

**THE MODERN STATE IN
RELATION TO SOCIETY
AND THE INDIVIDUAL**

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The modern state in relation to society and the individual by Paul Leroy-Beaulieu

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PAUL LEROY-BEAULIEU

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BY

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59. Left
Dr. Charles L. Watson



THE MODERN STATE.

BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.

The Necessity for an Exact Conception of the Modern State and of its Functions.

THE conception which prevails generally among the men of our time of the State, its nature, and the part it has to play, is singularly confusing and confused. It is credited by them with inconsistent, often contradictory attributes, so great is the lack of clearness and precision of thought on the subject. When it approaches this theme, which has so weighty a bearing on human destinies, their thought loses itself in mist and fog.

The words Liberty, Progress, Individual Initiative, Social Duty, State Action, Legal Obligation, are

jumbled together hap-hazard in the speeches of our legislators and the writings of our controversialists. Many of them seem to be afflicted with that singular disease of the memory known as aphasia, which consists in taking a word to express an idea with which it has no possible connection. When they use the word Liberty, understand Servitude: when they say Progress, understand the reverse.

It is this conception of the State and of its mission that I wish to examine anew. Many others, it is true, have attempted this of late years. In 1880 the Academy of Moral and Political Sciences took for the subject of one of its numerous prize competitions, *The Part Played by the State in the Economic Order*. The palm was given to two distinguished productions sent in by two professors in our faculties of law, M. Jourdan of Aix and M. Villey of Caen. The compass of the subject might be much more widely extended, for it embraces more than the purely economic order. The Modern State overruns all the spheres of human activity: it threatens the whole range of human personality.

More recently still, the learned body above mentioned opened a long discussion among its members on the subject of the Functions of the State. Among those who took part in it were legislators, economists, historians, moralists, philosophers.

In this discussion it seemed to me that the philosophers did not descend sufficiently to the level of this earth. With their great talent for abstraction, they ignored the genesis of many human institutions, some of them attributing to the State a number of establishments which really sprang from free initiative, such as Banks, Mutual Aid Societies, Savings Banks, Insurance Companies, Hospitals, *Monts-de-piété*, etc.

The moralists, on the other hand, seemed to me to give way to an excessive sentimentalism, which runs a risk of enervating society and even man himself.

Thus the subject has not yet been exhausted, nor has it been, to my thinking, made sufficiently clear as to its main outlines.

The most forcible expositions which have lately appeared on this vast and splendid theme, we owe to