THE AMERICAN UNION

Its Effect on National Character and Policy With an Enquiry Into Secession as a Constitution Right and the Causes of Disruption

by
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PREFACE

Lest the neutral title of the following work should beguile any reader to assume that neutrality of opinion will pervade it, I warn him at once, on the threshold, that he will soon encounter a current of reasoning strongly adverse to the present doctrines and action of the Northern party. I have endeavoured to collect equally, and balance fairly, the evidence and argument on both sides. Having then formed a clear and strong conviction, it may be that its influence has guided the general tenor of the argument with an unintentional bias. If this be so, the reader will not complain that he has been thus forewarned; and may form his own deductions from the evidence placed before him. Complete impartiality of opinion on a subject of this nature, and during the excitement of its progress, is simply an impossibility. Whoever requires it must be contented to wait for thirty years. The pen of impartial history needs for its subject the events of a generation not our own.

There is, however, an essential difference between the plea of an advocate and the convictions expressed by one devoid of all interest in the case. The former may be composed of words expressly elaborated to entangle the judgment; the latter will represent conclusions, sincere, be they ever so erroneous. With the warning already given, it may be permitted to observe, that personal considerations and valued friendships incline me, without

exception, to the Northern side. Hence the opinions formed and expressed have not been adopted from choice, and are directly opposed to interest: they are convictions forced upon the mind by the facts and reasoning now submitted to the reader's judgment.

I have carefully avoided the use of figures whenever possible. Those who desire detailed information can always command it in statistical works. Figures certainly impart a glittering up appearance to the page; but I have found their effect upon myself, when so introduced, like that of surveying a landscape through a window framed with a number of partitions interlacing innumerable little panes. Such an arrangement may enhance architectural effect, but the view is generally clearer through a plain sheet of glass.

It may appear an omission that when alluding so often to the interests we have at stake, I should not have ventured to suggest any course for this country to adopt. It cannot, indeed, be supposed that we shall long continue dumb and passive when the most numerous of our industrial classes shall be pining in submissive destitution. The views or passions of any section of a foreign country can hardly be more binding or solemn than the existence of a helpless million at home.

What, then, is to be done? I take the blockade to be an act of arbitrary power, akin to that now building bastiles for those who differ in opinion – unauthorised by any law – opposed directly to the letter and spirit of the Federal compact – contradicting the principles recently professed by the same Government. Still it has been acknowledged. This fact now precludes argument upon its merits; and because it will prove so disastrous to ourselves, I see in that strong reason to respect it the more. We have maintained the right of blockade when in our favour; it becomes us to uphold it as rigidly when against us. Whichever be the American institutions we are to copy, let us never copy their practice – so frequently illustrated in the following pages – of adopting a principle at one time and reversing it at another, to suit the convenience of the hour.

There is, however, a measure we have a clear right to take.

By the invariable policy both of America and of Europe, it is but a question of time and judgment when to acknowledge a *de facto* Government. Had we been permitted to remain disinterested, a wide latitude of time might have been afforded to the people of the North to subjugate their fellow-countrymen. The course they have deliberately adopted, by involving in the strife the existence of large masses of our people, forces the question upon us. What are the elements to be weighed to arrive at a sound judgment on this point?

If we find that the States of the South are exercising a just constitutional right – that the attempt to subdue them is a hopeless delusion – that persistence in it may bend free institutions beneath the yoke of military despotism, and must inevitably burthen the North with a crushing load of debt – and further, that the restoration of the Union, were it possible, would be of uttermost injury to the true welfare of the people – if these conclusions be arrived at, there need then be no long hesitation in adopting a course thus really beneficial to all parties. It may, indeed, be said, that after that event the war and the blockade might still continue. But this is a war entirely dependent on a series of loans; these loans entirely depend on the chance duration of the present excitement. Whenever the independence of the South is acknowledged by England and France, the bankers of New York will have little desire to take another loan. A war sustained by borrowing at the rate of eighty millions a year, in a community exposed to panics such as that but four years distant, is an enormous superstructure overhanging a basement of glass, and needs no very weighty blow to level it in a moment with the ground.

It may, perhaps, be said that the defects of the American system have been criticized with too great severity. But on examination the terms employed will appear mild when compared with those of American authorities quoted: further, the severity will be found to be limited to the fault, and not to extend to the man. The events impending are too grave for honied words. Our language is plain-spoken; timidity, subserviency, sycophancy, let them be ever so fashionable are words foreign to our native tongue. I ven-

ture to express a doubt whether any Englishman could investigate the details of the treatment this country has received at the bands of the Union from its birth to the present day, without some little warmth of feeling. Against this I have striven; and if in vain – if it should be occasionally apparent – then I forestall the reader's reproof by inviting him to go through the same studies, and to learn whether they will not produce on his own mind a similar effect.

Allowing justly for this, what desire has any one here except to see that great country the home of a really great people? Few feelings are deeper in the human breast than love of kindred. None desire to be quite alone in the world. To assume the existence, on our part, of a covert ill-will towards America, is to reverse the real impulse. Did we really hate them, we might praise their institutions, flatter the present humour, urge a continuance of the recent course. It is because we desire to see them kinsmen whom we can respect – to hold them not merely as related by descent, but in the warmer relationship of manly affection; – this prompts us to deplore the causes, and to denounce earnestly the evils that sunder us from each other, and are widening the gulf between us year by year.

J.S.

Liverpool,
Nov. 2, 1861.

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CHAPTER ONE
The Political Institutions of the Union

No subject attracts so large a share of public attention, at the present day, as the American Union. In France and Germany, as well as in this country, its disruption affects interests of such magnitude, that in each of them it seems rather the shock of a great national calamity than the subdued reaction of some remote event. In this country the interest is twofold, for beyond its effect on commerce, the final result will shape, through all future time, the fortunes of a people who are destined to be the most numerous family of our race. The subject is thus of commanding interest to all thoughtful minds, whether intent on political inquiry, or engaged in mercantile pursuits, whether depressed by the former history of similar events, or but recently elated with the buoyant hopes which the exulting prosperity of the New World encouraged. And there are those who are impressed with the belief, that it may prove impossible for this country to maintain a policy of inaction for so long a period as civil wars have usually endured. We are, indeed, already parties to the contest, as sharing the suffering it creates. So far the progress of events has still permitted us to look on as spectators; but the time approaches when large masses of our population will be reduced to want, and when, however anxious to maintain neutrality, it will become extremely difficult to continue in an attitude of indifference.

There is also the established policy of modern times, which, discarding the old doctrine of divine right, recognizes established governments as matter of fact, leaving the discussion of their origin or right to those who adopt or dispute them. On this policy we have acted in all the cases which have hitherto occurred in America. To refuse to apply the rule in the present case, would be to make an exception; and this might fairly be construed by the party whom it would affect as a breach of the spirit of neutrality, which should aim at treating all alike. If acted upon, it will plainly be unsafe to rely on the equanimity of the other belligerent. Yet the question may arise at no very distant date, and it will claim our decision. That decision will greatly influence the issue of the contest; and looking to the irretrievable nature of its consequences, it will readily be admitted that public opinion, which must guide so largely the action of government, can hardly be too fully informed upon the merits of the case.

Up to the present time, by far the greater part of the information and argument placed before us, has been supplied by one only of the contending parties. The Federal or legitimate party – for, strange at it seems, this term may now be used in American affairs – have an overwhelming command of the press. They have the ear of Europe, and the advantage of exclusive and constant intercourse with us. And greatly beyond these in its influence to their advantage, is the fact that they speak to those whose principles and sympathy incline greatly in their favour.

But all know that, in political affairs, sentiment and sympathy have the effect of colouring media, through which objects are presented in a light more or less at variance with truth. The more they attract in the direction of one party the more requisite it becomes to hold them at arm's length to follow the example of one of our judges, who recently replied to an impatient counsel: "It is for the very reason that my opinion inclines to your side, that I must weigh the more carefully what arguments there may be upon the other."

A feeling has been expressed that the present period is not the time for any inquiry into American institutions, and that criti-

cism should be hushed in the presence of such grave events. Unquestionably, that small criticism which employs itself on matters of taste and habits would be sadly out of place at such time; and this may be said, too, of any inquiry conducted in a carping spirit. It can be no time to recount a man's faults when he lies stretched in dangerous illness; but it may be right, even essential, to inquire what has brought him to that condition – what causes, predisposing to disease, must be eradicated before he can be thoroughly restored, and more especially, how far any course we may take would delay or promote recovery to really sound health.

Another reason for silence has been assigned by those who remind us that we are of the same kith and kin. This, like all sentiment, may be pushed to an undue excess. Relationship is mutual, and its obligations are mutual. We cannot discover where this has been acknowledged by American citizens, save in their eloquence in after-dinner Anglo-Saxon speeches. Words are very well in their way, but facts should agree with them. We have received for many years one certain and unvarying treatment – our manufactures have just been virtually prohibited – the largest branch of our commerce is now paralyzed by a deliberate act – we are addressed in terms, and visited with threats, which bespeak no manner of affection. The relationship appears to bring to one side considerable indignity and scant justice; must it return to the other nothing but tenderness and love? There has perhaps been enough of this fastidious delicacy, and matters grow too serious for more of it. It may possibly have created a willingness to rely upon it, and to abuse it. We take it to be now our plain duty neither to be dismayed at the present power of America, nor at that which has already threatened us as a prospect of the future, – nor yet to be disturbed by any virulence of the press, with which that country is afflicted, – nor, furthermore, to be restrained by sentiments which, though responded to in phrases, are denied in facts. We have been invited, nay, vehemently urged, to support the Union, or to sympathize with those who are struggling to restore it. Under these circumstances shall we take its merits upon trust, and continue to believe in them on hearsay; or

may we not attempt to form an opinion of our own, whether or not it be for the real welfare of any portion of the United States that the Union should be restored?

We cannot, indeed, dispute the eloquence of the terms in which its advantages have been portrayed. The marvellous progress of the United States seems to confirm these glowing descriptions. We have heard, too, indignant denunciations of rebels and traitors, and our own loyalty has predisposed us to join in the censure, though in the milder spirit of the looker-on. We have heard of the Free, as opposed to the Slave States, and our repugnance to slavery has impelled us towards the voice that was said to be the voice of freedom. We hear the praises of the Constitution, sounding and resounding so loudly, that we fall into a kind of deferential acquiescence, and yield ourselves to be swept along by so irresistible a torrent of applause.

And yet, after all, it may be that the maintenance of a Constitution, which was framed by slave-owners, will afford slender hope of advantage to the slave; and, indeed, it seems possible that the chances of his escape might be better in breaking the walls of his prison, than in rebuilding them. It may prove that the Southern rebels and pirates may be simply following, and for similar reasons, the example of those who have been extolled for the very conduct so reprobated, in others, now. Indeed, we may possibly find that the prosperity of the United States, so dazzling to the eye – their rapid progress and sudden wealth – may arise from causes widely apart from the merits of the Union, which may have been silently working out effects in the highest degree prejudicial, whilst the vigorous energy of the race, and the glare of apparent success, may have confused our judgment, and diverted attention from the real facts.

In endeavouring to form an opinion of the real value of the Union, one of the first questions that arises in the mind is whether this form of government – that of a Federal Republic – be really permanent in its nature. Were the Union in its former condition, there would be little interest in this inquiry; but now when severed, and when so costly an effort is being made to re-

store it, we naturally ask whether durability may be expected in the future. All experience seems to teach that this form of government can never permanently endure, except on a very small scale, and under rare and peculiar circumstances. There have been already two Federal Republics in the United States, or, rather, the Union has existed under two Constitutions – that bearing the title of "Articles of Confederation," under which the Revolutionary war was terminated, and that which followed it, and now exists. The history of Greece affords an example of two Federations, strikingly similar in their principles to the two Constitutions of the Union.

Under the Amphyctionic Council the States of Greece were united in a league, precisely similar to that of the American States under the old Congress. The Grecian republics also retained their individual sovereignty – had equal votes – and the Council was invested with power to declare war and make peace – to decide controversies between the States – to admit new ones into the league, and to promote its general welfare – in short, with all the chief attributes of the Congress in the first Confederation. This was followed in another portion of Greece by the Achæan league, the type of the present Federal Republic. Its members retained their local power and jurisdiction under a Senate, or Federal government, to which was allotted the rights of war and peace, the duty of receiving and sending ambassadors, of making treaties, and of appointing a prætor or president, who administered the federal affairs under the measures, and coin were ordained; strangers were admitted to citizenship on equal terms; and the effective nature of the Union may be seen in the fact, that when Sparta joined it she had to alter the laws of Lycurgus for the purpose. In spite of all this, both these Federations failed to endure; and it may be held that they proved of fatal injury to Greece, by sustaining the small States in a separate yet ineffective existence; whilst but for this they might have been incorporated with the larger, and so have prevented the civil wars that proved so fatal to the country.

If it be held that the mercurial character of the Greek ren-

dered his government unstable, we have another instance in modern times amongst a people, of all in Europe, the least open to that charge. The united provinces of Holland formed a Federal Republic, under a president, bearing the title of Stadtholder. The confederation had an assembly or congress for general affairs, each province or State having its own legislature for provincial purposes, and enjoying a theoretical sovereignty. The history of this Republic presents on some points a striking analogy to that of the United States. The Dutch not only made a similar commercial progress, but displayed an energy, both in commerce and war, without any parallel in modern history, if the small dimensions of the country, and its many disadvantages, be considered. The same features are found in all these cases – great activity in the people, constant intestine commotions, and the eventual extinction of the system of government.

But there are instances much nearer at hand. Mexico, Central America, Columbia, and the Argentine Republic all copied the example of the United States. It has been argued that the system has failed in these cases, not from demerit in itself, but from the faults of race. But if any government succeed with one race, and fail with all others, it would appear that the whole merit of the success must lie in the race, and not with the system. Certainly, in every other instance on record, federal republicanism, when the component States have had the dimensions of powers, and not of provinces, has proved a signal failure. If its merits are to be tested by experience, it would appear that results have invariably disproved it, not only in remote times, but in the present age, in the immediate neighbourhood of the Union, and under the most favourable auspices. In the case of Mexico, it is capable of very clear demonstration, that the political ruin of that unhappy country has mainly resulted from evils arising in a Federal system, copied from that of the United States. In their war of independence, the Mexicans proved themselves to be men equal to the Brazilians; and yet now that time has developed the effects of political institutions, how inferior is their condition! On one side of the Andes the Federal system exists in the Argentine Republic,

a scene of incessant strife, oscillating between anarchy and despotism, with intermittent fits of civil war; whilst on the other side of that range, there is a Republic – that of Chili – free from the Federal principle; a people of the same race, much less favourably situated, yet steadily prosperous to the present day. Thus the general experience of the New World, as well as of the Old, teaches us that the peace and welfare of any people, under a Federal system or Union, would seem to be only a temporary exception to an invariable rule.

We say temporary, for the present disruption of the American Union is clearly another proof of the rule. It has long been predicted on theoretical grounds. Whenever a Federal Republic is formed of States large enough to exist as independent powers, or which, as in this case, have already existed as independent communities, two opposite forces come at once into action. There is the original attraction, or the compression, that brought them, and holds them together, and there is a disruptive force in the jealousy, ambition, and conflicting interests that come into existence. So long as the former exceed the latter they continue united, but whenever the disruptive power overcomes that of cohesion, they fall asunder, unless restrained by force; and to apply force is to abandon the principle of the system. It will be seen that time tells upon these influences with a two fold effect. The States originally unite because they are weak, because their population is small, and they have a sense of insecurity in standing alone in the world. Time removes all this, whilst, on the other hand, it strengthens all the influences that tend to disruption; for with the growth of riches come the means of political corruption, – with the accumulation of masses of indigent population arise the elements of discontent, – with the development of special branches of industry conflicting interests come into play, – with the increase of grandeur there will grow too the spirit of ambition. There is but one thing that can counteract all this. When the original union of States has, in the progress of its development, become homogeneous, so that time has obliterated the first lines of distinction, and the whole has fused into a united people, – in

that case the Federal principle has disappeared, and given place to a consolidated State. In the United States, although this has occurred in some respects, in others, and those of far the greatest force, time has wrought the opposite effect. The original elements continue, and permit the action of the laws under which time and growth are fatal to this form of government. In truth, no Federal Union has ever been formed, on a large scale, of States which had approached a mature condition; it has always been the resource of communities still young and feeble. It arises, indeed, out of their youth; but in time they cease to be young, they become mature and powerful, and when this point is reached, it becomes as natural for those which may now differ from the rest to desire independence and free action, as for grown men to desire a termination of the conditions which were necessary and fitting in their early days.

All the writers who have commented on the subject appear to have entertained these opinions. To Lord Macaulay's letter no one has attempted a reply, for it was unanswerable. Confining himself to one element, he pointed out, with a force carrying irresistible conviction, how that single element of dense urban population would eventually overthrow the Union. The framers of the Constitution entertained misgivings upon the subject. Curtis, in his *History of the Constitution*, observes: "Many of the wisest of the statesmen of that period, as we now know, entertained doubts whether the country embraced by the thirteen original States would not be too large for the successful operation of a republican government." Washington expressed his fears more than once. It was a serious question in his mind whether that extent – insignificant as it was when compared with the present dominion – was not too large to abide permanently under one rule. He foresaw the effects of time, but wisely avoided unsettling discussions on the subject. In one of his letters he observes: "Let experience solve the question; to listen to speculation in such a case were criminal." Jefferson wrote thus forty years ago: "I have been amongst the most sanguine in believing that our Union would be of long duration. I now doubt it much, and see the event

at no great distance. My only comfort and confidence is, that I shall not live to see it." De Tocqueville, in many passages, expresses his opinion that the Union could not endure: indeed, he says: "The history of the world affords no instance of a great nation retaining the form of republican government for a long series of years."

Writers of the present day, whenever they consider the subject, express their doubts of the durability of the Union. Grattan observed: "The day must no doubt come when clashing objects will break the ties of a common interest which now preserve the Union. The districts of South, North, and West are joined like some wall of incongruous material, with a cement insufficient to secure perpetual cohesion. They will inevitably crumble into confusion, though no man may foretell the period of dissolution." Even the period has been predicted with remarkable accuracy. A Russian writer, Ivan Golovin, made the remark, six years ago: "A visit to the United States has the strange property of cooling democrats. Again I tell you that the manifest destiny of the States is disunion. I do not give the Union eight years to last." Sterling, in his able *Letters From the Slave States*, writes thus: "It appears to me that amid so many elements of uncertainty in the future, both from the excited state of men's minds in the States themselves, and the complication of surrounding circumstances, no wise man would venture to foretell the probable issue of American affairs during the next four years." This was written in 1857, and just within the four years the disruption has occurred.

Indeed, let any one take the map of America, and consider that the valley of the Mississippi, alone, is capable of containing and supporting a population equal to that of the whole of Europe, and let him ask himself if it be in the nature of things that a continent, embracing so wide a range of latitude and climate, should permanently remain under a single rule. From the earliest ages the other continents have been the abode, each of them, of many distinct communities; and whenever the attempt has been made to aggregate many of these under one government, it has, though

successful for the time, invariably ended in division. There are clearly principles, inherent in our nature, which throughout all periods of history, and in all quarters of the world, have worked out this same result. If the American be one of ourselves, the same law will apply to him, the same influences will affect him. They may not come into action for a time, during a period of rapid growth, when men's minds are absorbed in their own pursuits, – the backwoodsman in clearing the forest, or the farmer in ploughing up the prairie, – but all this has an end. The question is simply one of time, unless we assume that American nature is different from what human nature has elsewhere proved to be. In this view of the subject, when estimating the value of the Union, we cannot but regard it as a political condition, essentially temporary in its nature: and this costly and terrible effort to preserve it, if successful, can have no other result than to defer for a time that which, sooner or later, is inevitable.

The object of the present inquiry is to form a judgment of the real value of the Union, not as an abstract question, but in connection with the existing struggle for its maintenance. We propose, in the first place, to consider what its effects have been politically and socially, – what are the actual results of its institutions, and what influence they have exercised on the character of the people in public life. After this examination, it will naturally follow to consider the causes that have led to its disruption at the present time. Assuming that these causes have proved sufficient, in the judgment of the people of the South, to create on their part a strong desire for self-government, the question will arise, whether they have really a constitutional right to secede from the Union. After examining that subject, to whatever conclusion we may come, as the right of revolution is admitted, we may proceed to inquire whether the Southern States possess those resources, and that military power, without which any attempt at either secession or revolution might prove abortive. This subject being investigated, we may pass to a consideration of our own interest, first weighing whether or not we are bound by any obligations; and we may then take a general view of the probable results of

the contest, both in the event of the restoration of the Union, or in that of its separation into two powers.

We believe that no cause really exists that prevents the people of this country from forming an impartial decision on American affairs. The majority of the people of that country are cousins of ours, only thrice removed. No Englishman ever thinks or speaks of an American as a foreigner; nor is it without a feeling of surprise, and of some degree of pain, that on landing on their shores he hears himself called a "foreigner." They may not attach precisely the same significance to the word, but still the sound of it grates upon his ear. We have no other than an earnest desire that this convulsion may eventually result, as we believe it will, in the true welfare of the whole people. Their prosperity is part of ours, for we have buried the commercial jealousy of bygone days with other errors of the past. Happily, we have learned to look for good to ourselves in all that promotes the good of the great family of mankind. As they grow in numbers we shall expect a more extended commerce; and as poverty was never yet a good customer, we may look for some advantage in all that adds to their wealth. Nor does there exist any political contingency to awaken distrust or alarm. If Canada were to express clearly and calmly, through the voice of a majority of her people, a desire to leave us and to join the Union, though we might question her taste, and greatly doubt her judgment, we should have nothing else to deplore. We should institute no blockade, nor embark in any war, to retain her against her will; we should be more inclined to say farewell, and bid her God speed. We have no such mean opinion of the dignity of our household as to constrain those to remain in it who like it not. In the direction of rivalry on the ocean, no political apprehensions can arise in the case of a power whose policy it has always been to avoid the cost of maintaining any serious naval force. Commercial rivalry cannot be greatly feared by those who have striven for many years to invite competition by every effort of legislation. In all these things there is nothing to preclude a strong, earnest desire to see the Americans a prosperous and a great people, – to see them not only enforcing

the respect of Europe, but also, and still more, to see them in possession of its admiration and esteem.

What, then, have really been the effects of the Union and the Constitution of the United States on the welfare and character of the people? Have they really worked for good, or for evil? We know something of the period of Washington. Are the people now the same; have they advanced in common with the social and political advancement of other nations; or have they retrograded as a people during the eighty years that have elapsed?

It seems an invariable rule with those who come forward in support of the Union, to avoid these grave questions, and to confine their attention to mere increase of numbers and trade. This progress they attribute largely to the beneficial influence of the Constitution. Pictures are drawn of the deplorable state of the country immediately before it came into operation, and of the great prosperity that has ensued. But, in truth, it was not in the power of laws to avert the debility and suffering that resulted from a war of seven years' duration, – a war undertaken by communities possessed of little wealth and no credit, and followed by oppressive debts and exhausted resources. No system of government could have prevented a period of dreary reaction from the excitement of the war, or a sorrowful reckoning of its cost. And after this term had passed away, we can imagine no Government so bad, within the limits of reason, that it could have prevented rapid progress in a country enjoying such abundant elements of growth.

We may assume that the government of the colonies by Great Britain must have been bad, to excite them to rebel, although, indeed, we see rebellion now, as a result of what we are told are excellent institutions. But believing, as we may fairly do, that it was defective, both in temper and wisdom, still it never prevented the rapid growth of the colonies. This, indeed, is obvious from the shortness of the period within which they had acquired sufficient numbers and strength to overthrow it. Whatever may have been the alleged oppression, more than one State can be found that grew more rapidly in those days than at any time

since in the Union. We shall see that there are those which, even at the present day, look back mournfully to the prosperity of the olden time.

If, indeed, it had been the "magic" influence of the Constitution that restored prosperity to the country, we should expect to find that the same influence would have power to avert periods of similar depression. This has not been the case. A term of equal suffering followed the war with this country in 1814, though the Constitution was then in full operation, and since, there have been periods of panic, of general bank suspensions, and wide-spread insolvency, with long terms of gloomy depression, such as the era extending from 1837 to 1842, periods equal in distress to that which ushered in the Constitution.

There were, indeed, special circumstances that rendered it of great service at the time of its coming into operation. It averted the danger of civil war, which was then impending; it enabled a settlement to be effected of the war debt; it obtained the respect of foreign powers; and as the old Confederation had virtually died out, it had the great value of supplying a government where practically none existed. But the services it thus rendered are neither a certain proof of merit in its principles, nor yet of its suitability to the circumstances of the present day. Any reasonable form of government will be of value as compared with chaos; and it seems a very exaggerated view of the case to attribute to its excellence the subsequent progress of the country which has been, in the main, the result of obvious natural causes. It required no magic to produce that progress, nor is there anything in it to cause astonishment. The United States are really a vast region of fertile soil, to which the crowded people of Europe – Englishmen, Irishmen, Germans, and others – have passed over. Taking with them the knowledge and experience earned in Europe by the toil of ages, they entered, so to speak, into a magnificent domain, free of rent, of tithe, of encumbrance, and with implements ready to their hands. That population should grow rapidly, and wealth increase, under such circumstances, is as natural and inevitable as that water which has gained an entrance into a

valley should flow on, and spread out into a wide expanse.

And, indeed, if we are to form an estimate of the true value of the Union and its institutions, no standard would be more deceptive than that of superficial prosperity. We must seek for their effects in the intellectual and social, not in the commercial growth of a people. Tables of imports and exports are a very uncertain test of the merits of governments. Venice flourished in golden magnificence under a detestable political system. India was in political subjection to a foreign race, despotic, and alien in religion and polity, during the only period of her history that is clothed with external splendour. When Greece fell under the Roman yoke, her material prosperity increased, a new market was opened to her commerce, a new dominion to her literature and art. In every material sense the change was to her advantage ; but the mind of Greece, that once had been the peerless light of the world, waned into that obscurity from which it has never since emerged. We have, indeed, in our own time, ample proof how entirely the movements and progress of trade may be apart from the excellence of institutions. We have seen them, in France, continuously progressive under extreme changes of government; and at the present day, if advance in wealth, in exports, in luxury, in all that glitters before the eye, should be adopted as a proof of the soundness of institutions, we should be forced to submit to the opinions of those who take an enlightened despotism as their model. But though we find that trade has often flourished under ignoble governments, we shall search in vain through the pages of history to find that they are capable of maintaining health and purity in the social and political character of a people.

As we proceed, we shall frequently find it impracticable to separate the Union from the Constitution. The latter is the sole bond of union, and whatever terminates the one, ends the other. It will, however, be very necessary to recollect – and it is frequently forgotten – that the present is the second Constitution of the United States. The Union existed long before its date; indeed its germs may be traced back as far as 1754. Immediately upon the commencement of the Revolution in 1774, a Union was formed,

under a government bearing the title of Congress; but although independence was declared on the 4th July, 1776, and there were terms of agreement under which the Union subsisted, no permanent and methodical Constitution was framed, until the 1st March, 1781, when the "Articles of Confederation" came into force.

Those "Articles" form a complete and very elaborate Constitution. We know that exception will be taken to their being termed a Constitution, because they are not called by that name. But what a thing is, according to European logic, depends on the thing itself, and not upon the name given to it. Whether that name be a code, or a charter, or a set of articles, or whether indeed, as in our own case, there be no written instrument to which a title can be attached, this makes no real difference. That is a Constitution, the terms of which are the framework of the government and political institutions of a country. In these "Articles" defects were discovered after the termination of the war, not indeed so much inherent in the instrument, as in the surrounding circumstances; and, after surmounting great difficulties, the second Constitution was framed, which is now the law of the land.

The present Constitution, although extremely complex, is probably inferior to none ever framed, in the ability displayed in dealing with difficult and incongruous elements. Had those who are struggling to maintain it really acted in its spirit, convulsion would not have occurred. The evils of the country arise from the fact, that the Constitution has not really been maintained. We shall find, as we proceed, that some of its most important provisions are reduced to a dead letter, that the principal causes of secession could never have existed had the spirit of the Constitution been adhered to. Its marked characteristic is moderation. The prominent characteristic of the people at the present day is excess. So far from being democratic, all the leading features of democracy are absent from it; there is no universal suffrage, nor household, nor uniform, nor even proportionate suffrage in it. It was framed by men who were not impelled by the thirst of popular applause, and the spirit that actuated them may be judged of

by their own words.

Hamilton, the master-spirit of its framers, observed in the convention employed in forming it: "To the proper adjustment of checks, the British owe the excellence of their Constitution. Their House of Lords is a most noble institution. Having nothing to hope for by a change, and a sufficient interest by means of their property in being faithful to the national interest, they form a permanent barrier against every pernicious innovation, whether attempted on the part of the Crown or of the Commons." Upon another occasion Adams, the second President, observed: "Purge the British Constitution of its corruption, and give to its popular branch equality of representation, and it would be the most perfect Constitution ever devised by the wit of men." To which Hamilton replied: "As it stands at present, with all its supposed defects, it is the most perfect form of government that ever existed." Perhaps those who urge us to copy American institutions would do well to weigh these words, expressed by two of the most eminent of the fathers of that Republic.

We agree with those who, apart from incurable defects inherent in the circumstances, admire the general excellence of the Constitution; and we consider it unquestionable that it rendered important service to the country at the period of its adoption. Our view is, that circumstances are so widely altered, that it suits them no longer, even if fairly interpreted. We believe, also, that the Union has greatly accelerated the rate of national progress. But it does not follow, by any means, that this has been a real advantage. There are none who have not observed that there is such a thing as growing too fast. In the words of Channing, "Noble growths are slow." The growth of the poplar is rapid, when compared with the growth of the oak; but we know that its value is proportionately small. There is always a ratio between growth and durability, and a law exists that whatever grows with great rapidity will as rapidly decay. There is also a natural rate of growth, and one that may be stimulated; and all experience teaches that the natural rate will prove the better in the end.

We shall be the more inclined to doubt whether excessive

rapidity of material growth be any lasting advantage, if we find it accompanied by a continuous decline in the character and ability of public men, and in the general standard of political morals. It was observed by De Tocqueville, twenty-five years ago, "It is a well-authenticated fact that at the present day the most talented men in the United States are very rarely placed at the head of affairs. The race of American statesmen has evidently dwindled most remarkably in the course of the last fifty years." And if this observation could be made by an acute observer, at a period when Webster, Clay, and Calhoun were still upon the stage, it would appear as if there were some impoverishing and exhaustive principle at work, when, at the present day, we search in vain for one single name that may be termed that of a statesman. Politicians cover the land; statesmen seem to have become extinct. At the commencement of its history, no country produced a larger proportion of men of the highest order of ability; indeed, it would be difficult to find elsewhere the record of so large a number in an equal population. The fact was commented upon by Chatham and Burke, in terms expressing admiration and surprise. The names of Washington, Franklin, Hamilton, Madison, Marshall, and Jefferson are universally classed amongst the names of men of eminent ability. They have been succeeded in our day by the names of Filmer, Van Buren, Tyler, Polk, and Pierce. The contrast is too obvious to need any comment; and when we inquire into its causes we shall find, accompanying this decline in the talent of public men, a similar decline in the standard of political morals.

In a conversation that occurred shortly after the Constitution was framed, Washington expressed the hope that they had succeeded in forming a "respectable" government. To apply the term respectable to the government would be regarded by an American of the present day as an indignity. In the mind of Washington the standard of excellence was worth – something that men should respect. His own greatness, indeed, was moral grandeur. It was not in martial genius, nor the sparkle of brilliant deeds, but in self-denying endurance of toil worn years – in strug-

gling with unexhausted patience, under extinguished hope – against cold, and poverty, and meanness – against jealousy and rancour – in seeking no fame, and desiring no reward – but adopting, like one of our own time, and contented to adopt, that most rare of military watchwords – duty.

Unhappily, as it seems to us, the standard of the public mind is widely altered. The vast dimensions of the Union, and its incessant growth, have filled the national mind with conceptions of size, of amplitude, with the desire to excite astonishment rather than to command respect. Magnitude has become the standard, in place of worth. We shall be able to trace the effects of this alteration in the standard of excellence, and we shall find it extending its baneful influence over many features of the national character.

And first, what has caused this remarkable decline in the ability at the head of the State? There is no reason to believe that there exists, at the present day, less intellectual power than at a former period. All evidence tends to produce an impression quite the reverse of this. Why, then, does it remain latent, inactive, politically lost to the community as fully as though it had ceased to exist?

Originally, when the Constitution came into action, the population of the United States amounted but to three millions, and they occupied only that portion of the Union now known as the Atlantic border. Within these moderate dimensions it was not difficult to discern superiority of talent, or to select men of eminent acquirements. It was considered by all to be a primary object to obtain for the State the advantage of the highest attainable ability; and the men chosen as the earliest Presidents were the ablest men of the time. But the Union has outgrown all this. It stretches now from the Atlantic to the Pacific – from Maine to Mexico. Spread over so vast a surface, it has become physically impossible for its citizens, dwelling thousands of miles apart, to attempt the selection of the President on the ground of merit. It may, indeed, be said that the renown of the orator will extend far and wide, without much heeding the obstacle of space. But this

may not apply to that of the statesman, of whom the very ablest may be without any gift of words. Jefferson observes, in his *Memoirs*: "I served with Washington in the legislature of Virginia, before the revolution, and during it, with Franklin in Congress. I never heard either of them speak ten minutes at a time, nor to any but the main point, which was to decide the question." And Jefferson's pretensions to oratory were no greater. Upon this point we find at once a remarkable change in the national character, for in modern times a senator has been known to speak for three whole days. The most valuable of all the gifts of the statesman is assuredly judgment, or that which, when combined with knowledge, may be termed wisdom: it was the characteristic of the men of Washington's age. It is clearly one that may exist with very little noise.

That ability should no longer form the ground of selection for the presidential office appears injurious enough; but the evil extends much beyond this. Under the system that now prevails ability is a certain ban of exclusion. It proved so in the case of Webster, of Clay, of Calhoun, and, in the last election, of Seward. The fact is so difficult to realize, that it becomes necessary to consider how these elections are really conducted in America. The theory of the Constitution is, that the President shall be elected by the people: and in order to avoid the difficulties arising from wide dispersion, it provides that they shall first appoint a college of electors, to whom ample time is afforded for deliberate choice. This is the theory: in practice, the whole power has passed from the people into the hands of a knot of professional politicians, and the electoral college has become a useless form. The electors are now denied the power of choice, and are reduced to the reality of mere instruments for recording the votes they were, from the first, appointed to give. The election originates with a committee of the party, thus described by Clarigny in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*: "These committees are filled with briefless lawyers, with doctors without patients, with schemers, place-hunters, who devote themselves to the triumph of the party in order to be elected to some little salaried place. All the chances

are for the intriguers, if success be obtained. And it is these committees which name the delegates for the Convention, which has to choose the party candidate; the immense majority of the citizens have no other alternative than to accept these nominations as they stand, or renounce the exercise of their vote." The members of the Convention thus elected meet at some central point to decide upon a candidate. They come from sections of the country, hundreds of miles apart, widely different in their interests, part of them from Free, and part from Slave States. The only connecting link is a common desire for the success of the party; on all other points there is strong diversity of sentiment. This inevitably leads to great difficulty in agreeing upon the candidate. The most eminent man of the party is first proposed – a Clay, or a Webster; but it immediately appears that in the course of a vigorous career he has done something, made some declaration, or adopted some principle, which has given unpardonable offence to one or more sections of the party. Unless these be conciliated there must be a division, and success will be hopeless. Ballot succeeds to ballot, in long succession. The same capital defect of eminence, which excluded the leader of the party, eliminates others of less celebrity. At length a compromise is assented to; some one is proposed for party's sake – a nonentity, a Polk, or a Pierce, of whom no one happens to know any harm. He is chosen, not as a person fit for the office, but as the best for the purposes of the party. And here another rule comes into force with disastrous effect. If, as with us, the nominee who commanded the largest number of votes carried the day, then the most eminent would be selected, in spite of sectional jealousy and opposition. But the rule in the United States is to require, not a relative, but an absolute majority of the whole number of votes. This enables the promoters of several insignificant candidates to render it impossible for any other to obtain the majority required. The injurious effect of this rule is manifest, and often deplored in America. In this country such an evil would be eradicated at once, immediately on its effects being discovered; but in the United States there is a written Constitution, the spirit of which, as we have just

seen in the case of the electoral college, is widely departed from, whilst the letter and form remain, to work out, in this and many other instances, the most serious injury to the community. In the present case the electoral college has become a useless form, but not a harmless one. The moment the electors are appointed the future President is known; all the influences of his election come at once into action. But the form, the letter of the Constitution remains in force – he is not yet elected legally. The power to control those influences will not come into being for more than three months; and probably the secession movement would not have succeeded, and the disruption of the Union might not now have occurred, but for this departure from the spirit of an instrument, whilst the letter of it continues to be the law of the land.

And whence arises such a political system as this – one so opposed to reason, as that which renders eminence an insuperable barrier to office – which denies the faculty of choice to the elector, and reduces the nominal power of the people to the real privilege of putting into a box a ticket, having upon it the name of a person of whom the great majority never heard before? It arises in chief from the excessive magnitude, and conflicting interests, of the Union, – from the dispersion of the people over a space so vast that necessity enforces a system of this kind. Were an attempt made to exercise any really popular choice, it would end in inextricable confusion. It has been observed that we also act through party organization; but there is a wide difference. We use party at elections as a means of returning the candidate selected; but here the candidate is selected as a means of success to the party. Not only is his fitness for the office discarded from consideration, but, practically, none pretend to consider the welfare of the country as a whole; the attention and efforts of all are concentrated on a single object – the success of the party ticket.

Under such a system, we can no longer wonder at the contrast which the recent Presidents offer to those of former days. And the qualifications required for the office are not light. Justice Story thus describes them: "The nature of the duties to be performed by the President are so various and complicated as not

only to require great talents and great wisdom to perform them, but also long experience in office. They embrace all the arrangements of peace and war, of diplomacy and negotiation, of finance, of naval and military operations, and of the execution of the laws, through almost infinite ramifications of details, and in places at vast distances from each other." If this be true, and it clearly is so, how is it possible that the government can be properly conducted, under a system which so utterly excludes these qualifications? It has been remarked, that the best form of government is that which places the best men in office. Without going quite so far as this, there can be little doubt that the system is a vicious one, under which the best men are excluded from office. Olmsted observes: "Unquestionably there are great evils arising from the lack of talent applied to our government, from the lack of real dignity of character, and respectability of attainments, in many of the government offices. We cannot afford to employ a heavy proportion of talent or honesty, about the little share of our business which is done at the capital." If this explanation of the cause of such admitted evils were correct, nothing could be more unsatisfactory; but in reality, there is abundance both of talent and honesty to spare for the purposes of government. They are not absent from their deficiency, but because the existing institutions exclude them.

We have seen what are the qualifications required in the President: his powers are not less extensive. In many important particulars, they exceed those exercised by the Crown in this country. He not only has the right to veto the acts of the Legislature, but not infrequently uses it. He can maintain his government in office for four years, and this has been done for long periods, in opposition to a majority in either or both Houses. In regard to patronage, he exercises a power which no European monarch has ever aspired to. On the accession of the President of another party, he at once claims the whole of the government offices as spoils of victory, and proceeds to dismiss and replace, not only the former Ministry, but all the subordinates, the ministers to foreign courts, the consuls, the custom-house officer, the village

post-masters. All these are regarded, not as servants of the commonwealth, but as the minions of a vanquished foe. The same principle holds as in his own election – it is not the country that is to be thought of, but the party. They have calculated on these offices, their exertions have been stimulated by the prospect of them, and they cannot now be disappointed. This practice of necessity creates two entire sets of officials set in place, and another set displaced. Numbers of those ejected, and thus deprived of a livelihood, become professional politicians, and, inflamed by the zeal their position creates, impart that passionate heat to American politics, so frequently commented on by travellers. Fitness for the office, being disregarded in the highest station, can hardly give much concern in lower ones; and hence we see persons appointed to offices for which they are manifestly unsuited. In any other country the whole machinery of government would be clogged, and become unmanageable. In America, the natural quickness, and peculiar adaptability to circumstances, which the people possess, enable them to sustain, and apparently without much concern, even such evils as these.

It would, however, be a great error to suppose that their influence, although endurable, will not be widely felt. Where the possession of minor offices – of subsistence indeed – becomes, with large classes, the moving impulse, politics cease to be a question of opinion, and degenerate into a trade. With them, the question will be, not their country's good, but what they want for their own. And this large class of office-holders out of place, with no other occupation than to struggle for return to it, will naturally devote an amount of time to political pursuits, which the well-employed, respectable classes cannot afford, and they will bring into play a special amount of individual eagerness; they will fill the seats of these committees, which exercise the power, nominally in the hands of the people. Men of wealth, of commercial standing, of literary tastes, are outrun by such eager rivals; and we find them, as a rule, not only indifferent to politics, but avoiding them altogether in despair.

And this tendency to convert the pursuit of politics into

a profession, is largely strengthened by another cause – the payment of members of the Legislature. This calls into existence a class of persons who openly make legislation their business, and live upon the income it provides. It may indeed be said, theoretically, that we are as much bound to pay men for making laws, as for making shoes. But experience tells us that the two employments require different classes of minds. A wide acquaintance with history, with jurisprudence, with social economy, an insight into the whole range of industrial pursuits, – these attainments need much more time to acquire, than those can allot to them whose time is their bread. As a rule, they can only be acquired when the possession of property gives the command of sufficient leisure for the purpose. When it is necessary to turn time into money, we cannot expect that much of it will have been turned into legislative knowledge. It is true, indeed, that if in America all men are created equal, they may be equally fitted for all pursuits. Once granted that all men are alike, there can be no fear of putting a wrong one into any place. But when Mr. Jefferson announced that doctrine – which he exemplified by holding a number of them in bondage from their birth – he did not assert that they grew up of equal powers, or alike in knowledge; and very ample experience has proved that laws will be made best by those whom previous study and habits of thought have trained in kindred pursuits.

And whilst, in the United States, the payment of members has created a class who make law-giving a livelihood, the rate of payment is below the present standard of expenditure. There will therefore be those who have to make up this deficiency. Hence arises the well-known institution of "lobbying." Dr. Mackay, by no means a hostile witness, observes: "No one who knows anything of the internal working of American politics, will deny the fact that such members [alluding to those who live on their pay] are notoriously and avowedly open to the influences of what is called 'lobbying.' And how is it to be expected that a needy and ambitious lawyer, without practice, having nothing but his three or four dollars a day, and upon whose single vote the fortunes of

a project, costing millions to carry into effect, may absolutely depend, shall not be open to the influences of those who lobby him? No disquisition on the morality or propriety of such a state of things is necessary."

The lobbies of the legislative halls are filled with a class of men called agents, whose business it is to work private bills through Congress, or public bills, in which, like the Merrill tariff, private interests are deeply concerned, by means of influence upon members, – or, in plain terms, by some form of corruption. This is no secret matter, for indeed secrecy is little known in American affairs; the power of the lobby is alluded to in every debate. In referring to the political corruption that exists, there is the following sentence in the Chicago Manifesto – the creed of the Northern party: "The people justly view with alarm, the reckless extravagance which pervades every department of the Federal Government; a return to rigid economy and accountability is indispensable, to arrest the systematic plunder of the public treasury by favoured partizans, whilst the recent startling developments of frauds and corruption at the Federal metropolis, show that an entire change of administration is imperatively demanded."

We think they show more than this, – they show a state of disease that needs stronger remedy than a change of physicians. They show that the whole system is unsound, which produces such results. The other political party, upon whom the blame is cast, make no attempt to dispute the facts. They admit them, but trace their source to the protective system, which brings into the public treasury a larger amount of money than the Government can expend, in any pure manner. Thus we have both the great parties in entire accordance, as to the fact of the existing political corruption. Who will dispute such competent authorities? And if forced to admit such facts as these, they must exercise no light weight when we are employed in forming a judgment of these institutions. Had our own Government fallen into such a condition, we should assuredly be more inclined to embark in a struggle to end, than to maintain it.

We observed that the Constitution is by no means democratic. At the period when it was framed, the rule throughout the States was a property qualification. Although differing in the nature and amount of the qualification, there was no State without one – practically effective – and there was no thought of abandoning the rule. The framers of the Constitution, so far from desiring to lower, or to level this, decided to leave unchanged the diversity which existed. It was held, by the ablest of them, that variety in the suffrage would provide the best representation, and afford the surest prospect of that system of check, and moderating influence, by one interest of another, which, we have seen, they regarded as a supreme excellence in the British Constitution. Here, again, we shall find that the spirit of the founders of the Republic, has been widely departed from, and departed from in this, as in every other instance, with disastrous effect to the country.

Jefferson took no part in framing the Constitution. He expressed strong, though guarded, disapproval of it. He was in Paris, studying and imbibing the principles then coming into play, associating with the members of the future Jacobin club, cultivating the acquaintance of Thomas Paine, and filling his mind with theories, many of them springing from just emotions, but fatal in their effects, from their tendency to excess, and from ignoring human nature. There he studied them, when the temple of infidelity was about to open its portals – in the purlieus of brooding socialism, in the coming shadow of the guillotine. And to these theories he clung, with strange infatuation, long after he had witnessed their result, in sweeping Christianity, liberty, and life, into one hideous ruin. Of the character of his views we may judge by his own words. Alluding to Shay's rebellion, he writes: "God forbid we should ever be twenty years without such a rebellion. The people cannot be all and always well-informed. The part which is wrong will be discontented, in proportion to the importance of the facts they misconceived. If they remain quiet under such misconception, it is a lethargy, the forerunner of death to the public liberty. What signify a few lives lost in a century or two! The tree

of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants. It is its natural manure."

The early spirit of temperate republicanism, (that of the Fathers of the country,) which guided its councils during the terms of Washington and Adams, as Presidents, was followed and subverted by this spirit of extreme democracy, imported from France. Jefferson, and not Washington, has been the guide of the country for the last fifty years. One of the many results of this change which we shall meet with, has been the virtual abandonment of all qualifications, and the adoption of universal suffrage. The effect of this has been greatly aggravated by the large proportion of foreigners thus placed in the command of political power, without either training or association to fit them for it. To so great an extent, indeed, has this proceeded, that in many districts, and amongst them may be classed the virtual metropolis of the country, New York, the decisive political power is in the hands of those of foreign birth. On this subject of the suffrage, Chancellor Kent, one of the highest of American authorities, remarks in his *Commentaries*: "The progress and impulse of popular opinion is rapidly destroying every constitutional check, every conservative element, intended by the sages who framed the earliest American Constitutions, as safeguards against the abuses of popular suffrage."

Thus the unqualified suffrage, which has been regarded by some in this country, as an American institution, is really a foreign abuse, unknown to its Constitution, opposed to the spirit of its greatest patriots, and deplored by the ablest of its jurists. In another passage, bearing on similar subjects, Chancellor Kent observes: "Such a rapid course of destruction of the former constitutional checks, is matter for grave reflection; and to counteract the dangerous tendency of such combined forces as universal suffrage, frequent elections, all offices for short periods, all officers elective, and an unchecked press, and to prevent them from racking and destroying our political machines, the people must have a larger share than usual, of that wisdom which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated." As no one can

imagine that these are attributes of American character at the present day, it would seem to follow, that they have really been "racking and destroying" the political machine.

We have seen that under the system in force, ability is excluded from the highest office in the State; there is another cause which very largely excludes it from the legislative chambers. The ministers are not permitted to take part in the proceedings of Congress. To judge of the effects of this, we have only to imagine the result of excluding the whole of the ministry from the House of Commons. The men who, of all others, have access to the sources of information, who are thoroughly conversant with details, and who possess the requisite experience and ability to guide the debates of the assembly – these men are not to come within its walls. And this deprivation of ability is a small evil when compared with others that result. Who can put a question to a minister, who is never there to be questioned? There is a complete absence of that sharp and effective responsibility to the people, through their representatives, which we should hardly like to exchange for a system of secret management of the House by parties who can never be seen, face to face. Thus no minister can introduce and explain his own measure; he must do so second-hand. He cannot be made to avow his own opinions – no responsibility can be fixed upon him. He must work the business of the government, through private arrangements with members of the House, and use patronage to supply the place of ability or knowledge. We have some impatience of the very idea of what is called "back-stairs" influence, and what shall we say to a system, in which the whole business of the government is conducted on the back-stairs principle, and where, indeed, there can be no other? We should expect to see in the result precisely that political corruption which all parties in the United States admit to exist there.

And not only is this the system of government which prevails there, but the ministry, thus connected with the representatives of the people, through the influence of office alone, can retain their power, so long as they agree with the President for the four years of his tenure of office. They can do so against the

will of the whole people, and of both Houses of Congress. It is quite true they require money; this must be voted; and this necessity would appear to give an effectual, controlling power. But in practice it has no such result: so great is the secret influence of the Government in the House, that although it has sometimes occurred that the ministry have been in opposition to a majority of the House, we cannot find that they have ever yet failed to obtain the money votes required. It would convey a less unsatisfactory impression of the system if they had failed. As yet this has not occurred, and there is no such thing really known to the American system, as ministerial responsibility to the people. Whilst with us, the people possess through their representatives, an ever-vigilant power over the government, which they can put into operation on any night of debate, and do constantly exercise – there is in America, no more real practical power over the ministry than there is real choice in the election of President. It would seem as if we, ourselves, were in the use and enjoyment of republican institutions, whilst the people of the United States content themselves with the theory, and profession, and sound of them.

Reviewing the preceding facts, we certainly find much that is at variance with our most cherished ideas of constitutional government. Either, after five hundred years' experience, we are ignorant of what representative institutions ought to be, or else these stand in need of very radical reform. They explain, what else would be incomprehensible, such a course of legislation as we have witnessed during the present crisis, when, if ever, the calm wisdom of a senate was required. We see the true spirit of the Constitution, lost or perverted, – the nominal power of the people, really in the hands of trading politicians, – the electoral college, whose office is selection, deprived of the function of choice, – the ruler of the State so appointed, as to bar out experience and talent, – legislation converted into a livelihood, and parliamentary corruption organized into a profession, – two armies of place-holders, one besieging, and the other besieged, – ministerial ability and knowledge excluded from parliamentary discussion, and ministerial responsibility exchanged for government in-

fluence. As the result of all this, we find an incessant decline in the ability at the head of the State, and in the character of its legislation; and, in spite of rare material advantages, an amount of embittered discontent which has at length culminated in civil war. We have, however, as yet examined but one part of the subject – the political institutions of the Union. Before we can form a full impression of the value of the Union itself, we must also consider its effect on the character of the people in their social or public life.