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# A SURVEY OF THE LIFE AND NOVELS OF DAVID GRAHAM PHILLIPS

A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the Department of English

University of New Mexico

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Abraham Feldman

March 1945

This thesis, directed and approved by the candidate's committee, has been accepted by the Graduate Committee of the University of New Mexico in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

George P. Hammond
DEAN

June 4, 1945
DATE

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# INNTTTRODUCTION

American ficticonn: had perhaps never been, since the birth of the Republic,, , so enthralled by European patterns and criterions as it wwwaas at the start of the twentieth century. Records of the most luucccrrative wares in the book-markets of the epoch show that Brrriiitish products were prime in demand (Caine, Corelli, Du Mmaauurrier, Hope-Hawkins, "Ian Maclaren," Stanley Weyman, etc.),,, They were arlusualy aped in the United States, in the hhhistorical romances, melodramas of imaginary kingdoms, annadi comic-sentimental tales--usually with bucolic landscapeeeee--by authors like James Lane Allen, Marion Crawford, Richaaarrdi Harding Davis, George Barr McCutcheon, Weir Mitchhheelll, and Maurice Thompson.* The solitary method our aauutthoors generally knew for escaping from the subserviences seems to plunge into "local color," to delve into exotic ramnadi backward precincts of our country. Dialect served to disggguuiise barren subject-matter in the books of Irving Bacheellllller, "Charles Craddock," Nelson Page, Hopkinson Smith, "Ootttaavvve Thanet," Edward Westcott, etc.** Escape is not emancippaattiion, and the domestic literature

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* It is notewoorrtthy how many of these novelists were natives of Indiana, ooff tthe "Valley of Democracy."

** Two Southerrnn authors working in "local color" uniquely managed it aass a means for displaying cosmic passion and common sense--Geoorrgge Washington Cable and Joel Chandler Harris.

was dismally unworthy of a great nation--already heading the world in economic might, and beginning to claim even moral supremacy.

The last of our western frontiers (the Cherokee Strip) was being vanquished; industries were springing from the prairies like the Greek giants from the dragon-planted ground, colossal heroism; that could be called by no local name less than American, was manifested in war and peace from Cuba to Alaska. They went unsung, or wretchedly chanted, unilluminated by the creative intellects of the land. A primary cause of the failure and neglect was the fact that the artistic wits were too close, distressfully close, to the triumphs and the tragedies.

Of the elder artists the finest felt more comfortable in legends of juvenile America (e.g., Mark Twain), or in transatlantic comedies and idylls (e.g., Henry James). If they were keenly aware of the writer's duty as a citizen, they confined themselves to the "sunny side" of United States life in their fictions (e.g., Dean Howells), or else printed in impotent anonymity (e.g., Henry Adams). There was a thin current, allied to the local colorists, that promised a literature truthful to the country. But the obsession of Mary Freeman, Hamlin Garland, Edgar Howe, and Sarah Orne Jewett with peasant misery, and their fear of the industrial future, changed the stream into a school of sterility.

In truth, the insurrection of American genius against the uprooted writers, the parochial writers, the timorous

writers, occurred under new European impacts. Our prodigious and prematurely silenced rebels (Stephen Crane, Jack London, Harris Merton Lyon, Frank Norris, etc.) labored in the shadows of French realism and Russian naturalism. But their labors burst the chains of the teachers as well as those of the mental tyrants of the Old World. They shortened the distance to the day when young minds in Europe and Asia also would look to America for liberation.

Justice has been done to gratifying degree in national recognition of the services of Crane, Norris, Theodore Dreiser and Edith Wharton. They had a comrade whose work for the freedom of American art once earned for him tributes grander than their grandest. David Graham Phillips was hailed as one of the noblest of our novelists, if not the paramount. He was also hailed with epithets of derision and hatred, and more and murkier controversy stormed about him than encircled all the others except Dreiser. Today he is nearly forgotten or entirely unknown among those who consider themselves the advance-guard of our culture. The verdict of his enemies did not prevail. Survivals of the polar points of view appear in the current literary history and criticism of the century, but the partisans for and against Phillips no longer challenge to battle. The trial to determine the man's esthetic stature and post in American and international art remains in suspended animation. The

following study essays to help in the inevitable performance of justice to a great American, perhaps our greatest man of art.

In the opening chapters I have tried to explain the development of the Phillips outlook. Then I have endeavored to establish by the analysis of every novel that he published just what is ephemeral and what is permanent in his work. The opinions of all important judges of the books, as well as the decisions of many insignificant critics who reflect contemporary literary appetites, have been examined and balanced by each other. Sketches of the background against which Phillips struggled, the material and moral forces and crises of his age, are given with necessary details.

In addition to the published compositions of Phillips in books and periodicals that were accessible to me, I have consulted various magazines and newspapers of contemporary reviews and posthumous articles on his life and labors. At the close of the thesis will be found records of my correspondence with various gentlemen who I thought would have a personal or esthetic interest in my project. These letters are even more valuable as expressions of the minds and manners of their authors than as contributions to the study of Phillips.

Naturally I owe an irredeemable debt to Isaac F. Marcosson and his pioneer biography of Phillips. Mr. Marcosson,

who kindly allowed me to use his luminous volume as I pleased, devoted his work largely to the achievements of the hero as a journalist. I have concerned myself almost exclusively with him as a novelist. The incredibly patient librarians of the University of New Mexico (Miss Ruth Russell in particular), the city of Indianapolis, and Princeton University have given me priceless aid. The number of those who have assisted me with information and counsel is an index of tribute to human nature. I cannot leave this preface without an attempt to state my gratitude to Dr. Thomas Matthew Pearce, chief of the English Department in the University of New Mexico, for generous criticism, relief in technical trouble, practical and constant encouragement from the genesis to the deuteronomy of my thesis.

Albuquerque, New Mexico,
January-March, 1945.

Abraham Feldman.

# CHAPTER I

## THE WESTERN STUDENT

Ancestry, in the belief of David Graham Phillips, belonged among the solemn matters it was the duty of the dead to bury. The world was for the living, and families who searched for consanguine glory in the past deserved no future. He was convinced that the land where native stock determined community standing went in burning need of renascence. "We're all old families, you know," contended one of his manliest characters, "and very superior ones. When you think of all that the human race has been through, you realize that everyone that has survived must be very superior--the less sheltered, the more superior."[1] The only venture of Phillips into historical romance was a parody on the arrogance of genealogy.[2] The father of his hero Hampden Scarborough used to frighten people inquisitive about his forebears by affirming, "I'm descended from murderers!" Regicides he meant, rebels against every creed and code that judged men and women by their lineage instead of their labors. Phillips delighted in the blood of the Scarboroughs, red without a blemish of blue, surging through self-resolved

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[1] The Second Generation (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1907), p. 109.

[2] Chapter III, "And Scarborough," The Cost (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1904).

generations of "men who had learned to hate kings in Holland in the sixteenth century,[3] and learned to despise them in England in the seventeenth century, had learned to laugh at them in America in the eighteenth century, had learned to exalt themselves into kings," sovereigns of a revolutionary republic, "in the free West in the nineteenth century."[4]

The soul of Phillips yielded plenty of testimony of "the fierce temper of the Scotch Covenanters, the militant revolt of Cromwell's Ironsides."[5] He drew a vivid portrait of his father, David Graham Phillips, as Hiram Ranger, the magnificent workman of The Second Generation, and pointed out the "Covenanter fiber tough as ironwood" in his constitution.[6] The artist inherited that fiber, which was not softened in the least by his mother's milk, for she was renowned in Indiana as a woman of strong will. He never proclaimed her blood-relation to the proud Virginia clan that included the Revolutionary War chief Light-Horse Harry Lee. The farmer's daughter, Margaret Lee, who became the mother of one of America's most popular novelists, trained

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[3] "Holland was the godmother of modern Democracy," Phillips declared in The Reign of Gilt (New York: James Pott & Co., 1905), p. 186.

[4] The Cost, p. 31.

[5] Phrases of the Hoosier statesman Albert Jeremiah Beveridge, a dear friend of Phillips, quoted by Claude G. Bowers, Beveridge and the Progressive Era (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1932), p. 344.

[6] The Second Generation, p. 47.

her son to consider the whole human race as children of the common earth.[7]

## 1. MADISON-THE BIRTHPLACE

David Graham Phillips the elder was a farmer's son, who left his homestead near the Indiana village of Canaan in 1845, when he was sixteen, with the purpose to rise with the growing city of Madison. First he studied for two years at the Methodist college of Asbury (afterward DePauw University), the future academy of his son. When he returned to Madison, the town's wealth as the main Ohio River emporium between Cincinnati, ninety miles to the north, and Louisville, fifty miles south, was being multiplied by the completion of the first railroad west of the Alleghany Mountains, uniting Madison with Indianapolis.[8] So long as the locomotive served the steam-packet, the city prospered. The farmer's son obtained the post of cashier in Madison's chief bank, and held it for thirty-one years. There he witnessed the rapid gravitation of midwestern railroad trade from the Ohio to the Great Lakes. He saw Indiana torn between sympathy for Southern statecraft, engendered by Kentucky commerce, and Northern fervor against Dixie's "peculiar institution."

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[7] Isaac F. Marcosson, David Graham Phillips and His Times (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1932), p. 10.

[8] Meredith Nicholson, The Hoosiers (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1900), p. 11.

Ohio Abolitionists and Hoosier converts drove Jefferson County sheriffs wild by their "underground railroads" for fugitive slaves speeding to Canada.[9] The Democratic Party of the state gave the country the sinister term "Copperhead."[10] Phillips saw the Confederacy's frantic effort to shift the Civil War into Northern territory by means of Morgan's guerrillas in the summer of 1863.[11] With the coming of peace Madison's splendor as a port faded. Mansions that used to dazzle the Hoosiers with their festivals drooped to shells of moribund grandeur. The town became drowsy and picturesque, haunted by the fantoms of showboats and antebellum chivalry. The county farmers again "found in litigation their chief distraction from the stupefying dullness" of rural days, just as they did in the period of "pause, after the Indian and nature had been conquered and before the big world's arteries of thought and action had penetrated."[12] The elder Phillips lived to write to his son in the winter of 1895: "Madison is a doomed old town, that is, it is doomed to have about 10,000 inhabitants, for the simple reason that any beyond that can't live here. . . ."[13]

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[9] Marcosson, op. cit., p. 7.

[10] Paul S. Smith, "First Use of the Term 'Copperhead'," The American Historical Review, XXXII (July, 1927), 799.

[11] Marcosson, op. cit., p. 7.

[12] David Graham Phillips, The Plum Tree (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1905), p. 6.

[13] Quoted by Marcosson, op. cit., p. 12.

The bank-clerk remained to the end an exemplar of Indiana democracy as it flourished in the era when "every man of character owned his own land and could conceive of no superior between him and God."[14] His iron integrity and and religious generosity gained him the honor of three county offices. He was Methodist to the marrow, having served as a Sunday-schoolmaster in youth and often taken the pastor's place.[15] Family prayers were regular in the Phillips household, and the Bible was so beloved by him that the children of his daughters called it "Grandpa's Book."[16] The Book's power is evident in each of his son's books. Young Phillips never forgot "the Bible's promises, so confident, so lofty, so marvelously responsive to the longings and cravings of every kind of desolation and woe."[17] As in church concerns, so in affairs of state the artist's father was always earnest, relentlessly loyal to principles. Partisan strife was not excluded from his fireside. In praise of his native state Phillips later said: "Few indeed are the homes in strenuously political Indiana where politics is not the chief subject

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[14] The Cost, p. 34. Indiana's independence in ecclesiastical matters was nearly notorious. Her Christian denominations outnumbered those of every other state. See Carleton Beals, American Earth (Philadelphia: J.B.Lippincott Company, 1939), p. 159.

[15] Marcosson, op. cit., p. 11.

[16] Ibid.

[17] The Second Generation, p. 96.

of conversation."[18] Although he lost his father's theological faith, he never lost his faith in the common folk's right to self-rule. The elder Phillips was republican to the core, a true son of the state whose constitution ordained in 1851 that any citizen of ordinary decency could practice law, " and allowed the jury, however ignorant, to determine what rules of law should be applied."[19] He believed that "Democracy must breed citizens who think for themselves,"[20] and gave his children as much of the world's intellectual riches as he could purchase. In countenance and character David Graham Phillips the younger strongly resembled his father.

The artist was born October 31, 1867, in a house whose windows overlooked the golden Ohio waters and the green slopes of Kentucky. Among his earliest memories were the melodies of the Negro stevedores and a voyage with his father up to Cincinnati on a famous sidewheel steamer. Before his death he voiced the desire to journey west and take a trip down the river.[21] Several chapters of his masterpiece, Susan Lenox: Her Fall and Rise, reveal the bliss of his boyhood on

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[18] The Cost, p. 156.

[19] Dixon Ryan Fox, "Civilization in Transit," The American Historical Review, XXXII (July, 1927), 764.

[20] The Reign of Gilt, p. 194.

[21] Marcosson, op. cit., p. 15.

"the lovely Ohio," with its magic moons, floating theaters, and ballads--"Blue Alsatian Mountains," "Annie Laurie," "Kathleen Mavourneen," and "Swanee River." The opening pages of Old Wives for New recapture the supreme summer mood of the meadows round Madison, and his discovery of sex mid an Indiana "sea of emerald and gold."

As a child he was plump, rosy and merry, fond of the frolics and pranks of healthy Hoosier lads. With his three sisters and brother Harrison he contrived ordeals for what he afterward delineated as "the typical western-American expression--shrewd, easy-going good humor."[22] When they moved to a dwelling over the bank where the father worked, their fun was restricted. Once he and his favorite sister, Carolyn, managed to drill a hole through the floor and drop water on the heads of depositors--the first outbreak of Phillips against finance.[23] The lad's imagination was like the burning bush in the Bible; none of its flames could consume it. In his father's parlor was probably the best private library in Madison, and for hours every day he sat there, Carolyn remembered, curled in a big chair, "absorbed in some great romance or a volume of history."[24] Before he was twelve he had devoured, besides the Scriptures and

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[22] The Cost, p. 28.

[23] Marcosson, op. cit., p. 17.

[24] Ibid., p. 16.

Shakespeare, the works of Scott, Dickens, Victor Hugo, the travels of Mark Twain. "Ever since he could remember," Phillips wrote of the protagonist of the Scarborough saga, "his strongest passion had been for books." That intrepid youth had tried to explore such tenebrous volumes as Richard Baxter's The Saint's Everlasting Rest and Milton's Paradise Lost.[25] Hampden confessed that he found more cordial Tom Paine's Age of Reason--"a preacher's son down the pike stole it from a locked closet in his father's library and loaned it to me...."[26]

Pictorial art was a rare luxury even in the most prosperous Hoosier homes. On Scarborough's parents' walls were hung facsimiles of the Declaration of Independence, the Emancipation Proclamation, and portraits of Washington, Lincoln, and (surprisingly) Napoleon, who was "held in that household second only to Washington in all history as a 'leveler'."[27] When people were inquisitive about Phillips's pristine culture, he used to say: "Perhaps the best part of my education was the very democratic one I received at home from the books of my father's library."[28]

His parents had a profound share of what he called

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[25] The Cost, p. 35.

[26] Ibid., p. 100.

[27] Ibid., p. 36.

[28] Marcosson, op. cit., p. 12.

in The Cost "the intense American passion for education." They sent him to the public schools of Madison and also employed private tutors. In manhood he agreed absolutely with John of Nassau, "the oldest brother of that friend of civil and religious liberty William the Silent," that patriots educated in free common schools "are better than all armies, arsenals, armories, munitions, alliances and treaties that can be had or imagined in the world."[29] However, the practice of Midwestern infant pedagogy was not very congenial to his adventurous spirit. When he created for a number of his novels the imaginary city of Saint Christopher to reflect the heart of the United States, he described its public schools as governed by virgins secretly hostile to masculine prowess. Madison's schoolmarms prohibited the reading of the dime romances of the day, but little Phillips rejoiced in their savagery. The group of boys to which he belonged kindled council fires in a place known as "Indian Cave," and there he reveled in declamation of the thousands of verses he recalled, especially Gray's "Elegy."[30] Nobody observed in the boy any talent or strange energy.

Madison remembered the curly-haired, blue-eyed youngster for two traits: fidelity to friends and intolerance of bluff familiarity. The town heard not a breath of gossip

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[29] The Reign of Gilt, p. 186.

[30] Marcosson, op. cit., p. 18.

about his earliest impulses toward the feminine. Maybe, like his dreamer Charles Murdock, the Indiana Methodist rustic who seemed "like a young corn and wine god," Phillips could not look at girls without pensive comparison of them with a goddess "evolved from his picturings of the women who lived for him in history and in romance--Cleopatra and Aspasia, Theodora and a boy's version of Messalina; the two Catherines, she whom Florence gave to France, and she who set upon her own head the crown of great Peter's crazy, impish grandson; Dickens's Agnes, and Thackeray's Becky, the woman who ran away from her master in Second Judges, and the burning-eyed roadside preacher, who finally taught slow Adam Bede the meaning of love."[31]

## 2. GREENCASTLE--THE SEMINARY

At fifteen Phillips left Madison to matriculate at the Asbury University, the youngest member of his class. The college of his father had become, since the epoch when the majority of pupils arrived from homesteads visited by Wesleyan circuit riders,[32] one of America's leading democratic academies. Under a faculty including men like the historian John Clark Ridpath, it won the lifelong affection of Phillips, who embodied its essence in fiction as Battle

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[31] Old Wives for New (New York: D.Appleton and Company, 1908), p. 2.

[32] Nicholson, op. cit., p. 68.

Field University. He made gentle fun of the surrounding hamlet of Greencastle: "old-fashioned Battle Field, where the best people were still steeped in medieval disdain of 'foolishness' and regarded the modern passion for the joy of life as sinful."[33] But he liked to recall the white pines and sparkling streams of Putnam County and the blue Wabash range beyond. He enjoyed the human nature active in Asbury most of all.

The students were nearly all male, yet the girls there never felt alien or inferior. A large number of both sexes worked their way through the college, and these gave it an immensely serious air, which gay pastimes did not diminish. Battle Field University

> put no more restraint upon its young women than it put upon its young men--and it put no restraint upon the young men. In theory and practice it was democratic, American, western--an outgrowth of that pioneer life in which the men and the women had fought and toiled and enjoyed, side by side, in absolute equality, with absolute freedom of association.[34]

Individualism, added Phillips, was a religion to the collegians. Just as in the church their sole concern was personal salvation, so in worldly life it was personal success. "Their talk was of history and philosophy, religion and politics;"[35] knowledge meant rigorously practical power. For the Asbury

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33 Light-Fingered Gentry (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1907), p. 32.

34 The Cost, p. 25.

35 Ibid., p. 27.

register Phillips blazoned as his future profession--banking.[36] However, he showed more interest in football than in finance. Scholastically the robust and rosy youth was outstanding among classmates for sheer indolence, unless in controversy.

Greencastle eyes were attracted to the tall Phillips by his clothes, which were fastidious always and sometimes fancy. They nicknamed him "The Duds," but never challenged his virility, after watching him with the football team or in the military company conducted for Asbury by regular army officers. He avoided religious exercises, and employed the hours officially devoted to morning prayers as study periods.[37] Hampden Scarborough at Battle Field was unhappy in mathematics and zoology; so was his author.[38] They both found Latin less difficult, Virgil in particular, with Dryden for first aid. Nevertheless, they were not reluctant to cast away the Aeneid for the sake of a frolic. "It doesn't matter what that hideous old Harpy howled at the pious Aeneas," he grumbled, "Let's go out and watch the Great God Pan dedicate his brand-new temple."[39] Phillips's best grades were in languages and literature. He would rather read than write; no teacher discerned a scintilla of talent in his themes. In

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36 Marcosson, op. cit., p. 19.

37 Ibid., p. 21.

38 The Coast, p. 50.

39 Ibid., p. 78.

conversation only he shone. The Platonian Literary Society and his Greek-letter fraternity, Delta Kappa Epsilon, were enchanted by his fact-reserves and polemic skill. "The Dude" amused them in the fall of 1884 by his grave investigation of the presidential campaign of Belva Lockwood, that pioneer of her sex's political emancipation. "He frequently reflected upon what he thought was the oppression of women, often declaring that this was a 'man-made world'."[40] Shelleyan fury blazed in him while listening to a report of brutality or foul exploitation. Yet he was considered by the average Asburyite aristocratic in temper as well as taste.

Certainly he led no battles, as his gallant Scarborough did, to halt the cleavage of collegians into "Grecks" and "barbarians." The split at Greencastle was not extrusive nor sharp, because the secret clubs welcomed into membership every "barbarian" of strength and charm. From timber camps rose the young man who was regarded as the star of promise in Delta Kappa Epsilon, the lifelong friend of Phillips, Albert Jeremiah Beveridge. His experience inspired the framework of the Scarborough saga in The Cost, The Plum Tree and The Second Generation. Beveridge was a sophomore when Phillips entered in the autumn of 1882. Their encounter was a signal instance

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[40] Professor Joseph Piercy of Indiana University, formerly a room-mate of Phillips in Greencastle, quoted by Marcosson, op. cit., p. 26.

of friendship at first sight. The tall, rosy and lazy fellow was charmed by the short, gray, industrious Beveridge. Decades later Phillips confessed the reason: "there always was a fascination for me in strength--and this new acquaintance of mine, with his unkempt hair and his burning eye and his voice like a trumpet, was obviously strong mentally and physically."[41] Soon they shared a chamber in the home of Professor John DeMotte, and started a sequence of violent political arguments that were concluded only by the tragic death of Phillips.

The lumberjack toiled over texts, and went to the woods for hours to practice oratory, striving for prizes of all sorts. The would-be banker strove for none, and appeared to spend most of his time in perusal of odd volumes of history, philosophy, political economy, and literature. Of the numberless novels he devoured the French were his favorites, especially Balzac and Zola. He bought their works in paper-covered editions, carrying them in pockets to read in chance moments of leisure.[42] Beveridge peddled books to farmers, and dreamed of increasing the statutes of Indiana and the Federal Government. He represented the school in the state oratorical contest at Indianapolis in 1883, triumphing with a speech on "The Conflict of Capital and Labor."

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[41] From an article on Beveridge in Success Magazine (August, 1905), quoted by Claude Bowers, op. cit., pp. 17-18.

[42] Professor Piercy, in Marcosson, op. cit., p. 30.

America still echoed from the colossal general strike of 1877, which Karl Marx applauded as the "first explosion against the associated oligarchy of capital which has risen since the Civil War."[43] The capitalists were terrified by the fraternization of the old-fashioned militia of Maryland, Pennsylvania, and other states with the rebels of the railroads and coal-mines. New state regiments were organized, and gigantic armories constructed in the industrial centers. The boy Beveridge enthralled Indianapolis with tocsin rhetoric against insurgent labor: "let socialism attempt the pillage of private property and our landowners' cannon will answer."[44] Phillips marched in the college procession honoring the champion, heard his own version of the victory, and went to bed, leaving the ambitious Beveridge to his midnight studies. What Phillips thought of socialism, of the multitudinous Americans who called themselves wage-slaves, was not recorded. He continued to cultivate his sartorial and conversational faculties. "The cultured American," said the daughter and son-in-law of Karl Marx who visited the United States in 1886, "is perhaps the most charming person on the face of the earth."[45]

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[43] Bertram Wolfe, Marx and America (New York: The John Day Company, 1934), p. 20.

[44] Bowers, op. cit., p. 20.

[45] Edward and Eleanor Marx Aveling, The Working-Class Movement in America (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1891), p. 12.

During one of Beveridge's debates with Phillips, the orator suddenly inquired: "Why don't you make writing a career? A man who talks as well as you should be a great success as an author."[46] Phillips yielded no sign that the question had struck a sympathetic chord. His friend soon noted that he was giving his themes greater attention, and demonstrating a fluent and pellucid style. None of the products of his pen in the seven semesters he completed at Greencastle were preserved. Doubtless he condemned them just as Matthew Blacklock condemned the palace he built to outglow the house of a patrician rival: "like the composition of a school-boy beside an essay by Goldsmith or Hazlitt."[47] The son of Margaret Lee Phillips persevered.

Mrs. Phillips rejoiced in her children's pride and liberty, with the austere joy of Hiram Ranger's wife in the redemption of her son from the necessity of corporal labor. Both mothers cherished the dream of frontier women—to send their boys to college, to eastern universities, if the glory could be afforded![48] Mrs. Phillips wanted her Graham to ascend from the rural lore of Asbury to metropolitan education. She scanned catalogues and, after a few months at the University

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[46] Marcosson, op. cit., p. 30.

[47] David Graham Phillips, The Deluge (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1905), p. 88.

[48] The Second Generation, p. 26.

of Cincinnati, he left Madison and the West in order to enroll at the College of New Jersey in the village of Princeton in the fall of 1885.[49] His mother never learned the first lesson Phillips was taught in the ivy-mantled halls of Old Nassau--"the college is not in the catalogue...."[50]

## 3. PRINCETON--THE INQUISITION

It was the invariable rule of the president of the College of New Jersey, James McCosh, to have a personal interview with every newcomer. The sage from Scotland would have been happy to hear that Phillips, who matriculated as a junior (again the youngest member of his class), was of Covenanter stock too. Not that Dr. McCosh had even the palliest rill of revolutionary blood in his veins. The author of The Method of the Divine Government frowned on all insurrections, except those securely stowed in history, as diabolic disturbances of celestial peace. He had dextrously reconciled Calvin with Darwin, true to the Princeton tradition of metaphysics which beheld no contradiction betwixt matter and deity but two eternal verities. "The

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[49] The year before, Asbury became DePauw University, and expanded liberally as a result of the donations of Washington DePauw. That grim patriot, who began his fortune with a grist-mill and crowned it with plate-glass, provided several ingredients of The Second Generation.

[50] The Second Generation, p. 72.

advantage of such a dualism was the avoidance of the difficulty of trying to think things together."[51] Phillips was not afraid of the difficulty. He reached Princeton with the resolve to find his function in the universe.

For the university records he announced his future profession as—"unknown."[52] He executed curricular tasks with the minimal effort required by his strange dignity of eighteen years. Nothing gave him more pleasure than a duel of ideas, and this was denied him in the classrooms. It was probably hunger for wit-combats that gained him the nickname of "La Bouche." Because of his incandescence in debate he was chosen a member of the Whig Society, which the first minstrel of American democracy, Philip Freneau, and the first humorist, Hugh Brackenridge, founded together with James Madison. The "Whigs" also titled him "Louis Philippe," mistaking his delicacy and grace for the behavior of the bourgeois king. Faithful to the philosophy of Princeton, they made no attempt to solve the riddle of his posture as Mr. Valiant-for-Truth and his costuming like a gentleman from Vanity Fair.[53]

Although Old Nassau employed only a single professor

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[51] Woodbridge Riley, American Thought from Puritanism to Pragmatism and Beyond (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1915), p. 123.

[52] Marcosson, op. cit., p. 51.

[53] Phillips admired Bunyan from boyhood. His first novel, The Great God Success, testifies to the visionary tinker's influence.

of history and three instructors in Greek, her wideawake lads were more keenly concerned with the making of history than they were with the classic ghosts. History was in their eyes largely a business of bimetallism, disputes about gold orthodoxy and silver heresy, or else a question of steep tariffs or free trade. In short, making history meant making money. Why should the children of the Gilded Age (which did not close when Charles Warner and Mark Twain issued their satire on its idols in the midst of the economic panic of 1873) vex their skulls over Aeschylus with his raving against "deadly gold," or the lament of Sophocles on money--"Of evils current on the earth, the worst"--or Aristotle's curious conception of democracy as the dictatorship of the poor? The Greek instructors themselves appeared interested in optatives and aorists rather than those undead thoughts. If the "almighty dollar" was the object of universal adoration in the era of Washington Irving and Jacob Astor, what did it become in Mark Twain's and Jay Gould's epoch? Few of the professors and few of their pupils' fathers viewed transactions like the bribery of Blaine, the "plumed knight" of Congress, as fatal disgraces. "He showed his smartness in it," they opined, "and that is just the smart man we want."[54]

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54 See the New York Nation, XXII, June 29, 1876, and Carleton Beals, op. cit., p. 229.

hardly better than the peripatetic scholarship of Blacklock, the model broker of The Deluge, who was erudite in the pragmatic sanctions of racetrack and "red-light" districts. Blacklock had been taught in the official schools to have scant respect for abstract notions of right and wrong. His teachers had revered piracy in the career of Sir Francis Drake, and provoked him to inquire--Was not "Washington a traitor to his soldier's oath of allegiance to King George?"[55] If fortunes grew over the corpses of workers who outnumbered the soldiers killed in all their country's wars, then that was the manifest destiny of United States production. People with "chocolate eclair backbones" (in Theodore Roosevelt's phrase) might blame the captains of industry. But Blacklock would "as soon have thought of describing General Grant as a murderer, because he ordered the battles in which men were killed or because he planned and led the campaigns in which subordinates committed rapine and pillage and assassination."[56] Naturally, Blacklock and Phillips were told that "Grant's work was at the command of patriotism and necessity." Yet the young man from Madison was fated to struggle for years through the unsentimental education of a wage-earner before he discovered how to tell the patriotism of a Grant from the

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55 The Deluge, p. 14.

56 Ibid., p. 124.

parasitism of a Gould. He did not need Princeton to teach him that "Franklin was right when he said life was a tunnel and one had to stoop, and even occasionally to crawl, in order to get through it successfully."[57] There was no course in the curriculum to show him how to keep spinal rectitude, how to stoop without sycophancy, how to crawl and never risk moral crookedness.

American backbone was severely tested in the spring of 1886. On the first of May the working class launched a general strike for an eight-hour work day. This was no spontaneous explosion like the revolt of 1877, but an intelligently devised movement. "Realizing it to be at basis the first national awakening of the proletariat, progressive men and women of every shade of opinion hastened forward to support it and direct it into one of opposition, not merely to a few of the evils of wage slavery, but to what they considered the fundamental cause itself--the capitalist system."[58] In the forefront of the progressives were such men of integrity and intellect as Captain William Black of Chicago, a Civil War veteran and a giant of the law, Colonel Richard Hinton of New York, a Chartist-trained Englishman

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[57] The Second Generation, p. 255.

[58] Gustavus Myers, History of the Great American Fortunes (New York, The Modern Library, 1936), p. 350. The accuracy of Myers's chronicle has never been assailed.

who had fought under the Union flag too, and Daniel De Leon, who lectured on international law at Columbia University. Ex-Abolitionists were divided on the burning question of the day. James Russell Lowell fumed against the "piratical crew of the eight-hour men," and Wendell Phillips defended them. The crisis reached its peak in Chicago. The owners of the McCormick reaper factories hired mercenary troops called Pinkerton detectives to disperse the rebels there, who were conducting their strike with coolness and sober sense of order under the leadership of the Knights of Labor. On May 2 strikers assembled with their women and children to make the customary demands and appeals to the "scabs" within the plant. Some boys threw stones and, without warning, the police opened a general fire upon the crowd; four workers were killed and many wounded. On May 4 the working people of Chicago were summoned by horror-stricken Anarchists to rally in protest against the capitalist reign of terror. The mass meeting occurred in the Haymarket, and was so quiet that Mayor Harrison left early, followed by many who were disappointed by the speeches, which were utterly clear of Anarchist frenzy. Nevertheless, police arrived in large numbers and, without waiting for the answer to their captain's command to empty the Haymarket, "immediately charged, and began clubbing and mauling the few hundred persons present."[59] Suddenly somebody threw a bomb into the police

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[59] Ibid., p. 354. Cf. Henry David, The History of the Haymarket Affair (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, Inc., 1936).

ranks. Sixty were hurt, one killed instantly. The police drew revolvers and shot wildly into the fugitives from the bomb. Who hurled the bomb has never been found out. The Pinkertons, who were known to have destroyed property and incited to riot in the railroad and coal strikes of Pennsylvania in 1877 and afterward, were charged with the crime. Chicago justice made no attempt to discover the criminal. Instead eight energetic Anarchists were arrested and indicted for instigating the atrocity. The travesty of justice, the court murder of four dreamers who wrote and cried over labor's wrongs, is still the most terrible stain on the honor of Illinois. The others, except one who committed suicide in prison rather than face the gallows, were doomed to long terms of imprisonment. The conduct of the case under Judge Gary made patriots like William Dean Howells, Steele MacKaye, Edgar Lee Masters, Clarence Darrow, and Finley Peter Dunne feel that the honor of Illinois was not alone at stake. The honor of all the United States was in danger.[60]

The fall of 1886 was a crucial season in the life of Phillips as well as in the history of his country. Princeton

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[60] Two novels dealing with the Chicago tragedy, Frank Harris's The Bomb (New York: Mitchell Kennerley, 1909) and Robert Herrick's The Memoirs of an American Citizen (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1905) border on burlesque.

echoed the battle for the mayoralty of New York, when the United Labor Party marching behind Henry George was defeated by the frantic fraud of Republicans and Democrats combined. At the very time Edward Bellamy conceived the purpose "to reason out a method of economic organization by which the republic might guarantee the livelihood and material welfare of its citizens on a basis of equality corresponding to and supplementing their political equality,"[61] the young man from Madison was turning his mind intensely to thoughts of labor and liberty. He garnered the fruit of his meditations for an essay which is one of his few Princeton papers extant. It took the form of a review of George Gissing's novel Demos: A Story of English Socialism, published that autumn. Four ideas dominate his criticism; two of these he rejected twenty years later, and two he cherished the rest of his brief life.

Solemnly Phillips affirmed his youthful belief that "It is a terrible mistake to think that we can better the human race by educating them all--that is if we must attempt to get all the happiness possible out of this life. Education," said the unhappy Hoosier, "brings unsatisfied and insatiable longings that ignorance never knows. Say what you will, increase education and you increase pain."[62] Socialism, he

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61 Edward Bellamy, Equality (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1906), p. v.

62 Marcosson, op. cit., p. 52.

was equally confident, "is utterly impractical." Socialism cannot stop the progress of the ego toward the gains that often bring goods to all mankind. When a clever Socialist achieves wealth and betrays his proletarian friends, that is "the natural result" of dispelled illusions. "It was inevitable that he should grow weary of his former ideas and should seek to free himself from their bonds."[63] So far Phillips reasoned in solidarity with his comrade Beveridge, who was preparing to win glory at the bar of Indiana by his eloquence for the cause of individual increment. Beveridge was bound to become the darling of the corporations whose plants of steel were springing up like toadstools over the Midwest. He was hell-bent to be the youngest member of the United States Senate. Upstarts like Beveridge gave Phillips the conviction that there were limits beyond which Levelers turned into tyrants.

There were two negations of Gissing's critic that the boy orator of the Wabash would not have relished. Phillips despised the Socialism displayed in Demos as a "peculiar" product of English ideology.[64] Being British,

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[63] Marcosson, loc. cit.

[64] Gissing dealt with the statecraft advocated by Henry Hyndman, of whose party Friedrich Engels, the brother-in-revolution of Marx, wrote: "it is so important to break up the Social Democratic Federation as quickly as possible, its leaders being nothing but careerists, adventurers and literary gentry." (Letter to August Bebel, 28 October 1885, in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Selected Correspondence, New York: International Publishers, 1935, p. 442.)

he charged, "It is more sordid, more openly brutal, than any other. It is infused with the spirit of the shopkeeper."[65] The Napoleonic contempt for shopkeepers must have dismayed the Hoosier politician. Where the English novelist thought he was analysing a malady of the whole world, his American critic, revealing a deeper insight, pointed out that he was only attacking an excrescence of a single state. Furthermore, the amazing American took pains to warn the readers of the review that his philippic on socialism was not an apology for the capitalist class. The bourgeoisie, he declared, "indeed is the worst class of modern society. The hypocrisy of their cry of progress is well shown up" by Wyven, one of Gissing's puppets.[66] Mere multiplication of money and machinery might signify, instead of civilized progress, ferocious reaction. Young Phillips had learned by heart the lesson of Flaubert: "Hatred of the bourgeoisie is the beginning of virtue."

Looking for the last time on Princeton ivy in 1887, the man from Madison resolved that he would never live according to the collegiate ideal of a gentleman, which he later designated the "Harvard ideal," because he detested the educational goals of Dr. Charles W. Eliot. "So subtle and evanescent," he laughed, "so much a matter of the most

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[65] Marcosson, op. cit., p. 51.

[66] Ibid., p. 52.

delicate shadings was this ideal" that the most devoted of Harvard graduates "often found the distinction quite hazy between it and that which looked disquietingly like 'tommy rot'."[67] Phillips pilloried Dr. Eliot in The Second Generation as the Reverend Eliot Wilmot, a Boston patrician of the pulpit, who thundered against the theory that Jesus was of lowly origin, and gloated over the tracing of His lineage to royal Israel. The Reverend Eliot Wilmot leaves a fortune to a theological seminary 'to endow scholarships and fellowships for decayed gentlemen's sons."[68] It is very doubtful whether Phillips would have considered the Princeton program of Dr. Woodrow Wilson preferable to Dr. Eliot's activity at Harvard. When Professor Wilson claimed before the guests of the sesquicentennial of the College of New Jersey that the goal of education must not be merely to develop the individual, but to serve the state,[69] he set himself in polar antagonism to the social faith of Phillips. The claim was made upon the occasion of the College's transformation to Princeton University, when designs were contemplated for new buildings in the Gothic fashion. Dr. Wilson was entranced by the architecture which "acknowledged our

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[67] The Second Generation, p. 29.

[68] Ibid., pp. 301-302.

[69] Ray Stannard Baker, Life and Letters of Woodrow Wilson (New York: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1927-1931), II, 34-35.

derivation and lineage" from the cloisters of Oxford and Cambridge.[70] Phillips disdained all medieval masonry in the New World, and must have been angered by Dr. Wilson's endeavors to forge links between Princeton and the "lost causes and impossible loyalties" of decayed England.

He wanted to be a writer of realities. He had searched his powers with the frankness of his father and the patience of his mother, and finished the self-inquisition determined to produce the imaginary history of the United States, his people and his period. In order to discipline himself for the task, he decided to enlist in the army of journalism. A substantial fruit of his years at Princeton was the friendship of the brothers Clarence and Marshal Halstead, whose father was the editor of the Cincinnati Commercial-Gazette and potent in the national press as well as in Republican politics. The Halsteads could help him to cross quickly the threshold of the newspaper world. "Was he wrong in thinking that journalism offered the most splendid of careers--the development of the mind and the character; sharpening of all the faculties; the service of truth and right and human betterment, in daily combat with injustice and error and falsehood; the arousing and stimulating of the drowsy minds of the masses of mankind?"[71] Phillips had no

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[70] Ray Stannard Baker and William E. Dodd, editors, The Public Papers of Woodrow Wilson (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1925,1927), I, 463.

[71] The Great God Success (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1901), p. 17.

illusions about the press. He was ready to encounter the hidden and hideous faces, to scour the darkest corners of his country. "The reporter is a historian. And history is, as Gibbon says, for the most part 'a record of the crimes, follies and misfortunes of mankind'."[72] The lover of leisure and elegance did not flinch before the prospect of hard work, the hazards of the journalism of his time. He knew no other way to his mind's desire. "I must learn to write for the people."[73]

## 4. CINCINNATI-THE STAR REPORTER

Marshal Halstead introduced David Graham Phillips to the managing editor of the Commercial-Gazette on a June morning in 1887. The manager, a man named Smith, blurted that he had enough college boys on the paper.[74] Phillips requested the shamefaced Marshal to introduce him to James Green, the city editor of the Times-Star, a young man who had served on the Halstead staff. Green was a grave youth, and he glanced at the tall handsome stranger with the "great shock of black hair and extreme clothes," and the sissy cigarette, with obvious disapproval. But for the sake of Halstead and auld lang syne he promised to "look around and

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[72] Ibid., p. 28.

[73] Ibid., p. 27.

[74] Marcosson, op. cit., p. 62.

see what could be done." Phillips proposed that he should be allowed to stay in the office, read the exchanges, and maybe "something might come his way."[75]

Day after day the indefatigable Phillips arrived with the earliest at the Times-Star office, perused the journals, smoked his repulsive cigarettes, and watched the news apparatus and the reporters. One morning his chance came. "There was an embezzlement at a bank, a big fire, two or three murders, a political scandal, and what not." In desperate need of news-hunters Green summoned Phillips, explained precisely what he demanded--the facts of a fire in the river bottoms and the facts of the suicide of a woman who had leaped off a bridge. At the time appointed for the copy's delivery Phillips appeared, bringing two stories composed according to Green's rigid rules. Within the week he was granted a regular job. "Within a month he was recognized as the star reporter" in Cincinnati, if not the Ohio Valley.[76] The open secret of

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[75] The newspaper apprenticeship of Phillips was described cheerfully by Green himself in a letter to Marcosson (op. cit., pp. 63-69).

[76] A legend of Phillips's first job that once amused New York runs--"after being graduated from Princeton he went about applying unsuccessfully for a place as a reporter. Finally he was taken on when he offered to work for nothing. Even that would not do. Once in the dog days the owner of the paper entered the room where Phillips was toiling. 'Who is that young man?' he asked the city editor. The latter explained. 'Get rid of him at once,' was the curt order. 'But we are getting him for nothing.' 'I don't care if he is paying for the privilege. Get rid of him at once. I can't bear to see any human being work so hard. It breaks my heart.' Years in journalism were needed before Phillips made good." Arthur Bartlett Maurice, "Old Bookman Days," Bookman, LXVI, September, 1927, 25-26.

his felicity was told by Green in one sentence: "He flung his whole heart into his work, brilliantly and yet laboriously."[77]

For six months Phillips was on the payroll of the Taft family, the owners of the Times-Star, who paid him the same wages the city editor received. He gave the Tafts more than their money's worth. During intervals of tranquillity in the reporter's routine he used to sketch what are termed feature articles. These did not augment his income, but every week two or three were printed and provoked laughter and logic in Cincinnati, especially in the beer-gardens of the district called "Over-the-Rhine."[78] Pieces of philosophy on such topics as ordinary bread,[79] or the goblets of Gambrinus, they were done in a manner that Fielding, Goldsmith and Hazlitt would have applauded. Long before the nonpareil Max Beerbohm thought of "A Defence of Cosmetics," the man from Madison demonstrated in the Times-Star that "Rouging is one of the fine arts."[80] Phillips also conducted a daily column patterned after the feuilletons of Eugene Field. In

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[77] Marcosson, op. cit., p. 69.

[78] The Cincinnati canal was called the Rhine, "because the city's huge German population lived beyond it, keeping up the customs and even the language of the fatherland." (Susan Lenox: Her Fall and Rise, New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1917, I, 283.)

[79] Readers of Susan Lenox will recall the lesson in human brotherhood she learned in a Cincinnati bakery.

[80] Marcosson, op. cit., p. 77.

brief, he practiced his hand in writing about everything under the sun of western Ohio.

He seemed eager to obtain assignments to "cover" politics or interview politicians. On several occasions he conversed with Oswald Dietz, an officer of the Socialist Labor Party in Cincinnati. The twenty-year-old journalist wrote about proletarian revolution with astonishing calm and correctness, in a decade when the words brought to millions of Yankee ears the percussions of bomb or guillotine.[81] His impersonal prose was celebrated for the quality of "human interest" which was later to become the sine qua non of international journalism. If the sincerity of Phillips had not been unchallengeable, he might be called a precursor of the "sob-sister," because of work like his "story of a penniless mother holding a dead child in her arms amid the squalor of a dingy tenement."[82] But he would

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[81] Ibid., p. 75. The star reporter never knew Otto Walster, the editor of the Socialist Labor Zeitung, who was a familiar figure in Cincinnati ratheskellern and cafés chantants. To portray this poet, playwright and novelist, it has been said, "needs a George Meredith at least, if not a Heine or a Balzac.... He makes the path out of the desert at once plainer and more smooth. He goes along it apparently carelessly, with a sort of devil-may-care swing; but he misses no flower that may be noted by the way; nay, he plants many himself, and for the less favoured souls gladdens all the journey with an eternal geniality and with flashes of an exquisite and pathetic humour." (Edward and Eleanor Marx Aveling, op. cit., pp. 207, 208-209.) Phillips seems to have been acquainted only with the Scotch-Irish breed of Socialist, like the martyred carpenter Tom Brashear in Susan Lenox: Her Fall and Rise.

[82] Marcosson, loc. cit.

have branded the "sob-sister" a sentimental swindler; he was constitutionally incapable of the sin unpardonable by Artemus Ward--"slopping over."

Phillips defined the method of his journalism in a letter sent to a friend of his childhood in Madison, Earle Martin, who had asked him for counsel in preparing for a newspaper career. First, Phillips noted, he must read widely, not less than "everything that the great writers have written." Next, in creative composition,

> he should try to get atshort, clear and simple words, expressions of actual thought--short words, Anglo-Saxon words, words that the laboring man and humble people will not stumble over.
>
> I should say that a man should learn to be simple, natural, and absolutely unaffected in his intercourse with his fellowmen--learn to judge men and things fairly, charitably, amd without considering what other people think of them.[83]

The final advice rings like Dante's Segui il tuo corso, e lascia dir le genti. Rarely had Indiana known a son who was so resolute to be his own master. Phillips had a cordial share of the American skepticism of the wisdom of Aesop which asserts that the placid and persistent are inexorably the victors in life's races. He makes the Hoosier mother of poor, scared Harvey Sayler urge him to aggressive strategy in the pursuit of happiness: "Better go too far and too fast than not go at all.... Once a tortoise beat

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[83] Ibid., p. 79.

a hare,--once. It never happened again, yet the whole timid world has been talking about it ever since."[84] Phillips did not hesitate to tell fellow-reporters the strategy he had designed for his life. Seymour Dunbar, the future author of the vivacious History of Travel in America, remembered how the star reporter informed him of his plans, "just what he intended to do. He did not say he 'hoped' or 'wanted' to do it. He said he was going to do it...."[85] Phillips intended to use journalism as the best public school for the knowledge of "men and social conditions." After mastering the lore of newspapers,

> he would then make a big name for himself as a writer of books, that is, novels with a purpose; a purpose not solely or even with the major object of making money, but with the intent to shed a lot of light on certain phases of the national life which as he then admitted he did not know much about, but which he intended to know a lot about as a basis for his books.[86]

Murat and Marshal Halstead persuaded him to enlist on the staff of the Commercial-Gazette with a salary more than twice the amount the Tafts paid him. He joined them primarily because their organ promised a scope and variety surpassing those of the Times-Star. He was permitted liberal play in

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[84] The Plum Tree, p. 4. Compare the militancy of Robert Stilson, the hero of A Woman Ventures (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1902). "He rose rapidly and was not laughed at for his idealism and his Puritanism, partly because he was able, chiefly because he had that arrogant temperament which enforces respect from the irresolute, submissive majority."(p.257).

[85] Marcosson, op. cit., p. 80.

[86] Ibid., p. 81.

a column on the editorial page which was titled "Lagniappe."[87] His friendship with James Green continued for many years; as he told his first mentor in journalism, the latter's teaching was responsible for his success. The good Green protested, "David Graham was born to write."[88] He did not realize that he had doubly armed the novice by confirming the theory he cherished of the nature and necessity of truth, the ways to disclose and explore it, and how to make the millions listen to it. The applause of the Halsteads was wine to Phillips; the praise of Green had been bread. Nevertheless, in consorting with these admirers and Seymour Dunbar and Edwin Flynn, who occupied a desk next to his own every afternoon at the Commercial-Gazette office, he was unable to subdue the feeling that he was alien and solitary among them. No man in Cincinnati could see the heart of the Hoosier genius stark. There was one man employed by the Halsteads who might have been a superb companion. Sad to say, Phillips hardly had time to make the acquaintance of Lafcadio Hearn before that passionate pilgrim escaped from Ohio winter to New Orleans early in 1887. Hearn, despite his predilection for the perverse, had plenty in common with the apostle of the plain. Both men loved French literature, and had the faculty of keeping the news brand-new, Phillips by day and

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[87] The Louisiana word for tradesmen's trifling gifts to customers. See Mark Twain's Life On the Mississippi, Chapter XLIV.

[88] Marcosson, op. cit., p. 69.

Hearn by night. They were equally fascinated by the vistas opened by Darwin's doctrine of natural selection, and believed there was no limit to the metamorphoses of mankind. Both toiled like galley-slaves at their quotidian tasks, confident that it was impossible for journalism to crush out of them the determination to advance and excel. "Phillips was among the first in Cincinnati to appreciate the possibilities of Hearn. He not only held him up to his colleagues as an artist in writing but talked with him" whenever he could lure the half-blind recluse to conversation.[89] What a friendship the world missed when Lafcadio Hearn listened one frosty night to a fellow-reporter speaking of the liveoaks, magnolias and mockingbirds of Louisiana!

No man in Cincinnati could see the heart of the Hoosier genius stark. There was one woman who plucked out the heart of his mystery. Carolyn Phillips, his sister, was married to Henry Frevert, a merchant of the city, and the star reporter lived at her home while he worked for the Times-Star and the Commercial-Gazette. Mrs. Frevert exerted the supreme influence on her brother's life. Her power can be compared with none save the queenly influence that Madame Laure

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[89] Ibid., p. 82. How much Hearn and Phillips had in common may be seen in rich detail in Life and Letters of Lafcadio Hearn, edited by Elizabeth Bisland (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1923), I, 44-56.

Surville, the sister of Balzac, had over him. Carolyn Frevert's belief in the genius of her brother did not waver once, despite his ever-increasing army of enemies and his blundering friends. She lived to see him reach the gilded summit where the "best-sellers" of America flourish and fade. She witnessed the twilight of his fame shortly after his assassination, and to the day of her death in 1930 peered forward to its resurgence. Unfortunately Mrs. Frevert bequeathed no biography of her brother to vanquish critics. Her will was that his defense should rest in his own words.

In 1886, when the star reporter of Cincinnati was wondering if he was strong and resourceful enough to dare the ordeal of New York, she encouraged him to go east. Both felt that, if the heart of the United States was to be heard beating in the valley of the Ohio, the brain of the nation pulsed on the Atlantic coast. He who aspired to become what Balzac called the secretary of society was bound to work in the metropolis of his people. Where else could an American "painter of types of humanity, a narrator of the dramas of private life, an archaeologist of social furniture, a classifier of professions, a registrar of good and evil" find the materials of his art in such abundance? Above all, where, if not in New York, should he "probe the reasons or the cause of these social effects, detect the secret sense

of this vast assembly of figures, passions and incidents"?[90] They were sure that one year after his arrival in Manhattan he would say of Indiana what Horace Armstrong was to affirm of Battle Field from a New York vantage-point: "I'm glad I come from there--but I'm glad I came."[91] However, Phillips did not feel sufficiently armed for a victorious fight with the city until the spring of 1890.

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[90] Balzac, "Introduction," La Comédie Humaine (Paris, 1842). There is no doubt that Phillips's model was Balzac. See Arthur B. Maurice, op. cit., p. 25.

[91] Light Fingered Gentry, p. 155. Armstrong's remark calls to mind the answer of George Ade to the query, had he ever noticed how many bright people came from Indiana--"Yes, and the brighter they are, the quicker they come."("Literary Chat," Munsey's Magazine, XXVI, March, 1902, 869.) The myopic morality of provincial journalism seems to have given Phillips a sense of suffocation, which he conveys in the following lines from his final novel: "She had read in the [Cincinnati] Commercial. . . an article on working girls, how they were seduced to lives of shame--by love of finery! Then she read that those who did not fall were restrained by religion and innate purity. There she laughed--bitterly." (Susan Lenox: Her Fall and Rise, I, 344.)

## CHAPTER II

## THE EASTERN ARTIST

Fortune, in the common or American sense of the word, never seems to have tempted David Graham Phillips. When he renounced the ambition to climb to the pinnacles of finance, his kith and kin must have wagged their heads in wonder over the odd lad. Some may have sighed, "he will have to be supported. He is too much of a dreamer."[1] Behold this dreamer! His native hue of resolution was rarely sicklied over by the pale cast of thought. On the contrary, thought made his countenance redder with determination. He faced without a qualm the peril of loneliness in the East, in quest of his felicity. "It doesn't disturb me to think of myself as alone.... But it would disturb me if I were propped up and weren't sure I could stand alone."[2] History had taught him that greatness had nothing to fear from solitude; its perils emerged from mobs, rabble of hero-worshipers as well as mobs of idol-demolishers. Unlike Carlyle, he discerned the relativity of greatness, the abysses that make the peaks. He saw the heroes towering among the stars because they all climbed on the backs of multitudes whose subjugation appeared grandiose only in the tomes of servile scholars

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[1] The Great God Success, p. 93.

[2] Hampden Scarborough, in The Cost, p. 54.

from the same species as the victims.

> I wonder how much of their supernal glory would be left to the world's men of action, from its Alexanders and Napoleons down to its successful bandits and ward-bosses, if mankind were in the habit of looking at what the winner had opposed to him,--Alexander faced only by flocks of sheep-like Asiatic slaves; Napoleon routing the badly trained, wretchedly officered soldiers of decadent monarchies; and the bandit or ward-boss overcoming peaceful and unprepared and unorganized citizens. Who would erect statues or write eulogies to a man for mowing a field of corn-stalks with a scythe?[3]

Phillips left the West a democratic materialist. He had learned well "the primer lesson of large success--that one must build upon the hard, pessimistic facts of human nature's instability and fate's fondness for mischief, not upon the optimistic clouds of belief that everybody is good and faithful and friendly disposed and everything will 'come out all right somehow'."[4] He had very few illusions about popular sovereignty, but had no faith in the steadfastness of personal liberty that was not founded on the liberty of the masses. They were "my kind of people, the working classes," and he was not in the least inclined to rise above their ranks. He lacked "the money-making instinct,"[5] and believed that rulers were shackled to the same yokes as the ruled. The supernal love of his life was for freedom.

"If a man fixes his mind," Hampden Scarborough said,

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[3] The Plum Tree, pp. 175-176.

[4] The Second Generation, p. 236.

[5] The Great God Success, pp. 1, 30, 105.

"not on making friends or defeating enemies, not on elections or on history, but just on avoiding from day to day, from act to act, the condemnation of his own self-respect,"[6] his right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness will be in truth inalienable. Phillips possessed no other guide to the labyrinths he was going to enter. The old folks at home regarded New York with holy terror as a sky-scraping Babylon--"New York, that lures young men from the towns and the farms, and prostitutes them, teaches them to sell themselves with unblushing cheeks for a fee, for an office, for riches, for power."[7] Phillips felt that the metropolitan nets that could ensnare his soul were not precious metal or imperial purple. They would have to be of subtler stuff, entrancing the vanity of his genius. He knew only one way to guard his ego against them, the way of self-oblivious labor. When he glanced over the glowing new world by the Atlantic, the humming hive of Manhattan, his tongue already tingling with foretaste of its honey, he did not, like Eugene Rastignac staring at Paris in Balzac's terrible and beautiful Père Goriot, declare war on that world. Instead David Graham Phillips went to work.

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[6] The Plum Tree, p. 386.

[7] The Great God Success, p. 267.

## 1. NEW YORK--THE SUN REPORTER

In those days the New York Sun, owned and run by Charles A. Dana, was revered by American journalists everywhere as "the newspaperman's newspaper." To labor under the banner of Dana was "the ambition of half the reporters in the United States."[8] During the Civil War he had been lauded by Lincoln as the "eyes of the Administration."[9] His pupils on Printing House Square merited the reputation of being the eyes of America. From the morning and evening "shops" of the Sun were graduated many hawk-visioned spectators of the continental pageant, writers who knew how to crest the plankton tides of literature. The reportage of Arthur Brisbane and Julian Ralph--the yarns of Samuel Hopkins Adams, Rudolph Block ("Bruno Lessing"), Irvin S. Cobb, Richard Harding Davis, Will Irwin, E. W. Townsend ("Chimmie Fadden"), and Jesse Lynch Williams--the melodramas of A. E. Thomas and Eugene Walter--these have not lost their savor, can yet attract and amuse. Unhappily, the doctrine of Dana, which was crystallized by his disciple John Bogart in the classic definition--"If a man bites a dog, that is news," conduces to quick

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[8] Will Irwin, The making of a Reporter (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1942), p. 92.

[9] Elements of Dana were used in the making of Malcolm, the wizard editor in Phillips's initial novel, whose "period of greatest activity and most intimate acquaintance with the behind-the-scenes of statecraft" was the Civil War. (The Great God Success, p. 159.)

mortality in literature. Shakespeare would have wrought a sensation on the stage by compelling King Lear to bark back at the little dogs, Tray, Blanch and Sweetheart. But he cared less for novelty than for necessity.

When the city editor of the Sun, Daniel Kellogg, asked David Graham Phillips what were his qualifications for service under Dana, the man from Madison answered, "I think I can write."[10] He carried no letters of introduction on that May morning when he entered the Sun house, and doubtless made an easy target for the jokes of future collaborators, standing on the threshold in the radiance of his raiment. He was hired at a salary far inferior to what he received from the Times-Star. Before the year's end he had more than tripled the sum in his pay envelope. Long before the end of 1890 his fellow-workers stopped smiling at "young Lochinvar out of the West," with his lofty collars and lapel chrysanthemums; somehow he impressed them as over six feet and three inches in stature. Not only was he "the most perfect dandy on Manhattan Island;" they judged his head was "designed by nature to fit sooner or later into a gallery of portraits of imposing statesmen."[11] Phillips preferred election to a gallery of star journalists. He once assured a Sun mate, Robert Sterling Yard (who became an editor of the Century

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[10] Marcosson, op. cit., p. 97.

[11] Charles J. Rosebault, a veteran of the Sun staff, quoted in Marcosson, op. cit., p. 99.

magazine), that he would "rather be a good reporter than president of the United States."[12]

Every day the attire and lordly behavior of the Hoosier dazzled the eyes of the Sun, but there were enough brains behind these eyes to discover the intellect so gallantly arrayed. Mr. Yard admitted,[13]

> Phillips was recognized at once as brilliant, and more quickly than most he swung into the bigger reportorial work. He grasped the Dana idea fully. Though he often over-wrote, he took the blue pencil with the same cheerful sense that he took everything and everybody he met. For so fastidious a dresser with so grand a manner to be so absolutely democratic caught the fancy of the staff....

The man from Indiana was convinced that the culture of the republic had ripened beyond the Puritanic and provincial phases, and should strip aristocracy of the monopoly of sartorial art. "If democracy meant freedom of individual development, why should Americans be restricted to standard modes of dress while realms of hierarchy, caste and guild flaunted infinitude of color and cut of garments? Le style c'est l'homme, and dress "is a covering for our ideas no less than for our bodies."[14] The clothing of Phillips reflected his conviction that "we should be grateful for all varieties of human nature--the valleys that make the peaks, the peaks that make the abysses." He towered as a phenomenal protest against the kind of democracy that acted as "if human nature

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[12] Ibid., p. 101.

[13] Loc. cit.

[14] Old Wives for New, p. 43.

were one vast prairie," as if homo sapiens were intrinsically Hoosier![15]

The extraordinary dress and face drew the attention of a gifted toiler for the Herald, Charles Edward Russell, who met Phillips when they were chasing the mystery of a Staten Island murder in March, 1891. They became intimate, and the intimacy was strengthened when Russell was made city editor of the World and thus Phillips's official superior for over two years. Their relations continued to be cordial after Russell emerged as a potentate of the Socialist Party and tried to convert the realist to his cult of the all-swallowing state. When their paths first converged, Russell "saw at once that the young man had an unusual gift of style but no qualifications for police work."[16]

A favorite rendezvous of the reporters was Katie's cafeteria by the Brooklyn Bridge. Anarchists were alleged to meet there, which made it alluring. The "Fourth Estate" has always found outlaws fascinating. That is why the luminaries of the Chicago press, led by "Mr. Dooley" (Finley Peter Dunne) and George Ade, formed the Whitechapel Club, named after the netherworld of London. Phillips used to dine at Katie's and add to the din there with unwearying dissection

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15 Light-Fingered Gentry, p. 83.

16 Marcosson, op. cit., p. 100.

of men and motives. At one time, Robert Yard remembered, he predicted literally his future occupation:

> He would work for newspapers, he told me, as long as there was anything more to learn of life, method, and workmanship. That would take him until he was about forty, which he conceived to begin life's best achievement. Then he would write novels for all the rest of his life.[17]

On two assignments of the Sun Phillips contributed classics to American journalism. The first is famous as the story of the Lost Child. New York was stirred to tears and Dana was thrilled by his report of the recovery of a three-year-old boy who had vanished for three nights in the wilds of the Catskill Mountains.[18] The other triumph was earned in the summer of 1891, when he was ordered, while wearing an immaculate white suit, to take a train bound for Tennessee where armed miners were striking. He went immediately and, within twenty-four hours, won the good will of the workers. Their lips unlocked for the "dude," not for the other newspapermen present, who debated the secret of his magnetism.[19]

The following summer witnessed the ultimatum of

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[17] Ibid., p. 102.

[18] Mr. Marcosson's reprint of the classic (op. cit., pp. 104-109) ought to be compared with Phillips's variation of the theme in The Great God Success, pp. 20-24. Will Irwin (op. cit., p. 110) errs in designating New Jersey as the scene of the adventure.

[19] Marcosson, op. cit., pp. 109-110.

Andrew Carnegie for sweeping reductions in the wages of his workmen at Homestead, Pennsylvania. They marched on strike and he mobilized thirty Pinkerton detectives to escort "scabs" into his company's plant. The gunmen came on barges which were prevented from landing by crowds of strikers and their comrades. The New York Tribune told how the Pinkertons fired into the crowds, and the workers retaliated with bullets. Eleven steel-laborers and nine detectives were killed. The enraged rebels strove to set fire to the Carnegie barges and to blow them up with dynamite. At last the Pinkertons surrendered. On their way to the Homestead hospital the rebels scared them sick by tongue-lashing and rough handling, but there was no more violence. The next day the strikers returned to the works; Carnegie had conquered. William Dean Howells regretfully wrote to his father: "How much better if the Homesteaders could have suffered the Pinkertons to shoot them down unarmed."[20] What Phillips wrote or thought of the Homestead tragedy is not public knowledge.[21]

For three years his brilliance entranced the readers

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[20] Life in Letters of William Dean Howells, edited by Mildred Howells (Garden City: Doubleday, Doran & Company, 1928), II, 25.

[21] In the two novels that Phillips produced with the "Fourth Estate" as background, the protagonists undergo spiritual baptisms of flame as reporters of militant strikes in the coal regions of Pennsylvania. See The Great God Success, p. 63, and A Woman Ventures, Chapter XI.

of the Sun. Seldom did the herculean Hoosier leave the press before midnight. Urged to make new acquaintances he probably retorted with the words of Howard, the lonesome star reporter of his maiden novel, "Can they tell me anything that I can't learn from newspapers or books more accurately and without wasting so much time?" Yes, he would enjoy meeting persons of charm and achievement, but "I can't afford to hunt for them through the wilderness of nonentities."[22] The gay world of sport and scandal was not for "my kind of working man."[23] He went straight from the office to his room, exulting there in the hermetic recreation of thinking and composing,--and often wrote until sunrise. Perhaps the habit of nocturnal trawail was an emulation of the beloved Balzac. He did feel refreshed and free "when the rest of the world is asleep."[24] No doubt it was at night that he produced his earliest magazine publication, "The Rescue of the Jeansville Miners," which appeared in Harper's Weekly in March, 1891. This article on the salvation of five brave workmen from a flooded Pennsylvania coal-pit was an expansion of a news item he had written. It brought him intoxicating praise from magnates of journalism beyond New York:

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[22] The Great God Success, p. 96.

[23] Ibid., p. 98.

[24] Marcosson, op. cit., pp. 114-115.

> David Graham Phillips, who is said to be a reporter on the staff of the New York Sun, and one of the youngest in the service, tells the story of "The Rescue of the Jeansville Miners" and tells it with such dramatic force, with such fine appreciation of the power of its humanity, tenderness, and heroism, and with such vigor and brilliancy of diction that almost any author might be glad to claim it as his own work.[25]

All but one of the eleven contributions he made to Harper's Weekly were transcripts of various facts he gleaned while winning his daily bread. "The First Born" was the earliest of his imaginary stories to reach the public. A pathetic miniature comedy, it portrays the estrangement of married lovers by a baby boy. Theme and method prompt us to surmise that William Dean Howells would have been happy to sign it in the spring of 1892. But Howells confessed in the winter: "I doubt if I shall ever write another story in which mating and marrying plays an important part. I am too old for it, and it does not interest me."[26] Love and matrimony were from first to last the central subject-matter of the tales of David Graham Phillips. Since the school-days when the exploiting and brutalizing of women made him furious, he had held cardinal the belief that "the most important and most interesting subject in the world" is "the relations of the sexes."[27] Historic movements struck him as

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[25] Editorial, "Literature and Journalism," Philadelphia Ledger, March 17, 1891.

[26] Letter to Charles Eliot Norton, December 11, 1892, in Mildred Howells, op. cit., II, 29.

[27] "Before the Curtain," a preface to his play, The Worth of a Woman (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1908). The preface was in the main reprinted for Susan Lenox: Her Fall and Rise.

processions of men and women; social abstractions were merely mantles for carnalities. In old Asbury he probed national trends until he confronted what he identified as the nucleus--"the personalities and motivations of individual men behind such movements--and how political and economic events affected the individual and social relations of people."[28] On the Sun he was primarily concerned with "men and motives." And human motives, the paramount relations of people were, in the eyes of Phillips, quintessentially questions of mating and marrying.

It was inevitable that the reporter who could make himself at home among all classes of his fellow men and women, including bankers and miners, should receive an invitation from Joseph Pulitzer, the blind dictator of the most dynamic newspaper in New York, to work for the World.

## 2. LONDON--THE FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT

Phillips accepted Pulitzer's handsome wages in May, 1893, and rose swiftly in his esteem and affection. The boss of "the World shop" provided the mask and tongue of Malcolm, the cynical editor in Phillips's initial novel. The wrinkled "satirical" head (particularly the long, inquisitive, "sarcastic" nose) is unmistakable.[29] Malcolm is

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[28] Professor Joseph Piercy, quoted by Marcosson, op. cit., p. 26.

[29] The Great God Success, p. 86.

in fact nothing but an acrid amalgam of the outstanding traits of Pulitzer and Dana as autocrats of the press. Nothing but printer's ink runs in his arteries; he is journalism incarnate. The minds of Dana, who had experimented with communism at Brook Farm in youth and aided Secretary of War Stanton in the war to extirpate black bondage, and Pulitzer, who had volunteered for the Union cavalry shortly after arriving in America and then sweated as a Mississippi stevedore, were far less limited. Malcolm's newspaper principles leaned to Pulitzer's practice rather than Dana's. The latter desired the Sun to be interesting; the World wished to be exciting. Pulitzer was prone to relinquish accuracy for the sake of art-like effect. Journalism under Dana was a profession; under the lord of the World it was an adventure as well. The blind boss proved the boldness of his fancy when he decided, in the very month of his employment of Phillips, to send the young star as a correspondent to England. "Nothing could suit me better," replied Phillips, recalling his declaration to James Green, less than six years before, that he intended to become the foreign correspondent of a great New York daily.

From London the following month was cabled the masterpiece of his newspaper career. The twenty-five-year-old correspondent enabled the World to give the British the first true story of the sinking of their battleship Victoria after

colliding with the Camperdown in a "mock war" off Tripoli on June 23. Admiral Tryon's stupendous effrontery, and "The loss of three hundred and fifty-eight lives ranked it as the greatest of all peacetime naval disasters."[30]

In July Phillips surprised the World with a second revelation in advance of all other journals. He obtained in an unknown way a copy of the encyclical Rerum novarum of Pope Leo XIII. It shocked American Catholics on the 31st, but no Catholic seer could pierce the future and witness that "charter of the Christian labor movement" upheld in Europe as a manifesto of Fascism![31] The Pope's call for a crusade against unholy socialism made no deep impression on Phillips. If we are justified in regarding his hero Robert Stilson (once a romantic reporter on the World--fresh from Princeton) as a surrogate for the realist, we may conclude that the encyclical only corroborated his irreligion. Stilson's university "studies in science and philosophy had taken away his creed."[32] Thorndyke, the hero of the single novel of Phillips dealing with religion, affirms:

> At school I was shocked by the unbelief of my fellows.... And one day we read in Cicero, 'Why do the oracles at

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[30] Marcosson, op. cit., p. 148.

[31] Ibid., pp. 164-165. See Pierre van Paassen, Days of Our Years (New York: Hillman-Curl, Inc., 1939), p. 465.

[32] A Woman Ventures, p. 257.

> Delphos no longer speak? Nothing is more in contempt than they.' And I asked myself the same question about the oracles of our fathers. And I began to examine my faith--and it vanished.[33]

The God of Home got no homage from the World star, but he was frankly iconoclastic toward the religion of London. He never tired of attacking the "snob-god who calls some Englishmen to be lords, and others to be servants."[34]

To spread his fame and so prepare the United States for his novels, Phillips requested Pulitzer to attach his name to the letters from London. The autocrat of the World blandly ignored the request, and permitted his foreign correspondent's work to be confused with stuff from United Press bureaus. Late in the autumn of 1893 Phillips appealed to the blind boss for the signature in a long letter. The proud proletarian declared:

> I have distinct ideas of what I wish my future to be. Being naturally of an inert disposition, I do not wish to struggle against any greater odds than I must. Therefore I am uneasy at the prospect of a state of affairs which would mean only disaster to me.[35]

Phillips lacked the modesty of the Princes of Wales; he would never take for his motto Ich dien. Pulitzer sensed the defiance of his hegemony in the appeal, and answered his

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[33] The Mother-Light (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1904), p. 210.

[34] A Woman Ventures, p. 145.

[35] Marcosson, op. cit., p. 167.

servant with polite regrets that he was contemplating resignation, and that the New York office had been issuing the London letters "under protest".[36] Phillips refused to defend his work, and despatched his resignation without delay. He remained in London until one Ballard Smith was installed carefully in his job.

In "the mid-ocean period when the worlds on either side of those infinite waters dwindle into unreality,"[37] he had ample leisure to review and digest his experience in England. He never forgot

> that marvelous English ability at specializing men--a system by which a man intended for a certain career is arrested in every other kind of growth, except only that which tends to make him more perfect for his purpose.[38]

The system explained the nearly idiotic beatitude of the British ruling class: "they were entirely free from that ill-at-easeness about their own and their neighbor's position in society which makes the American upper classes tiresome and ridiculous."[39] The British aristocracy were serenely sure that the toiling poor of the realm would never violate the Westminster Catechism, would never refuse to occupy the place

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[36] Ibid., p. 168.

[37] A Woman Ventures, p. 136.

[38] The Husband's Story (New York and London: D. Appleton and Company, 1910), p. 201.

[39] Ibid., p. 210.

ordained for them by Heaven. The starvelings of the East End of London, wildly warbling "Britons never, never, never shall be slaves," showed no impulse to follow their Leveler, Digger or Chartist ancestors. Socialism, as they learned it from the gospel according to Henry Hyndman and his Social Democrats, was a hifalutin word for looting.[40] William Morris and Eleanor Marx Aveling preached revolutionary communism forever, but apparently in vain. The captains of British labor climbed upon its shoulders to berths in parliament and imperialist banquets, and left their less agile brethren to the Salvation Army. Phillips pictured the typical plebeians of the Empire in Dr. Wackle and Mrs. Clocker of Craven street, near the Strand, London.[41] He pictured the average aristocrat in Lord Arthur Gordon-Beauvais, Earl of Frothingham, the fortune-hunter of Golden Fleece. The American mimicry of Europe's "ingrown" lordships, which he witnessed in London and while crossing the Atlantic, provoked him to vitriolic laughter.

He was glad to see the Goddess of Liberty again, but not many hours after his ship saluted the statue he was informed that the World required his energy as a reporter at home. The exasperating Pulitzer had ignored his resignation.

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[40] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Selected Correspondence, pp. 446-447.

[41] A Woman Ventures, Chapter XXXIII.

Phillips did not demur, since he had not completed the unsentimental education of journalism he planned at Princeton. He returned home more exquisitely dressed than ever, his virile beauty heralding clearly the man of destiny. Alone in the 'nineties he lived according to the ideals of panoply cherished by Oscar Wilde and yet worked so contrary to Wilde's ideals of literature!

## 3. NEW YORK--THE COSMOPOLITE

The love of Phillips for the metropolis was all-inclusive, oceanic, like Dickens's passion for London and Balzac's for Paris. The man from Indiana found felicity in strolling up and down Broadway and the Bowery, scrutinizing each community of far-fetched immigrants teeming betwixt the Battery and the Bronx. He walked at dawn and at dusk, and wondered when the crucible of the United States would create from the foreign hordes not just a fraternity of races but the first internationality, exemplars of the cosmic family to come. The handsome Hoosier was familiar everywhere in the city, drinking the sunshine and the air of the sea in the variable-voiced streets. Still he was a stranger. Hundreds knew him, liked him, respected him; none ever penetrated to his heart of hearts. He himself could not unravel the mystery. When he endowed the protagonist of his initial novel with the enigma, he offered as "explanation of this combination of openness and reserve, friendliness and

unapproachableness," the fact that "his boyhood and youth had been spent wholly among books. That life had trained him not to look to others for amusement, sympathy or counsel..."[42] Books were never more than tools for Phillips, instruments necessary in the making of his manhood concordant with a very early dream-image of David Graham Phillips as a man of the world. The dream may have been derived from his father's volumes. He aspired beyond patriotism to be free and have friends everywhere on the earth. "I purpose," Hampden Scarborough cries, "never to 'belong' to anything or anybody."[43] "Lovers do not "belong" to each other, they are not mutual property. And no American was a greater lover than Phillips of "this land which Lincoln so finely and fully described when he said: 'the republic is opportunity.'"[44]

He liked especially to walk in Washington Square, looking "upon a panorama of the human race such as is presented by no other city in the world and by no other part of that city."[45] He could stand and stare without weariness at the delicatessen stores and the beer-gardens, in remembrance of Cincinnati's bohemia "Over-the-Rhine." The

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[42] The Great God Success, p. 61.

[43] The Cost, p. 54.

[44] The Deluge, p. 1.

[45] The Great God Success, p. 34.

affairs of the German clubs he attended, the choral and the theatric verein, made him equally gay and grave. He listened to their songs and discussions, the adoration of their mundane trinity--Arbeit, Liebe und Heim, which he celebrated long years later in his novel The Fortune Hunter. Perhaps no nationality that was blending with the blood of the Republic stood higher in his esteem than the Germans, unless it was the French. He searched for and gloried in Gallic restaurants. Profoundly moved by the opera La Bohème (his memory of Emma Calvé in the role of Mimi was imperishable), he brooded over the problems of feminine freedom it suggested.[46] There are haunting evocations of Murger's tragedy and Puccini's music in his earliest novels. Phillips's pleasure in opera is comparable to Walt Whitman's enthusiasm, and James Joyce's. In January, 1894, he wrote an incandescent half-page narrative of Nellie Melba's debut as Juliette. The heroine of one of his last novels, The Price She Paid, is trained to become an operatic star by an American whose mother was a great Italian soprano. More than by Germans, Frenchmen or Italians, the intelligence of Phillips was captivated by Jews. He may never have met the Hebrew sojourners in Indiana, except perhaps a pedler or two,

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[46] A Woman Ventures, pp. 219-220. Calvé (as Carmen) sings in Golden Fleece: The American Adventures of a Fortune-Hunting Earl (New York: McClure, Phillips & Co., 1903), p. 106.

resembling gypsies.[47] In New York he surveyed their bewildering breeds with a strange joy, and even played with the plot of an epic about the evolution of Israel. "The poetry and spirituality of the Hebrew appealed to him."[48] Superficially the Jews seemed internationalism in the flesh.

Among the maxims for youth which were his earliest contribution to the editorial page of the World may be found this: "Do not despise, either in manner or fact, any human being. Learn all you can from every one, even the meanest, and remember that your own weak points are just as weak as anybody's else."[49] One department of the World, "Stories of the Day," granted him a certain scope for his cosmopolitan sympathy. It was a miscellany of incidents, fragments of tragedy, comedy and romance, that were garnered by reporters at police courts, inquests, morgues, hospitals, tenements, and the quotidian theater of the streets. Health and humor joined with reason to persuade him that the globe did not sustain so many tragedies as the periodical reckoned. They

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[47] See the Prologue to Old Wives for New, p. 6. Young Murdock, the giant financier of that novel, enjoys Jews. His "best friend at home in Indianapolis is a Jew." (Ibid.) The best friend of Beveridge in the town was his Jewish partner in law, Leo Rothschild.

[48] Isaac F. Marcosson, Adventures in Interviewing (New York and London: John Lane Company, 1923), p. 244. Cf. Louis Filler, Crusaders for American Liberalism (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1939), p. 118.

[49] Marcosson, David Graham Phillips and His Times, pp. 174-175.

were accustomed to exploiting the august term for all sorts of misfortunes, including a few suspiciously like farces. Phillips was keenly tempted to deny that the age was capable of tragedy. He contended that "Money troubles and poor health are about the only serious calamities,"[50] and these rarely lifted people to cothurnate grief, rather tumbled them to its antithesis. Poverty gives rise to the tragic only through courageous struggle: "line and wrinkle and hollow always have the somber grandeur of tragedy" when, like those carved on the face of Harvey Sayler's mother, they tell of battle with privation, a "story of fearlessness, sacrifice, and love."[51] Phillips's theory of dramatic pity and terror slowly but ineluctably developed to the point where he was willing to concede a third rudiment of tragedy--bereavement. Did the earth bear a greater sorrow than "the eternal separation" of lovers by death? Still, this woe is not more common than love faithful to death, certainly not so frequent as the eternal separation of lovers by marriage. The "Stories of the Day" that Phillips wrote mainly teach a lesson which he formulated thus: "Do not take yourself too seriously.

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[50] The sentence is spoken by Joan Gresham, a female journalist with sturdy common sense in A Woman Ventures (p. 226). Madelene Schulze, the female physician of The Second Generation, whose nerves are more tender, says that "Disease and death and one other thing are the only really serious ills," the other thing being dishonor (pp. 290, 295). Yet suffering caused by acts of shame compels quasi-comic disgust, not tragic pity.

[51] The Plum Tree, p. 11.

Remember that the universe revolves about himself for every man and not for you alone."[52]

His humor enabled him to weather the doldrums of routine to which Pulitzer condemned him. Since the London mutiny the boss considered the star a bad bargain. Phillips redeemed himself in the spring of 1894 by a sequence of articles on seven major universities. The assignment gave him time for a "lightning" journey to Madison, a blissful visit to his parents. To his father he confided the discovery that "One college is so much like another that I have a hard time thinking of things to say."[53] He was also "of the opinion that if the Congress and the Senate don't adjourn, the people will rise in a body and root them up and throw them into the Potomac."[54] It was a hope rather than an opinion. He was outraged by the insolence of the trusts in Washington, despite the Sherman law of 1890. Although the law was a Republican measure, "the leaders of the Republican party were very careful not to include anything in the bill that would interfere with big business."[55] The Rockefeller miracle of oil had inspired the Havemeyer project to control

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[52] Marcosson, David Graham Phillips and His Times, p. 174.

[53] Ibid., pp. 175-176. He did not except his alma mater Princeton.

[54] Ibid., p. 176.

[55] Richard F. Pettigrew, Imperial Washington (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Company, 1922), p. 248. See also Gustavus Myers, op. cit., p. 696 et seq.

the price of sugar refined in the United States. The sugar trust, Phillips fulminated to his father, pays its laborers "starvation wages and it has no excuse for existence."[56] Then he smiled at his fulmination: "I am afraid you'll think I am affected with mental indigestion. But it is one of the proud privileges of youth to be indignant over follies and wrongs, real or fancied."[57] Congress, the Senate in particular, would one day smart under the lash of his laughter.

Fate was kind to him in the winter of 1894. Charles Edward Russell was chosen city editor of the World. On the first day of his new job "he noticed on the assignment sheet that Phillips had been detailed to a piece of 'key-hole' reporting," which the Hoosier despised. A husband seeking divorce was trying to trap his wife by a revolting device.[58] Russell's first official act was to release his friend from the task, and Phillips's star was again ascendant. He was no longer tormented with assignments proper to sleuths or pedants. Congenial to him were such duties as the description of a tempest that strewed the Atlantic coast with wrecks, and the portrayal (Rembrandt-like) of the "children of Hope" haunted by death in the Montefiore Home for Incurables and

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[56] Marcosson, David Graham Phillips and His Times, p. 176.

[57] Ibid., p. 177.

[58] Ibid., p. 179.

Chronic Invalilds. In gay mood he sketched the New York Horse Show, which he treated with ludicrous effect in Golden Fleece.. When the World's dramatic critic fell sick, he was sometimes invited to act as understudy. He warmly admired the histrionic skill of Minnie Maddern Fiske, who thrilled the diecade in Becky Sharp and A Doll's House. The greatest of comtemporary actresses, in his judgment, was the Italian tragedienne Eleanora Duse. In her honor he wrote column after column for his journal. When he created those two magicians of the stage Maida Hickman and Susan Lenox, the image of Duse shone in his mind. He endowed both with her sublime quality,"that mystery of attraction called personall magnetism--strong ani silent and mysterious as gravitation,, its corresponding force in the universe of matter."[59] His materialism later attained the nerve to analyse the mystery, but he never went so far as Oscar Wilde's criticism of woman, the sphinx without a secret. Phillips realized that tlhe secret of the sphinx was sex--but it remained nevertheless a mystery.

Russell and he had in common a craving to emerge from journalism to litterature. The editor wished to write books on poetry and drama. He produced a volume on the Elizabethan theater that Phillips strove in vain to sell for publication.

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[59] The Mother-Light, p. 1.

They attempted a lexicon for cynics or a "Dictionary of Things As They Are," in order to make money, apparently unaware of Ambrose Bierce's performance, The Devil's Dictionary. But the collaboration was short-lived.[60] The two men were not commonly in concord. Russell was astonished to learn that his companion's reading had been restricted mainly to classic prose. The poets he enjoyed were extremely few, yet he enjoyed them fervently. Keats was dearest to him; the "Ode to a Nightingale" he lauded as the greatest lyric in English. Next to Keats he loved Shelley, whose "Ode to the West Wind" was second in his esteem only to Keats's poem. As for Tennyson, his opinion of the Laureate verged on Stephen Crane's--"swill!" He considered Swinburne infinitely superior. Phillips himself was innocent of juvenile verse. However, he made Robert Stilson, the journalist hero of A Woman Ventures, who so mightily resembles his creator, responsible for a book of love lyrics![61]

As ardently as the friends talked about literature, they discussed the state of the nation. Once Russell inquired who Phillips thought was the most admirable figure

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[60] Eventually Russell became the author of Thomas Chatterton: The Marvellous Boy (1908) and Julia Marlowe: Her Life and Art (1926).

[61] Stilson's volume is entitled "In Many Moods" (A Woman Ventures, pp. 274-275). Phillips offers no samples of the songs, perhaps disdaining to invite poetical friends to contribute to Stilson's glory, as Balzac persuaded Théophile Gautier to fortify Les Illusions Perdues.

in modern American life. The Hoosier's prompt reply was "Grover Cleveland." Why? "Simply because he told the truth."[62] Russell responded with an oration on his idol, the Abolitionist and labor agitator, Wendell Phillips. He was astonished to learn that the Hoosier knew very little about him. After reading Martin's biography of the eloquent Yankee, Russell's companion inscribed Wendell Phillips on the scroll of heroes in his heart.

The World began to attach the name of David Graham Phillips to his feature articles which were being reprinted extensively. Pulitzer was exhilarated and made an overture to renewal of their original relations of cordiality. The star joined the autocrat's retinue and accompanied him to London. Phillips was "acute enough to separate the wisdom from the cynicism of his chief." Pulitzer tried to teach him "the art of compromise," with arguments as unctuous as these:

> Whenever your principles run counter to the policy of the paper, it would be wise to think the matter over carefully before making an issue. Usually there is truth on both sides, much that can be said fairly and honestly for either side. Often devotion to principle is a mere prejudice. Often the crowd, the mob, can be better controlled to right ends by conceding or seeming to concede a principle for the time. Don't strike a mortal blow at your own usefulness to

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[62] Marcosson, op. cit. supra, p. 183. The South Dakota senator Richard Pettigrew, who was an implacable enemy of Cleveland, said that, though the president "was reputed to have certain rugged virtues," "The only one that I remember his friends boasting about was that he would do as he agreed." (Pettigrew, op. cit., p. 220.)

good causes by making yourself a hasty martyr to some fancied vital principle...."[63]

Phillips found the logic hard to contradict, yet he suspected that truth upon this tilted planet was generally single-tracked. Devotion to principle might often be prejudice, but what trustworthier guide was there for the perplexed? Martyrdom was a terrible destiny, but did not self-respect demand contempt for death? Hamlet was right!

> Rightly to be great
> Is not to stir without great argument,
> But greatly to find quarrel in a straw
> When honour's at the stake.

It was Arthur Brisbane who suggested to Pulitzer the promotion of Phillips to the editorial staff of the World. In the winter of 1896 he was elevated to the rostrum of the blind boss's private forum. That was the season when Albert Beveridge was elating Matthew Quay, the senatorial servant of the trusts, with rhapsodies against John Altgeld, the governor of Illinois, who pardoned Anarchists and denied President Cleveland the privilege of despatching Federal troops to break a railroad strike in his state. Phillips was glad of the chance to explore the limits of his liberty of speech in Pulitzer's organ. He agreed with the blind boss that the unvarnished naked truth was too savagely shocking for the public, especially the ladies. "Unadulterated

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[63] Cf. The Great God Success, pp. 95, 161.

truth always arouses suspicion in the unaccustomed public. It has the alarming tastelessness of distilled water."[64] Frequently the young editor's contributions were rejected by William Merrill, his supervisor. They were usually re-written with the signature "D.G.P." or "Constant Reader," and thus eluded the myopic Merrill, who was pleased by their manly style. "It was powerful in its simplicity, its merciless raillery and irony; and only at the very end did it contain passion."[65] There were occasions when Phillips rendered statements that could not have come from his hand if his shoulders were free of the editorial mantle. When William E. Gladstone died in June, 1898, he asserted, "Death has given to history a Colossus of Democracy, a citizen of the world, a friend of mankind."[66] Four years before, in a letter to his father, he denounced the Liberal champion of British commerce:

> He has always been the enemy of this country. He has hated us consistently. He tried to ruin us during the Civil War and, until it was policy to say sweet things about us so that the Irish Americans would send over money for Liberty (sic!) party campaign funds, he never said anything about us that was not full of the venom and jealousy of

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64 Ibid., p. 95.

65 Ibid., p. 177.

66 Marcosson, op. cit., p. 178.

narrow English provincialism.[67]

The "art of compromise" has a fatal affinity to its trade.

## 4. DREAMER OF THINGS TO COME

When Carolyn Frevert and her husband moved to New York, Phillips felt as if great beacons had been kindled on his path. In her presence no drudgery, no dilemmas could make him lose the vision of his true life-work. When Russell quit the World in the autumn of 1897 to don the harness of William Randolph Hearst, his friend disdained to follow the drift of journalism in the Hearst wake. Phillips did not reject altogether the doctrine and practice of the "yellow" press. "He believed that the success of the 'yellow journals' with the most intelligent, alert and progressive public in the world must be based upon solid reasons," virtues surmounting vulgarity.[68] Was it not axiomatic "that the first object of a newspaper in a democratic republic is to catch the crowd, to interest it, to compel it to read, and so lead it to think"?[69] Very few patriots at the close of the century saw the rift of venality and malice in the yellow calliope.

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[67] Ibid., pp. 176-177. Beveridge had no respect for Gladstone because "he did not do things--he talked." The meteoric Hoosier preferred Disraeli and Bismarck. He forgot that Gladstone was responsible for butchery in Egypt and Ireland beside which the deeds of Disraeli and Bismarck flicker feebly. For Beveridge's obituary on the Briton, see Bowers, op. cit., p. 72.

[68] The Great God Success, p. 165.

[69] Ibid., p. 170.

When it widened in the war against Spain, the pretext that America was embattled for the liberty of Cuba concealed the sulfurous fissure. Pulitzer clamored with Hearst for the carnage that would enthrone the United States over subjects outnumbering citizens. They knew as well as William Dean Howells that the war would usher in "an era of blood-bought prosperity, and the chains of capitalism will be welded on the nation more firmly than ever."[70] The grand larceny named the annexation of Hawaii, the despotism established in the Philippines to strangle the republican revolution there, and the betrayal of Cuba into colonial serfdom proved the real nature of the new journalism. The "yellow" press was actually the voice of the plunder-lust called imperialism. Phillips had learned almost from the cradle that "Freedom's battles were never fought by men with full stomachs and full purses,"[71] and that war is "the arch-enemy of progress, the great trickster of man through his finest instincts"--"how many of those who would have lived most gloriously for their country has it cost us!"[72]

The blind dictator of the World "rather liked the idea of war--not a big one--but one that would arouse interest and give him a chance to gauge the reflex in his circulation

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[70] Letter to sister Aurelia, April 3, 1898, Howells, op. cit., II, p. 90.

[71] The Great God Success, p. 238.

[72] The Reign of Gilt, p. 247.

figures."[73] Alas, his journal's profits could not compete with Hearst's fortune, so fast were they engulfed by the costs of cables and correspondents. The desperate Pulitzer "lost interest in war and turned to urging an early peace."[74] His editors were ordered to demand the breaking up of the pest camps in Cuba and the return of the troops without delay. The plea for peace upheld the World's circulation, and its autocrat began blaring against imperialism, against the saber-brandishing of Roosevelt and the rape of the Philippines. He shrilled louder polemics on the Boer War, until the British were securely entrenched in South Africa. The indignation of Phillips against the banditry of Dr. Jameson in the Transvaal and the atrocities of Kitchener, not to mention the pusillanimity of President McKinley in dealing with the delegates of the Boer Republic,[75] was permitted full play for a short time. During the South African war the young editor was rewarded for his defense of the downtrodden Dutch farmers with the decoration of the Military Order of Pretoria, which was despatched to him by the war

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[73] Pulitzer's own confession, quoted by Walter Millis, The Martial Spirit: A Study of Our War with Spain (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1931), p. 77.

[74] Ibid., p. 348.

[75] McKinley's policy was excellently sketched by the Irish humorist Finley Peter Dunne in "The Boer Mission," Mr. Dooley's Philosophy (New York: R. H. Russell, 1900), pp. 69-75.

correspondent Richard Harding Davis.[76] How joyful old David Graham Phillipps and his Margaret must have been to learn of their son's devotion to the fierce love of freedom on the African veldt, which was identical in bone and sinew with the energy that made every soul sovereign in the American backwoods!

Soon Pulitzer tired of the Westerner's editorial earnestness, his attacks on the trusts, his philippics on "The Coal Baron and His Serf," and so forth. Pulitzer insisted that his private forum should be conducted in a spirit of ridicule. Then the editors were forbidden to occupy their columns with politics for a brief while. When Phillips consented to rest from his rostral labors in France and Italy, the autocrat was delighted. He corresponded spasmodically with the traveler, suggesting that he look at various paintings and monuments, and read various authors (including the advocate of usury, Jeremy Bentham). Phillips visited the Riviera and Rome, and sent the boss laconic and cool letters. There was one topic about which they could write with wholehearted mutual compassion--insomnia. Each was indefatigable in finding and inventing ways to win the mercy of Morpheus. The god laughed at their nets. However, Pulitzer did not yearn for comradeship, merely for

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[76] Marcosson, op. cit., p. 191.

courtiers. He exhausted for Phillips his arsenal of clever devices for taming servants who refused to be servile. In August, 1899, he invited the independent editor to his home at Bar Harbor, Maine, with this cajolery:

> Let us make a bargain, apropos of your imperious sensibility....Promise me, upon oath, that when you come here you will insist upon my telling you the truth about your work, your development, and your ambition during the last three years.[77]

But the broncho would not be broken of dancing!

Phillips was excited over the election of his college companion Beveridge to the United States Senate. As the youngest member of that body, Beveridge drew the national limelight to himself by a deed without parallel in the career of any American chosen for high public office in the nineteenth century. He left the country in order to observe with his own eyes a situation he was bound to aid in framing laws for. He sailed with his wife in May, 1899, for the Philippine Islands, where he was an eye-witness of the counter-revolutionary measures taken against the natives. He went on to the Oriental mainland, and saw the sundering of the body of China by Great Britain, Russia, France and Japan. A perfervid imperialist, he was nearly frantic with thoughts of what America was missing in Asia--her opportunities for colonial expansion! He sped home and, in January,

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[77] Ibid., p. 197.

1900, delivered to the Senate an oration full of flamboyant rhetoric, but not one sentence of sober portrayal of the Philippines or the Far East.[78] He could have made the same speech without the expense of his trip across the Pacific. The imperial theme of his rhetoric could be condensed to a few words: The "divine mission" of the United States is to "administer government among savage and senile peoples." He did not go so far in imperialist delirium as William Allen White, who shouted from his Kansas pulpit: "Only Anglo-Saxons can govern themselves. The Cubans will need a despotic government for many years to restrain anarchy until Cuba is filled with Yankees."[79] Only youth could excuse Phillips's friend for his slanders of the Filipinos and the Chinese, for eloquence worthy of that monarch who commanded his mercenaries in the Far East to behave like Huns. Phillips patiently endeavored to make the boyish Republican partisan realize that he was trampling on the cardinal tenets of the Republic. In what did the grandeur of the United States consist? Phillips answered:

> Not tyranny, not murder disguised as war, not robbery disguised as 'benevolent guidance,' not any of the false and foolish ideas of imperialism and aristocracy. But ideas of peace, of equal rights for all, of self-government.[80]

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[78] See Mark Sullivan, op. cit., pp. 47-48. Finley P. Dunne lampooned Beveridge's speech in "Young Oratory," op. cit. pp. 129-133.

[79] W.A.White, editorial, in the Emporia Gazette, March, 20, 1899.

[80] The Reign of Gilt, p. 290.

Phillips reminded his friend, the future biographer of Lincoln, of the downright declaration of Lincoln: "I say that no man is good enough to govern another man without that other man's consent. I say that this is the leading principle, the sheet-anchor."

In the spring of 1900 Phillips planned another voyage to Europe. As he had said of Senator Beveridge in a World editorial on his friend's pilgrimage to Manila, he

> needed rest and a change of scene. He took it as a man of serious purpose must always take a vacation. He went where he could best improve his mind for his career, for the service of his country.[81]

Pulitzer sent him letters of introduction to eminent men on the continent, and asked for details of "your own and your sister's plans." He guessed that his youngest editor wanted to "desert" him. "Be candid for once," the blind boss begged, "--you rascal!"[82] Vaguely he perceived that Mrs. Frevert held a wonderful authority in the world of her brother. Since he could not understand it, he ridiculed it. She encouraged the insubordination of Phillips and, while tranquilly handling his economic affairs, kept his esthetic ambition blazing. She steeled his nerve to the split with Pulitzer.

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[81] Editorial, "A Wise Young Man from the West," New York World, May 1899, quoted by Marcosson, op. cit., p. 33.

[82] Marcosson, op. cit., p. 201.

When Joseph W. Piercy, who had been a classmate of Phillips in Greencastle, published a story in the Atlantic Monthly of February, 1900, the restless editor congratulated him heartily, and printed a plaudit for the tale in the World. He liked its homely humorous realism, following the trail of Edward Eggleston, the patriarch of Hoosier literature. The next year he wrote to Piercy: "It is hard to write well, isn't it? I'm in despair. The more I write the farther I seem to be from the goal--and it's a modest goal, too."[83] Modest indeed! He simply aspired to become the supreme realist of the United States. What else could propel that "inert disposition," that exquisite temperament to noctambulism, to brain-spinning researches in natural science and political economy, to writing reams and destroying all but a few quires of what he wrote? His immediate aim may be called modest--from the viewpoint of a titan. The star editor determined that his first major venture in fiction should explain the environment in which he had worked for thirteen years. The Frederick Stokes Company accepted The Great God Success early in 1901, with alacrity, as a novel of newspaper life by a journalist of international repute. The author's contract with the tyrant of the World did not allow his name to appear anywhere else. Therefore the book appeared under the

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[83] Ibid., p. 208.

pseudonym of John Graham.[84] The reviews, especially those of newspapers, were exhilarating to Phillips.

In May the British publisher Grant Richards arrived in New York, and visited the house of Stokes. A director suggested that he might be pleased "to see over an American newspaper office," and asked the young novelist to serve as a cicerone young the World. The Briton remembered Phillips as "rather English than American, as wearing an English straw hat with a club ribbon and as being very polite."[85] Apparently he did not remember the initial novel, although he later published two of the author's books, Golden Fleece (1903) and The Master Rogue (1904). Richards recollected clearly that neither "made any impression or was profitable in England."[86]

Pulitzer enjoyed The Great God Success "very much with one single reservation," he told the author in May, 1902. He never told him what that reservation was. Six months after the book was launched, Phillips signed his farewell to the World. The "Fourth Estate" of New York was wonder-struck by

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[84] George Horace Lorimer, the editor of the Saturday Evening Post, bestowed the name on the Chicago pork-packer whose financial philosophy he expounded in The Letters of a Self-Made Merchant to His Son (1903) and Old Gorgon Graham (1904). There was an instructor in gymnastics at Harvard named John Graham, but nobody attributed the novel to him.

[85] Grant Richards, Author Hunting by an Old Literary Sportsman (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1934), p. 165.

[86] Ibid., p. 166.

his fulfilment of the promise he made so many years ago. He had vowed to leave journalism at forty, but prophets are rarely exact in chronology. He was scarcely thirty-three years old, and stood on the meridian summit of his profession. Old acquaintances, like Charles Rosebault of the Sun, tried to dissuade him from the surrender of an income of eight thousand dollars a year. They painted with the grim veracity of Hogarth the hazards of the Grub-street destiny Phillips appeared to be facing. Some muttered that he was "spoiling a good newspaper man to make a poor novelist."[87] The romantic Rosebault was amazed by the resolution because he knew how the Hoosier abhorred poverty. "He demanded more of life than most men," remarked the veteran of the Sun. Once Phillips told him that, when he left home, his father gave him "just one bit of advice. 'Graham,' he said, 'always buy the best.'"[88] How did the Indiana "dude"--with his paradoxical dreams of a democratic literature capable of winning the admiration of cosmopolitan Europe without fantastic costume and "local color"--expect the American book-buying public to sustain him in the luxuries that he considered necessities? Rosebault never forgot how

> We walked up and down Fifth Avenue under the stars and argued it out. I was in full sympathy with his purpose. I had been thrilled by his first effort and was convinced

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[87] Arthur Bartlett Maurice, op. cit., p. 26.

[88] Marcosson, op. cit., p. 213.

> that he would make good, but I did not want him to burn his bridges behind him. He had written one novel while holding down his job, why not another?
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> But he had made his decision. That was a closed chapter.[89]

## 5. TOUJOURS TRAVAILLER!

The house in Washington Square where he dwelt and toiled over The Great God Success was haunted by ghosts of paupers and starvelings. After his valediction to the World, he climbed its stairs with glowing hopes of prosperity, hopes winging from the welcome of his first novel and the acceptance of two magazine articles for which he had been promised $75 each.[90] The enthusiasm of Senator Beveridge prompted George H. Lorimer of the Saturday Evening Post to request contributions from the "free lance." Lorimer read and appreciated his book; a Philadelphia interview convinced him that Phillips could furnish entertaining and instructive stuff for the Post mill. The novelist earned more than his annual wages on the World during his first year as a "free lance."

In those days the public derived acute pleasure from articles and tales about the big game of making and breaking

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[89] Ibid., p. 214.

[90] Maurice, loc. cit.

fortunes, and the cognate sport of setting up and upsetting political forces. The time was still far away when exposures of the machinations of millionaires would be castigated as un-American, and anarchistic. Phillips cheerfully labored for Lorimer, writing essays on the Morgans, Rockefellers, George W. Perkins, David B. Hill, and their cronies. A glance at several titles of his Post pieces amply indicates their nature: "Democrats and Diamonds," "Swollen Fortunes," "Penalties of Plutocracy," "The Mills of the Money Gods." They were uniformly composed from the standard of capitalist free trade, of the type championed in The Great God Success --"not dangerous or demagogical because they were just and were combined with a careful avoidance of encouragement to the lazy, the envious, the incompetent and the ignorant."[91] Populist farmers would have spurned them as "pussy-footing;" Socialist workers probably dismissed them as "petty bourgeois."

Herculean is the sole word for the way Phillips worked to preserve his creed of diet and dress. Between the summer of 1902 and the winter of 1905 he contributed fifty articles to the Saturday Evening Post, and numberless editorials. At the same time he scribbled a weekly column of gossip under the title "The Looker-On" for the New York Times. With extreme painstaking he produced articles and short stories for magazines of wide plebeian circulation. When his reputation

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[91] The Great God Success, p. 182.

as a novelist reached stellar magnitude, some of his longer tales were printed in serial form. Meanwhile he maintained a meager correspondence with his kindred and a few dear friends, particularly "Bev."

In March, 1901, the Senator submitted to his judgment a manuscript on the Cuban question intended for the North American Review. Phillips replied with characteristic candor:

> Don't like the article at all. It is too sober and monotonous a form, and the argument is not consecutive and drags. In one or two places it is specious, I think.... My judgment is that you must entirely re-write--put in dash and spirit but NOT RHETORIC.[92]

The artist misconstrued his stately friend's purpose, which "was deftly to show that there was still a possibility to acquire Cuba," despite the Teller Resolutions and McKinley's gestures of good-neighborliness toward the island.[93] Phillips had no conception of the depth of Beveridge's imperialism, which enraptured his fellow-legislators also under the party whip of Nelson Aldrich of the Sugar Trust. However, the statesman clung to Phillips's affection and would not allow the discords of their politics to estrange them. When he sailed to the Philippines again in August, his soul was chilled by remembrance of his dead wife, with whom he had

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[92] Marcosson, op. cit., p. 34.

[93] Bowers, op. cit., p. 141. The piece, for which Phillips urged the title "Keeping Faith with Cuba," appeared in the North American Review as "Cuba and Congress," CLXXII (April, 1901), pp. 535-550.

made his prior voyage to Manila. The pangs of loneliness froze the exultation of his researches in the white American's "Burden." They drove him to cry out to "The oldest and best-loved friend of all": "It takes all my nerve. How I need you to talk to."[94] Persistently, loyally, the novelist went on teaching the ex-lumberjack that the genuine greatness of their country consisted in useful, creative men and women, and would never be reckoned in fiscal and colonial statistics.

Toward the end of May, 1902, there was an assembly of Hoosier men of letters at Indianapolis in order to increase the Benjamin Harrison Memorial Fund. George Ade, Charles Major, George Barr McCutcheon, Meredith Nicholson, James Whitcomb Riley, Booth Tarkington, and Lew Wallace combined their talents, with the blessing of Beveridge, for the Republican scheme. Phillips could not lend a hand to an enterprise glorifying Cleveland's rival, a president whose nomination had been gained by the Aldrich machine after "A hundred negro delegates were secured, bought at fifty dollars the head."[95] Republican presidents following Lincoln were handled with scant courtesy in the books Phillips wrote in this period. One of them appointe Howard,

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[94] Bowers, op. cit., pp. 156, 162.

[95] Nathaniel Wright Stephenson, Nelson W. Aldrich: A Leader in American Politics (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930), p. 71.

the protagonist of his first, as minister to the Court of St. James after he has proved disloyal to the masses.[96] Golden Fleece darts a sarcasm at President Arthur and his "employment agency" for poor relations of political lackeys.[97] Phillips's contempt for the despots of industry impelled him to support the Democratic party--but his equal contempt for the agrarian hysteria whose mouthpiece was William Jennings Bryan would not let him belong to that outfit. His devotion to Cleveland was embittered by the sight of plutocrats such as Phelps Dodge, Theodore Marburg, Taylor Pyne, and William Whitney bearing his hero's banner.

The swiftly changing national scene and the need to propel his pencil daily and nightly for livelihood made it hard to think things through. He told his sister Mrs. Eva McLelland, "Perhaps in ten or fifteen years I may do something of some value.... I'm still an obscure apprentice who must work very hard each day, harder now than at any time in my life."[98] He looked forward to a Falstaffian death--"scoured to nothing with perpetual motion." The death of his father made him severely conscious of the revolutionary ordeals America was traversing in his own generation. One would need to capture in prose the velocity and clarity of

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96 The Great God Success, pp. 290, 296.

97 Golden Fleece, p. 186.

98 Marcosson, op. cit., p. 225.

the new art of the cinema before one dared to fasten the United States in black and white. He could not afford to brood over autopsies of malformed and stillborn brain-children.

> I don't wait for mood or inspiration, and I don't give up because I don't begin right or am writing rubbish. I think it's fatal to give way to moods. And I'm not a bit afraid to throw away everything I've written or to edit my stuff to the bone--"Travailler, toujours travailler, encore travailler." I think that's the secret of developing whatever possibilities one may have.[99]

Beveridge watched eagerly for the appearance of each new book by his truest friend and most merciless critic. He used to run into every bookstore he passed to inquire about the purchases of the novels. When the sales register was favorable, he wrote to Phillips with boyish gladness, not forgetting to express a grievance against the given work's mordant, radical ideas on rights and wrongs. The Cost was the earliest of the novels to attain the apex of profitable fiction, the roll of the "best-sellers." This triumph in the spring of 1904 gave Phillips the confidence to load every rift of sequent work with ore of truth from ever profounder veins, all that the market would bear--and more! His novels never stayed long on the lists of America's fleeting favorites in fiction, but he found happiness in the fancy that his seeds were being flung far over the land and would

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[99] Letter to Joseph Piercy, winter of 1902, in Marcosson, op. cit., p. 227. Cf. The Great God Success, p. 202.

blossom in many, perhaps hundreds, of unknown minds. When The Deluge was published and broadly bought in the fall of 1905, Beveridge was in ecstasy: "How proud we ought to be of David Graham Phillips. How splendid to see his talents flower into genius as they are doing every year." 100 The energetic Senator himself was breaking out with pink symptoms of progressivism. The spirit of the age penetrated to the core of his spirit.

Prior to the World War, the year 1905 was perhaps the most decisive in the history of the human race. The Orient made titanic strides toward revolutions for modern republics. Russia staged what Lenin later designated the "dress rehearsal" of the proletarian victory of 1917. General strikes convulsed Europe and shook the moribund monarchies to their foundations. And the United States witnessed the rise of industrial socialist labor unions. The three bravest and most brilliant chiefs of the American proletariat, Daniel De Leon, Eugene Debs, and William Haywood joined their energies to build the Industrial Workers of the World. They promised a peaceful transformation of the system of profit and property into a commonwealth where the producers were the possessors. Phillips did not share their conviction that the multiplication of goods by communal mastery of tools

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100 Letter to Phillips, October 30, 1905, in Marcosson, op. cit., p. 37.

would end "the more or less turbulent wrangling over the division of the rewards" of work. But he was absolutely concordant with them in the belief that

> The joy of life is the exaltation that comes through a sense of a life lived to the very limit of its possibilities; a life of self-development, self-expansion, self-devotion to the emancipation of man.[101]

He agreed with them that wealth alienated from labor, "breeder of parasitism and patronage, has shriveled and rotted" the joy of life, "always, everywhere."[102] Finally, he was in harmony with the three in stressing the right of revolution as defined in the Declaration of Independence and Lincoln's first Inaugural Address.[103]

The promise of the I. W. W. was nullified by Anarchist wreckers and Socialist partisans who were faithful to the American Federation of Labor, whose officers were called by Mark Hanna the "labor lieutenants" of the captains of capital. The new unions were also assailed by people who titled themselves "Progressives" and were very voluble against all restraints of the right of man to traffic freely with labor-power or any other commodity. They were stentorian in favor of laws to hamstring the trade of the trusts. Since the trusts were ferociously fond of imperialism, the "Progressives"

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101 The Reign of Gilt, pp. 233, 276.

102 Ibid., p. 262.

103 Ibid., pp. 291-292.

talked tirelessly against it. Typical of the lot was Robert LaFollette of Wisconsin of whom the historian Frederick L. Paxson shrewdly said that, "apart from his political gestures" (i.e., demagogy),

> he was a defender of capitalistic society against itself. He was never a Socialist or a destroyer. He believed, I think, that unless checked by a hand sympathetic to capital as such, capital was almost certain to suicide in U. S., and to bring on an effective opposition of Socialism.[104]

The "Progressives" were struggling to preserve the small business, the small farms, manufacturers, money-lending firms of America, who seemed to be threatened with extinction between the millstones of corporate capital and organized labor. Their speeches and gestures were not entirely fruitless. Typical of their accomplishments was the Pure Food Law which was endorsed by Congress after national tumult over the "Progressive" revelations of the Meat Trust. The law was adopted only when it "had been robbed of its original sting by the guaranty clause."[105] The most active agitators for the law and similar reforms were ladies and gentlemen whom Theodore Roosevelt styled "Muckrakers," so zestful were they in piling alps of facts about the filth of business and statecraft.

At the head of the "Muckrakers" marched Ray Stannard Baker, Charles Edward Russell, and Lincoln Steffens, all

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[104] Quoted by Stephenson, op. cit., p. 478.

[105] Stephenson, op. cit., p. 465.

friends of Phillips. A number of students of the period have claimed that the movement embraced him too. Certainly he rejoiced in the unmasking of rich criminals and polluters of the ballot. "Democracy," he affirmed, "drags public corruption out of its mole-tunnels where it undermines society, drags it into the full light of day, draws its deadly fangs that fasten in fundamental human right."[106] However, the "Muckrakers" did not menace the fangs of public corruption; they were blissfully busy with the task of moderating their cruelty and diminishing the poison. Their activity was merely the climax of so-called vice crusades that swept the nation at the close of the nineteenth century. Phillips derided those crusades as "periodic spasms of virtue," products of the "sacred Anglo-Saxon hypocrisy" whose outcome was generally a vulgar revulsion against the crusaders.[107] The futility of reforms that never delved to fundamentals was demonstrated by a single incident in The Plum Tree. A corrupt party manager in that story (a boss of the breed denounced by Steffens in The Shame of the Cities) is indicted and convicted before a party judge. "Of course," the protagonist grins, "following the custom in cases of yielding

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[106] The Reign of Gilt, p. 11.

[107] The Great God Success, p. 173. See Finley P. Dunne's satires on "The Crusade Against Vice," Mr. Dooley's Opinions (New York: R.H.Russell, 1901), pp. 153-158, and "Reform Administration," Observations of Mr. Dooley (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1906), pp. 167-172.

to pressure from public sentiment," the judge "made the trial-errors necessary to insure reversal in the higher court."[108] [The "Muckrakers" criticised judges, not courts; party bosses, not parties; statesmen, not the state. Indeed their endless appeals for government intervention in economic concerns increased the might of the executive arm dangerously. Their hatred of the trusts led to the ideal of the state as a super-trust, the ideal cherished by Woodrow Wilson. No wonder so many of the "Progressives" found themselves parading under Wilson's flags, defending his imperialist aggressions in Haiti and Mexico, and the Treaty of Versailles!]

Beveridge was vigorously instrumental in the passage of the Pure Food Law. He was already in rebellion against the arrogance of Aldrich in the Senate. In a sharp debate over railroad legislation he had seen the Republican boss's fangs bared against him, threatening under breath, "He'll get you for this!"[109] Phillips was immensely pleased by Beveridge's struggle to preserve the "original sting" of the Food statute. "That's the kind of thing I like to see your name associated with," he wrote to his friend in May, 1906. "It is the best thing you have done in the Senate, and I do not say this because of my personal interest in reforms of various kinds, but from the standpoint of real practical politics."[110]

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[108] The Plum Tree, p. 15.

[109] Stephenson, op. cit., p. 266.

[110] Marcosson, op. cit., p. 40.

Phillips thus practiced on the Senator the Machiavellian technique he recommended in his novels: "To get a man to vote for the right you must show him that he is voting for the personally profitable."[111]

Phillips surpassed all the "Muckrakers" (and wrung from President Roosevelt the immortal epithet!) with the sensational articles collectively entitled "The Treason of the Senate." When Bailey Millard, the editor of Randolph Hearst's Cosmopolitan Magazine, invited him to write a thorough exposure of the Senate, he refused, because he was absorbed in his novels. He suggested William Allen White as a substitute, but the Kansan could not undertake the work. Millard appealed to the artist once more, "agreeing to pay him any price he asked. The novelist named a sum that he believed to be out of the question, and was overwhelmed when his offer was taken."[112] His brother Harrison, a journalist in Denver, and Gustavus Myers, author of the classic History of the Great American Fortunes, were employed by Hearst to help assemble the materials for the tremendous indictment. Phillips set to work in characteristic fashion, with hand, brain and heart in unison. He raced to Washington to consult Beveridge and acquaintances

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[111] The Plum Tree, p. 139. Indeed, "what necessity but the material is there?" (The Second Generation, p. 181.)

[112] C. C. Regier, The Era of the Muckrakers (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1932), p. 110.

in the capital, and returned home to toil nocturnally on the first clinical scrutiny of a modern political body. The series ran in the Cosmopolitan from March to November, 1906. Hearst composed a preface for the series, pledging that no guilty person would be spared. His attorneys examined each article word by word before it went to press. The honesty of Phillips's scalpel was never challenged by one Senatorial suit. Nevertheless, Roosevelt ventured to hint that he was a liar in the oration against the "Muckrakers" that he made at the laying of the cornerstone of the House of Representatives building (April 4).[113]

Among the foremost to rush to the protection of the Senate from the fury of Phillips was Senator Beveridge. The realist was deeply hurt by the sophistic article he wrote on the question. "I have read your scream on the Senate," Phillips replied curtly, "and I'll try to answer it in two or three months. You and Tillman and LaFollette might at least refrain from defending the indefensible. But after all, that is your business, not mine."[114] The artist was amazed by the national response to his polemic on the "business."

> The Cosmopolitan declared that Phillips's articles were stirring the country as it had never been stirred before, but they had little effect on the political careers of

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[113] Regier, op. cit., pp. 1-2.

[114] Letter to Beveridge, July 31, 1906, Bowers, op. cit., p. 164. The apology for the "Millionaires Club," entitled "The Rich Man in Politics," was reluctantly published by Beveridge in the Saturday Evening Post, June 16, 1906.

> the men attacked, and Phillips himself was so depressed by the savage denunciations visited upon him by various periodicals that he refused to write any more articles.[115]

The exasperated editor of the Atlantic Monthly, Ellery Sedgwick (who liked to lecture on the essentials of a gentleman) fumed against Phillips and his collaborators: "These men want Socialism!"[116]

## 6. MANHATTAN-THE DEATHPLACE

No matter where Phillips wandered, death was never distant from his path. When he was eight years old, walking in the sunshine of Madison, a vicious swine attacked him. He was dragged away from the foaming face in time to prevent a ghastly injury or killing. When he was twelve, he fell through the hatchway of a hardware shop and lay in darkness, unconscious and badly bruised, for hours before he was found.[117] In his sophomore year at Asbury, he suffered a prophetic dream--

> An old man with long white hair and beard came to me and said, 'You will have a short life'; whereupon I replied, 'Short, but merry!' To this the old man answered, 'No--short, and not merry.'[118]

While in the service of the Sun he was ordered one day to

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[115] Regier, op. cit., p. 255.

[116] Filler, op. cit., p. 255. Mr. Filler adds invidiously that Sedgwick "was mistaken: what Phillips was after was the truth"!

[117] Marcosson, op. cit., pp. 17, 18.

[118] Ibid., p. 23.

write a report on the White Squadron (which comprised in that epoch nearly the whole United States navy). With two other journalists he left the cruiser Atlanta to go ashore in a skiff, and the little boat was capsized by huge rolling waves. He could not swim, and narrowly escaped drowning.[119] Death by hunger and a grave in Potter's Field were the least of his terrors. When he severed his links with Pulitzer, he was without the luxury of enemies, although several men were envious of his newspaper prowess and spoke venomously of him behind his back. "The Treason of the Senate" gathered for him a host of enemies. He began to receive letters full of threats. Some of them warned him that he would be murdered if he persisted in the revelations. "He merely looked upon them as outbursts of cranks. He developed an indifference to such performances which was eventually to cost him his life."[120]

Two outcomes of "The Treason of the Senate" were a torrential growth of the range of his "best-sellers" and the cultivation of a cold-blooded malignance in literary criticism of his works.[121] A mild example of the latter was the critical reaction to his drama The Worth of a Woman. The reaction was mild because the production was a failure. Phillips was always interested in the theater, ever since

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[119] Ibid., pp. 18, 103.

[120] Ibid., p. 242.

[121] Filler, op.cit., p. 256.

the showboat days on the Ohio. So dramatic was his conception of life and literature that he "frequently outlined his novels first in the form of plays."[122] An experiment in the drama of a single act, "A Point of Law," brought him the satisfaction of many amateur performances. The Worth of a Woman was presented in February, 1908, at the Madison Square Theater, with Katherine Gray in the role of Diana, the unchaste heroine. The second week in February saw the doom of the old playhouse, for the tragicomedy failed to draw enough customers to keep it open. In April it was dismantled and wrecked. Was not Phillips's folly to blame for the downfall? Matthew White, jr., of Munsey's Magazine, insinuated so. The play was preposterous, yet pathetic, he asserted, because "poor Katherine Gray tried her best to make[it] convincing.

> Mr. Phillips's pet theory, this time, was that no woman should marry a man if he offers matrimony as a reparation for the greatest wrong one of his sex can do her. Oceans of talk swirled about this unpleasant subject....
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> ....people in the audience audibly whispering, 'She's a fool!'--which she certainly was."[123] After all, how could a play that dealt with sex as a frank and imaginative American, acquainted with Ibsen and Paul Hervieu, might--how could a

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122 Marcosson, op. cit., p. 243.

123 "The Stage," Munsey's Magazine, XXXIX (April, 1908) 135. Claude Bowers exhibits ignorance of Phillips's work in the statement that "He wrote plays, some of them successful" (op. cit., p. 162).

serious love story on the Manhattan stage of that era hope to compete with *The Merry Widow* and Eugene Walter's *Paid in Full*, so aromatic of the "red-light" district?

When Beveridge married Catherine Eddy, the niece of Mrs. Marshall Field of Chicago, in the spring of 1907, he was grieved because Phillips was ill and could not come to the American embassy in Berlin to be "best man." Toward the end of 1908 the Senator, who was being tantalized with visions of his silver tongue ringing in the White House, was forced to neglect his maneuvers for the Republican presidential candidacy by a program of "social" duties, dinners, dances, and so forth. Phillips rebuked him sardonically. Then came news of Beveridge's fatherhood, and his friend congratulated him sadly: "You get everything, don't you? I envy you, Bev, I do—that baby."[124] Whenever the Senator came to New York, he hurried to greet his friend. They went to restaurants and theaters, and spent hilarious nights at the novelist's apartment in the National Arts Club in Gramercy Square. Directly after his scheduled orations in the metropolis, Beveridge used to speed to the Square and, before a cheerful fire, they would converse or keep silent for hours, sometimes until sunrise.

In the autumn of 1910 Beveridge underwent the first

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[124] Marcosson, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

major defeat of his life. He campaigned for restoration to the Senate upon an "Independent Republican" ticket, and lost. He was stalwartly supported by the artist-comrade whom he had disappointed the year before by efforts to elect Taft as president. Taft "doublecrossed" him by declining to interfere with the Hoosier Republican machine's plot to send the Democrat John Kern to the Senate instead. The party would not tolerate Beveridge's preaching of tariff reform. He was suspected of willingness to reason about subversive measures like the direct primary, the initiative, referendum and recall. After the tragic death of his friend, he ran for the governorship of Indiana on a "Progressive" platform and simultaneously signed his political death-warrant so far as the "Grand Old Party" and the Democracy were concerned. Then America discovered that the ambitions of Beveridge had nearly robbed her of a superb historian to make an unhappy politician.

Politics was a passion with Phillips to his final day. Like Balzac he wondered if his ultimate goal was not to be a front-rank fighter in the arena of party warfare. "I believe," he insisted, "there is a chance for perfectly clean politics in this country."[125] Revolted by the franchise-faking of the Democrats in their struggle to deprive

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[125] Ibid., p. 183.

the incendiary Hearst of the mayoralty of New York, Phillips aided the lord of yellow journalism in his fight to become governor of the Empire State in 1906. However, the novelist declared, "They will kill him before they will let him become governor."[126] The plutocrats were cutting off all the constitutional channels to their overthrow. "The United States," wrote the English traveler William Archer in the Fortnightly Review of May, 1910, "is like an enormously rich country overrun by a horde of robber barons."[127] Vitriolic is the sole word for the language of Phillips in the same year against the class which, he charged, was strangling the Republic and bleeding the land white.

> I had found out that the triumphant class, far from being the gentlest and most civilized, as its dominant position in civilization would indicate, was in fact the most barbarous, was saturated with the raw savage spirit of the right of might. I am speaking of actualities, not of pretenses—of deeds, not of words. To find a class approaching it in frank savagery of will and action you would have to descend through the social strata until you came to the class that wields the blackjack and picks pockets and dynamites safes.[128]

Stronger declarations of war on the bourgeoisie have been uttered by Marx and Lenin alone.

The man from Madison never formally proclaimed himself a socialist, although he advocated virtually all the tenets of proletarian revolution. "He always declared

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126 Loc. cit.

127 Quoted by Regier, op. cit., p. 3.

128 The Husband's Story, p. 143.

that 'every intelligent human being is something of a socialist.' He had a profound admiration for Karl Marx," of whom he said, "The titanic personality of Marx is greater even than his idea."[129] The man who announced to the Frenchmen that repeated his words instead of emulating his actions, "Je ne suis pas un marxiste!" would have mirthfully agreed with Phillips. The Hoosier was closer in spirit to the Promethean than the Yankees who converted his principles to dogmas, and socialism into an eschatological sect. Phillips was more than amiable to Charles Edward Russell, Upton Sinclair, John Spargo and William English Walling. But he was repelled by their adoration of parliamentary power, their fever to see the government engulfing national economy and thus multiplying "red-tape" bureaus, courts, police and espionage. Their tactics of opportunism and appetite for phrases that distorted facts went against his grain. Russell "used to try to point out to him that occasions arise in which it is needful for even the best of men to compromise with the bald truth, but he would never admit this."[130]

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[129] Marcosson, op. cit., p. 299.

[130] Filler, op. cit., p. 255. The newspaperman Will Irwin, who was sympathetic to the Socialist Party then, impeaches the veracity of Phillips. The professional "Muckrakers," according to Irwin, worked "with all the scientific conscientiousness of historians; and they guarded most carefully against letting artistic imagination run away with judgment." Not so, alas, labored "such authors as David Graham Phillips who, good reporter though he was in his days on the Sun, when he became a great novelist

Nothing but the truth would ever set mankind free.

The prophetic soul of Phillips, dreaming of things to come, made an indelible impression on Colonel Arthur W. Little, the owner of Pearson's Magazine, which published Light-Fingered Gentry. Colonel Little was emphatic:

> Phillips's mind was the keenest and clearest I have ever known. His prophetic understanding was almost uncanny. Ten years before our entrance in the World War he prophesied the events that were to come. To me he foretold the revolution in Russia, and the political changes in Germany. He expressed fears of similar debacles overtaking our own country, through the blind selfishness of what he always referred to as the secret government, meaning the money powers which at that time ruled the United States through the Wall Street banking system, and which subsequently came to rule the world.[131]

In the year of Phillips's murder Colonel Edward M. House wrote his utopian romance, Philip Dru: Administrator, in which an American debacle such as the artist feared is interpreted as the beginning of a golden age. President Wilson was enchanted by this tale of a West Point wit who makes himself dictator of the United States, nullifies the Constitution, and enters a coalition with England for military and commercial rule of the globe.[132] Colonel House

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grew to see life in terms of the picturesque. If the fact was striking, then it must be true. There was no intellectual dishonesty in this," Irwin hastily adds, "--just a mental quirk." (Op. cit., pp. 170-171.) No comment is necessary on these remarks of Herbert Hoover's merriest press agent.

[131] Quoted by Marcosson, op. cit., p. 272.

[132] Philip Dru: Administrator, A Story of Tomorrow,

called his hero a Socialist....

The assassin of the artist lived in the Rand School of Social Science, which was loyal to the Socialist Party. But Fitzhugh Coyle Goldsborough was no dreamer of social metamorphosis. He was a faithful member of his union, the American Federation of Musicians, being a skilled violinist. He also wrote lachrymose lyrics. Yet he was not utterly romantic. Once he had ardently admired the stories of David Graham Phillips. Goldsborough's diary testified that he perused most of them. It also records the progress of his introspection of insults and injuries which he felt were being ever more brutally inflicted on his quivering heart. His pride was prodigious. He could not forget that he was the scion of old Southern gentry, belonged to a blue-blooded family of the Capital, and gleamed as a gentleman of promise at Harvard. At last he was inflamed by the lack of chivalry in Phillips, his "cynical" delineation of American ladies. Late in the summer of 1910 he started to write letters to the artist, attacking his desecration of patrician womanhood. Phillips was accused of slandering Goldsborough's

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1920-1935, by Colonel Edward House was published in 1912. For a synopsis, see Colonel Jennings C. Wise, Woodrow Wilson: Disciple of Revolution (New York: The Paisley Press, 1938), pp. 659-660. Wilson's opponent, the Republican boss Nelson Aldrich, was blandished by similar notions. In the judgment of his affectionate biographer, Nathaniel Stephenson, "he was steadily moving away from faith in assemblies and toward faith in more permanent and less popular machinery of control." (Op. cit., p. 468.)

mother and sister in The Fashionable Adventures of Joshua Craig! The artist was familiar with such complaints. Residents of a certain New Jersey community once protested that he had revealed eccentricities of theirs in Old Wives for New.[133] When Goldsborough persisted in his accusations, Phillips told his sister, "The man must be crazy; I know nothing about his people."[134] The lonely and frigidly furious violinist rented a front room at the Rand School in order to spy on the Phillips apartment and the movements of the man he hated.

On the afternoon of January 23, 1911, the novelist left his chambers to take his customary walk. He circled the western end of Gramercy Square and was within a few paces of the Princeton Club, where his mail was delivered, when Goldsborough confronted him. "Now I have you!" the musician exclaimed, and fired six bullets into the erect and handsome body before him. Then the assassin shot himself in the delusion-clustered skull and dropped dead in the gutter. Phillips kept himself upright by clutching a park rail. He was brought to the Bellevue Hospital where physicians found that only a single shot of the six wounded him seriously. He fought with terrible will to survive, and

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[133] Marcosson, op. cit., p. 279.

[134] Frank Harris, Latest Contemporary Portraits (New York: The Macaulay Company, 1927), p. 19.

expressed firm confidence in his recovery. In hope of the defeat of death, the anguished Beveridge left his bedside. He was told in Washington of the deadly hemorrhages in his friend's right lung. The artist's brother, the ever-trustworthy Harrison, stayed to the ultimate hour. Phillips lingered until the approach of midnight, January 24, and at last murmured, "I could have won against two bullets, but not against six."[135]

The broken-hearted Beveridge conducted the final honors. The other pallbearers were the veteran journalists Samuel Blythe, John O'Hara Cosgrave, George Horace Lorimer, and the publisher Joseph Sears, who had the courage to print Susan Lenox: Her Fall and Rise under the nostrils and talons of the Society for the Suppression of Vice. Phillips had the serene bliss of laboring over the galleys of his masterpiece a few days before his death. The body was entombed in Kensico Cemetery beneath a plain Ionic cross on which were carved the words--"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." In vain the friends of Phillips strove to lift the darkness that fell on the heart of his truest comrade, Carolyn Frevert.

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135 Marcosson, op. cit., p. 303. Strangely the tragedy resembles the killing of the workman Laurent Tague in Chapter XXV ("Man and Gentleman") of The Second Generation. He is shot to death by a decayed aristocrat, for the "crime" of insulting his sister!

## CHAPTER III

## EVOLUTION OF THE NOVELS

At the outset of Phillips's career, in Cincinnati, he determined to win enduring fame by writing "novels with a purpose." This purpose he never conceived as parabolic or didactic. His tales were not designed to be allegories, to exhort the readers to desertion of their own life-ways and imitation of the author's path in ethics. His intention from the first was "to shed a lot of light on certain phases of the national life."[1] Before his death he affirmed once more the original goal of his labors: "I have no mission, no purpose, no cult. I am just a novelist, telling as accurately as I can what I see, and trying to hold my job with my readers."[2] How could he aver that he was without purpose and yet publish novels with a purpose? The paradox disappears when we understand how accuracy of illumination as a goal in literature is inseparable from its method; the end is within the means. Phillips's method was verisimilitude to life, the unvarnished truth, but free of the chance medley, the irrelevance and superflux of nature. He was not a naturalist in the sense of Zola; his Comédie Américaine is not a series of experiments in sociology, nor cross-cuts of raw collops

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[1] See supra, p. 29.

[2] Cited by John Curtis Underwood, Literature and Insurgency (New York: Mitchell Kennerley, 1914), p. 186.

of the world. The light he burned to cast on the national life was the flame of a quest for the quintessential. "There is in every human being," he declared, "a main current, a big temperamental artery, which is character."[3] The task of the true novel is to strip bare that central current of humanity, and thus to help the readers know themselves, recognizing the kin of the red rhythm in their own bodies. The novelist who performed the task might claim without fear of contradiction that he belonged to eternity as well as to his era. Yet Phillips was doomed to descend to history branded as anything but the artist he aimed to be, "more like a dismal preacher, a man with a mission, than an artist with the joy of living laughing in his heart."[4]

He was blessed and also damned as a "Progressive" partisan, a "Muckraker," an evangelist of lost or obsolete causes. The chorus of critical hostility to Phillips through the past four decades is condensed in the following indictment--

> Phillips, in whom the nostalgic Jeffersonianism of the Progressive period became a passion, had no higher aspiration than to lay bare the debasement of the old middle-class spirit in the new plutocracy....he succeeded only in dramatizing the headlines of the Progressive era and in packing into his books an unparalleled density of

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[3] Marcosson, op. cit., p. 285.

[4] David Graham Phillips, White Magic (New York and London: D. Appleton and Company, 1910), p. 129.

newspaper data.[5]

We will not bother to investigate how the critic who made this indictment managed to confuse Progressivism, a trend of Republican manufacturers and merchants, with the agrarian Democracy of Jefferson. Is it a fact that the stories of Phillips are merely news-transcripts of his period, teeming with old-fashioned political prejudices, bereft of all beauty and powerless to inspire joy in future generations? That is the question.

## 1. FROM REPUBLIC TO PLUTOCRACY

Nostalgia is a mood or malady that will scarcely be found in the life of Phillips. Nowhere in his novels did he manifest any forlorn desire for the resurrection of a past institution or ideal. The "old middle-class spirit" he championed in youth against the "new plutocracy" was no ghost of a bygone age when he perished. In 1912 it militantly collected a million votes for Eugene V. Debs, the Socialist Party candidate for the presidency. Seven years earlier Phillips showed it flourishing:

> The dignity of labor, the prizes to the laborer--these ideals of a century ago, ideals born no doubt of a vanity which sought to make a virtue of necessity, are our ideals....today millions of us see that the laborer is the only good citizen, that his estate is

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[5] Alfred Kazin, On Native Grounds (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1942), pp. 107-108.

the only estate of dignity.[6]

This reverence for labor was unquestionably "middle-class," because it did not distinguish between the workman and the tradesman, the producer and the exchanger. The social philosophy that Phillips upheld when he uttered that panegyric to work still bore the trademark of Yankee handicraft, of the days when artisans were masters of their tools and marketed wares rather than work or man-power. Nevertheless, the old rough-hewn economy defended by the realist was not mercenary; the "middle-class spirit" was not sterling bourgeois. Under its sway Americans were prouder of their hands and homes than of money. Plutocrats showing off false French might call it bourgeois, but Phillips spurned the imputation. He used the word ironically in describing the workaday existence which the "hero" of The Great God Success and his wife rejected in their avarice for glory and gold:

> The "bourgeois" life which they had planned--both standing behind the counter and both adding up the results of the day's business after they had put up the shutters, two as one in all the interests of life--became a dead and forgotten dream.[7]

This happiness of shopkeepers was not, in the firm opinion of Phillips, bourgeois, because the lovers had agreed they "wouldn't work for fame or riches or for any outside thing."

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[6] The Reign of Gilt, p. 226.

[7] The Great God Success, p. 244.

Their aspiration was celestially luminous, but lacking in contour and precision: "We would work to make ourselves wiser and better and more worthy each of the other and both of our great love."[8] Perhaps the phrase excels the substance of the dream. Phillips was well aware of the frailty of middle-class idealism, and he struck the weakness in its core when he dissected the object of its economy in his initial novel.

Success! The glittering ambiguity was the goal of American economy for two centuries, and under its spell the Republic became a world power. A few members of the upper proprietary class, like William James, in the bitterness of disenchantment might blaspheme against "the bitch goddess Success." To the masses of the land it was THE GREAT GOD SUCCESS, a deity with two faces, the countenances of Christ and Mammon. The rewards of its religion were not merely the joys of materializing visions of industry and art; they were solid, quantitative, precious, and involved the rages of cutthroat competition. The first novel of Phillips demonstrated how the blessings of personal struggle were converted under capitalism to the dead stuff reckoned far more valuable. Concretely The Great God Success made plain how the press, the "Palladium of all the civil, political, and

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[8] Ibid., p. 121.

religious rights" (in the grandiose phrase of Junius) changed into what Mr. Dooley dourly termed the "pollutium of our liberties."

Howard, the "hero" of the tale, rises to control of the New York News-Record after twenty years of brilliant success as reporter and editor. His mentors in journalism had hammered the lesson of honest newspaper work home to his mind: "You have to remember always that you're not there to cheer or sympathise or have emotions, but only to report, to record. You tell what your eyes see."[9] The bias of the press must be restricted to the editorial page. However, it rarely happened that news items contradicted editorials. The leading journals of the nation were organs of private advantage first and conveyors of public intelligence afterward. Howard discovered the imposture of the News-Record's liberalism, which claimed to be

> independent because it supported now one political party and now the other, or divided its support. But this superficial independence was in reality subservience to the financial interests of the two principal owners.... revenging themselves for too heavy levies of blackmail upon their corrupt interests... securing unjust legislation and privileges.[10]

Yet the democratic tradition (or, as Mr. Alfred Kazin puts it, the "old middle-class spirit") of the press was so strong that the money concerns of the owners had by no means

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[9] Ibid., p. 10.

[10] Ibid., p. 172.

succeeded in destroying its public utility. When Howard took charge of the News-Record he grimly resolved that it would no longer be an "organ." He told the staff, "We are going to print a newspaper--all the news and nothing but the news." If it was genuine news, then it was fit to print. "Our paper should interest every man and woman able to read."[11]

Success crowns the young Howard's effort as a laborer, but the barterer in him is malcontent. He is afraid that the treasury of his press does not contain enough funds to guard its freedom against predatory greed. He is afraid that his own individual treasury is too poor to sustain the grandeur of his bride. The conscience of Howard, as husband and capitalist on whose interprise many wage-earners and a magnificent wife depend, makes a coward of him. "The fact that his present course was profitable gave him, he felt, more pleasure than the fact that it was right."[12] He invests in copper stock, knowing that "the way of speculation was the way of bondage for his newspaper and for him."[13] But he is convinced that money alone can emancipate him from fear. The acid test that bares the depth of his cowardice comes in the midst of a "coal conspiracy." At first the News-

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[11] Ibid., p. 168.

[12] Ibid., p. 184.

[13] Ibid., p. 255.

Record gallantly executes its duty and wages war on the plunderers. Howard's wife is dreadfully loyal, and he groans under her sacrifices of rich friends for his sake. Next he finds out that a railroad he is "interested" in was ensnared by the conspiracy and its profits imperilled by his reporters. The News-Record's artillery against the Coal Trust goes into retreat--"not precipitate but orderly, masterly."[14] The success of Howard as a tradesman is complete; his pride as a workman disappears. What did the barter of honor profit him? "At times it exasperated him that he could not regard his change of front as a deliberate sale for value received, and not as the weak and cowardly surrender which he saw that it really was."[15] The soul makes a sad commodity, and success can be a cruel swindle.

The Great God Success nobly bears comparison with Balzac's Un Grand Homme de Province à Paris as a portrait of a creative genius ruined by servile journalism. Indeed the work of Phillips exhibits a generosity and justice to journalism warmly worthy of Balzac but not to be found in his satire on the prostitute press of France. The American realist fully disclosed the potentiality of the press for intellectual liberty. The battle cry of his novel is

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[14] Ibid., p. 268.

[15] Ibid., p. 275.

"Let there be light!"[16] His passion for veracity makes dynamic the pages lavished on the mechanics of the press, radiant and redolent of the chapters on the art of printing in Balzac's Eve et David. In other respects The Great God Success echoed Phillips's favorite among the novels of the French demiurge, Le Père Goriot. The Sands boarding house where Howard dwells at the beginning of his career in New York looks and sounds and smells like the Pension Vauquer where Rastignac rooms after his arrival in Paris. In both, new lodgers customarily started by taking the finest chambers and, slowly or swiftly, according to the process of their pecuniary disintegration, climbed upward stage after stage to the paupers' nest under the eaves.[17] Nevertheless, Phillips only echoed Balzac because New York sounded as if it echoed his Paris! Of course the picture of genteel penury in The Great God Success will not endure comparison with Le Père Goriot whose revelation of the Pension Vauquer was rightly praised by Henry James as "the most portentous setting of the scene in all the literature of fiction."

Phillips's initial novel was devised when, according to Mr. Kazin, he "was reporting the stale (?) scandals of New York high society for Pulitzer."[18] The fact has deluded

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16 Ibid., p. 212.

17 Ibid., Chapter IV, "In the Edge of Bohemia," particularly p. 37.

18 Kazin, op. cit., p. 85.

critics into hunting for the Hebraic features of the World's autocrat in the "hero" Howard. Phillips copied "his own employer, Pulitzer, as the villain of the piece, it is believed," said one scholar.[19] Another critic attempted to render the tale more profound by alleging that it "satirized the newspaper publisher"![20] The Great God Success is a comedy, since the "hero" survives his moral suicide and regards his wife as guilty of the crime. A comedy without mirth, like the sublime Tartuffe, but not (by a long shot!) satire. Phillips never distorts his narrative or characters for a glaring moral; travesty is not his vein.

Satire he did endeavor to write in his second book, Her Serene Highness, but quickly he discarded the uncongenial mode. The barbs of his sarcasm were intended for the successful manufacturer of pseudo-romances, George Barr McCutcheon of Tippecanoe County, Indiana. McCutcheon made a fortune by following the British fashion of Anthony Hope (born Hawkins), whose Prisoner of Zenda had shown how bourgeois virtue could be reconciled with feudal frivolity. Exploiting Hope's invention of the mythic European principality, McCutcheon fabricated his Graustark, where wealthy

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[19] Fred Lewis Pattee, The New American Literature 1890-1930 (New York: The Century Company, 1930), p. 150. See supra, pp. 35, 42.

[20] Arthur Hobson Quinn, American Fiction; An Historical and Critical Survey (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1936), p. 645.

and athletic Americans ravished the hearts of equally incredible German princesses. Both authors languidly tried to conceal their sycophancy toward medieval pomp and parasitism. Both were darlings of the parvenu patricians on each side of the Atlantic, above all the she-snobs. McCutcheon's volumes were carameled and carmined in American boudoirs among the nobility of banks and "bucket-shops" in the East, the Midland nobility of bacon and beef, and the nobility of bullion in the West. Her Serene Highness was an attempt to unveil the McCutcheon cult as a disgrace to democracy, mocking the sycophants who were "dazzled by spangles like a vulgar peasant."[21]

The attempt failed, for the artist did not have the tough cynicism of Henry Fielding or Harold Frederic and was unable to sustain irony for a hundred pages. Phillips retained the typical plot of Graustarkian extravaganza, and vainly strove to graft on it a truthful sketch of the ermined anachronisms of Europe as he had scrutinized them. Memory preserves with humor the tale's gallery of remnants of the Holy Roman Empire. The dukedom of Zweitenbourg is a solemn circus, and its overlords are monstrously funny. His Royal Highness Wilhelm von Traubenheim, for example--"a jibbering

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[21] Her Serene Highness (New York and London: Harper & Brothers, 1902), p. 100.

idiot, who sat all day on the floor in a corner gnawing his nails and his great whiskers."[22] The complete works of McCutcheon yield nothing so valuable as Phillips's vision of the Grand Duke Casimir and the gorgeous cavalcade that always heralds the chariot of the "sallow, cross-looking little man, with thin shoulders, legs, and arms, and a great paunch of a stomach, dilated and sagged from over-feeding."[23] The Grand Duke's horror of noise is worse than Schopenhauer's. Once he breaks an abysmal silence exclaiming, "It is the sound of the grass and bushes growing. Tear them up!"[24] Compared with Casimir, the hero, Frederick Grafton, a scion of Chicago pork-packers, is a preposterous fantom. Phillips depicts him as "the unmistakable American type--tall, thin, with a narrow, shrewd, frank face."[25] But Grafton shows more shrewdness than frankness when he brags that Americans are "all kings, but we don't use the title"![26] He must have seen the absurdity of describing pork barons and their stockyard serfs as "kings."

The Duchess Erica is unreal too, except in the episode

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[22] Ibid., p. 165.

[23] Ibid., pp. 35-36.

[24] Ibid., p. 46.

[25] Ibid., p. 135. The image is common in the novels of Booth Tarkington and Harry Leon Wilson.

[26] Ibid., p. 89. Contrast the democratic outcry of Howard late in The Great God Success: "I abhor the lower classes--so much so that I wish to see them abolished." (Page 180.)

of her flight from the palace, where Phillips for the first and final time attained heroic romance. Who can forget the glimpse of Erica bewitching the Grand Duke's sentinels into allowing her escape from his court in her lover's car?[27]

Strange as it may seem, Phillips believed that the basic concern of The Great God Success and Her Serene Highness was nothing less than sex. In the former he wanted to portray the "pursuit of the eternal feminine" by "the eternal masculine" as it was circumstanced and developing in the domain of metropolitan journalism, in the shadows of "the Titan-tenements of financial New York."[28] In the fantasy he strove to portray "the universal woman in presence of the universal man" reflecting the conflict of transatlantic cultures.[29] When he used to debate on literature with Charles Edward Russell at Mouquin's Restaurant, Phillips contended that no work of fiction "can succeed that is not based on sex interest."[30] He returned in his third novel to the theme of his first, and made the erotic motive more emphatic. And A Woman Ventures surpassed its forerunners in popularity.

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[27] Her Serene Highness, p. 192. Scott would have rejoiced in the scene.

[28] The Great God Success, pp. 92, 113.

[29] Her Serene Highness, p. 24.

[30] Marcosson, op. cit., p. 161.

If the tragicomedy had been redeemed from faults of hasty composition marring several passages and leaving a riddle or two unsolved, A Woman Ventures would have been a masterpiece. The faults were the outcome of untamed vitality fracturing the framework, so tumultuous with life is the tale. It would have disconcerted Henry James, but Phillips laughed at "those literary folk who take themselves seriously as custodians of An Art and A Language."[31] There are few portraits of ladies in the canon of James comparable in grace and grandeur with this painting of the daring girl Emily Bromfield with the "expression like a goddess of liberty's."[32] She is the first of Phillips's immortal beauties. Our hearts are here from the moment she lifts her head of red-gold hair and violet eyes against the death-adoring industrial village of Stoughton, Connecticut, which is New England in miniature.

Emily refuses to marry for money and finds work as a reporter, with the help of a sparkling newspaperman named Marlowe.[33] A strike at "Furnaceville," Pennsylvania, provides her opportunity for a triumph. She enters the town prepared to witness a "battle between brain-workers and

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[31] A Woman Ventures, p. 284.

[32] Ibid., p. 209.

[33] The resemblance of Marlowe to Richard Harding Davis cannot be coincidence.

brawn-workers."[34] Instead she sees a Homeric struggle between men who refuse to become beasts of burden and rich armored beasts of prey. Rifles of the state militia kill before her eyes a father, a son who ventured to rescue him, and the son's bride. Emily's companion Camp, a news artist, is frenzied by the sight; he

> poured out curses upon capitalist and militia. Camp!--who that very morning had been trying to impress Emily with his superiority to his origin (his parents were proletarian), his contempt of these 'mere machines for the use of men of brains.'[35]

The "triple tragedy of courage, self-sacrifice, love and death"[36] forms the material for a report to the New York Democrat that wins Miss Bromfield fame. She had looked at the civil war in Pennsylvania "a panic-stricken girl. She returned a woman, confident of herself. She had seen; she had felt; she had lived."[37] Unfortunately, she had not thought. The tragedy did not bring her to consciousness of the identity of her material and moral interests with those of the iron-puddlers and their women. No, it stirred up at best an enlightened egoism! Out of agony emerged a will to enjoy her death-haunted youth to the utmost. She marries the scintillant Marlow clandestinely and, jealous of her

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[34] A Woman Ventures, p. 89.

[35] Ibid., p. 100.

[36] Loc. cit.

[37] Ibid., p. 101.

liberty as worker and wife, keeps the wedding secret.

Romance of equality proves Marlowe's inferiority. He craves a conventional lady, an ideal that Emily interprets as half-domestic slave and half-harlot. Her savior from shame is a South Dakota divorce court. Alone in Paris, she falls in love with a marvelous American clergyman. The Rev. Arthur Stanhope is fighting to protect the middle-class gospel that every man must be his own master from the plutocratic heresy blurted by George Baer of the Coal Trust in 1902. Denouncing the public sympathy for Pennsylvania rebels against the Trust, Baer spoke of "the Christian men and women to whom God in His infinite wisdom has intrusted the property interests of the country,"[38] as if strikers were cast by Christ into Lucifer's bosom forever. Stanhope tells Emily--

> I am what we call in America a self-made man. I come from the people--not from ignorance and crime and sensuality, but from the real people--who think, who aspire, who advance, who work and take pleasure and pride in their work, the people who have built our republic which will perish if they decline.[39]

How far "the real people" had already declined Stanhope made clear when he confessed that in France alone, and to Emily alone, can he pronounce his thoughts untrammeled. He cries out, "the joy of telling the truth intoxicates me."[40] He shows Emily his field of spiritual warfare, the pauperism of

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[38] Gustavus Myers, op. cit., p. 367 fn.

[39] A Woman Ventures, pp. 147-148.

[40] Ibid., p. 149.

New York: "the great stagnant, disease-breeding marsh which receives the sewage of society."[41] She would be proud to toil with her lover there, but Stanhope has a "helpmate," the mother of two children, and the lovers renounce comradeship lest they "shiver with the lightning of lust the great tree of the church, the shelter and hope" of his people.[42]

Individualism is Dead-Sea fruit for Emily, and her fame as the star reporter of the Democrat makes her solitude intenser. "Life was purposeless to her. She was working for self alone."[43] Then in a public park, she encounters the little daughter of her journal's editor, Robert Stilson, and the child reveals that she is the "Violet Lady" whom he has secretly loved ever since the Furnaceville tragedy. Stilson had always fascinated Miss Bromfield with his "strong-featured, melancholy face," abrupt hard speech and gentle eyes. She was grateful to him for generosity in assignments and pitied him for being confined to a desk after his star of journalism suddenly set on the "Oil River" of Pennsylvania where he worked during a flood, sleeping on wet ground. The limping taciturn giant did not permit their friendship to ripen to intimacy. Yet listening to his child the "Violet

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41 Ibid., p. 201.

42 Ibid., p. 245.

43 Ibid., p. 290.

Lady" found her heart flaming in response to the secret: "By what subtle chemistry," she wonders, "had sympathy, admiration, trust, been combined into this new element undoubtedly love, yet wholly unlike any emotion she had felt before?"[44] Exploring the mystery, Emily learns that Stilson had married a dancer eleven years before, a demoness named Marguerite Feronia. After a fleeting honeymoon he discovered that his wife was a morphine-eater, that her brain was irrevocably diseased. In despair he attempted to become as vile by strength of will as she was by madness of blood. The birth of his daughter restored his reason and he went back to work with demoniac energy. Feronia was loyal to him through starvation and sickness, and he never dreamed of deserting the elfin girl. From the face of Stilson, like the face of one crucified, Emily learned that "the love that can refrain and renounce is the truest love."[45]

Two riddles of A Woman Ventures were left unsolved and darken the sunrise catharsis of the tragicomedy. When Feronia dies and Stilson is free to marry Emily, we wonder how the second wedlock will recompense her for the sacrifice of her public brilliance? It is difficult to fancy Mrs.

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[44] Ibid., p. 270. Contrast the "chemism" of passion in Theodore Dreiser's novels of mechanical naturalism.

[45] A Woman Ventures, p. 275. Reminiscent of George Meredith is Phillips's comment on this classic postulate: "they were not sentimental egotists. They would have got little sympathy from those who weep in theatres and blister the pages of tragic fiction." (Op. cit., p. 308.)

Robert Stilson confining her fire to a family hearth.

> Whatever one gets that's worth while in this life one has to pay for. The price of freedom--to a woman just the same as a man--is work, hard work.... And what are we here for except to improve upon nature?[46]

Freedom is not purchased once and forever; its price as Jefferson taught, is eternal vigilance. Felicity as Mrs. Robert Stilson would lull the firmest of women almost to hebetude. But Emily Bromfield, her love fortified by labor as editor of The World of Women (her latest occupation), could break any trammel. Facing the dawn of a new life as the sweetheart of Stilson, she appears to have forgotten the fighters against servitude to whom she owes her womanly worth. The wisdom of Emily is proof against the illusion that her liberty is clean and substantial so long as heroes like the iron puddler Jack Farron, his son, and his son's love, are chained and martyred.

## 2. REPRESENTATIVE ROGUES

What Professor Pattee styled "the assult upon manners and the social regime" led by Phillips did not commence in 1901, as he states, but in 1903 with the publication of Golden Fleece: The American Adventures of a Fortune-Hunting Earl. In this comedy, if anywhere, should be heard the Hoosier's "shrill protest," as Professor Pattee puts it,

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[46] Ibid., p. 215.

"against the evils of Eastern effeteness."[47] Nothing of the sort is heard in the novel, which rings with gentle laughter and calm appeal to the people to drown out the native choir of "God Save the King" with the "Battle Hymn of the Republic." Golden Fleece is a book of philippic fun about Anglophiles.

Lord Arthur Frothingham leaves an estate threatened with poverty to search the United States for a barbarian princess with whose charms he may fleece her rich father. His title is not dearer to him than his monocle, a magic circlet that functions as mask and window to his soul. The recurrent references to the monocle mark the phases of an odyssey whose comic spirit is peerless in American literature. The earl's odyssey turns into a sentimental journey and education in the meanings of democracy. He comes to New York to sell a title, hardly realizing that the commercial equivalent is a woman, not merely a dowry. He would have been surprised by the epigram of the cynical Yankee Joseph Wallingford that marketing human flesh alive is "generally regarded as a reputable transaction—unless one is vulgar

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47 Pattee, op. cit., p. 149. The professor's prejudice sneers behind the word "shrill;" less tolerable is the ignorance he exhibits, saying that Phillips "was born at Marshall" (loc. cit.), and that "his first tilt [as a "Muckraker"] was at the windmill of the Senate," implying that The Treason of the Senate was written in 1900 or earlier! (Page 150.)

enough to sell out for the mere necessaries of life."[48]

The earl is amused by Wallingford's claim that America was not corrupt enough to have an aristocracy. "We over here," says the Yankee, not vaunting but pensive, "don't know how to be gracefully idle and inane, as your upper classes do. It's not in us anywhere. We haven't the tradition--our tradition is all against it."[49] Frothingham had already been assured by a less clever Yankee that "Birth and breeding count with us" even more than they do in Britain: "The lines are more closely drawn because there are no official lines."[50] Wallingford argues that such sycophantic Yankees do not speak for America; they are renegades of the Republic. Lord Arthur inquires how the actual American is recognized, and the cynic explodes into star-spangled eloquence--

> When you see a man or a woman who looks as if he or she would do something honest and valuable, who looks you straight in the eyes, and makes you feel proud that you're a human being and ashamed that you are not a broader, better, honester one--that's an American.[51]

Notwithstanding the spread-eagle words, Wallingford seems to deride his fervor; "he smiled with his eyes so queerly that Frothingham could not decide whether or not he was jesting."

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[48] Golden Fleece, p. 82. Wallingford peculiarly suggests the epicure-patriot Robert W. Chambers. Cf. pp. 41, 53, 56 passim.

[49] Ibid., p. 57.

[50] Ibid., p. 29.

[51] Ibid., p. 58.

The smile hinted that true Americans were scarcer than redskins!

Lord Arthur encountered institutions and traits excluded from Wallingford's definition which were unmistakably American. Did the globe elsewhere flaunt phenomena like Yankee and Dixie "bluff" and "front," grotesque mixture of architectural styles, "public relations counsels," crowding of hours with entertainment, the fierce frolics (as if the players' luck was ephemeral), mothers as marriage-brokers, the "devilish enterprising attitude" to quick weddings and quicker divorces? Most astonishing of all were the innocent or imbecile aspects of the rich Americans who paid court to his lordship. The "beggars" behaved just like beastly boys when they were not chasing dollars. Frothingham was also dismayed by the cisatlantic concept of sportsmanship--the surliness of losers, the lynching of persons without arms, the "yellow" journals, who slandered him, relying for immunity on his being poor and solitary. They accused his earldom of being the bait of a syndicate of English creditors![52]

Frothingham enjoyed New York, which struck him as "much like Paris--more attractive than London, not so gloomy.... It's Paris with English in the streets"[53] When the exigency

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[52] Ibid., p. 298.

[53] Ibid., p. 49.

of a wasted wooing made him quit the cosmopolis, he went to Boston, and his spirits sank. Arriving in winter he found the New England air "sent the chilled blood cowering to the depths of the body instead of bringing it to the surface in healthful reaction."[54] It aided him in understanding Boston's intellectual climate.

> In New York he had been amused by the variety--specimens of all nationalities, often several nationalities struggling for expression in the same face. Here the sameness was tiresome to him, and he missed the alert look of New Yorkers of all kinds.[55]

Foremost among the Bostonians he met was Edward Allerton, a banker, who was

> savage in his hatred of all social innovations, was fanatical against the morals and manners of the younger people in the limited Boston set which he evidently regarded as the pinnacle and pattern of the whole world, yet was almost a sensualist in literature, art, and music. He sneered at superstition, yet believed in ghosts....[56]

Allerton nearly drives his spirituelle child mad by trying to make her Lady Frothingham, to enroll his name in Burke's Peerage. The humor of his crotchets and conundrums has no sunshine in it; our laughter is less constrained in the presence of Professor Yarrow of Cambridge, a wraith who represents the twilight of New England culture. His researches into pseudo-psychical mysteries and India yogi-bogies

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[54] Ibid., p. 116.

[55] Ibid., p. 117.

[56] Ibid., pp. 127-128.

provoke a sardonic lady of Boston:

> He's a disgrace to New England. We pride ourselves on having the culture of Emerson and the other great men of our past. What would they think of us if they could look in on us with our Yarrows and our Ganga Sahibs....?[57]

The irony of Phillips is least cruel toward the brilliant Bostonian Thayer, "one of the ablest lawyers in Massachusetts," whose idiosyncrasy or "fad was a militant socialism that had a kindly eye for a red flag".[58]

The bleakness of Boston left Frothingham's bones when he was lionized in Washington. On the stage of the Capitol Golden Fleece descends to farce. Decades would pass before the American theater would dare to show comparable scenes of dispute over precedence at banquets and balls between the wives of bureaucrats, or scenes of obscene pretense at being plebeian and plain of Western senators and their families visited by rustic constitutents. It is difficult to forget the glimpse of President --- and the "First Lady" strutting while sitting on "thrones" or rather gilt chairs at Senator Pope's party.[59] The unspeakable snobbery of Senator Pope and his daughter save Lord Arthur from marrying the latter, who is then swindled by an Italian count

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[57] Ibid., p. 155. Is the snapshot of Yarrow a gibe at William James?

[58] Ibid., p. 156.

[59] Ibid., p. 195.

of astounding grace and gall. In Washington the earl observed the effect on foreign servants of the social unrest and the homage to individual enfranchisement: "even his faithful Hutt was not the docile, humble creature he had been."[60] The earl was unconscious of the American effect on himself until he came to Chicago.

> New York was a titanic triumph, Chicago a titanic struggle; New York a finished or at least definite creation, Chicago a chaos in convulsion. There was in the look and the noise of it an indefinable menace....[61]

Frothingham felt as if he were in Hell! A tempest off Lake Michigan shows him humanity as he never beheld it before--a "struggling, swearing, shouting mass of men." At noon "all ate as if struggling for a prize offered to him who should chew the least, swallow the fastest, and finish the soonest."[62]

> ... there wasn't a pretence of a leisure class except the loungers in the parks; and they were threatening, so it was said, to organize and do all sorts of dreadful things if they weren't given something to do.[63]

Chicago disorients the earl, and he falls in love with "the first girl, it so happened, who was really natural" to the incisive beam of his monocle. Nelly Barney was the daughter

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60 Ibid., p. 178. Cf. Ruggles of Red Gap by Harry Leon Wilson.

61 Golden Fleece, pp. 253-254.

62 Ibid., pp. 255, 267-268.

63 Ibid., p. 268.

of a department-store magnate who dwelt in a "fantastic combination of German medieval fortress and Italian renaissance villa."[64] There was not a globule of vulgarity in her blood. Life to her meant "self-forgetfulness" in communal labor, or the union of self with society. She is the superintendent of a school, founded according to her mother's deathbed desire, "where girls can be taught how to be useful wives and mothers, instead of spending their whole lives at learning."[65] The earl is amazed by this deliberate cultivation of the impulses and wills of proletarian girlhood. He warns the beautiful Miss Barney: "You're making the lower classes restless and discontented. They'll pull everything down about your ears the first thing you know."

Phillips gives Nelly Barney two replies to the protest. First, she denies that the United States suffers a cleavage of classes: "we differ in degree, but not in kind." Second, she affirms, "I'm not afraid of light, anywhere."[66] She knows that gentry exist who covet the darkness which allows them to leech upon "the labor and the intelligence of others."[67] But while they crawl on the summit of America, they do not rule the nation yet. Westward,

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[64] Ibid., p. 256.

[65] Ibid., p. 306. The Barney school was Phillips's first attempt at utopia. The other was Tecumseh University in The Second Generation.

[66] Golden Fleece, p. 307.

[67] Ibid., p. 309.

look, the land is bright....

After Frothingham's fatal interview with the vanishing American of Wallingford's definition, he discovers a new self blossoming under his skin. He protests against the bartering of his sister to an American lackey in England, and declines to accept a meat-millionaire's daughter who is almost hurled into his arms, "her head full of castles and coronets and crests." He is rescued from the revolution of self by an old love in England who has inherited a fortune. He goes home regretfully, with Chicago's vocables and Nelly Barney's eyes still burning in his skull, and the comedy is concluded. Phillips never worked its vein again.

He produced his first portrait of a plutocrat, and boldly sent it forth in the shape of autobiography; moreover, it was designed to be the self-portrait of one battening at the very top of American riches. The Master-Rogue vaulted short of the author's ambition. James Galloway's journal or apologia pro vita sua does not reveal him with needful breadth and clarity. He seems to fluctuate between man and monster. Phillips was far too frugal with his raw materials. Galloway is real enough in the beginning, when he springs from dry-goods clerk, in a firm that operated "on a basis of mixed business and benevolence," to millionaire merchant after swindling his old-fangled employer--

"by sheer force of intellect," he brags.[68] "From earliest boyhood I had seen that the millionaire was the only citizen universally envied, honoured, and looked up to."[69] He was not a materialist, Phillips brilliantly points out. What he worshipped was not material wealth but the god that he thought was hidden in goods, their elusive value, independent of utility. "In this world, what things really are is not important; it's altogether what they seem to be, altogether the valuation agreed upon."[70] William James or John Dewey could not have stated their creed better! Commodities were mere symbols of the great god value. To Galloway his wife was the most glorious of symbols--"the way she shone and sparkled and blazed, becapped and bedecked and bedraped with jewels as she was."[71] Her decaying physical charms and sterility make her more precious; carnal utility only detracted from her divine treasure. The religiosity of Galloway is so profound that we are panged with disappointment when he mocks the dogma of immortality: "The afterward? I've never had either the time or the mind for the speculative and the intangible--at least not since I passed the sentimental

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[68] The Master-Rogue: The Confessions of a Croesus (New York: McClure, Phillips & Co., 1903), pp. 11, 23.

[69] Ibid., p. 3.

[70] Ibid., pp. 219-220.

[71] Ibid., p. 94.

period of youth."[72] Yet his life is spent in speculation, in hunting the intangible splendor that will abide with him through the flux of mortality. Phillips endowed Galloway with habits of Pierpont Morgan,[73] but he missed the significance of Morgan's passion for Episcopal conclaves, his devotion to the "blessed doctrine of complete atonement for sin through the blood of Jesus Christ once offered and through that alone."[74] The transcendental philosophy of the Christian Croesus whose memoirs we are examining glows at its loftiest in this line: "there is in me an absolute incapacity to live in the present."[75]

Galloway's contempt for the millions who live according to the motto of hedonism, Carpe diem! from day to day, often from hand to mouth, is worthy of the mighty immaterialist. Yet he appreciates their infinite capacity for windy ideals, for eating the air "promise-crammed." When Senator -----, orator of railroad capital, pleads that a certain bill to control transportation rates is a trick-bone to satisfy the public clamors for reform, Galloway tells him--

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[72] Ibid., p. 189.

[73] The likeness of Morgan and Galloway becomes plainer in The Deluge, pp. 337, 342-343.

[74] Cited from the last will and testament of J.P. Morgan, who died in the odor of sanctity at Rome in 1913.

[75] The Master-Rogue, p. 262.

> the mob isn't appeased, but is made hungrier, by getting what it wants. Humbug's the only dish for it. Fill it full of humbug and it gets indigestion and wishes it had never asked for anything.[76]

The scoundrel is of course a philanthropist: "The public lays what it is pleased to call the 'crime' upon the corporation I own; the benefaction is credited to me personally."[77] Charity is cheap, requiring only a trifle of the profits from artificial panics, synthetic wars, etc. Notwithstanding, his path is not all primroses. There exist a few newspapers who infuriate the "mob" against him:

> Instead of showing that I was like a general who sacrifices a comparative few in order that he may save millions [sic!] and advance a great cause, the wretched rag held me up as a swindler and robber--worse, as an assassin![78]

No, the plutocrat's path is not all primroses. His wife steals money from him, craving independence. His elder son defies him, quits his house, and strikes out for himself in Wall Street. There is not the faintest reason for believing (as Phillips would have us believe) that this rebel "would have done his best," if he had not been disinherited,

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[76] Ibid., p. 191. Senator ----- is kept in office "to see that that sort of demagoguery [movements for Congressional regulation of railroads] is held in check." (Ibid., p. 190.) "It was to guard against such dangerous tendencies that the New York Central Railroad sent Chauncey M. Depew to the Senate in 1898." Richard F. Pettigrew, op. cit., p. 260.

[77] The Master-Rogue, p. 91.

[78] Ibid., p. 166. Compare John D. Rockefeller, Jr.'s analogy of the Standard Oil Company to an American Beauty rose.

"to recreate for [his] family the conditions of the old America which made 'three generations from shirt sleeves to shirt sleeves' proverbial."[79] Galloway's other boy is more credible, with all the vices of his father and none of his barbarous virtues. "Sometimes," the Croesus muses, "I think he must have been created during one of my periods of advance by ambuscade"![80] Inevitable, he is convinced, was "the complete breaking up of the family, except as it is held together by my money."[81] However, his daughter Helen loved him--the aged stranger who was frequently kind to her. He bequeaths seventy millions to the girl. In vain the elder son fought to break the will, "to paralyse his dead hand--that awful hand he has plotted to keep on ruling and ruining with for generations."[82] Helen lavishes plenty of the loot to build the Galloway Memorial Museum of Fine Arts; so the farce closes.

Senator Beveridge rejoiced at the mass demand for The Master-Rogue. Characteristically, in praising the volume, he confused the ethical with the esthetic: "It is so much stronger than your Golden Fleece that there is no comparison. I think in its way it is well-nigh perfect." Phillips's

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[79] The Master-Rogue, pp. 272-273.

[80] Ibid., p. 92.

[81] Ibid., p. 33. Cf. also pp. 14, 32.

[82] Ibid., p. 291.

fifth novel was more strenuous than the prior work, yet not stronger in thought and execution. Beveridge touched the trouble with The Master-Rogue, but described it wrongly:

> I can only regret that you saw fit to state the bitter side of the men of affairs. Yet I can see an excuse for that too. The book has in it such sincerity, such conviction, and in short smells so thoroughly of the truth. Unpleasant as it is, there is absolutely no question of the atmosphere of veracity that prevades every page.[83]

If Phillips had failed to state the sweet side of his men of affairs, the veracity of the book would have been impeachable. He showed them in moods of affability and affection, especially toward females. But the bitter side of their souls was dominant, and he did right in stressing it. His error, the unpleasantness, consisted in painting every character black or else crepuscular--not one figure of dynamic light to lift the rest from flat fantasy to drama of dialectically equal forces. Artistic integrity demanded a second portrait of plutocracy, done with primary care for chiaroscuro.

Phillips toiled to correct the error in The Cost, and easily excelled The Master-Rogue. Economically The Cost was the luckiest of his six novels; esthetically it was a tragic failure. Tragic--for its general inferiority to both Golden Fleece and A Woman Ventures throws into glaring relief the fragments of greatness it contains. Again Phillips

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[83] Letter to Phillips, November 27, 1903, in Marcosson, op. cit., p. 36.

investigated the process by which "The bourgeoisie has torn away from the family its sentimental veil, and has reduced the family relation to a mere money relation."[84] He wanted to demonstrate why the marriage of the capitalist John Dumont was in reality whoredom. Nervously his novel disrobes the clandestine romance of Dumont and Pauline Gardiner, proving it a seduction. Pauline wished to be seduced, worshiping the great god Success. She loved Dumont for the same reason she admired Hampden Scarborough, for the way he pursued happiness--happiness in the United States sense of "getting up in the world."[85] She told Scarborough of her elopement with Dumont and said, "You and he are ever so much alike--even in looks."[86] Phillips would have us believe that a fundamental difference subtly shone between Scarborough and Dumont, manifested not so clearly in their methods as in their aims. But there is precious little evidence of the difference! Dumont's aims are private and avaricious; Scarborough's ambition is public and benevolent. But are they as contrary as the author alleges? Nowhere do we find them in real conflict. Dumont is never disturbed by the rivalry of Scarborough for Pauline's love; he does not even

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[84] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, The Communist Manifesto (1848), I.

[85] See The Husband's Story, p. 82, on "the universal American dream."

[86] The Cost, pp. 82-83.

know it exists! Nor do we know the source of Pauline's courage when she leaves her husband on discovering that he committed adultery. The influence of nightly contact with his lust and temper, the face suggesting "gilded slime," vanishes like gossamer under meridian sun. There is no struggle to break the humiliating wedlock. There is no drama.

Dumont and Scarborough meet once, at a dinner where the plutocrat wished to make the acquaintance of the politician who was acting to wrest Indiana government from Dumont's machine. In the presence of the heroine the rivals are morethan polite, indeed, cordial, but they say nothing memorable.[87] Scarborough captures the state machine, but Dumont's corrupt industry in Indiana continues apparently unhurt. We are shown the plutocrat's operations in wonderful detail, but Phillips left his opponent's plans nebulous and abstract. The politics of Scarborough are in fact reactionary! In his campaigns he fought shy of the cities, "the manufacturing towns; he went to the country--to the farmers and the villagers, the men who lived each man in his own house, on his own soil from which he earned his own living."[88] He appealed, in short, to the enemies of science and cosmopolitan culture. When he is accused of being "sentimental--almost romantic,"

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[87] Ibid., p. 177.

[88] Ibid., p. 232.

he laughs: "You've plucked out the heart of my mystery. My real name is Don Quixote de Saint X" [his home town].[89] Precisely, he yearns to drag the cycle of American history backward in the name of a dead agrarian ideology disguised with gaudy words (justice, truth, equality, etc.).[90] If Scarborough "exemplifies Phillips' ideals," as the mock-Marxist Granville Hicks surmises,[91] then the twentieth century would have nothing vital to learn from his novels.

The Cost exemplifies the conflict in Phillips in 1904 between the will to conquer plutocracy and the wish to uphold the Republic that gave birth to it and nourished it with life-blood. He knew that a commonwealth of farmers would bereave America of the solidarity, enlightenment and liberty that modern industry promised and compelled. The Republic, proud of the gems of New York and Chicago in her diadem, would perish before she would submit to reconstruction in the image of Arkansas! Could she be saved from perishing under the fists of plutocracy without destroying the capitalism from whose loins she leaped? Phillips was

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[89] Ibid., p. 286.

[90] Scarborough is an unconscious comedian in another fashion; he is a joke on Beveridge! He is not "a thinly veiled picture" of the Senator, as Marcosson contends (op. cit., p. 232), although many facts of their careers are uniquely alike. But Beveridge was an imperialist, Scarborough a populist!

[91] Hicks, The Great Tradition (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1933), p. 179.

outraged by free trade in love, but he was still reluctant to part company with it in labor. The sole alternative seemed to be the Teutonic tyranny which he had been taught was socialism. That doctrine is advocated by one person in The Cost, Langdon, a rich rogue whose prescription for social sickness is "manual labor every day for everybody."[92] The contradiction in the political economy of Phillips flares in two riddles that Pauline Dumont sets her predatory husband. She muses, "When a doctor or a man of science or a philosopher makes a discovery that'll be a benefit to the world... he gives it freely," rewarded by "honor and fame." She wonders, "Why shoudn't a man with financial genius be like men with other kinds of genius?"[93] Waking from her communist caprice, Pauline strains to be practical: "Why not put your combine on such a basis that it would bring an honest, just return to you and the others, and would pay the highest possible wages...?"[94] Dumont finds both questions funny, and declines to tell her that the magnitude of "an honest, just return" is a mystery for scholastic skulls to ache over, not business brains, and that a corporation paying "the highest possible wages" would collect the

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[92] The Cost, p. 160. Mowbray Langdon is the villain of The Deluge! Nevertheless, his paradox, "Inherited riches are a hopeless handicap," is the first forespark of Phillips's masterpiece The Second Generation. See The Cost, p. 401.

[93] Ibid., p. 198.

[94] Ibid., p. 200.

least possible profits. There is no compromise between the system that values humanity by standards of metal and the order of generous production and free distribution. Phillips was groping for such a compromise in The Cost.

Ambiguity of principle resulted in tenebrous drawing of personalities, and worse, the invocation of a deus ex machina to unravel the plot. Frederick Taber Cooper, an early admirer and blunt critic of Phillips, reported that he "brought away no very clear impression" of the characters in The Cost, regretting too that it was "marred by an irritatingly conventional ending."[95] The critic was too severe when he judged there was "lack of vividness" throughout the novel. Among the dynamic passages we constantly recall those of the birth of Pauline's baby, the wrestling with her lad in summer hay, the stichomythic talk of John Dumont and his wife on the rumor of marriage between her lover Scarborough and Dumont's sister, and the sequel conversation under the stars of Pauline and Langdon on courage. The portrayal of Dumont's frantic efforts to save his fortune, his victory in a pandemoniac stockmarket crisis, and his death entangled in ticker-tape has been dismissed as melodramatic. Similar work, but embroidered with heavy though hollow symbolism, in Frank Norris's The Pit is welcomed as sublime.

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[95] F.T.Cooper, review of The Cost, in Bookman, XIX (July, 1904), 501.

## 3. ANNUS MIRABILIS

The eventful year 1905 was greeted by Phillips in February with a book of sublimity, The Mother-Light, a tragedy of the divine. If the novel had not been published anonymously, it would have stirred the heart of the nation. No critic seems to have been struck with the clews to authorship dispersed in the story, so utterly unlike the seven that made his signature magnetic across the continent. On the very first page it is possible to identify the writer, since the opening scene is in a theater where Victoria Fenton, the actress who became Marlowe's second wife in A Woman Ventures, is starring in "Morals of the Marchioness," a notorious play in that novel. But there is no better testimony to the mind that conceived The Mother-Light than the remorseless materialism that pervades the book. Its theme may be stated in the immortal words of an elder materialist:

> Religion is the moan of the oppressed creature, the sentiment of a heartless world, as it is the spirit of spiritless conditions. It is the opium of the people.
>
> The abolition of religion, as the illusory happiness of the people, is the demand for their real happiness.[96]

The American materialist dealt with religion in a very

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[96] Karl Marx, "A Criticism of the Hegelian Philosophy of Right," Selected Essays, translated by H. J. Stenning (New York: International Publishers, 1926), p. 12.

concrete, a contemporary form. He selected cardinal traits of prevalent American theologies, concentrating on the indigenous, to invent the particular cult of his novel. "United States ideas on the ultramundane are represented perhaps most perfectly by what one ecclesiast designates the "Egocentric Sects."

> These have physical comfort, personal exhilaration, and freedom from pain, disease, and ennui as their objectives. The Christian Scientists, Divine Scientists, Unity School of Christianity, and New Thought groups are examples of this type.... they depart from the Christian tradition.[97]

According to the official biographer of Phillips, the artist was concerned "with a phase of the new thought cult."[98] A reviewer opined that the church of Mary Baker Eddy was his pattern, and complained, "Whether or not the story is for or against this faith, it is difficult for a reader to decide."[99] A discriminating reader will decide that the story judges not any religion. It simply explains why the most advanced country in the world responded to the urge

> to provide a religion for those who had felt compelled to surrender their Christianity to the imperious demand of Science but who still cast longing glances into space beyond the exploded mystery of the last weighed and measured star.[100]

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[97] Elmer T. Clark, The Small Sects In America (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1937), pp. 28,29.

[98] Marcosson, op. cit., p. 234.

[99] Anonymous, "The Mother-Light," Bookman, XXI (April, 1905), 214.

[100] The Mother-Light, p. 33.

The Mother-Light mounts above the village atheism that snarls in Sinclair Lewis's Elmer Gantry, bears no stain of the dismal irony of Harold Frederic's The Damnation of Theron Ware, and drives deeper into the fountainhead of the sacrosanct in America than William Dean Howells's The Leatherwood God. The national literature has no volume deadlier to the faith that Phillips considered the final survival of savagery.

At the head of the church of "The Mother-Light" stands Maida Hickman,

> one of those mighty human magnets that take hold through the dominant instincts of human nature--instincts which were ancient inhabitants of the mind before it was human, instincts beside which reason, newcomer of humanity's yesterday, is indeed a helpless infant.[101]

These words are actually used to describe Ann Banks, the foundress of the church, but they are truer of Maida, her successor, who is the most sensitive of all the heroines of Phillips. Disciples revere (or worship?) her as the visible expression of "Light," an enigmatic essence flowing from "The Great All," which, like every Absolute, is masculine. Her apparition in red induces blind believers to see, deaf to hear, lame to hurl crutches away. Infidel physicians mutter about hysteria as a cause and cure of disease. Metaphysicians exult, "When the universe evolved mind, it evolved

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[101] Ibid., pp. 32-33. See pp. 69-70, 250, passim.

a master!"[102] But the "mind" they mean has no more to do with the mortal and vexatious thing convolved in the cranium than the "Word" of St. John with speech. What Maida Hickman signified by her Logos was love, love--

> The instinct that began with the beginning of the universe--the instinct that makes two atoms of matter rush together with a force that could rend a mountain.[103]

She is in love with Dr. Gaylord Thorndyke, a man thirsty for lost illusions, who searches for a key to the prison where her priests have locked in the virginal "Mother-Light." He burns to believe in her as goddess in order to win her as woman. She yields herself, "when she was not her own to give,"[104] and a priest (named Will Hinkley) shows her the wages of sin by knifing her lover in the back. Thorndyke lives, but she can never look on him again. Three years later he attends one of the apparitions of "The Scarlet Woman," as hostile journals brand her, and when the vision vanishes he stands in the midst of ecstasy "like a rock of reason," as a fellow-surgeon declares, "alone in an ocean of delusion." "A bleak and barren rock," Thorndyke answers, "and the soul on it dying of hunger and thirst."[105] However, he returns to his duty, the salvation of mankind from the

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[102] Ibid., p. 222.

[103] Ibid., p. 249. Cf. pp. 165-166.

[104] Ibid., p. 288.

[105] Ibid., p. 296.

fate of the brute, salvation by labor, a thornier but more reliable road to freedom than the wild way of love.

> ... at bottom, all men, whether they know it or not, are of the same religion. Each in his own way believes, and --if he is wise--tries to live, the great gospel--the Gospel of Work.[106]

The hero of Phillips's next novel, The Plum Tree, says, "There may be those who are stimulated to achievement by being in love, though I doubt it." The love of Harvey Sayler for Elizabeth Crosby absorbed his thoughts and paralyzed his courage.[107] Fear of hunger and the shame of rags in a hovel, brute terror inspires him to the career whose crown is the mastery of the strongest political party in America. The Plum Tree is Sayler's autobiography--"confessions, not my professions."[108] It is also the story of the death of democracy in the United States. As a boy the protagonist watched "the crude beginnings of the money-machine in politics ... the beginnings of the overthrow of the people as the political power."[109] Twenty years after, "The system which ruled my own state was in full blast in every one of the states of the Union."[110] How had this horrific change

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[106] Ibid., p. 161. Thorndyke dreams of the day the world's "toilers are emancipated from the slavery of the task into the freedom of work." (Ibid.)

[107] The Plum Tree, p. 10.

[108] Ibid., p. 39.

[109] Ibid., p. 14.

[110] Ibid., pp. 152-153. See too p. 184.

occurred without an uprising in defense of the democracy for which a civil war had been fought whose wounds were hardly healed? Harvey Sayler offers two replies. "In the first place, the virtues of the old republic were partly responsible for its ruin. Respectability was a synonym for commercial credit and good will, and for their sakes the people bartered their less palatable franchise. "As if honor or honesty could win other than sporadic and more or less hypocritical homage--practical homage, I mean, among a people whose permanent ideal is wealth, no matter how got or how used." After all, "want," not bondage, "is man's wickedest enemy."[111] But love is also guilty of the decline and fall of popular sovereignty:

> the chief reason why so many men had surrendered the inner citadel of self-respect. In the crucial hour, when they had had to choose between subservience and a hard battle with adversity, forth from their hearts had issued a traitor weakness, the feeling of responsibility to wife and children....[112]

The social transformation that Phillips attributed to usury was the blame of industry, in the judgment of the Hoosier humorist Booth Tarkington. He lamented the revolution that made Indiana's green and pleasant land an inferno of factories, but the culprits of the revolution were machines, not men! Tarkington compared the shadow of industry looming over the rustic state of his youth to

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[111] Ibid., p. 48.

[112] Ibid., p. 41.

> the ceiling shadow of a lifted war club over one of the pioneer settlers reading his Bible by candle-light in the log cabin out of which the cities grew. For no catastrophe of earthquake, of war, or fire, or flood, or tornado, or all combined, could have done more to those towns than the change has done.[113]

Just as he sentimentally neglected to show the pioneer distilling rum to debauch Indians or getting ready his rifle to butcher them, so Tarkington overlooked the fact that steel is not blessable for cutting knots nor damnable for cutting throats, Bill Sykes to the contrary! In The Plum Tree Phillips demonstrated how steel, coal, oil, instead of strengthening, warming and illuminating America were spreading blight and plague, because of the owners prehensile for profit. The Plum Tree carried a gallery of typical proprietors.

The editor of the Bookman observed,

> A good many people are amusing themselves by trying to identify the originals of some of the characters.... The author, however, when approached on this point, disclaims all intention of singling out individuals of national fame for praise or pillory, maintaining that his characters are composites, and that separate traits may readily be fastened on separate men.[114]

Phillips did not copy; he created. He was not nominating villains for gallows; he uncloaked the conditions breeding villainy. For instance, the etching of Senator Goodrich, the custodian of the national engines of Harvey Saylor's

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[113] Booth Tarkington, The World Does Move (Garden City: Doubleday, Doran and Company, 1929), pp. 34-35.

[114] Editorial, Bookman, XXI (June, 1905), 342.

party, is no execration of Senator Aldrich, but a critique of the economy that promoted such creatures.[115] If the godly Roebuck, whose "expression suggested that each dollar had been separated from him with as great agony as if it had been so much flesh pinched from his body,"[116] was the spitting image of John D. Rockefeller, he was simultaneously the twin of many a pious capitalist. And President Burbank, who "lacked the moral courage boldly to do either right or wrong," and regarded his lowly birthplace that persuaded tears and votes as a "beggar looks on the deformity he exhibits to get alms"?[117] Yes, he sharply resembles McKinley, but he mainly presents a mirror for magistrates!

Mark Hanna furnished major elements for the making of Harvey Sayler, who also bought the two votes requisite to bring him into the Senate.[118] Both men wielded whips over party machines in the Midwest, and became overlords within

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[115] The Plum Tree, pp. 183-184. Constituents of Matthew Quay entered in the etching of Goodrich. Phillips took the title of his novel from Quay's telegram to a New York broker which disclosed the links between capital and the Capitol: "You buy 5000 Met a stock he cherished and I will shake the plum tree." (Cited by Marcosson, op. cit., p. 234.)

[116] Ibid., pp. 70-71.

[117] Ibid., pp. 148, 149. Incidentally, President Burbank's last act "was--or seemed to be--an attempt to involve us in a war with Germany," to yank America from economic crisis and intrench his administration with blood and iron! (Ibid., p. 378.)

[118] Ibid., pp. 125-126.

the White House by the shrewdest handling of money and men. Both were liberal to the proletariat, wished "to give to the prostrate but potentially powerful many at least enough to keep them quiet."[119] Both were bellicose to socialism, yet held the conviction it could never succeed in the United States, because "our people always reason that it is better to rot slowly by corruption than to be frightened to death by revolution."[120] However, Hanna was unswervingly loyal to Wall Street,[121] while Sayler named its business "brigandage" and plotted "to yield to the powerful few a minimum of what they could compel."[122] Sayler is an unhappy opportunist, "like a civilized man who has to live among a savage tribe."[123] But he does not envy the quixotic senator Hampden Scarborough, who has to share the leadership of his party with a barbarian rabble-rouser like Rundle of Indiana. Don Quixote of Saint X runs for the presidency twice, under a program that

> was a firebrand to light the torch of revolution, of revolution back toward what the republic used to be before differences of wealth divided its people into upper, middle and lower classes.[124]

Solidly backed by "the rural districts and the small towns"

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[119] Ibid., p. 187.

[120] Ibid., pp. 174-175.

[121] See Nathaniel Wright Stephenson, op. cit., p. 459.

[122] The Plum Tree, p. 187.

[123] Ibid., p. 137.

[124] Ibid., p. 232.

the reactionary Scarborough wins the second campaign, but he never risks his neck against the windmills or dynamos of the ruling class. Phillips wastes no space reporting the feeble reforms he probably accomplished. No refutation is offered of Sayler's "claim that we practical men are as true and useful servants of our country and of our fellow men" as Scarborough.[125] In fact, when the plutocratic opportunist interviews the unhappy utopian in the Executive mansion, the latter admits: "I know you and I have in the main the same purpose."[126] So much for reformers! Scarborough's friend defines his own function as that of social "swineherd"![127]

The "swineherd" was haunted by the perfume and the fantom of his boyhood love, Elizabeth Crosby. Fugitive from her sense of duty and honesty, he married a rich girl who "appreciates that a woman's best chance for big dividends in marriage is by being the silent partner in her husband's career."[128] But Elizabeth crossed his path at each crisis, and when at last he found the old maid a beautiful builder of a modern academy for women, he could not restrain the outcry: "I came to try to make you as unhappy as I am."

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[125] Ibid., p. 338.

[126] Ibid., p. 384.

[127] Ibid., Chapter XXXI, "Harvey Sayler, Swineherd."

[128] Ibid., p. 60.

She did not respond, "maddeningly mistress of herself," and he accused her of cold indifference to his suffering. Wordless the virgin stretched out her hands and let the cruel lover see in her palms "four deep and bloody prints where her nails had been crushing into them."[129] He fled from the sibyl's face, and returned to the stenchful pit of his politics, wreaking his rage on the Burbanks and Roebucks until they turned their fangs on him. The death of the ambitious mother of his children released him from the necessity of retaining his crown as the autocrat of his party. He pleaded with Elizabeth to help him regain the pride of his young manhood. She consented.

> And so, I end as I began, as life begins and ends--with a woman. In a woman's arms we enter life; in a woman's arms we get the courage and strength to bear it; in a woman's arms we leave it. And as for the span between--the business, profession, career--how colorless, how meaningless it would be but for her![130]

Does The Plum Tree contradict itself when it calls love a cause of cowardice and the cradle of courage? The contradiction disappears in the light of these words from Phillips's prior work:

> There are two distinct genera of love--and the others are species.... There is the love that asks all and offers nothing; there is the love that offers all and asks nothing.[131]

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[129] Ibid., pp. 258, 259.

[130] Ibid., p. 389.

[131] The Mother-Light, pp. 270-271.

The second kind is the love terrible as an army with banners, from which the unvaliant Sayler tried to escape, hiding between the breasts of the first. In view of Phillips's dream of ladies as liberators, what must we think of the conclusion of Alfred Kazin that "the women in his 'reform' novels were pastel heroines out of Tennyson," pallid with "sweet-smiling patience and fastidiousness"?[132] Are there women in American fiction, after Brockden Brown's Constantia Dudley, Hester Prynne, and Mark Twain's black Roxy, so beautifully brave as Elizabeth Crosby, Nelly Barney, and Emily Bromfield? Not even the heroine of The Social Secretary, the third novel Phillips produced in 1905, the shortest and shallowest of his works, can be termed Tennysonian. But Augusta Talltowers of the District of Columbia, though she revels in Browning, lacks the stature and fire of that virile Victorian's girls.

The Talltowers diary is too complacent about the class that employs her as a diplomatic bookkeeper, the class that she calls society. Her book teems with trivialities. Among them are sprinkled notes that chime a merry threnody on American democracy. Thus: "Naturally, as we get more and more ambassadors [who are ordinarily gilded idiots], and a bigger army, and the President more powerful, we become like the European courts."[133] The only memorable persons of the

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[132] Kazin, op. cit., p. 108.

[133] The Social Secretary (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1905), p. 49. See pp. 9-10 for satire on ministers in foreign realms.

story are Mother Burke, a Western senator's wife striving to make herself at home in imperial purple, and the Baroness Nadeshda Daragane, a Russian siren. We are granted no evidence for the rapturous remark of a German envoy that Mrs. Burke "ranks with Bret Harte and Mark Twain," except her fancy that "the country'll turn loose a herd of steers from the prairies in this town" of Washington if the mimicry of monarchy is continued.[134] The Daragane is more vivid, in her "dress of silver spangles like the wonderful skin of some amazing serpent," able to "kiss or kill with equal enthusiasm."[135] These women do not atone for the vanity of The Social Secretary, the futile attempt to mingle comedy of capital-city manners with summer-hammock romance. It is the single book of Phillips that deserves the glib criticism Mr. Kazin applied to his complete works--"glib, surface portraits of the ascendant [sic] class on display."[136] The trivial volume gave no promise of the splendid novel that followed it, The Deluge.

Frank Harris affirmed, "The corruption in American political life was never so well pictured" as in The Plum

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[134] Ibid., pp. 50, 87.

[135] Ibid., pp. 73, 109.

[136] Kazin, op. cit., p. 124. The criticism of Alfred Kazin may be reckoned at its adequate worth by his comment on Frank Norris's study of bestiality McTeague--"a tragedy almost literally classic in the Greek sense of the debasement of a powerful [sic!] man." (Ibid., p. 102.)

Tree.[137] On the other hand, the picture of corruption in the financial life of the nation set forth in The Deluge has never been outdone. "Phillips has done his strongest piece of work, up to the present time," said Frederick Taber Cooper in the fall of 1905.[138] He was right, for none of the previous novels possessed its radiant concord of parts; the dramatis personae of the others were not so numerous nor drawn with such abundant and bright detail. The secret of The Deluge's vivacity was revealed by Phillips in the prelude to Matthew Blacklock's autobiography, in lines of exultation over his literary prowess:

> I shall by no means confine my narrative to business and finance. Take a cross-section of life anywhere, and you have a tangled interweaving of the action and reaction of men upon men, of women upon women, of men and women upon one another. And this shall be a cross-section out of the very heart of our life today, with its big and bold energies and passions--the swiftest and intensest life ever lived by the human race.[139]

The volume's "chief merit," Cooper justly remarked, "lies in the cleverness with which the pulse of the stock market and the beat of the human heart are made to blend and harmonise."[140]

Matthew Blacklock has often erroneously been identified with the Boston banker Thomas W. Lawson, whose exposure of

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[137] Harris, op. cit., p. 25.

[138] Cooper, review of The Deluge, Bookman, XXII (December, 1905), 372.

[139] The Deluge, p. 3.

[140] Cooper, op. cit., p. 373.

the crimes of his competitors in copper (chiefly Henry Rogers and William Rockefeller) in Frenzied Finance (1905) was a masterpiece of Muckraking. The hero of The Deluge does have a temper and tongue like Lawson's, and exploits publicity with the same calcium flamboyance, but there the likeness halts. The superiority of Blacklock's intellect to Lawson's may be seen by contrasting any page of The Deluge with the banker's books--particularly his Friday the Thirteenth (1907), an atrocity in the style of the Reverend Thomas Dixon, author of The Clansman.[141] Lawson was no "born iconoclast," and no capitalist ever accused him, as Roebuck accused Blacklock, of constructing "that engine of publicity of his to cannonade the foundations of society."[142] Nor did the banker ever speak of the Rockefellers as the protagonist of The Deluge talked of "Roebuck and his gang of so-called 'organizers of industry'"--"those parasites, bearing precisely the same relation to our society that the kings and nobles and priests bore to France before the Revolution."[143] The book of Blacklock was directed to rid the mind of America of the pernicious notion "that some dire calamity would come if they

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[141] An excellent sketch of the author of Frenzied Finance was drawn by Louis Filler, op. cit., pp. 171-189. Mr. Filler asserts, "The critics who have been pained by the 'melodrama,' and 'unreality,' of The Deluge have not been acquainted with the period it expressed."

[142] The Deluge, p. 416.

[143] Ibid., p. 125.

[the Roebucks and fellow-bandits] were swept from between producer and consumer!"[144] In short, there was not a drop of Lawson's blood scarlet with socialism.

The streak of socialism in Blacklock appears most lucidly when he utters his thoughts of sex. They ring like Yankee echoes of Die Frau und der Socialismus by the great German revolutionary labor leader August Bebel, which Daniel De Leon had issued in English in 1904. Blacklock's love, Anita Ellerely, a daughter of the plutocracy, rebels against her bourgeois upbringing: "They've treated me as the Flat-head Indian women treat their babies," shaping the tiny skulls to the tribal pattern of beauty and imbecility.[145] Her parents failed to complete the process, and "their only large income-producing asset" glides from their grasp. Anita's mother's scheme for selling her provokes from Blacklock a metaphor Dantesque in its stark horror--"no old harpy presiding over a dive is more full of the venom of the hideous calculations of the market for flesh and blood than is a woman whose life is wrapped up in wealth and show."[146] Is the girl's rebellion folly? "It is the splendid follies of life that redeem it from vulgarity."[147] But Anita was practical, in fact selfish,

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[144] Ibid., p. 422.

[145] Ibid., p. 185.

[146] Ibid., pp. 149-150, 155.

[147] Ibid., p. 192.

and her declaration of independence unmasks the individualism of the ruling class, the class of standard commodities, mental stereotypes, and conventional immoralities, as a lie, the negation of the ego. Her marriage with Blacklock is emancipation, not a contract of obedience in exchange for maintenance. The "idea of responsibility in possession," her lover vows, "was new to me--was to have far-reaching consequences. Now that I think of it, I believe it changed the whole course of my life."[148] Both in jurisprudence and practical commerce this principle of responsibility in possession runs against the grain of private property with its "right to use and abuse," as ordained by the Twelve Tablets of Rome.

Nevertheless, Phillips did not allow the scarlet vein to dominate The Deluge. He had not relinquished the hope that his people would conquer plutocracy without overthrowing the government. After Blacklock precipitates a panic by national revelations of the sabotage of the United States by Wall Street, and the desperate investors turn against him as an incendiary, he retires from business confident of "the futility of trying to hasten evolution by revolution."[149] Calling his revelations revolutionary is comic. They excited the masses but did not unite them; they

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[148] Ibid., p. 262.

[149] Ibid., p. 481.

were iconoclastic, not constructive. He merited the popular fury, precisely for circulating the delusion that the country is "democratic today, inevitably more democratic tomorrow!" at the same time that he warned America to beware of the invisible government of the "kings of finance"! He spread the opium of belief that Demos was sovereign while bewildering the public with facts proving that Plutos was in command, that a crew of capitalists "controlled in one way or another practically all the industries of the country," and "all the governments of the nation--national, state and city--were prostrate under their iron heels".[150]

Needless to tell, Phillips did not realize that The Deluge floated opium along with its wine of truth. The paradox of his politics never obscured the essentially progressive power of his works. They incited no popular conflagrations, but thrilled thousands and educated hundreds who, like Blacklock, had "much to learn, and to unlearn." Republican illusions were merely sun-spots on his genius, like the Roman Catholic royalism of Balzac and Tolstoy's visions of Messianic peasantry, enhancing the splendor of his science and conscience. The Deluge was full of sibylline leaves reminiscent of the tempests of 1905 that kindled battles for democracy in Asia and struggles for proletarian

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[150] Ibid., pp. 4, 12, 433. (Italics are mine.--A.F.)

commonwealth in America. The following novels of Phillips reflected with increasing purity and power "the prophetic soul of the wide world, dreaming on things to come."

## CHAPTER IV

## EVOLUTION OF THE NOVELS (CONTINUED)

Fair play in criticism of Phillips became less conspicuous among the majority of his judges with each book of his prolific decade. He might have retorted that he cherished the old English law--a man should only be tried by his peers, and the genuine jury for the case of David Graham Phillips had not been assembled. From the time he entered the realm of fiction he was harassed by arbiters of belles lettres who treated his works with malice or exorbitant favor. Some rushed into print with solemn or frolic opinions after simply glancing at the novels! When Golden Fleece appeared the artist was asked if critics comprehended the fundamental meaning of his books. He answered,

> In the main, yes--that is, those who have done me the honour of reading what I wrote and have spared their imaginations the fatigue of constructing plots or characters or both with small assistance from me.[1]

None of his contemporary critics were so agile and jejune in their flights of fancy as the posthumous antagonists. Each of these built a straw Phillips and blasted him with ponderous irony, perversion of fact and slander. Phillips was a misanthrope, according to Carl Van Doren,

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[1] "Chronicle and Comment," Bookman, XVIII (December, 1903), 351.

"through a score of novels in which he hunted for snobbery and stupidity and cruelty and greed, throwing upon them an angry light without much art or charm."[2] How art or charm could exist where there was nothing but a pursuit of vileness, Van Doren omitted to tell. Phillips was Muckraking's "most prolific representative in fiction," says Granville Hicks, but his novels were very poor propaganda. They threw more than "angry light"--

> Phillips wrote in a fit of passion, recklessly mixing fact and gossip, and pouring over all a molten coat of vituperation. But the indignation is curiously unfocussed; Phillips could tell a good news story, but he could not draw up an indictment.[3]

The artist's kind friend Frederick Cooper was also grieved by the fact that Phillips worked from a dramatic stage instead of an apostolic pulpit. He wondered over the novels:

> Why is it that, starting as they do with big ethical problems and a broad epic treatment, they are so apt at the end to leave rather the impression of having given us an isolated and exceptional human story than of having symbolized some broad and universal principle.[4]

Cooper remarked, "there was a curious anomaly in the manner in which Mr. Phillips's mind worked when in quest of the germ idea of a new story." The strange novelist told Cooper

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[2] Carl Van Doren, The American Novel, revised edition (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1940), p. 237.

[3] Hicks, op. cit., p. 178.

[4] Cooper, Some Contemporary American Story Tellers (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1911), p. 116.

that "no story ever began to shape itself in his mind in the form of an abstract principle." Think of it! His wits were empty of "ethical doctrine," according to his own admission, when he began a story: "he always started from a single character or episode and built from these,--sometimes indeed from nothing more definite than a face glimpsed for a moment in a crowd."[5] Did the good Cooper read the same score of novels that Van Doren denounced? What would he have thought of Alfred Kazin's ridicule of the idea that Phillips was a realist? Of Kazin's contention that he was a preacher concerned strictly with ethical doctrine? Nobody would dispute that this critic was quite original. "Away from his muckrake," he pronounces, "Phillips was a frank romanticist." Proof? Nothing but this non sequitur:

> he seems to have based his criticism of a competitive society on the dangers it presented to the marriage equipoise. He always wrote of Wall Street with loathing, but the great danger of a life on Wall Street for him was that it kept husbands away from home.[6]

Phillips based none of his ideas on "dangers;" the menace of Wall Street for the novelist was that it wrecked more than homes--it wrecked America. To complete the farce of criticism, there is Mr. Upton Sinclair lamenting the fact

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[5] Ibid., p. 117.

[6] Kazin, op. cit., p. 106.

that Phillips was not an evangelist, preached "no panaceas."[7] What do these contradictions of the Hickses and Kazins, the falsifications of the Van Dorens and Pattees, signify? Mr. Sinclair tells us, while claiming that Phillips was no revolutionary,--"David Graham Phillips affords an interesting illustration of the power of bourgeois criticism to suppress and abolish those writers who threaten its ideology."[8]

## 1. ANATOMY OF AMERICA

Up-to-date sartorial neatness was unconscious hypocrisy on the part of Phillips, Mr. Sinclair argues. For the Hoosier was

> the genuine old-fashioned American, the wearer of square-toed shoes and a string tie. I do not mean that I ever saw him in that costume, but that his view of human society was derived from that period [sic] .... Like a good American, he respected money and the power of money, but he wanted the people who had this power to behave like sensible human beings....[9]

If the ten novels we have examined so far teach anything, they teach money is a mere tool; if they inculcate any lesson, it is that the potentates of capital can never behave like sensible human beings. Above all powers, Phillips respected labor-power, and in this respect he was "old-fashioned," of the period of Prometheus! Even in his vindication of

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[7] Sinclair, Mammonart; An Essay in Economic Interpretation (Pasadena: The Author, 1925), p. 356.

[8] Ibid., p. 353.

[9] Sinclair, loc. cit. The description fits Booth Tarkington perfectly.

the rights of woman he was "old-fashioned," returning to the tenets of a world unknown to Mary Wollstonecraft, the world of matriarchy. Without the lore of Johann Bachofen and Adolphe Bandelier, the Hoosier genius imagined the twentieth century recreating the golden age when all women were queens (as in the Anglo-Saxon tongue), keepers of culture, mothers of men. The chrysanthemum on his coat was an emblem of his revolutionary conception of sex. His dress was worthier of a free American, a workman of the world, than the artisan's costume of Walt Whitman's frontispiece.[10] Alas, Phillips was destined to isolation among fashionable philosophers like Mr. Sinclair and his comrades. He was surely "square-toed" in hostility to Socialist love as practiced by the Reverend George Herron, who deserted an "old-fashioned" wife to marry a new-fangled and wealthier one. But so was the revolutionary Marxian, Daniel De Leon, a man after the Hoosier's own heart.

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[10] Bailey Millard, the Cosmopolitan editor, introduced Phillips to Jack London and "was disappointed to note that these two men whose views on social affairs touched at so many points had so little to say to each other. David Graham was in full regalia--he rarely dressed in citizen's clothes--while London wore his customary flannel shirt, with attached collar and no waistcoat, although it was winter." Afterward, when Millard voiced his sorrow over the constraint, Phillips explained, "The trouble was that London didn't like me. My clothes bothered him. He mistook me for a dude, and wouldn't open out to me." Later London told Millard, "I'm afraid Phillips didn't like me. He didn't like the way I was dressed. Well, let it go at that." The next day Phillips wrote to the editor: "What an interesting man London is, and what a fine, honest, healthy and healthful look out of his eyes!" (Editorial, "Phillips's Methods," Bookman, XXXIII (March, 1911), 12.

The artist was tempted to relapse from proletarian to middle-class morality when he approached the end of a huge effort (as we observed in The Deluge) or in the holiday mood following a major performance (as when he dashed off Her Serene Highness and The Social Secretary). He yielded to the temptation for the last time while at work on The Fortune Hunter.[11] His object was to celebrate a Manhattan community of Germans who were

> honorable and exemplary members of that great mass of humanity which has the custody of the present and the future of the race--those who live by the sweat of their own brows or their own brains, and train their children to do likewise, those who maintain the true ideals of happiness and progress, those from whom spring all the workers and all the leaders of thought and action.[12]

But the pleasure of singing praises of their trinity Arbeit, Liebe und Heim blinded Phillips to the difference between the labor that produces for use and the labor that exploits its flesh and blood to heap a surplus for exploiting others. Old man Brauner and his family perspired in their delicatessen store for grosser stuff than love and home. He has piled enough dollars to flourish as a landlord and make tenement-denizens sweat for rent.

But the petty bourgeois Brauners are preferable to

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[11] The novel has nothing in common with the play of identical title by Winchell Smith which was produced three years later (1909) and elevated John Barrymore to stardom.

[12] The Fortune Hunter (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1906), p. 12.

Carl Feuerstein, the fascinating protagonist of the tale, a Prussian parasite of histrionic profession.

> His was one of those lofty natures that scorn all such matters of intimate concern to the humble, hard-pressed little human animal as food, clothing and shelter. He so loathed money that he would not deign to work for it, and as rapidly as possible got rid of any that came into his possession.[13]

The Thespian's contrivances to gain Hilda Brauner and her father's gold are sinisterly hilarious. Even his suicide is a master-stroke of comedy. The rhythm of the story is unique in the works of Phillips, buoyantly sparkling in every chapter. His mirth sometimes explodes like a boy's: "What laughter is so gay as laughter at nothing at all?"[14] The Fortune Hunter flows melodiously with German park-bands and children dancing in their wake, "twinkling tirelessly to their music," and Phillips frolics along with them. "It is a pity," said Harry Thurston Peck, that the artist "did not take a little more time to round out this story and do full justice to the capital materials...To what marvelous ends Balzac would have employed it all!"[15] Peck knew how the Hoosier novelist hated prolixity, but he was accustomed to Victorian fiction intended (and extended) for idle readers. He was thirsty for the sad satiety of Thackeray, Trollope and Hardy, wishing to wallow

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[13] Ibid., p. 30. Herr Feuerstein is perfervid in favor of "art for art's sake."

[14] Ibid., p. 155.

[15] H. T. Peck, review of "The Fortune Seeker" (sic!) Bookman, XXIV (October, 1906), 179.

in more scenes and episodes like those of The Fortune Hunter even though they did not advance the central theme of the novel. The point of the tale was put bluntly by one of the minor clowns, a criminal lawyer: "when a man or woman has been brought up to live without work, to live off other people's work, there's nothing they wouldn't stoop to, to keep on living that way."[16]

To reach the anatomy of a nation we must probe to the mode of producing and distributing the wares that relieve its wants. If the structure is healthful, the mode is founded on freedom of the workers; if it is sick and deathful, the workers are slaves. These ideas were cardinal in the "Gospel of Work" according to David Graham Phillips. He saw that America's anatomy was sick, in danger of decay; still he found it difficult to digest the theory that the creative class of the "sweet land of liberty" was actually in chains. How could the backbone of democracy be scarred by a yoke? He had been educated to trust that the bondage of the black race was the sole slavery that had ever disgraced his country. Did Carlyle do right in reducing the Homeric Civil War (Ilias Americana in Nuce) to a prize-fight between the "Peter of the North" who hires his laborers "by the day," and the "Paul of the South" who "hires them by the lifetime"?

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[16] The Fortune Hunter, pp. 100-101.

Phillips turned the light and the lancet of his candor on the national organism of industry, for the first time with determination to search it to the marrow. Amica America sed magis amica Veritas.

The Second Generation is "a criticism of contemporary industrial ethics," as Alfred Kazin noted, and therefore not, as he says, "an editorial in novel form."[17] The stalest of the charges brought against Phillips is that his literature is journalism. Professor Pattee announces discovery that what the public considered delectable tales were "in reality camouflaged bombshells for fighting things that should not be." The bomb-maker, he adds, "was a machine turning out day by day a standard product....viewing everything with the newsman's eye. Like an editorial it was timely, but it was stuff pregnant only with the moment."[18] Journalism is nothing if not timely, with a local habitation and a date. Yet the adversaries of Phillips have a devilishly hard time trying to bound his "stuff" in a nutshell, or a headline. Mr. Hicks is confident that "The Second Generation summed up Phillips' conclusions, contrasting the virtues of hard-working poverty with the evils of inherited wealth."[19] The fact is "the

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[17] Kazin, op. cit., p. 108. By "contemporary" Mr. Kazin means the lifetime of Phillips.

[18] Pattee, op. cit., 150-151. Dr. Pattee does not mention one of Phillips's books in proof of any of his accusations.

[19] Hicks, op. cit., p. 179.

virtues of hard-working poverty" are treated in two chapters, at most, of the alleged summary (in the auxiliary plot of Laurent Tague). Sympathetic Cooper, in his quest for Zolaesque abstractions, could not decide whether The Second Generation was a "protest against inherited fortunes, a glorification of work," or else a "satire upon the snobbery of America's idle class."[20] At least he discerned potentiality for three editorials in the story! The second guess came nearest to definition of Phillips's goal, although he would have smiled at the hint that work needed glorifying. Yes, it was work that occupied him in The Second Generation, work as servitude and work as emancipation, work as it was and work as it might be in the United States of the infancy of the twentieth century.

How far Phillips transgressed the decrees of journalism in his books may plainly be seen in his passion for writing of things as they might be, particularly labor. This passion, according to Cooper,

> led him quite frequently to picture, not what average people are doing under existing conditions, but what somewhat unusual people would in his opinion have done

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20 Cooper, op. cit., p. 120. Mr Ludwig Lewisohn, whose esteem for Phillips is ardent, also speaks of the book in question as if it were mainly chastisement of "young snobs and wasters ... who had lost the practical virtues of their fathers and had developed none that were new." (Expression in America, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1932, p. 327.

> under conditions just the reverse of those that exist.[21]

These extraordinary folk and circumstances are always pictured against the stage of the average, the commonplace. The Second Generation is almost mathematically an exemplar of the method. The tragedy of the workman Hiram Ranger marches with the comedy of the capitalist Charles Whitney as counterpoint, and poles of mutual repulsion are formed by their two sons and two daughters, trite and intrepid respectively. Nevertheless, Cooper is wrong when he calls the book "an up-to-date morality play."[22] No incarnate virtues or vices mime in it. There is nothing static in the story. What realist knew better than Phillips that, in the universal flux, equipoise is hallucination? The "counterpoint" flows naturally from the partnership of Ranger and Whitney, who are "typical impersonations of the first generation that is sowing in labor." The "poles" emerge from parallels of their children's lives, which are models of "the second generation that is reaping in idleness."[23] Within each character is plenitude of contradiction. The dominant personality of the volume, Hiram Ranger himself, whose will propels the central plot, is literally paralysed with remorse

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[21] Cooper, op. cit., p. 123.

[22] Ibid., p. 128.

[23] The Second Generation, p. 5.

over his will, dooming his family to a life of industry instead of luxury from the fruits of his work.

[The death-in-life of Hiram Ranger is symbolic of the destiny of the old-fashioned American artisan who was both proprietor and toiler.] He was master in his plant "not by reason of money but because he was first in brain and in brawn; not because he could hire but because he could direct and do."[24] As proprietor his place was usurped by the capitalist who is in command of industry only by reason of money, because he could hire. As toiler, living exclusively by the power of his muscle and mind, his place was seized by the capitalist for the wage-slave. To the age of Ranger success had meant beholding "the creations of [the] brain materialize in work accomplished;" under his epigones it "has sunk to mean supremacy in cheating and double-dealing."[25] He burned with "that hatred of inequalities which, repulsive though it is in theory, is yet the true nerver of the strong right arm of progress."[26] Horrified by the ravages of unearned riches among the youth of America, he made a testament depriving his son and daughter of the virus of hereditary gold. He thus struck a blow at the bedrock of civilization, the creed of private ownership, but he was more conscious of the cruelty it would inflict on his

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[24] Ibid., p. 2.

[25] Ibid., pp. 151, 330.

[26] Ibid., p. 188.

carefree children. The blow killed Hiram Ranger. Yet the only utterance he could make in paralysis when sad or glad was "Yes--yes--yes,"[27] tragic involuntary affirmation of the goodness of his deed despite the pity scalding his heart, the despair on being unable to revoke the will. The old-fashioned workman was proud to bequeath property to his offspring, protecting them from hardships that had seasoned his daily bread. Without property there could be no respectability. Hiram Ranger knew that he had done right, kept faith with "the force which in a few brief generations had erected from a wilderness our vast and splendid American,"[28] the force of free labor. His majestic reason notwithstanding, he felt that he had done wrong. The neutrality or paralysis of his class was a supreme necessity for the freedom of young America to work out its own destiny.

Tecumseh Agricultural and Classical University was the only important beneficiary of Hiram Ranger's will. This college of Phillips's invention provides Mr. Kazin with a target for his singular wit. He calls the self-immolation of the master-workman a "sentimental renunciation," and interprets his testament as the expression of a desire that men

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[27] Ibid., p. 90. Ranger's "yea-saying," as an expression of masculine creative might, invites comparison with the affirmations of that mouthpiece of feminine energy, Molly Bloom, at the close of James Joyce's Ulysses.

[28] The Second Generation, p. 334.

should "leave the beast world of the big city to build Jerusalem again" on ground that God made. The whole novel, to Mr. Kazin's spectacles, is a sermon of "Jeffersonian small-village ideals for a generation bound to megalopolis."[29] Now, what are the facts of the book? The Ranger will spurred the village of Saint X toward becoming a big city. The mills and factories that belonged to the Ranger estate were incorporated into Tecumseh University, which was transformed from an agrarian academy to a school of industrial humanism. All buildings and apparatus were renovated according to the most advanced ideas of technology. The students were required to learn the elemental cultures of farm and shop as well as the science of life and the art of living, earning their way to graduation by exertion of every manual and mental talent.

> Chemistry and its most closely related sciences were to be the foundation of the new university, as they are at the foundation of life.... All that science has bestowed in the way of making labor and its surroundings clean and comfortable, healthful and attractive, was to be provided; all that the ignorance and the short-sighted greediness of employers, bent only on immediate profits and keeping their philanthropy for the smug penuriousness and degrading stupidity of charity, deny to their own self-respect and to justice for their brothers in their power.[30]

If this is "Jeffersonian small-village" ideology, then Henry

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[29] Kazin, op. cit., p. 109.

[30] The Second Generation, pp. 73, 178, 262, passim.

Ford is an avatar of Robert Owen![31]

Arthur, the son of Hiram, after a bitter farce of revolt, finally donned overalls and went to work in his father's flour-mill and cooperage. Heartened by the love of Madelene Schulze, a medical practitioner whose beauty lifts the prose of Phillips to lyric, young Ranger mastered the mechanism of Hiram's industry. He is aided and guided by a youth of French descent, Laurent Tague, who embodies the proletarian ideals of his creator. Lorry is proud of his class, believing that the keys of the future are in its hands, trustworthy hands that will free the race forever from the terrors of hunger, sickness, and bestiality. From his lips Arthur learned the Marxian principle of surplus value, which Lenin named the cornerstone of revolutionary socialism. In Tague's own terms it is not a theory but an empirical fact:

> Did you ever think, it takes one of us only about a day to make enough barrels to pay his week's wages, and that he has to donate the other five days' work for the privilege of being allowed to live? If I rose from the bench to boss dom, I'd be living off those five days of stolen labor.[32]

Arthur won the trust of his fellow-workers and was chosen organizer of their union. The son of Hiram Ranger, the old

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[31] Tecumseh is a noble successor to the communal dream that Robert Owen tried to materialize at New Harmony, Indiana.

[32] Ibid., p. 230. Young Tague strikingly suggests Eugene Victor Debs, who was of Alsatian descent, and proclaimed, "I want to rise with my class, not from it."

patriot who recognized no classes in democracy, vowed, "as long as I'm a workman, I'll stand with my class."[33] With the support of old Hampden Scarborough, he was elected to the board of trustees of Tecumseh University, and the speed of the school toward "megalopolis" doubled. The students' working day was reduced to seven hours, and they were instructed to get ready for a six-hour day. The curriculum was enlarged to welcome courses for housewives, girls about to become mothers, women eager for crafts and professions. Arthur's "revolution" infurated the capitalists of Saint X whose "hands" became sprightly and brotherly under the colors of Tecumseh. The Socialist Party never set forth a program for an American renaissance equal to the vision of David Graham Phillips in The Second Generation. Yet, in the face of the Tecumseh "utopia," the working-class leader Lorry Tague insisted that "the day'll come when they'll look back on the way we work nowadays, as we do on the time when a lot of men never went out to work except in chains and with keepers armed with lashes."[34] Those who called Arthur and Theodore Hargrave, the chief chemist at Tecumseh, and Lorry "crazy dreamers" did not realize, Tague said, "what ignorant savages they themselves are."[35]

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33 The Second Generation, pp. 190-191.

34 Ibid., p. 297.

35 Loc. cit.

The Second Generation is a symphony of labor and love. The imagination of the author mounts on winged steel to peaks where no American artist before or after him dared to climb. He plays with the fancy of planned procreation of future mankind, when chemistry shall grasp the secret of interchanging "the so-called elements." He would have rejoiced in the saying of Hegel that what the mind of man can conceive the hand of man can construct. "I've often thought," muses Dory Hargrave, "that when one sees a beautiful man or woman, one is seeing the monument to some moment of supreme, perfect happiness."[36] It would be the bliss of a commonwealth of workers to create beauty in flesh and blood as well as in steel and electricity. So run the dreams of the revolutionary materialists of Tecumseh. Dreams do not make these master-builders sad. They have the strength to laugh at their mistakes, and to laugh louder at the exploiters and parasites who hang warnings up on the gates of science and labor, "No Trespassing," Ne Plus Ultra, and nonsense signifying human nature is immutable. The mirth of Phillips's symphony is not sardonic: its mockery comes (to use his own piquant phrase) "like a trivial twitter from the oboe

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36 The Second Generation, pp. 112, 298-299. Resisting the temptation to seek cryptograms in Phillips, we cannot but recognize in Dory Hargrave an image of his maker. Both men enjoyed working at desks standing and smoking endless cigarettes. Both loved to "have at hand" the books of Montaigne and Cervantes, Shakespeare and Shelley (Ibid., p. 332).

trickling through a lull in the swell of brasses and strings."[37] It is the laughter of the warrior sure of victory and relaxing from a strenuous but indecisive fight.

The editor of the Chicago Dial was deeply disappointed by Phillips's masterpiece. It came so close to actualizing that myth of our literature--the Great American Novel! When that epic "came to be written," the editor predicted,

> it would have for its leading motive the contrast between successful parents and their degenerate children, a contrast so frequently, and at time so dramatically, illustrated in our national life as to assume typical significance.

Alas, Mr. Phillips had not produced the morality play of the Dial's nightmare. "Unfortunately, Mr. Phillips has no style;" moreover, his work shows "a slight tincture of unwholesome socialism."[38] Doubtless the editor had perceived but "a slight tincture" because so many of the novel's radical notions appeared to be "home-made," not European importations.

The Dial registered displeasure when Phillips continued his anatomy of the United States in Light-Fingered Gentry, which explained how public utilities were subverted by plutocracy to private monopolies. The raw material for the

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[37] Ibid., p. 41.

[38] William Morton Payne, review of The Second Generation, Dial, XLII (May 16, 1907), 314. Frederick Cooper urges the novel as the best book for beginners in Phillipsiana, because it "contains less than most of his books that is likely to arouse antagonism," and illustrates the author's strongest qualities with its "clash of many interests." (Op. cit., p. 126.)

novel came from the scandals of life insurance companies uncovered by Charles Evans Hughes in a stroke of "muckraking" that earned him election as governor of New York. Phillips did not exaggerate the filth of the fiduciary corporations in America.[39] Still the editor of the Dial assured his audience that the book was "marked by a stronger bias against the methods of the companies than facts would be likely to justify."[40] So irritated was he by the novelist's lèse majesté that he could not enjoy or even consider the love motive that crosses the fable of life insurance and sometimes overwhelms it. He asserted that "the private interest of the story was inconsiderable."[41] In truth, the romance of Horace Armstrong and Neva Carlin after the breaking of their wedlock shines among the finest of American fictions.

Armstrong married in order to use Carlin money to promote his commercial schemes. Neva accepted him in the hope that he would free her from the stifling village of Battle Field, Indiana. Both were frustrated, but remained captives in the town until their baby died. Then he fled to Chicago and plunged into finance, and she strove to forget

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[39] See Louis Filler, op. cit., Chapter XV, "Insurance on Trial."

[40] William Morton Payne, review of Light-Fingered Gentry, Dial, XLIII (October 16, 1907), 253.

[41] Loc. cit.

her sorrows in painting. When he returned ruddy with prosperity to reason with Neva for a divorce, she surprised him by consenting peacefully. She voiced his own internal conviction:

> you must get rid of whatever interferes with your development. And you are right. We must be true to ourselves. Worn-out clothes, worn-out friends, worn-out ties of every kind--all must go to the rag bag--relentlessly.[42]

From Chicago the greve young Armstrong went to New York and rose, or rather was elevated, to the presidency of the Mutual Association Against Old Age and Death. He was exalted by the plutocrats who secretly ruled the corporation and wanted an honest and industrious servant at its head, a magnified bookkeeper, who would mind his business and never inquire into their exercises with the funds whose accounts he kept. Horace was a man of liberal morality; where he was able to disregard the tenebrous deals of his colleagues, he ignored them; "where he could not ignore--he told himself that the end justified the means."[43] In the long run life insurance was a social service, and no great service can be fulfilled without grime. Armstrong suddenly lost his liberalism when he found out that his overlords were cunningly steering him to slaughter as a scapegoat to public wrath. Competitors were busy blowing the flickers of

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[42] Light-Fingered Gentry, p. 9.

[43] Ibid., p. 39.

indignation about the firm's arrogance to delinquent policyholders and the flaunting of wealth by officials into a flaming demand for state investigation. (Phillips thus demonstrated how "muckraking" could be profitable to the rivals of the raked.) Armstrong felt as if the sun had been extinguished. He could not believe the amiable bankers with whom he consorted were the monsters their conspiracy to assassinate his character proved them to be. He had seen them behave like beasts at ribald banquets, but thought the liquor was at fault. Now he recalled the testimonial dinner where his presidency was announced, and the service of solid gold plate that was bestowed on the retiring president, whom the plutocrats had swindled. How their eyes glittered and mouths foamed at the sight of the metal: "This apparition of the god in visible, tangible form caused hysterical excitement."[44] He remembered their grins of approval for political speeches attacking democracy, speeches like this:

> We must have a stronger government, and abolish universal suffrage. This thing of ignorant men, with no respect for the class with brains and property, having an equal voice with us has got to stop or we'll have ruin.[45]

While Armstrong meditated on the infamy and fiendishness of his "superiors," and scoured his skull for a plan to

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[44] Ibid., p. 23.

[45] Ibid., p. 92.

escape their trap for him, he heard of the arrival in New York of Neva Carlin. She came ostensibly to study painting under the brilliant Boris Raphael (one of Phillips's superb personalities). The self-liberation of Neva from Battle Field engendered a "revolution in her whole mode of life and thought" that shocked Armstrong to the core. "In the evolution of every living thing, there comes a definite moment when the old vanishes and the new bursts forth in full splendor," and that moment was the time of her resolution to free herself from the dead traditions and sex-starvation of her home.[46] Armstrong could hardly believe that she had once been his mate with the intimacy of domestic Indianans. He fell in love with the new Neva--at the very time when he needed all senses for the struggle to escape the fate devised for him. Miraculously his lust gave his vision the clarity that some morphine-eaters know, even though Neva was cool and distant in his presence. A plot to outwit his plutocratic enemies, a revenge worthy of their worst, was invented in his nocturnal walks. Night after night, when he paced the streets perfecting the invention,

> developing his vast and complex scheme to pile high the ruins of his enemies that he might rise the higher upon them, he would find himself almost or

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[46] Ibid., pp. 137, 138. Let it be noted how far the philosophy of Phillips had evolved since the day when he imagined revolution as external and disruptive to evolution. (The Deluge, p. 149.)

> quite at the entrance to the apartment house where she lived.[47]

He did not realize how much he looked like his overlords, how murderous, until Neva showed him the slime his soul had fallen in. His contrite heart broke. But "no one ever does anything real until his or her heart has been broken....then, one discovers one's real self--the part that can be relied on through everything and anything."[48]

Boris Raphael "could not believe that any man of the material, commercial type would attract a sincerely artistic, delicate, spiritual woman like Neva Carlin." He began to understand the unity of these opposites when he saw that Armstrong had "a certain charm of the force that in repose is like the mountain and in action is like the river."[49] Neva's lover did not learn of her passion for him until she had rescued him from the conspiracy. Then he suffered a renascence. The revolution of Armstrong leads to the transformation of his life insurance company into a tremendous cooperative. Cooperation as an economic principle does no violence to small-village ideals, but Phillips pictures it only from a megalopolitan viewpoint. Light-Fingered Gentry concludes with an image of New York in winter, with the torrents of spring beginning in its heart: "the vast panorama

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[47] Light-Fingered Gentry, p. 150.

[48] Ibid., p. 100.

[49] Ibid., p. 141.

of snow-draped skyscrapers, plumed like volcanoes and lifting grandly in the sparkling air."[50]

## 2. TOUJOURS L'AUDACE!

Light-Fingered Gentry was enjoyed by tens of thousands, but by none more eagerly than Albert Beveridge. He proclaimed his faith that "David Graham Phillips is the master American novelist of today."[51] He stood solitary in the faith. Never had critics dealt so drastically with the author of "The Treason of the Senate" as they did in the winter of 1907, when this novel they looked upon as a romance of "muckraking" came out. The sarcasms against his style increased.

> Few novelists of his degree of success have accepted adverse criticism in a more tolerant spirit; but there was one thing that he resented, and that was the charge of careless haste. 'People sometimes say that I write too fast,' he protested not long before his death. 'They said so about my Light-Fingered Gentry. They don't know anything about it! I don't believe any one ever wrote more slowly and laboriously. Every one of my books was written at least three times--' He paused a moment, then added in correction, 'And when I say three times, it really means nine times, on account of my system of copying and revision.'"[52]

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[50] Ibid., p. 451. Early in the novel Phillips delivered a challenge to capitalism which is integral to Marxian thought: "what is every kind of snobbishness in its essence but the divorce of brain and hand?" (Page 59.) Cf. Marx and Engels, The German Ideology, edited by R. Pascal (New York: International Publishers, 1939), p. 20.

[51] Quoted by Appleton advertisement in Old Wives for New.

[52] Cooper, op. cit., p. 113.

The style of Phillips needs no apology. It is common English, rather American, athletic and swift, frequently mounting to epic and lyric heights, deliberately written for the masses. He strove for transparency and trusted to the truth of his work to give it luster. His language is a vehicle moving with the speed of light, approximating action as well as words can. Yet the most implacable opponents confessed that his style could attain subtlety and color without collapsing into purple patches. The "effect" of the Prologue to Old Wives for New, said William Morton Payne, "comes close to being poetical." The body of the novel, he hastened to add, was composed in a "particularly sordid sort of prose." He made no effort to elucidate the discord, but went on to thunder against the "disgusting detail," and wound up his critique by calling Old Wives for New an "incoherent fabrication, which is one of the most revolting books, in both incident and general plan, that we have ever read."[53] One would have to exhume the English response to Ibsen to find a comparable flaring of righteousness against realism. That zealot of Zolaism, Frederick Cooper, reacted to Phillips's revelation of matrimony and divorce just as Tennyson reacted to Zola.

Protested Cooper:

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[53] Payne, review of Old Wives for New, Dial XLIV (June 1, 1908), 350.

> There is probably no other American novel that gives us with such direct and unflinching clairvoyance the sordid, repellent, intimate little details of a mistaken marriage that slowly but surely culminates in a sort of physical nausea and an inevitable separation....a sort of heartless immorality about the whole proceeding.[54]

One female critic showed less queasiness. She considered the title was not chosen in the happiest taste, and--"the style is often crude and the construction faulty." Despite these misfortunes, she admitted, the dramatis personae, and many "crowd the pages," are "very much alive".[55]

Frank Harris laconically called Old Wives for New a masterpiece.[56] The novel inspired Mr. Ludwig Lewisohn to eulogy of Phillips:

> He saw what no previous American novelist had permitted himself to see; he spoke out; he had a rude but sufficient power of characterization; his works contain portraits of people, such as that of Sophie Murdock in "Old Wives for New," which for their time and place dared greatly and successfully, which convince and even move and terrify. He was through with the sentimental pretenses of even Norris. He swept clean.[57]

Sophie Murdock, the divorced wife of the fable, was the character that provoked the warmest controversy. Innumerable women regarded her as a mirror of their own domestic degeneration. She was simply a beautiful lady who quit the struggle

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54 Cooper, op. cit., p. 130.

55 Grace Isabel Colbron, review of Old Wives for New, Bookman, XXVII (July, 1908), 495, 496.

56 Harris, op. cit., p. 22.

57 Lewisohn, Expression in America, p. 327.

to improve her gifts and graces after marriage, relapsing into the hebetude of a woman kept by one gainfully employed, and holding him loyal to wedlock by social sanctions rather than by affection and friendship. The female critic quoted above contended that Mrs. Murdock represented a type new to the American novel but "rapidly becoming obsolete." She predicted that "the fiction of the future will have no interest" in the type.[58] The future she forecast has not had its daybreak. When it does dawn, the personality of Sophie's rival, the dressmaker Juliet Raeburn, will furnish material for controversy as torrid as the first Mrs. Murdock caused, and surely more intelligent. Juliet Raeburn attracted merely prurient attention in her own epoch.[59] Her love for the hero was the love of a fully ripened woman, mature and majestic even in its savage moods. The episodes of her service as the nurse of the unconscious Murdock, a victim of train wreck, carry, beyond question, the sign manual of genius.

The scene of the railroad catastrophe itself (Chapter XV, "Derailed") unites terror and laughter in a way unknown

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[58] Grace Isabel Colbron, op. cit., p. 495.

[59] Granville Hicks, (op. cit., p. 179) claims that Old Wives for New opened a new phase of Phillips's novels, a phase "dealing with the new woman." If A Woman Ventures, The Second Generation, Light-Fingered Gentry, and even The Social Secretary, do not deal with "the new woman," what does the phrase signify? Mr. Hicks further claims that the realist wrote Old Wives for New after "sensing the decline of the popular interest in muckraking." (Loc. cit.) Mr. Louis Filler's Crusaders for American Liberalism has demonstrated at length how blatantly unwarranted this description of the people's attitude to "muckraking" is

to art west of the European mainland since Shakespeare. In the midst of fire and agony physicians are shown abandoning the bodies of anonymous victims to dispute for the fees of Murdock, the railroad magnate, over his broken body. Injured travelers yield place and liberty to the plutocrat. The confusion of the critics, their inability to tell whether the author was deriding or bewailing the spectacle, made them obtuse to the might and beauty of the book. They could not believe that Phillips was just obeying the commandment of Spinoza to all thinkers on social questions: Non ridere, non lugere, sed intellegere. To this day, no critic has drawn public eyes to the portrait of Berkeley, Murdock's partner, the cold-blooded hedonist who is at last murdered by one of the women he trafficked with, one who happened to love him. The agony of his end, his insistence on the saving of his reputation, and the freezing of his face in death--"a grotesque mask, sensual as a satyr, foolish as a clown,"[60] are triumphs of the comic spirit. How profoundly Phillips has studied his people may be discerned in the comparison of the conventional Methodist piety of Sophie Murdock and the frenetic Catholic devotion of Berkeley's murderess. The artist never did more durable work.

Old Wives for New fascinated the Germanophile critic Percival Pollard, who detested the earlier novels of Phillips

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[60] Old Wives for New, p. 385.

because in them he felt as if he were "being dragged through unpleasant facts, and amid unpleasant persons." He found this study of plutocrats at home and among harlots quite pleasant.

> Nothing in all of his (Phillips's) previous writing-with-a-purpose had prepared us for the virtues in his "Old Wives for New." There, for the first time, we were able to forget the man's manner.... There, finally, he wrote the book that ranked him among the social historians to whom American literature must look.... What was most encouraging in "Old Wives for New" was the dominant note of broad intelligence on which the author treated such eternal questions as home, love, and divorce....[61]

What Pollard called "the dominant note" was what he mistook as a tribute of the artist to "the doctrine of millions of unconscious Nietzscheans."[62] The critic had no objection to preaching in fiction so long as it was restricted to problems of individual lives; by "social historians" he really meant sexual. He thought he heard in Phillips's masterpiece an echo of Also Sprach Zarathustra, an appeal for unlimited love and the abolition of all obstacles to self. Was not Charles Murdock an uebermensch after Nietzsche's own fancy, subduing "reason to its place as the chief and trusty servant of his will," seeking exclusively to "satisfy his imperial longings for life"? Listen to his creed:

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[61] Percival Pollard, Their Day in Court (New York and Washington: Neale Publishing Company, 1909), pp. 189, 190, 192.

[62] Ibid., p. 192.

> The master men, playing life as a game and using their fellow-men as pawns, would not get far if they included consequences to others in their calculations. Also, he had learned that consideration usually causes greater blunders and disasters than ruthlessness....[63]

The fact that Phillips had crystallized the ideal of Nietzsche as an idol of plutocracy did not disturb Pollard, who preferred to have money or the Golden Calf adored in the fashion of Edgar Saltus, with all sorts of artistic ritual and mysterious ceremony, worshipped as Apis and blazoned with hieroglyphics. Pollard was positive that the Hoosier genius was paying homage to his German religion of egoism. He did not see that the train wreck, the result of the criminal negligence of Murdock's own corporation, was the beginning of the plutocrat's education up from egoism. He was hopelessly blind to the lesson implicit in the life of Juliet Raeburn, that love without work enslaves men and women to vanity, to parasitic sterility.

It is amusing to recall here the criticism of a professional sociologist of Old Wives for New. The message of the comedy, according to this critic, was the "Inadvisability of marriage between people of different social backgrounds."[64] The sociologist must have perused the volume with scientific precision. Yet, clearly, it never occurred to him that

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[63] Old Wives for New, pp. 147, 148.

[64] James Harwood Barnett, Divorce and the American Novel (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1939), p. 97.

Murdock, the railroad financier, and Juliet Raeburn, the ladies' tailor, had widely "variant social and educational backgrounds," were not members of the same class. Unlike Grace Isabel Colbron, the female critic whose shrewd review we quoted above, and Ludwig Lewisohn, the sociologist was not impressed by the vivacity of the characters. Phillips, he opined, "tried desperately hard to portray the psychological process of alienation of husband and wife but failed because he could not create characters which come alive in this work." The fastidious social scientist was irritated by the tale's "spurious atmosphere of high finance," and its apparent predilection for "the rougher and less pleasant side of life"![65] He is the only judge of Old Wives for New who found its plutocratic atmosphere "spurious," and he left the accusation undocumented. However, he did reveal the Indiana origin of the artist's theories on the rights of matrimony.[66]

Phillips revered his native state as a land "which has queer, sentimental divorce laws, made for honest people instead of for hypocrites."[67] Before Nevada elected to

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[65] Ibid., pp. 106, 107.

[66] The main source of Mr. Bennett's discourse on Indiana divorce legislation is Horace Greeley's Recollections of a Busy Life (New York: J. B. Ford Company, 1868), pp. 571-616. Greeley trumpeted that the Hoosiers were making their state a free-love colony.

[67] Light-Fingered Gentry, p. 145.

become the Mecca of divorce questers, Indiana was the happy hunting ground of the nation for them.[68] One year's residence qualified for a petition; the case could be tried thirty days after a published notice. Often the defendant was ignorant of the proceedings. But this was to be anticipated. "The average American," Phillips declared, "feels that it is only human nature to insist upon any and every possible advantage."[69] Only intellects like those that conceived the liberal divorce laws of Indiana sincerely imagined that human nature could be refined by republican fiat. The laws were the outcome of agitation by Robert Dale Owen, whose father was the noble Utopian who founded the utopian communist colony of New Harmony. The younger Owen was a gallant radical, who served the Union bravely during the Civil War, assisted the philosopher William Torrey Harris in making the national school system the freest on the earth, and ended his days serenely in the Left Wing of the Republican party, a worthy comrade of Stevens and Sumner. In his youth he worked together with Frances D'Arusmont, popularly known as Fanny Wright, for the cause of socialism and feminine emancipation. Politically, intellectually, David Graham Phillips stood for a twentieth century renascence of the humane and

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[68] William Dean Howells's A Modern Instance (Chapter XXXI) presents a vivid picture of a Hoosier divorce trial.

[69] Old Wives for New, p. 454.

materially sound doctrines of Robert Dale Owen.[70]

None of the artist's admirers were cheered by his next novel of 1908, The Fashionable Adventures of Joshua Craig. Percival Pollard was chagrined by what he thought was a retreat from Nietzsche to Emerson, to the philosophy whose God sang, "Fishers and choppers and ploughmen shall constitute my state."[71] Frederick Cooper, on the other hand, viewed the novel was a vilification of democracy; the hero, he charged, as " a piece of cheap caricature," a travesty of Owen Wister's renowned Virginian![72] The foes of Phillips were of course overjoyed by his playing into their hands with a book so "impossible to take seriously." As "extravaganza," gloated William Morton Payne, it was "rather good fun," despite the "determination of the author to be startling at any cost," and the "commonness of the style and the unredeemed vulgarity of the treatment."[73] Critics who thought themselves champions of democracy were the harshest in assailing Phillips's style. Their precursors were no less vehement in condemning the "commonness" of Mark Twain's method. Ring Lardner is not the last artist whose interpretation of

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[70] James Harwood Barnett's doctoral dissertation already cited makes Robert Owen and his son Robert Dale the same person! See op. cit., pp. 46, 49.

[71] Pollard, op. cit., p. 194.

[72] Cooper, op. cit., p. 132.

[73] Payne, review of The Fashionable Adventures of Joshua Craig, Dial, XLVI (April 16, 1909), 264.

United States manners and minds in language those minds could grasp will be denounced as vulgar by arbiters of elegance anxious to evade the question of its veracity.

Joshua Craig himself was the target of tireless vituperation. "A boor through and through," the editor of the Dial termed him.[74] The Bookman reviewer saw him as "a new and particularly objectionable type of all-round cad," "always and forever a snivelling snob," and asserted, "There are not even the smallest grounds upon which to suspect Craig of even common honesty."[75] At least one ground for such a suspicion is the enmity of the serpent-spirited Branch (Secretary of the Treasury) toward the hero. Another is Craig's sober rejection of the presidential bribe of a cabinet job. The reviewer compared him to Georges Duroy, the garrulous scoundrel of Maupassant's Bel Ami, who resembles Joshua Craig as much as Hamlet resembled Hercules. Certain traits of the statesman from Minnesota were derived from the Corsican conqueror, who struck the rotten republic of Thermidorian France in the same way that Craig struck Washington: "Surely not since the gay women of Barras's court laughed at the megalomaniac ravings of a noisy, badly dressed, dirty young lieutenant named Buonaparte, had there

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[74] Loc. cit.

[75] Firmin Dredd, Bookman, XXIX (March, 1909), 95. Firmin Dredd is a pseudonym, perhaps of Harry Thurston Peck.

been a vanity so candid, so voluble, so obstreperous."[76] Other traits of Craig were taken from Andrew Jackson, before whose statue he delighted to meditate. "You know," he reminded Margaret Severence, the girl of his desire, the uncrowned princess of the capital city, "it was because the gang that was in got too refined and forgot whom this country belonged to that old Jackson was put in office. The same thing will happen again."[77] Craig hungered for the supreme magistracy, and his ambition, and the tactics he used to capture the good-will of the millions for that goal provide the clews to the primary source of his character. His leonine air, his democratic rodomontades, his yearning to win the people's hearts even at the hazard of his career--all forcibly bring to mind the figure of the Wisconsin senator Robert La Follette. Both Northwestern politicians combined bombast and courage; and Craig was exactly the kind of filibuster to captain that "little group of wilful men expressing no opinion but their own" whom Woodrow Wilson execrated for combatting his armed-vessel bill which helped to propel America into the carnage of Europe in 1917. But Joshua Craig's devotion to liberty brimmed stronger than Bob La Follette's, and his last full measure would not have been

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[76] The Fashionable Adventures of Joshua Craig (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1909), p. 64.

[77] Ibid., p. 140.

confined to filibuster against the war to make the world safe for plutocracy.

The crux of The Fashionable Adventures is reached in this sentence from the middle of the romance:

> If Joshua Craig, hardy plodder in the arduous pathway from plowboy to President, could have seen what was in the mind so delicately and so aristocratically entempled in that graceful, slender, ultra-feminine body of Margaret Severence's, as she descended the stairs, putting fresh gloves upon her beautiful, idle hands, he would have borrowed wings of the wind and would have fled as from a gorgon.[78]

Miss Severence (Maggie, as Josh called her) despised his posture as a man of the masses. She aimed to make the rustic statesman a spearhead for her own conquest of Washington, to gather riches for her as a corporation attorney's wife. In short, she wished to reform him for sale and profit, to change the barbarian into a pretorian hireling of Rome. Craig was terribly tempted by her loveliness, the beauties that filled him with longings,

> longings as primeval in kind as well as in force as those that set delirious the savage hordes from the German forests when they first poured down over the Alps and beheld the jewels and marbles and round, smooth, soft women of Italy's ancient civilization. But at the same time he had the unmistakable, the terrifying feeling of dare-devil sacrilege.[79]

His feeling was the reverence of the real American male for "the mystery feminine." It aided him in struggle against

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[78] Ibid., p. 186.

[79] Ibid., pp. 182-183.

cynicism, against handling woman as a commodity, and prevented him from prostituting himself. It gave him the chivalric urge to rescue Maggie from the sacrilege of her dollar-idolizing environment. By saving her from aristocracy, he set himself out of reach of her class's corruption.

The Bookman critic was outraged by "the author's brutality in marrying" the patrician virgin to "his precious Joshua."[80] The editor of the Dial understood Maggie Severence better. He pointed out that she was the Minnesotan's mate in daring enterprise, cruel temper, and carnal ecstasy. Margaret was no patrician, but "essentially a vulgarian," in the Dial's verdict, and belonged to the working classes that Craig announced as her new kindred when he wedded her. The editor felt that when Maggie Craig followed her lover to his home in the Northwest, justice, though the opposite of poetic, had been done. For Minnesota, said the patriotic Payne, was "probably a good place in which to leave this precious pair."[81] He experienced no qualms at the prospect (in the final chapter of the romance) of the Craigs returning to take the capital city by the electoral will of the folk.

Phillips almost became melancholy when he contemplated the critical volleys on his novel. The dismay of

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[80] Firmin Dredd, op. cit., 96.

[81] Payne, loc. cit.

Western citizens over what they thought was metropolitan mockery of their innocence and boisterousness hurt him more. Although he realized that a work of art can never be authentically explained in alien terms, he tried to reveal the purport of his book to the public:

> I like to write about real people, whether they are ugly or otherwise, as long as they are worth while, and I don't believe in idealizing them. A lot of Western people seem to resent Joshua Craig as not cultured enough, but to me he seems fairly representative. How many of those blustering, rough-shod, self-centered young men do we meet out West? Joshua is a type--a real man. If he were not a real man people wouldn't be so interested in him. Reality is the touchstone. That is what made Christ impress himself so strongly upon the people of His time. You remember what Paul said of Him: "For He was touched with our infirmities." That's it--that's the whole story.[82]

But the pharisee public would not tolerate this tale of the Savior being loved precisely for his common human attributes. To speak of bucolic Craig in the same breath with the Crucified Carpenter was blasphemy, but too ridiculous to discuss. "Logic and sermons never convince." The crowing of the critics proved that all the glorious performances of The Tempest Caliban crowds the pit and gallery to listen to will not make him a companion of Prospero. In the conflict of Phillips and his critics we behold the spirit of Prospero, rendered in democratic idiom, encountering the soul of Caliban

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[82] Quoted by Marcosson, op. cit., p. 290. Compare the statement in The Mother-Light (p. 34) that it was "to the slaves and pariahs and beggars of old Rome that the Gospel came."

clamourous with the vocabulary of bourgeois snobs. "Sometimes," the artist remarked, "I despair of ever being understood." The hero of The Fashionable Adventures of Joshua Craig, it seemed clear to him, was

> a worthy fellow, and yet they call him a boor, a bounder, a disgusting creature. Now Josh is no boor. I know him thoroughly. The ungentle way he acted with Margaret was simply to impress her with his personality, his masculinity, and from the very first he did impress her. He saw it and he kept it up. I tried to make his position plain to the reader, but perhaps I failed.

Reflecting without bitterness, Phillips continued:

> It has been my lot to be misunderstood both as a writer and as a man. I have even been accused of being aristocratic--me, the soul of democracy. Why, I have even avoided riding in a carriage or an auto, for I know that the man or woman who does it gets out of sympathy with the masses. When you lose such sympathy, you yourself are lost.[83]

Sympathy with the masses did not deprive him of the sense to know that he was isolated in their midst by the strangeness of his vision of popular sovereignty. The people were content to serve, lacked the impulse to govern. And dialectic of the best of democracies would still prove that "wherever there are individualities there must be a strife and the lower combining against the higher."[84] Victory in

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[83] Editorial, "Phillips's Methods," Bookman, XXXIII (March, 1911), 12-13.

[84] The Mother-Light, p. 182.

the struggles for human self-determination only opened new vistas of struggle, of labor.

## CHAPTER V

## EVOLUTION OF THE NOVELS (CONCLUDED)

One of the strangest features of the criticism of Phillips was the tarnishing of his genius by several who acknowledged his greatness. They have yielded vital points to the offensive of critics whose political, moral and esthetic bigotries prompted them to falsify the history of Phillips and his fiction. Ludwig Lewisohn, straining to be judicious in examination of our artist, tripped into absurdity. Phillips, he opined, was "not perhaps as gifted as Crane or Norris or London, yet more significant culturally and more precisely on the road to the future than those others." How could the three prodigies named, if truly superior to Phillips in endowments, fail to excel him in social vision and progressive power? Lewisohn will not answer; he persists in treating the man who "scrutinized closely the actual scene of life in its common manifestations," and thus "penetrated to the permanently significant," as inferior to the three in essential qualities of art. Phillips's defender goes so far as to impeach him for possessing but one main string in his harp! Not only was he "an awkward and muddy writer," but "he more or less told the same story over again in ever thicker and heavier

volumes."[1] We shall not quarrel over the question how a perfectly clear style could be called "muddy." But we insist on the courtesy of the critic to the extent of telling us what this hardy perennial plot of Phillips was. We have noted how the artist's friend Frederick Cooper confessed that he could not trace an "abstract principle" in any of the novels: "it is difficult to say with precision, or, at all events, to say within the limits of ten words just what principle any one book of his stands for."[2] Indeed, Cooper was disappointed to find that, unlike the works of Harriet Beecher Stowe and Robert Herrick of Chicago, the works of Phillips would never fit a didactic formula. The artist, he mourns, was "unable to do one thing at a time, found himself obliged to complicate and obscure his central purpose by having in reality several simultaneous central purposes."[3]

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[1] Lewisohn, Expression in America, p. 326. Frederick Taber Cooper makes the same impeachment. Phillips, he states, was "striving from the start to do pretty much the same sort of thing in all his work;" better performance was the "only practical difference between his later volumes and his earlier." (Op. cit., p. 126.)

[2] Cooper, op. cit., p. 119.

[3] Ibid., p. 121. Cooper's aesthetic doctrine is lucid in the following apology for Robert Herrick's Together on the reproach "that by assembling a score or more of ill-mated couples, truant husbands, erring wives, the whole sad gamut of incompatibility, infidelity, and the divorce courts, he [Herrick] has shown a distorted perspective, a false sense of proportion." Cooper ripostes by declaring that "similar reproach" could be made "against Uncle Tom's Cabin, L'Assommoir, and every other big, epic study of ethical problems." (Ibid., p. 159.)

If Cooper could not extort from the novels a unifying postulate, what deluded Lewisohn into the conviction that he found in them a unifying fable?

There was unity in the novels, and it consisted of a simpler harmony than that of method. The harmony flowed from the paramount motive of the artist, which was so naked and straightforward that (as Poe might have predicted) none of the cunning and creed-ridden critics detected it. Phillips told Cooper that

> he had small use for such artificial devices for giving unity to a series of volumes as Balzac's scheme of the Comédie Humaine or Zola's complicated family tree of the Rougon-Macquart. But he did insist upon seeing every human story as a cross-section of life.[4]

Now, the words "cross-section of life" meant extremely variant things in the language of the critic and the language of the creator. Life for the former was a fabric of idealities and hypotheses. To the artist it was a flux of self-resolving matter with two intertwined functions, production and reproduction. All artistic cross-sections of life manifest these functions in the shapes they take in the manifold phases of evolution. The evolution of mankind is designated history, and within the cycles of history its elemental activities are called work and sex. In the cycle named civilization work and sex assume the forms of political economy and marriage with its eternal attendant, whoredom.

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[4] Ibid., p. 115.

The United States carved an orbit inside ivilization where work and sex developed practices that were relatively without parallel in the world or its past. These practices, official and illicit, fascinated Phillips. A cross-section of American life would show them in evolution according to definite geographic and chronological coefficients. In the tradition of the English novel the coefficients appeared customarily in anarchic profusion, landscapes, "documents," propaganda, and so forth. The novel was homily or romance, often a flaying, at best *disjecta membra* of life. French art restored fiction to the pristine desideratum of Richardson's *Clarissa* and Diderot's *Le Neveu de Rameau*, but the restoration was not clean-cut until the triumph of Flaubert. The American novel did not sever the umbilical cord binding it to the British till the twentieth century, notwithstanding the half-mutiny of Hawthorne and Crane. Even on the genius of Phillips the *mortmain* of Scott and Dickens hung heavily. As he admitted to Cooper,

> his great difficulty lay in confining himself to such details as were strictly relevant to his central purpose. He was hampered by knowing too much about people, their habits of life and methods of thought. They were all the time taking matters into their own hands, and insisting upon his setting down upon paper all sorts of happenings quite extraneous to the story.[5]

The literary frugality of Phillips made Flaubert look lavish. Extraneous trivialities abound in the books of the French

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[5] *Ibid.*, p. 114.

master; the lapidary technique that endeared him to dwellers in "ivory towers" aloof from life frequently led Flaubert astray. More serious was his profound ignorance of industry, which his compassion for the industrious poor cast into darker distinctness. The amorous lore of Phillips was deeper than Flaubert's, approximating Balzac's, and the American's knowledge of labor was unique. Love and labor, labor and love--these were the substance of every cross-section of life, the sole and whole subject-matter of the works of our artist. [Their discords and syntheses on the stage of his land during his own life formed his Comédie Américaine. He was forever absorbed in the phenomena of the workers' market and the wives' market, the factory metamorphoses of females, the oligarchy of gold devouring the republic, the menace and promise of the proletariat, the birth-agony of a new and nobler culture in the straitjacketed matrix of capitalism. In scope, if not in skill, Phillips was the noblest of our novelists.]

## 1. THE FATE OF THE FAMILY

From first to last his novels reviewed the disintegration of the American household by the economy that left it with no nexus (in Carlyle's terminology) but cash. The realist did not look upon the breakdown as a disaster. To his sight it was inexorable and necessary, heralding a brave

new world in social science as the explosion of the atom did in natural science. Imperative for human nature was the perishing of the family, the very etymology of which linked it with bondage.[6] The end of the family, reduced by the decay of private property[7] to the skeleton of monogamy, must ensue after the extinction of "our social system which makes a wedding a social function, not a personal rite."[8] The fall of the family as a sacred economic institution meant the beginning of a biological union of parents and offspring for common welfare, sundered without pain by the development of individual powers. Instead of wedlock, Phillips said in effect, let there be lovelock.

The best burnished of his mirrors of American marriage was The Hungry Heart. Frank Harris hailed it as "one of the great stories of the world," for in it--and in White Magic, which followed in 1910--Phillips "showed that he knew more about love than any one who has written in English since Shakespeare finished 'Antony and Cleopatra.'"[9] The

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[6] "In its primary meaning the word family had no relation to the married pair or their children, but to the body of slaves and servants who labored for its maintenance and were under the power of the pater familias." --Lewis H. Morgan, Ancient Society (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1877), p. 469.

[7] "... property rights had ceased to exist....property had become a revocable grant from the 'plutocrats.'"--The Deluge, p. 26.

[8] The Second Generation, p. 183.

[9] Harris, Latest Contemporary Portraits, pp. 22, 23.

Hungry Heart "came near to being the author's favorite among all his books."[10] The romance unfolded the rarest flowers of his faculties; he would have been willing to stand or fall as an artist by the test of this one story. It remains one of the least investigated of his novels. Contemporary critics were repelled by it, or bewildered, or thrilled; comprehension was not to be expected. The Dial discovered that the tale was "less grossly repellant" than other novels of the allopathic author, but (caveat emptor!) he "still nurses his old grievance against the refinements of civilized society, and the weapon of his warfare is a weaver's beam."[11] Upton Sinclair thought the artist's mode of combatting the bourgeoisie was not formidable at all, quite orthodox. Says Sinclair:

> In "The Hungry Heart" he deals with the eternal triangle, and shows a husband forgiving an erring wife--which you would think was good Christian doctrine, but which is contrary to fancy notions of sexual implacability.[12]

Phillips did not rest his case on religion, because he knew that "fancy notions of sexual implacability" were supported by "good Christian doctrine" and grim Christian practice. Among the first stones hurled at his portrait of a woman

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[10] Copper, op. cit., p. 135.

[11] William Morton Payne, review of The Hungry Heart, Dial, XLVII (November 16, 1909), 386, 387.

[12] Sinclair, Mammonart, p. 354.

taken in adultery was the critique of a lady book-reviewer who finished her defense of Christian chastity as follows:

> With what a sense of refreshment does one turn, therefore, to one of Mrs. Wiggins' books, to one of Margaret Deland's, to something of Hopkinson Smith's, for instance. Here we have life as it ought to be; here are high ideals lived up to ; here is sweetness, here are domestic peace and domestic honor, the sunshine of clean hearts, the harmony of souls untainted....[13]

The lady censor was no wiser at the conclusion of the novel than its heroine, Courtney Vaughan, was at the start. "She had been brought up among people who imagine they see the operations of natural law in the artificial conventions of morality that differ for every age and race and creed, really for every individual."[14] If this is Christian doctrine, then what is Satanic?

Courtney Vaughan learned very soon after her honeymoon that her dream of "the life in common, the life together" with her Richard went against his will.[15] The marital division of labor, in his view, excluded her from his workshop, for partnership would imply that he did not earn his wife's

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[13] Norma Bright Carson, review of The Hungry Heart, Book News Monthly, Vol. 28 (October, 1909), 108.

[14] The Hungry Heart (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1909), p. 295. The sentence indicates the freedom of Phillips from the so-called "Social Darwinism" of Herbert Spencer and William Graham Sumner, which infected Dreiser.

[15] Ibid., p. 25.

living. Collaboration of that kind was "impossible," Dick informed her, "where people are of our station."[16] She should have her hands full with housekeeping and child-bearing and rearing. The thought of Courtney in his chemical laboratory was no less laughable than the idea of his aiding in the kitchen. He would not tolerate her presence in the pantry either, except as mistress or supervisor. Her enthusiastic exertions in landscape gardening and interior decorating savored not in his nostrils; he suspected they were manually demeaning. He was a wizard in chemistry, but his concept of sex was not more scientific than his grandfather's, and old Colonel Achilles clung to the venereal code prevailing through the whole world "since the Oriental contempt for women reconquered Europe under the banner of the Cross."[17] In brief, Courtney was taught by the behavior of her husband that she was "simply part of his property," and "since she took bread she must give body."[18] Mrs. Vaughan recognized herself as a slave.

She was American to the core, therefore a spontaneous empiric, sure that "there's no other way for woman or man to learn but by experience," and equally confident of the corollary:

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[16] Ibid., p. 217.

[17] Ibid., p. 214. Wherever wealth obsessed men in democratic America women were handled like concubines or houri. "You can find the reason in Ben Franklin's autobiography, if you care to look it up."--Ibid., p. 409.

[18] Ibid., p. 245.

"self-reliance and self-respect" can "come only through successful independent action."[19] She had liked chemistry at school and was curious about Dick's quest of a universal equivalent for all known fuels. She insisted on her right to share his anguish and grandeur in the laboratory. Courteously he banished her from the smoke and slime he reveled in. The mother of his heir must not be contaminated by toil. For the first time in her youth she drank the full chalice of loneliness, panged as never before by "that saddest of sad love's songs," Villon's Mais où sont les neiges d'antan?[20] When the rich Basil Gallatin arrived to aid and sponsor Richard's enterprise, his kindness, tact, and gallantry touched her heart as the sun touches a sunflower. Minds the most rational are vulnerable to fantasy, and all empirics are prone to deception; since there can be no equipoise between facts and reflexions, the soul is never stripped utterly of illusion. "A strong imagination flings out this beautiful, trouble-making drapery always; not quite so eagerly if there has been sad warning experience, but none the less inevitably."[21]

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[19] Ibid., pp. 70, 462.

[20] Ibid., p. 95. The Hungry Heart contains more poetry and lyrical allusions than any other novel of Phillips. Homer, Shakespeare, Browning, and Tennyson are quoted, and Poe haunts many pages. Taste "the imp of the perverse" (p. 333) and the simile of summer "dying like a lovely woman whose mortal disease only enhances loveliness" (p. 215).

[21] Ibid., p. 112.

Courtney beheld in Gallatin a liberator--and she surrendered her body to him. He consoled himself for treachery to his friend by enjoying wickedness in terms of tragedy; his "mistress" was convinced that Richard was being rewarded for violating his betrothal vows of comradeship with her. "The wounded heart of an intelligent man or woman usually protects itself with the scab of cynicism."[22] They waited in torment for the pretext to divorce Dick and have the custody of her son. Eventually she was able to fathom Gallatin's baseness, his jealousy, his godly welter of sin, beneath all his ideal of a bride as pastime and proof of her lord's prowess and hoard,--but not before poor Dick heard, from an ancient servant on her deathbed, that he was a cuckold.

Phillips proved himself the intellectual peer (maybe the superior) of Ibsen in the scene where Richard Vaughan confronts his wife with her guilt and quickly understands that he must have committed a dreadful wrong to drive her to the infamy. The terror and the pity of that scene![23] When Richard rises from the fragments of his cosmos and declares that he must think his life through alone, leaving his wife in no spirit of vengeance, we hear a heroic voice and feel ashamed of our intrusion in the chamber where a king was

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[22] Ibid., p. 239.

[23] Ibid., pp. 386-391.

crying. Alone in his laboratory, working mechanically while the past is crucibled in his brain, he makes discoveries greater than those of Cavendish or Lavoisier, judging himself by deeds not intentions. Courtney, he learns, was a stranger whom he twisted to his lust by opening no other alternative but starvation. Feeding her flesh, he had starved her heart. Denying her the right to useful life beyond procreation, he had been disciplining her to parasitism. What was her infamy compared with his own? He could not forgive her, because he could not forgive himself. There was nothing for man or God to forgive. The evil of his outlook on love had entered his blood with the maternal milk; it was the last legacy of Colonel Achilles; the cancer was generated by the very cosmos that crashed betwixt his eyes and Courtney's, the world of the false and fatal cleavage of labor and property between the sexes. Richard emerged from his ordeal cleansed of

> the delusion of free will that makes us talk about bettering the race by 'changing human nature from within' [i.e., by religion or education.--A.F.] -- the delusion that the individual is responsible, though obviously the social system and the other compelling external conditions move the individual as the showman his puppet.[24]

Vaughan went back to his wife, who was waiting for her punishment and a fight for justice for her son, and asked Courtney to stay in his house. He needed her by his side in

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[24] Ibid., p. 315. The thought is pure materialism, of Spinoza's vintage.

the workshop in order to struggle for liberty from the necropolis of tradition.[25]

The dialectics of character change in The Hungry Heart set critical wits spinning. The Dial denied that Phillips could "shape consistent character.... He keeps our sympathies constantly shifting."[26] The cautious Cooper found the reformation of Richard Vaughn incredible, but heartily praised the novel for its "careful construction," the unity of place, the limitation of dramatis personae to four,--stark workmanship meriting to be called classical.[27] According to Cooper,

> it was pointed out to [the artist] one day in friendly criticism that a woman such as the heroine was portrayed to be throughout the first half of the story would neither have remained with her lover nor gone back to her husband, but would have lived alone unless some third man eventually came into her life. This comment impressed Mr. Phillips to an extent which seemed disproportionate, until he confessed that the solution of a third man was precisely what he had planned from the start as definitely as it lay in him to plan anything in advance. But, he explained, when he had reached the midway point, his characters took the matter quite out of his hands. He suddenly awoke to a realization that his heroine was quite a different woman from what he had all along supposed her to be; she made it clear to him that she was not the kind either to hold to the old lover or to take a new one; she was the type of woman who would have the courage to go back.[28]

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[25] "...traditions are graves."--The Hungry Heart, p. 6.

[26] Payne, op. cit., p. 366.

[27] Cooper, op. cit., p. 134.

[28] Ibid., pp. 135-136.

The artist added gravely, "If I have not made her convincing, to that extent The Hungry Heart is a failure--but I know the type of woman I was after and I know she would have done just what I made this woman do."[29] The felicity at the finish of The Hungry Heart and the majority of Phillips's works, which follows tumult of fate like that of the mills of Longfellow's God, provoked Mr. Alfred Kazin to remark:

> There is a kind of determinism that reaps its victims in his [Phillips's] books as inexorably as in any naturalistic novel, but he always weakened and brought in some deus ex machina at the end to send his characters off in a shower of bliss.[30]

The divine comedy of the Vaughans blazoned "the truth that so needed to be sounded and to be embodied in American fiction," the truth which Mr. Lewisohn looked upon as the supreme contribution of Phillips to our literature. But the critic saw only the negative aspect of the contribution. He pictured the artist incarnating the truth "by stripping of their self-importance and self-deception and unclean parasitic pretense especially the married woman of the middle classes."[31] But Phillips did better than disrobe bourgeois ladies of their vanities and vices. He pointed out

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[29] Ibid., p. 136.

[30] Kazin, op. cit., p. 109. The underlining of "always" is mine; Mr. Kazin either forgot or was ignorant of the showers of sorrow at the end of The Great God Success, Golden Fleece, The Master-Rogue, The Mother-Light, The Fortune Hunter, and Susan Lenox: Her Fall and Rise.

[31] Lewisohn, op. cit., p. 327. The English is Mr. Lewisohn's own.

the path they must journey to reach real social importance, self-comprehension and honesty and usefulness. The utility of his tales was their supreme quality from the point of the creator's view. There were few things Phillips deplored more than "those distressing attempts to divorce beauty from its supreme quality, use, that are the delight of the unfortunates whose esthetic faculty has been paralyzed by the medieval monastic education still blighting the modern world." Art was nothing if not practical, he affirmed, "as practical as that of the artists of the age of Pericles, a taste which abhorred the bizarre and the blatant."[32] How merrily Phillips could unite the esthetically utile with the ethically dulce, he demonstrated in his next comedy of modern sex, White Magic.

Elvish is the word for White Magic. Its laughter at the ruling class was oblique, satire evanescent as gossamer, yet strong enough to fool the good Cooper. He described the book as "simply an innocuous little love story, told with rather more explosive violence than the theme warrants."[33] The violence is not the outburst of Phillips, however; it is the rage of Daniel Richmond, the millionaire father of the heroine, Beatrice, who storms to prevent her from marrying the hard-working, though not penurious, painter Roger Wade.

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[32] The Hungry Heart, p. 68.

33 Cooper, op. cit., p. 133.

Naturally the plutocrat's violence is unwarranted, and precisely for that reason it foments half the fun of the story. The other half is provided by the serenity of Roger Wade, who refuses to wed Beatrice because he is wedded to his art, believing that celibacy is prerequisite for pure and immortal painting. Not until Beatrice has upset the house of Richmond by rebelling against her despotic father, wooing Wade scandalously by dawn, dusk and midnight, rejecting a financial fiancé, getting ready to invade the business of women's wear with a former French maid, does Roger consent to become her husband. This "innocuous little love story" is an incendiary romance, inciting daughters to revolt against parents who try to crush their hearts' desires and to drag them into the marriage market. But its flames are anything but acetylene. They suggest the utterance of Herbert Spencer about George Eliot, "the most superb compliment one human being ever paid another;" he said the magnificent woman made him think of "a large intelligence moving freely."[34] The fires of White Magic are the fires of Ariel.

Explicit in the romance is the faith of Phillips that the war of the classes will end in the victory of the workers, headed by giants like Roger Wade, who had better work to do in his brief life than take care of property.[35] The Daniel Richmonds can never defeat such free-hearted men, and when

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[34] White Magic, p. 3.

[35] Ibid., p. 105.

Beatrice became his bride, she knew how hard she "would ever have to strive to keep" his love.[36] Strife and struggle--this was the quintessence of life for Phillips. (When the American journalist John Swinton invited the definition of life cherished by Karl Marx, he responded with the single word "Struggle.") The indomitable fighters, the artist seems to say, are indomitable because they are armed with the "white magic" of love, labor, and laughter. With what other weapon than mirth can one dispose of such criticism as the New York Nation's malice against Phillips and his romance? Its anonymous damnation of White Magic included such gems of judgment as the statement that the writer's aspiration was "to the genre of the late Henry Harland," author of The Cardinal's Snuffbox, the Norman Douglas of his day, and the statement that Roger Wade was a hero as "conventional" as any in the confections of Robert. W. Chambers. The Nation also asserted that none of Phillips's females are very "convincing," but his Beatrice Richmond is "rather ludicrous." Its critic advised him to refrain from social comedy, and to "stick to his blunderbuss."[37] The blaze of that "blunderbuss" when it shot "The Treason of the Senate" still stung the nerves of the Nation, which was then beneath the egis of Paul Elmer More's plutocratic Platonism.

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36 Ibid., p. 391.

37 Anonymous, review of White Magic, Nation, vol. 90 (June 16, 1910), 607.

Phillips's understanding of women, Frank Harris stated,

> while not so intimate and varied as that of Balzac, is yet surprisingly rich and of wide range. White Magic is a love story which any one might be proud of having written, were it only for its revelation of the heroine's character.[38]

Afterward Harris coupled it with The Hungry Heart as evidence that the artist "knew more about love than any one who has written in English since Shakespeare."[39] The romantic critic was not so well pleased by the moral force of Phillips, attributing that to heredity. "Being of the Anglo-Saxon race, it was to be expected that he would be more of a preacher than Balzac and less of an artist." Nevertheless, in mental stature the American reached the shoulders of the French titan.

> He has not delved so deeply into character as Balzac; he has not created types that live with the same intensity as Cousine Bette and Hulot and César Birotteau and Eugénie Grandet and Balthasar Claes, but he has approached this daemonic power and created type after type of American that will live in fiction.

The style of Phillips did not disturb Harris, who wrote plain, manly English himself, without folderol, rigmarole or sweating for subtlety. What impressed him above all else in the American's books were "the brains"—

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[38] Harris in the London Academy, quoted by the Bookman, XXXVII (August, 1913), 593.

[39] Harris, Latest Contemporary Portraits, p. 23.

> —that determining factor in all works of art, what Goethe called the "architect faculty" ... one must admit that Mr. Phillips's vision is not so profound as Balzac's, though it is astonishingly clear and astonishingly true. For example, the ordinary American belief that the millionaire is a man of surpassing intelligence doesn't pass muster for a moment with Mr. Phillips: he knows better: he attributes to him surpassing greed, considerable unscrupulousness, and great tenacity, but that is all.[40]

Towering over all of Phillips's motley troop of millionaires stands Godfrey Loring, the narrator of The Husband's Story. What a vast distance of literary training and moral growth the artist had traveled in the seven years since The Master-Rogue! Galloway in that volume is a grotesque cartoon in contrast with this full-length and three-dimensional figure of the lordly Loring. His book stirred up more hornet-noise among critics, and summoned happier applause than any of the novels prior to the issuance of Susan Lenox: Her Fall and Rise. The average reader made the lamentable assumption that Loring was merely a megaphone for the opinions of his maker, because, as Phillips explained in the preface,

> ... in the letter accompanying the manuscript, after several pages of the discriminating praise most dear to a writer's heart, he (Loring) did me the supreme honor of saying that in his work he had "striven to copy as closely as might be your style and your methods—to help me to the hearing I want and to lighten your labors as editor."... I have done practically no editing at all. In form and in substance, from title to finis, the work is his. I am merely its sponsor—[41]

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40 Harris, quoted by the Bookman, loc. cit.

41 The Husband's Story, p. 2. Here we may record the verdict of the Book News Monthly [Vol. 29 (December, 1910),

The artist could not have told the public in plainer speech (without spoiling the effect of the pretended autobiography) to beware of mistaking the plutocrat for his painter. Nevertheless, Cooper had to deplore the fact that the ordinary American consumer of fiction "has groped rather helplessly to decide just what the author meant" in this, "the best and strongest of all his books." The critic ventured to explain the creator's explanation. Deliberately, said Cooper, the gay Phillips "deprived himself of the chance of expressing his own ideas directly, and was obliged to give us every detail strongly colored by its passage through another man's temperament."[42] Phillips, in short, had parodied his own technique. Where he used to speak in his own person in the interludes of drama, playing at the same time the rôle of a choral conscience for his characters, the unconscious comedian Godfrey Loring was downrightly didactic or loftily sardonic. The Nation saw no distinction between the confessor and his creator. The rôle of Phillips, it said, is always "virtually that of the bull in the china-shop," though "it is clear that he has no suspicion of the fact. He smashes away with the solemn zeal of the prophet." The

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263.] on the masterpiece: it called the plot unpleasant, the characters scarcely likeable, and the whole thing "impossible, of course."

[42] Cooper, op. cit., pp. 119, 120.

prophet, hinted the Nation's anonymous judge, was not above mercenary motives despite his attacks on plutocracy, "fancying that abuse will serve for bait" to catch customers for his books. After the assertion that The Husband's Story, as "a piece of literary art," was "atrocious," the Nation proceeded to make the most general blunder of reviewers and readers with respect to Phillips's purpose. The book, it blared, "hoarsely bellows his contempt for American womanhood."[43] The compact majority of critics "assumed that The Husband's Story was an indictment of the American woman as a whole."[44] An armful of thinkers recognized the novel as an indictment of the American capitalist, moreover the bourgeois at his best. Nobody saw that the book was a tremendous impeachment of the bourgeoisie as a whole.

Mrs. Annie Nathan Meyer, an adversary of female suffrage, cheered the autobiography of Godfrey Lering as "the most poignant arraignment of [the American woman] that has appeared," "so trenchant, so searching, that one almost wonders that the shot which cut short the career of the brilliant author was fired by a man"![45] The Dial also contemplated the novel as the product of a misogynist: "his latest

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[43] Anonymous, review of The Husband's Story, Nation, vol. 91 (October 13, 1910), 339.

[44] Cooper, op. cit., p. 120.

[45] Annie Nathan Meyer, letter to the New York Times Literary Supplement, January 29, 1911.

diatribe against the despised and abhorred sex." Mr. Phillips, in its judgment, was not the "Juvenal he would like to appear," but a "common scold," and his book "excites nothing but disgust." Indeed, the editor trumpeted, there is "no more mischievous kind of writing"![46] One almost wonders if Mrs. Meyer and Mr. Payne have the same volume in mind. Both certainly missed the author's meaning. The woman of his comedy, Edna Wheatlands, later Loring, afterward the Princess Frascatoni, was pictured with the most painstaking justice, even if her jilted husband played the advocatus diaboli. Her rise from the parlor of a Passaic, New Jersey, undertaker to the palace of a prince of Italian imperial purple sweeps before us visually with all the grace and majesty she would have coveted in a history of herself. But audible throughout is the cruel tone of Loring's commentary on her career, the tireless exposure of the cheapness of her aspirations, ever measured in metal. Yet the initial impulse of Edna to climb out of the paternal pit of mediocrity and drabness was a sign of health and growth. She forced Godfrey to move "clear of the neighborhood in which we had always lived," into a house, among houses, "much superior," primarily to smell. And he admits it was her action that "was the beginning of my dissatisfaction with

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[46] William Morton Payne, review of The Husband's Story, Dial, XLIX (October 16, 1910), 289.

what I had all my life had in the way of surroundings."[47] It opened for him a vista of truly civilized life. For her, however, it was merely the first stage to a higher barbarism than that of her birthplace. She coveted the pride, pomp and circumstance of private property. For the sake of these her daughter was traded to the Marquis of Crossley, with Loring's consent.

The husband was worthy of his wife. As Cooper pointed out, he did "not raise a finger toward helping" Edna guard against degradation, against the illusion that it was aggrandizement. He was indifferent to the death of his first babies, and the death of his father-in-law's son which brought him the Wheatlands money. He betrayed his partners in a crisis to protect and augment his treasury. He confesses that he acted the hypocrite with his wife, keeping connubial privileges even while she chilled his soul, and worst of all, he permitted her to educate his only surviving child into a sycophant, a hypocrite, a coward, the Marchioness of Crossley. Cooper was correct when he said,

> To conceive a story of this sort is something in itself to be proud of; but to conceive of telling it through the husband's lips was a stroke of genius. To have told it in any other way would have been to rob it of its greatest merit.[48]

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[47] The Husband's Story, pp. 20, 21.

[48] Cooper, op. cit., pp. 138, 139.

Unhappily Cooper was wrong in his choice of the merit; he thought it was "the all-pervading sting" of satire. The Husband's Story is rich in satire, but that is not its trend, its genuine triumph. Cooper was not fair to Godfrey Loring, who tried to tell the round unvarnished truth about his life, and did so, thus proving that he deserved a better fate than satire. What Cooper failed to discern was that The Husband's Story is a record of an American's education--up from plutocracy. The life of Loring is one of slow, reluctant, but remorseless, sincere learning, stumbling and crawling over errors and crimes toward light.

When Loring declares that

> the farmer watering his milk or the grocer using solder-'mended' scales is as bad as the man who 'reorganizes' a railway or manipulates a stock--is worse actually because the massed mischief of the million little business rascals is greater than the sensational misdeeds of the few great rascals,

he is not simply justifying his own avarice. No, he is establishing the materialist law--

> human nature is good or bad according to the opportunities and necessities, not according to abstract moral standards. And the cry is no longer, 'Kill the scoundrel,' but, 'That fellow had the sense to out-wit us. We must learn from him how to sharpen our wits so that we won't let ourselves be robbed'[49]

When Loring affirms that he and his sort "are greedy, selfish grabbers, making thousands work for us," he is not cynically slandering human nature. He is revealing the

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[49] The Husband's Story, p. 109.

nature of the ruling class that society will have to suffer until the common folk stop worshiping and working for them, and learn how to rule the forces of production without the capitalists. Beyond question, the Lorings "do build up big enterprises, we do set things to moving, and we do teach men the discipline of regular work by forcing them to work for us at more or less useful things."[50] True, this function of the "captains of industry" becomes increasingly the task of their lieutenants, the hirelings called managers and "straw-bosses." The industrial capitalists are divided by the evolution of capital into mere financiers (or, if you please, usurers) and "aristocrats of labor." Really the rulers of the world are the financial aristocrats, "the triumphant class," as Loring calls them. And they, he proclaims, are "the most barbarous" masters humanity ever groaned under, "saturated with the raw savage spirit of the right of might."

> I am speaking of actualities, not of pretenses--of deeds, not of words. To find a class approaching it in frank savagery of will and action you would have to descend through the social strata until you came to the class that wields the blackjack and picks pockets and dynamites safes. The triumphant class became triumphant not by refinement and courtesy and consideration, but by defiance of those fundamentals of civilization--by successful defiance of them. It remained the triumphant class by keeping that primal savagery of nature.[51]

Somehow the common folk must become uncommon folk and sweep

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[50] Ibid., p. 191.

[51] Ibid., p. 143.

the financial aristocrats into ancient history. They must revive the virtue of "the pioneer days of no property and of labor for all."[52] How? Loring has no solution for the problem. He is lost in the labyrinth of his wealth, blinded by the dust of his family's downfall, desperate to win love and peace before he drops into the everlasting darkness. When his comedy closes we behold him voyaging for a second honeymoon to the South Seas, in headlong flight from the United States. Away from America: away from work and class war!

## 2. FROM EMPIRE TO DEMOCRACY

After the crazy murder of Phillips his desk was found to contain the complete manuscripts of three novels, three novelettes, and twelve short stories, beside the galley-proofs of Susan Lenox: Her Fall and Rise. On the day he died The Grain of Dust was in the printers' hands. Of these posthumous works Mr. H. L. Mencken, whose debt to the artist has never been noted by his admirers, wrote with asperity: "Phillips, with occasional reversions to honest work, devoted most of his later days to sensational serials for the train-boy magazines...."[53] The reckless Mr. Mencken failed to

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[52] Ibid., p. 315.

[53] H. L. Mencken, Prejudices; First Series (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1919), p. 131. A similar impeachment was

back his accusation of dishonest work with one item of testimony. Nor did he offer a word of explanation for his change of judgment since the time when he hailed Phillips as "the leading American novelist," on the eve of the artist's disaster. Following the publication of The Husband's Story Mr. Mencken fanfared:

> Mr. Phillips writes as if novel-writing were a serious business, demanding preparation, reflection, ardor, skill. He seems to be firmly convinced that the people whose doings he is describing are real human beings, that their overt acts are the effects of deep-lying motives and causes, and that it is worth while to tunnel down into them and get all those motives and causes. Stranger still, he himself has mental processes. He thinks! Contemplating his characters, he is led to meditate and philosophize upon the internal and external stimuli which make them what they are. And passing from what they are to what they represent, he investigates the general conditions of human existence in the United States, differentiating between things universal and things American....[54]

So far, so good. We are not interested now in the process by which the raptures of Mr. Mencken over the cerebral prowess of Phillips were dissipated by ecstasies over the nescience of James Branch Cabell and Joseph Hergesheimer. What we are after is the reason for his bouleversement in stigmatizing as dishonest work what was--as we will soon see--the tranquil continuance of the Phillips process.

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made by Mr. Mencken in the Second Series of his Prejudices (1920), when he put Phillips in the category of the peddler of culture Elbert Hubbard--"all men flustered by high aspiration, and yet all pulled down by the temptations below." (Page 34.)

[54] Mencken, in The Smart Set (January, 1911), quoted by Marcosson, op. cit., p. 287.

The reason may be unearthed from the jocularity with which Mr. Mencken continued his plaudits for Phillips:

> The man, of course, is an anarchist. Such earnestness is revolutionary, dangerous, insulting, abominable. The purpose of novel-writing, as that crime is practiced in the United States, is not to interpret life--to make it a merry round of automobiling, country clubbing, seduction, money-making, and honeymooning, with music by Victor Herbert. Novelists succeed among us in proportion as they keep outside the skin. But Mr. Phillips does not bid for success in that way. He boldly ventures upon hazardous psychological laparotomies,...[55]

The trouble with Phillips, Mr. Mencken learned to his dismay, was that his laparotomies did not halt with the bellies of the idle rich; they were pursued until the withers of the industrious rich, whom Mr. Mencken adored, were wrung. Phillips was a revolutionary in reality, and by no means an anarchist (a type of politician Mr. Mencken would pardon for its devotion to individualism). When the critic discovered that the artist was indeed a "red," hostile to the whole bourgeoisie, not merely to its frivolous faction, he made his facetious volte-face. He could catapult to powder the spurious socialisms of H. G. Wells and Upton Sinclair, but his logic and wit were themselves pulverized against the democratic communism of Phillips. Il Mencken é mobile, yes, but loyal at bottom to the exploiting class.

The Grain of Dust was a greater novel than The Husband's Story, yet it raised nothing like the cloud of controversy

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[55] Loc. cit.

that swirled around that book. The dramatization of the former by Louis Evan Shipman, which was prosperously staged in Chicago, found the majority of critics obdurately determined not to augment the fame of Phillips any more. "David Graham Phillips, in 1910," announced Frank Harris, "was almost totally unknown." Harris exaggerated the conspiracy of silence; he says of the assassination, "nobody in New York seemed to pay any special attention to the affair."[56] His chronology is wrong. In January, 1911, the silence fell on Phillips, providing Dr. Pattee with the pretext to asseverate: "The severest criticism of his work, however, is the fact that it has not survived. With his tragic death he dropped completely from the public consciousness."[57] The Grain of Dust was the last of the best-sellers of Phillips.

There is a Hebrew proverb that runs, "The greater the man, the greater his passions." The Grain of Dust plays profound symphonic variations on this theme. Frederick Norman, the hero, is a young luminary of the legal profession who once,

> with the maternal peasant blood hot in his veins,... had entertained the quixotic idea of going into politics on the poor or people's side and fighting for glory only.[58]

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[56] Harris, Latest Contemporary Portraits, pp. 19, 20.

[57] Pattee, The New American Literature, p. 151.

[58] The Grain of Dust (New York and London: D. Appleton and Company, 1911), p. 40.

The craving for comfort, and the gratification of his prodigious appetites and impulses, kept him toiling at jurisprudence. He did not fool himself concerning the value of his profession, which, as he stated, "divides into two parts--teaching capitalists how to loot without being caught, and teaching them how to get off if by chance they have been caught. There are other branches of the profession, but they're not lucrative, so we do not practice them."[59] His partners disrelished his frankness, but so long as he did not pursue utopias, chase rainbows, and rebel against the bourgeoisie, they were willing to permit his wits to ramble into radicalism at odd intervals of grinding out profits for the firm. He saw no way out of the hunt for lucre except the personal path he followed--collecting sufficient funds to enable him to leave the loathsome business and live at ease from the marting crowd. However, his passions came close to thrusting him to the hindmost in the hunt. And thereby hangs the tale.

Norman fell deeply in love with one of his office "typewriters," a girl apparently so commonplace that he compared her effect upon his mind's eye to a grain of dust.

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59 Ibid., p. 6. "But such is the frailty of human nature--or so savage the pressure of the need of the material necessities of civilized life, let a profession become profitable or develop possibilities of profit--even the profession of statesman, even that of lawyer--or doctor--or priest--or wife--and straightway it begins to tumble down toward the brawl and stew of the market place." (Ibid., p. 5.) Compare Marx and Engels, The Communist Manifesto, Chapter I.

Dorothy Hallowell, her boss found out, possessed a strange kind of beauty, like "the uncertain glory of an April day," in Shakespeare's lovely verse. Her face and body mirrored her moods; grief made her dreary, gladness radiant; she ordinarily looked commonplace because of her poverty, which was rarely illuminated by dream and hope. More potent perhaps than her beauty was the Hallowell girl's strange dignity, the princessly way she walked and spoke, as if she were destined for a life innocent of lucre and machinal bondage. She was unaware of this awe and guffaw-inspiring air of hers. Norman learned that she derived it partly from the paternal seed and partly from her father's presence. Newton Hallowell was a king of biochemistry, and "during most of his fifty-five or sixty years had lived the purely intellectual life. The result was a look of spiritual beauty, the look of the soul living in the high mountain, with serenity and vast views constantly before it."[60] Microbic phenomena did not escape his eagle glance, nor the phenomena of infinitesimal souls engendered by the lucrative life. When Norman inquired why he did not try to interest entrepreneurs in his researches, Newton Hallowell smiled:

> There is much talk about capitalists and capital opening up things. But I have yet to learn of an instance of their touching anything until they were absolutely sure of large profits. Their failed enterprises are not

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60 The Grain of Dust, p. 126.

> miscarriage of noble purpose but mistaken judgment, judgment blinded by hope and greed.[61]

He trod the streets obscure and unobstrusive, rarely flashing on the world his eagle glance, the look of his steel will as he trailed the secrets of protoplasm. And his daughter Dorothy walked in bodily as he in intellectual beauty, isolated, modest, disregarded by the world. Norman discovered that she was beyond purchase, not even convertible to a commodity after he had built old Newton a modern laboratory and financed his explorations in the stuff of life.

The love of Dorothy worked a mysterious chemical spell on Norman. His nimble mind "refused to obey his will's order to concentrate on the client and his business--"

> said business being one of those huge schemes through which a big monster of a corporation is constructed by lawyers out of materials supplied by great capitalists and controllers of capital, is set to eating in enormous meals the substance of the people; at some obscure point in all the principal veins small but leechlike parasite corporations are attached, industriously to suck away the surplus blood so that the owners of the beast may say, 'It is eating almost nothing. See how lean it is, poor thing! Why, the bones fairly poke through its meager hide.'...

Norman "felt like a giant disabled by a grain of dust in the eye."[62] He acted like a man in delirium. He made an enemy of his company's main client by breaking his engagement to

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61 Ibid., p. 130. Recall Edison's protests against the abandonment of inventors to starvation by capitalists lusting for rapid results.

62 The Grain of Dust, pp. 68, 69.

marry the plutocrat's daughter. He could not exclude from his consciousness the girl of the working class, and from his conscience her heroic father, and from heart and head the thoughts they planted "about the active life of the day—about its religion, politics, modes of labor, its habits of one creature preying upon another." Norman neglected gigantic affairs to meditate on old Hallowell's vision of revolution. "Tomorrow," his creed predicted, "not religion, not politics, but chemistry, not priests nor politicians, but chemists, would change" the life of predatory property,—"and change it by the only methods that compel. An abstract idea of liberty or justice can be rejected, evaded, nullified,. But a telephone, a steam engine, a mode of prolonging life—those realizations of ideas compel."[63] Compel whom? The working class, of course, to demand these goods, and the exploiting class to quell the demands and suppress the victories of science. No, Norman had no confidence in the will and the intelligence of the proletariat to enforce its demands. He remarked to Galloway, "the master-rogue,"

> What an asset to you strong men has been the vague hope in the minds of the masses that each poor devil of them will have his turn to loot and grow rich. I used to think ignorance kept the present system going. But I have discovered that it is that sly, silly, corrupt hope.[64]

Lack of faith in the laboring poor gave him strength to harass

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[63] Ibid., p. 196.

[64] Ibid., p. 375.

Dorothy Hallowell with his price. After the death of her father, and the experience of absolute solitude in the whore-haunted precincts of New York, she consented to marry the lawyer. His triumph was brief and bitter.

In the end of The Grain of Dust the passion-spent and law-revolted Norman came home to his Dorothy and his daughter. To his surprise and pleasure there was a home for him to return to and rest in. His wife could not be idle, and when she welcomed him to her love-starved heart, he was glad, no--grateful, to forget the tragic past together with her in the work of educating the child. The education was naturally conducted toward making her a woman worthy of the world of her grandfather Newton's heart's desire.

How was the working class to be educated free of servile trust in mere numbers, the bulk of ballots or the brute mass of mutiny? How could it win the confidence of the Frederick Normans, the men it needed to plan the battles for its liberation, battles with the least slime, the least slaughter? These questions occupied the genius of Phillips with increasing force during his final days. He found no American denomination of socialism deserving of his energy and art. How could he belong to the sects that later collapsed before the wheels of the Wilson bandwagon and under the Wilson juggernaut of the Justice Department raids on "reds"? He indicated the chief disease of the Socialist

Party in The Grain of Dust, the malady of the Muckrakers too:

> Many and fantastic are the illusions the human animal, in its ignorance and its optimism, devises to change life from a pleasant journey along a plain road into a fumbling and stumbling and struggling about in a fog. Of these hallucinations the most grotesque is that the weak can come together, can pass a law to curb the strong, can set one of their number to enforce it, may then disperse with no occasion further to trouble about the strong.[65]

This mania for the multiplying of statutes and state usurpations of people's rights was epidemic in America. The upshot of all the tumult of legislation was not justice and peace, but increased bureaucratic arrogance, behavior of executives like executioners, empire masquerading as democracy. Parliamentary cretinism was an incurable disease, but Phillips searched for prophylaxis. He experimented in his revolutionary novel The Conflict with devices for educating American labor to rely upon its own brawn and brains, not upon statutes and party programs. The book was his vademecum for workers desirous of building a commonwealth of "no property, and of labor for all" in the United States.

The Conflict was greeted with ominous muteness by most of the arbiters of elegant letters. There is not an iota of evidence that some of the reviewers even examined the volume. The Book News Monthly might have stereotyped its

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[65] Ibid., p. 20. The disease was named parliamentary cretinism by Marx and analyzed by Engels in his Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Germany (1848), Chapter XV. This classic of democratic communism was first published in the New York Tribune.

criticism to serve in reviewing any of Phillips's novels:

> The book bears the customary Phillips characteristics, strong, almost brutal character portrayal, frank opinions expressed as to modern methods, conditions and manners, and a tendency to be unnecessarily outspoken when it comes to a discussion of things that are not usually discussed.[66]

The editors were simply warning their audience to hunt for headaches elsewhere if they were so desperate in hammock or rocking-chair for something to occupy their minds. The Atlantic Monthly critic described The Conflict as if it were The Husband's Story. She pictured the central female figure as "a mere bundle of complaints, an enumeration of [the writer's] grievances against modern womankind," and added the routine attack on Phillips's technique: "The harsh lines of the treatment, the dull anger with which the list of qualities that he resented is checked off, the journalistic quality of the style, make up a volume which impresses one as having neither charm nor power."[67] The critic has nothing to say about socialism or labor, the central theme of The Conflict! Nor does she tell her audience that the central woman of the novel, Jane Hastings, is not in the least representative of modern womankind, and, far from being "a mere bundle of complaints," she abounds with graces and virtues. Her wedding

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[66] Anonymous, review of The Conflict, Book News Monthly, vol. 30 (October, 1911), 131.

[67] Margaret Sherwood, "Characters in Recent Fiction," Atlantic Monthly, CIX (May, 1912), 673.

with Dr. Charlton, a militant socialist, in whose working-class hospital she labors as a nurse, ends the comedy.

The Conflict is a comedy, opening and closing with laughter, and bright with the promise of inevitable victory to the powers of labor, love and liberty. The temper of the tale is exemplified by the lithograph of Karl Marx adorning the office of the New Day, the proletarian newspaper which plays so mighty a part in the novel. Congruent with pictures of Washington, Lincoln, and Leonardo's Christ, the countenance of Marx beamed "powerful, imperious, yet wonderfully kind and good humored."[68] The father of scientific socialism is revered as "the most important man for human liberty that ever lived--except perhaps one.... Leonardo's 'man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.'"[69] Comparisons of the two great Jews and "labor agitators" are familiar to communists round the globe. Phillips presented his own:

> The first one proclaimed the brotherhood of man. But he regarded this world as hopeless and called on the weary and heavy laden masses to look to the next world for the righting of their wrongs. Then--eighteen centuries after--came that second Jew ...and he said: 'No! not in the here-after, but in the here. Here and now, my brothers. Let us make this world a heaven. Let us redeem ourselves and destroy the devil of ignorance who is holding us in this hell.' It was three hundred years before that first Jew began to triumph. It won't be

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[68] The Conflict (New York and London: D. Appleton and Company, 1911), p. 59.

[69] Ibid., pp. 61, 62.

so long before there are monuments to Marx in clean and free cities all over the earth.[70]

Marx's voice resounds from nearly every page of this comedy of class struggle. The Conflict is proletarian literature, radiating a greater intelligence than the working-class books of Maxim Gorki, Martin Andersen Nexo, Ernst Toller, and Victor Serge, if not so sensational.[71] The hero of Phillips's work was modelled after the most beloved leader of American labor, Eugene Victor Debs, also a Hoosier, celebrated by the Hoosier laureate James Whitcomb Riley:

> An' there's 'Gene Debs, a man 'at stands
> An' holds right out in his two hands
> As big a heart as ever beat
> Betwixt here an' the Judgment Seat.

Victor Dorn, the protagonist of The Conflict was early associated with railways, like Debs, but his trade was carpentry. Like Jesus and 'Gene Debs, Dorn liked to consort with publicans, fishermen, and even magdalene. His home town, Remsen City, was not very different from Debs's Terre Haute. Nevertheless, two outstanding differences between Debs and Dorn almost eclipse their likeness. Dorn lacked his genial archetype's bibulous habit, and his

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[70] Ibid., p. 62.

[71] Proletarian literature is not to be confused with the fiction of pauperism that Russophile writers deluged the 1930's with, fiction properly called lumpen-literatur, or gutter literature.

organization, the Workingmen's League, bears no resemblance to the Socialist Party. The Workingmen's League would never have allowed its leader to rot in prison for bravely denouncing imperialist war, while other officers were recruiting for the war, collecting bonds for its bankers, and shouting for intensive production of bayonets and bombs against the conscript poor of alien lands. Debs was sentimentally faithful to the Socialist Party because he was inclined to drift with large numbers--more or less eager for the goal he climbed toward. "But Victor [Dorn] represented a new type of human being--the type into whose life reason enters not merely as a theoretical force, to be consulted and disregarded, but as an authority, a powerful influence, dominant in all crucial matters."[72]

The philosophy of revolutionary labor in the novel approximates the doctrine of Daniel De Leon, the lonely chief of the Socialist Labor Party, from which the Socialist Party was born after a split resulting from a fight against De Leon's efforts to destroy the American Federation of Labor. When the unions of De Leon's dreams were founded under the flag of the Industrial Workers of the World, the Socialist Party, despite the joy of Debs in the new unions, wrecked them with the informal assistance of anarchist chanters of

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[72] The Conflict, p. 284. Victor Dorn's wife, Selma Gordon, is the artist's transmutation of Anna Strunsky, the wife of Phillips's friend William English Walling.

"Halleluhah, I'm a Bum!" De Leon fought the labor leaders who battened on the slave revolts called strikes, their beggary and bargaining and brutality. Phillips urged "workingmen to awaken to the fact that their strikes were stupid and wasteful, that the way to get better pay and decent hours of labor was by uniting, taking possession of the power that was rightfully theirs and regulating their own affairs."[73]

> The reason we of the working class are slaves is because we haven't intelligence enough to be our own masters, let alone masters of anybody else. The talk of equality, workingmen, is nonsense to flatter your silly, ignorant vanity. We are not the equals of our masters. They know more than we do, and naturally they use that knowledge to make us work for them. So, even if you win in this strike or in all your strikes, you will not much better yourselves. Because you are ignorant and foolish, your masters will scheme around and take from you in some other way what you have wrenched from them in the strike.
>
> Organize! Think! Learn! Then you will rise out of the dirt where you wallow with your wives and your children. Don't blame your masters; they don't enslave you. They don't keep you in slavery. Your chains are of your own forging and only you can strike them off![74]

Phillips must have enjoyed himself hugely as he composed his little communist manifesto. But he probably did not laugh when he quoted a typical capitalist response to the propaganda,

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73 Ibid., pp. 50-51. The best account thus far published of the rise and wreck of the Industrial Workers of the World is Paul F. Brissenden's The I.W.W., A Study in American Syndicalism (New York, 1919).

74 The Conflict, pp. 52-52. For similar Marxian statements, consult Daniel De Leon's booklets, What Means This Strike? (1898), The Burning Question of Trades Unionism (1904), and De Leon and Debs, Industrial Unionism (1905).

a spread-eagle speech against the efforts of "socialists and anarchists, haters of this free country and spitters upon its glorious flag, to set poor against rich, to destroy our splendid American tradition of a free field and no favors, and let the best man win!"[75]

A deadlier enemy of Victor Dorn's movement than the star-spangled demagogue was David Hull, an exquisite exemplar of the rich young reformer in politics, liberal with loquacity, decorous in deeds. Hull recognized that "The old parties are falling to pieces because they stand for the old politics of the two factions of the upper class quarreling over which of them should superintend the exploiting of the people."[76] He improvised "new" politics to delude the poor into supporting him while he played messiah and expelled the money changers from Remsen City's temple of democracy--in order to install new money changers. He was elected mayor by a plurality of men who would not argue with the Workingmen's League, or answer questions like these: "Why should we elect an upper class government to do for us what we ought to do for ourselves? And how can they redeem their promises when they are tied up in a hundred ways to the very people who have been robbing and cheating us?"[77] Characteristic of the oratory of Hull was

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[75] The Conflict, p. 321.

[76] Ibid., p. 142.

[77] Ibid., p. 269.

his inaugural address:

> David urged everybody who was doing right to keep on doing so, warned everybody who was doing wrong that they would better look out for themselves, praised those who were trying to better conditions in the right way, condemned those who were trying to do so in the wrong way. It was all most eloquent, most earnest. Some few people were disappointed that he had not explained exactly what and whom he meant by right and by wrong; but these carping murmurs were drowned in the general acclaim. A man whose fists clenched and whose eyes flashed as did David Hull's must "mean business"— and if no results came of these words, it wouldn't be his fault, but the machinations of wicked plutocrats and their political agents.[78]

Victor Dorn was not worried by the enthusiasm of the masses for the man whom Selma Gordon, fellow-editor of the New Day, branded as "nothing but a stool pigeon for pickpockets." He told her, "It's something gained when politicians have to denounce the plutocracy in order to get audiences and offices. The people are beginning to know what's wrong."[79]

Adventurous as The Conflict was in science, it was not so daring in art as the political companion-piece, George Helm. In that little tragedy Phillips ventured to create a twentieth-century avatar of Abraham Lincoln.[80] George Helm too was long and lank, homely and humorous, melancholy,

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[78] Ibid., pp. 381-382.

[79] Ibid., p. 382. Opportunely for the plutocracy came the "Great Crusade" to cut off the flower of the awakening people.

[80] Of the few reviews this will suffice as a sample: "It is a mediocre sort of a political novel.... We must confess that George Helm himself, who is presented as a 'Lincoln type' of hero is a very tiresome and wooden individual!" New York Times, October 20, 1912. The quotation marks are the ironical reviewer's.

afraid of women, ambitious and shrewd. But Lincoln "had all the cranks and romantic reformers down on him;" nobody ever accused him of belonging to the "breed of dangerous young demagogues who want to substitute anarchy and socialism for the republic of the fathers."[81] Helm was not a Marxian, no! He was a member in good standing of the Democratic Party, at least in the beginning of his career, when he was nominated for a county court bench by the party in order to assure the election of the Republican candidate. But the red-bearded, horny-handed Helm astonished them by a passionate campaign teaching the rural laborer how "the big monopolies headed by the railway trusts had reduced the nominally independent farmer to the slavery of the poorly paid wage-earner of the cities and towns."[82] George Helm was not a Hampden Scarborough fighting for a lost republic with quixotic abstractions. He conceived the "task of restoring democracy"[83] as a battle of material interests and concrete facts. He called a spade a spade, and slaves slaves, making the people see how the oligarchy of capital "grabs public property--bribes public officials--hires men they never see to do their dirty work, their cruel work, their work of shame and death."[84] The

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[81] George Helm (New York and London: D. Appleton and Company, 1912), pp. 94, 219.

[82] Ibid., pp. 137-138.

[83] Ibid., p. 138.

[84] Ibid., p. 250.

master of both Republican and Democratic machines, Harvey Sayler, did not mind Helm's unmasking of plutocracy, for he was confident the rebel could be bought. The guardian of "the plum tree" elevated Helm to the governorship of his state, to blackmail the monopolies there into surrendering to his program for the ruling class. Sayler aided the son of the working class to wed Eleanor Clearwater, the daughter of a senator and lumber magnate. He even tried to bribe Helm with the glory of heir to the post of keeper of "the plum tree"! The rebel rejected the bribe, constructed an "independent movement" to continue his fight after descending from the governorship to poverty, and converted Mrs. Helm to his cause. She loved him so strongly that she barely heard him say before the marriage: "You understand you're leaving your class and coming to mine--and that the war between these two classes is going to be bitter and more bitter."[85] She did not realize the meaning of her man's struggle until her father demanded that she make him halt prosecution of his lumber crimes. Through the paternal fury Mrs. Helm discerned the facts, and renounced the Clearwater heritage. The tragedy concludes with the laughter of the lovers over their baby son breaking a castle of blocks they have built for him.... Lincoln would have loved George Helm, especially when the

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[85] Ibid., p. 247.

hero felt as low-down as "a patch on the ragged pant-leg of some cotton-picking coon working for the sub-lessee of a mortgaged farm in a poor corner of Arkansas".[86]

## 3. THE ETERNAL FEMININE

Our artist never learned the message implicit in the majority of criticisms of his work, the lesson of "the two kinds of truth--decent and indecent--decent truth that gives everybody a comfortable sense of general depravity, and indecent truth that points out specific instances of depravity, giving names, dates and places."[87] Americans had been accustomed to the "decent" kind ever since Puritanism was planted in New England and the Calvinists in coonskin sprinkled its seeds westward. The most popular depravity in "God's Country" was, of course, fornication, and the blame for this, as for every other sin of Christendom, generally lay with women. Likewise in cases of political felony, the watchword of pastors and police was Cherchez la femme. "The American woman," observed Phillips in 1905, "is regarded both here and abroad as the strongest and subtlest enemy of the American Democracy."[88] Multitudes presumed that he was circulating

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[86] Ibid., p. 110.

[87] George Helm, pp. 44-45.

[88] The Reign of Gilt, p. 253.

this canard in his novels, and cursed (or, as in the obituary by Mrs. Annie Nathan Meyer, blessed) him for it. But generalizations about human nature were contrary to his temperament, and his materialism, which demanded always the clear-cut, the actual, the "local habitation and a name." His truth was attacked as indecent by gentlemen and ladies who identified their egos and gains with the nation or the race, society and the commonwealth. The only females assailed in his novels were the wantons, the wasters of the fruits and not infrequently the lives of the creative class. Honest patriots, he said,

> insist that our public administrators shall be chosen from the main body of toilers and shall execute, not direct, the popular will. Since leadership in public and private activity thus falls to the toiler in a Democracy, these fashionable 'sets' provided by the women of the rich class are wholly alien and hostile to us as a democratic people.[89]

Against the matriarchs of plutocracy Phillips directed the sharpest of his wit-shafts. To their daughters he appealed for rebellion in the name of self-respect, self-decision, which were inseparable in his creed from self-denial, hard work. Democracy was doomed unless women earned their sustenance, and the hope of republican independence was working-class womankind.

> Did any of those ancient republics we hear so much about, those whose decline and fall Europe and our own pessimists

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[89] Ibid., p. 257.

> say we must inevitably imitate, ever number among its inhabitants a company of women wage and salary earners such as has been so swiftly evolved in democratic, work-compelling, work-exalting America?[90]

Yes, wage-slavery was preferable to all other forms of servitude. Not only did it compel millions to learn how to cooperate in social production on penalty of hunger, but it also hammered into the heads of those millions the gulf-difference between the time of exploitation and the time of liberty, the time of work necessary to supply communal wants and the time of surplus labor to supply the appetites of capital. Proletarian bondage tantalized the millions with the wine of its few hours of freedom, trickling down throats parched with the hours of toil for others. To the hypothesis that wage-slavery was the sure, the solitary road to emancipation for mankind Phillips devoted his last years, proving it in novel after novel. The Price She Paid and Susan Lenox: Her Fall and Rise were his ultimate testaments, and they were a warning to fair women of the necessity of the lowliest labor as the trail-blazer to creative liberty.

The grief of Frederick Cooper over the tragic death of the artist clarified the critic's vision so that he discerned the motive of The Price She Paid instead of hunting vainly for the moral. Phillips, he affirmed, "always had the faculty of making us see." And seeing the struggles of

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[90] Ibid., p. 259.

the heroine against native indolence and external allurements to harlotry--harlotry in wedlock, be it noted--we cannot help but sympathize.[91] Thus we draw no morals from the novel; we form no supreme court for Mildred Gower, who is not an allegoric ghost but our sister. The charm and power of the story moved no less a judge than the critic of the Atlantic Monthly to declare that "the book is better than any other one of Mr. Phillips's works that I have read." She hastened to say that "it has something of his querulousness of voice, a thinness of quality which suggests that he did not go far enough into the vital sources of human life." What that sonorous phrase signified she indicated by complaining that, in the whole volume, there was "no touch of recognition of the artist's joy in his work, or delight in work for work's sake."[92] Work for work's sake? Can one conceive "the vital sources of human life" flowing without consciousness of the object of labor? Who but idiots would work if the outcome of effort was not kept in sight, if symphonies could be enjoyed fragmented, if potsherds had been left of Grecian urns? The artist's joy in his work is vanity and vexation of spirit unless he feels that the fabrics of

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[91] F. T. Cooper, review of The Price She Paid, Bookman, XXXV (August, 1912), 632.

[92] Margaret Sherwood, "Some Recent Fiction," Atlantic Monthly, CX (November, 1912), 686.

his thought are being actualized in matter. If Margaret Sherwood had understood this, she would not have taken such joy in her funeral work against Phillips.

How Phillips must have enjoyed writing The Price She Paid will be sensed at once by any heart willing to listen to the volume's pulse and music. They are mighty as the Atlantic echoed on several pages, the "almost tranquil sea... crooning softly in the sunlight, innocent and happy and playful as a child,"[93] that suffers change overnight into man-consuming fury. Briefly, the book is the chronicle of the making of a free woman. "A baby enters the world screaming with pain," wrote Phillips. "The first sensations of living are agonizing. It is the same with the birth of souls, for a soul is not really born until that day when it is offered choice between life and death and chooses life."[94] The soul of aristocratic Mildred Gower was not liberated when she broke away from the marriage with General William Siddall. She fled from the creature because he was loathsome to her flesh; she could not endure "the longings of his physical infatuation for her coiling and uncoiling and reaching tremulously out toward her like unclean, horrible tentacles."[95] She fled to the protection of another millionaire, Stanley

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[93] The Price She Paid (New York and London: D. Appleton and Company, 1912), p. 200.

[94] Ibid., p. 290.

[95] Ibid., p. 237.

Baird, who financed her education as a singer and then asked for requital of his cash and passion. Her soul was her own only when she found the courage to refuse Baird's invitation to become his bride. She found the courage in companionship with two utterly unlike human beings, Agnes Belloc, land-lady of a "disrespectable" house, who had once been a New England "schoolmarm," and Donald Keith, a consulting lawyer whose mother was a great Italian soprano. Agnes Belloc "had no ethical standards;" her guide through the perplexities of life was common sense, "so adaptable, so tolerant, so conducive to long and healthy life." Common sense led her to make her house "respectable," to abandon "the arms she had taken up against the social system" and to submit to conventions of virtue, fighting the system "from the safer and wiser inside."[96] She became a champion of woman's suffrage. How proud Phillips was of her creation!

> Agnes Belloc was typical--certainly of a large and growing class in this day--of the decay of ancient temples.... For a thousand years genius has been striving with the human race to induce it to abandon its superstitions and hypocrisies.... Grossly materialistic, but alluringly comfortable. Whether for good or for evil or for both good and evil, the geniuses seem in a fair way at last to prevail over the idealists, religious and political.[97]

And Donald Keith showed Mildred the way to make an honest livelihood by singing in opera. When Stanley Baird saw the

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[96] Ibid., p. 308.

[97] Ibid., p. 309. The context is rough and unfinished, but the meaning unmistakable. Phillips requires no interpreter.

Spartan regimen that Keith designed for her artistic discipline, he was outraged

> by the discovery of the coarse and painful toil, the grossly physical basis, of what had seemed to him all idealism. He had been full of the delusions of spontaneity and inspiration, like all laymen, and all artists, too, except those of the higher ranks--those who have fought their way up to the heights and, so, have learned that one does not achieve them by being caught up to them gloriously in a fiery cloud, but by doggedly and dirtily and sweatily toiling over every inch of the cruel climb.[98]

The sole alternative for Mildred Gower was marriage, the lifelong task of earning subsistence by gratifying her paymaster's body-greed and snobbery.

> Alone with him, she must make him constantly feel how rich and rare and expensive a prize he had captured. When others were about, she must be constantly making them envy and admire him for having exclusive rights in such wonderful preserves. All this with an inflexible devotion to the loftiest ideals of chastity.[99]

Was not the prostitute of the streets franker and freer? Mildred chose to sell the use of her voice, training herself like an athlete, denying herself pleasure and love too, in order to rise to stardom in tragic opera. She was triumphant, but learned that art was the most jealous of lovers and would not tolerate the presence of Donald Keith save in rare holidays. Her Italian teacher pointed out the road ahead for her--upward to peaks of brighter but more solitary victories: "With those who win the high places, sex is an incident, but only an incident. He must not spoil your career.

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[98] Ibid., p. 274.

[99] Ibid., p. 89.

If you allowed that you would be like a mother who deserts her children for a lover."[100] There was but a single price for liberty--labor, incessant labor; the greater the liberty, the stronger the labor, the deeper the loneliness. For the ecstasy of creation, of godhead, who would not pay the price?

Frank Harris vowed that he would rather have written The Price She Paid, The Grain of Dust, White Magic and The Hungry Heart, "than all the novels Kipling and Hardy together have written in the last thirty years." For the sake of these works alone, he declared "Phillips to be the greatest American novelist, immeasurably superior to Wells or Moore; wiser even than Thackeray or Fielding or Reade."

> On almost every page of these books glimpses of truth are to be found of rare value....Everywhere one feels a mind that has travelled and that gravitates, so to speak, irresistibly towards truth. That constitutes the main difference between Phillips and the next greatest American novelists of the same period,[101]

who were, in Harris's opinion, Norris and London. To the amazement of the British critic, the epitome and crown of Phillips's masterpieces, Susan Lenox: Her Fall and Rise, seemed to be terribly inferior to them. From the standpoint of the "architect faculty" it was a tragic failure, Harris thought. "The whole reasoning of the novel is wrong, stupidly wrong, and the painting never reaches Phillips'

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[100] Ibid., p. 378.

[101] Harris, Latest Contemporary Portraits, pp. 24, 25, 28.

mastery. The man who killed him killed a dead man."[102] What summoned this vehemence from one of the foremost admirers of Phillips? Harris made no effort to demonstrate how the mind that produced The Price She Paid could have turned to complete Susan Lenox, a book of a decade's work, and let it pass from his hands as a colossal stupidity. Another Phillips enthusiast, Mr. Lewisohn, was also acridly irritated by the book. He declined to discuss it in his panorama of American literature, beyond asserting that most of the artist's volumes "are too long and too ill-written and too repetitious. And this is most true of the best-known and longest of all, 'Susan Lenox.'"[103] In contrast with these masculine condemnations there sparkles the laconic praise of the novel by that excellent judge of well-written tales and the difference between flat repetition and variant, fugue-like stress, Edith Wharton. Twice in her autobiography she spoke of "that unjustly forgotten masterpiece 'Susan Lenox,'" without relinquishing her reasons for the laudation.[104] No other American novel has clustered round it so many contrary criticisms, so many myths of its creation, so many diverse predictions of its destiny. There is nothing wonderful in these facts, for classics are like "the characters which

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[102] Ibid., p. 24.

[103] Lewisohn, op. cit., pp. 327-328.

[104] Edith Wharton, A Backward Glance (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1934), pp. 147, 235.

play the large parts in the comedy of life," "naturally those that offer to the shifting winds of circumstances the greatest variety of strongly developed and contradictory qualities."[105]

Perhaps the most absurd interpretation of Susan Lenox was the one ventured by Mr. Alfred Kazin--that the novel is "a gusty American Moll Flanders"![106] Both books concern courtesans. Otherwise they are vastly different. Defoe's work is robust and coarse of grain, like the spirit of his heroine; nobody ever fancied it as a fruit of romanticism. Yet that is precisely how critics of widely divergent views have classified Susan Lenox. "It was a new kind of romanticism," Upton Sinclair stated, "familiar enough to Europe, but not to us."[107] The heroine possesses "a purity of soul and a delicacy of feeling," remarked Dr. Arthur Hobson Quinn, "which take the novel out of the category of realism."[108] Even the sentimental Irish critic Francis Hackett found the story "preposterous" as a transcript of life: "There is only one deadly charge to make against this story--it is an epic of feminine courage that required for its plausibility a consistent exaggeration of the difficulties of women in industry and a humorlessly romantic

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[105] The Price She Paid, p. 314.

[106] Kazin, op. cit., p. 108.

[107] Sinclair, op. cit., p. 355.

[108] A. H. Quinn, American Fiction, p. 645.

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106 *The Price She Paid*, p. 314.

105 Kazin, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

104 Stoddart, *The Age*, p. 308.

103 A. B. Guthrie, *American Fiction*, p. 842.

view of prostitution."[109] Hackett was considered a radical critic, but his verdict on Phillips's gigantic chronicle was essentially identical with that of the ultra-conservative critic of the Boston Transcript. That gentleman opined: "For Susan Lenox to have remained the acme of physical perfection after undergoing the horrors of the life that she deliberately sought and endured is impossible. Mr. Phillips's story may be realism, but it is certainly not reality."[110] This pillar of Boston Puritanism agreed with John S. Sumner, apostle of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, who tried to drive our epic of a modern Magdalene into the under-counter trade of "obscene matter." The Transcript warned its righteous readers against "the attempts to prejudge Mr. Phillips's posthumous novel by frantic claims as to its high moral purpose and sincerity." For the paladin of piety, Edwin F. Edgett, "for any unbiased reader of fiction," as he thundered, it seemed impossible "to view it otherwise than as an extremely offensive addition to the literature of pornography."[111] To the authority of the Boston organ was added the orthodoxy of the New York Times: "It would have been much better for Mr. Phillips's reputation and the repute of American letters

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[109] Francis Hackett, review of Susan Lenox: Her Fall and Rise, New Republic, X (March 10, 1917), 169, 170.

[110] Edwin F. Edgett, review of Susan Lenox, Boston Transcript, March 3, 1917.

[111] Ibid. Sumner's drive is described in Marcosson, op. cit., pp. 255-261.

if it had never been published." The Times looked on Susan Lenox as a record of the underworld of society merely: "Mr. Phillips spares neither her nor the reader any of its revolting filth." Revolting, yet unreal--for the whole novel, the critic roared, "is false to the core":[112]

The story of Susan Lenox is easily summarized. She was born in Indiana with the brand of a bastard, ran away from home to escape the disgrace of the stigma, was brought back by the forces of "law and order" to be married to an enterprising peasant who proceeded according to his conception of conjugal obligation to rape the orphan.[113] In flight from the farmer she was sheltered by a showboat troop headed by a man named Bob Burlingham, kindly, tolerant, intelligent, who gave Susan her first illumination of life, the life of modern America which revolves round the market-place. When Burlingham's death left her stranded in Cincinnati, she tried to earn bread by the sweat of her brow in a box factory. The horrific scenes of the factory and the tenement dwellings of its workers provoked Francis Hackett to say that the artist exaggerated "the difficulties of women in industry." But Phillips did not intend to depict general conditions of industrial womankind. He simply depicted the sufferings of one sensitive

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[112] New York Times, February 25, 1917, p. 62.

[113] "... the picture of her bridal night is one of the unforgettable scenes of American fiction."--Sinclair, op. cit., p. 355.

girl in one branch of industry, and left us to draw our own conclusions as to the inexorable effect of factory exploitation on the whole sex. Certainly Phillips did not overpaint the putrescence of tenement habitation. Susan escaped from the sisterhood of wage-slavery by becoming a prostitute. Upton Sinclair protested against the artist's frank justification of this choice of a profession by his brave heroine:

> It does not occur to her to conceive a passionate ideal of sisterhood with all the oppressed factory workers; to hang on to her job with them, and teach and organize them, and lead them in a strike for better working conditions and higher wages.[114]

Mr. Sinclair forgot Emerson's fable of the mountain and the squirrel. Susan Lenox as the walking delegate of a trade union is comic, incredible; she lacked the toughness of fiber, the wits for bookkeeping, the tenacity in bargaining which are requisite for the occupation. The artist, Mr. Sinclair shrugs, oblivious of The Conflict, "did not understand the revolutionary psychology."[115] Susan met but one revolutionary in her life, Tom Brashear, a saintly cabinet-maker and socialist labor agitator, who perished during a tenement fire before he could finish her education as a working-class woman. She never forgot his teachings, however; they enabled her to see her way clear out of the abyss of slavery into which she fell as a victim of syndicated, police-guarded whoredom. She became the

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[114] Sinclair, op. cit., p. 356.

[115] Loc. cit.

mistress of Freddie Palmer, a criminal who mounted from petty outlawry to politics and high finance. He is a type that was just emerging into prominence in Phillips's lifetime. Decades passed before the type flowered into such men as Tony Musica, alias F. Donald Coster, the former chief of the McKesson-Robbins drug corporation. Susan fled from the gangster and concealed herself in dope-dives and similar holes and corners of the capitalist labyrinth. In New York she encountered a journalist who had befriended her in Ohio, a would-be dramatist, Roderick Spenser. She found him under the spell of alcohol, reconciled to starvation, and she fought with all her might to restore him to manhood. Her will to survive, to be free, filled him with strength for a while to work, but he wilted before the fire of competition and monopoly and was soon indebted to Susan for his living. Yet Spenser was also of service in her advance, guiding her through the mazes of professional careers in the metropolis. He introduced her to the "legitimate" theater, and thus she met Robert Brent. In the playwright Brent we behold a self-portrait of David Graham Phillips, modified by traits of the famous Clyde Fitch.[116] From Brent the heroine learned the meaning and the mastery of art. She was on the way to becoming a great tragic actress when the plutocrat Palmer invaded her felicity, discovered her love for Brent, and ordered his

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[116] See Marcosson, op. cit., pp. 251-252.

mercenaries to murder the artist. But embracing Susan now was like burying his face in the breast of a statue of snow; Palmer released her to a future of perfect isolation. The soul of Susan Lenox was at last her own. She proved her supremacy by a triumphant performance of the rôle of Roxy Grandon in the martyred Brent's final comedy. Independent and free, she belonged to creative beauty alone, and therefore to the earth.

"That Mr. Phillips was sincere," a representative devourer of novels said, "I do not doubt, but that he had any intimate knowledge of the life of the young girls who fill our factories and our shops, I do not for a moment believe.... The conclusion of the story is merely laughable. That a woman so sodden with vice, so soaked with whisky and at last with opium, should escape all its [sic] physical penalties, and, without previous apprenticeship, become, almost in a day, a famous actress, contradicts every human experience."[117] Susan Lenox did not consume such quantities of alcohol and narcotic as the gay critic imagined. Also, it is possible for a woman to conquer the theater without "apprenticeship," if she has studied the stage for years, practiced difficult parts in private (such as Brent made Susan do with Cavalleria Rusticana), and cultivated her body like an athlete for the histrionic career. The gay critic should have given Phillips credit for knowing enough history of the stage and its stars to warrant

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[117] J. T. Gerould, review of Susan Lenox: Her Fall and Rise, Bellman, XXII (April 7, 1917), 385.

the victory of Susan Lenox. But he would not even grant the veteran reporter "intimate knowledge" of factory girlhood as it bloomed and faded in Cincinnati and New York. Professor Quinn was not so incredulous of the industrial passages of the epic as he was of the scenes of harlotry. He declined to "believe that such a girl will leave a man she loves 'for his sake,' and yet become a street-walker, or that she will give herself to a commercial buyer for 'the sake of the house' which employs her, yet leave the store the next day; or that she will refuse nobly the offer of protection made by a dramatic agent and yet continue her street-walking, is absurd."[118] Dr. Quinn will admit no contradiction, no confusion of principles of duty and trade, in the heroine's character. He goes on to say that the whole novel "is based upon the sentimental fallacy that evil leaves no trace on the character of a woman who sells her body promiscuously."[119] The fallacy in Dr. Quinn's criticism is, of course, based upon the dogma that the wages of sin is death, regardless of the riches and joys that sometimes precede the death. Evil did leave deep traces on Susan's character, needless to tell. Phillips was mocked by Francis Hackett too for not, as the critic alleged, "admitting one touch of weakness or deterioration."[120] The touches of frailty and decay on Susan's temperament are plain for all to see; it

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[118] Quinn, op. cit., p. 645.

[119] Loc. cit.

[120] Hackett, op. cit., p. 170.

is not Phillips's fault if they do not glare lecherously from her face after she surmounted the miseries of her past. None of the critics seemed to remember how the fiber and bone of Susan Lenox were fortified against the ravages of poverty and the so-called world's oldest profession by her healthy Hoosier childhood. Upton Sinclair objected to her escape from the ravages of venereal disease, and charged that the artist "idealizes prostitution as a career for women, in order to give it the advantage over the box factory."[121] Phillips idealized nothing: he challenged the Sinclairs to prove that the slavery of the street was more damnable than the slavery of the shop. In a world ruled by exchange-values, by the idolatry of commodities and money, the degraded wretch of the factory makes herself a sad jest by derision of the mote in the eye of her sister who exchanges the abuse of her body sexually for subsistence.

From the shower of critical darts Susan Lenox emerges with marvelous vitality. When Francis Hackett finished his cursory dissection of the book, he confessed that it "moved and impressed this reader deeply." Lovers of American literature, he counseled, should feel "deeply consoled that the eternally lamentable insane act which killed Phillips did not intrude before he had had this full expression of his generous powers."[122] "One thing," an enthusiastic student of Phillips

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[121] Sinclair, op. cit., p. 357.

[122] Hackett, op. cit., p. 170.

thought, "the discerning reader misses in the austere pages: the failure of ecstasy in Susan's life.... she had barely the opportunity to know joy as it can sometimes come, freely, consummately. There was no pagan in Susan.... The daring that can make young life and love an adventure, the pure joy that can ignore fine clothes and position, that can take its chance with food and shelter--these things were missing completely from her life."[123] The student was strangely oblivious of the joyous experiences of Susan in her excursion down the Ohio River by night with Roderick Spenser, her pristine glory as a player on Burlingham's river theater, her first arrival in New York, "the City of the Sun," her discovery of Robert Brent's pride in her courage, and her earliest glimpses of Parisian stars and esprit. True, she had no bliss in la vie de Bohême. But no Bohemian ever had outside the perfumed pages of Henri Murger and Leonard Merrick. The "pure joy ... that can take its chance with food and shelter" has delighted plutocracy and its sycophants in literature only since the rise of that romanticist of Bourbon reaction Chateaubriand. The American artist chose to follow in the footsteps of Defoe and Diderot, Balzac and the Bible, and he found the heroic, the free, the creative content with less ethereal joys.

> Who never ate with tears his bread,
> And never through night's heavy hours
> Lay weeping on his lonely bed,--
> He knows you not, you heavenly powers!

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123 Louis Filler, "An American Odyssey: The Story of Susan Lenox," Accent, I (Autumn, 1940), 29.

Together with Goethe, David Graham Phillips believed and taught that none but the men who struggle and labor can be redeemed from the inhuman, and the genuinely human is reached only in the liberation of das ewig Weibliche, the eternal feminine. Yes, the American artist was "in truth the first" of our national novelists

> who made an attempt, at least, to deal honestly with the concrete lives and unvarnished adventures of men and women. He is surely the first who gives us the tang and taste of life in America as we know it and have lived it and since life does not change greatly in its essentials but only in its accidents, his work, rude and commonplace in an hundred ways, does nevertheless retroactively discredit in a subtle manner even the more honest delineations of American life that preceded him.[124]

Phillips was also in truth the last American novelist to delineate the life of his land, if not sub specie aeternitatis, as Spinoza might have said, at least beneath the mirror of world humanity. No other artist of the United States worked with an equal consciousness of internationality, of the fraternity of Americans with the rest of the race. That is why he seemed to direct crowds and currents of populaces in his novels like a Niagara-governing god, and made the readers feel that every town of his imagination--Saint Christopher, for instance--"was not an isolated community, but was itself only a link in the vast network of social and industrial life stretching over the wide continent."[125] Indeed, David Graham Phillips was the

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[124] Lewisohn, op. cit., pp. 326-327.

[125] Cooper, op. cit., p. 115.

first and the last American novelist to display for us the torrents of our history pouring out of the past and flashing into the dark future.

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# APPENDIX

## CORRESPONDENCE

These letters are in the main self-explanatory. Their authors were invited to answer questions that varied according to the trade or repute of the correspondent. Mr. Samuel Blythe and Mr. Isaac Marcosson were asked for biographic information. Mr. H. L. Mencken and Mr. Edmund Wilson were asked for their maturest critical opinions. Mr. Theodore Dreiser and Mr. Sinclair Lewis were approached for a judgment on the degree of influence which Phillips may have exerted on their fiction. Mr. Upton Sinclair and Mr. Booth Tarkington gave their views of the character and work of a contemporary, a friend, who wrote in the same fields of the novel they did. The statement of Mr. Gouverneur Morris, who knew Phillips as a collaborator for the Cosmopolitan, is quoted with the kind permission of Dr. T. M. Pearce, who personally inquired for Mr. Morris's memory of Phillips. Finally, there is included the report of Miss Lillian Blease, librarian of Princeton University, on that institution's collection of Phillipsiana.

1.

From the secretary of Mr. Blythe:

Monterey, California.
September 25, 1944.

"Mr. Blythe has your letter and wishes me to say that he would be most happy to assist you in gathering material about his old friend David Graham Phillips if he was physically able to do so. He regrets to say he has no letters from him to send you. Only has his inscribed novels."

2.

From Mr. Marcosson:

28 East 63rd Street,
New York City, N. Y.
September 25, 1944.

"I have your letter.

"You are free to use the book (David Graham Phillips and His Times) in every way.

"Mrs. Frevert, the favorite sister of Phillips and who was the dominating influence in his life, died in 1930. However,

all of the author's old friends with whom he corresponded, are dead. The only one to whom he wrote /constantly?--A. F./ was Senator Beveridge. I have the Phillips letters to him in my book."

3.

From Mr. Mencken:

1524 Hollins St.,
Baltimore, Md.
September 5, 1944.

"Unhappily, I never met Phillips, and recall nothing said about him by Pollard. Moreover, it is so long since I read him that I hesitate to express any opinion about his books. What I wrote in the Smart Set and the Prejudices book may stand.

"I am sorry I can't help you better."

4.

From Mr. Wilson:

Wellfleet, Mass.
September 12, 1944.

"I've never read anything by D. G. Phillips except Susan Lenox, which I thought had some naturalistic merits for an American novel of its period, though it was so crude and badly written that I never wanted to read anything else by Phillips. Edith Wharton, by the way, thought S L was a masterpiece: she refers to it either in her memoirs or in her book on the art of fiction. /The references occur in her memoirs, A Backward Glance. --A. F./ It would be interesting to go back and look into him, as you are doing."

5.

From Mr. Dreiser:

1015 N. King's Rd.,
Hollywood, 46, Cal.
September 14, 1944.

"In answer to your letter of recent date in regard to David Graham Phillips, I knew him very slightly.

"I think the only time I ever met him was the time I went to his place to make a deal for one of his stories for the Delineator. At that time I did make a deal for a novelette but before he did anything about it he died.

"This is all the information I can furnish."

6.

From Mr. Lewis, who returned my letter of inquiry with the following note:

October 24, 1944.

"I never met D G P &, I regret to say, I don't remember ever reading one of his novels."

7.

From Mr. Morris, to Dr. Pearce:

Coolidge, N. M.
November 12, 1944.

"David Graham Phillips was an attractive figure to me, modest and easy to be with. But I was not with him often and did not know him well. I was always a country mouse and most of the writers in those old days lived in the cities. Many of them took themselves seriously so that it was noticeable. Phillips must have been serious-minded but he kept it to himself. Susan Lenox is a proof. All my generation got a real thrill out of that book, and so did I. I wonder if today it wouldn't seem a little dated? It had to me even when I was being thrilled no humor atall, and of course the fatal defect of being a kind of propaganda, which to my way of thinking has no proper place in fiction. The story is the thing."

(Mr. Morris proceeded enthusiastically to advise the reading of Henryk Sienkiewicz's romances of Polish patriotism aimed to catch the conscience of Europe against Russia.)

8.

From Mr. Sinclair:

Monrovia, Calif.
September 25, 1944.

"I have your friendly letter.

"I have nothing to add to what I wrote about Phillips. A biography of him has been published. The name of the author slips my mind at the moment....

"I probably had a few letters from Phillips, but they must have been burned in Helicon Hall fire in the spring of 1907. I met him a few times in New York. I remember a very kindly and likable person. The only detail I remember is that his feelings were a bit hurt because I kidded him about the fact that his novels were all exactly cut to fit magazine serial purposes. He wrote an opinion of THE JUNGLE, and this I have since it was printed at the time. It is as follows:

"I never expected to read a serial. I am reading THE JUNGLE, and I should be afraid to trust myself to tell how it affects me. It is a great work. I have a feeling that you yourself 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. I must restrain myself or you may misunderstand."

9.

From Mr. Tarkington:

Seawood,
Kennebunkport, Me.
September 30, 1944.

"David Graham Phillips was long an intimate friend of mine and his tragic death meant a great loss to me. He was from Indiana, my native state, and our formal educations were similar as we both spent a year at an Indiana college before going to Princeton, though I didn't know him until after we'd both finished with that.

"I met him later in New York, was at once captivated by him, as we say, and saw as much as I could of him and the devoted sister with whom he lived. We were often together then, and afterward in Paris; did some traveling together, &c.

"Of his 'personality' I'd say that it was fascinating--certainly always so to me--and, I think, to almost everybody who met him. He was handsome and 'distinguished', tall, graceful, particularly elegant, even exquisite, in dress; a readily friendly man, interested in everything, clear and vigorous and humorous in talk. Never a parrot, he seldom took the popular or conventional view of anything. His mind was searching and original.

"I never knew anybody who didn't find him delightful; association with him was always invigorating. Moreover, he was ever what is called 'human'. Generosity and kindness marked all his relations with his fellow-men except when he was on the trail of what he thought wickedness.

"We must have corresponded at times; but I've forgotten what about and haven't so far as I know any letters from him in my present possession.

"We had interminable talks, I remember; but very little remains definite in my memory of what we said. I recall with clarity only one bit; that he once told me he thought 'Clarissa' was the greatest of all novels, and when I expressed vehement surprise he defended his opinion with great eagerness and strong conviction.

"About his work, my 'literary judgments" have always been too biased to be of any value. By this I mean, simply, that I liked him so much that I liked whatever he wrote because I heard his voice in all of it. One cannot make critical estimates of a friend whose memory is dear; I can only leave such weighings to others.

"In regard to the durability of his achievement, I suppose that to be a matter of statistics, so to speak. The question of how much he's still read has to be left to librarians and publishers, I suppose. Probably you could find out about that by some inquiries addressed to public libraries...."

10.

From Miss Blease:

Princeton University,
The Library,
Princeton, N. J.
November 16, 1944.

"According to the correspondence between President Hibben and Mr. Isaac Marcosson during September and October, 1930, the David Graham Phillips manuscripts were bequeathed by the will of Mr. Phillips's sister, Mrs. Frevert, to Robert W. Chambers. It was his desire that they should come to Princeton. Accordingly, the executor, Mr. Marcosson, arranged to have most of them sent here. However, he saved the original ms. of Susan Lenox for Mr. Chambers, sending only the two typewritten copies to Princeton. He kept for himself the ms. of The Grain of Dust, and to the two sisters of Mr. Phillips sent the mss. of The Social Secretary and The Golden Fleece.

"This correspondence has also brought to light some errors in the listing of the Phillips mss., of which I sent you a copy. This may explain why some of the titles looked unfamiliar to you. I am sending a corrected list, and with the list I am placing whatever additional information the manuscripts yielded on those about which you were dubious.

"Concerning their physical appearance, the manuscripts are in pencil on 8 x 10 sheets which have been torn in half. The quality of the paper is very poor, apparently it was from the ordinary school pad. It has already turned brown and is very brittle. Occasionally a typewritten sheet becomes part of the ms., and sometimes typed pages and ms. pages on odd-sized sheets are pasted together, making a very irregular ms. Corrections are occasional rather than frequent for the whole. Susan Lenox is, of course, an exception to this description. Both copies are typewritten on regular-sized paper. The earlier copy has lines about 8 spaces apart, and the free area is filled with manuscript additions and corrections. The later copy was apparently typed up from this copy and has few corrections.

"I am sorry that I cannot send the titles of the 'Special Articles'. There are no titles given in the manuscripts. They appear to have been designed for the newspaper, perhaps for a column. Most are signed, and sometimes a note of 'no signature' appears. They are from 10 to 15 pages long, and on a variety of subjects."

DAVID GRAHAM PHILLIPS MANUSCRIPTS IN THE PRINCETON UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

The Bolt from the Blue (a play)

The Conflict

The Cost

The Deluge

Enid [The central story in Degarmo's Wife and Other Stories. The manuscript was in the breast pocket of the novelist when he was shot, on his way to deliver it to the publishers. It was punctured three times and drenched with blood.--A. F.]

The Fashionable Adventures of Joshua Craig

Mr. Feuerstein [The protagonist of The Fortune Hunter.--F.]

Her Serene Highness

George Helm

The Hungry Heart (in part only)

The Husband's Story

McMaster's Historian (an article)

The Mother Light

Pauline [The heroine of The Cost.--A. F.]

A Point of Law [A one-act comedy published together with The Worth of a Woman.--A. F.]

The Price She Paid

The Reign of Gilt (some essays from)

The Sneak (a short story)

The Story of Neva ("and Armstrong" part of the title, but crossed out) [This must be the original version of Light-Fingered Gentry.--A. F.]

Susan Lenox, Her Fall and Rise

That Person

Thoughts of Her (a novel or long short story)

White Magic

A Woman Ventures

The Worth of a Woman (a play)

Special Articles

# IMPORTANT!

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