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F. C. HOWE'S "THE MODERN CITY"*

A clear-cut easily comprehended treatment of a subject which is of great timely interest to many, . . . a book therefore which will make a wide appeal and will be of value to more than one class of readers. The author has made himself known long ere now by his sympathetic studies of city life, its possibilities and problems. His mental attitude toward his subject, pleasingly evident in this latest volume, as in all the others, is that of one not content merely to understand and describe things as they are, but who illuminates existing conditions by the white light of a vision that might and can become actuality. It gives the human touch even to tables of statistics and marshalling of dry facts unavoidable in the theme. We feel that Frederic Howe loves the city because after all it is but a huge aggregation of humanity and he loves humanity with an abiding affection.

The twentieth-century city is the brain of a cosmic machine; it is the heart and sensory system of the world as well.

This is the keynote of the book.

The author gives a quick glance backward at the cities of Hellenic and Roman antiquity, where citizenship was the work and play of a leisured class for whom hundreds of slaves did the rough work. Then onward a little through the years to the mediæval cities of Europe which gradually became great commercial centres where trade was king and where an industrial aristocracy shook itself free from the chains of feudalism. Then he brings us back to to-day, to our great modern cities with their differing problems of a wider democracy

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and a tense and complicated industrial machinery. We are shown the problems particular to American cities and those that belong to European towns. Each problem of Public Utilities; sanitation; city planning; political machinery, is given a chapter to itself. We see how we have dealt with the problem here and in what way the European nations have treated it. With calm impartiality each method is explained and weighed. The writer's greatest interest is given to the subject of home rule for cities, the lack of which is undoubtedly hampering the splendid development that might come to our own great towns. With gentle irony he casts aside the futile doctrine of "good men in office," to which so many well-meaning people cling hopelessly, and shows how no good man can ever accomplish good with the "cheques and balances" of our cumbersome system of allowing State legislatures to deal with city measures . . . thereby clogging the wheels of State business and hampering the city's growth. Municipal ownership of public utilities, in which the writer firmly believes, is treated in several chapters. And several more are given to the important question of raising city revenues. New methods of taxation suggested are described in theory and practice. The Housing problem, a most important one for our largest cities, is dealt with in detail, and its intimate connection with taxation methods and the land question is clearly shown.

The summary that closes each chapter, giving a quick epitome of its contents, is a useful innovation, making the book all the more valuable to the busy reader who refers to it. *Grace Isabel Colbron.*