

Founding the United Nations

Paul-Boncour — all spoke out of long experience and were impressive. True, they said nothing, but this seemed an occasion when nothing was better than too much. President Truman made a sensible, undistinguished speech — just too long. (He looks like a sparrow, little, old, small-town, American housewife who could shut the door very firmly in the face of travelling salesmen and tramps.) He got the biggest hand from the audience and after him Halifax. They fell completely for Halifax's gilt-edged "niceness." What with tributes to the Great Deceased and bouquets to each other and commendatory remarks on the good work accomplished, the whole thing reminded one of speech day at school. In front of me the Argentine Ambassador and his pretty daughter applauded with polite enthusiasm. There were only two cracks in the surface — one was when Masaryk, the Czech Foreign Minister, said at the close of his speech, "Let us for God's sake hear less talk of the next world war." And the other (for me at least) was when Stettinius asked us to stand "in silent memory of the dead in this war whose sacrifice had made this Conference possible." I suppose it had to be said — it sounded as if we were thanking Lady Bountiful for lending her garden "without which this bazaar would not have been possible." As a matter of fact I did think of some of the dead — of Victor

Gordon-Ives, who wanted to go on living and to enjoy country-house culture, collect beautiful things and make jokes with his friends — of John Rowley and Gavin Rainnie and the other Canadians whose prompt reaction would have been "Balls to you, brother!" Still, I suppose it had to be said, but not by Stettinius in the San Francisco Opera House on a gala evening to the polite applause of the Argentine Ambassador.

5 July 1945. *Halifax, Nova Scotia.*

Back in my own country among my own people — how different from the easy-going superficial Californians. The surface layer here as everywhere is Americanisation — the climate that extends over the whole of this continent — the whole Anglo-Saxon world — babbity — but here it is a peculiar brand of babbity without optimism, and it is not deep. Underneath is a queer compound of philosophical pessimism, of rooted old prejudice, of practical kindness to the neighbour and the unfortunate, of unkindness towards the prosperous, something which has been ironed out in the prosperous fat lands of Upper Canada but which still grows on this rocky soil. □

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