

fearfully dangerous position of the Chemin des Dames. The doctrine of Nivelle is the most romantic of all. It consists in the expectation of an immense miracle. It ought to be; therefore it will be. Without adequate preparation, and in an administrative fog, with the enemy forewarned, the troops go forward. The attack is shattered, the army demoralized, and, according to M. de Pierrefeu mutinies break out in sixteen army corps.

We had reason to know well that the whole area of the attack bristled with difficulties, but we expected a miracle. The famous quarter of an hour in which the enemy's courage fails and he is routed, would it happen this time? I imagine that all of France was in the same state of impatience as we. The length of the war was becoming intolerable, it was necessary to finish it, every one would have given ten years of his life to see the day of victory. This war psychosis has rightly been called siege fever; no word describes it better, and I believe no government would have been strong enough to stop the offensive which was about to be unleashed. General Nivelle, whatever his responsibility, felt the instinctive push, the fuddling of that great crowd of Frenchmen who were unnerved by waiting, who hoped for a miracle and demanded an end of the nightmare at any price.

Nivelle's disaster was followed by the inconclusive but murderous battles of Flanders. By the end of 1917 Attrition had destroyed the Allied superiority, and with the Russian peace, Ludendorff actually had the bigger army on the western front. He had, too, invented a new method of attack. M. de Pierrefeu shows how resolutely the strategists refused to study it, though the intelligence section had studied it in detail. The breakthrough of March 21, 1918, was in part the result of this neglect.

But in the meantime, according to M. de Pierrefeu, France had found a general who was capable of adjusting his doctrine to the facts. The story of Pétain, for reasons which he describes, is not well known in America. It is surely one of the great stories of the war. For Pétain took hold of a mutinous army, and by a combination of human understanding with administrative genius, nursed it back to health. Under Pétain, too, the intelligence began to function; tactics were based at last, and apparently for the first time, on actual information. Unfortunately M. de Pierrefeu does not make altogether explicit the relation between Foch and Pétain, but he furnishes the basis for surmise. Pétain, it seems, was the man who organized the army for the defense in 1918 and forged the weapon Foch wielded. The tactical inventions seem to have been the work of Pétain's staff; the great strategic decisions were Foch's.

It was Foch, for example, who decided in May of 1918 to defend the Channel and Amiens, at the risk of exposing the road to Paris. And that decision in spite of the disaster in Champagne,

which brought the Germans from the Chemin des Dames to the Marne, was the ultimately sound decision, because it compelled Ludendorff to expend his reserves on a moral rather than a strategic success. But in July it was Pétain who forced Gouraud to adopt the new defense which shattered the last German attack, it was Pétain who gave Foch the necessary information for the counter offensive.

M. de Pierrefeu shows how at last the conception of victory was reached. Once the American troops had given the Allies superiority, it was no question of attrition, nibbling, piercing and the rest. "It was no longer the breakthrough, a false conception based on a false picture, but the wrecking of the whole fortified front." M. de Pierrefeu's description of how Pétain improvised the French part of the incessant advance is an unforgettable record of how at last theory and practice were fitted one to the other.

It is to date the very best book on the war, and it will, I think, long remain an indispensable document on the nature of leadership, and the quality of command. It is not a moralist's book, and it rightly does not pretend to throw light on any of the ultimate questions of war and peace. It is a first hand study of the commander in war, and therefore, a contribution to the psychology of leadership anywhere. It will delight any one whose curiosity is stronger than his opinions.

WALTER LIPPMANN

The Cry

Dear Life, be merciful and kind,
Lend me your hand, for I am blind,
Lend me your wit, for mine too soon
Inhabits with the spectral moon,
Prepare your still intelligence
To watch beside my ailing sense.

Life, I have made my pilgrimage
All as you bade, and, wage by wage,
Your service seemed but well to me.
Now gentle in persuasion be,
When after you I fall and bleed,
And hear not where your footfalls lead.

My song no tardy messenger
Has been of any word that there
Dwelt from your charge for witnessing,
Let me not be an outcast thing,
Dear life, this wether from your fold,
With a great heart untimely old.

In faith to you have labored long
My blood, my purposes, my song.
In faith to you my hope is dumb,
To this poor waste of darkness come.
O life, forsake me not, who lie
Broken upon your Calvary.

JOHN DRINKWATER.

The Building Industry: Chaos or Collusion?

EIGHT years ago a remarkable book, entitled, *The New Competition*, was published by the late Arthur Jerome Eddy. Its object was to set forth a plan by which the "old competition" of secrecy, distrust, discrimination and cut-throat practices might be replaced by a "new competition" of frankness, fairness and good faith. What Mr. Eddy proposed was the "Open Price Association," which, as he expounded it, looked to many students of industry like a practicable escape from the disorder and crookedness of much of our competitive business, above all in the field of contract construction. The idea appeared to be excellent. But out of it — so it appears from the Lockwood inquiry — has grown the oppressive system of combinations that have played havoc with the business of building and contracting in New York and elsewhere. Hettrick and Brindell — the hatch seems very incongruous with the egg. How did it happen?

There is no doubt that conditions were far from satisfactory before the formation of the combinations now under fire, and will remain unsatisfactory after those combinations have been dissolved. In the field of retail trade American business long ago developed the policy of uniform prices to all, plainly marked, accessible to the public and to competitors. The advantages of this policy, to all persons concerned, are obvious and striking. Buying and selling at retail is no longer a contest of wits, absorbing a great part of the moral energies of both buyer and seller, as it had been throughout history and still is in the Mediterranean countries and the Orient, and in fact in far the greater part of the world. We have subjected our public service enterprises to the same rule. But in much manufacturing and in most construction under contract, the struggle of wits between buyer and seller is just as fierce as it is in the rug trade of Bokhara or Mosul. The contractor, ignorant of what his competitors are bidding, makes up his own bid not on a basis of a fair equivalent for his costs and services, but on a basis determined by his guesses as to the terms of other bids, the needs of his customer and his own more or less pressing need for work. Again, in securing his supplies he does not know what his competitors are paying. Within his proper field he may be an efficient manager, but if he falls short in bidding for work or purchasing supplies he may be driven entirely out of the business. It used to be said complacently that those who fell were the unfit and that society was the gainer by their elimination. But to anyone who like Mr. Eddy had observed the actual workings of compe-

tition in the building industry the social gains from this kind of selection appeared doubtful.

This was the nature of the evil that Mr. Eddy's Open Price Association was intended to remedy. And before we condemn it because of the nest of scorpions apparently sprung from it, let us see exactly what it was. All the contractors or manufacturers in a given competing group were to be brought into an association whose essential function was to be the sharing of information of common interest. The fixing or maintaining of prices was no part of Mr. Eddy's plan. Indeed, he was very much opposed to any such activity, not only because it was contrary to law and public policy, but also because all price fixing associations are shipwrecked sooner or later by sporadic price cutting and by the resultant suspicion and ill will. But let all the contractors or manufacturers in active competition get together, say, in monthly meetings and discuss the general condition of the industry, what business each had conducted in the course of the month and at what price, etc. That alone would give some clue to the amount and kind of business to be had in the subsequent month, and indicate to each member of the group whether he ought to cut his bids to the lowest possible figure or whether he could allow himself a comfortable margin and still get all the work he wanted. Ultimately Mr. Eddy hoped that all competing bids for any particular job might be made known to all bidders before the contract was signed. Then any striking variations might be discussed among the contractors and sharp practices and unsound policies revealed.

Under this plan, it might be argued, no contractor would submit his lowest possible bid. Perhaps not. But the Eddy plan did not contemplate any requirement of standing by a bid once made public. Any contractor, during the discussion, might revise his bid downward, although he would doubtless be deterred from cutting to a ruinously low figure by the fact that all of his competitors would see exactly what he was doing.

But would not such a scheme lend itself readily to collusive bidding? As originally conceived, the open price association was to operate in full publicity. Everything done by the association was to be fully recorded, and the records always kept open to inspection by public officers, representatives of the association's customers and representatives of labor. Under such conditions it would hardly have been possible for the several bidders to conspire to keep all bids at an unreasonably high level and divide among themselves the profits of the one selected to put in the lowest bid. Those who favored the Eddy plan believed that contracts would