

on the part of the people, that some of the faults of their legislatures may be ascribed.

The chief lesson which a study of the more vicious among the State legislatures teaches, is that power does not necessarily bring responsibility in its train. I should be ashamed to write down so bald a platitude, were it not one of those platitudes which are constantly forgotten or ignored. People who know well enough that, in private life, wealth or rank or any other kind of power is as likely to mar a man as to make him, to lower as to raise his sense of duty, have nevertheless contracted the habit of talking as if human nature changed when it entered public life, as if the mere possession of public functions, whether of voting or of legislating, tended of itself to secure their proper exercise. We know that power does not purify men in despotic governments, but we talk as if it did so in free governments. Every one would of course admit, if the point were put flatly to him, that power alone is not enough, but that there must be added to power, in the case of the voter, a direct interest in the choice of good men, in the case of the legislator, responsibility to the voters, in the case of both, a measure of enlightenment and honour. What the legislatures of the worst States show is not merely the need for the existence of a sound public opinion, for such a public opinion exists, but the need for methods by which it can be brought into efficient action upon representatives, who, if they are left to themselves, and are not individually persons with a sense of honour and a character to lose, will be at least as bad in public life as they could be in private. The greatness of the scale on which they act, and of the material interests they control, will do little to inspire them. New York and Pennsylvania are by far the largest and wealthiest States in the Union. Their legislatures are confessedly among the worst.

## CHAPTER XLVI

### STATE POLITICS

IN the last preceding chapters I have attempted to describe first the structure of the machinery of State governments, and then this machinery in motion as well as at rest, — that is to say, the actual working of the various departments in their relations to one another. We may now ask, What is the motive power which sets and keeps these wheels and pistons going? What is the steam that drives the machine?

The steam is supplied by the political parties. In speaking of the parties I must, to some slight extent, anticipate what will be more fully explained in Part III.: but it seems worth while to incur this inconvenience for the sake of bringing together all that refers specially to the States, and of completing the picture of their political life.<sup>1</sup>

The States evidently present some singular conditions for the development of a party system. They are self-governing communities with large legislative and administrative powers, existing inside a much greater community of which they are for many purposes independent. They must have parties, and this community, the Federal Union, has also parties. What is the relation of the one set of parties to the other?

There are three kinds of relations possible, viz. —

Each State might have a party of its own, entirely unconnected with the national parties, but created by State issues — *i.e.* advocating or opposing measures which fall within the exclusive competence of the State.

Each State might have parties which, while based upon State issues, were influenced by the national parties, and in some sort of affiliation with the latter.

<sup>1</sup> Many readers may find it better to skip this chapter until they have read those which follow (Chapters LIII.—LVI.) upon the history, tenets, and present condition of the great national parties.

The parties in each State might be merely local subdivisions of the national parties, the national issues and organizations swallowing up, or rather pushing aside, the State issues and the organizations formed to deal with them.

The nature of the State governments would lead us to expect to find the first of these relations existing. The sphere of the State is different, some few topics of concurrent jurisdiction excepted, from that of the National government. What the State can deal with, the National government cannot touch. What the National government can deal with lies beyond the province of the State. The State governor and legislature are elected without relation to the President and Congress, and when elected have nothing to do with those authorities. Hence a question fit to be debated and voted upon in Congress can seldom be a question fit to be also debated and voted upon in a State legislature, and the party formed for advocating its passage through Congress will have no scope for similar action within a State, while on the other hand a State party, seeking to carry some State law, will have no motive for approaching Congress, which can neither help it nor hurt it. The great questions which have divided the Union since its foundation, and on which national parties have been based, have been questions of foreign policy, of the creation of a national bank, of a protective tariff, of the extension of slavery, of the reconstruction of the South after the war. With none of these had a State legislature any title to deal: all lay within the Federal sphere. So at this moment the questions of currency and tariff reform, which are among the most important questions before the country, are outside the province of the State governments. We might therefore expect that the State parties would be as distinct from the national parties as are the State governments from the Federal.

The contrary has happened. The national parties have engulfed the State parties. The latter have disappeared absolutely as independent bodies, and survive merely as branches of the national parties, working each in its own State for the tenets and purposes which a national party professes and seeks to attain. So much is this the case that one may say that a State party has rarely any marked local colour, that it is seldom and then but slightly the result of a compromise between State

issues and national issues, such as I have indicated in suggesting the second form of possible relation. The national issues have thrown matters of State competence entirely into the shade, and have done so almost from the foundation of the Republic. The local parties which existed in 1789 in most or all of the States were soon absorbed into the Federalists and Democratic Republicans who sprang into life after the adoption of the Federal Constitution.

The results of this phenomenon have been so important that we may stop to examine its causes.

Within four years from their origin, the strife of the two great national parties became intense over the whole Union. From 1793 till 1815 grave issues of foreign policy, complicated with issues of domestic policy, stirred men to fierce passion and strenuous effort. State business, being more commonplace, exciting less feeling, awakening no interest outside State boundaries, fell into the background. The leaders who won fame and followers were national leaders; and a leader came to care for his influence within his State chiefly as a means of gaining strength in the wider national field. Even so restlessly active and versatile a people as the Americans cannot feel warmly about two sets of diverse interests at the same time, cannot create and work simultaneously two distinct and unconnected party organizations. The State, therefore, had, to use the transatlantic phrase, "to take the back seat." Before 1815 the process was complete; the dividing lines between parties in every State were those drawn by national questions. And from 1827 down to 1877 the renewed keenness of party warfare kept these parties constantly on the stretch, and forced them to use all the support they could win in a State for the purposes of the national struggle.

There was one way in which predominance in a State could be so directly used. The Federal senators are chosen by the State legislatures. The party therefore which gains a majority in the State legislature gains two seats in the smaller and more powerful branch of Congress. As parties in Congress are generally pretty equally balanced, this advantage is well worth fighting for, and is a constant spur to the efforts of national politicians to carry the State elections in a particular State. Besides, in America, above all countries, nothing succeeds like

success; and in each State the party which carries the State elections is held likely to carry the elections for the national House of Representatives, and for the President also.

Moreover, there are the offices. The Federal offices in each State are very numerous. They are in the gift of whichever national party happens to be in power, *i.e.* counts among its members the President for the time being. He bestows them upon those who in each State have worked hardest for the national party there. Thus the influence of Washington and its presiding deities is everywhere felt, and even the party which is in a minority in a particular State, and therefore loses its share of the State offices, is cheered and fed by morsels of patronage from the national table. The national parties are in fact all-pervasive, and leave little room for the growth of any other groupings or organizations. A purely State party, indifferent to national issues, would, if it were started now, have no support from outside, would have few posts to bestow, because the State offices are neither numerous nor well paid, could have no pledge of permanence such as the vast mechanism of the national parties provides, would offer little prospect of aiding its leaders to win wealth or fame in the wider theatre of Congress.

Accordingly the national parties have complete possession of the field. In every State from Maine to Texas all State elections for the governorship and other offices are fought on their lines; all State legislatures are divided into members belonging to one or other of them. Every trial of strength in a State election is assumed to presage a similar result in a national election. Every State office is deemed as fitting a reward for services to the national party as for services in State contests. In fact the whole machinery is worked exactly as if the State were merely a subdivision of the Union for electoral purposes. Yet nearly all the questions which come before State legislatures have nothing whatever to do with the tenets of the national parties, while votes of State legislatures, except in respect of the choice of senators, can neither advance nor retard the progress of any cause which lies within the competence of Congress.

How has this system affected the working of the State governments, and especially of their legislatures?

It has prevented the growth within a State of State parties addressing themselves to the questions which belong to its legislature, and really affect its welfare.

The natural source of a party is a common belief, a common aim and purpose. For this men league themselves together, and agree to act in concert. A State party ought therefore to be formed out of persons who desire the State to do something, or not to do it; to pass such and such a law, to grant money to such and such an object. It is, however, formed with reference to no such aim or purpose, but to matters which the State cannot influence. Hence a singular unreality in the State parties. In most of the legislatures as well as through the electoral districts they cohere very closely. But this cohesion is of no service or significance for nine-tenths of the questions that come before the legislature for its decision, seeing that such questions are not touched by the platform of either party. Party, therefore, does not fulfil its legitimate ends. It does not produce the co-operation of leaders in preparing, of followers in supporting, a measure or line of policy. It does not secure the keen criticism by either side of the measures or policy advocated by the other. It is an artificial aggregation of persons linked together for purposes unconnected with the work they have to do.

This state of things may seem to possess the advantage of permitting questions to be considered on their merits, apart from that spirit of faction which in England, for instance, disposes the men on one side to reject a proposal of the other side on the score, not of its demerits, but of the quarter it proceeds from. Such an advantage would certainly exist if members were elected to the State legislatures irrespective of party, if the practice was to look out for good men who would manage State business prudently and pass useful laws. This, however, is not the practice. The strength of the national parties prevents it. Every member is elected as a party man; and the experiment of legislatures working without parties has as little chance of being tried in the several States as in Congress itself. There is yet another benefit which the plan seems to promise. The State legislatures may seem a narrow sphere for an enterprising genius, and their work uninteresting to a superior mind. But if they lead into the larger field of national politics, if dis-