

II

In the League of Nations, however, Mr. Wilson had a great moral, human and almost divine conception and it is impossible to believe that he was possessed as many of his opponents suggest by sheer desire for personal glory and a great place in history. In Paris he was in a strange atmosphere and France had no sympathy with his idealism. He was perhaps too anxious to dominate the Peace Congress and too fearful of any open alliance with Great Britain. He was rash and inconsiderate in dealing with Italy and possibly his "open diplomacy" had some of the characteristics of competitive journalism. But when the Conference ended he stood foremost among the statesmen of the world and even in his own country he seemed to hold a position of absolute pre-eminence.

There were, however, those in influential places in his own party, actuated by conviction or smarting under long-hoarded grievances, or governed by personal ambition, who saw that there were formidable elements in the United States which could be moved to oppose any definite alliance with European nations, while among Republicans there was bitter resentment over his single-handed action at Paris and failure to associate any of the Republican leaders with the great negotiation which followed a war in which Republicans had devoted themselves to all military and patriotic objects with a zeal and devotion as eager and single-minded as Democrats had displayed. Indeed with singular arrogance and unwisdom he set even the Democratic leaders of Congress aside and seemed to arrogate to himself all the authority of an autocrat. Thus he excited the uncompromising and unrelenting hostility of Republicans and alienated the sympathy of powerful men in his own party without whose loyal support he could not prevail in Congress or in the country.

There is reason to think that if he had shown a more accommodating temper a compromise could have been effected with Republicans in the Senate which would have been equivalent to substantial acceptance of the Covenants of the League of Nations. This clearly was the view of Viscount Grey or his now famous letter to *The Times* would not have been written. This, too, was the hope and confidence of Mr. Taft who has revealed throughout the whole controversy a freedom from narrow prejudices, a great-mindedness, a conception of public duty, and a high concern for the honour of his nation and the common welfare of mankind which should give his name an imperishable lustre in history. But Mr. Wilson was determined that the contract to which he had set his hand at Paris should be accepted without a single alteration or amendment. He would not conciliate nor bargain nor admit that there could be force in any contention of his opponents. It may be that the Republicans exploited the situation for party advantage but probably they also believed that the President was more concerned to achieve a personal triumph than to unite Congress in support of the best agreement that could be obtained. There is no evidence that Mr. Wilson has lost the respect of the thinking and independent section of the American people but he has achieved a remarkable unpopularity with Republican partisans and failed to secure the affection of those in his own party with whom he would have done well to take counsel, but to whom he would give only orders.

III

So he has earned the distrust of the leaders in industry and a great section of the conservative classes who believe that he is the dangerous ally of impracticable idealists and revolutionary agitators. When all is said the forces of individualism and conservatism are probably stronger in the United States than in any other country and apparently these forces are behind the Repub-