

was primarily a democracy, the ideal democracy, fraught with lessons for Europe, and above all for his own France. What he has given us is not so much a description of the country and people as a treatise, full of exquisite observation and elevated thinking, upon democracy, a treatise whose conclusions are illustrated from America, but are in large measure founded, not so much on an analysis of American phenomena, as on general views of democracy which the circumstances of France had suggested. Democratic government seems to me, with all deference to his high authority, a cause not so potent in the moral and social sphere as he deemed it; and my object has been less to discuss its merits than to paint the institutions and people of America as they are, tracing what is peculiar in them not merely to the sovereignty of the masses, but also to the history and traditions of the race, to its fundamental ideas, to its material environment. I have striven to avoid the temptations of the deductive method, and to present simply the facts of the case, arranging and connecting them as best I can, but letting them speak for themselves rather than pressing upon the reader my own conclusions. The longer any one studies a vast subject, the more cautious in inference does he become. When I first visited America eighteen years ago, I brought home a swarm of bold generalizations. Half of them were thrown overboard after a second visit in 1881. Of the half that remained, some were dropped into the Atlantic when I returned across it after a third visit in 1883-84: and although the two later journeys gave birth to some new views, these views are fewer and more discreetly cautious than their departed sisters of 1870. I can honestly say that I shall be far better pleased if readers of a philosophic turn find in the book matter on which they feel they can safely build theories for themselves, than if they take from it theories ready made.

In the effort to bring within reasonable compass a description of the facts of to-day, I have had to resist another temptation, that of straying off into history. The temptation has been strong, for occasional excursions into the past might have been used not only to enliven but to confirm and illustrate statements the evidence for which it has sometimes been necessary to omit. American history, of which Europeans know scarcely anything, may be wanting in colour and romance when compared with the annals of the great states of the Old World; but it is eminently rich in political instruction. I hope that my American readers,