

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION

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GEORGE THOMAS WHITE PATRICK

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BY

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PREFACE

MACAULAY in his essay on Lord Bacon said that it was not Bacon's purpose to make men perfect. His humble aim was to make imperfect men comfortable. This Baconian philosophy, whose aim is to exploit all the forces of nature for the comfort and convenience of mankind, and which finds happiness not in the exercise of man's highest powers but in the release and satisfaction of human desires, originally characterized only the English-speaking peoples, but has now extended to the whole world.

While personally I believe that a civilization based on such a foundation as this is artificial and ephemeral, nevertheless to write a book to prove this would be a thankless task. It would be just a sermon, fruitful of nothing but yawns. We do not now look with very much alarm at such warnings as *Civilization at the Crossroads*. We are not greatly impressed when we are told that the kind of society which the social reformers promise us is not such a society as we ought to have; just as the laborer is not very much impressed when the capitalist tells him that his poverty is good for him.

But our attitude toward science is a wholly different matter. If the authority of religion, philosophy, and traditional morality has somewhat abated in these days, not so the authority of science. The emblems of authority are now all its own. I have therefore attempted in the following pages to apply certain elementary principles of psychological science to the problems of social reconstruction. For the sake of brevity, I have used the title, "The Psychology of Social Reconstruction." A more appropriate title might have been, "Preliminary notes on the application of psychology to the problem of social reconstruction as represented in certain popular movements of the day."

There is, of course, already an extensive literature on the psychology of social reform in its larger aspects. I have quoted from some of these writings in the pages which follow. While I have hoped to make a further slight contribution to this large subject, my immediate purpose has been the examination of some of the current and popular plans for social reform in the light of recent psychological studies—particularly studies in certain forms of instinctive human behavior. The early chapters of the book are, therefore, largely negative. In the