

most Americans.¹ It takes a new member at least a session to learn the procedure of the House. Full dress debates are rare, newspaper reports of speeches delivered are curt and little read. The most serious work is done in committees; it is not known to the world, and much of it results in nothing, because many bills which a committee has considered are perhaps never even voted on by the House. A place on a good House committee is to be obtained by favour, and a high-spirited man may shrink from applying for it to the Speaker. Ability, tact, and industry make their way in the long run in Congress, as they do everywhere else. But in Congress there is, for most men, no long run. Only very strong local influence, or some remarkable party service rendered, will enable a member to keep his seat through two or three successive congresses. Nowhere therefore does the zeal of a young politician sooner wax cold than in the House of Representatives. Unfruitful toil, the toil of turning a crank which does nothing but register its own turnings, or of writing contributions which an editor steadily rejects, is of all things the most disheartening. It is more disheartening than the non-requital of merit; for that at least spares the self-respect of the sufferer. Now toil for the public is usually unfruitful in the House of Representatives, indeed in all Houses. But toil for the pecuniary interests of one's constituents and friends is fruitful, for it obliges people, it wins the reputation of energy and smartness, it has the promise not only of a re-nomination, but of that possible seat in the Senate which is the highest ambition of the congressman. Power, fame, perhaps even riches, sit upon that pinnacle. But the thin spun life is usually slit before the fair guerdon has been found. Few young men of high gifts and fine tastes look forward to entering public life, for the probable disappointments and vexations of a life in Congress so far outweigh its attractions that nothing but a strong sense of public duty suffices to draw such men into it. Law, education, literature, the higher walks of commerce, finance, or railway work, offer a better prospect of usefulness, enjoyment, or distinction.

Inside Washington, the representative is dwarfed by the senator and the Federal judges. Outside Washington he enjoys

¹ See also Chapter LVIII. *post*.

no great social consideration,¹ especially in the Northern States, for in the South his position retains some of its old credit. His opinion is not quoted with respect. He seems to move about under a *prima facie* suspicion of being a jobber, and to feel that the burden of proof lies on him to show that the current jests on this topic do not apply to him. Rich men therefore do not seek, as in England, to enter the legislature in order that they may enter society. They will get no *entrée* which they could not have secured otherwise. Nor is there any opportunity for the exercise of those social influences which tell upon members, and still more upon members' wives and daughters, in European legislatures. It may of course be worth while to "capture" a particular senator, and for that purpose to begin by capturing his wife. But the *salon* plays no conspicuous part in American public life.

The country does not go to Congress to look for its presidential candidates as England looks to Parliament for its prime ministers. The opportunities by which a man can win distinction there are few. He does not make himself familiar to the eye and ear of the people. Congress, in short, is not a focus of political life as are the legislatures of France, Italy, and England. Though it has become more powerful against the several States than it was formerly, though it has extended its arms in every direction, and encroached upon the executive, it has not become more interesting to the people, nor strengthened its hold on their respect and affection.

VIII. Neither in the Senate nor in the House are there any recognized leaders. There is no ministry, no ex-ministry leading an opposition, no chieftains at the head of definite groups who follow their lead, as the Irish Nationalist members in the British Parliament followed Mr. Parnell, and a large section in the French and German chambers followed M. Clemenceau and Dr. Windthorst. Hence there exists no regularly working agency for securing either that members shall be apprised of

¹ A few years ago an eminent Englishman, visiting one of the colleges for women in New England, and wishing to know something of the social standing of the students, remarked, "I suppose you have a good many young ladies here belonging to the best families, daughters of members of Congress and so forth?" The question excited so much amusement that it was repeated to me months afterwards not only as an instance of English ignorance but as a merry jest.

the divisions to be expected, or that they shall vote in those divisions in a particular way.

To any one familiar with the methods of the English Parliament this seems incomprehensible. How, he asks, can business go on at all, how can each party make itself felt as a party with neither leader nor Whips?

I have mentioned the Whips. Let me say a word on this vital, yet even in England little appreciated, part of the machinery of constitutional government. Each party in the House of Commons has, besides its leaders, a member of the House nominated by the chief leader as his aide-de-camp, and called the whipper-in, or, for shortness, the whip. The whip's duties are (1) to inform every member belonging to the party when an important division may be expected, and if he sees the member in or about the House, to keep him there until the division is called; (2) to direct the members of his own party how to vote; (3) to obtain pairs for them if they cannot be present to vote; (4) to "tell," *i.e.* count the members in every party division; (5) to "keep touch" of opinion within the party, and convey to the leader a faithful impression of that opinion, from which the latter can judge how far he may count on the support of his whole party in any course he proposes to take. A member in doubt how he shall vote on a question with regard to which he has no opinion of his own, goes to the whip for counsel. A member who without grave cause stays away unpaired from an important division to which the whip has duly summoned him is guilty of a misdemeanour only less flagrant than that of voting against his party. A ministerial whip is further bound to "keep a house," *i.e.* to secure that when government business is being considered there shall always be a quorum of members present, and of course also to keep a majority, *i.e.* to have within reach a number of supporters sufficient to give the ministry a majority on any ministerial division.¹ Without the constant presence and activity

¹ That which was at one time the chief function of the ministerial whip, *viz.* to pay members for the votes they gave in support of the government, has been extinct for about a century. He is still, however, the recognized organ for handling questions of political patronage, and is therefore called the Patronage Secretary to the Treasury. People who want places for their friends, or titles for themselves, still address their requests to him, which he communicates to the prime minister with his opinion as to whether the appli-

of the ministerial whip the wheels of government could not go on for a day, because the ministry would be exposed to the risk of casual defeats which would destroy their credit and might involve their resignation. Similarly the Opposition, and any third or fourth party, find it necessary to have their whip or whips, because it is only thus that they can act as a party, guide their supporters, and bring their full strength to bear on a division. Hence when a new party is formed, its first act, that by which it realizes and proclaims its existence, is to name whips, to whom its adherents may go for counsel, and who may in turn receive their suggestions as to the proper strategy for the party to adopt.¹ So essential are these officers to the discipline of English parliamentary armies that an English politician's first question when he sees Congress is, "Where are the whips?" his next, "How in the world do you get on without them?"

The answer to this question is threefold. Whips are not so necessary at Washington as at Westminster. A sort of substitute for them has been devised. Congress does to some extent suffer from the inadequacy of the substituted device.

A division in Congress has not the importance it has in the House of Commons. There it may throw out the ministry. In Congress it never does more than affirm or negative some particular bill or resolution. Even a division in the Senate which involves the rejection of a treaty or of an appointment to some great office, does not disturb the tenure of the executive. Hence it is not essential to the majority that its full strength should be always at hand, nor has a minority party any great prize set before it as the result of a successful vote.

Questions, however, arise in which some large party interest is involved. There may be a bill by which the party means to carry out its main views of policy or perhaps to curry favour with the people, or a resolution whereby it hopes to damage a

cant's party services justify the request. Nowadays this patronage has no great political importance.

¹ Even parties formed with a view to particular, and probably transitory issues, such as that of the English Anti-Home-Rule Liberals in the House of Commons, appoint one or more of their members as whips, because they could not otherwise act with that effect which only habitual concert gives. Each party has its whips in the House of Lords also, but as divisions there have less political significance their functions are less important.

hostile executive. In such cases it is important to bring up every vote. Accordingly at the beginning of every Congress a caucus committee is elected by the majority, and it becomes the duty of the chairman and secretary of this committee (to whom, in the case of a party bill supported by the majority, there is added the chairman of the committee to which that bill has been referred, necessarily a member of the majority) to act as whips, *i.e.* to give notice of important divisions by sending out a "call" to members of the party, and to take all requisite steps to have a quorum and a majority present to push through the bill or resolution to which the party stands committed. *Mutatis mutandis* (for of course it is seldom an object with the minority to secure a quorum), the minority take the same course to bring up their men on important divisions. In cases of gravity or doubt, where it is thought prudent to consult or to restimulate the party, the caucus committee convokes a caucus, *i.e.* a meeting of the whole party, at which the attitude to be assumed by the party is debated with closed doors, and a vote taken as to the course to be adopted.¹ By this vote every member of the party is deemed bound, just as he would be in England by the request of the leader conveyed through the whip. Disobedience cannot be punished in Congress itself, except of course by social penalties; but it endangers the seat of the too independent member, for the party managers at Washington will communicate with the party managers in his district, and the latter will probably refuse to re-nominate him at the next election. The most important caucus of a Congress is that held at the opening to select the party candidate for the speakership, selection by the majority being of course equivalent to election. As the views and tendencies of the Speaker determine the composition of the committees, and thereby the course of legislation, his selection is a matter of supreme importance, and is preceded by weeks of intrigue and canvassing.

¹ An experienced senator told me that the Senate caucus of his party used to meet on an average twice a month, the House caucus less frequently. A leading member of the House said that a "call" would be sent out, on an average, for about six measures in a session, *i.e.* from ten to twenty times altogether, according to the resistance offered to the measures of the majority. Sometimes a "call" of the majority is signed by the Speaker. General meetings of a party in Parliament are much less common in England.

The process of "going into caucus" is the regular American substitute for recognized leadership, and has the advantage of seeming more consistent with democratic equality, because every member of the party has in theory equal weight in the party meeting. It is used whenever a line of policy has to be settled, or the whole party to be rallied for a particular party division. But of course it cannot be employed every day or for every bill. Hence when no party meeting has issued its orders, a member is comparatively free to vote as he pleases, or rather as he thinks his constituents please. If he knows nothing of the matter, he may take a friend's advice, or vote as he hears some prominent man on his own side vote. Anyhow, his vote is doubtful, unpredictable; and consequently divisions on minor questions are uncertain. This is a further reason, added to the power of the standing committees, why there is a want of consistent policy in the action of Congress. As its leading men have comparatively little authority, and there are no means whereby a leader could keep his party together on ordinary questions, so no definite ideas run through its conduct and express themselves in its votes. It moves in zig-zags.

The freedom thus enjoyed by members on minor questions has the interesting result of preventing dissensions and splits in the parties. There are substances which cohere best when their contact is loose. Fresh fallen snow keeps a smooth surface even on a steep slope, but when by melting and regelation it has become ice, cracks and rifts begin to appear. A loose hung carriage will hold together over a road whose roughness would strain and break a more solid one. Hence serious differences of opinion may exist in a congressional party without breaking its party unity, for nothing more is needed than that a solid front should be presented on the occasions, few in each session, when a momentous division arrives. The appearance of agreement is all the more readily preserved because there is little serious debating, so that the advocates of one view seldom provoke the other section of their party to rise and contradict them; while a member who dissents from the bulk of his party on an important issue is slow to vote against it, because he has little chance of defining and defending his position by an explanatory speech.

The congressional caucus has in troublous times to be supplemented by something like obedience to regular leaders. Mr. Thaddeus Stevens, for instance, led with recognized authority the majority of the House in its struggle with President Andrew Johnson. The Senate is rather more jealous of the equality of all its members. No senator can be said to have any authority beyond that of exceptional talent and experience; and of course a senatorial caucus, since it rarely consists of more than fifty persons, is a better working body than a House caucus, which may exceed two hundred.¹

The European reader may be perplexed by the apparent contradictions in what has been said regarding the party organization of Congress. "Is the American House after all," he will ask, "more or less a party body than the British House of Commons? Is the spirit of party more or less strong in Congress than in the American people generally?"

For the purpose of serious party issues the House of Representatives is fully as much a party body as the House of Commons. A member voting against his party on such an issue is more certain to forfeit his party reputation and his seat than is an English member. But for the purpose of ordinary questions, of issues not involving party fortunes, a representative is less bound by party ties than an English member, because he has neither leaders to guide him by their speeches nor whips by their private instructions. The apparent gain is that a wider field is left for independent judgment on non-partisan questions. The real loss is that legislation becomes weak and inconsistent. This conclusion is not encouraging to those who expect us to get rid of party in our legislatures. A deliberative assembly is, after all, only a crowd of men; and the more intelligent a crowd is, so much the more numerous are its volitions; so much greater the difficulty of agreement. Like other crowds, a legislature must be led and ruled. Its merit lies not in the independence of its members, but in the reflex action of its opinion upon the leaders, in its

¹ At one time the congressional caucus played in American history a great part which it has now renounced. From 1800 till 1824 party meetings of senators and representatives were held which nominated the party candidates for the presidency, who were then accepted by each party as its regular candidates. In 1828 the State legislatures made these nominations, and in 1832 the present system of national conventions (see *post*, in Vol. II.) was introduced.

willingness to defer to them in minor matters, reserving disobedience for the issues in which some great principle overrides both the obligation of deference to established authority and the respect due to special knowledge.

The above remarks answer the second question also. The spirit of party may seem to be weaker in Congress than in the people at large. But this is only because the questions which the people decide at the polls are always questions of choice between candidates for office. These are definite questions, questions eminently of a party character, because candidates represent in the America of to-day not principles but parties. Whenever a vote upon persons occurs in Congress, Congress gives a strict party vote. Were the people to vote at the polls on matters not explicitly comprised within a party platform, there would be the same uncertainty as Congress displays. The habit of joint action which makes the life of a party is equally intense in every part of the American system. But in England the existence of a Ministry and Opposition in Parliament sweeps within the circle of party action many topics which in America are left outside, and therefore Congress seems, but is not, less permeated than Parliament by party spirit.