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UPTON SINCLAIR

A Study in Social Protest

By

FLOYD DELL

GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY
ON MURRAY HILL : NEW YORK

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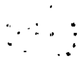

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UPTON SINCLAIR

A Study in Social Protest

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UPTON SINCLAIR

I. PRELIMINARY EXPLANATIONS

I.

AMERICANS generally are truly surprised and puzzled by Upton Sinclair's fame abroad—by the fact that he seems to be regarded throughout the world as his country's most distinguished literary figure. . . . So great is the discrepancy between his position in the world at large and his position in his own country, that a book about him may as well begin by offering some explanation, to bewildered American readers, of his world fame.

The gist of the matter seems to lie in this:

Modern industrial America is a new portent in an old world; and the world has looked to American literature for realistic description and intellectual interpretation of it—and has found these things chiefly and best in the writings of Upton Sinclair. Other American writers of our time may be more acute psychologists, wiser in the lore of human nature, more able to analyze and dramatize the traditional passions of mankind. But in our American literature generally there is no such account—at once emotionally and objectively convincing—of what America is in its most characteristic contem-

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porary aspects, as may be found in the novels and pamphlets of Upton Sinclair. And this very simply explains the fact of Sinclair's special eminence in the eyes of the world among American writers of this period.

From this point of view, then, it may roughly be said that, as an expositor of modern industrial America, Sinclair takes rank with Cooper, who put the America of the Indian and the pioneer on the literary map of the world; with Mark Twain and (in so far as a prose writer may be compared to a poet) with Walt Whitman—each of whom, in his time, described and interpreted to the world a significant epoch of American life.

These are strictly literary considerations; another consideration, not purely literary (at least not from the American point of view) is also involved in the great respect which Sinclair enjoys abroad. The Voltairean tradition of the literary man as a fighter against wrong, a champion of the oppressed, still survives in Europe. It is not an offense against good taste (as it would be in our politer American literary world) for such writers as Zola and Anatole France to take sides in a Dreyfus case. And when they hear abroad that the author of *The Jungle* has been arrested in New York City for "picketing" the offices of John D. Rockefeller, Jr., as a protest against the treatment of miners in Colorado, or that he has been arrested in California for reading the Constitution of the United States in public in a "free-speech fight", they do not regard it as an unliterary eccentricity, but as a kind of heroism appropriate to a

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profession which has not abandoned its pretensions to courage.

II.

These preliminary pages may also serve to explain, to readers abroad, some of the reasons for the failure of America to accord Sinclair the rank to which it would seem that he is entitled by his achievements. An obvious reason, of course, is that he interprets American life in terms of a "class struggle" which is, as yet, alien to the idealistic conceptions of the American intelligentsia in general. More will be said on this point later. But there are, at the present moment, other psychological obstacles in the way of a general recognition of Sinclair in America.

One of these is his temperamental attitude toward life. He is recognized as being fundamentally a Puritan; and Puritanism (for reasons to be gone into at length later on) is just now very unpopular among the American intelligentsia. Sinclair has, indeed, by virtue of his passionate realism, his poetic and epic vision, and his critical and revolutionary thought, far transcended in his writings the limitations of the Puritan point of view. Yet it is perceptible at times, and to Americans in revolt against Puritanism it counts heavily against him.

Again, his attitude toward our machine civilization is one which Americans find it difficult to understand—since it is neither the popular one of uncritical adulation, nor the aristocratic one of reactionary sentimental protest against the machine age

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as such. Both these literary attitudes are well understood in America; but that a writer may be an idealist, and yet be a cordial believer in this modern machine civilization of ours, founding all his hopes for ultimate justice and beauty and happiness upon machinery's essential and revolutionary possibilities, is still to the American mind a paradox.

III.

Nevertheless, there are unmistakable signs in recent American criticism of a growing respect for Upton Sinclair. Time's perspective has given a new dignity to the gallant literary movement with which his name is associated. It is remembered that Europe's greatest critic, Georg Brandes, once said: "I find three present-day American novelists worth reading—Frank Norris, Jack London, and Upton Sinclair." The literary movement of which these men were the leaders came (for reasons to be recounted later) upon evil days, and seemed to end in discouragement and chagrin. But now that it has very recently been revived in the hands of younger writers, it is remembered that during that long interval Sinclair remained its single unfaltering and powerful voice. He can now be seen as a representative pioneer figure of an ambitious interpretive effort of which the culmination is still to come in the American literature of the future.

Of so much honor, in his own country, this prophet is now assured. And it is certain that, as the kind of literature comes into its own which Frank Norris,

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Jack London and Upton Sinclair first showed us how to write in America, his literary stature will, like theirs, increase in the eyes of his fellow-countrymen. We shall know that he was of the race of giants, and forgive him those faults which we perceive to-day.

Meanwhile, his faults as well as his virtues will receive due attention in this little book. But it may as well be said frankly that they will be dealt with as the faults of a great writer, and analyzed with the respect due to him as such. It should also be remarked that the biographical details in these pages are intended to be subordinate to the critical study of his development as a certain kind of writer—a describer, critic and prophet of modern industrial America.

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II. SOUTHERN BEGINNINGS

I.

UPTON SINCLAIR was born in Baltimore, Maryland, September 20th, 1878. His father was one of the Norfolk Sinclairs, his mother one of the Baltimore Hardens. That is to say, he was by ancestry and birth a Southerner. His childhood, moreover—until his tenth year, when his family moved to New York City—was spent in the very Southern atmosphere of Baltimore. . . . This background is so alien to the theme of modern American industrialism as to arouse a wonder and provoke a question: How did this child of the South ever come to write *The Jungle*?

For the South of his childhood had a history of its own, sufficiently different from that of the factory-building North. It is true that Baltimore, an important seaport in close proximity to coal mines, had already begun its industrial career; but the relations of capital and labor presented so far no tragic problems of which a little boy would hear. And such vague rumors as might have reached the child in Baltimore of the "labor troubles" up North—the strike in Chicago at the McCormick reaper works, the agitation for an eight-hour day, the Haymarket riot, and the hanging of the Chicago "Anarchists"

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—could have made no deep impression on his young consciousness.[1] He was living in another world than that. It was the world of an aristocracy ruined by the Civil War and struggling to regain its place in the sun.

II.

The Sinclairs of Norfolk had been a navy family. Before the first Sinclair came to America, there had been Sinclairs in the British navy. A Sinclair had commanded a frigate in the American navy in the War of 1812.[2] His son had followed him into the navy, and had been in command of one of the ships of Commodore Perry in the famous expedition of 1852-54 which "opened up" Japan. But in 1861, this officer had had to make a disastrous choice of loyalties. . . . There was a story which was a part of the Sinclair family tradition, about the two old sea-dogs who sat up all one April night in Norfolk, arguing out their duty and their destinies. One was Lieutenant Commander Arthur Sinclair, the boy Upton's grandfather; the other was his old friend and shipmate, Captain David Farragut. Both were Southerners, both Virginians—and Virginia had that day seceded from the Union. They argued all night

[1] He did, however, hear about the Haymarket riot later, when the family moved to New York. "I remember seeing wax-works of the anarchists making their bombs, in the Eden Musée, and I believed every word of it—or shall I say, every wax-work of it. I well remember the name of Altgeld [the governor of Illinois who later pardoned the surviving Haymarket anarchists from prison] as a kind of super bomb-thrower! I swallowed all its ideas complete."

[2] "Sinclair, Arthur. Lieutenant, 10 June, 1807. Commander, 2 July, 1812. Captain, 24 July, 1813. Died 7 February, 1837."—*U. S. Army and Navy Register.*

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in Sinclair's study and in the morning Farragut went North to offer his services to President Lincoln—while Sinclair stayed to fight for the South.[1] History preserves the name of Farragut as the commander of the victorious squadron which captured New Orleans and Mobile and sealed the South within a fatal blockade. Sinclair's further career is recorded only in the obscure annals of the defeated Confederacy. He commanded a blockade-runner which was sunk in a storm off the coast of England, carrying him to his death, and his body was buried in a churchyard at Hull.

His family's history was henceforth united with that of the lost cause. His eldest son had served four years under his father in the U. S. navy; he went into the Confederate navy, burned his ship to prevent its capture by Farragut at Mobile, was an officer on the blockade-runner *Alabama* which was finally sunk in English waters, survived to write a book about it, and died in poverty in a Soldiers' and Sailors' Home. Another son was also in the Confederate navy, and, more fortunate, lived to adorn New York society. Still another, Upton Beall Sinclair, who was to become the father of the novelist, was too young to see much of the fighting, though he took a gun and ran away from home to help in the final defense of the Confederate capital, Richmond. . . . The Sinclairs, along with all the rest of the South, were ruined, at

[1] "Sinclair, Arthur. Midshipman, 4 March, 1823. Passed midshipman, 4 June, 1831. Lieutenant, 3 March, 1835. Commander, 14 September, 1855. Dismissed 18 April, 1861."—*U. S. Army and Navy Register.*

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least until they could successfully adapt themselves to new conditions. During the "reconstruction" period, when Southern affairs were run by "carpet-bagger" politicians from the North with the aid of the votes of Negro freedmen, they were no longer members of the ruling class, with a prescriptive right to places of power and pride. They had to make their livings as best they could.

Moreover it would be a long time before the cotton and tobacco industries adjusted themselves comfortably to the new wage-labor system. Slavery was gone, and the old aristocratic ease only a sentimental memory. But the South loved its memories, bitter as they were—and drinking, that generous accompaniment of the old aristocratic ease, became an important solace of the harassed post-war period. Even if the proud womenfolk of the South got up stealthily in the dead of night to wash the doorsteps and perform other menial tasks, thus honorably concealing their poverty, there was always money for the menfolk to spend on good whiskey. The liquor trade thrived in the ruined South. And so it was that Upton B. Sinclair became a wholesale liquor salesman.

The young salesman's business took him to Baltimore, and there he met and married Priscilla Harden, daughter of the secretary and treasurer of the Western Maryland railroad. Maryland, violently Southern in its sympathies—so much so that the first blood of the Civil War was shed there when a mob resisted the passage of Northern regiments on their way to Washington—had nevertheless been

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kept within the Union by force of arms. It had not suffered with the rest of the South the rigors of blockade; and though it had endured the inconvenience of military occupation, it had not been devastated by invasion and battle, and it was able to share to some considerable extent in the economic growth and prosperity of the North after the war. The Hardens were moderately rich; and one of Priscilla's sisters had married a Baltimore banker named Bland, who presently founded the United States Fidelity and Guaranty Company, and became a millionaire many times over.

Priscilla Harden's marriage with the young salesman was less fortunate in an economic sense. Mr. Sinclair was not a sufficiently enterprising salesman, and was destined never to rise from the ranks. A gentle little man, the soul of courtesy to women and of loyalty to his friends, full of proud old Southern ideals of chivalry, having the knightly Robert E. Lee as his *beau ideal,* he was not one to succeed in business.

In Upton Sinclair's autobiographical novel, *Love's Pilgrimage,* there is a portrait of his father. From his old-fashioned aristocratic point of view he hated this modern business world in which he struggled. Those among whom his work took him "never guessed the depths of his contempt for all they stood for. They had the dollars, they were on top; but some day the nemesis of Good-breeding would smite them—the army of the ghosts of Gentility would rise, and with 'Marse Robert' and 'Jeb' Stuart at

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their head, would sweep away the hordes of commercialdom."

Mr. Sinclair was devoted to his wife and worshipped his only son. He was bitterly unhappy because his ineffectual efforts on their behalf left them still mired in poverty. As he brooded over his failure, he came more and more to resort to the solace of his own wares; and of that, too, he was ashamed. But he could at least teach his son to be a kind and chivalrous Southern gentleman.

The boy's mother was a Southern good woman, patient and practical. Like other Southern women who had seen too much of the ravages of drunkenness among their menfolk, she hated drink with a fierce hatred born of fear. All her capacity for unworldly idealism was centered in that emotion. She brought up her son to fear and hate liquor; she herself did not even drink tea or coffee, because they were "stimulants", and there was in her example and attitude a continual protest against "self-indulgence"—a touch of Spartan sternness. But for the rest, she had an innocent and happy worldliness, which desired and approved all the respectable comforts which life had to offer. Except for this fear of the consequences of "self-indulgence", a fear which was emphasized by the family circumstances, her influence upon her son would be wholly in the direction of conformity with the respectable world. And if for a time she hoped to see him go into the ministry, it was with the somewhat worldly expectation of seeing him in a bishop's robes. . . .

In Grandmother Sinclair's dining-room there was

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a portrait, well remembered, of the old sea-dog, Commodore Sinclair; and the boy Upton was told that he had his grandfather's nose—in the portrait a fierce, proud eagle-beak. And it was hoped that in the child's quiet stubbornness there was evidence of the ancestral trait of indomitable will. The boy was to go into the navy, and might become a hero like his grandfather. At the age of six, that was his ambition.

It was no unreasonable ambition. His parents were poor, but—aside from such influence as might be exerted by his rich relatives—poverty would not stand in the way of the appointment to the Naval Academy of a boy who was of cavalier stock and whose forefathers had served the State. He might easily enough get the nomination to Annapolis from his congressman; it was only necessary for him to be a bright enough lad to pass his examinations —and there would be no difficulty about that. Early in childhood, without having gone to school, he had taught himself to read, and had already begun to exhibit a precocious intellectuality. The only possible question was one of health. A series of infantile diseases had left him a rather delicate child. That was dealt with by keeping him out of school till the age of ten, to give his body, in the homely phrase, a chance to catch up with his brains. And, though he pursued his education with more intensity by himself than he would have done at school, he did become physically robust. There was, apparently, every reason to believe that young Upton Sinclair would become an officer in the U.S. navy.

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. . . One can imagine him thus now, a slight, straight, grizzled captain, something of a martinet, unquestionably brave, not very popular, a little aloof, doing his duty, carrying on the family traditions. But life had other destinies in store for him.

III.

The gentle, chivalrous father, unable to make a decent living for the wife and son he loved, became in his discouragement more and more dependent upon the liquid consolations which he peddled. Ashamed of his lapses from grace, afraid to go home and confess himself again conquered by his weakness, he would stay away, drinking himself into the stupor of forgetfulness. The family poverty at times became desperate. There were, to be sure, when bitter necessity had overcome her pride, Mrs. Sinclair's relatives to turn to for help. And the child was, of course, always welcome at the homes of "Grandfather Harden" and "Uncle Bland". The Bland wealth was gained during the boy's childhood and youth, and he grew up amidst the constantly expanding grandeur of the Bland family. The contrast between the luxury of these prosperous Baltimore and country homes and his own dingy boarding-house background made him feel more acutely the poverty of which he was the victim.

Moreover, the help that was extended to his family by these more fortunate relatives could scarcely be given without, in the eyes of a sensitive

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child, an appearance of condescension, against which all his pride was in revolt. It seemed to a child's sense of justice that the family needs rightfully entitled them to a chance for life and happiness; and it was shameful that this should be granted them as a favor, that they should have to beg for it. "To each according to his needs" is the natural economic code of childhood. . . . But it was inevitably with his own needs and their frustration that he was secretly preoccupied. It seems, to a child, that all for which he wishes belongs rightfully to him already; and it is hateful to him that power over his own life and happiness should be in other hands, to be granted as a favor, not conceded as a right. To have to beg for what already belongs to one is, in the code of childhood, to pay too humiliating a price for it. One would rather, if one is sufficiently sensitive, go without.

His sensitive egotism had thus in childhood become painfully complicated with the poverty of his family and the wealth of some of the family relatives. And, most painfully of all, he felt that he need not remain, if he chose, the victim of his parents' poverty. He was as a child much loved by these rich relatives; and he understood that he was always welcome to stay with them. This possibility, of escape from poverty, never came up for formal decision, and remained for a long time to torment him. But at the age of ten it emerged more definitely into his consciousness, when his family decided to leave Baltimore. They were going to New York City, where his father had got

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a position as a traveling salesman—his line this time being hats, instead of whiskey. It would have been very easy for the boy to stay on in Baltimore and have his relatives' assistance in getting an education. In effect this would mean, when it came to his choice of a career, that he would have all the advantages of a rich man's son. He hated poverty; and above all he dreaded going on with the endless and hopeless struggle with drink in which his father was involved. But loyalty and chivalry had been among the old-fashioned Southern virtues which his father had inculcated in him, and he chose to share his father's struggle. . . . Perhaps he remembered the tale, heard as a child, of his grandfather's debate with Captain Farragut. Commodore Sinclair had done his duty, and his grandson could do no less.

It was a bitter duty which he had to look forward to. He was getting old enough now to help his father in his times of weakness. Soon, when his father did not come home, it would be the boy's task to seek for him in one saloon after another until he found him. Yes, and give him the reassurance that he most needed—that they still loved him in spite of everything;—and so bring him back to the boarding-house where his wife sat and wept. . . . The boy, in choosing, knew what he was in for.

The emotional relations between the boy and his father are described in *Love's Pilgrimage,* where the boy is called Thyrsis. "To others his father was merely a gross little man, with sordid ideals and low tastes; but to Thyrsis he was a man with the terror of the hunted creatures in his soul, and the furies

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of madness cracking their whips about his ears." . . . "There were rich relatives, a world of real luxury up above—the thing that calls itself 'Society'. And Thyrsis was a student and a bright lad, and he was welcome there; he might have spread his wings and flown away from this sordidness. But duty held him, and love and memory held him still tighter. For his father worshipped him, and craved his help; to the last hour of this dreadful battle he fought to keep his son's regard—he prayed for it, with tears in his eyes and anguish in his voice. And so the boy had to stand by. And that meant that he grew up in a torture-house."

IV.

A sensitive child who grows up in an ugly and hateful world becomes something of a poet in self-defense. He has to shut himself away from all the world's ugliness and hatefulness in an imaginative world of books and dreams. His natural creative energies, baffled by the obduracy of outward circumstances, will begin to work upon the more plastic materials furnished by reverie. Books and dreams are his natural refuge, and to become an artist his inevitable secret dream.

"There was", it is written of the boy "Thyrsis" in *Love's Pilgrimage,* "not much of what is called 'culture' in his family; no music at all, and no poetry. But there were novels, and there were libraries where one could get more of these, so Thyrsis became a devourer of stories; he would disappear, and they would find him at meal-times hidden in a

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clump of bushes or in a corner behind a sofa—anywhere out of the world. He read whole libraries of adventure: Mayne Reid and Henty, and then Cooper and Stevenson and Scott. And then came more serious novels—'Don Quixote', and 'Les Misérables', George Eliot, whom he loved, and Dickens, whose social protest thrilled him; and chiefest of all, Thackeray, who molded his thought. Thackeray saw to the heart of it; and no high-souled lad who read him and worshipped him was ever after to be lured by the glamor of the 'great' world—a world whose greatness was based upon selfishness and greed." He needed, it would seem, such help as Thackeray's to enable him to resist the very real temptation to become a part of such a world.

He needed, moreover, figures with whose heroic renunciation he could take satisfaction in imaginatively identifying himself; nor did he fail to find them in this realm of ideal types. In his childhood the most significant of these figures was that of Jesus—who had hated the power of Mammon and built up a Kingdom of the Spirit. The idea of Jesus driving the money-changers out of the Temple remained throughout his childhood a vivid and consoling fantasy. And this secret Kingdom of the Spirit, in which he walked in lonely exaltation, gave him reasons more profound even than those of love and duty for refusing to live a life of luxury. For the life of his rich relatives was not the ideal life of his poetic dreams. It seemed to him that these riches were wasted. They were not used in achieving beauty and happiness, but only in acquiring toys.

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"What do I mean by toys?" he wrote later, in *Wilshire's*. "Why, just things. Nothing but things—all things in this big world except half a dozen useful things. The uses of bread and bacon, of a stove and a wood-pile, I recognize with all my heart; and also of beautiful books in an occasional rare instance; and always, of course, of prayer and music, of joy and love, of wisdom and high resolve. Those things—that are as free as air and sky and the flowers—are serious things; and all things else that this spreading earth has to show, all the infinite unthinkability that is shut up in a thousand mighty cities and is fought and cried for" by adult children "are *toys*—just *toys!*" It is a cry out of his own childhood, when, forced by unhappiness to take life seriously, he realized that these grown-up people had by no means put away childish things. Toy-lovers still, preoccupied with acquiring and displaying their toy-titles, toy-learning, toy-houses, toy-food and toy-clothes, they were unable even to wish for the real beauties and joys that life had to offer. His path, then, surely, was different from theirs. . . .

Yet, in so sternly and resolutely refusing to be tempted aside from his own secret goal, he must have felt deep and aching regrets at the good things which he was incidentally but necessarily giving up. There had been a time in his childhood when he was naïvely fond of luxury; there were relatives on his father's side who were poor and whom he did not care to visit because of a "snobbery of the palate", preferring the excellent table of his wealthier relatives. His mother would scarcely have condemned that as

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"self-indulgence"; but it was a worldly tendency which he learned to resist with Spartan asceticism. In inwardly deciding to give up these luxuries, he must unconsciously have felt it necessary to despise them; and among the luxuries which he thus came to despise were such simple and innocent things as good food, idleness, and play. His hard choice would seem to have confirmed him in a too stern and ascetic attitude toward life. Some of the simple, natural, happy, playful aspects of living were unconsciously classed in his mind as temptations, and came to be regarded with the emotional hostility[1]

[1] However, Sinclair writes in a private letter: "I am not opposed to the play aspects of life. The facts are these: As a boy, I did every kind of playing that boys can do. I played tennis in Central Park, football and baseball in vacant lots, and was nabbed by the police in the usual style, built bonfires and roasted stolen potatoes, skated on ice in winter and played shinny on roller skates the rest of the year, climbed on the roofs and threw clothes-pins at the people on the street. I was in every kind of danger. I used to say, playfully, that fate must be keeping me alive for some purpose, because I had escaped death by a hair's breadth a dozen times before I was fourteen. I could outrun any boys I knew for long distances. I have run all the way around Central Park, and I have ridden a bicycle from up town in New York over Brooklyn bridge to Coney Island, gone in swimming in March with snow on the ground, and then ridden home again; this at the age of seventeen. At about that age I set out with desperate determination to learn to play the violin, practicing eight hours a day. It was work, but done in order that I might be able to play. At the present time, when my wife is ill and I have to stay at home nearly all the time, I play an hour or two every day—always sight reading, and I get as much excitement out of struggling through a Mozart sonata as some people get out of a horse-race. I get as much fun out of a tennis tournament as any of the young fellows. I have also been devoted to the theatre, having never missed seeing a good play except because of poverty.

"From the age of twenty to twenty-eight or twenty-nine I did no playing, but this was because I was in a desperate struggle to survive as a writer; but that was not a matter of philosophy but of practical necessity. You wouldn't say that a man was opposed to play because he didn't play while he was in a battle.

"Theoretically I am opposed to play under the following circumstances; first, when it is cruel and involves wanton suffering to either human beings or animals. I have always enjoyed hunting and fishing, but the game or fish were always eaten. Second, when the play is destructive to health; and that is the basis of my objections to the kind of play which involves alcohol. I know so many ways to have a good time which do not involve a headache next morning. Naturally, the condition of my father's liver when he died has a good deal to do with this

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he had already been taught to feel for drinking, as things to be feared and hated. . . . Nor, under the circumstances, was that exaggerated emotion quite absurd. These things *were* temptations to him; and it was the effort to save his poet's soul alive that he became a Puritan.

attitude. Third, play which is not a recreation after work, but a substitute for work. I saw in Greenwich Village a great many young idlers calling themselves radicals and doing nothing for the movement, and that made me tired. . . .

"I think you mistake my attitude toward dancing. As a boy at various 'springs' in Virginia, I danced a lot and was duly dressed up for fancy balls. I remember very well being a 'baker'. I don't think I was more than six years old, and I was expected to carry a tray with rolls on it, but I very soon shed that encumbrance. Later on I never danced, simply because the dancing I saw was done by the idlers of 'society', wasting time, and it was a matter of expensive clothes, and all that sort of social frummery: either that, or you had to patronize the underworld. My objection to modern jazz dancing is that it represents the taking possession of America by that underworld. I think that jazz dances are awkward and ugly, being imitations of savage sex dances. Of course, as time goes on, if they survive, they will be idealized. . . .

"My ethical ideals on these questions are very simply stated, and they seem to me entirely practical. I want grown-up human beings to have some serious work to do, something constructive, something which constitutes their main interest. When they have worked at this with real, full-sized energy and determination, then let them recreate both minds and bodies by any kind of play whatever which they enjoy, and which does not interfere with their ability to go back to their work."

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III. ADOLESCENT DISCOVERIES

I.

WHEN the Sinclairs came to New York in 1888, they had not quite left the South—for they stayed, at first, for a year or two, in a "Southern" hotel on West 19th Street. It is described in *Love's Pilgrimage* as inhabited by musty phantoms of the dead Southern past—"old ladies who were proud and prim, and old gentlemen who were quixotic and humorous, young ladies who were 'belles' and young gentlemen who aspired to be 'blades'. It was a world that would have made happy the soul of any writer of romances; but to Thyrsis . . . this dead Aristocracy cried aloud for burial. There was an incredible amount of drunkenness, and of debauchery scarcely hidden; there was pretense strutting like a peacock, and avarice skulking like a hound; there were jealousy, and base snobbery, and raging spite, and a breath of suspicion and scandal hanging like a poisonous cloud over everything. These people came and went, an endless procession of them; they laughed and danced and gossipped their way through the boy's life, and unconsciously he judged them, and hated them, and feared them. . . . Most of them were poor; not an honest poverty, but a sham and artificial poverty—the inability to dress as others

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did, and to lose money at 'bridge' and 'poker', and pay the costs of their self-indulgences. As for Thyrsis and his parents, they always paid what they owed; but they were not always able to pay it when they owed it, and they suffered all the agonies and humiliations of those who did not pay at all. There was scarcely over a week when this canker of want did not gnaw at them; their life was one endless and sordid struggle to make last year's clothing look like new, and to find some boarding-house that was cheaper and yet respectable. There was endless wrangling and strife and worry over money; and every year the task was harder, the standards lower, the case more hopeless."

And now the boy went formally to school for the first time, an East Side school, and played rowdily about the streets of New York with his schoolmates, to whom he was familiarly known as "Chappie". He was able to do two years' work in one, and at the age of twelve had finished grammar school; but because he was too young to enter college, he had nothing better to do in the meantime than take the last year of grammar school over again. "The fates took pity on him," he says of himself in *The Goose-Step,* "and gave him as teacher for that year a jolly Irish gentleman, so full of interest in his boys that he did not keep the rules. If you wanted to ask him questions, you asked and without first raising your hand; you might even get into an argument with him, as with any boy, and if he caught you whispering to your neighbor his method of correcting you was novel, but highly effective—he would let fly a

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piece of chalk at your head, and you would grin, and the class would howl with delight." A collection of one or two hundred books, given him by aunts and uncles and cousins on Christmases and birthdays, he left with the school, where it became the foundation of a class library, to the delight of the boys and the Irish teacher, so that he left school in a blaze of glory. His school-life, though he was found a sufficiently apt pupil, was not all so satisfying nor by any means so unconventional as in these instances. But it was too late for him to be really amenable to the social pressure of the school-room and the school-yard; he was an individual, cherishing his own secret dreams. Though he played with other boys, he had no chums, no real friends. "Where," as he asks, in *Love's Pilgrimage* of Thyrsis, "should he meet people who knew what he knew about life? Where in all the world should he meet them, save in the books of great men in times past?"

Books were still his companions. In the summer of his thirteenth year, when visiting his uncle in Baltimore, he discovered sets of Milton and Shakespeare in expensive bindings, unread to that day and perhaps since; he went straight through them in rapture, and found in Hamlet a figure to shine in his imagination beside that earlier heroic and beautiful figure of Jesus. For Hamlet was, like himself, a prince of the spirit, cheated by the world out of his inheritance—the poet's natural inheritance of beauty and happiness. And Hamlet's world seemed to him like the world he had known all his life, in

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Baltimore and New York. His predicament had made him think a great deal about the world. It wasn't, he knew, his father that was to blame for his misery; at first he had thought the corner saloon-keeper was to blame—but behind him he had seen first the brewer, then Tammany Hall, and finally rich and respectable society, involved in a cruel and unscrupulous plot to make money out of his own and others' miseries. Yes, Hamlet, like himself, was an idealist in revolt against the world.

He had vague plans of wringing from this brutal world his chance for life. He needed knowledge first of all. And so, still nominally too young, and obliged to tell a lie about his age, he began in 1892 the five-years' course at the College of the City of New York, from which he was to receive his A.B. at the age of eighteen. This institution, then located in an old brick building at Twenty-third Street and Lexington Avenue, is described in *Love's Pilgrimage* as a poor-boy's college, "where the students all lived at home, and had nothing to do but study; and so Thyrsis missed all that beneficent illumination known as 'student-life'. He never hurrahed at football contests, nor did he dress himself in honorific garments, nor stupefy himself at 'smokers'. Being democratic, and without thought of setting himself up over others, he was unaware of his greatest opportunity, and when they invited him into a fraternity, he declined. Once or twice he found himself roaming the streets at night with a crowd of students, emitting barbaric screechings; but this made him feel silly, so he lagged behind and went

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home." For he had gone to this institution with a purpose of his own; he was to use it, not let it use or shape him.

The college did, indeed, serve to introduce him to the world of knowledge; "but that did not take long, and afterwards it was all in his way. The mathematics were a discipline, and in them he rejoiced as a strong man to run a race; and this was true also of the sciences, and of history—the only trouble was that he would finish the text-books in the first few weeks, and after that there was nothing to do save to compose verses in class, and to make sketches of the professors. But as for the 'languages' and the 'literatures' they taught him—in the end Thyrsis came to forgive them, because he saw that they did not know what languages and literatures were." "I marvel," he says in *The Goose-Step,* "when I realize that it was possible for me to read *The Acharnians* of Aristophanes, line by line, and hardly once get a smile out of it, nor have it occur to me that there was any resemblance between what happened in that play, and the fight against Tammany Hall and the Hearst newspapers which was going on in the world about me." Of the Latin professor he writes: "I can see this old gentleman's knitted brows and hear his angry tones as he exclaims: 'Mr. Sinclair, it is so because I say it is so!' Five hours a week for five years I studied with that old gentleman, or his subordinates, and I read a great deal of Latin literature, but I never got so that I could read a paragraph of the simplest Latin prose without a dictionary. The professor of Eng-

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lish literature chanced to be a propagandist—but not, of course, of radical ideas of any sort; that would scarcely have been tolerated. He was an ardent and argumentative Catholic, and his idea of conducting a class in literature was to find out if there was anything in the subject which could in any way be connected with Catholic doctrine and history, and if so, to bring out that aspect of the subject." Finally, as his time in this college was nearing its end he got a leave of absence on the ground that he had to earn his living, and spent two months sitting on the bed in his eight-by-ten bedroom in a lodging-house, spending his days and nights learning for himself.

He made the great discovery of cheaply-printed prose classics—English poetry he already knew by heart. The Spartan plainness, the lack of outward beauty, in these little paper-bound volumes did not offend him. "One could get so much for so little, in this wonderful world of mind! For eight cents he picked up a paper volume of Emerson's *Essays;* and in this shrewd and practical nobility was so much that he was seeking in life! And then he stumbled upon a fifteen-cent *Sartor Resartus,* and took that home and read it. It was like the clash of trumpets and cymbals to him. Hour after hour he read, breathless, like a man bewitched, the whole night through. He would cry aloud with delight, or drop the book and pound his knee over the demoniac power of it. The next day he began the *French Revolution;* and after that, alas, he found there was no more—for Carlyle had turned his back

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upon democracy, and so Thyrsis turned his back upon Carlyle."

For, in the New York public schools, he had begun for the first time to learn, as he could scarcely have learned in the South, the history of his country as an experiment in democracy. His hatred of the sham aristocracy of the South had made him thrill to the lessons of democracy. He had read ten large volumes about Lincoln. And because the great historic idea of democracy was something new to this young rebellious Southerner, he could understand and respond to all its revolutionary implications. These implications might be smugly covered up in the school histories, but they were plain enough for him in nineteenth century literature. "Wordsworth and Tennyson, Browning and Swinburne—he followed each one as far as their revolutionary impulse lasted. Even Ruskin, who taught him the possibilities of English prose, and opened his eyes to the form and color of the world of nature—even Ruskin he gave up, because he was a philanthropist and not a democrat."

Nevertheless, his own ideals were fundamentally more aristocratic than he realized. It was from his father's aristocratic point of view that he had first in childhood learned to hate commercialism; and his father's notion of Gentility arising under the leadership of Robert E. Lee to drive out the hordes of commercialdom had found its spiritually aristocratic analogue in his childhood vision of Jesus driving the money-changers from the Temple. It was as an aristocrat that he had turned against plutocracy;

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but sensitive and energetic members of a defeated aristocracy sometimes make common cause with the democracy against their common enemy, the rich. So far his democracy was a little like Byron's. And his hatred of a sham Aristocracy was not the least aristocratic thing about him. He was conscious of superiority to those against whom he measured himself and his desire was for a Kingdom of the Spirit where he should take his true rank among the peers of that realm.

II.

His family belonged to the Episcopalian church. He had been taught the Christian virtues in his childhood, but theology had not been emphasized. Church-going was more important than orthodoxy. It pleased his mother to be escorted to church on Sunday by husband and son, these correctly attired for the occasion in kid gloves and derby hat. Though the family always lived in poor neighborhoods, it was to a fashionable Fifth Avenue church that they went, to be taken by the polite usher with padded shoes into the half-occupied pew of some more or less hospitable church member. Coming out, they would look at the costumes of the church-goers, marvel at the Vanderbilt palaces they passed by on their way home, and talk about how much everything must cost. The boy's mother, who had little enough of comfort and leisure in her life, enjoyed these occasions innocently, and the father appreciated the opportunity to dress up in his Sunday best and wear his tight and "dressy" patent-

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leather shoes. But the boy, because he had a really religious nature and took religion seriously, began to revolt against this practice. It, too, he declared, was a sham. . . . From the age of fourteen he had been the protegé and friend of a clergyman, the Reverend William W. Moir, of the Church of the Holy Communion, in New York. This warm-hearted clergyman had gathered about him a whole flock of boys, rich and poor, and young Sinclair was one of his favorites. To him the boy took his first theological difficulties, and was given volumes of Christian apologetics to read. These completed his downfall, for they revealed how feeble were the intellectual defenses of the church against its critics. His clergyman friend was not, however, seriously troubled about the boy's agnosticism, declaring that he would come back. . . . Nor were his family seriously troubled over his apostasy. They were not interested in theological matters. But his refusal to go to church was a different matter. That made his mother very unhappy. And it shattered, moreover, her dream of seeing him a bishop. . . .

At the same time he was beginning to pain his father by speaking disrespectfully of the Democratic party. And when he presently went on to utter disrespectful opinions concerning the Vanderbilts, and respectability in general, he passed out of the range of parental comprehension.

And now, beside Jesus and Hamlet, a third great ideal figure came into the world of his imagination —Shelley. . . . The course in English literature at college had somehow failed to conceal that poet's

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existence. It was in his senior year, reading *The Skylark* in class, that he abruptly realized that what he was going through in college was a "ghastly farce." And accordingly he went home, to conduct his own education for a time. His education had been all along an attempt to discover the values of life, so that he might choose for himself what his own life should be. His secret wish was to be a poet; and now this wish was given its largest and noblest interpretation by his worship of the great poet who had declared poets to be "the unacknowledged legislators of mankind".

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IV. THE YOUNG HACK

I.

HE was, in a humble and practical way, already a writer. He had found that he had the "curious knack" of doing trivial little things—verses, jokes, poems—that pleased others. "They came from some little corner of his consciousness, he scarcely knew how." And, most incredibly, they sold! He had been doing these things since he was fifteen. He was soon making as much as four or five dollars a week doing these things in odd moments. . . .

The family fortunes being for the time improved, he was free to spend these princely sums upon himself. And since what he most desired was freedom, he was somewhat reluctantly permitted to have a room of his own, away from his parents, paying his rent and buying his own food out of his literary earnings.

The room, a top-floor hall bedroom, cost $1.25 a week.[1] That did not leave much for food; but he scorned the worldly demands of appetite, and negligently fried his own meals, or thought his high thoughts while he ate the cheapest dishes in the

[1] Detail, from a letter: "Twenty-five cents a week for clean collars and cuffs, and newspapers. I wore the cuffs up high to keep them from showing too much and getting soiled too fast. I did not have to buy any clothes—my cousin H—— used to send me his cast off clothes. My meals cost $3 a week."

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cheapest restaurants—thereby laying up for himself in years to come a case of chronic indigestion. He would stay in his unheated room until he got too severe a cold, and then pay a precious dollar more to move into a room with a radiator in it. . . . And meantime there was an "Uncle Terry", an elder brother of his father's, sporting it in New York society. And occasionally the rich Baltimore relatives would come to New York and invite the young student to a dinner at the Waldorf-Astoria and a musical comedy afterward and then perhaps a late supper. Doubtless they meant well; but their guest would bitterly reflect, after an evening empty of beauty or meaning, that upon what had been wasted in those few hours he could have lived for months!

From his fifteenth to his sixteenth year he went on in this fashion. He spoke of becoming a lawyer; but this was more than anything else a mask to hide, even from himself, his rash and beautiful dream of becoming a poet. . . . And then, one winter midnight, when he was sixteen, there came to him his first visitation of poetic ecstasy.

He was walking at the time alone in a beautiful garden, for it was during a holiday visit to those "upper regions" of luxury which were his for the asking. The experience came suddenly and abruptly. "He could not have told whether he walked or sat down, whether he spoke or was silent—his consciousness was given up to the people of his dreams, the companions and lovers of his fancy. The cold and snow were gone, and there was a moonlit glade in a forest; and thither they came, one by one,

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friendly and human, yet in the full panoply of their splendor and grace. There were Shelley and Milton, and the gentle and troubled Hamlet, and the sorrowful knight of la Mancha, with the irrepressible Falstaff to hearten them all; a strangely assorted company, yet royal spirits all of them, and no strangers to each other in their own world. And here they gathered and conversed, each in his own vein and from his own impulse, with gracious fancy and lofty vision and heart-easing mirth."

That was the first of what he came to recognize as a poet's ecstasies, to wait for and welcome, and to remember as authentic signs of his own election to a poetic career. For these visions were more real than reality; and they summed up in some vivid form all that he felt, and more than he was aware he knew, about life. They seemed to come from unknown deeps of his soul; they were what the dull professors of English literature were unwittingly referring to when they spoke so glibly of a poet's "inspiration".

He was at first so awed by these visions as to be disinclined to grapple with them and attempt to fix them in words. It seemed to him that a whole lifetime must needs be dedicated to realizing them in verse. Yet "he soon discovered that these visions of wonder came but once, and that when they were gone they were gone forever. And he must learn to grapple with them as they fled, to labor with them and hold them fast, at the cost of whatever heartbreaking strain. Thus alone could men have even the feeblest reflection of their beauty. . . ."

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II.

But, meanwhile, he was under the practical necessity of supporting himself. His "curious knack" of writing things that sold must be cultivated. And also, as his father's earning capacity became more uncertain and undependable, it was necessary for him to contribute to the support of his mother. If he could make enough money by writing, he need not quit his studies. And so, still holding fast to his secret hope of becoming a poet, he threw the reserve of an immense stock of youthful energy into the task of making a living by hackwork. He knew well enough what sort of things he could write that would sell, and he wrote them. Boys' stories, tales of adventure, full of his own earlier boyish dreams of adventure, flowed easily from his pen.

There were also jokes to be manufactured at odd moments and sold to the comic papers, or to artists who drew for the comic papers. A dollar apiece was the established price. In an *Argosy* serial written at the age of nineteen, when he was commencing to break under the strain of hackwork, he introduced a poet, come to New York with an epic poem in his pocket, poor fool! but fortunately falling in with a smart lad who supports himself by writing these jokes; and the process is thus described by this latter character:

> "I have a regular list of joke subjects—there is the tramp joke, the mother-in-law joke, the boarding-house joke, the small boy brother joke, the life-insurance agent

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joke, the cannibal and missionary joke, and so on. I have counted them up, and I am sure there are fifty subjects. . . .

"Then, to take the tramp idea, for instance; there are a dozen things available in connection with tramps. There is the fact that tramps don't like to saw wood, that they are afraid of water, and bull-dogs, and tough apple pies. You see, when you get the thing reduced down like that it is very easy to take any one of the ideas and build a joke up around it."

Shall we have, by way of illustration, from the scrap-book fondly kept by Upton Sinclair's mother during this period, a joke thus manufactured?

> Old Lady—You look as if you never washed, sir.
> Weary Will—Yes, ma'am; I prefer godliness.

Not a very good joke? Well, the editor liked it, and that sufficed. Another on the same theme:

> Peregrinating Peter—Look dere at dat sign!
> Emigrating Edward—'Cleaning and dyeing establishment.' What about it?
> Peregrinating Peter—Didn't I tell you them two allus went tergidder?

And here is one that harks back to the days of the "Raines law" hotels, when beer could legally be served in New York on Sunday only with a meal—the meal being, in practice, a sandwich, endlessly re-served to each customer in turn:

> "The complaint reads," began the justice, "that the plaintiff entered your hotel on Sunday and ordered a sandwich and a glass of beer. That he was peaceably enjoying the same when you, the proprietor, assaulted him violently. Guilty or not guilty?"
> "Guilty, your honor."
> "And why did you do it?"

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> "Your honor, the feller did me out of a whole Sunday's trade."
> "How, pray?"
> "Why, he ate the sandwich!"

Thus the "joke-factory". And when Upton Sinclair is accused, as he has been, of having no sense of humor, he is perhaps entitled to the defense that he had to manufacture too many jokes at a dollar apiece. . . .

Later came stories and serials in the *Argosy,* a cheap popular magazine of adventure fiction. They had the first place in the magazine, and doubtless his mother was proud of her boy's achievement.

> It was early in the month of February, in the year 1804, along the northern coast of Africa.
> A small vessel of Moorish rig was speeding over the Mediterranean waves, urged onward by a fierce gale. The little craft was close-reefed, and her decks were swept by the flying spray.

Thus begins *In the Days of Decatur,* a novel complete in one issue. And *In the Net of the Visconti,* a serial:

> In the month of June of the year 1402 two horsemen were riding through a deep forest in central Italy. Their horses were spattered with foam. . . .

These youthful literary talents did not fail to attract the attention of Street & Smith, publishers of five-cent novels, and presently he was given a regular job producing this kind of fiction for adolescents. Under military and naval pseudonyms, he wrote a weekly series about life at West Point and

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another about life at Annapolis. The Spanish-American war came on, and he sent both his young heroes to Cuba. "Killing Spaniards" became a profitable literary occupation. Each week he wrote a number of the Army weekly (15,000 words) and of the Navy weekly (15,000 words), and every other week a complete volume (over 50,000 words) for some cheap "library" series— accomplishing during this period the almost incredible number of 56,000 words a week. He kept two stenographers going all the time. One came one day, the other the next day; he would start dictating at 8 o'clock in the morning and dictate until noon, about 2,000 words an hour or 8,000 a day, Sundays not excluded. In the afternoon he would revise the typed matter brought in from the previous day's dictation, and in the evening he would take a long walk in the park and think up the next day's story. This was while he was still nominally a college student, and actually undertaking to keep up his intellectual life. These hack labors occupied some eight hours a day, leaving eight more for intellectual pursuits, for he was operating on a sixteen-hour work-day, leaving eight hours for the necessary business of eating and sleeping. For these hack labors he received $70 a week, at the rate of an eighth of a cent a word. At the age of twenty, he was turning out more than two million words a year.

He had shown that he was capable of coping with the world on its own terms. But he had not given up his secret dream of becoming a poet. Sometimes, when the ecstasy came, he would turn aside from

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these necessitous labors, and try to capture its magic in a net of words. He would try, and hope that he had succeeded, and know that he had failed. Poetry is a jealous mistress. But he could not take time off to court her properly. Street & Smith would not pay him a weekly salary while he was learning to be a poet. The world did not want poetry enough to pay for it. The best that was in him was worthless in the eyes of the world. The world valued only this "curious knack" of turning out adventure stories for adolescent minds. Be a hack, then, or starve! There lay his choice.

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V. THE ARTIST IN REVOLT

I.

IN this manner he earned his living and helped support his mother, until he was twenty. He had finished college at the age of eighteen, "passing comfortably near the bottom of his class", and had entered Columbia University as a graduate student. During these years, he had written millions of words of hackwork—a total bulk, he had estimated it, equal to the complete works of Sir Walter Scott! The psychology of the period that immediately follows could not well be understood without taking that fact into consideration. It is obscured in his own autobiographical novel, *Love's Pilgrimage,* and does not at all enter into the quasi-autobiographical *Journal of Arthur Stirling.* Both of these books tell of the frantic and frenzied struggles of a young writer for self-realization in the midst of poverty. In neither of these books will the young writer solve the problem of poverty by doing any other kind of work except writing: and this "no compromise" attitude, when carried to such extreme lengths as it is in these books, alienates a good deal of the sympathies of the reader. One is better able to understand such reckless and wilful intransigence when one realizes that this is the maddened rebellion of

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an over-driven hack. All work and no play may make Jack a dull boy, when Jack is an ordinary citizen; but if Jack feels himself to be an artist, too much hackwork and no opportunity for creative self-expression makes him go berserk. It is the artist's revolt against slavery; and like any slave-revolt it is likely to be marked by "red ruin and the breaking up of homes". It is these years of successful literary drudgery, these millions of meaningless and merely saleable words, that explain the ruthless singleness of artistic purpose in the face of every obstacle and in defiance of common sense. It is this situation which explains the extraordinary combination of abnormal personal sensitiveness with an inhuman indifference to all opposing human claims, whether in himself or in others who are dear to him; and it not merely explains but, more than anything else, serves to excuse the belief, on the part of the young man himself, that the frightful excesses of his morbid egotism are symptoms of "genius".

The onset of this period of revolt was necessarily delayed at first and then intensified by a sense of his responsibilities toward his mother. The burden of her support had lately been borne much more by him than by his father. It may seem obvious enough to us that, in these circumstances, she should turn to her relatives for assistance, leaving the boy free to struggle with his career; but perhaps this was not so obvious to the relatives—and it was an idea which could grow in the boy's mind only in the most painful fashion, and with the assistance of an immense amount of quasi-impersonal idealism.

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He had to believe that his poetic career was of the utmost importance to humanity—perhaps never a difficult thing for a young poet to believe. And since being a poet meant necessarily being poor, his poverty had to have a quasi-divine sanction and justification, which his ascetically-religious tendencies made it easy for him to feel. Poetry was to be not a career so much as a Mission. The Muse might have spoken to him in such words as those of Jesus, saying: "If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple". Indeed, the struggle through which he went was in the nature of a religious conversion, such as has led more than one zealot to break the bonds of filial affection and devote his life to poverty and danger. Yet his repudiation of his mother—for such it must have seemed to him—was a hard matter. And the partial transformation of his earlier ambition from that of becoming a poet in the pure and restricted sense to that of becoming a poetic novelist was perhaps not merely due to the influence of years of story-writing, but was a compromise with his sense of obligation to her. For he conceived of himself as ultimately and brilliantly successful. Such success would enable him to resume his obligations to her, without endangering his own ambitions. But this was the utmost compromise of which his tormented mind was capable. And in the meantime he had to repudiate all human obligations that stood in his way. He had to hate the Christianity he had already intel-

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lectually outgrown, and, with some help from Nietzsche, whom he had read in the German, to scorn its teaching of Obedience, as a slave-morality unfit for free men.

II.

This, in his twentieth and twenty-first years, was his secret life, and his preparation for the struggle soon to come. Ostensibly, he was at the university in preparation for a career as a lawyer. "His mother had given up all hope of seeing him a bishop, and they had compromised on a judgeship." But he easily found reasons for repudiating that career: "Here at the university there was a law-school, and he met the students, and saw that this, too, could not be. These 'lawyers' were not seeking knowledge for the love of it—they were studying a trade, by which they could rise in the world. They were not going out to do battle for justice—they were perfecting themselves in cunning, so that they might be of help in money-disputes." Besides, "they were a coarse and roystering crew, and he shrank from them in repugnance".

Being secretly dedicated to a literary career, he was particularly sensitive to the deficiencies of the courses in English literature. An eminent professor and critic assigned him a "theme" on College Athletics. He decided to quit the course, and the following conversation ensued, as reported in *Love's Pilgrimage:*

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The professor gazed over his spectacles at him. "Why?"

"I don't think I'm getting any good out of it."

"But how can you tell what good you are getting?"

". . . I don't seem to feel that I am."

"It's not to be supposed that you would feel it—not at this early stage. You must wait."

"But I don't like the method, sir."

"What's wrong with the method?"

He was not sure, he said; but he did not think that writing could be taught. Anyway, one first had to have something worth saying——

"Are you laboring under the delusion that you know anything about writing? . . . Because if you are, let me disabuse your mind at once. There is no one in the class who knows less about writing than yourself. . . . It is my business to teach students to write. I've given my life to it, and I think I know something about it. But you think you know more than I do. That's all."

And so they parted.

In a similar course under an even more eminent professor and critic, a grammatical error was discovered in a poem. "You will find such things occasionally," said the professor, as the story is told in *The Goose-Step*. "There is a line in Byron—'There let him lay'—and I have an impression that I once came upon a similar error in Shelley. Some day before long I plan to read Shelley through and see if I can find it." Shelley was the boy's dearest friend; and he quit that course also.

Nevertheless, while at the university, he discovered for himself how to master a foreign language. He familiarized himself in a few days with the main features of its grammar and syntax, and then read—looking up each word once for all time, and impressing its meaning so firmly in his mind that he

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would never have to waste time looking in the dictionary again. On the side he thus taught himself German, French, and Italian and read immensely in all those languages. In German he made enthusiastically the acquaintance of Goethe, a picture of whom as a young poet he carried about in his pocket "like a lover"—perhaps, unwittingly to himself, as a secret promise of the coming true of his own rash poetic ambitions.

His only friends were still in the world of imagination. He had no time to make friends; and, if he had wished to do so, he was too much of an oddity at the university; "there was a certain facetious senior who had caught him hurrying through the corridors one day, declaring in excitement that—

> 'Banners yellow, glorious, golden,
> On its roof did float and flow!'

But he had long ago ceased to hope for a friend, or to care what anybody thought about him; it was clear to him by this time that he had made himself into a poet, and was doomed to be unhappy."

The time came when he could withhold himself no longer from his own creative work. "There were many signs by which this state might have been known. He went quite alone, and spoke to no man; he was self-absorbed, and walked about with his eyes fixed on vacancy; he was savage when disturbed, and guarded his time unscrupulously. He had given up the last formalities of life—he no longer attended any lectures, or wore cuffs, and he would not talk at meal-times. He took long walks

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at impossible hours, and he was fond of a certain high hill where the storms blew. These things had been going on for a year; and now the book that had been coming to ripeness in his mind was ready to be born."

The projected book was a novel, to be called *Springtime and Harvest*. He was so full of this novel that he could not think about anything else; "the professors at the university, and all his relatives and acquaintances had given him up as a hopeless case". But he had a hundred dollars saved up; and he would spend the summer in the country doing his book.

In the early spring he went to Quebec, found a lonely shack in the woods, had provisions brought to him twice a week, and wrote madly.

It was his break for freedom.

III.

That was in the spring of 1900, when he was not yet twenty-two years old. The previous years, ever since he had grown conscious of his poetic destiny, had been years of struggle and preparation to fit and free himself for his chosen creative task. It doubtless seemed to him that the preparation was complete, and that there remained but the actual struggle of accomplishment, under the mere handicap of poverty.

The truth would perhaps have been too discouraging to face.

Though he had formally decided to seek fame as

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a writer of prose, he had not really renounced his poetic ambitions; and we are obliged to consider, as gently as possible, his claims to distinction as a poet. His conceptions were truly poetic, and Shelleyan in their nature; it is not strange that his verse should have been thinly intellectual and of a rarefied emotional quality; it is natural enough that it should have dealt with life not directly but through the medium of vague images from some ideal fairyland; its lack of original music, its lack of observation of the natural world, its lack of any striking verbal qualities—all these are faults which might be overcome in time by a young poet of great energy and high ambitions. The early poems of great poets are sometimes terribly bad, and it would be rash to conclude from the mere feebleness and unoriginality of a young poet's verse that he has no future. Yet in the fragments submitted for our examination in *Love's Pilgrimage* it is impossible to find any positive evidences of any sort indicating a poetic vocation.

The same faults, indeed, are apparent in his early prose; but miracles are more to be expected in the realm of prose achievement. Yet it was with but a scanty equipment that this young writer faced the world so confidently. This first novel of his, produced with his heart's blood, was a shadowy affair; for his heart had no blood in it yet, only morals, ideas, and egotism. The terrible defect of this first creative effort was his lack of knowledge of life. Such knowledge as he had assimilated came from books. But of first-hand acquaintance with life he

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gave no indication. His actual experience of twenty-one years of existence in this troubled planet had been, it would seem, too painful for realization in concrete form; it had been refined by some psychic process into moral lessons, and it was in this dry form that it reached his imagination, to emerge in earnest but jejune fables that had but the remotest relation to reality. His imagination was securely barricaded against actual life. Of actual life he was afraid, however ardently he might live in his airy refuge of dreams and thoughts. Such, indeed, was his conception of the poet's life. It was by deliberate intention that he turned his back upon the welter of experience. Filled as he was with moral earnestness, he no doubt despised the late nineteenth-century ideal of the "Ivory Tower". Yet he lived in an equally remote and cloudy refuge of his own—it might be called a Tower of Clouds.

So long as he continued to live shut away from life behind those cloudy battlements, ambition and moral earnestness would scarcely avail him to become one of the Shelleyan "legislators of mankind". He would have remained, for all his excellent intentions, utterly ineffective, forever unable to gain a hearing. His "genius" had to be informed by human experience before it could give him power to communicate his emotions to mankind. And since his ascetic fear of life made him incapable of learning joyously, he had to learn by pain. Life had to batter down the walls of his refuge, force itself upon him, pry open his eyes, pierce into his ears, overwhelm the defenses of his mind, before it could

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reach his heart. . . . The education of the artist is sometimes a complex business. A poem of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's, well-conned by him at the time, tells of the pain involved in "making a poet out of a man". He was prepared to suffer that pain. But he was unprepared to suffer the further pain, which was to complicate his life for several years, of making a man out of a half-grown artist-boy. It would take a woman to do that for him.

But he was inured to pain, already an adept in those sufferings which come from resisting the claims of life; and life, even in the shape of woman, would find him a worthy and resourceful antagonist. It promised to be an epic conflict.

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VI. THYRSIS

I.

THE young poet's struggle with human nature is told at length in *Love's Pilgrimage*. With the information there given, and with inferences of our own, we may draw this brief outline of the origins of that struggle in his mind.

A pattern of fear—fear of the outside world—had existed in his mind since early childhood. Specifically it concerned drinking. "In his earliest childhood he had known that his father was preyed upon, just as certainly as any wild thing in the forest. At first the enemies had been saloon-keepers, and wicked men who tempted him to drink with them. The names of these men were household words to him, portents of terror; they peopled his imagination as epic figures, such as Black Douglas must have been to the children of the Northern Border. But then, with widening intelligence, it became certain social forces, at first dimly apprehended. It was the god of 'business'—before which all things fair and noble went down." And as this conception of the vast network and conspiracy of worldly evil was widening in the intellectual realm into an intelligent and useful theoretical understanding of the nature of capitalist society, in the meanwhile—or so we may conclude—

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it was broadening in the untutored realm of the unconscious mind into a more or less morbid fear of woman, as the other great "temptation" of life. And what is said in *Love's Pilgrimage* specifically of his fear of the one temptation can be read as covering the other: "Outwardly he was like other boys, eager and cheerful, even boisterous; but . . . life had made him into an ascetic. He must be stern, even merciless, with himself—because of the fear that was in him. . . . The fear that self-indulgence might lay its grisly paws upon him!" "So it was that the soul of this lad had grown somber, and taken to brooding upon the mysteries of fate. Life was no jest and no holiday, it was no place for shams and self-deceptions. It was a place where cruel enemies set traps for the unwary; a field where blind and merciless forces ranged, unhindered by man or God."

It would not be strange if love itself were to come to seem to this boy one of these "traps". But at first it was only the simpler forms of the sexual temptation that he feared. Not, indeed, in its grosser form, as in prostitution; to one with his fastidiousness of temperament this was no temptation; "the thought of a woman who sold herself for money"—he had first heard of this strange transaction at college—"could never bring him anything but shuddering." Yet there were real temptations. "All about his lodging-house lived the daughters of the poor, and these were a snare for his feet." At recurrent intervals a restlessness would interrupt his serenity of work and study "and he would go out

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into the night and wander about the streets for hours, impelled by a futile yearning for he knew not what—the hope of something clean in the midst of uncleanness, of some adventure that would be not quite shameful to a poet's fancy"—only to steal home unsatisfied, "baffled and sick at heart". He took, with some embarrassment, these troubles to his clergyman friend, who told him of his own youthful struggle—"which had resulted in victory, for he had never known a woman". He emphasized the importance of the boy's choice: "On the one hand was slavery and degradation and disease; and on the other were all the heights of the human spirit." He was eloquently recommended to "save and store" his sexual energy, so that this base metal might become "transmuted to the gold of intellectual and emotional power". Such, he was assured, was the "universal testimony of the masters of the higher life". Tennyson's Galahad was referred to, whose strength was as the strength of ten because his heart was pure. . . . Nor was this to be a denial of love, but on the contrary its consecration. Some day he would meet the woman he was to cleave to, whom of course he would expect to be a virgin; and he must do her as much honor—"he must save the fire and fervor of his young desire for his life's great consummation". And a "compact" was made, according to which the youth was to write to the man every month and tell him of his "success or failure". In times of trial, the thought of having to confess the truth to his friend was "like a sword hanging over him", and this alone was, on such occa-

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sions, what kept him to his vow. Ordinarily, in a life so dominated by fear of sex, the temptations are of a merely imaginative sort, since there is lacking the courage to undergo those preliminaries of approach to the opposite sex which must occur before the temptation can be of a very realistic nature. But this youth's masculine enterprise was not so wholly chained up as that, it would appear, for *Love's Pilgrimage* recounts one such hour of trial, in which a spirited girl at a summering-place yields to his fiery importunities and makes a date with him, only to be met by an ashamed youth who has in the meantime conquered these impulses of his baser nature and now offers her his agonized apology for his caddishness, together with some moral generalizations on the subject. "Preaching won't help it any," she says; "I don't want to hear it. Good-bye." For this, and other such vergings upon surrender, he would punish himself by "months of toil and penance and of savage self-immolation. . . . For several months at a time he would go without those kinds of food that he liked; and instead of going to bed at one o'clock he would read the New Testament in Greek for an hour." These moral struggles are reminiscent of Tolstoy's, early and late in life; except that Tolstoy was reproaching and punishing himself for sins actually, rather than almost, committed. Like Tolstoy, he kept self-reminding diaries and wrote exhortations to himself. And, being an agnostic and unable to use the ordinary theological forms of prayer, "he fashioned new invocations for himself: prayers to the unknown sources of his

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vision, to the new powers of his own soul—'the undiscovered gods', as he called them." And "above all he prayed to his vision of the maiden who waited the issue of this battle and held the crown of victory in her keeping. . . ."

This ideal of a future sweetheart began to take shape in his mind. Some lines by the English bachelor-schoolmaster, Cory, were like a refrain to his thoughts on this subject:

> "Somewhere beneath the sun,
> These quivering heart-strings prove it,
> Somewhere there must be one
> Made for this soul to move it; . . .
> *Some one whom I could court*
> *With no great change of manner,*
> *Still holding reason's fort,*
> *Though waving fancy's banner."*

First of all, that is to say, she should be one who would take him as she found him; an inspiration to him (of course), she should inspire him to go on doing precisely what he wanted to do; hers was to be the surrender, not his in any degree. A sufficiently unlikely young creature, yet one for which the young poet is inevitably bound to wish. For the rest, she should be of an angelic purity and goodness.[1]

II.

The vision of a distant wedded bliss, the reward of abstinence as promised him by his clergyman

[1] Comment from a letter: "No human male could have been more pitifully ignorant of the female critter, body, mind, and soul, than I was at the age of 21. It was a tragedy, but I was not to blame. It was the Victorian age."

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friend, sufficed for a time; but his poetic ambitions came presently to trouble and disturb that hope. As a poet, doomed to poverty, he would be economically unable to accept those conventions of marriage under which a husband is required to support his wife. . . . These material limitations may have served to halt the development of his love-ideals in a boyish stage. Nor is that to be wondered at. A poet, in a society in which poetry is ordinarily a neglected and unrewarded art, is faced by the painful choice of renouncing either his art or the normal masculine satisfactions involved in giving protection—a home, food, clothes—to his beloved. He, then, was obliged to conceive their companionship in other than terms of ordinary marriage. To take a wife, in the conventional sense, would be to chain himself for life and give up all hope of achievement in his art. And this very real danger to himself as an artist could but reinforce his morbid fear of the actualities of sex, and confirm him in his reluctance to assume an adult masculine rôle.

Under these not unfamiliar circumstances, the artist as a young man sometimes accepts the compromise of casual, temporary and irresponsible relationships; but to an ascetic young artist of high ideals these were impossible. He was able to conquer his merely physical instincts; but what would happen when he actually fell in love? Would he fall blindly into the "trap" set by nature? If not, how would he seek to avoid it? . . . In the meantime, at nineteen and twenty, he cultivated the art of music, as a means of sublimating these troublesome

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emotions, attended concerts, worshipped the hero-soul of Beethoven, and practised till his fingers were raw and his back aching, on the violin. In summer, in the country with his mother, he would take his violin into the fields and play all day to the squirrels. A musician, arriving at that summer resort, driving over in the hotel bus, heard an Italian woman in the street singing the 'Tannhaüser March'. He asked the woman where she learned it; and she explained: "Dey ees a crazy feller in de woods—he play it all day for t'ree weeks!"

At the age of twenty-one, it seemed to him that with the help of music he had "beaten his devils", and come to be "master of himself".

Then he went to the country to write his book.

III.

The first fury of his creative impulse had barely spent itself when his mother and another woman, her oldest friend, arrived to spend the summer in a boarding-house in a village near Quebec, and with them the other woman's daughter, a dark-eyed girl of twenty. The girl brought his lunches to the negligent young poet at work in his cabin in the woods, and a companionship was begun, with emotional consequences that made it difficult enough for him to concentrate on his work as a young poet should. They were, in fact, before the summer was over, involved in the torments and problems of first love.

She was a girl whom he had admired for her beauty, but scorned for her submissiveness, and

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never for a moment in his imagination cast in the heroic rôle of a poet's mate. Not was she, apparently, at all suited to such a rôle. From the worldly point of view, a poet's mate should doubtless be an eminently practical and capable person; and from the poet's own point of view she should be by temperament and education able to understand and sympathize with his ambitions. None of these things was true of this dark-eyed girl of twenty. She was spoiled and wilful, fond of leisure and comfort, fond of play, with a deep capacity for the pagan enjoyment of life. And perhaps it was these very qualities, the dramatic complement of his own impersonal, fanatic, Puritanical qualities, which attracted him to her. . . . That can be understood; and it can be understood that he should fool himself into thinking that he was going to educate and train her to be like himself! But what perversity of feminine nature could have so laid open her young girl's heart to the worship of this scornful youth, and made her, not merely fall in love with him as a summer's idle diversion, but be ready to go with him upon his own harsh terms into a life of poverty and struggle? Perhaps it was the charm of his distinction, for he was certainly like no other man she had ever known: though she might have considered him as a well-brought-up young girl should, merely "queer".

Perhaps it was something authoritarian and quasi-parental in his attitude toward her; for he began his wooing by scolding her for the kind of life she lived—for being an idle butterfly.

Then this conversation:

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She: "But people aren't to blame for the lives they live!"

He: "Why not?"

She: "Because—they can't help them. They are bound fast."

He: "They should break loose."

She: "That is easy for you to say. You have no ties."

He: "I did have them—I might have them still. But I broke them."

She: "Ah, but you are a man!"

He: "What difference does that make?"

She: "It makes all the difference in the world. You can earn money, you can go away by yourself. But suppose you were a girl—shut up in a home, and told that was your 'sphere'?"

He: "I'd fight—I'd break my way out somehow, never fear. If one doesn't break out, it simply means that his desire isn't strong enough."

So it begins. It might be a Russian wooing of the Nihilist period. It seems that the butterfly has a soul, and truly desires freedom. The young Nihilist tells her sternly that she must work for her salvation. She begs humbly for instructions, for tasks—and he sets them. He lectures her on Christianity, on marriage, on the wrongness of the world as it is; and she listens with glowing eyes. Of course the master reads his unfinished masterpiece to his pupil; she thinks it wonderful. . . . Kisses begin to mingle with these lectures; boy and girl kisses, cool as the touch of a flower. Yet even kisses such as these awaken in his mind the reverberations of an old

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alarm; and he commences to explain to her the essential loneliness of his destiny as a poet. "And do you expect to have no human relationships as long as you live?" she asks in awe. They discuss that. There is, it seems, a possible mate for him. But she would have to endure every privation. He would not turn aside one step for her sake. No, rather he would drive her as mercilessly as he drove himself, up the steep hill toward perfection. Not, one would think, an alluring prospect for a joy-loving young girl! Yet it fails to frighten her. He quotes in warning:

> "Maiden! a nameless life I lead,
> A nameless death I'll die;
> The fiend whose lantern lights the mead
> Were better mate than I!"

And now, in a month or two of companionship, she has had good reason to know how realistically true that warning is. She knows how much more important his book is to him than her mere company. He sets her to learning German. He scolds her for not learning it instantly. A sufficiently quaint courtship! But he is her master; she takes gladly what he gives, the lectures, the scoldings, and, more infrequently, the kisses. He is ashamed of kissing, as an unworthy weakness—and doubtless also a waste of good time that might have been devoted to further counsels of perfection. And presently it is understood that she is his mate; by no means his perfect mate as yet, but presumably to be perfected by further lectures, scoldings, and German lessons. Of course, it is made clear, they are not sweethearts in

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any ordinary sense. There has been already too much of kissing and petting; she is to get down to her German, and grind away at that, so that some day she may be his intellectual equal. . . .

In *Love's Pilgrimage,* where this courtship is described in detail, the girl is called Corydon and the boy Thyrsis. The choice of those names, Thyrsis and Corydon, for the principals in this boy-and-girl romance, is relevant to the boyish and poetic ideal which the young lover so gallantly and absurdly attempted to impose upon the recalcitrant facts of their human nature. The original Thyrsis and Corydon, in Greek and Roman pastoral poetry, were shepherd-boys and dear friends; and it was such an idyllic and quasi-boyish companionship in thought and work, without any of the disturbing influences of sex, that this young lover had in mind. He was spiritually unprepared for any surrender to the tempestuous waves of man-and-woman love; and if he was so harsh and graceless in his treatment of his young sweetheart, it was out of fear. And he may well have been afraid. He seemed to be the master in this relationship, the dictator of hard terms which she meekly accepted. Yet was he truly in control of the situation? Or did this girl submit with such proud humility because her heart knew a secret which he had yet to learn?

His learning of it proceeded slowly. Their talk and their studies lasted late into the night at the lonely cabin in the woods. The gossip of a summer resort community can be imagined, and the alarm of the two mothers. The young people, conscious

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of their purity, could only despise a world which thought that love necessarily meant "obscenity". "Everybody is thinking obscenity about us!" he said to her indignantly. They stubbornly persisted in their companionship until the girl was taken away to New York. . . . Now the young poet had time to write on his book in peace; yet his thoughts of her gave him no peace, and he spent the precious hours of his hard-bought freedom in writing long letters to her. Not love-letters, precisely; they were scoldings on paper, because the thought of her kept him from his work; exhortations, warnings. He was trying to escape from her. Yet it was not she, after all, who held him fast caught in that net; it was something within himself, battling against his fears—the rash desire for life. Then furiously he threw himself into the task of writing, to escape the problem which confronted him.

The fact seemed to be that he had taken this girl's destinies into his own hands; she was his. But upon what terms? He had preached his quaint Tolstoyan-Tennysonian idealism to her, and she had accepted it; she was ready to live with him as a sister in one room in New York that winter. This plan was reluctantly renounced on medical advice; apparently it was not so easy to live an ideal life in defiance of the conventional world.[1] What choice then was

[1] In the more-or-less autobiographical novel, *Love's Pilgrimage,* it is related of Corydon and Thyrsis that they did carry out this idealistic plan for a time after they were married. That version is scarcely more than a dramatic heightening of some of the facts, and the fiction does make clear the underlying neurotic conflict in the young poet's mind.

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left except abandonment of a spiritual responsibility he had undertaken—or ordinary marriage? That autumn he came to New York knowing dazedly that he was going to marry her.

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VII. THYRSIS AND CORYDON

I.

THYRSIS and Corydon, as we may for a while continue to call them, were married in New York City one day in October of that year, 1900. They had no money with which to set up housekeeping, and so they lived with his parents, while waiting for the book, which had been finished somehow amidst all this storm and stress, to be accepted.

The book wasn't immediately accepted; it was, to the young writer's astonishment, rejected—the first of many rejections. . . . Now that he had so rashly taken unto himself a wife, it was agreed by everyone that he should get a job and support her properly. But he refused to do so. Behind him lay the meaningless slavery of hackwork from which he had barely escaped with his poet's soul alive; back into that slavery he was not going. And was it not fully understood that it was his mate's privilege to share the hardships of a poet's life?

In a world of relatives and friends who kept wondering why her husband didn't get a job, who pitied her for what seemed to them her strange and humiliating position, the girl did not, as she might easily have done, lose faith in her artist-husband. But she began to lose faith in herself—feeling herself to be

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a weak and inferior and merely human person mated with a relentless, inexorable and inhuman will. Sometimes the shock of some new frustration in his career, some disappointment at the hands of an editor or publisher, left him a hurt boy to be comforted in her arms. But these moments were brief; ashamed of his weakness, he would lash himself to some new task, and send her to her corner to attend to what seemed to be her wifely duty of studying German. She could not get on with German, and that made her feel more abysmally inferior. It seemed that they had no time to be together, now that they were married. They did sometimes play Bach together, in his savage and determined and utterly unsentimental fashion. She liked to be read to, but he was too impatient for that—he ravaged the newspaper of its contents in three minutes and tossed it gutted aside, and dealt with books in a similarly purposeful and efficient way. If he spared time for a walk, he fretted at the frightful waste of time required for her dressing and primping. They ate, then and later, haphazardly, and lived for periods on cold food, bringing on in him a chronic case of indigestion and increasing his querulousness. It was small wonder that she in turn developed a case of nerves; and her capacity for thus giving pain brought her what all her capacity for giving joy had never brought, the reward of her husband's serious attention. He would sit up with her all night and discuss and analyze her morbid fears, in the light of the latest therapeutic knowledge from abroad. It seems to have become, under those conditions, some-

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thing of a habit for her to indulge in what were nicknamed "soul-mates", as a means of securing some attention from her husband.

II.

It was his fierce determination to fight it out as a writer if he starved. His novel, *Springtime and Harvest,* was at last privately published, in the spring of 1901, with money borrowed from a relative. It contained a preface telling about himself and his hopes; this book was to be the first of a library which he intended to found, "for the purpose of increasing helpful reading among the humble people of our land." He added: *"Springtime and Harvest* may fail, and subsequent books may fail; but that library is quite certain to come. The writer is a man who gives all his time to his art, and some day or other, he will have money; it is by this use of it that he hopes to keep clean his artist's conscience." *Springtime and Harvest* sold two hundred copies, enough to pay back the relative. This same relative, impressed with his energies and abilities, had already offered him a very good job in the financial world. But he did not want a job, he wanted a chance to develop his genius. He became shameless, and wrote begging letters to rich men famed as philanthropists, asking for a subsidy. Impersonal subsidies, not given out of friendship but for the encouragement of young talent, do now to a limited extent exist; perhaps Upton Sinclair's later propaganda on behalf of that idea had something to do

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with its realization; but there was no such kindly custom then. His letters, when not thrown in the wastebasket by the rich men's secretaries, were answered with the information that if he were truly a young man of genius he would find in poverty and struggle the best encouragement to achievement. Young poets must not, by rash generosity, be prevented from learning in suffering what they are to teach in song! In his case there was some truth in that smug and cruel notion; at least, it was to take more suffering than he had yet known to make him understand life. . . .

He was still self-imprisoned in his tower of clouds. His idealism could not yet accept the human terms of marriage. The medical advice upon which the chaste earlier plans of the lovers had been abandoned had been accompanied with the information (which was news to Thyrsis) that actual marriage need not result in children. The advice, upsetting enough to the whole universe which the poet had erected upon his neurotic fear of life, had been only with much misgiving on his part acted upon. Marriage had opened a new world to him; but it was a too disturbing world, too alien to that cloudy realm of ideas and moralities, of disciplines and duties, in which he was accustomed to move; his generalizations had no meaning in this new pagan world of delight—and he presently, from high motives drawn from his own habitual realm, felt that it was his duty to renounce it. He had thoughtfully and earnestly concluded that it could not be right to enjoy the raptures of the marriage bed unless those rap-

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tures were consecrated to an unselfish purpose, namely that of creating new life. That purpose was not at all a part of his plans; it was totally in conflict with the much more important purpose of fulfilling his consecrated literary ambitions. Nevertheless, the idea of renunciation had come too late; it appeared that these connubial raptures had after all not been mere ignoble and unfruitful self-indulgence, but had been, however unintentionally, dedicated to their proper biologic purpose, after all.

And now the chagrined poet could in secret mock bitterly at himself as a deluded victim of Nature, and trace in memory the steps by which he had been led into that very trap of human responsibility which he had thought himself wise enough to avoid. . . . Yet there was a possible way of escape, even now, from the trap. And these bitter soliloquies were interrupted by a practical discussion of the question whether this new life, so inimical to the poetic career, should be permitted to be. It was discussed upon high moral grounds, pro and con. And it was in the nature of an astonishing revelation to the young poet of a hitherto unguessed secret of the feminine heart when, while they were trying to make up their minds, he observed Corydon's profound interest and delight in a sufficiently ordinary baby halted in its carriage before the park bench where they sat talking. Was it, then, possible that this girl, who had come to him as a poet's mate, and was presumed to be interested in nothing but inspiring and assisting his career—was it possible that she *wanted* a baby? That, he concluded, was actually true; and, in the

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irreconcilable conflict of moral duties which the situation otherwise presented, that merely emotional factor was giving the deciding vote. Thyrsis was becoming more human.

III.

The birth, in December 1901, of his child, an event of which he was a startled witness, was almost too appalling a glimpse into that realm of human experience from which he had tried to escape. Yet not long afterward he was able to confront his memories of that event with a sufficiently fearless mind and build them up into one of the most remarkable scenes in the whole of modern realistic fiction—the scene being later incorporated into his novel, *Love's Pilgrimage.*[1]

The child, a son named David, was a personage of sufficient importance to affect even such an inflexible determination as that of this young poet. He did not get a job, but he did hackwork. His pen had lost its old fluency in that sort of writing, it was no longer a knack but an agony; but he did it in desperation, together with book-reviews and every sort of literary odd-job by which he could make a dollar. He raised a laugh in an editorial office by offering, as an expert, to review a book on the care and feeding of infants; he was willing enough to be laughed at if he could thus get a much needed book without having to pay for it.

[1] In 1902 he took the account of this birth-scene to Paul Elmer More, one of the leaders of the academic school of criticism then in power, and was told that it could "*never* be published."

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Springtime and Harvest was republished by a regular publishing house late in 1901 under the title *King Midas*, without diminishing either his poverty or his obscurity. . . . A new literary project needed for its accomplishment more peace than a new baby permitted, and he had to go elsewhere to work for some weeks; in the meantime his wife and her child were taken away by indignant relatives, and when he returned he was forbidden to see either of them until he should have "come to his senses" and agreed to behave like a proper husband —that is, get a job. By letter between the parted parents it was arranged that the nurse should bring the baby on a certain day and hour to a certain place in the park, so that he might see his son. A nurse did come to the spot at that hour, wheeling a baby much less beautiful than he remembered his own as being; and he was miserable until his telegram, asking if the baby had red hair, was answered by one explaining that the nurse had been ill and not able to go to the park that day! . . . But even this pressure failed to bring the stubborn young poet to terms, and his wife and child were presently allowed to go and share his poverty.

IV.

His second novel, *Prince Hagen,* though not published until 1903, was written in 1901. In 1902 he wrote *The Journal of Arthur Stirling,* a book which made a considerable sensation in the literary world, and which will be dealt with in the next chapter.

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Still poor, and unknown to the great public, he moved in the spring of 1903 to the outskirts of Princeton, N.J., where he lived with his wife and child in a shack in the woods, and wrote two more novels, the second of which was to bring him world-wide fame. His intellectual and artistic development during this period will be considered at length in the following chapters; but, as a significant detail revealing the progress and suggesting the limits of his emotional development, we may fix our attention on that shack in the woods near Princeton.

In the back pages of *Country Life in America* for June 1904, following the accounts and pictures of expensive and luxurious summer residences for the rich, there appeared a brief article entitled *A Country House Built and Furnished for Only $156* (Photograph by the author). It began:

> The writer of this article is pursuing the occupation of unpopular novelist, and is attempting what few even of the popular novelists attempt—to live on his royalties.

One does not need to turn to the signature to know that it was written by Upton Sinclair. Yet for purposes of comparison we may, before going on, interpolate here some fragrants of a manifesto composed the previous spring, just before moving to this tiny house in the country:

> . . . born to sing and to worship, as I was
> born to sing and to worship . . .
> . . . stewed and mashed in misery for a
> lifetime, as I for seven long years . . .

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> . . . I could not greet my Muse until
> I had flung my banner wide . . .
> . . . You laugh at me, no doubt, but
> some day you will heed me . . .

Unquestionably there is power in these phrases; but unquestionably also they are boyish. . . . And now we return to the article in *Country Life:*

> Prior to the discovery herein to be set forth, I lived, as most city-bred and non-wealthy people live, in a flat or a boarding-house in winter and in a summer hotel in the warm months.

To be sure, it is scarcely true that "most city-bred and non-wealthy people" in America go to summer hotels for the "warm months"; he was perhaps thinking of the class he was addressing in that publication: workingmen do not read *Country Life in America*. . . . But this prose, in comparison with the fragments of last year's manifesto quoted above, has in it the quality of civilized conversation; the shrill boyish note is gone; it is a man speaking. The boy has grown up. And he has grown up, somewhat in spite of himself, through the influence of human experience in its most inescapable domestic terms. He has been living, not in a poetic Shelleyan grotto, but in what despite some unusual features is nevertheless unmistakably a home. He has been a husband and father,—doubtless not a very good husband, for a preoccupied artist may easily fail, and a puritanical idealist is pretty certain to fail, to be that—yet the head of a household, a breadwinner, a man responsible to wife and child; he has almost if not quite ceased to dramatize himself

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in the grandiose rôle of a solitary and unique figure bearing the burden of a poetic doom. He has become considerably humanized, and as it happens through suffering—for domesticity is not the least of those miseries in which, as he complained in his manifesto the previous year, he had been stewed and mashed. Corydon does not seem to have been a very efficient housewife or very capable mother; and she probably seemed to an impecunious young poet dreadfully extravagant. They were both terribly overworked. Yet domesticity, to the young poet a monster of such frightful mien that to be hated need but to be seen, when endured sufficiently was found to have human values of its own; and though he might never be said to have been thoroughly domesticated, though the close and warm intimacies of family life remained something to shy away from as much as possible, yet he had gained something from his experience which now led him to show other young people the way to these life-values, at a price within their meager means!

And so to continue with the article; the next few paragraphs are introductory to his theme, but interesting for their realistic information:

> So overwhelming was the force of custom that for many years I never dreamed there was any other way to live. At last, however, the truth dawned upon me that I was foolish to pay for the use of a hotel in the country when what I wanted was only the country and not the hotel. I chanced one day to be walking in the woods when I came upon a little cabin which had been built for picnicking purposes by a lady who had immediately afterward been providentially smitten with a

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> rheumatic knee. This house I hired for $25 for the season, and then I began to discover what things there were in life. This house had cost about $400; and from force of custom I rented it without inquiring further.
>
> Meantime, also, I went back to the city in winter, though there was nothing I wanted in the city except books. . . . I am writing this article because I know that there are in New York many thousands of poets, painters, musicians, and other would-be dwellers in the land of the spirit, living in just exactly that way, and never dreaming that there is any other way for them to do it; that there is any sort of shelter save a hall bedroom at $2 a week, or any sort of food save what is shoved at them over a restaurant table at twenty or thirty cents a dish! Figure up the cost of a hall bedroom at $2 a week for a lifetime . . .

Thus far, to be sure, this is simply a country studio for artists that is being suggested; but it abruptly becomes a home in the same sentence:

> and then consider that houses suitable for the occupancy of poets and lovers may be built at a cost of from $50 to $150, and dwelt in all the year round at a cost of $6 a week for two and $2 more for the baby.
>
> Five years ago, the writer met a charming young couple one summer, engaged, and painfully in love. With the naïveté of lovers, they told me all about the problem—which was that he was only twenty-six, and was earning only a poor $1800 a year; and they had waited two years already—they expected to wait one more, and then he would receive $2,200, and upon that they were heroically going to try to get along. The writer has not seen them for three years, but just the other day he made inquiry. Whether the increase was delayed or their courage gave out, he does not know—but they are still engaged!

It may seem a little unfair for this young writer, of all persons, to taunt these cowardly lovers; but

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that he can do so means that he has at last accepted that impulse which in spite of so many qualms carried him into marriage as, not a weakness nor a folly, but a thing to be proud of—not a mere falling into a "trap of Nature", but a responsible action of his own; that is to say, his sexual impulse is at last acknowledged to be a part of himself, and not a "devil" nor an "enemy". But to proceed:

> The house shown in this illustration cost $156. This figure is larger in two respects than necessary—mistakes were made in its construction, and it was built in a place where lumber is very high in price. As described in this article, it can be built for about $125.
>
> It stands about three miles outside of Princeton, New Jersey, which was chosen because it is a beautiful town with a library. The house is built upon a long strip of land bordering a dense woods; this strip has a score of great trees upon it, and no less than a dozen springs, of various degrees of coldness. It was of no use to the farmer who owns it, and he rented it for $10 a year.
>
> The house is 16x18 feet. It has three rooms—a kitchen, a bedroom, and a living-room—respectively 6x7, 9x7, and 11x16 feet. Six by seven sounds small for a room, but every part of it was calculated beforehand, and there is plenty of space. . . .

He continues with details of its construction and cost. There is a piazza, to be used as a dining-room in summer. "A good deal of the furniture is home-made, of plain white pine; it can be varnished or covered with pretty stuffs, though the present house is in the Spartan style." The house took six days to build. "Enough crockery and kitchen utensils—agate-ware and unbreakable—can be bought for $5 or $10, and then the house is

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inhabitable—for poets and lovers!" Near-by in the woods is a study, costing $25. "It is 8×10, and sounds small; but it holds a table, a book-case, a stove, a trunk, two chairs, and an unpopular novelist"—who presently was to write there a book that would be read all over the world.[1]

It is a brave description; but certain reflections present themselves. This "Spartan" simplicity, one feels sure, is not dictated entirely by poverty, but by a Spartan temperament; and one is equally sure that the Corydon of whom one has read in *Love's Pilgrimage,* however delighted she might be at having a house of her own to be mistress of at last, would have preferred something less bleak. She was not Spartan: she was Corinthian, rather; and her tastes have not been consulted, or have been sternly overruled, in the planning of this home. One looks at the photograph so proudly furnished; a neat, bleak, Quakerish place, for whose drabness poverty does not wholly account—the home of an ascetic, a despiser of soft living, of comfort, of ease; the home of one who recognizes the uses "of bread and bacon, of a stove and a woodpile", and scorns all beauty except that "of prayer and music, of joy and love, of wisdom and high resolve", and perhaps of "beautiful books in an occasional rare instance"—a moralist still! And one remembers, in one of Corydon's letters in *Love's Pilgrimage,* the wistful cry: "Oh, but how I want a poor taste of joy!" One might guess that a girl of her temperament would

[1] To be exact, the $25 study was moved on a wagon to a farm near by in the fall of 1904, and it was there that *The Jungle* was written.

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be exasperated into rebellion by a husband who was afraid of beauty and joy in its most innocent forms, afraid even of his love of her; and that this rebellion would take forms calculated to torment and madden even him out of his Olympian austerity. Not a happy prospect for this marriage! But even if it should ultimately prove too great a strain for either of them to endure, it was meanwhile breaking down, apparently as far as human experience was capable of doing so, his imaginative resistance to reality; and its robust influences, combined with those of a new philosophy of life, to be discussed later, served to make, out of a conceited boy-poet, a man and a writer.

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VIII. THE JOURNAL OF ARTHUR STIRLING

I.

IN 1903 there appeared a book entitled *The Journal of Arthur Stirling*, purporting to be the real diary of a young poet who had, after a bitter and unsuccessful struggle, committed suicide. An editorial introduction, signed "S.", gave a sketch of the poet, and quoted from a New York newspaper a notice of his death "by suicide in the Hudson River".

The book was something of a sensation among that small class of American readers who cared enough about their country or its literature to be moved by the thought of a poet being driven to suicide by neglect in the midst of one of the richest cities in the world. The book was widely reviewed, and though it was generally felt that Arthur Stirling was a "difficult" young man, abnormally sensitive in his attitude toward life and overstrained in his attitude toward his art, the book was praised by those who knew artists as a true picture of young genius.[1]

The book incidentally related certain rebuffs and indignities at the hands of editors and publishers. And these publishers, recognizing themselves in the

[1] For instance, Richard Le Gallienne wrote of it as "at once an authoritative document, a heart-searching appeal, and a tragic entertainment. I don't remember to have seen the old case of 'the Poet *versus* the World' put with more truth, more vehemence, and more charm."

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story, did not fail to recognize the young poet as Upton Sinclair—and so the truth came out. The critics, especially those who had compared the journal of Arthur Stirling with the diary of Marie Bashkirtseff, resented being hoaxed, and discussion of the book ceased. It was treasured, however, among discerning readers as being, despite the fact that its author was still alive and kicking, a sufficiently authentic account of the exasperated psychology of the young artist in his struggle with poverty and neglect.

Time has confirmed that judgment; the book remains a permanently valuable and interesting contribution to our knowledge of what may without prejudice be called youthful genius, and—more than that—a moving plea on its behalf.

But it is further interesting to us as a stage in its author's development. It was the second book after his marriage, and it deals directly with his own most acute problems—not only the problems of poverty and neglect, but with the psychic problem involved in his own conception of himself, his destiny, and his duties. . . . The book was written feverishly, day and night, during six weeks in the spring of 1902, on an island in the St. Lawrence River. His son had been born in the previous December. The birth of his child had necessarily altered the course of his life; it had bound him to reality. And it was with the inescapable necessity of such an alteration in the course of his life, the necessity of making terms with reality, that he was now in violent inward struggle. He had, by rebellion, just previously,

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established himself as a poet and a free soul; as such he had no chains; even his marriage had by prescriptive arrangement involved no human obligations whatever; he stood alone, and compromised with nothing. And he had hardly had time to enjoy this freedom when it was snatched away from him, not by a world that he could defy and resist, but by Nature—including his own newly discovered Human Nature. If it was an evil and ugly world that kept him in poverty, it was something in himself which could scarcely be dismissed as ugly or evil that bound him to his wife and child. And it was at the behest, not of the world, but of this something in himself, that he had to compromise, and give up his freedom. In giving it up, he gave up necessarily what had been his fundamental conception of himself, as a Poet, consecrated only to his career, free from every other duty. A painful renunciation, and one which he would be slow to make. In leaving, then, his wife and child, to go away and write this book, he was not merely attempting desperately to make some money, he was taking this occasion to deal in terms of art with the internal conflict which obsessed him.

The Arthur Stirling of the book was based in part upon Sinclair's imaginings concerning the life of an actual young poet whom he had met once or twice—a waiter and a snow-shoveller, who had sought a publisher in vain, yet of whom it had been said by an eminent poet in Sinclair's hearing that "he had written lines not surpassed by one of his years since Keats". But it was chiefly, of course, based upon his own experience as a neglected writer.

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It begins, however, with the young poet writing his book—and this part of the story goes back to, and might be an actual diary of, his life two years before, when he had made his great break for freedom—when, with a hundred dollars in his pocket he had left the world behind and gone to a shack in the country to write his great book. . . . That is to say, he had gone back to the days when he was free, to the days when he had a right to think of himself as a poet. No girl casts her shadow over these pages. The tragedy must be blamed upon the world, not upon her. . . . And now, once more a poet, he savors again in memory the beauty and the pain of the poetic doom:

> It is not merely the vision, the hour of exultation; that is but the setting of the task. Now you will take that ecstasy, and hold on to it, hold on with soul and body; you will keep yourself at that height, you will hold that flaming glory before your eyes, and you will hammer it into words. Yes, that is the terror—into words—into words that leap the hilltops, that bring the ends of existence together in a lightning flash. You will take them as they come, white-hot, in wild tumult, and you will forge them, and force them. You will seize them in your naked hands and wrestle with them, and bend them to your will—all that is in the making of a poem. And last and worst of all, you will hold them in your memory, the long, long surge of them; the torrent of whirling thought—you will hold it in your memory! You are dazed with excitement, exhausted with your toil, trembling with pain; but you have built a tower out of cards, and you have mounted to the clouds upon it, and there you are poised. And anything that happens—anything!—ah, God, why can the poet not escape from his senses?—a sound, a touch—and it is gone!

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These things drive you mad.—

But meanwhile it is not gone yet. You have still a whole scene in your consciousness—as if you were a juggler, tossing a score of golden balls. And all the time, while you work, you learn it—you learn it! It is endless, but you learn it. In the midst of it, perhaps, you come down of sheer exhaustion; and you lie there, panting, shuddering, your hands moist; you dare not think, you wait. And then by and by you begin again —if it will not come, you *make* it come, you lash yourself like a dumb beast—up, up, to the mountain-tops again. And then once more the thing comes back—you live the scene again, as an actor does, and you shape it and you master it. And now in the midst of it, you find this highest of all moments is gone! It is gone, and you cannot find it! Those words that came as a trumpet-clash, burning your very flesh—that melody that melted your whole being to tears—they are gone—you cannot find them! You search and you search—but you cannot find them. And so you stumble on, in despair and agony; and still you dare not rest. You dare not ever rest in this until the thing is done—done and over—until you have *nailed* it fast. So you go back again, though perhaps you are so tired that you are fainting; but you fight yourself like a madman, you struggle until you feel a thing at your heart like a wild beast; and you keep on, you hold it fast and learn it, clinch it tight, and make it yours forever. I have done that same thing five times to-day without a rest; and toiled for five hours in that frenzy; and then lain down upon the ground, with my head on fire.

Afterward when you have recovered you sit down, and for two or three hours you write; you have it whole in your memory now—you have but to put it down. And this forlorn, wet, bedraggled thing—this miserable, stammering, cringing thing—*this* is your poem!

Every moment of this lost poetic life is dear to him, infinitely precious, worthy to be recorded: the egotism, the querulousness, the hysteria—these, too, are part of the poet's doom, and beautiful as such.

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I am wild to-day. Oh, how can I bear this—why should I have to contend with such things as this! Is it not hard enough—the agony that I have to bear, the task that takes all my strength and more? And must I be torn to pieces by such hideous degradation as this? Oh, my God, if my life is not soon clear of these things I shall die!

Oh, it is funny—yes, funny—Let us laugh at it. The dance-hall musician has brought home his 'cello! I heard him come bumping up the stairs with it—God damn his soul! And there he sits, sawing away at some loathsome jig tunes! And he has two friends in there—I listen to their wit between the tunes.

Here I sit like a wild beast in a cage. I tell you I can bear any work in the world, but I can not bear such things as this. That I, who am seeking a new faith for men—who am writing, or trying to write, what will mean new faith to millions—should have my soul ripped into pieces by such loathsome, insulting indignities!

Oh, laugh!—but *I* can't laugh—I sit here foaming at the lips, and crying! And suppose he's lost his position, and does this every day!

Now every day I must lay aside what I am doing and sit and shudder when I hear him coming up the steps—and wait for him to begin this! I tell you, I demand to be free—I *demand* it! I want nothing in this world but to be let alone. I don't want anybody to wait on me.—*I don't want anything from this hellish world but to be let alone!*

And, in another mood:

To get the mastery of your soul, to hold it here, in your hands, at your bidding, to consecrate your life to that, to watch and pray and toil for that, to rouse yourself and goad yourself day and night for that; to thrill with the memory of great consecrations, of heroic sufferings and aspirations; to have in your heart the power of the stars, of nature, of history and the soul of man . . .

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It is a lingering farewell to a beautiful past. For the Poet must die. There is no place for him in such a world. When he has suffered enough, he will take himself out of it. He endures his last indignity, and faces tranquilly the death toward which he goes. "Do I believe that I shall ever live again? I know that I shall not. . . . He has given me an hour. . . . My life was beautiful. . . . There are no thoughts in Oblivion." . . . "No one will find my body, and no one will ever care about it."

Three years later Upton Sinclair wrote, in the preface to a new edition: "No truer book than *The Journal of Arthur Stirling* has ever been written; it is the book of all my boyhood's hopes and dreams, and it is as dear to me as the memory of a dead child."

It does preserve, with infinite love, the memory of a dead child—a dead poet, tenderly and regretfully put to death by his own hand.

It foreshadows the end of an epoch, and the beginning of a new life.

II.

The Journal of Arthur Stirling contained, incidentally, a message. With the giving up of his own poetic career, he had become conscious of the needs of others—a class-consciousness in the artistic realm.

> You let every man go his way—you let him starve, you let him die in any hole that he can find. The poet—tenderest and most sensitive of all men! the poet—the master of the arts of suffering! Exposed on every

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side, nervous, haunted, unused to the world, knowing how to feel and knowing that alone! Is not his life an agony under any conditions,—is he not tortured for you—the world? And you leave him helpless, despairing!

What is the matter with you?—How can you be so blind? There are some of you who really love books—look and see the story of genius—if it be not a thing to make you shudder and turn sick. It has been so through all the ages, and it will be through all the ages to come until society has a conscience and a soul. Tell me if there is anything in this world more frightful than the lot of poets who have been born poor—of Marlowe and Chatterton and Goldsmith, Johnson and Burns and Keats! And who can tell how many more choked before even their first utterance?

I can not talk of that, for it makes me sick; but I will talk of the poets who were born rich. Is it not singular—is it not terrible—how many of the great stalwart ones were rich? To be educated, to own books, to hear music, to dwell in the country, to be free from men and men's judgments! Oh, the words break my heart!

—But was not Goethe rich, and did he not have these things? And was not Hugo rich? And Milton? When he left college he spent five years at his father's country place and wrote four poems that have done more to make men happy than if they had cost many millions of dollars.

But let me come to what I spoke of before, the seven poets of this century in England.

I name Wordsworth and Byron, Tennyson, Browning and Swinburne, Shelley and Keats. I said that six of them were independent, and that the other—the greatest—died like a dog.

Wordsworth came first; he was young and poor and struggling, and a friend left him just such an independence as I have cried for; and he consecrated himself to art, and he revolutionized English poetry, he breathed truth into a whole nation again. . . . Think that the world owes its possession of Wordsworth's

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> poetry to the accident that a friend died and left him some money!
>
> I name Byron; he was a rich man. I name Tennyson; he had a little competence, and gave up the idea of marriage, and for ten years devoted himself to art; and when he was thirty-two he published his work—and then they gave him a pension!
>
> I name Browning; Browning went his own way, heeding no man; and he never had to think about money. I name Swinburne; and the same was true of him.
>
> I name Shelley; and Shelley was wealthy. They kept him poor for a time, but his poems do not date from then. When he wrote the poetry that has been the spiritual food of the high souls of this century, he lived in a beautiful villa in Italy, and wandered about the forest with his books. . . .

This state of affairs and its remedy were set forth, a few months after the publication of the book, in an article entitled *My Cause,* in the *Independent.* This is the "manifesto" referred to and fragmentarily quoted on a previous page; it begins:

> I, Upton Sinclair, would-be singer and penniless rat, having for seven years waged day and night with society a life-and-death struggle for the existence of my soul; and having now definitely and irrevocably consummated a victory—having routed my last foe and shattered my last chain and made myself master of my own life: being in body very weak and in heart very weary, but in will infinitely determined, have set myself down to compose this letter to the world, before taking my departure for a long sojourn in the blessed regions of my own Spirit.
>
> I should not write a letter to the world for the purpose of setting myself right; being "lord of a thousand dollars," the world no longer exists for me. What people think of me is not whispered in the forests that I love, and I have read my last review, and waited

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> upon my last publisher, and cringed before my last rejection. The sole reason for my writing is that in that world there are surely others, born to sing and to worship, as I was born to sing and to worship, but born less capable than I in the world's low way—less willing to fight the world with its own weapons—less cunning, less unprincipled, than I. For such there being in the place from which I have escaped no salvation, and no prospect, save to be stewed and mashed in misery for a lifetime, as I for seven long years, I could not greet my Muse until I had flung my banner wide and declared myself to men.

The remedy which was set forth in equally eloquent terms was an institution to be supported by rich men for the purpose of endowing young authors of talent—an "American University of Literature", with a Board of Trustees "consisting of the noblest and truest and most reverent literary men of the time", employing "a corps of carefully selected and trained readers" to consider and pass on manuscripts offered in evidence of the possession of talent worth encouraging: the standard of judgment being "not what the Public Wants, but what American Literature wants, and what God wants, and what beauty and truth and righteousness want. . . ."

Only three years later, judgment upon this scheme was passed by the author himself in somewhat brutally realistic terms. "I look back upon it now", he wrote in the preface to the new edition of the *Journal,* "as an amusing illustration of the guilelessness of my attitude toward the world. If any such plan were to be proposed to-day, I should say that it was a device to emasculate literature, as the newspaper and the college and the church have all been

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emasculated; and I should argue that it were better for the young author to starve all his life than to compromise with the powers that are in control of the wealth of the world to-day. My error lay in supposing that it is literature that makes life, instead of life that makes literature."

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IX. MANASSAS

I.

THE *Journal of Arthur Stirling* had been the death-cry of his boyhood's ideals; and it was heard by a Socialist editor and lecturer named George D. Herron—a gentle ex-clergyman, a man much lied about at the time in the newspapers, which chose to represent a divorce and re-marriage of his as a "free-love" arrangement, so that he was a notorious figure and in public esteem a monster of iniquity. It was he who subsidized the young author during the period of his hardest struggles, and it was his influence which led him to read Socialist books and listen to Socialist arguments. There ensued a swift conversion; for the young man badly needed a new ideal to live by, in the place of the one which life had so rudely shattered; and the Socialist philosophy was peculiarly suited to his needs. His scientific interests, his acceptance of the Darwinian ideas of evolution, his repudiation of the church and of mysticism, his interest in history and belief in the democratic ideal, his sense of justice and abhorrence of a class society, his Utopian tendencies, his conception of himself as a rebel and revolutionist, had half prepared him for the new philosophy of Socialism; nothing, indeed, had stood in its way except the doc-

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trine, centering about his own personal ambitions, of literature as the determining influence in human progress: and once he had given up his poetic ambitions, it would not prove difficult for him to dethrone literature from the supreme place he had assigned it, in favor of humbler material factors, as required by the Marxian theory. It was not, he now perceived, literature that made life, but life that made literature; it was, on the whole, the way men made their living that determined their thought, including their sense of right and wrong. What, then, he had found wrong with the world was due fundamentally to its economic arrangements; and these economic arrangements were in their very nature, according to the Marxian reading of history, temporary; this present period of capitalism was a passing phase in mankind's conquest of its environment. It would be destroyed by its own machinery; for the machine method of production brought into existence a larger and larger class of wage-workers, whose interests were necessarily inimical to those of the class which lived on profits and dividends; and when these workers had learned the lesson that they had nothing to lose but their chains and a world to gain, in the words of the *Communist Manifesto,* they would unite for revolutionary purposes, destroy capitalism, and create a workers' commonwealth all over the world. He conceived this, in accordance with the somewhat mild Socialist ideas of that period, as an essentially peaceful process, to be brought about by voting the Socialist ticket; the votes being influenced by "agitation", in which a

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writer who had the good of the world at heart could find an honorable and useful and sufficiently important field for the exercise of his talents. . . . But, truly more important than all this, so far as his development as a writer is concerned, was that aspect of the Socialist philosophy which gave, to one who had always feared and hated the world, some realistic means of discriminating among its values, so that he could more freely and fearlessly enter into an imaginative intimacy with it in all its crude detail. His old ethico-artistic theory of life, which had held him in imagination at as great a distance as possible from raw life, and had permitted him imaginatively to entertain life's welter only in the highly sublimated form of precept and principle, had thereby played him false both in love and in art, had fooled and cheated him on every hand. This new theory of life, finding order in the very midst of what had been an unintelligible chaos, made him braver and bolder in his imaginative approach to human experience; it enabled him to see beauty where before there had been only ugliness, and it is ultimately to the bracing influences of this new philosophy that we owe his development into a great realistic novelist.

His nearness to the Socialist philosophy is apparent in *Prince Hagen,* written in 1901—a spirited and amusing though too obviously didactic satirical fable, in which a Nibelung out of Wagnerian opera comes to New York and pursues an instructive career in Democratic and Republican politics, high society, and finance, and then proposes to take back

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to the Nibelungs the benefits, already set forth in somewhat Shavian terms, of Christianity and capitalism. It was published in 1903, and dedicated to his Socialist friend, Dr. Herron. But its criticism of the world was his own—not Marx's.

II.

He had planned a novel of the Civil War—a trilogy, in fact—to be called *The American.* It was announced under that title in the *Independent* article, where he spoke of the Civil War as "to me the greatest art-theme now unpre-empted", "one of the most tremendous efforts of the human spirit in all history", and declared that he hoped to give "the next four or five years" to the task. This projected work had also been described in *The Journal of Arthur Stirling:*

> The world is filled with historical fiction; it is the cant and sham of the hour.—Bah!
>
> —This is what I long to do; to take the agony of that struggle and live it and forge it into an artwork; to put upon a canvas the soul of it. . . .
>
> I saw some of it to-day, and it made my blood go!
>
> I saw a poet, young, sensitive, throbbing at the old, old wrong, at the black shame of our history; I saw him drawn into that fearful whirlpool of blood and passion, driven mad with the pain and the horror of it; and I saw him drilled and hammered to a grim savageness, saw him fighting, day by day, with his spirit, forging it into an iron sword of war. He was haggard and hollow-eyed, hard, ruthless, desperate. . . . I saw a man, wild and war-frenzied, riding a war-frenzied horse; he rode at the head of a squadron, bare-headed, sword in hand, demon-like—thundering down-hill upon

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a mass of men, stabbing, slashing, trampling, scattering! Above the roar of it all I heard his cry: "Finish it! Finish it!"

And afterward he staggered from his horse and knelt by the men he had killed, and wept.

—I saw him again. It was when the man of the hour had come at last; when the monster had met his master; when, day by day, they hammered it . . . ; when they closed with it in death-grapple in a tangled wilderness, where armies fought like demons in the dark, and the wounded were burned by the thousands. I saw companies of fainting, starving, agonized men retreating, still battling, day by day; and I saw the wild horseman galloping on their track, slashing, trampling —and still with the battle-yell: "Finish it! Finish it!"

I saw him yet a third time. It was done, it was finished; and he lay wounded in a dark room, listening. Outside in the streets of Washington a great endless army marched by, the army of victory, of salvation; and the old war-flags waved, and the old war-songs echoed, and he heard the trampling of ten thousand feet. . . .

The first volume of this projected trilogy appeared in 1904, under the title *Manassas: A Novel of the War*. As written, under the sobering influence of the new philosophy that had intervened in the meantime, it is by no means so rhetorical a work as might have been expected from these announcements. It is, in fact, his first realistic novel. It is at the same time beautiful. Its many-cadenced and never negligent prose bends tenderly or humorously over the most minute details of everyday life, and rises with a mature magnificence to the height of the most chaotic battle-scenes, never once losing its grip on reality. It impresses one, re-reading it

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after many years, as a great war-novel. It has its special limitation, sufficiently characteristic of the author in this transition phase: sex does not exist for its hero; but that limitation, ridiculous enough in afterthought, does not count against it as much as might be supposed. Politics fill that foreground of emotional interest usually occupied in fiction by women, and so profoundly passionate are these political emotions that one scarcely notices, and does not resent, the substitution. The hero is a Southern youth who goes to visit relatives up North, becomes interested in the Abolition agitation, becomes gradually a convert and an enthusiast, and, when the war begins, enlists in a Boston regiment that is mobbed in passing through Baltimore on its way to Washington, and takes part in the great defeat of Northern arms at Manassas, where the book ends. Its historical background is marvelously sketched in; and, though it may be a heretical taste, it is possible to prefer its battle-scenes to those of *The Red Badge of Courage,* or, indeed, to anything short of Byron's in *Don Juan* and Tolstoy's in *War and Peace.* Jack London, it may be remarked, called it "the best Civil War book I've read".

But it is interesting not only as a novel, but as a memorial of a private struggle of his own. It is not for merely literary reasons that a child of the South goes over to the traditional enemy. The aristocratic South, the old South, was still alive in him; it was the South in him that, in spite of all his efforts to be modern and scientific and democratic, still gave him that unconsciously lordly attitude toward life. He

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had only changed its terminology and not its essence when, as a Prince of the Kingdom of the Spirit, as a poet-aristocrat, he had demanded of the world his rightful place in the seats of spiritual rulership of mankind. When he hated the South, as he had done since boyhood, it was something in himself that he hated. And now, when he had cast off these lordly pretensions that had only gained him mockeries and injuries, and sunk his own aspirations toward freedom and happiness in those of the masses of workingmen, now more than ever he needed to free himself from his Southern heritage. It was for that reason that he fought the Civil War over again in his imagination. In the person of his hero he had to make war on the South; the slavery of black men was his pretext—it was himself that must be set free, before he could go on to write the new books that called to him. . . .

The rest of the trilogy was never written. In the fall of 1904, he went to Chicago to get material for a book about Packingtown. He worked there seven weeks, came back with his imagination aflame, and—pausing in 1905 to found the Intercollegiate Socialist Society [1]—wrote a book that changed his whole literary career.

[1] The Intercollegiate Socialist Society was to become the center of rebellious thought and the forum for free discussion in the conservative colleges of America. Few students with any spark of intellectual curiosity but were touched by its liberalizing influences.

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X. THE JUNGLE

I.

IN 1905 there began to appear, in a Socialist weekly, the *Appeal to Reason,* published in Girard, Kansas, a novel of the Chicago stockyards, by an almost altogether unknown writer: *The Jungle,* by Upton Sinclair. I can remember, as a boy of eighteen, reading in my *Appeal* that first chapter describing the wedding party of Jurgis and Ona, and my delight in the rich, full-blooded humanity of that scene. It was the happy prelude to what was to be, as week after week the story unrolled itself, a tragic panorama of working-class life, true, terrible, and magnificent. . . .

The story was simple enough; it related the fortunes of a group of immigrants who lived and worked in the stockyards district—their struggle to get ahead, to own a home, to bring up their children decently, while all the time they are brutally exploited, preyed upon, robbed, outraged, by the unscrupulous forces which find in their poverty and ignorance and helplessness mere opportunities for enrichment. The group is crushed, one by one, in the struggle; the old men are thrown on the scrap-heap to starve, the women are drawn into prostitution to keep body and soul together, the children die;

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Jurgis himself goes to prison for smashing the face of a brutal boss, and when he comes out his little world had been destroyed as if by an earthquake—and he is left to wander, getting wisdom as he wanders, and coming at last to believe in a Socialist reconstruction of this hideous world. At every point the story is enriched by the most vivid and relentless realistic detail; one is immersed in the filth and stench and cruelty of the stockyards, and one feels the sublime human aspirations which even there burn unquenchably in humble hearts.

For a while the knowledge that a great new novelist had appeared in America was almost confined to the readers of that Socialist weekly—no small audience, however, for the "*Appeal* army" of enthusiastic subscription-getters had drummed up half a million readers for that publication. The first public, therefore, of this astonishing novel, was of farmers resting in stocking feet beside the stove of winter evenings, and of discontented workingmen in a thousand cities and towns—an audience which, whether rural or urban, understood the truths of human suffering which it so vividly portrayed. That was its first success—its recognition and acclaim by a proletarian audience. Then came recognition by fellow-writers, who heard of this strange and powerful novel being published in a Socialist weekly, and sent for back numbers. David Graham Phillips wrote to the author: "I never expected to read a serial. I am reading *The Jungle* and I should be afraid to trust myself to tell you how it affects me. It is a great work. I have a feeling that you yourself

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will be dazed some day by the excitement about it. It is impossible that such a power should not be felt. It is so simple, so true, so tragic, and so human. It is so eloquent, and yet so exact." And, of course, Jack London, his comrade in the Socialist movement, did not fail to acclaim this achievement. "The *Uncle Tom's Cabin* of wage slavery", he called it; and with that legend on the jacket and in the advertisements it was brought before the general American public in book form in 1906. It was an immediate and enormous success. It became a "best-seller" in America, England and the British colonies. It was translated into seventeen languages, and the world became aware that industrial America in its toil, its misery and its hope had found a voice.

II.

But the literary sensation in America had already become secondary to the shock of its readers in learning of the conditions under which their meats were prepared in Packingtown, not as affecting the workers but as affecting their own health—for the story dealt incidentally with the use of condemned meat. The author later remarked that he had aimed at the public's heart and by accident had hit it in the stomach. His deepest concern had been with the fate of the workers, and he realized with bitterness that he had become a celebrity not because the public cared anything about the workers, but because it did not want to eat diseased meat.

The public was more or less prepared for such

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charges against the packers, on account of the "embalmed beef" scandal during the Spanish-American war. President Roosevelt, responding to a widespread popular demand, sent a commission to Chicago to make an investigation of conditions in Packingtown. This commission was assisted, at Sinclair's expense, by Ella Reeve Bloor, who had been familiar with conditions there and had helped him in his seven weeks' investigation preliminary to the writing of the novel; and the researches of this commission appear to have confirmed the chief charges made in the book.

The young novelist accepted, as a Socialist, the opportunity which this situation provided for agitation. But the packers, and large business interests in general, were aroused, and all their power and influence was used to keep this agitation from reaching the public, and to represent the young agitator as an irresponsible sensation-monger. He set up a publicity bureau, worked twenty hours a day, wrote articles, sent telegrams, and gave interviews to roomfuls of reporters; but so thoroughly had the newspapers been mobilized by the business interests as a medium of defense that the publicity he actually achieved for the workers' cause was slight; and on the other hand, his own reputation, in genteel literary and critical circles, and among the public at large, was seriously damaged. In the course of these efforts, President Roosevelt said to him: "Mr. Sinclair, I have been in public life longer than you, and I will give you this bit of advice; if you pay any attention to what the newspapers say

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about you, you will have an unhappy time." He might have taken this as a warning that his temperament was not suited to public life, for he could not get used to being lied about in the newspapers; but he persisted in his efforts, and he did have a very "unhappy time".

Nothing in particular was done about the workers' conditions. Even the President's meat-inspection law, as finally passed, had, in the opinion of those behind it, all its teeth drawn first. Sinclair continued his attempt to agitate the question, but the public had been reassured, and the effort was futile. In *The Brass Check*, where the complete story of this period is told vividly, he says: "I look back upon this campaign, to which I gave three years of brain and soul sweat, and ask what I really accomplished." He had taken, he says, a few million dollars away from the Chicago packers, "giving them to the Junkers of East Prussia, and to the Paris bankers who were backing enterprises to pack meat in the Argentine". He had also added a hundred thousand readers to the circulation of a popular magazine, which speedily repudiated its early muck-raking habits and became a defender of big business; and he had made a fortune for his publishers, who immediately became conservative and devoted their profits from *The Jungle* to promote a kind of writing hostile to everything in which he believed. . . .

III.

The Jungle was in fact the climax of a literary movement in America which had aroused the fear

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and anger of large business interests. The great middle-class reform movement, marked in the political field by the careers of Bryan, Roosevelt and the earlier Wilson had produced an audience sympathetic to the telling of unpleasant truths about American political and business conditions. In the magazine field this was called "muck-raking"; there were sensational revelations of the inside workings of Wall Street by Tom Lawson, of municipal corruption by Lincoln Steffens, of Standard Oil history by Ida M. Tarbell, of Beef Trust finance by Ray Stannard Baker. In the fictional field there was a corresponding literature, written by such men as Robert Herrick, Frank Norris and David Graham Phillips. This literature had its social revolutionary fringe: Jack London was an avowed revolutionist, and such Socialist critics of society as W. J. Ghent, John Spargo, Robert Hunter, Charles Edward Russell and William English Walling, had a wide hearing. A professor named Thorstein Veblen had written a devastating book called *The Theory of the Leisure Class,* and phrases from it passed into general intellectual currency. These conditions were sufficiently alarming, in a country where every year, in one great industry or another, there was a bitter struggle between employers and men, in which bullets were the decisive factor. And now a young man, by writing a book, had put a great industry on the defensive before the whole public. It was necessary to tighten the grip of business upon the intellectual world. The newspapers were already well in hand; but there was a group of free magazines which were

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making money out of "muck-raking"—the very center of the intellectual rebellion. Big business struck at this group of free magazines, effectively, through the medium of advertising. The magazine policies were changed. Writers were called off from investigations of industrial conditions. An immense campaign of optimism was begun, and a cheerful outlook upon American industrial conditions was preached and made synonymous with patriotism. The writers for the most part changed with the times, and adapted their views to the new editorial demand; the others were silenced or discouraged. A few prominent radical journalists, unable to tell the truth any longer in the magazines, bought one of their own; but they, too, presently succumbed to the spirit of the times. . . . Sinclair quotes, in *The Brass Check,* the titles of some representative articles from a recent issue of that once-daring magazine: "How We Decide When to Raise a Man's Salary", "The Comic Side of Trouble", "Interesting People: A Wonderful Young Private Secretary", "From Prize-Fighter to Parson". . . .

The public, deprived of the intellectual stimulant of unpleasant truth before it had quite got used to it, was easily trained in more cheerful tastes. Those writers who sought to revive the art of muck-raking found themselves with an indifferent audience. "People aren't interested in that sort of thing any more." While as for fiction, the old genteel tradition reasserted itself, the standard of non-controversiality became identical with the standard of decency, and any author who dared to violate this

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standard ran the risk of finding himself removed in critical esteem beyond the pale of literary respectability.

The measure of the wrath of the masters of America and the docility of its intellectual class during this period may be taken from the Gorky incident, which happened in the spring of 1906, coincident with the *Jungle* agitation. The great Russian novelist, Maxim Gorky, had come to America to raise funds for the cause of Russian freedom—a cause long since made popular among even the respectable American intelligentsia by the writings of the American journalist, George Kennan. A great welcome was prepared for him. But it happened that two radical union leaders, Moyer and Haywood, were on trial for their lives in a Western state in the course of an industrial war between the miners and the coal-barons. Their cause had been espoused by the Socialists, who now asked Gorky to sign a telegram of sympathy to Moyer and Haywood. He did so. A White House reception to Gorky was immediately canceled. And then the American papers, at the instance of the Czarist embassy, began to denounce Gorky, on the pretext that he had "insulted" the American people by bringing with him as his wife a woman to whom he was not married. It was known to those who made the charge that Russian revolutionists married without the churchly processes which alone were "legal" in Russia, and that Madame Andreieva was his wife according to the revolutionary code; they had known that all along, and had not made use

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of the fact. Now they unloosed upon him the furies of a hypocritical moralistic journalism. He was hounded out of New York hotels, denounced in pulpit and newspaper throughout the country; his mission was destroyed. And the American men of letters who had been proud to be invited to dine with this Russian giant, were afraid to brave that storm: one and all, the respectable writers turned tail and fled, not daring to call their souls their own —a black day in the calendar of American letters. Great reputations fell that day, Mark Twain's among them, in the minds of boys and girls, now grown up, who saw that humiliating and cowardly action with the clear eyes of youth and were ashamed for their country. If American literature is now less timid about sex, that young indignation may have something to do with it. But those boys and girls did not know why America and American men of letters had suddenly become so prudish: they did not know that Maxim Gorky's influence had been destroyed in that sudden journalistic whirlwind, not because of the lack of churchly blessings upon his union with Madame Andreieva, but because he had rashly intruded into an American economic struggle on the unfashionable side. He, and the writers of America, must be taught a lesson, and made to realize who was running this country and what happened to anybody who tried to interfere with them.

The stage of Upton Sinclair's literary career, immediately ensuing upon his immense celebrity as the author of *The Jungle,* falls within this period when

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"muck-raking" was being outlawed and editors and writers taught a lesson by those in control of American business. He was one of the few who dared to brave this Thermidorian reaction, and he was chief of those to suffer from it. It is his temerity which explains the fact that his reputation in America as a novelist fell during that period to zero, or lower. He missed, by remaining a "muck-raker", his chance of regaining literary respectability. His next novel, *The Metropolis,* published in 1907, was an attack on New York society; and *The Money-changers,* published in 1908, was an exposé of Wall Street. Nor is this explanation to be discounted by the fact that *The Metropolis* and The *Money-changers* were not very good novels.

The point is worth laboring. Novels far inferior to those two would, in that period, have maintained Upton Sinclair in American critical esteem, if they had been of a different tendency; not to realize that is to be ignorant of American criticism and its fashions. It was the fashion to sneer at Upton Sinclair, and to accept the yellow-journal pictures of him, in which he was represented as a mere sensation-monger and fool to boot. Georg Brandes, generally accounted the world's greatest modern critic, was astonished at this American neglect of one of its greatest writers; on visiting this country in 1914, he took pains to say to the reporters who met him at the steamer that there were three American novelists whom he found worth reading, among these being Upton Sinclair. The statement, as it generally appeared in the press, referred only to

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Frank Norris and Jack London, omitting Upton Sinclair's name altogether. Doubtless it was naïvely regarded as incredible that anyone should really take this disreputable "muck-raker" seriously. . . . And it was not until a new rebellious literature and criticism emerged after the war, under the leadership of Sinclair Lewis and H. L. Mencken, that Upton Sinclair was again mentioned among American writers by any reputable native critic who was not a Socialist.

IV.

The Metropolis and *The Moneychangers,* though better as propaganda than as art, are nevertheless of interest to us for what they reveal of their author's psychology at this period. The former novel grew out of his observations of the life of the idle rich during his fame as the author of *The Jungle.* His celebrity made him naturally an object of curiosity and interest to these rich people; and its secrets, such as they were, were readily exposed to him. It happened to be within his power, if so he chose, to remain in such a life. A group of capitalists had come to him, as he relates in *The Brass Check,* "with a proposition to found a model meat-packing establishment; they had offered me three hundred thousand dollars worth of stock for the use of my name"; and he adds: "if I had accepted that offer and become the head of one of the city's commercial show-places, lavishing full-page advertisements upon the newspapers, I might have . . . been invited to be the chief orator at banquets of the

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Chamber of Commerce and the National Civic Federation, and my eloquence would have been printed to the extent of columns; I might have joined the Union League Club and the Century Club, and my name would have gone upon the list of people about whom no uncomplimentary news may be published under any circumstances. At the same time I might have kept one or more apartments on Riverside Drive, with just as many beautiful women in them as I wished, and no one would have criticized me, no newspaper would have dropped hints about 'love-nests'." This opportunity, no temptation in reality, appears nevertheless to have intrigued his imagination sufficiently to make such a "temptation" the theme of his new novel. Its hero comes to New York and undergoes the temptation of wealth and luxury. It is a kind of ironic sequel to the unfinished trilogy of the Civil War; its hero is the son of the man who fought in *Manassas* to save the Union from destruction. The Union had, by that epic agony, been saved—for what? For this, says the disillusioned author, pointing to the waste and vulgarity and triviality of the life of the "Four Hundred". . . . It will be seen that the theme psychologically precedes that of *The Jungle;* and it is not surprising to find the book revelatory of an actually less mature point of view than is shown in that masterpiece. Its emotional effects are of a juicelessly ethical character. The young hero turns his back upon these temptations, and resolves to earn an honest living! One remembers Jurgis in *The Jungle*; he could not turn his back on Packingtown

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—he had to live its life; and only thus are we enabled to know what Packingtown was. Yet, through some identification of himself with his young aristocrat in this later book, the author is unable to imagine his surrender to metropolitan luxury, even for a moment; so that we never learn, in any emotional sense, in any sense but that of factual detail, what metropolitan luxury means. The *dégringolade* of a high-souled young man under such influences—and possibly his eventual revolt under other influences—was the story called for by the theme. It was never written; only the surface details are presented. So meager a use of the vast powers displayed in *The Jungle* suggests some internal conflict in connection with this theme, and we may perhaps be permitted to look there for the answer to this literary riddle—if it is permissible at all to inquire why a writer does not always remain at his best.

The Moneychangers, a sequel to *The Metropolis,* had the same central character. The book was based upon the panic of 1907, of which it undertook to give the "inside story". It might have been treated as an epic theme; but it was viewed in too narrow and factual a way, through the eyes of this aristocratic young moralist-hero, who, as the total upshot of these events, is merely surprised and shocked that people can be so bad—and refuses to dine at the house of one of the scoundrels. There was to have been a third volume; it was written as a play, *The Machine,* and in it the hero falls in love with the scoundrel's daughter, who has in the meantime taken up settlement work and renounced her

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father's riches. It was, then, toward this grand event that that creation moved!

Jack London had written of *The Jungle*: "It is alive and warm. It is brutal with life." No one would say that of *The Metropolis* or *The Money-changers*. They are emotionally thin performances. Ill-health, and poverty after the Helicon Hall experiment (see next chapter), doubtless partly account for this inadequacy. In both novels the hero remains essentially untouched by all that goes on about him, scarcely more than an observer—a disembodied ghost, as it were, of the author himself, looking on and taking note of all that happens with an admirable journalistic faculty, but capable of no depth of human emotions. In *The Brass Check* the author remarks that the critics were cross with his hero, saying that he was "a prig", and that he "ought to have been really tempted by the charms of the lovely 'Mrs. Winnie Duval'," and he goes on to say: "It has happened to me, not once, but several times, to meet with an experience such as I have portrayed in the 'Mrs. Winnie' scene, and I never found it any particular temptation. The real temptation of the Metropolis is not the exquisite ladies with unsatisfied emotions; it is that if you refuse to bow the knee to the Mammon of Unrighteousness you become an outcast in the public mind. You are excluded from all influence and power, you are denied all opportunity to express yourself, to exercise your talents, to bring your gifts to fruition. One of the reasons *The Metropolis* had a small sale was because I refused to do the conventional thing—to

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show a noble young hero struggling in the net of an elegant siren. The temptation I showed was that of the man's world, not of the woman's; the temptation of Wall Street offices, not of Fifth Avenue boudoirs. It was a kind of temptation of which the critics were ignorant, and in which the public, alas, was uninterested." Indeed, an interesting theme. And a pity it is that these novels did not actually deal with it. But we are now perhaps in a position to make at least a guess at the psychic conflict which held the author's emotions so tight-locked during the composition of those two books: it might well have been, no vulgar conflict of worldly ambition with his high ideals, but a conflict involving his old aristocratic emotions—for he had been offered, Tantalus-like, the opportunities of public leadership, only to have them snatched out of his grasp—a conflict between the poet-prophet, the Shelleyan "unacknowledged legislator of mankind", and the newer humbler rôle of the imaginative novelist who identifies himself with weak, suffering, stumbling, pitiful humanity itself. For a moment he had taken the latter rôle, and produced a masterpiece of prose fiction. But the poet in him demanded another destiny; and in that conflict he became neither poet nor quite novelist, but journalist-agitator.

In the meantime, in 1907, he had published a book entitled *The Industrial Republic.* Its dedication, "To H. G. Wells, 'the next most hopeful'," is an allusion to an inscription written by Wells in a book presented to him: "To the most hopeful of Socialists, from the next most hopeful!" The Wells book was

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A Modern Utopia; and in this book Sinclair goes him one better. It is sub-titled: "A Study of the America of Ten Years Hence". It is a Socialist America that is thus described, though its Socialism is of so mild a sort that even the American Socialists of those days must have found it a somewhat watery potion. "If Mr. Bryan would only procure and read a really authoritative treatise upon modern scientific Socialism (say Vandervelde's *Collectivism and Industrial Evolution*) he would understand that his programme is so close to that of the Socialists that the difference would require a microscope to discern." And this Bryanesque government-ownership Socialism was to be brought about by the election, in 1912, of a radical Democratic President, probably William Randolph Hearst. "It may be, of course, that some one else will get the Democratic nomination in 1912; that matters not at all in my thesis—the one thing certain is that it will be some man who stands pledged to put an end to class-government. Following it there will be a campaign of an intensity of fury such as this country has never before witnessed in its history." This is a remarkably accurate, if somewhat exaggerated, foreshadowing of the Wilson-Roosevelt-Taft campaign of 1912, which was fought out fiercely on social issues. But he goes on to predict an industrial crisis, a new "Coxey's Army" marching on Washington, a panic, and then the Revolution: needless to say a peaceful one. The captains of industry will have been told by the President that, "since they can no longer run their business, they must allow the Government to take

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possession and run it—the price to be paid for their stock being a matter for future negotiation, and a matter of no great importance to them in any case, because of the income and inheritance laws just then being rushed through Congress." The revolution, thus defined, was to take place "within one year after the Presidential election of 1912". It was a youthful guess that one need not be ashamed of having made, though one may smile at the youthful rashness of putting it on record in print; it was based on some quite widespread Social Revolutionary expectations of the period, and its immediacy seemed natural enough to a young Utopian in a great hurry.

But, with a revolution coming in six years, there might have seemed the less reason for him to discipline his imagination to the novelist's difficult and humble task of representing human nature If this young writer was to be henceforth of distinguished use to American literature, he had to suffer more hurts and disillusionments.

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XI. LOVE'S PILGRIMAGE

I.

THE success of *The Jungle* in 1906 had put the young author immediately in possession of some thirty thousand dollars; and with this money he founded, that fall, at Englewood, New Jersey, a co-operative undertaking called the Helicon Home Colony. This project had been outlined in an article that summer in the *Independent*, in which he said:

"Here am I on my little farm, living as my ancestors lived—like a cave man or a feudal baron. I have my little castle and my retainers and dependents to attend me, and we practise a hundred different trades: the trade of serving meals, and the trade of cleaning dishes, the trade of washing and ironing clothes, of killing and dressing meat, of churning butter, of baking bread, of grinding meal, of raising chickens, of cutting wood, of preserving fruit, of heating a house, of training children, and of writing books! And all these crowded into one establishment, in close proximity, and all jarring and clashing with each other! And all carried on in the most primitive and barbarous fashion, upon a small scale, and by unskilled hand labor." The coöperative argument, as developed by Charlotte Perkins

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Gilman, follows: "It takes a hundred cooks to prepare a hundred meals badly, while twenty cooks could prepare one meal for a hundred families and do it perfectly. . . . It takes a hundred ignorant nursemaids to take care of the children of a hundred families, and develop every kind of ugliness and badness in them; it would take only twenty or thirty trained nurses and kindergarten teachers to take care of them coöperatively, and bring them up according to the teachings of science." He goes on to say that "there must be, in and near New York, thousands of men and women of liberal sympathies, who understand this situation clearly, and are handicapped by its miseries in their own lives—authors, artists and musicians, editors and teachers and professional men, who abhor boarding-houses and apartment hotels, and yet shrink from managing servants, who have lonely and peevish children like my own, and are no fonder of eating poisons or of wasting their time and strength than I am. There must be a few who, like myself, have realized that it is a question of dragging through life a constantly increasing burden of care, or making an intelligent effort and solving the problem once for all. To such I offer my coöperation. I am not a business man, but circumstances have forced me to take up this problem, and I am not accustomed to failing in what I undertake."

Many answers were received to this announcement, and the plan was experimentally carried out by fifty or sixty people, including ten children. The colonists bought nine and a half acres of land sloping

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down from the Palisades on the Hudson, within an hour of New York City. There was a large three-story building, formerly a boys' school, equipped with a pipe organ, a swimming pool, a bowling alley, a theater, a billiard room, thirty-five bedrooms, a children's dormitory, dining-room and play-room, a heating system, etc. Lodging cost $3 a week, meals $5 a week, "or $4 if we only eat two meals"; and the children were taken care of at a cost of $4 a week apiece.

"I look back on Helicon Hall to-day," says Upton Sinclair in *The Brass Check,* "and this is the way I feel about it. I have lived in the future; I have known those wider freedoms and opportunities that the future will grant to all men and women. Now by harsh fate I have been dragged back into a lower order of existence, and commanded to spend the rest of my days therein. I know that the command is irrevocable, and I make the best of my fate—I manage to keep cheerful, and to do my appointed task; but nothing can alter the fact in my own mind —I have lived in the future, and all things about me seem drab and sordid by comparison. I feel as you would feel if you were suddenly taken back to the days when there was no plumbing and when people used perfume instead of soap."

This colony of middle-class intellectuals was not a very radical experiment; but it furnished the newspapers an opportunity for sensational stories none the less. Reporters were always snooping about, spying in the nursery and eavesdropping in the pantry, and going back to write stories about

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"Upton Sinclair's love-nest". When William James and John Dewey came to visit the colony and talked of current affairs beside the fireplace, that was not news; but when, at the weekly dance, according to the democratic traditions of the place, the resident professor of philosophy danced with the two pretty Irish girls who waited on the table, that was something to be spread before a shocked America. Among the reporters was a young Yale College student named Sinclair Lewis, afterward the famous author of *Main Street*; he tended furnace at Helicon Hall and afterward wrote it up for a New York paper. What he wrote was playful, and the colonists would have enjoyed the fun except that some of them had their livings to think about. Subsequently an American newspaper was sued for libel by Upton Sinclair for scandalous lies concerning the Helicon Home Colony; a retraction and apology were printed, but the American public continued to believe the worst.

This eminently conservative and, within its own limitations, entirely successful economic and social experiment came abruptly to an end after six months. One night in March, 1907, a fire, possibly of incendiary origin, burned Helicon Hall to the ground, destroying among the total contents of the house all of the young agitator's manuscripts and documents, including certain documents concerning defective armor plate furnished to American battleships. The Helicon Home Colony was wiped out.

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II.

Upton Sinclair had been for a young author, rich, and thus he had spent and lost his riches. Now he was a poor man; and for a number of years he was to be tormented by indigestion and by domestic unhappiness. He commenced a wandering life, spending the summer of 1907 at Point Pleasant, New Jersey, the winter at Bermuda, the next summer in the Adirondacks, meanwhile writing *The Metropolis* and *The Moneychangers*. During a winter's "rest" in California in 1908-9 he organized a traveling theatrical company to produce Socialist drama, and put on three of his own plays. He then went with his family to live at the single-tax colony at Arden, Delaware, where he remained for three years. During all this time he was the butt and victim of newspaper mockery and sensationalism. But in 1910 there occurred at Arden a preposterous incident which relieved the newspapers of the trouble of making up lies to print about him. The truth, for once, was amusing enough. Sinclair tells the story in *The Brass Check*.

"Close upon the edge of Arden there dwelt an Anarchist philosopher, a shoemaker hermit, whose greatest pleasure in life was to rise in public meetings and in the presence of young girls explain his ideas on the physiology of sex. The little Economic Club of Arden invited him to shut up, and when he claimed the privileges of 'free speech' the club excluded him from its meetings and when he per-

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sisted in coming, had him arrested. It happened that the members of this Economic Club were also members of the baseball team, and they played a game on Sunday morning; so the Anarchist shoemaker repaired to Wilmington and swore out warrants, on the ground of their having violated an ancient statute, dating back to 1793, forbidding 'gaming' on the Sabbath. It happened that I did not belong to the Economic Club, and had nothing to do with the trouble; but I had played tennis that Sabbath morning, so the Anarchist shoemaker included me in his warrants.

"So behold us, eleven young men summoned to the office of a Wilmington Justice of the Peace one evening, and finding the street packed solid for a block, and people even climbing up telegraph poles and lamp-posts to look in at the window and watch the proceedings."

They were fined, but refused to pay their fines; and so they were all sent to jail for eighteen hours. "When we came out from the jail we were met by twenty-two newspaper reporters and three cameramen, and everything we had to say took the front page, top of column. Incidentally, I got a curious revelation. For years I had written poetry, and had never been able to get it published; but now I found that by the simple device of writing it in jail, I could get it on the front page of every newspaper in Philadelphia and New York!" He quotes two lines:

> 'And then in sudden stillness mark the sound—
> Some beast that rasps his vermin-haunted hide.'

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"When my cell-mate, Berkeley Tobey, read those lines, he remarked: 'That's me!' To which I answered: 'Tobey, that's you'."

The cells in which they had spent the night had been characteristic of the American jail system, filthy and swarming with vermin; they had been given food unfit for animals. Men were serving life-sentences in this jail, working in a clothing factory under a sweatshop contractor, without a spot where they could get a glimpse of sunlight or a breath of fresh air. What these released members of the Economic Club told the reporters about conditions in that jail "made an uproar in Delaware".

Furthermore, they served notice that they were going to have the Attorney General of the state and the Chief Justice of the supreme court arrested for playing golf on Sunday, so that they might find out what it was like in jail. It was decided by the authorities that no more arrests would be made for "gaming on the Sabbath", and the prison commissioners decided to add an exercise court to the prison.

"I look back," says Upton Sinclair, "upon my life of nearly twenty years of muck-raking, and am able to put my finger on exactly one concrete benefit that I have brought to mankind. Twenty or more men who are serving life sentences in the Newcastle County Workhouse owe it to me that they get every now and then a glimpse of the sunlight and a breath of fresh air! . . .

"Can you blame me," he asks, "if I stored away in my mind for future reference the fact that when

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it is necessary to get some important news into the papers, I can manage it by getting myself sent to jail? This", he adds, "is a discovery which is made, sooner or later, by all social reformers; and so going to jail becomes a popular diversion and an honorable public service."

III.

Samuel the Seeker, in 1910, had marked the lowest ebb of its author's powers. Indigestion seems to have been largely to blame: "my poor tummy", he says, "simply wouldn't let me feel any emotions." Accordingly *The Fasting Cure,* in 1911, an account of the means by which he had finally restored himself to health, has a closer relation than it might seem to have to the literary life. Novelists, like armies in the Napoleonic maxim, get ahead on their stomachs. And thus there appears, in the same year, another great novel—*Love's Pilgrimage.*

It is the story of his own life, or rather, of the earlier part of it, up to the year 1904. So many references have already been made to it in these pages, and it has been drawn upon so often for biographical material, that it will be dealt with here briefly. But a letter from the Dutch novelist, Frederik van Eeden, may be quoted:

"It is surely your greatest book, and very nearly one of the great books of the world. . . . You give wooing, marriage, pregnancy, birth, in great classic lines. . . . Of course you have read Zola's description of a birth. Yours is better, because it is more

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human, more poetic. It is one of the best things in English literature. . . . This book will make your world fame."

While subscribing to these enthusiastic comments, one may note that the book, in dealing with the life of young Thyrsis, his earlier self, shows less of a detached and mature point of view than might have been expected. He has identified himself, so far as attitudes toward love and art are concerned, with his young hero, who was, from any mature point of view, outrageously wrong (or egregiously neurotic) about both these important matters.[1] The book's greatness does not in the least lie in the direction of self-understanding, let alone self-criticism. It lies rather in its robust immersion in the stream of life. Nothing appals the writer; everything is told—it matters not that it is in impassioned self-defense. Its candor is magnificent, shameless, beautiful. It succeeds as realism. It is a masterpiece, vastly different from *The Jungle,* not comparable with it in detachment or breadth, but not inferior to it in truth and power. It must be named in any list of great American novels.

IV.

It was an unfinished story. It was intended to be followed by another book [2] dealing with the later life of Thyrsis, and Corydon his wife. But actual events in their stormy marriage interfered.

[1] This, however, appears to have been deliberate, because he was going to show how Thyrsis learned, in the second volume.

[2] I have read the manuscript of this unpublished novel, and may be permitted to express the hope that it will eventually be published.

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In this ill-matched and ill-fated marriage of theirs, the prime cause of discord would seem, to an outside observer, to have lain in the temperament of the husband, with his ignorant poetic fear of the realities of human love; nor is it strange that this should have produced in his girl-wife a state of emotional instability and irresponsibility. Her emotional divagations, though she might undertake to justify them by modern theories of freedom, would be explained more truly as her exasperated reactions to his aloof and Olympian nature. And he, less aloof and Olympian then he seemed, would find himself in what he later described as "a maelstrom in which a man's physical, mental and moral integrity are subtly and bewilderingly tossed and buffeted and maimed". They had been involved in this secret and painful domestic melodrama for eight years. The conclusion of *Love's Pilgrimage* suggests their belief that they had at last achieved a durable peace and happiness through a frank facing of their problem. But that hope seems to have been too precarious. Hardly had that book, with its tender record of their young love, and its high hopes for the future, been published, than a crisis arrived in their lives, which ended their marriage. Corydon went away with a lover; and Thyrsis instituted suit for divorce.

The divorce, after much painful newspaper publicity, was denied, on grounds of "collusion". According to the New York laws, if both parties appear to desire the divorce, that is a reason for not granting it. These private affairs were the

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topic of nation-wide newspaper discussion, into which we need not go. "I felt in those terrible days", Sinclair writes in *The Brass Check,* "like a hunted animal which seeks refuge in a hole, and is tormented with sharp sticks and smoke and boiling water." His earning power had been destroyed by the newspapers; no one would read his books, or publish what he wrote. His health seemed permanently undermined; he did not think he was going to live, and he "did not much care".

He did not wish to appeal the case, because the law required that the evidence in the case must be printed "and remain public property forever". But he had received from his friend van Eeden a letter assuring him that Holland was a civilized country, where divorce was granted upon reasonable grounds, without publicity. Accordingly he went to Holland, in 1912. He intended to spend the rest of his life in Europe. "It seemed to me that I could not bear the sight of America again."

V.

In Holland he obtained his divorce quietly and without scandal. "I wish", he says in *The Brass Check,* "to pay tribute to the kindest and most friendly people I have ever met—the Dutch. When I came to them, sick with grief, they did not probe into my shame; they invited me to their drawing-rooms for discussions of literature and art, and with tact and sweetness they let me warm my shivering heart at their firesides. Their newspapers treated

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me as a man of letters—an entirely new experience to me. They sent men of culture and understanding to ask my opinions, and they published these opinions correctly and with dignity. When I filed my divorce suit they published nothing. When the decree was granted, they published three or four lines about it in the columns given to court proceedings, a bare statement of the names and dates, as required by law."

He goes on to say: "There were many men in Holland, as in England and Germany and Italy and France, who hated and feared my Socialist ideas. I made no secret of my ideas; I spoke on public platforms abroad, as I had spoken at home. When reporters for the great Tory newspapers of England came to interview me, I told them of the war that was coming with Germany, and how bitterly England would repent her lack of education and modern efficiency, and her failure to feed and house her workers as human beings. These opinions were hateful to the British Tories, and they attacked me; but they did not attack the author of the opinions, by making him into a public scarecrow and publishing scandals about his private life."

VI.

In the meantime, during his stay in Holland and England, he had written a novel called *Sylvia,* published in 1913. Its locale is divided between the aristocratic South and aristocratic Boston; it bears, more lightly than his New York novels, its inevitable

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burdens, journalistic exposition of class-traits, and sociological and moral arguments. Most unexpectedly, it presents a heroine of authentic charm—a sparkling, witty, vivacious young Southern girl, whose destiny it is to resist and at last succumb to the wooing of a young millionaire. It is unexpectedly tender, also, in its dealings with the South; even the author's principles do not blind him to the charm of that environment. It is the tenderness, perhaps, of nostalgia, of one in exile looking back across the bitter defeats of adult life to the scenes of his childhood. It is not, however, a transcript of actual memories; it owes a good deal to reminiscent tales of the South heard from the friend who was presently to become his second wife. It is dedicated "To the People at Home", and it is the one of all his books which might conceivably not hurt their feelings.

The story, however, was obviously unfinished; and a secondary theme of the book, which was emphasized only on the last page, required another volume for its presentation. This was the theme at the time being sensationally presented to American playgoers and readers by Brieux, in his play, *Damaged Goods*—a novelized version of which, with the playwright's grateful consent, was written and published in 1913 by Sinclair.

Sylvia's Marriage, accordingly, which appeared in 1914, relates the consequences to this marriage of her husband's pre-marital wild oats, in the form of a blind baby—a result accounted for with satisfactory realism. The novel, however, rises far above merely

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propaganda effects in dealing with the life of his heroine after she has left her millionaire husband and come back with her blind baby to live in the Southern home of her childhood. A realistically disillusioned woman, she is neither pathetic nor embittered, nor has she lost her charm, her wit, or her brilliance. These qualities, deepened rather by her tragic experience, are her weapons in the ensuing struggle with her family and friends and the milieu in general. For here she observes, in the habits of the young blades and in the sheltered ignorance of the young belles, the possible origins of other such tragedies as hers; and with a realistic and reckless candor she intervenes in more than one engagement, to the bewildered shock of her family and the malicious amusement of the town. These pages are true high-comedy, as fine as anything of the sort that English or American fiction has to offer. The duel between this disillusioned and frank young matron and the conventional reticences of the polite world is done with a masterly hand. But fiction of this sort, except from the most distinguished foreigners, was at the time considered disreputable in America, because it dealt frankly with sex; and now, by a swing of the wheel of fashion, it would be considered unduly moralistic.

Comments have been made in these pages on the cramping effects upon some of this writer's fiction by his moral conceptions; and it will be in place here to note that these moral conceptions have been complained of, not because they were moral, but because they involved a distaste for the subject

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in hand, and led to an undue slighting of its realities. But in the case of this novel, the moral conceptions lead rather to a richness of truth in dealing with the subject in hand, and are consequently not to be complained of by one whose interest is in the business of getting life into terms of fiction. If some of the more romantic aspects of sexual adventure are neglected by Sinclair, in his preoccupation with certain of its realistic consequences, that is to be expected, and is all the more readily to be forgiven since the aspects which he neglects are sufficiently celebrated elsewhere. He has taken a difficult aspect of the sexual theme and, throughout the latter part of this novel, handles it magnificently.

Some references have also been made in these pages to the neurotic attitudes toward sex displayed by its subject in his earlier life; and the argument might be expected here that his preoccupation with the frightful physical dangers of sexual adventure is an illustration of a neurotic fear. There is little doubt that it is the neurotic conflicts in the minds of all artists which lead them to their particular themes: the important question is what they then do with those themes. Do they get truth and beauty out of them? Upton Sinclair's opinions, as such, on the whole subject of sex, will be dealt with later on. For the present, it needs merely to be said that he has, in *Sylvia's Marriage,* artistically justified his emotional preoccupation with the sterner and sadder aspects of a theme which has many aspects.

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VII.

He had never expected to return to America. He did return, however, in 1913, and in the course of the year was married to Mary Craig Kimbrough. She was of an old Southern family, and at the time of the wedding, in Virginia, her husband noted that the event was respectfully treated by the newspapers; which, he remarks in *The Brass Check*, was explained by the information contained in the news dispatches, to the effect that the bride's father was "one of the wealthiest men in this section, and controls large banking interests."

If, however, the newspapers had presumed that the groom was henceforth to lead a correct and respectable literary life and keep out of radical politics, they were mistaken.

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XII. KING COAL

I.

ONCE back in America, Sinclair was inevitably drawn into the field of agitation. From a winter in Bermuda, where he had written *Sylvia's Marriage,* he returned to investigate the coal strike then going on in Colorado. It was a sufficiently dramatic episode in our industrial history; eleven thousand miners, with their wives and children, on strike and evicted from company-owned homes, were living in tent-colonies that had been raided and shot up by gun-men—and finally machine-guns had been turned on them, their tent-colony at Ludlow had been burned, and three women and fourteen children had been suffocated to death. Yet this news was being published only, with the most rare and meager exceptions, in the Socialist papers. Sinclair resolved to break this conspiracy of silence. Being convinced that John D. Rockefeller, Jr., was personally responsible for the tactics of the mine-owners, he went to Mr. Rockefeller's office and asked that he meet and talk with an eyewitness of the barbarities with which the strike was being repressed. The interview was denied. Then Sinclair hit on the idea of inviting a group of people to put bands of crêpe around their arms and walk in silence up and down

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in front of 26 Broadway, the Rockefeller offices, in token of mourning for the dead women and children of Ludlow. Picketing, except in labor strikes, was then a new publicity device, though the suffragists afterward made it familiar. Reporters were informed of the plan, and were on hand next morning when the demonstration began, together with a great crowd. There were also policemen, who told the pickets to go away. They replied that what they were doing was not unlawful, and continued. They were then arrested. They were followed by reporters to the police station, and Sinclair was there interviewed. He explained the purpose of the demonstration, and told the entire story of the Colorado coal strike. Within a few hours the newspapers were on the street with the story emblazoned on the front page, with three or four columns of news of the strike, as contained in the interview. The device had been successful: the conspiracy of silence was broken.

The pickets were fined and, on refusing to pay their fines, were locked up in the Tombs. The newspapers sneered at this "pink-tea martyrdom", as one of them described it, and said that the demonstration was actuated by "no genuine desire to effect a reform", but only by "a morbid craving for notoriety". Nevertheless the papers sent special correspondents to the coal fields, and the strike news continued to occupy the front page.

After Sinclair's arrest, his wife took up the demonstration. She was not arrested, but a false report that she had been was sent out by the Associated

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Press, which brought her mother in alarm to New York, with the news that her father had disinherited her after reading the morning paper. She continued to marshal the demonstration for two weeks, and her husband reports that her habitual "Southern lady" airs awed the policemen so much that they kept everybody else off the sidewalk so that the silent parade she was leading should have room to walk up and down undisturbed. A Southern lady is accustomed to having her way; and when she decided that her husband had been in jail long enough, she serenely interrupted court proceedings to have that matter attended to. "In the South, you understand," says Upton Sinclair, "anything from a court to a fire-engine will stop to pick up a lady's handkerchief"—and it appears that the air of expecting such consideration is effective also in the North. But these public demonstrations, however much she might approve of them in principle, were so alien to her Southern tastes that after going calmly through each day's ordeal she would come home at night and cry.

The investigation of the strike now took Sinclair to Colorado, where he undertook to attack the problem of news-suppression at its source, and succeeded in putting the Associated Press on its defense before the world. The whole story is told in *The Brass Check*. Returning to the East, he found that a group of radicals had been arrested for holding a street-meeting in Tarrytown, New York, whither Mr. Rockefeller had retired from the storm of publicity to the seclusion of his estate. Sinclair then

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went to Tarrytown on behalf of free speech, and, being forbidden to hold a street-meeting and unable to rent a hall, he persuaded a millionaire neighbor of Mr. Rockefeller's to give him the use of an open-air theater for a meeting to discuss the "Ludlow massacre". In the meantime the Broadway demonstration case had been appealed; and in due time the higher court had handed down its august decision, affirming the decision of the police magistrate, on the ground—highly instructive to a man who had been ridiculed and insulted for so many years by the newspapers—that "no citizen has a right to rebuke another citizen by subjecting him to ridicule or insult". There was, however, a difference in these cases: Mr. Rockefeller was a millionaire.

II.

Returning to the literary life for a time, Sinclair edited, that summer, while living at Croton-on-Hudson, N. Y., *The Cry for Justice,* "an anthology of social protest: the writings of philosophers, poets, novelists, social reformers, and others who have voiced the struggle against social injustice: selected from twenty-five languages, covering a period of five thousand years", with an eloquent introduction by Jack London (1915). And later he put his knowledge of the Colorado situation into a novel, *King Coal,* which was published in 1917.

King Coal is perhaps as fine a labor novel as could be written under the disability of having a young aristocrat for its hero. The disability, moreover,

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is not so great as might be imagined in the light of *The Metropolis* and *The Moneychangers*. This young aristocrat is, happily, different from the young aristocrat in those books. He is not so naïve, his morality is at least not so oppressively solemn, he is robust, high-spirited, humorous, and likeable; as the somewhat rebellious son of a coal-magnate, he gets a job, not in his father's mines, for he would be recognized there, but in the mines belonging to the father of a chum, and not merely sees what is going on but takes an active part in the highly exciting events that happen, including the organization of a union, an abortive strike, and a mine-explosion. The working people in the book are, though minor figures, real enough to remind us that this book is by the author of *The Jungle*. The theme is really fictionized, not merely served up in journalistic hunks. The propaganda is implicit though all-pervading. There is even a shadowy but real "love-interest", thus described by Georg Brandes in his introduction to the book:

"Most beautifully is this [the author's poetic attitude] shown in Hal's relation to a young Irish girl, Red Mary. She is poor, and her daily life harsh and joyless, but nevertheless her wonderful grace is one of the outstanding features of the book. The first impression of Mary is that of a Celtic Madonna with a tender heart for little children. She develops into a Valkyrie of the working-class, always ready to fight for the workers' right."

True and interesting as it is, it leaves considerable to be desired as fiction. The young aristocrat, even

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in this likeable guise, impedes rather than develops the labor theme. The story, told from the point of view of Red Mary, might not have been so clear an exposition of all the facts, but it might have been —it could have been—another *Jungle*. It does credit to the author's intelligence rather than to his powers of human feeling. Even the great mine disaster is not, from the point of view necessitated by the choice of a sympathetic outsider as the central figure rather than one directly involved, a tragedy. But, in not attempting a more vital treatment, it does not fail. It is a minor, and on its own limited plane a brilliant, success.

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XIII. JIMMIE HIGGINS

I.

AFTER a winter in the South, at Gulfport, Miss., Sinclair went to California in 1915, and made his home at Pasadena, where he continued to reside.

In the meantime there was a war going on in Europe, toward which Sinclair as a Socialist had to orient his views. The international Socialist movement had been traditionally and on principle anti-militaristic; but in all the European countries involved, the conservative elements of the party had found reasons for abandoning these principles and supporting the war. In America the intellectual leadership of the party was almost entirely in favor of declaring war on Germany. Sinclair had written pacifist articles in the past; but he regarded German militarism as a menace to the Socialist hope of revolution, and he joined with a group of Socialist intellectuals, including W. J. Ghent, Charles Edward Russell, J. G. Phelps Stokes, and William English Walling, in issuing a *Practical Program for Socialists,* in which it was urged that Socialists should "adjust themselves to events", and further recommended a large war budget, universal military training, and conscription of both male and female citizens. After the announcement of the resumption of unlimited submarine warfare by Germany,

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Sinclair telegraphed to President Wilson, on February 3, 1917:

> "As one who has devoted his life to a passionate struggle for Democracy, I cannot remain silent in this hour of Democracy's greatest peril. To delay naval action in this crisis is to give Germany all she wants and to risk the existence of everything for which a lover of freedom cares to live. On the other hand you have a chance to take the greatest forward step in history if in offering the American fleet to keep open the sea lanes to England, you obtain agreement by allied nations that all territory taken from Central powers in this war shall be neutralized and made forever independent under international guarantee."

The rank and file of the American Socialist party were, however, still anti-militarist, and on April 11, five days after the declaration of war, the party in special convention at St. Louis, adopted by a three-fourths vote a platform denouncing war and national patriotism and opposing enlistment by the workers in this war. The familiar theoretic Socialist position on war was thus reaffirmed: "The only struggle which would justify the workers in taking up arms is the great struggle of the working class of the world to free itself from economic exploitation and political oppression. As against the false doctrine of national patriotism, we uphold the ideal of international working-class solidarity. In support of capitalism we will not willingly give a single life or a single dollar; in support of the struggle of the workers we pledge our all. . . . We brand the declaration of war by our government as a crime against the people of the United States and against the nations of the world."

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Such was the majority report. A minority report sponsored by John Spargo, held it "our Socialist duty" to help "our nation and our allies to win the war as speedily as possible, and another minority report proposed to "recognize the war as a fact" and to promote an early and democratic peace. The action of the convention was not final, and the platform as adopted was submitted to a referendum of the whole membership. Though the party was afterward considerably demoralized by the defection of so many of its intellectual leaders, their counsels were in this crisis unhesitatingly rejected, and the anti-war platform was ratified by a 12 to 1 vote. Sinclair was one of a number of prominent Socialists who then resigned from the party. He issued an address to his former comrades, in which he said:

> I cannot but believe, Comrades, that the difference between our opinions comes from the fact that I have lived in Germany and know its language and literature, and the spirit and ideals of its rulers. Having given many years to a study of American capitalism, as it exists in the domain of the beef trust, the steel trust, and the coal trust, I am not apt to be blind to the defects of my own country; but, in spite of these defects, I assert that the difference between the ruling class of Germany and that of America is the difference between the seventeenth century and the twentieth.
>
> I find those with whom I talk here in the West utterly unable to conceive what the Prussian ruling class is. They cite its modernness, its use of science; failing to realize that this is precisely the thing which makes it dangerous—a beast with the brains of an engineer. . . .

"I intend," he said in conclusion, "to go on working for Socialism as hard as I can. . . ."

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From April 1918 to February 1919 he published *Upton Sinclair's*, a monthly magazine with the subtitle "for a clean peace and the internation". It was devoted to what its editor believed to be President Wilson's war and peace policies. He took the Wilsonian idealism at its face value, and not unnaturally believed that the President had secured the proper pledges from the allied governments. And so, having identified himself for the time being with this idealistic and eloquent administration, he was doing his bit, by propaganda among recalcitrant radicals, to help win the war that was to make the world safe for democracy.

II.

In 1918 he commenced publication, first in his own magazine, and after its discontinuance in the *Appeal to Reason,* of a war novel called *Jimmie Higgins.*

"Jimmie Higgins" was the name popularly applied to the humbler and less articulate members of the party—those who carried the soap-box and set up the gasoline torch at street meetings, not those who made the speeches. The book was to begin with an affectionate and faithful picture of the type; and it went on to show Jimmie's bewilderment in this war situation, and the arguments by which he was kept out of the war and urged into it. Presently, however, in accordance with the author's pro-war animus, Jimmie succumbs to the example of several good Socialists, including a German comrade who is anxious to help overthrow the Kaiser, and

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enlists in the army. Here the story begins to take on sweetly fabulous outlines. Being torpedoed on his transport, Jimmie is waited upon in hospital by the Honorable Beatrice Clendenning, a member of the British aristocracy, and is genially indulged in Socialist argument by His Majesty the King of England.

> "We've had some terrible poverty," admitted His Majesty. "We shall have to find some way of getting rid of it."
>
> "There ain't no way but Socialism!" cried Jimmie. . . .

Jimmie then, by single-handed heroism, stops the German army with a machine-gun, winning the battle of "Chatty Terry" and in fact the war. "The whole course of the world's history might have been different", it is playfully related, "if one little Socialist machinist from Leesville, U. S. A., had not chanced . . ." etc. Wounded and sent to base hospital, he there fraternizes across the social chasm with a rich and formerly sinful young man: one who had actually seduced other men's wives, and had got properly punished for it earlier in the story in the manner of Abelard; the war has made him democratic and thoughtful, and Jimmie learns from him that even the rich are unhappy. . . . It was a piece of fiction calculated to break down the anti-war morale of Socialist readers.

There is an important difference, however, to be noted between him and the other intellectual Socialist leaders who had left the Party. Most of these became bitter and venomous opponents of the revolutionary movement, and used every opportu-

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nity to denounce it, particularly in its newest form of Russian Bolshevism, in what they had been accustomed to call "the capitalist press". The same opportunities were offered to him. Here, indeed, was his opportunity, such as more than one "leader of revolt" has not failed to take advantage of, to endear himself to those rich and powerful classes whose hatred had driven him into poverty and neglect. He might have become a fashionable and prosperous war-time renegade. But when he, too, was offered large sums of money for speeches or articles to help in defeating certain anti-war Socialists in important municipal elections, he was astonished and hurt. "What do they think I am?" he asked. "When this is all over, I shall be back in the ranks again."

And he was presently back in the ranks again. It was the intervention of the United States against the Socialist government of Russia, and the private anti-Soviet war conducted by the Administration after the armistice with Germany, which ruthlessly disillusioned him as to President Wilson's idealism.

History was kind to him. The intervention of American arms in Siberia came in time for him to let Jimmie Higgins share in his disillusion. The final chapters of that novel show Jimmie Higgins sent with the American forces to Siberia, to fight against the new Socialist Republic. Jimmie fraternizes with the Bolsheviks, and learns the truth from them. "He"—like his creator—"had swallowed their propaganda, he had filled himself up on their

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patriotism, he had dropped everything to come and fight for Democracy. . . . And now they had broken their bargain with him. . . ." He distributes Bolshevik propaganda among his fellow soldiers—as happened at Archangel in actuality, when American regiments mutinied and refused to fight. Jimmie is caught at it, and tortured to make him betray his comrades. But the thumbscrews and the water-cure fail to break his spirit. That chapter is called "Jimmie Higgins Discovers His Soul". In the next and final chapter—"Jimmie Higgins Votes for Democracy"—he escapes from his tormentors by going insane. The effect is to give the previous naïvely pro-war chapters an effect of fine irony. A sympathetic American critic, Carl Van Doren, finds that the novel "showed traces of a romantic pulse, settling down, however, toward the end, to a colder beat". It was the late and necessary disillusionment of a too hopeful and generous mind.

III.

In 1920 came *100%: The Story of a Patriot,* published in England under the title of *The Spy.* Let Mr. Van Doren continue: "It is the colder beat which throbs in *100%,* with a temperature which suggests both ice and fire. Hardly since *Jonathan Wild* has such irony been maintained in an entire volume, as that which traces the evolution of Peter Gudge from sharper to patriot through the foul career of spying and incitement and persecution opened to his kind of talents by the frenzy of non-

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combatants during the war. To this has that patriotism come which on the red fields of Virginia poured itself out in such unstinting sacrifice; and, though the sacrifice went on in France and Flanders, was it worth while, Mr. Sinclair implicitly inquires, when the conflict, at no matter what distance, could breed such vermin as Peter Gudge? Explicitly he does not answer his question; his art has gone, at least for the moment, beyond avowed arguments, merely marshaling the evidence with irresistible ironic skill and dispensing with the chorus. *100%* is a document which honest Americans must remember and point out when orators exclaim, in the accents of official idealism, over the great days and deeds of the great war."

A less sympathetic critic might find this book somewhat too hard, somewhat too relentless—might protest that even "such vermin" as a labor-spy might be credited with an occasional and irrelevant impulse of kindness, of human decency, or of shame. It might perhaps be said that in this book the realist has labored to repay to grim truth the immense debt which the illusioned poet had so splendiferously incurred during the war.[1]

[1] Sinclair appears, under the name of Sanford Peyton, as a pro-war Socialist in a novel by the present writer, *An Old Man's Folly*, which deals with American pacifists in war-time. Sinclair, in reviewing the novel, remarks that the war-time opinions attributed to him are correct, and adds: "I can only tell him that reading them over now makes me very unhappy, and I find myself with a continual impulse to get into jail with the rest of his characters! I have had almost ten years to think the thing over, and what I have to report is that if at the beginning of 1917 I had known what I know to-day, I would have opposed the war and gone to jail with the pacifist radicals." Later in the review he remarks of the Presidential idealist in whom he believed at the time: "I cannot forgive him; it is not merely that he made a fool of himself, but he made a fool of me!"

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XIV. THE BOOK OF LIFE

I.

"WHY do you always think of things first?" H. G. Wells wrote to Sinclair, upon receiving *The Book of Life*. "I should have been at that in a year or two. I may still do it in spite of you."

It was in fact a book of a more or less Wellsian sort, in scope if not in treatment. It was published in 1921 and 1922. "The writer of this book", says the introduction, "has been in this world some forty-two years. That may not seem long to some, but it is long enough to have made many painful mistakes, and to have learned much from them. Looking about him, he sees others making these same mistakes, suffering for lack of that same knowledge which he has so painfully acquired. This being the case, it seems a friendly act to offer his knowledge, minus the pain.

"There come to the writer literally thousands of letters every year, asking him questions, some of them of the strangest. A man is dying of cancer, and do I think it can be cured by a fast? A man is unable to make his wife happy, and can I tell him what is the matter with women? A man has invested his savings in mining-stock, and can I tell him what to do about it? A man works in a sweatshop,

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and has only a little time for self-improvement, and will I tell him what books he ought to read? Many such questions every day make one aware of a vast mass of people, earnest, hungry for happiness. The things they need to know are not taught in the schools, nor in the newspapers they read, nor in the church they attend."

He promises that he "will not pretend to know what he merely guesses, and where it is necessary to guess, he will say so frankly. Finally, it is a kind book; it is not written for its author's glory, nor for his enrichment, but to tell you things that may be useful to you in the brief span of your life. It will attempt to show you how to live, how to find health and happiness and success, how to work and how to play, how to eat and how to sleep, how to love and to marry and to care for your children, how to deal with your fellow men in business and politics and social life, how to act and how to think, what religion to believe, what art to enjoy, what books to read. A large order, as the books phrase it!"

II.

The prophet, in his most realistic mood, becomes a teacher of mankind. And the prophet in Upton Sinclair has been considerably disillusioned and humbled before undertaking this task. There are here no overweening airs of seership; and though the book seeks to generalize too much from a specific life experience, it is none the less valuable on that account. If no one is wise enough to tell all of us

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how to live, we can nevertheless learn something from those who tell the truth about themselves. This is the counsel of a man who has seen, lived and suffered much, who has kept through trying years his faith that life has a meaning to be discerned by the human mind, who believes resolutely that, in large affairs and in small, knowledge gives us power. If it reveals the limitations of his knowledge, it is nevertheless an invigorating book, dealing as it does simply, sincerely and candidly with the fundamental problems of life. "You have written", May Sinclair wrote to him, "the best and sanest things about love, and, it seems to me, the best and sanest things about society." And it will be no serious derogation from this praise if we proceed to emphasize, for our purposes, its inevitable shortcomings.

The Book of the Mind and the Book of the Body are, on the whole, useful guides and primers. It is, however, noteworthy that while in the Book of the Mind there is some awareness of the contributions of modern psychology to our understanding of life, there is actually no great use made of such knowledge. The author's view of life remains, with slight empirical exceptions, a pre-Freudian view. All life's difficulties are apparently to be dealt with by the argumentative method, by reasonable arguments addressed to presumably reasonable minds. And such difficulties as are patently not amenable to reform by reasonable arguments are left entirely out of this purview, or are met with gusts of moral indignation. That there exists, for instance, among

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life's important problems for young people, such a problem as the successful establishment of heterosexuality or even the problem of psychic emancipation from the home, is not at all indicated nor apparently at all understood. And in default of any useful insight into these realms of conduct, an undue burden of explanation of human behavior has to be placed, elsewhere in the book, upon the theory of economic determinism—which under this severe pressure begins to take on some mythological characteristics. And this lack of intimate knowledge of the operations of the mind leaves him with none too adequate defenses against his own tendency to credulity, in the matter of spiritistic marvels, where nevertheless he maintains such skepticism as he can muster.

The Book of the Body though characterized by an over-emphasis, due to his own unhappy experiences, upon the Stomach, is nevertheless interesting and useful.

III.

The Book of Love, on the whole very sensible and enlightening, suffers inevitably from the lack of a really modern psychological apparatus. His view of the subject proceeds simply and confidently upon the theory that the sexual arrangements of mankind can be classified exclusively with reference to the property-systems upon which they depend. This conception, though in itself a useful one, provides the author with the opportunity to indulge his own moral animus in the guise of economic deter-

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minism. Whatever in the way of human sexual habits he doesn't approve of, becomes an illustration of "exploitation" by a ruling class. Moreover, in his presentation of what he regards as objectionable sexual conduct, the psychic burden of his own repressions becomes sometimes painfully obvious. In relating what he regards as sexual scandal, he becomes uncritical, incapable of serene thought, generosity, taste, or humor. He does not permit himself to realize that it is largely human nature itself that he is condemning, rather than merely the aberrations of a property system. In more than one passage he betrays something of his early emotional bias against sex [1]—an emotion which he rationalizes, not always successfully, into a preoccupation with its actual dangers.

Yet these pages represent, much more significantly, his escape from the domination of what he calls "the abominable old ideal of celibacy", from which he had suffered. It may be said that he has, in his conception of marriage, achieved a really sane and healthy ideal. The treatment of love and marriage give the book its claim to serious consideration as a guide to life's young adventurers. . . . Beyond the realm of marriage as founded upon what might be called complete or "true" love, his sympathy and understanding do not extend. Sexuality, in its possibly neurotic but still normal manifestations, all its merely adventurous, casual, experimental or play expressions, arouses in him an undue repug-

[1] However, in a letter, Sinclair defends himself against this charge, saying: "I have no trace of that early bias left. You may think I have, but I haven't. What I have is a repugnance to 'love-making' without love."

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nance. (A reference to modern dancing and "petting parties" evokes the statement that "society is disintegrating, going back to the howling and fighting and cannibalism of the jungle"!) But it would be an injustice to the book to trace and further emphasize these occasional evangelistic outcroppings in a work whose merits are all in the direction of sexual sanity and health.

We may, however, pause to disengage one of the author's characteristic attitudes for momentary attention, in its relation to his own psychic development. He believes very strongly in early marriage—at seventeen or eighteen. He gives many practical reasons for this proposal, but it is not difficult to perceive the one left unstated, the wish to live his own life over again and more happily. Indeed, one sometimes feels that it is to his youthful self that this whole book is addressed: that he is at forty saying precisely those things which if he had known them at eighteen would have saved him a world of unhappiness. And the passage which above all others seems a cry out of the heart, poignant with infinite regrets, is this advice to married lovers: "Be natural; be simple and straightforward; and beware of fool notions about sex."

But it is perhaps due to the author that one word more be said about him as a guide. It should occasion no surprise to learn that his guidance must be taken with the usual discrimination. No guide, whether Aristotle, or Bacon, or Havelock Ellis, has known all the paths of life. Upton Sinclair is a guide conspicuously lacking in tolerance. Yet as

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guides go I do not hesitate to pronounce him an excellent one, if a little old-fashioned in his methods. If one must be intolerant—and it is a common human failing—it is better to be intolerant of drunkenness and debauchery than of, for example, the aspirations of mankind toward beauty, wisdom, and order. Puritans, it has been remarked earlier in these pages, are at the present time unpopular in America, where they are believed to have inflicted upon helpless populations much meddling and drastic tyranny in the effort to make us better. It is true that the agrarian revolt against the financial domination of the city, after its defeat in the political field in the great campaigns at the turn of the century, has lately been more or less successful in some rear-guard attacks in the cultural field, including certain attempts to enforce rigid rural codes of morals and manners. At the same time, the acquisition of a considerable margin of leisure by a large part of that native population which had hitherto piously believed in keeping its nose to the grindstone, has resulted in a violent urban repudiation of former middle-class standards of decency and respectability; and lacking other approved channels, a vast amount of social and economic discontent of all sorts is finding expression at present in the new popular middle class protest against its own former moral narrowness. A moral nihilism is the approved note at present among the shell-shocked intelligentsia, and in this comfortable doctrine the prosperous middle-class is beginning to find spiritual encouragement for the diversions which enrich its newly-found leisure.

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It is impossible in America at the present moment to have any standards of conduct short of happy chaos without being regarded by the younger intelligentsia as a Puritan and hateful blue-nosed reformer. And since Upton Sinclair shares in this execration, it is only just to point out that he is actually a moral revolutionary, of the kind if not the quality of Blake or Nietzsche. One might not like to live in a world constructed according to the wishes of Upton Sinclair; I confess that I should not; but it would be a world wildly unlike the dreams of our Puritan forefathers.

IV.

The Book of Society, which concludes this work, contains an analysis of capitalist society and an argument for its reconstruction upon Socialist lines—an analysis and argument considerably but not fundamentally modified in the light of the Russian revolutionary experience; he prefers to hope for a peaceful solution of the economic problem, and makes various proposals to that end, which would obviate the disorder of an otherwise inevitable and violent revolution. This peaceful reconstruction, he declares, could begin at once "if we had sufficient intelligence. . . . And will anyone maintain," he asks, "that it is the part of an intelligent man to advocate a less intelligent course than he knows?" It is by these views that Sinclair remains, despite his broad sympathies, identified with the pre-war Socialist movement, as distinguished from the post-war movement which denominates itself Communist.

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XV. THE GREAT PAMPHLETS

I.

MODERN industrial America has proved a difficult theme for the artists whose business it is to handle it. There have been two recognized attitudes of literary approach to this theme. The first, to be found in the popular magazines, is an attitude of uncritical adulation and blatant celebration of the advantages which accrue to its beneficiaries. The other attitude, now found increasingly in fiction appealing to the intelligentsia, is one of hopeless sentimental protest against a machine civilization which is conceived as utterly vicious, spiritually degrading, and altogether too hideous and uninteresting to be worth picturing in any realistic detail—the space being occupied instead by accounts of the miseries of the sensitive and artistic souls who are represented as its chief victims. A welcome from the American intelligentsia awaits any writer who will picture present conditions as a confused and hopeless chaos; and on the other hand a vast popularity, though with no such critical esteem, awaits the writer who will uncritically celebrate the joys of riding about in expensive motor cars, eating at expensive restaurants, playing at expensive sports, indulging in expensive adultery, and exploiting generally the ad-

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vantages which accrue to the beneficiaries of the industrial process. From a literary point of view, the objection to both these methods is that they fail to come to grips with their subject.

In so new, vast and confusing a heap of materials as modern industrial America presents, what is needed first of all is a pattern, an ideological map of the scene. The old patterns will scarcely do—at least those patterns which concern themselves narrowly with the fortunes of individuals, against a background which can be taken for granted. Here the background is of greater importance, and it is with masses or groups of men that the story must needs be concerned. Or so it would seem. The most successful experiment in this kind of fiction was made by Frank Norris in *The Octopus;* there the canvas was sufficiently large for the event portrayed, a farmer-railroad war. But he failed to follow up this method in his succeeding book, *The Pit,* where attention was concentrated upon a few individuals. A literary problem is here involved, which has not yet been successfully solved in fiction. Upton Sinclair's *Jungle* did suggest that one solution lay in putting, as he declared he had attempted, "the content of Shelley in the form of Zola." But in his immediately succeeding books, *The Metropolis* and *The Moneychangers,* he failed to make his wealth of reported detail a living part of his story. The problem might have advanced further toward a solution, but for the serious discouragements which American literature suffered, for more than a decade, at the hands of those timid business classes

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who felt that their interests were endangered by truthfulness in fiction; and now that the younger writers in America are in general revolt against the censorship of respectability, their daring has manifested itself chiefly so far in venturing to deal frankly with sexual themes, leaving almost everything else untouched. The problem still remains. But it is again being attacked, in the field which precedes perhaps by necessity the fictional one, that is to say in pamphleteering.

It was pamphleteering—magazine "muck-raking" as it was called—which preceded and accompanied the great fictional period with which the names of Frank Norris, Jack London and Upton Sinclair are associated. That period of pamphleteering had scientific rigor as its goal; a series of magazine articles on railroad corruption was praised by saying that it read "like an interstate commerce report". The new period of pamphleteering is no less scientifically rigorous in its factual basis, but it is more human, robust, vigorous, eloquent, humorous, satirical, personal—and in these respects approaches and sometimes achieves the effects of imaginative literature. This pamphleteering at its best has the narrative and dramatic and psychological excitements of the novel; and it does what the novel has but seldom succeeded in doing, it comes to grips with the American theme. It does so by virtue of having patterns which include the tumultuous and shifting details of this theme—ideological maps of the landscape, by which the writer can guide us swiftly from point to point; and most of all, perhaps, it succeeds by reason

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of having no such restricted personal scope as the novelist habitually feels obliged to confine himself to: it deals with the broad panorama of life. It furnishes perhaps the experimental models of a fiction soon to be born, able to cope with such a theme as America presents. In any event, it stands, in its foremost examples, as the latest and greatest achievement of contemporary American literature.

And, as might perhaps have been expected, it is one of the surviving leaders of the gallant fictional campaign of twenty years ago who has set the pace in this new effort. Baffled, it would seem, by the difficulty of getting so huge a drama into fiction, Upton Sinclair has magnificently turned all his powers loose into the generous medium of pamphleteering—to use that term in the sense not of small but of controversial books.

Already, in 1918, there had appeared the first of a series of great pamphlets which were to get modern America down on paper with a fullness and a freedom never yet achieved in any other literary form. This initial work was *The Profits of Religion,* announced as "a study of supernaturalism from a new point of view—as a source of income and a shield of privilege". If the point of view was not actually new, it had at least not been embodied in so ambitious a review. Its manner was new, at least since Voltaire. Scarcely since then had there been such a ruthless showing up of sacred institutions. It was not a matter of arguing about creeds; it was a revelation of the facts about the actual function of churches and churchmen in a class society. It

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was a more devastating book than can readily be imagined. A liberal clergyman, the Rev. John Haynes Holmes, wrote of it: "I must confess that it has fairly made me writhe to read these pages, not because they are untrue or unfair, but on the contrary, because I know them to be the real facts. I love the church as I love my home, and therefore it is no pleasant experience to be made to face such a story as this which you have told. It had to be done, however, and I am glad you have done it, for my interest in the church, after all, is more or less incidental, whereas my interest in religion is a fundamental thing. . . . You have done us all a service in the writing of this book."

From a certain point of view, however, the importance of the book is less concerned with its thesis than with the details of contemporary life through which it leads like a pathway. Indeed, there is a sense in which an ideological pattern of any sort justifies itself as a means, whereby the artist leads us into the heart of his subject. And Sinclair's pattern is of value precisely where the facts would otherwise be most confusing or negligible, that is to say in modern life. In his historical prelude, the pattern seems to introduce too great a simplification, and its literary value may be doubted; but it serves as an efficient map through that contemporary American welter of superstition and exploitation which is his actual theme. Doubtless there are other important factors involved besides the economic one; that does not so much matter when the picture is before us—"the Church of Good Society", "the

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Church of the Servant Girls", "the Church of the Slavers", "the Church of the Merchants", "the Church of the Quacks". These are part of our America; and these are the uses to which a business régime finds these institutions apt and ready. It may be in part an indictment of human nature rather than of capitalism; but it is a true picture of a not unimportant aspect of modern industrial America.

II.

It was announced, moreover, that this volume was to be the first of a series that should "do for Education, Journalism, and Literature" what had here been done for the Church: "the four volumes making a work of revolutionary criticism, an Economic Interpretation of Culture under the general title of *The Dead Hand*".

If there were any doubt of the significance of the Church as an aspect of modern American industrial life, there was none concerning Journalism and Education. American Journalism was in a peculiar position: the newspapers, being almost the sole mediums of publicity, had confidently and arrogantly used their opportunities to sing their own praises, attributing to themselves all the virtues, and glorifying in particular their own honesty, truthfulness, fairness, incorruptibility. Their victims might be aware of the contrary, their editors might have tales to tell in private, soap-box orators might denounce them for falsifying and suppressing news of industrial struggles in the interests of the employers—

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but who would listen? They seemed as secure as Gille de Rais in his castle. And at their back stood the Associated Press, loaded with international honors, a sacrosanct institution, alert to prosecute for criminal libel any obscure Socialist publication which dared charge it with partisanship. It would indeed be difficult to prove a case against them, to expose the truth which lay behind these gigantic self-advertised reputations for purity. Yet it was nothing less than this that Upton Sinclair undertook.

The Brass Check: A Study of American Journalism appeared in 1919. The reference in the title is to the metal counters used in brothels, according to investigations which had given the phrase some currency as a polite synonym for prostitution. The book was an indictment of the corruption of the American press, with facts, names, dates, proof complete. If the charges were false, they constituted criminal libel, and the author could have been put in prison. But, despite repeated challenges by the author, the truth of these statements was never denied in court.

The Brass Check is an extraordinary book—not in its daring alone. Its contents vary from what might be described as dynamite to the most preposterously farcical matters, which are not, however, without their strict relevance to the subject under discussion, since American journalism has its farcical as well as its tragic aspect. Never in modern times have such widespread charges been made in such personal terms—personal with reference to the accuser as well as the accused. For it is, inci-

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dentally but first of all, an account of the dealings of the author himself with the newspapers of America. The book might for that reason have been ineffective; it was certainly unconventional. But in this case the story of one man's relations with the press, embracing as it does some of the most important episodes in American newspaper history during our time, is a valuable document. Not all the personal incidents are important, though they illustrate the characteristic traits of the American press. But the story of Sinclair's efforts to get the news of the Colorado coal strike into the papers, and his battle with the Associated Press in connection with the coal strike, is of the greatest importance. And this personal story is only the beginning of the record; with an immense mass of the most careful documentation, the whole field is covered in a factual and convincing way.

The impression which the book made upon America, the eagerness with which it was read here, as well as all over the world, revealed the fact that there was an immense resentment against the pseudo-sanctity in which these institutions had wrapped themselves; whether or not any reforms were immediately effected by this exposure, it at least lifted a cloud of repression from the minds of the American people. It was now possible to speak disrespectfully of these great institutions without seeming to be guilty of lèse majesté. It had been done, with impunity!

Aside, however, from its uncontroverted authenticity in detail, it was a picture of America which

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could be recognized by those who knew their country—a picture which has not before been compassed in our literature. Here was a real American story: nor, from that point of view, did it matter that the characters bore names that could be found in Bradstreet's. When the persons named in the book are forgotten, when they are mere characters in the book, the book will still live on as a picture of its age. Here pamphleteering has reached the heights of great art.

III.

Upton Sinclair, almost forgotten as a novelist by his countrymen, became by virtue of this book again a figure in American life and literature. The post-war disillusionment had begun, people were willing to listen to the truth—and here was a man capable of telling it. What would his book on American education be like?

American education, it had begun to be realized, was largely a fetish. Was it really education at all, the process so elaborately conducted in our universities with amphitheatrical football performances in the foreground and intellectual terrorization in the background? And if not education, what was it, and why? Upton Sinclair, from the point of view of those who are interested technically in the problems of modern education, cannot furnish a final answer to that question. But, in *The Goose-Step: A Study of American Education,* his pattern provides us with preliminary guidance through the labyrinth of astounding and ridiculous facts; it does

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show us, if not everything that is the matter with American universities, at least what uses American business stupidity is making of these huge and lumbering institutions. There is, indeed, no Machiavellian cunning here, certainly no far-seeing effort to make higher education in America an efficient part of the capitalist system; but there is fear everywhere of truth, fear of intellectual freedom, hysterical fear and stupid tyranny. It is a tragic farce that is revealed in the book. The tragedy lies in the wastage of youth, and the frustration of teaching talent. But comic in the highest degree are the pompous figures that stalk so solemnly through its pages—the dignified and ridiculous little lords of the educational world who are hired to run their institutions so as to please the men who have money to give. . . . The book was followed in 1924 by *The Goslings: A Study of the American Schools,* in which the picture becomes both more ridiculous and more tragic, for petty greed and unscrupulous commercial exploitation, as ruthless and vicious as has ever been practised upon the helpless and the ignorant, become part of the scene. These revelations are all of a specifically factual and utterly convincing sort, and they portray in indelible terms the species of moral and intellectual serfdom to which the higher and lower educational institutions of America have been all but universally reduced by the ignorance and the fears of a business régime. And, together with their predecessors in this series of great pamphlets, these books constitute a Contemporary History of American Civilization by which we are known and

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judged all over the world, and which must be read and studied by all Americans who dare to face realities.

In these books, moreover, a writer who despite two extraordinary artistic triumphs has so often failed to come to complete and satisfying fullness of expression in the medium of the novel, reaches and maintains himself at the height of his powers. In this realm of facts, as not always in the realm controlled by the imagination, he is utterly assured and at home—capable, in this large field, of Aristophanic laughter and epic vision. Across these huge canvases march the multitudes of living mankind, tricksters and deluded ones, liars and dupes, thieves and victims, masters and henchmen, the preachers, editors, railroad presidents, financiers, politicians, soldiers, gunmen, salesmen, teachers, children: it is a panorama of contemporary American humanity, candidly, tenderly, relentlessly, magnificently displayed.

IV.

Mammonart: An Essay in Economic Interpretation, published in 1925, the latest in this series of gigantic exposés, is a venture of a different sort from the others. It does not deal especially with the American scene; and its interest lies only partly within the field of fact, being still more significantly within the field of opinion. It is in one of its aspects a polemic in art criticism, or, more specifically, literary criticism—an attack upon the theory of art for art's sake. It is also, from its own revolutionary

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point of view, an "Outline of Literature"—the most spirited, honest, interesting and informative ever published. But it may perhaps most interestingly be considered here as a psychological document.

An American writer who early in this century wished to deal with themes of social and economic significance found himself hampered by an academic tradition concerning literature which had grown up since the Civil War. That vast struggle had left America too spiritually exhausted to take its due part in the great intellectual battles which raged through Europe in the latter half of the nineteenth century; and the literary productions which reflected those conflicts came to us a little late and with an odor of sanctity which obscured their controversial quality. The new effort to exploit the vast commercial possibilities of America absorbed, moreover, for a generation or more, all its best energies, and literature was left to the professors. By these it was characteristically conceived as a serene realm high above the vulgar conflicts of the day, a refuge from immediate interests, a shelter from passing hopes and fears, a communion with "eternal" things. This professorial view of literature had preferred to forget the origin of its most admired productions in that very stress and sweat of earthly conflict. It was a forgetfulness natural to the epicene and timid class to whom education itself was no preparation for the struggle of life but rather a retirement from it. According to these professorial standards of taste, literature must not come too dangerously close to reality, or it would incur the damnation of being

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dismissed as "propaganda". It was this attitude which the young Upton Sinclair encountered when he began his literary career. He wanted to show the evils of the existing world, and he wanted to help create the desire for a world fit to live in. Such intentions as these are no new thing in the history of literature—they have been implicit and explicit in much of the world's greatest literature. But he found himself offending the taste of timid and nervous critics. They thought it was all right for him to have opinions about the Civil War, because that happened a long time ago; but he really ought not to have any opinions about the Class Struggle, because that was possibly going on right now. To try to make people sympathize with struggling poets was sufficiently artistic; but to try to make people sympathize with struggling workingmen was, in the cant phrase of the day, "propaganda".

And yet it seemed to him, looking back over the world's literature, that it was full of "propaganda", of one sort and another. If Aristophanes satirized Athenian democracy, if Virgil concocted an imitation epic in celebration of the founding of Rome, if Juvenal muck-raked the high Roman society of his time in the most scandalous fashion, if Shakespeare mocked and reviled the mobs and their rebel leaders, if John Milton called on God to avenge the massacre of Protestants in Piedmont, that wasn't called propaganda, to be sure; when the propagandists were dead enough, they were called artists. But wasn't all art inevitably concerned with revealing a view of life? Propaganda in that sense was an

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intimate part of every work or art. Mediocre poets like Southey were called artists in their time, because they said all the approved things; and great poets like Shelley were dismissed as loud-mouthed ranters because they wanted to change the world. Keats was told to go back to his pills by the aristocratic reviewers of his time because he was a radical and a friend of Leigh Hunt's. . . . Apparently, then, esthetic criticism was not as purely esthetic as it deemed itself, but was involved with the fears of the ruling class. Those who praise the existing scheme of things will find their artistic virtues readily enough acclaimed. The rash young revolutionist who turns his coat and comes out for law and order will likely enough be made poet laureate. Morals, too, are involved—the writer who is a rebel in politics will have his moral frailties emblazoned before a shocked world and will be regarded as a monster; while the writer whose opinions are correct may, if he is careful, enjoy his adulteries and perversities and remain the darling of respectable society. And, when one looks over the world's literature, how many first-rate writers are there who have not been social rebels? How many writers have written anything worth while after they ceased to be rebels? How many hugely-bolstered reputations of the correct sort have any validity? And of those writers who were notoriously hostile or indifferent to the great social rebellions of their time, how much has their art lost by their blindness to what was going on?

These questions, fulminating in the mind of the

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young writer, set in motion a long historical and critical inquiry of years, of which *Mammonart* is the result. . . . In the meantime, and especially since the war, it appears that these professorial doctrines have passed over into the minds of the younger generation of the American intelligentsia and its writers generally, a natural symptom of the social helplessness of this period of disillusionment. The *fin-de-siècle* art theories of the European 'nineties have been taken over with much enthusiasm as a means of retaining artistic self-respect while sitting among the ruins of pre-war hopes. Under these circumstances, it can easily be understood that Upton Sinclair's book should arouse resentment—for it is implicitly a challenge to the young writers of America to take their place as leaders in what Heine called the Liberation War of Humanity.

Such is the content of *Mammonart;* in form it is a handbook covering in short, vivid chapters a vast part of the world's literature, reviewing it against its own political and economic background, with special attention to the manner in which the social struggles of the times are reflected in the life and work of the writers. It describes itself as an inquiry into art from the point of view of revolutionary economics. It is the first of the kind to be broadly undertaken, though Bernard Shaw in his essay on Wagner and in his criticisms in general has furnished some interesting and valuable examples of the method. It is a kind of criticism that is familiar in Russia, where it has long been practised. But, though at present something of a novelty in Amer-

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ica, it is not likely to remain so. The weakness of the various current attempts to deal with art from a purely esthetic standpoint seem to make it inevitable that this more revolutionary and realistic method will come into vogue.

Social revolutionary criticism, as it may be called, takes it for granted that an artist is an interpreter of life, and judges the truth and value of his interpretation by the test of how fully he shows himself aware of what is going on in his world, with special reference to social change, and whether he helps his audience to understand and sympathize with such changes. He is recognized as a discriminator of spiritual values, in some sense a creator of them, and he is judged by the spiritual values he helps to create in a world that struggles toward something greater and finer than its past. He is not asked to be consciously attempting to create such values, and least of all is he asked to believe in this or that specific program of change—he is judged as an artist and not as a politician. It is a frankly partisan criticism, but it represents the genuine esthetic response of those who feel themselves to be living in a changing world lighted by the hope of revolutionary improvement. It is a criticism which attaches no importance to such sacrosanct effects as those of tragedy. It welcomes cynicism and pessimism in regard to institutions, but it regards cynicism and pessimism in regard to man's ultimate power of conquering his environment as merely morbid. It bases itself on science, and claims the right to rank various kinds of "beauty" accord-

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ing to its own scale of values. It is thus seen to be itself a discriminator and creator of spiritual and esthetic values; it does not hesitate to hurl gods from their pedestals nor throw outworn beauty in the dustbin of time. Its weakness is that of all other theories of art criticism—that it may become a cloak for the personal prejudices of those who use it, giving them a dignity they do not necessarily deserve. But it has vitality, and candor, and is more realistic than any other kind of criticism that has yet appeared. Upton Sinclair's own moral preconceptions are occasionally obvious in this book; but he has triumphantly escaped most of the dangers of this kind of criticism. His book is so rich in its swiftly painted backgrounds, so moving in its drama, so profoundly true on the plane in which it moves, and so thoroughly and simply intelligible in its thesis, as to constitute a very impressive and valuable example of the new social revolutionary criticism.

As an utterance of its author's point of view, the book arouses a certain psychological curiosity—his alleged "Puritanism" again comes under discussion. The erotic themes which constitute so large a part of the world's literature receive scant attention here. It might seem that from his point of view mankind's erotic problems are too simple to bother with in literature; but some reflection upon his own writings (including the unpublished manuscript of *Love's Progress*) shows that this is not so. One hazards the explanation that they seem to him, these erotic problems of mankind, to be too involved with social problems to be isolated, and indeed too complex to

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be satisfactorily solved by mankind except upon terms of profound social change. His impatience with literary critics would thus be the impatience of a revolutionary mind, not content with such tawdry or cruel or cowardly escapes as the world has thus far afforded to its rebels in the sexual realm. One remembers the boy Thyrsis, who wandered at night seeking some adventure that would be "not quite shameful to a poet's fancy". So, it would seem, has he wandered through the byways of the world's literature, finding no erotic fancies that were not, to a realist and a poet, tiresome to contemplate—as for example, when he turns away from Coleridge's "woman wailing for her demon lover" with the remark that it is "a savage's nightmare". Such a mind would turn naturally to the world's future for its ultimate satisfactions, and form the habit of subsuming under its social hopes its erotic dissatisfactions with the world of contemporary reality.

It may be remarked that Upton Sinclair's own practice has not been invariably in the direction of slighting the sexual aspects of life; he notably did not slight them in *Love's Pilgrimage*—and when urged by a friendly older novelist to be less frank in certain scenes, he replied in terms which constitute an interesting defense of the realistic method:

"I wish," he wrote, "to give the inner significance of life, as it comes to me; but on the other hand, I conceive that there is no way to give this, except with the materials of the actual world which we have at our hand.

"You will readily believe that I did not write the

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particular passages in *Love's Pilgrimage* which you discuss, without much earnest thought about the subject. I had certain emotions to portray, and I knew only one way to do it. For instance, I could not have conceived of the conveying of the emotions of the man who sees his first child born, without describing the actual physical things which he saw. I simply did not know any other way to do it. If you think that there is any other way, I would be interested to have you tell me. Do you know of any place in the world's literature where it has been done? For my part, I know of only one or two hints at it, and these very inadequate.

"You must understand that concerning both this subject, and that of the passion scenes in the novel, I have a very definite conviction that the attitude of modern civilization toward these subjects is a wholly false and unnatural one. I believe that these things are part of human life, and that we should learn to talk about them with the same simplicity and naturalness that we use about any other of the deep facts of life, such as, for instance, the problems of death or of religion."

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XVI. OIL!

I.

ONE of the difficulties of writing a critical biography of a living writer is that he changes while he is being written about. When this book was begun, it was with the idea that Upton Sinclair, in spite of two fictional masterpieces, had found the novel too narrow a medium for the expression of his vast and robust interest in the social and economic tragi-comedy of life, and that he had reached his fullest self-realization in the series of great pamphlets descriptive of American culture. But there is now at hand the astonishing new novel, *Oil!*, upon which he has been at work for the past two years, and that judgment has to be reversed.

Oil! stands beside and in many ways above *The Jungle*. It is a maturer work, and if it does not have the intensity and poignancy of that early masterpiece it has a greater breadth of vision and a deeper knowledge of life. Its curiosity and range and ease and power are Tolstoyan. It is a large book, a great canvas, as great as that of the great pamphlets, and carrying all their effects easily within its simple story. It is the story of Oil, in human terms, and in terms of all classes—the oil magnates and their families, the rich, the poor, the workers,

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idlers, the doll-house life of Hollywood, and the political machinations that have been reverberating through America for the last four years: it is all here, in the story of an oil magnate's son, his father, his sweethearts, and his friends, including the vital figure of Paul, the young workingman who gives him his first glimpse into the rebel world beneath his happy paradise. No extended account of it will be given in these last pages; it suffices to say that it restores to us Upton Sinclair the novelist, and that it constitutes one of the great achievements in the literary discovery of contemporary America.

It is as though in the great pamphlets Upton Sinclair had found his stride, and brought back to the medium of fiction the verve and the reality which he had learned in dealing with life at close quarters. If he can continue in this masterful way, not even his Socialist preoccupations can prevent him from being recognized as America's greatest novelist.

II.

It remains only to complete the picture with some brief account of his other activities, carrying the story of his life down to the present. . . . Little has been said of him here as a playwright; but he has written many plays, produced some of them himself under Socialist auspices, and one of his late plays, *Singing Jailbirds,* published in 1924, dealing with the ruthless persecution of the I. W. W. under the California "Criminal Syndicalist" law, is a more poignant and effective example of the expressionistic

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drama than any that has been produced on the American stage. It has been played in England as a means of raising funds for the striking miners, and last year in Vienna on the revolutionary anniversary, November 8th and 9th. This remarkable play is the outcome of the author's experience in 1923, during the free speech fight at Los Angeles in connection with the I. W. W. harbor strike. The rights of free speech being illegally denied by the police to the members of the I. W. W., he undertook to uphold the law against those who, sworn to defend it, were engaged in violating it in the interests of the Merchants' and Manufacturers' Association. He and his associates, assembling in San Pedro on private property with the consent of the owner, were arrested by the police for the crime of reading aloud, and hearing read, three sentences from the Constitution of the United States—those guaranteeing "freedom of speech and of the press, and the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for the redress of their grievances." The act of reminding the people of California of these antique rights as guaranteed in that venerable document constituted a crime which made Sinclair, according to the Los Angeles chief of police, "more dangerous than 4,000 I. W. W." The complaint on which he was illegally arrested charged him with "discussing, arguing, orating and debating certain thoughts and theories, which thoughts and theories . . . were detrimental and in opposition to the orderly conduct of affairs of business, affecting the rights of private property. . . ." He was accord-

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ingly thrown into jail and held "incommunicado". While in jail he learned of an incident which had happened there the day before—fifty men crowded into a small prison hole without air for singing their I. W. W. songs—the origin of his play, *Singing Jailbirds*. "I am not", he wrote to the chief of police after his release on bail had been at last effected, "a giant physically; I shrink from pain and filth and vermin and foul air, like any other man of refinement; also, I freely admit that when I see a line of a hundred policemen with drawn revolvers flung across a street to keep anyone from coming on to private property to hear my feeble voice, I am somewhat disturbed in my nerves. But I have a conscience and a religious faith, and I know that our liberties were not won without suffering, and may be lost again through our cowardice."

III.

For a number of years Upton Sinclair has occupied a peculiar situation, as the publisher of his own books. This, as may be remembered, began with his first novel, which could at first find no publisher. *The Jungle,* also, when it had been rejected by five publishers, he decided to publish himself, and had made the plates when a publisher summoned up the courage to take it over—and made a fortune on it. Ten years afterward, *The Profits of Religion* could find no publisher, and he published it himself; he has sold some sixty thousand copies, and still sells two thousand copies every year without advertising.

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He was told that there were fifty criminal libel suits and one or two thousand civil suits in *The Brass Check,* so he published that himself. He printed twenty-three thousand copies, and they were sold in two or three weeks; orders came in for forty thousand more, but this was at a time of paper shortage, and he found it hard to get paper—doubly hard, because in several instances when it was discovered what the paper was to be used for the orders were canceled; a hundred and thirty-five thousand copies were sold altogether, in spite of these difficulties. "Also", the author remarks, "I have managed to give away seven or eight thousand copies of *Singing Jailbirds."* *Jimmie Higgins, 100%, The Goose-Step, The Goslings,* and *Mammonart* were similarly published; and the business flourished sufficiently to enable him to buy the plates and copyrights of books originally published by other publishers, so that he now owns twenty-six of them, and has all but three or four in print. He does not, however, recommend the method to other authors, and tells the story of a man who was in the business of manufacturing brushes, and whose wife, when he found at the end of the year that he had been selling the brushes below cost, said enthusiastically: "But think what an enormous business you do!" The story sums up, he admits, his own experiences as a publisher. The method, however, keeps him in touch with his readers. "Never a mail comes that there is not a letter from some workingman or workingwoman, some poor student, or teacher, or political prisoner, who has been able to get my books for one

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reason and one only—that they are available at low prices. It is not an unusual thing for me to hear of a single volume that has been read by scores of people, prisoners in jail, or workingmen in mines and lumber camps, or teachers in a school, or professors in a college. I get letters from South Africa and South America, from Alaska and New Zealand, from India and Russia." Many of his books, scarcely heard of in America, are best sellers in Great Britain and its colonies, in Germany, Italy, Holland, Denmark, the Scandinavian countries, and the states from Finland down to Serbia, while hundreds of editions were published in the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics, where the printing of his books has recently been made a state monopoly.

IV.

At the age of twenty-three it had been Upton Sinclair's ambition, as expressed in the preface to his first novel, to publish a library of helpful books for "the humble people of our land." This dream of a workingmen's library has recently come true in an indirect way, as one of the enterprises conducted at his instigation by the "Garland Fund." The manner in which the fortune which had been repudiated by a strange young millionaire named Charles Garland came to be used for this and other liberal and radical purposes is thus described by Sinclair in *What's the Use of Books?*—a pamphlet published by the Vanguard Press:

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"I am going to tell you a story. It is as strange as any fairy story you ever read, and with this one difference—it happened exactly as I tell it, and only three or four years ago.

"Once upon a time there was a young man who had been born into a home of luxury. He had everything in life that a young man could desire, and before he was twenty-one a relative died and left him a million dollars. Ask most Americans what they would like to have happen to them, and they will say that to have a relative die and leave them a million dollars would suit them fine. But for some strange reason it didn't suit this rich young man. He was troubled with an uncomfortable thing called a conscience; he had the crazy notion that before a man spends money he ought to earn it. He said that he hadn't earned that million dollars, and so he wasn't going to take it.

"It was none of my business, but I was worried, thinking about that million dollars, and all the things that could be done with it. Lying there in a Wall Street bank, piling itself up—according to present-day customs being loaned out to speculators and big business men, and thus being used directly contrary to the ideas of the young man! I sat down and wrote him a letter, pointing this out and begging him to take the money and use it for spreading his ideas of social justice—or, if he hadn't faith enough in his own ideas, then to entrust the money to a group of the best friends of social justice he could find. Many others wrote the young man to the same effect, and the upshot was that

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he changed his mind, and took the million dollars and established an endowment called 'The American Fund for Public Service.'

"So there was a group of men and women having this responsibility; and right away they began getting letters from me. I wanted them to spend the money for one thing—cheap books for the workers. Books differ from most other things in that their inner spirit is not dependent on their outer form. The most important ideas in the world can be printed and sold for a few cents, and if you get the ideas they are exactly as useful to you as if they had come out of a costly volume printed on vellum and bound in silk. Therefore, I argued, *books should come first.*

"Others agreed with me, and so there came into being an institution called the Vanguard Press, having magically in its possession one hundred thousand dollars of that Wall Street money, and pledged through its trustees to spend the money in selecting the books most needed by the every-day people of this country, having them edited and printed, and offered to the people at the lowest possible prices."

V.

Throughout his career, with the exception of the brief period during the war referred to in an earlier chapter, he has been actively identified with the Socialist Party; he was a Socialist candidate for Congress in 1906 and 1920, for the Senate in 1922, for governor of California in 1926. In the present

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state of the Socialist movement in America, split as it is between the Socialist and the Workers (Communist) Party, and with these groups more or less hostile to one another, he is the one figure, since the death of Debs, who commands the respect of all branches of the revolutionary movement.

VI.

Most of Upton Sinclair's personality is expressed in his social-revolutionary interests and activities. Upton Sinclair, "the person," aside from these activities, is a slight, wiry, graying figure, an early riser and hard worker, keeping one or two stenographers busy all day; an excellent tennis player, an eager talker; self-described as "easily bored, naïve and impersonal"; dealing with "griefs, troubles and failures" by putting his emotions into the book he it writing; somewhat skeptically interested in spiritistic phenomena, very hopefully interested in new devices, regarded as absurd by the medical profession, for curing disease; an occasional lecturer to women's clubs, able to mitigate the shock of his opinions to precisely the amount that such organizations can stand; wearing the cast-off clothes of a rich young friend, precisely as when he was seventeen and living on $4.50 a week; always in debt, never hesitating to borrow money for some project which he regards as for the benefit of humanity; always hopeful of enormous success in each new project, each new book; very boyish, impulsive, trustful, stubborn; fondly regarded as impractical by those who

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love him . . . including a wife who backs him loyally, and who appears in his writings as "M. C. S.", and in *Mammonart* as "Mrs. Ogi".

VII.

Upton Sinclair is at this point in his career forty-eight years old; he intends to live to be as old as Bernard Shaw, and he probably will. His future literary career may bring surprises; the poet in him may yet overwhelm the propagandist. It is sufficient, however, to have seen the development of a raw cub of genius, an ethereal poet, afraid of real life, into the fearless and robust transcriber of the tragi-comic welter which is contemporary America. And we may conclude with the reminder that it is as one of the leaders of a significant American literary movement that he has here been studied—a movement which will seem of larger and larger importance to us as we learn and cherish our own literary history—a movement which was killed twenty years ago because there was too much troublesome truth in it, and which is only in these last few years being painfully born again: he is one of the great pioneers in the fictional discovery and exploitation of modern America.

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