

**UNIVERSITIES AND
SCIENTIFIC LIFE IN
THE UNITED STATES**

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Universities and Scientific Life in the United States by Maurice Caullery

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MAURICE CAULLERY

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Universities and Scientific Life in the United States

BY

MAURICE CAULLERY

PROFESSOR AT THE SORBONNE

FRENCH EXCHANGE PROFESSOR AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY, 1916

TRANSLATED BY

JAMES HAUGHTON WOODS

AND

EMMET RUSSELL

"The world has been remade in the last half-century."

CHARLES W. ELIOT



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1922

G. H. P.

TO MY FRIENDS AT HARVARD
AND IN PARTICULAR
TO
GEORGE HOWARD PARKER

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PREFACE

THIS book is based on observations and impressions which I gathered during a stay of five months in the United States.

As a biologist, I describe the university landscape above all from the scientific and more specially from the biological point of view, but with the design of making the whole of it understood and of setting it into the general framework of contemporary American society.

During the second half-year of 1915-16, I had the honor of being Exchange Professor at Harvard University. And my first word here must be to affirm, once more, the very great utility of exchanges of professors between French and American universities. They are among the most efficacious means of helping the two countries to know, esteem and aid one another. The great mass cannot cross the Atlantic; but if the educators of youth have done so, they may help to dissipate many prejudices. They are almost bound, it seems to me, not to keep to themselves the experience acquired, however incomplete their observations may often be. That is what has determined me to write the following pages. I wish that they may make better known in France an aspect of American democracy, which is not that under which we are most commonly led to look at it, and also that they may emphasize the efforts which the immediate consequences of the war imperiously oblige us to make without delay.

It is my duty — and a very pleasant one — to inscribe, at the beginning of this book, my best gratitude for the welcome I received in America. American hospitality was shown me from the time I set foot on New York soil. On my arrival in Cambridge, President Lowell received me in his house, and my first impression of Harvard was that of the simple cordiality which is the charm of the Harvard community, and which unites all its members, from the president down to young freshmen. Everywhere, in New York, Boston, Baltimore, Princeton, Yale, Chicago, and at San Diego on the Pacific, I found friends and colleagues to welcome me with the same affectionate eagerness.

Likewise I received favors on the part of learned bodies. I felt particularly the honor which the American Philosophical Society and the National Academy of Sciences did me in inviting me as a guest at Easter 1916 to their meetings in Philadelphia and in Washington.

I have also to thank the clubs — particularly the Colonial Club at Cambridge and the Harvard Clubs of Boston and New York — which, by opening their doors to me during my entire stay, added to its ease and increased its delight.

My colleagues at Harvard, especially those of the department of Zoölogy, welcomed me with an eagerness which the tales of my predecessors had made me expect, but which touched me none the less. At Harvard, they know how to make the newcomer forget, from the first day, that he is a stranger, and to give him the illusion of being a regular and permanent member of the university. Friends watch attentively to foresee the least wishes of the guest, and to remove every difficulty.

And they exercise their ingenuity in making his stay constantly agreeable. I dedicate this book to the delightful memories of these firm friendships.

I understood, through my own experience, what my colleague and friend Paul Marchal wrote recently, in regard to a scientific journey to the United States in 1913, and in particular regarding a stay at Cornell University. "One must have lived for several days," he says, "in the atmosphere of this ideal society of the arts and sciences, in order fully to enjoy its charm, and to understand its harmony, which call to mind the picture of the Future City of Henrik Anderson. One realizes then to what a profound error European travelers are the victims, who estimate American life and civilization, by judgments formed upon the overwhelming impressions which they have felt in the whirl of the great business thoroughfares of New York, or from visiting the famous Stockyards section of Chicago."¹ It is in fact a profound impression of idealism that one brings back from American university circles.

In 1916, during the months when the battle of Verdun was going on, the meaning of it to a Frenchman was singularly reënforced by the warm sympathy which he felt in the unanimity of the American intellectual class for the cause of France and the heroism of her soldiers. He felt himself in the midst of friends more than one of whom regretted not yet being an ally. And he carried away the precious conviction that sincere American

¹ P. Marchal, *Les Sciences Biologiques Appliquées à l'agriculture et la lutte contre les ennemis des plantes aux États-Unis*. Paris (L'homme), 1916, p. 252.

feeling and the American heart were won for his country, that the best people in America justly appreciated the extent, the purity, and the nobility of the sacrifice stoically undergone by the youth of France, for the salvation of civilization and liberty.

MAURICE CAULLERY.

PARIS, June 1917.

PREFACE BY THE AUTHOR TO THE TRANSLATION

AT the beginning of this English edition, I wish to express my hearty thanks to my translators, and especially to my good friend, J. H. Woods. I am glad that in this form these impressions of my journey will reach wider circles of American life.

But I should like to warn the reader against erroneous conclusions that might be drawn from the book. It was written for the French public. One should not be surprised to find many details which seem superfluous to Americans. And on the other hand, when I spoke of France and made comparisons I presupposed among my readers a general knowledge of academic and scientific life in France and confined myself to allusions. Because I wished to stimulate public opinion, I insisted almost exclusively on points or reforms that seemed to me desirable. The result is that only the defects of the French institutions seem to be noted — which exist in all countries not excepting the United States — while this impression does not appear to be counterbalanced by the solid qualities which our higher education does actually possess. I should be distressed if the reader, heedless of the point of view from which the book was written, would regard it as a general criticism of French methods. Our traditions often impose upon us heavy chains. But they have also fertile educative qualities. Those who have a true knowledge of France, who judge her without prejudice, can appreciate the clarity, the