JAMES BRYCE

THE AMERICAN COMMONWEALTH

VOL. 3: THE PARTY SYSTEM & PUBLIC OPINION

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CONTENTS:

CHAPTER LIII. POLITICAL PARTIES AND THEIR HISTORY

In the preceding chapters I have endeavored to describe the legal framework of American government as it exists both in the nation and in the States. Beginning from the Federal and State Constitutions we have seen what sort of a structure has been erected upon them as a foundation, what methods of legislation and administration have been developed, what results these methods have produced. It is only occasionally and incidentally that we have had to consider the influence upon political bodies and methods of those extra-legal groupings of men called political parties. But the spirit and force of party has in America been as essential to the action of the machinery of government as steam is to a locomotive engine; or, to vary the simile, party association and organization are to the organs of government almost what the motor nerves are to the muscles, sinews, and bones of the human body. They transmit the motive power, they determine the directions in which the organs act. A description of them is therefore a necessary complement to an account of the Constitution and government; for it is into the hands of the parties that the working of the government has fallen. Their ingenuity, stimulated by incessant rivalry, has turned many provisions of the Constitution to unforeseen uses, and given to the legal institutions of the country no small part of their present color.

To describe the party system is, however, much harder than it has been to describe those legal institutions. Hitherto we have been on comparatively firm ground, for we have had definite data to rely upon, and the facts set forth have been mostly patent facts which can be established from books and documents. But now we come

to phenomena for a knowledge of which one must trust to a variety of flying and floating sources, to newspaper paragraphs, to the conversation of American acquaintances, to impressions formed on the spot from seeing incidents and hearing stories and anecdotes, the authority for which, though it seemed sufficient at the time, cannot always be remembered. Nor have I the advantage of being able to cite any previous treatise on the subject; for though the books and articles dealing with the public life of the United States may be counted by hundreds, I know of no author who has set himself to describe impartially the actual daily working of that part of the vast and intricate political machine which lies outside the Constitution, nor, what is more important still, the influences which sway the men by whom this machine has been constructed and is daily manipulated. The task, however, cannot be declined; for it is that very part of my undertaking which, even though imperfectly performed, may be most serviceable to the student of modern politics. A philosopher in Germany, who had mastered all the treatises on the British Constitution, perused every statute of recent years, and even followed through the newspapers the debates in Parliament, would know far less about the government and politics of England than he might learn by spending a month there conversing with practical politicians, and watching the daily changes of sentiment during a parliamentary crisis or a general election.

So, too, in the United States, the actual working of party government is not only full of interest and instruction, but is so unlike what a student of the Federal Constitution could have expected or foreseen, that it is the thing of all others which any one writing about America ought to try to portray. In the knowledge of a stranger there must, of course, be serious gaps. But since no native American has yet essayed the task of describing the party system of his country, it is better that a stranger should address himself

to it, than that the inquiring European should have no means of satisfying his curiosity. And a native American writer, even if he steered clear of partisanship, which I think he might, for in no country does one find a larger number of philosophically judicial observers of politics, would suffer from his own familiarity with many of those very things which a stranger finds perplexing. Thus European and even American readers may find in the sort of perspective which a stranger gets of transatlantic phenomena, some compensation for his necessarily inferior knowledge of details.

In America the great moving forces are the parties. The government counts for less than in Europe, the parties count for more; and the fewer have become their principles and the fainter their interest in those principles, the more perfect has become their organization. The less of nature the more of art; the less spontaneity the more mechanism. But before I attempt to describe this organization, something must be said of the doctrines which the parties respectively profess, and the explanation of the doctrines involves a few preliminary words upon the history of party in America.

Although the early colonists carried with them across the sea some of the habits of English political life, and others may have been subsequently imitated from the old country, the parties of the United States are pure home growths, developed by the circumstances of the nation. The English reader who attempts, as Englishmen are apt to do, to identify the great American parties with his own familiar Whigs and Tories, or even to discover a general similarity between them, had better give up the attempt, for it will lead him hopelessly astray. Here and there we find points of analogy rather than of resemblance, but the moment we try to follow out the analogy it breaks down, so different are the issues on which English and American politics have turned.

In the United States, the history of party begins with the Constitutional Convention of 1787 at Philadelphia. In its debates and discussions on the drafting of the Constitution there were revealed two opposite tendencies, which soon afterwards appeared on a larger scale in the State Conventions, to which the new instrument was submitted for acceptance. These were the centrifugal and centripetal tendencies — a tendency to maintain both the freedom of the individual citizen and the independence in legislation, in administration, in jurisdiction, indeed in everything except foreign policy and national defense, of the several States; an opposite tendency to subordinate the States to the nation and vest large powers in the central Federal authority.

The charge against the Constitution that it endangered State rights evoked so much alarm that some States were induced to ratify only by the promise that certain amendments should be added, which were accordingly accepted in the course of the next three years. When the machinery had been set in motion by the choice of George Washington as president, and with him of a Senate and a House of Representatives, the tendencies which had opposed or supported the adoption of the Constitution reappeared not only in Congress but in the President's cabinet, where Alexander Hamilton, secretary of the treasury, counselled a line of action which assumed and required the exercise of large powers by the Federal government, while Jefferson, the secretary of state, desired to practically restrict its action to foreign affairs. The advocates of a central national authority had begun to receive the name of Federalists, and to act pretty constantly together, when an event happened which, while it tightened their union, finally consolidated their opponents also into a party. This was the creation of the French Republic and its declaration of war against England. The Federalists, who were shocked by the

excesses of the Terror of 1793, counselled neutrality, and were more than ever inclined to value the principle of authority, and to allow the Federal power a wide sphere of action. The party of Jefferson, who had now retired from the administration, were pervaded by sympathy with French ideas, were hostile to England whose attitude continued to be discourteous, and sought to restrict the interference of the central government with the States, and to allow the fullest play to the sentiment of State independence, of local independence, of personal independence. This party took the name of Republicans or Democratic Republicans, and they are the predecessors of the present Democrats. Both parties were, of course, attached to Republican government — that is to say, were alike hostile to a monarchy. But the Jeffersonians had more faith in the masses and in leaving things alone, together with less respect for authority, so that in a sort of general way one may say that while one party claimed to be the apostles of Liberty, the other represented the principle of Order.

These tendencies found occasions for combating one another, not only in foreign policy and in current legislation, but also in the construction and application of the Constitution. Like all documents, and especially documents which have been formed by a series of compromises between opposite views, it was and is susceptible of various interpretations, which the acuteness of both sets of partisans was busy in discovering and expounding. While the piercing intellect of Hamilton developed all those of its provisions which invested the Federal Congress and President with far-reaching powers, and sought to build up a system of institutions which should give to these provisions their full effect, Jefferson and his coadjutors appealed to the sentiment of individualism, strong in the masses of the people, and, without venturing to propose alterations in the text of the

Constitution, protested against all extensions of its letter, and against all the assumptions of Federal authority which such extensions could be made to justify. Thus two parties grew up with tenets, leaders, impulses, sympathies, and hatreds, hatreds which soon became so bitter as not to spare the noble and dignified figure of Washington himself, whom the angry Republicans assailed with invectives the more unbecoming because his official position forbade him to reply.

At first the Federalists had the best of it, for the reaction against the weakness of the old Confederation which the Union had superseded disposed sensible men to tolerate a strong central power. The President, though not a member of either party, was, by force of circumstances, as well as owing to the influence of Hamilton, practically with the Federalists. But during the presidency of John Adams, who succeeded Washington, they committed grave errors. When the presidential election of 1800 arrived, it was seen that the logical and oratorical force of Hamilton's appeals to the reason of the nation told far less than the skill and energy with which Jefferson played on their feelings and prejudices. The Republicans triumphed in the choice of their chief, who retained power for eight years (he was re-elected in 1804), to be peaceably succeeded by his friend Madison for another eight years (elected in 1808, re-elected in 1812), and his disciple Monroe for eight years more (elected in 1816, re-elected in 1820). Their long-continued tenure of office was due not so much to their own merits, for neither Jefferson nor Madison conducted foreign affairs with success, as to the collapse of their antagonists. The Federalists never recovered from the blow given in the election of 1800. They lost Hamilton by death in 1804. No other leader of equal gifts appeared, and the party, which had shown little judgment in the critical years 1810-14, finally disappears from sight after the second peace with England in 1815. One cannot note the

disappearance of this brilliant figure, to Europeans the most interesting in the earlier history of the Republic, without the remark that his countrymen seem to have never, either in his lifetime or afterwards, duly recognized his splendid gifts. Washington is, indeed, a far more perfect character. Washington stands alone and unapproachable, like a snow-peak rising above its fellows into the clear air of morning, with a dignity, constancy, and purity which have made him the ideal type of civic virtue to succeeding generations. No greater benefit could have befallen the Republic than to have such a type set from the first before the eye and mind of the people. But Hamilton, of a virtue not so flawless, touches us more nearly, not only by the romance of his early life and his tragic death, but by a certain ardor and impulsiveness, and even tenderness of soul, joined to a courage equal to that of Washington himself. Equally apt for war and for civil government, with a profundity and amplitude of view rare in practical soldiers or statesmen, he stands in the front rank of a generation never surpassed in history, a generation which includes Burke and Fox and Pitt and Grattan, Stein and Hardenberg and William von Humboldt, Wellington and Napoleon. Talleyrand, who seems to have felt for him something as near affection as that cold heart could feel, said, after knowing all the famous men of the time, that only Fox and Napoleon were Hamilton's equals, and that he had divined Europe, having never seen it.

This period (1788-1824) may be said to constitute the first act in the drama of American party history. The people, accustomed hitherto to care only for their several commonwealths, learn to value and to work their new national institutions. They become familiar with the Constitution itself, as partners get to know, when disputes arise among them, the provisions of the partnership deed under which their business has to be carried on. It is found that the existence of a central Federal power does not

annihilate the States, so the apprehensions on that score are allayed. It is also discovered that there are unforeseen directions, such for instance as questions relating to banking and currency and internal communications, through which the Federal power can strengthen its hold on the nation. Differences of view and feeling give rise to parties, yet parties are formed by no means solely on the basis of general principles, but owe much to the influence of prominent personalities, of transient issues, of local interests or prejudices. The small farmers and the Southern men generally follow the Republican standard borne aloft by the great State of Virginia, while the strength of the Federalists lies in New England and the middle States, led sometimes by Massachusetts, sometimes by Pennsylvania. The commercial interest was with the Federalists, and the staid solid Puritanism of all classes, headed by the clergy. Someone indeed has described the struggle from 1796 to 1808 as one between Jefferson, who was an avowed free-thinker, and the New England ministers; and no doubt the ministers of religion did in the Puritan States exert a political influence approaching that of the Presbyterian clergy in Scotland during the seventeenth century. Jefferson's importance lies in the fact that he became the representative not merely of democracy, but of local democracy, of the notion that government is hardly wanted at all, that the people are sure to go right if they are left alone, that he who resists authority is prima facie justified in doing so, because authority is prima facie tyrannical, that a country where each local body in its own local area looks after the objects of common concern, raising and administering any such funds as are needed, and is interfered with as little as possible by any external power, comes nearest to the ideal of a truly free people. Some intervention on the part of the State there must be, for the State makes the law and appoints the judges of appeal; but the less one has to do with the State, and a fortiori the less

one has to do with the still less popular and more encroaching Federal authority, so much the better. Jefferson impressed this view on his countrymen with so much force and such personal faith that he became a sort of patron saint of freedom in the eyes of the next generation, who used to name their children after him and to give dinners and deliver high-flown speeches on his birthday, a festival only second in importance to the immortal Fourth of July. He had borrowed from the Revolutionists of France even their theatrical ostentation of simplicity. He rejected the ceremonial with which Washington had sustained the chief magistracy of the nation, declaring that to him there was no majesty but that of the people.

As New England was, by its system of local self-government through the town meeting, as well as by the absence of slavery, in some respects the most democratic part of the United States, it may seem surprising that it should have been a stronghold of the Federalists. The reason is to be found partly in its Puritanism, which revolted at the deism or atheism of the French revolutionists, partly in the interests of its ship-owners and merchants, who desired above all things a central government which, while strong enough to make and carry out treaties with England and so secure the development of American commerce, should be able also to reform the currency of the country and institute a national banking system. Industrial as well as territorial interests were already beginning to influence politics. That the mercantile and manufacturing classes, with all the advantages given them by their wealth, their intelligence, and their habits of co-operation, should have been vanquished by the agricultural masses, may be ascribed partly to the fact that the democratic impulse of the War of Independence was strong among the citizens who had grown to manhood between 1780 and 1800, partly to the tactical errors of the

Federalist leaders, but largely also to the skill which Jefferson showed in organizing the hitherto undisciplined battalions of Republican voters. Thus early in American history was the secret revealed, which Europe is only now discovering, that in free countries with an extended suffrage, numbers without organization are helpless and with it omnipotent.

I have ventured to dwell on this first period, because being the first it shows the origin of tendencies which were to govern the subsequent course of party strife. But as I am not writing a history of the United States I pass by the particular issues over which the two parties wrangled, most of them long since extinct. One remark is however needed as to the view which each took of the Constitution. Although the Federalists were in general the advocates of a loose and liberal construction of the fundamental instrument, because such a construction opened a wider sphere to Federal power, they were ready, whenever their local interests stood in the way, to resist Congress and the executive, alleging that the latter were overstepping their jurisdiction. In 1814 several of the New England States, where the opposition to the war then being waged with England was strongest, sent delegates to a convention at Hartford, which, while discussing the best means for putting an end to the war and restricting the powers of Congress in commercial legislation, was suspected of meditating a secession of the trading States from the Union. On the other hand, the Republicans did not hesitate to stretch to their utmost, when they were themselves in power, all the authority which the Constitution could be construed to allow to the executive and the Federal government generally. The boldest step which a president has ever taken, the purchase from Napoleon of the vast territories of France west of the Mississippi which went by the name of Louisiana, was taken by Jefferson without the authority of Congress. Congress subsequently gave its

sanction. But Jefferson and many of his friends held that under the Constitution even Congress had not the power to acquire new territories to be formed into States. They were therefore in the dilemma of either violating the Constitution or losing a golden opportunity of securing the Republic against the growth on its western frontier of a powerful and possibly hostile foreign State. Some of them tried to refute their former arguments against a lax construction of the Constitution, but many others avowed the dangerous doctrine that if Louisiana could be brought in only by breaking down the walls of the Constitution, broken they must be.

The disappearance of the Federal party between 1815 and 1820 left the Republicans masters of the field. But in the United States if old parties vanish nature quickly produces new ones. Sectional divisions soon arose among the men who joined in electing Monroe in 1820, and under the influence of the personal hostility of Henry Clay and Andrew Jackson (chosen President in 1828), two great parties were again formed (about 1830) which some few years later absorbed the minor groups. One of these two parties carried on, under the name of Democrats, the dogmas and traditions of the Jeffersonian Republicans. It was the defender of States' Rights and of a restrictive construction of the Constitution; it leant mainly on the South and the farming classes generally, and it was therefore inclined to free trade. The other section, which called itself at first the National Republican, ultimately the Whig party, represented many of the views of the former Federalists, such as their advocacy of a tariff for the protection of manufactures, and of the expenditure of public money on internal improvements. It was willing to increase the army and navy, and like the Federalists found its chief, though by no means its sole, support in the commercial and manufacturing parts of the country, that is to say, in New England and the middle States. Meantime a

new question far more exciting, far more menacing, had arisen. In 1819, when Missouri applied to be admitted into the Union as a State, a sharp contest broke out in Congress as to whether slavery should be permitted within her limits, nearly all the Northern members voting against slavery, nearly all the Southern members for it. The struggle might have threatened the stability of the Union but for the compromise adopted next year, which, while admitting slavery in Missouri, forbade it for the future north of lat. 36° 30'. The danger seemed to have passed, but in its very suddenness there had been something terrible. Jefferson, then over seventy, said that it startled him "like a fire-bell in the night." After 1840 things grew more serious, for whereas up till that time new States had been admitted substantially in pairs, a slave State balancing a free State, it began to be clear that this must shortly cease, since the remaining territory out of which new States would be formed lay north of the line 36° 30'. As every State held two seats in the Senate, the then existing balance in that chamber between slave States and free States, would evidently goon be overset by the admission of a larger number of the latter. The apprehension of this event, with its probable result of legislation unfriendly to slavery, stimulated the South to the annexation of Texas, and made them increasingly sensitive to the growth, slow as that growth was, of Abolitionist opinions at the North. The question of the extension of slavery west of the Missouri river had become by 1850 the vital and absorbing question for the people of the United States, and as in that year California, having organized herself without slavery, was knocking at the doors of Congress for admission as a State, it had become an urgent question which evoked the hottest passions, and the victors in which would be victors all along the line. But neither of the two great parties ventured to commit itself either way. The Southern Democrats hesitated to break with those Democrats of the

Northern States who sought to restrict slavery. The Whigs of the North, fearing to alienate their Southern allies by any decided action against the growing pretensions of the slave-holders, temporized and suggested compromises which practically served the cause of slavery. Anxious to save at all hazards the Union as it had hitherto stood, they did not perceive that changes of circumstances and feeling were making this effort a hopeless one, and that in trying to keep their party together they were losing hold of the people, and alienating from themselves the men who cared for principle in politics. That this was so presently appeared. The Democratic party had by 1852 passed almost completely under the control of the slave-holders, and was adopting the dogma that Congress enjoyed under the Constitution no power to prohibit slavery in the territories. This dogma obviously overthrew as unconstitutional the Missouri compromise of 1820. The Whig leaders discredited themselves by Henry Clay's compromise scheme of 1850, which, while admitting California as a free State, appeased the South by the Fugitive Slave Law. They received a crushing defeat at the presidential election of 1852; and what remained of their party finally broke in pieces in 1854 over the bill for organizing Kansas as a territory in which the question of slaves or no slaves should be left to the people, a bill which of course repealed the Missouri compromise. Singularly enough, the two great orators of the party, Henry Clay and Daniel Webster, both died in 1852, wearied with strife and disappointed in their ambition of reaching the presidential chair. Together with Calhoun, who passed away two years earlier, they are the ornaments of this generation, not indeed rising to the stature of Washington or Hamilton, but more remarkable than any, save one, among the statesmen who have followed them. With them ends the second period in the annals of American parties, which, extending from about 1820 to 1856, includes the rise and fall of the Whig

party. Most of the controversies which filled it have become matter for history only. But three large results, besides the general democratization of politics, stand out. One is the detachment of the United States from the affairs of the Old World. Another is the growth of a sense of national life, especially in the Northern and Western States, along with the growth at the same time of a secessionist spirit among the slave-holders. And the third is the development of the complex machinery of party organization, with the adoption of the principle on which that machinery so largely rests, that public office is to be enjoyed only by the adherents of the President for the time being.

The Whig party having begun to fall to pieces, the Democrats seemed to be for the moment, as they had been once before, left in possession of the field. But this time a new antagonist was swift to appear. The growing boldness of the slave-owners had already alarmed the Northern people when they were startled by a decision of the Supreme court, pronounced early in 1857 in the case of the slave Dred Scott, which laid down the doctrine that Congress had no power to forbid slavery anywhere, and that a slave-holder might carry his slaves with him whither he pleased, seeing that they were mere objects of property, whose possession the Constitution guaranteed. This completed the formation out of the wrecks of the Whigs and Know-nothings or "American party," together with the Free Soilers and " Liberty" party of a new party, which in 1856 had run Fremont as its presidential candidate and taken the name of Republican. At the same time an apple of discord was thrown among the Democrats. In 1860 the latter could not agree upon a candidate for President. The Southern wing pledged themselves to one man, the Northern wing to another; a body of hesitating and semi-detached politicians put forward a third. Thus the Republicans through the divisions of their opponents

triumphed in the election of Abraham Lincoln, presently followed by the secession of eleven slave States.

The Republican party, which had started by proclaiming the right of Congress to restrict slavery and had subsequently denounced the Dred Scott decision, was of course throughout the Civil War the defender of the Union and the assertor of Federal authority, stretched, as was unavoidable, to lengths previously unheard of. When the war was over, there came the difficult task of reconstructing the now reconquered slave States, and of securing the position in them of the lately liberated negroes. The outrages perpetrated on the latter, and on white settlers in some parts of the South, required further exertions of Federal authority, and made the question of the limit of that authority still a practical one, for the old Democratic party, almost silenced during the war, had now reappeared in full force as the advocate of State rights, and the watchful critic of any undue stretches of Federal authority. It was deemed necessary to negative the Dred Scott decision and set at rest all questions relating to slavery and to the political equality of the races by the adoption of three important amendments to the Constitution. The troubles of the South by degrees settled down as the whites regained possession of the State governments and the Northern troops began to be withdrawn. In the presidential election of 1876 the war question and negro question had become dead issues, for it was plain that a large and increasing number of the voters were no longer, despite the appeals of the Republican leaders, seriously concerned about them.

This election marks the close of the third period, which embraces the rise and overwhelming predominance of the Republican party. Formed to resist the extension of slavery, led on to destroy it, compelled by circumstances to expand the central authority in a way unthought of before, that party had now worked out its programme and fulfilled its

original mission. The old aims were accomplished, but new ones had not yet been substituted, for though new problems had appeared, the party was not prepared with solutions. Similarly the Democratic party had discharged its mission in defending the rights of the reconstructed States, and criticizing excesses of executive power; similarly it too had refused to grapple either with the fresh questions which had begun to arise since the war, or with those older questions which had now reappeared above the subsiding flood of war days. The old parties still stood as organizations, and still claimed to be the exponents of principles. Their respective principles had, however, little direct application to the questions which confronted and divided the nation. A new era was opening which called either for the evolution of new parties, or for the transformation of the old ones by the adoption of tenets and the advocacy of views suited to the needs of the time. But this fourth period, which began with 1876, has not yet seen such a transformation, and we shall therefore find, when we come to examine the existing state of parties, that there is an unreality and lack of vital force in both Republicans and Democrats, powerful as their organizations are.

The foregoing sketch, given only for the sake of explaining the present condition of parties, suggests some observations on the foundations of party in America.

If we look over Europe we shall find that the grounds on which parties have been built and contests waged since the beginning of free governments have been in substance but few. In the hostility of rich and poor, or of capital and labor, in the fears of the Haves and the desires of the Have-nots, we perceive the most frequent ground, though it is often disguised as a dispute about the extension of the suffrage or some other civic right. Questions relating to the tenure of land have played a large part; so have questions of religion; so too have animosities or jealousies of race; and

of course the form of government, whether it shall be a monarchy or a republic, has sometimes been in dispute. None of these grounds of quarrel substantially affected American parties during the three periods we have been examining. No one has ever advocated monarchy, or a restricted suffrage, or a unified instead of a Federal republic. Nor down to 1876 was there ever any party which could promise more to the poor than its opponents. In 1852 the Know-nothing party came forward as the organ of native American opinion against recent immigrants, then still chiefly the Irish, (though German immigration had begun to swell from 1849 onwards), and the not unnatural tendency to resent the power of foreign voters has sometimes since appeared in various parts of the country. But as this ' American ' party, for a time powerful by the absorption of many of the Whigs, failed to face the problem of slavery, and roused jealousy by its secret organization, it soon passed away, though it deserves to be remembered as a force disintegrating the then existing parties. The complete equality of all sects, with the perfect neutrality of the government in religious matters, has fortunately kept religious passion outside the sphere of politics. The only exceptions to be noted are the occasionally recurring outbreaks, during the last sixty years, of hostility to the Roman Catholic Church. Nor would these outbreaks have attained political importance but for the strength added to them by the feeling of the native against the foreigner. They have been most serious at times when and in places where there has been an influx of immigrants from Europe large enough to seem to threaten the dominance of American ideas and the permanence of American institutions.

Have the American parties then been formed only upon narrow and local bases, have they contended for transient objects, and can no deeper historical meaning, no longer historical continuity, be claimed for them?

Two permanent oppositions may, I think, be discerned running through the history of the parties, sometimes openly recognized, sometimes concealed by the urgency of a transitory question. One of these is the opposition between a centralized or unitary and a federalized government. In every country there are centrifugal and centripetal forces at work, the one or the other of which is for the moment the stronger. There has seldom been a country in which something might not have been gained, in the way of good administration and defensive strength, by a greater concentration of power in the hands of the central government, enabling it to do things which local bodies, or a more restricted central government, could not do equally cheaply or well, Against this gain there is always to.be set the danger that such concentration may weaken the vitality of local communities and authorities, and may enable the central power to stunt their development. Sometimes needs of the former kind are more urgent, or the sentiment of the people tends to magnify them; sometimes again the centrifugal forces obtain the upper hand. English history shows several such alternations. But in America the Federal form of government has made this permanent and natural opposition specially conspicuous. The salient feature of the Constitution is the effort it makes to establish an equipoise between the force which would carry the planet States off into space and the force which would draw them into the sun of the National government. There have always therefore been minds inclined to take sides upon this fundamental question, and a party has always had something definite and weighty to appeal to when it claims to represent either the autonomy of communities on the one hand, or the majesty and beneficent activity of the National government on the other. The former has been the watchword of the Democratic party. The latter was seldom distinctly avowed, but was generally in fact represented by the Federalists of the first

period, the Whigs of the second, the Republicans of the third.

The other opposition, though it goes deeper and is more pervasive, has been less clearly marked in America, and less consciously admitted by the Americans themselves. It is the opposition between the tendency which makes some men prize the freedom of the individual as the first of social goods, and that which disposes others to insist on checking and regulating his impulses. The opposition of these two tendencies, the love of liberty and the love of order, is permanent and necessary, because it springs from differences in the intellect and. feelings of men which one finds in all countries and at all epochs. There are always persons who are struck by the weakness of mankind, by their folly, their passion, their selfishness: and these persons, distrusting the action of average mankind, will always wish to see them guided by wise heads and restrained by strong hands. Such guidance seems the best means of progress, such restraint the only means of security. Those on the other hand who think better of human nature, and have more hope in their own tempers, hold the impulses of the average man to be generally towards justice and peace. They have faith in the power of reason to conquer ignorance, and of generosity to overbear selfishness. They are therefore disposed to leave the individual alone, and to entrust the masses with power. Every sensible man feels in himself the struggle between these two tendencies, and is on his guard not to yield wholly to either, because the one degenerates into tyranny, the other into an anarchy out of which tyranny will eventually spring. The wisest statesman is he who best holds the balance between them.

Each of these tendencies found among the fathers of the American Republic a brilliant and characteristic representative. Hamilton, who had a low opinion of mankind, but a gift and a passion for large constructive

statesmanship, went so far in his advocacy of a strong government as to be suspected of wishing to establish a monarchy after the British pattern. He has left on record his opinion that the free constitution of England, which he admired in spite of the faults he clearly saw, could not be worked without its corruptions. Jefferson carried further than any other person set in an equally responsible place has ever done, his faith that government is either needless or an evil, and that with enough liberty, everything will go well. An insurrection every few years, he said, must be looked for, and even desired, to keep government in order. The Jeffersonian tendency has always remained, like a leaven, in the Democratic party, though in applying Jeffersonian doctrines the slave-holders stopped when they came to a black skin. Among the Federalists, and their successors the Whigs, and the more recent Republicans, there has never been wanting a full faith in the power of freedom. The Republicans gave an amazing proof of it when they bestowed the suffrage on the negroes. Neither they nor any American party has ever professed itself the champion of authority and order. . That would be a damaging profession. Nevertheless it is rather towards what I may perhaps venture to call the Federalist-Whig-Republican party than towards the Democrats that those who have valued the principle of authority have been generally drawn. It is for that party that the Puritan spirit, not extinct in America, has felt the greater affinity, for this spirit, having realized the sinfulness of human nature, is inclined to train and control the natural man by laws and force.

The tendency that makes for a strong government being akin to that which makes for a central government, the Federalist-Whig-Republican party, which has, through its long history, and under its varying forms and names, been the advocate of the national principle, found itself for this reason also led, more frequently than the Democrats, to

exalt the rights and powers of government. It might be thought that the same cause would have made the Republican party take sides in that profound opposition which we perceive to-day in all civilized peoples, between the tendency to enlarge the sphere of legislation and State action, and the doctrine of laissez faire. So far, however, this has not happened. There is more in the character and temper of the Republicans than of the Democrats that leans towards State interference. But neither party has thought out the question; neither has shown any more definiteness of policy regarding it than the Tories and the Liberals have done in England.

American students of history may think that I have pressed the antithesis of liberty and authority, as well as that of centrifugal and centripetal tendencies, somewhat too far in making one party a representative of each through the first century of the Republic. I do not deny that at particular moments the party which was usually disposed towards a strong government resisted and decried authority, while the party which specially professed itself the advocate of liberty sought to make authority more stringent. Such deviations are however compatible with the general tendencies I have described. And no one who has gained even a slight knowledge of the history of the United States will fall into the error of supposing that the words Order and Authority mean there what they have meant in the monarchies of Continental Europe.

CHAPTER LIV. THE PARTIES OF TODAY

There are now two great and several minor parties in the United States. The great parties are the Republicans and the Democrats. What are their principles, their distinctive tenets, their tendencies? Which of them is for free trade, for civil service reform, for a spirited foreign policy, for the regulation of telegraphs by legislation, for a national bankrupt law, for changes in the currency, for any other of the twenty issues which one hears discussed in the country as seriously involving its welfare?

This is what a European is always asking of intelligent Republicans and intelligent Democrats. He is always asking because he never gets an answer. The replies leave him in deeper perplexity. After some months the truth begins to dawn upon him. Neither party has anything definite to say on these issues; neither party has any principles, any distinctive tenets. Both have traditions. Both claim to have tendencies. Both have certainly war cries, organizations, interests enlisted in their support. But those interests are in the main the interests of getting or keeping the patronage of the government. Tenets and policies, points of political doctrine and points of political practice, have all but vanished. They have not been thrown away but have been stripped away by Time and the progress of events, fulfilling some policies, blotting out others. All has been lost, except office or the hope of it.

The phenomenon may be illustrated from the case of England, where party government has existed longer and in a more fully developed form than in any other part of the Old World.

The essence of the English parties has lain in the existence of two sets of views and tendencies which divide the nation into two sections, the party, let us say, though these general terms are not very safe, of movement and the party of standing still, the party of liberty and the party of order. Each section believes in its own views, and is influenced by its peculiar tendencies, recollections, mental associations, to deal in its own peculiar way with every new question as it comes up. The particular dogmas may change: doctrines once held by Whigs alone may now be held by Tories also; doctrines which Whigs would have rejected fifty years ago may now be part of the orthodox programme of the Liberal party. But the tendencies have been permanent and have always so worked upon the various fresh questions and problems which have presented themselves during the last two centuries, that each party has had not only a brilliant concrete life in its famous leaders and zealous members, but also an intellectual and moral life in its principles. These principles have meant something to those who held them, so that when a fresh question arose it was usually possible to predict how each party, how even the average members of each party, would regard and wish to deal with it. Thus even when the leaders have been least worthy and their aims least pure, an English party has felt itself ennobled and inspirited by the sense that it had great objects to fight for, a history and traditions which imposed on it the duty of battling for its distinctive principles. It is because issues have never been lacking which brought these respective principles into operation, forcing the one party to maintain the cause of order and existing institutions, the other that of freedom and what was deemed progress, that the two English parties have not degenerated into mere factions. Their struggles for office have been redeemed from selfishness by the feeling that office was a means of giving practical effect to their doctrines.

But suppose that in Britain all the questions which divide Tories from Liberals were to be suddenly settled and done with. Britain would be in a difficulty. Her free government has so long been worked by the action and reaction of the ministerialists and the opposition that there would probably continue to be two parties. But they would not be really, in the true old sense of the terms, Tories and Liberals; they would be merely Ins and Outs. Their combats would be waged hardly even in name for principles, but only for place. The government of the country, with the honor, power, and emoluments attached to it, would still remain as a prize to be contended for. The followers would still rally to the leaders; and friendship would still bind the members together into organized bodies; while dislike and suspicion would still rouse them against their former adversaries. Thus not only the leaders, who would have something tangible to gain, but even others who had only their feelings to gratify, would continue to form political clubs, register voters, deliver party harangues, contest elections, just as they do now. The difference would be that each faction would no longer have broad principles — I will not say to invoke, for such principles would probably continue to be invoked as heretofore — but to insist on applying as distinctively its principles to the actual needs of the state. Hence quiet or fastidious men would not join in party struggles; while those who did join would no longer be stimulated by the sense that they were contending for something ideal. Loyalty to a leader whom it was sought to make prime minister would be a poor substitute for loyalty to a faith. If there were no conspicuous leader, attachment to the party would degenerate either into mere hatred of antagonists or into a struggle over places and salaries. And almost the same phenomena would be seen if, although the old issues had not been really determined, both the parties should have so far abandoned their former positions that these issues did not divide them, so that each professed