

they are opposed to "sentimentalism," and think that "politics," as now practised, would do more harm to women than women could possibly do good to politics.

These are some of the reasons which make an impartial observer doubt whether full political suffrage, as distinguished from school or municipal suffrage, is likely to be granted to women in many States of the Union within the next thirty years, for of the remoter future it would be rash to speak. Still it must be remembered that considerable advances have been made, and that where any form of suffrage has been once granted it has never, except in Washington and in the wholly exceptional case of Utah, been withdrawn. The suffragists have some grounds for the confidence of victory they express. If they can bring the public opinion of women themselves over to their side, they will succeed. To a European observer the question seems one rather of social than of political moment. If he sees no reason to expect an improvement in politics from the participation of women in elections and their admission to Congress and to high political office, neither does he find much cause for fear. The results of universal suffrage may not greatly differ from those of manhood suffrage. Such misgivings as he entertains are of a different nature. They are serious misgivings, and they are rendered not less serious by a study of the social changes which are passing upon the world in Europe as well as in America.

CHAPTER XCVII

THE SUPPOSED FAULTS OF DEMOCRACY

THE question which in one form or another every European politician has during the last half-century been asking about the United States, is the broad question, How does democracy answer? No other country has tried the experiment of a democratic government on so large a scale, with so many minor variations, for the State governments are forty-four autonomous democracies, or with such advantages of geographical position and material resources. And those who think that all civilized countries are moving towards democracy, even though they may not be destined to rest there, find the question an important one for themselves. The reader who has followed thus far the account I have tried to give of the Federal Constitution and its working, of the State Constitutions, of local government, of the party machinery, of the influence of public opinion as a controlling power over all the institutions of the country, will be content with a comparatively brief summary of the results to which the inquiries made under these heads point.

That summary naturally falls into three parts. We have to ask first, how far the faults usually charged on democracy are present in America; next, what are the special faults which characterize it there; last, what are the strong points which it has developed.

The chief faults which philosophers, from Plato downwards to Mr. Robert Lowe, and popular writers repeating and caricaturing the dicta of philosophers, have attributed to democratic governments, are the following:—

Weakness in emergencies, incapacity to act with promptitude and decision.

Fickleness and instability, frequent changes of opinion, con-

sequent changes in the conduct of affairs and in executive officials.

Insubordination, internal dissensions, disregard of authority, with a frequent resort to violence, bringing on an anarchy which ends in military tyranny.

A desire to level down, and an intolerance of greatness.

Tyranny of the majority over the minority.

A love of novelty: a passion for changing customs and destroying old institutions.

Ignorance and folly, producing a liability to be deceived and misled; consequent growth of demagogues playing on the passions and selfishness of the masses.

I do not say that this list exhausts the reproaches directed against democracy, but it includes those which are most often heard and are best worth examining. Most of them are drawn from the history of the Greek republics of antiquity and the Italian republics of the Middle Ages, small communities where the conditions of social and political life were so different from those of a great modern country that we ought not to expect similar results to follow from political arrangements called by the same name. However, as this consideration has not prevented writers and statesmen, even in our own day, from repeating the old censures, and indeed from mixing together in one repulsive potion all the faults that belonged to small aristocratic republics with all that can belong to large democratic republics, it is worth while to examine these current notions, and try them by the light of the facts which America furnishes.

Weakness and want of Promptitude. — The American democracy is long-suffering and slow in rousing itself; it is often perplexed by problems, and seems to grope blindly for their solution. In the dealings with England and France which preceded the war of A.D. 1812, and in the conduct of that war, its government showed some irresolution and sluggishness. The habit of blustering in its intercourse with foreign powers, and the internal strife over slavery, led Europeans to think it lacked firmness and vigour. They were undeceived in 1861. While it seemed possible to avert a breach with the Southern slave-holders, the North was willing to accept, and did accept, a series of compromises whose inadequacy was soon revealed.

The North was ill led in Congress, and the South was boldly if not wisely led. Yet when the crisis arrived, the North put forth its power with a suddenness and resolution which surprised the world. There was no faltering in the conduct of a struggle which for two long years French and English statesmen deemed hopeless. The best blood of the North freely offered itself to be shed on the battlefields of Virginia and Pennsylvania for the sake of the Union; while an enormous debt was incurred in equipping army after army. As every one knows, the Southern people displayed no less vigour even when the tide had evidently begun to turn against them, and the hope of European intervention died away. If want of force, dash, and courage in moments of danger is a defect generally chargeable on popular governments, it was not then chargeable on the United States. But the doctrine is one which finds little to support it either in ancient or in modern history, while there are many instances to the contrary: witness the war of the Swiss against Charles the Bold, and the defence of Florence against Charles the Fifth.

Fickleness and Instability. — The indictment fails on this count also. The people are open to sudden impulses, and in particular States there have been ill-considered innovations and a readiness to try wild experiments, such as those I have described in California. But taking the nation as a whole, its character is marked by tenacity of beliefs and adherence to leaders once chosen. The opposite charge of stubbornness in refusing to be convinced by argument and to admit the failings of men who have established some title to gratitude, might more plausibly be preferred. Western farmers have been accustomed to suffer from the high price of the clothes they wear and the implements they use, but once imbibed the belief that a protective tariff makes for the general good of the country they remained protectionists down till 1890; and many among them remain so still. The blunders of President Grant's first administration, and the misdeeds of the knot of men who surrounded him, playing upon the political inexperience of a blunt soldier, scarcely affected the loyalty of the masses to the man whose sword had saved the Union. Congressmen and State officials are no doubt often changed, but they are changed in pursuance of a doctrine and a habit in which the

interests of a class are involved, not from any fickleness in the people.¹

Insubordination and Contempt for Authority. — On this head the evidence is more conflicting. There are States, and cities, in which the laws are imperfectly enforced. Homicide is hardly a crime in some parts of the South — that is to say, a man who kills another is not always arrested, often not convicted when arrested and put on his trial, very rarely hanged when convicted.² One might almost say that private war is recognized by opinion in these districts, as it was in Europe during the earlier Middle Ages. In the mountainous country of Eastern Kentucky, and the adjoining parts of Virginia and Tennessee, quarrels are kept up from generation to generation between hostile families and their respective friends, which the State authorities cannot succeed in repressing. In 1890, I was assured when passing the borders of that region, that in one such blood feud more than fifty persons had perished within the preceding ten years, each murder provoking another in revenge. When a judge goes into these parts it has sometimes befallen that a party of men come down fully armed from the mountains, surround the court house, and either drive him away or oblige him to abandon the attempt to do justice on slayers belonging to their faction. In the West, again, particularly in such South-western States as Missouri, Arkansas, and Texas, brigandage seems to be-regarded with a certain amusement, rising into sympathy, by a part of the peaceable population. Having arisen partly out of the Border ruffianism which preceded the outbreak of the Civil War, partly among men who were constantly engaged in skirmishing with the Indian tribes, there is a flavour of romance about it, which ceases to gild the exploits of train-robbers only when their activity threatens the commercial interests of a rising city. Jesse James, the notori-

¹ See Chap. XX. in Vol. I.

² Murder is not dealt with quite firmly enough even in some of the Northern States. "There is no subject within the domain of legislation in which improvement is so needed as in the law against murder. The practical immunity that crime enjoys in some sections of the country, and the delay, difficulty, and uncertainty in enforcing the law almost everywhere, is a reproach to our civilization. Efforts to save assassins from punishment are so strenuous, the chances of escape so numerous, and the proceedings so protracted, that the law has few terrors for those disposed to violate it." — Address of Mr. E. J. Phelps to the American Bar Association, 1881.

ous bandit of Missouri, and his brothers, were popular heroes in the region they infested, much like Robin Hood and Little John in the ballads of the thirteenth century in England. These phenomena are, however, explicable by other causes than democratic government. The homicidal habits of the South are a relic of that semi-barbarism which slavery kept alive long after the northern free States had reached the level of European order. The want of a proper police is apparently the cause answerable for the numerous train-robberies. Even in such States as Illinois and Ohio, robberies occur, which are detected and punished more frequently by the energy of the railroad or express (parcel delivery) companies and their skilled detectives than through the action of the State authorities. Brigandage is due to the absence of a mounted gendarmerie in the vast and thinly peopled Further West, and there is no gendarmerie because the Federal government leaves the States and Territories to create their own, and these unsettled communities, being well armed, prefer to take care of themselves rather than spend their scanty corporate funds on a task whose cost would, as they think, be disproportionate to the result.¹ In the western wilds of Canada, however, the mounted police secures perfect safety for wayfarers and train-robberies seem to be unknown.

Lynch law is not unknown in more civilized regions, such as Indiana and (more rarely) Ohio. A case occurred recently not far from New York City. Now lynch law, however shocking it may seem to Europeans and New Englanders, is far removed from arbitrary violence. According to the testimony of careful observers, it is not often abused, and its proceedings are generally conducted with some regularity of form as well as fairness of spirit. What are the circumstances? Those highly technical rules of judicial procedure and still more technical rules of evidence which America owes to the English common law, and which have in some States retained antiquated minutiae now expunged from English practice, or been rendered by new legislation too favourable to prisoners, have to be applied in districts where population is thin, where there are very few officers, either for the apprehension of

¹ There is always a sheriff, whose business it is to pursue criminals, and hang them if convicted, but much depends on his individual vigour.