

## MR. GONEGAGA REAPPEARS

*I—He Studies America in Europe*

GEORGE HENRY PAYNE

THE platform of the Gare St Lazare marked for the train to Cherbourg was crowded with men and women talking loudly and exultingly. A dark little man with an Italian hat, a French overcoat, and English tweeds pushed his way through a group of American buyers and tapped on the window of my compartment.

"Hey! How are you? Going back to the Dry? Hey! Hey! So am I!"

I peered intensively at the stranger, and slowly it dawned on me that this was my philosophic friend Gonegaga whom months ago I had left in America studying American newspapers and political institutions. I warmly invited him into the compartment and then demanded why he had left America for Europe and why he had discontinued his American researches.

"But I am continuing my studies," he exclaimed, although his appearance and his tonal qualities were at variance with his former philosophic calm, introspective, and penetrating analytical attitude. "You think me strange," he went on, noting with his old-time keenness my look of wonderment, "but I was told by the editorial friend on 'The Times' to whom you introduced me that if I wanted to understand American politics and newspapers I must go to Geneva to see the League of Nations and to Paris to see the Americans."

"And Geneva you found interesting?"

"Wonderful — it was filled with the delegates and the Americans, — the delegates seemed tired of being in the League, and the Americans most anxious to get in."

"But, if you will permit a personal question, when I saw you last you were wearing the Oriental costume of your fathers. Why have you changed to this very occidental costume?"

"I got them in Geneva," — he flapped his coat triumphantly, — "to get the Americans to talk English to me."

"Talk English?" I was frankly puzzled.

"Ah!" he said with pleased and gentle superiority, "you do not know your own people. Whenever they see a foreign-looking person in Europe, they speak French to him."

"But you speak French as well as you speak English," I thoughtlessly insisted.

"But not with the same accent", he said softly.

I winced.

"Then you did not approve of the Americans you saw in Geneva?"

"Oh! please do not think that," Gonegaga protested with evident sincerity. "I admired them greatly, — they were the real idealists. They were superior to all the others in imagination, they were continually soaring. I can understand why you should be superior in any warfare in the air."

"Self heated, I presume —" the subject was turning painful, and in defense I said, "tell me what you discovered about American politics in Paris."

"Many wonderful things, particularly the influence on the franc," with a most engaging smile. I tried to grasp what possible influence the political opinions of Americans in Paris could have on the franc, but finally confessed that I did not understand him.

"It was you who told me that somewhere between the conservative and the progressive opinion is probably the party which is right, and the more bitter these two extremes become the more strength will be developed right in the middle."

I nodded slowly, vaguely remembering some such thought but still much perplexed as to its application.

"Well, there are in Paris two American newspapers, — the 'Paris New York Herald-Tribune' which is Conservative, and the 'Paris Chicago-Tribune' which is Progressive. They both quote every day on their first page for the benefit of their Americans the figures at which the franc may be bought with American money. As they never agree and neither is ever right, the Conservatives (New York Tribune) and the Progressives (Chicago Tribune) are becoming more and more bitter, and so the franc which is in the middle is becoming stronger. Indeed, I myself heard Americans say that after reading the two papers for several days they had come to the conclusion that the franc was

much maligned for they found that if it went down in one paper, it always went up in the other."

"Did you discover anything else?" I felt there was hardly any necessity for explaining to Mr. Gonegaga the editorial difficulties of exact market quotations.

"Yes, I discovered how unpopular is the American Senate. Paris to an American man is against not only the Senate but even the lower house. I found, however, that the feeling against the upper chamber is more deep seated. Heretofore in my humble political studies I have refrained from indulging in the customary political prophecy, but if I may, as you say, indulge myself, I should say that at some time in the near future the American-Paris journalists and politicians will be found leading a movement for the abolition of the American Congress."

"Did you find this feeling confined to Paris?"

"Oh! No, I found it intensified as I traveled. On the Orient Express, I met two Americans and one Turk who were for the immediate decapitation of Senator Borah, the prompt cremation of Senator Couzens, the pulverization of Senator Norris, and the complete transmogrification of Senator Walsh. I think I have the words correctly, — they were slightly perplexing."

"Purely partisan feeling," I suggested soothingly.

"Pardon, but I do not think so, for it was the Turk who was most bitter. He had spent six years in America and was what he called a naturalized Republican."

"But the American representatives of the Government abroad do not feel this way?" — I was beginning to be interested.

"More so. If the American Senate is ever abolished in Europe, the American diplomatic and Consular officials of all Europe will celebrate with an extra *thé dansant*."

I admitted that I was genuinely surprised.

"Please do not misunderstand me. The feeling is not my own. The Congressman you introduced to me in Washington was so unassuming, counting out the seeds for his constituents. The Congressman who calls on the American Consul disturbs so many arrangements, the afternoon siesta, for instance, and he generally wants to see some old historic church, or some Murillo or Velasquez that no consul has ever heard of. Then he always wants to meet somebody, and that is very disconcerting, for how

can a diplomatic or consular representative keep his social position in a foreign city if he introduces his friends to a Congressman? And then the Senators, — they are terrible. Of course you understand I am, what you call, reflecting opinion. The Senators give their constituents a letter addressed to 'The American Diplomatic and Consular Officials', and it makes a lot of trouble."

"In what way?"

"Firstly, the Consul must see the person who presents the letter, and this is disturbing. Then some of the traveling Americans think the letter is a railroad pass or that it will help get a discount at a hotel. I was told that one young lady, the bride of one of your leading bootleggers, had one of these letters from a New Jersey Senator, and she gave it to a waiter as a tip."

"You believe, Gonegaga, that the move to abolish the American Congress — in Europe — is most sincere?" I said finally.

"Undoubtedly, although it mystifies me that those who were the first modern upholders of representative government should now preach to Europe contempt for their own institutions."

"But they can't abolish the Senate," I exclaimed, "and they would know that if they would only read the Constitution."

"Ah!" responded Mr. Gonegaga, "but their answer to that is that they won't read the old Constitution. Dear sir," and Gonegaga spoke with a tearful seriousness that was unusual in him, "I seem to see that Americans are not unlike many Europeans who are in a bewilderment because of their too strong desire to accomplish what they believe in. In their hearts, these Europeans would not be indifferent to a *coup d'état*, not realizing that *coup d'état* frequently spells *auto da fe*."

We walked up the gangplank of the *Berengaria* together.

"I shall see you, I hope, in New York. Good-bye," he said, holding out his hand.

"Good-bye! — where do you think you are going now?"

"To continue my study of American politics and opinions," he smiled suavely. "I am now going to be what you call in America an Illustrated Sunday Feature. I travel third class that I may learn something of 'Why the Other Half Lives'."

And smiling enigmatically, he marched off to the Third Class with a troop of heavily loaded and thoroughly mystified first cabin stewards.

# FOOTPATH AND HIGHWAY

BY THE PEDESTRIAN

## THE CHILDREN OF THE WAY

A PEDESTRIAN may pretend that he passes bucolic days sprinkling flour on honey-bees or dodging bulls in the upland pastures, but even he cannot avoid the stern, mirthless facts which confront men and women in the crowded streets. Stopping on the brow of a hill and looking down on a distant, shimmering city, he may cry, "How beautiful!" — but there is always that fellow at his shoulder to exclaim, "Beautiful? How *earnest!*" And when he descends into the plain and walks in the city streets, where the celestial haze has turned to dirty smoke, and the soothing murmur has grown to a discordant din, he cannot wholly escape crying, like Ruskin, of "the misery that I know of, and see signs of where I know it not, which no imagination can interpret too bitterly."

It may be good to return to the hill-top, to see the distant, beautiful city as well as to echo the lamentations of Ruskin. It may be profitable to remember Turi the Lapp, who says he cannot think unless a stiff breeze is blowing through his hair. But no amount of persiflage or of bucolic gambol can blot out the picture and the noise. Those who have followed the Pedestrian hitherto in the pathetic expectation that he might eventually squeeze a jest out of the preposterous illusions of mankind are hereby warned to turn back. To-day he is concerned seriously, not with illusions, which are often funny things, but with disillusion, which is a bitter thing.

For the real misery, "which no imagination can interpret too bitterly," is not the condition of the poor, nor yet, except in a secondary sense, what Ruskin called the "deforming mechanism" of modern life. Rather, it is wide-spread disillusion, especially among the young, and a pathetic clutching at spiritual nostrums and anodynes. Perhaps most youthful ideals are illusions, but when disillusionment came slowly and in part you could build new and less hollow illusions out of the ruins of the old, and eventually, out of these, could build still less illusory faiths, till