

Woodrow Wilson as Allied Chief

*In a Few Months he has Become
the Spokesman of the Combination*

Against Germany

By FREDERICK JAMES GREGG

THE President's masterly address to Congress, on January 8th, in regard to peace terms, and his various other addresses and state papers, have combined to make him the leading personage in the group of nations allied against Germany. He is the "overlord" of the greatest international combination ever formed in the world. He is not only the chief reliance of his international associates but he has been accepted, frankly, as their spokesman. What America has to say—through him—is as important at Downing Street, as at the Vatican, or at the Kaiser's Great Headquarters; and, the private typing-machine of Woodrow Wilson will be a "museum piece" of prime importance when the Great War is over, and the relics are collected for posterity to gape at.

THERE are various reasons for Mr. Wilson's present preëminence. For one thing he represented, for years, the rights, under International Law, of the nations which were not in the war, and, whatever his private opinions may have been as to the merits of the quarrel, he held to an attitude of strict legality. Under his direction, America became the guardian of every neutral, whether weak or strong. If his demand had been met the fighting would have been confined to the original belligerents. In the second place, he has, at this stage of the game, the prestige of commanding the resources of the richest country in the world—resources which are absolutely necessary for the Allies, after three years of struggle. Then further, he is at the head of a nation which had no selfish motives in coming in. America wants for herself no new territory, no new spheres of influence. France wants Alsace and Lorraine. Italy wants *Italia Irridenta*. England, though she declared war to save France from being overrun through losing the channel ports, has gained incidentally all German Africa and the German islands of the South Seas, and will have to keep them.

BUT perhaps Mr. Wilson owes his precedence as much to his cold gift of lucid exposition as to anything else. His long practice, as a writer on the history of his country was but the schooling which prepared him for the construction of the State Papers, dealing with the war, which have appeared, from time to time, in the columns of every important newspaper published outside the territory of the Central Powers.

EXCEPTING only Albert of the Belgians—a sovereign without a country, but for a little bit of sea sand,—the Kings among the Allies are almost negligible figures. It is the statesmen, representing the peoples, who are of importance today. But these are only secure in their places as long as they have Parliamentary majorities—or coalitions—behind them. A shake-up in a Cabinet drives a European premier, either from office, as Asquith was put down, after a decade of power, or into a lower place, as was the case with Clemenceau's predecessors, Painlevé and Ribot. Indeed France has had one Prime Minister after another, since the war began. It has been the same with Italy. It was so with Russia, until she fell into the hands of the Lenin-Trotsky anarchistic and socialistic faction.

President Wilson, not depending, for his tenure of office, or the safety of his Cabinet, on a majority in Congress, does not have to

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THE PRESIDENT

From the bust, modelled at the White House, by Jo Davidson. This is the only sculpture ever made of the President. A movement is on foot in London to present it to the National Portrait Gallery

worry about the condition of his political fences. He can sit tight, with a smile round both his ears, fully conscious of the fact that the country is always ready to give the warning growl that will bring the Senate and the House of Representatives to their senses, and make them realize that they must not only hear but obey their master's voice. According to the unbroken American tradition the nation is always "behind the President" in war time, whereas Great Britain decided, not so long ago, that she was not behind Asquith, and there were doubts, a few weeks ago, as to whether or not our cousin Canada was behind the imperturbable Borden. Fortunately she decided that she was, to the irritation of the friends of Germany.

UNTIL lately Lloyd George used to be spoken of as the "Prime Minister of the Allies." But since it became necessary for him to face and fight his enemies in the House of Commons—with more fights to come—the leadership of the confederacy has passed into the hands of Woodrow Wilson, thousands of miles away.

The fact has been acknowledged in London. This is largely the result of our President being above the political conditions of the day. People know that next year, and the year after that, if he is alive, Woodrow Wilson will be President of the United States. On the other hand, no prophet, or son of a prophet, can predict, with certainty, as to the leadership of Great Britain, or France, or Italy, or any of the others among the Allied powers, even a month from now.

Here today and gone tomorrow has been the history of the great ones of Europe for three tragic and tremendous years. A contemplation of the "Who's Who" of the war is as disquieting as the combinations seen in a shaken kaleidoscope. The military men have fared as ill as the statesmen. In spite of the glory of the Marne, the politicians got Joffre and sent him packing to retirement, with a marshal's cap on his head, by way of consolation, and by way of "camouflage". Field Marshal French, too easy-going, has been kicked up-stairs to bed, to the House of Lords and the Home Command. Cadorna, who had almost achieved the big decisive thing, failed to foresee the German drive for Italy and had to go. Brusiloff did anticipate the disturbances of the Revolution, (Continued on page 74)

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but like the Grand Duke Nicholas, he is in retirement. Admiral Jellicoe was removed because he left the Germans get by him at night, after the Jutland fight. The Irish Beatty now directs the Grand Fleet, with Rosslyn Wemyss as First Sea Lord. And so it goes.

THE Kaiser, as a symbol of the Teutonic "will to wreck" the world, persists. Many of his responsible men, one after another, have gone into the scrap-heap—Von Kluck, Von Tirpitz, Von Bülow, Bethmann Hollweg are out. The procession of German generals was like the succession of ghosts of the murdered in "Richard the Third." It was only when von Hindenburg, with his shadow von Ludendorff, became the idol of the Fatherland, that there was real stability. Three Chancellors have done the will of the Emperor, and pretended to do the will of the German people, since August, 1914. As for Austria-Hungary and Turkey, both submerged, their experience may be summed up in the Elizabethan mortuary phrase—"the rest is silence."

IT used to be a commonplace, of the before-the-war sort, that the President of the United States had more actual power than any chief-of-state but the Czar of Russia. A puff of revolt, following the discovery of their status as the hired-men of Germany, sent the feather-headed Romanoffs flying to limbo. So there now remains one, and only one national chief who is independent of his National Legislature; who is in supreme command of his national army and navy; who selects the National Cabinet (of course, by and with the consent of the Senate, which is not refused), and keeps the members of it in office as long as he happens to feel that way), and, finally, who selects the members of the Supreme Court, who have it in their power to declare any and every act of Congress as unconstitutional, and, so, null and void. For authority, one holding the place of President of the United States, compared with even a Prime Minister of England—with all the prestige of the latter's office—is as Hyperion to a satyr.

IF it is so in the day of peace, it is much more so in the day of war. The long arm of Woodrow Wilson, American director of belligerency, reaches as far as he wants it to go, for his grasp is equal to his reach, seeing that he can do what he likes. The Kaiser's Chancellor has to pacify, and conciliate, that interesting debating society, the Reichstag. Even Bismarck had to do that when in the full insolence of his power. But, the President of these United States, who "pays no visits and returns none,"—according to the Jeffersonian book of etiquette—is not called on to ask any questions, or answer any. It is simply the duty of Woodrow Wilson to state the condition of affairs to Congress from time to time. It is, in turn, the duty of Congress to give him what he wants, when he wants it, and where he wants it. That is the law and the prophets, and there is no way of getting out of it.

It is because the Allies and the Central Powers now realize what the situation is, that, on both sides, there has been a change of tune as to the part that America will play in the War and—what is of equal importance—in the Peace that is to follow it.

BUT the acceptance of Woodrow Wilson as spokesman of the Allies has not been merely tacit: It has involved overt acts. When Pope Benedict XV—naturally a friend of peace—asked both sides to state their war objects, the President replied, on August 28, 1917,—with proper politeness and deference—"We cannot take the word of the present rulers of Germany as a guarantee of anything that is to endure. We must await some new evidences of the purposes of the great peoples of the Central Powers." Great Britain refused to send a separate reply to the Pope, stating that the President's note was her answer too and that it covered the whole ground. And no statesman in responsible office, in England, France or Italy, has varied since then, from the essentials of the Washington declaration, which was final on the subject of "what are we fighting for?"

The main point is, however, that no matter how long the Peace Conference may be delayed, the man who will be most influential at the long table, though he won't be there in person, is the President.

THERE were many who voted for Woodrow Wilson on the theory that he had kept us out of war: There are many others, who voted against him then, who would vote for him now, because they know that he will keep us *in it*, until it is finished in the only right way.

V A N I T Y

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