



CHAPTER III

THE PROFIT ACCOUNT

THIS *bouleversement* of society, this change from the country to the city, from individualism to communalism, from the self-sufficient household to the self-sufficient city; this shifting of the centre of life from the individual to the many, from isolation and independence to unity and dependence, has been accompanied by gains and losses to society. The city has woven our lives into the lives of others. No longer is each household an independent one, producing for its own wants alone and supplied from within. The texture of the fabric has been altered. It is now closely woven. And this change is far more than an industrial one—a mere adjustment of mankind to his work. It is but part of man's desire for a larger life, for freer social intercourse, for amusement, as well as a response to the industrial revolution which has superseded domestic industry by the machine.

Within the city the game of life is played, and there are many capital prizes. Here, opportunity and fortune are to be found. Here business centres. Here life is full and human. The farm offers none of these things. It is barren of great

possibilities, barren, even, of a living, the farmer says. The city is El Dorado, the promised land which fires the imagination. Failure may come, it is true, but there is the chance, and life, movement, and recreation even in failure. The saloon is something, while the streets, the parks, the theatre, the church, one's fellows, all make up the canvas of life even to the poorest.

And the city has given the world culture, enlightenment, and education along with industry and commercial opportunity. The advance in recent years in this regard has been tremendous. Compare our London, Paris, Berlin, or New York with these cities fifty years ago. Then, life in any large sense was limited to a few. To-day, to an ever-increasing mass of the population, opportunities are crowding one upon another. Not only is education generously adapted to the needs of all, but night schools, art exhibitions, popular lectures and concerts, college settlements, the parks, playgrounds, a cheap press, labor organizations, the church, all these are bringing enlightenment at a pace never before dreamed of. Day by day opportunities gain in volume. A decade almost encompasses the history of such movements for democratic opportunity.

All this is enlarging life, modifying our civilization, deepening the significance of democracy. It is rendering possible a higher standard of liv-

ing. A new conception of municipal purpose has come in. It is neither conscious nor defined as yet, but in the midst of the outward manifestations of municipal activity, an unrecognized broadening of the culture and life of the city is going on, of immense significance to the future.

Much of this is being expressed through private channels. But that the private activities of to-day will become the public ones of to-morrow is inevitable. The crèche, kindergarten, settlement, playgrounds, public baths, lodging houses, hospitals were inspired by private philanthropy. They are slowly passing under public control. Merely to enumerate what has been done during the past few years in the matter of school administration would form a chapter in itself. The same is true of the care of juvenile offenders. It is manifest in every department of city affairs. The possibility of life is increasing more rapidly than at any other period in the history of the world. It is less than a decade since Josiah Quincy, while Mayor of Boston, proposed the erection of public baths and gymnasiums and the opening of playgrounds in the poorer sections of the city. When made, the suggestion was assailed as socialistic. To-day, without protest, the City of Boston expends \$500,000 annually for parks and playgrounds and over \$100,000 annually for baths and gymnasiums. Over \$3,000,000

has been expended for these purposes in a few years' time. There are now twenty-one playgrounds in the city; while summer camps, public concerts, bathing beaches, and public lavatories have still further added to the comfort of the poor. During this interval, appropriations for these purposes have crept into the budgets of nearly all of our large cities, while kindergartens, summer schools, manual training, free lectures, and public concerts are rapidly finding a place in city administration along with the expenditures for police, fire, and health protection.

But such a schedule of items is but a small part of the gain which civilization has made through the city. They are but evidences of the fact that life has become a social, not an isolated thing. The entire groundwork of society is being relaid under a system of closer political relationship. But a few generations ago, civilization was based on individualistic lines. The city has brought us whatever sense of social responsibility we now have. In a sense all this is socialism. We do not call it that. But neither does the German nor the Englishman call the undertakings of his city socialistic.

The humanizing forces of to-day are almost all proceeding from the city. They are creating a new moral sense, a new conception of the obligations of political life, obligations which, in earlier

conditions of society, did not and could not exist. Step by step individual rights have been merged into larger social ones. And it is this very increase in public activities that renders the city as attractive to the rich as it is to the poor. In earlier days, even the most elementary public functions were performed by the individual. He paved, cleaned, and lighted the street before his door. He was his own constable. Such health protection as he enjoyed was the result of his own vigilance. Education was conducted at home or by the church. The library was a priestly possession, as was all learning. His house was his castle, even in the midst of the city, and society offered him little save the administration of justice and protection from foreign foes.

To-day the city protects his life and his property from injury. It safeguards his health in countless ways. It oversees his house-construction, and protects him from fire. It cleans and lights his streets, collects his garbage, supplies him with employees through free employment bureaus. It educates his children, supplies them with books, and in many instances with food. It offers him a library, and through the opening of branches almost brings it to his door. It offers nature in the parks; supplies him with opportunities for recreation and pleasure through concerts, lectures, and the like. It maintains a public market; ad-

ministers justice; supplies nurses, physicians, and hospital service, as well as a cemetery for burial. It takes the refuse from his door and brings back water, gas, and frequently heat and power at the same time. It inspects his food, protects his life, and that of his children through public oversight of the conditions of factory labor. It safeguards him from contagious diseases, facilitates communication upon the streets, and in some instances offers opportunities for higher technical and professional education.

All these intrusions into the field of private business have involved no loss of freedom to the individual. Every increase of public activity has, in fact, added to personal freedom. Whatever the motive, the real liberty of the individual has been immeasurably enlarged through the assumption of these activities by the city.

And all this has been achieved at an insignificant cost. The expenditure of the average city of over a quarter of a million inhabitants ranges from \$16 to \$34 per capita, or from \$60 to \$136 per family, a sum which would scarcely pay for the education of a single child at a private institution. And while incompetence, extravagance, and frequently corruption have accompanied much of it, there are few who would contend that the private watchman is more efficient than the public fireman, that private education is better

than public education, that the supply of gas from a private company is cheaper or better than the supply of water under public control.

Such are some of the palpable gains which the city has brought. But the real gain is far more than an enumeration of services or a schedule of activities. The real significance of it all is found in the fact that democracy has been forced into activities which have heretofore lain outside of the sphere of government. The relationships of society are changing. We are being drawn into an intimacy, a solidarity, which makes the welfare of one the welfare of all. A finer spirit is being born. The city is being socialized. It is coming to feel the cruelty of nature's laws and to alleviate their poignancy. The hospitals, parks, kindergartens, playgrounds, and reform schools were the first expression of this feeling. The movement has since changed in character. Its motives are justice, rather than philanthropy, and it is expressing itself in a demand for reform in our methods of taxation, the solution of the housing problem, in a desire for cheaper water, transportation, and light.

What the lines of future activity will be, we can only conjecture. Measured by what has been done in the past ten years, the change will be tremendous. For, once organized, modern democracy moves with increasing momentum. We may call

it socialism if we will. This will scarce check its advance. And when these newer services come, their arrival will be welcomed by all classes just as were the public schools, libraries, parks, and water works, the police, fire, and health departments, whose control by the city has increased the happiness and safety of city life to all.