

## THE OUTLOOK FOR THE AVERAGE MAN, IN A NON-COMPETITIVE SOCIETY.\*

Albert Shaw, PH.D. New York, N.Y.

I propose to-day to say something about the position and prospects of the average young man in the face of vast current and impending changes in economic and industrial society. Certainly, I shall not hope to exhaust the subject of such varied aspect and such profound importance. I shall be satisfied if I may make some suggestions and observations that may prove in the least degree useful to some of my hearers in their thinking upon general problems, or in their dealing with more personal or individual phases of the economic and social question—for it is obvious that there are prevalent just now two kinds of interest and anxiety in view of the enormous transitions that are taking place about us.

1. On the part of many young men who feel that they have their own way to make in the world, the natural optimism of youth is tempered by a considerable anxiety by reason of the disappearance of traditional landmarks, and of the new meanings that must be written into such terms as "success" and "getting on in the world." A more acute anxiety, relieved by far less of personal hope or general optimism, is that of older men of fixed habits and

diminished adaptability, who find themselves the victims of displacement as new methods of work and of organization ruthlessly supersede old methods.

2. Quite a different sort of anxiety is that which has a somewhat disinterested or philosophical basis and concerns itself not so much with the question, "How shall these things affect me, my fortunes, my future?" as with the questions, "How is the community to be affected?" and "Are these new tendencies making in the general sense for human emancipation and equality on an even higher plane, or are they making for a new and unpleasant kind of social and economic imperialism, in which the few shall be plutocratic masters and the many industrial subjects?"

I shall not try to take these questions ponderously or elaborately, and I shall be inclined, quite against my usual habit of mind, to give somewhat more attention to individual and personal aspects, and rather less to economic generalization. The clean-cut theory, the scientific formula, the beautiful presentation of the law of averages—all these bring only cold comfort to the individual young man who is seeking specific solutions for his own problems.

If we had our grounds for trepidation twenty or twenty-five years ago as we peered over the college wall, there were

---

\*Delivered on the occasion of the Forty-first Quarterly Convocation of the University, held in Studebaker Theatre, March 18, 1902, at 3 p.m.