

But the unwieldiness of ancient assemblies, coupled with the proverbial fickleness of the masses, made the pursuit of a definite policy almost an impossibility. Any windy demagogue who mingled a little tact with his blustering was often successful in carrying his proposals against a safer or more beneficial plan advocated by a less gifted but more scrupulous adversary. Hence their government was very unstable. But to-day, when every member holds his seat because he has pledged himself to a certain course of action on all vital questions, there is reasonable certainty that the policy of the stronger party will be persistently followed during the natural life of the Parliament.

Another consideration which added to the fickleness of the Athenian *Ecclesia* is the fact that meetings must be held at least four times a month. Thus, in case the policy pursued for the time being appeared to have miscarried in any way, the people dealt with the matter summarily and while under the influence of anger or indignation, a condition of affairs not conducive to clear thinking and careful legislation.

Again, with regard to the method of conducting elections a wide difference is found. At the time when Athenian democracy was at its height almost any citizen might give in his name as a candidate for the office of archon, and the selection was made by the casting of lots. But to-day the number of candidates usually corresponds to the number of political parties, and the election is made by a ballot vote; in theory, each elector independently giving expression to his heartfelt convictions—in practice, often wielding his suffrage in the interests of the party that will pay him most, or voting while his brain is stupefied by drugs smuggled into his system under cover of an election treat. Each system has its disadvantages, but in theory, at least, we of

to-day can claim a great superiority over the ancients.

With regard to the field of legislation there has not been much change, each Assembly dealing with all matters of home and foreign policy. But the *Ecclesia* had supreme and final power in all matters of national law-giving, of war or peace, of external alliances; while to-day the power of the representatives of the people is hampered by other authorities. The effect of such restriction of the power of the Commons is held to be very salutary, but is sometimes felt as a serious inconvenience by the party in power.

In the Executive Department of State Government another contrast is presented. In the early democracies the Legislative Assembly itself attended to the execution of its decrees and enactments. This it did partly by giving over certain duties to the various officers of state and partly by appointing executive committees as occasion required. But to-day the President or Premier of the land is responsible, through his colleagues in the Cabinet, for the proper administration of the laws.

A comparison of the judicial systems reveals considerable difference in custom and procedure. At Athens, through their somewhat elaborate system of dikasteries, the people directly controlled the civil and the criminal courts. Except in cases involving a very small fine, which came under the jurisdiction of an archon, or in the matter of homicide—to deal with which was the peculiar province of the Senate—the popular dikastery alone had power to act, and its decision was final. But in modern democracies is found a graded system of jury courts, where, under certain limitations, appeal may be made from each lower to the next higher court.

Again, a criminal court of to-day is presided over by an expert in criminal law, who is believed to be, and