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The American political novel in the nineteenth century

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Dissertation

THE AMERICAN POLITICAL NOVEL IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

by

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". . . the dark and bloody cross-
roads where literature and poli-
tics meet. . . ."

Lionel Trilling,
The Liberal Imagination

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	Page 1
------------------------	-----------

Part One

DECLINE OF THE SCHOLAR-GENTLEMAN-STATESMAN:
THE PROTEST AGAINST MATERIALISM, 1774-1890

Chapter

I. CRITICS OF A NEW DEMOCRACY, 1774-1850.	9
Pioneers in Political Fiction: Francis Hopkinson and Jeremy Belknap	9
Hugh Henry Brackenridge	21
James Kirke Paulding	59
John Pendleton Kennedy	66
James Fenimore Cooper	72
Summary	95
II. CIVIL WAR AND RECONSTRUCTION	102
John W. De Forest	104
Nathaniel Beverley Tucker	105
Jeremiah Clemens	109
Albion W. Tourgee	110
John S. Wise	117
III. THREE DISILLUSIONED REPUBLICANS.	126
Mark Twain	134
John W. De Forest	147
Henry Adams	155
IV. GENTLEMEN ON THE FRINGES OF POLITICS: CIVIL SERVICE REFORM	174

Part Two

THE LAST STAND OF THE AGRARIAN:
THE WESTERN REVOLT AGAINST CAPITALISM

I. THE PROTEST AGAINST BIG BUSINESS	188
---	-----

II.	REVOLT	200
	The Greenback Party.	202
	Laborites.	207
	The Single-Taxers.	211
	Utopian Socialists	215
	The Anarchists	230
	The Christian Socialists	234
	The People's Party	239
III.	THE SCRUTINY OF AMERICAN VALUES	257
IV.	NINETEENTH CENTURY POSTSCRIPT: THE BOSS NOVEL.	267

Part Three

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

I.	AMERICAN POLITICS AND THE AMERICAN POLITICAL NOVEL: A SUMMARY.	289
	The Political Novel and Its Milieu	289
	The Impact of the Political Novel Upon Society.	302
II.	AMERICAN LITERATURE AND THE AMERICAN POLITICAL NOVEL.	309
	The Use of the Didactic	309
	The Form of the Political Novel.	311
	The Populist Movement and the Rise of Realism.	322
	Realism in theory	322
	Realism in practice	337
	BIBLIOGRAPHY.	345
	ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION.	369
	VITA.	372

INTRODUCTION

Despite the great number of American novelists who have used political themes, the political novel has received little attention from scholars. Morris E. Speare in The Political Novel: Its Development in England and in America (1924) discusses primarily the political novel in England; of the American novelists he includes only Winston Churchill and Paul Leicester Ford. In Speare's opinion "the most interesting and the most valuable [of all American political novels] has been Paul Leicester Ford's The Honorable Peter Stirling."¹ William B. Dickens's doctoral dissertation, A Guide to the American Political Novel, 1865-1910 (1953) consists primarily of "a digest of the eighty-four American political novels written in the period under discussion."² This digest tabulates for each novel certain facts such as setting, plot, characters, and theme. In addition, Mr. Dickens includes a forty-nine page evaluation of the contents of the novels. Joseph L. Blotner's The Political Novel (1955) is an interdisciplinary monograph dealing with the political novel in world literature and recommended as a teaching aid for political science instructors. In it the novels are classified as "political

¹Speare, The Political Novel (New York: Oxford University Press, 1924), p. 3.

²Dickens, A Guide to the American Political Novel (Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Michigan), v. 1.

instrument[s] and "mirror[s] of national character"; the novelists as "political historian[s]," "analyst[s] of group political behavior" and "analyst[s] of individual political behavior."¹ Under these headings the novels are treated singly and, for the most part, briefly.

The most recent study of the political novel is Irving Howe's astute Politics and the Novel (1957), a selective rather than intensive study of both foreign and American political novels. The Americans considered are Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry James, and Henry Adams. In Mr. Howe's words, his "subject is the relation between politics and literature, and . . . the term 'political novel' is used here as a convenient shorthand to suggest the kind of novel in which this relation is interesting enough to warrant investigation." Further, he wishes "to show the way in which politics increasingly controls a certain kind of novel, and to speculate on the reasons for this change."²

I am not as interested in categorization and classification as Mr. Dickens, but yet I must be much more inclusive than Mr. Howe. For I wish to consider the flow of political thinking in the United States, the native economic conditions and foreign ideologies which influenced this thinking, and I wish to determine where the American novelist took his stand in relation to these factors. I want to ascertain the political point of view of the writers, their motivations, and

¹Blotner, The Political Novel ("Doubleday Short Studies in Political Science"; Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1955), see Table of Contents, pp. ix, x.

²Howe, Politics and the Novel (New York: Horizon Press, 1957), p. 17.

their objectives. With these matters Parts One and Two of this study are concerned. Part One includes the period in which the gentleman, having rather roughly been shoved outside the political arena by Jacksonian democracy and big business alike, views the melee from the bleachers with some disgust. After 1885, the man with the hoe began to take up the pen and Part Two considers the contribution in fiction of the farmer and laborer and the men who were sympathetic to their cause. If the novelists before 1885 were more concerned with eliminating graft and restoring men of education, ability, and integrity to public office, the writers in the last decade were more concerned with such visceral problems as the price of wheat, regulated railroad rates, cheap money, and the right to a job. Practical as these desires were, they found their ideological roots in the Enlightenment as it was adapted for American use in Jeffersonian agrarianism.

Although the organization throughout is generally chronological, Parts One and Two have had to be organized differently because of their contents. The relatively small number of political novels in the early period and the literary stature of their writers made it advisable to examine individual writers and their personal reactions in some detail. The large number of novels in the latter part of the century, their general literary mediocrity and their similarity to one another in any given period, makes the study of these novels most meaningful when it is organized by political movements or ideas.

Having then placed the American political novelist in relation to the political milieu, I wish finally to consider him and his work in relation to the literary milieu. How did the political novel fit into nineteenth century literary history? How was it dependent upon it and what did it contribute to it? Is there a connection between the decline of the gentlemanly monopoly of the political novel and the decline of romanticism and between the increase in political novels by the common man and the rise of realism? Part Three attempts to answer these questions.

In selecting the novels for study, I have considered first of all only those novels written by Americans about political activities, ideas, or personages in the United States. Secondly, the novels discussed here have time-spans contemporary at least at some point with the lives of their authors so that the (non-contemporary) historical novel is eliminated. Novels which do not deal with politics but which have merely helped to bring about political action, such as Uncle Tom's Cabin, have not been included. These delimitations only indicate the boundaries of this dissertation and are not intended to set up a definition of a genre. Efforts to create rigid classifications to distinguish the political novel from the economic, the social, the proletarian and other related types are likely not only to be unsuccessful but to detract from an understanding of the development of the novel rather than to add to it. As I have indicated, then, I have

not been interested so much in a precise catalog of political novels and their contents as in the progression of political ideas through the pages of the American novel and in a sampling broad enough to arrive at a formulation of these ideas. To the best of my knowledge, all of those novels indisputably political have been considered;¹ some in which the political element is obviously minor (such as James Kirke Paulding's two novels, Koningsmarke and Westward Ho!) are also included because they contain comments or scenes or characters which seemed pertinent to this study. Of that vast middle class where precise distinctions (particularly as between the economic or political novel) would lead only to hairsplitting, I have tried to include all.

Although I start with the beginning of political fiction in America,² the focus of this dissertation is upon the nineteenth century, which witnessed in its latter years the rise and decline of the Populist movement. Apart from the usual inevitable inability to stop the flow of influences and ideas by the fixing of arbitrary dates, I was faced with the prospect, if

¹However, not every Utopian novel is included. Because of the plethora of Utopias in this century and the repetition in subject matter and treatment I have included only a reasonably extensive sampling. For a detailed study of the Utopian novel see Vernon Louis Parrington, Jr., American Dreams: A Study of American Utopias (Providence, Rhode Island: Brown University, 1947).

²This entails the inclusion of the eighteenth century "novels" of Francis Hopkinson and Jeremy Belknap.

I concluded sharply at 1900, of eliminating a rather extraordinary and pertinent group of novels which appeared in the early years of the new century. Most of the political novels between 1900 and 1908 such as those of Upton Sinclair and Jack London corroborate their composition dates with their social and political orientation--and even their literary form; they belong without question to the twentieth century. But there is a rather astonishingly large group of novels on a single subject--the political boss--which appear during these years and which I have included in this study because they seem to exhibit a composite of nineteenth century ideological forces which previous to 1900 had been kept separate, at least in the political novel: I mean that they contain the ideas of equality, of the preference of "the common man" over the gentleman, of humanitarianism, and of the evils of big business but they combine these ideas with the Darwin-Spencer-Alger "survival of the fittest" theory which previous novelists had condemned, applied as it was to the ascendancy of the business man. Although realism is used extensively, these ideas are clothed predominantly in the romantic garments of the old domestic sentimental novel. They are not of course isolated from twentieth century influences, but their anachronistic aspects make them a fitting conclusion to a consideration of the nineteenth century novel.

Besides this special group, a few other novels written after nineteen hundred have been included simply because, though bearing later publication dates, they are actually part

of earlier movements. Thus Elizabeth Higgins's Out of the West (1902) and Mary Dillon's The Leader are definitely populist novels and belong with the discussion of that movement.

Inasmuch as the political novel itself is an arbitrary classification, I have tried to resist subdivisions which seem even more artificial. At the same time, however, some ready guide to the novels discussed here and to their political content may be useful. Therefore I have placed at the end of each chapter a list of the political novels used in the preparation of that chapter.

PART ONE

DECLINE OF THE SCHOLAR-GENTLEMAN-STATESMAN:

THE PROTEST AGAINST MATERIALISM, 1774-1890

CHAPTER I

CRITICS OF A NEW DEMOCRACY, 1774-1850

Pioneers in Political Fiction: Francis Hopkinson and Jeremy Belknap

The political novel in the eighteenth century was not the most common nor the most effective form of political criticism in America. During the Revolution and the days of the Confederacy the pamphlet was the form most often chosen by propagandists, although political poetry was far from uncommon.¹ The rarity of the political novel is not surprising. In the first place the English novel itself was even younger than the century (Robinson Crusoe appeared in 1719) and Fielding, Smollett and Richardson were not producing novels until the forties. Although English novels did circulate in the colonies to some extent,² it is likely that the problems involved in creating a nation and taming a wilderness left little time for the kind of widespread reading among the middle and upper middle classes upon which the novel flourishes.

¹Notably that of the Hartford Wits and Philip Freneau.

²To what extent, it seems difficult to determine. Carl Van Doren writes that English novels "had little vogue" in the colonies in these years (The American Novel: 1789-1939 [New York: The Macmillan Company, 1940], p. 3) whereas Alexander Cowie cites examples to illustrate that "the novel was reasonably well known" here (The Rise of the American Novel [New York: American Book Company, 1951], p. 4).

Perhaps an even greater deterrent to the creation of a native American fiction was the constant threat to writers of being charged with corrupting the public morals.¹ The first American novelists were not unnaturally, therefore, very careful to provide in their books both the excitement necessary to insure wide circulation and the moral lessons essential to forestall criticism. These were, in fact, the staple ingredients of the sentimental novel, which was the most popular type of early American fiction.

Most critics like to think of William Hill Brown's The Power of Sympathy (1789) as the first American novel.² This appeared, however, fifteen years after the publication of the first piece of political fiction--Francis Hopkinson's A Pretty Story in 1774.³ Moses Coit Tyler, noting the fact that the date and place of publication coincided with the meeting of

¹Van Doren, op. cit., p. 4; and Cowie, op. cit., pp. 4-5.

²The controversy over the identification of the first American novel is summarized by Professor Edward Wagenknecht in Cavalcade of the American Novel (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1952), pp. 1-2. Professor Wagenknecht places Jeremy Belknap's The Foresters with the early historical novels (Van Doren calls it an "allegory" [op. cit., p. 5] and Cowie refers to it as a "political romance" [op. cit., p. 29]). On the basis of Professor Wagenknecht's classification it is entitled to supersede the claim of The Power of Sympathy to being the first novel; for, although it was published in book form in 1792, the date generally cited for it, it appeared serially as early as 1787 in The Columbian Magazine.

³No one has offered A Pretty Story as a candidate for the first American novel, even though it is similar in form to The Foresters. It has been called "a political satire taking the form of allegory" (Cowie, op. cit., p. 9) and "an allegory which lies nearly as close to fiction as to history" (Van Doren, op. cit., p. 5).

the First Continental Congress, has devised the following dramatic account of the place of the book in Revolutionary history:

On Monday morning, the fifth of September, 1774, four-and-forty respectable gentlemen, mostly strangers to one another, but representing twelve "colonies and provinces in North America" quietly made their way into Carpenters' Hall, in Philadelphia, and there sitting down together began "to consult upon the present state of the colonies, and the miseries to which they are and must be reduced, by the operation of certain acts of parliament respecting America, and to deliberate and determine upon wise and proper measures to be by them recommended to all the colonies, for the recovery and establishment of their just rights and liberties, civil and religious, and the restoration of union and harmony between Great Britain and the colonies, most ardently desired by all good men." Thus came into life the first Continental Congress, and with it the permanent political union of the American people. As to the task set before those four-and-forty gentlemen, no graver one was ever undertaken since the world began.

As they came out from that hall of anxious deliberation, some of them may have found, on stepping into Mr. John Dunlap's shop not far away, a lively-looking little book, just come from the printer's hands, in which book, under the veil of playful allegory, they could read in a few minutes a graphic and indeed a quite tremendous history of the very events that had brought them together in that place.¹

Thomas Jefferson was one of those who bought a copy--but not from Mr. Dunlap. He was able to get one printed the same year in Williamsburg, the colonial capital of Virginia and a center for early revolutionary activity.²

Although A Pretty Story purported to be by one Peter Grievous, Esquire, we may assume that it did not take long

¹Tyler, The Literary History of the American Revolution: 1763-1783 (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1897), I, 279.

²Jefferson's copy, printed by John Pinkney, is in the Library of Congress.

for word to get around the city that its true author was Francis Hopkinson and that this knowledge rather augmented than diminished its popularity (there were three printings of it in 1774). Hopkinson, the son of an eminent Philadelphia lawyer, had been given the best colonial education of his day, an education crowned by a sojourn in England, where he was entertained in the best society. Upon his return to America he married a wealthy New Jersey heiress and became a resident of that state. In 1774 he was made mandamus councilor for New Jersey, a Crown appointment. With this background it would not have been surprising had he become a Tory; but, whatever the reason, he turned his back on the Tories with the publication of A Pretty Story. In 1775 he was a member of the Second Continental Congress and in 1776 signed the Declaration of Independence. Throughout the war his witty pamphlets and poems brought cheer and encouragement to the colonials.

A Pretty Story is not a revolutionary document; it belongs to that period in history when the colonials had still not given up the hope that their grievances might be redressed and amity restored. In fact, it was not until after the Second Continental Congress had convened in 1775 that talk of actual separation was heard. Hopkinson's purpose in this book, therefore, is merely to outline the events which led up to the convening of the First Continental Congress; he offers no solution and pleads for no specific course of action. The allegory is simple and readily understandable even to the modern

reader; the dramatis personae include the nobleman (king), the nobleman's wife (Parliament), the steward (the Prime Minister) and the children who went to live on the new farm (the Americans). "Once upon a time [Hopkinson begins], a great while ago, there lived a certain nobleman, who had long possessed a very valuable farm, and had a great number of children and grandchildren."¹ After a brief history of the development of the English Constitution, he continues:

Now it came to pass that this nobleman had, by some means or other, obtained a right to an immense tract of wild uncultivated country at a vast distance from his mansion house²

In process of time . . . some of his children, more stout and enterprising than the rest, requested leave of their father to go and settle on this distant tract of land.³

The father assures the children that they will retain all their filial benefits in return for which the children are to get all of their merchandise from him. But as in many a story, the children are undone by the father's wife; in this case, the nobleman's wife proves to be, not a mother, but a "mother-in-law." For she "began to cast an avaricious eye upon the new settlers."⁴

. . . [S]he first issued an edict setting forth, that whereas the tailors of her family were greatly injured

¹All page numbers refer to the 1857 edition of A Pretty Story, published under the title of The Old Farm and the New Farm (New York: Dana and Company) which contains an introduction and notes explaining the allegory by Benson J. Lossing.

²P. 19.

³P. 26.

⁴Ibid.

by the people of the new farm, inasmuch as they presumed to make their own clothes whereby the said tailors were deprived of the benefit of their custom; it was therefore ordained that for the future the new settlers would not be permitted to have amongst them any shears or scissors larger than a certain fixed size. In consequence of this our adventurers were compelled to have their clothes made by their father's tailors: but out of regard to the old gentleman, they patiently submitted to this grievance.¹

More and more restrictions are placed on the children in order to limit them to agrarian pursuits and make them buy their goods from the children on the old farm. Although the nobleman is not intentionally bad to his children, he is getting old and is forced to turn the management of his affairs over to the real villain of the piece--the steward.

Now the steward had debauched his wife, and by that means gained an entire ascendancy over her. She no longer deliberated what would most benefit either the old farm or the new; but said and did whatever the steward pleased. Nay so much was she influenced by him that she could neither utter Ay or No but as he directed. For he had cunningly persuaded her that it was very fashionable for women to wear padlocks on their lips, and that he was sure they would become her exceedingly. He therefore fastened a padlock to each corner of her mouth; when the one was open, she could only say Ay; and when the other was loosed, could only cry No.²

Feeling runs higher and higher at the new farm against the steward and the nobleman's wife until the children, having pleaded with their father to redress their grievances, decide not to trade at their father's shop anymore. All the taxes are then withdrawn except for the tax on water gruel. When the wagons of water gruel arrive, Jack breaks up the casks and destroys the cargo. Hopkinson concludes:

¹p. 27.

²Pp. 30-31.

A padlock put upon Jack's gate to punish him had little effect, for his neighbors helped him by handing supplies to him over the garden wall. These harsh and unconstitutional proceedings irritated Jack and the other inhabitants of the new farm to such a degree that . . . caetera desunt.

The denouement was to be supplied by the Continental Congress.

The fact that A Pretty Story went into three printings within a year attests to its popularity. Having served well in one war, it was refurbished, illustrated and annotated, and issued again in 1857 and in 1864 in order "to revive the spirit of the Continental Congress and of '76," as Lossing puts it. "What was true then, is true now: United we stand, divided we fall."¹

The Whigs were fortunate to have on their side one of the most versatile men of the day--a man who was musician,² painter, lawyer, merchant, quasi-novelist, and poet. His The Battle of the Kegs is one of the wittiest poetical efforts of the Revolution. After the war, he followed the inclinations of his class and joined the Federalists in support of the Constitution. His aristocratic bias, sublimated as he joined his fellowmen in common attack upon the British, became evident in his Federalist pamphlets. In the allegorical "The New Roof" the writing of the Constitution becomes the building of a new

¹Hopkinson, A Pretty Story, Introd, p. 4.

²Hopkinson has been given credit for writing the first American song. See Colonial Dames Committee on Historical Research, "The First American Song, 'My Days Have Been So Wondrous Free'"; also, Oscar George Theodore Sonneck, "The First American Composer--Hopkinson or Lyon?" Musical America, XXXVII (1923), 9.

roof for "a certain Mansion-house which was observed to be in a very bad condition, and quite insufficient for the purpose of protection from the inclemencies of the weather."¹ The anti-federalists are represented by Margery the Midwife, who is described as "of intriguing spirit, of a restless and inveterate temper, fond of tattle, and a great mischief-maker."² He continues his support of the Constitution--it is rather an attack on those who object to it--in another narrative, "Objections to the Proposed Plan of a Federal Government for the United States on Genuine Principles." The objectors here are described as a group of convicts who meet to make various suggestions for improvement of the Constitution and who afterward resume "their daily occupation of cleaning the streets and common sewers."³

At the interment of Jeremy Belknap the Rev. John Thornton Kirkland described Belknap's contribution to his country in the following words:

Whilst the church is deprived of a distinguished Minister; the Republic of letters of an accomplished Scholar and Writer, the country mourns a Patriot. Ever a strenuous assertor of the rights of the colonies in speech and writing, and a warm friend of the revolution, which accomplished the independence of the United States; he was also a decided advocate and supporter of the governments of our own choice, which succeeded and of the constitution

¹Hopkinson, The Miscellaneous Essays and Occasional Writings, I, 282.

²Ibid., p. 285.

³Ibid., p. 335.

for the States in Union, which he considered the bulwark of our national security and welfare

Actuated by public spirit, and, viewing it the duty of every citizen to throw his whole weight into the scale on the side of law and order, he was earnest in his wishes and prayers for the government of the country, and in critical periods, took an open and unequivocal, and as far as professional private duties allowed, an active part.¹

The son of a well-to-do furrier, Belknap was educated at Boston Latin School and Harvard, after which he entered the ministry. Like Hopkinson, he allied himself with the colonists during the Revolution, despite close ties with Tories, and later became a Federalist. He is the author of a number of now-forgotten theological works and of the uncompleted American Biography; his History of New Hampshire (1784-92) is usually considered his major literary effort. In 1787 he combined his historical and didactic interests and wrote a political allegory in which he tried to convince his countrymen of the virtues of a strong central government and the vices of too much popular control. The Foresters, published first serially in The Columbian Magazine and in book form in 1792 and 1796,² is reminiscent of A Pretty Story, although the allegory is much more detailed and the time-span is greater in the former; and, whereas Hopkinson uses only narration, Belknap attempts some dramatization by having his characters speak directly. In

¹"Sermon at the Interment of the Reverend Jeremy Belknap, D. D.," Hazard Pamphlets, XCI, 1.

²The 1792 version concludes with the adoption of the American Constitution; in the later edition, Belknap includes the period of the French Revolution and the activities of the French foreign minister, Genet, in this country.

The Foresters John Bull (England) is the possessor of a forest in which his domestics decide to settle. The first to obtain a lease is Walter Pipeweed (Raleigh), who takes a wife (Virginia). "Who knows," muses Pipeweed, "what treasures the land itself may contain--perhaps some rich mines!--then I am made for this world--I shall be as rich as Lord Strut [Spain]."¹ As in A Pretty Story the allegory denounces the increasing power of Mr. Bull's wife, or Parliament,--"petticoat-government," Belknap calls it--and the wrongs which Pipeweed, Codline (Massachusetts) and the other settlers suffer at the hands of John Bull's steward (the prime minister). The Revolutionary War is described as a series of lawsuits, with the big verdict in favor of the foresters rendered at Saratoga. In places the allegory breaks down because of metaphorical inconsistencies. For example, the early Confederation is described in terms of a clock with one bell and thirteen separate mechanisms, the keys to which are kept in the separate family mansions. But when the clock is thrown out, its substitute is a plan called the fiddle. Those for the plan are called fiddlers, those against it, anti-fiddlers.²

¹P. 6. References are to the 1792 edition.

²P. 189. "Federalists" was the name taken by those who favored adoption of the Constitution. Although the name was first used by those who opposed the Constitution to indicate their opposition to nationalism, the adoption of it by the conservatives forced their opponents to take the name "anti-federalists" (Homer Carey Hockett, Political and Social Growth of the American People: 1492-1865 [New York: The Macmillan Company, 1944], p. 218).

Belknap is even more conservative than Hopkinson in his post-Revolutionary views. Whereas Hopkinson tried to justify such measures as the exclusion of a bill of rights by contending that these rights were already guaranteed to the people under the new Constitution,¹ Belknap makes a bare-faced defense of inequality. The Confederation is weak, Belknap indicates, because it is based on the social contract idea, which supposes all men to be good--and to be equal. But the people should recognize that natural equality is destroyed "by a thousand causes which exist in nature and in society."²

"Now if there is in fact such an inequality existing among us, why should we act as if no such thing existed? We have tried the beaver scheme of partnership long enough, and find it will not do. Let us then adopt the practice of another kind of industrious animals which we have among us--Let us imitate the bees, who are governed by one supreme head"³

Triumphing over opposition, the fiddlers are successful in getting the new plan adopted, and George (Washington) is chosen

¹See "The New Roof," Miscellaneous Essays.

²The Foresters, p. 185.

³Op. cit., p. 186. "The movement for the Constitution found its supporters, in short, among the conservatives who attributed the commotions of the time to an 'excess of democracy,' as Gerry phrased it, and desired to check these evils and promote business interests. The Philadelphia Convention was composed of men of the class that made the majorities in the state legislatures which chose them; it contained no representatives of the wage-earning and small-farming elements, for the one had no vote and the other was in the minority in the state assemblies. The framers of the Constitution had the bias of the old governing class, and came to Philadelphia to do on the scale of the nation what they had already done in the states. Their ideal was not government by the people" (Hockett, op. cit., p. 206).

as chief steward. Since then the foresters have prospered except for the development of a new species of rats (the speculators), who jump up on the tables and snatch meat off people's plates.

Thus Hopkinson and Belknap define the sides in the century-long battle between aristocrats who wished to confine control of the government to a few and the masses of people who wished to broaden it.

Compared with the wit of A Pretty Story, the satire of The Foresters seems heavy-handed and ponderous. Whereas Hopkinson invested his leading figures--the nobleman, his wife, the steward, and the children--with enough life to make them seem like characters in a domestic drama, Belknap never manages to make Mr. Bull or Mr. Lewis (France), or Humphrey Ploughshare (Connecticut), more than mere personifications of geographical names. If allegory does not do more than this--if the reader, in order to keep the story straight, must always immediately transpose, must read France for Mr. Lewis--there is no purpose in writing it. Straight history will do just as well. The value of historical allegory lies in the creation of emotionally-charged characters which will sustain the reader's interest and enlist him in the support of the ideas or groups they represent. In this Belknap failed where Hopkinson succeeded. Instead of historical allegory, The Foresters is rather a history, annoying to the reader because it is written in a code which must be deciphered.

Hugh Henry Brackenridge

Modern Chivalry, the several volumes of which were published between 1792 and 1815, is the first undisputable American political novel.¹ In it its author, Hugh Henry Brackenridge, records the political problems confronting an educated man at this time in American history. During the Revolution, merchants, landed gentry, radicals, and agrarians had all united against the Tories and had expelled the British. After the war, a political realignment found merchants, speculators, creditors, lawyers, former army officers, and clergymen allied under the Federalist label² and generally favorable to a strong central government, while small farmers, debtors, and the planters of the Virginia Piedmont rallied to the anti-Federalist cause.³ Conservative elements were terrified in 1786 by the uprising of a group of farmers in Massachusetts under the leadership of Daniel Shays, a revolt provoked by recent incarcerations of large numbers of farmers for debt and non-payment of taxes. The Federalists consequently drafted a Constitution which provided for a federal government with power enough to control such outbreaks. Jefferson, Patrick

¹Royall Tyler's The Algerine Captive (1797) has political implications but, beyond pleading for an end to paying tribute to Algiers, it does not relate specifically to politics. Tyler is primarily concerned with pointing out the inhuman treatment of slaves.

²Samuel Eliot Morison and Henry Steele Commager, The Growth of the American Republic (3rd ed.; New York, Oxford University Press, 1942), I, 181.

³Hockett, op. cit., p. 218.

Henry and other Piedmont Virginia planters along with Massachusetts farmers and Pennsylvania pioneers worked for a plan which would safeguard states' rights and civil liberties. During Washington's administration, Hamilton, with his espousal of a United States Bank, a high tariff and other fiscal politics which generally favored banking and shipping interests,¹ became the leader of the conservatives or Federalists, while the opposition--which, because of its anti-mercantile bias, now included the Virginia "tide-water planters"--united behind Jefferson and in a few years became the Republican party.²

The French Revolution, which began in 1789, also had its effect on political alliances in this country. At the outset, it was a revolt by moderates against monarchy and was widely applauded in the United States because of its ideological similarity to the American Revolution. Washington graciously accepted from Lafayette the key of the Bastille as a "'token of the victory gained by liberty.'"³ But after further monarchical plots and an uprising of workers who had not been given voting privileges under the new constitution, an era of violence began which caused many Americans, and especially Federalists, to withdraw their approval.

¹Morison and Commager, op. cit., p. 220.

²This party eventually became today's Democratic Party.

³Charles A. and Mary R. Beard, The Rise of American Civilization (New York, The Macmillan Co., 1930), p. 360.

Those who disagreed with the Federalists were denounced as Jacobins¹ and were reminded of the dire results of levelling in France.

It is possible, without any detailed knowledge of the political history of that day, to read Modern Chivalry as a delightfully humorous picaresque novel. The travels of Captain John Farrago and his Sancho Panza, Teague O'Regan, while they acquaint the reader with the crude life of the frontier West of the Alleghenies as well as with a little of the more sophisticated life of Philadelphia, form the framework for a satire, not only on local, state and national politics, but on the ministry, learned societies, the press, duelling, and the legal profession as well. But to approach this work with the expectation of finding an organized piece of fiction with a consistent political point of view is only to be disappointed. For it is really a series of episodes involving the Captain and Teague written by Brackenridge for the purposes, first, of justifying his political beliefs; secondly, of serving him as a therapeutic following political disappointments; and finally, of educating his fellow citizens so that they would perform their proper roles as voters in a democracy. It is full of inconsistencies, as Cowie points out;² but what seems an inconsistency is due, in many cases to changes in his thinking over a twenty-year period.

¹John Allen Krout and Dixon Ryan Fox, The Completion of Independence: 1790-1830, Vol. V of A History of American Life (New York, The Macmillan Co., 1944), p. 156.

²Op. cit., p. 53.

Attempts to determine whether or not Brackenridge was a democrat and whether he is satirizing democracy or denouncing it demand that his beliefs be placed in the context of the politics of his day. The use of such terms as "democracy" outside their historical context is likely to be meaningless. Most critics conclude that Brackenridge was a democrat, and he makes the claim himself. But what did it mean to be a democrat in 1790 or in 1800, and what did Brackenridge mean by the term?

Most discussions of Modern Chivalry presuppose a planned, complete whole, when actually the novel is about as planned and organized as a diary. In fact, it is essentially a diary--the political diary or journal of a man constantly involved in the political life of his day; and in order to have justice done to it and to its author, it must be read as reaction to and commentary upon Brackenridge's political experiences. The first three volumes, published in 1792 and 1793 were evoked by Brackenridge's disappointment at his being rejected as the candidate from his district to the Constitutional ratifying convention in 1787 in favor of William Findley, a fellow legislator and former weaver. The next volume, published in 1797, reflects Brackenridge's involved role in the Whiskey Rebellion in 1794. The criticism of Brackenridge in the press and the attacks of radicals on the judiciary gave rise to the composition of the episode which appeared in 1804 (Volume I, Part II). Part II, Volume II (1805) continues the satire on the same subject matter and in

addition assails Jefferson's economic policies. In 1815 the entire work was published with additional satire on those who wanted to reform the Constitution as well as general observations on a variety of subjects.

The virtues of organization and consistency, then, which must be denied Modern Chivalry, are compensated for by its immediate involvement with contemporary political affairs. Brackenridge has been commended for objectivity¹ when more than any other political writer who comes to mind his political opinions are influenced, and in many cases produced, by his personal political fortunes. The interest in Captain Farrago's journeys pales beside the fascination for the reader in following the political peregrinations of one of the most intelligent and controversial political and literary figures of his day.

Early life and political activities,--Born in Scotland, Brackenridge moved with his family when he was five to a Pennsylvania frontier farm. Here he managed to obtain some schooling and by the time he was fifteen was engaged as a teacher.² Within five years he enrolled at Princeton, where he established friendships with James Madison and Philip Freneau, who joined him in organizing the Whig Literary Society.³ After his graduation, he became the master of an

¹Robert E. Spiller et al. (eds.), Literary History of the United States, I, 179.

²Hugh Henry Brackenridge, Modern Chivalry, ed. Claude M. Newlin (New York, American Book Co., 1937), p. x.

³Ibid., pp. x-xi.

academy at Princess Anne, Maryland. In support of the Revolutionary cause he wrote such dramatic plays for his pupils as "The Battle of Bunkers-Hill" and "The Death of General Montgomery." After a period as army chaplain (he had read Divinity upon his graduation from Princeton), Brackenridge went to Philadelphia to found the United States Magazine, in whose pages he emerges in the role he played later in Modern Chivalry--that of self-appointed mentor to backwoods Pennsylvania. In the first issue (January, 1779) he wrote:

We regard it as our great happiness in these United States, that the path to office and preferment, lies open to every individual. The mechanic of the city, or the husbandman who ploughs his farm by the river's bank, has it in his power to become, one day, the first magistrate of his respective commonwealth, or to fill a seat in the Continental Congress. This happy circumstance lays an obligation upon every individual to exert a double industry to qualify himself for the great trust which may, one day, be reposed in him.

.
The honest husbandman who reads this publication will rapidly improve in every kind of knowledge. He will be shortly capable to arbitrate the differences that may arise amongst his neighbors. He will be qualified to be a Magistrate. He will appear a proper person to be appointed Sheriff of his county. He will be equal to the task of legislation. He will be capable of any office to which the gales¹ of popularity amongst his countrymen may raise him.

Perhaps the rigors of wartime were not conducive to the success of such a literary enterprise; perhaps mechanics and husbandmen were not interested in such education. At any rate, the collapse of this undertaking at the end of the year was Brackenridge's first disappointment in his lifelong

¹Hugh Henry Brackenridge (ed.), The United States Magazine (Philadelphia, 1779), I, 9-10.

struggle to uplift the ordinary American citizen. Turning then to the study of the law, he was admitted to practice in the court of common pleas in Philadelphia in 1780 and in 1781 went to Pittsburgh, then a small, rough frontier settlement.

His political career began in 1786 with his election to the state assembly on a platform which included a promise to support a bill allowing farmers to pay for their land in state certificates of indebtedness. This was a crucial issue with the farmers; for faced with deflationary demands of bankers, money-lenders, and speculators, they were finding it more and more difficult to pay their debts.¹ After his election, however, Brackenridge changed his mind, refused to support such a bill, and added to the rage of his constituents by speaking out in favor of Robert Morris, the Superintendent of Finance during the Revolution, and in favor of Morris's creation, the Bank of North America.² Why did Brackenridge change his mind on the issues which were of most importance to the people of his county? In his explanation in the Pittsburgh Gazette he stated that he felt himself always bound to serve the best interests of the people and assured his constituents that, were they as well-informed as he on the subjects, they would agree that he was right.³ The more Brackenridge tried to justify himself, the less he was believed;

¹Morison and Commager, op. cit., pp. 158-9.

²Claude M. Newlin, The Life and Writings of Hugh Henry Brackenridge (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1932), p. 78.

³Ibid., p. 84.

it doubtless appeared to the people in his district that he had come under the influence of easterners in the legislature whose governmental and economic philosophies were more congenial to his own. Another influence on his decision may have been Shays's Rebellion, which began between the time of his election and his appearance in Philadelphia in November, 1786.¹

Brackenridge's stand on these issues largely overshadowed the work he did on other bills whose passage was vital to the West. He introduced a bill to set aside land for an academy; he was strongly opposed to a treaty with Spain which would have prohibited the use of the Mississippi to American shippers; he worked on a committee which was to draw up a bill providing that land titles would be issued only to people actually living on the land--a protection of squatters against speculators.

The final blow to his popularity in the West came when in 1787 he supported the new Federal Constitution during the debate in the assembly on the authorization of a state ratifying

¹This was a rebellion of Massachusetts mechanics, laborers, and farmers led by a respectable former army man, Captain Daniel Shays, to force the state legislature to act on their grievances, which included objections "to the mode of taxation and of paying the State debt; the method of representation; the existence of the State Senate; lawyers and their high fees; and the lack of a circulating medium" (James Truslow Adams, *The March of Democracy*, Vol. I, *The Rise of the Union* [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1933], p. 152). When the legislature did not act, the rebels, in the fall of 1787, used force to close the courts which were considering suits against these debtors and whose decisions were resulting in the loss of farms and shops. After further violence in 1787, the state legislature sent an army to crush the revolt (*ibid.*).

convention. These backwoodsmen had recently fought a war against a strong government and against a Parliament which was not chosen by them and which did not represent them. Because of the relatively liberal Pennsylvania constitution, they now had a large voice in state affairs. But they were being asked to approve a document which provided for another strong central government--a system which would include a Senate, removed from popular control; a President who would have somewhat broad powers, including control of the Army, and who would also be removed from popular choice; and a Supreme Court whose members would be appointed for life.

Brackenridge played a prominent role in support of the bill which called for a ratifying convention. Included among his opponents were the ex-weaver, William Findley, who had also opposed him on the debt-relief issue, and all of the other members of the assembly from the three southwest counties of Pennsylvania.¹ The session was a stormy one. After the assembly voted to call a ratifying convention, Findley and the eighteen others who had voted against the question left the assembly so that lack of a quorum would prevent transaction of business concerning convention details. The sergeant-at-arms and a clerk were dispatched to induce them to return, and with the assistance of some Philadelphia citizens two of the members were found and forced back into the chamber. In the discussion that followed concerning the right

¹Newlin, op. cit., p. 92.

²Ibid., p. 90.

of the assembly to force these men to stay against their will, Brackenridge stated, in part:

. . . But if the Member has been conducted by the citizens of Philadelphia to his seat in the legislature and they have not treated him with the respect and veneration he deserves, it must lie with him to obtain satisfaction, but not with us. The gentleman by answering to his name, when the roll was called, acknowledged himself present, and forms a part of the House. Well, Sir, I conceive the question is, what is to be done now he is here--for how he came here, can form no part of our enquiry, whether his friends brought him (and I should think they could not be his enemies, who would compel him to do his duty, and avoid wrong)¹

Brackenridge wrote later in the Pittsburgh Gazette:

There can be no doubt but that it was in the power of the house, to have dispatched the sergeant-at-arms for the refractory members who were absent, and that it was in the power of the house to have fined and imprisoned them for this contempt²

The action of the Pennsylvania legislature is noteworthy for the short length of time (five weeks) it gave to the people to inform themselves on this measure and to elect delegates to a ratifying convention,³ and it was Brackenridge who proposed

¹Ibid., pp. 90-91.

²H. H. Brackenridge, Gazette Publications (Carlisle, 1806), p. 57.

³Morison and Commager write (op. cit., pp. 181-2): "In Pennsylvania they [the Federalists] rushed through the election of a state convention before the Anti-federalists had time to stir up their natural supporters, the German farmers and Scotch-Irish frontiersmen." See also Charles and Mary Beard (op. cit., p. 331): "When, for example, certain opponents of the Constitution in the Pennsylvania legislature sought to win time for deliberation by leaving their seats and breaking the quorum, a federalist mob invaded their lodgings, dragged them through the streets, and pushed them back into the assembly room. Applauded by the victors, the vote was then taken and the election of delegates to the state ratifying convention was fixed at a date only five weeks ahead, reducing to the minimum the period allowed for taking 'the solemn judgment of the people.'"

the date in a motion to the assembly.¹

As he did after he had voted against the debt-relief measure, Brackenridge now set about to convince his constituents that he was right, and the pages of the Pittsburgh Gazette teemed with his prose and verse in support of the Constitution.² All that was needed, he felt, was proper education. But the people proved to be slow of learning; for after Brackenridge's severe satire on Findley and the other opponents of the Constitution, they elected Findley, instead of Brackenridge, as delegate to the ratifying convention. Brackenridge, now irate, followed with more satires on Findley, whom he had dubbed Traddle the Weaver, and whom he criticized for presuming to rise from his "proper station."³ Nor did he spare the people who elected Findley, but tagged them "'th' injudicious multitude'"⁴

This summary of Brackenridge's political activities preceding the publication of the first part of Modern Chivalry in 1792 indicates that at this time he was generally in sympathy with the Federalists and their causes. He worked for his constituents on a number of measures, but he did not feel that his proper duty as legislator was direct representation. His role was rather that of leader, educator, of Old Testament prophet. "O Israel thou art destroyed for lack of knowledge," he cried.⁵ He would save his people from the false prophets

¹Newlin, op. cit., p. 91.

²Ibid., p. 92.

³Ibid., p. 98.

⁴Quoted, ibid., p. 97.

⁵Ibid., pp. 93 and 103.

like Findley,¹ and to do this he turned from the cramping pages of the Pittsburgh Gazette to the wider scope of the novel.

Brackenridge probably began work on Modern Chivalry about 1789; this year marked another political disappointment for him. After the ratification of the Constitution, William Findley was named by the Anti-federalists as their candidate to the first United States Congress, and Brackenridge rather expected to be chosen as the Federalist candidate. When the Federalist convention selected another nominee, Brackenridge announced his break with the state Federalist organization.² One of the earliest evidences of the influence of this break upon his political philosophy was indicated when the Federalists made an attempt to revise the old radical state constitution. Although Brackenridge had previously been opposed to this constitution, he now opposed any changes.

Modern Chivalry, Part I, Volumes I, II, and III,--
The first three volumes of Modern Chivalry, which were the product of his feud with William Findley, advise the cobbler to stick to his last and the voter to choose qualified men for office. The framework of the story consists of the journey of Captain John Farrago and his servant Teague O'Regan--the American equivalents of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza--from Pittsburgh to Philadelphia. Captain Farrago, who is Brackenridge's spokesman, is a true specimen of the genus American

¹Ibid., p. 102.

²Ibid., p. 124.

democrat (Jeffersonian variety). He had "an academie education" and "had lived the greater part of his life on a small farm."¹ Teague is uncouth, illiterate, dirty, and dishonest, but he is possessed with a brashness and ambition which tempt him to become an actor, a lawyer, a politician, the husband of a rich widow, a bon vivant, and a presidential appointee. Eventually he obtains the appointment, but despite the good offices of the Captain, Teague becomes no more than an excise officer. Interspersed with the narrative episodes are chapters of "observations" in which Brackenridge gives his opinions on a variety of subjects including--besides political matters--dueling, slavery, the American Philosophical Society, religion, and literary style. He also interjects an oration he delivered to troops while a chaplain in the army and two poems in Hudibrastic verse.

Politically, Brackenridge confines himself primarily to generalities. There is no discussion of the issues which divided him from his Western anti-Federalist colleagues in the assembly. He exhibits the then-common anti-British attitude of Americans² and indicates the differences with Federalist ideals which made him uncomfortable in an alliance with them after having joined them in promoting the ratification of the Constitution. He has no faith in an aristocracy based on heredity,³ nor does he believe that any class has a monopoly

¹Brackenridge, Modern Chivalry, p. 6.

²Ibid., p. 89.

³Ibid., p. 7.

of "genius and virtue."¹ But the burden of these volumes is the folly of electing unqualified men for office. Although he is still confident that a democracy is the best form of government, he has lost the optimism with which he launched the United States Magazine in 1779. Was he now a little sorry that he had urged "the mechanic of the city, or the husbandman who ploughs his farm by the river's bank"² to prepare himself for public office--even for Congress? Now he would remind the people that although in a democracy "the lowest citizen may become chief magistrate; yet it is sufficient to possess the right, not absolutely necessary to exercise it."³ The political experience which led him to so modify his views is alluded to only once:

There are individuals in society, who prefer honour to wealth; or cultivate political studies as a branch of literary pursuits; and offer themselves to serve public bodies, in order to have an opportunity of discovering their knowledge, and exercising their judgment. It must be chagrining to these, and hurtful to the public, to see those who have no talent this way, and ought to have no taste, preposterously obtrude themselves upon the government.⁴

He sees the struggle of the new country between the rule by "the aristocratic part of the government" and "the democratic" and he does not so much choose rule by the "democracy" as he rejects rule by the aristocracy.

When we see therefore, a Teague Oregon lifted up, the philosopher will reflect, that it is to balance some

¹Ibid., p. 21.

²See supra, p. 18.

³Brackenridge, Modern Chivalry, p. 15.

⁴Ibid., p. 20.

purse-proud fellow, equally as ignorant, that comes down from the sphere of aristocratic interest.

Yet it would be better for the country if it did not have to turn from aristocracy to the other extreme; hence these volumes attempt to show both the folly of the electorate in choosing unqualified men and the folly of unqualified men in allowing themselves to be so chosen.¹ As Brackenridge sees the problem, the two were rooted in the same vice; namely, the desire for power and fame. For in electing one of themselves to office the people exercise their power and at the same time enjoy vicariously the assumption of power by one of themselves.² He recognizes also the natural antipathy of "the multitude" against "the patrician class,"³ for it is with this feeling that he is himself in sympathy; and it is for this reason he calls himself a democrat.

Having thus eliminated (ideally) both the aristocrat and the ordinary man from political office, what manner of man did he recommend to the electorate? Well, someone very much like H. H. Brackenridge; in short, an educated and intelligent man. The man who opposes Traddle the Weaver is such a man⁴ as is the opponent of the man with two kegs, who is "said to be of good sense and experience in facts."⁵ Teague is not fitted for political life because of his lack of education. Brackenridge assures the gullible, deceitful, bumbling

¹ Ibid., p. 21.

² Ibid., p. 19.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., p. 13.

⁵ Ibid., p. 34.

Teague that it is environment not heredity that has cheated him of a public career:

This [his lack of qualifications] is not the fault of your nature, but of your education; having been accustomed to dig turf in your early years, rather than instructing yourself in the classics, or common school books.¹

Such testimony to belief in the intellectual perfectibility of man is in its way indicative of a democratic faith seldom equalled. However, Brackenridge himself was not able to maintain his belief in this ideal either through the vicissitudes of his political life or throughout the pages of his novel. In view of the complete failure of Teague to learn how to walk properly--or even to learn which was his right or left foot--one wonders how the Captain could ever apply this theory to the bog-trotter.

Modern Chivalry, Part I, Volume IV,--From the time of Brackenridge's break with the state Federalists until the publication of his fourth volume of Modern Chivalry in 1797, he became more and more sympathetic to anti-Federalist doctrines. With something like Jacobinical fervor he wrote in 1793 an article for the National Gazette which he called gleefully "Louis Capet Lost his Caput."² He protested Washington's proclamation of neutrality in the war between England and France and advocated invasion of Canada in order to help France. However, an alarming personal experience in 1794 led to the modification of these views, to the publication of

¹Ibid., p. 17.

²Ibid., p. xvi.

Incidents of the Insurrection in the Western Parts of Penn-
in the Year 1794 (1795), and to another volume of Modern
Chivalry in 1797.

As his biographer admits, Brackenridge's part in the Whiskey Insurrection, which came to a climax in 1794, was indeed equivocal.¹ Although he sympathized with the farmers, to whom an excise tax on their only marketable commodity seemed an imposition, he was opposed to violence. However, his choice of the middle road seems dictated almost as much by business concerns as by ideological beliefs. In 1790, he acted as attorney for groups of distillers who had refused to pay the excise tax.² On the other hand, he had close friends and clients among prominent Federalists in the community and did not wish to offend them by supporting the rebels openly.³ In 1792, when he was in Philadelphia, he wrote an article in the National Gazette attacking the excise law.⁴ In 1794, drawn into the role of moderator, his safety was threatened both by the rebels and by the militia sent to repress them. Finally he was called before Hamilton to defend himself against a charge of treason and was acquitted.

In this volume, Teague is given a Federal appointment--not the expected ambassadorial post for which he has been groomed by Captain Farrago, but the position of a hated excise

¹Newlin, op. cit., p. 126.

²Ibid., p. 125.

³Ibid., p. 126.

⁴Ibid., p. 128.

officer and is sent into Western Pennsylvania. The Captain, accompanied by his new servant--a Scotchman named Duncan, journeys with Teague to his new post, witnesses the humiliation of Teague with tar and feathers and barely escapes tarring and feathering himself.¹ In order to avoid the violence of the mob, the Captain and Duncan retire to the country where they spend some weeks at the secluded cabin of a French Marquis, a sojourn which offers the opportunity of discussing the French Revolution. When the militia arrives to quell the disturbance, the Captain emerges from his hideout only to be accused of treason. As in the case of Brackenridge, the Captain is acquitted. Traddle the Weaver is once more the subject of satire² and the author emphasizes again the necessity for elected officials to be well-educated.³ In the satire relating to the excise law, neither side fares very well. As a representative of the United States government, Teague can hardly be said to reflect credit upon it; but the irrationality of the mob with their tar and feathers is nonetheless inexcusable. The Captain in attempting to restrain them says:

Is it not a principle of that republican government which you have established, that the will of the majority shall govern; and has not the will of the majority of the United States enacted this law?⁴

But the mob is not to be dissuaded, and with the cry of "'Liberty, and no excise law. Down with all excise officers,'" they proceed to the tarring and feathering of Teague.

¹Modern Chivalry, p. 308.

²Ibid., pp. 282-3.

³Ibid., pp. 296-7.

⁴Ibid., p. 304.

During the visit with the Marquis de Marnessie, Brackenridge discusses with him the right of the people to revolt against a monarchy and to set up a democratic government.

The Captain had read the pamphlets of Thomas Paine, entitled, "Rights of Man," and was a good deal disposed to subscribe to the elementary principles of that work; a leading doctrine of which is, that at no time can the pact or customs of ancestors forestall or take away the right of descendants to frame whatever kind of government they think proper.¹

The Marquis, on the other hand, although he had favored reform in France, could see now that once started, reform is difficult to stop. The people will be satisfied only with extremes and violence. It seems likely that these views indicate the positions of Brackenridge before and after the Whiskey Rebellion. When the Captain learns that the rebels against the excise tax "had begun to frame guillotines, and to talk of taking off the heads of traitors to the cause,"² he

. . . was not a little alarmed at these proceedings; but the Marquis who had seen the machine of the guillotine in actual operation, was seized with a horrid fear; and he almost imagined to himself that he saw it moving of its own accord towards him; and his reason told him, that it was not at all improbable but that it might be brought to approach him very speedily, as the same sans culotte anarchy and violence began to shew itself in these regions, as had broke out in France.³

Modern Chivalry, Part II, Volume I,--It is not easy to follow Brackenridge's political convolutions from 1797 until

¹Ibid., p. 312.

²Ibid., p. 316.

³Ibid.

the publication of this installment of Modern Chivalry in 1804. His sympathy with the French Revolution was only modified by his experiences in the Whiskey Revolt; unlike many Federalists he did not denounce it completely. Yet it seems that he continued his Federalist alliance in national politics, while supporting the Republicans locally. Newlin writes that Brackenridge was chairman of a Federalist group which "avowed substantially the same principles as the Federalists in regard to 'foreign influences'" although "they were proceeding cautiously toward Jeffersonianism."¹ About a year later, Brackenridge was supporting the Republican candidate for governor and a few days after the election met with a group of Republicans who were organized "for further activities." At a meeting on October 26, Brackenridge presiding, they toasted "'our envoys to France, and the adjustment of our differences with that nation'" The next week those who met were referred to as "Jacobins" in the Pittsburgh Gazette.² Brackenridge himself was a candidate for election to the state legislature, but he did not campaign actively and was defeated. It is not impossible that

¹Newlin, op. cit., p. 204. The precise political affiliation of this group is not explained by Newlin. It seems to have been a liberal Federalist splinter group, which met to appoint its own candidate, being dissatisfied with the regular party candidate, a man named Woods. Brackenridge was accused at the time (and Newlin seems to support the accusation) of wanting to defeat Woods for personal reasons--they had clashed during the Whiskey Rebellion (ibid., p. 207). This might explain Brackenridge's affiliation with a Federalist group at a time when he seemed to be more in sympathy with the Republicans.

²Ibid., p. 209.

his inactivity resulted from his expectation of an appointment from the victorious Republican governor. At any rate, the appointment was forthcoming and he took his place on the bench of the Supreme Court of the state.

In 1801 Brackenridge began a correspondence with Jefferson (then Vice President), an indication of the beginning of a national as well as a state affiliation with the Republicans. He was also at work again on Modern Chivalry, directing his satire this time against scurrilous journalism. Specifically, he was reacting to the attacks upon him by William Cobbett and J. Thompson Callender in the Pittsburgh Gazette when he had become the leader of the Republican party in Western Pennsylvania. Before he published this volume, however (in 1804), the attack on the judiciary, the common law, and lawyers--not only in Pennsylvania but in the whole country--caused him to leap to their defense.

As the volume opens, the author explains that Teague has returned from France, where he was shipped as a curiosity after his tarring and feathering and where he became one of the sans culottes. Returning to his home village with Teague again his bogtrotting servant, the Captain finds his fellow townsmen taking sides in a controversy between a libelous journalist, Peter Porcupine, and a young college man who has imported a skunk to dramatize the evils of scurrilous writing. As a compromise, the skunk goes, Porcupine stays, and Teague is set up with a newspaper to counteract the calumnies of Peter. Having written this episode, Brackenridge laid down

his pen for a period and his writing after this hiatus seems to have lost the wit and rompish humor of the earlier volumes. The narrative thenceforth is almost entirely given up in favor of "observations." As Brackenridge himself recognizes pathetically in the conclusion of this volume:

. . . the snow of age has come upon my head; and winter has taken possession of my brow. My fancy is as cold as it was once warm. My inclination leads me to metaphysics, chiefly There is some attempt at humour; but seldom have I been able to reach it. A salutary bon mot, or jeu d'esprit, may sometimes be found. Nevertheless it may serve to let people know that I am alive.¹

Like the conversation of an old man, this volume rambles; it divides itself between observations and parables liberally interspersed with digressions. As in former volumes, Brackenridge upholds the necessity for the educated public servant, denounces the public's distrust of education,² inveighs against the assumption of office by the unqualified,³ advocates the middle way,⁴ and maintains his belief in a democratic form of government.⁵ What disturbs him primarily now, however, is the attack of the Republicans on the constitution, the judiciary, and lawyers.

The prejudice of anti-Federalists against the courts was one of long standing, having originated with their revolt against British judicial control. The prejudice was augmented by the fact that Jefferson, when he came into office, found

¹Modern Chivalry, p. 463.

²Pp. 367, 401, 419-20, 431, 433, 446-7.

³Pp. 392-3. ⁴Pp. 399, 418, 427. ⁵Pp. 404, 426-7.

the federal judiciary packed with Federalists, many of whom, like Justice Samuel Chase, were delivering political speeches on the bench.¹ And when Chief Justice Marshall established the doctrine that the Supreme Court has the power to declare a law of Congress unconstitutional, Jefferson felt that the balance of power between the three branches of government had been tipped in favor of the judiciary.² Judge John Pickering of the New Hampshire federal district court was impeached, and found guilty; he heard cases while intoxicated and was "clearly unfit for his position."³ The Republicans then impeached Samuel Chase, an associate justice of the Supreme Court and Brackenridge's law tutor. In the course of his partisan comments upon the bench, Chase had referred to the Republicans as a "mobocracy."⁴ He was, however, acquitted. Similar impeachment proceedings were instituted against judges in other states.

Although in an earlier volume, Brackenridge expressed some sympathy with the rights of each generation to cut the shackles which bind it to a previous era,⁵ there is no longer any evidence of such revolutionary sentiments in Modern Chivalry. Now as a lawyer and judge, Brackenridge upholds the courts and

¹Morison and Commager, op. cit., I, 291-3.

²Charles and Mary Beard, op. cit., p. 388.

³The words of Hockett, op. cit., 375. ⁴Ibid.

⁵See Modern Chivalry, p. 312; and supra, p. 31.

the law. The common law of England, which Jefferson believed should "be purged of outworn elements, imbued with democratic sympathies,"¹ Brackenridge views as "the birthright" of Americans and the preserver of their freedoms.² "It seems to me," he writes, "that a poor man is safer in a country of laws, than one without laws."³ He argues that judges will be competent only if they are secure in their positions and are not subjected to the pressures of public opinion.⁴ But the most striking difference between the philosophies of Jefferson and Brackenridge is shown in the way they assess the relative importance of the three branches of government. Jefferson, fearful of the power of the judiciary, was more confident of the legislature as the guardian of democracy. Brackenridge, on the other hand, believes that the judiciary "is that branch of government, on which liberty most essentially depends"⁵ and fears the power of the House of Representatives.⁶ As he was writing, the impeachment of Justice Chase was drawn up by the House, and he reminds the populace that Chase was a leader in the Revolution,⁷ suggests that "his error has been in the heat of times, if error there has been," and questions whether "the prosecution, has been necessary, or

¹Vernon Louis Parrington, Main Currents in American Thought, Vol. I, 1620-1800, The Colonial Mind, p. 352.

²Modern Chivalry, p. 372.

³Ibid., p. 397.

⁴Ibid., p. 398.

⁵Ibid., p. 391.

⁶Ibid., p. 449.

⁷Ibid., p. 455.

judicious."¹

All of these sentiments seem in character with the cautious democracy of Brackenridge at this time, seem consistent with his general hatred of violence, and the natural prejudice of a man on behalf of his profession. How surprising it is, therefore, to discover that Brackenridge himself was responsible for the impeachment and dismissal of one of the district court judges in Pennsylvania. The motivation again was personal and political. Judge Alexander Addison not infrequently delivered partisan harangues from the bench (he was a Federalist). In one instance in his charge to a jury he denounced "interested individuals" who "promote the election of the present governor"² in an obvious reference to Brackenridge. In an open letter in the Tree of Liberty, a newspaper which Brackenridge had helped to found, Brackenridge denounced Addison's partisanship on the bench and professed astonishment at the fact that, having heard Addison's charge to the jury, the people "did not drag you from your seat, and tread you under foot."³ Although many viewed Brackenridge's letter as an incitement to violence, its purpose (apparently) was merely to unbench the judge and Brackenridge lost no time in promoting the circulation of petitions to that end. Eventually the Republicans carried impeachment proceedings to the legislature (in 1803) and Addison was dismissed. It is

¹Ibid., p. 455.

²Newlin, op. cit., p. 223.

³Ibid.

difficult not to conclude that the cases of Chase and Addison differed primarily in the fact that Chase was a personal friend and former teacher of Brackenridge's, whereas Addison was a political enemy.

Throughout this volume Brackenridge indicates a growing concern for the irresponsibility and despotism of the mob.¹ The main reasons for the irrationality of the people, he seems to feel, are lack of education and disrespect for learning. Looking around at the village fair, the captain encounters a man running for election who charges that he has been slandered by his opponent: he has been accused of being an educated man. He protests: ". . . I am an illiterate man, God be praised, and free from the sin of learning, or any wicked art" ² Another man narrowly escapes being adjudged insane because he reads books.³ Brackenridge hopes to discredit the popular belief that the educated man is anti-democratic, a belief which was not without some basis in fact during the early days of the Republic. He insists, however, that the opposite is true.

There is a natural alliance between liberty and letters. Men of letters, are seldom men of wealth, and these naturally ally themselves with the democratic interest in a commonwealth.⁴

The castigation of lawyers he saw as a counterpart of this general prejudice against learning.⁵

¹Modern Chivalry, pp. 367 ff. and 449.

²Ibid., p. 419.

³Ibid., pp. 430-2, 446-7.

⁴Ibid., p. 401.

⁵Ibid., p. 448.

As an educated man he could see that democracy was the only reasonable form of government; idealistically it was unassailable.

Democracy embraces the idea of a standing on virtue alone; unaided by wealth or the power of family. This makes 'the noble of nature' of whom Thomas Payne speaks. Shall this noble not know his nobility, and be behind the noble of aristocracy who piques himself upon his honour, and feels a stain upon his delicacy as he would a bodily wound? The democrat is the true chevalier, who, though he wears not crosses, or the emblazoned arms of heraldry, yet is ready to do right, and justice to every one. All others are imposters, and do not belong to the order of democracy.¹

The difficulty seemed to be that there were so many imposters.

Modern Chivalry, Part II, Volume II,--In 1805 Volume II of Part II was published and in 1815 the new edition of the entire work with an added volume as well as additions to Volume I, Part II. In this last part the narrative has been all but discarded in favor of the essay. The most that can be said about some of Brackenridge's digressions is that he apologizes for them. Such narrative as there is is built around the Captain's journey westward and his founding of a new community on the frontier. The satire includes the subjects dealt with in his earlier volumes (the tendency to elect unqualified men to office,² anti-intellectualism,³ blackguard journalism,⁴ the extremes of the mob,⁵ and the attack on the judiciary.⁶ In addition, he attacks the economic policies of Jefferson⁷ and denounces

¹Ibid., p. 404. ²Ibid., pp. 481 and 611.

³Ibid., p. 524. ⁴Ibid., pp. 560-1.

⁵Ibid., pp. 505 and 472.

⁶Ibid., pp. 473, 484, 510, 562, and 566.

⁷Ibid., pp. 467 ff, 472-3, and 566.

the excesses of the French Revolution.¹ In the final volume, he attacks the stake-in-society principle by carrying it to the extreme of giving chattel (or animals) not merely the power of enfranchising their owners, but the right to their own votes.

His discussion of the impeachment of judges² was inspired not only by the general attack of the Republicans on the judiciary but by his own experience (since the publication of Part II, Volume I) as a member of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania. When the Republican legislature impeached three judges for the conviction of a man for contempt of court, Brackenridge asked that his name be included because, though he had not been on the bench when judgment was passed, he had concurred in the decision. He pointed out that, since he was the only Republican judge, the legislature might seem to be acting from partisan motives in excluding him. This imputation of partisanship so angered the members of the House that they decided not to accede to his request that he be added to the group of impeached judges but instead to present a petition to the governor that he be removed from the bench because of his frequent absences. The governor, McKean, refused, not surprisingly, to honor their request.³

After acknowledging that impeachment proceedings in the state inspired his remarks on the subject,⁴ he ventures to

¹Ibid., pp. 564 and 784. ²Ibid., pp. 737-741.

³See Mildred Williams, "Hugh Henry Brackenridge as a Judge of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, 1799-1816," Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine, X (October, 1927), 213.

⁴Modern Chivalry, p. 737.

suggest that impeachment has a salutary influence on judges even if they are eventually acquitted. "Is it nothing even in the case of an acquittal, to be scared half to death?"¹ The judges have now learned their lesson and "tyranny and oppression" have shifted to the people and to the lawyers, and especially to the lawyers.² In the earlier volumes of Modern Chivalry Brackenridge denounced those who denounced lawyers. Now, however, as a judge he begins to appreciate the objections to lengthy tirades by the members of the bar; a judge ought to be able to restrain lawyers without fear of impeachment.³

When Jefferson assumed the office of President in 1803, he declared in his inaugural address:

A wise and frugal government, which shall restrain men from injuring one another, shall leave them otherwise free to regulate their own pursuits of industry and improvement, and shall not take from the mouth of labor the bread it has earned. This is the sum of good government.

Under Federalist control, the government had increased its debt even while it had levied such odious taxes as the excise tax. In line with his theories of simple government, Jefferson had the excise tax repealed. He saw no need for a navy, and instead authorized the building of a number of gunboats which would be secreted along the coast to be used by local farmers (a kind of naval militia) if needed. Though Brackenridge was now nominally a Republican, it is easier to see his differences with the Republicans at this time than his agreements. The

¹Ibid., p. 741.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 742.

Republican drive for economy was felt by the judicial branch of the government in several ways, which Brackenridge enumerates. In the first place, although the Federalists had enlarged the court system so that judges would not spend so much time traveling their circuits, the Republicans, once in office, cut back the number of judges. This action was largely an outgrowth of the general Republican prejudice against enlarging the judiciary, but, as Brackenridge (through the Captain) says:

A judiciary law was said to be repealed on the principle of oeconomy. The constitutionality of the repeal has been questioned, much more the expediency. The suitors are obliged to come from the most remote parts of a state, to some one place where the circuit court is held, which under that law was brought, if not to their own doors; yet at least nearer home.¹

Thus what the people save in taxes, they must spend in order to get to court.²

Economy has led to neglect of the roads by the federal government. And it strikes at the judges, who must do more riding over poorer roads. Altogether, a judge's lot is not a happy one. "For what is it, whether a judge is broke upon the bench; or has his neck broke upon the roads?"³

How would Brackenridge support the increased expenses of the navy and augmented judiciary? It may seem surprising that he would retain the excise tax because, as he puts it, "The people had become reconciled to the excise, and I do not recollect a single petition for a repeal."⁴ This statement

¹Ibid., p. 468.

²Ibid., p. 472.

³Ibid., p. 473.

⁴Ibid., p. 786.

makes it clear that his previous objections to the tax were based primarily upon the inopportunity of the time of imposition.

Brackenridge too often has been considered as a political theorist, when he was actually a practical politician (largely unsuccessful in his personal campaigns but nonetheless influential in his community) who tailored his arguments to fit the political needs of the day.¹ His political alliances were many times made to promote his personal fortunes--either political or legal--and at least once, as we have seen, were even dictated by the desire for mere political vengeance. Dos Passos' characterization of him as "vain, ambitious, pushing"² is not unjustified. In 1770, when Brackenridge was a student at Princeton, he wrote in collaboration with Philip Freneau a prose narrative called Father Bombo's Pilgrimage to Mecca, only a part of which has been found. The portion of the extant fragment written by Brackenridge is a curiously prophetic allegory of his later political life. As the fragment begins, the ship Father Bombo has been travelling on has been captured by a French ship and Father Bombo, even though a prisoner, has managed to ingratiate himself with the French captain. As Father Bombo tells the story:

¹The impression left by some critics that his inability to remain long within one party was due to his independent, unbiased political thinking is only partially true.

²John Dos Passos, The Ground We Stand On (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1941), p. 401.

For, as he [the Captain] was an extravagant lover of the polite arts, I became a very acceptable prisoner to him, as he found me to be a great connoisseur in the various parts, branches, and systems of moral philosophy as it is taught in all the learned nations of Europe¹

An Irish privateer soon interrupts this pleasant situation when it delivers a broadside to the French vessel. Father Bombo continues:

Here I found myself in a miserable plight, for should I seem to act the Coward on the present occasion, my fate would be unavoidably fixed if the French man gained the Victory; but if I fought Gallantly and suffered myself to play the Hero, I would be treated as a prisoner if the privateer should conquer. I therefore resolved to steer a mean between both, for according to that wise Philosopher Quid, "in medio tutissimus ibis," The midway is the best.²

Accordingly, Father Bombo stays in the battle long enough to deliver some exhortations to the fighting sailors and so to establish himself as a hero. Then, pretending thirst, he goes below decks and stays there until he can determine which way the battle will go. When he discovers that the Irish are winning, he jumps into some fishnet, tangles himself up and with no difficulty at all, assumes the role of a native Irishman who has been taken prisoner by the French. Some thirty years later we hear the echo of Captain Bombo's words from Captain Farrago: "In medio tutissimus ibis. The middle way is the best."³

The strategy of the middle way failed Captain Bombo, however, when he joined his Irish captors, or rescuers. Although

¹Newlin, op. cit., p. 15.

²Ibid., p. 16.

³Modern Chivalry, p. 399.

he was at first treated royally, he came to be regarded as a witch and was finally put out upon a barren piece of land. One wonders whether Brackenridge ever thought of Captain Bombo as he followed the middle way during the Whiskey Revolt only to be called traitor by both sides.

It would not be just to leave the impression that Brackenridge was destitute of guiding political and moral ideals. If he was not a disinterested observer of the early American scene, neither was he a complete political opportunist. In medio tutissimus ibis. His most outstanding political inconsistencies and personal biases have been mentioned above: his decision to become a Republican when he was not chosen as the Federalist candidate for Congress; his political support of a former enemy, Neville, against a greater enemy, Woods; his haranguing of the citizenry against Judge Addison the while he deplored interference with the judiciary; his virtual abandonment of Revolutionary ideology after he became a judge; his break with Jefferson over treatment of the judiciary (admittedly hard to classify as clearly a theoretical or personal objection); his criticism of lawyers when he no longer argued cases. Let us now, taking Modern Chivalry as a whole, discover what constant principles seem to have guided him.

The choosing of the middle way does not necessarily mean equivocation or opportunism; it may, and sometimes did in the case of Brackenridge, mean conservatism. At only one point in his life did Brackenridge show signs of radicalism--

that is, during the early days of the French Revolution--but this aberration had been overcome before he started to write Modern Chivalry. In these volumes he warns his countrymen of the dangers of rule by the mob on one hand¹ and rule by the aristocracy on the other.² It is this abhorrence of extremes that was often responsible for his switches from one party to another. He found himself uncomfortable in an alliance with the Federalists not only because of his prejudice against a ruling aristocracy but because of his Anglophobia,³ his hearty disagreement with the stake-in-society theory,⁴ his belief in a broad suffrage.⁵ If, however, he turned to the Republicans, he was disappointed by their disregard for the stabilizing effects of a strong judiciary and of a reliance on the Constitution and by their penchant for electing unqualified men to office. Although every man should have a right to vote, he did not feel it followed that every man had a right to hold office.⁶ Why is it, then, that Brackenridge gives far more space to satirizing democracy, or "the evils of it," than he gives to satirizing the aristocrats? Unable to support an aristocracy, he became a champion of democracy; having in a sense been forced to cast his ideological lot with "the mob," he was constrained because of his conservatism to devote over eight hundred pages to keeping his

¹Ibid., pp. 367 ff., 373, 375, 382, 415, 505.

²Ibid., pp. 7, 21.

³Ibid., p. 89.

⁴Ibid., pp. 696 ff.

⁵Ibid., pp. 646, 532-3.

⁶Ibid., p. 15.

often incompatible bed-fellows from extremism. To put it perhaps less kindly--he was a democrat primarily because it was the alternative to an alliance with the aristocracy. "I use the term democracy," he explained, "as contradistinguished from the aristocracy; that is a union of men of wealth, and influence."¹

Since he had chosen to support the ordinary American in his demand for the franchise, he grew increasingly bitter over the people's rejection of him and their general distrust of the educated man. Perhaps the most common theme in Modern Chivalry is the folly of electing unqualified men to office, and by "unqualified" Brackenridge meant primarily "uneducated." True, he writes at one point that

There are but two characters that can be respectable as representatives of the people. A plain man of good sense, whether farmer, mechanic, or merchant; or a man of education and literary talents.²

But in a number of other places, he virtually rules out mechanics--particularly, of course, weavers--from qualifying for public office. "A man of education" who aspires to office states of his opponent, a weaver:

Fellow citizens, I pretend not to any great abilities; but am conscious to myself that I have the best good will to serve you. But it is very astonishing to me, that this weaver should conceive himself qualified for the trust. For though my acquirements are not great, yet his are still less. The mechanical business which he pursues, must necessarily take up so much of his time, that he cannot apply himself to political studies It will be more honourable for himself, to remain at his loom and knot threads, than to come forward in a legislative

¹Ibid., p. 471.

²Ibid., p. 296.

capacity: because, in the one case, he is in the sphere where God and nature has placed him; in the other, he is like a fish out of water, and must struggle for breath in a new element.¹

Hearing this speech, the Captain sympathizes with the educated man and adds his words to the argument. He believes that

. . . to rise from the cellar to the senate house, would be an unnatural hoist. . . . It would be a reversion of the order of things. Not that a manufacturer of linen or woollen, or other stuff, is an inferior character, but a different one, from that which ought to be employed in affairs of state.²

The weaver's "good sense" is not considered; indeed, the Captain knows nothing of him in this case except his occupation. Weaving is "the sphere where God . . . has placed him."

Clearly Brackenridge has lost the conception of a fluid, classless society which inspired the launching of the United States Magazine. Clearly, he envisions a ruling class of educated men from whom the rest of the people, recognizing the superiority of this class, should choose their government officials. He was no doubt correct in his picture of the general distrust of learning on the part of the electorate. With some bitterness, he voices the protests of a candidate accused of being educated:

An abominable, slander, said he; I a scholar! I a learned man! it is a falsehood. See me reading! He never saw me read. I do not know a B, from a bulls foot. But this is the way to injure a man in his election. They report of me that I am a scholar!. . . Were you not seen carrying books, said a neighbour?

Aye, said the distressed man; two books that a student had borrowed from a clergyman. But did I look into them?

¹Ibid., p. 13.

²Ibid., p. 14.

Did any man see me open the books? I will be sworn upon the evangelists: I will take my Bible oath, I never looked into them. . . . I am an illiterate man, God be praised, and free from the sin of learning. . . . Here I am, an honest republican; a good citizen,¹ and yet it is reported of me, that I read books. . . .

Again and again he returns to this theme.²

This bias of the public against education was probably inevitable because education very early was associated with those who could afford it--i. e., the aristocrats. Not until democracy became operative and education became generally available could the prejudice be ameliorated and the country's voters as well as its office-holders become educated. One's quarrel with Brackenridge is only his complete confidence that the educated man alone is (1) intelligent, (2) virtuous, and (3) democratic.³ There is in these pages no apparent recognition of the differences of political beliefs among the educated. Too often there seems to be the assumption that if there are differences between men, it is only because some men have knowledge and some do not.

In his last chapter, Brackenridge writes: ". . . I flatter myself, that it is not a little owing to this book, published in portions, from time to time, that a very different state of things now exists."⁴ Specifically he mentions that the American Philosophical Society no longer admits bog-

¹Ibid., p. 419.

²Ibid., pp. 296, 298, 367, 401, 419-420, 431, 433, 446-447, 524.

³Ibid., p. 401.

⁴Ibid., p. 805.

trotters,¹ that the people's prejudice against learned representatives has so far abated that there is a lawyer as speaker of the senate,² that the courts are now operating, because of fewer harangues, without great delays, and that verbosity has likewise been curtailed in the state assembly.³ He boasts that "there is scarcely a parlour window [in Pennsylvania] without a Modern Chivalry. Five booksellers have made a fortune by it; for I have never asked a cent from any of them for the privilege of printing an edition" ⁴

It seems likely that the early volumes of Modern Chivalry may have been generally read, at least in Pennsylvania, because they were readable and humorous and because the satire was directed toward local contemporary political figures. The rest of it was probably read and admired only by those scholarly enough to appreciate the classical allusions and foreign phrases.⁵ Unfortunately, these were not the people whom Brackenridge was trying to persuade to mend their ways. Many of the objects of his satire could not read at all, and those who could, probably preferred the sentimental or Gothic romances. Of the improvements for which Brackenridge claims credit, most would undoubtedly have come with the growth of the new country anyway; what part Modern Chivalry played in

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., p. 806.

³Ibid., p. 807.

⁴Ibid.

⁵There were four editions by 1825. John Quincy Adams is one of the educated and eminent men who enjoyed Modern Chivalry (see Newlin, op. cit., pp. 190-1).

hastening their accomplishment can only be surmised. My guess would be that its value, aside from its place in American literary history, lies in another direction. That a work of such obvious erudition was written by such an eminent person about the new country and about its government must have lent an aura of respectability to the system itself. It was the first time Americans had been able to observe themselves and their new government in the pages of fiction; they had become the subjects of a historical novel! Having now a history, they may have sensed that the possibility of a future for them and their government was less remote.

James Kirke Paulding

Of all the early political writers, James Kirke Paulding probably most deserves the name "democrat." Although he lived and worked with members of the aristocracy, his devotion to democracy persisted even through Jackson's administration, a difficult test for a man in his position. Like Brackenridge, he rose from poverty to comfort, but unlike Brackenridge, he seemed more eager to celebrate the virtues of the ordinary man than to try to uplift him.

Paulding inherited from his father a strong Anglo-phobia that had its roots in the experiences of the family during the Revolution. Paulding's father, a merchant and an ardent Whig, contributed so heavily to the Revolutionary cause that the family was bankrupt after the war. Paulding also had memories of being harried from his home by Tories during the conflict. The results of this anti-British feeling

are found in his Diverting History of John Bull and Brother Jonathan (1812), which is reminiscent of Hopkinson's A Pretty Story, and in other minor writings.

After some elementary schooling, Paulding made his way to New York City, where he fell in with the literary group around Washington Irving and contributed his talent to the writing of the Salmagundi Papers.

Both Paulding's literary and political theories derive largely from his hatred of things British. He deplored the English romanticists, such as Scott (see Koningsmarke¹) and Byron. Politically, he felt impelled to defend democracy as often and as strongly as it was attacked by the British. The banking system, hated so by Jeffersonian Republicans and Jacksonian Democrats, was to him an evil imported from England.²

His two novels Koningsmarke (1823) and Westward Ho! (1832) contain enough political passages to define the tenets most basic to Paulding's political theory: his devotion to the idea of equality and his strong agrarianism. Koningsmarke is a historical novel dealing with an early Swedish settlement on the Delaware River; Westward Ho! is largely romance and melodrama using the westward expansion as a background.

When Paulding published Koningsmarke, James Monroe was in his second term as President, and America was enjoying "the era of good feeling." The Federalist party was on the

¹Koningsmarke: The Long Finne (New York: Charles Wiley, 1823), I, 148.

²Parrington, op. cit., Vol. II, 1800-1860, The Romantic Revolution in America, p. 217.

wane, while factions were building up within the Republican (later the Democratic) party. From the Adams-Clay faction was to come the present Republican party.¹ Continued westward movement was creating a new section of the nation with peculiar political interests which had to be balanced with interests of the North and the South. To solve all of these problems created by sectionalism, Henry Clay devised "the American system" According to this plan, a high protective tariff would stimulate manufacturing in the Eastern states, and factories would then be able to support a large number of laborers who would provide a market for the agricultural produce of the West. The West and the South would buy the manufactured articles of the East, and the South would furnish the factories with cotton. The money accruing to the government from the tariff would be used for internal improvements, needed particularly in the West.

It is not difficult to see how this plan would conflict with Paulding's democratic ideals, for he shared Jefferson's desire to preserve the agrarian nature of American life. In Letters From the South he writes:

I was saying, that we have too many people living in cities, in proportion to our farmers, who, after all, are the backbone of every country, whence originates its riches and its solid strength. . . . The race of paupers receives no recruits from them; for in all my sojournings, I may say with truth, that I never saw an industrious farmer forsaken, "or his seed begging bread."²

¹Morison and Commager, op. cit., p. 363.

²Quoted in Parrington, op. cit., II, 217.

"To live in peace and die in peace is the great end of human existence,"¹ he believed, and this ideal seemed to him to be promoted more by country life than by any other. The American system would stimulate the growth of large manufacturing centers with a citizenry removed from the soil. Even the internal improvements, such as roads, would, Paulding felt, contribute to urbanization. In Koningsmarke, Counsellor Langfanger with his internal improvements program appears as a caricature of Henry Clay; his plans include the building of new roads, even though houses must be torn down to make way for them. To finance his improvements he places a low tax on property, but then evaluates it at three times more than it should be. Consequently the people have to sell their property to pay the taxes.

But the masterpiece of Langfanger's policy was that of pulling down an old market, and building a new one in another part of the village, in the management of which business he is supposed to have laid down the first principles of the great and thriving science of political economy, or picking people's pockets on a grand scale. He caused the people living near the old market to pay roundly for its removal as a nuisance; and then he caused the people that lived about where the new one was to be built, to pay roundly² for the vast pleasure and advantage of its neighbourhood.

Internal improvements are again the butt of Paulding's satire in Westward Ho!, in which the author's anti-improvements' spokesman is a Frenchman of the Mississippi valley.

¹Quoted in Floyd C. Watkins, James Kirke Paulding: Humorist and Critic of American Life (Summary of a doctoral thesis, Nashville, Tenn.: Joint University Libraries, 1951), p. 18.

²Koningsmarke, p. 148.

"Diable! monsieur, another improvement; last year they assess me for one grand public improvement! one road to go somewhere, I don't know. Eh bien! I pay the money. Well, this year they assess me for one other grand public improvement--very grand--voila, monsieur, one other road, right longside the other, both going to the same place. Diable! I no want to travel on two turn-pike roads. Ah, monsieur le colonel, I shall be very rich. O! very rich indeed, by these grand improvements. They take away all my land to make room for the grand improvement; they take away all my money to pay for him, and then they tell me my land worth four, six time so much as before. Peste! what they to me when my land all gone to the dem public improvement, hey!"¹

The internal improvements program also brought out Paulding's repugnance toward the interference of the central government in the affairs of the states. Furthermore, it was contrary to his strong anti-mercantile reelings. Although he found the old aristocracy, with its life of genteel leisure, pleasant enough, he objected to the rising, pushing middle class, interested only in making money. In Letters from the South, he wrote:

In days of yore, Plutus, although he shone in gold and precious stones, hid himself in the bowels of the earth; but now he is seen clothed in ragged bank-notes, taking precedence everywhere in the city drawing-rooms. There is now no place where a knot of harmless people of moderate fortune can sit down in the undisturbed enjoyment of social ease, or the cultivation of literature and science, free from the intrusion of tobacco, tar, pitch, potash, and cod-fish; sandahs, baftas, bugli-poops, and all the jargon of East India commodities. If they have a moderate competency, they are beset by greedy beggars, who, by dint of perseverance, at length tempt them to engage in some profitable speculation, which draws them gradually from their former pursuits, and ingulphs them for ever in the vortex of gain.²

¹ Ibid., p. 175.

² Quoted in Amos L. Herold, James Kirke Paulding: Versatile American (New York: Columbia University Press, 1926), p. 112 from Paulding, Letters from the South, I, 51-52.

By 1832, the year Westward Ho! was published, Andrew Jackson had been President for three years, and Paulding found that his democratic principles withstood even this severe test. Certainly one could surmise that Brackenridge, had he lived, would have been back in the Federalist camp by this time. The people had done what Brackenridge had been warning against: they had elected one of themselves to office--to the highest office in the land. Was this bad for democracy and for America? Paulding thought not. Instead of satirizing those of the lower classes who aspired to political office, Paulding criticizes the well-born and well-dressed who presumed to represent the people. In Westward Ho!, the Dangerfield family has migrated from Virginia to Kentucky and in due time Young Dangerfield, who presents Paulding's political views, decides to participate in politics. Appearing along with his opponent at a public meeting, he finds his adversary dressed well, "too well," and carrying a white pocket handkerchief. Such a man seems to Dangerfield unfit for public office. "We are not to be . . . dazzled out of our understandings with a white towel,"¹ say the people; and Dangerfield, who is a plain man, a man of the people, wins the election. Paulding urges all people to greater participation in political affairs.²

As a democrat, Paulding is insistent on social and civil equality. When Mr. Dangerfield invites the tradesman

¹Westward Ho! A Tale (New York, J. and J. Harper, 1832), I, 60.

²Ibid., p. 59.

who delivers his goods to come in and sit down, Dangerfield's guest, a Mr. Barham of England, protests that equality will never work, that the mob is destructive. But Dangerfield replies:

"That is just because there is no equality among you, and not because there is. It is the sense of inequality, and its attendant wants and mortifications, that produce these violent eruptions of popular discontent."¹

In only one respect did Paulding fail to apply his theory of equality. He became an apologist for slavery. Apparently the vision of the kindly southern gentleman, the patriarch of a plantation cultivated by happy slaves, invaded his agrarian dream and seemed more righteous to him than the plight of the northern laborer.² Thus in Westward Ho! the slave Pompey Ducklegs refuses freedom after he sees the condition of freed negroes in Philadelphia.³

Paulding was one of the few literary men of his day to be consistently interested and active in politics. Although Washington Irving, possibly through the influence of Paulding, was a Jackson enthusiast for a time and was even made Minister to Spain during Jackson's administration, he did not have deep-seated political convictions and veered from one political party to another as his nose for romance led him.⁴ Both men

¹Ibid., p. 122.

²See J. Mishell George, "James Kirke Paulding: A Literary Nationalist" (Mimeographed doctoral thesis, George Washington University, 1941), pp. 8-10; also Watkins, op. cit., pp. 21-23.

³Vol. I, p. 65.

⁴Parrington, op. cit., II, 207-210.

were close friends of Van Buren, and during his administration, Paulding was Secretary of the Navy.

John Pendleton Kennedy

The campaign of 1840 was the most rollicking, slogan-and-song riddled political contest which the new country had seen. When it was over, Andrew Jackson's hand-picked successor, William Van Buren, had been defeated by the Whig candidate, William Henry Harrison, largely because the Whigs had wooed and won the common man, previously courted so successfully by the Democrats. The same themes were used as those in the 1828 election when Jackson, with his homespun look, his bad grammar and his war record, beat Adams so handily. This time the tables were neatly turned and the Democrats found themselves trying to defend Van Buren's perfumed moustache and his "love of good wine and old silver." The Democrats made the mistake of accusing Harrison of being willing to settle for a log cabin and a jug of cider and found themselves promptly inundated by log-cabin and hard-cider slogans, songs, souvenirs, and even free hard cider. One of the popular ditties was:

Let Van from his coolers of silver drink wine,
And lounge on his cushioned settee.
Our man on his buckeye bench can recline,
Content with hard cider is he,
The iron-armed soldier, the true hearted soldier,
The gallant old soldier of Tippecanoe!¹

Eighteen hundred and forty was also the year of the publication of a book much in the spirit of the campaign--

¹Morison and Commager, op. cit., I, 556.

Quodlibet by John Pendleton Kennedy. Through his mother, who belonged to the Virginia aristocracy, Kennedy had close ties with the agrarian South; but only the humanitarian element of Jeffersonian democracy seems ever to have appealed much to him.¹ His second marriage in 1829 made him the son-in-law of Edward Gray of Philadelphia, a wealthy manufacturer and a Federalist, and henceforth Kennedy became a staunch supporter of Henry Clay and his American plan and of the Whig party. Just as Paulding believed that America's hope lay in preserving its agrarian society, so Kennedy believed just as strongly that industrialism would promote the welfare of the country by providing a balance for agriculture.²

As a novelist, Kennedy preferred and excelled in romance; Horseshoe Robinson and Swallow Barn are more interesting today than the political satire, Quodlibet. Nevertheless Quodlibet provides literary history with the first political novel in unabashed defense of Whiggery. Kennedy was an aristocrat first by birth and secondly by marriage. But by marriage he became a member of the new aristocracy, the merchant class, who were displacing the old landed gentry. Brackenridge and Paulding would have found this alliance distasteful. Kennedy did not, and thereby avoided many of the inconsistencies and frustrations of Brackenridge, who found no permanent solace in any political party.

¹Parrington, op. cit., II, 48-9.

²Ibid., p. 49.

Although Quodlibet describes the political activities in a small western town of the same name, Kennedy explains that Quodlibet itself is to be considered "but an abstract or miniature portrait of this nation."¹ The satire is directed primarily at the Democrats' distrust of the Bank of the United States and at their tendency to encourage the common man to assume political power. As the volume opens, Quodlibet, struggling and poor, is destined to take "that sudden leap to greatness brought about by "the Removal of the Deposites."² Thus the issue between the Whigs and the Democrats--the main issue in the election of 1832--is joined at once. Although, as we have seen, the issue of the Bank went back to post-Revolutionary days, the panic of 1819 intensified the hatred particularly of the Westerner for the BUS, through which he felt that the "moneyed interests" of the East controlled and impoverished the citizens of the new states. James Truslow Adams recounts the events which led up to the panic of 1819:

The situation of the whole country was thoroughly unsound when in 1818 the United States Bank, which had been very badly managed and had done nothing to check the orgy of credit, suddenly instructed all its branches to accept no notes but its own, to demand immediate payment of all State bank notes, and to renew no personal loans. State banks crashed everywhere, the hollow credit structure collapsed, and ruin was widespread. Land values dropped in some cases by seventy per cent and staple products by fifty per cent. By the collapse of the local State banks and the foreclosures by the national bank, a large part

p. 2. ¹Quodlibet (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1840),

²Ibid., p. 3.

of the city of Cincinnati, its hotels, iron foundries, unimproved real estate, warehouses, and so on passed in title to the Bank of the United States, and this story was repeated in other towns. The West was prostrate at the feet of what it had come to call "the Monster."¹

In 1832, although the Bank's charter still had four years to run, its President, Nicholas Biddle, applied for an extension, and Congress passed a bill allowing it. Jackson, however, vetoed the bill. After the election of 1832, in which Clay made Jackson's veto one of the chief issues of the campaign, Jackson decided to kill the Bank and ordered the removal from it of the government deposits. He then proceeded to deposit national funds in state banks, favoring those which were sympathetic to his political party. These came to be known as pet banks.

It is in the spirit of the times then, that as Quodlibet opens, two of the town's citizens are planning to start, as a speculative venture, a bank which will be called "the Patriotic Copper-Plate Bank of Quodlibet." These two men, Theodore Fog and Nicodemus Handy, are exponents of the new democratic theory called Quodlibetarianism and belong to the New Lights Democratic party. They plan to issue paper money based on the government deposits and with the funds thus acquired they will speculate in real estate.² Local citizens with the right politics are allowed to take stock in the bank. When Mr. Grant, a Whig, is invited to come in--provided of

¹Adams, op. cit., pp. 272-3.

²Quodlibet, pp. 28-36.

course he will promise to support the New Lights (Democratic) candidate for election--he refuses and predicts a crash because of the issuing of too much paper money.¹ Thus Kennedy places the blame for the panic of 1837 on Jackson's monetary policies, where some of it probably belonged.²

Kennedy also satirizes the Democratic belief that every man is qualified to hold office. Asks Mr. Fog rhetorically: ". . .who would be the most impartial in such a matter, the man legislating for his own property or the man legislating for his neighbor's?" He explains the New Lights point of view:

"Do we not know," said he, "that in every community the majority are poor? that there are two men without property for every one man with it? Of course then, it follows logically, that, as two heads are better than one, the sole right, as well as the whole power of legislation is in the poor"³

Abel Brown speaks up for the rich--and for the author:

"Is it to be told against a man, that his neighbors count him to be frugal and thrifty, and that he is considered respectable in the world? Yet that is your new fashioned-democracy, which wants to put every one in the dust who doesn't idle away his time and squander his substance, and let his family go to wrack, whilst he strolls about the country bawling democracy Democracy's not what it used to be, or you would never find the people putting up with this eternal dictation from the President and his friends, to Congress and to the nation, what he will have,

¹Ibid., p. 36.

²See J. T. Adams, op. cit., p. 307. However, Edward Channing (A History of The United States, Vol. V, The Period of Transition, 1815-1848 [New York: The Macmillan Co., 1930], p. 455) discounts Jackson's role in bringing on the crisis.

³Quodlibet, p. 129.

and what he won't have:--that's what I call rank monarchy, and I will fight against it to my latest breath."¹

Kennedy also satirizes what he considers the tendency of the Democrats to substitute words for things. Mr. Flam's house used to be called Quality Hall, located on Poplar Flats. Gradually the words changed to Equality Hall and The Popular Flats. For, as Flam explains,

"...I have observed . . . in our country, especially amongst the unflinching, uncompromising democrats, that a name is always half the battle. For instance, sir, we wish to destroy the Bank; we have only to call it a Monster: We desire to put down an opposition ticket, and keep the offices amongst ourselves; all that we have to do is to set up a cry of Aristocracy."²

Being a merchant himself, Kennedy is particularly sensitive to the criticism of his class. The merchants always take the rap, says Fog, because they have few votes. Besides, a merchant can never be right. If he is successful he is "a Rag Baron, a Ruffle Shirt, a Scrub Aristocrat"; if he fails, he is blamed "for turning the humble and honest laborer out of employment, grinding the faces of the poor, depriving the widow and orphan of their bread."³

Quodlibet concludes with the election of 1840, when Harrison and Tyler are nominated to oppose Van Buren. Despite the necessity for the modern reader to refer frequently to the history book, the novel is still impressive as a clever, witty satire by a gentleman who does not apologize for being anti-democratic.

¹Ibid., p. 170.

²Ibid., p. 58.

³Ibid., pp. 158-9.

James Fenimore Cooper

For many years James Fenimore Cooper's romances were considered as the bona fide expressions of his great talent, while his political and social commentaries were looked upon as the outpourings of an irascible aristocrat against his more common neighbors. Recent scholarship has done much to restore proper perspective and to show that, taken together, his works show a consistency of thinking heretofore missed. That "the creator of Leatherstocking, the symbol of men's innate goodness in a state of nature, spent most of his latter years writing novels expounding the value of a hierarchical society" is not as paradoxical as Dr. David M. Ellis believes it is.¹ This has been the conventional viewpoint. Miss Dorothy Waples began the necessary reconsideration when she established the political partisanship of Cooper and the effect this had on his private life and on his writing and examined in detail the Effingham libel suits which resulted in the novels Homeward Bound and Home As Found.² Robert Spiller has reexamined Cooper as a social critic and has asserted that "his romances were often merely a means of conveying his views on the political and social evils of his day."³ Important as this larger analysis is, this study must

¹"The Coopers and New York State Landholding Systems," James Fenimore Cooper: A Re-Appraisal (Cooperstown, New York: New York State Historical Association, 1954),

²The Whig Myth of James Fenimore Cooper (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1938).

³"Second Thoughts on Cooper," James Fenimore Cooper: A Re-Appraisal, pp. 175-6.

confine itself primarily to a consideration of the clearly political novels: The Bravo (1831), The Heidenmauer (1832), The Headsman (1833), The Monikins (1835), The Redskins (1846), The Crater (1847), and The Ways of the Hour (1850).

Cooper's father was a Federalist with extensive landholdings in New York state, which, during Cooper's boyhood, were in large part a wilderness populated by Indians. From this early environment come Cooper's respect for men unspoiled by civilization and his defense of the old aristocracy, both of which are not incompatible with his staunch defense of democracy but are rather necessary components of it. Cooper's democracy stemmed, just as did Jacksonian democracy, from French romantic theory. It was nurtured by the agrarianism of Jeffersonian democracy (with its admixture of the ideals of the planter aristocracy, which included in Virginia the political union of the higher and lower classes against the middle). By the time Jackson became the head of the Democratic party, Cooper shared with the Democrats their hatred of the Bank of the United States and of course their dislike for the Whigs, the party composed of the new aristocracy of Wall Street--the pushing, uncultured middle class.

In 1826 Cooper went to Europe. Separated from his country by the Atlantic Ocean, he extolled the virtues of popular government with an enthusiasm which he was never able to muster after his return home. It is not strange that he was more of a democrat in Europe than he was in America or that, abroad, he "wore his democracy on his sleeve."¹

¹Cowie, op. cit., p. 132.

Separation often dulls the memory of the faults of both men and countries. But besides, Cooper, who might have been considered an aristocrat at home, felt in Europe as a frontiersman might feel upon his introduction to New York society. In comparison with the European aristocracy, he was a republican--socially as well as politically. And finally, he was genuinely an American patriot who, though he might have been disposed to criticize at home, outside the family circle remained loyal.

His first effort to win friends for America and democracy was his Notions of the Americans, Picked up by a Traveling Bachelor (1828). Purportedly written by a Britisher visiting America, it praises the institutions of the United States to such a degree that it succeeded merely in setting up among Europeans the "defense mechanism"¹ which Cooper himself had adopted in Europe. For the next three years he kept his political feelings out of print but then, too impressed with the superiority of republican ideals--as he believed they were upheld in America--over the oligarchical governments of Europe to keep silent longer, he wrote his trilogy of novels, set in medieval Europe but designed to criticize the existing European regimes. Although it has been remarked that Cooper was writing more for the warning of Americans than the instruction of Europeans,² such a purpose is never explicitly stated

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., p. 138.

by Cooper.¹ Occasionally he interjects an implied criticism of Americans, particularly the money-getters,² but on the whole Americans and their politics are not directly referred to and when they are they contrast favorably with Europeans.³ There is no forecast of the bitterness with which he was later to view the American political scene. These three novels--The Bravo, The Heidenmauer, and The Headsman--thus only by indirection can be considered American political novels. They are important here only as indications of Cooper's earlier political thought and as evidence of the great changes which his views on popular government were to undergo after his return to the United States in 1833.

In general the three works all illustrate the evils of a system in which a few govern the many. He points out "the necessity of widening the foundations of society, until the base shall have a breadth capable of securing the just representation of every interest" ⁴ For,

¹His statement in The Heidenmauer ([Philadelphia: Carey, Lea, and Blanchard, 1836], I, 85)--"for we profess to write only for the amusement--fortunate shall we be if instruction may be added--of our own countrymen; should others be pleased to read these crude pages, we shall be flattered and of course grateful; but with this distinct avowal of our object in holding the pen, we trust they will read with the necessary amount of indulgence"--seems to be an attempt to convince Europeans that he was not lecturing them.

²See James Grossman's comment in James Fenimore Cooper ("American Men of Letters"; William Sloane Associates, 1949), 77.

³In The Bravo ([Philadelphia: Carey and Lea, 1833], I, 171), he explains that he is writing about one of the "self-styled commonwealths" of this period in Italian history whose downfall is often used as "proof of the inability of man to govern himself." This is the kind of reasoning which "is so fond of predicting the downfall of our own liberal system"

⁴The Bravo, I, 170.

...admitting every benefit which can possibly flow from a just administration, with wise and humane princes, a government which is not properly based on the people, possesses an unavoidable and oppressive evil of the first magnitude, in the necessity of supporting itself by physical force and onerous impositions, against the natural action of the majority.¹

Cooper approves of the opinions of Monsieur Descloux (The Headsman) on the subject:

"If one man rule, he will rule for his own benefit, and that of his parasites; if a minority rule, we have many masters instead of one . . . all of whom must be fed and served; and if the majority rule, and rule wrongfully, why the minimum of harm is done." He admitted, that the people might be deceived to their own injury, but then, he did not think it was quite as likely to happen, as that they should be oppressed,² when they were governed without any agency of their own.

He even goes so far as to say, not that if the citizens of a country are virtuous in their private lives, the government will be a just and moral one, but that if the government is a true republic, it will have a beneficent influence upon the personal morality of its citizens.

. . .[O]ther things being equal, the citizens of a republic will have a higher standard of private virtue than the subjects of any other form of government For responsibility to public opinion existing in all the branches of its administration, that conventional morality, which characterizes the common sentiment, will be left to act on the mass, and will not pervert it into a terrible engine of corruption, as is the case when factitious institutions give a false direction to its influence.³

In defense of popular revolts, he comments:

. . . when a government trembles for its existence, before the turbulence of popular commotion, it is reasonable to

¹Ibid., p. vii.

²The Headsman, p. ix.

³The Bravo, p. 179.

infer some radical defect in its organization. Men will rally around their institutions, as freely as they rally around any other cherished interest, when they merit their care, and there can be no surer sign of their hollowness than when the rulers seriously apprehend the breath of the mob.¹

The entire plot of The Headsman is meant to illustrate the evil of prejudice which favors the well-born and discriminates against those with a hereditary stigma. The hero, Sigismund, though kind, generous, courageous, and possessed of all of the private virtues any one man could hope for, is nevertheless nearly denied the hand of the woman he loves because he has been born, as it is believed, the son of a headsman. The virtues of the lady are, however equal to his own, for she is able to overcome the prejudices of her family and accept him even before she discovers that he is, after all, well-born like herself. "Without the aid of parchments and tongues . . . we should all be equal in birth," her father admits.²

In general Cooper looks favorably upon reform ("change is the unpardonable sin in politics," observes one of the characters in The Headsman).³ Always, however, men should bear in mind that no matter who governs in this mortal realm there is an "intelligence which controls the harmony of the universe";⁴ that though change is to be welcomed, unchangeable are the "qualities of the good, the virtuous, and of the really

¹Ibid., I, 95..

²Ibid., II, 248.

³P. 251. See also The Headsman, p. 233; Heidenmauer, II, 248.

⁴Heidenmauer, I, 51.

noble."¹

The high idealism of these novels was due to be severely tested when Cooper returned home in 1833 to find that the scramble for money was the chief motivation of Americans. Jackson was in his second term as President, the westward migration had increased, and speculation was rampant. Furthermore, The Bravo, because of its didacticism, provoked some unfavorable criticism which annoyed Cooper. He replied to this criticism in A Letter to His Countrymen (1834), which also sets forth the extent to which he found his country disappointing upon his return home. He was convinced that the critical review of The Bravo which appeared in an American paper had been translated from a French journal and that the French review had been prompted by the fact that he had taken sides in a political debate in France.² It seemed ironic to him that his staunch defense abroad of American institutions had brought unfavorable comments from his own country; in anger and disappointment, he began to doubt that democracy was working in the United States as well as it should. The consequence of these doubts was the publication in 1835 of The Monikins, a satire of both English and American politics--but particularly of the Whigs. The issue was now joined with the Whigs and with the press, which was primarily Whig-controlled;

¹Ibid., II, 248.

²Cooper, A Letter to His Countrymen (New York: J. Wiley, 1834), p. 107.

and from this time on, Cooper devoted much of his time and his art to political attacks and political defense.¹

The narrator of The Monikins, Jack Golden calf, is a member of the nouveau riche--the grandson of a shopkeeper who has become wealthy by his own efforts. Jack is educated by a clergyman, Dr. Etherington, who retains the old prejudice in favor of social classes established by birth. Jack, however, feels that circumstances of birth are of small importance, for money can buy anything. It can even buy social position, and so Jack proceeds to buy himself a baronetcy. Jack, however, has his own high ideals; he believes deeply in the stake-in-society principle.

By a stake in society is meant . . . a multiplication of those interests which occupy us in our daily concerns--or what is vulgarly called property. This principle works by exciting us to do right, through those heavy investments of our own which would inevitably suffer were we to do wrong. The proposition is now clear, nor can the premises readily be mistaken. Happiness is the aim of society; and property, or a vested interest in that society, is the best pledge of our disinterestedness and justice, and the best qualification for its proper control. It follows as a legitimate corollary, that a multiplication of those interests will increase the stake, and render us more and more worthy of the trust, by elevating us, as near as may be,² to the pure and ethereal condition of the angels

Jack therefore decides to get as many stakes in society as possible; he resolves "to love all things, and consequently to become worthy of being intrusted with the care of all

¹See Waples, op. cit.

²Cooper, The Monikins (New York: Stringer and Townsend, 1852), I, 91.

things."¹ In the course of his travels he visits the countries of Leaphigh (England) and Leaplow (The United States), where he encounters Swiftian animals which look like monkeys, act like men, and are known as monikins.

The government of Leaplow is in theory better than that of Leaphigh. When Sir John (Jack Goldencalf) asks if the suffrage is not "confined to those members of society who possess a 'social stake'" Brigadier Downright, the author's spokesman, replies, "'Certainly, Sir John. They who live and breathe.'" Brigadier Downright objects to the social-stake system as commonly defined, for it supports the interests of only one class.

"If your government is instituted for their benefit only, your social-stake system is all well enough; but if the object be the general good, you have no choice but to trust its custody to the general keeping."²

The foundations of the Leaplow government are to be commended, therefore; but while Sir John and his friends are in Leaplow an eclipse occurs--the eclipse of the moral postulate Principle, the intervening body being the immoral postulate, Pecuniary Interest.

The shadow cast its malign influence on every interest connected with monikin life. Temples were raised to God on speculation; the government was perverted to a money-investment, in which profit and not justice and security, was the object; holy wedlock fast took the aspect of buying and selling, and few prayed who did not identify spiritual benefits with gold and silver.³

¹Ibid., II, 92.

²Ibid., II, 126-7.

³Ibid., II, 192.

This is the transformation of his own country that Cooper could not bear. The old aristocracy was being replaced.

The affluent, without hesitation, or, indeed, opposition, appropriated to themselves the sole use of the word respectable, while taste, judgment, honesty, and wisdom, dropped like so many heirlooms quietly into the possession of those who had money.¹

People in Leaplow used to ask of a man: "'is he honest?' 'is he capable?' 'is he enlightened?' 'is he wise?' 'is he good?'" Now, however, the only interrogation is "Is he rich?" Again, Brigadier Downright comments for the author: "' . . . no government that is essentially influenced by commerce has ever been otherwise than exclusive, or aristocratic.'" ²

As the book ends, Sir John gives up his social-stake theories as being ill-founded³ and marries Anna Etherington, a member of the social aristocracy.

Although all of this is primarily directed toward the Whigs, the Democrats do not escape. The levelling tendencies of the Jacksonians were in sharp disagreement with Cooper's social theories. The inhabitants of Leaplow have their tails docked (the tails were the seat of wisdom) so that all are equal. "'Without some such expedient, there might be an aristocracy of intellect among us, and there would be an end of our liberties,'" explains the Commodore.⁴ The struggle

¹Ibid., II, 195. ²Ibid., II, 196. ³Ibid., II, 231.

⁴Ibid., II, 37. In *The American Democrat* ([New York: New York Vintage Books, 1956], p. 43) Cooper is more specific; he declares himself against "equality of condition." He also objects to "raising men very far above their natural propensities" (ibid., p. 4).

of each politician to prove himself one of the people and the preference of voters for office-holders of little ability is satirized. Judge People's Friend explains:

"In Leaplow, humility is everything. The monikin who will take care and repeat sufficiently often that he is just the poorest devil going, that he is absolutely unfit for even the meanest employment in the land, and in other respects ought to be hooted out of society, may very safely consider himself in a fair way to be elevated to some of the dignities he declares himself the least fitted to fill."¹

Rotation in office is achieved in Leaplow by putting all the names of the citizens in one barrel and all the names of the offices in another. The names are drawn as in a lottery to choose government officials for a year.²

Following the publication of The Monikins, Cooper became involved in a controversy with residents in and near Cooperstown which confirmed his opinions that the rights of the landed gentry were being destroyed. Beginning with a local dispute, the incident rapidly spread to a war between Cooper and Whig papers who were retaliating against his recent commentaries on American politics and who were offended by what appeared to them his aristocratic pretensions.³ Cooper's father had given the people of Cooperstown and its

¹Ibid., I, 216-17. See also II, 38.

²Ibid., II, 29.

³See Waples, op. cit. for details; also Ethel R. Outland, The "Effingham" Libels on Cooper ("University of Wisconsin Studies in Language and Literature," No. 28; Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1929).

environs permission to picnic on a picturesque point of land which jutted out into Lake Otsego. As time passed, the people began to assume that the land was public property; and, when Cooper objected to trees being cut down and buildings erected without his permission, he aroused the wrath of the townspeople. He finally forbade them to use the area at all. A mass meeting was held at which the people voted to defy his "no trespassing" decree and to remove his books from the public library. The accounts of this incident in the papers were the basis of the series of lawsuits that Cooper brought against the newspapers which published them. Homeward Bound (1838) and Home as Found (1838) contain Cooper's account of what was for him a disillusioning and bitter experience. Although he still professed to be a democrat and although his thinking did not change basically, Cooper's emphasis more and more was on the virtues of and the necessity for a landed aristocracy to counteract the evils of the new Wall Street gentry and to guide and serve the lower class. In The American Democrat (also published in 1838) he writes:

The social duties of a gentleman are of a high order. The class to which he belongs is the natural repository of the manners, tastes, tone, and, to a certain extent, of the principles of a country. They who imagine this portion of the community useless drones who consume without producing, have not studied society, or they have listened to the suggestions of personal envy instead of consulting history and facts. If the laborer is indispensable to civilization, so is also the gentleman. While the one produces, the other directs his skill to those¹ arts which raise the polished man above the barbarian.

¹P. 89.

He condones democracy because it is less likely to lead to abuse than other forms of government.¹ Further, it is cheaper and "less liable to popular tumults" because "the people, having legal means in their power to redress wrongs, have little inducement to employ any others."² However, he believes that political equality does not demand social equality; though theoretically desirable, social equality can never work in a civilized country.

If we would have civilization and the exertion indispensable to its success we must have property; if we have property, we must have its rights; if we have the rights of property, we must take those consequences of the rights of property which are inseparable from the rights themselves.³

It was these "rights of property" which Cooper defended again when the anti-rent controversy came to the fore a few years later in New York state. In considering Cooper's part in this question we must keep in mind that he was politically a conservative. As he put it in A Letter to His Countrymen, "the democrat is the conservative, and, thank God, he has something worth preserving."⁴ Although in his three European political novels, he was critical of those who objected to change, he was not himself able to submit to it in the United States. Related to his reverence for the status quo was his

¹Ibid., p. 46.

²Ibid., p. 56.

³Ibid., p. 42.

⁴Op. cit., p. 99.

insistence on a strict adherence to the law and the Constitution. In the anti-rent dispute he even used the ultra-conservative argument that if a thing had not up to this time existed "it was probably never designed by divine wisdom that it should exist."¹

The anti-rent issue flared up in New York in the 1830's. The early Dutch and English settlers had been given huge grants of land from the crown and had leased part of it on a permanent basis in exchange for money or goods or both. These rents became oppressive to many of the farmers who had improved the land and built on it; they wished to buy it outright, but the landlords would not sell. When the landlords demanded payments of back rents or threatened eviction, the farmers banded together to resist. Before enough pressure was brought to bear on the state legislature so that the large estates were broken up, some men had been shot and others had been hanged for doing so.²

Cooper immediately saw the similarity between this issue and his troubles over the public use of his own land. It was a violation of personal rights and property rights; it was destroying the status quo; and it was defiance of the law. Nor were his views softened by the fact that the Governor,

¹The Redskins (New York: George Munro, 1885), p. 8.

²This was the same kind of landlord tyranny which the Western farmers objected to later in the century and which is recorded in the fiction of Hamlin Garland. A good summary of the anti-rent issue appears in Granville Hicks, "Landlord Cooper and the Anti-Renters," Antioch Review, V (March 1945), 95-109.

who sympathized with the tenants, was a Whig. His views were translated into fiction in the Littlepage trilogy: Satanstoe (1845), The Chainbearers (1845), and The Redskins (1846).

The first two are primarily background. In The Redskins Cooper gets into the heart of the anti-rent issue with the result that the narrative is often forgotten while he lapses for pages at a time into his argument. His thesis is summed up in the following passage:

A state of things which will not encourage the rich to hold real estate would not be desirable since it would be diverting their money, knowledge, liberality, feelings and leisure, from the improvement of the soil, to objects neither so useful nor so praiseworthy.¹

In The Crater (1847) and The Ways of the Hour (1850) his views on the matters of majority rights versus minority rights ("tyranny" versus "freedom") and of the rights of property become more extreme and further removed from the political realities of nineteenth century America. In fact, in The Crater he removes his characters physically from the United States to a volcanic island in the Pacific where a gentleman-dictator rules a group of colonists until newspaper men and lawyers arrive to bring dissension and majority rule. The Governor's assistants are his brother, whom he appointed as secretary, and a council of nine, who were elected for life "to prevent the worst part, and the most corrupting influence of politics, namely, the elections, from getting

¹The Redskins, p. 8.

too much sway over the public mind."¹ Since the Governor, Mark Woolston, was the first to land on the island, he is given property amounting to more than that belonging to all the other colonists put together. The possession of this property together with the fact that he is a gentleman make him entitled to rule.² The manner in which he was cast upon the island makes it seem, in fact, that the land was "a special gift of Providence to himself."³ Indeed, "no sovereign on his throne, could write Gratia Dei before his titles with stricter conformity to truth, than Mark Woolston."⁴

Cooper makes it plain that he has little sympathy for collectivist schemes. Like Woolston, he "was of opinion that civilization could not exist without property, or property without a direct personal interest in both its accumulation and its preservation."⁵ Common property meant a curtailment of individual freedom, which came to be for Cooper the greatest good.

Of all sophisms, that is the broadest which supposes personal liberty is extended by increasing the power of the community. Individuality is annihilated in a thousand things, by the community-power that already exists in this country, where persecution often follows from a man's thinking and acting differently from his neighbors, though the law professes to protect him. The reason why this power becomes so very formidable, and is often so oppressively tyrannical in its exhibition, is very obvious. In countries where the power is in the hands of the few, public sympathy often sustains the man who

¹The Crater or Vulcan's Peak (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, n. d.), p. 341.

²Ibid., pp. 339-40.

³Ibid., pp. 339-40.

⁴Ibid., p. 464.

⁵Ibid., p. 313; see also p. 339.

resists its injustice; but no public sympathy can sustain him who is oppressed by the public itself.¹

He is against the change of laws or Constitutions because "constitutions were expressly intended to defend the rights of minorities It was but a truism to say that the oppression of the majority was the worst sort of oppression" ² On the subject of majority rule, Cooper becomes vehement.

A majority of the electors of the State of New York are, at this moment, opposed to universal suffrage, especially as it is exercised in the town and village government, but moral cowardice holds them in subjection. Afraid of their own shadows, each politician hesitates to "bell the cat." What is more, the select aristocrats and monarchists are the least bold in acting frankly, and in saying openly what they think; leaving that office to be discharged, as it ever will be, by the men who--true democrats, and not canting democrats--willing to give the people just as much control as they know how to use, or which circumstances will allow them to use beneficially to themselves, do not hesitate to speak with the candor and manliness of their principles. These men call things by their right names, equally eschewing the absurdity of believing that nature intended rulers to descend from male to male, according to the order of primogeniture, or the still greater nonsense of supposing it necessary to obtain the most thrifty plants from the hot-beds of the people, that they may be transplanted into the beds of state, reeking with the manure of the gutters.³

Despite the fact that there are only about five hundred people in the colony, class boundaries are distinct and rigid. Although none belongs "to the highest social class of America,"

. . . distinctions existed which were maintained usefully, and without a thought of doing them away. The notion that

¹Ibid., pp. 313-14.

²Ibid., p. 458.

³Ibid., p. 464.

money alone makes those divisions into castes which are everywhere to be found, and which will probably continue to be found as long as society itself exists, is a very vulgar and fallacious notion. It comes from the difficulty of appreciating those tastes and qualities which, not possessing ourselves, are so many unknown and mysterious influences.¹

Nor did the class distinctions confine themselves to the social realm. Of the nine original council members, eight were "gentlemen"; the other was the sailor who had been tossed on the island with Woolston, and because of this circumstance had been put on the governing body. Although Betts "had good sense," he was not, like the eight gentlemen, intelligent. So sensible was he that

. . . the honest fellow . . . resigned his seat in the council, feeling that he was out of his place in such a body, among men of more or less education, and of habits so much superior and more refined than his own. Mark did not oppose this step in his friend, but rather encouraged it; being persuaded nothing was gained by forging upon a man duties he was hardly fitted to discharge.²

In one area the Cooper of the European novels appears (this is one issue upon which he maintains a consistent stand throughout his life)--that is, his opposition to the mercantile class. There is nothing wrong with making money (the Woolstons become wealthy on the island), but the evil comes with the devotion of all one's time to "the pursuit of gain."³

The Ways of the Hour continues in the same vein, although the author's spokesman, in place of the mild mannered,

¹Ibid., p. 362.

²Ibid., pp. 372-3.

³Ibid., p. 368; also p. 406.

reserved Mark Woolston, is the peppery and opinionated Wall Street lawyer, Thomas Dunscomb. Not particularly discernible in Cooper's earlier works is the note of pessimism: "'Things are changed in Ameriky . . .'"¹ and "'The times seem sadly out of joint . . .'"² The "tyranny of the majority"³ has overthrown the old state Constitution and has instituted a new code of laws which provides for such evils as election of judges by the people⁴ and gives women the right to keep their property in their own name even after marriage. This latter--the "cup-and-saucer law"--is particularly distasteful; it "would fain disturb the order of a domestic government, which is directly derived from divine wisdom as from divine benevolence."⁵ The anti-rent issue crops up again with its corollary, strict adherence to and enforcement of law with no changes.⁶ Dunscomb (or Cooper) would punish the anti-renters by withholding the franchise from counties or towns where the law could not be enforced.⁷

Class distinctions have become even more important. Cooper here tries to distinguish, however, between the terms "aristocrat" and "gentleman." An aristocrat, he points out, is a member of a political elite, and no such class exists in

¹Ibid., p. 108. ²Ibid., p. 141. ³Ibid., p. 221.

⁴Ibid., p. 66.

⁵Ibid., p. 315; also pp. 157, 158, 214, 372, 161, 238-9, 240, 271, 315, 378-80ff.

⁶Ibid., p. 17.

⁷Ibid., p. 18; also pp. 16, 87, 361, 377.

America. What political privilege does the patroon have "unless it be the privilege of having more stolen from him, by political frauds, than any other man in the State . . . ?"¹

The gentleman is, however, still with us and is recognizable at a glance.

. . . [A] gentleman can hardly be brought into the company of man or woman, without his at once perceiving whether he or she belongs to his own social caste or not. What is more, if a man of the world, he detects almost instinctively the degrees of caste, as well as the greater subdivisions²

The lawyer Timms recognizes Dunscomb as a gentleman, even though he persists in misnaming him an aristocrat.

"Why, sir, [says Timms] you don't look like the rest of us. Your very walk is different--your language, manners, dress, habits and opinions"³

Timms tries to elevate himself by improving his language and manners, but Dunscomb reproves him:

"Timms; take my advice, and let all these small matters alone. It takes a life to master them, and one must begin from the cradle"⁴

Mary Monson, accused of arson and murder, is recognized as a lady immediately by Dr. McBrain; who "saw, at a glance, that this person belonged to a class every way superior to that of even the highest of those who pressed around the table."⁵

The judge at her trial, though now by virtue of his election controlled by the people, recognizes her station, too, and gives her special consideration in the court room.⁶ In truth,

¹Ibid., p. 274.

²Ibid., p. 89.

³Ibid., p. 275.

⁴Ibid., p. 139.

⁵Ibid., pp. 31-2.

⁶Ibid., p. 257.

"the chasm between the cultivated and the uncultivated, the polished and the unpolished, is wide" ¹ Explicit as he is on the necessity for social distinctions, Cooper, one feels, has kept back the point he really wishes to make: that even though there is no aristocracy now in the United States, it might be a good idea if there were one; that gentlemen, with their intelligence, manners, and habits should be the office-holders.

The primary purpose of the novel, however, is to point out the injustice of jury trial. Mary Monson, a wealthy lady of good family, is accused of arson and murder. Because, during her residence in the town prior to her arrest she has refused to mix socially with the citizens and because during her imprisonment she has refused to display herself at the prison window; because she plays a harp and reads books in foreign languages; because, in short, she insists on retaining her individuality and her class distinction, she is found guilty by a prejudiced jury. Cooper's view is that

. . . the institution itself, so admirable in a monarchy, is totally unsuited to a democracy. The very principle that renders it so safe where there is a great central power to resist, renders it unsafe in a state of society in which few have sufficient resolution to attempt even to resist popular impulses. ²

He does not give us a good alternative to trial by jury, however, for the judge rather obviously shows his prejudices to be in favor of the upper social classes.

¹Ibid., p. 202.

²Ibid., preface, p. 3.

The extent of Cooper's disillusionment with democracy in practice is strikingly illustrated by a passage from The Bravo. Written by Cooper as a derogatory description of Signor Gradenigo, a senator and member of the Venetian oligarchy, it could all too aptly be applied to the Cooper of 1850.

. . . [H]e was equally opposed to the domination of one, or of the whole; being, as respects the first, a furious republican, and, in reference to the last, leaning to that singular sophism which calls the dominion of the majority the rule of many tyrants! In short, he was an aristocrat; and no man had more industriously or more successfully persuaded himself into the belief of all the dogmas that were favorable to his caste. He was a powerful advocate of vested rights, for their possession was advantageous to himself; he was sensitively alive to innovations on usages and to vicissitudes in the histories of families, for calculation had substituted taste for principles; nor was he backward, on occasion, in defending his opinions by analogies drawn from the decrees of Providence. With a philosophy that seemed to satisfy himself, he contended that, as God had established orders throughout his own creation, in a descending chain from angels to men, it was safe to follow an example which emanated from a wisdom that was infinite.¹

The quotation does not, however, fit in one respect. Cooper maintained his defense of the high principles of justice and honesty as he saw them; of the rights of individuals and the value of individualism in a country where group orientation and conformity was becoming a fetish.² Perhaps his fault lay in his assumption that all gentlemen were as highly principled as himself.

¹The Bravo, pp. 101-2.

²The problem of the rights of the minority under majority rule has concerned many people in the twentieth century. Proportional representation (PR) is one method of voting devised to provide representation for all groups.

In an analysis of Cooper's political views, oversimplification is dangerous. A careful study of his political and social philosophy as evidenced in all his novels is much needed. Examination of his political novels here indicates that his alliance with the Democrats was inevitable because of his strong anti-monarchical bias, his firm belief in the rights of the individual, his belief in political equality, his abhorrence of the rise of exploitation and speculation, and his hatred of the class which was engaged in these pursuits. To attain the ideals which he upheld, he favored less political power for the states and more for the federal government¹ and the domination of the executive branch of government over the legislative.² His democratic views were tempered by, or perhaps coupled with, the beliefs that, though the lower classes should have the right to vote (with some exceptions) they should not hold political positions for which they do not have the talent or training; and that levelling is not a necessary or desirable concomitant of democracy. Implicit in Cooper (much as in Brackenridge) is a Platonic conception of the ideal democracy as being a government with a responsible, educated, principled ruling group elected by a much larger class of Natty Bumpos, nature's unspoiled noblemen.

Cooper's political novels did little to stay the tide of popular democracy, and they did considerable harm to his

¹The Ways of the Hour, p. 150.

²A Letter to His Countrymen, p. 90; also pp. 75 ff.

popularity as a novelist, and as a consequence to his bank account. After the publication of The Bravo, the amount he was able to get for his novels in England fell steadily until in his attempts to publish The Ways of the Hour there he had trouble getting a publisher who would give him anything at all.¹ The public preferred the Leatherstocking tales and all of his attempts to educate them to an understanding of his political views only made them turn against him the more. Although time has kindly forced his political novels into obscurity, at the time of his death, they were uppermost in the minds of his countrymen.

Summary

The period from 1774 to 1850--the publication dates of A Pretty Story and The Ways of the Hour respectively--was marked by constant and vast political change. On the one hand, from a colony and later a loose federation the country had become a union which could rank in power with other nations in the world and which could put down its own internal disturbances. On the other hand, it had changed from a people seemingly united under a new Constitution and a popular President (Washington) to a land divided by parties of ever-shifting sectional and class alliances, a land which was soon to be torn by Civil War. This period saw the downfall of the old aristocracy as represented by the Tories and the Federalists and the beginnings of a new aristocracy based upon wealth--a

¹Grossman, op. cit., p. 243.

class which adhered in political principle to the theory of laissez faire and English middle class liberalism.

It was this philosophy--realistic and materialistic--which gave impetus to the great westward expansion and industrial development of the country. It eclipsed for a time but yet it never completely annihilated another philosophy, also individualistic, which was inherited largely from John Locke and from French romantic theory and which was embodied in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. This philosophy was concerned more with the individual political and civil rights of each man rather than with the rights of trade; it appeared as Jeffersonian agrarianism in the early years of the century, later as Jacksonian democracy, and it migrated to New England under the guise of humanitarian reforms such as abolition.¹ It was to appear again in the equalitarian loco-foco movement in New York and much later as an element in the rise of the agrarian-populist movement toward the end of the century.

In this early period, the political novels reveal an awareness of the problems facing a government in its experimental stages. Democracy was by no means unanimously acknowledged as the only possible form of government for this country; monarchy was seriously considered by some at the time of the French Revolution. Even when nominally espoused, democracy was subject to even more interpretations than it is

¹Parrington, op. cit., II, iii-ix.

today. Thus Brackenridge, Paulding, and Cooper, who are usually conceded to have been sympathetic toward democracy, have different ideas of what a democracy should be. Hopkinson and Belknap supported the Revolution, but this was perhaps the only cause which found these two Federalists on the same side as Samuel Adams and Patrick Henry. Actually, despite the diversity of opinion among these early novelists, the radical or revolutionary segment of the population typified by Adams or Henry had no spokesman in the prose fiction of the period. The one thing that stands out with respect to all of these writers is that they were aristocrats by nature or by choice, if not by birth. Anti-monarchical as they were as a result of their Revolutionary experience and their romantic espousal of equalitarianism, yet in varying degrees they were opposed to the levelling tendencies of Jacksonian democracy. The hope of Brackenridge was that equality in America with its unlimited opportunities would mean a levelling up rather than a levelling down; he hoped that eventually the masses would become aware of the necessity of electing educated men to office. The desire of Cooper was for a maintenance of political equality together with a recognition of social and intellectual inequality. The aim of both was an unlimited individual development rather than a levelling off at mediocre uniformity.

In assessing the contribution of these men to political fiction, it must be remembered that, being scholars, they were

gentlemen almost per se.¹ It is typical of the feeling of the period that the Massachusetts constitution should in describing the composition of the state senate use the phrase, "gentlemen of education, fortune, and leisure."² The combination was common, if not inevitable. Yet education could probably be more closely identified with class and section during this period before the establishment and propagation of a public school system than it was to be later in the century.³ At this time, it took great industry, parental and personal interest, as well as the favor of circumstance for a poor boy to become educated. Because of sectional differences it was easier to get at least an elementary school education in New England, whereas west of the mountains this was almost impossible before 1840.⁴ In the colleges students were trained as they had been in colonial days by men who had acquired their learning and philosophy in England. Many young men went

¹This was true of most of the writers at this time. Of the writers during the Revolution, only Thomas Paine stands out as an exception: he was not well-educated, he was not an aristocrat; and he was a cosmopolitan revolutionary rather than a protesting American. Philip Freneau was one of the few educated radicals (see Merle Curti, The Growth of American Thought [2nd ed.; New York, Harper and Bros., 1951], pp. 186 and 224-6).

²Evarts Boutell Greene, The Revolutionary Generation: 1763-1790, Vol. IV of A History of American Life (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1943), p. 313.

³For a discussion of the establishment of educational facilities in the United States, see Carl Russell Fish, The Rise of the Common Man, Vol. VI of A History of American Life (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1927), pp. 200-226.

⁴Ibid., pp. 202-3.

abroad themselves to complete their studies.¹

Of the men in the group of writers discussed here the two who were of humble origin--Paulding² and Brackenridge--rose in society when they became educated men. Paulding, who was largely self-taught, joined the literary group around Washington Irving in New York which was drawn from the financial and social upper class.

For Paulding, Brackenridge, and Cooper democracy meant a revolt against the merchant class, the nouveau riche, the new Wall Street aristocracy, more than a wish to be identified with the masses of people. It is understandable that these literary men found it difficult to ally their interests in more than a theoretical sense with those of the "dirty mob" and it is just as understandable that the members of the mob distrusted the litterati.

These educational distinctions were not always translated into party affiliations. In the days of the Revolution, both the Federalists and the Whigs had their share of educated men. Similarly during the drafting of the Constitution, learned men were active on both sides. Jefferson, the founder of the Democratic party, was a gentleman and a scholar. Not until the election of Jackson does the party split follow more closely along class lines and, with the election of a President who had trouble with his spelling, illiteracy began

¹Spiller et al., op. cit., I, 123.

²Paulding's family had once been in comfortable circumstances, however.

its long career in American politics as a mark of distinction. Emerson a little later remarked with some justification that the Democrats had all the principles and the Whigs all the good men.¹ To a northerner, perhaps the division seemed neater than it actually was elsewhere, for, as one historian has put it, "an educated northern Democrat" was a "rara avis."²

In choosing their party, the problem for Cooper and Brackenridge arose from the fact that they were idealists who espoused democratic principles but who recoiled from the prejudiced, undisciplined, untutored, and often unclean masses with whom the practical application of these principles associated them. As a practical politician rather than a theorist, Brackenridge was concerned primarily lest unqualified men be elected to office. Cooper had a clearer and more consistent theory of government, probably developed in large part during his stay in Europe and his contact there with the ideas of the French Enlightenment. Many of his views seem to be taken directly from French Physiocratic theory; for example, that "the state existed to safeguard the natural rights of the individual,"³ including particularly his right to hold property; that land is to be preferred as a source of wealth over commerce and industry; and that a

¹Morison and Commager, op. cit., p. 450.

²Fish, op. cit., p. 250.

³These words are used to describe the Physiocrats in Raymond G. Gettell, History of Political Thought (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1924), p. 269.

"natural order," whose laws are fixed by God is superior over any legal arrangements devised by the whim of man.¹ Paulding, also like the Physiocrats, had a preference for agrarianism over industrialism and favored laissez faire economic policies. Only Hopkinson deserted his class and went over to the mercantile interests. In a sense, while Brackenridge, Cooper and Paulding looked back with nostalgia upon the days of an agrarian America with its large and small landowners, only Hopkinson was able, without any qualms, to join the money-getters and go along with the acquisitive spirit characteristic of the nineteenth century.

A List of Political Novels Considered in Chapter I

Belknap, Jeremy, The Foresters (1792)
 Brackenridge, Hugh Henry, Modern Chivalry (1792-1815)
 Cooper, James Fenimore, The Bravo (1831)
 _____, The Crater (1847)
 _____, The Headsman (1833)
 _____, The Heidenmauer (1832)
 _____, The Monikins (1835)
 _____, The Redskins (1846)
 _____, The Ways of the Hour (1850)
 Hopkinson, Francis, A Pretty Story (1774)
 Kennedy, John Pendleton, Quodlibet (1840)
 Paulding, James Kirke, Koningsmarke (1823)

¹Ibid., pp. 268-9.

CHAPTER II

CIVIL WAR AND RECONSTRUCTION

A strong element, we have noted, in the democratic sentiments of Cooper and Brackenridge was their hatred of the mercantile interests, the rising, uncultured, not-to-the-manner born middle class. In Cooper and Paulding particularly these hatreds were reflected in their anti-Yankee bias, for the people of New England were, at the time of Cooper, mostly Whigs. The Yankees, in return, were strongly critical of the pretensions of aristocrats who were reluctant to admit the newcomers to their class. Cooper's opinions on the anti-rent question in New York were roundly censured by the Yankees.

As Brackenridge, Cooper and Paulding were opposing the rise of the Whigs in the North, Southerners of the old agrarian school, democrats and humanitarians in the Jeffersonian tradition, were also finding that their culture was being crowded out. They reacted just as strongly as the old aristocracy of the North did to the acquisitiveness of New England, which had, they felt, imposed a tariff bill upon them to the benefit of northern manufacturers and to the detriment of southern farmers. But the reaction of the South did not carry them toward democracy, as it had in the cases

of educated gentlemen of the North. For, as Jay B. Hubbell¹ and Parrington² have pointed out, the leadership of the South was passing from the hands of the old plantation owners, especially those of Virginia, with their patriarchal liberal traditions, to a group of newcomers to the planter class--the "cotton snobs," who, far from hoping slavery would be ultimately abandoned, as had Jefferson and other enlightened slave-holders, saw that slavery was now an essential to their economy. The only way to make money in the southwest (i. e., Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama, Missouri) was with huge cotton plantations.

Exaggeration led the northerners either to denounce all southerners as "slave-holding aristocrats" or to point out that southerners were not really the aristocrats they claimed to be.³ Southerners on the other hand developed the myth that almost every plantation owner in the South was the descendant of a Cavalier.⁴ In truth, the new southern tradition, headed by Calhoun, was the result of the rise of a middle class just as exploitative and mercenary as the rising middle class in the North. As Calhoun himself pointed out: "the interests of the gentlemen of the North and of the South

¹The South in American Literature: 1607-1900 (Duke University Press, 1954), p. 334.

²Op. cit., II, 61 ff.

³Hubbell, op. cit., pp. 332-4.

⁴Ibid., p. 334. See also Louis Hartz, The Liberal Tradition in America (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1955), p. 149 and Spiller et al., op. cit., I, 612.

are identical."¹ When these two groups attempted to give a moral justification for their enmity, the North found such a strong weapon in abolition that the South and its writers could only retreat to an elaborate rationalization of slavery founded upon a culture so ancient--that is, the Greek--that the parallel was almost non-existent. The South's humanitarian-based counter-argument that workers in the North were more poorly treated than slaves was irrelevant, but the merit it did have seemed invalidated by the source. Thus the plight of northern workers had to wait for a hearing until the more obvious wrong was obliterated.

So the South cried that the North was raising up a "moneyed aristocracy"² and the North denounced the Southern states as "aristocracies; and aristocracies of the sternest and most odious kind."³

John W. De Forest⁴

In this atmosphere, it is not surprising that political novels were scarce and that those which were written were mere reflections of sectional prejudice. Self-criticism was absent. Northerners--like John W. De Forest, who had spent a number of years in the South--were guilty of over-simplification, self-righteousness, and of blindness to the political and economic bases of the slavery question. In Miss Ravenel's Conversion from Secession to Loyalty (1867) De Forest writes

¹Richard Hofstadter, The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made It (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1948), p. 83.

²Hubbell, op. cit., p. 415. ³Ibid., p. 330.

⁴A more detailed discussion of De Forest appears in Chapter III, p. 147, where Playing the Mischief and Honest John Vane are considered.

of the war as "a struggle of the plain people against an oligarchy"; in it he sees the "northern working-man" pitted against the "southern gentleman."¹ Although he does not spare the concrete details when describing the physical aspects of the war, realism forsakes him when he comes to the analysis of its causes and effects. Dr. Ravenel, who has left the South because of his lack of sympathy for the Confederate cause, speaks for De Forest and the northern idealists:

"These Europeans judge us aright; we have done a stupendous thing. They are outside of the struggle, and can survey its proportions with the eyes with which our descendants will see it. I think I can discover a little of its grandeur. It is the fifth act in the grand drama of human liberty. First, the Christian revelation. Second, the Protestant reformation. Third, the war of American Independence. Fourth, the French revolution. Fifth, the struggle for the freedom of all men, without distinction of race and color; this truly democratic struggle which confirms the masses in an equality with the few. We have taught a greater lesson than all of us think or understand. Once again we have reminded the world of Democracy, the futility of oligarchies, the outlawry of Caesarism."²

Yet De Forest was realistic enough to recognize that abolition was often no more than a political shibboleth.³ And although he was idealistic in his view of the larger results of the war, he saw that in such matters as procurement of supplies and officers' promotions political considerations took precedence over merit and ability.⁴

Nathaniel Beverley Tucker

The spokesman for the pre-war South in the political

¹De Forest, Miss Ravenel's Conversion from Secession to Loyalty (New York: Harper and Bros., 1939), p. 75.

²Ibid., p. 443.

³Ibid., p. 347.

⁴Ibid., pp. 79-80.

novel was Nathaniel Beverley Tucker. His half-brother, John Randolph of Roanoke, had been against slavery; and his father, who for a number of years was a professor of law at William and Mary, had published in 1796 A Dissertation on Slavery, With a Proposal for the Gradual Abolition of It, in the State of Virginia. The idea that slavery was a temporary but necessary evil, though widely held in the South at this time, was to disappear almost completely after 1830. In 1832 Henry Clay got a tariff bill passed in Congress that convinced the South that they were now a political minority and were being exploited by the North. Following South Carolina's declaration that this tariff act was null and void, Jackson took steps to collect the customs through Federal officials. In his proclamation to the people of South Carolina he stated his belief that a law of the United States could not be annulled by one of the States.¹ This action offended states' rights Democrats, and as the power of the Federal Government loomed larger, slavery became dearer.

In 1836 appeared Beverley Tucker's apology for slavery and glorification of plantation life, The Partisan Leader: A Tale of the Future. Of his father's liberal political philosophy, he had retained only the idea of the right of the states to secede and an intense agrarian hatred of industrialism. Although his father believed in "a Democracy, where all Men are equal,"² the son had a profound distrust for the rabble,

¹Morison and Commager, op. cit., pp. 379-380.

²Hubbell, op. cit., p. 150.

which he identified largely with the abolitionists of the North. The culture of the South he saw composed of a class of gentlemen descended from the "gallant cavaliers" of England¹ and their loyal and devoted slaves, who were characterized by their "proud humility."² Tucker had abandoned the leadership of Jefferson for that of Calhoun.

A Partisan Leader bears the date of 1856 on its title page and purports to be a history of the preceding years. As the novel opens, a number of southern states, including South Carolina, have already seceded from the Union because of the tariff laws passed by Congress "to weaken the mal-content States in the South, and to increase the resources of their northern oppressors and those of the General Government."³ The purpose of Tucker's novel is to exhort Virginia to follow their example and secede, for "separation . . . to be peaceable, must be prompt."⁴ Martin Van Buren--"King Martin the First"--is shown at the beginning of his fourth term in office as a virtual dictator, ensconced in palatial quarters--shrewd and unscrupulous. He tries to keep Virginia from secession by the use of Federal troops, but we are to assume that he was unsuccessful.

¹The Partisan Leader ("Printed for the Publishers by James Caxton," [1836]), I, 8.

²Ibid., I, 101.

³Ibid., I, 39.

⁴Ibid.

Tucker's picture of plantation life is the now conventionally romantic one of stately mansions, presided over by regal mistresses whose gallant sons were ready to be accused of treason to their country rather than allow a lady to be insulted in their presence. Although "he was so completely and exclusively Virginian as to deserve the epithet 'Virginianissimus,'" ¹ his allegiance shifted from Virginia to South Carolina after 1836. Virginia, he complained, has "sunk in the slough of democracy." "South Carolina alone," he wrote to his friend William Gilmore Simms, "can act because she is the only State in which the gentleman retains his place and influence, and in which the statesman has not been degraded from his post."² He did not realize that in following Calhoun and South Carolina he himself had helped to bring about the demise of the rule of the old aristocracy and was instead a philosopher of the new southern agrarian-capitalists.³

Not for a generation would more than an occasional Southerner be able to agree with Walter Hines Page that when the South turned its back upon the liberalism of Jefferson to follow Calhoun and Davis, it had been guilty of one of the most dangerous apostasies in all history.⁴

¹Parrington, op. cit., II, 35.

²Ibid., II, 39 and Hubbell, op. cit., p. 427.

³Hofstadter writes: "Charleston was the great cultural center of the Old South, a city with a flavor of its own and an air of cosmopolitan taste and breeding, and Charleston was the one part of South Carolina for which Calhoun had no use" (op. cit., p. 71).

⁴Hubbell, op. cit., p. 704.

Jeremiah Clemens

The point of view of the Union sympathizer in the South during the war is given in Jeremiah Clemens's Tobias Wilson (1865). Clemens, a college graduate and a lawyer, was a member of the Alabama state legislature from 1839 to 1844. After participation in the war for Texan independence and the war against Mexico, he was elected in 1849 to the United States Senate. Tobias Wilson, one of nine novels by Clemens, takes the side of the Union, but on a pro-slavery basis. He can find no fault with the way the United States government has dealt with the slavery issue:

" . . . but what wrong has the Government of the United States ever done to us? What is there to be settled? Individuals and communities throughout the North have spoken and acted in a manner hostile to slavery. Be it so. The Government is not responsible for that. It has discharged its whole duty and more than its duty in this respect. There has never been a time when our peculiar institution was hedged round with so many defenses as it now is; and yet we are on the verge of a revolution . . . from no other cause than a vague and undefined fear that slavery may be destroyed by the Government which is, and has been, its only protector."¹

Clemens's argument had some validity. The causes for secession as given by the state conventions made reference only to the attitude of northerners toward slavery. Yet this attitude could not be changed by secession; secession could not give the slave states any rights in the territories; and slavery could have been outlawed in the South only by a consti-

¹Tobias Wilson: A Tale of the Great Rebellion (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott and Co., 1865), p. 17.

tutional amendment.¹ Tobias Wilson attempts to dramatize the strife between the confederates and the Union sympathizers of whom there were many among the small farmers. However, what might have been an exciting plot is buried beneath avalanches of purple prose and a romanticization of the Union soldiers exceeded in fervor only by Tucker's picture of southern gentlemen.²

Albion W. Tourgee

The Civil War abolished slavery in the South and with it the agriculture based on large plantations. It was not, however, responsible for the passing of "the grand old South, of chivalrous, and majestic memory," as Paul Hayne put it.³ If such a South had ever existed it had expired somewhere in the early 1800's.⁴ What the Civil War did was to arouse in the South--and later even in the North--a nostalgia for a way of life, limited to a few and long since past. Reconstruction involved more than the physical rebuilding of the South, more than its political reorganization. It involved the reconstruction of a largely mythical past, of a people and a way of

¹Morison and Commager, op. cit., pp. 534-6.

²"... [Y]et the murder of old Johnson, the Alabama Unionist, is a scene not easily forgotten" (Rebecca Washington Smith, The Civil War and Its Aftermath in American Fiction, 1861-1899 [Private ed., Part of a Doctoral Dissertation; Chicago, Ill.: Distributed by the University of Chicago Libraries, 1937], p. 6.

³Hubbell, op. cit., p. 707.

⁴See supra, p. 95.

life which would provide a rationale for secession.¹ This attitude was not necessarily inconsistent with a desire for greater communication and understanding between North and South, and, although there were many to whom the Yankees remained anathema, probably the larger number of Southerners were eager to erase the hatreds of war.

The policy of Reconstruction adopted by the Congress, now controlled by Republicans, was not designed to mitigate the ravages of war so much as it was aimed at maintaining Republican control in Congress. Lincoln had taken the point of view that because secession was unconstitutional, the southern states had never been out of the Union. He therefore pursued a policy of restoration of state governments as soon as these could be established. His assassination interrupted this program, however, and the attempt of President Johnson to carry it forward was completely thwarted by a hostile Congress. The Reconstruction Act of 1867 provided for the establishment of five districts each under the control of a General of the army. Those states which had already reestablished governments under Lincoln's plan would have to dissolve them. Conventions were to be called in each state, the delegates to which would be elected by universal male suffrage, to

¹"The mind of the conservative Southerner of middle age, trying in some manner to justify the course his section had taken with such disastrous consequences, was thrown back upon the past. That past began to seem in retrospect a kind of Golden Age. In some respects he was now more intensely and more consciously Southern than his fathers had been. For a decade a main activity of the Southern mind--apart from the struggle for a living--was given to the defense of the Southern interpretation of American history" (Hubbell, *op. cit.*, p. 704).

draft new state Constitutions and to ratify the Fourteenth Amendment. Many of these conventions were dominated by Negroes and northern carpetbaggers, and the constitutions which were drawn up by them disfranchised Confederate leaders. Thus political control passed into the hands of carpetbaggers, scalawags, and Negroes, in most states.

There are only two political novels written by participants in the Reconstruction: Albion W. Tourgee's A Fool's Errand (1879) and John S. Wise's The Lion's Skin (1905). The first was written by a carpetbagger, though probably one of more integrity than most; the second by a Virginia Republican who joined with the Negroes, carpetbaggers, and other Republicans in the state in helping to rebuild it. The point of view of the disfranchised southern leader and the romanticized version of the ante-bellum South would have to wait for its expression until later in the century with such novels as Thomas Nelson Page's Red Rock (1898).

Albion W. Tourgee was born in Ohio, where he became a lawyer and with the outbreak of the War enlisted in the Union army. Finding his law practice gone when he returned home, Tourgee decided to go to North Carolina where land was cheap, as it was generally in the South, and buy a plantation. He hoped not only to make a living for himself but to help the Southerners rebuild their land and their government.¹ During his fifteen years in North Carolina he was active as a Republican

¹However, Stanley J. Kunitz and Howard Haycroft refer to him as a "complete opportunist" (American Authors, 1600-1900 [New York: The H. W. Wilson Co., 1938], p. 755).

in local politics. He was one of sixteen "carpetbagger" delegates to the convention of 1868, called to write a new Constitution for the state,¹ and was elected Judge of the Superior Court, a position he held from 1868 to 1874. His experience was the background for five novels on the South during Reconstruction.² Another novel, Figs and Thistles (1879),³ embraced the war years, but its post-war setting is primarily the North.

Sometimes referred to as "the Uncle Tom's Cabin of the Reconstruction," A Fool's Errand was one of the best-sellers of its day. Like Tourgee, the protagonist of the book, Com-

¹ See Joseph Gregoire de Roulhac Hamilton, Reconstruction in North Carolina (Raleigh, N. C.: Edwards and Broughton, [1906]), Chapter VI, on this convention. Tourgee's name is mentioned frequently, but it is difficult to obtain a clear picture of his role as a politician. The only issue on which his stand is recorded is the repudiation of the old State debt. Tourgee was for repudiation but his view did not prevail (p. 238). According to Hamilton, the carpetbaggers were in control of this convention (p. 237), despite the fact that he reports only sixteen carpetbaggers and thirteen Negroes out of 107 Republicans (p. 229). However, the author generally gives the impression of being on the side of the Conservatives; for example, he deplores the fact that the convention removed property qualifications from voting, thus taking political control out of the hands of the propertied class (see especially p. 257).

² Toinette (1874); reissued in 1881 as A Royal Gentleman
John Eax and Mamelon in one volume (1882)
A Fool's Errand (1879)
Bricks Without Straw (1880)
Hot Plowshares (1882)

A Fool's Errand is the only political novel in this group. Bricks Without Straw has some political aspects, since it deals with the problem of integrating the Negro politically and socially into the civilization of the South. The other novels are primarily social, interesting for their portrayal of southern life.

³ Infra, p. 195.

fort Servosse, goes south after the war, buys and restores an old plantation and helps some of the local Negroes get a start by selling them small plots of his land. He does not hesitate to speak out in favor of what he feels to be the truth about the social and political problems facing the South. Consequently, he is denounced as a carpet-bagger, his life is threatened, and his family is socially ostracized. Despite all this, however, he continues to be active in politics, and is elected to the legislature.

An important element in the book is Tourgee's portrayal of the activities of the Ku Klux Klan.¹ After the murder of a white man and the hanging of a kindly old Negro, Servosse writes to a "wise man" in the North--presumably a legislator--asking Federal help. The man replies that the States are again duly organized to govern themselves and the Federal Government cannot intervene. His attitude is that the government "has given the colored man the ballot, armed him with the weapon of the free man and now he must show himself worthy to use it."² As for the poor whites and the pro-Union people, "Instead of whining over the wrongs they suffer at the hands of the rebels, they should assert themselves, and put down such lawless violence."³

¹Tourgee's position against the Klan was further documented in The Invisible Empire published with A Fool's Errand in 1880 as a kind of appendix.

²A Fool's Errand (New York: Fords, Howard and Hulbert, 1879), p. 211.

³Ibid.

Tourgee believes that this position is a great mistake. He describes the activities of the Klan and even its dissolution in the area after a series of confessions by former members. But the mission of the Klan has been accomplished. The Negro may still vote, but he no longer votes for his choice.¹

Like all of Tourgee's books, this novel is heavily weighted with a message; its burden is that reconstruction was a failure in the South. With small regard for his narrative, he devotes a number of pages to a discussion of this problem. As he sees it, there were four possible ways of dealing with the South after the War. First, there was Lincoln's plan of restoring the states as they were ante bellum with only the people in key positions replaced. According to the second plan--"a makeshift; inspired by fright at what had been done, and a desire to avoid what must be done"--the states would come back to the Union with their representation based upon the white population only, unless the Negroes should be enfranchised. This was rejected by the Southerners, who "regarded it as an attempt to bribe them into the acceptance of the results of emancipation by the offer of power as a reward for their concurrence."² The third plan, and the one favored by Tourgee

¹North Carolina was "redeemed" by the Conservatives in 1870. An account of the injustices of the Reconstruction period is given in Allan Nevins, The Emergence of Modern America: 1865-1878, Vol. VIII of A History of American Life (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1927), pp. 349-353.

²A Fool's Errand, p. 115.

. . . recognized the fact that a doctrine which had been known as State Sovereignty was at the root of the evil, and that the nation had taken a race from bondage which it was mortally bound to prepare for freedom. So it proposed that the States which had been in the infected region should be quietly left to molder in the grave of rebellion,--the bed they themselves prepared; that the region which they once embraced should be divided up into Territories without regard to formal statal lines, and so remain for a score of years under national control, but without power to mold or fashion the national legislation--until time should naturally and thoroughly have healed the breeches of the past, till commerce had become re-established, and the crude ideas of the present had been clarified by the light of experience.¹

The fourth plan, a compromise, was the one actually put into effect. This plan, as Tourgee describes it, entailed administration of state governments by the former slaves together with those whites who would be willing to ally themselves with this group: that is, the martyrs, devoted to principle; the self-seekers; and "the fools," who somehow hoped the present state of affairs was only temporary. He sums up the result:

The North and the South are simply convenient names for two distinct, hostile, and irreconcilable ideas,--two civilizations they are called, especially at the South. At the North there is somewhat more of intellectual arrogance; and we are apt to speak of the one as civilization, and of the other as a species of barbarism. These two must always be in conflict until the one prevails, and the other falls. To uproot the one, and plant the other in its stead, is not the work of a moment or a day. That was our mistake. We tried to superimpose the civilization, the idea of the North, upon the South at a moment's warning. We presumed, that, by the suppression of rebellion, the Southern white man had become identical with the Caucasian of the North in thought and sentiment; and that the slave, by emancipation, had become a saint and a Solomon at once. So we tried to build up communities there which should be identical in thought, sentiment, growth, and development, with those of the North. It was A Fool's Errand.²

¹Ibid., pp. 115-116.

²Ibid., pp. 340-41.

Now that the wrong course had been chosen, what was the best remedy for the situation? Education is what Tourgee offers.¹ Education of the colored man, of the poor-white, of the voter.

Although the novel unquestionably contains the bias of a Northerner and a Republican, or Radical, Tourgee by no means places all the blame for the failure of Reconstruction upon the South. One southern lady wrote in her diary: "I have just read Tourgee's Fool's Errand. It is very smart, and the only book on this phase of the South and North that presents a true picture. He has done it very well. Tells the truth as nearly as a carpetbagger and a Tourgee could be expected to do. I think he tried to be fair."²

John S. Wise

Post-war politics in Virginia differed markedly from that in North Carolina and other states farther south. In the

¹"Poor-whites, Freedmen, Ku-Klux, and Bulldozers are all alike the harvest of ignorance" (p. 347). On October 21, 1901 Tourgee wrote to President Roosevelt in regard to his advocacy of education as a solution to the Negro problem in the South: "It was a genuine fool's notion. I sincerely believed at that time that education and Christianity were infallible solvents of all the evils which have resulted from the white man's claim of individual superiority Today I am ashamed to have been that sort of a fool. I realize now that . . . education does not eradicate prejudice but intensifies it--Christianity does not condemn or prevent injustice to the weak by the strong, but encourages and excuses it" (quoted in Roy F. Dibble, Albion W. Tourgee [New York: Lemcke and Buechner, 1921], pp. 126-7). Dibble feels that Tourgee's change of mind may have been the result of peevishness brought on by ill health.

²Quoted in Hubbell, op. cit., p. 755.

first place, the percentage of Negroes was comparatively low, so that there was not the immediate post-war domination of the colored population to unite the whites and bring about an equally extreme reaction. In 1868 there were three political factions in Virginia: the Conservatives, or Democrats, who were opposed to the enfranchising of the Negroes and were against the Underwood Constitution, the new Constitution which had just been created by the state convention; the conservative Republicans, who favored the Underwood constitution if amended by omission of the "test-oath" and disfranchising articles;¹ and the radicals or Republicans who favored complete approval of the Constitution. In the election of 1868, the Constitution was to be voted upon and the combination of conservative and radical Republicans appeared enough to pass it and thus to disfranchise a large number of former Confederates. At this point Alexander H. H. Stuart, a conservative, proposed that Virginians, powerless to prevent Negro suffrage, yield to it in return for the removal of the test-oath

¹The Underwood constitution disfranchised "every person who has been a Senator or Representative in Congress, or elector of President or Vice-President, or who held any office, civil or military, under the United States, or under any State, who having previously taken an oath as a member of Congress, or as an officer of the United States, or as a member of any State legislature, or as an executive or judicial officer of any State, shall have engaged in insurrection or rebellion against the same, or given aid or comfort to the enemies thereof." These voting restrictions could be removed by a three-fifths vote of the legislature. The "test-oath," required of all those taking office, provided that the signer "had not voluntarily aided the Confederacy or held office under it." (H. J. Eckenrode, The Political History of Virginia During the Reconstruction [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1904], pp. 101-2.)

and disfranchisement clauses from the Constitution. "The intelligence and wealth of the South would continue to govern as before," he assured the citizenry.¹ Although this plan met with much opposition from the Conservatives, a committee was appointed (known as the Committee of Nine) to go to Washington and present a report to Congress stating that

the undersigned are prepared, and they believe the majority of the people of Virginia are prepared to surrender their opposition to its incorporation into their fundamental law as an offering on the altar of peace, and in the hope that union and harmony may be restored on the basis of universal suffrage and universal amnesty.²

Grant expressed his sympathy, and Congress passed a bill allowing a separate vote on any individual clause or clauses of the Constitution. The election of 1869, therefore, was "a great conservative triumph."³ The disfranchising and test-oath clauses were defeated, the Constitution was adopted, and Gilbert C. Walker, "a carpet-bagger-Republican and banker from Norfolk"⁴ was elected Governor. This coalition of conservatives, controlled by "city capitalistic leaders"⁵ first sold the state's holdings in its own railroads to private corporations without setting up any control powers, and in 1871 passed a Funding Act which "fastened upon an impoverished, war-broken state an annual interest upon the funded debt almost

¹Ibid., p. 110.

²Ibid., p. 111.

³Ibid., p. 125.

⁴C. Vann Woodward, Origins of the New South: 1877-1913 (Louisiana State University Press, 1951), p. 4.

⁵Ibid.

equal to the entire revenue of the state."¹ Virginia government was in the hands of bankers and businessmen, and especially railroad interests.

In the seventies, an opposition group, known as the "readjustors," arose, calling for the readjustment or repudiation of the debt. Near the end of the seventies, when the funders were sacrificing everything, including the schools, to pay the debt, the readjustors organized for a campaign. Although there was a "chaotic mixture of party lines,"² the Readjustors drew their strength largely from the small farmers of the Southwest and the Shenandoah Valley, together with some of the old Tidewater Republicans. Both groups appealed to the Negro vote. In 1880 the Readjustors elected a governor and in 1881 elected a Senator, William Mahone, a former Conservative Republican and railroad magnate himself. In the United States Senate, Mahone found that he had the privilege of breaking the Republican-Democratic tie and deciding which party would organize the body. He voted with the Republicans, and the party patronage in the state passed into his hands.

By 1882 Mahone was making a bid for the gubernatorial nomination, and one of his floor leaders was J. S. Wise, described as "young, eager, and brilliant, with perhaps a touch of unsteadiness."³ He and William Cameron were "destined to

¹ Ibid., p. 5.

² Ibid., p. 95.

³ Charles Chilton Pearson, The Readjuster Movement in Virginia (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1917), p. 111.

be viewed in the North as excellent examples of the anti-Bourbon forces in the movement."¹ Wise's father, Henry A. Wise, was a former Governor of Virginia, who had, along with many Conservatives, opposed the petition of the "Committee of Nine."² Wise the son was elected to Congress in 1882, but in 1885 he was defeated when he ran for Governor. By this time the Readjustors were calling themselves Republicans and were split over the debt issue and inter-party loyalties.³ It was mainly the tidewater aristocrats versus the carpetbaggers; and when President Hayes sided with the carpetbag faction and urged cooperation with the debt-payers, who were Democrats in national elections, the Republicans began to give up. Realignment was inevitable. The new Democratic party was composed of radicals and the "old regime."⁴ With Virginia supporting Cleveland in the election of 1884 and with the defeat of Wise in 1885, Virginia was turned back to the Bourbons, or, as one

¹Ibid., pp. 111-112.

²Henry T. Shanks writes of Henry A. Wise: "Wise was an aggressive leader who frequently changed sides but, regardless of his stand on issues, carried many followers with him. A Tyler Whig in the Jackson period, he went over to the Democrats in the forties. Upon his return in 1848 from Brazil, where he had served as minister, he supported the 'Southern Rights' faction in the contest of 1848-1851" (The Secession Movement in Virginia 1847-1861 [Richmond: Garrett and Massie, 1934], p. 47).

³See Woodward, op. cit., p. 100.

⁴Pearson, op. cit., p. 174.

writer puts it, to the "real Virginians."¹

It is this period of confused loyalties and political jockeying which Wise considers in The Lion's Skin. In the eighties and nineties novels like Thomas Nelson Page's Red Rock, which depict the glories of the old South and the abuse of the planter class during Reconstruction, were popular. It may be that Wise has Page himself in mind when he writes:

. . . Fortunately their brilliant imaginative writers tell us that they were themselves babes in short clothes at the time which they pretend to describe.² Their writings unconsciously reflect upon the manhood of the people they would glorify. The writer [Wise] was a full-grown man, an ex-Confederate soldier, lived amid these scenes, was indignant at the outrageous pretensions of the scalawag and carpet-bagger, and helped to fight them, whip them and oust them from control They excited the contempt of the military rulers, and the real people conquered them easily. In Virginia they never had any opportunity to steal much, for there was no Legislature in session, no money in the Treasury, and little elsewhere, during their brief control of about two years.³

He brands novels which "purport to represent any period in which Negroes or alien and degenerate whites were in position to oppress the gallant people of Virginia" as "pure figments of the imagination."⁴ According to Wise, it was "the gallant people of Virginia" themselves who were responsible for many of the hardships and evils of Reconstruction.

Many a man who built his fine house in Richmond, and who or whose descendants now prate of the horrors of reconstruction days, stood hand in glove with the thieves he denounced and laid the foundations of his restored fortunes in collusion with them. Aye, many a one indicted for frauds on the revenue only escaped by his ability to

¹Ibid., p. 171. ²Page was twelve in 1865.

³The Lion's Skin (New York: Doubleday, Page and Co., 1905), pp. 195-6.

⁴Ibid., p. 195.

corrupt the juries that tried him, or by compromising the Government claim by heavy payments to these same hated and abused carpet-baggers. This rascally doctrine that it was fair to cheat the Government was popular.¹

What Wise deplotes more than anything else is the moral degradation which Virginians allowed themselves to fall into. He believes the first step was the subterfuge practiced by the Conservatives when they agreed to accept Negro suffrage in return for the right to vote separately on the test-oath and disfranchising clauses in the state constitution, even though they did not plan to support it. This "started the people of Virginia upon a downward career of political dishonesty and duplicity from which they have not recovered and will not in a hundred years."²

Although Wise is much occupied with polemics, the framework of the novel is the story of Powhatan Carrington, a confederate veteran much like himself who becomes active in Virginia politics as a Republican. As in A Fool's Errand³ (and also in Red Rock) the southern gentleman takes a northern girl to wife, and the family are subjected to so much abuse because of their politics that they are forced to leave the Old Dominion, dear as it is to them.

Much of Wise's moral outrage seems to stem from chagrin over his defeat as a candidate for governor in 1885.

¹Ibid., p. 248.

²Ibid., p. 238.

³The son of a southern aristocrat finally gets approval from his father to marry Lily Servosse, daughter of the hero.

He complains that the Democratic vote was padded in the Negro section.¹ It is this manipulation of the Negro vote, the direct result of enfranchising the Negro, which he consistently denounces. It first occurred, he points out, shortly after the war when legislation was passed favorable to the railroads; at this time Negro votes were bought openly.² Wise ventures to say that if Southern states had never accepted constitutions providing for Negro suffrage, the North would soon have recognized their struggle "to maintain white control honestly" and would have helped them.³

Although Wise is bitter against the Conservatives--the "insolent white oligarchy"⁴ which, in making this bargain with Grant, fastened Negro suffrage on the State, he is not happy with the Republicans either. Because of the scalawags in the Republican party--those who became ardent Union supporters

¹p. 366. Nelson M. Blake (William Mahone of Virginia [Richmond: Garrett and Massie, 1935], fn., p. 232) quotes Jennings S. Wise, son of John S. Wise, to the effect that Wise actually received a majority of at least 25,000 votes and lost the election only because of fraudulent returns from "the black Belt."

²The Lion's Skin, p. 268.

³Ibid., p. 397.

⁴Ibid., p. 366.

and informers when the Union army arrived--he says that southerners will never embrace it.¹ Yet these are the people who "have more influence and consideration than any ex-Confederate Republican."²

Despite the fact that history confirms Wise's views in large part,³ the impact of the novel is vitiated by the impression that it is largely the product of disappointed ambition.

A List of Political Novels Considered in Chapter II

Clemens, Jeremiah. Tobias Wilson (1865)
 De Forest, John W. Miss Ravenel's Conversion from Secession to Loyalty (1867)
 Tourgee, Albion W. A Fool's Errand (1879)
 Tucker, N. Beverley. A Partisan Leader (1836)
 Wise, John S. The Lion's Skin (1905)

¹Wise himself was involved in the demise of the Republican party in Virginia. At the Republican State Convention in Petersburg May 17, 1888, Wise led a group to walk out in protest against the "unit rule" of the Mahone machine, the other faction in the party (Wise had broken with Mahone earlier). The faction led by Wise again opposed Mahone when he ran for governor in 1889, declaring in a circular (one of the signers was Wise) "that the defeat of William Mahone is essential to the salvation of the Republican party" (Blake, *op. cit.*, pp. 240-41). Mahone was defeated, but the Republican party, far from being strengthened, never showed much vigor again. Mahone, still chairman of the party, tried to deliver the Republican vote to the Farmer's Alliance in 1891, but because of the Democratic flavor of the Alliance, he was unsuccessful (*Ibid.*, pp. 249-52).

²The Lion's Skin, p. 192.

³The conviction that Negro suffrage could have been permanently withheld, however, is certainly unrealistic.

CHAPTER III

THREE DISILLUSIONED REPUBLICANS

Had Cooper lived on until after the Civil War, he would have seen that what he had most feared and hated had come to pass. The country was indeed in the hands of a new aristocracy--the plutocracy, it was called; in fact, every man was either a plutocrat, or hoped to be one, by speculation, good luck, or if necessary by hard work. Cooper had hoped for a stable society based upon the political union of the public-spirited aristocrat and the honest hard-working peasant-agrarian. But it was hard to confine Americans to classes; they were determined to rise. The great victory of Andrew Jackson, awarded to him by the common people, was a warning that they did not intend to remain common. The frontiersman, surrounded by what seemed unlimited opportunities, quickly became entrepreneur, speculator. The poor boy in the East could and did rise from the bottom of the financial heap to the top. Jim Fisk's father was a traveling salesman selling goods door-to-door to country housewives; Andrew Carnegie's father was a poor weaver. What these men had done, any man could do--and should do; for money-making became the measure of success for a man. The cry was, "Get money. Get it quickly. Get it in abundance. Get it in prodigious abundance. Get it

dishonestly if you can, honestly if you must."¹

It was not that Cooper and the old aristocracy were not materialists. Getting and keeping had been recommended to the citizenry by one of its oldest and most respected members, Benjamin Franklin. But somehow the old accompanying values had been lost; just as in Leaplow, Principle had been eclipsed by Interest. "Nothing is lost save honor," was the way Jim Fisk put it.

Individualism and laissez-faire had always been a part of American social and political culture. Few realized that individual freedom had become freedom to exploit one's fellow-man. As articulated by Herbert Spencer, the popular American philosophy now was that the fittest would survive and that those who survived and climbed highest were the fittest.

This almost universal desire for money was not limited to those outside government. Politics proved to be as good a way as most to fill the pocket-book. And, since money was the measure of a man's success, a man was a fool not to take all he could get in this way as in any other. The Credit Mobilier case² and the Salary Grab³ were outstanding examples

¹Mark Twain, Mark Twain in Eruption, ed. Bernard De Voto (New York: Harper and Bros., 1922), p. 77.

²The Credit Mobilier was a construction company organized by officials of the Union Pacific who then awarded this company profitable contracts. When the railroad itself was near bankruptcy, the Mobilier was able to pay huge dividends. Upon the threat of a Congressional investigation, members of Congress were bribed with stock (see Morison and Commager, op. cit., II, 72).

³This was the name given to a bill passed by Congress in 1873 providing for substantial increases in the salaries of the President and Congress--increases which were to be retroactive for two years.

of the application of this principle to government. As John W. De Forest describes it, a Congressman's lot was a hard one:

Congressmen, in order to get ahead, must bribe. Their salaries give them enough to eat on, but not enough to bribe on. And, to bribe others, we must take bribes.¹

Washington hummed with lobbyists who handed out substantial sums for bills passed to the advantage of the businesses who paid them. Individual lobbyists were pushing their own private claim bills through Congress.

Honesty had also gone out of fashion in the executive branch. During Grant's terms in office, the Secretary of the Navy netted sizeable sums through the contracts let by the Department; the Department of the Interior cooperated with land speculators; our minister to Brazil fled to Europe with one hundred thousand dollars of Brazilian money. When the Democrats came into office in 1874 they found that the Treasury Department under Grant, and, in fact, Grant's own private secretary, had been abetting a Whiskey Ring in St. Louis. Confronted with these exposures, Grant did not indicate any dissatisfaction with any of his appointees.²

The corruption extended to state legislatures, which were commonly bought and sold. And in New York City the Tweed Ring had become famous for milking the city of at least one hundred million dollars. When, after two trials, Tweed was found guilty and sentenced for twelve years, he served only one,

¹ Playing the Mischief (New York: Harper and Bros., 1875), p. 72.

² Morison and Commager, op. cit., II, 71-76.

and Tammany Hall continued to supply the city with bosses.

The machine age had come to America, and the biggest machine was the railroad. "The country was railway mad."¹ Every town in the West wanted a railroad and was willing to go into debt for one, in the belief that it would eventually mean great prosperity for the area. But the railroad also meant high rates for western farmers with the money going to the railroads and their promoters in Congress.

In 1800 Brackenridge had found his "modern chevalier" in the honest, dedicated, country gentleman; he had found his ideal democracy to be composed of such gentlemen. In 1880 the American people found chivalry exemplified in "the Plumed Knight" of the Republican party--James G. Blaine. During Grant's second term, Blaine was accused of aiding railroad corporations in return for remunerations. During the Congressional investigation which followed, Blaine stole some papers which incriminated him (the Mulligan letters) and refused to give them to the investigators.

Other knights of the era armed themselves with gold and vanquished the enemy by cornering the stock market. "The day of the idealists was dead; that of the materialists had been born."²

¹Don C. Seitz, The Dreadful Decade (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1926, p. 116.

²Claude G. Bowers, The Tragic Era (New York: Blue Ribbon books, n. d.), p. 337.

Yet many of the idealists lived on, and some of them wrote novels. The three primary political novelists of these post-war years were Mark Twain, Henry Adams and John W. De Forest. Their reaction to the cynicism of the age was sarcasm, satire, disillusion--even pessimism. There was irony to begin with in the titles which they chose for their novels: Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner caught the sham and the materialism of the period with the title The Gilded Age; De Forest named his Honest John Vane, an ironic sobriquet for a protagonist lacking in moral fibre of any sort; and Henry Adams called his book Democracy, using the term not in respect but in derision.

The men themselves were singularly different. Different in temperament, in background, in political point of view. Henry Adams's political lineage goes back to his great-grandfather, John Adams--Federalist and second President of the United States. Although John had his doubts about the workability of a democratic government, cluttered up as it would be with rude oafs from the West, he came to feel that "a democracy led by gentlemen might after all be made palatable."¹ Scrupulously honest, he felt that the well-to-do aristocrat would be freer from temptation in public life than a poorer man. Henry Adams's grandfather, John Quincy Adams, had shocked some of his New England friends when he had abandoned Federalism to follow Jefferson, but he restored his reputation by becoming

¹Curti, op. cit., p. 214.

the father of the Whig party. With the same sense of no-
blesse oblige which possessed his father, John Quincy conducted himself in office with a dogged and honest statesmanship which often made him seem merely disagreeable. When, after his first term as President, the people rejected him for a man who seemed more like themselves, he was saddened by their lack of appreciation of his honesty, industry, and patriotism.

Henry's father, Charles Francis Adams, was one of the leaders of the Free Soil party in Massachusetts, a group made up of anti-slavery Whigs and liberal Democrats. During Lincoln's administration, Charles Francis was minister to England, whence Henry accompanied him as a secretary.

Although John W. De Forest's father was a Connecticut manufacturer, he was not a graduate of the middle class but a member of an old family whose founder came to America in 1636 and became a New Netherlands burgher.¹ And so, if De Forest did not come of the landed gentry he was certainly upper class. He was not college-educated, but he traveled abroad extensively; his vacations in Greenville, South Carolina, enabled him to use the southern locale in Miss Ravenel's Conversion.

Mark Twain's heritage is different from that of De Forest and Henry Adams, different as each of those men is from the other. Born in Virginia of small-planter stock, John Marshall Clemens, father of Samuel, moved with his family to

¹Allen Johnson and Dumas Malone, eds., Dictionary of American Biography (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930), V, 199.

Kentucky. There he studied law and was granted a license to practice.¹ Following his marriage, he moved to Jamestown, Tennessee, where he clothed and conducted himself as a country squire² and bought the land in the Tennessee Knobs which was to be for the Clemenses as for the Hawkins family in The Gilded Age the never-fulfilled promise of wealth. Although he left Tennessee, land poor, to join his brother-in-law in Missouri, John began to acquire more land as soon as he arrived.³ He had tendencies toward settling in the towns destined to stagnate and getting the short end of real estate transactions. Coupled as these propensities were with a rigid personal morality and an innate sense of fairness, it is not surprising that Samuel's father went to his death a pauper.

Mark Twain's political heritage was a conservative one. His father, John Marshall Clemens, named for the great Federalist Justice, was a follower of Henry Clay and "a known and sterling Whig."⁴ His mother seems to have absorbed the general southern hatred for the "black Republicans" of Civil War days.⁵ His brother Orion was a conservative Whig and as such opposed free-soilism and abolition.⁶ Yet he was no

¹Dixon Wecter, Sam Clemens of Hannibal (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1952), p. 14.

²Ibid., p. 31

³Ibid., pp. 32-42.

⁴Ibid., p. 55; see also p. 15.

⁵Ibid., p. 128.

⁶Ibid., pp. 232-3.

southern "fire-eater" and followed Lincoln's leadership into a moderate Republican party. The Clemens family were small slaveholders, but by the time John Clemens reached Hannibal he had only one slave whom he later sold. Mark Twain's father seems to have generally supported slavery, treating his slaves with the sternness characteristic of him. It was his wife, Jane Clemens, who showed evidences of mitigating the injustices of the system with personal kindness; she possessed the spirit of humanitarianism which was a strong element in her son's personality. Jane Clemens, too, was the one who saw to it that the family went to church; at one time it was a Methodist church, later a Presbyterian.¹ John Clemens, a non-believer, did not attend church with his family. What he lacked in doctrinal beliefs, he made up for with his firm moral principles.

Mark Twain had little formal education. He was a product of the frontier, rough and crude and yet morally strict. Here society was as nearly classless as it can ever be. Here, the classes, if there were any, were based on morality rather than money; there were the "good"--that is, respectable--people of the town, and there were the outcasts, usually female, engaged in immoral activities. He was of this frontier and his best writing is drawn from this part of his life. Yet he chose to live and work in the East, as did a later political novelist, Hamlin Garland. For the

¹Ibid., p. 86.

frontier furnishes an abundance of materials, but no leisure, no audience--and probably no money--to encourage the novelist.

Mark Twain

In 1873, when Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner¹ published The Gilded Age, Grant's first term was drawing to a close and the great panic of 1873 was just getting underway with the failure of Jay Cook and Company. It was the end of a period of great speculation and of stock-watering activities which were no doubt influential in bringing about the crash. The Gilded Age shows the greatest activity of the period to be money-grabbing. It is a cynical book about a cynical age, and it lapses at times into bitterness. It is not the work of a reformer; indeed, there is some evidence that Mark Twain already believed in 1874 that democracy was doomed.²

Literary critics have made much ado about Mark Twain's pessimism. What caused it and whether it existed from his early years are questions not yet answered conclusively. On the one hand there are those like Dixon Wecter and DeLancey Ferguson who see him as "a born worrier."³ In the same vein,

¹Warner also wrote the novel A Little Journey in the World (1889), which, though it has some politico-social implications, is not explicitly political. It is the story of Margaret Debreë whose moral and social ethics are ruined by marriage to a rich man.

²According to Mark Twain himself (Mark Twain in Eruption, p. 2), he forecast in a letter to Howells in 1874 that the monarchy was sure to come.

³Spiller, et al., op. cit., p. 919; Ferguson, Mark Twain: Man and Legend (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1943): "The critics who attribute What Is Man? and The

Henry Seidel Canby goes to some lengths to explain Twain's "neuroticism."¹ Both Canby and Bernard DeVoto trace his problems to a guilt complex fed by misfortunes involving his family for which he blamed himself.² Yet there are those who, like Parrington and Granville Hicks, can write of his "surprising metamorphosis from master humorist into brooding pessimist."³ Both Hicks and Parrington sympathize with the theory developed by Van Wyck Brooks⁴ that the root of his problem was shame for having himself yielded to the materialism of the Gilded Age.

Certainly Mark Twain was not happy with the American political and economic scene when he wrote The Gilded Age, for it is essentially a novel of defeat. The only one who succeeds is the plodding Philip Sterling. Much of this defeatism can be explained in terms of the author's personal experience. Starting with the hope, the industry, and the ambition common to the frontier, Mark Twain's father sank lower and lower

Mysterious Stranger to the disasters of Mark's later years have been too hasty. The black moods were part of his nature, part of the price he paid for his lightheartedness" (p. 184).

¹Canby, Turn West, Turn East (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1951), pp. 252-4.

²DeVoto, Mark Twain at Work (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1942). See the chapter on "The Symbols of Despair."

³Richard D. Altick, "Mark Twain's Despair: an Explanation in Terms of His Humanity," South Atlantic Quarterly, XXXV (October, 1935), 359-367; see also Granville Hicks, The Great Tradition (Rev. ed.; New York: The Macmillan Co., 1935), p. 48; and Parrington, op. cit., III, 91.

⁴The Ordeal of Mark Twain (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1920); see especially pp. 258-261.

economically until he ended in utter poverty. Like the Si Hawkins family, the Clemens family moved to ever cheaper lodgings, always hoping that the mirage-like fortune from the Tennessee land would materialize. This is one of the first novels to describe the life of this western frontier in realistic terms. Mark Twain puts into it, mainly in the character of Beriah Sellers ("It's always sunrise with that man, and fine and blazing at that,"¹) the spirit of indomitable optimism that so infused the West before and immediately after the Civil War. But he was writing it in the light of the disappointments which were beginning to visit plodding pioneers and reckless speculators alike. At the point when the fortunes of Washington Hawkins and Colonel Sellers are at their lowest, the Colonel attempts to cheer up Washington with the remark, "'Every silver lining has a cloud behind it.'"²

This is the kind of ironic humor which pervades the book. Oscar Cargill has pointed out the prevalence of cynicism in the humorous material of Josh Billings, Artemus Ward, and others; he finds in this Western humor "the first indication of a premonition heretofore foreign to American thought."³ He is referring to the cynical point of view. Mark Twain was one of these Western humorists, and the mixture of cynicism

¹The Gilded Age (New York: Harper and Bros., 1915), I, 12.

²Ibid., II, 225.

³Cargill, Intellectual America (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1941), p. 400.

and pathos is marked in this book, especially in his treatment of the pioneer. Many writers have glorified the stamina of the pioneer mother; Twain pointed out that one of the greatest hardships she faced was being the wife of a pioneer speculator. For Si Hawkins is always holding out for a better price on the Tennessee land. One day, after he has turned down an offer of \$3,000 for the land, his wife comes to him.

"Si," she says, "I do not know what we are going to do. The children are not fit to be seen, their clothes are in such a state. But there's something more serious still. There is scarcely a bit in the house to eat.

"I've kept still, Si, as long as ever I could. Things have been getting worse, and worse and worse, every single day; I don't go out of the house, I feel so down; but you had trouble enough, and I wouldn't say a word--and I wouldn't say a word now, only things have got so bad that I don't know what to do, nor where to turn." And¹ she gave way and put her face in her hands and cried."

And yet a few moments after this interview her husband turns down an offer of \$10,000 for the land.

Mrs. Sellers suffers similarly, as Washington Hawkins discovers when he drops in unexpectedly to have dinner with the Sellers family and finds that turnips and water are the only items on the menu.

Washington stole a glance at Mrs. Sellers's face, and would have given the world, the next moment, if he could have spared her that. The poor woman's face was crimson, and the tears stood in her eyes. Washington did not know what to do. He wished he had never come there and spied out this cruel poverty and brought pain to that poor little lady's heart and shame to her cheek²

Then there is the scene in the Sellers home when, in lieu of a fire, a candle is lighted in the stove to illuminate the

¹The Gilded Age, I, 52-3. ²Ibid., I, 106.

ising-glass of the stove while the family freezes. If you can't have the real thing, the appearance of it is next best-- was the motto of Colonel Sellers and that of most of his fellow countrymen of the period. There is humor here, but it is not a "gay plunge into satire" as Parrington describes it.¹ Mark Twain's later description of humor could be applied to The Gilded Age: "Everything human is pathetic. The secret source of Humor itself is not joy but sorrow. There is no humor in heaven."²

Mark Twain does not reveal in The Gilded Age any kind of systematized political philosophy. In party affiliation he followed in the Whig-Republican footsteps of his father and his brother. Lincoln Republicanism with its emphasis on individualism, humanitarianism, and materialism naturally had great appeal for him. But the nomination of Blaine in 1884 by the Republicans was too much for his honest nature and he bolted the party to work for Cleveland. Along with the mugwumps, he objected to such Jacksonian innovations as the spoils system and rotation in office but could not countenance the alliance of big business and government as represented by Blaine. Like Brackenridge, Cooper and Henry Adams, he found there was no room in either party for gentlemen. In 1908 he had come to believe (allowance must be made for exaggeration) that

¹Op. cit., III, 91.

²Quoted in Spiller, et. al, op. cit., 939.

. . . for fifty years our country has been a constitutional monarchy, with the Republican party sitting on the throne. Mr. Cleveland's couple of brief interruptions do not count; they were accidents and temporary, they made no permanent inroad upon Republican supremacy.¹

Not only was the country a monarchy, but when Theodore Roosevelt chose the man to succeed him, Mark Twain proclaimed it a "hereditary monarchy."²

In 1873, however, he had not yet reached the depths of bitterness of later years. Disappointed he was. The idealism which had been bred by a Virginia heritage, a frontier environment, by his reading of Tom Paine and the story of Joan of Arc was finding little nourishment in the practical manifestations of contemporary democracy. He had been able to observe the workings of a democratic government in Washington in the winter of 1867-8, when he was private secretary to Senator William Stewart of Nevada, and when he was assigned to Washington in 1868 as Washington reporter for the Chicago Republican.³

The spoils system with its bribery, cheating, lying, and plain thievery would have turned the stomach of most ordinary mortals. To a sensitive soul like Mark Twain it was an extremely severe blow. Most of the system is epitomized in the characterization of Senator Dilworthy, which was based upon the political activities of Senator Pomeroy of Kansas.

¹Mark Twain in Eruption, pp. 2-3.

²Ibid., p. 3.

³The newspaper articles which resulted from this job are collected in Washington in 1868.

The Senator has no redeeming characteristics; he is a hypocrite, a deceiver, a liar, and a thief. He cannot even accept a bribe straightforwardly. For example when Harry Brierly suggests to the Senator that there might be something in the Columbus River appropriation bill for him (this was the era of internal improvements programs), Dilworthy "was wounded by the suggestion."

"You will offend me by repeating such an observation," he said. "Whatever I do will be for the public interest. It will require a portion of the appropriation for necessary expenses, and I am sorry to say that there are members who will have to be seen. But you can reckon upon my humble services."¹

Dilworthy's favorite device is public thievery under the guise of humanitarianism. The Knobs University bill was to benefit Negroes and at the same time take advantage of the widespread sympathy for that race.

There are many ways of skinning a cat or of stealing public money. When Laura reports to Dilworthy that she found Senator Balloon packing boxes of old clothes which he planned to label "Pub. Docs" so that they could be franked home free, Dilworthy's comment is

". . . but, child, all Congressmen do that. It may not be strictly honest; indeed, it is not unless he had some public documents mixed in with the clothes."²

The height of his hypocrisy lies in the Senator's protestations of religious devotion. Of course he goes to church regularly in Washington and conducts a Bible class in

¹The Gilded Age, p. 204. ²Ibid., II, 42.

the Sunday school. He is active in the temperance movement and "his house is open to all the laborers in the field of total abstinence" ¹ When he attends church in Hawkeye he commends the minister for giving his congregation "the doctrines"; for "it is owing to a neglect of the doctrines, that there is such a fearful falling away in the country." ² When he robs his government of thousands of dollars with some project like the Columbus River bill, he announces that "Providence has crowned our efforts with success." ³

But Dilworthy's talents are not fully exploited until he is accused of bribery and the Senate initiates an investigation, not of Dilworthy, but of Noble, the man who has accused Dilworthy of offering him a bribe. Says Dilworthy on the stand:

. . . but for the fact that public morality required an example, for the warning of future Nobles, he would beg that in Christian charity this poor misguided creature might be forgiven and set free. ⁴

There is intense irony in Dilworthy's final statement. After explaining that Noble had come to him for money for a friend, Dilworthy reports:

"I finally gave him the two packages of bills; I took no note or receipt from him, and made no memorandum of the matter. I no more look for duplicity and deception in another man than I would look for it in myself This is all, gentlemen. To the absolute truth of every detail of my statement I solemnly swear, and I call Him to witness who is the Truth and the loving Father of all

¹Ibid., I, 231.

²Ibid., I, 205.

³Ibid., I, 244.

⁴Ibid., II, 283.

whose lips abhor false speaking; I pledge my honor as a Senator, that I have spoken but the truth. May God forgive this wicked man--as I do."¹

The satire is meant to include most of Congress; as Colonel Sellers puts it, "'There is still a very respectable minority of honest men in Congress.'"² Although the Colonel is forced to admit that Senators buy their seats now and then, he agrees that "'when you come to look at it you cannot deny that we would have to go without the services of some of our ablest men, sir, if the country were opposed to--to--bribery. It is a harsh term. I do not like to use it.'"³

Since almost everyone expected to be paid for his vote, the expense of getting a bill through Congress was considerable. However, no one minded much, because as much money could be voted as would be needed. Internal improvements bills were among the most popular. Although the reigning political philosophy was based upon laissez faire, it was easy to make a case for the necessity of government help in developing the western lands. Just as Mark Twain's father had helped in forming the Salt River Navigation Company, which planned to deepen the Salt River so that ships might come up to Florida, Missouri, from the Mississippi, so Harry Brierly and Colonel Sellers organize the Columbus River Slackwater Navigation Company, which has a similar purpose. Harry finally gets the bill through Congress, but the expense has

¹Ibid., II, 284-5.

²Ibid., II, 201.

³Ibid., II, 46.

been so great that there is no money left to pay the men who are to work on the project. In New York, Harry calls on the President of the Company to find out what has become of the money.

"Why," explains the president, "the matter is simple enough. A Congressional appropriation costs money. Just reflect, for instance. A majority of the House committee, say \$10,000 apiece--\$40,000; a majority of the Senate committee, the same each--say \$40,000; a little extra to one or two chairmen of one or two such committees, say \$10,000 each--\$20,000; and there's \$100,000 of the money gone, to begin with. Then, seven male lobbyists, at \$3,000 each--\$21,000; one female lobbyist, \$10,000; a high moral Congressman or Senator here and there--the high moral ones cost more, because they give tone to a measure--say ten of these at \$3,000 each is \$30,000; then a lot of small-fry country members who won't vote for anything whatever without pay--say twenty at \$500 apiece, is \$10,000; a lot of jim-cracks for Congressmen's wives and children--those go a long way--you can't spend too much money in that line--well, those things cost in a lump, say \$10,000--along there somewhere;--and then comes your printed documents--your maps, your tinted engravings, your pamphlets, your illuminated show-cards, your advertisements in a hundred and fifty papers at every so much a line--because you've got to keep the papers all right or you are gone up, you know The total in clean numbers foots up \$118,254.42 thus far."¹

Of course Congress often investigates the activities of its members and tries those accused of bribery and other immoral acts. Although no one is ever found guilty, these investigations, in the words of Colonel Sellers have "'a good moral effect'" particularly on foreign countries. "'It shows that a man can't be corrupt in this country without sweating for it, I can tell you that.'"²

The influence of the female lobbyist upon the lawmakers of the country is acknowledged by the descriptions of the

¹Ibid., I, 276-7.

²Ibid., II, 202.

activities of Laura Hawkins.¹ Laura goes to Washington as a protégé of Senator Dilworthy, who is quick to see her possibilities, and she works for the Knobs University bill, by the provisions of which the government will buy or lease from the Hawkins heirs the large worthless tract of land which they have been reluctant to sell and will establish on it an industrial school for Negroes. Laura gets votes for the bill by charming the men, by bribing them, and if all else fails, by elaborate blackmail plots.²

Democracy for Mark Twain meant equal opportunity, and he did not see this principle operating in the Civil Service system, the great fountain of patronage for the use of Congress. A job is not given to a man because he is "worthy, and competent, and a good citizen of a free country that 'treats all her sons alike.'"³ According to the authors of The Gilded Age the system works like this:

If you are a member of Congress (no offense), and one of your constituents who doesn't know anything, and does not want to go into the bother of learning something, and has no money, and no employment, and can't earn a living, comes besieging you for help, do you say, "Come, my friend, if your services were valuable you could get employment elsewhere--don't want you here"? Oh, no. You take him to a Department and say, "Here, give this person something to pass away the time at--and a salary"--and the thing is done. You throw him on his country. He is his country's child, let his country support him. There is something good and motherly about Washington, the grand old benevolent National Asylum for the Helpless.⁴

¹Says Harry Brierly: "'Common thing, I assure you, in Washington; the wives of Senators, Representatives, Cabinet officers, all sorts of wives, and some who are not wives use their influence" (I, 189)

²Ibid., II, 112. ³Ibid., I, 240. ⁴Ibid.

Washington society gives the authors a chance to describe the corruption in the New York of Tweed days. Patrick O'Riley "as his name then stood"¹ had the familiar career of the New York politician of those days: from rum shop operator to stylish saloon owner and finally to alderman. Mr. O'Riley then became a city contractor and a friend of "the great and good William M. Weed himself."²

By and by the newspapers came out with exposures and called Weed and O'Riley "thieves"--whereupon the people rose as one man (voting repeatedly) and elected the two gentlemen to their proper theater of action, the New York legislature.³

After they were tried and vindicated by "our admirable jury system," Mr. O'Riley went to France. He returned to America with a French accent and a new name--"Oreille."

But it is the fever of speculation which is the pervading spirit of the book. Almost everyone is involved in speculation in some way. There is Beriah Sellers, the optimist. He is the man who never seems to feel defeated, the man with vision who has ideas which pay off once in awhile. Sellers is shown in the novel only during his lean years, but he has made fortunes, and lost them. Then there is Si Hawkins, one hundred per cent dreamer, who allows Colonel Sellers to make and lose his money for him and who dreams of the inheritance his children will have from the Tennessee Land. Harry Brierly is the drifter with little integrity, little persistence, little

¹Ibid., II, 18.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., II, 19.

intelligence. His ambitions are to impress people and to make an easy dollar. And there is Philip Sterling--in him are embodied all the characteristics of the ideal American man of the 1870's. First of all he wants to succeed--which means that he wants to make money. He is willing to work hard and long for it, but not at a regular job. Working almost beyond endurance in a mine in order to strike it rich in coal, he is the embodiment of the persistent speculator. His story illustrates one of the great American maxims of his day: he who works hard enough and long enough will be materially rewarded. The corollary of this was that he who has no money has not worked hard enough and long enough.

The authors of The Gilded Age do not propose any reforms or any solutions to the problems of political corruption beyond their implied support of reform of the Civil Service system. The nearest thing to an explanation or a solution is a simple one: the people should elect honest men to office.¹ But they should also take more part in politics at the grass roots level instead of leaving it to the "publicans and their retainers" ("for everybody else hates the worry of politics and stays at home").² It is also suggested that if women voted, better people would be elected.³ After being shown the extent to which the money-grabbing spirit has penetrated the life of most Americans we are asked to believe that politics

¹Ibid., II, 193-4. ²Ibid., I, 17-18.

³Ibid., II, 194.

would be reformed by their devotion to it. But the authors are not reformers; they are not commentators; they are merely observers. They do not seem to think in terms of systems or forms of government but rather in terms of the individuals who make it up. If these individuals are dishonest, others should take their place.

John W. De Forest

John W. De Forest published two novels in 1875--Honest John Vane and Playing the Mischief¹--both of which deal with the corruption of the Grant era. Playing the Mischief is the story of Josephine Murray, who proves herself the cleverest and probably the most unscrupulous of all the women who have taken up residence in Washington to devote their time and their lives, if need be, to getting their personal claims acted upon favorably by Congress. Playing the Mischief is not a pleasant book (there is scarcely an admirable character in it); and yet the machinations of the incomparable Josie are fascinating. De Forest is frankly bitter about the way governmental affairs are conducted (" . . . this state is rottener

¹Honest John Vane was serialized from July 1873 to November 1873 and hence is contemporary with The Gilded Age. The similarity between Josie Murray of Playing the Mischief and Laura Hawkins of The Gilded Age is probably not coincidental. Both are charming, beautiful, and successful lobbyists in Washington. Josie, however, as the self-educated opportunist, is consistently fascinating, while Laura, as the revengeful female, is neither a very interesting, nor a very well-drawn character. See Edward R. Hagemann, J. W. De Forest and the American Scene (Doctoral dissertation, Indiana University, 1954), p. 198, for a correlation of the composition dates of these three novels.

than Denmark . . .").¹ The statement, "'Hypocrisy is the established religion of some persons; yes, and of some nations,'" could be the theme of the novel. The morality of Josie is only the moral life of the nation in microcosm.

But if he is bitter in Playing the Mischief, he is venomous in Honest John Vane. There is some consolation to be had in the fact that Josie is in control of her affairs; but the protagonist of Honest John Vane is largely at the mercy of his surroundings.² He does not even have the strength of character to create evil; he is only the victim of it. "He is a chameleon. He takes the color of the people about him."³ The gloom is relieved only by such flashes of light as his constant use of the ironic and harsh epithet, which, like the fires of hell, reveals only wickedness personified. Quite consciously, De Forest is trying to create allegory. Thus he describes the situation in Washington as being

. . . a new and perversely reversed and altogether be-devilled rendering of the Pilgrim's Progress into American politics; it was much as if Bunyan had at the last pitched his Christian and Hopeful into the little lurid hold which led from the Zion to the pit. Nothing could well be more subverting and confounding and debilitating to the moral sense, unless it might be to see silver Demas and filthy Muckrake welcomed by the shining ones into the Holy City.⁴

¹Playing the Mischief (New York: Harper and Bros., 1875), p. 72.

²There is a hint of social determinism here, rare this early in the century.

³Honest John Vane (New Haven, Conn.: Richmond and Patten, 1875), p. 100.

⁴Ibid., p. 246.

Honest John, then, is the dreadful decade's "Christian"; he is personally ill-equipped for his pilgrimage, and he is pitched into the muck where he hasn't a chance. Mark Twain had criticized the personal morality of the members of Congress; De Forest sees this as a fault, but he contends that immorality is bred by the wickedness of the system--capitalism.

John Vane becomes the Congressional candidate from his district because the supporters of two other candidates were equally divided at the nominating convention. Despite this selection of a dark horse, however,

The old war-horses and leaders all fell into the trace at once, and neighed and snorted and hurraed until their hard foreheads dripped with patriotic perspiration, every drop of which they meant should be paid for in municipal or State or Federal dollars.¹

Once nominated, he is elected because he has a reputation for being honest: he once refused a one hundred dollar bribe in the state legislature.

Only one hundred in greenbacks (about ninety in gold) out of pocket, and the days of Washington come again! I should suppose that, for say twice the figure, a legislator of the period might get the title of "Father of his Country."²

The fact that he is ignorant does not worry the electorate.

He was too ignorant to be a professor in the State University, or even a teacher in one of the city schools; but it was presumed that he would answer well enough as a law-giver for a complicated Republic containing forty millions of people.³

Once a Congressman, John wins the woman of his choice, Olympia Smiles, who refused him when he was merely a boarding widower

¹Ibid., p. 28. ²Ibid., p. 45. ³Ibid., p. 46.

in her mother's house.

In Washington John plans nothing but a continuing policy of honesty, "not because he believed that reputation, self-respect, and sense of honor were precious, far more precious than happiness or even life,"¹ but merely because of his vanity.

All, or nearly all, his uprightness had sprung from a desire to win the hurrahs of men who were no better than himself, or who were his inferiors. The title of Honest John . . . was a nom de guerre, by aid of which he could rally voters around him, and perhaps win further glories at the polls.²

However, John finds himself pressed on the one hand by Darius Dorman, urging him to vote for the great subfluvial tunnel in exchange for some stock, and on the other hand by the debts of his wife, who insists upon living beyond their means. Finally his situation becomes desperate; and seeing other "honest" Congressmen letting themselves in on dishonest projects, concluding "that in Washington his title of Honest brought him no influence and little respect,"³ and finding that the people at home did not seem to know what was going on in Washington, largely because it was to the interest of Congress to keep its own secrets, he yields. Honest John sells his soul to Dorman, "the Mephistopheles of the lobby," but De Forest's attempt to create Faustian overtones in this sordid little deal hardly comes off.⁴ Finally with a political coup which

¹Ibid., p. 176. ²Ibid., pp. 175-6. ³Ibid., p. 176.

⁴"The eyes of the Mephistopheles of the lobby glowed with a lurid excitement which bore an infernal resemblance to joy. He had a detestable hope that at last he was about to

seems out of character and which must have made Dorman envious, Honest John turns his dishonest act into a personal victory and emerges with his reputation for honesty even sounder than before.

De Forest's political beliefs reflect the fact that his family was of the old aristocracy rather than the new,¹ for capital is the real villain of the piece.

" . . . Capital--ah, . . . there's a word! My very blood curdles when I think of the power and majesty of capital. This land, sir, this whole gigantic Republic . . . is the servant and I had almost said the creature, of capital"2

The capitalists working through their lobbyists subvert Congressmen with such temptations as the Great Subfluvial Tunnel project, a lampoon on the Credit Mobilier affair of 1872.

The Great Subfluvial Tunnel, which was to be built under the Mississippi river from Lake Superior to the Gulf of Mexico, has a connected construction company which Congressmen are given stocks in. The lobbyist Dorman advises John Vane to go in for this "financial legislation"; for the job of a Congressman, he explains, is

" . . . running party politics, clearing scores with your fuglemen, protecting vested interests which can pay for

strike a bargain with his simple Faust. There was more than the greed of lucre in his murky countenance; there was seemingly a longing to buy up honesty, character, and self-respect; there was eagerness to purchase a soul" (*ibid.*, p. 154).

¹The most complete biography available to me is in Mr. Hagemann's dissertation (*op. cit.*). There is nothing in Mr. Hagemann's account to indicate what the political view of De Forest's father might have been. At any rate, the death of the father when John was thirteen would have minimized direct paternal political influence.

²The words of Congressman Sharp, an old Washington hand, to Honest John, pp. 34-5.

it, voting relief bills for a percentage on the relief, and subsidizing great schemes for a share of the subsidy."¹

With his prejudice against the capitalist class, De Forest combines a preference for the aristocracy as public servants. The middle-class virtues De Forest saw as insufficient to deal with the problems of corrupt capitalism. Honest John Vane, for example,

. . . was commercially honest, indefatigably industrious, a believer in the equal rights of man, a strenuous advocate of the Maine liquor law, a member, if I am not greatly mistaken, of the church, and every way in good repute among grave, conscientious people.

His "war record" was admitted to be unimpeachable; that is to say, he had consistently and unflinchingly denounced the Rebellion "from its inception"; if he had not fought for the Union on the battle-field, he had fought for it on the stump and in the chimney-corner.²

De Forest sees these qualities as merely superficial evidences of personal value. The difficulty, in fact, with Honest John, is threefold: he lacks good birth, good breeding, and education. There never had been a Vane who was worth much; so it was pointless to expect much of John, in whom was "much sediment deposited by the muddy instincts of his ancestors."³ Therefore, when Vane finally succumbs to the venality of Washington, we do not witness "the downfall of a truly noble nature"; for,

. . . there is a rabble in morals as well as in manners, and to this spiritual mobocracy Vane belonged by birth. The fibre of his soul was coarse, and it had never been refined or purified by good breeding, and very likely it was not capable of taking a finish.⁴

¹Honest John Vane, p. 97.

²Ibid., pp. 36-7.

³Ibid., p. 174.

⁴Ibid., p. 158.

Of course, as Dorman explains it to John, being an aristocrat in politics creates problems:

"... the fine name is a disadvantage; American freemen hate an aristocrat. It's really curious to see how Saltonstall's followers are killing him off. They are saying that, because he is the son of an honorable, he ought to be an honorable himself, and that he will do the right thing for the sake of his forefathers. Our voters don't see it in that light. They want plain people to become honorables."¹

It would be unfair to assume from these passages that De Forest was not an advocate of democracy or that he despised the poor man. He acknowledges that "Abraham Lincoln [and] many another . . . has shed honor on lowly beginnings"² What he objects to is the, to him, too-common assumption that a man must be "self-made" in order to be worthy of the admiration or vote of his fellowman.³ He objects not so much to the "rabble in manners" as to the "rabble in morals"; not to democracy but to "spiritual mobocracy." Although he doubtless felt that the well-born were more likely to develop the proper virtues, there is no indication that he equated an honorable heritage with a wealthy one.

Politically and economically De Forest favors those measures which would benefit the poor man and opposes those which would help the capitalist. Consequently, he disapproves of the protective tariff; Vane a refrigerator manufacturer, favoring a tariff on refrigerators, cannot see that his manufacturing costs are raised by tariffs on hinges and zinc.⁴

¹Ibid., p. 22.

²Ibid., p. 158.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., pp. 42-3 and 143.

In defense of the American farmer, De Forest upholds the importation of cheap Chinese labor,¹ which would lower the cost of manufactured goods, and the issue of Greenbacks.² He opposes American Anglophobia and the jingoism which stemmed from a desire to increase foreign markets.³

Although De Forest does not approve of the theory that anyone is entitled to public office regardless of ability, he is confident of the honesty and integrity of the average voter. It was, after all, the high moral standards of the voters at home which kept John Vane honest when he served in the state legislature ("He went straight in Slowburgh, because most folks in Slowburgh go straight"⁴). And the people at home are honest because they do not have to come in contact with "the feculent system of special legislation to rot them with its drippings."⁵ The fault of the voter lies not with his moral standards but with his inability to discern the lack of morality in others. When John Vane testifies before the committee investigating the Great Subfluvial Tunnel,

. . . that forgiving, milk-and-water public was as mild in its judgment as the committee. It magnified our dishonorable member for not lying, and exalted his name for not committing perjury.⁶

And yet the blame for political rottenness lies not

¹Ibid., p. 38.

²Playing the Mischief, p. 13.

³Honest John Vane, pp. 37-8.

⁴Ibid., p. 100.

⁵Ibid., p. 193.

⁶Ibid., pp. 251-2.

primarily with the Congressman or with the voter, but with the system.

Such men as John Vane will inevitably find their way in numbers to the desks of the Capitol. Better and wiser men than he will be corrupted by a lobby which has thoroughly learned the easy trick of paying a hundred thousand out of every stolen million. Nothing in the future is more certain than that, if this huge "special legislation" machine for bribery is not broken up, our Congress will surely and quickly become, what some sad souls claim that it already is, a den of thieves.¹

Somehow, he felt, the ability of Congressmen to vote money into their own pockets and into the pockets of the special interests must be terminated, for it is unrealistic to expect the average human being to withstand the temptations of Washington. "As long as there is special legislation, there will be money to be made by it, and legislatures will take their share."²

Sardonically De Forest concludes:

...that our system of government was the purest and most economical in the world, when it was not abused by municipal rings, public defaulters, railroad legislation, and lobbyists of the State and national capitals.³

Henry Adams

In Democracy (1880)⁴ Henry Adams condemns the people,

¹Ibid., pp. 258-9.

²Ibid., p. 98. ³Ibid.

⁴Published anonymously, it was first attributed to Adams's friend Clarence King. William Roscoe Thayer in his Life and Letters of John Hay (1915) first disclosed that Adams was the real author. The full story was revealed by Henry Holt, its publisher, in 1921 (see Robert A Hume, Runaway Star [Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1951], pp. 131-2, and D. A. Randall and J. T. Winterich, "One Hundred Good Novels. Henry Adams: Democracy," Publishers' Weekly, CXXXVI [July 15, 1939], pp. 181-2.

the politicians, and democracy itself. Alexander Cowie has remarked that, compared with Henry Adams, Mark Twain "seems an adolescent in the throes of his despair at discovering that the world is imperfect."¹ Adams's pessimism was to deepen after he wrote his political novel, but even here the gloom is ominous. In the Education, Adams records one of his earliest experiences with politics. His father in 1848 was the Vice Presidential candidate of the Free Soil party, which included such public figures as Charles Sumner and L. A. Dana. In a bargain with Massachusetts Democrats the Free Soilers--specifically Sumner--were awarded a seat in the Senate, while the Democrats themselves got the governorship. Adams's father, Charles Francis Adams, would have nothing to do with this bargain, but the Senate seat went to Sumner nevertheless.

This was the boy's first lesson in practical politics [Adams writes of himself], and a sharp one; not that he troubled himself with moral doubts, but that he learned the nature of a flagrantly corrupt political bargain in which he was too good to take part, but not too good to take profit.²

He continues:

Mr. Alley, one of the strictest of moralists, held that his object in making the bargain was to convert the Democratic Party to anti-slavery principles, and that he did it. Henry Adams could rise to no such moral elevation. He was only a boy, and his object in supporting the coalition was that of making his friend a Senator. It was as personal as though he had helped to make his friend a millionaire. He could never find a way of escaping immoral conclusions, except by admitting that he and his father

¹Cowie, op. cit., p. 635.

²The Education of Henry Adams (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1918), p. 49.

and Sumner were wrong, and this he was never willing to do, for the consequences of this admission were worse than those of the other. Thus, before he was fifteen years old, he had managed to get himself into a state of moral confusion from which he never escaped. As a politician, he was already corrupt, and he never could see how any practical politician could be less corrupt than himself.¹

In general, Adams was a Republican, voting for Lincoln in 1860 and favoring Grant for a first term. But Grant disappointed him by his failure to effect any reforms; and after Grant was elected a second time, Adams withdrew his support. During his teaching appointment at Harvard in the 1870's Adams edited the North American Review, which became an organ for a liberal Republican group.² In fact, two of Adams's articles were reprinted by the Democrats and distributed by them as campaign material. He characterized his own views as tending toward "'democracy and radicalism.'"³ As his theory of the dissipation of energy evolved, he saw in Grant undisputed proof of his point of view.

He had no right to exist [he wrote of Grant]. He should have been extinct for ages That, two thousand years after Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar, a man like Grant should be called--and should actually and truly be--the highest product of the most advanced evolution, made evolution ludicrous The progress of evolution

¹Ibid., p. 50.

²"This party was composed of the independents who were discontented with the conduct of both the regular parties and who were called together by Carl Shurz in 1875, shortly after Grant's reelection, when it became apparent that civil service reform was not in the offing" (Adams, Education, p. 1085). These men were also known as "mugwumps."

³Quoted in Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., "The Other Henry Adams," The Nation, CLXVII (December 25, 1948), 727.

from President Washington to President Grant, was alone evidence enough to upset Darwin.¹

When he returned to Washington from his Harvard teaching post, Adams continued his reading in history, moving from the medieval period, his specialty at Harvard, to early American history, especially Jeffersonianism and Federalism. Ultimately (1889-1891) he published the nine-volume work, The History of the United States during the Administrations of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison. Although during the seventies he was much involved with writing political articles, studying political history, and associating with politicians--"stable-companion to statesmen" was how he described himself--he had no practical experience with politics. That he would like to have been more directly involved in political activity is evident in his writings. In a letter to his brother from Germany in 1848 he wrote: "There are two things that seem to be at the bottom of our constitutions; one is a continual tendency towards politics; the other is family pride."² The Adams family was very conscious of the Presidents in its genealogy, and the failure of the country to call upon the later

¹ Adams, Education, p. 266.

² Quoted in Hicks, The Great Tradition, p. 134. See also Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., "The Other Henry Adams," loc. cit.: "The guiding motive in Adams's career, as we see it develop, was plainly his fascination with politics. This fascination was certainly connected in great part with the family expectations of the Adamses. Yet it is not clear that it differed too much in quality from the feelings of any bright young man, too intellectual for the hustings but under the spell of political ideas and figures."

generations for political service¹ was one of the leading factors in the formulation by Henry and his brother Brooks of the theory of the degradation of the democratic dogma.² Henry writes in the Education of his disappointment with President Grant:

No one wanted to go into opposition. As for Adams, all his hopes of success in life turned on his finding an administration to support. He knew well enough the rules of self-interest. He was for sale. He wanted to be bought. His price was excessively cheap, for he did not even ask an office, and had his eye, not on the Government, but on New York. All he wanted was something to support; something that would let itself be supported. Luck went dead against him.³

Democracy seemed to be at its height when the Adams ancestors were ruling; it seemed to decline as the people repudiated Henry and his family. With the failure of the Grant administration to work for reform, it deteriorated to the place where an Adams could no longer accept service, even if offered.⁴

In the midst of Victorian enthusiasm, in the midst of the optimism attendant upon westward expansion in the United States and the birth of the machine age, Henry Adams was

¹Charles Francis Adams, father of Henry, was rejected more than once for the Presidential nomination, although he did serve as Minister to England under Lincoln.

²In 1910 Henry wrote A Letter to American Teachers of History. Brooks added posthumously Henry's "The Rule of Phase," edited the two, included an introductory essay, and titled the whole The Degradation of the Democratic Dogma.

³Adams, Education, p. 267.

⁴See Roger V. Shumate, "The Political Philosophy of Henry Adams," The American Political Science Review, XXVIII (August, 1934), 606: "Democracy had reached a point at which it could not use an Adams, or a point at which an Adams could not serve it without demeaning himself and his principles."

reaching a pessimism induced by his belief that society was dissipating its energies. In his pre-occupation with the origins of force, Adams concluded that the world was running out in multiplicity and chaos. It was to formulate this belief that he wrote the Education (written in 1907, published in 1918), which is a history of thought in the United States from about 1800. In contrast to nineteenth century chaos, he found a sense of unity in the Middle Ages, which was centered about the Virgin Mary, and he embodied this idea in Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres (1904).

Democracy (1880) was Adams's first attempt to explore the nature of force in society--in this case, as that force was manifested in politics. In synopsis, the book deals with the adventures in Washington of Mrs. Madeleine Lee, who formerly occupied her time with hospitals and charities in New York. Finding herself restless, she decides to come to Washington to search for greatness in men ("Why will not somebody grow to be a tree and cast a shadow?"¹) which she could not find in New York or Boston society.

Here, then, was the explanation of her restlessness, discontent, ambition,--call it what you will. It was the feeling of a passenger on an ocean steamer whose mind will not give him rest until he has been in the engine-room and talked with the engineer. She wanted to see with her own eyes the action of primary forces; to touch with her own hand the massive machinery of society; to measure with her own mind the capacity of the motive power. She was bent upon getting to the heart of the

¹Democracy (New York: Farrar, Straus and Young, Inc., 1952), p. 8.

great American mystery of democracy and government.

What she wished to see she thought, was the clash of interests, the interests of forty millions of people and a whole continent, centering at Washington; guided, restrained, controlled, or unrestrained and uncontrollable, by men of ordinary mold; the tremendous forces of government, and the machinery of society, at work. What she wanted, was POWER.¹

In her house on Lafayette Square she entertains political figures much as Henry and Marian Adams did at a similar location in Washington. Of all the Senators whom she observes at her home and on the floor of the Senate, the figure of Senator Ratcliffe looms as the most likely to attain the stature she is seeking. Ratcliffe is a superior politician--an opportunist, a Machiavellian, a demagogue--with a Websterian voice and an impressive profile. Ratcliffe soon decides that along with the Presidency, for which he is in line at the next election, he will have Mrs. Lee for his wife. Determined to prevent this union is Guy Carrington, who is the symbol of many of the things which Adams held highest in the scale of morality. Carrington is a member of an old southern family, as Adams was a member of an old New England family. With his air of Southern grace and gentility, which we are to equate with goodness, he contrasts sharply with Senator Ratcliffe, who is a brash Westerner and who does not even know when to wear gloves to dinner. Madeleine Lee believes, in her womanish egocentricity, that Carrington's aversion to Senator Ratcliffe is based on jealousy; to her Ratcliffe seems

¹Ibid., pp. 9-10.

kind, noble and upright. Ratcliffe, using the perspicuity developed through many political campaigns, determines to vanquish his opponent and arranges for Carrington to accept an assignment in Mexico so that he will be free to propose to Mrs. Lee. Nevertheless, Carrington manages to outwit Ratcliffe by leaving a letter in the hands of Mrs. Lee's sister to be given to Mrs. Lee if she seems on the verge of accepting Ratcliffe. The letter, duly given to Mrs. Lee, exposes Ratcliffe as a Senator who has accepted a bribe, and Madeleine is shocked and disillusioned. Next day she announces her negative decision to Ratcliffe and seeks to dismiss the matter from further discussion. He insists upon arguing, upon giving an explanation for his duplicity--a course which compels Mrs. Lee to realize that politics is completely immoral and that there is no hope of its ever being reformed by her. Ratcliffe finally loses his campaign manners and calls her a coquette, whereupon she turns him out of her house. There is a final suggestion that Carrington might have a chance to marry Mrs. Lee, should he repeat his request.

Democracy reveals as much about Henry Adams as it does about his times. It is much more of a personal soul-searching than The Gilded Age; it is less of a tract than Honest John Vane. In its essentials Democracy is an allegory concerning the wooing of Intelligence by two kinds of force--the Force of Good and the Force of Evil.¹ Madeleine Lee is

¹Or as R. P. Blackmur puts it ("The Novels of Henry Adams," Sewanee Review, LI [Spring, 1943], 293): "pure intelligence" versus "corruption."

Intelligence, and Curiosity, but she is plagued with Ambition, a flaw which almost causes her to lose the battle to the Force of Evil.¹

Rather than being a prescription for the role he expected his wife to fill in Washington, as Oscar Cargill suggests,² the character of Mrs. Lee seems to tally often with Adams's own personality. He speaks early in the book of "her restlessness, discontent, ambition,--call it what you will."³ These same characteristics took Adams from Massachusetts to Germany, later to England with his father, to Harvard, and back to Washington. As we have observed, he made no secret of the fact that he would have liked to serve his government.⁴ Madeleine Lee had a not dissimilar longing for "usefulness"--for "doing good,"⁵ which Adams seems to confuse or more properly to interchange with her ambition. As Adams had believed in and supported Grant, so Mrs. Lee had at first relied on the integrity of Ratcliffe; disillusion and withdrawal was the ultimate fate of both.

¹"Was she not herself devoured by ambition, and was she not now eating her heart out because she could find no one object worth a sacrifice?" (Democracy, p. 5.)

²Op. cit., p. 555.

³Democracy, p. 9.

⁴For Henry Adams's identification of himself and his family with a "governing class" see R. P. Blackmur, "Henry and Brooks Adams: Parallels to Two Generations," Southern Review, V (Autumn, 1939), 308-334.

⁵Democracy, p. 221.

"Life was emptier than ever [concludes Madeleine] now that this dream was over. Yet the worst was not in that disappointment, but in the discovery of her own weakness and self-deception."¹

For Madeleine Lee is not a passive character at the mercy of the forces of good or evil; and Ratcliffe is not wholly in the wrong in accusing her of being a coquette. She was tempted to use Ratcliffe as a means of gaining her ambition, which was to be useful--an ambition of which Ratcliffe was entirely aware and which he made the basis of his marriage proposal to her. But after her final interview with Ratcliffe, she chooses complete withdrawal; she longs "to live in the Great Pyramid and look out for ever at the polar star!"²

There are two other characters in the book which reflect facets of the author's point of view: Mr. Gore and, of course, Mr. Carrington. The following description of Gore's career resembles Adams's own:

A much higher type of character was Mr. Nathan Gore, of Massachusetts, a handsome man with a grey beard, a straight, sharply cut nose, and a fine, penetrating eye; in his youth a successful poet whose satires made a noise in their day, and are still remembered for the pungency and wit of a few verses; then a deep student in Europe for many years, until his famous "History of Spain in America" placed him instantly at the head of American historians, and made him minister at Madrid, where he remained four years to his entire satisfaction, this being the nearest approach to a patent of nobility and a government pension which the American citizen can attain. A change of administration had reduced him to private life again, and after some years of retirement he was now in Washington, willing to be restored to his old mission.³

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., p. 243.

³Ibid., p. 132.

Mrs. Lee and Mr. Gore are both eager to serve. Mrs. Lee differs in being the rejector, whereas Mr. Gore is the rejected--he does not get the post to Madrid. Henry Adams is both. Mr. Gore explains his position to Mrs. Lee:

"The President does not want my services, and I can't blame him, for if our situations were reversed, I should certainly not want his. He has an Indiana friend, who, I am told, wanted to be postmaster at Indianapolis, but as this did not suit the politicians, he was bought off at the exorbitant price of the Spanish mission. But I should have no chance even if he were out of the way. The President does not approve of me. He objects to the cut of my overcoat which is unfortunately an English one"

Madeleine could only acknowledge that Mr. Gore's case was a bad one. "But after all," said she, "why should politicians be expected to love you literary gentlemen who write history"

"You are perfectly right [answered Gore], and so is the President. I have no business to be meddling in politics. It is not my place."¹

And so Madeleine Lee-Henry Adams and Mr. Gore-Henry Adams have both withdrawn from politics. What of Mr. Carrington-Henry Adams? Mr. Carrington is already something of a recluse. He represents the golden days of democracy in America from the time of Washington to the Civil War. As Madeleine says, "He is a type! . . . he is my idea of George Washington at thirty!"² Because he has fought for a cause which has been lost, because he stands for a way of life which is past, Carrington is a symbol of Adams's ancestors. For Adams to indicate that Carrington is the embodiment of George Washington is high praise, for elsewhere in the novel, Mr. Gore states what is undoubtedly a reflection of Adams's veneration for Washington

¹Ibid., pp. 132-3.

²Ibid., p. 17.

and the other men of his day, such as his grandfather John Quincy Adams: ". . . we [New Englander] idolize him. To us he is Morality, Justice, Duty, Truth; half a dozen Roman gods with capital letters. He is austere, solitary, grand; he ought to be deified."¹

Ratcliffe demonstrates his own immorality by deprecating Washington; representative of present, corrupt American democracy, Ratcliffe naturally must show his antipathy towards the past. Mrs. Lee early names him as the symbol of contemporary America; and in her discovery of his true character lies the message of the book and the answer to Mrs. Lee's quest:

"I must know whether America is right or wrong. Just now this question is a very practical one, for I really want to know whether to believe in Mr. Ratcliffe. If I throw him overboard, everything must go, for he is only a specimen."²

Well, Ratcliffe is thrown overboard, and with him, we must assume, goes democracy-as-it-is-practiced-in-America-today. Modeled after James G. Blaine, Ratcliffe proves his dishonesty by accepting bribes from a steamship company, much as Blaine became involved with a railroad. The other Senators in the novel are only slightly more attractive than Ratcliffe. Senator Clinton, Madeleine's cousin, is of little stature and serves mainly to introduce Mrs. Lee to society. The one Congressman we know, best, C. C. French, is somewhat stupid; it is he whom Adams chooses to be the reformer. The President is not as admirable a character in many respects as Ratcliffe.

¹Ibid., p. 90.

²Ibid., p. 52.

He is vainglorious and, if he is not as dishonest as Ratcliffe, neither is he as clever or as powerful.

The diplomats fare somewhat better; at least Baron Jacobi, though a cynic, is anti-Ratcliffe; and Lord Skye of England is to be preferred as a dinner partner, a not unpraiseworthy characteristic in this setting.

With the culmination of the book in the withdrawal of the main characters in disgust and disillusion from politics; with Madeleine Lee's explicit disavowal of any more desire to reform, it is difficult to see how Morris Speare can give as Adams's purpose "the desire for Reform."¹ R. P. Blackmur's theory, that the novel was written "to strike Blaine a mortal blow"² is a little less incredible, for Blaine, as Blackmur points out, had twice defeated Adams's father for the Republican nomination and was the favored nominee for 1880. Still, this hypothesis advances a purpose too militant for the tone set both by the characters through which Adams speaks and by the author himself. Reform measures such as tariff and Civil Service reform are certainly advocated, but the sometimes caustic, sometimes sombre observations of the author and the characters through whom he speaks are not those of a crusader. Mrs. Lee's conclusions seem nearer the author's point of view:

She had got to the bottom of this business of democratic government, and found out that it was nothing more than government of any other kind. She might have known it by

¹Op. cit., p. 288.

²"The Novels of Henry Adams," loc. cit., p. 285.

her own common sense, but now that experience had proved it, she was glad to quit the masquerade; to return to the true democracy of life, her paupers and her prisons, her schools and her hospitals.¹

Of course, to counteract this, there is Gore's statement concerning democracy, often considered to be Adams's position at this time:

"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. 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. I am glad to see society grapple with issues in which no one can afford to be neutral."²

However, the author's own opinions of democracy are less reassuring. There are his cynical references to democracy ("for democracy, rightly understood, is the government of the people, by the people, for the benefit of Senators"³) and his description of the President's reception as "the dance of democracy round the President."⁴ But the following statement is just short of complete rejection:

There may be some mistake about a doctrine which makes the wicked, when a majority, the mouthpiece of God against the virtuous, but the hopes of mankind are staked on it; and if the weak in faith sometimes quail when they see humanity floating in a shoreless ocean, on this plank, which experience and religion long since condemned as rotten, mistake or not, men have thus far floated better by its aid, than the popes ever did with their prettier principle; so that it will be a long time yet before society repents.⁵

¹Democracy, p. 225.

²Ibid., p. 53.

³Ibid., pp. 22-3.

⁴Ibid., p. 114.

⁵Ibid., p. 121.

It is true that Adams has specific complaints, which imply the hope of some reform. He objects to the iron grip of party control demonstrated by the party caucus and by the system of party distribution of spoils. He describes what can happen at a nominating convention:

The new President was, almost as much as Abraham Lincoln or Franklin Pierce, an unknown quantity in political mathematics. In the national convention of the party, nine months before, after some dozens of fruitless ballots in which Ratcliffe wanted but three votes of a majority, his opponents had done what he was now doing; they had laid aside their principles and set up for their candidate a plain Indiana farmer, whose political experience was limited to stump-speaking in his native State, and to one term as Governor. They had pitched upon him, not because they thought him competent, but because they hoped by doing so to detach Indiana from Ratcliffe's following, and they were so successful that within fifteen minutes Ratcliffe's friends were routed, and the Presidency had fallen upon this new political Buddha.¹

Mrs. Lee asks Ratcliffe: "'Have you never refused to go with your party?' 'Never!' was Ratcliffe's firm reply."² Democracy describes the intricacies of proper job placement for party workers after an election; it reports the time which must be spent by high officials such as the President and Secretary of the Treasury in distributing the spoils.

The exposure of bribery is limited to the climax--when Ratcliffe is shown to have accepted a bribe from a steamship company. Considering the emphasis which Adams, in the Education and elsewhere, places upon the surrender of the United States to capitalism and industry after the Civil War, it is surprising that there is not more of this type of criticism in this novel.

¹Ibid., p. 108.

²Ibid., p. 56.

What then are the practical steps to be taken to work for reform? Mrs. Lee realizes that the question of morality is a more complicated one than she had thought. When Ratcliffe asks for her advice she tells him, "'Do whatever is most for the public good.'" But Ratcliffe asks "'And what is most for the public good?'"

Madeleine half opened her mouth to reply, then hesitated, and stared silently into the fire before her. What was indeed most for the public good? Where did the public good enter at all into this maze of personal intrigue, this wilderness of stunted natures where no straight road was to be found, but only the tortuous and aimless tracks of beasts and things that crawl? Where was she to look for a principle to guide, an ideal to set up and to point at?¹

Ratcliffe accuses her of refusing to help him, of condemning him but not giving him credit when he does do right.

"I confess my sins," said Madeleine, meekly and despondently; "life is more complicated than I thought."²

She begs for "'no responsibility. You ask more than I can give.'"³ At first glance this would seem to be a criticism of Mrs. Lee rather than of Ratcliffe or of politics. But actually, Adams's point is clear as he proceeds: politics is so bad that its corruption is likely to rub off on even the most well-intentioned reformer. Right and wrong become confused. Early in the book Carrington exposes an election fraud which Ratcliffe has been involved in. Blandly, Ratcliffe justifies it to Mrs. Lee with the old political excuse that ends justify means, and Mrs. Lee accepts his explanation. She

¹Ibid., pp. 116-117.

²Ibid., p. 118.

³Ibid.

deserves Ratcliffe's cutting reminder:

" . . . in that election I deprived a million people of rights which belonged to them as absolutely as their houses! You could not say that I had done wrong. Not a word of blame or criticism have you ever uttered to me on that account" ¹

The point Adams seems to be making is that her contact with politics has dulled her ethical judgment. When she finally realizes this, she determines to have nothing more to do with it, a decision which leaves the reader wondering if Adams really felt there was no chance for reform.

Although the politicians come in for the largest share of criticism in the novel, Adams does not omit a jibe at the citizenry, who after all were responsible for electing Ratcliffes to office. Baron Jacobi is an especially harsh critic:

"Well, I declare to you that in all my experience I have found no society which has had elements of corruption like the United States. The children in the street are corrupt, and know how to cheat me. The cities are all corrupt, and also the towns and the counties and the States' legislatures and the judges. Everywhere men betray trusts both public and private, steal money, run away with public funds." ²

Clearly the majority, who under democracy control the government are the real villains; as their representative Ratcliffe is the citizenry in microcosm. The last words in the volume are Mrs. Lee's postscript in a letter to Carrington after her condemnation and refusal of Ratcliffe:

"The bitterest part of all this horrid story is that nine out of ten of our countrymen would say I had made a mistake." ³

¹Ibid., pp. 235-6. ²Ibid., p. 50. ³Ibid., p. 246.

It is a depressing picture. The most cheerful aspects of the book are the one restrained endorsement of democracy and the hard-won victory of Mrs. Lee over Ratcliffe, which is, after all, not so much victory as escape. The novel is permeated with the ignored patrician's hatred of democracy and of common people who try to be more than they are. The inauguration of the President, Madeleine found, was "'of the earth, earthy.'" The President, "'an elderly western farmer,'" and his wife, a "'coarse washerwoman,'" were trying "'to have a court and to ape monarchy.'"¹ In final judgment, as a system democracy was no more than that rotten plank attempting to sustain a people afloat upon a shoreless ocean. Because it is better than past systems of governments, people unfortunately still cling to it and refuse to find something better. What would be better, Adams does not suggest.

All three of these men--Mark Twain, John W. De Forest, and Henry Adams--are idealists whose hopes for democracy have been spoiled by the sordidness of their political environment. All three are disillusioned Lincoln Republicans. Uppermost in De Forest is a hatred for the machinations of the capitalists which throws him politically on the side of all of those classes which resented the encroachments of big business. This element of anti-capitalism, although it turns up in Adams's

¹Ibid., pp. 128-9 and 199.

Education, is almost entirely absent in Democracy. The fact that Adams could ally himself with neither the capitalist class nor the lower classes brought him closer than any of these three to discarding the democratic system. The Gilded Age contains less understanding of political and economical causes than the other two, the authors contenting themselves with an exhibition of moral indignation.

And yet all three are cut from the same cloth, politically. In the twilight of patrician influence and control, they look back with nostalgia on the democracy of early America, when honorable men were chosen to manage governmental affairs. They hope in a machine age to recapture the democracy of an agrarian one. Except for some minor suggestions of De Forest, political reform is seen to be an ethical problem rather than a social or an economic one.

Despite its weaknesses, democracy was not, however, to be abandoned; nor was capitalism; nor exploitation. The gentlemen of the East were to have their way with Civil Service reform, and then out of the West were to come forces which would attempt to guarantee to every man a share in the wealth of the new country.

* A List of Political Novels Considered in Chapter III

Adams, Henry. Democracy (1880)
 De Forest, John W. Honest John Vane (1875)
 . Playing the Mischief (1875)
 Twain, Mark, and Charles D. Warner. The Gilded Age (1873)

CHAPTER IV

GENTLEMEN ON THE FRINGES OF POLITICS:

CIVIL SERVICE REFORM

When Mark Twain remarked that fleas could learn just about anything that a Congressman could,¹ he was expressing the point of view common to respectable people of the day. As each new political scandal of the Grant regime came to light, politics came more and more to be regarded as a profession pursued by the immoral and the ignorant--those incapable of earning a living in any other employment. Brand Whitlock, in a later novel, recorded this point of view:

"I wish you'd let politics alone," Amelia went on relentlessly. "It seems so--so common. I don't see what there is in it to attract you. And how am I ever going to explain your absence to those people tomorrow night? Tell them that politics detained you, I suppose?" She looked at him severely, and yet triumphantly, as if she had reduced the problem to an absurdity.

"Why," said Vernon, "you can tell them that I was called suddenly to Springfield; that an important matter in the Senate--"

"The Senate!" Amelia sneered.

"But dearest," Vernon began, leaning over in an attitude for argument.

She cut him short.

"Why, Morley, do you think I'd ever let on to those Eltons that I know any one in politics?"²

Henry Adams had learned through personal experience, first,

¹Spiller, et. al, op. cit., p. 926.

²Her Infinite Variety (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., [1904]), pp. 9-10.

that gentlemen were no longer acceptable in politics, and secondly, that he as a gentleman, wanted no part of politics as it was being conducted.

When Roosevelt fresh from Harvard in 1881 decided to run for the New York legislature, his lawyer and business friends sought to dissuade him from a career which, they pointed out, was controlled not by "gentlemen" but by "saloon-keepers, horse-car conductors, and the like."¹

Thus eliminated from politics either by lack of demand or lack of desire, some gentlemen urged a higher standard of political morality upon their countrymen and at the same time turned to a non-partisan reform movement which would if successful return some of the government jobs to those suited for them--the movement for Civil Service reform.

Despite the very real evils engendered by the spoils system, full-blown under President Grant, there was little popular clamor for reform of the Civil Service; it was "an agitation carried on by a comparatively small, educated class."² The reasons for this must be sought back in the days of Andrew Jackson, commonly tagged as the first to make a clean sweep of governmental offices. After his election in 1828, Jackson replaced all government employees, a process which entailed throwing out the intrenched office-holding aristocracy made up primarily of Federalists. For the idea of being governed by an elitist group did not appeal to the

¹Arthur Meier Schlesinger, The Rise of the City, 1878-1898 (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1933), p. 388.

²Carl Russell Fish, The Civil Service and the Patronage (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1905), p. 243.

people who elected Jackson. Also, the old theory of rotation of office, initiated in the early days of the colonists to keep men from holding offices of power too long and to give more of the people experience in political life had, begun by association to be applied to all offices, and the idea came to be regarded as "democratic."¹ It was natural, then, that the frontiersmen who helped to elect Jackson should wish to apply this idea to the federal service and throw out the "damned rascals" who had supported Adams. Those who were paid by the people should be of the people, they felt; and after all, weren't all men "created equally able to fulfill the duties of government offices?"² The fact that the Federalists "felt themselves indispensable to a well-run government" did not sit well with the self-confident pioneers.³ Accordingly Jackson said in his first annual message:

The duties of all public offices are, or at least admit of being made, so plain and simple that men of intelligence may readily qualify themselves for their performance; and I can not but believe that more is lost by the long continuance of men in office than is generally to be gained by their experience. I submit, therefore, to your consideration whether the efficiency of the government would not be promoted, and official industry and integrity better secured, by a general extension of the law which limits appointments to four years.

. . . The proposed limitation would destroy the idea of property now so generally connected with official station, and although individual distress may be sometimes produced, it would, by promoting that rotation which constitutes a leading principle in the republican creed, give healthful action to the system.⁴

¹Ibid., pp. 83-4.

²Ibid., p. 104.

³Ibid., p. 109.

⁴Ibid., p. 112.

And so he threw the rascals out, in a federal housecleaning much criticized by his opponents. However, when the Whigs were returned to office in 1841, they mended Jackson's error by putting all of their own men in, and the spoils system was established.

As William Dudley Foulke, once an active civil service reformer, points out,¹ the spoils system, under the conditions then existing in America, inevitably accompanied the rise of the two parties. Henceforth each new President was compelled to spend much of his time rejecting or satisfying office seekers. Lincoln complained: "I seem like one sitting in a palace, assigning apartments to importunate applicants while the structure is on fire and likely soon to perish in ashes."² The situation worsened under Grant, although he had initially asked for a law to control civil service appointments. According to legislation passed, he appointed an advisory board of which George William Curtis was chairman, but he could not conform to its recommendations and Curtis resigned.³

The reform movement grew under the leadership of such men as Carl Schurz, Dorman B. Eaton, Theodore Roosevelt and Curtis; to the latter Parrington gives credit for doing more than almost any other man to bring about reform in

¹Fighting the Spoilsmen (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1919), p. 3.

²Charles and Mary Beard, op. cit., II, 95.

³Fish, The Civil Service, p. 213.

this area.¹ Curtis's primary vehicle was Harper's Weekly, of which he was editor from 1863 until his death. An early novel by Curtis (Trumps, 1861) exposes corruption in New York politics with its account of the rise of a young, dissolute and immoral man, hand-picked by unscrupulous politicians.

In 1881 Curtis became president of a National League to promote governmental reform. In this same year, the New York Civil Service Reform Association had members in thirty-three states and territories.² Despite these figures, however, the movement had little support among farmers, laborers and the general public until the assassination of Garfield inspired their compassion (his slayer was said to be a disappointed office-seeker). A civil service reform bill finally passed Congress in 1883. Only a few thousand civil servants were covered by the law at first, but Cleveland, in the face of party opposition, added to the number, as did the Presidents following him--in many cases with the purpose of keeping party appointees in their jobs. "To the vanquished belong the spoils" became the new slogan; but it made for gradual progress.

As for the graft and corruption in Congress, the moralists had their day in the election of 1884, when the people refused to elevate the notorious spoilsman James G. Blaine to the Presidency. There were no large scandals

¹Parrington, op. cit., III, 150.

²Fish, The Civil Service and the Patronage, p. 217.

thereafter--at any rate, in the Congress.¹

The corrupt state of politics after the Civil War was duly lamented by the political novelists. They find politicians as a class generally uneducated, immoral and unscrupulous. Conspicuously absent is criticism of the influence of big business on politics--a potent force in political corruption. They see the problems as emanating from the excesses of Jacksonian democracy and see the solutions lying in the direction of the election of honest men and promotion of Civil Service reform.

These novelists were faced with a technical problem evolving from their desire to present a plot that would show that all politicians are basically evil and at the same time would have a hero that was properly moral and upstanding. This dilemma was solved, partly at the expense of the moral lesson, by throwing a clean-cut, educated, usually handsome, honest young man into the "maelstrom of corruption"² and watching him struggle. The moral of the story is that there are no good men in politics; and yet according to the best romantic tenets, right triumphs and the virtuous young man is not corrupted.³ Novels following this general plan are: Joe

¹Politics in the state and city governments were another story, however.

²Alexander P. Betterworth, John Smith, Democrat (Springfield, Ill.: H. W. Rokker, 1877), p. 86.

³Honest John Vane contains the realistic counterpart of this theme. John Vane was no clean-cut hero before he left for Washington, and he was allowed to sink into the mire, even as other men had before him.

Mitchell Chapple, Boss Bart, Politician (1896); Wilson J. Vance, Princes' Favors (1880); Gilbert A. Pierce, Zachariah, the Congressman (1880);¹ John Ferguson Hume, Five Hundred Majority, or the Days of Tammany (1872); Alexander P. Betterworth, John Smith, Democrat (1877); and F. Marion Crawford, An American Politician (1884). Robert Grant in An Average Man (1884)² features two young men, one of whom remains virtuous and one of whom succumbs to the temptations of moneyed politicians. In two other novels of the period (Myra C. Hamlin's A Politician's Daughter [1886] and W. A. Wilkins's The Cleverdale Mystery [1882]) daughters of Senators narrowly escape being forced to marry wicked men to further their fathers' political careers. Only in Henry Hooper's Wash Boltor (1872) is the protagonist the unscrupulous politician; here the treatment is satirical. The novels deal with politics at all levels: federal, state and local. In every area the situation is the

¹Pierce was a lawyer, a journalist, Governor of Dakota Territory and first U. S. Senator from North Dakota (Kunitz and Haycroft, op. cit., p. 619). Zachariah, the Congressman appeared in 1883 in a story magazine The American Library under the title of Peggy; a Country Heroine.

²Grant was a member of Boston's Back Bay set and a judge who, when appointed to advise the governor of Massachusetts on the Sacco-Vanzetti case, turned in a verdict unfavorable to the two men. In his autobiography Fourscore (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1934) Grant refers to An Average Man as a novel which "not merely smelt of the lamp, but was stillborn" (p. 156). His later novel, Unleavened Bread (1900) is a much better piece of work.

same:

We have only to look round us to see, today, such noble men, when once embarked on a political sea, risk, with perfect confidence in their virtue, the outer feeblest circle of the maelstrom of corruption; thinking, when they have made this one round, they can easily extricate themselves, and spread their sails for a straight course on a level sea. Oh! what a terrible mistake is this risk, of the outer feeblest circle. The proverbial first glass of the drunkard is safety in comparison¹

As Elbert Ainsworth remarks (in Boss Bart), "I would give two years of my life to find twenty honest men in a bunch in any political gathering."²

The authors are not so unanimous in their suggestions for improvement, however. Vance seems to be very bitter because the spoils are not distributed to loyal, honest party men who have been of real service, but rather are given out on the basis of prestige or promise of future value. He sees politics as a "dog's life" and believes that a young man should hang himself rather than go into this profession.³

F. Marion Crawford joins the general clamor against corruption in An American Politician. Obviously somewhat out of his element, he skirts the edges of the muddy political pool, trying with general moral exhortations to purify the waters without having to plunge in himself. Crawford's hero, John Harrington, is an upstanding young Bostonian who refuses to purchase a Senate seat by promising to protect the iron

¹ Betterworth, op. cit., pp. 86-7.

² (New York: F. Tennyson Neely, 1896), p. 49.

³ Princes' Favors (New York: The American News Co., 1880), pp. 14-15.

trade of an Irish politician. The final chapter, in the form of a speech to the House of Representatives (Harrington is finally elected in spite of the Irish),¹ is supposed to contain the sum of his political beliefs. In general, he urges the American people to throw off "the ignoble chains of party slavery, the wretched hopes of party preferment."² Because of party connections, the average politician supports "measures which he knows to be injurious to the welfare of the country."³

"This party spirit, this miserable craving for the good things that may be extracted from the service of a party, has produced the crying evil of our times. A certain class--a very large class--call our politics dirty, and our politicians dishonest. Young men whose education and position in the commonwealth entitle them to a voice in public matters withdraw entirely from all contact with the real life of the country. Liberty has become a leper, a blind outcast in the eyes of the gilded youth of today.

.....
 "All honor to those who have set their faces against the growing evil, to check it if they can, and to lay the foundation of a barrier against which the tidal wave of corruption and dishonesty shall break in vain They mean to do right, and they do it, because right is right, not because they expect to be rewarded with the spoils or fed with fat tit-bits from the feast of party."⁴

This turgid oration in favor of honesty, nobility and public

¹Harrington is elected to the United States Senate (An American Politician [New York: P. F. Collier and Son, 1884], p. 334). Why then is he making a speech before the House of Representatives on the occasion of their vote to decide a tie in a Presidential election (*ibid.*, p. 335)?

²*Ibid.*, p. 355.

³*Ibid.*, p. 345.

⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 351-2.

sacrifice covers the last twenty-two pages of the novel and is, as Quinn comments, "absurd."¹

A similar view is taken by Pierce, Wilkins and Hamlin, who believe that more honest people should go into politics. Pierce denounces the "holier-than-thou" attitude of many good men;² it is "not only the privilege but the duty of American citizens"³ to involve themselves in political affairs, says Wilkins. Hamlin sees the present difficulty stemming from the fact that gentlemen do not presently engage in politics. Arthur Bradley, the gentleman who has thought politics beneath him, decides that "'My country needs just such men as I in politics--men who are educated gentlemen.'"⁴ Hume sees the greatest barrier to good government in the existence of political parties;⁵ Grant is the only one who believes that "We shall never get pure government in this country until the moral tone of the average voter is raised."⁶

Pierce demonstrates the dire need for Civil Service reform. In his Zachariah, the Congressman a poor civil servant

¹Op. cit., p. 394.

²Zachariah, the Congressman, (Chicago: Donnelly, Gasette and Loyd, 1880), p. 56.

³The Cleverdale Mystery (New York: Fords, Howard, and Hulbert, 1882), p. 286.

⁴A Politician's Daughter (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1886), p. 112.

⁵Five Hundred Majority (New York: G. P. Putnam and Sons, 1872), p. 121.

⁶An Average Man (Boston: James R. Osgood and Co., 1884), pp. 142-3.

by the name of Timothy Bobbin moves his family to Washington only to be thrown out of office after the next election. Timothy, wasted by starvation and wracked by fever, finally dies. Zachariah himself is not re-elected to Congress because he has offended a politician by refusing him a job. Other objectors to the practice of using the Civil Service for patronage are Grant¹ and Hooper.²

Only one political novel comes out against Civil Service reform: Emma W. MacCarthy's Congressman John and His Wife's Satisfaction (1891). Here the old prejudice of the ordinary citizen against civil service reform is obvious. For Mrs. MacCarthy asserts that such competitive examinations as are proposed would only affect the small positions; Congressman John Fairfax says:

"Commence then, O reformer, at the head. Abolish the Electoral College; let the various candidates for the office of chief magistrate of the United States appear before a commission, who may with plummet and line ascertain the height, the breadth and the depth of their capabilities. Thus in like manner proceed throughout each and every department."³

In contrast to the advocates of Civil Service reform, Congressman John is more interested in seeing the passage of anti-trust legislation which would be

¹Ibid., pp. 252-3.

²Wash Boltor, M. D. (London: For the Author by J. C. Hotten, 1872), p. 29.

³Congressman John (New York: G. W. Dillingham, 1891), pp. 43-4.

"... the death-blow to the hydra-headed monster, from whose corpse it was hoped would spring an era of healthy competition, reviving the languishing trades, and disarming the Plutocratic Class. . . ."¹

Thus far, the political novelists have originated largely from the aristocracy or from the upper middle class. Federalist-Whigs have resented too much participation in government by the masses and have advocated stronger central government. Patricians have spoken out against the mercantile classes; sometimes they have balked at too much levelling, but more often they have taken a paternalistic attitude toward the common man. Many of these have been Democrats in the Jefferson-Jackson tradition. The Civil Service reformers were for the most part descendants of the Whigs and the abolitionists who had found another cause to support--a panacea which seemed irrefutably on the side of righteousness, and which would leave them unsullied by the mud of partisan politics.

Meanwhile, however, novelists had begun to present the case of the laboring man or of the farmer against big business. Appearing in ever-increasing numbers, these novels protesting the ubiquitousness of big business in American life were to be the dominant variety until 1900.

¹Ibid., pp. 103-4.

A List of the Political Novels Considered in Chapter IV

- Bettersworth, Alexander P. John Smith, Democrat (1877)
 Chapple, Joe Mitchell. Boss Bart, Politician (1896)
 Crawford, F. Marion. An American Politician (1884)
 Grant, Robert. An Average Man (1884)
 [Hooper, Henry.] Wash Bolter, M. D. (1872)
 Hume, John Ferguson. Five Hundred Majority (1872)
 MacCarthy, Emma W. Congressman John and His Wife's Satisfaction
 (1891)
 Pierce, Gilbert A. Zachariah, the Congressman (1880)
 Vance, Wilson J. Princes' Favors (1880)
 Wilkins, W. A. The Cleverdale Mystery (1882)

PART TWO

THE LAST STAND OF THE AGRARIAN:

THE WESTERN REVOLT AGAINST CAPITALISM

CHAPTER I

THE PROTEST AGAINST BIG BUSINESS

While the agitation for Civil Service reform flourished among upper middle-class easterners like Godkin, Schurz and Curtis, who were politically right-of-center, the movement of protest against the domination of big business was gathering support from lower middle-class and middle-class groups, politically left-of-center and radical, and largely from the West.¹

In large part the work of those who had promoted honesty in government had been done. By the late 1880's the administrative branch of the government had eliminated much of the corruption which had so marked the Grant Administration, and progress was being made toward elimination of the spoils system of appointments in spite of opposition by professionals of both parties.² Thus the United States began its emergence from the Gilded Age. Not only was the bottom of the political pork barrel in sight with the decrease in

¹However, there were some eastern "scholars"--e. g., William Graham Sumner and Arthur Latham Perry--who joined forces with the hayseeds (Matthew Josephson, The Politicos [New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1938], p. 326.

²Harrison Cook Thomas, The Return of the Democratic Party to Power in 1884 (New York: 1919), pp. 100 and 245.

patronage, but the number of other opportunities for making money which had seemed so infinite only a few years before, was becoming distinctly limited. The closing of the frontier (which according to Frederick Jackson Turner occurred in 1880)¹ contributed largely to the disappearance of the spirit of optimism which had obtained in the country since the Civil War. If the frontier did not actually make a great number of men wealthy, it at least held forth to many the promise of future prosperity. Farmers, whether they had prospered or not in the midwest, had always the opportunity to sell out and go further West; laborers had been able to turn to homesteading if working conditions proved unbearable. But by 1890 all the good land seemed to be either claimed by previous settlers, bought by speculators, or given away to the railroads.

The spirit which had begrudged no man a fortune as long as there were fortunes available to all, turned to discontent as a great many people despaired of ever being prosperous. Equal opportunity for all had bred wealth for a few. In fact, while the Jeffersonians and Jacksonians had been preaching equal opportunity, the capitalists had been the beneficiaries of a governmental paternalism which they were now, in their security, prepared to scrap in what Professor Hartz refers to as a "dramatic flip flop."²

¹Turner, The Frontier in American History (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1920), p. 1.

²Louis Hartz, The Liberal Tradition in America (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1955), pp. 215-16.

Some radicals were demanding a change in focus of governmental paternalism; others, like the more conservative farmers, were merely asking for a reversion to a true laissez-faire policy.

There were few areas in which the dominant hand of big business was not felt. It controlled politics at all levels--city, state, and national; it embittered the farmers in the West who had to pay prohibitively high freight rates to get their produce back to Eastern markets; it intruded itself upon small businessmen, who were often squeezed by the trusts. The most obvious way to end the governmental assistance to business seemed to many to be the abolishment of the protective tariff. That the protective tariff was a sectional issue had been shown as early as 1820, when Henry Clay had maintained that protection was a national benefit. The vote on the tariff bill in that year found the manufacturing states lined up in favor of it, while the large farming interests united to defeat it.¹ During the Civil War the high tariff had had the dual purpose of encouraging new business and providing a source of revenue for the government. Now however it produced surplus revenue which only encouraged Congressional dishonesty and was moreover responsible for the high prices which farmers had to pay for manufactured items. Pressure against the protective tariff began to mount in 1882 and 1883, when a bill was passed ostensibly in response to this pressure;

¹J. T. Adams, op. cit., p. 271.

actually, however, the tariff on some items was raised and on others lowered.¹ The platforms of both parties in 1884 were equally vague on the tariff question,² and it was not until Cleveland became interested in reducing the tariff that any progress was made to that end. In 1887 he devoted his annual message entirely to the subject of tariff reduction.

The first group of novelists to deal with capitalist control were content mainly with exposure. Although they no doubt hoped through their books to ameliorate the situation by arousing public opinion, they did not have in mind any significant reform of the economic or political system; advocacy of tariff revision was generally as far as they went. "The danger lies not in the system but the abuse of it," is the way Thomas Stewart Denison puts it.³

Two of these novels are specifically concerned with tariff reform:⁴ The Money-Makers (1885) by Henry Francis Keenan and The Story of Rodman Heath (1894) by Robert T. Edes.

¹Morison and Commager, op. cit., p. 230.

²Thomas, op. cit., p. 128. Although anti-protectionist activity was mainly within the Democratic party, the Democrats as far as party policy was concerned were not noticeably less protectionist than the Republicans. See also Schlesinger, Political and Social Growth of the American People, p. 114.

³An Iron Crown (Chicago: T. S. Denison, 1885), p. 465.

⁴Crawford's hero in An American Politician calls himself a "tariff reform man." Yet he tries to placate the politician who sells pig-iron by saying: ". . . I am prepared to support laws to protect iron as much as is necessary. Free trade nowadays does not mean cutting away all duties; it means a proper adjustment of them to the requirements of our commerce" (pp. 228-230). The only novel, as far as I know, to come out against tariff reform is Chapple's Boss Bart, which opposes it on the grounds that free trade would force wages down (pp. 124-5).

Edes's book points up the modification in political attitudes which was occurring as the populace began to have second thoughts about helping most those who had most. Rodman Heath explains the change in his own thinking:

"Heretofore the present system has seemed to me, in the main, all right. I said--and honestly, too--'The country is prosperous and these are the men that made it so. Let us take care of these men, and continue the system. They get more than their share, to be sure; but then most of them give back a good deal' Now I can see another side. The wealthy men and the hustlers do not make the country prosperous alone. They have no right to claim the lion's share. Charity does, indeed, cover a multitude of sins; but the plan of allowing all the good things of the world to accumulate in the hands of a small class, to be distributed at their pleasure, no matter how generously, is a mediaeval one"¹

Rodman Heath calls himself a Mugwump--that is, one of those liberal Republicans who bolted the party in 1884 and 1888 to support Cleveland and honest government. This group, however, (see Part One, Chapter V) was not, like Rodman Heath, generally interested in changing the system which created huge fortunes while other men were starving.² Somewhat to the left of the average Mugwump is Heath's opposition to

. . . the unequal and unjust distribution of wealth, the inadequate reward of certain forms of labor, and the enormous and corrupting facility for the acquisition of others' earnings by the various forms of gambling, speculation, and combination.³

Yet as a specific remedy for these inequalities Edes advocates

¹Rodman Heath (Boston: Arena Publishing Co., 1894), pp. 216-17.

²The Mugwumps, led by such men as Carl Shurz, G. W. Curtis, and E. L. Godkin, were, like Cleveland, "interested mainly in questions of administrative efficiency, being largely indifferent to those profound influences which were already breeding labor unrest and class friction" (Schlesinger, Growth, p. 110).

³Edes, op. cit., p. 243.

little else besides a lower tariff.¹

Keenan's The Money-Makers, written for the purpose of defending labor from the charges made against it in John Hay's The Breadwinners (1884), describes with Democratic bias the rise of a capitalist, Aaron Grimstone, to a virtual political dictatorship. Starting as a blacksmith, Grimstone became within fifteen or twenty years the boss of his state. Keenan gives us one of the early portraits of the robber baron as politician:

He could, by a word, decide the choice of the men who were to be Governor, Senator, Congressmen, legislators, as in 1872 he was omnipotent in making General Ajax President. . . . He had made Kilgore Senator, causing his election by a Legislature in which the ^Ultrocrats held a majority on joint ballot. In those days Kilgore was a poor man; but he was counted worth not less than a million in 1872, six years after his election.²

He describes with realistic detail the methods used to purge newspaper men who were reporting the truth in labor struggles;³ the way money was spent in order to control elections;⁴ the economic--and hence political--control which a manufacturer had over the men he employed.⁵ The mission which the protagonist-journalist, Fred Carew, takes upon himself is the education of the laboring man. Using as a basis the slogan "free trade, free labor, and free men," he teaches "that the protective practice was a rope fastened around the money-bags of the rich,

¹Ibid., p. 279.

²Keenan, The Money-Makers (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1885), p. 138.

³Ibid., pp. 36 ff. ⁴Ibid., pp. 327-8. ⁵Ibid., p. 328.

the end of which was used as a whip for labor."¹ The tariff is labelled as "the slavery of the South transferred to the North."²

Keenan's primary purpose is to show the absolute unscrupulousness of the captains of industry. For example, he details the operations of a group of railroad speculators who want to ruin the stock of a rival company which has been monopolizing the coal-carrying trade and who do it by stirring up trouble in the coal mines. After they have paid the operators of a coal mine to stop work, "legislators were asked to grant a comprehensive system of charters which would henceforth put all the coal products of Appalachia and Transylvania into the hands of a syndicate operating from New York and Pennadelphia."³ When the legislature does not respond rapidly enough, agitators are placed in the mines to goad the men on to violence so that the legislature will have to act.

The other early anti-businessman novels are concerned with the methods used by businessmen to gain political control rather than with advocacy of any specific reform. Naturally the primary instrument is the promise of financial gain, but there are a number of ways in which this could be used. Senators could be bribed directly, as in Burnett's Through One Administration (1883);⁴ a cooperative lawyer could be insured

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., p. 329.

³Ibid., p. 36.

⁴Frances Hodgson Burnett, Through One Administration (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1914), pp. 380 ff.

a lucrative business, as in An Iron Crown;¹ or a politician's vote on a bill could be insured by giving him a pecuniary interest in its passage. Dave Sawdor (in An Iron Crown) responded to this somewhat more subtle technique; he

. . . was the kind of oily politician who deludes the people into believing him a patriot, and who is ready to be bought, at any time on any occasion, not by so many dollars counted out and receipted for but by a block of stock quietly slipped into the hand of a discreet friend with the understanding that if a certain bill passes the stock will be valuable, if not, it will be worthless.²

Congressman Markham Churr in Albion Tourgee's Figs and Thistles finds that all his savings and those of his benefactor and long friend have been invested, unknown to him, in a railroad company just when he is called upon to vote on a bill relating to the same company. Here considerations of the welfare of his family and the demands of his friend make it difficult for Churr to vote honestly.³ Stuffing of ballot boxes and buying of citizens' votes are other methods used by those with money.⁴

Economic pressures are not the only ones which the businessman used, however--at least in the political novel, where love is sometimes more powerful than money. In Alice Brand, a young, honest politician, Mason, finds himself on the opposite side of the tariff question from that of the father of the girl he loves. His adamant adherence to principle

¹Denison, op. cit., pp. 55-56.

²Ibid., p. 384.

³Tourgee, Figs and Thistles (New York: Fords, Howard, and Hulbert, 1879), pp. 427-432.

⁴Denison, op. cit., p. 56.

is rewarded when he manages to marry the girl.¹ Rodman Heath faces a similar dilemma, although his difficulty is compounded by the fact that he will not only lose the girl he is engaged to, but the financier and backer of his campaigns as well (the girl's father) if he persists in his mildly socialistic ideas. When he decides that to keep faith with his conscience he must withdraw from the Republican party, his fiancée breaks the engagement, and without the support of her father and the Republican party, he fails to be reelected.² Romantic pressure is also applied to John Andross, who yields to it momentarily only to discover his error in time to vote correctly.³ And Through One Administration tells the story of a man who tries to make his innocent wife charm Senators into voting for measures favorable to his business.

Of special interest are the portraits of the money kings found in this early fiction. The capitalist here, like the politician-lobbyist Dorman in De Forest's Honest John Vane, is dynamically wicked. For the political novel has not yet grown out of its morality play aspects, and the business man as oppressor of labor, robber of the poor, and killer of small

¹A. G. Riddle, Alice Brand (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1875).

²Edes, op. cit.

³Rebecca Harding Davis, John Andross (New York: Orange Judd Co., 1874), p. 300.

children as well as adults¹ becomes more and more prevalent. Around 1900 the novelists begin to see the capitalist as a man of at least one admirable quality--strength--with the advent of the novel of economic struggle.² But in the eighties and nineties they were using this fictional picture of the businessman-devil to fight the Horatio Alger myth and its companion, the myth of the paternalism of the robber baron. As Andrew Carnegie believed, the man of money was

. . . the mere agent and trustee for his poorer brethren, bringing to their service his superior wisdom, experience, and ability to administer, doing for them³ better than they would or could do for themselves³

This comparatively new myth, having displaced the old survival-of-the-fittest or dog-eat-dog philosophy,⁴ was devised

¹Laird in John Andross is a man who hires thugs to get rid of honest people standing in his way; Keenan's Aaron Grimestone built a hotel which he knew to be unsafe and which is responsible for the deaths by fire of a number of people; later Arnold Clark in Beneath the Dome (1894) shows rich Mr. Villar's neglected sister dying in the snow just outside his door.

²An example is Will Payne's The Money Captain (1898) in which political machinations are subordinated to the story of the struggle between the Duke of Gas and a newspaper man who attempts to expose him. An amazingly close parallel of this plot is found in The Second Generation by James Weber Linn (1902). Robert Herrick documents the making of a robber baron in The Memoirs of An American Citizen; the type finally emerges full-blown in Dreiser's The Financier (1912) and The Titan (1914). The clash of economic forces is of course the theme in Frank Norris's The Octopus.

³Quoted in Ralph Henry Gabriel, The Course of American Democratic Thought (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1940), p. 151, from an article in the North American Review (June 1889) called "The Gospel of Wealth."

⁴The old philosophy, as Frederick Townsend Martin saw it, was that "It matters not one iota what political party is in power, or what President holds the reins of office. We are

to drown the rising clamor of the "poorer brethren" to administer their own affairs. But it was new only to the captains of industry, who borrowed it from the old feudalistic aristocracy hoping that an air of noblesse oblige would reconcile the populace to their financial position. The justification of this Gospel of Wealth was largely ignored by fiction writers.¹ Edward Everett Hale did come to their defense in My Friend the Boss (1888) in which Fisher, a wealthy manufacturer, runs a town for the good of all. Altruism, however, seems to be set aside with Fisher's remark: ". . . I have a large pecuniary interest in having it well governed."² Hale makes a point elsewhere of emphasizing the unselfish by-products, if not motivations, of making money. There is the builder, not primarily interested in making money, who likes to see people enjoying his houses. And there is the clothing manufacturer: "He took real pleasure, substantial pleasure, in knowing that they had better clothes on their backs than they would have had if he had not lived."³

not politicians or public thinkers; we are the rich; we own America; we got it, God knows how; but we intend to keep it if we can by throwing all the tremendous weight of our support, our influence, our money, our political connection, our purchased senators, our hungry congressmen, our public-speaking demagogues into the scale against any legislation, any political platform, any Presidential campaign, that threatens the integrity of our estate (Quoted in Matthew Josephson, The Robber Barons [New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1934], p. 352 from Martin's The Passing of the Idle Rich.)

¹Alice French later comes to the defense of the capitalist; she believes in charity rather than higher wages for laboring men. In The Man of the Hour (1905) her thesis is that a man has to be rich and stay rich in order to be of any help to others.

²(Boston: J. Stilman Smith and Co., 1888), p. 101.

³Ibid., p. 46.

Despite the bitter denouncement of the capitalists in these early books, capitalism itself is still for the most part inviolate except for the suggestion of tariff reform. Denison goes a little further, but after one of the strongest indictments of the railroads for being subsidized by the government and of such organizations as the Credit Mobilier and the Standard Oil company and after a bitter complaint about the giving away of public lands to the railroads, he urges only these changes: government supervision of public transportation, denial of voting privileges to the illiterate, reform of the jury system, and participation of "all intelligent citizens" in politics.¹ More radical reforms, however, were not long in bidding for attention.

A List of Political Novels Considered in Chapter One

- Burnett, Frances Hodgson. Through One Administration (1883)
 Clark, Arnold. Beneath the Dome (1894)
 Davis, Rebecca Harding. John Andross (1874)
 Denison, Thomas Stewart. An Iron Crown (1885)
 Edes, Robert T. Rodman Heath (1894)
 Keenan, Henry Francis. The Money-Makers (1885)
 Riddle, A. G. Alice Brand (1875)
 Tourgee, Albion W. Figs and Thistles (1879)

CHAPTER II

REVOLT

"The air is full of revolt against things as they are."¹

We meet in the midst of a nation brought to the verge of ruin. Corruption dominates the ballot box, the legislatures, the Congress, and touches even the ermine of the bench The newspapers are subsidized or muzzled; public opinion silenced; business prostrated, our homes covered with mortgages, labor impoverished, and the land concentrated in the hands of the capitalists. The urban population are denied the right of organization for self-protection; imported pauperized labor beats down their wages; a hireling standing army, unrecognized by our laws, is established to shoot them down The fruits of the toil of millions are boldly stolen to build up colossal fortunes, unprecedented in the history of the world, while the possessors despise the republic and endanger liberty. . . . The national power to create money is appropriated to enrich bondholders; silver . . . has been demonetized to add to the purchasing power of gold by decreasing values of all forms of property as well as human labor; and the supply of currency is purposely abridged to fatten usurers, bankrupt enterprise, and enslave industry. A vast conspiracy against mankind has been organized on two continents and is taking possession of the world. If not met and overthrown at once it forebodes terrible convulsions, the destruction of civilization, or the establishment of an absolute despotism.²

This ominous and passionate pronouncement was a part of the preamble to the platform of the People's Party in 1892. Listed in it are the grievances of diverse groups which had

¹Hamlin Garland, Jason Edwards (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1897), p. 42.

²Quoted in Grant C. Knight, The Critical Period in American Literature (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1951), pp. 50-51.

finally in a spirit of despair and revolt come together as one political party. The history of this party does not begin with its formal organization in 1890; some of its tenets were advocated in Andrew Jackson's time. Its immediate history is the history of the groups which had been battling the plutocracy since 1870 and which now joined together in what John Hicks calls this "struggle to save agricultural America from the devouring jaws of industrial America."¹ These groups included the Greenbackers, laborites, single-taxers, free silver supporters, socialists and Christian socialists. Not all of these groups were composed solely of farmers; and yet Hicks is right, for not only were the majority of the Populists farmers, but organizationally the antecedents of the People's Party were the succession of farmers' organizations which began with the Grange shortly after the Civil War. The farmers were able to attract these other groups because of the two primary complaints which they all held in common: the feeling that they were at the mercy of the monopolies and the trusts--particularly the railroads--and their distrust of the bankers and money-lenders in the East, which was the cause of the great agitation over the currency problem.

The beliefs of each one of these groups were urged by political novelists. In fact, a history of the political novel in this period is in essence a history of the rise of

¹John D. Hicks, The Populist Revolt: A History of the Farmer's Alliance and the People's Party (Minneapolis, The University of Minnesota Press, 1931), p. 257.

the People's Party. It must be remembered, however, that just as there was a good deal of overlapping in the membership of these groups, there was the same kind of overlapping in the fiction. Therefore in a study of the political novel of this era it would be impossible to group the novels rigidly into categories. It has thus seemed most meaningful in the discussion which follows to use the political group as a skeletal form on which to arrange the ideas in the novels. If a novel contains ideas pertaining to more than one group, it will of course appear in the discussion of both.

The Greenback Party

The issue of cheap money was one which had divided the farmer and his creditor since Revolutionary times, when paper money was issued to pay for the war and was later demanded by debtors to ease the almost intolerable scarcity of money after the war.¹ Again during the Civil War, paper currency known as greenbacks helped to pay soldiers and to buy supplies. However, the soldiers soon found that it took more of the greenbacks to buy goods than it did of silver or gold coin. The trouble, said the Greenbackers, was that the government made greenbacks legal tender for everything except import duties and interest on some government bonds.² They refused

¹Edward Bellamy, cognizant of the parallel between Shays's Rebellion, which occurred during this post-revolutionary period, and the greenback agitation of the seventies and eighties, described the revolt led by Daniel Shays in The Duke of Stockbridge, published serially in 1879.

²See T. A. Bland, Esau or the Bankers' Victim (Washington, D. C., Published by the Author, 1892), a story built

to subscribe to the old theory that all money in circulation should be related to the amount of bullion in the vaults of the federal government. Instead they held that

. . . money is a kind of certificate which says in effect that the holder of it has rendered a service to the community in some way; that he has produced something, which, not being in need of himself, he wished to exchange for something else, and had transferred his title to it to another, taking this certificate, this money, as evidence of the fact, and that now, having found the article he desires, and which is for sale, he is entitled to take it for his own use at the price asked, upon transferring his certificate, or money, to the party owning the article for sale; who, in his turn, has the right to take any other article for sale by anybody else at the price asked, by transferring the certificate to him.¹

The people in the West felt that they were being exploited by the eastern bankers who were making money, not by doing any kind of productive work but merely by distributing and loaning the money which the government should have been issuing directly to the people. Congressman Swanson (a conservative but kind-hearted lawyer selected as a labor candidate and then "stolen" by the big business party) finally admits that he

" . . . believed the Greenbackers were more than half right, and that the proper thing to do was to abolish the National Banks, and issue the money needed to do the

around the currency problem after the Civil War. Bland portrays the bankers as so distressed by the proposed bill to issue greenbacks that they hold a special meeting and, controlling the government as they do, decide that one small amendment shall be attached to the bill: "'Provided, That the notes provided for, and authorized, by this act, shall be legal tender for all purposes except duties on imports and interest on the public debt'" (p. 32).

¹Charles Cyril Post, Congressman Swanson (Chicago: Charles H. Sergel and Co., 1891), p. 241. See S. F. Norton, Ten Men of Money Island or The Primer of Finance (1891), an allegory with a similar point of view.

business of the country direct to the people; paying it out in meeting the expenses of Government and receiving it back again (redeeming it) in payment of import duties and internal revenue taxes."¹

Of all the groups mentioned above which contributed to the rise of the People's Party, the Greenback Party may be said to be most directly the antecedent of it and of its predecessor, the Alliance. This connection is pointed up in Congressman Swanson, which is actually a fictional history of the rise of the Populist Party, with most of its space devoted to the Labor Reform Party (1872) and its successor, the Greenback-Labor Party. As far as I have been able to ascertain, Congressman Swanson is unique in its attempt to present the point of view of both the farmer and the laborer and the plight of the farmer in the South as well as in the North.

Many of the ideas later used in the platform of the Greenback party appeared in a declaration of the National Labor Union in convention in 1867 (members of the National Labor Union [1867-1872] organized the Labor Reform Party in 1872), which stated:

. . . that property is the product of physical or intellectual labor; that money is the medium of distribution for non-producing capital and producing labor; that the power to make money and regulate its value is an essential attribute of sovereignty.²

It further urged that greenbacks be made the exclusive legal

¹Ibid., pp. 216-217.

²Edward R. Lewis, A History of American Political Thought from the Civil War to the World War (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1937), pp. 268-9. See also Post, op. cit., p. 198.

tender of the nation.¹

After the panic of 1873, which is described in some detail in Congressman Swanson, the Greenback party intensified these demands for currency reform and became definitely inflationary in point of view. Drawn largely from the debtor classes, the Greenbackers saw that they had had to mortgage their farms when wheat was fifty cents a bushel and pay back principal and interest with twenty-cent (or less) wheat. The planter in the South like the Northern farmer had to buy supplies for months before he got them, paying twenty-five to thirty per cent more for them than he would have had to pay if he had bought them for cash. More and more in debt, he then had to market his cotton when the notes fell due, which was when cotton was bringing the least money.² Many lost their farms and plantations altogether.³ On the other hand, conservative business and banking interests were calling for the resumption of specie payments, and the Specie Resumption Act of 1875 met their demands and virtually "ended the greenback question as a practical political issue."⁴ Although it still supported issuing of greenbacks, the Greenback party began to plump for other inflationary measures such as free

¹ Lewis, op. cit., p. 269.

² Post, op. cit., p. 324.

³ See Bland, op. cit., in which the loss of the home farm because of deflation is the central situation.

⁴ Morison and Commager, op. cit., p. 244.

silver,¹ which was capable of attracting a larger number of voters. The free silver plank, which was adopted by the Alliance in its platform of 1887,² and which was always an important one in the Populist Party platforms, gave rise to the central issue in the campaign of 1896 when it was finally adopted by the Democrats.

Congressman Swanson, with its story of the attempt to educate labor to vote for its own best interests instead of voting as the boss says, points up--sometimes narratively but too often expository--two of the issues which were central in the platforms of the Populist Party: the anti-monopoly bias of the farmers³ and of course the advocacy of cheap money. It also attempts to show the common interests of the farmer and the laborer, the two dichotomic groups whose disagreements were finally to be central in the dissolution of the People's Party.

The Greenback party offered Presidential slates in 1876, when it nominated Peter Cooper, and in 1880 and 1884. Thereafter it was unable to maintain the union of urban and

¹The Greenback party platform of 1878 denounced "the limiting of the legal-tender quality of greenbacks, the changing of currency-bonds into coin-bonds, the demonetisation of the silver dollar, the excepting of bonds from taxation, the contraction of the circulating medium, the proposed forced resumption of specie payment, and the prodigal waste of public lands." (Harold Underwood Faulkner, American Political and Social History [New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1937], p. 445.)

²John Hicks, op. cit., p. 132.

³Post, op. cit., p. 336.

rural voters which the party had been based upon; and with the formation of labor parties and the Farmers' Alliance, it disintegrated.

Laborites

The laboring man before 1900 found it difficult to make his voice heard politically. With the two major parties obviously in the hands of the employer class, the workers turned, as we have seen, to the Greenback Party and later to the Populist, Nationalist or Socialist parties.¹ Very much like the farmers, the laborers in the seventies and eighties were not interested in the overthrow of capitalism but in a more equal distribution of the wealth and in the alleviation of bad working conditions.² The growth of labor organizations paralleled the growth of the cities. In 1880 there were twenty-eight thousand in the Knights of Labor, and in 1885, four times that number. More practical, less idealistic than the Knights, the American Federation of Labor under Samuel Gompers was organized in 1881. The Socialist Labor party, formed in 1877, was more Marxian in its aims and methods but met with dissension in its ranks between those who believed

¹Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 257. But see Chester McArthur Destler, *American Radicalism, 1865-1901* (New London, Conn.: Connecticut College, 1946), p. 141, where the point is made that as early as 1884 "both major parties recognized labor in their platforms," the Republicans advocating an eight-hour day and the Democrats looking toward the incorporation of labor unions.

²Schlesinger, *Political and Social Growth*, p. 159.

in the use of peaceful propaganda and those who believed in the direct use of force against the capitalistic class. Because its membership came primarily from German-speaking immigrants, its effectiveness as a political organ was limited. It was not until 1889, when Daniel De Leon assumed leadership, that its political power began to wax. The opposition of public opinion toward labor groups was illustrated by the convictions resulting from the Haymarket riot in 1886. The meeting which precipitated the riot was attended mostly by anarchists and, although most laboring men and their leaders were neither Socialists nor anarchists, most anarchists were laboring men. Hence, the riot was identified with all of labor. It was an event which shook the nation, but by the time the last condemned man had been hung, the convicted anarchists as well as the cause of labor had gained support from such men as William Dean Howells, Henry Demarest Lloyd and many other Americans of stature who resented the unfair trial and the control of capitalistic forces.

Early attempts to educate and organize the workingmen are chronicled in the political novels by Keenan (The Money-Makers [1885]) and Post (Congressman Swanson [1891]). The time-span of both volumes includes the panic of 1873, a period of great hardship for laboring men. Post devotes a considerable amount of space to describing how the men who roamed the country to find work or food were dealt with as tramps by being jailed and put at hard labor. Both books explain that the situation resulted in agitation for greenbacks.

For Keenan this is nothing but demagoguery; but Post portrays two of his central characters, leaders of the workingmen, as the drafters of a bill for "a re-issue of the greenback legal tenders to replace those already called in and destroyed, and for the remonitization of silver."¹ Both novels attempt to illustrate the complete control which the boss (manufacturer) had over his men economically and politically and to describe the first somewhat feeble efforts to educate labor to use its power for its own benefit.² In Keenan's novel this is done by a journalist, Fred Carew, and in Post's book it is taken over by two of the working men themselves. When it comes to political alignments, Fred Carew of The Money-Makers supports free trade and the Ultrocrats, whom we are apparently to interpret as the Democrats; the labor leaders John Nixon and Joseph Mason of Congressman Swanson, however, do not trust either party. The workingman has been deceived too often by one of the older parties who would promise:

"Oh, we are with you, we agree with you. There is no need of a third party to carry out the reforms demanded. Our platform is the same as yours and you can secure all that the farmers and laboring men are asking for through the Democratic party."

.....
And the people were deceived, and voted with them, and this party of false pretenses carried the state, secured the United States Senator, prevented the voters from uniting any considerable numbers in the new party and ended by delivering them, bound hand and foot, into the

¹Post, op. cit., p. 187.

²Ibid., p. 141. Post's labor leaders and their policy of "agitate and educate" echo T. V. Powderly, head of the Knights of Labor during the period covered by Congressman Swanson (see Norman J. Ware, The Labor Movement in the United States 1860-1895 [New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1929], p. 90).

power of their enemies.¹

Arnold Clark's Beneath the Dome (1894) is the ineffectual portrayal of the difficulties of a workingman (John White) and his sympathizers in trying to work against the political machine of wealthy, powerful Mr. Villars. It also attempts to illustrate the hardships caused by imprisoning as vagrants men who could find no work.

Except for these works, and some fantastic anarchistic novels, the laboring man had to wait until the twentieth century to see himself portrayed in the political novel.² In fact, Joseph Mason and John Nixon are the only working-men who figure importantly in the *dramatis personae* of these novels, and Mason is represented as having once been a business partner of the cruel factory owner, Hardiman. Mason and Nixon rise in the world so that at the end of the book they have their own factory, a denouement that presumably fulfills the ideal of

¹Post, Congressman Swanson, pp. 231-2.

²A Utopian novel, Henry L. Everett's The People's Program (New York: Workmen's Publishing Co., 1892), is dedicated to T. V. Powderly and Samuel Gompers. Although the author's purpose as expressed in the preface is to arouse laboring men to action, the laboring men themselves figure scarcely at all in realizing the utopia based on "the people's program," a program which turns out to be very close to the People's Party platform (see pp. 185-9). Even in such post-1900 novels as I. K. Friedman's The Radical (1907) and Dwight Tilton's On Satan's Mount (1903) the life of the laboring man *per se* is apparently not considered good enough plot material. To be sure, Bruce McAllister in The Radical was known in his political life as the "butcher boy," but he has come a long way since he delivered meat. Even though he remains devoted to the cause of the working man, he courts and marries a wealthy girl, so that the atmosphere is one of drawing rooms and fancy balls rather than working men's hovels. There is more contact with the situation of the mistreated worker in On Satan's Mount, but again the author must have his hero marry the daughter of the hated boss, who is of course a millionaire.

the American working-man as well as that of every other full-blooded and ambitious American of the day. John Hay in The Breadwinners had, many felt, maligned the working man with his characterizations of labor leaders;¹ Keenan, in an answer to Hay's novel, gave much space to the actions of groups of working-men, but acquainted his readers with no individuals. The proletarian novel was still in the future along with the political novel starring the laboring-man.

The Single-Taxers

Although there were single-taxers in the ranks of the Populists, they were there largely because they had no place else to go and because the Populists like themselves were a protest group. Of course, the Populists were against monopolies, and one historian has said that "If any date is to be picked for the start of a strong anti-monopoly movement in this country, it might be 1879, the date of the publication of Henry George's Progress and Poverty."² Henry George also shared with many in the West an aversion to the passing of the public domain into the hands of corporations and speculators.³ Like the farmers too he favored free trade,⁴ and at least one of the more famous Populists--"Sockless" Jerry

¹In what was probably an attempt to present all sides, Post also gives us Peters, the greasy, dishonest labor leader who tries to collect money and credit for political action from both Hardiman and the labor leaders.

²Faulkner, op. cit., p. 490.

³Two novels which deal with the land boom and accompanying speculation and hence are of marginal interest in the study of the political novel are Edward Eggleston, The Mystery of Metropolisville (1873) and D. R. Locke, A Paper City (1878).

⁴Henry George, Progress and Poverty (New York: John W. Lovell Co., 1883), pp. 9 and 216, for example.

Simpson--was a self-declared disciple. Hamlin Garland, for a time a Populist apologist, was also a single-tax proponent and tried persistently but in vain to convert his friend William Dean Howells.

Yet George's sympathies did not lie in the main with the Populists, in spite of the fact that he approved of certain of their aims. Although the party made great gains in 1890, George considered them merely "ephemeral."

To George the great events were that Tom Johnson, as complete a free-trader as anyone, was elected to Congress, and William McKinley, whose name was attached to the high tariff act of the spring, had been retired.¹

As far as most of the Populists were concerned, the feeling was mutual. Although they could never go all the way with socialism, they were definitely semi-collectivist, advocating government ownership of utilities, whereas George was as much opposed to governmental control as to monopolistic control.² The socialists claimed that free competition benefited only big business; hence they agitated for more governmental control. George saw the ills of society as caused, not by free competition, but by the lack of it--by monopoly. He proposed to restore free competition and freedom of opportunity to every man by the single tax on land.³ Although most

¹Charles Albro Barker, Henry George (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), p. 600.

²This "'idea of effecting social improvement by government paternalism'" was what George also objected to in the Bellamy-inspired Nationalist movement (*ibid.*, p. 540). See also Henry George, *op. cit.*, pp. 218 and 231, for example.

³George, *op. cit.*, pp. 237 ff.

radicals of the day felt that the single-tax was not the answer, one can see the appeal that George's program would have for many Western agrarians who cherished the Jeffersonian ideal of individual liberty.

This was almost certainly the attraction for a man like Hamlin Garland, who wrote one single-tax novel, Jason Edwards, the story of a New England laborer who took his family to the promised land in the West after cuts in his wages and rises in his rent had taken most of their money. Out "'where they ain't no landloras an' no rent'" they find themselves after three years on a heavily mortgaged farm at the mercy of a land-shark.¹ One of Garland's short stories, "Under the Lion's Paw,"² also shows Henry George's influence. Tim Haskins and his wife work hard on a run-down rented farm for three years only to have the owner raise the purchase price of the farm so that they have to pay again when they buy it for the improvements they have made.

Aside from Jason Edwards and some of the Utopian novels which use ideas of Henry George,³ the only fictional use of

¹"Judge here has charge of the affairs of a banking establishment that holds, I suppose, five hundred mortgages in this country'" (Jason Edwards [New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1897], p. 130).

²Main-Travelled Roads (New York: Harper and Bros., 1891).

³Some examples: Henry Olerich, A Cityless and Countryless World (1893); Samuel Crocker, That Island (1892); Theodore Hertzka, Freeland, A Social Anticipation (1891); Costello N. Holford, Aristophia, A Romance History of the New World (1895); William Simpson, The Man from Mars (1891).

the single-tax in the political novel is in Arnold Clark's Beneath the Dome (1894), a sentimental volume about a clerk employed by a state government--a young man who is given to lying "on the couch with his head in his mother's lap" while she hums "the old songs she had sung to him in years gone by."¹ According to the preface, Clark "believed that the land belongs to all the people, and that our land system is the root of our labor troubles."² After some experience with corruption in state politics, Oliver Arkwright decides that the way to reform lies not through legislation but through the awakening of the people "to sympathy for the poor, to a greater sensitiveness and devotion to human rights."³

Henry George did not inspire the writers of fiction to any great extent; nor was his single-tax theory popular with politicians and economists who followed him.⁴ Yet he enjoyed a sizeable following for a time. In 1886 he ran for mayor of New York City with the backing of the United Labor Unions⁵ and two years later his single-tax theory found its

¹Beneath the Dome (Chicago: The Schulte Publishing Co., 1894), p. 333.

²Ibid., p. 6.

³Ibid., p. 350.

⁴George's biographer writes: "The nearest American national politics has ever come to George--and that not very close--was the democracy of Woodrow Wilson. . . . They each devoted a career to establishing a Jeffersonian ideology and policy for America, and for the world, of the industrial age" (Barker, op. cit., p. viii).

⁵Norman J. Ware (op. cit., p. 362) comments: "The political campaign of 1886 was the most successful ever conducted by labor in the United States."

way into national politics by way of the United Labor Party.¹ Although Garland's enthusiasm is testimony to George's attraction for some Western farmers, his popularity in the West was never great. The farmers sympathized with his individualism, his Jeffersonian liberalism, and his denunciation of the landlord. But a tax on land alone did not appeal to the small landholder; nor, for that matter, to the man with a mortgaged farm. After all, he still hoped to own the farm clear some day. Still, the writings of Henry George were joined in the movement for reform and helped to establish the climate which made possible the rise of the People's Party.

Utopian Socialists

It would be difficult to select a year more propitious for the publication of a novel like Looking Backward than 1888. Inspired himself by the environment, Edward Bellamy wrote at a time when his novel could give most impetus to the forces of collectivism which were gathering with the discontent of the period.

In the farm areas a combination of over-production, falling prices, rising freight rates and deflation of the currency was swelling the numbers who belonged to the Farmers' Alliance. The national convention of the Alliance in 1887 called for government control of the railroads and even owner-

¹For a complete discussion of the battle for control within the ULP between the followers of George and the socialists which ended in victory for the single-taxers see Howard H. Quint, The Forging of American Socialism (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1953), pp. 43-48.

ship of one or two lines, although the farmers were traditionally individualists and wanted to use such measures only to strengthen free enterprise and small business.¹

The Knights of Labor, heretofore the leading labor organization, was losing members from the right who were disillusioned by the association of labor with the Haymarket riot (1886) and members from the left who were disappointed by the firm stand of T. V. Powderley against the men who had been arrested. For the most part, the workingman had not made much progress toward his goals; strikes had not been effective and political action had proved both difficult and futile.

In national politics, 1888 saw Cleveland defeated in his try for a second term by the electoral college vote--in popular votes he ran ahead of Harrison. Cleveland had made himself unpopular in many circles with his determination to espouse the cause of free trade. There were other factors, to be sure, which aided his defeat,² but the fear of lower tariffs had swelled the campaign coffers of the Republicans. John Wanamaker, a Philadelphia business man, set out to get contributions for the campaign.

"If you were confronted," he asked each of the industrialists, "with from one to three years of general depression by a change in our revenue and protective methods . . . what would you pay to be insured for a better year?"

¹Destler, op. cit., p. 227.

²See Morison and Commager, op. cit., p. 321.

Funds rolled in to an amount variously estimated at from over \$200,000 to \$1,350,000. Though most of the money was doubtless devoted to legitimate campaign uses, the corruption of voters in Indiana, Connecticut, West Virginia and certain other close states was so bold and undisguised as to make the campaign of 1888 probably the most venal in American history.¹

Now, at the end of the eighties, the literature of collectivism was beginning to show its influence upon the philosophy of the nation. Besides Henry Demarest Lloyd's article in the Atlantic against Standard Oil,² there was Laurence Gronlund's The Cooperative Commonwealth, which was brought out in 1884 and which purported to be "an exposition of German socialism, which is at present the Socialism the world over. . . ."³ Gronlund explained further that he should be classed as a collectivist rather than either "a Communist in the Anglo-Saxon sense" or an anarchist.⁴ His strong denunciation of the individualism of Herbert Spencer⁵ echoes the observation of Lester Ward in 1881 "that laissez faire and Herbert Spencer's individualistic sociology were behind the times in a world moving toward government intervention in

¹Schlesinger, Rise of the City, p. 405. Before the next Presidential election the Australian ballot was adopted in most states.

²"Story of a Great Monopoly," The Atlantic Monthly, XLVII (March, 1881), 317-334.

³Gronlund, The Cooperative Commonwealth (New York: John W. Lovell Co., 1887), p. 8.

⁴Ibid., p. 9.

⁵Ibid., p. 262.

social affairs."¹ At a time when many men were working hard to eliminate the spoils system by Civil Service reform, when many labor leaders were demanding an eight-hour day, Gronlund declared: "The distinguishing trait of Socialists is that they boldly aim at a revolution and care not a jot about reforms."²

Into this climate, having himself been nourished by it, Edward Bellamy introduced Looking Backward.³ Utopian communities had previously tried practicing communism in several areas in the United States.⁴ But whereas these experiments were based on social and religious ideals, Bellamy's emphasis was primarily economic. He realized that, although political equality had been achieved theoretically, economic equality had not. He wrote:

The industrial system of a nation, like its political system, should be a government of the people, by the people, for the people. Until economic equality shall give a basis to political equality, the latter is but a sham.⁵

¹Robert Falk, "The Rise of Realism, 1871-1891," Transitions in American Literary History, ed. by Harry Hayden Clark (Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press, 1953), p. 416.

²Gronlund, op. cit., p. 263.

³Bellamy began work on Looking Backward in the fall or winter of 1886; it was sent to the publishers in September, 1887 and appeared in published form in January, 1888 (Arthur E. Morgan, Edward Bellamy [New York: Columbia University Press, 1944], p. 230).

⁴For accounts of the various socialist Utopias established in the United States see V. F. Calverton, Where Angels Dared to Tread (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1941).

⁵Quoted from the masthead of The New Nation, edited by Bellamy, in Charles A. Madison, Critics and Crusaders (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1947), p. 147.

In its economic emphasis and in its recognition of a class struggle before Utopia can be realized, Looking Backward resembles The Cooperative Commonwealth, with which Bellamy was undoubtedly familiar. But unlike Gronlund and some of the other socialists of the day, Bellamy inclined to Fabianism¹ and was willing to work with another party, the Populists, for minor gains.

Bellamy believed that all men are essentially good, that it is the possession of wealth and the economic system itself which are sources of evil.² He felt that if people were only informed and educated they would repudiate private capitalism by means of the ballot.³

Looking Backward and its sequel Equality (1897) are primarily devoted to the economics of the new order. Politics is a minor aspect because, for one thing, the government has little to do except to operate the industrial army, in which all citizens must serve for a designated period and of which the President is the head. The President is elected, not by the people he commands, but by "all the men of the nation who are not connected with the industrial army."⁴ This system has struck some critics as being more militaristic than democratic.

¹However, in his introduction to the American edition of Fabian Essays (1894), he states that he favored not only government ownership of the productive mechanism, like the Fabians, but also equal distribution of the product (Elizabeth Sadler, "One Book's Influence," The New England Quarterly, XVII (1944), 539.

²Looking Backward (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1929), pp. 59-60.

³Ibid., pp. 57-8.

⁴Ibid., p. 191.

State governments, having become completely superfluous, have disappeared, but how, asks Julian West, do you get any legislation passed if you have no state legislatures and Congress meets only once in five years.

"We have no legislation," replied Dr. Leete, "that is, next to none. It is rarely that Congress, even when it meets, considers any new laws of consequence, and then it only has power to commend them to the following Congress, lest anything be done hastily. If you will consider a moment, Mr. West, you will see that we have nothing to make laws about. . . ."¹

In fact, politics as Julian West knew it has practically disappeared. "We have no parties or politicians, and as for demagoguery and corruption, they are words having only an historical significance," Dr. Leete explains.³ Dr. Leete denies that people are any better; the fact is that the system offers no temptation to the person who would be dishonest.

After writing Looking Backward, Bellamy became actively engaged as leader of the new group called "Nationalists," after the "national party" which, according to Dr. Leete, arose to carry out the reforms which resulted in the perfect society of 2000 A. D.⁴ Bellamy lectured, wrote articles, and from 1891 to 1893 edited a weekly called the New Nation. After writing Equality, he died, in 1898, at the age of forty-eight.

The influence, both literary and political, of Looking Backward was phenomenal. A million copies were sold in a few years and Nationalist clubs (150 of them by 1890) flourished

¹Ibid., p. 191.

²Ibid., p. 208.

³Ibid., p. 60.

⁴Ibid., p. 253.

throughout the country--primarily, however, west of the Mississippi.¹ Although there was an attempt to form a national organization, the Nationalists got no further than to present a complete state ticket in Rhode Island and partial tickets in a few other states. Because Nationalism drew its membership from the same areas in which Populism flourished, it was hardly possible for both groups to elect candidates. In general the Nationalists supported the Populists, although Bellamy was careful to point out that there were differences in the beliefs of the two movements.² After a close alliance of the two groups in 1891, the Nationalists united with the Populists in the election of 1892 and exerted a marked influence on the People's Party platform drawn up at the Omaha convention.

The literary influence of Looking Backward was equally remarkable. Before 1880 only five Utopias had been published in the United States. Between 1889 and 1900 forty-six were written.³ Although it is safe to say that almost all, if not all of these writers were inspired to use the Utopian form by the popularity which Bellamy's book enjoyed, they were divided in political point of view. Some of the Utopias were

¹Madison, op. cit., p. 146.

²Sadler, loc. cit., p. 537.

³Allyn B. Forbes, "The Literary Quest for Utopia: 1880-1900," Social Forces, VI (December, 1927), 179-189. See also Vernon Louis Parrington, Jr., American Dreams: A Study of American Utopias, a doctoral dissertation of Brown University (1947) for detailed information about most of these novels.

written expressly to support Bellamy;¹ others to disagree with him.² Still others took advantage of the popularity of the Utopian framework to devise their own ideal governments.³

One of the most famous books to show the influence of Looking Backward was William Dean Howells's A Traveler from Altruria (1894). This volume and its sequel, Through the Eye of the Needle (1907) are very close to the socialistic philosophy in Bellamy's works. Both men based their socialist systems on the belief that men are inherently good, that it is the economic system which they are forced to live under that buries the good of men under an incrustation of self-seeking materialism. They both felt that political equality is meaningless without economic equality.⁴ Howells, like Bellamy, would eliminate money altogether, because, as Mr. Homos says:

We had always heard it said that the love of money was the root of all evil, but we had taken this for a saying

¹Among these were: Mrs. C. H. Stone, One of "Berrian's" Novels (1890); Solomon Schindler, Young West (1894); Thomas Lake Harris, The New Republic (1891); and Albert Chavannes, The Future Commonwealth, (1892), and Brighter Climes (1895)

²For example: Richard Michaelis, Looking Further Forward (1890); Conrad Wilbrandt, Mr. East's Experiences in Mr. Bellamy's World (1891); Arthur D. Vinton, Looking Further Backward (1890); and J. W. Roberts, Looking Within (1893).

³See Alexander Craig, Ionia, Land of Wise Men and Fair Women (1898); Alvarado Fuller, A. D. 2000 (1890); Bradford Peck, The World a Department Store (1900); Joaquin Miller, The Building of the City Beautiful (1893); Charles W. Caryl, New Era (n. d.).

⁴Howells, A Traveler from Altruria (New York: Harper and Bros., 1908), p. 40.

merely; now we realized it as an active, vital truth. . . .¹
 Finally, they both felt that a socialist Utopia could and should be voted in by the people.² To Howells's banker, it seems that the laboringmen are going at reform the wrong way.

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 could make it the law in six months by such overwhelming numbers that no one would dare to evade or defy it.³

There is an inescapable political naiveté in Howells that is disconcerting; for, while he professed at times to believe that the workingman could change his position overnight at the ballot-box, he was also aware of the fact that,

Political liberty, political equality . . . valuable as they are in themselves, may be reduced to mere shells in the absence of economic liberty and economic equality. The hireling, though guaranteed the right of suffrage by the constitution itself, cannot manfully use that right if his employer can take away his means of live-lihood for doing so.⁴

But Howells does not explain how this impasse is to be resolved: if the economic power of the employer controls the vote of the employee, how is he to vote reforms for himself? When it came

¹Ibid., p. 208. See also Eveleth Strange's indictment of money as an actual curse in Through the Eye of the Needle (New York: Harper and Bros., 1907), p. 93.

²Bellamy, Equality (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1913), p. 15.

³Howells, A Traveler from Altruria, p. 154; see also Howells, "Are We a Plutocracy?" The North American Review, CLVIII (February 1894), p. 196.

⁴Taylor, The Economic Novel in America (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1942), p. 249.

to practical reforms, moreover Howells could be astonishingly myopic. He could, for example berate the "poor American" for submitting to a plutocracy which, he said, could very easily be changed.

If the poor American does not like it, or if he does not prefer a plutocracy to a democracy, he has the affair in his own hands, for he has an overwhelming majority of the votes. At the end, as in the beginning, it is he who is responsible, and if he thinks himself unfairly used, it is quite easy for him to see that he is used fairly; for, slowly or swiftly, it is he who ultimately makes and un-makes the laws, by political methods which, if still somewhat clumsy, he can promptly improve.¹

But when the people tried to improve the political methods by such measures as electing their Senators themselves, Howells did not approve. He then spoke of "maintaining safeguards against impulsive movements" and keeping our "machine with its original checks and balances."²

Howells's Altruria differs from Bellamy's Utopia in its deemphasis of the machine and in its agrarian orientation. Mr. Homos explains:

If it can be said that one occupation is honored above another with us, it is that which we all share, and that is the cultivation of the earth. We believe that this, when not followed slavishly, or for gain, brings man into the closest relations to the Deity, through a grateful sense of the divine bounty, and that it not only awakens a natural piety in him, but that it endears to the worker that piece of soil which he tills, and so strengthens his love of home.³

Although Bellamy did not share this reverence for the soil,

¹Howells, "Are We a Plutocracy?" op.cit., p. 196.

²Howells, "Editor's Study," Harper's Magazine, LXXX (May 1893), 968.

³Howells, A Traveler from Altruria, p. 195.

he was, on the other hand, more willing to offer personal political assistance to the farmers; in Equality he gives them credit for being "in the van" of the economic revolution.¹ Finding himself nearer to Bellamy than to Henry George (whose single-tax scheme he felt did not go far enough), Howells did not, however, formally ally himself with a Nationalist organization. Too close to the genteel tradition himself to descend into the political arena, he nevertheless was able to sympathize with those in the West who were revolting against the inequalities engendered by the capitalist system.²

A few books appeared in the wake of Looking Backward which could not go all the way with Bellamy's socialistic ideas but which nevertheless reflect the influence of the rising popularity of Nationalism. One of these, Frederick Upham Adams's President John Smith (1896), is a partial Utopia which predicts the election of a Nationalist, John Smith, to the Presidency. Instead of socialism, free competition reigns--the government competing with business. Although the book precedes Equality, it advocates similarly the direct vote of the people on matters before Congress and the election of all officials and Congressmen from the President on down.³ In fact the book is really an impassioned

¹Bellamy, Equality, p. 337.

²Howells, A Traveler From Altruria, pp. 97-8.

³Adams, President John Smith (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr and Co. [1896]), p. 241; Bellamy, Equality, p. 274.

exhortation to work for majority rule as the palliative for all the country's ills.¹

Like President John Smith, A Modern Despotism (1894) by Marcus Petersen starts with an account of political history in the United States and concludes with the author's prediction of the future. Petersen's book is the story of the corruption resulting from machine control in Michigan state politics in 1892 and the following two years. He allies himself openly on the side of Bellamy by calling on all men to

. . . recognize the truth, so forcibly stated by Edward Bellamy, that "however high, however rich, however wise you are, the only way in which you can surely safeguard your child from hunger, cold and wretchedness, and all the degradations and indignities that poverty implies, is by a plan that will equally safeguard all men's children."²

Yet the reforms that Petersen advocates are clearly somewhere to the right of socialism. He is less interested in economic improvements than in such moderate panaceas as Civil Service reform,³ elimination of the bosses,⁴ and popular election of Senators.⁵ His advocacy of government ownership of railroads, communications and coal mines⁶ is the extent of his socialistic ideas.

¹Adams, op. cit., p. 290.

²Petersen, A Modern Despotism (Buffalo, New York: Charles Wells Moulton, 1894), p. 223.

³Ibid., pp. 63-4.

⁴Ibid., p. 309.

⁵Ibid., p. 73.

⁶Ibid., p. 309.

Whitson's Walter Graham, Statesman, after chronicling the rise of a young politician through the ranks of Free Soilers and Abolitionists bestows a cautious nod in the direction of socialism. Walter is another in the series of men who progress from poverty to Congress. He is honest, and he stays honest--he is a "statesman." But because he is not a politician, willing to make moral compromises, he is never nominated for President, though his name is mentioned. Another reason for his not reaching the top politically is that he is too far left. As proof of his radicalism the author cites some of the books he has read: Progress and Poverty and Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations. Moreover, the North American Review is his favorite magazine. According to one of his political contemporaries "he's too full of these visionary theories."¹ He has even read Looking Backward and has gone so far as to introduce Bellamy to an audience.

Though he is not yet ready to proclaim as a public principle that the government should operate the railroads and telegraphs, the public perceive that his face is turned in that direction. In short, you may see him go down to his grave without becoming President, simply because the National party is not ripe.²

Aside from these novels and the Utopias, the socialist novel had not yet emerged. Socialism in the United States began in earnest only with the rise of the Socialist Labor Party under the leadership of Daniel De Leon during the

¹Thomas Whitson, Walter Graham, Statesman (Lancaster, Pa.: Fulton Publishing Co., 1891), p. 599.

²Ibid., pp. 601-2.

nineties. Although Bellamy and the Nationalists advocated complete socialism, they did not wish to be identified with the Marxian socialists, and indeed there were differences; both groups worked for state socialism, but in their means of attaining this goal they differed. An article in the Nationalist in 1889 took pains to point out these differences. It was asserted that unlike the Marxists, the Nationalists urged non-violence and made an attempt to soft-pedal class-conflict; it further stated that the Nationalists emphasized reform in the United States rather than in the world and, finally, were willing to work for minor reforms such as public ownership of utilities (the Fabian influence).¹ The Nationalists, refusing to accept the necessity for class struggle as the precursor to reform, substituted education. With their optimistic belief in the natural goodness of man, they were certain that if rich and poor alike were shown by word and by example (such as socialistic colonies) the superiorities of the socialistic system, capitalism would have no more supporters.

Inclining toward the Nationalists rather than the Marxists, these middle-left novels, then, decry the control of big business over politics, point out gross economic inequalities and sympathize with the laboring man; but they deplore the use of violence or even of strikes.² A harbinger of proletarian

¹Quint, op. cit., p. 87.

²Petersen, op. cit., pp. 266-272; Whitson, op. cit., p. 560. Even in some post-1900 labor novels the anti-violence doctrine was advocated. Philip Craig in On Satan's Mount (1903)

novels to come and a novel more clearly influenced by Marxian socialism is F. A. Adams's weird novel, The Transgressors (1900), the theme of which is socialism by revolution. A secret committee of forty is organized, each member of which is to murder a selected capitalist and then commit suicide, in order to facilitate the return of the government to the people under the Presidency of Harvey Trueman, candidate of the Independence party. Nevins, the leader who plans the campaign of Trueman, who governs the Committee of Forty, and who in fact selected Trueman for the nomination, chose him because Trueman is opposed to violence and would, once elected, prevent "a reign of anarchy."¹ The establishment of the new order

. . . must be done by an intrepid few. It cannot be entrusted to visionary men, to fanatics, to men who detest government of any form or to men who are willing to suffer present ills rather than face temporary

constantly cautions the laborers whom he leads to avoid violence. I. K. Friedman's The Radical (1907), echoing Gronlund, calls for the establishment of "the cooperative commonwealth" and bids democracy "to work a complete change in the structure erected by the labor of its hands and the sweat of its brow" (p. 338). With the faith of a Marxian determinist, he awaits the downfall of plutocracy: ". . . competition must yield to cooperation, even as feudalism and serfdom had given way to a new civilization which now, in its turn, was dropping behind in the march of progress, in the epic movement of the peoples in the pathway of the suns. It was all written in the unsealed books of evolution, and plutocracy was powerless to stem the tide. . . ." (p. 362) The line descends through Jack London's Martin Eden (1909) and The Iron Heel (1907) to the proletarian novels of the thirties, of which one of the most explicit in the promulgation of the class-struggle theory is John Dos Passos' The 42nd Parallel.

¹Francis A. Adams, The Transgressors (Philadelphia: Independence Publishing Co., 1900), p. 145.

discomfiture.¹

None of these categories, we are to believe, fits the membership of the Committee of Forty. The book is Utopian in nature, with its depiction of the "abolition of all forms of private monopoly"² brought about both by force and by the ballot. The triumphant candidate is not, however, a thoroughgoing socialist, for he advocates only "the government control of all avenues of transportation and communication, and . . . the strict regulation of all industries that affect the common necessities of life."³ We are, it finally appears, to consider him a moderate.⁴

The Anarchists

The element of force as represented in The Transgressors was not a part of the political plans of those, Socialists or others, who made up the People's Party.⁵ There were, in this country in the nineties a small group of anarchists who advocated force if necessary to overthrow the capitalistic

¹Ibid., pp. 153-4.

²Ibid., p. 177.

³Ibid., p. 145.

⁴Ibid., pp. 323-333. The author's attitude toward the use of force is not clear. He is sympathetic towards the leader of the plan of violence but advocates a President who did not participate in or condone such a plan. That force is sometimes necessary to bring about a just order, would seem to be his point of view.

⁵However, for examples of the violence used by the farmers when they were desperate, see Elizabeth Higgins, Out of the West (New York: Harper and Bros., 1902), pp. 121 and 134.

system and rid the people of any governmental control.¹ However, as one of the characters in one of the few novels to deal with anarchy remarks, "There are anarchists and anarchists."² Some preached non-violence. Yet so great is the tendency to exaggeration and mass hysteria that a large share of the people in the United States felt that there were great numbers of people (mostly recent immigrants) who were ready at a moment's notice to blow up the country with dynamite, despite the fact that there were never more than five or six thousand anarchists at the height of the movement.³ Nor were people always careful to distinguish between ideologies. Anarchism could be equated with socialism, Populists were socialists, and so it followed that there were some who saw the Populists as dangerous revolutionaries.⁴ This was the same shrill

¹One anarchist group, the Revolutionary Socialist Party, at a convention in 1883 "advocated the destruction of the existing class rule by 'energetic, relentless, revolutionary and international action, the establishment of a free society based on cooperative organization of production; free exchange of equivalent products by and between the productive organizations without commerce and profit-mongery; the organization of education on a secular, scientific and equal basis for both sexes; equal rights for all without distinction of sex or race, and the regulation of public affairs by free contracts between the autonomous communes and associations resting on a federalistic basis'" (Ware, op. cit., p. 308).

²H. B. Salisbury, The Birth of Freedom: A Socialist Novel (New York: Humboldt Publishing Co., 1894), p. 51), p. 51. This novel was first published in the Nationalist Magazine in 1890, then in book form as Miss Worden's Hero, and in 1894 in book form again under its original title.

³Schlesinger, Political and Social Growth, pp. 160-1.

⁴In Looking Backward, Dr. Leete comments: ". . . the subsidizing of those fellows was one of the shrewdest moves of the opponents of reform," and ". . . no historical authority

irrationalism of Richard Henry Savage who wrote in his preface to The Anarchist (1894):

The octopus feelers of an insane revolt against all law which guards Private Right are stealing to-day through every avenue of human life. Organized cosmopolitan repression will be the stern answer of the civilized world to the dark creed of Destruction.¹

But Savage is not unwilling to use for his own ends the force he so denounces as the instrument of others. With its strong racial prejudices² The Anarchist has only three measures to recommend to the reader: a revision of the naturalization laws, establishment of a proper passport system, and laws to regulate the "sale and handling of high explosives."³

As close as any novel to an apology for anarchism is H. B. Salisbury's The Birth of Freedom (1890).⁴ Salisbury

nowadays doubts that they were paid by the great monopolies to wave the red flag and talk about burning, sacking, and blowing people up, in order, by alarming the timid, to head off any real reforms." Julian West, however, dismisses this theory as "wholly erroneous," though he concedes that it would appear plausible to anyone in the year 2000 (Bellamy, Looking Backward, p. 252).

¹Savage, The Anarchist (Chicago: F. Tennyson Neely, 1894), p. 4.

²In the words of one of the sympathetic characters, a young English diplomat: "Anarchy will be stayed by the solid walls of the Anglo-Germanic element of the world. The Emperor William favors a general Anglo-Germanic union. Conspiracy and anarchistic madness is either Latin or Slavic" (ibid., p. 398).

³Ibid., p. 385.

⁴See also John Henry Mackay, The Anarchists (Boston: Benjamin R. Tucker, 1891), which is a strident defense of anarchism set primarily in London. A review of the Haymarket riot in the United States and the subsequent trial points up the injustices connected with it. Communists are denounced as "fanatics . . . sick, confused, afflicted with moral spooks--" The policy of revolution by force is upheld (p. 213).

describes a meeting of anarchists in which some advocate immediate overthrow of government but the leaders advise caution ("the man of you that attempts violence now deserves the death he will surely meet").¹ Class warfare ensues, but it is begun by the Plutocrats, who win the war. They do not win the peace, however.

In the greedy race for wealth they trampled down so many that formerly stood with them, and reduced their numbers so effectually by the process of "big fish eating little ones," that they became frightened at their own weakness, and thousands of them accepted the new order as inevitable. The people finally rose en masse, and all who were willing to recognize the new system became equal with all other citizens, while those who refused were banished the country, and have scattered² through the wild and uncivilized portions of the globe.

Salisbury, too, has a dream of Utopia. As in Looking Backward, all the people share equally in the products of the cooperative industry. But the government consists solely of the trustees appointed by the people to handle the surplus wealth which accumulates and is handed down from one generation to another.³ This could indeed be the Utopia of Utopias, for in it "nationalists, socialists, and anarchists have been able to reconcile differing views."⁴

In the political novel as in political history, socialism, except for the Bellamy brand, was not respectably "American" until after 1900--after the formation of the Socialist

¹Salisbury, op. cit., p. 63.

²Ibid., p. 132.

³Ibid., p. 123.

⁴Ibid.

party--and even then it was somewhat suspect. Nationalism itself flourished for only two or three short years, and, by 1892, in order to perpetuate its ideas, was forced to work through the People's Party. Socialists in the nineties had really no satisfactory party through which to express their ideas. By 1894, as we shall see, the socialist wing of the People's Party was losing ground to the currency reformers; yet the Socialist Labor party was not acceptable to many of the socialistically inclined either--first, because of its doctrinaire philosophy; secondly, because of the strict discipline imposed upon party members by its leader Daniel De Leon; and finally, because of the foreign-born composition of its membership.

Since the proletariat--outside of its socialistic leadership, which was engaged largely in pamphleteering--was relatively inarticulate, it is not unnatural that socialism in the American novel should, during this period of the nineties, be characterized by the ethical idealism of the great middle class, rather than by the reverberations of the class struggle. This emphasis on the ethical rather than the economic side of socialism is found even more specifically in another group of novels--those which advocate Christian Socialism.

The Christian Socialists

It is not surprising that a formal organization of Christian Socialists should follow shortly after the publication of Looking Backward and the formation of Nationalist

clubs. Bellamy himself came of a religious home, and both Looking Backward and Equality are infused with the concept of man's responsibility toward his fellow man. Dr. Leete, in fact, gives encouragement to the Christian Socialist movement when he describes to Julian West "the Great Revival"-- "a tide of enthusiasm for the social, not the personal, salvation, and for the establishment in brotherly love of the kingdom of God on earth which Christ bade men hope and work for. . . ."¹

The first Society of Christian Socialists was formed in Boston in 1889 with a membership composed of clergymen, most of whom were members of the Nationalist Club of Boston.² As the leader of the group, W. D. P. Bliss, a clergyman who had joined the Knights of Labor in 1886 and the Nationalists

¹ Bellamy, Equality, p. 340. See also Looking Backward (p. 134) where Dr. Leete says: "If I were to give you, in one sentence a key to what may seem the mysteries of our civilization as compared with that of your age, I should say that it is the fact that the solidarity of the race and the brotherhood of man, which to you were but fine phrases are, to our thinking and feeling, ties as real and vital as physical fraternity."

² A Declaration of Principles drawn up in April, 1889, set forth their objectives as follows: "1. To show that the aim of Socialism is embraced in the aim of Christianity. 2. To awaken members of Christian churches to the fact that the teachings of Jesus Christ lead directly to some specific form or forms of Socialism; that, therefore, the church has a definite duty upon this matter, and must, in simple obedience to Christ, apply itself to the realization of the social principles of Christianity" (quoted from The Dawn, II [May, 1890] in James Dombrowski, The Early Days of Christian Socialism in America [New York: Columbia University Press, 1936], p. 100).

in 1889¹ envisioned the following program for Christian Socialists:

1. Personal living: the Christian Socialist was to live simply, giving up time, money, and position if necessary for his convictions. 2. Social work: he was to educate, agitate, and organize; to distribute literature and speak whenever the opportunity arose; to promote labor organizations and to join a radical political party. 3. Work for reform legislation: by promoting such measures as the Australian ballot, single-tax measures, free technical education, free meals for school² children, public ownership of utilities, and so forth.

A second formal organization of Christian Socialists, which designated itself the Brotherhood of the Co-operative Commonwealth, included in its membership Henry Demarest Lloyd and Eugene V. Debs. This group aimed to propagate socialism, to establish socialist colonies, to organize cooperative industries, and to engage in direct political action.³

The spirit of these organizations found expression in the novel. The optimism which pervaded "the Great Revival" is pointedly illustrated if one compares From Heaven to New York by Isaac George Reed, Jr., which was published in 1876 with Murvale Eastman, Christian Socialist, written by Albion W. Tourgee in 1890. In the early book the author is at some pains to illustrate his point that the man who tries to put his Christianity to practical use in this world is doomed to

¹Bliss, however, as a Christian Socialist, had some objections to the aims and methods of the Nationalists; for example, he disagreed with Bellamy's tendency toward military organization and with his plan of equal wages for all (Quint, op. cit., p. 114).

²Dombrowski, op. cit., pp. 103-4.

³Ibid., p. 75.

frustration and disappointment and must be content to get his rewards in heaven. On the other hand, Murvale Eastman believes that the words of the Lord's Prayer ("Thy kingdom come on earth") are to be taken literally and that the first step is to live by the Golden Rule. The League of Christian Socialists, of which Murvale is the president, will promote its objectives in the following ways:

- (1) By endeavoring to shape and direct public sentiment;
- (2) By seeking to obtain desirable legislation; (3) By securing the enforcement of just laws and the modification of bad ones.¹

Although political action is envisaged, concrete accomplishments in the volume are limited primarily to a plan for profit-sharing on the part of employees.²

Although he is primarily concerned with inward regeneration, Tourgee does make some recommendations for governmental reforms. However, another novel, Dr. Marks, Socialist (1897) by Marion Couthouy Smith, makes only vague references to the "changed conditions of society and of government"³ which can be effected by practical Christianity. The most popular book of this kind, Charles M. Sheldon's In His Steps (1897), advo-

¹Tourgee, Murvale Eastman (New York: Fords, Howard, and Hulbert, 1890), p. 319.

²Ibid., pp. 536-8.

³Smith, Dr. Marks, Socialist (Cincinnati: The Editor Publishing Co., 1897), pp. 48-9.

cates reform of the most personal kind. All that is necessary to rid the world of its evils is for each individual to reform himself, and reform of the political system as well as other changes will be assured.¹

Christian Socialism burgeoned in the nineteenth century with its Utopian idealism and humanitarianism; but its popularity decreased when the twentieth century arrived with its skepticism, determinism and pessimism. But Thomas Nelson Page was really a nineteenth century idealist who turned from idealizations of the Civil War to dreams of a better world to come. In the Christian Socialist tradition is his novel, John Marvel, Assistant (1909). Shying away from the word "socialism" ("that is a name which some prefer and some detest"), he finds "co-operation" a more comfortable appellation.² Its picture of turn-of-the-century Chicago with its struggling immigrants, its hovels and boarding-houses is the same Chicago of which Theodore Dreiser and Upton Sinclair wrote.

Between the aims of the Society of Christian Socialists and the American clergy as a whole, these novels stand about mid-way in point of view. Many of those who, like W. D. P. Bliss, preached political action and actually defended strikers were soon out looking for new congregations. And, it must be emphasized, most of the novels dealing with Christian

¹Sheldon, In His Steps (Chicago: The John C. Winston Co., 1937), p. 256 and passim. This is, of course, the application of the Golden Rule.

²Page, John Marvel (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1909), p. 534.

Socialism had little to say about practical politics.

Yet, if organized Christianity did not embrace politics, it could be said that politics was embracing Christianity. For the People's party had a hard core of ethically-motivated souls who were the descendants of the Free-soilers, the Abolitionists, and, incidentally, sons of parsons themselves.¹ Indeed so confident of its own virtue was the People's Party that one of its advocates, John Rankin Rogers, could write a Populist novel called The Graftons (1893) which presents (how far we have come from the 1880's!), not the conversion of a politician to Christianity, but the conversion of a clergyman to politics.²

The People's Party

Although the People's Party gathered its forces from all of these groups--Christian Socialists, Nationalists, single-taxers, Greenbackers, and laborers--organizationally it was an outgrowth of such farmers' organizations as the Grange and the Farmers' Alliance. The complaints of the farmers changed little from 1870 on; they still fell readily into two main categories--hatred of monopolies and trusts (particularly the

¹Dombrowski points out that there was a significant number of sons of clergymen in the Nationalist movement (op. cit., p. 84) including Henry Demarest Lloyd and Richard T. Ely, influential social economist. George D. Herron, himself a minister, was instrumental in the creation of the Socialist Party of America (ibid., p. 135).

²Rogers, The Graftons (Chicago: Milton George Publishing House, 1893), p. 105. For elements of Christian Socialism--called "the New Christianity"--in this novel see pp. 105, 27, 63, and 83.

railroads) and a distrust of the banks and money-lenders, which expressed itself largely in the great agitation over the currency problem.

The first farmers' organization, the Patrons of Husbandry or the Grange, was organized in the late sixties at a time when the farmer was experiencing the depression following the Civil War. Functioning at first primarily on a social basis, it soon broadened its program to include politics: it was responsible for the election of its own men to office and for the passage of a number of laws designed to mitigate railroad abuses, laws which were commonly known thereafter as Granger laws. The farmer early discovered that the cause of most of his economic difficulties could be laid at the door of the monopolies. The railroad charged him exorbitant rates to get his product to market; once there, it had to be sold in a free market of declining prices; but the next spring the farmer had to buy his supplies in a market of rising prices controlled by the trusts.¹ To alleviate the effects of this squeeze, the Grange organized cooperatives through which farmers could market their dairy products and even built factories to supply the farmers with machinery. These Grange activities were never very successful, but the organization had its value nevertheless. As Hamlin Garland points out in A Spoil of Office (1892), it educated the farmers politically, it gave them courage to exercise their power, and

¹Post, op. cit., pp. 316 ff.

it acquainted them with each other, so that when they decided to select their own political leaders they could do so easily and quickly.¹

As the Grange gradually died out with the better times of the late seventies, the Farmers' Alliance, a more militant organization, came to replace it.² Garland has caught the spirit behind this group in the following description of a Farmers' Alliance parade:

. . . here was an army of veterans, men grown old in the ferocious struggle against injustice and the apparent niggardliness of nature,--a grim and terrible battle-line. It was made up, throughout its entire length, of old or middle-aged men and women with stooping shoulders, and eyes dim with toil and suffering. There was nothing of lovely girlhood or elastic, smiling boyhood; not a touch of color or grace in the whole line of march. It was sombre, silent, ominous, and resolute.

It appeared the most pathetic, tragic, and desperate revolt against oppression and wrong ever made by the American farmer. It was the Grange movement broadened, deepened, and made more desperate and wide-reaching by changing conditions.³

Although the Grange was quasi-social in origin, and only chanced into politics, the Alliance was from its inception openly anti-monopoly and reformist in purpose. One of the reasons for the success of the Alliance was the period of hard times of the late eighties. A hot summer in 1886 was followed by a cold winter in 1886-7; and during the following

¹Garland, A Spoil of Office (Boston, Mass: Arena Publishing Co., 1892), pp. 90 and 92.

²The account of the Alliance here follows in the main that in John D. Hicks, The Populist Revolt: A History of the Farmers' Alliance and the People's Party, pp. 148-152.

³A Spoil of Office, p. 340.

very dry years people in Kansas, Nebraska, and Dakota loaded up their wagons (except for those who had mortgaged wagons and teams and could not leave the state with them) and headed back east. "In God we trusted, in Kansas we busted," was a slogan commonly seen scratched on the wagons. At least twenty well-built towns in eastern Kansas were said to have been completely deserted.¹ The farmers who, though hard hit, managed to stay on in the West began to express their discontent through such farmers' organizations as the Alliance and later through the People's Party. For the drought not only created discontent, it created the time to talk about it. In Out of the West, which, in its creation of the atmosphere of the period, surpasses Garland's performance in either A Spoil of Office or A Member of the Third House, Elizabeth Higgins writes:

Everyone was talking and everyone was thinking. . . . Little by little they commenced to theorize upon their condition. Despite the poverty of the country, the books of Henry George, Bellamy, and other economic writers were bought as fast as the dealers could supply them.²

The Alliance appointed paid lecturers to travel from one community to another organizing the political strength of the farmers.

The effort thus made had for its end the adoption of certain "demands" by the farmers, to which they were to commit themselves. . . . [T]he attempt was made to inculcate

¹John Hicks, op. cit., p. 32.

²Higgins, op. cit., p. 133.

a course of action within the limits of all the existing political parties and no favoritism was to be shown to either or any. Certain so-called demands were formulated and printed and kept constantly before the farmers and advocated at their meetings and it was agreed that no general movement embracing the carrying out of the demands should be entered upon until a practical unanimity had been reached. . . .

The plan included the presentation of a printed copy of the "demands" to every candidate of all the different political parties, which he was to be asked to sign, by a committee sent from the farmers and it was agreed that no member would vote for a candidate for any office whatever, unless he would pledge himself in writing to use his utmost exertions at all times and places, and in every manner, to secure the passage of the laws demanded.¹

In many areas the Alliance managed to capture the machinery of the dominant party--that is, the Democratic party in the South and the Republican party in the West. The result was the passage of an impressive number of bills which attempted to adjust freight rates and eliminate injustices of the railroads' control of elevators and warehouses. At the height of the Alliance in 1890, it had two million members and sent two men to the United States Senate and scores of others to state legislatures.² Yet the effect on the economic status of the farmer was discouraging. The railroads actually lost little of their control. If commissions were established, the railroads managed to get their own men on them. If regulatory laws were passed, the courts often nullified them.³ The farmers tried electing men of their own occupation to office, but it soon became evident that these

¹Rogers, op. cit., p. 89.

²Madison, op. cit., p. 350.

³Morison and Commager, op. cit., p. 118.

men were too innocent of the ways of politics to be able to conduct themselves in the interest of the farmers.¹ If they were kept in office long enough to become educated, they lost the ties with their own class, often becoming railroad stockholders or corporation stockholders themselves. Too often one of the major parties would nominate the same candidate as the Alliance and then control him. Any attempt to present their case through the newspapers usually was fruitless because of the control of the press by the corporations.² Consequently a feeling gradually arose that, betrayed as they had been by the old parties, their only recourse was the formation of a third party.

The work of the Alliance and the subsequent formation of the People's Party are central in The Graftons, Out of The West and A Spoil of Office. In all of these novels, the prominent part which women played in Western politics is emphasized. Gone is the merely decorative heroine who could not seem to grasp the intricacies of political issues. Of the number of women who campaigned for Alliance and People's Party candidates, Mary Ellen Lease was probably the most colorful; certainly her exhortation to the farmers to raise less corn and more hell has guaranteed her a place in almost every history of the period. Ida Wilbur of A Spoil of Office comes closest to carrying on

¹See, for example, Rogers, op. cit., p. 95.

²The accusation of discrimination in the press in favor of moneyed interests appears in several novels, including the following: Garland, A Member of the Third House; Keenan, The Money-Makers; Post, Congressman Swanson; and T. Carl Spelling, Won on a Silver Basis,

Mrs. Lease's type of dedicated, forceful campaign. But in all three books it is the women who exhibit more conviction than the men in their attitudes toward the principles for which the People's Party stands. Mary Grafton is not a public campaigner, but, like Edith Hull in Out of the West, she will not consent to be a man's wife until his political views are right. Indeed, the following line epitomizes Western romance in the political novel of the 1890's: "He gazed upon her deep-red lips, sensitive and quivering in their dainty curving, while he talked of a minimum freight bill and the government ownership of railroads."¹

Both Bradley Talcott (A Spoil of Office) and Frank Field (Out of the West) are sent to Congress by the People's Party. Before the end of the term, Talcott's bride, Ida, leaves him to go back West to work with the people. As for Frank Field, he is an Easterner converted to Populism who reverts to type when he gets to Washington. Unable to resist the money of the lobbyist which enables him to live more in keeping with the style in which he was reared, he fails to get his rate bill reported out of committee until his conscience is aroused by the impassioned declaration of his wife and the sudden death of his small son.

The Graftons and Out of the West point up the strong element of Christian ethics which was inherent in Populist Party ideals. In The Graftons, George Maitland, a minister of

¹Higgins, op. cit., p. 192.

the Gospel from the East, is converted to the cause of Populism and, with Wendell Phillips as his model, goes forth to preach "'The New Christianity'--by which he explained he meant the modern application of the precepts of the religion of Christ." He feels that "If we but will it, the kingdom of Heaven is at hand."¹ Out of the West goes even further with a visionary heroine known as the Colorado Joan of Arc, who is called to duty when her brother is killed by militiamen. In explaining this experience to her husband she says:

I have seen and I have heard, and I know He came to me, giving me the strength and showing me the way. . . . I cannot blame you. There is no pierced forehead and mangled hand [her brother's] before your eyes. For you there is no memory of the sun going down behind a mountain at the gulch's mouth, the piece of sky overhead darkened, and the gorge as silent and as black as the grove. . . . Then my call came to me; I cannot tell you of it; you did not understand. When day came, and I started for my home, I saw before me my first duty. After I had spoken to those distraught men I was convinced. I saw my power², I heard my words, and I knew whence they came. . . .

In Ignatius Donnelly's The Golden Bottle (1892), a Utopian novel³ which promotes free money, cooperatives, and government regulation of corporations, the Joan of Arc symbol is again employed when the heroine, Sophie, brandishing her sword and

¹Rogers, op. cit., p. 105.

²Higgins, op. cit., pp. 282-3.

³Other Utopian novels which supported the Populists were [Samuel Crocker], That Island, A Political Romance, by Theodore Oceanic Islet [pseud.] (1893); Henry L. Everett, The People's Program (1892). Among anti-Populist Utopias were: [Anon.] The Beginning, a Romance of Chicago As It Might Be (1893); and [A. O. Grigsby] Nequa, or the Problem of the Ages, by Jack Adams [pseud.] (n. d.).

riding a white horse, leads the troops to victory in the battle which ushers in the millennium.

Taken all together, these Populist novels echo, in the remedies they advocate, the platform of the People's Party adopted at the Omaha convention in 1892,¹ although individual authors emphasize different sections of the platform. In A Spoil of Office "the war is between the people and the monopolist wherever he is. . . ."² The Graftons, with a Kansas setting, is primarily concerned with the problem of debt-ridden farmers: "Debt is what is ruining us; more money is being paid as interest on money than all the surplus crops of the State are selling for."³ The goal of the Alliance is to elect a state legislature which will "pass a stay law" and "abrogate all laws for the collection of debts to be incurred in the future."⁴ The Golden Bottle espouses almost all of the issues which appeared as planks in the 1892 platform of the People's Party; Ignatius Donnelly, veteran politician-reformer from Minnesota, was the author of both.⁵ In The Golden Bottle

¹The platform provided for "free and unlimited coinage of silver at a ratio of 16:1; a graduated income tax; postal savings banks; government operation of railroads, telephones, and telegraphs; direct election of United States senators; the secret ballot; and the initiative and referendum" (Faulkner, op. cit., p. 448).

²Garland, A Spoil of Office, p. 192.

³Rogers, op. cit., p. 59. ⁴Ibid.

⁵He also wrote Caesar's Column (1890), another Utopian novel in which he predicts the destruction of civilization in

he sets forth the following general propositions:

Keep the land in the hands of the many

Limit the amount that any man may own. . . .

See to it that the working-men obtain homes. . . .

Use the powers of government for the good of the governed.¹

The Populists' demand for popular election of Senators is the theme of Lewis Levy's Senator Cashdollar of Washington (1899).

Proof that the "politics is a dirty business" feeling was still prevalent is provided by Francis Lynde in The Grafters (1904)² and by Higgins in Out of the West (here the indictment is aimed only at politicians in the two big parties).³ Bradley Talcott (A Spoil of Office) finds that, contrary to common opinion, most legislators are reasonably honest.

There was one count, however, that remained good against nearly all of the legislators: they seemed to lack conscience as regards public money. . . . He was forced to admit that this was the most characteristic American crime. To rob the commonwealth was a joke.⁴

Throughout most of these Populist novels, it is the railroads which bear the brunt of the blame for the farmers'

this part of the world and the rise of a Utopia out of the ruins. In general he advocates the same governmental policies in both books.

¹Donnelly, The Golden Bottle (New York: D. D. Merrill Co., 1892), p. 128.

²Lynde, The Grafters (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1904), pp. 98-100.

³Higgins, op. cit., pp. 243-4.

⁴Garland, A Spoil of Office, pp. 257-8.

predicament.¹ The railroad had always been central in the development of the West. Because of the need to get their products to market, settlers were eager to get railroads in their area. Hicks writes:

Towns and cities in the West were judged in importance somewhat in accordance with the number of railway lines converging upon them. Each sizeable village aspired, therefore, to become a railway center and stood ready to bond itself heavily in order to grant favors to prospective roads. In fact, the mania for railroads became so acute that a class of promoters developed who made it their business to project and construct lines, not because they were needed or could hope to pay dividends for long but because the gifts that the counties, cities, and even the states were willing to shower upon them insured for the promoters a handsome initial profit. Once the road was built, they lost no time in unloading its obligations upon others.²

The virtual control of an area by the railroads is the dominant theme in both The Federal Judge (1897) by Charles K. Lush and The Grafters by Lunde, two volumes with strangely similar plots.³ In general both books show the Populists

¹John Hicks (op. cit., p. 69) bears out the impression created by the novelists. The high freight rates forced farmers of Minnesota and Dakota to pay half what their wheat was worth to get it as far as Chicago. Local rates were extremely high. Because railroads were over-built, many could not make a reasonable profit and communities were taxed to support them. Preference was given to large shippers, cars sometimes being refused to small shippers. The railroads made sure that no one hostile to their interests was nominated for office. Their lobbyists were always working against unfavorable legislation. "It is not unfair to say that normally the railroads--sometimes a single road--dominated the political situation in every western state" (ibid.).

²Ibid., p. 29. Land speculation in the boom towns created by the mere possibility of the arrival of the railroad is central in Edward Eggleston's The Mystery of Metropolisville (1873) and David Ross Locke's A Paper City (1878).

³Although Frank Norris used this theme in The Octopus, his treatment of it, as well as his purpose, is different. Norris, fascinated by the clash of the two forces--railroads

versus the railroads. In The Federal Judge, as one would expect in a novel of the period, the railroads and the men working for them are tagged as the villains; but, in a switch, The Grafters presents Governor Bucks, the People's Party candidate, as the head of a corrupt ring in control of the state. Both volumes contain a federal judge who is the tool of the alleged crooks as they force a railroad into a receivership to serve their own ends. In The Grafters the judge is blackmailed; in The Federal Judge, Judge Tracy Dunn is duped by Elliot Gardwell, who so ingratiates himself with the judge that his strong sense of right and wrong is warped.

The part of the courts in the case of the farmers and other groups versus the railroad is not a small one and is reflected in other novels besides these two.¹ Early Granger laws involving rate regulation and charges of grain elevators were sustained by the courts. But in succeeding years the Supreme Court became more conservative and the courts soon made it clear that regulation of the roads was the province of the Federal government only. The result was the Interstate Commerce Act of 1887, which provided for an Interstate Commerce Commission. But so frequently did the courts reverse the

and farmers--uses farmers with large land-holdings who are at least able to put up a good fight. The farmers in the Populist novels are struggling homesteaders pretty much at the mercy of the railroad. Their only hope is political organization and action.

¹For example, Denison, An Iron Crown, p. 52; and Adams, President John Smith, p. 147. A sore point with the Populists was the veto by the Supreme Court of the income tax law of 1894.

Commission and so difficult was it for shippers to collect from the railroads even when they were sustained that the Commission became largely useless and, by its own confession in 1898, a failure.¹ Ignatius Donnelly voiced popular sentiment when he wrote:

Tom Jefferson foretold that the Supreme Court of the United States would eventually absorb into their hands all the power of the nation. They are rapidly doing it, and doing it in the interest of the moneyed class.²

Other indictments of the railroads in the Populist novel include descriptions of the methods of the powerful railroad lobby in Garland's A Member of the Third House and in Higgins's Out of the West. The lobbyist for the railroads in A Member of the Third House, Tom Brennan, uses liquor, bribery, and blackmail to win one state legislator's vote. The moral which Garland draws is that

so long as legislators have the power to vote public values into private pockets the lobby will continue to exist, and its damning work will be seen in the ruin of men like Senator Ward and Mr. Davis [the "Iron Duke"--head of the powerful Consolidated Railway]; for . . . he is a victim of corruption as well as himself being a corrupting agent.³

¹Morison and Commager, op. cit., pp. 116-120.

²Donnelly, The Golden Bottle, pp. 145-6.

³Pp. 197-8. Lincoln Steffens for the same reason promoted "the Henry George plan for the closing up of all the sources of unearned wealth." This was the plan which Tom Johnson, a Henry George follower, put into effect in Cleveland. Because he felt it was senseless "to throw out the rascals and put into office honest men without removing that which makes good men do bad things" he advocated public ownership of public utilities (Lincoln Steffens, Autobiography [New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1931], p. 493).

Out of the West shows the railroads operating on both a state and a national level. In the state legislature the farmers had finally elected the majority which was to insure passage of a bill lowering freight rates. But it was not as easy as the leaders had assumed.

An unseen mesh was thrown around them. Their men were as in the control of an invisible power. Lobbyists worked skilfully and unceasingly. Small in numbers, the railroads' men stood as in serried ranks,¹ and their opponents were an unorganized mob before them.

People's Party candidates fared little better in Washington, where one, Frank Field, found himself set upon by female as well as male lobbyists.

Yet the currency question remained one of the most inflammatory issues in politics until the mid-nineties. The demand for free silver was heard in the ranks of every party. In the words of Governor Randolph Ransom in Philip Payne's The Mills of Man "Silver spreads like a contagion,"² and he, like other politicians, were trampling each other in the rush to get on the silver bandwagon. The farmers placed much of the blame for the panic of the late eighties on "the crime of '73," by which they meant the coinage act of 1873 demonitizing silver. Mining interests of the West joined the farmers, and the result was the passage of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act of 1890, which provided for the purchase of 4,500,000 ounces of silver each month by the government. The

¹Higgins, op. cit., p. 185.

²Payne, The Mills of Man (Chicago, Rand McNally and Co., 1903), p. 282.

bill failed completely to help either the farmers by increasing the amount of money in circulation or the silver-miners by raising the price of silver, and Cleveland brought about its repeal in 1893. This action on the part of Cleveland created a schism in the Democratic party that Herman E. Taubeneck, chairman of the National Executive Committee of the People's Party was quick to exploit. The People's Party was facing internal problems between the more conservative farm elements and the antimonopolist-Nationalist-labor Socialist bloc.¹ Taubeneck, a free-silverite, predicted that at the St. Louis convention in 1894 the Party would

. . . make known the fact that it has outgrown many of the "isms" that characterized its birth and early growth, and take a stand on the financial question that will make it worthy of the support of those who have looked askance at the acts of Wait and Lewelling. . . .²

Led by Henry Demarest Lloyd the radical coalition, however, gained control over the free silver group and retained its leadership until the defeat of the Populists in the Chicago municipal election, a party disaster for which each group blamed the other. In 1896 Taubeneck and Senator William V. Allen with the help of "steamroller tactics"³ were able to deliver the party into the hands of the free silver group.

¹Frederick Upham Adams in President John Smith reflects the Nationalist point of view at this time, rejecting free silver as a significant issue and advocating abandonment of both silver and gold as currency standards.

²Destler, op. cit., p. 228.

³Ibid., p. 30.

When the Democrats nominated William Jennings Bryan, the People's Party had their biggest vote-getting issue taken from them. Although the socialists in the party were still willing to try to lick 'em, the convention decided to jine 'em, and nominated Bryan too. The emotional impact of the silver problem is pointed up in Joseph Altsheler's The Candidate (1905), based apparently on this campaign.

They heard the candidate tell of mighty corporations, of a vague and distant place called Wall Street, where fat men, with soft, white fingers and pouches under their eyes, sat in red-carpeted offices and pulled little but very strong strings that made farmers on the Western plains, two thousand miles away, dance like jumping-jacks, just as the fat men wished, and just when they wished. These fat men were allied with others in Europe, pouchy-eyed and smooth-fingered like themselves, and it was their object to own all the money-bags of the world, and gather all the profits of the world's labor. Harley, watching these people, saw a spark appear in their eyes many times, but it was always brightest at the mention of Wall Street.¹

Although Altsheler has trouble finding enough material in a political campaign to hang a plot on, he manages to convey the atmosphere surrounding this campaign, including the wooing of Western political bosses and the defection of the hard money Democrats.²

Bryan appeared again as the Democratic nominee in 1900 and in 1908. His second campaign, which leaned heavily on

¹Altsheler, The Candidate (New York: Harper and Bros., 1905), pp. 101-102.

²The convention of hard money Democrats, the support of their slate by Cleveland, and the resultant diversion of votes from Bryan is described by Allan Nevins in Grover Cleveland: A Study in Courage (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1932), p. 708.

anti-imperialism and anti-trust issues, inspired Mary Dillon to write the political romance, The Leader (1906), in which the eloquent, honest, brilliant John Dalton appears as, above all, the man of the people.

The People's Party convened again in 1898, when it abandoned free silver and endorsed paper money as legal tender. But prosperity was returning and bringing with it the apathy which smothers reform. Weakened by dissension and unable to compete with the Democrats who had stolen their thunder, the People's Party was no longer a political force, even though it continued to nominate Presidential candidates until 1908. Yet the movement left an inheritance to the twentieth century: the spirit of reform reappeared in a modified form in the Progressive movement and many of the specific measures which the Populists had advocated were in time written into law.¹

A List of Political Novels Considered in Chapter II

- Adams, Francis A. The Transgressors (1900)
 Adams, Frederick Upham. President John Smith (1896)
 Altsneler, Joseph. The Candidate (1905)
 [Anon.] The Beginning, a Romance of Chicago as It Might Be (1893)
 Bellamy, Edward. Equality (1897)
 . Looking Backward (1888)
 Bland, T. A. Esau or the Banker's Victim (1892)
 Caryl, Charles W. New Era (n. d.)
 Chavannes, Albert. Brighter Climes (1895)
 . The Future Commonwealth (1892)
 Clark, Arnold. Beneath the Dome (1894)

¹For example, the election of Senators by popular vote, a graduated income tax, a more elastic currency system, national control of communications and availability of loans to farmers to carry them from one season to the next (John Hicks, op. cit., p. 422).

- Craig, Alexander. Ionia, Land of Wise Men and Fair Women (1898)
 Crocker, Samuel. That Island (1892)
 Denison, Thomas Stewart. An Iron Crown (1885)
 Donnelly, Ignatius. Caesar's Column (1890)
 . The Golden Bottle (1892)
 Everett, Henry L. The People's Program (1892)
 Fuller, Alvarado. A. D. 2000 (1890)
 Garland, Hamlin. A Member of the Third House (1892)
 . A Spoil of Office (1892)
 . Jason Edwards (1897)
 [Grigsby, A. O.] Nequa, or the Problem of the Ages (n. d.)
 Harris, Thomas Lake. The New Republic (1891)
 Hertzka, Theodore. Freeland, A Social Anticipation (1891)
 Higgins, Elizabeth. Out of the West (1902)
 Holford, Costello N. Aristophia, A Romance History of the New World (1895)
 Howells, William Dean. A Traveler from Altruria (1894)
 . Through the Eye of the Needle (1907)
 Keenan, Henry Francis. The Money-Makers (1885)
 Lynde, Francis. The Grafters (1904)
 Mackay, John Henry. The Anarchists (1891)
 Michaelis, Richard. Looking Further Forward (1890)
 Miller, Joaquin. The Building of the City Beautiful (1893)
 Olerich, Henry. A Cityless and Countryless World (1893)
 Page, Thomas Nelson. John Marvel, Assistant (1909)
 Payne, Philip. The Mills of Man (1903)
 Peck, Bradford. The World a Department Store (1900)
 Petersen, Marcus. A Modern Despotism (1894)
 Post, Charles C. Congressman Swanson (1891)
 Roberts, J. W. Looking Within (1893)
 Rogers, John Rankin. The Graftons (1893)
 Salisbury, H. B. The Birth of Freedom (1890)
 Savage, Richard Henry. The Anarchist (1894)
 Schindler, Solomon. Young West (1894)
 Sheldon, Charles M. In His Steps (1897)
 Simpson, William. The Man from Mars (1891)
 Smith, Marion Couthouy. Dr. Marks, Socialist (1897)
 Spelling, T. Carl. Won on a Silver Basis (1897)
 Stone, Mrs. C. H. One of "Berrian's" Novels (1890)
 Tourgee, Albion W. Murvale Eastman, Christian Socialist (1889)
 Vinton, Arthur D. Looking Further Backward (1890)
 Whitson, Thomas. Walter Graham, Statesman (1891)
 Wilbrandt, Conrad. Mr. East's Experiences in Mr. Bellamy's World (1891)

CHAPTER III

THE SCRUTINY OF AMERICAN VALUES

The attack of the Populists upon monopoly indicated the disappointment of large numbers of people in the destruction of the essential equality and individuality which they felt to be inherent in American democracy. Although there were socialists among the Populists, the majority of people claimed no philosophy different from that which sustained the man of wealth. America was still fundamentally united by the myth that success was available to all who possessed such virtues as honesty, perseverance, courage, punctuality, piety, and diligence. Horatio Alger became the most widely read American author by rewriting this same theme in over one hundred books. "Success" commonly meant "riches," but it could also mean social and political advancement. To illustrate the possibilities for political success in America Alger brought out From Canal Boy to President or The Boyhood and Manhood of James A. Garfield in 1881, From Farm Boy to Senator, Being the History of the Boyhood and Manhood of Daniel Webster in 1882, and Abraham Lincoln: The Backwoods boy in 1883.¹

Most of the American political novelists found themselves in conflict with this ethos which held that success was

¹See "The Self Made Man and the Cult of Success" in Curti, op. cit., pp. 644-750.

to be measured in terms of the advancement of one's personal fortunes. Consequently some of them began a reexamination of the values and motivations of politicians and businessmen or, frequently, the politician-businessman. In outline, their novels were similar to Alger's: they wrote of the rise of an obscure and usually poor young man to fame and fortune. But instead of writing lessons in the methods of economic or political ascent, these novelists were concerned with the effect of this struggle upon the man's character. They agreed with all of America that honesty and integrity were admirable virtues but they believed that in the struggle for wealth or political preferment these values did not survive. Some of them believed that other values such as responsibility to society were too often overlooked. In their novels specific political issues are disregarded; the evil politician and the evil capitalist per se have been largely abandoned. The villain is rather the overweening desire for power, prestige, or money.

One group of these writers who saw money-grabbing as a universal American attribute looked upon democracy as a system which perpetuated it and which merely elevated uncultured and uneducated boors to positions above their abilities. Here, after the manner of Cooper and De Forest, is another manifestation of resentment on the part of men of culture, education and social position toward the rising middle class. Cooper, however, found in democracy a theory by which he could ally himself with the lower class to defeat the merchant class.

These men on the other hand were revolting against a perverted kind of democratic theory which paradoxically offered all an equal opportunity to become members of an elite. For this elitism based on democratic materialism these writers would substitute an elitism based on ability, education and culture.

An attack on these self-made aristocrats is found in varying degrees and in diverse forms in the following novels: The Demagogue (1881) by David Ross Locke;¹ Juggernaut, A Veiled Record (1891) by George Cary Eggleston² and Dolores Marbourg; The Light of Her Countenance (1889) and The Mammon of Unrighteousness (1891) by H. H. Boyesen; and Unleavened Bread (1900) by Robert Grant.

The demagogue in Locke's volume,³ Caleb Mason, decides early in life that he will rise from his low position in society (he was the child of a drunken father and slatternly mother) to one of affluence and political power. He calculates each of his moves shrewdly, never developing any ties of love or friendship to hold him back from his opportunistic career. Bogging down in sentiment and melodrama, the novel ends with

¹The creator of "Petroleum V. Nasby," the illiterate Copperhead whose letters were popular with both Lincoln and Grant as well as the rest of the North. Self-educated, Locke was a journalist by profession.

²Younger brother of Edward Eggleston. Although he studied law, he chose to be a journalist and became editor-in-chief of the Commercial Advertiser.

³The career of another political opportunist, though not so vile a one, is the subject of Brand Whitlock's The 13th District (1902). Whitlock's novel ends on a more optimistic note.

the complete moral disintegration of Mason, who has murdered, embezzled and who finally commits suicide. Part of the blame for the rise of the demagogue is placed upon the voters who allow it. Caleb is advised at one point to go into politics by a friend, Judge Rainey. Says the Judge:

"You can make up your mind that the mass of people are fools. They have not the ability to frame opinions of their own, and so want them ready-made; a fellow with the gift of gab, who can think when he is on his feet can do as he likes with them."¹

Like Caleb Mason, Edgar Braine in Juggernaut is a poor boy who rises by his unscrupulousness to a position of great political power. He will not stop short of the greatest goal of all--the Presidency--and in his determination to have this office, he drives his wife into prostitution. He sacrifices his honor and that of his wife for power.

Both The Demagogue and Juggernaut have little to commend them. The style is verbose and flowery; the plots are dull melodrama; the characters are one-dimensional; the morals are labored. The novels of Boyesen are markedly superior to these. The Light of Her Countenance, however, is still largely romance with political digressions. The familiar picture of the disreputable political boss and his cohorts is used to illustrate the weaknesses of democracy. Julian Burroughs, cultured and educated, cannot make his way in politics.

¹Locke, The Demagogue (Boston, Lee and Shepard, 1891), pp. 105-6.

"There's one thing I never discovered before [he says to a friend], and that is that culture--nay, the possession of any talent or distinction beyond the average--~~is~~ a disqualification for public life in a democracy."¹

The author himself speaks out against the political boss in this fashion:

If our republic is ever destined to suffer shipwreck, this is the kind of ruler which universal suffrage, in a community where a majority of the electorate are ignorant, will invariably produce. He represents the true average, morally and intellectually, of the vote that upholds his power. And as soon as he shall represent, not the municipal, but the national average, we shall have him in the White House. If we permit ignorant hordes of foreigners, at the rate of half a million a year, to continue to lower this average, it is an inevitable result which no power in heaven or on earth can prevent.²

These may seem strange words to come from a man who is an immigrant himself. Boyesen, however, was not "ignorant"; he was a scholar and teacher.

These sentiments are repeated in The Mammon of Unrighteousness, a novel vastly superior to its predecessor. In a conscious effort to write realistically³ Boyesen examines the lives of two brothers--Alexander Larkin, who vows: "I mean to be true to myself--true to my convictions," and Horace Larkin, who declares: "I mean to succeed."⁴ Aleck makes an attempt to purify politics, but when he finds that in trying to elect the honest man he has been led into using the very methods he deplores in others,⁵ he withdraws from politics

¹Boyesen, The Light of Her Countenance (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1889), p. 68.

²Ibid., p. 55.

³Boyesen, The Mammon of Unrighteousness (New York: United States Book Co., 1892), preface, p. 4.

⁴Ibid., p. 5.

⁵Ibid., pp. 55-57.

completely. Horace, however, in his climb up the political ladder does not hesitate to do anything to further his career. His ambition leads him to marriage with a girl who is just as ambitious as he is, just as unscrupulous, and a little more clever. In a splendidly ironic ending, Horace discovers that the woman he married to further his own career has married him to further hers. He says:

"This American democracy of ours--what is it but the triumph of the average? Look at the men we send into public life now! Compare them to those we sent fifty or a hundred years ago; compare their very faces, and you see how the type has degenerated. What does that mean, if not that the average fool who formerly took pride in being represented by a wiser man, now prefers to be represented by as great a fool as himself? The average American, fifty years ago, was poor, and he paid the homage of admiration to greatness, moral and intellectual; but now his prosperity has turned his brain; he feels big enough to kick up his heels on his own account, and he dislikes the man whom he suspects of being his superior."¹

As an enterprising politician, Horace becomes the epitome of all the American people want in a lawmaker and reaches the depths of immorality when he quotes the Bible to justify his course.² He becomes an apologist for the American devotion to enterprise.

"Tell me, Mr. Larkin," [asks the girl who will marry him] "why do you think it is that so few of our young men of good family and education go into politics?"

"It is," Horace replied in his leisurely drawl, "because they are not fit for politics. They don't know enough."

"Why, you surprise me! Is it your opinion, then, that those individuals from the liquor saloons and the slums who do govern us are the fittest to govern?"

"No, they are deplorably unfit, but yet fitter than Anglo-maniacs and blue-blooded Knickerbockers who squander their lands in laborious and vapid amusements, in coaching,

¹Ibid., p. 7.

²Ibid., p. 240.

riding after hounds. . . . The majority of our politicians are a low-lived lot, and many of them corrupt. But they have the courage to be American--rudely and uncompromisingly American--and that is, in my eyes, a virtue which is not to be lightly rated."

"And may I ask, Mr. Larkin, what do you mean by being American?"

"Being frankly, ably enterprisingly plebeian. It is the plebeian after all, who shall inherit the earth--"

"I beg your pardon. According to the Bible it is the meek."

"I must differ with the Bible, then; for the meek, in my experience, if they inherit anything, never manage to keep it. It passes, sooner or later, into the hands of the strong, the self-assertive, the grasping. But these, as you will admit, are plebeian characteristics. A universally prosperous, comfortable, impudent, and enterprising mob--that is the goal toward which we are steering; and in my opinion it is a good and desirable one."

Robert Grant turns to the portrayal of the ambitious female in Unleavened Bread. His protest is against

. . . an increasing number of women in my native land who because of their aspirations saw themselves qualified for any opportunity; who resented special knowledge of any kind as un-American, and were hostile to, yet secretly envious of, women of more refinement and social ease.

Grant examines not only the ethics and motivations of the typical "climber" but also the political beliefs of the professing democrat, and concludes that envy of the rich is a stronger element in democratic sentiment than the belief in political equality. The ambition of Selma White and her third husband leads them into a situation of such moral chaos that the husband's desire to fulfill a promise made as a result of bribery is more ethical than Selma's complete devotion to self-interest. Selma finally forces her husband to yield to

¹Ibid., pp. 282-3.

²Robert Grant, Fourscore: An Autobiography (Boston, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1934), p. 220.

her "superior ethics,"¹ but even though she realizes her ambition to become the wife of a Senator, she never becomes a real lady. She is as unfitted for the literary society she yearns to join as Teague was for membership in the Philosophical Society; she is as unscrupulous politically as Josephine Murray. Her abilities are never equal to her ambitions. The nouveau riche, Grant indicates, will never be able to ape nobility successfully.

Boyesen and Grant are in the tradition of Cooper and Henry Adams; after close examination, the desirable virtues seem to be in the possession of the upper classes. Robert Herrick continues this exploration into the motivations and ethical standards of the self-made man but he is interested in social responsibility as well as personal ethics. The Gospel of Freedom (1898) is the search of Adela Anthon for happiness--a testing, really, of the accepted success standards of the day. Adela marries John Wilbur, a young flourishing businessman because "His every act indicated freedom, a large, hopeful way of life, full of plans and the realizing of plans by constant, swift, clever calculation."² But when she discovers that his "way of life" includes bribing of the Illinois state legislature and the governor, she finds existence with him too sordid to endure. Life as a dilettante

¹Robert Grant, Unleavened Bread (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1900), p. 427.

²Herrick, The Gospel of Freedom (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1898), p. 89.

in Europe proves exciting for awhile, but it offers no permanent satisfaction. Her final solution to the problem of how to live points up the difference between Herrick and his predecessors, Boyesen and Grant. A person, according to Herrick, must be guided not only by adherence to honesty, integrity, and the other commonly accepted virtues. Goodness involves more than simple purity of the isolated individual; it depends also upon the value of the individual to his society.¹ Adela concludes: "There are some whom I have made to suffer. . . . I must learn how to live."²

Although all of these writers are disturbed by the powers sought and assumed by the unscrupulous, there are important differences in emphasis. Locke, Eggleston, and Boyesen feel that universal suffrage, placing responsibility with uneducated, unthinking, or merely uninterested masses, breeds immorality. Grant sees ambition arising from a class of people who are uncultured, untutored, envious and frustrated; the very nature of their unsuitability for control gives rise to that determination by which they will rise to power. Similarly those with ability and education, who would be able to govern, do not have the frustrations which would drive them

¹This is also the problem considered in Herrick's Memoirs of an American Citizen (1905). Van Harrington, the businessman is the victim as he is a member of a whole society based upon a rationalized immorality. A whole new ethical scheme has been set up to accommodate the businessman and his mastery of the new continent. "That beautiful scheme of things which the fathers of our country drew up in the stage-coach days had proved itself inadequate in a short century" (p. 247).

²Herrick, The Gospel of Freedom, p. 287.

into power. Herrick, however, sees the same characteristics, the same drives in a business man, as Boyesen saw in a politician. And yet, universal suffrage cannot be blamed directly for this situation. He sees the need for a change in the whole philosophy of a generation--a change which would require that men look not only to their own internal moral rejuvenation but to their behavior toward their fellow man.

A List of Political Novels Considered in Chapter III

- Boyesen, H. H. The Light of Her Countenance (1889)
The Mammon of Unrighteousness (1892)
 Eggleston, George Cary and Dolores Marbourg. Juggernaut, A Veiled Record (1891)
 Grant, Robert. Unleavened Bread (1900)
 Herrick, Robert. The Gospel of Freedom (1898)
 Locke, David Ross. The Demagogue (1881)

CHAPTER IV

NINETEENTH CENTURY POSTSCRIPT:

THE BOSS NOVEL

In the period from 1901 to 1906 there were thirteen political novels written about the political boss. There were boss novels written before and there have been a number of them written since, but the concentration of them at this time and the homogeneity of their content deserves special consideration.

Far from being mere coincidence, the plethora of boss novels just after the turn of the century resulted from a confluence of two groups of nineteenth century ideological forces which had not before been combined in the political novel. The ideas of the first group find their roots back in post-Revolutionary America and have already been used as the ethical basis of many political novels. In this group there is, first, the belief (objected to by Brackenridge) that the ordinary man could and should aspire to political heights; secondly, there is the belief which received its impetus during the Jacksonian era--that "respectability" is suspect in a democracy. Thirdly, there is the humanitarian impulse, always strong in America. Fourthly, there is the hatred of big business. All of these ideas are central in the novels after the Civil War and are almost unanimously upheld by the

political novelists. Here in the boss novel, however, another set of ideas is joined with these--a set of ideas which had previously been seen as antithetical to the first group and which even here are implicit rather than explicit. The first of these is that the accumulation of money is desirable because of the good it can do (this is of course contrary to the Bellamy-Howells feeling that money inspires evil). The second is approval for those who have fought their way to the top of the heap--acquiescence in the survival-of-the-fittest theory. Novelists now saw that these two groups of ideas were not mutually exclusive. All could be blended in one personality--the boss.

One of the earliest boss novels, Five Hundred Majority or the Days of Tammany (1872), deals with a subject familiar to later novelists, the rule in New York City by Tammany and the Tammany boss. Written by John Ferguson Hume (under the pseudonym of Wyllis Niles), it describes in detail the cruelty and lawlessness of the machine, denounces its boss as a "tyrant"¹ and places the blame for it all on political parties as "the plague of a free people."² It contains the familiar excoriation of the politicians that we have seen to be characteristic generally of novels of that period. Solid for Mulhooley: A Sketch of Municipal Politics (1881) is a narrative rather than a novel and it delineates the rise of Michael Mulhooly

¹Hume, Five Hundred Majority (New York: G. P. Putnam and Sons, 1872), p. 93.

²Ibid., p. 121.

(with the help of the Tammany boss) from his humble birth in a one-room log hut in Ireland to Member of Congress of the United States. The familiar machine-and-boss political techniques are used: the padded ballot boxes, repeaters, vote-buying and the force of the fist and other weapons.

In these pre-twentieth century novels even the physical characteristics of the boss follow a pattern. Typical is Mr. Patrick Ballymolloy of An American Politician;¹ he was

. . . vastly more striking than attractive. He was both corpulent and truculent, and his hands and feet were of a size and thickness calculated to crush a paving-stone at a step, or to fell an ox at a blow Mr. Ballymolloy's nose . . . called vividly to mind the effect of one of those great glass bottles of reddened water, behind which apothecaries of all degrees put a lamp at dusk in order that their light may the better shine in the darkness. . . .²

Harold Payne's The Gilded Fly (1892) continues the tradition in the weirdest of all the boss novels. The narrator here allows himself to be transformed into a small dog so that he can observe at close hand the operations of the boss, Colonel Bloaker, who is a liar, philanderer and murderer.

Not until Paul Leicester Ford's The Honourable Peter Stirling (1894)³ is there any attempt to explain the conditions,

¹An American Politician is not a boss novel as I use the term here; that is, to apply to those novels in which the boss is the protagonist.

²F. Marion Crawford, op. cit., p. 220.

³Alleged to have been based on the life of Grover Cleveland. However, the similarities are few. Peter Stirling, like Cleveland, was accused of fathering an illegitimate child. Peter, self-sacrificing but completely innocent, was merely covering up for a friend. It is possible that this was what Cleveland was doing, too, as Schlesinger suggests (The Rise

economic and social, which give rise to the boss. And, since an affirmative answer would always have been assumed previously, never before is the question asked as it is in this novel: "' . . . but are bosses bad?"¹

"In every community [Peter Stirling explains] there are men who influence more or less the rest. It may be that one can only influence half a dozen other intimates. Another may exert power over fifty. A third may sway a thousand. One may do it by mere physical superiority. Another by a friendly manner. A third by being better informed. A fourth by a deception or bribery. A fifth by honesty. . . .

"Each of the men I have mentioned can usually affect an average of twenty-five votes. But now we get to another rung of the ladder. . . . They not merely have their own set of followers, but they have more or less power to dominate the little bosses of whom I have already spoken.

"Then we get another grade. Usually men of a good deal of brain force, though not of necessity well-educated. They influence all below them by being better informed, and by being more far-seeing. . . . They, too, are usually in politics for a living, and so can take the trouble to work for ends for which the men with other work have no time. They don't need the great personal popularity of those I have just mentioned, but they need far more skill and brain. . . . Naturally, in a dozen or twenty men, there will be grades, and very often a single man will be able to dominate them all, just as the smaller bosses dominate the smaller men. And this man the papers call a boss of a ward. Then when these various ward bosses endeavor to unite for general purposes, the strongest man will sway them, and be boss of the city."²

of the City, p. 399). Cleveland apparently did have an irregular liaison with a widow who gave birth to a child, the paternity of whom was uncertain. Cleveland, however, accepted the responsibility and provided for the rearing of the child (see "What We Think About It Now," The Nation, XXXIX [Aug. 7, 1884], pp. 106-7). Peter Stirling also resembles Cleveland in his insistence upon pure milk and water for poor people. As mayor of Buffalo Cleveland encouraged the board of health in its efforts to clean up dairies and close up dirty wells (see Nevins, Grover Cleveland, p. 90). Both Cleveland and Stirling married women much younger than themselves.

¹Ford, The Honourable Peter Stirling (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1894), p. 281.

²Ibid., pp. 281-282.

And that is what Peter Stirling is. Peter points out, however, that his power is derived from his ability to get people to vote for him, and if he should ever be defeated three times running, he would lose all of his power. As for bosses, Peter explains:

"I have not found them so bad. They are quite as honest, unselfish, and reasonable as the average of mankind. . . ." ¹

The Honourable Peter Stirling marks one step in the literary metamorphosis of the boss. Far from the crude, illiterate villain of the eighties, the boss which Ford creates is a gentleman after the hearts of all of those who have wanted polish, education, and complete honesty in their political leaders. Peter Stirling, though of humble beginnings, is a graduate of Harvard Law School who starts practicing among the tenement dwellers of New York City. He has never been known to take a bribe, trade a vote (much less buy one), or tell an untruth (except once, when it meant saving the reputation of a friend). Although he goes into saloons to talk to the men, he never takes a drink, and he swears only once. (When strikers ask him to disband his state guard unit for the sake of votes, he feels this calls for strong language and shouts, "Votes be damned!")

Peter Stirling is as "absolutely" upright as Alexander Larkin, but he has something that Aleck lacked: a social conscience. This was to be the distinguishing ingredient of the boss novels in the years after 1900. This was the

¹Ibid., p. 285.

criterion of morality which would threaten the place of the business man in the hearts of the American people and attempt the substitution of a new folk-hero, the political boss.

Like Peter Stirling, the new post-1900 fictional boss was popular because he promoted the interests of the common man. But, unlike Stirling he remained a common man himself. He was uncouth, unlettered, often unscrupulous. He was all that the reformers in the eighties and nineties had said he was; but he was the new knight-errant of democratic materialism. He was only one manifestation of the revolt against the old middle-class virtues. In the course of the new search for truth, not only the political boss but also the prostitute and the criminal were found to have a great deal of "good" in them. The ideals of the French Enlightenment which so influenced Jeffersonian democracy with the belief in the essential nobility of man and the value of the individual led from an emphasis on the equality of the ordinary or sub-ordinary man to a conviction of his superiority.

Thus the philosophy which had been the basis for Howells's democratic realism was now the foundation for molding the truth in a new way: it led to the gross idealization of the common man, who not in spite of his failings, but rather almost because of them, proved his preeminence; he had unmistakably severed his ties with respectability.

No longer a villain, the boss, then, became a loveable rogue; a twentieth century Robin Hood whose thieveries were on a vast scale, but whose heart was touched by the poor widow or orphan. Tom Gallegher, the boss in Drewitt's Dream (1902) says:

" . . . I made money circulate among poor voters, and in that way I made it possible for thousands of men and women to provide themselves with food and coal and clothes. And the rich people paid the taxes."¹

The reform candidate in Robertson's "If I Were a Man" (1899) admits:

" . . . I know that those who regard you [the boss Dolliver] as wholly bad wrong you; for many poor people love you. You spend your money generously, whatever may be the methods by which you get it. You stand by your friends, and you keep your promises. . . ."

In Harrison Robertson's The Opponents (1902) the politician and boss Morgan Tunstall is said to be "neither dishonest nor corrupt."³ But J. Devlin--Boss (1901) is perhaps the most extreme apologia of them all. Francis Churchill Williams states his purpose:

Jimmy, taking his beating with clenched teeth and dry eyes;
Jimmy, hurrying to the bedside of some stricken worker;
Jimmy whose face softened at the sound of a woman's voice,

¹W. L. Alden, Drewitt's Dream (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1902), p. 260. This is similar to the claim of the business man Van Harrington in Herrick's Memoirs of An American Citizen ([New York: The Macmillan Co., 1905], p. 250). The difference is that the novelists approved of or overlooked behavior in the boss which they disapproved of in the business man.

²Harrison Robertson, "If I Were a Man" (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899), p. 134.

³Robertson, The Opponents (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1902), p. 105.

and whose arms made a cradle at a baby's touch; Jimmy whose heart was over-big for his plain, strong body,-- this, as well as the Jimmy whose tireless brain wove the political destinies of a city's thousands, is the Jimmy I would have you know.

To the world he was a Boss. To a few he was a man.

That those who know of a "Jimmy" in his public character may, after reading this story, think sometimes of him as one with longings, disappointments and joys akin to their own is the wish of the Author.¹

It was an understandable reaction to the many years when most people, like the old fisherman in J. Devlin--Boss felt that "A pol'tician's a good bit like a skunk. Looks inn'cent 'nough till y' tackle him. . . ." ²

The boss is given credit not only for ministering to the material needs of his people--the picture of the boss handing out food and clothes to the poor is a familiar one in these novels--but also for being a sympathetic friend to the new and confused immigrant.³

Harvey Saylor, the boss in The Plum Tree by David Graham Phillips, has few endearing qualities; yet the author would have us feel that he has in him the mixture of qualities

¹Francis Churchill Williams, J. Devlin--Boss (Boston: Lothrop Publishing Co., 1901), foreword, p. 7.

²Ibid., p. 401.

³See Alfred Henry Lewis, Richard Croker (New York: Life Publishing Co., 1901), p. 98. Lewis also wrote The Boss (1903), a political novel based upon the life of Richard Croker. Both are sympathetic treatments.

common to all men. "In me," says Saylor, "--in every one-- there's a beast and a man."¹ Shacklett, too (in Walter Barr's Shacklett) is a mixture with a preponderance of good; a friend comments:

"It looks--like that man Shacklett--would--let go--of his life--to keep some other fellow--out of trouble. . . . He's a kind o' cross between a good woman and a devil. . . ." ²

As the boss rose in the novelists' estimation, the reformer fell. At least four novels set out to contrast the reformer and the boss: Warren's The Land of the Living, Mark Lee Luther's The Henchman (1902), Arthur Colton's Port Argent (1904), and Harrison Robertson's The Opponents (1902). If the bosses were symbols of democratic uncouthness, the reformers were symbols of aristocratic respectability. The prototypes were probably the Civil Service reformers of the nineteenth century. As one writer puts it: "What reformers really yearn for, is not so much honesty, as having fellow-gentlemen for rulers, instead of coarse-mannered fellows. . . ." ³

¹Phillips, The Plum Tree (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1905), p. 388.

²Walter Barr, Shacklett (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1901), p. 201.

³Payne, The Mills of Man, p. 293.

In The Land of the Living, Big John Callahan, the boss, and Henry Furlong, the young promising reformer, compete for the allegiance of Hugh MacDermott, an orphan whom Callahan has rescued from the street. Furlong proves to be a complete political opportunist who will not even stick by his friends, whereas Callahan's kindness never falters. The issue in the book is between "Callahan's great heart" and "the white principles of Sir Galahad,"¹ which are never put into practice. In Port Argent the theme is similar: the contrast between the man of words ("a chin-waggin' preacher") and the man of deeds ("If I wants a job, I says the word to Murphy, an' he speaks the word maybe to Hennion an' he gets me a job. . . .")² The Henchman pits Bernard Graves (writer, poet and reformer-- another man of words) against Calvin Ross Shelby, a politician who hasn't paid much attention to moral principles on his way up. When Shelby finally reaches the political heights he proves he knows what is right and will do it. He despises men like Graves who think they are "'too damned good for'" politics; "'it's the lily-fingered people of your stripe who make reform a byword and a laughing-stock.'"³ In each of these volumes a woman is asked to choose between the reformer and the

¹Maude Radford Warren, The Land of the Living (New York: Harper and Bros., 1908), p. 131.

²Arthur Colton, Port Argent (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1904), p. 71.

³Luther, The Henchman (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1902), p. 73.

politician for a husband; and in each case, though she almost succumbs to the reformer, she sees his true character in time to choose the red-blooded politician.¹

These novels serve to indicate the climate of the times and to reveal the novelist's answer to the problem: why couldn't the reformers reform? Brand Whitlock, who served as mayor of Toledo for four terms before he began writing his novels, writes that "I came to know both species pretty well, and, in the later connotations of the term, I prefer the politician. He, at least, is human."² In Colton's Port Argent it is said of the reformer: ". . . there ain't any real democracy in him . . ." and in Elliott Flower's The Spoilsman (1903) an "enlightened" reformer explains that the "average reformer" is "'so busy being honest that he hasn't time for anything else. The minor individual interests of his constituents are too insignificant to hold his attention. . . .'"³ The reformer lacked, or at least was thought to lack, the sympathy for humanity which was the backbone of

¹In The Land of the Living, the choice is actually between the reformer and the protege of the boss, but the implications are the same. Only in The Opponents does the lady wed the reformer and in that case the deciding factor is the death of the boss.

²Whitlock, Forty Years of It, p. 221.

³Flower, The Spoilsman (Boston: L. C. Page and Co., 1903), p. 223.

the boss's power. Refusing for the most part to soil his hands with politics, the reformer organized pressure groups to enact and enforce laws--especially those having to do with vice and crime--which he felt would purify government. The human needs and problems behind excessive drinking, thievery, and prostitution were not considered; the problems that remained after saloons and houses of prostitution were closed, and after baseball games were prohibited on Sundays, never occurred to many of these reformers. Their work was done.¹ In short, the feeling, largely justified, was that these were upper middle-class gentlemen trying to impose their will upon their inferiors.

Furthermore, these writers say, the reformer in office was often not as trustworthy as the politician. The politician usually prided himself on keeping his word and looking after his friends; but the reformer, probably partly because he was so new in the game, tried to please everybody and hence could be trusted by no one.² The reformer also was often a businessman who supported reform only as long as his own revenue was not interfered with. Lewis in The Boss gives us an amusing scene when three leading citizens call on Big Kennedy to discuss reform. Big Kennedy starts out as moral as anybody.

¹See, for example, Ford, The Honourable Peter Stirling, pp. 292-3; Warren, The Land of the Living, p. 157; and Whitlock, Forty Years of It, p. 239.

²This thesis was presented subsequently in Steffens, Autobiography, p. 328; and Whitlock, Forty Years of It, p. 229.

"We're not only goin' to clean up th' town, gents," said Big Kennedy unctuously, "but Tammany Hall as well. There's to be no more corruption, no more blackmail. . . ."

One reformer, a reputable old gentleman, says the first thing to go should be the gambling dens.

"Now on those points," responded the personage of real estate dubiously, "I should say that we ought to proceed slowly. You can't rid the community of vice; history shows it to be impossible."

He suggests other, more pressing needs for reform--the enforcement of sidewalk and street ordinances. This brings objections from the reputable old gentleman and they begin quarreling among themselves. When Big Kennedy suggests closing down the saloons, the wholesale grocer objects. They finally go out, leaving Big Kennedy to run the city.

"An' that's th' last we'll see of 'em," said Big Kennedy, with a laugh. "No cat enjoys havin' his own tail shut in th' door. . . ."¹

This was probably the most potent deterrent to permanent reform--this hold that business interests had over government and the hold that the lure of monetary success had over the minds of the people. This is the thesis of The Plum Tree:

"Bad for Business!"--the most potent of political slogans. And it will inevitably result some day in the concentration of absolute power, political and all other kinds, in the hands of the few who are strongest and cleverest. For they can make the people bitterly regret and speedily repent having tried to correct abuses; and the people, to save their dollars, will sacrifice their liberty. I doubt if they will, in our time at least, learn to see far enough to realize that who captures their liberty captures

¹Lewis, The Boss (New York: A. S. Barnes and Co., 1903), pp. 158-165.

them and, therefore, their dollars too.¹

For Saylor, the boss of The Plum Tree, gets his power purely through economic methods. He boasts: "The hand that holds the purse strings is the hand that rules. . . ." ² Lewis in The Boss says that the boss is "the Man with the Money" and that "money is the mainspring of practical politics."³ This is true, not only in municipal politics, as in The Boss, and in national politics, as in The Plum Tree, but also in state politics, as in The Second Generation, in which James Weber Linn explains how the lobbyist of a business concern can buy a legislature.⁴ Again, in Winston Churchill's Conis-ton, Jethro Bass first controls politics in his area because he holds most of the mortgages.

The truth is that the ordinary citizen wanted money just as much as the boss and he was deceived by the boss into thinking he was better off with the direct but uncertain handout than with honest government. As Callahan says in The Land of the Living:

¹Phillips, The Plum Tree, pp. 50-51.

²Ibid., p. 127.

³Lewis, The Boss, pp. 223-4. See pp. 246-8 for a description of how the boss and a business man could combine to make their investment pay. Lewis also stresses the economic motive in politics in another political novel, The President (1904).

⁴Linn, The Second Generation (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1902), pp. 212-215. A picture of an unusual boss is given us by Flower in The Spoilsman--a boss who shunned monetary gain and was in politics "for the fun of the thing. . . ." (p. 64) Morgan Tunstall of Robertson's The Opponents is also in politics "for the game, not for the stakes" (p. 68).

. . . in this counthry all we love is money. . . . Well, now, as long as we love money as we do, these little spasms of reform and honesty aren't worth the powder to blow them up. . . .¹

This was the truth that Lincoln Steffens was finding out during this same period. As he travelled around the United States, he was looking for the theory of government which would bring lasting reform to the cities mired in corruption. He found that reform governments would be put in, only to be thrown back out. He found in St. Louis that the people were only made angry by the exposure of corruption in their city and refused to listen; he found that a change in the system was followed by just as much corruption as before. He was forced to conclude:

. . . no one class is at fault, nor any one breed, nor any particular interest or group of interests. The misgovernment of the American people is misgovernment by the American people.²

He admits that it is the business man who is

. . . the chief source of corruption, and it were a boon if he would neglect politics. But it is not the business man that neglects politics; that worthy is the good citizen. . . . He too is busy, he is the one that has no use and therefore no time for politics. . . .³

But there is hope, not alone despair, in the commercialism of our politics. If our political leaders are to be always a lot of political merchants, they will supply any demand we may create. All we have to do is to establish a steady demand for good government.⁴

¹Warren, The Land of the Living, p. 110.

²Steffens, The Shame of the Cities (New York: McClure, Phillips and Co., 1904), p. 4.

³Ibid., p. 5.

⁴Ibid., p. 8.

He concludes that it is the politician who should be in politics with the people to "punish him when he gives bad [politics] and reward him when he gives good; make politics pay."¹

Phillips, in The Plum Tree, is perhaps the most pessimistic of ever attaining good government among a people "whose permanent ideal is wealth, no matter how got or how used." As Lewis points out in The Boss,² the people in their constant clamor for reform and their refusal to support it, were proving themselves hypocrites. Young Morton, the business man in league with the boss, explains the phenomenon to the reformer, the Reverend Bronson:

"And speaking of 'reform' as we employ the term in politics: The town, in honesty, never desires it; and that's why somebody must forever attend on 'reform' to keep it from falling on its blundering nose and knees by holding it up by the tail. . . ."³

He says New York puts in reform like a drunkard signing the pledge, and takes no notice of it thereafter. "'A rule should ever fit a people, and it ever does. . . .'"⁴

The task before those who would reform the moral standards of the people was actually one of convincing them that their best interests would be served by honest government. If the people were interested only in making money, they would

¹Ibid., p. 25. See also Ford, The Honourable Peter Stirling, pp. 291-2; and Williams, J. Devlin--Boss, p. 445.

²Pp. 380-1.

³Lewis, The Boss, pp. 382-3.

⁴Ibid., p. 383.

have to be shown that corrupt government cost them more. But there were immediate improvements which could be made in city governments. Robert Barr in The Victors (1901) defends the boss, indicating that what is really needed is a Civil Service appointment system for cities.¹ Home rule for cities was undoubtedly another worthwhile reform,² as was the new city manager type or commission type of city government. Yet the bosses could get control of these systems too, if they were allowed to do so. One thing seemed to work in one city, while another method worked in another. The general trend, in the period when getting rid of the boss seemed to be essential, was toward more direct government. This was the era of the popularization of the referendum and the recall. But as the tradition of good government grew, the swing was back again to representative government, with the power as well as the responsibility fixed in one or two men who could be removed by the people if they did not use their power rightly. There was some justification in Shacklett's pronouncement to his wife:

"That's the mistake that people make, my dear, exactly where they make a mistake. They try to stop the machine when they ought to use it for their own ends. . . ."³

¹Barr, The Victors (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co., 1901), p. 536. George Washington Plunkitt believes that civil service reform is hard on the boss and his spoils system, declaring that "civil service is sappin' the foundation of the whole shootin' match" (William L. Riordan, Plunkitt of Tammany Hall [New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1943], p. 18).

²See Whitlock, Forty Years of It, p. 211.

³Walter Barr, Shacklett, p. 335.

But while these novelists as well as other muckrakers, were partially responsible for changes in the national moral climate, at the same time they were, not surprisingly, victims of it. For is not their new-found admiration for the political boss an admiration for his power and a part of the nation-wide worship of the strong man which had previously had the businessman as its object?¹ Was not the boss the supreme example of the rags-to-riches legend? Wealthy, powerful, philanthropic, he had, however, never become pretentious or snobbish.² He was, in fact, Robin Hood, Horatio Alger and Andrew Jackson all rolled into one.

In reality, the novelists in these volumes, while condemning the businessman, give their approval to the methods by which the businessman reached success,³ for there can be no clearer example of the application of the jungle law to civilization than the rise of a boss. The politician of the earlier novels was controlled by the money of the business man; he was a hireling. Here he has become a big business man himself. The typical careers are traced in Lewis's The Boss, Phillips's The Plum Tree; Williams's J. Devlin--Boss, Warren's The Land of the Living, Walter Barr, Shacklett, Robertson's The Opponents, and Churchill's Coniston. The evidence in

¹See Grant C. Knight, The Strenuous Age in American Literature (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1954), which points out the emphasis on the "strong man" in literature between 1900 and 1910.

²I refer, of course, to the boss in fiction.

³Richard Hofstadter (Social Darwinism in American Thought) shows the extent to which the "survival of the fittest" theory permeated American life.

these novels is corroborated by such contemporary non-fictional accounts as Lewis's biography, Richard Croker (1901); Henry Champernowne's The Boss (1894), which pretends to be a handbook for bosses; and William L. Riordon's Plunkitt of Tammany Hall (1905), which is a series of comments by Boss Plunkitt recorded by a contemporary newsman. As Old Mike says in Lewis's The Boss:

"Politics is a game where losers lose all; it's like war, sure, only no one's kilt--at any rate, not so many."¹

Old Mike's successor, Big John Kennedy, gives his successor in turn the following advice:

"Think first, last, an' all th' time of yourself. You may not be of account to others, but you're the whole box of tricks to yourself. . . ."²

The boss of a big city, then, was one who had survived a good deal, and had beaten his competitors in the field physically and logistically. Lewis feels that Richard Croker is worth writing about because he is "the most potential figure of the greatest city of the greatest state of the greatest country of the world. . . ."³ In Linn's The Second Generation, the publisher Northrop spends a lifetime trying to beat the boss Chris Wheeler. After Wheeler dies, Northrop says of him:

¹p. 69.

²Lewis, The Boss, p. 209. See the statement by the "reformed" reformer Adee in Colton's Port Argent (p. 311): "Men are brothers by blood or interest, but for the rest they fight the old war that began before the earth had a decent crust to cover its chaos. Brotherhood of wildcats!"

³Lewis, Richard Croker, p. xv.

"He was a strong man--a terribly strong man. . . . I¹ never could have beaten him; he had to beat himself."

Shacklett is an example of the strong man who wins not only in politics but in love. Mary Stoddard chooses to marry Shacklett, whose moral principles are somewhat wobbly, rather than the upright minister of the Gospel, because Shacklett has more potentiality. She feels that she can persuade him to use his "'power and privileges for good.'"² In Churchill's Coniston, Cynthia Ware--young, tender, refined--falls in love with Jethro Bass, the uneducated, coarse country boss. She was in love "with Strength, in the crudest form in which it is created, perhaps, but yet with Strength. The strength might gradually and eventually be refined. . . ." ³ The same quality appeals later to Cynthia Wetherell, Cynthia Ware's daughter: "Even as he [Jethro] was speaking a thrill of admiration ran through Cynthia, piercing her sorrow. The superb strength of the man was there in that simple confession, and it is in the nature of woman to admire strength."⁴

In the boss novel, the complete triumph of the common man is celebrated.⁵ The aristocrat--the gentleman with his

¹P. 291.

²Walter Barr, Shacklett, p. 348.

³Churchill, Coniston (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1925), p. 44.

⁴Ibid., p. 393.

⁵The type has recently appeared in modern dress: Edwin O'Connor's The Last Hurrah (1956). Frank Skeffington is a bit more complicated and more sophisticated than these early types, but the basic elements are still there: Frank is hard, clever, but kind to the poor, whence comes his power.

disdain for the material and his love for culture, propriety, and literacy--has been removed from politics by the novelist. It was only a short step to the removal of the novelist himself from any alliance with formal education, genteel society or even polished literary style, so that he could pursue his study of the common man free of either bias or the suspicion of it.

A List of Political Novels Considered in Chapter IV

- Alden, W. L. Drewitt's Dream (1902)
 Barr, Robert. The Victors (1901)
 Barr, Walter. Shacklett (1901)
 Churchill, Winston. Coniston (1906)
 Colton, Arthur. Port Argent (1904)
 Flower, Elliott. The Spoilsmen (1903)
 Ford, Paul Leicester. The Honourable Peter Stirling (1894)
 Hume, John Ferguson. Five Hundred Majority (1872)
 Lewis, Alfred Henry. The Boss (1903)
 Linn, James Weber. The Second Generation (1902)
 Luther, Mark Lee. The Henchman (1902)
 [Payne, Harold] The Gilded Fly (1892)
 Phillips, David Graham. The Plum Tree (1905)
 Robertson, Harrison. "If I Were a Man" (1899)
 . The Opponents (1902)
 [Shapley, Rufus E.] Solid for Mulhooly (1881)
 Warren, Maude Radford. The Land of the Living (1908)
 Williams, Francis Churchill. J. Devlin--Boss (1901)

PART THREE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

CHAPTER I

AMERICAN POLITICS AND THE AMERICAN POLITICAL NOVEL:

A SUMMARY

The Political Novel and Its Milieu

The preceding pages have indicated the reaction of political novelists to American political movements and to personal pressures in enough detail, I hope, to indicate how complex such movements are and how inadequate the word "reaction" is to describe the associations between a writer and his culture. It should be understood, of course, that the novelist both as writer and as citizen is helping to create the culture which is in turn exerting its influence on him and that this process is constant and indivisible. If we keep in mind the dangers involved in over-simplifying the influences between writer and environment, we may proceed to a summary of the ideas of the period which, though it sacrifice nuances, will contribute to clarity and provide a necessary background for the final discussion of the place of the political novel in American letters. Let us then consider in brief the philosophical and political milieu of the period and the response of the novelists to it and secondarily the probabilities of the success of their novels as didactic instruments--that is, their influence upon political history.

It is not uncommon for political, economic and literary historians, seeing a marked change between the attitudes and ideas of the nineteenth century and those of the twentieth, to consider 1900 or thereabouts as marking the beginning of the modern temper.¹ After the prejudice of the human mind in favor of dealing with round centuries has been recognized, there still seems to be considerable justification for such a division. Philosophically nineteenth century America was a child of the Enlightenment. The organization of a new government offered an opportunity to put into practice on a large scale the ideas of John Locke and Jean Jacques Rousseau. From English and French political theorists (Locke and Rousseau in particular) came certain seminal ideas which found in the new country an environment favorable to their propagation. From Locke came the idea of the "social compact" theory of government, by which he meant that men joined together to form governments in order to preserve certain natural rights belonging to them and specifically the rights of life, liberty and property. Since the government was formed voluntarily by the people, they could at any time dissolve it and form another.²

¹Some examples: Parrington, *op. cit.*; Henry Steele Commager, *The American Mind*; Harlan Hatcher, *Creating the Modern American Novel*; Fred Lewis Pattee, *The New American Literature*; Claude R. Flory, *Economic Criticism in American Fiction*; Walter Fuller Taylor, *The Economic Novel in America*.

²William Kelley Wright, *A History of Modern Philosophy* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1941), p. 167.

In Locke also appeared the ideas of equality in a state of nature and separation of governmental powers which were to find their way into the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. The idea of property rights, particularly the rights of a man to possession of land which he has enclosed and tilled, can be traced back to Locke.

Perhaps even more influential in the new country were the thinking and personality of Rousseau. His Social Contract (1762) recognizes the political rights of every citizen; laws to protect "natural rights" are imposed by the people themselves.¹ Primary in his thinking was the belief in the innate goodness of man and in his perfectibility, with its attendant idea of progress. No less important was Rousseau's primitivism or "noble-savage" conception.² All of these ideas were particularly congenial to a frontier society. Not only did they bolster the self-respect and self-confidence of the ordinary citizen, they could give rise to the suspicion that the frontiersman was even better than his sophisticated countryman; that farmers, being closer to Mother Nature, were closer to God; that the outdoor life was to be preferred to the indoor; that the unpolished, uncouth citizen was likely to be

¹Ibid., pp. 236-7.

²In the English romantic poets, and specifically in Wordsworth this primitivism of course gives rise to a respect for the speech of humble folk, to a revolt in general against the artificialities of civilization and to a return to nature. (see the discussion on this subject in David Daiches, Literature and Society [London, Victor Gollancz, Ltd., 1938], pp. 188-9).

more honest than the man encumbered with the artifices of society. There were even philological repercussions. A word like "rugged," which originally meant "uncouth, unpolished, lacking refinement" could come colloquially to mean "strong, powerful, healthy, robust."¹ And, because education was associated with civilization, it could give rise to the idea (which Rousseau, being a strong advocate of education, would never have harbored) that the ignorant man (or writer, or politician) was superior to the educated one.

These are some of the ramifications of a philosophy which was the very foundation of a democratic government.

But there was another major influence upon American politics in the nineteenth century: English liberal thought as formulated by Adam Smith in The Wealth of Nations (1776) and by subsequent members of the school. Here the emphasis was not upon a land-based economy but upon industrialism. Self-interest was seen to be the chief motivation of mankind; and a laissez faire governmental attitude toward industry prevailed. Since both the French Enlightenment and English liberal thought were individualistic and opposed (for slightly different reasons) to governmental interference, it is not difficult to see why socialism made little headway in the United States until the twentieth century.

Jefferson's thinking is heavily weighted not only with the ideas of Locke and Rousseau but also with those of

¹The Winston Dictionary (College ed., 1945), p. 855.

the French Physiocrats. The salient points of Physiocratic theory which Jefferson adopted are (1) the emphasis upon individual rights, (2) a belief that land is the source of wealth, and (3) adherence to the doctrine of laissez faire, laissez passer. (The Physiocratic advocacy of a single tax on land was to turn up later in the writings of Henry George.) Besides these ideas, Jefferson believed in political control by an aristocracy of the able and intelligent who would govern in the best interests of the masses. Under Andrew Jackson the theory of democracy was broadened; property rights for voting were abolished and universal manhood suffrage was established. And with the infusion of hoi polloi into governmental positions, the rights of the people to govern as well as to choose their governors was established.

The combination of universal suffrage, demagoguery, materialism, and self-interest snowballed into a mad rush for money which reached almost intolerable proportions after the Civil War. The laissez faire principle was largely abandoned as government was enlisted in the aid of a burgeoning industrialism.

In general political novelists in the nineteenth century upheld the ideals of political equality, humanitarianism, and agrarianism of the Enlightenment. They abhorred the materialism, acquisitiveness, political corruption of the age; and although some shrank from the excesses of the mob, they loathed the mercantile interests to such an extent that they were driven to an alliance with the democracy. Bracken-

ridge championed universal suffrage but worked to control the inflammatory populace by demanding strict adherence to laws and constitutions. Cooper, early a proponent of equal political rights and agrarianism, came more and more to stress the importance of property rights over personal rights. Of the other early novelists, Paulding retained his equalitarianism most consistently while Kennedy remained the spokesman for the mercantile classes.

As the business interests rose to power in the North, Calhoun was leading the South in a similar direction. Rejecting the humanitarian and equalitarian ideals of Jeffersonian agrarianism, he retained from the old Virginia traditions only the belief in a weak central government and developed from it the theory that individual states have the power to nullify acts of the Federal Government. He discarded French romantic theory to advocate a democratic state patterned after the ancient Greeks in which slavery, far from being a moral and political evil, was seen to be "the most safe and stable basis for free institutions in the world."¹ Nathaniel B. Tucker's The Partisan Leader is the fictional embodiment of Calhoun's ideas.

Meanwhile the ideals of the Enlightenment which had been nourished in New England by the transcendentalists, by romantic poets and by Free Soilers had taken the popular form of abolitionism, choking out realistic protestations by some

¹Quoted in Parrington, op. cit., II, 80.

New England merchants who could see nothing but profit in the slave trade. John Brown, a rather pathetic and misguided radical, became the symbol of liberty, equality, and fraternity. After the conflict, one of the most famous American carpetbaggers, Albion W. Tourgee, recorded the largely unsuccessful efforts of a northern missionary to revive the democratic faith in the section of its birth.

In the years after the Civil War the ideals of the Enlightenment all but perished. The abolitionists had completed their mission and had retired to find such non-political outlets for their idealism as the propagation of Unitarianism or the cultivation of genteel society. Industrialization was proceeding apace and with it a new ethic provided by the English eighteenth century liberals. Progress was enthroned and its handmaidens were acquiescence in speculation and pursuit of self-interest. The theory of laissez faire had been altered slightly to allow the government to lend its aid to certain groups--specifically the industrialists; for, what was good for industry was good for America. The publication of Darwin's Origin of Species (1859) and Herbert Spencer's First Principles (1860-62) lent credence to the view that those who survived the dog-eat-dog melée were the fittest. An unrestrained spirit of economic optimism prevailed. Here the political novelists part company with the prevailing ideals of the times.

It was difficult for men nurtured by the romantic idealism of the new country to find the great democratic dream

of the founding fathers subverted by a money-mad middle class. Democracy had seemed to be the best possible governmental system and it was not working. Mark Twain, John W. De Forest and Henry Adams could really see no way to end the orgy of materialism. Through their novels they chided their fellow countrymen, criticized governmental corruption, speculation, and capitalism, but they held out little hope for improvement. Their reaction, finally, to the ebullient optimism of their contemporaries was withdrawal and pessimism. Other gentlemen on the upper fringes of the middle class called for a return to the simple virtues of honesty, courage, patriotism and devotion to duty on the part of citizens and their elected representatives; they held out some hope for improvement by reform of the Civil Service system.

In the 1880's it became apparent to large groups of the citizenry that elimination of corruption in government was not sufficient to eliminate the inequalities that seemed incompatible with the traditional American dream. As Howells put it:

. . . after fifty years of optimistic content with "civilization" and its ability to come out all right in the end, I now abhor it, and feel that it is coming out all wrong in the end, unless it bases itself anew on a real equality.¹

Business men amassed large fortunes while the men who worked for them were near starvation. If a business man closed down

¹Quoted in Alfred Kazin, On Native Grounds (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1956), p. 5.

his factory for a few months to create shortages which would in turn bring about higher prices, hundreds of men might be thrown out of work. But under the rationale encouraged by Spencer and in turn by his American disciple John Fiske this was nature's way of eliminating the unfit in the battle of life. If the farmers were at the mercy of the Eastern bankers who manipulated prices and of the railroads which fixed rates to their own advantage, they were consoled by the reminder that this was progress. But the suspicion grew that something was wrong with the system; the diagnoses indicate the dichotomy of philosophies in the last decade of the century. Farmers and laborers clung on the one hand to the old agrarianism and on the other hand to the forces of socialism.

The farmers held that the government was now helping those who required help least--the business interests. What was needed was a return to a true laissez faire. Government should go back to its old function of mere policeman. Others felt that free competition was thoroughly discredited. One theorist wrote,

It is rather late in the day to talk of "open competition" as a panacea for all social ills. Those who really wish to trust to Natural Selection in its original form, which operates by the extinction of the unfit, must be ready to strip the human race of all the painfully won results of civilisation and to return, first to barbarism, and then to a general scramble for nuts in the primeval forest--out of which scramble, however, Natural Selection, in its gradually ascending forms, would some day build up civilised society again. Open competition might give results of some value if every one were to start fair, run on his own legs and carry equal weight; but open competition between one man in a sack with a bundle on his shoulders, another on a good horse, and a third in an

express train is a farce, and a somewhat cruel one, when the race is being run for dear life.¹

There were many who saw some kind of socialism as the answer. The Christian socialists took the ethical approach; heavily imbued with humanitarianism they tried to persuade the rich of their obligations to the poor and went back to the founder of Christianity for pronouncements on the virtues of having material goods in common. Some were willing to settle for the right of employees to share in industrial profits (e. g., Tourgee in Murvale Eastman). Edward Bellamy and the Utopians discarded selfishness and competition as tenable motivations and devised a society in which "there is absolutely no way in which an official, however ill-disposed, could possibly make any profit for himself or any one else by a misuse of his power."² Although these movements were largely middle class in origin, there was an attempt to make their countrymen aware of the plight of the laboring man; cooperatively owned industries were suggested (as in Francis A. Adams' The Transgressors).

Despite infiltration of the ideas of Darwin, Spencer, Laurence Gronlund and to some extent Karl Marx, the hand of Jefferson lay heavy upon the pens of the protesters. Bellamy with his democratic and peaceful evolution to a social state in which there is only one class--and that middle class and

¹David Ritchie, Darwinism and Politics (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1895), p. vi.

²Bellamy, Looking Backward, p. 61.

somewhat genteel, seemed closer to Brook Farm and Fourier than to Karl Marx and his proletarian class struggle.¹ Henry George harked back to the Physiocrats and "throughout his writings ran a strong current of democratic sympathy and democratic idealism."² Deterministic ideas, whether inspired by Darwin or merely left over from Deism or Calvinism, were optimistic and Christian. Julian Leete recalls the lines from Tennyson's "Locksley Hall":

For I doubt not through the ages one increasing purpose
runs,
And the thoughts of men are widened with the process of
the suns.³

The President of the Kansas Alliance, Mr. Greene of The Graftons, concludes:

. . . somehow I've an idea that affairs move on a regular plan. Each man only sees one act in the play and can't make head or tail to it; he only reads one chapter in the story and thinks the villain is having too good a time of it and that the good men and women are not sufficiently appreciated, but my notion is that when we are able to read the book clear through we'll see that things are managed for us.⁴

God is the determining force, but his instrument is the people--"the voice of the people [is] the voice of God."⁵

¹For a different opinion see Russell Blankenship, American Literature as an Expression of the National Mind (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1931), p. 420.

²Charles Edward Merriam, American Political Ideas (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1920), p. 43.

³Bellamy, Looking Backward, p. 150.

⁴Rogers, The Graftons, p. 70.

⁵Ibid., p. 107.

Howells abhors strikes and other evidences of class struggle and recommends that "the working-men stop fighting, and get down to voting."¹ Equality and humanitarianism are the bases for the ethics and politics of these novels. Like Jefferson, Howells saw the agrarian life as the great equalizer and ennobler; it brought men closer together and closer to god. Mr. Homos remarks:

"If it can be said that one occupation is honored above another with us, it is that which we all share, and that is the cultivation of the earth. We believe that this when not followed slavishly, or for gain, brings man into closest relations to the Deity. . . ."

Rogers in The Graftons makes the faith explicit:

Deep down in the nature of every man there exists a chord of sympathy, which responds to the slightest manifestation of genuine interest in his welfare. All own its power. It exists; the heart of man does beat in sympathy with that of his fellow and upon this hangs the hope of humanity. And this bond of brotherhood, of sympathy, depends upon no external aid. It is not the creature of custom or of man made, or priestly law; it is a natural force inherent in the nature of man and beast. . . .²

The Populist movement attempted to harness two horses going in opposite directions: the spirit of the nineteenth century and the spirit of the twentieth. Although agrarianism held the reins, the twentieth century forces of proletarian socialism, environmental determinism were starting to assert themselves. Many of the men involved belonged wholly to the nineteenth or wholly to the twentieth. Some like Howells, and to a lesser extent Garland, were microcosms of the period,

¹A Traveler from Altruria, p. 155.

²Ibid., p. 195.

³p. 27.

embodying its conflicting forces. Admitting that he was a "theoretical Socialist and a practical aristocrat"¹ Howells indicated both the limits of his socialism and his ties with an earlier era.² Although it ceased to be a force in American politics after 1896, Populism broke ground for socialism in the twentieth century and prepared the way for progressivism. The concept of the welfare state was on its way to acceptance and disputes henceforth would be over amounts and degrees of governmental aid and regulation. While the farmer receded as an organized political force, the laborer rose. With the twentieth century the ideas of Marx would modify those of Darwin, Spencer, Bellamy and Jefferson. Economic determinism would absorb social Darwinism and displace the belief in the inevitability of progress based upon reason; Christianity would yield in many cases to agnosticism; governmental intervention in the economy would supersede the old individualism; optimism and hope would give way to doubt and sometimes to pessimism and despair.

¹Kazin, op. cit., p. 2.

²Substituting "democrat" for "socialist" would not the phrase have fitted Cooper, Brackenridge and other early patri-cians? Like much humanitarianism, Howells's seems prompted in large part by a sense of guilt--induced perhaps because he had been privileged to escape from the dullness and poverty of life in the Middle West. Hamlin Garland, known in the eighties and nineties as a radical, was even less of one than Howells, for whom the single-tax theory did not go far enough. Garland's impetus to reform perished partly because agrarianism was doomed in an industrial society, partly because his stimulus was the guilt he felt when he left his family to waste their lives on the prairies. His expiation was both public and private: he served time in the People's party and he eventually delivered his family from their life of grim toil and poverty and settled them in Wisconsin.

And yet the spirit of the nineteenth century did not of course suddenly cease to influence the thinking of men. In its equalitarian extremes it held that the common man was as entitled (if not more entitled) to hold public office and political power as the aristocrat. This idea was carried to its logical culmination in a group of novels written shortly after the turn of the century. In the boss novel Jacksonian democracy is wedded to social Darwinism. From Teague O'Regan has evolved Richard Croker. In revolting against the celebration of the businessman, these novelists have fallen victim to the ideology they pretend to condemn; they present for our approval an embodiment of antitheses: an equalitarian superman, a self-serving altruist, an honest thief, a ruthless humanitarian, a tender ruffian, a civilized barbarian.

The Impact of the Political Novel Upon Society

In the preceding pages I have considered the climate of ideas in the nineteenth century which helped to condition the political novelists. As I have said, it is not to be supposed that this conditioning was a one-way process; every novel, assuming it is read at all, probably has some influence, however minuscule. Nevertheless it is easier to see and assess the affect of the larger force upon the smaller; it is far easier to see that the tree is swayed by the wind than it is to judge how the wind is deflected by the tree.

Critical commentaries have had little to say about the impact of the political writer upon his times. Albert

Guerard in his study Literature and Society devotes one short chapter to the consideration of the "Influence of Literature Upon Life"¹ while the book as a whole attempts to answer the question, "to what extent is Literature conditioned by Society?"² Joseph Blotner (The Political Novel) gives some promise of dealing with the problem in his chapter entitled "The Novel as Political Instrument" but he is concerned only with content, not with effect. Individual biographers, too, have generally preferred to ignore this side of the coin. Although Robert E. Spiller's biographical treatment of Cooper³ is subtitled Critic of His Times and presents Cooper's social criticism in detail, the impact of the criticism in his novels upon society is largely ignored. The same is true of Claude M. Newlin's biography of Brackenridge. Similarly histories of the novel fail almost entirely to deal with the influences of novelists upon their culture.

When one considers the problems involved in arriving at conclusions that are more than mere conjecture, it is not surprising that this problem of impact has been avoided. How, for example, is one to separate the influence of a man's writings from his total influence, personal and literary? How is one to assess the influence of a man's political novels

¹Pp. 336-354.

²Ibid., p. vii.

³Fenimore Cooper, Critic of His Times (New York: Minton, Balch and Co., 1931).

apart from his other writings? These are the questions which occur particularly in connection with the political novels of Howells, who was writing editorially as well as fictionally and whose personal influence upon contemporary writers probably counted for more than the influence of his fiction itself. The problem is equally intricate in a consideration of Cooper. His neighborhood relationships, publicized as they were by the newspapers, no doubt got a wider hearing than the ideas in his political novels.

Furthermore, how is one to separate the influence of one man from the influence of his like-thinking contemporaries? How is one to decide how Looking Backward, Progress and Poverty or the speeches of Mary Ellen Lease ranked in the hierarchy of influences? This of course really brings us back to the original problem--how to separate the influence of the era upon the man from the influence of the man upon his times.

The final problem in this series seems to be--how, at last, does one measure this kind of influence? The immediate answer would seem to be that influence is sometimes indiscernible and always immeasurable to any degree of preciseness. Nevertheless this problem of impact upon culture should at least be considered, especially in the case of the political novel. For influence, reform, effect were their raison d'etre.

There are, it is clear, certain aids in determining the importance of these novels in the affairs of society. One of the first that comes to mind is the number of copies sold.

On this score, the political novels did rather poorly. In the cases of Cooper, Howells, Garland, Kennedy and Mark Twain, their political novels were less popular than their other works. Few political novels made the best-seller lists before 1900. Looking Backward, of course, did well with more than 558,000 copies sold.¹ Donnelly's Caesar's Column sold very well in its first year (60,000 copies), but then dropped out of sight.² Robert Grant's Unleavened Bread appears on best seller lists for 1900.³ Leading all best seller lists is In His Steps with eight million copies sold; but this novel is political only by considerable extension of the term. Of the problem novel in the eighties and nineties, Hart comments:

What the public evidently wanted was neither brooding nor melodrama, nor even, if Garland's work is sufficient indication, any one isolated program. With social problems confronting them at every turn, the people who read novels seemed to want complete escape into romance, a combination of romance and serious consideration of religious beliefs, or the treatment of one embracing solution to all problems.⁴

One political novel which satisfied some of these popular requirements was Paul Leicester Ford's Peter Stirling, which sold very poorly at first until a bookseller began to spread the word that it was modeled after the life of Cleveland; after

¹Alice Payne Hackett, Fifty Years of Best Sellers, 1895-1945 (New York: R. R. Bowker Co., 1945).

²James D. Hart, The Popular Book (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950), p. 172.

³Hackett, op. cit.

⁴Hart, op. cit., p. 169.

that 228,000 copies were sold. By 1945 it had gone into seventy-six printings with more than a half a million copies sold.¹ There is no proof, however, that it caused the public to look more tolerantly upon bosses or that it helped to get pure milk and water for the poor.

Another test of the influence of a political novel is whether the reform which the author is promoting is actually initiated. Few novelists have obtained the dramatic results that Upton Sinclair got with The Jungle. On the whole the nineteenth century political novel did not appear so successful. Brackenridge died happy in the thought that his novel had caused standards to rise in the legislatures and made the people less susceptible to demagoguery; but fifteen years after his death, Andrew Jackson was elected President. Cooper warned of the moral bankruptcy of an acquisitive society, and, although his fears were well-grounded, his warnings were mere preludes to the Great Barbecue.

The only single political novel that gives evidence in these areas of affecting its environment is Looking Backward, which resulted in the founding of a political party and in organization of groups which exerted pressure on other political parties. Its effect was no doubt far-reaching and long-lasting. Moreover it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the Populist novels--economic and political--in the aggregate played some role in the perpetuation of the People's

¹Hackett, op. cit.

party and in the education of the farmers to the need for political reform.¹ The novels in the latter part of the century had the advantage that more people could read and were reading; and further, and more to the point, the people to whom they were directed were reading them. Brackenridge, apprehensive of the excesses of democracy, was read and appreciated largely by those who were in sympathy with his ideas. And although the word got around about the subject matter in Cooper's novels, these reports provided him with enemies rather than converts--an influence of a kind, to be sure.

But where was the American Zola--Tolstoy--Ibsen? Are there no large figures in the realm of the political novel? A search in the nineteenth century for political novelists of wide and permanent effect on our culture is on the whole fruitless. In this large sense I think it would have to be said that the influence of individual American political writers in the nineteenth century was negligible. It may be, after all, true to say, as Guerard has said, that America has produced few figures in any area of literature who have had a profound effect on our society. After pointing out the extensive influence of the literary man on public affairs in France, England and Germany

¹Edward L. Cassady ("Muckraking in the Gilded Age," American Literature, XIII [May, 1941], 139) writes: "There can be little doubt that such literature as this played an important part in fomenting popular agitation that resulted in passing the Sherman Antitrust Law of 1890, just as the later muckraking literature, continuing the attack on monopoly, helped to bring to pass the Clayton Act of 1914."

he concludes: "America is the country where literary fame is most completely divorced from political authority."¹ Certainly there is nothing in the history of the American political novel in the nineteenth century to weaken his conclusion. If the political novel in this period had any noteworthy influence it is probable that it was in the realm of literature rather than of politics.

¹Guerard, op. cit., p. 342.

CHAPTER II

AMERICAN LITERATURE AND THE AMERICAN POLITICAL NOVEL

The Use of the Didactic

Perhaps the only safe generalization that can be made about the political novels of the nineteenth century is that they are all didactic or polemic; that is, the purpose of the writers is either to protest against some contemporary political injustice and/or to advocate a change in existing political institutions or conditions. I do not mean to say that this was the only purpose of the novelists whose works have been discussed in these pages or even in many cases the primary purpose. But no matter how peripheral the political element, it is never introduced unless it is accompanied by the author's views on some political issue of the day. Admittedly it is difficult to write a political novel without doing this, almost as difficult as it is to write a purely objective novel of any kind. But let us say, at least, that it is possible to write a political novel without recommending how the reader should cast his ballot at the next election, how the Congress should act with respect to free trade, or why socialism should be adopted as a form of government. Politics could be used as the milieu for a novel of manners (De Forest approached this type in Playing the Mischief; Adams was less successful in Democracy); a political figure could have been

studied as comment on the larger problems of mankind (as in Robert Penn Warren's All the King's Men). Why, then, were political novels in this period so limited, immediate and direct with their "message"?

The first reason which must be considered is a historical one. Didacticism has had a long history in prose fiction, from Bunyan and Defoe to Fielding and Richardson; sometimes the element has been incorporated to forestall criticism; sometimes it has been self-imposed. Often it has been a rationale devised to soothe the Puritanical conscience of both reader and writer--to provide both uplift and pleasure--and thus, incidentally, to reach the goal of the novelist, a wide audience.¹ Early novelists in America not only followed the English traditions but had a similar problem to face--the censure of "respectable" folk. Consequently didacticism (usually mixed with sentimentalism) established itself early in native American literature.

For the second reason we must look both to the novel writers and to tradition. The men writing political novels, as we have seen, were those who were educated--in short, men of the patrician class, such as Henry Adams, Fenimore Cooper, and John Pendleton Kennedy, a group which after the inauguration of Andrew Jackson was largely eliminated from active political participation; what they saw of political life, they could not

¹The tradition of didacticism in the English novel is discussed, for example, in Gordon Hall Gerould, The Patterns of English and American Fiction (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1942), Ch. VII.

approve. The only reason, therefore, for writers like Cooper and Kennedy to turn to politics was their profound desire to educate their fellowmen politically. Furthermore, these men after 1830 were, like their literary colleagues, writing largely romance; and the uncouth, unsophisticated, and often unmannerly politician did not have a place in romantic fiction unless he played the role of villain.¹

Later in the century the politician made his way into the novel without being derogatorily treated when the onus of corruption had shifted to the businessman and when those whose very existence had been threatened by the alliance between business and politics began to write novels. But the novel was still didactic; indeed didacticism was the very reason for the existence of these novels also, for had these writers not been desperate in their desire for reform, most of them would never have put pen to paper.

The Form of the Political Novel

The American political novel, then, became early a vehicle for propaganda and remained so until the end of the nineteenth century and even thereafter. What is the relationship between this political (didactic) novel and the development of the American novel in the nineteenth century? Just as

¹Of course, though current literary styles do influence writers, they do not bind them; so, it is only partly true to say, as I have said, that these men were not dealing with the contemporary scene because they were living in a period dominated by the romance. For it is also true that they were writing romance precisely because they were not interested in the sordid details of the lives of their more common countrymen.

the history of the American novel in this period includes the rise of realism and the decline of romanticism,¹ so the political novel, in the main, follows this pattern. Always, however, the political novelist has his special problem--the inculcation of the moral--which he, consciously or unconsciously, has to integrate into the form of his novel. In the process of assessing the success or failure of this integration, we shall discover, I think, the role of the political novel in the last century.

Brackenridge's first choice of form for the attempt to enlighten his fellow democrats was *Hudibrastics*, which had been successfully used for didactic poetry in England. His talents were more suited to prose, however, and his second choice, satire within the framework of the picaresque novel, was a happier one. Had Brackenridge remained within this convention, Modern Chivalry would probably occupy a higher place in literary history. As it progresses, however, Brack-

¹This seems to be the conventional generalization; e. g., Harlan Hatcher, Creating the Modern American Novel; Harry Hartwick, The Foreground of American Fiction; Grant C. Knight, The Critical Period in American Literature; Fred L. Pattee, The New American Literature; Alfred Kazin, On Native Grounds; to name a few. Most of these men of course are careful at the same time to point out that if romanticism declined it did not die; in fact, it appeared in a virile form in the works of Frank Norris. And while we speak of the decline of romanticism at the end of the century, we must keep in mind what William Lyon Phelps sees as the enthronement of realism, circa 1882-4, and the subsequent romantic revolution climaxed by "the Romantic Revival of 1884-1904" (Introduction to Essays by Robert Louis Stevenson (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1918), p. xi.)

enridge bothers less and less with plot, finding it simpler, apparently, to dispense with narrative trappings and to become a straightforward essayist. If it is easier for the author it is harder on the reader, and the early Farrago-Regan adventures remain the most delightful parts of the novel.

Another possible vehicle for the conveyance of political sentiments was of course allegory. As Wilson Follett has written, allegory is fictional didacticism in its purest form: "it is in essence a set of convictions given shape as dramatis personae. . . ."¹ The political allegories written by Hopkinson and Belknap are the simplest kind; Belknap's amounts merely to the substitution of one set of names for another. Read John Bull for the King of England; his wife for Parliament, and so on. The Monikins is more subtle and more intricate, as is Quodlibet. Yet The Monikins is dull, and Quodlibet, for all its sprightliness, is only a period piece.

There was, too, the possibility of combining politics and romance,² and these are the ingredients of the majority

¹Wilson Follett, The Modern Novel (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1918), p. 127.

²Cooper also tried the historical romance as a political vehicle with more success than he attained in his other political novels. Although critics have been unkind to The Bravo and The Headsman, he lectures less in them, allowing the characters and the story to illustrate the political theme. Edward Bellamy used the historical novel in a similar way in The Duke of Stockbridge in which he describes the desperation of the farmers of Massachusetts which led to Shays's Rebellion in the hope that his readers would see a contemporary parallel in the plight of the farmers West of the Mississippi. Except for these novels, I have not considered the historical novel.

of the political novels in the nineteenth century. The most common way of delivering the "message" is for the author to choose one of the characters, usually the protagonist, to be his mouthpiece. This method, which Cooper uses in The Redskins, leads too frequently to long monologues or dialogues which disturb the narrative and annoy the reader.

In the political romance something close to allegory is often obtained when characters are "assigned" roles corresponding to current political types. It is the old morality play come again. The villain (devil) can be either the political boss,¹ the businessman,² or the lobbyist.³ Not many of the writers were as conscious of writing allegory as De Forest was in Honest John Vane, in which Darius Dorman is described as though he has just emerged from the fires of Hell and is referred to as "the Mephistopheles of the lobby" and in which the author draws parallels between his own work and Pilgrim's Progress.⁴ In general, whether they can be dignified by the

¹General Belch in Curtis's Trumps (1861); Barton Sechrist in Hume's Five Hundred Majority (1872); Michael Mulhoolly in Shapley's Solid for Mulhoolley (1881); Patrick Ballymolloy in Crawford's An American Politician (1884); Bartlett Waldie in Chapple's Boss Bart (1896).

²Villars in Clark's Beneath the Dome (1894); Hardiman in Post's Congressman Swanson (1891); Davis, the Iron Duke, in Garland's A Member of the Third House (1892); Aaron Grimstone in Keenan's The Money-Makers (1885); Ingledue in Denison's An Iron Crown (1885); Rankell in Wendell's Rankell's Remains (1887).

³Darius Dorman in De Forest's Honest John Vane (1875); Pike in De Forest's Playing the Mischief (1875); and Tom Brennan in Garland's A Member of the Third House (1892).

⁴Pp. 153 and 246.

term of allegory or not, these novels are filled with characters which show remarkable similarities from one volume to another. Besides the villains, the following types appear frequently: the honest, politically naive boy just home from the war and drafted into politics by his fellow citizens¹ or the hero, non-veteran but still incorruptible by the pressures of either big business or politics;² the political opportunist, or "average" politician;³ and such female types as the ideal, and colorless heroine;⁴ the scheming (opportunistic)

¹Charles Mason in Riddle's Alice Brand (1875); Markham Churr in Tourgee's Figs and Thistles (1879); Zachariah Martin in Zachariah the Congressman (1880); Randolph Remsen in Vance's Prince's Favors (1800); Rodman Heath in Edes's The Story of Rodman Heath (1894); and Walter Graham in Whitson's Walter Graham (1891).

²Clinton Maintland in Hume's Five Hundred Majority (1872); Albert Charlton in Eggleston's Mystery of Metropolisville (1893); Edgar Bradford in De Forest's Playing the Mischief (1875); Comfort Servosse in Tourgee's A Fool's Errand (1879); Harvey Trueman in Adams's The Transgressors (1900); Oliver Arkwright in Clark's Beneath the Dome (1894); Peter Stirling in Ford's The Honourable Peter Stirling (1896); Bradley Talcott in Garland's A Spoil of Office (1892); Wilson Tuttle in Garland's A Member of the Third House (1892); Nick Burr in Glasgow's The Voice of the People (1900); Fred Carew in Keenan's The Money-Makers (1885); Elbert Ainsworth in Chapple's Boss Bart (1896).

³Senator Dilworthy in Twain's and Warner's The Gilded Age (1873); Woodbury Stoughton in Grant's An Average Man (1884); Jeremiah Cashdollar in Levy's Senator Cashdollar (1899); Caleb Mason in Locke's The Demagogue (1891); Hilliard in Keenan's The Money-Makers (1885); John Lyons in Grant's Unleavened Bread (1900); Abel Newt in Curtis's Trumps (1861); Senator Ratcliffe in Adams's Democracy (1881); Senator Dave Sawdor in Denison's An Iron Crown (1885).

⁴Hope Wayne and Amy Waring in Curtis's Trumps; May Bryce in Denison's An Iron Crown; Alice Brand in Alice Brand; Lily Servosse in A Fool's Errand; Lizzie Churr in Figs and Thistles; Peggy in Zachariah, The Congressman; Ethel Purdy in Adams's The Transgressors; Pearl in Clark's Beneath the Dome;

female;¹ and the female lobbyist.² (Later romances reflect the trend toward philanthropy on the part of the wealthy with the introduction of the "good fairy" or benevolent princess type--the lady with a social conscience.³)

Not unnaturally, certain stereotyped plots were employed to accommodate these characters. A favorite is the triangle involving the young, honest reformer-politician opposed to the calculating wicked business man but, alas, in love with his daughter.⁴ This plot had an obvious attraction:

Leonore d'Alloi in Ford's The Honourable Peter Stirling; Ida Wilbur in A Spoil of Office; Helene Davis in Garland's A Member of the Third House; Florence Cashdollar in Senator Cashdollar; Sarah Dunlap in Locke's The Demagogue; Jennie Mason in Post's Congressman Swanson; Helen Sherwood in Tarkington's A Gentleman from Indiana; Dorothy Harcourt in A Politician's Daughter; and so on ad infinitum.

¹Olympia Smiles of De Forest's Honest John Vane; Miss Marmaluke of Pierce's Zachariah, the Congressman; Georgia Fiske Ten Eyck in Friedman's The Radical; Selma White in Grant's Unleavened Bread; Mrs. Daniels in Chapple's Boss Bart.

²Cordelia Saunders in Boyesen's The Light of Her Countenance; Laura Hawkins in Twain's and Warner's The Gilded Age; Josephine Murray in De Forest's Playing the Mischief; Helen Braine in Eggleston and Marbourg's Juggernaut is driven to lobbying by her husband; and Bertha Herrick is an unwitting lobbyist for her husband in Burnett's Through One Administration.

³Eleanor Leigh in Page's John Marvel, Assistant (1909); Miss De Voe in Ford's The Honourable Peter Stirling (1896); and Marina Van Dorn in Smith's Dr. Marks, Socialist (1897).

⁴Riddle's Alice Brand; Edes's The Story of Rodman Heath; Burnett's John Andross; Tilton's On Satan's Mount; Pierce's Zachariah, the Congressman; Wilson's The Cleverdale Mystery; Hume's Five Hundred Majority; Garland's A Member of the Third House; and The Transgressors. Ellen Glasgow in The Voice of the People develops a similar plot meaningfully and realistically.

it provided a situation which would test to the utmost the hero's devotion to the cause of justice and political integrity. Although the young struggling politician frequently and preferably began his career in poverty, he usually rose to riches rapidly--sometimes even before the opening of the novel--so that an unpleasant commonness could be avoided. For even reformers had to sell their books and too much realism was not popular. Mr. Twelvemough, Howells's writer in A Traveler from Altruria, admits that the "'handsome young artisan, who wins the millionaire's daughter'" is still too plebeian for his readers. He explains:

"You might still find him in the fiction of the weekly story-papers; but . . . he would not go down with my readers. Even in the story-paper fiction he would leave off working as soon as he married the millionaire's daughter, and go to Europe, or he would stay here and become a social leader, but he would not receive working-men in his gilded halls."¹

And later in the same novel, when someone declares that political economy would be a fit subject for a novel and suggests that the eviction of a poor family from a tenement might be a dramatic scene, one of the ladies objects:

"I think that these harrowing subjects are brought in altogether too much. . . . There are enough of them in real life, without filling all the novels with them. It's terrible the number of beggars you meet on the street this winter. Do you want to meet them in Mr. Twelvemough's novels, too?"²

Ford in The Honourable Peter Stirling worked out what was probably the ideal formula: Peter spends most of his

¹P. 45.

²P. 80.

time socially with the rich, even though his residence in a poor tenement section of New York makes the poor feel he is one of them. Thus the love story can be laid in the affluent surroundings befitting romance while the political story can given the more realistic tenement setting.

As I have remarked, not all of these novelists had as their primary purpose the promulgation of a political point of view. Some few books were undoubtedly written to sell, as light entertainment.¹ Yet even in these the political element is decidedly partisan.

The style employed by most of these authors is that of the sentimental romance of the day. Long passages of didactic exposition often alternate with sticky sentiment. There are far too many passages like this one in An American Politician when Josephine Thorn receives a proposal of marriage:

As the shadows steal at evening over the earth, softly closing the flowers and touching them to sleep, silently and lovingly, in the promise of a bright waking--so, as she sat there, her eyelids drooped and the light faded gently from her face, her lips parted a very little, and² with a soft-breathed sigh she sank into unconsciousness.

The Stature of the Political Novel

Few political novels were written in America in the nineteenth century which are of lasting value. Why? Before proceeding with the answer to this question we will do well to

¹Crawford's An American Politician; Riddle's Alice Brand; Hamlin's A Politician's Daughter; McCarthy's Congressman John; Burnett's Through One Administration.

²Crawford, An American Politician, p. 45.

recall that there were not many good novels of any kind before 1900. Harlan Hatcher even goes so far as to say (after excepting Huckleberry Finn and a few novels by James and Howells) "that American fiction of scope and distinction began with the close of the last century."¹ Let us consider, then, why the political novels were not better than they were, and why they were not, as I think they were not, as good as other kinds.

Since I have already pointed out that all the political novels before 1900 were didactic, it seems proper to consider this element first of all and to determine if possible what effect it has upon the literary value of the novel. Inasmuch as all serious novels (let us join Howells in recognizing a legitimate place for the fanciful and the purely adventurous novel) illuminate and interpret a part of life according to the value judgments of the author, all novels are didactic. The political novelist does this in the realm of politics; political theories, political movements, or political figures--all must come under the scrutiny of his personal system of ethics, or at least be considered in the light of them. In other words, if this is didacticism, the political novelist faces the problem of any novelist: he must so construct his plots and create his characters that the moral lesson emerges as self-evident. The reader must, whether he

¹Hatcher, op. cit., p. 3. He considers that Moby Dick belongs to the twentieth century, which discovered it.

agrees or not, accept for the duration of the novel the writer's system of values. Yet few readers would object to all serious novels for this reason. In fact those novels which are generally hailed as "great" have precisely this element of the didactic.

Is there, then, no truth to the charge that the "purpose" novel is doomed to failure or, at the best, is difficult to handle? I believe there is some justification for this allegation. The reader, when he says he is objecting to didacticism is really objecting to exaggeration and distortion which are the shortcuts used by the lazy or untalented fiction writer as a substitute for adequate character portrayal or plot sequence. What the reader objects to, furthermore, is not the exaggeration or distortion per se (which are perfectly acceptable in satire or humor) but the pretense on the part of the novelist that he is not exaggerating or distorting. It is this deceit which revolts the reader and makes suspect the very values which the author would inculcate. This then is the element which makes the didacticism of many of the political novels unacceptable and it is this element which is usually meant when the term didactic is used derogatorily. It will help then, if we henceforth refer to novels with this objectionable didactic element as "propaganda novels." There were, then, a good many propaganda novels in this period because the writers, in their inexperience and zeal were mistaken in the method they thought would make converts. The man active in a political movement who wanted to

influence the voting at the next election often felt that he could not take chances of disagreement on the part of the reader by even suggesting the existence of opposing ideas. It was difficult for Ignatius Donnelly to admit the possibility of a capitalist's possessing any one of those qualities which might entitle him to some sympathy as a fellow human being. In the heat of battle, lines were drawn and deviations were difficult. Writing a book for the next election very often results in a novel which does not live beyond it.

Having established that didacticism in a novel does not necessarily make it a poor one, we have yet to determine what makes some of these novels rank above the rest of their kind. Consider the following: De Forest's Honest John Vane and Playing the Mischief, Twain's and Warner's The Gilded Age, Adams's Democracy, Burnett's John Andross, Grant's Unleavened Bread, Herrick's The Gospel of Freedom. In each of them, the denouement is the result of the logical development of the characters, and the plot arises out of the interaction and relationship of these characters.¹ The characters, while some of them are reminiscent of recurring types, are individualistic and some are memorable. In short, the element in these novels which makes them reasonably successful political novels is realism. They lack the distortion and exaggeration which make the propaganda novels bad art and poor propaganda. Realism, as Upton Sinclair was to prove with The Jungle, is the surest way to spur reform.

¹In The Gilded Age there are, of course, many plots. But the development of the Washington Hawkins--colonel Sellers situation seems logical and true.

The converse now seems equally true: the sentimental romance is not successfully adaptable to political-didactic fiction, for one of its primary elements is distortion--distortion in character, exaggeration of emotion, and ephemerality of theme. Trying to combine the sentimental romance and the didactic political novel is like trying to mix water and oil. You may put them together but they will not blend. Most of the novels of this period were mixtures of these two in varying proportions. But to the extent that they eschewed sentiment and espoused realism, they were the more successful.

The Populist Movement and the Rise of Realism

Realism in Theory.--That the proliferation of the political novel at the end of the nineteenth century paralleled the rise of realism is not, I think, mere historical coincidence. The Populist movement, which included all of the elements in the wave of social protest, actually provided impetus for the realistic movement in the United States in the nineties and, while it developed and nourished certain literary characteristics which "naturalism" later was to adopt, it nevertheless was a movement limited to this period and arising in it largely because of its political and philosophical motivations. There are three reasons for the close political and literary link at this time: first, I have already pointed out that realism proved to be the form most successful for the protest novel; and as novelists of both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries

came to recognize this, the form was utilized when the spirit of protest moved them. Secondly, the political and social thought underlying the "revolt" of the farmers and laborers was the natural basis for the realism of this period. Thirdly, I propose that in the virtual inundation of political novels from the West, or at least outside of the cultural centers, we come closer to a primitive literature than at any other time in this country and that this primitive expression was a stimulus to the development of realism. ✓

I do not want to gainsay the influence on American writers of realists writing in England and France; certainly realism was in the air. But influences, like seeds, do not germinate in the air; and, though the question may never be answered satisfactorily, it should nevertheless be asked: Why did not Flaubert, Balzac, Daudet have more influence in the United States earlier? Howells, though he had read them, said that by that time "I had already grown into my realistic method, and I was authorized rather than inspired by the Frenchmen."¹ He was very close in his social thinking to Tolstoy, and certainly the Russian influence should not be discounted. Garland had read the French writers, but probably in his case more than in that of any other writer of the period the influence of the spirit of protest is evident. During the period of his interest in social and political reform, his fiction was realistic; when it was over, he wrote romance.

¹Quoted in Quinn, op. cit., p. 258.

As for the influence of the English realists, one critic notes that Thomas Hardy and George Moore were influential to the extent "of loosening up the popular mind in America for our own Naturalists" and that other English realists came too late to have any significant effect on American naturalism.¹

There were early realistic stirrings in the United States, too, in the years after the Civil War in the writings of John W. De Forest, Mark Twain and in the "local color" stories of Bret Harte, Mary Wilkins and Sarah Orne Jewett. Literary movements are never one-dimensional and in positing here the encouragement which Populism gave to realism I have in mind nothing more than the explication of one element in a complicated story.

The movement toward realism in the United States after 1885 can be said to consist of two groups: the conscious theorizers, and practitioners as well, who were educated in varying degrees and of whom Howells, Garland, and Boyesen were the most articulate; and the untutored and unlearned realists, many of whom were moved by economic and political conditions to voice their protest. In discussing the contributions of these groups we are very likely to become entangled beyond extrication in definitions of realism and romanticism if precautions are not taken. Although it will be impossible here to detail the history or the ramifications of "romance"

¹Cargill, op. cit., p. 82.

and "romanticism"¹ we will do well to remember that novels are not generally made up exclusively of one or the other. As Grant C. Knight has written:

Francis Marion Crawford would describe the toil in a cigarette-making establishment as convincingly as Henry James would picture the drinking of tea in an English garden, and the realist's very preoccupation with man's doings is romantic, for remorselessly logical realism would lead to nihilism. Everyman's life is, as Crawford and James Lane Allen and Frank Norris were going to assert, a blend of the exceptional and the commonplace, and it was easy for writers of both persuasions to make forays into each other's territories, bringing back booty and prisoners.²

I should like, therefore, only to discuss the kind of romance which Howells and others were inveighing against and the kind of realism they were encouraging in American letters; that is the matter of primary interest for this study.

In order to understand the realism of the nineties it will be necessary, however, to go back to the early years of the republic, for philosophically realism was the progeny of the romantic thought of the 1830's and of the Enlightenment as it was embodied in the Declaration of Independence. One has only to read "The American Scholar" and Garland's Crumbling Idols in juxtaposition to see how close Garland was philosophically to Emerson. Both, first of all, were writing declarations of independence from the influence of foreign

¹Jacques Barzun's Romanticism and the Modern Ego (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1943) is helpful in clarifying terms. For the gamut in meanings see Chapter IX "'Romantic'--A Sampling of Modern Usage."

²The Critical Period in American Literature, p. 18.

letters. Emerson declares:

Our day of independence, our long apprenticeship, to the learning of other lands, draws to a close. The millions that around us are rushing into life, cannot always be fed on the sere remains of foreign harvests. Events, actions arise, that must be sung, that will sing themselves.

Garland writes:

The great body of men and women who give strength and originality to Chicago are people who care very little what New York thinks of their work, and the doings of London and Paris are not more vital. . . .

.
O Sayers and Doers of this broad, free inland America of ours! to you is given the privilege of being broad and free in your life and letters. You should not be bound to a false and dying culture, you should not endeavor to reenact the harsh and fierce and false social dramas of the Old World. You should not turn your face to the east, to the past. . . .

Yours not to worship crumbling idols; your privilege and pleasure should be to face life and the material earth in a new way,--moulding old forms of government into new shapes, catching from earth and sea and air, new songs to sing, new thoughts to frame, new deeds to dare.¹

Of democracy and the literature of the commonplace Emerson says:

One of these signs [of the future] is the fact that the same movement which effected the elevation of what was called the lowest class in the state, assumed in literature a very marked and benign aspect. Instead of the sublime and beautiful, the near, the low, the common, was explored and poetized. That which had been negligently trodden under foot by those who were harnessing and provisioning themselves for long journeys into far countries, is suddenly found to be richer than all foreign parts. The literature of the poor, the feelings of the child, the philosophy of the street, the meaning of household life, are the topics of the time. It is a great stride. . . . I ask not for the great, the remote, the romantic. . . . I embrace the common, I explore and sit at the feet of the familiar, the low.²

And Garland on the same subject:

¹Garland, Crumbling Idols (Chicago, Stone and Kimball, 1894), pp. 155-162.

²Howells quotes this particular passage from "The American Scholar" in Criticism and Fiction (New York: Harper and Bros., 1891), p. 79.

There is coming in this land the mightiest assertion in art of the rights of man and the glory of the physical universe ever made in the world. It will be done, not by one man, but by many men and women. It will be born, not of drawing-room culture, nor of imitation, nor of fear of masters, nor will it come from homes of great wealth. It will come from the average American home, in the city as well as in the country. It will deal with all kinds and conditions.¹

Of individualism and optimism, Emerson observes:

Another sign of our times, also marked by an analogous political movement, is the new importance given to the single person. Everything that tends to insulate the individual,--to surround him with barriers of natural respect, so that each man shall feel the world is his, and man shall treat with man as a sovereign state with a sovereign state,--tends to true union as well as greatness. . . . The mind of this country, taught to aim at low objects, eats upon itself. . . . Young men of the fairest promise, who begin life upon our shores, inflated by the mountain winds, shined upon by all the stars of God, find the earth below not in unison with these, but are hindered from action by the disgust which the principles on which business is managed inspire. . . . If the single man plant himself indomitably on his instincts, and there abide, the huge world will come round to him. Patience,--patience; . . . for work the study and the communication of principles, the making those instincts prevalent, the conversion of the world.

Garland denounces "conformity" and asks that "individuality" not be buried.² He, too, writes optimistically:

All that the past was not, the future will be.

If the past was bond, the future will be free. If the past was feudalistic, the future will be democratic. . . .

If the past was dark and battleful and bloody and barbarous, the future will be peaceful and sunny. If the past celebrated lust and greed and love of power, the future will celebrate continence and humility and altruism. If the past was the history of a few titled personalities riding high on obscure waves of nameless, suffering humanity, the future will be the day of high average personality, the abolition of all privilege, the peaceful walking together of brethren, equals before nature and before

¹Garland, Crumbling Idols, p. 189. ²Ibid., p. 15.

the law. And fiction will celebrate this life.¹

These passages contain the basic elements of the new movement. For Garland it was a conscious revolt against the tyranny of Europe and primarily of England; if political freedom had been won, intellectual freedom had not. It was also a revolt of the West against the East, which Garland felt was the literary stronghold of conservatism in literature as well as in politics. There was a good bit of truth in the accusation. Scholars in Boston and New York looked with distaste upon the raw, crude outlanders west of the Hudson who had imposed their political ideals on the country and were threatening to influence literature as well. Barrett Wendell observed with some alarm the rise of democracy in literature, which he saw as opposed to excellence² and saw in "our great confused West" only "enthusiasm for material prosperity as distinguished from spiritual or intellectual ideals."³ But Garland insisted that "the quality most needed in literary discussion today is not learning, it is candor,"⁴ observed that "the common man is again moving in intellectual unrest, as in the time of Burns and Shelley"⁵ and recognized

¹Ibid., pp. 45-6.

²Wendell, A Literary History of America (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1900), p. 530.

³Ibid., p. 505.

⁴Garland, op. cit., p. 186.

⁵Ibid., p. 187.

that "that this should happen seems dreadful and impossible to the conservative mind."¹ "The real literature of America [can] not be a polite literature."²

One begins to see how inextricably mixed were politics and literature both in the minds of the revolutionaries and in the minds of the eastern litterati; the latter could see only that the Jacksonian democrats who had soiled the White House furniture with their muddy boots during the inauguration of Jackson and who had reduced republican government to a mass of corruption were finally dragging literature into the mire.

This outcry against the dominance of the East, which was considered to be a mere literary appendage of England, was, as Garland indicated, accompanied by a strong plea for native American literature (to Garland this meant writing about the particular section of America in which the writer lived). In the preface to The Mammon of Unrighteousness (1892) H. H. Boyesen joins the nationalists:

My one endeavor in this book has been to depict persons and conditions which are profoundly and typically American. I have disregarded all romantic traditions, and simply asked myself in every instance, not whether it was amusing, but whether it was true to the logic of reality--true in color and tone to the American sky, the American soil, the American character.³

Earlier, he had noted a scarcity of great American novelists and saw the reason for it in the refusal of most novelists to deal with subjects of common concern.

¹Ibid., p. 188.

²Ibid., p. 189.

³P. 4.

Politics, for instance [he continued], which, outside of the great cities, plays so large a part in the lives of our people, is out of deference to the ladies, rarely allowed to invade our novels.¹

Howells makes explicit the political ties of the new movement:

The pride of caste is becoming the pride of taste; but as before, it is averse to the mass of men; it consents to know them only in some conventionalized and artificial guise. . . . Democracy in literature is the reverse of all this. . . . Men are more like than unlike one another; let us make them know one another better, that they may be all humbled and strengthened with a sense of their fraternity.²

It was inevitable that the revolt against the intellectual strongholds of the East would be accompanied by a denouncement of all institutionalized learning. Said Garland:

It can almost be stated as a rule without an exception that in our colleges there is no chair of English literature which is not dominated by conservative criticism, and where sneering allusion to modern writers is not daily made. The pupil is taught to worship the past, and is kept blind to the mighty literary movements of his own time. If he comes to understand Ibsen, Tolstoy, Bjornson, Howells, Whitman, he must do it outside his instruction.³

And,

Schools are conservative forces. They are nearly always linked with the aristocratic and the old, especially in their art instructions. Universities are the bulwarks of tradition.⁴

¹Boyesen, "Why We Have No Great Novelists," The Forum, II (February, 1887), p. 617. He mentions a few of the novelists who have dealt with politics: De Forest, Eggleston, Tourgee and the "anonymous writer" of Democracy. But he sees these as mere exceptions "to prove the rule." As for Crawford he "had, to be sure, the hardihood, some months ago, to advertise his ignorance of the politics of his native land in a book entitled An American Politician, but I doubt if he expected anyone to take such a performance seriously" (ibid., pp. 617-18).

²Criticism and Fiction, pp. 187-8.

³Crumbling Idols, p. 9.

⁴Ibid., p. 185.

And again,

This literature is not the literature of scholars; it is the literature of lovers and doers; of men who love the modern and who have not been educated to despise common things. . . . They are rooted in the soil.¹

Howells recommended "life-likeness" rather than "booklikeness" and complained of "the spirit of the wretched pedantry into which learning, much or little, always decays when it withdraws itself and stands apart from experience in an attitude of imagined superiority. . . ."²

On the other side of the question Lowell complained of the exclusion of the educated. "One eminent gentleman," he wrote, "has even gone so far as to sneer at school-books as sources of information." He protested against "this putting of culture under the ban" and suggested that it was

. . . but a more subtle application of the American system, as it is called, which would exclude all foreign experience, as well as the raw material of it, till we had built up an experience of our own at the same cost of mistake and retribution which is its unvarying price.³

This new movement of course was not merely a rebirth of the idealism of the 1830's; there were important differences. For the new movement, however it might seem to go back to primary sources of democratic idealism, was influenced by the spirit of the times. Emerson was careful to emphasize not only individuality (as Garland did also) but the isolation of the

¹Ibid., p. 59.

²Criticism and Fiction, p. 10.

³James Russell Lowell, "The Place of the Independent in Politics" (1888).

individual. "'I learned,' said the melancholy Pestalozzi, 'that no man in God's wide earth is either willing or able to help any other man.' Help must come from the bosom alone."¹ Garland, however, spoke of "the peaceful walking together of brethren"² and Howells pointed out:

Men are more like than unlike one another; let us make them know one another better, that they may be all humbled and strengthened with a sense of their fraternity.³

Although most of these realists did not wholeheartedly embrace Marxian socialism, neither did they ignore it. Rather they translated it into a desire for people to work together for the benefit of the individual.⁴

Since Emerson wrote, science had also become a force to be reckoned with. Howells thought of the realistic movement as born of science and democracy. Yet he would not approve of mere collection and recording of data in fiction, after the manner of Zola. He thought rather of science as showing the way to a literature dealing with real sights, sounds, colors, feelings, and people instead of the artificiality of the ideal. The realist can no more deal with fabrications than the scientist would think of describing an ideal

¹Emerson, "The American Scholar."

²Crumbling Idols, p. 46.

³Criticism and Fiction, p. 188.

⁴This kind of individual-group orientations still exists in the West where it started as part of the Populist movement. The western or mid-western farmer is one of the most intense individualists in the United States. Socialism is often a subversive term to him. Yet he supports his cooperatives; and the farmers of North Dakota were the first to initiate certain socialist reforms such as a state insurance system and a state-owned mill and elevator.

"cardboard" grasshopper. If the scientist is concerned with reality--the fruits of experience--so is the writer.¹ The force of Darwinian determinism, though it provided for later naturalists the thesis "that under the veneer of cultivation man carries a brute in his breast and that only the ruthless endure"² or that "man is only a chemical compound, ignorant and futile amid a web of natural forces which are both good and evil,"³ was blunted in the realists by the residue of faith in progress--by the old ante-bellum optimism. Garland sees only that the theories of Spencer and Darwin are liberating America from the old traditions.⁴ He knows now that "Change is sure" and, since the present is undesirable, the future must be better. "If the past was bond, the future will be free."⁵

All of these ideas, then, made up the movement toward realism. The revolt was prompted by surfeit with the kinds of novels which were being served up to the American public. There was the sentimental novel replete with trite plots, trite characters, trite tears; they objected to the falseness and they objected to the stereotypes. They objected, too,

¹See Howells, Criticism and Fiction, pp. 9-17.

²Hatcher (op. cit., p. 46), writing of London and Norris.

³Harry Hartwick, The Foreground of American Fiction ([New York: American Book Co., 1934], p. 103), writing of Dreiser.

⁴Crumbling Idols, p. 43.

⁵Ibid., p. 46.

to the romances of Scott, not only because he was so idolized by conservative critics, but also because of his politics:

. . . his mediaeval ideals, his blind Jacobitism, his intense devotion to aristocracy and royalty; his acquiescence in the division of men into noble and ignoble, patrician and plebeian, sovereign and subject, as if it were the law of God. . . .¹

They objected to the novels populated exclusively by the rich and well-born, set in affluent surroundings. These were morally destructive, imparting a distorted sense of values and intimating that there is worth only in the superfine and not in the vulgar.² The cosmopolitan romance, like those written by F. Marion Crawford, was very popular, but the new critics asked that American themes be used instead. They were, moreover, tired of the flowery phrase and genteel diction of current fiction and called for colloquial speech--the speech of ordinary men and the speech patterns of specific regions.

Howells summed up all of the objections:

But let fiction cease to lie about life; let it portray men and women as they are, actuated by the motives and the passions in the measure we all know; let it leave off painting dolls and working them by springs and wires; let it forbear to preach pride and revenge, folly and insanity, egotism and prejudice, but frankly own these for what they are, in whatever figures and occasions they appear; let it not put on fine literary airs; let it

¹Howells, Criticism and Fiction (p. 22)--although Scott was "a great man, and a very great novelist as compared with the novelists who went before him" (ibid.).

²Ibid., p. 81.

... speak the dialect, the language of unaffected people everywhere--and there can be no doubt of an unlimited future, not only of delightfulness but of usefulness, for it.¹

Ah, but there was really the crux of the whole controversy: should art be useful? did the reader come to the novel as a schoolboy to his lessons? was the novelist to play the role of teacher or preacher? Howells was by no means narrow in his tastes; he felt that the literature of escape and sentiment "has its place"² but he reserved for it an inferior one and declared:

The art which in the mean time disdains the office of teacher is one of the last refuges of the aristocratic spirit which is disappearing from politics and society and is now seeking to shelter itself in aesthetics. . . .³

The discussion was not one-sided. F. Marion Crawford defended the novel as he wrote it in The Novel, What It Is (1893). His objection to the purpose novel was, he said, that it pretends to be entertainment but its real purpose is instruction. This is like buying a toy pistol for a child and finding it loaded. The novel should, he felt, be:

. . . the heroic exposition of all that is noble, heroic, honest, and true in the life of woman or man; but it has no right to tell us what its writer thinks about the relations of labour and capital, nor to set up what the author conceives to be a nice, original, easy scheme of salvation. . . .

He argued that the romance is ultimately more moral than the

¹Ibid., p. 104.

²Ibid., p. 106.

³Ibid., p. 187.

⁴Crawford, The Novel, What It Is (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1893), p. 17.

Tendenz-Roman because it shows people "what they may be, ought to be, or can be."¹ Against too frank a realism he pleaded for the purity of American girlhood:

In our Anglo-Saxon social system the young girl is everywhere, and, if the shade of Sterne will allow me to say so, we temper the wind of our realism to the sensitive innocence of the ubiquitous shorn lamb.²

At the same time, Crawford genially admitted the greater market value of the romance.³

Even a British novelist--Robert Louis Stevenson--joined the lists to rebut Howells. Should fiction represent life? "The life of man," he contended, is not the subject of novels, but the inexhaustible magazine from which subjects are to be selected."⁴ For,

Life is monstrous, infinite, illogical, abrupt, and poignant; a work of art, in comparison, is neat, finite, self-contained, rational, flowing, and emasculate.⁵

But, said Garland, art must be "significant." "Mere beauty no longer suffices."⁶ If art would be truthful, individual, American, it would, these realists felt, necessarily convey with it what they believed to be the ideals of American life--democracy, equality, humanitarianism, and brotherhood.

¹Ibid., p. 77.

²Ibid., p. 28.

³Mr. Twelvemough had stated the matter correctly when he said that the public would not buy realistic novels. Howells's books went begging for readers (see Kazin, op. cit., pp. 8-9n) while Crawford in 1894 was ranked fifteenth in popularity among the novelists of all time (William P. Trent, "Mr. Crawford's Novels," The Sewanee Review, II [February, 1894], 251).

⁴"A Humble Remonstrance," Essays by Robert Louis Stevenson, op. cit., p. 259.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Crumbling Idols, p. 59.

Realism in Practice.--Garland's exhortation to the young men and women of the Middle Border and Far West to begin to write of the fields and mountains and prairies came a little late. Successive panics, low prices and high freight rates had inspired them several years before the publication of Crumbling Idols. And the novels they wrote contained the elements of realism; realism as a tool came to the hand of the western man as naturally and as essentially as the plough. These novels were not thoroughly realistic and they were not very artistic; they suffered stylistically because of the influence of what Garland called "millions of tons of romantic love-stories of detectives or Indians."¹ But they were American--no doubt about that--and, as Howells had said, "an American novel . . . deals at its worst, with comparatively new interests and motives."² But hadn't the farmer, the laborer, the common man been dealt with before in American literature? There were Whittier's Maud Muller, Cooper's Leatherstocking, Kennedy's Horseshoe Robinson. But Maud Muller with her "wealth/Of simple beauty and rustic health" is a far cry from Mary Ellen Lease on the lecture platform. For all his humble beginnings, Whittier was a gentleman writing a poem about a farm girl which required no farm experience to write, and Cooper and Kennedy produced the idealizations

¹Ibid., p. 8.

²Criticism and Fiction, p. 79.

of romance.¹ Realism on the other hand required of the gentleman-writer sympathy and understanding of the common man in his unlovely as well as his lovely aspects, a recognition of his problems, and a sense of the fraternity of mankind. To the common-man writer realism came naturally. It was his instrument--his indignation, his rebellion, his passion required it.²

If no great novels came out of the Populist movement, still its contribution to literature was distinctive. From this vast, raw, new land came raw materials to supply a nation not only with bread but with books. From it came a spirit of protest which in itself was an assertion of the dignity of every man. For scenes in richly-furnished salons were substituted settings in the coal mines,³ in the tenements,⁴ in drab little western villages.⁵ The young society lion of the

¹A good case could be made for calling this realism of the nineties "romanticism" if one used the proper definitions. I have already pointed out the ideological similarities between Emerson and the new movement. Also see Paul Kaufman's definition of the romantic in "The Romantic Movement," (The Reinterpretation of American Literature, ed. by Norman Foerster [New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1928], p. 120). R. L. Stevenson points to "the glow of romance" in Howells's books (*op. cit.*, p. 266). The philosophy of the realists was without question romantic and idealistic; the difference between them and their ante-bellum colleagues was a social conscience and the zeal for reform.

²See Alfred Kazin, *op. cit.*, Chap. I, "The Opening Struggle for Realism" in which he mentions the relation between realism and the Populist movement.

³See the opening pages of Adams's The Transgressors.

⁴Garland's Jason Edwards, pp. 24 ff.

⁵Like Columbia Junction in Higgins's Out of the West.

East was excluded and the simpering, fainting heroine began to disappear. New types of people were introduced: tramps,¹ farmers,² social workers,³ and women who were not only decorative but politically intelligent.⁴

One of the best examples of the realism inspired by protest is provided by Garland in A Spoil of Office with his description of an Alliance meeting in Kansas:

Up the broad street, under that soaring sky, from their homes upon a magnificently fertile soil, came the long procession of revolting farmers. There were no bands to lead them; no fluttering of gay flags; no cheers from the bystanders. They rode in grim silence for the most part, as if at a funeral of their dead hopes--as if their mere presence were a protest.

Everywhere the same color predominated--a russet brown. Their faces were bronzed and thin. Their beards were long and faded, and tangled like autumn corn silk. Their gaunt gnarled, and knotted hands held the reins over their equally sad and sober teams. The women looked worn and thin, and sat bent forward over the children in their laps. The dust had settled upon their ill-fitting dresses. There were no smart carriages, no touch of gay paint, no glittering new harnesses; the whole procession was keyed down among the most desolate and sorrowful grays, browns, and drabs.⁵

¹Post, in Congressman Swanson, pp. 264-77, describes the brutal treatment of the unemployed during the panic of 1893.

²Rogers, The Graftons; Garland, A Spoil of Office or almost any other Populist novel.

³Page, John Marvel, Assistant.

⁴Jennie Mason in Post's Congressman Swanson; Ida Wilbut in Garland's A Spoil of Office; Edith Hull in Higgins's Out of the West; Mary Grafton in Rogers's The Graftons; Sophie Hetherington in Donnelly's The Golden Bottle.

⁵P. 338. See in conjunction with this passage Garland's statement in Crumbling Idols: "The realist or veritist is really an optimist, a dreamer. He sees life in terms of what it might be, as well as in terms of what it is; but he writes of what is, and at his best, suggests what is to be, by contrast. He aims to be perfectly truthful in his delineation

There is the picture of Pawnee Junction in Out of the West:

He [Frank Field, looking out of his hotel room] saw the unpaved streets and cheaply constructed houses, and the trees of July with the withered branches of September. He saw the engine-house and the court-house, each like the other, and both standing in fenced squares. In the streets he watched the wispy-haired women pushing their way through the wind. He looked over the level, sunburned plains, without hill or knoll, a green tree, or the sight of water. There was the trestled culvert spanning the creek-bed; far as eye could reach, the railroad stretching out upon its dirt embankment; the tracts of withering corn; and the warrens of Polack Town. It was complete desolation, and the graveyard at the end of the street about which the village clustered gave it a quieting tone of harmony.¹

And the letter from Mrs. Benezet to her son Ephraim in The Golden Bottle:

Our old cow, Blossom, had a steer calf yesterday. I have a great deal of trouble with the chickens. I fear a skunk gets into the coop at night. I have lost three lately. . . .²

The movement was distinctive but short-lived; naturalism was coming to the forefront with its pessimistic determinism, its celebration of the extraordinary man, its new romanticism.³ Howells would not be able to follow. He was too idealistic, too much committed to the democracy of Jefferson. Garland, unsympathetic with the new literature, became a writer of romances. But his life on the frontier, his association with men such as Henry George, Howells and Joseph Kirkland; his

of his relation to life, but there is a tone, a color, which comes unconsciously into his utterance, like the sobbing stir of the muted violins beneath the frank, clear song of the clarinet [sic]; and this tone is one of sorrow that the good time moves so slowly in its approach" (p. 52).

¹Higgins, op. cit., p. 8. ²Donnelly, Golden Bottle, p. 109.

³Frank Norris would refer to realism as "that harsh, loveless, colourless, blunt tool" ("A Plea for Romantic Fiction," The Responsibilities of the Novelist [New York: Doubleday, Page and Co., 1903], p. 214.)

yearning, in the old American tradition, for something better; his innate humanitarianism--all of these made him a realist perhaps in spite of himself. Although he played the part of a radical in politics for a time, he was essentially a conservative who wanted to preserve the romance of the pioneering West which he must have absorbed from his father and his uncles when they set out for the Middle Border singing:

O'er the hills in legions, boys,
Fair freedom's star
Points to the sunset regions, boys,
Ha, ha, ha-ha!--¹

When he returned to the farm after spending some time in Boston and saw his mother bent and prematurely old and saw his father worn with toil,² "all the gilding of farm life melted away. The hard and bitter realities came back upon me in a flood."³ He was not then concerned primarily with the ratio of silver to gold or with the amount the railroads charged his father for a short haul. What bothered him was that his bucolic dream--the American one of the happy independent farmer wresting his crops from the earth despite Indians, despite

¹See Garland, Jason Edwards, pp. 45-6 and 63; also Garland, A Son of the Middle Border (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1917), pp. 66-67 where he quotes the song again and writes that it is ". . . a song which is full of the breath of hope and the peculiar vibrant melody of the pioneer who is born and not made . . . a song that dates far into the forties, bringing forward to us today the boundless energy and freedom and imagination of Boone and Crockett, and the men they led into the West."

²Garland, A Son of the Middle Border, pp. 366-9.

³Ibid., p. 365.

plagues, despite drought, while his children grow to sturdy manhood and womanhood--was disturbed.¹ Garland's final solution to this problem was to settle his parents in reasonable comfort in Wisconsin. In his story "A Branch Road"² he draws a picture of farm life in which there is only ugliness, coarseness, unkindness and poverty. And what is the denouement? The farmer's wife takes off on a European cruise with her old sweetheart.³ Jason Edwards offers a similar ending; Garland's "god from the machine" (as Professor Wagenknecht puts it),⁴ who is always the man who has gotten away from the farm and made a little money, returns to take the family back East.

These would not seem to be the ways of the militant reformer; the solutions offered are nearer escape than reform. As for Garland the writer, he found during a tour in 1891 of the Populist areas for The Arena that the romance that he loved could still be found further west.⁵ More important,

¹Walter Reeves' bitter outburst in Jason Edwards echoes this sentiment: "'So this is the reality of the dream! This is the 'homestead in the Golden West, embowered in trees, beside the purling brook!' A shanty on a barren plain, hot and lone as a desert.'" (p. 142.)

²Garland, Main-Travelled Roads (1891).

³This is escapism, but it has an element of the realistic revolt: the flouting of established custom, particularly that of female subservience.

⁴Op. cit., p. 206.

⁵Garland, Roadside Meetings (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1930).

perhaps, is his admission that his "reaction from the ethic to the esthetic" came with "the destruction of the People's Party and the failure of this novel [A Spoil of Office, which he was writing serially as he toured the country for the Arena]." ¹ As he abandoned polemics, he points out, Howells and Mark Twain were undergoing a similar change; "the reform impulse was steadily waning with us all." ² Thus does one of the leaders in the parallel movements of Populism and realism write their obituary.

As for Howells, he would encourage the younger writers like Stephen Crane, but he could no longer lead them. Like Moses after delivering his people from bondage, he was allowed a glimpse of the promised land, but he was not vouchsafed to enter it.

It was of brief duration, this movement, but it did not pass without leaving an inheritance. Just as many of the reforms which the Populists advocated were realized in the twentieth century, so many of the elements in their literature were used and accepted in the twentieth. What, then, was the legacy?

First there was the entire tradition of the novel as an instrument of social protest utilized later so extensively by the muckrake school. There was also the economic orientation

¹Ibid., p. 187.

²Ibid. Showing how much it had waned, he writes in this same book (p. 63) that now (in 1930) "the poor are almost obsolete."

of fiction which was to be found later in Dreiser and Norris and London. Even the theme of the farmers versus the railroads was used by Norris (The Octopus)--in twentieth century clothing, to be sure. The evils of big business and materialism were explored, more subtly, more scientifically and more coldly by Herrick. The sombreness of tone, though usually unallayed by the old idealistic faith in the future, permeated many of the novels, especially those of Dreiser's. Willa Cather found heroism and nobility on the stark bare prairie. And the tradition which held that the novelist should be a man of experience rather than a man of education, a man of the people rather than an aristocrat of any kind was started on its persistent way in American literature.¹ It was a large dowry and it lasted a long time.

¹See Trilling (op. cit., p. 23): "The liberal judgment of Dreiser and James goes back to politics, goes back to the cultural assumptions that make politics. We are still haunted by a kind of political fear of the intellect which Tocqueville observed in us more than a century ago."

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ABSTRACT

For the purposes of this dissertation, a political novel is any novel concerned with political figures, ideas, or movements contemporary with some part of the author's life. In Parts One and Two I have examined the political novels written in the United States from the beginnings (in 1774) to 1900; I have outlined the political and economic backgrounds and have attempted to determine where the American novelist took his stand in relation to them.

Part One (1774-1890) traces the decline of the gentleman-scholar as politician and as political novelist. Such early novelists as Brackenridge, Paulding, and Cooper favored a Jeffersonian agrarianism which would allow the lower classes to vote and the upper classes to rule; in the immediate pre- and post-Civil War period, the novelists (e. g., De Forest and Tucker) primarily rationalized the positions of their own geographical sections with respect to the causes and results of the war. After the war, the country entered upon that period of materialism, speculation, and governmental corruption known as the Gilded Age, the label given it by Mark Twain and C. D. Warner in their political novel of that name. In this twilight of patrician influence and control, three idealists--De Forest, Mark Twain, and Henry Adams--recorded in political

novels the disappointment of their hopes for democracy. They looked back with nostalgia upon the agrarian democracy of early America, when honorable men were chosen to manage governmental affairs.

Still later, more optimistic members of the upper middle class, now largely on the fringes of politics, offered hope for improvement through election of honest men to office and through Civil Service reform. Conspicuously absent in these novels was criticism of the corrupting influence of big business on politics.

Part Two considers the novels of 1890 to 1900. In these novels the case for the laboring man or the farmer was presented and the ubiquitousness of big business in American politics was denounced. Believing that the restoration of morality in governmental affairs did not solve the critical economic problems, the writers of these novels called for such reforms as governmental regulation of transportation and communications, cheap money, and guaranteed employment. Like the early political novelists, they found their ideological roots in the Enlightenment as it was adapted for American use by Jeffersonian agrarianism.

Part Two also includes an analysis of a group of "boss novels" which appeared between 1900 and 1908. These novels, in which the boss appeared as a loveable rogue, exhibited a composite of nineteenth-century ideological forces: the boss epitomized the ideas of equality, of the preference for the common man over the gentleman, of humanitarianism, and of the evils of big business; but he also embodied the Darwin-Spencer-

Alger "survival of the fittest" theory which previous novelists had condemned when used to justify the actions of the business man.

Part Three surveys the impact of the political novel upon American politics and upon American literature. I have concluded that the political novel in the nineteenth century had little effect upon politics. However, after 1885 it gave impetus to the movement toward literary realism. The realism in the political novels of the last decade of the century was not only a conscious attempt by writers like Garland and Howells to make American literature reflect American democratic ideals but also an unconscious but inevitable ingredient of the large numbers of protest novels produced by those connected with the Populist movement.

Agrarianism as a national political force and its literary concomitant did not survive after the nineteenth century. These movements were superseded by the forces of socialism and economic determinism in politics and by naturalism in literature. However, they left to twentieth-century fiction a legacy: a tradition of literary protest, an awareness of economic and political forces, and a recognition of the possibilities of the ordinary American as a subject for fiction.

VITA

Jean Ostby Johnson was born August 21, 1921 in Walker, Minnesota, the daughter of Vivian Ralya Ostby and Melvin Peter Ostby. Moving shortly after birth to Plentywood, Montana, she attended the public schools there and later those in Wibaux, Montana. She graduated from the Wibaux County High School in 1938 as class valedictorian. In 1942 she graduated from Concordia College, Moorhead, Minnesota, magna cum laude.

After accepting a graduate assistantship in the English Department at the University of Oregon, she studied and taught classes there for two years. She was awarded the Master of Arts degree by the University of Oregon in 1944.

In 1946 she taught English literature and composition at York Junior College, York, Pennsylvania and in 1946-1947 and 1948-1949 was instructor in English at Emerson College, Boston, Massachusetts. She and her husband, Robert H. Johnson, and two children--Mark, born in 1950 and Eric, born in 1953--live presently in Alexandria, Virginia.

