

## American Neutrality Officially Explained

(From The Literary Digest, Feb. 6.)

Critics with British or German sympathies have been so insistent in accusing our government of unneutrality that our secretary of state has felt compelled to clear the air by a plain statement of its position. His words carry conviction to most of the newspapers we have examined, but it is noticeable that just as the majority of the accusations come from the pro-German side, that side is now not fully satisfied with his defense. Mr. Herman Ridder, for instance, tells us in his New York Staats-Zeitung how clear it is to him that "the document which bears the signature of Mr. Bryan was composed either in London or in the English embassy at Washington." But Mr. Clement Griscom, an American partisan of the Allies, finds in the letter "conclusive proof" that most of the administration's acts have "been in favor of Germany and against the Allies." Some political foes of the administration profess to hold the document in contempt, yet we note many of Mr. Bryan's most inveterate enemies in the long list of press eulogists. Some of them, indeed, find the letter so satisfactory that they can not believe Mr. Bryan had much to do with preparing it. The London press, it may be here noted, seem generally to think our secretary of state has proved his case. The Times even going so far as to say that his letter "will be read with satisfaction by all unprejudiced champions of neutral rights." Whether the various "pros" like Mr. Bryan's letter or not, "patriotic Americans," decries the New York World, "will like it because he clears up all the points that have been raised in respect to the attitude of the United States government." The letter, it adds, "is a permanent contribution to American history."

Though some writers object to what they call the "political motive" behind the letter, the New York Evening Post believes that those in charge of our foreign relations, "as elected rulers in a democracy, have to take cognizance of the attitude of large elements in our citizenship." And, in view of the many citizens of German origin, "the administration may rightly take steps to show them that the laws of neutrality are impartially enforced." For example,

"If British pretensions have been overweening, the government can prove that it has not tamely acquiesced in them. This was made clear in the American note. It stands out in greater plainness, and with more detail in the recitals of the letter to Senator Stone. In several matters, the department of state has protested to the British government or one of the Allies. It objected to the 'hovering' of British cruisers off New York harbor, and that practise has in consequence been given up. In like manner, a Japanese warship, after a protest by us, ceased to 'hover' off Honolulu. And in the instance of discouraging the flotation of a public loan here, in the interest of the Allies the administration gave the surest proof of its desire to hold the scales absolutely even, where there was no specific provision of law, domestic or international, compelling it to a definite course."

Since Secretary Bryan's letter is 6,000 words long and fills five newspaper columns, answering twenty specific complaints, it is impossible to do more than sketch its outline here. Besides the matter mentioned by The Evening Post or covered in the recent note to Sir Edward Grey, the secretary explains that this

government allows free communication by cable while censoring wireless messages, because cables can be cut by belligerents, and because messages may be sent from wireless stations on neutral shores to belligerent warships on the high seas. There has been, so far, no serious trouble over private letters, passports, and arrests of American citizens, and, in the few cases that have occurred, both sides are held to be about equally at fault. As to alleged violations of the Hague Conventions and the Declaration of London, our government does not consider them binding, and is acting according to the general principles of international law. Complaints of the sale of dumdum bullets to Great Britain by American manufacturers are said to be unfounded. There has been no shipment of British troops or war material across the territory of the United States, though "a request on the part of the Canadian government for permission to ship equipment across Alaska to the sea" was refused. Since "no German warship has sought to obtain coal in the Canal Zone," the charge of discrimination there rests upon a possibility which has not yet materialized. Mr. Bryan points out that vigorous protests have been made to the British government against interference with our shipping, and that our attitude on the subject of contraband has been made known to that government. But he would remind complainants that "some of the doctrines which appear to bear harshly upon neutrals at the present time are analogous to or outgrowths from policies adopted by the United States when it was a belligerent." Moreover, "the fact that the commerce of the United States is interrupted by Great Britain is consequent upon the superiority of her navy on the high seas. History shows that whenever a country has possessed that superiority our trade has been interrupted and that few articles essential to the prosecution of the war have been allowed to reach its enemy from this country." Mr. Bryan also takes up the complaint discussed at length elsewhere in this issue, that "the United States has not interfered with the sale to Great Britain and her Allies of arms, ammunition, horses, uniforms, and other munitions of war, although such sales prolong the conflict." The position of the administration, in which the German government is said to acquiesce, is this:

"There is no power in the executive to prevent the sale of ammunition to the belligerents. The duty of a neutral to restrict trade in munitions of war has never been imposed by international law or by municipal statute."

Finally, Mr. Bryan denies the charge of unfriendliness toward Germany and Austria-Hungary:

"It is the business of a belligerent operating on the high seas, not the duty of a neutral, to prevent contraband from reaching an enemy."

"Those in this country who sympathize with Germany and Austria-Hungary appear to assume that some obligation rests upon this government, in the performance of its neutral duty, to prevent all trade in contraband and thus equalize the difference due to the relative naval strength of the belligerents."

"No such obligation exists. It would be an unneutral act, an act of partiality on the part of this government, to adopt such a policy if the executive had the power to do so. If Germany and Austria-Hungary can not import contraband from this

country, it is not because of that fact the duty of the United States to close its markets to the Allies. The markets of this country are open upon equal terms to all the world, to every nation, belligerent or neutral."

Unqualified approval of the position here taken by the administration though with occasional disagreement with certain minor details of policy, is expressed by such representative eastern dailies as the Boston Transcript (Rep.), Springfield Republican (Ind.), New Haven Journal-Courier (Ind.), Albany Journal (Rep.), New York Wall Street Journal, Commercial Journal of Commerce, Sun (Ind.), Herald (Ind.), Times (Ind. Dem.), Tribune (Rep.), Globe (Ind.), Evening Post (Ind.), Brooklyn Eagle (Ind. Dem.), Times (Rep.), Citizen (Dem.), Newark News (Ind.), Philadelphia Evening Ledger (Ind. Rep.), Evening Telegraph (Rep.), Inquirer (Rep.), Record (Dem.), Baltimore News (Prog.), American (Rep.), Washington Star (Ind.), and Herald (Ind.), Richmond Times-Dispatch (Dem.), and Pittsburg Gazette-Times (Rep.); and in the middle west the Chicago News (Ind.), St. Louis Globe Democrat (Rep.), St. Paul Dispatch (Ind. Rep.), Indianapolis News (Ind.), and Grand Rapids Press (Ind.). The London editors are also well pleased. The Daily Chronicle calls the Bryan letter an "unanswerable" reply to the pro-Germans, and commends the administration's "absence of bias" and "undoubted desire to keep even keel between jarring elements." Here The Times agrees. "Broadly speaking," it finds that "the doctrine laid down by Secretary Bryan is the doctrine of our own courts."

But perhaps these pleasant words from London would only heighten the displeasure of Mr. Hearst. In his New York American (Ind.), he attacks Mr. Bryan for appearing in the role of "Defender of Britain," and says that the "correspondence between Senator Stone and the state department is evidently designed to give the administration the opportunity to retract its recent letter and recede from the position of firmness it recently assumed toward England regarding American shipping. The people are tired of needless humiliation of this sort." So, too, the New York Evening Mail (Rep.), another severe critic of the administration, says Mr. Bryan's explanation "pleases nobody." In particular, it "will not satisfy the Germans," and the New York Herald is cited as saying "that the only thing that pleases it about the Bryan plea is that it shows that the administration is beginning to get anxious about the German and Irish vote." So, concludes The Evening Mail, "if Mr. Bryan has accomplished nothing more than this by his explanation, he would have done better to hold his tongue."

In Chicago, the Illinois Staats-Zeitung proclaims our secretary of state as "England's servant," while in New York Mr. Ridder's Staats-Zeitung beholds him "on the knee before England," and the Deutsches Journal says bitterly:

"No one can read this letter to Senator Stone without feeling ashamed at the pitiful role that the United States—the sole neutral power of the first rank—is playing in this war, nor can he, before he comes to the end of this screed, escape a feeling of nausea at the mixture of hypocrisy, insolence, and derision shown to Germany and the utter obsequiousness shown to England."

In contrast with the above is the statement of Mr. Griscom, formerly general manager of the International Mercantile Marine Company, that Mr. Bryan's letter "conclusively" proves that "almost every action that has been taken by the administration

has been in favor of Germany and against the Allies," adding that "the administration of these United States has been the catspaw of German manipulation long enough."

Mr. Curtis Guild, former ambassador to Russia, also charges in an article in the Philadelphia Public Ledger that the president's "partisanship on the side of Germany" has been "extraordinary," and intimates that his shipping bill is virtually "an act of war by the United States against the Allies."

But Mr. Griscom, indignantly comments the New York World, "belongs to a class of Americans who are much more English than the English," who "are no more concerned about the honor and the welfare of the United States in this war than are the pro-German extremists who blackguard President Wilson and Mr. Bryan for not allowing Germany to use the United States as a military base. Neither of these elements believes in honest neutrality, and their grievance against the administration is that it has maintained an honest neutrality." "Deutschland uber Alles," remarks the New York Sun, is an admirable motto for subjects of the Kaiser, but our citizens of German extraction are recommended to substitute the sentiment "Amerika uber Alles."

### MR. BRYAN AND PROHIBITION

Now that the great matter of riding the proposed prohibition amendment to its first expected fall has been done with, it must be peculiarly distressing to the many who take such an extreme interest in Mr. Bryan's personal habits and opinion respecting the use of liquor, to find that he has no intention of throwing up his portfolio and bolting to the Prohibition league.

When the secretary of state wrote in The Commoner that he was for prohibition and that the party should rid itself of the liquor influence, he said only what he has said time and time again. Yet the old cry of "bolt" instantly was raised. There was friction in the cabinet that could not be allayed. Bryan already was seeking the laurels of the prohibition party nomination heretofore worn by Rev. Swallow. Whereupon Mr. Bryan announced that, while he was against liquor and all its works, he realized the strength of the contention that the matter was one for the states; that while he would fight liquor in and out of the party, he did not presume to attempt to commit the party as a whole to prohibition. So Mr. Hobson has his "Day" and the country—including the Cabinet—is still intact.

Mr. Bryan, of course, is a downright man. He hates whiskey with a passion possible only to one who has never tasted it. He hates its suggestion, its smell, its name. In this matter, as in others, he will speak with strategic candor on occasions, in politics and otherwise, extremely sometimes, certainly to conservative ears inopportune. His contribution to The Commoner was in a way of the same sort as that he contributed to the Baltimore convention in the Murphy-Belmont resolutions. Both were expressions of convictions, especially that as to the liquor question; but it is at least due to the secretary of state to say that, advocating prohibition, he is still able to see and recognize other problems upon the political horizon.—The State (Columbia) S. C.

### SENATORIAL RECREATION

Those who think senators are overworked should note that Senator Gallinger has had time to introduce a resolution to repeal the tariff act.—Charleston News and Courier.