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1. The Advent of Modern Democracy

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1. The Advent of Modern Democracy

Abstract

Everywhere there was a strong tendency to modify the concepts of political liberalism into a justification of democracy. By and large, this was not the result of the creation of a completely new political theory. The advocates of democracy tended to justify their doctrine with natural-rights theories from the Enlightenment, with a utilitarianism reminiscent of John Stuart Mill, with deductions drawn from the romantic glorification of the individual, or with appeals to the record of the United States. In general, they took over the concepts of the middle-class liberalism of the nineteenth century. However, the very logic of the liberal position in an increasingly industrialized world forced democrats to advocate the removal of many of those limitations on popular participation in government which liberals earlier had thought necessary. With victory apparently in sight in the years 1871-1914, democracy can be studied through its acts, in the difficult task of putting into practice under widely divergent conditions those general concepts which had been forged in an earlier age. In the process strongly egalitarian institutions were developed which became identified with democracy in the minds of most Westerners. It is in the observations of this process that we can test the definition of democracy as "government responsible to the will of the people." [excerpt]

Keywords

Contemporary Civilization, Democracy, Political Liberalism, Industrialization, Will of the People, Egalitarian

Disciplines

History | Political History | Political Science

Comments

This is a part of [Section XVII: The Transformation of Liberalism and Nationalism, 1871-1914](#). The [Contemporary Civilization](#) page lists all additional sections of *Ideas and Institutions of Western Man*, as well as the [Table of Contents](#) for both volumes.

More About Contemporary Civilization:

From 1947 through 1969, all first-year Gettysburg College students took a two-semester course called Contemporary Civilization. The course was developed at President Henry W.A. Hanson's request with the goal of "introducing the student to the backgrounds of contemporary social problems through the major concepts, ideals, hopes and motivations of western culture since the Middle Ages."

Gettysburg College professors from the history, philosophy, and religion departments developed a textbook for the course. The first edition, published in 1955, was called *An Introduction to Contemporary Civilization and Its Problems*. A second edition, retitled *Ideas and Institutions of Western Man*, was published in 1958 and 1960. It is this second edition that we include here. The copy we digitized is from the Gary T. Hawbaker '66 Collection and the marginalia are his.

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1. The Advent of Modern Democracy

Everywhere there was a strong tendency to modify the concepts of political liberalism into a justification of democracy. By and large, this was not the result of the creation of a completely new political theory. The advocates of democracy tended to justify their doctrine with natural-rights theories from the Enlightenment, with a utilitarianism reminiscent of John Stuart Mill, with deductions drawn from the romantic glorification of the individual, or with appeals to the record of the United States. In general, they took over the concepts of the middle-class liberalism of the midnineteenth century. However, the very logic of the liberal position in an increasingly industrialized world forced democrats to advocate the removal of many of those limitations on popular participation in government which liberals earlier had thought necessary. With victory apparently in sight in the years 1871-1914, democracy can be studied through its acts, in the difficult task of putting into practice under widely divergent conditions those general concepts which had been forged in an earlier age. In the process strongly egalitarian institutions were developed which became identified with democracy in the minds of most Westerners. It is in the observations of this process that we can test the definition of democracy as "government responsible to the will of the people." *(not as helpful as on p. 8)*

By 1914, written constitutions defining the powers of the government were a common feature of democracies, except Britain

which managed to work within a framework founded on custom and general agreement. So popular had written constitutions become since the eighteenth century that even regimes which could hardly be called democratic felt compelled to issue some such document, usually in a form which veiled the true distribution of power.

Even where democratic, such constitutional regimes were not necessarily republican. In the Western hemisphere, only the British and Dutch possessions acknowledged the headship of a monarch, but in Europe only Switzerland, France, and Portugal were republics. Just how much power the monarch exercised varied. At one extreme were the sovereigns of Britain, the Scandinavian states, the Netherlands, and Belgium, whose powers were fairly narrowly circumscribed by law and custom. Although not without influence, their main functions were ceremonial; they were symbols of state and nation. At the other extreme, in eastern Europe, were tsars and emperors whose influence and legal powers were alike extensive. Yet even here the past three-quarters of a century had exhibited a tendency for political power to slip into other hands.

Coincident with this decline in monarchy was the spread of parliamentary institutions and their accumulation of authority. The process which had by 1914 given every European state some sort of representative body was not everywhere uniform. Mighty Russia, in this as in so much else a hesitant convert to Western institutions, acquired her first Duma only in 1906. Nor were the legal authority and actual power of these bodies everywhere the same. The trend in Europe was to emulate Britain, who had herself ignored John Locke's advice on the separation of powers, and make the executive officers in the cabinet responsible to the legislature. In western Europe such control of the legislature over the executive was fairly complete; but in eastern and central Europe, and in the United States, the executive and its officers retained both in law and in fact varying degrees of independent authority. In the German Empire the emperor regarded the armed forces and foreign affairs as his special preserve, and the influence of the Reichstag in these matters was much less extensive than in, for example, commercial legislation. Nevertheless, the general picture which emerges from the series of constitutional crises that troubled the domestic history of every European country shows a trend toward granting parliaments a regular, and then a larger, role in government.

One reason for this extension of parliamentary institutions was their apparent efficacy in linking the steadily growing power of the government with the populace, winning the latter's allegiance, sounding out its sentiments, and even directing its opinions. More and more citizens were now given the vote. The French Third Republic (1875-1940) inherited universal manhood suffrage from the Second Empire. Switzerland instituted it in 1848 and Belgium in 1893. Britain gave the franchise to most

go thru and pick out these extensions of old liberalism.

townsmen in 1867; after another extension of the electorate in 1884 about three-quarters of the adult male population was included; and the remaining males received the franchise in 1918. The new German Empire had universal manhood suffrage from its birth in 1871, but elections in the local German states, as in many other countries, often gave special weight to the votes of men with property, education, social status, or official position. In some places elections were indirect, as in the United States where election of federal senators was in the hands of the state legislatures until 1913. But, taking the Western World as a whole, the tendency was toward "one man, one vote" and "one vote, one value."

There was less progress toward granting equivalent rights to women, but the first steps toward the emancipation of women occurred in the second half of the nineteenth century. Australia gave them the franchise in federal elections in 1902, and both Finland and Norway in 1907. At about the same time the "suffragettes" of Britain were agitating for the right to vote with a violence that gave new meaning to the phrase "war between the sexes."

Another feature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was the proliferation of voluntary organizations. The "right of association" was carried over from liberal to democratic constitutions. Societies to care for the indigent; to abolish the opium, liquor, or slave trades; to convert the heathen; or to educate the ignorant helped fill that gap between theory and need which the laissez-faire state neglected. They drew heavily on the legacy of humanitarianism left by the Enlightenment and on the quickened sense of charity in the churches. Many such societies went into politics to secure their objectives when they saw governments assuming more responsibility in economic and social affairs, and when extension of the franchise made governments more sensitive to organized public opinion. The statute books of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries are filled with legislation covering topics from alcohol to workingmen which were first advocated by small volunteer bands of zealots. In some pressure groups, economic self-interest was obviously involved. Associations of farmers, steelworkers, and shippers sought to secure favorable legislation, in addition to pursuing outside the realm of politics various policies for mutual benefit.

A special type of voluntary body which was found in all democracies, and elsewhere when permitted, was the political party, formed either of men with common ideas and interests, or of an alliance between groups. The formation of such bodies to influence policy was encouraged by the fragmentation of political power throughout the enlarged electorate. Parties distilled their wisdom and interests into platforms, in which issues and alternative proposals were placed before the voter. Parties selected candidates to stand, or run, for election. Voluntary and paid party workers sought to get out the vote

through appeals to civic virtue or with less idealistic inducements. Opposition parties could be counted upon to expose the faults of the government. At the polls, parties in power could be held responsible for their acts. Where the major political issues concerned the very nature of the constitution, as in France, parties tended to be numerous. Where, as in Britain and the United States, there was fairly general acceptance of the existing regime, two major parties sufficed. At their worst, parties and other voluntary associations were organized selfishness, the more dangerous because of the strength which lay in union. At their best, they were one of the devices whereby the individual could make his voice heard in an increasingly complex society.

Many other features of democratic governments were introduced in the belief that they contributed to the proper working of the broadened franchise. Even governments less than completely democratic adopted some of these features for one reason or another. The secret ballot, first introduced in Australia, was designed to protect the voter from intimidation. Most constitutions now contained some form of a bill of rights, and real gains were made toward securing freedom of speech and assembly, where they had not already been introduced by liberals earlier. Advocates of democracy urged that this was essential if the voter was to make an intelligent choice between alternatives. The censor lost a number of battles in his efforts to control the printed word, and in some countries -- Britain, France, and the United States, for example -- he had lost the war.

Among the results of these victories for freedom of the printed word was a remarkable expansion of the newspaper and periodical press, a phenomenon linked also to rising standards of living, increased literacy, and technological progress in the gathering and dissemination of news. It has been estimated that between 1880 and 1900 the number of newspapers published in Europe approximately doubled. Publishing now became in many cases a mammoth enterprise, geared to produce for the mass audience of new literates rather than for a relatively small group of the upper classes as heretofore. A new type of journalism evolved, catering to this unsophisticated reading public which demanded that its news be brightly written, brief, simplified, and exciting. Too often the popular press was guilty of "yellow journalism," confusing celebrity with greatness, and whipping up public emotions, regardless of consequences, for the sake of added sales. Yet the person who would make the effort could obtain factual reporting with an ease hitherto unequaled.

Virtually all parties agreed that the state must assume more responsibility than ever before for the promotion of universal education. that -- in a phrase widely current -- "we must educate our masters." The complexity of modern society added additional incentive to the cultivation of an educated

citizenry. Modern technology cried out for more trained minds and hands. Schools were called upon to teach the social discipline essential to urban living. All states were troubled by problems of loyalty and hoped that the indoctrination of a common education would forge links between classes, ethnic groups, economic interests, and religious beliefs. Consequently education was often strongly tainted with propaganda, but this should not obscure the fact that education of some sort was now available for more people, and for a larger proportion of the populace, than ever before. Even before 1870 advances in popular education in the United States gave her leadership in that field. For technical and scientific education, Germany in the late nineteenth century set the pace.

From the reservoirs of skills produced by educational systems which tended to become both free and, on the lower levels, compulsory came men to staff the new government posts created as laissez-faire receded. Many countries ceased awarding the medium and lower grade posts in the civil service on the basis of political patronage and introduced competitive examinations, thus implementing the old Napoleonic slogan of "careers open to talents." The United States Civil Service Commission, whose counterparts in other countries were numerous, itself dates from 1883.

It was a rare country in which an expanding state-supported system of education did not become embroiled in that long-standing problem of Western Civilization, the relation between church and state. More or less privileged state churches were still the rule in Europe, although generally their privileges were being curtailed and religious freedom and equality introduced. France separated church and state in 1905 after a prolonged and bitter fight which left many scars. Even where both sides accepted the old radical formula of "a free church in a free state," relations between the two were not easy. Each was concerned with securing and maintaining the loyalty of the citizenry. Consequently, governments sought some control over all education. Some churches sought to include religious instruction in the state school curriculum, or the right to establish a separate church school system, sometimes with financial aid from the state. Often two systems of education existed side by side, their relations strained by memories of age-old quarrels. The friction between the village priest and the anticlerical teacher in the state school was a stock situation in literature and popular legend.

usually battle with R.C. or ph. Orthodox but not always usually more R.C. than G.O. Orthodox had powers outside the state. Better position to put up a fight.

Many of the same states which began to require a minimum of education from their young citizens now also exacted a period of service in the armed forces. Austria-Hungary adopted universal military service in 1868; France in 1872; Russia in 1874; and Italy in 1875. Although the United States and Britain failed to follow suit, Continental democratic tradition was attached to the concept of the citizen army, "the nation under arms." It was felt that the people should defend the state

*army for defense, but not for offense. (democratic institution)
Not always questions of education, but it was usually the main one.*

which spoke with their sovereign voice. It was felt too that a citizen army was less dangerous and socially more desirable than the professional armies in which the landed aristocracy was firmly entrenched. Finally, some democrats argued that a citizen army was essentially a defensive weapon, and therefore unlikely to tempt a government into an aggressive war. Many who felt little sympathy for democracy favored universal military service simply because it produced large armies at a minimum cost.

In this case as in others, many who feared democratic institutions found that they could be curbed, or even used for ends which advocates of democracy had never intended. Party machinery and a purchased press could direct public opinion rather than reflect it. In legislatures, upper houses, less intimately bound to the electorate than lower houses, could act as a brake on legislation. Organized minorities could exercise an influence all out of proportion to their size. The civil service and the armed forces were excellent entrenchments from which to fight delaying actions. Money talked, unmistakably and sometimes convincingly. The power of the churches or, where it existed, of the crown could be used on the side of conservatism. In England, a line of Conservative statesmen from Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881) onward gambled that there was such a creature as a "Conservative workingman" who could be induced to vote for their party by judicious bribes in the form of social legislation and by a heady draft of imperialism. At a number of elections the gamble paid off. In Germany, Bismarck used, among other devices, a roughly similar mixture of social legislation and nationalism to secure backing at the polls.

If some of the wilder fears of the early opponents of democracy turned out to be groundless, so too some of the more extravagant hopes of democracy's advocates were disappointed. Enough has been said already in this brief survey of democratic institutions to suggest that their introduction did not abolish all controversy or cure all ills. Public interest in the concern about the problems of democracy is attested by the steady stream of books assessing the system which has flowed from the presses from that day to this.

A classic example of such analyses of democracy, and one which is still read with profit, is James Bryce's The American Commonwealth, the first of many editions of which appeared in 1888. The Englishman Bryce (1838-1922) was admirably equipped to discuss American political institutions. In 1864 he made his debut in the world of scholarship with a brilliant historical essay, The Holy Roman Empire. Prolonged study acquainted him with the English antecedents of the American system, and twenty-seven years as a Liberal member of the House of Commons provided first-hand knowledge of practical politics. Further knowledge of government came from service at the bar, in the Cabinet, and as ambassador to Washington.

The American Commonwealth appeared after three extensive visits to the United States, the first of many. Bryce was a penetrating observer, a good mixer who went everywhere, saw everything, spared no one his inquiries, and engaged in voluminous correspondence with his numerous American friends. The book was an immediate success on both sides of the Atlantic, drawing praise from Woodrow Wilson, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and Theodore Roosevelt. It has been said that thanks in part to its explanation of America to Britain, the "Spirit of '76" was never again the same on either side of the Atlantic, at least among intellectuals.

Bryce sought to present "a view of the United States both as a Government and as a Nation," encompassing "not only the State Governments but the party system, not only the party system but the ideas, temper, habits of the sovereign people." The following selection is from Chapter 94 of the 1891 edition, entitled "The True Faults of American Democracy."

...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....

egalitarianism emphasis on equality
even exceptions among adult males

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?

First, 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.

Things he sees wrong with our public 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.

How many of these things can be said of today?

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.

Criticism as not democratic, but really mean not egalitarianism. Doesn't seem to be any one great book to single out a study of democracy. These new ideas were not totally new but extensions of other ideas.

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 which 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.

Most of these ^{ideas} ~~ideas~~ ^{and extensions of the reforms} introduced by the original liberals. People started looking to the U.S. It was a leader in many things and was a going concern. They had an advantage of perspective, outside looking in. This was the "Gilded Age" - nice on the outside, but shoddy on the inside.

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.

...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. 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.

*Bryce knew America well. &
Important to know the times to understand what he says. (Probably Amer. at its worst.)*

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 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 doctrinairism 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 states of growth, but disappear when a nation has passed into another stage, or when sedulous experimentation has discovered the appropriate remedy.... 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. *
