

now. He shook his head as he went on his way. Memories made things harder.

There was a perspiration on his brow, his heart like stone with fear. He was getting thin, haggard and worn. They told him he looked badly. "Exercise," he said, but as he said it he knew it for a lie. Yes, the threatening note was there. He felt it once again. This was no dream. It had come at last. He had been expecting it. He had earned it. To harry, to hunt, to search, it was his work, and he had done it. Yes, the pay was good, if anything could pay a man for this.

The overhanging trees grew closer, it was darker here, pitch dark, there was an edge to the path. No, not there, he was safer near the wall, he

moved in stealthily closer. He wanted to touch it, to feel it, but his hand refused to leave his pocket, refused to let go of the revolver that he grasped.

He was glad now the patrol were not with him, the men on it always talked. It's hard to hear noises when men talk, that's what it was. Listening! listening always, and thinking! God! how long this walk was, how hot! Yes, he'd open his coat. Blast it! these muggy nights were worst of all. Sometimes he stepped on fallen branches which crackled as he walked, and then again it was silence broken only by slish, slosh, and the mournful dripping of trees.

FLORENCE HACKETT.

## Headline Heroes

**I**T is Tuesday, and one o'clock. Some seventy newspapermen crowd the white walled little corridors that lead to the President's room. There has just been a Cabinet meeting, and a few large slow-moving men, Weeks, Hoover, Daugherty, thread their way out through the crowd, shaking hands here and there. For a few minutes more the crowd stands gossiping about, then all at once presses forward, pours through a narrow door, and surges up as close as it can about the desk. The bright light from the windows, through which one sees barren levels of the withered White House grass, at first blurs the figure in front of the desk.

A thick Middle-Western voice says, low and evenly, "How are you all?" The President, who gradually becomes more distinct, is shuffling written questions slowly from hand to hand, gazing distantly down at them through his pince-nez. The broad mouth spreads suddenly, purses, twitches in what you take at first to be suppressed amusement, but learn later to recognize as meditation. There are silences, broken with low answers to the questions in his hand. "Political prisoners—Friday." "No." "I don't think so." A longer answer, spoken distinctly—a distinctness that comes from the lungs. Our American distinctness of wind, not lips. A pause. Then: "I have here a friendly and courteous question, referring to the quadrilateral naval arrangement in the Pacific." With emphasis, the head suddenly raised, tilted curiously to one side: "The Executive does not understand that the treaty applies to the homeland of Japan any more than it does to the mainland of the United States."

If you go often enough to hear him, you will

notice with curiosity the kind of questions the President likes to answer. The more definite they are the less he is apt to say about them. But here is one which, he says, he will save till the end. It is a general question: "whether the Conference will result in a better moral feeling in the world," perhaps, or about the "success of the Conference as a whole." This kind of question he answers with a little speech, windy, mildly solemn, full of such phrases as "a new concord and a new confidence." At the end he may remark: "That's not very well expressed, but you get the idea."

There is dignity in his bearing, a benevolent, genial gravity, but with this assurance there is a touch of doubt and sensitiveness. "I am President, but I'm not an extraordinary man," you feel often to be in the back of his head. You have evidence of this when he talks of himself as "a Main Street citizen." You have further proof of it when one of us asks if commission merchants and middlemen might not be included in the invitation to an agricultural conference. The President lifts up his head, the light catches the round smooth planes of his face, the startling pockets under the eyes, and he leans forward eagerly. "An excellent suggestion! They should certainly be included! I am really much obliged to you for your suggestion!" He means it. He had not thought of this, and he is genuinely thankful for it. But neither in this, nor in anything that he says, is he completely engrossed. Mixed in with all the gravity, all the heartiness, there is a trace of self-conscious questioning, of a simpler self, snowed under, but not dead. That rich home-made voice, which lingers over "Uh-merican" and loves to prolong the word "great" with an unmistakably oratorical

tremolo, if it is part of him now, did not altogether naturally become so. How much he must have changed since he was a small boy—and how little.

The newspapermen go in to the President; Mr. Hughes comes out to them suddenly through a small door, and the newspapermen break up their groups in the shadow of portraits of past Secretaries and press into a ring about him, almost menacingly. "Well, this is an offday," he begins. "I'm afraid there's nothing to tell you." These words are barely uttered—in a deep positive muscular voice, when a fire of questions begins. "When M. Briand replied to you. . . ." The questioner pronounces it Em Bree-and, and Mr. Hughes's eyes light with a brief twinkle, though his amusement does not disturb the decorative sweep of his moustache and beard. More questions, catch questions, cross questions, silly questions, questions about Christmas, trying to squeeze some small drops of information from an international sponge which Mr. Hughes has just said was dry. He balances from foot to foot, or stands still, gazing, with his head high in the air, at the questioner. He breaks into answer, confident, clear, with easy gestures of his hands. A humorous illustration, a quick story, a hearty good-natured laugh, which, as another question breaks over him, vanishes instantaneously. "I can't say anything about that. You know my rule. I can't discuss anything the President says." Another question. Those wide serious eyes take on a different look, a strained look, almost of pain. But the question is answered, and perhaps there is another sudden turn of humor, when the face and the frank eyes and the neatly bushy beard contract and open suddenly, only to snap tight again the moment after. Is this the face that scrapped a thousand ships? The strain of such an effort is evident. Particularly evident on some difficult day, when the "I can't say anything about that" is more frequent, shorter, and the geniality, the humor, do not flow. At such times, under a languishing fire of questions, he backs toward the door, and goes out quickly, with his veteran head high in the air, and his legs rather wide apart.

Leaving the State, War and Navy building behind you—not turning back to look at it lest its ten-thousand pillared monstrosity haunt your dreams—you go past white colonial palaces, homes of the Red Cross and the Daughters of the American Revolution, past the Pan-American building, rather too clean and squarely beautiful. Here a sentry, in his regulated walk back and forth, calls out "Hey Mister, what's the time?" Other sentries guard the deserted drugget and the awning over

it that lead up mysteriously into the home of great decisions. You walk on to where, when the Conference started, stood twin obelisks of victory, fair and shining in white paint and plaster. Now,—and, say the cynics, it is an omen for liberty—all that remains of them is one huge pole laddered with cross pieces. Then the Navy building, built on the Ford plan; bare inhospitable rooms all alike, peopled with marines, newspapermen and stray anonymous official-looking individuals, carrying canes and documents.

In one of these rooms some thirty newspapermen sit about a makeshift table of identical cheap varnished desks pushed together. Blinding charmless lights. Nothing on the walls. The crowd, like a classroom, waits for its professor. Here he is: Admiral Baron Kato. The crowd rises. The Admiral, in faint but friendly English, wishes them a Happy New Year. "The same to you, Admiral, and we are glad you have recovered from your illness." Business begins. The Admiral does not conduct this in English, but through an interpreter with a Phi Beta Kappa key. Behind the Admiral sits, sly, amused and rotund, Mr. Debuchi, who handles his delegation's publicity. While the interpreter translates the first harmless questions, there is time to notice Admiral Kato's long delicate nose, his thin motionless hands, the blinking, tired eyes, with eyebrows in a perfect semi-circle as if raised in a perpetual frown. His slight figure sits sideways, looks at nothing in particular, seems aged, absent, infinitely weary and patient, yet unconscious of being either. "Has Japan ever given Semionov any financial support?" The answer comes second-hand: "In the past money has been given to Semionov, but this should not be interpreted as assistance. It was given by the last Cabinet when the Bolsheviki were not so strong as they are now, to stabilize Semionov." "How much was it?" "All I remember is that it was very little." "What money was appropriated?" "There was no appropriation. Every nation has such a special fund at its disposal. It was not furnished by parliamentary process."

While some of the questions which follow hot upon these are being translated, Mr. Debuchi leans forward for a few words with the Admiral. He listens, his expression does not change from one of distant, patient endurance, he turns back again. Dozens of questions. Then as the correspondents are beginning to scrape back the varnished chairs, the interpreter halts them. "The Admiral wishes me to say that as it might lead to misunderstanding, he thinks it will be more satisfactory to omit what he said about the money given to Semionov. It is a thing of the past." "Then we are to

take what he said as withdrawn—cancelled?" "Yes."

In newspaper language Admiral Kato spilled the beans, was tipped off, and then killed the only news of the afternoon. Yet he has not changed his expression of weary calm.

More usually Mr. Hanihara, vice-minister of foreign affairs, plays teacher for the Japanese. He is short, chunky, with very thick black hair, his face a pattern of tan rings and dark slits. He sits squarely at the table, hunched over it, his arms on it. He wears a grin both friendly and cautious. A questioner will find this impish, wary countenance, with its eyes almost completely closed, turned toward him, and will usually be rewarded with an answer which, in any language, would be unintelligible. The invariable peroration—a phrase repeated some thirty or forty times during the sitting—is "You see." Between this and the solid matter of the answer (usually a profession of ignorance) stretches a prodigious humming grunt, which breaks sharply toward the end into a higher and more violent snort originally the property of several members of the animal kingdom.

Later in the evening you may find Mr. Hanihara, in snowy white tie and waistcoat, dining all by himself in the Shoreham grill. He is scrupulously attentive to his food, but if he catches your eye will bow with a politeness which in ten centuries you could not hope to imitate.

Leave the Navy building, show your pass to the Marine, and you may climb the stairs into the Pan-American. Seven o'clock. In those clean marble silences, with endless stairs, black and white zebraed pillars, gold inscriptions, a small group of newspaper men are waiting. Upstairs, beyond Lord knows what blameless stony corridors, people are wrestling over the fate of Shantung. In a courtyard there is a dark mysterious tangle of indoor trees and plants. The newspapermen are smoking, swapping stories, speculating about whether there will be any real Shantung news tonight, betting on it. Time drags. A telephone tinkles listlessly. The atmosphere is the same as people have about them who are waiting for the arrival of a Boston and Maine train, posted as late. A State Department official comes down to say it will soon be over. We rise and stretch, as in the seventh inning. Another quarter of an hour. Then—"They're coming!" We crowd to the foot of the long stairs. A trickle of small, dark Japanese and Chinese secretaries with portfolios, one after the other, descend slowly, ten steps apart. At last Mr. Hanihara, who grins but grunts little. "No news." There must be, there shall be. Angry, laughing questions. "Well, what have you been talking about these two

hours?" Mr. Hanihara can't get away. He is pushed into a corner, still smiling, then squeezed through a narrow space between two pillars, from which he finally emerges with his coat and hat.

Another ten minutes. The Chinese appear. Dr. Koo, smiling, finished, with a charming English accent. He also is pressed, squeezed, he too answers from between the pillars, over his shoulder, through the arms of his overcoat. Now for Mr. Wang. Five hundred questions fired at him in five minutes. No real news. Deadlock again. We see him into his car. Somebody drapes the automobile robe about his feet.

Deadlock; no news.

The newspapermen scatter to tell a bored world how, when, where, and why there is no news, in two columns.

ROBERT LITTELL.

## Back to Nora O'Grady

**N**ORA O'GRADY insists we are old-fashioned. Something must be done about it, for to be considered conventional is the one abomination.

Nora, who is past fifty and a grandmother, "sews by the day" for most of our little group. Every so often she arrives, a compact, buxom little figure in black, carrying the inevitable black morocco handbag stuffed to neat but not bulging fullness. She stays with us for a few days at a time, briskly hewing down the discouraging pile of plain sewing and mending, listening to us, good-humoredly scoffing at us, and filling the house with the genial warmth of her personality.

She goes the rounds of twenty odd families, couples, or parts of families that make up our little coterie in the West Twenties—a suburb of Greenwich Village we call it, who can no longer afford the Village's remodeled grandeur. During the year, consequently, Nora becomes familiar with the events and opinions in our circle, "seeing us through the eye of her needle," as Julie says.

Nora is inflexibly conventional in habit, speech, experience, in everything except her attachment for us. She was married at eighteen, widowed at thirty, but single-handed brought up her large family. She believes in the essential superiority of the male, original sin, a blazing hereafter, the futility of woman suffrage, the purse as a token of marital authority, and woman's inevitable consecration to suffering.

We, of course, are extremely modern in our activities. In our circle the women smoke, bob their hair, and use their own names even if mar-