

**TRUE AND FALSE
DEMOCRACY.
[1915]**

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True and False Democracy. [1915] by Nicholas Murray Butler

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NICHOLAS MURRAY BUTLER

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TO MY FRIEND

JOHN MORLEY

IN GRATEFUL RECOGNITION OF THE VALUE

OF HIS WRITINGS, HIS TEACHINGS

AND HIS LIFE

76
P.
7.9.38
a.d. d.

If knowledge is power, surely there are times *Preface*
when ignorance seems more powerful still. No
lessons are so little learned as those of past
human experience in politics. In each succeeding
generation men come forward who are rash
or foolish enough to attempt any experiment, no
matter how discredited, and vain enough to at-
tack any tradition or institution, no matter how
fully justified and established. They foment dis-
turbing change and prevent progress.

The name democracy is old, but the thing
itself is quite new. Until the rise of public
opinion, democracy in the modern sense was not
possible. Nevertheless, human nature has been
pretty much the same since history began, and
human strength and human weakness have been
exhibited and tested in almost every possible
way. The world may know, if it cares to, how
human beings will act under certain circum-

Preface

stances and conditions. Yet we are constantly asked to forget or overlook the teachings of all this experience, and to act politically as if the past political actions of human beings had left no mark.

The modern newspaper has greatly extended the rule of the formula or the phrase. The head-line of to-day is the rallying-cry of to-morrow. A motto is substituted for a principle. The words democracy, democratic, undemocratic, are constantly used in this way for purposes that are either bad or misleading. The appeal is to the mob, not to the people.

It must never be forgotten that the same individuals constitute both the mob and the people. When their lower nature rules, these individuals are a mob; when their higher nature guides, they are the people. The demagogue makes his appeal to the mob; the political leader, the statesman, makes his appeal to the people.

The perfect state of Plato, in which all rulers shall be philosophers, will be at hand when every member of a self-governing community has a clear understanding of what democracy really

means and implies, as well as a character strong *Preface* enough to fix his own relations to his fellows in accordance with moral principle.

If the papers contained in this little volume contribute in any way to this end, they will have served their purpose.

It is futile to expect a regeneration of man by act of legislature or through a redistribution of the world's goods. Socialism would wreck the world's efficiency for the purpose of redistributing the world's discontent. The moral education of the individual human being to the point where he realizes the squalid poverty of selfishness and the boundless riches of service, will alone lift civilization to a higher plane and make true democracy secure.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
May 4, 1907

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