

them and working for them in drilling and "energizing" the party within the area which is the sphere of its action.

What have the tenets of such national parties as the Republicans and Democrats to do with the politics of States and cities? Very little with those of States, because a matter for Federal legislation is seldom also a matter for State legislation. Still less with those of cities or counties. Cities and counties have not strictly speaking any political questions to deal with; their business is to pave and light, to keep the streets clean, maintain an efficient police and well-barred prisons, administer the poor law and charitable institutions with integrity, judgment, and economy. The laws regulating these matters have been already made by the State, and the city or county authority has nothing to do but administer them. Hence at city and county elections the main objects ought to be to choose honest and careful men of business. It need make no difference to the action of a mayor or school trustee in any concrete question whether he holds Democratic or Republican views.

However, the habit of party warfare has been so strong as to draw all elections into its vortex; nor would either party feel safe if it neglected the means of rallying and drilling its supporters, which State and local contests supply. There is this advantage in the system, that it stimulates the political interest of the people, which is kept alive by this perpetual agitation. But the multiplicity of contests has the effect of making politics too absorbing an occupation for the ordinary citizen who has his profession or business to attend to; while the result claimed by those who in England defend the practice of fighting municipal elections on party lines, viz. that good men are induced to stand for local office for the sake of their party, is the last result desired by the politicians, or expected by any one. It is this constant labour which the business of politics involves, this ramification of party into all the nooks and corners of local government, that has produced the class of professional politicians, of whom it is now time to speak.

## CHAPTER LVII

### THE POLITICIANS

INSTITUTIONS are said to form men, but it is no less true that men give to institutions their colour and tendency. It profits little to know the legal rules and methods and observances of government, unless one also knows something of the human beings who tend and direct this machinery, and who, by the spirit in which they work it, may render it the potent instrument of good or evil to the people. These men are the politicians.

What is one to include under this term? In England it usually denotes those who are actively occupied in administering or legislating, or discussing administration and legislation. That is to say, it includes ministers of the Crown, members of Parliament (though some in the House of Commons and the majority in the House of Lords care little about politics), a few leading journalists, and a small number of miscellaneous persons, writers, lecturers, organizers, agitators, who occupy themselves with trying to influence the public. Sometimes the term is given a wider sweep, being taken to include all who labour for their political party in the constituencies, as *e.g.* the chairmen and secretaries of local party associations, and the more active committee men of the same bodies.<sup>1</sup> The former, whom we may call the Inner Circle men, are professional politicians in this sense, and in this sense only, that politics is the main though seldom the sole business of their lives. But at present extremely few of them make anything by it in the way of money. A handful hope to get some post; a somewhat larger number conceive that a seat in Parliament may enable them to push their financial undertakings or

<sup>1</sup> In America (Canada as well as the United States) people do not say "politicians," but "the politicians," because the word indicates a class with certain defined characteristics.



make them at least more conspicuous in the commercial world. But the gaining of a livelihood does not come into the view of the great majority at all. The other class, who may be called the Outer Circle, are not professionals in any sense, being primarily occupied with their own avocations; and none of them, except here and there an organizing secretary, paid lecturer, or registration agent, makes any profit out of the work.<sup>1</sup> The phenomena of France and Italy and Germany are generally similar, that is to say, those who devote their whole time to politics are a very small class, those who make a living by it an even smaller one.<sup>2</sup> Of all the countries of Europe, Greece is that in which persons who spend their life in politics seem to bear the largest proportion to the whole population; and in Greece the pursuit of politics is usually the pursuit of place.

To see why things are different in the United States, why the Inner Circle is much larger both absolutely and relatively to the Outer Circle than in Europe, let us go back a little and ask what are the conditions which develop a political class. The point has so important a bearing on the characteristics of American politicians that I do not fear to dwell somewhat fully upon it.

In self-governing communities of the simpler kind — for one may leave absolute monarchies and feudal monarchies on one side — the common affairs are everybody's business and nobody's special business. Some few men by their personal qualities get a larger share of authority, and are repeatedly chosen to be archons, or generals, or consuls, or burgomasters, or landammans, but even these rarely give their whole time to the State, and make little or nothing in money out of it. This was the condition of the Greek republics, of early Rome,<sup>3</sup> of

<sup>1</sup> Of course now and then a man who has worked hard for his party is rewarded by a place. Barristers who have spent their substance in contesting seats have a better chance of judgeships, and there are usually five or six practising counsel in the House of Commons who are supposed to contemplate the possibility of obtaining legal office. But these cases are so few as to make no practical difference.

<sup>2</sup> The number of persons who live off politics by getting places or by manipulating finance is said to have increased in France of late years. But it cannot be very large even now.

<sup>3</sup> The principal business in life of Cincinnatus was to till his fields, and a dictatorship a mere interlude. When I waited on the president of the Republic of Andorra, one of the oldest states in Europe, twenty years ago, I found him with his coat off wielding a flail on the floor of his barn.

the cities of mediæval Germany and Italy, of the cantons of Switzerland till very recent times.

When in a large country public affairs become more engrossing to those who are occupied in them, when the sphere of government widens, when administration is more complex and more closely interlaced with the industrial interests of the community and of the world at large, so that there is more to be known and to be considered, the business of a nation falls into the hands of the men eminent by rank, wealth, and ability, who form a sort of governing class, largely hereditary. The higher civil administration of the state is in their hands; they fill the chief council or legislative chamber and conduct its debates. They have residences in the capital, and though they receive salaries when actually filling an office, and have opportunities for enriching themselves, the majority possess independent means, and pursue politics for the sake of fame, power, or excitement. Those few who have not independent means can follow their business or profession in the capital, or can frequently visit the place where their business is carried on. This was the condition of Rome under the later republic,<sup>1</sup> and of England and France till quite lately — indeed it is largely the case in England still — as well as of Prussia and Sweden.<sup>2</sup>

Let us see what are the conditions of the United States.

There is a relatively small leisured class of persons engaged in no occupation and of wealth sufficient to leave them free for public affairs. So far as such persons are to be found in the country, for some are to be sought abroad, they are to be found in a few great cities.

There is no class with a hereditary prescription to public office, no great families whose names are known to the people, and who, bound together by class sympathy and ties of relationship, help one another by keeping offices in the hands of their own members.

<sup>1</sup> Rome in the later days of the republic had practically become a country, that is to say, the range of her authority and the mass of her public business were much greater than in any of the Greek cities, even in Athens in the days of Pericles. The chances of making illicit gains were great, but confined to a small number of persons.

<sup>2</sup> Norway, the most democratic of the monarchical countries of Europe, is the one which has probably the smallest class of persons continuously occupied with politics.



The country is a very large one, and has its political capital in a city without trade, without manufactures, without professional careers. Even the seats of State governments are often placed in comparatively small towns.<sup>1</sup> Hence a man cannot carry on his gainful occupation at the same time that he attends to "Inner Circle" politics.

Members of Congress and of State legislatures are invariably chosen from the places where they reside. Hence a person belonging to the leisured class of a great city cannot get into the House of Representatives or the legislature of his State except as member for a district of his own city.

The shortness of terms of office, and the large number of offices filled by election, make elections very frequent. All these elections, with trifling exceptions, are fought on party lines, and the result of a minor one for some petty local office, such as county treasurer, affects one for a more important post, *e.g.* that of member of Congress. Hence constant vigilance, constant exertions on the spot, are needed. The list of voters must be incessantly looked after, newly-admitted or newly-settled citizens enrolled, the active local men frequently consulted and kept in good humour, meetings arranged for, tickets (*i.e.* lists of candidates) for all vacant offices agreed upon. One election is no sooner over than another approaches and has to be provided for, as the English sporting man reckons his year by "events," and thinks of Newmarket after Ascot, and of Goodwood after Newmarket.

Now what do these conditions amount to? To this — A great deal of hard and dull election and other local political work to be done. Few men of leisure to do it, and still fewer men of leisure likely to care for it. Nobody able to do it in addition to his regular business or profession. Little motive for anybody, whether leisured or not, to do the humbler and local parts of it (*i.e.* so much as concerns the minor elections), the parts which bring neither fame nor power.

If the work is to be done at all, some inducement, other than fame or power, must clearly be found. Why not, some one will

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.* The seat of government for Maryland is Annapolis, not Baltimore; for Ohio, Columbus, not Cincinnati; for Illinois, Springfield, not Chicago; for California, Sacramento, not San Francisco; for Washington, Olympia, not Seattle or Tacoma; for Louisiana, Baton Rouge, not New Orleans.

say, the sense of public duty? I will speak of public duty presently: meantime let it suffice to remark that to rely on public duty as the main motive power in politics is to assume a commonwealth of angels. Men such as we know them must have some other inducement. Even in the Christian Church there are other than spiritual motives to lead its pastors to spiritual work; nor do all poets write because they seek to express the passion of their souls. In America we discover a palpable inducement to undertake the dull and toilsome work of election politics. It is the inducement of places in the public service. To make them attractive they must be paid. They are paid, nearly all of them, memberships of Congress<sup>1</sup> and other Federal places, State places (including memberships of State legislatures), city and county places. Here then is the inducement, the remuneration for political work performed in the way of organizing and electioneering. Now add that besides the paid administrative and legislative places which a democracy bestows by election, judicial places are also in most of the States elective, and held for terms of years only; and add further, that the holders of nearly all those administrative places, Federal, State, and municipal, which are not held for a fixed term, are liable to be dismissed, and have been hitherto in practice dismissed, whenever power changes from one party to another,<sup>2</sup> so that those who belong to the party out of office have a direct chance of office when their party comes in. The inducement to undertake political work we have been searching for is at once seen to be adequate, and only too adequate. The men for the work are certain to appear because remuneration is provided. Politics has now become a gainful profession, like advocacy, stockbroking, the dry goods trade, or the getting up of companies. People go into it to live by it, primarily for the sake of the salaries attached to the places they count on getting, secondarily in view of the opportunities it affords of making incidental and sometimes illegitimate gains. Every person in a

<sup>1</sup> Though, as observed in a previous chapter, the payment of members of Congress does not seem to have any marked effect in lowering the type of members. It is the offices rather than legislative posts that sustain the professional class.

<sup>2</sup> This was the practice up to within the last few years. It has been modified lately in consequence of the progress of the civil service reform movement. There are now 27,000 postmasters within the civil service rules.



high administrative post, whether Federal, State, or municipal, and, above all, every member of Congress, has opportunities of rendering services to wealthy individuals and companies for which they are willing to pay secretly in money or in money's worth. The better officials and legislators — they are the great majority, except in large cities — resist the temptation. The worst succumb to it; and the prospect of these illicit profits renders a political career distinctly more attractive to an unscrupulous man.

We find therefore that in America all the conditions exist for producing a class of men specially devoted to political work and making a livelihood by it. It is work much of which cannot be done in combination with any other kind of regular work, whether professional or commercial. Even if the man who unites wealth and leisure to high intellectual attainments were a frequent figure in America, he would not take to this work; he would rather be a philanthropist or cultivate arts and letters. It is work which, steadily pursued by an active man, offers an income. Hence a large number of persons are drawn into it, and make it the business of their life; and the fact that they are there as professionals has tended to keep amateurs out of it.

There are, however, two qualifications which must be added to this statement of the facts, and which it is best to add at once. One is that the mere pleasure of politics counts for something. Many people in America as well as in England undertake even the commonplace work of local canvassing and organizing for the sake of a little excitement, a little of the agreeable sense of self-importance, or from that fondness for doing something in association with others which makes a man become secretary to a cricket club or treasurer of a fund raised by subscription for some purpose he may not really care for. And the second qualification is that pecuniary motives operate with less force in rural districts than in cities, because in the former the income obtainable by public office is too small to induce men to work long in the hope of getting it. Let it therefore be understood that what is said in this chapter refers primarily to cities, and of course also to persons aiming at the higher Federal and State offices; and that I do not mean to deny that there is plenty of work done by amateurs as well as by professionals.

Having thus seen what are the causes which produce professional politicians, we may return to inquire how large this class is, compared with the corresponding class in the free countries of Europe, whom we have called the Inner Circle.

In America the Inner Circle, that is to say, the persons who make political work the chief business of life, for the time being, includes: —

*First.* All members of both Houses of Congress.

*Secondly.* All Federal office-holders except the judges, who are irremovable, and the "classified civil service."

*Thirdly.* A large part of the members of State legislatures. How large a part, it is impossible to determine, for it varies greatly from State to State. I should guess that in New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, California, Maryland, and Louisiana, half the members were professional politicians; in Ohio, Virginia, Illinois, Texas, less than half; in Connecticut, Georgia, Kentucky, Iowa, Oregon, not more than one-fourth; in Massachusetts, Vermont, and some other States, perhaps even less. But the line between a professional and non-professional politician is too indefinite to make any satisfactory estimate possible.

*Fourthly.* Nearly all State office-holders, excluding all judges in a very few States, and many of the judges in the rest.

*Fifthly.* Nearly all holders of paid offices in the greater and in many of the smaller cities, and many holders of paid offices in the counties. There are, however, great differences in this respect between different States, the New England States and the newer States of the North-west, as well as some Southern States, choosing many of their county officials from men who are not regularly employed on politics, although members of the dominant party.

*Sixthly.* A large number of people who hold no office but want to get one. This category includes, of course, many of the "workers" of the party which does not command the majority for the time being, in State and municipal affairs, and which has not, through the President, the patronage of Federal posts. It also includes many expectants belonging to the party for the time being dominant, who are earning their future places by serving the party in the meantime.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> But, as already observed, there are also in the rural districts and smaller towns many workers and expectants who do not look for places.



All the above may fairly be called professional or Inner Circle politicians, but of their number I can form no estimate, save that it must be counted by hundreds of thousands, inasmuch as it practically includes nearly all State and local and most Federal office-holders as well as most expectants of public office.<sup>1</sup>

It must be remembered that the "work" of politics means in America the business of winning nominations (of which more anon) and elections, and that this work is incomparably heavier and more complex than in England, because:—

(1) The voters are a larger proportion of the population; (2) The government is more complex (Federal, State, and local) and the places filled by election are therefore far more numerous; (3) Elections come at shorter intervals; (4) The machinery of nominating candidates is far more complete and intricate; (5) The methods of fighting elections require more technical knowledge and skill; (6) Ordinary private citizens do less election work, seeing that they are busier than in England, and the professionals exist to do it for them.

I have observed that there are also plenty of men engaged in some trade or profession who interest themselves in politics and

<sup>1</sup> The Inner Circle may in England be roughly taken to include:—

Members of the House of Lords, say . . . . .	80
Members of the House of Commons . . . . .	670
Editors, and chief writers on leading newspapers, say . . . . .	300
Expectant candidates for House of Commons, say . . . . .	450
Persons who in each constituency devote most of their time to politics, e.g. secretaries of political associations, registration agents, etc., say . . . . .	2000
	<u>3500</u>

Comparatively few newspapers are primarily political, and in many constituencies (e.g. Irish and Highland counties) there are very few persons occupied in political work. I do not, therefore, think this estimate too low.

In the United States there are now about 130,000 Federal offices. Allowing one expectant for each office (a small allowance), and assuming the State and local offices bestowed as the reward for political services to be equal in number to Federal offices (they are, of course, far more numerous), and allowing one expectant to each such office, we should have a total of over  $120,000 \times 4 = 480,000$ . Deducting from this total those who hold or aspire to Federal offices which have been "taken out of politics," those who, though they work for office, do not make such work their main business, and those who work with no special eye to office, we should still have a very large total, doubtless over 200,000, of persons whose chief occupation and livelihood lies in politics.

work for their party without any definite hope of office or other pecuniary aim. They correspond to what we have called the Outer Circle politicians of Europe. It is hard to draw a line between the two classes, because they shade off into one another, there being many farmers or lawyers or saloon-keepers, for instance, who, while pursuing their regular calling, bear a hand in politics, and look to be some time or other rewarded for doing so. When this expectation becomes a considerable part of the motive for exertion, such an one may fairly be called a professional, at least for the time being, for although he has other means of livelihood, he is apt to be impregnated with the habits and sentiments of the professional class.

The proportion between Outer Circle and Inner Circle men is in the United States a sort of ozonometer by which the purity and healthiness of the political atmosphere may be tested. Looking at the North only, for it is hard to obtain trustworthy data as to the South, and excluding congressmen, the proportion of men who exert themselves in politics without pecuniary motive is largest in New England, in the country parts of New York, in Northern Ohio, and the North-western States, while the professional politicians most abundant in the great cities—New York, Philadelphia, Brooklyn, Boston, Baltimore, Buffalo, Cincinnati, Louisville, Chicago, St. Louis, New Orleans, San Francisco. This is because these cities have the largest masses of ignorant voters, and also because their municipal governments, handling vast revenues, offer the largest facilities for illicit gains.

I shall presently return to the Outer Circle men. Meantime let us examine the professionals somewhat more closely; and begin with those of the humbler type, whose eye is fixed on a municipal or other local office, and seldom ranges so high as a seat in Congress.

As there are weeds that follow human dwellings, so this species thrives best in cities, and even in the most crowded parts of cities. It is known to the Americans as the "ward politician," because the city ward is the chief sphere of its activity, and the ward meeting the first scene of its exploits. A statesman of this type usually begins as a saloon or bar-keeper, an occupation which enables him to form a large circle