Reflections on American Institutions

Selections from
The American Commonwealth

by James Bryce

With an introduction by
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BRYCE'S AMERICA

For almost two centuries, now, America has troubled Europe—her politics, her economy, her mind, her conscience. There it was, looming up across the ocean, unavoidable, implacable, inviting and demanding. It was a curiosity and an excitement, an opportunity and a challenge, an object lesson and an inspiration. It was, unmistakably, an extension of Europe—of European peoples, governments, cultures and institutions. Yet it was quite as unmistakably not Europe. That was one of the things that most troubled Europeans—that America so stubbornly refused to be a mere replica of the Old World.

Everyone had to agree when Crevecoeur announced that the American was "a new Man". But what kind of new man was he? In the eighteenth century a group of philosophers—the Abbe Raynal, the Comte de Buffon, Corneille De Pauw and others—announced that he was, or inevitably would be, an inferior specimen of European man, for the American environment—so they concluded—was unfavorable to life, and in America everything degenerated, flora and fauna and even man, and they pointed triumphantly to the American Indian as the model to which Americans would eventually conform. But even here the Americans refused to cooperate. They refused to confess themselves small, impotent, inferior and degenerate, but by the most elementary tests proved themselves physically superior to their Old World progenitors, and claimed moral superiority as well.

If the American was not a new man physically, clearly he was new-making his government, his society, his economy, and even his philosophy. He had originally inherited all of these institutions, but somehow, in crossing the ocean, they had suffered a sea-change, or perhaps it was a forest-change in the New World itself. The English language survived, but most other languages dropped off altogether. Christianity survived, but not the traditional dependence of Church on State, but a medley of independent churches and faiths. Government survived, but not the government of Kings or Lords or Bishops, but self-government. Social institutions

survived, but not the neat class arrangements of the Old World, but a new classless society.

All of this was a challenge not only to the Old World but to history itself. To some observers it was worse: it was an outrage and an affront: one might suppose that America existed just for the benefit of Europe, and was morally bound to conform to European standards. To these it was clear that America meant mischief. Liberty—so they concluded—would inevitably degenerate into license; democracy would disintegrate into anarchy; the separation of church and state would lead to irreligion and immorality; the fine flower of Old World culture would fade and die. To others the New World was chiefly an interesting experiment, almost a scientific experiment, but whether it meant good or ill only the future could tell. To still others it was a gratification and an inspiration; visible proof of what man could achieve when he threw off the shackles of tyranny and superstition and ignorance, and gave full play to those talents with which Providence had so richly endowed him.

No wonder a continuous flood of visitors—all of them with pen in hand—washed over the new nation. Every ship that sailed into New York harbor, so it seemed, disembarked its bevy of critics and observers, men—and women too—coming to see for themselves what Americans were like, to see for themselves if the United States was really as barbarous as had been predicted, as lawless, as vulgar, as boisterous and exuberant, as impatient with the past, as audacious with the future,—and to bear the report back to the palpitating Old World.

Of all the hundreds—nay thousands—of these reports, only a handful are of more than historical interest. Why was this? Why did America so persistently baffle and frustrate its Old World interpreters? It was in part because America was so new and unexpected that Europeans did not know how to interpret it:—the old standards no longer applied, the old measurements were no longer accurate, even the old vocabulary seemed curiously archaic. It was in part because the United States was so large—larger by far than any western European nation—that it was almost impossible to take it in all at once, and so rapidly changing that reports were out of date before they were printed. But there was more to it than this. The chief reason for the inadequacy of so many of the commentaries on America, it is fair to say, was simply that the visitors themselves were so ill-equipped for the task they had assumed. They came, most of them, with minds already

made up, and even closed. They saw just what they expected to see, and their visits triumphantly confirmed all their prejudices. Most of them might just as well have stayed at home and written their books in the quiet of their own studies.

The nineteenth century saw two major exceptions to these generalizations—two magisterial works that still stand as monuments to the judiciousness, the learning, and the perspicacity of their authors. The first, by the French aristocrat, Comte Alexis de Tocqueville, was written in the eighteen-thirties; the second, by the Scottish scholar-statesman, James Bryce, came just half a century later, in the eighteen-eighties. And these two books—*Democracy in America*, and *The American Commonwealth*—are still, generations later, the best books written on America.

Bryce himself was very conscious of the achievement of his great predecessor. "The book which it might seem natural for me to take as a model" he wrote in his introduction to *The American Commonwealth*, "is the *Democracy in America* of Alexis de Tocqueville. But I have conceived the subject upon quite other lines." He had, indeed. Where Tocqueville was primarily interpretative and philosophical, Bryce was descriptive and analytical. Where Tocqueville was deductive —reluctant to let the facts of observation embarrass the principles of interpretation—Bryce was inductive and empirical. Where Tocqueville sifted all his evidence through the sieve of Democracy, rejecting all else as dross, Bryce had no master-key to American development, but gave equal consideration to environment, institutions, and mechanics. Tocqueville was interested in the American experiment because he was sure that it prefigured European experience and he wanted to guard against it. "In America," he wrote, "I saw more than America; I sought the image of democracy itself, with its inclinations, its prejudices, and its passions, in order to learn what we have to fear or to hope from its progress." But Bryce thought the United States interesting in its own right, and felt that so far as it did represent the wave of the future, it was a wave on which men could safely float and a future which good men could accept with equanimity, and he concluded dispassionately that "the examination and appraisement of the institutions of the United States is no doubt full of instruction for Europe . . . but its chief value lies in what may be called the laws of political biology which it reveals, in the new illustrations and enforcements it supplies of general truths in social and political science. . . . truths which

might have been forgotten had not America poured a stream of new light upon them."

These are differences of mind and of method, but alongside these were differences inherent in the subject itself, and in the temperament of the interpreters. When Tocqueville wrote his luminous study, the American nation was still an experiment, and a dubious one; democracy was still an experiment, and an unpopular one. It was not at all remarkable that a European observer, weighing all considerations in the balance of history, should conclude that the Union could not last and that democracy would become the tyranny of the majority, though it was perhaps a bit surprising that so perspicacious a critic as Tocqueville should have come to this conclusion. But Bryce wrote twenty years after Appomattox when it was clear that the Union would endure; he wrote after almost a century of history had justified Jefferson's wonderful boast, "I believe this the strongest government on earth." When Tocqueville wrote reaction and privilege were in the saddle in most of the countries of the earth, and even the United States confessed the institution of slavery; when Bryce wrote, only half a century later, it was clear that freedom and democracy had triumphed.

That was the first, and decisive, difference—a difference in the American material itself. A second was temperamental—a difference so pervasive and so conspicuous that we are tempted to read into it national characteristics, and say that Tocqueville's approach represents the logic, the clarity, the incisiveness and brilliance of the French mind, and Bryce's the forthrightness and fairness and commonsense practicality of the British. However this may be it is certain that late Victorian liberalism—the liberalism of John Stuart Mill and Leslie Stephen, Goldwin Smith and John Morley, George Otto Trevelyan and James Bryce, was wonderfully congenial to the American character. Or, to put it more simply, who can doubt that a man like Bryce felt more at home with American politics than did Tocqueville—more at home with the two-party system, the talent for compromise, the habits of voluntary organizations, the style of the American bench and bar, of business, of the universities.

There is, too, one further consideration, and that a personal one. Tocqueville was fastidious, aloof, and grave, Bryce exuberant, gregarious, and optimistic. Experience and training had habituated Tocqueville to expect little of his fellow men, and to entertain no soaring hopes for the future, but Bryce was in this, too, a typical Victorian liberal that he tended to think

the best was yet to be. It would be an error to say that Tocqueville did not feel at home in the United States, but it is at least suggestive that in the quarter-century after his return to France he never felt moved to revisit the United States, or to revise his great treatise, and that he made no effort to keep up those friendships or those intellectual relationships that he had formed on his American visit. But to Bryce the United States was a second country. He had made three visits to the United States before he wrote *The American Commonwealth,* and he made many thereafter, and all his life he maintained his friendships with American statesmen and men of letters and of learning. When in 1907 he was appointed Ambassador to the United States that was merely an official recognition of the unofficial position he had held for a quarter of a century.

The United States, Bryce wrote in the introduction to his great book, "make on the visitor an impression so strong, so deep, so fascinating, so inwoven with a hundred threads of imagination and emotion". Tocqueville and Bryce saw the faults of the United States with equal clarity, but Bryce saw them through the eyes of affection, and that made all the difference. Even as he contemplated the crudeness, the waste, the materialism, the corruption of the American scene he remembered that "reserve of force and patriotism more than sufficient to sweep away all the evils which are now tolerated and make the politics of the country wholly worthy of its material grandeur and of the private virtue of its inhabitants. . . . A hundred times in writing this book," he added, "I have been disheartened by the facts I was stating; a hundred times has the recollection of the abounding strength and vitality of the nation chased away these tremors."

Bryce wrote *The American Commonwealth* in the mid-eighties, and the book appeared, in three massive volumes, in 1888. The reader must keep ever in mind that what Bryce is describing and interpreting is the United States at what is now close to the mid-way mark in national history. It was an America that had come not unscathed through the Civil War, but whole; that had cemented nationalism and was moving rapidly towards centralization; that was bursting with energy and vitality and wealth; that was busy catching up with—and in some fields surpassing—the Mother Country. It was an America in the midst of profound and rapid change—the change from country to city, from farm to factory, from small business to giant corporation, from the "old" to the

"new" immigration; from worn-out issues like the tariff and Reconstruction to new issues like the money question, the relations of labor and capital, and imperialism. Bryce caught the nation just as the old tides were going out and the new tides were coming in, and he charted the ebb and the flow with masterly skill.

Something should be said of the grand design of the *American Commonwealth.* It was a marvelously comprehensive survey, embracing not only the national government, but state and local governments as well; not only formal political institutions like the Presidency and the Courts and the Federal system, but the even more important informal institutions of government like the political party (heretofore scandalously neglected by scholars) and public opinion; and it dealt with all these realistically and empirically. And it included, too, chapters of what we would now call cultural anthropology: the position of women, the role of religion, the operations of the power elite, the character of the learned professions, and along with this reflections on the nature of American democracy and the style of American life. What with appendices and related material, all this required over two thousand pages —the most formidable scholarly analysis of the United States that had yet appeared.

Two thousand pages, yet closely reasoned and tightly argued: the book has qualitative as well as quantitative weight and density. There is nothing discursive here, nothing repetitive, and, oddly enough, not too much that is dated. The task confronting an editor limited to one-sixth of all this material is clearly discouraging. It would be folly to attempt to excerpt paragraphs here and there from this massive whole; that would be like taking snippets out of each movement of a Beethoven symphony or pieces, here and there, from Michel Angelo's ceiling in the Sistine chapel. What I have done here is rather to present, in their entirety, a group of chapters addressed to a common subject. All of the chapters reproduced here come from the third volume of *The American Commonwealth*; they constitute, in a sense, Bryce's mature reflections on the findings he has already presented us in the first two volumes. Even here limitations of space do not permit inclusion of all the interpretative materials. I have perforce left out those chapters which seemed to me less significant or less original—the chapters on *laissez faire*, for example, or on railroads, or on Wall Street, or on the Universities—and given preference to those that still speak

to us, over the gap of three quarters of a century, in terms that are eloquent and full of meaning.

"America" Bryce concluded, "has still a long vista of years stretching before her in which she will enjoy conditions far more auspicious than England can count upon. And that America marks the highest level not only of material well-being but of intelligence and happiness which the race has yet attained, will be the judgment of those who look not at the favored few for whose benefit the world seems hitherto to have framed its institutions, but at the whole body of the people." That might have been said by Lincoln, whom Bryce so greatly admired, or by Franklin Roosevelt, who was to represent those qualities Bryce most wanted for American political leadership. It is mark of Bryce's sympathetic understanding of the American commonwealth that he was able to close on a note equally valid for the American past and the American future.

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INTRODUCTORY

"WHAT do you think of our institutions?" is the question addressed to the European traveller in the United States by every chance acquaintance. The traveller finds the question natural, for if he be an observant man his own mind is full of these institutions. But he asks himself why it should be in America only that he is so interrogated. In England one does not inquire from foreigners, nor even from Americans, their views on the English laws and government; nor does the Englishman on the Continent find Frenchmen or Germans or Italians anxious to have his judgment on their politics. Presently the reason of the difference appears. The institutions of the United States are deemed by inhabitants and admitted by strangers to be a matter of more general interest than those of the not less famous nations of the Old World. They are, or are supposed to be, institutions of a new type. They form, or are supposed to form, a symmetrical whole, capable of being studied and judged all together more profitably than the less perfectly harmonized institutions of older countries. They represent an experiment in the rule of the multitude, tried on a scale unprecedentedly vast, and the results of which every one is concerned to watch. And yet they are something more than an experiment, for they are believed to disclose and display the type of institutions towards which, as by a law of fate, the rest of civilized mankind are forced to move, some with swifter, others with slower, but all with unresting feet.

When our traveller returns home he is again interrogated by the more intelligently curious of his friends. But what now strikes him is the inaptness of their questions. Thoughtful Europeans have begun to realize, whether with satisfaction or regret, the enormous and daily-increasing influence of the United States, and the splendour of the part reserved for them in the development of civilization. But such men, unless they have themselves crossed the Atlantic, have seldom either exact or correct ideas regarding the phenomena of the New World. The social and political experiments of America constantly cited in Europe both as patterns and

as warnings are hardly ever cited with due knowledge of the facts, much less with comprehension of what they teach; and where premises are misunderstood inferences must be unsound.

It is such a feeling as this, a sense of the immense curiosity of Europe regarding the social and political life of America, and of the incomparable significance of American experience, that has led and will lead so many travellers to record their impressions of the Land of the Future. Yet the very abundance of descriptions in existence seems to require the author of another to justify himself for adding it to the list.

I might plead that America changes so fast that every few years a new crop of books is needed to describe the new face which things have put on, the new problems that have appeared, the new ideas germinating among her people, the new and unexpected developments for evil as well as for good of which her established institutions have been found capable. I might observe that a new generation grows up every few years in Europe, which does not read the older books, because they are old, but may desire to read a new one. And if a further reason is asked for, let it be found in this, that during the last fifty years no author has proposed to himself the aim of portraying the whole political system of the country in its practice as well as its theory, of explaining not only the National Government but the State Governments, not only the Constitution but the party system, not only the party system but the ideas, temper, habits of the sovereign people. Much that is valuable has been written on particular parts or aspects of the subject, but no one seems to have tried to deal with it as a whole; not to add that some of the ablest writers have been either advocates, often professed advocates, or detractors of democracy.

To present such a general view of the United States both as a Government and as a Nation is the aim of the present book. But in seeking to be comprehensive it does not attempt to be exhaustive. The effort to cover the whole ground with equal minuteness, which a penetrating critic—the late Karl Hillebrand—remarked upon as a characteristic fault of English writers, is to be avoided not merely because it wearies a reader, but because it leads the writer to descant as fully upon matters he knows imperfectly as upon those with which his own tastes and knowledge qualify him to deal. I shall endeavour to omit nothing which seems necessary to make the political life and the national character and

tendencies of the Americans intelligible to Europeans, and with this view shall touch upon some topics only distantly connected with government or politics. But there are also many topics, perhaps no more remote from the main subject, which I shall pass lightly over, either because they have been sufficiently handled by previous writers, or because I have no such minute acquaintance with them as would make my observations profitable. For instance, the common-school system of the United States has been so frequently and fully described in many easily accessible books that an account of it will not be expected from me. But American universities have been generally neglected by European observers, and may therefore properly claim some pages. The statistics of manufactures, agriculture, and commerce, the systems of railway finance and railway management, are full of interest, but they would need so much space to be properly set forth and commented on that it would be impossible to bring them within the present volumes, even had I the special skill and knowledge needed to distil from rows of figures the refined spirit of instruction. Moreover, although an account of these facts might be made to illustrate the features of American civilization, it is not necessary to a comprehension of American character. Observations on the state of literature and religion are necessary, and I have therefore endeavoured to convey some idea of the literary tastes and the religious habits of the people, and of the part which these play in forming and colouring the whole life of the country.

The book which it might seem natural for me to take as a model is the *Democracy in America* of Alexis de Tocqueville. It would indeed, apart from the danger of provoking a comparison with such an admirable master of style, have been an interesting and useful task to tread in his steps, and seek to do for the United States of 1888, with their sixty millions of people, what he did for the fifteen millions of 1832. But what I have actually tried to accomplish is something different, for I have conceived the subject upon quite other lines. To De Tocqueville America was primarily a democracy, the ideal democracy, fraught with lessons for Europe, and above all for his own France. What he has given us is not so much a description of the country and people as a treatise, full of exquisite observation and elevated thinking, upon democracy, a treatise whose conclusions are illustrated from America, but are in large measure founded, not so much on an analysis of American

phenomena, as on general views of democracy which the circumstances of France had suggested. Democratic government seems to me, with all deference to his high authority, a cause not so potent in the moral and social sphere as he deemed it; and my object has been less to discuss its merits than to paint the institutions and people of America as they are, tracing what is peculiar in them not merely to the sovereignty of the masses, but also to the history and traditions of the race, to its fundamental ideas, to its material environment. I have striven to avoid the temptations of the deductive method, and to present simply the facts of the case, arranging and connecting them as best I can, but letting them speak for themselves rather than pressing upon the reader my own conclusions. The longer any one studies a vast subject, the more cautious in inference does he become. When I first visited America eighteen years ago, I brought home a swarm of bold generalizations. Half of them were thrown overboard after a second visit in 1881. Of the half that remained, some were dropped into the Atlantic when I returned across it after a third visit in 1883-84: and although the two later journeys gave birth to some new views, these views are fewer and more discreetly cautious than their departed sisters of 1870. I can honestly say that I shall be far better pleased if readers of a philosophic turn find in the book matter on which they feel they can safely build theories for themselves, than if they take from it theories ready made.

In the effort to bring within reasonable compass a description of the facts of to-day, I have had to resist another temptation, that of straying off into history. The temptation has been strong, for occasional excursions into the past might have been used not only to enliven but to confirm and illustrate statements the evidence for which it has sometimes been necessary to omit. American history, of which Europeans know scarcely anything, may be wanting in colour and romance when compared with the annals of the great states of the Old World; but it is eminently rich in political instruction. I hope that my American readers, who, if I am not mistaken, know the history of their country better than the English know that of England, will not suppose that I have ignored this instruction, but will allow for the omissions forced on me by the magnitude of the subject which I am trying to compress into three volumes. Similar reasons have compelled me to deal briefly with the legal aspects of the Constitution; but this is a

defect which the lay reader will probably deem a merit. . . .

It may be thought that a subject of this great compass ought, if undertaken at all, to be undertaken by a native American. No native American has, however, undertaken it. Such a writer would doubtless have great advantages over a stranger. Yet there are two advantages which a stranger, or at least a stranger who is also an Englishman, with some practical knowledge of English politics and English law, may hope to secure. He is struck by some things which a native does not think of explaining, because they are too obvious, and whose influence on politics or society he forgets to estimate, since they seem to him part of the order of nature. And the stranger finds it easier to maintain a position of detachment, detachment not only from party prejudice, but from those prepossessions in favour of persons, groups, constitutional dogmas, national pretensions, which a citizen can scarcely escape except by falling into that attitude of impartial cynicism which sours and perverts the historical mind as much as prejudice itself. He who regards a wide landscape from a distant height sees its details imperfectly, and must unfold his map in order to make out where each village lies, and how the roads run from point to point. But he catches the true perspective of things better than if he were standing among them. The great features of the landscape, the valleys, slopes, and mountains, appear in their relative proportion: he can estimate the height of the peaks and the breadth of the plains. So one who writes of a country not his own may turn his want of familiarity with details to good account if he fixes his mind strenuously on the main characteristics of the people and their institutions, while not forgetting to fill up gaps in his knowledge by frequent reference to native authorities. My own plan has been first to write down what struck me as the salient and dominant facts, and then to test, by consulting American friends and by a further study of American books, the views which I had reached.

To be non-partisan, as I trust to have been, in describing the politics of the United States, is not difficult for a European, especially if he has the good fortune to have intimate friends in both the great American parties. To feel and show no bias in those graver and more sharply accentuated issues which divide men in Europe, the issues between absolutism, oligarchy, and democracy; between strongly unified governments and the policy of decentralization, this is a harder task, yet a not less imperative duty.

This much I can say, that no fact has been either stated or suppressed, and no opinion put forward, with the purpose of serving any English party-doctrine or party-policy, or in any way furnishing arguments for use in any English controversy. The admirers and the censors of popular government are equally likely to find in the present treatise materials suited to their wishes; and in many cases, if I may judge from what has befallen some of my predecessors, they will draw from these materials conclusions never intended by the author.

Few things are more difficult than to use aright arguments founded on the political experience of other countries. As the chief practical use of history is to deliver us from plausible historical analogies, so a comprehension of the institutions of other nations enables us to expose sometimes the ill-grounded hopes, sometimes the idle fears, which loose reports about those nations generate. Direct inferences from the success or failure of a particular constitutional arrangement or political usage in another country are rarely sound, because the conditions differ in so many respects that there can be no certainty that what flourishes or languishes under other skies and in another soil will likewise flourish or languish in our own. Many an American institution would bear a different fruit if transplanted to England, as there is hardly an English institution which has not undergone, like the plants and animals of the Old World, some change in America. The examination and appraisement of the institutions of the United States is no doubt full of instruction for Europe, full of encouragement, full of warning; but its chief value lies in what may be called the laws of political biology which it reveals, in the new illustrations and enforcements it supplies of general truths in social and political science, truths some of which were perceived long ago by Plato and Aristotle, but might have been forgotten had not America poured a stream of new light upon them. Now and then we may directly claim transatlantic experience as accrediting or discrediting some specific constitutional device or the policy of some enactment. But even in these cases he who desires to rely on the results shown in America must first satisfy himself that there is such a parity of conditions and surroundings in respect to the particular matter as justifies him in reasoning directly from ascertained results there to probable results in his own country.

It is possible that these pages, or at least those of them which describe the party system, may produce on European

readers an impression which the author neither intends nor desires. They may set before him a picture with fewer lights and deeper shadows than I have wished it to contain. Sixteen years ago I travelled in Iceland with two friends. We crossed the great Desert by a seldom trodden track, encountering, during two months of late autumn, rains, tempests, snow-storms, and other hardships too numerous to recount. But the scenery was so grand and solemn, the life so novel, the character of the people so attractive, the historic and poetic traditions so inspiring, that we returned full of delight with the marvellous isle. When we expressed this enchantment to our English friends, we were questioned about the conditions of travel, and forced to admit that we had been frozen and starved, that we had sought sleep in swamps or on rocks, that the Icelanders lived in huts scattered through a wilderness, with none of the luxuries and few even of the comforts of life. Our friends passed over the record of impressions to dwell on the record of physical experiences, and conceived a notion of the island totally different from that which we had meant to convey. We perceived too late how much easier it is to state tangible facts than to communicate impressions. If I may attempt to apply the analogy to the United States and their people, I will say that they make on the visitor an impression so strong, so deep, so fascinating, so inwoven with a hundred threads of imagination and emotion, that he cannot hope to reproduce it in words, and to pass it on undiluted to other minds. With the broad facts of politics it is otherwise. These a traveller can easily set forth, and is bound in honesty to set forth, knowing that in doing so he must state much that is sordid, much that will provoke unfavourable comment. The European reader grasps these tangible facts, and, judging them as though they existed under European conditions, draws from them conclusions disparaging to the country and the people. What he probably fails to do, because this is what the writer is most likely to fail in enabling him to do, is to realize the existence in the American people of a reserve of force and patriotism more than sufficient to sweep away all the evils which are now tolerated, and to make the politics of the country worthy of its material grandeur and of the private virtues of its inhabitants. America excites an admiration which must be felt upon the spot to be understood. The hopefulness of her people communicates itself to one who moves among them, and makes him perceive that the graver faults of politics may be far less dangerous there than

they would be in Europe. A hundred times in writing this book have I been disheartened by the facts I was stating: a hundred times has the recollection of the abounding strength and vitality of the nation chased away these tremors.

There are other risks to which such a book as this is necessarily exposed. There is the risk of supposing that to be generally true which the writer has himself seen or been told, and the risk of assuming that what is now generally true is likely to continue so. Against the former of these dangers he who is forewarned is forearmed: as to the latter I can but say that whenever I have sought to trace a phenomenon to its causes I have also sought to inquire whether these causes are likely to be permanent, a question which it is well to ask even when no answer can be given. I have attributed less to the influence of democracy than most of my predecessors have done, believing that explanations drawn from a form of government, being easy and obvious, ought to be cautiously employed. Some one has said that the end of philosophy is to diminish the number of causes, as the aim of chemistry is to reduce that of the elemental substances. But it is an end not to be hastily pursued. A close analysis of social and political phenomena often shows us that causes are more complex than had at first appeared, and that that which had been deemed the main cause is active only because some inconspicuous, but not less important, condition is also present. The inquisition of the forces which move society is a high matter; and even where certainty is unattainable it is some service to science to have determined the facts, and correctly stated the problems, as Aristotle remarked long ago that the first step in investigation is to ask the right questions.

I have, however, dwelt long enough upon the perils of the voyage: it is now time to put to sea.

CHAPTER 1

NATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS AS MOULDING PUBLIC OPINION

As the public opinion of a people is even more directly than its political institutions the reflection and expression of its character, it is convenient to begin the analysis of opinion in America by noting some of those general features of national character which give tone and colour to the people's thoughts and feelings on politics. There are, of course, varieties proper to different classes, and to different parts of the vast territory of the Union; but it is well to consider first such characteristics as belong to the nation as a whole, and afterwards to examine the various classes and districts of the country. And when I speak of the nation I mean the native Americans. What follows is not applicable to the recent immigrants from Europe, and, of course, even less applicable to the Southern negroes; though both these elements are potent by their votes.

The Americans are a good-natured people, kindly, helpful to one another, disposed to take a charitable view even of wrongdoers. Their anger sometimes flames up, but the fire is soon extinct. Nowhere is cruelty more abhorred. Even a mob lynching a horse thief in the West has consideration for the criminal, and will give him a good drink of whisky before he is strung up. Cruelty to slaves was rare while slavery lasted, the best proof of which is the quietness of the slaves during the war when all the men and many of the boys of the South were serving in the Confederate armies. As everybody knows, juries are more lenient to offences of all kinds but one, offences against women, than they are anywhere in Europe. The Southern "rebels" were soon forgiven; and though civil wars are proverbially bitter, there have been few struggles in which the combatants did so many little friendly acts for one another, few in which even the vanquished have so quickly buried their resentments. It is true that newspapers and public speakers say hard things of their opponents; but this is

a part of the game, and is besides a way of relieving their feelings: the bark is sometimes the louder in order that a bite may not follow. Vindictiveness shown by a public man excites general disapproval, and the maxim of letting bygones be bygones is pushed so far that an offender's misdeeds are often forgotten when they ought to be remembered against him.

All the world knows that they are a humorous people. They are as conspicuously the purveyors of humour to the nineteenth century as the French were the purveyors of wit to the eighteenth. Nor is this sense of the ludicrous side of things confined to a few brilliant writers. It is diffused among the whole people; it colours their ordinary life, and gives to their talk that distinctively new flavour which a European palate enjoys. Their capacity for enjoying a joke against themselves was oddly illustrated at the outset of the Civil War, a time of stern excitement, by the merriment which arose over the hasty retreat of the Federal troops at the battle of Bull Run. When William M. Tweed was ruling and robbing New York, and had set on the bench men who were openly prostituting justice, the citizens found the situation so amusing that they almost forgot to be angry. Much of President Lincoln's popularity, and much also of the gift he showed for restoring confidence to the North at the darkest moments of the war, was due to the humorous way he used to turn things, conveying the impression of not being himself uneasy, even when he was most so.

That indulgent view of mankind which I have already mentioned, a view odd in a people whose ancestors were penetrated with the belief in original sin, is strengthened by this wish to get amusement out of everything. The want of seriousness which it produces may be more apparent than real. Yet it has its significance; for people become affected by the language they use, as we see men grow into cynics when they have acquired the habit of talking cynicism for the sake of effect.

They are a hopeful people. Whether or no they are right in calling themselves a new people, they certainly seem to feel in their veins the bounding pulse of youth. They see a long vista of years stretching out before them, in which they will have time enough to cure all their faults, to overcome all the obstacles that block their path. They look at their enormous territory with its still only half-explored sources of wealth, they reckon up the growth of their population and their products, they contrast the comfort and intelligence of their labouring classes with the condition of the masses in

the Old World. They remember the dangers that so long threatened the Union from the slave power, and the rebellion it raised, and see peace and harmony now restored, the South more prosperous and contented than at any previous epoch, perfect good feeling between all sections of the country. It is natural for them to believe in their star. And this sanguine temper makes them tolerant of evils which they regard as transitory, removable as soon as time can be found to root them up.

They have unbounded faith in what they call the People and in a democratic system of government. The great states of the European continent are distracted by the contests of Republicans and Monarchists, and of rich and poor,—contests which go down to the foundations of government, and in France are further embittered by religious passions. Even in England the ancient Constitution is always under repair, and while many think it is being ruined by changes, others hold that still greater changes are needed to make it tolerable. No such questions trouble American minds, for nearly everybody believes, and everybody declares, that the frame of government is in its main lines so excellent that such reforms as seem called for need not touch those lines, but are required only to protect the Constitution from being perverted by the parties. Hence a further confidence that the people are sure to decide right in the long run, a confidence inevitable and essential in a government which refers every question to the arbitrament of numbers. There have, of course, been instances where the once insignificant minority proved to have been wiser than the majority of the moment. Such was eminently the case in the great slavery struggle. But here the minority prevailed by growing into a majority as events developed the real issues, so that this also has been deemed a ground for holding that all minorities which have right on their side will bring round their antagonists, and in the long run win by voting power. If you ask an intelligent citizen why he so holds, he will answer that truth and justice are sure to make their way into the minds and consciences of the majority. This is deemed an axiom, and the more readily so deemed, because truth is identified with common sense, the quality which the average citizen is most confidently proud of possessing.

This feeling shades off into another, externally like it, but at bottom distinct—the feeling not only that the majority, be it right or wrong, will and must prevail, but that its being the majority proves it to be right. This feeling appears in the guise sometimes of piety and sometimes of fatalism. Religious minds

hold—you find the idea underlying many books and hear it in many pulpits—that Divine Providence has specially chosen and led the American people to work out a higher type of freedom and civilization than any other state has yet attained, and that this great work will surely be brought to a happy issue by the protecting hand which has so long guided it. Before others who are less sensitive to such impressions, the will of the people looms up like one of the irresistible forces of nature, which you must obey, and which you can turn and use only by obeying. In the famous words of Bacon, *non nisi parendo vincitur.**

The Americans are an educated people, compared with the whole mass of the population in any European country except Switzerland, parts of Germany, Norway, Iceland, and Scotland; that is to say, the average of knowledge is higher, the habit of reading and thinking more generally diffused, than in any other country. (I speak, of course, of the native Americans, excluding negroes and recent immigrants.) They know the constitution of their own country, they follow public affairs, they join in local government and learn from it how government must be carried on, and in particular how discussion must be conducted in meetings, and its results tested at elections. The Town meeting has been the most perfect school of self-government in any modern country. They exercise their minds on theological questions, debating points of Christian doctrine with no small acuteness.[1] Women in particular, though their chief reading is fiction and theology, pick up at the public schools and from the popular magazines far more miscellaneous information than the women of any European country possess, and this naturally tells on the intelligence of the men.

That the education of the masses is nevertheless a superficial education goes without saying. It is sufficient to enable them to think they know something about the great problems of politics: insufficient to show them how little they know. The public elementary school gives everybody the key to knowledge in making reading and writing familiar, but it has not time to teach him how to use the key, whose use is in fact, by the pressure of daily work, almost confined to the newspaper and the magazine. So we may say that if the political education of

* They are not conquered who do not obey.

1 See for a curious, though it must be admitted, somewhat dismal account of these theological discussions among the ordinary citizens of a small Western community, the striking novel of Mr. E. W. Howe, *The Story of a Country Town.*

the average American voter be compared with that of the average voter in Europe, it stands high; but if it be compared with the functions which the theory of the American Government lays on him, which its spirit implies, which the methods of its party organization assume, its inadequacy is manifest. This observation, however, is not so much a reproach to the schools, which at least do what English schools omit—instruct the child in the principles of the Constitution —as a tribute to the height of the ideal which the American conception of popular rule sets up.

For the functions of the citizen are not, as has hitherto been the case in Europe, confined to the choosing of legislators, who are then left to settle issues of policy and select executive rulers. The American citizen is virtually one of the governors of the republic. Issues are decided and rulers selected by the direct popular vote. Elections are so frequent that to do his duty at them a citizen ought to be constantly watching public affairs with a full comprehension of the principles involved in them, and a judgment of the candidates derived from a criticism of their arguments as well as a recollection of their past careers. As has been said, the instruction received in the common schools and from the newspapers, and supposed to be developed by the practice of primaries and conventions, while it makes the voter deem himself capable of governing, does not completely fit him to weigh the real merits of statesmen, to discern the true grounds on which questions ought to be decided, to note the drift of events and discover the direction in which parties are being carried. He is like a sailor who knows the spars and ropes of the ship and is expert in working her, but is ignorant of geography and navigation; who can perceive that some of the officers are smart and others dull, but cannot judge which of them is qualified to use the sextant or will best keep his head during a hurricane.

They are a moral and well-conducted people. Setting aside the *colluvies gentium* [the dregs of the nation] which one finds in Western mining camps, and which popular literature has presented to Europeans as far larger than it really is, setting aside also the rabble of a few great cities and the negroes of the South, the average of temperance, chastity, truthfulness, and general probity is somewhat higher than in any of the great nations of Europe. The instincts of the native farmer or artisan are almost invariably kindly and charitable. He respects the law; he is deferential to women and indulgent to children; he attaches an almost excessive

value to the possession of a genial manner and the observance of domestic duties.

They are also a religious people. It is not merely that they respect religion and its ministers, for that one might say of Russians or Sicilians, not merely that they are assiduous churchgoers and Sunday-school teachers, but that they have an intelligent interest in the form of faith they profess, are pious without superstition, and zealous without bigotry. The importance which they still, though less than formerly, attach to dogmatic propositions, does not prevent them from feeling the moral side of their theology. Christianity influences conduct, not indeed half as much as in theory it ought, but probably more than it does in any other modern country, and far more than it did in the so-called ages of faith.

Nor do their moral and religious impulses remain in the soft haze of self-complacent sentiment. The desire to expunge or cure the visible evils of the world is strong. Nowhere are so many philanthropic and reformatory agencies at work. Zeal outruns discretion, outruns the possibilities of the case, in not a few of the efforts made, as well by legislation as by voluntary action, to suppress vice, to prevent intemperance, to purify popular literature.

Religion apart, they are an unreverential people. I do not mean irreverent,—far from it; nor do I mean that they have not a great capacity for hero-worship, as they have many a time shown. I mean that they are little disposed, especially in public questions—political, economical, or social—to defer to the opinions of those who are wiser or better instructed than themselves. Everything tends to make the individual independent and self-reliant. He goes early into the world; he is left to make his way alone; he tries one occupation after another, if the first or second venture does not prosper; he gets to think that each man is his own best helper and adviser. Thus he is led, I will not say to form his own opinions, for even in America few are those who do that, but to fancy that he has formed them, and to feel little need of aid from others towards correcting them. There is, therefore, less disposition than in Europe to expect light and leading on public affairs from speakers or writers. Oratory is not directed towards instruction, but towards stimulation. Special knowledge, which commands deference in applied science or in finance, does not command it in politics, because that is not deemed a special subject, but one within the comprehension of every practical man. Politics is, to be sure, a profession, and so far might seem to need professional aptitudes. But the profes-

sional politician is not the man who has studied statesmanship, but the man who has practised the art of running conventions and winning elections.

Even that strong point of America, the completeness and highly popular character of local government, contributes to lower the standard of attainment expected in a public man, because the citizens judge of all politics by the politics they see first and know best—those of their township or city, and fancy that he who is fit to be selectman, or county commissioner, or alderman, is fit to sit in the great council of the nation. Like the shepherd in Virgil, they think the only difference between their town and Rome is in its size, and believe that what does for Lafayetteville will do well enough for Washington. Hence when a man of statesmanlike gifts appears, he has little encouragement to take a high and statesmanlike tone, for his words do not necessarily receive weight from his position. He fears to be instructive or hortatory, lest such an attitude should expose him to ridicule; and in America ridicule is a terrible power. Nothing escapes it. Few have the courage to face it. In the indulgence of it even this humane race can be unfeeling.

They are a busy people. I have already observed that the leisured class is relatively small, is in fact confined to a few Eastern cities. The citizen has little time to think about political problems. Engrossing all the working hours, his avocation leaves him only stray moments for this fundamental duty. It is true that he admits his responsibilities, considers himself a member of a party, takes some interest in current events. But although he would reject the idea that his thinking should be done for him, he has not leisure to do it for himself, and must practically lean upon and follow his party. It astonishes an English visitor to find how small a part politics play in conversation among the wealthier classes and generally in the cities. During a tour of four months in America in the autumn of 1881, in which I had occasion to mingle with all sorts and conditions of men in all parts of the country, and particularly in the Eastern cities, I never once heard American politics discussed except when I or some other European brought the subject on the carpet. In a presidential year, and especially during the months of a presidential campaign, there is, of course, abundance of private talk, as well as of public speaking, but even then the issues raised are largely personal rather than political in the European sense. But at other times the visitor is apt to feel—more, I think, than he feels anywhere in Britain—that his host has

been heavily pressed by his own business concerns during the day, and that when the hour of relaxation arrives he gladly turns to lighter and more agreeable topics than the state of the nation. This remark is less applicable to the dwellers in villages. There is plenty of political chat round the store at the cross roads, and though it is rather in the nature of gossip than of debate, it seems, along with the practice of local government, to sustain the interest of ordinary folk in public affairs.

The want of serious and sustained thinking is not confined to politics. One feels it even more as regards economical and social questions. To it must be ascribed the vitality of certain prejudices and fallacies which could scarcely survive the continuous application of such vigorous minds as one finds among the Americans. Their quick perceptions serve them so well in business and in the ordinary affairs of private life that they do not feel the need for minute investigation and patient reflection on the underlying principles of things. They are apt to ignore difficulties, and when they can no longer ignore them, they will evade them rather than lay siege to them according to the rules of art. The sense that there is no time to spare haunts an American even when he might find the time, and would do best for himself by finding it.

Some one will say that an aversion to steady thinking belongs to the average man everywhere. Admitting this, I must repeat once more that we are now comparing the Americans not with average men in other countries, but with the ideal citizens of a democracy. We are trying them by the standard which the theory of their government assumes. In other countries statesmen or philosophers do, and are expected to do, the solid thinking for the bulk of the people. Here the people are expected to do it for themselves. To say that they do it imperfectly is not to deny them the credit of doing it better than a European philosopher might have predicted.

They are a commercial people, whose point of view is primarily that of persons accustomed to reckon profit and loss. Their impulse is to apply a direct practical test to men and measures, to assume that the men who have got on fastest are the smartest men, and that a scheme which seems to pay well deserves to be supported. Abstract reasonings they dislike, subtle reasonings they suspect; they accept nothing as practical which is not plain, downright, apprehensible by an ordinary understanding. Although open-minded, so far as willingness to listen goes, they are hard to convince, because

they have really made up their minds on most subjects, having adopted the prevailing notions of their locality or party as truths due to their own reflection.

It may seem a contradiction to remark that with this shrewdness and the sort of hardness it produces, they are nevertheless an impressionable people. Yet this is true. It is not their intellect, however, that is impressionable, but their imagination and emotions, which respond in unexpected ways to appeals made on behalf of a cause which seems to have about it something noble or pathetic. They are capable of an ideality surpassing that of Englishmen or Frenchmen.

They are an unsettled people. In no State of the Union is the bulk of the population so fixed in its residence as everywhere in Europe; in many it is almost nomadic. Nobody feels rooted to the soil. Here to-day and gone to-morrow, he cannot readily contract habits of trustful dependence on his neighbours.[1] Community of interest, or of belief in such a cause as temperance, or protection for native industry, unites him for a time with others similarly minded, but congenial spirits seldom live long enough together to form a school or type of local opinion which develops strength and becomes a proselytizing force. Perhaps this tends to prevent the growth of variety in opinion. When a man arises with some power of original thought in politics, he is feeble if isolated, and is depressed by his insignificance, whereas if he grows up in favourable soil with sympathetic minds around him, whom he can in prolonged intercourse permeate with his ideas, he learns to speak with confidence and soars on the wings of his disciples. Whether or no there be truth in this suggestion, one who considers the variety of conditions under which men live in America may find ground for surprise that there should be so few independent schools of opinion.

But even while an unsettled, they are nevertheless an associative, because a sympathetic people. Although the atoms are in constant motion, they have a strong attraction for one another. Each man catches his neighbour's sentiment more quickly and easily than happens with the English. That sort of reserve and isolation, that tendency rather to repel than to invite confidence, which foreigners attribute to the Englishman, though it belongs rather to the upper and middle class

[1] Forty years ago this was much less true of New England than it is to-day. There are districts in the South where the population is stagnant, but these are backward districts, not affecting the opinion of the country.

than to the nation generally, is, though not absent, yet less marked in America.[1] It seems to be one of the notes of difference between the two branches of the race. In the United States, since each man likes to feel that his ideas raise in other minds the same emotions as in his own, a sentiment or impulse is rapidly propagated and quickly conscious of its strength. Add to this the aptitude for organization which their history and institutions have educed, and one sees how the tendency to form and the talent to work combinations for a political or any other object has become one of the great features of the country. Hence, too, the immense strength of party. It rests not only on interest and habit and the sense of its value as a means of working the government, but also on the sympathetic element and instinct of combination ingrained in the national character.

They are a changeful people. Not fickle, for they are if anything too tenacious of ideas once adopted, too fast bound by party ties, too willing to pardon the errors of a cherished leader. But they have what chemists call low specific heat; they grow warm suddenly and cool as suddenly; they are liable to swift and vehement outbursts of feeling which rush like wildfire across the country, gaining glow, like the wheel of a railway car, by the accelerated motion. The very similarity of ideas and equality of conditions which makes them hard to convince at first makes a conviction once implanted run its course the more triumphantly. They seem all to take flame at once, because what has told upon one, has told in the same way upon all the rest, and the obstructing and separating barriers which exist in Europe scarcely exist here. Nowhere is the saying so applicable that nothing succeeds like success. The native American or so-called Know-nothing party had in two years from its foundation become a tremendous force, running, and seeming for a time likely to carry, its own presidential candidate. In three years more it was dead without hope of revival. Now and then, as for instance in the elections of 1874-75, there comes a rush of feeling so sudden and tremendous, that the name of Tidal Wave has been invented to describe it.

[1] I do not mean that Americans are more apt to unbosom themselves to strangers, but that they have rather more adaptiveness than the English, and are less disposed to stand alone and care nothing for the opinion of others. It is worth noticing that Americans travelling abroad seem to get more easily into touch with the inhabitants of the country than the English do: nor have they the English habit of calling those inhabitants—Frenchmen, for instance, or Germans—"the natives."

After this it may seem a paradox to add that the Americans are a conservative people. Yet any one who observes the power of habit among them, the tenacity with which old institutions and usages, legal and theological formulas, have been clung to, will admit the fact. A love for what is old and established is in their English blood. Moreover, prosperity helps to make them conservative. They are satisfied with the world they live in, for they have found it a good world, in which they have grown rich and can sit under their own vine and fig-tree, none making them afraid. They are proud of their history and of their Constitution, which has come out of the furnace of civil war with scarcely the smell of fire upon it. It is little to say that they do not seek change for the sake of change, because the nations that do this exist only in the fancy of alarmist philosophers. There are nations, however, whose impatience of existing evils, or whose proneness to be allured by visions of a brighter future, makes them under-estimate the risk of change, nations that will pull up the plant to see whether it had begun to strike root. This is not the way of the Americans. They are no doubt ready to listen to suggestions from any quarter. They do not consider that an institution is justified by its existence, but admit everything to be matter for criticism. Their keenly competitive spirit and pride in their own ingenuity have made them quicker than any other people to adopt and adapt inventions: telephones were in use in every little town over the West, while in the City of London men were just beginning to wonder whether they could be made to pay. I have remarked in an earlier passage that the fondness for trying experiments has produced a good deal of hasty legislation, especially in the newer States, and that some of it has already been abandoned. But these admissions do not affect the main proposition. The Americans are at bottom a conservative people, in virtue both of the deep instincts of their race and of that practical shrewdness which recognizes the value of permanence and solidity in institutions. They are conservative in their fundamental beliefs, in the structure of their governments, in their social and domestic usages. They are like a tree whose pendulous shoots quiver and rustle with the lightest breeze, while its roots enfold the rock with a grasp which storms cannot loosen.

CHAPTER 2

CLASSES AS INFLUENCING OPINION

THESE are some of the characteristics of American opinion in general, and may, if I am right in the description given, be discovered in all classes of the native white population. They exist, however, in different measure in different classes, and the above account of them needs to be supplemented by some remarks on the habits and tendencies of each class. I do not, of course, propose to describe the present opinions of classes, for that would require an account of current political questions: my aim is merely to state such general class characters as go to affect the quality and vigour of opinion. Classes are in America by no means the same thing as in the greater nations of Europe. One must not, for political purposes, divide them as upper and lower, richer and poorer, but rather according to the occupations they respectively follow and the conditions of life that constitute their environment. Their specific characters, as a naturalist would say, are less marked even in typical individuals than would be the case in Europe, and are in many individuals scarcely recognizable. Nevertheless, the differences between one class and another are sufficient to produce distinctly traceable influences on the political opinion of the nation, and to colour the opinions, perhaps even to determine the political attitude, of the district where a particular class predominates.

I begin with the farmers, because they are, if not numerically the largest class, at least the class whose importance is most widely felt. As a rule they are owners of their land; and as a rule the farms are small, running from forty or fifty up to three hundred acres. In a few places, especially in the West, large landowners let farms to tenants, and in some parts of the South one finds big plantations cultivated by small tenants, often negroes. But far more frequently the owner tills the land and the tiller owns it. The proportion of hired labourers to farmers is therefore very much smaller than in England, partly because farms are usually of a size permitting the farmer and his family to do much of the work by themselves, partly because machinery is more

extensively used, especially in the level regions of the West. The labourers, or, as they are called, the "hired men," do not, taking the country as a whole, form a social stratum distinct from the farmers, and there is so little distinction in education or rank between them that one may practically treat employer and employed as belonging to the same class.

The farmer is a keener and more enterprising man than in Europe, with more of that commercial character which one observes in Americans, far less anchored to a particular spot, and of course subject to no such influences of territorial magnates as prevail in England, Germany, or Italy. He is so far a business man as sometimes to speculate in grain or bacon. Yet he is not free from the usual defects of agriculturists. He is obstinate, tenacious of his habits, not readily accessible to argument. His way of life is plain and simple, and he prides himself on its simplicity, holding the class he belongs to to be the mainstay of the country, and regarding city-folk with a mixture of suspicion and jealousy, because he deems them as inferior to himself in virtue as they are superior in adroitness, and likely to outwit him. Sparing rather than stingy in his outlays, and living largely on the produce of his own fields, he has so little ready money that small sums appear large to him; and as he fails to see why everybody cannot thrive and be happy on $1500 a year, he thinks that figure a sufficient salary for a county or district official, and regulates his notions of payment for all other officials, judges included, by the same standard. To belong to a party and support it by his vote, seems to him part of a citizen's duty, but his interests in national politics are secondary to those he feels in agriculturists' questions, particularly in the great war against monopolies and capitalists, which the power and in some cases the tyranny of the railroad companies has provoked in the West. Naturally a grumbler, as are his brethren everywhere, finding his isolated life dull, and often unable to follow the causes which depress the price of produce, he is the more easily persuaded that his grievances are due to the combinations of designing speculators. The agricultural newspaper to which he subscribes, is of course written up to his prejudices, and its adulation of the farming class confirms his belief that he who makes the wealth of the country is tricked out of his proper share in its prosperity. Thus he now and then makes desperate attempts to right himself by legislation, lending too ready an ear to politicians who promise him redress by measures possibly unjust and usually

unwise. However, after all said and done, he is an honest, kindly sort of man, hospitable, religious, patriotic: the man whose hard work has made the West what it is. It is chiefly in the West that one must now look for the well-marked type I have tried to draw, yet not always in the newer West; for, in regions like northern Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Dakota, the farming population is mainly foreign —Scandinavian and German—while the native Americans occupy themselves with trading and railroad management. However, the Scandinavians and Germans acquire in a few years many of the characteristics of the native farmer, and usually follow the political lead given by the latter. In the early days of the Republic, the agriculturists were, especially in the middle and the newer parts of the Southern States, the backbone of the Democratic party, sturdy supporters of Jefferson, and afterwards of Andrew Jackson. When the opposition of North and South began to develop itself and population grew up beyond the Ohio, the pioneers from New England who settled in that country gave their allegiance to the Whig party; and in the famous "log cabin and hard cider" campaign, which carried the election of General Harrison as President, that worthy, taken as a type of the hardy backwoodsman, made the Western farmer for the first time a noble and poetical figure to the popular imagination. Nowadays he is less romantic, yet still one of the best elements in the country. He stood by the Union during the war, and gave his life freely for it. His vote now carries the Western, and especially the North-western States for the Republican party, which is to him still the party which saved the Union and protects the negro.

The shopkeepers and small manufacturers may be said to form a second class, though in the smaller towns, of the West especially, their interests are so closely interwoven with those of the cultivators, and their way of life so similar, that there is little special to remark about them. In the larger towns they are sharper and more alive to what is passing than the rural population, but their intellectual horizon is not much wider. A sort of natural selection carries the more ambitious and eager spirits into the towns, for the native American dislikes the monotony and isolation of a farm life with its slender prospect of wealth. To keep a store in a "corner lot" is the ambition of the keen-witted lad. The American shopkeeper, it need hardly be said, has not the obsequiousness of his European congener, and is far from fancying that retail trade has anything degrading about

it. He is apt to take more part in local politics than the farmer, but less apt to become a member of a State legislature, because he can seldom leave his store as the farmer can at certain seasons leave his land. He reads more newspapers than the farmer does, and of course learns more from current talk. His education has been better, because city schools are superior to country ones. He is perhaps not so certain to go solid for his party. He has less ground of quarrel with the railroads, but if connected with a manufacturing industry, is of course more likely to be interested in tariff questions, or, in other words, to be a Protectionist. His occupation, however, seldom gives him any direct personal motive for supporting one party more than another, and he has less of that political timidity which Europeans take to be the note of the typical bourgeois than the retail dealer of France or England.

The working men, by which I mean those who toil with their hands for wages, form a less well-marked class than is the case in most parts of Europe, and have not so many sub-classes within their own body, though of course the distinction between skilled and unskilled labour makes itself felt, as it always must. They are, with the exception of many of the recent immigrants, fairly educated; they read the daily newspapers, and very likely a weekly religious journal and a monthly magazine; many of them, I think a majority, except in the greater cities, belong to a congregation in whose concerns they are generally interested. Many are total abstainers. Their wives have probably had a longer schooling and read more widely than they do themselves. In the smaller towns both in New England and the West, and even in some of the large cities, such as Philadelphia and Chicago, the better part of them own the houses they live in, wooden houses in the suburbs with a little verandah and a bit of garden, and thus feel themselves to have a stake in the country. Their wives dress with so much taste that on Sunday, or when you meet them in the steam cars (*i.e.* on a railway journey), you would take them for persons in easy circumstances. Until recently, strikes have been less frequent than in England, nor, in spite of the troubles of the last few months, has there hitherto existed any general sense of hostility to employers. This is due partly to the better circumstances of the workmen, partly to the fact that the passage from the one class to the other is easy and frequent. Thus, notwithstanding the existence of a so-called Labour party, and the recent creation of a vast organization embracing all trades over the

whole Union (the Knights of Labour), there has been less of collective class feeling and class action among workmen than in England,[1] and certainly much less than in France or Germany. Politicians have of late years begun to pose as the special friends of the working man. Although in a country where the popular vote is omnipotent there seems something absurd in assuming that the working man is weak and stands in need of special protection, the great power of capital, the growing disparities of fortune, and the fact that rich men bear less than their due share of taxation, have furnished a basis for labour agitation. While contributing as many recruits to the army of professional politicians as do the other classes, the wage-earning class is no more active in political work than they are, and furnishes few candidates for State or Federal office. Till the recent rise of the Greenback or Labour party little demand was made for the representation of labour as labour either in Congress or in State legislatures. There are of course many members who have begun life as operatives, but, so far as I know, very few in Congress though some in the legislatures of the Eastern States, whose special function or claim it is to be the advocates of their whilome class. Such progress as communistic or socialistic movements have made has been made among the German (including Polish and Bohemian) immigrants, with a much smaller contingent of Irish support, but it is not easy to say how great it is, for the educated classes had known and cared very little about it until the recent outbreak of Anarchist violence at Chicago turned all eyes upon a new source of peril to civilization. One question, however, which never fails to excite the workmen is the introduction of cheap foreign labour. In the Pacific States the feeling against the Chinese has not merely been the prime factor in Californian State politics, but has induced the Senate to ratify treaties and Congress to pass Acts forbidding their entry; and when a shoe manufacturer in Massachusetts some years ago brought a number of Chinese to replace his own men who had gone out on strike, they were threatened with molestation. One trade, however, the Chinese are

[1] An experienced American friend writes me: "Although immigrants from Great Britain are the best of all our immigrants, English workmen are more apt to stir up trouble with their employers than those of any other race. Employers say that they fear their English workmen, because they are generally suspicious, and disbelieve in the possibility of anything but hostility between men and masters."

permitted to follow, and have now almost monopolized, that of washermen—I cannot say, washerwomen. Even a small city rarely wants its Chinese laundry.

It will be gathered from what I have said that there is no want of intelligence or acuteness among the working people. For political purposes, and setting apart what are specifically called labour questions, there is really little difference between them and other classes. Their lights are as good as those of farmers or traders, their modes of thinking similar. They are, however, somewhat more excitable and more easily fascinated by a vigorous personality, as the success of General Benjamin F. Butler among the shoemakers of his Massachusetts district proved. A powerful speaker with a flow of humour and audacity will go farther with them than with the more commercially-minded shopkeeper, or the more stolid agriculturist, if indeed one can call any American stolid.

The ignorant masses of such great cities as New York, Brooklyn, Philadelphia, Chicago, San Francisco, ought not to be reckoned with the working class, but answer better to what is called in England "the residuum." They are largely Irish and Germans, together with Poles and Russians, Bohemians, negroes, Frenchmen, Italians, and such native Americans as have fallen from their first estate into drink or penury. From the immigrants neither national patriotism nor a sense of civic duty can as yet be expected; the pity is that they have been allowed civic power. Political opinions they can hardly be said to possess, for they have not had time to learn to know the institutions of their new country. Yet there are three sentiments which guide them, besides adhesion to the party which snapped them up when they landed, or which manipulates them by leaders of their own race. One of these sentiments is religious sympathy. Such of them as are Roman Catholics are ready to stand by whichever party may obtain the favour, or be readiest to serve the interests, of their church.[1] Another is the protection of the liquor traffic. The German loves his beer, and deems a land where this most familiar of pleasures is unattainable no land of freedom, while the Irishman stands by a trade in which his countrymen are largely engaged. And, thirdly, the American-Irish have been largely swayed by hatred of England, which has made them desire to annoy her, and if

[1] Those of the German immigrants who remain in the great cities instead of going West, seem to be mostly Catholics, at least in name; as are also the Poles and Czechs.

possible to stir up a quarrel between her and the land of their adoption. The events of the last three years in England seem, so far as one can gather, to have lessened this feeling, on which, of course, unscrupulous politicians play.

It must not be supposed that the class I am describing is wholly composed of immigrants, nor that all of the city-dwelling immigrants belong to it, for there are many foreigners whose education and skill places them at once on a level with the native American workmen. Its importance in politics arises less from its number, which is perhaps not over two millions all told, than from its cohesion. Being comparatively ignorant, and a part of it not yet absorbed into the American population, it is not moved by the ordinary political forces, nor amenable to the ordinary intellectual and moral influences, but "goes solid" as its leaders direct it, a fact which gives these leaders exceptional weight, and may enable them, when parties are nearly balanced, to dictate their terms to statesmen who loathe the necessity of submission. Nevertheless it is not so largely answerable for the faults of American politics as the stranger might be led by the language of many Americans to believe. There is a disposition in the United States to use the immigrants, and especially the Irish, much as the cat is used in the kitchen to account for broken plates and food which disappears. The cities have no doubt suffered from the immigrant vote. But New York was not an Eden before the Irish came; and would not become an Eden were they all to move on to San Francisco.

The capitalist class consists of large merchants, manufacturers, bankers, and railroad men, with a few great land speculators and directors of trading or carrying companies. How much capacity and energy, how much wealth and influence there is in this small class everybody knows. It includes the best executive ability of the country, and far more ability than is devoted to the public service of the state. Though such persons do not, and hardly could, hold aloof from politics—some of them are indeed zealous party men—their interest lies chiefly in using politics for their own purposes, and especially in resisting the attacks with which they are threatened, sometimes by the popular movement against monopolists and great corporations, sometimes by Free Traders anxious to get rid of the present high tariff which the manufacturers deem essential to the welfare of the country. One half of the capitalists are occupied in preaching *laissez faire* as regards railroads, the other half in resist-

ing it in railroad matters, in order to have their goods carried more cheaply, and in tariff matters in order to protect industries threatened with foreign competition. Yet they manage to hold well together. Their practical talent does not necessarily imply political insight, any more than moral elevation, nor have they generally the taste or leisure to think seriously about the needs of the state. In no country does one find so many men of eminent capacity for business, shrewd, forcible, and daring, who are so uninteresting, so intellectually barren, outside the sphere of their business knowledge.[1]

But the wealthy have many ways of influencing opinion and the course of events. Some of them own, others find means of inspiring, newspapers. Presidents of great corporations have armies of officials under their orders, who cannot indeed be intimidated, for public opinion would resent that, yet may be suffered to know what their superior thinks and expects. Cities, districts of country, even States or Territories, have much to hope or fear from the management of a railway, and good reason to conciliate its president. Moreover, as the finance of the country is in the hands of these men and every trader is affected by financial changes, as they control enormous joint-stock enterprises whose shares are held and speculated in by hosts of private persons of all ranks, their policy and utterances are watched with anxious curiosity, and the line they take determines the conduct of thousands not directly connected with them. A word from several of the great financiers would go a long way with leading statesmen. They are for the most part a steadying influence in politics, being opposed to sudden changes which might disturb the money market or depress trade, and especially opposed to complications with foreign States. They are therefore *par excellence* the peace party in America, for though some might like to fish in troubled waters, the majority would have far more to lose than to gain.

There remains the group of classes loosely called professional men, of whom we may dismiss the physicians as neither bringing any distinctive element into politics, nor often taking an active interest therein, and the journalists, because they have been considered in treating of the organs of opinion, and the clergy as inhibited by public feeling from direct immixture in political strife. In the anti-slavery and

[1] Silas Lapham, in Mr. Howells' well-known novel, illustrates many, though not all, the features of the type.

Free Soil struggles, ministers of religion were prominent, as they are now in the temperance movement, and indeed will always be when a distinctly moral issue is placed before the country. But in ordinary times, and as regards most questions, they find it prudent to rest content with inculcating such sound principles as will elevate their hearers' views and lead them to vote for the best men. Some few, however, of exceptional zeal or unusually well-assured position do appear on political platforms, and, like the late Mr. Henry Ward Beecher, justify their courage by their success. The Roman Catholic prelates have great influence with their flocks, but are so sensible of the displeasure which its exercise would cause among the native Americans as to be guarded in public action.

The lawyers, who are both barristers and attorneys in one, there being no such distinction of the profession into two branches as exists in England and France, are of all classes that which has most to do with politics. From their ranks comes a large part, probably a half, and apparently the better half, of the professional politicians. Those who do not make politics a business have usually something to do with it, and even those who have little to do with it enjoy opportunities of looking behind the scenes. The necessities of their practice oblige them to study the Federal Constitution and the Constitution of their own State, as well as to watch current legislation. It is therefore from the legal profession that most of the leading statesmen have been drawn, from the days of Patrick Henry, John Jay, and John Adams down to those of Abraham Lincoln and the presidential candidates of our own generation. Hence both in great cities and in small ones the lawyer is favourably placed for influencing opinion. If he be a man of parts, he is apt to be the centre of local opinion, as Lincoln was in Springfield, where he practised law and made his reputation.[1] When in some great community like New York or Boston a demonstration is organized, some distinguished advocate, such as Charles O'Conor was in New York, such as Rufus Choate was in Boston, is selected for the oration of the day, because he has the power of speech, and because everybody knows him. Thus the lawyers best deserve to be called the leading class, less powerful in proportion to their numbers than the

[1] I have heard townsmen of the great President describe how the front of his house used to be a sort of gathering place on summer evenings where his racy talk helped to mould the opinion of the place.

capitalists, but more powerful as a whole, since more numerous and more locally active. Of course it is only on a very few professional questions that they act together as a class. Their function is to educate opinion from the technical side, and to put things in a telling way before the people. Whether the individual lawyer is or is not a better citizen than his neighbours, he is likely to be a shrewder one, knowing more about government and public business than most of them do, and able at least to perceive the mischiefs of bad legislation, which farmers or shopkeepers may faintly realize. Thus on the whole the influence of the profession makes for good, and though it is often the instrument by which harm is wrought, it is more often the means of revealing and defeating the tricks of politicians, and of keeping the wholesome principles of the Constitution before the eyes of the nation. Its action in political life may be compared with its function in judicial proceedings. Advocacy is at the service of the just and the unjust equally, and sometimes makes the worse appear the better cause, yet experience shows that the sifting of evidence and the arguing of points of law tend on the whole to make justice prevail.

There remain the men of letters and artists, an extremely small class outside a few Eastern cities, and the teachers, especially those in colleges and universities. The influence of literary men is more felt through magazines than through books, for native authorship suffers terribly from the deluge of cheap English reprints. That of the teachers tells primarily on their pupils and indirectly on the circles to which those pupils belong, or in which they work when they have left college. One is amused by the bitterness—affected scorn trying to disguise real fear—with which "college professors" are denounced by the professional politicians as unpractical, visionary, pharisaical, "kid-gloved," "high-toned," "un-American," the fact being that a considerable impulse towards the improvement of party methods, towards civil service reform, and towards tariff reform, has come from the universities, and been felt in the increased political activity of the better educated youth. The new generation of lawyers, clergymen, and journalists, of teachers in the higher schools, and indeed of business men also, so far as they receive a university education, have been inspired by the universities, particularly of course by the older and more highly developed institutions of the Eastern States, with a more serious and earnest view of politics than has prevailed among the richer classes since the strain of the Civil War passed away. Their

horizon has been enlarged, their patriotism tempered by a sense of national shortcomings, and quickened by a higher ideal of national well-being. The confidence that all other prosperity will accompany material prosperity, the belief that good instincts are enough to guide nations through practical difficulties—errors which led astray so many worthy people in the last generation, are being dispelled, and a juster view of the great problems of democratic government presented. The seats of learning and education are at present among the most potent forces making for progress and the formation of sound opinion in the United States, and they increase daily in the excellence of their teachers no less than in the number of their students.

Before quitting this part of the subject a few general observations are needed to supplement or sum up the results of the foregoing inquiry.

There is in the United States no such general opposition as in Europe of upper and lower classes, richer and poorer classes. There is no such jealousy or hostility as one finds in France between the bourgeoisie and the operatives. In many places class distinctions do exist for the purposes of social intercourse. But it is only in the larger cities that the line is sharply drawn between those who call themselves gentlemen and those others to whom, in talk among themselves, the former set would refuse this epithet.

There is no one class or set of men whose special function it is to form and lead opinion. The politicians certainly do not. Public opinion leads them.

Still less is there any governing class. The class whence most office-holders come corresponds, as respects education and refinement, to what would be called the lower middle or "middle-middle" class in Europe. But office-holders are not governors.

Such class issues as now exist or have recently existed, seldom, or to a small extent, coincide with party issues. They are usually toyed with by both parties alike, or if such a question become strong enough to be made the basis of a new party, such a party will usually stand by itself apart from the two old and regular organizations.

In Europe, classes have become factors in politics either from interest or from passion. Legislation or administration may have pressed hardly on a class, and the class has sought to defend and emancipate itself. Or its feelings may have been wounded by past injury or insult, and it may seek occasions for revenge. In America neither cause for the action

of any class as a class can be said to exist.[1] Hence classes are not prime factors in American politics or in the formation of political opinion. In the main, political questions proper hold the first place in a voter's mind, and questions affecting his class the second. [2]

The nation is not an aggregate of classes. They exist within it, but they do not make it up. You are not struck by their political significance as you would be in any European country. The people is one people, although it occupies a wider territory than any other nation, and is composed of elements from many quarters.

Even education makes less difference between various sections of the community than might be expected. One finds among the better instructed many of those prejudices and fallacies to which the European middle classes are supposed peculiarly liable. Among the less instructed of the native Americans, on the other hand, there is a comprehension of public affairs, a shrewdness of judgment, and a generally diffused interest in national welfare, exceeding that of the humbler classes in Europe.

This is the strong point of the nation. This is what gives buoyancy to the vessel of the state, enabling her to carry with apparent ease the dead weight of ignorance which European emigration continues to throw upon her decks.

[1] Even those who would persuade the working men that legislation is unjust to them seldom complain of what it does, but rather of what it omits or does not prevent. Any statute which bore harshly on labouring men, such as some of the English statutes about trade-unions repealed in 1875, would in America be abolished forthwith. There is at present in some States an agitation, conducted by "Labour" leaders, to abolish the laws which forbid "picketing" in trade disputes, but the laws have so far been upheld by the general sense of the community.

[2] I have called attention to exceptions—*e.g.* tariff questions are foremost in the mind of Pennsylvanian manufacturers, Chinese questions in those of Californian working men, transportation questions, at particular moments, in those of farmers.

CHAPTER 3

THE ACTION OF PUBLIC OPINION

THE last few chapters have attempted to explain what are the conditions under which opinion is formed in America, what national qualities it reflects, how it is affected by class interests or local circumstances, as well as through what organs it manifests itself. We must now inquire how it acts, and for this purpose try to answer three questions.

By whom is public opinion formed? *i.e.* by the few or by the many?

How does it seek to grasp and use the legal machinery which the Constitutions (Federal and State) provide?

What means has it of influencing the conduct of affairs otherwise than through the regular legal machinery?

It may serve to illustrate the phenomena which mark the growth of opinion in America if we compare them with those of some European country. As England is the country in which public opinion has been longest and with least interruption installed in power, and in which the mass of the people are more largely than elsewhere interested in public affairs,[1] England supplies the fittest materials for a comparison.

In England political supremacy belongs to the householder voters, who number (over the whole United Kingdom) about five and a half millions, being between one-half and two-thirds of the adult male population. Public opinion ought in theory to reside in them. Practically, however, as everybody knows, most of them have little that can be called political opinion. It is the creation and possession of a much smaller number.

An analysis of public opinion in England will distinguish three sets of persons—I do not call them classes, for they do not coincide with social grades—those who make opin-

1 Always excepting Switzerland and Norway, whose conditions are, however, too dissimilar from those of the United States to make a comparison profitable.

ion, those who receive and hold opinion, those who have no opinions at all.

The first set consists of practical politicians (*i.e.* a certain number of members of the Lower House and a smaller fraction of members of the Upper, together with men taking an active part in local party organizations), journalists and other public writers, and a small fringe of other persons, chiefly professional men, who think and talk constantly about public affairs. Within this set of men, who are to be counted by hundreds rather than by thousands, it is the chiefs of the great parties who have the main share in starting opinion, the journalists in propagating it. Debates in Parliament do something, and the speeches which custom, recent, but strong and increasing, requires the leaders to deliver up and down the country, and which are of course reported, replace Parliament when it is not sitting. The function of the dozen best thinkers and talkers in each party is now not merely, as in the last generation, to know and manage Parliament, to watch foreign affairs, and prepare schemes of domestic legislation, but to inspire, instruct, stimulate, and attach the outside public. So too members of the Houses of Parliament find that the chief utility of their position lies in its enabling them to understand the actualities of politics better than they could otherwise do, and to gain a hearing outside for what they may have to say to their fellow-countrymen. This small set of persons constitutes what may be called the working staff of the laboratory; it is among them, by the reciprocal action and reaction on one another of the chiefs, the followers, and the press, that opinion receives its first shape.[1]

[1] Small as it may still seem to an American, the class that forms public opinion has been steadily widening in England. Last century it consisted only of the then ruling class,—the great families, the Houses of Parliament, a certain number of lawyers, with a very few journalists and clergymen, and a sort of fringe of educated men and monied men brought into relations with the rulers. This was the England which allowed George III. to alienate and lose the North American colonies. Even then, no doubt, the mass of voters outside (extremely small when compared with the numbers of to-day) counted for something, for there was always a possibility of their interfering when some feeling spread among them, one or other of the ruling parties being ready to stimulate and use such a feeling, and a general election enabling it in the counties and in a few of the boroughs to find expression. When the Reform Bill of 1832 enlarged the suffrage, and almost extinguished the pocket boroughs, what had been the ruling class sank into being merely the office-holding class; and now, though it dies hard, its monopoly of office is departing as its monopoly of sitting in Parliament did in 1832.

The second set of persons consists of those who watch public affairs with a certain measure of interest. When an important question arises, they look at the debates in Parliament or some platform deliverance by a leader, and they have at all times a notion of what is passing in the political world. They now and then attend a public meeting. They are not universally, but now pretty largely, enrolled as members of some political association. When an election arrives they go to vote of their own accord. They talk over politics after dinner or coming into town by a suburban train.

The proportion of such persons is larger in the professional classes (and especially among the lawyers) than in the mercantile, larger in the upper mercantile than among the working men of the towns, larger among skilled than unskilled artisans, larger in the North than in the South, larger among the town workmen than among the newly enfranchised agricultural labourers. It varies in different parts of the country, and is perhaps relatively smaller in London than in other cities. If still less than a third of the total number of voters, it is nevertheless an increasing proportion.

The third set includes all the rest of the voters. Though they possess political power, and are better pleased to have it, they do not really care about it—that is to say, politics occupy no appreciable space in their thoughts and interests. Some of them vote at elections because they consider themselves to belong to a party, or fancy that on a given occasion they have more to expect from the one party than from the other; or because they are brought up on election day by some one who can influence them. The number who vote tends to increase with the importation of party into municipal contests; and from the same cause some now enrol themselves in party associations. Others will not take the trouble to go to the polls. No one, except on the stump, can attribute independent political thinking to this mass of persons, because their knowledge and interest, though growing under the influence of the privileges they enjoy, are still slight.

Many have not even political prepossessions, and will stare or smile when asked to which party they belong. They count for little except at elections, and then chiefly as instru-

ments to be used by others. So far as the formation or exercise of opinion goes, they may be left out of sight.[1]

It is obviously impossible to draw a sharp line between the second set and the third, or to estimate their relative numbers, because when politics are dull many persons subside into indifference whom the advent of a crisis may again arouse. And of course there are plenty of people in the second set who though interested in politics have no sort of real knowledge or judgment about them. Such remarks, however, do not touch the point of the present analysis, which is to distinguish between the citizens who originate opinion (the first set), those who hold and somewhat modify it (the second set), and those who are rather to be deemed, and then only when they come to the poll, mere ballot-markers. The first set do the thinking; they scatter forth the ideas and arguments. The second set receive and test what is set before them. What their feeling or judgment approves they accept and give effect to by their votes; what they dislike or suspect is refused and falls dead, or possibly sets them the other way. The measure of the worth of a view or proposal—I do not mean its intrinsic worth, but its power of pleasing the nation—is however not merely the breadth of the support it obtains, but also the zeal which it inspires in those who adopt it. Although persons in the second set usually belong to one or other party,[2] and are therefore *prima facie* disposed to accept whatever comes from their party leaders, yet the degree of cordiality with which they accept indicates to a leader how their minds are moving, and becomes an element in his future

[1] What is said here cannot of course be proved, but I believe will appear to be true to any one who, knowing a large constituency, will compare the number of persons who attend public meetings at an election and can be trusted to come of themselves to the polls with the total number of voters on the lists. In the London constituencies I doubt if more than 10 per cent of the nominal voting strength show their interest in either of these ways. From 30 to 45 per cent do not even vote. The voting proportion is much larger in the north and west midland towns and in Scotland. In the old days of small constituencies, when it might have been supposed that the restriction of the franchise would have made it more prized, inexperienced candidates were always struck by the small percentage, out of those whom they personally canvassed, who seemed to care about politics, or even deemed themselves steady party men.

[2] The increasingly party character of municipal contests tends to draw an always larger number of persons from the third class into the second, because being dragged up to vote at a municipal election they acquire, if not opinions, at least the habit of party action and of repeating party cries.

calculations. Thus the second set, although rather receptive than creative, has an important function in moulding opinion, and giving it the shape and colour it finally takes when it has crystallized under the influence of a party struggle. The third set can scarcely be called a factor in the formation of opinion, except in so far as one particular proposal or cry may sometimes prove more attractive to it than another. It has some few fixed ideas or prejudices which a statesman must bear in mind, but in the main it is passive, consisting of persons who either follow the lead of members of the first and second sets, or who are so indifferent as to refuse to move at all.

The United States present different phenomena. There what I have called the first set is extremely small. The third set is relatively smaller than in England, and but for the recent immigrants and the negroes would be insignificant. It is in the second set that opinion is formed as well as tested, created as well as moulded. Political light and heat do not radiate out from a centre as in England. They are diffused all through the atmosphere, and are little more intense in the inner sphere of practical politicians than elsewhere. The ordinary citizens are interested in politics, and watch them with intelligence, the same kind of intelligence (though a smaller quantity of it) as they apply to their own business. They are forced by incessant elections to take a more active part in public affairs than is taken by any European people. They think their own competence equal to that of their representatives and office-bearers; and they are not far wrong. They do not therefore look up to their statesmen for guidance, but look around to one another, carrying to its extreme the principle that in the multitude of counsellors there is wisdom.

In America, therefore, opinion is not made but grows. Of course it must begin somewhere; but it is often hard to say where or how. As there are in the country a vast number of minds similar in their knowledge, beliefs, and attitude, with few exceptionally powerful minds applying themselves to politics, it is natural that the same idea should often occur to several or many persons at the same time, that each event as it occurs should produce the same impression and evoke the same comments over a wide area. When everybody desires to agree with the majority, and values such accord more highly than the credit of originality, this tendency is all the stronger. An idea once launched, or a view on some current question propounded, flies everywhere on

the wings of a press eager for novelties. Publicity is the easiest thing in the world to obtain; but as it is attainable by all notions, phrases, and projects, wise and foolish alike, the struggle for existence—that is to say, for public attention —is severe.

I do not, of course, deny that here, as everywhere else in the world, some one person or group must make a beginning, but seek to point out that, whereas in Europe it is patent who does make the beginning, in America a view often seems to arise spontaneously, and to be the work of many rather than of few. The individual counts for less, the mass counts for more. In propagating a doctrine not hitherto advocated by any party the methods used are similar to those of England. A central society is formed, branch societies spring up over the country, a journal (perhaps several journals) is started, and if the movement thrives, an annual convention of its supporters is held, at which speeches are made and resolutions adopted. If any striking personality is connected with the movement as a leader, as Garrison was with Abolitionism, he cannot but become a sort of figure-head. Yet it happens more rarely in America than in England that an individual leader gives its character to a movement, partly because new movements less often begin among, or are taken up by, persons already known as practical politicians.

As regards opinion on the main questions of the hour, such as the extension of slavery long was, and civil service reform, the currency, the tariff, are now, it rises and falls, much as in any other country, under the influence of events which seem to make for one or other of the contending views. There is this difference between America and Europe, that in the former speeches seem to influence the average citizen less, because he is more apt to do his own thinking; newspaper invective less, because he is used to it; current events rather more, because he is better informed of them. Party spirit is probably no stronger in America than in England, so far as a man's thinking and talking go, but it tells more upon him when he comes to vote.

An illustration of what has been said may be found in the fact that the proportion of persons who actually vote at an election to those whose names appear on the voting list is larger in America than in Europe. In many English constituencies this percentage does not exceed 60 per cent, though at exciting moments, such as the general elections of 1885 and 1886, it was larger than this, taking the country as a

whole. In America 75–80 per cent may be a fair average, taking presidential elections, which call out the heaviest vote.[1] Something may be ascribed to the more elaborate local organization of American parties; but against this ought to be set the fact that the English voting mass includes not quite two-thirds, the American nearly the whole, of the adult male population, and that the English voters are the more solid and well-to-do part of the population.

Is there, then, in the United States, no inner sphere of thinkers, writers, and speakers, corresponding to what we have called the "first set" in England?

There are individual men corresponding to individuals in that English set, and probably quite as numerous. There are journalists of great ability, there are a few literary men, clergymen and teachers, a good many lawyers, some business men, some few politicians. But they are isolated and unorganized, and do not constitute a class. Most of them are primarily occupied with their own avocations, and have only spare time to give to political thinking or writing. They are nearly all resident in or near the Eastern cities, and through many large tracts of country scarce any are to be found. In England the profession of opinion-making and leading is the work of specialists; in America, except as regards the few journalists and statesmen aforesaid, of amateurs. As the books of amateurs have some merits which those of professional book writers are apt to want, so something is gained by the absence of the professional element from American political opinion. But that which these amateurs produce is less coherent, less abundant, and less promptly effective upon the mass of the citizens than the corresponding English product. In fact, the individual Americans whom we are considering can (except the journalists and statesmen aforesaid) be distinguished from the mass of citizens only by their superior intellectual competence and their keener interest in public affairs. We may therefore repeat the proposition, that in America opinion does not originate in a particular class, but grows up in the nation at large, though, of course, there are leading minds in the nation who have more to do with its formation than the run of their fellow-citizens. The best instance I know of the power such men may exercise is afforded by the success of the civil service reform movement, which began among a few enlightened citizens in the Eastern States,

[1] In 1880 nearly three-fourths of the then total male population of voting age voted.

who by degrees leavened, or were thought to be leavening, the minds of their fellows to such an extent that the politicians were forced, sorely against the grain, to bring in and pass the appropriate legislation.

We may now ask in what manner opinion, formed or forming, is able to influence the conduct of affairs?

The legal machinery through which the people are by the Constitution (Federal and State) invited to govern is that of elections. Occasionally, when the question of altering a State Constitution comes up, the citizen votes directly for or against a proposition put to him in the form of a constitutional amendment; but otherwise it is only by voting for a man as candidate that he can give expression to his views, and directly support or oppose some policy. Now, in every country voting for a man is an inadequate way of expressing one's views of policy, because the candidate is sure to differ in one or more questions from many of those who belong to the party. It is especially inadequate in the United States, because the strictness of party discipline leaves little freedom of individual thought or action to the member of a legislature, because the ordinary politician has little interest in anything but the regular party programme, and because, as has been pointed out in previous chapters, in no party are the citizens at large permitted to select their candidate, seeing that he is found for them and forced on them by the professionals of the party organization. While, therefore, nothing is easier than for opinion which runs in the direct channel of party to give effect to itself frequently and vigorously, nothing is harder than for opinion which wanders out of that channel to find a legal and regular means of bringing itself to bear upon those who govern either as legislators or executive officers. This is the weak point of the American party system, perhaps of every party system, from the point of view of the independent-minded citizen, as it is the strong point from that of the party manager. A body of unorganized opinion is therefore helpless in the face of compact parties. It is obliged to organize. When organized for the promotion of a particular view or proposition it has in the United States three courses open to it.

The first is to capture one or other of the great standing parties, *i.e.* to persuade or frighten that party into adopting this view as part of its programme, or, to use the technical term, making it a plank of the platform, in which case the party candidates will be bound to support it. This is the most effective course, but the most difficult; for a party is sure to

have something to lose as well as to gain by embracing a new dogma. Why should such parties as those of America have lately been trouble themselves with taking up new questions, unless they are satisfied they will gain thereby? Their old dogmas are indeed worn threadbare, but have been hitherto found sufficent to cover them.

The second course is for the men who hold the particular view to declare themselves a new party, put forward their own programme, run their own candidates. Besides being costly and troublesome, this course would be thought ridiculous where the view or proposition is not one of first-rate importance which has already obtained wide support. Where however it is applicable, it is worth taking, even when the candidates cannot be carried, for it serves as an advertisement, and it alarms the old party from which it withdraws voting strength in the persons of the dissidents.

The third is to cast the voting weight of the organized promoters of the doctrine or view in question into the scale of whichever party shows the greatest friendliness, or seems most open to conversion. As in many States the regular parties are pretty equally balanced, even a comparatively weak body of opinion may decide the result. Such a body does not necessarily forward its own view, for the candidates whom its vote carries are nowise pledged to its programme.[1] But it has made itself felt, shown itself a power to be reckoned with, improved its chances of capturing one or other of the regular parties, or of running candidates of its own on some future occasion. When this transfer of the solid vote of a body of agitators is the result of a bargain with the old party which gets the vote, it is called "selling out"; and in such cases it sometimes happens that the bargain secures one or two offices for the incoming allies in consideration of the strength they have brought. But if the new group be honestly thinking of its doctrines and not of the officers, the terms it will ask will be the nomination of good candidates, or a more friendly attitude towards the new view.

These are the ways in which either the minority of a party,

[1] The practice of interrogating candidates with a view to obtain pledges from them to vote in a particular sense is less used in America than in England. The rigour of party discipline, and the fact that business is divided between the Federal and the State legislatures may have something to do with this difference. However, American candidates are sometimes pressed during election meetings by questions and demands from groups advocating moral reforms, such as liquor prohibition.

holding some doctrine outside the regular party programme, or a new group aspiring to be a party, may assert itself at elections. The third is applicable wherever the discipline of the section which has arisen within a party is so good that its members can be trusted to break away from their former affiliation, and vote solid for the side their leaders have agreed to favour. It is a potent weapon, and liable to be abused. But in a country where the tide runs against minorities and small groups it is most necessary. The possibility of its employment acts as a check on the regular parties, disposing them to abstain from legislation which might irritate any body of growing opinion and tend to crystallize it as a new organization, and making them more tolerant of minor divergences from the dogmas of the orthodox programme than their fierce love of party uniformity would otherwise permit.

So far we have been considering the case of persons advocating some specific opinion or scheme. As respects the ordinary conduct of business by officials and legislators, the fear of popular displeasure to manifest itself at the next elections is, of course, the most powerful of restraining influences. Under a system of balanced authorities, such fear helps to prevent or remove deadlocks as well as the abuse of power by any one authority. A President (or State governor) who has vetoed bills passed by Congress (or his State legislature) is emboldened to go on doing so when he finds public opinion on his side; and Congress (or the State legislature) will hesitate, though the requisite majority may be forthcoming, to pass these bills over the veto. A majority in the House of Representatives, or in a State legislative body, which has abused the power of closing debate by the "previous question" rule, may be frightened by expressions of popular disapproval from repeating the offence. When the two branches of a legislature differ, and a valuable bill has failed, or when there has been vexatious filibustering, public opinion fixes the blame on the party primarily responsible for the loss of good measures or public time, and may punish it at the next election. Thus, in many ways and on many occasions, though not so often or so fully as is needed, the vision of the polls, seen some months or even years off, has power to terrify and warn selfish politicians. As the worth of courts of law is to be estimated not merely by the offences they punish and the causes they try, but even more by the offences from which the fear of penalties deters bad men, and by the payment which the prospect of a writ extracts from reluctant debtors, so a healthy and watchful public opinion makes itself felt in

preventing foolish or corrupt legislation and executive jobbery. Mischief is checked in America more frequently than anywhere else by the fear of exposure, or by newspaper criticisms on the first stage of a bad scheme. And, of course, the frequency of elections—in most respects a disadvantage to the country—has the merit of bringing the prospect of punishment nearer.

It will be asked how the fear is brought home, seeing that the result of a coming election must usually be uncertain. Sometimes it is not brought home. The erring majority in a legislature may believe they have the people with them, or the Governor may think his jobs will be forgotten. Generally, however, there are indications of the probable set of opinion in the language held by moderate men and the less partisan newspapers. When some of the organs of the party which is in fault begin to blame it, danger is in the air, for the other party is sure to use the opening thus given to it. And hence, of course, the control of criticism is most effective where parties are nearly balanced. Opinion seems to tell with special force when the question is between a legislative body passing bills or ordinances, and a president, or governor, or mayor, vetoing them, the legislature recoiling whenever they think the magistrate has got the people behind him. Even small fluctuations in a vote produce a great impression on the minds of politicians.

The constancy or mutability of electoral bodies is a difficult phenomenon to explain, especially where secret voting prevails, and a dangerous one to generalize on. The tendency of the electoral vote in any constituency to shift from Tory to Whig or Whig to Tory, used in England to be deemed to indicate the presence of a corrupt element. It was a black mark against a borough. In America it sometimes deserves the same interpretation, for there are corruptible masses in some districts. But there are also cases in which it points to the existence of an exceptionally thoughtful and unprejudiced element in the population, an element which judges for itself, rejecting party dictation, and desires to cast its vote for the best man. The average American voter is more likely to be a partisan than the English, and is, I think, less capricious, and therefore if a transfer of votes from one party to the other does not arise from some corrupt influence, it betokens serious disapproval on the part of the Bolters. In the United States fluctuations are most frequent in one or two of the least sober and steady Western States, and in some of the most enlightened, such as New York and Massachusetts. In

the former the people may be carried away by a sudden impulse; in the latter there is a section which judges candidates more by personal merits than by party professions.

These defects which may be noted in the constitutional mechanism for enabling public opinion to rule promptly and smoothly, are, in a measure, covered by the expertness of Americans in using all kinds of voluntary and private agencies for the diffusion and expression of opinion. Where the object is to promote some particular cause, associations are formed and federated to one another, funds are collected, the press is set to work, lectures are delivered. When the law can profitably be invoked (which is often the case in a country governed by constitutions standing above the legislature), counsel are retained and suits instituted, all with the celerity and skill which long practice in such work has given. If the cause has a moral bearing, efforts are made to enlist the religious or semi-religious magazines, and the ministers of religion.[1] Deputations proceed to Washington or to the State capital, and lay siege to individual legislators. Sometimes a distinct set of women's societies is created, whose action on and through women is all the more powerful because the deference shown to the so-called weaker sex enables them to do what would be resented in men. Not long ago, I think in Iowa, when a temperance ticket was being run at the elections, parties of ladies gathered in front of the polling booths and sang hymns all day while the citizens voted. Every one remembers what was called the "Women's Whisky War" some ten years back, when, in several western States, bands of women entered the drinking saloons and, by entreaties and reproaches, drove out the customers. In no country has any sentiment which touches a number of persons so many ways of making itself felt; though, to be sure, when the first and chief effort of every group is to convince the world that it is strong, and growing daily stronger, great is the difficulty of determining whether the vocal are really numerous or only noisy.

For the promotion of party opinion on the leading questions that divide or occupy parties, there exist, of course, the regular party organizations, with a complex and a widely ramified mechanism. Opinion is, however, the thing with which this mechanism is at present least occupied. Its main objects are the selection of the party candidates and the conduct of the canvass at elections.

[1] In Philadelphia during a struggle against the City Boss, the clergy was requested to preach election sermons.

Traces of the other purpose remain in the practice of adopting, at State and national conventions, a platform, or declaration of principles and views, which is the electoral manifesto of the party, embodying the tenets which it is supposed to live for. A convention is a body fitted neither by its numbers nor its composition for the discussion and sifting of political doctrines; but, even if it were so fitted, that is not the work to which its masters would set it. A "platform" is invariably prepared by a small committee, and usually adopted by the general committee, and by the convention, with little change. Its tendency is neither to define nor to convince, but rather to attract and to confuse. It is a mixture of conciliation, denunciation, and declamation. It reprobates the opposite party for their past misdeeds, and "views with alarm" their present policy. It repeats the tale of the services which the party of those who issue it has rendered in the past, is replete with sounding democratic generalities, and attempts so to expand and expound the traditional party tenets as to make these include all sound doctrines, and deserve the support of all good citizens. At present neither platforms nor the process that produces them have a powerful influence on the maturing and clarification of political opinion. However, in times more stirring than the present, conventions have recorded the acceptance of certain vital propositions, and rejection of certain dangerous proposals by one or other of the great parties, and they may again have to do so, not to add that an imprudent platform may lay a party open to damaging attacks. When any important election comes off, the party organization generally sends its speakers out on stumping tours, and distributes a flood of campaign literature. At other times opinion moves in a different plane from that of party machinery, and is scarcely affected by it.

One might expect that in the United States the thoughts of the people would be more equably and uniformly employed on politics than in European countries. The contrary is the case. Opinion, no doubt, is always alive and vigilant, always in process of formation, growth, and decay. But its activity is less continuous and sustained than in Europe, because there is a greater difference between the spring-tide of a presidential campaign year and the neap-tides of the three off years than there is between one year and another under the European system of chambers which may be dissolved and ministries which may be upset at any moment. Excitement at one time is succeeded by exhaustion at another. America suffers from a sort of intermittent fever—what one may call a quintan ague.

Every fourth year there come terrible shakings, passing into the hot fit of the presidential election; then follows what physicians call "the interval;" then again the fit. In Europe the persons who move in what I have called the inner sphere of politics, give unbroken attention to political problems, always discussing them both among themselves and before the people. As the men who in America correspond to this set of persons are not organized into a class, and to some extent not engaged in practical politics, the work of discussion has been left to be done, in the three "off years," by the journalists and a few of the more active and thoughtful statesmen, with casual aid from such private citizens as may be interested. Now many problems require uninterrupted and what may be called scientific or professional study. Foreign policy obviously presents such problems. The shortcomings of modern England in the conduct of foreign affairs have been not unreasonably attributed to the fact that, while the attention of her statesmen is constantly distracted from them by domestic struggles, her people have not been accustomed to turn their eyes abroad except when some exciting event, such as the war of 1870 or the Bulgarian massacre of 1876, forces them to do so. Hence a state like Germany, where a strong throne keeps a strong minister permanently in power, obtains advantages which must be credited not wholly to the wisdom of the statesmen but also to the difficulties under which their rivals in more democratic countries labour. America has little occasion to think of foreign affairs, but some of her domestic problems are such as to demand that careful observation and unbroken reflection which neither her executive magistrates, nor her legislatures, nor any leading class among her people now give.

Those who know the United States and have been struck by the quantity of what is called politics there, may think that this description underrates the volume and energy of public political discussion. I admit the endless hubbub, the constant elections in one district or another, the paragraphs in the newspapers as to the movements or intentions of this or that prominent man, the reports of what is doing in Congress and in the State legislatures, the decisions of the Federal Courts in constitutional questions, the rumours about new combinations, the revelations of Ring intrigues, the criticisms on appointments. It is nevertheless true that in proportion to the number of words spoken, articles printed, telegrams sent, and acts performed, less than is needed is done to form serious political thought, and bring practical problems towards a solution. I once travelled through Transylvania with

Mr. Leslie Stephen in a peasant's waggon, a rude, long, low structure filled with hay. The roads were rough and stony, the horses jangled their bells, the driver shouted to the horses and cracked his whip, the wheels clanked, the boards rattled, we were deafened and shaken and jolted. We fancied ourselves moving rapidly so long as we looked straight in front, but a glance at the trees on the roadside showed that the speed was about three miles an hour. So the pother and din of American politics keep the people awake, and give them a sense of stir and motion, but the machine of government carries them slowly onward. Fortunately they have no need to hurry. It is not so much by or through the machinery of government as by their own practical good sense, which at last finds a solution the politicians have failed to find, that the American people advance. When a European visitor dines with a company of the best citizens in an Eastern city, such as Boston or Baltimore, he is struck by the acuteness, the insight, the fairness with which the condition and requirements of the country are discussed, the freedom from such passion or class feeling as usually clouds equally able Europeans, the substantial agreement between members of both the great parties as to the reforms that are wanted, the patriotism which is so proud of the real greatness of the Union as frankly to acknowledge its defects, the generous appreciation of all that is best in the character or political methods of other nations. One feels what a reserve fund of wisdom and strength the country has in such men, who so far from being aristocrats or recluses, are usually the persons whom their native fellow-townsmen best know and most respect as prominent in business and in the professions. In ordinary times the practical concern of such men with either national or local politics is no greater, possibly less, than that of the leaders of business in an English town towards its municipal affairs. But when there comes an uprising against the bosses, it is these men who are called upon to put themselves at the head of it; or when a question like that of Civil Service reform has been before the nation for some time, it is their opinion which strikes the keynote for that of their city or district, and which shames or alarms the professional politicians. Men of the same type, though individually less conspicuous than those whom I take as examples, are to be found in many of the smaller towns, especially in the Eastern and Middle States, and as time goes on their influence grows. Much of the value of this most educated and reflective class in America consists in their being no longer blindly attached to their

party, because more alive to the principles for which parties ought to exist. They may be numerically a small minority of the voters, but as in many States the two regular parties command a nearly equal normal voting strength, a small section detached from either party can turn an election by throwing its vote for the candidate, to whichever party he belongs, whom it thinks capable and honest. Thus a comparatively independent group wields a power in elections altogether disproportionate to its numbers, and by a sort of side wind can not only make its hostility feared, but secure a wider currency for its opinions. What opinion chiefly needs in America in order to control the politicians is not so much men of leisure for men of leisure may be dilettantes and may lack a grip of realities, but a more sustained activity on the part of the men of vigorously independent minds, a more sedulous effort on their part to impress their views upon the masses, and a disposition on the part of the ordinary well meaning but often inattentive citizens to prefer the realities of good administration to outworn party cries.

CHAPTER 4

THE FATALISM OF THE MULTITUDE

ONE feature of thought and sentiment in the United States needs a chapter to itself because it has been by most observers of the country either ignored or confounded with a phenomenon which is at bottom quite different. This is a fatalistic attitude of mind, which, since it disposes men to acquiesce in the rule of numbers, has been, when perceived, attributed to or identified with what is commonly called the Tyranny of the Majority. The tendency to fatalism is never far from mankind. It is one of the first solutions of the riddle of the earth propounded by metaphysics. It is one of the last propounded by science. It has at all times formed the background to religions. No race is naturally less disposed to a fatalistic view of things than is the Anglo-American, with its restless self-reliant energy,

Nil actum reputans dum quid restaret agendum, *

* Thinking nothing to be done while anything remains to be done.

its slender taste for introspection or meditation. Nevertheless even in this people the conditions of life and politics have bred a sentiment or tendency which seems best described by the name of fatalism.

In small and rude communities, every free man, or at least every head of a household, feels his own significance and realizes his own independence. He relies on himself, he is little interfered with by neighbours or rulers.[1] His will and action count for something in the conduct of the affairs of the community he belongs to, yet common affairs are few compared to those in which he must depend on his own exertions. The most striking pictures of individualism that literature has preserved for us are those of the Homeric heroes and of the even more terrible and self-reliant warriors of the Scandinavian sagas, men like Ragnar Lodbrog and Egil, son of Skallagrim, who did not regard even the gods, but trusted to their own might and main. In more developed states of society organized on an oligarchic basis, such as were the feudal kingdoms of the Middle Ages, or in socially aristocratic countries such as most parts of Europe have remained down to our own time, the bulk of the people are no doubt in a dependent condition, but each person derives a certain sense of personal consequence from the strength of his group and of the person or family at the head of it. Moreover, the upper class, being the class which thinks and writes, as well as leads in action, impresses its own type upon the character of the whole nation, and that type is still individualistic, with a strong consciousness of personal free will, and a tendency for each man, if not to think for himself, at least to value and to rely on his own opinion.

Let us suppose, however, that the aristocratic structure of society has been dissolved, that the old groups have disappeared, that men have come to feel themselves members rather of the nation than of classes, or groups, or communities within the nation, that a levelling process has destroyed the ascendency of birth and rank, that large landed estates no longer exist, and that many persons in what was previously the humbler class are found possessed of property. Under such conditions of social equality the habit of intellect-

[1] The kind of self-reliant attitude I am seeking to describe is quite a different thing from the supposed "state of nature" in which a man has no legal relations with his fellows. It may exist among the members of a community closely united by legal ties. It was evidently strong among the early Romans, who were united by such ties into family and clan groups.

ual command and individual self-confidence will have vanished from the leading class, which creates the type of national character, and will exist nowhere in the nation.

Let us suppose, further, that political equality has gone hand in hand with the levelling down of social eminence. Every citizen enjoys the same right of electing the representatives and officials, the same right of himself becoming a representative or an official. Every one is equally concerned in the conduct of public affairs, and since no man's opinion, however great his superiority in wealth, knowledge, or personal capacity, is legally entitled to any more weight than another's, no man is entitled to set special value on his own opinion, or to expect others to defer to it; for pretensions to authority will be promptly resented. All disputes are referred to the determination of the majority, there being no legal distinction between the naturally strong and the naturally weak, between the rich and the poor, between the wise and the foolish. In such a state of things the strong man's self-confidence and sense of individual force will inevitably have been lowered, because he will feel that he is only one of many, that his vote or voice counts for no more than that of his neighbour, that he can prevail, if at all, only by keeping himself on a level with his neighbour and recognizing the latter's personality as being every whit equal to his own.

Suppose further that all this takes place in an enormously large and populous country, where the governing voters are counted by so many millions that each individual feels himself a mere drop in the ocean, the influence which he can exert privately, whether by his personal gifts or by his wealth, being confined to the small circle of his town or neighbourhood. On all sides there stretches round him an illimitable horizon; and beneath the blue vault which covers that horizon there is everywhere the same busy multitude with its clamour of mingled voices which he hears close by. In this multitude his own being seems lost. He has the sense of insignificance which overwhelms us when at night we survey the host of heaven and know that from even the nearest star this planet of ours is invisible.

In such a country, where complete political equality is strengthened and perfected by complete social equality, where the will of the majority is absolute, unquestioned, always invoked to decide every question, and where the numbers which decide are so vast that one comes to regard them as one regards the largely working forces of nature,

we may expect to find certain feelings and beliefs dominant in the minds of men.

One of these is that the majority must prevail. All free government rests on this, for there is no other way of working free government. To obey the majority is therefore both a necessity and a duty, a duty because the alternative would be ruin and the breaking-up of laws.

Out of this dogma there grows up another which is less distinctly admitted, and indeed held rather implicitly than consciously, that the majority is right. And out of both of these there grows again the feeling, still less consciously held, but not less truly operative, that it is vain to oppose or censure the majority.

It may seem that there is a long step from the first of these propositions to the second and third; and that, in fact, the very existence of a minority striving with a majority implies that there must be many who hold the majority to be wrong, and are prepared to resist it. Men do not at once abandon their views because they have been outvoted; they reiterate their views, they reorganize their party, they hope to prevail, and often do prevail in a subsequent trial of strength.

All this is doubtless involved in the very methods of popular government. But it is nevertheless true that the belief in the rights of the majority lies very near to the belief that the majority must be right. As self-government is based on the idea that each man is more likely to be right than to be wrong, and that one man's opinion must be treated as equally good with another's, there is a presumption that when twenty thousand vote one way and twenty-one thousand another, the view of the greater number is the better view. The habit of deference to a decision actually given strengthens this presumption, and weaves it into the texture of every mind. A conscientious citizen feels that he ought to obey the determination of the majority, and naturally prefers to think that which he obeys to be right. A citizen languidly interested in the question at issue finds it easier to comply with and adopt the view of the majority than to hold out against it. A small number of men with strong convictions or warm party feeling will for a time resist. But even they feel differently towards their cause after it has been defeated from what they did while it had still a prospect of success. They know that in the same proportion in which their supporters are dismayed the majority is emboldened and confirmed in its views. It will be

harder to fight a second battle than it was to fight the first, for there is (so to speak) a steeper slope of popular disapproval to be climbed. This sufficiently appears from the importance attached in self-governing countries to test elections. In England what is called a "by-election," *i.e.* the election of a member of Parliament to fill a casual vacancy, is not only taken by partisans as an index of their strength in the nation at large, but if it can be regarded as typical, strengthens or weakens a party by turning the minds of waverers. In the United States, when the elections in any State precede by a few weeks a presidential contest, their effect has sometimes been so great as virtually to determine that contest by filling one side with hope and the other with despondency. Those who prefer to swim with the stream are numerous everywhere, and their votes have as much weight as the votes of the keenest partisans. A man of convictions may insist that the arguments on both sides are after the polling just what they were before. But the average man will repeat his arguments with less faith, less zeal, more of a secret fear that he may be wrong, than he did while the majority was still doubtful; and after every reassertion by the majority of its judgment, his knees grow feebler till at last they refuse to carry him into the combat.

The larger the scale on which the majority works, the more potent are these tendencies. When the scene of action is a small commonwealth, the individual voters are many of them personally known to one another, and the causes which determine their votes are understood and discounted. When it is a moderately-sized country, the towns or districts which compose it are not too numerous for reckoning to overtake and imagination to picture them, and in many cases their action can be explained by well-known reasons which may be represented as transitory. But when the theatre stretches itself to a continent, when the number of voters is counted by many millions, the wings of imagination droop, and the huge voting mass ceases to be thought of as merely so many individual human beings no wiser or better than one's own neighbours. The phenomena seem to pass into the category of the phenomena of nature, governed by far-reaching and inexorable laws whose character science has only imperfectly ascertained. They inspire a sort of awe, a sense of individual impotence, like that which man feels when he contemplates the majestic and eternal forces of the inanimate world.

Such a feeling is still far stronger when it operates, not

on a cohesive minority which had lately hoped, or may yet hope, to become a majority, but on a single man or small group of persons cherishing some opinion which the mass disapproves. Thus out of the mingled feelings that the multitude will prevail, and that the multitude, because it will prevail, must be right, there grows a self-distrust, a despondency, a disposition to fall into line, to acquiesce in the dominant opinion, to submit thought as well as action to the encompassing power of numbers. Now and then a resolute man will, like Athanasius, stand alone against the world. But such a man must have, like Athanasius, some special spring of inward strength; and the difficulty of winning over others against the overwhelming weight of the multitude will, even in such a man, dull the edge of hope and enterprise An individual seeking to make his view prevail, looks forth on his hostile fellow-countrymen as a solitary swimmer, raised high on a billow miles from land, looks over the countless waves that divide him from the shore, and quails to think how small the chance that his strength can bear him thither.

This tendency to acquiescence and submission, this sense of the insignificance of individual effort, this belief that the affairs of men are swayed by large forces whose movement may be studied but cannot be turned, I have ventured to call the Fatalism of the Multitude. It is often confounded with the tyranny of the majority, but is at bottom different, though, of course, its existence makes tyranny by the majority easier and more complete. The tyranny of the majority means, or ought to mean, for it is a phrase apt to be loosely used, the disposition of the greater number to unfairly impose their will on the smaller number. A majority is tyrannical when it cuts short the discussion needed to give the minority a fair chance of convincing it that it is wrong, or when it passes laws restricting individual freedom in matters which law need not touch, or even when it subjects to social penalties persons who disagree with it in matters not essential to the common welfare. But the fatalistic attitude I have been seeking to describe does not imply any exercise of power by the majority at all. It may rather seem to soften and make less odious such an exercise of power, may even dispense with that exercise, because it disposes a minority to submit without the need of a command, to spontaneously renounce its own view and fall in with the view which the majority has expressed. In the fatalism of the multitude there is neither legal nor moral compulsion; there

is merely a loss of resisting power, a diminished sense of personal responsibility and of the duty to battle for one's own opinions, such as has been bred in some peoples by the belief in an overmastering fate. It is true that the force to which the citizen of the vast democracy submits is a moral force, not that of an unapproachable Allah, nor of the unchangeable laws of matter. But it is a moral force acting on so vast a scale, and from causes so often unpredictable, that its effect on the mind of the individual may well be compared with that which religious or scientific fatalism creates.

No one will suppose that the above sketch is intended to apply literally to the United States, where in some matters legal restrictions check a majority, where local self-government gives the humblest citizen a sphere for public action, where individualism is still in many forms and directions so vigorous. An American explorer, an American settler in new lands, an American man of business pushing a great enterprise, is a being as bold and resourceful as the world has ever seen. All I seek to convey is that there are in the United States signs of such a fatalistic temper, signs which one must expect to find wherever a vast population governs itself under a system of complete social and political equality. And there exist in the American Republic several conditions which specially tend to engender such a temper.

One of these is the unbounded freedom of discussion. Every view, every line of policy, has its fair chance before the people. No one can say that audience has been denied him, and comfort himself with the hope that, when he is heard, the world will come round to him. For the sense of grievance and injustice, which so often feeds the flame of resistance in a persecuted minority, there is less cause in a country like this, where the freedom of the press, the right of public meeting, the right of association and agitation have been legally extended, and are daily exerted, more widely than anywhere else in the world. He whom the multitude condemns or ignores has no further court of appeal to look to. Rome has spoken. His cause has been heard and judgment has gone against him.

Another is the intense faith which the Americans have in the soundness of their institutions, and in the future of their country. Foreign critics have said that they think themselves the special objects of the protecting care of Providence. If this be so, it is matter neither for surprise nor for sarcasm. They are a religious people. They are trying, and that on the largest scale, the most remarkable ex-

periment in government the world has yet witnessed. They have more than once been surrounded by perils which affrighted the stoutest hearts, and they have escaped from these perils into peace and prosperity. There is among pious persons a deep conviction—I have often heard it expressed in sermons and prayers with evident sincerity—that the nation has been, and is being, more than other nations, guided by the hand of God. And, even when the feeling does not take a theological expression, the belief in what is called the "Mission of the Republic" for all humanity is scarcely less ardent. But the foundation of the Republic is confidence in the multitude, in its honesty and good sense, in the certainty of its arriving at right conclusions. Pessimism is the luxury of a handful; optimism is the private delight, as well as public profession, of nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand, for nowhere does the individual associate himself more constantly and directly with the greatness of his country.

Now, such a faith in the people, and in the forces that sway them, disposes a man to acquiescence and submission. He cannot long hold that he is right and the multitude wrong. He cannot suppose that the country will ultimately suffer because it refuses to adopt what he urges upon it. As he comes of an energetic stock he will use all proper means to state his views, and give them every chance of prevailing. But he submits more readily than an Englishman would do, ay, even to what an Englishman would think an injury to his private rights. When a man's legal right has been infringed, he will confidently proceed to enforce at law his claim to redress, knowing that even against the government a just cause will prevail. But if he fails at law, the sense of his individual insignificance will still his voice. It may seem a trivial illustration to observe that when a railway train is late, or a waggon drawn up opposite a warehouse door stops the horse-car for five minutes, the passengers take the delay far more coolly and uncomplainingly than Englishmen would do. But the feeling is the same as that which makes good citizens bear with the tyranny of Bosses. It is all in the course of nature. What is an individual that he should make a fuss because he loses a few minutes, or is taxed too highly? The sense of the immense multitude around him presses down the individual; and, after all, he reflects, "things will come out right" in the end.

It is hard adequately to convey the impression which

the vastness of the country, and the swift growth of its population make upon the European visitor. I well remember how it once came on me after climbing a high mountain in an Eastern State. All around was thick forest; but the setting sun lit up peaks sixty or seventy miles away, and flashed here and there on the windings of some river past a town so far off as to seem only a spot of white. I opened my map, a large map, which I had to spread upon the rocks to examine, and tried to make out, as one would have done in England or Scotland, the points in the view. The map however was useless, because the whole area of the landscape beneath me covered only two or three square inches upon it. From such a height in Scotland the eye would have ranged from sea to sea. But here when one tried to reckon how many more equally wide stretches of landscape lay between this peak and the Mississippi, which is itself only a third of the way across the continent, the calculation seemed endless and was soon abandoned. Many an Englishman comes by middle life to know nearly all England like a glove. He has travelled on all the great railroads; there is hardly a large town in which he has not acquaintances, hardly a county whose scenery is not familiar to him. But no American can be familiar with more than a small part of his country, for his country is a continent. And all Americans live their life through under the sense of this prodigious and daily growing multitude around them, which seems vaster the more you travel, and the more you realize its uniformity.

We need not here inquire whether the fatalistic attitude I have sought to sketch is the source of more good or evil. It seems at any rate inevitable: nor does it fail to produce a sort of pleasure, for what the individual loses as an individual he seems in a measure to regain as one of the multitude. If the individual is not strong, he is at any rate as strong as any one else. His will counts for as much as any other will. He is overborne by no superiority. Most men are fitter to make part of the multitude than to strive against it. Obedience is to most sweeter than independence; the Roman Catholic Church inspires in its children a stronger affection than any form of Protestantism, for she takes their souls in charge, and assures them that, with obedience, all will be well.

That which we are presently concerned to note is how greatly such a tendency as I have described facilitates the

action of opinion as a governing power, enabling it to prevail more swiftly and more completely than in countries where men have not yet learned to regard the voice of the multitude as the voice of fate. Many submit willingly; some unwillingly, yet they submit. Rarely does any one hold out and venture to tell the great majority of his countrymen that they are wrong.

Moreover public opinion acquires a solidity which strengthens the whole body politic. Questions on which the masses have made up their minds pass out of the region of practical discussion. Controversy is confined to minor topics, and however vehemently it may rage over these, it disturbs the great underlying matters of agreement no more than a tempest stirs the depths of the Atlantic. Public order becomes more easily maintained, because individuals and small groups have learned to submit even when they feel themselves aggrieved. The man who murmurs against the world, who continues to preach a hopeless cause, incurs contempt, and is apt to be treated as a sort of lunatic. He who is too wise to murmur and too proud to go on preaching to unheeding ears, comes to think that if his doctrine is true, yet the time is not ripe for it. He may be in error; but if he is right, the world will ultimately see that he is right even without his effort. One way or another he finds it hard to believe that this vast mass and force of popular thought in which he lives and moves can be ultimately wrong. *Securus judicat orbis terrarum.*

CHAPTER 5

THE TYRANNY OF THE MAJORITY

THE expression "tyranny of the majority" is commonly used to denote any abuse by the majority of the powers which it enjoys in free countries under and through the law, and in all countries outside the law. Such abuse will not be tyrannous in the sense of being illegal, as men called a usurper like Dionysius of Syracuse or Louis Napoleon in France a tyrant, for in free countries whatever the majority chooses to do in the prescribed constitutional way will be legal. It will be tyrannous in the sense of the lines

"O it is excellent
To have a giant's strength, but it is tyrannous
To use it like a giant."

That is to say, tyranny consists in the wanton and improper use of strength by the stronger, in the use of it to do things which one equal would not attempt against another. A majority is tyrannical when it decides without hearing the minority, when it suppresses fair and temperate criticism on its own acts, when it insists on restraining men in matters where restraint is not required by the common interest, when it forces men to contribute money to objects which they disapprove, and which the common interest does not demand. The element of tyranny lies in the wantonness of the act, a wantonness springing from the sense of overwhelming power, or in the fact that it is a misuse for one purpose of power granted for another. It consists not in the form of the act, which may be perfectly legal, but in the spirit and temper it reveals, and in the sense of injustice and oppression which it evokes in the minority.

Philosphers have long since perceived that the same tendencies to a wanton abuse of power which exist in a despot or a ruling oligarchy may be expected in a democracy from the ruling majority, because they are tendencies incidental to human nature.[1] The danger was felt and feared by the sages of 1787, and a passage in the *Federalist* (No. L.) dwells on the safeguards which the great size of a Federal republic, and the diverse elements of which it will be composed, offer against the tendency of a majority to oppress a minority.

Since De Tocqueville dilated upon this as the capital fault of the American government and people, Europeans, already prepared to expect to find the tyranny of the majority a characteristic sin of democratic nations, have been accustomed to think of the United States as disgraced by it, and on the strength of this instance have predicted it as a necessary result of the growth of democracy in the Old World. It is therefore worth while to inquire what foundation exists for the reproach as addressed to the Americans of to-day.

We may look for signs of this tyranny in three quarters —firstly, in the legislation of Congress; secondly, in the constitutions and statutes of the States; thirdly, in the action of public opinion and sentiment outside the sphere of law.

[1] The comparison of the majority to a monarch is as old as Aristotle. "The people became a monarch." (*Polit.* iv. 4, 26). "Flattering the people as if it were a tyrant." (*Ibid.* ii. 12, 4).

The Federal Constitution, which has not only limited the competence of Congress but hedged it round with many positive prohibitions, has closed some of the avenues by which a majority might proceed to abuse its powers. Freedom of speech, freedom of religion, opportunities for debate, are all amply secured. The power of taxation, and that of regulating commerce, might conceivably be used to oppress certain classes of persons, as, for instance, if a prohibitory duty were to be laid on certain articles which a minority desired and the majority condemned the use of. But nothing of the sort has been attempted. Whatever may be thought of the expediency of the present tariff, which no doubt favours one class, it cannot be said to oppress any class. In its political action, as, for-instance, during the struggle over slavery, when for a while it refused to receive Abolitionist petitions, and even tried to prevent the transmission by mail of Abolitionist matter, and again during and after the war in some of its reconstruction measures, the majority, under the pressure of excitement, exercised its powers harshly and unwisely. But such political action is hardly the kind of action to which the charge we are examining applies.

In the States, a majority of the citizens may act either directly in enacting (or amending) a constitution, or through their legislature by passing statutes. We might expect to find instances of abuse of power more in the former than in the latter class of cases, because though the legislature is habitually and the people of the State only intermittently active, the legislatures have now been surrounded by a host of constitutional limitations which a tyrannical majority would need some skill to evade. However, one discovers wonderfully little in the State Constitutions now in force of which a minority can complain. These instruments contain a great deal of ordinary law and administrative law. If the tendency to abuse legislative power to the injury of any class were general, instances of it could not fail to appear. One does not find them. There are some provisions strictly regulating corporations, and especially railroads and banks, which may perhaps be unwise, and which in limiting the modes of using capital apply rather to the rich than to the masses. But such provisions cannot be called wanton or oppressive.

The same remark applies to the ordinary statutes of the States, so far as I have been able to ascertain their character. They can rarely be used to repress opinion or its expression, because nearly all the State Constitutions contain ample guarantees for free speech, a free press, and the right of

public meeting. For the same reason, they cannot encroach on the personal liberty of the citizen, nor on the full enjoyment of private property. In all such fundamentals the majority has prudently taken the possible abuse of its power out of the hands of the legislature.

When we come to minor matters, we are met by the difficulty of determining what is a legitimate exercise of legislative authority. Nowhere are men agreed as to the limits of State interference. Some few think that law ought not to restrict the sale of intoxicants at all; many more that it ought not to make procuring of them, for purposes of pleasure, difficult or impossible. Others hold that the common welfare justifies prohibition. Some deem it unjust to tax a man, and especially an unmarried man, for the support of public schools, or at any rate of public schools other than elementary. To most Roman Catholics it seems unjust to refuse denominational schools a share of the funds raised by taxing, among other citizens, those who hold it a duty to send their children to schools in which their own faith is inculcated. Some think a law tyrannical which forbids a man to exclude others from ground which he keeps waste and barren, while others blame the law which permits a man to reserve, as they think tyrannically, large tracts of country for his own personal enjoyment. So, in the case of religion, any form of State establishment, or State endowment, or even State recognition, of a particular creed or religious body will by some be deemed an abuse, by others a proper and necessary use of State authority. Remembering such differences of opinion, all I can say is that even those who take the narrower view of State functions will find little to censure in the legislation of American States. They may blame the restriction or prohibition of the sale of intoxicants. They may think that the so-called "moral legislation" for securing the purity of literature, and for protecting the young against various temptations, attempts too much. They may question the expediency of the legislation intended for the benefit of working men. But there are few of these provisions which can fairly be called wanton or tyrannical, which display a spirit that ignores or tramples on the feelings or rights of a minority. The least defensible statutes are perhaps those which California has aimed at the Chinese (who are not technically a minority since they are not citizens at all), and those by which some Southern States have endeavoured to accentuate the separation between whites and negroes, forbidding them to intermarry or to be taught in the same schools or colleges.

We come now to the third way in which a majority may tyrannize, *i.e.* by the imposition of purely social penalties, from mere disapproval up to insult, injury, and boycotting. The greatest of Athenian statesmen claimed for his countrymen that they set an example to the rest of Greece in that enlightened toleration which does not even visit with black looks those who hold unpopular opinions, or venture in anywise to differ from the prevailing sentiment. Such enlightenment is doubtless one of the latest fruits and crowns of a high civilization, and all the more to be admired when it is not the result of indifference, but co-exists with energetic action in the field of politics or religion or social reform.

If social persecution exists in the America of to-day, it is only in a few dark corners. One may travel all over the Northern and Western States, mingling with all classes and reading the newspapers, without hearing of it. As respects religion, so long as one does not openly affront the feelings of one's neighbours one may say what one likes, and go or not go to church. Doubtless a man, and still more a woman, will be better thought of, especially in a country-place or small town, if he or she is a church member and Sunday school teacher. But no one is made to suffer in mind, body, or estate for simply holding aloof from a religious or any other voluntary association. He would be more likely to suffer in an English village. Even in the South, where a stricter standard of orthodoxy is maintained among the clergy of the Protestant bodies than in the North or West, a layman may think as he pleases. It is the same as regards social questions, and of course as regards politics. To boycott a man for his politics, or even to discourage his shop in the way not uncommon in some parts of rural England and Ireland, would excite indignation in America; as the attempts of some labour organizations to boycott firms resisting strikes have aroused strong displeasure. If in some parts of the South a man took to cultivating the friendship of negroes and organizing them in clubs, or if in parts of the West a man made himself the champion of the Indians, he might find his life become unpleasant, though one hears little of recent instances of the kind. In any part of the country he who should use his rights of property in a hard or unneighbourly way; who, for instance, possessing a handsome park, with perhaps a waterfall or beautiful views over the country, should build a high wall round it and refuse all access, would be reprobated and sent to Coventry. I do not know of such cases; perhaps the fear of general disapproval prevents their arising.

In saying that there is no social persecution, I do not deny that in parts of the country, as, for instance, in the smaller towns of the West, there is too little allowance for difference of tastes and pursuits, too much disposition to expect every family to conform to the same standard of propriety, and follow the same habits of life. A person acting, however innocently, without regard to the beliefs and the prejudices of his neighbours would be talked about, and perhaps looked askance upon. Many a man used to the variety of London or Washington would feel the monotony of Western life, and the uniform application of its standards, irksome and even galling. But, so far as I could ascertain, he would have nothing specific to complain of. And these Western towns become every day more like the cities of the East. Taking the country all in all, it is hard to imagine more complete liberty than individuals or groups enjoy either to express and propagate their views, or to act as they please within the limits of the law, limits which, except as regards the sale of intoxicants, are drawn as widely as in Western Europe.

Forty or fifty years ago it was very different. Congress was then as now debarred from oppressive legislation. But in some Northern States the legislatures were not slow to deal harshly with persons or societies who ran counter to the dominant sentiment. The persecution of Miss Prudence Crandall, a benevolent Quakeress who had opened a school for negro children, by the legislature of Connecticut as well as by her own townsfolk, is a well-remembered instance. A good many rigidly Puritanic statutes stood unrepealed in New England, though not always put in force against the transgressor. In the South laws of the utmost severity punished whosoever should by word or act assail the "peculiar institution." Even more tyrannical than the laws was the sentiment of the masses. In Boston a mob, a well-dressed mob, largely composed of the richer sort of people, hunted Garrison for his life through the streets because he was printing an Abolitionist journal; a mob in Illinois shot Elijah Lovejoy for the same offence; and as late as 1844 another Illinois crowd killed Joseph Smith, the Mormon prophet, who, whatever may be thought of his honesty or his doctrines, was as much entitled to the protection of the laws as any other citizen. In the South, as every one knows, there was a reign of terror as regards slavery. Any one suspected of Abolitionism might think himself lucky if he escaped with tar and feathers, and was not shot or flogged almost to death. This extreme sensitiveness was of course confined to a few burning questions; but the

habit of repressing by law or without law obnoxious opinions was likely to spread, and did spread, at least in the South, to other matters also. As regards thought and opinion generally over the Union, De Tocqueville declares—

"Je ne connais pas de pays oú il règne, en général, moins d'indépendance d'esprit et de véritable liberté de discussion qu'en Amérique. La majorité trace un cercle formidable autour de la pensée. Au dedans de ces limites, l'écrivain est libre, mais malheur a lui s'il ose en sortir! Ce n'est pas qu'il ait à craindre un auto-da-fé, mais il est en butte à des dégoûts de tout genre et à des persécutions de tous les jours. La carrière politique lui est fermée: il a offensé la seule puissance qui ait la faculté de l'ouvrir. On lui refuse tout, jusqu'à la gloire."—Vol. ü. ch. 7.

He ascribes not only the want of great statesmen, but the low level of literature, learning, and thought, to this total absence of intellectual freedom.

It is hard for any one who knows the Northern States now to believe that this can have been a just description of them so lately as fifty-four years ago. Supposing, however, that it was a just description, how are we to explain the change to the absolute freedom and tolerance of to-day, when every man may sit under his own fig-tree and say and do (provided he do not drink) what he pleases, none making him afraid?

One is inclined to suspect that De Tocqueville, struck by the enormous power of general opinion, may have attributed too much of the submissiveness which he observed to the active coercion of the majority, and too little to that tendency of the minority to acquiescence which has been discussed in the last preceding chapter. Setting this aside, however, and assuming that the majority did in those days really tyrannize, several causes may be assigned for its having ceased to do so. One is the absence of violent passions. Slavery, the chief source of ferocity, was to the heated minds of the South a matter of life or death: Abolitionism seemed to many in the North a disloyal heresy, the necessary parent of disunion. Since the Civil War there has been no crisis calculated to tempt majorities to abuse their legal powers. Partisanship has for years past been more intense in Great Britain—not to say Ireland—and France than in America. When De Tocqueville saw the United States the democratic spirit was in the heyday of its youthful strength, flushed with self-confidence, intoxicated with the exuberance of its own freedom. The first generation of statesmen whose authority had restrained the masses, had just quitted the stage. The anarchic

teachings of Jefferson had borne fruit. Administration and legislation, hitherto left to the educated classes, had been seized by the rude hands of men of low social position and scanty knowledge. A reign of brutality and violence had set in over large regions of the country. Neither literature nor the universities exercised as yet any sensible power. The masses were so persuaded of their immense superiority to all other peoples, past as well as present, that they would listen to nothing but flattery, and their intolerance spread from politics into every other sphere. Our European philosopher may therefore have been correct in his description of the facts as he saw them: he erred in supposing them essential to a democratic government. As the nation grew, it purged away these faults of youth and inexperience, and the stern discipline of the Civil War taught it sobriety, and in giving it something to be really proud of, cleared away the fumes of empty self-conceit.

The years which have passed since the war have been years of immensely extended and popularized culture and enlightenment. Bigotry in religion and in everything else has been broken down—the old landmarks have been removed: the "latest results," as people call them, of European thought have become more familiar to the American masses than to the masses anywhere in Europe. At the same time, as all religious and socio-religious questions, except those which relate to education, are entirely disjoined from politics and the State, neither those who stand by the old views nor those who embrace the new carry that bitterness into their controversies which is natural in countries where religious questions are also party questions, where the clergy are a privileged and salaried order, where the throne is held bound to defend the altar, and the workman is taught to believe that both are leagued against him. The influence of these causes will, it may be predicted, be permanent. Should passion again invade politics, or should the majority become convinced that its interests will be secured by overtaxing the few, one can imagine the tendency of fifty years ago reappearing in new forms. But in no imaginable future is there likely to be any attempt to repress either by law or by opinion the free exercise and expression of speculative thought on morals, on religion, and indeed on every matter not within the immediate range of current politics.

If the above account be correct, the tyranny of the majority is no longer a blemish on the American system, and the charges brought against democracy from the supposed

example of America are groundless. As tyranny is one of those evils which tends to perpetuate itself, those who had been oppressed revenging themselves by becoming oppressors in their turn, the fact that a danger once dreaded has now disappeared is no small evidence of the recuperative forces of the American government, and the healthy tone of the American people.

CHAPTER 6

WHEREIN PUBLIC OPINION FAILS

WITHOUT anticipating the criticism of democratic government in general which belongs to a later chaper, we may wind up the examination of public opinion by considering what are its merits as a governing and overseeing power, and, on the other hand, what defects, due either to inherent weakness or to the want of appropriate machinery, prevent it from attaining the ideal which the Americans have set before themselves. I begin with the defects.

The obvious weakness of government by opinion is the difficulty of ascertaining it. English administrators in India lament the impossibility of learning the sentiments of the natives, because in the East the populations, the true masses, are dumb. The press is written by a handful of persons who, in becoming writers have ceased to belong to the multitudc, and the multitude does not read. The difficulties of Western statesmen are due to an opposite cause. The populations are highly articulate. Such is the din of voices that it is hard to say which cry prevails, which is swelled by many, which only by a few throats. The organs of opinion seem almost as numerous as the people themselves, and they are all engaged in representing their own view as that of the "people." Like other valuable articles, genuine opinion is surrounded by many counterfeits. The one positive test applicable is that of an election, and an election can at best do no more than test the division of opinion between two or three great parties, leaving subsidiary issues uncertain, while in many cases the result depends so much on the personal merits of the candidates as to render interpretation difficult. An American statesman is in no danger of consciously running counter to public opinion, but how is he to discover whether any particular

opinion is making or losing way, how is he to gauge the voting strength its advocates can put forth, or the moral authority which its advocates can exert? Elections cannot be further multiplied, for they are too numerous already. The *referendum*, or plan of submitting a specific question to the popular vote, is the logical resource, but it is troublesome and costly to take the votes of millions of people over an area so large as that of one of the greater States; much more then is this method difficult to apply in Federal matters. This is the first drawback to the rule of public opinion. The choice of persons for offices is only an indirect and often unsatisfactory way of declaring views of policy, and as the elections at which such choices are made come at fixed intervals, time is lost in waiting for the opportunity of delivering the popular judgment.

The framers of the American Constitution may not have perceived that in labouring to produce a balance, as well between the National and State Governments as between the Executive and Congress, in weakening each single authority in the Government by dividing powers and functions among each of them, they were throwing upon the nation at large, that is, upon unorganized public opinion, more work than it had ever discharged in England, or could duly discharge in a country so divided by distances and jealousies as the United States then were. Distances and jealousies have been lessened. But under the system of restrictions and balances, the habit of self-distrust and submission to the popular voice has become unexpectedly strong among legislators.

American legislatures are bodies with limited powers, their members less qualified, by shortness of tenure as well as other causes, for the work of constructive legislation, than are those of most European chambers. They are accustomed to consider themselves delegates from their respective States and districts, responsible to those districts, rather than councillors of the whole nation labouring for its general interests, and they have no executive leaders, seeing that no official sits either in Congress or in a State legislature, or possesses any authority in these bodies. Hence if at any time the people desire measures which do not merely repeal a law or direct an appropriation, but establish some administrative scheme, or mark out some positive line of financial policy, or provide some body of rules for dealing with such a topic as bankruptcy, railroad or canal communications, the management of public lands, and so forth, the people must decide for themselves what they want and put their wishes into practical

shape. In other words, public opinion must hammer out a project, and present it to Congress or to the State legislature (as the case may be), with such a voice of command as to compel its embodiment in and passage as an Act. But public opinion has no machinery available for the purpose. When members of Congress think the country desires legislation, they begin to prepare bills, but the want of leadership and of constructive skill often prevents such bills from satisfying the needs of the case, and the timidity of Congress, fearing to go beyond what opinion desires, retards the accomplishment of the public wish.[1] The people who are the power entitled to say what they want, are less qualified to say how, and in what form, they are to obtain it, or in other words, public opinion can determine ends, but is less fit to examine and select means to those ends. It is slow and clumsy in grappling with large problems. It looks at them, talks incessantly about them, complains of Congress for not solving them, is distressed that they do not solve themselves. But they remain unsolved. Vital decisions have usually hung fire longer than they would have been likely to do in European countries. The war of 1812 seemed on the point of breaking out over and over again before it came at last. The absorption of Texas was a question of many years. The extension of slavery question came before the nation in 1819; after 1840 it was the chief source of trouble; year by year it grew more menacing; year by year the nation was seen more clearly to be drifting towards the breakers. Everybody felt that something must be done. But it was the function of no one authority in particular to discover a remedy, as it would have been the function of a cabinet in Europe. I do not say the sword might not in any case have been invoked, for the temperature of Southern feeling had been steadily rising to war point. But the history of 1840-60 leaves the impression that the constitutional organs of government did less to grapple with the problem than a people may expect from its organs. Some other national questions, less dangerous, but serious, are now in the same condition. The question of reducing the surplus national revenue seems to have already puzzled statesmen and the people at large longer than a similar question would be suffered to do in Europe. I do not say that a European nation would decide it any better; but imagine that, whether wisely or foolishly, a European nation would al-

[1] These remarks apply in a less degree to State legislatures, bodies which are more prone to try all sorts of experiments than Congress is, but are often very unskilful.

ready have decided it somehow. And the same thing holds, *mutatis mutandis*, of State Governments. There also there is no set of persons whose special duty it is to find remedies for admitted evils. The structure of the government provides the requisite machinery neither for forming nor for guiding a popular opinion, disposed of itself to recognize only broad and patent facts, and to be swayed only by such obvious reasons as it needs little reflection to follow. Admirable practical acuteness, admirable ingenuity in inventing and handling machinery, whether of iron and wood or of human beings, co-exist, in the United States, with an aversion to new abstract propositions, and trains of theoretic reasoning. The liability to be caught by fallacies, the inability to recognize facts which are not seen but must be inferentially found to exist, the incapacity to imagine a future which must result from the unchecked operation of present forces,[1] these are indeed the defects of the ordinary citizen in all countries, and if they are conspicuous in America, it is only because the ordinary citizen, who is more intelligent there than elsewhere, is also more potent.

It may be replied to these observations, which are a criticism as well upon the American frame of government as upon public opinion, that the need for constructive legislation is small in America, because the habit of the country is to leave things to themselves. This is not really the fact. A great state has always problems of administration to deal with; these problems do not become less grave as time runs on, and the hand of government is beginning to-day to be invoked in America for many purposes thought to be of common utility with which legislation did not formerly intermeddle.

There is more force in the remark that we must remember how much is gained as well as lost by the slow and hesitating working of public opinion in the United States. So tremendous a force would be dangerous if it moved rashly. Acting over and gathered from an enormous area, in which there exist many local differences, it needs time, often a long time, to become conscious of the preponderance

[1] I do not forget the influence exercised on the national mind by the "glittering generalities" of the Declaration of Independence; nor the theoretical grounds taken up for and against States Rights and Slavery, and especially the highly logical scheme excogitated by Calhoun. Nevertheless he who compares the discussion of practical problems in America with the discussion of similar problems in Germany or France, will, I think, agree with the view in the text.

on one set of tendencies over another. The elements both of local difference and of class difference must be (so to speak) well shaken up together, and each part brought into contact with the rest, before the mixed liquid can produce a precipitate in the form of a practical conclusion. And in this is seen the difference between the excellence as a governing power of opinion in the whole Union, and opinion within the limits of a particular State. The systems of constitutional machinery by which public sentiment acts are similar in the greater and in the smaller area; the constitutional maxims practically identical. But public opinion, which moves slowly, temperately, and surely, in the field of national affairs, is sometimes hasty and reckless in State affairs. The population of a State may be of one colour, as that of the North-western States is almost purely agricultural, or may contain few persons of education and political knowledge, or may fall under the influence of a demagogue or a clique, or may be possessed by some local passion. Thus its opinion may want breadth, sobriety, wisdom, and the result be seen in imprudent or unjust measures. The latest constitution of California, the Granger legislation of Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin, the repudiation of their public debts by several States, are familiar instances of follies, to use no harder name, which local opinion approved, but which would have been impossible in the Federal Government, where the controlling opinion is that of a large and complex nation, and where the very deficiencies of one section or one class serve to correct qualities which may exist in excess in some other.

The sentiment of the nation at large, being comparatively remote, acts but slowly in restraining the vagaries or curing the faults of one particular State. The dwellers on the Pacific coast care very little for the criticism of the rest of the country on their anti-Chinese violence; Pennsylvania and Virginia disregarded the best opinions of the Union when in repudiating their debts they destroyed their credit; those parts of the South in which homicide goes unpunished, except by the relatives of the slain, are unmoved by the reproaches and jests of the more peaceable and well-regulated States. The fact shows how deep the division of the country into self-governing commonwealths goes, making men feel that they have a right to do what they will with their own, so long as the power remains to them, whatever may be the purely moral pressure from those who, though they can advise, have no title to interfere. And it shows also, in the

teeth of the old doctrine that republicanism was fit for small communities but monarchy necessary for large ones, how much the American democracy gains by trying its experiments with a large people in a vast country.

We may go on to ask how far American opinion succeeds in the simpler duty, which opinion must discharge in all countries, of supervising the conduct of business, and judging the current legislative work which Congress and other legislatures turn out.

Here again the question turns not so much on the excellence of public opinion as on the adequacy of the constitutional machinery provided for its action. That supervision and criticism may be effective, it must be easy to fix the praise for work well done, the blame for work neglected or ill-performed, on particular persons. Experience shows that good men are the better for a sense of their responsibility and ordinary men useless without it. The free governments of Europe and the British colonies have gone on the principle of concentrating power in order to be able to fix responsibility. The American plan of dividing powers, eminent as are its other advantages, makes it hard to fix responsibility. The executive can usually allege that it had not received from the legislature the authority necessary to enable it to grapple with a difficulty; while in the legislature there is no one person or group of persons on whom the blame due for that omission or refusal can be laid. Suppose some gross dereliction of duty to have occurred. The people are indignant. A victim is wanted, who, for the sake of the example to others, ought to be found and punished, either by law or by general censure. But perhaps he cannot be found because out of several persons or bodies who have been concerned it is hard to apportion the guilt and award the penalty. Where the sin lies at the door of Congress, it is not always possible to arraign either the Speaker or the dominant majority, or any particular party leader. Where a State legislature or a city council has misconducted itself, the difficulty is greater, because party ties are less strict there, proceedings are less fully reported, and both parties are apt to be equally implicated in the abuses of private legislation. Not uncommonly there is presented the sight of an exasperated public going about like a roaring lion, seeking whom it may devour, and finding no one. The results in State affairs would be much worse were it not for the existence of the governor with his function of vetoing bills, because in many cases, knowing that he

can be made answerable for the passage of a bad measure, he is forced up to the level of a virtue beyond that of the natural man in politics. And the disposition to seek a remedy for municipal misgovernment in increasing the powers of the mayor illustrates the same principle.

Although the failures of public opinion in overseeing the conduct of its servants are primarily due to the want of appropriate machinery, they are increased by its characteristic temper. Quick and strenuous in great matters, it is heedless in small matters, over-kindly and indulgent in all matters. It suffers many weeds to go on growing till they have struck deep root in the soil. It has so much to do in looking after both Congress and its State legislature, a host of executive officials, and perhaps a city council also, that it may impartially tolerate the misdoings of all till some important issue arises. Even when jobs are exposed by the press, each particular job seems below the attention of a busy people or the anger of a good-natured people, till the sum total of jobbery becomes a scandal. To catch and to hold the attention of the people is the chief difficulty as well as the first duty of an American reformer.

The long-suffering tolerance of public opinion towards incompetence and misconduct in officials and public men generally is a feature which has struck recent European observers. It is the more remarkable because nowhere is executive ability more valued in the management of private concerns, in which the stress of competition forces every manager to secure at whatever price the most able subordinates. We may attribute it partly to the good nature of the people, which makes them over lenient to nearly all criminals, partly to the preoccupation with their private affairs of the most energetic and useful men, who therefore cannot spare time to unearth abuses and get rid of offenders, partly to an indifference induced by the fatalistic sentiment which I have already sought to describe. This fatalism acts in two ways. Being optimistic it disposes each man to believe that things will come out right whether he "takes hold" himself or not, and that it is therefore no great matter whether a particular Ring or Boss is suppressed. And in making each individual man feel his insignificance it disposes him to leave to the multitude the task of setting right what is every one else's business just as much as his own. An American does not seem to smart under the same sense of personal wrong from the mismanagement of his public business from the exaction of high city taxes

and their malversation, as an Englishman would in the like case. If he suffers, he suffers with others, as part of the general order of things, which he is no more called upon than his neighbours to correct.

It may be charged as a weak point in the rule of public opinion that by fostering this habit it has chilled activity and dulled the sense of responsibility among the leaders of public life. It has made them less eager and strenuous in striking out ideas and plans of their own, less bold in propounding those plans, more sensitive to the reproach, even more feared in America than in England, of being a crotchet-monger or a doctrinaire. That new or unpopular ideas are more frequently started by isolated thinkers, economists, social reformers, than by statesmen, may be set down to the fact that practical statesmanship indisposes men to theorizing. But in America the practical statesman is apt to be timid in advocacy as well as infertile in suggestion. He seems to be always listening for the popular voice, always afraid to commit himself to a view which may turn out unpopular. It is a fair conjecture that this may be due to his being by his profession a far more habitual worshipper as well as observer of public opinion, than will be the case with men who are by profession thinkers and students, men who are less purely Americans of to-day, because under the influence of the literature of past times as well as of contemporary Europe. Philosophy, taking the word to include the historical study of the forces which work upon mankind at large, is needed by a statesman not only as a consolation for the disappointments of his career, but as a corrective to the superstitions and tremors which the service of the multitude implants.

The enormous force of public opinion is a danger to the people themselves, as well as their leaders. It no longer makes them tyrannical. But it fills them with an undue confidence in their wisdom, their virtue, and their freedom. It may be thought that a nation which uses freedom well can hardly have too much freedom; yet even such a nation may be too much inclined to think freedom an absolute and all-sufficient good, to seek truth only in the voice of the majority, to mistake prosperity for greatness. Such a nation, seeing nothing but its own triumphs, and hearing nothing but its own praises, seems to need a succession of men like the prophets of Israel to rouse the people out of their self-complacency, to refresh their moral ideals, to remind

them that the life is more than meat, and the body more than raiment, and that to whom much is given of them shall much also be required. If America has no prophets of this order, she fortunately possesses two classes of men who maintain a wholesome irritation such as that which Socrates thought it his function to apply to the Athenian people. These are the instructed critics who exert a growing influence on opinion through the higher newspapers, and by literature generally, and the philanthropic reformers who tell more directly upon the multitude, particularly through the churches. Both classes combined may not as yet be doing all that is needed. But the significant point is that their influence represents not an ebbing but a flowing tide. If the evils they combat exist on a larger scale than in past times, they too are more active and more courageous in rousing and reprehending their fellow-countrymen.

CHAPTER 7

WHEREIN PUBLIC OPINION SUCCEEDS

In the examination of the actualities of politics as well as of forms of government, faults are more readily perceived than merits. Everybody is struck by the mistakes which a ruler makes, or by evils which a constitution fails to avert, while less praise than is due may be bestowed in respect of the temptations that have been resisted, or the prudence with which the framers of the government have avoided defects from which other countries suffer. Thus the general prosperity of the United States and the success of their people in all kinds of private enterprises, philanthropic as well as gainful, throws into relief the blemishes of their government, and makes it the more necessary to point out in what respects the power of public opinion overcomes those blemishes, and maintains a high level of good feeling and well-being in the nation.

The European observer of the working of American institutions is apt to sum up his conclusions in two contrasts. One is between the excellence of the Constitution and the vices of the party system that has laid hold of it, discovered its weak points, and brought in a swarm of evils. The

Fathers, he says, created the Constitution good, but their successors have sought out many inventions. The other contrast is between the faults of the political class and the merits of the people at large. The men who work the Machine are often selfish and unscrupulous. The people, for whose behoof it purports to be worked, and who suffer themselves to be "run" by the politicians, are honest, intelligent, fairminded. No such contrast exists anywhere else in the world. Either the politicians are better than they are in America, or the people are worse.

The causes of this contrast, which to many observers has seemed the capital fact of American politics, have been already explained. It brings out the truth, on which too much stress cannot be laid, that the strong point of the American system, the dominant fact of the situation, is the healthiness of public opinion, and the control which it exerts. As Abraham Lincoln said in his famous contest with Douglas, "With public sentiment on its side, everything succeeds; with public sentiment against it, nothing succeeds."

The conscience and common sense of the nation as a whole keep down the evils which have crept into the working of the Constitution, and may in time extinguish them. Public opinion is a sort of atmosphere, fresh, keen, and full of sunlight, like that of the American cities, and this sunlight kills many of those noxious germs which are hatched where politicians congregate. That which, varying a once famous phrase, we may call the genius of universal publicity, has some disagreeable results, but the wholesome ones are greater and more numerous. Selfishness, injustice, cruelty, tricks, and jobs of all sorts shun the light; to expose them is to defeat them. No serious evils, no rankling sore in the body politic, can remain long concealed, and when disclosed, it is half destroyed. So long as the opinion of a nation is sound, the main lines of its policy cannot go far wrong, whatever waste of time and money may be incurred in carrying them out. It was observed in the last chapter that opinion is too vague and indeterminate a thing to be capable of considering and selecting the best means for the end on which it has determined. The counterpart of that remark is that the opinion of a whole nation, a united and tolerably homogeneous nation, is, when at last it does express itself, the most competent authority to determine the ends

of national policy.[1] In European countries, legislatures and cabinets sometimes take decisions which the nation, which had scarcely thought of the matter till the decision has been taken, is ultimately found to disapprove. In America, men feel that the nation is the only power entitled to say what it wants, and that, till it has manifested its wishes, nothing must be done to commit it. It may sometimes be long in speaking, but when it speaks, it speaks with a weight which the wisest governing class cannot claim.

The frame of the American government has assumed and trusted to the activity of public opinion, not only as the power which must correct and remove the difficulties due to the restrictions imposed on each department, and to possible collisions between them, but as the influence which must supply the defects incidental to a system which works entirely by the machinery of popular elections. Under a system of elections one man's vote is as good as another, the vicious and ignorant have as much weight as the wise and good. A system of elections might be imagined which would provide no security for due deliberation or full discussion, a system which, while democratic in name, recognizing no privilege, and referring everything to the vote of the majority, would in practice be hasty, violent, tyrannical. It is with such a possible democracy that one has to contrast the rule of public opinion as it exists in the United States. Opinion declares itself legally through elections. But opinion is at work at other times also, and has other methods of declaring itself. It secures full discussion of issues of policy and of the characters of men. It suffers nothing to be concealed. It listens patiently to all the arguments that are addressed to it. Eloquence, education, wisdom, the authority derived from experience and high character, tell upon it in the long run, and have, perhaps not always their due influence, but yet a great and growing influence. Thus a democracy governing itself though a constantly active public opinion, and not solely by its intermittent mechanism of elections, tends to become patient,

[1] The distinction between means and ends is, of course, one which it is hard to draw in practice, because most ends are means to some larger end which embraces them. Still if we understand by ends the main and leading objects of national policy, including the spirit in which the government ought to be administered, we shall find that these are, if sometimes slowly, yet more clearly apprehended in America than in Europe, and less frequently confounded with subordinate and transitory issues.

tolerant, reasonable, and is more likely to be unembittered and unvexed by class divisions.

It is the existence of such a public opinion as this, the practice of freely and constantly reading, talking, and judging of public affairs with a view to voting thereon, rather than the mere possession of political rights, that gives to popular government that educative and stimulative power which is so frequently claimed as its highest merit. Those who, in the last generation, were forced to argue for democratic government against oligarchies or despots, were perhaps inclined, if not to exaggerate the value of extended suffrage and a powerful legislature, at least to pass too lightly over the concomitant conditions by whose help such institutions train men to use liberty well. History does not support the doctrine that the mere enjoyment of power fits large masses of men, any more than individuals or classes, for its exercise. Along with that enjoyment there must be found some one or more of various auspicious conditions, such as a direct and fairly equal interest in the common welfare, the presence of a class or group of persons respected and competent to guide, an absence of religious or race hatreds, a high level of education, or at least of intelligence, old habits of local self-government, the practice of unlimited free discussion. In America it is not simply the habit of voting but the briskness and breeziness of the whole atmosphere of public life, and the process of obtaining information and discussing it, of hearing and judging each side, that form the citizen's intelligence. True it is that he would not gain much from this process did it not lead up to the exercise of voting power: he would not learn so much on the road did not the polling-booth stand at the end of it. But if it were his lot, as it is that of the masses in some European countries, to exercise his right of suffrage under few of these favouring conditions, the educational value of the vote would become comparatively small. It is the habit of breathing as well as helping to form public opinion that cultivates, develops, trains the average American. It gives him a sense of personal responsibility stronger, because more constant, than exists in those free countries of Europe where he commits his power to a legislature. Sensible that his eye ought to be always fixed on the conduct of affairs, he grows accustomed to read and judge, not indeed profoundly, sometimes erroneously, usually under party influences, but yet with a feeling that the judgment is his own. He has a sense of ownership in

the government, and therewith a kind of independence of manner as well as of mind very different from the demissness of the humbler classes of the Old World. And the consciousness of responsibility which goes along with this laudable pride, brings forth the peaceable fruits of moderation. As the Greeks thought that the old families ruled their households more gently than upstarts did, so citizens who have been born to power, born into an atmosphere of legal right and constitutional authority, are sobered by their privileges. Despite their natural quickness and eagerness, the native Americans are politically patient. They are disposed to try soft means first, to expect others to bow to that force of opinion which they themselves recognize. Opposition does not incense them; danger does not, by making them lose their heads, hurry them into precipitate courses. In no country does a beaten minority take a defeat so well. Admitted that the blood of the race counts for something in producing that peculiar coolness and self-control in the midst of an external effervescence of enthusiasm, which is the most distinctive feature of the American masses, the habit of ruling by public opinion and obeying it counts for even more. It was far otherwise in the South before the war, but the South was not a democracy, and its public opinion was that of a passionate class.

The best evidence for this view is to be found in the educative influence of opinion on new-comers. Any one can see how severe a strain is put on democratic institutions by the influx every year of half a million of untrained Europeans, not to speak of those French Canadians who now settle in the north-eastern States. Being in most States admitted to full civic rights before they have come to shake off European notions and habits, these strangers enjoy political power before they either share or are amenable to American opinion. Such immigrants are at first not merely a dead weight in the ship, but a weight which party managers can, in city politics, so shift as to go near upsetting her. They follow blindly leaders of their own race, are not moved by discussion, exercise no judgment of their own. This lasts for some years, probably for the rest of life with those who are elderly when they arrive. But the younger sort, when, if they be foreigners, they have learnt English, when, working among Americans, they have imbibed the sentiments and assimilated the ideas of the country, are thenceforth scarcely to be distinguished from the native population. They are more American than the Americans in their desire to put on the character of their new country.

This peculiar gift which the Republic possesses of quickly dissolving and assimilating the foreign bodies that are poured into her mass, imparting to them her own qualities of orderliness, good sense, self-restraint, a willingness to bow to the will of the majority, is mainly due to the all-pervading force of opinion, which the new-comer, so soon as he has formed social and business relations with the natives, breathes in daily till it insensibly transmutes him. Their faith, and a sentiment of resentment against England, keep up among the Irish a body of separate opinion, which for a time resists the solvent power of its American environment. But the public schools finish the work of the factory and the newspapers. The Irish immigrant's son is an American citizen for all other purposes, even if he retain, which he seldom does, the hereditary Anglophobia.

It is chiefly the faith in publicity that gives to the American public their peculiar buoyancy and what one may call their airy hopefulness in discussing even the weak points of their system. They are always telling you that they have no skeleton closets, nothing to keep back. They know, and are content that all the world should know, the worst as well as the best of themselves. They have a boundless faith in free inquiry and full discussion. They admit the possibility of any number of temporary errors and delusions. But to suppose that a vast nation should, after hearing everything, canvassing everything, and trying all the preliminary experiments it has a mind to, ultimately go wrong by mistaking its own true interests, seems to them a sort of blasphemy against the human intelligence and its Creator.

They claim for opinion that its immense power enables them to get on with but little government. Some evils which the law and its officers are in other countries required to deal with are here averted or cured by the mere force of opinion, which shrivels them up when its rays fall on them. As it is not the product of any one class, and is unwilling to recognize classes at all, for it would stand self-condemned as un-American if it did, it discourages anything in the nature of class legislation. Where a particular section of the people, such, for instance, as the Western farmers or the Eastern operatives, think themselves aggrieved, they complain and clamour for the measures thought likely to help them. The farmers legislated against the railroads, the labour party asks an eight hour law. But whereas on the European continent such a class would think and act as a class, hostile to other classes, and might resolve to pursue its own objects at what-

ever risk to the nation, in America national opinion, which every one shares, and recognizes as the arbiter, mitigates these feelings, and puts the advocates of the legislation which any class demands upon showing that their schemes are compatible with the paramount interest of the whole community. To say that there is no legislation in America which, like the class legislation of Europe, has thrown undue burdens on the poor, while jealously guarding the pleasures and pockets of the rich, is to say little, because where the middle and poorer citizens have long been a numerical majority, invested with political power, they will evidently take care of themselves. But the opposite danger might have been feared, that the poor would have turned the tables on the rich, thrown the whole burden of taxation upon them, and disregarded in the supposed interest of the masses what are called the rights of property. Not only has this not been attempted—it has been scarcely even suggested (except, of course, by socialists newly arrived from Germany), and it excites no serious apprehension among capitalists. There is nothing in the machinery of government that could do more than delay it for a time, did the masses desire it. What prevents it is the honesty and common-sense of the citizens generally, who are convinced that the interests of all classes are substantially the same, and that justice is the highest of those interests. Equality, open competition, a fair field to everybody, every stimulus to industry, and every security for its fruits, these they hold to be the self-evident principles of national prosperity.

If public opinion is heedless in small things, it usually checks measures which, even if not oppressive, are palpably selfish or unwise. If before a mischievous bill passes, its opponents can get the attention of the people fixed upon it, its chances are slight. All sorts of corrupt or pernicious schemes which are hatched at Washington or in the State legislatures are abandoned because it is felt that the people will not stand them, although they could be easily pushed through those not too scrupulous assemblies. There have been instances of proposals which took people at first by their plausibility, but which the criticism of opinion riddled with its unceasing fire till at last they were quietly dropped. It was in this way that President Grant's attempt to annex San Domingo failed. He had made a treaty for the purpose, which fell through for want of the requisite two-thirds majority in the Senate, but he persisted in the scheme until at last the disapproval of

the general public, which had grown stronger by degrees and found expression through the leading newspapers, warned him to desist. After the War, there was at first in many quarters a desire to punish the Southern leaders for what they had made the North suffer. But by degrees the feeling died away, the sober sense of the whole North restraining the passions of those who had counselled vengeance; and, as every one knows, there was never a civil war or rebellion, whichever one is to call it, followed by so few severities.

Public opinion does not always secure the appointment of the best men to places, but where undivided responsibility can be fixed on the appointing authority, it prevents, as those who are behind the scenes know, countless bad appointments for which politicians intrigue. Considering the power of party managers over the Federal executive, and the low sense of honour and public duty as regards patronage among politicians, the leading posts are filled, if not by the most capable men, yet seldom by bad ones. The Federal judges, for instance, are, and have always been, men of high professional standing and stainless character. The same may be, though less generally, said of the upper Federal officials in the North and West. That no similar praise can be bestowed on the exercise of Federal patronage in the southern States since the war, is an illustration of the view I am stating. As the public opinion of the South (that is to say, of the whites who make opinion there) has been steadily hostile to the Republican party, which commanded the executive during the twenty years from 1865 to 1885, the Republican party managers were indifferent to it, because they had nothing to gain or to lose from it. Hence they made appointments without regard to it. Northern opinion knows comparatively little of the details of Southern politics and the character of officials who act there, so that they might hope to escape the censure of their supporters in the North. Hence they jobbed their patronage in the South with unblushing cynicism, using Federal posts there as a means not merely of rewarding party services, but also of providing local white leaders and organizers to the coloured southern Republicans. Their different behaviour here and in the North therefore shows that it has not been public virtue, but the fear of public opinion that has made their Northern appointments on the whole respectable, while those in the South have been so much the reverse. The same phenomenon has been noticed in Great

Britain. Jobs are frequent and scandalous in the inverse ratio of the notice they are likely to attract.[1]

In questions of foreign policy, opinion is a valuable reserve force. When demonstrations are made by party leaders intended to capture the vote of some particular section, the native Americans only smile. But they watch keenly the language held and acts done by the State Department (Foreign Office), and, while determined to support the President in vindicating the rights of American citizens, would be found ready to check any demand or act going beyond their legal rights which could tend to embroil them with a foreign power. There is still a touch of spread-eagleism and an occasional want of courtesy and taste among public speakers and journalists when they refer to other countries; and there is a determination in all classes to keep European interference at a distance. But among the ordinary native citizens one finds (I think) less obtrusive selfishness, less Chauvinism, less cynicism in declaring one's own national interests to be paramount to those of other states, than in any of the great states of Europe. Justice and equity are more generally recognized as binding upon nations no less than on individuals. Whenever humanity comes into question, the heart of the people is sound. The treatment of the Indians reflects little credit on the Western settlers who have come in contact with them, and almost as little on the Federal Government, whose efforts to protect them have been often foiled by the faults of its own agents, or by its own want of promptitude and foresight. But the wish of the people at large has always been to deal with the aborigines generously as well as uprightly, nor have appeals on their behalf ever failed to command the sympathy and assent of the country.

Throughout these chapters I have been speaking chiefly of the northern States and chiefly of the present, for America is a country which changes fast. But the conduct of the Southern people since their defeat in 1865, illustrates the tendency of underlying national traits to reassert themselves when dis-

[1] It has often been remarked that posts of the same class are more jobbed by the British executive in Scotland than in England, and in Ireland than in Scotland, because it is harder to rouse Parliament, which in Great Britain discharges much of the function which public opinion discharges in America, to any interest in an appointment made in one of the smaller countries. In Great Britain a minister making a bad appointment has to fear a hostile motion, though Parliament is over lenient to jobs, which may displace him; in the United States a President is under no such apprehension. It is only to opinion that he is responsible.

turbing conditions have passed away. Before the war the public opinion of the Slave States, and especially of the planting States, was practically the opinion of a class,—the small and comparatively rich landowning aristocracy. The struggle for the defence of their institution had made this opinion fierce and intolerant. To a hatred of the Abolitionists, whom it thought actuated by the wish to rob and humiliate the South, it joined a misplaced contempt for what it deemed the money-grubbing and peace-at-any-price spirit of the Northern people generally. So long as the subjugated States were ruled by arms, and the former "rebels" excluded by disfranchisement from the government of their States, this bitterness remained. When the restoration of self-government, following upon the liberation of the Confederate prisoners and the amnesty, had shown the magnanimity of the North, its clemency, its wish to forget and forgive, its assumption that both sides would shake hands and do their best for their common country, the hearts of the Southern men were conquered. Opinion went round. Frankly, one might almost say cheerfully, it recognized the inevitable. It stopped those outrages on the negroes which the law had been unable to repress. It began to obtain "touch" of, it has now almost fused itself with, the opinion of the North and West. No one Southern leader or group can be credited with this: it was the general sentiment of the people that brought it about. Still less do the Northern politicians deserve the praise of the peace-makers, for many among them tried for political purposes to fan or to rekindle the flame of suspicion in the North. It was the opinion of the North generally, more liberal than its guides, which dictated not merely forgiveness, but the restoration of equal civic rights. Nor is this the only case in which the people have proved themselves to have a higher and a truer inspiration than the politicians.

It has been observed that the all-subduing power of the popular voice may tell against the appearance of great statesmen by dwarfing aspiring individualities, by teaching men to discover and obey the tendencies of their age rather than rise above them and direct them. If this happens in America it is not because the American people fails to appreciate and follow and exalt such eminent men as fortune bestows upon it. It has a great capacity for loyalty, even for hero-worship. "Our people," said an experienced American publicist to me, "are in reality hungering for great men, and the warmth with which even pinchbeck geniuses, men who have anything showy or taking about them, anything that is deemed to be-

token a strong individuality, are followed and glorified in spite of intellectual emptiness, and perhaps even moral shortcomings, is the best proof of the fact." Henry Clay was the darling of his party for many years, as Jefferson, with less of personal fascination, had been in the preceding generation. Daniel Webster retained the devotion of New England long after it had become clear that his splendid intellect was mated to a far from noble character. A kind of dictatorship was yielded to Abraham Lincoln, whose memory is cherished almost like that of Washington himself. Whenever a man appears with something taking or forcible about him, he becomes the object of so much popular interest and admiration that those cooler heads who perceive his faults, and perhaps dread his laxity of principle, reproach the proneness of their less-discerning countrymen to make an idol out of wood or clay. The career of Andrew Jackson is a case in point, though it may be hoped that the intelligence of the people would estimate such a character more truly today than it did sixty years ago. I doubt if there be any country where a really brilliant man, confident in his own strength, and adding the charm of a striking personality to the gift of popular eloquence, would find an easier path to fame and power, and would exert more influence over the minds and emotions of the multitude. Such a man, speaking to the people with the independence of conscious strength, would find himself appreciated and respected.

Controversy is still bitter, more profuse in personal imputations than one expects to find it where there are no grave issues to excuse excitement. But in this respect also there is an improvement. Partisans are reckless, but the mass of the people lends itself less to acrid partisanship than it did in the time of Jackson, or in those first days of the Republic which were so long looked back to as a sort of heroic age. Public opinion grows more temperate, more mellow, and assuredly more tolerant. Its very strength disposes it to bear with opposition or remonstrance. It respects itself too much to wish to silence any voice.

CHAPTER 8

THE SUPPOSED FAULTS OF DEMOCRACY

THE question which in one form or another every European politician has during the last half-century been asking about the United States, is the broad question, How does democracy answer? No other country has tried the experiment of a democratic government on so large a scale, with so many minor variations, for the State governments are thirty-eight autonomous democracies, or with such advantages of geographical position and material resources. And those who think that all civilized countries are moving towards democracy, even though they may not be destined to rest there, find the question an important one for themselves. The reader who has followed thus far the account I have tried to give of the Federal Constitution and its working, of the State Constitutions, of local government, of the party machinery, of the influence of public opinion as a controlling power over all the institutions of the country, will be content with a comparatively brief summary of the results to which the inquiries made under these heads point.

That summary naturally falls into three parts. We have to ask first, how far the faults usually charged on democracy are present in America; next, what are the special faults which characterize it there; last, what are the strong points which it has developed.

The chief faults which philosophers, from Plato downwards to Mr. Robert Lowe, and popular writers repeating and caricaturing the dicta of philosophers, have attributed to democratic governments, are the following:—

Weakness in emergencies, incapacity to act with promptitude and decision.

Fickleness and instability, frequent changes of opinion, consequent changes in the conduct of affairs and in executive officials.

Insubordination, internal dissensions, disregard of authority, a frequent resort to violence, bringing on an anarchy which ends in military tyranny.

A desire to level down, and intolerance of greatness.

Tyranny of the majority over the minority.

A love of novelty: a passion for changing customs and destroying old institutions.

Ignorance and folly, producing a liability to be deceived and misled; consequent growth of demagogues playing on the passions and selfishness of the masses.

I do not say that this list exhausts the reproaches directed against democracy, but it includes those which are most often heard and are best worth examining. Most of them are drawn from the history of the Greek republics of antiquity and the Italian republics of the Middle Ages, small communities where the conditions of social and political life were so different from those of a great modern country that we ought not to expect similar results to follow from political arrangements called by the same name. However, as this consideration has not prevented writers and statesmen, even in our own day, from repeating the old censures, and indeed from mixing together in one repulsive potion all the faults that belonged to small aristocratic republics with all that can belong to large democratic republics, it is worth while to examine these current notions, and try them by the light of the facts which America furnishes.

Weakness and want of promptitude.—The American democracy is long-suffering and slow in rousing itself; it is often perplexed by problems, and seems to grope blindly for their solution. In the dealings with England and France which preceded the war of A.D. 1812, and in the conduct of that war, its government showed some irresolution and sluggishness. The habit of blustering in its intercourse with foreign powers, and the internal strife over slavery, led Europeans to think it lacked firmness and vigour. They were undeceived in 1861. While it seemed possible to avert a breach with the Southern slave-holders, the North was willing to accept, and did accept, a series of compromises whose inadequacy was soon revealed. The North was ill led in Congress, and the South was boldly if not wisely led. Yet when the crisis arrived, the North put forth its power with a suddenness and resolution which surprised the world. There was no faltering in the conduct of a struggle which for two long years French and English statesmen deemed hopeless. The best blood of the North freely offered itself to be shed on the battlefields of Virginia and Pennsylvania for the sake of the Union; while an enormous debt was incurred in equipping army after army. As every one knows, the Southern people displayed no less vigour even when the tide had evidently began to turn against them, and the hope of European

intervention died away. If want of force, dash, and courage in moments of danger is a defect generally chargeable on popular governments, it was not then chargeable on the United States. But the doctrine is one which finds little to support it either in ancient or in modern history, while there are many instances to the contrary: witness the war of the Swiss against Charles the Bold, and the defence of Florence against Charles the Fifth.

Fickleness and Instability.—The indictment fails on this count also. The people are open to sudden impulses, and in particular States there have been ill-considered innovations and a readiness to try wild experiments, such as those I have described in California. But taking the nation as a whole, its character is marked by tenacity of beliefs and adherence to leaders once chosen. The opposite charge of stubbornness in refusing to be convinced by argument and to admit the failings of men who have established some title to gratitude, might more plausibly be preferred. Western farmers suffer from the high price of the clothes they wear and the implements they use, but having an idea that a protective tariff makes somehow for the good of the country they have hitherto remained protectionists. How little did the blunders of President Grant's first administration, and the misdeeds of the knot of men who surrounded him, playing upon the political inexperience of a blunt soldier, impair the loyalty of the masses to the man whose sword had saved the Union. Congressmen and State officials are no doubt often changed, but they are changed in pursuance of a doctrine and a habit in which the interests of a class are involved, not from any fickleness in the people.

Insubordination and contempt for authority.—On this head the evidence is more conflicting. There are States, and cities, in which the laws are imperfectly enforced. Homicide is hardly a crime in some parts of the South—that is to say, a man who kills another is not always arrested, often not convicted when arrested and put on his trial, very rarely hanged when convicted.[1] One might almost say that pri-

[1] Murder does not seem to be dealt with quite firmly enough even in some of the Northern States. "There is no subject within the domain of legislation in which improvement is so needed as in the law against murder. The practical immunity that crime enjoys in some sections of the country, and the delay, difficulty, and uncertainty in enforcing the law almost everywhere, is a reproach to our civilization. Efforts to save assassins from punishment are so strenuous, the chances of escape so numerous, and the proceedings so protracted, that the law has few terrors for those disposed to

vate war is recognized by opinion in these districts, as it was in Europe during the earlier Middle Ages. In the West, again, particularly in such south-western States as Missouri, Arkansas, and Texas, brigandage seems to be regarded with a certain amusement, rising into sympathy, by a part of the peaceable population. Having arisen partly out of the Border ruffianism which preceded the outbreak of the Civil War, partly among men who were constantly engaged in skirmishing with the Indian tribes, there is a flavour of romance about it, which ceases to gild the exploits of train-robbers only when their activity threatens the commercial interests of a rising city. Jesse James, the notorious bandit of Missouri, and his brothers, were popular heroes in the region they infested, much like Robin Hood and Little John in the ballads of the thirteenth century in England. These phenomena are, however, explicable by other causes than democratic government. The homicidal habits of the South are a relic of that semi-barbarism which slavery kept alive long after the northern free States had reached the level of European order. Brigandage is due to the absence of a mounted gendarmerie in the vast and thinly-peopled Farther West, and there is no gendarmerie because the Federal government leaves the States and Territories to create their own, and these unsettled communities, being well armed, prefer to take care of themselves rather than spend their scanty corporate funds on a task which in such a region could not be effectively performed except at a cost disproportionate to the result.

Lynch law is not unknown in more civilized regions, such as Indiana, Ohio, even Western New York. Now lynch law, however shocking it may seem to Europeans, is far removed from arbitrary violence. According to the testimony of careful observers, it is very seldom abused, and its proceedings are generally conducted with some regularity of form as well as fairness of spirit. What are the circumstances? Those highly technical rules of judicial procedure and still more technical rules of evidence which America owes to the English common law, and which have in some States retained antiquated minutiæ now expunged from English practice, or been rendered by new legislation too favourable to prisoners, have to be applied in districts where population is thin, where there are very few officers, either for the apprehension of offenders, or for the hunting up of evidence against them,

violate it."—Address before the American Bar Association, delivered in 1881 by Mr. E. J. Phelps, President on the Association.

and where, according to common belief, both judges and juries are occasionally "squared" or "got at." Many crimes would go unpunished if some more speedy and efficient method of dealing with them were not adopted. This method is found in a volunteer jury, summoned by the leading local citizens, or in very clear cases, by a simple seizure and execution of the criminal. Why not create an efficient police? Because crime is uncommon in many districts—in such a district, for instance, as western New York and Ohio,—and the people have deliberately concluded that it is cheaper and simpler to take the law into their own hands on those rare occasions when a police is needed than to be at the trouble of organizing and paying a force for which there is usually no employment. If it be urged that they are thus forming habits of lawlessness in themselves, the Americans reply that experience does not seem to make this probable, because lawlessness does not increase among the farming population, and has disappeared from places where the rudeness or simplicity of society formerly rendered lynch law necessary. However, the so-called "Molly Maguire" conspiracy, which vexed and terrified Pennsylvania for several years, showed the want of a vigorous and highly-trained police. A sort of secret society organized a succession of murders, much like the Italian Camorra, which remained undetected till a daring man succeeded in persuading the conspirators to admit him among them. He shared their schemes, and learnt to know their persons and deeds, then turned upon them and brought them to justice. This remarkable case illustrates not any neglect of law or tenderness for crime, but mainly the power of a combination which can keep its secrets. Once detected, the Molly Maguires were severely dealt with. The Pittsburg riots of 1877, and the Cincinnati riots of 1884, alarmed the Americans themselves, so long accustomed to domestic tranquillity as to have forgotten those volcanic forces which lie smouldering in all ignorant masses, ready to burst forth upon sufficient excitement. The miners and ironworkers of the Pittsburg district are rough fellows, many of them recent immigrants who have not yet acquired American habits of order; nor would there have been anything to distinguish this Pennsylvanian disturbance from those which happen during strikes in England, as, for instance, at Blackburn a few years ago, or in times of distress in France, as at Decazeville in 1886, had it been promptly suppressed. Unfortunately there was no proper force on the spot. The governor was absent; the mayor and other local authorities lost

their heads; the police, feebly handled, were overpowered; the militia showed weakness; so that the riot spread in a way which surprised its authors, and the mob raged for several days along the railroads in several States, and over a large area of manufacturing and mining towns.

The moral of this event was the necessity, even in a land of freedom, of keeping a force strong enough to repress tumults in their first stage. The Cincinnati riot began in an attempt to lynch two prisoners who were thought likely to escape the punishment they richly deserved; and it would probably have ended there had not the floating rabble of this city of 300,000 inhabitants seized the opportunity to do a little pillage and make a great noise on their own account. Neither sedition had any political character, nor indeed any specific object, except that the Pennsylvanian mob showed special enmity to the railroad company. They were not specially products of democracy, but they are unhappily proofs that democracy does not secure the good behaviour of its worst and newest citizens, and that it must be prepared, no less than other governments, to maintain order by the prompt and stern application of physical force.[1]

One hears in some States of laws which are systematically evaded, sometimes by the connivance of officials who are improperly induced to abstain from prosecuting transgressors, sometimes with the general consent of the community which perceives that they cannot be enforced. Thus some years ago the laws against the sale of liquor on Sundays in the city of Chicago were not enforced. The bulk of the population, being German and Irish, disliked them, and showed its dislike by turning out of the municipal offices those who had enforced them, while yet the law remained on the statute-book because, according to the Constitution of Illinois (one of the most experimental of the newer constitutions, as appears from its adoption of minority voting), it takes a majority of two-thirds in the legislature to repeal an Act; and the rural members, being largely Prohibitionists, stand by this law against Sunday dealing. When in Texas I heard of the same

[1] There is a great difference between different States and cities as regards police arrangements. The police of New York City are said to be very efficient and somewhat too promptly severe in the use of their staves. But when not long ago the strikers at some of the railway yards in Jersey City, on the other side of the Hudson River from New York, molested the men who had taken work under the companies, the latter were obliged to hire policemen from a private firm to protect their employés. In some cities the police are armed with revolvers.

thing as happening in the city of San Antonio, and doubt not that it occurs in many cities. Probably more laws are quietly suffered to be broken in America than in either England or Germany. On the other hand, it is fair to say that the credit which the Americans claim of being pre-eminently a law-abiding people is borne out by the perfect public order and the general security of property and person which strikes a traveller all over the East, the middle States, and the more thickly peopled parts of the West. Political disturbances are practically unknown outside some few of the southern States, where there are occasional collisions between whites and blacks, nor are they frequent or virulent in those States. Even when an election is believed to have been fraudulently won, the result is respected, because it is externally regular. Fights seldom occur at elections; neither party disturbs the meetings or processions of the other in the hottest presidential campaign. Such a series of disturbances as London and Lancashire saw in the beginning of 1882, when the meetings of a number of members of Parliament with their constituents were broken up by Irishmen, or party opponents masquerading as Irishmen, or such another series as marked the close of the agitation on the Franchise Bill in 1884, excites the wonder of Americans, who ask whether Englishmen can be fit for free government when they have not yet learnt to let their opponents meet and talk in peace.

The habit of obedience to constituted authority is another test, and one which Plato would have considered specially conclusive. The difficulty of applying it in America is that there are so few officials who come into the relation of command with the people, or in other words, that the people are so little "governed," in the French or German sense, that one has few opportunities of discovering how they comport themselves. The officers of both the Federal and the State governments, in levying taxes and carrying out the judgments of the Courts, have seldom any resistance to fear.[1] Other authorities experience no difficulty in making themselves respected. A railroad company, for instance, finds its passengers only too submissive. They endure with a patience which astonishes Englishmen frequent irregularities of the train service and other discomforts, which

[1] Excisemen are sometimes resisted in the mountains of North Carolina and Tennessee, which form a sort of *enclave* of semi-barbarism in a civilized country, such as the rugged Albania was in the Roman Empire.

would in England produce a whole crop of letters to the newspapers. The discipline of the army and navy in the war was nearly as strict as in European armies. So in universities and colleges discipline is maintained with the same general ease and the same occasional troubles as arise in Oxford and Cambridge. The children in city schools are proverbially docile. Employers never complain of any trouble in keeping order among their workpeople. So far, indeed, is insubordination from being a characteristic of the native Americans, that they are conspicuously the one free people of the world which, owing to its superior intelligence, has recognized the permanent value of order, and observes it on every occasion, not least when a sudden alarm arises. Anarchy is of all dangers or bugbears the one which the modern world has least cause to fear, for the tendency of ordinary human nature to obey is the same as in past times, and the aggregation of human beings into great masses weakens the force of the individual will, and makes men more than ever like sheep, so far as action is concerned. Much less, therefore, is there ground for fancying that out of anarchy there will grown any tyranny of force. Whether democracies may not end in yielding greater power to their executives is quite another question, whereof more anon; all I observe here is that in no country can a military despotism, such as that which has twice prevailed in France and once in England, be deemed less likely to arise. During the Civil War there were many persons in Europe cultivating, as Gibbon says, the name without the temper of philosophy, who predicted that some successful leader of the Northern armies would establish his throne on the ruins of the Constitution. But no sooner had General Lee surrendered at Appomattox than the disbandment of the victorious host began; and the only thing which thereafter distinguished Generals Grant, Sherman, and Sheridan from their fellow-citizens was the liability to have "receptions" forced on them when they visited a city, and find their puissant arms wearied by the handshakings of their enthusiastic admirers.

Cæsarism is the last danger likely to menace America. In no nation is civil order more stable. None is more averse to the military spirit. No political system would offer a greater resistance to an attempt to create a standing army or centralize the administration.

Jealousy of greatness, and a desire to level down.—This charge deserves a claim to respectful consideration from the authority of De Tocqueville, who thought it a

necessary attribute of democracy, and professed to have discovered symptoms of it in the United States. It alarmed J. S. Mill, and has been frequently dwelt on by his disciples, and by many who have adopted no other part of his teachings, as an evil equally inevitable and fatal in democratic countries. There was probably good ground for it sixty years ago. Even now one discovers a tendency in the United States, particularly in the West, to dislike, possibly to resent, any outward manifestation of social superiority. A man would be ill looked upon who should build a castle in a park, surround his pleasure-grounds with a high wall, and receive an exclusive society in gilded saloons. One of the parts which prominent politicians, who must be assumed to know their business, most like to play is the part of Cincinnatus at the plough, or Curius Dentatus receiving the Samnite envoys over his dinner of turnips. They welcome a newspaper interviewer at their modest farm, and take pains that he should describe how simply the rooms are furnished, and how little "help" (*i.e.* how few servants) is kept. Although the cynics of the New York press make a mock of such artless ways, the desired impression is produced on the farmer and the artisan. At a senatorial election not long ago in a north-western State, the opponents of the sitting candidate procured a photograph of his residence in Washington, a handsome mansion in a fashionable avenue, and circulated it among the members of the State legislature, to show in what luxury their Federal representative indulged. I remember to have heard it said of a statesman proposing to become a candidate for the Presidency, that he did not venture during the preceding year to occupy his house in Washington, lest he should give occasion for similar criticism. Whether or not this was his real motive, the attribution of it to him is equally illustrative. But how little the wealthy fear to display their wealth and take in public the pleasures it procures may be understood by any one who, walking down Fifth Avenue in New York, observes the superb houses which line it, houses whose internal decorations and collected objects of art rival those of the palaces of European nobles, or who watches in Newport, the most fashionable of transatlantic watering-places, the lavish expenditure upon servants, horses, carriages, and luxuries of every kind. No spot in Europe conveys an equal impression of the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, of boundless wealth and a boundless desire for enjoy-

ment, as does the Ocean Drive at Newport on an afternoon in August.

Intellectual eminence excites no jealousy, though it is more admired and respected than in Europe. The men who make great fortunes, such as the late Mr. A. T. Stewart, or "Commodore" Vanderbilt, are not regarded with suspicion or envy, but rather with admiration. "When thou doest good unto thyself, all men shall speak well of thee." Wealth does not, as in England, give its possessors an immediate *entrée* to fashionable society, but it marks them as the heroes and leaders of the commercial world, and sets them on a pinnacle of fame which fires the imagination of ambitious youths in dry goods stores or traffic clerks on a railroad. The demonstrations of hostility to wealthy "monopolists," and especially to railroad companies, made in some districts, are prompted, not by hatred to prominence or wealth, but by discontent at the immense power which capitalists exercise, especially in the business of transporting goods, and which they have frequently abused.

Tyranny of the majority.—Of this I have spoken in a previous chapter, and need only summarize the conclusions there arrived at. So far as compulsive legislation goes, it has never been, and is now less than ever, a serious or widespread evil. The press is free to advocate unpopular doctrines, even the most brutal forms of anarchism. Religious belief and practices are untouched by law. The sale of intoxicants is no doubt in many places restricted or forbidden, but to assume that this is a tyrannical proceeding is to beg a question on which the wise are much divided. The taxation of the rich for the benefit of the poor offers the greatest temptation to a majority disposed to abuse its powers. But neither Congress nor the State legislatures have, with a very few exceptions, gone any farther in this direction than the great nations of Europe. I may be told that this abstention from legislative tyranny is due, not to the wisdom and fairness of the American democracy, but to the restraints which the Federal and State constitutions impose upon it. This is true. But who impose and maintain these restrictions? The people themselves, who surely deserve the credit of desiring to remove from their own path temptations which might occasionally prove irresistible. I am not, however, arguing in favour of democracy in general, but simply pointing out how a self-governing multitude has behaved under certain given conditions, conditions in some points exceptionally favourable.

The absence of class hatreds has been such a condition. Another may be found in the fact that the two great national parties do not correspond with any class divisions. Taking the whole country, rich and poor are equally represented in both of these parties. Neither proposes to overtax the rich. Both denounce monopolism in the abstract, and promise to restrain capital from abusing its power, but neither is more forward than the other to take practical steps for such a purpose, because each includes capitalists whose contributions the party needs, and each equally leans upon the respectable and wealthy classes,—the Republicans more particularly on those classes in the North, the Democrats on the same classes in the South. Party lines do not coincide with social lines or religious lines, as they have often done in Europe.

In the several States in which the masses, because the sphere of legislation is wider, might more easily attack the rich or any unpopular class, the lines on which parties act are fixed by the lines which separate the national parties, and each party is therefore held back from professing doctrines which menace the interests of any class. The only exceptions occur where some burning economic question supersedes for the moment the regular party attachments. This happened in California, with the consequences already described. It came near happening in two or three of the north-western States, such as Illinois and Wisconsin, where the farmers, organized in their Granges or agricultural clubs, caused the legislatures to pass statutes which bore hardly on the railroads and the owners of elevators and grain warehouses. Yet even this legislation could scarcely be called tyrannical. It was an attempt, however clumsy and abrupt, to deal with a real economical mischief, not an undue extension of the scope of legislation to matters in which majorities ought not to control minorities at all. On a review of the whole matter it may safely be said that the majority abuses its legal power no more in the United States than in Europe. Its extra-legal power, its social and moral authority, was doubtless abused some fifty years ago. This has ceased, at least in the more advanced parts of the country, and the fact that a malady which once vexed the system has been thrown off by the natural forces of growth may be deemed an auspicious omen for future health.

Love of novelty; passion for destroying old institutions. —It is easy to see how democracies have been credited with

this tendency. They have risen out of oligarchies or aristocratic monarchies, the process of their rise coinciding, if not always with a revolution, at least with a breaking down of many old usages and institutions. It is this very breaking down that gives birth to them. Probably some of the former institutions are spared, are presently found incompatible with the new order of things, and then have to be changed till the people has, so to speak, furnished its house according to its taste. But when the new order has been established, is there any ground for believing that a democracy is an exception to the general tendency of mankind to adhere to the customs they have formed, admire the institutions they have created, and even bear the ills they know rather than incur the trouble of finding some way out of them? The Americans are not an exception. They value themselves only too self-complacently on their methods of government; they abide by their customs, because they admire them. They love novelty in the sphere of amusement, literature, and social life; but in serious matters, such as the fundamental institutions of government and in religious belief, no progressive and civilized people is more conservative.

Liability to be misled: influence of demagogues.—No doubt the inexperience of the recent immigrants, the want of trained political thought among the bulk even of native citizens, the tendency to sentimentalism which marks all large masses of men, do lay the people open to the fallacious reasoning and specious persuasions of adventurers. This happens in all popularly-governed counties; and a phenomenon substantially the same occurs in oligarchies, for you may have not only aristocratic demagogues, but demagogues playing to an aristocratic mob. Stripped of its externals and considered in its essential features, demagogism is no more abundant in America than in England, France, or Italy. In fact, the danger to be feared from it seems graver in these countries than in the United States, not merely because the Federal Constitution provides safeguards which those countries do not possess, but also because the American people are shrewd. A spouter like Denis Kearney is allowed to talk himself hoarse, and relapses into obscurity. A demagogue of greater talent may aspire to some high executive office; if not to the Presidency, then perhaps a place in the Cabinet, where he may practically pull the wires of a President whom he has put into the chair. Failing either of these, he aims at the governorship of his State or the mayoralty of a great city. In no one of these

positions can he do permanent harm. The Federal executive has no influence on legislation, and even in foreign policy and in the making of appointments requires the consent of the Senate. That any man should acquire so great a hold on the country as to secure the election of two Houses of Congress subservient to his will, while at the same time securing the Presidency or Secretaryship of State for himself, is an event too improbable to enter into calculation. Nothing approaching it has been seen since the days of Jackson. The size of the country, the differences between the States, a hundred other causes, make achievements possible enough in a European country all but impossible here. That a plausible adventurer should clamber to the presidential chair, and when seated there should conspire with a corrupt congressional ring, purchasing by the gift of offices and by jobs their support for his own schemes of private cupidity or public mischief, is conceivable, but improbable. The system of counter-checks in the Federal government, which impedes or delays much good legislation, may be relied on to avert many of the dangers to which the sovereign chambers of European countries are exposed.

A demagogue installed as governor of a State has but limited opportunities for wrong-doing. He can make a few bad appointments, and can discredit the commonwealth by undignified acts. He cannot seriously harm it. Two politicians who seem to deserve the title recently obtained that honourable post in two great Eastern States. One of them, a typical "ringster," perpetrated some jobs and vetoed a few good bills. The other, a man of greater natural gifts and greater capacity for mischief, whose capture of the chief magistracy of the State had drawn forth lamentations from the better citizens, seems to have left things much as he found them, and the most noteworthy incident which marked his year of office—for he was turned out at the next election—was the snub administered by the leading university in the State, which refused him the compliment usually paid to a chief magistrate of an honorary degree of Doctor of Laws.

This inquiry has shown us that of the faults traditionally attributed to democracy one only is fairly chargeable on the United States; that is to say, is manifested there more conspicuously than in the constitutional monarchies of Europe. This is the disposition to be lax in enforcing laws disliked by any large part of the population, and to be too indulgent to offenders and law-breakers generally. The Americans themselves admit this to be one of their weak

points. How far it is due to that deficient reverence for law which is supposed to arise in popular governments from the fact that the people have nothing higher than themselves to look up to, how far rather to the national easy-goingness and good-nature, I do not attempt to determine. It has produced no general disposition to lawlessness, but on the contrary diminishes it in the older parts of the country. And it is counter-balanced or replaced, in a serious crisis, by a firmness in repressing disorders which some European governments may envy. When men are thoroughly awakened to the need for enforcing the law, they enforce it all the more resolutely because it has the whole weight of the people behind it.

CHAPTER 9

THE TRUE FAULTS OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

We have seen that the defects commonly attributed to democratic government are not specially characteristic of the United States. It remains to inquire what are the peculiar blemishes which the country does show. So far as regards the constitutional machinery of the Federal and of the State government this question has been answered in earlier chapters. It is now rather the tendency of the institutions generally, the disposition and habits of the governing people, that we have to consider. The word Democracy is often used to mean a spirit or tendency, sometimes the spirit of revolution, sometimes the spirit of equality. For our present purpose it is better to take it as denoting simply a form of government, that in which the numerical majority rules, deciding questions of state by the votes, whether directly, as in the ancient republics, or mediately, as in modern representative government, of the body of citizens, the citizens being if not the whole, at least a very large proportion of the adult males. We may properly begin by asking, What are the evils to which we may expect such a form of government to be exposed? and may then go on to see whether any others are discoverable in the United States which, though traceable to democracy, are not of its

essence, but due to the particular form which it has there taken.

It is an old maxim that republics live by Virtue—that is, by the maintenance of a high level of public spirit and justice among the citizens. If the republic be one in which power is confined to, or practically exercised by, a small educated class, the maintenance of this high level is helped by the sense of personal dignity which their position engenders. If the republic itself be small, and bear rule over others, patriotism may be intense, and the sense of the collective dignity of the state may ennoble the minds of the citizens, make them willing to accept sacrifices for its sake, to forego private interests and suppress private resentments, in order to be strong against the outer world. But if the state be very large, and the rights of all citizens equal, we must not expect them to rise above the average level of human nature. Rousseau and Jefferson will tell us that this level is high, that the faults which governments have hitherto shown are due to the selfishness of privileged persons and classes, that the ordinary unsophisticated man will love justice, desire the good of others, need no constraint to keep him in the right path. Experience will contradict them, and whether it talks of Original Sin or adopts some less scholastic phrase, will recognize that the tendencies to evil in human nature are not perhaps as strong, but as various and abiding even in the most civilized societies, as its impulses to good. Hence the rule of numbers means the rule of ordinary mankind without those artificial helps which their privileged position has given to limited governing classes, though also, no doubt, without those special temptations which follow in the wake of power and privilege.

Every question that arises in the conduct of government is either a question of ends or a question of means; and errors may be committed by the ruling power either in fixing on wrong ends or in choosing wrong means to secure those ends. It is now, after long resistance by those who maintained that they knew better what was good for the people than the people knew themselves, at last agreed that as the masses are better judges of what will conduce to their own happiness than are the classes placed above them, they must be allowed to determine ends. This is in fact the essence of free or popular government, and the justification for vesting power in numbers. But assuming the end to be given, who is best qualified to select the means for its accomplishment? To do so needs in many cases a knowledge

of the facts, a skill in interpreting them, a power of forecasting the results of measures, unattainable by the mass of mankind. Such knowledge is to high for them. It is attainable only by trained economists, legists, statesmen. If the masses attempt it they will commit mistakes not less serious than those which befall a litigant who insists on conducting a complicated case instead of leaving it to his attorney and counsel. But in popular governments this distinction betwecn ends and means is apt to be forgotten. Often it is one which cannot be sharply drawn, because some ends are means to larger ends, and some means are desired not only for the sake of larger ends, but for their own sakes also. And the habit of trusting its own wisdom and enjoying its own power, in which the multitude is encouraged by its leaders and servants, disposes it to ignore the distinction even where the distinction is clear, and makes it refer to the direct arbitrament of the people matters which the people are unfit to decide, and which they might safely leave to their trained ministers or representatives. Thus we find that the direct government of the multitude may become dangerous not only because the multitude shares the faults and follies of ordinary human nature, but also because it is intellectually incompetent for the delicate business of conducting the daily work of government, *i.e.* of choosing and carrying out with vigour and promptitude the requisite excutive means. The fact that it is called by a singular name has made many forget that the people means nothing more than so many millions of individual men. There is a sense in which it is true that the people are wiser than the wisest man. But what is true of their ultimate judgment after the lapse of time sufficient for full discussion, is not equally true of decisions that have to be promptly taken.

What are the consequences which we may expect to follow from these characteristics of democracy and these conditions under which it is forced to work?

Firstly, a certain commonness of mind and tone, a want of dignity and elevation in and about the conduct of public affairs, an insensibility to the nobler aspects and finer responsibilities of national life.

Secondly, a certain apathy among the luxurious classes and fastidious minds, who find themselves of no more account than the ordinary voter, and are disgusted by the superficial vulgarities of public life.

Thirdly, a want of knowledge, tact, and judgment in

the details of legislation, as well as in administration, with an inadequate recognition of the difficulty of these kinds of work, and of the worth of special experience and skill in dealing with them. Because it is incompetent, the multitude will not feel its incompetence, and will not seek or defer to the counsels of those who possess the requisite capacity.

Fourthly, laxity in the management of public business. The persons entrusted with such business being only average men, thinking themselves and thought of by others as average men, with a deficient sense of their high responsibilities, may succumb to the temptations which the control of legislation and the public funds present, in cases where persons of a more enlarged view and with more of a social reputation to support would remain incorruptible. To repress such derelictions of duty is every citizen's duty, but for that reason it is in large communities apt to be neglected. Thus the very causes which implant the mischief favour its growth.

The above-mentioned tendencies are all more or less observable in the United States. As each of them has been described already in its proper place, a summary reference may here be sufficient to indicate their relation to the democratic form of government and to the immanent spirit or theory which lies behind that form.

The tone of public life is lower than one expects to find it in so great a nation. Just as we assume that an individual man will at any supreme moment in his own life rise to a higher level than that on which he usually moves, so we look to find those who conduct the affairs of a great state inspired by a sense of the magnitude of the interests entrusted to them. Their horizon ought to be expanded, their feeling of duty quickened, their dignity of attitude enhanced. Human nature with all its weaknesses does show itself capable of being thus roused on its imaginative side; and in Europe, where the traditions of aristocracy survive, everybody condemns as mean or unworthy acts done or language held by a great official which would pass unnoticed in a private citizen. It is the principle of *noblesse oblige* with the sense of duty and trust substituted for that of mere hereditary rank.

Such a sentiment is comparatively weak in America. A cabinet minister, or senator, or governor of a State, sometimes even a President, hardly feels himself more bound by it than the director of a railway company or the mayor of a town does in Europe. Not assuming himself to be individually

wiser, stronger, or better than his fellow-citizens, he acts and speaks as though he were still simply one of them, and so far from magnifying his office and making it honourable, seems anxious to show that he is the mere creature of the popular vote, so filled by the sense that it is the people and not he who governs as to fear that he should be deemed to have forgotten his personal insignificance. There is in the United States abundance of patriotism, that is to say, of a passion for the greatness and happiness of the Republic, and a readiness to make sacrifices for it. The history of the Civil War showed that this passion is at least as strong as in England or France. There is no want of an appreciation of the collective majesty of the nation, for this is the theme of incessant speeches, nor even of the past and future glories of each particular State in the Union. But these sentiments do not bear their appropriate fruit in raising the conception of public office, of its worth and its dignity. The newspapers assume public men to be selfish and cynical. Disinterested virtue is not looked for, is perhaps turned into ridicule where it exists. The hard commercial spirit which pervades the meetings of a joint-stock company is the spirit in which most politicians speak of public business, and are not blamed for speaking. Something, especially in the case of newspapers, must be allowed for the humorous tendencies of the American mind, which likes to put forward the absurd and even vulgar side of things for the sake of getting fun out of them. But after making such allowances, the fact remains that, although no people is more emotional, and even in a sense more poetical, in no country is the ideal side of public life, what one may venture to call the heroic element in a public career, so ignored by the mass and repudiated by the leaders. This affects not only the elevation but the independence and courage of public men; and the country suffers from the want of what we call distinction in its conspicuous figures.

I have discussed in a previous chapter the difficulties which surround the rule of public opinion where it allows little discretion to its agents, relying upon its own competence to supervise administration and secure the legislation which a progressive country needs. The American masses have been obliged, both by democratic theory and by the structure of their government, to proceed upon the assumption of their own competence. They have succeeded better than could have been expected. No people except the choicest children of England, long trained by the practice of local self-government

at home and in the colonies before their revolt, could have succeeded half so well. Still the masses of the United States as one finds them to-day are no exception to the rule that some problems are beyond the competence of the average man. They can deal with broad and simple issues, especially with issues into which a moral element enters. They spoke out with a clear strong voice upon slavery, when at last it had become plain that slavery must either spread or vanish, and threw themselves with enthusiasm into the struggle for the Union. Their instinctive dislike for foreign annexation foiled President Grant's plan for acquiring San Domingo. Their sense of national and commercial honour has defeated more than one mischievous scheme for tampering with the public debt. But when a question of intricacy presents itself, requiring either keen foresight, exact reasoning, or wide knowledge, they are at fault. Questions relating to currency and coinage, free trade and protection, improvements in the machinery of constitutions or of municipal governments, the control of corporations by the law, the method of securing purity of elections, these are problems which have continued to baffle them, just as the Free Soil question did before the war or the reconstruction of the revolted Southern States for a long time after it.[1] In those two instances a solution came about, but in the former it was not so much effected by the policy of the people or their statesmen as forced on them by events, in the latter it has left serious evils behind.

Is this a defect incidental to all popular governments, or is there anything in the American system specially calculated to produce it?

A state must of course take the people as it finds them, with such elements of ignorance and passion as exist in masses of men everywhere. Nevertheless a representative or parliamentary system provides the means of mitigating the evils to be feared from ignorance or haste, for it vests the actual conduct of affairs in a body of specially chosen and presumably specially qualified men, who may themselves entrust such of their functions as need peculiar knowledge or skill to

[1] I do not deny that an American critic of the English Government might point to one problem by which the British Parliament has been baffled for two or three generations, and I will even admit that the American people might probably have settled it sooner than the English Parliament is thought likely to do. Had England been either a monarchy like that of Germany, or a democracy like that of the United States, she would probably have been more successful in this particular matter.

a smaller governing body or bodies selected in respect of their more eminent fitness. By this method the defects of democracy are remedied, while its strength is retained. The masses give their impulse to the representatives: the representatives, directed by the people to secure certain ends, bring their skill and experience to bear on the choice and application of the best means. The Americans, however, have not so constructed or composed their representative bodies as to secure a large measure of these benefits. The legislatures are disjoined from the administrative offices. The members of legislatures are not chosen for their ability or experience, but are, five-sixths of them, little above the average citizen. They are not much respected or trusted, and finding nothing exceptional expected from them, they behave as ordinary men. The separation of the executive from the legislature is a part of the constitutional arrangements of the country, and has no doubt some advantages. The character of the legislatures is due to a mistaken view of human equality and an exaggerated devotion to popular sovereignty. It is a result of democratic theory pushed to extremes, but is not necessarily incident to a democratic government. The government of England, for instance, has now become substantially a democracy, but there is no reason why it should imitate America in either of the points just mentioned, nor does democratic France, apt enough to make a bold use of theory, seem to have pushed theory to excess in these particular directions. I do not, however, deny that a democratic system makes the people self-confident, and that self-confidence may easily pass into a jealousy of delegated power, an undervaluing of skill and knowledge, a belief that any citizen is good enough for any political work. This is perhaps more likely to happen with a people who have really reached a high level of political competence: and so one may say that the reason why the American democracy is not better is because it is so good. Were it less educated, less shrewd, less actively interested in public affairs, less independent in spirit, it might be more disposed, like the masses in Europe, to look up to the classes which have hitherto done the work of governing. So perhaps the excellence of rural local self-government has lowered the conception of national government. The ordinary American farmer or shopkeeper or artisan bears a part in the local government of his township or village, or county, or small municipality. He is quite competent to discuss the questions that arise there. He knows his fellow-citizens, and can, if he takes the trouble, select the fittest of them for local office. No

high standard of fitness is needed, for the work of local administration can be adequately despatched by any sensible man of business habits. Taking his ideas from this local government, he images Congress to himself as nothing more than a larger town council or board of county commissioners, the President and his Cabinet as a sort of bigger mayor and city treasurer and education superintendent; he is therefore content to choose for high Federal posts such persons as he would elect for these local offices. They are such as he is himself; and it would seem to him a disparagement of his own civic worth were he to deem his neighbours, honest, hard-working, keen-witted men, unfit for any places in the service of the Republic.

The comparative indifference to political life of the educated and wealthy classes which is so much preached at by American reformers and dwelt on by European critics is partly due to this attitude of the multitude. These classes find no smooth and easy path lying before them. Since the masses do not look to them for guidance, they do not come forward to give it. If they wish for office they must struggle for it, avoiding the least appearance of presuming on their social position. I think, however, that the abstention of the upper class is largely ascribable to causes, set forth in a previous chapter, that have little to do with democracy; and while believing that the United States have suffered from this abstention—it seems to be now passing away—do not regard it as an inseparable incident of their government. Accidental causes, such as the Spoils System, which is a comparatively recent and evidently curable distemper, have largely contributed to it.

The Spoils System reminds us of the Machine and the whole organization of Rings and Bosses. This is the ugliest feature in the current politics of the country. Must it be set down to democracy? To some extent, yes. It could not have grown up save in a popular government; and some of the arrangements which have aided its growth, such as the number and frequency of elections, have been dictated by what may be called the narrow doctrinarism of democracy. But these arrangements are not essential to the safety of the government; and the other causes which have brought about the machine politics of cities seem to be preventible causes. The city masses may improve if immigration declines, offices may cease to be the reward of party victory, the better citizens may throw themselves more actively into political work.

That corruption should exist under a democracy is no

doubt a reproach to a government which holds up, and needs for its safe working, a higher standard of virtue than any other. Remembering, however, that it was rife in the English Parliament a century and a half ago, in English constituencies thirty years ago, and that it prevails under the despotism of Russia to-day, while not uncommon in some other European monarchies, we shall be in no danger of connecting it with the form of the American government. There are diseases which attack the body politic, like the natural body, at certain stages of growth, but disappear when a nation has passed into another stage, or when sedulous experimentation has discovered the appropriate remedy. The corruption of Parliament in Sir Robert Walpole's days characterized a period of transition when power had passed to the House of Commons, but the control of the people over the House had not yet been fully established, and when, through a variety of moral causes, the tone of the nation was comparatively low. The corruption of the electorate in English boroughs appeared when a seat had become an object of desire to rich men, while yet the interest of the voters in public affairs was so feeble that they were willing to sell their votes, and their number often so small that each vote fetched a high price. The growth of intelligence and independence among the people, as well as the introduction of severe penalties for bribery, and the extinction of small constituencies, have now almost extinguished electoral corruption. So in America it may be expected that the more active conscience of the people and the reform of the civil service will cut down, if they do not wholly eradicate, such corruption as now infests the legislative bodies, while better ballot and election laws may do the same for the constituencies.

A European critic may remark that this way of presenting the case ignores the evils and losses which defective government involves. "If," he will say, "the mass of mankind possess neither the knowledge nor the leisure nor the skill to determine the legislation and policy of a great state, will not the vigour of the commonwealth decline and its resources be squandered? Will not a nation ruled by its average men in reliance on their own average wisdom be overtaken in the race of prosperity or overpowered in a warlike struggle by a nation of equal resources which is guided by its most capable minds?" The answer to this criticism is that America has hitherto been able to afford to squander her resources, and that no other state threatens her. With her wealth and in her

position she can with impunity commit errors which might be fatal to the nations of Western Europe.

Of the deficiencies summarized in this chapter, those which might seem to go deepest, because they have least to do with the particular constitutional arrangements of the country, and are most directly the offspring of its temper and habits, are the prominence of inferior men in politics and the absence of distinguished figures. The people are good, but not good enough to be able to dispense with efficient service by capable representatives and officials, wise guidance by strong and enlightened leaders. But they are neither well served nor well led. If it were clear that these are the fruits of liberty and equality, the prospects of the world would be darker than we have been wont to think them. They are the fruits not of liberty and equality, but of an optimism which has underrated the inherent difficulties of politics and failings of human nature, of a theory which has confused equality of civil rights and duties with equality of capacity, and of a thoughtlessness which has forgotten that the problems of the world and the dangers which beset society are always putting on new faces and appearing in new directions. The Americans started their Republic with a determination to prevent abuses of power such as they had suffered from the British Crown. Freedom seemed the one thing necessary; and freedom was thought to consist in cutting down the powers of legislatures and officials. Freedom was the national boast during the years that followed down till the Civil War, and in the delight of proclaiming themselves superior in this regard to the rest of the world they omitted to provide themselves with the other requisites for good government, and forgot that power may be abused in other ways than by monarchic tyranny or legislative usurpation. They continued to beat the drum along the old ramparts erected in 1776 and 1789 against George III., or those who might try to imitate him, when the enemy had moved quite away from that side of the position, and was beginning to threaten their rear. No maxim was more popular among them than that which declares eternal vigilance to be the price of freedom. Unfortunately their vigilance took account only of the old dangers, and did not note the development of new ones, as if the captain of a man-of-war were to think only of his guns and armour-plating, and neglect to protect himself against torpedoes. Thus abuses were suffered to grow up, which seemed trivial in the midst of so general a prosperity; and good citizens who were occupied in other and more engrossing

ways, allowed politics to fall into the hands of mean men. The efforts which these citizens are now making to recover the control of public business would have encountered fewer obstacles had they been made sooner. But the obstacles will be overcome. No one, I think, who has studied either the history of the American people, or their present mind and habits, will conclude that there is among them any jealousy of merit, any positive aversion to culture or knowledge. Neither the political arrangements nor the social and economical conditions of the country tend at this moment to draw its best intellects and loftiest characters into public life. But the democratic temper of the people does not stand in the way.

The commonest of the old charges against democracy was that it passed into ochlocracy. I have sought to show that this has not happened, and is not likely to happen in America. The features of mob-rule do not appear in her system, whose most characteristic faults are the existence of a class of persons using government as a means of private gain and the menacing power of wealth. Plutocracy, which the ancients contrasted with democracy, has shown in America an inauspicious affinity for certain professedly democratic institutions.

Perhaps no form of government needs great leaders so much as democracy. The fatalistic habit of mind perceptible among the Americans needs to be corrected by the spectacle of courage and independence taking their own path, and not looking to see whither the mass are moving. Those whose material prosperity tends to lap them in self-complacency and dull the edge of aspiration, need to be thrilled by the emotions which great men can excite, stimulated by the ideals they present, stirred to a loftier sense of what national life may attain. In some countries men of brilliant gifts may be dangerous to freedom; but the ambition of American statesmen has been schooled to flow in constitutional channels, and the Republic is strong enough to stand any strain to which the rise of heroes may expose her.

CHAPTER 10

THE STRENGTH OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

THOSE merits of American Government which belong to its Federal Constitution have been already discussed: we have now to consider such as flow from the rule of public opinion, from the temper, habits, and ideas of the people.

I. The first is that of Stability.—As one test of a human body's soundness is its capacity for reaching a great age, so it is high praise for a political system that it has stood no more changed than any institution must change in a changing world, and that it now gives every promise of durability. The people are profoundly attached to the form which their national life has taken. The Federal Constitution is, to their eyes, an almost sacred thing, an Ark of the Covenant, whereon no man may lay rash hands. Everywhere in Europe one hears schemes of radical change freely discussed. There is a strong monarchical party in France, a republican party in Italy and Spain. There are anarchists in Germany and Russia. Even in England, it is impossible to feel confident that any one of the existing institutions of the country will be standing fifty years hence. But in the United States the discussion of political problems[1] busies itself with details and assumes that the main lines must remain as they are for ever. This conservative spirit, jealously watchful even in small matters, sometimes prevents reforms, but it assures to the people an easy mind, and a trust in their future which they feel to be not only a present satisfaction but a reservoir of strength.

The best proof of the well-braced solidity of the system is that it survived the Civil War, changed only in a few points which have not greatly affected the balance of National and State powers. Another must have struck every European traveller who questions American publicists about the insti-

[1] I speak of problems purely political. Some economical and social issues now in debate are deep-reaching; but it is significant that nobody (except a few recently-imported European revolutionists) proposes to overset the political order for the sake of getting his own way in such matters.

tutions of their country. When I first travelled in the United States, I used to ask thoughtful men, superior to the prejudices of custom, whether they did not think the States' system defective in such and such points, whether the legislative authority of Congress might not profitably be extended, whether the suffrage ought to be restricted as regards negroes or immigrants, and so forth. Whether assenting or dissenting, the persons questioned invariably treated such matters as purely speculative, saying that the present arrangements were far too deeply rooted for their alteration to come within the horizon of practical politics. So when a serious trouble arises, a trouble which in Europe would threaten revolution, the people face it quietly, and assume that a tolerable solution will be found. At the disputed election of 1876, when each of the two great parties, heated with conflict, claimed that its candidate had been chosen President, and the Constitution supplied no way out of the difficulty, public tranquillity was scarcely disturbed, and the public funds fell but little. A method was invented of settling the question which both sides acquiesced in, and although the decision was a boundless disappointment to the party which had cast the majority of the popular vote, that party quietly submitted to lose those spoils of office whereon its eyes had been feasting.

II. Feeling the law to be its own work, the people is disposed to obey the law.—In a preceding chapter I have examined occasional instances of the disregard of the law, and the supersession of its tardy methods by the action of the crowd. Such instances scarcely affect the credit which the Americans are specially eager to claim of being a law-abiding community. It is the best result that can be ascribed to the direct participation of the people in their government that they have the love of the maker for his work, that every citizen looks upon a statute as a regulation made by himself for his own guidance no less than for that of others, every official as a person he has himself chosen, and whom it is therefore his interest, with no disparagement to his personal indepedence, to obey. Plato thought that those who felt their own sovereignty would be impatient of all control: nor is it to be denied that the principle of equality may result in lowering the status and dignity of a magistrate. But as regards law and order the gain much exceeds the loss, for every one feels that there is no appeal from the law, behind which there stands the force of the nation. Such a temper can exist and bear these fruits only

where minorities, however large, have learned to submit patiently to majorities, however small. But that is the one lesson which the American government through every grade and in every department daily teaches, and which it has woven into the texture of every citizen's mind. The habit of living under a rigid constitution superior to ordinary statutes—indeed two rigid constitutions, since the State Constitution is a fundamental law within its own sphere no less than is the Federal—intensifies this legality of view, since it may turn all sorts of questions which have not been determined by a direct vote of the people into questions of legal construction. It even accustoms people to submit to see their direct vote given in the enactment of a State Constitution nullified by the decision of a court holding that the Federal Constitution has been contravened. Every page of American history illustrates the wholesome results. The events of the last few years present an instance of the constraint which the people put on themselves in order to respect every form of law. The Mormons, a community not exceeding 140,000 persons, persistently defied all the efforts of Congress to root out polygamy, a practice eminently repulsive to American notions. If they inhabited a State, Congress could not have interfered at all, but as Utah is only a Territory, Congress has a power of legislating for it which overrides Territorial ordinances passed by the local legislature. Thus they were really at the mercy of Congress, had it chosen to employ violent methods. But by entrenching themselves behind the letter of the Constitution, they continued for many years to maintain their "peculiar institution" by evading the statutes passed against it and challenging a proof which under the common law rules of evidence it has been usually found impossible to give. Vehement declaimers hounded on Congress to take arbitrary means for the suppression of the practice, but Congress and the executive submitted to be outwitted rather than exceed their proper province, and succeeded at last (if indeed they have completely succeeded) only by a statute whose searching but moderate and strictly constitutional provisions the recalcitrants failed to evade. The same spirit of legality shows itself in misgoverned cities. Even where it is notorious that officials have been chosen by the grossest fraud and that they are robbing the city, the body of the people, however indignant, recognize the authority and go on paying the taxes which a Ring levies, because strict legal proof of the frauds and robberies is not forthcoming. Wrong-doing supplies a field for the display of virtue.

III. There is a broad simplicity about the political ideas of the people, and a courageous consistency in carrying them out in practice. When they have accepted a principle, they do not shrink from applying it "right through," however disagreeable in particular cases some of the results may be. I am far from meaning that they are logical in the French sense of the word. They have little taste either for assuming abstract propositions or for syllogistically deducing practical conclusions therefrom. But when they have adopted a general maxim of policy or rule of action they show more faith in it than the English for instance would do, they adhere to it where the English would make exceptions, they prefer certainty and uniformity to the advantages which might occasionally be gained by deviation.[1] If this tendency is partly the result of obedience to a rigid constitution, it is no less due to the democratic dislike of exceptions and complexities, which the multitude finds not only difficult of comprehension but disquieting to the individual who may not know how they will affect him. Take for instance the boundless freedom of the press. There are abuses obviously incident to such freedom, and these abuses have not failed to appear. But the Americans deliberately hold that in view of the benefits which such freedom on the whole promises, abuses must be borne with and left to the sentiment of the people and the private law of libel to deal with. When the Ku Klux outrages disgraced several of the Southern States after the military occupation of those States had ceased, there was much to be said for sending back the troops to protect the negroes and northern immigrants. But the general judgment that things ought to be allowed to take their natural course prevailed; and the result justified this policy, for the outrages after a while died out, when ordinary self-government had been restored. When recently a gigantic organization of unions of working men, purporting to unite the whole of American labour, attempted to enforce its sentences against particular firms or corporations by a boycott in which all labourers were urged to join, there was displeasure, but no panic, no call for

[1] What has been said of special and local legislation by the State legislatures may seem to be an exception to this rule. Such legislation, however, is usually procured in the dark and by questionable means, and for the benefit of some individual or company.

Looking both to the National and to the State governments, it may be said that, with a few exceptions, no people has shown a greater regard for public obligations, and that no people has more prudently and honourably refrained from legislation bearing hardly upon the rich, or indeed upon any class whatever.

violent remedies. The prevailing faith in liberty and in the good sense of the mass was unshaken; and the result is already justifying this tranquil faith. This tendency is not an unmixed blessing, for it sometimes allows evils to go too long unchecked. But on the whole it works for good. In giving equability to the system of government it gives steadiness and strength. It teaches the people patience, accustoming them to expect relief only by constitutional means. It confirms their faith in their institutions, as friends value one another more when their friendship has stood the test of a journey full of hardships.

IV. It is a great merit of American government that it relies very little on officials, and arms them with little power of arbitrary interference. The reader who has followed the description of Federal authorities, State authorities, county and city or township authorities, may think there is a great deal of administration; but the reason why these descriptions are necessarily so minute is because the powers of each authority are so carefully and closely restricted. It is natural to fancy that a government of the people and by the people will be led to undertake many and various functions for the people, and in the confidence of its strength will constitute itself a general philanthropic agency for their social and economic benefit. There has doubtless been of late years a tendency in this direction, a tendency to which I shall advert in a later chapter. But it has taken the direction of acting through the law rather than through the officials. That is to say, when it prescribes to the citizen a particular course of action it has relied upon the ordinary legal sanctions, instead of investing the administrative officers with inquisitorial duties or powers that might prove oppressive, and when it has devolved active functions upon officials, they have been functions serving to aid the individual and the community rather than to interfere with or supersede the action of private enterprise. As I have dwelt on the evils which may flow from the undue application of the doctrine of direct popular sovereignty, so one must place to the credit of that doctrine and the arrangements it has dictated, the intelligence which the average native American shows in his political judgments, the strong sense he entertains of the duty of giving a vote, the spirit of alertness and enterprise, which has made him self-helpful above all other men.

V. There are no struggles between privileged and unprivileged orders, not even that perpetual strife of rich and

poor which is the oldest disease of civilized states. One must not pronounce broadly that there are no classes, for in parts of the country social distinctions have begun to grow up. But for political purposes classes scarcely exist. No one of the questions which now agitate the nation is a question between rich and poor. Instead of suspicion, jealousy, and arrogance embittering the relations of classes, good feeling and kindliness reign. Everything that government, as the Americans have hitherto understood the term, can give them, the poor have already, political power, equal civil rights, a career open to all citizens alike, not to speak of that gratuitous higher as well as elementary education which on their own economic principles the United States might have abstained from giving, but which political reasons have led them to provide with so unstinting a hand. Hence the poor have had nothing to fight for, no grounds for disliking the well-to-do, no complaints to make against them. The agitation of the last few years has been directed, not against the richer classes generally, but against incorporated companies and a few individual capitalists, who have not unfrequently abused the powers which the privilege of incorporation conferred upon them, or employed their wealth to procure legislation opposed to the public interests. Where language has been used like that with which France and Germany are familiar, it has been used, not by native Americans, but by new-comers, who bring their Old World passions with them. Property is safe, because those who hold it are far more numerous than those who do not: the usual motives for revolution vanish; universal suffrage, even when vested in ignorant new-comers, can do comparatively little harm, because the masses have obtained everything which they could hope to attain except by a general pillage. And the native Americans, though the same cannot be said of some of the recent immigrants, are shrewd enough to see that the poor would suffer from such pillage no less than the rich.

A European censor may make two reflections on the way in which I have presented this part of the case. He will observe that, after all, it is no more than saying that when you have got to the bottom you can fall no farther. You may be wounded and bleeding for all that. And he will ask whether, if property is safe and contentment reigns, these advantages are not due to the economical conditions of a new and resourceful country, with an abundance of unoccupied land and mineral wealth, rather than to the

democratic structure of the government. The answer to the first objection is, that the descent towards equality and democracy has involved no injury to the richer or better educated classes: to the second, that although much must doubtless be ascribed to the bounty of nature, her favours have been so used by the people as to bring about a prosperity, a general diffusion of property, an abundance of freedom, of equality, and of good feeling which furnish the best security against the recurrence in America of chronic Old World evils, even when her economic state shall have become less auspicious than it now is. Wealthy and powerful such a country must have been under any form of government, but the speed with which she has advanced, and the employment of the sources of wealth to diffuse comfort among millions of families, may be placed to the credit of stimulative freedom. Wholesome habits have been established among the people whose value will be found when the times of pressure approach, and though the troubles that have arisen between labour and capital may not soon pass away, the sense of human equality, the absence of offensive privileges distinguishing class from class, will make those troubles less severe than in Europe, where they are complicated by the recollection of old wrongs, by arrogance on the one side and envy on the other.

Some American panegyrists of democracy have weakened their own case by claiming all the triumphs which modern science has wrought in a land of unequalled natural resources as the result of a form of government. An active European race would probably have made America rich and prosperous under any government. But the volume and the character of the prosperity attained may be in large measure ascribed to the institutions of the country. As Mr. Charles W. Eliot observes in a singularly thoughtful address delivered a few months ago:—

"A great deal of moral vigour has been put into the material development of the United States; and it is clear that widespread comfort ought to promote the civilizing of a people. Sensible and righteous government ought ultimately to make a nation rich; and although this proposition cannot be directly reversed, yet diffused well-being, comfort, and material prosperity establish a fair presumption in favour of the government and the prevailing social conditions under which these blessings have been secured. . . .

"The successful establishment and support of religious institutions—churches, seminaries, and religious charities—upon a

purely voluntary system, is an unprecedented achievement of the American democracy. In only three generations American democratic society has effected the complete separation of Church and State, a reform which no other people has ever attempted. yet religious institutions are not stinted in the United States; on the contrary, they abound and thrive, and all alike are protected and encouraged, but not supported, by the State. Who has taken up the work which the State has relinquished? Somebody has had to do it, for the work is done. Who provides the money to build churches, pay salaries, conduct missions, and educate ministers? Who supplies the brains for organizing and maintaining these various activities? This is the work, not of a few officials, but of millions of intelligent and devoted men and women scattered through all the villages and cities of the broad land. The maintenance of churches, seminaries, and charities by voluntary contributions and by the administrative labours of volunteers, implies an enormous and incessant expenditure of mental and moral force. It is a force which must ever be renewed from generation to generation; for it is a personal force, constantly expiring, and as constantly to be replaced. Into the maintenance of the voluntary system in religion has gone a good part of the moral energy which three generations have been able to spare from the work of getting a living; but it is worth the sacrifice, and will be accounted in history one of the most remarkable feats of American public spirit and faith in freedom.

"A similar exhibition of diffused mental and moral energy has accompanied the establishment and the development of a system of higher instruction in the United States, with no inheritance of monastic endowments, and no gifts from royal or ecclesiastical personages disposing of great resources derived from the State, and with but scanty help from the public purse. Whoever is familiar with the colleges and universities of the United States knows that the creation of these democratic institutions has cost the life-work of thousands of devoted men. At the sacrifice of other aspirations, and under heavy discouragements and disappointments, but with faith and hope, these teachers and trustees have built up institutions, which, however imperfect, have cherished scientific enthusiasm, fostered piety, literature, and art, maintained the standards of honour and public duty, and steadily kept in view the ethical ideals which democracy cherishes. It has been a popular work, to which large numbers of people in successive generations have contributed of their substance or of their labour. The endowment of institutions of education, including libraries and museums, by private persons in the United States is a phenomenon without precedent or parallel, and is a legitimate effect of democratic institutions. Under a tyranny—were it that of a Marcus Aurelius—or an oligarchy—were it as enlightened as that which now rules Germany—such a phenomenon would be simply impossible. The University of Strasburg was lately established by an imperial

decree, and is chiefly maintained out of the revenue of the State. Harvard University has been two hundred and fifty years in growing to its present stature, and is even now inferior at many points to the new University of Strasburg; but Harvard is the creation of thousands of persons, living and dead, rich and poor, learned and simple, who have voluntarily given it their time, thought, or money, and lavished upon it their affection; Strasburg exists by the mandate of the ruling few directing upon it a part of the product of ordinary taxation. Like the voluntary system in religion, the voluntary system in the higher education buttresses democracy; each demands from the community a large outlay of intellectual activity and moral vigour."

VI. The government of the Republic, limited and languid in ordinary times, is capable of developing immense vigour. It can pull itself together at moments of danger, can put forth unexpected efforts, can venture on stretches of authority transcending not only ordinary practice but even ordinary law. This is the result of the unity of the nation. A divided people is a weak people, even if it obeys a monarch; a united people is doubly strong when it is democratic, for then the force of each individual will swells the collective force of the government, encourages it, relieves it from internal embarrassments. Now the American people is united at moments of national concern from two causes. One is that absence of class divisions and jealousies which has been already described. The people are homogeneous: a feeling which stirs them stirs alike rich and poor, farmers and traders, Eastern men and Western men—one may now add, Southern men also. Their patriotism has ceased to be defiant, and is conceived as the duty of promoting the greatness and happiness of their country, a greatness which, as it does not look to war or aggression, does not redound specially, as it might in Europe, to the glory or benefit of the ruling caste or the military profession, but to that of all the citizens. The other source of unity is the tendency in democracies for the sentiment of the majority to tell upon the sentiment of a minority. That faith in the popular voice whereof I have already spoken strengthens every feeling which has once become strong, and makes it rush like a wave over the country, sweeping everything before it. I do not mean that the people become wild with excitement, for beneath their noisy demonstrations they retain their composure and shrewd view of facts. I mean only that the pervading sympathy stirs them to unwonted efforts. The steam is superheated, but the effect is seen only in the

greater expansive force which it exerts. Hence a spirited executive can in critical times go forward with a courage and confidence possible only to those who know that they have a whole nation behind them. The people fall into rank at once. With that surprising gift for organization which they possess, they concentrate themselves on the immediate object; they dispense with the ordinary constitutional restrictions; they make personal sacrifices which remind one of the self-devotion of Roman citizens in the earlier and better days of Rome.

Speaking thus, I am thinking chiefly of the spirit evolved by the Civil War both in the North and South. But the sort of strength which a democratic government derives from its direct dependence on the people is seen in many smaller instances. In 1863, when on the making of a draft of men for the war, the Irish mob rose in New York City, excited by the advance of General Robert E. Lee into Pennsylvania, the State governor called out the troops, and by them restored order with a stern vigour which would have done credit to Radetzsky or Cavaignac. More than a thousand rioters were shot down, and public opinion entirely approved the slaughter. Years after the war, when the Orangemen of New York purposed to have a 12th of July procession through the streets, the Irish Catholics threatened to prevent it. The feeling of the native Americans was aroused at once; young men of wealth came back from their mountain and seaside resorts to fill the militia regiments which were called out to guard the procession, and the display of force was so overwhelming that no disturbance followed. These Americans had no sympathy with the childish and mischievous partisanship which leads the Orangemen to perpetuate Old World feuds on New World soil. But processions were legal, and they were resolved that the law should be respected, and the spirit of disorder repressed. They would have been equally ready to protect a Roman Catholic procession.

Given an adequate occasion, executive authority is more energetic in America, more willing to take strong measures, more sure of support from the body of the people than it is in England. I may further illustrate what I mean by referring to the view which I found ordinary Americans take some eight years ago—for as to their present views I express no opinion—of the troubles of the English government and parliament in their efforts to govern Ireland.

They thought that England was erring in her refusal of the demand for trenchant land legislation, and for enlarged self-government; that she would never succeed in doing everything by the imperial parliament, and through officials taken from a particular class. They held that she ought to adopt a more broadly consistent and courageous policy, ought, in fact, to grant all such self-government as might be compatible with the maintenance of ultimate imperial control and imperial unity, and ought to take the results, be they pleasant or the reverse. But they also thought that she was erring by executive leniency, that the laws ought while they stood to be more unsparingly carried out, that parliamentary obstruction ought to be more severely repressed, that any attempts at disobedience ought to be met by lead and steel. "Make good laws," they said, "but see that whatever laws you make, you enforce. At present you are doing harm both ways. You are honouring neither liberty nor authority."

VII. Democracy has not only taught the Americans how to use liberty without abusing it, and how to secure equality: it has also taught them fraternity. That word has gone out of fashion in the Old World, and no wonder, considering what was done in its name in 1793, considering also that it still figures in the programme of assassins. Nevertheless there is in the United States a sort of kindliness, a sense of human fellowship, a recognition of the duty of mutual help owed by man to man, stronger than anywhere in the Old World, and certainly stronger than in the upper or middle classes of England, France, or Germany. The natural impulse of every citizen in America is to respect every other citizen, and to feel that citizenship constitutes a certain ground of respect. The idea of each man's equal rights is so fully realized that the rich or powerful man feels it no indignity to take his turn among the crowd, and does not expect any deference from the poorest. An employer of labour has, I think, a keener sense of his duty to those whom he employs than employers have in Europe. He has certainly a greater sense of responsibility for the use of his wealth. The number of gifts for benevolent and other public purposes, the number of educational, artistic, literary, and scientific foundations, is larger than even in England, the wealthiest and most liberal of European countries. Wealth is generally felt to be a trust, and exclusiveness condemned not merely as indicative of selfish-

ness, but as a sort of offence against the public. No one, for instance, thinks of shutting up his pleasure-grounds; he seldom even builds a wall round them, but puts up low railings or a palisade, so that the sight of his trees and shrubs is enjoyed by passers-by. That any one should be permitted either by opinion or by law to seal up many square miles of beautiful mountain country against tourists or artists is to the ordinary American almost incredible. Such things are to him the marks of a land still groaning under feudal tyranny.

It may seem strange to those who know how difficult European states have generally found it to conduct negotiations with the government of the United States, and who are accustomed to read in European newspapers the defiant utterances which American politicians address from Congress to the effete monarchies of the Old World, to be told that this spirit of fraternity has its influence on international relations also. Nevertheless if we look not at the irresponsible orators, who play to the lower feelings of a section of the people, but at the general sentiment of the whole people, we shall recognize that democracy makes both for peace and for justice as between nations. Despite the admiration for military exploits which the Americans have sometimes shown, no country is at bottom more pervaded by a hatred of war, and a sense that national honour stands rooted in national fair dealing. The nation is often misrepresented by its statesmen, but although it allows them to say irritating things and advance unreasonable claims, it has not for more than forty years permitted them to abuse its enormous strength, as most European nations possessed of similar strength have in time past abused theirs.

The characteristics of the nation which I have passed in review are not due solely to democratic government, but they have been strengthened by it, and they contribute to its solidity and to the smoothness of its working. As one sometimes sees an individual man who fails in life because the different parts of his nature seem unfitted to each other, so that his action, swayed by contending influences, results in nothing definite or effective, so one sees nations whose political institutions are either in advance of or lag behind their social conditions, so that the unity of the body politic suffers, and the harmony of its movements is disturbed. America is not such a nation. It is made all of a piece; its institutions are the product of its economic and social conditions and the expression of its character.

The new wine has been poured into new bottles: or to adopt a metaphor more appropriate to the country, the vehicle has been built with a lightness, strength, and elasticity which fit it for the roads it has to traverse.

CHAPTER 11

THE INFLUENCE OF RELIGION

To convey some impression of the character and type which religion has taken in America, and to estimate its influence as a moral and spiritual force, is an infinitely harder task than to sketch the salient ecclesiastical phenomena of the country. I approach it with the greatest diffidence, and do not profess to give anything more than the sifted result of answers to questions addressed to many competent observers belonging to various churches or to none.

An obviously important point to determine is the extent to which the external ministrations of religion are supplied to the people and used by them. This is a matter on which no trustworthy statistics seem attainable, but on which the visitor's own eyes leave him in little doubt. There are churches everywhere, and everywhere equally: in the cities and in the country, in the North and in the South, in the quiet nooks of New England, in the settlements which have sprung up along railroads in the West. It is only in the very roughest parts of the West, and especially in the region of mining camps, that they are wanting, and the want is but temporary, for "home missionary" societies are quickly in the field, and provide the ministrations of religion even to this migratory population. In many a town of moderate size one finds a church for every thousand inhabitants, as was the case with Dayton, in Ohio, which, when it had 40,000 people, had just forty churches.

Denominational rivalry has counted for something in the rapid creation of churches in the newly settled West and their multiplication everywhere else. Small churches are sometimes maintained out of pride when it would be better to let them be united with other congregations of the same body. But the attendance is generally good. In cities of moderate size, as well as in small towns and country places, a stranger is told that the bulk of the native American

population go to church at least once every Sunday. In the great cities the proportion of those who attend is far smaller, but whether or no as small as in English cities no one could tell me. One is much struck by the habit of church-going in the more settled parts of the Far West where the people, being new-comers, might be supposed to be less under the sway of habit and convention. California is an exception, and is the State supposed to be least affected by religious influences. But in the chief city of Oregon I found that a person, and especially a lady, who did not belong to some church and attend it pretty regularly, would be looked askance on. She need not actually lose caste, but the fact would excite surprise and regret; and her disquieted friends would put some pressure upon her to enrol herself as a church member.

The observance of the Sabbath as it was, or the Sunday as it is now more usually, called, furnishes another test. Although the strictness of Puritan practice has disappeared, even in New England, the American part of the rural population, especially in the South, refrains from amusement as well as from work.[1] It is otherwise with the Germans; and in some parts of the country their example has brought in laxity as regards amusement. Such cities as Chicago, Cincinnati, New Orleans, and San Francisco have a Sunday

[1] An interesting summary of the laws for the observance of Sunday may be found in a paper read by Mr. Henry E. Young at the Third Annual Meeting of the American Bar Association (1880). These laws, which seem to exist in every State, are in many cases very strict, forbidding all labour, except works of necessity and mercy, and in many cases forbidding also travelling and nearly every kind of amusement. Vermont and South Carolina seem to go farthest in this direction. The former prescribes, under a fine of $2, that no one shall "visit from house to house, except from motives of humanity or charity, or travel from midnight of Saturday to midnight of Sunday, or hold or attend any ball or dance, or use any game, sport, or play, or resort to any house of entertainment for amusement or recreation."

In Indiana, where all labour and "engaging in one's usual avocation" are prohibited, it has been held by the Courts that "selling a cigar to one who has contracted the habit of smoking is a work of necessity."

South Carolina winds up a minute series of prohibitions by ordering all persons to apply themselves to the observance of the day by exercising themselves thereon in the duties of piety and true religion. It need hardly be said that these laws are practically obsolete, except so far as they forbid ordinary and unnecessary traffic and labour. To that extent they are supported by public sentiment, and are justified as being in the nature not so much of religious as of socially and economically useful regulations.

quite unlike that of New England, and more resembling what one finds in Germany or France. Nowhere however does one see the shops open or ordinary work done. On many railroads there are few Sunday trains, and museums are in many cities closed. But in two respects the practice is more lax than in Great Britain. Most of the leading newspapers publish Sunday editions, which contain a great deal of general readable matter, stories, gossip, and so forth, over and above the news of the day; and in the great cities theatres are now open on Sunday evenings.

The interest in theological questions is less keen than it was in New England a century ago, but keener than it has generally been in England since the days of the Commonwealth. A great deal of the ordinary reading of the average family has a religious tinge, being supplied in religious or semi-religious weekly and monthly magazines. In many parts of the West the old problems of predestination, reprobation, and election continue to be discussed by farmers and shopkeepers in their leisure moments with the old eagerness, and give a sombre tinge to their views of religion. The ordinary man knows the Bible better, and takes up an allusion to it more quickly than the ordinary Englishman, though perhaps not better than the ordinary Scotchman. Indeed I may say once for all that the native American in everything concerning theology reminds one much more of Scotland than of England, although in the general cast and turn of his mind he is far more English than Scotch. It is hard to state any general view as to the substance of pulpit teaching, because the differences between different denominations are marked; but on the whole the tendency has been, alike among Congregationalists, Baptists, Northern Presbyterians, and Episcopalians, for sermons to be less metaphysical and less markedly doctrinal than formerly, and to become either expository or else of a practical and hortatory character. This is less the case among the Presbyterians of the South, who are more stringently orthodox, and in all respects more conservative than their brethren of the North. The discussion of the leading theological questions of the day, such as those of the authority of Scripture, the relation of natural science to the teachings of the Bible, the existence of rewards and punishments in a future state, goes on much as in England. Some of the leading reviews and magazines publish articles on these subjects, which are read more widely than corresponding articles in England, but do not, I think, absorb any more

of the thought and attention of the average educated man and woman.

Whether scepticism makes any sensible advance either in affecting a larger number of minds, or in cutting more deeply at the roots of their belief in God and immortality, is a question which it is to-day extremely difficult for any one to answer even as regards his own country. There are many phenomena in every part of Europe which appear to indicate that it does advance; there are others which point in the opposite direction. Much more difficult, then, must it be for a stranger to express a positive opinion as regards America on this gravest of all subjects of inquiry. The conditions of England and America appear to me very similar, and whatever tendency prevails in either country is likely to prevail in the other. The mental habits of the people are the same; their fundamental religious conceptions are the same, except that those who prize a visible Church and bow to her authority are relatively fewer among American Protestants; their theological literature is the same. In discussing a theological question with an American one never feels that slight difference of point of view, or, so to speak, of mental atmosphere, which is sure to crop up in talking to a Frenchman or an Italian, or even to a German. Considerations of speculative argument, considerations of religious feeling, affect the two nations in the same way: the course of their religious history is not likely to diverge. If there be a difference at all in their present attitude, it is perhaps to be found in this, that whereas Americans are more frequently disposed to treat minor issues in a bold and free spirit, they are more apt to recoil from blank negation. As an American once said to me—they are apt to put serious views into familiar words—"We don't mind going a good way along the plank, but we like to stop short of the jump-off."

Whether pronounced theological unbelief, which has latterly been preached by lectures and pamphlets with a freedom unknown even thirty years ago, has made substantial progress among the thinking part of the working class is a question on which one hears the most opposite statements. I have seen statistics which purport to show that the proportion of members of Christian churches to the total population has risen in the Protestant churches from 1 in 14½ in A.D. 1800 to 1 in 5 in A.D. 1880; and which estimate the number of communicants in 1880 at 12,000,000, the total adult population in that year being taken

at 25,000,000. But one also hears many lamentations over the diminished attendance at city churches; and in ecclesiastical circles people say, just as they say in England, that the great problem is how to reach the masses. The most probable conclusion seems to be that while in cities like New York and Chicago the bulk of the humbler classes (except the Roman Catholics) are practically heathen to the same extent as in London, or Liverpool, or Berlin, the proportion of working men who belong to some religious body is rather larger in towns under 30,000 than it is in the similar towns of Great Britain or Germany.

In the cultivated circles of the great cities one finds a good many people, as one does in England, who have virtually abandoned Christianity; and in most of the smaller cities there is said to be a knot of men who profess agnosticism, and sometimes have a meeting-place where secularist lectures are delivered. Fifty years ago the former class would have been fewer and more reserved; the latter would scarcely have existed. But the relaxation of the old strictness of orthodoxy has not diminished the zeal of the various churches, nor their hold upon their adherents, nor their attachment to the fundamental doctrines of Christianity.

This zeal and attachment happily no longer show themselves in intolerance. Except in small places in the West or South, where aggressive scepticism would rouse displeasure and might affect a man's position in society, everybody is as free in America as in London to hold and express any views he pleases. Within the churches themselves there is an unmistakable tendency to loosen the bonds of subscription required from clergymen. Prosecutions for heresy of course come before church courts, since no civil court would take cognizance of such matters unless when invoked by some one alleging that a church court had given a decision, or a church authority had taken an executive step, which prejudiced him in some civil right, and was unjust because violating an obligation contracted with him. Such prosecutions are not uncommon, but the sympathy of the public is usually with the accused minister, and the latitude allowed to divergence from the old standards becomes constantly greater. At present it is in the Congregationalist Church pretty much the same as in that church in England; in the Presbyterian Church of the North, and among Baptists and Methodists, about the same as in the unestablished Presbyterian churches of Scotland. Speaking generally, no church allows quite so much latitude either in doctrine or in ritual

as recent decisions of the courts of law, beginning from the Essays and Reviews case, have allowed to the clergy of the Anglican Establishment in England; but I could not gather that the clergy of the various Protestant bodies feel themselves fettered, or that the free development of religious thought is seriously checked, except in the South, where orthodoxy is rigid, and forbids a clergyman to hold Mr. Darwin's views regarding the descent of man. A pastor who begins to chafe under the formularies or liturgy of his denomination would be expected to leave the denomination and join some other in which he could feel more at home. He would not suffer socially by doing so, as an Anglican clergyman possibly might in the like case in England.

In what may be called the everyday religious life and usages of the United States, there are differences from those of England or Scotland which it is easy to feel but hard to define or describe. There is rather less conventionalism or constraint in speaking of religious experiences, less of a formal separation between the church and the world, less disposition to treat the clergy as a caste and expect them to conform to a standard not prescribed for the layman, less reticence about sacred things, perhaps less sense of the refinement with which sacred things ought to be surrounded. The letting by auction of sittings in a popular church, though I think very rare, excites less disapproval than it would in Europe. Some fashionable churches are supplied with sofas, carpets, and the other comforts of a drawing-room: a well-trained choir is provided, and the congregation would not think of spoiling the performance by joining in the singing. The social side of church life is more fully developed than in Protestant Europe. A congregation, particularly among the Methodists, Baptists, and Congregationalists, is the centre of a group of societies, literary and recreative as well as religious and philanthropic, which not only stimulate charitable work, but bring the poorer and richer members into friendly relations with one another, and form a large part of the social enjoyments of the young people, keeping them out of harm's way, and giving them a means of forming acquaintances. Often a sort of informal evening party, called a "sociable," is given once a month,

[1] Although total abstinence is much more generally expected from a clergyman than it would be in Great Britain. In most denominations, including Baptists and Methodists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians, it is practically universal among the clergy.

at which all ages and classes meet on an easy footing.[1] Religion seems to associate itself better with the interests of the young in America, and to have come within the last forty years to wear a less forbidding countenance that it has generally done in Britain, or at least among English Nonconformists and in the churches of Scotland.

A still more peculiar feature of the American churches is the propensity to what may be called Revivalism which some of them, and especially the Methodist churches, show. That exciting preaching and those external demonstrations of feeling which have occasionally appeared in Britain, have long been chronic there, appearing chiefly in the form of the camp-meeting, a gathering of people usually in the woods or on the sea-shore, where open-air preaching goes on perhaps for days together. One hears many stories about these camp-meetings, not always to their credit, which agree at least in this that they exercise a powerful even if transient influence upon the humbler classes who flock to them. In the West they have been serviceable in evangelizing districts where few regular churches had yet been established. In the East and South it is now chiefly among the humbler classes, and of course still more among the negroes, that they flourish. All denominations are more prone to emotionalism in religion, and have less reserve in displaying it, than in England or Scotland. I remember in 1870 to have been a passenger by one of the splendid steamers which ply along the Sound between New York and Fall River. A Unitarian Congress was being held in New York, and a company of New England Unitarians were going to attend it. Now New England Unitarians are of all Americans perhaps the most staid and sober in their thoughts and habits, the least inclined to a demonstrative expression of their faith. This company, however, installed itself round the piano in the great saloon of the vessel and sang hymns, hymns full of effusion, for nearly two hours, many of the other passengers joining, and all looking on with sympathy. Our English party assumed at first that the singers belonged

[1] Even dances may be given, but not by all denominations. When some years ago a Presbyterian congregation in a great Western city was giving a "reception" in honour of the opening of its new Church Building—prosperous churches always have a building with a set of rooms for meetings—the sexton (as he is called in America), who had come from a Protestant Episcopal church in the East, observed, as he surveyed the spacious hall, "What a pity you are not Episcopalians; you might have given a ball in this room!"

to some Methodist body, in which case there would have been nothing to remark except the attitude of the bystanders. But they were Unitarians.

European travellers have in one point greatly exaggerated the differences between their own continent and the United States. They have represented the latter as pre-eminently a land of strange sects and abnormal religious developments. Such sects and developments there certainly are, but they play no greater part in the whole life of the nation than similar sects do in Germany and England, far less than the various dissenting communities do in Russia. The Mormons have drawn the eyes of the world because they have attempted to form a sort of religious commonwealth, and have revived one ancient practice which modern ethics condemn. But the Mormon church is chiefly recruited from Europe: one finds few native Americans in Salt Lake City, and those few from among the poor whites of the South.[1] The Shakers are an interesting and well-conducted folk, but there are very few of them: and of the other communistic religious bodies one hears more in Europe than in America. Here and there some strange little sect emerges and lives for a few years;[2] but in a country seething with religious emotion, and whose conditions seem to tempt to new departures and experiments of all kinds, the philosophic traveller may rather wonder that men have stood so generally upon the old paths.

We have already seen that Christianity has in the United States maintained, so far as externals go, its authority and dignity, planting its houses of worship all over the country and raising enormous revenues from its adherents. Such a position of apparent influence might, however, rest upon ancient habit and convention, and imply no dominion over the souls of men. The Roman Empire in the days of Augustus was covered from end to end with superb temples to many

1 Some Southern States punish the preaching of Mormonism.

2 Near Walla Walla in Washington Territory I came across a curious little sect formed by a Welshman who fell into trances and delivered revelations. He had two sons, and asserted one of them to be an incarnation of Christ, and the other of St. John Baptist, and gathered about fifty disciples, whom he endeavoured to form into a society having all things in common. However, both the children died; and in 1881 most of his disciples had deserted him. Probably such phenomena are not uncommon; there is a good deal of proneness to superstition among the less educated Westerns, especially the immigrants from Europe. They lead a solitary life in the midst of a vast nature.

gods: the priests were numerous and wealthy, and enjoyed the protection of the State: processions retained their pomp, and sarcifices drew crowds of admiring worshippers. But the old religions had lost their hold on the belief of the educated and on the conscience of all classes. If therefore we desire to know what place Christianity really fills in America, and how far it gives stability to the commonwealth, we must inquire how far it governs the life and moulds the mind of the country.

Such an inquiry may address itself to two points. It may examine into the influence which religion has on the conduct of the people, on their moral standard and the way they conform themselves thereto. And it may ask how far religion touches and gilds the imagination of the people, redeeming their lives from commonness, and bathing their souls in "the light that never was on sea or land."

In works of active beneficence no country has surpassed, perhaps none has equalled, the United States. Not only are the sums collected for all sorts of philanthropic purposes larger relatively to the wealth of America than in any European country, but the amount of personal interest shown in good works and personal effort devoted to them seems to a European visitor to exceed what he knows at home. How much of this interest and effort would be given were no religious motive present it is impossible to say. Not all, but I think nearly all of it, is in fact given by religious people, and, as they themselves suppose, under a religious impulse. This religious impulse is less frequently than in England a sectarian impulse, for all Protestants, and to some extent Roman Catholics also, are wont to join hands for most works of benevolence.

The ethical standard of the average man is of course the Christian standard, modified to some slight extent by the circumstances of American life, which have been different from those of Protestant Europe. The average man has not thought of any other standard, and religious teaching, though it has become less definite and less dogmatic, is still to him the source whence he believes himself to have drawn his ideas of duty and conduct. In Puritan days there must have been some little conscious and much more unconscious hypocrisy, the profession of religion being universal, and the exactitude of practice required by opinion, and even by law, being above what ordinary human nature seems capable of attaining. The fault of antinomianism which used to be charged on high Calvinists is now sometimes

charged on those who become, under the influence of revivals, extreme emotionalists in religion. But taking the native Americans as a whole, no people seems to-day less open to the charge of pharisaism or hypocrisy. They are perhaps rather more prone to the opposite error of good-natured indulgence to offences of which they are not themselves guilty.

That there is less crime among native Americans than among the foreign born is a point not to be greatly pressed, for it may be partly due to the fact that the latter are the poorer and more ignorant part of the population. If, however, we take matters which do not fall within the scope of penal law, the general impression of those who have lived long both in Protestant Europe and in America seems to be that as respects veracity, temperance, the purity of domestic life, tenderness to children and the weak, and general kindliness of behaviour, the native Americans stand rather higher than either the English or the Germans.[1] And those whose opinion I am quoting seem generally, though not universally, disposed to think that the influence of religious belief, which may survive in its effect upon the character when a man has dropped his connection with any religious body, counts for a good deal in this, and is a more consciously present and active force than in the two countries I have referred to.

If we ask how far religion exerts a stimulating influence on the thought and imagination of a nation, we are met by the difficulty of determining what is the condition of mankind where no such influence is present. There has never been a civilized nation without a religion, and though many highly civilized individual men live without it, they are so obviously the children of a state of sentiment and thought in which religion has been a powerful factor, that no one can conjecture what a race of men would be like who had during several generations believed themselves to be the highest beings in the universe, or at least entirely out of relation to any other higher beings, and to be therewithal destined to no kind of existence after death. Some may hold that respect for public opinion, sympathy, an interest in the future of mankind, would do for such a people what religion has done in the past; or that they might even

[1] This would not be said as regards commercial uprightness, in which respect the United States stand on no higher level than England and Germany, and possibly below France and Scandinavia.

be, as Lucretius expected, the happier for the extinction of possible supernatural terrors. Others may hold that life would seem narrow and insignificant, and that the wings of imagination would droop in a universe felt to be void. All that need be here said is that a people with comparatively little around it in the way of historic memories and associations to touch its emotion, a people whose energy is chiefly absorbed in commerce and the development of the material resources of its territory, a people consumed by a feverish activity that gives little opportunity for reflection or for the contemplation of nature, seems most of all to need to have its horizon widened, its sense of awe and mystery touched, by whatever calls it away from the busy world of sight and sound into the stillness of faith and meditation. A perusal of the literature which the ordinary American of the educated farming and working class reads, and a study of the kind of literature which those Americans who are least coloured by European influences produce, lead me to think that the Bible and Christian theology altogether do more in the way of forming the imaginative background to an average American view of the world of man and nature than they do in modern Protestant Europe.

No one is so thoughtless as not to sometimes ask himself what would befall mankind if the solid fabric of belief on which their morality has hitherto rested, or at least been deemed by them to rest, were suddenly to break up and vanish under the influence of new views of nature, as the ice-fields split and melt when they have floated down into a warmer sea. Morality with religion for its sanction has hitherto been the basis of social polity, except under military despotisms: would morality be so far weakened as to make social polity unstable? and if so, would a reign of violence return? In Europe this question does not seem urgent, because in Europe the physical force of armed men which maintains order is usually conspicuous, and because obedience to authority is everywhere in Europe matter of ancient habit, having come down little impaired from ages when men obeyed without asking for a reason. But in America the whole system of government seems to rest not on armed force, but on the will of the numerical majority, a majority most of whom might well think that its overthrow would be for them a gain. So sometimes, standing in the midst of a great American city, and watching the throngs of eager figures streaming hither and thither, marking the sharp contrasts of poverty and wealth, an increasing mass of wretchedness and an in-

creasing display of luxury, knowing that before long a hundred millions of men will be living between ocean and ocean under this one government—a government which their own hands have made, and which they feel to be the work of their own hands—one is startled by the thought of what might befall this huge yet delicate fabric of laws and commerce and social institutions were the foundations it has rested on to crumble away. Suppose that all these men ceased to believe that there was any power above them, any future before them, anything in heaven or earth but what their senses told them of; suppose that their consciousness of individual force and responsibility, already dwarfed by the overwhelming power of the multitude, and the fatalistic submission it engenders, were further weakened by the feeling that their swiftly fleeting life was rounded by a perpetual sleep—

> Soles occidere et redire possunt:
> Nobis, quum semel occidit brevis lux
> Nox est perpetua una dormienda.[1]

Would the moral code stand unshaken, and with it the reverence for law, the sense of duty towards the community, and even towards the generations yet to come? Would men say "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die"? Or would custom, and sympathy, and a perception of the advantages which stable government offers to the citizens as a whole, and which orderly self-restraint offers to each one, replace supernatural sanctions, and hold in check the violence of masses and the self-indulgent impulses of the individual? History, if she cannot give a complete answer to this question tells us that hitherto civilized society has rested on religion, and that free government has prospered best among religious peoples.

America is no doubt the country in which intellectual movements work most swiftly upon the masses, and the country in which the loss of faith in the invisible might produce the completest revolution, because it is the country where men have been least wont to revere anything in the visible world. Yet America seems as unlikely to drift from her ancient moorings as any country of the Old World. It was religious zeal and the religious conscience which led to the founding of the New England colonies two centuries and a half ago—those colonies whose spirit has in such large measure passed

[1] Suns may set and rise again, but for us, once our bright light has set, one eternal night remains to be slept.——Catullus.

into the whole nation. Religion and conscience have been a constantly active force in the American commonwealth ever since, not indeed strong enough to avert many moral and political evils, yet at the worst times inspiring a minority with a courage and ardour by which moral and political evils have been held at bay, and in the long run generally overcome.

It is an old saying that monarchies live by honour and republics by virtue. The more democratic republics become, the more the masses grow conscious of their own power, the more do they need to live, not only by patriotism, but by reverence and self-control, and the more essential to their well-being are those sources whence reverence and self-control flow.

CHAPTER 12

THE POSITION OF WOMEN

It has been well said that the position which women hold in a country is, if not a complete test, yet one of the best tests of the progress it has made in civilization. When one compares nomad man with settled man, heathen man with Christian man, the ancient world with the modern, the Eastern world with the Western, it is plain that in every case the advance in public order, in material comfort, in wealth, in decency and refinement of manners, among the whole population of a country—for in these matters one must not look merely at the upper class—has been accompanied by a greater respect for women, by a greater freedom accorded to them, by a fuller participation on their part in the best work of the world. Americans are fond of pointing, and can with perfect justice point, to the position their women hold as an evidence of the high level their civilization has reached. Certainly nothing in the country is more characteristic of the peculiar type their civilization has taken.

The subject may be regarded in so many aspects that it is convenient to take up each separately.

As respects the legal rights of women, these, of course, depend on the legislative enactments of each State of the Union, for in no case has the matter been left under the rigour of the common law. With much diversity in minor

details, the general principles of the law are in all or nearly all the States similar. Women have been placed on an equality with men as respects all private rights. Married as well as unmarried women have long since obtained full control of their property, whether obtained by gift or descent, or by their own labour. This has been deemed so important a point that, instead of being left to ordinary legislation, it has in several States been directly enacted by the people in the Constitution. Women have in most, though perhaps not in all, States rights of guardianship over their children which the law of England denied to them till the Act of 1886. The law of divorce is in some States far from satisfactory, but it always aims at doing equal justice as between husbands and wives. Special protection as respects hours of labour is given to women by the laws of many States, and a good deal of recent legislation has been passed with intent to benefit them, though not always by well chosen means.

Women have made their way into most of the professions more largely than in Europe. In many of the Northern cities they practise as physicians, and seem to have found little or no prejudice to overcome. Medical schools have been provided for them in some universities. It was less easy to obtain admission to the bar, yet several have secured this, and the number seems to increase. They mostly devote themselves to the attorney's part of the work rather than to court practice. One edits, or lately edited, the *Illinois Law Journal* with great acceptance. Several have entered the Christian ministry, though, I think, only in what may be called the minor sects, not in any of the five or six great denominations, whose spirit is more conservative. Several have obtained success as professional lecturers. One hears little of them in engineering and in journalism. They are seldom to be seen in the offices of hotels, but many, more than in England, are employed as clerks or secretaries, both in some of the Government departments, and by telegraphic and other companies, as well as in publishing houses and other kinds of business where physical strength is not needed. They form an overwhelming majority of the teachers in public schools for boys as well as for girls, and are thought to be better teachers, at least for the younger sort, than men are.[1] No class prejudice

[1] The total number of teachers is given by the U.S. Bureau of Education Report for 1887 at 104,249 men and 191,439 women. As men are in a majority in the Southern States and in Indiana, the preponderance of women in the Northern States generally is very great.

forbids the daughters of clergymen or lawyers of the best standing to teach in elementary schools. Taking one thing with another, it is easier for women to find a career, to obtain remunerative work of an intellectual as of a commercial or mechanical kind, than in any part of Europe. Popular sentiment is entirely in favour of giving them every chance, as witness the new Constitutions of several Western States which expressly provide that they shall be equally admissible to all professions or employments. In no other country have women borne so conspicuous a part in the promotion of moral and philanthropic causes. They were among the earliest, most zealous, and most effective apostles of the anti-slavery movement. They have taken an equally active share in the temperance agitation. Not only has the Women's Christian Temperance Union with its numerous branches been the most powerful agency directed against the traffic in intoxicants, particularly in the Western States, but individual women have thrown themselves into the struggle with extraordinary zeal. Some years ago, during what was called the women's whisky war, they forced their way into the drinking saloons, bearded the dealers, adjured the tipplers to come out. At elections in which the Prohibitionist issue is prominent, ladies will sometimes assemble outside the polls and sing hymns at the voters. Their services in dealing with pauperism, with charities and reformatory institutions, have been inestimable. In New York three or four years ago, when an Act was needed for improving the administration of the charities, it was a lady (belonging to one of the oldest and most respected families in the country) who went to Albany, and by placing the case forcibly before the State legislature there, succeeded in obtaining the required measure. The Charity Organization societies of the great cities are very largely managed by ladies; and the freedom they enjoy, coupled with a knowledge of business, less frequently found among European women, makes them invaluable agents in this work, which the growth of a pauper class renders daily more important. So too when it became necessary after the war to find teachers for the negroes in the institutions founded for their benefit in the South, it was chiefly Northern girls who volunteered for the duty, and discharged it with single-minded zeal.

American women take less part in politics than their English sisters do, although more than the women of Germany, France, or Italy. That they talk less about politics may be partly ascribed to the fact that politics come less into ordinary conversation in America (except during a presidential election)

than in England. But the practice of canvassing at elections, recently developed by English ladies with eminent success, seems unknown. Ladies have never, I think, been chosen members of either Republican or Democratic conventions. However, at the National Convention of the Prohibitionist party at Pittsburg in 1884 a number of ladies presented credentials as delegates from local organizations, and were admitted to sit. One of the two secretaries of that Convention was a woman. Several were placed on the Committee of Credentials. Here we are on the debatable ground between pure party politics and philanthropic agitation. Women have been so effective in the latter that they cannot easily be excluded when persuasion passes into constitutional action, and one is not surprised to find the Prohibition party declare in their platform of 1884 that "they alone recognize the influence of women, and offer to her equal rights with man in the management of national affairs." Presidential candidates have often "receptions" given in their honour by ladies, and some of the letters which, during the campaign of 1884, appeared in the newspapers in advocacy of one or other party, bore female signatures. One hears of attempts made to establish political "salons" at Washington, but neither there nor elsewhere has the influence of social gatherings attained the importance it has often possessed in France, though occasionally the wife of a politician makes his fortune by her tact and skill in winning support for him among professional politicians or the members of a State legislature. There is, however, another and less auspicious sphere of political action into which women have found their way at the national capital. The solicitation of members of a legislature with a view to the passing of bills, especially private bills, and to the obtaining of places, has become a profession there, and the persuasive assiduity which had long been recognized by poets as characteristic of the female sex, has made them widely employed and efficient in this work.

I have already, in treating of the women's suffrage movement, referred to the various public offices which have been in many States thrown open to women. It is universally admitted that the gift of the suffrage must carry with it the right of obtaining any post in the service of the country for which votes are cast, up to and including the Presidency itself.

The subject of women's education opens up a large field. Want of space obliges me to omit a description, for which I

have accumulated abundant materials, and to confine myself to a few concise remarks.

The public provision for the instruction of girls is quite as ample and adequate as that made for boys. Elementary schools are of course provided alike for both sexes, grammar schools and high schools are organized for the reception of girls sometimes under the same roof or even in the same classes, sometimes in a distinct building, but always, I think, with an equally complete staff of teachers and equipment of educational appliances. The great majority of the daughters of mercantile and professional men, especially of course in the West,[1] receive their education in these public secondary schools; and, what is more remarkable, the number of girls who continue their education in the higher branches, including the ancient classics and physical science, up to the age of seventeen or eighteen, is as large, in many places larger, than that of the boys, the latter being drafted off into practical life, while the former indulge their more lively interest in the things of the mind. One often hears it charged as a fault on the American system that its liberal provision of gratuitous instruction in the advanced subjects tends to raise girls of the humbler classes out of the sphere to which their pecuniary means would destine them, makes them discontented with their lot, implants tastes which fate will for ever forbid them to gratify. [2]

As stated in a previous chapter, University education is provided for women in the Eastern States by colleges expressly erected for their benefit, and in the Western States by State universities, whose regulations usually provide for the admission of female equally with male students to a gratuitous instruction in all subjects. There are also some colleges of private foundation which receive young men and maidens together, teaching them in the same classes, but providing separate buildings for their lodging.

I must not attempt to set forth and discuss the evidence regarding the working of this system of co-education, interesting as the facts are, but be content with stating the general result of the inquiries I made.

Co-education answers perfectly in institutions like Antioch and Oberlin in Ohio, where manners are plain and simple,

[1] There are some private boarding schools and many private day schools for girls in the Eastern States. Comparatively few children are educated at home by governesses.

[2] A striking picture of such a case is given in a recent American tale called *The Breadwinners.*

where the students all come from a class in which the intercourse of young men and young women is easy and natural, and where there is a strong religious influence pervading the life of the place. No moral difficulties are found to arise. Each sex is said to improve the other: the men become more refined, the women more manly. Now and then students fall in love with one another, and marry when they have graduated. But why not? Such marriages are based upon a better reciprocal knowledge of character than is usually attainable in the great world, and are reported to be almost invariably happy. So also in the Western State universities co-education is well reported of. In these establishments the students mostly lodge where they will in the city, and are therefore brought into social relations only in the hours of public instruction; but the tendency of late years has been, while leaving men to find their own quarters, to provide places of residence for the women. The authorities have little to do in the way of discipline or supervision, and say they do not find it needed, and that they are not aware of any objections to the system. I did find, however, that the youths in some cases expressed aversion to it, saying they would rather be in classes by themselves; the reason apparently being that it was disagreeable to see a man whom men thought meanly of standing high in the favor of lady students. In these Western States there is so much freedom allowed in the intercourse of youths and girls, and girls are so well able to take care of themselves, that the objections which occur to a European arouse no disquietude. Whether a system which has borne good fruits in the primitive society of the West is fit to be adopted in the Eastern States, where the conditions of life approach nearer to those of Europe, is a question warmly debated in America. The need for it is at any rate not urgent, because the liberality of founders and benefactors has provided in at least four women's colleges places where an excellent education, surpassing that of most of the Western universities, stands open to women. These colleges are at present so efficient and popular, and the life of their students is in some respects so much freer than it could well be, considering the etiquette of Eastern society, in universities frequented by both sexes, that they will probably continue to satisfy the practical needs of the community and the wishes of all but the advocates of complete theoretical equality.

It will be seen from what has been said that the provision from women's education in the United States is ampler and

better than that made in any European countries, and that the making of it has been far more distinctly recognized as a matter of public concern. To these advantages, and to the spirit they proceed from, much of the influence which women exert must be ascribed. They feel more independent, they have a fuller consciousness of their place in the world of thought as well as in the world of action. The practice of educating the two sexes together in the same colleges tends, in those sections of the country where it prevails, in the same direction, placing women and men on a level as regards attainments, and giving them a greater number of common intellectual interests. It does not, I think, operate to make women either pedantic or masculine, or to diminish the differences between their mental and moral habits and those of men. Nature is quite strong enough to make the differences of temperament she creates persistent, even under influences which might seem likely to diminish them.

Custom allows to women a greater measure of freedom in doing what they will and going where they please than they have in any European country, except, perhaps, in Russia. No one is surprised to see a lady travel alone from the Atlantic to the Pacific, nor a girl of the richer class walking alone through the streets of a city. If a lady enters some occupation heretofore usually reserved to men, she is subject to much less censorious remark than would follow her in Europe, though in this matter the society of Eastern cities is hardly so liberal as that of the West.

Social intercourse between youths and maidens is everywhere more easy and unrestrained than in England or Germany, not to speak of France. Yet, there are considerable differences between the Eastern cities, whose usages have begun to approximate to those of Europe and other parts of the country. In the rural districts, and generally all over the West, young men and girls are permitted to walk together, drive together, go out to parties, and even to public entertainments together, without the presence of any third person, who can be supposed to be looking after or taking charge of the girl. So a girl may, if she pleases, keep up a correspondence with a young man, nor will her parents think of interfering. She will have her own friends, who, when they call at her house, ask for her, and are received by her, it may be alone; because they are not deemed to be necessarily the friends of her parents also, nor even of her sisters. In the cities of the Atlantic States, it is beginning to be thought scarcely correct for a young man to take a young lady

out for a solitary drive; and in few sets would he be now permitted to escort her alone to the theatre. But girls still go without chaperons to dances, the hostess being deemed to act as chaperon for all her guests; and as regards both correspondence and the right to have one's own circle of acquaintances, the usage even of New York or Boston allows more liberty than does that of London or Edinburgh. It was at one time, and it may possibly still be, not uncommon for a group of young people who know one another well to make up an autumn "party in the woods." They choose some mountain and forest region, such as the Adirondack Wilderness west of Lake Champlain, engage three or four guides, embark with guns and fishing rods, tents, blankets, and a stock of groceries, and pass in boats up the rivers and across the lakes of this wild country through sixty or seventy miles of trackless forest to their chosen camping ground at the foot of some tall rock that rises from the still crystal of the lake. Here they build their bark hut, and spread their beds of the elastic and fragrant hemlock boughs; the youths roam about during the day, tracking the deer, the girls read and work and bake the corn cakes; at night there is a merry gathering round the fire or a row in the soft moonlight. On these expeditions, brothers will take their sisters and cousins, who bring perhaps some lady friends with them; the brothers' friends will come too; and all will live together in a fraternal way for weeks or months, though no elderly relative or married lady be of the party.

There can be no doubt that the pleasure of life is sensibly increased by the greater freedom which transatlantic custom permits; and as the Americans insist that no bad results have followed, one notes with regret that freedom declines in the places which deem themselves most civilized. American girls have been, so far as a stranger can ascertain, less disposed to what are called "fast ways" than girls of the corresponding classes in England,[1] and exercise in this respect a pretty rigorous censorship over one another. But when two young people find pleasure in one another's company, they can see as much of each other as they please, can talk and walk together frequently, can show that they are mutually interested, and yet need have little fear of being misunderstood either

[1] Between fastness and freedom there is in American eyes all the difference in the world, but new-comers from Europe are startled. I remember to have once heard a German lady settled in a Western city characterize American women as *"furchtbar frei und furchtbar fromm"* (frightfully free and frightfully pious).

by one another or by the rest of the world. It is all a matter of custom. In the West custom sanctions this easy friendship; in the Atlantic cities so soon as people have come to find something exceptional in it, constraint is felt, and a conventional etiquette like that of the Old World begins to replace the innocent simplicity of the older time, the test of whose merit may be gathered from the universal persuasion in America that happy marriages are in the middle and upper ranks more common than in Europe, and that this is due to the ampler opportunities which young men and women have of learning one another's characters and habits before forming an engagement. Most girls have a larger range of intimate acquaintances than girls have in Europe, intercourse is franker, there is less difference between the manners of home and the manners of general society. The conclusions of a stranger are in such matters of no value, so I can only repeat that I have never met any judicious American lady who, however well she knew the Old World, did not think that the New World customs conduced more both to the pleasantness of life before marriage, and to constancy and concord after it.

In no country are women, and especially young women, so much made of. The world is at their feet. Society seems organized for the purpose of providing enjoyment for them. Parents, uncles, aunts, elderly friends, even brothers, are ready to make their comfort and convenience bend to the girls' wishes. The wife has fewer opportunities for reigning over the world of amusements, because, except among the richest people, she has more to do in household management than in England, owing to the scarcity of servants. But she holds in her own house a more prominent, if not a more substantially powerful, position than in England or even in France. With the German *Hausfrau*, who is too often content to be a mere housewife, there is of course no comparison. The best proof of the superior place American ladies occupy is to be found in the notions they profess to entertain of the relations of an English married pair. They talk of the English wife as little better than a slave, declaring that when they stay with English friends, or receive an English couple in America, they see the wife always deferring to the husband and the husband always assuming that his pleasure and convenience are to prevail. The European wife, they admit, often gets her own way, but she gets it by tactful arts, by flattery or wheedling or playing on the man's weaknesses; whereas in America the husband's duty and desire is to gratify the wife

and render to her those services which the English tyrant exacts from his consort.[1] One may often hear an American matron commiserate a friend who has married in Europe, while the daughters declare in chorus that they will never follow the example. Laughable as all this may seem to Englishwomen, it is perfectly true that the theory as well as the practice of conjugal life is not the same in America as in England. There are overbearing husbands in America, but they are more condemned by the opinion of the neighbourhood than in England. There are exacting wives in England, but their husbands are more pitied than would be the case in America. In neither country can one say that the principle of perfect equality reigns, for in America the balance inclines nearly though not quite as much in favour of the wife as it does in England in favour of the husband. No one man can have a sufficiently large acquaintance in both countries to entitle his individual opinion on the results to much weight. So far as I have been able to collect views from those observers who have lived in both countries, they are in favour of the American practice, perhaps because the theory it is based on departs less from pure equality than does that of England. These observers do not mean that the recognition of women as equals or superiors makes them any better or sweeter or wiser than Englishwomen; but rather that the principle of equality, by correcting the characteristic faults of men, and especially their selfishness and vanity, is more conducive to the concord and happiness of a home. They conceive that, to make the wife feel her independence and responsibility more strongly than she does in Europe, tends to brace and expand her character, while conjugal affection, usually stronger in her than in the husband, inasmuch as there are fewer competing interests, saves her from abusing the precedence yielded to her. This seems to be true, but I have heard others maintain that the American system, since it does not require the wife habitually to forego her own wishes, tends, if not to make her self-indulgent and capricious, yet slightly to impair the more delicate charms of character; as it is written, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

A European cannot spend an evening in an American drawing-room without perceiving that the attitude of men

[1] I have heard American ladies say, for instance, that they have observed that an Englishman who has forgotten his keys, sends his wife to the top of the house to fetch them; whereas an American would do the like errand for his wife, and never suffer her to do it for him.

to women is not that with which he is familiar at home. The average European man has usually a slight sense of condescension when he talks to a woman on serious subjects. Even if she is his superior in intellect, in character, in social rank, he thinks that as a man he is her superior, and consciously or unconsciously talks down to her. She is too much accustomed to this to resent it, unless it becomes tastelessly palpable. Such a notion does not cross an American's mind. He talks to a woman just as he would to a man, of course with more deference of manner, and with a proper regard to the topics likely to interest her, but giving her his intellectual best, addressing her as a person whose opinion is understood by both to be worth as much as his own. Similarly an American lady does not expect to have conversation made to her. It is just as much her duty or pleasure to lead it as the man's is, and more often than not she takes the burden from him, darting along with a gay vivacity which puts to shame his slower wits.

It need hardly be said that in all cases where the two sexes come into competition for comfort, the provision is made first for women. In railroads the end car of the train, being that farthest removed from the smoke of the locomotive, is reserved for them (though men accompanying a lady are allowed to enter it), and at hotels their sitting-room is the best and sometimes the only available public room, ladyless guests being driven to the bar or the hall. In omnibuses and horse-cars (tram-cars) it was formerly the custom for a gentleman to rise and offer his seat to a lady if there were no vacant place. This is now less universally done. In New York and Boston (and I think also in San Francisco), I have seen the men keep their seats when ladies entered; and I recollect one occasion when the offer of a seat to a lady was declined by her, on the ground that as she had chosen to enter a full car she ought to take the consequences. It was (I was told in Boston) a feeling of this kind that had led to the discontinuance of the old courtesy. When ladies constantly pressed into the already crowded vehicles, the men, who could not secure the enforcement of the regulations against overcrowding, tried to protect themselves by refusing to rise. It is sometimes said that the privileges yielded to American women have disposed them to claim as a right what was only a courtesy, and have told unfavourably upon their manners. I know of several instances, besides this one of the horse-cars, which might seem to support the criticism, but

cannot on the whole think it well founded. The better bred women do not presume on their sex; and the area of good breeding is always widening. It need hardly be said that the community at large gains by the softening and restraining influence which the reverence for womanhood diffuses. Nothing so quickly incenses the people as any insult offered to a woman. Wife-beating, and indeed any kind of rough violence offered to women, is far less common among the rudest class than it is in England. Field work or work at the pit-mouth of mines is seldom or never done by women in America; and the American traveller who in some parts of Europe finds women performing severe manual labour is revolted by the sight in a way which Europeans find surprising.

In the farther West, that is to say, beyond the Mississippi, in the Rocky Mountain and Pacific States, one is much struck by what seems the absence of the humblest class of women. The trains are full of poorly-dressed and sometimes (though less frequently) rough-mannered men. One discovers no women whose dress or air marks them out as the wives, daughters, or sisters of these men, and wonders whether the male population is celibate, and if so, why there are so many women. Closer observation shows that the wives, daughters, and sisters are there, only their attire and manner are those of what Europeans would call middle class and not working class people. This is partly due to the fact that Western men affect a rough dress. Still one may say that the remark so often made that the masses of the American people correspond to the middle class of Europe is more true of the women than of the men, and is more true of them in the rural districts and in the West than it is of the inhabitants of Atlantic cities. I remember to have been dawdling in a book store in a small town in Oregon when a lady entered to inquire if a monthly magazine, whose name was unknown to me, had yet arrived. When she was gone I asked the salesman who she was, and what was the periodical she wanted. He answered that she was the wife of a railway workman, that the magazine was a journal of fashions, and that the demand for such journals was large and constant among women of the wage-earning class in the town. This set me to observing female dress more closely, and it turned out to be perfectly true that the women in these little towns were following the Parisian fashions very closely, and were, in fact, ahead of the majority of English ladies belonging to the professional

and mercantile classes.[1] Of course in such a town as I refer to there are no domestic servants except in the hotels (indeed, almost the only domestic service to be had in the Pacific States is that of Chinese), so these votaries of fashion did all their own housework and looked after their own babies.

Three causes combine to create among American women an average of literary taste and influence higher than that of women in any European country. These are, the educational facilities they enjoy, the recognition of the equality of the sexes in the whole social and intellectual sphere, and the leisure which they posess as compared with men. In a country where men are incessantly occupied at their business or profession, the function of keeping up the level of culture devolves upon women. It is safe in their hands. They are quick and keen witted, less fond of open-air life and physical exertion than Englishwomen are, and obliged by the climate to pass a greater part of their time under shelter from the cold of winter and the sun of summer. For music and for the pictorial arts they do not yet seem to have formed so strong a taste as for literature, partly perhaps owing to the fact that in America the opportunities of seeing and hearing masterpieces, except indeed operas, are rarer than in Europe. But they are eager and assiduous readers of all such books and periodicals as do not presuppose special knowledge in some branch of science or learning, while the number who have devoted themselves to some special study and attained proficiency in it is large. The fondness for sentiment, especially moral and domestic sentiment, which is often observed as characterizing American taste in literature, seems to be mainly due to the influence of women, for they form not only the larger part of the reading public, but an independent-minded part, not disposed to adopt the canons laid down by men, and their preferences count for more in the opinions and predilections of the whole nation than is the case in England. Similarly the number of women who write is infinitely larger in America than in Europe. Fiction, essays, and poetry are naturally their favourite provinces. In poetry more particularly, many whose names are quite unknown in Europe have attained widespread fame.

Some one may ask how far the differences between the position of women in America and their position in Europe

[1] The above, of course, does not apply to the latest immigrants from Europe, who are still European in their dress and ways, though in a town they become quickly Americanized.

are due to democracy? or if not to this, then to what other cause?

They are due to democratic feeling in so far as they spring from the notion that all men are free and equal, possessed of certain inalienable rights, and owing certain corresponding duties. This root idea of democracy cannot stop at defining men as male human beings, any more than it could ultimately stop at defining them as white human beings. For many years the Americans believed in equality with the pride of discoverers as well as with the fervour of apostles. Accustomed to apply it to all sorts and conditions of men, they were naturally the first to apply it to women also; not, indeed, as respects politics, but in all the social as well as legal relations of life. Democracy is in America more respectful of the individual, less disposed to infringe his freedom or subject him to any sort of legal or family control, than it has shown itself in Continental Europe, and this regard for the individual enured to the benefit of women. Of the other causes that have worked in the same direction two may be mentioned. One is the usage of the Congregationalist, Presbyterian, and Baptist churches, under which a woman who is a member of the congregation has the same rights in choosing a deacon, elder, or pastor, as a man has. Another is the fact that among the westward-moving settlers women were at first few in number, and were therefore treated with special respect. The habit then formed was retained as the communities grew, and propagated itself all over the country.

What have been the results on the character and usefulness of women themselves?

Favourable. They have opened to them a wider life and more variety of career. While the special graces of the feminine character do not appear to have suffered, there has been produced a sort of independence and a capacity for self-help which are increasingly valuable as the number of unmarried women increases. More resources are open to an American women who has to lead a solitary life, not merely in the way of employment, but for the occupation of her mind and tastes, than to a European spinster or widow; while her education has not rendered the American wife less competent for the discharge of household duties.

How has the nation at large been affected by the development of this new type of womanhood, or rather perhaps of this variation on the English type?

If women have on the whole gained, it is clear that the nation gains through them. As mothers they mould the

character of their children; while the function of forming the habits of society and determining its moral tone rests greatly in their hands. But there is reason to think that the influence of the American system tells directly for good upon men as well as upon the whole community. Men gain in being brought to treat women as equals rather than as graceful playthings or useful drudges. The respect for women which every American man either feels or is obliged by public sentiment to profess, has a wholesome effect on his conduct and character, and serves to check the cynicism which some other peculiarities of the country foster. The nation as a whole owes to the active benevolence of its women, and their zeal in promoting social reforms, benefits which the customs of Continental Europe would scarcely have permitted women to confer. Europeans have of late years begun to render a well-deserved admiration to the brightness and vivacity of American ladies. Those who know the work they have done and are doing in many a noble cause will admire still more their energy, their courage, their self-devotion. No country seems to owe more to its women than America does, nor to owe to them so much of what is best in social institutions and in the beliefs that govern conduct.

CHAPTER 13

EQUALITY

THE United States are deemed all the world over to be preeminently the land of equality. This was the first feature which struck Europeans when they began, after the peace of 1815 had left them time to look beyond the Atlantic, to feel curious about the phenomena of a new society. This was the great theme of De Tocqueville's description, and the starting-point of his speculations; this has been the most constant boast of the Americans themselves, who have believed their liberty more complete than that of any other people, because equality has been more fully blended with it. Yet some philosophers say that equality is impossible, and others, who express themselves more precisely, insist that distinctions of rank are so inevitable, that however you try to expunge them, they are sure to reappear. Before we

discuss this question, let us see in what senses the word is used.

First there is legal equality, including both what one may call passive or private equality, *i.e.* the equal possession of civil private rights by all inhabitants, and active or public equality, the equal possession by all of rights to a share in the government, such as the electoral franchise and eligibility to public office. Both kinds of political equality exist in America, in the amplest measure, and may be dismissed from the present discussion.

Next there is the equality of material conditions, that is of wealth, and all that wealth gives; there is the equality of education and intelligence; there is the equality of social status or rank; and there is (what comes near to, but is not exactly the same as, this last) the equality of estimation, *i.e.* of the value which men set upon one another, whatever be the elements that come into this value, whether wealth, or education, or official rank, or social rank, or any other species of excellence. In how many and which of these senses of the word does equality exist in the United States?

Clearly not as regards material conditions. Sixty years ago there were no great fortunes in America, few large fortunes, no poverty. Now there is some poverty (though only in a few places can it be called pauperism), many large fortunes, and a greater number of gigantic fortunes than in any other country of the world. The class of persons who are passably well off but not rich, a class corresponding in point of income to the lower middle class of England or France, but superior in manners, is much larger than in the great countries of Europe. Between the houses, the dress, and the way of life of these persons, and those of the richer sort, there is less difference than in Europe. The very rich do not (except in a few places) make an ostentatious display of their wealth, because they have no means of doing so, and a visitor is therefore apt to overrate the extent to which equality of wealth, and of material conditions generally, still prevails. The most remarkable phenomenon of the last twenty-five years has been the appearance, not only of those few colossal millionaires who fill the public eye, but of many millionaires of the second order, men with fortunes ranging from $5,000,000 to $15,000,000. At a seaside resort like Newport, where one sees the finished luxury of the villas, and counts the well-appointed equipages, with their superb horses, which turn out in the afternoon, one gets some impression of the vast and growing wealth of the

Eastern cities. But through the country generally there is little to mark out the man with an income of £20,000 a year from the man of £1000, as he is marked out in England by his country house with its park, or in France by the opportunities for display which Paris affords. The number of these fortunes seems likely to go on increasing, for they are due not merely to the sudden development of the West, with the chances of making vast sums by land speculation or in railway construction, but to the field for doing business on a great scale, which the size of the country presents. Where a merchant or manufacturer in France or England could realize thousands, an American, operating more boldly, and on this far wider theatre, may realize tens of thousands. We may therefore expect these inequalities of wealth to grow; nor will even the habit of equal division among children keep them down, for families are often small, and though some of those who inherit wealth may renounce business, others will pursue it, since the attractions of other kinds of life are fewer than in Europe. Politics are less exciting, there is no great land-holding class with the duties towards tenants and neighbours which an English squire may, if he pleases, usefully discharge; the pursuit of collecting pictures or other objects of curiosity implies frequent visits to Europe, and although the killing of birds prevails in the middle States and the killing of deer in the West, this rather barbarous form of pleasure is likely in time to die out from a civilized people. Other kinds of what is called "sport" no doubt remain, such as horse-racing, eagerly pursued in the form of trotting matches, and the manlier amusements of yacht-racing, rowing, and baseball; but these can only be followed during part of the year, and some of them only by the young. A life of so-called pleasure is certainly harder to follow in an American city than in Paris or Vienna or London. Accordingly, while great fortunes will continue to be made, they will be less easily and quickly spent than in Europe, and one may surmise that the equality of material conditions, almost universal in last century, still general sixty years ago, will more and more diminish by the growth of a very rich class at one end of the line, and of a very poor class at the other end.

As respects education, the profusion of superior as well as elementary schools tends to raise the mass to a somewhat higher point than in Europe, while the stimulus of life being keener and the habit of reading more general, the number of persons one finds on the same general level of brightness,

keenness, and a superficially competent knowledge of common facts, whether in science, history, geography, or literature, is extremely large. This general level tends to rise. But the level of exceptional attainment in that small but increasing class who have studied at the best native universities or in Europe, and who pursue learning and science either as a profession or as a source of pleasure, rises faster than does the general level of the multitude, so that in this regard also it appears that equality has diminished and will diminish further.

So far we have been on comparatively smooth and easy ground. Equality of wealth is a concrete thing; equality of intellectual possession and resource is a thing which can be perceived and gauged. Of social equality, of distinctions of standing and estimation in private life, it is far more difficult to speak, and in what follows I speak with some hesitation.

One thing, and perhaps one thing only, may be asserted with confidence. There is no rank in America, that is to say, no external and recognized stamp marking one man as entitled to any social privileges, or to deference and respect from others. No man is entitled to think himself better than his fellows, or to expect any exceptional consideration to be shown by them to him. There is no such thing as a recognized order of precedence, either on public occasions or at a private party, except that yielded to a few official persons, such as the governor and chief judges of a State within that State, as well as to the President and Vice-President, the Speaker of the House, the Federal senators, the judges of the Supreme Federal Court, and the members of the President's cabinet everywhere through the Union. In fact, the idea of a regular "rule of precedence" displeases the Americans,[1] and one finds them slow to believe that the existence of such a rule in England entitling the youthful daughter of a baronet, for instance, to go first out of the room at a dinner party on the host's arm, although there may be present married ladies both older and of some personal distinction, is not felt as a mortification by the latter ladies, because it is a mere matter of convention and usage which does

[1] In private parties, so far as there is any rule of precedence, it is that of age, with a tendency to make an exception in favour of clergymen or of any person of special eminence. It is only in Washington, where senators, judges, ministers, and congressmen are sensitive on these points, that such questions seem to arise, or to be regarded as deserving the attention of a rational mind.

not prevent the other guests from respecting these wives of ordinary commoners much more than they may respect the baronet's daughter. That an obscure earl should take precedence of a prime minister who happens to be a commoner shocks Americans out of measure.

What then is the effect of influence for social purposes of such distinctions as do exist between men, distinctions of birth, of wealth, of official position, of intellectual eminence?

To be sprung from an ancient stock, or from a stock which can count persons of eminence among its ancestors, is of course a satisfaction to the man himself. There is at present almost a passion among Americans for genealogical researches. A good many families can trace themselves back to English families of the sixteenth or seventeenth century, and of course a great many more profess to do so. For a man's ancestors to have come over in the *Mayflower* is in America much what their having come over with William the Conqueror used to be in England. The descendants of any of the revolutionary heroes, such as John Adams, Edmund Randolph, Alexander Hamilton, and the descendants of any famous man of colonial times, such as the early governors of Massachusetts from William Endicott downwards, or of Jonathan Edwards, or of Eliot the apostle of the Indians, are regarded by their neighbours with a certain amount of interest, and their legitimate pride in such an ancestry excites no disapproval.[1] In the Eastern cities, and at watering-places like Newport, one begins to see carriages with armorial bearings on their panels, but most people appear to disapprove or ridicule this as a piece of Anglomania, more likely to be practised by a *parvenu* than by the scion of a really old family. Virginians used to set much store by their pedigrees, and the letters F.F.V. (First Families of Virginia) had become a sort of jest against persons pluming themselves on their social position in the Old Dominion.[2] Since the war, however, which has shat-

[1] In all the cases mentioned in the text I remember to have been told by others, but never by the persons concerned, of the ancestry. This is an illustration of the fact that while such ancestry is felt to be a distinction it would be thought bad taste for those who possess it to mention it unless they were asked.

[2] An anecdote is told of the captain of a steamer plying at a ferry from Maryland into Virginia, who being asked by a needy Virginian to give him a free passage across, inquired if the applicant belonged to one of the F.F.V. "No," answered the man, "I can't exactly say that; rather to one of the second families." "Jump on board," said the captain; "I never met one of your sort before."

tered old Virginian society from its foundations, one hears little of such pretensions. [1]

The fault which Americans are most frequently accused of is the worship of wealth. The amazing fuss which is made about very rich men, the descriptions of their doings, the speculation as to their intentions, the gossip about their private life, lend colour to the reproach. He who builds up a huge fortune, especially if he does it suddenly, is no doubt a sort of hero, because an enormous number of men have the same ambition. Having done best what millions are trying to do, he is discussed, admired, and envied in the same way as the captain of a cricket eleven is at a large school, or the stroke of the university boat at Oxford or Cambridge. If he be a great financier, or the owner of a great railroad or a great newspaper, he exercises vast power, and is therefore well worth courting by those who desire his help or would avert his enmity. Admitting all this, it may seem a paradox to observe that a millionaire has a better and easier social career open to him in England that in America. Nevertheless there is a sense in which this is true. In America, if his private character be bad, if he be mean, or openly immoral, or personally vulgar, or dishonest, the best society will keep its doors closed against him. In England great wealth, skilfully employed, will more readily force these doors to open. For in England great wealth can, by using the appropriate methods, practically buy rank from those who bestow it; or by obliging persons whose position enables them to command fashionable society, can induce them to stand sponsors for the upstart, and force him into society, a thing which no person in America has the power of doing. To effect such a stroke in England the rich man must of course have stopped short of positive frauds, that is, of such frauds as could be proved in court. But he may be still distrusted and disliked by the *élite* of the commercial world, he may be vulgar and ill-educated, and indeed have nothing to recommend him except his wealth and his willingness to spend it in providing amusement for fashionable people. All this will not prevent him from becoming a baronet, or possibly a peer, and thereby acquiring a position of assured dignity which he can transmit to his offspring. The existence of a

[1] A few years ago a club was formed in New York to include only persons who could prove that their progenitors were settled in the State before the Revolution, and I daresay clubs exist elsewhere making similar claims to exclusiveness.

system of artificial rank enables a stamp to be given to base metal in Europe which cannot be given in a thoroughly republican country.[1] The feeling of the American public towards the very rich is, so far as a stranger can judge, one of curiosity and wonder rather than of respect. There is less snobbishness shown towards them than in England. They are admired as a famous runner or a jockey is admired, but do not seem to receive either flattery or social deference. When a man has won great wealth by the display of remarkable talents, as is the case with some of the manufacturers and railroad kings, the case is rather different, for it is felt that his gifts are a credit to the nation.

The persons to whom official rank gives importance are very few indeed, being for the nation at large only about one hundred persons at the top of the Federal Government, and in each State less than a dozen of its highest State functionaries. For these State functionaries, indeed, the respect shown is extremely scanty, and much more official than personal. A high Federal officer, a senator, or justice of the supreme court, or cabinet minister, is conspicuous while he holds his place, and is of course a personage in any private society he may enter; but less so than a corresponding official would be in Europe. A simple member of the House of Representatives is nobody. Even men of the highest official rank do not give themselves airs on the score of their position. Some years ago, being in Washington, I was taken by a friend to be presented to the Commander-in-chief of the United States army, a great soldier whose fame all the world knows. We found him standing at a desk in a bare room in the War Department, at work with one clerk. While he was talking to us the door of the room was pushed open, and there appeared the figure of a Western tourist belonging to what Europeans would call the lower middle class, followed by his wife and sister, who were "doing" Washington. Perceiving that the room was occupied they began to retreat, but the Commander-in-chief called them back. "Walk in, ladies," he said. "You can look around. You won't disturb me; make yourselves at home."

[1] The English system of hereditary titles tends to maintain the distinction of ancient lineage far less perfectly than that simple use of a family name which prevailed in Italy during the Middle Ages, or in ancient Rome. A Colonna or a Doria, like a Cornelius or a Valerius, carried the glory of his nobility in his name, whereas any upstart may be created a duke.

Intellectual attainment does not excite much notice till it becomes eminent, that is to say, till it either places its possessor in a conspicuous position, such as that of president of one of the greatest universities, or till it has made him well known to the world as a preacher, or writer, or scientific discoverer. When this kind of eminence has been reached, it receives, I think, more respect than anywhere in Europe, except possibly in Italy, where the interest in learned men, or poets, or artists, seems to be greater than anywhere else in Europe.[1] A famous writer or divine is known by name to a far greater number of persons in America than would know a similar person in any European country. He is one of the glories of the country. There is no artificial rank to cast him into the shade. He is possibly less famous than the railroad kings or manipulators of the stock markets; but he excites a different kind of sentiment; and people are willing to honour him in a way, sometimes distasteful to himself, which would not be applied to the millionaire except by those who sought to gain something from him.

Perhaps the best way of explaining how some of the differences above mentioned, in wealth or official position or intellectual eminence, affect social equality, is by reverting to what was called, a few pages back, equality of estimation —the idea which men form of other men as compared with themselves. It is in this that the real sense of equality comes out. In America men hold others to be at bottom exactly the same as themselves. If a man is enormously rich, like A. T. Stewart or William H. Vanderbilt, or if he is a great orator, like Daniel Webster or Henry Ward Beecher, or a great soldier like Ulysses S. Grant, or a great writer like R. W. Emerson, or President, so much the better for him. He is an object of interest, perhaps of admiration, possibly even of reverence. But he is deemed to be still of the same flesh and blood as other men. The admiration felt for him may be a reason for going to see him and longing to shake hands with him. But it is not a reason for bowing down to him, or addressing him in deferential terms, or treating him as if he was porcelain and yourself only earth-

[1] In Germany great respect is no doubt felt for the leaders of learning and science; but they are regarded as belonging to a world of their own, separated by a wide gulf from the territorial aristocracy, which still deems itself (as in the days of Candide) a different form of mankind from those who have not sixteen quarterings to show.

enware.[1] In this respect there is, I think, a difference, slight but perceptible, between the sentiment of equality as it exists in the United States, and as one finds it in France and Switzerland, the countries of the Old World where (if we except Norway, which has never had an aristocracy) social equality has made the greatest progress. In France and Switzerland there lingers a kind of feeling as if the old *noblesse* were not quite like other men. The Swiss peasant, with all his manly independence, has in many cantons a touch of instinctive reverence for the old families; or perhaps, in some other cantons, a touch of jealousy which makes him desire to exclude their members from office, because he feels that they still think themselves better than he is. Nothing like this is possible in America, where the very notion of such distinctions excites a wondering curiosity as to what sort of creature the titled noble of Europe can be.

The total absence of rank and the universal acceptance of equality do not however prevent the existence of grades and distinctions in society which, though they may find no tangible expression, are sometimes as sharply drawn as in Europe. Except in the newer parts of the West, those who deem themselves ladies and gentlemen draw just the same line between themselves and the multitude as is drawn in England, and draw it in much the same way. The nature of a man's occupation, his education, his manners and breeding,[2] his income, his connections, all come into view in determining whether he is in this narrow sense of the word "a gentleman," almost as they would in England, though in most parts of the United States personal qualities count for rather more than in England, and occupation for

[1] This is seen even in the manner of American servants. Although there is an aversion among native Americans to enter domestic service, the temporary discharge of such duties does not necessarily involve any loss of caste. Eighteen years ago I remember to have found all the waiting in a large hotel in the White Mountains done by the daughters of respectable New England farmers in the low country who had come up for their summer change of air to this place of resort, and were earning their board and lodging by acting as waitresses. They were treated by the guests as equals, and were indeed cultivated and well mannered young women.

[2] On the New York elevated railroad smoking is not permitted in any car. When I asked a conductor how he was able to enforce this rule, considering that on every other railway smoking was practised, he answered "I always say when any one seems disposed to insist, 'Sir, I am sure that if you are a gentleman you will not wish to bring me into a difficulty,' and then they always leave off."

rather less. The word is equally indefinable in both countries, but in America the expression "not quite a lady" seems to be less frequently employed. One is told, however, that the son of cultivated parents would not like to enter a retail store: and even in a Western city like Detroit the best people will say of a party that it was "very mixed." In some of the older cities society is as exclusive as in the more old-fashioned English counties, the "best set" considering itself very select indeed. In such a city I remember to have heard a family belonging to the best set, which is mostly to be found in a particular quarter of the city, speak of the inhabitants of a handsome suburb two miles away just as Belgravians might speak of Islington; and the son of the family who, having made in Europe the acquaintance of some of the dwellers in this suburb, had gone to a ball there, was questioned by his sisters about their manners and customs much as if he had returned from visiting a tribe in Central Africa. On inquiry I discovered that these North Shore people were as rich and doubtless thought themselves as cultivated as the people of my friends' quarter. But all the city knew that the latter were the "best set." One is told that this exclusiveness spreads steadily from East to West, and that before long there will be such sets in all the greater cities.

Europeans have been known to ask whether the United States do not suffer from the absence of a hereditary nobility. As may be supposed, such a question excites mirth in America: it is as if you were to offer them a Court and an Established Church. They remark, with truth, that since Pitt in England and the Napoleons in France prostituted hereditary titles, these have ceased to be either respectable or useful. "They do not," say the Americans, "suggest antiquity, for the English families that enjoy them are mostly new; they are not associated, like the ancient titles, with the history of your nation; they are merely a prize offered to wealth, the expression of a desire for gilding that plutocracy which has replaced the ancient aristocracy of your country. Seeing how little service hereditary nobility renders in maintaining the standard either of manners, or morals,[1]

[1] The moral and social standard which American society enforces is in some respects more exacting than that of England. I have frequently heard Americans express surprise at the reception accorded by fashionable London to Americans whom they held cheap, or to persons, whether English or foreign, whose transgressions had become matter of notoriety.

or honour, or public duty, few sensible men would create it in any European country where it did not exist; much less then should we to dream of creating it in America, which possesses none of the materials or conditions which could make it tolerable. If a peerage is purchaseable even in England, where the dignity of the older nobility might have suggested some care in bestowal, purchaseable not so openly as in Portugal or a German principality, but practically purchaseable by party services and by large subscriptions to public purposes, much more would it be purchaseable here, where there are no traditions to break down, where wealth accumulates rapidly, and the wealthy seek every avenue for display. Titles in this country would be simply an additional prize offered to wealth and ambition. They could not be respected. They would make us as snobbish as you are. They would be an unmixed evil." A European observer will not quarrel with this judgment. There is already a disposition in America, as everywhere else, to relish and make the most of such professional or official titles as can be had; it is a harmless way of trying to relieve the monotony of the world. If there be, as no doubt there is, less disposition than in England to run after and pay court to the great or the fashionable, this is perhaps due not to any superior virtue, but to the absence of those opportunities and temptations which their hereditary titles and other social institutions set before the English. It would be the very wantonness of folly to create in the new country what most thinking people would gladly be rid of in the old one.

Another question is more serious and less easily answered. What is the effect of social equality upon manners? Many causes go to the making of manners, as one may see by noting how much better they are in some parts of Europe than in other parts where nevertheless the structure of society is equally aristocratic, or democratic, as the case may be. One must therefore be careful not to ascribe to this source only such peculiarities as America shows. On the whole, bearing in mind that the English race has less than some other races of that quickness of perception and sympathy which goes far to make manners good, the Americans have gained more than they have lost by equality. I do not think that the upper class loses in grace, I am sure that the humbler class gains in independence. The manners of the "best people" are exactly those of England, with a thought more of consideration towards inferiors and of frankness

towards equals. Among the masses there is, generally speaking, as much real courtesy and good nature as anywhere else in the world. There is less outward politeness than in some parts of Europe, Portugal for instance, or Tuscany, or Sweden. There is a certain coolness or off-handness which at first annoys the European visitor, who still thinks himself "a superior"; but when he perceives that it is not meant for insolence, and that native Americans do not notice it, he learns to acquiesce. Perhaps the worst manners are those of persons drest in some rag of authority. The railroad car-conductor has a bad name; but personally I have always been well treated by him, and remember with pleasure one on a Southern railroad (an ex-Confederate soldier) who did the honours of his car with a dignified courtesy worthy of those Hungarian nobles who are said to have the best manners in Europe. The hotel clerk is supercilious, but if one frankly admits his superiority, his patronage becomes friendly, and he may even condescend to interest himself in making your stay in the city agreeable. One finds most courtesy among the rural population of New England and the Middle States, least among the recent immigrants in the cities and the unsettled population of the West. However, the most material point to remark is the improvement of recent years. The concurrent testimony of European travellers, including both admirers and detractors of democracy, proves that manners must have been disagreeable forty years ago, and one finds nowadays an equally general admission that the Americans are as pleasant to one another and to strangers as are the French or the Germans or the English. The least agreeable feature to the visitors of former years, an incessant vaunting of their own country and disparagement of others, has disappeared, and the tinge of self-assertion which the sense of equality used to give is now but faintly noticeable.

CHAPTER 14

THE INFLUENCE OF DEMOCRACY ON THOUGHT

Two opposite theories regarding the influence of democratic institutions on intellectual activity have found currency. One theory extols them because they stimulate the mind of

a people, not only sharpening men's wits by continual struggle and unrest, but giving to each citizen a sense of his own powers and duties in the world, which spurs him on to exertions in ever-widening fields. This theory is commonly applied to Athens and other democracies of the ancient world, as contrasted with Sparta and the oligarchic cities, whose intellectual production was scanty or altogether wanting. It compares the Rome of Cicero, Lucretius, and Catullus, and the Augustan age, whose great figures were born under the Republic, with the vaster but comparatively sterile Roman world of Marcus Aurelius or Constantine, when freedom had long since vanished. It notes the outburst of literary and artistic splendour that fell in the later age of the republics of mediæval Italy, and dwells with especial pleasure on the achievements of Florence, the longest-lived and the most glorious of the free commonwealths of Italy.

According to the other theory, Democracy is the child of ignorance, the parent of dulness and conceit. The opinion of the greatest number being the universal standard, everything is reduced to the level of vulgar minds. Originality is stunted, variety disappears, no man thinks for himself, or, if he does, fears to express what he thinks. A drear pall of monotony covers the sky.

> "Thy hand, great Anarch, lets the curtain fall
> And universal darkness buries all."

This doctrine seems to date from the appearance of De Tocqueville's book, though his professed disciples have pushed it much further than his words warrant. It is really an *a priori* doctrine, drawn from imagining what the consequences of a complete equality of material conditions and political powers ought to be. But it claims to rest upon the observed phenomena of the United States, which, thirty years ago, were still the only great modern democracy; and it was with reference to the United States that it was enunciated by Mr. Robert Lowe in one of those speeches of 1866 which so greatly impressed his contemporaries.

Both these theories will be found on examination to be baseless. Both, so far as they are *a priori* theories, are fanciful; both, in so far as they purport to rest upon the facts of history, err by regarding one set of facts only, and ignoring a great number of concomitant conditions which have probably more to do with the result than the few conditions which have been arbitrarily taken to be sufficient

causes. None of the Greek republics was a democracy in the modern sense, for all rested upon slavery; nor, indeed, can the name be applied, except at passing moments, to the Italian cities. Many circumstances besides their popular government combined to place the imperishable crown of literary and artistic glory upon the brows of the city of the Violet and the city of the Lily. So also the view that a democratic land is necessarily a land of barren monotony, while unsound even as a deduction from general principles, is still more unsound in its assumption of certain phenomena as true of America, and in the face it puts on the phenomena it has assumed. The theorists who have propounded it give us, like Daniel, the dream as well as their interpretation of it. But the dream is one of their own inventing; and such as it is, it is wrongly interpreted.

Few mistakes are more common than that of exaggerating the influence of forms of government. As there are historians and politicians who, when they come across a trait of national character for which no obvious explanation presents itself, set it down to "race," so there are writers and speakers who, too indolent to examine the whole facts of the case, or too ill trained to feel the need of such examination, pounce upon the political institutions of a country as the easiest way to account for its social and intellectual, perhaps even for its moral and religious peculiarities. Few problems are in reality more complex than the relation between the political and the intellectual life of a country; few things more difficult to distinguish than the influences respectively attributable to an equality of political rights and powers on the one hand, an equality of material and social conditions on the other. It is commonly assumed that Democracy and Equality go hand in hand, but as one may have popular government along with enormous differences of wealth and dissimilarities in social usage, so also one may have social equality under a despot. Doubtless, when social and political equality go hand in hand they intensify one another; but when inequality of material conditions becomes marked, social life changes, and as social phenomena become more complex their analysis becomes more difficult.

Reverting to the two theories from which we set out, it may be said that the United States furnish little support to either. American democracy has certainly produced no age of Pericles. Neither has it dwarfed literature and led a wretched people, so dull as not even to realize their dulness, into a barren plain of featureless mediocrity. To ascribe the

deficiencies, such as they are, of art and culture in America, solely or even mainly to her form of government, is not less absurd than to ascribe, as many Americans of what I may call the trumpeting school do, her marvellous material progress to the same cause. It is not Democracy that has paid off a gigantic debt and raised Chicago out of a swamp. Neither is it Democracy that has denied her philosophers like Burke and poets like Wordsworth.

Most writers who have dealt with these matters have not only laid more upon the shoulders of democratic government that it ought to bear, but have preferred abstract speculations to the humbler task of ascertaining and weighing the facts. They have spun ingenious theories about democracy as the source of this or that, or whatever it pleased them to assume; they have not tried to determine by a wide induction what specific results appear in countries which, differing in other respects, agree in being democratically governed. If I do not follow these time-honoured precedents, it is not because the process is difficult, but because it is unprofitable. These speculations have perhaps had their use in suggesting to us what phenomena we ought to look for in democratic countries; but if any positive results are to be reached, they must be reached by carefully verifying the intellectual phenomena of more than one country, and establishing an unmistakable relation between them and the political institutions under which they prevail.

If some one, starting from the current conception of democracy, were to say that in a democratic nation we should find a disposition to bold and unbridled speculations, sparing neither theology nor morals, a total absence of rule, tradition, and precedent, each man thinking and writing as responsible to no criticism, "every poet his own Aristotle," a taste for strong effects and garish colours, valuing force rather than fineness, grandeur rather than beauty, a vigorous, hasty, impetuous style of speaking and writing, a grandiose, and perhaps sensational art: he would say what would be quite as natural and reasonable *a priori* as most of the pictures given us of democratic societies. Yet many of the suggested features would be the opposite of those which America presents.

Every such picture must be fanciful. He who starts from so simple and (so to speak) bare a conception as that of equal civil rights and equal political powers vested in every member of the community cannot but have recourse to his fancy in trying to body forth the results of this principle.

Let any one study the portrait of the democratic man and democratic city which the first and greatest of all the hostile critics of democracy has left us,[1] and compare it with the very different descriptions of life and culture under a popular government in which European speculation has disported itself since De Tocqueville's time. He will find each theory plausible in the abstract, and each equally unlike the facts which contemporary America sets before us.

Let us then bid farewell to fancy and endeavour to discover what are now the salient intellectual features of the mass of the native population in the United States.

As there is much difference of opinion regarding them, I present with diffidence the following list:—

1. A desire to be abreast of the best thought and work of the world everywhere, to have every form of literature and art adequately represented, and excellent of its kind, so that America shall be felt to hold her own among the nations.

2. A fondness for bold and striking effects, a preference for large generalizations and theories which have an air of completeness.

3. An absence among the multitude of refined taste, and disposition to be attracted rather by general brilliance than by delicacy of workmanship; a want of mellowness and inadequate perception of the difference between first-rate work in a quiet style and mere flatness.

4. Little respect for canons or traditions, accompanied by the notion that new conditions must of necessity produce new ideas.

5. An undervaluing of special knowledge or experience, except perhaps in the sphere of applied science and commerce, an idea that an able man can do one thing pretty much as well as another, as Dr. Johnson thought that if he had taken to politics he would have been as distinguished therein as he was in poetry.

6. An admiration for literary or scientific eminence, an enthusiasm for anything that can be called genius, with an over readiness to discover it.

7. A love of intellectual novelties.

[1] Plato indeed indulges his fancy so far as to describe the very mules and asses of a democracy as prancing along the roads, scarcely deigning to bear their burdens. The passion for unrestrained licence, for novelty, for variety is to him the note of democracy, whereas monotony and even obstinate conservatism are the faults which the latest European critics bid us expect.

8. An intellectual impatience, and desire for quick and patent results.

9. An over-valuing of the judgments of the multitude; a disposition to judge by "success" work which has not been produced for the sake of success.

10. A tendency to mistake bigness for greatness.

Contrariwise, if we regard not the people generally but the most cultivated class, we shall find, together with some of the above-mentioned qualities, others which indicate a reaction against the popular tendencies. This class has a strong relish for subtlety of thought and highly finished art, whether in literature or painting. It is so much afraid of crudity and vagueness as to be prone to devote itself to minute and careful study of subjects unattractive to the masses.

Of these characteristics of the people at large some may at first sight seem inconsistent with others, as for instance the admiration for intellectual gifts with the under-valuing of special knowledge; nevertheless it could be shown that both are discoverable in Americans as compared with Englishmen. The former admire intelligence more than the latter do: but they defer less to special competence. However, assuming for the moment that there is something true in these suggestions, which it would take too long to attempt to establish one by one, be it observed that very few of them can be directly connected with democratic government. Even these few might take a different form in a differently situated democracy. The seventh and eighth seem due to the general intelligence and education of the people, while the remainder, though not wholly uninfluenced by the habits which popular government tends to breed, must be mainly ascribed to the vast size of the country, the vast numbers and homogeneity of its native white population, the prevalence of social equality, a busy industrialism, a restless changefulness of occupation, and the absence of a leisured class dominant in matters of taste—conditions that have little or nothing to do with political institutions. The prevalence of evangelical Protestantism has been quite as important a factor in the intellectual life of the nation as its form of government.

Some one may say—I wish to state the view fairly though I do not entirely agree with it—that assuming the foregoing analysis to be correct, the influence of democracy, apart from its tendency to secure an ample provision of education, is discernible in two points. It produces self-confidence

and self-complacency, national and personal, with the result both of stimulating a certain amount of thought and of preventing the thought that is so produced from being subjected to proper tests. Ambition and self-esteem will call out what might have lain dormant, but they will hinder a nation as well as a man from duly judging its own works and in so far will retard its progress. Those who are naturally led to trust and obey common sense and the numerical majority in matters of state, overvalue the judgment of the majority in other matters. Now the judgment of the masses is a poor standard for the thinker or the artist to set before him. It may narrow his view and debase his style. He fears to tread in new paths or express unpopular opinions; or if he despises the multitude he may take refuge in an acrid cynicism. Where the masses rule, a writer cannot but think of the masses, and as they do not appreciate refinements he will eschew these, making himself at all hazards intelligible to the common mind, and seeking to attract by broad, perhaps coarsely broad, effects, the hasty reader, who at the circulating libraries passes by Walter Scott or Thackeray to fasten on the latest sketch of fashionable life or mysterious crime.

I do not deny that there is some force in this way of putting the case. Democracy tends to produce a superficially active public and perhaps also a jubilant and self-confident public. But it is quite possible to have a democratic people which shall be neither fond of letters nor disposed to trust its own judgment and taste in judging them. Much will depend on the other features of the situation. In the United States the cultivated public increases rapidly, and the very reaction which goes on within it against the defects of the multitude becomes an important factor. All things considered, I doubt whether democracy tends to discourage originality, subtlety, refinement, in thought and in expression, whether literary or artistic. I doubt if there be any solid ground for expecting monotony or vulgarity under one form of government more than another. The causes lie deeper. Art and literature have before now been base and vulgar under absolute monarchies and under oligarchies. One of the most polished and aristocratic societies in Europe has for two centuries been that of Vienna; yet what society could have been intellectually duller or less productive? Moreover, it must not be forgotten that the habits of popular government which open a career to talent in public life, open it in literature also. No man need lean on a faction

or propitiate a coteric. A pure clear voice with an unwonted message may at first fail to make itself heard over the din of competitors for popular favour; but once heard, it and its message will probably be judged on their own merits.

Passing away from this question as to the supposed narcotic power of democracy, the further question may be asked, what is the distinctive note of democratic thought and art as they actually appear in the United States? What is the peculiar quality or flavour which springs from this political element in their condition? I cannot tell. I find no such note. I have searched for it, and, as the Americans say, it is hard work looking for what is not there. Some Europeans and many Americans profess to have found it, and will tell you that this or that peculiarity of American literature is due to democracy. No doubt, if you take individual writers, you may discover in several of them something, though not always the same thing, which savours of democratic feeling and tinges their way of regarding human life. But that is not enough. What must be shown is a general quality running through the majority of these writers—a quality which is at once recognized as racy of the soil, and which can be traced back to the democratic element which the soil undoubtedly contains. No such quality seems to have been shown. That there is a distinctive note in many—not, perhaps in all—of the best American books may be admitted. It may be caught by ears not the most delicate. But is this note the voice of democracy? Is it even the voice of democracy and equality combined? There is a difference, slight yet perceptible, in the part which both sentiment and humour play in American books, when we compare them with English books of equivalent strength. The humour has a vein of oddity, and the contrast between the soft copiousness of the sentiment and the rigid lines of lingering Puritanism which it suffuses, is rarely met with in England. Perhaps there is less repose in the American style; there is certainly a curious unrestfulness in the effort, less common in English writers, to bend metaphors to unwonted uses. But are these differences, with others I might mention—and, after all, they are slight—due to any cause connected with politics? Are they not rather due to a mixed and curiously intertwined variety of other causes which have moulded the American mind during the last two centuries? American imagination has produced nothing more conspicuously original than the romances of Hawthorne. If any one says that he finds something in them

which he remembers in no previous English writer, we know what is meant and probably agree. But can it be said that there is anything distinctively American in Hawthorne, that is to say, that his specific quality is of a kind which re-appears in other American writers? Few will affirm this. The most peculiar, and therfore I suppose the most characteristically American school of thought, has been what used to be called the Concord or Transcendental school of forty years ago; among the writings produced by which those of Emerson are best known in Europe. Were the authors of that school distinctively democratic either in the colour of their thought, or in its direction, or in the style which expresses it? And if so, can the same democratic tinge be discerned in the authors of to-day? I doubt it: but such matters do not admit of proof or disproof. One must leave them to the literary feeling of the reader.

A very distinguished American man of letters once said to me that he hated nothing so much as to hear people talk about American literature. He meant, I think, that those who did so were puzzling themselves unnecessarily to find something which belonged to a new country, and a democratic country, and were forgetting or ignoring the natural relation of works of imagination and thought produced in America to books written by men of the same race in the Old World before and since 1776.

So far, then, as regards American literature generally, I do not believe that there is in it anything specifically democratic. Nor if we look at the various departments of speculative thought, such as metaphysics and theology, or at those which approach nearer to the exact sciences, such as economics and jurisprudence, shall we find that the character and substance of the doctrines propounded bear marked traces of a democratic influence. Why should we be surprised at this, seeing that the influence of a form of government is only one among many influences, even where a nation stands alone, and creates a literature distinctively local? But can books written in the United States be deemed to constitute a literature locally American in the same sense as the literatures of France and Germany, of Italy and Russia, belong to those countries? For the purposes of thought and art the United States is a part of England, and England is a part of America. Many English books are more widely read and strike deeper to the heart in America than in England. Some American books have a like fortune in England. Differences there are, but differences how trivial

compared with the resemblances in temper, in feeling, in susceptibility to certain forms of moral and physical beauty, in the general view of life and nature, in the disposition to revere and be swayed by the same matchless models of elder literature which both branches of the English race can equally claim. American literature does not to-day differ more from English literature than the Scottish writers of eighty or a hundred years ago—Burns, Scott, Adam Smith, Reid, Hume, Robertson—differed from their English contemporaries. There was a fondness for abstractions and generalizations in the Scottish prose writers; there was in the Scottish poets a bloom and fragrance of mountain heather which gave to their work a charm of freshness and singularity, like that which a faint touch of local accent gives to the tongue of an orator. But they were English as well as Scottish writers: they belong to English literature and make part of its glory to the world beyond. So Fenimore Cooper, Hawthorne, Emerson, Longfellow, and those on whom their mantle has fallen, belong to England as well as to America; and English writers, as they more and more realize the vastness of the American public they address, will more and more feel themselves to be American as well as English, and will often find in America not only a larger but a more responsive audience.

We have been here concerned not to discuss the merits and estimate the place of American thinkers and writers, but only to examine the relation in which they stand to their political and social environment. That relation, however, sets before us one more question. The English-speaking population of the United States is one-third larger than that of the United Kingdom. It is a more educated population, in which a greater number of persons come under the influence of books and might therefore be stirred up to intellectual production. Why then does it not make more important contributions to the common literary wealth of the race? Is there a want of creative power? and if so, to what is the want due?

This is a question frequently propounded. I propose to consider it in the chapter which follows.

CHAPTER 15

CREATIVE INTELLECTUAL POWER

THERE is a street in Florence on each side of which stand statutes of the famous Florentines of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries,—Dante, Giotto, Petrarch, Boccaccio, Ghiberti, Machiavelli, Michael Angelo, and others scarcely less illustrious, all natives of the little city which in their days had never a population of more than sixty thousand souls.[1] No one can walk between these rows of world-famous figures, matched by no other city of the modern world, without asking himself what cause determined so much of the highest genius to this one spot; why in Italy herself populous Milan and Naples and Venice have no such list to show; why the succession of greatness stopped with the beginning of the sixteenth century and has never been resumed? Questions substantially the same constantly rise to the mind in reading the history of other countries. Why did England produce no first-rate poet in the two stirring centuries between Chaucer and Shakespeare, and again in the century and a half between Milton's birth and Wordsworth's? Why have epochs of comparative sterility more than once fallen upon Germany and France? and why has music sometimes reached its highest pitch of excellence at moments when the other arts were languishing? Why does the sceptre of intellectual and artistic leadership pass now to one great nation, now to another, inconstant and unpredictable as are the shifting winds?

These questions touch the deepest and most complex problems of history; and neither historian nor physiologist has yet been able to throw any real light upon them. Even the commonplace remark that times of effort and struggle tend to develop an unusually active intellectual movement and therewith to awaken or nourish rare geniuses, is not altogether true; for some of the geniuses have arisen at moments when there was no excitement to call them forth, and at other times seasons of storm and stress have raised up no

[1] Petrarch saw the light in Arezzo, but his family was Florentine, and it was by a mere accident that he was born away from his own city.

one capable of directing the efforts or interpreting the feelings of his generation. One thing, however, is palpable: numbers have nothing to do with the matter. There is no average of a man of genius to so many thousands or millions of persons. Out of the sixty thousand of Florence there arise during two centuries more men of undying fame than out of huge London during the last three centuries. Even the stock of solid second-class ability does not necessarily increase with increasing numbers; while as to those rare combinations of gifts which produce poetry or philosophy of the first order, they are revealed no more frequently in a great European nation now than they were in a Semitic tribe or a tiny Greek city twenty-five or thirty centuries ago.

There is therefore no reason why the absence of brilliant genius among the sixty millions in the United States should excite any surprise; we might as well wonder that there is no Goethe or Schiller or Kant or Hegel in the Germany of to-day, so much more populous and better educated than the Germany of their birthtime. It is not to be made a reproach against America that men like Tennyson or Darwin have not been born there. "The wind bloweth where it listeth;" the rarest gifts appear no one can tell why or how. In broad France a century ago no man was found able to spring upon the neck of the Revolution and turn it to his will. Fate brought her favourite from a wild Italian island, that had but just passed under the yoke of the nation to which it gave a master.

The question we have to ask as regards the United States is therefore not why it has given us few men of the highest and rarest distinction, but whether it has failed to produce its fair share of talents of the second rank, that is, of men capable of taking a lead in all the great branches of literary or artistic or scientific activity, men who instruct and delight their own generation, though possibly future generations may not hold all of them in remembrance.

Have fewer men of this order adorned the roll of fame in the United States, during the century of their independence, than in England, or France or Germany during the same period? Obviously this is the fact as regards art in all its branches; and also as regards physical and mathematical science. In literature the disparity is less evident, yet most candid Americans will agree with Englishmen that it is greater than those who know the education and intelligence of the younger people would have expected. I pass by oratory and statesmanship, because comparison is in these fields very

difficult. The fact therefore being admitted, we have to endeavour to account for it.

If the matter were one of numerical averages, it would be pertinent to remark that of the sixty millions of people in the United States seven or eight millions are negroes, at present altogether below the stratum from which production can be expected; that of the whites there may be nearly two millions to whom English is a foreign language, and that several millions are recent immigrants from Europe. This diminishes the contrast between numbers and intellectual results. But numbers have so little to do with the question that the point deserves no more than a passing reference.

Those who have discussed the conditions of intellectual productivity have often remarked that epochs of stir and excitement are favourable, because they stimulate men's minds, setting new ideas afloat, and awakening new ambitions. It is also true that vigorous unremitting labour is, speaking generally, needed for the production of good work, and that one is therefore less entitled to expect it in an indolent time and from members of the luxurious classes. But it is not less true, though less frequently observed, that tranquillity and repose are necessary to men of the kind we are considering, and often helpful even to the highest geniuses, for the evolving of new thoughts and the creation of forms of finished and harmonious beauty. He who is to do such work must have time to meditate, and pause, and meditate again. He must be able to set his creation aside, and return to it after days or weeks to look at it with fresh eyes. He must be neither distracted from his main purpose, nor hurried in effecting it. He must be able to concentrate the whole force of his reason or imagination on one subject, to abstract himself when needful from the flitting sights and many-voiced clamour of the outer world. Juvenal said this long ago about the poet; it also applies, though possibly in a lower degree, both to the artist and to the serious thinker, or delicate workman, in any field of literature, to the metaphysician, the theologian, the philosophic historian, the economist, the philologist, even the novelist and the statesman. I have heard men who had gone from a quiet life into politics complain that they found their thinking powers wither, and that while they became far more expert in getting up subjects and speaking forcibly and plausibly, they found it harder and harder to form sound general views and penetrate beneath the superficialities of the newspaper and the platform. Interrupted thought, trains of reflection or imaginative conceptions constantly broken by

a variety of petty transient calls of business, claims of society, matters passing in the world to note and think of, not only tire the mind but destroy its chances of attaining just and deep views of life and nature, as a wind-ruffled pool ceases to reflect the rocks and woods around it. Mohammed falling into trances on the mountain above Mecca, Dante in the sylvan solitudes of Fonte Avellana, Cervantes and Bunyan in the enforced seclusion of a prison, Hegel so wrapt and lost in his speculations that, taking his manuscript to the publisher in Jena on the day of the great battle, he was surprised to see French soldiers in the streets; these are types of the men and conditions which give birth to thoughts that occupy succeeding generations: and what is true of these greatest men is perhaps even more true of men of the next rank. Doubtless many great works have been produced among inauspicious surroundings, and even under severe pressure of time; but it will, I think, be almost invariably found that the producer had formed his ideas or conceived his creations in hours of comparative tranquillity, and had turned on them the full stream of his powers to the exclusion of whatever could break or divert its force.

In Europe men call this a century of unrest. But the United States is more unrestful than Europe, more unrestful than any country we know of has yet been. Nearly every one is busy; those few who have not to earn their living and do not feel called to serve their countrymen, find themselves out of place, and have been wont either to make amusement into a business or to transfer themselves to the ease of France or Italy. The earning of one's living is not, indeed, incompatible with intellectually creative work, for many of those who have done such work best have done it in addition to their gainful occupation, or have earned their living by it. But in America it is unusually hard for any one to withdraw his mind from the endless variety of external impressions and interest which daily life presents, and which impinge upon the mind, I will not say to vex it, but to keep it constantly vibrating to their touch. Life is that of the squirrel in his revolving cage, never still even when it does not seem to change. It becomes every day more and more so in England, and English literature and art show increasing marks of haste. In the United States the ceaseless stir and movement, the constant presence of newspapers, the eagerness which looks through every pair of eyes, even that active intelligence and sense of public duty, strongest in the best minds, which make a citizen feel that he ought to know what is passing in the wider world as well

as in his own, all these render life more exciting to the average man than it is in Europe; but chase away from it the opportunities for repose and meditation which art and philosophy need, as growing plants need the coolness and darkness of night no less than the blaze of day. The type of mind which American conditions have evolved is quick, vigorous, practical, versatile; but it is unfavourable to the natural germination and slow ripening of large and luminous ideas; it wants the patience that will spend weeks or months on bringing details to an exquisite perfection. And accordingly we see that the most rich and finished literary work America has given us has proceeded from the older regions of the country, where the pulsations of life are slower and steadier than in the West or in the great commercial cities. It is from New England that nearly all the best books of the last generation came; and that not solely because the English race has been purest there, and education most generally diffused, for the New Englanders who have gone West, though they have carried with them their moral standard and their bright intelligence, seem either to have left behind their gift for literary creation, or to care to employ it only in teaching and in journalism.

It may be objected to this view that some of the great literary ages, such as the Periclean age at Athens, the Medicean age at Florence, the age of Elizabeth in England, have been ages full of movement and excitement. But the unrestfulness which prevails in America is altogether different from the large variety of life, the flow of stimulating ideas and impressions which marked those ages. Life is not as interesting in America, except as regards commercial speculation, as it is in Europe; because society and the environment of man are too uniform. It is hurried and bustling; it is filled with a multitude of duties and occupations and transient impressions. In the ages I have referred to men had time enough for all there was to do, and the very scantiness of literature and rarity of news made that which was read and received tell more powerfully upon the imagination.

Nor is it only the distractions of American life that clog the wings of invention. The atmosphere is over full of all that pertains to material progress. Americans themselves say, when excusing the comparative poverty of learning and science, that their chief occupation is at present the subjugation of their continent, that it is an occupation large enough to demand most of the energy and ambition of the nation, but that presently, when this work is done, the same energy and ambition will win similar triumphs in the fields of abstract

thought, while the gifts which now make them the first nation in the world for practical inventions, will then assure to them a like place in scientific discovery. There is evidently much truth in this. The attractions of practical life are so great to men conscious of their own vigour, the development of the West and the vast operations of commerce and finance which have accompanied that development have absorbed so many strenuous talents, that the supply of ability available not only for pure science (apart from its applications) and for philosophical and historical studies, but even for statesmanship, has been proportionately reduced. But, besides this withdrawal of an unusually large part of the nation's force, the predominance of material and practical interests has turned men's thoughts and conversation into a channel unfavourable to the growth of the higher and more solid kinds of literature, perhaps still more unfavourable to art. Goethe said, *apropos* of the good work produced by such men as Ampère and Mérimée at a very early age, "If a talent is to be speedily and happily developed the chief point is that a great deal of intellect and sound culture should be current in a nation." There is certainly a great deal of intellect current in the United States. But it is chiefly directed to business, that is, to railways, to finance, to commerce, to inventions, to manufactures (as well as to practical professions like law), things which play a relatively larger part than in Europe, as subjects of universal attention and discussion. There is abundance of sound culture, but it is so scattered about in divers places and among small groups which seldom meet one another, that no large cultured society has arisen similar to that of European capitals or to that which her universities have created for Germany. In Boston twenty years ago a host could have brought together round his table nine men as interesting and cultivated as Paris or London would have furnished. But a similar party of eighteen could not have been collected, nor perhaps even the nine, anywhere except in Boston. At present, culture is more diffused: there are many cities where men of high attainments and keen intellectual interest are found, and associate themselves in literary or scientific clubs. Societies for the study of particular authors are not uncommon among women. I remember to have been told of a Homer club and an Æschylus club, formed by the ladies of St. Louis, and of a Dante club in some Eastern city. Nevertheless a young talent gains less than it would gain in Europe from the surroundings into which it is born. The atmosphere is not charged with ideas as in Germany, nor with

critical *finesse* as in France. Stimulative it is, but the stimulus drives eager youth away from the groves of the Muses into the struggling throng of the market-place.

It may be thought fanciful to add that in a new country one whole set of objects which appeal to the imagination, are absent,—no castles gray with age; no solemn cathedrals whose altering styles of architecture carry the mind up or down the long stream of history from the eleventh to the seventeenth century; few spots or edifices consecrated by memories of famous men or deeds, and among these none of remote date. There is certainly no want of interest in those few spots: the warmth with which Americans cherish them puts to shame the indifference of the English Parliament to the historic and prehistoric sites and buildings of Britain. But not one American youth in a thousand comes under the spell of any such associations. In the city or State where he lives there is nothing to call him away from the present. All he sees is new, and has no glories to set before him save those of accumulated wealth and industry skilfully applied to severely practical ends.

Some one may say that if (as was observed in last chapter) English and American literature are practically one, there is no need to explain the fact that one part of a race undivided for literary purposes leaves the bulk of literary production to be done by the other part, seeing that it can enter freely into the labours of the latter and reckon them its own. To argue thus would be to push the doctrine of the unity of the two branches rather too far, for after all there is much in American conditions and life which needs its special literary and artistic interpretations; and the question would still confront us, why the transatlantic branch, nowise inferior in mental force, contributes less than its share to the common stock. Still it is certainly true that the existence of a great body of producers, in England of literature, as in France of pictures, diminishes the need for production in America. Or to put the same thing in another way, if the Americans did not speak English they would evidently feel called on to create more high literature for themselves. Many books which America might produce are not produced because the men qualified to write them know that there are already English books on the same subject; and the higher such men's standard is, the more apt are they to overrate the advantages which English authors enjoy as compared with themselves. Many feelings and ideas which now find adequate expression through the English books which Americans read would then have to

be expressed through American books, and their literature would be not only more individual, but more copious and energetic. If it lost in breadth, it would gain in freshness and independence. American authors conceive that even the non-recognition of international copyright has told for evil on their profession. Since the native writer has been undersold by reprints of English and French books, which, paying nothing to the European author, can be published at the cost of the paper and printing only, native authorship is discouraged, native talent diverted into other fields, while at the same time the intellectual standard of the public is lowered and its taste vulgarized. It might be thought that the profusion of cheap reprints would tend to quicken thought and diffuse the higher kinds of knowledge among the masses. But experience proves that by far the largest part of these reprints, and the part which is most extensively read, are novels, and among them many flimsy novels, which drive better books, including some of the best American fiction, out of the market, and tend to Europeanize the American mind in the worst way. One may smile at the suggestion that the allegiance of the working classes to their democratic institutions will be seduced by descriptions of English duchesses;[1] yet it is probably true—eminent observers assure one of it—that the profusion of new frothy or highly-spiced fiction offered at fivepence or tenpence a volume tends to spoil the popular palate for the enjoyment of more wholesome and nutritious food. And if it injures the higher literature by diminishing the demand, it may further injure it by creating an atmosphere unfavourable to the growth of pure and earnest native literary talent.

What then of the newspapers? The newspapers are too large a subject for this chapter, and their influence as organs of opinion has been already discussed. The vigour and brightness of many among them are surprising. Nothing escapes them: everything is set in the sharpest, clearest light. Their want of reticence and delicacy is regretfully admitted by all educated Americans—the editors, I think, included. The cause of this deficiency is probably to be found in the fact that, whereas the first European journals were written for the polite world of large cities, American journals were, early in their career, if not at its very beginning, written for the bulk of the people, and published in communities still so small that everybody's concerns were

[1] I have seen this argument advanced.

already pretty well known to everybody else. They had attained no high level of literary excellence when some forty years ago an enterprising man of unrefined taste created a new type of "live" newspaper, which made a rapid success by its smartness, copiousness, and variety, while addressing itself entirely to the multitude. Other papers were almost forced to shape themselves on the same lines, because the class which desired something more choice was still relatively small; and now the journals of the chief cities have become such vast commercial concerns that they still think first of the mass and are controlled by its tastes, which they have themselves done so much to create. There are cities where the more refined readers who dislike flippant personalities are counted by tens of thousands, but in such cities competition is now too severe to hold out much prospect of success to a paper which does not expect the support of hundreds of thousands. It is not, however, with the æsthetic or moral view of the newspaper that we are here concerned, but with the effect on the national mind of the enormous ratio which the reading of newspapers bears to all other reading, a ratio higher than even in France or England. A famous Englishmen, himself a powerful and fertile thinker, contrasted the value of the history of Thucydides with that of a single number of the *Times* newspaper, greatly to the advantage of the latter. Others may conceive that a thoughtful study of Thucydides, or, not to go beyond our own tongue, of Bacon, Milton, Locke, or Burke, perhaps even of Gibbon, Grote, or Macaulay, will do more to give keenness to the eye and strength to the wings of the mind than a whole year's reading of the best daily newspaper. It is not merely that the matter is of more permanent and intrinsic worth, nor that the manner and style form the student's taste; it is not merely that in the newspaper we are in contact with persons like ourselves, in the other case with rare and splendid intellects. The whole attitude of the reader is different. His attention is loose, his mind unbraced, so that he does not stop to scrutinize an argument, and forgets even valuable facts as quickly as he has learnt them. If he read Burke as he reads the newspaper, Burke would do him little good. And therefore the habit of mind produced by a diet largely composed of newspapers is adverse to solid thinking and dulling to the sense of beauty. Scorched and stony is the soil which newspaper reading has prepared to receive the seeds of genius.

Does the modern world really gain, so far as creative

thought is concerned, by the profusion of cheap literature? It is a question one often asks in watching the passengers on an American railway. A boy walks up and down the car scattering newspapers and books in paper covers right and left as he goes. The newspapers are glanced at, though probably most people have read several of the day's papers already. The books are nearly all novels. They are not bad in tone, and sometimes they give incidentally a superficial knowledge of things outside the personal experience of the reader; while from their newspapers the passengers draw a stock of information far beyond that of a European peasant, or even of an average European artisan. Yet one feels that his constant succession of transient ideas, none of them impressively though many of them startlingly stated, all of them flitting swiftly past the mental sight as the trees flit past the eye when one looks out of the car window, is no more favourable to the development of serious intellectual interests and creative intellectual power than is the limited knowledge of the European artisan.

Most of the reasons I have hazarded to account for a phenomenon surprising to one who recognizes the quantity of intellect current in America, and the diffusion, far more general than in any other country, of intellectual curiosity, are reasons valid in the Europe of to-day as compared with the Europe of last century, and still more true of the modern world as compared with the best periods of the ancient. Printing is by no means pure gain to the creative faculties, whatever it may be to the acquisitive; even as a great ancient thinker seems to have thought that the invention of writing in Egypt had weakened the reflective powers of man. The question follows, Are these causes, supposing them to be true causes, likely to be more or less operative in the America of next century than they now are? Will America become more what Europe is now, or will she be even more American?

I have elsewhere thrown out some conjectures on this point. Meantime it is pertinent to ask what are the most recent developments of American thought and research, for this will help us to see whether the tide of productive endeavour is rising or falling.

The abundant and excellent work done in fiction need be mentioned only for the sake of calling attention to the interest it has, over and above its artistic merit, as a record of the local manners and usages and types of character in various parts of the Union—types which are fast dis-

appearing. The Creoles of Louisiana, the negroes under slavery, with African tales still surviving in their memories, the rough but kindly backwoodsmen of Indiana forty years ago, the humours of the Mississippi steamboat and the adventurous life of the Far West, are all known to Europe through the tales of writers now living, as the Indians of eighty years ago became known through the romances of Fenimore Cooper. However, this is familiar ground to European readers, so I pass to work of a less generally attractive order.

Thirty years ago the standard of classical scholarship was low, and even the school commentaries on classical authors fell far short of those produced in Germany or England. Nowadays both in classical and in Oriental philology admirably thorough and painstaking work is produced. I have heard high European authorities observe that there is an almost excessive anxiety among American scholars to master all that has been written, even by third-rate Germans, and that the desire they evince to overtake Germany in respect of knowledge betrays some among them into the German fault of neglecting merits of form and style. In the sciences of nature, especially in those of observation, remarkable advances have been made. Dr. Asa Gray, whom the eldest American university has lately lost, was one of the two or three greatest botanists of his age. Much excellent work has been done in geology and palæontology, particularly in exploring the Rocky Mountain regions. Both for the excellence of their instruments and the accuracy of their observations, the astronomers stand in the front rank; nor do they fall behind Europe in the theoretical part of this science. In some branches of physics and chemistry, such as spectrum analysis, American investigators have won like fame. Competent authorities award the highest praise to their recent contributions to biology and to medical science. In economics they seem to stand before either England or France, both as regards the extent to which the subject is studied in universities and as regards the number of eminent persons whom it occupies. In jurisprudence and law, American textbooks are quite as good as those produced in England; [1] and one author, the late Mr. Justice Story, deserves, looking to the quantity as well as to the quality of his work,

[1] The number of legal journals and magazines in the United States is very much larger than in England, and the average level of workmanship in them seems to be higher.

to be placed at the head of all who have handled these topics in the English tongue during the last sixty years. Political science has begun to be studied more energetically than in England, where, to be sure, it is scarcely studied at all; and every year sees treatises and articles of permanent value added to the scanty modern literature which our language possesses on this subject. Similarly there is great activity in the field of both secular and ecclesiastical history, though as the work done has largely taken the direction of inquiries into the early history of institutions, and has altogether been more in the nature of research than of treatises attractive to the general public, its quantity and its merits have not yet been duly appreciated even at home, much less in Europe. Indeed, it is remarkable how far from showy and sensational is the bulk of the work now done in America. It is mostly work of the German type, solid, careful, exact, not at all the sort of work which theorists about democracy would have looked for, since it appeals rather to the learned few than to the so-called general reader. One receives the impression that the class of intellectual workers, who until recently wanted institutions in which the highest and fullest training could be had, have now become sensible that their country, occupied in developing its resources and educating its ordinary citizens, had fallen behind Europe in learning and science, and that they are therefore the more eager to accumulate knowledge and spend their energy in minutely laborious special studies.

I may be reminded that neither in the departments above mentioned, nor in statesmanship, can one point to many brilliant personalities. The men whose names rise to the lips of a European are all advanced in life. Perhaps this is true of Europe also; perhaps the world has entered on an age of mediocrities. Some one lately said that there was now nobody in Paris, Berlin, or London under sixty years of age whom one would cross the street to look at. If this be so, it is not merely because length of years has given better chances of winning fame, for nearly all the men now famous in Europe had won fame before they were forty. There have been periods in history when striking figures were lacking, although great events seemed to call for them. As regards America, if there be few persons of exceptional gifts, it is significant that the number of those who are engaged in scientific work, whether in the investigation of nature or in the moral, political, and historical sciences, is larger, relatively to the population of the country, than it was thirty

years ago, the methods better, the work done more solid, the spirit more earnest and eager. Nothing more strikes a stranger who visits the American universities than the ardour with which the younger generation has thrown itself into study, even kinds of study which will never win the applause of the multitude. There is more zeal and heartiness among these men, more freshness of mind, more love of learning for its own sake, more willingness to forego the chances of fame and wealth for the sake of adding to the stock of human knowledge, than is to be found to-day in Oxford or Cambridge, or in the universities of Scotland. One is reminded of the scholars of the Renaissance flinging themselves into the study of rediscovered philology, or of the German universities after the War of Liberation. And under the impressions formed in mingling with such men, one learns to agree with the conviction of the Americans that for a nation so abounding in fervid force there is reserved a fruitful career in science and letters, no less than in whatever makes material prosperity.

CHAPTER 16

THE RELATION OF THE UNITED STATES TO EUROPE

One cannot discuss American literature and thought without asking, What is the intellectual relation of the United States to Europe? Is it that of an equal member of the great republic of letters? Or is it that of a colony towards the mother country, or of a province towards a capital? Is it, to take instances from history, such a relation as was that of Rome to Greece in the second and first centuries before Christ? or of Northern and Western Europe to Italy in the fifteenth? or of Germany to France in the eighteenth? in all of which cases there was a measure of intellectual dependence on the part of a nation which felt itself in other respects as strong as or stronger than that whose models it followed, and from whose hearth it lighted its own flame.

To answer this question we must first answer another—How do the Americans themselves conceive their position towards Europe? and this, again, suggests a third—What does the American people think of itself?

Fifty, or even forty years ago, the conceit of this people was a byword. It was not only self-conscious but obtrusive and aggressive. Every visitor satirized it, Dickens most keenly of all, in forgiving whom the Americans gave the strongest proof of their good-nature. Doubtless all nations are either vain or proud, or both; and those not least who receive least recognition from their neighbours.[1] A nation could hardly stand without this element to support its self-reliance; though when pushed to an extreme it may, as happens with the Turks, make national ruin the more irretrievable. But American conceit has been steadily declining as the country has grown older, more aware of its true strength, more respected by other countries.[2] There was less conceit after the Civil War than before, though the Civil War had revealed elements of greatness unexpected by foreigners; there is less now than there was at the close of the Civil War. An impartially rigorous censor from some other planet might say of the Americans that they are at this moment less priggishly supercilious than the Germans, less restlessly pretentious than the French, less pharisaically self-satisfied than the English. Among the upper or better-educated classes, glorification has died out, except of course in Fourth of July and other public addresses, when the scream of the national eagle must be heard. One sometimes finds it replaced by undue self-depreciation, with lamentations over the want of culture, the decline of faith, or the corruption of politics. Among the masses it survives in an exultation over the size and material resources of the country,—the physically large is to them the sublime,—in an over-estimate of men and events in American history; in a delight, strongest, of course, among the recent immigrants, in the completeness of social equality, and a corresponding contempt for the "serfs of Europe" who submit to be called "subjects" of their sovereign, in a belief in the superior purity of their domestic life and literature, and in the notion that they are the only people who enjoy true political liberty,[3] liberty far fuller than that of England, far more orderly than that of France. Taking all classes together, they are now not more

[1] The Danes and Portuguese are examples.

[2] De Tocqueville complains that the Americans would not permit a stranger to pass even the smallest unfavourable criticism on any of their institutions, however warmly he might express his admiration of the rest.

[3] It must, however, be admitted that this whimsical idea is not confined to the masses. I find, for instance, in an address delivered

sensitive to external opinion than the nations of Western Europe, and less so than the Russians, though they are still a trifle more apt to go through Europe comparing what they find with what they left at home. A foreign critic who tries to flout or scourge them no longer disturbs their composure; his jeers are received with amusement or indifference. Their patriotism is in one respect stronger than that of Frenchmen or Englishmen, because it is less broken by class feeling, but it has ceased to be aggressive.

Accordingly the attitude of thoughtful Americans to Europe has no longer either the old open antagonism or the old latent self-distrust. It is that of a people which conceives itself to be intellectually the equal of any other people, but to have taken upon itself for the time a special task which impedes it in the race of literary and artistic development. Its mission is to reclaim the waste lands of a continent, to furnish homes for instreaming millions of strangers, to work out a system of harmonious and orderly democratic institutions. That it may fulfil these tasks it has for the moment postponed certain other tasks which it will in due time resume. Meanwhile it may, without loss of dignity or of faith in itself, use and enjoy the fruits of European intellect which it imports until it sees itself free to rival them by native growths. If I may resort to a homely comparison, the Americans are like a man whose next-door neighbour is in the habit of giving musical parties in the summer evenings. When one of these parties comes off, he sits with his family in the balcony to enjoy the quartettes and solos which float across to him through the open windows. He feels no inferiority, knowing that when he pleases he can have performers equally good to delight his own friends, though for this year

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by an eminent man to a distinguished literary fraternity in October 1887 the following passage: "They (*i.e.* 'the immortal periods of the Declaration of Independence') have given political freedom to America and France, unity and nationality to Germany and Italy, emancipated the Russian serf, relieved Prussia and Hungary from feudal tenures, *and will in time free Great Britain and Ireland also*"!

I have often asked Americans wherein they consider their freedom superior to that of the English, but have never found them able to indicate a single point in which the individual man is worse off in England as regards either his private civil rights, or his political rights, or his general liberty of doing and thinking as he pleases. They generally turn the discussion to social equality, the existence of a monarchy and of hereditary titles, and so forth—matters which are of course quite different from freedom in its proper sense.

he prefers to spend his surplus income in refurnishing his house or starting his son in business.

There is of course a difference in the view of the value of European work as compared with their own, taken by the more educated and by the less educated classes. Of the latter some fail to appreciate the worth of culture and of science, even for practical purposes, as compared with industrial success, though in this respect they are no more obtuse than the bulk of Englishmen; and they accordingly underrate their obligations to Europe. Others, knowing that they ought to admire works of imagination and research, but possessed of more patriotism than discernment, cry up second or third-rate fiction, poetry, and theology because it is American, and try to believe that their country gives as much to Europe as she receives. Taste for literature is so much more diffused than taste in literature that a certain kind of fame is easily won. There are dozens of poets and scores of poetesses much admired in their own State, some even beyond its limits, with no merit but that of writing verse which can be scanned, and will raise no blush on the most sensitive cheek. Criticism is lenient, or rather it does not exist, for the few journals which contain good reviews are little read except in four or five Northern Atlantic States, and several inland cities. A really active and searching criticism, which should appraise literary work on sound canons, not caring whether it has been produced in America or in Europe, by a man or by a woman, in the East or in the West, is one of the things most needed in America. Among highly educated men this extravagant appreciation of native industry produces a disgust expressing itself sometimes in sarcasm, sometimes in despondency. Many deem their home-grown literature trivial, and occupy themselves with European books, watching the presses of England, France, and Germany more carefully than almost any one does in England. Yet even these, I think, cherish silently the faith that when the West has been settled and the railways built, and possibilities of sudden leaps to wealth diminished, when culture has diffused itself among the classes whose education is now superficial, and their love of art extended itself from furniture to pictures and statuary, American literature will in due course flower out with a brilliance of bloom and a richness of fruit rivalling the Old World.

The United States are therefore, if this account be correct, in a relation to Europe for which no exact historical parallel can be found. They do not look up to her, nor seek

to model themselves after her. They are too proud for a province, too large for a colony. They certainly draw from Europe far more thought than they send to her, while of art they produce little and export nothing. Yet they cannot be said to be led or ruled by Europe, because they apply their own standards and judgment to whatever they receive.

Their special relations to the leading European countries are worth noting. In old colonial days England was everything. The revolt of 1776 produced an estrangement which might have been healed after 1783, had England acted with common courtesy and good sense, but which was embittered by her scornful attitude. Wounds which were just beginning to scar over were reopened by the war of 1812; and the hostility continued as long as the generation lived whose manhood saw that war. De Tocqueville in 1833 says he can imagine no hatred more venomous than that between the Americans and the English. The generation which remembered 1812 was disappearing when the sympathy of the English upper classes for the Southern Confederacy in 1861-65 lit up the almost extinguished flames. These have been quenched, so far as the native Americans are concerned, by the settlement of the Alabama claims, which impressed the United States not merely as a concession to themselves, but as an evidence of the magnanimity of a proud country. There is still a certain amount of rivalry with England, and a certain suspicion that the English are trying to patronize even when the latter are innocent of such intentions. Now and then an Englishman who, feeling himself practically at home, speaks with the same freedom as he would use there, finds himself misunderstood. But these lingering touches of jealousy are slight compared with the growing sympathy felt for "the old country" as it is still called. It is the only European country in which the American people can be said to feel any personal interest, or towards an alliance with which they are drawn by any sentiment. For a time, however, the sense of gratitude to France for her aid in the War of Independence was very strong. It brought French literature as well as some French usages into vogue, and increased the political influence which France exercised during the earlier years of her own Revolution. Still that influence did not go far beyond the sphere of politics: one feels it but slightly in the literature of the half century from 1780 to 1830.

During the reign of Louis Napoleon, wealthy Americans resorted largely to Paris, and there, living often for years together in a congenial atmosphere of display and amuse-

ment, imbibed undemocratic tastes and ideas, which through them found their way back across the ocean, and coloured certain sections of American society, particularly in New York. Although there is still an American colony in Paris, Parisian influence seems no longer to cross the Atlantic. French books, novels excepted, and those in translations, are not largely read. French politics excite little interest: France is practically not a factor at all in the moral or intellectual life of the country. Over art, however, especially painting and decoration, she has still great power. Many American artists study in Paris, indeed all resort thither who do not go to Rome or Florence; French pictures enjoy such favour with American dealers and private buyers as to make the native artists complain, not without reason, that equally good home-made work receives no encouragement;[1] and house decoration, in which America seems to stand before England, particularly in the skilful use of wood, is much affected by French designs and methods.

The enormous German immigration of the last thirty years might have been expected to go far towards Germanizing the American mind, giving it a taste for metaphysics on the one hand, and for minutely patient research on the other. It does not seem to have had either the one result or the other, or indeed any result whatever in the field of thought. It has enormously stimulated the brewing industry: it has retarded the progress of Prohibitionism: it has introduced more out-door life than formerly existed: it has increased the taste for music, it has broken down the strictness of Sabbath observance, and has indeed in some cities produced what is commonly called "a Continental Sunday." But the vast majority of German immigrants belong to the humbler classes. There have been among them extremely few *savants*, or men likely to become *savants*, nor have these played any conspicuous part in the universities or in literature.

Nevertheless the influence of Germany has been of late years powerfully stimulative upon the cultivated classes, for not only are German treatises largely read, but many of the most promising graduates of the universities proceed to Germany for a year or two to complete their studies, and there become imbued with German ideas and methods. The Eng-

[1] There is a heavy customs duty on foreign works of art, but this does not greatly help the native artist, for the men who buy pictures can usually buy notwithstanding the duty, while it prevents the artist from furnishing himself with the works he needs to have around him for the purposes of his own training.

lish universities have, by their omission to develop advanced instruction in special branches of knowledge, lost a golden opportunity of coming into relation with and influencing that academic youth of America in whose hands the future of American science and learning lies. This German strain in American work has however not tended towards the propagation of metaphysical schools, metaphysics themselves being now on the ebb in Germany. It appears in some departments of theology, and is also visible in historical and philological studies, in economics, and in the sciences of nature.

On the more popular kinds of literature, as well as upon manners, social usages, current sentiment generally, England and her influences are of course nearer and more potent than those of any other European country, seeing that English books go everywhere among all classes, and that they work upon those who are substantially English already in their fundamental ideas and habits. Americans of the cultivated order, and especially women, are more alive to the movements and changes in the lighter literature of England, and more curious about those who figure in it, especially the rising poets and essayists, than equally cultivated English men and women. I have been repeatedly surprised to find books and men that had made no noise in London well known in the Atlantic States, and their merits canvassed with more zest and probably more acuteness than a London drawing-room would have shown. The verdicts of the best circles were not always the same as those of similar circles in England, but they were nowise biassed by national feeling, and often seemed to proceed from a more delicate and sympathetic insight. I recollect, though I had better not mention, instances in which they welcomed English books which England had failed to appreciate, and refused to approve American books over which English reviewers had become ecstatic.

Passing English fashions in social customs and in such things as games sometimes spread to America,—possibly more often than similar American fashions do to England —but sometimes encounter ridicule there. The Anglomaniac is a familiar object of good-humoured satire. As for those large movements of opinion or taste or practical philanthropy in which a parallelism or correspondence between the two countries may often be discerned, this correspondence is more frequently due to the simultaneous action of the same causes than to any direct influence of the older country. In theology, for instance, the same relaxation of the rigid tests

of orthodoxy has been making way in the churches of both nations. In the Protestant Episcopal Church there has been a similar, though less pronounced, tendency to the development of an ornate ritual. The movement for dealing with city pauperism by voluntary organizations began later than the Charity Organization societies of England, but would probably have begun without their example. The rapidly growing taste for beauty in house decoration and in street architecture is a birth of the time rather than of Old World teaching, though it owes something to Mr. Ruskin's books, which have been more widely read in America than in England.

In political matters the intellectual sympathy of the two countries is of course less close than in the matters just described, because the difference between institutions and conditions involves a diversity in the problems which call for a practical solution. Political changes in England affect American opinion less than such changes in France affect English opinion, although the Americans know more and care more and judge more soundly about English affairs than the French do about English or the English about French. The cessation of bitterness between Great Britain and the Irish would make a difference in American politics; but no political event in England less serious than, let us say, the establishment of a powerful Socialist party, would sensibly tell on American opinion, just as no event happening beyond the Atlantic, except the rise and fall of the Southern Confederacy, has influenced the course of English political thought. However, the wise men of the West watch English experiments for light and guidance in their own troubles. A distinguished American who came a year or two ago to London to study English politics, told me that he did so in the hope of finding conservative institutions and forces from which lessons might be learned that would be, as he thought, very serviceable to the United States. After a fortnight, however, he concluded that England was in a state of suppressed revolution, and departed sorrowful.

On a review of the whole matter it will appear that although as respects most kinds of intellectual work America is rather in the position of the consumer, Europe, and especially England, in that of the producer,—although America is more influenced by English and German books and by French art than these countries are influenced by her—still she does not look for initiative to them, or hold herself in

any way their disciple. She is in many points independent, and in all fully persuaded of her independence.

Will she then in time develop a new literature, bearing the stamp of her own mint? She calls herself a new country: will she give the world a new philosophy, new views of religion, a new type of life in which plain living and high thinking may be more happily blended than we now see them in the Old World—a life in which the franker recognition of equality will give a freshness to ideas, and to manners a charm of simplicity, which the aristocratic societies of Europe have failed to attain?

As regards manners and life, she has already approached nearer this happy combination than any society of the Old World. As regards ideas, I have found among the most cultivated Americans a certain cosmopolitanism of view, and detachment from national or local prejudice, superior to that of the same classes in France, England, or Germany. In the ideas themselves there is little one can call novel or distinctively American, though there is a kind of thoroughness in embracing or working out certain political and social conceptions which is less common in England. As regards literature, nothing at present indicates the emergence of a new type. The influence of the great nations on one another grows always closer, and makes new national types less likely to appear. Science, which has no nationality, exerts a growing sway over men's minds, and exerts it contemporaneously and similarly in all civilized countries. For the purposes of thought, at least, if not of literary expression, the world draws closer together, and becomes more of a homogeneous community.

A visitor doubts whether the United States are, so far as the things of the mind are concerned, "a new country." The people have the hopefulness of youth. But their institutions are old, though many have been remodelled or new faced; their religion is old; their views of morality and conduct are old; their sentiments in matters of art and taste have not greatly diverged from those of the parent stock. Is the mere fact that they inhabit new territories, and that the conditions of life there have trained to higher efficiency certain gifts, and have left others in comparative quiescence —is this fact sufficient so to transform the national spirit as to make the products of their creative power essentially diverse from those of the same race abiding in its ancient seats? A transplanted tree may bear fruit of a slightly dif-

ferent flavour, but the apple remains an apple and the pear a pear.

However, it is still too early in the growth of the United States to form any conclusions on these high matters, almost too soon to speculate regarding them. There are causes at work which may in time produce a new type of intellectual life; but whether or not this come to pass, it can hardly be doubted that when the American people give themselves some repose from their present labours, when they occupy themselves less with doing and more with being, there will arise among them a literature and a science, possibly also, though later, an art, which will tell upon Europe with a new force. It will have behind it the momentum of hundreds of millions of men.

CHAPTER 17

THE ABSENCE OF A CAPITAL

THE United States are the only great country in the world which has no capital. Germany and Italy were long without one, because the existence of the mediæval Empire prevented the growth in either country of a national monarchy. But the wonderfully reconstructive age we live in has now supplied the want; and although Rome and Berlin still fall short of being to their respective states what Paris and London are to France and England, what Vienna and Pesth are to the Dual Monarchy, they bid fair to attain a similar rank[1] in their respective nations. By a Capital I mean a city which is not only the seat of political government, but is also by the size, wealth, and character of its population the head and centre of the country, a leading seat of commerce and industry, a reservoir of financial resources, the

[1] Athens, Lisbon, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Brussels, are equally good instances among the smaller countries. In Switzerland, Bern has not reached the same position, because Switzerland is a federation, and, so to speak, an artificial country made by history. Zurich, Lausanne, and Geneva are intellectually quite as influential. So Holland retains traces of her federal condition in the relatively less important position of Amsterdam. Madrid being a modern city placed in a country more recently and less perfectly consolidated than most of the other States of Europe, is less of a capital to Spain than Lisbon is to Portugal or Paris to France.

favoured residence of the great and powerful, the spot in which the chiefs of the learned professions are to be found, where the most potent and widely-read journals are published, whither men of literary and scientific capacity are drawn. The heaping together in such a place of these various elements of power, the conjunction of the forces of rank, wealth, knowledge, intellect, naturally makes such a city a sort of foundry in which opinion is melted and cast, where it receives that definite shape in which it can be easily and swiftly propagated and diffused through the whole country, deriving not only an authority from the position of those who form it, but a momentum from the weight of numbers in the community whence it comes. The opinion of such a city becomes powerful politically because it is that of the person's who live at headquarters, who hold the strings of government in their hands, who either themselves rule the state or are in close contact with those who do. It is true that under a representative government power rests with those whom the people have sent up from all parts of the country. Still these members of the legislature reside in the capital, and cannot but feel the steady pressure of its prevailing sentiment, which touches them socially at every point. It sometimes happens that the populace of the capital, by their power of overawing the rulers or perhaps of effecting a revolution, are able to turn the fortunes of the state. But even where no such peril is to be apprehended, any nation with the kind of a capital I am describing acquires the habit of looking to it for light and leading, and is apt to yield to it an initiative in political movements.

In the field of art and literature the influence of a great capital is no less marked. It gathers to a centre the creative power of the country, and subjects it to the criticism of the best instructed and most polished society. The constant action and reaction upon one another of groups of capable men in an atmosphere at once stimulative to invention and corrective of extravagance may give birth to works which isolated genius could hardly have produced. Goethe made this observation as regards Paris, contrasting the centralized society of France with the dispersion of the elements of culture over the wide area of his own Germany.

"Now conceive a city like Paris, where the highest talents of a great kingdom are all assembled in a single spot, and by daily intercourse, strife, and emulation mutually instruct and advance each other; where the best works, both of nature and art, from

all kingdoms of the earth, are open to daily inspection,—conceive this metropolis of the world, I say, where every walk across a bridge or across a square recalls some mighty past, and where some historical event is connected with every corner of a street. In addition to all this, conceive not the Paris of a dull spiritless time, but the Paris of the nineteenth century, in which, during three generations, such men as Molière, Voltaire, Diderot, and the like, have kept up such a current of intellect as cannot be found twice in a single spot on the whole world, and you will comprehend that a man of talent like Ampère, who has grown up amid such abundance, can easily be something in his four-and-twentieth year." *Conversations with Eckermann.*

The same idea of the power which a highly-polished and strenuously active society has to educe and develop brilliant gifts underlies the memorable description which Pericles gives of Athens. And the influence of such a society may be contemplated with the greater satisfaction because it does not necessarily impoverish the rest of a country. The centralization of intellectual life may tend to diminish the chances of variability, and establish too uniform a type; but it probably gives a higher efficiency to the men of capacity whom it draws into its own orbit than they could have attained in the isolation of their natal spot.

In the case both of politics and of literature, the existence of a capital tends to strengthen the influence of what is called Society—that is to say, of the men of wealth and leisure who have time to think of other matters than the needs of daily life, and whose company and approval are apt to be sought by the men of talent. Thus where the rich and great are gathered in one spot to which the nation looks, they effect more in the way of guiding its political thought and training its literary taste than is possible where they are dispersed over the face of a large country. In both points, therefore, it will evidently make a difference to a democratic country whether it has a capital, and what degree of deference that capital receives. Paris is the extreme case of a city which had been everything to the national literature and art, and has sought to be everything in national politics also. London, since the decline of Dublin and of Edinburgh, has stood without a British rival in the domain of art and letters; and although one can hardly say that a literary society exists in London, most of the people who employ themselves in writing books and nearly all those who paint pictures live in or near it. Over politics London has less

authority than Paris has exerted in France, doubtless because parts of the north and west of Britain are more highly vitalized than the provinces of France, while the English city is almost too populous to have a common feeling. Its very hugeness makes it amorphous.

What are the cities of the United States which can claim to approach nearest to the sort of capital we have been considering? Not Washington, though it is the meeting-place of Congress and the seat of Federal administration. It has a relatively small population (in 1880, 147,293, of whom one-third were negroes). Society consists of congressmen (for about half the year), officials, diplomatists, and some rich and leisured people who come to spend the winter. The leaders of finance, industry, commerce, and the professions are absent; there are few men of letters, no artists, hardly any journalists. What is called the "society" of Washington, which, being small, polished, and composed of people who constantly meet one another, is agreeable, and not the less agreeable because it has a peculiar flavour, is so far from aspiring to political authority as to deem it "bad form" to talk politics.

Not New York, though it is now by far the most populous city. It is the centre of commerce, the sovereign of finance. But it has no special political influence or power beyond that of casting a large vote, which is an important factor in determining the thirty-six presidential votes of the State. Business is its main occupation: the representatives of literature are few; the journals, although certainly among the ablest and most widely read in the country, are, after all, New York journals, and not, like those of Paris, London, or even Berlin, professedly written for the whole nation. Next comes Philadelphia, once the first city in the Union, but now standing below New York in all the points just mentioned, with less claim to be deemed a centre of art or opinion. Boston was for a time the chosen home of letters and culture, and still contains, in proportion to her population, a larger number of men and women capable of making or judging good work than any other city. But she can no longer be said to lead abstract thought, much less current opinion. Chicago combines a vast and growing population with a central position: she is in some respects more of a typical American city than any of the others I have named. But Chicago, so far as political initiative goes, has no more weight than what the number of her voters represents, and in art or literature is nowhere. Nor does any one of these cities

seem on the way to gain a more commanding position. New York will probably retain her pre-eminence in population and commercial consequence, but she does not rise proportionately in culture; while the centre of political gravity, shifting ever more and more to the West, will doubtless finally fix itself in the Mississippi valley.[1]

It deserves to be remarked that what is true of the whole country is also true of the great sections of the country. Of the cities I have named none, except possibly Boston and San Francisco, can be said to be even a local capital, either for purposes of political opinion or of intellectual movement and tendency. Boston retains her position as the literary centre of New England: San Francisco by her size has a preponderating influence on the Pacific coast. But no other great city is regarded by the inhabitants of her own and the adjoining States as their natural head, to which they look for political guidance, or from which they expect any intellectual stimulance. Even New Orleans, though by far the largest place in the South, is in no sense the metropolis of the South; and does little more for the South than set a conspicuous example of municipal misgovernment to the surrounding commonwealths. Though no Paris, no Berlin stands above them, these great American cities are not more important in the country, or even in their own sections of the country, than Lyons and Bordeaux are in France, Hamburg and Cologne in Germany. Even as between municipal communities, even in the sphere of thought and literary effort, equality and local independence have in America their perfect work.

The geographical as well as political causes that have produced this equality are obvious enough, and only one needs special mention. The seat of Federal government was in 1790 fixed at a place which was not even a village, but a piece of swampy woodland, [2] not merely for the sake of preventing the national legislature from being threatened by the mob of

[1] A leading New York paper says (March 1888), "In no capital that we know of does the cause of religion and morality derive so little support against luxury from intellectual interest or activity of any description. This interest has its place here, but it leads a sickly existence as yet under the shadow of great wealth which cares not for it." This remark applies with equal force to Chicago and San Francisco, probably less to Baltimore, and still less to Boston and some of the smaller cities.

[2] Congress, however, did not remove from Philadelphia to the banks of the Potomac until 1800. Thomas Moore's lines on Washington as he saw it in 1804 deserve to be quoted:— [overleaf]

a great city, but because the jealousies of the States made it necessary to place the legislature in a spot exempt from all State influence or jurisdiction. So too in each State the seat of government is rarely to be found in the largest city. Albany, not New York, is the capital of New York State; Springfield, not Chicago, of Illinois; Sacramento, not San Francisco, of California; Columbus, not Cincinnati, of Ohio; Harrisburg, not Philadelphia, of Pennsylvania. And this has been so ordered less from fear of the turbulence of a vast population than from the jealousy which the rural districts and smaller cities feel of the place which casts the heaviest vote, and is likely to seek to use the State resources for its own benefit.

It is a natural result of the phenomena described that in the United States public opinion crystallizes both less rapidly and in less sharp and well-defined forms than happens in those European countries which are led by the capital. The temperature of the fluid in which opinion takes shape (if I may venture to pursue the metaphor), is not so high all over a large country as in the society of a city, where the minds that make opinion are in daily contact, and the process by which opinion is made is therefore slower, giving a somewhat more amorphous product. I do not mean that a European capital generates opinion of one type only; but that each doctrine, each programme, each type of views, whether political or economic or religious, is likely to assume in a capital its sharpest and most pronounced form, that form being taken up and propagated from the capital through the country. And this is one reason why Americans were the first to adopt the system of Conventions—mass meetings of persons belonging to a particular party or advocating a particular cause, gathered from every corner of the country to exchange their ideas and deliberate on their common policy.

It may be thought that in this respect the United States suffer from the absence of a centre of light and heat. Admitting that there is some loss, there are also some conspicuous gains. It is a gain that the multitude of no one city should be able to overawe the executive and the legislature, perhaps even to change the form of government, as Paris

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"An embryo capital where Fancy sees
Squares in morasses, obelisks in trees;
Where second-sighted seers the plain adorn
With fanes unbuilt and heroes yet unborn,
Through naught but woods and Jefferson they see,
Where streets should run, and sages ought to be."

has so often done in France. It is a gain, for a democratic country, that the feeling of what is called Society—that is to say, of those who toil not, neither do they spin, who are satisfied with the world, and are apt to regard it as a place for enjoyment—should not become too marked and palpable in its influence on the members of the legislature and the administration, that it should rather be diffused over the nation and act insensibly upon other classes through the ordinary relations of private life, than take visible shape as the voice of a number of wealthy families gathered in one spot, whose luxury may render them the objects of envy, and the target for invective. And although types of political view may form themselves less swiftly, though doctrines may be less systematic, programmes less fully reasoned out than when the brisk intelligence of groups gathered in a capital labours to produce them, they may, when they do finally emerge from the mind of the whole people, have a breadth and solidity proportioned to the slowness of their growth, and be more truly representative of all the classes, interests, and tendencies that exist within the nation.

How far the loss exceeds the gain as respects the speculative and artistic sides of intellectual effort, it is too soon to determine, for American cities are all the creatures of the last sixty years. That which Goethe admired in Paris is evidently impossible to the dispersed geniuses of America. On the other hand, that indraught of talent from the provinces to Paris which many thoughtful Frenchmen deplore, and which has become more unfortunate since Paris has grown to be the centre of amusement for the dissipated classes of Europe, is an experience which no other country need wish to undergo. Germany has not begun to produce more work or better work since she has given herself a capital; indeed, he who looks back over her annals since the middle of last century will think that so far as scholarship, metaphysics, and possibly even poetry are concerned, she gained from that very want of centralization which Goethe regretted. Great cities realize so vividly the defects of the system they see around them that they sometimes underrate the merits that go with those defects; as a late distinguished English man of letters wished that England possessed an Academy of Letters, at the absence of which most Englishmen, knowing how such an institution is apt to be perverted, are disposed to rejoice. It may be that in the next age American cities will profit by their local independence to develop

varieties greater than they now exhibit, and will evolve diverse types of literary and artistic production. Europe will watch with curiosity the progress of an experiment which it is now too late for any of her great countries to try.

CHAPTER 18

THE PLEASANTNESS OF AMERICAN LIFE

I HAVE never met a European of the upper or middle classes who did not express astonishment when told that America was a more agreeable place than Europe to live in. "For working men," he would answer, "yes; but for men of education or property, how can a new rough country, where nothing but business is talked and the refinements of life are only just beginning to appear, how can such a country be compared with England, or France, or Italy?"

It is nevertheless true that there are elements in the life of the United States which may well make a European of any class prefer to dwell there rather than in the land of his birth. Let us see what they are.

In the first place there is the general prosperity and material well-being of the mass of the inhabitants. In Europe, if an observer takes his eye off his own class and considers the whole population of any one of the greater countries (for I except Switzerland and parts of Scandinavia and Portugal), he will perceive that by far the greater number lead very laborious lives, and are, if not actually in want of the necessaries of existence, yet liable to fall into want, the agriculturists when nature is harsh, the wage-earners when work is scarce. In England the lot of the labourer has been hitherto a hard one, incessant field toil, with rheumatism at fifty and the workhouse at the end of the vista; while the misery massed in such cities as London, Liverpool, and Glasgow is only too well known. In France there is less pauperism, but nothing can be more pinched and sordid than the life of the bulk of the peasantry. In the great towns of Germany there is constant distress and increasing discontent. The riots of 1886 in Belgium told an even more painful tale of the wretchedness of the miners and artisans there. In Italy the condition of the rural population of Lombardy and Venetia as well as of the southern provinces seems to grow

worse, and fills her statesmen with alarm. Of Russia, with her eighty millions of ignorant peasants living in half-barbarism, there is no need to speak. Contrast any one of these countries with the United States, where the working classes are as well fed, clothed, and lodged as the lower middle-class in Europe, and the farmers who till their own land (as nearly all do) much better, where a good education is within the reach of the poorest, where the opportunities for getting on in one way or another are so abundant that no one need fear any physical ill but disease or the results of his own intemperance. Pauperism already exists and increases in some of the larger cities, where drink breeds misery, and where recent immigrants, with the shiftlessness of Europe still clinging round them, are huddled together in squalor. But outside these few cities one sees nothing but comfort. In Connecticut and Massachusetts the operatives in many a manufacturing town lead a life far easier, far more brightened by intellectual culture and by amusements, than that of the clerks and shopkeepers of England or France. In cities like Cleveland or Chicago one finds miles on miles of suburb filled with neat wooden houses, each with its tiny garden plot, owned by the shop assistants and handicraftsmen who return on the horse cars in the evening from their work. All over the wide West, from Lake Ontario to the Upper Missouri, one travels past farms of two to three hundred acres, in every one of which there is a spacious farmhouse among orchards and meadows, where the farmer's children grow up strong and hearty on abundant food, the boys full of intelligence and enterprise, ready to push their way on farms of their own or enter business in the nearest town, the girls familiar with the current literature of England as well as of America. The life of the new emigrant in the further West has its privations in the first years, but it is brightened by hope, and has a singular charm of freedom and simplicity. The impression which this comfort and plenty makes is heightened by the brilliance and keenness of the air, by the look of freshness and cleanness which even the cities wear, all of them except the poorest parts of those few I have referred to above. The fog and soot-flakes of an English town, as well as its squalor, are wanting; you are in a new world, and a world which knows the sun. It is impossible not to feel warmed, cheered, invigorated by the sense of such material well-being all around one, impossible not to be infected by the buoyancy and hopefulness of the people. The wretchedness of Europe lies far behind; the weight

of its problems seems lifted from the mind. As a man suffering from depression feels the clouds roll away from his spirit when he meets a friend whose good humour and energy present the better side of things and point the way through difficulties, so the sanguine temper of the Americans, and the sight of the ardour with which they pursue their aims, stimulates a European, and makes him think the world a better place than it had seemed amid the entanglements and sufferings of his own hemisphere.

To some Europeans this may seem fanciful. I doubt if any European can realize till he has been in America how much difference it makes to the happiness of any one not wholly devoid of sympathy with his fellow-beings, to feel that all round him, in all classes of society and all parts of the country, there exist in such ample measure so many of the external conditions of happiness: abundance of the necessaries of life, easy command of education and books, amusements and leisure to enjoy them, comparatively few temptations to intemperance and vice.

The second charm of American life is one which some Europeans will smile at. It is social equality. To many Europeans—to Germans, let us say, or Englishmen—the word has an odious sound. It suggests a dirty fellow in a blouse elbowing his betters in a crowd, or an ill-conditioned villager shaking his fist at the parson and the squire; or, at any rate, it suggests obtrusiveness and bad manners. The exact contrary is the truth. Equality improves manners, for it strengthens the basis of all good manners, respect for other men and women simply as men and women, irrespective of their station in life. Probably the assertion of social equality was one of the causes which injured American manners forty years ago, for that they were then bad among townsfolk can hardly be doubted in face of the testimony, not merely of sharp tongues like Mrs. Trollope's, but of calm observers like Sir Charles Lyell and sympathetic observers like Richard Cobden. In those days there was an obtrusive self-assertiveness among the less refined classes, especially towards those who, coming from the Old World, were assumed to come in a patronizing spirit. Now, however, social equality has grown so naturally out of the circumstances of the country, has been so long established, and is so ungrudgingly admitted, that all excuse for obtrusiveness has disappeared. People meet on a simple and natural footing, with more frankness and ease than is possible in countries where

every one is either looking up or looking down.[1] There is no servility on the part of the humbler, and if now and then a little of the "I am as good as you" rudeness be perceptible, it is almost sure to proceed from a recent immigrant, to whom the attitude of simple equality has not yet become familiar as the evidently proper attitude of one man to another. There is no condescension on the part of the more highly placed, nor is there even that sort of scrupulously polite coldness which one might think they would adopt in order to protect their dignity. They have no cause to fear for their dignity, so long as they do not themselves forget it. And the fact that your shoemaker or your factory hand addresses you as an equal does not prevent him from respecting, and showing his respect for, all such superiority as your birth or education or eminence in any line of life may entitle you to receive.

This naturalness of intercourse is a distinct addition to the pleasure of social life. It enlarges the circle of possible friendship, by removing the *gêne* which in most parts of Europe persons of different ranks feel in exchanging their thoughts on any matters save those of business. It raises the humbler classes without lowering the upper; indeed, it improves the upper no less than the lower by expunging that latent insolence which deforms the manners of so many of the European rich or great. It relieves women in particular, who in Europe are specially apt to think of class distinctions, from that sense of constraint and uneasiness which is produced by the knowledge that other women with whom they come in contact are either looking down on them, or at any rate trying to gauge and determine their social position. It expands the range of a man's sympathies, and makes it easier for him to enter into the sentiments of other classes than his own. It gives a sense of solidarity to the whole na-

[1] A trifling anecdote may illustrate what I mean. In a small Far Western town the stationmaster lent me a locomotive to run a few miles out along the railway to see a remarkable piece of scenery. The engine took me and dropped me there, as I wished to walk back, much to the surprise of the driver and stoker, for in America no one walks if he can help it. The same evening, as I was sitting in the hall of the hotel, I was touched on the arm, and turning round found myself accosted by a well-mannered man, who turned out to be the engine-driver. He expressed his regret that the locomotive had not been cleaner and better "fixed up," as he would have liked to make my trip as agreeable as possible, but the notice given him had been short. He talked with intelligence, and we had some pleasant chat together. It was fortunate that I had resisted in the forenoon the British impulse to bestow a gratuity.

tion, cutting away the ground for all sorts of jealousies and grudges which distract people, so long as the social pretensions of past centuries linger on to be resisted and resented by the levelling spirit of a revolutionary age. And I have never heard native Americans speak of any drawbacks corresponding to and qualifying these benefits.

There are, moreover, other rancours besides those of social inequality whose absence from America brightens it to a European eye. There are no quarrels of churches and sects. Judah does not vex Ephraim, nor Ephraim envy Judah. No Established Church looks down scornfully upon Dissenters from the height of its titles and endowments, and talks of them as hindrances in the way of its work. No Dissenters pursue an Established Church in a spirit of watchful jealousy, nor agitate for its overthrow. One is not offended by the contrast between the theory and the practice of a religion of peace, between professions of universal affection in pulpit addresses and forms of prayer, and the acrimony of clerical controversialists. Still less, of course, is there that sharp opposition and antagonism of Christians and anti-Christians which lacerates the private as well as public life of France. Rivalry between sects appears only in the innocent form of the planting of new churches and raising of funds for missionary objects, while most of the Protestant denominations, including the four most numerous, constantly fraternize in charitable work. Between Roman Catholics and Protestants there is little hostility, and sometimes co-operation for a philanthropic purpose. The sceptic is no longer under a social ban, and discussions on the essentials of Christianity and of theism are conducted with good temper. There is not a country in the world where Frederick the Great's principle, that every one should be allowed to go to heaven his own way, is so fully applied. This sense of religious peace as well as religious freedom all around one is soothing to the weary European, and contributes not a little to sweeten the lives of ordinary people.

I come last to the character and ways of the Americans themselves, in which there is a certain charm, hard to convey by description, but felt almost as soon as one sets foot on their shore, and felt constantly thereafter. They are a kindly people. Good nature, heartiness, a readiness to render small services to one another, an assumption that neighbours in the country, or persons thrown together in travel, or even in a crowd, were meant to be friendly rather than hostile to one another, seem to be everywhere in the air,

and in those who breathe it. Sociability is the rule, isolation and moroseness the rare exception. It is not merely that people are more vivacious or talkative than an Englishman expects to find them, for the Western man is often taciturn and seldom wreathes his long face into a smile. It is rather that you feel that the man next you, whether silent or talkative, does not mean to repel intercourse, or convey by his manner his low opinion of his fellow-creatures. Everybody seems disposed to think well of the world and its inhabitants, well enough at least to wish to be on easy terms with them and serve them in those little things whose trouble to the doer is small in proportion to the pleasure they give to the receiver. To help others is better recognized as a duty than in Europe. Nowhere is money so readily given for any public purpose; nowhere, I suspect, are there so many acts of private kindness done, such, for instance, as paying the college expenses of a promising boy, or aiding a widow to carry on her husband's farm; and these are not done with ostentation. People seem to take their own troubles more lightly than they do in Europe, and to be more indulgent to the faults by which troubles are caused. It is a land of hope, and a land of hope is a land of good humour. And they have also, though this is a quality more perceptible in women than in men, a remarkable faculty for enjoyment, a power of drawing more happiness from obvious pleasures, simple and innocent pleasures, than one often finds in overburdened Europe.

As generalizations like this are necessarily comparative, I may be asked with whom I am comparing the Americans. With the English, or with some attempted average of European nations? Primarily I am comparing them with the English, because they are the nearest relatives of the English. But there are other European countries, such as France, Belgium, Spain, in which the sort of cheerful friendliness I have sought to describe is less common than it is in America. Even in Germany and German Austria, simple and kindly as are the masses of the people, the upper classes have that *roideur* which belongs to countries dominated by an old aristocracy, or by a plutocracy trying to imitate aristocratic ways. The upper class in America (if one may use such an expression) has not in this respect differentiated itself from the character of the nation at large.

If the view here presented be a true one, to what causes are we to ascribe this agreeable development of the original English type, a development in whose course the sadness of Puritanism seems to have been shed off?

Perhaps one of them is the humorous turn of the American character. Humour is a sweetener of temper, a copious spring of charity, for it makes the good side of bad things even more visible than the weak side of good things: but humour in Americans may be as much a result of an easy and kindly turn as their kindliness is of their humour. Another is the perpetuation of a habit of mutual help formed in colonial days. Colonists need one another's aid more constantly than the dwellers in an old country, are thrown more upon one another, even when they live scattered in woods or prairies, are more interested in one another's welfare. When you have only three neighbours within five miles, each of them covers a large part of your horizon. You want to borrow a plough from one; you get another to help you to roll your logs; your children's delight is to go over for an evening's merrymaking to the lads and lasses of the third. It is much pleasanter to be on good terms with these few neighbours, and when others come one by one, they fall into the same habits of intimacy. Any one who has read those stories of rustic New England or New York life which delighted the English children of thirty years ago—I do not know whether they delight children still, or have been thrown aside for more highly spiced food—will remember the warm-hearted simplicity and atmosphere of genial goodwill which softened the roughness of peasant manners and tempered the sternness of a Calvinistic creed. It is natural that the freedom of intercourse and sense of interdependence which existed among the early settlers, and which have always existed since among the pioneers of colonization in the West as they moved from the Connecticut to the Mohawk, from the Mohawk to the Ohio, from the Ohio to the Mississippi, should have left on the national character traces not effaced even in the more artificial civilization of our own time. Something may be set down to the feeling of social equality, creating that respect for a man as a man, whether he be rich or poor, which was described a few pages back; and something to a regard for the sentiment of the multitude, a sentiment which forbids any man to stand aloof in the conceit of self-importance, and holds up geniality and good fellowship as almost the first of social virtues. I do not mean that a man consciously suppresses his impulses to selfishness or gruffness because he knows that his faults will be ill regarded; but that, having grown up in a society which is infinitely powerful as compared with the most powerful person in it, he has learnt to realize his individual insignificance, as mem-

bers of the upper class in Europe never do, and has become permeated by the feeling which this society entertains—that each one's duty is not only to accept equality, but also to relish equality, and to make himself pleasant to his equals. Thus the habit is formed even in natures of no special sweetness, and men become kindly by doing kindly acts.

Whether, however, these suggestions be right or wrong, there is, I think, no doubt as to the fact which they attempt to explain. I do not, of course, give it merely as the casual impression of European visitors, whom a singularly frank and ready hospitality welcomes and makes much of. I base it on the reports of European friends who have lived for years in the United States, and whose criticism of the ways and notions of the people is keen enough to show that they are no partial witnesses.

CHAPTER 19

THE UNIFORMITY OF AMERICAN LIFE

To the pleasantness of American life there is one, and only one, serious drawback—its uniformity. Those who have been struck by the size of America, and by what they have heard of its restless excitement, may be surprised at the word. They would have guessed that an unquiet changefulness and turmoil were the disagreeables to be feared. But uniformity, which the European visitor begins to note when he has travelled for a month or two, is the feature of the country which Englishmen who have lived long there, and Americans who are familiar with Europe, most frequently revert to when asked to say what is the "crook in their lot."

It is felt in many ways. I will name a few.

It is felt in the aspects of Nature. All the natural features of the United States are on a larger scale than those of Europe. The four great mountain chains are each of them longer than the Alps. Of the gigantic rivers and of those inland seas we call the Great Lakes one need not speak. The centre of the continent is occupied by a plain larger than the western half of Europe. In the Mississippi valley, from the Gulf of Mexico to Lake Superior, there is nothing deserving to be called a hill, though, as one moves westward from the great river, long soft undulations in the great prairie begin

to appear. Through vast stretches of country one finds the same physical character maintained with little change—the same strata, the same vegetation, a generally similar climate. From the point where you leave the Alleghenies at Pittsburg, until, after crossing the Missouri, you approach the still untilled prairie of the West, a railway run of some thousand miles, there is a uniformity of landscape greater than could be found along any one hundred miles of railway run in Western Europe. Everywhere the same nearly flat country, over which you cannot see far, because you are little raised above it, the same fields and crops, the same rough wooden fences, the same thickets of the same bushes along the stream edges, with here and there a bit of old forest; the same solitary farmhouses and straggling wood-built villages. And when one has passed beyond the fields and farmhouses, there is an even more unvaried stretch of slightly rolling prairie, smooth and bare, till after five hundred miles the blue line of the Rocky Mountains rises upon the western horizon.

There are some extraordinary natural phenomena, such as Niagara, the Yellowstone Geysers, and the great cañon of the Colorado river, which Europe cannot equal. But taking the country as a whole, and remembering that it is a continent, it is not more rich in picturesque beauty than the much smaller western half of Europe. There is good deal of pretty scenery and a few really romantic spots in the long Allegheny range, but hardly anything so charming as the best bits of Scotland or southern Ireland, or the English lakes. The Rocky Mountains are pierced by some splendid gorges, such as the famous cañon of the Arkansas River above South Pueblo, and some most impressive wide prospects, such as that over the Great Salt Lake from the Mormon capital. But neither the Rocky Mountains, with their dependent ranges, nor the Sierra Nevada, can be compared for variety of grandeur and beauty with the Alps; for although each chain nearly equals the Alps in height, and covers a greater area, they have little snow, no glaciers,[1] and a singular uniformity of character. One finds, I think, less variety in the whole chain of the Rockies than in the comparatively short Pyrenees. There are indeed in the whole United States very few quite first-rate pieces of mountain scenery rivalling the best of the Old World. The most impressive are, I think, two or three of the deep valleys of the Sierra Nevada (of which the Yo Semite is the best known), and the superb line

[1] There are a few inconsiderable glaciers in the northernmost part of the Rocky Mountains, and a small one on Mount Shasta.

of extinct volcanoes, bearing snow-fields and glaciers, which one sees, rising out of vast and sombre forests, from the banks of the Columbia River and the shores of Puget Sound. [1] So the Atlantic coast, though there are pretty bits between Newport and the New Brunswick frontier, cannot vie with the coasts of Scotland, Ireland, or Norway; while southward from New York to Florida it is everywhere flat and generally dreary. In the United States people take journeys proportionate to the size of the country. A family thinks nothing of going twelve hundred miles, from St. Louis to Cape May (near Philadelphia), for a seaside holiday. But even journeys of twelve hundred miles do not give an American so much change of scene and variety of surroundings as a Parisian has when he goes to Nice, or a Berliner to Berchtesgaden. The man who lives in the section of America which seems destined to contain the largest population, I mean the States on the Upper Mississippi, lives in the midst of a plain wider than the plains of Russia, and must travel hundreds of miles to escape from its monotony.

When we turn from the aspects of Nature to the cities of men, the uniformity is even more remarkable. With five or six exceptions to be mentioned presently, American cities differ from one another only herein, that some of them are built more with brick than with wood, and others more with wood than with brick. In all else they are alike, both great and small. In all the same wide streets, crossing at right angles, ill-paved, but planted along the side walks with maple-trees whose autumnal scarlet surpasses the brilliance of any European foliage. [2] In all the same shops, arranged on the same plan, the same Chinese laundries, with Li Kow visible through

[1] Nothing is further from my mind than to attempt to disparage the scenery of the Great West, which contains, from the eastern slope of the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific, many very striking and impressive points. I only say that they are less beautiful than the Alps, just as the mountains of Asia Minor, even when equal or superior in height, are less beautiful, and largely for the same reason. They are much drier, and have therefore fewer streams and less variety and wealth of vegetation, the upper zone of the Sierra Nevada excepted; and the Rockies, as they run north and south, present less of a contrast between their two sides than do the northern and southern declivities of the Alps or the Caucasus.

[2] In the newer cities one set of parallel streets is named by numbers, the others, which cross them at right angles, are in some instances, as in New York, called avenues, and so numbered. In Washington the avenues are called after States, and of the two sets of streets (which the avenues cross obliquely), one is called by numbers, the other by the letters of the alphabet.

the window, the same ice-cream stores, the same large hotels with seedy men hovering about in the dreary entrance-hall, the same street cars passing to and fro with passengers clinging to the door-step, the same locomotives ringing their great bells as they clank slowly down the middle of the street. I admit that in external aspect there is a sad monotony in the larger towns of England also. Compare English cities with Italian cities, and most of the former seem like one another, incapable of being, so to speak, individualized as you individualize a man with a definite character and aspect unlike that of other men. Take the Lancashire towns, for instance, large and prosperous places. You cannot individualize Bolton or Wigan, Oldham or Bury, except by trying to remember that Bury is slightly less rough than Oldham, and Wigan a thought more grimy than Bolton. But in Italy every city has its character, its memories, its life and achievements wrought into the pillars of its churches and the towers that stand along its ramparts. Siena is not like Perugia, nor Perugia like Orvieto; Ravenna, Rimini, Pesaro, Fano, Ancona, Osimo, standing along the same coast within seventy miles of one another, have each of them a character, a sentiment, what one may call an idiosyncrasy, which comes vividly back to us at the mention of its name. Now, what English towns are to Italian, that American towns are to English. They are in some ways pleasanter; they are cleaner, there is less poverty, less squalor, less darkness. But their monotony haunts one like a nightmare. Even the irksomeness of finding the streets named by numbers becomes insufferable. It is doubtless convenient to know by the number how far up the city the particular street is. But you cannot give any sort of character to Twenty-ninth Street, for the name refuses to lend itself to any association. There is something wearisomely hard and bare in such a system.

I return joyfully to the exceptions. Boston has a character of her own, with her beautiful Common, her smooth environing waters, her Beacon Hill crowned by the gilded dome of the State House, and Bunker's Hill, bearing the monument of the famous fight. New York, besides a magnificent position, has in the grandeur of the buildings and the tremendous rush of men and vehicles along the streets as much the air of a great capital as London itself. Chicago, with her enormous size and the splendid warehouses that line her endless thoroughfares, leaves a strong though not wholly agreeable impression. Richmond has a quaint old-world look which dwells in the memory: few cities have a sea front equal in

beauty to the lake front of Cleveland. Washington, with its wide and beautifully-graded avenues, and the glittering white of the stately Capitol, has become within the last twenty years a singularly handsome city. And New Orleans or rather the Creole quarter of New Orleans, for the rest of the city is commonplace—is delicious, suggesting old France and Spain, yet a France and Spain strangely transmuted in this new clime. I have seen nothing in America more picturesque than the Rue Royale, with its houses of all heights, often built round a courtyard, where a magnolia or an orange tree stands in the middle, and wooden external staircases lead up to wooden galleries, the house fronts painted of all colours, and carrying double rows of balconies decorated with pretty ironwork, the whole standing languid and still in the warm soft air, and touched with the subtle fragrance of decay. Here in New Orleans the streets and public buildings, and specially the old City Hall, with the arms of Spain still upon it, speak of history. One feels, in stepping across Canal Street from the Creole quarter to the business parts of the town, that one steps from an old nationality to a new one, that this city must have had vicissitudes, that it represents something, and that something one of the great events of history, the surrender of the northern half of the New World by the Romano-Celtic races to the Teutonic. Quebec, and to a less degree Montreal, fifteen hundred miles away, tell the same tale: Santa Fé in New Mexico repeats it.

It is the absence in nearly all the American cities of anything that speaks of the past that makes their external aspect so unsuggestive. In pacing their busy streets and admiring their handsome city halls and churches, one's heart sinks at the feeling that nothing historically interesting ever has happened here, perhaps ever will happen. In many an English town, however ugly with its smoke and its new suburbs, one sees at least an ancient church, one can discover some fragments of a castle or a city wall. Even Wigan and Northampton have ancient churches, though Northampton lately allowed the North-Western Railway to destroy the last traces of the castle where Henry II. issued his Assize. But in America hardly any public building is associated with anything more interesting than a big party convention; and nowadays even the big conventions are held in temporary structures, whose materials are sold when the politicians have dispersed. Nowhere, perhaps, does this sense of the absolute novelty of all things strike one so strongly as in San Francisco. Few cities in the world can vie with her either in the

beauty or in the natural advantages of her situation; indeed, there are only two places in Europe—Constantinople and Gibraltar—that combine an equally perfect landscape with what may be called an equally imperial position. Before you there is the magnificent bay, with its far-stretching arms and rocky isles, and beyond it the faint line of the Sierra Nevada, cutting the clear air like mother-of-pearl; behind there is the roll of the ocean; to the left, the majestic gateway between mountains through which ships bear in commerce from the farthest shores of the Pacific; to the right, valleys rich with corn and wine, sweeping away to the southern horizon. The city itself is full of bold hills, rising steeply from the deep water. The air is keen, dry, and bright, like the air of Greece, and the waters not less blue. Perhaps it is this air and light, recalling the cities of the Mediterranean, that make one involuntarily look up to the top of these hills for the feudal castle, or the ruins of the Acropolis, which one thinks must crown them. I found myself so looking all the time I remained in the city. But on none of these heights is there anything more interesting, anything more vocal to the student of the past, than the sumptuous villas of the magnates of the Central Pacific Railway, who have chosen a hill-top to display their wealth to the city, but have erected houses like all other houses, only larger. San Francisco has had a good deal of history in her forty years of life; but this history does not, like that of Greece or Italy, write itself in stone, or even in wood.

Of the uniformity of political institutions over the whole United States I have spoken already. Everywhere the same system of State governments, everywhere the same municipal governments, and almost uniformly bad or good in proportion to the greater or smaller population of the city; the same party machinery organized on the same methods, "run" by the same wirepullers and "workers." In rural local government there are some diversities in the names, areas, and functions of the different bodies, yet differences slight in comparison with the points of likeness. The schools are practically identical in organization, in the subjects taught, in the methods of teaching, though the administration of them is as completely decentralized as can be imagined, even the State commissioner having no right to do more than suggest or report. So it is with the charitable institutions, with the libraries, the lecture-courses, the public amusements. All these are more abundant and better of their kind in the richer and more cultivated parts of the country, generally better in the

North Atlantic than in the inland States, and in the West than in the South. But they are the same in type everywhere. It is the same with social habits and usages. There are still some differences between the South and the North; and in the Eastern cities the upper class is more Europeanized in its code of etiquette and its way of daily life. But even these variations tend to disappear. Eastern customs begin to permeate the West, beginning with the richer families; the South is more like the North than it was before the war. Travel where you will, you feel that what you have found in one place that you will find in another. The thing which hath been, will be: you can no more escape from it than you can quit the land to live in the sea.

Last of all we come to man himself—to man and to woman, not less important than man. The ideas of men and women, their fundamental beliefs and their superficial tastes, their methods of thinking and their fashions of talking, are what most concern their fellow-men; and if there be variety and freshness in these, the uniformity of nature and the monotony of cities signify but little. If I observe that in these respects also the similarity of type over the country is surprising, I shall be asked whether I am not making the old mistake of the man who fancied all Chinese were like one another, because, noticing the dress and the pigtail, he did not notice minor differences of feature. A scholar is apt to think that all business men write the same hand, and a business man thinks the same of all scholars. Perhaps Americans think all Englishmen alike. And I may also be asked with whom I am comparing the Americans. With Europe as a whole? If so, is it not absurd to expect that the differences between different sections in one people should be as marked as those between different peoples? The United States are larger than Europe, but Europe has many races and many languages, among whom contrasts far broader must be expected than between one people, even if it stretches over a continent.

It is most clearly not with Europe, but with each of the leading European peoples that we must compare the people of America. So comparing them with the people of Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, one discovers more varieties between individuals in these European peoples than one finds in America. Scotchmen and Irishmen are more unlike Englishmen, the native of Normandy more unlike the native of Provence, the Pomeranian more unlike the Wurtemberger, the Piedmontese more unlike the Neapolitan, the Basque

more unlike the Andalusian, than the American from any part of the country is to the American from any other. Differences of course there are between the human type as developed in different regions of the country,—differences moral and intellectual as well as physical. You can generally tell a Southerner by his look as well as by his speech. A native of Maine will probably differ from a native of Kentucky, a Georgian from an Oregonian. But these differences strike even an American observer much as the difference between a Yorkshireman and a Lancastrian strikes the English, and is slighter than the contrast between a middle-class southern Englishman and a middle-class Scotchman, slighter than the differences between a peasant from Northumberland and a peasant from Dorsetshire. Or, to take another way of putting it: If at some great gathering of a political party from all parts of the United Kingdom you were to go round and talk to, say, one hundred, taken at random, of the persons present, you would be struck by more diversity between the notions and the tastes and mental habits of the individuals comprising that one hundred than if you tried the same experiment with a hundred Americans of the same education and position, similarly gathered in a convention from every State in the Union.

I do not in the least mean that people are more commonplace in America than in England, or that the Americans are less ideal than the English. Neither of these statements would be true. On the contrary, the average American is more alive to new ideas, more easily touched through his imagination or his emotions, than the average Englishman or Frenchman. I mean only that the native-born Americans appear to vary less, in fundamentals, from what may be called the dominant American type than Englishmen, Germans, Frenchmen, Spaniards, or Italians do from any type which could be taken as the dominant type in any of those nations. Or, to put the same thing differently, it is rather more difficult to take any assemblage of attributes in any of these European countries and call it the national type than it is to do the like in the United States.

These are not given as the impressions of a traveller. Such impressions, being necessarily hasty, and founded on a comparatively narrow observation, would deserve little confidence. They sum up the conclusions of Europeans long resident in America, and familiar with different parts of the country. They are, I think, admitted by the most acute Americans themselves. I have often heard the latter dilate on

what seems to them the one crowning merit of life in Europe —the variety it affords, the opportunities it gives of easy and complete changes of scene and environment. The pleasure which an American finds in crossing the Atlantic, a pleasure more intense than any which the European enjoys, is that of passing from a land of happy monotony into regions where everything is redolent with memories of the past, and derives from the past no less than from the present a wealth and a subtle complexity of interest which no new country can possess.

Life in America is in most ways pleasanter, easier, simpler, than in Europe; it floats in a sense of happiness like that of a radiant summer morning. But life in any of the great European centres is capable of an intensity, a richness blended of many elements, which has not yet been reached in America. There are more problems in Europe calling for solution; there is more passion in the struggles that rage round them; the past more frequently kindles the present with a glow of imaginative light. In whichever country of Europe one dwells, one feels that the other countries are near, that the fortunes of their peoples are bound up with the fortunes of one's own, that ideas are shooting to and fro between them. The web of history woven day by day all over Europe is vast and of many colours: it is fateful to every European. But in America it is only the philosopher who can feel that it will ultimately be fateful to Americans also; to the ordinary man the Old World seems far off, severed by a dissociating ocean, its mighty burden with little meaning for him.

Those who have observed the uniformity I have been attempting to describe have commonly set it down, as Europeans do most American phenomena, to what they call Democracy. Democratic government has in reality not much to do with it, except in so far as such a government helps to induce that deference of individuals to the mass which strengthens a dominant type, whether of ideas, of institutions, or of manners. More must be ascribed to the equality of material conditions, still more general than in Europe, to the fact that nearly every one is engaged either in agriculture, or in commerce, or in some handicraft, to the extraordinary mobility of the population, which in migrating from one part of the country to another brings the characteristics of each part into the others, to the diffusion of education, to the cheapness of literature and universal habit of reading, which enable every one to know what every one else is thinking, but

above all to the newness of the country, and the fact that four-fifths of it have been made all at a stroke, and therefore all of a piece, as compared with the slow growth by which European countries have developed. Newness is the cause of uniformity, not merely in the external aspect of cities, villages, farmhouses, but in other things also, for the institutions and social habits which belonged a century ago to a group of small communities on the Atlantic coast, have been suddenly extended over an immense area, each band of settlers naturally seeking to retain its customs, and to plant in the new soil shoots from which trees like those of the old home might spring up. The variety of European countries is due not only to the fact that their race-elements have not yet become thoroughly commingled, but also that many old institutions have survived among the new ones; as in a city that grows but slowly, old buildings are not cleared away to make room for others more suited to modern commerce, but are allowed to stand, sometimes empty and unused, sometimes half adapted to new purposes. This scarcely happens in America. Doubtless many American institutions are old, and were old before they were carried across the Atlantic. But they have generally received a new dress, which, in adapting them to the needs of to-day, conceals their ancient character; and the form in which they have been diffused or reproduced in the different States of the Union is in all those States practically identical.

In each of the great European countries the diversity of primeval and mediæval times, when endless varieties of race, speech, and faith existed within the space of a few hundred miles, has been more or less preserved by segregative influences. In America a small race, of the same speech and faith, has spread itself out over an immense area, and has been strong enough to impose its own type, not only on the Dutch and other settlers of the middle States, but on the immigrant masses which the last forty years have bought.[1]

[1] It may be thought that I have under-estimated the diversity already due to the presence of immigrants, and the greater diversity which the mingling of their blood with that of the native Americans will in time produce. However, in this chapter I am speaking of society as it now exists: and the recent immigrants have as yet affected it but little, save that the Germans have brought in a greater fondness for music, for the drama, and for out-of-door life in the cities. I greatly doubt whether the influence of the immigrants will be much more powerful in the future, so strong is the native type of thought and customs, and so quickly does it tell on the newcomers.

May one, then, expect that when novelty has worn off, and America counts her life by centuries instead of by decades, variety will develop itself, and such complexities, or diversities, or incongruities (whichever one is to call them) as European countries present, be deeper and more numerous?

As regards the outside of things this seems unlikely. Many of the small towns of to-day will grow into large towns, a few of the large towns into great cities, but as they grow they will not become less like one another. There will be larger theatres and hotels, more churches (in spite of secularist lecturers) and handsomer ones; but what is to make the theatres and churches of one city differ from those of another? Fashion and the immense facilities of intercourse tend to wear down even such diversities in the style of building or furnishing, or in modes of locomotion, or in amusements and forms of social intercourse, as now exist.

As regards ideas and the inner life of men, the question is a more difficult one. At present there are only two parts of the country where one looks to meet with the well-marked individualities I refer to. One of these is New England, where the spirit of Puritanism, expressed in new literary forms by Emerson and his associates, did produce a peculiar type of thinking and discoursing, which has now, however, almost died out; and where one still meets, especially among the cultivated classes, a larger number than elsewhere of persons who have thought and studied for themselves, and are unlike their fellows. The other part of the country is the Far West, where the wild life led by pioneers in exploration, or ranching, or gold-mining has produced a number of striking figures, men of extraordinary self-reliance, with a curious mixture of geniality and reckless hardihood, no less indifferent to their own lives than to the lives of others. Of preserving this latter type there is, alas, little hope; the swift march of civilization will have expunged it in thirty years more.

When one sees millions of people thinking the same thoughts and reading the same books, and perceives that as the multitude grows, its influence becomes always stronger, it is hard to imagine how new points of repulsion and contrast are to arise, new diversities of sentiment and doctrine to be developed. Nevertheless I am inclined to believe that as the intellectual proficiency and speculative play of mind which are now confined to a comparatively small class become more generally diffused, as the pressure of effort towards material success is relaxed, as the number of men

devoted to science, art, and learning increases, so will the dominance of what may be called the business mind decline, and with a richer variety of knowledge, tastes, and pursuits, there will come also a larger crop of marked individualities, and of divergent intellectual types.

Time will take away some of the monotony which comes from the absence of historical associations: for even if, as is to be hoped, there comes no war to make battlefields famous like those of twenty-five years ago, yet literature and the lives of famous men cannot but attach to many spots associations to which the blue of distance will at last give a romantic interest. No people could be more ready than are the Americans to cherish such associations. Their country has a short past, but they willingly revere and preserve all the memories the past has bequeathed to them.

CHAPTER 20

THE TEMPER OF THE WEST

WESTERN AMERICA is one of the most interesting subjects of study the modern world has seen. There has been nothing in the past resembling its growth, and probably there will be nothing in the future. A vast territory, wonderfully rich in natural resources of many kinds; a temperate and healthy climate, fit for European labour; a soil generally, and in many places marvellously, fertile; in some regions mountains full of minerals, in others trackless forests where every tree is over two hundred feet high; and the whole of this virtually unoccupied territory thrown open to an energetic race, with all the appliances and contrivances of modern science at its command,—these are phenomena absolutely without precedent in history, and which cannot recur elsewhere, because our planet contains no such other favoured tract of country.

The Spaniards and Portuguese settled in tropical countries, which soon enervated them. They carried with them the poison of slavery; their colonists were separated, some by long land journeys, and all by still longer voyages from the centres of civilization. But the railway and the telegraph follow the Western American. The Greeks of the sixth and seventh centuries before Christ, who planted themselves all

round the coasts of the Mediterranean, had always enemies, and often powerful enemies, to overcome before they could found even their trading stations on the coast, much less occupy the lands of the interior. In Western America the presence of the Indians has done no more than give a touch of romance or a spice of danger to the exploration of some regions, such as Western Dakota and Arizona, while over the rest of the country the unhappy aborigines have slunk silently away, scarcely even complaining of the robbery of lands and the violation of plighted faith. Nature and Time seem to have conspired to make the development of the Mississippi basin and the Pacific slope the swiftest, easiest, completest achievement in the whole record of the civilizing progress of mankind since the founder of the Egyptian monarchy gathered the tribes of the Nile under one government.

The details of this development and the statistics that illustrate it have been too often set forth to need re-statement here. It is of the character and temper of the men who have conducted it that I wish to speak, a matter which has received less attention, but is essential to a just conception of the Americans of to-day. For the West is the most American part of America; that is to say, the part where those features which distinguish America from Europe come out in the strongest relief. What Europe is to Asia, what England is to the rest of Europe, what America is to England, that the Western States and Territories are to the Atlantic States, the heat and pressure and hurry of life always growing as we follow the path of the sun. In Eastern America there are still quiet spots, in the valleys of the Alleghenies, for instance, in nooks of old New England, in university towns like Ithaca or Ann Arbor. In the West there are none. All is bustle, motion, and struggle, most so of course among the native Americans, yet even the immigrant from the secluded valleys of Thuringia, or the shores of some Norwegian fjord, learns the ways almost as readily as the tongue of the country, and is soon swept into the whirlpool.

It is the most enterprising and unsettled Americans that come West; and when they have left their old homes, broken their old ties, resigned the comforts and pleasures of their former homes, they are resolved to obtain the wealth and success for which they have come. They throw themselves into work with a feverish yet sustained intensity. They rise early, they work all day, they have few pleasures, few oppor-

tunities for relaxation.[1] I remember in the young city of Seattle on Puget Sound to have found business in full swing at seven o'clock A.M.: the shops open, the streets full of people. Everything is speculative, land (or, as it is usually called, "real estate") most so, the value of lots of ground rising or falling perhaps two or three hundred per cent in the year. No one has any fixed occupation; he is a storekeeper to-day, a ranchman to-morrow, a miner next week. I found the waiters in the chief hotel at Denver, in Colorado, saving their autumn and winter wages to start off in the spring "prospecting" for silver "claims" in the mountains. Few men stay in one of the newer cities more than a few weeks or months; to have been there a whole year is to be an old inhabitant, an oracle if you have succeeded, a by-word if you have not, for to prosper in the West you must be able to turn your hand to anything, and seize the chance to-day which every one else will have seen to-morrow. This venturesome and shifting life strengthens the reckless and heedless habits of the people. Every one thinks so much of gaining that he thinks little of spending, and in the general dearness of commodities, food (in the agricultural districts) excepted, it seems not worth while to care about small sums. In California for many years no coin lower than a ten-cent piece was in circulation; and even in 1881, though most articles of food were abundant, nothing was solid at a lower price than five cents. The most striking alternations of fortune, the great *coups* which fascinate men and make them play for all or nothing, are of course commoner in mining regions than elsewhere.[2] But money is everywhere so valuable for the purposes of speculative investment, whether in land, live stock, or trade, as to fetch very high interest. In Walla Walla (Washington Territory) I found in 1881 that the interest on debts secured on what were deemed good safe mortgages was at the rate of fourteen per cent per annum, of course payable monthly.

The carelessness is public as well as private. Tree stumps are left standing in the streets of a large and flourishing

[1] In the newer towns, which are often nothing more than groups of shanties with a large hotel, a bank, a church, and inn, some drinking saloons and gambling-houses, there are few women and no homes. Everybody, except recent immigrants, Chinese, and the very poorest native Americans, lives in the hotel.

[2] In California in 1881 I was shown an estate of 600,000 acres which was said to have been lately bought for $225,000 by a man who had made his fortune in two years' mining, having come out without a penny.

town like Leadville, because the municipal authorities cannot be at the trouble of cutting or burning them. Swamps are left undrained in the suburbs of a populous city like Portland, which every autumn breed malarious fevers; and the risk of accidents to be followed by actions does not prevent the railways from pushing on their lines along loosely heaped embankments, and over curved trestle bridges which seem as if they could not stand a high wind or the passage of a heavy train.

This mixture of science and rudeness is one of a series of singular contrasts which runs through the West, not less conspicuous in the minds of the people than in their surroundings. They value good government, and have a remarkable faculty for organizing some kind of government, but they are tolerant of lawlessness which does not directly attack their own interest. Horse-stealing and insults to women are the two unpardonable offences; all others are often suffered to go unpunished. I was in a considerable Western city, with a population of 70,000 people, some years ago, when the leading newspaper of the place, commenting on one of the train robberies that had been frequent in the State, observed that so long as the brigands had confined themselves to robbing the railway companies and the express companies of property for whose loss the companies must answer, no one had greatly cared, seeing that these companies themselves robbed the public; but now that private citizens seemed in danger of losing their personal baggage and money, the prosperity of the city might be compromised, and something ought to be done—a sentiment delivered with all gravity, as the rest of the article showed.[1] Brigandage tends to disappear when the country becomes populous, though there are places in comparative old States like Illinois and Missouri where the railways are still unsafe. But the same heedlessness suffers other evils to take root, evils likely to prove permanent, including some refinements of political roguery which it is strange to find amid the simple life of forests and prairies.

Another such contrast is presented by the tendency of this shrewd and educated people to relapse into the oldest and most childish forms of superstition. Fortune-telling, clairvoyance, attempts to pry by the help of "mediums" into the book of Fate, are so common in parts of the West that the

[1] This makes plausible the story of the Texas judge who allowed murderers to escape on points of law till he found the value of real estate declining, when he saw to it that the next few offenders were hanged.

newspapers devote a special column, headed "astrologers," to the advertisements of these wizards and pythonesses.[1] I have counted in one issue of a San Francisco newspaper as many as eighteen such advertisements, six of which were of simple fortune-tellers, like those who used to beguile the peasant girls of Devonshire. In fact, the profession of a soothsayer or astrologer is a recognized one in California now, as it was in the Greece of Homer. Possibly the prevalence of mining speculation, possibly the existence of a large mass of ignorant immigrants from Europe, may help to account for the phenomenon, which, as California is deemed an exceptionally unreligious State, illustrates the famous saying that the less faith the more superstition.

All the passionate eagerness, all the strenuous effort of the Westerns is directed towards the material development of the country. To open the greatest number of mines and extract the greatest quantity of ore, to scatter cattle over a thousand hills, to turn the flower-spangled prairies of the North-west into wheat-fields, to cover the sunny slopes of the South-west with vines and olives: this is the end and aim of their lives, this is their daily and nightly thought—

"juvat Ismara Baccho
Conserere atque olea magnum vestire Taburnum." *

The passion is so absorbing, and so covers the horizon of public as well as private life that it almost ceases to be selfish—it takes from its very vastness a tinge of ideality. To have an immense production of exchangeable commodities, to force from nature the most she can be made to yield, and send it east and west by the cheapest routes to the dearest markets, making one's city a centre of trade, and raising the price of its real estate—this, which might not have seemed a glorious consummation to Isaiah or Plato, is preached by Western newspapers as a kind of religion. It is not really, or at least it is not wholly, sordid. These people are intoxicated by the majestic scale of the nature in which their lot is cast, enormous mineral deposits, boundless prairies, forests which, even squandered—wickedly squandered—as they now are, will supply timber to the United States for centuries; a soil which, with the rudest cultivation,

[1] Ohio in 1883 imposed a licence tax of $300 a year on "astrologers, fortune-tellers, clairvoyants, palmisters, and seers."

* O, joy, to plant with the vines' green pride Ismara, clothe with the olive Taburnum's side.

yields the most abundant crops, a populous continent for their market. They see all round them railways being built, telegraph wires laid, steamboat lines across the Pacific projected, cities springing up in the solitudes, and settlers making the wilderness to blossom like the rose. Their imagination revels in these sights and signs of progress, and they gild their own struggles for fortune with the belief that they are the missionaries of civilization and the instruments of Providence in the greatest work the world has seen. The following extract from a newspaper published at New Tacoma in Washington Territory expresses with frank simplicity the conception of greatness and happiness which is uppermost in the Far West; and what may seem a touch of conscious humour is, if humorous it be, none the less an expression of sincere conviction.

WHY WE SHOULD BE HAPPY

"Because we are practically at the head of navigation on Puget Sound. Tacoma is the place where all the surplus products of the south and of the east, that are exported by way of the Sound, must be laden on board the vessels that are to carry them to the four corners of the world. We should be happy because being at the head of navigation on Puget Sound, and the shipping point for the south and the east, the centre from which shall radiate lines of commerce to every point on the circumference of the earth, we are also nearer by many miles than any other town on Puget Sound to that pass in the Cascade mountains through which the Cascade division of the Northern Pacific railroad will be built in the near future; not only nearer to the Stampede pass, but easily accessible from there by a railroad line of gentle grade, which is more than can be said of any town to the north of us.

"We should be happy for these reasons and because we are connected by rail with Portland on the Willamette, with St. Paul, Chicago, and New York; because being thus connected we are in daily communication with the social, political, and financial centres of the western hemisphere; because all the people of the south and of the east who visit these shores must first visit New Tacoma; because from here will be distributed to the people of the northwest all that shall be brought across the continent on the cars, and from here shall be distributed to merchants all over the United States the cargoes of ships returning here from every foreign port to load with wheat, coal, and lumber. We should be and we are happy because New Tacoma is the Pacific coast terminus of a transcontinental line of railroad. Because this is the only place on the whole Pacific coast north of San Francisco where through freight from New York can be

loaded on ship directly from the cars in which it came from the Atlantic side.

"Other reasons why we should be happy are, that New Tacoma is in the centre of a country where fruits and flowers, vegetables and grain, grow in almost endless variety; that we are surrounded with everything beautiful in nature, that we have scenery suited to every mood, and that there are opportunities here for the fullest development of talents of every kind. We have youth, good health, and opportunity. What more could be asked?"

If happiness is thus procurable, the Great West ought to be happy. But there is often a malignant influence at work to destroy happiness in the shape of a neighbouring city, which is making progress as swift or swifter, and threatens to eclipse its competitors. The rivalry between these Western towns is intense and extends to everything. It is sometimes dignified by an unselfish devotion to the greatness of the city which a man has seen grow with his own growth from infancy to a vigorous manhood. I have known citizens of Chicago as proud of Chicago as a Londoner, in the days of Elizabeth, was proud of London. They show you the splendid parks and handsome avenues with as much pleasure as a European noble shows his castle and his pictures: they think little of offering hundreds of thousands of dollars to beautify the city or enrich it with a library or an art gallery. In other men this laudable corporate pride is stimulated, not only by the love of competition which lies deep in the American as it does in the English breast, but also by personal interest, for the prosperity of the individual in inseparable from that of the town. As its fortunes rise or fall, so will his corner lots or the profits of his store. It is not all towns that succeed. Some after reaching a certain point stand still, receiving few accessions; at other times, after a year or two of bloom, a town wilts and withers; trade declines; enterprising citizens depart, leaving only the shiftless and impecunious behind; the saloons are closed, the shanties fall to ruin, in a few years nothing but heaps of straw and broken wood, with a few brick houses awaiting the next blizzard to overthrow them, are left on the surface of the prairie. Thus New Tacoma is harassed by the pretensions of the even more eager and enterprising Seattle; thus the greater cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis have striven for the last twenty years for the title of Capital of the North-West. In 1870 St. Paul was already a substantial city, and Minneapolis just beginning to be known as the possessor of immense water advantages from its position on the Mississippi at the

Falls of St. Anthony. Now, though St. Paul contains some 160,000 inhabitants, Minneapolis with 200,000 has distanced her in the race, and has become, having in the process destroyed the beauty of her Falls, the greatest flour-milling centre in America. The newspapers of each of such competing cities keep up a constant war upon the other; and everything is done by municipal bodies and individual citizens to make the world believe that their city is advancing and all its neighbours standing still. Prosperity is largely a matter of advertising, for an afflux of settlers makes prosperity, and advertising, which can take many forms, attracts settlers. Many a place has lived upon its "boom" until it found something more solid to live on; and to a stranger who asked in a small Far Western town how such a city could keep up four newspapers, it was well answered that it took four newspapers to keep up such a city.

Confidence goes a long way towards success. And the confidence of these Westerns is superb. I happened in 1883 to be at the city of Bismark in Dakota when this young settlement was laying the corner-stone of its Capitol, intended to contain the halls of the legislature and other State officers of Dakota when that flourishing Territory becomes, as it soon must, a State, or perhaps, for they talk of dividing it, two States. The town was then only some five years old, and may have had six or seven thousand inhabitants. It was gaily decorated for the occasion, and had collected many distinguished guests—General U. S. Grant, several governors of neighbouring States and Territories, railroad potentates, and others. By far the most remarkable figure was that of Sitting Bull, the famous Sioux chief, who had surprised and slain a detachment of the American army some years before. Among the speeches made, in one of which it was proved that as Bismark was the centre of Dakota, Dakota the centre of the United States, and the United States the centre of the world, Bismark was destined to "be the metropolitan hearth of the world's civilization," there came a short but pithy discourse from this grim old warrior, in which he told us, through an interpreter, that the Great Spirit moved him to shake hands with everybody. However, the feature of the ceremonial which struck us Europeans most was the spot chosen for the Capitol. It was not in the city, nor even on the skirts of the city; it was nearly a mile off, on the top of a hill in the brown and dusty prairie. "Why here?" we asked. "Is it because you mean to enclose the building in a public park?" "By no means; the Capitol is intended to be in the centre of

the city; it is in this direction that the city is to grow." It is the same everywhere from the Mississippi to the Pacific. Men seem to live in the future rather than in the present: not that they fail to work while it is called to-day, but that they see the country not merely as it is, but as it will be, twenty, fifty, a hundred years hence, when the seedlings shall have grown to forest trees.

This constant reaching forward to and grasping at the future does not so much express itself in words, for they are not a loquacious people, as in the air of ceaseless haste and stress which pervades the West.[1] They remind you of the crowd which Vathek found in the hall of Eblis, each darting hither and thither with swift steps and unquiet mien, driven to and fro by a fire in the heart. Time seems too short for what they have to do, and result always to come short of their desire. One feels as if caught and whirled along in a foaming stream, chafing against its banks, such is the passion of these men to accomplish in their own lifetimes what in the past it took centuries to effect. Sometimes in a moment of pause, for even the visitor finds himself infected by the all-pervading eagerness, one is inclined to ask them: "Gentlemen, why in heaven's name this haste? You have time enough. No enemy threatens you. No volcano will rise from beneath you. Ages and ages lie before you. Why sacrifice the present to the future, fancying that you will be happier when your fields teem with wealth and your cities with people? In Europe we have cities wealthier and more populous than yours, and we are not happy. You dream of your posterity; but your posterity will look back to yours as the golden age, and envy those who first burst into this silent splendid Nature, who first lifted up their axes upon these tall trees and lined these waters with busy wharves. Why, then, seek to complete in a few decades what the other nations of the world took thousands of years over in the older continents? Why do things rudely and ill which need to be done well, seeing that the welfare of your descendants may turn upon them? Why, in your hurry to subdue and utilize Nature, squander her splendid gifts? Why allow the noxious weeds of Eastern politics to take root in your new soil, when by a little effort you might keep it pure? Why hasten the advent of that threatening day when the vacant spaces of the continent shall all have been filled, and the poverty or dis-

[1] In the West men usually drop off the cars before they have stopped, and do not enter them again till they are already in motion, hanging on like bees to the end of the tail car as it quits the depot.

content of the older States shall find no outlet? You have opportunities such as mankind has never had before, and may never have again. Your work is great and noble: it is done for a future longer and vaster than our conceptions can embrace. Why not make its outlines and beginnings worthy of these destinies the thought of which gilds your hopes and elevates your purposes?"

Being once suddenly called upon to "offer a few remarks" to a Western legislature, and having on the spur of the moment nothing better to offer, I tendered some such observations as these, seasoned, of course, with the compliments to the soil, climate, and "location" reasonably expected from a visitor. They were received in good part, as indeed no people can be more kindly than the Western Americans; but it was surprising to hear several members who afterwards conversed with me remark that the political point of view—the fact that they were the founders of new commonwealths, and responsible to posterity for the foundations they laid, a point of view so trite and obvious to a European visitor that he pauses before expressing it—had not crossed their minds. If they spoke truly—and subsequent observation led me to think they did—there was in their words further evidence of the predominance of material efforts and interests over all others, even over those political instincts which are deemed so essential a part of the American character. The arrangements of his government lie in the dim background of the picture which fills a Western eye. The foreground is filled by ploughs and sawmills, ore crushers and railway locomotives. These so absorb his thought as to leave little time for constitutions and legislation; and when constitutions and legislation are thought of, it is as means for better securing the benefits of the earth and of trade to the producer, and preventing the greedy corporation from intercepting their fruits.

Politically, and perhaps socially also, this haste and excitement, this absorption in the development of the material resources of the country, are unfortunate. As a town built in a hurry is seldom well built, so a society will be the sounder in health for not having grown too swiftly. Doubtless much of the scum will be cleared away from the surface when the liquid settles and cools down. Lawlessness and lynch law will disappear; saloons and gambling-houses will not prosper in a well-conducted population; schools will improve and universities grow out of the raw colleges which one already finds even in the newer Territories. Nevertheless

the bad habits of professional politics, as one sees them on the Atlantic coast, are not unknown in these communities; and the unrestfulness, the passion for speculation, the feverish eagerness for quick and showy results, may so soak into the texture of the popular mind as to colour it for centuries to come. These are the shadows which to the eye of the traveller seem to fall across the glowing landscape of the Great West.

CHAPTER 21

THE FUTURE OF POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

THE task of forecasting the future is one from which a writer does well to turn away, for the coasts of history are strewn with the wrecks of predictions launched by historians and philosophers. No such ambitious task shall be essayed by me. But as I have described the institutions of the American commonwealth as they stand at this moment, seldom expressing an opinion as to their vitality or the influences which are at work to modify them, I may reasonably be asked to state, before bringing this book to a close, what processes of change these institutions seem to be at this moment undergoing. Changes move faster in our age than they ever moved before, and America is a land of change. No one doubts that fifty years hence it will differ at least as much from what it is now as it differs now from the America which De Tocqueville described. The causes whose action will mould it are far too numerous, too complex, too subtly interwoven for any one to be able to guess what their joint result will be. All we can ever say of the future is that it will be unlike the present. I will therefore attempt, not to predict future changes, but only to indicate some of the processes of change now in progress which have gone far enough to let us see that they are due to causes of unmistakable potency, causes likely to continue in activity for some time to come.

I begin with a glance at the Federal system, whose equilibrium it has been the main object of the Federal Constitution to preserve. That equilibrium has been little disturbed. So far as law goes, it has suffered no change since the amendments to the Constitution which recorded and

formulated the results of the Civil War. Before the war many Americans and most Europeans expected a dissolution of the Union, either by such a loosening of the Federal tie as would reduce the Union to a mere league, or by the formation of several State groups wholly independent of one another. At this moment, however, nothing seems less likely than another secession. The States' Rights spirit has declined. The material interests of every part of the country are bound up with those of every other. The capital of the Eastern cities has been invested in mines in the West, in ironworks and manufactories in the South, in mortgages and railroads everywhere. The South and the West need this capital for their development, and are daily in closer business relations with the East. The produce of the West finds its way to the Atlantic through the ports of the East. Every produce market, every share market, vibrates in response to the Produce Exchange and Stock Exchange of New York. Each part of the country has come to know the other parts far better than was possible in earlier times; and the habit of taking journeys hither and thither grows with the always-growing facilities of travel. Many families have sons or brothers in remote States; many students come from the West and the South to Eastern universities, and form ties of close friendship there. Railways and telegraphs are daily narrowing and compressing the vast area between ocean and ocean. As the civilized world was a larger world in the days of Herodotus than it is now,—for it took twice as many months to travel from the Caspian Sea to the Pillars of Hercules as it takes now to circumnavigate the globe; one was obliged to use a greater number of languages, and the journey was incomparably more dangerous, —so now the United States, with their sixty millions of people, extending from the Bay of Fundy to the Gulf of California, are a smaller country for all the purposes of government and social intercourse than they were before the cession of Louisiana in 1803, for it took longer then to go from Boston to Charleston than it takes now to go from Portland in Maine to Portland in Oregon, and the journey was far more costly and difficult.

Even the Pacific States, which might have seemed likely to form a community by themselves, are being drawn closer to those of the Mississippi basin. Population will in time become almost continuous along the lines of the Northern and Southern Pacific Railways, and though the deserts of Nevada may remain unreclaimed, prosperous communities round the Great Salt Lake will form a link between California and the

Rocky Mountain States. With more frequent communication, local peculiarities and local habits of thought diminish; the South grows every day less distinctively Southern, and country-folk are more influenced by city ideas. There is now not a single State with any material interest that would be benefited, probably none with any sentiment that would be gratified, by separation from the body of the Union. No great question has arisen tending to bind States into groups and stimulating them to joint action. The chief problems which lie before the country wear an aspect substantially the same in its various sections, and public opinion is divided on them in those sections upon lines generally similar. In a word, the fact that the government is a Federal one does not at this moment seem to make any difference to the cohesion of the body politic; the United States are no more likely to dissolve than if they were a unified republic like France or a unified monarchy like Italy.

As secession is improbable, so also is the extinction of the several States by absorption into the central government. It was generally believed in Europe, when the North triumphed over secession in 1865, that the Federal system was virtually at an end. The legal authority of Congress and the President had been immensely developed during the struggle; a powerful army, flushed with victory, stood ready to enforce that authority; and there seemed reason to think that the South, which had fought so stubbornly, would have to be kept down during many years by military force. However, none of these apprehended results followed. The authority of the central government presently sank back within its former limits, some of the legislation based on the constitutional amendments which had extended it for certain purposes being cut down by judicial decision. The army was disbanded; self-government was soon restored in the lately insurgent States, and the upshot of the years of civil war and reconstruction has been, while extinguishing the claim of State sovereignty, to replace the formerly admitted State rights upon a legal basis as firm as they ever occupied before. At this moment State rights are not in question, nor has either party an interest in advocating the supersession of State action in any department of government. The conservatism of habit and well-settled legal doctrine which would resist any such proposal is very strong. State autonomy, as well as local government within each State, is prized by every class in the community, and bound up with the personal

interest of those who feel that these comparatively limited spheres offer a scope to their ambition which a wider theatre might deny.

It is nevertheless impossible to ignore the growing strength of the centripetal and unifying forces. I have already referred to the influence of easier and cheaper communications, of commerce and finance, of the telegraph, of the filling up of the intermediate vacant spaces in the West. There is an increasing tendency to invoke congressional legislation to deal with matters, such as railroads, which cannot be adequately handled by State laws, or to remove divergences, such as those in bankrupt laws and the law of marriage and divorce, which give rise to practical inconveniences. The advocates of such proposals as liquor-prohibition and the restriction of the hours of labour are more and more apt to carry their action into the Federal sphere, while admitting that the Federal Constitution would need amendment in order to enable Congress to effect what they desire. State patriotism, State rivalry, State vanity, are no doubt still conspicuous, yet the political interest felt in State governments is slighter than it was forty years ago, while national patriotism has become warmer and more pervasive. The *rôle* of the State is socially and morally, if not legally, smaller now than it then was, and ambitious men look on a State legislature as little more than a stepping-stone to Congress. It would be rash to assert that disjunctive forces will never again reveal themselves, setting the States against the National government, and making States' Rights once more a matter of practical controversy. But any such force is likely, so far as we can now see, to prove transitory, whereas the centripetal forces are permanent and secular forces, working from age to age. Wherever in the modern world there has been a centrifugal movement, tending to break up a State united under one government, or to loosen the cohesion of its parts, the movement has sprung from a sentiment of nationality, and has been reinforced, in almost every case, by a sense of some substantial grievance or by a belief that material advantages were to be secured by separation. The cases of Holland and Belgium, of Hungary and Germanic Austria, of the Greeks and Bulgarians in their struggle with the Turks, of Iceland in her struggle with Denmark, all illustrate this proposition. When such disjunctive forces are absent, the more normal tendency to aggregation and centralization prevails. In the United States all the elements of a national feeling are

present, race,[1] language, literature, pride in past achievements, uniformity of political habits and ideas; and this national feeling which unifies the people is reinforced by an immensely strong material interest in the maintenance of a single government over the breadth of the continent. It may therefore be concluded that while there is no present likelihood of change from a federal to a consolidated republic, and while the existing legal rights and functions of the several States may remain undiminished for many years to come, the importance of the States will decline as the majesty and authority of the National government increase.

The next question to be asked relates to the component parts of the National government itself. Its equilibrium stands now as stable as at any former epoch. Yet it has twice experienced violent oscillations. In the days of Jackson, and again in those of Lincoln, the Executive seemed to outweigh Congress. In the days of Tyler, Congress threatened the Executive; while in those of Andrew Johnson it reduced the Executive to impotence. That no permanent disturbance of the balance followed the latter of these oscillations shows how well the balance had been adjusted at starting. At this moment there is nothing to show that any one department is gaining on any other. The Judiciary, if indeed the judges can be called a political department, would seem to have less discretionary power than seventy years ago, for by their own decisions they have narrowed the scope of their discretion, determining points in which, had they remained open, the personal impulses and views of the Bench might have had room to play. Congress has been the branch of government with the largest facilities for usurping the powers of the other branches, and probably with the most disposition to do so. Congress has constantly tried to encroach both on the Executive and on the States, sometimes, like a wild bull driven into a corral, dashing itself against the imprisoning walls of the Constitution. But although Congress has succeeded in occupying nearly all of the area which the Constitution left vacant and unallotted between the several

[1] The immense influx of immigrants has not greatly affected the sense of race unity, for the immigrant's child is almost always eager to become to all intents and purposes an American. Moreover the immigrants are so dispersed over the country that no single section of them is in any State nearly equal to the native population. Here and there in the West, Germans have tried to appropriate townships or villages, and keep English-speaking folk at a distance, but this happens on so small a scale as to cause no disquiet.

authorities it established, Congress has not become any more distinctly than in earlier days the dominant power in the State, the organ of national sovereignty, the irresistible exponent of the national will. In a country ruled by public opinion, it could hold this position only in virtue of its capacity for leading opinion; that is to say, of its courage, promptitude, and wisdom. Since it grows in no one of these qualities, it wins no greater ascendency; indeed its power, as compared with that of public opinion, seems rather to decline. Its division into two co-ordinate Houses is no doubt a source of weakness as well as of safety. Yet what is true of Congress as a whole is true of each House taken separately. The Senate, to which the eminence of many individual senators formerly gave a moral ascendency, has lost as much in the intellectual authority of its members as it has gained in their wealth. The House, with its far greater numbers and its far greater proportion of inexperienced members, suffers from the want of internal organization, and seems unable to keep pace with the increasing demands made on it for constructive legislation. One is sometimes inclined to think that Congress might lose its hold on the respect and confidence of the nation, and sink into a subordinate position, were there any other authority which could be substituted for it. There is, however, no such authority, for law-making cannot be given to a person or to a court, while the State legislatures have the same faults as Congress in a greater degree. We may accordingly surmise that Congress will retain its present place; but so far as can be gathered from present phenomena, it will retain this place in respect not of the satisfaction of the people with its services, but of their inability to provide a better servant.

The weakness of Congress is the strength of the President. Though it cannot be said that his office has risen in power or dignity since 1789, there are reasons for believing that it may reach a higher point than it has occupied at any time since the Civil War. The tendency everywhere in America to concentrate power and responsibility in one man is unmistakable. There is no danger that the President should become a despot, that is, should attempt to make his will prevail against the will of the majority. But he may have a great part to play as the leader of the majority and the exponent of its will. He is in some respects better fitted both to represent and to influence public opinion than Congress is. No doubt he suffers from being the nominee of a party, because this draws on every act he does the hostility of zealots of the op-

posite party. But the number of voters who are not party zealots increases, increases from bad causes as well as from good causes; for as a capable President sways the dispassionately patriotic, so a crafty President can find means of playing upon those who have their own ends to serve. A vigorous personality attracts the multitude, and attracts it the more the huger it grows; while a chief magistrate's influence excites little alarm when exerted in leading a majority which acts through the constitutional organs of government. There may therefore be still undeveloped possibilities of greatness in store for the Presidents of the future. But as these possibilities depend, like the possibilities of the British and German Crowns, perhaps one may add of the Papacy, on the wholly unpredictable element of personal capacity in the men who may fill the office, we need speculate on them no further.

From the organs of government I pass to the party system, its machinery and its methods. Nothing in recent history suggests that the statesmen who claim to be party leaders, or the politicians who act as party managers, are disposed either to loosen the grip with which their organization has clasped the country, or to improve the methods it employs. Changes in party methods there will of course be in the future, as there have been in the past; but the professionals are not the men to make them changes for the better. The Machine will not be reformed from within: it must be assailed from without. Two heavy blows have been lately struck at it. The first was the Civil Service Reform Act of 1883. If this Act is honestly administered, and its principle extended to other Federal offices, if States and cities follow, as a few have done, in the wake of the National government, the Spoils system may before long be rooted out, and with that system the power of the Machine will crumble. The Spoils system has stood for fifty years, and the bad habits it has formed cannot at once be unlearned. But its extinction will deprive professionals of their chief present motive for following politics. The tares which now infest the wheat will presently wither away, and the old enemy will have to sow a fresh crop of some other kind. The second blow is the frequent appearance, not merely in Federal elections, but in State and municipal elections, of a body of independent men pledged to vote for honest candidates irrespective of party. The absence for a number of years past of genuine political issues dividing the two parties, which has worked ill in taking moral and intellectual life out of the parties, and making their contests mere

scrambles for office, has at last worked well in disposing intelligent citizens to sit more loose to party ties, and to consider, since it is really on men rather than on measures that they are required to vote, what the personal merits of candidates are. Thirty years ago, just at the time when the fruits of Jacksonism, that is to say, of wild democratic theory coupled with sordid and quite undemocratic practice, had begun to be felt by thoughtful persons, the urgency of the slavery question compelled the postponement of reforms in political methods, and made patriotic men fling themselves into party warfare with unquestioning zeal. When the winning of elections, no less than the winning of battles, meant the salvation of the Union, no one could stop to examine the machinery of party. For ten years after the war, the party which was usually in the majority in the North was the party which had saved the Union, and on that score commanded the devotion of its old adherents; while the opposite party was so much absorbed in struggling back to power that it did not think of mending its ways. During the last ten or fifteen years, the war issues being practically settled, public spirited citizens have addressed themselves to the task, which ought to have been undertaken in 1850, of purifying politics. Their efforts began with city government, where the evils were greatest, but have now become scarcely less assiduous in State and national politics.

Will these efforts continue, and be crowned by a growing measure of success?

To a stranger revisiting America at intervals, the progress seems to be steadily though not swiftly upward. This is also the belief of those Americans who, having most exerted themselves in the struggle against Bosses and spoilsmen, have had most misrepresentation to overcome and most disappointments to endure. The Presidents of this generation are abler men than those of forty years ago, and less apt to be the mere creatures of a knot of party managers. The poisonous influence of slavery is no longer felt. There is every day less of sentimentalism, but not less of earnestness in political discussions. There is less blind obedience to party, less disposition to palliate sins committed from party motives. The number of able men who occupy themselves with scientific economics and politics is larger, their books and articles are more widely read. The press more frequently helps in the work of reform: the pulpit deals more largely with questions of practical philanthropy and public morals. That it should be taken as a good sign when the young

men of a city throw themselves into politics, shows that the new generation is believed to have either a higher sense of public duty or a less slavish attachment to party ties than that whose votes have prevailed for the last twenty years. Above all, the nation is less self-sufficient and self-satisfied than it was in days when it had less to be proud of. Fifty years ago the Americans walked in a vain conceit of their own greatness and freedom and scorned instruction from the effete monarchies of the Old World, which repaid them with contemptuous indifference. No despot ever exacted more flattery from his courtiers than they from their statesmen. Now when Europe admires their power, envies their prosperity, looks to them for instruction in not a few subjects, they have become more modest, and listen willingly to speakers and writers who descant upon their failings. They feel themselves strong enough to acknowledge their weaknesses, and are anxious that the moral life of the nation should be worthy of its expanding fortunes. As these happy omens have become more visible from year to year, there is a reasonable presumption that they represent a steady current which will continue to work for good. To judge of America rightly the observer must not fix his eye simply upon her present condition, seeking to strike a balance between the evil and the good that now appear. He must look back at what the best citizens and the most judicious strangers perceived and recorded fifty, thirty, twenty years ago, and ask whether the shadows these men saw were not darker than those of to-day, whether the forecasts of evil they were forced to form have not in many cases been belied by the event. De Tocqueville was a sympathetic as well as penetrating observer. Many of the evils he saw, and which he thought inherent and incurable, have now all but vanished. Other evils have indeed revealed themselves which he did not discern, but these may prove as transient as those with which he affrighted European readers in 1834. The men I have met in America, whose recollections went back to the fourth decade of this century, agreed in saying that there was in those days a more violent and unscrupulous party spirit, a smaller respect for law, a greater disposition to violence, less respect for the opinion of the wise, a completer submission to the prejudices of the masses, than there is to-day. Neither the Irish nor the Germans had arrived upon the scene, but New York was already given over to spoilsmen. Great corporations had scarcely arisen; yet corruption was neither uncommon nor fatal to a politician's reputation. A retrospect which

shows us that some evils have declined or vanished while the regenerative forces are more numerous and more active in combating new mischiefs than they ever were before, encourages the belief that the general stream of tendency is towards improvement, and will in time bring the public life of the country nearer to the ideal which democracy is bound to set before itself.

When the Americans say, as they often do, that they trust to time, they mean that they trust to reason, to the generally sound moral tone of the multitude, to a shrewdness which after failures and through experiments learns what is the true interest of the majority, and finds that this interest coincides with the teachings of morality. They can afford to wait, because they have three great advantages over Europe, an absence of class distinctions and class hatreds, a diffusion of wealth among an immense number of small proprietors all interested in the defence of property, an exemption from chronic pauperism and economical distress, work being generally abundant, many careers open, the still unoccupied or undeveloped West providing a safety valve available in times of depression. With these advantages the Americans conceive that were their country now left entirely to itself, so that full and free scope could be secured to the ameliorative forces, political progress would be sure and steady; the best elements would come to the top, and when the dregs had settled the liquor would run clear.

In a previous chapter I have observed that this sanguine view of the situation omits two considerations. One is that the country will not be left to itself. European immigration continues, and though more than two-thirds of the immigrants make valuable citizens, the remainder, many by their political ignorance and instability, some few by their proneness to embrace anti-social doctrines, are a source of danger to the community, lowering its tone, providing material for demagogues to work on, threatening outbreaks like those of Pennsylvania in 1877, of Cincinnati in 1884, of Chicago in 1886.

The other fact to be borne in mind is of still graver import. There is a part of the Atlantic where the westward speeding steam-vessel always expects to encounter fogs. On the fourth or fifth day of the voyage, while still in bright sunlight, one sees at a distance a long low dark-gray line across the bows, and is told this is the first of the fog banks which have to be traversed. Presently the vessel is upon the cloud, and rushes into its chilling embrace, not knowing what perils of

icebergs may be shrouded within the encompassing gloom. So America, in her swift onward progress, sees, looming on the horizon and now no longer distant, a time of mists and shadows, wherein dangers may lie concealed whose form and magnitude she can scarcely yet conjecture. As she fills up her western regions with inhabitants, she sees the time approach when all the best land will have been occupied, and when the land now under cultivation will have been so far exhausted as to yield scantier crops even to more expensive culture. Although transportation may also have then become cheaper, the price of food will rise; farms will be less easily obtained and will need more capital to work them with profit; the struggle for existence will become more severe. And while the outlet which the West now provides for the overflow of the great cities will have become less available, the cities will have grown immensely more populous; pauperism, now confined to some six or seven of the greatest, will be more widely spread; wages will probably sink and work be less abundant. In fact the chronic evils and problems of old societies and crowded countries, such as we see them to-day in Europe, will have reappeared on this new soil.

High economic authorities pronounce that the beginnings of this time of pressure lie not more than thirty years ahead. Nearly all of the best arable land in the West is already occupied, so that the second and third best will soon begin to be cultivated; while the exhaustion already complained of in farms which have been under the plough for three or four decades will be increasingly felt. It will be a time of trial for democratic institutions. The future of the United States during the next half century sometimes presents itself to the mind as a struggle between two forces, the one beneficent, the other malign, the one striving to speed the nation on to a port of safety before this time of trial arrives, the other to retard its progress, so that the tempest may be upon it before the port is reached. And the question to which one reverts in musing on the phenomena of American politics is this—Will the progress now discernible towards a wiser public opinion and a higher standard of public life succeed in bringing the mass of the people up to the level of what are now the best districts in the country before the days of pressure are at hand? Or will existing evils prove so obstinate and European immigration so continue to depress the average of intelligence and patriotism among the voters, that when the struggle for life grows far harder than it now is, the masses will yield to the temptation to abuse their power and

will seek violent, and because violent, probably vain and useless remedies, for the evils which will afflict them?

If the crisis should arrive while a large part of the population still lacks the prudence and self-control which a democracy ought to possess, what result may be looked for? This is a question which no experience from similar crises in the past helps us to answer, for the phenomena will be new in the history of the world. There may be pernicious experiments tried in legislation. There may be occasional outbreaks of violence. There may even be, though nothing at present portends it, a dislocation of the present frame of government. One thing, however, need not be apprehended, the thing with which alarmists most frequently terrify us: there will not be anarchy. The forces which restore order and maintain it when restored are as strong in America as anywhere else in the world.

While admitting the possibility of such a time of strife and danger, he who has studied America will not fail to note that she will have elements of strength for meeting it which are lacking in some European countries. The struggles of labour and capital do not seem likely to take the form of a widely prevailing hatred between classes. The distribution of landed property among a great many small owners is likely to continue. The habits of freedom, together with the moderation and self-control which they foster, are likely to stand unimpaired, or to be even confirmed and mellowed by longer use. The restraining and conciliating influence of religion is stronger than in France or Germany, and more enlightened than in those Continental countries where religion now seems strongest. I admit that no one can say how far the United States of fifty years hence will in these respects resemble the United States of to-day. But if we are to base our anticipations on the facts of to-day, we may look forward to the future, not indeed without anxiety, when we mark the clouds that hang on the horizon, yet with a hope that is stronger than anxiety.

CHAPTER 22

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC FUTURE

If it be hard to forecast the development of political institutions and habits, how much harder to form a conception of what the economic and social life of the United States will have become when another half century of marvellously swift material progress has more than quintupled its wealth and more than tripled its population; and when the number of persons pursuing arts and letters, and educated to enjoy the most refined pleasures of life, will have become proportionately greater than it is now. The changes of the last fifty years, great as they have been, may then prove to have been no greater than those which the next fifty will have brought. Prediction is even more difficult in this sphere than in the sphere of government, because the forces at work to modify society are more numerous, as well as far more subtle and complex, and because not only the commercial prosperity of the country, but its thought and culture are more likely than its politics to be affected by the course of events in the Old World. All I can attempt is, as in the last preceding chapter, to call attention to some of the changes which are now in progress, and to conjecture whether the phenomena we now observe are due to permanent or to transitory causes. I shall speak first of economic changes and their influence on certain current problems, next of the movements of population and possible alterations in its character, lastly, of the tendencies which seem likely to continue to affect the social and intellectual life of the nation.

The most remarkable economic feature of the years that have elapsed since the War has been the growth of great fortunes. There is a passage in the *Federalist*, written in 1788, which says, "the private fortunes of the President and Senators, as they must all be American citizens, cannot possibly be sources of danger." Even in 1833, De Tocqueville was struck by the equal distribution of wealth in the United States, and the absence of capitalists. To-day, however, there are more great millionaires, as well as more men with a capital of from $250,000 to $1,000,000 in America than in any other country; and fifty years hence it will probably con-

tain as many large fortunes as will exist in all the countries of Europe put together. Nor are these huge accumulations due to custom and the policy of the law, which in England keep property, and especially landed property, in the hands of a few by the so-called custom of primogeniture. An American testator usually distributes his wealth among his children equally. However rich he may be, he does not expect his daughters to marry rich men, but is just as willing to see them mated to persons supporting themselves by their own efforts. And he is far more inclined than Europeans are to bestow large part of his wealth upon objects of public utility, instead of using it to found a family. In spite of these dispersing forces, great fortunes grow with the growing prosperity of the country, and the opportunities it offers of amassing enormous piles by bold operations. Even an unspeculative business may, if skilfully conducted, bring in greater gains than can often be hoped for in Europe, because the scale of operations is in America so large that a comparatively small percentage of profit may mean a very large income. These causes are likely to be permanent; nor can any legislation that is compatible with the rights of property as now understood, do much to restrict them. We may therefore expect that the class of very rich men, men so rich as to find it difficult to spend their income in enjoying life, though they may go on employing it in business, will continue to increase.

It may be suggested that the great fortunes of to-day are due to the swift development of the West, so that after a time they will cease to arise in such numbers, while those we now see will have been scattered. The development of the West must, however, continue for forty or fifty years to come; and though the wealthy do not seek to keep their wealth together after their death by artificial means, many are the sons of the rich who start with capital enough to give them a great advantage for further accumulation. There are as yet comparatively few careers to compete with business; nor is it as easy as in Europe to spend a fortune on pleasure. The idle rich of America, who, though relatively few, are numerous enough to form a class in the greatest Atlantic cities, seem by no means the happiest class in the country.

The growth of vast fortunes has helped to create a political problem, for they become a mark for the invective of the more extreme sections of the Labour party. But should its propaganda so far prosper as to produce legislative attacks upon accumulated wealth, such attacks will be directed (at

least in the first instance), not against individual rich men, but against incorporated companies, since it is through corporations that wealth has made itself obnoxious. Why the power of these bodies should have grown so much greater in the United States than in Europe, and why they should be more often controlled by a small knot of men, are questions too intricate to be here discussed. Companies are in many ways so useful that any general diminution of the legal facilities for forming them seems improbable; but I conceive that they will be even more generally than hitherto subjected to special taxation; and that their power of taking and using public franchises will be further restricted. He who considers the irresponsible nature of the power which three or four men, or perhaps one man, can exercise through a great corporation, such as a railroad or telegraph company, the injury they can inflict on the public as well as on their competitors, the cynical audacity with which they have often used their wealth to seduce officials and legislators from the path of virtue, will find nothing unreasonable in the desire of the American masses to regulate the management of corporations and narrow the range of their action. The same remark applies, with even more force, to combinations of men not incorporated but acting together, the so-called Trusts, *i.e.* commercial rings, or syndicates. The next few years or even decades may be largely occupied with the effort to deal with these phenomena of a commerical system far more highly developed than the world has yet seen elsewhere. The economic advantages of the amalgamation of railroads and the tendency in all departments of trade for large concerns to absorb or supplant small ones, are both so marked that problems of this order seem likely to grow even larger and more urgent than they now are. Their solution will demand, not only great legal skill, but great economic wisdom.

Of the tendency to aggregation there are happily no signs so far as relates to agriculture. The only great landed estates are in the Far West, particularly in California, together with some properties held by land companies or individual speculators in the Upper Mississippi States, properties which are being generally sold in small farms to incoming settlers. In the South, large plantations are more rare than before the war, and much of the cotton crop is raised by peasant farmers. It is of course possible that cultivation on a large scale may in some regions turn out to be more profitable than that of small freeholders: agriculture as an

art may be still in its infancy, and science may alter the conditions of production in this highly inventive country. But at present nothing seems to threaten that system of small proprietors tilling the soil they live on which so greatly contributes to the happiness and stability of the commonwealth. The motives which in Europe induce rich men to buy large estates are here wholly wanting, for no one gains either political power or social status by becoming a landlord.

Changes in economic conditions have begun to bring about changes in population which will work powerfully on the future of society and politics. One such change has been passing on New England during the last twenty years. Its comparatively thin and ungenial soil, which has generally hard rock at no great depth below the surface, and has been cultivated in many places for nigh two hundred years, is now unable to sustain the competition of the rich and virgin lands of the West. The old race of New England yeomen have accordingly begun to sell or abandon their farms and to migrate to the upper valley of the Mississippi, where they make the prosperity of the North-western States. The lands which they have left vacant are frequently occupied by immigrants, sometimes French Canadians, but chiefly Irish, for the Germans come but little to New England; and thus that which was the most purely English part of America is now becoming one of the most Celtic, since the cities also are full of Irish and Canadians. It is impossible not to regret the disappearance of a picturesquely primitive society which novelists and essayists have made familiar to us, with its delightful mixture of homely simplicity and keen intelligence. Of all the types of rustic life which imagination has since the days of Theocritus embellished for the envy or refreshment of the dwellers in cities, this latest type has been to modern Europe the most real and not the least attractive. It will soon have passed away; nor will the life of the robust sons of the Puritans in the North-western prairies, vast and bare and new, reproduce the idyllic quality of their old surroundings. But the Irish squatters on the forsaken farms rear their children under better conditions than those either of the American cities or of the island of their birth, and they are replenishing New England with a vigorous stock.

Another change may possibly be seen when in the course of a few decades immigration begins to turn towards a Southern region, the far greater part of which has remained

until now undeveloped. Western North Carolina, Northern Georgia, and Eastern Tennessee possess enormous mineral deposits, only a few of which have yet begun to be worked. There are splendid forests; there is in many places a soil believed to be fertile, little of which has been brought under cultivation; while the climate is in general not too hot for white labour. It seems probable that when the vacant spaces of the North-west are no longer wide enough to receive the continued influx of settlers, these regions will become the seat of industries attracting and employing a vast population: and this population may in large measure come from the more crowded parts of the Northern States, carrying with it Northern habits and ideas which will quicken the progress of a backward part of the South, and bring her into a more perfect harmony with the rest of the country.

The mention of the South raises a group of questions bearing on the future of the negro and the relations he will sustain to the whites. To set forth even the main data needed for discussing these questions would need several chapters; so I must content myself with remarking that the best authorities now hold that the increase in the black population, even in the Gulf States, is less rapid than the census returns of 1880 had been thought to show, and does not constitute a present source of danger. The negroes have not so far, like those in some of the West India islands, relapsed into sloth and barbarism. Neither climate nor soil make it so easy as in those islands to raise by a few weeks' labour food enough to support a family through the year; while the proximity of trading and manufacturing towns draws a number of the negroes into closer relations with the whites, and gives an impulse towards progress to the whole mass. Although the line of separation between whites and blacks is more sharply drawn than before the Civil War, and is in some matters drawn by law as well as by custom; and although there is no mixture of blood by inter-marriage, there seems to be but slight ill feeling between the races, slight disposition on the part of the whites to oppress, or on that of the negroes to combine against their former masters. The gift of the suffrage, though rendered of little direct effect by the wiles of the whites, who in one way or another continue to suppress the negro vote in all important elections, has had the effect of raising to some extent both the white's view of the negro and the negro's view of himself. The South has changed, is changing, and must continue to change, in so many regards that it would be rash to con-

jecture the attitude of the coloured population forty years hence, when a generation accustomed to freedom and more generally instructed—for at present more than half the coloured population of school age are not in school, and only about one-tenth of the adults can read a newspaper with ease—has come to maturity. All that can be said is that at present thoughtful observers in the South seem to feel little anxiety, and expect that for many years to come the negroes, naturally a good-natured and easy-going race, will be content with the position of an inferior caste, doing the hard work, and especially the field work, of the country, but becoming gradually permeated by American habits and ideas, and sending up into the higher walks of life a slowly increasing number of their ablest members. It might be thought that this elevating process would be accelerated by the sympathy of the coloured people at the North, who enjoy greater educational opportunities. But statistics show that the negro race increases comparatively slowly to the north of latitude 40°, and it does not even there blend with the whites. A very high authority estimates the probable coloured population in 1900 at ten millions out of a total population of eighty millions, and adds the remark that, "considering the limited area of land in which negroes have an advantage over whites by physiological adaptation to climate, and the industrial advantage of the whites where climatic conditions are equal, it is doubtful whether there is room in the South for so large a population."[1]

Two other questions relating to changes in population must be adverted to before we leave this part of the subject. There are Europeans who hold—and in this physiologically-minded age it is natural that men should hold—that the evolution of a distinctively American type of character and manners must be still distant, because the heterogeneous elements of the population (in which the proportion of English blood is smaller now than it was fifty years ago) must take a long time to become mixed and assimilated. This is a plausible view; yet I doubt whether differences of blood have the importance which it assumes. What strikes the traveller, and what the Americans themselves delight to point out to him, is the amazing solvent power which American institutions, habits, and ideas exercise upon newcomers of all races. The children of Irishmen, Germans, and Scandinavians are far more like native Americans than

[1] General Francis A. Walker in *Ency. Brit.*, article "United States."

prevalent views of heredity would have led us to expect; nor is it without interest to observe that Nature has here repeated on the Western continent that process of mixing Celtic with Germanic and Norse blood which she began in Britain more than a thousand years ago. [1]

This parallel may seem fanciful, yet those who lay stress on race characteristics and expect the American people of the future to be sensibly changed by immigration, may be asked to remember that in that immigration neither the Celtic nor the Teutonic element has so far been able to preponderate. I venture, however, to believe that the intellectual and moral atmosphere into which the settlers from Europe come has more power to assimilate them than their race qualities have power to change it; and that the future of America will be less affected by this influx of new blood than any one who has not studied the American democracy of to-day can realize. The influence of European immigration is so far to be sought, not so much in any tinging of the national character, as in the unfortunate results it has had upon the public life of cities, and the unexpectedly severe strain it has put on universal suffrage. Nor must another source of evil pass unnoticed. The most conspicuous evidence of American prosperity has been hitherto seen in the high standard of living to which the native working classes of the North have risen, in the abundance of their food and the quality of their clothing, in the neatness and comfort of their homes, in the decent orderliness of their lives, and the fondness for reading of their women. The settlers of the last half century, though at first far behind the native

1 The ratio borne by the Celtic elements in the population of Britain (*i.e.* the Picts and Gaels of northern Britain and the Cymry of middle and western Britain who survived the onslaught of the Angles and Saxons in the fifth and sixth centuries) to the Teutonic elements in that population as it has stood during the last three centuries, may probably be a ratio not very different from that which the Irish immigrants to America bear to the German immigrants: so that the relative proportions of Celtic and Teutonic blood, as these proportions existed in the Americans of fifty years ago, have not been greatly altered by the Irish and the German immigration of the last five decades. The analogy may be carried one step farther by observing that the Scandinavians who now settle in the north-western States, as they have come later than Celts or Germans, so also have come in a proportion to Celts and Germans corresponding to that borne to the previous inhabitants of Britain by the Danes and Norwegians who poured their vigorous blood into the veins of the English race from the ninth century onwards.

Americans in all these respects, have tended to rise to their level and, except in a few of the larger cities, have after fifteen or twenty years practically adopted American standards of comfort. But within the last decade new swarms of European immigrants have invaded America, drawn from their homes in the eastern parts of Central Europe by the constant cheapening of ocean transit and by that more thorough drainage, so to speak, of the inland regions of Europe which is due to the extension of railways. These immigrants, largely of Slavonic race, come from a lower stratum of civilization than the German immigrants of the past, and, since they speak foreign tongues, are less quickly amenable to American influences, and probably altogether less improvable, than are the Irish. There seems to be a danger that if they continue to come in large numbers they may retain their own low standard of decency and comfort, and menace the continuance among the working class generally of that far higher standard which has hitherto prevailed in all but a few spots in the country. Already the United States, which twenty years ago rejoiced in the increase of immigration, begin to regard it with disquiet; and laws are passed to prevent the entrance not only of labourers brought under contract but of criminals and of persons who seem likely to become a burden upon the community.[1]

The intrusion of these inauspicious elements is not the only change in the population which may cause anxiety. For many years past there has been an indraught of people from the rural districts to the cities. More than one-fourth of the whole sixty millions are now, it is estimated, to be found in cities with a population exceeding 8000, and the transfer of people from a rural to an urban life goes on all the faster because it is due not merely to economic causes, such as operate all the world over, and to the spirit of enterprise which is strong in the American youth, but also to the distaste which the average native American, a more sociable and amusement-loving being that the English or Ger-

[1] Such laws are of course difficult of enforcement, because when the immigrants arrive it is seldom possible to say which ought to be refused ingress as paupers or criminals; and it has accordingly been proposed to throw upon United States Consuls at European ports of departure the duty of sifting those who seek to embark for America, and granting certificates to those who are approved. I am told that at present only about 500 are annually sent back to Europe out of an average of more than 500,000 who annually arrive.

man peasant, feels for the isolation of farm life and the monotony of farm labour. Even in 1844 R. W. Emerson wrote: "The cities drain the country of the best part of its population, the flower of the youth of both sexes goes into the towns, and the country is cultivated by a much inferior class." Since then the Western forests have been felled and the Western prairies brought under the plough by the stalwart sons of New England and New York. But now again, and in the West hardly less than in the East, the complaint goes up that native American men and women long for a city life, and gladly leave tillage to the new-comers from Germany and Scandinavia. Whether a city-bred population will have the physical vigour which the native rural population has shown—a population which in some of the Western States strikes one as perhaps more vigorous than any Europe can point to—is at least doubtful, for though American cities have sanitary advantages greater than those of most towns in Europe, the stress and strain of their city life is more exhausting. And it need scarcely be added that in the oldest and most highly civilized districts of the country, and among the more refined sections of the people, the natural increase of population is much smaller than it is among the poorer and the ruder. In highly developed communities, the principle of natural selection is apt to be reversed: marriages are later and families smaller among the best nurtured and most cultivated class than they are among the uneducated and improvident; more children are born to the physically weak and morally untrained than to those among the rich whose natural gifts would in ages of force have enabled them to prevail in the struggle for existence. In New England and the Eastern States generally, though there are many families, historic by the number of eminent names they have produced, which still flourish and count their cousinhood by hundreds, it is nevertheless true that the original English race grows less swiftly than the Irish or the German, and far less swiftly than it did some sixty years ago.[1] Yet here also that assimilative power of which I have spoken comes to the help of the nation. Those who rise from the less cultivated class, who do not belong to what Dr. Holmes calls the

1 General F. A. Walker gives the rate of increase of the native whites in the United States at 31.25 per cent in the decade 1870-80, but that of native whites born of native parents at 28 per cent. The average size of the native white family decreased in the same decade from 5.09 to 5.04.

Brahmin caste, still surviving in New England and once strong in Virginia, are breathed upon by the spirit of the country; they quickly absorb its culture and carry on its traditions; and they do so all the more readily because the pervading sense of equality makes a man's entrance into a class higher than that wherein he was born depend solely on his personal qualities.

European readers may ask whether the swift growth not only of wealth but of great fortunes in the United States will not end in creating an aristocracy of rich families, and therewith a new structure of society. I see no ground for expecting this, not merely because the wealthiest class passes down by imperceptible gradations of fortune to a working class far better off than the working classes of Europe, but also because the faith in equality and the love of equality are too deeply implanted in every American breast to be rooted out by any economic changes. They are the strongest beliefs and passions of the people. They make no small part of the people's daily happiness; and I can more easily imagine the United States turned into a monarchy on the one hand or a group of petty republics on the other than the aristocratic ideas and habits of Germany or even of England established on American soil. Social exclusiveness there may be,—signs of it are already descernible,—but visible and overt recognitions of rank differences, whether in the use of hereditary titles, or in the possession by one class of special privileges, or in the habit of deference by one class to another, would imply a revolution in national ideas, and a change in what may be called the chemical composition of the national mind, which is of all things the least likely to arrive.

I have left to the last the most difficult problem which a meditation on the future of American society raises. From those first days of the Republic in which its people realized that they were Americans and no longer merely English colonists, it has been a question of the keenest interest for them, as it is now for the world, when and how and in what form they would develop a distinctively new and truly national type of character and genius. In 1844 Emerson said, addressing those who had lately seen the coincidence of two fateful phenomena—the extension of railways into the West and the establishment of lines of swift ocean steamers to Europe—

"We in the Atlantic States by position have been commercial and have imbibed easily a European culture. Luckily for us,

now that steam has narrowed the Atlantic to a strait, the nervous rocky West is intruding a new and continental element into the national mind, and we shall yet have an American genius. We cannot look on the freedom of this country in connection with its youth without a presentiment that here shall laws and institutions exist on some scale of proportion to the majesty of nature. To men legislating for the area between the two oceans, betwixt the snows and the tropics, somewhat of the gravity of nature will infuse itself into the code."

Nearly half a century has passed since these words were spoken, but many events have intervened to delay that full expression of the national gifts in letters and arts, as well as in institutions, by which a modern people must reveal the peculiar nature of its genius. Emerson would doubtless have admitted in 1874 that the West has contributed less of a "new and continental element" than he expected, and that the majesty of nature had not yet filled Congress with its inspiration. Probably another generation must arise, less preoccupied with the task of material development than the two last have been, before this expression can be looked for. Europe, which used to assume in its contemptuous way that neither arts nor letters could be expected from commercial America—as Charles Lamb said that the whole Atlantic coast figured itself to him as one long counter spread with wares—Europe has now fallen into the opposite error of expecting the development of arts and letters to keep pace with and be immediately worthy of the material greatness of the country. And the Americans themselves have perhaps, if a stranger may be pardoned the remark, erred in supposing that they made, either in the days of the first settlements or in those when they won their independence, an entirely new departure, and that their new environment and their democratic institutions rendered them more completely a new people than the children of England, continuing to speak the English tongue and be influenced by European literature, could in truth have been expected to become. As Protestants have been too apt to forget the traditions of the mediæval Church, and to renounce the glories of St. Anselm and St. Bernard and Dante, so the Americans of forty years ago—for this is a mistake which they are beginning to outgrow—sought to think of themselves as superior in all regards to the aristocratic society from which they had severed themselves. and looked for an elevation in their character and an originality in their literature which neither the amplitude of their

freedom nor the new conditions of their life could at once produce in the members of an ancient people.

What will be either the form or the spirit of transatlantic literature and thought when they have fully ripened is a question on which I do not attempt to speculate, for the forces that shape literature and thought are the subtlest the historian has to deal with. I return to the humbler task of pointing to causes whose already apparent power is producing a society such as has never yet been seen in Europe. Nowhere in the world is there growing up such a vast multitude of intelligent, cultivated, and curious readers. It is true that of the whole population a majority of the men read little but newspapers, and many of the women little but novels. Yet there remains a number to be counted by millions who enjoy and are moved by the higher products of thought and imagination; and it must be that as this number continues to grow, each generation rising somewhat above the level of its predecessors, history and science, and even poetry, will exert a power such as they have never yet exerted over the masses of any country. And the masses of America seem likely to constitute one-half of civilized mankind. There are those now living who may see before they die two hundred and fifty millions of men dwelling between the Atlantic and the Pacific, obeying the same government, speaking the same tongue, reading the same books. A civilized society like this is so much vaster than any which history knows of, that we can scarcely figure to ourselves what its character will be, nor how the sense of its immensity will tell upon those who address it. The range of a writer's power will be such as no writers have ever yet possessed, and the responsibility which goes hand in hand with the privilege of moving so great a multitude will devolve no less upon the thinkers and poets of England than upon those of America.

The same progress which may be expected in the enjoyment of literature and in its influence may be no less expected in the other elements of what we call civilization. Manners are becoming in America more generally polished, life more orderly, equality between the sexes more complete, the refined pleasures more easily accessible than they have ever yet been among the masses of any people. And this civilization attains a unity and harmony which makes each part of the nation understand the other parts more perfectly, and enables an intellectual impulse to be propagated in swifter waves of light than has been the case among the far smaller and more ancient states of Europe.

While this unity and harmony strengthen the cohesion of the Republic, while this diffused cultivation may be expected to overcome the economic dangers that threaten it, they are not wholly favourable to intellectual creation, or to the variety and interest of life. I will try to explain my meaning by describing the impression which stamps itself on the mind of the stranger who travels westward by railway from New York to Oregon. In Ohio he sees communities which eighty years ago were clusters of log-huts among forests, and which are now cities better supplied with all the appliances of refined and even luxurious life than were Philadelphia and New York in those days. In Illinois he sees communities which were in 1848 what Ohio was in 1808. In the Territories of Dakota and Washington he sees settlements just emerging from a rudeness like that of primitive Ohio or Illinois, and reflects that such as Ohio is now, such as Illinois is fast becoming, such in some twenty years more will Dakota and Washington have become, the process of development moving, by the help of science, with an always accelerated speed. "If I return this way thirty years hence," he thinks, "I shall see, except in some few tracts which nature has condemned to sterility, nothing but civilization, a highly developed form of civilization, stretching from the one ocean to the other; the busy, eager, well-ordered life of the Hudson will be the life of those who dwell on the banks of the Yellowstone, or who look up to the snows of Mount Shasta from the valleys of California." The Far West has hitherto been to Americans of the Atlantic States the land of freedom and adventure and mystery, the land whose forests and prairies, with trappers pursuing the wild creatures, and Indians threading in their canoes the maze of lakes, have touched their imagination and supplied a background of romance to the prosaic conditions which surround their own lives. All this will have vanished; and as the world has by slow steps lost all its mystery since the voyage of Columbus, so America will from end to end be to the Americans even as England is to the English. What new background of romance will be discovered? Where will the American imagination of the future seek its materials when it desires to escape from dramas of domestic life? Where will bold spirits find a field in which to relieve their energies when the Western world of adventure is no more? As in our globe so in the North American continent, there will be something to regret when all is known and the waters of civilization have covered the tops of the highest mountains.

He who turns away from a survey of the government and society of the United States and tries to estimate the place they hold in the history of the world's progress cannot repress a slight sense of disappointment when he compares what he has observed and studied with that which idealists have hoped for, and which Americans have desired to create. "I have seen," he says, "the latest experiment which mankind have tried, and the last which they can ever hope to try under equally favouring conditions. A race of unequalled energy and unsurpassed variety of gifts, a race apt for conquest and for the arts of peace, which has covered the world with the triumphs of its sword, and planted its laws in a hundred islands of the sea, sent the choicest of its children to a new land, rich with the bounties of nature, bidding them increase and multiply, with no enemies to fear from Europe, and few of those evils to eradicate which Europe inherits from its feudal past. They have multiplied till the sapling of two centuries ago overtops the parent trunk; they have drawn from their continent a wealth which no one dreamed of, they have kept themselves aloof from Old World strife, and have no foe in the world to fear; they have destroyed, after a tremendous struggle, the one root of evil which the mother country in an unhappy hour planted among them. And yet the government and institutions, as well as the industrial civilization of America, are far removed from that ideal commonwealth which European philosophers imagined, and Americans expected to create." The feeling expressed in these words, so often heard from European travellers, is natural to a European, who is struck by the absence from America of many of those springs of trouble to which he has been wont to ascribe the ills of Europe. But it is only the utterance of the ever-fresh surprise of mankind at the discovery of their own weaknesses and shortcomings. Why should either philosophers in Europe or practical men in America have expected human nature to change when it crossed the ocean? when history could have told them of many ideals not less high and hopes not less confident than those that were formed for America which have been swallowed up in night. The vision of a golden age has often shimmered far off before the mind of men when they have passed through some great crisis, or climbed to some specular mount of faith, as before the traveller when he has reached the highest pastures of the Jura, the line of Alpine snows stands up and glitters with celestial light. Such a vision seen by heathen antiquity still charms us in that famous poem of Virgil's which was long believed

to embody an inspired prophecy: such another rejoiced the souls of pious men in the days of Constantine, when the Christian Church, triumphant over her enemies, seemed about to realize the kingdom of heaven upon earth. Such a one reappeared to the religious reformers of the sixteenth century, who conceived that when they had purged Christianity of its corrupt accretions, the world would be again filled with the glory of God, and men order their lives according to His law. And such a vision transported men just a century ago, when it was not unnaturally believed that in breaking the fetters by which religious and secular tyranny had bound the souls and bodies of men, and in proclaiming the principle that government sprang from the consent of all, and must be directed to their good, enough had been done to enable the natural virtues of mankind to secure the peace and happiness of nations. Since 1789 many things have happened, and men have become less inclined to set their hopes upon political reforms. Those who still expect a general amelioration of the world from sudden changes look to an industrial and not a political revolution, or seek in their impatience to destroy all that now exists, fancying that from chaos something better may emerge. In Europe, whose thinkers have seldom been in a less cheerful mood than they are to-day, there are many who seem to have lost the old faith in progress; many who feel when they recall the experiences of the long pilgrimage of mankind, that the mountains which stand so beautiful in the blue of distance, touched here by flashes of sunlight and there by shadows of the clouds, will when one comes to traverse them be no Delectable Mountains, but scarred by storms and seamed by torrents, with wastes of stone above, and marshes stagnating in the valleys. Yet there are others whose review of that pilgrimage convinces them that though the ascent of man may be slow it is also sure; that if we compare each age with those which preceded it we find that the ground which seems for a time to have been lost is ultimately recovered, we see human nature growing gradually more refined, institutions better fitted to secure justice, the opportunities and capacities for happiness larger and more varied, so that the error of those who formed ideals never yet attained lay only in their forgetting how much time and effort and patience under repeated disappointment must go to that attainment.

This less sombre type of thought is more common in the United States than in Europe, for the people not only feel in their veins the pulse of youthful strength, but remember

the magnitude of the evils they have vanquished, and see that they have already achieved many things which the Old World has longed for in vain. And by so much as the people of the United States are more hopeful, by that much are they more healthy. They do not, like their forefathers, expect to attain their ideals either easily or soon; but they say that they will continue to strive towards them, and they say it with a note of confidence in the voice which rings in the ear of the European visitor, and fills him with something of their own hopefulness. America has still a long vista of years stretching before her in which she will enjoy conditions far more auspicious than England can count upon. And that America marks the highest level, not only of material well-being, but of intelligence and happiness, which the race has yet attained, will be the judgment of those who look not at the favoured few for whose benefit the world seems hitherto to have framed its institutions, but at the whole body of the people.

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