

INTRODUCTION

AMERICA is no longer the New World, but the Modern World. It is a world which ought to awaken our interest and our fellow-feeling, for, whilst owing its origin to us, it has grown and developed outside the routine that we abhor and in the midst of the liberty of which we dream.

We fondly imagine that America, as a republic, must be the ideal nation of equality. This is quite a mistake, for nowhere are the lines of demarcation so distinct and nowhere are they so jealously maintained.

Towards the seventeenth century, America was open to all the oppressed and the discontented and to all the adventurously inclined of the Old World. Dutchmen came and settled there in order to escape from the Spanish yoke. English Puritans, persecuted by the Stuarts, came, and sectarians, too, from everywhere, in the wake of William Penn, the Quaker. These emigrants, whom political or religious causes had forced to leave their country, did not mix with the adventurers who had invaded America. Their religious faith and their principles were as a holy ark, keeping them above the rising flood of immigration. They formed a caste apart, and this caste constituted "society." For a very long time, this caste was quite inaccessible to *parvenus*. Some thirty or forty years ago, the plutocracy which could boast of three degrees of descent, and of enormous wealth, forced its way into this sacred circle. It grouped itself around the