





# LIBERTY

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BEHAVIOR OF CROWDS, PSYCHOLOGY, ETC.

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## PREFACE

The word "Liberty," which I have with some reluctance chosen to stand as the title of this book, means so many things that it often means almost nothing. I have attempted no abstract discussion or definition but have endeavored to show what those who have most thoughtfully considered the subject throughout the ages have meant by Liberty. I have also discussed the subject in the light of the general philosophy of life and of the psychological and historical facts which form the background of such discussion.

My first thought was to publish a book with the title "A History of Liberty," but many histories of liberty have been written and they are usually dull legalistic discussions, or are rhapsodical accounts of heroic battles for freedom. The impression given is either that liberty exists as a thing in itself in a sort of vacuum or else that an innocent and a pressed humanity knowing well what liberty meant has progressively emancipated itself from unjustifiable tyranny. Humanity once having gained a victory for the rights of man, it is assumed that the crowd has persisted in the love of freedom and has sought only to secure its blessings to the future.

Some such view appears to be taken for granted by most Americans. This is a "free country" as a result of the heroic feats of our ancestors. Liberty has been achieved once for all. The cause of freedom is that of the



masses against real or possible alien oppressors. Liberty and popular government are much the same, and the idea of liberty has become so associated with patriotic emotion that it has become more a matter of pride in history,—or in popular fictions about history—than a clear, rational concept.

We are inclined as a people to substitute emotion for thinking in dealing with most of the important concerns of our common life, and our attitude toward liberty is no exception. We persuade ourselves, for instance, that we entered the late war in order to make the world safe for democracy and were thus true to our historic rôle as a nation, fighting for liberty. As a matter of fact, many thinking people among us have long entertained certain misgivings about democracy. They knew the motives which prevailed in the average legislative assembly, local and national. We were already critical. We knew the "hysteria" of crowd behavior in our democratic society. We had reason to suspect that now since ancient tyrants had been overthrown the emergent enemy of human freedom is the crowd itself. We had seen evidence of its susceptibility to catch word, half understood ideas, and to designing propaganda of all sorts. Epidemic outbreaks of mob violence and quixotic crusades of alleged moral reform were not unknown among us. The extent of the venality and corruption in our political life had disturbed many who knew the facts and had meditated on their significance.

Since the war, we have had to witness a widespread cynical tendency to subordinate many of our traditional American ideals to the end of material prosperity. We have seen orgies of intolerance and we have noted too

often the degrading influence of popular prejudice and ignorance on many of the values of our civilization. We have seen more than one of our traditional guarantees of individual liberty shrink before the well meaning attempts at reform and the organized activity of groups inspired by profit seeking motives. Many have consequently been inclined to dismiss the cause of liberty as a popular illusion. Upon the majority, however, those who have tried to warn the public of the danger of loss of our inherited freedom have made little impression. Somehow, such warnings have appeared, and in fact often have been, little more than irritating criticisms of our ways of life and have offended against popular patriotic sentiments. Notwithstanding such warnings, we as a people feel still that we are dutifully patriotic when we give lip service to traditions of freedom which are seldom honored in daily practice. Warnings put forth as emotional appeal, often made in a spirit of denunciation and of partisanship, are worse than useless in the cause of liberty.

The time appears to have come for Americans to think dispassionately about this matter. We have long needed a rational and critical understanding of our philosophy of freedom. As I have pointed out in the ensuing chapters, it is ironical that in a "free country" where public education is maintained at great cost, to prepare our youth to live in a nation dedicated to liberty, so little concern has been given to the understanding of liberty that great classics on the subject, like Milton's *Areopagitica*, Locke's essay on *Toleration*, and Mill's essay on *Liberty*,—documents which should and could be known and understood by every high school student—are almost never taught.

Our people have little of the philosophy of freedom. Even our professed liberals are commonly confused, striving as they do to reconcile the classical understanding of liberty (as a rational achievement) with the romantic notion of freedom as a natural right. Little serious attention has been given to the conflict among the varied traditions of liberty we have inherited from the past, or to the problem of valuing them, noting their irreconcilable differences and striving to apply what might be most suitable in them to present conditions.

This book is an attempt to call attention to this situation and to point out what wise men of the past have meant by liberty, to make clear the incompatible presuppositions which lie behind the various traditional uses of the term "liberty," and to show that liberty has certain necessary relations to a definite and growing type of culture. I trust I may have succeeded in making it clear that the dangers to liberty against which we today must stand guard do not come from a traditional or master class, or from an alien tyrant, but lurk in precisely those impulses in the nature of all of us which are commonly manifest in crowd behavior.

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## CHAPTER I

# THE CONFUSION OF AMERICAN LIBERALISM

Liberty is one of the outstanding problems in modern civilization. It is an ironical fact that one hundred years after Andrew Jackson's victory swept the common masses of America into supremacy in political power we still find liberty an issue in the United States. What have Americans been doing with their freedom since the year 1828?

Every time the question of freedom is seriously raised in this country it would seem to be considered a challenge to certain "one-hundred-percent" American groups, such as the fundamentalists, the Ku Klux Klan, the Anti-Saloon League, various Protestant and industrial organizations, and even the Daughters of the American Revolution. It is a striking fact that these people on the whole are descended from the early British immigrants. They are the people whose ancestors believed that they were establishing here the world's first great experiment in achieving a society of free people. They are the children of the men who in the crisis of American history pledged their property, their lives and their sacred honor to make America free. They are the descendants of the people who, when they had realized their independence, wrote and adopted a constitution in order that they

might secure the blessings of liberty to their descendants forever.

It is a significant fact in American history, too, that most of the present liberals are of the newer immigration, who bring to this nation a recent European heritage, and that most of the reactionaries in America seem to be the descendants of the men who risked their lives to make America free. It is further ironical that the reactionaries, who seem to have abandoned all interest in securing freedom, honestly believe that they are the defenders of American liberty and of our free institutions. Here we have an instance of a situation in which the populace must be liberated from its liberators. This is an old, old story, for it has happened many times in history.

Perhaps the present issue of liberty in America is not really a struggle for liberty at all, but merely a rationalization of the attempt of industrial workers and city dwellers to claim their place in the sun of American prosperity, social prestige and political power. And this, too, would be an old, old story, for many times in European history a class of men has rationalized just such interests and purposes as the struggle for the emancipation of all men. However, there is here something much more profound than any such view of the situation. The problem of liberty is deeply imbedded in the difficulties and conflicts of Western civilization. The French scholar, André Siegfried, in his book, *America Comes of Age*, says that in America many of the magnificent material things have had to be achieved at the

sacrifice of individual liberty, the sacrifice of things which in the Old World are regarded as the greatest victories of civilization. He further says that in America the profit motive dominates everywhere and that under the spell of this motive all intellectual activity which does not contribute to profit is discouraged. As a result, we Americans have set up conformity as the greatest requirement of our lives. This demand for conformity in the interest of profit, says Siegfried, is not imposed on the American people by the upper classes, nor by the government; it is imposed by the great masses themselves. This is a thought that ought to make us pause and think about ourselves. Just how is liberty an issue and against whom is it primarily a challenge?

One hundred years ago the struggle for liberty was a struggle of the average individual against the tyranny of a nobility, a monarchy, a priesthood. Now the enemy of liberty seems to be the crowd itself, operating through the instrumentalities of the Machine Age and its social organization. If this view is correct, then the problem of liberty must be recast in new terms of social psychology. It becomes a challenge to men to understand themselves and to master themselves in new ways in order that they may retain some vestige of their inherited freedom.

We men of the Twentieth Century are less keen about our freedom than any generation in modern times; certainly less concerned about human liberty than people were in the days when they were striving to achieve it. This is a psychological situation which is common enough.



The things which we take for granted are the things for which we no longer fight. But when a populace becomes indifferent to its freedom, it begins to lose it.

It was ten years ago that the Armistice was signed, ending the Great War, and if you look back over the ten years you will find that there has been an astonishing revival of illiberalism in the United States. Most of the great illiberal movements which now torment us have had their victory, and many their origin as well, during the last decade. For instance, militarism has vastly increased. To-day it is a disgrace to be a pacifist in the United States. Prohibition is another fruit of these last ten years. We have witnessed in Massachusetts the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti, the tragic result of conflict between radical and conservative mob movements. More recently a similar conflict in a Southern state makes mockery of both civilization and our inherited liberties. Fundamentalism has grown stronger, during this decade, and religious bigotry has again raised its ugly head among us. It is altogether conceivable that the fundamentalist, anti-evolution mania may in the next ten years achieve a victory in America similar to that which prohibition has achieved during the last ten. The same people are behind both movements, the same religious fanaticism has inspired them both, and there is no assurance at all that we shall not have another amendment to the Constitution forbidding Darwinism.

So, all along the line, we see a slump in liberty and, curiously enough, we see it among professed liberals themselves. This generation sees its liberals more futile

than liberals have been at any time since the Seventeenth Century. They are bewildered. They have no followers. They speak a confusion of tongues. One would think, if one watched the way in which people behave to-day, that the great liberators of human history had never lived. We have forgotten what the lot of the common man was before our Bill of Rights was wrested from the hands of unwilling monarchs. We have forgotten what it means to live in communities where there is no constitutional provision against cruel and unusual punishments. Compare to-day with the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries! Think of the fact that almost uniformly in human history the great benefactors of the human race have had to live in exile because they have given humanity new truths and have challenged its old beliefs. We have forgotten what liberty has cost. We no longer have even a very clear conception of what we mean by liberty.

Men have had at least two things in mind when they have talked of liberty. The first is concerned always with concrete issues and the attainment of concrete rights. For instance, the men of the Renaissance, when they spoke of liberty, meant freedom to study classic literature in opposition to religious obscurantism. To men of the Protestant Reformation, liberty meant the right of private interpretation as opposed to the existing hierarchy. In the English Revolution it meant the immunities of the subject in opposition to the aggrandizement of an over-reaching monarch. In Nineteenth Century England it meant free trade in opposition to government-

favoured monopoly. In every instance there was a concrete, definite issue. The trouble with this conception of liberty is that it is always paradoxical. We are conscious of it only when we meet its opposite.

Our modern ideas of liberty are confused by theories derived largely from the teachings of Rousseau. This second philosophy of liberty, as distinguished from the first, which is specific, envisages liberty in general, as a state of human happiness. It is vague, the outcome of philosophical discussion. The first is realistic and is based upon experience; the second is idealistic and is based upon emotion. The first stands for self-discipline, the second for spontaneity. The first holds that liberties are a human achievement; the second that liberty is a natural right, a gift of nature. The first conceives of liberty as an outcome of culture and a means to culture; the second maintains that liberty is an escape from the burdens and artificialities of civilization. The first stands for individual responsibility; the second says, Let the people rule. The first philosophy usually prevails when men live under a government in which they do not participate and from which they must wrest their rights. The second philosophy prevails when men think they own their government. Men who hold the first view demand a guarantee of individual liberty with which to secure their rights. Those who incline to the second base their hope of freedom on the natural good will and increasing power of the masses. When the first philosophy prevails, men are careful and critical of custom and law. They would keep these things in their control in order

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that individuals may be free to vary. The second philosophy enfranchises the mass and makes crowd domination possible.

The history of liberty in our times is the story of the transition of our modern thought from the first philosophy to the second. There are three causes for this transition. The first was economic. It began in the Eighteenth Century and was greatly accelerated in the Nineteenth, when the Industrial Revolution brought opportunity to individuals to exploit their fellowmen. Individualism became the slogan of industrial magnates. They resented and resisted all legal control over their behavior. But industrialism had created great changes in social conditions—overwork, long hours, city slums—abuses which made the workers as a class demand that something be done to bring under the law the men whose economic power was putting them into the position of tyrants above the law. The situation was so bad that it necessitated a program of social legislation.

The second cause for the transition from the old liberalism to the new was religious and had to do with the degradation of three ideas of Protestant Christianity in the United States of America in the Nineteenth Century. The first of these was the idea of salvation, the second the idea of evangelism, and the third the idea of the church militant. When the Puritans came to America they were Calvinists, and the Calvinists were tremendously interested in the salvation of the soul. Salvation was the chief and most important business in life. But the Puritans did not believe that salvation was for every-



body. It was for a small proportion only, for the elect of God. Calvinism was broken up in this country partly by deism, which swept away vast numbers of the educated masses, and partly by Methodism, which, with its promise of free grace for all, won many thousands of converts. As the Calvinistic idea of salvation of the elect in the world-to-come became degraded and popularized, it was transformed into salvation of the citizens of the American Republic in this world. This led to the prophecy frequently expressed by reformers in the Nineteenth Century, that the millennium was at hand and that the Kingdom of God was to be set up in the Republic of the United States. Thus the State, with its program of legislation, was burdened with the task of the perfection of the individual.

The second idea, which suffered degradation, was that of evangelism. When the Puritans established their theocracy in New England, the preaching of their doctrines was kept in the hands of a few relatively well-educated men, but later the situation got out of control. Jonathan Edwards was largely responsible for this. He started a great religious revival in the United States in the Eighteenth Century. He held that when a person is converted he has an intense emotional experience, which transforms him from a state of sin to a state of grace. When men are saved and have a sure sign of grace, they have something to say and they need no theological training in order to say it. Therefore the converted masses gave rise to vast numbers of uneducated and unadjusted preachers. Everybody preached. We became, and have