

REVIEWS.

The New Freedom: A Call for the Emancipation of the Generous Energies of a People. By WOODROW WILSON. New York, Doubleday, Page and Company, 1913.—viii, 294 pp.

A celebrated English statesman, when asked once upon a time what his religious faith was, sagely replied that wise men never defined their religion. This same statesman kept his friends and foes in such a state of uncertainty as to his political faith that the most nearly accurate characterization which could be devised for him was that of "Tory-Democrat." The long line of distinguished Americans who have held the office of president of the United States have been almost as cryptic in their politics. Previous to the publication of Mr. Wilson's *New Freedom*, there had been only one systematic treatise on politics and economics by a president. John Adams published, some years before his election to the presidency, his justly famous *Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States*. This indiscretion plagued him from the day of publication until the morning of March 4, 1801, when he retired to private life. Other presidents after Adams had written copiously and many of them had written books, but none had attempted to formulate his creed in political economy until Mr. Wilson.

Although this volume is composed of speeches made during the campaign and, therefore, bears the marks of addresses delivered to popular audiences, it is a fairly symmetrical work, and it unfolds a reasonably complete system of public economy. It was a thoughtless wit who brought against it the charge of "lucid ambiguity." There are, it is true, some ingeniously turned phrases that gleam with the same brightness from every angle, but running through it there is a system. And it is of high significance that Mr. Wilson saw fit to give it to the world. It is of still greater significance that we at last have a president who has dared to let his mind play freely around the central problem of American democracy: the distribution of wealth and opportunity.

But the results of his meditations are not new. Doubtless Mr. Wilson is well enough aware of the fact, for though his volume bears the title of the "new" freedom, he speaks everywhere of the "restoration" of politics to their full spiritual vigor and of the national life to its "pristine" strength. It is true he does not attempt to fix the date of our "pristine

strength and freedom"; he does not tell us whether it was in the day of Mr. Cleveland's bond issues, of *Crédit Mobilier*, of the reign of slavocracy, or of the triumph of Jackson's wild-cat money hordes. But it is clear enough what he has in his mind: it is that day of *laissez faire*, long dreamed of by philosophers but never quite realized in any social order.

That philosophy, as everybody knows, was the philosophy of the reasonably successful middle class whose idol was Samuel Smiles and whose statesman was John Bright. Mr. Wilson is aware of the existence of a working class; the American Federation of Labor would hardly have permitted him to overlook this fact altogether. But his chief concern is the battle between great capitalists and the middle class in the United States, and his appeal is to the latter. His problem is how so to order the processes of industry that "your sons shall be able to look forward to becoming not employees, but heads of some small, it may be, but hopeful business, where their best energies shall be inspired by the knowledge that they are their own masters with the paths of the world before them." Whether he includes the daughters of the people to the number of the four or five millions in industry is not apparent.

The giant that blocks the path of those who would become their own masters is the "trust." Mr. Wilson will have none of that ambiguous classification into "good" and "bad" trusts. The trust is bad because it is the result of unfair practices, of the cowardly unwillingness of men to face competition like men. By unfair practices, the trust prevents our sons from becoming small and self-respecting business men and turns them into employees, into a state of non-freedom. Competition does not produce the trust. It may produce big business, but there is no danger from big business, because it is a sign of the ability of the owner to undersell his rivals efficiently.

The solution of the problem which Mr. Wilson sets before us is obvious: break up the trusts, legislate against unfair practices, define the rules of the business game in such a way that small men with small capital can play it, and then a thousand new doors of opportunity will be thrown open to our sons to escape from wage servitude into the ranks of business men.

To discuss adequately Mr. Wilson's system of politics would require a treatise on economics and politics. No such demand is ever made on reviewers of books. Whether they approve or condemn, scholars will find it refreshing to discover a president courageous enough to expound his system. Whether the exigencies of practical politics demand such frankness and such intelligibility, is, however, another matter.

CHARLES A. BEARD.

The New Democracy. By WALTER E. WEYL. New York, The Macmillan Company, 1912.—viii, 870 pp.

"America to-day is in a somber, soul-questioning mood," says Dr. Weyl. "... To millions of men there has come a deep and bitter disillusionment." They wonder if the democratic experiment which began with so much promise has failed after all and yielded no better result than pretenses and hollow forms. The causes of this disillusionment are set forth by Dr. Weyl in a masterly analysis of the economic forces which shaped our social and political development in the nineteenth century.

Unlike so many of his fellow radicals he does not ask us to believe in the legend of a golden age. He speaks of the "shadow-democracy of 1776," and believes that the Constitution was drawn by men who had learned their trade, as Mr. Dooley would say, before the period of open plumbing. Democracy did come under Jackson, at least a form of democracy far in advance of European practice. Why then has Europe outdistanced us? Partly because we thought we had democracy, and ceased striving for it; partly because the slavery issue intervened; but chiefly because the force of the nation was spent in the stupendous task of conquering the continent. So vast was the land, we are told, so few the people, that taking, wasting and exploiting came naturally; there was bred a lawless, self-confident individualism which knew no allegiance and few obligations. No check whatever was placed upon competition, a warfare in which all was fair and in which every man was presumed to be capable of sustaining his own interests. Dr. Weyl describes these conditions in terms which recall the satire of Dickens. Pawkins' boarding-house, the Hon. Elijah Pogram and Hannibal Chollop who could "calc'late his distance to an inch," are explained and excused.

In the last thirty years of the century, however, from the completion of the first transcontinental railroad to the appearance of the trust system in its final outlines, a period of transition came. The public domain had been appropriated or despoiled. The pioneer found himself warned off the farms and cattle-ranges and mines; assailed with familiar weapons now wielded by powerful hands.

The individualist became bewildered when his familiar rebating became double-cross rebating, and the big shipper received both his own and the little shipper's rebate, and he became still more confused when the big shipper ended rebates by acquiring his own railroads and his own pipe lines. The individualistic American was dumbfounded when he saw that