

THE POINT OF VIEW

THE notion that the eyes of foreign observers are those of "contemporary posterity" is, possibly, a little overworked in these days. Communication is easy; publication, by one channel or another, is almost as easy; really seeing is not easy at all, and the press of nearly every modern country teems with the reports of eyes inquisitive rather than genuinely curious and brains more prompt than penetrating in comment. But there is substance in the well-worn aphorism, and if the percentage of helpful observers is small, the actual number is, probably, larger than ever and their work well worth considering. Given the eyes really keen and patient and the brain tempered to investigation and tested generalization, your foreign student has for us the immense advantage that the vision is not dulled by familiarity and reflection is served by fresh and novel standards. You get from him the aloofness of posterity; the alertness, interest, sympathy—the *actualité*—of the contemporary. To read the sincere and serious work of such an observer is like consultation with a friend who is a physician: he has special knowledge you may not hope to attain and may candidly disclose to you sources of weakness and of strength you would not of yourself perceive.

I was strongly impressed by this in reading the latest volume of M. Pierre Leroy-Beaulieu, *Les États Unis dans le Vingtième Siècle*. The specialty of the author is, if I may say so, new countries. He has written with authority on the new Orient—Japan, Siberia, China—and on the new state created by the federation of the Australian colonies and New Zealand. It is as a new country that America—let us be thankful for the somewhat bump-tious assumption of that title by our Department of State—is approached by him. He has set himself to *compulser* the latest census and innumerable like documents, with the aid of a considerable residence among us. Primarily he is an economist—*de race*, as his countrymen would say of a family eminent in that line for two generations—but in his hands political economy is far from a gloomy

science; it is the ordered study of the forces that guide the development of organized human life over large areas for considerable periods. Now in our country we have been for many years a good deal exercised over our fiscal system, and of late we have been greatly excited—that is not too strong a word—over industrial "trusts." These two elements in our situation have been the subject of a vast amount and variety of writing in other lands. Among ourselves they are regarded with intense feeling; we get angry or gloomy or cynical over them. They furnish the fuel for our most heated political contests. Our publicists are puzzled by them; our politicians shy at them or openly play the demagogue over them. They appeal to the clergymen in need of "human" topics; girl graduates of our women's colleges investigate them, and they strew the field of settlement debates with the broken weapons of impassioned rhetorical battle. With the approach of the quadrennial national election they "burn" as no other questions can.

M. Leroy-Beaulieu, in his four hundred closely printed pages, devoted to a careful and complete examination of the actual condition and probable future of the United States, gives to the tariff but a parenthetical sentence or two, and to "trusts" but a few pages. He remarks that the unfettered trade between all parts of our vast territory, with its incalculable variety of resources and requirements, is one of the most solid bases of our present prosperity and of that assured to us, and that this is recognized by our own intelligent publicists. The "trusts" he subjects to an acute analysis and reaches the general conclusion that their evils are self-limiting, their advantages considerable and likely to be lasting. In other words, the two things which most excite, exalt, or depress us he treats as incidents of youth. Other things impress him mightily. The continent practically secured from hostile neighbors by the happy accident of Napoleon's cession of Louisiana; the scope of our soil and our climate; our mineral resources in metals and fuel; our natural or acquired lines of transport; above all, our composite

population, drawn at first from the chosen *couches* of England and Europe, and then disciplined, nourished, developed, by the needs and the opportunities of a new land—all these engage his thoughtful and intensely interested study. They are of the essence of the national being, gradually, but not slowly, unfolding and making itself felt in the crowded centres of the Occident and in the remotest regions of the awakening Orient. Compared with these, neither the devices of our legislation as to taxation of competition nor the devices of our captains of industry as to combination or monopoly are important. They are, in his sight, devices only, with which the steady forces of national evolution, acting constantly through great spaces of time and over great areas, will have their sure way.

That is a view of our strenuous existence on which it is wholesome to dwell. Nations have in their youth the "long, long thought" proper—inevitable—to that stage of their secular existence, and they have their "gleams and glooms" which we, caught in the growth of the great organism, cannot accurately understand, cannot take at their just value. It is a substantial service that is rendered to us by the foreign observer of the type of M. Leroy-Beaulieu, seeing us under a broader angle, measuring us by more comprehensive standards, seizing the larger meaning, tracing the lines of the enduring movement. From such a one we may indeed get at least a glimpse, now in the zest and fever of our young life, of the destiny posterity will realize.

THAT unionism can claim ethical justification for the "closed shop"—a shop from which non-union men are excluded by union dictation—seems surprising to those who have only casual acquaintance with current discussion of the labor problem. Yet that claim is put forth seriously and in good faith, and is significant for its marked break from American traditions. Perhaps

The Ethics of the "Closed Shop" no recent official statement of it is more comprehensive than that embodied in the resolutions of protest against making the Government Printing-office an "open shop"—a shop admitting union and non-union workmen on an equality—passed by the International Brotherhood of Bookbinders at the convention held in St. Paul. The contention of these resolutions is

that the labor movement is "unselfish," in that it seeks "the abolition of all conditions that do not operate for the general weal," and hence represents "the greatest good to the greatest number." The conclusion is that the open shop, in weakening organized labor, weakens its "reforming influence," and hence "is not in the interest of the public welfare." This somewhat sensational "proposition," that unionism is an essentially altruistic movement in its relation to labor as a whole and to the community, is not without indorsement by economists. Thus Prof. E. R. A. Seligman of Columbia, in a recent discussion of the open shop, declares that "the purpose and actual tendency of unionism are to help in establishing the average minimum payment for labor that will be adjusted for the general good of all working men, and indirectly, therefore, for the whole community, since the working men form politically the mass of the voters and economically the mass of the consumers"—an indorsement, it is to be noted, that would not seem to apply if the working men did not form the "mass," politically and economically, in the community.

Perhaps the most interesting phase of this contention is the process of reasoning by which good American citizens have thus come, as unionists, to reject the cardinal American doctrine of individual independence. For the gist of the union position, of which the closed shop is typical, rests on the representative character of unionism, including a right, if it can, to impose its peculiar policies on labor outside the unions and on the community. The assertion of this right, as a matter of ethics, is again based on the conviction that only through aggressive organization can labor hope to secure and maintain in the industrial struggle those wages, hours, and conditions of service which it is justified in demanding. This conviction rejects absolutely the pleasant optimistic theory that betterment in status often results from natural adjustments. It emphasizes the fact that even in the days preceding a general organization of labor, an advance, like the change from a working day of twelve to one of ten hours, was reached only through a policy of compulsion, and not from recognition of the great increase in production wrought by improved machinery and methods which made a day of twelve hours an unnecessary hardship. The change to a day of ten hours, it