



PREFACE

THE literature on the city deals almost exclusively with the machinery, the personnel, the charter, the legal limitations and relations. Either this or the corruption of the officials. It is a literature of forms and functions. Its point of view is ethical, personal, political. The economic foundations have been passed by as incidental, as a subject of administrative detail. In like manner, municipal reform has been viewed as a thing of conventional morals, of improving the individual citizen, and stimulating his patriotism.

This volume is a reversal of method. It is an attempt at the Economic Interpretation of the City. It holds that the corruption, the indifference, the incompetence of the official and the apathy of the citizen, the disparity of wealth, the poverty, vice, crime, and disease, are due to causes economic and industrial. They are traceable to our Institutions, rather than to the depravity of human nature. Their correction is not a matter of education or of the penal code. It is a matter of industrial democracy. The incidental conditions are personal and ethical. Whether we adopt the personal or the economic interpretation

will determine our attitude towards the problems of modern city life.

The convictions of this volume are the result of several years of actual political experience in the administration of the city of Cleveland, Ohio, as well as of personal study of municipal conditions in the leading cities of America and Great Britain. They represent a drift away from what I have termed the personnel, which is the orthodox view of politics. Instead of the city being controlled by the charter, the suffrage, or by purely political institutions, I have become convinced that it is the economic environment which creates and controls man's activities as well as his attitude of mind. This arouses his civic or his self interest; this underlies the poverty and the social problems with which the city is confronted. This explains contemporary politics. It alone explains conditions in Philadelphia, New York, St. Louis, Cincinnati. In all of our large cities it accounts for the Crokers, the Coxes, the Butlers. It is the economic motive that explains the activity and the apathy; the heavy burden on reform, and the distrust of democracy.

We do not question this motive in the saloon keeper, who organizes his precinct for a liberal Sunday. His politics are not ethical, they are due to self-interest. The same instinct is reflected, consciously or unconsciously, in the

leaders of finance, the franchise-seekers, the banker, and the broker, the lawyer, and the Press; all are fearful of democracy, when democracy dares to believe in itself. We all know that economic self-interest determines the politics of the saloon. We are beginning to realize that the same self-interest is the politics of big business. This realization explains the awakening of democracy, which is taking place in city and state all over the land.

The same is true of the social problems of city life. The worst of the distressing poverty, as well as the irresponsible wealth, is traceable to economic institutions, to franchise privileges and unwise taxation; to laws which are open to correction as they were to creation. Conditions in the tenement are not ethical, not personal, they are traceable to laws of our own enactment. There is no other possible explanation of the fact that destitution is greatest where wealth is most abundant and industry most highly developed.

Almost without question we have accepted the other, the personal explanation of these things. Our programme has been to improve the individual man by education, by charity; not to improve the city by a change in our industrial policy. We have been bailing water with a sieve. The reformatory sends forth one offender only to find two others at the gate. The big business man

may grow disgusted with his traffic in privilege, only to see another man less critical of means take his place. Only by exiling privileges shall we exile corruption. Only by offering opportunity to labor shall we close the doors of our hospitals, almshouses, and prisons. Only by taxing monopoly, will monopoly be forced to let go its hold on the resources of the earth and the means for a livelihood.

My own mind has passed through the evolution here suggested. Starting with the conviction that our evils were traceable to personal causes, to the absence of educational or property qualifications in our suffrage; to the activity of the spoilsman and the saloon keeper in alliance with the foreign voter; to the indifference of our best citizens to politics because it was politics, I have been forced by experience to a changed point of view, to a belief that democracy has not failed by its own inherent weakness so much as by virtue of the privileged interests which have taken possession of our institutions for their own enrichment. From a belief in a business man's government I have come to a belief in a people's government; from a conviction that we had too much democracy I have come to the conviction that we have too little democracy; from a study of history I have been forced to the realization that the progress of civilization has been a constant struggle