

## Backstage in Washington

WASHINGTON, D. C.



WE CANNOT but feel sorry for our well-meaning Secretary of State, Mr. Henry L. Stimson. The fifth choice for that post, the others being Elihu Root, Charles Evans Hughes, William Edgar Borah (after a fashion) and Julius Barnes—a name, by the way, that has never been mentioned publicly before or heard of in this connection until recently—he has exhibited a feverish faculty for making mistakes in spectacular style. The iconoclastic press gentlemen around the State Department have long called him “Wrong Horse Harry” because of his unerring ability to indorse the losing factions in recent South American revolutions, and now, I hear, they have dubbed him “Hot-foot Harry” because of the rashness with which he rushed through the mazes of the diplomatic dance at the London economic conference.

True to form, he apparently committed a terrific blunder with his denials that he had submitted the so-called “Hoover proposal” for solution of Germany’s difficulties, and with his insistence that it was, in any event, of Anglo-American rather than Yankee origin. On this side of the water there was considerable chuckling and some official consternation at his determination to persuade the powers to extend aid to Germany rather than grab credit for Mr. Hoover.

At first, I am informed, the President was no more than amused over his minister’s repudiation of reports that he was carrying an “American proposal” around in his brief case for presentation at the proper moment. “What in the deuce is the difference between a proposal and a plan?” asked Mr. Hoover of his advisers, I understand, when the Secretary’s statement to correspondents at London was relayed to the White House. Then, as it became clear that Mr. Stimson had permitted Premier MacDonald to assume the leadership which the American President wanted so badly, Messrs. Hoover, Castle and Mills could scarcely conceal their resentment and disappointment. The newspaper articles which,

upon the basis of their attitude, hinted at the prospective resignation or dismissal of Secretary Stimson accurately reported the official state of mind.

For once, however, the Secretary of State was in the right, and, as so often happens during delicate negotiations or efforts to solve a problem, the President and his humble hero-worshippers in the State and Treasury departments were shadow-boxing for headlines. While everybody here approves Mr. Hoover’s international program of recent weeks, even though it represents a reversal of his previous policies and personal view-



Kirby in N. Y. World-Telegram

*Coming out of the fog*

point, there are few who do not condemn the Administration for its flagrant efforts to make political capital out of Europe’s difficulties.

As I think I mentioned a few weeks ago, the presidential publicizing of the adventure in nation-saving began early. Although Messrs. Joslin and Mills quickly grasped at this opportunity to rehabilitate “the Chief,” the worst and most frequent offender has been the able and attractive William R. Castle, Jr., Under Secretary of State. He did not, of course, do it without Mr. Hoover’s approval. In fact, it was noticeable, and quite amusing for the crudeness with which it was accomplished, that every eulogy of the President by the Under Secretary followed a long conference between the two men at the White House. From the presidential office Mr. Castle

stepped across the street to the State Department, and there the ballyhoo was staged.

When, for instance, it was suggested that the idea of a moratorium had come from Owen D. Young, a possible Democratic nominee for the presidency, Mr. Castle immediately scotched that one. With details which he could have obtained only from Mr. Hoover he gave the chronology of the Administration’s study of the German situation, and, of course, the sole hero of the piece—in fact, the only character—was Mr. Hoover. While Mr. Stimson, for reasons he knew best, was drawing the British into a general movement to outflank the recalcitrant French, and denying that the so-called “proposal” was a Hoover scheme, Mr. Castle let down his immediate superior by handing to the press the plan itself. Rarely, I imagine, has there been such lack of coöperation between an Administration and its official representative abroad, or such willingness to endanger the success of a great international movement through playing domestic and partisan politics.

If Mr. Stimson was made to look a little ridiculous, it was not his fault. He simply demonstrated that a hero can lie as well as die for his country, and the Secretary of State was a valiant, if perspiring prevaricator.

Behind the scenes of this world-wide drama, as is true of so many great historical events, I suppose, was a clash of personalities. For the dramatist or the novelist there may be good material in the fact that Mr. Stimson and Mr. Castle have never been very friendly. The Secretary of State, I am informed, opposed elevation of the young Hoover hero-worshipper to the post of Under Secretary, but he was overridden by Mr. Hoover. So it may have been only natural that Mr. Castle, with a God-given opportunity, made no move to conceal his boss’s supposed shortcomings at London. As if he were a movie star before the camera, he registered amazement and chagrin at each reading of a press report anent Mr. Stimson’s strange course overseas. The Under Secretary was delightfully frank, more so than usual, and as a result the statesmen assembled at 10 Downing Street had to pore over dispatches from Washington to find out what they were doing—including, of course, “Hotfoot Harry.”

A. F. C.

# ►► All Quiet on the Rapidan ◄◄

By JOHN S. GREGORY

**H**ERBERT HOOVER believes passionately in his unquestioned right to what he calls his "private life." The fact he is thirtieth President of these United States, in his opinion, imposes no constitutional demand upon him to comport himself outside of office hours like a goldfish. He rebels bitterly, and tugs unceasingly, against the yoke of public curiosity which seeks to ferret out exactly what he had for breakfast, whether he has a pet name for Mrs. Hoover, and what he said to his little granddaughter the time she put the finger marks on the wall.

The public and its curiosity along these lines is represented, of course, by the reporters who cover the White House as a regular assignment, and who, amongst them, represent every daily newspaper in the country. And so, on this score, his resentment accrues to these gentlemen of the press.

In this aversion to what he apparently believes to be a group of professional "Peeping Toms," President Hoover stands far from alone in our abbreviated history. Of his more immediate predecessors, for instance, Woodrow Wilson and Warren G. Harding objected strenuously to what they seemed to consider tantamount to boudoir intrusions. Calvin Coolidge was an exception, but he had a set rule never to let anything appearing in print about him ruffle his temper, and publicly it never did.

Wilson railed even against the Secret Service operatives who followed him, disregarding the fact federal law so compelled them and that they would continue to protect his life in the face of any orders he might issue. Harding on more than one occasion undertook to lecture his unofficial bodyguard from the press for following him and reporting unfailingly certain of his more regular recreational activities—which, groundlessly, he appeared to fear would prejudice the more serious-thinking and church-going people against him. Golf and excursions aboard the old presidential yacht *Mayflower* came within the latter category.

President Hoover, however, evolved a system of his own. He sent his outdoor-loving secretary, Lawrence Richey, out into the wilds of the Blue Ridge Mountains with instructions to find a camp site which would be completely inaccessible to any but the particularly chosen few.

Richey scouted the mountain range south of Washington for several weeks

in company with Horace Albright, Superintendent of National Parks, and came back with the answer to the "Chief's" prayer. How complete an answer even Richey probably didn't know. All this happened in the early spring a little over two years ago, just after Mr. Hoover had taken office.

Mr. Hoover dug into his private pocket and purchased 160 acres of land about 500 feet from the top of the peak which towered over the isolated little hamlet of Criglersville, Va., slightly more than 100 miles from Washington. A muddy trail corkscrewed tortuously up the mountainside until it reached 2,500 feet above sea level and the point of Richey's selection—a spot where Laurel and Mill Pond Creeks converge to form the headwaters of the Rapidan River.

Here, indeed, was isolation. The first time the President made a trip to inspect his newly acquired property he and Mrs. Hoover had to ride that last eight miles up the mountain on horseback. The reporters who had followed them to the base by automobile lacked both the horses and the invitation to follow. The mud and the breath-taking climb—to say nothing of the Secret Service—dissuaded those harboring a desire for a "scoop" from following on foot.

**T**HE spot suited Mr. Hoover's purposes perfectly. Brook trout in the stream gave promise of many an entertaining afternoon at his favorite sport. The altitude and encompassing shade trees assured week-end relief from the summer heat. But most of all, that devious trail up the mountainside touched his fancy. This could be made a private thoroughfare, and the endless stream of time-wasting White House callers kept at a comfortable distance, to say nothing of those reporters. Again Mr. Hoover opened his personal purse and purchased the building materials necessary to erect a mountain retreat in keeping with the dignity of his office.

As Commander-in-Chief of the military establishment, he called upon the United States Marines, America's able jacks-of-all-trades, to drive the required nails and do the million other bits of manual labor that go into the building of a de luxe camp. Close behind them, the Army Engineer Corps was pressed into service to make the mountain trail a road over which limousines could climb in comfort. The Bureau of Fisheries stocked the Rapidan headwaters with choice trout so that even the rankest



"When a White House dog bites a Marine, is it news, or isn't it?"

amateur among the presidential guests would be assured of a satisfying catch. The Navy furnished a chef and mess boys. Telephone linesmen strung wire and established a direct line between the Blue Ridge fastness and the White House.

In the spring of 1929 the camp was opened, and President Hoover became a week-end commuter between Washington and the Blue Ridge. From April to October he rarely misses spending Sunday on the Rapidan, leaving the capital either Friday or Saturday and returning usually on Monday morning.

When he first started these excursions to the Rapidan, Mr. Hoover possibly thought the newspaper men were not going to follow him. In fact, he issued orders they were not to do so. The press associations, however, had different views, for there is always that outside chance that some mishap or unusual experience might occur to the Executive while traveling at rather high speed over the open road. He has consistently refused the offer of a motorcycle escort, and there are no distinguishing marks on the little motorcade of cars to warn any approaching tourist to pull out or a driver going in the same direction that he must not pass them.

The White House reporters held conferences on the subject with the White House secretariat and the Secret Service, for the President was holding dearly to his stand for equal rights with any other citizen once the time clock had been punched at the end of a working day. The reasons which impel the press associations — representing amongst them all the daily papers of the country, and thus representing virtually all of the reading public—were

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