

# The True Story Of Woodrow Wilson

By DAVID LAWRENCE

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## Chapter XVI

### Wilson and Colonel House

Selection of the Cabinet of President Wilson was a unique process probably without parallel in American history. It is doubtful whether any one played a greater part in the making of the Cabinet than Colonel House.

The development of the friendship between the quiet man from Texas and Woodrow Wilson was as remarkable as their subsequent separation under circumstances all the more amazing to relate when the full story of their association is told.

Colonel House was first of all a man of independent means, a liberal in politics and of influential personality. His tact and diplomacy, his progressiveness and unselfishness, captured Mr. Wilson's imagination.

"What I like about Colonel House," explained Governor Wilson one day to a group of newspaper men who displayed curiosity about the growing friendship, "is that he holds things at arm's length—objectively. He seems able to penetrate a proposition and get to its very essence quickly. He wants nothing for himself. He will not hold office and is a truly disinterested friend—the most valuable possession a man could have."

In those weeks preceding the inauguration of Mr. Wilson, Colonel House did an extraordinary thing which from that day to this has not been disclosed in print, but it shows the remarkable influence he possessed. As will be remembered by those who follow the stock market, the uncertainty over what the new Democratic Administration might do had an unsettling effect in the financial district—at least so claimed the leading financiers, some of whom kept hinting that, unless the uncertainty was allayed, a panic might even follow the inauguration of the President. Wall Street professed to be alarmed over the radicalism of the newly elected Chief Executive and what he might do to business generally. Some of the bankers asked Colonel House to attend a dinner and explain what was likely to happen under the new administration. He did not consent until he had Mr. Wilson's sanction. According to some of those who were present, the amount of money represented at that gathering was at least five billions of dollars in actual wealth and many billions more in potential credit. All the important financiers in America were there or sent representatives. The Colonel erased the notion that Woodrow Wilson was a "wild radical" who would turn things upside down, and instead gave a general sketch of what Mr. Wilson hoped to accomplish by way of currency reform. What the bankers wanted was something straight from headquarters about the Wilson intentions—not the details but his general attitude toward business and finance. Whether the talk Colonel House gave that night to all the important financiers of the country had any sequel in the confidence thereafter displayed by the markets is too intangible to prove, but there was a noticeable let-up in the predictions of disaster and calamity which had been spread about the metropolitan district.

Again and again Governor Wilson went to the apartments of Colonel House in New York, seeing many important visitors there. Later on, after Mr. Wilson was inaugurated, the home of Colonel House was a sort of New York branch of the White House.

There were frequent conversations over the long distance telephone and a regular series of letters day by day. These communications were private in every sense and were not opened by any intervening officials. Naturally there was often a disposition on the part of other advisors of the President to wonder what subjects were being discussed or taken up between Colonel House and Mr. Wilson. The Colonel was reticent—he earned a reputation of "silent partner" and he kept Mr. Wilson's confidence faithfully.

Many of the matters with which Colonel House dealt related to appointments to office. If the President wished to conduct an investigation as to the fitness of an individual for an important place, he would ask Colonel House to make such an investigation tactfully. It was Colonel House who suggested the name of Walter Hines Page to be American Ambassador to Great Britain. I rode from New York to Washington with him on the day before he took the matter up with Mr. Wilson and he told me of the prospective appointment feeling absolutely sure he could persuade Mr. Wilson to make it. And he did. It was with considerable amusement, therefore, that the Colonel read later on of reports that friction had developed between Ambassador Page and President Wilson because Colonel House had been sent to Eu-

rope as an unofficial envoy.

In the weeks immediately preceding the inauguration, Colonel House was especially valuable to Mr. Wilson in deciding political questions relating to the personnel of the Cabinet. After the inauguration the Colonel kept on dealing with patronage matters for Mr. Wilson and keeping the latter informed on the impressions the Administration was making in the large centers of the East. But what the Colonel brought mostly to Mr. Wilson later was an intimate knowledge of foreign affairs and a personal acquaintance with many of the most important figures in world diplomacy. Mr. Wilson's readiness to entrust Colonel House with his confidence on missions relating to foreign policy was due to his belief that the Colonel was tactful and diplomatic and would not be restricted by the same forms and conventions that surrounded a full fledged ambassador. Many people never could understand why President Wilson made use of unofficial envoys. The truth of the matter is that Mr. Wilson felt more could be accomplished by an unattached envoy than by one who was officially accredited to a government and therefore unable to reach into the heart of a problem and make personal investigation, or say things as bluntly as could a casual envoy who had no official status.

Mr. Wilson used to refer to Colonel House as his "eyes and ears." He was more than that. He was Mr. Wilson's personal representative in making a first hand investigation of the facts and opinions conveyed to the White House by ambassadors and ministers in long winded official reports. Colonel House was really analogous to the star reporter who is occasionally sent by his newspaper to make a general survey of a situation. Local correspondents are maintained in nearly every important center but large newspapers, every now and then, send a man to visit a certain section of the country and follow a particular line of investigation. He is often able to pry into matters which the local correspondent for one reason or another is embarrassed to untangle. Colonel House, moreover, had the faculty of digesting situations and putting them into brief reports. He was adroit in his conversations—he never committed the Government of the United States to any policy. He worked in close harmony with the ambassadors and ministers, and he did take a large burden off Mr. Wilson's mind.

But before the inauguration Colonel House can be said to have been responsible for the selection of at least half of Mr. Wilson's cabinet. He knew David F. Houston, who became Secretary of Agriculture. Mr. Houston had been president of the University of Texas. The friendship of Mr. Wilson and Secretary Houston was the admiration of one intellectual for another. Indeed when it became apparent to Mr. Wilson in 1920 that, on account of his ill health, he could not expect the Democratic Convention at San Francisco to nominate him, he wished that the Convention might turn to a man like Houston. He never made public announcement of that fact, but among President Wilson's intimate friends this was an open secret. Charles R. Crane, who became Minister to China and who exerted a great deal of influence on Mr. Wilson in connection with the Russian affairs, was one of the inner circle who favored Mr. Houston's candidacy in 1920. An index of how Mr. Wilson felt toward Secretary Houston was given when Secretary Glass resigned as head of the Treasury Department to become United States Senator from Virginia. Mr. Houston had always shown a practical knowledge of economics. At that time Mr. Wilson leaned heavily in the Cabinet on Mr. Houston's advice—he was one of the strong men of the administration. Many of the communications to Congress particularly on fiscal matters signed by President Wilson during his illness were word for word written by Secretary Houston.

(Tomorrow's chapter tells how Woodrow Wilson picked his Cabinet—one member he never met till inauguration day.)

### THE LITTLE GIFT

By Dr. James Henry Thayer

Many years ago there lived in the little fishertown of Bethsaida on the western coast of the seas of Galilee a boy whose name was Judah. Judah's father made his living by fishing in the lake, one April morning, Judah, with his mother sat on the beach mending the nets. It was a beautiful day, and the sun flashed along the waters of Galilee, as the boy and his mother sat working together. But Judah was dissatisfied. "I never am able to do anything or to see anything," he grumbled. "All I can do is to go to school, come down here on the beach and mend nets. I do wish that I could get away from Bethsaida and do something and see something."

"But, remonstrated his mother, "it is not always the big thing in life that counts for the most, son. After all, it is the spirit in which a thing is done and the faithfulness with which it is performed that count."

"That's all very well for you to say, mother," argued Judah, "but here I am fourteen years old, and all the further I've ever been has been up to Capernaum—why I've never been as far as Jerusalem and—"

"All that may be true, Judah," put in his mother. "But God expects us to do our work wherever he places us, and to be faithful in the small things which he has placed in our hands."

"What can a boy do mending nets?" There's not one chance in a thousand in Bethsaida. Look at Uncle Andrew. Why he took a trip down the Jordan a while back and met the wonderful prophet, John the Baptist. And he introduced him to Jesus of Nazareth. And now he and Uncle Peter go all over Galilee with Jesus and see the marvelous things which he does, and hear Him as He teaches—and here I stay in old Bethsaida, and have never even seen the prophet of Galilee." Judah toggled viciously at the fish cord of the net and frowned. His mother went on quietly mending her net and looked at the boy. How impatient he was—and how anxious to do something. "How I do wish he could get away for a while," she said to herself.

"Maybe a little trip on the lake might help him. And they say that Jesus of Nazareth is at Capernaum and—"

But she got no farther. Down the beach came running a boy of Judah's age. As he came up all out of breath, he gasped, "Judah, Judah, they say that Jesus is crossing this morning from Capernaum to the other side of the lake by boat. All of the people are running around the head of the lake to see if they cannot meet him on the other side—"

But he got no farther. . . .

"Look Ben Israel" spoke up Judah's mother calling the boy by name. "There go two or three boats sailing across from Capernaum to the eastern shore. Now I wonder if Jesus can be in one of them?"

Judah dropped his net and the two boys walked down the water's edge and looked at the fisherboats scudding along the water.

"One of those boats belongs to Uncle Peter," Judah called back to his mother. "I know it by the cut of the sail." He paused a moment and looked again. "And the one behind it belongs to Uncle Andrew, I'm certain. I just know they are taking Jesus over to the other side of the lake." He turned and ran back up the beach to his mother.

"Oh mother," he pleaded, "please let me go over to the other side and see Jesus of Nazareth. Uncle Andrew and Uncle Peter are both there, and I'll find them and they'll look after me."

But his mother shook her head. "Why Judah it would be night long before you could possibly get there on foot—and I couldn't think of doing such a thing."

"But why couldn't he take one of his father's boats—it would only take him a little while to sail across the lake and back." It was Ben Israel who now spoke up, and the hope of going along lit his eyes.

"That's just it, mother," pleaded Judah. "I can easily sail that small boat of Daddy's—I've often done it. And with Ben Israel to handle the sail it will not be a bit of trouble?"

While the boys waited impatiently Judah's mother looked out over the lake. She remembered the terrible storms that often swept down the ravens from the opposite side. She recalled one awful night when Judah's father had been caught out in a gale on the lake, and how he had just escaped with his life. Then she looked at the calm bosom of the lake and the bright sunshine glancing from it.

"I suppose," she said at last, "that it will be all right for you and Ben Israel to go, if his mother will allow—"

"Oh," broke in Ben Israel. "Mother said that I might go, if Judah would go along with me in his father's boat. That's what I came up here to ask him about, he added naively."

"That's fine," exclaimed Judah, as he gave his mother a grateful look. "Ben Israel, you run up to the house and get a pair of oars, and I'll get the boat ready. Good bye, mother," he called as he ran toward a fisher boat pulled high up on the shore.

"What a big boy he's getting to be," whispered his mother to herself. "I do hope that he won't miss the Teacher from Galilee—and who knows, perhaps the teacher may say something that will show him that he can help by doing the little things."

In a few moments Ben Israel came back to the beach carrying with him a pair of oars, and after much tugging and pushing the boys managed to get the small boat into the water. They were just about ready to push off when Judah's mother called "Wait a minute son, I've got something for you." Judah, with an oar dug into the sandy beach waited until his mother came up. "What is it, mother?" he said, rather impatiently.

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