



*A colonial schoolhouse*

England. In the older settlements they are more religious, and have better morals. We have fewer corruptions, we have more of the simplicity and innocence of youth. We are behind you in learning, in science, and in many of the mechanical and manufacturing arts. Still we have fewer prejudices, both because we are a less important part of the human family, and because we have had less time to form them. Great, powerful, and splendid nations never do justice to those that are inferior. At the same time, we are more friendly, more social, and more ready to please. We are also more orderly, quiet, and peaceful. We are governed with less difficulty, and by milder measures.

Our common people are far better educated than yours, both in the school and in the church. The reason for this is that they all go to school, and almost all go to church. All of them can read, write, and keep accounts. Almost all of them are able to read. To end the subject, there is a vein of practical good sense, the most valuable of all intellectual possessions, running through the people of New England. This may be considered as their most characteristic feature.

### READING REVIEW

1. According to Dwight, why do visiting English people often receive discourteous treatment?
2. According to Dwight, what are the main differences between English visitors and the people of New England?
3. Why might an intelligent American reader have objected to this article?

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## CHAPTER 12 Growing Democratic Strength (1825–1845)

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### 83 The People of the Western Frontier

The number of settlers moving into the lands west of the Appalachian Mountains increased rapidly during the late 1700's and early 1800's. These "westerners" had to adapt to their new surroundings. As they did so, they developed customs and manners that were much different from those of the Americans back East.

The following was written by an Englishman, Elias P. Fordham. It gives his impressions of the westerners he encountered on a trip through the Ohio River Valley in 1818.

#### READING FOCUS

1. What were the four classes of westerners Fordham observed?
2. Did the westerners believe in and practice equality toward one another?
3. Which class did Fordham seem to most admire?

The people who live on these frontiers may be divided into four classes:

1st. class.—The hunters, a daring, hardy, race of men, who live in miserable cabins, which they strengthen in times of War with the Indians, whom they hate but much resemble in dress and manners. They [the hunters] are unpolished, but hospitable, kind to Strangers, honest and trustworthy. They raise a little

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*Adapted from Elias P. Fordham, Personal Narrative of Travels in Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, and a Residence in the Illinois Territory: 1817-1818.*

Indian corn, pumpkins, hogs, and sometimes have a Cow or two, and two or three horses belonging to each family: But their rifle is their principal means of support. They are the best marksmen in the world, and such is their skill that they will shoot an apple off the head of a companion. Some few use the bow and arrow. I have spent seven or eight weeks with these men, have had opportunities of testing them, and believe they would sooner give me the last shirt off their backs, than rob me of a charge of powder. Their wars with the Indians have made them bitter. This class cannot be called first Settlers, for they move every year or two.

2d. class.—First settlers—a mixed set of hunters and farmers. They possess more property and comforts than the first class [the hunters]; yet they are a half barbarous race. They follow open land, selling out when the Country begins to be well settled, and their cattle cannot be entirely kept in the woods.

3d. class.—is composed of ambitious men from Kentucky and the Atlantic States. This class consists of Young Doctors, Lawyers, Storekeepers, farmers, mechanics and craftsmen, who found towns, trade, and speculate in land. There is in this class every level of *intellectual* and *moral* character; but the general tone of Social manners is yet too much relaxed. There is too much reliance upon personal ability, and the laws have not yet acquired enough force to prevent violence.

4th. class.—old settlers, rich, independent, farmers, wealthy merchants, possessing a good deal of information, a knowledge of the world, and an adventurous spirit. Such are the Ohio men, Western Pennsylvanians, Kentuckians, and Tennessee men. The young men have a military taste, and most of them have served in the late war. They were great duellists, but now the laws against duelling are more strictly enforced; they carry dirks [daggers], and sometimes decide a dispute on the spot. Irritable and lazy in youth, yet they are generally steady and active in Manhood. They begin, and carry on any business or speculation that promises great profit, and suffer the greatest losses with a firmness that resembles indifference.

The Backwoods men, as they are called somewhat contemptuously by the Inhabitants of the Atlantic States, are admirably adapted by Nature and education for the scenes they live and act in. The outstanding feature of their character is power. The young value them-



*Pioneers on the western frontier*

selves on their courage, the old on their shrewdness. The worst villains have something grand about them. They expect no mercy and they show no fear; "every man's hand is against them, and their hand is against every man's."

As social Comforts are less under the protection of the laws here, than in old countries, friendship and good neighbourhood are more valued. A man of good character is a treasure; not that there is a small number of such men, but because the bad are as terribly bad, as their opposites are especially good. This is not the land of Hypocrisy. It would not here have its reward.

I wish I could give you a correct idea of the perfect equality that exists among these republicans. A Judge leaves the Court house, shakes hands with his fellow citizens and retires to his loghouse. The next day you will find him holding his own plough. The Lawyer has the title of Captain, and serves in his Military capacity under his neighbour, who is a farmer and a Colonel. The shop keeper sells a yard of tape, and sends shiploads of produce to New Orleans; he travels 2000 miles a year; he is a good hunter, and has been a soldier; he dresses and talks as well as a London Merchant, and probably has a more extensive range of ideas; at least he has

fewer prejudices. One prejudice, however, nothing will cause him to give up—he thinks the Americans in general, and particularly those of his own state, are the best soldiers in the world.

I have not seen a feeble man, in mind or body, belonging to these Western Countries. The most ignorant, compared with men of the same standing in England, are well informed. Their manners are coarse; but they have amongst themselves a code of politeness, which they generally observe. Drinking whiskey is the greatest problem and cause of disorder, amongst them. When intoxicated by it, they sometimes fight most furiously.

### READING REVIEW

1. List the four classes of people that lived on the frontier and describe two characteristics of each.
2. Did the westerners believe in equality? Cite evidence from the reading to support your answer.
3. Describe the character of the typical westerner. What personal qualities did westerners especially value?
4. Which class do you think the writer admired the most? Explain your answer.

## 84 "Our Andy's" Inauguration

Large crowds gathered in Washington, D.C., to see Andrew Jackson sworn in as President. But these

*President-elect Andrew Jackson on the way to his inauguration*

crowds were different from those that had witnessed other inaugurations. Many who came to celebrate Jackson's inauguration were "common people"—farmers, laborers, pioneers, backwoods-men. They felt that Jackson was one of them. They had come to Washington to celebrate the inauguration of "our Andy."

Many of the old-line politicians and Washington society people took a dim view of some of the events surrounding Jackson's inauguration. One such person was Mrs. Samuel Harrison Smith, who wrote down her impressions of the inauguration and the White House reception that followed.

### READING FOCUS

1. Describe the crowd's behavior at Jackson's inauguration.
2. According to Mrs. Smith, what did Jackson's bow to the people symbolize?
3. What was Mrs. Smith's opinion of the "common people"?

The inauguration was an imposing and majestic event, and one of inspiration. Thousands and thousands of people, without distinction of rank, gathered round the Capitol, silent, orderly, and peaceful, with their eyes fixed on the front of that building, waiting the appearance of the President.

The door from the rotunda opens; preceded by the marshals, surrounded by the judges of the Supreme Court, the old man [Jackson] with his gray locks, advances, bows to the people who greet him with a shout that rends the air. The cannons from Alexandria and Fort Warburton proclaim the oath he has taken, and all the hills echo the sound.

It was grand—it was magnificent! An almost breathless silence followed, and the crowd was still, listening to catch the sound of his voice, though it was so low as to be heard only by those nearest to him. After reading his speech the oath was administered to him by Chief Justice Marshall. Then Marshall presented the Bible. The President took it from his hands, pressed his lips to it, laid it reverently down, then bowed again to the people—yes, to the people in all their majesty.

*Adapted from Mrs. Samuel Harrison Smith, The First Forty Years of Washington Society, Portrayed by Family Letters of Mrs. Samuel Harrison Smith, edited by Gaillard Hunt, 1908.*



The day was delightful, the scene animating. We walked around town and at every turn met some new acquaintance and stopped to talk and shake hands. We continued strolling here until near three, then returned home unable to stand, and threw ourselves on the sofa. Some one came and informed us the crowd before the White House was so far lessened that they thought we might enter.

This time we were able to enter. But what a scene did we witness! The *majesty of the people* had disappeared, and a rabble, a mob, of boys, Negroes, women, and children, were scrambling, fighting, and romping. What a pity, what a pity! No arrangements had been made, no police officers placed on duty, and the whole house had been flooded by the rabble mob.

We came too late. The President, after having been *literally* nearly pressed to death and almost suffocated and torn to pieces by the people in their eagerness to shake hands with Old Hickory, had retreated through the back way and had escaped to his lodgings.

Cut glass and china to the amount of several thousand dollars had been broken in the struggle to get the refreshments. Punch and other articles had been carried out in tubs and buckets, but had it been in barrels it would not have been sufficient; for it is said that twenty thousand people were there, though I think the number exaggerated. Ladies fainted, men were seen with bloody noses, and such a scene of confusion took place as is impossible to describe.

Those who got in the White House could not get out by the door again but had to scramble out of windows. At one time the President, who had retreated until he was pressed against the wall, could only be protected by a number of gentlemen forming round him and making a kind of barrier of their own bodies. The pressure was so great that Colonel Bomford, who was one, said that he was afraid they should have been pushed down or on the President. It was then the windows were thrown open and the torrent found an outlet, which otherwise might have proved deadly.

This crowd had not been anticipated and therefore not provided for. Ladies and gentlemen only had been expected at this reception, not the people en masse. But it was the people's day, and the people's President, and the people would rule. God grant that one day or other the people do not put down all rule and rulers. I fear, as they have been found in all ages and

countries where the people get the power in their hands, that of all cruel rulers, they are the most ferocious, cruel, and oppressive.

The noisy and disorderly rabble in the President's house brought to my mind descriptions I had read of the mobs in Tuileries and at Versailles during the French Revolution. I expect to hear the carpets and furniture are ruined; the streets were muddy, and these guests all went there on foot.

### READING REVIEW

1. Describe the mood of the crowd when Jackson was sworn into office.
2. (a) To whom did Jackson bow after taking the oath of office and kissing the Bible? (b) What did Mrs. Smith seem to think this bow symbolized?
3. Compare the behavior of the crowds at the inauguration and at the White House reception.
4. What was Mrs. Smith's opinion of the common people? Explain your answer.

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## 85 Officeholders in Government

Andrew Jackson firmly believed in the ability of average people to govern themselves. To put this belief into practice, he made many changes in government officeholders when he became President. He extended the so-called "spoils system," that is, the practice of appointing party supporters to serve in various government jobs. Jackson stated some of his beliefs about government in his first annual message to Congress, part of which follows.

### READING FOCUS

1. How did Jackson think that government efficiency could be improved?
2. What views did Jackson express about officeholders?

There are few people who can for any great length of time hold office and power without being more or less influenced by feelings unfa-

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*Adapted from James D. Richardson (comp.), Messages and Papers of the Presidents, Vol. II, 1896.*



*Jackson often rewarded loyal supporters.*

avorable to faithfully carrying out their public duties. Their integrity may prevent them from actual wrongdoing, but they are apt to become indifferent to the public interest and to tolerate conduct that would not be accepted by an inexperienced person. Public office is considered as a kind of property. And government is thought of more as a means of promoting individual interests than as an instrument created solely for the service of the people. Corruption and distortion of values turn government away from its proper ends and make it a way to support the few at the expense of the many.

The duties of all public officials are so plain and simple that people of intelligence may readily qualify themselves to perform them. I believe that more is lost by people continuing in office for a long time than is generally gained by their experience. I ask you, therefore, whether government efficiency would not be increased by a general extension of the law limiting appointments of officeholders to four years.

In a country where offices are created solely for the benefit of the people, no one person has any more right to hold office than another.

Offices were not established to support particular people at the public expense. No wrong is done by removing a person from office, since neither appointment to nor continuance in office, is a matter of right. It is the people, and they alone, who have a right to complain when a bad official is substituted for a good one.

The person who is removed from office has the same means of earning a living as are enjoyed by the millions who never held office. The proposed limitation on appointments of officeholders would destroy the idea of property now so generally connected with public office. Although individual distress may sometimes result, the change would, by promoting rotation in officeholders, be healthy for the system.

### READING REVIEW

1. What did Jackson mean when he said, "Public office is considered as a kind of property"?
2. According to Jackson, what harm could come about if a person continued in office for a long time?

## 86 A Great Chief's Farewell

In the 1830's the nation was making remarkable progress in manufacturing, in transportation, and in settling western lands, as well as in strengthening democracy. However, while most free Americans shared in the nation's progress, the Indians did not. Instead, they were being pushed from their lands by white settlers. American and Indian cultures were in conflict and this conflict often resulted in warfare.

In the Black Hawk War of 1832, American soldiers wiped out most of the Sac tribe after it had surrendered. The following is part of a farewell speech given by Black Hawk, the chief of the tribe, after he was forced to surrender.

### READING FOCUS

1. What is Black Hawk's attitude in the face of defeat?
2. What does Black Hawk think of whites?

You have taken me prisoner with all my warriors. I am much grieved, for I expected, if I did

they have listed the powers they have given to this government. They have made it a limited government. They have defined its authority. They have limited it to certain powers. All others, they declare, are reserved to the states or to the people. But they have not stopped here. If they had, they would have accomplished only half their work. No definition can be made so clear as to avoid all possibility of doubt. Who then shall interpret the people's will, where it seems to be in doubt? With whom do they leave this right of deciding on the powers of the government? They have left it with the government itself, in its appropriate branches.

The people have wisely provided, in the Constitution itself, a proper, suitable way to settle questions of constitutional law. There are, in the Constitution, grants of powers to Congress and restrictions on these powers. There are also prohibitions on the states. Some authority must therefore have the ultimate power to interpret these grants, restrictions, and prohibitions. The Constitution itself established that authority. How has it accomplished this great and essential end? By declaring that "the Constitution, and the laws of the United States made in pursuance thereof, shall be the supreme law of the land, anything in the constitution or laws of any state to the contrary notwithstanding."

This was the first great step. By this, the supremacy of the Constitution and laws of the United States is declared. The people so will it. No state law is to be valid which comes in conflict with the Constitution or any law of the United States. But who shall decide if a state law interferes with the Constitution or a federal law? This the Constitution itself decides also, by declaring "that the judicial power shall extend to all cases arising under the Constitution and laws of the United States." These two provisions cover the whole ground. They are, in truth, the keystone of the arch. With these, it is a constitution. Without them, it is a confederacy.

If the people, in these respects, had done otherwise, their Constitution could neither have been preserved, nor would it have been worth preserving. And if its clear provisions shall now be disregarded, it will become as feeble and helpless a being as its enemies could possibly desire.

In my career up to now, I have always kept in view the prosperity and honor of the whole

country, and the preservation of our federal Union. It is to the Union we owe our safety at home and our dignity abroad. It is to the Union that we are chiefly indebted for whatever makes us most proud of our country. Every year it has lasted has brought fresh proofs of its usefulness and its blessings. Although our territory has stretched out wider and wider, and our population spread farther and farther, they have not outrun its protection or its benefits. It has been to us all a fountain of national, social, and personal happiness.

I have not allowed myself to look beyond the Union, to see what might lie hidden there. I have not coolly weighed the chances of preserving liberty, when the bonds that unite us might be broken apart. I have not let myself think of the horrible effects that would result from the breakup of our Union. While the Union lasts, we have high, exciting, gratifying prospects spread out before us, for us and our children. Beyond that, I seek not to look. God grant that, in my day at least, I shall not have to look beyond it.

When my eyes shall be turned to look for the last time on the sun in heaven, may I not see it shining on the broken and dishonored fragments of a once glorious Union—on states in conflict and belligerent; on a land filled with civil feuds, or drenched, it may be, in brothers' blood! Let my eyes' last feeble and lingering glance, rather, see the gorgeous flag of the republic, now known and honored throughout the earth, still flying high, not a stripe erased, nor a single star obscured. Let its motto not be Liberty first and Union afterward. Let its motto—spread all over in characters of living light, blazing on all its ample folds, as they float over the sea and over land, and in every wind under the whole heavens—be that other sentiment, dear to every true American heart—Liberty and Union, now and forever, one and inseparable!

## READING REVIEW

1. According to Webster, who gave the government its authority?
2. How did the people provide a suitable way to settle questions of constitutional law?
3. What is Webster's attitude toward the Union?
4. What response might you have made to the last sentence of the reading?

## 88 Proclamation to the People of South Carolina

On December 10, 1822, President Andrew Jackson issued a "Proclamation to the People of South Carolina." This was the President's answer to South Carolina's Ordinance of Nullification. The fact that Jackson was a southern cotton planter led some of the supporters of nullification to argue that he would support the Ordinance. In his Proclamation, however, Jackson made it clear that he strongly opposed nullification and would use force, if necessary, to carry out the laws of the United States.

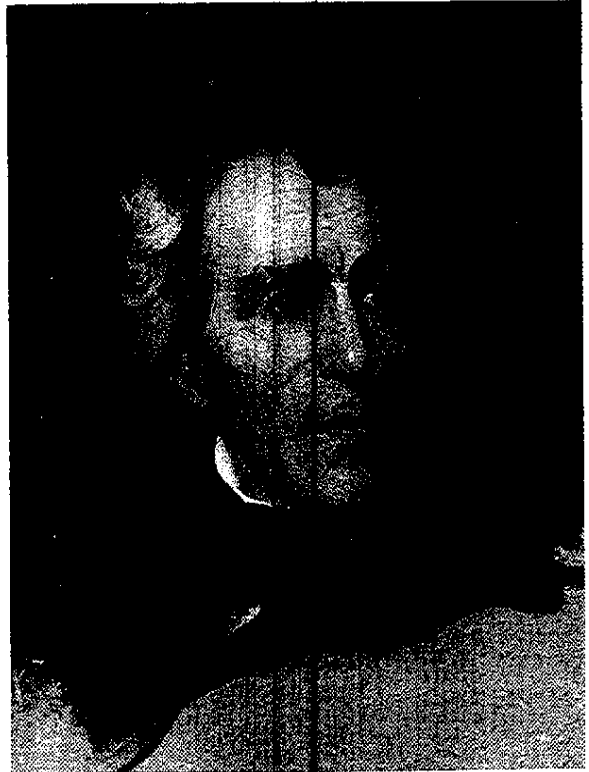
### READING FOCUS

1. Why did Jackson oppose the nullification?
2. What was his opinion of the right of a state to leave the Union?
3. What was the intent of the Proclamation which Jackson issued?

The Ordinance of Nullification is not based on the right to resist acts which are unconstitutional and oppressive, but rather on the strange position that any one state may declare an act of Congress void and prohibit the act from being carried out. If this Ordinance had been put into effect when our nation was young, the Union would have been dissolved in its infancy.

I consider that the power of one state to annul a law of the United States is not consistent with the survival of the Union. Nullification is forbidden by the Constitution; it violates the spirit of the Constitution; it is not consistent with the principles on which the Constitution was founded; and it is destructive of the great object for which the Constitution was written.

Furthermore, to say that any state may secede, or leave the Union, is to say that the United States are not a nation. The supporters of nullification and secession say that the Union was formed by a contract among the states. They go on to say that if the parties to that contract feel that they have been injured, then they may break the contract and leave the Union. But a contract is an agreement, a bind-



*Andrew Jackson as President*

ing obligation. So it is exactly because the Constitution is a contract that they cannot leave the Union!

This, then, is the position in which we stand. A small majority of the citizens of South Carolina have elected delegates to a state convention. That convention has proclaimed that all the revenue laws of the United States must be repealed or that South Carolina will leave the Union. The governor of South Carolina has recommended the raising of a state army to carry out a secession from the Union. No act of violent opposition to the laws of the United States has yet been committed, but such an act is feared to occur soon.

It is the intent of this proclamation (1) to declare that the duty imposed on me by the Constitution to faithfully carry out the laws of the United States shall be performed to the full extent of the powers given to me, and (2) to warn the citizens of South Carolina of the danger they will face if they obey the illegal and disorganizing Ordinance of Nullification.

Consider the following questions. If your state leaders were successful in separating

*Adapted from Messages and Papers of the Presidents, Vol. II, edited by J. D. Richardson, 1898.*

South Carolina from the Union, what would be your situation? Are all the people of your state united? Don't you fear civil war with all of its consequences?

The laws of the United States must be carried out. Those leaders in your state who told you that you might peaceably prevent the laws from being carried out deceived you. They know that force alone can prevent the laws from being put into effect. Their real object is disunion. But disunion by armed force is *treason*. Are you really ready to suffer the punishment for treason? On South Carolina will fall all of the evils of any conflict you force upon the government of your country.

I rely with confidence on your undivided support in my determination to carry out the laws, to preserve the Union by all constitutional means, and to prevent by moderate and firm measures the necessity of the rise of force.

Fellow-citizens, the momentous case is before you. On your undivided support of your government depends the decision of the great question it involves—whether your sacred Union will be preserved and the blessings the Union guarantees us as one people shall continue.

### READING REVIEW

1. List three reasons why Jackson opposed the Ordinance of Nullification.
2. What were Jackson's two main purposes in issuing his Proclamation?
3. According to Jackson, what was the real reason that the leaders of South Carolina supported nullification?
4. Why do you think that Jackson specifically addressed his Proclamation to the "People" of South Carolina rather than to the government of the state?

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## 89 Advice on Politics

### READING FOCUS

1. What was Crockett's eight-step plan for success?
2. What do you think Crockett really meant by his advice?

Attend all public meetings and get some friend to make a motion that you become presiding officer. If you fail in this attempt, make a push to be appointed secretary. The records of the meeting of course will be published, and your name is introduced to the public. If you fail in both undertakings, get two or three acquaintances over a bottle of whiskey to pass some resolutions, no matter on what subject. Publish them, even if you pay the printer. It will break the ice, which is the main point in these matters.

Intrigue until you are elected an officer of the militia. This is the second step toward promotion, and can be accomplished with ease. I know of one election where nobody showed up. The innkeeper, at whose house it was to be held, elected himself colonel of his regiment.

If your ambition or circumstances force you to serve your country and earn three dollars a day by becoming a member of the legislature, you must first publicly swear that the constitution of the state is a restraint upon free and liberal legislation. It is, therefore, of as little use in the present enlightened age as an old almanac of the year in which the document was written. There is a point to this. By making the constitution a dead document, your rash proceedings will be thought of as resulting from a bold mind. Otherwise people might think they arose from sheer mule-like ignorance.

When the day of elections approaches, visit the voters. Treat them generously and drink freely in order to rise in their estimation, though you fall in your own. True, you may be called a drunken dog by some of the upper class, but the real roughnecks will think you are a jovial fellow. Their votes are certain, and frequently count double.

*Adapted from David Crockett, Exploits and Adventures in Texas, 1836.*



Do all you can do to win the favor of the women. That's easily done. You have only to kiss and slobber over their children, wipe their noses, and pat them on the head. This cannot fail to please their mothers.

Promise all that is asked and more if you can think of anything. Offer to build a bridge or a church, to divide a county, create a bunch of new offices, build a turnpike, or anything they like. Promises cost nothing. Therefore, deny nobody who has a vote or sufficient influence to obtain one.

Get up on all occasions and sometimes on no occasion at all, and make long-winded speeches. Talk of your devotion to your country, your modesty, or any such fanciful subject. Speak against taxes of all kinds, officeholders, and bad harvest weather. Wind up your speech with a flourish about the heroes who fought and bled for our liberties in the times that tried men's souls.

If any charity is being carried on, be at the head of it, provided it is to be advertised publicly. If not, it isn't worth your while. None but a fool would keep his light under a bushel on such an occasion.

These few directions, if properly attended to, will take care of things. And when once elected—why, never mind the dirty children, the promises, the bridges, the churches, and the taxes. For it is absolutely necessary to forget all these before you can become a true politician and patriot.

### READING REVIEW

1. Why do you think Crockett was joking when he stated these ideas?
2. (a) What was Crockett really saying? (b) How would you translate his remarks into "good" advice for success as a politician?
3. Are any of Crockett's techniques in use today? Explain.

## 90 An Accusation of Hypocrisy

Frances Trollope came to the United States in 1827 in hopes of earning money for her family. She opened a shop in Cincinnati but it failed, and she returned to England in 1828. She took back to



Davy Crockett

England a book she had written while in America. When it was published it angered Americans and continued to do so for many years. Here, during a visit to Washington she writes about Americans' hypocrisy—"the contradictions between their principles and practice."

### READING FOCUS

1. How did Trollope characterize American-Indian relations?
2. What upset Trollope the most about Americans?

The Bureau of Indian Affairs contains a room of great interest. The walls are completely covered with original portraits of all the chiefs who, from time to time, have come to negotiate with their great father, as they call the President. The faces in the portraits are full of expression, but the expression in most of them is extremely similar. Rather, I should say that they have but two sorts of expression. The one is that of very noble and warlike daring, the other of a gentle simplicity. These portraits were touching, perhaps because at the moment we were looking at them they were suffering

Adapted from Mrs. Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, 1832.

from a base, cruel and oppressive action by their *great father*.

We were at Washington when a law forcing several tribes of Indians from their forest homes was passed by Congress and signed by the President. If the American character may be judged by their conduct in this matter, they are lacking honor and integrity. It is among themselves, and from themselves, that I have heard the statements which show them treacherous and false almost beyond belief in their relations with the unhappy Indians.

Had I, during my residence in the United States, seen any single feature in their national character that could justify their never-ending boast of generosity and love of freedom, I might have respected them, however much my taste was offended by their peculiar manners and customs. But it is impossible for any person not to be very upset by the contradictions between their principles and practice. They attack the governments of Europe, because as they say, they favor the powerful and oppress the weak. You may hear this said in Congress, roared out in taverns, discussed in every living room, poked fun at upon the stage, even discussed in the churches. Listen to it, and then look at them at home. You will see them with one hand lifting the cap of liberty, and with the other whipping their slaves. You will see them one hour lecturing their mob on the rights of man, and the next driving from their homes the Indians, whom they have bound themselves to protect by the most solemn treaties.

### READING REVIEW

1. According to Trollope, what characterized American dealings with the Indians?
2. What contradiction in the national character did Trollope find most upsetting?
3. What examples were given to support the statement on contradictory actions and beliefs?

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## 91 In Praise of American Democracy

In 1831 Alexis de Tocqueville traveled from France to the United States to study prisons in America. He saw much more, however, during his travels. The

book he wrote, *Democracy in America*, was full of insights about American society. De Tocqueville was especially interested in how the American government worked and its relation to the people of the nation.

### READING FOCUS

1. According to de Tocqueville, what makes America great?
2. What are the two kinds of rights he talks about?

No man can be great without goodness, nor any nation great without respect for rights. One might almost say that without it there can be no society, for what good is a combination of rational and intelligent beings held together by force alone?

I kept asking myself how, in our day, this idea may be taught to people. I find one way only—namely, to give them all the peaceful use of certain rights. One can see how this works among children. When a baby first begins to move among things, instinct leads him to make use of anything his hands can grasp. He has no idea of other people's property, not even that it exists. But as he is taught the value of things and discovers that he too may be robbed, he becomes more careful. In the end, he respects for others that which he wishes to be respected for himself.

Just as for a child with his toys, so is it later for a man with all his belongings. Why is it that in America, the land of democracy, no one makes that outcry against property in general that is often heard in Europe? Is there any need to explain? It is because there are no propertyless people in America. Everyone, having some possession to defend, recognizes the right to property in principle.

It is the same in the world of politics. The Americans have formed a high idea of political rights because they have some political rights. They do not attack those of others, because they do not want their own to be violated. Whereas the same person in Europe would be prejudiced against all authority, even the highest, the American obeys the lowest officials without complaint.

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*Adapted from Democracy in America by Alexis de Tocqueville, edited by J. P. Mayer and Max Lerner.*



The spectacle of Americans voting in general elections inspired Alexis de Tocqueville to write *Democracy in America*.

DE LA  
**DÉMOCRATIE**  
EN AMÉRIQUE,

PAR  
ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE,

AVOCAT A LA COUR ROYALE DE PARIS,  
ET DE MEMBRE DE L'ASSEMBLÉE  
DU SYSTÈME PÉNITENTIAIRE AUX ÉTATS-UNIS.

ORNÉ D'UNE CARTE D'AMÉRIQUE.

SECONDE ÉDITION.

TOME DEUXIÈME.



PARIS,  
LIBRAIRIE DE CHARLES GOSSELIN, F.  
RUE SAINT-BENOÎT-DES-ÉGLISES, N° 9.  
M DCCC XXXV.

Democratic government makes the idea of political rights spread to all citizens, just as the division of property puts the general idea of property rights within reach of all. That, in my view, is one of its greatest advantages.

I am not saying that it is an easy matter to teach all people to make use of political rights; I only say that when that can happen, the results are important.

And I would add that if ever there was a century in which such an attempt should be made, that century is ours.

Do you not see that religions are growing weak and that the idea of the sanctity of rights is vanishing? Do you not see that customs are changing and that the moral idea of rights is going with them?

Do you not notice how on all sides beliefs are given way to arguments, and feelings to planned behavior? If amid this collapse you do not succeed in linking the idea of rights to personal interest, what other means will be left to you to govern the world, if not fear?

In America the people were given political rights at a time when it was difficult for them to misuse them because the citizens were few and their ways of life simple. As they have grown more powerful, the Americans have not greatly increased the powers of democracy. Rather they have extended their democracy by increasing the number of people who have political rights.

There can be no doubt that the moment when political rights are granted to a people who have till then not had them is a time of crisis. A crisis which is often necessary but always dangerous.

A child may kill when he does not understand the value of life. He carries off other people's property before he knows that his own may be taken from him. At the moment when political rights are granted to a person, he is in much the same position with respect to those rights as is a child faced by unknown things.

This truth can be tested even in America. Those states in which the citizens have longest enjoyed their rights are those in which they still best know how to use them.

It cannot be repeated too often. Nothing is more wonderful than the art of being free, but nothing is harder to learn how to use than freedom.

### READING REVIEW

1. Why is respect for rights important to a nation, in de Tocqueville's estimation?
2. Why have Americans, according to de Tocqueville, formed a high idea of political rights?
3. Why did so little misuse of political rights take place in America?
4. Explain why de Tocqueville thinks the price of liberty is high?