

CHAPTER XV

THE SURVEY OF CITIES

How are civic inquiries and city surveys to be made more general, thorough, and efficient? An appeal to City Museums and Libraries, with examples of beginnings in small towns and great. School Surveys as educational processes and products; examples from primary schools, training colleges, and universities. Higher significance of surveys in education and in philosophy. Their applications, moral and social; their appeal to all groups and denominations accordingly.

How are city surveys and endeavours to be applied more generally, brought thoroughly before the public, made effective, complete, accessible, intelligible? That is the question from the last chapter, which we must attempt to answer in this; and on several convergent lines.

Like other professional bodies, the Museum Curators of Great Britain have their Annual Congress: this took place in Dundee in 1907; and was appropriately in the gallery of the city's museum devoted to "Old Dundee." Having listened to the natural and proper lamentations of the curators as to the deficient support of their institutions, and to various expressions of their anxiety to increase public interest accordingly, the writer threw his paper into the form

of a practical proposition, which may be summed up somewhat as follows :—

You lament that you have not sufficient funds adequately to maintain your museums and still less to increase them. Is it not needful to discover some way adequately to advertise your institutions—of course properly and legitimately, in due curatorial fashion—by making them interesting to a larger proportion of your community? At present your antiquities attract few save the antiquarians, a dwindling class. Thus we have here our admirable city-history collection, our town in 1800, 1700, 1600, 1500, and yet beyond, to the primitive Celtic hill-fort and its Roman transformation; and this does naturally attract the antiquarians. But the value of this collection depends upon each of these exhibits having had actuality in its day. It is its authenticity which gives it interest. Why should this collection now lack actuality in *our* day? Why no adequate exhibit of this city in 1900, in 1907? Why not give it this, and add to our Museum of the Past a corresponding exhibit of the Present? How can this be done? Easily. See, for instance, Booth's *Life and Labour in London*, with its great map; see the corresponding surveys of other cities, York, Manchester, Dundee, and the like. Do something of the same for each city now. Obtain more pictures and photographs of its present beauty and ugliness; obtain statistics and other particulars from the town-house, the registrars, and so on, so that

any and every active citizen shall henceforth find in the museum the most ready and convenient place for getting up all he wants to know about his city. In this way your museum will gain a new set of frequenters, each a future friend, for you will soon find that you can count on their support, and that increasingly. Nor is this all you can do; besides the few antiquarians and the many more practical men, who are interested in the past and the present respectively, you have a third class, small, yet important and increasing, those who are beginning to dream of the future. These wish to see some progress in their town, some actual betterment, the cleansing of its slums, the erection of new buildings and institutions, the supply of open spaces, and above all, the planning of its future extensions—its practicable Utopia—Eutopia in fact. Add, therefore, to your galleries of the Past and of the Present a third room, or at least a screen or two for this concrete exhibition of your City's Future, and you will thus bring to the museum a third and new class of supporters. Hence, even if you do not care for your city, if you do not yet feel its impulse to citizenship, consider this proposal as at least of a new attraction, a legitimate form of public appeal; and see whether it does not before long reward you to carry it out.

This proposal, almost in so many words, was warmly encouraged by the president of the Congress; and was actively discussed at a special

meeting, at which a large number of the museum curators of the United Kingdom spoke warmly in its favour, and decided to see what could be done towards carrying this out for their respective cities and in their museums. The preceding proposal applies, of course, to public libraries and city librarians, no less than to museums and their curators. How, then, are we as civic sociologists at once to aid in this movement as well as learn from it? Is it not time that curators and librarians, geologists and naturalists, local historians and antiquaries, architects and artists, business men and economists, clergymen and social workers of all denominations, politicians of all groups, were uniting their forces, at first no doubt largely as individuals, but also bringing in their respective societies and organisations as far as may be, towards this creation of their Civic Survey and Museum?

As suggestive examples of the many-sided progress of this movement, we may take one of the small towns and one of the great—Saffron Walden and Newcastle-on-Tyne. In the first was organised an active co-operation between the Museum Curator and the Natural Science Department of the Training College; thus was initiated a Survey Society open to citizens as members, and to young folks at work, at school, or college as associates (and at the moderate annual subscriptions of 1s. and 3d. respectively). Interest was successfully aroused; the museum was improved, and not simply in various of its collections,

or by forming this new regional one, but above all in public sympathy and educational usefulness. A photographic survey was undertaken; with the help of a town-planning architect the ancient town was more clearly mapped and interpreted, and even reconstructed in vivid perspective at various phases of its past. From this local exhibit has easily been arranged a smaller type-collection, which now circulates on loan with the Cities and Town Planning Exhibition and elsewhere, as a very model of the practicability and interest of such a survey. The preservation of the town's monuments and buildings, the planting of trees and shrubs, the encouragement of gardening on every scale—from child's flower-pot and home window-box onwards—has been a natural development, as also an increased interest in public health and housing. Best of all, a new tide of civic feeling has arisen; pageantry and festivals are more readily undertaken, the atmosphere of citizenship can be more fully breathed, and life at various points is brightened, as community and individuals thus learn anew to interact.

What now of Newcastle? By good omen, as this chapter is being written, there has been passed in the City Council a motion by Councillor Adams, here well worth citation as a typical one, equally applicable elsewhere:—

“That it is desirable to establish a Civic Museum for the City, wherein may be illustrated among other things the history of the town, and the growth and

development of the municipal, social, and industrial life of the City; and that the Public Libraries Committee be requested to consider and report upon the best means of carrying the same into effect."

Of course London has now its Museum in Stafford House; and there are notable beginnings, and still more materials, in many other cities. The movement may therefore be considered as assured in principle; but the less time now lost the better for advancing it locally and in execution. Even apart from the urgency for civic development, for town planning and housing already emphasised, every curator and librarian knows how increasingly hard it becomes every year to collect the objects and illustrative matter, which not so long ago were cheap and relatively abundant.

Beside all the agencies just named, there is another, weakest and least specially prepared hitherto, yet fullest of hope and possibility of all—the primary school. Could we but convince a single one of the Education Departments—English, Scots, or Irish, that of an American city or a Continental country—that in this movement of town study we have the complement of the nature study (which these departments have more or less recognised), and a means of correlation and vitalisation of studies even more widely potent and easily applicable, as from "school journeys" and boy-scouting onwards—a national survey would soon be in progress with its regional and civic division

of labour. Meantime there are excellent beginnings, and at many points: as notably, for instance, by Mr Valentine Bell in a Lambeth primary school, where his boys have effectively aided him in making a borough survey which was at Ghent and Dublin a delight and impulse to teachers from all lands; and of which the educational value and result at home is also manifest and fruitful. Here, in fact, are beginnings for a "Know your City" movement which may spread through our towns as of late through American ones; the more since, in the rise and growth of the boy scout movement, we have beginnings of regional survey; and from this to real beginnings of city survey is a natural step.

Coming now to University Schools of Geography, that of Oxford has long been peculiarly effective upon survey lines, and among the many excellent regional theses of Prof. Herbertson's pupils, Miss L. M. Hardy's admirable "Survey of Salisbury" may be cited as a peculiarly instructive and convincing type; and of vivid significance from many points of view, and instructive to bishops and to town planners alike.

It is peculiarly encouraging to the writer that, after too long interruption, the regional surveys which characterised the Edinburgh Summer Meetings of many years past, should have been actively resumed at Easter 1914, and this independently and successfully by a fresh and younger group, notably the active spirits of the Saffron Walden Survey aforesaid, Miss Barker, Messrs Maynard and Morris, and others

mentioned or not above ; and that these further have been preparing a wide appeal to teachers "for the study and practice of regional survey in country and town, and for the consideration of its application in primary and secondary education." The invitation of this nascent association to Dublin has opened a new series of contacts, and thus the method spreads apace. The British Ecological Society is now as definitely committed to the mapping of the British Isles as can be the Geological Survey in its older field ; but few of its members probably even know how its prime initiator, the late Robert Smith, undertook the vegetation maps which bear his name, and are now classic, as his part of the division of labour of that regional survey of Scotland, and not of the Edinburgh district only, which is a central purpose of the Outlook Tower, and a main justification of its plea for adaptation of its principle in every city and district.

One final word, of education now at its highest, of its very philosophy, and this at university levels ; and why not beyond ? What if the long-dreamed synthesis of knowledge, which thinkers have commonly sought so much in the abstract—and by help of high and recondite specialisms, logical, metaphysical, psychological, mathematical, and the rest, all too apart from this simple world of nature and human life—be really more directly manifest around us, in and along with our surveys of the concrete world ? What if Aristotle, that old master of knowledge, turns out to have been

literally, and not merely metaphorically, speaking in urging "the synoptic vision"? For surely "general views" may well be helped by—general views. What if philosophic aims may be served, better than in the study alone, in course of an experience again literally peripatetic? And, if it be claimed that beyond the highest speculative education is the active, the ethical, may we not add to our surveys, service? And to our going about, doing good?

It may well be among the less specialised and least municipally powerful members of the community that the civic enthusiasms and energies of the opening future may be most vitally awakening. And this not only among the workers, and the artists who at their best most truly voice them, but also among women, and among the children of our schools. Hence in two recent volumes of a popular series of the easiest access, *Evolution* and *Sex*, the writer and his colleague have not hesitated to state the appeal of civics and city betterment to these, as at once eupsychic, eutechnic, and eutopian; and upon the most general grounds, of human life, in its continuance and its uplift.

Nor can the churches of all denominations much longer delay that comprehensive dealing with the field of civic renewal which has been promised and urged on all sides, as in papal encyclicals, bishops' charges, and moderators' addresses, and in the Citizen-Sunday discourses which these encourage or inspire. It is but bare justice to recognise that fundamental

and vital civic endeavours have never been lacking from their remotest past, and that modern developments and adaptations of these are springing everywhere. The disunion of the churches and their supersedure by the State are, of course, older than the paleotechnic dispensation, but their long ineffectiveness in dealing with it has proved its potent influences upon them. Yet as their entrance upon social renewal grows clearer in thought and more definite in action, their emancipation must progress accordingly; and before long they may be dealing more vitally with many civic problems than can the State and its administrators. It is ever a group-emotion, a group-enthusiasm, which makes and remakes the cities: and the cry, "O Jerusalem! Jerusalem!" will never fail of echo and response throughout the ages.