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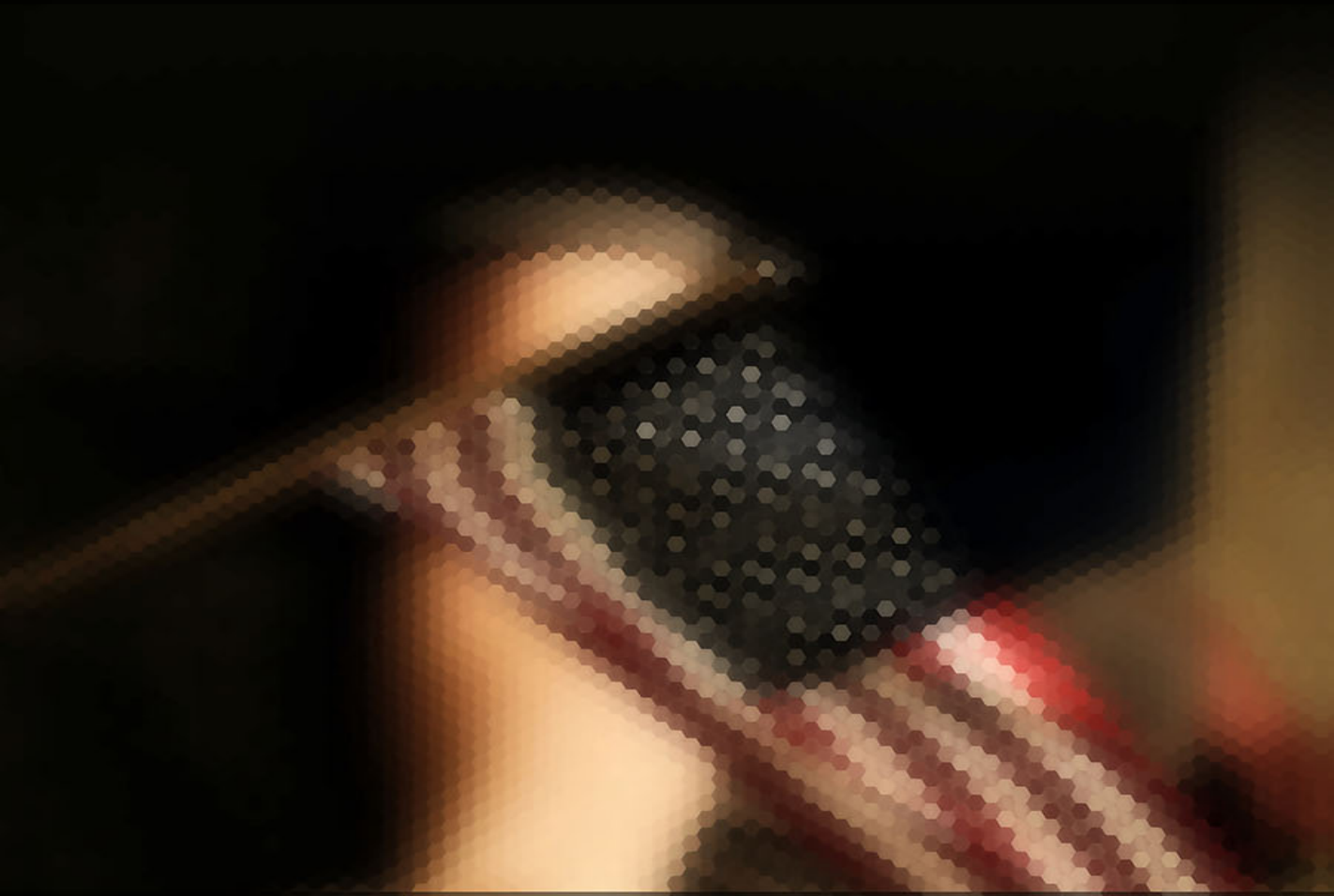

# THE AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

**Alexis de Toqueville**

# The American Democracy

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# Table of Contents

BOOK ONE
Introductory Chapter
Chapter I: Exterior Form Of North America
Chapter II: Origin Of The Anglo-Americans And Its Importance, in Relation to Their Future Condition
Chapter III: Social Conditions Of The Anglo-Americans
Chapter IV: The Principle Of The Sovereignty Of The People In America
Chapter V: Necessity Of Examining The Condition Of The States Before That Of The Union At Large.
Chapter VI: Judicial Power In The United States And Its Influence On Political Society
Chapter VII: Political Jurisdiction In The United States
Chapter VIII: The Federal Constitution
Chapter IX
Chapter X: Parties In The United States
Chapter XI: Liberty Of The Press In The United States
Chapter XII: Political Associations In The United States
Chapter XIII: Government Of The Democracy In America
Chapter XIV: What The Real Advantages Are Which American Society Derives From The Government Of The Democracy
Chapter XV: Unlimited Power Of Majority, And Its Consequences
Chapter XVI: Causes Mitigating Tyranny In The United States
Chapter XVII: Principal Causes Maintaining The Democratic Republic In The United States
Chapter XVIII: The Present And Probable Future Condition Of The Three Races Which Inhabit The Territory Of The United States
Conclusion

BOOK TWO:Influence Of Democracy On Progress Of Opinion in The United States
De Tocqueville's Preface To The Second Part
Section I: Influence of Democracy on the Action of Intellect in The United States.
Chapter I: Philosophical Method Among the Americans
Chapter II: Of The Principal Source Of Belief Among Democratic Nations
Chapter III: Why The Americans Display More Readiness And More Taste For General Ideas Than Their Forefathers, The English.
Chapter IV: Why The Americans Have Never Been So Eager As The French For General Ideas In Political Matters
Chapter V: Of The Manner In Which Religion In The United States Avails Itself Of Democratic Tendencies
Chapter VI: Of The Progress Of Roman Catholicism In The United States
Chapter VII: Of The Cause Of A Leaning To Pantheism Amongst Democratic Nations
Chapter VIII: The Principle Of Equality Suggests To The Americans The Idea Of The Indefinite Perfectibility Of Man
Chapter IX: The Example Of The Americans Does Not Prove That A Democratic People Can Have No Aptitude And No Taste For Science, Literature, Or Art
Chapter X: Why The Americans Are More Addicted To Practical Than To Theoretical Science
Chapter XI: Of The Spirit In Which The Americans Cultivate The Arts
Chapter XII: Why The Americans Raise Some Monuments So Insignificant, And Others So Important
Chapter XIII: Literary Characteristics Of Democratic Ages
Chapter XIV: The Trade Of Literature
Chapter XV: The Study Of Greek And Latin Literature Peculiarly Useful In Democratic Communities
Chapter XVI: The Effect Of Democracy On Language

Chapter XVII: Of Some Of The Sources Of Poetry Amongst Democratic Nations
Chapter XVIII: Of The Inflated Style Of American Writers And Orators
Chapter XIX: Some Observations On The Drama Amongst Democratic Nations
Chapter XX: Characteristics Of Historians In Democratic Ages
Chapter XXI: Of Parliamentary Eloquence In The United States
Section 2: Influence of Democracy on the Feelings of Americans
Chapter I: Why Democratic Nations Show A More Ardent And Enduring Love Of Equality Than Of Liberty
Chapter II: Of Individualism*a In Democratic Countries
Chapter III: Individualism Stronger At The Close Of A Democratic Revolution Than At Other Periods
Chapter IV: That The Americans Combat The Effects Of Individualism By Free Institutions
Chapter V: Of The Use Which The Americans Make Of Public Associations In Civil Life
Chapter VI: Of The Relation Between Public Associations And Newspapers
Chapter VII: Connection Of Civil And Political Associations
Chapter VIII: The Americans Combat Individualism By The Principle Of Interest Rightly Understood
Chapter IX: That The Americans Apply The Principle Of Interest Rightly Understood To Religious Matters
Chapter X: Of The Taste For Physical Well-Being In America
Chapter XI: Peculiar Effects Of The Love Of Physical Gratifications In Democratic Ages
Chapter XII: Causes Of Fanatical Enthusiasm In Some Americans
Chapter XIII: Causes Of The Restless Spirit Of Americans In The Midst Of Their Prosperity

Chapter XIV: Taste For Physical Gratifications United In America To Love Of Freedom And Attention To Public Affairs
Chapter XV: That Religious Belief Sometimes Turns The Thoughts Of The Americans To Immaterial Pleasures
Chapter XVI: That Excessive Care Of Worldly Welfare May Impair That Welfare
Chapter XVII: That In Times Marked By Equality Of Conditions And Sceptical Opinions, It Is Important To Remove To A Distance The Objects Of Human Actions
Chapter XVIII: That Amongst The Americans All Honest Callings Are Honorable
Chapter XIX: That Almost All The Americans Follow Industrial Callings
Chapter XX: That Aristocracy May Be Engendered By Manufactures
BOOK THREE: Influence Of Democracy On Manners, Properly So Called
Chapter I: That Manners Are Softened As Social Conditions Become More Equal
Chapter II: That Democracy Renders The Habitual Intercourse Of The Americans Simple And Easy
Chapter III: Why The Americans Show So Little Sensitiveness In Their Own Country, And Are So Sensitive In Europe
Chapter IV: Consequences Of The Three Preceding Chapters
Chapter V: How Democracy Affects the Relation Of Masters And Servants
Chapter VI: That Democratic Institutions And Manners Tend To Raise Rents And Shorten The Terms Of Leases
Chapter VII: Influence Of Democracy On Wages
Chapter VIII: Influence Of Democracy On Kindred
Chapter IX: Education Of Young Women In The United States
Chapter X: The Young Woman In The Character Of A Wife
Chapter XI: That The Equality Of Conditions Contributes To The Maintenance Of Good Morals In America
Chapter XII: How The Americans Understand The Equality Of The Sexes

Chapter XIII: That The Principle Of Equality Naturally Divides The Americans Into A Number Of Small Private Circles
Chapter XIV: Some Reflections On American Manners
Chapter XV: Of The Gravity Of The Americans, And Why It Does Not Prevent Them From Often Committing Inconsiderate Actions
Chapter XVI: Why The National Vanity Of The Americans Is More Restless And Captious Than That Of The English
Chapter XVII: That The Aspect Of Society In The United States Is At Once Excited And Monotonous
Chapter XVIII: Of Honor *a In The United States And In Democratic Communities
Chapter XIX: Why So Many Ambitious Men And So Little Lofty Ambition Are To Be Found In The United States
Chapter XX: The Trade Of Place-Hunting In Certain Democratic Countries
Chapter XXI: Why Great Revolutions Will Become More Rare
Chapter XXII: Why Democratic Nations Are Naturally Desirous Of Peace, And Democratic Armies Of War
Chapter XXIII: Which Is The Most Warlike And Most Revolutionary Class In Democratic Armies?
Chapter XXIV: Causes Which Render Democratic Armies Weaker Than Other Armies At The Outset Of A Campaign, And More Formidable In Protracted Warfare
Chapter XXV: Of Discipline In Democratic Armies
Chapter XXVI: Some Considerations On War In Democratic Communities
BOOK FOUR: Influence Of Democratic Opinions On Political Society
Chapter I: That Equality Naturally Gives Men A Taste For Free Institutions
Chapter II: That The Notions Of Democratic Nations On Government Are Naturally Favorable To The Concentration Of Power
Chapter III: That The Sentiments Of Democratic Nations Accord With Their Opinions In Leading Them To Concentrate

Political Power
Chapter IV: Of Certain Peculiar And Accidental Causes Which Either Lead A People To Complete Centralization Of Government, Or Which Divert Them From It
Chapter V: That Amongst The European Nations Of Our Time The Power Of Governments Is Increasing, Although The Persons Who Govern Are Less Stable
Chapter VI: What Sort Of Despotism Democratic Nations Have To Fear
Chapter VII: Continuation Of The Preceding Chapters
Chapter VIII: General Survey Of The Subject
APPENDIX TO VOLUME I. AND II.
Volume I.
Appendix A
Appendix B
Appendix C
Appendix D
Appendix E
Appendix F
Volume II.
Appendix G
Appendix H
Appendix I
Appendix K
Appendix L
Appendix M
Appendix N
Appendix O
Appendix P
Appendix Q
Appendix R

# BOOK ONE

Table of Contents

# Introductory Chapter

Table of Contents

Amongst the novel objects that attracted my attention during my stay in the United States, nothing struck me more forcibly than the general equality of conditions. I readily discovered the prodigious influence which this primary fact exercises on the whole course of society, by giving a certain direction to public opinion, and a certain tenor to the laws; by imparting new maxims to the governing powers, and peculiar habits to the governed. I speedily perceived that the influence of this fact extends far beyond the political character and the laws of the country, and that it has no less empire over civil society than over the Government; it creates opinions, engenders sentiments, suggests the ordinary practices of life, and modifies whatever it does not produce. The more I advanced in the study of American society, the more I perceived that the equality of conditions is the fundamental fact from which all others seem to be derived, and the central point at which all my observations constantly terminated.

I then turned my thoughts to our own hemisphere, where I imagined that I discerned something analogous to the spectacle which the New World presented to me. I observed that the equality of conditions is daily progressing towards those extreme limits which it seems to have reached in the United States, and that the democracy which governs the American communities appears to be rapidly rising into power in Europe. I hence conceived the idea of the book which is now before the reader.

It is evident to all alike that a great democratic revolution is going on amongst us; but there are two opinions as to its nature and consequences. To some it appears to be a novel

accident, which as such may still be checked; to others it seems irresistible, because it is the most uniform, the most ancient, and the most permanent tendency which is to be found in history. Let us recollect the situation of France seven hundred years ago, when the territory was divided amongst a small number of families, who were the owners of the soil and the rulers of the inhabitants; the right of governing descended with the family inheritance from generation to generation; force was the only means by which man could act on man, and landed property was the sole source of power. Soon, however, the political power of the clergy was founded, and began to exert itself: the clergy opened its ranks to all classes, to the poor and the rich, the villein and the lord; equality penetrated into the Government through the Church, and the being who as a serf must have vegetated in perpetual bondage took his place as a priest in the midst of nobles, and not infrequently above the heads of kings.

The different relations of men became more complicated and more numerous as society gradually became more stable and more civilized. Thence the want of civil laws was felt; and the order of legal functionaries soon rose from the obscurity of the tribunals and their dusty chambers, to appear at the court of the monarch, by the side of the feudal barons in their ermine and their mail. Whilst the kings were ruining themselves by their great enterprises, and the nobles exhausting their resources by private wars, the lower orders were enriching themselves by commerce. The influence of money began to be perceptible in State affairs. The transactions of business opened a new road to power, and the financier rose to a station of political influence in which he was at once flattered and despised. Gradually the spread of mental acquirements, and the increasing taste for literature and art, opened chances of success to talent; science became a means of government, intelligence led to social power, and the man of letters took a part in the

affairs of the State. The value attached to the privileges of birth decreased in the exact proportion in which new paths were struck out to advancement. In the eleventh century nobility was beyond all price; in the thirteenth it might be purchased; it was conferred for the first time in 1270; and equality was thus introduced into the Government by the aristocracy itself.

In the course of these seven hundred years it sometimes happened that in order to resist the authority of the Crown, or to diminish the power of their rivals, the nobles granted a certain share of political rights to the people. Or, more frequently, the king permitted the lower orders to enjoy a degree of power, with the intention of repressing the aristocracy. In France the kings have always been the most active and the most constant of levellers. When they were strong and ambitious they spared no pains to raise the people to the level of the nobles; when they were temperate or weak they allowed the people to rise above themselves. Some assisted the democracy by their talents, others by their vices. Louis XI and Louis XIV reduced every rank beneath the throne to the same subjection; Louis XV descended, himself and all his Court, into the dust.

As soon as land was held on any other than a feudal tenure, and personal property began in its turn to confer influence and power, every improvement which was introduced in commerce or manufacture was a fresh element of the equality of conditions. Henceforward every new discovery, every new want which it engendered, and every new desire which craved satisfaction, was a step towards the universal level. The taste for luxury, the love of war, the sway of fashion, and the most superficial as well as the deepest passions of the human heart, co-operated to enrich the poor and to impoverish the rich.

From the time when the exercise of the intellect became the source of strength and of wealth, it is impossible not to consider every addition to science, every fresh truth, and

every new idea as a germ of power placed within the reach of the people. Poetry, eloquence, and memory, the grace of wit, the glow of imagination, the depth of thought, and all the gifts which are bestowed by Providence with an equal hand, turned to the advantage of the democracy; and even when they were in the possession of its adversaries they still served its cause by throwing into relief the natural greatness of man; its conquests spread, therefore, with those of civilization and knowledge, and literature became an arsenal where the poorest and the weakest could always find weapons to their hand.

In perusing the pages of our history, we shall scarcely meet with a single great event, in the lapse of seven hundred years, which has not turned to the advantage of equality. The Crusades and the wars of the English decimated the nobles and divided their possessions; the erection of communities introduced an element of democratic liberty into the bosom of feudal monarchy; the invention of fire-arms equalized the villein and the noble on the field of battle; printing opened the same resources to the minds of all classes; the post was organized so as to bring the same information to the door of the poor man's cottage and to the gate of the palace; and Protestantism proclaimed that all men are alike able to find the road to heaven. The discovery of America offered a thousand new paths to fortune, and placed riches and power within the reach of the adventurous and the obscure. If we examine what has happened in France at intervals of fifty years, beginning with the eleventh century, we shall invariably perceive that a twofold revolution has taken place in the state of society. The noble has gone down on the social ladder, and the roturier has gone up; the one descends as the other rises. Every half century brings them nearer to each other, and they will very shortly meet.

Nor is this phenomenon at all peculiar to France. Whithersoever we turn our eyes we shall witness the same

continual revolution throughout the whole of Christendom. The various occurrences of national existence have everywhere turned to the advantage of democracy; all men have aided it by their exertions: those who have intentionally labored in its cause, and those who have served it unwittingly; those who have fought for it and those who have declared themselves its opponents, have all been driven along in the same track, have all labored to one end, some ignorantly and some unwillingly; all have been blind instruments in the hands of God.

The gradual development of the equality of conditions is therefore a providential fact, and it possesses all the characteristics of a divine decree: it is universal, it is durable, it constantly eludes all human interference, and all events as well as all men contribute to its progress. Would it, then, be wise to imagine that a social impulse which dates from so far back can be checked by the efforts of a generation? Is it credible that the democracy which has annihilated the feudal system and vanquished kings will respect the citizen and the capitalist? Will it stop now that it has grown so strong and its adversaries so weak? None can say which way we are going, for all terms of comparison are wanting: the equality of conditions is more complete in the Christian countries of the present day than it has been at any time or in any part of the world; so that the extent of what already exists prevents us from foreseeing what may be yet to come.

The whole book which is here offered to the public has been written under the impression of a kind of religious dread produced in the author's mind by the contemplation of so irresistible a revolution, which has advanced for centuries in spite of such amazing obstacles, and which is still proceeding in the midst of the ruins it has made. It is not necessary that God himself should speak in order to disclose to us the unquestionable signs of His will; we can discern them in the habitual course of nature, and in the

invariable tendency of events: I know, without a special revelation, that the planets move in the orbits traced by the Creator's finger. If the men of our time were led by attentive observation and by sincere reflection to acknowledge that the gradual and progressive development of social equality is at once the past and future of their history, this solitary truth would confer the sacred character of a Divine decree upon the change. To attempt to check democracy would be in that case to resist the will of God; and the nations would then be constrained to make the best of the social lot awarded to them by Providence.

The Christian nations of our age seem to me to present a most alarming spectacle; the impulse which is bearing them along is so strong that it cannot be stopped, but it is not yet so rapid that it cannot be guided: their fate is in their hands; yet a little while and it may be so no longer. The first duty which is at this time imposed upon those who direct our affairs is to educate the democracy; to warm its faith, if that be possible; to purify its morals; to direct its energies; to substitute a knowledge of business for its inexperience, and an acquaintance with its true interests for its blind propensities; to adapt its government to time and place, and to modify it in compliance with the occurrences and the actors of the age. A new science of politics is indispensable to a new world. This, however, is what we think of least; launched in the middle of a rapid stream, we obstinately fix our eyes on the ruins which may still be described upon the shore we have left, whilst the current sweeps us along, and drives us backwards towards the gulf.

In no country in Europe has the great social revolution which I have been describing made such rapid progress as in France; but it has always been borne on by chance. The heads of the State have never had any forethought for its exigencies, and its victories have been obtained without their consent or without their knowledge. The most powerful, the most intelligent, and the most moral classes of

the nation have never attempted to connect themselves with it in order to guide it. The people has consequently been abandoned to its wild propensities, and it has grown up like those outcasts who receive their education in the public streets, and who are unacquainted with aught but the vices and wretchedness of society. The existence of a democracy was seemingly unknown, when on a sudden it took possession of the supreme power. Everything was then submitted to its caprices; it was worshipped as the idol of strength; until, when it was enfeebled by its own excesses, the legislator conceived the rash project of annihilating its power, instead of instructing it and correcting its vices; no attempt was made to fit it to govern, but all were bent on excluding it from the government.

The consequence of this has been that the democratic revolution has been effected only in the material parts of society, without that concomitant change in laws, ideas, customs, and manners which was necessary to render such a revolution beneficial. We have gotten a democracy, but without the conditions which lessen its vices and render its natural advantages more prominent; and although we already perceive the evils it brings, we are ignorant of the benefits it may confer.

While the power of the Crown, supported by the aristocracy, peaceably governed the nations of Europe, society possessed, in the midst of its wretchedness, several different advantages which can now scarcely be appreciated or conceived. The power of a part of his subjects was an insurmountable barrier to the tyranny of the prince; and the monarch, who felt the almost divine character which he enjoyed in the eyes of the multitude, derived a motive for the just use of his power from the respect which he inspired. High as they were placed above the people, the nobles could not but take that calm and benevolent interest in its fate which the shepherd feels towards his flock; and without acknowledging the poor as their equals, they watched over

the destiny of those whose welfare Providence had entrusted to their care. The people never having conceived the idea of a social condition different from its own, and entertaining no expectation of ever ranking with its chiefs, received benefits from them without discussing their rights. It grew attached to them when they were clement and just, and it submitted without resistance or servility to their exactions, as to the inevitable visitations of the arm of God. Custom, and the manners of the time, had moreover created a species of law in the midst of violence, and established certain limits to oppression. As the noble never suspected that anyone would attempt to deprive him of the privileges which he believed to be legitimate, and as the serf looked upon his own inferiority as a consequence of the immutable order of nature, it is easy to imagine that a mutual exchange of good-will took place between two classes so differently gifted by fate. Inequality and wretchedness were then to be found in society; but the souls of neither rank of men were degraded. Men are not corrupted by the exercise of power or debased by the habit of obedience, but by the exercise of a power which they believe to be illegal and by obedience to a rule which they consider to be usurped and oppressive. On one side was wealth, strength, and leisure, accompanied by the refinements of luxury, the elegance of taste, the pleasures of wit, and the religion of art. On the other was labor and a rude ignorance; but in the midst of this coarse and ignorant multitude it was not uncommon to meet with energetic passions, generous sentiments, profound religious convictions, and independent virtues. The body of a State thus organized might boast of its stability, its power, and, above all, of its glory.

But the scene is now changed, and gradually the two ranks mingle; the divisions which once severed mankind are lowered, property is divided, power is held in common, the light of intelligence spreads, and the capacities of all classes

are equally cultivated; the State becomes democratic, and the empire of democracy is slowly and peaceably introduced into the institutions and the manners of the nation. I can conceive a society in which all men would profess an equal attachment and respect for the laws of which they are the common authors; in which the authority of the State would be respected as necessary, though not as divine; and the loyalty of the subject to its chief magistrate would not be a passion, but a quiet and rational persuasion. Every individual being in the possession of rights which he is sure to retain, a kind of manly reliance and reciprocal courtesy would arise between all classes, alike removed from pride and meanness. The people, well acquainted with its true interests, would allow that in order to profit by the advantages of society it is necessary to satisfy its demands. In this state of things the voluntary association of the citizens might supply the individual exertions of the nobles, and the community would be alike protected from anarchy and from oppression.

I admit that, in a democratic State thus constituted, society will not be stationary; but the impulses of the social body may be regulated and directed forwards; if there be less splendor than in the halls of an aristocracy, the contrast of misery will be less frequent also; the pleasures of enjoyment may be less excessive, but those of comfort will be more general; the sciences may be less perfectly cultivated, but ignorance will be less common; the impetuosity of the feelings will be repressed, and the habits of the nation softened; there will be more vices and fewer crimes. In the absence of enthusiasm and of an ardent faith, great sacrifices may be obtained from the members of a commonwealth by an appeal to their understandings and their experience; each individual will feel the same necessity for uniting with his fellow-citizens to protect his own weakness; and as he knows that if they are to assist he must co-operate, he will readily perceive that his personal

interest is identified with the interest of the community. The nation, taken as a whole, will be less brilliant, less glorious, and perhaps less strong; but the majority of the citizens will enjoy a greater degree of prosperity, and the people will remain quiet, not because it despairs of amelioration, but because it is conscious of the advantages of its condition. If all the consequences of this state of things were not good or useful, society would at least have appropriated all such as were useful and good; and having once and for ever renounced the social advantages of aristocracy, mankind would enter into possession of all the benefits which democracy can afford.

But here it may be asked what we have adopted in the place of those institutions, those ideas, and those customs of our forefathers which we have abandoned. The spell of royalty is broken, but it has not been succeeded by the majesty of the laws; the people has learned to despise all authority, but fear now extorts a larger tribute of obedience than that which was formerly paid by reverence and by love.

I perceive that we have destroyed those independent beings which were able to cope with tyranny single-handed; but it is the Government that has inherited the privileges of which families, corporations, and individuals have been deprived; the weakness of the whole community has therefore succeeded that influence of a small body of citizens, which, if it was sometimes oppressive, was often conservative. The division of property has lessened the distance which separated the rich from the poor; but it would seem that the nearer they draw to each other, the greater is their mutual hatred, and the more vehement the envy and the dread with which they resist each other's claims to power; the notion of Right is alike insensible to both classes, and Force affords to both the only argument for the present, and the only guarantee for the future. The poor man retains the prejudices of his forefathers without their faith, and their ignorance without their virtues; he has

adopted the doctrine of self-interest as the rule of his actions, without understanding the science which controls it, and his egotism is no less blind than his devotedness was formerly. If society is tranquil, it is not because it relies upon its strength and its well-being, but because it knows its weakness and its infirmities; a single effort may cost it its life; everybody feels the evil, but no one has courage or energy enough to seek the cure; the desires, the regret, the sorrows, and the joys of the time produce nothing that is visible or permanent, like the passions of old men which terminate in impotence.

We have, then, abandoned whatever advantages the old state of things afforded, without receiving any compensation from our present condition; we have destroyed an aristocracy, and we seem inclined to survey its ruins with complacency, and to fix our abode in the midst of them.

The phenomena which the intellectual world presents are not less deplorable. The democracy of France, checked in its course or abandoned to its lawless passions, has overthrown whatever crossed its path, and has shaken all that it has not destroyed. Its empire on society has not been gradually introduced or peaceably established, but it has constantly advanced in the midst of disorder and the agitation of a conflict. In the heat of the struggle each partisan is hurried beyond the limits of his opinions by the opinions and the excesses of his opponents, until he loses sight of the end of his exertions, and holds a language which disguises his real sentiments or secret instincts. Hence arises the strange confusion which we are witnessing. I cannot recall to my mind a passage in history more worthy of sorrow and of pity than the scenes which are happening under our eyes; it is as if the natural bond which unites the opinions of man to his tastes and his actions to his principles was now broken; the sympathy which has always been acknowledged between the feelings and the ideas of mankind appears to

be dissolved, and all the laws of moral analogy to be abolished.

Zealous Christians may be found amongst us whose minds are nurtured in the love and knowledge of a future life, and who readily espouse the cause of human liberty as the source of all moral greatness. Christianity, which has declared that all men are equal in the sight of God, will not refuse to acknowledge that all citizens are equal in the eye of the law. But, by a singular concourse of events, religion is entangled in those institutions which democracy assails, and it is not unfrequently brought to reject the equality it loves, and to curse that cause of liberty as a foe which it might hallow by its alliance.

By the side of these religious men I discern others whose looks are turned to the earth more than to Heaven; they are the partisans of liberty, not only as the source of the noblest virtues, but more especially as the root of all solid advantages; and they sincerely desire to extend its sway, and to impart its blessings to mankind. It is natural that they should hasten to invoke the assistance of religion, for they must know that liberty cannot be established without morality, nor morality without faith; but they have seen religion in the ranks of their adversaries, and they inquire no further; some of them attack it openly, and the remainder are afraid to defend it.

In former ages slavery has been advocated by the venal and slavish-minded, whilst the independent and the warm-hearted were struggling without hope to save the liberties of mankind. But men of high and generous characters are now to be met with, whose opinions are at variance with their inclinations, and who praise that servility which they have themselves never known. Others, on the contrary, speak in the name of liberty, as if they were able to feel its sanctity and its majesty, and loudly claim for humanity those rights which they have always disowned. There are virtuous and peaceful individuals whose pure morality, quiet habits,

affluence, and talents fit them to be the leaders of the surrounding population; their love of their country is sincere, and they are prepared to make the greatest sacrifices to its welfare, but they confound the abuses of civilization with its benefits, and the idea of evil is inseparable in their minds from that of novelty.

Not far from this class is another party, whose object is to materialize mankind, to hit upon what is expedient without heeding what is just, to acquire knowledge without faith, and prosperity apart from virtue; assuming the title of the champions of modern civilization, and placing themselves in a station which they usurp with insolence, and from which they are driven by their own unworthiness. Where are we then? The religionists are the enemies of liberty, and the friends of liberty attack religion; the high-minded and the noble advocate subjection, and the meanest and most servile minds preach independence; honest and enlightened citizens are opposed to all progress, whilst men without patriotism and without principles are the apostles of civilization and of intelligence. Has such been the fate of the centuries which have preceded our own? and has man always inhabited a world like the present, where nothing is linked together, where virtue is without genius, and genius without honor; where the love of order is confounded with a taste for oppression, and the holy rites of freedom with a contempt of law; where the light thrown by conscience on human actions is dim, and where nothing seems to be any longer forbidden or allowed, honorable or shameful, false or true? I cannot, however, believe that the Creator made man to leave him in an endless struggle with the intellectual miseries which surround us: God destines a calmer and a more certain future to the communities of Europe; I am unacquainted with His designs, but I shall not cease to believe in them because I cannot fathom them, and I had rather mistrust my own capacity than His justice.

There is a country in the world where the great revolution which I am speaking of seems nearly to have reached its natural limits; it has been effected with ease and simplicity, say rather that this country has attained the consequences of the democratic revolution which we are undergoing without having experienced the revolution itself. The emigrants who fixed themselves on the shores of America in the beginning of the seventeenth century severed the democratic principle from all the principles which repressed it in the old communities of Europe, and transplanted it unalloyed to the New World. It has there been allowed to spread in perfect freedom, and to put forth its consequences in the laws by influencing the manners of the country.

It appears to me beyond a doubt that sooner or later we shall arrive, like the Americans, at an almost complete equality of conditions. But I do not conclude from this that we shall ever be necessarily led to draw the same political consequences which the Americans have derived from a similar social organization. I am far from supposing that they have chosen the only form of government which a democracy may adopt; but the identity of the efficient cause of laws and manners in the two countries is sufficient to account for the immense interest we have in becoming acquainted with its effects in each of them.

It is not, then, merely to satisfy a legitimate curiosity that I have examined America; my wish has been to find instruction by which we may ourselves profit. Whoever should imagine that I have intended to write a panegyric will perceive that such was not my design; nor has it been my object to advocate any form of government in particular, for I am of opinion that absolute excellence is rarely to be found in any legislation; I have not even affected to discuss whether the social revolution, which I believe to be irresistible, is advantageous or prejudicial to mankind; I have acknowledged this revolution as a fact already accomplished or on the eve of its accomplishment; and I

have selected the nation, from amongst those which have undergone it, in which its development has been the most peaceful and the most complete, in order to discern its natural consequences, and, if it be possible, to distinguish the means by which it may be rendered profitable. I confess that in America I saw more than America; I sought the image of democracy itself, with its inclinations, its character, its prejudices, and its passions, in order to learn what we have to fear or to hope from its progress.

In the first part of this work I have attempted to show the tendency given to the laws by the democracy of America, which is abandoned almost without restraint to its instinctive propensities, and to exhibit the course it prescribes to the Government and the influence it exercises on affairs. I have sought to discover the evils and the advantages which it produces. I have examined the precautions used by the Americans to direct it, as well as those which they have not adopted, and I have undertaken to point out the causes which enable it to govern society.

I do not know whether I have succeeded in making known what I saw in America, but I am certain that such has been my sincere desire, and that I have never, knowingly, moulded facts to ideas, instead of ideas to facts.

Whenever a point could be established by the aid of written documents, I have had recourse to the original text, and to the most authentic and approved works. I have cited my authorities in the notes, and anyone may refer to them. Whenever an opinion, a political custom, or a remark on the manners of the country was concerned, I endeavored to consult the most enlightened men I met with. If the point in question was important or doubtful, I was not satisfied with one testimony, but I formed my opinion on the evidence of several witnesses. Here the reader must necessarily believe me upon my word. I could frequently have quoted names which are either known to him, or which deserve to be so, in proof of what I advance; but I have carefully abstained from

this practice. A stranger frequently hears important truths at the fire-side of his host, which the latter would perhaps conceal from the ear of friendship; he consoles himself with his guest for the silence to which he is restricted, and the shortness of the traveller's stay takes away all fear of his indiscretion. I carefully noted every conversation of this nature as soon as it occurred, but these notes will never leave my writing-case; I had rather injure the success of my statements than add my name to the list of those strangers who repay the generous hospitality they have received by subsequent chagrin and annoyance.

I am aware that, notwithstanding my care, nothing will be easier than to criticise this book, if anyone ever chooses to criticise it. Those readers who may examine it closely will discover the fundamental idea which connects the several parts together. But the diversity of the subjects I have had to treat is exceedingly great, and it will not be difficult to oppose an isolated fact to the body of facts which I quote, or an isolated idea to the body of ideas I put forth. I hope to be read in the spirit which has guided my labors, and that my book may be judged by the general impression it leaves, as I have formed my own judgment not on any single reason, but upon the mass of evidence. It must not be forgotten that the author who wishes to be understood is obliged to push all his ideas to their utmost theoretical consequences, and often to the verge of what is false or impracticable; for if it be necessary sometimes to quit the rules of logic in active life, such is not the case in discourse, and a man finds that almost as many difficulties spring from inconsistency of language as usually arise from inconsistency of conduct.

I conclude by pointing out myself what many readers will consider the principal defect of the work. This book is written to favor no particular views, and in composing it I have entertained no designs of serving or attacking any party; I have undertaken not to see differently, but to look

further than parties, and whilst they are busied for the morrow I have turned my thoughts to the Future.

# Chapter I: Exterior Form Of North America

Table of Contents

North America presents in its external form certain general features which it is easy to discriminate at the first glance. A sort of methodical order seems to have regulated the separation of land and water, mountains and valleys. A simple, but grand, arrangement is discoverable amidst the confusion of objects and the prodigious variety of scenes. This continent is divided, almost equally, into two vast regions, one of which is bounded on the north by the Arctic Pole, and by the two great oceans on the east and west. It stretches towards the south, forming a triangle whose irregular sides meet at length below the great lakes of Canada. The second region begins where the other terminates, and includes all the remainder of the continent. The one slopes gently towards the Pole, the other towards the Equator.

The territory comprehended in the first region descends towards the north with so imperceptible a slope that it may almost be said to form a level plain. Within the bounds of this immense tract of country there are neither high mountains nor deep valleys. Streams meander through it irregularly: great rivers mix their currents, separate and meet again, disperse and form vast marshes, losing all trace of their channels in the labyrinth of waters they have themselves created; and thus, at length, after innumerable windings, fall into the Polar Seas. The great lakes which bound this first region are not walled in, like most of those in the Old World, between hills and rocks. Their banks are flat, and rise but a few feet above the level of their waters; each of them thus forming a vast bowl filled to the brim. The slightest change in the structure of the globe would cause

their waters to rush either towards the Pole or to the tropical sea.

The second region is more varied on its surface, and better suited for the habitation of man. Two long chains of mountains divide it from one extreme to the other; the Alleghany ridge takes the form of the shores of the Atlantic Ocean; the other is parallel with the Pacific. The space which lies between these two chains of mountains contains 1,341,649 square miles.[a] Its surface is therefore about six times as great as that of France. This vast territory, however, forms a single valley, one side of which descends gradually from the rounded summits of the Alleghanies, while the other rises in an uninterrupted course towards the tops of the Rocky Mountains. At the bottom of the valley flows an immense river, into which the various streams issuing from the mountains fall from all parts. In memory of their native land, the French formerly called this river the St. Louis. The Indians, in their pompous language, have named it the Father of Waters, or the Mississippi.

The Mississippi takes its source above the limit of the two great regions of which I have spoken, not far from the highest point of the table-land where they unite. Near the same spot rises another river, [*b] which empties itself into the Polar seas. The course of the Mississippi is at first dubious: it winds several times towards the north, from whence it rose; and at length, after having been delayed in lakes and marshes, it flows slowly onwards to the south. Sometimes quietly gliding along the argillaceous bed which nature has assigned to it, sometimes swollen by storms, the Mississippi waters 2,500 miles in its course. [*c] At the distance of 1,364 miles from its mouth this river attains an average depth of fifteen feet; and it is navigated by vessels of 300 tons burden for a course of nearly 500 miles. Fifty-seven large navigable rivers contribute to swell the waters of the Mississippi; amongst others, the Missouri, which

traverses a space of 2,500 miles; the Arkansas of 1,300 miles, the Red River 1,000 miles, four whose course is from 800 to 1,000 miles in length, viz., the Illinois, the St. Peter's, the St. Francis, and the Moingona; besides a countless multitude of rivulets which unite from all parts their tributary streams.

The valley which is watered by the Mississippi seems formed to be the bed of this mighty river, which, like a god of antiquity, dispenses both good and evil in its course. On the shores of the stream nature displays an inexhaustible fertility; in proportion as you recede from its banks, the powers of vegetation languish, the soil becomes poor, and the plants that survive have a sickly growth. Nowhere have the great convulsions of the globe left more evident traces than in the valley of the Mississippi; the whole aspect of the country shows the powerful effects of water, both by its fertility and by its barrenness. The waters of the primeval ocean accumulated enormous beds of vegetable mould in the valley, which they levelled as they retired. Upon the right shore of the river are seen immense plains, as smooth as if the husbandman had passed over them with his roller. As you approach the mountains the soil becomes more and more unequal and sterile; the ground is, as it were, pierced in a thousand places by primitive rocks, which appear like the bones of a skeleton whose flesh is partly consumed. The surface of the earth is covered with a granite sand and huge irregular masses of stone, among which a few plants force their growth, and give the appearance of a green field covered with the ruins of a vast edifice. These stones and this sand discover, on examination, a perfect analogy with those which compose the arid and broken summits of the Rocky Mountains. The flood of waters which washed the soil to the bottom of the valley afterwards carried away portions of the rocks themselves; and these, dashed and bruised against the neighboring cliffs, were left scattered like wrecks

at their feet. [*d] The valley of the Mississippi is, upon the whole, the most magnificent dwelling-place prepared by God for man's abode; and yet it may be said that at present it is but a mighty desert.

On the eastern side of the Alleghanies, between the base of these mountains and the Atlantic Ocean, there lies a long ridge of rocks and sand, which the sea appears to have left behind as it retired. The mean breadth of this territory does not exceed one hundred miles; but it is about nine hundred miles in length. This part of the American continent has a soil which offers every obstacle to the husbandman, and its vegetation is scanty and unvaried.

Upon this inhospitable coast the first united efforts of human industry were made. The tongue of arid land was the cradle of those English colonies which were destined one day to become the United States of America. The centre of power still remains here; whilst in the backwoods the true elements of the great people to whom the future control of the continent belongs are gathering almost in secrecy together.

When the Europeans first landed on the shores of the West Indies, and afterwards on the coast of South America, they thought themselves transported into those fabulous regions of which poets had sung. The sea sparkled with phosphoric light, and the extraordinary transparency of its waters discovered to the view of the navigator all that had hitherto been hidden in the deep abyss. [*e] Here and there appeared little islands perfumed with odoriferous plants, and resembling baskets of flowers floating on the tranquil surface of the ocean. Every object which met the sight, in this enchanting region, seemed prepared to satisfy the wants or contribute to the pleasures of man. Almost all the trees were loaded with nourishing fruits, and those which were useless as food delighted the eye by the brilliancy and variety of their colors. In groves of fragrant lemon-trees,