

while the other one takes the inside. But there is something to be said for the traveler who will not stay more than ten minutes in the Pitti Palace in Florence if he finds the pictures dull. Much of what is condemned as Philistinism may be defended as honesty; much that passes for crudeness is simply lack of cultural pretense.

The American, especially the young American abroad, is often sniffed at for too much humility rather than for too little. There is of course, Mark Twain's impudent rough-neck who blows out a light that he learns has been burning a thousand years. But there are thousands of others all too ready to think that any little light of other days outshines even the blazing contemporary sun. There are numberless youths too timid to be outright American, and anxious to be courteously imitative of other people's habits and manners and accents. But if a youngster is humble for a time in Europe, it will not hurt him or hurt his capacity to be a citizen of his own time and country. Why should he not be hushed into humility by a civilization whose mere age and range must bewilder a young

citizen of a young country? When he gets home there will be plenty of people about, to teach him respect for the bright and shining and new.

"Punch" smiled once at a mythical American girl who asked a London policeman the nearest way to an English skylark. But that naïve hunt for background was based, after all, on a loving acquaintance with Shelley. There is, after all, something appealing in a traveler who goes hunting for a skylark of which a poet has caused her to dream.

The roughness and the humility, the nervous haste, the nostalgia and the sense of alienation that are revealed by Americans in Europe are symptoms of the fact that the American abroad is a type and a character. He is always a stranger, a rather self-conscious stranger in a world he feels to be different from his own. It is from that sense of difference often that an American learns to discover his own country, and his own implication in its life and fortunes. He goes home, in most cases, a rather finer American. Europe has become naturalized in his eyes and imagination; often for the first time America has become naturalized in his head and heart.

ABSENCE

HELEN BAKER PARKER

'Tis not the parting that I fear, but your return;
 Not fond farewell, but words you may not say
 in greeting;
 Not seas uncharted where unmeasured planets burn,
 But distance traveled in your heart before
 our meeting.

THE FARMER'S PLACE UNDER THE SUN

His Basic Difficulties a Menace to Our Stability

WILLIAM M. JARDINE

THERE is a rather widespread impression in the cities that agriculture in the United States has recovered from its post-war difficulties and that it needs no legislative consideration or other attention at this time. It is true that there has been a remarkable improvement in farm conditions since 1921. But progress has been slow and has been, broadly speaking, a succession of regional advances. The Wheat Belt, the South, the Pacific territory, the dairy regions, the diversified East, have made substantial progress, with, however, various setbacks from time to time, such as the present cotton situation. That part of the Western range country which is devoted to sheep has prospered, but the cattle territory, like the Corn Belt, has faced heavy odds for five years, though it now is on the road to better times.

All this, however, is the surface situation. The community at large has not seen the close-up shock of the depression period on the farms. It is difficult to visualize the details of an economic depression that spread itself through thousands upon thousands of homes over the length and breadth of the land. When the country as a whole attempts to appraise the current agricultural

situation, the picture must be cast against the background of events since 1920. The country must understand that and give it weight.

Underneath the surface the farmers of the United States are struggling with a disparity between their receipts and their costs, debts, and fixed charges that is peculiarly a heritage of the war. They are struggling with a problem of recurrent unavoidable surpluses, which is the outgrowth of the modern division of labor or complex exchange economy. These basic difficulties are a serious drag on our agriculture and a menace to the stability and prosperity of the United States generally. It is a wholesome and significant sign of the times that the men of affairs in urban life are giving so attentive an ear to agricultural problems. We make history fast in this young country, so fast that it is a little difficult sometimes to maintain the perspective on some of our shifting economic issues.

It was only the day before yesterday, figuratively speaking, that one could go up the Hudson Valley, out through the Mohawk, and into the Genesee country, and one was in the heart of the nation's granary. Western New York was the great wheat belt, and Ohio was the frontier range