# College Presidents on Modern Problems*

As Mr. James Bryce pointed out in "The American Commonwealth," college presidents in America are distinguished from their colleagues in Western Europe by their activity in molding public opinion. The lectures in these two volumes by two university presidents, Butler of Columbia and Hadley of Yale, all dealing with the working of democratic institutions in America, and first delivered before general audiences, are illustrations of this beneficent activity.

The president of Columbia uses a style more polished, more suitable for presentation in book form, than that of the

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*TRUE AND FALSE DEMOCRACY. *By Nicholas Murray Butler.* New York: The Macmillan Company. $1.00.

STANDARDS OF PUBLIC MORALITY. *By Arthur Twining Hadley.* New York: The Macmillan Company. $1.00.

president of Yale, whose "manner of treatment and choice of illustrations show that his lectures were originally intended for the platform rather than for the printed page." But the simpler style, the sharp-shooting of the shorter sentences, compensates by bringing the reader closer to the writer's personality, for the absence of that artistic pleasure which the carelessly wrought essay affords.

Both of these heads of universities have a reassuring faith in the outcome of our political democracy, tho neither is dim-eyed to the dangers, palpable and impalpable, of our machine politics. President Hadley says:

"I am no pessimist. I do not see anything which warrants the fear that we shall repeat in the near future the experience of Athens or Rome—unless it be the mistaken complacency of those optimists who think that we can repeat the mistakes of Athens and Rome without incurring the penalties."

In both books the same diagnosis is given of the origin of the political machine controlled by a boss: namely, the system of checks and balances established by the Constitution. If a Governor and Legislature, being in disagreement, can bring law-making and office-filling to a deadlock, and if judges, who are our most potent law-makers, can interpret laws according to personal whims, our government is unworkable. But if those members of a party who hold office must obey the behests of the party convention and the party leaders, then harmony can be secured and progress achieved. "Party machinery has appeared to be a necessity for getting the work of the government done continuously and regularly."

The leader of a party should be a statesman; in actual fact he is generally a "boss." To transform the leader from "boss" to statesman Doctors Butler and Hadley have different remedies. The former relies upon punishing him at the polls when his nominations are bad and perfecting civil service reforms so as to dry up the sources of his funds. Recent revelations of the subsidies which the Prince of Darkness, the ruler of Tenderloin districts, makes to the dominant political party in Chicago and in New York, and of the lavish size of "Yellow Dog funds" contributed by corporations, make that remedy, good in itself, to appear somewhat Lilliputian. President Hadley recommends for its curative properties, and with an enthusiasm which is unique in these pages, the system of direct primaries. "I do not know any field of effort," he says, "which is more promising for a man who wants to do political service . . . than the development of the direct primary or of some similar means which will give the average voter the best chance of expressing his views before the nomination." Since the stronghold of the "boss" is the convention, this remedy might prove more potent, tho the "boss" has hitherto shown himself so resourceful in escaping the nets that were set to catch him that experience alone will demonstrate whether the direct primary will prove his undoing.

While asserting their fidelity to democratic rule so far as it has extended, both these presidents show some nervous alarm about the threatened extension of the sphere of democracy. Each declares that equality and liberty are incompatible. "Liberty leads directly to inequality, based upon the natural differences of capacity and application among men. Equality, on the other hand, in any economic sense, is attainable only by the suppression in some degree of liberty." Therefore, in their reasoning, equality we must forego. But is equality of opportunity, the demand of today, at all incompatible with liberty?

Perhaps President Butler, being a personal friend of President Roosevelt, approves a somewhat wider extension of the State power than President Hadley, who has long been prominent as an unterrified defender of an individualism which is becoming old-fashioned. Columbia sees a cure for "what is properly called exploitation" in the development of an understanding of what property is public and assigning the care of such property to the Government. Undertakings partly public in character he would allow private corporations to initiate under State rules.

But Yale would object to so much extension of governmental power. It appeals to the leaders of industrial corporations to be faithful to the public side of their obligations; it trusts to "the voluntary development of the sense of trusteeship." Since President Hadley wrote these words events have falsified his con-

fidence that "the business community of today recognizes that the president and directors of a corporation have a fiduciary relation both to their stockholders and to their creditors." That quartet of financiers who looted the Chicago & Alton Railroad of twenty-three million dollars, and the group of traction magnates, recently exposed, who have drained the treasury of the Metropolitan Street Railway Company, still stand unshaken in the business community. No club has expelled them from membership; no board of trade or chamber of commerce purged itself of their presence.

When we examine the attitude of these college presidents to the newer problems which are arising, we discern why the influence of the scholar as publicist is so limited. He is timid before new problems, anxious to conserve things as they are, reluctant to step forward, an excellent exponent and critic of accepted institutions, a sworn foe of those pleading for acceptance. So wedded is President Butler to government by the strong hand, so suspicious of the folly and the incapacity of the people, that he goes so far as to say that "It is primarily the President and the Supreme Court who speak the people's maturest mind." The President we might admit, but the Supreme Court! To neither writer does it occur that perhaps their predictions of the disastrous result of extending the power of the people over parts of the field of industry might be disproven by experiment exactly as the predictions of the disasters of political democracy have been disproven.