

THE ANTI-WILSON "MANIA"

Analyzed by One Who Finds the President as Lonely and Well-Hated as Lincoln in 1862

By FRANCIS KING CAREY.

ONCE upon a time a man with a doubtful sense of humor established a magazine which seems to have been designed to open its columns to writers whose views collided with those held by well-established public opinion, and he called it the Unpopular Review. It would not have been surprising if the editor of THE NEW YORK TIMES had referred the writer of this article to the magazine in question instead of publishing it himself, because it must be admitted at the outset that an attempt to swim up the strong current of the national and, to some extent, the international hysteria of anti-Wilson mania—it can be designated by no less forceful word—has in it elements of futility if not perverseness.

Conceding for the purposes of argument that the "fashion" of anti-Wilson feeling, resolving itself in very many quarters into well-defined and uncompromising hatred and even contempt, is only a "fashion" which will pass, and that there may be behind the public expressions of this feeling an unexpressed opinion which has only for a moment been silenced, it must be granted that, for the moment at least—to use a popular expression—Wilson has been "bawled out," and that in a great many quarters and by a great many different classes of people it is being either joyfully claimed or sadly admitted that Wilson is not only a "down and out failure," but has not been loyal even to his own causes and ideals, if, indeed, present-day criticism credits him with ever having truly stood for either a cause or an ideal worthy of remembrance.

It is both noteworthy and significant that Harvey's Weekly, which the editor of The New Republic would probably call the "Town Topics of Reactionary Politics," and The New Republic, which the editor of Harvey's Weekly would probably call the "Police Gazette of Applied Anarchy," alike exhaust the language of insult and contempt to describe him. In money-minded Wall Street, in culture-minded Boston, in practical-minded Chicago, in the fashionable clubs of men and women, and in the gatherings of Socialist, Communist and undesignated proletariat assemblies you can always "start something" to your personal discomfiture and eventual humiliation if you offer the barest suggestion that Wilson has or deserves any defense; and you will have a very lonely time if you undertake to offer any. Even among men who have been counted his political friends and supporters you will find many who have grown weary of swim-

ming against the current and who let themselves down with the statement that they are still loyal but sorrowing.

Comparison with Lincoln.

If you leave out of account a few professional "uplifters," a few professional pacifists and the negligible array of office-holding men and women who look to him and his Administration for their daily bread, you will be forced to conclude that at present Wilson—slowly and heroically recovering from a terrifying illness, which would have long ago sent into retirement a less brave or a less determined man—is as lonely and well hated a President as Abraham Lincoln was in the year of grace 1862!

But what will history say?

Men who have reached and passed the chloroform age of three score years, if they have led and are still leading a reasonably normal and active business and professional life, acquire the habit not only of looking backward over the considerable tract of time which their lives have covered, but of looking forward—say for another score of years—and, after applying their practical experience, be it small or considerable, to the judgment of events which are passing in review before them; try to project their minds into the future and to inquire dispassionately what will be the judgment of twenty years hence, because experience has taught them that the judgment of the world, recorded in history "twenty years hence," has an exasperating way of reversing the judgments inspired by the fashions, hysterias and the manias of the passing moment.

The reason for this is not far to seek. History, in the first place, is much more concerned with the record of results than with the record of the instruments which have been selected to bring the results about. Because this is true, history is rather disquietingly disposed to measure men who have played prominent parts in shaping great events rather from the standpoint of the event itself than from the standpoint of the personal characteristics of the man. And history is a "wise guy" on the subject of manias and fashions and hysterias and is singularly uninfluenced and unastonished by them.

Twenty Years After.

Of course, it is a rather happy fact that in only rare cases men live long enough to suffer the supreme mortification of discovering "twenty years hence" that they had allowed their judgments to be warped by passing "fashion" and that they had actually stood in the presence of a great event without for a moment grasping either its greatness or its significance; and that they had been really guilty of a

form of political "provincialism," or, as our English friends would say, "parochialism." It would, moreover, be the refinement of cruelty to reincarnate those of our ancestors who burnt witches, glorified dueling, backed the slave trade, &c., if at the same time you gave them the attitude of the present moment toward these human foibles. And that train of thought is what makes the man of sixty a bit reserved about feeling sure that even a reasonably well concerted public opinion of today will be indorsed by history written twenty years hence.

When Tennyson sang of that
" * * * one far off divine event
" Toward which the whole creation
moves "

he was probably a good enough historian to realize that this "one" event was really a composite of many events which made up the life and progress of a nation or which represented the slow and painful climb of civilization toward the light. So far as the short career of the United States is concerned—up at least to the nomination and election of Wilson—the composite "event" of its development was represented in outline by the Revolutionary War, the successful conduct and conclusion of which are associated with Washington; the civil war, which ended with the saving of the Union and the abolition of slavery under the guidance of Lincoln, and the curbing of special privilege and the cutting of the tie between rotten politics and rotten corporate misbehavior, for which Roosevelt will always be justly given the credit.

The corporation lawyer, whose professional duties necessarily made him an intimate of Wall Street and of the great railway, banking and other corporate interests there centred, likes to forget, if he can—so recent is this particular "event"—that he united in expressing an enraged public belief, emanating from Wall Street, and quickly poisoning the public opinion of the whole nation, that Roosevelt had paresis! In other words, the fashion and hysteria of the period which covered Roosevelt's second term led wise and patriotic men to believe sincerely and declare openly that Roosevelt's radical and, as it turned out, his successful efforts to arrest the grossness of legislative and corporate corruption—the corporate control of legislative bodies, the corporate subscription to corruptly used election funds, the exploitation by privileged interests of public franchises, the grant to great corporations of railway rebates, &c.—were marks of approaching insanity, of which his intense egotism and arbitrary reliance on his personal judgment were well recognized symptoms.

So close at hand is this event that men need not read history or biography to refresh their memories or regret their mistakes; but most of us have to turn to history and biography both to learn a similar lesson from Lincoln and the civil war, and all of us have to do so before we can be induced to believe that the Great Father of his Country was during his second Administration almost, if not quite so much, the victim of the

hatred and contempt of his fellow-men as Wilson himself.

Indeed, so far as the printed page is concerned it is hard to match even in the unrestrained public press of today in its treatment of Wilson the brutality, insult and viciousness of the newspaper attacks upon Washington, who, it might be supposed, had so far won the gratitude and admiration of his countrymen as to enshrine him forever in their affection and veneration. As for Lincoln, who preserved the nation which Washington had created, can we match in Washington's day or in Roosevelt's day or in Wilson's day the sneers and contempt which dogged his footsteps until the day of his assassination? To most readers of the "Education of Henry Adams" the thrilling chapters are those which record the experiences of the young private secretary of the American Minister to the Court of St. James's during the terrible years of the civil war in this country, and nowhere can one find better described the sincerity with which the English gentlemen and statesmen really despised Lincoln.

From many standpoints the anti-Wilson bitterness of today is restrained by the fact that Wilson has the record of a well-bred man of the world and by his admitted learning as a student and fame as a historian. Lincoln, in his uncouthness and his ignorance of the ways and manners of the world, could interpose no such barrier to the avalanche of malice and hatred which was unremittingly his portion. But history shows no recollection of or concern with the criticisms of Washington or Lincoln. Ask Mr. Asquith, Lord Grey, Lord Bryce or any other great English statesman of today for the name of the greatest American and he will give you Lincoln's, and today's judgment of the American people will couple Washington's name with Lincoln's and stand in hearty agreement. If history is not yet prepared to write Roosevelt's name on the same tablet with Washington and Lincoln, who doubts that it will some day be written there?

But if Washington's one track led to the creation of the nation, and Lincoln's one track led to its preservation from disunion, and Roosevelt's one track led to its second preservation by stopping the corruption of its governmental sources—to what terminal point will history say that Wilson's one track has led? Is it not reasonably probable that when history is written it will concern itself little with but one conclusion, namely, that Wilson was chosen—by God, or, if you please, by fate, or by national evolution—to see to it that the war did not end without the creation of some form of international legal organization around which should revolve, under the leadership of the United States, a bona fide effort to make wars of aggression difficult and unpopular; to combat the fool notion that war is a legitimate, if not a desirable, "out-of-door sport" for civilization, and to make it as unfashionable as public opinion has finally made the duel, the slave trade, the lottery and the drunkard—and that he "delivered the goods"!