

**THE GREAT ADVENTURE
AT WASHINGTON;
THE STORY OF THE
CONFERENCE. [1922]**

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The Great Adventure at Washington; The Story of the Conference. [1922] by Mark Sullivan & Joseph Cummings Chase

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**THE GREAT ADVENTURE
AT WASHINGTON**

The Story of the Conference



"Hughes has dropped that rigidity and self-consciousness which used to make his personality seem stiff and cold, and was a barrier between him and the common man. The popular phrase, 'Hughes has loosened up' expresses it perfectly."

THE GREAT ADVENTURE AT WASHINGTON

The Story of the Conference

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ILLUSTRATIONS
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First Edition

PREFACE

You can't do anything that involves as much work and thought as this book did without learning a good deal; and one of the most penetrating reflections that arose out of putting this book together is on the difference between writing history long after the event, and writing it while it is in the making. The latter process has handicaps, which are both great and obvious; but also it has advantages that are great but not obvious. We commonly say that an adequate and comprehensive history of an event like the Washington Conference can only be written years later, after all the documents have become accessible. That is true. But it is also true that what these later and more pretentious histories may gain in exhaustiveness, they are pretty sure to lose in vividness.

I know that all the official documents in the world can't convey as much essential fact to the distant and future reader as did the look on Lord Beatty's face to the historian who had the advantage of being in the room when Mr. Hughes, in that sensational opening speech of

his, said that he would expect the British to scrap their four great *Hoods*, and made equally irreverent mention of the *King George the Fifth*. That was truly history in the making, and Beatty's look was the stuff of which real history is made—when the historians can get it, which they usually can't. The future historian may or may not identify that particular moment as the exact point where two great nations changed their relation to each other and the relation of each to the rest of the world; at the exact moment when Great Britain ceased—and knew she ceased—to have the exclusive franchise for laying down the law about navies and sea-power and control of the sea altogether. Also I may or may not be right in saying that this particular moment had this particular significance. All this, and the whole body of the broad effects of Hughes's speech on the history of the world, is discussed in Chapter XI. The point I am making now is that no future historian, who must depend upon digging into the official documents and examining the coded cables that raced across the Atlantic, will ever find anything as vivid as that look on Lord Beatty's face. Lord Beatty is the head of the British Navy—and the British Navy was being treated impiously. Lord Beatty is the custodian in his generation of a tradition that has lasted

for over two hundred years, and that tradition was being menaced.

However, the more complete picture of all this is in Chapter I, which pictures that dramatic opening session in full. The point I am making now is merely that the vividness of scenes like this is the advantage that the contemporary historian—even though a hurried journalist, with no pretense to exhaustiveness or authoritative-ness, or even to absolute accuracy—has over the formal historian who must depend on documents.

Of course, I would not have the reader take this book for more than it is. Most of it was written while the Conference was on. Much of it was written on the day, and even within the minute, that the event took place. While this is an advantage, and gives the value of a vividness not otherwise easily attainable, to those major parts of the narrative that describe events or recite facts, it is, on the other hand, a handicap in respect to such occasional parts of the book as seem to express or imply judgments. A momentary judgment based on a single episode may and often does differ from a judgment that takes into account the long chain of antecedent facts of which the immediate episode is only one incident. For this reason, the reader is asked not to take as necessarily final all the judgments that are frequently expressed or im-