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The Tendency of Governments toward Democracy

It is the fundamental principle, which underlies all governments, that man will ever seek after that means which will add to his own true and substantial happiness.

The query naturally arises what form of government will add the greatest happiness to man in his different epochs of civilization.

According to the writers of antiquity they recognize three different forms, and the writers of the 19th century recognize the same; viz., Monarchy, Aristocracy, and Democracy; and all others are corruptious or may be deduced to these three forms.

Monarchy is one in which the power is vested in a single individual: Aristocracy one in which the "many" are subjected to the few: Democracy one in which the power emanates from the people.

It is in this latter form of government that the rich and the poor, and all other classes are equal in the right of life, liberty and property:

it is here that one sprung from a lowly couch may attain the most exalted position within the gift of the people, and here only where you find the ruler and the subject one and the same. The Sovereign of such a government is supreme in this power only so far as the people may determine: he is the servant of the people, delegated by them to guard and protect their several interests. It is freedom's chart that directs and rules the destinies of a Democracy. From creation's earliest dawn we can trace the different forms of government to that which Sidney and Lock declare to be the only legitimate one, "the consent of the people". History carries us back to the ante diluvian period where we find Patriarchal governments scattered here and there through the then known world like so many oases in the desert. Wherever the ^{child} ~~lips~~ the name "Father" there we discover the primitive form of government. Among Savage races, who are as yet, but

children in respect to civilization, we discern this same form to exist. This form is a corruption of the first recognized one, and is essential to the happiness and prosperity of the savage, who must be ruled by force. Only an absolute monarchy and no other form is adapted to rule a half civilized people, as they must first learn how to be governed, before they can wield the sceptre themselves.

They must look upon the ruler with almost reverential awe.

Having this principle, how to be governed, they are no longer willing to be sacrificed upon an altar dedicated to some god, or to offer themselves as willing sacrifices upon the grave of their former despot, but they will demand a voice in the councils of the nation. Thus a limited monarchy or an aristocracy is established in which the few govern the many. As it is the law of the universe to advance so is it in reference to man's civilization.

The history of England, France, Russia, Spain and other nations

is a living monument to certify to the ever advancement of nations toward a more liberal form of government. Some nations have not made the advancement that others have, but that force, which is no latent, will sooner or later burst forth with renewed energy and impell them onward in the course mapped out for them.

Russia one of the oldest governments, yet, comparatively, little known concerning her early history, has within the past century made mighty strides; we might say mighty flights, as civilization is no longer content to march, but must be borne on wings. She no longer groans beneath the accursed institution of serfdom. They, who knew once only how to obey, will in turn demand to be obeyed. The air of liberty has been wafted from Poland throughout Russia and has found many a firm resting place within that vast domain. Liberty, which was once bounded on the east by despotic Russia, has broke down the barrier and entered into every nook and corner of that empire, until

every Russian can call himself a
freeman.

England a nation, that boasts of her
liberal government, has advanced
and is still advancing in liberalism.
Until 1264 she was ruled by the
nobility, since then not only have
the "Patricians"; but also the
plebeians have had a voice in the
affairs of the nation, though somewhat
limited. But at the present day the
unrepresented of England, headed
by John Bright and other great
reformists, are creating a great
revolution in that aristocratic
nation, and never will there be
a calm until all shall realize
their individuality and feel that
they acknowledge no superior
save their God.

The Bourbon throne of Spain, that has
been slumbering, as it were, for years
over a burning volcano, has fallen
to pieces by its own weight, to be
supplanted by a limited monarchy,
if not by a Democracy.

The dynasty of Napoleon is tottering
to its very centre, being only a
creature of time.

Every battle that has been fought
within the past century has had
its tendency toward Democracy.
Judging from the Past and Present,
we can say with a celebrated writer
that, "the great harmonious combi-
nation of aims, and tendency in
which consists the future, can
alone be realized in Liberty based
upon equality; in one word, in a
real genuine Democracy."

Commencement Oration of Vincent Bierbower, Class of 1866

Transcribed by Tristan Deveney, May 2008

Edited by Sarah-Hazel Jennings, June 2008

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[unsigned]