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Present State of Effectiveness of our Foreign Service

It may I believe be accepted as a generally recognized fact, although this may come as a surprise to American readers, that our Foreign Service as a whole now enjoys an enviable reputation in practically all parts of the world. It may be asserted that our diplomatic representation has grown constantly in efficiency and usefulness. It may not have in it for the time being individuals in outstanding positions of the brilliance and capacity that we may have had at various times in the past, but the usefulness of a service cannot be measured by that of a few outstanding officers but by the service rendered by the rank and file. Our diplomatic branch has more numerous personnel now than it has ever had in our history, and in spite of the only two apparent shortcomings of some of its present members and their lack of ability to measure up to the standards which the service is setting for itself, there is a marked improvement in the service which our diplomatic officers are rendering today to that given in the not distant past. Our diplomatic officers by their conduct of our foreign relations are beginning to arouse the interest of the foreign officers of other countries and while it cannot be asserted that our service is as yet the best, it is constantly improving. On the other hand it may be asserted that the consular branch of our foreign representation is now recognized as the most efficient consular representation possessed by any country. No matter what city you go to, whether it be in the highly industrialized centers of Europe, in the difficult posts in the Far East, or in the rapidly developing centers of South America, it does not take long for the observant traveler and for the business man to realize that our consular establishment ranks usually first in the opinion of the people of the community. The foreign officers of various countries which may be loath to recognize the outstanding position ^{which} ~~of~~ our consular representation has earned for itself have this situation thrust upon their attention in no uncertain way by the business interests of their own country which complain bitterly that certain services are rendered most effectively by the American Consular Service which they cannot hope to get from their own. The officers of the American Consular Service are to be congratulated on the fact that even prior to July 1, 1924, when their service was still on an uncertain cases and when it did not enjoy the career advantages offered by the services of some of the older countries, it had already established an enviable record of efficiency and superiority. The American public including our business men have not rendered in this case what was due to Caesar, for the Service did not receive the recognition from its own government and business men that was being accorded to it by foreign circles.

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It was characteristic of our ideals and of the underlying aims of our industrial development that our government should pay particular attention to the development of our consular representation, and although legislation was lacking to encourage the development of the highest type of consular service, it is nevertheless true that the activities of the Department of State were centered more particularly on the development of our consular rather than diplomatic representation. The fundamental reason however for the more rapid development in efficiency of the consular service is found in the fact that the men who went into it were actuated by somewhat different motives than those who went into the diplomatic branch. The men who went into the consular service after 1896 as a rule knew that they went into a working service, and they absorbed the spirit of the new service, while those who went into the diplomatic branch were interested more in selfish motives.

Our ^{are} consuls abroad are as a rule not only well organized well located, and well furnished, but they are also conducted in a dignified manner. The time is not far in the past when our consulates used to be in dingy parts of the city, in badly lighted and poorly equipped offices, altogether out of keeping with the dignity of our country and the importance of the work which they had to do. By constant attention to this problem the Department with the aid of Congress has been able to bring about a marked change. While our consular offices are still in certain parts of the world inadequate, Congress has recently began a legislation program which will result in adequate housing for our consulates as well as missions. For many years the Department has followed the policy of furnishing the consulates with a uniform type of furniture supplied from the United States and the consequence is that consular establishments as a rule present a neat, dignified, and businesslike appearance. Rules of procedure and practice have been laid down so that procedure in practically all of our consulates is as uniform as conditions in various countries permit. A consular officer who leaves a post in China to take charge of one in Europe, on the first day that he arrives in his new office should be able to put his hands on any letter or any document which he may need in the conduct of business.

The stress which our government has placed upon adequate consular

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consular representation has not failed to be noticed by foreign governments which are studying the system which we have put into effect. We are recognized as the pioneers and in reorganizing their systems it is the American system which is usually the basic consideration. It is the adaptation of the American service to the needs of our growing foreign trade which has aroused the greatest interest, and it is not unusual to find in various reviews and periodicals throughout the world articles commenting upon the American service and the superiority of the service which it renders to American business. There is not a consul in the American service who does not receive many letters from time to time from foreign firms requesting information which they have not been able to secure from their own services. The fundamental difference between the American service and most foreign services is that our consuls have recognized the fact that they are business agents and not political agents. They have been satisfied to do without the glamour which surrounds the political agent and have settled down to do the useful every day work which is the natural duty of the business agent. In too many other services there has been a feeling that the consular branch is a step-brother of the diplomatic and that to keep its prestige it must not soil its hands with trade. Even in the British and in the German systems, which approach ours next in efficiency, there is not nearly the same stress upon business activities there is in ours. The officers are loath to consider that a reply to a trade inquiry which means real investigation in the field requires the same degree of their attention and intelligence as a citizenship case.