

## CIVIC PROGRESS IN AMERICA

VICTOR BRANFORD

ON the cities of America the Industrial Revolution stamped its sign manual in an all-pervading ugliness and confusion, monotony and waste. Multiply those attractive elements indefinitely and there looms up before your gaze the goal of that progress, which for long was almost the sole American civic ideal—the CITY BIG. A swift and sudden reaction in our own day has reversed, none too soon, the direction of advance and re-oriented the civic aspiration of America toward the older and opposite ideal of the “City Beautiful.” In a mood of lavish adornment and with incredible rapidity the cities garlanded themselves with parks and ringed their suburbs with parkways. They dreamed of grandiose civic centres and spacious boulevards. Many cities planned ambitious reconstructions, Hausmann-like in scale and character, and a few are proceeding to carry them out.

The movement toward the “City Beautiful” is far from having exhausted itself. It is still in salutary progress as an æsthetic act of repentance. But another wave of civic emotion has surged into the focus of attention and is running high through the length and breadth of a nation which is a continent. More heavily charged with more complex and positive purposes, this new movement has for its watchword the “City Better.” It expresses itself in three great lines of activity, determined by the problem which it confronts. The achievement of the City Better is taken to postulate at once a moral re-birth, a new economic coöperation, and—as a preliminary to both—a re-investigation of social conditions. These several implications of the ideal, then, have given origin and imparted direction to three distinctive currents of civic enthusiasm. One of these, guided by a succession of remarkable Mayors—veritable City Fathers—is sweeping clean the Augean stables and replacing by administrations of efficiency and economy the old reign of municipal corruption which became a burden as well as a by-word. Another main current of redemptive civic activity (bringing fresh power

to the pre-existing housing-reform and sanitary movement) is organizing a coöperation of the municipal authorities with the railways and the industries in schemes of transit reconstruction within the city area; so that, for instance, it shall no longer take three days to get a truck of wheat from a western to an eastern railway terminus in Chicago, with vile defacement of the city as an incident in the process.

As the first current in the City Better movement is primarily moral, and the second economic and hygienic, the third is fundamentally intellectual. A new social imperative, entitled "Know Your City," is gathering momentum and winning acceptance far and wide. Under its impulse and sanction there is everywhere astir a penetrative spirit of inquiry into the facts and tendencies of city life. Its productivity ranges from the comprehensive "Pittsburgh Survey," whose half-dozen impressive volumes achieved a world publicity, down to the locally exhibited map of sewers, wells and waterpipes resulting from the "sanitary survey" of some western townlet suddenly awakened to the meaning of hygiene. The growing prevalence of the "social survey" in America is attested by many events of peculiar interest. When, for instance, stockholders of a great industrial trust take to demanding from their directorate a "social survey" of labor conditions in their mills to supplement the annual balance-sheet (as was done recently in the case of the Steel Corporation), who shall deny that the day may be approaching when by the Man in the Street, even though it be Wall Street, dividends will be reckoned in life and welfare?

There we talk of remote possibilities, and there are a crowd of others much nearer than that one. The significance of the "social survey" as we find it here and now lies in the testimony it affords of a general spontaneous awakening of citizens to civic consciousness and of a consequent resolve to know and to do. The movement is not one being forced on the cities from without. It has, happily, external sources of guidance, but it is crystallizing from within. Once the "survey idea" has touched the imagination of a city, what wonderful transformations—at least in social re-groupings and liberated energies—may be wrought, let the story of Syracuse tell.

In a city of 150,000 people, within the State of New York, the clergy and the local philanthropic agencies, along with the employers (acting through the Chamber of Commerce) and the working-men (acting through the Trades Council) all come together and enter into a co-partnery for the execution of a "preliminary survey" of their city. They allocate the costs in proportion to the collective means of their respective organizations, two-fifths being borne by the Chamber of Commerce and a fifth each by the other three groups. They call to their aid men of specialized experience from other cities, and thus obtain the services of the most competent experts in housing, in child welfare, in prison reform and other fields of inquiry and betterment. Volunteers for the detailed work of investigation and organization are forthcoming, and there springs into being a little army of physicians, clergymen, lawyers, students of the local university, municipal officials, journalists and plain citizens all metamorphosed for the time being into "civic surveyors." For commander-in-chief, modestly designated the survey director, is obtained the executive head of that admirable initiative, the Department of Surveys and Exhibits of the Russell Sage Foundation in New York City. The resulting five weeks' campaign of active investigation carries the "survey" to the stage of "report." To give publicity to the finding of the provisional reports there is organized a "know your city" week. It begins on a Sunday morning with sermons from forty pulpits on the responsibilities of citizenship. On Monday the schools take up the tale, and among other juvenile contributions is the reading of the prize essays selected from over a thousand written by the pupils on "How to make Syracuse a better city." Daily there are conferences on concrete local problems in the afternoons; in the evenings, mass meetings at which the reports are read and discussed. An exhibition of maps and charts, pictures and photographs of actualities, plans of improvements, is no unessential display of the "know your city week": it is indeed the centre on which its efforts focus. For by this graphic appeal is the surveyors' vision of the city, as It Is and Might Be, most fully evoked also in the minds of others and transmitted to the general body of the citizens. The Exhibition of Civic Surveys and Re-

ports is indeed at once a representation of fact, an evocation of dream, and an impulse to action.

Such is the story of Syracuse and its "preliminary survey." In the comprehensive sweep of its beginnings, in its simultaneous mobilization of all powers and purposes, it could, of course, be matched in but few other cities as yet. Nevertheless it is indicative of a movement demonstrably in progress at a hundred other places. Its significance for the student of survivals and tendencies lies in its interpretation as one of the signs of impending transition from the abstractions of public life to its realities: i. e. from State and national politics to civic and regional politics. Contrast the difference in organization, in mode of working and in educational process between the two systems. Instead of mystic caucuses, mimetic war of faction-fight, fevered elections, partisan orations, postulation of irreconcilable rights, appeals to unverifiable abstractions, we have affirmation of definite responsibilities, citizens in coöperative activity, surveys of actualities, reports in reference to concrete problems and specific issues, plans of possible improvements, appeals to the sense of order and to vision of the City Better.

But the new social and civic politics has of course its own special perils. Among these is the risk that action proceeding from faulty and inadequate diagnosis may be as mistaken as action proceeding—as so frequently in the old or passing order—from no deliberate diagnosis at all. In face of this peril there is particular need to remind organizers of social politics that the surveys and exhibits, reports and plans of the incipient civic order will be free from the surviving *defects* of the passing political order, just in proportion as they embody the surviving *qualities* of past and passing orders. Hence in so vast a problem, so complex a task as the adjustment of the present to the future, the *historic* survey must have a primary place; and this the more needed the fewer the city's visible monuments of historic cultures. The making of a city-plan for Chicago thus demands in its preparation more rather than less insistently a preliminary historic survey than in the case of Florence or Paris. The newer the city, the more likely its inhabitants to re-invent the defects of old civilizations, unless they be protected against the virus of evil by social transmission of the heritage of good.

The social survey, so full of promise for the future of American cities, must, if it would contribute adequately and take its due place in the city-planning movement, be further developed to include and incorporate the historic survey; and this, of course, in no mere archæological sense, but in the widest culture meaning. The phrase "city-planning" already expresses, in its content, the wide range and high ambition of American civic aspiration. In the best examples of the survey deliberately prepared for city-planning, there is ample recognition of social aspects and at least an affirmation of the historical point of view. In the survey, for instance, of Jersey City, by Messrs. G. B. Ford and Gooderich, perhaps the most intensive and detailed preliminary survey yet made for city-planning anywhere, there is actual investigation into recreational and culture needs and possibilities, and there is insistence on the study of historic tendencies as a necessary prerequisite to sound city-planning.

Thus is being prepared the way for a further phase of the civic renaissance in America. The leaders of this new advance are looking even beyond the conception of the City Better. How to advance from the City Better to the City at Its Best is their preoccupation. Manifestly, something more is needed than surveying and reporting, more even than the planning and executing of material improvements. The Muses must be invoked to arouse the ideals of personality; and to guide the creative urge of personal ideals toward civic expression, old institutions must be renovated and perhaps new ones devised. In that direction go not a few movements now in fitful progress, in so far as they obviously can be given a meaning and a message (and thereby a lasting vitality) by imparting to them a civic reference and rôle. As examples of such movements may be cited the renaissance of pageantry, the revival of folk-song and dance, the return of processional festivals, the increasing vogue of the acted drama in school and college, the growth of repertory theatres in regional capitals. All these are aids to the flowering of personality and so to the enrichment of communitary life. But the problem remains, How to orient the expanding personality that it may seek expression and outlet in assisting the re-birth of the civic spirit and its maintenance. To the solution of this

problem, on the overlapping borderland of education and civics, not a few notable contributions might be cited from America, alike by practical experimentalists and by theoretical investigators. Let us take an instance which admirably combines both these aspects.

As the ostentatious misuse of leisure in America provoked the critical and analytic study of Mr. Thorstein Veblen (*The Theory of the Leisure Class*), so the many American initiatives toward the redemption and the right use of leisure have brought forth their generalization in the constructive and synthetic study of Mr. Percy MacKaye (*The Civic Theatre*). His ardent propagandism for a "civic theatre" is not to be confounded by analogy with the movement for a national theatre in England—from which it differs as civic from State politics. It differs too in essence from the Municipal Theatre of Germany, and goes far beyond the mere Repertory Theatre in constructive social aim. For the Civic Theatre, Mr. MacKaye claims no less ambitious a mission than conscious and deliberate leadership in coördinating the whole circle of the arts and the sciences in a long-overdue reorganization of leisure. With Jane Addams he sees, in horror and indignation, the scanty and hard-earned leisure of youth and maiden in the great cities diverted from instinctive quest of adventure in the House of Dreams, and entrapped by commercially organized supply of vulgar or base temptation which aims at substituting lust for joy and debauchery for gaiety. With William Morris, he sees, in shame and contrition, the dull and drab festivities of Labor habitually divorced from Beauty and left joyless in Leisure, because forsaken by Art, which neglects the comforting of Lazarus, while engrossed in the service of Dives. With Gordon Craig and Huntly Carter, he sees in hope and encouragement, dramatist and actor, artist and musician, struggling to liberate themselves from a Commercial Theatre and striving to re-make it in the name of the Muses. In all these energies, unused or misused, these potentialities unawakened or basely stirred, these strivings imperfectly directed, Mr. MacKaye sees the very stuff of civic uplift; and to the Universities and to the Cities, he appeals for aid in his mission of reconstruction.

The universities of America have built for their athletes vast

and costly stadia. Some, like Harvard, have commenced the ascent from Olympus to Parnassus by occasionally devoting them (the stadia and the athletes) to higher purposes in open-air drama. Here play and pageant have been given with splendid magnificence before immense concourses of spectators. Let the universities continue their arduous ascent of Parnassus, urges Mr. MacKaye, and in course of time and travail they will be enabled to make a worthy return to the people who grant them endowment. What, he submits, the people want from the universities are the true Masters of Arts needed for leadership in creating the repertory of the Civic Theatre, in organizing the players for performances and in training the citizens for chorus.

By plays and pageants, festivals and processions, by folk drama and culture drama, the Civic Theatre is to achieve the uplift of the people through the redemption of leisure. To the cities, its advocate utters the prophetic warning that no city-plan is adequate to future requirement which fails to find a place for the Civic Theatre, and for one designed on large and generous proportions—a spacious portico for pageant, masque and processional, a great central auditorium for historic and romantic drama (from Æschylus to Shakespeare and Rostand), and two lateral auditoriums dedicated respectively to the Intimate Theatre (from Molière to Ibsen and Brieux), and to the Educational Theatre for plays to children and by children. In the focus of the city-plan thus envisaged stands the civic theatre, and grouped around it are its ancillary institutes of popular culture: schools of art and music, library and museum, concert hall and picture-gallery—with their several activities all vitalized through the unifying art of drama. By the creator of this vision there is foreseen in the cities of America a “chain of civic theatres stretching from New York to San Francisco,” each with its complement of subsidiary culture institutes, developing a “redemptive ritual of joy,” uplifting the body of citizens, as for their cities did the cathedrals of old.



## A CATHOLIC CHURCH

L. J. EDDY

A WRITER in contemporary pages, a decade or so since, gave an opinion on the future growth and domination of the Roman Catholic Church. He forecast its absolute supremacy.

Such eruptions as heresy-trials, papal encyclicals and forward movements have shown the dissenting or revivifying spirit on all sides, yet these instances are the extremes, and the quiet of religious circumstances seems pervasive. What place will each of the two great armies of Christ hold in the years to come? What will be the outcome of this strange competition where according to the spirit of Christ one would look for unity? And, with regard to the temper of our people, their essential ideality, and the fundamental spirit in each body of Christians, what may be a probable development?

To the critic, the outward state of the Roman Church presents the fact of a system, political and theological, which rests on the asserted authority given directly by Christ and handed down unbroken through the centuries. The Bible is held to be directly and literally inspired of God; the dogma built up is unchangeable and infallible; the Church is sole authority in spiritual affairs. Even greater indeed is the Church than the Book, for the Book must have the authority of the Church to its credibility. The Book is in entirety from God; and apart from the Christ and his sacrifice, his mediation, through the Roman Church, there can be no salvation.

This salvation, with its accretions of complex conceptions, rests on the dogma of all men's inherent sin through Adam's fall, and eternal punishment save through the Church, and through Christ who came to the world to expiate man's sin by his death. Over all is absolutely and infallibly the Roman Catholic Church. Witness St. Augustine: "I would not believe the Gospels did not the authority of the Catholic Church impel me."

These are but general outlines of some basic foundations on which this vast religious kingdom is erected, and to which, by all