

roads run from point to point. But he catches the true perspective of things better than if he were standing among them. The great features of the landscape, the valleys, slopes, and mountains, appear in their relative proportion: he can estimate the height of the peaks and the breadth of the plains. So one who writes of a country not his own may turn his want of familiarity with details to good account if he fixes his mind strenuously on the main characteristics of the people and their institutions, while not forgetting to fill up gaps in his knowledge by frequent reference to native authorities. My own plan has been first to write down what struck me as the salient and dominant facts, and then to test, by consulting American friends and by a further study of American books, the views which I had reached.

To be non-partisan, as I trust to have been, in describing the politics of the United States, is not difficult for a European, especially if he has the good fortune to have intimate friends in both the great American parties. To feel and show no bias in those graver and more sharply accentuated issues which divide men in Europe, the issues between absolutism, oligarchy, and democracy; between strongly unified governments and the policy of decentralization, this is a harder task, yet a not less imperative duty. This much I can say, that no fact has been either stated or suppressed, and no opinion put forward, with the purpose of serving any English party-doctrine or party-policy, or in any way furnishing arguments for use in any English controversy. The admirers and the censors of popular government are equally likely to find in the present treatise materials suited to their wishes; and in many cases, if I may judge from what has befallen some of my predecessors, they will draw from these materials conclusions never intended by the author.

Few things are more difficult than to use aright arguments founded on the political experience of other countries. As the chief practical use of history is to deliver us from plausible historical analogies, so a comprehension of the institutions of other nations enables us to expose sometimes the ill-grounded hopes, sometimes the idle fears, which loose reports about those nations generate. Direct inferences from the success or failure of a particular constitutional arrangement or political usage in another country are rarely sound, because the conditions differ in so many respects that there can be no certainty that what