

## Uncle Sam as Air Boss

AVIATION today is so bound up in the public mind with armaments that its value to society as a speedier medium of communication and transportation is overshadowed by its utility as a war machine. This tendency is apparent in the movement for a national code of air laws and the many bills introduced into Congress during the past five years which have urged legislation as a means of building up our air defense. Air laws are unquestionably needed in this country, but this constant appealing to nationalistic fervor and the use of such slogans as "building up our air defense" has obscured the civil worth of aircraft.

No one who has seen the French, British, German, or Dutch air lines in operation can question the importance of aviation in the every-day life of any country, regardless of what military value it may have. Air liners, on regular daily schedule, connect Paris with the important cities of all Europe, as far east as Warsaw and as far southeast as Constantinople. The English Channel air lines operate as regularly as the steamers. The German air lines connect Berlin with Moscow, the Baltic States, Scandinavia, Holland, and Great Britain.

The fact that most of these air lines are government-subsidized may be disregarded, for whether subsidized or not they have reduced Europe to about one-third its pre-aviation size, and today no two cities are separated by more than a daylight airplane flight. The possibilities here are even greater with our wide expanse of territory, ranges of mountains, and lack of customs barriers. Our aerial mail has shown what aviation can do in shattering distances.

Not too much is asked of Congress in urging the passage of the Winslow air bill. Its main object is (1) to provide through a proposed Bureau of Civil Aeronautics for uniform federal supervision of safety inspection of aircraft and airdromes, with regulation of the qualifications of aircraft crews, and the establishment and enforcement of air-navigation rules; (2) to furnish aid to air navigation by approving and charting air routes, establishing air light-houses and signal stations, supplying suitable weather reports, and providing at the government fields, in cases of emergency, supplies and repairs at their fair market value.

Like most of its unsuccessful predecessors the main object of the bill is to provide for federal regulation of air navigation. In theory we have a Congress whose business it is to provide laws regulating and promoting commerce and industry, but here we have an operating system of communication and transportation, covering the entire country, even if spasmodically, and involving the lives and property of the general public without even the beginning of national regulations. There is no working code of air laws in the country today, no air routes or weather reports for airmen, no government terminals excepting military fields, although there are 124 aerial companies and 162 private airports, with some 1,200 airplanes in operation, covering over three million miles during the past year, carrying 81,000 passengers and 208,302 pounds of freight.

The United States is the only large country in the world today without national air legislation. As for the need of air laws, in the past three years there have been 470 crashes, resulting in 221 deaths. These crashes have

been due to unairworthy machines, errors in piloting, lack of terminals, routes, and weather data. Government reports attribute 91 per cent of all the accidents to the itinerant fliers who operate without a fixed base, "through inexperience and the use of cheap and unsafe equipment." The itinerant fliers—the "gipsies"—on their part insist that they are the real pioneers, covering the most remote corners of the country, roughing it most of the time over uncharted courses. Yet no one denies that regulation of air traffic would reduce the number of accidents. The following experts' list of "six requisites for safe flying" provides the soundest reason for air laws:

1. A machine, sound aerodynamically and structurally.
2. A reliable engine of sufficient power.
3. A competent, conservative pilot and navigator.
4. Airports and emergency landing fields, sufficiently close together to insure gliding to safety.
5. Nation-wide weather forecast, specialized and adapted to the need of fliers.
6. Adequate charts of air routes.

Any man familiar with aviation will at once recognize the danger of taking passage in a machine which has not been thoroughly tested and without some proof of the pilot's ability, but such professional caution should hardly be expected from the general public. Passengers rarely stop to question the seaworthiness of a steamship or the competency of its captain. They rely wholly upon the government safety regulations, and the government in its turn has provided a detailed system of inspections and examinations. The control of sea traffic is now automatically accepted as a governmental function. The scope and nature of aviation make the control of such traffic as imperative.

## Introducing Our Ancestors

THE munificence of Mr. and Mrs. Robert W. de Forest, donors of the new American wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, will fan the flames of ancestor-worship which have been burning high. For here our Puritan forefathers appear in a pleasant and unfamiliar light: as artists unawares, as craftsmen, lovers of color and beauty. We have been learning of late years that the dour early New Englanders knew a thing or two that we do not; the countryside has been combed for slatback chairs and hook rugs and gooseneck andirons and old iron hinges, simple things with a decorative charm which grew directly out of a human love of comfort. But part of our liking for these things has been mere antiquarianism.

Here, however, is assembled an amazingly gay picture of life in the old colonies. Here is a free use of color which most of us, were it not guaranteed authentically ancestral, would look upon with doubt and regard as "Greenwich-villagey." Our ancestors, it seems, liked to stain their furniture black or a bright brick red—or both. In the old Hart house in Ipswich, built in 1640 (the lovely parlor or "keeping-room" of which is reproduced in the de Forest wing), a molded band of red and black dentils runs across the fireplace opening, and similar bright bands sheathe the ceiling and the great summer-beam overhead. The men who carved the chests and chairs of the earliest colonial furniture were plainly not sour souls with their eyes set on heaven alone; they worked long hours to make life pleasant in the here and now.

Indeed, the inventories of those old days reveal a degree of creature comfort and an eagerness for lavish color which is surprising to those who have grown up on the tradition that the early New Englanders frowned upon the niceties of life. Anne Hibbins, who was surely an authentic early New Englander (for she was the third person to be executed for witchcraft in those pious days), left behind her in 1656 "a green say cushion, a violet pinckt cushion, a velvet (10s) and a wrought cushion with gold (5s), a wrought cupboard cloth, a green say valance, a green cupboard cloth with silk fringe, a green wrought do. with do., one wrought valliants, five painted [India] calico curtains and valence, one cupboard cloth with fringe, and one wrought Holland cupboard cloth." A year later Theophilus Eaton, first governor of New Haven Colony, had an inventory made of his goods which reveals that he, too, had a taste for color. He counted his goods in the "greene chamber" and in the "blew chamber" among his other rooms; he had pottery and glass (undoubtedly the lovely colored glass which is now so rare), silver, brasses, and wrought iron—and 253 pounds of pewter utensils, which was not bad, considering that six years later Samuel Pepys complained of a dinner at the Guildhall in London on Lord Mayor's Day that "It was very displeasing that we had no napkins, nor change of trenchers, and drank out of earthen pitchers and wooden dishes." Harvard College was founded less than ten years after the first white man had looked upon the Charles River, and its founder was comfortable enough to leave it, after providing for his family, £729/17/2, in addition to a library of 260 volumes, including, besides the saints, such frivolous authors as Terence, Juvenal, and Horace.

Walter Prichard Eaton has recently commented in the *American Mercury* upon the artistic genius of the men who built old Nantucket—"a God-fearing, hard-working, close-fisted, and none too literate people, who knew a vast deal more about whales than they did about art," yet who, "when they built a town of their own, achieved an artistic unity of effect unknown today; they wrought every detail not only fittingly but beautifully." But, rages Mr. Eaton,

Then came the sophisticated moderns, laughing at the Puritans, scorning the Puritan attitude toward art, blaming on the Puritans, in fact, most of the childishness or crudity of American artistic expression—and the best these moderns could do were hideous casinos, sprawling cottages with verandas stuck all over them helter-skelter, houses with . . . gingerbread trimmings, and nothing, anywhere, that had repose, unity, beauty of outline or detail, or even adaptability to its site.

Mr. Eaton concludes, naturally, that the Puritans, expressing art in the creation of dwellings, ships, furniture, pots, pans, and hinges, were truer artists than the self-conscious gentlemen who today spell Art with a capital A. In that he is undoubtedly right. And Demos is awakening to it. Wealthy pants-makers are today following Mr. Eaton's example in buying up and restoring abandoned farms; agents of the metropolitan shops are buying out the farmers' parlors and refurnishing them from the mail-order catalogues; little colonial mansions adorn all the Main Streets of the United States, squeezed in upon one another as closely as their predecessors, the imitation castles. The Metropolitan Museum has chastely canonized our ancestors' good taste. But barring all this copying of old models, how is a generation too busy and too tired to whittle to acquire a craftsmanship of its own?

## The Going of M. Jusserand

WE have withheld comment upon the retirement of Ambassador Jusserand from the post he has filled with such success for so many years in the hope that the Herriot Government would reconsider and order the ambassador to remain. The doyen of the diplomatic corps, he has been on duty in Washington for so long that one has come to consider him as much an institution as the mounted statue of Jackson or the Washington Monument itself. Modest and unassuming, he has typified the best there was in the old diplomacy and he has combined this with a literary skill, a versatility, and an authority which have made him deservedly conspicuous in the world of letters. We have too few of his type in our citizenship or any other residing among us.

There are still other reasons why we hold M. Jusserand in admiration. He might well have been forgiven had he laid aside his modesty and altered his simple bearing when the war came. The tremendous exaltation of his country in American eyes as the war progressed because of the heroic struggle of the masses of the French people against such disaster and suffering as were theirs might well have led another to assume an aggressive or even a presumptuous attitude. There is surely no higher praise that we can bestow upon the ambassador than to say that, so far as we can recall, he struck not one single false note, made no imperialistic or provocative speech, and in no wise undertook to tell us how we should conduct our affairs. We have often had to complain of the pro-French propaganda carried on in this country by M. Gaston Liébert and others, but our quarrel was not with M. Jusserand, and the responsibility for their objectionable propaganda rests not upon him but in Paris. Undoubtedly the correctness of his bearing was due to his own innate qualities, but it may surely be attributed to his understanding of us, an understanding in which he has been surpassed by only one other diplomat—Lord Bryce.

Glancing over one of his war-time speeches we note that Ambassador Jusserand quoted Marcus Aurelius as follows:

Never value anything as profitable to thyself which shall compel thee to break thy promise, to lose thy self-respect, to hate any man, to suspect, to curse, to act the hypocrite, to desire anything which needs walls and curtains.

Those are admirable sentiments. Had they governed the Allies and especially his own Government in the years following the war the history of Europe would have been different. But no one can hold the ambassador responsible for the policies of his country. The fact that we wish to stress today is that he has not been an inciter to hate while in America and that he has ever worked for the right relations between this country and the great republic he represents. So we end where we began, with the expression of our intense regret that M. Herriot could not have seen his way clear to permitting the ambassador to remain still longer in active service in the country which has come to regard him with affection as well as high respect. Nor can we personally forget that his brilliant pen has occasionally contributed to these columns. The fact that our views have necessarily diverged from his since war-time days has not diminished, but rather enhanced, the regard in which we have always held him.