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GOVERNMENT BY IMPULSE

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I

THE American people love their orators. No other people flock as we do to hear sonorous sentences, well rounded periods, plausible epigrams, multiplied alliteration, and picturesque metaphors. Nowhere else is a resonant voice so potent as in America. Where else in the world, and in history, could be reenacted the scene that witnessed the nomination of an obscure newspaper reporter for the highest office in the gift of a great nation, because of the full orotund of his voice and the appealing figures of his speech? And what greater tribute could be paid to man than was vouchsafed by the assembled thousands gathered from every state at the eastern gateway of the continent, to greet the necromancer of words as he returned to his native land from a world tour? It is not Bryan the statesman, nor Bryan the sage, nor Bryan the politician, but Bryan the orator, whom the masses adore.

And so of all orators in varying degree. The political orator exercises a mystic sway. The enchantment of the human voice is singularly complete over the average American audience. They will stand in downpouring rain for hours, they will fill the largest hall to suffocation, they will gather in unwieldy crowds at monster mass meetings, to hear a mighty wielder of phrases; they will get out of bed at unseemly hours in the morning, or stay up until midnight, to hear a stump speech from the rear platform of the train that bears the favored orator from town to town in a journey of triumph.

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And why do we love to hear our orators? It is not merely idle curiosity, for curiosity is transitory; it vanishes speedily, once that it is satiate. Nor is it surely for the logic or the wisdom or the originality of the orator. The public speaker who has a reputation for syllogisms or philosophy speaks to empty benches. We love to hear our political orators, not for what they teach, but for what they inspire. They make us enthusiastic. We love the thrills they give, the impulses they radiate. The function of the stump speaker is not conversion or conviction, but stimulation.

In some degree all republics have magnified the gift of speech. The spoken word is the medium of legislation and agitation. From the village debating club to Congress, volubility is the much sought gift. Oratory is, however, rarely the medium of logic. It is rather the vehicle of passion and the handmaid of impulse.

This fondness for the stimulant of loud-spoken words is only a mild manifestation of our national psychology of impulse. Our patronizing of the yellow journals is a less hopeful and a far less excusable manifestation of the same tendencies in our group temperament. Red headlines flaming forth uncouth exaggerations; great brazenfaced type uttering shameful slanders; melodramatic, overdrawn pictures portraying impossible situations; morbid news items magnified into disgusting prominence,— all these and a myriad other deplorable details we exalt above the sane, small-typed and small-paragraphed news items

of the conservative and legitimate newspaper.

And even of the drama and of literature and of art it is the sensational and the stimulating that attract the crowds. Crowds are always impulsive, masses are moved by nerve propulsion rather than by logic. And a government by crowds is a government by the impulses, by the convictions, by the predilections of the crowds.

From the point of view of good government, this is unfortunate. Sanity and sensationalism cannot dwell together in the same mind; emotional thrills do not lead to calm reflection, nor can impulse be the forerunner of reason.

It is this widespread desire of the people for the thrilling and the stimulating that bars many able men from participating in politics. The people reward the very qualities which the successful business or professional man avoids. The capacity that has made a man great in commerce is utterly unalluring to the public. The prosaic plodding of the man of affairs repels, but the fitful flights of the spell-binders always attract the public eye. It will be admitted that few men of great executive ability enter public life. Small recompense and honor await them at the doors of political service, and the pathway is strewn with thorns and sharpened stones. On the other hand, the political realm teems with "four-flushers" and charlatans, men of make-believe greatness and of inflated importance, whose immensity suddenly collapses after a decisive defeat at the polls.

II

The psychology of a people is reflected in its government. And with us impulse joins conviction in the creation of a government by parties. No other organization of the governmental powers is subject to such subtle, such sudden and spectacular changes as is a democracy. For a democracy must always be a government by parties; and par-

ties are the repository, not only of conviction, but also of prejudice, of dogma, and even of passion. Factional wars have threatened monarchies and laid waste principalities, while creedal differences have devastated whole continents and eradicated entire populations. In America we have a War of the Roses every quadrennium; and having outgrown religious intolerance, we have transferred to the political arena all the impulses of factional warfare.

Government is a human device for protecting society against encroaching individuals. The political parties that operate this device in a republic we have made paramount. For with us the party is not only the medium through which the public will is expressed, but it is the goal of supreme political contention. Controlling the parties amounts to controlling the government. We have therefore developed a complex party system covering the entire union; we have a party orthodoxy whose creed receives sanction from the fathers, a party tradition whose details are held as sacred as the faith, and a party tyranny that plays upon the entire gamut of human feelings.

And the party is controlled by that evanescent ephemeron who to-day is and to-morrow is not,— the politician. Even in this present day of political hysteria, that has added "muck rake," "boodle," "boss," and "machine" to our national vocabulary, even now when distrust towards their servants characterizes the people, it is perfectly apparent that the boss still rules, that the machine still works, and that the politician has his hands upon the levers. There is this difference between these gory days of reform and the good old days of quiescence: at present many a dilettante and demagogue has usurped the throne of the grim, tribute-loving boss. These "reform movements" are always the opportunity of countless charlatans.

We admit then that ours is a government by party, and that the party is controlled by the politician. The politician

must get his power through votes. So his daily task is the invention of cunning devices for catching voters. The average man is reached more quickly through his prejudices than through his reasoning faculties. Therefore it is that into the ordinary campaigns is carried casuistry rather than argument, passion rather than logic. Therefore it is that the vote-getter seeks to tingle the nerves rather than excite the brain cells. Therefore it is that the stump orator who has

“Held the banner upward from a-trailing in the dust,
And let loose on monopolies and cuss'd, and cuss'd, and cuss'd,”

has attracted more people than the statesman whose only claim to consideration was common sense and a keen power of analysis. Disraeli said that his country was governed by Parliament, not by logic; we can affirm that our country is governed by politicians, not by postulates.

In this play to control the votes of the people there are two parts; the one secret and sinister, the other open and alluring. The one is the “organization,” the “machine;” the other is the real spectacular show, the part composed of orators and handbills and great headlines in party papers. This dual nature of his mechanism clearly reveals the intent of the politician. If he cared only for the naked, native truth, why all this plotting behind locked doors, why this red fire and ceaseless flow of florid rhetoric? A political party is simply a great, complex invention designed for the purpose of transforming human impulses into political majorities. One part of the device is designed to arouse and to hold the impulses, the other part to gather them into unity and to wield them for some specific purpose. So with every Tammany you must have both a Croker and a Cochran; and every Platt must have his Depew.

This dual power is almost irresistible. It was the coercion of the machine, using the frantic impulse of the crowd, that

gave the Prince of Yellow Journalists his sway over the Empire State. It has been the blending of these two forces that has covered the land with a chain of “organizations,” has given to each city its uncrowned czar, and to every state its boss. The bosses feed upon the impulses of the people. When the voters resort to reason, the bosses starve. It is only by the crafty and judicious use of the wild and curious elements of human nature that the political gangs can thrive. The existence of “rings” is proof that the reason of the electorate is lulled.

An ordinary political convention reveals the same pathological condition of the public mind. Here you see the dual forces at work. The boss writes the platform, and calls it “the party’s declaration of principles.” He writes the slate, selects the committees, and gives his orders, all behind the scenes; while in front of the curtain the orator is proclaiming in perfervid rhetoric the tale of how the glories of the party have made the grandeur of the country.

Then listen to a debate in Congress and sift the wheat of statesmanship from the chaff of flamboyant demagoguery. This will fairly represent the proportion of rampant impulse to dormant reason in an ordinary congressional campaign. And what is to be said of the state legislatures and city councils? How woefully small is the proportion of careful, able men to the superficial votaries of the “organization,” who shout to the galleries and pose for the cameras.

In any case, whether convention or congress, legislature or council, the power of the dual forces is revealed. You see the subtle strength of the boss entrenched behind the voters who have allowed themselves to be deceived by the noisy emissaries of the machine, voters who have been ruled by impulse, not by reason.

III

And it has always been thus in our land, even in the “heroic” days of the

political fathers. For human nature, like our old world, does not change much from age to age. Our fathers were swayed by impulses like unto those that move us. They were men, subject to heat and cold, to controversy and compromise, much like their grandsons.

The first political question to divide them was how much power should be centralized in the national government. Upon this important issue they split into Federalists and Anti-Federalists, the primordial political parties of America.

The first president was chosen with practical unanimity. Every one instinctively turned to Washington as the wisest leader to inaugurate the great experiment of the Federal state, and to start the new government under the untried constitution that had been adopted only after a bitter struggle. But with his election ceased the unanimity of sentiment, and Washington became the object of fierce partisan criticisms that extended even into his cabinet meetings, where Jefferson, the leader of the opposition, made a hateful onslaught on his chief.

When Washington laid down the cares of office there was great rejoicing among the Jeffersonians, who now turned their wrath and vituperation upon puritanic and stable John Adams. The third national campaign was one of great violence; the papers indulged in personalities that suggest the realms of libel, and the pamphleteers grew eloquent over absurd and imaginary dangers. In New York, Burr, the Machiavelli of his party, metamorphosed Tammany Hall from a benevolent secret society into a violent and vicious political machine, which wrested the city from Alexander Hamilton and put it under the domination of the Jeffersonians. In Philadelphia, staid and gentle Quakers forgot their mild manners and partook of the general excitement; while in punctilious Boston the partisan fire raged with blistering heat. To the Puritans, Jefferson was the embodiment of anarchism, an "atheist" and a "Bonapartist," seeking to join the

states to France and to make atheism the state religion.

But Jefferson was elected. His triumph was made the cause for deep mourning throughout New England. The newspapers appeared with black borders, and the doom of the Republic was confidently foretold. This absurd feeling was shared with the artisans and farmers by college professors, clergymen, and men of business.

Perhaps no other incident so well illustrates the political animosities of that day as the melancholy death of Hamilton at the hand of his great antagonist, Burr. Among the Federalists of the Northern states there was the most profound and sincere mourning for the fallen statesman, and an even more intense feeling against his slayer. But to the Jeffersonian South, Burr was the hero of that terrible duel, — the "Little David who hath slain the Goliath of Federalism," as they toasted him at their banquets. And the New England Jeffersonians heaped insult upon the great dead statesman, crying that "any of his clerks could have organized the United States Treasury." Thus incongruously and unfortunately mingled the patriotic love and the partisan hatred of our fathers over the bier of Alexander Hamilton. Death itself could not, even for the moment, still their factional fury.

Only once in our history has there been a lull in the strife of national politics; and it was due to an abounding commercial prosperity. This "era of good feeling" was ushered in by the days of plenty that followed the War of 1812. It was the happy lot of Monroe to preside over the land when partisanship was merged with industry, and political contentment followed in the wake of peace and plenty. But it could not last. The warring elements of human nature were merely slumbering, and they were ruthlessly awakened when the warrior Jackson boldly marched into the arena with his conquering army of uncouth frontiersmen and hunters, and wrested from the

original states the dominion they had hitherto exercised over the land.

So deep-seated were the political sentiments of the fathers that even foreign wars failed to evoke their unreserved loyalty. The War of 1812 was viewed by the New England Federalists as an unjustifiable attempt on the part of the Jeffersonians to despoil them of their property. They sullenly gave of their militia and of their taxes to its support. And the war with Mexico was met with protests that sound to-day very near to treason.

All these national outbreaks of political impulse were the reflection of local disputes and jealousies as intense and as discreditable as any modern municipal campaign, and in the personal nature of their encounters were far beyond anything we may witness to-day. The records that remain of their local political struggles reveal our fathers in personal encounters, in duels and in mobs, calling one another by opprobrious names in pamphlets and papers, and acting as if robbed of their senses.

In 1787, a minority of the Pennsylvania legislature refused to attend the last session, in order to prevent the presence of a quorum, and thus to make impossible the calling of a convention to consider the new Federal Constitution. A turbulent mob of Philadelphians carried the recalcitrant members by force from the tavern to the State House. New York was not represented in the first electoral college because the Federalist senate and the Anti-Federalist assembly were deadlocked and could not agree on the electors. Wild scenes were enacted in Albany during that session. Gentle and learned John Jay was counted out of the office of governor in 1792 by the Clintonians. The year 1800 saw Federalist committees terrorizing Jeffersonians in Boston, and saw Burr making the first poll list in America, that his Tammany might the more easily ferret out every voter.

And all this at a time when theorists

would say that ideal conditions existed for political purity! Universal suffrage was regarded with fear, and offices were invested with manorial dignity. There were property qualifications for voters and religious tests for office-holders prescribed by the laws of the original states. In nearly all the New England states the right to vote was limited to the men who owned a freehold valued at sixty pounds or had an income of three pounds a year. In New York a freehold of twenty pounds or a leasehold of forty shillings a year was prescribed. New Jersey required real estate to the value of fifty pounds, while Maryland and South Carolina required fifty acres of land, and Georgia ten pounds of taxable property. These were the property restrictions for voting.

But for holding office much more was required, the amount depending upon the dignity of the office. For instance, in Massachusetts the property requirements for a justice of the peace were about the same as those required for a voter; but to be governor of the state required an estate of one thousand pounds. The religious tests were even more narrow. New England barred Catholics and atheists from voting, and allowed only members of a protestant church to hold office. As a necessary preliminary to holding civil office Pennsylvania required faith in the inspiration of the Bible, Delaware demanded faith in the doctrine of the Trinity, and South Carolina faith in future punishments and rewards.

Yet even over a body of voters all of whom were property-holders, and over a galaxy of office-holders most of whom were church members, the excitable and impulsive elements of human nature held sway.

And when, in the early twenties, these barriers to suffrage and to office were swept aside by the mighty rush of democratic sentiment, the sway of impulse did not increase; it merely became more picturesque. It invaded the capital in the garb of Jackson's "squirrel hunters;"

it moved eastward in irresistible volume from the new-found valley of the Mississippi, overflowing the Alleghanies and flooding the Atlantic plain. The "hard cider campaign" of 1840, wherein Whigs vied with Democrats in political orgies and absurdities, was no more a spectacle of rampant impulse than was the bitter personal warfare of the Jeffersonians against the Federalists in the early days of a selective franchise and a restrictive right to office.

In all periods of our history and in every presidential campaign the party leaders have sought to stir human prejudices and passions, and indeed it would be a prosaic sight to witness a national campaign without songs, marching clubs, oratorical geysers, party slogans, and red-fire.

Party slogans show the prevalence of stimulating sentiment and the absence of sedative reason. The earnest protests of John Quincy Adams were of no avail against the mighty shout of the Jacksonians, "Turn the rascals out!" No call to reason could stem the overwhelming tide of jingo sentiment that reëchoed the call, "Fifty-four forty or fight!" and "The re-annexation of Texas and the reoccupation of Oregon."

And in like manner to-day the voter is admonished to "stand pat," and to "let well enough alone;" he is told that he must vote for "American tin," and must remember the "full dinner pail." What are these but so many rattles for the baby?

IV

The impulse of the masses is like the flashing, erratic lightning. It has been the destruction of the ambition of many of our greatest men when they appeared for high office; because it has been attracted by secondary faults, or by idle tales, or by willful misrepresentation. The unthinking populace too often believe the canard; they allow trivial events to unbalance their judgment.

There was the princely Henry Clay.

Who ever was more widely acclaimed than this wonderful orator of the Whigs? The extraordinary in political life was commonplace to him. He never spoke to crowds, — he spoke to acres of people. His name was woven into song and story and paraphrased into a hundred appellations of endearment. For half a century he was the striking figure in our national life. Every journey he undertook was a progress, for towns emptied their populations into his pathway, and farms were deserted when he passed through a neighborhood. And whenever he arose to speak the nation was his auditory. The adoration of the American people for Henry Clay is one of the remarkable incidents of our political history.

Yet he was five times defeated for the presidency, — three times as a party candidate before the people, twice as a candidate for the nomination before the national convention. There were many reasons for these multiplied defeats, but principally the false charge that Jackson hurled against him in 1824, when Clay gave his votes in the House of Representatives to John Quincy Adams for president rather than to the emperor, Jackson. Adams made Clay his Secretary of State, and Jackson shouted, "Bargain and corruption!" It was a false and unjust cry. Clay was perfectly sincere in his desire to keep Jackson out of the White House, and John Quincy Adams could never be suspected of trickery. Yet the people believed the cry. It was reëchoed and rephrased every succeeding time the brilliant orator ran for the presidency. He could not live it down; he could not explain it away. Such was the credulity of the people and such their fickleness.

Clay is not a solitary victim to impulsiveness. A catalogue of the noted men who have been sacrificed to the misguided impulse and the blind unreason and dislike of the people would include the names of many of our really great men. Webster, Calhoun, Cass, Blaine, Reed, are included among the regal vic-

tims of the lightning of impulsive politics.

The usual explanation of this unfortunate phenomenon is that these great men are too big for the office. That is a stultifying admission for an American to make. No man is too great for the exalted office of president. But there are men too great to juggle with the follies and prejudices of the populace.

v

If sentimentalism and impulse enter so largely into the routine of an election, we cannot expect them to subside after the votes are counted. The rule of party does not cease with an election. It invades the council chambers of the state and infests the legislative halls. There are very few men in public life with courage and character enough to stand out against the wild clamor of their constituents. The imposing examples of great men whose judgment ruled their action in times of unusual public agitation are rare and inspiring.

The noblest instance of such coolness and steadfastness in our history is the example of Washington guiding the young nation safely between the Scylla of a war with England and the Charybdis of a military alliance with France, into the quiet precincts of neutrality and unbiased peace. There probably has never been a stronger influence exerted on a president than was brought to bear on Washington in those turbulent days. The Jeffersonians demanded, the populace clamored for, and even many Federalist leaders advised, an alliance with France. But Washington paid no heed to these demands; he was indifferent to clamor, and put aside the advice of his friends that he might follow his own cool judgment. President Hayes passed through a similar experience when he endorsed the resumption of specie payments. The angry shouts of the demonitizationists and the threats of the politicians were alike unavailing. His firmness and sound-

ness of judgment in this event entitle him to a high place in the list of the fearless servants of the republic. Indeed, it is such sound and unbiased service as this that in the ultimate issue alone saves the republic from a cataclysm of sentimentalism and impulse.

Our lawmakers are too shortsighted. A present clamor they interpret as an imperative command; whereas the people can easily be led into such clamor, for they are very childlike in their reasoning. They are not analytic, and seek the causes for their ills too near at hand. Sometimes they are right, and often they are wrong. The causes for economic and political conditions are usually remote and hard to locate. But when once their minds are fixed upon a supposed cause, the voters go for it with a directness that knows neither variableness nor shadow of turning. And the representative follows. He should stand between the people and their folly. But he usually lacks the courage. If all the acts passed thus in frenzy, to please the people, were erased from the statutes, our sheep-bound folios would shrink to octavos.

Many members of legislative bodies are elected to do certain specific things, and are therefore pledged to a certain definite course of action before they take their seats. To them the doorways to conviction are locked. They have sold their birthright for a mess of political pottage. This is one of the most baneful of our practices. No man has a right to manacle his judgment upon a question of far-reaching policy. Such a form of political slavery is more abject than caucus rule. It usually accompanies a bitter campaign, in which the pledged candidate has been made the dupe of some selfish interests or of silly sentiment.

Even constitutions, the fundamental adamant of our civic structures, that should be remote from every variable human passion and broad enough to carry securely the ever widening structure of government, have not escaped the impulsiveness of their makers. Thus, in

1850 Ohio wrote into her constitution a provision virtually prohibiting her from developing her great canal system. The taxpayers of the state had become alarmed and angry at the encroachments of public improvements upon the treasury, that had threatened the state with bankruptcy. There was widespread dissatisfaction with the canals. Railroads had superseded them. The framers of the constitution followed their impulse to prevent forever a recurrence of such conditions. But they forgot to consider the coming generations, and now Ohio is virtually robbed of her seven hundred miles of canals.

In Illinois and Wisconsin the Grangers got control of the state machinery in the seventies, and played havoc, not only with the laws, but with the judges on the bench, in their wild desire to get even with the railroads which they regarded as their particular foes.

The anti-canteen law is a good example of a measure passed under pressure of external excitement. The testimony of experts was thrown to the winds, and the guidance of misdirected though well-intentioned zeal was followed. The wild shouts of the jingoes stampeded the conservatives into the war with Spain. How far will zeal outstrip reason in the present campaign against capital?

VI

The founders of our government believed, with the French publicists of their day, that there was a mystic efficacy in the separation of the governmental powers. Thus we have in our political orthodoxy the triune powers, legislative, judicial, and executive, all distinct, yet uniting to form in a practical manner the Federal government. This form is adopted by all the states.

The virtue of this separation lies less in the protection against evil, scheming men than the founders thought; but in the safeguards it places between the people and their rash impulses it attains real

efficacy. Here we find the surest bulwark against that transient clamor, that impulsiveness which characterizes the political movements of all masses.

Of course it is necessary that these powers all remain directly in the custody of the sovereignty, the people. But they are subject to the voters in a varying degree. And the radicalism, the mobility of each power, varies directly in proportion to its remoteness from the source of political authority, the franchise.

The legislative body lies nearest the voter. It is therefore the least stable. Over it the populace exercises a mesmeric sway.

The executive office is less mobile. The personality of the executive head himself determines in a large measure the degree of conservatism of his department. His election by the people makes him amenable to their impulses. He keeps his hand upon the public pulse, and feels the fever of its indignation or the fervor of its approval; and he is usually human enough to be prompted by the symptoms. And his desire to please the people he transmits to the executive departments. This is unfortunate, because it measures the public business by a standard that is never applied to private business. A singular sentiment pervades these offices, a feeling that throbs with political vitality. The restlessness of change comes periodically over them. Business is business, whether conducted for a private citizen or for the public. It should be devoid of sentiment, removed from impulse, and utterly free from political domination. Until we achieve this absolute divorcement, our public business, our Post Office Department, Pension Bureau, Land Office, and all other departments of the executive office, will fall far short of the standard of efficiency that a private concern sets for itself.

The one division of government that represents the conservative wisdom of the nation is the judiciary. As far removed from politics as is practically possible, the courts of our land are the

conserving force of the union. When impulse and thoughtlessness sway the populace, these tribunals remain amenable to reason.

The Supreme Court of the United States has been the anchor of the ship of state in many storms of passion and prejudice. One shudders to think what must have happened long ago to our republic but for the liberal conservatism of this noble tribunal. From the infant days of the government to the present, it has remained unshaken by popular clamor and unreasoning impulse. Laws passed in the heat of transitory agitation have found their deserving end in the decisions of this court. Upon its convictions, firm and unchangeable, the waves of popular wrath have dashed themselves to spray. Not that the court has escaped denunciation, even suspicion, in critical times, when a decision was of unusual gravity. Popular disapproval was loud, for instance, when the income tax decision was handed down. And the Dred Scott decision rent the nation, prepared by political and economic conditions for the final test with slavery.

Occasionally even an impulsive executive has been unwise enough to utter public criticism of the federal judges; as did President Jackson when Chief Justice Marshall decided against him in the Cherokee Indian cases. That militant president said, "John Marshall has issued his judgment, let him enforce it." And later presidents have publicly criticised the court, though in more delicate terms.

These exceptions are rare enough to emphasize the rule. Our supreme court is a unique and a magnificent tribunal, and we can easily believe that it was conceived in a moment of inspiration, so that its unbiased wisdom might guide the destinies of the republic.

VII

Our government thus ranges all the intervals between impulse and reason,

between the impetuous and the stable elements in human nature. We cannot expect anything else. But we should strive after a just subordination of one to the other. The opposite of a republic is a despotism. It is possible to conceive a despotism ruled entirely by reason; of a republic this is impossible. In a despotism patriotism is found only in the heart of the despot; in a republic it is universal. In a despotism only one man is actively engaged in the government; in a republic all men are interested in it. In a despotism impulse is subordinated to calculation; in a republic impulse is paramount to reflection. A despotism is human nature enchained; a republic is human nature emancipated.

We prefer the government by human nature. The American ideal exalts the many and frowns upon the few. We believe in universal liberty and in universal suffrage. If this leads to a tyranny of impulse, of unreason, it is but an incident in the glorious reality of self-government. We believe that the greater the number of people interested in the government, the better for the people. It may not be so well for the government; but government exists for the people, not the people for the government. This is no doubt a magnificent ideal. In its exalted contemplation we are willing to suffer the annoyances and the wrongs that the giddy and frivolous elements of human nature impose upon us.

The government of a vast republic, covering an area that embraces every clime and every altitude, busied with every pursuit known to civilization, composed of every race born into the family of man; the government of a mighty republic, wherein every man has a vote and is eligible to office, can at best be but a government by human nature in the raw. There are twelve million voters in America. Many of them are illiterate, few of them are learned, most of them are patriotic, all of them share in the government. Upon these millions of free-men play the ambitions of party leaders,

the cunning of politicians, the selfishness of private interests, and the instincts of the civilized animal, man. When these facts are passed in review, we cannot be surprised that impulse bears so leading a part in our government. The vote of the ignorant, impulsive, prejudiced man counts for as much as that of the sage. And there are only a few sages. The average voter is amenable to all the outward and inward impulses that unite to make the current of public sentiment. Our government is just as sound as the common sense of all the people, and just as weak as the prejudices and impulses of the masses.

These human feelings are like the sea. Every passing breeze ripples its surface, every storm strikes up the waves; but only the dread earthquake shakes the abyss. The profound depths of human convictions are aroused only once in a generation. And when they are thus intensely and vitally stirred the people do not err. Their ultimate judgment of right and wrong is sound. For the social conscience grows as unerring as the individual conscience.

But in the lesser activities, the minor

problems, ours is essentially a government by impulse. The surface of the unstable sea is constantly in commotion and the judgment of the voters is swayed by the waves of feeling.

The betterment of the government, then, lies through the difficult pathway of self-control, so that gradually even the lesser impulses shall become amenable to reason. The one lasting foundation of self government is the fundamental sanity of human nature. The more this sanity penetrates all judgments, the surer the foundations. And, conversely, the more fickle and impulsive a people, the more readily do the foundation stones of their governmental structure crumble under the heat of passing excitement. Witness our South American neighbors.

To broaden the influence of reason in our plain Anglo-Saxon natures, to teach the virtue of moderation to abide with the virtue of courage, becomes the hard task of the patriotic citizen. Then the natural political propensities of the American people will become a noble rivalry of intelligent conviction, not a foolish and destructive warfare of blind partisanship.

THE HELPMATE¹

BY MAY SINCLAIR

XXVIII

EASTWARDS along the Humber, past the brown wharves and the great square blocks of the warehouses, past the tall chimneys and the docks with their thin pine-forest of masts, there lie the forlorn flat lands of Holderness. Field after field, they stretch, lands level as water, only raised above the river by a fringe of turf and a belt of silt and sand. Earth and water are of one form and of one color, for, beyond the brown belt, the

widening river lies like a brown furrowed field, with a clayey gleam on the crests of its furrows. When the gray days come, water and earth and sky are one, and the river rolls sluggishly, as if shores and sky oppressed it, as if it took its motion from the dragging clouds.

Eleven miles from Scale a thin line of red roofs runs for a field's length up the shore, marking the neck of the estuary. It is the fishing hamlet of Fawlness. Its one street lies on the flat fields, low and straight as a dike.

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