

6. We demand that the judicial oath in the courts and in all other departments of the government shall be abolished, and that simple affirmation under the pains and penalties of perjury shall be established in its stead.

7. We demand that all laws directly or indirectly enforcing the observance of Sunday as the Sabbath shall be repealed.

8. We demand that all laws looking to the enforcement of "Christian" morality shall be abrogated and that all laws shall be conformed to the requirements of natural morality, equal rights, and impartial liberty.

9. We demand that not only in the Constitution of the United States and of the several states, but also in the practical administration of the same, no privileges or advantages shall be conceded to Christianity or any other special religion; that our entire political system shall be founded and administered on a purely secular basis; and that whatever changes shall prove necessary to this end shall be consistently, unflinchingly and promptly made.

MACAULAY'S CRITICISM OF DEMOCRACY AND GARFIELD'S REPLY.

BY CHARLES H. BETTS.

SOME time ago I called on the editor of *The Open Court* at his office and while we were discussing the world-wide conflict in which this country is now engaged, Dr. Carus asked me if I had ever happened to see a letter written by Lord Macaulay criticising Jefferson and democracy. I replied that I had the Macaulay letter, one copy in my scrap book and another copy in one of General Garfield's speeches.

I then related that on a recent visit with Dr. Andrew White at his home in Ithaca, while we were discussing the war, he asked me the same question asked by Dr. Carus relative to the Macaulay letter. I informed Dr. White that I had a copy of the letter whereupon he related how in a campaign when General Garfield was a candidate for president he spoke at Cornell University and in his speech quoted Macaulay's letter. Dr. White said he had always wanted to secure a copy of it and then described how General Garfield after quoting the letter had answered the criticism of democracy therein contained and concluded his speech by appealing to the audience to see to it that Macaulay's prophecy relative to our demo-

cratic form of government should not be fulfilled. Dr. White said that at the conclusion of his address General Garfield wanted to know how he liked his speech, whereupon he said to Garfield: "You have just made the greatest political speech I have ever heard." After I had related these facts to the editor of *The Open Court* he requested me to send him a copy of the Macaulay letter together with General Garfield's comments. I quote from General Garfield's speech as follows:

"At the risk of offending our American pride, I shall quote what is probably the most formidable indictment of democratic principles ever penned. It was written by the late Lord Macaulay, a profound student of society and government, and a man who, on most subjects, entertained broad and liberal views. Millions of Americans have read and admired his History and Essays, but only a few thousands have read his brief but remarkable letter of 1857, in which he discusses the future of our government. We are so confident of our position that we seldom care to debate it. The letter was addressed to the Hon. H. S. Randall, of New York, in acknowledgement of a copy of that gentleman's *Life of Jefferson*. I quote it almost entire.

'HOLLY LODGE, KENSINGTON, LONDON, May 23, 1857.

'Dear Sir, . . . You are surprised to learn that I have not a high opinion of Mr. Jefferson, and I am surprised at your surprise. I am certain that I never wrote a line, and that I never, in Parliament, in conversation, or even on the hustings,—a place where it is the fashion to court the populace,—uttered a word indicating an opinion that the supreme authority in a state ought to be intrusted to the majority of citizens told by the head; in other words, to the poorest and most ignorant part of society. I have long been convinced that institutions purely democratic must, sooner or later, destroy liberty or civilization, or both. In Europe, where the population is dense, the effect of such institutions would be almost instantaneous. What happened lately in France is an example. In 1848, a pure democracy was established there. During a short time there was reason to expect a general spoliation, a national bankruptcy, a new partition of the soil, a maximum of prices, a ruinous load of taxation laid on the rich for the purpose of supporting the poor in idleness. Such a system would, in twenty years, have made France as poor and barbarous as the France of the Carolingians. Happily, the danger was averted; and now there is a despotism, a silent tribune, an enslaved press. Liberty is gone, but civilization

has been saved. I have not the smallest doubt that, if we had a purely democratic government here, the effect would be the same. Either the poor would plunder the rich, and civilization would perish, or order and prosperity would be saved by a strong military government, and liberty would perish. You may think that your country enjoys an exemption from these evils. I will frankly own to you that I am of a very different opinion. Your fate I believe to be certain, though it is deferred by physical cause. As long as you have a boundless extent of fertile and unoccupied land, your laboring population will be far more at ease than the laboring population of the Old World; and while that is the case, the Jefferson politics may continue to exist without causing any fatal calamity. But the time will come when New England will be as thickly peopled as Old England. Wages will be as low, and will fluctuate as much with you as with us. You will have your Manchesters and Birminghams. And in those Manchesters and Birminghams hundreds of thousands of artisans will assuredly be sometimes out of work. Then your institutions will be fairly brought to the test. Distress everywhere makes the laborer mutinous and discontented, and inclines him to listen with eagerness to agitators, who tell him that it is a monstrous iniquity that one man should have a million while another cannot get a full meal. In bad years there is plenty of grumbling here, and sometimes a little rioting. But it matters little, for here the sufferers are not the rulers. The supreme power is in the hands of a class, numerous indeed, but select,—of an educated class,—of a class which is, and knows itself to be, deeply interested in the security of property, and the maintenance of order. Accordingly, the malcontents are firmly, yet gently, restrained. The bad time is got over without robbing the wealthy to relieve the indigent. The springs of national prosperity soon begin to flow again: work is plentiful, wages rise, and all is tranquillity and cheerfulness. I have seen England pass three or four times through such critical seasons as I have described. Through such seasons the United States will have to pass in the course of the next century, if not of this. How will you pass through them? I heartily wish you a good deliverance. But my reason and my wishes are at war, and I cannot help foreboding the worst. It is quite plain that your government will never be able to restrain a distressed and discontented majority. For with you the majority is the government, and has the rich, who are always a minority, absolutely at its mercy. The day will come when, in the State of New York, a multitude of people, none of whom has had more than half a breakfast, or expects to have more than half

a dinner, will choose a legislature. Is it possible to doubt what sort of a legislature will be chosen? On one side is a statesman preaching patience, respect for vested rights, strict observance of public faith; on the other is a demagogue ranting about the tyranny of capitalists and usurers, and asking why anybody should be permitted to drink champagne, and to ride in a carriage, while thousands of honest folk are in want of necessaries. Which of the two candidates is likely to be preferred by a workingman who hears his children cry for more bread? I seriously apprehend that you will, in some such season of adversity as I have described, do things which will prevent prosperity from returning; that you will act like people who should, in a year of scarcity, devour all the seed corn, and thus make the next year, not of scarcity, but of absolute famine. There will be, I fear, spoliation. The distress will produce fresh spoliation. There is nothing to stop you. Your Constitution is all sail and no anchor. As I said before, when a society has entered on this downward progress, either civilization or liberty must perish. Either some Cæsar or Napoleon will seize the reins of government with a strong hand, or your republic will be as fearfully plundered and laid waste by barbarians in the twentieth century; as the Roman empire was in the fifth,—with this difference, that the Huns and Vandals who ravaged the Roman empire came from without, and that your Huns and Vandals will have been engendered within your country by your own institutions.

'Thinking thus, of course I cannot reckon Jefferson among the benefactors of mankind.'¹

"Certainly this letter contains food for serious thought; and it would be idle to deny that the writer has pointed out what may become serious dangers in our future. But the evils he complains of are by no means confined to democratic government, nor do they, in the main, grow out of popular suffrage. If they do, England herself has taken a dangerous step since Macaulay wrote. Ten years after the date of this letter she extended the suffrage to eight hundred thousand of her workingmen, a class hitherto ignored in politics. And still later we have extended it to an ignorant and lately enslaved population of more than four millions. Whether for weal or for woe, enlarged suffrage is the tendency of all modern nations. I venture the declaration, that this opinion of Macaulay's is vulnerable on several grounds. . .

¹ The copy here followed is that found in the Appendix to Harper's edition of *The Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay*, by G. O. Trevelyan.

"In the first place, it is based upon a belief from which few if any British writers have been able to emancipate themselves; namely, the belief that mankind are born into permanent classes, and that in the main they must live, work, and die in the fixed class or condition in which they are born. It is hardly possible for a man reared in an aristocracy like that of England to eliminate this conviction from his mind, for the British empire is built upon it. Their theory of national stability is, that there must be a permanent class who shall hold in their own hands so much of the wealth, the privilege, and the political power of the kingdom, that they can compel the admiration and obedience of all other classes. At several periods in English history there have been serious encroachments upon this doctrine. But, on the whole, British phlegm has held to it sturdily, and still maintains it. The great voiceless class of day-laborers have made but little headway against the doctrine. The editor of a leading British magazine told me, a few years ago, that in twenty-five years of observation he had never known a mere farm-laborer in England to rise above his class. Some, he said, had done so in manufactures, some in trade, but in mere farm labor not one. The government of a country where such is a fact, is possible, has much to answer for.

"We deny the justice or the necessity of keeping ninety-nine of the population in perpetual poverty and obscurity, in order that the hundredth may be rich and powerful enough to hold the ninety-nine in subjection. Where such permanent classes exist, the conflict of which Macaulay speaks is inevitable. And why? Not that men are inclined to fight the class above them, but that they fight against any artificial barrier which makes it impossible for them to enter that higher class and become a part of it. We point to the fact, that in this country there are no classes in the British sense of that word,—no impassable barriers of caste. Now that slavery is abolished we can truly say that through our political society there run no fixed horizontal strata above which none can pass. Our society resembles rather the waves of the ocean, whose every drop may move freely among its fellows, and may rise toward the light until it flashes on the crest of the highest wave.

"Again, in depicting the dangers of universal suffrage, Macaulay leaves wholly out of the account the great counterbalancing force of universal education. He contemplates a government delivered over to a vast multitude of ignorant, vicious men, who have learned no self-control, who have never comprehended the national life, and who wield the ballot solely for personal and selfish ends. If

this were indeed the necessary condition of democratic communities, it would be difficult, perhaps impossible, to escape the logic of Macaulay's letter. And here is a real peril,—the danger that we shall rely upon the mere extent of the suffrage as a national safeguard. We cannot safely, even for a moment, lose sight of the *quality* of the suffrage, which is more important than its quantity.

"We are apt to be deluded into false security by political catch-words, devised to flatter rather than instruct. We have happily escaped the dogma of the divine right of kings. Let us not fall into the equally pernicious error that multitude is divine because it is a multitude. The words of our great publicist, the late Dr. Lieber, whose faith in republican liberty was undoubted, should never be forgotten. In discussing the doctrine *Vox populi, vox Dei*, he said, "Woe to the country in which political hypocrisy first calls the people almighty, then teaches that the voice of the people is divine, then pretends to take a mere clamor for the true voice of the people, and lastly gets up the desired clamor." This sentence ought to be read in every political caucus. It would make an interesting and significant preamble to most of our political platforms. It is only when the people speak truth and justice that their voice can be called "the voice of God." Our faith in the democratic principle rests upon the belief that intelligent men will see that their highest political good is in liberty, regulated by just and equal laws; and that, in the distribution of political power, it is safe to follow the maxim, "Each for all, and all for each." We confront the dangers of suffrage by the blessings of universal education. We believe that the strength of the state is the aggregate strength of its individual citizens; and that the suffrage is the link that binds, in a bond of mutual interest and responsibility, the fortunes of the citizen to the fortunes of the state. Hence, as popular suffrage is the broadest base, so, when coupled with intelligence and virtue, it becomes the strongest, the most enduring base on which to build the superstructure of government."²

The above reply of Garfield to Macaulay's letter merits all the praise bestowed upon it by Dr. White. It is a brilliant and scholarly defense of democracy.

In regard to Macaulay's criticism of Jefferson it might be well to state that Jefferson did not believe in a pure democracy as most of his followers believe. On the contrary he declared that it was unworkable beyond the limits of a township. He was a firm be-

² *Garfield's Works*, Vol. II.

liever in the American system of representative government. He knew that the engrafting of representation upon a pure democracy was a new invention in government unknown to the ancients.

Upon this subject Jefferson said:

"They knew no medium between a democracy (the only pure republic, but impractical beyond the limits of a township) and an abandonment of themselves to an aristocracy or a tyranny independent of the people. It seems not to have occurred that where the citizens cannot meet to transact their business in person, they alone have the right to choose agents who shall transact it, and that in this way a republican or popular government of the second grade of purity may be exercised over any extent of country. The full experiment of a government democratical, but representative, was and still is reserved for us."

Thus it will be observed that Jefferson was a firm believer in the representative feature of our American system of government and appreciated that it was a new invention in government unknown to the ancients. On this subject Stimson in his *History of Popular Law Making* says:

"All the authorities appear to agree that there is no prototype for what seems to us such a very simple thing as representation, *representative government*, among the Greeks or Romans, or any of the older civilizations of which we have knowledge."

It appears to be clear that the ancients had never discovered a workable system of government between the extremes of a pure democracy *which was a failure* and an aristocracy or a monarchy, both of which curtailed individual liberty and deprived the great mass of the people of a controlling voice in the affairs of their government.

The founders of the republic having the wisdom and experience of all the ages to guide them, knew that a pure democracy had neither stability nor reliability, because it gave a free rein to the emotions and passions of men. They knew that an aristocracy and a monarchy had stability and reliability but evolved into tyranny, and so they aimed to found a government which had all the good features of democracy, which left the final control of the government in the hands of the people, but which at the same time possessed some of the efficiency and stability of the monarchy, and so they planned to make the people themselves a monarch, with certain necessary checks, balances and limitations, the same to be fixed in a written constitution.



PORTRAIT OF MATEJKO BY HIMSELF.