

# Machinery and Ideals in Politics.

We do not habitually recognize the existence of any connection between things which we <sup>usually</sup> ~~are~~ accustomed to describe as mechanical and those which we <sup>usually</sup> designate as ideal. Yet it may be that in ~~many~~ <sup>some</sup> instances they are much more correlated ~~between them~~ than we are ~~at first inclined to suppose~~ <sup>now accustomed to suppose</sup> and ~~in regard to political events~~ <sup>in regard to political events</sup> ~~from the object which I had in view when I selected the subject of my address to you~~ <sup>to direct your attention to the intimate connection which I have long believed ~~to be~~ <sup>exists</sup> between ~~the~~ <sup>political</sup> ~~ideals that they~~ <sup>are</sup> ~~constituted~~ <sup>by</sup> ~~by~~ <sup>of the machinery</sup> which they are to be more nearly approached or by which we may at least</sup>

He more directly <sup>He does not</sup>  
their existence, and of their <sup>always receive the</sup>  
claims upon our energies and <sup>attention which they demand</sup>  
aspirations. <sup>On one occasion</sup> ~~It was~~ Matthew  
Arnold. I believe ~~who~~ under-  
took to remind his contemporaries  
that they could not secure  
their political salvation by  
machinery, and the literary  
garrots of the press immediately  
commenced and have continued  
to repeat the statement as if it  
embodied the greatest discovery  
yet made in ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> science of  
~~politics~~ <sup>politics</sup>. But whatever may  
be the amount of truth con-  
tained in the dictum, it is  
certain that the best work  
cannot be done in the field  
of politics any more than in  
any other sphere of human  
activity with defective or un-  
suitable tools. No writer in the

English language has displayed more insight and discrimination in the discussion of political questions than the late John Stuart Mill and he has very emphatically declared that the first criterion of the goodness of a government is the degree in which it tends to increase the sum of good qualities in the governed collectively and individually, and he proceeds to observe that as it is the good qualities of the people that supply the moving force which works the machinery of the government, the second criterion of the merit of a government is the degree in which its machinery is adapted to take advantage of the good qualities of the people and make them instrumental for right purposes. It therefore

follows that before we can determine which is the best form of government or in other words the best kind of political machinery for any particular people at any particular time. We must previously ascertain the extent of their Moral (Development) and intellectual capacity. We must also take into account their <sup>and</sup> habits and ~~characteristics~~ <sup>sentiments</sup> of the people ~~when discussing the question of their capacity to administer any particular form of government.~~

It was at one time the habit of certain short-sighted and superficial opponents of democracy to cite the short and stormy career of the second Republic in France as a proof of the inherent weakness and defects of <sup>all</sup> republican and democratic institutions. But

These hasty critics conveniently ignored the fact that during the short period of the immediately preceding half century three forms of monarchical government had been established in France and each of them had in turn been upset by similar revolutions. Since then a fourth form of monarchical government has been established and returned in the same country and the present republic has already existed a longer time than any previous government that has been created in France since the revolution of 1789. If the apparent stability of the present republic in France is due to the fact that it is making better use of the good qualities of the French people than that which was made of them by any of

its predecessors then it is un-  
doubtedly the best form of govern-  
ment for that country. If on the  
other hand it is depending for  
support upon the worst qualities  
of the French people and is not  
providing a sphere for their  
best energies and <sup>and</sup> highest  
aspirations it is doomed to  
follow the governments which  
have preceded it. But the  
question which I desire to place  
before you for consideration  
to-night is not so much the  
capacity of any form of govern-  
ment or political machinery  
to utilise energies and desires  
that are actively operating at  
a given time. Or any concomitancy  
as the potency of institutions to  
awaken or to hinder the genesis  
of good qualities and desires in  
a people capable of developing

them under commensurate influence  
and I am desirous of discussing  
this question with special reference  
to the political machinery and  
the political life of the Aus-  
tralian colonies.

It has been said that every  
people country obtains as good  
a government as it deserves, and  
I believe that the statement is  
largely true. But like all similar  
generalisations it requires some  
~~more~~ qualifications. A people  
may deserve a better government  
than the one they possess <sup>at</sup> any  
particular time, because that  
government may be a temporary  
accident and not the natural  
and legitimate product of their  
political capacity. A people  
may also deserve a better form  
of government than the one  
which they possess at a particular

period of their history in the sense that they are capable of being trained and prepared for the reception of a better form by virtue of their national character, possession of particular moral qualities and characteristics. But if a people in the highest and fullest sense of the word deserves a better government than that which it possesses it will ultimately acquire it, because the desert in that case will include a deliberate desire and an earnest effort to obtain it. ~~Let us now~~

Let us now ask ourselves whether the peoples of the several Australasian Colonies are in possession of governments as good as they deserve, and if the question be asked enquiring to be made in reference to the question of the capability of the Australasian people to

Maintain and administer a form  
of government that would give  
better results than those produced  
by the political institutions now  
in existence in these colonies,  
I say at once that we do deserve  
better government than we get.  
But if the question is asked  
with reference to the existence  
of any wide spread desire for  
the possession of better political  
institutions or of any earnest  
effort to obtain them then it  
may be that we get all we deserve  
because we have not yet mani-  
fested any desire or put forth  
any effort to improve the political  
machinery around us. Yet we  
constantly hear on every side of us  
expressions of dissatisfaction with  
the conduct of our legislators and  
our Ministers, and it cannot be  
denied that a large amount of

that dissatisfaction is well founded.  
But the curious part of the matter  
is that this expression of dissatisfaction  
generally takes the form of con-  
demnation or I might say de-  
nunciation of the particular  
persons who happen to be the  
legislators or ministers of the  
day, and ~~that must imply either~~  
<sup>that</sup> those persons are the most  
capable or at least are as capable  
as any others in the community  
for the positions they occupy, or  
that there are other persons in  
the community more capable of  
doing the work of government  
but who cannot be got to do it.  
If the second alternative is correct  
the question of prime importance  
for us is why the more capable  
men cannot be secured to govern  
us? If they are in the midst of  
us and if the people really wish

to be governed by them then it must be our political machinery which prevents them being chosen.

The only other possible cause explanation of the absence of the more capable men from our parliaments and from official life is their own deliberate refusal to assume the task and responsibilities of governing us, but I have no hesitation in saying that wherever such a state of things exists the character of the political machinery is largely responsible for it.

The form of the government in each of the Australasian colonies is entirely representative, and I make this statement in full remembrance of the fact that the Legislative Councils in some of the colonies are composed of members appointed by the

Government upon nomination of  
the Ministers of the day. The Ministers  
who nominate the members of the  
Council are for the most part  
if not entirely ~~elected~~ by the  
~~people~~ legislators who are  
elected by the people and are  
responsible to ~~their~~  
parliament for the selection  
they make, and the persons  
selected are not members of any  
particular section or class in  
the community. In fact it is  
very probable that a nominated  
Council often represents a  
larger variety of interests and  
opinions than a Council elected  
upon the basis of a restricted  
suffrage. ~~What then are we doing~~  
Therefore as we do under govern-  
ments that may be truly described  
as representative, let us ask our-  
selves what is the true principle

\* and of the right of the governed ~~to~~ to determine the misrule of the incapable or the dishonest and to eject them from office.

and the recognised Ideal of repre-  
sentative government? It certainly  
is not the absolute rule of the  
majority of the House by virtue  
of the bare fact that they are  
a majority. If that ~~was~~ the  
essential principle of representative  
government then every law and  
every administrative act ought  
logically to be submitted to the  
vote of the whole body of electors.  
But immediately such a practice was  
established representative government  
~~itself~~ would be at an end and we  
cannot therefore identify the aim  
and essence of representative  
government with the aim and  
essence of a system which can  
~~only be put in force or be established~~  
in the act of destroying the other.  
~~The truth is that we appeal~~  
representative government is  
founded upon ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> recognition of the  
<sup>rights of the</sup> most capable to govern, but, in

~~Supremacy of the~~ ~~right of capacity~~ ~~the~~ ~~capable~~ ~~to~~ ~~govern~~  
~~Capability~~ and in the words of  
Gruyot "All power which exists as  
a fact must, in order to become  
a right, act according to reason  
justice and truth," and "all the  
combinations of the political ma-  
chine ought to tend on the one  
hand to extract whatever of reason  
justice or truth exists in society  
in order to apply it to the prac-  
tical requirements of government,  
and on the other hand to promote  
the progress of society in reason  
justice & truth, and constantly  
to embody this progress of  
society in the actual structure  
of the government."

The fundamental piece  
of machinery in every representative  
government is that which is used  
for the election of the legislators,  
and I have no hesitation in  
saying that a contested election

in a large electorate. Under the electoral systems used in these colonies ~~there~~ nearly always compels a successful candidate to undergo a series of experiences which every honorable and sensitive <sup>man</sup> must regard as more or less degrading for him. We make laws to preserve the purity of elections and to punish severely all <sup>persons</sup> forms of bribery and corruption and yet our contested elections continue to be costly events for the large majority of the candidates. This fact alone indicates some radical defect in the system because it immediately falsifies the proposition that under representative government political power is the free gift of the people and not the personal possession of the legislator.

Gross and direct bribery may

have become comparatively rare  
but while the love of power con-  
tinues to urge men <sup>to possess money</sup> to obtain it,  
they will spend money in pursuit  
of it <sup>as long</sup> as opportunities pre-  
sent themselves for doing it and  
the expenditure promotes the  
result to which it is directed.

It is therefore evident that the  
full ideal of representative  
government will never be realized  
until the power and influence of  
money are eliminated from elections.

There have been many con-  
troversies as to whether the possession  
of a vote should be regarded as a  
natural right ~~as~~ or as a privilege  
to be acquired by some exertion  
or exhibition of merit or as a  
trust conferred by the community.  
For my own part I believe that it  
should be regarded as embracing  
each of those three aspects and

That those persons and those persons only have the right to elect the makers and administrators of the law who come forward spontaneously to exercise it with intelligence and honesty. The man who does not sufficiently value the suffrage, to use it for his own welfare and protection and who requires to be tempted in some way to use it has ceased to have a right to use it for the purpose of creating a legislature which shall make laws for the government of other people. It may be that it is beyond the wit of man to devise an electoral system which shall eliminate every influence that impedes the realisation of the full ideal of representative government, but among a number of more or less imperfect methods we may find

one which will afford less scope than the others for the operation of detrimental agencies and the use of which will bring us much nearer than we are at the present time to ~~the~~ government by the most capable. It was long ago recognized by discriminating students of political science, that a system which gives absolute power to the chance majority of the day might produce results as bad as any that have attended the rule of despots and oligarchies in the past and to some of them it seemed that the surest protection against such an evil was to be found in a due representation of minorities. But the representation of minorities would not necessarily secure the election of the most capable legislators. It would however give another chance for

The election of the most capable; and from this starting point we advance to the position that the most perfect electoral system is that which gives the greatest possible number of chances for the election of the most capable and minimises the opportunities for the operation of all sinister influences and agencies. Such a system has in my judgment been offered to us in that proposed by the late Mr Thomas Gore and now generally known by his name. A few years ago it was embodied in a Bill to amend the Electoral Law of New Zealand in a form which I think will be found to be the most suitable for all the colonies, but unhappily the bill did not become law. The proposal was to divide the

colony into large electorates returning from 6 to 8 members each and to apply Mr. Bare's system to each electorate separately. Under this plan a further modification could be introduced which would enable each elector to give more effect to his preferences than is possible under the original system by assigning progressive values to the successive positions of the names upon the ballot paper. By means of this modification the votes given by every voter for every candidate could be counted and the element of chance would be ~~at~~ eliminated from the system.

For some time after its first publication the Bare system was subjected to the usual criticism which awaits every new idea in politics and was declared to be ~~Utopian~~ Utopian and impracticable.

but it has been ~~adopted~~ tried with various modifications in detail in several instances and has been found to be quite workable. And I believe the most conservative supporter of the rights of minorities as well as the ~~the~~ advocates of the widest democratic suffrage with its appendage of one man one vote would find the Home system fulfil every condition which they allege to be requisite for the equitable representation of all interests and all classes in the community and I am persuaded that its adoption by the Australasian Colonies would inaugurate a new ~~& era~~ era in Australasian politics.

But our electoral system is not the only part of the political machinery of our Australasian constitutions which I believe to be defective for the purposes of securing the true

Subjects of representative government. The adoption of the system of so-called responsible Ministers whose tenure of office depends from day to day upon the votes of a majority of the legislature. Has always appeared to me to have been a grievous misfortune for all the colonies and particularly so for the smaller ones like Tasmania. That system was copied in the Mother Country in the midst of historical and social conditions which never existed in Australasia and its incompatibility with Democracy is manifestly being rapidly demonstrated in the home of its birth. Twenty years ago Frederick Harrison writing in the Fortnightly Review declared that the practical head of the state in England "had become a mere gladiator in a

mob of rhetoricians, a ploughing  
of a tangle of factions, of necessity  
a demagogue, by office a stop  
gap; and since then the tactics  
of the Irish members and other  
sectional representatives have not  
made the description one jot less  
truthful. In copying the constitution  
of the mother country so far as  
the conditions were <sup>permitted</sup> they  
permitted the colonial Statesmen  
believed that they could not err  
in attempting to follow as closely  
as possible a model which the  
experience of ten generations of  
their forefathers had developed.  
Yet if their national prejudices  
had not precluded them from  
doing it they might have profitably  
examined the political institutions  
of several other nations in which  
the social conditions were much  
more similar to those existing in

Australasian than to those existing  
in Great Britain. Among the  
constitutions of many of the separate  
States of the American Union ~~and~~  
the Federal government of Switzerland  
they might have formed a model  
which with slight modifications  
would have been well suited to  
colonial communities. If that  
course had been followed the  
political history of Australasia  
might have been deprived of some  
of its most exciting episodes  
but it would also have been  
free without many a page of the  
pages that record the evil results  
of our unstable executive bargaining  
for support with local and sectional  
factions and interests. The history  
of some of the Australasian colonies  
exhibits nearly as many changes  
of ministry as there have been  
sessions of parliament and it

Surely requires no argument to demonstrate that in the midst of so much commotion and conflict many important and necessary functions of an executive must ~~be~~ <sup>Page</sup> ~~very~~ ~~imperfectly~~ ~~imperfectly~~ fulfilled and that useful legislation must <sup>often</sup> ~~be~~ repeatedly postponed.

It has been argued that the system of cabinet government brings to the front the ablest men in the legislature, and ~~places~~ ~~there~~ puts them in their proper places as the leaders of the people. But this opinion is barely an illusion. The system may evolve the ablest leaders in special circumstances, but its tendency under ordinary conditions is to destroy true leadership and to make nominal leaders of the most subservient followers

of their party. It must also be always remembered that the system includes an opposition which is always ready to mutilate and deform the most beneficial measures of a Ministry simply as a display of strength, and hence ministerial proposals are often framed with more care to present the least possible number of points of attack than to grapple vigorously with the necessities of the country. This is certainly not true leadership however desirable an exhibition it may be of tactical skill in parliamentary warfare. If we wish to get true leaders we must offer them some security of tenure in their position and when we refuse to give it to them we compel them either to ~~ab~~ abandon us to the guidance of inferior men or to make bargains for support which by which they are insidiously ~~deteriorated~~ <sup>ruined</sup>.

Men of exceptional ability and strength of character may do good work under almost any system but the purpose for which the machinery of popular government ought to be designed is not to provide for the government of the people by leaders of exceptional ~~ability~~ <sup>ability</sup> but to provide the best means of teaching the people to govern themselves. So far as the performance of public functions by individuals acting as the organs or agents of the community is a necessity of its political existence, it is eminently desirable that the discharge of those functions should be entrusted to the citizens most capable of performing them, but let it be always remembered that true democracy is government by law and that it will produce its best results when the whole body of the people recognize that

They are themselves responsible for the character of the law and for the manner in which it is administered. This result cannot be attained without a constant sense of citizenship or in other words a sense of partnership in the collective life of the nation whose honor and welfare and whose disgrace and detriment are shared by all. When this sentiment is strongly developed in a people they will be well governed under any institutions which permit them to take an active part in the work; but it may be that when the sense of citizenship is weak some institutions may be better fitted than others to strengthen it, and I have for a long time believed that if the collective life of the people of the Australasian colonies was widened by Federation their sense of citizenship would be widened.

become more intense, and their political life would be more earnest and more elevated. It might be a difficult proposition to establish that the present political institutions of the Australasian colonies are in themselves obstacles to Australasian federation, but it cannot be denied that so far as they have proved facile instruments for the dominance of provincial interests they have impeded the growth of Federal and national sentiment. At the same time it must be admitted that our national aspirations have hitherto been weak and vague, and our greatest need to-day is a clearer vision of national life, which shall have the power to attract us to follow it over every obstacle that meets us and against every discouragement that our present environment engenders. Doubtless

those of us who shall live to  
see the federation of Australasia  
an accomplished fact will  
continue to see many things  
in our political life that will  
remind us that machinery  
alone cannot regenerate  
human nature, but for  
nations as for individuals  
the ideal is a fountain of per-  
petual youth, and to drink  
deeply of it will never fail to  
invigorate and purify and  
elevate us.

It may be that the <sup>South of the</sup> ~~provisional~~ ~~national~~ ~~generation~~  
of Australasian ~~nation~~ ~~will~~ <sup>carry the day in</sup> ~~will~~ have to wait for the  
advent of a ~~later~~ generation ~~not~~  
dominated ~~from the present~~ <sup>one</sup> by ~~the~~  
aspirations and sentiments that  
stretch across the ~~Indian~~ ocean to!

It may be that the Australasian  
Nation will not be born until the  
advent of generation not do



The intensely provincial aspect under  
which ~~every~~ political questions are  
naturally considered <sup>under existing conditions</sup> by the people  
of each separate colony ~~is the present situation~~  
~~political under the present conditions~~ <sup>in which the</sup> ~~present~~  
~~aspect only themselves necessarily~~ <sup>can</sup>  
~~make a narrow necessity narrow~~  
~~the province cannot necessarily~~  
~~exclude from view the larger~~  
~~relations in which the same~~  
questions would necessarily be  
discussed ~~in relation to the~~  
by the ~~as an early sign of the people of the~~  
whole of the Australasia, ~~and leads~~  
these provinces leads ~~as permits~~  
to produce ~~for a little in~~  
the life of political life of each colony, thereby  
~~helps the political life of each colony~~ <sup>separately</sup>  
with ~~its own~~ ~~within~~ ~~into~~ ~~spaces~~ the  
narrow limits ~~and~~ ~~consequently~~ ~~the~~  
with the political life of each separate colony is ~~by~~  
an attempt ~~to~~ ~~the~~ ~~void~~ ~~created~~ ~~by~~ ~~the~~  
~~absence of~~ ~~the~~ ~~question~~  
a ~~continent~~ ~~is~~ ~~in~~ ~~little~~  
time

Under the political life of each separate  
colony is compressed within a sphere ~~which~~  
~~to measure of it for the evolution of truly~~  
~~great issues~~ circumstances <sup>circumstances</sup>  
for the ~~evolution~~ <sup>evolution</sup> of ~~its~~ national  
elements ~~expression~~ of national  
evolution of ~~evolution~~ <sup>evolution</sup> of national  
sentiments <sup>and</sup> growth of national  
sentiments into their proper proportions  
and ~~their triumph over~~ <sup>for</sup> the local interests  
and personal ambitions which  
~~so narrow a field so restricted an~~  
~~arena encourages and flatters~~ find an  
~~exaggerated~~ congenial atmosphere  
and an exaggerated importance in ~~the~~  
a restricted arena.