

the lesson of the immigrant

views of immigrants in muckraking magazines 1900-1909

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Historians of the Progressive Era have been fascinated by two parallel phenomena: the unprecedented increase in immigration and the rapid rise of popular muckraking magazines. Historians have interpreted muckraking, a central feature of early twentieth century journalism, by concentrating on the most prominent muckraking journalists, concluding that most progressives harbored hostile or at least condescending attitudes toward immigrants.¹ In discussing the positive values that immigrants brought to America, at least one historian has noted that even “sympathetic” progressives tended to confine their focus to items such as exotic music, foods, and handicrafts, contributions that “had no bearing on American institutions or ideals.”² But the immigrant possessed something more than exotic “gifts” capable of directing the WASP toward a renewed sense of community, one which had been overwhelmed in the process of industrialization. Newly arrived immigrants possessed an as-yet-undefiled sense of moral values. They made the immigrant not a “destroyer” but, instead, a “saver” of community. Turning from the preoccupation of historians with the more sensational exposé articles, this paper will focus on the lesser-known, immigrant-related fiction that appeared in popular muckraking magazines during the first decade of this century. These secondary stories can be integrated with the more widely-read factual accounts and contribute to a common theme. While the millions of readers of those magazines³ might have detected an occasional condescending tone, the main point is that these writers used innocent immigrants to show the horrors of industrial capitalism to people who were less able to see their responsibility for its oppressive nature in their own lives.

These reform writers believed that industrial capitalism had stripped man of his innate conscience and left him ethically naked and exposed.

They perceived a need to reestablish moral responsibility. A contemporary of many of these writers, progressive sociologist E. A. Ross, developed this idea to the fullest extent. "A differentiated society abounds in closed doors and curtained recesses . . . the people 'are destroyed for lack of knowledge.'" Modern sins were so impersonal that "the very qualities that lull[ed] the conscience of the sinner blind[ed] the eyes of the onlookers." Interdependence and mutualism complicated the web of life and blurred the moral focus, leaving responsibility for society's "unrighteousness" assumed by no one.⁴ Directing his attention to the need to reevaluate moral responsibility, Ross found the root of the problem in complex societal relationships, those in which the vital interests of the consumer-citizen were intrusted to others.

Reform writers perceived of the problem in much the same way. The economic exploitation of underprivileged groups and classes by industrial capitalism was a moral problem. Political corruption (the urban-machine politician in general or the ward or precinct boss in particular), taking advantage of underprivileged groups and classes, was also a basic problem of morality and responsibility. Reform writers assumed that the average consumer-citizen also had a solid moral fiber that only needed to be aroused. The consumer-citizen had lost his personal ability to see and discipline impersonal malefactors like corporations. Because of this inability to perceive industrial patterns, reform writers sought to prick the American conscience and establish a feeling of guilt within the individual. A 1904 poem entitled, "The Tortured Millions," vividly expressed this sense of guilt. The poem underscores the dominant themes found in many muckraking stories:

The cry of the tortured millions rises to me,
Like the cry of a glacial river in its gorge.
And the smoke of their suffering surges upward to me
Like the mighty clouds of the twilight valley lands.
I shut my lids in the dark and I see them toiling,
The burdened backs and the glazing eyes and the fettered hands.

They are dying that I may live, the tortured millions,
By the Ohio River, the Euphrates, the Rhone.
They wring from the rocks my gold, the tortured millions;
Sleepless all night they mix my daily bread;
With heavy feet they are trampling out my vintage;
They go to a hungry grave that I may be fed.

They do not know my face from a million faces,
Nor have I ever beheld those poor oppressed.
I only hear the sounds of their groans in the valley,
The hiss and the grind and the heat of their torture-wheels,
Engine and oven and murderous flying loom,
Poison of dust and faces sheet-white in the gloom.

I do not demand their service, no, not I.
They are my slaves whom I wish to be free and happy.
But I may not free them or thank them or mercy cry.

Hunger and thirst and cold and aching bodies,
This is the priceless price that buys my health.
Emptiness, hopelessness, pitiful wickedness, this,
This is the stuff I sew for the purse of my wealth.

What shall I do for my slaves who work without hire,
What shall I do, I who have asked them not?
Shall I fold my hands on my mountain-peak in silence?
This is the natural order, this is the common lot.
I will call to them I who am one but they who are many,
To cease their toil; but no, they obey me not.

I warm my hands at the fires of ruining houses;
On a dying mother's breasts I sink my head;
Last night my feet were faint from idleness,
I bathed my feet in blood her children shed.
Oh thou eternal Law, I wish this not to be.
Nay, raise them from the dust and punish me.⁵

The nameless enemy here is indeed industrial capitalism, and the aim of the writer is to establish a feeling of guilt in the reader as a consumer-citizen. The writer is attempting to unite the irresponsible, uninvolved consumer-citizen with the poor, exploited worker, giving consumer-consciousness a pro-labor focus and citizen-consciousness a moral twinge. The loss of morality was fundamentally caused by massive, large scale industrialization, a system in which consumers no longer knew producers and workers, and in which the citizen's conscience had become inert. A lost sense of involvement in community and a sense of guilt as consumer-citizen was the result.⁶

Immigrants were making contributions that directly affected American institutions and values. In the "Hatred of Giovanni," a poor but aspiring Italian's newsstand business is cut by one half when an Italian girl sets up a newsstand opposite his corner. Giovanni's immediate concern is for the future of his business and his initial reaction is anger. But after more sober thought the reader hears him saying: "Well, dear God is good, and the blessed St. Joseph is powerful." As the cold weather sets in, Giovanni's attitude softens even more toward his new competitor. When the cold weather becomes severe, Giovanni's tailor friend remarks that perhaps his competitor will quit now and leave the news trade to him. But he rejected a sentiment to which he might have agreed earlier. "Strange how hateful our motives sometime seem, when we see them in others!"⁷ Giovanni's sense of moral values served, then, as an example to retrograde native Americans.

Writers focused their attention on the wretched conditions of the lower classes in slums and factories. In 1907, there appeared a picture series entitled, "The Cry of the Slums." Charles Edward Russell wrote comments. If the nameless figures in the pictures failed to get the point across, Russell's commentary left no doubts. The article appeared during the Christmas season and "comfortable," "well-fed" and "easy-going" Americans were accused of habitually going through the world "with

your eyes turned upon yourself." One photograph depicted an old woman in order to show how "want and misery and suffering had warped the mind that should have been full and strong and aspiring, until it was dark and dusty, like the hole wherein she abode and stitched things for you and me." Russell described how a family had constructed a makeshift Christmas tree upon which they hung old bottles and tomato cans taken from the garbage. The pictures were designed "to cheer us and show us the real beauties of the social conditions in which we live and which we never tire of praising." In conclusion the reader was urged to "look at these pictures and reflect that for all these things not the ways of Providence are responsible, nor inevitable conditions, nor the other vain imaginings wherewith we salve our consciences, but merely you and I."⁸ Blame indeed had its specific recipients. But if the examples of the slum lives of nameless characters could create very real instances, perhaps the examples could achieve their maximum effect by placing "real people" in these "real life" surroundings. What people could be more real and who could be more oppressed by the evils of industrialization than the urban slum dweller barely scratching out an existence, the immigrant?

A general, native reaction against the immigrant confronted reform writers. Because of this reaction, authors needed to show that the industrial capitalists and not the immigrants were the true enemies. To do this they had to alter the immigrant stereotype and make the immigrant popular, both with a view toward giving the reader a concern for the way the immigrant was treated. While the immigrant might have been a fictional creation of some writers, the point is that they tried to show that hatred of immigrants was wasting energy, and that attention should be turned to the source of evil, industrialization. Thus, reform writers set out to confront popular prejudice and to show the way to reform by depicting bigotry in its most embarrassing state. A story by Myra Kelly concerned the rather narrow-minded views of an Irish assistant superintendent of schools. Mr. Timothy O'Shea arrived at one Lower East Side public school urging the teacher to "remember that it is part of your duty to stamp out the dialect." Mr. O'Shea had strong prejudices that related directly to the great surge of new numbers of immigrants into New York City. His birthplace had been converted into a tenement, the hunting grounds of his youth had grown "ragged and foreign—swarming with strange faces and noisy with strange tongues—[and] Mr. O'Shea bore a sullen grudge against the usurping race."⁹ The repeated use of such words as "Eyetalian Guinnies," "Polack," "Dago," "Greaser," or "Portugee," in the stories, indicates that writers tried to point out the folly in the usage of such disparaging remarks toward immigrants. Lincoln Steffens also rejected the contention that immigrants were in any way a lesser brand of citizen. Speaking directly to native Americans, Steffens dismissed an accusation to the contrary as

“one of the hypocritical lies that save us from the clear sight of ourselves.”¹⁰

In many stories, the interaction that occurred between WASPs and new immigrants showed that both parties gained an increased awareness from the give-and-take process. Native Americans were slowly modifying their ethnic prejudices, while the new immigrants were slowly gaining an understanding of American society. W. B. MacHarg described a society of mingled races, and included in this tale many themes that constantly reappeared in these immigrant stories. Prejudice crumbled, good citizenship developed, and neighborhood and community came together, all now recognizing the need to reestablish moral responsibility. MacHarg was writing of an alien “not understood, not understanding himself completely.” But in the story *Antione*, the alien, saves his neighbor, Mr. Burke, from the smallpox. In the process *Antione* gains his neighbor's respect. Then, as the immigrant himself falls victim to the disease, the good neighbor repays his obligation, and the story concludes with the comment that “each man to all other men owes something, a debt.”¹¹ E. F. Stearns continued this idea of eroding ethnic prejudice, but added his own twist. Stearns saw the give-and-take in this process as a good and healthy interaction. This mutual reaction could occur between WASPs and new stock immigrants or between old stock and new stock immigrants themselves. In either case, both parties were beneficiaries. Simon, a poor Jew, worked the mines and was constantly hounded and badgered by the other miners, especially the Irishman O'Halloran. O'Halloran showed little regard for “Simon the Gentle's” religious principles, and continued to condemn and scorn his victim. Stearns depicted Simon as a segregated atom, willing but unable to be accepted in the mining community. O'Halloran catches Simon talking with his daughter, and his ethnic prejudice flares up once again. But as Simon explains to O'Halloran that children are children whether they are Christians or Jews, the reader can see the ethnic barrier start to give way. When O'Halloran's daughter is injured in a fall and is saved by the Jew, O'Halloran takes up a collection so that Simon can return to his family. O'Halloran had a debt and he, too, repaid it.¹²

The give-and-take by which ethnic prejudices eroded was the first step toward creating good citizenship. Reform writers seemed to be establishing their own test of national character, one based on how the “weak” were treated in society. Poor treatment of the disadvantaged was bad citizenship and should be eliminated. Failure of the people to understand the debilitating tendencies within industrial capitalism caused poor citizenship. It was the duty of the reform writer to help the people to understand, and this could best be done through literary example. The theme in many of these stories often unraveled in the following manner: The nation, dominated by bosses, was not free. But freedom could be obtained by those people who wished to act, vote and protest.¹³

Good citizenship, if it was to come, had to be accompanied by a

sterner sort of moral responsibility and political activism. Excellent examples of good citizenship, even in the face of economic adversity, can be found in stories that focus upon treatment of the disadvantaged under boss rule. The political boss, with his disregard for law and proper moral ideas, was not only a product of the city, but also of the conditions of industrial capitalism which surrounded it. A Booth Tarkington story revolves around an Italian chestnut vendor in New York City who is in the process of courting a German working girl. Only his ambitions of becoming a great merchant and proud American exceeded Tobigli's love for the girl. He is always eager to vote, and, moreover, to vote Republican, as the most enlightened had in his native Italy. Then one day the ward boss visits the thrifty and industrious Tobigli in his slum dwelling and urges him to "[j]est foller yer leader, that's the way to learn politics. . . ." The ward boss repeatedly attempts to bribe the naive Italian, but he refuses to change his vote. Tobigli's moral values, as yet untainted by the evils of industrial capitalism, made him unable to comprehend the motives of the boss. But these sinister motives are understood by the no-longer-naive reader, and as the boss leaves with the curse, "blast the Australian ballot system," the reader knows exactly what that means. To prevent him from going to the polls and exercising his right to vote, the boss contaminates Tobigli's apartment with small-pox.¹⁴ The reader has been given a lesson in the need for the good citizen. "One such man, no matter how obscure, quiet, simple, can get results amazing in their importance; one such man is worth about four thousand so-called respectable citizens who stay at home and talk about the shame of boss rule."¹⁵

Maximilian Foster explained the theme of the developing American citizen well. Grabo, the Slav, a new man in a new world, "bore in that crude mind of his the vital something to make him . . . the desirable citizen or the undesirable." He realized that he and others of his class possessed a new, but not easily understood liberty. The flush of a new wage, the lust for material wealth and a thirst for anarchy had to pass before the immigrant realized that defining his liberty took time. His wife, a second generation daughter of immigrants, was learning about the new-world life and explained much to Grabo that before had only been a mystery to him. Grabo had always possessed the courage to make something of himself; he had only lacked the knowledge. He took this knowledge and molded himself into a citizen.¹⁶ Similar themes, all stressing the wave of new citizenship, are located in other immigrant stories. Casper Day used a young Lithuanian girl as his example. Here, an Italian family lives within a predominantly Lithuanian neighborhood. The Italian family has a child who is very sick, and no one in the family knows how to care for her. Veronika comes into this crisis and secretly cares for the Italian infant. The baby was sick but Veronika could not give her up; in fact, she loved it more for that reason.¹⁷ Veronika was good, moral and eager to help her neighbor. Service is the theme. Ethnic

prejudices are disregarded in the process. What was needed most of all was just this combination of morality and action.

Immigrants were teaching native Americans moral virtues, a complete reversal of the idea of native Americans teaching the immigrants everything. The immigrant still had much to learn from the native American, but the WASP also had his own lesson to learn, even one as simple as listening to the other side of an argument. Lewis E. Macbrayne wrote a story which involved a United States Congressman who was traveling on an oceanliner from Europe to America. The Congressman is making the trip to conduct some firsthand research for an immigration restriction bill he plans to introduce in Congress. As he looks down from his first class perch upon the activities of the Assyrians, Roumanians and Jews traveling in steerage below, the "American" side of immigration facts are constantly running through his mind. He perceives the dangers of a lowered standard of wages, an assured increase in crime and pauperism and the undesirable quality of "machine-made" citizenship in which the new immigrants were ignorant of American customs and traditions. But during the voyage, a companion interprets the situation of the immigrant for him:

"The United States is a refuge to which the oppressed of every land are looking. They don't come to overthrow your institutions. They come only asking for the right to satisfy their hunger, to give their children something better than a life of poverty or dishonesty. . . . Dirty? Of course they are dirty, sir. They've been in the dust so long that every sentiment but love of family and faint ambition has been stifled within them. . . . They come to you in their ignorance, knowing far more of your land and your customs than you dream. . . . They are not cultured, and err because they still cling to their own customs. But I tell you that at heart they are safe. They will work for you, fight for you, die for you; and their children will become the real Americans."

As the steamer enters New York harbor the Congressman stands bewildered at the railing. He then notices that the immigrants have cast off their ragged clothes for their best outfits and have moved forward to the front of the ship. They began to sing "America." It is then that our Congressman tears up his draft for restrictive immigration.¹⁸ The immigrant, in this story, was a revitalizing influence in the democratic life. His strong belief in freedom would enable him to become a conscious, dedicated and determined force against oppression, a model citizen.

Writers looked upon differences between the native American civilization and a foreign civilization more as differences in value than in kind. To the reform writers this "value gap" could not be bridged without accessibility to the process of education. Lincoln Steffens, in a study focused on labor leader John Mitchell and the hard coal miner's

organization, mentioned that the union “was composed largely of men who were foreigners and had not yet learned their lesson of self-restraint and sound principles.”¹⁹ Myra Kelly used fiction to complement Steffens’ evaluation as she pondered “the furtive helplessness of the man [in this specific instance a Jewish garment worker] living in a land whose language was well-nigh unintelligible to him, ruled and judged by laws whose existence he could learn only by breaking them, driven out of one country, unwelcomed in another. . . .”²⁰ The immigrant, slowed in his transition to the state of “social-conscious” American, must be helped in some way. He must be provided with an education.

The process by which an education could be achieved was most graphic when the writer focused on the awakening influence which the teacher had upon the lives of school children. The best examples of beneficial instruction are found in a series of short stories by Myra Kelly. The location was always a Lower East Side grammar school, the students all second generation immigrants and the theme of the mental, moral, and physical uplifting of the child reoccurred. The children were ignorant of the concepts of nature and animals, and so the teacher showed them the wonders of the first and that kindness should be shown to the second.²¹ During February, stories of Washington stressed the citizenship training and were correlated with the “Golden Rule.”²² On one occasion a nine year old urchin showed up at the Lower East Side first reader class, in search of the education that would enable him to obtain a union card before he reached the doddering old age of ten! What he received instead was an appointment of “responsibility” to the Board of Monitors, and a lecture on cleanliness. The “Boss” himself received a lesson in moral training, including such slogans as “virtue is its own cold reward,” “right triumphs over wrong,” “honesty is the best policy” and “fortune favors the brave.” Finally the “Boss” had had it, and attempted to organize a strike, a work stoppage. He was outvoted. “He had not reached that Department of Moral Training which would have taught him that the way of the reformer is as hard as that of the transgressor, and that the wages of the man who tries to awaken his fellow is generally derision and death.”²³ On another occasion the children in the class went on a visit of their own to Central Park. It opened a new world to them, but they were slowly gaining a realization of what that world was all about. Education was providing these developing citizens with an awareness and semi-understanding, one which many of their parents could not obtain. Education was enabling them to bridge the “value gap.”²⁴

This process of acculturation [by which new values were being understood and mixed with old], though hastened by education, could be quickened further if native Americans themselves would attempt to better understand the new immigrant. A story by Maximilian Foster had the following dialogue imparted to his community worker: “Plainly speaking, the Hun or the Slav is justly as much an heir to all the ages as any

one of us. You and all the others like you look on these people only as beasts of burden—as Brothers to the Ox! Did you ever try to help them—to study their ambitions—to develop their ideals and reconstruct their point of view? What do you know of people you have never tried to help?”²⁵ Myra Kelly used the example of an incident in which the teacher washed the mouth of a Jewish boy with soap for using profane language in class. The parents of the boy became terribly upset, fearing that the soap had been made from pigs, therefore violating their religion. As the teacher and parents confronted each other over the problem, the teacher reaffirmed her intent to employ even harsher treatment. If the problem should persist, the teacher threatened to use washing soda and sapolio. Because these products were kosher, the parents quietly accepted the proposed treatment. The example is plain. Not only must the Jew understand the rules of the school system, but the teacher must understand the ways of the new immigrants. Both sides must give-and-take.²⁶

If Kelly, the good, Lower East Side, first grade teacher had failed to understand the intricate points of ethnic-religious diversity, she made sure to point out the awareness of her native American “model” of the larger perspective. In a story that took place at Christmas time, one Jewish student felt bad that he had no present to give to the teacher, just as all the other students were doing. He shared his problem with his mother, but she could only tell him that he was not a Christian and that he should not be concerned about Christmas. But the youngster did not easily overcome the fear that he was the only one in class without a present. Finally, Morris Mogilewsky showed up in the class with a folded up slip of paper which he placed with the other presents. Morris told the teacher that it was her Christmas present, and that he could tell by the response of his mother when she had first received the slip of paper from his father that it was a very nice present. That night, after the teacher had opened all her other presents, she unfolded Morris’ slip of paper. It was a rental receipt for one month for a room on the top floor of a Monroe Street tenement, and that slip of paper meant more to the teacher than any other gift she had received. This native American understood the existence of an inner-city immigrant family.²⁷

If readers were able to block out the “good” that showed through these stories and concentrate their attentions solely on the “bad,” they could see that the authors were trying to show poverty, misery and slum life. But a larger, all-encompassing cause existed behind their narratives. Myra Kelly drew close to this cause in a book entitled *Wards of Liberty*, a collection of her stories that had appeared between 1902 and 1907. In the foreword to the book she stated: “I think no one can come in contact with these people—really try to know them; to understand their difficulties and their struggles; their sufferings and their patience. . . . But the deepest [impressions] can never be written out by one of an alien race. The lives being lived in those crowded streets are so diverse, so different in end and in aim that no mere observer can hope to see more

than an insignificant vista of the whole seething, swarming mass of hope, disillusion, growth, and decay." To Kelly, "all the life of a family, eating, sleeping, cooking, working, illness, death, birth, and prayer is often crowded into one small room." Her purpose was to make others see what she had seen in an effort to quicken "intelligent interest in the poor and unfortunate of an alien race which is crowding into our great cities until whole districts turn foreign, squalid and overcrowded. . . . The newly arrived Jew must go to the Ghetto . . . and [find] work for his unskilled hands." To Myra Kelly, "the problems of a city are those of the nation itself. . . ."28 And these problems were indeed those wrought by the oppression of industrialization .

Muckraking magazines constantly presented their readers with this picture of industrialization and the immigrant. Reform journalists such as William Hard and Francis H. Nichols wrote excellent factual accounts of the crushing burdens being placed upon the worker. Hard wrote of a father who worked during the summer digging excavations for sewers and gas mains, while the mother worked during the winter making button-holes in coats, vests and pants. Neither parent could find work year-round.²⁹ Nichols spoke of child laborers in the coal regions, and of their parents whose "mental horizon is in everything bounded by the coal heaps. . . ."30 But these points were made just as convincingly through fiction. Maximilian Foster described the thoughts of a Slavic coal miner as he surveyed his surroundings: "On a step of the hillside, overlooking the scarred and ravaged valley, the tenements of the gangs huddled unhealthily, reeking with the grime and the disorder of their kind." But all this disorder was "passed over in the man's low understanding of decencies."³¹ Yet another immigrant, Janko, went to the pit-mouth night after night, "bearing with a sullen stubbornness the weight of his predestined toil." The tipple, the engine-house, the sheave-wheels of the head-gear, the hoisting cables and the steel cages symbolized the work of the great machines. "Strength and energy were there, but no beauty—it was Toil alone shown in a somber presentation, a monument uplifted to the uncompromising demands of Trade."³² And Casper Day had the exploiting force of industrial capitalism in mind as he spoke of the Lithuanian child being forced to overextend himself in the mines, while the boss merely cared that the coal went up the shaft.³³

The injustices of industrial capitalism had compromised the lot of man, and the stories that had the most impact on the minds of the readers dealt with the question of the fate of man. Bruno Lessing, in a story entitled "The End of the Task," addressed this question. The primary character was a young Russian tailor. He was twenty-six, and his six years in this country had been spent in the sweat shop. Here he worked monotonously from seven o'clock in the morning until seven o'clock at night, usually finishing about twenty garments in an hour, and for this labor earning seven cents. Often, after relentless hours of machine noise, feelings of "wild, blind rage," [of a] fierce outcry against

fate, possessed the young Russian immigrant. The constant demands of the machine were slowly killing his lover, and his thoughts often became bitter and rebellious; “the injustice of life’s arrangements rankled deeply at that moment, his whole soul felt outraged, fate was cruel, life was wrong, all wrong.”³⁴ A similar story found John Milansky, a Jew, working eleven hours a day in a button-hole shop. He was slowly going blind and sensed a drop in his production. He struggled to keep up. “All afternoon he had shoved faster and faster until . . . he felt no will, no mind, no soul in his head, it was all sucked into the machine.” Finally, forced to see a doctor, he was told he must find another job. But to an immigrant who could not speak English, locating new employment was a difficult task. “That’s what comes of these shops with their infernal long hours—cage a man in, use him up, and then leave him at forty as much an immigrant as when he landed!”³⁵ Again, inhuman conditions forced man to live in spite of hazards as a result of the evils of industrialism.

These evils are plainly evident in “A Question of Salvage.” This story concerned a Lithuanian miner trapped in a mine explosion. He had spoken to the mine boss about gas in the tunnels, but the boss had merely cursed him and called him a “Hunkie.” “Who was he, a Lithuanian cutter, to question Authority?” Now, trapped in the mine, he believed that help would come. “That thought never left him: Authority, up yonder at the pit-mouth, would save!—Authority, stern to repress, yet strong to rescue.” MacTavish, the mine boss, had heard the Lithuanian signaling for help, but ethnic prejudices kept him from responding. Vandenberg, the mine owner, had only contempt for the workmen. If the fire in the mine was not extinguished, the owner would lose profits, his only concern. Forgetting about saving the worker, the mine owner ordered the mine to be flooded. Thoughts of saving the miner appeared unrealistic to the owner. If the mine was flooded, thousands would be out of work and probably starve, and the mine owner did have his obligations to his stockholders. The mine owner was practical, totally aware of his duty and wondering how to meet it: “What’ll I have to meet my duty with? My duty as one of the men into whose hands God has given the property interests of this country? Words won’t pay dividends!” The superintendent, the lone, solitary force hoping to save the miner, attempted to stop the mine owner from acting. “By the living Lord, so long’s I’m superintendent of Cumberland there’ll be no men drowned for dividends.” But the mine owner refused to comply and laughed. “Oh, yes, you will,” he mocked. “I just crook my finger here and things are done.” The mine owner and mine boss overcame the helpless superintendent, flooded the mine and forced the Lithuanian to die a “rat’s death.” But why had they failed to come, to save? The Lithuanian knew. They had not heard his knocking on the rail. “Dey not hear me! Nobody hear—God!—nobody, only you! You hears me—even when I don’t to knock!” And for a long time after that, his body,

the shoring-timbers, the tramway-ties and "all the other worn-out, broken, useless, unproductive rubbish whirled round and round and round together in the dark."³⁶

By showing their disdain for conformity to industrial capitalist values in stories such as these, reform writers were in actuality condemning a moral transgression. This literary condemnation could only be productive if a sense of guilt could be instilled in those acquiescing in the growth of industrial capitalism. This need to reestablish moral responsibility implies that a type of conversion experience will have to be undergone. This experience could be made easier if the reader could accept the perceptions of the writers. What these writers were seeking to accomplish was to instill a psychological tremor within the reader that would reshape the human mind. Old attitudes toward self and neighbor would be reestablished, and that ideal "lost" community would be restored. Man would, in the process, be shocked out of his lethargy. Reform writers sought to undermine capitalistic overconfidence in their ability to suppress the actions and numb the minds of the people. They told men what they already knew subconsciously, that they had defied moral law and were being driven by impulses over which they no longer had control. The plan was to confront these people with the truth and establish within them a conviction of sin. Man would then be left to confront his feelings of guilt and his desire to eliminate his guilt would prove overwhelming. Man would then realize that it was his duty to act, to participate, to vote. But to reform the social order immigrants had to be seen anew and their purity had to be restored. The energies of society had to be rechanneled to confront the real enemy, the industrial capitalist.

The traditional interpretation of the progressive view of the immigrant, and the role of muckraking in the progressive movement needs to be reexamined. Fiction writers tried to awaken the reader to the evils of industrialism, and to point out the need for reform of the environment and the conditions that had prostituted it. They sought to regain lost values: to reestablish moral responsibility, and to rediscover the idea of community by uniting producers and consumers. They further emphasized the need to develop the active-concerned citizen in order to stimulate participatory democracy. To accomplish these ends they attacked ethnic prejudice and stressed the value of education. These writers of fiction were a vital force in the progressive movement. As progressives, they tried to avoid condescension toward the immigrant, and realized the valuable contributions immigrants were making to American institutions and values.

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footnotes

1. Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted* (New York, 1951), 219, found progressives complaining that the attitudes of the immigrants were self-interest rather than community-interest oriented.

Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform* (New York, 1955), 178-181, discovered hostility to immigrants to be most extreme among "Populistic Progressives," and declining in the direction of more "liberal-minded Progressives." George E. Mowry, *The Era of Theodore Roosevelt* (New York, 1958), 92-94, refers to progressives as racists. John D. Buenker, *Urban Liberalism and Progressive Reform* (New York, 1973), 196, 227, works from the assumption that the middle-class wing of progressivism was hostile to immigrants. Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search For Order* (New York, 1967), 210, found progressives possessing the paternalistic attitude of "gentle assimilation" in regards to the immigrant.

2. John Higham, *Strangers In The Land* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1955), 122-123.

3. N. W. Ayer and Son's, *American Newspaper Annual* (Philadelphia, 1907), 1060, notes that *McClure's* had a circulation of 414,000 in 1907, while *Everybody's* had a readership of 600,000 in that same year.

4. Edward Alsworth Ross, *Sin and Society: An Analysis of Latter-Day Iniquity* (Boston, 1907), 3-19.

5. Florence Wilkinson, "The Tortured Millions," *McClure's* (June, 1904), 167-168.

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