

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-

mercial classes. The East finds the capital for great undertakings all over the country, particularly for the making of railroads, the stock of which is chiefly held by Eastern investors, and the presidents whereof often have their central office in New York, Boston, or Philadelphia, though the line may traverse the Western or Southern States. The East also conducts the gigantic trade with Europe. It ships the grain and the cattle, the pork and the petroleum, it "finances" the shipping of much of the cotton, it receives nearly all the manufactured goods that Europe sends, as well as the emigrants from Britain, Germany, and Scandinavia.¹ The arms of its great bankers and merchants stretch over the whole Union, making those commercial influences which rule in their own seat potent everywhere. Eastern opinion is therefore the most quickly and delicately sensitive to financial movements and European influences, as well as the most firmly bound to a pacific policy. As in the beginning of the century, trade interests made Massachusetts and Connecticut anxious to avoid a breach with England, to whose ports their vessels plied, so now, though the shipping which enters Eastern ports is chiefly European (British, Norwegian, German, French), the mercantile connections of American and European merchants and financiers are so close that an alarm of war might produce widespread disaster.

The East is also, being the oldest, the best educated and most intelligent quarter of the country.² Not only does it contain more men of high culture, but the average of knowledge and thought (excluding the mob of the great cities and some backward districts in the hills of Pennsylvania) is higher than elsewhere. Its literary men and eminent teachers labour for the whole country, and its cities, which show the lowest element of the population in their rabble, show also the largest number of men of light and leading in all professions. Although very able newspapers are published in the West as well as in the East, still the tone of Eastern political discussion is more generally dignified and serious than in the rest of

¹ Some Germans and Italians enter by New Orleans or the ports of Texas.

² The percentage of persons able to read and write is as high in some of the Western States, such as Iowa and Nebraska, as in New England, but this may be because the Irish and French Canadians depress the level of New England.

the Union. The influences of Europe, which, of course, play first and chiefly upon the East, are, so far as they affect manners and morality, by no means an unmixed good. But in the realm of thought Europe and its criticism are a stimulative force, which corrects any undue appreciation of national virtues, and helps forward sound views in economics and history. The leisured and well-read class to be found in some Eastern cities is as cosmopolitan in tone as can be found anywhere in the world, yet has not lost the piquancy of its native soil. Its thought appropriates what is fresh and sound in the literature or scientific work of Germany, England, and France more readily than any of those countries seems to learn from each of the others. These causes, added to the fact that the perversions of party government have been unusually gross among the irresponsible masses that crowd these very cities, has roused a more strenuous opposition to the so-called "machine" than in other parts of the country. The Eastern voter is less bound to his party, more accustomed to think for himself, and to look for light, when he feels his own knowledge defective, to capable publicists. When, either in Federal or State or city politics, an independent party arises, repudiating the bad nominations of one or both of the regular organizations, it is here that it finds its leaders and the greatest part of its support. There is also in New England a good deal left of the spirit of Puritanism, cold and keen as glacier air, with its high standard of public duty and private honour, its disposition to apply the maxims of religion to the conduct of life, its sense, much needed in this tender-hearted country, that there are times when Agag must be hewn in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal. If the people of New England and rural New York had been left unpolluted by the turbid flood of foreign immigration, they would be the fittest of any in the world for a democratic government. Evils there would still be, as in all governments, but incomparably less grave than those which now tax the patriotism of the men who from these States hold up the banner of reform for the whole Union.

It is impossible to draw a line between the East and the West, because the boundary is always moving westward. Thirty years ago Ohio was typically western in character, now it has as much in common with Connecticut or New York as

with Kansas or Minnesota. The most distinctive elements in the Western States are the farming class, which here attains its greatest strength, and the masses of newly-arrived Germans and Scandinavians, who fill whole districts, often outnumbering the native Americans. These immigrants contribute so much more largely to the voting than to the thinking power of the newer States, that their presence is one of the main reasons why the political power of the West exceeds its political capacity. They are honest, industrious, and worthy people, the parents of good American citizens, useful men to clear the woods and break up the prairie, but they know so little of the institutions of the country, and often so little of its language, that they are as clay in the hands of their leaders, sometimes Americans, sometimes men of their own race. The predominance of the agricultural interest has the faults and merits indicated in the account already given of the farming class. Western opinion is politically unenlightened, and not anxious to be enlightened. It dislikes theory, and holds the practical man to be the man who, while discerning keenly his own interest, discerns nothing else beyond the end of his nose. It goes heartily into a party fight, despising Independents, Mugwumps, and "bolters" of all sorts. It has boundless confidence in the future of the country, of the West in particular, of its own State above all, caring not much for what the East thinks, and still less for the judgment of Europe. It feels sure everything will come right, and thinks "cheap transportation" to be the one thing needful. Reckless in enterprises, it is stingy in paying its officials, judges included: good-natured and indulgent to a fault, it is nevertheless displeased to hear that its senator lives in luxury at Washington. Its townfolk are so much occupied in pushing their towns, between whose newspapers there is a furious rivalry — they hate one another as Athens hated Thebes, or Florence Pisa — its rich men in opening up railroads, its farmers in their household and field toil, labour being scarce and dear, that politics are left to the politicians, who, however, are not the worst specimens of their class. When election time comes the Western man shouts with all his lungs, and should ever another war break out, the West would again send down its stout-hearted large-limbed regiments. While things are as they are now, you cannot get

the average Western man to listen to philosophical reasonings, or trouble himself about coming dangers. To arrest him you must touch his sentiment, and at this moment the questions whose solution presses are questions which sentiment goes no way to solve.

The West may be called the most distinctively American part of America, because the points in which it differs from the East are the points in which America as a whole differs from Europe. But the character of its population differs in different regions, according to the parts of the country from which the early settlers came. Now the settlers have generally moved along parallels of latitude, and we have therefore the curious result that the characteristics of the older States have propagated themselves westward in parallel lines, so that he who travels from the Atlantic to the Rocky Mountains will find fewer differences to note than he who, starting from Texas, travels north to Manitoba. Thus northern Ohio was filled from New England and western New York, and in its turn colonized northern Illinois, Michigan, and much of the farther North-west. Southern Ohio and Illinois, together with great part of Indiana, were peopled from Virginia and Kentucky, and the different quality of these early settlers is still traceable. Missouri was colonized from the Slave States, and retains the taint to this day.¹ Kansas, however, though it lies west of Missouri, received in the days of the Free Soil struggle many Puritan immigrants from the Free States, and bears, though it is often called the State of "cranks," a somewhat higher stamp than its neighbour. The Scandinavians are chiefly in Wisconsin and Minnesota, the Germans numerous in Iowa also, and indeed all over these newer States, including Texas. So far back as 1870 Milwaukee was a German rather than an American city;² and in 1890 it appeared that there were townships in Wisconsin in which the tax lists had

¹ In Oregon there is a district which was settled by people from Kentucky and Tennessee, rather exceptionally, for the outflow of these States seldom moved so far to the north. The descendants of these immigrants are now less prosperous and enterprising than are those of the men who came from the Free States.

² Asking my way about the streets, I found German more helpful than English. In the same year it was noticeable that in Wisconsin the paper money (then alone in use) had got a marked smell from the use of skins and furs by the newly-arrived Swedes and Norwegians.

for years been kept in German, and counties in which a paid interpreter was required to enable the business of the courts to be transacted. The Territories which lie farther to the Southwest have no vote in presidential elections, and only a voteless delegate each in Congress, yet over them the network of party organization has been spread, though, of course, the sparser population feeds a feebler political life.

The Pacific Slope, as its inhabitants call it, geographically includes the States of Oregon and Washington, but Oregon and Washington resemble the North-western States in so many respects that they may better be classed therewith. California and Nevada on the other hand are distinctly peculiar. They are more Western than the States I have just been describing, with the characteristics of those States intensified and some new features added. They are cut off by deserts and barren mountain ranges from the agricultural part of the Mississippi basin, nor is population ever likely to become really continuous across this wilderness. Mining industries play a larger part in them than in any other State, except Colorado. Their inhabitants are unsettled and fluctuating, highly speculative, as one may expect those who mine and gamble in mining stocks to be, occupied with questions of their own, and comparatively indifferent to those which interest the rest of the country. Of these questions, one is Chinese immigration, another the management of the great Central and Southern Pacific railroad system, which is accused of oppressing the trade and industries of California; a third, the reconciliation of the claims of miners and agriculturists to the waters of the rivers, which each set seeks to appropriate, and which the former have asserted the right to fowl. But as the recent history of California deserves a chapter to itself, it is enough to observe that public opinion is here, in spite of the proverbial shrewdness, energy, and hardihood of the men of the Pacific, more fitful and gusty, less amenable to the voice of sober reason, and less deferential to the authority of statesmen, or even of party than anywhere else in the Union. "Interests," such as those of a great mine-owning group, or of a railroad, are immensely powerful, and the reactions against them not less so.

Of the South, the solid South, as it is often called, because

its presidential vote is now cast entirely for the Democrats, some account will be found in two later chapters, one sketching its history since the war ended, the other describing the condition of the negro and his relations to the whites. Here, therefore, I will speak only of the general character of political opinion and action in the former Slave States. The phenomena they present are unexampled. Equality before the law is absolute and perfect, being secured by the Federal Constitution. Yet the political subjection of a large part (in some States a majority) of the population is no less complete.

There are three orders of men in the South.

The first is the upper or educated class, including the children of the planting aristocracy which ruled before the Civil War, together with the Northern men who have since 1865 settled in the towns for the purposes of trade or manufacture. Of this order more than nine-tenths — those in fact who have survived from the old aristocracy, together with those who have since risen from the humbler class, and with most of the newer arrivals — belong to the Democratic party. Along with the high spirit and self-confidence which are proper to a ruling race, these Southern men have shown an enlargement of view and an aptitude for grasping decided and continuous lines of policy, in fact a turn for statesmanship as contrasted with mere politics, which was less common in the North, because less favoured by the conditions under which ambition has in the North to push its way. The Southern man who enters public life has had a more assured position than his rival from a Northern State, because he represented the opinion of a united body who stood by him, regarding him as their champion, and who expected from him less subservience to their instructions. He did not need to court so assiduously the breath of popular favour. He was not more educated or intelligent: and had lived in a less stimulating atmosphere. But he had courage and a clear vision of his objects, the two gifts essential for a statesman; while the united popular impulse behind him supplied a sort of second patriotism. The element of gain entered somewhat less into Southern politics, partly because the country is poor: and though the South begins to be commercialized, the sensitiveness on the "point of honour" and a flavour of punctiliousness in manners, recall the olden time.

Opinion in the Slave States before the war, in spite of the divisions between Democrats and Whigs, was generally bold, definite, and consistent, because based on a few doctrines. It was the opinion of a small class who were largely occupied with public affairs, and fond of debating them upon first principles and the words of the Federal Constitution. It has preserved this quality while losing its old fierceness and better recognizing the conditions under which it must work in a Federal republic. On the other hand, the extreme strength of party feeling, due to the extreme sensitiveness regarding the negro, has prevented the growth of independent opinion, and of the tendency which in the North is called Mugwumpism. And although the leading statesmen are not inferior to those whom the North sends to Washington, the total number of thoughtful and enlightened men is, in proportion to the population, smaller than in the North-east, smaller even than in such Western States as Illinois or Ohio.

I have used the past tense in describing these phenomena, because the South is changing, and the process is now scarcely swifter in the West than in those parts of Tennessee, North Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama where the coal and iron deposits are being opened up. Most parts, however, are still thinly settled by whites, and so poor that a traveller finds it hard to understand how, when still poorer, the people managed to resist for four years the armies of the wealthy and populous North. There is therefore less eagerness and hopefulness than in the West, less searching discussion and elaborate organization than in the East, less of everything that is characteristically democratic. The Machine has been brought to no such terrible perfection as in the Northern States, because the need of it is not felt where one party is sure of victory, and because talent or social position usually designated the men to be selected as candidates, or the men whose voice would determine the selection. Of late years, however, the aristocratic element in Southern politics has grown weaker, and merits that were deemed characteristic of Southern statesmen are more rarely seen.

The second order consists of those who used to be called the Mean Whites. Their condition strengthens the impression of half civilization which the rural districts of the South produce

upon the traveller, and which comes painfully home to him in the badness of the inns. While slavery lasted, these whites were, in the lowlands of the planting States, a wretched, because economically superfluous, class. There was no room for them as labourers, since the slaves did the work on the plantations; they had not the money to purchase land and machinery for themselves, nor the spirit to push their way in the towns, while the system of large slave-worked properties made, as the *latifundia* did long ago in Italy, the cultivation of small farms hopeless, and the existence of a thriving free peasantry impossible. The planters disliked this class and kept them off their estates as much as possible; the slaves despised them, and called them "poor white trash." In South Carolina and the Gulf States, they picked up a wretched livelihood by raising some vegetables near their huts, and killing the wild creatures of the woods, while a few hung round the great houses to look out for a stray job. Shiftless, ignorant, improvident, with no aims in the present nor hopes for the future, citizens in nothing but the possession of votes, they were a standing reproach to the system that produced them, and the most convincing proof of its economic as well as moral failure. In the northerly Slave States, they were better off, and in the highlands of Western Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, and North Carolina, where there were few or no slaves, they had, along with much rudeness and ignorance, the virtues of simple mountaineers. Their progress since the war has been marked, both near the mining and manufacturing towns, which give work and furnish markets, and in the cotton-bearing uplands, where many have acquired farms and prospered as tillers of the soil. Everywhere, however, they remain, in point of education and enlightenment, behind the small farmers or artisans of the North and West. Before the war they followed, as a matter of course (except in the mountains, where the conditions were different), the lead of the planting class, not more out of deference to it than from aversion to the negroes. The less a man had to be proud of, the more proud was he of his colour. Since the war, they have been no less anxious than their richer neighbours to exclude the negroes from any share in the government. But they are no longer mere followers. They have begun to think and act for themselves; and, though one of the

first signs of independence has been shown in the acceptance of such impracticable projects as those advocated by the Farmers' Alliance, they have become a body which has views, and with whose views it is necessary to reckon.

The negroes constitute about one-third of the population of the old Slave States, and in three States they are in a majority. Though their presence is the dominant factor in Southern politics, they cannot be said to form or influence opinion; and it is not their votes, but the efforts made to prevent them from voting that influence the course of events. I reserve for a special chapter an account of their singular position.

Remembering that of the whole population of the Union, nearly one-third is in the Southern States, and that the majority of that one-third, viz. the lower part of the poor whites and nearly all the negroes (more than one-sixth of the sixty-six millions), has no political knowledge or capacity, nothing that can be called rational opinion, it will be seen how far the inhabitants of the United States are from being a democracy enlightened through and through. If one part of the people is as educated and capable as that of Switzerland, another is as ignorant and politically untrained as that of Russia.

Of the four divisions of the country above described, the West (including Oregon and Washington) has already the largest vote, and since it grows faster than the others, will soon be indisputably predominant. But as it grows, it loses some of its distinctive features, becoming more like the East and falling more and more under Eastern influences, both intellectual and financial. It must not therefore be supposed that what is now typically Western opinion will be the reigning opinion of the future. The Pacific States will in time be drawn closer to those of the Mississippi Valley, losing something of such specific quality as they still possess; and centres of literary activity, such as now exist almost exclusively in the Atlantic States, will be scattered over the whole country. Opinion will therefore be more homogeneous, or at least less local, in the future than it has been in the past; even as now it is less determined by local and State influences than it was in the earlier days of the Republic.

CHAPTER LXXXIII

THE ACTION OF PUBLIC OPINION

THE last few chapters have attempted to explain what are the conditions under which opinion is formed in America, what national qualities it reflects, how it is affected by class interests or local circumstances, as well as through what organs it manifests itself. We must now inquire how it acts, and for this purpose try to answer three questions.

By whom is public opinion formed? *i.e.* by the few or by the many?

How does it seek to grasp and use the legal machinery which the Constitutions (Federal and State) provide?

What means has it of influencing the conduct of affairs otherwise than through the regular legal machinery?

It may serve to illustrate the phenomena which mark the growth of opinion in America if we compare them with those of some European country. As Britain is the country in which public opinion has been longest and with least interruption installed in power, and in which the mass of the people are more largely than elsewhere interested in public affairs,¹ Britain supplies the fittest materials for a comparison.

In Britain political supremacy belongs to the householder voters, who number (over the whole United Kingdom) 6,161,000, being rather less than two-thirds of the adult male population. Public opinion ought in theory to reside in them. Practically, however, as everybody knows, most of them have little that can be called political opinion. It is the creation and possession of a much smaller number.

An analysis of public opinion in Britain will distinguish three sets of persons — I do not call them classes, for they do

¹ Always excepting Switzerland, Norway, and Greece, whose conditions are, however, too dissimilar from those of America to make a comparison profitable.