

The Century Social Science Series

SOCIAL PROGRESS

A Theoretical Survey and Analysis

BY

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SOCIAL PROGRESS

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EDWARD ALSWORTH ROSS

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June, 1928

TO MY CHILDREN,
BETTY MAY AND ROBERT LINCOLN
"HOPE—AND A RENOVATION WITHOUT END"

"New times demand new measures and new men;
The world advances, and in time outgrows
The laws that in our father's day were best;
And, doubtless, after us, some purer scheme
Will be shaped out by wiser men than we,
Made wiser by the steady growth of truth.
We cannot hale Utopia on by force;
But better, almost, be at work in sin,
Than in brute inaction browse and sleep.
No man is born into the world whose work
Is not born with him; there is always work,
And tools to work withal, for those who will;
And blessed are the horny hands of toil!

Ours is the harder task, yet not the less
Shall we receive the blessing for our toil
From the choice spirits of the aftertime.
My soul is not a palace of the past,
Where outworn creeds, like Rome's gray senate, quake,
Hearing afar the Vandal's trumpet hoarse,
That shakes old systems with a thunder-fit.
The time is ripe, and rotten-ripe, for change;
Then let it come: I have no dread of what
Is called for by the instinct of mankind;
Nor think I that God's world will fall apart
Because we tear a parchment more or less.
Truth is eternal, but her effluence,
With endless change, is fitted to the hour;
Her mirror is turned forward to reflect
The promise of the future, not the past.
He who would win the name of truly great
Must understand his own age and the next,
And make the present ready to fulfill
Its prophecy, and with the future merge
Gently and peacefully, as wave with wave.
The future works out great men's purposes;
The present is enough for common souls,
Who, never looking forward, are indeed
Mere clay, wherein the footprints of their age
Are petrified forever; better those
Who lead the blind old giant by the hand
From out the pathless desert where he gropes,
And set him onward in his darksome way.
I do not fear to follow out the truth,
Albeit along the precipice's edge.

My God! when I read o'er the bitter lives
Of men whose eager hearts were much too great
To beat beneath the cramped mode of the day,
And see them mocked at by the world they love,
Haggling with prejudice for pennyworths'
Of that reform which their hard toil will make
The common birthright of the age to come,—
When I see this, spite my faith in God,
I marvel how their hearts bear up so long.
Nor could they but for this same prophecy,
This inward feeling of the glorious end."

—Extracts from James Russell Lowell's
"A Glance Behind the Curtain."

PREFACE

The social theorist is a realist in most respects. He is trying to discover the realities underlying various notions and forms; he wants realities wherever there are controversies, confused issues, perplexing situations, maladjustments; on the basis of present occurrences and trends he tries to foresee future realities. This study is such an adventure in realism. As a theoretical survey and analysis of social progress it deals, first, with the great social values and social ends that lie not only behind sociological thinking, but the thinking and activity of all the sciences, physical, biological, and social, and all other human endeavors that are worthwhile; and, secondly, with the various agents, processes, attitudes, techniques, institutions, situations, and other conditioning factors that thwart or advance the realization of these values and ends. Of necessity the scene will be painted in with broad strokes, universals will be dealt with as far as possible, and the reader will be left to fill in the details and make many of the applications. In no sense is this a discussion exclusively of certain pathological phases of social life that are usually treated in so-called "social betterment" literature or in books on social problems, nor is it concerned to any great extent with the subject matter of social reform movements. At best such discussions involve only a small sector of the progress problem. This study is frankly extensive rather than intensive; it tries to view and analyze progress in its full stature as a general, involved, and multifarious social process. The writer fully realizes that in this book lie the potentialities of a dozen volumes.

Believing that lack of thought is one of the most widespread obstacles to progress, the writer seeks to stimulate thought and raise questions concerning present conditions and trends in the different departments of life, suggest reasonable standards whereby these trends may be evaluated, and where possible offer certain sane and feasible ways of handling the present issues. The materials are intended to serve as suggestions, primers, or inciters that will lead to further analysis and constructive discussion along lines that seem to need consideration and treatment. They are presented frequently in a critical way and occasionally with a positive emphasis—even exaggeration—

that is intentional; for the conditions and situations they involve should strike the reader in the face, irritate him, and goad him to thought and action.

The spirit of the new age must not be one of reaction nor, still less, revolution, but one of reform and progress. Therefore it is hoped that this book may serve incidentally as an antidote to some of the pernicious Bourbon tendencies of the times, dispel certain current, deep-seated illusions, be a means of developing a positive scientific attitude toward change, and here and there encourage constructive efforts. An attempt is made to put first things first, and to see them in the light of social ends.

Wherever possible the writer gives credit to the thinkers whose thought he is weaving into his treatment. Occasionally, however, he is reflecting thought that has not been definitely expressed in writing, but is sensing attitudes, beliefs, and ideals as they play here and there among the saner progressives. Inevitably also many of the ideas here given cannot be attributed to their proper originators because, having been acquired through more or less unconscious exposure and absorption, they carry no property label. To such thinkers the writer expresses his deepest obligation though they are unknown to him. For all the other thought, for the special uses here made of all the ideas, for the general organization of materials, the interpretations, the conclusions, and the general spirit of the book the writer is alone responsible.

The inspiration which led to this volume was received more than ten years ago in a graduate seminary on this subject given by Professor Edward Alsworth Ross at the University of Wisconsin. In the preparation, continual encouragement and valuable criticism have also been received from Professor Ross, the editor of this series. For all this the writer acknowledges his deepest obligation and gratitude. He also hereby expresses thanks to those colleagues, students, and friends who have read, criticized, and discussed with him various portions of the manuscript. Greatest of all is his indebtedness to his wife for her constant and sustaining encouragement, her assistance with parts of the manuscript, her advice and criticism, and her freewill sacrifices of various kinds that have given him the time and opportunity and peace of mind that made this book possible.

J. O. HERTZLER.

The University of Nebraska.

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