

Chapter Two

BACK TO NORMALCY

EARLY on the morning of November 11, 1918, President Woodrow Wilson wrote in pencil, on an ordinary sheet of White House stationery, a message to the American people:

My Fellow Countrymen: The armistice was signed this morning. Everything for which America fought has been accomplished. It will now be our fortunate duty to assist by example, by sober, friendly counsel, and by material aid in the establishment of just democracy throughout the world.

Never was document more Wilsonian. In those three sentences spoke the Puritan schoolmaster, cool in a time of great emotions, calmly setting the lesson for the day; the moral idealist, intent on a peace of reconciliation rather than a peace of hate; and the dogmatic prophet of democracy, who could not dream that the sort of institutions in which he had believed all his life were not inevitably the best for all nations everywhere. Yet the spirit of the message suggests, at the same time, that of another war President. It was such a document as Lincoln might have written.

But if the man in the White House was thinking of Abraham Lincoln as he wrote those sentences—and no doubt he was—there was something which perhaps he overlooked. Counsels of idealism sometimes fail in the relaxation that comes with peace. Lincoln had not lived to see what happens to a policy of “sober, friendly counsel” in a post-war decade; he had been taken off in the moment of triumph.

Woodrow Wilson was not to be so fortunate.

§ 2

What a day that 11th of November was! It was not quite three o'clock in the morning when the State Department gave out to the dozing newspaper men the news that the Armistice had really been signed. Four days before, a false report of the end of hostilities had thrown the whole United States into a delirium of joy. People had poured out of offices and shops and paraded the streets singing and shouting, ringing bells, blowing tin horns, smashing one another's hats, cheering soldiers in uniform, draping themselves in American flags, gathering in closely packed crowds before the newspaper bulletin boards, making a wild and hilarious holiday; in New York, Fifth Avenue had been closed to traffic and packed solid with surging men and women, while down from the windows of the city fluttered 155 tons of ticker tape and torn paper. It did not seem possible that such an outburst could be repeated. But it was.

By half-past four on the morning of the 11th, sirens, whistles, and bells were rousing the sleepers in a score of American cities, and newsboys were shouting up and down the dark streets. At first people were slow to credit the report; they had been fooled once and were not to be fooled again. Along an avenue in Washington, under the windows of the houses of government officials, a boy announced with painstaking articulation, "THE WAR IS OVAH! OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCEMENT CONFIRMS THE NEWS!" He did not mumble as newsboys ordinarily do; he knew that this was a time to convince the skeptical by being intelligible and specific. The words brought incredible relief. A new era of peace and of hope was beginning—had already begun.

So the tidings spread throughout the country. In city after city mid-morning found offices half deserted, signs tacked up on shop doors reading "CLOSED FOR THE KAISER'S FU-

NERAL," people marching up and down the streets again as they had four days previously, pretty girls kissing every soldier they saw, automobiles slowly creeping through the crowds and intentionally backfiring to add to the noise of horns and rattles and every other sort of din-making device. Eight hundred Barnard College girls snake-danced on Morningside Heights in New York; and in Times Square, early in the morning, a girl mounted the platform of "Liberty Hall," a building set up for war-campaign purposes, and sang the "Doxology" before hushed crowds.

Yet as if to mock the Wilsonian statement about "sober, friendly counsel," there were contrasting celebrations in which the mood was not that of pious thanksgiving, but of triumphant hate. Crowds burned the Kaiser in effigy. In New York, a dummy of the Kaiser was washed down Wall Street with a firehose; men carried a coffin made of soap-boxes up and down Fifth Avenue, shouting that the Kaiser was within it, "resting in pieces"; and on Broadway at Seventieth Street a boy drew pictures of the Kaiser over and over again on the sidewalk, to give the crowds the delight of trampling on them.

So the new era of peace began.

But a million men—to paraphrase Bryan—cannot spring from arms overnight. There were still over three million and a half Americans in the military service, over two million of them in Europe. Uniforms were everywhere. Even after the tumult and shouting of November 11th had died, the Expeditionary Forces were still in the trenches, making ready for the long, cautious march into Germany; civilians were still saving sugar and eating strange dark breads and saving coal; it was not until ten days had passed that the "lightless" edict of the Fuel Administration was withdrawn, and Broadway and a dozen lesser white ways in other cities blazed once more; the railroads were still operated by the government, and one bought one's tickets at United States

Railroad Administration Consolidated Ticket Offices; the influenza epidemic, which had taken more American lives than had the Germans, and had caused thousands of men and women to go about fearfully with white cloth masks over their faces, was only just abating; the newspapers were packed with reports from the armies in Europe, news of the revolution in Germany, of Mr. Wilson's peace preparations, of the United War Work Campaign, to the exclusion of almost everything else; and day after day, week after week, month after month, the casualty lists went on, and from Maine to Oregon men and women searched them in daily apprehension.

November would normally have brought the climax of the football season, but now scratch college teams, made up mostly of boys who had been wearing the uniform of the Students' Army Training Corps, played benefit games "to put the War Work Fund over the top"; and further to strengthen the will to give, Charlie Brickley of Harvard drop-kicked a football across Wall Street into the arms of Jack Gates of Yale on the balcony of the Stock Exchange. Not only the news columns of the papers, but the advertisements also, showed the domination of war-time emotions. Next to an editorial on "The Right to Hate the Huns," or a letter suggesting that the appropriate punishment for the Kaiser would be to deport him from country to country, always as an "undesirable alien," the reader would find a huge United War Work Fund advertisement, urging him to GIVE—GIVE—GIVE! On another page, under the title of PREPARING AMERICA TO REBUILD THE WORLD, he would find a patriotic blast beginning, "Now that liberty has triumphed, now that the forces of Right have begun their reconstruction of humanity's morals, the world faces a material task of equal magnitude," and not until he had waded through several more sentences of sonorous rhetoric would

he discover that this "material task" was to be accomplished through the use of Blank's Steel Windows.

And even as the process of demobilization got definitely under way, as the soldiers began to troop home from the camps, as censorship was done away with and lights were permitted to burn brightly again and women began to buy sugar with an easy conscience; even as this glorious peace began to seem a reality and not a dream, the nation went on thinking with the mind of people at war. They had learned during the preceding nineteen months to strike down the thing they hated; not to argue or hesitate, but to strike. Germany had been struck down, but it seemed that there was another danger on the horizon. Bolshevism was spreading from Russia through Europe; Bolshevism might spread to the United States. They struck at it—or at what they thought was it. A week after the Armistice, Mayor Hylan of New York forbade the display of the red flag in the streets and ordered the police to "disperse all unlawful assemblages." A few nights later, while the Socialists were holding a mass meeting in Madison Square Garden, five hundred soldiers and sailors gathered from the surrounding streets and tried to storm the doors. It took twenty-two mounted policemen to break up the milling mob and restore order. The next evening there was another riot before the doors of the Palm Garden, farther up town, where a meeting of sympathy for Revolutionary Russia was being held under the auspices of the Women's International League. Again soldiers and sailors were the chief offenders. They packed Fifty-eighth Street for a block, shouting and trying to break their way into the Palm Garden, and in the *mêlée* six persons were badly beaten up. One of the victims was a conservative stockbroker. He was walking up Lexington Avenue with a lady, and seeing the yelling crowd, he asked some one what all the excitement was about. A sailor called out, "Hey, fellows, here's another of the Bolsheviks," and in a moment a score

of men had leaped upon him, ripped off his tie, and nearly knocked him unconscious. These demonstrations were to prove the first of a long series of post-war anti-Red riots.

The nation at war had formed the habit of summary action, and it was not soon unlearned. The circumstances and available methods had changed, that was all. Employers who had watched with resentment the rising scale of wages paid to labor, under the encouragement of a government that wanted no disaffection in the ranks of the workers, now felt that their chance had come. The Germans were beaten; the next thing to do was to teach labor a lesson. Labor agitators were a bunch of Bolsheviks, anyhow, and it was about time that a man had a chance to make a decent profit in his business. Meanwhile labor, facing a steadily mounting cost of living, and realizing that it was no longer unpatriotic to strike for higher wages, decided to teach the silk-stockinged profiteering employer a lesson in his turn. The result was a bitter series of strikes and lockouts.

There was a summary action with regard to liquor, too. During the war alcohol had been an obvious menace to the fighting efficiency of the nation. The country, already largely dry by state law and local option, had decided to banish the saloon once and for all. War-time psychology was dominant; no halfway measure would serve. The War-time Prohibition Act was already on the books and due to take effect July 1, 1919. But this was not enough. The Eighteenth Amendment, which would make prohibition permanent and (so it was thought) effective, had been passed by Congress late in 1917, and many of the states had ratified it before the war ended. With the convening of the state legislatures in January, 1919, the movement for ratification went ahead with amazing speed. The New York *Tribune* said that it was "as if a sailing-ship on a windless ocean were sweeping ahead, propelled by some invisible force." "Prohibition seems to be the fashion, just as drinking once was," exclaimed the

Times editorially. By January 16th—within nine weeks of the Armistice—the necessary thirty-six States had ratified the Amendment. Even New York State fell in line a few days later. Whisky and the “liquor ring” were struck at as venomously as were the Reds. There were some misgivings, to be sure; there were those who pointed out that three million men in uniform might not like the new dispensation; but the country was not in the mood to think twice. Prohibition went through on the tide of the war spirit of “no compromise.”

Yet though the headlong temper of war-time persisted after the Armistice, in one respect the coming of peace brought about a profound change. During the war the nation had gone about its tasks in a mood of exaltation. Top sergeants might remark that the only good Hun was a dead one and that this stuff about making the world safe for democracy was all bunk; four-minute speakers might shout that the Kaiser ought to be boiled in oil; the fact remained that millions of Americans were convinced that they were fighting in a holy cause, for the rights of oppressed nations, for the end of all war forever, for all that the schoolmaster in Washington so eloquently preached. The singing of the “Doxology” by the girl in Times Square represented their true feeling as truly as the burning of the Kaiser in effigy. The moment the Armistice was signed, however, a subtle change began.

Now those who had never liked Wilson, who thought that he had stayed out of the war too long, that milk and water ran in his veins instead of blood, that he should never have been forgiven for his treatment of Roosevelt and Wood, that he was a dangerous radical at heart and a menace to the capitalistic system, that he should never have appealed to the country for the election of a Democratic Congress, or that his idea of going to Paris himself to the Peace Conference was a sign of egomania—these people began to speak

out freely. There were others who were tired of applauding the French, or who had ideas of their own about the English and the English attitude toward Ireland, or who were sick of hearing about "our noble Allies" in general, or who thought that we had really gone into the war to save our own skins and that the Wilsonian talk about making the world safe for democracy was dangerous and hypocritical nonsense. They, too, began to speak out freely. Now one could say with impunity, "We've licked the Germans and we're going to lick these damned Bolsheviki, and it's about time we got after Wilson and his crew of pacifists." The tension of the war was relaxing, the bubble of idealism was pricked. As the first weeks of peace slipped away, it began to appear doubtful whether the United States was quite as ready as Woodrow Wilson had thought "to assist in the establishment of just democracy throughout the world."

§ 3

But the mind of Mr. Wilson, too, had been molded by the war. Since April, 1917, his will had been irresistible. In the United States open opposition to his leadership had been virtually stifled: it was unpatriotic to differ with the President. His message and speeches had set the tone of popular thought about American war aims and the terms of eventual peace. In Europe his eloquence had proved so effective that statesmen had followed his lead perforce and allowed the Armistice to be made upon his terms. All over the world there were millions upon millions of men and women to whom his words were as those of a Messiah. Now that he envisioned a new world order based upon a League of Nations, it seemed inevitable to him that he himself should go to Paris, exert this vast and beneficent power, and make the vision a reality. The splendid dream took full possession of him. Critics like Senator Lodge and even associates like

Secretary Lansing might object that he ought to leave the negotiations to subordinates, or that peace should be made with Germany first, and discussion of the League postponed, in order to bring an unsettled world back to equilibrium without delay; but had he not silenced critics during the war and could he not silence them again? On the 4th of December—less than a month after the Armistice—the President sailed from New York on the *George Washington*. As the crowds along the waterfront shouted their tribute and the vessels in the harbor tooted their whistles and the guns roared in a presidential salute, Woodrow Wilson, standing on the bridge of the *George Washington*, eastward bound, must have felt that destiny was on his side.

The events of the next few weeks only confirmed him in this feeling. He toured France and England and Italy in incredible triumph. Never had such crowds greeted a foreigner on British soil. His progress through the streets of London could be likened only to a Coronation procession. In Italy the streets were black with people come to do him honor. "No one has ever had such cheers," wrote William Bolitho; "I, who heard them in the streets of Paris, can never forget them in my life. I saw Foch pass, Clemenceau pass, Lloyd George, generals, returning troops, banners, but Wilson heard from his carriage something different, inhuman—or superhuman." Seeing those overwhelming crowds and hearing their shouts of acclaim, how could Woodrow Wilson doubt that he was still invincible? If, when the Conference met, he could only speak so that they might hear, no diplomatist of the old order could withstand him. Destiny was taking him, and the whole world with him, toward a future bright with promise.

But, as it happened, destiny had other plans. In Europe, as well as in America, idealism was on the ebb. Lloyd George, that unfailing barometer of public opinion, was campaigning for reelection on a "Hang the Kaiser" plat-

form; and shout as the crowds might for Wilson and justice, they voted for Lloyd George and vengeance. Now that the Germans were beaten, a score of jealous European politicians were wondering what they could get out of the settlement at Paris for their own national ends and their own personal glory. They wanted to bring home the spoils of war. They heard the mob applaud Wilson, but they knew that mobs are fickle and would applaud annexations and punitive reparations with equal fervor. They went to Paris determined to make a peace which would give them plunder to take home.

And meanwhile in the Senate Chamber at Washington opposition to Wilson's League and Wilson's Fourteen Points increased in volume. As early as December 21, 1918, Henry Cabot Lodge, intellectual leader of the Republicans in the Senate, announced that the Senate had equal power with the President in treaty-making and should make its wishes known in advance of the negotiations. He said that there would be quite enough to do at Paris without raising the issue of the League. And he set forth his idea of the sort of peace which ought to be made—an idea radically different from President Wilson's. Lodge and a group of his associates wanted Germany to be disarmed, saddled with a terrific bill for reparations, and if possible dismembered. They were ready to give to the Allies large concessions in territory. And above all, they wanted nothing to be included in the peace settlement which would commit the United States to future intervention in European affairs. They prepared to examine carefully any plan for a League of Nations which might come out of the Conference and to resist it if it involved "entangling alliances." Thus to opposition from the diplomats of Europe was added opposition of another sort from the Senate and public opinion at home. Wilson was between two fires. He might not realize how they threatened him, but they were spreading.

The tide of events, had Wilson but known it, was turning against him. Human nature, the world over, was beginning to show a new side, as it has shown it at the end of every war in history. The compulsion for unity was gone, and division was taking its place. The compulsion for idealism was gone, and realism was in the ascendant.

Nor did destiny work only through the diplomats of the Old World and the senatorial patriots of the New. It worked also through the peculiar limitations in the mind and character of Woodrow Wilson himself. The very singleness of purpose, the very uncompromising quality of mind that had made him a great prophet, forced him to take upon his own shoulders at Paris an impossible burden of responsible negotiation. It prevented him from properly acquainting his colleagues with what he himself was doing at the sessions of the Council of Ten or the Council of Four, and from getting the full benefit of their suggestions and objections. It prevented him from taking the American correspondents at Paris into his confidence and thus gaining valuable support at home. It made him play a lone hand. Again, his intelligence was visual rather than oral. As Ray Stannard Baker has well put it, Wilson was "accustomed to getting his information, not from people, but out of books, documents, letters—the written word," and consequently "underestimated the value of . . . human contacts." At written negotiations he was a past master, but in the oral give and take about a small conference table he was at a disadvantage. When Clemenceau and Lloyd George and Orlando got him into the Council of Four behind closed doors, where they could play the game of treaty-making like a four-handed card game, they had already half defeated him. A superman might have gone to Paris and come home completely victorious, but Woodrow Wilson could not have been what he was and have carried the day.

This is no place to tell the long and bitter story of the

President's fight for his ideals at Paris. Suffice it to say that he fought stubbornly and resourcefully, and succeeded to a creditable extent in moderating the terms of the Treaty. The European diplomats wanted to leave the discussion of the League until after the territorial and military settlements had been made, but he forced them to put the League first. Sitting as chairman of the commission appointed to draw up the League Covenant, he brought out a preliminary draft which met, as he supposed, the principal objections to it made by men at home like Taft and Root and Lodge. In Paris he confronted a practically unanimous sentiment for annexation of huge slices of German territory and of all the German colonies; even the British dominions, through their premiers, came out boldly for annexation and supported one another in their colonial claims; yet he succeeded in getting the Conference to accept the mandate principle. He forced Clemenceau to modify his demands for German territory, though he had to threaten to leave Paris to get his way. He forced Italy to accept less land than she wanted, though he had to venture a public appeal to the conscience of the world to do it. Again and again it was he, and he only, who prevented territories from being parceled out among the victors without regard to the desires of their inhabitants. To read the day-to-day story of the Conference is to realize that the settlement would have been far more threatening to the future peace of the world had Woodrow Wilson not struggled as he did to bring about an agreement fair to all. Yet the result, after all, was a compromise. The treaty followed in too many respects the provisions of the iniquitous secret treaties of war-time; and the League Covenant which Wilson had managed to imbed securely in it was too rigid and too full of possible military obligations to suit an American people tired of war and ready to get out of Europe once and for all.

The President must have been fully aware of the ugly

imperfections in the Treaty of Versailles as he sailed back to America with it at the end of June, 1919, more than six months after his departure for France. He must have realized that, despite all his efforts, the men who had sat about the council table at Paris had been more swayed by fear and hate and greed and narrow nationalism than by the noble motives of which he had been the mouthpiece. No rational man with his eyes and ears open could have failed to sense the disillusionment which was slowly settling down upon the world, or the validity of many of the objections to the Treaty which were daily being made in the Senate at Washington. Yet what could Wilson do?

Could he come home to the Senate and the American people and say, in effect: "This Treaty is a pretty bad one in some respects. I shouldn't have accepted the Shantung clause or the Italian border clause or the failure to set a fixed German indemnity or the grabbing of a lot of German territory by France and others unless I had had to, but under the circumstances this is about the best we could do and I think the League will make up for the rest"? He could not; he had committed himself to each and every clause; he had signed the Treaty, and must defend it. Could he admit that the negotiators at Paris had failed to act in the unselfish spirit which he had proclaimed in advance that they would show? To do this would be to admit his own failure and kill his own prestige. Having proclaimed before the Conference that the settlement would be righteous and having insisted during the Conference that it was righteous, how could he admit afterward that it had not been righteous? The drift of events had caught him in a predicament from which there seemed to be but one outlet of escape. He must go home and vow that the Conference had been a love-feast, that every vital decision had been based on the Fourteen Points, that Clemenceau and Orlando and Lloyd George and the rest had been animated by an overpowering

love for humanity, and that the salvation of the world depended on the complete acceptance of the Treaty as the charter of a new and idyllic world order.

That is what he did; and because the things he said about the Treaty were not true, and he must have known—sometimes, at least—that they were not, the story of Woodrow Wilson from this point on is sheer tragedy. He fell into the pit which is dugged for every idealist. Having failed to embody his ideal in fact, he distorted the fact. He pictured the world, to himself and to others, not as it was, but as he wished it to be. The optimist became a sentimentalist. The story of the Conference which he told to the American people when he returned home was a very beautiful romance of good men and true laboring without thought of selfish advantage for the welfare of humanity. He said that if the United States did not come to the aid of mankind by indorsing all that had been done at Paris, the heart of the world would be broken. But the only heart which was broken was his own.

§ 4

Henry Cabot Lodge was a gentleman, a scholar, and an elegant and persuasive figure in the United States Senate. As he strolled down the aisle of the Senate Chamber—slender, graceful, gray-haired, gray-bearded, the embodiment of all that was patrician—he caught and held the eye as might William Gillette on a crowded stage. He need not raise his voice, he need only turn for a moment and listen to a sentence or two of some colleague's florid speech and then walk indifferently on, to convince a visitor in the gallery that the speech was unworthy of attention. It was about Lodge that the opposition to Wilson gathered.

He believed in Americanism. He believed that the essence of American foreign policy should be to keep the

country clear of foreign entanglements unless our honor was involved, to be ready to fight and fight hard the moment it became involved, and, when the fight was over, to disentangle ourselves once more, stand aloof, and mind our own business. (Our honor, as Lodge saw it, was involved if our prerogatives were threatened; to Woodrow Wilson, on the other hand, national honor was a moral matter: only by shameful conduct could a nation lose it.) As chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, Lodge conceived it to be his duty to see that the United States was not drawn into any international agreement which would endanger this time-honored policy. He did not believe that the nations of the world could be trusted to spend the rest of their years behaving like so many Boy Scouts; he knew that, to be effective, a treaty must be serviceable in eras of bad feeling as well as good; and he saw in the present one many an invitation to trouble.

Senator Lodge was also a politician. Knowing that his Massachusetts constituents numbered among them hundreds of thousands of Irish, he asked the overworked peace delegates at Paris to give a hearing to Messrs. Frank P. Walsh, Edward F. Dunn, and Michael J. Ryan, the so-called American Commission for Irish Independence, though it was difficult for anyone but an Irishman to say what Irish independence had to do with the Treaty. Remembering, too, the size of the Italian vote, Lodge was willing to embarrass President Wilson, in the midst of the Italian crisis at the Conference, by saying in a speech to the Italians of Boston that Italy ought to have Fiume and control the Adriatic. Finally, Lodge had no love for Woodrow Wilson. So strongly did he feel that Wilson's assumption of the right to speak for American opinion was unwarranted and iniquitous, that when Henry White, the only Republican on the American Peace Commission, sailed for Europe, Lodge put into White's hands a secret memorandum containing

his own extremely un-Wilsonian idea of what peace terms the American people would stand for, and suggested that White show it in strict confidence to Balfour, Clemenceau, and Nitti, adding, "This knowledge may in certain circumstances be very important to them in strengthening their position." No honorable man could have made such a suggestion unless he believed the defeat of the President's program to be essential to the country's welfare.

United with Lodge in skepticism about the Treaty, if in nothing else, was a curious combination of men and of influences. There were hard-shelled Tories like Brandegee; there were Western idealists like Borah, who distrusted any association with foreign diplomats as the blond country boy of the old-fashioned melodrama distrusted association with the slick city man; there were chronic dissenters like La Follette and Jim Reed; there were Republicans who were not sorry to put the Democratic President into a hole, and particularly a President who had appealed in war-time for the election of a Democratic Congress; there were Senators anxious to show that nobody could make a treaty without the advice as well as the consent of the Senate, and get away with it; and there were not a few who, in addition to their other reasons for opposition, shared Lodge's personal distaste for Wilsonian rhetoric. Outside the Senate there was opposition of still other varieties. The Irish were easily inflamed against a League of Nations that gave "six seats to England." The Italians were ready to denounce a man who had refused to let Italy have Fiume. Many Germans, no matter how loyal to the United States they may have been during the war, had little enthusiasm for the hamstringing of the German Republic and the denial to Germany of a seat in the League. There were some people who thought that America had got too little out of the settlement. And there were a vast number who saw in the League Covenant,

and especially in Article X, obligations with which they were not willing to have the nation saddled.

Aside from all these groups, furthermore, there was another factor to be reckoned with: the growing apathy of millions of Americans toward anything which reminded them of the war. They were fast becoming sick and tired of the whole European mess. They wanted to be done with it. They didn't want to be told of new sacrifices to be made—they had made plenty. Gone was the lift of the day when a girl singing the "Doxology" in Times Square could express their feelings about victory. This was all over now; the Willard-Dempsey fight and the arrival of the British dirigible R-34 at Long Island were much more interesting.

On the 10th of July, 1919, the President, back in Washington again, laid the Treaty of Versailles before the Senate, denying that the compromises which had been accepted as inevitable by the American negotiators "cut to the heart of any principle." In his words as he addressed the Senate was all the eloquence which only a few months ago had swayed the world. "The stage is set, the destiny disclosed. It has come about by no plan of our conceiving, but by the hand of God who led us into the way. We cannot turn back. We can only go forward, with lifted eyes and freshened spirit, to follow the vision. It was of this that we dreamed at our birth. America shall in truth show the way. The light streams upon the path ahead and nowhere else."

Fine words—but they brought no overwhelming appeal from the country for immediate ratification. The country was tired of going forward with lifted eyes, and Woodrow Wilson's prose style, now all too familiar, could no longer freshen its spirit. The Treaty—a document as long as a novel—was referred to Lodge's Committee on Foreign Relations, which settled down to study it at leisure. A month later Lodge rose in the Senate to express his preference for national independence and security, to insist that Articles X

and XI of the League Covenant gave "other powers" the right "to call out American troops and American ships to any part of the world," and to reply to Wilson: "We would not have our politics distracted and embittered by the dissensions of other lands. We would not have our country's vigor exhausted, or her moral force abated, by everlasting meddling and muddling in every quarrel, great and small, which afflicts the world." And within a fortnight Lodge's committee began voting—although by a narrow margin in each case—to amend the Treaty; to give Shantung to China, to relieve the United States of membership in international commissions, to give the United States the same vote as Great Britain in the League, and to shut off the representatives of the British dominions from voting on questions affecting the British Empire. It began to look as if the process of making amendments and reservations might go on indefinitely. Woodrow Wilson decided to play his last desperate card. He would go to the people. He would win them to his cause, making a speaking trip through the West.

His doctors advised against it, for physically the President was almost at the end of his rope. Never robust, for months he had been under a terrific strain. Again and again during the Peace Conference, Ray Stannard Baker would find him, after a long day of nerve-wracking sessions, looking "utterly beaten, worn out, his face quite haggard and one side of it twitching painfully." At one time he had broken down—had been taken with a sudden attack of influenza, with violent paroxysms of coughing and a fever of 103°—only to be up again and at his labors within a few days. Now, in September, his nerves frayed by continued overwork and by the thought of possible failure of all he had given his heart and strength for, he was like a man obsessed. He could think of nothing but the Treaty and the League. He cared for nothing but to bring them through to victory. And so, despite all that those about him could say,

he left Washington on September 3rd to undergo the even greater strain of a speaking trip—the preparation and delivery of one or even two speeches a day in huge sweltering auditoriums (and without amplifiers to ease the strain on his voice); the automobile processions through city after city (during which he had to stand up in his car and continuously wave his hat to the crowds); the swarms of reporters, the hand-shaking, the glare of publicity, and the restless sleep of one who travels night in and night out on a swaying train.

Again and again on that long trip of his, Woodrow Wilson painted the picture of the Treaty and the League that lived in his own mind, a picture which bore fainter and fainter resemblance to the reality. He spoke of the “generous, high-minded, statesman-like coöperation” which had been manifest at the Paris Conference; he said that “the hearts of men like Clemenceau and Lloyd George and Orlando beat with the people of the world,” and that the heart of humanity beat in the document which they had produced. He represented America, and indeed every other country, as thrilling to a new ideal. “The whole world is now in a state where you can fancy that there are hot tears upon every cheek, and those hot tears are tears of sorrow. They are also tears of hope.” He warned his audiences that if the Treaty were not ratified, disorder would shake the foundations of the world, and he envisioned “this great nation marching at the fore of a great procession” to “those heights upon which there rests nothing but the pure light of the justice of God.” Every one of those forty speeches was different from every other, and each was perfectly ordered, beautifully phrased, and thrilling with passion. As an intellectual feat the delivery of them was remarkable. Yet each pictured a dream world and a dream Treaty, and instinctively the country knew it. (Perhaps, indeed, there were moments of terrible sanity when, as the President lay sleepless

in his private car, he himself knew how far from the truth he had departed.) The expected surge of public opinion toward Wilson's cause failed to materialize. The Senate went right on discussing reservations. On September 24th, the first test vote went against the President 43 to 40.

On the night of the next day Wilson came to the end of his strength. For some time he had had indigestion and had slept little. After his long speech at Pueblo on the evening of September 25th he could not sleep at all. The train was stopped and Mr. and Mrs. Wilson took a walk together on a country road. When he returned to the train he was feverish and "as he slept under a narcotic, his mouth drooled. His body testified in many ways to an impending crash." The next morning when he tried to get up he could hardly stand. The train hurried on toward Washington and all future speaking engagements were canceled. Back to the White House the sick man went. A few days later a cerebral thrombosis partially paralyzed his left side. Another act of the tragedy had come to an end. He had given all he had to the cause, and it had not been enough.

§ 5

There followed one of the most extraordinary periods in the whole history of the Presidency. For weeks Woodrow Wilson lay seriously ill, sometimes unable even to sign documents awaiting his signature. He could not sit up in a chair for over a month, or venture out for a ride in the White House automobile for five months. During all the rest of his term—which lasted until March 4, 1921, seventeen months after his breakdown—he remained in feeble and precarious health, a sick man lying in bed or sitting in an invalid's chair, his left side and left leg and left arm partially paralyzed. Within the White House he was immured as if in a hospital. He saw almost nobody, transacted only the

most imperative business of his office. The only way of communicating with him was by letter, and as during most of this time all letters must pass through the hands of Mrs. Wilson or Admiral Grayson or others in the circle of attendants upon the invalid, and few were answered, there was often no way of knowing who was responsible for a failure to answer them or to act in accordance with the suggestions embodied in them. Sometimes, in fact, it was suspected that it was Mrs. Wilson who was responsible for many a White House decision—that the country was in effect being governed by a regency.

With the President virtually unable to function, the whole executive machine came almost to a stop. It could, to be sure, continue its routine tasks; and an aggressive member of the Cabinet like Attorney-General Palmer could go blithely ahead rounding up radicals and deporting them and getting out injunctions against strikers as if he had the full wisdom and power of the Presidency behind him; but most matters of policy waited upon the White House, and after a while it became clear that guidance from that quarter could hardly be expected. There were vital problems clamoring for the attention of the Executive: the high cost of living, the subsequent breakdown of business prosperity and increase of unemployment; the intense bitterness between capital and labor, culminating in the great steel and coal strikes; the reorganization of the government departments on a peace basis; the settlement of innumerable questions of foreign policy unconnected with the Treaty or the League. Yet upon most of these problems the sick man had no leadership to offer. Meanwhile his influence with Congress and the country, far from being increased by his martyrdom for the League, dwindled to almost nothing.

The effect of this strange state of affairs upon official Washington was well described a year or two later by Edward G. Lowry in *Washington Close-ups*:

“For a long time the social-political atmosphere of Washington had been one of bleak and chill austerity suffused and envenomed by hatred of a sick chief magistrate that seemed to poison and blight every human relationship. The White House was isolated. It had no relation with the Capitol or the local resident and official community. Its great iron gates were closed and chained and locked. Policemen guarded its approaches. It was in a void apart. . . . It all made for bleakness and bitterness and a general sense of frustration and unhappiness.”

Mr. Wilson's mind remained clear. When the report went about that he was unable “to discharge the powers and duties” of his office and should, therefore, under the provisions of the Constitution, be supplanted by the Vice-President (and reports of this sort were frequent in those days) Senators Fall and Hitchcock visited him in behalf of the Senate to determine his mental condition. They found him keenly alive to the humor of their embarrassing mission; he laughed and joked with them and showed a complete grasp of the subjects under discussion. Nevertheless, something had gone out of him. His messages were lifeless, his mind was sterile of new ideas. He could not meet new situations in a new way: reading his public documents, one felt that his brain was still turning over old ideas, rearranging old phrases, that he was still living in that dream world which he had built about himself during the days of his fight for the League.

He had always been a lonely man; and now, as if pursued by some evil demon, he broke with one after another of those who still tried to serve him. For long years Colonel House had been his chief adviser as well as his affectionate friend. During the latter days of the Peace Conference a certain coolness had been noticed in Wilson's attitude toward House. This very conciliatory man had been perhaps a little too conciliatory in his negotiations during the Presi-

dent's absence from Paris; rightly or wrongly, the President felt that House had unwittingly played into the hands of the wily Clemenceau. Nevertheless, House hoped, on his return from Paris, to be able to effect a rapprochement between his broken chief and the defiant Senators. House wrote to suggest that Wilson accept certain reservations to the Treaty. There was no answer to the letter. House wrote again. No answer. There was never any explanation. The friendship and the political relationship, long so valuable to the President and so influential in the direction of policy, were both at an end—that was all one could say.

Robert Lansing had been at odds with the President over many things before and during the Peace Conference; yet he remained as Secretary of State and believed himself to be on good terms with his chief. During Wilson's illness, deciding that something must be done to enable the government to transact business, he called meetings of the Cabinet, which were held in the Cabinet Room at the White House offices. He was peremptorily dismissed. Last of all to go was the faithful Joe Tumulty, who had been Wilson's secretary through fair weather and foul, in the Governor's office at Trenton and for eight years at Washington. Although the break with Tumulty happened after Wilson left the White House, it deserves mention here because it so resembles the others and reveals what poison was working in the sick man's mind. In April, 1922, there was to be held in New York a Democratic dinner. Before the dinner Tumulty visited Wilson and got what he supposed to be an oral message to the effect that Wilson would "support any man [for the Presidency] who will stand for the salvation of America, and the salvation of America is justice to all classes." It seemed an innocuous message, and after ten years of association with Wilson, Tumulty had reason to suppose that he knew when Wilson might be quoted and when he might not. But as it happened, Governor Cox spoke at the Democratic dinner,

and the message, when Tumulty gave it, was interpreted as an indorsement of Cox. Whereupon Wilson wrote a curt letter to the *New York Times* denying that he had authorized anybody to give a message from him. Tumulty at once wrote to Wilson to explain that he had acted in good faith and to apologize like a true friend for having caused the President embarrassment. His letter was "courteously answered by Mrs. Wilson" (to use Tumulty's own subsequent words), but Wilson himself said not a word more. Again Tumulty wrote loyally, saying that he would always regard Mr. Wilson with affection and would be "always around the corner when you need me." There was no answer.

On the issue of the Treaty and the League Woodrow Wilson remained adamant to the end. Call it unswerving loyalty to principle or call it stubbornness, as you will—he would consent to no reservations except (when it was too late) some innocuous "interpretive" ones, framed by Senator Hitchcock, which went down to defeat. While the President lay critically ill, the Senate went right on proposing reservation after reservation, and on November 19, 1919, it defeated the Treaty. Only a small majority of the Senators were at that time irreconcilable opponents of the pact; but they were enough to carry the day. By combining forces with Wilson's Democratic supporters who favored the passage of the Treaty without change, they secured a majority against the long list of reservations proposed by Lodge's committee. Then by combining forces with Lodge and the other reservationists, they defeated the Treaty minus the reservations. It was an ironical result, but it stood. A few months later the issue was raised again, and once more the Treaty went down to defeat. Finally a resolution for a separate peace with Germany was passed by both Houses—and vetoed by Wilson as "an action which would place an inefaceable stain upon the gallantry and honor of the United States." (A similar peace resolution was ultimately signed by

President Harding.) President Wilson's last hope was that the election of 1920 would serve as a "great and solemn referendum" in which the masses of the people—those masses who, he had always claimed, were on his side—would rise to vindicate him and the country. They rose—and swamped the pro-League candidate by a plurality of seven millions.

It is not pleasant to imagine the thoughts of the sick man in the White House as defeat after defeat overwhelmed his cause and mocked the great sacrifice he had made for it. How soon the realization came upon him that everything was lost we do not know. After his breakdown, as he lay ill in the White House, did he still hope? It seems likely. All news from the outside world was filtered to him through those about him. With his life hanging in the balance, it would have been quite natural—if not inevitable—for them to wish to protect him from shock, to tell him that all was going well on the Hill, that the tide had swung back again, that this token and that showed that the American people would not fail him. On such a theory one might explain the break with Colonel House. Possibly any suggestion for compromise with the Lodge forces seemed to the President simply a craven proposal for putting up the white flag in the moment of victory. But whether or not this theory is justified, sooner or later the knowledge must have come, as vote after vote turned against the Treaty, and must have turned the taste of life to bitterness. Wilson's icy repudiation of faithful Joe Tumulty was the act of a man who has lost his faith in humankind.

§ 6

Back in the early spring of 1919, while Wilson was still at Paris, Samuel G. Blythe, an experienced observer of the political scene, had written in the *Saturday Evening Post* of

the temper of the leaders of the Republican Party as they faced the issues of peace:

"You cannot teach an Old Guard new tricks. . . . The Old Guard surrenders but it never dies. Right at this minute, the ancient and archaic Republicans who think they control the destinies of the Republican Party—think they do!—are operating after the manner and style of 1896. The war hasn't made a dent in them. . . . The only way they look is backward."

The analysis was sound; but the Republican bosses, however open to criticism they may have been as statesmen, were at least good politicians. They had their ears where a good politician's should be—to the ground—and what they heard there was a rumble of discontent with Wilson and all that he represented. They determined that at the election of 1920 they would choose as the Republican standard-bearer somebody who would present, both to themselves and to the country, a complete contrast with the idealist whom they detested. As the year rolled round and the date for the Republican Convention approached, they surveyed the field. The leading candidate was General Leonard Wood, a blunt soldier, an inheritor of Theodore Roosevelt's creed of fearing God and keeping your powder dry; he made a fairly good contrast with Wilson, but he promised to be almost as unmanageable. Then there was Governor Lowden of Illinois—but he, too, did not quite fulfill the ideal. Herbert Hoover, the reliever of Belgium and war-time Food Administrator, was conducting a highly amateur campaign for the nomination; the politicians dismissed him with a sour laugh. Why, this man Hoover hadn't known whether he was a Republican or Democrat until the campaign began! Hiram Johnson was in the field, but he also might prove stiff-necked, although it was to his advantage that he was a Senator. The bosses' inspired choice was none of these men:

it was Warren Gamaliel Harding, a commonplace and unpretentious Senator from Ohio.

Consider how perfectly Harding met the requirements. Wilson was a visionary who liked to identify himself with "forward-looking men"; Harding, as Mr. Lowry put it, was as old-fashioned as those wooden Indians which used to stand in front of cigar stores, "a flower of the period before safety razors." Harding believed that statesmanship had come to its apogee in the days of McKinley and Foraker. Wilson was cold; Harding was an affable small-town man, at ease with "folks"; an ideal companion, as one of his friends expressed it, "to play poker with all Saturday night." Wilson had always been difficult of access; Harding was accessible to the last degree. Wilson favored labor, distrusted business men as a class, and talked of "industrial democracy"; Harding looked back with longing eyes to the good old days when the government didn't bother business men with unnecessary regulations, but provided them with fat tariffs and instructed the Department of Justice not to have them on its mind. Wilson was at loggerheads with Congress, and particularly with the Senate; Harding was not only a Senator, but a highly amenable Senator. Wilson had been adept at making enemies; Harding hadn't an enemy in the world. He was genuinely genial. "He had no knobs, he was the same size and smoothness all the way round," wrote Charles Willis Thompson. Wilson thought in terms of the whole world; Harding was for America first. And finally, whereas Wilson wanted America to exert itself nobly, Harding wanted to give it a rest. At Boston, a few weeks before the Convention, he had correctly expressed the growing desire of the people of the country and at the same time had unwittingly added a new word to the language, when he said, "America's present need is not heroics but healing; not nostrums but normalcy; not revolution but restoration;

. . . not surgery but serenity." Here was a man whom a country wearied of moral obligations and the hope of the world could take to its heart.

It is credibly reported that the decision in favor of Harding was made by the Republican bosses as early as February, 1920, four months before the Convention. But it was not until four ballots had been taken at the Convention itself—with Wood leading, Lowden second, and Harding fifth—and the wilted delegates had dispersed for the night, that the leaders finally concluded to put Harding over. Harding's political manager, an Ohio boss named Harry M. Daugherty, had predicted that the Convention would be deadlocked and that the nomination would be decided upon by twelve or thirteen men "at two o'clock in the morning, in a smoke-filled room." He was precisely right. The room was Colonel George Harvey's, in the Hotel Blackstone. Boies Penrose, lying mortally ill in Philadelphia, had given his instructions by private wire to John T. Adams. The word was passed round, and the next afternoon Harding was nominated.

The Democrats, relieved that Wilson's illness had disqualified him, duly nominated another equally undistinguished Ohio politician, Governor James M. Cox. This nominee had to swallow the League of Nations and did. He swung manfully around the circle, shouting himself hoarse, pointing with pride. But he hadn't a chance in the world. Senator Harding remained in his average small town and conducted a McKinleyesque front-porch campaign; he pitched horseshoes behind the house with his Republican advisers like an average small-town man and wore a McKinley carnation; he said just enough in behalf of "an association of nations" to permit inveterate Republicans who favored the League to vote for him without twinges of conscience, and just enough against Wilson's League to con-

vince the majority that with him in the White House they would not be called upon to march to the aid of suffering Czechoslovakia; and the men and women of the United States woke up on the morning of November 3rd to find that they had swept him into the Presidency by a margin of sixteen millions to nine millions. Governor Cox, the sacrificial victim, faded rapidly into the mists of obscurity.

The United States had rendered its considered judgment on "our fortunate duty to assist by example, by sober, friendly counsel, and by material aid in the establishment of just democracy throughout the world." It had preferred normalcy.

§ 7

Woodrow Wilson lived on in Washington—in a large and comfortable house on S Street—for over three years after this final crushing defeat. Those who came to call upon him toward the end found a man prematurely old, huddled in a big chair by the fireplace in a sunny south room. He sat with his hands in his lap, his head a little on one side. His face and body were heavier than they had been in his days of power; his hair, now quite gray, was brushed back over an almost bald head. As he talked he did not move his head—only his eyes followed his visitor, and his right arm swung back and forth and occasionally struck the arm of the chair for emphasis as he made his points. The old-time urbanity was in his manner as he said, "You must excuse my not rising; I'm really quite lame." But as he talked of the foreign policy of the United States and of his enemies, his tone was full of hatred. This was no time to sprinkle rose-water round, he said; it was a time for fighting—there must be a party fight, "not in a partisan spirit, but on party lines." Still he clung to the last shred of hope that his party might

follow the gleam. Of the men who had made the fulfillment of his great project impossible he spoke in unsparing terms. "I've got to get well, and then I'm going out to get a few scalps." So he nursed his grievance; an old man, helpless and bitter.

On Armistice Day, five years after the triumphant close of the war, he stood on the steps of his house—supported so that he should not fall—and spoke to a crowd that had gathered to do him honor. "I am not," said he, "one of those that have the least anxiety about the triumph of the principles I have stood for. I have seen fools resist Providence before and I have seen their destruction, as will come upon these again—utter destruction and contempt. That we shall prevail is as sure as that God reigns."

Three months later he was dead.