WOODROW WILSON AS MAN OF LETTERS[1]

I

HEREDITY AND ENVIRONMENT

HEREDITY and environment blended into unity in Woodrow Wilson's early career. Scotch Presbyterianism was both his heredity and his environment, and there was little to modify the biological or ethical trend in him. Ellen Axson, whom he married, did not change him. She also was derived from the loins of a long line of Presbyterian ancestry. He and she were mutually effective in widening each the other's mental horizons. She mollified some of his asperities. Mrs. Reid remarks, not altogether convincingly, that Wilson understood only one sort of woman, the sort his mother was. He may have understood no other sort, but of some whom he liked cordially it scarcely may be said, as Mrs. Reid says of Ellen Axson, that she "might have been his mother's daughter." Like her mother-in-law, Ellen Axson was gentle, retiring; like her mother-in-law, Ellen had a relentless will, especially manifest when she was set upon checking in "Woodrow" some rash impulse. He re-

[1]Three public lectures delivered at the Rice Institute on February 18, 25, and March 4, 1934, by Stockton Axson, Litt.D., L.H.D., LL.D., Professor of English Literature at the Rice Institute.

These lectures were immediately followed by three others on the same general subject, bearing the titles Academic Addresses, Reaction and Progress, and State Papers. At the time of the author's death, February 26, 1935, he was engaged in preparing the entire course of six lectures for publication in the *Rice Institute Pamphlet,* but he had not completed this task to his own satisfaction, even with respect to the revision of the three lectures that are here printed.

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marked frequently that women are more logical than men. Ellen Axson's logic was closer than his.

For his early ancestry I must rely much on printed books, especially the biography by Mr. Ray Stannard Baker, whose research in sources inaccessible to me has had rewarding results.

The names "Woodrow" and "Wilson" imply the origins, Scottish and Scotch-Irish. To the end he was proud of both blood streams. It is amusing to observe how often in his published works he steps from the highway of his narrative to observe that some notable of the past had in him Scottish blood or was of North-of-Ireland stock.

Together in Glasgow he and I were watching some laddies, neat in their kilties, docile toward their starched nursemaids, and I wondered what the little hill billies of north Georgia would do to them. Prompt was his response: "Your Georgia roughnecks would get the breath knocked out of them, for these little lads are Scotch."

As President of the United States he italicized the doctrine that there could be no such animal as a hyphenated American, that the hyphen dropped "of its own weight" when the individual elected himself a United States citizen. In an address to the cadets of West Point, he said: "Americanism consists in utterly believing in the principles of America and putting them first as above anything that might by any chance come in competition with them." But there was sympathy with the sentimental loyalty of people to the lands of their origin. However, it must be sentiment only, not partitioned allegiance.

He himself was a somewhat new American. None of his ancestors arrived until this republic had been established. He could not have qualified for membership in a Revolutionary or Colonial society.

The first to step ashore on American soil was James Wilson from North Ireland, who married a fellow voyager, Ann Adams, a stern woman who died unforgiving a daughter who had married without parental permission, muttering, it is reported, among her last words: "Oh, the iron gates of death." In the unrelenting Woodrow Wilson of latter days one seems to catch an echo of this quality. He broke with some close friends, would say: "The door is closed," seemed almost to forget the old bonds. But one sensed in him a cicatrized scar, though he would not speak of it, for he was proud as Lucifer, grim as the Spartan with the hidden wolf in his bosom gnawing out his vitals.

James, the grandfather, printer by trade, newspaper man in Philadelphia, later in Ohio, uncompromisingly opposed to Andrew Jackson, disciple of Jefferson, was a bonnie fighter, who poured molten wrath and Irish wit upon political adversaries and journalistic competitors. The political and judicial strain was in him, for we are told he became a member of the Ohio legislature and an Associate Judge of Common Pleas. Besides, he was an incorporator of the railway which built the first railroad bridge across the Ohio River. An active man of business in real estate and banking, Judge Wilson was distinguished in his community, Steubenville, Ohio.

Ten children were born to James and Ann, seven sons and three daughters. The youngest of the children was Joseph Ruggles, who became the father of Woodrow Wilson.

Three of the children were triplets, and to the end of his life Joseph Ruggles believed that one of these went a-wooing his brother's fiancée, on off nights, the young lady not suspecting the clownish joke, so strong was the resemblance between the two brothers. The Wilsons originated in Scotland but tarried in Ireland long enough to acquire some

Hibernian rogueries. Joseph Ruggles, Dr. Wilson as I and all who knew him, not of the blood, called him, had a deal of Irish whimsey, as will appear later.

The Woodrows, perhaps a grade higher in the social scale than the Wilsons, were of Covenanter stock in Scotland, a distinguished family, records of which reach back into the seventeenth century, legends yet further back. Among the notables was Professor James Wodrow (so the name was spelled) of Glasgow University, and his son Robert, who wrote a famous book, *The Sufferings of the Church of Scotland.* To the clan the unorthodox Robert Burns paid disrespectful respect (in "The Twa Herds"):

> Auld Wodrow lang has hatch'd mischief,
> We thought aye death wad bring relief,
> But he has gotten, to our grief,
> Ane to succeed him;

a rather obvious reference to a son of Robert.

Robert Louis Stevenson, in *Random Memories,* writes he "dug in Wodrow manuscripts"; it is a fair guess that he refers to Robert, who was a prolific writer.

The stern Covenanter mingled in Woodrow Wilson's heritage with the scrapping humorous Irish. "The *Covenant* of the League of Nations"; the phrasing is no accident. On his last fateful speaking tour President Wilson referred to his lineage, adding grimly: "Well, I am a Covenanter."

Several generations after James and Robert there was born Thomas Wodrow, who also became a Presbyterian minister, who married a lass of Highland descent, Marian Williamson, and became the maternal grandfather of Woodrow Wilson.

It was the Reverend Thomas who altered the spelling to "Woodrow" as more consonant with English usage, for he,

said to be the first of the clan in five hundred years to move across the border southward, became the revered pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Carlisle, England, where he was beloved for his preaching, character, and learning.

Twice the grandson, Woodrow Wilson, attended service in the Carlisle church: once in the 1890's when he, an unknown bicycle tourist, was eyed sharply by a vigilant usher, unaccustomed to bicycle togs in church, and was grudgingly shown a seat in an obscure corner of a rear pew; secondly, on the last Sunday of 1918, when he, regarded as the foremost man of the world, was received, with his wife and entourage, and spoke reverently, seemingly reluctantly, from his grandfather's pulpit. Though President of the United States and world leader, his religion, knit into his fibre, was humble and he questioned the propriety of a layman, he, speaking from the desk where the man of God, licensed and ordained, had preached all the years before.

The reverence of Woodrow Wilson was an inherent and abiding trait. When as President of Princeton he was occasionally under compulsion to preach in the college chapel or deliver a baccalaureate sermon in Alexander Hall, he was uneasy. He who could speak with so much confidence on secular or semi-secular occasions, was almost diffident when he assumed the ministerial rôle. Emphatically he declared himself no preacher, when suddenly summoned to the university chapel because the minister of the occasion was unable to keep his appointment; after service, a fellow member of the faculty left the chapel declaring his preference for "no preacher."

I recall my amusement when I discovered his second wife and one of his daughters gravely considering whether they dared repeat to him the joke about the old Virginia cook who, directed to serve dinner at a certain hour, and being

confused (like some of the rest of us) by daylight saving time, asked petulantly: "Is that 'cordin' to Wilson time or Christ's time?"

He was shocked when he found that a member of his own household credited the legend of repartee between himself and President Butler of Columbia. The story ran that in an after-dinner speech, Dr. Butler had jocosely referred to Princeton as a sleepy place, that President Wilson, with submerged reference to the large Jewish quota of students at Columbia, had retorted that President Butler must keep awake, for "he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." "The idea of my trifling with so tender a passage from Scripture!" exclaimed Mr. Wilson.

A digression. Returning to Reverend Thomas Woodrow. He and his wife Marian had eight children, one of whom was Janet, usually called Jessie, who later married Joseph Ruggles Wilson and became the mother of Woodrow; one was James, who became an eminent scholar, a power and a disturbance in the Southern Presbyterian Church; a third was Marian, who wedded Mr. James Bones, originally of Augusta, Georgia, later a merchant in Rome, Georgia, and an elder in the church of the Reverend Dr. Axson, whose daughter Woodrow Wilson was to marry.

After fifteen years as a most successful pastor of the church at Carlisle, Dr. Thomas Woodrow decided to migrate to America, land of promise. The voyage was exceptionally tempestuous. It is said that the sailing vessel was in sight of Newfoundland when adverse winds swept it back across the Atlantic until the shores of Ireland were sighted.

An almost incredible story was recited to me by Woodrow Wilson, who did not invent yarns, to the effect that little Jessie, his predestined mother, then a child of nine, was swept overboard by a mammoth wave but with Scottish

pluck caught a rope, held on until rescued. Mr. Baker states that the shock of the voyage begot in her such a horror of the sea that later she dissuaded her boy Tommy (the Woodrow of history) from following his heart's desire of seeking an appointment to Annapolis; but it is doubtful that he could have passed the physical examination, for he had broken in health about the time that he would have been an applicant.

From childhood he had a passion for the sea, studied and modeled sailing craft, though he never smelled salt water until he was a college boy.

The lure of the sea never left him, its perils never dismayed him. He and I crossed the Atlantic to and fro, had two marine accidents, one a major disaster. The ship climbed an iceberg in a fog, slid off, battered, broken, rolled on her side, and probably most people aboard expected to go to the bottom, but he took it laughingly, as if that was what ships were expected to do, skid up icebergs and somersault back into the water.

I crossed with him a third time, after the Versailles Treaty, a leisurely voyage, when he, done in by incessant battling and by influenza, recuperated joyously and probably postponed some weeks the crash which slowly killed him.

The Reverend Thomas Woodrow was preaching at Poughkeepsie when his wife died, perhaps from the strain of the dreadful voyage. Dr. Woodrow moved with his children and an aunt to Brookville, Canada, but the climate was too rigorous, and he soon accepted a call to the First Presbyterian Church at Chillicothe, Ohio, preached there twelve years, removed to Columbus, where he died at an advanced age. It was at Chillicothe that the children grew up, and apparently that was "home." As a boy I used to hear much of Chillicothe from the Bones girls.

The Wilsons were living at Steubenville, also in Ohio. When young Joseph Ruggles was prepared, he went to Jefferson College (afterwards Washington and Jefferson) in Western Pennsylvania. After graduation, at the head of his class, he taught school awhile, then, deciding to become a preacher, he went to the Theological Seminary at Allegheny, then to divinity school at Princeton.

Here, as custom was (and still is, for all I know), he was permitted to do graduate work in the college (there is no organic connection between Princeton College and Princeton Seminary; it is merely their location in the same village that has given Princeton College a reputation for Calvinism, though, of course, most of its presidents, all down to Woodrow Wilson, have been Presbyterian ministers).

Young Joseph Wilson, with a flair for science, had the distinguished privilege of studying physics under the eminent Joseph Henry. Dr. Henry, subsequently the first secretary of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, was doing original research work in electro-magnetism; his apparatus is still a treasured exhibit in the Princeton museum, and there was a tradition, false or founded, that the first "message" ever transmitted by wire was across the Princeton campus.

It was not really a message. Professor Henry, according to Princeton legend, which may be fact, merely strung a wire between his home and the house of a colleague, rigged up some kind of transmitter and receiver, sent a spark or click along the wire. Either he did not realize or was indifferent to the commercial possibilities of the device, for it was pure science which interested him. The more practical Morse enlarged the plan, invented a code, and if the old story is true flashed from Washington to Baltimore the melodramatic signal which being interpreted meant, "What hath God

wrought!" But God had wrought the miracle, through Henry or others, sometime before Morse and his associates staged their "theatre," and put science to earning dividends.

Professor Henry seems to have taken a fancy to the handsome young theologue with his real talent for science and his gift of gab. In his latter years, when I was much with Dr. Wilson, he talked incessantly of Dr. Henry, of things learned from him, of comradeship in the crude laboratory.

The Princeton days ended. Joseph Ruggles Wilson decided to teach awhile again, this time in his home town, Steubenville, at the Male Academy. Now, in Steubenville there was also a Female Academy (so they called it) and thither went Jessie Woodrow to complete her formal education. She was demure, of serious mind, but with a sense of humor, and she giggled the first time she saw Joseph Ruggles Wilson, for though he was usefully occupied raking his father's garden, he was wearing gloves.

William Allen White, in his biography of Woodrow Wilson, quotes at some length an estimate of the Doctor Wilson of later years by an elderly citizen of Columbia, South Carolina, a character sketch which mingles admiration with criticism, wherein the old gentleman told Mr. White that Dr. Wilson "was, I should say, a vain man." He was not vain when I knew him so many years later, but he was a great personality, and he knew it, "had de ways," as an old negro in Columbia told Mr. White. He was good to look at in his old age, must have been stunning in his youth, when Jessie Woodrow first saw him, and, likely enough, he was aware of his looks. So, as the "beautician" had not arrived in those early days, not even the manicurist—at least in Steubenville—it was natural enough that a young man of parts should purchase gloves, and wear them during the rough work of gardening. He had brains too, and, even as the

Columbian said, the bearing of an Irish gentleman—and it is often said that no gentleman of any land can quite compare with a perfect Irish gentleman.

> Barney McGee, you're the pick of gentility,
> Nothing can faze you, you've such a facility;

so wrote Richard Hovey of one who mingled vagabondage with the perfect gentility of Sheridan's young Captain Absolute. There was no vagabondage in Joseph Wilson, but doubtless plenty of blarney (before he grew old) and he unconsciously modeled himself on those fascinating eighteenth century young gallants of fact and fiction.

Moreover, he quickly and sincerely fell deeply in love with Jessie Woodrow. She was more profoundly religious than he; he was genuinely religious all his life, but more ready than she, with all those stern Covenanter ancestors, to leave things with God and not be all the while pulling up his soul by the roots to see if some canker of sin or skepticism were beginning a cancerous attack. Long after her death he told me one day how he quelled some soul-misgiving in her by robustly bidding her to trust God and leave off worrying.

It is no wonder that Jessie Woodrow yielded quickly to his wooing, with its Irish ardor and its guilelessness. So they were married in due time by the bride's father in Chillicothe.

Young Professor Wilson found a wider field as teacher of natural science in Hampden-Sidney College in Virginia, where, by the way, he once felled an impertinent student with a fist propelled by an arm like a piston rod.

I am glad I never encountered that mighty fist, though in later years I often met his smashing wit. For example, in an evil hour I related to him a hearsay story about a span of intelligent mules in Georgia. For years after I had repercussions from that yarn, which I admit was a tall one, and not of my inventing. Repeatedly when I would begin an anec-

dote the Doctor would halt me: "Stop! Is there a Georgia mule in this story?"

From Hampden-Sidney the Wilsons moved to Staunton, Virginia, where, in the manse of the First Presbyterian Church, on December 28, 1856, was born their third child and the first of two sons, christened Thomas Woodrow Wilson, in tribute to the maternal grandfather.

The manse, a substantial, "homey," two-story building, is now a place of pilgrimage because of the baby boy who was born in it and lived in it something less than a year. Indeed, though Woodrow Wilson is numbered among the eight "Virginia Presidents," his sojourns in Virginia were brief, less than a year of babyhood, less than a year as a student of law at the University of Virginia, and the golf and automobiling on Virginia soil when he was President of the United States. His stays in Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Maryland, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, were longer—in Connecticut about as long. But there is a glamour about Virginia, "mother of Presidents," and Wilson loved to think of himself as a Virginian. Besides, he *was* born there. One could almost wish he had been buried there, in Staunton. His dust seems alien in the huge sarcophagus in Washington, in an Episcopal cathedral—he whose rootages and convictions were utterly Presbyterian.

From Staunton Dr. Wilson was called to the Augusta (Georgia) First Presbyterian Church, thence to the Columbia (South Carolina) Theological Seminary, thence to the pastorate of the First Presbyterian Church in Wilmington (North Carolina), thence to the Theological Seminary in Clarksville (Tennessee), where, weary of teaching and preaching, he resigned active life, against the protests of his son Woodrow, who realized that his father's still vigorous mind should be systematically occupied.

For about fifteen years Dr. Wilson made his headquarters at the home of his elder son and favorite child, with many sojourns in New York, which he loved dearly; and, indeed, the New York of the 1890's was an adorable place, not the bedlam of today.

I saw Mrs. Wilson only once, at the marriage of Woodrow Wilson and Ellen Axson, in the manse of the Independent Presbyterian Church in Savannah, Georgia, the ceremony performed by the bride's grandfather and the groom's father. But I have never forgotten Mrs. Wilson's face, with a tinge of sadness (inevitable in the face of one who broods much on the mysteries of life and God); large luminous eyes, perhaps with more grey in them than there was in her son's eyes. But he was in appearance a Woodrow, though he had his father's odd prehensile nose, with the flexible tip which moved slightly when he talked.

Mrs. Wilson died shortly after the marriage, but I came to know intimately the widowed father in the last dozen years of his life. There was unusual intellect on both sides of the family, but if one had known only Dr. Joseph Wilson he would have been at no loss to explain Woodrow Wilson's genius.

He was an extraordinary man, this Joseph Wilson. One evening a few months before Woodrow Wilson's death I was in the library of the home in S Street, Washington, where the invalided President was living in retirement with his devoted heroic wife, when Mr. Wilson made some allusion to his long-dead father meshed with a regret that he had not had his father's genius, when up spoke a member of the group: "Indeed, I should hope you realize how much greater you are than he." Testily the invalid turned about and said: "You don't know what you are talking about. You never knew my father. He was much abler than I. He played

his rôle on a more contracted stage than I, but his innate and acquired abilities far exceeded mine."

There was some truth in that, though it is difficult, impossible, to make the truth apparent, for Dr. Wilson published nothing (his son frequently scolded him for not doing so), and only the genius of a Boswell could reproduce the impression of his massive personality and the wealth of his talk. One can repeat a few of his whimsicalities, but the flash and edge of his wisdom are dimmed by unrecorded time. Dr. Joseph's scholarship exceeded his son's in variety, though not in profound concentration.

I think I never came in contact with so much knowledge in one leonine head; a marvelous head in mass and contour, covered with a thick mop of hair, not white but of the tinge of sea-island cotton, as one of Woodrow Wilson's biographers quotes me in description of it (indeed, I must once in a while quote from myself, having talked and written at length to so many biographers). Dr. Joseph retained his Latin and Greek, knew Hebrew, a deal of science, of course much theology, the elder philosophies, and more of general literature than his son, literature of an old school, including Swift and Samuel Johnson, both of whom he resembled, as I have heretofore hinted, in caustic traits of speech.

He was a power in the Southern Presbyterian Church, for though northern-born he was robustly in harmony with the Southern cause in sympathies and prejudices. He was a grand smoker. Woodrow did not smoke, and Mr. Baker quotes Joseph Jr., the younger brother, as saying that Woodrow remarked that he did not need to smoke, for his father had done enough of that for any one family. During the sectional war somebody gave Dr. Joseph a contraband cigar, Cuba's best. Carefully the Doctor put it away, saying that he would not smoke it until and if the Confederacy

should fail. And so he did, shutting himself up and communing with that cigar to the last burnt-out stub. If my memory is not playing me a trick, he shared the view of an uncle of my own to the effect that when Stonewall Jackson was killed he was convinced that Providence did not intend that the Confederate cause should be successful. And, by the way, speaking of this uncle, also a Presbyterian preacher, large of frame, positive of speech, it was mirth for the gods to see him and Dr. Wilson together. Each was a plain-spoken man, and perhaps for that reason they did not like each other. When together, however, they were comically polite, reminding one of two huge mastiffs, walking around each other in silent respect, neither venturing to "start anything," both aware that hostilities once begun, none could tell where the slaughter would end.

Though a bit indolent, Dr. Wilson was a natural leader of men. He was once moderator of the Southern Presbyterian General Assembly, was for thirty-seven years stated clerk of the Assembly (his son Woodrow assisted him many years in writing up the minutes). In 1861 in the Assembly at Philadelphia, the national Presbyterian Church split on war issues, and the Southern Presbyterian Church was organized in Dr. Wilson's ecclesiastical edifice at Augusta. This rift in the Presbyterian Church continues to this day though, of course, the original causes are dead issues. Attempts have been made to unite the northern and southern wings, but have failed, chiefly because the southern church is more conservative in doctrine than the northern; "heresies" are more prevalent in the northern church.

Between the father and elder son there was rare devotion, noted by all who knew either or both. Woodrow Wilson's conversations were full of his father, and he frequently referred to or quoted his father in public addresses.

Woodrow Wilson attended several colleges, Davidson, Princeton, the University of Virginia, Johns Hopkins, but his real tutor was his father. Few of his professional teachers influenced him much: President McCosh of Princeton (more by his personality than by his formal lectures in philosophy); Professor John B. Minor of the University of Virginia, accounted one of the ablest teachers of law this country has had; Professor Herbert Adams of Johns Hopkins, more by suggestion than by actual instruction, most perhaps, by giving Wilson liberty to follow his own chosen paths of study.

It was the father who took the lad's mind in custody, drilled him some in Latin, possibly Greek (both of which the son shed effectively in later years), but especially in English usage. Without pedantry, Dr. Joseph was a stickler for English forms. The second best word would never do, only the best. It must be chosen with care, articulated clearly, precisely connoted with other and cognate words in a sentence. One of his methods with his boy was to scrutinize carefully an English classic and endeavor to ferret out apter words and better composing than the author had accomplished. A somewhat audacious exercise, but Dr. Joseph's scholarship and genius for expression were equal to the endeavor. That precision of thought and distinction of utterance so notable in President Wilson's written addresses were derived chiefly from his father's exacting, companionable training. He taught his son to think clearly as well as express his thoughts in comely fashion.

Mark Sullivan in the fourth volume of *Our Times* subtly analyzes the subtlety of Wilson's literary style. Too subtle is Mr. Sullivan's critical cunning. If Wilson were alive I doubt that he would assent to Sullivan's dicta about the dual meanings in Wilson's phrasings, the surface meaning for the

plain-minded, the serpentining undermeaning for the astute. But Mr. Sullivan exaggerates nothing when he calls Mr. Wilson "the master dialectician of the age." Dr. Joseph Wilson's mind was less subtle than his son's became, but it was Dr. Joseph who laid in the boy's mind the foundational concepts of the unequivocal power of words and word-values in unity and in combination. The solid base was the father's, the towering superstructure was the son's.

When President of the United States Woodrow Wilson used to say that his father put him there. Often he added another name, that of his first wife: "But for my father and Ellen I should not be here."

She taught him appreciation of painting and poetry, for neither of which had his father much zest. She carefully criticized his writing, lovingly but boldly suggested omissions and addenda. A friend said only the other day, "She was a great critic."

Some one may ask, What has all this about verbal expression to do with making a President? Much, if Wilson's own words mean anything. He said to me once: "The reason why the American people accept me is that I can put into words what all are thinking but cannot articulate."

There is a discouraging passage in F. L. Allen's *Only Yesterday:* "He [Wilson] fell into the pit which is digged for every idealist. Having failed to embody his ideal in fact, he distorted the fact. He pictured the world to himself and others, not as it was, but as he wished it to be." Has Mr. Allen never read in the Book of Proverbs, "Where there is no vision, the people perish"? Or is he accepting as finality the whole thesis of the first part of his book, that the orgies of the decade 1921–1929 are the result of the loss of belief in everything, the abandonment to riot of a world that sees nothing beyond alcohol, sexuality, money-madness, pleasure-

madness? Is this the end of it all? Wilson failed in a great purpose, but are we to accept that failure as final? He had a vision of a world transformed. It was not a visionary's vision. It was a very practical vision, of checking the greed of nations by the combined armed forces of the world. His tutelaries, his father and his wife, were commonsensical people. They drilled into him ideas of practicality as well as ideals of perfection. Neither of them had anything to do with his League of Nations plan. His father had been dead eleven years when the European War broke. His wife died in the month that Europe went crazy, August, 1914. He never knew whether she, in her exhaustion, realized that a war had begun. But had she been well she would have encouraged him in his aspiration to give the world a formula quite different from that by which it had been operating to destruction. Had his father been living and vigorous he would have applauded the commonsense which underlay the so-called idealism of Woodrow Wilson. Yes, Wilson failed, because the greed of Europe, the frenzied partisanship of his opponents in the United States Senate were too much for him. But what is taking the place of his formula? It is no "idealist," but a shrewd banker, Stuart Chase, who talks about the "myth" of "prosperity." It is a myth.

To believe in something other than "prosperity" as a permanency is, as old Thomas Carlyle would have said, as necessary as to believe in soul, and that, as he *did* say, is necessary even to save the price of salt as a preservative.

Woodrow Wilson looked up at the stars, and they twinkled at him a great hope, a great purpose, something worth dying for, even through four and a half years of dying.

We had better come back to that old, old wisdom, "Where there is no vision the people perish."

To quit this Jeremiad and think back into the pedestrian stride of this lecture. It may be that Woodrow Wilson derived his atrocious punning habit from his father. Puns are called cheap wit, but after all they originate in a quick discernment of word resemblance, and the Wilsons, father and son, had that to a high degree.

Dr. Joseph never tired of repeating a pun, the worse the oftener. He and I rode the train together frequently between Princeton and New York, on round trip tickets. Always when the conductor would come round, Dr. Joseph would ponderously produce his cartel and say "a little punch, please."

He punned on what was practically his deathbed. The son had become President of Princeton University and was frequently out of town. One afternoon the little girls scampered into my apartment and panted excitedly: "Mother wants you at once. Grandfather is dying. Father is out of town." Hastening to the sick room, I stood at the foot of the bed, Dr. Wilson's daughter and daughter-in-law on either side. The invalid had rallied from the sinking spell. I could see him squinting at me, as one peers through a mist. Then in resonant tones he asked: "Who is that?" I gave him my name. "Why, what are you doing here?" "Oh, I just dropped in." Wearily turning his massive head on the pillow, he grunted: "Umph; I'm a little dropsical myself."

The great scholar was too Irish not to have his waggeries. One day he recited in detail how he had learned to speak by constant rehearsing, even as his son, later, had rehearsed in Potter's Wood back of Princeton campus. The Doctor's forum had been a barn where lay an old cow ruminating. When the speaker would raise his voice in impassioned periods, the cow would slowly turn her head, look at him over her shoulder with round questioning eyes, heave a sigh

and return contentedly to her cud. As the old Doctor talked, it was obvious that he had forgotten his auditor and was living in the past. Rousing himself he turned slowly to me, and in deliberate tones, without a smile, he said: "And she was about as intelligent as my subsequent congregations proved to be."

His congregations were fond of him, but he had to have his mischievous fun with them. Indeed it is plausible that few of his church members ever realized how great he was. It is hard for a joker to make people take him altogether seriously, as Mark Twain discovered in travail of soul. Tom Reed is one of the few Washington politicians who succeeded in making Congress understand that behind his wit was formidable earnestness. Proctor Knott was an able man, but Congress never realized it, always got ready for a laugh when he rose to speak. So Dr. Wilson joked so continually on the streets of Augusta that his flock never quite got the depth of his thought when he stood in the pulpit on Sundays. One day he was climbing into his buggy, when a church member, possibly a deacon, noticing dust or dandruff on the Doctor's coat collar, said: "Why, Doctor Wilson, your horse is better cared for than you." "Yes," was the answer, "I take care of my horse, my congregation takes care of me."

These idle reminiscences are not altogether irrelevant. The stern Scotch purpose in Woodrow Wilson was spiced with Irish whim. Because he more often revealed in public his Scotch gravity than his Irish waggery, the public got a lopsided notion of him. Those who knew him intimately were aware that beneath his sadness, the eternal boy bubbled in him spasmodically almost to the end. It was a spectacle, that of His Excellency the President of the United States loping down the long White House hallway bunting his

youngest daughter with folded arms—"chicken fighting" was the old Southern name for it.

It is a just surmise that some who write about him now write under the spell of what they have read and heard said about him rather than of the authentic impression they took of him from direct personal contact. I was not present on the occasion of any of irresistible Marie Dressler's visits to the White House, but I have a lively notion that she did not find him "cold" in personal contact any more than he found her without gorgeous fun when he saw her across the footlights or on the screen. She was infectious fun personified, and Wilson was not immune to fun. Yet Miss Dressler called him "cold" in her autobiography, written or dictated while she was dying, just published.

It is a fair proposition that all really eminent democrats are aristocrats by instinct. It is conviction, power of conscience, that forces them into the struggle to help the submerged to a higher level. The ridiculous *nouveaux riches,* the pampered snobs do not understand this. They are essentially common. But a Woodrow Wilson understands it, descends from his fastidious heights with deliberate purpose to make common cause with the herd. That is what Alfred Tennyson understood so well when he wrote "The Palace of Art," when putting behind him the refinements of the English rectory, the select society of Cambridge University, the association with the intellectuals of his age, he elected to become a liberal in politics, and became the representative poet of Victorian England. Tennyson and Wilson were intellectual and cultural aristocrats. There is no other real aristocracy.

Behind Wilson there were those grandparents, parents and collaterals, that environment of complete culture.

Of his collateral ancestry the most distinguished was

James Woodrow, his mother's brother. After graduation from Jefferson College he went to Harvard, was a pupil of Agassiz. This was in 1853, six years before Darwin published *The Origin of Species,* but young Woodrow, like so many thoughtful young men of the age, including Tennyson and Browning across the pond, had sensed the developmental idea, and young Woodrow went to Heidelberg to study, probably among the early crop of young Americans who found Germany the Mecca for scientific study, as Germany remained until militarism swallowed up all else.

He also was a Presbyterian minister and became a professor in the Columbia Theological Seminary (after a teaching novitiate in Oglethorpe College, Georgia, where his favorite pupil was young Sidney Lanier, who has recorded his indebtedness more than once to Dr. Woodrow).

Candor was a Wilsonian-Woodrow trait, candor and courage. When some reactionaries learned that Dr. Woodrow was attempting, openly, to reconcile the Book of Genesis with the theory of development from single to multiple cells, there were mutterings which culminated, in 1884, in the fiercest heresy trial in the Southern Presbyterian Church.

Unlike the Dayton, Tennessee, trial a generation later, the Woodrow trial was strictly a church affair, the state had nothing to do with it. At Dayton Mr. W. J. Bryan was the prosecutor; thirty-odd years before Dr. Woodrow had been the defendant. There was this semblance, that both Bryan and Woodrow believed strictly in the Bible. Both held that man's existence was the result of a divine fiat, because the Bible said so. But Bryan conceded, Woodrow taught that nothing in the Bible inhibited belief in developmental processes among lower organisms, a scholastic distinction.

Dr. Woodrow was exonerated by his Presbytery but ap-

pealed to the General Assembly, the highest Presbyterial Court.

The South buzzed with excitement. Boys and girls hotly disputed "monkey descent"—as irrelevant as Mark Twain's "Petition to the Queen of England." Prejudice was potent, and finally there was forced out of the Columbia Theological Seminary one of the godliest and certainly the most learned member of a small group of distinguished men who had made the seminary a place of real learning.

The institution was hurt more than Dr. Woodrow. Practical as he was erudite, he continued to publish his church paper *The Southern Presbyterian,* and he wrote his favorite nephew, Woodrow Wilson, that he could not understand how anyone kept from becoming rich who went into business. He was a Scotsman.

Dr. Joseph Wilson who knew more of physics than biology, and young Woodrow Wilson who knew little of either, but was a lawyer and could assess testimony, both sympathized strongly with Dr. Woodrow and his fight. Besides, it was the cause of the clan. Gentle but principled Mrs. Joseph Wilson was convinced that those who prosecuted her brother were wicked scheming men.

I saw Dr. Woodrow only when he visited his nephew for two or three days in Princeton, was impressed by the gentleness of his manner and his low even tones of voice. It was difficult to realize that he had been the storm center of one of the most acrimonious ecclesiastical debates of the era.

Here, then, is a brief sketch of Wilsonian ancestry: pugnacious James Wilson fighting without quarter pugnacious Andrew Jackson; Ann Wilson defiantly facing "the iron gates of death"; Joseph Wilson out with his shillalah of wit fortified with sarcasm, hitting a head when he saw it; tenacious James Woodrow defending evolution until he was

overwhelmed by numbers, and that when belief in evolution was a bogey. No compromise in any of them.

Is it strange that President Wilson declared: "There is not a drop of compromise in my veins"? Or that in a magazine article which appeared four days after his inauguration he stated that he loved the "thrill of fighting"?

In sketching his ancestry I have envisioned his environment, the home in which he was reared, the kinsmen with whom he came in contact.

Of course, college environment and friends of his own age followed. A little must be said of these in the next chapter. But he was primarily a home boy. In Augusta he had his "gang," the incidental thing about which was the games they played, the notable thing, the boys' parliament which he organized.

He was not much of an outdoor or sporting person. He played baseball at Davidson College. President Lingle says he played well, but Wilson himself many years later would laugh as he told how the captain of the team said: "Wilson, you would be a dandy ball player if you were not so damned lazy."

Lazy he was not, but a child's illness (scarlet fever, I think) had undermined him, and relaxed his physical energy. He was seldom altogether robust—five major breakdowns and many lesser illnesses. He was a football enthusiast at Princeton, but not sufficiently strong to make the team, though he became manager of the baseball nine.

I have said that Wilson by heredity and instinct was something of an aristocrat. He loved the Virginia of Washington's time the more because of its resemblance to England, its stately manners, its courtly customs.

He loved the fragrant byways, hedgerows, protected waterways of England. He loved the English tradition that

a man's home is his castle. He loved walled gardens and privacy and secluded comradeship with a chosen few.

It was surely no easy matter for him to sacrifice these predilections for a comradely life with the masses. But he did it, and that occasional self-consciousness in him was a badge of courage, the sign manual of one who forsook something privately precious to assume something publicly dutiful.

I recall his fascination for the peaceful landscape about Ely Cathedral in preference to cluttered Peterborough. He and I lounged many hours on the encompassing sward of Ely; then on the smooth river Cam; then in the close of New College, Oxford, sitting out long summer evenings.

His early reading had been much in and about English statesmen and English political institutions. He loved English poets, including Tennyson (though Wordsworth was his favorite), Tennyson so atmospherically English, Tennyson with his liberal-conservative politics. The Wilson who wrote the *George Washington* had in him a marked streak of conservatism. Mrs. Reid makes a good point when she writes that Wilson impressed her more as an English statesman than an American politician.

He was to come out of all that, to develop into a thorough American, almost in a temper to recommend war against England when she tampered with our mail during the earlier stages of the war, but I think thoroughly to understand the complex Wilson (assuming that a thorough understanding is possible at all) we must recognize in him an English bias.

His environment was less material than intellectual and spiritual. A bold Scots-Irishman, with a softening touch of gentler England. Then an awakened Imperial American after the Spanish-American War; then a flaming Progressive; then a radical American, if we know what we mean, a champion of the masses against vested privilege; finally

broadening out into an Internationalist, so enamored of world peace that he wanted to fight for it, did fight for it.

A complex man, many in one, but with a mingling of simplicity and profundity; of contacts and withdrawals, of love and that rage which Browning calls "holy."