On May 4, 1910, Theodore Roosevelt and his wife Edith, daughter Ethel, and son Kermit arrived at Christiana (the future Oslo) and were greeted by Norway’s King Haakon VII and Queen Maud. Once again, as they had almost everywhere in their tour across Europe, they stayed at the royal palace. The Colonel, as TR styled himself after the presidency, reported to his close friend Massachusetts Senator Henry Cabot Lodge his continuing puzzlement about the “extraordinary” receptions he received in Norway and elsewhere. Royals had vied with one another to entertain them, and the popular displays were even more remarkable. In his opinion this was largely because to them he represented the American Republic, which stood to the average European as a “queer, attractive dream”—to some a “golden utopia partially realized” and to others a “field for wild adventure of a by no means necessarily moral type—in fact a kind of mixture of Bacon’s Utopia and Raleigh’s Spanish Main.” In addition, the former president appealed personally to their imaginations as a “leader whom they suppose to represent democracy, liberty, honesty and justice.” It was all very interesting and amusing, but it was also fatiguing and irksome. As much as he dreaded getting back into the “confusion” of American politics, after 13 months abroad he longed “inexpressibly to be back at Sagamore Hill, in my own house, with my own books, and among my own friends.”

One more serious duty Roosevelt performed at Christiana was to deliver a four-years-belated Nobel Peace Prize Address. He was doing so, in part, as a favor to Andrew Carnegie, the world’s richest man and an international peace advocate extraordinaire, who had stepped in to provide the lion’s share of the financial support for the yearlong African safari that had preceded the European leg of TR’s postpresidential odyssey.

World peace was prominent among the many causes Carnegie supported, and he had enlisted Roosevelt, as a kindred spirit to Germany’s Kaiser Wilhelm II, to aid in this quest. Carnegie seemed to find no contradiction in turning to these two figures whose public personas often reflected the glorification of war and military virtues. One authority on the American peace movement has commented that Carnegie coupled “an extraordinarily
sanguine disposition” with a “simplicity of mind that blurred the contradictory implications of specific ideas and actions.” In 1903 the plutocrat donated $1,500,000, a huge sum at that time, to build a “Temple of Peace” at The Hague to house the sessions of the permanent court of arbitration, the most lasting creation of the First Hague Conference called by Russia’s Czar Nicholas II in 1899 to discuss disarmament. Over the rest of his life, as Carnegie followed his “Gospel of Wealth” to give away 90 percent of his fortune, he would prove a generous donor to peace organizations in the United States and abroad.

Though deeply skeptical as to his prospects of success, Roosevelt had agreed to act as Carnegie’s peace envoy, not only at Christiana, but also at Berlin with Wilhelm, who was seen by Carnegie as the greatest hope for world peace, and by many others as its greatest menace. Three years before, at the time of the Second Hague Peace Conference (which TR had fostered), Carnegie had told Charlemagne Tower, the American ambassador in Berlin, that Wilhelm had it “in his power to do the world the greatest service ever rendered by man.” If he were to propose an international police to keep the peace, Britain, America, France, and the other powers would follow. Carnegie concluded that the Kaiser and Roosevelt “would make a team if they were only hitched up in together for the great cause of peace.”

Peace, the Colonel told his Nobel audience at Christiana, was “generally good in itself,” but it was “never the highest good” unless it came as the “hand maiden of righteousness,” and it became a “very evil thing” if it served “merely as a mask for cowardice and sloth, or as an instrument to further the ends of despotism or anarchy.” Nevertheless, he believed great advances could be made in the cause of international peace along several lines. First, there should be treaties of arbitration between the “really civilized communities.” The establishment of a sufficient number of these, Roosevelt argued, would go a long way toward “creating a world opinion which would finally find expression” in the provision of still-needed methods to forbid or punish transgressors.

A second line of advance could be made in the further development of The Hague Tribunal, particularly the conference and courts of The Hague. TR agreed with those who said that the First Hague Conference a decade before had framed a Magna Carta for the nations. The Second Conference in 1907 had made further progress, and he thought the next projected for 1914 should do more. The American government had more than once tentatively suggested methods for completing the Court of Arbitral Justice, and the statesmen of the world would do well to use the US Supreme Court as a model. In the third place, something should be done to check the growth of armaments, especially naval, by international agreement. In TR’s opinion, granted sincerity of purpose, the Great Powers should find no insurmountable obstacle in reaching an agreement to end the present costly expenditures. Finally, it would be a master stroke if those same Great Powers honestly bent on international amity would form a League of Peace, not only to keep