

WORK BEHIND THE GLAMOUR:

Days in the Life of a Diplomatist

THERE are wrong ideas about every calling among those outside it. Once, for example, a young Irishman applied for admittance to our police on the ground that a policeman's was "a clane aisy job." To many people a diplomatist's life is a round of banquets, receptions, and conferences, in which he meets an unending stream of highly-placed and interesting folk, a life of glamour and political fencing and intrigue. Only his public utterances and a despatch now and then come into the news. Of the routine desk work at the Chancellery of Embassy or Legation, as the office proper is called, they know little or nothing.

Nor do outsiders realise what a strain entertainments may be to men who have to give them and attend them week after week and month after month, when perhaps they have had a long, tiring day and what they would like best would be to put their feet up on the mantelpiece and enjoy a quiet evening at home. Then there are the increasing calls on diplomatists, who already have a full-time job, made by international conferences of various kinds.

New Zealand's Minister to the United States, Sir Carl Berendsen, is back in New Zealand on a visit—a busman's holiday to some extent—so we asked him if he would explain the working of the New Zealand Legation in Washington and the United Nations' meetings at Lake Success, and how the second affected the first. Would he tell the people just what the Minister and his staff did.

Helping New Zealanders

He began by assuring us that Washington was a very beautiful city, and a delightful place to live in, especially at some seasons of the year, and emphasised that he was fortunate in living right alongside his office. The hours of the office were usually from nine-thirty in the morning till six at night, but in summer they started and finished a little earlier.

"The business of the Legation," he explained, "may be divided into three main classes. First of all there are the negotiations between the New Zealand Government and the United States Government, that is the State Department, on various matters that crop up. At times we are busier on these things than at others; the work is patchy. I should say this takes about a third of my time. Then there is the



SIR CARL AND LADY BERENDSEN

job of looking after New Zealanders in the States. We also have a Consul-General in New York. This has been increased considerably by the presence in the States of more than a thousand war brides. Nearly all these girls have settled down happily. We keep in touch with all of them. We circulate a news sheet giving them information from New Zealand and items about their fellows—the arrival of babies and so on. If they strike trouble they come to us. Very few of them do, but if so, the American authorities are most helpful. I have been rung up by a Court and told they have one of our

girls and could we give her a home? They fall in with our wishes.

"Then there's the New Zealand traveller. He may want advice, or may be short of dollars. A good deal of our time is spent in helping New Zealanders, and of course we like doing it.

"The third division of our work is explaining New Zealand to Americans and America to New Zealand. I regard this as very important. My concern is not with the representatives of other countries, so much as with Americans of all classes. I try not to get involved too much in office work, so that I may have as much time as possible for deal-

ing with what I may call the imponderables of my job. The opportunities for addressing Americans are endless, for they have the lecture habit more than any other people. They are avid of information, and anyone who has something worth saying can always get an audience. I could give a dozen addresses a day if I wanted to, and had the time and energy. I try to concentrate on University students because they are particularly receptive, and they furnish the teachers of the present and the future. It is the custom to pay lecturers in the States and some of them do well. I am commonly offered (and of course always refuse) fees up to 300 and 400 dollars for an hour's talk; and once I had quite a handsome fee pressed into my hand after an address, like a tip, which of course I didn't take."

The talk turned to social life in Washington, with occasional comments from Lady Berendsen, who, as the housekeeper, naturally had her own angle. Generally speaking, she has been well off for domestic help, but she knows what it is to go down to the kitchen and cook a meal for a dinner party, and then come up and dress for the part of well-turned-out and smiling hostess. For the first few months of their life in Washington, she told us, they averaged three social engagements a day outside the Legation. They give five or six parties a year, large and small. There is always a big one on our Dominion Day. Entertaining and being entertained is part of the necessary mechanism of the diplomatic life. The Russians give the most elaborate parties of all.

Fascination of Baseball

Does entertainment pall? Of course it does, said Sir Carl, and if you're wise you take certain precautions. If you don't your body is liable to rebel. He and Lady Berendsen found that one good meal a day sufficed, so if they were asked out to lunch they did without dinner, or if they were asked out to dinner they did without lunch; by doing without he meant they had a light snack. "But," added Sir Carl with emphasis, "the thing we miss most in America is fish and chips!"

Among their recreations is watching baseball. They spoke of baseball with lyrical enthusiasm. They had had the good fortune to see some of the last world series. It was very difficult to get tickets, but Bob Considine, the war



WASHINGTON, D.C.—In the centre of the photograph is the Capitol with the Library of Congress to the right