Washington and the Stranger Who's Inside the Gate

Reviewing the Situation in the War-Girt Capital. As for Food, One Must Be Thankful to Set One's Teeth Into "Anything That Yields and Can Be Masticated." But the Lodging Proposition Is Even Worse!

By Ralph Block

Washington, May 9.

WASHINGTON, there is no doubt of it, is become the perfect chameleon of American cities. Its colors change as rapidly as the colors of a wheatfield in the passing afternoon sunlight. But its change is now all in one direction, more people, more traffic, more buzz and hum. May is here, and with it a memory of the Washington leisurely people used to know. The trees have burgeoned, the grass in the parks is lush and ripe and the overhanging foliage does its best to give the splendid avenues an atmosphere of languors and luxuries. But even so prodigal and resplendent a natural dress cannot hide the modern excitements underneath, the jerkiness and fever of a city that is now inescapably caught in the wheels of the machine and rushed forward to a stranger and less comfortable destiny.

A month in the capital makes as much difference now as a decade made before. The traffic is amazing. To care for it a sagacious military mind has invented a little lookout for the policeman whose fate puts him at the intersection of any one of the frequent five corners. Balmy temperatures used to change Washington, sent every one out to the country. But the country is crowded now as much as the city, and cottages or the usual refuge of city folk have long been occupied as homes by those who could find no hospitality in the city's border.

Among the changes is the fact that Washington has a new hotel, a rather modern hotel, with an orchestra that does not disdain to play a jazz tune once in a while. By that you can tell it is new; but scarcely by any other mark; for the demand for room is so great that the new hotel already looks as well accustomed to its job as any one of the dozen others. As a matter of fact, room is the one great problem of this city of palaces. To understand all that has happened to Washington you have to envisage the Washington that slept and plodded in its sleep through the years before the Hun jolted it awake. It wasn't a factory town, and the nearest it ever came to singing the great modern song of songs, organization, was in the voice of the great collections of human beings who came from all parts of the country to engage in the then uneventful occupation of working for the government. They, however, didn't turn out any great thing, they weren't engaged on any tremendous project that demanded their spirit as well as their energy—in short, if they had any esprit de corps it was of the very mildest kind, due probably to gratitude in return for the fact that unlike other city workers they could go home an hour or so past the middle of the afternoon.

But it was not merely not a factory town. It wasn't a trading centre, either, except, as one might say, for yarns and votes. It had no great jobbing houses, no great warehouses, it wasn't a gateway for anything except tourists. It was the Los Angeles of the East. The population grew by two methods of extension: either by the addition of another governmental department and its necessary personnel or by the addition of persons of means who were under the mistaken impression that Washington was the place in which they could find the social elevation their means had not been able to get for them somewhere else. Then there were mixed in with these a few other persons of leisure, who liked to have an address in Washington just to add, for the sake of looks, to their other town and country addresses. It was a little bit like going to court and being presented to the king.

The result of this was, in the first place, to make Washington as provincial a place and as lacking in the commonest ingredient of the American character, colloquially known as pep, as an American can imagine one of his own cities could be. The cities of the real South were to Washington as Rome used to be to Helvetia, so far as sophisticated energy was concerned.

The hotels of Washington and the restaurants were divided into three parts, which is again reminiscent of the Helvetians. There were the rather sober hotels for Congressmen and their wives, full of Congressmen's young daughters, who went to boarding schools in Washington for finishing. Then there were one or two pretentious hotels to make aware those people who had the means of patronizing them that they hadn't made any mistake in coming to Washington. The rest were for small fry, who had to have a shelter and food. There were, even so, a few good restaurants, not in any degree up to the tasters' paradise of New Orleans, but at least respectfully aiming at the mark of good food. They couldn't have had the authentic spirit, however, because when alcohol decamped from Washington for other abodes the eating places lost their verve and their élan and all the other qualities for which the French have better words than the English. When the Americans captured Washington, about six months after April 6, 1917, there was scarcely a real eating place left in Washington anywhere.

It is even hard to find them now. There are so many people in Washington that your desire for quality in food cannot be strained, and you can be thankful to set your teeth in anything that yields and can be masticated. For a city that needs vitality for the big job of the present, Washington has even now the poorest selection of eating places of any big city in the United States. I have no doubt that when Washington fails at anything the eating places are to blame. There are a half dozen of them here that undoubtedly share between them the blame for the failure of the airplane programme. That an army fights on its belly is as true in Washington to-day as it was when Napoleon or any other of the half dozen claimants to authorship first said it.

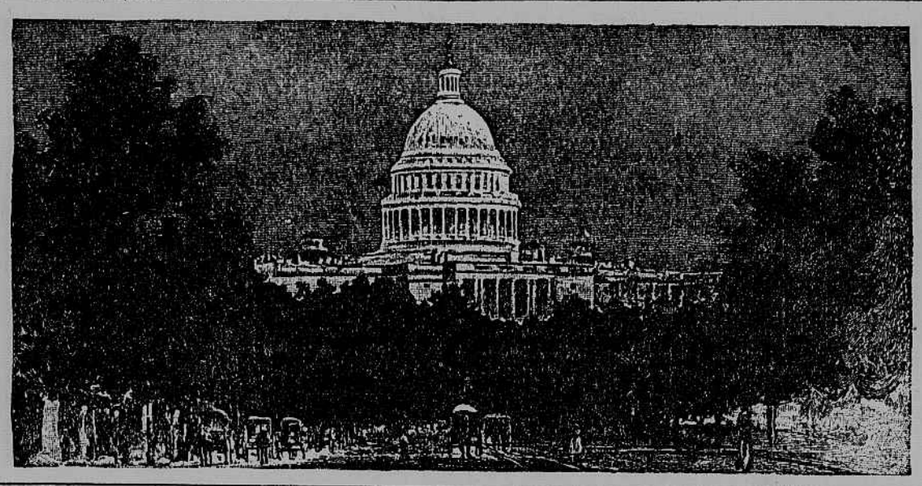
The situation when it comes to living quarters is worse, and more directly related to the history of Washington previous to April of last year. Without factories, great growing industries or trading houses of any kind, and lacking a strategic commercial position to stimulate its growth, Washington had little demand for further living facilities. There was a normal growth, but it was a singular city, in that you could go around it for miles without finding any of those pastures marked out with street signs and cut up in unsliced building lots that transform the environs of every other ambitious and aspiring community in the country.

Washington is built like most of the cities in the East. It has miles of country around it, but that didn't stop the original settlers from putting their houses next to each other like cheese boxes, as was the Continental fashion of that time, and the fashion has continued until it is a permanent matter. Now, when you buy a house in Washington you really buy just so much right to space in a brick structure that stretches all along one side of a block. The airy spaces and backyards and sideyards and orchards of more lonely Western cities exist here only in dreams.

At any rate, when the invasion began there were just so many of these homes, together with a variegated assortment of apartment buildings, and no more than enough to go around. Rents went up and leases were transferred so many times that houses and apartments in Washington began to acquire pedigrees of a kind to make a blue ribbon Airedale ashamed of himself. It is no uncommon thing now to find an apartment that may once have rented for $50 renting for $300, and the higher-priced apartments have gone up in proportion. The Johnson rent profiteering bill will undoubtedly level some of these extortionate prices for shelter; but the real estate man is not to be done out of his profits by a mere act of Congress. The law now in Washington to the home dweller appears to be either to buy or move, and in the buying the real estate man, as has frequently been pointed out, sees to it as a rule that his pocket is amply lined.

The situation that Washington now finds itself in puts a great question up to the government. Nobody wants to invest anything in Washington, build any house, put up any apartments, open any new restaurants, because there's no telling when the war will end, and "pouf," the scurrying, rushing, careless, extravagant population that has turned Washington inside out will have vanished back where it came from.

So far as I can see there's only one thing for the government to do. It will have to subsidize the war and see that it's made a permanent thing. Then maybe Washington will get a real move on itself and begin to look after the stranger within the gates.



—From *Century Magazine*

Lincoln and the War

LORD CHARNWOOD contributes to "The New Europe" an article under the above title, in which he aims to point out the lessons which our side in the war might learn from Lincoln's career. The following extract contains what is best in the article:

"The message of Lincoln is that of a man who was utterly brave and utterly gentle; equally tenacious of his sternest and his mildest purposes, because both were needed in his abounding love for men; incapable, therefore, of those vacillations and illusions, for which clever people can always give reasons, but which are caused by the weariness of protracted pain. We need neither labor after a close analogy nor miss an obvious example. The South was deluded and heroically persistent in delusion, but it was not corrupted, and the faults even of its misleaders were passionate rather than sophisticated; emphatically, the South was not Germany, nor South Carolina Prussia. Yet Lincoln's treasured precept, 'Judge not,' may now, as then, have a true as well as a false application. The German revival of the ancient cult of cruelty is an uglier enemy than was the combination of disunionism and slavery. Yet it is the product of a hothouse, and may perish even from the German mind on the one condition that it is beaten. In any case, now, as then, inconclusive war would be the worst offence against that charity which was in Lincoln.

"It needed no intellectual penetration to show us when the issue had to be joined with Germany; the test of modern statesmanship will arise when war is over and the new-born league of nations demands a lasting constitution. Yet, here, too, the patient watchfulness of the great American, and the gift he showed from the outset of his career of facing present fact without loss of far-off hope, is the pattern to statesmen of a wisdom which common people will follow."

After the War

PROF. FRANZ OPPENHEIMER, of Berlin University, has taken a glimpse, in a recent address, into probable conditions in Germany and Europe after the war. He estimates that the number of killed and disabled for all the European states will reach 25,000,000 to 30,000,000. "That will cause," he says, "an advance of 25 to 100 per cent in the value of labor." As for wages, they—

"will rise by successive stages, beginning with agricultural labor and extending to the factory workmen. The purchasing power of the German home market will be increased by at least $1,000,000,000 through this increase in wages.

"Antiquated arrangements in factories can no longer be afforded. Only the manufacturing concerns that are best conducted and have the most highly perfected machinery will be able to pay the high wages. The perfection of economic methods, the stretching of the nerves of production to their utmost capacity, which Rathenau thinks should be brought about through state interference, will take place of itself. The number of all laborers and employes not absolutely necessary, like agents and commercial travellers, will have to be reduced.

"In consequence of the high cost of labor the value of land will fall. Large landed estates cannot be kept up, and they must be made free for the settlement of peasants. Everybody will have to work to his utmost capacity, and owing to the intelligent application of labor its product will increase despite the reduced numbers of workers. Strikes will scarcely ever occur again.

"In consequence of the high taxes few persons will create landed estates for purposes of ease and enjoyment; land will, on the contrary, be owned for the most part as a means of production. Capital will therefore increase rapidly, and the damages of the war will be restored at an equal pace. The healing process, however, can go forward only when business is guaranteed a free market and manufacturers preserve the instinct of workmanship."

★ The Golden Book of Congress ★

Two Ways of Looking at It

Senator Overman Defends His Bill to Extend the Power of the Executive—Senator Vardaman Quotes Thomas Jefferson

MR. OVERMAN. I deny that this is a revolutionary measure, and I deny that Congress has in any way by this bill abdicated any power. I am tired of hearing Senators talk about the abdication of power, when we have it in our power after the bill is signed to repeal it, when we have the whole machinery of legislation here that gave the power, and nothing on God's earth is asked for in this bill except—what? To exercise power which Congress already has given. I will ask the Senator is there anything in the bill asked for that Congress itself has not granted?

* * *

Mr. VARDAMAN. The immortal Thomas Jefferson, the variety of whose information, farreaching vision and superb judgment surpassed any statesman of modern times, who lived in the morning of our national life, thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the men who gave this government being, and christened it with their patriotism and love, said:

"The will of the people is the only legitimate foundation of any government and to protect its free expression should be our first object. . . . The first principle of a good government is certainly a distribution of its powers into executive, judiciary and legislative, and a subdivision of the latter into two or three branches. . . . No government can continue good but under the control of the people. . . . Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established, should not be changed for light and transient causes. . . . Unless the mass retains sufficient control over those intrusted with the powers of their government, these will be perverted to their own oppression, and to the perpetuation of wealth and power in the individuals and their families selected for the trust. Whether our Constitution has hit on the exact degree of control necessary is yet under experiment; and it is a most encouraging reflection that distance and other difficulties securing us against the brigand governments of Europe, in the safe enjoyment of our farms and firesides, the experiment stands a better chance of being satisfactorily made here than on any occasion yet presented by history."

I might proceed without limit to quote from this inexhaustible storehouse of wisdom; but the above is sufficient to make clear my idea, and to direct as I would if permitted the course of the Senate in the further consideration of this question.

A Sick Man—A Very Sick Man

Another County Heard From in the Overman Debate

MR. PHELAN. I resent any accusation of usurpation or the countenance of usurpation or the condonation of usurpation in any vote I cast for this measure. Woodrow Wilson has been accused by no one of coveting power. He has been cast by fortune in the place where he has to exercise power, and he only asks the means by which he can, consistently with the Constitution and without usurping powers, do his work. I say this is war time. "Diseases desperate grown by desperate remedies are relieved, or not at all"; and we are now resorting, I confess, to a desperate remedy. But there is authority for it in no less a leader than Abraham Lincoln, quoted in the eloquent speech recently made by the standard bearer of the Republican party, Mr. Hughes, in the recent campaign; and I may say, judging from this and in answer to the Senators on the other side, that their standard bearer is not with them. Lincoln says:

"I can no more be persuaded that the government can take no strong measures in time of rebellion because it can be shown that the same could not be lawfully taken in time of peace than I can be persuaded that a particular drug is not good medicine for a sick man because it cannot be shown to be good medicine for a well one."

Mr. President, we are a sick man—a very sick man—and this measure proposes medicine unpleasant to take; but I sincerely believe that if we take it we will be very much better, and for that reason I shall support the bill.

The Sort of Backing That Would Count

MR. M'CUMBER. We should no longer delay some effective method of utilizing all the energies of all the people of the country in the field of production. We are at present operating on a scale not even 50 per cent efficient when we consider our capabilities. Provision should be immediately made to the end that not a single other strike shall occur in our essential industries during the remainder of this war. We should see to it that there should be no just cause for strikes, and then we should further see to it that every day's service performed in the production of war necessities shall be a full and honest day's work; that so long as we have a single soldier in France fighting for this country there shall not be a single slacker on this side of the ocean. Back of our patriotic fighting force there should be a patriotic producing force, a force with the same ardor, the same determination, the same patriotism that thrills the hearts of our little army. That we should call upon one class of men to perform heroic tasks, to suffer excruciating horrors beyond words of expression, and even to die the most agonizing of deaths, and at the same time allow other men to loaf in the streets or retard production that could save the lives of hundreds of thousands of our soldiers and the soldiers of our fighting allies, is worse than a mere national blunder, worse than a mere national injustice. It is a national crime without palliation or excuse. We should proceed immediately to organize the entire manhood and womanhood of this country into a mighty and invincible army of producers.

Criticism

MR. KING. I do not believe in criticism for criticism's sake either in peace or in war. It is an unhappy and wholly fruitless way to wear out your life. Furthermore, no one need to fear unjust criticism; the sober and final judgment of the American people will sustain the man who is unfairly and unjustly assailed. It is only the weak, the incompetent, the dishonest who need fear the facts or who should seek shelter from the freedom of speech and of the press. The libeller, the slanderer, the unfair critic, the purveyor of false news will have short shrift with the American people. If that were not true, our theory of government would be startlingly erroneous, for it all rests at last upon public opinion, and without a free press and free speech there can be no such thing as a sound public opinion. Sincere and fearless discussion is in the long run the aid of a competent and able administration.

Single-Handed

HON. WILLIAM P. BORLAND. Germany is a nation of 65,000,000 people, inhabiting a restricted territory of somewhat limited natural resources. The United States is a nation of 100,000,000 people, inhabiting a boundless empire of almost untouched natural resources. Our people are just as intelligent, just as resolute, and just as skilful as the inhabitants of Germany, and it is manifest that with an equal degree of thought and preparation this country, single-handed, is more than a match for the German Empire in any national contest. (Applause.)

Subtle Poison at Which the Sedition Bill Is Aimed

SENATOR M'CUMBER. I had before me yesterday, Mr. President, a newspaper which is published in the State of Minnesota in a foreign language. I could not read one word in that paper, but there were two cartoons in it which impressed me, as I looked at them, with the belief that the editor of that paper was a disloyal man and ought to be out of this country and not in it. There was nothing in those cartoons which would possibly subject him to prosecution, but there was sufficient in them to indicate a sentiment of disloyalty, a lack of sympathy, and a purpose to impose that sentiment upon the readers of the paper. Then I made inquiry of some one who knew the gentleman who edited this paper, and I was told he was one of the most disloyal men in the United States. If you should read that paper you would probably find that there has been nothing ever said in it in support of the great American cause.

It is such persons who are liable to be caught by this proposed law, because, having in their hearts a hatred against our cause, they will sometimes lose discretion and will give utterance to sentiments which ought to send them to the penitentiary. Such persons ought to be prosecuted upon general principles, and if we shall at some time get something against them which will enable the law to get hold of them and dispose of them as they ought to be disposed of I shall not worry. I know hundreds and hundreds of people in the United States who are saying nothing to-day. Why? Because of the fear of just such a law as this one which is proposed. I hope the law will be so strong that we shall keep the fear of the Lord and of the government in their hearts until we get out of this war, and then I wish there was some possible way of separating the black sheep from the white and sending the black ones out of this country, for the man who cannot appreciate the justice of this world war against military autocracy and whose heart does not respond to that sentiment in loyalty ought never to be allowed to claim this as his country.

Thoughts on the Muzzle

MR. VARDAMAN. Mr. President, the strength of this Republic consists in the moral qualities and intellectual acquirements of individual citizens thereof. "The government is strong and great in proportion to the strength of mind and moral force of the individual man and woman." The citizens can not develop to their utmost in mind and morals without fully enjoying unrestricted the privilege to think, the freedom of speech, and the unproscribed performance of the duties of citizenship. A citizen of this Republic has got a right to think, and that right carries with it the right to think incorrectly, if perchance his mental processes shall be somewhat warped. The mental straitjacket is never used with success in a republic, and it has no place here.

. . . . . .

I believe in an hour like the present that the fullest and freest discussion should be permitted. The right and privileges guaranteed by the Constitution should be upheld and scrupulously respected. I would not proscribe men and women in the expression of their views, for the reason that in doing so I fear that I might be influenced by my own feelings and my own earnest desires, which might carry me too far in certain directions. There is danger in proscription. There is absolute safety in freedom of thought and liberty of speech. The lie is harmless as long as truth is free to combat it. To make myself better understood I will be permitted, I trust, to paraphrase a statement made by one of America's greatest constitutional lawyers and noblest patriots: "It is not for the exercise of despotic power, nor yet from the headlong passions of a raging people that we will learn our duty to one another and to our country. When the prophet Elijah stood on the mountainside and looked for some token of the divine will he did not see it in the tempest or the earthquake or the fire, but he heard it in the 'still, small voice' which reached his ears after they had passed by." We have heard the storm of political debate, we are feeling the earthquake shock of a world war, we are seeing to-day the effect of legislative persecution. We shall find the truth when they are all passed and gone, and we will find it by hearkening to the "still, small voice" which speaks to our consciences in the articulate words of the Constitution from the graves of our fathers. If we cannot get the truth from them, if their words of wisdom and the light of their patriotic examples do not lead us in the straight and narrow path, then, Mr. President, the days of this great Republic are numbered. The end is not far away. I would counsel moderation in this hour of trial. Laws that originate in intense hatred or excessive love are equally unreliable and necessarily unstable.

It is a mistake to legislate upon the presumption that all the wisdom and all the patriotism are confined to Congress and the executive branch of the government. Reasoning from that hypothesis leads inevitably to a false conclusion, finally to disaster.

I cannot more fittingly close what I have to say than by quoting from an ancient Greek who had felt the hot iron of adversity in his soul. He understood the fallibility of men, the unreliability of human judgment, and in the shadow of doubt, conscious of human limitations, he uttered these wise words for the guidance of his people. I commend this to your careful consideration:

Tossed on a sea of trouble, soul, my soul,
Do thou myself control
To meet the weapons of advancing foes
A stubborn breast oppose,
Undaunted by the hostile might of squadrons
Burning for the fight.
Thine no vain boasting when the victor's crown
Wins the deserved renown:
Thine no dejected sorrow when defeat
Would urge a base retreat.
Rejoice 'mid joyous things, nor overmuch
Let grief thy bosom touch
'Mid evil: still bear in mind
How changeful are the ways of human kind.

Interesting Figures in the House

—From *The Washington Post*

Douse That Glim!

THE following observation relative to the reception Luna receives in Paris when she is full comes from "Collier's":

"The phases of the moon have long been held to exercise a serious influence upon earthly phenomena and human affairs. Old is the legend that children born under a new moon are sickly or weak-minded; old the superstition that a full moon favors the growth of cucumbers, potatoes and turnips. But in the Paris of the late winter and early spring of 1918 a full moon had a quite other significance. It meant that just before it reached its fulness, trains leaving the city were uncomfortably well filled with nervous gentlemen of middle age, or over, conducting their families to points south or west; it meant that when one asked the Parisian to dinner 'next Monday' he was as likely as not to say: 'Monday? But Monday the moon is full, and my wife is rather nervous about dining out when the moon is full. Make it two weeks from Monday, and I'm sure we'll be glad to accept.'

"For to the Parisian of 1918 the full moon had signified, in anticipation at least, a return of the Gothas. Not in terror, for Paris is not easily terrified, but in mild, disillusioned humor, the wits of the City of Light (but nowadays not too much light) rally one another upon their preference for dining at home on probable nights of a raid. Why die uselessly? is the excellent philosophy. It is only the American who has never yet seen a raid who ventures out needlessly; unless, indeed, he is a newspaper man, and newspaper men don't matter anyway. Yet it is in one of the most respectable of Paris newspapers that we find some excellent fun apropos of these same air raids. It is a writer in the 'Journal des Débats' who recalls the place of the full moon in poetry—and Musset's rare 'Ballade à la Lune,' *du passant bénie.*

"The Japanese have loved the moon, in their brief snatches of lyric, their wonderful concentrations of a mood in a few syllables of phrasing. 'Full moon,' writes one of them:

Full moon,
And all night I've walked me
Round the lagoon.

"Here is another specimen of Japanese moon verse:

To-night, that the moon is so fine,
Is he in his hut,
The hermit?

"But here, according to the cynical Parisian, is the way the poet of Nippon would write his poem—if Yokohama were as near the German lines as Paris is:

Full moon.
Some wise man tell me how to
Douse that glim!

"That perfect moon poem also measures twleve syllables!"

The Soldier From the Backwoods

HENRY ROOD, in "The Century Magazine," writes:

"It is said that the least promising material for our National Army comes from the fastnesses of the Maine woods, the St. Lawrence forests, and correspondingly remote regions of the country. Such men may be descendants of American stock for a century or more. Most of them are muscular, powerfully built, with heavy thighs, stout arms and legs, and broad shoulders. Yet many are unevenly developed, as is shown by their narrow, constricted chests, their limited lung capacity, their bowed backs. Living far from the world's activities, out of touch with modern progress, they are slower of thought, speech and action than the town-bred men, whose wits have been sharpened by a broader life. Also, as a rule, the city-bred man is apt to take more kindly to discipline than the young farmer or the young backwoodsman. In public school, in business office, store, shop or factory, the city man is accustomed to work under direction of others, to obey orders, and ability to obey orders is the root, basis, foundation and keystone combined of success in army or navy."