

DEMOCRACY.

A Russian Indictment of Political Parties.

DEMOCRACY AND THE ORGANIZATION OF POLITICAL PARTIES. By M. Ostrogorski. Translated from the French by Frederick Clarke, M. A., with a Preface by the Right Hon. James Bryce, M. P. Two Volumes. 8vo. pp. Volume I, lviii, 627; Volume II, xliii, 793. The Macmillan Company.

Matthew Arnold characterized de Tocqueville's style as "wearing an air of rigorous scientific deduction without the reality." The same thing may be said of Mr. Ostrogorski's investigation of the workings of democratic government in England and the United States. It is a monumental work, fairly to be compared with that of de Tocqueville. Great research has been made for it. The author, with years of experience in the Russian Government service, comes to the subject with a broad comparative knowledge, a philosophic detachment, and, as he says, with a belief in democracy. He is a penetrating observer and an acute reasoner. But his deductions all make for the establishment of a theory. The same facts might have been the basis of an equally plausible treatise of a different tendency, showing the evolution of real popular government out of democratic forms under the control of aristocratic oligarchies. It might be shown that power is now in the hands of all who will take the trouble to exercise it. Mr. Ostrogorski's theory is that in both England and America the political party machines have usurped control, abolished the sway of political principle, substituted for it devotion to organization for its own sake, and set aside true democratic government. His proof, however, is not so satisfactory as he seems to regard it. This lack of conclusiveness is not discreditable to Mr. Ostrogorski. It is inherent in his subject, which is one for high speculation, with a field of observation so vast and complicated that every thinker may find good support for his views. The mistake in dealing with it is in presenting in the guise of logical proofs what must be at best insufficient inductions.

Mr. Bryce, while admitting that the author's description of party government in England is minute and, on the whole, accurate and fair, holds that the generalizations are open to question and make a darker impression than the realities of the case warrant. He thinks that the power and poison of the caucus are exaggerated, and that sufficient allowance is not made for the healthy influences at work to correct its dangers. This is certainly true of the description of American conditions. Nothing but praise can be given to the author's keen analysis of our political history. The rise of the Congressional caucus, the substitution of the convention system with the diffusion of political power, and the construction of the consolidated party machines are admirably set forth. His facts are, with rare exceptions, accurately stated, his exposure of the detailed defects of the party system as it operates is as just as it is pitiless. We agree with what he says about corrupt bosses and subservient legislators, the evils of the spoils system, and the difficulty in making the parties act as efficient and progressive instruments of government. He is doubtless right in his conclusion that political formalism and machinism are most serious dangers of democracy, and that they are more in evidence here because democracy has had a longer and freer sway than in England. A vast electorate, little interested in the problems of politics, but acutely jealous for its appearance of power, offers in both countries the material for the organizer of selfish machines. But bad as these machines are, much as they need to be purified and brought under the domination of enlightened opinion, it is doubtful if parties are responsible for the evils of American politics, as they must be if reform is to come, as Mr. Ostrogorski recommends.

He urges their abolition as permanent organizations and the remodeling of the machinery of the State to make the executive elective by Congress, with a ministry responsible to both houses, somewhat on the French model. He would have occasional parties formed for the decision of a single question, to be disbanded immediately, so that the citizens may freely realign themselves on the next issue. Thus the remedy is sought in machinery, as is natural, if the party organization is in itself the evil and not a mere manifestation of the faults of society. A fair argument may be made, on the other hand, that the parties do represent the average will to-day, as well as any other political organ ever expressed the will of less democratic generations. True, the parties lack ideals, but the machinery of other governments have generally lacked them, and likewise generally been full of corruption. And, after all, the parties do respond to public opinion when there really is any.

The politicians never had any love for the merit system, but they have given it a place in the government. Mr. Ostrogorski complains that in 1896 Mr. McKinley and the Republican organization were timid in their devotion to sound money, which, if true, shows that, in spite of the caution of the politician, the party can be made the instrument of a clear cut issue whenever the people want an issue. On the other side, the Democrats stood for a popular belief. The party may have been the victim of a craze, but it was the craze of the great body of its adherents, and the organization reflected its con-

stituents as truly as any occasional party would have done. The machines, with all the vested interests of officeholders and powerful business men, are, indeed, slow to respond to popular demand. But that is not an unmixed evil. It is one of the checks on passion. It prevents endless experiment with half digested radical reforms. Before a party can be brought to espouse any important cause, it must have become a real issue. This is discouraging to the enthusiast, but helpful to natural national development.

Mr. Ostrogorski thinks that, with parties organized for single causes, with the number of elections greatly diminished, legislators would

while pending they are generally defeated, and with legislatures pledged on one issue and irresponsible on all others, there would be nothing in his way but the individual character of the lawmakers. That is the vital matter with any form of government machinery. The author believes that with his occasional parties the character of representatives would be raised. But the same intelligence and unselfish energy needed to accomplish this with the occasional parties, if directed to the control of the regular machines, or to teaching them lessons by careful scrutiny of their nominations and independent voting, as has been done by the Voters' League, of Chicago, would be equally effective.



"PORTRAIT DE DAME ASSISE."
(From the drawing by Ingres in the Alexandre collection.)

more directly represent public opinion. That is certainly true so far as the one cause of supreme interest at the time of an election is concerned. But on other questions they would be as irresponsible as now. The lobbyist could still put through his jobs in the dark. When his schemes are now brought to public attention

The party boss governs because other people abdicate. Sometimes he is foolish and stubborn and defies public opinion. If he is a wise leader, however, he is only too anxious to find out what the majority of the voters really want, as distinguished from what some loud and temporary clamor would delude him into thinking they

wanted. He seeks power and takes appropriate means to secure it. Smash his machine and he will build another adapted to new conditions. He is a broker because respectable heads of corporations want to buy law, a spoilsmonger because a large body of citizens want office, and there are offices to be distributed. A mere change in the forms of political activity will accomplish nothing. The cure must go deeper.

It is through his failure to give due weight to the influences that are working the cure that Mr. Ostrogorski draws too dark a picture. The merit system is making progress. Independent voting increases. The evils of blind partisanship are more and more realized. The advance is slow, but there is advance. Moreover, the author is inclined to accept at their face value denunciations which are the exaggerations of political controversy or flippant cynicism. Each year he hears that a legislature was "the worst we ever had," and concludes that they are all so bad that the distant one seems good by comparison. As a matter of fact, the corruption of legislatures is much overdrawn. There are some corrupt men in every body, but there are more stupid and opinionated men, and the bulk of the lawmaking in the United States is well meant if not wise. In the same fashion Mr. Ostrogorski infers that early in the last century politics had ceased to be respectable because the phrases "as low as a politician" and "it is a disgrace longer to hold office" are found in old newspaper files. By the same token he should conclude that Washington and Adams were tyrants trying to enslave the people, and that Jefferson was an anarchist trying to destroy the government. He generally discounts the loose language of controversy in those times, but seems to take it at its face value when he deals with a more recent period. He accepts the prejudices of a comparatively small band of professional independents when he judges the men and measures of the last twenty years and loses his perspective. He can find no statesmen in the Senate, and thinks that only weak and mediocre men can secure high executive office in the State or nation. Acceptance of the same prejudice a generation ago would have led to the same judgment on the Lincolns, Searns and Chases, whose fame is now secure. It is also curious to find him taking seriously as indicative of a "movement" a letter to a newspaper by a somewhat erratic lawyer proposing the abolition of district attorneys, and drawing the lesson that on account of corrupt prosecution there is a tendency to return to the primitive English system of law enforcement solely on private initiative.

Mr. Ostrogorski's indictment of parties is really an indictment of the people. As Secretary Stanton once wrote to Bishop Whipple: "Congress never redresses a wrong until the people of the United States demand it," and no Congress with any form of party machinery will ever be any better in that respect. It is impossible to accept the recommendations of this student of our institutions as offering a solution of our problems, but we may be most grateful for his study. It is one of the most notable books which has been written about the workings of democratic institutions. It goes behind the forms, and, in spite of its occasional exaggerations and faulty deductions, it gets at the reality of things, and shows clearly the vicious tendencies which must be guarded against if democracy is to be a permanent success.

TWO ART COLLECTIONS.

Notes on Sales Just Held in Paris.

The art season in New-York begins to draw to a close as summer approaches, but at this time there is abundant activity in Parisian auction rooms, keeping pace with the movement which derives its chief impetus from the salons. Evidence of this reaches us just now in the shape of two catalogues which we have received from M. Durand-Ruel. The first of these enumerates the old and modern pictures in the collection of M. Emile Pacully, which has recently been sold at the Georges Petit Gallery, in the Rue de Sèze. The brief and very favorable introduction bears the authoritative signature of the late Eugene Muntz, and the text throughout is written by divers other eminent critics. To judge from the plates, they have good ground for the amiable things they say of the collection. The list opens with an early French portrait that appears to be of great merit, and this is followed by a superb nude of Courbet's. There is a bewitching little panel by Eisen, "Ronde d'Enfants," and then come some notable works by Fragonard and Largilliere. Among the works of the Northern schools we note an important "Last Judgment" by Bosch and a striking "Pieta" by Gerhard David, and another religious painting by Memling. There are three interesting specimens of Rubens catalogued, one a sombre and noble composition, "Thetis plongeant Achille dans le Styx," a very characteristic "Bacchanale" in grisaille, and the painting of "La Recolte de la Manne," a study for which is in the Louvre. Teniers and Rembrandt are represented, and there are souvenirs of the German, English, Spanish and Italian schools, the Spanish especially figuring to good purpose in the list.

The collection of M. Arsene Alexandre, the well known writer on art, which has also been dispersed at the Georges Petit Gallery, was formed entirely of modern pictures. One American appears in the catalogue, Mr. W. T. Dana, with an interesting study of a Spanish woman, but nearly all the other artists are French.



"LA RECOLTE DE LA MANNE."
(From the painting by Rubens in the Pacully collection.)