


CRUSADERS FOR
AMERICAN LIBERALISM

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XXVIII. THE END OF MUCKRAKING

THE movement to put a stop to exposure was systematically ~~begun by those who felt that they could no longer tolerate interference in their affairs.~~ If no executive council met solemnly to discuss ways and means to corrupt or liquidate the muckraking magazines, it was only because enough minor disagreements existed among the interested parties to make such co-operation impossible. It is no less true that the destruction of the magazines was deliberately planned and accomplished in short order—in the case of individual organs, within a few months.

It was not enough for the trusts to develop private publicity bureaus, nor even to influence the independent press. So long as the muckrakers were at large and had a forum, they were dangerous—more dangerous than the Socialists¹ who scorned reform and were therefore less able to cope with tendencies of big business to the extent of forcing them to follow popular will. The corporation leaders were content to take their chances with class war so long as they could rid themselves of the obstinate journalists. Since reform showed no signs of abating, of becoming respectable, the reactionaries had to deal with its advance guard severely and summarily.

This move was no sudden inspiration among those who hated and feared the muckrakers. Ambitious attempts had already been made to meet the muckrakers on their own ground. Standard Oil, for example, in an effort to build up an organ sympathetic to its principles, had subsidized *Gunton's Magazine*. *Gunton's*, however, lacking the stamina to compete with the national magazines, had been discontinued in 1904. *Leslie's Weekly*¹ had later been given like support, but though it struck a more popular—and shallow—note, it had failed to make the kind of impression its sponsors

¹ Not to be confused with the monthly Ellery Sedgwick had edited which became *The American Magazine*.

required. Now there was nothing to do but recognize that the muckraking magazines had the best and most influential writers, and to make attempts to corrupt or cripple those magazines by way of the advertising bribe or boycott.

Until 1910 the strength of popular demand, as well as the disunity between advertisers, more than counterbalanced the efforts of reaction to check the muckrakers. But the urge to combat exposure could hardly be expected to wane, despite the optimistic predictions of some muckrakers that a good time was coming when business would be perfectly free, competitive, and honest. The cheerful avowals of the less realistic muckrakers simply proved that they did not understand their own success. Men who believed that "honesty is catching" were not likely to survive the shock of disillusion. For reform could not proceed on its own momentum. Big business was not to be argued into social consciousness; it had its own convictions. The farther reform progressed, moreover, the more basic became the issues involved in it.

Collier's, when it began in 1907 its long campaign against "tainted news," showed its awareness of the fact that honest journalism was not to be expected of the trusts. Mark Sullivan and Samuel Hopkins Adams, out of their extensive newspaper experiences and investigations, gave searching descriptions of trust methods. With the definitive series on the subject which he wrote for *Collier's*, and which extended through 1911 and beyond, Will Irwin crowned the protest against those methods as they were revealed by scores of investigators in a dozen periodicals. But what Irwin and Sullivan and Adams failed to understand and record was that the trusts were not to be reformed by exposure. Their bureaus were intended for permanence, which meant that either they or muckraking would have to go. Both could not exist side by side, and the reform magazines, if they were to continue, would have to be as highly organized as the trust agencies.

Collier's might therefore have been concerned for the fate of its fellow-publications instead of holding itself aloof from them. Editorial differences did not make any muckraking organ more palatable to those whom it exposed; and *Collier's*, for all its half-million circulation, had a stake in the future of even such a periodical as *The Arena*. But *Collier's* did not acknowledge that stake.

The American News Company, handling magazine distribution, singled out B. O. Flower's magazine for anti-reform discrimination and ruled that copies of it which had not been sold by the newsdealers could not be returned. The aim of this action was to make dealers reluctant to handle a magazine which they might not happen to sell and which they would have to keep at a loss. Similar forces were brought to bear on *The Arena*. Flower was unable to stimulate enough support to preserve control of it, and in 1909 it was taken away from him and merged with *Christian Work*. Thus *The Arena* was the first of the muckraking organs to succumb to the advertising boycott.

Flower then took over the insignificant *Twentieth Century* and, almost immediately, brought it to the level of his old magazine. Newton D. Baker, Rose Pastor Stokes, the Socialist William Mailly, and such tried contributors as Hamlin Garland, Charles Zueblin, Debs, and Charles Edward Russell, responding to Flower's call, tempered his doubtful essays on Christian Science with articles affirming the need for progressivism and freedom of speech.

Free speech had once meant the right of minority groups to express opinions in a hostile atmosphere, and had usually been cited with reference to radicals and labor agitators. The muckrakers, secure with their public, had been more than generous in advocating free speech for everybody. Now the right to free speech took on more subtle implications for muckrakers as well as radicals. One of these implications was that advertisers had no right to discriminate against periodicals that practiced exposure; another was that banks were duty-bound to deal with their clients impartially.

The muckraking magazines were, as we have seen, businesses for the most part, and several of them were to be corrupted not by outside influences directly but with their own money. Still, before the end, all of them appealed to moral principles against the forces that were depriving them of their proper place in society. However, they had not come into being through moral appeals but in response to public demand. This latter point only made it patent that the ground had slipped from under them, and that moral suasion could help them no more than it had helped the Populists years before.

When late in 1909, President Taft and Postmaster-General Hitchcock made a sudden attempt to pass legislation aimed at the magazines, all of them arose fighting. Magazines had for decades been given special postal rates by the government. Hitchcock now pointed to the Post Office deficit and urged the passage of a law raising the postage on magazines from one cent to four or five cents.

In *Collier's* Robert J. Collier printed an open letter in which he asserted that he wanted no favors from the government. If it could be proved, he said, that such a rate on periodicals was necessary, he would be glad to test the interest of *Collier's* readers by continuing on what must be inevitably a ruinous postal rate for magazines selling at ten cents. He asked only for the facts on the situation—Hitchcock had not given them.

Success, less defiant, more fearful, analyzed the proposed Taft-Hitchcock recommendation at length. Samuel Merwin noted that it particularly discriminated against periodicals having voluminous advertising and a heavy percentage of Western readers. No magazine could meet the new rate unless it had a huge fortune and a conservative policy behind it. *Ship* subsidies, he observed, had Taft's approval, but subsidies—if they really were that—for purposes of popular education, did not. Canada's rate on periodicals was one-fourth of a cent!

Ben Hampton asked sardonically why Taft and his Postmaster-General did not simply list the muckraking organs slated for destruction and have done with it, instead of preparing elaborate postal schedules which in reality meant nothing.

Although this particular attempt to strike at the magazines failed, it showed which way the wind blew. The magazines could expect no consideration from Washington should they happen to find themselves in difficulties.

Early in 1910, E. J. Ridgway sold *Everybody's* to the Butterick Company for \$3,000,000. No change in policy was immediately noticeable, but the next year, John O'Hara Cosgrave, beginning to feel a pressure to which he was totally unaccustomed, resigned as editor of the magazine, and after negotiating with Robert J. Collier and Norman Hapgood, who promised him a free hand, he began anew with *Collier's*. Cosgrave entered upon

his duties with enthusiasm, having formulated a campaign against Stock Exchange practices which Lawson would have endorsed.

But in the meantime the magazine had begun to experience rough sailing. The younger Collier, unlike his father, was a reckless businessman, and he had saddled his property with so much debt that he was forced to borrow heavily from his friend Harry Payne Whitney. No doubt Whitney would have been willing to extend credit and support, but his bankers intervened and ordered *Collier's* to curb its muckraking campaigns. A business manager was put over Mark Sullivan and Hapgood. Cosgrave himself lasted just eleven weeks with the magazine. Observing that a number of articles he had passed for publication had been omitted, he resigned and quit the magazine field entirely.

In time it became clear that *Collier's* was defeated. As clear an indication as any other was its prosperity, which allowed the editors to cut its price from ten to five cents. Hapgood followed Cosgrave out soon after. With Charles R. Crane as "angel," Hapgood kept *Harper's Weekly* in the field until the advertising boycott became too powerful.

In the interim, *Success* came more dramatically to grief. Having completed its most useful year with the overthrow of Cannon, it was ready to follow *Hampton's* into the bolder ways of exposure. Surveying the magazine field, it asked whether it was true that the muckrakers were being stalked by enemies. Publisher Higgins and Samuel Merwin wrote confidently, but they were plainly troubled; and it was noteworthy that they should have emphasized that they did not consider the other organs of exposure "competitors" but colleagues who were doing similar work. In those uncertain days it was heartening to feel that there were friends.

What of *The American Magazine*? Merwin asked anxiously. For it had become allied with the Crowell Publishing Company, which was controlled by Thomas W. Lamont and J. P. Morgan. Newspaper stories appeared stating that the *American* was to do no more muckraking. Was the lariat to go over Tarbell, Baker, John S. Phillips, and Finley Dunne? Although these editors announced that they contemplated no changes whatsoever in policy,

there was reasonable doubt that they would be allowed to print whatever they chose.

The doubt was sound. Tarbell, Baker, and the others stopped a campaign against the reactionary Diaz regime in Mexico at the demand of Americans having interests there, and even published articles in defense of it.² They made further concessions. By the time they had lost the magazine entirely it was hardly recognizable as the organ they had launched so bravely in 1906.

Success, confident that Morgan himself could not stop its own rise or influence, floated a second periodical, *The National Post*, a fortnightly which was to interpret current affairs. Within three months it was forced to combine the two properties. . . .

The rest of the story was told in fitting fashion by Margaret Connolly, in her *Life Story of Orison Swett Marden*, which summed up that optimist's achievements in just such terms and from just such a standpoint as he would have appreciated. *Success*, she wrote bitterly, had been under Marden the greatest of all the popular magazines. It had been esteemed for its uplift motives, patriotism, and fine ideals. But then—

Rival magazines [sought] some weapon with which to challenge his [Marden's] position. Many ingenious plans were evolved without avail, until "muck-raking" attacks upon big businessmen and politicians were launched. These magazines, in attempts to command public attention, directed assaults upon American politics and civic life; upon the personalities and methods of our great industrial leaders, and upon some of our institutions. And for a time they succeeded. "Muck-raking" swept the country like a pestilent wave. To speak well of a man or an institution became a "lost art." A period of destruction and confiscation of character and property set in. . . .

So great became this wave that it forced its insidious way even into the magazine founded on faith in God and man. Inside groups in Doctor Marden's own *Success* "household," through ingenious methods, playing on his faith in man and his associates, maneuvered until they secured control of the magazine. They vetoed his principles, reversed his policies, joined the "muck-raking" writers; and entered upon a regime of exploitation and what they believed to be "expansion"—until one day the climax came.

² See John Kenneth Turner's *Barbarous Mexico*, Kerr Co., Chicago, 1910. Later editions contain further information on the methods employed by pro-Diaz journalists and industrialists.

The splendid structure, the institution that Editor Marden and his ideals had built, collapsed. Like modern Samsons, the "muck-rakers" had pulled down the temple on their own shoulders.

Like all large publishing plants, *Success* had monthly bills running into the thousands of dollars with printers, paper makers, and others. The expense of getting out a single issue of such a periodical is enormous, and its income from subscribers and advertisers is spread over a period of months. Consequently, the life blood of a great magazine is credit.

In swerving from Doctor Marden's fixed standards, and attacking "big business," *Success* laid itself open to counter-attack below the water-line, in its most vulnerable spot—its financial credit—and this is just what occurred.

It was dealt a staggering blow when a great banker—evidently offended by these articles on big business—stated politely, but firmly, that its loans must be curtailed. Demand notes were called in. Printers and paper men grew insistent, and *Success* suddenly found itself upon the financial rocks. It was forced into the hands of a receiver—and this despite its hundreds of thousands of reader friends.

Success failed after a large Christmas number which promised many literary and educational treats ahead. What remained of it was absorbed into *The Circle*, an innocuous family magazine of the time. Samuel Merwin, cast adrift by this disaster, abandoned reform and began a new career as a writer of light fiction.

It was almost at the same moment that B. O. Flower lost the editorship of *Twentieth Century* because, although he had built it into a paying venture, he was unable to find the credit necessary to continue it. Urging his readers to support the new sponsors, he began his last important series of articles for the magazine: his memoirs. Flower evidently felt—and felt rightly, as it turned out—that the time had come to sum up. *Twentieth Century* itself was little helped by the change in editorial personnel, and after struggling for a little more than a year it was forced to close up.

Human Life, a Boston periodical which A. H. Lewis edited, had shorter shrift.

Inside of five years Lewis had built it into a substantial organ that seemed as unlikely as *Success* to go to the wall. He had just signed a contract with the University Press at Cambridge, which

was henceforth to print the entire magazine. *Human Life* was unique among the muckraking organs because of the amount of personalia it printed. It was the magazine "about people"; it published material on muckrakers and reformers which could not be found in any other journal. Lewis himself contributed many autobiographical chapters to its pages.

As a muckraker Lewis was uncertain, but for that very reason worrisome. He actually defended Ballinger, simply because he knew the Secretary personally and liked him. He became a "convert" to insurance at a time when evidence of criminal manipulations were still being unearthed. But at the same time he joined the fight against Cannon, whom he did *not* like, and printed articles by Bailey Millard, Upton Sinclair, and his friend Charles Edward Russell. Above all he kept the muckraking "tone" which was so hateful to special interests—a tone which gave notice that he intended to print whatever he chose, and whatever he deemed interesting to his readers.

Just how *Human Life* was dispatched, and by whom, was never told. Apparently trouble was precipitated by a novel of Lewis's entitled "The Chief," which he was running in serial form and which dealt intimately with the New York police. The magazine suddenly changed ownership, and publication of "The Chief" was halted in mid-course with the new owners' comment that they did not care to "wash their linen in public" regarding it. As usual, there were no warnings that catastrophe was imminent. With the July issue of 1911 control of *Human Life* slipped from Lewis's hands, and within two months, despite the bright promises of the new publishers and their editor, Francis Hackett, the magazine was deserted by its subscribers and ceased to exist.

Other periodicals were killed in the same fashion, but it was *Hampton's* that best showed how determined financial interests were to rid themselves of the incubus of exposure and to what measures they were prepared to resort. Since *Hampton's* was the greatest of the muckraking organs, its shocking end had an indubitable effect on the morale of other organs with like inclinations.

In 1910, Charles Edward Russell was running his definitive series on the rise and practices of the great railroads. In the course

of his work he took up the story of the New York, New Haven & Hartford and showed how it had secretly gained a monopoly over all New England traffic, including that of steamship lines and street-railways. (This was several years before a Congressional investigation brought out that the conduct of the company had made one of the worst records in railroad history.) While the article was still in proof, and apparently was known only to its author and publisher, Ben Hampton received a visit from a man who introduced himself as representing Charles S. Mellon himself, president of the New England railroad. Mellon, he said, understood that an article "full of lies," as he described it, was to appear in *Hampton's* attacking him. He came to give warning that there would be reprisals if the article should be published.

In discussing the article Hampton's visitor showed such a remarkable familiarity with its contents, that Hampton was taken aback. He brought out the article and reviewed it line for line with his visitor, and in the end he satisfied himself that the man had no information disproving Russell's statements. Nevertheless Hampton was threatened with ruin if he dared to print the article. Convinced, however, that he had no reason to discuss the matter further with the railroad agent, Hampton closed the interview and in his December 1910 issue printed "The Surrender of New England," which made a profound impression among Eastern readers.

From that time on Hampton was marked.⁸ Spies ferreted their way into his offices, and one in the accounting department found the opportunity to copy out the entire list of Hampton's stockholders. Each stockholder was separately visited and regaled with stories of how Hampton was misusing company funds. Wall Street agents of the railroad made extraordinary bids for the stock in order to indicate that it was losing value. Hampton, who had a credit of three hundred thousand dollars with the paper makers, was unable to raise thirty thousand dollars to pay his current bill, and was arbitrarily ordered to pay the money in advance.

Seeing trouble ahead, he convened a committee of stockholders in New York City, and a group of a dozen men, whose combined

⁸ Hampton's own account of these proceedings was given in Upton Sinclair's *The Brass Check*; see also Charles Edward Russell's *Stories of the Great Railroads* (Kerr Co., Chicago, 1912), "Prefatory Anecdote."

fortune exceeded \$2,000,000, endorsed for him three notes of ten thousand dollars each. The paper was taken to the bank and accepted. Hampton checked against them, drew money on them—and on the following day was ordered to return the money and take his notes from the bank. Such banking practice was illegal, but the manager of the bank told Hampton that he was powerless to do anything else; “downtown” people were giving the orders, and he had to take them.

Hampton now tried and failed to float a loan. One banker who declared that he would stand by Hampton in his crisis, whether the “Morgan crowd” willed it or not, was forced to stop his transactions and was himself put out of business within several months.

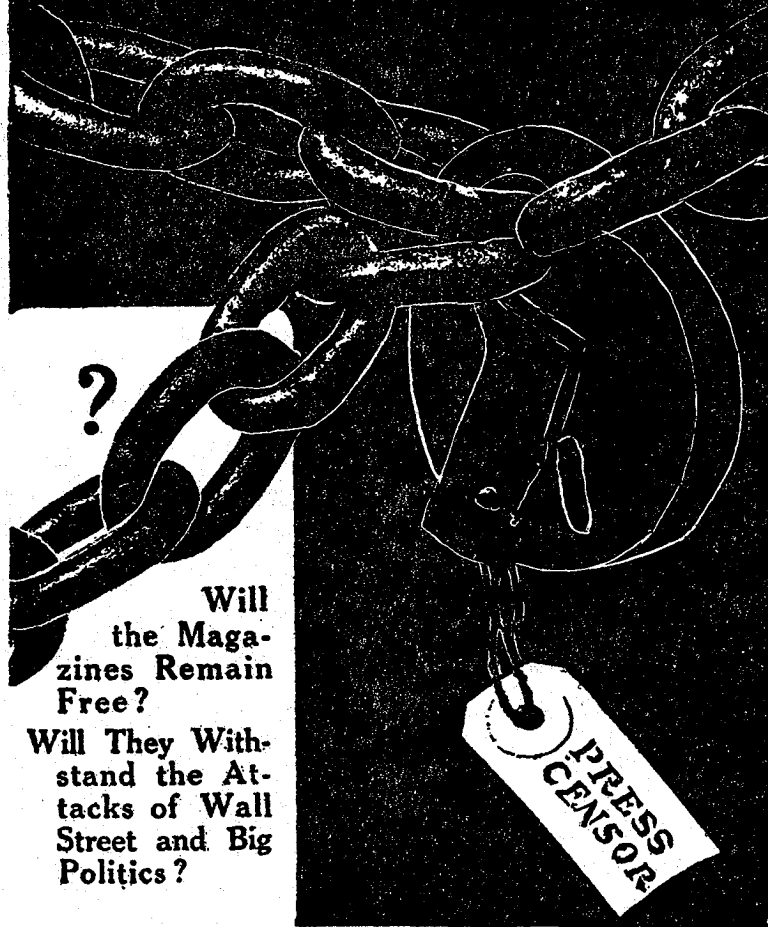
Within ten days Hampton had to turn his affairs over to his lawyers. Facing receivership, he chose what seemed the lesser of two evils: he relinquished his magazine to a group of promoters who offered impressive introductions and gave promises that the magazine would be fully supported. In a few months Hampton became convinced that the new owners had no intention but to loot the magazine. He was later told by the bookkeeper that they abstracted \$175,000 from the property, and then took the books down to the East River and threw them from a bridge.

Hampton tried to indict the new owners for criminal practices, but when the trial came he was unable to prove anything. He could prove that *Hampton's* had been extremely valuable, but he could show no evidence that its affairs had been criminally mis-handled. The records were gone. And, in the meantime, the magazine had been destroyed.

It was not to be wondered at, therefore, that the younger radicals did not attempt to follow in the path of the muckrakers. Under the circumstances they had their choice of cynicism or revolt—and they chose revolt. It was regrettable that they should have gone to extremes which in many cases isolated them from the broad currents of popular thought, but that was the natural reaction which the abrupt termination of muckraking called forth.

S. S. McClure vigorously denies (what Upton Sinclair claimed) that his magazine was taken away from him by special interests. It was “bad business methods,” he feels, that gave the West Vir-

HAMPTON'S MAGAZINE



Will
the Maga-
zines Remain
Free?
Will They With-
stand the At-
tacks of Wall
Street and Big
Politics?

HAMPTON SAW TROUBLE BEFORE IT CAME

ginia Pulp and Paper Company ownership of *McClure's*. Perhaps. But "bad business methods" do not explain why McClure immediately lost public influence upon the change of ownership. He was at that time only fifty-five years old, and the most distinguished editor in the country. He had built his syndicate and magazine out of nothing, not through good business methods primarily, but by popular demand. (When McClure lost his magazine, it was because muckraking was "on the spot.")

Yet the last of the muckraking organs had the fire and courage, if not the editorial genius, of *Hampton's*. It was, surprisingly, *Pearson's* which took the wandering muckrakers out of the cold, as Russell has it, and gave them a final haven—*Pearson's*, which had been the "Easy-to-Read" magazine, and had played almost no part at all in exposure.

Arthur West Little, its publisher, head of the J. J. Little & Ives Company, was not a muckraker, but he was a firm friend and admirer of the muckrakers and was more than willing to give them a forum. He took over the subscribers' list of the defunct *Hampton's* and, in his April 1912 issue, announced that *Pearson's*, seeing how reaction had taken the offensive in journalism, was determined to oppose it. *Pearson's* was to be a free organ of opinion, and Little knew that meant he must be independent of advertisers; for this reason, he announced, *Pearson's* was dispensing with pictures and would be printed on pulp paper. Its one attraction would be its subject matter, and Little was confident that an audience existed for that.

During the next four years, until Frank Harris took over the magazine and turned it into an organ expressive solely of his personality and interests, *Pearson's* held its post as the last of the muckraking magazines. It was "The Magazine Which Prints the Facts That Others Dare Not Print." This claim was, perhaps, unfair to *The Metropolitan* which, under Carl Hovey and supported by Payne Whitney, opened a new career at the same time, but as a quasi-Socialist periodical. Yet the claim was true in the sense that *The Metropolitan*, being "radical," disdained muckraking subject matter and gave space to more "advanced" material, of which Morris Hillquit's series on the theory and practice of Socialism was representative. Special interests were not sorely dis-

turbed by it—less disturbed, at any rate, than by articles which exposed their immediate plans and activities.

The Metropolitan accumulated subscribers and prestige . . . and its Socialist features were finally dispensed with. *Pearson's*, on the other hand, from the time it threw down the gauntlet to "the interests," never lost a certain desperate and harassed demeanor.

Arthur Little's friend, David Graham Phillips, was already dead when Little embarked on his venture in reform. (Phillips had been shot down by a manic-depressive who fancied that one of Phillips's novels, *The Fashionable Adventures of Joshua Craig*, was directed at him and his family.) Little's friend Charles Edward Russell, glad to find a new avenue for his work, became *Pearson's* leading writer. Alfred Henry Lewis also contributed to *Pearson's* until his death in 1914, although his writings hardly constituted muckraking. Bolton Hall carried on the campaign for the Single Tax; and Gifford Pinchot, C. P. Connolly, Judson C. Welliver, and others of the original reformers, as well as such Socialists as Allen L. Benson, Robert Hunter, and Harry W. Laidler, also helped to make *Pearson's* required reading for earnest Americans.

It was of more than casual significance that *Pearson's*, without pictures, without the diverting features which had tempted readers of *McClure's* and other periodicals of late influence, should have received considerable support. Those who said, and have said, that muckraking "died" because there was no further demand for it, might have asked themselves what class of readers followed Russell's documented exposures and the political analyses that *Pearson's* presented unadorned.

Those who insisted that muckraking just died never accounted for *Pearson's* health and substance. Unerringly the magazine seized upon the Nonpartisan League, just then gathering strength, as the most likely center about which a new democratic movement could be built. The Progressive movement had quickly disintegrated under the leadership of opportunists. The new Nonpartisan League, beginning from scratch, concerned itself, as was proper, with the basic grievances of the farmers. When *Pearson's* became its official organ, Charles Edward Russell wrote articles about the

League which he later collected to form his last ambitious muckraking book.⁴

The League, led by Governor Frazier of North Dakota, fought important battles in the Northwest, and if it did not capture national attention as Progressivism had done, the reason was that greater issues had arisen which it was unable to understand, let alone master. But it functioned commendably, and so foretold the coming of days when the political pendulum would swing again toward the aims and program for which it stood.

It was the World War that completed the work of reaction, that took the scattered and demoralized reformers and herded them into strange alliances with men and movements they had previously opposed. The professional trust-defenders by themselves could never have carried on effective propaganda for war. They lacked the intellectual equipment, the direct contact with the masses. An issue involving so somber a question of life and death required men and women who could convince because they were convincing—and only those who had been muckrakers were able to do that.

The years from 1914, when war ceased to mean the differences between several small European countries, to 1917, were the time during which America was prepared for participation. While George Sylvester Viereck edited his pro-German magazine, pro-Ally propaganda was released through a thousand channels. The reformers were aroused sufficiently to clamor for swifter and more comprehensive reforms that would make the country independent of foreign catastrophes and insure democracy. Charles Edward Russell wrote that it was Kaiserism which had plunged Germany into her great adventure, and insisted that such "Kaiserism" as had started the latest class war in Colorado would have to be ended if Americans were to resist embroilment in Europe's affairs. Allen L. Benson (one of the Socialists who approved the sensational Ford plan for distributing profits) urged a referendum on war.

While peace parades vied with "preparedness" campaigns, the issue was at last resolved by the final declaration of war. Many

⁴ *The Story of the Nonpartisan League*, Harper & Bros., New York, 1920.

joined the patriotic front out of sheer relief that a decision had been made for them, and assured themselves that they could support their country as any citizen should. Others, throwing overboard the ideas and companions they had cherished until now, went to war with passion and determination. Rheta Dorr sent her son into the service, and she herself became a fiery propagandist for war.

Down in the streets, in Union and Madison Squares [she wrote⁵] and all over the East Side, scores and hundreds of loud-mouthed alien Socialists were pouring out in execrable English, denunciation of the President, of our flag, of the army and navy, and of the "capitalists" who were forcing the country into war. What did they know about America, except that we had been so senseless as to let their slave-minded lot in? . . . It was time they were beginning to let Americans fight.

Dorr was speaking in terms different from those she had used in the battles for factory regulation and women's rights—those battles by which she had made her reputation. (Woman suffrage came, but under banners less bright than those that had heralded it.) Upton Sinclair also joined in the great crusade, but without such venom for those who broke with him on the issue.

It was my task, self-assumed [he wrote⁶] to hold the radical movement in line for Woodrow Wilson's policies. Needless to say, I never asked or received a cent from anyone, and the little magazine⁷ which I edited and published cost me a deficit of six or eight thousand dollars for the ten months of its history. . . .

How could I have been trapped into supporting the war? I thought that Woodrow Wilson really meant his golden, glowing words; I thought he was in position to know what I couldn't know, and would take the obvious steps to protect us against diplomatic perfidy. I knew nothing of the pre-war intrigues of the French and Russian statesmen against Germany, which had made the war inevitable, and had been planned for that purpose; I knew nothing of the secret treaties which bound the allies for the war. . . .

Others did not have so much of a past so that they would have to explain why they submitted; the cause needed no explanation.

⁵ *A Woman of Fifty*, Funk & Wagnalls Co., New York, 1924.

⁶ *In Money Writes!*, A. & C. Boni, New York, 1927.

⁷ *Upton Sinclair's*.

As Hermann Hagedorn, who was made president of the Vigilantes in the American League of Artists and Authors for Patriotic Services, put it:

There are strange, unexpected ways
Of going soldiering these days.
It may be only census-blanks
You're asked to conquer, with a pen,
And suddenly you're in the ranks
And fighting for the rights of men! ⁸

The choice was as easy as that. One was, perhaps, only a writer or educator, faced with the choice of standing for or against war. One found one's services in demand, and was lifted into high and influential position. And suddenly one, too, was in the ranks and fighting for the rights of men.

The Socialist Party was split in two. Jack London was already dead (the best fate a muckraker could have asked, commented Sinclair, who lived into the Coolidge prosperity era); worn out by the personal and social contradictions that hounded him, London had taken his own life. Gustavus Myers, infected, wrote such an article as "Why Idealists Quit the Socialist Party" and a book, *The German Myth*, exploding, or attempting to explode, German claims to culture and enlightenment. And when Charles Edward Russell's eloquence was finally enlisted for war, it was clear that no more anti-war support could be expected from any of the veteran scribes. Russell had been a hero to the younger generation because of his firm and principled adherence to exposure, and it was because he joined the war agitators with firmness and principle that he was showered with abuse by his former admirers. But, as he later noted in his autobiography, he did no worse than Clarence Darrow—or, he might have added, Ben Lindsey or Frederic Howe, who were less revered for their powers of leadership and hence were less condemned for their roles in the war years.

George Creel was made chairman of the Committee on Public Information, and with Arthur Bullard he turned it, within six months, into a machine which dominated every agency of propa-

⁸ "How Can I Serve?" in *Defenders of Democracy*, John Lane Co., New York, 1918.

ganda.⁹ Seventy-five thousand "Four Minute Men" covered the country in a whirlwind campaign of speeches. On or co-operating with the Committee were such people as Harvey O'Higgins, Will and Wallace Irwin, Ernest Poole, Samuel Hopkins Adams, Louis F. Post, Ray Stannard Baker, Ida Tarbell—indeed, it was a roll call of the muckrakers.

The Bolshevik revolution gave the muckrakers the *coup de grâce*, ending their efforts to deal as independents with their new associates on the political and cultural fronts. The overthrow of the Czar delighted them: this was democracy coming out of war; this justified their patriotic zeal. But the uncompromising determination of the proletarian leaders to continue the battle against the allied governments, and under a working-class dictatorship, pushed the ex-muckrakers to the other extreme. It was, Rheta Dorr saw with horror, the French Revolution all over again. In *Red Friday*, a prophetic novel of a Lenin come to America, George Kibbe Turner abandoned the famed McClure objectivity to portray his fear of class war on the Russian model. Charles Edward Russell and William English Walling gave better documented evaluations of the "democratic centralism" espoused by the Bolsheviks, although in order to do it they were constrained to ignore the point of view, the desperate situation of the Bolsheviks. As for John Spargo, he issued one voluminous study after another to prove that the revolutionists were liars and dictators who were determined to wipe out democracy in their own country and break the back of the Allied offensive.

It was this abandonment of objectivity by the ex-muckrakers, this confession that as middle-class writers they could not act as a determining force in the international crisis, which broke off all their relationships with the vital radical movement. For better or for worse, the old reformers were now with those who dominated the democracies and, as it happened, controlled their thoughts. They were no longer able as before to criticize big business; many no longer desired to do so. When the war ended, they quietly retired. But there was evidence in such a book as Frederic C. Howe's autobiography that all were not entirely satisfied with their conduct during the War. They had been party to hysteria,

⁹ *How We Advertised America*, by George Creel, Harper & Bros., New York, 1920.

hardly the role for educators and reformers; they had tacitly condoned the cruel raids which brought suffering and death to radicals; they had condoned the imprisonment of Eugene Debs. Necessary though war might or might not have been, there had not been such democracy behind the lines in America as the ex-muckrakers had demanded of the Bolsheviks.

For all the old reformers' contempt of "parlor pinks," this minority had asked sane questions—questions not reported correctly in patriotic newspapers or the freshly groomed magazines. Lincoln Steffens, one of the "pinks," had refused to be involved in the massacre of free speech, and had even consented to write an introduction to a volume of essays by Leon Trotsky, crediting the leader of the Red Army with sanity and earnestness.

The War was over, but not its effects. An age set in which held reform lightly. Capitalism had no further fear of reform, but even sponsored it whenever it might smooth the road for organized business. The younger generation was completely uninterested in reform, having learned through hard experience that there were greater issues abroad. Russia and Italy, far away though they were, were organized nations intent upon carrying diverse programs out to the finish; but in America reform had shown itself incapable of resisting class pressure. Babbitt had no intelligent word to say on this state of affairs, and the succeeding prosperity made it unnecessary for anyone to face the issue directly.

In 1918 Upton Sinclair began to write what his biographer Floyd Dell has called his "great pamphlet-histories." These furious, detailed summaries of his experiences with American customs and institutions were the last of the muckraking books. It was unfortunate that the younger radicals took them for histories rather than for what they were: polemics. But it is likely that if Sinclair had attempted to give the picture of his times, rather than the Socialist version of affairs, he would not have been believed. Even the memory of muckraking was gone, and those who avidly accepted his conception of the muckraking era were seeking an answer to the late war, and would not have been able to comprehend the psychology of the movement for exposure even if they could have been persuaded to believe it. The young radicals, the "lost

generation," had no roots in the past and no faith in the future.

The Profits of Religion, the first of Sinclair's books, was written with the high indignation of muckraking. *The Brass Check*, the most famous, concluded with an appeal for funds to found a newspaper which would be entirely free and impartial in content (Sinclair later withdrew this chapter). *The Goose-Step*, *The Goslings*, and *Mammonart* continued his story of capitalism as it had influenced the schools, the colleges, and literature. By 1927, when *Money Writes!* was published, Sinclair's tone had changed, if not his manner. There was no audience for exposure; there was much more of an audience for literary gossip. He pleaded for a little patience from the reader while he gave background to his opinions of Sherwood Anderson, Dreiser, Cabell, Mencken, Hergesheimer, and others who were the literary lights of the day. Even this device was vain. Having sold many thousands of copies of *The Brass Check* despite a newspaper boycott, Sinclair now could find no way of catching the interest of the reading public.

It was not to be wondered at, then, that others who had no stake in Socialism lost contact with radical thought. There were jobs in abundance for such trained writers as the ex-muckrakers—paying jobs, influential jobs—but they were rarely accompanied by the dignity that had once distinguished them.

Ray Stannard Baker, coming out of the war, in which his close relationship with Woodrow Wilson had made him eminent, reviewed labor troubles of the early Twenties in *The New Industrial Unrest*. In method this book was as good as his former muckraking work; but it lacked strength and vitality, that quality of movement that he had earlier given his writing, and it caused not a ripple of interest. He retired, subsequently to undertake the definitive and authorized biography of his war-time chief.

Samuel Hopkins Adams wrote *Revelry*, a novel of the Harding administration. This was a muckraking subject and, what was more, had drawn public attention. But Adams's treatment of it was a travesty on muckraking. Embarrassingly, for those who knew his earlier work, he carried his plain style in an attempt to compete with the brilliant new-generation writers on their own flapper-slang-hipflask level. It was a pitiful comedown, and although *Revelry* sold well, it was only for the same reasons which

gave Kathleen Norris, Harold Bell Wright, and Edgar Rice Burroughs their vast publics.

Wallace Irwin, forgetting verse and the Japanese schoolboy, joined the movement in second-rate fiction, as did Henry Kitchell Webster, Reginald Wright Kauffman, and others. Will Irwin, who had written the most mordant account of "kept" journalism, was now convinced that it had reformed. Finley Dunne reviewed his memories of President Harding—as though the creator of "Mr. Dooley" needed these for fame!

A barrage of books praising and explaining reactionary businessmen and politicians high-lighted the times. Carl Hovey wrote of J. P. Morgan, George Kennan (who had attacked the Southern Pacific) of E. H. Harriman, William Hard and Will Irwin both of Herbert Hoover, and Tarbell of Judge Gary and Owen D. Young. Charles Edward Russell, however, turned to biography not as a means of explaining new convictions but in order to develop long-cherished interests; and his studies, particularly those of Julia Marlowe and Theodore Thomas, were solid contributions to contemporary writing.

Popular literature, as Norman Hapgood realized, had ended in banality. He himself, perhaps because he had been less violently the muckraker, preserved a cooler head in this post-War age which had no respect for muckrakers. It was a paradox that he, who had been so bitterly opposed to Hearst, should have learned to value that journalist; and Hapgood served him as editor with real satisfaction. But the new magazine work had little to offer a man who had once commanded the earnest attention of the nation. The vast circulations of the "reformed" magazines meant simply that an America that was swifter, more complex, and more highly populated than many had truly believed it could become was better able to satisfy its unthinking desires for romance and escape. The middle-class had lost a certain self-respect in giving way to those desires, and its more lively representatives poured contempt upon it through such organs as *The American Mercury*. But popular education? There was no demand for it; there was apparently no need for it. *Collier's*, *Cosmopolitan*, *The American Magazine*, *Everybody's* (which became *Romance Magazine*)—these magazines, to be found on every newsstand, were now only organs for entertainment.