

The Utopian of Uvalde

BY CHARLES ALBERT BILLINGS

The man we may receive in exchange for Charles Curtis

IN THE secret of his closet, the Honorable John Nance Garner of Texas is a very unhappy man. Washington correspondents, aided and abetted by William Randolph Hearst, are primarily responsible, of course, for the sorrow now besetting the Utopian of Uvalde. They pumped too much helium overnight into his Presidential bag, and the collapse in Chicago was more than a man of sixty-three — even a son of Texas — could easily bear in so promising a Democratic year.

The Vice-Presidential nomination that followed the precipitate dumping act of William Gibbs McAdoo failed to appease him. Doubts set in immediately whether a half-loaf of bread — particularly a Democratic half-loaf — was, after all, better than none; specifically, whether the Vice-Presidency was a better job than Speaker of the House. Thus it is that today, in mid-campaign, Garner is given to private fears that the greatest tragedy which can becloud his hitherto happy political career is to be awakened on the morning of November 9 — nobody believes he will stay up the night of November 8 to listen to the returns — with the information that he has

routed the hapless Charley Curtis from the Senate wing of the Capitol. Garner is cold-blooded enough a practical politician to know that if the people elect him Vice-President in November, only death in the White House can save him from a sunset of senility.

Fortunately for the Democratic cause, the gavel-breaking, gallery-playing, pecan-cracking Speaker Garner is a first-rate actor. His talents there are but slightly less in constant evidence than his gifts as a politician and a poker-player, both of thirty years' effective use. Therefore his high-pitched, lip-pinched voice is betraying in campaign none of the luke-warmness of his heart as to how the election will turn out in November. But before the acting started, the country got a fair idea how he felt about the Chicago nomination for second place. He dictated a brief letter of acceptance to his secretary-wife. A three-cent stamp, he told the correspondents, was enough to expend in acknowledging a nomination for Vice-President of the United States on the Democratic ticket.

The wife who wrote the letter is on the Government pay-roll as his secretary and has been for twenty-

eight years. Despite the rising cry against Congressional nepotism, she is likely to remain in that job even if officially she becomes second lady of the land. Contrary to the usual habits of Congressional wives, she works. At seven in the morning she is at the Capitol and at seven at night she can begin to call it a day. Such a routine leaves her with neither time nor tolerance for social activities to which a membership in Congress automatically entitles anybody from a section-hand to a blooded scion. Curiously enough, Mr. Garner will drag several thousand votes to the Democratic ticket for no reason other than the lack of social ambition in his wife. The spectacle that Mrs. Dolly Gann created has begun now to have its political reverberations. Any stern matron in Washington society will whisper confidentially that she knows a raft of otherwise good Republican votes headed toward the Democratic party for no other purpose than to give the 200-pound Mrs. Gann the elbow rush from second place at the table of state. Garner is thoroughly aware of this situation, and his sly references to Washington society are designed to ensnare the bulk of female votes beginning beyond the 400 mark. Mr. Roosevelt can take care of the Four Hundred itself by right of early register.

Unfortunately for Mr. Garner, he is no Adonis for the voting ladies to gaze upon. Even Roosevelt exceeds him in that capacity. To make matters worse for the pink-faced, gray-topped Garner, Washington correspondents vastly overdid the job of puffing him up to the public after his selection as Speaker last December.

They pictured him as a fiery, stalwart, sombrero-wearing son of Texas. They recalled that Texans hailed him as the "Chaparral Cock of the Frío," but failed to explain that the local meaning of that term is merely "road-runner." Photographers rushed into the mails pictures of Garner stalking up the marble steps to the House of Representatives, his sombrero rivaling the dome of the Capitol. Cartoonists clothed him in the garb of Tom Mix — and the picture of a rip-roaring, snorting public servant was complete.

Thus press-agented by the boisterous Washington correspondents, the voters expected to voice huzzahs for an idol with a larynx at least sufficient to produce a good barytone, if not basso profundo. They hastened to hear and to see the most colorful member of the Hoover-Curtis-Roosevelt-Garner quartet. The result was painful. So long as Candidate Garner merely posed from the rear-end of the car or the front of the stage, he resembled the photographs and cartoons sufficiently for accurate finger-pointing by the populace. But when his thin lips parted for action, the illusion was exploded. Out piped a voice as thin and sharp as that of a vaudeville tenor. Before the shock of it was over, so was the speech; and Goliath was down without a David. He fell back, of course, on the depression; and it may yet ride him into the Vice-Presidency next November, even if only by the seat of his spangled pants.

IN THE same unconscionable manner that they puffed up Garner the man, Washington correspondents concocted and dispatched to the na-

tion the most flagrantly erroneous picture of Garner the politician — they even called him “statesman” — that Capitol Hill has known in recent political history. Any casual observer of Congressional advancement knows that simple seniority, plus a few convenient deaths, defeats or promotions, gave to Garner the place he occupies in the House today; and even his most zealous colleagues privately admit or insist that, aside from a sharp tongue and tremendous energy, he possesses nothing politically in excess of similar talents of many of his present-day colleagues.

A question mark still hangs like a spying balloon over the propriety of his famous fraternizing episodes with the “enemy” during the time when Nicholas Longworth was Speaker. On the floor, Garner, as Democratic leader, would pour into the solemn pages of the Congressional Record a long flow of vitriolic denunciation of Republican policies, proposals and tactics; but when the words had ended, and the stenographers had hastened to an ante-room to type them off for consumption by the breathlessly awaiting Democratic readers of the Record, Garner would walk over to Longworth, break into laughter about what he had just said, and together they would leave the chamber — arm-in-arm. To some observers, it was merely a gentlemanly gesture, but to some of the more loyally blooded Democrats, such a performance smacked of treason. Of course they held their tongues, since it was merely a matter of time before Garner would become Speaker, with a palm-full of little favors for the more faithfully subservient of the lesser lights.

Immediately upon his ascension to the speakership, the correspondents pictured him as an amazingly successful leader of his party, holding a magnetic personal sway over his fellow Democrats and capable of marshaling them in line for anything from selection of an assistant door-keeper to passage by partisan strength of major legislation. The truth of the matter is that he did not win a single major legislative fight during the entire session just ended; and that in the three greatest battles — the moratorium, the proposed manufacturers’ sales tax and the relief of destitution — he played a rôle that was an impotent cross between a yes-man for President Hoover and a tail-tucked rabbit for the Democratic party.

In the matter of the moratorium, he fell whole-heartedly in line with the proposal of President Hoover for its passage, and accomplished the greatest piece of work for an opposition party Chief Executive that any speaker had done in more years than the Democratic party could remember.

The sales tax defeat was a personal defeat — an early and crushing collapse of the party organization that Garner had attempted to set up in the House at the beginning of his administration. As he is now in the present campaign for Vice-President, so was he equally luke-warm in his advocacy of a sales tax; but having decided upon it as an emergency item in the 1932 frenzy to balance the budget, he made its passage the equivalent of a vote of confidence in him from his party.

Seeing that such a vote of confidence was not on its way, he took the

unprecedented action of leaving the chair and calling upon members of the House to participate in a demonstration that smacked of a Holy Roller revival and a Methodist love feast. The galleries watched amazed as he went into action.

"Rise in your seats," he pleaded with the House, "all you members who are willing to try to balance the budget."

Of course it was a trick, similar to the stock proposition of evangelists: "All who want to go to Heaven, hold up your hands."

Republicans arose along with Democrats, and even the sole Farmer-Laborite in the House, Paul John Kvale of Minnesota, stood high upon his young feet.

"Now, those who do not want to balance the budget, rise in their seats." No one rose, so the solemn Congressional Record faithfully reports in its issue of March 29, 1932.

Having filled the mourners' bench with budget-balancers, Garner then resumed the fight for the sales tax as the major emergency item. By the time it got around to a vote, there were enough backsliders — led by the Democratic Rankin of Mississippi and the Republican La Guardia of New York — to hand to him the most noticeable personal defeat of his Congressional career.

Then came his famous "pork barrel" bill. To the amazement of his harried colleagues, Garner introduced a "relief of destitution" measure that would have built a post-office in almost any town in the United States able to muster enough inhabitants to go through the alphabet at least one time. The press of the country hooted its derision and many

towns where post-offices were proposed for the "relief of destitution" arose in indignation. But Garner, with the Presidential bug biting him, called a caucus of the Democratic party and demanded that the members agree to unanimous support of the bill. What really happened in that famous caucus is just now beginning to leak out. One fist-fight was barely averted; one member walked out with a sharp denunciation of Garner still pouring from his angry lips as he slammed the door; and two members rose boldly in the face of their chief and put themselves on record as refusing to be bound by the caucus. The others were sufficiently whipped into line to result in House passage of the bill. From then on it was doomed; and when the Hoover recommendations were accepted as a substitute by the House on the eve of adjournment, Garner had taken the second major personal defeat of his brief tenure as speaker.

WHATEVER humor the heavy-breathing, post-prosperity American populace may manage to find this year in the Presidential campaign, none of it will purposely be furnished by Garner. For thirty years he has managed to survive the perils of life on Capitol Hill. Acid-dipped retorts form his principal stock of tactics on the floor, while in the chair he is as careful of his utterances as a bridegroom. He wants to be mentioned in political history as a Speaker of tremendous dignity, exactness and correctness; a presiding officer of both gift and wisdom in parliamentary procedure; a worthy Solomonic successor to even the worthiest of his predeces-

sors, from Frederick A. C. Muhlenberg of Pennsylvania to Nicholas Longworth of Ohio. It requires, therefore, that he bring his theatrical talents into continuous play as a Congressional Jekyll and Hyde, — Dr. Jekyll in the chair, Mr. Hyde on the floor. It is a talent he possesses and exercises in such abundance that it has even been made a minor issue in the present campaign.

A search of the Congressional Record fails to reveal much of a horse-play tendency in the Garner make-up. Only once in thirty years has he been known to fall victim to the school-boy method of scribbling a "piece of poetry" to answer an opponent. That was in 1913, when the tariff bill was up for action, and Garner, representing a goat-infested district, wanted a ten per cent duty on mohair. Representative J. Hampton Moore, now Mayor of Philadelphia, pulled a paper from his pocket, and read to the House his lines entitled: *Garner's Goat of Texas*:

Of all the creatures in the land,
Of pedigrees supremely grand,
There's none that does respect command
Like Garner's Goat of Texas.

So while you kick the wool off sheep
And beef and mutton make so cheap,
Protective tariff now will keep
The Garner Goat of Texas.

The House was still roaring when Garner rushed into a corner, did some hasty scribbling and demanded recognition. His work of art in reply to Moore was:

Hampie Moore is a heluva poet —
He don't know a sheep from a goat.

The "goat tariff" went on as Garner's contribution to the Underwood tariff bill of 1913, much to the shock of die-hard Jeffersonian Demo-

crats who held that a tariff on anything, from goats to perfume, was a breach of faith with the party. In 1919, when the Republicans regained control of the House and proposed a tariff bill more to their party liking, Garner led the general fight for the lowest rates possible to force on the bill.

Tariff and taxation, Garner's legislative hobbies, are handled exclusively in the House by the Ways and Means Committee, and assignment on that group is the highest committee honor a member of the lower branch can obtain. When a vacancy occurs, the scramble for the appointment is the worst inside dog-fight staged in the House of Representatives. Garner got his chance for membership on the committee in 1913, shortly after the czaristic appointive powers of the Speaker had been transferred to the membership as a whole for division in accordance with majority and minority party strength. Older Democrats, none too sure of how the Texas "road-runner" would go in matters of tariff and taxation, discouraged his fight for the Ways and Means Committee. When it became apparent that he was sufficiently accomplished in the gentle art of back-scratching and log-rolling to get the place, elder colleagues made this proposition to him:

"Give up your effort to go on the Ways and Means Committee, and we will make you Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs."

Such a chairmanship would have ushered Mr. and Mrs. Garner overnight into the choicest inner circle of the diplomatic set in Washington and put them high on the exclusive

list at the White House. The man whose campaign song is *I've Been Working on the Railroad* would have rated the full-depth bows at all legations in Washington. But the red-faced Garner retorted:

"I don't want the chairmanship of Foreign Affairs. I want to deal with affairs affecting American people — not foreign people. I'm going on the Ways and Means."

It was too rebellious an action to be handled outside a secret caucus and the Democrats ordered a huddle. When it was over, Garner led the ticket for the places vacant on the Democratic side, and the Ways and Means Committee got a new member dominated by a belief that if tariffs are to be enacted, they should be national, not sectional in scope; and that taxes should be loaded in every conceivable manner upon the rich, leaving to the poor only the payment of sufficient taxes to qualify as voters.

A short time later Garner came to the conclusion that the Democratic fight against the tariff is a hopeless task; and that the wisest policy for his party to pursue is to grab what benefit it can from a tariff, rather than devoting the bulk of its time and talent trying to destroy it. His "goat tariff" was his first successful effort in accordance with that theory.

"Apparently there is no escape from the tariff burden," he bluntly confessed to his colleagues one day in the House. "After the American consumer has spent his days trying to extract from life a fair measure of its joys, and each hour of the day and night contributing to the profits of those special interests which have

been successful in securing indefensible tariff favors, even death does not free him from their pitiless greed. His family is compelled to pay a tariff tax on practically every article that goes into the manufacture of his coffin, and when his body is finally laid to rest, the granite tombstone with which they mark his resting place will carry a tariff rate ranging from sixty to 1,500 per cent."

With the tenacity and energy of a private detective, Garner tackled the details of the \$3,000,000,000 refund of income, excess profits and estate taxes during the administration of Andrew Mellon as Secretary of the Treasury. It was the most notable piece of work he accomplished for his party in his whole career. At best, it was merely an excellent piece of reporting, or investigating. Its outcome was the creation of a Joint Committee on Internal Revenue Taxation, a sort of super-watchdog of the Treasury. It has done no barking since higher ambitions occupied the time and attention of the creator.

The smartest piece of advance thinking that Garner did prior to the Chicago Convention was a futile effort. The North Carolina primary convinced him that even the alleged Dry South was getting moist, if not soaking Wet. Information reached him that the platform committee of the Democratic Convention would bring out a plank calling for repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment. Immediately he issued a statement for repeal. It was a bold stroke for the Presidency — the best one that he made. But along with Al Smith, Garner found out that it was too late to stop Roosevelt.

Can Europe Pay Us?

BY JOHN PARKE YOUNG

*The factual case against cancelation or revision of War debts
—and the psychological in favor*

HITLER has said that the prospect of Germany's ever making the final reparation payment of \$714,000,000 arranged at the Lausanne Conference is not worth three marks. In the Allied nations, however the Lausanne accord is hailed as the final and amicable settlement of a long standing controversy. Its predecessor, the Young Plan, was received in the same manner.

The "gentlemen's agreement," whereby the nations have agreed not to ratify the Lausanne settlement until the United States shall have reduced the War debts, has not been kindly received in the United States, nor has it improved the chances of debt reduction. The position of the United States, as emphatically reiterated by President Hoover in his letter to Senator Borah, is unchanged — the War debts are to stand on their own feet and not become mixed with reparations, although he hinted in his acceptance speech that "some other tangible form of compensation" than gold might be acceptable. While members of Congress and a large part of the American public have been antagonized by the attempted pressure, a substantial number of people in this country are and always have been def-

initely in favor of cancelation or reduction.

A fundamental difference exists between reparations, a penalty imposed upon defeated Germany, and the War debts, the result of money loaned by the United States to friendly nations. Reparations are based upon the idea of War guilt which Germany was forced to accept in the peace treaty. For her sins Germany has already paid some nine or ten billion dollars, depending upon who makes the computation. Money loaned to European nations by the United States Government was supplied by the American public and is still owing the public by our Government. The question at issue is, can Europe pay, and if so, should she pay? First let us consider reparations.

AT THE Peace Conference in 1919 the Allied nations were unable to agree upon the reparation bill to be presented to Germany. Extravagant sums were proposed, far beyond Germany's capacity to pay. One group wanted the amount left elastic, so that as Germany recovered from the War, reparations could be adjusted accordingly. The treaty finally provided that a Reparation Commission be established and