

which he displayed, at least on one of the occasions for his behaviour upon which he has been much abused—the capture of Pylos.

The fact is that Cleon, even on Thucydides' showing, was a most vigorous and able man, who discerned more clearly than any one of his day, the weakness inherent both in the Athenian character and in the elaborate educational system introduced by Pericles, a system which, even if practicable, was calculated to minister to that weakness. That Cleon was a demagogue is undeniable; if "demagogue" be the right name for one, who being a man of the people and sharing sincerely all popular limitations and prejudices; appeals to these limitations and prejudices in his supporters; but he was a demagogue in the less discreditable, not the more discreditable, sense of the term; he was the real leader of the people, not the mere minister of the popular will; he was the censor and uncompromising opponent of the people, where he thought them mistaken, not the pliant mouthpiece of every momentary majority.

With this force of character he combined eloquence not less forcible. If we can trust Thucydides' version of the speech in which he denounced the wavering will and easily stirred sympathies of the Athenians, he spoke in incisive phrases, some of which still remain after twenty centuries the best expression in brief space of the weakness and the genius of the Athenian mind. Certainly there is no passage in Thucydides, not even in the funeral speech of Pericles itself, which rings in the memory so often as Cleon's summary of Athenian inconstancy. "You criticize your orators as an audience in a theatre the actors; the recital of fact itself you listen to only as to so many eloquent words; you gauge the possibilities of the future by the plausibility of the speaker; you accept for the history of the past, not the facts to which your own eye-witness gives additional certainty, but the mere hearsay of clever invective; best of all men, are you to be deceived by mere arguments, averse to listening to the arguments which time has proved; slaves of each fresh paradox; contemptuous of customary things; anxious each man to be (best of all) himself an orator; if not at least to rival each orator in the speed with which he follows out his thought; and to praise his utterance before it yet has passed the speaker's lips; zealous to divine what each statesman is like to say, but indolent to forecast the issues of his policy; ever dreaming of a life of other conditions than the present; yet ever but half informed of these in which we live; impotent to resist the eloquence that charms the ear, and more like students listening to declaiming rhetoricians than to statesmen pondering a nation's welfare."

Had this been all that was to be said of Cleon, had he been merely a man of the people, with the virtues and defects of his qualities, and gifted in addition with a masculine eloquence and uncompromising convictions, one might have thought of him as an Athenian John Bright. But in reality Cleon finds his counterpart in a less admirable type of popular leader; it is rather William Cobbett than John Bright that he suggests, and even that comparison is very unjust to the English Cleon, who did not despise education itself, if he did despise the chief centres and the chief subjects and the chief depositaries of education of the England of his day. For it seems tolerably clear that from Cleon's time, and owing to Cleon's influence, there appeared in Athenian politics a strain of vehement hostility to education and to the educated. Democracy, which had meant liberty to Pericles, began in Cleon's day to have that other and sordid meaning which is forever contesting with liberty the right to pose as the essential factor of the democratic spirit. Democracy with Cleon began to mean, not liberty for all, but jealousy of the upper classes; class legislation for the benefit of the many and poor; ostracism of the few and wealthier and better educated; in short, envy, hatred, malice and all uncharitableness.

It is not merely that Cleon himself asserts roundly that the masses are better guides of a nation's policy on the whole than the more educated—a half truth, which Cleon himself can hardly have accepted as more than half the truth, since it contradicts the other and compensatory truth which he himself proclaims almost in the same breath, that a democracy is inherently too emotional to stick to any settled policy. It is not merely that Cleon himself protests against scrupulous caution, anxious reflection, no less than

against novel points of view, nimbleness of mind, largeness of sympathy—against anything and everything, in fact, which goes beyond the rough and ready matter-of-fact point of view from which the uneducated and shortsighted are prepared to settle off-hand the most delicate and the least soluble problems of statesmanship; it is not merely that Cleon himself in this way anticipates to some extent the curiously mixed politics of a school of politicians supposed to be an evolution of very modern times and called "Tory-Democrats," politicians who affect to combine with devotion to the cause of the people that same contempt for high-flown speculations and ideal theories, which is supposed to be the mark of toryism; it is not merely that Cleon himself speaks in this vein, but we can trace after his time, in the later books of Thucydides, a general jealousy in Athens of education, a general tendency to the gospel of know-nothing-ism, which is a constant feature in the baser form of democracy both ancient and modern. "The Republic," said the modern high priest of this gospel, Robespierre, "does not want chemists." Precisely in the same spirit, Athens after Cleon's time began not to want philosophers. Even so true a son of the people as Socrates perished because he would persist in taking up his parable against democracy, and because he was suspected of Atheism. "Atheism," said Robespierre again, with even greater audacity, "is wrong because it is aristocratic." On hardly better grounds, Athens put to death or banished, not Socrates only, but other men of note, members of the circle which had gathered around Pericles, in the days when Democracy had meant enlightenment—Phidias, Protagoras, and Anaxagoras.

A fatal gulf between education and democratic politics thus opened in Athens for the first time. In the days of Pericles' power, there had been no such gulf; these two forces, democracy and education, had gone hand and hand, much as they did in England a generation ago, when Mill was only expressing a general opinion when he dropped the famous remark that the conservative, or anti-democratic, was the stupid party. Indeed so general was this opinion then, that few cared to hear more, and few now remember, to Mills' credit, that he was a philosopher as well as a Radical, and capped his aphorism with its complementary truth. "Most stupid men," he said, "are conservatives, and most sciolists or half-educated men are Liberals." In fact, he expressed in sober and academic language, the truth which, in more racy and idiomatic terms, has been embodied in an anecdote told of the late Lord Lytton. "Lord Lytton," said an emancipated lady, whom he had taken into dinner, "how can you be a Tory?—all fools are Tories." "True, madam," replied Lord Lytton, sadly, "but all asses are Radicals." Those who use slang as all language should be used with nicety and precision, will appreciate the distinction. But to return to Cleon and the gulf which he opened between education and democratic politics, it is very easy to see how fatal was this gulf to both parties; it meant for the educated abstention from politics altogether as in Plato's case, or disloyalty and treason to the State, as in the case of Critias and of the other and worse class of Socrates' pupils; it meant for the politicians, more and more of what we now call "machine politics" the tyranny of party; it meant that the moderate and the educated were ostracised from politics as impracticable, "kid glove" politicians; it meant, therefore, that this charge realized itself, and that from want of experience with politics, the moderate and educated did tend to become impracticable purists, as we shall presently see in the case of Theramenes. "To know everything," says Thucydides, "became an offence in the eyes of politicians, for it meant 'to do nothing,' because knowledge involved moderation and scruples—perhaps excessive scruples, and fastidiousness, but most of all was it an offence because it excluded the first of all virtues to the politician—party spirit. "Put pity," said Lamartine, "into your republic, if you want it to last"; but the Athenian Democrats who followed Cleon, count pity, whether for the external foe or the internal party opponent—a fault of weak minds, a refinement of education, an anachronism in practical politicians; and accordingly, for this among other reasons, their republic did not last, but fell not merely through the strength of the external foe Sparta, but through the virulence of the internal dissensions between the rich and the poor, the educated and the Democrats.

And now there appears upon the stage of Athenian