

OUR DYNAMIC SOCIETY¹

Though North America drew its population from Europe, it soon began to develop a society quite unlike that of the Old World. Ours became distinctly dynamic, while that from which it sprang remained static. The difference was not caused by crossing the Atlantic. An individual does not lose his character in passing over the ocean—except temporarily—nor does a people suffer a sea change. The real cause of the divergence was uncovered nearly forty years ago by Frederick Jackson Turner, who thereby revolutionized our interpretation of American history. The change began when the first European population, inhabiting only a narrow strip along the Atlantic seaboard and the lower St. Lawrence, commenced to push inland, and the divergence grew as the human flood rolled westward to fill up this continent. In other words, the transformation was wrought by crossing the land and not the sea.

Four stages in this westward growth are quite discernible, though there is no clear-cut demarcation between them. The first men to penetrate the wilderness became its victims. They could not help it. Conditions were too strong for them. They were hunters and fur-traders. To survive, they simply had to follow the example of the natives, and in this they were often assisted by native wives. They adopted the language, the food, the clothing, and, generally, the manner of life of the Indians, which after all was the manner of life dictated by the nature of the country. They lived and moved and had their being beyond the pale of civilization, and when they occasionally returned to their old homes they were no longer at home. They had run wild. This vanguard of hunters, trappers, and fur-traders

¹ Presented on January 11, 1932, as the annual address of the eighty-third annual meeting of the Minnesota Historical Society. *Ed.*

moved steadily westward as the nearer supply of furs was exhausted and the redskins retreated. Then came the second stage—the beginning of agricultural settlement. This was the work of “old-timers” who abandoned their roving and of newcomers from the East. Here again we find human victims of environment. These people were so isolated in the wilderness that their existence was of necessity very primitive, and the agriculture that they practiced was limited to what is known as the rude diversified type. They were almost entirely self-sufficing, producing their own food, making their own clothing, fashioning their own few simple tools, and manufacturing what little furniture they needed. Their only contact with the outside world was confined, as a rule, to an annual visit of one member of each family to the older settlements in the East, whither he might take a few furs and some bear grease and whence he might return with such bare essentials as a bag or two of salt and a few bars of iron. After a while the pressure of population from the East thickened these primitive settlements, and slowly but surely a great transformation took place. This type of life shifted on to the west in the wake of the receding fur frontier, and a third stage appeared—a more developed society engaged in producing staples for export, chiefly cattle and wheat. Many of the earlier pioneers, feeling the need for more elbowroom, sold out to newcomers who did not care to face the grim struggle in the wilds farther on. Others remained and altered their manner of living. Instead of consuming all that they produced, they now sold an increasing surplus for profit and bought many commodities which they previously had made for themselves or done without. Now the compromise of civilization was not so marked, but it was still there. Then, with the lapse of more years and the further pressure of population from the East, came another shifting and transformation which gave rise to the fourth stage—a relatively final type of diversified society. Again many

individuals sold out to new arrivals and moved on to repeat their old experience on new farms, while others changed their methods rather than their habitat. Now, instead of depending upon the production of one or two staples, they developed mixed farming, with dairying, market gardening, and fruit growing. At the same time, manufacturing began to spring up.

Our society has thus grown by continually returning to primitive conditions on the margin of settlement. The process reminds us of the biological law that ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny, the development of the whole species being repeated in foreshortened form in the development of the single embryo. Even so, in North America the history of individual settlements has been, in a way, a recapitulation of the history of the human race from savagery. Civilization was always beginning all over again and growing up on the frontier of settlement. The frontier type of existence has thus been a permanent feature of North American life—though of no one part of the continent, because it was forever creeping westward. It had a profound reaction upon the East, from which it was an offshoot. To understand this reaction, we must first examine the reacting agent.

There is no mystery about the nature of this frontier life. We can see it clearly in the answers to two simple questions. Who went west? And what happened to them there? Those who moved with the sun were not a representative sample of the society which they left behind. They were a picked lot, selected by conditions. Speaking broadly, they were the poor, but not just ordinary poor people. They were inspired by a hope of becoming richer, and they were endowed with both the ability and the energy to realize their hope if it were at all possible. They were men and women who were determined to carve out for themselves a life that was denied them in their old homes. They had youth; they had strength; they had daring. Of

course there was a goodly admixture of bad specimens among them—criminals and other misfits. Though these undesirable elements left their mark in a certain flavor of lawlessness and irreligion, they were for the most part swallowed up, and therefore we may drop them from our picture. As a whole, this continual rebirth of society in the West was, in its origin, a revolt against the conservative tendency in the East—a revolt that found ample scope in the open spaces of the West. There the migrants succeeded, and, by their very success in creating a new life, they confirmed and glorified the impulse which had driven them forth from among their fellows. The new life which they created was crude and material. Conditions made it so. But it was redeemed by a peculiar idealism—an intense belief in what man can do and a tremendous faith in the future. It was free of the feeling of restraint which the growing past throws over man. It was emancipated; it was creative. Hence the ozone which filled the western air and spread over all the land.

The reaction of the frontier on the older society to the east has been perhaps the most powerful influence in the shaping of American life, socially, economically, and politically. In the regions where new life was springing up, the individual stood erect on his own feet instead of crouching in the nook of society where he was born—a cramping attitude—or instead of hanging on to the family tree—a monkey attitude. Out of the West came a new and a larger conception of the individual. This conception was forever being renewed, and it was constantly injecting a dynamic force into the life of this continent. The restless energy, the driving power, the practical resourcefulness, the buoyancy, and the exuberance of the westerner leavened the whole lump of America. Those who remained in the East were fired to emulate their successful younger brothers and cousins in the West. Thus we have had in North America, in Canada as well as in the United States, a life with little

leisure or culture, a life that is intensely practical and concerned with material things, a life in which emphasis is laid on growth and quantity rather than on stability and quality, and on the future instead of the past. Thus did America grow away from Europe and develop a life of her own. Here is the key to the New World spirit as opposed to the Old World spirit—to the American belief that the earth belongs to those who live on it and not to those who lie in it.

The economic reaction was tremendous. It began seriously with the growth of the third stage in western development. The hunters and fur-traders had relatively little influence upon the economic life of the East. The same was true of the first agricultural pioneers, with whom the East had almost no contact. They were practically independent. They had no exportable surplus, and even if they had they could not have got rid of it because they were too cut off from the outside world. With the appearance of the next stage—the production of a staple for export—contact between East and West was established, and from the first it was rather painful. The pioneer who sought to export has almost always wrestled with a great problem. His product has been bulky, his market has been distant, and the cost of transportation has threatened to eat up all his profits. Ranching contained in itself a solution of the problem, for cattle could carry themselves to market. But the same land could produce more wealth when tilled than when left as pasture, and hence arose the vision of greater gain if only the product could be got out. Many farmers tried to solve the problem by transforming their grain into a more concentrated form of wealth which, because of its greater economic specific gravity, would cost less to ship out. In many interior regions this was the beginning, though not the end, of whisky. In spite of this, and of many other less happy efforts, the *pons asinorum* was not yet crossed. The final solution was found not in decreas-

ing the bulk of the export, but in increasing the means of transportation.

At first roads were built; then canals were dug; and finally the railroads came. These improved means of communication were constructed not so much because the West wanted them as because the East wanted them. The East desired the western staple and it also sought an outlet for its own goods in the growing West. Therefore, there was competition in the East to provide the West with transportation facilities. The result was striking. By finding a market through, and in, the more thickly populated areas to the East, and by drawing goods back in return, the West gave a powerful stimulus to eastern development. Great cities grew up at the eastern end of this trade. What really made New York was the completion of the Erie Canal in 1825. Generally speaking, eastern labor and eastern capital both profited by the greater demand created by the opening of the West. Eastern agriculture also benefited, for now, with larger markets near at hand, it became intensive. Thus did the loss of vigorous elements to the West bring a rich return to the East. The frontier absorbed vitality, but it gave back more than it had taken. Undoubtedly the haphazard manner in which the interior was settled did entail great waste. But it is questionable whether a more rational control of development was possible; and it is fairly certain that, if such control had been feasible and had been applied, our society would not have become so peculiarly dynamic.

The political reaction of the West has been profound. It pulled America away from Europe, bringing political independence and, after it, the isolation policy expressed in the Monroe Doctrine. The western movement has been like a great mixing machine or crucible, fusing into one national body elements that were quite disparate because they came from different parts of the East and from Europe. Moreover, the frontier, because it moved to and

fro across the northern international boundary, has bound Canada to the United States in a great American marriage without any chance of an American divorce. Great as these reactions have been, we must not dwell upon them here, for there are two others which are much more germane to our discussion of the nature of American society.

One of these is to be found in the running conflict between the older settlements in the East and the younger settlements in the West. Two centuries ago the people on the seaboard feared that those who had moved up-country were getting out of hand, and therefore they tried to keep a firm hand upon them. The men of the West found themselves wholly or partly disfranchised, and they were forced to pay taxes to a government that gave them practically nothing in return. They reacted in a very natural manner. Why should they submit to the restraints of government imposed by the unsympathetic East? Bacon's Rebellion occurred a hundred years before the Revolution, and the Whisky Rebellion was only one of the revolts that came shortly after the establishment of independence. For a long while the West was inspired by a strong individualism and a hearty distrust of government. But as time passed the attitude of the Westerners was reversed. They began to feel the pressure of economic problems too big for them to handle by themselves, such problems as transportation, irrigation, and marketing. Then they developed a marked genius for coöperation and a growing desire for government interference to conquer their difficulties. This meant the investment of capital, which could be found only in the East. As a consequence, the opposition of East and West assumed a new phase. The West had always been a debtor country, but now it was a much greater debtor and it became self-conscious as such. It betrayed a growing suspicion of the "moneyed interests" of the East, and it was inclined to inject unsound economic doctrines into political life. Inflation of the currency and special favors

to debtors, in one form or another, became and remained common western demands. Of course this attitude made the East suspect that the West desired to cheat it of its capital. Thus the West produced a type of thinking which we know as pioneer radicalism. It was an alarming challenge to the more conservative East. Born of this political insurgence, third parties were forever springing up. But they have never had more than an ephemeral existence. The older parties, centered in the East, sooner or later bid against each other for the support of the expanding West, and in this bidding they have taken over the sound and dropped the unsound ideas to which the West gave birth. For generations politics were revived by the new life of the West.

The other political repercussion was more important still. As Turner pointed out years ago, democracy, as it has existed on this continent, came out of the West. Of late some have tried to deny this and have cited the example of France's feudal colony on the shores of the St. Lawrence. A close examination of New France, however, only confirms Turner's theory. Feudalism lost all its strength on being transplanted into Canada; and the government of the colony, though autocratic according to the letter of the law, was very far from autocratic in practice. The eyes, the ears, and the mouth of the government in every parish were those of the local militia captain; and he, though formally appointed by the governor, was substantially the elected leader of the people. From the earliest days of New France, the breath of liberty entered into the lives of the French-Canadians to a degree that has been little appreciated except by themselves. It could not be otherwise. It was physically impossible to hold down the habitant as the peasant was held down in old France. America emancipated him. The woods were at his very door and liberty was forever beckoning to him through the trees. What was true of the French was equally true of the English who

came to this continent. The wide opportunity of the frontier prevented the labor supply in the older parts of America from piling up and accumulating weight. It offered an independent life to all who were unsatisfied with their lot. No man need be a hewer of wood or a drawer of water for others. Through the open door of the West, he could step into a land where all men were equal. It was no mere accident that the principle of manhood suffrage was born in the new constitutions which appeared as the new communities in the West set up political housekeeping for themselves. Neither heaven nor George Washington made this a continent of freedom and democracy. The frontier was the corner stone of our democracy, the perennial preserver of our freedom. Liberty has continuously blown like a breeze from the West refreshing our society.

It has been a fresh and steady breeze. It did not come in violent gusts as in the Old World, because of the fundamental difference between American and European democracy. They have not the same ancestry at all. European democracy was born of the industrial revolution, which herded great masses of wage-earners into industrial centers, where they became class conscious. The tone of Old World democracy has been set by the workman in the town who owned no property, who toiled for another as master. But the keynote of American democracy was struck by a man who was his own master and a real owner of property — the farmer working his own farm. American democracy has thus been steadied by a ballast of property and by a consciousness of economic independence, while European democracy, without these restraints and with a certain feeling of desperation, has every now and then blown up a revolutionary storm.

For generations the growing tide of American life was set toward the west and flowing out upon the land. But this is all a tale of yesterday. The vast tide at last slowed down, was caught in an eddy, and now for some years it

has been flowing strongly in the opposite direction. The great turn was somewhat obscured by the homestead entries, which still remained numerous. But for some time before the World War the proportion of people taking up new land was dwindling. Then came the war, and it further confused our view. With its attendant upheavals in the Old World, such as the Russian Revolution, it caused an enormous increase in the demand for food and a stupendous rise in the prices of farm produce. The result was an unnatural and a temporary stimulus to agriculture in North America, as elsewhere. The new vision of prosperity was as illusory as it was glorious. It hastened the inevitable end and even pushed us beyond it. Without the war, agricultural expansion was bound to slow down to reach an equilibrium. The war reversed the process and speeded it up. As a consequence we are now face to face with a painful situation. One of the most important ills in our much disjointed economic world is general agricultural overdevelopment.

Except for the dislocation caused by the war, farms have been absorbing less and less of our surplus population. More and more the surplus has been drawn off in other directions by the greater returns offered by other lines of economic activities, chiefly business and industry, of which more anon. Our surplus population has also been repelled from rural life. The disappearance of free homesteads, the rising price of land, the increase of taxes, and the mounting of mortgage and other encumbrances have all conspired to push people away from the land. Also the mechanization of agriculture, which began noticeably with the appearance of reapers, binders, and threshers in the middle of the last century, leading finally to the use of tractors and combines, has very effectively dammed up the westward flowing stream. The amount of capital necessary for profitable agriculture has soared beyond the reach of the common man.

There was still the possibility of subsistence farming, of making a living directly out of the soil without the intermediation of money. And here and there, with the assistance of a few tools and a modicum of machinery, families did live in this way. But this kind of life was losing its old attraction. The greater temptations of business and industry furnish only part of the explanation. The rest is to be found in subtle changes that have been permeating our whole mode of life. We have been living in the midst of one of the greatest revolutions in the history of the western world and perhaps of mankind. It has been so all-embracing, so all-pervading, that we have scarcely seen it, at least in its entirety. It is perhaps the greatest result of the industrial revolution and the development of science. Invention has been piled on invention with bewildering rapidity, and their combined weight has been crushing one of the finest qualities of our race. More and more we have come to depend for our daily existence on what machines make and do for us, until at last we have become practically the slaves of a machine-controlled society. The change is more than physical; it has affected our mentality. We have come to pity our ancestors who knew nothing of the marvels of this age, with its electric lights, its telephones, its radios, its motor cars, and its legion of machine-made goods. But if only our forebears could turn Rip Van Winkle, they might well pity us who have come to regard these things as necessary to make life worth living. We have come to imagine that they are civilization. We have mistaken the husks for the kernel, which is fine thought, fine feeling, and fine action. To the average individual of today, life is poor, nasty, and brutish without the many amenities of urban life. We have lost the individual self-reliance of our grandfathers, who knew how to do things for themselves. In short, our society has been evolving in such a way that it has been producing fewer and fewer of the old pioneering class.

The change that all these causes have effected in rural society is very great. It has become a business rather than a life. More food is raised by more machines and fewer men. Excluding the many localities where the city has, as it were, spilled out over the surrounding land, the rural population of America has been growing thinner and thinner, and the old rural society has been dissolving. The old neighborliness has been dying, if only because neighbors are fewer and farther off. The loneliness of rural life has been growing, though Henry Ford and Signor Marconi have been striving to alleviate it. Very naturally, this transformation of rural life has reacted to weaken still further the old urge onto the land. All this is fraught with tremendous meaning for North American society as a whole. We may talk about machines taking the place of men and women in the great open spaces of the country, and yet, unless we remember who these people were, we miss the most significant truth of all. It is simply this. The pressure of great and complicated forces has been silently but none the less effectively removing the old cornerstone of our American life, the common man who owns a farm and works it himself.

Turning now to the rise of modern business and industry, it will be well to go back to the Civil War, which gave this new development an immense impetus. It also gave it a new freedom. In addition to preserving the Union and destroying slavery, it upset an important balance in the country's life. The mercantile and industrial East, which Alexander Hamilton on the morrow of the Revolution desired to make dominant in order that it might weld the young nation into a strong unity, had been held in check by the agrarian slave South reinforced by the agrarian free West. By flattening out the South, the Civil War left only the agrarian West to balance the rising giant in the East. This the West neither could nor would do. Indeed

the first reaction of the West was one of joyous expansion, for eastern capitalists indulged in an orgy of railway building which brought western lands nearer to the market for their produce and opened up the natural resources of the West.

The country now wallowed in prosperity, experiencing a phenomenal industrial development. This was due in part to the rapid expansion of the domestic market, the like of which had never been seen before and may never be witnessed again. The population was increasing by leaps and bounds. Race suicide had not yet reduced the family to stingy proportions, and the Old World was pouring its surplus population into America in one of the largest migratory movements in the history of the human race. And in addition to swelling the market of consumers, this immigration aided industry by providing it with a better labor market than it had yet enjoyed. Another factor in the development of this new and abounding life was the multiplication of inventions and the advent of mass production. And still another influence was the new protective tariff—a strong fence around the native pastures. Industries sprang up like Jonah's gourd and flourished like green bay trees. Small ones swelled into big ones, and big ones combined into still bigger ones, leading to a grand climax about the turn of the century, when gigantic trusts appeared everywhere. And what was the effect of all this upon the nature of American society?

Sociologically, it pulled American life away from the country and into the towns and cities. It changed the whole character of life, as we have already seen, by making us dependent upon machines. It also gave rise to new social ideals. The social prestige of the farmer declined and that of the city-dweller rose, not only in his own estimation but also in the eyes of his country cousin. The latter came to be known as a "hayseed," and newspaper

cartoons poked fun at him as a simpleton. From now on, the common goal of youth's ambition was to be a big business man.

Economically, this new development meant that the country was becoming less democratic. The rapid building of railways has been called an orgy, and this is exactly what it was. Federal, state, and local governments contributed to the glorious feast. From the federal government alone, railway promoters secured free grants of land whose total acreage was roughly four times that of Minnesota — a veritable empire. Many more million acres were given by states, and, in addition, governmental aid was given lavishly in cash, loans, credit, and various kinds of privileges. It was a gigantic transfer of the public domain to private hands. Enormous fortunes were piled up, and the control of most of the transportation system, upon which the very life of the country depended, was concentrated in the hands of a few individuals in the East.

This is but a small part of the new picture. The railway-builders were not the only private interests to gain huge concessions of the country's natural resources — for developmental purposes. The whole trend of business and industry was toward a concentration of wealth and economic control in the hands of a few. This great republic was growing a lusty crop of railroad kings, lumber kings, coal kings, copper kings, steel kings, and oil kings, each possessing a greater revenue and more power than most old-fashioned kings enjoyed in the heyday of royalty. At the same time, but toward the other end of the scale, appeared another class — the vast mass of wage-earners, the proletariat, the economic subjects of those who controlled the nation's machinery of production and distribution. And at the very bottom, the human ash pits of the mighty engine of society, the slums, multiplied. In some respects the relation between the rulers and the ruled was less happy and less natural than in the days of the divine right of kings.

Only too often those who had acquired fortunes regarded these fortunes as their own absolute property to be used in any way they wished so long as they did not transgress the law. Separated by a nexus of stocks and bonds from the mass who were in one way or another dependent upon them, they could not see that they had a responsibility to society for the manner in which they employed their wealth, a responsibility in return for society allowing them to get and keep this wealth.

Politically also, America was becoming less and less a democracy. Big business was entering politics—by the back door. To change the figure of speech, it short-circuited democracy, bringing its powerful influence to bear upon those whom the people had elected, and thereby directing things in its own interests. Jay Cooke was a splendid example of what an enterprising man could do. He was the prize war profiteer. He made many millions by financing the government during the Civil War. With his sanctimonious ways, his expansive personality, and his boundless hospitality, he cast his net around those in political authority, even the chief of them. While General Grant was in the White House, this financial wizard kept him supplied with choice wines and expensive cigars. Grant's administration was notoriously corrupt, but corruption did not cease with his departure from office. It could not cease, if for no other reason than that the tariff was bound to continue it. Whether the economic gospel according to Adam Smith be canonical or apocryphal, its rejection by this country let loose a great corrupting agency. Tampering with the tariff could make or unmake millionaires, and lobbying became a fine and expensive art—an applied and not a pure art. Of state governments, corresponding stories may be told. Such men as Huntington and Leland Stanford, by distributing free railway passes to members of the legislature, by paying their campaign expenses, and by other equally judicious but more personal

gifts, practically bought the legislature of California. A like fate came over city administrations even when the sinister shadow of the boss was not in evidence. Gas, water, electric light and power, and street railway franchises were granted. In plain words, private individuals acquired monopolies of essential services. Perhaps this was right. The public is very intolerant of public ownership and is almost fanatical in its insistence on the superior efficiency of private enterprise. I have no desire to play the heretic by challenging this cardinal doctrine of American theology, but I would like to draw attention to a serious implication that may be hidden in this doctrine. The popular rejection of public ownership for essential monopolies may be interpreted as the partial abdication of democracy. Of course this conclusion may be avoided by placing a limitation upon the meaning of "democracy." It is easy to escape the problems of democracy by dickering with its definition. But to return to the point, though some of these franchises were honestly gained and justly exercised, many were not. How many, it is impossible to say; but their number must have been very large, and this is not surprising. With the new industrial and urban development, necessitating great plants to meet the public needs, immense prizes swam into view and the temptation was just as immense. Here has been a great corrupting influence, like the tariff. Nor are these all the reasons for the short-circuiting of democracy. Perhaps the greatest is to be found in the attitude of the people toward what was going on. It was largely one of apathy, which likewise was very natural. Absorbed in their own material concerns in a society permeated by materialism, and somewhat intoxicated by the feeling of prosperity—material prosperity—they were either bribed or blinded. But some were not. They were those who began to feel the pinch of this plutocratic organization of society.

The spirit of revolt raised its head in both town and

country. There was a proletarian revolt and an agrarian revolt. The former appeared as the labor movement. At first it was far from successful. The early organizations collapsed. Then Samuel Gompers built up the great American Federation of Labor, Mitchell developed the Mine Workers of America, and the powerful railway brotherhoods arose. Strikes, often accompanied by violence, marked the awakening class consciousness of the growing army of wage-earners. As labor girded up its loins and learned how to fight its battles, something was accomplished. Wages were raised, hours were reduced, and, with the assistance of a moderately sympathetic public, legislation was enacted to improve working conditions and to give some measure of physical and economic security to employees. The agrarian revolt expressed itself in various movements—Granger, Populist, and Progressive. Class consciousness was springing up among the farmers. They awoke to their utter dependence on the railways and other organizations that handled their produce until it finally reached the consumer, and the wide spread between what they received and what the consumer paid was to them like a red rag to a bull. Mary Ellen Lease, with her trumpet call to the farmers to “raise less corn and more hell,” was no John the Baptist. Hers was only one of many exasperated voices that were ringing through the West in an angry chorus, denouncing the many varied forms of control that big business was exerting in the country. This strident music, which though rural was hardly rustic, roused echoes in urban centers. Public opinion was stirred and something was done to harness what appeared to be the monster in the land. A bridle was placed upon the railroads in the form of the Interstate Commerce Commission. Legislation tried to do to the trusts what Delilah did to Sampson. Laws were passed to preserve politics from corruption by punishing the corrupters, and, lest thieves break through and steal, the walls of democratic government were

raised and strengthened by reforms in the electoral machinery and by innovations like the initiative, the referendum, and the recall.

Only a limited success attended these revolts. They were balked by a few great practical difficulties. Immigration was one. It crippled the efforts of labor. Indeed a government report states that much of the later immigration was due to the desire of certain Pennsylvania mine-owners to procure a more docile body of workers. Nor is it without significance that the majority of the laborers in the greatest steel works in the country came to be foreign born. A second obstacle lay in the constitution and its interpretation by the courts. Again and again, labor laws and other social legislation were pronounced unconstitutional. Many projected reforms did not reach even this hurdle. Another had stopped them in the beginning. It was the widespread sense of private property, ready to take alarm at any proposal that squinted in its direction. The moment the proletarian or the agrarian revolt became the least bit too radical, it defeated itself by alienating the public sympathy, without which it could achieve nothing. And what is the total result? Great changes have been made, but how deep do they go? They have been little more than palliatives. Our society is organized substantially as it was, with the many under the control of the few. Some still live in hope, but state socialism in this country would appear to be politically impossible, and the farm-labor combination which has recently appeared in various parts of the United States and of Canada seems like a counsel of despair.

The failure of both revolts is in keeping with human experience. Taking society as a whole, over its long history, there has been such a permanent tendency for the few to rule over the many, in one manner or another, that it would appear to be something like a law of nature. Over long periods the many have submitted with little or no question.

At times they have risen to overthrow the few who ruled them, only to find that another few have somehow slipped into the saddle. The frontier movement, while it lasted, provided a unique opportunity for the many to escape into freedom. That opportunity is now gone. The corner stone of American democracy has crumbled under a crushing weight. If democracy of any kind is to survive in this land, can it avoid approximating the type that has been growing in Europe? More and more our population has been herded in cities, where the individual counts for less and less, where only the few may rise to positions of control and the many are doomed to a life of dependence, and where self-government tends to break down under the sheer weight of numbers. And with the passing of our democracy, will not another striking feature of our society likewise pass? How can we retain our spirit of buoyancy and optimism when its mainspring is removed? As the human tide is dammed up in urban centers or suburban districts, the average individual is caught and whirled along by the vast mechanics of what we call civilized existence. If perchance he lifts his eyes from time to time, he may see changes in the city's skyline; and if he ever pauses for meditation, he may dream dreams of new miracles that science may perform; but he cannot have that proud consciousness of himself creating a new life and moulding the boundless future, that consciousness which was the very breath of being to those who turned their faces toward the setting sun. Our atmosphere has lost its peculiar tang, its ozone, and it begins to smell like that of Europe.

But if some virtue has gone out of us, so also has some evil. The ruthless exploitation of the country and its citizens, when economic development was governed by a superhuman and inhuman race after profits, unrestrained by either tradition or morals, is a thing of the past. It cannot be repeated, if only because the natural resources have been pretty well exploited. In the national domain, there

is not much plunder left to be gathered. Also the business leaders of today are less crude than those of a generation ago. They are more enlightened. It is the difference between raw youth and sober maturity. Nor, for all its continued apathy, will public opinion tolerate abuses which once were common. Though the majority are by their very nature incapable of organizing to exercise a continuous control, they can exercise a spasmodic control, and the knowledge of this is part of the wisdom of the new leaders of business. Thus we need not be too gravely concerned over the fact that the foundations of American life have been shifting and changing so that they bear a growing resemblance to those of European life. But this is looking only at the negative side. As our society, having lost its dynamic character, settles down to a more static existence and even hardens into classes, though not with the rigidity which is declining in the Old World, we may develop, and we are already developing, some new and positive virtues.

The successful few of the Gilded Age, having amassed wealth, faced the problem of what to do with it; and, like Adam and Eve when they had eaten of the forbidden fruit, they became conscious of their nakedness. In their embarrassment, they turned to Europe, the home of culture in western civilization. There they found what they lacked, and the result of their discovery was both amusing and pathetic. It was also very natural. Having plundered the New World of its material resources, they began to plunder the Old World of its cultural resources, its literary and artistic treasures. But they did not understand that there is possession and possession. Their money enabled them to acquire these things in a physical but not in a spiritual sense, and, as a consequence, they staged a rather vulgar show. A few of finer sensibilities were disgusted by such blatancy and sought salvation by surrendering themselves, by a servile imitation of the leisured classes of Europe. Then, as American wealth grew older and mel-

lower, a new vision arose. Those who were in pursuit of culture began to see that it can be acquired neither by purchase nor by mimicry, that this elusive quality is not an artificial flower but the living flower of a mature civilization. With the dawn of this vision, America began to come of age. The art galleries and museums of this country are ceasing to be storehouses of dead treasures and are developing as live centers of artistic and intellectual creation. The lavish spending of money all over this country in the cultivation of real music recalls the splendid patronage of Italian rulers in the great days of the Renaissance. Another sign of maturity is the vigorous awakening to a realization that this country is an integral part of the great world, and the earnest effort to grasp its perplexities. The faith of our fathers, our wholly American faith in the Holy American Trinity of Change and More and Faster, is yielding before the advance of skepticism, or rather of a new and yet old religion, the religion of all civilized people—the search after Quality. Culture is growing in America as people are finding the emptiness of life on a merely material plane and the fullness of life on a higher plane. It is now a real growth, a native growth, and not just a new kind of graft.

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