

enough, but so flattened, so shallow, so dull, that they lose their incandescence and are dark to him. All is flattened down and levelled up; a little bit for everybody. There is no particular reason to be puzzled. Like turns to like. The mysterious thing that Longfellow put into Paul Revere's story to make it popular was a commonplace section of Longfellow's self. The critic may take his lesson from department store windows, with their plaster and pictures, their satin and glass and novelties, those last, spent waves of the Rue de Rivoli, the Louvre, the Metropolitan. If there are two hundred thousand admirers that are foolish, may there not be the one foolish author?

The moments come when we doubt. Are there really such banalities? It is impossible that anyone could be doing this work on the level, ideally, with honest effort. And yet in the midst of our mantling blushes at this travesty of all fine and noble things, we recall that such are the ways of life. People use patchouli surely because they like it; they feel it expresses them. Bodenhausen must have had some sort of foolish piety when he painted his simpering madonnas; even Mr. Christy must have moments of weakness toward his dreadful creations; and Mr. Robert Service at his worst must be fooling himself as well as others. The equals of all these await them at the market-shrine.

Now and then a man of real parts declares that he will write such a book, play the game. But with this intention only, the odds are against him. A quirk somewhere in him will muddy his stream. He will see too much, lose the key, spoil the unity of folly aimed at. He pays for his stature.

Of the two this is the pleasanter conclusion, if we must have such books. It leaves us a human bedrock, dense enough but sound. It means clear consciences that may go to heaven—a great comfort to some minds—even though art goes damned. The sincerity of fools, honest at least, or almost honest; even though in art it turns out false. People do prefer, if possible, to stay put; they like to be stirred to the depths if the depths will keep close to the surface. They do choose their comedy, like the colored supplement, to be funny as fast as the pages open; and their sadness sociable, not too sad. But it does not follow that they wish to be merely exploited. Their art may play for effects, select, underscore, since all art does; but honestly, in the bond. They like it roaring or pitiful, shallow or soft, but bona fide. Just David and Following the Star are no summits in art, to be sure; but they are successful not wholly through their designs on mushy hearts. Theirs are tears, not very salt if you like, and fast drying; but, in their fashion, tears.

STARK YOUNG.

## At the Capitol

ONE of the six filibustering senators who were burned in effigy for wanting to delay matters recently declared to the Senate, in summing up the progress on the administration's food bills, "We have devoted an entire legislative day to the discussion of a motion to recommit; and it seems that when we get through this day's work it has been understood all the time that the bill is going to be recommitted. Then why waste all this eloquence?"

Coming from Senator Norris this disapproval cannot be regarded as petulant, or indifferent to the need of proper time for deliberation in Congress. It is a fair criticism that while the food bills proposed by the administration are deserving of thorough study, a good part of the delay in advancing them has not been due to any desire for careful consideration. The first few attempts to bring the bills up for discussion failed in both houses because there was not enough of an attendance to warrant the consideration of anything except routine matters. On Wednesday the Senate was ready to go ahead, but was prevented from doing so by one of its own rules. The bills are now the unfinished business in both houses. Much of the discussion that is being given to them could be spared; but they are so far-reaching that the perspective resulting even from somewhat irrelevant debate may be valuable, unless interruptions come too often.

It is probable, however, that before the Senate has finished with the food measures that are pending it will have to turn its attention to the revenue bill. In coming through the hands of the Committee of Finance, sharp reductions have been made in the draft of this measure as it passed the House—particularly in the tax on manufacturer's gross sales and in the surtax on incomes of more than \$40,000. Taxes of this sort fall principally upon the larger cities. In the House there are two hundred and fifty members who represent districts in which there is not a single city with a population of thirty thousand. How closely rural districts and willingness to tax incomes are related is shown in the fact that only nineteen of these two hundred and fifty members voted against the proposals for manufacturers' and increased income taxes. But in the Senate it is different. Each senator is subject to pressure from all parts of his state, and few states do not contain at least one city of thirty thousand people. When the conferees meet to adjust the variances between the House bill and the Senate bill the effects of this different basis of representation will be prominent.

One matter to which the Senate can give its attention without fear of injury to its manufacturing constituencies is the question whether it is wise policy to exempt government bonds from taxation. Not a word was said on this point when the section providing exemption was before the House, though there was much time spent in deciding whether it was equitable to tax chautauquas, playing cards, perfumed cachous and pleasure craft. The House paid for its freedom from a state-wide pressure in having to adjust the even more local problems of home industry—the Detroit members assailing a tax on automobiles, the representative from Hartford objecting to a tax on insurance, and so on. The debate was consequently more real than the serious but artificial discussion over the question of going to war. With the present system and standards of representation a revenue bill built on compromise rather than foresight is inevitable. But it is unfortunate, even with revision in the Senate still to come, that many alterations of considerable importance were left to a scant at-

tendance. An amendment to the tax on manufacturers' gross sales was voted down, 36 to 10—which meant that 389 members of the House were not present. A revision in the tax on admissions and dues was accepted by a vote of 32 to 18—with seven-eighths of the membership absent. Decisions often rested on chance. An amendment would occasionally be adopted on a close vote; and a few minutes later an identical amendment to a succeeding clause would be refused because several of the ayes had gone out into the cloak-room. Mr. Meeker, looking about him for support in reducing the tax on perfumes, wanted to know, "What has become of the bunch of automobile patriots who were here a while ago?" His amendment was similar to theirs; but the automobile patriots, having carried their own point, had vanished. There were in all thirty-three votes on the revenue bill in the House. Including even the five roll-call votes, which bring on almost complete attendance, the average number voting was 170—out of a total of 435.

One agreeable result of the debate in the House was that it aroused a number of members to the shortcomings of their own rules. For a long time there have been attempts to adapt the House to its theoretical purpose in existing, but, coming chiefly from the outside, they have made little headway. The issue this time was opened by Mr. Moore's attempt to have a war tax of \$2.50 a bale placed upon cotton. The rather fine point on which objection to this proposal rested was that, while germane to the subject, it was not germane to the subject matter. It violated thereby a rule which the Democrats had adopted in the sixty-second Congress, as the only means of forcing their tariff legislation through the House. The effect of the rule is to permit changes in any of the taxes proposed by the Ways and Means Committee, but to forbid the introduction of any new items, once the bill has been reported. The House is accordingly left with only a veto over an irresponsible group of twenty-three men. Even a member so usually satisfied with the present order as Mr. Fitzgerald has demanded a change: "This question vitally affects the power of the House to do business, and to consider legislation in any intelligent and proper manner."

It is doubtful whether matters would be much improved simply by a repeal of this rule. Such a step, while theoretically encouraging free discussion, would in fact encourage the introduction of a thousand pro forma amendments on which the House could be kept voting until almost any measure was killed. But a beneficial change in the rule is possible, and with Mr. Fitzgerald, Mr. Mann and Mr. Lenroot calling upon the Committee on Rules for action, it is likely that the first step in several years will be taken toward giving the House a better organization. Instances of the past week point to a number of desirable innovations. The requirement of roll-call votes in the Committee of the Whole would have fixed the responsibility for absence, and not left decisions of some importance to as few as fifty members; a system of electrical voting, long urged as a sensible and easy reform, would have prevented the frequency of roll-calls from interfering with progress; publicity for committee deliberations would have provided the Senate with a revenue bill responsibly drawn, and insured an earlier opportunity for the taking up of measures, such as the food bills, which were temporarily shelved. Under the strain of the war, weaknesses in the organization of Congress are being so clearly disclosed that it does not seem that they can long go on escaping the attention of the members who suffer from them.

C. M.

## A COMMUNICATION

### The Perils of Diplomacy

SIR: You can render no greater service in this hour than by constantly repeating your eloquent warning of May 19th to the effect that the war is to be won by diplomacy as well as by soldiers and high explosives. The fact cannot be too often recited or too firmly emphasized. The sooner that all provincial editors and chimney-corner strategists learn this, the better for America. Of course, this does not mean that we should not strain every nerve to the breaking point in the mobilization of our resources. Neither does it mean that we should not work for a smashing victory which will carry the soldiers of the Allies to the streets of Berlin. It simply reminds us of the old adage that cutting off our noses to spite our faces is poor political economy.

Diplomacy, unfortunately, is not so simple as donning a uniform and marching up to a cannon's mouth to the martial strains of Yankee Doodle. It calls for poise, cold-bloodedness, and a Machiavellian disposition to see things as they are and to deal with them as they are—whether we like them or not. It is a difficult art which the author of *The Prince* fain would teach us. It requires an understanding of many things, many tempers, many perversities, and a spirit of reconciliation not unlike that of the narrow home. A knowledge of history—especially social and economic history—is absolutely indispensable. A sympathetic appreciation of habits and ways that are not our own is equally indispensable. Logic does not help much. A painful consciousness of the rectitude of our intentions and the purity of our purposes is more likely to be a nuisance than a service.

If all this is true, then we cannot begin too soon in this country a discussion of the human considerations that must be taken into account if this war is to be brought to a reasonably satisfactory conclusion—to say nothing now of a glorious victory. On taking stock of our intellectual resources the prospect warns us to make haste. When we learn from the newspapers that the statesmen highest in the councils of the nation cannot read French public documents and that the notes of the Imperial German Government must be translated before those in power can catch the drift of them, we cannot help wondering how well prepared are our leaders to understand the tempers, interests, and prejudices of the European nations with which we have to reckon. Nor can it be said that the English statesmen at the helm are much less provincial than our own. It has long been "proper," it is true, for English "gentlemen" to finish their education by taking a trip to France, but the "barbarous" tongue of the Germans has received scant welcome in the island home. The bitter truth is that Oshkosh is scarcely less pleased with itself than is London.

When to provincial self-satisfaction is added the quality of mind that comes from habitual rotation within the narrow circle of one's group or class there is formed a combination that disqualifies for the art of diplomacy. It is no exaggeration to say that the average middle-class American—even one who has done the cathedral towns—never reads any newspapers except those which flatter his