

HOOVER

The opponents of Herbert Hoover have been put to considerable strain to find some point upon which to attack him.

His courage and honesty being unassailable, his ability tried and proven, his record stainless and his policies self-demonstrating, they have elected to picture him as a cold, far-away government automaton, without sympathy, without compassion or appreciation of the sufferings of the poor.

"He jests at scars who never felt a wound." The sympathies of the normal man may usually be gauged by the extent of his own hardships and sufferings. The sympathy that Herbert Hoover feels for the sufferings of men and women during this crisis comes, not from a dramatic imagination, but from a heart that has known suffering and hardship.

He did not find out about poor little boys and girls from bedtime stories told by his devoted nurses in a luxurious New York estate; he knows how the poor feel. He has licked his own wounds.

The same stories were told about Washington—as though he enjoyed seeing the bloodstains made by the torn, naked feet of his soldiers at Valley Forge. The same vilification was poured out upon Lincoln as he hurled armies into battle—when the tramp of the soldiers' feet beat a tattoo of agony on his understanding heart. Grant was an inhuman monster when he sent his shattered regiments back to another charge. It is an old slander that certain elements of every republic have turned upon every leader in the hour of crisis.

With the possible exception of Lincoln, no other President has been so wounded by experience as Herbert Hoover—or so keenly in sympathy with human suffering. He has known poverty; he has known what it means to work with a pick and shovel down in the damp cold depths of a mine. He knows what the hard callouses of work-worn hands mean without reading a medical book.

Hoover has no genius for melodrama. He keeps his feelings to himself. He is not an exhibitionist. But no one feels more deeply or more poignantly.

When the depression descended over this world like a menacing storm, and the people of the United States were engulfed in the backwash of a financial tempest, Herbert Hoover made no demagogic speeches from the balconies of the White House. He wouldn't have known how to make such a flourish had he tried.

But he went to work. Again since Lincoln, no President has ever given more of himself in any great national crisis.

No one will ever know the terrific strain of that ordeal. He was familiar with big affairs—and the consequences of big world movements—for good and bad. No one in a position of power ever realized more fully how easily the financial retreat could be turned into a hopeless financial rout.

Most of the time with an unfriendly Congress blocking his efforts, playing politics with what appeared to be a sinking ship, Hoover had to stand against the tempest.

No one knows the full story of the turning of the disastrous downward sweep of that financial avalanche. There have been great generals who have turned back the retreat of demoralized soldiers; but their task was easy compared with the crisis that confronted Herbert Hoover.

It is a story of firm courage, of masterly resourcefulness; of prompt and decisive action. No man could be stirred to this heroic effort but by the impulse of one consideration; the drive of his sympathies for those dependent upon his efforts. As an intellectual problem no man of whatever heroic mold could have stemmed the black tide. It was Hoover's knowledge of the suffering that threatened the people of his country that stoutened his heart to one of the greatest tasks of history.

He has had his efforts misunderstood; he has had misrepresentation and bitter malice flung into his tired face; but he has carried on, as George Washington carried on, after he had told Alexander Hamilton, "I had rather be in my grave than in the Presidency." The spirit of such men is not the spirit of personal ambition, but of public self-sacrifice.

Hoover is too good a sportsman to misrepresent a political opponent. He rose above personal abuse. It did not embitter him. But it aroused in him a righteous indignation against those who through vilifying him would lower the nation's respect for the mighty office which he filled and endanger the program of rehabilitation which he is prosecuting.

At Fort Wayne, Ind., he broke his rule of reticence with regard to such calumnies. For once he threw off the armor of silence and revealed the true nature of the leader who, without recrimination, was carrying his heavy burden. His rebuke was strong, simple and impassioned:

I shall say now the only harsh word that I have uttered in public office. I hope it will be the last I shall have to say. When you are told that the President of the United States, who by the most sacred trust of our nation is the President of all the people—a man of your own blood and upbringing—has sat in the White House for the last three years of your misfortune without troubling to know your burdens; without heartaches over your miseries and casualties; without summoning every avenue of skillful assistance irrespective of party or view; without using every ounce of his strength and straining his every nerve to protect and help; without using every possible agency of democracy that would bring aid; without putting aside personal ambition and humbling his pride of opinion, if that would serve—then I say to you that such statements are deliberate, intolerable falsehoods.

All fair-minded Americans join with the President in this dignified repudiation of the slanders directed against him and his office. His life record marks him as one tender to the sufferings of his fellow-men nor impotent in their relief.

He has championed the cause of the child, not with weak gushes of sentimentalism, but with well-considered plans matured through years of diligent labor. In mobilizing the voluntary and official organizations of the country to prevent suffering and to protect families stricken by unemployment, he has given heart service, not lip service, to those with lean larders and cold hearths.

In the years to come man will gauge his stature with the truth of performance and the real Hoover will stand forth above the present fogs of carefully spread calumnies. They will say of him, looking back on this world-wide crisis:

He was a rock of convictions in a time when men believed in little and scoffed at all things.

He was of dauntless courage when faith and trust were perishing in the hearts of his countrymen.

He was unfailingly true to American principles in an age when foreign cynicisms and imported manners were fouling the mainspring of democracy.

He was truthful—sternly, strictly, literally—when the plausible white lie was indulgently regarded as a useful weapon; he was a man of honor when honor was being stripped of its original meaning.

He was a keeper of promises when making, not keeping, promises was the common road to popular preferment.

He gave his mind to great thoughts and great purposes when the political mind of the times ran to fantastic experiments and appeals to ignorant fanaticism.

He was modest and fine and self-contained when to be loud and coarse and effusive was almost universal.

He was full of a sympathy deeper than words when cold-blooded indifference was masked in a wealth of hot-headed oratory.

He was free from every vestige of or suggestion of self-seeking and renounced a personal fortune to answer the call to public service.

He was all these things in an age when religion was losing its hold, when crime and its apologists were bringing all law into disrespect, and when the creed of the unthinking crowd was to "take the cash and let the credit go."

For three years Hoover has fought the hardest foe humanity the world over has ever been called upon to overcome. Through his efforts America is in a better condition today than any other country.

But he realizes, what all wise and well-informed men realize, that the battle is only half won.

The savage assault of the depression has fallen back, but it is not yet beaten. Certain plans have been set in motion. They are bringing back better times. The black clouds are clearing. But no one realizes as does Herbert Hoover with what frightful suddenness these props could fall away were his sound financial bulwarks to be abandoned in favor of a hazy, ill-considered, amateur Alice-in-Wonderland idea of taking money from one empty pocket to put in another empty pocket, such as is offered by those who would displace him.