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EDITORIAL

MINUETING AT OYSTER BAY.

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“**S**ERGIUS Witte and Baron Rosen, the Russian peace envoys, and Baron Komura and Minister Takahira, the envoys of Japan, will be presented to each other on Saturday morning by the President of the United States at Oyster Bay.

“The meeting will take place on the deck of the naval yacht *Mayflower*.

“The plenipotentiaries of the belligerent nations will leave this city at 10 o'clock on Saturday and proceed to Oyster Bay aboard the United States cruisers *Topeka* and *Chattanooga*. The President will await them on the *Mayflower*.

“After the introduction the Russians will remain aboard the *Mayflower*. The Japanese will go to the *Dolphin*, which is to be anchored nearby, and then the two delegations, convoyed by the *Topeka* and *Chattanooga*, will make a leisurely voyage to Portsmouth, N.H., where their conference is to be held.”

This is a sample of the owlsh-grave style in which the bourgeois “democratic” press of bourgeois “republican” America is reporting the farce-comedy of the pending Japanese-Russian peace conference. Satirizing a 17th century minuet performance similar to that at which the redoubtable Roosevelt is now beating time, Macaulay said:

“There was a long dispute about the place where the conference should be held. The Emperor proposed Aix-la-Chapelle. The French objected, and proposed the Hague. Then the Emperor objected in turn. At last it was arranged that the ministers of the Allied Powers should meet at the Hague, and that the French plenipotentiaries should take up their abode five miles off at Delft. Half way between Delft and the Hague is a village named Ryswick; and near it then stood, in a rectangular garden, which was bounded by straight canals, and divided into formal woods, flower beds and melon beds, a seat of the Princes of Orange. The house seemed to have been built expressly for the accommodation of such a set of diplomatists as were to meet there. In the center was a large hall painted by Honthorst. On the right and on the left were wings exactly corresponding to each other. Each

wing was accessible by its own bridge, its own gate, and its own avenue. One wing was assigned to the Allies, the other to the French, the hall in the center to the mediator. Some preliminary questions of etiquette were, not without difficulty, adjusted; and at length, on the ninth of May, many coaches and six, attended by harbingers, footmen, and pages, approached the mansion by different roads. The Swedish minister alighted at the great entrance. The procession from the Hague came up the side alley on the right. The procession from Delft came up the side alley on the left. At the first meeting the full powers of the representatives of the belligerent governments were delivered to the mediator. At the second meeting, forty-eight hours later, the mediator performed the ceremony of exchanging these full powers. Then several meetings were spent in settling how many carriages, how many horses, how many lackeys, how many pages, each minister should be entitled to bring to Ryswick; whether the serving men should carry canes; whether they should wear swords; whether they should have pistols in their holsters; who should take the upper hand in the public walks, and whose carriage should break the way in the streets. The Imperial ambassadors claimed a right to sit at the head of the table. The Spanish ambassador would not admit this pretension, and tried to thrust himself in between two of them. The Imperial ambassadors insisted on having a room to themselves in the building, and on having a special place assigned to their carriages in the court. All the other Ministers of the Confederacy pronounced the demand altogether inadmissible; and a whole sitting was wasted in the childish dispute. The chief business of Harlay and Kaunitz was to watch each other's legs. Neither of them thought it consistent with the dignity of the Crown which he served to advance towards the other faster than the other advanced towards him. If therefore one of them perceived that he had inadvertently stepped forward too quick, he went back to the door, and the stately minuet began again. The ministers of Lewis drew up a paper in their own language. The German statesmen protested against this innovation, this insult to the dignity of the Holy Roman Empire, this encroachment on the rights of independent nations, and would not know anything about the paper till it had been translated from good French into bad Latin. In the middle of April it was known to everybody at the Hague that Charles the Eleventh, King of Sweden, was dead, and had been succeeded by his son: but it was contrary to etiquette that any of the assembled envoys should appear to be acquainted with this fact till Lilienroth had made a formal announcement: it was not less contrary to etiquette that Lilienroth should make such an announcement till his equipages and his household had been put into mourning; and some weeks elapsed before his coachmakers and tailors had completed their task. At length, on the twelfth of June, he came to Ryswick in a carriage lined with black and attended by servants in black liveries, and there, in full congress, proclaimed that it had pleased God to take to himself the most puissant King Charles the Eleventh. All the ambassadors

then condoled with their brother on the sad and unexpected news, and went home to put off their embroidery, and dress themselves in the garb of sorrow," etc., etc.

So far as our bourgeois journalists, who are filling the columns of their papers with the minuet of etiquette to be observed at Oyster Bay, and then at Portsmouth, are concerned Macaulay lived, and wrote, and died in vain.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.

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