

PREFACE

WHAT is the cause of the grave changes that are coming over the American Republic — the extraordinary inequality in the distribution of wealth manifested on every hand; the rise of class feeling; the growth of the aristocratic idea; the lapse from morals in business and private relations among the very rich; the growth of elements of physical, mental and moral deterioration among the working masses; the appearance of militant trade-unionism; the perversion of the injunction principle and the use of soldiers in strikes; the corruption of Federal, State and municipal politics; the deterring of press, university and pulpit from an open expression; the centralization of government; the advances in foreign aggression?

Such things did not exist at the foundation of the Republic. Why should they now appear when we have grown so wonderfully in population and wealth? Why should this age contrast so unfavorably with that when the nation numbered less than our chief city now contains?

The answer is that something is rampant now that existed only in rudimentary form then. That something is Privilege.

This volume strives to show in a brief, suggestive way how privileges granted or sanctioned by government underlie the social and political, mental and moral manifestations that appear so ominous in the Republic. The monopoly of natural opportunities, heavy taxes upon pro-

duction, private ownership of public highways and other lesser privileges cause the great inequalities in the distribution of wealth which are evident all about. For these are not powers to produce wealth, but powers to appropriate it.

This inequality in distribution causes the formation in the community of two clearly marked and powerful classes with distinct views and mutually hostile feelings. One of them is lifted into superabundance and the weaknesses and vices that spring from it; while within that class is born the spirit of superiority and the feeling that the "work people" were created expressly to work for it.

The "work people," composing the great body of the population, constitute the opposing class. Cut off by monopoly from free access to natural opportunities, and robbed of and taxed on the fruits of their labor at every turn, they have been reduced to an intense competition for a living. In the skilled trades they have organized into unions to control the supply of their kinds of labor, in order to keep up and, if possible, increase its price. This organization for defense brings a power for offense that, governed by a narrow or an unscrupulous spirit, may be exercised in opposition to general public rights.

There has, therefore, risen up in the nation two great, belligerent elements: leagued privileges on the one side, labor unionism on the other. When Privilege cannot make terms with labor unionism, by which it may peacefully rob the public, it makes war against it. Its chief weapons are soldiers and an extraordinary development of the judicial enjoining order.

And not only to help in this, but to protect and extend the favors that are its life, Privilege further endeavors to control politics by corruption, and to influence public

opinion through purchase or intimidation of the press and through gifts to the university and the pulpit.

All this leads to the centralization of government and to foreign aggression, and reveals in the Republic startling parallels with great nations which, after brilliant development, entered upon the path of ruin and death.

All this is treated not in abstract, but in concrete style; with citation of events and forces visible to any who will look. A very much larger array of facts might be presented with their minor details and qualifications, but that might confuse the purpose of this volume, which is to show sharply that the anomalous and seemingly unrelated state of things, social and political, mental and moral, that are so gravely disturbing the Republic are in reality related and spring from privileges granted or sanctioned by government.

Yet this volume is not an outcry of pessimism. It is a word of warning, but also of hope. Tax land monopoly to death, thereby enabling the remission of all taxation now embarrassing production, and take all public highway functions into public hands, and the main causes of the unequal distribution of wealth would be removed. The destruction of the numerous secondary causes would quickly follow.

The Republic rightly boasts of great achievements, and it has in reserve power for great things to come. But half-way measures will be worse than futile, since they will give growing time to Privilege. The one sure way to cure the ills that afflict the nation is to destroy Privilege at the root. And that, and only that, accords with the mandates of Justice.

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