

CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES

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Causes and Consequences by John Jay Chapman

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BY
JOHN JAY CHAPMAN

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PREFATORY NOTE

If anyone will turn over the pages of the Charities Directory, or will stop for a moment in front of the Charities Building in Fourth Avenue, he will be impressed with the multiplication of benevolent agencies that has taken place within the last generation,—the number of hospitals, settlements, boys' clubs, girls' clubs, babies' clubs, small park associations and schools of philanthropy. Somewhere behind the bricks and mortar of these societies are the men and women whose insistence has brought them into being, and whose names are not always revealed by the letter-heads.

A whole society and social caste of workers has sprung into existence,—a galaxy and salvation army of militant benevolence, having its newspapers, its agents at Albany,—having an inner life and social atmosphere peculiar to itself, its tone and mission. There is an unconquerable religious spirit in these priests of humanity; though religion is a word at which

many of them are offended. Suffice it to say here that they are endowed with a positive and dominant tone of mind, and are not afraid of Society. They cannot be cajoled or sidetracked; they are driven forward by a force behind or within them. They feel in themselves that they are right. These people very well fulfill Emerson's ideal of the individual or Nietzsche's theory of the superman. They are a law unto themselves.

The other day one of these gentlemen visited me in the interest of the Young Men's Christian Association, whose work is being extended into the county where I live. He seemed to me to be a great many feet high. I knew that his mind was proof against all protest, proof against every idea except his own. I knew that he was right; I knew he would establish whatever he was trying to establish; and that I should help him establish it, and be glad if I escaped with my life.

Well, I myself have been one of these people, and the field of my labors used to be the philosophy of politics. After eight or ten years of activity in various reform movements, I began throwing my thoughts together into pamphlets and packing them into books. I be-

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lieved,—as all philosophers believe,—that a good statement of truth does more to advance the world than a thousand years of clouded endeavor. “Set free the intellect,” I reasoned, “brush away the adamantine cobwebs of false reasoning, and the people will go right of themselves.” It is only through the power of such beliefs on the part of writers and workers that things get written or done. It is common to hear these beliefs called illusions. If so, they are illusions in form only; the substance of them is true. One might almost say that the substance of them is religious truth itself.

April, 1909.

J. J. C.