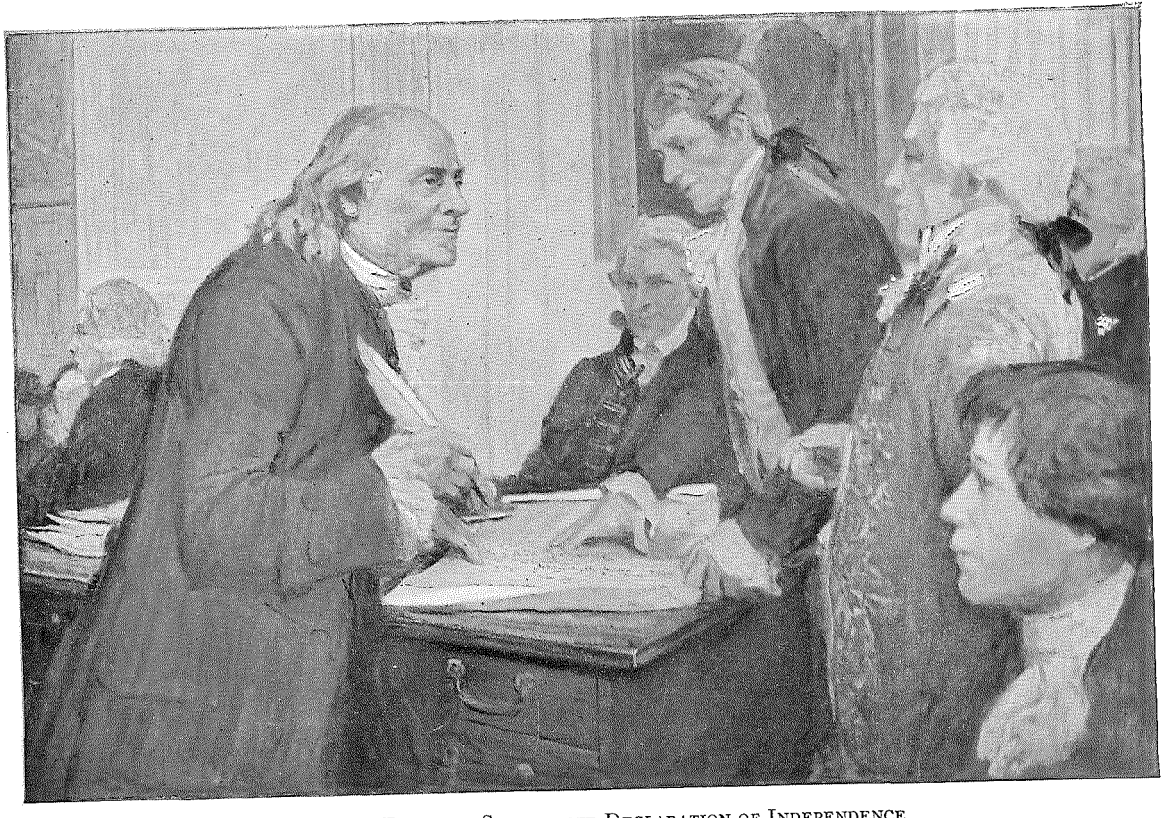

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN SIGNING THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

THE MAKING OF AMERICAN CIVILIZATION

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COLOR ILLUSTRATIONS BY
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THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
NEW YORK 1944

Set up and electrotyped. Published April, 1937.
Reprinted September, 1937; June, 1938. Reissue with additional material, March, 1939.
Reprinted June, 1939; August, 1940; April, 1942; May, 1944.

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TO TEACHERS

The growing demand for social studies that will give boys and girls in the schools a "realistic knowledge" of the society in which they live and are to take part as citizens seems to us an encouraging sign of the times. But we cling to the belief that this realistic knowledge can best be acquired by what is called "the historical approach."

In the first place, many features of contemporary society are as old as the American nation, or older, even though they may present novel aspects today or be called by different names. This is as true of the arts, sciences, and literature as it is of political and economic institutions and practices. How can anyone hope to comprehend the trends in "the new art" without studying the trends in "the old art"? Or comprehend the issues of currency, banking, tariff, foreign trade, agriculture, the use of natural resources, and the interpretation of the Constitution, without knowledge of how they arose? The American people have been coping with them for more than a century. To discuss these matters merely in the light of today, or of the past few years, is to discuss them superficially and to encourage the formation of frivolous judgments.

In the second place, the very statement of contemporary problems raises controversial issues and a rational treatment calls for knowledge of relevant facts, skill in research, and the judicial temper. If anyone is to state the problems clearly and convincingly, he must know how to get at the facts involved. If he is to treat them rationally, he must know how to take an all-round view of them with all the opinions involved. Such skill and such spirit, we believe, can be better acquired by beginning with the problems of long ago than by starting with questions that are "hot in the day's news." Nearly all the issues now up for consideration are issues that have long been before the American people, and one may more firmly grasp their nature

now worried more about the future of democracy. In one of his last poetic outbursts, he wrote:

> A Worship new, I sing;
> You captains, voyagers, explorers, yours!
> You engineers, you architects, machinists, yours!
> You, not for trade or transportation only,
> But in God's name, and for thy sake, O soul!

Writers in the "Old Families" Scoff at the Newcomers. While optimistic Americans rejoiced in the "opportunity for everybody to get rich," a few critical writers viewed the very idea with dismay and no little contempt. In this school were Henry James and Edith Wharton. They sprang from the seasoned society of the East, from families that had been well-to-do for two or three generations. They held proudly aloof from the plain people as if gazing at them through lorgnettes. Ignorance of table manners troubled them. Crudities of behavior annoyed them. Both resented the boldness of the newly rich who were trying to "break into the social set of the well-born" with its milder customs and restrained tastes. James wove his stories chiefly about Americans abroad. Edith Wharton dealt principally with Americans at home in the cities. Both preferred to live out of the country—in England or Paris. The rough-and-tumble of American life, the flaunting display of wealth gave them such acute distress that they sought relief in "the mellower civilization" of the Old World, where ordinary individuals were still kept "in their proper places" to a greater extent.

John Hay Defends Business Enterprise. Unlike Henry James with his English tastes, John Hay found America "good enough for him." He had spent years abroad, but the main interest of his life was at home. Born in a small town in Indiana, educated at Brown University, and introduced to politics as Lincoln's secretary, Hay was familiar with the East and the West. He married the daughter of a rich businessman in Cleveland and became well acquainted with the industrial leaders who were spreading their enterprise across the continent. Turning from poetry, his first literary effort, he expressed his social ideas in a novel called "The Breadwinners," just as the panic of 1873–1878 was shaking

the country. In this novel he portrayed the difficulties of employers and drew a picture of the labor leader as a rough and dishonest demagogue engaged in deluding his followers for his own benefit.

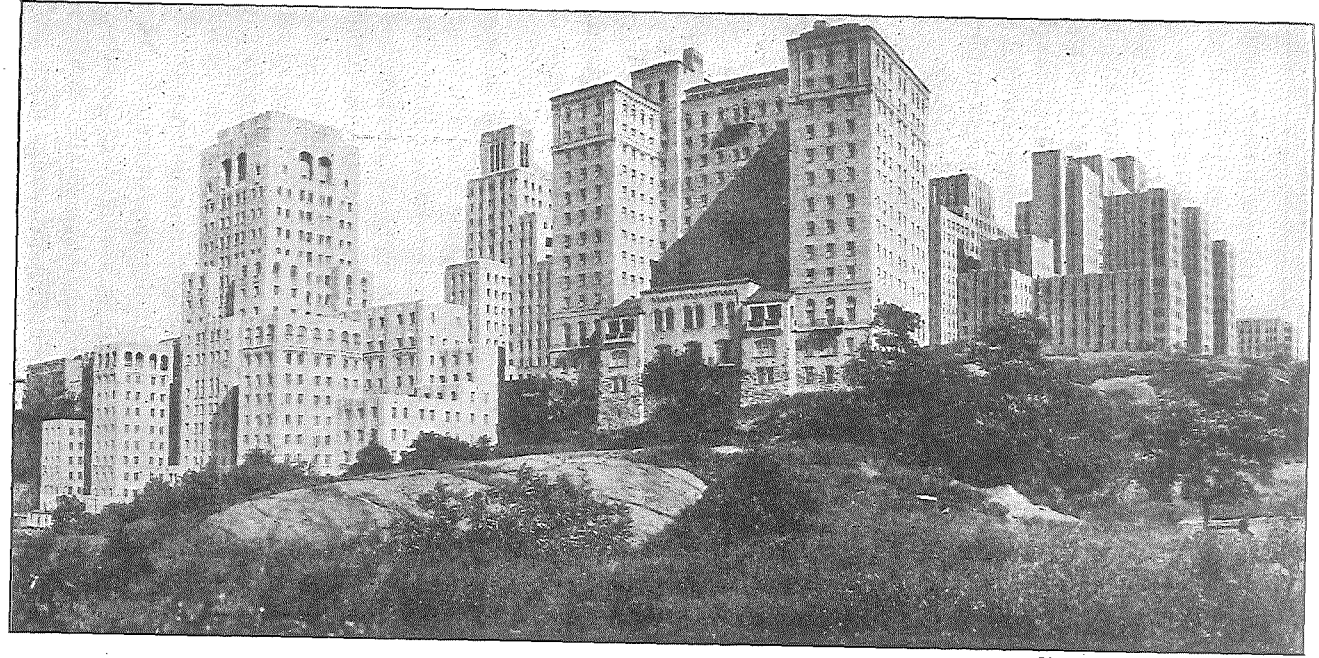
Howells Turns to Realism. Although he was a friend of John Hay, a more distinguished writer, William D. Howells, took another view of passing events. For half a century he was the outstanding novelist of America. Like Hay a mid-westerner by birth, Howells, however, first wrote about Italy. But he turned back to America by way of Boston and Cambridge. He chose for the plots of his novels the conflicts taking place in the United States. With a gentle yet firm pen he drew pictures of men and women in all classes. He kept his faith in democracy, as Hay did not, and believed that it would create a better world if given time; but he made his readers realize that there were dark and distressing features in contemporary American life. "Let us face the cruel facts," he seemed to be saying, with neither bitterness nor despair.

Sharper Notes Appear in American Fiction. In the realistic spirit of Howells, but with more bluntness, other writers also insisted that all was not good in "the land of the free." In his very first novel, written with Charles Dudley Warner, shortly after the Civil War, Samuel Clemens ("Mark Twain"), lashed out at riches and corruption under the ominous title "The Gilded Age." Although he later chose less ticklish themes, such as "Tom Sawyer" and "Huckleberry Finn," he never forgot his early views and in his last years he turned to criticism again. Hamlin Garland described in his "Son of the Middle Border" the stark poverty of the romantic frontier as he had experienced it himself. Robert Herrick voiced the spirit of revolt against the ugliness and cruelty which, in his mind, were accompanying the sweep of industrialism. Frank Norris, influenced by the writings of Zola, a vivid French critic, spared no words in describing the abuses which dogged the steps of "progress"; but he made right defeat wrong in the end. With startling realism Upton Sinclair described the meat-packing industry in Chicago as a sample of operations by "big business." Indeed President Theodore Roosevelt was so

and magazines reached every corner of the United States. The isolation of communities was broken down and ideas of all kinds flowed freely from one end of the country to the other. When medical science in one city found a way to prevent epidemics of typhoid fever or cholera, doctors everywhere soon learned of the achievement. When a reform was proposed and tried in one state, news of the event quickly reached other states. Amid such circumstances Americans took up the problems of the new age and tried to deal with them.

Domestic Discontent Takes Many Forms

Abuses in American Life Are Exposed. For reform action the way was prepared by a large body of published writings critical of abuses in our national life. Facts and theories about government and business were collected and scattered widely among the people. Books, magazines, and newspapers dealt with the current issues. From 1870 until his death in 1892 George William Curtis, president of the Civil Service Reform Association, kept up a running fire upon the evils of the spoils system. In a book called "The American Commonwealth," published in 1888, James Bryce, an English student of politics, gave the whole country a shock by his picture of the corrupt "rings" of politicians who ruled the cities of the United States. Six years later Henry Demorest Lloyd, a Chicago journalist, in a volume entitled "Wealth against Commonwealth" attacked in scathing language certain trusts which had destroyed competitors and bribed public officials. In 1903 Ida Tarbell, a writer of history, gave to the public an account of the ruthless methods used by the Standard Oil Company in crushing its rivals. About the same time another journalist, Lincoln Steffens, exposed sordid politics in several municipalities in a series of articles bearing the painful heading, "The Shame of the Cities." The questioning spirit appeared in other forms: in weekly and monthly magazines, in essays, pamphlets, editorials, news stories, and novels such as Churchill's "Coniston" and Sinclair's "The Jungle." It became so violent that the opening years of the twentieth century were well named "the age of the muckrakers."



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MEDICAL CENTER, NEW YORK CITY

saying that the rich were growing richer and the poor were growing poorer. He asserted that, on the contrary, the average man, wageworker, farmer, and small businessman was better off than ever. That there had been abuses in the heaping up of private riches he did not deny, but he believed that the men who won immense fortunes, on the whole, conferred positive benefits upon the country. Nevertheless he felt that grave dangers to the safety and the happiness of the people lurked in gross inequalities of wealth. In 1906 he wrote that he wished it were in his power to prevent the growth of enormous fortunes. The next year, to the surprise of many leaders in his own party, he told Congress in a message that he approved both income and inheritance taxes, then generally viewed as Populist or Democratic measures. He declared that such taxes should be levied in order to bring about a more equitable distribution of wealth and wider equality of opportunity among citizens.

Roosevelt Supports New Measures of Government

Economic and Social Legislation Is Enacted. When Roosevelt turned from expressing opinions in messages and speeches to the work of trying to get his bills through Congress, he found himself faced with strong opposition in both parties. Many of his views were regarded as too advanced and the making of laws to apply them was slow. But in his administrations several measures were enacted that bore the stamp of his theories, although it could hardly be said that he controlled Congress to the same degree as did some other Presidents. The Hepburn Railway Act of 1906 enlarged the Interstate Commerce Commission; it extended the Commission's power over oil pipe lines, express companies, and other interstate carriers; it gave the Commission the right to reduce rates found to be unreasonable and discriminatory; it forbade "midnight tariffs," that is, sudden shifts in rates to favor certain shippers; and it prohibited common carriers from transporting goods owned by themselves, especially coal, except for use in their railway business. Two important pure food and drug laws, passed during the same year, were designed to protect the public against diseased meats and harmful foods and drugs.

His labor legislation included an act making interstate railways liable to damages for injuries sustained by their employees and a law limiting the hours of railway employees engaged as trainmen or telegraph operators.

The Federal Government Begins Irrigation in the West. The open country—deserts, forests, waterways, and public lands—interested Roosevelt no less than railway and industrial questions. Indeed in his first message to Congress he placed the conservation of natural resources among "the most vital internal problems" of the age, and brought before the people more forcibly an issue that had been discussed in a casual way since Cleveland's first administration. The suggestion met an immediate response from Congress. Under the leadership of Senator Newlands of Nevada the Reclamation Act of 1902 was passed, providing for the irrigation of desert areas in the West. By this Act proceeds from the sale of public lands were set aside to pay for building dams and sluiceways to hold water and divert it as needed to the thirsty sands. Furthermore it was arranged that the rents paid by water users should go into a reclamation fund to continue the work indefinitely. Construction was started immediately under the terms of the law. Within seventeen years about 1,600,000 acres had been reclaimed and more than a million were actually irrigated. In the single year 1918 the crops of the irrigated districts were valued at approximately $100,000,000.

Conservation of Resources Is Pressed. In his first message Roosevelt urged the transfer of all control over national forests to trained foresters—a recommendation carried out in 1907 when the Forestry Service was created. In every direction progress was made in the administration of the national domain. The science of forestry was improved and public interest in the subject awakened. Water-power sites on the public domain were no longer sold or given away but were leased for a term of years to private companies. The area of the national forests was enlarged from forty-three million acres to one hundred ninety-four million acres by presidential proclamation—more than forty-three million acres being added in one year, 1907. Persons who turned sheep