

facturing interests being the most important); and the advantages to be derived by persons in business in a large way from standing well with the managers of the dominant party are sufficiently great to check in no small degree individual inclination to strive for better conditions. As elsewhere in America, it is not the natural leaders in the community, the men who have succeeded in business or in the professions, who are party leaders, but men who are of no importance in any other connection. This fastens upon us an impersonal rule, those who exercise it not being influenced by public opinion, which would certainly act as a restraint upon men of standing. . . . The councils are dominated by the party managers who nominated them, and corporations who pay wages, in one way or another, to a considerable portion of the members. The city charter of 1885 is a good one, and we should look not so much for more legislation as for some means of stimulating the people to take a common-sense view of municipal government and realize their responsibility for it.

Philadelphia has just erected a magnificent city hall, the largest and finest building of its kind in the United States, with a tower, 537 feet in height, which far overtops Cologne Cathedral and the Pyramid of Cheops and St. Peter's at Rome. The thoughts of the traveller who is taken to admire it naturally turn to what goes on beneath its ample roof, and he asks whether the day will arrive when Philadelphian voters will take to heart the painful lessons of the past, and when the officials who reign in this municipal palace will become worthy of so superb a dwelling and of the city where the Declaration of Independence and the Federal Constitution first saw the light. His Philadelphian friends reply that such a day will doubtless arrive. But they admit that it seems still distant.

CHAPTER XC

KEARNEYISM IN CALIFORNIA

I. THE CHARACTER OF CALIFORNIA

WHAT America is to Europe, what Western America is to Eastern, that California is to the other Western States. The characteristics of a new and quickly developed colonial civilization are all strongly marked. It is thoroughly American, but most so in those points wherein the Old World differs from the New. Large fortunes are swiftly made and not less swiftly spent. Changes of public sentiment are sudden and violent. The most active minds are too much absorbed in great business enterprises to attend to politics; the inferior men are frequently reckless and irresponsible; the masses are impatient, accustomed to blame everything and everybody but themselves for the slow approach of the millennium, ready to try instant, even if perilous, remedies for a present evil.

These features belong more or less to all the newer and rougher commonwealths. Several others are peculiar to California—a State on which I dwell the more willingly because it is in many respects the most striking in the whole Union, and has more than any other the character of a great country, capable of standing alone in the world. It has immense wealth in its fertile soil as well as in its minerals and forests. Nature is nowhere more imposing nor her beauties more varied.

It grew up, after the cession by Mexico and the discovery of gold, like a gourd in the night. A great population had gathered before there was any regular government to keep it in order, much less any education or social culture to refine it. The wildness of that time passed into the blood of the people, and has left them more tolerant of violent deeds, more prone to interferences with, or supersessions of, regular law, than are the people of most parts of the Union.

The chief occupation of the first generation of Californians was mining, an industry which is like gambling in its influence on the character, with its sudden alternations of wealth and poverty, its long hours of painful toil relieved by bouts of drinking and merriment, its life in a crowd of men who have come together from the four winds of heaven, and will scatter again as soon as some are enriched and others ruined, or the gold in the gulch is exhausted. Moreover, mining in this region means gambling, not only in camps among the miners, but among townfolk in the shares of the mining companies. Californians of all classes have formed the habit of buying and selling in the mining exchanges, with effects on the popular temper both in business and in politics which every one can understand. Speculation becomes a passion, patient industry is distasteful; there is bred a recklessness and turbulence in the inner life of the man which does not fail to express itself in acts.

When California was ceded to the United States, land speculators bought up large tracts under Spanish titles, and others, foreseeing the coming prosperity, subsequently acquired great domains by purchase, either from the railways which had received land grants, or directly from the government. Some of these speculators, by holding their lands for a rise, made it difficult for immigrants to acquire small freeholds, and in some cases checked the growth of farms. Others let their land on short leases to farmers, who thus came into a comparatively precarious and often necessitous condition; others established enormous farms, in which the soil is cultivated by hired labourers, many of whom are discharged after the harvest — a phenomenon rare in the United States, which, as everybody knows, is a country of moderately sized farms, owned by persons who do most of their labour by their own and their children's hands. Thus the land system of California presents features both peculiar and dangerous, a contrast between great properties, often appearing to conflict with the general weal, and the sometimes hard-pressed smaller farmer, together with a mass of unsettled labour, thrown without work into the towns at certain times of the year.¹

Everywhere in the West the power of the railways has

¹ "Latifundia perdunt Californiam," some one said to me in San Francisco.

excited the jealousy of the people. In California, however, it has roused most hostility, because no State has been so much at the mercy of one powerful corporation. The Central Pacific Railway, whose main line extends from San Francisco to Ogden in Utah, where it meets the Union Pacific and touches the Denver and Rio Grande system, had been up till 1877, when my narrative begins, the only route to the Mississippi valley and Atlantic,¹ and therefore possessed immense influence over the trade of the whole State. It was controlled by a small knot of men who had risen from insignificance to affluence, held nearly all the other railway lines in California, employed an enormous number of clerks and workmen, and made the weight of their hand felt wherever their interest was involved. Alike as capitalists, as potentates, and as men whose rise to gigantic wealth seemed due as much to the growth of the State as to their own abilities, and therefore to come under the principle which is called in England that of the "unearned increment," they excited irritation among the farming and trading class, as well as among the labourers. As great fortunes have in America been usually won by unusual gifts, any envy they can excite is tempered by admiration for the ability shown in acquiring them. The common people felt a kind of pride in the late Mr. A. T. Stewart, and perhaps even in that flagrant "monopolist," Mr. Jay Gould. But while these particular railway magnates were men of talent, there were also in California millionaires who had grown rich merely by lucky speculation. They displayed their wealth with a vulgar and unbecoming ostentation. They did not, as rich men nearly always do in the Atlantic States, bestow a large part of it on useful public objects. There was therefore nothing to break the wave of suspicious dislike.

Most of the Western States have been peopled by a steady influx of settlers from two or three older States. Minnesota, for instance, and Iowa have grown by the overflow of Illinois and Ohio, as well as by immigration direct from Europe. But California was filled by a sudden rush of adventurers from all parts of the world. They arrived mostly *via* Panama, for there

¹ There are now four other transcontinental trunk lines, but two of them lie far to the north, and another belongs to the same group of men who have controlled the Central Pacific.

was no transcontinental railway till 1869, and a great many came from the Southern States. This mixed multitude, bringing with it a variety of manners, customs, and ideas, formed a society more mobile and unstable, less governed by fixed beliefs and principles, than one finds in such North-western communities as I have just mentioned. Living far away from the steadying influences of the Eastern States, the Californians have developed, and are proud of having done so, a sort of Pacific type, which, though differing but slightly from the usual Western type, has less of the English element than one discovers in the American who lives on the Atlantic side of the Rocky Mountains. Add to this that California is the last place to the west before you come to Japan. That scum which the westward moving wave of emigration carries on its crest is here stopped, because it can go no farther. It accumulates in San Francisco, and forms a dangerous constituent in the population of that great and growing city—a population perhaps more mixed than one finds anywhere else in America, for Frenchmen, Italians, Portuguese, Greeks, and the children of Australian convicts abound there, side by side with negroes, Germans, and Irish. Of the Chinese one need not speak; for, though they numbered in 1880 some twelve thousand, have a large quarter to themselves, and have given rise to the dominant question in Pacific coast politics, they do not themselves join in any political movement, but mingle as little with the whites as oil with water.

California, more than any other part of the Union, is a country by itself, and San Francisco a capital. Cut off from the more populous parts of the Mississippi valley by an almost continuous desert of twelve hundred miles, across which the two daily trains move like ships across the ocean, separated from Oregon on the north by a wilderness of sparsely settled mountain and forest, it has grown up in its own way and acquired a sort of consciousness of separate existence. San Francisco dwarfs the other cities, and is a commercial and intellectual centre and source of influence for the surrounding regions, more powerful over them than is any Eastern city over its neighbourhood. It is a New York which has got no Boston on one side of it, and no shrewd and orderly rural population on the other, to keep it in order. Hence both State

and city are less steadied by national opinion than any other State or city within the wide compass of the Union.

These facts in Californian history must be borne in mind in order to understand the events I am about to sketch.¹ They show how suited is her soil to revolutionary movements. They suggest that movements natural here are less likely to arise in other parts of the Union.

II. THE SAND LOT PARTY

In 1877 California was suffering from "hard times." The severe commercial depression which began in the Eastern States in 1873, and touched the lowest point about 1876, had reached the Pacific coast, and was aggravated there by a heavy fall in mining stocks. The great Bonanza finds some years before had ushered in a period of wild speculation. Everybody gambled in stocks, from railroad kings down to maidservants. Stocks had now fallen, and everybody was hard hit. The railroad kings could stand their losses, but the clerks and shop assistants and workmen suffered, for their savings were gone and many were left heavily in debt, with their houses mortgaged and no hope of redemption. Trade was bad, work was scarce, and for what there was of it the Chinese, willing to take only half the ordinary wages, competed with the white labourer. The mob of San Francisco, swelled by disappointed miners from the camps and labourers out of work, men lured from distant homes by the hope of wealth and ease in the land of gold, saw itself on the verge of starvation, while the splendid mansions of speculators, who fifteen years before had kept

¹ The narrative which follows does not profess to be complete, for the difficulty of procuring adequate data was very great. When I visited San Francisco in 1881, and again in 1883, people were unwilling to talk about the Kearney agitation, feeling, it seemed to me, rather ashamed of it, and annoyed that so much should have been made of it (more, they declared, than it deserved) in the Eastern States. When I asked how I could learn the facts in detail, they answered, "Only by reading through the files of the newspapers for the years 1877-80 inclusive." Some added, that there were so many lies in the newspapers that I would not have got at the facts even then. Failing this method, I was obliged to rely on what I could pick up in conversation. I have, however, derived some assistance from a brilliant article by Mr. Henry George, who was then a resident of San Francisco, in the *Popular Science Monthly* for August, 1880.