

Tucholsky Wagner Zola Scott
Turgenev Wallace Fonatne Sydon Freud Schlegel
Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Friedrich II. von Preußen
Weber Freiligrath Frey
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel
Engels Fielding Hölderlin Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Rathenau Dostojewski Ganghofer
Trackl Stevenson Lichtenberg Doyle Gjellerup
Mommsen Thoma Tolstoi Lenz Hambruch Droste-Hülshoff
Dach Thoma von Arnim Hägele Hanrieder Hauptmann Humboldt
Karrillon Reuter Verne Rousseau Hagen Hauff Baudelaire Gautier
Garschin Defoe Hebbel Hegel Kussmaul Herder
Damaschke Descartes Schopenhauer Bebel Proust
Wolfram von Eschenbach Darwin Dickens Grimm Jerome Rilke George
Bronner Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Herodot
Bismarck Vigny Gengenbach Barlach Heine Grillparzer Georgy
Storm Casanova Lessing Langbein Gilm Gryphius
Chamberlain Schiller Lafontaine Iffland Sokrates
Brentano Strachwitz Katharina II. von Rußland Bellamy Schilling Kralik Gibbon Tschchow
Löns Hesse Hoffmann Gogol Wilde Gleim Vulpius
Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Klee Hölty Morgenstern Goedicke
Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Homer Kleist Mörike Musil
Luxemburg La Roche Horaz Kraus
Machiavelli Kierkegaard Kraft Kraus
Navarra Aurel Musset Lamprecht Kind Kirchhoff Hugo Moltke
Nestroy Marie de France Laotse Ipsen Liebknecht
Nietzsche Nansen Lassalle Gorki Klett Leibniz Ringelntz
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Woodrow Wilson as I Know Him

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Imprint

This book is part of the TREDITION CLASSICS series.

Author: Joseph P. Tumulty

Cover design: toepferschumann, Berlin (Germany)

Publisher: tredition GmbH, Hamburg (Germany)

ISBN: 978-3-8491-5589-6

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WOODROW WILSON AS I KNOW HIM

BY

JOSEPH P. TUMULTY

To

the memory of my dear mother Alicia Tumulty whose spirit of
generosity, loyalty, and tolerance I trust will be found in the lines of
this book

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

In preparing this volume I have made use of portions of the following books: "The War The World and Wilson" by George Creel; "What Wilson Did at Paris," by Ray Stannard Baker; "Woodrow Wilson and His Work" by William E. Dodd; "The Panama Canal Tolls Controversy" by Hugh Gordon Miller and Joseph C. Freehoff; "Woodrow Wilson the Man and His Work" by Henry Jones Ford; "The Real Colonel House" by Arthur D. Howden Smith; "The Foreign Policy of Woodrow Wilson" by Edgar E. Robinson and Victor J. West. In addition, I wish to make acknowledgment to the following books for incidental assistance: "My Four Years in Germany" by James W. Gerard; "Woodrow Wilson, An Interpretation" by A. Maurice Low; "A People Awakened" by Charles Reade Bacon; "Woodrow Wilson" by Hester E. Hosford; "What Really Happened at Paris," edited by Edward Mandell House and Charles Seymour, and above all, to the public addresses of Woodrow Wilson. I myself had furnished considerable data for various books on Woodrow Wilson and have felt at liberty to make liberal use of some portions of these sources as guide posts for my own narrative.

PREFACE

Woodrow Wilson prefers not to be written about. His enemies may, and of course will, say what they please, but he would like to have his friends hold their peace. He seems to think and feel that if he himself can keep silent while his foes are talking, his friends should be equally stoical. He made this plain in October, 1920, when he learned that I had slipped away from my office at the White House one night shortly before the election and made a speech about him in a little Maryland town, Bethesda. He did not read the speech, I am sure he has never read it, but the fact that I had made any sort of speech about him, displeased him. That was one of the few times in my long association with him that I found him distinctly cold. He said nothing, but his silence was vocal.

I suspect this book will share the fate of the Bethesda speech, will not be read by Mr. Wilson. If this seems strange to those who do not know him personally, I can only say that "Woodrow Wilson is made that way." He cannot dramatize himself and shrinks from attempts of others to dramatize him. "I will not write about myself," is his invariable retort to friends who urge him to publish his own story of the Paris Peace Conference. He craves the silence from others which he imposes upon himself. He is quite willing to leave the assessment and interpretation of himself to time and posterity. Knowing all this I have not consulted him about this book. Yet I have felt that the book should be written, because I am anxious that his contemporaries should know him as I have known him, not only as an individual but also as the advocate of a set of great ideas and as the leader of great movements. If I can picture him, even imperfectly, as I have found him to be, both in himself and in his relationship to important events, I must believe that the portrait will correct some curious misapprehensions about him.

For instance, there is a prevalent idea, an innocently ignorant opinion in some quarters, an all too sedulously cultivated report in

other quarters, that he has been uniformly headstrong, impatient of advice, his mind hermetically closed to counsel from others. This book will expose the error of that opinion; will show how, in his own words, his mind was "open and to let," how he welcomed suggestions and criticism. Indeed I fear that unless the reader ponders carefully what I have written he may glean the opposite idea, that sometimes the President had to be prodded to action, and that I represent myself as the chief prodder.

The superficial reader may find countenance lent to this latter view in the many notes of information and advice which I addressed to the President and in the record of his subsequent actions which were more or less in accord with the counsel contained in some of these notes. If the reader deduces from this the conclusion that I was the instigator of some of the President's important policies, he will misinterpret the facts and the President's character and mental processes; if he concludes that I am trying to represent myself as the instigator he will misunderstand my motives in publishing these notes.

These motives are: first, to tell the story of my association with Mr. Wilson, and part of the record is contained in these notes; secondly, to show what liberty he allowed me to suggest and criticize; how, so far from being offended, he welcomed counsel. Having this privilege I exercised it. I conceived it as part of my duty as his secretary and friend to report to him my own interpretations of facts and public opinion as I gathered these from newspapers and conversations, and sometimes to suggest modes of action. These notes were memoranda for my chief's consideration.

The reader will see how frankly critical some of these notes are. The mere fact that the President permitted me to continue to write to him in a vein of candour that was frequently brusque and blunt, is the conclusive answer to the charge that he resented criticism.

Contrary to the misrepresentations, he had from time to time many advisers. In most instances, I do not possess written reports of what others said orally and in writing, and therefore in this record, which is essentially concerned with my own official and personal relations with him, I may seem to represent myself as a preponderating influence. This is neither the fact nor my intention. The public

acts of Mr. Wilson were frequently mosaics, made up of his own ideas and those of others. My written notes were merely stones offered for the mosaic. Sometimes the stones were rejected, sometimes accepted and shaped by the master builder into the pattern.

It was a habit of Mr. Wilson's to meditate before taking action, to listen to advice without comment, frequently without indicating whether or not the idea broached by others had already occurred to him. We who knew him best knew that often the idea had occurred to him and had been thought out more lucidly than any adviser could state it. But he would test his own views by the touchstone of other minds' reactions to the situations and problems which he was facing and would get the "slant" of other minds.

He was always ahead of us all in his thinking. An admirer once said: "You could shut him up in an hermetically sealed room and trust him to reach the right decision," but as a matter of fact he did not work that way. He sought counsel and considered it and acted on it or dismissed it according to his best judgment, for the responsibility for the final action was his, and he was boldly prepared to accept that responsibility and conscientiously careful not to abuse it by acting rashly. While he would on occasion make momentous decisions quickly and decisively, the habitual character of his mind was deliberative. He wanted all the facts and so far as possible the contingencies. Younger men like myself could counsel immediate and drastic action, but even while we were advising we knew that he would, without haste and without waste, calmly calculate his course. What, coming from us, were merely words, would, coming from him, constitute acts and a nation's destiny. He regarded himself as the "trustee of the people," who should not act until he was sure he was right and should then act with the decision and finality of fate itself.

Of another misapprehension, namely, that Mr. Wilson lacks human warmth, I shall let the book speak without much prefatory comment. I have done my work ill indeed if there does not emerge from the pages a human-hearted man, a man whose passion it was to serve mankind. In his daily intercourse with individuals he showed uniform consideration, at times deep tenderness, though he did not have in his possession the little bag of tricks which some

politicians use so effectively: he did not clap men on their backs, call them by their first names, and profess to each individual he met that of all the men in the world this was the man whom he most yearned to see. Perhaps he was too sincere for that; perhaps by nature too reserved; but I am convinced that he who reads this book will feel that he has met a man whose public career was governed not merely by a great brain, but also by a great heart. I did not invent this character. I observed him for eleven years.

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WOODROW WILSON AS I KNOW HIM

CHAPTER I

THE POLITICAL LABORATORY

My introduction to politics was in the Fifth Ward of Jersey City, New Jersey, which for many years was the "Bloody Angle" of politics of the city in which I lived. Always Democratic, it had been for many years the heart and centre of what New Jersey Democrats were pleased to call the great Gibraltar of Democracy. The ward in which I lived was made up of the plainest sort of people, a veritable melting pot of all races, but with a predominance of Irish, Germans, and Italians, between whom it was, like ancient Gaul, divided into three parts.

My dear father, Philip Tumulty, a wounded soldier of the Civil War, after serving an apprenticeship as an iron moulder under a delightful, whole-souled Englishman, opened a little grocery store on Wayne Street, Jersey City, where were laid the foundation stones of his modest fortune and where, by his fine common sense, poise, and judgment, he soon established himself as the leader of a Democratic faction in that neighbourhood. This modest little place soon became a political laboratory for me. In the evening, around the plain, old-fashioned counters, seated upon barrels and boxes, the interesting characters of the neighbourhood gathered, representing as they did the leading active political forces in that quaint cosmopolitan community.

No matter how far back my memory turns, I cannot recall when I did not hear politics discussed—not ward politics only, but frequently the politics of the nation and the world. In that grocery

store, from the lips of the plainest folk who came there, were carried on serious discussions of the tariff, the money question, our foreign relations, and all phases of the then famous Venezuelan question, which in those days threatened to set two continents on fire.

The make-up of the little "cabinet" or group which surrounded my father was most interesting. There was Mr. Alexander Hamill, the father of Congressman Hamill of Jersey City, a student of Queen's College in Ireland and who afterward taught in the National Schools of Ireland, a well-read, highly cultured, broad-minded man of affairs; and dear Uncle Jimmie Kelter, almost a centenarian, whose fine old gray hair gave him the appearance of a patriarch. Uncle Jimmie nightly revelled in the recital to those who were present as ready listeners, his experience when he was present at a session of the House of Parliament in London and heard the famous Irish statesman, Daniel O'Connell, denounce England's attitude of injustice toward Catholic emancipation. He loved to regale the little group that encircled him by reciting from memory the great speech of Robert Emmett from the dock, and excerpts from the classic speeches of the leading Irish orators like Curran, Sheridan, and Fox.

While these discussions in the little store wended their uneasy way along, a spark of humour was often injected into them by the delightful banter of a rollicking, good-natured Irishman, a big two-fisted fellow, generous-hearted and lovable, whom we affectionately called "Big Phil." I can see him now, standing like a great pyramid in the midst of the little group, every now and then throwing his head back in good-natured abandon, recounting wild and fantastic tales about the fairies and banshees of the Old Land from whence he had come. When his listeners would turn away, with skepticism written all over their countenances, he would turn to me, whose youthful enthusiasm made me an easy victim upon which to work his magic spell in the stories which he told of the wonders of the Old Land across the sea.

I loved these delightful little gatherings in whose deliberations my dear father played so notable a part. Those kind folk, now off the stage, never allowed the spirit of provincialism to guide their judgment or their attitude toward great public affairs. I recall with pleasure their tolerance, their largeness of view, and fine magna-

nimity which raised every question they discussed to a high level. They were a very simple folk, but independent in their political actions and views. Into that little group of free, independent political thinkers would often come a warning from the Democratic boss of the city that they must follow with undivided allegiance the organization's dictum in political matters and not seek to lead opinion in the community in which they lived. Supremely indifferent were these fine old chaps to those warnings, and unmindful of political consequences. They felt that they had left behind them a land of oppression and they would not submit to tyrannous dictation in this free land of ours, no matter who sought to exert it.

In this political laboratory I came in contact with the raw materials of political life that, as an older man, I was soon to see moulded into political action in a larger way in the years to come. I found in politics that the great policies of a nation are simply the policies and passions of the ward extended. In the little discussions that took place in that store, I was, even as a youth, looking on from the sidelines, struck by the fine, wholesome, generous spirit of my own father. Never would he permit, for instance, in the matter of the discussion of Ireland—so dear to his heart—a shade of resentment or bitterness toward England to influence his judgment in the least, for he believed that no man could be a just judge in any matter where his mind was filled with passion; and so in this matter, the subject of such fierce controversy, as in every other, he held a judgment free and far away from his passionate antagonisms. I found in the simple life of the community where I was brought up the same human things, in a small way, that I was subsequently to come in contact with in a larger way in the whirligig of political life in the Capitol of the Nation. I found the same relative bigness and the same relative smallness, the same petty jealousies and rivalries which manifest themselves in the larger fields of a great nation's life; the same good nature, and the same deep humanity expressing itself in the same way, only differently apparelled.

One of the most interesting places in the world for the study of human character is the country store or the city grocery. I was able as a boy standing behind the counter of the little grocery store to study people; and intimately to become acquainted with them and their daily lives and the lives of their women and children. I never

came in contact with their daily routine, their joys and sorrows, their bitter actualities and deep tragedies, without feeling rise in me a desire to be of service. I remember many years ago, seated behind the counter of my father's grocery store, with what passionate resentment I read the vivid headlines of the metropolitan newspapers and the ghastly accounts of the now famous Homestead Strike of 1892. Of course, I came to realize in after years that the headlines of a newspaper are not always in agreement with the actual facts; but I do recall how intently I pored over every detail of this tragic story of industrial war and how, deep in my heart, I resented the efforts of a capitalistic system that would use its power in this unjust, inhuman way. Little did I realize as I pored over the story of this tragedy in that far-off day that some time, seated at my desk at the White House in the office of the secretary to the President of the United States, I would have the pleasure of meeting face to face the leading actor in this lurid drama, Mr. Andrew Carnegie himself, and of hearing from his own lips a human and intelligent recital of the events which formed the interesting background of the Homestead Strike.

CHAPTER II

DOING THE POLITICAL CHORES

For the young man who wishes to rise in the politics of a great city there is no royal road to preferment but only a plain path of modest service uncomplainingly rendered. Of course, there seem to be exceptions to this rule. At times it is possible for the scion of a great family to rise to temporary distinction in politics without a preliminary course in the school of local politics, for as a Democratic boss once said to me: "Great family names are fine window-dressers," but in my own experience I have seen the disappointing end of careers thus begun and have found that sometimes after a great name has been temporarily used to meet certain political emergencies, the would-be politician is quickly thrust aside to make