

**AMERICA  
AT HOME**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649206155

America at home by A. Maurice Low

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

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**A. MAURICE LOW**

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AT HOME**



# AMERICA AT HOME

A. MAURICE LOW

— AUTHOR OF —  
*THE SUPREME SURRENDER*



LONDON  
GEORGE NEWNES, LIMITED  
SOUTHAMPTON ST., STRAND, W.C.



THE FLAT IRON BUILDING  
(THE MOST STRIKING 'SKY-  
SCRAPER' IN NEW YORK).

## PREFACE

MANY years ago a shipwrecked man was cast not far from that historic rock where the Pilgrim Fathers landed, and there discovered by a passing Irishman. This Good Samaritan quickly revived the unfortunate with copious draughts of the 'crayture,' and sent him on his way rejoicing.

On hearing of the charitable deed, one of his friends asked Pat how he happened to know the correct remedy for the case. He answered quietly, 'Devil a bit do I know of medicine; but, sir, I like whisky myself, and thought he might too.'

So it is with the contents of this little book. It does not pose as a profound critique of American psychology, nor a minute investigation into social and political conditions in the United States, but rather as a rapid presentation of the phases of life which have appealed to me, and I trust may interest the reader.

This is not, however, a plea for a special dispensation of criticism such as is offered by the producer of the so-called popular forms of theatrical entertainments, who argues that as nothing serious was contemplated, nothing serious in the way of comment should follow.

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'You must not take me seriously,' is his effort to disarm criticism in advance, 'because I do not take myself seriously.'

Now I, on the contrary, have a serious purpose. Although my comments may be a surface play over national traits, rather than an analysis of character and institutions, still, if I have not replaced the lay figure conception of 'Uncle Sam' as an individual enthusiastically provincial, strenuously acquisitive, and infinitely crude, by a panoramic view of a great Nation—a Nation in flux, it is true, but crystallizing with amazing rapidity into an heroic mould, I have failed in my task. An attempt has been made frankly to present the truth about the American at home as it is borne in upon me after years of sojourn in that 'home,' and not the caricature which is supposed to inspire the amused admiration of the public. On this point I await the judgment of my readers.

I have not discussed the American temperament as demonstrated in present-day literature and art, for the reason that all literary efforts in the United States now seem to me to tend to inculcate the obvious without a hint of the subjective grasp of life which is the only touch to make a work vital and lasting, and because there is as yet no national school of American art.

Whether the artistic temperament exists in sufficient intensity in America to blossom on the native soil, is an unanswered question; for whenever a young man in America feels the inspiration to devote himself to an



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artistic career, he is packed off by public acclaim to Paris, where the probabilities are that he attaches himself to some school and becomes a mere copyist.

So there is no representative Gallery of American Art, and not until one or two generations have assimilated foreign influences with the natural bent toward individuality supplied by conditions in America, can we hope for native work. Even then the results may not be great immediately; but if the United States is as determined to be as great in art as she has become in manufactures, the future is certain.

The future is the keynote of Uncle Sam's daily song. †

The sculptor, George Wade, says: 'I could tell an American immediately, not by manner, walk or clothes, or anything external, but by the peculiar expression of the eye. It is an expression I find it hard to analyse. It is a look that seems to embrace the future rather than the present or the past. The American face has the open-eyed look of confident anticipation.'

And the two French writers who have collaborated on *L'Oncle Sam Chez lui* pay this tribute to American uniqueness:

'Formed out of an aggregation of different races, the American people forms a race by itself—individual, characteristic, and, from many points of view, very superior. It is as ridiculous to say that it is solely Anglo-Saxon as that it is Latin. The American has neither the egotism of the Englishman nor the arrogance of the German, but he possesses their practical sense;

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he has not the light-heartedness of the Frenchman, but his suppleness; he has not the obsequious politeness of the Italian or the Spaniard, but a profound respect for established institutions.

‘The American is himself and nothing but himself. His character is difficult to define. Polite, affectionate, and loquacious by turns, he may become, without apparent reason, brusque, crabbed, and reserved. Even after living with him for many years, it is impossible to know him completely. He is a man of surprises. One appreciates and esteems him, one does not judge him.’

With this I agree, with some modifications—the modifications lie in the pages beyond.

A. M. L.

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