THE TRUTH ABOUT THE YANKS AS A FRENCHMAN SEES IT

THE fine compliments bestowed on Americans by visiting Europeans are generally pure "bunk," in effect says Louis Thomas, a Frenchman who has been sojourning in our land for a time and now has gone back home to tell of that funny America. Americans adore compliments, avers Mr. Thomas, and the astute European, quickly perceiving this weakness, for his own devious purposes proceeds to "lay it on thick" by handing out bouquets just as he would distribute glass beads to African savages. But he makes up for it when he gets home, we are assured, by saying "more unkind things about Americans than they deserve." Apparently, Mr. Thomas feels that the Yanks deserve having a few unkind things said about them, however, for his article appearing in *L'Opinion* (Paris) is frankly critical. His point of view, however mistaken it may be, contrasts interestingly with the compliments to which America has grown accustomed. Speaking of the business of "soft-soaping," of which he accuses the Europeans, the Frenchman opines that this was carried on to a positively indecent extreme during the war, especially by his polite countrymen, who now apparently regret that they did not exercise more restraint in this regard, when they see how the naive Americans and others, believing what they were told in France, have conceived the notion that they won the war, and are inclined to look upon the French as a bunch of mere "also-rans." As Mr. Thomas puts it, "we Frenchmen, who have the habit of criticizing ourselves out loud and washing our own dirty linen in public, gave our allies a daily present of courtesies and polite lies . . . which so inflated them that at the end each of them thought he had accomplished more than we." This was particularly true in the case of the Americans, we learn, and we read further:

From the day that they sent us a hundred men and one general we said to them: "It is you who will decide the outcome of the war!" That was in accordance with our idea of the polite formula. . . . Later, when the Americans decided, after months of inaction and hesitation, to fulfil their duty as allies and to send to the battle-fields of France a fraction of the men who were being mobilized in their country, we called all the gods to witness this action.

We did not speak of our dead; we were too well bred to insist on that detail, and we told, we sang, we repeated to the Americans, "You have won the war!" And they believe it! Whenever an American division was incorporated in a French army we talked so much about the division that in America they thought the army was composed entirely of Americans. In a similar situation the British General Staff, more far-seeing, would forget to mention the Americans at all. General result: The Americans have won the war and it is no longer permissible to criticize them.

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