THE COURIER

Vol. XXI.

March 10th, 1917

No. 15

THE PRESIDENT NEXT DOOR

MONG the big-man characters of the present muddle known as the world, the head of the world's greatest republic, must be estimated in comparison with Kaisers, Kings, and Premiers. He may not like it—or he may. That makes no difference. The benant of the White House, now more than ever in fifty years, must be in the world's judgment.

Just to get away from calling the President of the United States a super-anything, let us call him The Fourth Dimension. That puts Woodrow Wilson at once in a class by himself. I don't know what the fourth dimension is. Neither does the President. Anyway, it's not merely physical.

It's psychic. Try to calculate the cubic contents of a diamond, and you'll see how psychic it is. The diamond is a kind of fourth dimension. It has something more than length, breadth and height. And that is why this long-faced, earnest-looking mentality in the White House is such a baffling person; why his own party sometimes regards him as a sphinx; why Congress considers him its prize puzzle; and why the nation, the Deople, the polyglot commonwealth under one flag, hopeless of comprehending the man Woodrow Wilson, cheer like blazes for—The President.

In all other recent occupants of the White House there was none of this miracle business. Taft never needed an interpreter. Roosevelt was no more mysterious than a broncho. McKinley was a kindly, calculating big man, and a Methodist. Cleveland always made the people feel like saying "Good old Grover!" Back of these again came the uninspiring Harrison, the oratorical, somewhat heroic Garfield—and that leads us by a jump or two back to the greatest of them all, Abraham Lincoln.

Now we must go back to Lincoln to get the real Perspective on Wilson; not because the two men are at all alike, but because 1865 is most like 1915. In 1865 a peculiar kind of man met the emergency in the United States. And to use an Americanism-he got away with it. In 1915 another peculiar sort of personality is face-up with a national emergency. Different? Yes, as much as Wilson is from Lincoln. Bigger? Nobody knows. It's a much bigger country, more complex, more disturbing, twice as many People, a conglomerate congress of all Europe under one flag. This man, Woodrow Wilson, has taken on the emergency of 1915 and after. Will he get away with it? Heaven only knows. There was real War in 1861-65. A nation came out of it. Europe and business has tried to snow that nation under. Maybe war is the only force that will bring the nation out again. If it does, Woodrow Wilson will go down to history arm-in-arm with Abe Lincoln. But Lincoln Was a great, humorous, moral man-figure, big enough to inspire any free people.

WOODROW WILSON so far is the fourth dimension. Lincoln was humorous; Wilson is intellectual. Lincoln was Morality in action; Wilson is—Eithics in a state of unstable equilibrium. Lincoln was truly psychic. Wilson is psychological. Lincoln was a real message to humanity, plain as an old song. Wilson would be the voice of America, whatever it may be, heard all over the world.

Destiny has played pranks with Mr. Wilson. So it did with Napoleon and Caesar. Born a plain intellectual, schooled to the limit, passionate after books and historical lore, keen upon political analysis and the study of constitutions, learned in plain law, football coach when a young man, a college president with an appetite for belies lettres and all that sort of thing—how did he ever suspect that the mere accident of his being born in the United States would



A Study in the Fourth Dimension

By AUGUSTUS BRIDLE.

Drawing by T. W. McLean

pluck him from the common rabble of pure-thoughters and place him upon the throne of the United States?

We may as well call it by a plain poker name. The man who, whatever his previous character and experience, is pitchforked by the gods into the greatest reward of personal ambition in this world, the Presidency of the world's greatest republic—which is not a democracy—must be regarded for one or two quadrenniums as a king. In fact he is more. Cartoonists and editors don't, as a rule, lampoon, their own kings. But the ancients used to take great liberties with some of the folk that were higher than kings, just to show that they liked them. These were gods.

It's a great national satisfaction for the people who spend money and time to elect a man to that eminence to remember that by some varied turn of the wheel any one of them might have been in his place. Hence the Democratic chairman of a leading State being in Washington at one time sent word through Secretary Tumulty that he would like to have a word with the man he had done so much to elect. President Wilson sent back a little handscript footnote to the typewritten memo, as he always does asking the Chairman to wait till next day. The Chairman waited, called at the White House, found himself in the line-up along with the cork-leg veteran from Shiloh, was rewarded with a clammy handshake and a how-de-do and left the city wondering why

He spent so much of a big intellect trying to think himself into harmony with the will of the people that he had very little time for the intuition which, in some men, makes action the first essential of great statesmanship. he had wasted that 24 hours.

A new congressman, anxious to impress his outwest electors with the fact that the President really didn't dislike him, tried to see Mr. Wilson. He confessed that when his "folk back home" asked him how the President talked to him on the German question, he wanted to tell them.

"See Tumulty," said the friend. "He'll fix you up."

"Nothing doing," said the Congressman. "I've tried that game. Can't work it."

And the Congressman went back home without even seeing the great man, whose slap on the back would have made it fifty per cent. easier to win another election.

Which is playing the mystery game a little stronger than most Hindu gods ever do. They are at least on their pedestals for the people to see them, no matter whereabouts in the clouds their souls may be communing with the immortals.

Yet in Washington they tell you that the President is not an aloof man. Granting that he is a high intellectual and all that, perhaps the greatest scholar that ever occupied the White House, they remind you that he takes his own notes in shorthand, and when he has a little memorandum that he wants to present to Congress, he steps up to a little typewriter and types out the message or the insert with his own hand. No doubt that little typewriter feels about as aristocratic as the piano played by Paderewski.

BRIDL

A Sa baseball fan he is second only to Taft, and as a devotee of Keith's Theatre the President has made vaudeville the latest thing out for the Washington 400. Moreover, we do not forget that he is happily married to a very charming second wife, who is the real life of all White House functions and takes a huge load of merely physical sociability off her husband's hands. A handshaking scrimmage leaves him as limp as a dishrag, her as fresh as a dewdrop daisy.

So Woodrow Wilson, pedestalite, mystery-man, cold intellectual, seems to be a very human sort of person. Besides, he changes his mind about some political matters about as often as a woman changes hers about a hat.

Wilson has been accused of many things. Canadians think he is the President of a united state of inaction; his notes to the belligerent powers proclaim him at once an idealist and a meddler; does not understand practical politics; fails to grasp the real logic of events; is misled by his own theories of government instead of being either educated or unduly influenced by advisers; has been the author of more impolitie and unwise phrases than any other President of our times; so the critics say. Then they call to witness his various stands on the Mexican situation; his action in regard to the railway strike last summer; his apparent playing into the hands of the labour unions as against the railway corporations; his subjection to Bryan because a section of the Democratic party demanded it; his opposition to Garrison Secretary of War on the preparedness issue; his subsequent pre-election shout for preparedness and his prediction that never again in a world war could the United States be neutral, in face of the fact that he took punctilious and pious care when war broke out to define American neutrality as no other President had ever done; his failure to protest to Germany against the invasion of Belgium; the memorable "shaking his fist first and finger afterwards," as Elihu Root put it, referring to Wilson's protests to Germany on the submarine outrages. All these and a hundred other