

The European reader must not suppose that this lowest section of the labouring class is wholly composed of immigrants, nor that all of the city-dwelling immigrants belong to it, for there are many foreigners whose education and skill place them at once on a level with the native American workmen. Its importance in politics arises less from its number, which does not approach three million of voters all told,¹ than from the cohesion, in every great city, of so much of it as is massed there. Being comparatively ignorant, and for the most part not yet absorbed into the American population, it is not moved by the ordinary political forces, nor amenable to the ordinary intellectual and moral influences, but "goes solid" as its leaders direct it, a fact which gives these leaders exceptional weight, and may enable them, when parties are nearly balanced, to dictate their terms to statesmen. The disposition to truckle to the forces of disorder, and to misuse the power of pardoning offenders, which prominent State officials sometimes evince, is due to the fear of the so-called "Labour Vote," a vote which would be insignificant were the suffrage restricted to persons who have resided fifteen or twenty years in the country. Nevertheless the immigrants are not so largely answerable for the faults of American politics as a stranger might be led by the language of many Americans to believe. There is a disposition in the United States to use them, and especially the Irish, much as the cat is used in the kitchen to account for broken plates and food which disappears. The cities have no doubt suffered from the immigrant vote. But New York was not an Eden before the Irish came; and would not become an Eden were they all to return to green Erin, or move on to arid Arizona.

The capitalist class consists of large merchants, manufacturers, bankers, and railroad men, with a few great land speculators and directors of trading or carrying companies. How much capacity and energy, how much wealth and influence there is in this small class everybody knows. It includes the best executive ability of the country, and far more ability

¹ The total foreign-born population of the United States, of both sexes, was (in 1890) 9,249,547 as against 53,372,703 native born. Of the lower labouring class I am describing, a very small part is native American and another considerable part the American-born sons of recent immigrants.

than is devoted to the public service of the State. Though such persons do not, and hardly could, hold aloof from politics—some of them are indeed zealous party men—their interest lies chiefly in using politics for their own purposes, and especially in resisting the attacks with which they are threatened, sometimes by the popular movement against monopolists and great corporations, sometimes by Free Traders anxious to get rid of the present high tariff which the manufacturers deem essential to the welfare of the country. One-half of the capitalists are occupied in preaching *laissez faire* as regards railroad control, the other half in resisting it in railroad rate matters, in order to have their goods carried more cheaply, and in tariff matters, in order to protect industries threatened with foreign competition. Yet they manage to hold well together. Their practical talent does not necessarily imply political insight, any more than moral elevation, nor have they generally the taste or leisure to think seriously about the needs of the State. In no country does one find so many men of eminent capacity for business, shrewd, forcible, and daring, who are so uninteresting, so intellectually barren, outside the sphere of their business knowledge.

But the wealthy have many ways of influencing opinion and the course of events. Some of them own, others find means of inspiring, newspapers. Many are liberal supporters of universities and colleges, and it is alleged that they occasionally discourage the promulgation, by college teachers, of opinions they dislike. Presidents of great corporations have armies of officials under their orders, who cannot indeed be intimidated, for public opinion would resent that, yet may be suffered to know what their superior thinks and expects. Cities, districts of country, even States or Territories, have much to hope or fear from the management of a railway, and good reason to conciliate its president. Moreover, as the finance of the country is in the hands of these men and every trader is affected by financial changes, as they control enormous joint-stock enterprises whose shares are held and speculated in by hosts of private persons of all ranks, their policy and utterances are watched with anxious curiosity, and the line they take determines the conduct of thousands not directly connected with them. A word from several of the great financiers

would go a long way with leading statesmen. They are for the most part a steadying influence in politics, being opposed to sudden changes which might disturb the money market or depress trade, and especially opposed to complications with foreign States. They are therefore *par excellence* the peace party in America, for though some might like to fish in troubled waters, the majority would have far more to lose than to gain.

There remains the group of classes loosely called professional men, of whom we may dismiss the physicians as neither bringing any distinctive element into politics, nor often taking an active interest therein, and the journalists, because they have been considered in treating of the organs of opinion, and the clergy as, inhibited by public feeling from direct immixture in political strife. In the anti-slavery and Free Soil struggles, ministers of religion were prominent, as they are now in the temperance movement, and indeed will always be when a distinctly moral issue is placed before the country. But in ordinary times, and as regards most questions, they find it prudent to rest content with inculcating such sound principles as will elevate their hearers' views and lead them to vote for the best men. Some few, however, of exceptional zeal or unusually well-assured position do appear on political platforms, and, like the late Mr. Henry Ward Beecher, justify their courage by their success. The Roman Catholic prelates have great influence with their flocks, but are so sensible of the displeasure which its exercise would cause among the native Americans as to be guarded in political action, allowing themselves a freer hand in promoting temperance or other moral causes. Some of them have been among the most prominent figures in the country.

The lawyers, who are both barristers and attorneys in one, there being no such distinction of the profession into two branches as exists in Britain and France, are of all classes that which has most to do with politics.¹ From their ranks comes a large part, probably a half, and apparently the better half, of the professional politicians. Those who do not make politics a business have usually something to do with it, and even those who have little to do with it enjoy opportunities of looking

¹ An account of the American Bar will be found in a later chapter.

behind the scenes. The necessities of their practice oblige them to study the Federal Constitution and the Constitution of their own State, as well as to watch current legislation. It is therefore from the legal profession that most of the leading statesmen have been drawn, from the days of Patrick Henry, John Jay, and John Adams down to those of Abraham Lincoln and the presidential candidates of our own generation. Hence both in great cities and in small ones the lawyer is favourably placed for influencing opinion. If he be a man of parts, he is apt to be the centre of local opinion, as Lincoln was in Springfield, where he practised law and made his reputation.¹ When in some great community, like New York or Boston, a demonstration is organized, some distinguished advocate, such as Charles O'Connor was in New York, such as Rufus Choate was in Boston, is selected for the oration of the day, because he has the power of speech, and because everybody knows him. Thus the lawyers best deserve to be called the leading class, less powerful in proportion to their numbers than the capitalists, but more powerful as a whole, since more numerous and more locally active. Of course it is only on a very few professional questions that they act together as a class. Their function is to educate opinion from the technical side, and to put things in a telling way before the people. Whether the individual lawyer is or is not a better citizen than his neighbours, he is likely to be a shrewder one, knowing more about government and public business than most of them do, and able at least to perceive the mischiefs of bad legislation, which farmers or shopkeepers may faintly realize. Thus on the whole the influence of the profession makes for good, and though it is often the instrument by which harm is wrought, it is more often the means of revealing and defeating the tricks of politicians, and of keeping the wholesome principles of the Constitution before the eyes of the nation. Its action in political life may be compared with its function in judicial proceedings. Advocacy is at the service of the just and the unjust equally, and sometimes makes the worse appear the better cause, yet experience shows that the sifting of evi-

¹ I have heard townsmen of the great President describe how the front of his house used to be a sort of gathering place on summer evenings where his racy talk helped to mould the opinion of the place.

dence and the arguing of points of law tend on the whole to make justice prevail.

There remain the men of letters and artists, an extremely small class outside a few Eastern cities, and the teachers, especially those in colleges and universities. The influence of literary men has been more felt through magazines than through books, for native authorship suffered severely till 1891 from the deluge of cheap English reprints. That of the teachers tells primarily on their pupils, and indirectly on the circles to which those pupils belong, or in which they work when they have left college. One is amused by the bitterness—affected scorn trying to disguise real fear—with which “college professors” are denounced by the professional politicians as unpractical, visionary, pharisaical, “kid-gloved,” “high-toned,” “un-American,” the fact being that an impulse towards the improvement of party methods, civil service reform and tariff reform, has come from the universities, and been felt in the increased political activity of the better educated youth. The new generation of lawyers, clergymen, and journalists, of teachers in the higher schools, and indeed of business men also, so far as they receive a university education, have been inspired by the universities, particularly of course by the older and more highly developed institutions of the Eastern States, with a more serious and earnest view of politics than has prevailed among the richer classes since the strain of the Civil War passed away. Their horizon has been enlarged, their patriotism tempered by a sense of national shortcomings, and quickened by a higher ideal of national well-being. The confidence that all other prosperity will accompany material prosperity, the belief that good instincts are enough to guide nations through practical difficulties, errors which led astray so many worthy people in the last generation, are being dispelled, and a juster view of the great problems of democratic government presented. The seats of learning and education are at present among the most potent forces making for progress and the formation of sound opinion in the United States, and they increase daily in the excellence of their teachers no less than in the number of their students.

Before quitting this part of the subject a few general obser-

vations are needed to supplement or sum up the results of the foregoing inquiry.

There is in the United States no such general opposition as in continental Europe of upper and lower classes, richer and poorer classes. There is no such jealousy or hostility as one finds in France between the bourgeoisie and the operatives. In many places class distinctions do exist for the purposes of social intercourse. But it is only in the larger cities that the line is sharply drawn between those who call themselves gentlemen and those others to whom, in talk among themselves, the former set would refuse this epithet.

There is no one class or set of men whose special function it is to form and lead opinion. The politicians certainly do not. Public opinion leads them.

Still less is there any governing class. The class whence most office-holders come corresponds, as respects education and refinement, to what would be called the lower middle class in Europe. But office-holders are not governors.

Such class issues as now exist or have recently existed, seldom, or to a small extent, coincide with party issues. They are usually toyed with by both parties alike, or if such a question becomes strong enough to be made the basis of a new party, that party will usually stand by itself apart from the two old and regular organizations.

In Europe, classes have become factors in politics either from interest or from passion. Legislation or administration may have pressed hardly on a class, and the class has sought to defend and emancipate itself. Or its feelings may have been wounded by past injury or insult, and it may seek occasions for revenge. In America neither cause for the action of any class as a class can be said to exist.¹ Hence classes have not been prime factors in American politics or in the formation of native political opinion. In the main, political questions proper have held the first place in a voter's mind, and ques-

¹ Even those who would persuade the working men that legislation is unjust to them seldom complain of what it does, but rather of what it omits or does not prevent. Any statute which bore harshly on labouring men would in America be repealed forthwith. There is at present in some States an agitation, conducted by “Labour” leaders, to alter the law which restrains what is called coercive “picketing” or molestation in trade disputes, but the laws have so far been upheld by the general sense of the community.

tions affecting his class the second.¹ The great strikes which have of late years convulsed large sections of the country, and the "labour" agitation which has accompanied them, have brought new elements of class passion and class interest upon the scene. But it is possible that these phenomena, which are mainly due to the presence of a mass of immigrants, still unassimilated, though invested with political power, may prove to be transitory.

The nation is not an aggregate of classes. They exist within it, but they do not make it up. You are not struck by their political significance as you would be in any European country. The people is one people, although it occupies a wider territory than any other nation, and is composed of elements from many quarters.

Even education makes less difference between various sections of the community than might be expected. One finds among the better instructed many of those prejudices and fallacies to which the European middle classes are supposed peculiarly liable. Among the less instructed of the native Americans, on the other hand, there is a comprehension of public affairs, a shrewdness of judgment, and a generally diffused interest in national welfare, exceeding that of the humbler classes in Europe.

This is a strong point of the nation. This is what has given buoyancy to the vessel of the State, and enabled her to carry with apparent, though perhaps with diminishing, ease the dead weight of ignorance which European emigration continues to throw upon her decks.

¹ There are exceptions — *e.g.* tariff questions are foremost in the mind of manufacturers, Chinese questions in those of Californian working men, transportation questions often in those of farmers.

CHAPTER LXXXII

LOCAL TYPES OF OPINION — EAST, WEST, AND SOUTH

BOTH the general tendencies and the class tendencies in the development of public opinion which I have attempted to sketch, may be observed all over the vast area of the Union. Some, however, are more powerful in one region, others in another, while the local needs and feelings of each region tend to give a particular colour to its views and direction to its aims. One must therefore inquire into and endeavour to describe these local differences, so as, by duly allowing for them, to correct what has been stated generally with regard to the conditions under which opinion is formed, and the questions which evoke it.

In an earlier chapter I have classified the States into five groups, the North-Eastern or New England States, the Middle States, the North-Western States, the Southern States, and the States of the Pacific Slope. For the purposes of our present inquiry there is no material difference between the first two of these groups, but the differences between the others are significant. It is needless to add that there are, of course, abundance of local differences within these divisions. Pennsylvania, for instance, is for many purposes unlike Ohio. Georgia stands on a higher level than Louisiana. Nebraska is more raw than Illinois. To go into these minor points of divergence would involve a tedious discussion, and perhaps confuse the reader after all, so he must be asked to understand that this chapter endeavours to present only the general aspect which opinion wears in each section of the country, and that what is said of a section generally, is not meant to be taken as equally applicable to every State within it.

In the Eastern States the predominant influence is that of capitalists, manufacturers, merchants — in a word, of the com-