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The Department of State and Charles R. Crane

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Some six months ago Mr. Charles R. Crane had a tantrum, precipitately resigned the post as Minister to China, and gave forth a number of prepared statements to the press intended to show him a martyr of an unkind Department of State.

Mr. Crane is well known to have many friends, especially among writers, and has been thought a mild mannered amiable gentleman. Those who see the folly and weakness of his assault on the State Department charitably conclude that he was badly advised.

Since the Crane incident, deliberate belittling and misconstruction of the policies of the Department of State by various writers known to be close friends of Mr. Crane, makes it singularly clear that, in considering the national interest rather than his own convenience in dealing with Mr. Crane, the Secretary of State acted with his eyes open and with an admirable degree of devotion to duty.

Those close to him know that it was also the earnest desire of Secretary Knox to treat Mr. Crane in the kindest and most considerate manner.
This tempest in a teapot, as indicated above, has not been without baleful influence, distressing as it is to admit that respectable publications in their dealings with public questions are influenced by the personal likes and dislikes of their writers. With a patient dignity the Department of State has steadily refrained from stating its side of the case. It is natural, however, that in the course of many months enough has become known from various sources to make it possible now to piece together what may be depended upon as an accurate presentation of the part of the Department in the so called Crane incident.

It shows that the sting of the incident was brought upon Mr. Crane by his own rash action, that the Department of State greatly desired to prevent unpleasantness to him, and that in concluding not to send him to China the Secretary of State gave the only conscientious decision of a question forced upon him by Mr. Crane himself.

When the President selected Mr. Crane for the important post of Minister to China he did so on the recommendation of a number of people who gave him to understand that Mr. Crane was accustomed to large business operations and
and experience, which seemed to indicate him as especially qualified for the Chinese Mission at the present time when business and diplomacy are so thoroughly interrelated in China. The selection on these grounds was most welcome to the Secretary of State. It was learned only much later that so far from being a successful and experienced business man Mr. Crane was rather a dilettante and traveller, whose business activities as a manager had proved too expensive to all concerned to be long continued.

When Mr. Crane first presented himself a certain oddity of appearance and address struck one, but one having had hear so well of him that one at once inferred that, associated with this personality, there was a peculiarly clever mind. When Mr. Crane arrived at the Department he did not at once present himself to the Secretary, but Mr. Knox heard he was in the building and immediately let it be known that he wished to see him. The Secretary then and always after treated him in the most friendly manner.

Mr. Crane had every opportunity to know, from the printed regulations, that every diplomatic officer was entitled...
entitled to thirty days period for instruction. He knew that there was in the Department a Division of Far Eastern Affairs, one of whose main duties was to give infinite time to officers proceeding to the Far East. Mr. Crane seemed always in a hurry and only spent a week or ten days all told in Washington, this being divided into five or six separate flying visits. The Assistant Secretary of State had a long talk with him and lent him his best books on diplomacy and placed himself entirely at his disposition.

Mr. O'Brien, the Ambassador to Japan, and Mr. Rockhill, former Minister to China and newly appointed Ambassador at St. Petersburg, were in town. It was an ideal opportunity, one that no other Minister to China ever had, to get in thorough touch with the Far East from the Chinese, Japanese and Russian points of view. To give Mr. Crane the benefit of this the Secretary actually detained Mr. Rockhill in Washington beyond the day arranged for his departure, and gave a luncheon for Mr. Crane in a private room at the Club, something he has done for no other American diplomat, and invited officials of the Depart-
ment and Messrs. Rockhill and O'Brien, in order that Mr. Crane might have an easy opportunity for full conference. Mr. Crane was also in conference with his two colleagues, the Ambassadors to Russia and Japan, one whole forenoon in the Far Eastern Division. Mr. O'Brien happened to be visiting at the house of the Assistant Secretary. Mr. Huntington Wilson asked Mr. Crane to dine with him in order to have the benefit of talking with Mr. O'Brien, who like himself had been some years in Japan and was very familiar with the Far East.

Mr. Crane was leaving town that night, and was persuaded to spend the night in order to discuss until the small hours Far Eastern affairs. Of course, all this was done especially to give Mr. Crane extraordinary opportunities for the fullest instruction.

About Mr. Crane's taking Mr. Marvin to China, the delicacy involved in his doing so was explained to him by the fact that Mr. Marvin had been in Chinese employ and was supposed to be anti-Japanese; but the Secretary decided not to interfere but to rely entirely upon his discretion. Undaunted by these hints Mr. Crane allowed himself
himself to be associated rather closely also with Mr. Millard, who, while he has written admirable and valuable books on the Far East, is yet notoriously partisan in his views, and has thus somewhat impaired his own usefulness as a publicist and counsellor in the politics of Asia. The desirability of extreme discretion in speeches was also intimated to Mr. Crane.

Some of Mr. Crane's speeches naturally made the whole Department's hair stand on end, especially one he made in New York where, in connection with the Hukuang loan, he used the expression "hold up China". He telephoned to the Secretary at his farm and the Secretary, who had only read an abbreviated account of this speech, in order to be agreeable to Mr. Crane, complimented him upon it. When everyone showed the full account the Secretary naturally thought the speech indiscreet.

At a time when the Department was considering a most delicate question with Japan, Mr. Crane received from a clerk in the Far Eastern Division what he would have received, presumably, from its chief; namely, information that
that the Department was considering a certain course. Of course, the fact was not being divulged because it would obviously disturb the negotiation, as any child would know.

The officers of the Department were amazed three days later to see what was before the Department clearly indicated in a Chicago newspaper. Painstaking investigation proved the fact that Mr. Crane, without permission and keeping secret his action, had deliberately given the story to a certain correspondent with a three days' release, and had so left Washington. This glaring indiscretion was the direct cause which finally led to the acceptance of his resignation.

The Secretary consulted all the higher officials of the Department and all exactly advocated the course ultimately adopted, i.e., his summons to Washington. When questioned by reporters on his way from San Francisco to Washington, instead of giving an answer regardful of the public interest, Mr. Crane denied knowledge of the cause of his journey, and instead of declining to discuss the question and remaining non-committal, he gave explanations plainly
plainly calculated to be diplomatically detrimental by stating that his return was due to the seriousness of the Far Eastern situation.

Upon his arrival at Washington at the house of the Secretary of State in the presence of a high official of the Department Mr. Knox very gently put before Mr. Crane his indiscretion. Mr. Crane admitted that he had made a mistake and said to the Secretary, in the most earnest way, that if the confidence which he, the Secretary, felt in him (Mr. Crane) had suffered in the least, he requested the Secretary merely to say so in order that he might resign. The Secretary took the matter under consideration and then proceeded to ask the officials of the Department to try to devise a way to save Mr. Crane without neglecting the plain duty of the Department to the country. The Secretary was confronted with these alternatives: to do the easy thing and let Mr. Crane proceed to China and perpetrate at that most important post indiscretions which would damage the national interests, or to take him at his word and allow him to resign, thus running the risk of bringing upon himself
Mr. Crane might have resigned assigning any cause, or he might have been transferred to a less difficult post of equal or some higher grade. The Department stood ready to go to any honorable length to save him and his reputation. However, after placing the Secretary in this difficult position, instead of quietly awaiting the decision, Mr. Crane rushed to the White House and wrote telegrams to the President contradicting what he said to the Secretary, claiming that he had made no mistake, alleging the Secretary was the one who had made a mistake and tendering his resignation. Naturally these telegrams were at once put before the Secretary of State.

In the course of his statement to the press Mr. Crane, who had received hospitality and had written a letter warmly appreciative of many kindnesses shown him, made the statement that the Assistant Secretary of State had broken four appointments to see him. What happened was this: - Mr. Huntington Wilson had an appointment with Mr. Crane one day. Late the night before the Assistant Secretary was summoned out of town on official business,
ostensibly to return the same afternoon, when he had in
mind to see Mr. Crane in place of the morning appointment.
He was detained all day and that night, when he reached
the Department at 11:30 the next day he was swamped with
business, but gave forty or fifty minutes to Mr. Crane.
After luncheon the Assistant Secretary went to bed with
an attack of appendicitis, followed in the morning by an
operation. He had told Mr. Crane that he was going
that afternoon to New York for the Hudson-Fulton Celebra-
tion and would be at a certain hotel, and that there they
could have plenty of talks. Mr. Crane had offered to
change to the same train for New York for the purpose of
talking official matters with the Assistant Secretary. This
is as near as the latter ever came to breaking four en-
gagements with Mr. Crane.

Throughout Mr. Crane's experience he showed a curious
egoism and inaptitude, and lack of the sense of values, also of the sense of loyalty. In every country it is the
recognized duty of the diplomat to take the blame and shield
the Government and his chief, the President. This seems
never to have occurred to Mr. Crane. He was also guilty
of the indiscretion and bad taste of using in public speeches the careless homely phrase that the President had used with him in private conversation. I refer to his saying that he had been told to give it to them "red hot", which, of course, merely meant to arouse interest in the Far Eastern trade of the United States. The best test of this fault is that he did not seem to realize that he was going as the spokesman of the Department of State. He thought he was going as a constructor of policy, in which work the President would be allowed a certain participation,—the mere details of selling goods, etc., being left to the diplomatic department of the Government. Yet with all this hopelessness of point of view, to the general amazement Mr. Crane showed so sublime an egoism that when invited to discuss Far Eastern Affairs he would instead talk by the hour of his travels in the Near East and give assurance that he knew more of Russia than any other living man outside of that Empire.