

## PREFACE

There is no lack of books telling what government has been and is. This little volume may aid the student in his endeavour to determine for himself what it ought to be and to do, as well as what it ought not to undertake. There is perhaps no greater hindrance to civic progress than the impression that principles of government are too abstruse for common understanding, to which is often added the handicap of starting out in the study of government with a confident knowledge of "so much that isn't so," and of reasoning from maxims rather than axioms.

What we ought to do, whether as citizens or as men, in matters affecting our fellow men, is not a question of precedent but of principle, and is to be learned not so much from history as by use of that common sense upon which we rely in forming our judgments of history, whose lessons serve but to illustrate and confirm our perhaps innate ideas of right and wrong as between man and man. It was the deliberate conclusion of Im-

manuel Kant, as expressed in his "Critique of Pure Reason," that with regard to the essential interests of human nature the highest philosophy can achieve no more than that guidance which nature has vouchsafed even to the meanest understanding.

The political inquiry, whose methods and outcome are hereinafter briefly outlined, was first impelled by what seemed to be the importance, the justice even, of meeting the evidently serious contention of the Anarchists with something more intelligent and intelligible than mere denial, and was prosecuted with the endeavour to determine by what right, if any, the compulsory State is maintained; for if it has no right to be, it can have no right to act. Nor was answer to the question readily to be found. In no treatise on government, in no declaration of sovereign authority, although much was often taken for granted, was it clearly shown by what right any majority can compel an unwilling and otherwise unoffending minority to unite with them in organising and maintaining the State, or with what justice any man not desiring to co-operate in its maintenance, not asking its aid, and himself interfering with no man's freedom, can be forcibly compelled to be-

come a supporting member of it, and, to that extent at least, responsible for its action. There were other questions calling for definite answer, among which was that raised by the Socialists, as to how far the State may justly go in assuming control of the means and methods of wealth production. Conclusions resulting from such inquiry, finally reached a generation or more ago and but confirmed by the experience, observation and reflection of subsequent years, are now submitted, not as presenting anything entirely new in political thought, but as suggesting the importance of much that, however familiar to that thought, is almost entirely overlooked in political action.

Brief as they are, the chapters following will be found to contain an orderly exposition of what are believed to be the basic principles of government; a definite outline, simple analysis, and serviceable classification of its legitimate functions; as well as a summary of present-day abuses of its power, and of problems resulting therefrom. The reader's attention is respectfully directed to the consideration given to the doctrine of natural rights, to the question of absolute right to maintain the compulsory State, and to the limits of its

authority; to the distinction made between things, functions and values in their nature individual and private, and those which are no less naturally social or public; to the relation shown to exist between corporations and the trusts; as well as to suggestions in regard to solving problems of government.

In so far as it has yet to be filled in with the actuality of practice, the outline presented is of necessity a mere theory, a purely abstract conception of what may or may not be realised, as at one time or another might have been as truly said of any and every most approved theory now in practice. But we need not wait on practice to know this much, that in so far as a theory of government ignores basic principles of justice as between man and man, it will ultimately fail in practice. History has nowhere contradicted this categorically imperative, *a priori* conclusion.

Justice and freedom, its object and complement, are but abstractions, toward the realisation of which the race seems to be surely if slowly advancing. The only conception of justice with which the State has any proper concern is that arising from consideration of man's conduct toward man. As said by an able political writer

and now distinguished statesman, in his admirable text-book "The State," "Government, in its last analysis, is organised force." It is, moreover, always a force exerted by man upon man, and its justice depends on how it affects individual enjoyment of the natural, inalienable rights of man. Once it wrongs the individual, it has begun its injury to Society, which can suffer only through its members. In order to determine whether an act of government is or would be unjust or not, it is necessary to inquire what would be its nature, whether it would be unjust toward any human being, if performed without civil authority; for that which would be harmful and unjust if done by an individual or a mob, can be neither harmless nor just when done by the State. If such question is not to be answered, it is idle to talk of civic righteousness, of good government, or of an orthocratic, or rightly governing State.

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