

The Shame of the Cities – Lincoln Steffens

Now, the typical American citizen is the business man. The typical business man is a bad citizen; he is busy. If he is a "big business man" and very busy, he does not neglect, he is busy with politics, oh, very busy and very businesslike. I found him buying boodlers [political machines] in St. Louis, defending grafters in Minneapolis, originating corruption in Pittsburgh, sharing with bosses in Philadelphia, deploring reform in Chicago, and beating good government with corruption funds in New York. He is a self-righteous fraud, this big business man. He is the chief source of corruption, and it were a boon if he would neglect politics. But he is not the business man that neglects politics; that worthy is the good citizen, the typical business man. He too is busy, he is the one that has no use and therefore no time for politics. When his neglect has permitted bad government to go so far that he can be stirred to action, he is unhappy, and he looks around for a cure that shall be quick, so that he may hurry back to the shop.

The History of the Standard Oil Company – Ida Tarbell

There were at that time 26 [oil] refineries in the town - some of them very large plants... To the owners of these refineries Mr. Rockefeller now went one by one, and explained [his plans]. "You see," he told them, "this scheme is bound to work. It means an absolute control by us of the oil business. There is no chance for anyone outside.... You are to turn over your refinery to my appraisers, and I will give you Standard Oil Company stock or cash, as you prefer, for the value we put upon it. I advise you to take the stock. It will be for your good." Certain refiners objected. They did not want to sell. They did want to keep and manage their [own] business. Mr. Rockefeller was regretful, but firm. It was useless to resist, he told the hesitating; they would certainly be crushed if they did not accept his offer, and he pointed out in detail, and with gentleness, how beneficent the scheme really was... "You can never make any more money, in my judgment," said Mr. Rockefeller. "You can't compete with the Standard. We have all the large refineries now. If you refuse to sell, it will end in your being crushed."

The Great American Fraud – Samuel Hopkins Adams

Gullible America will spend this year some seventy-five millions of dollars in the purchase of patent medicines. In consideration of this sum it will swallow huge quantities of alcohol, an appalling amount of opiates and narcotics, a wide assortment of varied drugs ranging from powerful and dangerous heart depressants to insidious liver stimulants; and, in excess of all other ingredients, undiluted fraud. For fraud, exploited by the skilfullest of advertising bunco men [swindlers], is the basis of the trade. Should the newspapers, the magazines and the medical journals refuse their pages to this class of advertisement, the patent medicine business in five years would be as scandalously historic as the South Sea Bubble, and the nation would be the richer not only in lives and money, but in drunkards and drug-fiends saved.

Southern Horrors: Lynch Laws in All Its Phases – Ida B. Wells

The miscegenation laws [mixing of races] of the South only operate against the legitimate union of the races; they leave the white man free to seduce all the colored girls he can, but it is death to the colored man who yields to the force and advances of a similar attraction in white women. White men lynch the offending Afro-American, not because he is a despoiler of virtue, but because he succumbs to the smiles of white women.

Since [January 1, 1892], not less than one hundred and fifty have been known to have met violent death at the hands of the cruel bloodthirsty mobs during the past nine months. To palliate this record (which grows worse as the Afro-American becomes intelligent) and excuse some of the most heinous crimes that ever stained the history of a country; the South is shielding itself behind the plausible screen of defending the honor of its women... It has closed the heart, stifled the conscience, warped the judgment and hushed the voice of press and pulpit on the subject of lynch law throughout this "land of liberty." Men who stand high in the esteem of the public for Christian character, for moral and physical courage, for devotion to the principles of equal and exact justice to all, and for great sagacity [knowledge], stand as cowards who fear to open their mouths before this great outrage. They do not see that by their tacit encouragement, their silent acquiescence, the black shadow of lawlessness in the form of lynch law is spreading its wings over the whole country.

The Shame of the Cities – Lincoln Steffens

1. What is Steffens' opinion regarding regular businessmen?
2. What influence did Steffens think big business had on politics?
3. How is this excerpt reflective of the Gilded Age? (Give specific examples.)
4. What does the author suggest is the cause of these abuses?

The History of the Standard Oil Company – Ida Tarbell

1. According to the author, how did Rockefeller build and expand Standard Oil?
2. What is Tarbell's opinion of Rockefeller based upon this article?
3. How is this excerpt reflective of the Gilded Age? (Give specific examples.)
4. What does the author suggest is the cause of these abuses?

The Great American Fraud – Samuel Hopkins Adams

1. According to the author, what is the "Great American Fraud?"
2. What does Adams suggest is the greatest danger of this problem?
3. How is this excerpt reflective of the Gilded Age? (Give specific examples.)
4. What does the author suggest is the cause of these abuses?

Southern Horrors: Lynch Laws in All Its Phases – Ida B. Wells

1. What does Wells note as the great hypocrisy of Southern race laws?
2. What does the author suggest is the cause of the rise in lynchings?
3. How is this excerpt reflective of the Gilded Age? (Give specific examples.)
4. What does the author suggest is the cause of these abuses?