

—remarked upon as a characteristic fault of English writers, is to be avoided not merely because it wearies a reader, but because it leads the writer to descant as fully upon matters he knows imperfectly as upon those with which his own tastes and knowledge qualify him to deal. I shall endeavour to omit nothing which seems necessary to make the political life and the national character and tendencies of the Americans intelligible to Europeans, and with this view shall touch upon some topics only distantly connected with government or politics. But there are also many topics, perhaps no more remote from the main subject, which I shall pass lightly over, either because they have been sufficiently handled by previous writers, or because I have no such minute acquaintance with them as would make my observations profitable. For instance, the common-school system of the United States has been so frequently and fully described in many easily accessible books that an account of it will not be expected from me. But American universities have been generally neglected by European observers, and may therefore properly claim some pages. The statistics of manufactures, agriculture, and commerce, the systems of railway finance and railway management, are full of interest, but they would need so much space to be properly set forth and commented on that it would be impossible to bring them within the present volumes, even had I the special skill and knowledge needed to distil from rows of figures the refined spirit of instruction. Moreover, although an account of these facts might be made to illustrate the features of American civilization, it is not necessary to a comprehension of American character. Observations on the state of literature and religion are necessary, and I have therefore endeavoured to convey some idea of the literary tastes and the religious habits of the people, and of the part which these play in forming and colouring the whole life of the country.

The book which it might seem natural for me to take as a model is the *Democracy in America* of Alexis de Tocqueville. It would indeed, apart from the danger of provoking a comparison with such an admirable master of style, have been an interesting and useful task to tread in his steps, and seek to do for the United States of 1888, with their sixty millions of people, what he did for the fifteen millions of 1832. But what I have actually tried to accomplish is something different, for I have conceived the subject upon quite other lines. To De Tocqueville America