

Hamilton

A

INTRODUCTION

The city, like the individual, may be the builder of her own destiny. She has only to set up an ideal for herself, pass through a period of introspection and self-analysis to discover exactly her present state and the steps that must be taken that she may become the ideal city.

Until very recently, and it is true of the vast majority still, the great desideratum of our cities was bigness. They pressed on to this goal blindly, regardless of the waste of life and property and the other evils which attended such a mad career. These evils have become sufficiently great to give pause to some cities in America. Such a close student of American life as ex-Ambassador James Bryce has said that the large city is an abnormality and some of the crowded centres of population are beginning to question if the cost of being big is not too great. A few have found a new ideal—that of being better places in which to live.

Out of this civic self-analysis the social survey has grown. It is, therefore, not a muck-raking project, neither is it investigation merely for investigation's sake. It is rather the method by which the community seeks to learn the social facts of its life so that it may intelligently plan the next steps in social advance.

This movement on the part of cities to know themselves was instituted in London by Charles Booth, a wealthy shipowner. His work, which occupied the last twenty years of the last century, and cost a quarter-million dollars, was largely the inspiration and the basis for the widespread movement for civic betterment which has since possessed old London. Next the City of York was studied by Seebohm Rowntree, and the social workers of the Old Land were placed in possession of the significant social facts concerning a large and a small city.

In the New York Tenement House investigation at the beginning of the century, Robert W. de Forest and Lawrence Veiller made a diagnosis of the tenement house problem of the American metropolis, and furnished a body of data which gave New York her present Tenement House Law and started a housing reform movement in almost every state in the Union.

In September, 1907, was begun the now famous Pittsburg Survey, the first reports appearing early in 1909. The main subjects of study were: the racial make-up of the wage-earning population, hours, wages, labor control in the steel industry, child labor, industrial education, women in industry, the cost of living, and industrial accidents. This work gave a strong impetus to the survey idea, and there are now different bureaus in the United States which are kept busy in making social surveys of urban and rural communities. Even from cities in India and Japan inquiries have come as to what the social survey may mean for them.

Canada stands to gain much from the survey idea. Our cities are young, and if they set about to know themselves in their youth, even if that does involve facing some unpleasant facts, they will be able to build a future far more grand than anything that will come if they remain in complacency. The same is true of our rural communities. We cannot afford not to study the social significance of the rapid growth of industrialism, the vast influx of immigrants, rural depopulation, and the new mobility of labor and of industry that have come upon us. Indeed, it is likely that in time we shall be so impressed with the necessity of social investigation that each large city will have its bureau of social research making that continuous study which is the only basis for intelligent action for civic betterment.

In this preliminary examination of the city of Hamilton, the aim was to discover the lines of investigation which would prove most profitable in an intensive study, and to suggest the scope of such a survey. The field work, which occupied the month of April, 1913, was done by Mr. Bryce M. Stewart, who also compiled this report.