

Chapter 5 NECESSITY OF STUDYING WHAT TAKES PLACE IN THE PARTICULAR STATES BEFORE SPEAKING OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNION

I propose to examine in the following chapter what, in America, is the form of government founded on the principle of the sovereignty of the people; what are its means of action, its encumbrances, its advantages, and its dangers.

A first difficulty presents itself: the United States has a complex constitution; one notes in it two distinct societies enmeshed and, if I can explain it so, fitted into one another: one sees two governments completely separated and almost independent: one, habitual and undefined, that responds to the daily needs of society, the other, exceptional and circumscribed, that applies only to certain general interests. They are, in a word, twenty-four little sovereign nations, the sum of which forms the great body of the Union.

To examine the Union before studying the state is to embark on a route strewn with obstacles. The form of the federal government of the United States appeared last; it was only a modification of the republic, a summary of the political principles spread through the entire society before it and subsisting independent of it. Moreover, the federal government, as I have just said, is only an exception; the government of the states is the common rule. The writer who would make known the sum of such a picture before having shown its details would necessarily fall into obscurities or repetitions.

The great political principles that govern American society today were born and developed in the *state*; one cannot doubt it. It is therefore the state that one must know to have the key to all the rest.

As for the external aspect of institutions, the states that compose the American Union in our day all present the same spectacle. Political or administrative life is found concentrated around three sources of action that could be compared to the various nervous centers that make the human body move.

At the first stage is the *township*,* higher the *county*, finally the *state*.

*Lit.: "commune." In contrast to the American township described by AR, the French commune is governed by a municipal council and a mayor, who is an agent of the central government.

ON THE TOWNSHIP SYSTEM IN AMERICA

Why the author begins the examination of political institutions with the township.—The township is found among all peoples.—Difficulty of establishing and preserving township freedom.—Its importance.—Why the author has chosen the township organization of New England for the principal object of his examination.

It is not by chance that I examine the township first.

The township is the sole association that is so much in nature that everywhere men are gathered, a township forms by itself.

Township society therefore exists among all peoples, whatever their usages and their laws may be; it is man who makes kingdoms and creates republics; the township appears to issue directly from the hands of God. But if the township has existed since there have been men, the freedom of a township is a rare and fragile thing. A people can always establish great political assemblies; for it habitually finds within it a certain number of men in whom, up to a certain point, enlightenment replaces experience in affairs. The township is composed of coarser elements that often resist the action of the legislator. The difficulty of founding the independence of townships, instead of diminishing as nations become enlightened, increases with their enlightenment. A very civilized society tolerates only with difficulty the trials of freedom in a township; it is revolted at the sight of its numerous lapses and despairs of success before having attained the final result of experience.

Among all freedoms, that of townships, which is established with such difficulty, is also the most exposed to the invasions of power. Left to themselves, the institutions of a township can scarcely struggle against an enterprising and strong government; in order to defend themselves successfully they must have completed all their developments and have been mixed with national ideas and habits. Thus as long as township freedom has not entered into mores, it is easy to destroy it, and it can enter into mores only after having subsisted for a long time in the laws.

Township freedom therefore eludes, so to speak, the effort of man. Thus it rarely happens that it is created; it is in a way born of itself. It develops almost secretly in the bosom of a half-barbaric society. It is the continuous action of laws and mores, of circumstances and above all time that comes to consolidate it. Of all the nations of the continent of Europe, one can say that not a single one knows it.

It is nonetheless in the township that the force of free peoples resides. The institutions of a township are to freedom what primary schools are to science; they put it within reach of the people; they make them taste its peaceful employ and habituate them to making use of it. Without the institutions of

a township a nation can give itself a free government, but it does not have the spirit of freedom. Fleeting passions, the interests of a moment, the chance of circumstances can give it the external forms of independence; but despotism suppressed in the interior of the social body reappears sooner or later on the surface.

To make the reader understand well the general principles on which the political organization of the township and the county in the United States rests, I believed it useful to take for a model one state in particular, to examine in detail what takes place in it, and afterwards to cast a rapid glance at the rest of the country.

I have chosen one of the states of New England.

The township and the county are not organized in the same manner in all parts of the Union; it is easy to recognize, however, that in all the Union nearly the same principles have presided at the formation of both.

Now, it appeared to me that these principles had received more considerable development and reached more extensive consequences in New England than anywhere else. There they show themselves so to speak in higher relief and are thus more easily open to the observation of a foreigner.

The institutions of the township in New England form a complete and regular ensemble; they are old; they are strong by law, stronger still by mores; they exert an enormous influence on the entire society.

Under all these heads, they deserve to attract our attention.

SIZE OF THE TOWNSHIP

The township of New England is midway between the district [*canton*] and the township [*commune*] of France.* It generally numbers two to three thousand inhabitants;¹ it is therefore not so extensive that all its inhabitants do not have nearly the same interests and, on the other hand, it is sufficiently populated so that one is always sure of finding within it the elements of a good administration.

POWERS OF THE TOWNSHIP IN NEW ENGLAND

The people, origin of all powers in the township as elsewhere.—They treat its principal affairs by themselves.—No municipal council.—The greatest part of the authority of the

* AT uses the French word *commune* for the American township, but here he states that the American township is actually larger, and is between the French *canton* ("district") and *commune* in size.

1. The number of townships in the state of Massachusetts in 1830 was 305; the number of inhabitants 610,014; this gives an average of nearly 2,000 inhabitants per township.

township concentrated in the hands of the selectmen.—How the selectmen act.—General assembly of the inhabitants of the township (town meeting).—Listing of all township officials.—Obligatory and compensated offices.

In the township as everywhere, the people are the source of social powers, but nowhere do they exercise their power more immediately. The people in America are a master who has to be pleased up to the furthest limits of the possible.

In New England, the majority acts through representatives when it must treat general affairs of the state. It was necessary that it be so; but in the township, where legislative and governmental action is brought closer to the governed, the law of representation is not accepted. There is no municipal council; the body of electors, after having named its magistrates, directs them itself in everything that is not pure and simple execution of the laws of the state.²

This order of things is so contrary to our ideas and so much opposed to our habits that it is necessary to furnish a few examples here to make it possible to understand it well.

Public offices are extremely numerous and very divided in the township, as we shall see below; nevertheless, the greatest part of administrative powers is concentrated in the hands of a small number of individuals elected each year whom they name selectmen.³

The general laws of the state have imposed a certain number of obligations on the selectmen. They do not need the authorization of their constituents to fulfill them, and they cannot shirk them without taking personal responsibility. State law charges them, for example, with forming electoral lists in their township; if they omit doing it they commit a punishable offense. But in all things that are left to the direction of the township's power, the select-

2. The same rules are not applicable to large townships. These generally have a mayor and a municipal body divided into two branches; but that is an exception that needs to be authorized by law. See the law of February 22, 1822, regulating the powers of the city of Boston. *Laws of Massachusetts*, vol. 2, 588 [*The General Laws of Massachusetts* (Boston, 1823), vol. 2, 588-599; law of February 23, 1822]. This applies to large cities. It also frequently happens that small cities are submitted to a particular administration. In 1832 there were 104 townships administered in this manner in the state of New York (*Williams' Register*) [Edwin Williams, *The New York Annual Register* (New York, 1832)].

3. They elect three of them in the smallest townships, nine in the largest. See *The Town Officer*, 186 [Isaac Goodwin, *Town Officer or, Laws of Massachusetts Relative to the Duties of Municipal Officers* (Worcester, 1829)]. See also the principal laws of Massachusetts relative to selectmen:

Law of February 20, 1786, vol. 1, 219; of February 24, 1796, vol. 1, 488; March 7, 1801, vol. 2, 45; June 16, 1795 [June 12, 1795], vol. 1, 475; March 12, 1808, vol. 2, 186; February 28, 1787, vol. 1, 302; June 22, 1797, vol. 1, 539.

men are executors of popular will as among us the mayor is the executor of the deliberations of the municipal council. Most often they act on their private responsibility and in practice do nothing but follow the consequences of principles that the majority has previously laid down. But should they wish to introduce any change whatsoever in the established order, should they desire to engage in a new undertaking, they must go back to the source of their power. If I suppose that it is a question of establishing a school: the selectmen convoke the sum of electors on a certain day in a place indicated in advance; there they set out the need that is felt; they make known the means of satisfying it, the money that must be spent, the place that is suitable to choose. The assembly, consulted on all these points, adopts the principle, fixes the place, votes the tax, and puts the execution of its will in the hands of the selectmen.

The selectmen alone have the right to convoke the town meeting, but one can induce them to do it. If ten property owners conceive a new project and want to submit it to the consent of the township, they call for a general convocation of the inhabitants; the selectmen are obliged to endorse it, and they retain only the right to preside over the assembly.⁴

These political mores, these social usages are doubtless very far from us. At this moment I do not wish to judge them or to make known the hidden causes that produce them and bring them to life; I limit myself to setting them forth.

The selectmen are elected every year in the month of April or May. At the same time the assembly of the township chooses a host of other municipal magistrates,⁵ assigned to certain important administrative details. Some, under the name of assessors, must establish the tax; others, under that of collectors, must levy it. An officer, called a *constable*, is charged with doing the policing, watching over public places, and taking in hand the material execution of the laws. Another, named the clerk of the township, records all deliberations; he takes note of birth, marriage, and death certificates. * A cashier keeps the township's funds. Add to these officials an overseer of the poor, whose duty, very difficult to fulfill, is to have legislation relative to indigents executed; school commissioners, who direct public instruction; highway inspectors, who are charged with all the details of the network of large and small highways—and you will have the list of the principal agents of a township's administration. But the division of offices does not stop there: one also

* Lit.: "acts of the civil state."

4. See *Laws of Massachusetts*, vol. 1, 150 [vol. 1, 252-253]; law of March 25, 1786 [March 23, 1786].

5. *Ibid.*

finds among municipal officers⁶ parish commissioners, who must regulate expenditures for worship; inspectors of several kinds, some charged with directing the efforts of citizens in case of fire; others with overseeing harvests; others with provisionally removing the difficulties that can arise relative to enclosures; others with overseeing the measuring of woods or of inspecting weights and measures.

In all, the principal offices in the township number nineteen. Each inhabitant is constrained, under penalty of fine, to accept these different offices; but also most of them are compensated so that poor citizens can devote their time to them without suffering disadvantage from it. Yet the American system is not to give a fixed salary to officials. Generally each act of their ministry has a price, and they are paid only in proportion to what they have done.

ON TOWNSHIP EXISTENCE

Each is the best judge of what concerns himself alone.—Corollary to the principle of the sovereignty of the people.—Application that American townships make of these doctrines.—The New England township, sovereign over all that relates only to it, subject in all the rest.—Obligation of the township to the state.—In France, the government lends its agents to the township.—In America, the township lends its to the government.

I said previously that the principle of the sovereignty of the people hovers over the whole political system of the Anglo-Americans.* Each page of this book will make known some new applications of this doctrine.

In nations where the dogma of the sovereignty of the people reigns, each individual forms an equal portion of the sovereign and participates equally in the government of the state.

Each individual is therefore supposed to be as enlightened, as virtuous, as strong as any other of those like him.

Why therefore does he obey society, and what are the natural limits of this obedience?

He obeys society not because he is inferior to those who direct it or less capable than another man of governing himself; he obeys society because union with those like him appears useful to him and because he knows that this union cannot exist without a regulating power.

* DA I 1.4.

6. All these magistrates really exist in practice.

To learn the details of the offices of all these magistrates of a township, see the book entitled *Town Officer* by Isaac Goodwin (Worcester, 1827 [1829]); and the collection of the general laws of Massachusetts in 3 vols. (Boston, 1823).

In all that concerns the duties of citizens among themselves, he has therefore become a subject. In all that regards only himself he has remained master: he is free and owes an account of his actions only to God. Hence this maxim: that the individual is the best as well as the only judge of his particular interest, and that society has the right to direct his actions only when it feels itself injured by his deed or when it needs to demand his cooperation.

This doctrine is universally accepted in the United States. Elsewhere I shall examine what general influence it exerts even on the ordinary actions of life,* but I speak at this moment of townships.

The township, taken *en masse* and in relation to the central government, is only one individual like another, to which the theory that I have just pointed out applies.

The freedom of a township in the United States therefore flows from the very dogma of the sovereignty of the people; all American republics have more or less recognized this independence; but among the peoples of New England, circumstances have particularly favored its development.

In this part of the Union, political life was born in the very bosom of the townships; one could almost say that each of them at its origin was an independent nation. When afterwards the kings of England reclaimed their part of sovereignty, they were limited to taking the central power. They left the township in the state they found it in; now the townships of New England are subjects; but in the beginning† they were not or were scarcely so. They therefore did not receive their powers; on the contrary, it was they that seemed to relinquish a portion of their independence in favor of the state—an important distinction that ought to be present in the mind of the reader.

The townships generally submit to the state only when it is a question of an interest that I shall call *social*, that is to say, which they share with others. For all that relates to themselves alone, the townships have remained independent bodies; and one encounters no one among the inhabitants of New England, I think, who recognizes in the government of the state the right to intervene in the direction of interests that are purely the township's.

One therefore sees the townships of New England sell and buy, attack and defend themselves before the courts, burden their budget or relieve it, without having any administrative authority whatsoever think of opposing it.‡

As for social duties, they are held [responsible] for satisfying them. Thus, should the state need money, the township is not free to grant or to refuse its cooperation.§ Should the state want to open a route, the township is not

* DAL 2.6.

† Or, "in principle."

‡ See *Laws of Massachusetts*, law of March 23, 1786, vol. 1, [249-]250.

§. *Laws of Massachusetts*, law of February 20, 1786, vol. 1, 217[-225].

a master who might close its territory to it. Should it make a police regulation, the township must execute it. Should it want to organize instruction on a uniform plan over the whole extent of the country, the township is held [responsible] for creating the schools the law wants.¶ We shall see when we speak of the administration of the United States how and by whom the townships in all these different cases are constrained to obedience.* Here I only want to establish the existence of the obligation. The obligation is strict; but the state government, in imposing it, does nothing but decree a principle; for its execution the township generally recovers all its rights of individuality. Thus it is true that the tax is voted by the legislature, but it is the township that apportioned and collects it; the existence of a school is imposed, but the township builds it, pays for it, and directs it.

In France, the tax collector of the state levies the taxes of the commune; in America, the tax collector of the township levies the tax of the state.

Thus, among us, the central government lends its agents to the township; in America, the township lends its officials to the government. That alone makes understandable the degree to which the two societies differ.

ON THE SPIRIT OF THE TOWNSHIP IN NEW ENGLAND

Why the New England township attracts the affections of those who inhabit it.—Difference that is encountered in Europe in creating the spirit of the township.—Rights and duties of the township cooperating in America to form this spirit.—The native country has more of a physiognomy in the United States than elsewhere.—How the spirit of the township manifests itself in New England.—What happy effects it produces.

In America not only do the institutions of a township exist, but also a spirit of the township that sustains them and brings them to life.

The New England township unites two advantages that, everywhere they are found, keenly excite men's interest; that is to say: independence and power. It acts, it is true, in a circle that it cannot leave, but its movements within that are free. That independence alone would already give it a real importance if its population and its extent did not assure it.

One must indeed be persuaded that men's affections are generally brought only to where there is force. One does not see love of the native country reign for long in a conquered country. The inhabitant of New England is attached to his township not so much because he was born there as because he sees in

* See in this chapter the section "On Administration in New England."

¶. See the same collection, laws of June 25, 1789, and March 8, 1827, vol. 1, 367[-371], and vol. 3, 179[-192].

that township a free and strong corporation that he is a part of and that is worth his trouble to seek to direct.

It often happens in Europe that those who govern regret themselves the absence of the spirit of a township; for everyone agrees that the spirit of a township is a great element of order and of public tranquillity; but they do not know how to produce it. In rendering the township strong and independent, they fear partitioning social power and exposing the state to anarchy. Now, remove force and independence from the township, and you will always find only those under its administration and no citizens.

Remark an important fact, moreover: the New England township is so constituted that it can serve as the home of lively affections, and at the same time nothing is next to it that strongly attracts the ambitious passions of the human heart.

County officials are not elected and their authority is restricted. The state itself has only a secondary importance; its existence is obscure and tranquil. There are few men who, to obtain the right to administer it, consent to depart from the center of their interests and to trouble their lives.

The federal government confers power and glory on those who direct it, but the men to whom it is given to influence its destinies are very few in number. The presidency is a high magistracy that one can scarcely reach except at an advanced age; and when one arrives at other federal offices of an elevated rank, it is in a way haphazardly and after one has already become celebrated by following another career. Ambition cannot make them the permanent goal of its efforts. It is in the township, at the center of the ordinary relations of life, that desire for esteem, the need of real interests, the taste for power and for attention, come to be concentrated; these passions, which so often trouble society, change character when they can be expressed so near the domestic hearth and in a way in the bosom of the family.

See with what art they have taken care in the American township, if I can express myself so, to *scatter* power in order to interest more people in public things. Independently of electors called from time to time to perform the acts of government, how many diverse offices, how many different magistrates, who all, within the sphere of their prerogatives, represent the powerful corporation in whose name they act! How many men thus exploit the power of the township for their profit and take interest in it for themselves!

The American system, at the same time that it partitions municipal power among a great number of citizens, does not fear to multiply the duties of the township either. In the United States they rightly think that love of one's native country is a kind of worship to which men are attached by its observances.

In this manner life in a township makes itself felt in a way at each instant,

it manifests itself each day by the accomplishment of a duty or by the exercise of a right. This political existence impresses on society a continual, but at the same time peaceful, movement that agitates it without troubling it.

The Americans are attached to the city by a reason analogous to the one that makes inhabitants of the mountains love their country. Among them, the native country has marked and characteristic features; it has more of a physiognomy than elsewhere.

New England townships generally have a happy existence. Their government is to their taste as well as of their choice. In the bosom of the profound peace and material prosperity that reign in America, the storms of municipal life are few. The direction of interests in a township is easy. In addition, the political education of the people has long been done, or rather they arrived wholly instructed on the soil they occupy. In New England, division of ranks does not even exist in memory; there is, therefore, no portion of the township that is tempted to oppress the other, and injustices, which strike only isolated individuals, are lost in the general contentment. Should the government show defects, and certainly it is easy to point them out, they do not strike the eye, because the government really does emanate from the governed and because it is enough for it to work, even with great difficulty, for a sort of paternal pride to protect it. Besides, they have nothing to compare it to. England formerly reigned over the entirety of the colonies, but the people always directed affairs in townships. The sovereignty of the people in the township is therefore not only an old state, but a primitive state.

The inhabitant of New England is attached to his township because it is strong and independent; he is interested in it because he cooperates in directing it; he loves it because he has nothing to complain of in his lot; he places his ambition and his future in it; he mingles in each of the incidents of township life: in this restricted sphere that is within his reach he tries to govern society; he habituates himself to the forms without which freedom proceeds only through revolutions, permeates himself with their spirit, gets a taste for order, understands the harmony of powers, and finally assembles clear and practical ideas on the nature of his duties as well as the extent of his rights.

ON THE COUNTY IN NEW ENGLAND

*The New England county, analogue of the *arrondissement* in France.—Created in a purely administrative interest.—Has no representation.—Is administered by unelected officials.*

The American county is very analogous to the *arrondissement* in France. As with the latter, an arbitrary district has been drawn for it; it forms a body of

flouted, the governor advances at the head of the material force of the state; he breaks the resistance and reestablishes the accustomed order.

Yet the governor does not enter into the administration of townships and counties, or at least he takes part in it only very indirectly by the nomination of justices of the peace which he cannot afterwards revoke.⁴⁸

The governor is an elective magistrate. They generally even take care to elect him for only one or two years, so that he always remains in a strict dependence on the majority that created him.

ON THE POLITICAL EFFECTS OF ADMINISTRATIVE DECENTRALIZATION IN THE UNITED STATES

Distinction between governmental centralization and administrative centralization.—In the United States, no administrative centralization, but very great governmental centralization.—Some distressing effects that result from extreme administrative decentralization in the United States.—Administrative advantages of this order of things.—The force that administers society, less regulated, less enlightened, less learned, much greater than in Europe.—Political advantages of the same order of things.—In the United States the native country makes itself felt everywhere.—Support that the governed lend to the government.—Provincial institutions more necessary as the social state becomes more democratic.—Why.

Centralization is a word that is constantly repeated in our day and whose sense no one, in general, seeks to clarify.

Nevertheless, two very distinct kinds of centralization exist, which it is important to know well.

Certain interests are common to all parts of the nation, such as the formation of general laws and the relations of the people with foreigners.

Other interests are special to certain parts of the nation, such as, for example, the undertakings of the township.

To concentrate the power to direct the first in the same place or in the same hand is to found what I shall call governmental centralization.

To concentrate the power to direct the second in the same manner is to found what I shall name administrative centralization.

There are some points at which these two kinds of centralization come to be confused. But in taking as a sum the objects that fall more particularly in the domain of each of them, one easily succeeds in distinguishing them.

It is understood that governmental centralization acquires an immense force when it is joined to administrative centralization. In this manner it

habituates men to make a complete and continual abstraction from their wills; to obey not once and on one point, but in everything and every day. It then not only subdues them by force, but it also captures them through their habits; it isolates them and afterwards fastens them one by one onto the common mass.

These two kinds of centralization lend each other a mutual assistance, drawing on one another; but I cannot believe that they are inseparable.

Under Louis XIV, France saw the greatest governmental centralization that one could conceive of, since the same man made general laws and had the power to interpret them, represented France to the outside [world] and acted in its name. "L'Etat, c'est moi,"* he said; and he was right.

Nevertheless, under Louis XIV there was much less administrative centralization than in our day.

In our time we see one power, England, in which governmental centralization is brought to a very high degree: there the state seems to move like a single man; it stirs up immense masses at its will, gathers and brings the effort of its whole power everywhere that it wishes.

England, which has done such great things for fifty years, has no administrative centralization.

For my part, I cannot conceive that a nation can live or above all prosper without strong governmental centralization.

But I think that administrative centralization is fit only to enervate the peoples who submit to it, because it constantly tends to diminish the spirit of the city in them. Administrative centralization, it is true, succeeds in uniting at a given period and in a certain place all the disposable strength of the nation, but it is harmful to the reproduction of strength. It makes [the nation] triumph on the day of combat and diminishes its power in the long term. It can therefore contribute admirably to the passing greatness of one man, not to the lasting prosperity of a people.

One should be careful indeed to say that a state cannot act because it has no centralization; one almost always speaks without knowing it of governmental centralization. The German empire, one repeats, could never take the fullest possible advantage of its strength. Agreed. But why?—because national force was never centralized there; because the state was never able to make its general laws obeyed; because the separate parts of that great body always had the right or the opportunity to refuse to the agents of common authority their cooperation in the very things that interested all citizens; in other words, because there was no governmental centralization. The same remark is applicable to the Middle Ages: what produced all the miseries of

48. In several states, justices of the peace are not named by the governor.

*"The state, it is I."

feudal society is that the power not only to administer, but to govern, was partitioned among a thousand hands and fragmented in a thousand ways; the absence of all governmental centralization at that time prevented the nations of Europe from advancing with energy toward any goal.

We have seen that in the United States administrative centralization does not exist. One hardly finds a trace of hierarchy there. Decentralization has been carried to a degree that no European nation can tolerate, I think, without profound unrest, and which even produces distressing effects in America. But in the United States, governmental centralization exists to the highest point. It would be easy to prove that national power is more concentrated there than it was in any of the old monarchies of Europe. Not only is there only a single body in each state that makes the laws; not only does there exist only a single power that can create political life around it; but in general they have avoided gathering numerous district or county assemblies for fear that these assemblies be tempted to go outside their administrative prerogatives and impede the working of the government. In America, the legislature of each state has before it no power capable of resisting it. Nothing can stop it on its way, neither privileges, nor local immunity, nor personal influence, not even the authority of reason, for it represents the majority that claims to be the unique organ of reason. It therefore has no other limits in its action than its own will. Next to it, and under its hand, is placed the representative of the executive power who, with the aid of material force, will compel malcontents to obedience.

Weakness is encountered only in certain details of governmental action. American republics do not have a permanent armed force to put down minorities, but up to the present, minorities there have never been reduced to making war, and the necessity of an army has still not been felt. The state most often makes use of the township's or the county's officials to act on citizens. So, for example, in New England it is the township's assessor who apportions the tax, the township's tax collector levies it; the township's cashier has the income from it come to the public treasury, and the claims that arise are submitted to the ordinary courts. Such a manner of collecting the tax is slow, encumbered; it would impede at each moment the workings of a government that had great pecuniary needs. Generally, one should desire, for all that is essential to its life, that the government have its own officials, chosen by it, revocable by it, and rapid forms of proceeding; but it will always be easy for the central power, organized as it is in America, to introduce more energetic and more efficacious means of action according to its needs.

Therefore it is not, as is often repeated, because there is no centralization in the United States that the republics of the New World will perish; far indeed from not being centralized enough, one can affirm that the American

governments are too much so; I shall prove it later.* Every day legislative assemblies swallow up the dregs of governmental powers; they tend to gather them all to themselves, just as the Convention had done.† The social power, thus centralized, constantly changes hands because it is subordinated to popular power. Often it comes to lack wisdom and foresight because it can do everything. That is the danger for it. It is therefore because of its very force, and not as a consequence of its weakness, that it is threatened with extinction one day.

Administrative decentralization produces several diverse effects in America.

We have seen that Americans have almost entirely isolated administration from government; in that they seem to me to have overstepped the limits of sound reason; for order, even in secondary things, is still a national interest.⁴⁹ As the state has no administrative officials of its own, placed at fixed posts at different points in the territory, on whom it can impress a common impulse, the result is that it rarely attempts to establish general rules of order. Now, the need for these rules makes itself keenly felt. A European often notices their absence. The appearance of disorder reigning on the surface at first persuades him that there is complete anarchy in society; it is only when examining the bottom of things that he is undeceived.

Certain undertakings interest the entire state and nevertheless cannot be executed because there is no national administration to direct them. Abandoned to the care of townships and counties, left to elected and temporary agents, they lead to no result or produce nothing lasting.

Partisans of centralization in Europe assert that governmental power administrators localities better than they could administer themselves: that can be true when the central power is enlightened and localities are without enlightenment, when it is active and they are inert, when it is in the habit of acting and they are in the habit of obeying. One even understands that the more centralization there is, the more this double tendency increases and the more the capacity of one part and the incapacity of the other become prominent.

* DA 1.2.7.

†The National Convention during the French Revolution (1792-1795).

49. The authority that represents the state, even if it does not administer itself, ought not, I think, to relinquish the right to inspect local administration. I suppose, for example, that an agent of the government, placed at a fixed post in each country, could refer the punishable offenses that are committed in the townships and the county to the judicial power; would order not be more uniformly followed without compromising the independence of localities? Now, nothing like this exists in America. Above the county courts there is nothing; and those courts are made cogizant in a way only haphazardly of the administrative offenses that they must repress.

But I deny that it is so when the people are enlightened, awakened to their interests, and habituated to thinking about them as they are in America.

I am persuaded, on the contrary, that in this case the collective force of citizens will always be more powerful to produce social well-being than the authority of government.

I avow that it is difficult to point out in a sure manner the means of awakening a people that sleeps, so as to give it passions and enlightenment that it does not have; I am not ignorant that to persuade men that they ought to occupy themselves with their affairs is an arduous undertaking. It would often be less toilsome to interest them in the details of court etiquette than in the repair of their town hall.

But I also think that when the central administration claims to replace completely the free cooperation of those primarily interested, it deceives itself or wants to deceive you.

A central power, however enlightened, however learned one imagines it, cannot gather to itself alone all the details of the life of a great people. It cannot do it because such a work exceeds human strength. When it wants by its care alone to create so many diverse springs and make them function, its contents itself with a very incomplete result or exhausts itself in useless efforts.

Centralization, it is true, easily succeeds in subjecting the external actions of man to a certain uniformity that in the end one loves for itself, independent of the things to which it applies, like those devotees who adore the statue forgetting the divinity that it represents. Centralization succeeds without difficulty in impressing a regular style on current affairs; in skillfully regimenting the details of social orderliness; in repressing slight disorders and small offenses; in maintaining society in a status quo that is properly neither decadence nor progress; in keeping in the social body a sort of administrative somnolence that administrators are accustomed to calling good order and public tranquillity.⁵⁰ It excels, in a word, at preventing, not at doing. When it is a question of moving society profoundly or pressing it to a rapid advance, its force abandons it. If its measures need the concurrence of individuals, one is then wholly surprised at the weakness of that immense machine; it finds itself suddenly reduced to impotence.

Then sometimes it happens that centralization tries, in desperation, to

50. China appears to me to offer the most perfect emblem of the kind of social well-being that a very centralized administration can furnish to peoples who submit to it. Travelers tell us that the Chinese have tranquillity without happiness, industry without progress, stability without force, and material order without public morality. Among them society always runs well enough, never very well. I imagine that when China is open to the Europeans the latter will find the most beautiful model of administrative centralization that exists in the universe.

call citizens to its aid; but it says to them: "You shall act as I wish, as long as I wish, and precisely in the direction that I wish. You shall take charge of these details without aspiring to direct the sun; you shall work in the darkness, and later you shall judge my work by its results." It is not under such conditions that one obtains the concurrence of the human will. It must have freedom in its style, responsibility in its actions. Man is so made that he prefers standing still to marching without independence toward a goal of which he is ignorant.

I shall not deny that in the United States one often regrets not finding those uniform rules that seem constantly to be watching over each of us.

From time to time one encounters great examples there of insouciance and social negligence. Here and there gross stains appear that seem in complete discord with the surrounding civilization.

Some useful undertakings that demand a continual care and a rigorous exactitude to succeed are often abandoned in the end; for, in America as elsewhere, the people proceed by momentary efforts and sudden impulses.

The European, accustomed to finding an official constancy at hand who mixes in nearly everything, gets used to these different workings of a township's administration only with difficulty. In general, one can say that the little details of social orderliness that render life sweet and comfortable are neglected in America; but the essential guarantees to man in society exist there as much as everywhere else. Among the Americans, the force that administers the state is less well regulated, less enlightened, less skillful, but a hundred times greater than in Europe. There is no country in the world where, after all is said and done, men make as many efforts to create social well-being. I do not know a people who has succeeded in establishing schools as numerous and as efficacious; churches more in touch with the religious needs of the inhabitants; common highways better maintained. One must therefore not seek in the United States uniformity and permanence of views, minute care of details, perfection of administrative procedures;⁵¹ what one

51. A writer of talent [Sébastien L. Saunier] who, in a comparison between the finances of the United States and those of France, has proven that spirit cannot always substitute for knowledge of facts, rightly reproaches the Americans for the kind of confusion that reigns in the budgets of their townships, and after having given the model of a departmental budget in France, he adds: "Thanks to centralization, admirable creation of a great man, the municipal budgets from one end of the kingdom to the other, those of the great cities like those of the most humble communes, present no less order and method." Saunier, "Nouvelles observations sur les finances des États-Unis, en réponse à une brochure publiée par le Général La Fayette," *Revue Britannique*, October 8, 1831: 195-260 at 239.] There, certainly, is a result that I admire; but I see most of those French communes, whose accountancy is so perfect, plunged in a profound ignorance of their true interests and left in such an invincible apathy that society seems rather to vegetate than to live in them; on the other hand, I perceive in those same American townships,

finds there is the image of force, a little wild it is true, but full of power; [the image] of life accompanied by accidents, but also by movement and efforts.

Furthermore, I shall admit, if one wishes, that the villages and counties of the United States would be more usefully administered by a central authority located far away from them, and that would remain foreign to them, than by officials taken from within them. I shall recognize, if one requires it, that more security would reign in America, that they would make a wiser and more judicious use of social resources, if the administration of the whole country were concentrated in a single hand. The *political* advantages that Americans derive from the system of decentralization would still make me prefer it to the contrary system.

What does it matter to me, after all, that there should be an authority always on its feet, keeping watch that my pleasures are tranquil, flying ahead of my steps to turn away every danger without my even needing to think about it, if this authority, at the same that it removes the least thorns on my path, is absolute master of my freedom and my life, if it monopolizes movement and existence to such a point that everything around it must languish when it languishes, that everything must sleep when it sleeps, that everything must perish if it dies?

There are nations of Europe where an inhabitant considers himself a kind of colonist, indifferent to the destiny of the place that he inhabits. The greatest changes come about in his country without his concurrence; he does not even know precisely what has taken place; he suspects; he has heard the event recounted by chance. Even more, the fortune of his village, the policing of his street, the fate of his church and of his presbytery do not touch him; he thinks that all these things do not concern him in any fashion and that they belong to a powerful foreigner called the government. For himself, he enjoys these goods as a tenant, without a spirit of ownership and without ideas of any improvement whatsoever. This disinterest in himself goes so far that if his own security or that of his children is finally compromised, instead of occupying himself with removing the danger, he crosses his arms to wait for the nation as a whole to come to his aid. Yet this man, although he has made such a complete sacrifice of his free will, likes obedience no more than any

whose budgets are not drawn up on methodical and above all uniform plans, an enlightened, active, enterprising population; I contemplate a society always at work there. That spectacle astonishes me; for in my eyes, the principal goal of a good government is to produce the well-being of peoples and not to establish a strict order in the midst of their misery. I therefore wonder if it would not be possible to attribute to the same cause the prosperity of the American township and the apparent disorder of its finances, the distress of the commune in France and the perfection of its budget. In any case I distrust a good that I find mixed with so many evils, and I easily console myself for an evil that is compensated by so much good.

other. He submits, it is true, at the pleasure of a clerk; but it pleases him to defy the law like a defeated enemy, as soon as force is withdrawn. Thus one sees him swinging constantly between servitude and license.

When nations have arrived at this point, they must modify their laws and their mores or they perish, for the source of public virtues is almost dried up; one still finds subjects in them, but one no longer sees citizens.

I say that such nations have been prepared for conquest. If they do not disappear from the world stage, it is because they are surrounded by nations like them or inferior to them; it is because there still remains in their bosom a sort of indefinable instinct of the native country, some unreflective pride in the name that it bears, some vague memory of their past glory, which, without being linked precisely to anything, is enough to impress on them a conservative impulse as needed.

One would be wrong to reassure oneself by thinking that certain peoples have made prodigious efforts to defend a native country in which they have been living so to speak as foreigners. One should be careful indeed here, and one will see that religion was then almost always their principal motive.

The duration, glory, or prosperity of the nation had become sacred dogmas for them, and in defending their native country, they were also defending that holy city in which they were all citizens.

Turkish populations never took any part in the direction of the affairs of society; they nevertheless accomplished immense undertakings as long as they saw the triumph of the religion of Mohammed in the conquests of the sultans. Today religion is passing away; despotism alone remains to them; they fall.

Montesquieu, in giving despotism a force of its own, has, I think, done it an honor that it does not merit.* Despotism all alone by itself can maintain nothing lasting. When one looks at it from close up, one perceives that what has long made absolute governments prosper is religion and not fear.

One will never encounter, whatever one does, genuine power among men except in the free concurrence of wills. Now, there is nothing in the world but patriotism or religion that can make the universality of citizens advance for long toward the same goal.

One does not depend on laws to reanimate beliefs that are extinguished; but one does depend on laws to interest men in the destiny of their country. One depends on laws to awaken and direct that vague instinct of the native country that never abandons the heart of man, and in binding it to daily thoughts, passions, and habits, to make of it a reflective and lasting sentiment. And let it not be said that it is too late to attempt it; nations do not

* *The Spirit of the Laws*, III 9-10.

grow old in the same manner as men. Each generation born within them is like a new people that comes to offer itself to the hand of the legislator.

What I admire most in America are not the *administrative* effects of decentralization, but its *political* effects. In the United States the native country makes itself felt everywhere. It is an object of solicitude from the village to the entire Union. The inhabitant applies himself to each of the interests of his country as to his very own. He is glorified in the glory of the nation; in the success that it obtains he believes he recognizes his own work, and he is uplifted by it; he rejoices in the general prosperity from which he profits. He has for his native country a sentiment analogous to the one that he feels for his family, and it is still by a sort of selfishness that he takes an interest in the state.

Often the European sees in the public official only force; the American sees in him right. One can therefore say that in America a man never obeys man, but justice or law.

Thus he has conceived an often exaggerated but almost always salutary opinion of himself. He trusts fearlessly in his own forces, which appear to him to suffice for everything. A particular person conceives the thought of some undertaking; should this undertaking have a direct relation to the well-being of society, the idea of addressing himself to the public authority to obtain its concurrence does not occur to him. He makes known his plan, offers to execute it, calls individual forces to the assistance of his, and struggles hard to hand against all obstacles. Often, doubtless, he succeeds less well than if the state were in his place; but in the long term the general result of all the individual undertakings far exceeds what the government could do.

As administrative authority is placed at the side of those whom it administers, and in some way represents them, it excites neither jealousy nor hatred. As its means of action are limited, each feels that he cannot rely solely on it. Therefore when the administrative power intervenes within the circle of its prerogatives, it does not find itself abandoned to itself as in Europe. One does not believe that the duties of particular persons have ceased because the representative of the public comes to act. On the contrary, each person guides, supports, and sustains it.

Since the action of individual forces is joined to the action of social forces, they often succeed in doing what the most concentrated and most energetic administration would be in no condition to execute.*

I could cite many facts in support of what I advance; but I would rather take a single one and choose the one that I know best.

*See AT's note IX, page 691.

In America, the means that are put at the disposal of authority to uncover crimes and prosecute criminals are few.

An administrative order does not exist; passports are unknown. The judicial order in the United States cannot be compared with ours; police detectives are few; they do not always have the initiative in prosecutions; training is rapid and oral. I nevertheless doubt that crime in any country so rarely escapes punishment.

The reason for this is that everyone believes himself interested in providing proof of the offense and catching the offender.

During my stay in the United States, I saw the inhabitants of a country where a great crime had been committed spontaneously form committees for the purpose of pursuing the guilty one and delivering him to the courts.

In Europe, the criminal is an unfortunate who fights to hide his head from the agents of power; the population in some way assists in the struggle. In America, he is an enemy of the human race, and he has humanity as a whole against him.

I believe provincial institutions useful to all peoples; but none seems to me to have a more real need of these institutions than one whose social state is democratic.

In an aristocracy, one is always sure of maintaining a certain order in the bosom of freedom.

Since those who govern have much to lose, order is a great interest for them.

One can also say that in an aristocracy the people are sheltered from the excesses of despotism, because organized forces are always to be found ready to resist the despot.

A democracy without provincial institutions possesses no guarantee against such evils.

How make a multitude support freedom in great things when it has not learned to make use of it in small ones?

How resist tyranny in a country in which each individual is weak and in which individuals are not united by any common interest?

Those who fear license and those who dread absolute power should therefore equally desire the gradual development of provincial freedoms.

I am convinced, furthermore, that no nations are more at risk of falling under the yoke of administrative centralization than those whose social state is democratic.

Several causes concur in this result, but among others these:

The permanent tendency of these nations is to concentrate all governmental power in the hands of the sole power that directly represents the

people, because beyond the people one perceives no more than equal individuals confused in a common mass.

Now, when the same power is already vested with all the attributes of government, it is very difficult for it not to seek to enter into the details of administration, and it hardly ever fails to find the occasion to do it in the long term. We have been witnesses to this among ourselves.

In the French Revolution there were two movements in contrary directions that must not be confused: one favorable to freedom, the other favorable to despotism.

In the old monarchy, the king alone made the law. Below the sovereign power some half-destroyed remains of provincial institutions were placed. Those provincial institutions were incoherent, badly ordered, often absurd. In the hands of the aristocracy, they had sometimes been instruments of oppression.

The Revolution pronounced itself at the same time against royalty and against provincial institutions. It confused in one and the same hatred all that had preceded it, absolute power and whatever had been able to temper its rigors; it was at once both republican and centralizing.

This double character of the French Revolution is a fact that the friends of absolute power have very carefully laid hold of. When you see them defending administrative centralization, do you believe they are working in favor of despotism? Not at all, they are defending one of the great conquests of the Revolution.* In this manner, one can remain popular and be an enemy of the rights of the people; a hidden servant of tyranny and an avowed lover of freedom.

I have visited the two nations that have developed the system of provincial freedoms to the highest degree and I have listened to the voices of the parties that divide these nations.

In America, I found men who aspired in secret to destroy the democratic institutions of their country. In England, I found others who openly attacked aristocracy; I did not encounter a single one who did not regard provincial freedom as a great good.

In those two countries I saw the evils of the state imputed to an infinite variety of causes, but never to freedom of the township.

I heard citizens attribute the greatness or the prosperity of their native country to a multitude of reasons; but I heard all of them put provincial freedom first in line and class it at the head of all other advantages.

Shall I believe that men naturally so divided, who agree neither on religious doctrines nor on political theories, fall into accord on one sole fact that

*See AT's note X, page 692.

they can best judge since it passes before their eyes daily—and that this fact is erroneous?

It is only peoples who have few or no provincial institutions who deny their utility; that is to say, only those who do not know the thing speak ill of it.

Chapter 6 ON JUDICIAL POWER IN THE UNITED STATES AND ITS ACTION ON POLITICAL SOCIETY

The Anglo-Americans have preserved in the judicial power all the characteristics that distinguish it among other peoples.—Nevertheless they have made of it a great political power.—How.—How the judicial system of the Anglo-Americans differs from all others.—Why American judges have the right to declare laws unconstitutional.—How American judges use that right.—Precautions taken by the legislator to prevent the abuse of that right.

I believed I ought to devote a separate chapter to judicial power. Its political importance is so great that it appeared to me that to speak of it in passing would diminish it in the eyes of readers.

There have been confederations elsewhere than in America: republics have been seen in places other than on the shores of the New World; the representative system has been adopted in several European states; but I do not think that, until now, any nation in the world has constituted judicial power in the same manner as the Americans.

What a foreigner understands only with the greatest difficulty in the United States is the judicial organization. There is so to speak no political event in which he does not hear the authority of the judge invoked; and he naturally concludes that in the United States the judge is one of the prime political powers. When, next, he comes to examine the constitution of the courts, he discovers at first only judicial prerogatives and habits in them. In his eyes the magistrate never seems to be introduced into public affairs except by chance, but this same chance recurs every day.

When the Parliament of Paris* made remonstrances and refused to register an edict, when it had a corrupt official cited at its bar, one openly perceived

*The French Parlements were not legislatures, but courts.

maneuvers of the one will serve to unmask the other. In democracies, the vices of the magistrate are in general wholly personal to him.

But public men under the government of aristocracy have a class interest which, if it is sometimes intermingled with that of the majority, often remains distinct from it. That interest forms a common and lasting bond among them; it invites them to unite and to combine their efforts toward a goal that is not always the happiness of the greatest number: it not only binds those who govern with one another; it also unites them to a considerable portion of the governed; for many citizens, without being vested with any post, make up a part of the aristocracy.

The aristocratic magistrate therefore encounters constant support in society at the same time that he finds it in the government.

The common object that unites the magistrates in aristocracies to the interest of a part of their contemporaries also identifies them and subjects them, so to speak, to that of future races. They work for the future as well as for the present. The aristocratic magistrate is therefore pushed toward the same point all at once by the passions of the governed, by his own, and I could almost say by the passions of his posterity.

How be surprised if he does not resist? One often also sees the spirit of class in aristocracies carry along even those it does not corrupt and, little by little without their knowing it, make them accommodate the society to their use and prepare it for their descendants.

I do not know if an aristocracy as liberal as that of England has ever existed, which without interruption has furnished men as worthy and enlightened to the government of the country.

It is, however, easy to recognize that in English legislation the good of the poor has in the end often been sacrificed to that of the rich, and the rights of the greatest number to the privileges of some: thus England in our day unites within itself all the most extreme fortunes, and one meets with miseries there that almost equal its power and glory.

In the United States, where public officials have no class interest to make prevail, the general and continuous course of government is beneficent although those who govern are often unskillful and sometimes contemptible.

There is, therefore, at the base of democratic institutions, a hidden tendency that often makes men cooperate for the general prosperity despite their vices or errors, whereas in aristocratic institutions a secret inclination is sometimes discovered that, despite talents and virtues, brings them to contribute to the miseries of those like them. Thus it can happen that in aristocratic governments public men do evil without wanting to, and in democracies they produce good without having any thought of doing so.

ON PUBLIC SPIRIT IN THE UNITED STATES

Instinctive love of native country.—Reflective patriotism.—Their different characteristics.—That people ought to strive with all their strength toward the second when the first disappears.—Efforts the Americans have made to achieve this.—The interest of the individual infinitely bound to that of the country.

There exists a love of native country that has its source principally in the unreflective, disinterested, and indefinable sentiment that binds the heart of the man to the place where the man was born. This instinctive love intermingles with the taste for old customs, with respect for ancestors and memory of the past; those who feel it cherish their country as one loves a paternal home. They love the tranquillity they enjoy; they hold to the peaceful habits they have contracted there; they are attached to the memories it presents to them, and even find some sweetness in living there obediently. Often that love of native country is further exalted by religious zeal, and then one sees prodigies done. It is a sort of religion itself; it does not reason, it believes, it feels, it acts. Peoples have been encountered who have, in some fashion, personified the native country and have caught a glimpse of it in the prince. They have therefore carried over to him a part of the sentiment of which patriotism is composed; they have become haughty with his triumphs and have taken pride in his power. There was a time, under the former monarchy, when the French experienced a sort of joy in feeling themselves delivered without recourse to the arbitrariness of the monarch, and they used to say haughtily: "We live under the most powerful king in the world."

Like all unreflective passions, this love of country pushes one to great, fleeting efforts rather than to continuity of efforts. After having saved the state in a time of crisis, it often allows it to decline in the midst of peace.

When peoples are still simple in their mores and firm in their beliefs, when society rests gently on an old order of things whose legitimacy is not contested, one sees this instinctive love of native country reign.

There is another more rational than that one; less generous, less ardent perhaps, but more fruitful and more lasting; this one is born of enlightenment; it develops with the aid of laws, it grows with the exercise of rights, and in the end it intermingles in a way with personal interest. A man understands the influence that the well-being of the country has on his own; he knows that the law permits him to contribute to producing this well-being, and he interests himself in the prosperity of his country at first as a thing that is useful to him, and afterwards as his own work.

But sometimes a moment arrives in the lives of peoples when old customs are changed, mores destroyed, beliefs shaken, the prestige of memories faded

away, and when, however, enlightenment remains incomplete and political rights are badly secured or restricted. Then men no longer perceive the native country except in a weak and doubtful light; they no longer place it in the soil, which has become a lifeless land in their eyes, nor in the usages of their ancestors, which they have been taught to regard as a yoke; nor in the religion which they doubt; nor in the laws they do not make, nor in the legislator whom they fear and scorn. They therefore see it nowhere, no more with its own features than with any other, and they withdraw into a narrow and unenlightened selfishness. These men escape prejudices without recognizing the empire of reason; they have neither the instinctive patriotism of the monarchy nor the reflective patriotism of the republic; but they have come to a stop between the two, in the midst of confusion and miseries.

What is one to do in such a state? Retreat. But peoples no more come back to the sentiments of their youth than do men to the innocent tastes of their first years; they can regret them, but not make them revive. One must therefore go further ahead and hasten to unite in the eyes of the people individual interest to the interest of the country, for disinterested love of one's native country is fleeing away without return.

I am surely far from claiming that, to arrive at this result, one ought to accord the exercise of political rights to all men all at once; but I say that the most powerful means, and perhaps the only one that remains to us, of interesting men in the fate of their native country is to make them participate in its government. In our day, the spirit of the city seems to me inseparable from the exercise of political rights; and I think that from now on one will see the number of citizens in Europe increase or diminish in proportion to the extension of these rights.

How is it that in the United States, where the inhabitants arrived yesterday on the soil they occupy, where they have brought neither usages nor memories; where they meet for the first time without knowing each other; where, to say it in a word, the instinct of the native country can scarcely exist; how is it that each is interested in the affairs of his township, of his district, and of the state as a whole as in his own? It is that each, in his sphere, takes an active part in the government of society.

In the United States, the man of the people understands the influence that general prosperity exerts on his happiness—an idea so simple and yet so little known by the people. Furthermore, he is accustomed to regarding this prosperity as his own work. He therefore sees in the public fortune his own, and he works for the good of the state not only out of duty or out of pride, but I would almost dare say out of cupidity.

One does not need to study the institutions and history of Americans to know the truth of what precedes; mores advertise it enough to you. The

American, taking part in all that is done in this country, believes himself interested in defending all that is criticized there; for not only is his country then attacked, he himself is: thus one sees his national pride have recourse to all the artifices and descend to all the puerilities of individual vanity.

There is nothing more annoying in the habits of life than this irritable patriotism of the Americans. A foreigner would indeed consent to praise much in their country; but he would want to be permitted to blame something, and this he is absolutely refused.

America is therefore a country of freedom where, in order not to wound anyone, the foreigner must not speak freely either of particular persons, or of the state, or of the governed, or of those who govern, or of public undertakings, or of private undertakings; or, finally, of anything one encounters except perhaps the climate and the soil; and still, one finds Americans ready to defend both as if they had helped to form them.

In our day one must know how to resign oneself and dare to choose between the patriotism of all and the government of the few, for one cannot at once unite the social force and activity given by the first with the guarantees of tranquillity sometimes furnished by the second.

ON THE IDEA OF RIGHTS IN THE UNITED STATES

There are no great peoples without an idea of rights.—What is the means of giving the idea of rights to the people.—Respect for rights in the United States.—How it arises.

After the general idea of virtue I know of none more beautiful than that of rights, or rather these two ideas are intermingled. The idea of rights is nothing other than the idea of virtue introduced into the political world.

It is with the idea of rights that men have defined what license and tyranny are. Enlightened by it, each could show himself independent without arrogance and submissive without baseness. The man who obeys violence bows and demans himself; but when he submits to the right to command that he recognizes in someone like him, he raises himself in a way above the very one who commands him. There are no great men without virtue; without respect for rights, there is no great people: one can almost say that there is no society; for, what is a union of rational and intelligent beings among whom force is the sole bond?

I wonder what, in our day, is the means of inculcating in men the idea of rights and of making it, so to speak, fall upon their senses; and I see only one, which is to give the peaceful exercise of certain rights to all of them: one sees that well among children, who are men except for force and experience. When the child begins to move in the midst of external objects, instinct

brings him to put to his use all that he encounters in his hands; he has no idea of the property of others, not even of its existence; but as he is made aware of the price of things and he discovers that he can be stripped of his in his turn, he becomes more circumspect and ends by respecting in those like him what he wants to be respected in himself.

What happens to the infant with his playthings happens later to the man with all the objects that belong to him. Why in America, country of democracy par excellence, does no one make heard those complaints against property in general that often ring out in Europe? Is there need to say it?—it is that in America there are no proletarians. Each one, having a particular good to defend, recognizes the right of property in principle.

In the political world it is the same. In America, the man of the people has conceived a lofty idea of political rights because he has political rights; so that his own are not violated, he does not attack those of others. And whereas in Europe this same man does not recognize sovereign authority, the American submits without murmur to the power of the least of its magistrates.

This truth appears even in the smallest details of the existence of peoples. In France there are few pleasures reserved exclusively for the upper classes of society; the poor man is admitted almost everywhere the wealthy man can enter: so he is seen to conduct himself with decency, and to respect everything that serves enjoyments he shares. In England, where wealth has the privilege of pleasure like the monopoly of power, they complain that when the poor man comes to introduce himself furtively into the place destined for the pleasures of the rich he likes to cause useless damage: how can one be surprised at this?—they have taken care that he has nothing to lose.

The government of democracy makes the idea of political rights descend to the least of citizens, as the division of goods puts the idea of the right of property in general within reach of all men. There is one of its greatest merits in my eyes.

I do not say that it is an easy thing to teach all men to make use of political rights; I say only that when that can be done, the resulting effects are great.

And I add that if there is a century in which such an undertaking ought to be attempted, that century is ours.

Do you not see that religions are weakening and that the divine notion of rights is disappearing? Do you not find that mores are being altered, and that with them the moral notion of rights is being effaced?

Do you not perceive on all sides beliefs that give way to reasoning, and sentiments that give way to calculations? If in the midst of that universal disturbance you do not come to bind the idea of rights to the personal interest that offers itself as the only immobile point in the human heart, what will then remain to you to govern the world, except fear?

Therefore when I am told that the laws are weak and the governed turbulent; that passions are lively and virtue without power, and that in this situation one must not think of augmenting the rights of democracy, I respond that it is because of these very things that I believe one must think of it; and in truth I think that governments have still more interest in it than society, for governments perish, and society cannot die. Furthermore, I do not want to abuse the example of America.

In America, the people were vested with political rights at a period when it was difficult for them to make bad use of them, because the citizens were few and simple in mores. In becoming larger, Americans did not so to speak increase the powers of democracy; rather, they extended its domain.

One cannot doubt that the moment when one accords political rights to a people who have been deprived of them until then is a moment of crisis, a crisis often necessary, but always dangerous.

The child puts to death when he is ignorant of the price of life; he takes away the property of others before knowing that one can rob him of his. The man of the people, at the instant when he is accorded political rights, finds himself, in relation to his rights, in the same position as the child vis-à-vis all nature, and that is the case in which to apply to him these celebrated words: *Homio puer robustus*.*

This truth is exposed in America itself. The states where citizens have enjoyed their rights longest are those where they know best how to make use of them.

One cannot say it too often: There is nothing more prolific in marvels than the art of being free; but there is nothing harder than the apprenticeship of freedom. It is not the same with despotism. Despotism often presents itself as the mender of all ills suffered; it is the support of good law, the sustainer of the oppressed, and the founder of order. Peoples fall asleep in the bosom of the temporary prosperity to which it gives birth; and when they awaken, they are miserable. Freedom, in contrast, is ordinarily born in the midst of storms, it is established painfully among civil discords, and only when it is old can one know its benefits.

ON RESPECT FOR THE LAW IN THE UNITED STATES

Respect of Americans for the law.—Paternal love that they feel for it.—Personal interest that each finds in increasing the power of the law.

*"Man is a robust boy." AT wrote "famous from Hobbes" in a draft note. See Thomas Hobbes, *De Cive*, Preface, though Hobbes says *vir malus* (a wicked man) instead of *homo*. Cf. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, part 1.

It is not always permissible to call the entire people, either directly or indirectly, to the making of the law; but one cannot deny that when that is practicable, the law acquires great authority from it. That popular origin, which often harms the goodness and wisdom of legislation, contributes singularly to its power.

There is a prodigious force in the expression of the will of a whole people. When it is uncovered in broad daylight, the very imagination of those who would wish to struggle against it is overwhelmed.

The truth of this is well known to parties.

And so one sees them contest for a majority everywhere they can. When they lack it among those who have voted, they place it among those who have abstained from voting, and when it still happens to escape them there, they find it among those who did not have the right to vote.

In the United States, excepting slaves, domestics, and indigents nourished by the townships, there is no one who is not an elector, and whoever has this title concurs indirectly in the law. Those who want to attack the laws are therefore reduced to doing openly one of these two things: they must either change the opinion of the nation or ride roughshod over its will.

Add to this first reason, another more direct and more powerful, that in the United States each finds a sort of personal interest in everyone's obeying the laws; for whoever does not make up a part of the majority today will perhaps be in its ranks tomorrow; and the respect that he professes now for the will of the legislator he will soon have occasion to require for his. However distressing the law may be, the inhabitant of the United States submits to it without trouble, therefore, not only as the work of the greatest number, but also as his own; he considers it from the point of view of a contract to which he would have been a party.

One therefore does not see in the United States a numerous and always turbulent crowd, which, regarding the law as a natural enemy, casts only glances of fear and suspicion on it. On the contrary, it is impossible not to perceive that all classes show great confidence in the legislation that rules the country and feel a sort of paternal love for it.

I am mistaken in saying all classes. In America, the European ladder of powers being reversed, the rich are found in a position analogous to that of the poor in Europe; it is they who often mistrust the law. I have said it elsewhere: the real advantage of democratic government is not to guarantee the interests of all, as it has sometimes been claimed, but only to protect those of the greatest number.* In the United States, where the poor man governs, the rich always have to fear lest he abuse his power against them.

* DA I 26.

This disposition of the mind of the rich can produce a muted discontent; but society is not violently troubled by it; because the same reason that prevents the rich man from granting his confidence to the legislator prevents him from defying his commandments. He does not make the law because he is rich, and he does not dare to violate it because of his wealth. In civilized nations it is generally only those who have nothing to lose who revolt. So, therefore, if the laws of democracy are not always respectable, they are almost always respected; for those who generally violate the laws cannot fail to obey those that they have made and from which they profit, and citizens who could have an interest in breaking them are brought by character and by position to submit to the will of the legislator, whatever it may be. Furthermore, the people in America obey the law not only because it is their work, but also because they can change it when by chance it hurts them; they submit to it in the first place as an evil that is imposed by themselves and after that as a passing evil.

ACTIVITY REIGNING IN ALL PARTS OF THE BODY POLITIC OF THE UNITED STATES; INFLUENCE THAT IT EXERTS ON SOCIETY

It is more difficult to conceive of the political activity reigning in the United States than of the freedom or equality encountered there.—The great movement that constantly agitates legislatures is only an episode, a prolongation of this universal movement.—Difficulty that the American finds in occupying himself only with his own affairs.—Political agitation spreads into civil society.—Industrial activity of the Americans coming in part from this cause.—Indirect advantages that society derives from the government of democracy.

When one passes from a free country into another that is not, one is struck by a very extraordinary spectacle: there, all is activity and movement; here, all seems calm and immobile. In the one, it is only a question of betterment and progress; one would say that society in the other, after having acquired all goods, aspires only to rest in order to enjoy them. Nevertheless, the country that gives itself so much agitation so as to be happy is generally richer and more prosperous than the one that appears so satisfied with its lot. And in considering them both, one has trouble conceiving how so many new needs make themselves felt daily in the first, whereas one seems to feel so few in the second.

If this remark is applicable to free countries that have preserved the monarchical form and to those where aristocracy dominates, it is still more so in democratic republics. There, it is no longer one portion of the people that undertakes to better the state of society; the entire people takes charge of this

care. It is not only a question of providing for the needs and the conveniences of one class, but of all classes at the same time.

It is not impossible to conceive the immense freedom that Americans enjoy; one can get an idea of their extreme equality as well; but what one cannot comprehend without having already been witness to it is the political activity that reigns in the United States.

Scarcely have you descended on the soil of America when you find yourself in the midst of a sort of tumult; a confused clamor is raised on all sides; a thousand voices come to your ear at the same time, each of them expressing some social needs. Around you everything moves: here, the people of one neighborhood have gathered to learn if a church ought to be built; there, they are working on the choice of a representative; farther on, the deputies of a district are going to town in all haste in order to decide about some local improvements; in another place, the farmers of a village abandon their furrows to go discuss the plan of a road or a school. Citizens assemble with the sole goal of declaring that they disapprove of the course of government, whereas others gather to proclaim that the men in place are the fathers of their country.* Here are others still who, regarding drunkenness as the principal source of the evils of the state, come solemnly to pledge themselves to give an example of temperance.¹

The great political movement that constantly agitates American legislatures, the only one that is perceived from the outside, is only one episode and a sort of prolongation of the universal movement that begins in the lowest ranks of the people and afterwards spreads gradually to all classes of citizens. One cannot work more laboriously at being happy.

It is difficult to say what place the cares of politics occupy in the life of a man in the United States. To meddle in the government of society and to speak about it is the greatest business and, so to speak, the only pleasure that an American knows. This is perceived even in the least habits of life: women themselves often go to political assemblies and, by listening to political discourses, take a rest from household tedium.[†] For them, clubs replace theater-going to a certain point. An American does not know how to converse, but he discusses; he does not discourse, but he holds forth. He always speaks to you as to an assembly; and if he happens by chance to become heated, he will say "sirs" in addressing his interlocutor.

**Patria*, elsewhere "native country";

†Or "annoyances"; *ennuis*.

1. Temperance societies are associations whose members pledge to abstain from strong liquors. On my visit to the United States, temperance societies already counted more than 270,000 members, and their effect had been to diminish consumption of strong liquors in the state of Pennsylvania alone by 500,000 gallons a year.

In certain countries, the inhabitant only accepts with a sort of repugnance the political rights that the law accords him; it seems that to occupy him with common interests is to steal his time, and he likes to enclose himself in a narrow selfishness of which four ditches topped by a hedge form the exact limits.

On the contrary, from the moment when an American were reduced to occupying himself only with his own affairs, he would have been robbed of half of his existence; he would feel an immense void in his days, and he would become incredibly unhappy.²

I am persuaded that if despotism ever comes to be established in America, it will find more difficulties in defeating the habits to which freedom has given birth than in surmounting the love of freedom itself.

This agitation, constantly reborn, that the government of democracy has introduced into the political world, passes afterwards into civil society. I do not know if, all in all, that is not the greatest advantage of democratic government, and I praise it much more because of what it causes to be done than for what it does.

It is incontestable that the people often direct public affairs very badly; but the people cannot meddle in public affairs without having the scope of their ideas extended and without having their minds be seen to go outside their ordinary routine. The man of the people who is called to the government of society conceives a certain self-esteem. As he is then a power, very enlightened intellects put themselves at the service of his. People constantly address themselves to him to get his support, and in seeking to deceive him in a thousand different manners, they enlighten him. In politics, he participates in undertakings that he has not conceived, but that give him a general taste for undertakings. Every day people indicate to him new improvements to make to the common property; and he feels the desire being born to improve what is personal to him. He is perhaps neither more virtuous nor happier, but he is more enlightened and more active than his precursors. I do not doubt that democratic institutions, joined to the physical nature of the country, are not the direct cause, as so many people say, but the indirect cause of the prodigious motion of industry to be remarked in the United States. Laws do not give birth to it, but the people learn to produce it by making the law.

When the enemies of democracy claim that one alone does better what he takes charge of than the government of all, it seems to me that they are right.

2. The same fact was already observed in Rome under the Caesars.

Montesquieu remarks somewhere [*On the Greatness of the Romans and Their Decline*, XIV 12] that nothing equalled the despair of certain Roman citizens who, after the agitations of a political existence, suddenly reentered the calm of private life.

The government of one alone, supposing equality of enlightenment on both sides, puts more coherence into its undertakings than the multitude; it shows more perseverance, more of an idea of an ensemble, more perfection of detail, a more just discernment in the choice of men. Those who deny these things have never seen a democratic republic or have judged by only a few examples. Democracy, even if local circumstances and the dispositions of the people permit it to be maintained, does not present to the eye administrative regularity and methodical order in government; that is true. Democratic freedom does not execute each of its undertakings with the same perfection as intelligent despotism; often it abandons them before having received their fruit, or it risks dangerous ones: but in the long term democracy produces more than despotism; it does each thing less well, but it does more things. Under its empire, what is great is above all not what public administration executes but what is executed without it and outside it. Democracy does not give the most skillful government to the people, but it does what the most skillful government is often powerless to create; it spreads a restive activity through the whole social body, a superabundant force, an energy that never exists without it, and which, however little circumstances may be favorable, can bring forth marvels. Those are its true advantages.

In this century, when the destinies of the Christian world appear to be unresolved, some hasten to attack democracy as an enemy power while it is still getting larger; others already adore it as a new god that issues from nothingness; but both know the object of their hatred or their desire only imperfectly; they do combat in the shadows and strike only haphazardly.

What do you ask of society and its government? We must understand each other.

Do you want to give a certain loftiness to the human spirit, a generous way of viewing the things of this world? Do you want to inspire in men a sort of contempt for material goods? Do you desire to give birth to or to maintain profound convictions and to prepare for great devotions?

Is it a question for you of polishing mores, of elevating manners, of making the arts shine? Do you want poetry, renown, glory?

Do you intend to organize a people in such a manner as to act strongly on all others? Do you desire it to attempt great undertakings and, whatever may be the result of its efforts, to leave an immense mark on history?

If this is, according to you, the principal object that men ought to propose for themselves in society, do not take the government of democracy; it would surely not lead you to the goal.

But if it seems to you useful to turn the intellectual and moral activity of man to the necessities of material life and to employ it in producing well-

being; if reason appears to you to be more profitable to men than genius; if your object is not to create heroic virtues but peaceful habits; if you would rather see vices than crimes, and if you prefer to find fewer great actions on condition that you will encounter fewer enormities; if instead of acting within a brilliant society it is enough for you to live in the midst of a prosperous society; if, finally, the principal object of a government, according to you, is not to give the most force or the most glory possible to the entire body of the nation, but to procure the most well-being for each of the individuals who compose it and to have each avoid the most misery, then equalize conditions and constitute the government of a democracy.

If there is no longer time to make a choice and if a force superior to man already carries you along toward one of the two governments without consulting your desires, seek at least to derive from it all the good that it can do; and knowing its good instincts as well as its evil penchants, strive to restrict the effects of the latter and develop the former.

Chapter 7 ON THE OMNIPOTENCE OF THE MAJORITY IN THE UNITED STATES AND ITS EFFECTS

Natural force of the majority in democracies.—Most of the American constitutions have artificially increased this natural force.—How.—Imperative mandates.—Moral empire of the majority.—Opinion of its infallibility.—Respect for its rights. What augments it in the United States.

It is of the very essence of democratic governments that the empire of the majority is absolute; for in democracies, outside the majority there is nothing that resists it.

Most of the American constitutions have also sought to augment this natural force of the majority artificially.¹

1. We have seen, during the examination of the federal constitution [DA I 1.8], that the legislators of the Union made contrary efforts. The result of these efforts was to render the federal government more independent in its sphere than that of the states. But the federal government is scarcely occupied with any but external affairs; it is the state governments that really direct American society.

degradation. It is not to them that I am speaking; but there are others who see in the republic a permanent and tranquil state, a necessary goal toward which ideas and mores carry modern societies each day, and who sincerely wish to prepare men to be free. When these attack religious beliefs, they follow their passions and not their interests. Despotism can do without faith, but freedom cannot. Religion is much more necessary in the republic they extol than in the monarchy they attack, and in democratic republics more than all others. How could society fail to perish if, while the political bond is relaxed, the moral bond were not tightened? And what makes a people master of itself if it has not submitted to God?

ON THE PRINCIPAL CAUSES THAT MAKE RELIGION POWERFUL IN AMERICA

Care that Americans have taken to separate church from state.—The laws, public opinion, the efforts of the priests themselves cooperate to reach this result.—To this cause one must attribute the power that religion exerts over souls in the United States.—Why.—What is the natural state of men in the matter of religion in our day.—What particular and accidental cause is opposed in certain countries to men's conforming to this state.*

The philosophers of the eighteenth century explained the gradual weakening of beliefs in an altogether simple fashion. Religious zeal, they said, will be extinguished as freedom and enlightenment increase. It is unfortunate that the facts do not accord with this theory.

There is a certain European population whose disbelief is equaled only by their brutishness and ignorance, whereas in America one sees one of the freest and most enlightened peoples in the world eagerly fulfill all the external duties of religion.

On my arrival in the United States it was the religious aspect of the country that first struck my eye. As I prolonged my stay, I perceived the great political consequences that flowed from these new facts.

Among us, I had seen the spirit of religion and the spirit of freedom almost always move in contrary directions. Here I found them united intimately with one another: they reigned together on the same soil.

I felt my desire to know the cause of this phenomenon growing daily. To learn it, I interrogated the faithful of all communions; above all, I sought the society of priests, who keep the depositories of the different beliefs and who have a personal interest in their duration. The religion that I profess brought me together particularly with the Catholic clergy, and I was not slow to bond in a sort of intimacy with several of its members. To each of them I

expressed my astonishment and exposed my doubts: I found that all these men differed among themselves only on details; but all attributed the peaceful dominion that religion exercises in their country principally to the complete separation of church and state. I do not fear to affirm that during my stay in America I did not encounter a single man, priest or layman, who did not come to accord on this point.

This led me to examine more attentively than I had until then the position that American priests occupy in political society. I learned with surprise that they did not fill any public post;⁴ I did not see a single one in the administration, and I discovered that they were not even represented within the assemblies.

The law in several states had closed any political career to them;⁵ opinion did so in all the others.

When I finally came to inquire what the mind of the clergy itself was, I perceived that most of its members seemed to distance themselves from power voluntarily and take a sort of professional pride in remaining strangers to it.

I heard them anathematize ambition and bad faith, whatever might be the political opinions with which these took care to cover themselves. But I learned in listening to them that men cannot be condemnable in the eyes of God because of these same opinions when they are sincere, and that there is no more sin in erring in matters of government than in being mistaken about the manner in which one must build a dwelling or plow a furrow.

I saw them separate themselves carefully from all parties, and avoid contact with them with all the ardor of personal interest.

These facts served to prove to me that I had been told the truth. Then I wanted to bring the facts back to the causes: I wondered how it could happen that in diminishing the apparent force of a religion one came to increase its real power, and I believed that it was not impossible to discover this.

The short space of sixty years will never confine the whole imagination of man; the incomplete joys of this world will never suffice for his heart. Alone

4 Unless one gives this name to the offices that many of them occupy in the schools. The greater part of education is entrusted to the clergy.

5. See the Constitution of New York [1821], art. 7, sec. 4; Constitution of North Carolina [1776], art. 3; Constitution of Virginia; Constitution of South Carolina [1790], art. 1, sec. 23; Constitution of Kentucky [1791], art. 2, sec. 26; Constitution of Tennessee [1796], art. 8, sec. 1; Constitution of Louisiana, art. 2, sec. 22. The article of the Constitution of New York is conceived thus:

Ministers of the Gospel, being by their profession consecrated to the service of God and given to the care of directing souls, ought not to be troubled in the exercise of these important duties; consequently no minister of the Gospel or priest, to whatever sect he may belong, shall be able to be vested with any public offices, civil or military.

* All uses the term "priests" generally, referring to Protestant as well as Catholic clergy.

among all the beings, man shows a natural disgust for existence and an immense desire to exist: he scorns life and fears nothingness. These different instincts constantly drive his soul toward contemplation of another world, and it is religion that guides it there. Religion is therefore only a particular form of hope, and it is as natural to the human heart as hope itself. Only by a kind of aberration of the intellect and with the aid of a sort of moral violence exercised on their own nature do men stray from religious beliefs; an invincible inclination leads them back to them. Disbelief is an accident; faith alone is the permanent state of humanity.

In considering religions from a purely human point of view, one can therefore say that all religions draw from man himself an element of strength that can never fail them, because it depends on one of the constituent principles of human nature.

I know that there are times when religion can add to the influence that is proper to it the artificial power of the laws and the support of the material powers that direct society. One has seen religions intimately united with earthly governments, dominating souls by terror and by faith at the same time; but when a religion contracts an alliance like this, I do not fear to say that it acts as a man would: it sacrifices the future with a view to the present, and in obtaining a power that is not due to it, it risks its legitimate power.

When a religion seeks to found its empire only on the desire for immortality that torments the hearts of all men equally, it can aim at universality; but when it comes to be united with a government, it must adopt maxims that are applicable only to certain peoples. So, therefore, in allying itself with a political power, religion increases its power over some and loses the hope of reigning over all.

As long as a religion is supported only by sentiments that are the consolation of all miseries, it can attract the hearts of the human race to it. Mixed with the bitter passions of this world, it is sometimes constrained to defend allies given it by interest rather than love; and it must repel as adversaries men who often still love it, while they are combating those with whom it has united. Religion, therefore, cannot share the material force of those who govern without being burdened with a part of the hatreds to which they give rise.

The political powers that appear the best established have as a guarantee of their longevity only the opinions of a generation, the interests of a century, often the life of one man. One law can modify the social state that seems the most definitive and the best consolidated, and with it everything changes.

The powers of society are all more or less fugitive, as are our years on earth; they rapidly succeed each other like the various cares of life; and no

government has ever been seen to be supported by an invariable disposition of the human heart or founded on an immortal interest.

As long as a religion finds its force in the sentiments, instincts, and passions that one sees reproduced in the same manner in all periods of history, it defies the effort of time, or at least it can only be destroyed by another religion. But when religion wishes to be supported by the interests of this world, it becomes almost as fragile as all the powers on earth. Alone, it can hope for immortality; bound to ephemeral powers, it follows their fortune and often falls with the passions of a day that sustain them.

In uniting with different political powers, religion can therefore contract only an onerous alliance. It does not need their assistance to live, and in serving them it can die.

The danger that I have just pointed out exists in all times, but it is not always so visible.

There are centuries in which governments appear to be immortal, and others in which one would say that the existence of society is more fragile than that of one man.

Certain constitutions maintain citizens in a sort of lethargic slumber, and others deliver them to feverish agitation.

When governments seem so strong and laws so stable, men do not perceive the danger that religion can risk by uniting with power.

When governments show themselves so weak and laws so changeable, the peril strikes every eye, but then there is often no longer time to escape it. One must therefore learn to perceive it from afar.

Insofar as a nation takes on a democratic social state, and societies are seen to incline toward republics, it becomes more and more dangerous for religion to unite with authority; for the time approaches when power is going to pass from hand to hand, when political theories will succeed one another, when men, laws, and constitutions themselves will disappear or be modified daily—and this lasting not only for a time, but constantly. Agitation and instability are due to the nature of democratic republics, just as immobility and sleep form the law of absolute monarchies.

If the Americans, who change their head of state every four years, who every two years make a choice of new legislators and replace provincial administrators each year; if the Americans, who have delivered the political world to the attempts of innovators, had not placed their religion somewhere outside of that, what could it hold onto in the ebb and flow of human opinions? In the midst of the parties' struggle, where would the respect be that is due it? What would become of its immortality when everything around it was perishing?

American priests have perceived this truth before all others, and they conform their behavior to it. They saw that they had to renounce religious influence if they wanted to acquire a political power, and they preferred to lose the support of power rather than share in its vicissitudes.

In America, religion is perhaps less powerful than it has been in certain times and among certain peoples, but its influence is more lasting. It is reduced to its own strength, which no one can take away from it; it acts in one sphere only, but it covers the whole of it and dominates it without effort.

I hear voices in Europe arising from all sides; they deplore the absence of beliefs and they wonder what means will give back to religion some remnant of its former power.

It seems to me that one must first inquire attentively into what ought to be, in our day, *the natural state* of men in the matter of religion. Then, knowing what we can hope and have to fear, we would perceive clearly the goal toward which our efforts ought to tend.

Two great dangers menace the existence of religions: schisms and indifference.

In centuries of fervor, it sometimes happens that men abandon their religion, but they escape its yoke only to submit to that of another. Faith changes its object, it does not die. Then the old religion excites either ardent love or implacable hatred in all hearts; some quit it with anger, others attach themselves to it with a new ardor: beliefs differ, irreligion is unknown.

But it is not the same when a religious belief is undermined silently by doctrines that I shall call negative, since in affirming the falseness of one religion they do not establish the truth of any other.

Then prodigious revolutions are worked in the human mind without the apparent aid of man's passions and so to speak without his suspecting them. One sees men who let the object of their dearest hopes escape almost by forgetting. Carried along by an insensible current against which they do not have the courage to struggle and to which they nonetheless yield with regret, they abandon the faith that they love to follow the doubt that leads them to despair.

In the centuries we have just described, beliefs are abandoned in coldness rather than hate; they are not rejected, they leave you. In ceasing to believe religion true, the unbeliever continues to judge it useful. Considering religious beliefs under a human aspect, he recognizes their empire over mores, their influence on laws. He understands how they can make men live in peace and prepare them gently for death. He therefore regrets his faith after he has lost it, and deprived of a good of which he knows the entire value, he fears to take it away from those who still possess it.

For his part, he who continues to believe does not fear exposing his faith

to all eyes. In those who do not share his hopes he sees unfortunates rather than adversaries; he knows that he can acquire their esteem without following their example; he is therefore not at war with anyone; and not considering the society in which he lives as an arena where religion must constantly struggle against a thousand relentless enemies, he loves his contemporaries at the same time that he condemns their weaknesses and is afflicted by their errors.

With those who do not believe hiding their disbelief and those who believe showing their faith, a public opinion in favor of religion is produced; people love it, sustain it, and honor it, and one must penetrate to the bottom of their souls to discover the wounds that it has received.

The mass of men, whom religious sentiment never abandons, see nothing, then, that turns them aside from established beliefs. The instinct for another life leads them without difficulty to the foot of altars and delivers their hearts to the precepts and consolations of faith.

Why is this picture not applicable to us?

I perceive men among us who have ceased to believe in Christianity without attaching themselves to any religion.

I see others who are halted in doubt and already no longer pretend to believe.

Further, I encounter Christians who still believe and do not dare to say it. In the midst of these tepid friends and ardent adversaries, I finally discover a few of the faithful ready to brave all obstacles and scorn all dangers for their beliefs. They have done violence to human weakness in order to rise above common opinion. Carried away by this effort, they no longer know precisely where they ought to halt. As they have seen that in their native country the first use that man has made of independence was to attack religion, they fear their contemporaries and turn away in terror from the freedom that they pursue. Disbelief appears to them to be a new thing, and they envelop all that is new in the same hatred. They are therefore at war with their century and their country, and in each opinion professed there they see a necessary enemy of faith.

Such ought not to be the natural state of men in the matter of religion in our day.

One encounters among us, therefore, an accidental and particular cause that prevents the human spirit from following its inclination, and pushes it beyond the limits within which it ought naturally to halt.

I am profoundly convinced that this particular and accidental cause is the intimate union of politics and religion.

The unbelievers of Europe hound Christians as political enemies rather than as religious adversaries: they hate faith as the opinion of a party much

more than as an erroneous belief; and it is less the representative of God that they repel in the priest than the friend of power.

In Europe, Christianity has permitted itself to be intimately united with the powers of the earth. Today these powers are falling and it is almost buried under their debris. It is a living [thing] that someone wanted to attach to the dead; cut the bonds that hold it back and it will rise again.

I am ignorant of what one would have to do to give back the energy of youth to European Christianity. God alone could do it; but at least it depends on men to allow to faith the use of all the strength it still preserves.

HOW THE ENLIGHTENMENT, THE HABITS, AND THE PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE OF THE AMERICANS CONTRIBUTE TO THE SUCCESS OF DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

What one ought to understand by the enlightenment of the American people.—The human mind has received a less profound culture in the United States than in Europe.—But no one has remained in ignorance.—Why.—Rapidity with which thought circulates in the half-wilderness states of the West.—How practical experience serves Americans even more than literary knowledge.

In a thousand places in this work I have had readers note what has been the influence exerted by the enlightenment and the habits of the Americans on the maintenance of their political institutions. Few new things, therefore, now remain for me to say.

Up to the present, America has had only a very few remarkable writers; it has not had great historians and does not count one poet. Its inhabitants look on literature properly so-called with a sort of disfavour; and there are towns of the third order in Europe that publish more literary works each year than the twenty-four states of the Union taken together.

The American mind turns away from general ideas; it does not direct itself toward theoretical discoveries. Politics itself and industry cannot bring it to them. In the United States, new laws are constantly made; but great writers have still not been found to inquire into the general principles of the laws.

The Americans have juriconsults and commentators; they lack publicists;* and in politics they give to the world examples rather than lessons.

It is the same for the mechanical arts.
In America, they apply the inventions of Europe shrewdly, and after per-

*Juriconsults are legal advisors or jurists; commentators are legal writers; publicists are experts in public or international law.

fecting them, they adapt them marvelously to the needs of the country. Men there are industrious, but they do not cultivate the science of industry. One finds good workers and few inventors. Fulton* hawked his genius among foreign peoples for a long time before being able to devote it to his country.

Whoever wants to judge what is the state of enlightenment among the Anglo-Americans, therefore, is exposed to seeing the same object under two different aspects. If he pays attention only to the learned, he will be astonished at their small number; and if he counts the ignorant, the American people will seem to him the most enlightened people on earth.

The population as a whole is placed between these two extremes; I have already said it elsewhere.[†]

In New England, each citizen receives the elementary notions of human knowledge; in addition, he learns what the doctrines and the proofs of his religion are: he is made familiar with the history of his native country and the principal features of the constitution that governs it. In Connecticut and Massachusetts, it is very rare to find a man who knows all these things imperfectly, and whoever is absolutely ignorant of them is in a way a phenomenon.

When I compare the Greek and Roman republics to these republics of America, the manuscript libraries of the first and their coarse populace, to the thousand newspapers that crisscross the second and the enlightened people who inhabit them; when I think next of all the efforts that are still made to judge the one with the aid of the others and to foresee by what happened two thousand years ago what will happen in our day; I am tempted to burn my books so as to apply only new ideas to a social state so new.

Furthermore, one must not extend indiscriminately to the whole Union what I say about New England. The farther one moves to the west or toward the south, the more instruction of the people diminishes. In the states that neighbor the Gulf of Mexico, as among us, a certain number of individuals are found who are strangers to the elements of human knowledge; but one would seek in vain in the United States for a single district that is plunged into ignorance. The reason for this is simple: the peoples of Europe have left the shadows and barbarism to advance toward civilization and enlightenment. Their progress has been unequal: some have run down this course, others have in a way only walked along it; several have halted and still sleep on the road.

It has not been the same in the United States.

*Robert Fulton (1765–1815) ran the first commercially successful steamboat, and is usually considered its inventor. See AT's marginal note in *Œuvres* 2: 1018.

†DA 1.3.

cannot be confused with the freedom to write: the former is at once less necessary and more dangerous. A nation can set bounds for it without ceasing to be master of itself; it sometimes must do that to continue to be such." And further on I added: "One cannot conceal from oneself that unlimited freedom of association in political matters is, of all freedoms, the last that a people can tolerate. If it does not make it fall into anarchy, it makes it so to speak touch it at each instant."

Thus, I do not believe that a nation is always so much a master as to allow citizens the absolute right to associate in political matters, and I even doubt that there is any country, in any period, in which it would not be wise to set bounds for freedom of association.

Such and such a people, it is said, cannot maintain peace within itself, inspire respect for the laws, or found a lasting government if it does not confine the right of association within narrow limits. Such goods are doubtless precious, and I conceive that to acquire them or preserve them a nation consents to impose great hindrances temporarily; but still it is good for it to know precisely what these goods cost it.

If to save the life of a man one cuts off his arm, I understand it; but I do not want someone to assure me that he is going to show himself as adroit as if he were not one-armed.



Chapter 8 HOW THE AMERICANS COMBAT INDIVIDUALISM BY THE DOCTRINE OF SELF-INTEREST WELL UNDERSTOOD*

When the world was led by a few powerful and wealthy individuals, these liked to form for themselves a sublime idea of the duties of man; they were pleased to profess that it is glorious to forget oneself and that it is fitting to do good without self-interest like God himself. This was the official doctrine of the time in the matter of morality.

I doubt that men were more virtuous in aristocratic centuries than in

*"Self-interest" translates the French *intérêt* when unmodified.

others, but it is certain that the beauties of virtue were constantly spoken of then; only in secret did they study the side on which it is useful. But as the imagination takes a less lofty flight and each man concentrates on himself, moralists become frightened at this idea of sacrifice and they no longer dare to offer it to the human mind; therefore they are reduced to inquiring whether the individual advantage of citizens would not be to work for the happiness of all, and when they have discovered one of the points where particular interest happens to meet the general interest and to be confounded with it, they hasten to bring it to light; little by little such observations are multiplied. What was only an isolated remark becomes a general doctrine, and one finally believes one perceives that man, in serving those like him, serves himself, and that his particular interest is to do good.

I have already shown in several places in this work how the inhabitants of the United States almost always know how to combine their own well-being with that of their fellow citizens.* What I want to remark here is the general theory by the aid of which they come to this.

In the United States it is almost never said that virtue is beautiful. They maintain that it is useful and they prove it every day. American moralists do not claim that one must sacrifice oneself to those like oneself because it is great to do it; but they say boldly that such sacrifices are as necessary to the one who imposes them on himself as to the one who profits from them.[†]

They have perceived that in their country and their time, man had been led back toward himself by an irresistible force, and losing hope of stopping him, they no longer dreamed of doing more than guiding him.

They therefore do not deny that each man can follow his interest, but they do their best to prove that the interest of each is to be honest.

I do not want to enter here into the details of their reasons, which would divert me from my subject; it suffices for me to say that they have convinced their fellow citizens.

Long ago Montaigne said, "When I do not follow the right path for the sake of righteousness, I follow it for having found by experience that all things considered, it is commonly the happiest and most useful."[‡]

The doctrine of self-interest well understood is therefore not new,[§] but among Americans of our day it has been universally accepted; it has become

* DA I 2.4, 2.6.

†The name of Benjamin Franklin is so obvious among these "American moralists" as to obscure all others.

‡Montaigne, "Of Glory," *Essays*, II 16.

§The actual phrase "self-interest well understood" was apparently first used by Etienne de Condillac in 1798; see his *Traité des animaux*, vol. 3, 453.

popular there: one finds it at the foundation of all actions; it pierces into all discussions. It is encountered not less in the mouth of the poor man than in that of the rich.

In Europe the doctrine of self-interest is much coarser than in America, but at the same time it is less widespread and above all shown less, and among us one still feigns great devotions every day that one has no longer.

Americans, on the contrary, are pleased to explain almost all the actions of their life with the aid of self-interest well understood; they complacently show how the enlightened love of themselves constantly brings them to aid each other and disposes them willingly to sacrifice a part of their time and their wealth to the good of the state. I think that in this it often happens that they do not do themselves justice; for one sometimes sees citizens in the United States as elsewhere abandoning themselves to the disinterested and unreflective sparks that are natural to man; but the Americans scarcely avow that they yield to movements of this kind; they would rather do honor to their philosophy than to themselves.

I could halt here and not try to judge what I have just described. The extreme difficulty of the subject would be my excuse. But I do not want to avail myself of that; and I prefer that my readers see my goal clearly and refuse to follow me rather than that I leave them in suspense.

Self-interest well understood is a doctrine not very lofty, but clear and sure. It does not seek to attain great objects; but it attains all those it aims for without too much effort. As it is within the reach of all intellects, each seizes it readily and retains it without trouble. Marvelously accommodating to the weaknesses of men, it obtains a great empire with ease, and preserves it without difficulty because it turns personal interest against itself, and to direct the passions, it makes use of the spur that excites them.

The doctrine of self-interest well understood does not produce great devotion; but it suggests little sacrifices each day; by itself it cannot make a man virtuous; but it forms a multitude of citizens who are regulated, temperate, moderate, farsighted, masters of themselves; and if it does not lead directly to virtue through the will, it brings them near to it insensibly through habits.

If the doctrine of self-interest well understood came to dominate the moral world entirely, extraordinary virtues would without doubt be rarer. But I also think that gross depravity would then be less common. The doctrine of self-interest well understood perhaps prevents some men from mounting far above the ordinary level of humanity; but many others who were falling below do attain it and are kept there. Consider some individuals, they are lowered. View the species, it is elevated.

I shall not fear to say that the doctrine of self-interest well understood seems to me of all philosophic theories the most appropriate to the needs of

men in our time, and that I see in it the most powerful guarantee against themselves that remains to them. The minds of the moralists of our day ought to turn, therefore, principally toward it. Even should they judge it imperfect, they would still have to adopt it as necessary.

I do not believe that, all in all, there is more selfishness among us than in America; the only difference is that there it is enlightened and here it is not. Each American knows how to sacrifice a part of his particular interests to save the rest. We want to keep everything, and often everything eludes us.

I see around me only people who seem to want to teach their contemporaries every day by their word and their example that the useful is never dishonest. Shall I therefore finally discover none who undertake to make them understand how honesty can be useful?

There is no power on earth that can prevent the growing equality of conditions from bringing the human spirit toward searching for the useful and from disposing each citizen to shrink within himself.

One must therefore expect that individual interest will become more than ever the principal if not the unique motive of men's actions; but it remains to know how each man will understand his individual interest.

If in becoming equal, citizens remained ignorant and coarse, it is difficult to foresee what stupid excess their selfishness could be brought to, and one cannot say in advance into what shameful miseries they would plunge for fear of sacrificing something of their well-being to the prosperity of those like them.

I do not believe that the doctrine of self-interest such as it is preached in America is evident in all its parts; but it contains a great number of truths so evident that it is enough to enlighten men so that they see them. Enlighten them, therefore, at any price; for the century of blind devotions and instinctive virtues is already fleeing far from us, and I see the time approaching when freedom, public peace, and social order itself will not be able to do without enlightenment.

Chapter 8 INFLUENCE OF DEMOCRACY ON THE FAMILY

I have just examined how among democratic peoples, and among Americans in particular, equality of conditions modifies the relations of citizens among themselves.

I want to penetrate more deeply and enter into the bosom of the family. My goal here is not to seek new truths but to show how already known facts are linked to my subject.

Everyone has remarked that in our day new relations between the different members of the family have been established, that the distance that formerly separated a father from his sons has diminished, and that paternal authority has been, if not destroyed, at least altered.

Something analogous but still more striking is seen in the United States. In America, the family, taking this word in its Roman and aristocratic sense, does not exist. One only finds some vestiges of it during the first years following the birth of the children. The father exercises at that time, without opposition, the domestic dictatorship that the weakness of his sons renders necessary and which their interest as well as his incontestable superiority justifies.

But from the moment when the young American approaches manhood, the bonds of filial obedience are loosened day by day. Master of his thoughts, he is soon after master of his conduct. In America there is, to tell the truth, no adolescence. On leaving his first years the man shows himself and begins to trace out his path by himself.

It would be wrong to believe that this happens following an internal struggle in which the son has obtained, by a sort of moral violence, the freedom his father refused him. The same habits, the same principles that impel the one to seize independence dispose the other to consider the use of it as an incontestable right.

Therefore one remarks in the former none of the hateful and disordered passions that still agitate men long after they have escaped from an established power. The latter does not feel the regrets full of bitterness and anger that ordinarily survive after one has been deprived of power: the father has perceived from afar the boundaries at which his authority will come to expire; and when its time has approached these limits, he abdicates without difficulty. The son has foreseen in advance the precise period when his own will becomes his rule, and he takes possession of his freedom without haste

and without effort, as a good that is due him and of which no one seeks to rob him.¹

It is perhaps not useless to bring out how the changes that have taken place in the family are tightly bound to the social and political revolution that is finally being accomplished before our eyes.

There are certain great social principles that a people makes pervasive everywhere or allows to subsist nowhere.

In countries organized aristocratically and hierarchically, power is never directly addressed to the entirety of the governed. Since men are joined to one another, one limits oneself to guiding the first ones. The rest follows. This applies to the family as to all associations that have a head. In aristocratic peoples, society knows, to tell the truth, only the father. It holds the sons only by the hands of the father; it governs him and he governs them. The father therefore does not have only a natural right. He is given a political right to command. He is the author and the sustainer of the family; he is also its magistrate.

In democracies, where the arm of the government goes to seek each man particularly in the midst of the crowd to bend him, in isolation, to the common laws, it has no need of an intermediary like this; in the eyes of the law, the father is only an older and richer citizen than his sons.

When most conditions are very unequal and the inequality of conditions is permanent, the idea of a superior grows large in the imagination of men; should the law not accord him prerogatives, custom and opinion concede

1. Americans, however, have not yet imagined, as we have done in France, taking away one of the principal elements of power from fathers by denying them their freedom to dispose of their goods after death. In the United States the ability to make a will is unlimited.

In that, as in almost all the rest, it is easy to remark that if the political legislation of the Americans is much more democratic than ours, our civil legislation is infinitely more democratic than theirs. That one conceives without trouble.

Our civil legislation had for its author a man who saw his interest in satisfying the democratic passions of his contemporaries in all that was not directly and immediately hostile to his power. He willingly permitted some popular principles to regulate goods and govern families, provided that one did not claim to introduce them into the direction of the state. While the democratic torrent flooded over civil laws, he hoped to keep political laws easily sheltered. This view is at once full of skill and of selfishness, but such a compromise could not be lasting. For, in the long term, political society cannot fail to become the expression and image of civil society; and it is in this sense that one can say that there is nothing more political in a people than civil legislation.

[The Napoleonic, or Civil, Code to which AT refers was enacted in France in 1804. Claiming to be based on the dictates of reason rather than custom, it established uniformity of law throughout the country. The Code guaranteed the equality of all citizens, abolished hereditary nobility and class privileges, and replaced primogeniture, requiring fathers to distribute their estates among all sons equally. In practice, however, exceptions to equality of inheritance were frequent. See DA 1.1.3 above, on estate law.]

them to him. When, on the contrary, men differ little one from another and do not remain always unalike, the general notion of a superior becomes weaker and less clear; in vain does the will of the legislator strive to place one who obeys much below one who commands; mores bring the two men together and each day draw them toward the same level.

Therefore, if I do not see particular privileges accorded to the head of the family in the legislation of an aristocratic people, I shall not cease to be assured that his power is much respected and more extensive than within a democracy, for I know that whatever the laws may be, a superior will always appear higher and an inferior lower in aristocracies than among democratic peoples.

When men live in the remembrance of what has been rather than in the preoccupation with what is, when they worry much more about what their ancestors thought than they seek to think for themselves, the father is the natural and necessary bond between the past and the present, the link at which these two chains end and are joined. In aristocracies the father is therefore not only the political head of the family; he is the organ of tradition, the interpreter of custom, the arbiter of mores. He is listened to with deference; approached only with respect; and the love one bears for him is always tempered by fear.

As the social state becomes democratic and men adopt for their general principle that it is good and legitimate to judge all things by oneself, taking old beliefs as information and not as a rule, the power of opinion exercised by the father over the sons becomes less great, as does his legal power.

The division of patrimonies to which democracy leads contributes perhaps more than everything else to changing relations between father and children.

When the father of a family has few [material] goods, he and his son live in the same place constantly and are occupied in common with the same work. Habit and need bring them together and force them to communicate with one another at each instant; therefore there cannot fail to be established between them a sort of familiar intimacy that renders authority less absolute and that ill accommodates to external forms of respect.

Now among democratic peoples, the class that possesses these small fortunes is precisely the one that gives power to ideas and sets the tone of mores. It makes its opinions predominate everywhere at the same time as its will, and even those who are most inclined to resist its commands allow themselves in the end to be carried away by its examples. I have seen fiery enemies of democracy who have gotten used to being addressed familiarly by their children.

Thus at the same time as power is slipping away from the aristocracy, one

sees what there used to be of the austere, the conventional, and the legal in paternal power disappearing, and a sort of equality being established around the domestic hearth.

I do not know if, all in all, society loses by this change; but I am brought to believe that the individual gains by it. I think that as mores and laws become more democratic, the relations of father and son become more intimate and sweeter;* rule and authority are met with less; confidence and affection are often greater; and it seems that the natural bond tightens while the social bond is loosened.

In the democratic family the father exercises hardly any power other than that which one is pleased to accord to tenderness and to the experience of an old man. His orders would perhaps be neglected; but his counsels are ordinarily full of power. If he is not surrounded with official respect, his sons at least approach him with confidence. There is no recognized formula for addressing words to him; but they speak to him constantly and willingly consult him daily. The master and the magistrate have disappeared; the father remains.

To judge the difference between the two social states on this point, it suffices to run through the domestic correspondence that aristocracies have left us. Their style is always correct, ceremonious, rigid, and so cold that the natural warmth of the heart can hardly be felt through the words.

Among democratic peoples, on the contrary, in all the words that a son addresses to his father there reigns something at once free, familiar, and tender that makes one discover from the first that new relations have been established in the bosom of the family.

An analogous revolution modifies the mutual relations of children.

In the aristocratic family as well as in aristocratic society, all places are marked out. Not only does the father occupy a separate rank in it and enjoy immense privileges, the children are not equal among themselves: age and sex irrevocably fix the rank of each and assure him certain prerogatives. Democracy overturns or lowers most of these barriers.

In the aristocratic family, the eldest son, inheriting the greatest part of the goods and almost all the rights, becomes the chief, and up to a certain point the master, of his brothers. To him go greatness and power, to them mediocrity and dependence. Still, it would be wrong to believe that among aristocratic peoples the privileges of the eldest are advantageous to him alone and that they excite only envy and hatred around him.

The eldest ordinarily strives to procure wealth and power for his brothers

*Or "milder." *Doz* has sometimes been translated as "sweet," as in this chapter on the family; it is usually translated as "mild," for example in the chapter on mild despotism, *DA II 4-6*.

because the general brilliance of the house reflects on the one who represents it; and the younger ones seek to facilitate all the undertakings of the eldest because the greatness and force of the head of the family put him more and more in a state to elevate all the offspring.

The various members of the aristocratic family are therefore very tightly bound to one another; their interests are joined, their minds are in accord; but it is rare that their hearts agree.

Democracy also attaches brothers to one another; but it goes about it in another manner.

Under democratic laws children are perfectly equal and consequently independent; nothing forces them to come together, but also nothing draws them apart; and as they have a common origin, are raised under the same roof, are the object of the same cares, and are not distinguished or separated by any particular prerogative, one sees the sweet, childlike intimacy of the first years arise easily among them. With the bond thus formed at the beginning of life, there are scarcely any occasions to break it, for fraternity brings them together daily without hindrance.

It is therefore not by interests but by community of memories and free sympathy of opinions and tastes that democracy attaches brothers to one another. It divides their inheritance, but it permits their souls to intermingle.

The sweetness of these democratic mores is so great that even partisans of aristocracy allow themselves to be taken by it, and after tasting it for some time, they are not tempted to return to the respectful and cold forms of the aristocratic family. They would willingly preserve the domestic habits of democracy provided that they could reject its social state and laws. But these things are joined, and one cannot enjoy the one without suffering the other.

What I have just said of filial love and fraternal tenderness ought to be understood of all the passions that spontaneously have their source in nature itself.

When a certain manner of thinking or feeling is the product of a particular state of humanity, and that state comes to change, nothing remains. Thus it is that the law can very tightly attach two citizens to one another; when the law is abolished, they separate. There was nothing tighter than the knot that united vassal to lord in the feudal world. Now these two men no longer know each other. The fear, recognition, and love that formerly bound them have disappeared. One does not find a trace of them.

But it is not the same with sentiments natural to the human species. It is rare that the law, in striving to bend these in a certain manner, does not enervate them; that in wishing to add to them it does not take away something, and that they are not always stronger left to themselves.

Democracy, which destroys or obscures almost all the old social conven-

tions and prevents men from readily fastening on new ones, makes most of the sentiments that arise from these conventions disappear entirely. But it only modifies the others, and often it gives them an energy and a sweetness they did not use to have.

I think it is not impossible to contain all the sense of this chapter and several others that precede it in a single sentence. Democracy loosens social bonds, but it tightens natural bonds. It brings relatives together at the same time that it separates citizens.

Chapter 9 EDUCATION OF GIRLS IN THE UNITED STATES

There have never been free societies without mores, and as I said in the first part of this work,* it is woman who makes mores. Therefore, all that influences the condition of women, their habits, and their opinions has great political interest in my eyes.

In almost all Protestant nations, girls are infinitely more mistresses of their actions than in Catholic peoples.

This independence is still greater in Protestant countries like England which have preserved or acquired the right to govern themselves. Freedom then penetrates the family through political habits and religious beliefs.

In the United States, the doctrines of Protestantism come to combine with a very free constitution and a very democratic social state; and nowhere is the girl more promptly or more completely left to herself.

Long before the young American woman has attained the age of puberty, one begins to free her little by little from maternal tutelage; before she has entirely left childhood she already thinks for herself, speaks freely, and acts alone; the great picture of the world is constantly exposed before her; far from seeking to conceal the view of it from her, they uncover more and more of it to her regard every day and teach her to consider it with a firm and tranquil eye. Thus the vices and perils that society presents are not slow to be revealed to her; she sees them clearly, judges them without illusion, and faces them without fear; for she is full of confidence in her strength, and her confidence seems to be shared by all those who surround her.

*See DALI 2.9.

Therefore one must almost never expect to encounter in the girl of America the virginal candor in the midst of nascent desires or the naive and artless graces that ordinarily accompany the passage from childhood to youth in the European woman. It is rare that the American woman, whatever her age, shows a puerile timidity and ignorance. Like the European girl, she wants to please, but she knows precisely at what price. If she does not indulge in evil she at least knows what it is; she has pure mores rather than a chaste mind.

I was often surprised and almost frightened on seeing the singular dexterity and happy audacity with which these girls of America knew how to conduct their thoughts and words amid the pitfalls of a playful conversation; a philosopher would have stumbled a hundred times on the narrow path that they traveled without accident and without trouble.

It is in fact easy to recognize that in the very midst of the independence of her first youth, the American woman never entirely ceases to be mistress of herself; she enjoys all permitted pleasures without abandoning herself to any of them, and her reason does not drop the reins although it often seems to let them dangle.

In France, where we still mix debris from all ages in our opinions and tastes in such a strange manner, we often give women a timid, withdrawn, and almost cloistered education as in aristocratic times, and afterwards we suddenly abandon them, without a guide and without assistance, in the midst of the disorders inseparable from a democratic society.

The Americans are in better accord with themselves.

They have seen that within a democracy, individual independence could not fail to be very great, youth premature, tastes badly controlled, custom changing, public opinion often uncertain or impotent, paternal authority weak, and marital power contested.

They have judged that in this state of things there were few chances of being able to repress in woman the most tyrannical passions of the human heart, and that it was surer to teach her the art of combating them herself. As they could not prevent her virtue from often being in peril, they wanted her to know how to defend it, and they counted more on the free effort of her will than on shaky or destroyed barriers. Instead of keeping her in mistrust of herself, therefore, they constantly seek to increase her confidence in her own strength. Having neither the possibility nor the desire to keep a girl in perpetual and complete ignorance, they have hastened to give her a precocious knowledge of all things. Far from hiding the corruptions of the world from her, they wanted her to see them right away and to exert herself to flee them; and they would rather safeguard her honesty than respect her innocence too much.

Although Americans are a very religious people, they have not relied on religion alone to defend the virtue of woman; they have sought to arm her reason. In this as in many other circumstances they have followed the same method. They have first made incredible efforts to get individual independence to rule itself, and it is only when they have reached the last limits of human force that they have finally called religion to aid them.

I know that such an education is not without danger; nor am I ignorant that it tends to develop judgment at the expense of imagination and to make women honest and cold rather than tender spouses and amiable companions of man. If society is more tranquil and better regulated for it, private life often has fewer charms. But those are secondary evils that ought to be faced for a greater interest. Having come to the point where we are, we are no longer permitted to make a choice: we need a democratic education to safeguard woman from the perils with which the institutions and mores of democracy surround her.

Chapter 10 HOW THE GIRL IS FOUND BENEATH THE FEATURES OF THE WIFE

In America the independence of woman is irretrievably lost within the bonds of marriage. If the girl is less constrained there than everywhere else, the wife submits to stricter obligations. The one makes of the paternal home a place of freedom and pleasure, the other lives in her husband's dwelling as in a cloister.

These two so different states are perhaps not so contrary as is supposed, and it is natural that Americans pass through the one to arrive at the other. Religious peoples and industrial nations have a particularly serious idea of marriage. The first consider the regularity of a woman's life as the best safeguard and most certain sign of the purity of her morals. The latter see in it a sure pledge of the order and prosperity of the home.

The Americans form at once a Puritan nation and a commercial people; their religious beliefs as well as their industrial habits therefore bring them to exact from woman a self-abnegation and a continual sacrifice of her pleasures to her business that is rare to demand of her in Europe. Thus an inexorable public opinion reigns in the United States that carefully confines woman within the small circle of interests and domestic duties, and forbids her to leave it.

On her entrance into the world, the young American woman finds these notions firmly established; she sees the rules that flow from them; she is not slow to be convinced that she cannot for a moment escape the usages of her contemporaries without immediately putting her tranquillity, her honor, and even her social existence in peril; and she finds the energy to submit to them in the firmness of her reason and in the virile habits her education has given her.

One can say that it is in the use of independence that she drew the courage to undergo the sacrifice without struggle and without murmur when the moment came for it to be imposed on her.

The American woman, moreover, never falls into the bonds of marriage as into a trap set for her simplicity and ignorance. She has been taught in advance what is expected of her, and she freely places herself in the yoke on her own. She tolerates her new condition courageously because she has chosen it.

As paternal discipline is very lax in America and the conjugal bond very strict, it is only with circumspection and fear that a girl contracts for it. One scarcely sees any precocious unions there. Therefore American women marry only when their reason is exercised and mature, while elsewhere most women ordinarily begin to exercise their reason and become mature in it only within marriage.

Furthermore, I am very far from believing that the great change that occurs in all the habits of women in the United States as soon as they are married ought to be attributed only to the constraint of public opinion. Often they impose it on themselves by the sole effort of their will.

When the time has come to choose a spouse, the cold and austere reason that has been enlightened and steadied by a free view of the world indicates to the American woman that a light and independent spirit within the bonds of marriage is a subject of eternal trouble, not of pleasure; that the amusements of a girl cannot become the relaxations of a wife, and that for woman the sources of happiness are within the conjugal dwelling. Seeing clearly in advance the sole path that can lead to domestic felicity, she enters on it with her first steps and follows it to the end without seeking to turn back.

This same strength of will that the young wives of America display in bowing all at once, without complaint, to the austere duties of their new state is, furthermore, found also in all the great trials of their lives.

There is no country in the world where particular fortunes are more unstable than in the United States. It is not rare that in the course of his existence the same man rises and falls back through all the stages that lead from opulence to poverty.

The women of America tolerate these revolutions with tranquil and in-

domitable energy. One would say that their desires contract with their fortunes as easily as they expand.

Most of the adventurers who come each year to populate the solitudes of the West belong, as I said in my first work,* to the old Anglo-American race of the North. Some of these men who run with so much audacity toward wealth already enjoyed ease in their own land. They bring their companions with them and make them share the innumerable perils and miseries that always signal the beginning of such undertakings. I often met young women at the utmost limits of the wilderness who, after having been raised in the midst of all the delicacies of the great cities of New England, had passed almost without transition from the rich dwellings of their parents to leaky huts in the middle of a forest. Fever, solitude, and redium had not broken the springs of their courage. Their features seemed altered and faded, but their look was firm. They appeared at once sad and resolute.

I do not doubt that these young American women had gathered from their early education the internal force they made use of then.

It is therefore the girl who is found again beneath the features of the wife in the United States; the role has changed, the habits differ, the spirit is the same.[†]

Chapter II HOW EQUALITY OF CONDITIONS CONTRIBUTES TO MAINTAINING GOOD MORES* IN AMERICA

There are philosophers and historians who have said or let it be understood that women are more or less severe in their mores according to whether they live more or less far from the equator.[‡] This is getting out of the difficulty cheaply, and by this account a globe and a compass would suffice to resolve in an instant one of the most difficult problems that humanity presents.

I do not see that this materialist doctrine is established by the facts.

The same nations have shown themselves to be chaste or dissolute at

* DA I 210.

† See AT's note XX, page 699.

‡ Or "moralis" throughout this chapter.

§ Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, XVI 9, 12.

different periods in their history. The regularity or disorder of their mores therefore depended on some changing causes and not only on the nature of the country, which did not change.

I will not deny that in certain climates the passions that arise from the reciprocal attraction of the sexes are particularly ardent; but I think that this natural ardor can always be excited or contained by the social state and political institutions.*

Although travelers who have visited North America differ among themselves on several points, they all agree in remarking that mores are infinitely more severe there than everywhere else.

It is evident that on this point the Americans are much superior to their fathers, the English. A superficial view of the two nations suffices to show that.

In England as in all other countries of Europe, public ill will is constantly exercised over the weaknesses of women. One often hears philosophers and men of state complain that mores are not regular enough, and every day literature makes one assume it.

In America all books, not excepting novels, assume women chaste, and no one tells of gallant adventures in them.

This great regularity of American mores is doubtless due in part to the country, race, and religion. But all these causes, which are encountered elsewhere, are still not enough to explain it. For that, one must have recourse to some particular reason.

That reason appears to me to be equality and the institutions that flow from it.

Equality of conditions does not produce regularity of mores by itself alone; but one cannot doubt that it facilitates and adds to it.

In aristocratic peoples, birth and fortune often make man and woman such different beings that they can never come to be united to one another. Passions bring them together, but the social state and the ideas it suggests prevent them from bonding in a permanent and open manner. Hence a great number of passing and clandestine unions necessarily arise. Nature compensates itself in secret for the constraint that the laws impose on it.

One does not see this same thing when equality of conditions has brought down all the imaginary or real barriers that separate man from woman. Then there is no girl who does not believe she can become the wife of the man who prefers her; which makes disorder in mores before marriage very difficult. For whatever the credulity of passions may be, there is scarcely a means by which a woman may be persuaded that you love her when you are perfectly free to marry her and do not do it.

* See AT's note XXI, page 70.

The same cause operates within marriage, although in a more indirect manner.

Nothing serves better to legitimate illegitimate love in the eyes of those who feel it or of the crowd that contemplates it than unions that are forced or made haphazardly.¹

In a country where a woman always exercises her choice freely, and where education has put her in a state to choose well, public opinion is inexorable toward her faults.

The rigor of the Americans arises in part from that. They consider marriage as an often onerous contract of which one is nonetheless strictly held to execute all the clauses because [the parties] were able to know them all in advance and because they enjoyed the complete freedom of not obligating themselves to anything.

What renders fidelity more obligatory renders it easier.

In aristocratic countries, marriage has the purpose of uniting goods rather than persons; so it sometimes happens that the husband is picked while in school and the wife at the wet nurse. It is not surprising that the conjugal bond that keeps the fortunes of the two spouses united leaves their hearts to wander about aimlessly. This flows naturally from the spirit of the contract.

When, on the contrary, each always chooses his companion by himself without having anything external to hinder him or even direct him, it is ordinarily only similarity of tastes and ideas that brings man and woman together; and that same similarity keeps and fixes them beside one another.

Our fathers conceived a singular opinion in regard to marriage.

As they had perceived that the few marriages by inclination that were made in their time had almost always had a fatal issue, they resolutely concluded that in such a matter it was very dangerous to consult one's own heart. Chance appeared to them to be more perceptive than choice.

It was not very difficult to see, however, that the examples they had before their eyes proved nothing.

I shall first remark that if democratic peoples accord to women the right

1. It is easy to be convinced of this truth by studying the different literatures of Europe.

When a European wants to retrace in his fiction some of the great catastrophes that are so often displayed in the bosom of marriage among us, he takes care to excite the pity of the reader in advance by showing him ill-matched or constrained beings. Although a long tolerance relaxed our mores long ago, he would with difficulty succeed in interesting us in the misfortunes of these personages if he did not begin by making their fault excusable. This artifice scarcely ever fails to work. The daily spectacle to which we are witness prepares us from afar for indulgence.

American writers cannot render such excuses plausible in the eyes of their readers; their usages and laws resist it, and as they despair of making disorder likable, they do not portray it. It is in part to this cause that one must attribute the small number of novels published in the United States.

to choose their husbands freely, they take care in advance to furnish to their minds the enlightenment, and to their wills the force, that can be necessary for such a choice; whereas among aristocratic peoples, girls who furtively escape paternal authority to throw themselves into the arms of a man whom they have been given neither the time to know nor the capacity to judge lack all these safeguards. One cannot be surprised that they make a bad use of their free will the first time they use it, nor that they fall into such cruel errors when they want to follow the customs of democracy in marrying, without having received a democratic education.

But there is more.

When a man and a woman want to come together across the inequalities of the aristocratic social state, they have immense obstacles to overcome. After having broken or loosened the bonds of filial obedience, they must escape the empire of custom and the tyranny of opinion by a last effort; and when they have finally come to the end of that harsh undertaking, they find themselves almost strangers amid their natural friends and near relations: the prejudice they have overstepped separates them. This situation does not take long to bring down their courage and embitter their hearts.

If it therefore happens that spouses united in this manner are at first unhappy, and then guilty, one must not attribute it to their having freely chosen each other but rather to their living in a society that does not admit such choices.

One ought not to forget, moreover, that the same effort that makes a man violently take leave of a common error almost always carries him beyond reason; that to dare to declare a war, even a legitimate one, on the ideas of one's century and one's country, one must have a certain violent and adventurous disposition of spirit, and people of this character, whatever direction they take, rarely come to happiness and virtue. And it is this, one may say in passing, that explains why so few moderate and honest revolutionaries are encountered in the most necessary and holy revolutions.

Thus if in an aristocratic century a man by chance takes it into his head to consult no other propriety than his particular opinion and taste in a conjugal union, and afterwards disorder of mores and misery are not slow to be introduced into his household, one must not be surprised. But when this same manner of acting is in the natural and ordinary order of things; when the social state facilitates it; when paternal power is lent to it and public opinion recommends it, one ought not to doubt that the internal peace of families will become greater and that conjugal faith will be better kept.

Almost all men in democracies follow a political career or exercise a profession, and, on the other hand, the mediocrity of fortunes obliges a woman

to confine herself inside her dwelling every day in order to preside herself very closely over the details of domestic administration.

All these distinct, compulsory tasks are like so many natural barriers which, by separating the sexes, make solicitations from the one rarer and less lively and the resistance of the other easier.

It is not that equality of conditions can ever come to make man chaste; but it gives a less dangerous character to the disorder of his mores. As no one then any longer has the leisure or the occasion to attack virtues that want to defend themselves, one sees at once a great number of courtesans and a multitude of honest women.

Such a state of things produces deplorable individual miseries, but it does not prevent the social body from being fit and strong; it does not destroy family bonds and does not enervate national mores. What puts society in danger is not the great corruption of some, it is the laxity of all. In the eyes of the legislator, prostitution is much less to be feared than intrigue.

This tumultuous and constantly vexed life, which equality gives to men, not only turns them away from love by taking away the leisure to indulge in it, but it also diverts them by a more secret, yet surer path.

All men who live in democratic times contract more or less the intellectual habits of the industrial and commercial classes; their minds take a serious, calculating, and positive turn; they willingly turn themselves away from the ideal to direct themselves toward some visible and proximate goal that presents itself as the natural and necessary object of their desires. Equality does not destroy imagination in this way, but limits it and permits it to fly only while skimming the earth.

None are less dreamers than citizens of a democracy, and one scarcely sees any of them who want to abandon themselves to the idle and solitary contemplation that ordinarily precedes and produces great agitations of the heart.

It is true that they put much value on procuring for themselves the sort of profound, regular, and peaceful affection that makes up the charm and security of life; but they do not willingly run after the violent and capricious emotions that trouble and shorten it.

I know that all the preceding applies completely only to America and for the present cannot be extended in a general manner to Europe.

In the half century in which laws and habits have pushed several peoples of Europe toward democracy with unequalled energy, one has not seen the relations of man and woman in those nations becoming more regular and more chaste. The contrary is even perceived in some places. Certain classes are better regulated; general morality appears more lax. I shall not fear to

remark on it, for I do not feel myself more disposed to flatter my contemporaries than to speak ill of them.

This spectacle ought to be distressing, but not surprising.

The fortunate influence that a democratic social state can exert on regularity of habits is one of those facts that can only be discovered in the long term. If equality of conditions is favorable to good morals, the social travail that renders conditions equal is quite fatal to them.

In the fifty years that France has been transforming itself, we have rarely had freedom, but always disorder. In the midst of this universal confusion of ideas and general shaking of opinions, amid this incoherent mixture of just and unjust, of true and false, of right and fact, public virtue has become uncertain and private morality unsteady.

But all revolutions, whatever their object and their agents might have been, have at first produced effects like these. The very ones that have ended by tightening the bond of morals have begun by loosening it.

The disorders to which we are often witness therefore do not seem to me to be a durable fact. Some curious indications already announce it.

There is nothing more miserably corrupt than an aristocracy that preserves its wealth while losing its power and which, though reduced to vulgar enjoyments, still possesses immense leisure. The energetic passions and great thoughts that formerly animated it then disappear, and one encounters scarcely more than a multitude of gnawing little vices that attach themselves to it like worms to a cadaver.

No one disputes that the French aristocracy of the last century was very dissolute, whereas old habits and aged beliefs still maintained respect for morals in the other classes.

Nor will one have any trouble reaching agreement that in our time a certain severity of principles is displayed amid the debris of that same aristocracy, instead of the disorder of morals that appears to have spread in the middle and inferior ranks of society. In such a way the same families that showed themselves to be the most lax fifty years ago show themselves to be the most exemplary today, and democracy seems to have made only the aristocratic classes more moral.

The Revolution, by dividing the fortunes of the nobles, by forcing them to occupy themselves assiduously with their affairs and their families, by confining them with their children under the same roof, finally by giving their thoughts a more reasonable and serious turn, prompted in them, without their having perceived it themselves, a respect for religious beliefs and a love of order, of peaceful pleasures, of domestic joys, and of well-being; whereas the rest of the nation, which naturally had these same tastes, was carried

HOW THE AMERICANS UNDERSTAND THE EQUALITY OF MAN AND WOMAN
along toward disorder by the very effort that had to be made to overthrow laws and political customs.

The old French aristocracy has suffered the consequences of the Revolution, and it neither experienced the revolutionary passions nor shared the often anarchic transports that produced it; it is easy to conceive that it feels the salutary influence of this revolution in its morals before the very ones who made it.

It is therefore permissible to say, although the thing appears surprising at first sight, that in our day it is the most antidemocratic classes of the nation that best display the species of morality that it is reasonable to expect from democracy.

I cannot prevent myself from believing that when we have obtained all the effects of the democratic revolution, after having left the tumult to which it gave birth, what is true only of a few today will little by little become true of all.

Chapter 12 HOW THE AMERICANS UNDERSTAND THE EQUALITY OF MAN AND WOMAN

I have brought out how democracy is destroying or modifying the various inequalities to which society gives birth; but is that all, or will it not come finally to act on the great inequality of man and woman, which until our day has seemed to have its eternal foundations in nature?

I think that the social movement that brings son and father, servant and master, and, in general, inferior and superior closer to the same level elevates woman and must, more and more, make her the equal of man.

But it is here, more than ever, that I feel the need to be well understood; for there is no subject on which the coarse and disordered imagination of our century has given itself freer rein.

There are people in Europe who, confusing the diverse attributes of the sexes, intend to make man and woman into beings not only equal, but alike.*

* AT may be referring to followers of Saint-Simon, who advocated a scientific organization of industry and society aimed at helping the poorest classes. His writings included arguments for women's equality.

They give both the same functions, impose the same duties on them, and accord them the same rights; they mix them in all things—labors, pleasures, affairs. One can easily conceive that in thus striving to equalize one sex with the other, one degrades them both; and that from this coarse mixture of nature's works, only weak men and disreputable women can ever emerge.

This is not the way Americans have understood the kind of democratic equality that can be established between woman and man. They have thought that since nature had established such great variation between the physical and moral constitution of man and that of woman, its clearly indicated goal was to give a diverse employment to their different faculties; and they have judged that progress did not consist in making two unlike beings do nearly the same things, but in getting each of them to acquit its task as well as possible. Americans have applied to the two sexes the great principle of political economy that dominates industry in our day. They have carefully divided the functions of man and woman in order that the great social work be better done.

America, among the world's countries, is the one where they have taken the most continual care to draw cleanly separated lines of action for the two sexes, and where they have wanted them both to march at an equal pace but on ever different paths. You do not see American women directing the external affairs of the family, conducting a business, or indeed entering the political sphere; but neither do you encounter any of them who are obliged to engage in the rough work of plowing or in any painful exertions that require the development of physical force. There are no families so poor as to make an exception to this rule.

If the American woman cannot escape from the peaceful circle of domestic occupations, she is, on the other hand, never constrained to leave it.

Hence it is that American women, who often display a manly reason and a wholly virile energy, generally preserve a very delicate appearance and always remain women in their manners, although they sometimes show themselves to be men in mind and heart.

Neither have Americans ever imagined that democratic principles should have the consequence of overturning marital power and introducing confusion of authorities in the family. They have thought that every association, to be efficacious, must have a head, and that the natural head of the conjugal association is the man. They therefore do not deny him the right to direct his mate; and they believe that in the little society of husband and wife, as well as in the great political society, the object of democracy is to regulate and legitimate necessary powers, not to destroy all power.

This is not an opinion particular to one sex and fought by the other.

I did not remark that American women considered conjugal authority as a happy usurpation of their rights, or that they believed they were debasing themselves in submitting to it. On the contrary, it seemed evident to me that they made a sort of glory for themselves out of the voluntary abandonment of their wills, and that they found their greatness in submitting on their own to the yoke and not in escaping from it. That is at least the sentiment that the most virtuous women express: the others are silent, and one does not hear in the United States of an adulterous wife noisily claiming the rights of woman while riding roughshod over her most hallowed duties.*

It has often been remarked that in Europe a certain scorn is disclosed in the very midst of the flatteries that men lavish on women: although the European often makes himself the slave of woman, one sees that he never sincerely believes her his equal.

In the United States women are scarcely praised, but it is shown daily that they are esteemed.

Americans constantly display a full confidence in the reason of their mate and a profound respect for her freedom. They judge that her mind is as capable as a man's of discovering the naked truth, and her heart firm enough to follow it; and they have never sought to place the virtue of the one more than the other under the shelter of prejudices, ignorance, or fear.

It seems that in Europe, where they submit so readily to the despotic empire of women, they nevertheless deny them some of the greatest attributes of the human species, and consider them as seductive and incomplete beings; and what one cannot find too astonishing is that women in the end see themselves in the same light, and that they are not far from considering as a privilege the ability left to them of showing themselves futile, weak, and fearful. American women do not claim rights like these.

One would say, on the other hand, that on the question of morals we have granted the man a sort of singular immunity, in such a way that there is almost one virtue for his use and another for his mate; and that according to public opinion, the same act can be alternatively a crime or only a fault.

Americans do not know this iniquitous division of duties and rights. Among them the seducer is as dishonored as his victim.

It is true that Americans rarely show women the ready attentions with which one is pleased to surround them in Europe; but they always show by their conduct that they suppose them virtuous and delicate; and they have such a great respect for their moral freedom that in their presence each

* *At* may be referring to Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797), an English writer who argued for women's equality while leading a scandalous private life.

watches his discourse carefully for fear that they be forced to hear language that offends them. In America a girl undertakes a long voyage alone without fear.

The legislators of the United States, who have made almost all the provisions of the penal code milder, punish rape with death; and there is no crime that public opinion pursues with more inexorable ardor. That can be explained: as the Americans conceive of nothing more precious than the honor of woman and nothing so respectable as her independence, they deem no chastisement too severe for those who take them away from her against her will.

In France, where the same crime is punished with much milder penalties, it is often difficult to find a jury that convicts. Would this be contempt for chastity or contempt for woman? I cannot keep myself from believing that it is both.

Thus Americans do not believe that man and woman have the duty or the right to do the same things, but they show the same esteem for the role of each of them, and they consider them as beings whose value is equal although their destiny differs. They do not give the same form or the same employment to the courage of woman as to that of man, but they never doubt her courage; and if they deem that man and his mate should not always employ their intelligence and reason in the same manner, they at least judge that the reason of one is as sure as that of the other, and her intelligence as clear.

Americans, who have allowed the inferiority of woman to subsist in society, have therefore elevated her with all their power to the level of man in the intellectual and moral world; and in this they appear to me to have admirably understood the true notion of democratic progress.

As for me, I shall not hesitate to say it: although in the United States the woman scarcely leaves the domestic circle and is in certain respects very dependent within it, nowhere does her position seem higher to me; and now that I approach the end of this book where I have shown so many considerable things done by Americans, if one asked me to what do I think one must principally attribute the singular prosperity and growing force of this people, I would answer that it is to the superiority of its women.

Chapter 13 HOW EQUALITY NATURALLY DIVIDES THE AMERICANS INTO A MULTITUDE OF PARTICULAR LITTLE SOCIETIES

One might be brought to believe that the ultimate consequence and necessary effect of democratic institutions is to intermingle citizens in private life as well as in public life and to force them all to lead a common existence.

This is to understand the equality to which democracy gives birth in a coarse and tyrannical form indeed.

Neither a social state nor laws can render men so alike that education, fortune, and tastes do not put some difference between them, and if different men can sometimes find their interest in doing the same things in common, one must believe that they will never find pleasure in it. They will therefore always escape the hand of the legislator, whatever one may do; and, by stealing off to some spot away from the circle in which one seeks to confine them, they will establish, alongside the great political society, small private societies in which similarity of conditions, habits, and mores will be the bond.

In the United States, citizens have no preeminence over one another; they reciprocally owe each other neither obedience nor respect; together they administer justice and govern the state, and in general they all gather to treat of the affairs that influence their common destiny; but I never heard anyone claim that all of them should be brought to amuse themselves in the same manner or to enjoy themselves when intermingled in the same places.

Americans, who so easily mix with each other in the precincts of political assemblies and law courts, divide themselves, on the contrary, with great care into very distinct little associations to taste the enjoyments of private life separately. Each of them willingly recognizes all his fellow citizens as his equals, but he never receives any but a very few of them among his friends and guests.

That seems very natural to me. As the circle of public society grows larger, one must expect that the sphere of private relations will narrow: instead of imagining that citizens of the new societies are going to end by living in common, I indeed fear that they will finally come to form no more than very small coteries.

In aristocratic peoples, the different classes are like vast precincts that cannot be left and cannot be entered. The classes do not communicate between