

Whatever may be said as to exact remedies proposed, the author of the article makes it clear that the term *bloc* (novel in use in this country and used abroad to describe something quite different from what we now see in Congress) is not a factional or partisan thing. Nor is it a revival of wild Populist ideas, much less an imitation of Russian Sovietism. Political conservatives are common in the bloc. Senator Capper asserts that it is farthest from the thoughts of any of the men in the bloc that ultimately there should be "instead of Representatives and Senators from the several States, Representatives and Senators from steel, and from coal, and from railways, and from oil, and from agriculture, as appears to be the hope of the radical writers."

In former political combinations relating to industry, such as the one that "Pig Iron Kelly" once headed, there has been danger from grasping special interests in the sense of small combinations of large capitalists. But agriculture is a predominating, not a special, interest, and its "capitalists" are simple farmers counted by millions.

One sentence in Senator Capper's article is especially illuminating. He says that the term "agricultural bloc" describes a movement rather than a group. He means, we take it, that it is neither a bipartisan combination nor a new political party.

This will reassure those who fear that the farmers' united action represents a tendency toward government by the combination of groups rather than by the two-party political system. The shifting of political balance of power by the frequent coalition and breaking up of political groups has long had a dominant influence in France and Germany; and of late in Great Britain, what with the Labor party and the shifting about inside the present Coalition Government on such questions as Ireland and foreign policies, there has been a tendency toward group government.

The group system sometimes increases political flexibility, but it lessens responsibility and executive efficiency. The idea is not consonant with American government under our written Constitution. France may have, and has had, a Socialist Premier when the Socialist party had no parliamentary majority. With us there can be no premier; really the President is premier as well as the fixed executive head. Congress, to be sure, may change its political complexion within a President's term, but our plan of checks and balances rests chiefly on the Presidential elections. A combination of political groups in Congress, constantly seeking such alliances as would make a vic-

torious opposition party, is quite out of our political probabilities—and would probably be injurious even if it were practical.

The measures proposed in Congress for farmers' protection or relief should be considered, therefore, with relation to their soundness and justice. There is no reason to fear that they portend political or social revolution.

A GREAT AMERICAN AMBASSADOR

WE have already referred to the articles relating to "The Life and Letters of Walter H. Page" which have been appearing in the "World's Work." The chapter published in the January issue of that periodical



WALTER H. PAGE

is extraordinary in more ways than one. It brings to light, or at least brings into clear light, facts about English and American relations in the war not heretofore fully understood; it brings out strongly the personal character and the deep patriotism of the American Ambassador and of the English Foreign Secretary; it contains two or three stories of diplomacy that are intensely amusing.

Americans recognized Walter Page's ability long ago, but so great was his modesty and reserve that few people realize fully what a service he did in the war. So as to Sir Edward (now Viscount) Grey; the incidents in this article describe his forbearance and his abstention from passion or irritability when he might well have been vexed and angry. We are even told that "the time came when a section of the British public was prepared almost to stone the Foreign Secretary in the streets of London, because they believed that his 'subservience' to American trade interests was losing the war for Great Britain."

Mr. Page at the outbreak of war accepted the President's neutrality proclamation as right and proper; but "the President's famous emendations ["We must be impartial in thought as well as

in action," and so on] filled him with astonishment and dismay." What could have been his feeling, then, when he learned that it was only Colonel House's strenuous efforts that prevented our State Department from sending to Great Britain a note which would have been almost equivalent to a declaration of war between the United States and Great Britain? The witness in the case is Colonel House himself, who, in a letter to Mr. Page dated October 3, 1914, said:

Sir Cecil [the British Ambassador to the United States, Sir Cecil Spring-Rice] told me that if the dispatch had gone to you as written and you had shown it to Sir Edward Grey, it would almost have been a declaration of war; and that if, by any chance, the newspapers had got hold of it, as they so often get things from our State Department, the greatest panic would have prevailed. He said it would have been the Venezuela incident magnified by present conditions.

We all remember the time when feeling was strong in this country as to the seizure or detention by England of neutral ships bound to neutral countries but carrying goods which were either contraband or very close to contraband, goods the ultimate destination of which was undoubtedly Germany. There was danger that the situation of 1812 should arise again. Great Britain might as well have given up hopes of escaping German domination if she did not stop raw material from getting to Germany. The enormous and unnatural amount of exports that were going to countries bordering on Germany proved that these things (such as cotton, to be made into guncotton, copper for shells, rubber for military purposes, and so on) did, in fact, get into Germany.

Our Ambassador, Mr. Page, and Sir Edward Grey were straining every effort to prevent friction between the United States and England. Just then Mr. Bryan, with his usual tactfulness, thought it was a good time to force upon Great Britain the acceptance of the Declaration of London. England had never ratified it, nor any other nation except the United States. Its acceptance entire would have ruined England. If the note prepared in the State Department above referred to had gone through, it would have been practically a demand from America to England that she should throw away every chance of winning the war. Page wrote House that he would resign if Lansing pressed the Declaration again after four flat rejections by England.

Meanwhile, England was treating the neutrals whose property was involved with the utmost fairness and paying big prices for everything taken. Mr. Page,

in a letter to Colonel House, says, "We can get damages without a quarrel; or we can have a quarrel and probably get damages. Now, why in God's name should we provoke a quarrel?"

Later, when feeling ran still higher, came up the Dacia case. The ship was under American registry, but she was filled with cotton meant for Germany. It was known that the Dacia would be seized if she sailed for a German port. This was the amusing outcome:

When matters had reached this pass Page one day dropped into the Foreign Office.

"Have you ever heard of the British fleet, Sir Edward?" he asked.

Grey admitted that he had, though the question obviously puzzled him.

"Yes," Page went on musingly, "we've all heard of the British fleet. Perhaps we have heard too much about it. Don't you think it's had too much advertising?"

The Foreign Secretary looked at Page with an expression that implied a lack of confidence in his sanity.

"But have you ever heard of the French fleet?" the American went on. "France has a fleet, too, I believe."

Sir Edward granted that.

"Don't you think that the French fleet ought to have a little advertising?"

"What on earth are you talking about?"

"Well," said Page, "there's the Dacia. Why not let the French fleet seize it and get some advertising?"

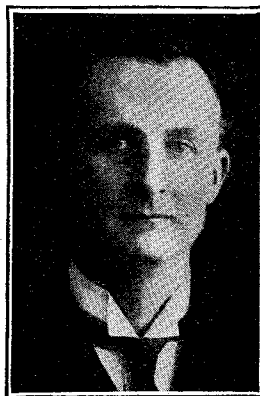
A gleam of understanding immediately shot across Grey's face.

"Yes," he said, "why not let the Belgian royal yacht seize it?"

This suggestion from Page was one of the great inspirations of the war. It amounted to little less than genius.

So, instead of a British cruiser, a French cruiser seized the Dacia. She was promptly condemned by a French prize court and "there was not even a ripple of hostility."

The relations between Sir Edward Grey and our Ambassador were friendly and even amusing, although each was doing his best for his own country's advantage. One day Page was in Grey's office and he noticed on the wall the canceled fifteen-million-dollar check with which Great Britain paid the Alabama claims. The British are proud of the check—first, because they are good sports; second, because the settlement by arbitration of the Alabama claims was a great advance in international peace relations. Page and Grey were discussing this matter of the detention of the American cargoes when Page had a sudden idea; he pointed to the Alabama check and said, "If you don't stop these seizures, Sir Edward, some day you will have your entire room papered with notes like that!" Sir Edward later "got back" by remarking, after he had read one of Mr. Bryan's rasping, undiplomatic notes, "This reads as though



VISCOUNT GREY

they thought that they are still talking to George III!"

The whole story of Walter Page's dealings with Sir Edward Grey is one that should make every American proud of such representation at one of the most critical diplomatic periods of our history.

POPE BENEDICT XV

WHEN the great World War broke upon startled Europe, there were only two courses between which the Roman Catholic Church might choose. It might perceive the cause and comprehend the meaning of the war, it might see in it a new phase of the perpetual conflict between an unscrupulous militarism and human rights, it might resent with indignation the repudiation by a great military nation of its solemn pledge by the invasion of Belgium, and condemn with eloquent wrath the repudiation of the moral law as well as of civilized warfare in the barbarism with which the invasion of France and Belgium was carried on. Or it might hold itself aloof from a conflict in which German and Austrian Catholics were arrayed against French and Belgian Catholics, hold its peace, and wait for the war to come to its inevitable close and then exercise its good offices in an endeavor to bring about such a peace as might issue eventually in an era of international good will. If the Roman Catholic Church had pursued the first of these courses and had succeeded where success was certainly doubtful and perhaps impossible, it would have saved millions of lives, thousands of desolated and devastated homes, prevented the incitement of vengeful national passions which will outlast the century, and not impossibly have changed the history of the world.

But if the Protestant student of current history is inclined to lament the fact that Cardinal Mercier did not occupy the throne of Benedict XV, and that a spirit of self-sacrificing, heroic courage did not animate the Vatican

instead of the spirit of self-preserving caution, he must remember three facts: Cardinal Mercier in Belgium throughout his brilliant and never-to-be-forgotten duel with the German military authorities was supported by a united State and a united Church within that State. His priests were not less brave than their brave leader and as ready for self-sacrifice as he. But Pope Benedict XV had neither a united Church nor a united State behind him. Italy was divided in sentiment for months after the war opened. It may be safely assumed that the Italian Church was equally divided, and it is by no means certain whether a Papal denunciation of the criminal course of the Central Powers would have strengthened or weakened the war party in Italy. The critic must also remember that any such condemnation of the crimes which eventually united almost the entire civilized world against the national criminals would almost certainly have rent the Roman Catholic Church in twain. Its strongest support in Europe was Austria; its next strongest support was southern Germany. Both Austria and Germany would have remained Catholic, but not Roman Catholic. And no Treaty of Versailles could have united the dis-severed Church when the war came to an end. It must also be remembered that every one of us is limited in his powers by his temperament. Pope Benedict XV was temperamentally a harmonizer, not a fighter. If the compromising Pope and the uncompromising Cardinal could have changed places, it is certain that the Pope could not have done what Cardinal Mercier did in Belgium and it is not certain that Cardinal Mercier could have done what the Pope did in Rome. The latter appeared to sacrifice something of the moral power of the Church in order to hold it together; but it is doubtful whether he could have held it together if he had ventured to make full use of its moral power.

Whatever idealists may think upon this question, only a limited and decreasing number of irreconcilables can fail to see in current events some facts to be passed to the credit of the Pope's pacific temper. There is, I think, very little doubt that his influence has been exerted to assuage the anti-English passion of the Irish and make possible the treaty of peace between England and Ireland. The Vatican knows how to keep its secrets, and what its influence has been during the recent pontificate is a matter of surmise, not of public record; but it cannot be doubted that the growth of friendly relations between the Church and the State in Italy is not a little due to the friendly spirit of