

**THE TEXT-BOOK OF THE NEW
REFORMATION. MUNICIPAL
REFORM MOVEMENTS IN
THE UNITED STATES**

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The Text-Book of the New Reformation. Municipal Reform Movements in the United States by
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THE TEXT-BOOK OF THE NEW REFORMATION



MUNICIPAL REFORM MOVEMENTS
IN THE UNITED STATES

BY

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WITH AN INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER BY THE
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TO MY MOTHER
THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED
BY HER SON
IN LOVING RECOGNITION OF HER
INSPIRATION TO NOBLE IDEALS
OF MANHOOD.

PREFACE

THERE are very few municipalities in our country where a reform movement would have no reason for existence. Too often, however, the mention of a reform movement conveys the idea of destruction, an immense amount of tearing down, so that it has come to pass that the so-called practical reformer is almost as much dreaded as the practical politician. On the other hand, it is true that many a reform must tear down, in order that the ground may be prepared for the superstructure of improved conditions; but it is also a fact that certain reforms, destined to accomplish permanent results, are expending their utmost energies on the constructive phases of their work. To illustrate concretely: the recent action of the London County Council in insuring the lives of all the workmen who are engaged in the dangerous parts of the work of constructing the tunnel under the Thames is a reform in the right direction, and there are organizations that are striving to secure an increasing regard for the claims of life, in preference to those of property. The differences in the two phases of reform may again be illustrated by the work of the Society for the Prevention of Crime and of the City Vigilance League, the efforts of the former being along destructive and of the latter along constructive lines.

The spirit of reform is now manifesting itself in a great diversity of organizations, based on the fundamental principle that municipal affairs must be administered in the interests of

○ all the citizens—not merely the taxpayers, but also the non-taxpayers, because the latter as well as the former must dwell in our cities, and intend to make them their civic home. One theory of municipal administration holds that a city is simply a civic household, and the more closely it approximates a well ordered and appointed individual home the nearer it approaches ideal conditions. On this point the Committee of Seventy laid particular stress, and it is safe to assume that the voters indorsing its demands responded because of the high standard of the following ante-election statement: "The call goes to the citizens of New York to face the dangers that confront them, and resolutely to determine that these conditions shall cease and that the affairs of the city shall henceforth be conducted as a well-ordered, efficient, and economical household, in the interests of the health, comfort, and safety of the people." After the enunciation of the theory of its demands for civic betterment, the Committee then enumerated the *positive* measures necessary to secure it: it demanded that the quality of the Public Schools be improved; that Small Parks be opened in the densely populated parts of the city; Rapid Transit; that adequate Public Baths and Lavatories be provided; that the Docks and Water-front be improved; and that the Street-cleaning be thorough.

In the desire of effecting an organization for municipal reform there is great danger that both time and energy are wasted, because either the society in question is not adapted to local needs or fails to respond to the demands that are made upon it. These difficulties might easily have been obviated if the founders had made a more careful study of the local conditions, or if they had utilized the experiences of similar societies in other cities that were grappling with the same problems. If this had been done a working constitution could have been framed that would have secured all the objects of the organization in question. To illustrate: St. Paul

may use as a model a Philadelphia society, which will not work at all in the Western city, but admirably serves its purpose in Philadelphia.

It is therefore the object of this book to bring together, for comparison and selection, the salient and essential points in all the leading reform movements, in order that any persons desirous of forming a new organization may have a knowledge of those methods which the successful experience of other communities has commended. The great need in municipal reform is a kind of Reform Clearing House where the various plans and methods of work might be reported, in order that ways and means may be carefully studied. Then a composite constitution can be framed, which may be worked at once, whereby valuable time and effort will be utilized from the very start. There are also numerous movements not so much for municipal reform as for what may be called civic betterment. The varied phases of these organizations have been described in the methods of some one typical society. Any summary of the elements in successful reform organizations would be sadly incomplete without the mention of women's work. Particularly was this true in Brooklyn in 1893, and in New York in 1894. Accordingly one part has been devoted to the work of the women in municipal reform.

In the last part the work of the City Vigilance League has been described in detail, because it stands as a kind of object-lesson of what may be accomplished in the constructive work of civic reform. Its methods are of value because only such have been retained as were clearly shown to have stood the test of experience. In its early days it had no definite policy nor any delicately constructed theories. Its working capital was the knowledge that New York City must be made better, and it undertook the contract. In the words of its founder, "Our sole aim is to raise the tone of our citizenship. What ever concerns the welfare of our city is made the subject of