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ARTICLE VII.

THE GROWTH OF DEMOCRACY.

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GENUINE democracy is of slow growth. The mushroom variety that springs up in a night perishes as suddenly, and gives place to the absolutism of a Venetian aristocracy or a Napoleonic autocrat. When a people angered by long oppression and smarting with personal sufferings rise up to demand their rights without giving any attention to their duties, it is a manifestation of spurious democracy. Oppression by the multitude soon becomes more intolerable and destructive than oppression by an autocrat, and a swift reaction follows. True democracy is possible only when there is quite as much thought about the rights of others as about one's own, when duties are made more prominent than rights. True democracy, in its recognition of men not according to their adventitious conditions but for themselves, is simply a realization of the golden rule. "The democracy of Christianity" is not merely a sounding phrase: it expresses the central relation of the teaching of Jesus to the perfected social order.

The cry for liberty may indicate only a wish to be free from responsibility, a desire to exchange orderly regard to one's obligations for unrestrained license. Clamor about equality may be as full of iniquity as the promise of the old farmer to arbitrate impartially between two neighbors because he "hated them both alike." Liberty and equality of such sort will never lead to fraternity. Because so-called democratic move-

ments have too often been lacking in the Christian element of love, they have disappointed the hopes of men, and have failed to regenerate the world.

It is a mistaken pessimism that infers from such disappointments that democracy is an iridescent dream. History has not been an aimless repetition of despotism following anarchy. Though sweeping back and forth with many a curve, like a meandering river, history shows a constant movement toward the ocean of universal brotherhood.

It is easy to make an appalling catalogue of wrongs and oppressions that still survive in the parts of the world that are grouped under the name Christendom. How tardy has been the recognition of the rights of the people in Russia! Whether this late recognition means much or little, we are not yet sure. There are other parts of the continent where political liberty is far from complete. Where the political freedom is largest, there may still be great inequality of social treatment. There may also be industrial conditions that make the lot of thousands little better than bondage. Every exclusion of men from a share of life's opportunities, every taking of unjust gain, is a sin against the spirit of brotherhood. Whether it be exploiting uncivilized colonies for exorbitant revenue, or holding the ignorant in peonage on cotton plantations, or getting rich at the expense of the life-blood of helpless immigrants in city sweat-shops, every offense against the golden rule is an assault on genuine democracy. The poorer the victim of injustice, the more heinous is the assault. A fraud against an equal may be only fraud. When committed against the helplessly weaker, it shows also the spirit of caste, which is the deadly foe of democracy.

Genuine democracy demands equal treatment of all, forbids secret favors to some patrons that must be paid for by the rest.

bars discriminations to rob some for the benefit of others. With double emphasis it bans malfeasance in office, whether it be in a business position, where one is trusted with other people's funds, or in a political office, where one has been placed, not to serve himself, nor his family, nor his district, but to serve the whole public. To use one's position in a financial institution to provide fat sinecures for one's sons and nephews, or to employ political influence to fill one's purse with unearned gains, is flat treason against democracy. When such ends are accomplished by the acts of the demagogue in the name of devotion to the interests of "the dear people," the treason is doubly odious. It is betrayal with a kiss.

There have been recently so many exposures of fraud in both the business and the political world that it has required only a few months to make the word "graft" generally current in its new base meaning. Many and diverse and outrageous as are these manifestations of wrong-doing, they should not be allowed to hide the better side of current life. The daily newspaper is not a mirror of life. The newspaper thrives on the unusual and the shocking. A tragedy or a crime will sell ten copies where a deed of notable kindness will sell one, and the statement of some man's ordinary honesty will sell none. The Catholic bishop spoke with penetration when he said that the events of a thousand well-conducted convents would not supply a column of "news" for the daily paper. The quiet virtues of the multitude attract so little attention that it has been truly said, "Happy are the people who have no history." The biblical book of Judges leaves the impression of rough violence and brutal crime as the chief characteristic of Israel's life after Joshua. The book of Ruth corrects that impression by its simple story of affection and faithfulness in lowly life. It is no doubt a truer picture of the

prevailing spirit of the period than is given in the closing chapters of Judges.

The recent uprising of the people to overthrow corrupt rings to which they had long been in subjection, the vigorous movement to shake out trickery and parasitism from the life insurance companies, the rising determination to find a way to secure equal dealing from transportation and other great corporations, are conclusive evidence that the heart of society in our day is not corrupt, that the ideal of brotherhood, with all it implies both of rights and duties, has not been lost.

Similar reasons for hopefulness can be found in other quarters. The republican form of government in France has long since passed its majority, and to-day looks far more stable than monarchy in some other parts of Europe. More important than the form of democracy is the spirit of the people's life. Who can make even a transient stay in Paris without noting the many parks and palaces, once devoted to royal or aristocratic use, now open to the common people and freely used by them? The everyday attire, the frequent occupation with some simple needlework, the unrestrained children's voices, all testify to a large element of genuine democracy in the life of the republic. That Belgium has a king with little enough regard for the people of the Congo State, unhappily left to his tender mercies, does not prevent one's finding in Brussels much the same democratic atmosphere as in Paris. That Holland has a queen does not abate the constant feeling that one is there in the land of liberty.

On passing to England one experiences a mingling of gratification and disappointment. England has long been far advanced in the recognition of equal rights before the law. This is a large part of true democracy. Where England is backward is in the undue emphasis she still puts on the rights of

property. Her successful industrial and commercial energy has naturally been accompanied by strenuous views of ownership. Yet Englishmen settling in New Zealand have broken with the old traditions, and have greatly restricted individual property rights, especially in land. In England itself nothing calls out a more determined approval from a thoughtful audience of the common people than a protest against permitting thousands of acres of productive land to be withdrawn from agriculture to make a hunting-park for a nobleman or a millionaire. The growing spirit of democracy is sure in the not distant future greatly to modify the English land tenure. There are many indications that the ownership of land is not considered absolute. From time immemorial the right of eminent domain has sufficed for condemning land whenever it was needed for laying out a new street or widening an old one. While London is still dotted with exclusive parks, fenced with iron, secured with locks, and shut even from the gaze of common people by thick shrubbery, not a few such parks have already abandoned their exclusiveness, and are now thrown freely open. The opinion is common that many more of these will soon be popularized. Some times this will be done by the voluntary act of the present owners, moved to it by the growing spirit of democracy. In other cases it will be done by municipal purchase, as part of the wise movement for city playgrounds, that has already wrought such changes in Boston and New York. All this is in the same line with the increasing number of men of great wealth who are devoting their riches, not to personal show, but to public uses, and the growing prevalence of the feeling that he who devotes no part of his large accumulations to the general good shows himself so base as to be a proper object of contempt.

Very suggestive of the pervading spirit of democracy is

the attitude of art in recent times. When before did art take themes so often from lowly life? The painter Millet needed no royal trappings for his canvas, but found inspiration for his marvelous genius in the peasants of his birthplace occupied with their ordinary toil. Constantine Meunier of Brussels has been inspired in the same way by coal-miners and workers in iron mills. He has enriched sculpture with many figures setting forth the fidelity, the courage, and the pathos of their lives of toil and danger. In the galleries of Holland no modern painter holds the attention more effectively than Joseph Israels. He, like Meunier, has dignified the life of the common toiler and the poor. Fishermen and their families, farm laborers, even rag-pickers, are not beneath his artistic notice. Into the sympathetic delineation of the human spirit manifesting its unquenchable nobility in sordid surroundings, Israels has thrown his whole soul. Such manifestations of art indicate more than deliberate effort to change the aspect of society: they show the drift of the time toward an all-embracing human sympathy, which is true democracy.

The same increasing regard for the common people appears in the attitude of writers on economic subjects. The economists are turning sociologists. They are concerned with the welfare of factory working-people as well as with the increase of factory products. When they speak of social progress they are found to have something in mind far higher than the multiplication of merchandise. The economists were once regarded as heartless elaborators of the "dismal science." Today they care more for human character and human comfort than for material goods. Recent text-books and periodical literature are full of the evidence of this attitude. It appears in the increased weight given to the psychological element in value. It shows itself in discussions of the eight-hour day

and of coöperation. It is especially manifested in the respectful consideration given to the aims and methods of labor-unions, and the sober, quiet discussion of such once burning questions as progressive taxation and land tenure.

None of these things indicate the approach of socialism. The desire to sit under one's own vine can never be driven out of human nature. Nothing can ever be devised to take the place of ownership as an incentive to industry, skill, and economy. It is only where ownership pushes its claims so far as to smother these qualities in the multitudes by closing their avenues to ownership that society will rise in self-preservation to put limits to the power of ownership. In the more advanced countries of the world there is no need of revolution to make society genuinely democratic. The steady development of principles already incorporated in social and civic life, the slow alteration of customs to meet changing conditions, will in most lands bring in the desired increase of general welfare. The only peril is from those who still attempt too long to build vain dykes against the current.