

A FRIEND'S VIEW OF COLONEL HOUSE

BY HENRY HERBERT CHILDERS

COLONEL HOUSE, comparatively unknown three years ago, is now a factor in the making of current history. This prominence came to him through his intimacy with President Wilson, and an earnest desire to serve his friend and his country.

Colonel House was born in Houston fifty-seven years ago; his father was a banker and land owner; he received a college education at Cornell; he married Miss Hunter, of San Marcus, and is the father of two daughters, who are married. In the early eighties he made his home in Austin, for the purpose of having easy access to the land office and the best records of Spanish grants, head-rights and land patents. His father owned thousands of acres, and clear title is an essential in the management of landed estates in Texas, where originally all the public domain was reserved to provide public school, asylum, university and other funds. When I met Mr. House some twenty years ago he was not called Colonel, nor has he earned the title since by any military service, nor as a National Guardsman. A Governor of Texas—maybe Lanham, or perhaps Sayers—without previous consultation, attached him to his staff as an aide-de-camp.

Colonel House has never tried to make money. His main effort has been to keep what his father left him, and to make it productive. His income does not exceed twenty thousand dollars a year. He was unknown in public life until the Hogg-Clark campaign in 1892, at the end of Governor Hogg's first term of office. Even then his movements were so noiseless that few knew he was interested in the

result. Hogg was a progressive, Clark a reactionary. Both were Democrats. Hogg had the farmers, Clark the merchants. Hogg favored the regulation of railroads and a closer supervision over all private corporations. Clark's followers insisted that Hogg was trying to bankrupt the railroads and drive capital from the State. The campaign was bitter, and Hogg would have lost the fight if it had not been for House, who stood behind the curtain and pulled the strings.

When the 1894 campaign began, the progressives (though not by that designation) were dominant, and Charles A. Culberson was Attorney-General of the State. Culberson had trailed along in harmony with Hogg's policies. Colonel House had kept in the background, but was counseling and standing by his friend, the retiring Governor. The candidates for the Governorship were Culberson, Richard M. Wynne, and John H. Reagan, of Confederate Cabinet fame, who had recently resigned from the United States Senate to become chairman of the first railway commission of Texas. No one took Wynne seriously. He was picturesque, broad-shouldered, six feet tall, with long hair such as Bailey used to wear and Vardaman wears now. Reagan was then past seventy, but he was the grand old man of Texas. He had served many years in the Lower House of Congress, had made a good record for earnest work and constant attendance, and afterwards had been sent to the Senate, there to serve acceptably, devoting his time chiefly to interstate commerce matters.

House picked Culberson. I was staff correspondent at Austin for the leading Democratic newspaper, and gave him my co-operation. So did a sufficient number of other newspaper men in order to make a working force for public opinion. Wynne soon withdrew, and the struggle lay between a popular, virile, handsome young son of the late David B. Culberson—of whom it had been said that he was, in his time, the best lawyer in Congress—and Reagan, a splendid survivor from a past age. Youth and eloquence meant much, but Culberson had House with him: that was the main point; and Culberson won. Subsequently Mr. House played the leading role in electing Sayers and Lanham. He rose gradually to be the most effective though the most quiet influence in the Democratic policies of the Southern States. He never has sought anything for himself.

Perhaps the most remarkable thing that can be said of Colonel House is that during these four campaigns for Governor he never incurred the enmity of a single man, never had one heated controversy, never threatened, never brow-beat, never punished. It is safe to say that he never sought to even up old scores with anyone, whatever the provocation. If he ever sought the friendship of any man, it is not on record. Place and power were not for him. He did not need them. They were not essential to his purposes. He belonged to no particular coterie, no clique. He was never known as the source of any plot. He had methods of his own, and they won out. His politics and his friendships were disinterested.

At this point in my picture it may serve a useful purpose to quote what E. S. Martin said of him in his book, *Reflections of a Beginning Husband*:

Another thing I find reassuring is the glimpses I get now and then of men who are at work providing government for the country; especially unadvertised men whom few people ever hear of, who hold no office and aspire to none; whose pictures are never in the papers, nor their names in the reporters' books or the mouths of the multitude. I heard the other day about one such person (Brookfield told me), a man of sufficient fortune—a million, I dare say—not a celibate like Thompson, but married and with a few children; a shrewd, experienced, thoughtful man, whose interest in life is and always has been politics, to handle the machinery of it and get the best results compatible with the material offered to pass laws and fill the offices, and the prejudices and mental disabilities of the voters. "I have known that man," Brookfield said, "for eighteen years, and watched him play politics all that time; plan and direct; weigh men and choose between them; use their talents and abilities when they had them; put them in places where they belonged when he could; put in the next-best man when he couldn't. He always played fair; always wanted the best man, the best law, and the best principle that he could see, and never wanted anything for himself except the fun of playing the game. You couldn't drive him into office. He never tried to make a penny out of legislation. The less he was seen and heard of the better he liked it, but he recognized politics as the great man's game, and he liked to play it. No doubt the sense of power was pleasant to him, but his use of power was entirely conscientious, and the source of his power was never money, but the confidence that men had in his sagacity and unselfishness. Back in him somewhere there was, of course, a sense of duty and a belief in certain principles of government, and a sort of unconscious consecration to the desire to see our experiment in government go well and to see

the country prosper. But the immediate interest that kept his mind busy was just a delight in guiding the political affairs of men.

I dare say Brookfield's man is an exceptional political boss; but I dare say, also, that in so far as we have, or ever have had, or will have, decent government, we owe it to somebody who has had a call to provide it for us, and has had the talents necessary to make his call effective. The rare thing about Brookfield's man, as he described him, was his self-effacement and superiority to vanity. He loved to play the game, but not only never thought of the gate-money, but never cared to be a grand-stand player. To do the job and do it well brought him the joy of a true artist in his art. As I said, I have felt encouraged about the future of politics in this country since I heard about him. If he had been a saint I wouldn't have been so much encouraged, but Brookfield represented him as a mere human being, like any of us, looking about for things that interested his mind and made life taste good, and finding them supremely in politics. It is an encouragement to find that our politics is so good a game that folks with money and brains enough to experiment with pleasures will play at it purely for their inward satisfaction, and without attention even to the applause. Of course, men of that temperament and that high degree of sagacity and self-control are rare, but we have our share of men with an insight into cause and effect, and an understanding of the human mind both in the individual and in the crowd, and with ability to hear what is going on when they put their ears to the ground, and with a lively interest in human affairs that must surely draw them into politics whenever they see that politics is a paramount interest. We have no picturesque Dukes of Devonshire drudging dutifully at government without vanity or political ambition, as fathers drudge for their families, and as Washington, maybe, drudged for us, but I believe we have a native product of our own that does like work, and quite as often with intelligence, because the work calls to them and because they not only feel the responsibilities of civilization, but find delight in undertaking them.

When he had achieved his marked success in making Governors of Texas some of his friends advised a national career. He was told that he could enlarge his ambitions and make or help to make a President of the United States. He entertained the idea, but he did not seek publicity. He gave no token of what he had in his mind, but he went to New York, in conformity with his custom at certain seasons, and began a quiet review of the Democratic situation. He studied the Republican position as well.

That was in 1904. I was then engaged at National Democratic headquarters, in the Speakers' Bureau, and talked

with Mr. House about our chances of success. August Belmont and William F. Sheehan were influential in the campaign. Colonel House had a talk with Sheehan, and studied the situation—and that was the end of it, so far as he was concerned. He saw what was going to happen long before Belmont or Sheehan or even Taggart, Chairman of the National Committee, did, and kept out. He voted for Parker, of course.

What about the succeeding Presidential election? Where was House then? He was around, but was not active, even quietly. He liked Bryan, personally. He believes in him, but does not worship him. About this time Gaynor was attracting attention as Mayor of New York. Colonel House saw and studied him. People told him Gaynor was peculiar. Some said he was crazy. Before anyone was aware that House was studying Gaynor, he had finished the task, and turned his head in another direction. House was looking for a man Bryan would accept, and while Bryan liked some things about Gaynor, he liked more things about Bryan. House did not think Bryan should run again, but he did not tell him so. That is not his way.

This was in 1908, and Bryan wanted another nomination, and got it. House again drew aside and looked on with consistent resignation to the inevitable. He knows as well as anybody that political parties must be allowed to butt their brains out occasionally. Consequently he did not waste any of his resourcefulness in that campaign. He kept out of it.

Colonel House's modesty amounts almost to diffidence. He will not get into a crowd if he can help it, and has never attended a convention of any kind, educational, religious, or political. He never wrote a newspaper communication, nor until recently has he submitted to an interview for publication. He never belonged to a church or order of any kind. He never posed; and yet one could not say that he has kept his light under a bushel.

When I say his diffidence makes him self-effacing, I do not mean that he is without force: he simply subordinates the personal equation to his public purpose, considers the work rather than himself as the worker. Force he has in plenty, but it is suave. His method employs the scalpel, not the club. But no man achieves influence without arousing envy. Not long ago I met in Washington a Senator from

the Middle West, from whom I wanted a written endorsement. I showed the statesman a telegram from Colonel House, advising me to get endorsements of importance. Here is what he said:

“Who is Colonel House? They tell me you can't get anywhere unless he says so. I'm tired of hearing about Colonel House, Colonel House, all the time.”

What about Colonel House's connection with the campaign of 1912? How did he meet Woodrow Wilson, and how long has he known him? Just precisely the hour and day when these friends met is not material, but, to be accurate, it was at 3 P. M. one day in the month of October, 1911, at a hotel in New York City, that Governor Wilson called on Colonel House, by appointment, perhaps arranged by William F. McCombs. Mr. Wilson was stopping at another hotel, and had to make his visit short, as he had another appointment with James D. Phelan, of San Francisco, at 4 P. M. Wilson and House took a fancy to each other immediately.

Colonel House's aversion to publicity, where his own undertakings are concerned, has generally been respected by his intimates. President Wilson has made public reference to him on several occasions without calling his name—as, for instance, in an address to the Motion Picture Association on the 27th of January, 1916, in New York City, in these words:

We all in our hearts agree upon the fundamental principles of our lives, of our life as a nation. Now we ought to tax ourselves with the duty of seeing that those principles are realized in action, and no fooling about it. The only difficult things in life, ladies and gentlemen, are the applications of the principles of right and wrong. I can set forth the abstract principles of right and wrong, and so can you. But when it comes down to an individual item of conduct, whether in public affairs or private affairs—there comes the pinch! In the first place, to see the right way to do it, and in the second place, to do it that way. If we could only agree that in all matters of public concern we would adjourn our private interests, look each other frankly in the face and say, “We are all ready, at whatever sacrifice of our own interests, to do in common the thing that the common weal demands,” what an irresistible force America would be!

I can point out to you a few men—of course I am not going to name them now—whom every man ought to be afraid of because nothing but the truth resides in them. I have one in particular in

mind whom I have never caught thinking about himself. I would not dare make a pretense in the presence of that man even if I wanted to. His eyes contain the penetrating light of truth before which all disguises fall away.

As germane to the subject of the meeting between President Wilson and Colonel House, I might add that W. F. McCombs, in the late summer of 1911, had received a pool contribution to the pre-convention Wilson campaign fund of ten thousand dollars, the contributors being William G. McAdoo, James D. Phelan, Cleveland H. Dodge, and one other, each giving twenty-five hundred dollars. In September of that year the money had all been spent, and, being refused further aid (except by Dodge), McCombs began to supply the necessary funds from his own private resources. In the spring of 1912, however, after Colonel House became interested in the nomination of Governor Wilson, there was plenty of money. Did Colonel House send McCombs a check? There is no record of such a remittance. But House was busy, nevertheless, and offset cash contributions with something better. How? By keeping Bryan, the perpetual candidate, from openly coming out for the nomination for the fourth time. Just what Colonel House said to Colonel Bryan, and just what answer Colonel Bryan gave Colonel House, is immaterial to the issue. Colonel House could not keep Bryan from being a candidate—for a candidate he was, every minute, before and during the Baltimore Convention, until the gavel fell, and he is a candidate now—but he could and did hold his activities in leash until the danger point was passed. President Wilson knew that Colonel House was handling matters in his interest and was performing good service. House knew Wilson needed Bryan in the convention. But Bryan did not want Wilson. Bryan wanted Bryan.

In pre-convention times McCombs kept Wilson headquarters at 42 Broadway. Colonel House never called. He and McCombs used the telephone. Every snag was placed in the way of Colonel House. At this time House was not familiar enough with the mechanism of national politics to do more than advise; but he did know what was going on in Texas, and had T. W. Gregory pulling wires there. When June came, Wilson was in the running, but he was going against both wind and tide. Clark then had much the best of it. House had played all his cards, had worked hard, and

was much run down in health, but everybody thought he would surely attend the Baltimore Convention. Instead he sailed from Boston for Liverpool, none too confident of Wilson's nomination. The moment Wilson was nominated I sent him a wireless at sea, as he had requested.

Returning from abroad sooner than usual, he looked in at headquarters in the Fifth Avenue Building. Matters were at their worst. McCombs had gone to his hotel ill, and Wilson had asked McAdoo to take charge. McAdoo had built a tube connecting New York and Jersey City, which seemed to fill Mr. Wilson with confidence in his ability to run a campaign, but this did not keep headquarters from getting into a hopeless snarl. At this time House dropped in two or three times each day, refusing to have an office or desk, but keeping at work.

At the end of September the funds were spent, and the committee was \$140,000 in debt. Even House was dismayed. McCombs, who was fretting over conditions, and over being supplanted by another as chief, was told of the state of the campaign treasury. This seemed to act as a stimulant. He pulled himself together, entered the chairman's office unannounced, turned McAdoo out, and went to work. He found Colonel House at his elbow. The funds again began to flow in, and at the close of the campaign more than a million dollars had been contributed. Colonel House was able to make McAdoo and McCombs think they liked each other. He has that faculty. House was cordial to both alike, but he liked Wilson best.

This brings me to the inauguration of President Wilson. At that time House was unknown in national politics, but his fame was fast increasing. As the President's friend, his responsibilities began to enlarge. Dealing with Texas politics is one thing; dealing with the affairs of a great republic is distinctively another. Aiding and comforting a governor is a trifle compared with giving a new President of the United States the right start. It is history now that House became Wilson's St. Peter. He sat on the right side—and there was no one on the left. It is safe to say that no private citizen was ever so close to a President. The relation was wholly different from that between President McKinley and Mark Hanna, who dictated appointments. House simply advises when asked; and he has been consulted often.

After the election of 1912, Gregory went to represent this country at Mexico City. But Bryan objected. He did not want a border man in the place. This eventually worked well for Gregory, who suggested McReynolds, his classmate, for Attorney General, and himself was set to work on the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad case. Gregory was from Austin, as was Burleson, the Postmaster General, but that did not act as a restraining influence with President Wilson. Gregory was promoted, in time. He was House's friend. Thomson, another of House's friends, from Austin went to Colombia, as Minister. Batts, another Austin man, a friend of Gregory and House, took Gregory's place as prosecutor in the New Haven case. This may look like undue favor for Texas, but it must be recalled that Texas was once a republic and in acres is an empire.

There is no use in growling about House's part in the selection of the Wilson Cabinet. Some like it. Some do not. I am positive the Colonel had nothing to do with the selection of the Secretary of Labor, and as little with Daniels's appointment. He was consulted as to all the others. President Wilson wanted to know about Franklin K. Lane. House looked him up, and pronounced him one of the best. Burleson had little trouble, because House had known him for twenty-five years. When the Middle West raised its voice for one of the Cabinet places, Houston from Missouri was considered—and appointed. He had lived in Texas many years as president of the Texas University and was a friend of Gregory and Colonel House. It is not likely that House bothered himself much about Redfield. He seemed to be entirely available. The President wanted Colonel House to be Secretary of the Treasury, but House politely declined the honor and suggested McAdoo. Public opinion selected Bryan for the portfolio of State, and House approved. House then had to reconcile Bryan to his associates.

When Bryan made his spectacular exit from the State Department, many eyes turned on Colonel House to see if there were signs of his weakening on a former resolution to accept no office, but he flatly refused to consider the suggestion.

Brushing aside governor-making, president-making, and president-assisting, and the mystery of his influence (if it is a mystery) over Woodrow Wilson, there are graver mat-

ters in the life of Colonel House about which this article is concerned. While he never aspires to be called a college man, literary man, or writer, he has thought deeply on problems that concern the dearest interests of mankind. He has always been a student of political science and anthropology. He wants to benefit mankind. He is always seeking to enlarge the sphere of his benefactions. In Texas he employed his talents in that way. He is now seeking larger opportunities of usefulness. I recall his saying to me, in substance, that the whole fabric of society and government has been wrong from the beginning. I positively know that if, in a redistribution of amassed riches, the greater part of his fortune were taken from him, he would see it go with serene composure and without protest. Quoting him literally:

Our civilization is fundamentally wrong, inasmuch as among other things it restricts efficiency. If society were properly organized there would be none who was not sufficiently clothed and fed. The laws, habits and ethical training in vogue are alike responsible for the inequalities in opportunity and the consequent wide difference between the few and the many. The result of such conditions is to render inefficient a large part of the population, the percentage differing in each country in the ratio that education and enlightenment and unselfish laws bear to ignorance, bigotry and selfish laws.

Little progress had been made in the early centuries for the reason that opportunity was confined to a few, and it is only recently that any considerable part of the world's population has been in a position to become efficient. Therefore, as an economic problem, divorced from the realm of ethics, the far-sighted statesman of tomorrow, if not today, will labor to the end that every child may have an opportunity to accomplish that for which it is best suited. Their bodies will be properly fed and clothed, so that life may mean something more than a struggle for existence. Humanity as a whole will then be able to do its share towards the conquest of the forces of Nature, and there will be brought about an intellectual and spiritual quickening that will make our civilization of today seem crude, as selfish and illogical as that of the Dark Ages.

Agreeing with Mazzini, Colonel House thinks there should be "no war of classes, no unjust violation of the rights of property, but a constant disposition to ameliorate the condition of the classes least favored by fortune."

Preferring spiritual to material compensation, he has thus expressed his views:

I believe that mankind is awakening to the fact that material compensation is far less to be desired than spiritual compensation.

This feeling will grow, it is growing, and when it comes to full fruition the world will find but little difficulty in attaining a certain measure of altruism.

Touching socialism, he says:

I know things are not as they should be, but how can there be a more even distribution of wealth without lessening the efficiency of the strong, able, and energetic men, and without making mendicants of the indolent and improvident?

If we had pure socialism, we could never get the best endeavor out of anyone, for it would seem not worth while to do more than an average. The race would then go backward, instead of lifting itself higher by the insistent desire to excel and to reap the reward that comes with success. Socialism, as dreamed of by Karl Marx, cannot be entirely brought about by the leveling of wealth.

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PROHIBITION OR TEMPERANCE?

BY L. AMES BROWN

A MEMBER of the International Anti-Alcohol Federation, who declared in a work published a few years ago that the anti-alcohol movement in America is unlike the movement in Europe in that it is not University bred, cannot be held to have uttered an unfair judgment upon the leaders of the movement here. It is a regrettable fact that the more valuable minds in America have been concerned with problems which were deemed more weighty than the problem of drink reform, and that a movement of very important extent has arisen under the dominance of a set of men who do not represent the best minds among us. As evidencing the failure of the prohibition leaders to comprehend the traditions of the people they have sought to lead, I have referred in an earlier paper to the prominence given in the Anti-Saloon League propaganda to the material gain to be anticipated from prohibition, and have commented upon the implicit neglect of the tradition that as a people Americans have girded up their loins and made great sacrifices only on occasions when some spiritual thing was at issue. It is my aim in the present paper to inquire if there are essential differences between prohibition and temperance, and to disclose instances in the history of the United States when the former has seemed to antagonize the other.

The whole lesson of Americanism, as applied to the drink problem, is that our progress has been in the direction of temperance, of self-control, of restraint, instead of prohibition. Misled by their uneducated enthusiasm, some of the prohibitionists are working upon theories of Americanism which do not comprehend that the only prohibition that could comport with our traditions would be one preceded by utter self-control. Perhaps it would not be un-American for peo-