DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA.

BY

ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE.

TRANSLATED BY

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EDITED, WITH NOTES,

THE TRANSLATION REVISED AND IN GREAT PART REWRITTEN, AND THE ADDITIONS MADE TO THE RECENT PARIS EDITIONS NOW FIRST TRANSLATED,

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ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE SECOND PART.

THE Americans have a democratic state of society, which has naturally suggested to them certain laws and certain political manners. It has also created in their minds many feelings and opinions which were unknown in the old aristocratic societies of Europe. It has destroyed or modified the old relations of men to each other, and has established new ones. The aspect of civil society has been as much altered as the face of the political world.

I have treated of the former subject in the work which I published, five years ago, upon American Democracy; the latter is the object of the present book. These two Parts complete each other, and form but a single work.

But I must warn the reader immediately against an error which would be very prejudicial to me. Because I attribute so many different effects to the principle of equality, it might be inferred that I consider this principle as the only cause of everything that takes place in our day. This

would be attributing to me a very narrow view of things.

A multitude of the opinions, sentiments, and instincts which belong to our times owe their origin to circumstances which have nothing to do with the principle of equality, or are even hostile to it. Thus, taking the United States for example, I could easily prove that the nature of the country, the origin of its inhabitants, the religion of the early settlers, their acquired knowledge, their previous habits, have exercised, and still do exercise, independently of democracy, an immense influence upon their modes of thought and feeling. Other causes, equally independent of the principle of equality, would be found in Europe, and would explain much of what is passing there.

I recognize the existence and the efficiency of all these various causes; but my subject does not lead me to speak of them. I have not undertaken to point out the origin and nature of all our inclinations and all our ideas; I have only endeavored to show how far both of them are affected by the equality of men's conditions.

As I am firmly convinced that the democratic revolution which we are now beholding is an irresistible fact, against which it would be neither desirable nor prudent to contend, some persons perhaps may be surprised that, in the course of this book, I have often applied language of strong censure to the democratic communities which this

revolution has created. The simple reason is, that precisely because I was not an opponent of democracy, I wished to speak of it with all sincerity. Men will not receive the truth from their enemies, and it is very seldom offered to them by their friends; on this very account, I have frankly uttered it. I believed that many persons would take it upon themselves to inform men of the benefits which they might hope to receive from the establishment of equality, whilst very few would venture to point out from afar the dangers with which it would be attended. It is principally towards these dangers, therefore, that I directed my gaze; and, believing that I had clearly discerned what they are, it would have been cowardice to say nothing about them.

I hope the same impartiality will be found in this second work which people seemed to observe in its predecessor. Placed between the conflicting opinions which divide my countrymen, I have endeavored for the time to stifle in my own bosom the sympathy or the aversion that I felt for either. If the readers of my book find in it a single phrase intended to flatter either of the great parties which have agitated our country, or any one of the petty factions which in our day harass and weaken it, let them raise their voices and accuse me.

The subject which I wished to cover by my investigations is immense; for it includes most of the feelings and opinions produced by the new

condition of the world's affairs. Such a subject certainly exceeds my strength, and in the treatment of it I have not been able to satisfy myself. But though I could not reach the object at which I aimed, my readers will at least do me the justice to believe, that I conceived and followed out the undertaking in a spirit which rendered me worthy of success.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICE OF DE TOCQUEVILLE.

THE family of Clerel, from which M. de Tocqueville was descended, belongs to the nobility of France, and has been established for centuries in that peninsula, forming the modern department of La Manche, which projects from the coast of Normandy into the English Channel, and has Cherbourg at its extremity. Here they possessed with seignorial rights the village and lands of Tocqueville, whence they derived their territorial designation. The title of Count, formally bestowed by Louis XVIII. on the father of Alexis, was only the acknowledgment of an ancient distinction. The chateau that formed the family residence consisted at first of a huge stone tower, now of great antiquity, which was enlarged in the seventeenth century by appending to it a quadrangle, that served both for the residence of the family and for farm buildings. An old "feudal weathercock" surmounted the great tower; and a large dove-cot, now tenantless, still marks the ancient right of the lord of the manor to keep his pigeons at the expense of his peasantry. "A stain over the door indicates the spot from which the Revolution of '93 tore the escutcheon of the family."

Count de Tocqueville, the father of Alexis, came into possession of this estate at an early age, and married Mademoiselle de Rosambo, a granddaughter of the celebrated M. de Malesherbes. This marriage took place in 1793,

shortly after the execution of Louis XVI. had caused M. de Malesherbes to retire to his country-seat, at which place the wedding was celebrated. Only six months afterwards, the illustrious old man himself, — for so he is entitled to be called after his courageous defence of his king, — and his whole family, consisting of his daughter, his granddaughter, Madame de Chateaubriand, and her husband, a brother of the celebrated statesman and author, were seized and sent as prisoners to Paris; where, on the 22d of April, 1794, they were all guillotined together. Count de Tocqueville and his wife were arrested at about the same time; but after remaining a long time in prison, they were at length liberated by the fall of Robespierre. They then returned to his family mansion, and as they never emigrated, they were allowed to retain their estate, where they lived in dignified seclusion most of the time till the restoration of the Bourbons. Then the Count reaped some reward for his consistent and uncompromising conduct and opinions as an ardent royalist, being appointed successively Prefect at Metz, at Amiens, and at Versailles, and finally created a peer of France. Late in life, stimulated perhaps by the success of his son, the Count became an author, and achieved no small distinction, his "Philosophical History of the Reign of Louis XV." being one of the most valuable productions of the modern school of French historians.

These particulars respecting the parentage and family of De Tocqueville are interesting, as they show what were the influences under which he received his early training, and which undoubtedly colored his sentiments and opinions throughout life. He was, so to speak, born and bred an aristocrat and a loyalist, and as such he witnessed with mournful but dignified composure the rapid and overwhelming development of democracy in his day, which he knew full well would finally sweep away every vestige of those distinctions which had constituted the

local grandeur of his house. What others would merely have brooded over as a misfortune, became to him an object of philosophical study; and, far from seeking to limit or repress, he sought only to direct and chasten, that irresistible growth of opinion and march of public affairs which are so swiftly levelling all inequalities of condition, and establishing the principle of the sovereignty of the people as the sole element in the government of this world's affairs. He came to America in order to study the phenomenon where it had existed the longest, and had been most freely developed under favorable circumstances. In the Introduction to his work, he says: "The whole book has been written under the impression of a kind of religious terror, produced in the author's mind by the view of that irresistible revolution which has advanced for centuries in spite of every obstacle, and which is still advancing in the midst of the ruins it has caused." This personal interest in his subject was unquestionably one great cause of the ardor and the success with which he studied and analyzed it; and this interest, as we have seen, arose from the circumstances of his birth and the position and history of his family.

Alexis Charles Henri Clerel de Tocqueville, the third son of his parents, was born at Paris, whither the family had gone upon a visit, on the 29th of July, 1805. While yet an infant, he was carried home to Tocqueville in a pannier slung across a horse, with his nurse on a pillion, the facilities for travelling in those days, in districts at any considerable distance from the capital, being of a very primitive character. He does not seem to have received a very regular or finished education, being trained chiefly at home, under the instruction of an Abbé Lesueur, to whom he was much attached, and afterwards at the College of Metz, where he began his classical studies while his father was Prefect of that city. There he did not acquire any distinction in the classics, but paid great attention to writing French

prose, and in 1822 gained the first prize in rhetoric. But the most effective education which he had was an unconscious one under the quiet influences of home, where the counsels and example of his parents formed his manners, and developed in him a nice sense of honor and strong religious sentiment and conviction. On his father's death, in 1856, he wrote to one of his intimate friends, "If I am worth anything, I owe it above all to my education, to those examples of uprightness, simplicity, and honor which I found about me in coming into the world and as I advanced in life. I owe my parents much more than mere existence."

Having determined to enter the legal profession, he completed the study of law at Paris in 1826, and then set out upon a tour through Italy and Sicily, accompanied by his next elder brother, the Baron Edward de Tocqueville. A small portion of the copious memoranda which he made during this journey has been published in his Memoirs; it relates to the island of Sicily and its inhabitants, and is chiefly curious as showing how the philosophical bent of his mind turned, even in early manhood, to observation of the social and intellectual state of a people, as affected by their laws and political institutions.

From this delightful experience of Italian travel he was recalled by a letter from home, in April, 1827, announcing that he had been appointed *Juge Auditeur*, a sort of deputy or assistant prosecuting officer, attached to the lower courts at Versailles, of which town his father was then Prefect. It was the first round on the ladder of advancement in the legal magistracy, the higher steps remaining to be taken according as self-achieved distinction or interest with the ministry might in time secure his promotion. The office was one which might be held nearly as a sinecure, or to which the incumbent could cause regular duties to be attached. De Tocqueville was industrious

and ambitious, and therefore solicited and obtained active employment. He soon displayed solid rather than brilliant talents, which, with his grave manner of speaking, caused more than one of the presiding judges to foretell his high advancement in the profession. But the strong tendency to generalization which he even then betrayed, and his aversion to technicalities and details, rendered it doubtful in the minds of some of his friends whether this prophecy would hold good. Among his colleagues at the bar he found M. Gustave de Beaumont, with whom he soon contracted a close intimacy, that continued throughout life. With this congenial associate, whatever time could be rescued from judicial labors was soon devoted to more attractive studies than that of the law, especially to those connected with general history and politics. Already the young friends aspired to become philosophical statesmen and to guide the helm of state.

These studies and day-dreams were soon broken by an untoward event for De Tocqueville, — the Revolution of 1830. All his philosophy had not overcome his early predilections as a legitimist, and only with great reluctance did he give in his adhesion to the new dynasty. The event contributed further to wean him from his profession, as he could no longer count upon his father's influence at court to facilitate his promotion. "Every day he became more and more convinced that France, in irresistibly drifting into democracy, was also drifting into its perils. He determined to visit the only great country in which those dangers have been conquered, and where perfect equality reigns side by side with liberty. He communicated his scheme to his late colleague at Versailles, then *Substitut du Procureur du Roi* in Paris, who was charmed with the proposal. Obstacles, however, stood in their way: as magistrates they both required leave of absence, and a legitimate cause for obtaining it. At that time, as is always

the case immediately after a revolution, all innovation was held in honor, and a reform of real but of secondary importance (that of the prisons) attracted public attention. A penitentiary system, which had proved successful in the United States, was talked of. The two young magistrates presented to the then Minister of the Interior, the Comte de Montalivet, a paper in which, after setting forth the question, they offered to study it on the spot, if they might be sent on an official mission. It was granted to them; and the Minister of Justice having consented, the two friends set out with a leave obtained in due form. It has often been said that this mission was the cause of Alexis de Tocqueville's expedition. It was in truth only the pretext. His real and long premeditated object was to study the customs and institutions of American society."

Having arrived at New York on the 10th of May, 1831, De Tocqueville devoted about a year to travelling in the United States, to observations connected with the subject of his formal mission, and to other inquiries of a more general nature, which were to furnish the material for the great work which he was now meditating. While journeying in the depth of a severe winter through our South-western States, he was exposed to unaccustomed privations and hardships, which operated hardly on a constitution originally slender, and probably laid the seeds of a malady which was ultimately to prove fatal. Returning to Europe in the spring of 1832, his attention was necessarily first directed to the preparation of a report to the Minister of the Interior on the subject of his mission. This work, the joint composition of his friend and himself, soon appeared under the title of "The Penitentiary System in the United States, and its Application in France," and had good success. It passed through three editions, was translated both into German and English, and has shaped much of the subsequent legislation of France upon the subject.

Even before this report was completed, De Tocqueville had quitted the legal profession forever. De Beaumont, having refused to speak on an occasion when the official part which he had to play appeared to him discreditable, was summarily dismissed from office; and his friend resented this procedure so highly, that he immediately sent in his own resignation. He was probably glad of an opportunity to break off all connection with a government for which he had never entertained either sympathy or respect, to quit at the same time a profession which he had always disliked, and to give his whole time and effort to the preparation of the work on which his thoughts had so long been deeply engaged. The two years from 1832 to 1834, which were probably the happiest of his life, were devoted to the composition of the First Part, which, after being rejected by one publisher and accepted only with great reluctance by another, appeared in January, 1835. Even if it had not been successful, the labor bestowed upon it would have been its own exceeding great reward. Secluding himself during these two years from society, spending the daytime, in order to avoid interruption, in a lodging the secret of which was known to very few of his friends, sustained by the flattering dreams which always visit a young author and by the attachment which he had already formed to the lady whom he was soon to marry, he gave himself up to the intoxication which generally attends the continuous creative action of mind. The success of the work was great, but it was no more than he had anticipated.

"Since Montesquieu, there has been nothing like it," said Royer-Collard; and on a subsequent occasion, M. de Barante added, "Twenty years later, we repeat the same judgment." It has passed through fourteen editions at Paris, and has been translated into nearly all the languages of modern Europe. In 1836, the French Institute adjudged

to its author the Monthyon prize, which is given annually for the work of the highest moral utility that has been produced during the year; and in this case, to mark a special distinction, the prize was increased from 6,000 francs, its usual amount, to 8,000. A year later, De Tocqueville was chosen a member of the Academy of the Moral and Political Sciences; and in 1841, he became one of the forty members of the French Academy, the highest literary honor that a Frenchman can attain. This last distinction was well deserved, for considered only as a specimen of refined and idiomatic French prose, evincing a careful study of the inimitable style of Pascal, but betraying also an imitation of the curt and sententious manner of Montesquieu, the book is fairly entitled to take rank as a classic in the literature of France. In respect to doctrine, it was welcomed both by the friends and opponents of democracy; by the former, because it points out so clearly the rapid development and future universal dominion of democratic principles; by the latter, because it shows with equal clearness the dangers incident to this progress, and the ease with which such dominion degenerates into a tyranny even more hateful than the despotism of one man. Perhaps the greatest merit of the author consists in the resolute impartiality with which he looks at the subject on all its sides, and shows that the welfare of a nation under democratic rule can be maintained only on condition of such a union of general intelligence and religious faith with submissiveness to constitutional restraint, as is rarely exemplified in the history of mankind.

In the same year in which his book became so generally popular, he married Miss Mary Motley, an English lady without fortune, but who united those qualities of character and intellect which rendered her, during an unbroken union of twenty-five years, his best companion, counsellor, and friend. He often remarked that his marriage, though cen-

sured by those prudent friends who look only to the contribution which a wife is first able to make to her husband's pecuniary or social position in the world, had proved to be the most sensible action of his life. About the same time, he visited England, whither his literary renown had preceded him, and where he consequently received a cordial welcome into the best circles of literary and aristocratic society. The character of De Tocqueville's mind, in several respects, approached more nearly to the English than the French standard of excellence; and he soon contracted an intimate friendship with many eminent Englishmen, on frequent intercourse with whom depended much of the happiness of his subsequent career. His personal qualities, indeed, were such as to make him an object of strong attachment to all his friends. An Englishman who knew him well says of him, that "the extreme delicacy of his physical organization, the fastidious refinement of his tastes, and the charm of his manners, made him the very type of a high-bred gentleman."

His mother died shortly after his return to France, and then, through a family arrangement with his two older brothers, he obtained possession of the paternal estate at Tocqueville, and made it his permanent residence. The old chateau was in bad repair, — "full of associations and ruins," says his French biographer; but the country around is rich and pleasant, and the upper part of the building commands a magnificent view of the sea-coast and the English Channel. Here De Tocqueville devoted himself to the management of the estate, for which his knowledge of agriculture did not very well qualify him, to the preparation of the Second Part of his work, and to cultivating that acquaintance with his country neighbors, on which he was to depend for election to the Chamber of Deputies, and thus for an introduction to political life. To this object his ambition was now directed; he longed for an opportunity to carry

out in practice some of the theoretical views which he had so nobly developed; and perhaps his success in abstract speculation made him over-estimate his fitness for the practical management of affairs.

The Second Part of his work, which treats of the influence of democracy upon the action of mind, and upon feelings and manners, was published in 1840, and its success was decided, though not so brilliant and general as that of its predecessor. The subject, of course, had now less of novelty to recommend it, and the treatment of it, though even more elaborate in thought and expression than the First Part, abounded too much in abstract speculation and acute philosophical analysis for the taste of ordinary readers. The year before it was published, its author offered himself as a candidate to his own district for election to the Chamber of Deputies. His relative, Count Molé, then Prime Minister of France, gave orders, without consultation with him, that all the influence of the government should be exerted in his favor. Fearful lest he should be thus committed to a support of the ministerial policy, De Tocqueville wrote back with some haughtiness to decline the proffered aid. The Minister replied with considerable spirit, but with politeness and good sense, remarking that he had not intended to impose any obligation, that isolation is not independence, that the party of government were acting together, not from interested motives, but from sincere conviction, in defence of the institutions of the country, and that their assistance, as it was not desired, should be promptly withdrawn. The candidacy of De Tocqueville, thus deprived of government aid, proved unsuccessful; his neighbors could not be made to believe that, although he belonged by birth and social position to the nobility, he did not share the feelings and the prejudices of his order, but was really the friend and the expounder of democracy. The popular opinion respecting

him was well expressed by his opponent, a retired manufacturer, who cried out lustily, "Beware! He is going to bring back his aristocratic pigeons into their old dove-cot." Two years afterwards, when his temper and principles had come to be better understood in the neighborhood, he was elected by a triumphant majority to the Chamber, and he continued to represent his district thoughout his parliamentary career.

That career lasted only twelve years, up to December, 1851, when Louis Napoleon's *coup d'état* destroyed the constitutional liberties of France, and De Tocqueville, unwilling to take an oath of fidelity to one whom he regarded as a usurper, retired altogether to private life. Up to February, 1848, he was a member of the opposition, and contended strongly, though without personal animosity, against Guizot's ministry; after the Revolution, he joined the party of the moderate republicans, who, with Cavaignac for a leader, strove gallantly, though with only faint hopes of success, against the mad schemes of the radicals on the one hand, and the intriguing ambition of the future Emperor on the other. But it must be owned that his mind was of too fine a texture, his principles too pure and unwavering, and his disposition for abstract thought and analytical investigation too strongly marked, to allow him to succeed in the strife of parties or the tournaments of parliamentary debate. He commanded the confidence of his friends and the respect of his opponents; but he was not put forward into the front rank in battle, nor elevated to the chief seat in council. The best portions of his parliamentary labors were his reports on the abolition of colonial slavery, on prison reform, and on the administration of Algeria, a country which he had twice visited, and whose affairs he thoroughly understood. When the new Republic was settling into a calm, he became a member of the Committee appointed to frame a new Constitution for France,

and endeavored in vain to induce his colleagues to adopt the principle of a division of the legislature into two houses. Louis Napoleon understood his value arising from his weight of character, and endeavored to secure his aid by offering him considerable attention. But the bribe of a usurper was coldly declined. After dining with the President on one occasion at the Elysée, De Tocqueville remarked on leaving, "I have been dining with a man who believes in his own hereditary right to the crown as firmly as Charles X. himself."

"One chance remained to avert the final catastrophe. It was possible that the President might still be content to accept a constitutional position; to govern by responsible ministers, who hoped to effect a revision of the constitution by legal means. At any rate, to abandon or to oppose him was to compel him to resort to an immediate *coup d'état*. On this principle, M. Odilon Barrot and the leading liberals formed an administration on the 2d June, 1849, in which M. de Tocqueville took the important office of Minister of Foreign Affairs. It would be inappropriate here to enter upon the political transactions in which he was engaged. As he said, on quitting his office four months later, — 'I have contributed to maintain order on the 13th of June, to preserve the general peace, to improve the relations of France and England. These are recollections which give some value to my passage through affairs. I need hardly say anything to you of the cause which led to the fall of the Cabinet. The President chooses to govern alone, and to have mere agents and creatures in his ministers. Perhaps he is right. I don't examine that question, but we were not the men to serve him on these terms.'"

After leaving the ministry, as his health was considerably impaired, he went to Italy, and spent the winter at Sorrento, engaged in his literary undertakings. On his return, he took little share in the proceedings of the

Assembly, except to draw up the celebrated Report on the Revision of the Constitution, which was presented on the 8th of July, 1851. It was the ablest of his parliamentary productions, and the presentation of it may be regarded as the closing act of his political life.

Yet he was present in the struggle, if it can be called one, of the 2d of December, 1851, and, in company with about 230 other representatives, signed a paper deposing the President from all authority, and requiring the High Court of Justice to proceed to judgment against him and his accomplices. It was a bootless proceeding, except for the purpose of putting on record the protest of the legislature; for Louis Napoleon immediately arrested the whole party, and the High Court of Justice too, and sent them to prison, whence most of them were released after only two days' confinement. De Tocqueville drew up a temperate narrative of the proceeding, which he published in *The Times* newspaper, England being then the only country in Europe where such a document could be printed with impunity. Then, with a sad heart, he went back to his residence in the country, to give the few years of life which remained to intercourse with his friends, to the care of his estate, and to one other literary effort in which he was deeply interested.

This project, as originally conceived, was that of a new history of the first French Revolution, with especial reference to the causes which had produced it in the preceding state of the country and the government. It was not to be so much a narrative of events, as a philosophical inquiry into the nature of the circumstances which precede and originate great changes in the constitution of society. Perhaps it would have been better if he had acted earlier upon the conviction which he expressed in January, 1851, in a letter to a friend. "It has occurred to me a hundred times," he says, "that, if I am to leave any traces of my passage

through the world, it will be far more by my writings than by my actions." His subject required much research, not only in the great public libraries of the state, but among the archives of the old provincial administrations, especially in that of Tours; and to facilitate these researches, as well as to benefit his health, he resided for some months in 1854 at St. Cyr, near Tours. The next year, he visited Germany, and learned the language of the country, that he might be able to consult original documents in German. The first part of his work was published in 1856, entitled *L'Ancien Régime et la Revolution*, and was received with decided tokens of general approbation. It was translated into several languages, and commended in all the leading journals of Europe. Yet it was only a fragment, as the whole work would probably have filled three volumes. Two chapters only of the second volume were found at his death in so finished a state as to warrant their publication in his "Memoirs and Correspondence." The manuscript preparations for the remainder of the work were very extensive, but not in a state fit for presentation to the public.

Among his other unfinished works was one of considerable length, on the "Establishment of the English in India." His pen was always active, but he was chary of publication, except of a work which might aid some important object, or add to its author's fame; he could not tolerate bookmaking. Hence, though he left a great amount of manuscript, it is probable that only a small portion of it will ever see the light. One important fragment of contemporary history, however, will probably appear as soon as the French government can tolerate it, and delicacy to surviving individuals will permit; it is entitled "Souvenirs," and relates chiefly to public affairs in France in 1848–49. Some very interesting portions of his correspondence, also, are as yet kept back, as their appearance might irritate the government or wound the feelings of persons in private life.

The health of De Tocqueville had never been robust, and ever after 1850, at least, when he was compelled to spend the winter at Sorrento, he was affected by pulmonary disease, though it appears to have escaped the observation both of himself and his medical attendants. But in the summer of 1858 he broke a bloodvessel, and showed other unequivocal symptoms of the fatal malady. In the autumn, as his strength had rapidly declined, his physicians required him to go to the South of France for the winter. Though very reluctant to leave home, he prepared to obey; and having made large provision of books, manuscripts, and other materials for the completion of his work, he set out for Cannes, where he arrived early in November, 1858. He was accompanied by his wife and his brothers, and was visited in Provençe by several of his friends. With others he kept up a frequent correspondence, and even labored at times upon his work during the winter, though it was evident to every eye but his own that he was sinking fast. Christian faith, which had always governed his convictions and regulated his life, supported him in his last moments. Having received the sacraments according to the rites of that Church to which he was strongly attached, he died on the 16th of April, 1859, at the age of fifty-four. In conformity with his own request, his remains were carried to Tocqueville, and in the village cemetery there a plain wooden cross marks his grave.

THE END.

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