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WHITHER ARE WE DRIFTING?

From the N. O. Delta.

In every stable and orderly society there must be a governing class; there must be a controlling will; there must be active, organized intelligence. In this country, according to the theory of cosmopolitan institutions, the whole people form the governing class, they possess the controlling will, and all the legislative and executive, all the judicial power supposed to embody their will and their intelligence. This is self-government in theory. If the system may sometimes lead to anarchy in practice, it only perhaps affords an illustration of that perversity in the aggregate of men, so frequently manifested by individuals, which makes them prone to predict those dolefully the performance of which they are responsible alone to themselves. Private vice is the injury which an individual does to himself, and political vice is the injury which the sovereign political power suffers by its own hands. There seems to be a common philosophy for both.

The fact cannot be disguised that a widespread apathy or negligence with respect to public interests is beginning to be exhibited by the people in this country. The governing power virtually abdicates its rights; the ever-close of conservatism, in behalf of its own prerogatives; it interposes no check to the selfish aims and pernicious predominance of small but resolute and wicked minorities. In all our large cities, especially, this species of political vice—the self-neglect of the people—prevails to an alarming extent, and with manifestly fatal tendencies. The following picture of the political condition of those cities, and the contrast between them and the old cities which are under the control of the strong monarchical or imperial governments of Europe, is by no means overdrawn. It is from the New York Herald of the 22d instant. The lessons which the Herald writer cites from the examples of the decayed great cities of Italy, are also highly seasonable and full of food for profitable reflection:

"No intelligent citizen can have failed to observe the rapid decay, from year to year, in the municipal governments throughout the United States. While the country at large has been prosperous and comparatively happy, our large cities—the centers of wealth, education, worth and influence—have fallen under the miserable ascendancy of unscrupulous individuals. It has become the deliberate conviction of wise men, that the experiment of free government has failed, as far as these are concerned, in consequence of the abject submission to rowdy mobs which everywhere prevails. New York, Baltimore, New Orleans, San Francisco, Chicago, Philadelphia and St. Louis are the counterpart of one another. The press of each teems daily with the bitter complaint, that the most corrupt class in the community have usurped the reins of government, and that the honest, upright and moneyed laborers, mechanics, manufacturers, merchant and professional men of country have built up the Union, are permitted to have no shape in administering its affairs.

"If the largely-populated places of the New World are compared with those of the Old, the most marked contrast will be noticed in their respective conditions. The American cities of Paris, London, Vienna, St. Petersburg, Stockholm, Copenhagen, Madrid, Munich or Dresden, is song struck with the wonderful order that everywhere prevails in those places; and if his time permits an investigation of the details of local government, with the economy and prudence in finance, as well as the wisdom and maturity of police and sanitary regulations, inconvenience are unknown, and public or private accusations against heads of departments are so rare, and are so promptly attended to, that, perhaps, a sense disturbed by them. The reason of this admirable state of things in the great cities of Europe, is that the local authorities are all of them under a higher supervision and control. The Imperial Governments of France, Russia and Austria, and the royal prerogatives of England, Spain, Sweden and Denmark, are sufficiently powerful and immediate in their influence to exclude the possibility of mobrule, or of the intrusion of personally selfish ends. Therefore order and tranquility prevail; and, when the general Administration may be unpopular, municipal affairs are never found fault with.

"The want of some powerful check, either external or internal, upon the tendency downwards of prosperous communities, will always be a calamity; and unless this check is sooner or later applied, grave evils, if not utter ruin, must be the result. The industrious portions of the population, in cities, as elsewhere, are inclined to the steady application of their energies to the augmentation of property, and to acquiring the competence which brings education, ease, training and intelligence within their reach. If they participate in politics, they is so laboriously, as a secondary and inferior matter; but abstain from applying their attention to those indispensable preliminaries of good government, without the control of which practical exercise of power can never remain in their hands. On the contrary, the idle, dissipated, depraved scum which floats upon the surface of city population, is ever ready to assume the patronage and power which right-minded citizens improvidently cast off. Those who have too large to work, whose occupations and habits make them akin to beasts of prey, can imagine no higher end than the attainment of that paradise of plunder, which neglect of duty on the part of the better classes throw into their hands.

"Therefore, the future of the large cities of the United States will be a sad one, if the experience of the past does not teach wisdom for the future. Let those who revel in the history of the prosperity of the Italian republics of the middle ages, find a lesson there. What constituted the glory of Venice? It was that, for centuries, men whose eyes were ever-fully directed upwards, could attain there a Fifth avenue length of respectability, influence and wealth, which law did their well legal power to put down the efforts of a minority rabble to destroy the republic. When, in the course of time, the aristocracy of birth was displaced by that of brains, thieves and bullies, decay was immediate, and Venice fell. So long as an aristocracy of industry prevailed in Genoa, Florence and Pisa, those republics alone with a light which will be reflected throughout generations. When, however, the latter residies of the period usurped the sway which merchant princes were fitted to exercise, they, like Venice, succumbed to an ignoble yoke. The free cities of the Hanseatic league owing to and free-the various phases of prosperity and adversity—in proportion as the industrial classes made their influence felt against the dissolute and worthless. Old Rome, Athens, Sparta, Thebes—examine closely, with pondering minds the pages of their checkered histories! They all teach the same lesson. So long as the element in their communities, which was conservative and good, remained active, they were iron in strength, invincible without, and peaceful within. When these became apathetic, power dropped from their hands, and they fell into decay and dissolution."

But what are we logically to infer as the consequence, should the tendency of the people to neglect their political duties—that is, to abandon self-government—prove invincible and persistent? Of course anarchy cannot be organized and perpetuated as a system. Society instinctively seeks government, and unless it utterly perishes it must find government. If the spirit of self-government dies in one form, it will be succeeded by another form. The people will endeavor to establish a supreme power in the State, the regular and efficient exercise of whose governing functions will not be impeded by their negligence, or disturbed by the dangerous activity of selfish factionists. They will look to that as the only available remedy for the evils which they have brought upon themselves while possessing the prerogatives, but neglecting the duties of a self-governing, irresponsible power; and thus a mighty democracy will look or leap from its own bosom's still mightier impensility. Does such a speculation look paradoxical and visionary? Be it so, but history is full of the proof of such paradoxes and the realization of such visions.

THE FREE SOIL CREED.

From the N. O. True Delta?

It is difficult to determine which party is most democratic—Douglas or Seward. A—Douglas has the doctrine of popular sovereignty, that of the Administration or the Freesoil. In the present canvass in the West, in Ohio, Indiana and Minnesota, the Freesoilers have appeared to transcended all their previous fanatical abolitions against the great statesman of Illinois, and to have given vent to bitter self-derision and denunciation than even their party, to renowned as it is for unsavory epithets and unscrupulous vituperation, has hitherto managed to press into any canvass. Douglas was the burden of their song in every place; he haunted their orators, their peripatetic electioneers, their confederated associations, making it manifest to all the world to what quarter lies the dormant power to rescue the Union from the traitorous grasp of the black conspirators who would destroy it. Among the leading spirits of the Freesoil camp, the Hon. E. P. Blair, of Missouri, made himself, on the occasions of which we speak, conspicuously prominent. His prominent association with the Democratic party, his intimate association and identification with me; high in the confidence and exalted by the favors of that national organization, his success in reaching congressional honors on the Freesoil ticket in a slave State, his boldness, daring and talent all combined to make him a champion of the recent Freesoil demonstration to the West, and he certainly, by the violence of his speech, the virulence of his invective, and the intense bitterness of his assaults upon Douglas, entitled himself to all the prominence he obtained. In a harangue delivered by him at St. Paul, now before us, the squatter sovereignty principle of Mr. Douglas received no quarter.

It was a trick and device of the great statesman of the West to deliver over to the slave oligarchy Mexico, Central America, Cuba and the rest of intertropical America, said Mr. Blair. It is as certain as any undermined event citizen, that if left to themselves and their free choice, all these countries will pass Within the bay slavery. Admit, says the Missouri an, the people who are alone interested in the matter, whose worldly welfare, happiness and the development of whose energy are identified with the institution, to the laws which nature has designed for the emancipation of labor to determine it, as Douglas demands, and beyond all question they will announce in favor of its re-establishment. How, then, does Mr. Blair propose to prevent such a result? Not by a plea, what scheme, what shift has he in his fertile imagination, by which the reasonable, just and eligible proposition of Douglas, to allow the people exclusively interested to determine the question for themselves, may be defeated? Why he demands, as do many of our truest Southern men, that there shall be no Congressional intervention, he contends, as Mr. Buchanan does, that Congress, and not the people of the Territories therein, has power over the question, and through Hallett to intervention Mr. Blair would forever prevent slavery therein, whether the Territory in which it be so inhibited be suited or unsuited for that description of labor."

In his own exact words he thus treats the matter:

This, then, is the true issue before the country, to-wit: Is it the right and duty of Congress to fix the institutions of the Territories which belong to the people of the United States, whose sovereignty is represented by Congress, or does the Constitution of the United States propria vigore carry slavery into the Territories beyond the power of Congress or the people thereof to exclude it? The Republican party hold the affirmative of the first proposition, which has been handed down to it from the founders of the Government, the framers of the Constitution, and those who guided its fortunes and maintained its purity inviolate through the first sixty years of its existence, and who rest its defense upon the genuine principle of popular sovereignty, that the entire body of the people of the United States, to whom the Territories belong, shall fix the institutions of these Territories through their representatives in Congress, and adapt them for the habitation of a homogeneous people, and fit them for association with the other States. The doctrine of the Republican party favors freedom, and thus founds itself upon the purest and most rational Democratic idea.

And again:

"But it is hardly worth while to pursue further this intangible and unsubstantial question of popular sovereignty, which was devised to subvert the very being which it professes to uphold, by withdrawing attention from the dangerous designs of the slave oligarchy, who guide the counsels of the so-called Democratic party. Douglas' popular sovereignty is simply the red flag which the bull-fighters hold in the sight of their victim, to blind him to the flashing steel about to be thrust into his side. The real designs of that party are to be gathered by looking to the South, where its strength and power lies, and where its chiefs openly proclaim their objects. With the sword of conquest in one hand and the Dred Scott decision in the other, these modern imitators of Mohammed are marching forward to seize upon the inter-tropical regions of the continent, and to reopen the African slave trade to stock its fertile realms with slaves. Whoever doubts that these designs are the pondered thought by day, and dream by night, of those who dictate the policy of the Democratic party, is blind to the lessons of the past, and knows nothing of the audacity and daring of the Southern leaders of that party, who can such men as Douglas and Buchanan as their instruments and tools."

Thus, according to Mr. Blair, if the people of the Territories now included in or hereafter to be added to, the Union, should be left to themselves to shape their institutions as their interests and feelings dictate—as Douglas contends they possess the indisputable right to do—such a speculation would be paradoxical and visionary? Be it so, but history is full of the proof of such paradoxes and the realization of such visions.

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