

Americans are as familiar with elections as with the alphabet. They see the representatives of the people, chosen in various ways, go to their duties in every direction, from township officers to the President and Congress; from the justice of the peace to the Supreme Court of the United States. We do not stop to consider that this representative government is vital to American liberty and that, without it, we should pass under the yoke of arbitrary rule. Knowledge of its origin and history can alone make us comprehend our debt. No youth should leave school without knowing that our Anglo-Saxon forefathers carried representative government from the forests of Germany into England; how it flourished in the hundred-moot, the shire-moot and the folk-moot; how all government was laid prostrate for the moment by William the Conqueror; how, starting again the Great Council of the Norman Kings, the people of England slowly, against their kings, built up a more and more representative government, which developed into the English Parliament and the American Congress of to-day; how the people of England drove to the block and to exile their kings who would rule in defiance of their laws and without the representatives of the people in parliament assembled; and finally how our English fathers came and planted representative government upon the shores of America; how, ever since, those who had known only the hand of a ruler have come here and have been permitted to enjoy the ancient Anglo-Saxon right of joining in the choice of representatives of the people, and so have become rulers themselves.

We settle our disputes by Courts. These were not invented by Washington and Hamilton and Jefferson. I would have children taught that they are not new; that they were not granted by any king; that they were present in the elements which produced the Anglo-Saxon race. The village-moot, the hundred-moot and the folk-moot were all Courts. In all of those Courts disputes were settled according to the customs as stated by the elder-men. This was the making of the common law. After six hundred years William the Conqueror and his successors built upon this Anglo-Saxon foundation the Courts which have developed into the English and American courts of to-day. The recorded decisions of those