

CHAPTER IX

According to the modern, the democratic, and, we venture to say, the only just notion of liberty, every man, being presumed to have received from nature the intelligence necessary for his own general guidance, is inherently entitled to be uncontrolled by his fellows in all that only concerns himself, and to regulate at his own will his own destiny.

In the fifteenth century some adventurous spirits had a glimpse of the democratic idea of liberty, but it was almost immediately lost sight of. It was during the eighteenth only that the transformation began to work.

DeToqueville.

DEMOCRACY

“Democracy”, says Webster’s unabridged dictionary, “is opposed to aristocracy”. It also says that aristocracy is “government by the best; hence, government by a relatively small privileged class or order”. It appears, then, that democracy is opposed to government by the best, and also opposed to government by a privileged class.

If aristocracy is in fact government by the best, is it not safe to assert that the world has enjoyed but little aristocratic government? Surely the barbarian organization, with its absolute master in each family, is not to be accepted as rule by the best. Larger groups called tribes were organized upon the same

plan. The ancient world seemed not to know a different method. The great states of remote antiquity also were ruled by individual tyrants, few of whom may fairly be called the "best". Such organizations, however, were logical developments from barbarian families.

Even republican Rome was so far removed from the "best" that it perished of its own absurdities, although it was a product of revolution and sometimes displayed both strength and wisdom. The empire that displaced the republic perished even more ingloriously. More than a thousand years of feudalism followed, presenting every phase of stupidity, rascality, and tyranny.

All of these were aristocracies, but who would call them the best? Then modern democracies, so-called, appeared. These made great advances beyond previous conditions, but at present seem to be afflicted with something equivalent to an injunction. Even in the United States official figures prove the aristocratic adjustment of social forces, for but one family in twenty-four is really prosperous, while but three more can claim no more than comfort. These figures suggest plutocracy rather than rule by the best.

On the other hand, since aristocracy is government by a privileged class, is it not true that the world has enjoyed but little of any other sort? This difficulty vanishes when we recognize the spurious character of the claim that aristocracy is government by the best.

But the assertion of the dictionary that democracy is opposed to aristocracy is correct. It is opposed to the aggressions of Asiatic conquerors who devastated India and Europe for their own aggrandizement. It is opposed to the cruelty of emperors who sacrificed human lives to grace a Roman holiday. It is opposed to the murders of Henry VIII, and to the foolish and fanatical tyranny of Philip II, which alienated the affections of a loyal and powerful people. It is opposed to the prevarications of Charles I, and to the insincerities of his son. It is opposed to the personal government of George III, and to the class government so energetically advocated by Alexander Hamilton.

It is opposed to human slavery, and to the more tricky bondage imposed by tariffs and inadequately controlled rights-of-way as well as land grants, which through speculation cause those fluctuations in industry, known as good and hard times and sometimes called the

industrial cycle. Democracy is, in fact, opposed to every legal privilege that militates against the common good. These special privileges lead to rascality, faction fights and crime, as Gibbon pointed out, and eventually to murder. They are the cause of the world-wide industrial depression now afflicting civilization.

Democracy is opposed to any legal obstruction to legitimate human enterprise. It discards the aristocratic notion that human beings need the guiding and restraining hand of the state in the usual and legitimate undertakings of life; but it guards public or common rights with jealous care, allowing no private interest to gain a special advantage through the use of public power.

Democracy is thus arrayed in opposition to aristocracy, because that "relatively small privileged class" has always used the powers of government to despoil the mass of the people. In fact, without this incentive, aristocracy would not exist. Everywhere it has seized the lands, which Gibbon called the common right, compelling the people to pay ground rent for permission to live and toil in the land where they were born; and then, with insolence that only aristocrats can muster, saddled

them with the expense of the governmental machinery that holds them in subjection.

This is accomplished by the simple device of taxing the things that the mass of the people consume. By the same means, the English forced the people of Ireland to pay most of the expenses of the army that subjugated them. It is a transparent scheme, and insult is added to injury by attempts to make the people believe that it is operated for their benefit.

If, for instance, in a territory where industry is not taxed, it costs two dollars to make a hat, the manufacturer and dealer will be compelled to raise the price at which it is sold if taxes are laid upon the building, machinery, and material used in its production. With respect to other products the same reasoning holds good. This increased price is paid by consumers. The larger a family, the standard of living being the same, the greater the contribution to the tax gatherer. By such use of the governmental power of taxation all aristocratic states artificially add to the normal cost of living.

Democracy is opposed to such procedure. It would remove taxes from products, levying them instead upon the value of the legal privi-

leges that necessarily accompany a developing civilization. This also is a simple plan, easily within the grasp of the most ordinary intelligence. In fact, it is this simplicity that renders democracy practical. If it were involved and intricate, democracy would be hopeless because of the difficulty of inducing a considerable majority of the people to give the matter sufficient attention to be able to render sound judgment. But if government is restricted to its proper function no intricate problem is presented.

We may thus perceive that the great virtue of democratic government is not an increasing number of regulations, with an army of inspectors to see to their enforcement. Instead, its virtue is found in a people free to form such customs as they may find agreeable and advantageous, without governmental interference. Such customs are readily altered with changing conditions; whereas, legal regulations can be altered only by the expenditure of much energy that might more profitably be exerted in furthering production.

In short, the advantage of democratic government is not so much in what the state does for the people as in what the people do for themselves when the state lets them alone.

Such freedom stimulates attention and self-reliance, which are usually ranked among human virtues. The public, for instance, constructs a highway, and every variety of vehicle makes use of it. These, to be sure, must turn to the right, or in Britain to the left, when meeting, and must avoid either injury or obstruction of the roadway. But unnecessary regulative interferences by the public merely subtracts from the usefulness of the project, as was eventually discovered with respect to toll roads. The gasoline tax, in some degree restricting the use of automobiles, is of this character, and in time it will be seen that taxes on cars and their fuel are dangerous obstructions to traffic. It is not necessary that business or pleasure should be subject to "graft".

It is, of course, true that democracy has often been viewed as possessed of entirely different characteristics. Many seem to imagine that boisterous and somewhat rude behavior is democratic, although a fully attended session of the House of Lords offers crudity enough to satisfy the coarsest taste. Hamilton indicated his sentiment by saying, "Democracy is pork still with a little change of sauce". Even Carlyle declared that freedom of the individual turns out to be freedom to starve. He and

other critics failed to note that democracy has but partly been established, and thus overlooked the fact that the evils charged to democracy result from privileged powers granted in the past, embodied in law, and now enforced by the authority of a state presumed to be democratic.

The Italian dictator, too, is reported to have said in effect that democracy is obsolete. Following the elevation of other dictators to power correspondents inform us, rather joyously, it seemed, that civilized peoples were rapidly losing faith in popular rule. Recent elections in the United States, however, do not support these assertions.

A noted and somewhat ponderous writer has declared that democracy assumes that the people as a whole know better what they want and what is good for them than does any select group, no matter how well informed or highly civilized. Similar notions are widely entertained notwithstanding their childishness. In fact, democracy assumes that the people, if really free, will act with integrity because, if for no other reason, they cannot profitably mislead themselves. Any other course can result from misunderstanding only.

On the other hand, a select group that controls government, no matter how intelligent or well meaning, is under continual temptation to use the powers of government in behalf of special interests; and the record indicates that it often yields. Meanwhile, it must be noted that a state still saturated with feudal law may adopt many democratic forms without preventing its administration from being stupid or as tyrannical as one frankly based upon privilege. Democratic forms permit but do not assure just government. Universal voting, for instance, is a means whereby just government may be secured, but it is not a guaranty. Intelligence and knowledge are needed as well as integrity.

Again, attempts have been made to distinguish a democracy from a republic, the former being described as direct rule by the people, and the latter through the agency of representatives. But the reference books inform us that one of these words is derived from Latin and the other from Greek, each meaning popular as distinguished from class government. We may note, too, that the people of republican Rome knew as little of representative systems as did those of the Greek city-states.

We hear, too, a noted magistrate asserting

that of all governments a democracy is the most difficult to administer. This assertion probably is sustained by the record of existing so-called democracies, but the structure of those states is so saturated with inherited feudal practices that their records are an unfair basis upon which to rest judgment of the power and virtue of a democratic state.

The difficulty of administering existing democratic governments arises from the fact that they contain antagonistic principles and tendencies. They assert freedom and restriction at the same time. The result, necessarily is confusion. Democracy, however, if restricted to the management of public affairs only, is plain and simple in administration. It does not need a genius at its head, nor a wide discretion on the part of courts.

This democratic attitude or point of view is, in Europe, called liberalism. In recent years it has shown declining powers throughout that continent. This, however, may fairly be attributed to the failure of liberals to maintain the integrity of their own doctrine, having, instead absorbed a large measure of conservative opinion. While liberalism is opposed to sumptuary laws that attempt to regulate private affairs, and affirms free competition as the

natural regulator of economic matters, many liberals have found it convenient to support much regulative legislation that was designed to relieve hard industrial conditions. Like a past generation of physicians, they treated symptoms, not having the wit to discern nor the energy to remove causes. They attempted to coddle working people instead of freeing them. American democrats pursued similar legislative tactics, and organized labor has learned to seek legal privileges as earnestly as like advantages are sought by titled favorites of older states.

Legislation of this character is inevitable in any state that in purpose is humanly decent, if the two kinds of property are not clearly distinguished. All attempts to treat alike industrial and institutional property develop inconsistencies leading directly to a reaction that accepts more and more of feudalistic paternalism, sometimes known as conservatism. To succeed, then, democracy must fully endorse the logical consequences of its postulates. Why hesitate? The postulates are true; the logic is sound; the conclusions are valid.

Instead of thus manfully supporting their principles, democrats in America and liberals in Europe have so far deserted their true posi-

tions that voters find little difference between them and their conservative opponents. Liberals in Britain would not support Gladstone's home rule bill for Ireland, but that abused island is now a British dominion. Democrats in America linked themselves to slave holders, and the matter was settled by civil war. Since that event, instead of absorbing the lesson so energetically inculcated, American democracy has assimilated still more of conservative opinion. Consequently we have a confused mass called democrats and including bimetallists, monometallists, protectionists, free traders, anti-monopolists, pro-monopolists, as well as a nondescript host of tariff reformers who would reduce tariff taxes on articles not produced in their localities; which recalls to memory Louisiana senators when sugar is under consideration, and a presidential candidate who declared tariff taxes to be local issues.

But to secure support for the inauguration or continuance of tariff taxes on articles in which they were immediately interested, advocates of such policy find it necessary to support like taxes on articles in which they have no direct interest. This sort of political trading is often called "log-rolling", but found a better description at the hands of Congress-

man Cox, of New York, who characterized it as "reciprocal rascality".

Other criticisms of democracy as readily yield to reasonably careful examination, and much more ingenuity is required to untangle conservative sophistry than to sustain democratic simplicity.

In fact, democracy is well expressed by our popular slogan: "Equal rights for all; special privileges to none". Strict adherence to these affirmations would secure to every citizen the equal status that has invited the most eloquent appeals of statesmen, and the freedom of which poets have foretold. It would bring permanent prosperity to all. It would put an end to the senseless and destroying competition that inevitably follows hard upon private privilege, ignoring common rights, while ruling commercial and professional life. It would introduce the competition that normally obtains among free men, but which is more correctly termed emulation.

Such free competition is the highest form of co-operation. For instance, one desiring clothing selects a pleasing design of satisfactory texture and price, scarcely thinking of the wonderful assistance received from many unknown

sources. To make the cloth, sheep were reared, perhaps on the other side of the globe. Men mined in the bowels of the earth for ore of which the shears that clipped the fleece were made, while others sunk shafts for coal to fuse the ore. Railroads, ships and other transportation facilities were provided to carry the wool and other necessities to market. Cunnings machines were devised to card, spin and weave the wool into cloth. Skilled operatives cut, fitted and sewed the garments. Similar co-operation provided thread, needles, pins, etc. The service of the printing and paper industries were required that accountants might be furnished with convenient forms. And all needed the aid of the building trades to obtain structures in which their work could be carried forward. In fact, some part of nearly the whole industrial machinery of civilization was called into play to furnish a suit of clothing for one individual.

At every point such free competition is open for improvement. Any one who can render any part of this service at less expense to consumers can profit, or "make money", by introducing his better method. Always provided, however, that the state has not by law in some way limited free competition. The opportu-

nity thus to introduce better methods at any point in the entire field of production keeps the co-operative process at highest efficiency. Any failure in this respect is always traceable to unnecessary and injurious legal interference.

This co-operation is so extensive, so refined and so easily adjusted to new methods that the social organization evolved is often called an organism. But as each step in the process is consciously executed, it seems legitimately described as an organization. With its free functioning, genuine democracy permits no interference, either by violence or law. While it is true that tariff taxes, ship subsidies, and other legal interferences, together with a host of local obstructions, still hamper free competition, and while their continuance and extension are urged, with specious arguments advanced in their support, it is also true that opposition to them becomes increasingly emphatic as it is more fully realized that such interferences, checking legitimate competition and stimulating speculation, cause the depressed condition of industry now so largely featured in current literature.

Knowledge of the true situation slowly spreads, but the modern world, with all of its

improvement upon ancient practices, exhibits only a partial view of free competition, and this picture, splendid though it is, merely suggests the magnificent service that would flow from its full development. Such service is, of course, dependent upon freedom, for the labor of each participant is voluntarily contributed, while compensation is determined by efficiency.

With freedom in production and distribution thus established business will no longer be subject to the industrial cycle, for no private monopoly will then have power to absorb the earned income of labor. Farmers will not then be urged to limit their cultivated acreage nor to plow under part of their crops of corn and cotton. Thousands of acres of fruit trees will not then be uprooted, nor will it be necessary, in manufacturing establishments, to "adjust production to demand". With purchasing power permanently fixed at the highest point, the problem will be to find sufficient capital and labor to meet the ever increasing "effective demand".

The greater part of this demand will come from producers directly, but a certain fund will flow into public treasuries through governmental taxation of privileged values. That this fund also will appear as purchasing power

is assured by the well known fact that public revenue is never too large for public requirements.

With the entire product of labor thus utilized as purchasing power, with no one deprived of any part of his earnings, with no private monopoly absorption permitted, and with the value of public power secured to public treasuries, democracy may fairly be considered scientific government.

Government so organized may fairly be called scientific for the same reason that this term is applied to a properly constructed edifice. In either case men conform to the nature of the forces and materials that surround them and with which they must deal. The builder recognizes gravitation and obeys the law of the plummet. He also heeds the cohesive power of brick and stone and the adhesive strength of mortar.

In like manner genuine democratic government, observing that the strong are likely to trespass upon the weak, develops the defensive agency called the police power. Then, too, in each community some place becomes the preferred business or residence locality, thereby acquiring value. Democratic government is

equitably adjusted to this fact by absorbing this value through the agency of the taxing power.

In short, applied science is the most efficient adjustment of the practical matter in hand to the forces of the environment by which it is surrounded, and the democratic organization is the only government that conforms to this rule. Other forms of government ignore the nature of site value, permit it to be privately appropriated, and consequently they become leaning towers of Pisa, soon or late to fall unless their defects are corrected.

Science, then, is systematized knowledge of the action of natural forces; or, as the dictionary says, of principles and facts. Biologists, chemists and other scientists assume, because all experience warrants the assumption, that in like conditions natural forces act in like ways. They study phenomena and their discoveries are called scientific knowledge. The application of such knowledge to practical affairs, made possible by curtailment of feudal privileges, accounts for the great achievements of modern times.

Democratic freedom is the greatest possible encouragement to such study, leaving as it does, all individuals free to pursue any investi-

gations and experiments chosen, subject only to the condition that their activities shall not trespass upon others. In fact democracy is the application of science to political and economic affairs.

All of this seems to be in harmony with the widely accepted theory of evolution, which we are told holds that all life struggles to adapt itself to its environment. Forms that succeed survive; others disappear. Men, however, can and do alter their environment. This alteration may be in the interest of a class, relatively small says the dictionary in its definition of aristocracy, or in the common interest, agreeable to the democratic concept of equal natural rights.

But the notion of natural rights is opposed by many scholars and by at least one highly esteemed supreme court justice. Supporters of the natural-right theory are asked to define "rights". When they say that justice is right they are asked to define "justice". So we finally arrive at the ancient question: "What is Truth?"

It is really astonishing as well as amusing to note the antics of aristocrats in their efforts to avoid formal acceptance of the most ordinary perceptions. Meanwhile, none are more vocif-

erous than these same people in asserting rights, but their claims are based on legality rather than natural justice. To them justice means anathema. As before noted, however, Justices Johnson and Story with Chief Justice Marshall found it convenient, in supreme court decisions, to appeal to "the nature of things".

Still, justice is as easily apprehended by human intelligence as any other ultimate fact. Such facts are, of course, assumed because no other course is possible. Without such assumption the reasoning process is formless. For instance, we are told that all physical things consist of molecules, and these of atoms. An atom is said to contain a nucleus and one or more electrons—the former manifesting positive, the latter negative, electricity. Perfectly clear, is it not? Now, What is electricity? If electricity is elusive, try some common subject: What is a chair, or a potato? These also consist of atoms, which fact, of course, again leads us to electricity. So, what is a chair, or a potato?

Who can tell what gravitation is? In the absence of a definition shall we ignore the rule of the plummet? Such procedure reminds one of Burn's comment upon Edinburgh critics, who he said refined their ideas until they were,

like the thread produced by some weavers in his home country, so fine as to be of no practical use. At all events, ordinary men agree that an unprovoked assault is wrong, while payment of an honest debt is right.

Of course, so long as political and economic knowledge is lacking, the world will be ruled by force. Only as such knowledge is acquired and applied, will force be displaced by justice. Great numbers, perhaps the majority of thoughtful people, even among those calling themselves democrats, still believe that some degree of authoritative compulsion is essential to the maintenance of social order. This belief, vaguely or clearly held, helps to explain the reluctance with which aristocratic power in society is reduced. Indeed, few understand how such reduction may be made without seriously disrupting orderly social relations.

Force, thus firmly established, is able for a time to resist the installation of demonstrated science in social matters. Nevertheless, free competition among people unhampered by any form of tribute is genuine democracy, and is the goal toward which civilization has blindly struggled throughout the whole period of modern history. The gradual disappearance of serfdom, the elimination of feudal tenures,

the abolition of chattel slavery, were but steps in this mighty march.

Further social advance is hindered by public exactions and tribute to private monopolies. Freedom is the condition of such advance, and freedom means more than suppression of violence. It also means public control of public things and private control of private things. This is true despite the remark of Justice Holmes that private property may be taken for public use without paying for it, if we do not take too much. Presumably the court would determine the meaning of "too much", but judicial discretion is a somewhat variable foundation on which to rest human freedom and welfare.

Public invasion of private rights is likely to gain support from his words, though it is opposed by many influential organizations. Usually, however, they resist public interference with manufactories and corporate grants with equal energy. This failure to distinguish between public and private affairs is evinced both by advocates and opponents of extension of public activities. The record of the recent attempt to "save agriculture" by the use of hundreds of millions of dollars of public money

may help to enlighten a few statesmen before the debauch has ended.

At the present time, however, there is great need that we recognize such detrimental action as evidence of confused thought, and as the natural result of partly established democracy. This is especially true of America, where the common expression, "This is a free country", assumes that we have achieved social freedom, and reveals a belief that fundamental institutions are sound in this fair land, though difficulties may arise from careless, incompetent, or dishonest administration. That the evils suffered are inherent in our scheme of government is utterly foreign to common opinion. Indeed, any one who asserts such a thing is looked upon with suspicion if not with enmity.

Considering the character of the information and instruction received from schools, newspapers, magazines, and lectures, it is not astonishing that the masses entertain the belief prepared for them and accept the assumption thrust upon them; but the fact that our cultivated fellow-citizens reveal a similar belief is a matter not so easily dismissed, if we consider their supposed acquaintance with historic facts.

They know that privilege is an advantage to some and in derogation of common right, and that it is a matter frequently brought to attention even on the base-ball diamond. They often hear of it in connection with the race track as well. If one horse is underweighted there is no confusion of thought respecting the character of the contest. The idea, in and of itself, is a commonplace matter. Our better classes, however, seem to prefer the barbarian practice of avoiding mention of tabus. Therefore, reference to the overpowering influence of political force upon industrial activities is avoided.

Thus the assumption that democracy has been established in America ignores the manifest perversity that accompanies many of our commercial and political activities. These rather indicate that we are still under the sway of feudal forces. Corrupt politics was a permanent characteristic of that system. Indeed, one of our early aristocratic statesmen cynically replied to the assertion that the British form of government is best, if it could be rid of its corruption, by saying that without its corruption it was not possible. Point is given to this reply by the notorious methods by which George III, who occupied the throne at that time, maintained control of parliament. Ap-

parently it was assumed that bribery is a royal prerogative. At any rate, our mixture of individual responsibility and feudal privilege makes clean politics rather more than doubtful.

Another notion that has widely been assumed, even by supposedly competent students, and supported by professors holding positions in institutions of learning of first rank, is that while it was easy to make a living in America at the time of the revolution when there were only three or four millions of people in the country, who were scattered along the Atlantic seaboard, it is now difficult to accomplish the same end because the land is "filled up" by over one hundred and twenty millions.

These figures are impressive, but suppose we compare population with space: A quarter of a city block is usually looked upon as a spacious residence site. Let us imagine each group of five persons so provided. Thus 125 feet by 125 feet, facing streets sixty feet in width, making 155 feet by 155 feet, or 24,225 square feet, a little over half an acre, for each such group. This devotes less than 13,800,000 acres to residences, which is less than three-fourths of one percent of the territory of the United

States, exclusive of outlying possessions and dependencies.

When we think of the thousands who live in hotels and apartments, where they are piled on shelves one above another, we may imagine how small a fraction of one per cent of our country is actually devoted to homes. Certainly very few families really occupy a quarter of a city block. Even in small towns such spaciousness is rare. Still it is a perfectly feasible arrangement, for the whole population, so distributed, would cover less territory than three-fourths of the state of Maine, leaving the rest of our land available for production, education or whatever activities might engage our attention.

This notion of excessive numbers of human beings, is a theory credited to Malthus, who taught that men tend to multiply faster than wheat or meat and that the earth would soon be unable to feed its teeming millions. Actual experience, however, proves that finding a market is the real problem. In fact, production is so excessive that the United States government in 1933 caused millions of acres of cotton be plowed under, while 6000 acres of peach trees were uprooted in California alone. The

destruction of corn, hogs, and cattle is still progressing. Thus vanishes the Malthusian delusion in the face of facts.

Let us observe the process of community development: Today a given territory is occupied, and as it grows in population a commercial center, or city, comes into being. At some point in this municipality business activities locate. Here more business can be done in less space and time than at any other point. Therefore, all business and professional people seek this location, and it becomes increasingly valuable.

Shrewd men see that possession of land similarly situated is profitable, and rapidly secure control of available sites. As the city continues to grow more business is required, but those who would engage in trade and manufacture find nearby points held at prices that would absorb a large part of their anticipated gains. Many then seek localities farther from the business center, and thus another industrial site is developed, but is hampered by the same kind of speculation that absorbed their gains at the first center. Of course, too, their profits are still drained away by increasing taxes.

In this way the city spreads irregularly with much territory vacant or devoted to meager or

inadequate improvements. Evidently both public and private enterprises are hindered and burdened with unnecessary cost by this process. Street paving and other public improvements are carried past vacant lots. Delivery vehicles pass these lots. Men, women, and children pass them to reach objectives. Inferior building is induced, making destruction by fire more frequent, thereby adding to insurance rates on all buildings. It is an expensive method of administration, and is maintained for no purpose save to aid speculations that are of no benefit to society. Finally some leave for virgin soil in another part of the country, as they have been doing for over a hundred years, but only to repeat the mode of administration that drove them from their former homes.

Our people have thus been scattered, or have scattered themselves, throughout three millions of square miles of territory. They have invaded the home of the sage brush and the cactus, where little can be produced, and where transportation to market of that little costs ten times what it would cost if they could use the vacant lands within and surrounding our cities which are the best markets in the world.

By taxing the value of lots and lands and

avoiding tax on products, democracy eliminates the speculation that causes such abnormal and costly development, while making the holding of vacant lots and lands unprofitable. In such conditions, the city expands as population increases, but without the compulsion and the exhaustion of profits that speculation in land values enforces, and also without the drain occasioned by taxation of products and processes of industry.

Imagine industry and trade carried forward without the burden of taxes, licenses, fees, and fines, and also without the expense and annoyance of meeting the cost of speculative values in the sites that they occupy and use. The greater consideration for business men, however, is that their customers also would be free from taxes and the obstacle of speculation. Demand for their products, therefore, would be constant and limited only by the quality of wares and their own industry.

Again, on the assumption that democracy is already installed, many thousands, whose native inclination leads them to support popular government, are confused when the evils of the existing situation are revealed. As soon, however, as this assumption is cast aside, and democracy is seen to be in process of growth,

though still hampered by remnants of feudalism, this confusion gives way to courage and clear perception of the actual situation. Pessimism then yields to optimism; doubt is displaced by faith.

Such faith is fairly warranted by the facts, for the progress in all of the arts of civilization that has been so conspicuous a feature of modern times has almost wholly been under the auspices of societies strongly impregnated with democratic belief and practice. In fact, the pervading inspiration, ever increasing in power, of this latest civilization is expressed by the words of the American declaration of independence and the French declaration of the rights of man and the citizen. High conservative opinion informs us that these notions or beliefs have been accepted by all civilized nations as "the gospel of modern times".

If, instead of accepting any of the various misconceptions of democracy or antagonisms to it, we recognize the fact that it is still in a formative state, but that even in this undeveloped condition has achieved much good by partly overthrowing feudal privilege, or at least loosening the fetters that had been riveted upon mankind, we are at once in possession of a valid reply to every adverse criticism ad-

vanced by ignorance, prejudice or tyrannical design at democratic faith, hope, and achievement.

Of course, a state may be democratic in form while clearly aristocratic in fact. In truth, the so-called modern democratic states have been, and are, chiefly of this description. This is not astonishing when we remember that these states came into being at a time when very few people had more than the vaguest notions of the necessary machinery of democratic government, though they entertained a stern determination to escape from the evils that had been imposed upon them by tyrants.

History, therefore, can furnish only defective illustrations of democracy in operation. It follows, of course, that early leaders in democratic development were compelled to feel their way into the relatively unknown. Because of this manner of development, democracy has always been stronger in opposing aristocratic aggression than in advancing constructive policies. But it will progress more rapidly by frankly formulating its essential program without reservation.

Such a course of action would even invite the kindly consideration of honest and intelligent aristocrats, for many of them already

know that antagonistic interests in privileged society doom it eventually to destruction, either from external attack or from internal factions, but more likely from both.

For instance, the Greek civilization, in some respects the finest ever known, was bottomed on slavery. Its parts, jealous of each other and incapable of cohesion, fell before centralized power. The later Romans neglected the virtues and rough justice of their ancestors, divided their people into the strong and the weak by legal discrimination, thus developing powerful disintegrating forces, and finally collapsed before barbarian hordes that, if confronted by early Romans, would have proved no more than serious annoyances.

The English revolution again revealed the characteristic weakness of aristocracy. It could not let the mass of the people alone, but must guide, order and tax them, and for this disservice it would absorb all products above the most meager necessities. The French repeated the experience so thoroughly that Carlyle could not refrain from reference to the "French featherhead aristocracy".

In our own land, too, slave holders followed tradition by opposing any and all attempts to rid our country of the sin of human slavery,

ultimately indulging in civil war. Today, however, the beneficiaries of slavery would not, if they could, re-establish the institution; for one would hardly expect slave labor to run modern machinery successfully. In our time, too, Russian aristocracy disappeared in the ocean of its own stupidity. Similar records mark the course of smaller states. The history of the world, in fact, is merely the story of the rise and fall of one aristocratic state after another.

Because of Rome's defense of privileged power, Marius slaughtered the rich, and Sulla devoted similar attention to the poor. Our own slave holders, like Philip of Spain, Charles of England, George III, and Louis XVI, strove in the same unholy cause without avail. British politics today tends to repeat the same old story, while our own aristocrats vainly copy errors long ago discredited.

Few of these in any age were able to perceive that true conservatism could not be separated from honesty in primary social relations, and that, therefore, an unguarded legal privilege in private possession could not be wisely defended by those calling themselves conservatives—while understanding the real meaning of the word. Instead, with vast

energy and even violence, they have insisted upon supporting a power that would inevitably destroy themselves, as the record overwhelmingly demonstrated that it always has done.

Their reliance has been aristocratic government, which appears to them so friendly and so gracious, but it always fails. Democracy alone can be made permanent. It, and it only, can resist the steady encroachment of special interests. It does this by the simple process of reserving to itself the profits of special interests, that necessarily evolve in a growing society. By the same act it preserves for private pockets the untaxed earnings of private effort.

Such disposition of the powers of human society is absolutely just, and justice alone renders peace possible, or even desirable. Such disposition is also full recognition of the fact that, within the limits of their capacity and the natural environment in which they exist, unless artificial restrictions are imposed, men are free.