



CHAPTER II

THE NEW CIVILIZATION

THE modern city marks an epoch in our civilization. Through it, a new society has been created. Life in all its relations has been altered. A new civilization has been born, a civilization whose identity with the past is one of historical continuity only.

We but dimly appreciate the full import of this fact. And yet, it is more significant, possibly more pregnant for the future than any previous political or social change. "Revolutionary" is an expression so loosely used that it scarce impresses us. (But the modern city marks a revolution—a revolution in industry, politics, society, and life itself.) Its coming has destroyed a rural society, whose making has occupied mankind since the fall of Rome. It has erased many of our most laborious achievements and turned to scrap many of our established ideas. Man has entered on an urban age. (He has become a communal being.) The increasing pressure of population is fast filling up the waste places of the globe. This, of itself, forecasts the life of the future. And in consequence, the city will no longer be an inci-

dental problem. It has already become the problem of society and the measure of our civilization.

The extent of this change is seen in the drift of population. Already four-fifths of the people of the United Kingdom dwell in cities. But one-fifth of Britain's teeming population, and that a diminishing fifth, lives on the soil it cultivates. In the United States we are so accustomed to an immense unoccupied western domain that the growth of our city population fails to impress us. In our thoughts, America is still an agricultural nation, and the city but an incident of our growth. But an examination of the census returns destroys this illusion. In 1800 but four per cent. of our population dwelt within city walls. By 1830 the percentage had crept up to six and seven-tenths. Thirty years later, at the outbreak of the Civil War, five millions, or sixteen and one-tenth per cent. of our people, were urban dwellers. Since that time, the growth of industry, the expanding network of railways that has been woven across the face of the continent, the ever-increasing inflow of immigration, have raised this ratio to thirty-three per cent. of the whole. To-day, more than twenty-five millions of America's population dwell in cities of over 8000 inhabitants, while nearly forty per cent. of the total reside in communities of over 4000 people. In the older and more developed commonwealths of the East, the

proportion of urban population is much higher. And it is in these states that we are to look for the real tendencies of our time. In Rhode Island eighty-one and two-tenths per cent. of the people dwell in cities, while Massachusetts has seventy-six per cent., New York sixty-eight and one-half per cent., New Jersey sixty-one and two-tenths per cent., and Connecticut fifty-three and two-tenths per cent. of their population as urban dwellers. Even Illinois, the great prairie state of the central West, is nearly one-half urban, while in California over forty per cent. of the people live under city conditions. And this movement to the city is bound to continue. The statistics of all countries demonstrate this fact. While the total population in America increased twenty and seven-tenths per cent. during the decade from 1890 to 1900, the urban population of the country increased thirty-seven per cent.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the City of New York contained more people within its jurisdiction than responded to the authority of the first President of the Republic. In a hundred years' time it has become the second city in the world. In the magnitude of its undertakings, it is easily first. No state of the Union, saving New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, and Ohio, equals it in population, and not even these approach it in the splendor of their enterprise. Even the fed-

eral government was conducted at less expense than is the Empire City until the Civil War ushered in a new order of financing. The city's annual expenditures exceed \$108,000,000. London, with forty per cent. more population, expends but seven-tenths as much. The annual budget of the Japanese Empire is but \$120,000,000; of the Turkish Empire but \$80,000,000 and of Holland and Switzerland combined but \$80,000,000.

The area of the City of New York is three hundred square miles; that of London is but one hundred and eighteen; of Paris but thirty, and of Berlin but twenty-five. To-day America has three cities with over one and a quarter millions of people, while at least three other communities claim one-half that number. Nor is this but another of the colossal exhibits that America presents to the world, an incident of her newness and bigness. Close upon her heels crowd the cities of the old world in the percentage and rapidity of their growth. Even in Belgium and Holland, the cities grow in more rapid proportion than the total population; while in Australia, an agricultural country *par excellence*, two-thirds of the population is already urban.

Tremendous as this exhibit is, it probably marks but the beginning of the movement to the city. It has been suggested by Mr. H. G. Wells in his *Anticipations* that in time, London, St. Peters-

burg, and Berlin will each exceed 20,000,000 in population, while New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago will probably contain twice this number of people. In so far as New York and Chicago are concerned this is probably no fanciful estimate. People are already living on certain portions of Manhattan Island at a density, which, if continued throughout the entire city, would give New York a population of 197,372,635; while in as new a city as Cleveland, Ohio, straitened by none of the geographical limitations that confine New York, certain blocks are peopled at a rate which, if in force throughout the city, would give it a population of over eight million souls.

Already in America we can discern the development of the future, a development that is forecast by natural economic conditions. At no distant day, New York is destined to be the largest city on the globe. It is rapidly becoming the clearing house of the world. It is bound to be the cosmopolis of finance, shipping, and the allied interests. It will be the distributing agency for the supplies of other nations, an immense warehouse where the East and the West, the North and the South will meet in the exchange of their wares. The opening of the Isthmian Canal will accelerate this movement. Free trade would advance it by leaps and bounds. The city's docks will extend far up the Hudson as well as along the East River. In

time New York will assume the position now held by London, but a position enlarged many fold by the unparalleled growth of international trade, the extension of ocean commerce, and the coming of more extensive trade connections with Asia, South America, and Africa. From the beginning of international exchanges some city has been the recognized centre of the trade and financial activity of the world. Century by century this centre has shifted westward by way of Constantinople, Venice, Florence, the Hanseatic towns, and the Netherland cities. It ultimately stopped at London. And when the centre of commercial gravity passes across the Atlantic and New York becomes the clearing house of the world, it will be a city as much more dominant than London now is as London exceeds in importance the earlier clearing centres of the world.

This result is forecast by the law of political gravitation, by our bigness and wonderful resources. America is no longer largely a debtor country. Her credit power is being increased each year by hundreds of millions of dollars. Her natural resources have scarcely been touched, while those of other nations are in a state of relative exhaustion.

On a smaller scale, and in a sense tributary to New York, the cities of Boston, Philadelphia, New Orleans, San Francisco, and Seattle will expand

by the same forces; only shipping and the distribution of commodities will be the agencies of their growth. By the time the United States has doubled its population, these cities will have quadrupled theirs. In like manner, Chicago and St. Louis will perform for the central regions of America what New York now does for the eastern seaboard. They will be the jobbing centres of the country and in a sense for the world as well. The opening of the Panama Canal will place them in close and cheap trade connection with South America and the Orient. Already far-sighted business men are discussing deep waterway connections with the Gulf and the Atlantic seaboard through the Mississippi, the St. Lawrence River, or the Erie Canal. In time this dream will be realized. With that achieved the West will no longer be dependent upon railway transportation for an outlet to the sea, and the wealth of prairie production will reach its markets by the cheapest of all freights. At no distant day, Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Buffalo, and Duluth will be seaboard towns, for the opening of deep waterway connections to the sea is an insignificant engineering achievement in comparison with what has already been done.

By similar natural influences in the century that is dawning, the cities of Pittsburg and Cleveland will become the great industrial centres of the

world. To-day, steel is king, and iron, copper, coal, and oil are its handmaidens. Nature has exhausted her ingenuity in conjoining these great wealth-producing agencies about the region of which these cities are the centres. Already the city of Pittsburg, with its environs, has a population of nearly a million souls. The city of Cleveland has half that number. The valleys between these cities blaze for a hundred miles with blast furnaces, rolling mills, and foundries. In the Great Lakes region are found rich copper mines of which the Calumet and Hecla is chief. Iron ore is mined on the shores of Lake Superior by being scooped from the surface of the earth by steam-driven shovels, while natural gas, oil, and bituminous coal are distributed in almost inexhaustible quantities in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and West Virginia. From mine to mill, the cost of transportation through the chain of Great Lakes has been reduced to the vanishing point. In this great central region, nature has decreed that Vulcan should prepare the timbers for the rebuilding of the world, for the construction of her cities, the building of her railways and steamships, and the opening up to civilization of Asia, South America, and South Africa.

Along with the great iron and steel industries go the lesser ones—the finishing processes, the machine and tool industries and the making of the

great enginery, and new tools that are subjugating nature in the wild places of the earth to the domestic needs of man. Not only will the two cities of Pittsburg and Cleveland become communities of two million inhabitants each, but the intervening region as well as the southern shore of Lake Erie will be one long succession of manufacturing towns like unto the midland cities of England. In time, the counties of southwestern Pennsylvania as well as northeastern Ohio will become a vast semi-urban community interdependent and closely connected in its activities—the forge shop of the world.

In this great centripetal movement of the people to the city, the seaboard and Great Lakes towns will enjoy the greatest growth. This is inevitable. Ease and cheapness of access to market has become a determining element in the development of cities, just as it has in the growth of nations.

Through the enlarging of trade connections from state to nation; and from the nation to the world at large, the great cities have become the counters across which commodities are exchanged. Within a short hundred years the local fair, that Adam Smith described as prevailing in England prior to the industrial revolution, has become a world's fair, and barter, sale, and exchange are now performed by clearing-house agencies which are as infinitely delicate and myriad in their rami-

fications as the nervous system of the human body. And in this world movement, the city is the centre.

Along with the forces that have been enumerated are certain minor and, in a sense, more obvious ones which are drawing mankind to the city. The steam railway is being supplemented by the electric inter-urban line. It is a cheap form of transit, and has already developed into trunk-line connections with facilities for long-distance travel. Through these agencies, the city is being ruralized and the country is being urbanized. Thousands of men are now linked to the town for their livelihood, recreation, education, and interests, who a few years since were as hopelessly removed from these advantages as though they had resided a hundred miles away. At the same time, an increasing number of people are drifting into the country, in order that they may escape the burdens of city life and at the same time enjoy the advantages which it offers.

The industrial revolution of which the city is a product is beginning to revolutionize the country as well as the city. Through improved machinery, three men are now able to produce from the soil food for a thousand; while the growth of large farms and the division of agricultural industry have relieved the farmer of many burdens, and at the same time rendered him depend-

ent upon the city. The telephone and the free rural postal delivery have united the farmer with his market. And the day is not far distant when broad highways suitable for motor carriages as well as electric trolley communication will enable him to live under urban surroundings and readily manage his farm without that sacrifice which residence in the country now involves. Moreover, we are just on the threshold of a development in motor and electric traction that will expand city boundaries in a way at the present time impossible. The beginnings of this development are already apparent in New York, which is being burrowed under in every direction like a rabbit warren to accommodate the pressure of population. In the century that is dawning Manhattan Island will become little more than an immense clearing house of trade, like the city of London proper, whose population dwindles to thousands at night, although millions of people crowd its banks, offices, and streets by day. Within little more than a decade, the region from Washington Square to Central Park has been appropriated for business purposes, and in time the island itself will become a mountainous pile of sky-scraping buildings devoted to banking, business, wholesale establishments, offices, public purposes, hotels, clubs, and theatres. This change will drive the city's population far out into New York, New Jersey,

and Connecticut. Philadelphia will be as accessible to the City Hall as Harlem is to-day. Coming generations will be able to live fifty or a hundred miles from their work more comfortably than they now live one-tenth of that distance; while the cost of transportation will be no more than it now is upon the city streets. Given a sufficiently heavy traffic, and passengers can be carried fifty miles as cheaply as they can a hundred blocks. In the country, the original cost of construction is not so great as in the city. Nor are the operating expenses any more. For it is the frequent stopping and starting of electric cars that is a burden on energy, and this will be so reduced that long-distance travel can be carried at a greatly reduced cost.

Recent experiments in electric transmission have demonstrated that a speed of a hundred miles an hour is easily attainable, while the undeveloped energy of Niagara, the Susquehanna, as well as of the Rocky Mountains and Sierra Nevada Ranges, will furnish the cheapest of propelling powers. In one of the Cantons in Switzerland water power is being used to light the country for a radius of thirty miles by electricity. In Scotland and England the supply of water and gas is being extended far into the rural regions, while in America the telephone, rural free delivery, and the inter-urban traction lines are

rapidly destroying the isolation of the country and bringing the farmer into semi-urban conditions of life.

But it is not my purpose to engage in speculation regarding the tendencies of city growth. The nineteenth century has unloosed the genii of industrialism, and we cannot go back to the simple agricultural conditions of an earlier age. They are as closed to us as is the patriarchal one of simple nomadism. The city has become the central feature in modern civilization, and to an ever-increasing extent the dominant one. Never before outside of China, with the possible exceptions of ancient Rome and Babylon, has society been organized on such a basis, and the earlier type of city, it need hardly be said, offers little in common with the modern "abyss," which, like a whirlpool, draws to its vortex the good and the bad, the strong and the weak, and which, in some form or other, is the final form of organized political life. For formerly the town was an ecclesiastical, feudal guild, or commercial affair. Its trade was carried on through the agency of the fair. Politically, more democratic than feudalism, it was still a close corporation. Socially, it was aristocratic. Its gates were barred to the stranger. The octroi was a barrier to prevent intercourse.

And this rural civilization, whose making has

engaged mankind since the dawn of history, is passing away. The modern city has erased the landmarks of an earlier society. Man has entered on an urban age, the final stage of his development. The past is as closed to us as are the barbed enclosures of the occupied West to the dispossessed Red Man. Nature has been harnessed, the earth has been tapped, the dormant energy of the earth's resources has been subjugated, and mankind has become bound together by millions of Lilliputian bands drawing mankind into an intimate relationship, a common dependency, from which there is no escape and no return possible to the early life of domestic industry, personal independence, and political simplicity. We have tasted the wine of many wants; our life has become one of divided powers and responsibilities, and society has developed into an organism like the human body, of which the city is the head, heart, and centre of the nervous system.

This industrial revolution has been accompanied by a political change scarcely less significant. For while the city has given birth to a hierarchical organization of industry, with class and mass distinctions, with great wealth close beside unprecedented poverty, it has also brought in new political forces, increasingly hostile to the industrial regimen which has created it. For the first time in history we have a really democratic

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city, safeguarded in its democracy by law. Through this fact the city has become a tremendous agency for human advancement. It already serves us to a greater extent than does the state or the nation. It is an organism capable of conscious and concerted action, responsive, ready, and intelligent. The ease of organization, the responsiveness of the official to his constituents, the comparative inexpensiveness of experimentation, all indicate that the city is to be the arena where the social and political forces that are coming to the fore will play. This fact is scarcely less significant than the city itself, for with universal education, a free press, a free ballot, all contributing to the formation of definite political and social ideals, civilization is armed with powers such as she has never before enjoyed, powers whose possibilities for the future it is as impossible to measure as are the movements of society itself.