EQUALITY

Edward Bellamy

Equality

Chapter 1 - A Sharp Cross-Examiner

With many expressions of sympathy and interest Edith listened to the story of my dream. When, finally, I had made an end, she remained musing.
"What are you thinking about?" I said.
"I was thinking," she answered, "how it would have been if your dream had been true."
"True!" I exclaimed. "How could it have been true?"
"I mean," she said, "if it had all been a dream, as you supposed it was in your nightmare, and you had never really seen our Republic of the Golden Rule or me, but had only slept a night and dreamed the whole thing about us. And suppose you had gone forth just as you did in your dream, and had passed up and down telling men of the terrible folly and wickedness of their way of life and how much nobler and happier a way there was. Just think what good you might have done, how you might have helped people in those days when they needed help so much. It seems to me you must be almost sorry you came back to us."
"You look as if you were almost sorry yourself," I said, for her wistful expression seemed susceptible of that interpretation.
"Oh, no," she answered, smiling. "It was only on your own account. As for me, I have very good reasons for being glad that you came back."
"I should say so, indeed. Have you reflected that if I had dreamed it all you would have had no existence save as a figment in the brain of a sleeping man a hundred years ago?"

"I had not thought of that part of it," she said smiling and still half serious; "yet if I could have been more useful to humanity as a fiction than as a reality, I ought not to have minded the—the inconvenience."

But I replied that I greatly feared no amount of opportunity to help mankind in general would have reconciled me to life anywhere or under any conditions after leaving her behind in a dream—a confession of shameless selfishness which she was pleased to pass over without special rebuke, in consideration, no doubt, of my unfortunate bringing up.

"Besides," I resumed, being willing a little further to vindicate myself, "it would not have done any good. I have just told you how in my nightmare last night, when I tried to tell my contemporaries and even my best friends about the nobler way men might live together, they derided me as a fool and madman. That is exactly what they would have done in reality had the dream been true and I had gone about preaching as in the case you supposed."

"Perhaps a few might at first have acted as you dreamed they did," she replied. "Perhaps they would not at once have liked the idea of economic equality, fearing that it might mean a leveling down for them, and not understanding that it would presently mean a leveling up of all together to a vastly higher plane of life and happiness, of material welfare and moral dignity than the most fortunate had ever enjoyed. But even if the rich had at first mistaken you for an enemy to their class, the poor, the great masses of the poor, the real nation, they surely from the first would have listened as for their lives, for to them your story would have meant glad tidings of great joy."

"I do not wonder that you think so," I answered, "but, though I am still learning the A B C of this new world, I knew my contemporaries, and I know that it would not have been as you fancy. The poor would have listened no better than the rich, for, though poor and rich in my day were at bitter odds in everything else, they were agreed in

believing that there must always be rich and poor, and that a condition of material equality was impossible. It used to be commonly said, and it often seemed true, that the social reformer who tried to better the condition of the people found a more discouraging obstacle in the hopelessness of the masses he would raise than in the active resistance of the few, whose superiority was threatened. And indeed, Edith, to be fair to my own class, I am bound to say that with the best of the rich it was often as much this same hopelessness as deliberate selfishness that made them what we used to call conservative. So you see, it would have done no good even if I had gone to preaching as you fancied. The poor would have regarded my talk about the possibility of an equality of wealth as a fairy tale, not worth a laboring man's time to listen to. Of the rich, the baser sort would have mocked and the better sort would have sighed, but none would have given ear seriously."

But Edith smiled serenely.

"It seems very audacious for me to try to correct your impressions of your own contemporaries and of what they might be expected to think and do, but you see the peculiar circumstances give me a rather unfair advantage. Your knowledge of your times necessarily stops short with 1887, when you became oblivious of the course of events. I, on the other hand, having gone to school in the twentieth century, and been obliged, much against my will, to study nineteenth-century history, naturally know what happened after the date at which your knowledge ceased. I know, impossible as it may seem to you, that you had scarcely fallen into that long sleep before the American people began to be deeply and widely stirred with aspirations for an equal order such as we enjoy, and that very soon the political movement arose which, after various mutations, resulted early in the twentieth century in overthrowing the old system and setting up the present one."

This was indeed interesting information to me, but when I began to question Edith further, she sighed and shook her head.

"Having tried to show my superior knowledge, I must now confess my ignorance. All I know is the bare fact that the revolutionary movement began, as I said, very soon after you fell asleep. Father must tell you the rest. I might as well admit while I am about it, for you would soon find it out, that I know almost nothing either as to the Revolution or nineteenth-century matters generally. You have no idea how hard I have been trying to post myself on the subject so as to be able to talk intelligently with you, but I fear it is of no use. I could not understand it in school and can not seem to understand it any better now. More than ever this morning I am sure that I never shall. Since you have been telling me how the old world appeared to you in that dream, your talk has brought those days so terribly near that I can almost see them, and yet I can not say that they seem a bit more intelligible than before."

"Things were bad enough and black enough certainly," I said; "but I don't see what there was particularly unintelligible about them. What is the difficulty?"

"The main difficulty comes from the complete lack of agreement between the pretensions of your contemporaries about the way their society was organized and the actual facts as given in the histories."

"For example?" I queried.

"I don't suppose there is much use in trying to explain my trouble," she said. "You will only think me stupid for my pains, but I'll try to make you see what I mean. You ought to be able to clear up the matter if anybody can. You have just been telling me about the shockingly unequal conditions of the people, the contrasts of waste and want, the pride and power of the rich, the abjectness and servitude of the poor, and all the rest of the dreadful story."

"Yes."

"It appears that these contrasts were almost as great as at any previous period of history."
"It is doubtful," I replied, "if there was ever a greater disparity between the conditions of different classes than you would find in a half hour's walk in Boston, New York, Chicago, or any other great city of America in the last quarter of the nineteenth century."
"And yet," said Edith, "it appears from all the books that meanwhile the Americans' great boast was that they differed from all other and former nations in that they were free and equal. One is constantly coming upon this phrase in the literature of the day. Now, you have made it clear that they were neither free nor equal in any ordinary sense of the word, but were divided as mankind had always been before into rich and poor, masters and servants. Won't you please tell me, then, what they meant by calling themselves free and equal?"
"It was meant, I suppose, that they were all equal before the law."
"That means in the courts. And were the rich and poor equal in the courts? Did they receive the same treatment?"
"I am bound to say," I replied, "that they were nowhere else more unequal. The law applied in terms to all alike, but not in fact. There was more difference in the position of the rich and the poor man before the law than in any other respect. The rich were practically above the law, the poor under its wheels."
"In what respect, then, were the rich and poor equal?"
"They were said to be equal in opportunities."
"Opportunities for what?"
"For bettering themselves, for getting rich, for getting ahead of others in the struggle for wealth."
"It seems to me that only meant, if it were true, not that all were equal, but that all had an equal chance to make themselves unequal. But was it true that all had equal opportunities for getting rich and bettering themselves?"

"It may have been so to some extent at one time when the country was new," I replied, "but it was no more so in my day. Capital had practically monopolized all economic opportunities by that time; there was no opening in business enterprise for those without large capital save by some extraordinary fortune."

"But surely," said Edith, "there must have been, in order to give at least a color to all this boasting about equality, some one respect in which the people were really equal?"

"Yes, there was. They were political equals. They all had one vote alike, and the majority was the supreme lawgiver."

"So the books say, but that only makes the actual condition of things more absolutely unaccountable."

"Why so?"

"Why, because if these people all had an equal voice in the government—these toiling, starving, freezing, wretched masses of the poor—why did they not without a moment's delay put an end to the inequalities from which they suffered?"

"Very likely," she added, as I did not at once reply, "I am only showing how stupid I am by saying this. Doubtless I am overlooking some important fact, but did you not say that all the people, at least all the men, had a voice in the government?"

"Certainly; by the latter part of the nineteenth century manhood suffrage had become practically universal in America."

"That is to say, the people through their chosen agents made all the laws. Is that what you mean?"

"Certainly."

"But I remember you had Constitutions of the nation and of the States. Perhaps they prevented the people from doing quite what they wished."

"No; the Constitutions were only a little more fundamental sort of laws. The majority made and altered them at will.

The people were the sole and supreme final power, and their will was absolute."
"If, then, the majority did not like any existing arrangement, or think it to their advantage, they could change it as radically as they wished?"
"Certainly; the popular majority could do anything if it was large and determined enough."
"And the majority, I understand, were the poor, not the rich—the ones who had the wrong side of the inequalities that prevailed?"
"Emphatically so; the rich were but a handful comparatively."
"Then there was nothing whatever to prevent the people at any time, if they just willed it, from making an end of their sufferings and organizing a system like ours which would guarantee their equality and prosperity?"
"Nothing whatever."
"Then once more I ask you to kindly tell me why, in the name of common sense, they didn't do it at once and be happy instead of making a spectacle of themselves so woeful that even a hundred years after it makes us cry?"
"Because," I replied, "they were taught and believed that the regulation of industry and commerce and the production and distribution of wealth was something wholly outside of the proper province of government."
"But, dear me, Julian, life itself and everything that meanwhile makes life worth living, from the satisfaction of the most primary physical needs to the gratification of the most refined tastes, all that belongs to the development of mind as well as body, depend first, last, and always on the manner in which the production and distribution of wealth is regulated. Surely that must have been as true in your day as ours."
"Of course."
"And yet you tell me, Julian, that the people, after having abolished the rule of kings and taken the supreme power of

regulating their affairs into their own hands, deliberately consented to exclude from their jurisdiction the control of the most important, and indeed the only really important, class of their interests."
"Do not the histories say so?"
"They do say so, and that is precisely why I could never believe them. The thing seemed so incomprehensible I thought there must be some way of explaining it. But tell me, Julian, seeing the people did not think that they could trust themselves to regulate their own industry and the distribution of the product, to whom did they leave the responsibility?"
"To the capitalists."
"And did the people elect the capitalists?"
"Nobody elected them."
"By whom, then, were they appointed?"
"Nobody appointed them."
"What a singular system! Well, if nobody elected or appointed them, yet surely they must have been accountable to somebody for the manner in which they exercised powers on which the welfare and very existence of everybody depended."
"On the contrary, they were accountable to nobody and nothing but their own consciences."
"Their consciences! Ah, I see! You mean that they were so benevolent, so unselfish, so devoted to the public good, that people tolerated their usurpation out of gratitude. The people nowadays would not endure the irresponsible rule even of demigods, but probably it was different in your day."
"As an ex-capitalist myself, I should be pleased to confirm your surmise, but nothing could really be further from the fact. As to any benevolent interest in the conduct of industry and commerce, the capitalists expressly disavowed it. Their only object was to secure the greatest possible

gain for themselves without any regard whatever to the welfare of the public."
"Dear me! Dear me! Why you make out these capitalists to have been even worse than the kings, for the kings at least professed to govern for the welfare of their people, as fathers acting for children, and the good ones did try to. But the capitalists, you say, did not even pretend to feel any responsibility for the welfare of their subjects?"
"None whatever."
"And, if I understand," pursued Edith, "this government of the capitalists was not only without moral sanction of any sort or plea of benevolent intentions, but was practically an economic failure—that is, it did not secure the prosperity of the people."
"What I saw in my dream last night," I replied, "and have tried to tell you this morning, gives but a faint suggestion of the misery of the world under capitalist rule."
Edith meditated in silence for some moments. Finally she said: "Your contemporaries were not madmen nor fools; surely there is something you have not told me; there must be some explanation or at least color of excuse why the people not only abdicated the power of controling their most vital and important interests, but turned them over to a class which did not even pretend any interest in their welfare, and whose government completely failed to secure it."
"Oh, yes," I said, "there was an explanation, and a very fine-sounding one. It was in the name of individual liberty, industrial freedom, and individual initiative that the economic government of the country was surrendered to the capitalists."
"Do you mean that a form of government which seems to have been the most irresponsible and despotic possible was defended in the name of liberty?"
"Certainly; the liberty of economic initiative by the individual."

"But did you not just tell me that economic initiative and business opportunity in your day were practically monopolized by the capitalists themselves?"
"Certainly. It was admitted that there was no opening for any but capitalists in business, and it was rapidly becoming so that only the greatest of the capitalists themselves had any power of initiative."
"And yet you say that the reason given for abandoning industry to capitalist government was the promotion of industrial freedom and individual initiative among the people at large."
"Certainly. The people were taught that they would individually enjoy greater liberty and freedom of action in industrial matters under the dominion of the capitalists than if they collectively conducted the industrial system for their own benefit; that the capitalists would, moreover, look out for their welfare more wisely and kindly than they could possibly do it themselves, so that they would be able to provide for themselves more bountifully out of such portion of their product as the capitalists might be disposed to give them than they possibly could do if they became their own employers and divided the whole product among themselves."
"But that was mere mockery; it was adding insult to injury."
"It sounds so, doesn't it? But I assure you it was considered the soundest sort of political economy in my time. Those who questioned it were set down as dangerous visionaries."
"But I suppose the people's government, the government they voted for, must have done something. There must have been some odds and ends of things which the capitalists left the political government to attend to."
"Oh, yes, indeed. It had its hands full keeping the peace among the people. That was the main part of the business of political governments in my day."
"Why did the peace require such a great amount of keeping? Why didn't it keep itself, as it does now?"

"On account of the inequality of conditions which prevailed. The strife for wealth and desperation of want kept in quenchless blaze a hell of greed and envy, fear, lust, hate, revenge, and every foul passion of the pit. To keep this general frenzy in some restraint, so that the entire social system should not resolve itself into a general massacre, required an army of soldiers, police, judges, and jailers, and endless law-making to settle the quarrels. Add to these elements of discord a horde of outcasts degraded and desperate, made enemies of society by their sufferings and requiring to be kept in check, and you will readily admit there was enough for the people's government to do."

"So far as I can see," said Edith, "the main business of the people's government was to struggle with the social chaos which resulted from its failure to take hold of the economic system and regulate it on a basis of justice."

"That is exactly so. You could not state the whole case more adequately if you wrote a book."

"Beyond protecting the capitalist system from its own effects, did the political government do absolutely nothing?"

"Oh, yes, it appointed postmasters and tidewaiters, maintained an army and navy, and picked quarrels with foreign countries."

"I should say that the right of a citizen to have a voice in a government limited to the range of functions you have mentioned would scarcely have seemed to him of much value."

"I believe the average price of votes in close elections in America in my time was about two dollars."

"Dear me, so much as that!" said Edith. "I don't know exactly what the value of money was in your day, but I should say the price was rather extortionate."

"I think you are right," I answered. "I used to give in to the talk about the pricelessness of the right of suffrage, and the denunciation of those whom any stress of poverty could

induce to sell it for money, but from the point of view to which you have brought me this morning I am inclined to think that the fellows who sold their votes had a far clearer idea of the sham of our so-called popular government, as limited to the class of functions I have described, than any of the rest of us did, and that if they were wrong it was, as you suggest, in asking too high a price."

"But who paid for the votes?"

"You are a merciless cross-examiner," I said. "The classes which had an interest in controling the government—that is, the capitalists and the office-seekers—did the buying. The capitalists advanced the money necessary to procure the election of the office-seekers on the understanding that when elected the latter should do what the capitalists wanted. But I ought not to give you the impression that the bulk of the votes were bought outright. That would have been too open a confession of the sham of popular government as well as too expensive. The money contributed by the capitalists to procure the election of the office-seekers was mainly expended to influence the people by indirect means. Immense sums under the name of campaign funds were raised for this purpose and used in innumerable devices, such as fireworks, oratory, processions, brass bands, barbecues, and all sorts of devices, the object of which was to galvanize the people to a sufficient degree of interest in the election to go through the motion of voting. Nobody who has not actually witnessed a nineteenth-century American election could even begin to imagine the grotesqueness of the spectacle."

"It seems, then," said Edith, "that the capitalists not only carried on the economic government as their special province, but also practically managed the machinery of the political government as well."

"Oh, yes, the capitalists could not have got along at all without control of the political government. Congress, the Legislatures, and the city councils were quite necessary as

instruments for putting through their schemes. Moreover, in order to protect themselves and their property against popular outbreaks, it was highly needful that they should have the police, the courts, and the soldiers devoted to their interests, and the President, Governors, and mayors at their beck."

"But I thought the President, the Governors, and Legislatures represented the people who voted for them."

"Bless your heart! no, why should they? It was to the capitalists and not to the people that they owed the opportunity of officeholding. The people who voted had little choice for whom they should vote. That question was determined by the political party organizations, which were beggars to the capitalists for pecuniary support. No man who was opposed to capitalist interests was permitted the opportunity as a candidate to appeal to the people. For a public official to support the people's interest as against that of the capitalists would be a sure way of sacrificing his career. You must remember, if you would understand how absolutely the capitalists controled the Government, that a President, Governor, or mayor, or member of the municipal, State, or national council, was only temporarily a servant of the people or dependent on their favour. His public position he held only from election to election, and rarely long. His permanent, lifelong, and all-controling interest, like that of us all, was his livelihood, and that was dependent, not on the applause of the people, but the favor and patronage of capital, and this he could not afford to imperil in the pursuit of the bubbles of popularity. These circumstances, even if there had been no instances of direct bribery, sufficiently explained why our politicians and officeholders with few exceptions were vassals and tools of the capitalists. The lawyers, who, on account of the complexities of our system, were almost the only class competent for public business, were especially and directly

dependent upon the patronage of the great capitalistic interests for their living."

"But why did not the people elect officials and representatives of their own class, who would look out for the interests of the masses?"

"There was no assurance that they would be more faithful. Their very poverty would make them the more liable to money temptation; and the poor, you must remember, although so much more pitiable, were not morally any better than the rich. Then, too—and that was the most important reason why the masses of the people, who were poor, did not send men of their class to represent them—poverty as a rule implied ignorance, and therefore practical inability, even where the intention was good. As soon as the poor man developed intelligence he had every temptation to desert his class and seek the patronage of capital."

Edith remained silent and thoughtful for some moments.

"Really," she said, finally, "it seems that the reason I could not understand the so-called popular system of government in your day is that I was trying to find out what part the people had in it, and it appears that they had no part at all."

"You are getting on famously," I exclaimed. "Undoubtedly the confusion of terms in our political system is rather calculated to puzzle one at first, but if you only grasp firmly the vital point that the rule of the rich, the supremacy of capital and its interests, as against those of the people at large, was the central principle of our system, to which every other interest was made subservient, you will have the key that clears up every mystery."

Chapter 2 - Why The Revolution Did Not Come Earlier

Absorbed in our talk, we had not heard the steps of Dr. Leete as he approached.

"I have been watching you for ten minutes from the house," he said, "until, in fact, I could no longer resist the desire to know what you find so interesting."

"Your daughter," said I, "has been proving herself a mistress of the Socratic method. Under a plausible pretext of gross ignorance, she has been asking me a series of easy questions, with the result that I see as I never imagined it before the colossal sham of our pretended popular government in America. As one of the rich I knew, of course, that we had a great deal of power in the state, but I did not before realize how absolutely the people were without influence in their own government."

"Aha!" exclaimed the doctor in great glee, "so my daughter gets up early in the morning with the design of supplanting her father in his position of historical instructor?"

Edith had risen from the garden bench on which we had been seated and was arranging her flowers to take into the house. She shook her head rather gravely in reply to her father's challenge.

"You need not be at all apprehensive," she said; "Julian has quite cured me this morning of any wish I might have had to inquire further into the condition of our ancestors. I have always been dreadfully sorry for the poor people of that day on account of the misery they endured from poverty and the oppression of the rich. Henceforth, however, I wash my hands of them and shall reserve my sympathy for more deserving objects."

"Dear me!" said the doctor, "what has so suddenly dried up the fountains of your pity? What has Julian been telling you?"
"Nothing, really, I suppose, that I had not read before and ought to have known, but the story always seemed so unreasonable and incredible that I never quite believed it until now. I thought there must be some modifying facts not set down in the histories."
"But what is this that he has been telling you?"
"It seems," said Edith, "that these very people, these very masses of the poor, had all the time the supreme control of the Government and were able, if determined and united, to put an end at any moment to all the inequalities and oppressions of which they complained and to equalize things as we have done. Not only did they not do this, but they gave as a reason for enduring their bondage that their liberties would be endangered unless they had irresponsible masters to manage their interests, and that to take charge of their own affairs would imperil their freedom. I feel that I have been cheated out of all the tears I have shed over the sufferings of such people. Those who tamely endure wrongs which they have the power to end deserve not compassion but contempt. I have felt a little badly that Julian should have been one of the oppressor class, one of the rich. Now that I really understand the matter, I am glad. I fear that, had he been one of the poor, one of the mass of real masters, who with supreme power in their hands consented to be bondsmen, I should have despised him."
Having thus served formal notice on my contemporaries that they must expect no more sympathy from her, Edith went into the house, leaving me with a vivid impression that if the men of the twentieth century should prove incapable of preserving their liberties, the women might be trusted to do so.

"Really, doctor," I said, "you ought to be greatly obliged to your daughter. She has saved you lots of time and effort."
"How so, precisely?"
"By rendering it unnecessary for you to trouble yourself to explain to me any further how and why you came to set up your nationalized industrial system and your economic equality. If you have ever seen a desert or sea mirage, you remember that, while the picture in the sky is very clear and distinct in itself, its unreality is betrayed by a lack of detail, a sort of blur, where it blends with the foreground on which you are standing. Do you know that this new social order of which I have so strangely become a witness has hitherto had something of this mirage effect? In itself it is a scheme precise, orderly, and very reasonable, but I could see no way by which it could have naturally grown out of the utterly different conditions of the nineteenth century. I could only imagine that this world transformation must have been the result of new ideas and forces that had come into action since my day. I had a volume of questions all ready to ask you on the subject, but now we shall be able to use the time in talking of other things, for Edith has shown me in ten minutes' time that the only wonderful thing about your organization of the industrial system as public business is not that it has taken place, but that it waited so long before taking place, that a nation of rational beings consented to remain economic serfs of irresponsible masters for more than a century after coming into possession of absolute power to change at pleasure all social institutions which inconvenienced them."
"Really," said the doctor, "Edith has shown herself a very efficient teacher, if an involuntary one. She has succeeded at one stroke in giving you the modern point of view as to your period. As we look at it, the immortal preamble of the American Declaration of Independence, away back in 1776, logically contained the entire statement of the doctrine of universal economic equality guaranteed by the nation

collectively to its members individually. You remember how the words run:

"'We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal, with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these rights it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it and institute a new government, laying its foundations on such principles and organizing its powers in such form as may seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness.'

"Is it possible, Julian, to imagine any governmental system less adequate than ours which could possibly realize this great ideal of what a true people's government should be? The corner stone of our state is economic equality, and is not that the obvious, necessary, and only adequate pledge of these three birthrights—life, liberty, and happiness? What is life without its material basis, and what is an equal right to life but a right to an equal material basis for it? What is liberty? How can men be free who must ask the right to labor and to live from their fellow-men and seek their bread from the hands of others? How else can any government guarantee liberty to men save by providing them a means of labor and of life coupled with independence; and how could that be done unless the government conducted the economic system upon which employment and maintenance depend? Finally, what is implied in the equal right of all to the pursuit of happiness? What form of happiness, so far as it depends at all on material facts, is not bound up with economic conditions; and how shall an equal opportunity for the pursuit of happiness be guaranteed to all save by a guarantee of economic equality?"

"Yes," I said, "it is indeed all there, but why were we so long in seeing it?"

"Let us make ourselves comfortable on this bench," said the doctor, "and I will tell you what is the modern answer to the very interesting question you raise. At first glance, certainly the delay of the world in general, and especially of the American people, to realize that democracy logically meant the substitution of popular government for the rule of the rich in regulating the production and distribution of wealth seems incomprehensible, not only because it was so plain an inference from the idea of popular government, but also because it was one which the masses of the people were so directly interested in carrying out. Edith's conclusion that people who were not capable of so simple a process of reasoning as that did not deserve much sympathy for the afflictions they might so easily have remedied, is a very natural first impression.

"On reflection, however, I think we shall conclude that the time taken by the world in general and the Americans in particular in finding out the full meaning of democracy as an economic as well as a political proposition was not greater than might have been expected, considering the vastness of the conclusions involved. It is the democratic idea that all human beings are peers in rights and dignity, and that the sole just excuse and end of human governments is, therefore, the maintenance and furtherance of the common welfare on equal terms. This idea was the greatest social conception that the human mind had up to that time ever formed. It contained, when first conceived, the promise and potency of a complete transformation of all then existing social institutions, one and all of which had hitherto been based and formed on the principle of personal and class privilege and authority and the domination and selfish use of the many by the few. But it was simply inconsistent with the limitations of the human intellect that the implications of an idea so prodigious

should at once have been taken in. The idea must absolutely have time to grow. The entire present order of economic democracy and equality was indeed logically bound up in the first full statement of the democratic idea, but only as the full-grown tree is in the seed: in the one case, as in the other, time was an essential element in the evolution of the result.

"We divide the history of the evolution of the democratic idea into two broadly contrasted phases. The first of these we call the phase of negative democracy. To understand it we must consider how the democratic idea originated. Ideas are born of previous ideas and are long in outgrowing the characteristics and limitations impressed on them by the circumstances under which they came into existence. The idea of popular government, in the case of America as in previous republican experiments in general, was a protest against royal government and its abuses. Nothing is more certain than that the signers of the immortal Declaration had no idea that democracy necessarily meant anything more than a device for getting along without kings. They conceived of it as a change in the forms of government only, and not at all in the principles and purposes of government.

"They were not, indeed, wholly without misgivings lest it might some time occur to the sovereign people that, being sovereign, it would be a good idea to use their sovereignty to improve their own condition. In fact, they seem to have given some serious thought to that possibility, but so little were they yet able to appreciate the logic and force of the democratic idea that they believed it possible by ingenious clauses in paper Constitutions to prevent the people from using their power to help themselves even if they should wish to.

"This first phase of the evolution of democracy, during which it was conceived of solely as a substitute for royalty, includes all the so-called republican experiments up to the

beginning of the twentieth century, of which, of course, the American Republic was the most important. During this period the democratic idea remained a mere protest against a previous form of government, absolutely without any new positive or vital principle of its own. Although the people had deposed the king as driver of the social chariot, and taken the reins into their own hands, they did not think as yet of anything but keeping the vehicle in the old ruts and naturally the passengers scarcely noticed the change.

"The second phase in the evolution of the democratic idea began with the awakening of the people to the perception that the deposing of kings, instead of being the main end and mission of democracy, was merely preliminary to its real programme, which was the use of the collective social machinery for the indefinite promotion of the welfare of the people at large.

"It is an interesting fact that the people began to think of applying their political power to the improvement of their material condition in Europe earlier than in America, although democratic forms had found much less acceptance there. This was, of course, on account of the perennial economic distress of the masses in the old countries, which prompted them to think first about the bearing any new idea might have on the question of livelihood. On the other hand, the general prosperity of the masses in America and the comparative ease of making a living up to the beginning of the last quarter of the nineteenth century account for the fact that it was not till then that the American people began to think seriously of improving their economic condition by collective action.

"During the negative phase of democracy it had been considered as differing from monarchy only as two machines might differ, the general use and purpose of which were the same. With the evolution of the democratic idea into the second or positive phase, it was recognized that the transfer of the supreme power from king and

nobles to people meant not merely a change in the forms of government, but a fundamental revolution in the whole idea of government, its motives, purposes, and functions—a revolution equivalent to a reversal of polarity of the entire social system, carrying, so to speak, the entire compass card with it, and making north south, and east west. Then was seen what seems so plain to us that it is hard to understand why it was not always seen, that instead of its being proper for the sovereign people to confine themselves to the functions which the kings and classes had discharged when they were in power, the presumption was, on the contrary, since the interest of kings and classes had always been exactly opposed to those of the people, that whatever the previous governments had done, the people as rulers ought not to do, and whatever the previous governments had not done, it would be presumably for the interest of the people to do; and that the main use and function of popular government was properly one which no previous government had ever paid any attention to, namely, the use of the power of the social organization to raise the material and moral welfare of the whole body of the sovereign people to the highest possible point at which the same degree of welfare could be secured to all—that is to say, an equal level. The democracy of the second or positive phase triumphed in the great Revolution, and has since been the only form of government known in the world."

"Which amounts to saying," I observed, "that there never was a democratic government properly so called before the twentieth century."

"Just so," assented the doctor. "The so-called republics of the first phase we class as pseudo-republics or negative democracies. They were not, of course, in any sense, truly popular governments at all, but merely masks for plutocracy, under which the rich were the real though irresponsible rulers! You will readily see that they could

have been nothing else. The masses from the beginning of the world had been the subjects and servants of the rich, but the kings had been above the rich, and constituted a check on their dominion. The overthrow of the kings left no check at all on the power of the rich, which became supreme. The people, indeed, nominally were sovereigns; but as these sovereigns were individually and as a class the economic serfs of the rich, and lived at their mercy, the so-called popular government became the mere stalking-horse of the capitalists.

"Regarded as necessary steps in the evolution of society from pure monarchy to pure democracy, these republics of the negative phase mark a stage of progress; but if regarded as finalities they were a type far less admirable on the whole than decent monarchies. In respect especially to their susceptibility to corruption and plutocratic subversion they were the worst kind of government possible. The nineteenth century, during which this crop of pseudo-democracies ripened for the sickle of the great Revolution, seems to the modern view nothing but a dreary interregnum of nondescript, faineant government intervening between the decadence of virile monarchy in the eighteenth century and the rise of positive democracy in the twentieth. The period may be compared to that of the minority of a king, during which the royal power is abused by wicked stewards. The people had been proclaimed as sovereign, but they had not yet assumed the sceptre."

"And yet," said I, "during the latter part of the nineteenth century, when, as you say, the world had not yet seen a single specimen of popular government, our wise men were telling us that the democratic system had been fully tested and was ready to be judged on its results. Not a few of them, indeed, went so far as to say that the democratic experiment had proved a failure when, in point of fact, it seems that no experiment in democracy, properly understood, had as yet ever been so much as attempted."

The doctor shrugged his shoulders.
"It is a very sympathetic task," he said, "to explain the slowness of the masses in feeling their way to a comprehension of all that the democratic idea meant for them, but it is one equally difficult and thankless to account for the blank failure of the philosophers, historians, and statesmen of your day to arrive at an intelligent estimate of the logical content of democracy and to forecast its outcome. Surely the very smallness of the practical results thus far achieved by the democratic movement as compared with the magnitude of its proposition and the forces behind it ought to have suggested to them that its evolution was yet but in the first stage. How could intelligent men delude themselves with the notion that the most portentous and revolutionary idea of all time had exhausted its influence and fulfilled its mission in changing the title of the executive of a nation from king to President, and the name of the national Legislature from Parliament to Congress? If your pedagogues, college professors and presidents, and others who were responsible for your education, had been worth their salt, you would have found nothing in the present order of economic equality that would in the least have surprised you. You would have said at once that it was just what you had been taught must necessarily be the next phase in the inevitable evolution of the democratic idea."
Edith beckoned from the door and we rose from our seat.
"The revolutionary party in the great Revolution," said the doctor, as we sauntered toward the house, "carried on the work of agitation and propaganda under various names more or less grotesque and ill-fitting as political party names were apt to be, but the one word democracy, with its various equivalents and derivatives, more accurately and completely expressed, explained, and justified their method, reason, and purpose than a library of books could do. The American people fancied that they had set up a

popular government when they separated from England, but they were deluded. In conquering the political power formerly exercised by the king, the people had but taken the outworks of the fortress of tyranny. The economic system which was the citadel and commanded every part of the social structure remained in possession of private and irresponsible rulers, and so long as it was so held, the possession of the outworks was of no use to the people, and only retained by the sufferance of the garrison of the citadel. The Revolution came when the people saw that they must either take the citadel or evacuate the outworks. They must either complete the work of establishing popular government which had been barely begun by their fathers, or abandon all that their fathers had accomplished."

Chapter 3 - I Acquire A Stake In The Country

On going into breakfast the ladies met us with a highly interesting piece of intelligence which they had found in the morning's news. It was, in fact, nothing less than an announcement of action taken by the United States Congress in relation to myself. A resolution had, it appeared, been unanimously passed which, after reciting the facts of my extraordinary return to life, proceeded to clear up any conceivable question that might arise as to my legal status by declaring me an American citizen in full standing and entitled to all a citizen's rights and immunities, but at the same time a guest of the nation, and as such free of the duties and services incumbent upon citizens in general except as I might choose to assume them.

Secluded as I had been hitherto in the Leete household, this was almost the first intimation I had the public in my case. That interest, I was now informed, had passed beyond my personality and was already producing a general revival of the study of nineteenth-century literature and politics, and especially of the history and philosophy of the transition period, when the old order passed into the new.

"The fact is," said the doctor, "the nation has only discharged a debt of gratitude in making you its guest, for you have already done more for our educational interests by promoting historical study than a regiment of instructors could achieve in a lifetime."

Recurring to the topic of the congressional resolution, the doctor said that, in his opinion, it was superfluous, for though I had certainly slept on my rights as a citizen rather an extraordinary length of time, there was no ground on

which I could be argued to have forfeited any of them. However that might be, seeing the resolution left no doubt as to my status, he suggested that the first thing we did after breakfast should be to go down to the National Bank and open my citizen's account.

"Of course," I said, as we left the house, "I am glad to be relieved of the necessity of being a pensioner on you any longer, but I confess I feel a little cheap about accepting as a gift this generous provision of the nation."

"My dear Julian," replied the doctor, "it is sometimes a little difficult for me to quite get your point of view of our institutions."

"I should think it ought to be easy enough in this case. I feel as if I were an object of public charity."

"Ah!" said the doctor, "you feel that the nation has done you a favor, laid you under an obligation. You must excuse my obtuseness, but the fact is we look at this matter of the economic provision for citizens from an entirely different standpoint. It seems to us that in claiming and accepting your citizen's maintenance you perform a civic duty, whereby you put the nation—that is, the general body of your fellow-citizens—under rather more obligation than you incur."

I turned to see if the doctor were not jesting, but he was evidently quite serious.

"I ought by this time to be used to finding that everything goes by contraries in these days," I said, "but really, by what inversion of common sense, as it was understood in the nineteenth century, do you make out that by accepting a pecuniary provision from the nation I oblige it more than it obliges me?"

"I think it will be easy to make you see that," replied the doctor, "without requiring you to do any violence to the methods of reasoning to which your contemporaries were accustomed. You used to have, I believe, a system of gratuitous public education maintained by the state."