cultivated Americans a certain cosmopolitanism of view, and detachment from national or local prejudice, superior to that of the same classes in France, England, or Germany. In the ideas themselves there is little one can call novel or distinctively American, though there is a kind of thoroughness in embracing or working out certain political and social conceptions which is less common in England. As regards literature, nothing at present indicates the emergence of a new type. The influence of the great nations on one another grows always closer, and makes new national types less likely to appear. Science, which has no nationality, exerts a growing sway over men's minds, and exerts it contemporaneously and similarly in all civilized countries. For the purposes of thought, at least, if not of literary expression, the world draws closer together, and becomes more of a homogeneous community.

A visitor doubts whether the United States are, so far as the things of the mind are concerned, "a new country." The people have the hopefulness of youth. But their institutions are old, though many have been remodelled or new faced; their religion is old; their views of morality and conduct are old; their sentiments in matters of art and taste have not greatly diverged from those of the parent stock. Is the mere fact that they inhabit new territories, and that the conditions of life there have trained to higher efficiency certain gifts, and have left others in comparative quiescence, is this fact sufficient so to transform the national spirit as to make the products of their creative power essentially diverse from those of the same race abiding in its ancient seats? A transplanted tree may bear fruit of a slightly different flavour, but the apple remains an apple and the pear a pear.

However, it is still too early in the growth of the United States to form conclusions on these high matters, almost too soon to speculate regarding them. There are causes at work which may in time produce a new type of intellectual life; but whether or not this come to pass, it can hardly be doubted that when the American people give themselves some repose from their present labours, when they occupy themselves less with doing and more with being, there will arise among them a literature and a science, possibly also an art, which will tell upon Europe with a new force. It will have behind it the momentum of hundreds of millions of men.

CHAPTER CXIII

THE ABSENCE OF A CAPITAL

The United States are the only great country in the world which has no capital. Germany and Italy were long without one, because the existence of the mediæval Empire prevented the growth in either country of a national monarchy. But the wonderfully reconstructive age we live in has now supplied the want; and although Rome and Berlin still fall short of being to their respective states what Paris and London are to France and England, what Vienna and Pesth are to the Dual Monarchy, they bid fair to attain a similar rank[1] in their respective nations. By a Capital I mean a city which is not only the seat of political government, but is also by the size, wealth, and character of its population the head and centre of the country, a leading seat of commerce and industry, a reservoir of financial resources, the favoured residence of the great and powerful, the spot in which the chiefs of the learned professions are to be found, where the most potent and widely read journals are published, whither men of literary and scientific capacity are drawn. The heaping together in such a place of these various elements of power, the conjunction of the forces of rank, wealth, knowledge, intellect, naturally makes such a city a sort of foundry in which opinion is melted and cast, where it receives that definite shape in which it can be easily and swiftly propagated and diffused through the whole country,

[1] Athens, Lisbon, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Brussels, are equally good instances among the smaller countries. In Switzerland, Bern has not reached the same position, because Switzerland is a federation, and, so to speak, an artificial country made by history. Zurich, Lausanne, and Geneva are intellectually quite as influential. So Holland retains traces of her federal condition in the relatively less important position of Amsterdam. Madrid being a modern city placed in a country less perfectly consolidated than most of the other states of Europe, is less of a capital to Spain than Lisbon is to Portugal or Paris to France.

deriving not only an authority from the position of those who form it but a momentum from the weight of numbers in the community whence it comes. The opinion of such a city becomes powerful politically because it is that of the persons who live at headquarters, who hold the strings of government in their hands, who either themselves rule the state or are in close contact with those who do. It is true that under a representative government power rests with those whom the people have sent up from all parts of the country. Still these members of the legislature reside in the capital, and cannot but feel the steady pressure of its prevailing sentiment which touches them socially at every point. It sometimes happens that the populace of the capital, by their power of overawing the rulers or perhaps effecting a revolution, are able to turn the fortunes of the state. But even where no such peril is to be apprehended, any nation with the kind of a capital I am describing, acquires the habit of looking to it for light and leading, and is apt to yield to it an initiative in political movements.

In the field of art and literature the influence of a great capital is no less marked. It gathers to a centre the creative power of the country, and subjects it to the criticism of the best instructed and most polished society. The constant action and reaction upon one another of groups of capable men in an atmosphere at once stimulative to invention and corrective of extravagance may give birth to works which isolated genius could hardly have produced. Goethe made this observation as regards Paris, contrasting the centralized society of France with the dispersion of the elements of culture over the wide area of his own Germany.

"Now conceive a city like Paris, where the highest talents of a great kingdom are all assembled in a single spot, and by daily intercourse, strife, and emulation, mutually instruct and advance each other; where the best works, both of nature and art, from all kingdoms of the earth, are open to daily inspection, — conceive this metropolis of the world, I say, where every walk across a bridge or across a square recalls some mighty past, and where some historical event is connected with every corner of a street. In addition to all this, conceive not the Paris of a dull spiritless time, but the Paris of the nineteenth century, in which, during three generations, such men as Molière, Voltaire, Diderot, and the like, have kept up such a current of intellect as cannot be found twice in a single spot on the whole world, and you will comprehend that a man of talent like Ampère, who has grown up amid such abundance, can easily be something in his four-and-twentieth year." [1]

The same idea of the power which a highly polished and strenuously active society has to educe and develop brilliant gifts underlies the memorable description which Pericles gives of Athens.[2] And the influence of such a society may be contemplated with the greater satisfaction because it does not necessarily impoverish the rest of a country. The centralization of intellectual life may tend to diminish the chances of variability, and establish too uniform a type; but it probably gives a higher efficiency to the men of capacity whom it draws into its own orbit than they could have attained in the isolation of their natal spot.

In the case both of politics and of literature, the existence of a capital tends to strengthen the influence of what is called Society, that is to say, of the men of wealth and leisure who have time to think of other matters than the needs of daily life, and whose company and approval are apt to be sought by the men of talent. Thus where the rich and great are gathered in one spot to which the nation looks, they effect more in the way of guiding its political thought and training its literary taste than is possible where they are dispersed over the face of a large country. In both points, therefore, it will evidently make a difference to a democratic country whether it has a capital, and what degree of deference that capital receives. Paris is the extreme case of a city which has been everything to the national literature and art, and has sought to be everything in national politics also. London, since the decline of Dublin and of Edinburgh, has stood without a British rival in the domain of art and letters, and although one can hardly say that a literary society exists in London, most of the people who employ themselves in writing books and nearly all those who paint pictures live in or near it. Over politics London has less authority than Paris has exerted in France, doubtless because parts of the north and west of Britain are more highly vitalized than the provinces of France, while the English city is almost too populous to have a common feeling. Its very hugeness makes it amorphous.

[1] *Conversations with Eckermann.* [2] Thucyd. II. 37-41

What are the cities of the United States which can claim to approach nearest to the sort of capital we have been considering? Not Washington, though it is the meeting-place of Congress and the seat of Federal administration. It has a relatively small population (in 1890, 230,392, of whom one-third were negroes). Society consists of congressmen (for about half the year), officials, diplomatists, and some rich and leisured people who come to spend the winter. The leaders of finance, industry, commerce, and the professions are absent; there are few men of letters, no artists, hardly any journalists. What is called the fashionable society of Washington, which, being small, polished, and composed of people who constantly meet one another, is agreeable, and not the less agreeable because it has a peculiar flavour, is so far from aspiring to political authority as to deem it "bad form" to talk politics.[1] Its political society on the other hand is so largely composed of officials, "professionals," and office-seekers, as to produce an atmosphere unlike that of the nation at large, and dangerous to those statesmen who breathe it too long without interruption.

Not New York, though it is now by far the most populous city. It is the centre of commerce, the sovereign of finance. But it has no special political influence or power beyond that of casting a large vote, which is an inportant factor in determining the thirty-six presidential votes of the State. Business is its main occupation: the representatives of literature are few; the journals, although certainly among the ablest and most widely read in the country, are, after all, New York journals, and not, like those of Paris, London, or even Berlin, professedly written for the whole nation. Next comes Philadelphia, once the first city of the Union, but now standing below New York in all the points just mentioned, with even less claim to be deemed a centre of art or opinion. Boston was for a time the chosen home of letters and culture, and still contains, in proportion to her population, a larger number of men and women capable of making or judging good work than any other

[1] Washington being situated in the Federal District of Columbia is not a part of any State, and therefore enjoys no share in the Federal government. Its inhabitants can vote neither for a member of Congress nor for presidential electors; and the city is ruled, greatly to its advantage, by a Federal Commission. It is indeed the only well governed large city in the country.

city. But she can no longer be said to lead abstract thought; much less current opinion. Chicago combines a vast population, now second to that of New York only, with a central position: she is in some respects more of a typical American city than any of the others I have named. But Chicago, so far as political initiative goes, has no more weight than what the number of her voters represents, and does not yet count in art or literature. Nor can one say that any of these cities is on the way to gain a more commanding position. New York will probably retain her pre-eminence in population and commercial consequence, but she does not rise proportionately in culture, while the centre of political gravity, shifting ever more and more to the West, will doubtless finally fix itself in the Mississippi valley.[1]

It deserves to be remarked that what is true of the whole country is also true of the great sections of the country. Of the cities I have named, none, except possibly Boston and San Francisco, can be said to be even a local capital, either for purposes of political opinion or of intellectual movement and tendency. Boston retains her position as the literary centre of New England; San Francisco has by her size a preponderating influence on the Pacific coast. But no other great city is regarded by the inhabitants of her own and the adjoining States as their natural head, to which they look for political guidance, or from which they expect any intellectual stimulance. Even New Orleans, though by far the largest place in the South, is in no sense the metropolis of the South; and does little more for the South than set a conspicuous example of municipal misgovernment to the surrounding commonwealths. Though no Paris, no Berlin, stands above them, these great American cities are not more important in the country, or even in their own sections of the country, than Lyons and Bordeaux are in France, Hamburg and Cologne in Germany. Even as between municipal communities, even in

[1] A leading New York paper says (March, 1888), "In no capital that we know of does the cause of religion and morality derive so little support against luxury from intellectual interest or activity of any description. This interest has its place here, but it leads a sickly existence as yet under the shadow of great wealth which cares not for it." This remark applies with equal force to Chicago and San Francisco, probably less to Baltimore, and still less to Boston and some of the smaller cities.

the sphere of thought and literary effort, equality and local independence have in America their perfect work.

The geographical as well as political causes that have produced this equality are obvious enough, and only one needs special mention. The seat of Federal government was in 1790 fixed at a place which was not even a village, but a piece of swampy woodland,[1] not merely for the sake of preventing the national legislature from being threatened by the mob of a great city, but because the jealousies of the States made it necessary to place the legislature in a spot exempt from all State influence or jurisdiction. So too in each State the seat of government is rarely to be found in the largest city. Albany, not New York, is the capital of New York State; Springfield, not Chicago, of Illinois; Sacramento, not San Francisco, of California; Harrisburg, not Philadelphia, of Pennsylvania. This seems to have been so ordered not from fear of the turbulence of a vast population, but partly to secure a central spot, partly from the jealousy which the rural districts and smaller cities feel of the place which casts the heaviest vote, and may seek to use the State resources for its own benefit.

It is a natural result of the phenomena described that in the United States public opinion crystallizes both less rapidly and in less sharp and well-defined forms than happens in those European countries which are led by the capital. The temperature of the fluid in which opinion takes shape (if I may venture to pursue the metaphor), is not so high all over a large country as in the society of a city, where the minds that make opinion are in daily contact, and the process by which opinion is made is therefore slower, giving a somewhat more amorphous product. I do not mean that a European capital generates opinion of one type only; but that each doctrine, each programme, each type of views, whether political or

[1] Congress, however, did not remove from Philadelphia to the banks of the Potomac until 1800. Thomas Moore's lines on Washington as he saw it in 1804 deserve to be quoted: —

> "An embryo capital where Fancy sees
> Squares in morasses, obelisks in trees;
> Where second-sighted seers the plain adorn
> With fanes unbuilt and heroes yet unborn,
> Though nought but woods and Jefferson they see,
> Where streets should run, and sages ought to be."

economic or religious, is likely to assume in a capital its sharpest and most pronounced form, that form being taken up and propagated from the capital through the country. And this is one reason why Americans were the first to adopt the system of Conventions, mass meetings of persons belonging to a particular party or advocating a particular cause, gathered from every corner of the country to exchange their ideas and deliberate on their common policy.

It may be thought that in this respect the United States suffer from the absence of a centre of light and heat. Admitting that there is some loss, there are also some conspicuous gains. It is a gain that the multitude of no one city should be able to overawe the executive and the legislature, perhaps even to change the form of government, as Paris has so often done in France. It is a gain, for a democratic country, that the feeling of what is called Society — that is to say, of those who toil not, neither do they spin, who are satisfied with the world, and are apt to regard it as a place for enjoyment — should not become too marked and palpable in its influence on the members of the legislature and the administration, that it should rather be diffused over the nation and act insensibly upon other classes through the ordinary relations of private life than take visible shape as the voice of a number of wealthy families gathered in one spot, whose luxury may render them the objects of envy, and the target for invective. And although types of political view may form themselves less swiftly, though doctrines may be less systematic, programmes less fully reasoned out than when the brisk intelligence of groups gathered in a capital labours to produce them, they may, when they do finally emerge from the mind of the whole people, have a breadth and solidity proportioned to the slowness of their growth, and be more truly representative of all the classes, interests, and tendencies that exist within the nation.

How far the loss exceeds the gain as respects the speculative and artistic sides of intellectual effort, it is too soon to determine, for American cities are all the creatures of the last sixty years. That which Goethe admired in Paris is evidently impossible to the dispersed geniuses of America. On the other hand, that indraught of talent from the provinces to Paris

which many thoughtful Frenchmen deplore, and which has become more unfortunate since Paris has grown to be the centre of amusement for the dissipated classes of Europe, is an experience which no other country need wish to undergo. Germany has not begun to produce more work or better work since she has given herself a capital; indeed, he who looks back over her annals since the middle of last century will think that so far as scholarship, metaphysics, and possibly even poetry are concerned, she gained from that very want of centralization which Goethe regretted. Great critics realize so vividly the defects of the system they see around them that they sometimes underrate the merits that go with those defects. It may be that in the next age American cities will profit by their local independence to develop varieties greater than they now exhibit, and will evolve diverse types of literary and artistic production. Europe will watch with curiosity the progress of an experiment which it is now too late for any of her great countries to try.

CHAPTER CXIV

AMERICAN ORATORY

Oratory is an accomplishment in which Europeans believe that Americans excel; and that this is the opinion of the Americans themselves, although they are too modest to express it, may be gathered from the surprise they betray when they find an Englishman fluent before an audience. Fifty years ago they had the advantage (if it is an advantage) of much more practice than any European nation; but now, with democracy triumphant in England and France, the proportion of speeches and speaking to population is probably much the same in all three countries. Some observations on a form of effort which has absorbed a good deal of the talent of the nation, seem properly to belong to an account of its intellectual life.

Oratorical excellence may be said to consist in the combination of five aptitudes —

Invention, that is to say, the power of finding good ideas and weaving effective arguments.

Skill and taste in the choice of appropriate words.

Readiness in producing appropriate ideas and words at short notice.

Quickness in catching the temper and tendencies of the particular audience addressed.

Weight, animation, and grace in delivery.

Such excellence as the Americans possess, such superiority as they may claim over Englishmen, consists rather in the three latter of these than in the two former.

The substance of their speeches is not better than one finds in other countries, because substance depends on the intellectual resources of the speaker and on the capacity of the audience for appreciating worthy matter. Neither is the literary form better, that is to say, the ideas are not clothed in any choicer language. But there is more fluency, more readiness, more