

AS FRANCE SEES AMERICA

By MAURICE DE WENDEL

THE United States, today a country of one hundred and ten million people, was for five hundred years a colony practically deserted. Its unceasing development has become more and more rapid, and has acquired in the last fifty years fabulous proportions.

For a long time, the United States has continued to progress, amply reaping the fruit of its endeavors. A long period of peace and prosperity has hastened and consecrated its development—finally the war has concentrated in its hands a large part of the wealth of the world. These privileged conditions have justified a daring spirit in commerce favored by admirable natural resources and immense outlets. The constant enrichment of its inhabitants displays itself in a constant changing in the aspects of life. The general wealth of the country strikes one on disembarking—it is a country which enjoys a general comfort and a facility of life of which the French have scarcely an idea.

All work entails enormous expense, and is at the same time tremendous in its dimensions and complete, and generally carefully carried out in detail.

One building represents millions of dollars; the factories are immense and largely equipped on a most expensive scale; municipalities spend large sums on parks, gardens, and public buildings; the large cities extend indefinitely with millions of houses, the luxury and comfort of which indicate the wealth of their inhabitants.

It is apparent that no idea of economy enters into their construction. One finds in the shops everything in abundance—the most luxurious articles for which one pays amazing prices; the public is generally well dressed, and it is scarcely possible to establish social distinctions by the cloth-

ing worn. A certain standardized comfort displays itself in the hotels and residences which corresponds to an active life of widely varied occupations. Everyone seems to have money and to spend it lavishly. Prosperity is not only apparent—it is real. America cultivates immense tracts of land and its agricultural products are infinitely varied. Industry there benefits not only from mineral strata of all kinds, but also from natural gas, petroleum and from the largest oil production of the world. One is able to freely squander basic substances of all sorts. National industry is largely provided for at home. Finally, the war has accumulated in the United States the gold of the world and immense perspectives open up for the future development of the country.

Exceptionally favorable circumstances in time and in space are partly responsible for this state of things. But so, also, are the American men of sufficient stamina to put them to account. The spirit of initiative should be placed among the foremost of the qualities which the Americans have evidenced and which have encouraged their development. Legislative shackles do not constitute a network which separate thought from execution; that sort of jealousy which constitutes hatred of success is not precisely part of the mentality of the New World; on the contrary, a man who has succeeded is generally admired and commands a certain consideration. Audacious enterprises prosper; chances being greater in a new country, success brings success. Pressed to succeed, the American realizes his responsibility much sooner than we do. An experience, from time to time dearly bought, replaces studies frequently uselessly prolonged, the gropings and hesitations to which circumstances nearly submit us.

Boldness of execution is not the only thing that renders realization more attainable—conditions of credit are also very different in America. Risky operations of certain establishments cause at times severe setbacks, but on the whole the custom of extended credit has rendered great

service and a long period of unceasing development justifies a confidence that otherwise might be considered imprudent.

An immense field offers itself to those interested in agriculture; greed has not tried to ruin it; the pioneers of the development of the United States have on the contrary received almost as a gift unsuspected privileges; but the result has far surpassed all hope.

Let us take for example the immense territorial concessions accorded to the first railway companies; are not these an indication of what might be done in French colonies without overburdening the budget of heavy charges on public finance? One should not think, however, that there are no obstacles to success in the United States nor that it is not exposed to the same disadvantages as other countries. The new world is today experiencing heavy fiscal taxes, and politics play an important role; excessive taxes on large incomes, exaggerated protective tariffs, and immigration restriction are the symptoms—and they are not all.

The future will show the reaction of these measures on the princely foundations with which the United States has endowed universities, hospitals, institutions of all kinds; on its commerce and exportation, and finally on its very development which has depended up to the present on the increase of population by a continual influx of immigrants. Formed of the most heterogeneous elements the population of the United States however astonishes the stranger by the homogeneity of life into which it has been softened. It seems that as soon as he disembarks at New York, the immigrant adopts uniform conceptions, considers himself the equal of his neighbor, and seeks his same social level. There are degrees of luxury, but classes are not marked by as profound differences in mentality and education as in Europe—one scarcely understands life without a house to one's self, a telephone, one or two clubs, outdoor sports, and an automobile, and if all these are not already acquired, each hopes to obtain them.

The clothes of the workingman and artisan differ slightly from those of the bank employe and every young girl

possesses an evening frock of a mode more or less Parisienne; dances, moving pictures, theatres are the indispensable complements to days wherein breakfast, lunch or dinner offer menus which are practically similar to all classes.

To this ensemble of life, slightly material, but comfortable all may lay claim and when work and luck have made the employe of yesterday, the head of the firm, and have placed him in a larger and more luxurious frame, his habits do not become profoundly modified. The ambition of the less favored classes to adopt the customs of their richer neighbors proves a desire to mount the rungs of the social ladder, and in that the spirit is really democratic because it tends to elevate the middle classes by the education of the masses. In all classes attempts are made to raise the physical and moral standard, and as all is accomplished through financial efforts, large sums are consecrated to this work.

The mentality of the ruling classes will be without doubt profoundly changed by the spread of university life, and doubtless we shall one day see an America where the "self-made-man" will hold but a modest place. The men who have made the industrial and financial power of the United States have been to a large extent "self-made-men," very different from the corresponding type in France; with a few exceptions, the latter, though, without a fortune, going through college and taking degrees, possess the general ideas common to all the French of a certain intellectual level. The "self-made-man" on the contrary, whatever his specialty generally starts life with but a rudimentary education, an intelligence generally remarkable but sometimes limited, great will power, and circumstances which he knows how to take advantage of carry him to the highest positions; but the deficiencies in his early education remain, and an eminent man in his sphere may be very ignorant of elementary subjects.

Today, most of the young Americans in easy circumstances, and nearly all the rich, go through universities. They come out with a mentality assuredly different from

their fathers' and at an age when the latter had practically made their fortunes. What will be the result of this change?

We cannot ignore this movement in America toward the universities; French professors are able to exercise a real influence in them, and there are already some examples. It is a method of fostering the current of friendship and sympathy which exists in our favor, the profound sources of which must be allowed to disappear.

When the United States entered the war it was well known that the sympathy which the American people feel for us was a preponderating factor in their action. Visitors who return from the United States are convinced of this and realize what we owe to Lafayette and the government of Louis XVI. The part which Lafayette played in the creation of the young republic is known by every school child and this great Frenchman, to whose generous disinterestedness after 150 years we owe such precious Allies, merits a more prominent place in popular historical instruction. The heroic attitude of France during the war reawakened in all their strength these latent sympathies, proof of which we had before 1917. The collaboration of the two armies, and final success, sealed this friendship in blood and glory. The ovations made in America in honor of Marshal Foch, blended in a double deification, the great chief of the Allied armies and of France.

How does all this accord with the continual misunderstandings, echoed daily by the press, which appear nearly to constitute a break with our American friends? It all hangs, on both sides, on a profound ignorance of the interests in sight, and we have not known how to make the American public understand the essential conditions of our security. However, a small group of Americans familiar with French culture, and belonging to the upper middle class, is more sensitive than we ourselves to our sorrows and our joys; they are ready to defend our points of view, but they do not always understand them thoroughly enough. However, in no other country in the world could we awaken such a

current of sympathy as exists for us in the United States, but we can only benefit feebly by it, for lack of knowing the American mentality and illuminating it as to our needs.

Until more of the French, belonging to the elite of our upper intellectual and social circles, can act in America, it is necessary to concentrate all our efforts on the Americans travelling in France in order to spare them any disillusion and avoid painful misunderstandings. It is necessary that the French apply themselves to knowing them better, and to make them feel that they have our sincere affection. The deceptions which we suffered because of the politics of President Wilson have rendered France a little skeptical of the efficacy of prodigal demonstration of friendship. It is necessary that the Americans understand that if the Franco-American friendship has not been deeply injured by a policy just as disastrous for them, it is because the French people have known how to create a distinction between President Wilson and America, of which he was however, the most duly authorized representative.

In order to become informed it is necessary to know and to understand. But that is the delicate point. Very few of the French understand the United States, even superficially, and it is very evident that a country as large, fosters a quality of divergent interests. The study of points of understanding between the United States and a country across the sea is singularly complex, since on many of these the Americans disagree. From this it is clearly evident that we should dispatch a small number of agents of the first order to tell us at just what points we may depend on American opinion and to tell the Americans themselves, in all frankness, the reasons which prevent us from sharing their points of view. They prefer certainly an opposite opinion to incomplete explanations, and their admiration for France is so great that frequently they rally to her point of view before the brutality of facts. Our cause should be better presented and by persons trusted by the Americans, and it is therefore necessary to find people who will consent

to live a long time in the United States; we also need representatives who are impregnated with the problems and mentality of their country. The system which consists of maintaining abroad consuls and other functionaries for years without letting them re-establish contact with the mother country, diminishes infinitely their ability to serve our interests. Besides, diplomatic corps, missions, whatever their activity, are not sufficient to penetrate a country. In the situation that we are in, we can scarcely glimpse the possibility of making that French spirit which is our unique medium of influence shine with brilliancy in America—the sending of savants and professors destined to maintain the impression of our superiority in the domains of the intellect and of science. France cannot but rejoice at the intellectual developments in the United States. She can contribute enormously to this development. Already several French professors have chairs in American Universities, and without doubt we should encourage this means of propaganda. Our methods permit it without fear of impoverishing our own Universities, and we should not neglect our invaluable occasion to come in contact with the younger generation.

France has great prestige in America. All our efforts should converge to maintain there a sufficient number of men in the public view, capable of denying mistaken views close to the sources from which they spring and to make France better known to a country which receives with predilection all that comes from France.

We should in France apply ourselves to destroying the legends which tend to divide the Americans and the French, and which shake our keenest sympathy for the stranger. We should support our friends from America by showing sincere gratitude to those among them who fought for France, at times with the passion of apostles.

This is the best method of counteracting the fatal influences which are working at present to throw dissension between two countries, the common history of which enshrines imperishable memories.

INTERNATIONAL DECENCY

By THEODORE MARBURG

OUR experience since the close of the Great War should convince Americans that mistaken foreign policies may affect the life of the people as disastrously as wrong domestic policies.

When the Balkan cloud began to gather again in the summer of 1914, few men thought of world-war, because few dreamed that Germany would be so mad as to make an assault on the general peace. In like manner, when the Versailles Treaty was brought home by Woodrow Wilson, few men thought that the United States Senate would be so mad as to let partisanship run riot and bring upon the world the vast consequences which must follow rejection of the Treaty. In each case the event was unlooked for because it represented the triumph of unreason.

In March, 1919, William Howard Taft termed the Paris Covenant "the greatest step in recorded history in the betterment of international relations for the benefit of the people of the world and for the benefit of my country."

The instrument so characterized by Mr. Taft was what the Senate rejected. Was that a performance to be proud of? Will it not, on the contrary, come to be looked upon as a tragic blunder, the greatest failure of duty of which our country has ever been guilty?

America, pre-eminently through its President, had blazed the way of the Covenant, interpreting and formulating the general longing for some institution to discourage war. From initial conception, down through days of planning to the actual completion of the instrument, the American mind and heart were interwoven in it. But for the insistence of our President it would have been left out

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