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**FIVE COLLEGE
DEPOSITORY**

**SOME POLITICAL NOVELS
OF THE NEW INDUSTRIAL AGE,
1873-1915**

**ROGER P. LEEMHUIS
1961**

SOME POLITICAL NOVELS OF THE
NEW INDUSTRIAL AGE, 1873-1915

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A.B., Villanova University

THESIS

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SOME POLITICAL NOVELS OF THE NEW INDUSTRIAL AGE

OUTLINE

The objective of this study is to trace the growth of the American political novel from 1873 to 1915, through comparative analyses of seventeen representative works. Of principal interest is the extent to which the novels reflect changing currents in American political thought as well as social and economic trends affecting American culture.

I. The Era of Grant

The reactions of some socially-conscious American writers to Grantism and parvenus in the age of the Mugwumps. An anti-labor polemic by a defender of the rights of property.

- A. Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner, The Gilded Age (1873).
- B. Henry Adams, Democracy (1880).
- C. John Hay, The Breadwinners (1884).

II. The Era of Cleveland

Two novels by Hamlin Garland--one describing the social and political abuses which provoked the rise of the Granger and Alliance parties and culminated in the Populist revolt, the other treating the political power of railroads and the nature of "invisible government" in a midwestern state. Utopian reforms of the social order, advocated by two Socialists; a conservative's reaction to radicalism. Descriptions of the "melting pot" in urban politics, and a defense of the political boss.

- A. Hamlin Garland, A Spoil of Office (1892).
- B. Hamlin Garland, A Member of the Third House (1892).
- C. Edward Bellamy, Looking Backward (1888).
- D. William Dean Howells, A Traveler from Altruria (1894).
- E. Paul Leicester Ford, The Honorable Peter Stirling (1894).

III. The Progressives

The Progressive temperament, i.e., the middle-class demand for social and political reforms, studied through literary treatments of such problems as professional machine politics and the influence of corporate interests in government. Various other aspects of Progressive thought.

- A. Brand Whitlock, Thirteenth District (1902).
- B. Brand Whitlock, Her Infinite Variety (1904).
- C. William Allen White, Strategems and Spoils (1901).
- D. David Graham Phillips, The Plum Tree (1905).
- E. Winston Churchill, Mr. Crewe's Career (1908).
- F. Edward House, Philip Dru, Administrator (1912).

IV. Social Violence

The theme of social violence, pursued in political fiction by a Populist leader and two Socialists. Of chief interest are the means of overthrowing existing political orders and the class appeals which they advocate. The social philosophies which permeate these works.

- A. Ignatius Donnelly, Caesar's Column (1890).
- B. Jack London, The Iron Heel (1908).
- C. Ernest Poole, The Harbor (1915).

V. Criticisms and Analyses

A. The middle class.

The reactions of middle-class America to changing patterns in political life, as expressed throughout these novels. The degree to which the authors appeal to middle-class readers.

B. The "melting pot."

Expressions of nativism, with special interest in anti-Semitism and prejudice towards Irish-Americans. Sentiment of old-stock Americans towards the "melting pot."

C. Professional politicians and the reformer.

Machine politics and the spoils system, as described by these authors. The professional boss attacked and defended; types of political reformers pictured. Methods of combatting the bosses, from the Mugwumps to the Progressives.

D. Political parties in America.

Historical characteristics of the major parties, as examined in several novels. The basic conservative posture of both parties and any ideological differences. The appeal and role of minor parties and popular attitudes towards them.

E. Lawyers and the law.

Popular sentiment towards the legal profession and jurisprudence, as reflected in various novels. Attorneys as advisers of corporations, viewed as clever tools who manipulate the law for corrupt ends; pressures upon their professional integrity. American courts and constitutional law, considered as bulwarks of property interests.

F. Determinism and ideas of progress.

Analysis of the various social philosophies prevalent in these novels, considered within the historical context of such ideological currents as naturalism and pragmatism. The notion of politics as undermining personal moral character.

G. Summing up.

Final conclusions regarding the value of these novels in enriching historical insights into an important transitional period.

INTRODUCTION

José Ortega Y Gasset wrote that the "past is past not because it happened to others but because it forms part of our present, of what we are in the form of having been, because, in short, it is our past."¹

One cannot fail to perceive the continuity in American life and culture from the late nineteenth century to the present day. The years after the Civil War witnessed the emergence of modern America--the industrialization of its economy, the rapid settlement of the frontier, the increasing urbanization of a once agrarian nation. These factors provoked changes in the country's political institutions and ideas which, in spite of many modifications, remain apparent even today.

Concurrent with the post-Civil War alterations in American life was the growth of a more realistic fiction. And one manifestation of this literary realism was the political novel. My objective is to trace the development of the American political novel from 1873 to 1915, through comparative studies of seventeen representative works. The authors selected present a diversity of backgrounds and viewpoints. It is hoped that this investigation may provide some insight into the changing currents, as well as the basic features, of American political thought.

1. Jose Ortega Y Gasset, Toward A Philosophy of History (New York, 1941), 212.

I. THE ERA OF GRANT

The changing mode of American life after the Civil War was subjected to harsh criticism. In 1871, Walt Whitman's pamphlet, Democratic Vistas, expressed despair over the moral tone of American society:

"An acute and candid person, in the revenue department in Washington, who is led by the course of his employment to regularly visit the cities, north, south and west, to investigate frauds, has talked with me about his discoveries. The depravity of the business classes is not less than has been supposed, but infinitely greater. The official services of America, national, state, and municipal, in all their branches and departments, except the judiciary, are saturated in corruption, bribery, falsehood, mal-administration; and the judiciary is tainted. The great cities reek with respectable as much as non-respectable robbery and scoundrelism. In fashionable life, flippancy, tepid amours, weak infidelism, small aims, or no aims at all, only to kill time. In business, (this all-devouring word, business) the one sole object is, by any means, pecuniary gain."¹

The age of which Whitman wrote was that of Daniel Drew, the Tweed Ring and the Credit Mobilier. And the poet's gloom was profoundly shared by many of his fellow-citizens--the genteel Yankees of the old upper class as well as many members of the middle class. Rejecting a society dominated by grasping entrepreneurs and nouveaux riche, Henry James took refuge in England; but others, equally dissatisfied, exerted their efforts to effect desired changes.

In 1946, Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt recalled the attitude of the Dutchess County squires, who considered politics in the

¹ Walt Whitman, Democratic Vistas and Other Papers (London, 1888), 10-11.

Gilded Age to be "pollution," unfit for the "men of the older families."¹ But while such patricians disliked gutter politics, some of them plunged into reform movements in the early 1870's. Most of their efforts were devoted to promoting civil service reform. But upper-class disdain for the corruption and crassness of "Grantism" was also shared by the middle class. This concern found outlets in the Liberal Republican effort against Grant in 1872, in Samuel Tilden's campaigns for the New York governorship and for the Presidency in 1876, and in the "Mugwump" protest against Blaine in 1884. Speaking at a Liberal Republican convention of 1872, Carl Schurz proclaimed, "We want a government which the best people of this country will be proud of."² Two novels in this study--The Gilded Age and Democracy--dealt with political trends which disturbed Schurz.

But if political graft and parvenu opportunism were ulcers in the social order, even more ominous was the rising labor and agricultural unrest of the 1880's and 1890's. John Hay's novel, The Breadwinners, dealt with the economic discontent of the latter years of the Grant era. A comment from Hamlin Garland's A Spoil of Office suggested the rising impact of social and economic ills upon American politics and fiction:

"No one who travels about as I do can fail to see it. The labor question in the cities, and the farmer question in the country, will soon be the disturbing factor in politics."³

1 Eric F. Goldman, Rendezvous with Destiny (New York, 1952), 18.

2 Ibid., 18-24.

3 Hamlin Garland, A Spoil of Office (Boston, 1892), 166.

The Gilded Age

The Gilded Age, by Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner, was published in 1873, a year of financial panic. It provided a commentary on the social and ethical mores of the nation in the years before the end of Reconstruction.

The story focused upon Congressional grants for western railroads and internal improvements, with the accompanying scrambles for public graft. The Hawkins family, which had settled in Missouri, owned some practically worthless Tennessee land, which it tried to sell to the Federal government. The family used political connections to influence Congress to purchase the property. In Washington, Senator Dilworthy proposed the founding of a land-grant industrial college to be built on the land, for deserving white and Negro boys. Influencing Senator Dilworthy and other Congressmen was Colonel Beriah Sellers, a St. Louis financial speculator and friend of the Hawkins family. Sellers also had a financial stake in the building of the Salt Lick Pacific Extension, which sought Federal funds.

Senator Dilworthy combined religious fundamentalism with shrewd political adroitness. Sunday school preacher and temperance advocate, he sought re-election from his state legislature on a platform of Christian virtue. An opponent asserted that Dilworthy had tried to purchase his vote in the legislature, and this charge menaced the Senator's political future. But this matter was casually evaluated by one observer, who

stated that "From the center of our country to its circumference, nothing was talked of but Mr. Noble's terrible revelation, and the people were furious. Mind, they were furious not because bribery was uncommon in our public life, but merely because here was another case."¹

Dilworthy's disgrace hurt the Hawkins' attempt to capitalize on the get-rich-quick spree of the times. Congress rejected the purchase of the Hawkins land in Tennessee, while approving appropriations for the Salt Lick Pacific Extension.

This novel was amusing for its portraits of the greedy and conniving people of the carpetbag era. Yet however superficial, most of them were not vicious; many were church-going parvenus who winked their eyes as they dipped their fingers into the "public pie." Almost childlike in their shrewdness, they had no fundamental moral standards, no guiding principles of life. They lacked education and cultivation, and life was essentially a quest for material pleasures and riches.

Colonel Sellers, a Civil War veteran, typified the grasping opportunist with political connections in the age of stock-jobbing and the Whiskey Ring. The world was his for the grabbing. And Twain satirized Senator Dilworthy as an example of pompous self-righteousness. Though the legislator was caught in a dubious operation, it was difficult to censure him harshly. A comic figure, he lacked malice. If Senator Dilworthy preached to a Sunday school group at a Baptist church and on the next day

¹ Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner, The Gilded Age (Hartford, 1873), 530.

gave a political bribe, he was representative of his times. After all, a theological seminary was named for one of the most unscrupulous men of the Grant era, Daniel Drew. However, one literary historian has credited The Gilded Age for dramatizing "the vulgarity of a chrome civilization and the urge to keep up with the Joneses, churchly hypocrisy, pork-barrel politics, oratorical buncombe, bribery, personal immorality in high places, and the widest degradation of the democratic dogma."¹

Democracy

Similarly disillusioned with the Washington of the Grant era was the New England aristocrat, Henry Adams. Democracy was anonymously published in 1880, and many years elapsed before Adams' authorship was publicly known.

The story's setting was the national capital, where Mrs. Madeleine Lee, a wealthy, cultured but dilettantish widow, lived with her young sister, Sybil. They observed the machinations of national politics, which centered around the Presidency. Mrs. Lee made her mark in capital society, and met Senator Silas P. Ratcliffe of Illinois, the "Prairie Giant," who fell in love with her.

The plot revolved about the President-elect, who had defeated Ratcliffe for his party's nomination. This intellectually shallow Indiana governor who, through favorable circumstances, had reached the White House, symbolized the post-Civil War scene in Washington and the self-seeking men who

1. Robert Spiller et al, Literary History of the United States (New York, 1953), 927.

wielded influence.

The new President had to deal with Ratcliffe, party leader in the Senate. Utilizing his vital position, the "Prairie Giant" made demands upon the President, gained favors for his loyal clientele of job-seekers and had a strong voice in cabinet appointments. Mrs. Lee became trapped in her relations with Ratcliffe and came to realize that he was an unprincipled person, who was using her to strengthen his power. Sybil played a key role in helping her sister to break loose from Ratcliffe.

The use of a refined woman by a coarse and unscrupulous Illinois politician was offensive to Adams. Mrs. Lee realized that she had been foolish and began to comprehend the brickery and corruption that pervaded Washington society and national politics. She despaired that the concept of noblesse oblige did not prevail in American government. However, one of the story's minor characters, Representative French of Connecticut, was a dedicated genteel reformer who fought for civil service legislation.

Adams wrote this novel at a time when the civil service movement was strong. But, as the historian Matthew Josephson contended, the demand for purification of the government service

"...evaded completely the great questions, the great dangers to democracy raised by monstrous railroad and industrial monopolies. Here was a burning issue which cut across the lines of divisions of classes and sections of the people, combining the diverse groups of the community while ignoring the enduring differences over which they conflicted. The idea that bureaucratic reform, such as England and Germany had carried out, would cure our political ills was now warmly supported by respectable

and wealthy taxpaying citizens, the dominant classes who ruled public opinion...It was no coincidence that types of aristocratic American youth who were prepared to climb the political ladder, such as Henry Cabot Lodge of Boston and Theodore Roosevelt of New York, nowadays enlisted under the banner of civil service reform in all local contests."¹

For all his misgivings, Adams did not advocate any radical overhauling of the American political system. Some historians have cited Adams for having become disillusioned with political life after 1869, when his "first-hand view of American realistic democracy shattered the romantic democratic faith which he had known as a boy before the war."² In 1868, he had been pleased with General Ulysses Grant's elevation to the Presidency, and, as Professor Ralph Gabriel stated ,

"Young Adams felt that the chief need of America, disorganized by civil strife and poisoned by Reconstruction, was discipline and organization. These two are the essence of science. Adams felt that under the soldier's (Grant's) leadership science would march forward to national greatness. Then one day in 1869 he read in the press the names of Grant's proposed cabinet, a handful of cheap politicians..Adams-felt ashamed, not of Grant, but of himself for misinterpreting so completely the American scene. He took one look at realistic American democracy and decided that he must plan his life afresh..Since 1869, in Adams' mind the conviction had been growing that democracy was the process of degradation."³

If Adams, as Gabriel contended, saw in post-Civil War democracy the germs of degradation, he did not necessarily lose complete faith in the democratic experiment. A comment by one of the characters in Democracy suggested that, in spite of the

1 Matthew Josephson, The Politicos (New York, 1938), 345-46.

2 Ralph H. Gabriel, The Course of American Democratic Thought (New York, 1940), 326.

3 Ibid., 325-28.

disappointing condition of Grantism, Adams still considered democracy as man's last, best hope.

"I believe in democracy. I accept it. I will faithfully serve and defend it. I believe in it because it appears to me the inevitable consequence of what has gone before it. Democracy asserts the fact that the masses are now raised to higher intelligence than formerly. All our civilization aims at this mark. We want to do what we can to help it. I myself want to see the result. I grant it is an experiment, but it is the only direction society can take that is worth its taking; the only conception of its duty large enough to satisfy its instincts; the only result that is worth an effort or a risk. Every other possible step is backward, and I do not care to repeat the past."¹

Adams' contention that the masses were being elevated to "higher intelligence than formerly" seemed to bode well for the future of democracy. The author, who later developed an elaborate philosophy of historical determinism, adhered in some degree to what Professor Eric Goldman has called "reform Darwinism;" he could tolerate, however uncomfortably, some passing stages in social evolution in which wanton self-seekers like Senator Ratcliffe commanded political power.

The political novels of Twain and Adams discussed some of the abuses which appeared on the surface of the American social order. But as criticisms of ills which lay at the roots of American society in the Grant era, these works were superficial. Another novel of the period, one which came more to grips with basic issues, was John Hay's The Breadwinners.

The Breadwinners

The Breadwinners (1883) was published anonymously, and

¹ Henry Adams, Democracy (New York, 1880), 53.

only in later years was John Hay's authorship revealed. In writing this work, he was profoundly influenced by the great railroad strikes of 1877, which caused riots and created for a short time the most alarming condition of its kind that the nation had experienced.¹ The ideas in Hay's story, one of the most widely read novels of its time, provoked much controversy.¹ In a preface to an 1889 edition, the author wrote:

"I have been unjust, it seems, to the labor unions. This is a gratuitous assumption. I have expressed no opinion about labor unions. I have told about a little society, organized for his own ends by a criminal, who used the labor reformers' slang and something of their methods to swindle a few workmen out of their money..I have not discussed the labor problem."²

Disregard for property rights among some workers was the theme of Hay's novel. The sanctity of property was defended (and personified) by Arthur Farnham, a wealthy socialite-bachelor who had investments in several industrial enterprises in the large midwestern city where he resided. Miss Maude Matchin, a young high school graduate from a lower-middle class family, obtained a library job through his influence. Farnham's romantic affair with her thereby aroused the resentment of Sam Sleeny, a carpenter who worked in his neighborhood and who sought Maude's affections. Maude, caught between her love for Farnham and her social status, was a center of conflict between these two men. Moreover, Sleeny's name suggested a connotation of the treachery and recklessness that Hay identified with the laboring classes.

1 William Roscoe Thayer, John Hay (New York, 1915), II, 1-9. Thayer stated that during its serial publication, The Breadwinners enjoyed more success than any previous American novel since the Civil War.

2 John Hay, The Breadwinners (New York, 1889 ed.), v-vi.

He belonged to the Brotherhood of Breadwinners, a center of labor agitation, and was quite jealous of another Breadwinner, Andy Offitt, who also had romantic interests in Maude.

Through the initiative of the Breadwinners, the workers effected a general strike, economically crippling the city. After a few days, the workers became extremely disorderly, and some of them, out of malice, decided to raid Algonquin Avenue (where Farnham resided). One worker proclaimed at a rally, "Enter in and take possession of the spoilers' gains. Algonquin Avenue is heaped with riches wrung from the sweat of the poor. Clean out the abode of blood guiltiness."¹ Riots occurred, but these ceased when the strike was broken up. The mayor, supposedly a friend of the masses, was a vacillating figure in the strike. Hay bemoaned the fact that the more prosperous were not more adequately represented in the municipal government:

"The rich and prosperous, as their manner is, congratulated themselves on their escape, and gave no thought to the question which had come so near to an issue of fire and blood. In this city of two hundred thousand people, two or three dozen politicians continued to govern it, to assess and to spend its taxes, to use it as their chattel and property. The rich and intelligent people kept on making money, building fine houses, and bringing up children to hate politics as they did, and in fine to fatten themselves as sheep which should be mutton whenever the butcher was ready. There was hardly a millionaire on Algonquin Avenue who knew where the ward meeting of his party was held. There was not an Irish laborer in the city but knew his way to his ward club as well as to Mass."²

"Bringing up children to hate politics as much as they did" was undoubtedly one reason for the failure of many reform move-

1 Ibid., 218-19.

2 Ibid., 246-47.

ments in this age of the Migwumps.

Discontented after the strike, Sleeny fell under the influence of Offitt, who went to Farnham's home one evening and attacked him. After stealing a large sum of money, he went to Maude and asked her to flee with him; she refused. Then Offitt tried to throw the blame for the assault upon Sleeny, who was arrested. Sleeny broke loose and killed Offitt, but was acquitted when it was learned that his former friend had attacked Farnham. The injuring of the wealthy man by a laborer indicated bitter class consciousness.

In a preface to the 1889 edition, Hay cited factual parallels to events in the story. The speech inciting the mob to sack Algonquin Avenue was suggested by an article in a Cleveland newspaper in July 1877. The mob scene at Farnham's house was patterned after an incident in Louisville, Kentucky, during the strikes of 1877.¹

Although Hay claimed that he distinguished between the labor movement and reckless agitators, his sincerity as a friend of labor was questionable. Letters which he wrote to his father-in-law in the summer of 1877 revealed a relentless indignation towards strikers and unions. Following are some excerpts:

(July 24) "Since last week the country has been at the mercy of the mob..The shameful truth is now clear, that the government is utterly helpless and powerless in the face of an unarmed rebellion of foreign workingmen, mostly Irish."

1. Ibid., vii.

(July 25) "It is probable that the strike may end by the surrender of the railroad companies to the demands of the strikers. This is disgraceful, but it is hard to say what else could be done."¹

Discussing the Republican nominee for the Ohio governorship in 1877, Hay regretted that "all his sympathies are with the laboring man, and none with the man whose enterprise and capital give him a living. He condemns the use of force against strikes and opposes the increase of the army."²

Although proclaiming in his preface his sympathy to the labor movement, Hay did not choose to discuss possible reasons for the workers' discontent. Neither did his son, who denied, in an introduction to a later edition, that the author was anti-union. However, the future Secretary of State's presentation of industrial strife received wide attention.

1 Quoted in Thayer, op. cit., II, 1-5.

2 Ibid., II, 1-5.

THE ERA OF CLEVELAND

The Cleveland era witnessed additional concern with the problems created by post-Civil War industrialism. Agricultural movements, which had begun in the 1870's with the Grangers, blossomed into the Populist revolt. Labor unions emerged, and strikes became a part of the American scene. Socialist, anarchist and single-tax movements indicated discontent with the economic dislocations which attended the triumph of the Industrial Revolution.

One literary historian maintained that modern American literature had its roots in the 1880's and 1890's, "when all America stood suddenly, as it were, between one society and another, one moral order and another, and the sense of impending change became almost oppressive in its vividness. It was rooted in the drift to the new world of factories and cities, with their dissolution of old standards and faiths."¹ Disillusionment with the new industrial order produced a number of Utopian novels in the late 1880's and throughout the 1890's. In his classic work, Looking Backward, Edward Bellamy articulated moderate socialist ideas and stimulated much Utopian fiction in the decade following its publication. Notable among the socialist writers who followed Bellamy's example was William Dean Howells, whose A Traveler from Altruria was widely read.

1 Alfred Kazin, On Native Grounds (New York, 1942), viii.

Prominent in the literary emergence of the Middle West, and in the growth of a more realistic and socially-conscious fiction, was Hamlin Garland, who wrote two political novels which revealed the temperament of Populism. A Spoil of Office expressed the reactions of agrarian America to economic injustices and described the Granger and Alliance movements, the immediate forerunners of Populism. A Member of the Third House dealt with the power of railroads and of "invisible government" in a midwestern city and state; this novel analyzed some Populist grievances which would later be those of the Progressives.

American society in the Cleveland era was also affected by the waves of immigration to the large eastern cities. From the new urban "melting pot" the professional party machine boss drew much of his strength. Paul Leicester Ford's The Honorable Peter Stirling was significant for its defense of the boss system, as well as for its attack upon radicalism.

The novels discussed in this chapter revealed various reactions to the new forces that shaped American life in an important transitional period.

Looking Backward

The idea of uplifting human nature by radically overhauling political institutions was not new in 1887; but it was skillfully presented in Edward Bellamy's Looking Backward. Written in an age of rugged industrialism, Bellamy's book maintained that only under collectivism could true individuality flourish. He revived the literary form of Thomas More's

classic, Utopia, by striking a contrast between an ideal society and the imperfect America of the late nineteenth century. The main character, Julian West, was a wealthy Bostonian who fell into a mesmerized sleep in 1887 and woke up in the world of 2000. In 1887, West had been indifferent to the sufferings of the masses and antipathetic towards strikes. Upon waking up, he was cared for by one Dr. Leete and some other citizens. Observing American society in 2000, he saw the complete prevalence of harmony and altruism. Dr. Leete explained to him the evolution of society since 1887 that had brought reform:

"Early in the last century the evolution was completed by the entire capital of the nation. The industry and commerce of the country, ceasing to be conducted by a set of irresponsible corporations and syndicates of private persons at their caprice and for their profit, were intrusted to a single syndicate representing the people, to be conducted in the common interest for the common profit. The nation, that is to say, organized as the one great business corporation, in which all other corporations were absorbed; it became the one capitalist in the place of all other capitalists, the sole employer, the final monopoly in which all previous monopolies were swallowed up, a monopoly in the profits and economies of which all citizens shared. The epoch of trusts had ended in the Great Trust."¹

Dr. Leete described to his visitor the nature of the changed America. The government was the employer of all citizens, and there was no labor problem. Bankers and merchants were obsolete; a system existed whereby each citizen had a credit card with which he obtained goods and services. There were no "middlemen" in the economic system of 2000. There was free trade on a barter basis among the nations. Because of complete internation-

1 Edward Bellamy, Looking Backward (New York, 1887), 41.

al amity (due to lack of economic competition), there were no wars, no need for military forces or armaments.

In this classless society, no man's occupation was considered inferior or superior to another's. Since economic inequalities were nonexistent, crime in the United States was practically negligible. Lawyers were not needed, according to Dr. Leete, because "everything touching the relations of men to one another is now simpler, beyond any comparison, than in your day. We should have no use for the hairsplitting experts who presided and argued in your courts."¹

State governments had been eliminated, and one centralized administration remained. The man who became President rose through the ranks of the great industrial army, just as a five-star general rises through the ranks; his selection was similar to that of Plato's philosopher-king.

There were no political parties or politicians; corruption and demagoguery were thus nonexistent. Furthermore, the labor parties of the late nineteenth century were viewed as having been too narrow in scope and class-minded. But later a national socialist party developed, paving the way for the partyless state of 2000. Bellamy found the labor parties of his own day too class-conscious and urged that socialism have a broader base. He appealed to "those middle-class Americans who were disturbed by the increasing hardening and stratification of society along class lines. His utopia developed out of the existing capitalism without the bitterness of class strife.

1 Ibid., 167.

His leaders were neither members of the plutocracy nor working class radicals."¹ By departing from orthodox Marxist doctrine and urging a moderate reformation of the existing social order, Bellamy had a tremendous impact upon American socialism, which "owed more for its inspiration to Looking Backward than it did to Karl Marx's Das Kapital."²

Awakening in the America of 1887, West realized that its social structure was built upon selfishness and greed. He recalled Dr. Leete's statement that its "system of antagonistic industries was as absurd economically as it was morally abominable."³ The late nineteenth century was, in retrospect, an age of conflict between producers and parasites; usury and money were the devices by which a small group of plunderers held their privileged positions.

Bellamy's thought was deterministic; when human beings became sufficiently enlightened and unselfishly followed the dictates of human reason, no other development was conceivable. When West asked Dr. Leete how society had solved the problem of labor unrest, he was told:

"It was not necessary for society to solve the riddle at all. It may be said to have solved itself. The solution came as the result of a process of industrial evolution which could not have terminated otherwise. All that society had to do was to recognize and co-operate with that evolution, when its tendency had become unmistakable."⁴

Bellamy proclaimed his faith in human nature to improve

1 Howard H. Quint, The Forging of American Socialism (Columbia, S.C., 1953), 77-78.

2 Ibid., vii.

3 Bellamy, op. cit., 199.

4 Ibid., 35.

man's lot. But his ideal of a humanized collectivist society "was destined to live largely in the realm of the Utopian ideals of the middle class, for it did not take hold either in the grass roots or at factory benches. But in those segments of the middle class that Looking Backward did reach, the vivid and graphic argument helped to break down the older conception of an individualism which operated within a framework of laissez-faire, competition and production for profits."¹ This novel spurred the appearance of many Nationalist Clubs, formed mainly by humanitarian-minded citizens of the urban middle class. And generally, "little effort was made to bring members of the working class into the Nationalist ranks."²

At a time when trusts were growing and the problem of ruthless competition was becoming acute, Bellamy's projection of a "Great Trust" received much attention. Looking Backward was one of the most important American novels ever written.

A Traveler from Altruria

In A Traveler from Altruria (1894), William Dean Howells reversed Bellamy's format, by bringing a citizen of another nation to late nineteenth century America. Similarly, Howells contrasted the inadequacies in the American industrial order with the higher state of human existence which mankind could attain--through a moderate socialism.

The traveler, Mr. Homos, stayed at a New England resort hotel and inquired about life in America. The hotel guests

1 Merle F. Curti, The Growth of American Thought (New York, 1943), 629.

2 Quint, op. cit., 79-85.

with whom he conversed were quite prosperous and indifferent to the welfare of workers and farmers. He found lack of concern for social problems and even indignation about strikes and demands for higher wages. One man felt that the "iron law" of economics, rather than human considerations, should govern labor-management relations. This strong belief in rugged individualism astonished Mr. Homos, since it encouraged a lack of public control over property rights.

Mr. Homos saw that labor strife was great. He also noted that high-interest rates were hurting debtor-farmers. But one of the guests maintained that American society was in a transitional stage, compelled by the Industrial Revolution; the nation was in a nasty but necessary phase, progressing towards improved conditions.

After listening to several people, Mr. Homos concluded that the American worker's economic status was "in a state of perpetual uncertainty, and to save himself in some measure he has organized, and so has constituted himself a danger to the public peace."¹ He was convinced that social equality did not complement political equality in America. One tourist stated that social divisions were "voluntary," but added that

"The divisions among us are rather a process of natural selection. You will see, as you get better acquainted with our institutions, that there are no arbitrary distinctions here, but the fitness of the man for the work and the work for the man determines the social rank that each one holds."²

Another guest, discussing the potential strength of the

1 William Dean Howells, A Traveler from Altruria (New York, 1894), 44.

2 Ibid., 19.

workers, believed that they had hurt themselves by engaging in strikes, which would only arouse public sentiment against them.

"They are in the majority, the immense majority, if you count the farmers, and they prefer to behave as if they were the hopeless minority. They say they want an eight-hour law, and every now and then they strike, and try to fight it. Why don't they vote it?..They can make any law they want, but they prefer to break such laws as we have."¹

One tourist contrasted the socialists with the anarchists and other radicals; the socialists did not agitate strikes among the workers, as the newspapers unjustly accused them, but instead employed legitimate means in attaining their goals.

"The socialists are the only fellows among them who propose to vote their ideas into laws, and nothing can be more American than that..(Their) philosophy is more law, not less, and (they) look forward to an order so just that it can't be disturbed."²

Howells wrote this novel in a period of labor disorders. He hoped to erase any public impression of socialism as dangerous and revolutionary. He wanted the socialists to fight their battles, legitimately and constantly, in the political arena.

Mr. Homos described the evolution of society in his native land and the ideal order that had been achieved there. Predatory avarice and exploitation, once prevalent, had been supplanted by altruism. He spoke of the Accumulation, the sorrowful stage which industrial society had once reached in Altruria--absolute concentration of wealth and power in a ruthless plutocracy; monopolies and trusts emerged. After this phase, a

¹ Ibid., 150.

² Ibid., 150-51.

a campaign against the Accumulation provoked a coming of the collectivist planned economy. Howells seemed to suggest that the growing power of trusts in the United States in the 1890's might cause a similar fate.

The downfall of the Accumulation occurred when the Altrurians became aroused and exercised their rights at the polls. In the new Commonwealth of Altruria, the old competitive and monopolistic features of society were discarded. The means of production became collectively owned and operated, while economic and social inequalities were abolished.

Howells offered a call for political action which was moderate and peaceful. But although some social ills were severely scrutinized, the social order itself was not indicted. A Traveler from Altruria demanded some reasonable reforms. And like Bellamy, Howells wanted to give socialism a touch of middle-class respectability.

A Spoil of Office

A Spoil of Office (1892), by Hamlin Garland, dealt with Iowa politics in the Granger and Alliance period. It also offered some insights into the nature of power in Congress. The author had himself been affiliated with Populism, and the famous People's Party leader, "Sockless" Jerry Simpson, had strongly influenced him.¹

The struggle of farmers against the small town middlemen who exploited them economically and dominated them politically occasioned the entry of Bradley Talcott, the story's main

¹ John D. Hicks, The Populist Revolt (Minneapolis, 1931), 161.

character, into politics. At a local Republican convention, the farm delegates were outmaneuvered by the "town slickers" in the selection of candidates for county offices. Some insurgent delegates bolted and ran independent candidates on a Granger ticket. "It was a singular thing to see the farmers suddenly begin to ask themselves why they should stand quietly by while the townsmen monopolized all the offices and defied them to make a change."¹ Garland indicated that farmers were sufficiently aroused to fight back against those who were apparently exploiting them. An authoritative study of the Populist movement maintained that the farmers suffered, "or at least they thought they suffered, from the railroads, from the trusts and the middlemen, from the money-lenders and the bankers, and from the muddled currency."²

Talcott, a lawyer, worked for the Granger ticket and later was elected to the state legislature and to Congress through Democratic and Granger support. As a state legislator, he observed the influence of corporate interests upon state government; on his arrival in Washington, he was informed by a friend that

"The House is under the rule of a Republican czar, and men with your ideas are to be shut out remorselessly. Let me tell you something right here; it will save you time and worry. You want to know the Speaker, cultivate him. He's the real power. That's the reason the Speakership becomes such a terrible struggle. It decides the most important question. In his hand is the appointing of committees, which should be chosen by the legislators themselves. The power of these committees is unlimited,

1 Hamlin Garland, A Spoil of Office (Boston, 1892), 95.

2 Hicks, op. cit., 45.

you'll find. They can smother bills of the utmost importance. Theoretically, they are the servants of the House. Actually, they are its autocrats."¹

Talcott became associated with the minority of radical, reform-minded Congressmen. At the next Democratic convention in his district, he failed to gain renomination. His radical position alienated many people, for the Democratic Party, although differing with the Republicans on the tariff issue, was essentially no less conservative than its rival party. One newspaper in Talcott's district "published some of his radical utterances, much garbled, of course, and called him 'an anarchist and a socialist, a fit leader for the repudiating gang of alleged farmers in Kansas.'"² Talcott joined the Alliance movement and prepared to seek re-election to Congress, as candidate of the Alliance and Reform Party.

"Down with monopolies!" "Free trade, free land!" "Money at cost! Transportation at cost!" "Abolish the national banks!" "If we don't own the railroads, the railroads will own us!" "Let us legislate for the poor, not for the bankers!"³ These were among the slogans of the Alliance movement which Talcott joined. Garland predicted further that the protective tariff, supposedly a curse of eastern manufacturing interests upon the farmers, would be defeated. One of the novel's characters stated the case for free trade, as well as the agrarian distrust of cities:

¹ Garland, A Spoil of Office, 278-79. Garland's observations concurred with some of the conclusions reached by Woodrow Wilson, in Congressional Government in the United States (1888).

² Ibid., 325.

³ Ibid., 338-39.

"Maybe you won't believe me, cities mean vice, and crime, and poverty, and vast wealth for the few, and as for the Home Market idea, how would it do to let the farmer buy in the same market in which he sells. He sells in the world's market, but you'd force him to buy in a protected market."¹

The identification of cities with vice was characteristic of Populism. To many agrarians, the city symbolized an artificial economy and an abuse of the natural extraction of wealth. "This feeling, though hardly confined to Populists and Bryanites, was none the less exhibited by them in a particularly virulent form. Everyone remote and alien was distrusted and hated--even Americans, if they happened to be city people."² Garland recalled in later years that when he first visited Chicago in the 1880's, he expected it to be swarming with thieves and feared that his physical safety would be jeopardized.³

Garland contended that new economic forces were fostering political realignments. The strong showing of the People's Party in the 1892 elections, in the year of this novel's publication, tended to support his view. But while a great political upheaval failed to materialize, the two parties became more concerned, in later decades, about the many ills grieving the farmer.

A Member of the Third House

In A Member of the Third House (1892), Garland treated the influence of railroads in politics. While revealing some

¹ Ibid., 72.

² Richard Hofstadter, The Age of Reform (New York, 1955), 82.

³ Hamlin Garland, A Son of the Middle Border (New York, 1923 ed.), 269.

strains of Populist thought, this work dealt with problems which would confront the Progressives in the following decade.

A midwestern city and its largest city were politically controlled by the Consolidated Railway Company, which was applying for a state charter that would give it a franchise over all of the city's transit lines. Wilson Tuttle, a fearless young member of the state legislature, introduced a resolution (which was passed) to investigate the methods of the Consolidated. He also introduced a bill to charge a graduated increasing annual rent for street privileges for transit companies. To complicate the plot, Tuttle was courting the pretty young daughter of the railway president, Lawrence B. Davis.

Davis was not basically corrupt, but his weakness in yielding to pressures made him a tragic figure in the story. He was persuaded by his unscrupulous legal adviser, Tom Brennan, that the only practical way to obtain approval of the desired charter was to employ dishonest tactics. "I've spent a hundred thousand dollars already,--and now you come to me with a scheme to practically buy the Senate. Can't it be done some other way?" Brennan replied, "I don't know any other way. Moral suasion is out of date in legislation."¹

Garland dissected the character of Brennan, who was "as much a product of our society, and especially of our government, as the electric railway or the telephone, or the milk trust. His like is to be seen in every hotel corridor."²

¹ Hamlin Garland, A Member of the Third House (Chicago, 1892), 37.

² Ibid., 48.

The mood of this novel was frankly cynical. Garland asserted that the times were vicious; the moral environment was making good men weak and bad men worse.

Brennan represented also the rising immigrant Irish in politics and business. Garland expressed the dislike of the rising foreigners which was felt by many midwestern Americans of Anglo-Saxon stock, notably among the Populists. It was appropriate that the principal villain of this novel was an Irish railroad lawyer.

Tuttle's resolution to have the Consolidated's methods investigated brought public hearings, conducted by a joint committee of both legislative houses. Senator Ward, a key figure, was offered a liberal bribe not to press the exposé of railway-politics connections. But Tuttle successfully appealed to Ward's sense of public duty. "Every paper in the Union is commenting on the supineness of our great state under the heel of this corporation. We must break it down. I am appalled at the thought of failing to convict, so gigantic is the evil."¹ Ward testified against the Consolidated; Brennan and Davis were arrested.

The forces of good (and public duty) were clearly pitted against the forces of evil, represented by corporate wealth in politics. Davis, who was weak, was lost to the cause of evil, as the crass materialism and narrowness of his life overcame any evidence of virtue in his character. He committed suicide. Brennan, released on bail, fled. The story ended

¹ Ibid., 136.

with the young Tuttle determined to continue his battle against the pernicious forces that plagued society. (He also married Davis' daughter.)

Tuttle, a young lawyer who entered politics, represented the middle-class citizenry which was beginning to protest against the intrusions of large business interests into government. Ten years later, he would undoubtedly be a Progressive.

The Honorable Peter Stirling

The Honorable Peter Stirling (1894), was Paul Leicester Ford's pioneer novel of the professional party boss. In an age of serious labor unrest, the author also made a sharp attack upon radicalism.

Stirling, who became Democratic boss of New York City, was a self-made gentleman in politics. A New Englander who had opened a law practice in a New York working-class district, he worked his way up the political ladder, eventually becoming a powerful figure. Through a college friend, who was from a wealthy family, he made contacts in New York society. He thus mingled with both poor and prosperous. He attracted attention by his effective prosecution of a dairy which had sold impure milk. As a result of the case, some newspapers began a crusade against the swill-milk dealers. Stirling got a reputation as a defender of immigrants, a reputation which gave him political appeal. He was selected as delegate to a Democratic Party state convention, where he

received notice by urging the party to promote food-inspection and tenement-inspection legislation.

A college-educated and articulate spokesman for the working-class people in his district, Stirling rose in the party. An Irishman in his ward declared, "Good for de sixt! Hurrah for the unwashed democracy, where one man's as good as another! So a 'Mick' ward wants its great man to put on all the frills? I tell you, chum, we may talk about equality, but the lower classes can't but admire and worship the tinsel and flummery of aristocracy."¹ The distinction between the big city's "melting pot" and the "better element" of people was raised by the wife of his college friend, who asked, "But don't you think that the people of our class are better and finer?" Stirling answered that public virtue and altruism were not monopolized by the more prosperous and socially-prestigious people.² Moreover, he disliked "impractical reformers," and especially the condescending and self-righteous bearing which some of them assumed. He scorned the notion of noblesse oblige.

After several years, Stirling became party boss of New York City. A staunch supporter of the boss system, he defended the role of the professional politician. "In my whole political career, I have never known a man who could control a thousand votes for five years, who was not a better man, all in all, than the voters whom he influenced. More one cannot

¹ Paul Leicester Ford, The Honorable Peter Stirling (New York, 1894), 228.

² Ibid., 283.

expect. The people are not quick, but they find out a knave or a demagogue if you give them time."¹ Ford believed in the inherent goodness and wisdom of the common people.

As a state party convention approached, the Democrats were under pressure to join forces with the Labor Party, by nominating for governor a socialist who had been identified as a Democrat. Stirling opposed this tactic.

"The Labor Party will get as many votes from the Republicans as from us, and, for every vote the Labor Party takes from us, we shall get a Republican vote, if we can put up the right kind of man..We can win with our own man, and we don't need to trade with or endorse the Labor Party. We can elect Maguire (socialist aspirant) by the aid of the worst votes in this city, or we can elect our own man by the aid of the best. The one weakens the party in the future; the other strengthens it."²

Even with its broad base of support from the poorer classes in New York, the Democratic Party in this novel was not radical in its outlook or control. The New York Democracy was represented basically by conservatives, who would repudiate the "worst votes in this city."

A few months before the election, a railroad strike followed a reduction in wages for railway employees. An economic depression (probably the Panic of 1893) prompted the wage cut. Mob riots were organized, largely through the initiative of anarchists. The governor ordered regiments of the state militia to break up the strike and to restore public order. Stirling was leader of a local regiment which was summoned to help break the strike ; he led a march on to the Central

1 Ibid., 274.

2 Ibid., 300.

Station. The Labor Party press and radicals dubbed him "Butcher Stirling." The Democratic nominee for governor, he took his stand for public order. His speech to his regiment during the strike was widely discussed, and helped him to win the election.

"We have taken our oath to preserve law and order, and we are interested in having it done, far more than is the capitalist, for he can buy protection, whether laws are enforced or not, while the laboring man cannot. But if any man here is not prepared to support the state in its duty to protect the life and property of all, by an enforcement of the laws, I wish, I wish to know it now."¹

A conservative, Ford recognized the abuses in an industrial society and publicized the need for such correctives as tenement-inspection and food-inspection laws. He was neither radical nor reactionary.

¹ Ibid., 355.

III. THE PROGRESSIVES

Underway in the early 1900's, the Progressive Movement essentially reflected urban America's reactions to many of the problems involved in the transformation of the nation from a primarily agrarian society to an industrial power. Professor George Mowry stated that Progressivism embodied the aspirations of a "solid middle class," economically secure and largely college-educated. The majority of Progressive reformers were lawyers, publishers and editors. Moreover, most Progressives had been conservative supporters of McKinley in 1896 and disliked any radicalism, whether it be of the free silver or socialistic variety.¹ Progressivism emerged at a time of relative prosperity, when middle-class America showed a concern towards the power of the classes both above and below it. The upper classes were combatted through attempts to curb trusts and concentrated wealth; the working classes were restrained by efforts to halt radicalism and labor unions.

Personal envy and frustration, moreover, partially motivated Progressive resentment of extreme wealth. Theodore Roosevelt, who personified much of the spirit of his day, has been viewed by Professor Richard Hofstadter as despising the rich but fearing the mob, seeking to have an elite middle-class arbiter between the two.² Hofstadter has further interpreted

1 George Mowry, The Era of Theodore Roosevelt (New York, 1958), 37.

2 Richard Hofstadter, The American Political Tradition (New York, 1948), 221.

Progressivism in terms of a "status revolution" in which the old educated, urban middle-class group was losing its privileged position in American society. During the 1890's and into the new century, this group, which included lawyers, editors, doctors, preachers and independent businessmen, was seeing its prestige undermined by the leaders of large corporations and by the labor unions. The feeling of frustration which this status upheaval caused deeply affected the Progressive mood.¹

Although a fundamentally urban movement, some Progressivism entailed a disillusionment with urban life. To a considerable extent Anglo-Saxon racism provoked this attitude, as immigrants filled the cities and provided the base of the professional machine bosses' power.² The Yankee influence further promoted a tendency to view political questions in absolute moral terms. Also important was a strong individualism and the idea of a leadership "elite," guiding the masses. And, as some novels indicated, a modified Social Darwinism affected the thought of the era.

A most vital aspect of Progressivism was its basic conservative orientation; in fact, the movement could be viewed in terms of a reactionary as well as reform impulse.³ Prevalent among many Progressives was a desire to restore the "good old days" before railroads, malefactors of great wealth and

1 Hofstadter, The Age of Reform, 135.

2 Arthur Mann, Yankee Reformers in the Urban Age (Cambridge, Mass., 1954), has a good discussion of this problem.

3 Mowry, op. cit., 104 .

big-city machine bosses became so obnoxious.

The five authors selected for this chapter were all prominent Progressives. Brand Whitlock was a writer on a variety of subjects of social concern, mayor of Toledo and Minister to Belgium under President Wilson. Winston Churchill was one of the era's most popular novelists. William Allen White was an outspoken Kansas editor. David Graham Phillips, among the most famous "muckrakers," was the author of The Treason of the Senate (1906). Edward House was a close friend and adviser of Woodrow Wilson.

Thirteenth District

Brand Whitlock's Thirteenth District (1902), described the machinations of party politics in Illinois at the turn of the century. The deals which were essential to a successful career in public office, the infighting for power and patronage control--these were the basic elements of this novel. And amid these scrambles could be perceived one of the fundamental strengths, if also one of the weaknesses, of American democracy--the lack of rigorous ideological ties in the American party system.

The story's main character, Jerry Garwood, was an honest and ambitious small-town lawyer, a man with few profound convictions. After serving in the state legislature, he was twice elected to Congress but denied a third nomination. The approach of a district party convention, which selected Garwood, was observed by Whitlock:

"All over the Thirteenth Congressional District, a few men in each county seat were gratuitously attending to government for (the people), plotting and scheming to place certain names on the ballot, confident in the knowledge that in November the people would divide themselves arbitrarily into parties, and go through the empty formality of ratifying the selections that would result from all their maneuvers and machinations. Thus the business of the people's government is carried on."¹

Garwood gained his first nomination largely through the support of Jim Rankin, party boss in Polk County. He won his first election against a former circuit court judge who had resigned from the bench to make a more lucrative living as a railroad counsel. Garwood's success was due largely to his charging his opponent with being a rubber-stamp of the railroad.

Seeking a second nomination, Garwood placed expediency above personal loyalties; his old patron, Rankin, had been deposed as county chairman, and Garwood gained the friendship of Rankin's old enemy, Freeman Pusey. Mainly through Pusey's backing, Garwood was victor at the district convention. Deals had to be made to obtain a nomination, and after the election, he secured for Pusey an appointment as postmaster-general of the town of Grand Prairie. In the next campaign, however, the party nominee was chosen in a primary election. Rankin actively supported Garwood's opponent; in his third bid, the young Congressman failed.

Whitlock pictured the little cliques that conducted the business of government in the seven Illinois counties which

¹ Brand Whitlock, Thirteenth District (Indianapolis, 1902), 236.

comprised the Thirteenth District. Winning election to a public office depended upon gaining their support.

"They were men who did not especially have at heart the interests of that portion of the people known as the 'party' they represented. They had only their own interests at heart, and they conducted the people's government for what they themselves might get out of it in money and in power. Behind them, it is true, were oftentimes men who were either too respectable or too unpopular to engage in politics; men who controlled large affairs, but these were also interested in nothing but their own business and the making of money. The happiness of the people was not for them to consider; fortunately, that was left to the winds."¹

Significant was the lack of sharp cleavages over large public issues. In his first campaign, Garwood spoke about the bribes which his opponent had received as a judge "under the guise of discussing the tariff."² The principal concern in each campaign was which clique or faction would control patronage and dispense political favors; it would be a Republican clique or a Democratic clique. At the polls, therefore, the people chose between two groups of professional politicians, and matters of public policy were mainly superficial.

Her Infinite Variety

Another novel by Whitlock, Her Infinite Variety (1904), dealt with the women's suffrage movement. Written in a romantic and light vein, it lacked the realism of other novels. Nevertheless, it offered some insights into the attitudes of upper-class Americans towards politics in the early 1900's.

A wealthy dilettante in politics, Morley Vernon, was the story's main character. A state senator from a silk-stockings

1 Ibid., 236-37.

2 Ibid., 117-18.

district in Cook County, Illinois, he had found a legal career tedious, entered politics, and patronized good causes. "I wanted to do something--to have some part in the world's work. The law seemed to be a respectable profession, and I felt that maybe I could do some good in politics. I don't think that the men of my class take as much interest in politics as they should."¹

While serving in Springfield, Vernon met Miss Maria Greene, who was lobbying for the passage of a state constitutional amendment granting the vote to women. He became impressed with this movement and made a speech on behalf of the bill. But he confronted opposition to this measure among the aristocratic women of his own class. After making his speech, Vernon met a Mrs. Overman Hodge-Lathrop at a social gathering. Haughty and pretentious, she asserted that political activity would degrade the female sex. The vote for the woman would "make her soil herself with politics, by scheming and voting and caucusing and button-holing and wire-pulling."² Mrs. Hodge-Lathrop worked successfully to have the women's suffrage measure defeated.

Although the Progressive Movement was essentially middle-class, this picture of upper-class attitudes revealed some features of the Progressive temperament. Most pronounced was the genteel dislike for the vulgarity of political life, with its ward-healers and greedy promoters. The constituents in

¹ Brand Whitlock, Her Infinite Variety (Indianapolis, 1904), 76-77.

² Ibid., 102.

Vernon's aristocratic district in Cook County would have had only disdain for the big city bosses, in cities like Chicago, who drew their strength from immigrants and workers. Vernon was an impractical and good-intentioned reformer, loving humanity in the abstract, who would have been ridiculed by Peter Stirling in Ford's 1894 novel. But in spite of the snickering of some professional politicians, people like Morley Vernon came to play a more important role in American politics. And in spite of Mrs. Hodge-Lathrop's temporary success, the feminist movement gathered momentum in the early years of this century.

Strategems and Spoils

Strategems and Spoils (1901), was a collection of short stories by William Allen White, containing some of this famous publicist's criticisms of political life. In each story an ethical problem was posed and a man compelled to display his true moral fiber.

The Man on Horseback, first of the stories, concerned a powerful parvenu who influenced politics in his city. Joab T. Barton resided in a "castle," where his uncultured wife ostentatiously flaunted their wealth. In the Horatio Alger fashion, he had risen from brakeman to railroad president. His influence on city and state government was great.

"He not only owns the executive and legislative branches of the civil government, but the judiciary is recruited from his law offices...By a scratch of the pen he can increase freight rates on his great railroad system, putting the necessities of life out of the reach

of one-third of the population in the city, and no state legislature dare check his avarice."¹

Mrs. Barton and the wife of a James Kelsey were staunch enemies and social rivals. Kelsey was a key member on the city council, which was considering a measure that would give Barton's company a franchise on the city's streetcar transportation. The plot revolved about Barton's overtures to Mrs. Kelsey, who in turn influenced her husband to support Barton's transit interests. Barton decided that business took priority over his wife's pride and acted ruthlessly. Mrs. Barton learned a lesson in humility, but her grasping husband achieved his goal.

A Victory for the People dealt with railroads in politics. Governor Rhodes had to appoint a successor to fill the unexpired term of a United States Senator who had died. He offered the post to Harvey Bolton, a successful railroad attorney, who was hesitant about giving up a lucrative practice as counsel for the Corn Belt Railroad for a two-year unexpired term in Washington. The railroad president urged Bolton to accept; he feared the possible appointment of another man, John Gardiner, who was interested in exposing railroad-government corruption.

Bolton declined the offer, but persuaded the governor to name Tom Wharton, with a promise that the railroad interests would support Rhodes himself two years later for a full term. Rhodes agreed to this deal, but after some sober second

¹ William Allen White, Strategems and Spoils (New York, 1901), 43-44.

thoughts, he realized that in appointing Wharton, whom he considered dishonest, he would discredit himself. The governor really wanted to name Gardiner, but feared that he might endanger his own career by antagonizing the railroads.

Rhodes finally yielded to his sense of public responsibility and demonstrated his courage by selecting Gardiner. One satisfied newspaper hailed this appointment as "A victory for the people."

A Triumph's Evidence pursued a similar theme. Henry Myton returned to his home town in Colorado after serving his last term in Congress. At the last district convention, his party had denied him renomination for his stand on the currency issue, which went against the party's position. Returning to law practice, Myton felt that his defeat was a blessing in disguise which compelled him to re-assess his moral values. He believed that a political career tended to undermine, rather than to elevate, a man's character.

In the following year, Myton became involved in a struggle within his own party over the state legislature's choice of a United States Senator. The party's legislators were divided among a Pro-King faction, an anti-King faction, and an uncommitted group. King was the choice of the party machine and the corrupt railway interests. Myton still retained some influence in the party and was approached by King, who told him that, in return for his aid, he would be assured of the Congressional nomination in his district the following year. Myton was com-

pelled to decide between two alternatives--advancing his career or standing by his convictions. Myton opposed King, and his stand attracted notice; some anti-king leaders gave him a complimentary vote on the first ballot. A deadlock ensued, and Myton became the ultimate victor.

But after winning the Senate seat, Myton felt that he had become tainted by associating in a deal with the anti-king men, some of whom were also unscrupulous. The story ended on a cynical but hopeful note.

In The Mercy of Death, White sketched the career of a Senator from a midwestern state. Tom Wharton began life as an idealist, but the practical necessities of politics had forced him to become deceitful and conniving. Once a country school-teacher, he went to the state legislature and then to Congress. At first he was stunned by the avarice and insincerity which he saw in Washington, but he adjusted to the ethical climate.

"Yet there were times when he recalled his youthful visions and hoped against hope that the day would come when he might realize them..In the meantime, he controlled his district machine, and his party's national organization oiled the machine well with fat fried from concerns east of the Alleghenies which were affected by Wharton's attitude upon important Congressional committees."¹

A powerful figure in the House, Wharton moved up to the Senate. He became involved in questionable financial investments; one involved a combination of electric light companies in Washington. Wharton had high stakes in the merger's approval by the District of Columbia committee; but unfortunately for him, the corrupt nature of the proposed consolidation was

1 Ibid., 148-49.

detected by a Senator Felt.

Felt, a New Englander and cultured aristocrat, looked upon Wharton as unprincipled climber from the unwashed Midwest. But he respected Wharton for his power and boldness. Felt threatened an investigation of the proposed merger of the light companies and the financial interests involved. Wharton tried to bribe Felt, but the patrician stood firm. He stated that his forebears had fought for America in 1776 and in 1861, and that he would battle the corrupt force which was menacing the old, virtuous America.

As Felt pressed his investigation, Wharton realized that he faced trouble. He tried to drown his woes in whiskey, but his physical stamina diminished, and he died with a whiskey glass in hand. The former idealist, whose principles were compromised by a political career, was saved from disgrace by the mercy of death.

In these stories, White stressed the difficulties of public figures in maintaining their personal integrity. In A Triumph's Evidence, Henry Myton stood by his convictions, but nonetheless felt that he was lowering himself by being in politics. In A Victory for the People, Governor Rhodes held steadfast to his sense of public duty by withstanding pressures to appoint a dishonest man to the Senate. But in The Mercy of Death, Tom Wharton lacked the moral firmness to prevent the rotting away of his earlier principles. In each instance, White emphasized the individual character; the person himself,

rather than his environment, was the decisive factor. If a man yielded to the temptations of political life, it was not essentially because the times were bad, but rather because he lacked the courage of his convictions.

The Plum Tree

The Plum Tree (1905), written by David Graham Phillips, was a fast-moving story of politically-ambitious men who vied ruthlessly for favored spots under the "plum tree" of rewards and pickings. The main character, Harvey Sayler, had unusual success under the tree, but his political good fortunes caused him a troubled mind. The moral catharsis which he experienced comprised the central theme of the novel.

Young Sayler had been a midwestern small-town lawyer, whose first chance to get near the "plum tree" came when he approached the local party leader, Mr. Dominick, who needed a dependable man to run for the state assembly. Sayler gained his approval. In Dominick's headquarters, a large beer-garden, congregated political cronies, judges, lawyers seeking judicial office, and agents of business interests soliciting favors. As a state legislator, Sayler learned even more about the realities of political life:

"I saw clearly that graft was the backbone, the whole skeleton of legislative business, and that its fleshly cover of pretended public service could be seen only by the blind. I saw, also, that no one in the machine of either party had any real power. The state boss of our party, United States Senator Dunkirk, was a creature and servant of corporations."¹

1 David Graham Phillips, The Plum Tree (New York, 1905), 30-31.

A bill was proposed in the legislature providing tax exemption for the railways in the state. Sayler stood by his inner convictions and voted against the bill; consequently, he was obliged to return to his law practice upon the expiration of his term. But he joined a reform movement against Dominick and was elected district attorney of Jackson County. This "reform movement" was actually only a consequence of a quarrel among the corporations that patronized Dominick, who had been showing excessive consideration to one of the business interests that employed him, much to the annoyance of his other corporate clients. The other interests organized a drive to "purify" Jackson County, Dominick's stronghold.

Sayler's effectiveness as district attorney, however, was limited. By his control of judges and the press, Dominick had the power to restrain anyone who sought to curb him. After failing to win re-election, Sayler was offered a position by the Power Trust (Universal Gas and Electric Company) as one of its lawyers. It was a practice of the corporate interests to offer a job to, and win over to their side, any promising young attorney who had been causing them difficulty.

Sayler's shrewd work for the Power Trust pushed him ahead. He played a key role in solving the problem posed by Senator Dunkirk, boss of the state machine, who had been demanding higher prices for the political protection which his organization had given. The Power Trust desired to wreck Dunkirk and "cheapen the cost of political business."¹ Sayler proposed

1 Ibid., 71.

that the Power Trust join with other corporations to pressure Dunkirk. In combination they would do business with another political faction at a more reasonable cost. This plan was pursued, but Dunkirk proved to be a formidable adversary, with many county machines and other less powerful corporations at his command.

Dunkirk approached Sayler and tried to persuade him not to become involved in the movement against him. Not realizing that he was on the other side, Dunkirk offered him the post of state party chairman. Sayler accepted and used the post to his best advantage.

Dunkirk's Senate term was expiring, and the state legislature prepared to elect. A deadlock ensued between Dunkirk and the candidate of the anti-Dunkirk movement. When it appeared that neither could win, Sayler emerged as a compromise choice. Two of the legislators pledged to Dunkirk were purchased for \$12,000 a piece, and Sayler became United States Senator and boss of the state party machine.

In the Senate, Sayler observed the workings of national power politics. The leading agent for corporate interests was Senator Goodrich of New Jersey, the party's national boss. Phillips commented upon the nature of business-government relations as they had evolved by the turn of the century:

"The dominion of the great business interests over politics was the rapid growth of about twenty years--the consolidations of business naturally producing concentrations of the business world's political power in the hands of the few controllers of the big railway, industrial and financial combines..They made (Goodrich) their

agent for the conveying of their wishes and their bribes of one kind or another to the national managers of both parties. They knew little of the details of practical politics, knew only what they needed in their businesses; and as long as they got it, it did not interest them what was done with the rest of the power their 'campaign contributions' gave."¹

In the party's national convention, Goodrich supported a man named Cronwell, a tool of Wall Street interests. But Sayler, with a combination of western and southern delegates, succeeded in promoting Governor Burbank of his state. Stunned at this turn of events, Goodrich negotiated with the bosses of the opposition party's national machine. He hoped that they would select an ultra-conservative candidate who would be acceptable to Wall Street. But the opposition party nominated a Senator Scarborough, who was backed chiefly by western and southern leaders. Scarborough, a midwesterner, was reform minded, and feared by big business.

Sayler was pleased by the rival party's choice, because he knew that big business would support Burbank rather than risk a Scarborough victory. Sayler replaced Goodrich as the party's national chairman. But after the election, which Burbank won, the President-elect aligned with Goodrich, and Sayler lost his post as party boss.

Burbank was a weak President, and public indignation with his blatant ties with big business cost him the next election, which was won by Scarborough. Appropriately, Phillips showed the Progressive forces finally triumphing.

¹ Ibid., 184.

Sayler decided to terminate his political career by asserting the ideals which for so long he had compromised. He pressured the corporations and corrupt political agents in his own state. Retiring from politics, he wondered if he had wasted much of his life.

The theme persisted that success in this life was contingent upon an adjustment of one's moral principles to practical realities. This adjustment Sayler made, although with mental qualms, for he was basically a principled man. He realized, as he advanced in his career, that he was degrading himself. But if he found his life personally displeasing, it was because his individual integrity had been undermined. Here Phillips upheld the autonomy of the individual man--in defiance of much of the deterministic thought prevalent in the late nineteenth century, that man's moral life was bound to his environment. He showed that the Progressive mentality differed in some degrees from that of the Grant and Cleveland periods. In The Gilded Age and in A Member of the Third House, the times were bad, men could do nothing but adjust to the unhealthy ethical climate, and good men became weak and bad men worse. But in The Plum Tree, even though political life was corrupting, a man could, through force of character, rise above the temptations that assailed him. Lawrence Davis, in Garland's novel, was basically decent, but was trapped in tragic circumstances. Harvey Sayler fought in the end to retain his self-respect and vowed to compromise his convictions no longer.

The politicians who competed for favored places under the "plum tree" were professionals; there were no impractical crusaders in this novel. (Scarborough, who won the White House at the end, was a practical reformer with professional backing.) Moreover, the political "game" was played along mainly opportunistic lines. The politicians in this story were horsetraders, not men of ideas. Ideological clashes were hardly treated in The Plum Tree; Phillips' journalistic background was best suited to relate concrete, particular experiences.

Mr. Crewe's Career

Mr. Crewe's Career (1908), by Winston Churchill, dealt with Humphrey Crewe, a wealthy country gentleman, involved in railroad-controlled New York state politics. This novel stressed the coming of age of the younger Progressive generation in the first decade of this century. A remark by one of the main characters summarized much of the Progressive spirit:

"A new generation has come--a generation more jealous of its political rights, and not so willing to be rid of them by farming them out. A change has taken place in the older men, who simply did not think about these questions ten years ago. Men of this type, who could be leaders, are ready to assume their responsibilities, are ready to deal fairly with railroads and citizens alike."¹

The generation that was "more jealous of its political rights" was typified by Austin Vane, a young lawyer whose father was counsel for the United Northeastern Railroad, which held a tenacious grip upon state politics. But although Austin

¹ Winston Churchill, Mr. Crewe's Career (New York, 1908), 329.

joined his father's law firm in an upstate small town, he accepted no connections with the railroad. On one occasion, Austin saved the life of a farmer, who was injured by a Northeastern train at a railroad crossing. He served as the farmer's legal counsel without fee, and won a \$6,000 verdict against the Northeastern, which was represented in court by one of his father's associates. After the case was tried, the railroad, fearing that Austin might be a formidable adversary, tried to gain his friendship.

Austin's independence reflected much of the Progressive spirit. He was economically secure, and the opportunity to join his father's law firm insured a comfortable future. But he felt that becoming associated with, and obligated to, a powerful corporation would be self-degrading. The Progressive emphasis upon personal integrity and individualism was strong in Austin's thinking; but what seemed to motivate the young attorney was his threatened loss of status.¹ Professor George Mowry contended that the personal frustration of moderately prosperous men, like Austin, came not from economic despair,

"..but from other feelings, from their sense of lessened power, perhaps, from their regard for the good name, from the sensitivity to the opinion of their fellows. Their relative status and power in society had been going down consistently since the rise of the economic moguls following the Civil War. The gap between them and the Morgans and Rockefellers had been steadily increasing, and their hopes for attaining the top of the economic heap were progressively dimming. As (Lincoln Steffens) noted, the ambitious middle classes in society had 'suffered a reduction less in income than in outlook.'²

1 Hofstadter, The Age of Reform, 131-73.

2 Mowry, op. cit., 95-96.

Austin found a partial outlet for his emotional need for self-assertion by participation in politics. "Since the Progressive was not organized economically as well as the capitalist and the laborer, he chose to fight his battles where he had the most power--in the political arena."¹ Austin entered the political scene by supporting the gubernatorial candidacy of Humphrey Crewe.

Crewe was a patronizing and philanthropic country squire as well as a successful businessman and investor. He saw the Republican leader of his district, and, obtaining his approval, won a seat in the state legislature. His constituents, in a rural area in upstate New York, were millionaires living on their estates and farmers complaining about the railroad. Crewe conformed almost exactly to Mowry's portrait of the wealthy Progressive, among whom some had "no definite occupation save that of preserving their family fortune and indulging in reform."² He typified the educated and well-bred "elite" in politics. Like Theodore Roosevelt, he hoped to represent the masses of people but not identify himself with them.

In the legislature, Crewe pushed for reform. He took a leading role in securing the passage of a bill for the construction of another railroad in the state, one which would compete with the Northeastern. The success of the bill was conspicuous, since the Northeastern had for many years sought to manipulate political machinery in Albany.

1 Ibid., 104.

2 Ibid., 86.

"The railroads, before they consolidated, found the political bosses in power, and had to pay him favors. The citizen was the culprit to start with, just as he is the culprit now, because he does not take sufficient interest in his government to make it honest. We mustn't blame the railroads too severely, when they grew strong enough, for substituting their own political army to avoid being blackmailed."¹

The United Northeastern Railroad in this novel acted as the Power Trust in The Plum Tree did--to "cheapen the cost of political business."² Especially significant was Churchill's belief that the citizen had a duty to make his government honest. The author revealed some of the moral righteousness which was a Progressive characteristic--the inclination to approach political issues in terms of ethical responsibility and service.

Pledging a reform drive against the pernicious political control of the Northeastern, Crewe sought the Republican gubernatorial nomination. Austin Vane worked actively for his candidacy, and this commitment forced a break with his father. Austin saw the younger generation as more willing to question economic and political practices which the older generation accepted. Hilary Vane pondered his son's ideas and finally reached the conviction that he had been lowering himself by serving the railroad. On the eve of the Republican convention, he resigned as railroad counsel.

Crewe's bid for the nomination failed, and a man friendly to the Northeastern won. But Austin and his father were convinced that even though the railroad's candidates might prevail

1 Churchill, op. cit., 181-82.

2 Phillips, op. cit., 71.

in the next few elections, its days of political power were numbered. The reform spirit was becoming too strong in America; and the optimism of the Progressives was well expressed by Austin Vane, who asserted that "the era of political domination by a corporation, and mainly for the benefit of a corporation, is over."¹

Philip Dru, Administrator

Philip Dru, Administrator, published anonymously in 1912 by Colonel Edward House, told of the emergence of a benevolent American dictator in the years 1920-35. Dru was an idealistic West Point graduate who was dismayed by existing social conditions. He resigned his commission to pursue a career as a professional humanitarian. The civil institutions in America, he believed, had been "debased by the power of wealth under the thin guise of the constitutional protection of property."² He considered American society fundamentally unstable, because it restricted efficiency.

"If society were properly organized, there would be none who were not sufficiently clothed and fed; the laws, habits and ethical training in vogue (are) alike responsible for the inequalities in opportunity and the consequent wide difference between the few and the many."³

After gaining national fame by winning an army essay contest, Dru embarked upon a writing career. However, he realized the necessity of achieving his objectives through political action, because of widespread corruption in politics. Moreover, a plutocracy was seeking to control the national government.

1 Churchill, op. cit., 476-77.

2 Edward House, Philip Dru, Administrator (New York, 1912),

3.

3 Ibid., 57-58.

A Senator Selwyn, tool of the predatory interests, had successfully promoted the election to the Presidency of a mid-western state governor who was obligated to big business.

One of Selwyn's allies inadvertently allowed his dictograph to be one day while he was conversing confidentially in his office--about a planned conspiracy in the American government. His secretary later heard the talks and gave a record of the conversations to the press. The nation read of the impending conspiracy, and men divided themselves into groups as fear of revolution loomed.

At a mass meeting in New York, attended by many distinguished citizens, Dru advised moderation in face of possible crisis. He was named head of a committee which was formed to investigate abuses in the government. In the meantime, Selwyn gathered the armed forces, to face any popular upheavals. But the organization that Dru headed also militarized.

Revolt broke loose in America. "General" Dru successfully led the mobilized forces against the oppressive regime, and to him fell the task of organizing a provisional government. He proclaimed himself "Administrator of the Republic" and assumed this role until a constitutional government could be restored. An overwhelming majority of people, relieved at being freed from the domination of the plutocracy, supported him.

Dru used Selwyn in his government and stimulated his more altruistic qualities. "Dru soon came to know that at heart Selwyn was not without patriotism, and that it was only from

environment and an overwhelming desire for power that had led him into the paths he had heretofore followed."¹

Dru overhauled the national government, reforming both executive and judicial branches. Court procedures were re-modeled, laws were codified and made more intelligible; the powers of the courts were re-defined, so that "they could no longer pass upon the constitutionality of laws, their function being merely to decide, as between litigants, what the law was, as was the practice of all other civilized nations."² The law would be flexible and pragmatic, adapting itself to the changing elements of human experience in a dynamic society.

Taxation procedures were revised, and a graduated income tax formulated. A federal corporation act was enacted; the public, through the state or federal government, was represented on boards of corporations, along with a representative from labor. In addition, Dru ordered a reform of the nation's financial structure and greater governmental regulation of the railroads.³

Although a former friend of states' rights doctrines, Dru came to realize the need for a strong, more centralized national government. (Significantly, House was a southern Democrat.) House also made some pointed comments on post-Civil War Reconstruction. He condemned the unscrupulous carpetbaggers and pension agents who disgraced the nation. Discussing the race problem, he censured the nation for throwing millions of

1 Ibid., 165.

2 Ibid., 168.

3 Some of House's suggestions found actual materialization after Woodrow Wilson-assumed the Presidency in 1913.

ignorant colored people upon the protection of the south.

"The humane, the wise, the patriotic thing to have done, was for the nation to have assumed the responsibility of the education of the Negroes for at least one generation."¹

Dru exerted his influence in international affairs, promoting efforts to break down world-wide economic barriers. The Monroe Doctrine was broadened; and the United States joined in an inter-American coalition against dictatorial Latin-American regimes.

After serving as Administrator for seven years and setting American government and society on a more stable basis, Dru retired. One cannot fail to wonder to what extent this benevolent ruler personified some of the secret aspirations of Colonel Edward House. House was himself a Texas colonel, and the author's own interest in military affairs might have partially influenced the army background of Dru. As a military leader, Dru embodied one Progressive characteristic--that of the paternalistic and enlightened leader, above the masses of ordinary people, who took over civil authority and reorganized society wisely.

The novel also described the party boss system. One evening, Selwyn told Dru of his career in politics--his early days as a lawyer, entering ward politics and advancing. He discussed the hierarchy of bosses.

1 House, op. cit., 120.

"The state boss treated the city bosses with much consideration, for he was more or less dependent upon them, his power consisting largely of the sum of their power.

"The state boss dealt in larger things and became a national figure. He was more circumspect in his methods, for he had a wider constituency and a more intelligent opposition.

"The local bosses were required to send to the Legislature 'loyal' party men who did not question the leadership of the state boss.

"The big interests preferred having only one man to deal with, which simplified matters; consequently they were strong aids in helping him retain his power."¹

Selwyn became his party's boss in Philadelphia and then in Pennsylvania; he made the corporate interests pay well for his friendship. "I had found that the interests were not paying anything like a commensurate amount for the special privileges they were getting, and I more than doubled the revenue obtained by the deposed boss."² Selwyn later became a United States Senator and established himself as a powerful leader in Washington, eventually becoming a President-maker.

This novel was published in the year that Woodrow Wilson won his first term in the White House, when the Progressive Movement was at a peak. Philip Dru, Administrator expressed some of the little-known ideas of a man who enjoyed an intimate contact with the architect of the New Freedom.

1 Ibid., 195.

2 Ibid., 208.

IV. THE NOVEL OF SOCIAL VIOLENCE

In his study of radical fiction in America, Walter B. Rideout pointed out that the most striking feature of the entire body of Socialist novels was without exception their reflection of the "faith of the party's moderate majority in a peaceful transformation of society."¹ Only a few authors--notably a Populist, Ignatius Donnelly, and the socialists, Jack London and Ernest Poole--advocated violence as a means of achieving social change.

Caesar's Column

In Ignatius Donnelly's anti-Utopian story, Caesar's Column (1890), the growth of trusts had the opposite effect of Edward Bellamy's "Great Trust" upon society. The harsh realities of American life in 1988 were witnessed through the eyes of Gabriel Weltstein, a Uganda sheepherder visiting in New York. Since the late nineteenth century, wealth and power had become steadily concentrated in a small clique, which had arisen from the "robber barons" who had organized the large trusts. An arrogant plutocracy, having established a police state, was exploiting the masses. Leader of the plunderers, who along with the aristocracy of the world, were "almost

¹ Walter B. Rideout, The Radical Novel in the United States (Cambridge, Mass., 1956), 53. Rideout maintains that much of the radical fiction possessed a marked middle-class slant and appeal.

entirely of Hebrew origin,"¹ was Prince Cabano (also known as Isaac Jacobs).

Democracy and the forms of government were meaningless. The newspapers, the courts and the law were "the merest tools of the rich."² The wealthy rulers--railroad presidents, bankers, great speculators--were thieves, while their aides were vulgar self-seekers. Weltstein was shown the conditions in America by Maximilian Petion, a rich man who helped to organize a revolution against the plutocracy. A proletarian Brotherhood of Destruction had formed and planned a vengeful outbreak of terror. Weltstein pleaded for a Brotherhood of Justice; he urged the revolutionaries to pursue a program of constructive reform; but the latter, possessing a nihilist bent, disregarded him. The great mass of humanity broke loose, chaos reigned, and civilization was destroyed. The vicious mob of survivors in the terrible holocaust prevented any orderly reconstruction of society. Weltstein, with Petion and some friends, escaped to Africa.

Safe at home, he planned an ideal political order. Society would be governed rationally by a legislature composed of three branches. The first would represent the "producers," i.e., urban workers and agrarian farmers. The second would contain members selected by merchants and manufacturers, while the third would represent authors, journalists, artists, scientists

1 Ignatius Donnelly, Caesar's Column (New York, 1890), 32.

2 Ibid., 28.

and philosophers. In accordance with Populist doctrine, the "money power" would be abolished and usury forbidden.

Donnelly's identification of the "money power" as an avaricious and conspiratorial force reflected the Populist outlook, of which the conspiracy theory of politics and history was a chief tenet.¹ Furthermore, though the plutocrats were admittedly despotic oppressors, class warfare was not advocated.

An outright determinist, Donnelly denied that man was a free moral agent. Regarding the masses, Weltstein commented, "We saw the wild beasts in their lairs; in the iron cages of circumstance which civilization has built around them, from which they too readily break out to desolate their fellow creatures. Here were the fruits of misgovernment. The little seed of weakness or wickedness had been carefully nursed by society, generation after generation, until it has blossomed at last in this destructive monster."²

Donnelly was not an exponent of revolution. Although violence and destruction occurred in the story, they were presented only as possible conditions which could develop if social reforms were not enacted. The author had a lively imagination, and the upheaval which he depicted was not his real prescription for political action in 1890. However, another novelist who took the notion of social violence more seriously was Jack London.

The Iron Heel

Jack London's The Iron Heel (1907), depicted a socialist

1 Hofstadter, The Age of Reform, 70-74.

2 Donnelly, op. cit., 41-42.

revolution in America in the early twentieth century and the brutal fascist-type order which attended its failure. London's socialism was tempered by a strain of Spenserian and Nietzschean ideas, which permeated the story. The main character, Ernest Everhard, was a leader in a socialist upheaval against the control of wealth and power in America by a small group of plutocrats. After this oligarchy, called the Iron Heel, harassed the middle class, class war erupted in 1912. In that year, the socialists won a great landslide in the national elections; but in spite of their overwhelming victory, they did not capture control of the government.

The oligarchy, retaining political control, promoted a war with Germany. But the socialists in both countries united to oppose it, by organizing a general strike. Then the Iron Heel reacted by dividing the masses, through granting special favors to selected labor unions. The socialist cause was thereby undermined.

Revolutionary movements occurred throughout the world, but the Iron Heel employed terror to destroy the socialists. It then proceeded to transform society. Labor castes were created, and a police state emerged. The workers made their last stand in the abortive Chicago Commune of 1918. Everhard, leader of this revolt, was executed.

The plutocrats ruthlessly manipulated the legal forms of American constitutional government. Congress and the courts became bulwarks of the despotic order.

London frankly espoused the primacy of power. Addressing a group of capitalists before the upheavals, Everhard cried,

"Power...is what we of the working class preach. We know, and well we know by bitter experience, that no appeal for the right, for justice, for humanity, can ever touch you."¹

London pursued an outright primitivism. Everhard lacked the refinements of society; his wife described him as "simple, direct, afraid of nothing, and he refused to waste time on conventional mannerisms,"² while the plutocrats were "the cool captains of industry and lords of society, these snarling, growling savages in evening clothes."³ But if London viewed man as a beast, he also saw him as a machine, driven by impulses. Denying free will, he described human beings as "all caught up in the wheels and cogs of the industrial machine."⁴

In light of this determinism, conflict was inherent in human nature and irreconcilable in a society divided between capital and labor; civilization was inevitably torn between the oppressed masses (who embodied good) and the arrogant plutocracy (representing evil). London maintained that all of the qualities of social righteousness were plainly identified with the socialist movement.

Everhard's thought was pragmatic, and he denounced metaphysics as a worthless device for preserving a corrupt status quo. He would accept only those premises which could be verified by scientific proof and practical results.

The Iron Heel was the only novel among the Utopian and

1 Jack London, The Iron Heel (New York, 1907), 97.

2 Ibid., 6.

3 Ibid., 89.

4 Ibid., 56.

anti-Utopian works discussed which did not suggest an improved social order against which the America of the author's day might be contrasted. London offered no program for a rational reorganization of society. In the words of Everhard's wife, only by bloody means can "we poor humans attain our ends, striving through carnage and destruction to bring lasting peace and happiness upon the earth."¹

The Harbor

Much more realistic than London was Ernest Poole. His novel, The Harbor (1915), dealt with a general strike on the New York waterfront and with the emotional conflict in a man's mind over the impact of industrial change upon society. Conversion of a middle-class dilettante to sympathy towards radicalism was the central theme of the story.

Bill was the son of a waterfront merchant, who desired to pursue a life of culture. At college he avoided talk of economic and political affairs, and upon graduation pursued an artist's life in Paris. But he was compelled to return home, when his father sold his waterfront business. Bigness and consolidation in the trading and shipping industries had forced out small businessmen. Bill began a writing career; and through Eleanor Dillon, whom he married, he met people with radical ideas.

Eleanor's father, an engineer who worked on a project to modernize the New York waterfront, impressed Bill with his preaching of efficiency and consolidation. But Bill was vis-

¹ Ibid., 2.

dated by Joe Kramer, an old college friend and socialist, who urged him to question Dillon's ideas:

"Does he say a word to you about graft? Does he talk about the North Atlantic Pool or any of the other pools and schemes by which they keep up rates? Does he make you think about low wages and long hours and all the fellows hurt or killed on the docks and in the stoke holes? Does he give you any feeling at all of this harbor as a city of four million people, most of 'em getting a raw deal and getting mad about it? That's more important to you and me than all the efficiency - gods on earth."¹

Bill was gradually affected by Joe's ideas. He advanced as a journalist, writing articles on successful businessmen and financiers. But, when interviewing them, he often was puzzled by their indifference towards labor and social problems.

Kramer became a strike leader, and helped to organize a general strike on the New York waterfront. He told Bill of a world parliament of socialists which had met in Copenhagen and resolved to oppose "wars of every kind, except the one deepening bitter war of labor against capital. To further (their aims) they had proposed to paralyze by strikes the whole international transport world."²

Bill wrote some articles for his paper on the ensuing strike, and attended a meeting of strike leaders, at which he heard them preach violence. They urged that nationality differences be forgotten, in order that the strikers might be united. Bill described the strikers as a wild and brutish mob, and noted the marked immigrant element among them. "They were

1 Ernest Poole, The Harbor (New York, 1915), 197.

2 Ibid., 273.

of all races. Uncouth, heavy, stolid, and with that hungry hope in all their eyes for more of the good things of the earth, they seemed like some barbaric horde about to pour in over the land."¹

The big waterfront companies hired scabs, cheap Negro labor, to break up the strike. As police and militia intervened, violence occurred. The story concluded with Kramer preparing to take part in the international socialist movement against war (which was menacing Europe). He was convinced that his ideas of social violence and equality would ultimately triumph. And Bill finally experienced a strong feeling of sympathy towards the strikers and their cause.

The conversion of Bill--from a sheltered dilettante to a sympathetic observer of radical movements--was significant. The main character was not a downtrodden immigrant agitator, but rather a middle-class, old-stock American, the son of a small businessman who developed a sensitivity to the economic injustices which hurt the working class.

The Harbor was far more realistic in approach to social upheaval than the novels of Donnelly and London. Moreover, it was more effective in expressing socialist ideas than The Iron Heel, because it dealt with events which were more in the realm of actual possibility. A citizen could have read London's far-fetched account of the Chicago Commune with amusement; but he could not have completely dismissed the possibility of a general strike on the New York harbor. The reader in 1915

1 Ibid., 296.

could not have forgotten that Eugene Debs had polled an unusually large vote as the Socialist candidate for the Presidency in 1912; nor could he have ignored much of the radical agitation throughout Europe since the outbreak of war in 1914.

Poole's novel, furthermore, pursued a note of humanitarianism, even while violence was preached as a means of righting the prevailing wrongs. London's tone was frankly bloodthirsty and cynical, and Donnelly's story might almost be called masochistic.

V. ANALYSES AND CRITICISMS

The Middle Class

Many novels offered insights into middle-class and upper-class grievances. In the Grant era, The Gilded Age and Democracy showed the rising nouveaux riches in post-war society. The American scene, as pictured by Mark Twain and Henry Adams, was one that upper-class "mugwumps" and patricians sought to reform.¹ Colonel Sellers, a get-rich-quick type of speculator, grasped for a comfortable middle-class status. Similarly, the characters in Democracy were self-seeking mediocre men, shrewd in politics and business. But while Twain and Adams were dissatisfied with crassness and opportunism, they desired to purify rather than to destroy democracy. Their intention was to persuade the more prosperous and socially-prestigious citizens to "throw the rascals out" and to demand honesty in government. Though they wrote about the corruption and treachery in Washington, and the political graft involved in railroad building and land speculation, their stories treated no serious economic disorders in society. The trusts had not clearly emerged when Twain and Adams wrote these novels, nor had the Haymarket Riot or Pullman Strike occurred.

By 1887, when Looking Backward was published, more serious social problems had arisen; and Edward Bellamy was more deeply

¹ A good example of the patrician reformer was Samuel Tilden of Gramercy Park, who fought the Tweed Ring in New York.

committed to social reforms than were Twain or Adams. Bellamy advocated a gradual but thorough overhauling of the entire structure of society.

In their Utopian stories, both Bellamy and William Dean Howells appealed to middle-class readers. Bellamy carried the evolution of American society to a point where, in the late nineteenth century, only two classes remained--the very poor and the very rich, the producers and the parasites. Both implicitly and explicitly, Bellamy was warning middle-class Americans of his day about the possible misfortunes which might accrue to them if they failed to adopt moderate socialist measures.

While Bellamy and Howells demanded changes in society, Paul Leicester Ford stood for a clean and honest status quo. But Ford favored a social order in which the rights and welfare of all classes were protected. Peter Stirling was a middle-class gentleman who mingled with upper-class society and yet represented lower-class immigrants. He was college-educated, an articulate spokesman of the working class but not a radical. A respectable political boss, he was suspicious of aristocratic reformers and fearful of radicalism. When he ran for the New York governorship, he could command the support of the solid middle class as well as the friendship of the working class. His background fitted Stirling to the stereotype of the later Progressives; but the similarity ended with his identification as a machine boss who represented the immigrant

workers.

In Hamlin Garland's A Spoil of Office, a political struggle between country farmers and small-town middlemen saw the Grangers (forerunners of the Populists) on the side of the exploited farmers. This novel revealed the antagonism between farmers and middle-class townspeople as well as the traditional agrarian distrust of the cities. The story's hero, Bradley Talcott, became identified with radical reform efforts in Congress and consequently lost the next Democratic nomination in his Iowa district. Since both Democratic and Republican parties were committed to small-town, middle-class conservatism, and neither would have him, Talcott cast his lot with the Alliance and Reform Party. Furthermore, the middle-class townspeople in this novel were identified as tools of the special interests that were hurting the farmer.

Garland, however, dealt with a large city in a midwestern state in A Member of the Third House. A middle-class setting marked this novel, which contained little if any Populist propagandizing. Garland's second political work suggested that agitation for political reform in the 1890's was becoming increasingly centered in the growing cities, where Progressivism would have its appeal.

The Progressive Movement expressed the reaction of the striving middle-class person, whether a lawyer or small businessman, to the increasing concentration of power among the few. Corporate power, which threatened the economic and social

status of the thriving middle class as well as the prestige of the old patrician class, was the chief object of attack. As one literary historian stated, "Though uneasily aware of the proletariat, the typical middle-class author felt the essential conflict of his times as a struggle, not between capital and labor, but between the plutocracy and the people."¹

The spirit of Progressivism was expressed by Winston Churchill in Mr. Crewe's Career with the remark that "the era of political domination by a corporation, and mainly for the benefit of a corporation, is over."² This comment revealed a reaction of the old educated, urban middle-class which had been losing its prestige in American society in what Professor Richard Hofstadter called the "status revolution."³ Similarly, many upper-class patricians felt that they were losing their once privileged position; the aristocratic Humphrey Crewe typified the attitudes of such men as Theodore Roosevelt and Charles Bonaparte.

Professional machine politicians had become increasingly distasteful to the patricians and to the middle-class people who wanted political power in their hands. Progressives resented especially the alliances between corrupt bosses and the large corporations. The battle that Austin Vane and Humphrey Crewe fought against a tenacious machine with business connections was similar to those waged by many Progressive Americans after 1900. The "Power Trust" in The Plum Tree,

1 Spiller, op. cit., 987.

2 Churchill, op. cit., 476-77.

3 Hofstadter, The Age of Reform, 135.

the Northeastern Railroad in Mr. Crowe's Career, Joab T. Barton's railway interests in The Man on Horseback (in Strategems and Spoils), and the railroad seeking to dictate a Senate appointment in A Victory for the People (in Strategems and Spoils)--all showed the large combines intruding into and corrupting the political process.

Of the three novels in this study that pursued the theme of social violence, only The Harbor made a conscious appeal to middle-class readers. The main character in Ernest Poole's story was the son of a small businessman who became converted to a radical cause. But Ignatius Donnelly's Caesar's Column and Jack London's The Iron Heel both asserted a social conflict between the oppressed masses and a ruthless plutocracy. However, only London's work depicted a class war with a distinct appeal to class consciousness.

The Melting Pot

Some novels in this study indicated nativist thinking. Donnelly's work was conspicuous for its expressions of Populist-type anti-Semitism, while Garland, Ford and Poole commented on the influence of Irish in the country. In addition, Poole made significant allusions to immigrants from Eastern Europe.

The determination of the American government after 1890 to maintain the gold standard aroused much discontent, especially in rural America, and provoked fear of the alleged international influence of Jews. "Since gold was becoming, in fact, a more and more firmly established international standard, millions of

Americans associated their country's troubles with an international medium of exchange and felt themselves in the toils of a world-wide money power."¹ Stimulating this prejudice was the prevalence of the conspiracy theory of history and politics, which was manifested in Caesar's Column. Among the Populists, Jews were considered arch-conspirators in an economic exploitation of rural America.² Referring to Isaac Jacobs (alias Prince Cabano), Donnelly noted that "the aristocracy of the world is now almost entirely of Hebrew origin."³ Moreover, although some Jews were associated with radical movements, Donnelly's malice was derived from the reputation of Jewish persons as international bankers and financiers.⁴

The character of Tom Brennan, the climbing, amoral railroad attorney in A Member of the Third House, was important in light of the status of Irish-Americans in the late nineteenth century. Brennan was characterized "a product of the necessity a poor Irish boy is under, to be smart and shifty, in order to succeed."⁵ Garland wrote this work in 1892, at a time when Irish-Americans were striving hard to advance themselves on the social scale. The Irish immigrants, since the 1840's, had held a reputation for rowdiness and poverty; moreover, they had borne the brunt of most anti-Catholic bigotry among nativist Americans. But "the Irish stereotype could not help but

1 John Higham, Strangers in the Land (New Brunswick, N.J., 1955), 93.

2 Hofstadter, The Age of Reform, 77-81.

3 Donnelly, op. cit., 32.

4 Higham, op. cit., 27. Higham states that some suspicion of Jews was due to an identification of them with the parvenu spirit of the Gilded Age.

5 Garland, A Member of the Third House, 49.

soften as more and more Irishmen rose out of the ranks of unskilled labor and merged in speech and manner with the older population. By the early eighties they were generally well-regarded."¹ But even while the Irish had gained great respectability by the early twentieth century, Ernest Poole described the rough Irish gangs on "the other side of the tracks" as undesirable elements in The Harbor.

Irish-Americans, settling mainly in large cities like New York and Boston, found politics a profession and avocation much to their liking and advantage. By the end of the century, Irish-Catholic politicians were gaining controlling positions in Democratic urban machines, as Paul Leicester Ford's novel revealed. This development caused the old Yankee stock to become even more solidified among the Republicans.²

Alarmed at the growing power of the immigrants in urban politics, the older Anglo-Saxon Americans asserted that the "better element" of people should govern. Their attitude became an important factor, especially in the 1900's, when the Progressives sought to break the power of the alliances between big city machines and immigrant voters.³ Peter Stirling, leader of a teeming Irish ward and party boss in New York City, rejected the concept of noblesse oblige and upheld the machine system which drew its strength from the "melting pot."

1 Higham, op. cit., 26. Will Herberg, in Protestant, Catholic, Jew (New York, 195), stated that among immigrant groups, the Irish adapted especially well to the demands of assimilation.

2 Higham, op. cit., 60.

3 Higham notes that around the turn of the century, Senator Henry Cabot Lodge spearheaded a drive to restrict the entry of Eastern Europeans into America. But Higham states that at the same time Progressivism felt little urge to nativism.

In the New York of Peter Stirling, immigrants provided practically no support for any radicalism or anarchy; most aspired to attain middle-class respectability. But in The Harbor, the New York immigrants on the waterfront were likened to "some barbaric horde about to pour in over the land."¹ Poole gave the impression that the immigrants in his novel were largely arrivals from Eastern Europe, many of whom had little command of English and who did not strive so strenuously for middle-class status as the Irish.

Professional Politicians and the Reformer

Tammany Halls and Matthew Quays were not to be found in the Commonwealth of Altruzia, but they were everywhere in the new industrial America. Several novels in this study revealed concern towards machine politicians and various attitudes towards reform.

The Grant era witnessed the public treasury plundered through customhouse frauds and graft reaped in federal subsidies for railroads and western land sales. The Gas Ring ruled Philadelphia, while similar organizations flourished throughout the land. But this avarice and venality in American politics occasioned protest. By 1872 Samuel Tilden had challenged the Tweed Ring in New York and a national Mugwump movement was underway against Grantism. The Liberal Republican effort, attracting such public-spirited men as Whitelaw Reid, Charles Francis Adams, Jr., Carl Schurz, William Cullen Bryant and Charles W. Eliot, appealed to those who were sensitive to the

¹ Poole, op. cit., 296.

need for reform. One contemporary observer described an audience at a Liberal Republican rally as "composed of that sober, thoughtful middle class, equally removed from wealth and poverty."¹ Furthermore, in the 1880's and 1890's, the demand for political reforms gained momentum. But the "mugwump" reformer was limited in effectiveness, because he was shut off from the sources of voting power by his social reserve and amateurism.²

The Gilded Age and Democracy provided a backdrop of the Grant era; the Washington of these novels was that of Roscoe Conkling, Oliver Morton and Jay Gould. But of the two, Adams' story offered a deeper insight into the "mugwump" mentality. Mark Twain's novel was written with a detached amusement, but Henry Adams was clearly disenchanted with the American political scene. Adams' work was especially vital for showing the isolation of the "mugwump" reformer from the people. Representative French, the aristocratic advocate of civil service reform in Democracy, could offer little challenge to the political power of a Senator Ratcliffe, the "Prairie Giant." Henry Adams seemed mildly resigned to the impotence of the patrician reformer.

While Civil service reform movements in the Grant and Cleveland periods had only a qualified degree of success, there were after 1890 more determined efforts, especially in the big cities, to expose and "clean up" corrupt political machines.

1 Quoted in Matthew Josephson, The Politicos (New York, 1938), 160.

2 Hofstadter, The Age of Reform, 143.

When Woodrow Wilson commented in 1910 that municipal government in the United States was the most corrupt and inefficient in the western world, he spoke for Progressive America. After 1890, reformers sought principally to combat franchise politics in the cities, which had caused inadequate and expensive utilities, protected prostitution and left liquor traffic unhamp-ered.

The boss system did, nevertheless, have its defenders. An eminent political scientist, Henry Jones Ford, wrote in 1904 that "our despised politicians are probably to be credited with what we call the wonderful assimilating capacity of American institutions. They are perhaps managing our affairs better than we are able to judge."¹ If the political machine worked for the public betterment, it was because of men like Peter Stirling. In his novel, Paul Leicester Ford upheld the usefulness of the party boss and belittled the amateurish mugwump reformers of the Cleveland era:

"On one side we have bosses, who know and understand the men in their wards, have usually made themselves popular, are in politics for a living, have made it a life-study, and by dear experience have learned that they must surrender their own opinions in order to produce harmony and a solid vote. The reformer, on the contrary, is usually a man who has other occupations, and, if I may say so, has usually met with only partial success in them. By that I mean the really successful merchant, or banker, or professional man cannot take time to work in politics, and so only the less successful try. Each reformer, too, is sure that he himself is right, and as his bread and butter is not in the issue, he quarrels to his heart's content with his associates, so that they rarely can-

1 Henry Jones Ford, "Municipal Corruption," Political Science Quarterly, XIX (Dec. 1904), 676-86.

unite all their forces. Most of the reform movements in this city have been attempted in a way that is simply laughable."¹

Peter Stirling made the above observation with New York machine politics in mind, but his views could also apply generally to reformers throughout America. However, not all mugwumps were the middling bankers and lawyers. For example, the Liberal Republican drive against Grantism in 1872 was led by distinguished men, and Samuel Tilden, a New York patrician from Gramercy Park, battled the Tweed Ring in a sophisticated manner. However, many professional men and merchants would be identified with Progressivism after 1900, and not all of them dabbled in politics in a way that was "simply laughable."

The Progressives differed from the Mugwumps in having had a wider base of middle class support and in being more practical in their methods.² But the Progressives also strongly opposed collusion between party boss and businessman. Discussing the Butler machine in St. Louis, Lincoln Steffens wrote in 1902:

"Butler organized and systematized and developed (the machine) into a regular part of the business community. He had for clients, regular or occasional, bankers and promoters; and the statements of boodlers, not yet on record, allege that every transportation and public convenience company that touches St. Louis has dealings with Butler's combine."³

Steffens' criticisms found similar expression in political fiction. In The Plum Tree, David Graham Phillips wrote of a political boss who became an arbiter between the corp-

1 Ford, The Honorable Peter Stirling, 273.

2 Hofstadter, The Age of Reform, 143.

3 Lincoln Steffens, The Shame of the Cities (New York, 1904), 120-21.

orate interests and the public. In Mr. Crowe's Career, Winston Churchill presented an upper-class reformer who attacked the power of the bosses in New York State and the railroad magnates who influenced and patronized them. And in Strategems and Spoils, William Allen White showed some alliances between bosses and corporations which operated to the public detriment. While these authors attempted in the literary sphere to arouse interest in reform, concrete measures were taken on the practical plane, such as the promotion of the primary election, the referendum, the recall, and the city manager and commission forms of municipal administration.

Political Parties in America

According to Professor Henry Steele Commager, the average American in the latter decades of the nineteenth century was "no more capable of distinguishing between Methodist and Presbyterian theologies than between Republican and Democratic principles."¹ While Commager intended chiefly to stress the similarities among religious creeds, he drew an effective analogy.

Three writers--Garland, London and Phillips--implied that both major parties were fundamentally conservative. In A Spoil of Office, Bradley Talcott's radicalism found no place in either party, and he was finally compelled to cast his lot with the Alliance and Reform movement. In The Iron Heel, both parties were the rubber-stamps of the plutocrats, and London

¹ Henry Steele Commager, The American Mind (New Haven, 1950), 9.

made a particular attack upon William Randolph Hearst, a prominent Democrat. In The Plum Tree, after the Wall Street interests failed to prevail at one party convention, some of the ultra conservative leaders tried to negotiate with the other party, with hopes that the opposition would nominate for the Presidency a man acceptable to them. Phillips' story might have compelled the reader to wonder if there was really much difference between a William McKinley or an Alton Parker.

In The Thirteenth District, there was little at conflict between the major parties. At a party convention or in an election, the choice was basically between two cliques. But in many novels discussed in this study, there was no mistaking the conservative identification of the Republican Party. In A Spoil of Office, the Republicans were personified by the middlemen in a small Iowa town, who dominated the county farmers. Garland's novel also showed that the "bloody shirt" still had a lingering appeal, even though it was fading and economic issues correspondingly were growing in public interest in the Granger period. And in Mr. Crewe's Career, the Republican Party in New York was controlled by the Northeastern Railroad.

The Democratic Party displayed some of the characteristics in The Honorable Peter Stirling that it has possessed throughout the twentieth century. In Paul Leicester Ford's work, the urban immigrant groups provided a base of Democratic strength. But the novel also showed that the party was not amenable to radicalism; it adhered, rather, to a Grover Cleveland-brand of

conservatism. Stirling would not ally the Democrats with a labor party. He did, nevertheless, understand the pressing social problems which the Socialists desired to solve:

"I disagree with Socialists entirely both in aims and methods, but I sympathize with them, for I see the fearful problems which they think their theories will solve, and though I know how mistaken they are, I cannot blame them, when I see how seriously and honestly they believe in, and how unselfishly they work for, their ideas. Don't blame the Socialists, for they are quite as conscientious as were the Abolitionists. Blame it to the lack of scientific education, which leaves these people to believe that theories containing a half-truth are so wholly true that they mean the regeneration and salvation of society."¹

In Thirteenth District, Brand Whitlock made a noteworthy comment upon minor parties:

"There were, of course, two or three other parties, small and without hope of success, so that the men who belonged to them could honestly say what they thought, but it was not considered respectable or dignified to belong to any of these smaller parties, and the men who adhered to them were ridiculed and ostracized and made to feel ashamed."²

Hamlin Garland's work offered an insight into the aims of the Granger and Alliance parties. But also significant was Edward Bellamy's allusion to the labor parties of the nineteenth century. Bellamy (and also Howells) desired to raise socialism to a level of respectability when he presented the Nationalist Party of the future as a moderate movement with middle-class appeal. He possessed a realistic grasp of the American political character, by realizing that a party in the United States, to be successful, needed to follow a moderate approach.

1 Ford, op. cit., 351.

2 Whitlock, op. cit., 432.

Lawyers and the Law

Changing attitudes towards the legal profession and American law were revealed in most of these novels. Invariably, the successful and aspiring American lawyer was a tool of big business. A promising young attorney would best attain material wealth and professional prestige by associating with the corporate interests. Tom Brennan, counsel for the Consolidated Railway Company in A Member of the Third House, typified the conniving self-seeker who advised corporate management. In The Plum Tree, the ability of corporations to recruit the best legal talent to their side was shown, when the Power Trust offered a position to Harvey Sayler, who had previously been making trouble as a public-minded district attorney. In A Victory for the People (in Strategems and Spoils), Harvey Bolton placed private profit over public service and chose to retain his job as railway counsel rather than accept a Senate appointment. In Thirteenth District, Jerry Garwood's opponent in his first Congressional campaign was a former circuit court judge who had returned to a highly lucrative practice as a railroad attorney. Garwood won the election, largely through publicizing the former jurist's dubious connections with the railroad.

Also present in many novels was the view that American courts and constitutional law had become the private domains of corporations. Common law and judicial precedents, some authors asserted, had been unscrupulously manipulated by "hair-

splitting" judges and lawyers to protect private property. In A Spoil of Office, a veteran of the law offered young Bradley Talcott some advice: "A successful lawyer is the fellow who tangles things up and keeps common law and common sense subordinated to chicanery and precedent. Damn precedent, anyway. It means referring to a past that didn't know, and didn't want to know, what justice was."¹ In Looking Backward, Edward Bellamy wrote that because the abolition of economic injustices had promoted fair dealing in human relations, there was no need for a large body of law in 2000 A.D. Caesar's Column and The Iron Heel both found the courts bulwarks of the unjust plutocrats. In The Man on Horseback (in Strategems and Spoils), the judiciary of a large city was recruited from law offices having connections with the business magnate, Joab T. Barton. And Attorney Peter Stirling was almost prevented from getting his swill-milk case into court, because of dairy pressure on the district attorney's office. He forced action by going to the governor, who directed the state attorney-general to exercise some obscure powers granted to him. In The Plum Tree, lawyers who desired judicial positions had to see Mr. Dominick, political boss and agent of the corporate interests.

These novels reflected definite trends in American law in the late nineteenth century. Socially and professionally, leaders of the bar were naturally allied with the propertied classes; the most successful American lawyers were thus the

¹ Garland, A Spoil of Office, 136-37.

shock troops of the corporations against threats from popular legislative enactments and legal attacks.¹ As challenges to property rights became greater after the Civil War, efforts were made to make American courts and constitutional law the special preserves of propertied interests; this was not a difficult task, with the most influential judges and lawyers, favorably disposed to big business, interpreting the law.²

The impact of laissez-faire individualism and philosophical naturalism was especially felt by the law. Quite understandably, some attorneys were disinclined to think in terms of social problems or the public welfare; they were trained in common law, which was a private law dealing with the relations between individuals.³ Most lawyers in these novels were not public-minded servants of the people; on the contrary, the Tom Brennans and Harvey Saylers were cynical adherents to a ruthless Social Darwinian order.

After 1900, however, new influences affected American law and legal philosophy, though the novels in this study only slightly indicated their coming. Pragmatism brought an assault upon "abstractionism" and "formalism" in the social sciences--an assault that had impact on the law schools and courts as well as on economics, education and social ethics.⁴ American jurisprudence by the early twentieth century had become more

1 Benjamin Twiss, Lawyers and the Constitution (Princeton, 1942), 13.

2 The use of the Fourteenth Amendment to uphold the rights of corporate "persons" was especially important in the role of constitutional law as a refuge for property interests.

3 Twiss, op. cit., 12.

4 Morton White, Social Thought in America (New York, 1949), 13.

definitely influenced by Peirce, James and Dewey. In expounding "legal realism," Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., Roscoe Pound and Louis D. Brandeis influenced American law in the manner than John Dewey influenced ethics and education, Charles Beard historical thought, and John P. Commons and Richard T. Ely economics.

Moreover, by the turn of the century, many fairly prosperous lawyers, who were not necessarily corporation counsels, became identified with the Progressive Movement.² Young Austin Vane, in Mr. Crewe's Career, whose father was a prominent railway counsel, chose to keep his professional self-respect rather than be obligated to the Northeastern Railroad. And in the 1890's, some attorneys like Peter Stirling spoke for the less privileged people. A wealthy minority in the legal profession (but with a dominant voice in the bar associations and in the courts) were the advisers of big business. But the majority of lawyers, notably those in the medium income range, was more public minded. Attorneys like Austin Vane helped to set the tone for Progressivism.

Determinism and Ideas of Progress

While American law felt the force of nineteenth century naturalism, the general tone of political thought itself was strongly influenced by the articulation of Charles Darwin's biological theories into a systematic moral philosophy by Herbert Spencer and John Fiske.² Moreover, the increasing industrialization and urbanization of American society since 1865

1 Hofstadter, The Age of Reform, 156-63.

2 Richard Hofstadter, Social Darwinism in American Thought (New York, 1944), treats the general emergence of this ideology.

aided the Social Darwinists in helping to mould American thought.

Deterministic ideas strongly affected political fiction. In a moment of reflection, Harvey Saylor, the ambitious boss in The Plum Tree, stated that

"The paths have not always been straight and open, said I to myself; like all others who have won in the conditions of this world thrall to the brute, I have had to use the code of the jungle. In climbing I have had to stoop, at times to crawl."¹

In The Harbor, Ernest Poole saw the striking workers as a beastly mob. Jack London, in The Iron Heel, likened the oppressive plutocrats to snarling savages, while frankly advocating brute force as the means for overthrowing an unjust political order.

The cynicism of London, Poole and Phillips indicated that the idea of progress, one of the cardinal features of American thought since colonial times, was being undermined. In the Romantic Age before the Civil War, the Transcendentalists believed man to be the center of creation, possessing a spark of the divine. But their spirit of optimism was challenged after the Civil War. A growing pessimism was well expressed by Hamlin Garland, in A Member of the Third House, when he called man "an infinitesimal insect, lost in a swarm of similar flecks of life produced in this decaying globe of ours."² Garland suggested further that the times were bad and that weak persons could not overcome the pressures of a corrupt moral environment.

1 Phillips, op. cit., 296.

2 Garland, A Member of the Third House, 199.

In his novel, the unscrupulous railway attorney, Tom Brennan, was shown simply as a product of his times.

A particularly skeptical outlook was held by Henry Adams, who asserted that political institutions became decadent when public morality degenerated. In Democracy he stated that a government reflected the degree of corruption in society. One character in his novel remarked, "Purify society and you purify the government. But try to purify the government and you only aggravate failure."¹ Since 1869, Adams' faith in the political progress of mankind had been shaken.² Despite the influence of scientific theories in his time, Adams "reacted against the chaos of modern science, took seriously the second law of thermodynamics, which postulated the eventual disappearance of energy from the universe, and pondered over what seemed to him retrogression in human affairs."³ Adams' pessimism partially indicated the general uncertainty which industrialization and its social effects had provoked among the American people. Professor Henry Steele Commager stated

"That confusion and doubt rather than certitude and confidence should characterize the thought of a people at the height of their material prosperity and the maturity of their scientific development was surprising, but no more surprising than that the material prosperity should bring so little general contentment and the science solve so few fundamental problems."⁴

However, not all Americans shared a pessimistic attitude towards human progress. One reaction to the strong wave of

1 Adams, op. cit., 49-50.

2 Ralph H. Gabriel, The Course of American Democratic Thought (New York, 1940), 328.

3 Curti, op. cit., 569.

4 Commager, op. cit., 48.

naturalism in American thought was the current of "reform Darwinism," with its belief that man could manipulate the forces of nature for his own benefit.¹ More optimistic than an Adams or Garland about the possibilities of uplifting human nature by reforming political institutions were William Dean Howells, Edward Bellamy and Lester F. Ward. Although not all writers shared Bellamy's faith in human perfectibility, many concurred in his belief that social institutions underwent various stages of transformation. While societies evolved to more beneficent stages, as in Looking Backward and A Traveler from Altruria, social orders could also retrogress to less desirable conditions, as in the anti-Utopian stories of Ignatius Donnelly and Jack London. In Edward House's Philip Dru, Administrator, the worst phase of economic exploitation preceded (and provoked) popular upheaval.

Many novelists believed that man could not rise above his moral environment. Moreover, the notion that politics was degrading to personal integrity was well summarized by Mark Twain, in The Gilded Age:

"The chances are that a man cannot get into Congress now without resorting to arts and means that should render him unfit to go there; of course there are exceptions. But do you know that I could not go into politics if I were a lawyer, without losing standing somewhat in my profession, and without raising at least a suspicion of my intentions and unselfishness? Why, it is telegraphed all over the country and commented on as something wonderful if a congressman votes honestly and unselfishly and refuses to take advantage of his position to steal from the government."²

1 The term "reform Darwinism" was designated by Eric Goldman, in Rendezvous with Destiny (New York, 1952).

2 Twain and Warner, op. cit., 457-58.

Also following this idea was Winston Churchill; in Mr. Crewe's Career, Hilary Vane resigned as counsel for the Northeastern Railroad, after concluding that his political services had undermined his moral character. In William Allen White's A Mercy of Death (in Strategems and Spoils), Tom Wharton was a tragic figure, whose early ideals were compromised by his adjustment to the demands of political life. In David Graham Phillips' The Plum Tree, Harvey Sayler closed his career in politics--one which witnessed a spectacular rise--by wondering if he had wasted much of his life.

Summing Up

The years from 1873 to 1915 comprised an age in which the United States emerged as a dominant industrial power. Throughout this period, many political novels revealed a growing social consciousness in American thought.

The works analyzed in this study indicated that during this span of time, an unbridled Social Darwinism was supplanted by a more responsible "reform Darwinism." Some anti-social attitudes among American lawyers and in American law were attacked. And the various reform movements--socialism, Populism and Progressivism--showed the increasing demands that government assume a more active role in protecting the economic welfare of the great majority of citizens.

This rise of social consciousness reflected basically the reactions to the industrialization and urbanization of American life, especially among farmers, workers, and, most

important, the middle class. These novels were especially valuable for stressing the changing complexion of the groups and classes that composed American society.

Similarly, political institutions in the United States were keenly scrutinized in these works. The demand that the democratic process be made more responsive to the needs of a primarily middle-class electorate was pursued by several novels. Perhaps these novels made their outstanding contribution by their implications that, in spite of the many changes in American society, moderation and stability were then, as in the present time, the most fundamental characteristics of American politics.

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