

drawn. It is for that party that the Puritan spirit, not extinct in America, has felt the greater affinity, for this spirit, having realized the sinfulness of human nature, is inclined to train and control the natural man by laws and force.

The tendency that makes for a strong government being akin to that which makes for a central government, the Federalist-Whig-Republican party, which has, through its long history, and under its varying forms and names, been the advocate of the national principle, found itself for this reason also led, more frequently than the Democrats, to exalt the rights and powers of government. It might be thought that the same cause would have made the Republican party take sides in that profound opposition which we perceive to-day in all civilized peoples, between the tendency to enlarge the sphere of legislation and State action, and the doctrine of *laissez faire*. So far, however, this has not happened. There is more in the character and temper of the Republicans than of the Democrats that leans towards State interference. But neither party has thought out the question; neither has shown any more definiteness of policy regarding it than the Tories and the Liberals have done in England.

American students of history may think that I have pressed the antithesis of liberty and authority, as well as that of centrifugal and centripetal tendencies, somewhat too far in making one party a representative of each through the first century of the Republic. I do not deny that at particular moments the party which was usually disposed towards a strong government resisted and decried authority, while the party which specially professed itself the advocate of liberty sought to make authority more stringent. Such deviations are however compatible with the general tendencies I have described. And no one who has gained even a slight knowledge of the history of the United States will fall into the error of supposing that the words Order and Authority mean there what they have meant in the monarchies of Continental Europe.

CHAPTER LIV

THE PARTIES OF TO-DAY

THERE are now two great and several minor parties in the United States. The great parties are the Republicans and the Democrats. What are their principles, their distinctive tenets, their tendencies? Which of them is for free trade, for civil service reform, for a spirited foreign policy, for the regulation of telegraphs by legislation, for a national bankrupt law, for changes in the currency, for any other of the twenty issues which one hears discussed in the country as seriously involving its welfare?

This is what a European is always asking of intelligent Republicans and intelligent Democrats. He is always asking because he never gets an answer. The replies leave him in deeper perplexity. After some months the truth begins to dawn upon him. Neither party has anything definite to say on these issues; neither party has any principles, any distinctive tenets. Both have traditions. Both claim to have tendencies. Both have certainly war cries, organizations, interests enlisted in their support. But those interests are in the main the interests of getting or keeping the patronage of the government. Tenets and policies, points of political doctrine and points of political practice, have all but vanished. They have not been thrown away but have been stripped away by Time and the progress of events, fulfilling some policies, blotting out others. All has been lost, except office or the hope of it.

The phenomenon may be illustrated from the case of England, where party government has existed longer and in a more fully developed form than in any other part of the Old World.¹

¹ English parties are however not very ancient; they date only from the struggle of the Stuart kings with the Puritan and popular party in the House of Commons, and did not take regular shape as Whigs and Tories till the reign of Charles II.

The essence of the English parties has lain in the existence of two sets of views and tendencies which divide the nation into two sections, the party, let us say, though these general terms are not very safe, of movement and the party of standing still, the party of liberty and the party of order. Each section believes in its own views, and is influenced by its peculiar tendencies, recollections, mental associations, to deal in its own peculiar way with every new question as it comes up. The particular dogmas may change: doctrines once held by Whigs alone may now be held by Tories also; doctrines which Whigs would have rejected fifty years ago may now be part of the orthodox programme of the Liberal party. But the tendencies have been permanent and have always so worked upon the various fresh questions and problems which have presented themselves during the last two centuries, that each party has had not only a brilliant concrete life in its famous leaders and zealous members, but also an intellectual and moral life in its principles. These principles have meant something to those who held them, so that when a fresh question arose it was usually possible to predict how each party, how even the average members of each party, would regard and wish to deal with it. Thus even when the leaders have been least worthy and their aims least pure, an English party has felt itself ennobled and inspirited by the sense that it had great objects to fight for, a history and traditions which imposed on it the duty of battling for its distinctive principles. It is because issues have never been lacking which brought these respective principles into operation, forcing the one party to maintain the cause of order and existing institutions, the other that of freedom and what was deemed progress, that the two English parties have not degenerated into mere factions. Their struggles for office have been redeemed from selfishness by the feeling that office was a means of giving practical effect to their doctrines.

But suppose that in Britain all the questions which divide Tories from Liberals were to be suddenly settled and done with. Britain would be in a difficulty. Her free government has so long been worked by the action and reaction of the ministerialists and the opposition that there would probably continue to be two parties. But they would not be really, in the true old sense of the terms, Tories and Liberals; they would be merely

Ins and Outs. Their combats would be waged hardly even in name for principles, but only for place. The government of the country, with the honour, power, and emoluments attached to it, would still remain as a prize to be contended for. The followers would still rally to the leaders; and friendship would still bind the members together into organized bodies; while dislike and suspicion would still rouse them against their former adversaries. Thus not only the leaders, who would have something tangible to gain, but even others who had only their feelings to gratify, would continue to form political clubs, register voters, deliver party harangues, contest elections, just as they do now. The difference would be that each faction would no longer have broad principles — I will not say to invoke, for such principles would probably continue to be invoked as heretofore — but to insist on applying as distinctively its principles to the actual needs of the state. Hence quiet or fastidious men would not join in party struggles; while those who did join would no longer be stimulated by the sense that they were contending for something ideal. Loyalty to a leader whom it was sought to make prime minister would be a poor substitute for loyalty to a faith. If there were no conspicuous leader, attachment to the party would degenerate either into mere hatred of antagonists or into a struggle over places and salaries. And almost the same phenomena would be seen if, although the old issues had not been really determined, both the parties should have so far abandoned their former positions that these issues did not divide them, so that each professed principles which were, even if different in formal statement, practicably indistinguishable in their application.

This, which conceivably may happen in England under her new political conditions, is what has happened with the American parties. The chief practical issues which once divided them have been settled. Some others have not been settled, but as regards these, one or other party has so departed from its former attitude that we cannot now speak of any conflict of principles.

When life leaves an organic body it becomes useless, fetid, pestiferous: it is fit to be cast out or buried from sight. What life is to an organism, principles are to a party. When they which are its soul have vanished, its body ought to dissolve,

and the elements that formed it be regrouped in some new organism :

"The times have been
That when the brains were out the man would die."

But a party does not always thus die. It may hold together long after its moral life is extinct. Guelfs and Ghibellines warred in Italy for nearly two centuries after the Emperor had ceased to threaten the Pope, or the Pope to befriend the cities of Lombardy. Parties go on contending because their members have formed habits of joint action, and have contracted hatreds and prejudices, and also because the leaders find their advantage in using these habits and playing on these prejudices. The American parties now continue to exist, because they have existed. The mill has been constructed, and its machinery goes on turning, even when there is no grist to grind. But this is not wholly the fault of the men; for the system of government requires and implies parties, just as that of England does. These systems are made to be worked, and always have been worked, by a majority; a majority must be cohesive, gathered into a united and organized body: such a body is a party.

If you ask an ordinary Northern Democrat to characterize the two parties, he will tell you that the Republicans are corrupt and incapable, and will cite instances in which persons prominent in that party, or intimate friends of its leaders, have been concerned in frauds on the government or in disgraceful lobbying transactions in Congress. When you press him for some distinctive principles separating his own party from theirs, he will probably say that the Democrats are the protectors of States' rights and of local independence, and the Republicans hostile to both. If you go on to inquire what bearing this doctrine of States' rights has on any presently debated issue he will admit that, for the moment, it has none, but will insist that should any issue involving the rights of the States arise, his party will be, as always, the guardian of American freedom.

This is really all that can be predicated about the Democratic party. If a question involving the rights of a State against the Federal authority were to emerge, its instinct would lead it to array itself on the side of the State rather than of the central government, supposing that it had no direct motive to do

the opposite. As it has at no point of time, from the outbreak of the war down to 1892, possessed a majority in both Houses of Congress as well as the President in power, its devotion to this principle has not been tested, and might not resist the temptation of any interest the other way. However, this is matter of speculation, for at present the States fear no infringement of their rights. So conversely of the Republicans. Their traditions ought to dispose them to support Federal power against the States, but their action in a concrete case would probably depend on whether their party was at the time in condition to use that power for its own purposes. If they were in a minority in Congress, they would be little inclined to strengthen Congress against the States. The simplest way of proving or illustrating this will be to run quickly through the questions of present practical interest.

That which most keenly interests the people, though of course not all the people, is the regulation or extinction of the liquor traffic. On this neither party has committed or will commit itself. The traditional dogmas of neither cover it, though the Democrats have been rather more disposed to leave men to themselves than the Republicans, and rather less amenable to the influence of ethical sentiment. Practically for both parties the point of consequence is what they can gain or lose. Each has clearly something to lose. The drinking part of the population is chiefly foreign. Now the Irish are mainly Democrats, so the Democratic party dare not offend them. The Germans are mainly Republican, so the Republicans are equally bound over to caution. It is true that though the parties, as parties, have been, in nearly all States, neutral, most Temperance men are, in the North and West,¹ Republicans, most whiskey-men and saloon-keepers Democrats. The Republicans therefore more frequently attempt to conciliate the anti-liquor party by flattering phrases. They suffer by the starting of a Prohibitionist candidate, since

¹ The Southern negroes have usually voted for the Republicans, but are generally opposed to restrictions on the sale of liquor. This was strikingly shown in a recent popular vote on the subject in Texas. On the other hand, the better class of Southern whites, who are of course Democrats, are largely Temperance men, and some States, *e.g.* Georgia, have adopted a local option system, under which each county decides whether it will be "wet" or "dry" (*i.e.* permit or forbid the sale of intoxicants).

he draws more voting strength away from them than he does from the Democrats.

Free Trade *v.* Protection is another burning question, and has been so since the early days of the Union. The old controversy as to the constitutional right of Congress to impose a tariff for any object but that of raising revenue, has been laid to rest, for whether the people in 1788 meant or did not mean to confer such a power, it has been exerted for so many years, and on so superb a scale, that no one now doubts its legality. Before the war the Democrats were advocates of a tariff for revenue only, *i.e.* of Free Trade. Some of them still hold that doctrine in its fulness, but as the majority, though they favour a reduction of the present system of import duties, have not been clear upon the general principle, the party trumpet has often given an uncertain sound. Moreover, Pennsylvania is Protectionist on account of its iron industries; northern Georgia and Alabama and South-eastern Tennessee have leanings that way for the same reason; Louisiana has sometimes inclined to Protection on account of its sugar. Unwilling to alienate the Democrats of three such districts, the party has generally sought to remain unpledged, or, at least, in winking with one eye to the men of the North-West and South-East who desire to reduce the tariff, it has been tempted to wink with the other to the iron men of Pittsburg and the sugar men of New Orleans. Thus, though the Democrats have come to advocate more and more strongly large changes in the present system, they have done this not so much on pure Free Trade principles, as on the ground that the surplus must be got rid of, and that the duties now in force oppress many classes in the community. The surplus has now (1894) disappeared, eaten up by the Pension Act of 1890, and has been replaced by a deficit, but the Democrats committed themselves against Protection in the election of 1892 more distinctly than they had previously done. The Republicans, all along bolder, have twice pledged themselves, in framing their platform, to maintain the protective tariff. But some of the keenest intellects in their ranks, including a few leading journalists, have been strong for Free Trade and therefore sorely tempted to break with their party. Only a few, however, have on that ground forsaken it.

Civil service reform, whereof more hereafter, has for some time past received the lip service of both parties, a lip service expressed by both with equal warmth, and by the average professional politicians of both with equal insincerity. Such reforms as have been effected in the mode of filling up places, have been forced on the parties by public opinion, rather than carried through by either. None of the changes made—and they are perhaps the most beneficial of recent changes—has raised an issue between the parties, or given either of them a claim on the confidence of the country. The best men in both parties support the Civil Service Commission; the worst men in both would gladly get rid of it.

The advantages of regulating, by Federal legislation, railroads and telegraphic lines extending over a number of States, is a subject frequently discussed. Neither party has had anything distinctive to say upon it in the way either of advocacy or of condemnation. Both have asserted that it is the duty of railways to serve the people, and not to tyrannize over or defraud them, so the Inter-State Commerce Act passed in 1887 with this view cannot be called a party measure. Finances have on the whole been well managed, and debt paid off with surprising speed. But there have been, and are still, serious problems raised by the condition of the currency. Both parties have made mistakes, and mistakes about equally culpable, for though the Republicans, having more frequently commanded a Congressional majority, have had superior opportunities for blundering, the Democrats have once or twice more definitely committed themselves to pernicious doctrines. Neither party now proposes a clear and definite policy, although the Democrats have been more inclined to the free coinage of silver.

It is the same as regards minor questions, such as woman suffrage or ballot reform, or convict labour. Neither party has any distinctive attitude on these matters; neither is more likely, or less likely, than the other to pass a measure dealing with them. It is the same with regard to the doctrine of *laissez faire* as opposed to governmental interference. Neither Republicans nor Democrats can be said to be friends or foes of State interference: each will advocate it when there seems a practically useful object to be secured, or when the popular voice seems to call for it. It is the same with foreign policy. Both

parties are practically agreed not only as to the general principles which ought to rule the conduct of the country, but as to the application of these principles. The party which opposes the President may at any given moment seek to damage him by defeating some particular proposal he has made, but this it will do as a piece of temporary strategy, not in pursuance of any settled doctrine.

Yet one cannot say that there is to-day no difference between the two great parties. There is a difference of spirit or sentiment perceptible even by a stranger when, after having mixed for some time with members of the one he begins to mix with those of the other, and doubtless much more patent to a native American. It resembles (though it is less marked than) the difference of tone and temper between Tories and Liberals in England. The intellectual view of a Democrat of the better sort is not quite the same as that of his Republican compeer: neither is his ethical standard. Each of course thinks meanly of the other; but while the Democrat thinks the Republican "dangerous" (*i.e.* likely to undermine the Constitution) the Republican is more apt to think the Democrat vicious and reckless. So in England your Liberal fastens on stupidity as the characteristic fault of the Tory, while the Tory suspects the morals and religion more than he despises the intelligence of the Radical.

It cannot be charged on the American parties that they have drawn towards one another by forsaking their old principles. It is time that has changed the circumstances of the country, and made those old principles inapplicable. They would seem to have erred rather by clinging too long to outworn issues, and by neglecting to discover and work out new principles capable of solving the problems which now perplex the country. In a country so full of change and movement as America new questions are always coming up, and must be answered. New troubles surround a government, and a way must be found to escape from them; new diseases attack the nation, and have to be cured. The duty of a great party is to face these, to find answers and remedies, applying to the facts of the hour the doctrines it has lived by, so far as they are still applicable, and when they have ceased to be applicable, thinking out new doctrines conformable to the main principles

and tendencies which it represents. This is a work to be accomplished by its ruling minds, while the habit of party loyalty to the leaders powerfully serves to diffuse through the mass of followers the conclusions of the leaders and the reasonings they have employed.

"But," the European reader may ask, "is it not the interest as well as the duty of a party thus to adapt itself to new conditions? Does it not, in failing to do so, condemn itself to sterility and impotence, ultimately, indeed, to supersession by some new party which the needs of the time have created?"

This is what usually happens in Europe. Probably it will happen in the long run in America also, unless the parties adapt themselves to the new issues, just as the Whig party fell in 1852-57 because it failed to face the problem of slavery. That it happens more slowly may be ascribed partly to the completeness and strength of the party organizations, which make the enthusiasm generated by ideas less necessary, partly to the growing prominence of 'social' and 'labour' questions, on which both parties are equally eager to conciliate the masses, and equally unwilling to proclaim definite views, partly to the fact that several questions on which the two great parties still hesitate to take sides are not presently vital to the well-being of the country. Something is also due to the smaller influence in America than in Europe of individual leaders. English parties, which hesitate long over secondary questions, might hesitate longer than is now their practice over vital ones also, were they not accustomed to look for guidance to their chiefs, and to defer to the opinion which the chiefs deliver. And it is only by courage and the capacity for initiative that the chiefs themselves retain their position.