

The Saturday Review

of LITERATURE

EDITED BY HENRY SEIDEL CANBY

VOLUME VIII

NEW YORK SATURDAY, DECEMBER 19, 1931

NUMBER 22



PRESIDENT WILSON AND SECRETARY DANIELS WATCHING A BASEBALL GAME

Christmas Poetry

IT is a little pathetic, the way in which we cling at Christmas to symbols which refer to a life as different as possible from our own. If Christmas cards were to be taken literally, we rattle off on our holidays in a coach and four, horns blowing, mufflers fluttering, stolid peasants in smocks watching along the frozen roadsides. We pause at a half timber inn for mugs of ale, then trot on through the deep snow to a manor hall where silver is reflected in the polished oak and boozy, red-cheeked squires sprawl over their port, while a stable boy sings a Christmas ballad. Does this country suffer, then, from a mother complex, and once a year express its longing to enter again into the body corporate of the old country, where the ancestors of some sixty millions of us would find themselves violently alien? Not at all. This is a literary, not a psychological phenomenon. The old English Christmas which we broadcast at from five to ten cents apiece, comes from books, not from history. It was created for our imagination by two writers who have had the good fortune to be extensively read at Christmas: Dickens, of course, but also more than is usually realized, our own Washington Irving. Without "Pickwick" and "Bracebridge Hall" we might have picked up a very different Christmas symbolism.

Which suggests an opportunity for modern writers, who may well hope that with the acceleration of our times they may get their Christmas ideas adopted before they are dead.

They might begin with Christmas card poetry, for a great many things can be done to Christmas card poetry without damaging it. Indeed, if all the poets in "The Dunciad" had trained up apprentices to write badly, and if the decline in merit had been continuous for two centuries, the resulting poetry could not be more insipid, more banal, more utterly commonplace than the stanzas which can be bought anywhere this week by the piece or the gross.

The modernists, and particularly the modernists of that school which seeks to heighten consciousness by holding the magnet imagination over the rank and file of words in their syntactic order, and punctuation wherever it was, could make a real contribution to Christmas poetry.

As for example, typographically—

ME— R
of the year
on the day
happ-
iest
R Y
cheer
good
all
CHRI — ST
I send you
MA — S

The intellectualists, whose creed is an escape from the obvious, have left this
(Continued on page 392)

Eagle Passage

(In memory of Vachel Lindsay)

By WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

NOT the stone now—
For the stone shall be shattered;
Not the earth now—
For the earth shall be shed
As vapor
From wings upthundering,
Strong wings overhead.
Loudly crying
Your challenging cry,
Spirit undying
You take the sky,
Aloft flying
With the flying cloud,
Wild and proud.
Not the head bowed,
But the head lifted
For a banner of beauty to the world unfurled:
Not night on us
But light drifted
From a new world.

Western star,
Blaze bright, blaze high;
Where you are
Only death can die.
O strong wings
That throb forever
Through a golden sky!

Wilson: Idealist and Statesman

By the Hon. JOSEPHUS DANIELS

LIFE AND LETTERS OF WOODROW WILSON 1910-1914. By RAY STANNARD BAKER. Two volumes. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Company. 1931. \$10.

THE earlier volumes of the authorized "Life and Letters of Woodrow Wilson" carried him through his youth and professional and university career. The first of the latest volumes opens with his emergence upon the political stage. The volume begins with his leaving Princeton, which had been his home for a quarter of a century. There he had won his spurs. There he had received deep wounds. Wilson and his wife (she was his true partner and inspiration) walked the one-half mile from the artist's studio to the depot, all alone, deeply stirred with emotion. It was at Princeton he had "found himself" and had come to know "who he was and what he had to do." The scars of conflict over his attempts to prevent the side shows crowding out the big tent were forgotten that morning. Only memories of quiet happiness welled in their hearts. They were not only leaving Princeton and home. They realized they were giving up the quiet life of reading and art, and were entering the "glare of publicity" which had no attraction for either. Mrs. Wilson, always the more ambitious of the two, carried in her heart deep satisfaction that her faith, plighted long ago to a noble soul, had received national endorsement. She was the gayer of the two. "No doubt," he wrote, "when the plunge is over we will fare well enough, but just now we would halt with genuine shivers, and we are not as lighthearted as we might be." Neither had qualms about Wilson's ability to meet the tests, more difficult than then appeared on the horizon, as the train carried them to the high station of "consecrated opportunity."

The second volume closes with the heart story, brought out by the recollections following her death, of the devotion of Woodrow Wilson and Ellen Axson. She had been his guide in many things—he had leaned on her sound judgment. Her talent as an artist was free from the artistic temperament, often lacking in practical wisdom. She never knew of the outbreak of the World War in which her beloved was to be the great casualty. The last information of a public character that cheered her dying hours was that the bill for better housing conditions in the crowded alleys in Washington, which she had inspired, had become the law. "God has stricken me almost beyond what I can bear," he wrote when she died in August, 1914. Later in his own last illness, memories of her came back to him and he said to his daughter, Margaret, "Wasn't she the most radiant person that ever lived?" Mr. Baker closes the volumes, recording her passing with the words: "It was a bleak and war-torn world toward which, on the following day, the President turned his face."

Before the call to leadership in the national councils (which Wilson had hoped would come to him as a boy and as a student at Princeton), Mr. Baker's volumes are filled with the story of stirring days—epoch days—in his life and the life of New Jersey. From his battle with the

Jersey bosses to his conflict with the forces of imperialism, he is depicted as immersed in domestic issues and the problems of the World War, and framing the charter of a warless world—achievements which were to bring him immortality.

First of all Mr. Baker disproves the myth that George Harvey was the first to suggest Wilson for President and that Harvey "made him President." Long before Harvey's espousal, in 1902 in Indiana, to be precise, the suggestion was made. It germinated. It was not until 1906 at the Lotus Club dinner that Harvey "proposed Woodrow Wilson, the honored guest of the occasion, for President of the United States." Mr. Baker says: "the man who presented him was at the moment scarcely more than half in earnest." As a matter of fact, "journalists do not 'make' public men; they discover them." However, he does not minimize Harvey's large part in securing for Wilson the governorship of New Jersey, and focusing national attention upon Wilson's availability for the presidency. He also proves Wilson's real appreciation and gratitude. The story of Col. Harvey's zeal in urging Mr. Wilson's candidacy is detailed, including a dinner attended by Thomas F. Ryan; August Belmont; Mr. Laffan, of the *Sun*; Mr. Ochs and Mr. Miller, of the *Times*, and the celebrated Harvey-Watterson dinner, which was the occasion of Harvey's break with Wilson and his later support of Clark. The Ryans and Belmonts looked Wilson over and didn't like his views. No more did Wilson like their attitude. Chemist Harvey couldn't make oil and water mix. The Harvey break was the best piece of luck that came to Wilson in the early days when Wilson was reluctantly acceding to demands that he be-

This Week

"ON UNDERSTANDING WOMEN."

Reviewed by FRED A. KIRCHWEY.

"FIRST NIGHTS AND FIRST EDITIONS."

Reviewed by H. THORNTON CRAVEN.

"ANZA'S CALIFORNIA EXPEDITIONS."

Reviewed by ALLAN NEVINS.

AUSLANDER'S "SONNETS OF PE-TRARCH."

Reviewed by CHARLES HALL GRANDGENT.

"THE ALMOND TREE."

Reviewed by TAYLOR SCOTT HARDIN.

"TIME EXPOSURE."

Reviewed by ROBERT CANTWELL.

"THE CORCORANS."

Reviewed by H. W. BOYNTON.

A LIST.

By CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.

WHAT IS THE ANSWER?

By GEORGE S. OPPENHEIMER.

"POWER AND GLORY."

Reviewed by ROYAL J. DAVIES.

Next Week, or Later

"THE LITERARY MIND."

Reviewed by HENRY S. CANBY.

come a candidate. The truth is, as Mr. Baker proves, in Wilson's case the office sought the man, not that it rushed up and kidnapped him unawares, but that party leaders saw the need of a new type and the rank and file felt that here was the man they had been looking for, and Wilson was "a willin' Barkis."

Perhaps the first address made by Wilson, after the public became familiar with his name as a possible candidate, was his speech at the Jamestown Exposition on July 4, 1904, on "The Author and Signers of the Declaration of Independence." He called "fictitiously increasing the value of stocks sheer thefts," and declared "the only way to evade socialism is to put an end to the rule of trusts. When we dissolve them, we check and hamper legitimate undertakings and embarrass the business of the country." How would he end monopoly? He said:

One really responsible man in jail, one real originator of the schemes and transactions which are contrary to the public interest, legally lodged in the penitentiary, would be worth more than one thousand corporations mulcted in fines, if reform is to be genuine and permanent.

He afterwards elaborated this point of view under "Make Crime Personal." On January 17, 1910, he "spoke like some old Hebrew prophet" to the great bankers of New York City with J. Pierpont Morgan at the head table.

The trouble with you bankers (he said) is that you are too narrow minded. You are not interested in the development of the country, but in what has been developed. There is a higher law than the law of profit. You bankers, sitting in this provincial community of New York, see nothing beyond your own interests and are content to sit at the receipt of customs and take toll of all passers-by. You should be broad-minded and see what is best for the country at large.

Morgan, who sat next to Wilson, was deeply offended and let Wilson know he was. Wilson's remarks personal. Wilson

These two speeches insured for Wilson the hostility, which ripened into organized opposition, of the giant captains of industry. He was to feel it afterwards, particularly when he obtained a currency system which they vainly sought to defeat. However, their opposition caused the masses to turn to the man who could demand that trust magnates be sent to jail and tell great bankers to their faces that they took toll but added nothing to real values. These speeches that offended money magnates did not, however, lessen Harvey's activity, though he was the literary spokesman of Big Business. Mr. Baker asked: "Did Harvey and his backers think Wilson was insincere in these public addresses?" Probably. They had heard other men thunder in public before election and eat out of their hands after election. At any rate Harvey planned to get Jim Smith and other bosses to nominate Wilson for Governor of New Jersey "as the first step to the presidency." The plan succeeded, though the New Jersey Progressives were distrustful of a high-brow and amateur sponsored by reactionary bosses. His campaign developed qualities the people never dreamed he possessed. Wilson wrote: "This is what I was meant for, anyhow, this rough and tumble in the political arena. My instincts all turn that way, and I sometimes feel rather impatient of the restraints of my academic position." Jim Smith, before nominating Wilson, wanted to make sure how he stood on the liquor question. Wilson said: "I am not a prohibitionist. The issue should be settled by local option in each community." Hudspeth told him New Jersey Democrats were strongly opposed to local option. At that time in New Jersey the dries were for local option; the wets against it. "Well," said Wilson, "that is my attitude and my conviction. I cannot change it." New Jersey Democratic leaders accepted him, not because they wished him but because having been defeated successively for many years, they needed a winner. Most of them felt, as Boss Bob Davis, of Jersey

City, was quoted as saying, when asked if he thought Wilson would make a good Governor: "How the hell do I know whether he'll make a good Governor? He'll make a good candidate and a good meal ticket for us. That's the only thing that interests me." Wilson's distinguished career as Governor of New Jersey, and his victory over the machine when it sought to defeat the results of the primary and elect the Boss to the Senate, heightened his fame. It also delighted the Progressives who were looking for a man around whom they could rally. It did more: it secured him the nomination for the presidency in 1912. Without that manifestation of what men in the ring call "guts" he might never have reached the high goal.

Mr. Baker is at his best in the illuminating story of how Wilson came into the leadership of the Progressives of the country, even taking the reins from Bryan (with Bryan's approval and powerful assistance), Roosevelt, and LaFollette, and the hard-won conflicts before the Baltimore Convention handed him the scepter of his party. Equally stirring is the account of what happened and how it happened at the Convention that nominated him, after a long contest. He is the only man ever nominated after a competitor had been given a majority ballot vote.

The relations between Wilson and Bryan run through the book, from the time in 1896 when Wilson voted against Bryan, saying to Roland Morris: "Bryan has caught the spirit and instincts of American life but, Morris, the man has no brains," and his letter to Joline in 1907: "Would that we could do something effective to knock Bryan once and for all into a cocked hat,"—until Bryan's resignation from the Cabinet. The severe criticisms of Bryan were made before Wilson had even seen Bryan. Later, upon intimate association, he reversed this early estimate of the man with whom he was to work in perfect sympathy and under-

Wilson's high appraisal of Bryan after close association. The two men in faith in the people, devotion to popular government, belief in Jeffersonianism, hatred of monopoly, and a passion for peace were as alike as two peas in a pod. Bryan was a born Jeffersonian. Wilson intellectually admired Hamilton as shown in his early writings. He came later in life to understand and to appropriate the Jeffersonian principles which Bryan espoused early. Bryan was an evangelist and a crusader by nature, who loved the political arena and the companionship of the multitude. Wilson was an intellectual aristocrat, who was impersonal in his public career, admitting few to close fellowship and holding those admitted by hooks of steel. The deep affection, never broken, between Wilson and his Princeton classmates shines out beautifully on the pages of these volumes. The same is true of the unbroken friendship with co-workers whose sincerity and comradeship were tested and proved. Mr. Baker also fails to give Mr. Bryan the full credit he deserves in the tariff, federal reserve, Panama tolls, Mexican and Japanese issues, though he shows Bryan's loyalty and influence in them all. He does give deserved high place to him in the drafting and ratification of the treaties of arbitration which had in them the germ of the substitute for war, afterwards embodied in the Versailles treaty. Mr. Bryan's great mistake was in his resignation. The differences between him and Wilson were only that Bryan could not bring himself to contemplate his connection with war under any circumstances. Wilson's hatred of war was as deep, but he felt that war was preferable to a Prussianized America, which he envisioned as the alternative.

The story of the relations of Mr. Wilson with other members of his Cabinet, Colonel House, and Congressional leaders is enriched with illustrative incidents. They show what is a truth that is not generally known, to-wit, that no chief executive

ever gave quite such free rein to Cabinet ministers or gave them such proof of his confidence and support as did Mr. Wilson. He never sought to retain a member of his Cabinet who expressed a desire to resign. He asked nothing of any member of the Cabinet except wholehearted devotion to the policies laid down after Cabinet discussions. Nothing less made for administrative vigor and success.

Mr. Baker tells of the beginning of the friendship between Mr. Wilson and Colonel House, born out of House's advocacy of Wilson's nomination in 1912:

There was in House something of the quality that Wilson admired in fine women; something intimate, sympa-



CARTOON, BY ROLLIN KIRBY, REPRODUCED FROM "HIGHLIGHTS" (PAYSON)

thetic, unarguing. He was a listener, he drew people out. . . . As a matter of fact, House never in his life openly and seriously opposed anything that Wilson desired—once he found out what it was. . . . Wilson liked him. He had qualities that Wilson lacked. He liked to confer and adjust, and he had the time to do it. He was incurably confidential. "Just between you and me and the angels" was one of his characteristic expressions. . . . The writer has never found, in all of Wilson's voluminous correspondence, however intimate, a single word of criticism of Col. House, nor did he ever hear, not even during the in-

the once prevalent opinion that Colonel House shaped public policies or was the power behind the throne. House was useful, helpful, resourceful, friendly. Wilson leaned on him for information and assistance, holding him in affectionate esteem and signally honored him. He was never influenced by House in great issues. In graver matters, Wilson depended (after securing all the information House could furnish him, which he did with something like genius, and the views of others he deemed qualified to advise) upon a man by the name of Woodrow Wilson. Nobody else. There was no Warwick in his entourage. There was no man who had the influence with Wilson which Seward sought to exercise in the early days of Lincoln's administration. Every adviser had the weight to which logic and reason entitled him. No more. Personal pull was non-existent and personal friendship had no weight in shaping public policies.

The four big things that engrossed the Wilson administration before the World War were:

1. The tariff. Wilson's creed was: "The power of government to tax should never be used to confer privileges upon individuals or groups of individuals, but should be used always and only to secure general benefits, the benefit of tax-payers as a whole or of the nation as an organism." In that spirit the Underwood-Simmons tariff act was drafted and enacted. Wilson did not write a section of the measure. In fact, he rarely dealt with details. He conferred with leaders, he combatted those within his party who wished "sugar in their'n," and kept in close touch with those who were in charge of the measure. It was a giant task for all concerned. Wilson refused to approve compromises and in that attitude the party leaders in Congress were in accord. Shortly after his election in a public statement he announced he would call a special session of Congress to revise and lower the tariff. He delayed nothing. He knew how Cleveland's tariff acts were

mangled because he postponed action. Therefore Wilson lost no time. A member of his Cabinet advised: "Press the tariff act before the offices are distributed." The Democratic caucus's action insured the passage of the measure in the House, but it was a harder and longer fight in the Senate. The bill passed the Senate, however, in September by a vote of 44 to 37. It was "the greatest tariff fight in the history of the United States." Wilson had won his first notable domestic reform.

2. On the very day he signed the Tariff act, Mr. Wilson said "we have accomplished only half our journey." The second step was the currency bill, for "setting the business of the country free." If the fight for the tariff measure had drawn heavily upon his vitality and resources, he was now coming to a joust with the men who had long ruled America by the control of banking and public credit and even the processes of the Treasury. Mr. Baker's account of the evolution of the Federal Reserve is a historical account of a piece of legislation that was designed to decentralize the banking and currency of the country. For years the country had been cursed with money panics. Wilson had as far back as 1897 given thought to the need of reforms, saying in that year "nothing but currency reform can touch the cause of the present discontent. Later he had declared:

The control of credit is dangerously concentrated in this country. The large money resources of the country are not at the command of those who do not submit to the direction and combination of the small groups of capitalists, who wish to keep the economic development of this country under their own eye and guidance. The great monopoly in this country is the money monopoly.

He determined to end the money monopoly and accepted the Democratic National Convention's declaration against the so-called Aldrich plan for the establishment of a "central bank." Before he was inaugurated he consulted with Mr. Glass and others about the currency legislation that would meet the needs. As

every big business in America moved to defeat it. They wished the Aldrich centralized system. Senator Owen and Mr. Bryan said, first, that "power to issue currency should be vested exclusively in government officials, even when the currency is issued against commercial paper," and second, that the board should be distinctly a government body and "the function of the bankers should be limited strictly to an advisory council." Mr. Brandeis agreed with Bryan and warned Wilson that the "conflict between the policies of the administration and the desires of the financiers and of big business is an irreconcilable one." Finally, after much discussion, and some dangers of serious division, the two ideas of Bryan and Owen were incorporated in the Glass act. McAdoo and others, and Democrats in and out of the House, united in securing the enactment of the measure, a few Republicans also voting for it. Policies of postponement were urged. "Secretary Lane, who had heard disturbing reports from New York, also came to urge upon the President a policy of delay. No member of the Cabinet mirrored conservative opinions more consistently than Lane." Wilson refused to listen to his and like suggestions. The House acted fairly promptly, but in the Senate it required many weeks. The bankers kept up their fight all summer and brought to bear every possible influence to destroy it by proposing maiming amendments. They were able to secure such delay that the measure did not pass until December. Lodge and Root predicted that disaster would follow. "It was without the slightest question the powerful and unyielding pressure from the White House which made possible the enactment of the law." If the Federal Reserve system had not been in operation when the World War opened it is difficult to comprehend how the war could have been so successfully financed.

3. When the Panama Canal was com-

(Continued on page 396)