

taking. The answer was that they had considered this course, but had concluded that it was cheaper to capture a majority of the Commission. The passing of the Inter-State Commerce Act by Congress was expected to bring about a change in the situation, but that act has disappointed its promoters; and the tyranny of the Southern Pacific Railroad (as it is now called, though it controls the Central Pacific line also) remains severe. In July 1894, when the dispute between the Pullman Company and their employés in Illinois gave rise to a railway strike over large parts of the West, the mobs which attacked the depots and wrecked the trains in California seem to have been regarded by the mass of the people with a sympathy which can be attributed to nothing but the general hostility felt to the railroad company which has so long lain like an incubus on the State.

Some of the legislation framed under the Constitution of 1879 has already been pronounced by the Supreme Court of the State invalid, as opposed to that instrument itself or to the Federal Constitution, and more of it may share the same fate. The condition of the people at large has not substantially changed, though the restrictions imposed on the legislature (as regards special legislation) and on local authorities (as regards borrowing and the undertaking of costly public works) have proved beneficial. The net result of the whole agitation was to give the monied classes in California a fright; to win for the State a bad name throughout America, and, by checking for a time the influx of capital, to retard her growth just when prosperity was reviving over the rest of the country; to worry without seriously crippling, the great corporations, and to leave the working classes and farmers where they were. No great harm has been done, and the Constitution, pruned and trimmed by the courts, is now (1893) reported to be working fairly well. Nevertheless, a mischievous example has been set, and an instrument remains in force which may some day be made the basis of further attacks upon the capitalist class.

IV. OBSERVATIONS ON THE MOVEMENT

I would leave the reader to draw a moral for himself, were he not likely to err, as I did myself, till corrected by my

Californian friends, by thinking the whole movement more serious than it really was.

It rose with surprising ease and swiftness. The conditions were no doubt exceptionally favourable. No other population in America furnished so good a field for demagoguery. But the demagogue himself was not formidable. He did not make the movement, but merely rode for a moment on the crest of the wave. Europeans may say that a stronger man, a man with knowledge, education, and a fierce tenacity of fibre, might have built up a more permanent power, and used it with more destructive effect. But Californians say that a strong man would not have been suffered to do what Kearney did with impunity. Kearney throve — so they allege — because the solid classes despised him, and felt that the best thing was to let him talk himself out and reveal his own hollowness.

The movement fell as quickly as it rose. This was partly due, as has just been said, to the incompetence of the leader, who had really nothing to propose and did not know how to use the force that seemed to have come to his hands. Something, however, must be set down to the credit of the American party system. The existing parties are so strong, and are spread over so wide an area, that it is very difficult to create a new party. Resting on a complex local organization, and supported by the central organization for the purposes of Federal politics, they can survive a temporary eclipse in a particular State, while a new party cannot count itself permanent till it has established some such organization, central as well as local. This may operate badly in keeping old parties alive, when they deserve to die. But it operates well in checking the growth or abridging the life of mischievous local factions. That fund of good sense, moreover, which lies at the bottom of nearly every native American mind, soon produces a reaction against extreme measures. When the native voters, especially those who owned even a little property, had relieved their minds by voting for the new Constitution, they felt they had gone far enough in the direction of change, and at the election of a legislature voted for moderate men. Support from this class having been withdrawn, the Sand Lot rabble ceased to be dangerous; and although threats of violence were abundant, and sometimes bloodthirsty, there was little sedition or disorder.

Every stump orator in the West says a great deal more than he means, and is promptly discounted by his hearers. The populace of San Francisco has now and again menaced the Chinese quarter and the docks of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company, which, until recent legislation by Congress checked them, brought the Chinese over. Once the Chinese armed in defence of Chinatown, and twice during these agitations a committee of public safety was formed to protect the banks and keep order in the streets. But many people doubt whether order was really endangered. The few attacks made on Chinese stores were done by small bands of hoodlums, who disappeared at the sight of the police. The police and militia seem to have behaved well all through. Moreover, any serious riot would in San Francisco be quelled speedily and severely by the respectable classes, who would supersede the municipal authority if it seemed to fear, or to be secretly leagued with, the authors of sedition. Even the meetings of the various political parties were scarcely ever disturbed or "bull-dozed" by their opponents. When the Kearneyites once or twice molested Democratic meetings, they were so promptly repelled, that they desisted for the future.

There was very little of conscious or constructive communism or socialism in the movement. Kearney told the working men that the rich had thriven at their expense, and talked of hanging thieves in office, and burning the houses of capitalists. But neither he nor any other demagogue assailed the institution of property. The farmers, whose vote carried the new Constitution, owned their farms, and would have recoiled from suggestions of agrarian socialism. And in fact the new Constitution, although it contains provisions hostile to capital, "is anything but agrarian or communistic, for it entrenches vested rights, especially in land, more thoroughly than before. . . . It is anything but a working man's Constitution; it levies a poll tax without exemption; disfranchises a considerable portion of the floating labour vote; prevents the opening of public works in emergencies, and in various ways which working men, even in their present stage of enlightenment, may easily see, sacrifices the interests of the labouring classes, as well as the capitalists, to what the landowners regard as

their interests."¹ A solitary Parisian communist who was elected to the convention "exercised no influence, and was expelled from the party for refusing to support the new Constitution." There were some rich men, and lawyers connected with the great corporations, among the candidates and supporters of the Sand Lot party. Others of the same class who tried secretly to use it had probably their selfish ends to serve, but would have been less willing to increase its strength had they regarded it as an attack on property in general. The fact is that theoretical communism has no hold upon native Americans, while its practical application does not commend itself to farmers who own their land and workmen who own their houses. The belief which prevailed in the Eastern States that the movement had a communistic character was therefore a mistaken one.

More mischief would have been done but for the existence of the Federal Constitution. It imposed a certain check on the Convention, who felt the absurdity of trying to legislate right in the teeth of an overruling instrument. It has been the means of upsetting some of the clauses of the Constitution of 1879, and some of the statutes passed by the legislature under them, and has discouraged attempts to pass others.

On the whole, not much evil has been wrought, at least not much compared with what was feared in the State itself, and believed in the East to have resulted. The better sort of Californians two years after were no longer alarmed, but seemed half ashamed and half amused when they recollected the scenes I have described. They felt somewhat as a man feels when he awakes unrefreshed after a night of bad dreams. He fears at first that his parched tongue and throbbing head may mean that he has caught a fever. But when he has breakfasted and is again immersed in work, these sensations and apprehensions disappear together. After all, say the lawyers and bankers of San Francisco, we are going on as before, property will take care of itself in this country, things are not really worse so far as our business is concerned.

Neither are things better. It is natural to suppose that a shock, however short, must make a difference to a community, and affect its future fortunes. If this shock has so affected

¹ Mr. H. George, in *Popular Science Monthly* for August, 1880.

California, the results are not yet apparent. Though the new Constitution has not altered the economic condition of the workmen and farmers, it might have been thought that the crisis, which suddenly startled this busy and (in San Francisco) luxurious society, would rouse good citizens to a more active interest in politics, make them see the necessity of getting honest men into the offices and the legislature, and, indeed, of purifying public life altogether. But these consequences do not seem to have followed. In the stress and hurry of Californian life, impressions pass swiftly away. Good citizens are disposed to stand aside; and among the richer many look forward to a time when, having made their fortunes, they will go East to spend them. San Francisco in particular continues to be deplorably misgoverned, and passes from the tyranny of one Ring to that of another, with no change save in the persons of those who prey upon her. It may be that another shock is in store for the Golden State, more violent than the last, although equally within legal limits, for there seems no danger, in spite of such outbreaks as marked the great railway strikes of 1894, of mere mob law and anarchy. The forces at the disposal of order are always the stronger; nor are the Californians, with all their restlessness, specially inclined to communistic experiments. It may on the other hand be that as society settles down from the feverish instability of these early days, as the mass of the people acquire a more enlightened view of their true interests, as those moral influences which count for so much in America assert their dominion more widely, the present evils will slowly pass away. The president of the Vigilance Committee of 1856 told me that all he had seen happen in San Francisco, since the days when it was a tiny Spanish mission, made him confident that everything would come out straight. Probably he is right. American experience shows that the optimists generally are.

EPILOGUE TO THIS AND THE TWO LAST PRECEDING
CHAPTERS.

The illustrations given in these three chapters of perversions of popular government carry their moral with them, and only a few parting comments are needed.

Neither of the two great political parties has in respect of the events narrated a better record than its rival. If the Tammany Ring sheds little lustre upon the Democrats of New York, the Gas Ring of Philadelphia is no more creditable to the Republicans of Pennsylvania.

Both in New York and in Philadelphia there was nothing truly political in the character and career of the Rings. Tammany has been for thirty years a selfish combination of men who have had purely personal ends to serve; and Tweed in particular was a mere vulgar robber. So the Gas Ring strove and throve, and its successors have striven and thriven, solely to secure patronage and gain to their respective members. True indeed it is that neither in New York nor in Philadelphia could the Rings have won their way to power without the connivance of chiefs among the national parties, who needed the help of the vote the Rings controlled; true also that that vote would never have become so large had not many citizens looked on the Rings as the "regular" organizations, and heirs of the local party traditions. But neither Ring had ever any distinctive principles or proposals: neither ever appealed to the people on behalf of a doctrine or a scheme calculated to benefit the masses. Lucre, with office as a means to lucre, was their only aim, the party for the sake of the party their only watchword.

What, then, are the salient features of these two cases, and what the lessons they enforce? They are these. The power of an organization in a multitude; the facility with which the administrative machinery of government may be made the instrument of private gain; the disposition of the average respectable citizen to submit to bad government rather than take the trouble of overthrowing it. These are not wholly new phenomena, but they are hardly such as would have been looked for in the United States; and not one of them was feared when Tocqueville wrote.

Very different, and far less discreditable to those concerned, is the case of California. The movement which gave birth to the new Constitution was a legitimate political movement. It was crude in its aims, and tainted with demagogism in its methods. But it was evoked by real evils; and it sought, however ignorantly, the public good. Kearney had no sordid

personal ends to serve, and gained for himself nothing more solid than notoriety. His agitation was essentially the same as that which has appeared in the Western States under the forms of Grangerism, the Farmers' Alliance, and Populism, an effort to apply political remedies to evils, real or supposed, which are mainly economic rather than political, and only a part of which legislation can remove. Similar movements must from time to time be expected; all that can be hoped is to keep them within constitutional lines, and prevent them from damaging the credit and retarding the prosperity of the States they affect. Nothing is more natural than that those who suffer from hard times and see that a few men grow rich while the vast majority remain poor should confound the mischiefs which arise from State or city maladministration and from the undue power which the laws have permitted corporations to acquire with other hardships due to the constitution of human nature and the conditions of the world we live in, and should, possessing the whole power of the State, strike out wildly at all three at once. In a country so little restrained by ancient traditions or deference to the educated class as is Western America, a country where the aptitude for politics is so much in advance of economic wisdom, it is less surprising that these storms should sometimes darken the sky than that they should uproot so little in their course.

CHAPTER XCI

THE HOME OF THE NATION

THERE are three points wherein the territories which constitute the United States present phenomena new in the annals of the world. They contain a huge people whose blood is becoming mixed in an unprecedented degree by the concurrent immigration of numerous European races. We find in them, beside the predominant white nation, seven millions of men belonging to a dark race, thousands of years behind in its intellectual development, but legally equal in political and civil rights. And thirdly, they furnish an instance to which no parallel can be found of a vast area, including regions very dissimilar in their natural features, occupied by a population nearly the whole of which speaks the same tongue, and all of which lives under the same institutions. Of these phenomena the first has been already frequently referred to, while the second is dealt with in a later chapter. The third suggests to us thoughts and questions which cannot pass unnoticed. No one can travel in the United States without asking himself whether this immense territory will remain united or be split up into a number of independent communities; whether, even if it remain united, diverse types of life and character will spring up within it; whether and how far climatic and industrial conditions will affect those types, carrying them farther from the prototypes of Europe. These questions, as well as other questions regarding the future local distribution of wealth and population, open fields of inquiry and speculation too wide to be here explored. Yet some pages may well be given to a rapid survey of the geographical conditions of the United States, and of the influence those conditions have exerted and may, so far as can be foreseen, continue to exert on the growth of the nation, its political and economical development. Beginning with a few observa-