

Free Union of Hughes and Harding

By the Author of "The Mirrors of Washington"

LET me put two recent incidents that have caused much gossip in their proper light. Seen truly they illumine a personality and exhibit much of the actual state of our Government. I refer to President Harding's saying that the home islands of Japan were not covered by the assurances of the four-power pact after Secretary Hughes had announced several times that they were, and to the surprising story carried by all Associated Press newspapers that Mr. Hughes's famous detailed proposal with regard to Naval Limitation had been originated by Mr. Harding, having been all written down when the President had an opportunity to invite his soul in the quiet cabin of the Mayflower.

Upon the foundation of these two incidents a vast structure of conjecture was erected. Mr. Harding was, so the guesses ran, jealous of his Secretary's prominence; otherwise why the story, which, of course, must have been inspired by the White House, that the voice was the voice of Hughes, but the mind was the mind of Harding?

And, again, why should Mr. Harding interpret the pact one way when Mr. Hughes had more than once interpreted it the other way, unless the President wished to rebuke the overweening ambition of his Secretary?

Then came Mr. Hughes's partial discomfiture through French refusal to accept a rating as a world power imposed upon it by the Big Three, the failure to limit such warships as are within the reach of the poor, Mr. Hughes's obvious unhappiness, his loss of his confident manner, his tendency to explain, apologize and defend himself. Jealousy of the Secretary in the White House, ignoring of the President by the Secretary, or perhaps a rather crude public notice by the President to the Secretary that it was the Executive, not his subordinate, who made treaties, the partial failure of a Secretary conducting affairs with a high hand, his disappointment—why, of course, the Secretary would resign—he would resign!

Now let us look at the facts. There was not any malice in Mr. Harding's saying that the treaty meant one thing while Mr. Hughes said it meant another. And what actually happened acquits the President of jealousy, of lack of confidence, of a desire to rebuke presumption; on the contrary, it furnishes the best proof in the world that Mr. Harding takes the wisdom of his Secretary of State for granted and is more unceremonious than Chief Executives usually are. Mr. Harding is, of course, jealous of the prerogatives of his great office. But thinking, I should say, was not regarded as one of the prerogatives of that office. That is the prerogative of the best minds. Mr. Hughes is one of the best minds. The other best minds of the world were cooperating in the deepest international amity with Mr. Hughes's best mind. Was not that enough?

The Secretary did not from his intellectual eminence agree to a treaty and leave his President to find out what it meant from the reporters. Having accepted Mr. Balfour's suggestion that to balance the assurance of territorial integrity given to the Philippines, Australia and New Zealand, a similar assurance be extended to the home islands of Japan, the only extensive insular possessions Japan had in area covered by the pact, the Secretary of State went over to the White House and told the President what he had done.

There is no dispute about this. Upon reaching an agreement with Mr. Balfour and Admiral Kato about the meaning of the treaty Mr. Hughes promptly informed the President. The friends of Mr. Hughes say so—the friends of the President say so.

The fact that Japan's whole island territory had been assured while no other nation had fared so well in the pact did not register upon Mr. Harding's mind when it was presented by Mr. Hughes. The President did not perceive the political implications of what had been done. He readily accepts authority. The conference was an authority. It was a success. The best minds composed it. The conference had done this thing. That was enough. It was one of the

achievements of international cooperation and was promptly forgotten.

In the meantime, that is, between the day Mr. Hughes told Mr. Harding and that when Harding made his statement to the press, the newspapers had repeatedly printed the news that the American delegation had frankly acknowledged the inclusion of the Japanese Islands in the four-power pact. How, then, was the President not reminded of what his Secretary of State had said to him? Quite simple. He did not read the newspapers. He is not a habitual newspaper reader. I watched him at Marion during the campaign when his own election was at stake, and even then he did not follow closely what was printed about him. He is easily di-

Would a President jealous of the prominence that his Secretary of State was achieving fail to read with passionate interest every word that was appearing in the newspapers about that Secretary?

Of course, it is probable that Mr. Hughes did not stress the inclusion of the Japanese islands in telling Mr. Harding of it. It was not stressed in Mr. Hughes's own mind. When you sit pleasantly about a table with a couple of agreeable gentlemen, disposing of the fates of the world, you are lulled into a feeling that whatever you do is the most natural thing in the world. It happened to Mr. Wilson at Paris, and to Mr. Lodge here, who, being a poet, thought only of spreading the mantle of peace over lily islands in the Pacific. But a jealous mind in

the great speech he made during the treaty debate in the Senate, which the papers did not print. He will say of some current policy, "That occurred to me in Marion during the conferences there."

Never having been a prominent figure nationally till he was named for the Presidency, there is a sense, I suspect, that fame has never been quite just to him. He is not enough of an egotist to feel strongly about the great speech that was never published. He knows it was a great speech. He has since been elected President and that is a tremendous Q. E. D. about himself. Perhaps you have been misled by the fact that credit does not always fall where credit is due. Well, then, he wants you to know about that great speech. Perhaps you are not aware that he

claim. Well let him. But, among ourselves, I don't mind saying that I had that idea myself, in the cabin of the Mayflower." I am only guessing, but it is a guess based upon more than once hearing the President tell of great speeches and great ideas of his.

The President has the unconfident man's instinct for self-justification. Out in Marion Colonel Harvey laughed at *The Marion Star*. "What a make-up! Why did Mr. Harding print a period after the name Marion Star on the front page? Small town stuff and out of date. No real newspaper did it." Mr. Harding sent for the New York papers. *THE TIMES* had a similar period. The World had a period. Other papers had periods.

But it was not enough to overthrow the cocksure Colonel Harvey—Mr. Harding had to tell everybody about it. *The Star* was a great, up-to-date newspaper. It had a period just like *THE NEW YORK TIMES*. When you understand this incident you understand about the great speech and the great ideas.

It is as hard for the President and his Secretary of State to be disunited as it is for a husband and wife to separate. There are the children to be thought of. The children in this case are the acceptance of the treaties by the Senate, the election of a Republican Congress next Fall, the Republican victory in 1924.

Remember the last case of a President and his Secretary of State who were unhappy together, that of Mr. Wilson and of Mr. Lansing; a President and a Secretary who love each other like David and Jonathan may part company. It is at least possible for them to do so. But the last cause for which a political divorce is granted is incompatibility of temper.

Mr. Wilson disliked and condemned Mr. Lansing. Mr. Lansing felt ignored and almost insulted. But Mr. Lansing could not resign while the war lasted. It would have looked bad. He could not resign while peace was being made. That would have looked worse. He could not resign while the treaties were pending before the Senate. That would have imperiled their acceptance. He could not resign while Mr. Wilson was ill. That would have looked like desertion. Mr. Wilson suffered from a similar disability as to parting company with his despised Secretary, until finally, when all had gone to smash, he was free to show his wrath and dismiss him.

Now let us look at the children. Mr. Harding counted upon this conference to an extent which I am not at liberty to disclose for a victory in the Congressional elections next Fall. Disarmament of the world would disarm the Democratic Party. In the first moments of the acclaim which greeted Mr. Hughes's opening speech, a Republican Congress was elected and the present Administration had four years more. It was not a moment for showing spite.

Now there is room for argument about the results of the conference. Granted that the public will accept the conference as a success, which I think it will, it was not one of those great successes that stir the imagination and win votes among a people suffering from hard times. Mr. Harding must say that it was a success, say so as often as possible and bring the testimony of unnamed British statesmen and historians to its support.

Mr. Hughes, too, must say it was a success. It is probably the crowning act of his political life. For him to resign would be to raise questions. Granted that he hates Mr. Harding and that Mr. Harding is consumed with jealousy of him, they must live together. They must think of the children.

They must get the treaties through the Senate by mutual applause. They must stand hand in hand before the country when it votes next Fall. Isn't it in "The Circle" that the lady, after several years' experience of a free union, remarks that "it is a terrible thing to be bound to a man by his honor"? Even so, it is a terrible thing to be bound together by common success. It is an almost indissoluble union.

Fortunately, I think this an entirely happy one. It is as perfect as the period on the front page of *The Marion Star*.



"Still over and above Mr. Hughes and himself, a party to whose greater glory both are contributing."

verted, even from front page headlines. He sees many people. He is interested in politics and in personalities. He becomes engrossed in certain aspects of his task as chief executive. He is too good-hearted and kindly to be systematic. He does not organize his time so as to get everything done, and one of the things that goes by the board is the reading of the press.

Now take the failure to be impressed by what Mr. Hughes had said to him about the inclusion of Japan, the inattention to what the press was printing about that inclusion and consider what it all signifies. Of course it signifies that the President is easy going mentally and does not follow through hard upon the policies and ideas with which his Administration is dealing. But it means much more than that. Only a President who had the most perfect confidence in a subordinate would accept without inspection and question what that subordinate told him, would take it so readily for granted that it would be lost among the crowded impressions of the day.

the White House brooding over another's presumptuousness would have caught implications which had gone unperceived in the blandness of international conferences.

If further evidence is needed of the President's state of mind toward his chief subordinate, one has only to circulate among his old playmates of the Senate, those who do not rank among the best minds, those who give him his "mental relaxation," among whom one hears that "Warren is being spoiled by the high-brows Hughes and Hoover."

There still remains the publication of the story that Mr. Hughes's program of disarmament occurred to Mr. Harding himself in the seclusion of the Mayflower. I don't pretend to know how that story got into print. But I suspect that the President told it himself among his friends and that one of them repeated it to the reporter who wrote it.

Mr. Harding has the habit in private of claiming credit which he thinks is due him but which has not been given him publicly. He will tell you, whenever he gets a chance, of

originates policies. Well, then, here was one, struck off in the cabin of the Mayflower. It is a mild personal assertion, like writing something down in your diary so that future generations may get the record straight.

Mr. Harding's Administration is not a personal Government. There is room in it for a Cabinet officer who achieves more prominence than the President. In spite of blocs, in spite of Borahs and Johnsons, Mr. Harding lives under the illusion that this is a party Government. Mr. Hughes is one manifestation of the party. Mr. Harding is another. There is no more room for jealousy between them than there is for jealousy between the left hand and the right or between the brain and the eye. You may call it magnanimity, you may call it modesty, but it is really subordination to the illusion that this is still 1896 and that there is still over and above Mr. Hughes and himself a party, in the old sense of the word party, to whose greater glory both are contributing.

"Mr. Hughes is getting all the ac-