

out of his religious convictions. The world was divinely governed by forces, "not mechanical but dynamic, interpenetrating and controlling all existing things from the utmost bounds of space to the smallest granule on the earth's surface, from the making of the world to the lightest action of man." Divine law was everywhere, and the welfare of man depended on a faithful interpretation of it. Society was an organism, not an organisation, not a fortuitous concourse of individuals living together on conditions they could arrange for themselves, but on conditions that were inexorably laid down "from the beginning." Every step taken was a step in either the right or the wrong direction, every law passed would be successful or the reverse according as it corresponded to, or deviated from, the "divine law." Convenience and expediency, the rights of man, government by majorities, were but a delusion and a snare.

When democracy was preached as an end, not a means to an end, when it was asserted that the ills of a country would be remedied by an extension of the suffrage, he poured out on all such cant, as he termed it, the vials of his wrath. When "laissez faire" was the political ideal of reformers, when it was the accepted theory that government was to pass a "self-denying ordinance," prohibiting itself from interfering in the affairs of men except to protect property, and the result would be the best of all possible worlds, he thundered against this surrender of authority as the maddest speculation ever conceived by the brain of man. The result would be, he maintained, the worst of all possible worlds—a world in which human life, such a life as human beings ought to live, would become impossible. What captain would dream of sailing his vessel on such principles, of deciding the course, or of calculating the longitude by a vote of the majority of the crew? What general would

dream of forswearing discipline in his army, and of winning victories by allowing every man to do as he pleased? And the government of a nation was infinitely more difficult and more complex than the art of navigation or the art of strategy. It was simply inconceivable that a nation could "progress" anywhere but down to Tophet that gave Judas Iscariot and St. Paul an equal voice in shaping its destinies.

Men had "rights" certainly: their rights consisted in finding out the wisest and the best among them, or in Lord Rosebery's phrase, the most efficient, and setting them to rule. He recognized, however, the great central truth of democracy—that it was an effort to get rid of sham-rulers, that no rulers were better than bad ones, and that at heart it was an endeavour after the heroic. "When a nation," he says in 'Past and Present,' "not yet doomed to death, is rushing down to ever deeper Baseness and Confusion, it is a dire necessity of Nature's to bring in her Aristocracies, her Best, even by forcible methods. When their representatives cease entirely to be the Best, Nature's poor world will very soon rush down again to Baseness; and it becomes a dire necessity of Nature's to cast them out. Hence French Revolutions, Five-point Charters, Democracies, and a mournful list of Etceteras in these our afflicted times."

Carlyle had not reached these conclusions without deep meditation and profound thought. He had been born and bred a Radical; the misery that had existed after the Great War had burned into his soul an indelible impress. In his youthful enthusiasm he had hoped great things from the Reform Bill of 1832, which was to be the trumpet peal heralding the dawn of the millennium; but he had been bitterly disappointed. The Reform Bill had become law, and the poor were none the better off: the power in the State had been shifted from the aristocracy to the middle classes.