

only man whose eloquence might have outmatched that of Antony, so, for the same motive, did Woodrow Wilson reject the services of Roosevelt when the latter begged to be allowed to lead a division of volunteers to France. Had Wilson possessed sufficient magnanimity and far-sightedness to enlist Roosevelt on his side, the course of American political history would have been changed, for Roosevelt could have provided the crowd mind with an idol, whereas Wilson, like Brutus, could only offer an ideal.

Wilson, like Brutus, made the fatal mistake of underestimating his opponents. The contempt of the stern moralist, Brutus, for the reckless libertine, Antony, which misled him into ignoring danger from such a source, finds its echo in Woodrow Wilson's justifiable but most ill-advised sneer at the pygmy minds of his senatorial opponents. Even as Brutus wricked the cause of his party by a blunder in military strategy, the descent from his safe position in the hills to meet his enemies upon ground of their own choosing, so did Woodrow Wilson wreck his cause by a blunder in political strategy, the appeal to the people for a Democratic Congress at the elections of 1918, an appeal which outraged the popular sentiment that war should call a halt to partisan politics, and which united in opposition to the administration all the discordant factions of Republicanism.

So striking is the parallelism that the cause of the downfall of both these idealists may be expressed in words which Lawrence Houseman, in his admirable little play The Instrument, puts into the mouth of Woodrow Wilson: "Too much faith, not in what I stood for, but in myself." And again: "I haven't the faculty of letting others think for me." And from the same play we may borrow the words which sum up the pathos of the fate of both: "To be so sure that I was right, and yet to fail"; for the tragedy of the idealist is never the fall of the individual but the failure of his cause.

Even as Brutus exclaimed:

"If it be aught toward the general good,
Set honor in one eye and death in the other,
And I will look on both indifferently."

So Woodrow Wilson quoted with application to himself the words of Shakespeare's Henry the Fifth:

"For if it be a sin to covet honor,
I am the most offending soul alive,"

and on his fatal tour of the country on behalf of the League of Nations, a journey undertaken against the urgent advice of his physician, he again and again proclaimed the glory of dying for a great cause, and once said that he himself would gladly die to bring peace to the world.

And both men, indeed, welcomed death after the shattering of their life's ambition. The resigned "I am ready to go" of the dying Woodrow Wilson finds its poetic anticipation in the words of Brutus:

"Night hangs upon mine eyes, my bones would rest,
That have but labored to attain this hour."

Of the two men, Woodrow Wilson suffered the more pitiful fate. He was doomed to outlive the shattering of his ideal and to see the world a prey to bitter national rivalries, while his own country stood aloof in selfish isolation. Fortune, however, spared him the most unkindest cut of all, the overwhelming repudiation of his ideal by the party he had led so long, yet which after all did "stand but in a forced affection."