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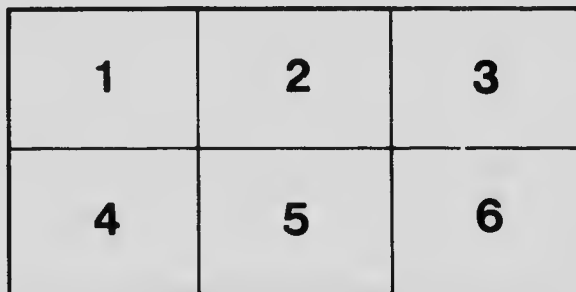
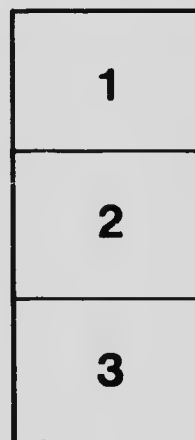
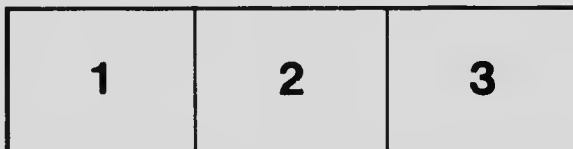
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# **Roman, Greek, English and American Conceptions of Liberty**

**A Lecture Delivered Before The Canadian Club  
of Toronto**

**On Monday, April 20th, 1903**

By

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University of Toronto**

Published for

**The Canadian Club of Toronto**

By

**The Canadian Magazine  
1903**

431856  
19. 1. 45



# ROMAN, GREEK, ENGLISH AND AMERICAN CONCEPTIONS OF LIBERTY

By W. S. Milner

**S**OME years ago I heard the late Bishop of London in a public lecture in Oxford drop the remark: that to know what any people understands by the word "Liberty" is to know that people. He perhaps added "and to know that people's history," for our national conceptions of liberty have grown out of our national experiences.

Modern progress in political studies has destroyed the synthesis of man *versus* the State, unconsciously working in Greek principles. We now can see man is fashioned by society and himself only in society, that freedom and sovereignty are complementary parts of national life, and spring from the same source, the instinct for self-preservation. The isolated animal is free only to perish, but "man is a political animal," and instinctively organizes societies for self-defence. The State begins, says Greek philosophy (and how exquisitely!), for the sake of living, and is continued for the sake of living well. Self-preservation is the origin, noble life the end. The Greeks have time with them. At every step toward that goal of noble living, so distant yet, if something has been acquired for the individual, something also has been surrendered to the whole. Something of personal freedom is continually surrendered for the sake of noble living, and something will continue to be surrendered to the end. Liberty and the power of the State are not incompatible, but how to hold the balance just between State and citizen is the master problem of government, more difficult in the immediate future than ever before in history.

Hammer or anvil was the only political theory known to the ancient world, and survival itself the greatest problem. There was no ancient "bal-

ance of power." Now the Roman, for national existence itself, made a sacrifice of individual liberty of a kind unique in history. His surrender of personal will laid the world eventually at his feet, but it almost extinguished individuality. His idea of liberty we shall understand if we examine what he meant by *imperium*.

As we reconstruct the faint outline of Rome under her kings, we see a citizen body of equals accepting without discussion the king nominated for them by the council of elders, and having once elected him, yielding to his *imperium* an obedience that was absolute and without qualification. We cannot hope to recover the causes which produced that ancient Roman temper, that marvellous spirit of obedience and self-surrender, which so differentiates them from the Greeks. Physical causes certainly operated most strongly. The mountainous network of Greece, the comparatively poor soil, the great extent of coastline, the neighbouring islands—so many stepping-stones—compelled and tempted the Greeks to take to the sea. Nature had determined for them in advance a national type of restless motion. Italy, on the other hand, was much more favourable to agriculture, and consequently to stability and conservatism. Moreover it is, at least, worth considering, what would be the political effect, in the case of Rome, of the occupancy of that little cluster of hills fourteen miles from the Tiber mouth, defensible, yet so near to each other that mutual destruction or amalgamation were the only alternatives. This amalgamation is itself a surrender of individual will. A long discipline of incorporation and obedience lies back of that city of Servius Tullius, a fragment of whose great wall confronts the visitor to Rome as he emerges from the railway station, a line that explains why

no wall was built again for a thousand years.

The ancient Roman head of a family was, indeed, king in his own house. Son, wife and son's sons and their property were under the absolute power of the head of the family so long as he lived. But over him again was the king whose *imperium* must, in the first instance, be obeyed, who might, indeed, allow appeal to the citizen-body from a capital sentence, but was not compelled to do so, who was bound only by custom, and who consulted the citizen-body only when some change in custom was to be proposed, a will, or an adoption to be made, or war to be declared. This leaves the head of a family, in the old Roman sense, king in his own sphere of property and private worship, yet it is very plain that these Romans knew much of duty, but little of civil liberty. It may, therefore, well be repeated that history has seen nothing like this legally regulated civic discipline, which was to characterize Rome during the next three centuries of her greatest political vitality. Obedience, absolute devotion to the *res publica*, the beautiful word which they themselves created for us, is the one great virtue in the beadroll of Republican worthies. Great men and genius are impossible under this national discipline, but, could Rome have created a drama of her own, she would have struck out a new type of hero, the civic martyr in a lost cause. The Greek hero, helpless but questioning in the face of a mysterious destiny, no Roman would have understood.

The overthrow of the kings was no great popular movement toward liberty. As Livy puts it, the beginning of liberty consisted in the fact, that the first consuls held the old regal *imperium* but for a year, and that there were two of them, the veto overriding the command. The *imperium* still survived. Thus the Roman conception of liberty lay in a limiting, but more in a subdivision of the *imperium*. The consuls' *imperium* will be divided again and again among many holders;

the extraordinary tribunate of the plebs will be created—an office without a parallel, an extra cog in the political machine, which will bring it again and again to a standstill, and which will finally be used to wreck it, and at length the various strands of the *imperium* will be gathered up again in the hands of another monarch. And the last voice—indeed the only voice—of liberty will be heard in a degenerate senatorial aristocracy.

For it is inherent in the city-state, which grows out of the family, that power in its first descent, shall fall to the Senate—the great family-heads. Add to this the innate Roman deference to age and experience, and the further consideration that the expulsion of the Tarquins disguises probably the removal of an Etruscan overlordship with greater material resources than early Rome could conceivably have possessed, and we have the explanation which political philosophy gives for the Senate's accession to power. From the standpoint of the constant struggle of human wills it was, however, a direct usurpation of power and probably the Patrician reply to Servius Tullius' incorporation of the Plebeians within the citizen-body. The Senate controls the new consuls. Thus the long struggle of privilege is set up in Roman history.

Yet the Senate well filled the place it seized. By the Ovinian law of 312 B.C. it became really the organ of the whole people, every member of that great council having stood for the suffrage of the people, the majority more than once. In fact, from the Licinian bills to the close of the Hannibalic war Rome may be said to have exhibited to the world the first working of what we call constitutional government—the carrying into effect of the general will of the people, safeguarded by debate among men of age and experience.

For a moment we seem to hear the true note of democracy and to catch a glimpse of an Italian state, but true democracy is impossible when a city-state grows beyond a certain point. Rome had strained the city-state ideal



beyond the utmost conception of the Mediterranean world, but in the acquisition of her first territory over sea there was involved the distant return of monarchy.

The provincial governor carried with him into his province the *imperium*, once more intact, unhampered by colleague or tribune, and, while the Roman toleration of native law and custom was broad and generous, in this fatal contradiction of the *imperium* lay the secret of the Republican failure in provincial government. Rule of dependencies corrupted aristocracy and democracy alike, it removed taxation from the rights for which freemen in all lands contend, and the transformation of the Senate from a guardian of the whole people into the preserve of an hereditary oligarchy was rapid and complete. At the close of this oligarchy's lease of power a returned governor from Africa confesses, "*Imperium nostrum ex optimo atque justissimo crudele intolerandumque factum est.*"\*

It is the irony of history that Romans at last fight for an ideal, when victory would have made any moderate realization of it impossible. For what, after all, was that liberty which sounds so pathetically and so continuously in the pages of Cicero and Tacitus—that liberty for which Cicero perished in his unequal struggle, for which Cato destroyed himself and Brutus played the assassin? In the noblest of those last Republicans, pride of power, in the meanest—and most were mean—the right of a handful of decadent families, to despoil the civilized world. Can men gather figs of thistles? Could freedom broaden slowly down from the deed of a Brutus, who had five town councillors of Salamis starved to death to exact an interest of 48 per cent.? The fall of the Republic was, in truth, a great tragedy, but the "courtesy" of that degenerate Roman Senate had made it necessary in the interest of a more general and more distant freedom.

*Imperium*, then, is deposited once more in the hands of a single holder, who affects to rule in concert with the

simulacrum of a Senate. The monarch is deified at death, and finally enveloped in glory and worshipped on earth. We need not forget the faint show of political interest preserved in the provinces, as, for example, in Gaul, by Augustus' organization of the worship of the genius of Rome and the Emperor, or by the municipal system throughout the Empire. We need not forget that splendid period of righteous and enlightened rule, in the eighty years preceding the death of the Stoic Emperor. But we should like apologists for the new brand of American political rights to say whether they call this liberty. And we need not forget the noble achievements of Roman law. But was not privilege the essence of that law? St. Paul's proud claim of Roman citizenship was but the claim of privilege—the privilege of appeal to the Emperor—a long advance, indeed, beyond the iniquitous working of the *jus commercii*, on which the value of Republican Roman citizenship so largely hinged. In short, Roman liberty was the authority of the one or the few to rule and the privilege of the many.

Christianity, asserting a new principle of human liberty, conquers this magnificent empire, only itself to succumb to the spell of this *imperium*. Catholicity is of the essence of Rome. In the last century of the Roman Empire in the West, a Christian poet thus apostrophizes the mistress of the world: "*Urbem fecisti quod prius orbis erat.*"\* A state, a nation not Christianized Rome itself could build. The Germans, flooding over the barriers and silting gradually into the Roman world, were bringing with them that which was secretly and intrinsically inconsistent with the Roman *imperium*.

Turning now to Greece, when we remember that the ingredients from which the state was constructed were the same as in the case of Rome—the family, the clan, the phratry, the tribe, the village community, the king and council and casual assembly of the people, the worship of ancestors, the ground-work of law and custom,

\* Our *imperium* from having been good and just has become cruel and intolerable.

\* Thou hast a city made of what was erst a world.

all resulting in the city-state, the type of Mediterranean culture—we may well feel astonished at the difference in the political temper developed. In Italy, as Mommsen puts it, the state appears to step forth like Minerva in complete armour, while in Greece the clan holds out against the state long into historical times, and the individual citizen stands out as an entity from a very early date. The political progress is also, in its early stages, that of Rome, from monarchy to aristocracy. But here Greece and Rome part company, Rome going on to fulfil the cycle of decay worked out by Plato, while in Greece most states oscillate backwards and forwards between tyranny and democracy. And in truth the experience of our own generation almost convinces us that this oscillation has in it something normal.

The result, then, was a multitude of little city-states, with a passionate instinct for home rule, forever embroiled in Lilliputian war, grouping themselves for purposes of worship and trade, proudly conscious of a community of race, and, in their great games and common reverence for Delphi, showing a certain instinct towards actual unity, striking out the federal idea again and again, but never attaining political unity until, under the sway of Macedonia, the scorned sister of the great Greek family, they achieved that brilliant historic revenge upon Persia and created a short-lived world-empire, alien to their instincts, whose work presently devolved upon Rome. The most painful pages in Greek history recount the inability of these inveterate home-rulers to combine against the common foe.

As with Rome, so with Greece, we are not wrong in attributing national temper more to physical environment than race, and the features of physical contrast have already been stated. The great exception in this general picture of Greece is, of course, Sparta, and the Spartans remind us of the Romans. Yet nothing could be less like Sparta, apparently, than her western colony Tarentum. Now, Sparta

was essentially a city of the plain, beset, like Rome, by mountains, and compelled as no other Greek state to attain military discipline. At the same time Nature had not given her a background of enforced amalgamation, nor the levelling spirit of commerce. While Athens, on the other hand, the glory of Greece, alone among the Greek states evinced some slight instinct for incorporation. Athens comprised Attica. Is it fanciful to see in this larger citizen-body some blind germ of that larger spirit which rallied these jealous little states against the Persian, which strove for a brief hour to make Athens the school of Hellas, and failing, laid the world in debt for countless lessor in beauty and truth? The Athenians alone became a people, though there are ugly things to be said of their Laconizers and Medizers, her pro-Boers. Then philosophers, too, were against them. In any case geography is a deeper explanation of Greek political character than race.

Resistance then to arbitrary authority and an unconquerable predilection for having something to say in government are the essence of the Greek political temper; and faction is its peculiar weakness, indeed the disease which destroyed most of their city-states. Pericles' boast of the "open-door" comes home peculiarly to Englishmen of our day as they have become more conscious of the meaning of their own empire, and may we not say the same of the Pan-Hellenic idea of the next generation of Athenian statesmanship? True Greek empire lay in this direction. The blood of our race speaks in the veins of us Colonials, but community of national ideals is a bond more powerful than any formal union. And it is just in this colonial expansion of Greece that we best realize the work of that little England. Those old-time voyagers, whose marvellous tales of new worlds are echoed for us in the Odyssey—recall our Frobishers, Drakes and Hawkinses. They dotted the Mediterranean world with their colonies, but each autonomous, and, in true Greek fashion, rarely connected with

the mother city by any political tie whatever.

In the political field, then, the Greeks have liberated an idea. They have made a first contribution towards what the centuries have not yet completed—a reasoned definition of liberty. They have brought into the realm of consciousness an instinct which time will never extinguish on the earth, the instinct which in individuals and states moves toward autonomy.

But they made another contribution of far greater moment. They, first of men, on the Ionian coast, advance the claim that the universe is explicable to human reason. They question their own theology, the foundations of duty and of society itself. They question the legitimacy of slavery, the very basis of ancient culture. Of all our debts to Greece none is so great as this freedom of thought.

The political life-time of Greece is short as that of Rome is long—both perish from the defects of their virtues. This individualism and rationalism of Greece inflicted deep wounds upon Republican Rome, and once again the Greek spirit was destined to meet its great antagonist when the conflict was joined between Protestantism and Catholicism. For in Greece and Rome we have two eternal principles standing out in naked simplicity, individualism and obedience, self-assertion and self-effacement, both self-destructive. Greece and Rome between them have made the ultimate appearance of democracy inevitable, but they have also shown its Scylla and Charybdis. Tyranny is the degenerate form of submission to authority, faction of individual self-assertion. Between these extremes it would seem that most popular government is doomed to oscillate until religion and science unite in establishing social justice. I say "most" popular government, because I come now to what I believe is an exception.

Many of us have been taught to regard Anglo-Saxon civil and political liberty as the collective body of rights won by fierce and continuous

struggle from absolute and irresponsible power. William the Conqueror acquired England in undisputed, absolute personal ownership, acknowledging no obligation, the defence of the realm and administration of justice within it. Justice and peace, however, were of the royal favour, for which the rents of the land were a compensation. This claim of vested right obtained a legal expression when John alienated the land and all its appurtenances to Pope Innocent, who reconveyed it to him for the rent of 1,000 marks, which was paid for over a century. Resistance won the Great Charter, the first step in a long series of deprivations of vested right, which summed up a tentative English civil and political liberty.

But this constitutional method is now abandoned. We can now see that the foundations of our liberty vastly antedate the charter, for they lie in English character, as it was carried from its European home. Ultimately the English will administer their own affairs and in their own way, they will submit only to laws and taxes which they have themselves ordained. They have all the inveterate Greek instinct for autonomy. But the Greek, at bottom, could not consider himself as apart from his state. In short, there is a collectivism in the Greek hardly less than in the Roman, which belongs to the city state. Now Tacitus felt instinctively this difference in type from Mediterranean culture. He puts his finger on the very traits which explain the difference in the evolution of the Teutonic state. (1) They do not dwell in cities, he says, and even in their village communities, which are scattered in random fashion, they do not live contiguously. We were never gregarious. (2) They have a strange respect for their women. (3) In speaking of their religious notions, could he have had our retrospect, he would have said they have no localized gods. The city with its localized gods is the root of Mediterranean culture. (4) He dwells on their "comitatus." Here is the very kernel of the difference. The Greek, and very specially the Ro-

man, state starts from the father of the family, the head of its worship of ancestors; the Teutonic from this confraternity in arms. We know, further, that their kings were chosen only for time of war. Now here clearly is English political character, as was pointed out by Gibbon and Hume before it was dwelt on by constitutional historians. But this character, too, as Greek and Roman character, is not a matter of race. Mother earth has had her will of us. One may simply ask this question—What is the bearing of that forest and fen life of our ancestors, in contrast with the abundance of small defensible hills in the Græco-Roman world? But I am not prepared to fall in with the doctrine, that physical environment is the whole explanation of primitive national types. Primitive religion may go deeper, or it may only push the explanation still further back. But the hopeless nature of this problem we may see when we reflect that in Italy the Samnite sacred woodpecker evidences a stage immensely back of the religion of the ancient city state, *i.e.*, totem worship. I am insisting only that national character is not a matter of race, but of national experience.

Here, then, at the very outset, are deep differences in the Græco-Roman and English political character. The primitive cell of their future form of state seems almost the same, but there is something prophetic in the acclamation of the Homeric assembly, the sober legality of question and answer in the Roman, and the tumultuous shield-clashing of the ancient English host. The Greek will debate, the Roman legalise, the Englishman will fight. But long national experience, far different from either Greek or Roman, has tempered this fighting instinct. He will fight only when it is worth his while. For centuries after the conquest he was content if left unmolested on his land. The coming centuries were to teach him the lessons which the Greeks and Romans learned separately, and to produce in him a temper compounded of both.

He was to learn, as no other people has learned, that eternal vigilance is the price of liberty, that the machinery of government may be seized by king, nobles, priest, parliament and class interest. In Roman history the Senate was the one great usurpation of power from which the Romans worked back to tyranny, and there remained. We English begin by restraining our Norman kings with the charter and committee of twenty-five. But these committees prove short-lived. Again and again during more than a century royal absolutism is welcomed as a diminution of tyranny. For a long period the great problem is how to restrain tyrannical kings without multiplying tyranny. But English nationality is awake, and we are slowly groping for a king who shall represent the English idea. We then, abandoning committees, restrain the first Edward by the barons and knights in Parliament. The Parliament practically deposes his successor, and under Edward III. we find the town-burgesses sitting side by side with the knights of the shire. Royal ministers are impeached. Another king is deposed, and the principle that Parliament may change the succession is asserted in the accession of Henry IV., who definitely leans on the commonalty. But before two centuries of effort at restraint of despotism by Parliament are over we return to kingly absolutism. Nevertheless the Tudor régime is not retrograde. The Tudors lean on the nation at large and free us from the competing sovereign. This dual sovereignty of Pope and King has at last been found incompatible with liberty. The Tudors introduce into sovereignty the first idea of responsibility—responsibility to God, it is true, but a recognition that kingship is a trust, something very different from the Norman and Plantagenet idea. The divine-right theory fails, too, in its turn, but after weakening the Lords and raising the Commons. And these Commons, after having been the tool of absolutism, after giving the king's proclamations the force of law, end by taking sov-

ereignty into their own hands and beheading a king. But Parliament, too, we felt at length could fail to represent the nation. Under the Hanoverians, parliamentary liberty came to mean the rule of the moneyed interests and landlordism. Then came the last great assertion of English instinct, and the extension of the franchise in 1832 and 1867 and 1886.

This political progress so hurriedly sketched, is nothing but the constant assertion of original English instinct against the Roman idea. Cromwell, Pym, Hampden belonged to the small landowners. For two centuries our great "uncrowned kings" have represented really the same middle class and the same English ideal of liberty. Pitt learned in his father's school. By circumstances only, a Tory, he was forced to use a combination of the commercial interests and the great landed proprietors. His pupil Canning came of the same class, and maintained the same combination. Peel's father was a calico-printer. Under him the combination was broken, and Peel went with his own. Gladstone is likewise representative, his Tory education the better enabling him to hold power. It can hardly be said that these two centuries bear out Mr. Kidd's doctrine of the growth of popular liberty, as a long series of concessions from the ruling class, dictated by the unconscious promptings of a sense of justice or humanitarian impulse.

We have thus, by an experience unparalleled, achieved our political liberty and been taught its value and unstable character. It is maintained only by the steady pressure of a national opinion and an instinct now so deeply engrained in the nation that eclipse is inconceivable. But this is equally true of our civil liberty. We have long been taught that the citadel of our liberties is rather in the common law than in the Bill of Supply or Mutiny Act, or the constitution. And this is true. As Baron Bramwell put it, "There is no right in this country under the law so sacred as the right of personal liberty." But this citadel of our liberty is being

constantly, and often extensively, repaired and extended, less by statute than the judges. Nothing can be more significant than their constant basing of decisions upon the ground of enlightened public interest. Here again the assertion of original English instinct is the great working force—instinct brought with us from the shores of the Baltic.

But if we do well to emphasize the original basis of character, our national experiences have also steadily and deeply coloured our conception of liberty. The Norman conquest in particular has permanently moulded our political conceptions in two ways.

In the first place it has developed in English people a profound distrust of government. The nightmare of the feudal and divine-right theory still oppresses them. Government is a thing to be watched and checked, to be confined within the sphere of the national defence and the maintenance of the peace. English people, therefore, leave a multitude of things to private initiative, which we in the western world transact by government, such as the lifeboat system, the system of marine inspection, experimental farms (the work, for example, of Sir J. B. Lawes), and education, until yesterday. Hospital Sunday is probably one of the first surprises to all of us who have visited London. The long list of societies figuring in our government reports as in receipt of government subvention finds no counterpart in England.

On the other hand, the English people can be found regarding society as a partnership—the ancient confraternity, not paternalism—in a manner not yet paralleled on this side of the Atlantic. I mean, of course, in the municipalities. They have been, from the first, the true centres of English liberty. Had our own first municipal act been maintained, we should have left out the kernel of the English municipal system. But the day is yet far distant when our municipalities will succeed in such enterprises as those so wonderfully multiplied to-day in Eng-

land. It is true that the English municipal bonds are falling in value—municipal enterprise is found in many cases to be more expensive than anticipated—but this is not the great obstacle standing in the way with us and our American cousins. Centuries of stern experience have taught the English to control the great foe of Western civil liberty—the predatory politician.

This brings us to the second great result of English experience after the Norman conquest. Dickens' philosophical comment on that "memorable fact in genealogy that no De Any ones ever came over with Anybody else" than the great William, and the theory by which that ingenious Frenchman, M. Demolins, derives the English ruling classes, may not correspond very accurately with the facts of the case, but one may venture to maintain that some strain of blood combined with the working of the Norman, the Roman idea accounts for English Toryism. Common law, the Borough, Wiclif—ancient head of Balliol, still the centre of Oxford liberalism, Cromwell, Whigs, Wesley, the Manchester School, the line of great commoners from Pitt to Gladstone, represent the English idea and more purely English stock; King, Church, Nobles, Feudalism, Vested rights, Toryism, represent the Roman. The former splendidly characterized by a sense of duty and by public spirit; the latter by a sturdy individualism and tenacious assertion of the rights of the mass.

But further, and this appears to me the great English quality, these fundamental ideas, English and Roman, not merely run in separate currents of national life, but are largely based in the individual Englishman. Immediate, unquestioned recognition of the rights of the other man, pugnacious, even quixotic insistence on his own co-exist in the same man. This explains many a thing in English life which strikes us as ludicrous, though it is not certain who will laugh last. The spectacle of Sairey Gamp delaying the coach in the stowing of her luggage and precious

umbrella is English to the core. The adorable Sairey is the only ludicrous feature in the scene to the average Englishman, but we Westerners are astonished, on the one hand, that passengers and coachman should take Sairey's claims for granted, and on the other, at Sairey's complacent assurance against a coach. An Englishman loves a lord, acknowledges vested rights only too well, but he will pursue the management of a "London and Globe" company where governments are afraid to follow, and he will fight a railroad in the courts to avoid paying twopence instead of a penny for wheeling a bicycle over a railway bridge—and he will win. Such a temper is too wonderful for us, we may not attain unto it! We throw a man out of hand, without a warrant, into the common police cells, for disposing of a railroad ticket. This disciplined individualism is the great and distinguishing glory of English character. The woof is Greek and Roman, but the warp is original English. There is no artistic control in this English conception of liberty—nor any theory. The Englishman has never defined it. He has no ideal. He is for the *status quo*. Liberty is what he has got, and he will get more of it when he wants it, but he is in no hurry. At bottom he believes in no natural rights of man, except the right to fight for his own hand, and to help the under dog. But no man knows so well the value of this liberty he has got, and how unstable a thing it is. This English spirit is, and has ever been, at bottom, ultimate democracy, but it is not collective democracy, the spirit of the crowd. Though there are signs of this temper in English life, I should venture the assertion that England has silently passed the critical moment.

Let us now follow our kin across the Atlantic and ask whether they have kept their ancient temper. From actual public utterances I may build a paragraph for a speech of an American Pericles:

"American democracy is more than a form of government. It is a great

religious faith. It is faith in man—not merely good will to man nor hope for man, but faith in man. Like Romulus of old we have opened an asylum. We welcome all comers to share our lands and compete with us. We trust the people as a whole to decide the greatest issues, silver or gold, the relations of Cuba and the Philippines. To decide these issues we organize ourselves periodically into a great debating society, and we have self-restraint, for we abide by the decision of the majority and of our Supreme Court. We believe that education is not the prerogative of a class, nor religion of a church, nor government the government of the best men, but that all the world is for all men."

In the first place it is clear that, to the mass of citizens of the United States, democracy is a fervid, passionate ideal, a veritable religion. This is due to two causes in close proximity in time. The revolt by which independence was won, and the French revolution. "Liberty" is as rare a word on the lips of Englishmen as "civil liberty" on the lips of an American. The American nation did not grow, but was made. It is only just beginning to think seriously of civil liberty. Liberty has heretofore meant to it freedom from old-world despotism—a single achievement. Secondly, while that great people has been dwelling proudly and sometimes resentfully on its past, while it has been eagerly absorbed in developing the material resources of their vast country, the machinery of government has in the meantime been usurped. When they threw off the yoke they believed that the tyrant had been left behind across three thousand miles of sea, while in the homeland their kin have had the tyrant ever with them. Deep distrust of government is bred in the bone of the English people. The Americans have a naive and pathetic faith in it. They have forgotten that the tyrant need not wear a crown. The net result is the "Boss," the party machine, the transformation of Congress from the organ of the whole nation into a trust

of financial interests that will not compete. Hence the significant tendency everywhere observable towards enhancing the power of mayors and the rising demand for concentration of power in the hands of the President. In short, the Greek tyrant, in his best and worst forms, is on the scene.

I hope I have given some good reasons for my own belief that this experience does not await the English people; that, as I said before, they have silently passed the critical moment. Many Liberals deplore the degeneration of the British House of Commons. There is less, it is true, of the grand manner; there is less debate, and the ugly sign has appeared in the political heavens of Ministers holding company directorships, but the Commons still remains, what it has been made in no other country, a machine for selecting and displacing governments—the great bulwark of democratic political freedom, the instrument for the immediate carrying into effect of the public will. Majorities rise and fall daily, think on this, Canadians; representatives of the people still vote against their party or for their party in a higher sense. In a recent number of the *Spectator* the Cabinet Ministers are counselled to combat this independence in the House by a sort of extension lectures on the meaning of party-government. It is to be feared that they would require the aid of lantern-slides to draw an audience. The House is still sensitive as a barometer to bye-elections. The Government may, at any time, go out between dinner and daybreak. Here is something that deserves the serious attention of all thoughtful Canadians. There can be no doubt that political corruption in the United States has, in particular instances, surpassed anything the world has seen. When we read that in North Smithfield, Rhode Island, the "floating voters" were sold at auction *en bloc* near the town-hall steps, that in St. Louis "Col." Butler has been known, while standing by a polling booth, to call over the heads of the police, "Are there any more repeaters who wish to vote?" we feel

that the old stories of the auction of the Roman Empire from the Prætorian ramparts and the election of a horse to the consulship, have seen their best days. But when we read again that, some weeks ago, a State senator in Delaware rose in his place to defend the Addicks' system thus, "The voter's assistant system comes in and commends itself for fairness. It ensures delivery of the goods. When I buy a horse I want my horse. When a Republican buys a vote he wants his vote. I contend that there is no politics in the matter, for when a Republican or Democrat wants to buy a vote he has an opportunity of thus securing it, instead of being cheated out of it, as has been the case so many times in this State," we lift our hats to the Homeric directness of this utterance. But the methods of Tammany, of Quay, of Croker, of Butler, Addicks, Ames have, at least, this great merit: they cannot be mistaken or defended for piety or patriotism, and they are being at length more and more hotly attacked in good Anglo-Saxon style.

Now I am sure that not a few of you feel with me that for many years, in our country, the free expression of public opinion has been dying out. We are abandoning our birthright of civil and political liberty, and, indeed, our own Canadian tradition. What is the explanation of this public apathy, this political cowardice, I confess I do not see, unless it lies in the new-world type of democracy. The barnyard fowl that appears among its brethren with a daub of paint is promptly pecked to death. My own undergraduate body is as good a place in which to study the working of this Western type democracy as a barnyard. It seems to me that year by year the frank expression of individual opinion among undergraduates is more and more difficult. Their so-called public opinion is now often the mere physical spirit of the crowd, finding expression in parading mobs, the clamouring "gods," or the "rooting" of the grand stand, that ghastly substitute for the spontaneous British cheer. University politics also amus-

ingly illustrate the extinction of opinion by committee rule. Give a Western tyrant a committee and he will effect all that his Greek prototype did with a body-guard. It will be objected, perhaps, that the treatment of the English pro-Boers and of Kenseit contrasts badly with the American tolerance of their anti-Imperialists and our own of Mr. Bourassa. But it is only fair to remember the philanthropic appeal of English ritualism in the great cities, and that the Kruger policy stood for actual oppression, as well as for national insult. Lord Beaconsfield's famous remark, that Liberalism tends towards cosmopolitanism, Conservatism towards Nationalism, goes very deep. The true English instinct stands for defence of others as well as self-defence. And there is little doubt that, with Gladstone in power to-day, the unspeakably horrible revelations by Dr. Dillon, in the April *Contemporary*, of Turkish deviltry in Macedonia, would produce a political upheaval. But, whatever the sins of our kindred, we should take shame to ourselves for our public apathy and cowardice these many years. The wretched recrimination of party at this hour is not public opinion. True opinion begins when we attack abuses by which we do not and will not profit ourselves. Not honesty alone, but public courage and indomitable persistency are the safeguards of society. When a great party-organ, confessing that there is "a discreditable following" attached to both parties, protests that there can be no remedy for this until the best men in both parties unite to shake it off, what is this but to complain that liberty is too high and difficult a thing? The American revival of public courage is something that demands our attention. We have no divine exemption from the awful evils corroding the American commonwealth. At the present rate of growth a generation will establish among us Canadians the very conditions now present in the United States. The "Boss" will have arrived, our own parliaments will have become financial trusts, if we do not show the ancient



English temper that is our heritage. No deeper wounds are dealt to liberty on this continent than those inflicted by the methods of the great companies—and they are great in a very noble sense. But our legislators are the persons immediately responsible to the people, and the only remedy for public evil is the courageous public expression of opinion.

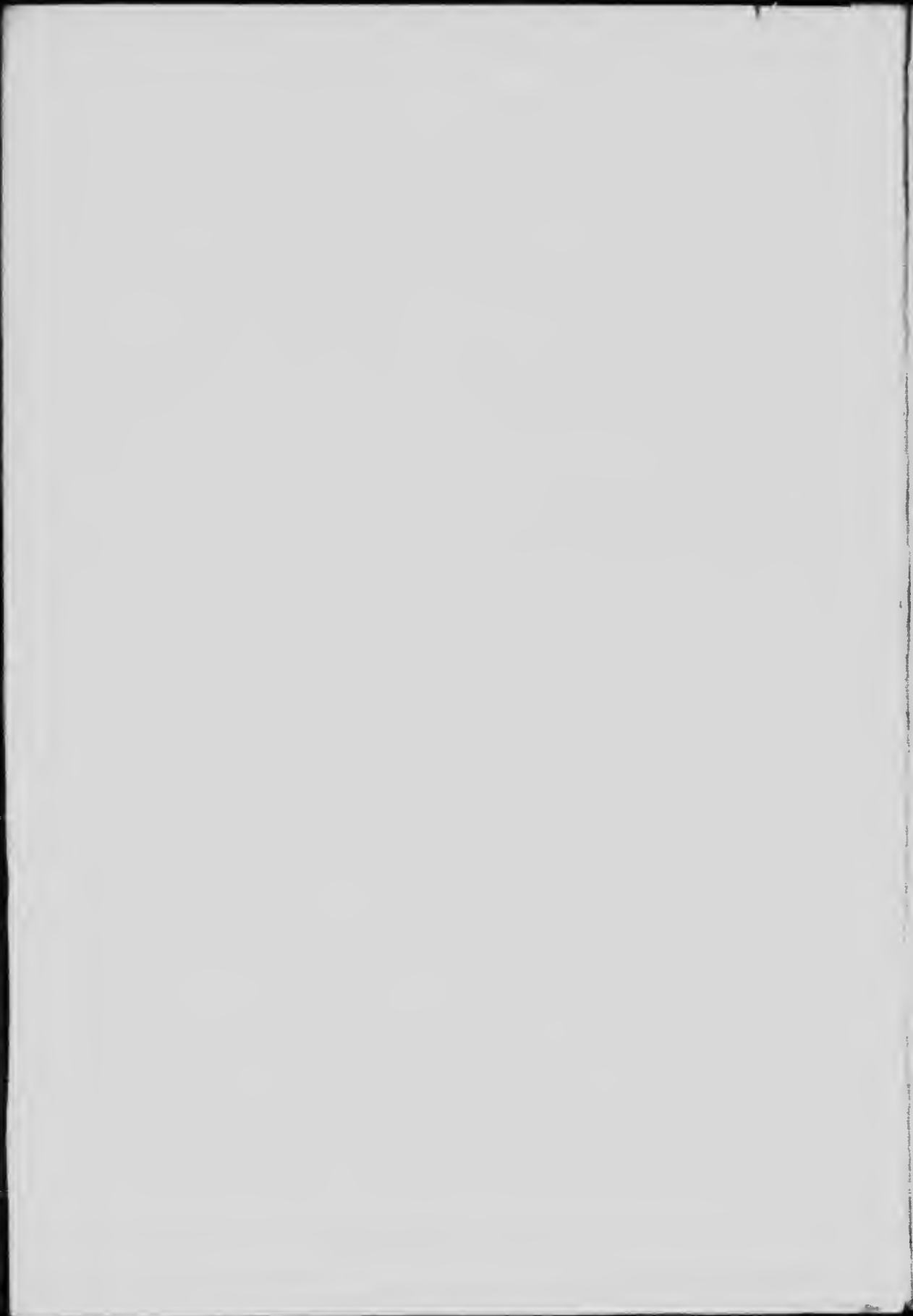
With a third feature in American conceptions of liberty, I am done. There is a more or less general ideal underlying American school training of a piece with their conception of democracy. The child must have an unfettered development. He must expand like a flower and put forth his leaves like a sapling—an ideal sapling, no twig of which is ever bent. He must never be coerced in any material way. Now, I believe we can feel the effect of this ideal in our own city. We have the English individualism without the discipline. Our pioneers, who brought with them instincts engrained by a thousand years of national discipline, have been gathered to their fathers. Many of us feel keenly that our boys are being endangered by this defect in training, and that trouble is coming. Partly this is due to the great predominance of women teachers in the primary schools. I hope I may say this with no mean suggestion of competition, and I pay them the compliment of not attempting to defend or explain. Partly it is due to the influence of America: democracy. We lean on the law and the police, not the schoolmaster. Our whole attitude toward the police is un-English. We tyrannize over them in crowds and in the movement of public traffic, but we

allow the tables to be turned as individuals. Some seven or eight years ago a party of ladies and gentlemen in Parkdale were playing tennis on a private grounds, when a lad came up and began to use intolerable language. One of the men jumped over the fence and extinguished it by an *a posteriori* method. He was summoned to court and fined five dollars. Now there are cases in which, as Mr. Bumble observed, "the law is an ass." Who served the public better on this occasion, the individual or the magistrate? The boy would now be let off on suspended sentence. A great accession in discipline may be against the spirit of the time, but we make the time, and we shall do well to cry back to our national ideals of liberty.

And now this "good life" for which the State exists—what is it but liberty herself, the fruit of a perfected society, of man *in* the State? Our English kin are too apt to regard civic and political liberty as closed questions, to look askance upon tendencies which make men less content "with the sphere in which it has pleased Providence to place them." But we Westerners are urged on by a divine dissatisfaction towards a liberty which will some day be nothing less than the possibilities of man, his right to make the most of himself. More clearly than the poet in 1832, the English-speaking peoples of this continent hear

"A motion toiling in the gloom,  
The spirit of the years to come,  
Yearning to mix himself with life."

But we do not realize that the desperate problem of democracy is the creation and expression of opinion.





FACTS CONCERNING  
**THE CANADIAN CLUB**  
OF TORONTO

ORGANIZED, - - - NOVEMBER, 1897  
SEASON, - - - - - 1902-'03

- 1.—Present Membership is 800.
- 2.—Average attendance at luncheons, 200.
- 3.—Place of meeting—*McConkey's Assembly Hall.*
- 4.—Day of meeting—*Every Monday.*
- 5.—Hour of meeting—*1 to 2 p.m.*
- 6.—Membership fee is—*\$1.00 per year.*
- 7.—Fee is payable on joining the Club, and after each Annual Meeting.
- 8.—Applications for membership may be obtained from the Secretary or any member of Club.
- 9.—Applications are announced at two regular Club meetings, and voted upon at next Executive meeting.
- 10.—Special evening meetings are held about once a month, members receiving special notice of such.
- 11.—Annual Meeting—first Tuesday in November.
- 12.—No meetings are held in May, June, July, August and September.

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