

The True Story Of Woodrow Wilson

By DAVID LAWRENCE

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Chapter XXV

Wilson and Mrs. Galt

The transition period in the life of Woodrow Wilson dates from the summer of 1914 when Mrs. Wilson died to the spring of 1915—the days of acquaintance with Mrs. Norman Galt. Eight months of tomb-like seclusion in the White House changed the whole temper of the man. His moods in those months were so despondent that even the members of his family groped in vain for something that would lift him from the depression into which he had languished. Public business he transacted with the same earnestness but without zeal, without ambition, without inspiration.

Two daughters had been married, his wife was dead. All his old friends were away from Washington in other scenes. The President of the United States cannot make new friends as quickly as a private citizen. Mr. Wilson knew that if he drew to his side either the members of his Cabinet or Senators or Representatives they would surely talk to him about the problems of the day from which, mentally at least, he was seeking to escape. Dr. Cary T. Grayson was almost constantly with Mr. Wilson. The companionship of Professor Stockton Axson, a brother of Mrs. Wilson, was also sought by the President. Secretary Tumulty lived at the White House for several weeks while his family was away for the summer. Everything possible to divert Woodrow Wilson's mind from the sorrow which weighed upon him was done, but his spirits never rose and the horizon seemed to grow darker and darker. At least Dr. Grayson, whose diagnosis of Mr. Wilson's dilemma was not merely that of an attendant physician interesting in maintaining the health of the nation's Chief Executive, but a man of breadth and understanding who knew that continued seclusion would dispirit the President and perhaps break down his health, suggested that the time had come for a musicale at which the President might hope to spend a social evening once in a while. Guests were invited and among them was Mrs. Norman Galt, a charming widow. A short time previous Mrs. Galt had been introduced by Dr. Grayson as a walking companion for Miss Helen Woodrow Bones, a first cousin of President Wilson, who lived at the White House. Dr. Grayson was at the time engaged to and subsequently married, Miss Alice Gertrude Gordon, whose mother had been the intimate friend of Mrs. Galt.

Everyone around the White House was aware that a romance had begun. The eyes of a good many attendants are turned upon the President of the United States at all times and when he and Mrs. Bones rode home with Mrs. Galt in one of the White House automobiles there was an instant impression that Wilson's need for companionship had at last been fulfilled. The President's interest grew from day to day as he sent books to his new friend. Her modest little home on 20th street became the almost daily destination of the President on his walks or rides. Miss Bones invited Mrs. Galt to accompany her on one of the cruises of the Mayflower from Washington to New York where the fleet was reviewed by the President. Later on during the summer months the home in Cornish, New Hampshire, was opened again for the Wilson household and Miss Bones and Mrs. Galt went there to escape the heat of Washington. The President spent many weeks at Cornish during the summer of 1915 and when he returned in the autumn Washington generally had learned of his infatuation for Mrs. Galt.

Members of the Cabinet and people in official life began to wonder what would be the effect of the President's engagement on his political fortunes but no one had the temerity to advise Mr. Wilson on his personal affairs as it was recognized that the new mistress of the White House would be able later to wield both power and influence against anyone who might earn her disfavor. Secretary Lane is credited with having remarked to some of his colleagues in the Cabinet that Mr. Wilson would lose his popularity if he remarried because the country had become intensely sympathetic with him in his loneliness. Secretary Tumulty, with his keen vision of politics shared to some extent this view, but he knew that the President was more interested in the woman he loved than in holding political office. There is abundant evidence that Mr. Wilson did not care as much about a second term as did the leaders of the Democratic party who wanted to see the administration continued in power and that Mr. Wilson would have easily swallowed his disappointment if he had failed of renomination or reelection. The truth is that his frame of mind was such that he did not enjoy public office and ardently hoped to be released from responsibility. He was a human being first and an executive machine second. As between a life of freedom and public office there is no doubt that Mr. Wilson would have chosen the former if he had been able con-

sistently to do so.

The months of Mr. Wilson's courtship of Mrs. Galt involved a let-up in his labors of previous years in the White House. He did not work as long at his desk. He found diversion in the animated conversations with his fiancée. In the inner circle at Washington rumors started that the President's desk was piled high with unattended business. There was a noticeable delay at one time in the dispatch of a note to Great Britain protesting against violation of neutral rights. Rumor had it that Mr. Wilson was not concentrating on the note but in this respect at least the reports were unfounded. Mr. Wilson chose to delay that note because a Cabinet crisis in Great Britain was beginning to develop and he did not wish to do anything that would add complications to Great Britain's internal political turmoil. Premier Asquith and Sir Edward Grey were at the helm. Mr. Wilson had for both of them at the time a warm admiration. Besides, Walter Hines Page, the American Ambassador, had insisted in his letter to the President that the United States tone down its protestations to Great Britain.

Mr. Wilson finally sent the note—not by cable—but by a messenger who carried special instructions to Ambassador Page. In the autumn of the year the controversy between the President and Ambassador Page reached a climax. One Sunday afternoon word came that Ambassador Page had resigned. The author who was at the time in charge of the news relating to American neutrality for the Associated Press at Washington sought to verify the report of Mr. Page's resignation but neither Secretary Tumulty nor any member of the Cabinet knew anything about it. The Associated Press had received a private cable from London but as usual did not print any news of this kind until

verification could be obtained. The author, of course, did not know how long the secret would be kept, fearing, of course, that competitors might obtain it and score a "beat" if it were disclosed. The President could not be reached—he had gone to the home of Mrs. Galt on 20th Street. Across the street, two secret service men lounged against a tree in all day vigil. Neither one would carry a message into the house. The idea of disturbing the afternoon social call of the President of the United States was dismissed by them as absurd. The telephone operator at the White House switch board, through which a private line to the 20th Street home of Mrs. Galt had been connected, would not disturb the President. The author penned a note to the President telling him of the sensational developments and waited outside hoping that somebody might emerge from the Galt home and carry a message inside. The President spent the afternoon and evening there. Finally Dr. Cary T. Grayson appeared on the scene and with his customary courtesy took the note and a few minutes later returned with the answer. "Mr. Page has not resigned."

For a long time this episode was unexplained because the man who sent the cable from London actually read a copy of the letter of resignation written by Mr. Page and knew of an exchange of cables between the President and Ambassador Page relative to the letter. But Mr. Wilson did not accept the resignation—hence to his mind it was just as if Mr. Page had not offered to relinquish the post. And the President saw no reason at that time to disturb the delicate situation which existed by revealing the friction he was having with the embassy at London. It is a fact, however, that Mr. Wilson did for a time consider accepting the resignation and offering the ambassadorship to Great Britain to Cleveland H. Dodge, his classmate at Princeton, who, however, did not care to undertake the mission.

Shortly after this incident Mr. Wilson called in his private secretary and told him that he could an-

nounce the engagement of the President to Mrs. Norman Galt. Secretary Tumulty, still mindful of the political dangers of an early marriage, hoped the President might postpone the announcement believing that it should be deferred until after the 1916 campaign. But Mr. Wilson would not listen to it, and Secretary Tumulty like a faithful friend promptly accepted the situation and loyally sought to set the stage for a favorable response by the press to the news he was about to disclose. For hours he labored over the form of the announcement and the necessary data which would give to the newspapers the best impression possible of the romance and would completely sweep aside the criticisms by those who might be disappointed over the remarriage of the President fifteen months after the death of his first wife.

Mr. Tumulty talked with the newspaper men about the rise in the President's spirits and his general improvement in health together with the fact that all the members of the Wilson household, including the daughters, were fond of Mrs. Galt, all this had its effect and made the wedding pass without incident and without political ill-effect.

Mr. Wilson's disinclination to postpone his engagement—he never considered it seriously—was convincing evidence of the strength of his affection for the fascinating widow. He cared nothing about the political phases of it—he was in love. Those who knew him best realized that it meant a prolongation of his life and an inspiration to do greater things. For he was the type of man who lives on feminine inspiration.

(Tomorrow's chapter tells why Mr. Wilson broke with Joseph P. Tumulty.)

RETURN FROM FUNERAL

Mr. and Mrs. T. S. Mann, Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Burfoot, Mr. and Mrs. S. W. Twiford, Mr. and Mrs. E. M. Cox, E. D. Midgett, C. R. Fulcher, T. A. Tillett, George Tillett, Tommie Mann, Willie Wright, Alonzo Midgett, Samuel Twiford, William Midgett, William Williams, Mrs. A. O. Mann, Mrs. Henry Doxey, Miss Net-

tie Midgett, and Rev. Daniel Lane, pastor of City Road Methodist Church, returned home Sunday night after attending the funeral of J. D. Midgett of Manns Harbor.

ALONG THE WATERFRONT

The motor vessel Peggy H. of San Francisco is docked at Flora's wharf.

The schooner Eugene H. Brown is docked at Woodley's wharf loading general merchandise for Little Alligator.

The stern of the schooner Georgia A. Gaskins was lifted by Bailey's ways Wednesday for work on her propeller.

The barge Charles E. McNally was towed out Wednesday with a cargo of lumber for Philadelphia, loaded at the Foreman-Blades Lumber Co.

Two light barges are anchored on the flats waiting for cargoes of logs or mine props for Seligman, Williams and Ball.

Vessels in Port.

Schooner Anghen waiting. Barge John H. McNally discharging acid phosphate at Albemarle Fertilizer Company.

Steamer Texas, at Elizabeth City Iron Works, waiting for charter. Steam tug Viente y Tres, at Elizabeth City Iron Works, tied up.

Schooner Jesse Irving on Elizabeth City Iron Works ways. Schooner Georgia A. Gaskins at Bailey's wharf.

Motor vessel Peggy H. at Flora's wharf. Schooner Eugene A. Brown at Woodley's wharf.

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Sedan	1985

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