

# LECTURE.

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## DEFECTS OF OUR SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT.

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Three years ago I had the honor of reading before the members of this Society, a paper upon "Various Forms and Functions of Government." I have selected this year a kindred subject:—one in fact which I intended to have formed a portion of that paper. As I proceeded, however, I found the basis of my argument developed to such goodly dimensions, that I should have taxed beyond measure the patience of my audience had I attempted to build upon it the superstructure, the plan of which I had already decided upon. I dare say, therefore, I shall be excused, if in leading up to my present subject I repeat, in as concise a way as I am able, some of the main features of the paper referred to.

In the first place then, I asserted that forms of Government or Constitutions to be enduring should be the product or outgrowth of the nature and life; the habits and instincts of the people, rather than the result of their deliberate purposes; that their development should be progressive, like the development of individual man, to which that of a nation is markedly analogous; and therefore that Governmental functions, in their nature and extent, must materially differ, in different stages of civilization, in different states of society.

When mankind was set apart in families, a problem was thereby propounded, in the solution of which most of the principles of National Governance might also be evolved. In the development of individual man, there would seem to be four clearly defined periods of growth, each of which calls for a mode of treatment peculiar to itself; namely, infancy, childhood, adolescence and manhood. The first stage calls for unlimited control on the part of the parent, unquestioning submission on that of the child. The vicious and selfish tendencies of human nature assert themselves with his earliest breath, and unrestrained by reason can only be held in check by the efforts of a stronger will. So in National Life the earliest stage of progress has generally (so far as history bears reliable record) been that of reclamation from a state of barbarism and ignorance through the instrumentality of an absolute despotism. In their primitive state of savagery, each member of a tribe or nation, carved out his own fortunes by sheer physical force—Might was the sole measure of Right—and the weakest had practically to acknowledge the force of the doctrine of the survival of the fittest; until by virtue of greater prowess, some powerful chief.