

is that in no country can a military despotism, such as that which has twice prevailed in France and once in England, be deemed less likely to arise. During the Civil War there were many persons in Europe cultivating, as Gibbon says, the name without the temper of philosophy, who predicted that some successful leader of the Northern armies would establish his throne on the ruins of the Constitution. But no sooner had General Lee surrendered at Appomatox than the disbandment of the victorious host began; and the only thing which thereafter distinguished Generals Grant, Sherman, and Sheridan from their fellow-citizens was the liability to have "receptions" forced on them when they visited a city, and find their puissant arms wearied by the handshakings of their enthusiastic admirers.

Cæsarism is the last danger likely to menace America. In no nation is civil order more stable. None is more averse to the military spirit. No political system would offer a greater resistance to an attempt to create a standing army or centralize the administration.

*Jealousy of Greatness, and a Desire to Level Down.*—This charge derives a claim to respectful consideration from the authority of Tocqueville, who thought it a necessary attribute of democracy, and professed to have discovered symptoms of it in the United States. It alarmed J. S. Mill, and has been frequently dwelt on by his disciples, and by many who have adopted no other part of his teachings, as an evil equally inevitable and fatal in democratic countries. There was probably good ground for it sixty years ago. Even now one discovers a tendency in the United States, particularly in the West, to dislike, possibly to resent, any outward manifestation of social superiority. A man would be ill looked upon who should build a castle in a park, surround his pleasure-grounds with a high wall, and receive an exclusive society in gilded saloons. One of the parts which prominent politicians, who must be assumed to know their business, most like to play is the part of Cincinnatus at the plough, or Curius Dentatus receiving the Samnite envoys over his dinner of turnips. They welcome a newspaper interviewer at their modest farm, and take pains that he should describe how simply the rooms are furnished, and how little "help" (*i.e.* how few servants) is kept. Although the cynics of

the New York press make a mock of such artless ways, the desired impression is produced on the farmer and the artisan. At a senatorial election not long ago in a North-western State, the opponents of the sitting candidate procured a photograph of his residence in Washington, a handsome mansion in a fashionable avenue, and circulated it among the members of the State legislature, to show in what luxury their Federal representative indulged. I remember to have heard it said of a statesman proposing to become a candidate for the Presidency, that he did not venture during the preceding year to occupy his house in Washington, lest he should give occasion for similar criticism. Whether or not this was his real motive, the attribution of it to him is equally illustrative. But how little the wealthy fear to display their wealth and take in public the pleasures it procures may be understood by any one who, walking down Fifth Avenue in New York, observes the superb houses which line it, houses whose internal decorations and collected objects of art rival those of the palaces of European nobles, or who watches in Newport, the most fashionable of transatlantic watering-places, the lavish expenditure upon servants, horses, carriages, and luxuries of every kind. No spot in Europe conveys an equal impression of the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, of boundless wealth and a boundless desire for enjoyment, as does the Ocean Drive at Newport on an afternoon in August.

Intellectual eminence excites no jealousy, though it is more admired and respected than in Europe. The men who make great fortunes, such as the late Mr. A. T. Stewart, or "Commodore" Vanderbilt, are not regarded with suspicion or envy, but rather with admiration. "When thou doest good unto thyself, all men shall speak well of thee." Wealth does not, as in England, give its possessors an immediate *entrée* to fashionable society, but it marks them as the heroes and leaders of the commercial world, and sets them on a pinnacle of fame which fires the imagination of ambitious youths in dry goods stores or traffic clerks on a railroad. The demonstrations of hostility to wealthy "monopolists," and especially to railroad companies, made in some districts, are prompted, not by hatred to prominence or wealth, but by discontent at the immense power which capitalists exercise, especially in the



business of transporting goods, and which they have frequently abused.

*Tyranny of the Majority.* — Of this I have spoken in a previous chapter, and need only summarize the conclusions there arrived at. So far as compulsive legislation goes, it has never been, and is now less than ever, a serious or widespread evil. The press is free to advocate unpopular doctrines, even the most brutal forms of anarchism. Religious belief and practices are untouched by law. The sale of intoxicants is no doubt in many places restricted or forbidden, but to assume that this is a tyrannical proceeding is to beg a question on which the wise are much divided. The taxation of the rich for the benefit of the poor offers the greatest temptation to a majority disposed to abuse its powers. But neither Congress nor the State legislatures have, with a very few exceptions, gone any farther in this direction than the great nations of Europe. I may be told that this abstention from legislative tyranny is due, not to the wisdom and fairness of the American democracy, but to the restraints which the Federal and State constitutions impose upon it. These restraints do, no doubt, exist. But who impose and maintain them? The people themselves, who surely deserve the credit of desiring to remove from their own path temptations which might occasionally prove irresistible. It is true that the conditions have been in some points exceptionally favourable. Class hatreds are absent. The two great national parties are not class parties. Taking the whole country, rich and poor are equally represented in both of these parties. Neither proposes to overtax the rich. Both denounce monopolism in the abstract, and promise to restrain capital from abusing its power, but neither is more forward than the other to take practical steps for such a purpose, because each includes capitalists whose contributions the party needs, and each equally leans upon the respectable and wealthy classes, — the Republicans more particularly on those classes in the North, the Democrats on the same classes in the South. Party divisions do not coincide with social or religious divisions, as has often happened in Europe.

Moreover, in State politics — and it is in the State rather than in the Federal sphere that attacks on a minority might be feared — the lines on which parties act are fixed by the

lines which separate the national parties, and each party is therefore held back from professing doctrines which menace the interests of any class. The only exceptions occur where some burning economic question supersedes for the moment the regular party attachments. This happened in California, with the consequences already described. It came near happening in two or three of the North-western States, such as Illinois and Wisconsin, where the farmers, organized in their Granges or agricultural clubs, caused the legislatures to pass statutes which bore hardly on the railroads and the owners of elevators and grain warehouses. Similar attempts have been more recently made by the so-called Populists. Yet even this kind of legislation can scarcely be called tyrannical. It is an attempt, however clumsy and abrupt, to deal with a real economical mischief, not an undue extension of the scope of legislation to matters in which majorities ought not to control minorities at all.

*Love of Novelty; Passion for destroying Old Institutions.* — It is easy to see how democracies have been credited with this tendency. They have risen out of oligarchies or aristocratic monarchies, the process of their rise coinciding, if not always with a revolution, at least with a breaking down of many old usages and institutions. It is this very breaking down that gives birth to them. Probably some of the former institutions are spared, are presently found incompatible with the new order of things, and then have to be changed till the people has, so to speak, furnished its house according to its taste. But when the new order has been established, is there any ground for believing that a democracy is an exception to the general tendency of mankind to adhere to the customs they have formed, admire the institutions they have created, and even bear the ills they know rather than incur the trouble of finding some way out of them? The Americans are not an exception. They value themselves only too self-complacently on their methods of government; they abide by their customs, because they admire them. They love novelty in the sphere of amusement, literature, and social life; but in serious matters, such as the fundamental institutions of government and in religious belief, no progressive and civilized people is more conservative.



*Liability to be misled; Influence of Demagogues.* — No doubt the inexperience of the recent immigrants, the want of trained political thought among the bulk even of native citizens, the tendency to sentimentalism which marks all large masses of men, do lay the people open to the fallacious reasoning and specious persuasions of adventurers. This happens in all popularly governed countries; and a phenomenon substantially the same occurs in oligarchies, for you may have not only aristocratic demagogues, but demagogues playing to an aristocratic mob. Stripped of its externals and considered in its essential features, demagogism is no more abundant in America than in England, France, or Italy. Empty and reckless declaimers, such as are some of those who have figured in the Granger and Populist movements (for sincere and earnest men have shared in both), are allowed to talk themselves hoarse, and ultimately relapse into obscurity. A demagogue of greater talent may aspire to some high executive office; if not to the Presidency, then perhaps to a place in the Cabinet, where he may practically pull the wires of a President whom he has put into the chair. Failing either of these, he aims at the governorship of his State or the mayoralty of a great city. In no one of these positions is it easy for him to do permanent mischief. The Federal executive has no influence on legislation, and even in foreign policy and in the making of appointments requires the consent of the Senate. That any man should acquire so great a hold on the country as to secure the election of two Houses of Congress subservient to his will, while at the same time securing the Presidency or Secretaryship of State for himself, is an event too improbable to enter into calculation. Nothing approaching it has been seen since the days of Jackson. The size of the country, the differences between the States, a hundred other causes, make achievements possible enough in a European country all but impossible here. That a plausible adventurer should clamber to the presidential chair, and when seated there should conspire with a corrupt congressional ring, purchasing by the gift of offices and by jobs their support for his own schemes of private cupidity or public mischief, is conceivable, but improbable. The system of counter-checks in the Federal government, which impedes or delays much good legislation, may be relied on to avert

many of the dangers to which the sovereign chambers of European countries are exposed.

A demagogue installed as governor of a State — and it is usually in State politics that demagogism appears — has but limited opportunities for wrong-doing. He can make a few bad appointments, and can discredit the commonwealth by undignified acts. He cannot seriously harm it. Two politicians who seem to deserve the title recently obtained that honourable post in two great Eastern States. One of them, a typical “ringster,” perpetrated some jobs, tampered with some elections, and vetoed some good bills. Venturing too far, he at last involved his party in an ignominious defeat. The other, a man of greater natural gifts and greater capacity for mischief, whose capture of the chief magistracy of the State had drawn forth lamentations from the better citizens, left things much as he found them, and the most noteworthy incident which marked his year of office — for he was turned out at the next election — was the snub administered by the leading university in the State, which refused him the compliment, usually paid to the chief magistrate, of an honorary degree of Doctor of Laws.

This inquiry has shown us that of the faults traditionally attributed to democracy one only is fairly chargeable on the United States; that is to say, is manifested there more conspicuously than in the constitutional monarchies of Europe. This is the disposition to be lax in enforcing laws disliked by any large part of the population, to tolerate breaches of public order, and to be too indulgent to offenders generally. The Americans themselves admit this to be one of their weak points. How far it is due to that deficient reverence for law which is supposed to arise in popular governments from the fact that the people have nothing higher than themselves to look up to, how far to the national easy-goingness and good-nature, how far to the prejudice against the maintenance of an adequate force of military and police and to the optimism which refuses to recognize the changes brought by a vast increase of population, largely consisting of immigrants, these are points I need not attempt to determine. It has produced no general disposition to lawlessness, which rather tends to diminish in the older parts of the country. And it is some-



times (though not always) replaced in a serious crisis by a firmness in repressing disorders which some European governments may envy. Men who are thoroughly awakened to the need for enforcing the law, enforce it all the more resolutely because it has the whole weight of the people behind it.

## CHAPTER XCVIII

### THE TRUE FAULTS OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

WE have seen that the defects commonly attributed to democratic government are not specially characteristic of the United States. It remains to inquire what are the peculiar blemishes which the country does show. So far as regards the constitutional machinery of the Federal and of the State government this question has been answered in earlier chapters. It is now rather the tendency of the institutions generally, the disposition and habits of the governing people, that we have to consider. The word Democracy is often used to mean a spirit or tendency, sometimes the spirit of revolution, sometimes the spirit of equality. For our present purpose it is better to take it as denoting simply a form of government, that in which the numerical majority rules, deciding questions of state by the votes, whether directly, as in the ancient republics, or mediately, as in modern representative government, of the body of citizens, the citizens being if not the whole, at least a very large proportion of the adult males. The inquiry may begin with the question, What are the evils to which such a form of government is by its nature exposed? and may then proceed to ascertain whether any other defects exist in the United States government which, though traceable to democracy, are not of its essence, but due to the particular form which it has there taken.

It is an old maxim that republics live by Virtue — that is, by the maintenance of a high level of public spirit and justice among the citizens. If the republic be one in which power is confined to, or practically exercised by, a small educated class, the maintenance of this high level is helped by the sense of personal dignity which their position engenders. If the republic itself be small, and bear rule over others, patriotism