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Poincaré Thanks America for Help

Good-Will and Appreciation for Sympathy Are Voiced by French President

Lauds Our Hospital Work

In Cordial Phrases He Expresses the Gratitude of All His People to Americans

PARIS, Nov. 5.—This morning President Poincaré gave me permission to convey through *The New York Times* a message to the American people.

It is a message of good will It recognizes and appreciates the sympathy shown to France in her present fight for liberty and civilization by those Americans who remember that when we fought for our liberty France was not neutral but sent us Lafayette and Rochambeau, ships, and soldiers. It is a message of thanks from the distinguished president of the French Republic to those Americans, who not being neutral find it easier to be grateful.

It was my good fortune to be presented by Paul Benazet, a close personal friend of the president and both an officer of the army and a deputy. As a deputy before the war he helped largely in passing the bills that called for three years of military service and for heavier artillery. As an officer he won the Legion of Honor and the Cross of War. Besides being a brilliant writer, M. Benazet also is an accomplished linguist, and as President Poincaré does not express himself readily in English and as my French is better suited to restaurants than palaces, he acted as our interpreter.

The arrival of important visitors, M. Cambon, the former ambassador to the United States, and the new prime minister, M. Briand, delayed our reception, and while we waited we were escorted through the official rooms of the Elysee. It was a half hour of most fascinating interest, not only because the vast salons were filled with what in art is most beautiful, but because we were brought back to the ghosts of other days.

What we actually saw were the best of Gobel tapestries, the best of Sevres china, the best of mural paintings. We walked on silken carpets, bearing the fleur de lys of Henry II. We sat on sofas of embroidery as fine as an engraving and as rich in color as a painting by Morland.

The bright October sunshine illuminated the ormolu, the brass of the First Empire, gilt eagles, crowns, cupids, and the only letter of the alphabet that always suggests one name.

Those whom we brought back to the rooms in which once they lived, planned, and plotted, were the ghosts of Mme. de Pompadour, Louis Quinze, Murat, Napoleon I, and Napoleon III. We could imagine the first emperor standing with his hands clasped behind him in front of the marble fireplace, his figure reflected in the full length mirrors, his features in the

gold looking down at him from the walls and ceilings. We intruded even into the little room opening on the rose garden, where for hours we would pace the floor.

But perhaps what was of greatest interest was the remarkable adjustment of these surroundings, royal and imperial, to the simple and dignified needs of a republic.

France is a military nation and at war, but the evidences of militarism were entirely absent. Our own White House is not more barren of uniforms, our own president from guards of honor. One got the impression that he was entering the house of a private gentleman, a gentleman of great taste and a great nation.

We passed at last through four rooms, in which were the secretaries of the president, and as we passed the major domo spoke our names and the different gentlemen half rose and bowed. It was all so quiet, so calm, so free from telephones and typewriters that you felt that by mistake you had been ushered into the library of a student or a cabinet minister.

Then in the fourth room was the president. Without this room we were presented to M. Sainsere, the personal secretary of the president, and without further ceremony M. Benazet opened the door and in the smallest room of all introduced me to M. Poincaré. His portraits have rendered his features familiar, but they do not give sufficiently the impression I received of kindness, firmness, and great dignity.

He returned to his desk and spoke in a low voice of peculiar charm. As though the better to have the stranger understand, he spoke slowly, selecting his words.

"I have a great admiration," he said, "for the effectiveness with which Americans have shown their sympathy with France. They have sent doctors, nurses, and volunteers to drive the ambulances to carry the wounded. I have visited the hospitals at Neuilly and other places. They are admirable. The one at Neuilly was formerly a college, but with ingenuity they have converted it into a hospital, most complete and most valuable.

"The American colony in Paris has shown a friendship that we greatly appreciate. Your ambassador I have met several times. Our relations are most pleasant, most sympathetic."

I asked if I might repeat what he had said. The president gave his assent and after a pause, as though now he was to be quoted he wished to emphasize what he had said, continued:

"My wife, who distributes articles of comfort, sent to the wounded and to families in need, tells me that Americans are among the most generous contributors. Many articles come anonymously—money, clothing, layettes for the babies and Lafayette kits for the soldiers. We recognize and appreciate the manner in which, while preserving a strict neutrality, your countrymen and women have shown their sympathy."

The president rose, and on leaving I presented a letter for him from ex-President Roosevelt. It was explained that this was the second for him I had had from Colonel Roosevelt, but that when a prisoner of the Germans I had judged it wise to swallow the first one, and that I had requested Colonel Roosevelt to write the second one on thin paper.

The president smiled and passed the letter critically between his thumb and forefinger. "This one," he said, "is quite digestible."

Then he gave me a message to Colonel Roosevelt and with the unconsciousness of real courtesy himself opened the door for us.

I carried away the impression of a kind and distinguished gentleman who, in the midst of the greatest crisis in history, could find time to dictate a message of appreciation to a correspondent guiltily conscious that he had wasted the precious moments of a great officer, but also through the pleasure he had received unrepentant.