

SOCIAL PROGRESS
IN
CONTEMPORARY EUROPE

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FOREWORD

IN this little volume an attempt has been made to gather up and to explain with succinctness those aspects of European social development since the later eighteenth century which by common acceptance seem to possess enduring significance. The subject is as limitless as it is inviting, and in the present survey of it many things of substantial importance have, of necessity, been passed with the barest allusion, or, at the most, with an exposition which is not more than introductory. Not a few topics of interest, I am well aware, have failed so much as to be mentioned. Effort has been made, however, to lay emphasis upon fundamentals and to make clear at least some of the principal developments by which, within the past hundred and twenty-five years, the state of European society has been made what it now is. The reader who may desire to pursue further any of the subjects here touched upon is referred to a selected bibliography which appears at the close. In the chapters which are concerned with the growth of popular political institutions I have utilized a number of passages from a forthcoming volume entitled *The Governments of Europe*.

FREDERIC AUSTIN OGG.

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS,
April 10, 1912.

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CHAPTER I

POINTS OF VIEW

THAT the European world of to-day is fundamentally unlike the European world of St. Francis and of Frederick Barbarossa, and even that of Martin Luther and of Queen Elizabeth, is a sufficiently familiar fact. How enormous a proportion of the changes by which this difference has been brought about has fallen within a comparatively recent period — within the past hundred or hundred and twenty-five years — is not so commonly understood. In the eighteenth century, and far into the nineteenth, even the most advanced of European countries presented aspects, especially on the side of social and industrial economy, that were essentially mediæval, and many indeed of the transitions and readjustments by which the life of Europe, as that of all portions of the civilized world, has been made what it is to-day have fallen within the memory of men still living. The eighteenth century was itself an era of remarkable change. Indeed, the scope of eighteenth century speculation and invention is only beginning adequately to be recognized. It remained, however, for the nineteenth to carry forward with greatly accelerated speed, and in entirely new directions, the transformations that had been begun, and to work out conclusive answers to scores of problems which in the earlier period had been but dimly discerned.

When one undertakes a comparison of the Europe of George III. and of Louis XVI. with the Europe of George V.

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CHAPTER I

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When one undertakes a comparison of the Europe of George III. and of Louis XVI. with the Europe of George V.

and of William II. the differences which are likely to impress themselves first of all are those that relate to the number, extent, organization, and grouping of nations. Within the space of a century and a quarter two great states, the German Empire and the kingdom of Italy, have been built up from autonomous and discordant political elements; Austria, ejected from the German federation, has become an independent nation and, in conjunction with Hungary, a power of the first rank; France has been brought from absolutism to republicanism; Belgium has been converted from a dependency of Austria into a sovereign nation; the three Scandinavian states, Denmark, Sweden, and Norway, have finally, in our own day, become entirely disassociated; and in the southeast the rule of the Turk has been vastly restricted, while upon the soil which he once possessed there has sprung up a cluster of small but promising and not unimportant states.

After all, however, these are only a few of the changes by which, within the period mentioned, the European world has been reconstituted. Other changes of divers sorts have contributed much more directly to that amelioration of social conditions which comprises perhaps the nineteenth century's principal claim to distinction. A fundamental prerequisite of substantial progress must always be the growth of independent, compact, and powerful states, but all history goes to show that by such development alone the lot of men is not of necessity much improved. The changes by which the past hundred and twenty-five years have been given character are preëminently social, intellectual, legal, and industrial — the breaking-down of the barriers which once separated classes of men, the abolition of privilege, the extension of political power to the masses, the establishment of equality before the law, the upbuilding of popular education, the freeing of thought and of the press, the liberating of religious opinion, the application of scientific discovery to the problems

of human existence, the invention of machinery and the introduction of the use of steam-power, the placing of public safeguards about the conditions of labor, the extension and re-adaptation of philanthropy, the provision of agencies for the care of the people's savings, the establishment of systems of insurance against sickness, unemployment, and old age, and a multiplicity of other more or less far-reaching innovations in the interest of the public weal. There is not a country of Europe in which the past four or five generations have not been productive of considerable development in respect to many or all of these things, and no history of the nineteenth century can be adjudged in any wise adequate which does not assign to them a larger permanent importance than to war, diplomacy, or court affairs.

It is the purpose of this book to explain the origins and character of some of the changes that have been enumerated. The ground to be traversed in point of time is the century and a quarter which has elapsed since the uprising of 1789 in France. The subject to be covered is "social progress." The term "social," susceptible of numerous definitions, must here be interpreted very broadly to comprehend everything that bears with any degree of directness upon the status and opportunity of the average man in the society in which he lives. It partakes of the political, the legal, the intellectual, the religious, and the economic. Similarly, the term "progress" must be accorded a liberal construction. It is often by no means easy to say wherein progress consists, and at the best the term, like the thing for which it stands, is largely relative. What is progress to-day may be reaction to-morrow, and what by one person is considered progress may by another be considered retrogression.

The purpose in hand, however, is to gather up and follow at some length those threads of recent politics, legislation, industry, and reform upon which have been strung noteworthy benefits for the ordinary member of society. Wherein, and

to what extent, are the conditions amidst which the average European of to-day lives and works more conducive to welfare and happiness than were the conditions surrounding his ancestors of the third and fourth, and even of the first and second, generations removed? This is the query with which it is proposed to approach the social and economic maze of contemporary Europe. No final or complete answer is to be expected. No facts are more elusive than those which pertain to the homeliest concerns of everyday existence, and the range of the inquiry that can be undertaken here is, of necessity, severely restricted. Certain broad conclusions may, however, be arrived at, and those conclusions ought to possess no mere academic interest. For a variety of reasons they should be of practical concern hardly less to the American than to the European. It may be maintained that, on the whole, Americans cherish fewer prejudices respecting foreign peoples and are able to assume a more appreciative attitude toward them than any other great national group of men. Our newspapers and magazines are filled with foreign news and discussions of foreign affairs. Hundreds of thousands of Europeans land at our ports every year and settle among our people, and through the immigration problem alone we are being compelled to inquire closely into the antecedent conditions of our newcomers, and therefore into the manner of life of a very large proportion of the population of Europe. Industrial changes, problems of capital and labor, land ownership and control, conditions of everyday life, opportunities and effects of education, the various forms of social propaganda, the care of the criminal and dependent classes — all these things, and many more, are of interest to us, whether viewed in Great Britain, in Germany, or in Russia. They are interesting in themselves, and doubly so by reason of the fact that in many respects we have our own similar problems and stand in need of the practical experience of other and older peoples.

CHAPTER II

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY BACKGROUND

To the end that the direction, extent, and character of the social development of Europe since the French Revolution may adequately be measured, it is essential that certain fundamental aspects of the European situation in the eighteenth century be emphasized at the outset. For present purposes these aspects may be grouped under five heads, according as they relate to (1) population, (2) the mechanical appliances of civilization, (3) government, (4) social strata and privilege, and (5) economic condition.

In the first place, it is to be observed that in the eighteenth century the inhabitants of Europe were both very much fewer than they are to-day and very differently distributed. One of the things for which the past hundred years has been especially remarkable is the growth of populations that has taken place within the period. The aggregate population of Europe in 1800 has been estimated at 150,000,000 and that in 1900 at 330,000,000, which means that for every five persons living at the time of the establishment of Napoleon's consulate there were eleven at the time of the death of Queen Victoria. The first of European censuses whose results are of much value were those taken in Great Britain and in France in 1801. The French census, taken at the instance of Napoleon, and covering, in addition to France proper, the territory of Alsace-Lorraine, showed a population of 27,350,000, which (leaving out of account the extremely uncertain populations of Russia and Turkey) was at the time the largest in Europe. The population of Great Britain and Ireland, estimated in 1789 at 14,000,000, was shown by the census

of 1801 to be 16,345,646, being exceeded by the populations of France, Austria-Hungary, Prussia, and Italy. With the exception of France, virtually every European country has doubled, or more than doubled, its population since the period mentioned. The population of France has been increased by less than half, being, in 1906, 39,252,267. But that of the United Kingdom rose by 1911 to 45,216,665, and that of the territories comprising present-day Germany came up by 1910 to 64,896,881 — in neither instance far short of a tripling. In 1800 the number of inhabitants per square mile was 134 in France and 113 in Germany. In 1908 the number in France was 189, in Germany 303. The population density of Germany is now substantially equal to that of Italy, is approaching that of Great Britain, and is materially exceeded in Europe only by that of Belgium and Holland.

Another phase of population change has been that involved in the growth of towns and cities. In most European countries the nineteenth century was a noteworthy period of urban development. In 1801 England and Wales contained but 106 urban centres exceeding 5000 in population and 15 exceeding 20,000; in 1891 the numbers were, respectively, 622 and 106. In 1801 the proportion of Englishmen and Welshmen living in towns of 20,000 was less than 17 per cent; in 1891 it was 53.5 per cent. At the present day eight of every ten Englishmen dwell in towns of 10,000 and upwards. Between 1846 and 1891 the proportion of the population of France classed as urban (*i.e.*, resident in communes containing 2000 persons or more) increased from 24.4 to 37.4 per cent. The urban element (in *gemeinden* of 2000 people or more) in the kingdom of Prussia rose between 1867 and 1895 from 35.8 to 51.4 per cent. In Austria the same element rose between 1843 and 1890 from 18.9 to 32.5 per cent. Not merely did the proportion of urban to total population tend thus universally to be increased; the century witnessed the rise of those vast agglomerations of people which to-day comprise

the populations of London, Paris, Berlin, St. Petersburg, Vienna, and scores of lesser centres. The population of London in 1801 was 864,845; to-day it is 7,252,963.¹ That of Paris in 1801, was 547,756; in 1906 it was 2,722,731. That of Berlin in 1819 was 201,138; that of the German metropolis in 1905 was 2,040,222. Such cities as existed in the eighteenth century, even the largest of them, were hardly better equipped with the conveniences of civilized life than were those of the Middle Ages. In the boulevards of Paris in 1787 the mud was not infrequently six inches or a foot deep.² Berlin in 1800 had no sidewalks, paving, or sewers. London by 1800 had lamp-posts, but was the only city of Europe which boasted such a luxury.

A second fact, indeed, which needs constantly to be borne in mind is that the Europe of the eighteenth century was devoid of a multiplicity of mechanical inventions and appliances whose use has been woven into the very texture of our present-day civilization. No man before the nineteenth century ever saw a railroad or a steamship, and the mere lack of these great agencies of travel and trade was sufficient to impart to the eighteenth century a character distinctly different from that of more recent times. There was in the eighteenth century no such thing as the telegraph or the telephone, by which almost instant communication at great distances has been made not only possible but convenient and cheap. Electricity was not unknown, but appliances for the utilization of electrical power were yet to be developed. Photography, anæsthetics, antiseptics, illuminating gas, kerosene, friction matches, and scores of other products and

¹ This is the population, in 1911, of Greater London, comprising the city and the Metropolitan Police District.

² Of Paris, the English traveller, Arthur Young, who visited the city in 1787, writes: "The streets are very narrow, and many of them crowded, nine-tenths dirty, and all without foot pavements. Walking, which in London is so pleasant and so clean that ladies do it every day, is here a toil and a fatigue to a man, and an impossibility to a well-dressed woman."

arts owing their existence to the practical application of scientific knowledge were yet undreamt of. The foundations of the modern sciences of physics, chemistry, astronomy, botany, and geology were laid by the remarkable researches of eighteenth century scholars, but the establishing of the relations between theoretical scientific knowledge and the everyday needs of human life remained largely to be accomplished during the past hundred years.

In the next place, it may be observed that there was not in operation in Europe prior to 1789 a single governmental system which properly can be termed democratic.¹ England, it is true, possessed the elements of a modern popular government. Already, save during the more vigorous days of George III., it could be said that the king reigned but did not govern, and the fundamental principles of parliamentary control of legislation and finance and the administration of public affairs by a ministry responsible singly and collectively to the House of Commons had been brought permanently into operation. The requirements of the franchise, however, were so exacting that the great mass of small landholders and non-landholders continued, as in the Middle Ages, to be excluded entirely from the electorate; the House of Commons represented only a small minority of the nation, and the aristocratic House of Lords could prevent the enactment of any measure which the Commons succeeded in passing; the offices of state were monopolized by members of the Established Church; in short, the nation as a whole was not yet self-governing. On the continent the situation was worse, because all but universally such agencies of popular government as at one time or another had sprung into existence were, in the eighteenth century, inactive or even obsolete. In France the States General, comprising representatives of

¹ Switzerland, the tiny republics of Andorra and San Marino, and the Netherlands were not monarchies, but their governmental systems were by no means wholly democratic.

the three estates, or orders, had not met since 1614. The Spanish Cortes, while not fallen completely into desuetude, was seldom convened for purposes other than the swearing of allegiance to a new sovereign and the performance of other nominal duties incident to the inauguration of a reign. In Austria, Prussia, and the German states generally autocracy was unrestricted. During the course of the century there reigned a number of sovereigns who by historians are commonly designated as the "enlightened despots,"—Frederick II. of Prussia, Catherine the Great of Russia, Maria Theresa of Austria, the Emperor Joseph II. and his brother Leopold (grand-duke of Tuscany), and Charles III. of Spain. Each of these monarchs labored conscientiously and more or less successfully to promote the welfare of the people over whom he or she ruled. But all of them were thoroughgoing absolutists, and there was no place in the plans of any of them for popular institutions. Government continued uninterruptedly to mean despotism—benevolent, perhaps, but yet despotism.

In all countries, but especially on the continent, the eighteenth century was still essentially mediæval in respect to the stratification of society and the status possessed by the various social orders. A twelfth century chronicler in France declared that the society of his day consisted of three classes—the fighting class, the praying class, and the farming class. With the addition of an industrial class, which came into importance at a later time, this grouping of the social elements was maintained essentially unchanged in the eighteenth century. The fighting class was no longer distinctively a feudal class as once it had been, for feudalism had all but disappeared; but it was represented in effect by the nobility, shorn, it is true, of the enormous governmental powers that had belonged to it in most countries in the Middle Ages, but preserving a very large measure of eminence and privilege. The "praying class," comprising the clergy, was in no country so powerful as once it had been, but it likewise preserved in

a large degree its wealth, influence, and privileged position. The industrial class, using the term broadly, included the traders, craftsmen, artisans, and to some extent the professional men.

At the bottom of the scale, now as ever, stood the farming class, *i.e.*, the rural peasantry. Formerly the members of this class had been very generally serfs, which means that they were obligated to remain through life upon the manor to which they belonged and to render to the proprietor a burdensome aggregate of dues, some in the form of produce and some in the form of manual labor. In some countries serfdom had disappeared gradually during the later Middle Ages, and by the eighteenth century had become practically non-existent. This was true especially of England and, in a somewhat smaller degree, of France. In Spain, Austria, Prussia, portions of Italy, and Russia, however, the peasants were still, at the outbreak of the Revolution in France, all but universally serfs, and in some of the countries mentioned they continued to be so until the middle of the nineteenth century. Even where, as in England and France, the eighteenth century peasant was not a serf, he was pretty certain not to be an independent proprietor of his own bit of ground, as is the French or the American small farmer of to-day. He lived, as a rule, still upon the ancient manor, and whether or not legally free, was in point of fact, by reason of his poverty and his economic dependence, bound by numerous obligations and exactions. He dwelt in a cheerless hut, labored incessantly to meet his obligations to landlord, state, and church, considered himself fortunate to be able to keep soul and body together, and, at the last, transmitted to his children a lot in life neither worse nor better than that which had been his own.

In connection with this matter of social stratification it is essential to take note especially of the peculiar status of the clergy and of the power which ecclesiastical tradition and

organization exerted upon the minds and deeds of men. During the sixteenth century the solidarity of the Church universal had been shattered, but through the centuries that followed there existed in every country of Europe some one branch of the Church which for all practical purposes occupied the same exalted station that the undivided Church had occupied throughout Christendom in the Middle Ages. In France, Spain, Portugal, Austria, and the Italian states this Church was the Catholic; in the Scandinavian and North German states it was the Lutheran; in England it was the Anglican, and in Scotland the Presbyterian. In most countries the clergy constituted a separate, powerful, and highly privileged order of society. The Catholic Church continued enormously wealthy; its influence was still predominant at many courts; and its range of activities—religious, judicial, educational, philanthropic—was scarcely more restricted, save geographically, than five hundred years before. Within England the position occupied by the Established Church approximated closely to that occupied by the Catholic organization in France or Spain.

Protestant and Catholic churches in common were intolerant of dissenters, and in every important country there were penal laws of the most thoroughgoing character by which attempt was made to maintain the unity of the faith. Thus in France under terms of a decree of 1724 persons who should assemble for worship in accordance with any creed save the Catholic were condemned to forfeit their property, the women being imprisoned for life, the men being sent to the galleys, and the ministers who convoked such meetings or conducted unapproved services being put to death. It is only fair to say that this rigorous law was but mildly enforced. But the fact of its existence in one of the most enlightened of European countries within two hundred years of our own day is significant. England, likewise, maintained throughout the eighteenth century an essentially intolerant religious

system. The Act of Toleration of 1689 permitted Protestant dissenters to hold meetings; but "papists and such as deny the Trinity" were excluded from the benefits of the measure, the celebration of the mass was rigidly prohibited, and Catholics were forbidden to enter the country and all public offices were closed against them. At the middle of the eighteenth century there was rendered a judicial decision to the effect that English law did not recognize the presence of Roman Catholics within the kingdom and that their continuance in the country was made possible only by lax enforcement of the statutes.¹

Within the domains of industry and commerce the eighteenth century, at least until toward its close, was for all practical purposes about as far removed from the nineteenth as was the sixteenth or seventeenth. Industry was still almost exclusively of the handicraft, household type; machines were few and crude; steam-power was but in its experimental stage; the factory system was unknown. The demand for manufactured goods was comparatively small, and the industrial output was correspondingly limited. The various crafts were carried on still, for the greater part, by master workmen who were organized in guilds and who were assisted in the processes of manufacture by members of their families, by journeymen, or hired workmen, and by apprentices. The work was done in small shops attached to the living rooms of the master craftsman, and the goods produced were apt to be exhibited for sale on the spot. A guild comprised the organization of masters engaged in a particular craft within a town, *e.g.*, the weavers, the goldsmiths, the tailors, the tanners, the bakers, the candlemakers, and by it were regulated minutely the quantity of goods to be produced, the quality to be maintained, the prices to be charged, the number of journeymen and apprentices to be kept, the wages to be paid, and, above all, the conditions to be required

¹ Robinson and Beard, "Development of Modern Europe," I., 155.