

tance at the present juncture in British politics. The recent struggle was in no sense a struggle between either the throne or the "classes," as against the "masses," for the right to rule. The sovereignty of the people was taken for granted by all parties. The principle of Democracy is thus accepted as settled in the British Empire, and we may believe settled for all time, by which rather misty expression we mean, of course, for a time extending as far into the future as it is worth while for us to attempt to foresee the operation of similar causes under similar conditions. The idea of a voluntary surrender by the people of the power for which they have so long struggled and which they have at last so completely—we will not say in their hands, but within their reach—is hardly conceivable. Such a surrender would simply mean that a growingly intelligent people had either grown tired of the task of self-government, for which in the nature of things they must be becoming better fitted year by year, or that they had finally become convinced of their own incapacity for self-rule, and had agreed by a sufficient majority to surrender the reins of government—not simply of administration or executive authority—into the hands of a few or of one. The political revolution which some foresee, by which some "man on horseback," some strong-minded soldier, shall effect a *coup d'état* and make himself dictator, is equally inconceivable. The conditions are radically different from those which obtained in any country under which a revolution by means of the army was ever effected. British soldiers are British citizens and volunteers at that, not mercenaries, conscripts, or slaves. To enslave the nation would be to enslave themselves.

That is but a shallow conception of the true meaning of democracy which would make it inconsistent, as some of our Republican neighbours seem to do, with any but a republican form of government. No people could be said to be truly self-governing if they were not at liberty to choose and use any form of administration which they deemed simplest and best, or which they might have found by experience to be reasonably effective. As a matter of fact, it has been repeatedly shown that the people of the United Kingdom, under their limited monarchy, are more directly self-ruling, and so more completely democratic, than the people of the United States, with their much belauded written Constitution. We do not say that the theory of a Ruler of the State appointed directly by the voice of the people may not be more ideally democratic than that of an hereditary monarch. But a truly autonomous people must, *ex hypothesi*, have just as good a right to choose the one method as the other, and a truly wise one will select that which works most smoothly at a given time and under given circumstances. Should the people of Great Britain have cause given them at any time to be dissatisfied with their reigning Monarch, there is no power within or without their unwritten Constitution which could prevent them from making any desired change. There are certain usages which have come down from earlier times, which may sometimes grate upon the feeling of extremists, such as the use of the first personal pronoun somewhat freely in Queen's speeches at the opening and closing of Parliamentary sessions, but everyone knows that those expressions are put into Her Majesty's mouth by Ministers who are responsible to the people, through their representatives, for every word of even that speech.

The United Kingdom is, then, essentially and effectively a democracy, just so far, at least—and that is now very far—as every one who is justly entitled to citizenship has the power of the franchise. But the questions of methods of administration, of the fair adjustment of the burdens and the just distribution of the privileges and the property of the

nation, as distinct from the individual—on a hundred such questions as these there are yet wide differences. On this arena the struggle between Home-Rule and Unionism, Individualism and Socialism, Capital and Labour, will no doubt go on vigorously, with fluctuating results, it may be perpetually, though with a constant approach toward certain central ideas and principles. But again let it be noted that these are not conflicts between democracy and some other claimant for supreme authority, but between the different sections of the democracy itself. It is doubtful whether the time to "rest and be thankful" will ever come to earnest patriots, any more than to ambitious politicians. Perhaps it is well, for anything is better than stagnation, and stagnation would probably be the fate of a people who no longer had anything worth striving for by way of improvement of their political and social condition.

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Ruskin and His Message.

IT is no light matter in these last years of the nineteenth century to confess Ruskin before men. To the irreverent and facetious multitude he is a "crank," endowed with great genius, to be sure, and now and then showing extraordinary shrewdness, wisdom, and spiritual insight, but first of all he is a crank. The more thoughtful find in him a most puzzling combination of sense and nonsense, of extraordinary insight and extraordinary folly; and in their bewilderment they put him aside altogether, or read him only for the grace of his style, the truth and beauty of his description, or the elevation of his thought. For, after the critic has exhausted his powers of satire and burlesque over the "absurdities of Ruskin," he, in general, graciously admits, as a concession to your simple hero-worship, that the literary quality of him is unequalled. He is a "word-painter" (abominable phrase), these critics say, a great virtuoso, but not a thinker nor a leader of men.

But there is another view possible, a view of Ruskin that has been and is entertained by many of the best minds of the century, and especially by men of moral and spiritual power. The more unfavourable view prevails largely because the man and his writings are not known as a whole; people read bits of him—and it is often the more eccentric utterances that are put before the public—and they go away offended, not knowing the man nor his manner. Dr. Sanday has said that it requires special powers of discernment to separate the wheat from the chaff in Ruskin's works. This is, perhaps, true; the reader certainly requires to have special sympathy. If he takes up a book to enjoy the pleasure of hearing his own views well expressed or of measuring it by his own superior opinions, if the reader is thrilling with his own opinions and theories, let him keep away from Ruskin—or any other original writer—for no good can possibly come to him. But if he is prepared to go out of himself, and to sit at the feet of another greater than he, and for the time to see with his eyes and feel with his heart, then he can read Ruskin, and fairly criticise him. For after he has thus listened, it is the reader's part to stand aside, resume his own individuality, and test the theories and conclusions of the author by his own knowledge and insight. Ruskin himself demands only an earnest hearing, and requires every man to obey the dictates of his own enlightened mind.

The most devout admirer will admit in Ruskin exaggeration, eccentricity, a marvellous dogmatism, and much else that is reprehensible. His best friends have often been in despair over some of his extreme or whimsical views, and his frequent violence and extravagance of language. And these faults undoubtedly have seriously impaired his influence, especially among unimaginative people, to whom the poet and prophet is ever a complete enigma. But it must be remembered that Ruskin is a humorist, that he rather likes to shock people, and is overfond of paradox. Then, he is strangely careless in his utterances, taking no thought for his reputation. No man has so fully opened his life to the public. For half a century he has lived in a light as fierce as any that beats upon the throne; we know Ruskin thoroughly; there are no "disclosures" to come. Yet the verdict of to-day among the best minds is that the exaggeration,