



CHAPTER XIX

THE CITY FOR THE PEOPLE

THE city is not only the problem of our civilization, it is the hope of the future. In the city democracy is awakening, it is beginning to assert itself. Here life is free and eager and countless agencies coöperate to create a warmer sympathy, a broader sense of responsibility, and a more intelligent political sense. Already the city has attained a higher degree of political responsiveness than has the commonwealth which gave it being and which jealously resents its growing independence. In many instances it is better governed than is the state or the nation at large. It is freer from the more subtle forms of corruption. For the open bribe, the loan, or even the game of poker in which the ignorant councilman is permitted to win a handsome stake are not the only means employed. Self-interest, a class-conscious feeling, the fancied advantage of party may be as powerful a motive for evil as the more vulgar methods with which we are familiar. The sinister influences bent on maintaining the *status quo*, on the prevention of necessary legislation, the control of the party, the caucus, or the convention; methods

which are in vogue in national and state affairs, may be even more dangerous to democracy than the acts which violate the criminal code and which are becoming intolerable to public opinion. Moreover, in national affairs, the public is less alert, much less able to act collectively or to concentrate attention upon a given issue. The same is true in state affairs, where the divergent interests of the country and the city render united action well-nigh impossible.

The city is also being aroused to social and economic issues as well as to political ones. It is constantly taking on new activities and assuming new burdens. Everything tends to encourage this, while many things render it imperative. By necessity we are forced to meet the burdens of a complex life. We cannot live in close association without common activities, without abandoning some of our liberties to regulation. Not only do health, comfort, and happiness demand this, self-protection necessitates it.

Some of the activities which the city has assumed, or will assume, have been suggested. Through them many of the losses which the city has created will be made good. By these means the city will become fuller of opportunity than the scattered rural life which it has displaced. A conscious housing policy will be adopted. The tenement will become habitable, comfortable, and

safe. Cheap and rapid transit will lure the population from the crowded slum into smaller suburban centres. For the city of the future will cover a wide area.

The same motives that have opened up breathing spots in the form of parks, as well as public baths and gymnasiums, in the crowded quarters will, in time, lead to the establishment of city club-houses, winter recreation centres, where such advantages as are now found in the social settlement will be offered. About these centres the life of the community will focus for study, play, recreation, and political activity. Here concerts, lectures, and human intercourse will be offered. A sense of the city as a home, as a common authority, a thing to be loved and cared for, will be developed. In the city club the saloon will find a rival. From such centres charity work will be carried on. Here neglected children will be cared for, here the boys and girls will find an opportunity of escape from the street, and the mother and father a common meeting ground which is now denied them. For city life not only destroys the home of the poor, it promotes divorce. The tenement drives its dwellers to the streets and to the saloon. Private philanthropy has done much to relieve this condition through the settlement, but the service it renders is as much a public one as are the parks, the hospitals, or the schools. For the settlement is

the equivalent of the outdoor park: Even from a pecuniary point of view it is a good investment to the city. The settlement promotes order, it lessens crime, it reduces petty misdemeanors, and organizes the life and energy of the slum and turns it into good channels. The uniform testimony of police officials is to the effect that a settlement or a playground is as good as a half-dozen policemen.

When the city becomes its own factory inspector, the problem of school attendance will be simplified. Then the city will be able to coordinate its administration and enforce its own ordinances. With reduced cost of transportation, through the public ownership of the means of transit, with free books and possibly free luncheons to school children, compulsory education will become a possibility. For the problem of education is largely economic or industrial. Our cities are now in the illogical position of enforcing school attendance upon those who cannot afford even the insignificant cost of the same.

These reforms will be possible through home rule, through the city-republic. With the city free in these regards it will be able to raise the educational age, adopt manual-training and trades' schools, fit its instruction to local needs, and ultimately elevate the standard of life of all classes. With the city free, the administration of our cor-

rectional institutions may be fitted to the crime. Probation courts and city farm schools may then be established and provision made for those of tender years who, in many cities, are still imprisoned with criminals, branded with the mark of crime, a brand which they can never outlive, a memory which they can never forget, an influence that can never be eradicated. Then the city will be able to discriminate between the offences of ignorance and poverty and those of instinct. Today they are all classed together. The poor who have unwittingly violated some local ordinance, such as blocking a sidewalk, driving a garbage cart without a license, failing to remove rubbish, or the like, when arrested, if unable to find bail, are cast into jail to await trial or to serve their time. An examination of the police-court blotter of the average city leads one to wonder if the offences of society against its own do not equal those of the individual against his fellows. Justice, as administered in these courts, probably hurts quite as much as it helps, and society, by its thoughtlessness, creates as much crime as it prevents. The solicitude of the common law for the occasional innocent has not been extended to the thousands of real innocents, to the children, the unfortunate, the ignorant, whom indifference punishes and, in punishing, destroys. Thousands of men and women are sent to the jails, workhouses,

and penitentiary every year who should have been sent to the hospital, to an inebriate asylum, to the country, or, much better, given work. Their offence is of a negative sort. It is not wilful. It is industrial or economic; they could not catch on.

By natural processes inability to maintain life in store, factory, or sweat-shop produces the outcast woman, just as sickness, irregular employment, hard times yield their unvarying harvest of vagrants, with the sequence of the lodging house, the street, and ultimately a life of petty crime. Such a career is not often taken from choice, but by misfortune. And society often arrests, sentences, and punishes, when it should help and endeavor to reclaim by work, kindness, and assistance.

We have had our public schools for so long that we accept them as a commonplace. But we do not appreciate that the high schools are raising millions of citizens to an educated estate which was known to but a limited number a few years ago. The effect of this infusion of culture into our life is beginning to make itself felt. And in the years to come, when education has, in fact, become compulsory, and the school age has been raised to a higher standard, the effect will be tremendous. Along with the schools go the public libraries. Branches and distributing agencies are extending their influence into every part of the city. Through them opportunity is offered for a con-

tinuation of study, even after the door of the school has closed.

Provision for public concerts in summer as well as in winter has already found a place in many municipal budgets. With the development of the city club there will come public orchestras, art exhibitions, and the like that will brighten the life of the community. Something like this is already being done through the libraries which are being constructed with assembly halls and meeting rooms for this purpose. Here and there the idea is taking form of utilizing the public-school buildings as local clubs. The basement, gymnasiums, and assembly rooms are being opened in the evening and during the summer months. In time there will be a modification in their architecture, equipment, and facilities, so that they will be available for a multitude of purposes instead of the limited one of education. In New York City the school buildings are already being erected with roof-gardens, where music, recreation, and a common centre for the life of the locality are offered.

These are some of the things the new city will do. It will also care for the sick, as it now does in many cities, through district physicians or visiting nurses attached to the school departments. It will find work and maintain employment agencies. It will supervise factories, mills, and workshops. The latter function is now inadequately

performed by the state at large, and the inefficiency of its performance is largely attributable to the fact that the state is attempting to supervise a matter of local concern. The regulation of the conditions of employment is as much a city function as is the preservation of the health and well-being of the community. It is also a necessary part of school administration.

All these functions are, in a sense, socialistic. But it is such activities as these, it is the care and protection of the people, that inspire love and affection for the city. For these new activities will enlarge our life, not limit it; will insure freedom, not destroy it; will give to the millions whose life goes to the city's upbuilding something more than ten hours of work, eight hours of sleep, a single room in a tenement for a home, and a few hours in the saloon as compensation for it all.

We have already taken the first steps toward such an end. Many of these activities are already performed in many cities without exciting comment. But nowhere have they been adopted as a conscious, working programme, unless it be in the county of London, the cities of Glasgow or Birmingham, or the parish of Battersea, where a coördinated idea of the city seems pretty highly developed. But amazing progress has been made in the United States within the past ten years. The most remarkable advance is in the cities of Bos-

ton, New York, Chicago, and Cleveland, which communities have been transformed in their tendencies if not in their achievements. We are probably in but the beginning of this movement which aims to relieve the cost of city life, to enlarge the opportunities for happiness, and save the oncoming generation from some of the losses which the industrial city has exacted.

How much farther the city will go in its activities is a matter of conjecture. That the educational development will continue is indicated by the impulse it has received in recent years, as well as the jealousy on the part of the public of anything which impairs its efficiency. The same is true of the public libraries, which are being supplemented in many cities by art galleries, public lectures, and concerts. The educational and recreative features of the twentieth-century city are assured, and these on a higher plane of efficiency as well as on a broader basis of culture than has anywhere yet been attempted. If our own cities are to follow the tendencies in England, Germany, France, and Belgium, it is likely that such functions will be greatly extended. Foreign cities are already going in for municipal milk bureaus, the supply of coal, for savings banks, not to speak of many enterprises of a purely competitive and commercial sort.

Many who assent to our advance in educational,

recreative, and charitable activities hesitate at the extension of the community into the field of business. Yet the management of certain industries seems as necessary to the city's well-being as the functions already assumed. The discussion of municipal ownership has heretofore been confined to the natural monopolies, to the franchise corporations, the street railways, gas, water, electric-lighting, telephone, power, and heating companies. These industries are inevitably monopolies. They occupy limited rights of way. They exist by grant from the city. Their business is of a routine nature. The services which they render are universally used. The public health, our comfort and convenience demand that these services should be supplied at a minimum cost. Urban life is so dependent upon them. Their use cannot be avoided, and work, pleasure, education, and domestic convenience are all intimately bound up with their cheap and proper performance. Moreover, the value of such industries is a social one, created by the very existence of the city, by its growth and development. In this respect they differ widely from the purely competitive business.

It would seem to be a rule of general application that whatever is of necessity a monopoly should be a public monopoly. Private monopoly and political liberty seem to be irreconcilable. It is because of the conflict between them that our

politics have suffered, along with our convenience. We have attempted to reconcile these two forces, with the result that liberty has lost in the contest. There is abundant evidence that street-railway fares under municipal ownership could be reduced to three, possibly to two cents. In Germany they have been cut down to two and one-half cents, while in England, where fares are adjusted by the zone system, the average paid in many cities is much less. In Glasgow, the average fare is one and three-fourths cents. In 1894 rates were reduced thirty-three per cent. Since that time the lines have been electro-equipped and greatly extended, while the number of passengers carried increased in eight years from 86,500,000 to 177,000,000, or a growth of one hundred per cent. Yet the net earnings of the Glasgow system, after all allowance for working expenses and necessary maintenance, were \$1,760,000 in 1903. In the cities of New York and Cleveland, where an agitation has been on for the public ownership of electric light and power, it has been shown by reports of expert engineers that current could be produced and sold the consumer at three cents a kilowatt hour. This is from one-half to one-fifth what is usually charged by private companies.

Artificial gas is sold in the United States at from seventy-five cents to two dollars a thousand cubic feet, the average charge being in the neigh-

borhood of a dollar and a quarter. In Great Britain the rate in the municipal plants averages sixty-four cents a thousand, while in a number of cities it is as low as fifty cents. The by-products of coal gas have become so valuable that the gas itself is said to cost but little in the mains. If this be true, public ownership would greatly reduce the cost of light and fuel, while the problem of smoke abatement would be open to solution through the use of gas as a fuel.

Moreover, many things are possible through public management that cannot be achieved through private control. The streets and public ways can be better lighted, while the use of gas can be greatly extended among the poor. For the city can adjust the rates, payments, and conditions of use so as to promote the convenience of the user. This is the policy adopted in Great Britain, where one person out of every five uses gas in the cities, the use being promoted by municipal coöperation in many ways.

In the discussion of municipal problems it is necessary to bear in mind that the issue of city life has become one of decent human existence. In England, it has become the most vital of imperial problems, for town disease has already affected her army, her industry, her life itself. Even in America the barest conveniences of life are denied to millions, conveniences that make life endurable

to the majority of us. Every social adjustment involves some cost. Advancing society exacts some sacrifice. But under our present adjustment the sacrifice is borne by the many for the enjoyment of the few.

That democracy will seek to adjust these burdens so as to improve conditions of life is inevitable. The gain which has been made in the past ten years has been tremendous. Things that were denounced as socialistic but a few years ago are now accepted as commonplace. And greater and greater demands are being made in this direction each year. The time is not far distant when equality of chance, in so far as education is concerned, will be offered to all, while opportunities for recreation, which are now confined to a few and which a few years since were unknown to any, will become the common accessories of city life.

It is along these lines that the advance of society is to be made. It is to come about through the city. For here life is more active, while the government is close to the people. It is already manifest on every hand. Through the divorce of the city from state control this progress will be stimulated. The city will become a centre of pride and patriotism. Here art and culture will flourish. The citizen will be attached to his community just as were the burghers of the mediæval towns. Through direct legislation the city will be democratized.

Public opinion will be free to act. Then the official will be holden to a real responsibility, while national politics will no longer dominate local affairs, for the test of the candidate for office will be his citizenship in the community which he serves.

At the same time the burden of existence will be materially relieved. The great cost of living within the city is largely attributable to ground rent on the one hand, and the cost of such services as transportation, gas, water, and fuel on the other. From one-fourth to one-half of the worker's income is absorbed by these charges. By the municipalization of the latter services and the reduction of charges to cost, a portion of this loss can be regained. Likewise, by a beautiful law of social adjustment, the burdens created by the growth of society, the ground rents of our cities, can be used to compensate the individual for the losses which he has incurred in making the city his home. Such a programme of tax reform is demanded by justice, not by charity. For if it be true that organized society creates this fund, then society should retake it for its own needs and the satisfaction of the wants which are created, and which are everywhere incidental to existence in the city.

Just as by a wonderful provision of nature the moisture is gathered up from the sea, to be later deposited upon the land, which it refreshes and

renders productive, whence it is carried back again from mountain-side, hill, and prairie to the sea; so there is open to us a law of social life which performs the same refreshing and productive service. For the gathering together of mankind into close association, with its varied energies and activities, creates a social treasure; a treasure whose magnitude we are now able to measure, and which treasure, if retaken by society, will enable all of the burdens which close association involves, to be borne without cost to the dwellers therein.

This cycle of social production and social distribution, of rent and taxation, is like the circulation of the blood in the body. Surging from the heart, it is carried to the extremities, stimulating activities and enabling life to be carried on. From the extremities again, it is returned to the lungs, where it is purified and again returned to the heart.

Within the city there is a similar cycle. The crowding of mankind together has created a social fund. This fund is in excess of present needs, and the needs of government can never exceed it. In the creation of this fund mankind pays a price, a tribute for the privilege of city life; but a price that is now assumed by private collectors. Were society to retake this fund, it would repay the individual who has made the sacrifice what he has

lost, it would offer him many of the common necessities of life and usher in an elevated standard of existence.

All this can be brought about through a reform in our methods of taxation. For the taxation of ground rents does not increase rents nor the cost of living. It merely shifts the burden on to him who enjoys the benefit. It cannot be shifted to any one else. It is like special assessments for paving, sewers, and the like. From this source all of the needs of the city can be satisfied. In many communities this principle has already been recognized. The city of Liverpool receives a half-million dollars annually from the lease of its common land. In certain cities in Germany, it has become the policy to buy up surrounding land in advance of the city's growth, and thus retain the benefits and the unearned increment of the city's expansion.

Through these means poverty would be relieved. For poverty is an eradicable thing. It is not a dispensation of Providence, as we interpret the scriptural expression with which we justify our inaction. Nor is it true that the poverty, which is everywhere increasing in our cities, is traceable to "Nature or the Devil, which has made some men weak and imbecile, and others lazy and worthless."¹ Such men there are, and such there

¹ *The Trust: Its Book.* Article by S. C. T. Dodd.

will probably always be. But poverty in city and country is largely the result of human laws. It is the natural, as it is the inevitable, product of legal institutions, which are open to correction. These institutions are most aggressively operative in Great Britain and America, where industrial progress is most advanced and wealth is most abundant. Especially in America is poverty traceable to the monopoly of the land and its withholding from use by those who would work it. In our cities it is the burden of rent, along with the franchise monopolies, that imposes the heaviest burden on the poor. Aside from this, within and about every large city, land is held out of use for speculative purposes, while the city is filled with men eager for an opportunity. It is this dog in the manger policy of acquiring and holding out of use land which other men would work that has changed the character of America within the past twenty years from a nation incredulous of poverty into a nation of rapidly increasing tenancy and landless men. It is this that closes opportunity and must of necessity reduce both nominal as well as real wages. Whatever may be the extent of poverty to-day, (and we have recently had some alarming testimony, if not proof, of its widespread existence from the pen of Mr. Robert Hunter) the poverty of the next generation will be very great. For

in no nation of western civilization has monopoly affixed its hold to industry as it has in the United States. With it has gone a marked increase in the cost of living, as well as a closing of opportunity. To this is to be added the injustice of our federal taxes, which are designed like an exaggerated poll-tax and fall almost exclusively on the poor. America is to-day struggling under a burden of monopoly charges in rent, franchise and railway privileges, and taxes on the necessities of life, unparalleled in the civilized world outside of Russia. The poor are held between the burden of unjust taxation on the one hand and monopoly on the other, and the result must inevitably be a decrease in wages, a reduction of the standard of living, and a great increase in poverty.

In the cities it is within our power to lift the burden. The extension of the activities of the city and the reduction of the cost of service on municipal monopolies will do something. But the greatest gain will come through a change in our methods of taxation and the assumption of the unearned increment of the land for public uses.

But the fiscal advantages of the single tax upon land values are not the chief of the advantages which would follow. Through its introduction the bad tenement would disappear, while the vacant lands within and without the city would in-

vite building. A stimulus to industry would result which would increase the demand for labor. This, in turn, would increase wages. But beyond all this a new freedom would arise, while the opportunity of access to the undeveloped resources of America would be like the discovery of a new continent. For while America is the richest country in the world in resources, its population per square mile is still less than one-tenth of that of many European countries.

Through such means as these the city will cease to be a necessary abyss of poverty. It is our institutions and our laws, not a divine ordinance or the inherent viciousness of humankind, that are at fault. Our evils are economic, not personal. Relief is possible through a change in our laws, in an increase in the positive agencies of the government, and the taxing for the common weal of those values which are now responsible for much of the common woe. It is not personal goodness that is demanded so much as public intelligence. For the worst of the evils under which America suffers are traceable to laws creating privileges. The evils can be largely corrected through their abolition. This is most easily obtainable in the city, for it is in the city that democracy is organizing and the power of privilege most rampant.

In the past, the extension of the functions of

society has proceeded with an utter indifference to theoretical ideas as to the proper sphere of public activity. While political philosophers have debated the subject, society has ignored the proposals of individualism or socialism. While *a priori* philosophers have reduced the functions of the state to those of the constable, to the protection of life, liberty, and property from external and internal violence, public sentiment, unaided by the logic of any school, has contentedly accepted the formula of Locke that "the end of government was the welfare of mankind," which Thomas Huxley has said was "the noblest and at the same time briefest statement of the purpose of government known to man."