

# The Open Court

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Devoted to the Science of Religion, the Religion of Science, and the  
Extension of the Religious Parliament Idea

Founded by EDWARD C. HEGELER

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VOL. XXXII (No. 10)

OCTOBER, 1918

NO. 749

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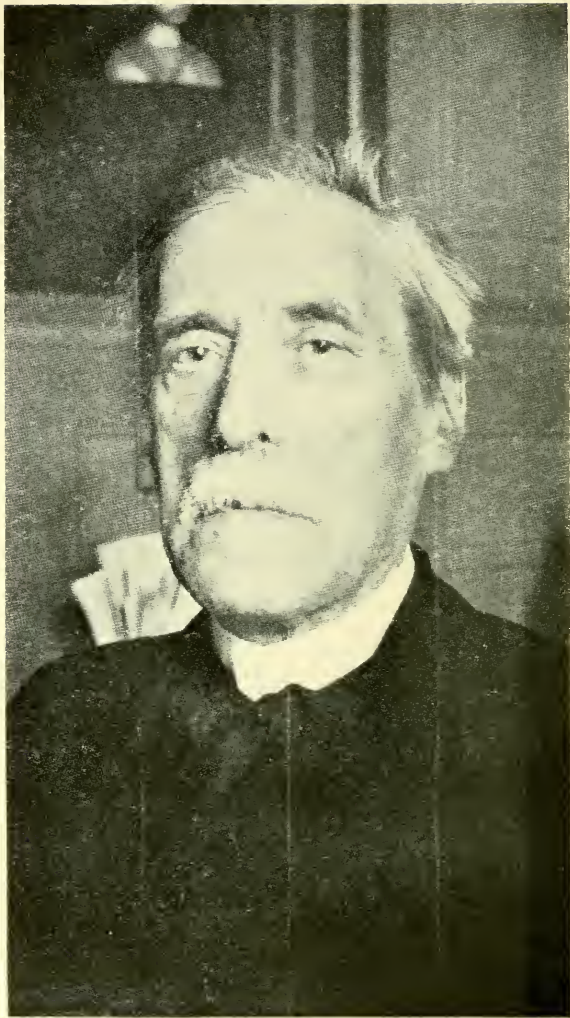
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ILLINOIS





EMILE BOUTROUX  
*Membre de l'Académie.*

*Frontispiece to The Open Court.*

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## A FRENCHMAN ON AMERICA.<sup>1</sup>

BY EMILE BOUTROUX.

[The psychological development of America seems to have been so rapid since the outbreak of the European war, and especially since April 6, 1917, that to an observer from Mars the face of the country might appear totally changed. It may be well, under the circumstances, to turn to what a prominent Frenchman had to say about us as early as 1910, to measure the distance that separates us from our pre-war state of mind. In some ways a mere retrospect will be suggested, a prospect in others, and a reaffirmation of our ideals will certainly become apparent that should be greeted as most propitious.—ED.]

WHEN the Academy, last February, before I started for America, was good enough to invite me to relate my impressions on my return I had no idea that I should have the honor of doing so in the presence of the most eminent representatives of American culture. It is a bold undertaking to discourse on foreign countries even before one's fellow-countrymen; they are disposed, naturally enough, to mistrust assertions which they are not in a position to verify, while to relate one's fleeting impressions before the very persons who are best acquainted with the things to which they refer, and who are constantly in touch with them, shows a degree of boldness for which it is difficult to find excuse. Of course one can put forward the doctrine which many psychologists regard with such favor nowadays, that, in order to know the self of an individual, the foreign observer who investigates from without is in a more favorable position than the subject himself who studies from within. The various nations of the world, however, are not prone to favor this view; as a general rule we attribute to foreigners a degree of perspicacity or mental discernment all the more profound only in pro-

<sup>1</sup> [This address was delivered at the *Académie des Sciences morales et politiques* April 23, 1910, President Roosevelt and the Ambassadors Bacon and Jusserand being present. Authorized translation by Fred Rothwell, London, England.]

portion as their impressions and judgments regarding us coincide with the opinion we have of ourselves.

To speak worthily, then, of America in the presence of Americans, it would seem necessary that one should have evolved an American soul. But even then I am not at all certain that the difficulty would be removed. America is a nation of a somewhat special *genre*. No doubt there exists an American soul, an American genius or spirit, but if we are to become thoroughly acquainted with it we must apply ourselves to what is really essential, characteristic, and representative, in the various traits that come before the notice of the observer. Whatever is not representative of the real American genius it is the foreigner's duty to ignore altogether; for if we once possess a perfectly lifelike portrait of a person, it is useless to aspire to its completion by the addition of something purely accidental and extrinsic. This is the theory usually set before the visitor to America, and it is a very sensible one indeed. Our sole difficulty consists in discriminating between what must be retained as truly representative and what had better be set aside as negligible. In one great center it is proven to demonstration that there the men and things exactly constitute the genuine and authentic American type. In another such center, a similar proof is afforded. For instance, when in Boston, if I describe America from what I have seen in New York, the truth of my observations will most likely be called into question; whereas in New York, if I invoke what I have seen in Boston, I shall incur the reproach of regarding the part as the whole, or the past as the present. To a foreigner it sometimes appears as though America realizes the paradoxical conception of a circle with its center everywhere and its circumference nowhere.

Any one, however, who has to speak about America before an American, is supposed to be in a privileged position. Let us imagine, then, an American born in New York, a graduate of Harvard, one who enjoys the widest popularity imaginable, in fact to such a degree that, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from Lake Ontario to the Gulf of Mexico, the American nation is reflected in him; let us also imagine that this American has taken for his motto: *Courage and honesty*; then, most of the difficulties above mentioned will be non-existent in the case of a speaker who has such a man listening to him. Accordingly I will regard myself as in this very position, lay aside my scruples and *go ahead*, as you say in America. In the following remarks, my sole endeavor will be to set forth my impression of things as faithfully as possible.



From the outset I must confess that, immediately on landing, I was bitterly conscious of my inability to answer the American reporters who asked me without delay, What do you think of America? It is very difficult to deal with so vast a subject while engaged in collecting one's luggage scattered here and there in a vast hall, and satisfying the inquisitive and suspicious demands of the custom-house officers. Besides, I was going to America not so much to reveal to the people there the future in store for them and what they were in themselves as possibly to learn all this to some extent myself. So I kept this question in mind only to reflect subsequently on what it really meant, and I thought I saw at last that one of the main objects of the Americans, whose national emblem bears the words: *E pluribus unum*, was to maintain the cohesion and unity of the nation, amid the enormous diversity of the peoples of which it is composed. The American spirit certainly possesses a singular capacity of assimilation. It does not appear, however, that in America there exists an aspiration after unity in identity pure and simple. The great variety of traditions and conditions, of ambitions and natural propensities there to be found forms a source of wealth, productiveness, and power which it is important to maintain and utilize: American unity ought to be nothing less than the untrammelled convergence of these various forces toward one and the same end. To my mind, this nation which is still so young would find the formula of the ideal after which it is aiming pretty accurately expressed in the ancient maxim:

πῶς δέ μοι ἔν τι τὰ παντὰ ἔσται καὶ χωρὶς ἕκαστον;

"How are we to make the whole a unit and each part a whole?"

Will America realize this ideal? It would hardly be pertinent on the part of a passing stranger to express an opinion on such a question. Moreover, as Michelet truly said, the future is not something made and which we must expect: it is for us to make it what we wish it to be. This thought I regard as quite American.

\* \* \*

Instead of attempting to solve the great problems that face America, I found it far more practicable to enjoy the extremely interesting and agreeable life offered me by that country. It was with the university and literary world that I came more specially in contact. I had the good fortune to stay with Prof. William James, who lives in a delightful house surrounded by greenswards and trees and built of wood in colonial style, as are most of the houses in the university quarter of Cambridge. A vast place, its

walls lined with books from floor to ceiling, this dwelling is wonderfully adapted for study and meditation. Nor is there any danger of sinking into a state of moody egoism, for the most pleasant sociability reigns everywhere. The library, Professor James's study, contains not only a writing-desk, tables, and books, but also sofas and window-seats, as well as rocking armchairs which receive visitors at all hours, so that it is in the presence of ladies drinking tea and engaged in lively conversation that this profound thinker meditates and writes.

The first thing that strikes one about American universities is the extent of their grounds. At Harvard one passes through lawns planted with trees, the playground of little gray squirrels which climb on one's shoulders. The university itself consists of several buildings, each of moderate size, scattered here and there in vast enclosures or parks. It is the same throughout America. Nor is this merely a healthy and pleasant arrangement: unless I am very much mistaken, it is the symbol of a certain conception of the development of science. Suppose the frame of science has been set up, once for all, by competent and infallible authority, in conformity with the immutable categories of Being; and it will be logical to construct for its use a splendid edifice with great walls and narrow courts, symmetrical and definite in design. Admit, on the other hand, that the frame must be made for the picture, and that the picture can be completed only by proceeding from details to the whole, continually permitting of modifications which cannot be foreseen; admit that we do not even know if the original we are endeavoring to represent, is itself a complete whole; then the house of science will itself have to remain ever subject to modification and transformation, with its arrangements expressing the actual and contingent distribution of knowledge, rather than the eternal, and perhaps illusory fabric of the universe. In a people wholly imbued with the idea of progress, ever ready to replace rather than to patch up, so as to have entire freedom of action, and which takes for its motto Emerson's phrase, "The old is for slaves," no doubt the sense of the subordination of the outer garb of science to the infinite and ever-advancing reality of things is particularly keen and vivid; and it is apparently such a sense that is manifested in the very construction of the universities as they freely evolve and expand in accordance with the requirements of the scholars.

Another feature that impresses the visitor is the enormous part played by the donations of individuals in the development of American universities. Harvard University, where I had the privilege

of speaking, owes its name to the Rev. John Harvard, who died in 1638 leaving half of his fortune to the college founded by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The new lecture hall in which I delivered one of my two series of lectures was built by Lowell, a generous alumnus of Harvard. At Wellesley, near Boston, a famous college for young ladies, Mr. Rockefeller has given an apparatus which distributes heat and electricity throughout the numerous buildings. The magnificent library in the center of Columbia University, costing \$1,100,000, is the gift of Mr. Low, a former president of the University. During the present academic year, this University has received in donations a sum of \$4,000,000. At Princeton there was no water to provide the students with nautical sports: Mr. Andrew Carnegie gave them a lake nearly four miles in length. Libraries, scientific institutions, gymnasiums, swimming-tanks, and public meeting-rooms thus testify everywhere to the interest taken in university life by the owners of immense fortunes. Here money is both the symbol and the source of creative power. And one of the creations most appreciated is that of buildings and establishments fitted to supply young people with health and strength, amusement and instruction, i. e., with the means of helping themselves.

It is not for me to inquire into the relation between results and expenditure. Specialists in all departments of life must decide as to the place America holds in the world of science. I will merely state that at Harvard, in the world of philosophy, the most diverse studies and tendencies are brilliantly represented. William James, the renowned psycho-physiologist, gifted with a marvelous sense of life and the concrete world, rises from the conception of radical empiricism to a metaphysic of action, pluralism, and universal creation. Royce, the famous author of *The World and the Individual*, whose idealism attempts to find a basis for relative experience in absolute experience, purposes to combine a certain pragmatism with the principles of symbolical logic, recognizing that the essential postulates of logic are to be found in the conditions of action. Münsterberg, the psychological savant, superimposes the subjective point of view onto the objective, according to the idea of Fichte, and thus insures the foundations of logic, ethics, and esthetics. Santayana, in contrast with William James, turns to the philosophy of Being and the Immovable. Palmers and Perry deal in original fashion with moral and other questions. Aided by such minds, as distinguished as they are diverse in nature, the students are called upon to exercise their reflective powers. Some are convinced prag-

matists, some are anti-pragmatists, and philosophical debates are lively and impassioned. Apart from general philosophy, whether pragmatic or idealist, those branches of philosophic study which flourish most at Harvard are psychology, symbolical logic, and social ethics.

It would be extremely interesting to watch the tendencies of American universities. We know that they generally consist of two sorts of establishments: the college and the special faculties, the latter added onto the former. The result is something like a German university added onto the old English or French college. In this combination the college, though admitting of possibilities of choice, continues to represent general culture, whereas the faculties are the domain of special studies. Now the question asked on every side is whether strictly college studies should be maintained to the extent that at present holds good. Young men spend four years at college, from eighteen to twenty-two, as a rule, in preparing for a bachelor's degree. Nowadays, however, it is generally found that, considering the ever-increasing requirements of science and life, the postponement of special studies cannot be maintained as obligatory for so long a period; in many universities the students are allowed to specialize in their work after three years of college. All the same, even among those who advocate such measures, many are still greatly in favor of general culture, and President Butler of Columbia University writes in this connection: "The college has hitherto been and, let us hope, will continue to be the center and foundation of higher education in America." The question of the relation between general culture and special culture depends, as we see, on what is the future of the college.

Another thing, of quite a different relation to the former, is the desire to form the closest possible connection between study and life. As a general rule it seems unbecoming to transform into an end what ought to be only a means; a literary culture that produced only wits, a scientific culture that neglected practical life and the public good, would find little favor with the American nation. This is why, on the one hand, it is only in so far as college studies contribute to mould a man, and not simply a scholar, that there is a desire to retain them; on the other hand, a number of schools that are not merely special but strictly speaking technical, find a place in the universities. It is also expected that the teachers should be constantly at the service, not only of pure science, but also of the nation, in actual concrete reality.

The zeal shown by the teachers in this direction, with the object

of inducing young men to aim at the higher ends of education, quite apart from success in examinations, it must be confessed, is not always fully appreciated by the pupils themselves. In a small book that describes the life at Harvard I read about two students, keen athletes, who, as the examinations drew near, hurriedly engaged one of their comrades, of less means, who had attended all the lectures and taken down every word of the professor,—to “cram” them for the ordeal. “Now,” said the extempore coach to his two pupils, “we have gone through the doctrines of Thales, Heraclitus, Democritus, Anaxagoras, Socrates, and have reached Plato—.” “Skip Plato,” interrupts one of the students, “you have told us quite enough about him when dealing with the others.” Nor is this anecdote purely academical. One day, when Professor James, with that original dash and enthusiasm of his, was expounding one of his philosophical theories, a pupil, mindful of the impending examination, interrupted him with the words: “To be serious for a moment. . . .”

Indeed, every country possesses its quota of such students, whom Professor James in his picturesque language calls bald-headed and bald-hearted. Still, in America, a strict attendance at lectures and diligent study represent only a part of university life, even in the case of the best students. The relations of the students with one another, their common life, occupations and amusements, form an equally important element. All around the university buildings are dormitories, refectories, and clubs, where the students have their home life, under the patronage of the university authorities. Not only do they join heartily in the various sports, they also publish journals, engage in debates on literary, social, philosophical, and political questions, play Shakespeare, and enjoy a most interesting and fully organized life which seems as though it would take up the whole of their time. One of the numerous clubs I will mention is the Cosmopolitan Club, consisting of young men belonging to about thirty different nationalities. It is a pleasure for me to inform you that the members of this club requested me to address them on the *Institut de France*, and that Chinese, Japanese, and Hindus, as well as Greeks, Germans, Americans, and Frenchmen, at the close of the lecture heartily expressed the interest they had taken in it.

This life in common possesses something more than mere charm in the eyes of the students; they regard it as the finest possible preparation for social and political life. In Anglo-Saxon countries education is generally thought to be far less dependent

on lessons or on the example even of parents, masters, and pastors, than on the daily relations between the young man and his equals. This is the reason why students' homes and boarding establishments are in such favor. Sports, in which strict obedience to the elected captain is the first condition of success, regarded from this point of view, become of the utmost importance. The Alma Mater ever holds the first place in the affection of her offspring quite as much because of the relations she sets up between the students, the qualities she develops in them, as by reason of the instruction she lavishes on them. The students receive the impression that the whole of their after-life depends on their college years. And I think I may affirm that a Harvard man, though he were to become a colonel, Governor of a State, or even President of the United States, would regard none of these offices as dearer to him than that of President of the Association of the Alumni of Harvard.

\* \* \*

The opinion of students as to the importance of their college life is but the expression of a thought predominant in the United States: that of the preponderance of education over instruction, strictly so called. Nothing is regarded in that country as complete or final. According to the ruling idea, mankind *is* not, but is *becoming*; human nature, in its inmost essence, is susceptible of change and progress—it is in the making. On human worth mainly depends the form and progress of human life. Now man is not a product of nature, he is a work of art; he has made himself by education and he becomes modified by the same means. "Impossible to exaggerate the importance of education," is a current saying in America. It is surprising how far an individual by appropriate training can modify even his physical constitution and, from being thin and delicate, become strong and robust, capable of the most trying electoral campaigns or of adventurous hunts across the deserts of Africa. There is no such thing as fatality weighing heavily upon individuals or masses of people; by education man can attain to both physical and mental power, to self-confidence and self-control.

And so, in a very general way, throughout the United States inquiry into the best means of education is regarded as the one problem on which all the rest depend. If one would judge of the zeal and enthusiasm shown in this connection, one need only consult the bulky Bibliography of Education, published yearly in Washington by the United States Bureau of Education.

What are the main principles of this education, on which the future of the nation is supposed to depend?

To deal with such a question without losing oneself, either in details or in vague generalities, it would be advisable, if possible, to take a concrete example, a particularly significant one, or what Francis Bacon calls a privileged case. Now it happens that the whole of America, at the present time, finds its loftiest tendencies focussed in an individual to whom it gives the title: citizen. All the idealism of the country is fixed on the citizen: this phrase sums up what I have read and heard on all sides. And so the best thing to do is simply to find out what are preeminently the controlling ideas of this American citizen.

Above all else, he strongly condemns dilettanteism and purely negative criticism. The superiority on which those persons plume themselves who sit comfortably on their porches and watch what they call the human masquerade pass by, or again, those who think they undermine living realities by directing against them the learned ingenuity of their abstract reasonings, such superiority is nothing more than presumption and delusion: as a matter of fact, these fine wits have no share in the work of humanity and are without influence upon its destiny. Human life is a matter of faith and action. A noble, useful life is a strenuous life, not what is called in French *une vie intense*, but rather a life of toil and effort, of labor and strife.

Does this mean that life has no other end than itself, that we must recommend man to take up action for its own sake, to struggle and conquer without any other object than power and the consciousness of such power? This could not be in the mind of the author of *American Ideals*. For him, action, like physical strength and even instruction, is but a means: that which qualifies it is the end in view.

This end is essentially Americanism. It is the first duty of every American *to talk and think and be United States*. "America first, last, and all the time": such is his motto. No doubt, as human beings, it is our duty to work for mankind. Still, the moral unity of the human race is not an actually realized entity which renders the distinctness of the various nations something accidental and contingent. Man realizes himself, first of all, as one of a family and the citizen of a country: family and fatherland are the necessary foundations of the temple of humanity.

The American citizen must aim after true Americanism. Now this is not that vain pursuit of dollars which is sometimes regarded

as the objective of American activity. Know thyself, i. e., clearly perceive or discern thy best self: this ancient motto is one that applies to nations as well as to individuals. True Americanism is a spirit of independence and liberalism, of practical idealism.

Both collectively and individually, the Americans mean to govern themselves, to be their own masters. They possess that sense of self-reliance and of self-control which form the prerequisites of true personality.

Moreover, being composed of men of the most diverse origins, rich because of this very diversity which constitutes its originality and gives every promise of a glorious future, America is sincerely wedded to freedom of beliefs and customs. It was this that was in the mind of the President of the United States, when, in 1907, at the laying of the foundation-stone of the cathedral of Saint Paul, he telegraphed to Archbishop Ireland: "In this fortunate country of ours, liberty and religion are natural allies and go forward hand in hand."

Finally, America is the outcome of a mighty effort on the part of man against brute nature: here the Puritan idealism of its founders is necessarily intertwined with realism. It is no attempt to find a heavenly kingdom unconnected with the natural world, it is an effort to create the spiritual out of matter itself, an essentially practical idealism that expresses the religious groundwork of the American soul.

These general ideas determine the principles which the American educator would like to see governing individual, social, and international life.

\* \* \*

At the banquet of the Alumni which followed the installation of Mr. Nicholas Murray Butler as President of Columbia University in 1902, the President of the United States declared that the essential elements of character—for it is this that especially determines a man's worth—were to be found in the three virtues of *courage*, *honesty*, and *hard common sense*. A very simple doctrine, assuredly, but how far-reaching its consequences, could it be put into practice! The ways of men are complicated, but their motives are elementary. A few elementary virtues, if only put into practice, would change the face of the world.

Social life, says our statesman, is based on liberty, though not on liberty alone. There is another principle, justice, with which liberty must be invested. And justice that is true and complete is not simply the strict observance of legality, it is rather the recog-



tion of each man's right to live a distinctively human life. Among the conditions that contribute to the fulfilment of the human ideal is property. Property is made for man, not man for property; when the two clash the right of the former takes precedence over that of the latter. In proportion, therefore, as any given property increases, it is the duty of its holders to make use of it in such a way as to facilitate access thereto of all such as have contributed, by their labor, to build it up. Speaking generally, between right pure and simple which aims only at the just guarantee of the existing state of things, and possession, which is the thing that sets a seal on activity, we find concrete possibility, the sum total of those conditions that allow individual effort to be usefully exercised and to aspire after possession. In a well-organized society there would be not only equality of rights but also equality of possibilities.

International life, also, has moral rules of its own. Nations consist of persons. Peace is evidently the normal form of international relations; though in this connection we must distinguish between end and result. Peace is not the supreme end in view. He whose teachings we are here summing up would doubtless affirm that we intend to have nothing to do with that peace of which Tacitus speaks in the famous passage: *Ubi solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant*. There are evils, greater than war, to which nations are exposed: injustice, dishonor, and death. But if rational, just, and equitable relations are regularly established between nations and seriously guaranteed, then the natural result of such organization will be peace, no longer that deceptive, precarious peace which can only be realized by victorious power, but the solid and lasting peace which is the expression of essential order.

\* \* \*

And now,—for there is one question which no doubt you have been wishing to ask me since I began,—in the ever closer relations, both intellectual and moral, which bind together France and the United States, what is that in us which the Americans appreciate and what in them is it that we may profitably study? On so great a subject, I will confine my remarks to two points to which my attention has constantly been called during my stay in the United States.

Americans are more than ever struck by the peculiar value belonging to that quality—so ordinary, to all appearance—which is everywhere extolled in the French mind: clarity. Throughout the world the idea has long been prevalent that the French are wonderful

artists, but that they cultivate art for its own sake, and are neither able to enter into profound speculations regarding the principles of things, nor to adapt themselves, in a manly docile fashion, to the conditions of practical life. It now appears, however, as though the genius of France, in all its rashly generous experiments, were constantly pursuing reasonable and practical ends, and not really leaving the earth at all, notwithstanding the aspirations toward the ideal. Consequently it is not a mere subjective or verbal, esthetic or abstract, clarity after which the French mind is aiming: it is bent on acquiring a clear insight not only into its own ideas but also into things themselves. It makes a distinction between the false clarity which disregards the obscurity of things, and the true clarity, which dissipates that obscurity. This was the idea of Descartes, the thinker of clear ideas and one of the most perfect models of the French mind, when he began his work on the conduct of the mind with the words: *Studiorum finis esse debet ingenii directio ad solida et vera de iis omnibus quae occurrunt proferenda judicium.*

Hence the qualities of clearness, precision, and elegance generally recognized in the French language, qualities which cause it to be regarded not only as a useful organ of international communication, but as a precious instrument of culture for men of all lands. Such clarity in speech is a pledge of probity and delicacy in thought and action. France is something more than an amuser, something more than a fomenter of dissoluteness and disorder. She works and investigates with conscientiousness and liberality; she clarifies, refines, and universalizes ideas, in order to reaffirm them and make them more useful, and so she presents to the world teachings which, though sometimes set forth in simple and elegant language, may merit consideration nevertheless. Such, at all events, is the impression I received of what Americans think of France.

On the other hand, I was keenly conscious how advantageous it is for a Frenchman to become imbued with the American spirit and come under the influences which this bold and sturdy nation exercises upon those who mingle with its life. A remarkable blend of idealism and practical sense, the habit of thinking "in terms of action" as they say, the indifference to ideas that cannot be translated into concrete realities, the love of the present added to a very precise sense of its strictly relative importance, and the probable necessity, the very next day, it may be, of self-effacement before the demands of the future; and along with these the cult of individual energy, of effort and self-confidence, as being not only indispensable for the realization of the ideal entertained but also

powerful and efficacious in itself, the virile optimism of the man who knows himself to be responsible and the master of his destiny; such traits as these, so manifest in America's best manhood, are bound to make a deep impression on our minds, ever eager as they are to aspire after the earliest and most universal realization possible of the loftiest and most generous ideal.

May I be permitted to conclude with a comparison which has just entered my mind. During the last few days, I was staying at Washington, D. C., and naturally I made a pilgrimage to Mount Vernon. Among the many spare bedrooms in the simple and homely habitation of George Washington was one bearing the inscription, La Fayette's Room. So also, from this day onward, there may be seen, among other names, that of Theodore Roosevelt attached to one of the seats of this Academy. Thus, after the flight of ages, do the two nations, the American and the French, make exchange of the best they possess:

*Amant alterna sorores.*

## SAVAGE LIFE AND CUSTOM.<sup>1</sup>

BY EDWARD LAWRENCE.

### I. WHAT IS A SAVAGE?

**W**HAT is a savage? Most people would answer by saying that of course, by the word savage we mean a wild, ferocious, uncouth being, who is fierce and brutal to his fellows, and while destitute of religion, is steeped in superstitious rites and practices. Savages have been repeatedly described by writers and travelers as living in a state of moral degradation and revolting depravity; as being thieves and liars; brutal alike to their womenfolk and to their old people; destitute of all family ties and obligations; naked and not ashamed.

Now I am going to ask you to dismiss this definition from your mind for the present. I want you to place yourself in the position of a scientific investigator who has some new and curious animal to study. Let us assume that we know nothing about savages. To answer the question let us both make a tour of the world and see

<sup>1</sup> In the following pages we give the first part of a series of chapters on the birth, marriage, and burial customs, superstitions, human sacrifices, and cannibalism of modern savages, by Edward Lawrence, Fellow of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland.