

**FEARS FOR DEMOCRACY  
REGARDED FROM  
THE AMERICAN POINT  
OF VIEW, PP. 1-293**

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Fears for Democracy Regarded from the American Point of View, pp. 1-293 by Charles  
Ingersoll

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**CHARLES INGERSOLL**

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# FEARS FOR DEMOCRACY

REGARDED

FROM THE AMERICAN POINT OF VIEW.

BY

CHARLES INGERSOLL.

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"La liberté est un aliment de bon suc, mais de forte digestion; il faut des estomacs bien sains pour le supporter." J. J. ROUSSEAU.

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## PREFACE.

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THESE pages, which have been much curtailed from what were prepared for the press, in the hope, by diminishing their number, of increasing the chance of their being read, rest on a position, not, indeed, very new, that it is from the people government like ours must take its measure; that democratic institutions are meaningless when the people leave the watch; beginning to flag when a single citizen deserts his duty; and getting worse and worse as skulking goes on.

Democracy is now, and always has been, a word of fear in the United States; it is so everywhere. But whatever we have we owe to it. Prince Gortschakoff, in the darkness of Russian despotism, may be an honester man than Mr. Disraeli; but the Englishman stands in the light; he accounts, if not to the people, to the country.

On this idea our institutions rest. We trust society. But it is composed of materials bad and good. If our institutions reflect only the bad materials, government is bad and the laws badly administered. They are good, or, as good as they can be made, when they reflect all. If, reflecting all, they are, still, bad, the experiment we make, and which every political philosopher, even the most hopeful, Mr. Jefferson, for example, has regarded as an experiment, fails, so far. Not entirely, but so far.

Every candid man must admit that society, with us so highly capable, does not infuse itself into government. Government is not inspired by all, but, as in other parts of the world, by the few. It means the few, not the many. It has the same vice here as everywhere.

There are at least two stages of the experiment of representative democracy. There is the experiment whether the masses possess will and stuff enough of character to have themselves represented; and there is, afterwards, the experiment whether a government which does represent them is capable of governing.



Under monarchical institutions the central idea is the divinity of the king; whom it is a religion to respect, though he be the meanest of mortals. Under democratic institutions the central idea is the divinity of the people; but we do not respect them at all.

The word *democracy* is used by the author, only, in its broad sense, not that of party. We are a democracy, a representative one; and there can be no party in the United States, whatever it may call itself, that is not democratic. It was meant, at first, in the questions here considered, not to touch points on which there are party differences, but that was found impossible, and given up. Party the writer must see (as who does not?) through the mists of his prejudices, and have for his errors, if he fall into them, the excuse that all have.

PHILADELPHIA, December, 1874.

1874



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