Andrew Carnegie, Author

"Though not a writer I have always felt that my true field was to be one—at least that was my early ambition."

Andrew Carnegie, the speaker, might well have added that writing remained his favorite avocation. In 1902, shortly after retiring, he wrote a friend, "I am golfing, fishing, writing the latter the sweetest of all." ¹ Like many millionaires, he prized literary friendships with such men as Matthew Arnold, George W. Cable, and Mark Twain. Unlike other millionaires, he was a member of the Authors Club of New York and had earned the privilege by publishing more than some professional writers.

When Carnegie was seventeen, he wrote two letters to the Pittsburgh Dispatch, urging that a library, open free to apprentices, also be free to young men like himself who were not bound.² At eighty, he wrote an article on "The Principles of Giving" for the Woman's Home Companion. In between, he published seven books and more than eighty articles and speeches. Although sometimes he had a literary assistant to collect material, he needed no ghost writer. Being a millionaire undoubtedly helped him to get a hearing, but his works were not merely subsidized expressions of vanity. His essay "Wealth," for example, was the lead article in the North American Review of June, 1889, and aroused heated discussions in American and British journals. Although exact sales figures are unavailable, at least two of his books sold very well. An American Four-in-Hand in Britain, published for general sale in 1883, was reprinted eighteen times and sold nearly fifteen thousand copies. In 1886 it appeared in a paper-back edition. Triumphant Democracy (1886) sold seventeen thousand copies in the United States within a few months of publication. Several expensive English editions went equally well, and a

¹ Burton J. Hendrick, ed., Miscellaneous Writings of Andrew Carnegie (Garden City, N. Y., 1933), I, vii.
² Burton J. Hendrick, The Life of Andrew Carnegie (Garden City, N. Y., 1932), I, 68–70.
Carnegie once remarked, "I come by my scribbling propensities by inheritance. . . ." His father was a weaver, but his maternal grandfather published *The Precursor*, a radical Scottish paper, and contributed to William Cobbett's *Register*. Although Carnegie's few years of formal education virtually ended when he sailed for America at the age of twelve, his true education began earlier and continued throughout a long life. His intellectual father was George Lauder, an uncle, who taught him to appreciate nature, music, and the heroes of Scottish and American history. Lauder encouraged his nephew's gift for memorizing and declaiming, and instilled in him a lasting love of Robert Burns. Before Carnegie could read, he knew by heart most of Burns's finest poems.

After coming to Pennsylvania, Carnegie had to work to aid his family, but he made the most of the limited educational opportunities of Allegheny City and Pittsburgh. As a messenger boy, he delivered telegrams to the Pittsburgh Theater and sometimes was allowed to watch plays from the upper balcony. Along with the popular melodramas came performances of Shakespeare by a famous actor of the day, Edwin Adams. "Thenceforth," Carnegie said, "there was nothing for me but Shakespeare. I seemed to be able to memorize him almost without effort. Never before had I realized what magic lay in words." His reading broadened when Colonel James Anderson of Allegheny City opened his library of four hundred volumes to working boys. Carnegie recalled reading Macaulay's history and essays, Lamb's essays ("my special delight"), and Bancroft's *History of the United States* ("which I studied with more care than any other book I had then read"). With some companions, Carnegie joined the Webster Literary Society. This not only increased his confidence as a public speaker, but also led him to do wide reading on the subjects of forthcoming debates. In his early twenties, he met Leila Addison of Pittsburgh, a cultivated older lady

---

who had been tutored by Carlyle. Under her guidance, Carnegie smoothed his rough manners, began to pay strict attention to his language, and read the English classics “with great avidity.”7 Somewhat later, he discovered in the works of Darwin and Spencer an evolutionary philosophy which ordered his intellectual outlook. And so it went. Throughout his life, Carnegie learned much from books. No wonder he spent part of his fortune in founding public libraries. No wonder he frequently urged young men “to cultivate the taste for reading.”8

Like many lovers of reading, Carnegie yearned to write. “Even in my teens,” he said, “I was a scribbler for the press. To be an editor was one of my ambitions.” He was ecstatic when one of his youthful letters was printed in Horace Greeley’s New York Tribune.9 On another occasion, shortly after joining the Pennsylvania Railroad, he sent an anonymous article to the Pittsburgh Evening Journal, which resulted in an invitation to spend Sunday with the wealthy and influential William A. Stokes, chief counsel of the road. The lesson was not missed. “The pen,” wrote Carnegie, “was getting to be a weapon with me.”10 Nevertheless, his true debut as an author was delayed another twenty years until he was forty-three. In 1878 he traveled around the world, and in 1881 took a coaching trip in Britain. On both occasions, he wrote up his daily notes of sights and impressions and had them printed privately for friends. These accounts were so well received that Scribner’s Sons published them for general sale.11

An American Four-in-Hand in Britain (1883) is Carnegie’s most charming book. Originally, he had intended only a brief account. When he began writing, however, the words flowed so easily that in twenty sittings he had finished a book of more than three hundred pages.12 A vernal, joyous atmosphere suffuses the narrative; the mood is of a childhood dream-come-true. Carnegie proclaimed in the

7 Ibid., 46, 97–98.
8 Andrew Carnegie, The Empire of Business (New York, 1902), 78–79.
10 Ibid., 81–82.
11 Hendrick, Life of Andrew Carnegie, I, 228–237.
12 Autobiography of Andrew Carnegie, 211–212; the private edition of 1882 was titled Our Coaching Trip, Brighton to Inverness.
opening pages, "The Goddess Fortune, my friends, rarely fails to give to mortals all they pray for and more. . . ."\textsuperscript{13}

The structure of the book is the simple, timeless one of a journey. Carnegie, his mother (then in her seventy-first year), and nine invited friends sailed from New York for a summer lark, an eight-hundred-mile coaching trip from Brighton, England, to Inverness, Scotland. The "Gay Charioteers," as Carnegie dubbed the party, set out from Brighton on June 17 in a large black and red coach drawn by four glossy bays. The original party consisted of fifteen Britons and Americans, married and unmarried, plus Perry the coachman and Joe the footman.\textsuperscript{14} A general pattern was soon established. The horn sounded, and the coach rolled off each morning about 9:30. In order to share the graces of the ladies, no gentleman was to sit in the same seat twice in a row. At noon, the hamper of food was unpacked for a picnic lunch beside a gentle stream or in a shady glen. Sometimes the group took side excursions on foot. The average day's travel of thirty-two miles was broken by an occasional stop-over for a day or two of rest.

The narrative offers varied fare. Least interesting, perhaps, are the bits of antiquarian history which Carnegie gleaned from local guidebooks. But even some of this is enlivened by his delight in visiting hallowed spots like Oxford. Reaching Stratford-on-Avon, Carnegie observed, "One can hardly say that he comes into Shakespeare's country, for one is always there, so deeply and widely has his influence reached."\textsuperscript{15} Carnegie captured the minor incidents of day-to-day travel—the weather, strangers met, petty inconveniences and subjects of conversation. The group comes alive when he describes his stout old mother doing a highland reel from high spirits, or the sack race designed to dispel the sadness of the final luncheon before the trip's end.\textsuperscript{16}

Carnegie freely included his opinions on things like temperance, militarism, democracy, English political and social institutions, the power of the press, and poetry. Sometimes his comments are a little

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{13} Andrew Carnegie, \textit{An American Four-in-Hand in Britain} (New York, 1886), 6.
\item \textsuperscript{14} People came and went; thirty-two persons traveled on the coach at one time or another. \textit{Ibid.}, 185-186.
\item \textsuperscript{15} \textit{Ibid.}, 77.
\item \textsuperscript{16} \textit{Ibid.}, 112, 185.
\end{itemize}
surprising for a Pittsburgh steel manufacturer. Passing through the industrial district near Birmingham, he wondered, "How can people be got to live such terrible lives as they seem condemned to here?" He observed the large estates of rural England and wrote, "The rights of property are all very well in their place, but the rights of man and the good of the commonwealth are far beyond them." He thought it "worth an Atlantic voyage to hear a skylark for the first time," praised the gypsy life, ridiculed the British passion for shooting birds and deer, and agreed with Sydney Smith that the secret of happiness was to "take short views of things."

Traveling steadily northward, the coach passed into Scotland on July 16 and pressed on to the trip's climax—the triumphal return of Carnegie and his mother to their native town, Dunfermline. It seemed to Carnegie "the most memorable day of my mother's life or of mine." The town declared a holiday. Carnegie spoke and his mother laid the memorial stone of the Free Library, the first of several thousand that he would give away. He was almost overcome when he heard the abbey bell which had echoed through his childhood. "What Benares is to the Hindoo, Mecca to the Mohammedan, Jerusalem to the Christian, all that Dunfermline is to me." The trip, which lasted exactly seven weeks and a day, ended at Inverness on August 3. "Faust need not have sold himself to the devil for youth, after all," wrote Carnegie. "We find it here in this glorious gipsy life."

The success of An American Four-in-Hand in Britain led to the publication of Round the World in 1884. This was actually Carnegie's first book and told of the realization of another boyish dream. In October, 1878, he and a friend John W. Vandevort sailed from San Francisco for Japan. On the twenty-two-day voyage, Carnegie reread carefully eleven of Shakespeare's plays. After a week in Japan, he traveled along the coast of China—Shanghai, Hong Kong, Canton and Singapore. While in China, Carnegie read Confucius and caught the "curio fever," buying some temple gongs. He stopped briefly in Ceylon, then sailed for Madras and Calcutta. India deeply impressed Carnegie. He visited Benares, Lucknow, the palaces and tombs of the

---

17 Ibid., 87, 128.
18 Ibid., 59, 120, 170-171, 177.
19 Ibid., 159, 161, 178.
great Moguls at Agra, admired the Taj Mahal, then went on to Delhi and Bombay. En route, he read Buddha and the sacred Hindu books, and, while among the Parsees in Bombay, studied Zoroaster. Of the Delhi area he commented, "A ruin now and then is acceptable, but eleven miles of them in one or two days are rather embarrassing. . . ." Leaving India, he sailed along the Arabian coast, up the Suez to Egypt. When he reviewed his impressions of the East, he concluded, "Life there lacks two of its most important elements: the want of intelligent and refined women as the companion of man, and a Sunday." Since he had seen Europe before and was not receiving fresh impressions, Carnegie quickly summarized his visits to Sicily, Italy, France and Great Britain. He arrived home in New York harbor on June 24, 1879, after an eight-month trip without a single unpleasant incident.

*Round the World* had some amusing lines and engaging passages. Carnegie noted of Paris, "Good Americans come here when they die, it is said, and I think it would be well for most of them if they did postpone their journey until then." His epitome of civilized doctrine was, "When smitten on the one cheek, turn to the smiter the other also, but if he smites you on that, go for him." But, on the whole, pedestrian writing and a disjointed structure make this a dull book. Overwhelmed by strange, ever-changing sights, Carnegie did little more than transcribe miscellaneous facts and impressions. The trip was a great educational experience for him, but not one that he could translate into art.

Carnegie's first two literary ventures grew out of personal experience; his third book, *Triumphant Democracy* (1886), originated in his "realizing how little the best-informed foreigner, or even Briton, knew of America, and how distorted that little was." This book cost him four years of "steady, laborious work." Indeed, he attributed his second serious illness to the strain of writing it while carrying on business as usual.

His intention was to celebrate, not criticize, the United States. The dedication foreshadowed the book's tone: "To the Beloved

---

22 Ibid., 226, 49.
Republic under whose equal laws I am made the peer of any man, although denied political equality by my native land, I dedicate this book with an intensity of gratitude and admiration which the native-born citizen can neither feel nor understand." When George William Curtis asked "what had become of the shadows?" Carnegie replied, "My dear friend, Triumphant Democracy was written at high noon, when the blazing sun right overhead casts no shadows." He admitted that the Republic was not perfect, but he sought to give Americans a better appreciation of their vast accomplishments. Even more, he wanted to speak to the British masses, to convince them that "the government of the people through the republican form, and not the government of a class through the monarchical form, is the surest foundation of individual happiness and of national growth." The final effect of the book, he hoped, would be to strengthen the bonds of affection between his native and adopted lands.24

In twenty-two chapters, Carnegie systematically summed up major aspects of American life: the composition and growth of the population (the American was almost purely Anglo-Saxon); the phenomenal urban growth; the high wages and living standard of the average American; occupations (the United States was a nation of workers); education (popular education was the basis of an enduring civilization); religion; pauperism (rare) and crime (republican institutions aided in eliminating criminal impulses); literature (not equal to Britain's, but creditable for a young country); art and architecture; agriculture (advancing on all fronts; increasing mortgage debts a sign of ambition, not decay); manufacture (the Republic had become the world's greatest manufacturer); mining, commerce, and transportation; and government—its nonpolitical work, the national budget, foreign policy, and the Constitution (the cardinal idea of American government was home rule).

Triumphant Democracy was a solid, useful book whose sales prove that it met a need. For the present-day reader, however, it is tedious. One feels Carnegie's labor in composition, and nods over pages crammed with statistics and unadorned facts. Though Carnegie paid tribute to spiritual, intellectual, and artistic achievements, the book

gives the impression of glorifying materialism. Matthew Arnold's criticism, even if a bit unfair, is understandable:

He [Carnegie] and most Americans are simply unaware that nothing in the book touches the capital defect of life over here: namely, that compared with life in England it is so uninteresting, so without savour and without depth. Do they think to prove that it must have savour and depth by pointing to the number of public libraries, schools, and places of worship?²⁵

To its credit, though, *Triumphant Democracy* gave Mark Twain the idea of telling a tale about a Yankee at the court of King Arthur.²⁶

If we pass over two collections of articles—*The Gospel of Wealth and Other Timely Essays* (1900) and *The Empire of Business* (1902)—Carnegie's next book waited almost twenty years.²⁷ When Doubleday, Page & Company first asked him to write a life of James Watt, he refused. But the idea nagged him until he accepted. It proved a happy decision. He greatly enjoyed doing the book and came to admire Watt as "one of the finest characters that ever graced the earth."²⁸

*James Watt* (1905) was a short, popular biography which made no pretense of originality or scholarship. Carnegie stressed the character and early training of the poor Scottish instrument maker, explained Watt's contribution to the steam engine, devoted four of eleven chapters to his partnerships and business struggles, and concluded with an assessment of Watt as a scientist and man. Author and subject were well matched. Carnegie responded to his fellow Scot—"the heather was on fire within Jamie's breast"—and understood his early struggles and ultimate success.²⁹ He did a competent job of making Watt's achievements meaningful against the background of earlier steam engines and contemporary needs. Drawing on his own business career, Carnegie gave a sympathetic account of the entrepreneurial skills required of men like Matthew Boulton of Birmingham before the Watt engine became a practical reality. The book is not without faults. Carnegie quoted too much from earlier writers on

Watt and at times became mawkish; for example, his paragraphs describing the death of Watt's first wife are separated from the text by two heavy black lines. For the most part, though, *James Watt* is a good example of intelligent popularization.

Carnegie's last and most important book was the *Autobiography of Andrew Carnegie*, published posthumously in 1920. He wrote it in his late sixties and seventies after retiring. The narrative reaches 1914, then breaks off abruptly. The dreamer of universal peace had no heart for writing in a world at war. Like most of its genre, the *Autobiography* gives in the first seventeen chapters a rich, moving account of Carnegie's youth and rise to fame, but tends thereafter to become a routine recital of honors received, panaceas proposed, places visited, and famous friends. But even the later chapters are redeemed by some interesting anecdotes about Matthew Arnold, William E. Gladstone, Herbert Spencer, James G. Blaine, and others. Like Benjamin Franklin, one of his boyhood models, Carnegie wrote of his life simply, even conversationally. He freely pointed morals and offered advice, and studded his text with quotations from Burns and Shakespeare. A deep love of family and friends, affection for Scotland and America, business trials and successes, social and political issues of the day, philanthropy, and work for a more peaceful world—these are the dominant themes.

Throughout, Carnegie's gift for revealing stories is evident. He particularly enjoyed this one told him by an aunt:

I had been brought up upon wise saws and one that my father had taught me was soon given direct application. As a boy, returning from the seashore three miles distant, he had to carry me part of the way upon his back. Going up a steep hill in the gloaming he remarked upon the heavy load, hoping probably I would propose to walk a bit. The response, however, which he received was:

"Ah, father, never mind, patience and perseverance make the man, ye ken."30

Another incident illustrates one reason why Carnegie was a successful executive. He was negotiating with a committee of workingmen over what he thought were unfair demands instigated by a bullying leader:

When we sat down at the table the leader's seat was at one end and mine at the other. . . . After I had laid our proposition before the meeting, I

---

saw the leader pick up his hat from the floor and slowly put it on his head, intimating that he was about to depart. Here was my chance.

"Sir, you are in the presence of gentlemen! Please be so good as to take your hat off or leave the room!"

My eyes were kept full upon him. There was a silence that could be felt. The great bully hesitated, but I knew whatever he did, he was beaten. If he left it was because he had treated the meeting discourteously by keeping his hat on, he was no gentleman; if he remained and took off his hat, he had been crushed by the rebuke. . . . He very slowly took off the hat and put it on the floor. Not a word did he speak thereafter in that conference.①

If Triumphant Democracy was composed at high noon, the Autobiography was written in the soft twilight of contented age. It told of a hero who worked hard, won fame and fortune, and lived happily ever after. Carnegie glossed over the bitter Homestead Strike and the failings of friends like James G. Blaine, and included few scars in his self-portrait. Fortunately, though, he wrote better than he knew. The attentive reader discerns not only intelligence, ambition, generosity and poetry, but also subtlety, ruthlessness, stubbornness and a will to dominate. Despite the Autobiography's omissions and distortions, both the man and the era come alive in its pages.

The concern of mid-twentieth-century business and political leaders with public opinion would not have surprised Carnegie. He considered the press to be "the universal parliament" and wrote, "If any man wants bona fide substantial power and influence in this world, he must handle the pen—that's flat."② In scores of articles and letters, Carnegie acted on this belief. He was not an original or especially fertile thinker, but he did have a knack for clearly presenting common sense views on questions of general concern. Since he frequently repeated himself, it is not worth while to examine any large number of his articles and speeches in detail. It will be enough to mention some of his major topics and leading ideas.

A surprising percentage of Carnegie's articles—more than a quarter—dealt with British or Anglo-American themes. He contributed frequently to British magazines like the Fortnightly Review and The Nineteenth Century. His first magazine article, "As Others See Us," appeared in the Fortnightly Review of February, 1882, and presented the reaction of an American to British political questions

① Ibid., 248-249.
of the day. Beneath a superficial tactfulness, Carnegie's main point was that Britons were arguing over questions like hereditary political position, land tenure, and church-state relations which Americans had long since solved. He offered sympathy to the dissatisfied British people "irritated by the pressure of old forms from which the body politic in the natural course of development struggles to be free, yet apparently lacking the courage to cast off at one manly stroke . . . all that hinders the new birth." This essay set a pattern for many others to follow. The implied advice to the British was almost always, "Do it the American way."

Carnegie abhorred hereditary privilege and was sure that if the House of Lords was to survive with power, it must be elected, not restricted to a class. He offered the example of the United States Senate. When the British franchise was broadened in 1884, he applauded, and predicted that under democracy, British political institutions would gradually be assimilated to those of other English-speaking communities, that is, be "Americanized." Carnegie's fondest Anglo-American dream was of an imperial federation of all English-speaking countries. He shared the racist assumptions of the later nineteenth century and earnestly desired "to secure first the unity of our race, and through that, for it, the mastery of the world for the good of the world." Of course, one prerequisite of this would be that Britain's political institutions become like those of her former colonies. Carnegie even ventured opinions on British foreign policy. To solve the Irish question, he favored home rule based on the example of the American federal system. He believed that the British suppression of Dutch aspirations in South Africa was foolish and indefensible, and said so in the North American Review.

33 Andrew Carnegie, "As Others See Us," Miscellaneous Writings of Andrew Carnegie, I, 18–19.
34 Andrew Carnegie, "The Second Chamber," The Nineteenth Century and After, LXII (1907), 689–698.
times of Anglo-American tension, Carnegie was quick to proclaim that Americans did not hate England. One wonders if some conservative Britons could say as much about Carnegie.

A second topic on which Carnegie wrote extensively was business. As one of the world’s richest industrialists, he spoke with authority on the path to success, the administration of wealth, labor relations and the problem of monopoly. His own writings did much to make him a symbol of rags-to-riches success for ambitious young men. Going beyond Poor Richard, Carnegie argued that thrift, being one of the cardinal differences between the savage and civilized man, was everyone’s duty. He professed sympathy for children of wealthy parents and frequently asserted that most great men had been “nurtured in the bracing school of poverty.” Should poverty ever be abolished, he feared that humanity would cease to progress.

Once started in business, a young man should aim high. “Be king in your dreams,” Carnegie advised. The future leader must avoid the three great dangers of liquor, speculation, and endorsement. If he wished to attract attention and rise, he had to go beyond the question “What must I do for my employer?” and ask, “What can I do?” The master secret of success was to “concentrate your energy, thought, and capital exclusively upon the business in which you are engaged.” Or, as Carnegie preferred to say, “put all your eggs in one basket, and then watch that basket.” But he realized, also, that routine hard work was not enough. “The highest triumphs even in business,” he said, “flow from romance, sentiment, imagination.”

Success, in turn, led to what Carnegie believed was one of the great problems of the day, the administration of wealth. In his most famous article, he set forth in 1889 “the true Gospel concerning Wealth.” He maintained that humanity progressed most under the

39 See, for example, Andrew Carnegie, “Do Americans Hate England?” ibid., CL (1890), 752-760.
40 Andrew Carnegie, “Thrift as a Duty,” The Empire of Business, 95-99.
44 Ibid., 10, 17-18.
laws of competition. While competition might be hard on the individual, it ensured the survival of the fittest in all departments and therefore was best for the race. To propose different social conditions, he said, was out of order. Mankind had tried communism and found it wanting; socialism, even if a desirable ideal, involved the changing of human nature. Accepting individualism, private property, and competition, then, one had to decide how best to use the wealth that would inevitably accumulate in the hands of a few men of managerial genius.

Carnegie pointed out that surplus wealth could be left to heirs, bequeathed for public purposes, or distributed by the possessor during his lifetime. He thought the first method harmful to both the heirs and the state, and suggested the provision of only moderate sums for one's wife and daughters, and little, if any, for sons. (Since Carnegie had no son, his faith in this austere doctrine was not tested.) The second approach, while better, required that a man die before his money could be of value to the world. Further, since it required as much ability to spend money wisely as to earn it, the testator's real goals were often not attained. Carnegie found in the third alternative the "true antidote for the temporary unequal distribution of wealth."47 Money distributed in small amounts to the masses accomplished little, but wealth wisely administered for the common good became truly the property of the many.

In a later article, "The Best Fields of Philanthropy," Carnegie was more concrete. His basic axiom was that money should never be spent in ways that had a pauperizing effect on the recipients. He believed that the irreclaimably destitute and worthless, or the confirmed beggar, should be cared for by the state, but should be segregated lest they corrupt those who were willing and able to work. Intelligent private philanthropy should try to assist the best and most aspiring of the poor. As examples of worth-while uses of surplus wealth, Carnegie suggested the founding or extension of a university or scientific institution; a free community library; a hospital, medical college, laboratory, or other institution for the alleviation of suffering; a public park, including such aesthetic features as statues and fountains; a public hall for meetings and music; a municipal swim-

47 Ibid., 660.
ming pool and baths; and a gift to a church, especially for a lovelier building which would add beauty to the community. He intended this list only as one man's choice, however, and said that wealth would be best administered when the object appealed to the giver's heart.48

These views on wealth attracted great attention, particularly in Britain. Gladstone's review and recommendation of them in The Nineteenth Century was followed in the same magazine by a symposium on "Irresponsible Wealth" by three of England's best-known clerics.49 The reason for this excitement was not the novelty of Carnegie's proposals. True, there was the shock of having a millionaire write of the disgrace of dying rich. But he himself called attention to earlier men like Peter Cooper who had advocated and practiced wise philanthropy. Carnegie's idea on surplus wealth was no more than the ancient Christian doctrine of stewardship in modern dress. Indeed, this was probably the major reason why his views had such wide appeal. To many persons who were frightened by urban slums, labor strife, farm discontent, the aggregation of colossal fortunes, and the specter of socialism and anarchy, he offered a panacea which promised to eliminate friction without changing anything but the minds of a few millionaires. His naïve optimism was apparent in the final lines of the essay on "Wealth": "Such, in my opinion, is the true Gospel concerning Wealth, obedience to which is destined some day to solve the problem of the Rich and the Poor, and to bring 'Peace on earth, among men Good-Will.' "50

Though less sensational, Carnegie's opinions on labor relations were realistic and enlightened. He was proud of being a weaver's son and missed few opportunities to praise the average worker's ability and good faith.51 Although he expressed approval of large trade unions, he preferred local organizations in each plant through which workers could express grievances and make suggestions. He recognized (and twentieth-century sociologists have since confirmed) how important seemingly small trifles concerning working conditions

49 These articles are reprinted in Miscellaneous Writings of Andrew Carnegie, II, 126-202.
51 See, for example, Andrew Carnegie, "Results of the Labor Struggle," The Gospel of Wealth, 127-132.
and fringe benefits could be in determining the worker's attitude. He advocated a sliding scale of wages proportioned to the net prices received for the company's product, and, in joint stock companies, recommended that workers share in the enterprise by becoming stockholders. He condemned both strikes and lockouts as appeals to brute force, not justice, and urged that neither be resorted to until arbitration had been offered and refused. Should arbitration fail, he cautioned against the use of violence by labor, or strikebreakers by management. Like many Americans, he disliked the growing separation of workers and owners which resulted from corporate growth. In order to preserve some of the old feeling of mutuality, he advised employers to show good-will through new means, such as financing a workers' library or co-operative store.

Most of Carnegie's ideas about business changed little over the years. He did, however, markedly shift his stand on the controversial issue of corporate concentration. In 1889, he lightly dismissed the "bugaboo of trusts." In manufacturing, he explained, a trust arose from a situation of overproduction and falling prices. Unable to close down without ruin, manufacturers produced at a loss until necessity forced them to unite. Through new officers chosen for the combination, or trust, the entire product could then be distributed to the public at a profitable price. Carnegie saw no danger to the permanent interest of the country from these giant aggregations. As profits rose, new factories would spring up. The attempts of the trust to buy up these interlopers would only attract more capital. Eventually, overproduction would again destroy profits; no device could permanently thwart the law of supply and demand. "Keep the field open," Carnegie said, and trusts would inevitably collapse. He held similar beliefs in 1900.

57 Andrew Carnegie, "Popular Illusions About Trusts," *The Century Magazine*, LX (1900), 143-149.
By 1911, however, he had lost some of his faith in the workings of a free market. He still believed that concentration was required for the cheapest manufacture of common articles, but he now argued that combination must be accompanied by regulation. Otherwise, the small and great producers of an item, allied by common interests, would agree in charging consumers unreasonably high prices. Since producers couldn’t judge themselves, he recommended an "industrial court" to set maximum prices. How some of Carnegie's business friends must have shaken their heads at his statement that "the problem now is how to secure fair and reasonable prices to the consumer in spite of combination or monopoly."  

In addition to Anglo-American and purely business topics, Carnegie wrote on a variety of other subjects. He defended a protective tariff. He opposed the free coinage of silver, believing that the gold standard was essential to national stability and good faith. In foreign affairs, he fought hard against American imperialism and publicly attacked his friend President McKinley's Philippine policy. He gave freely of time, money, and writing ability to promote international arbitration and world peace. And, on a more personal level, he wrote occasional pieces on literary favorites like Burns, and was a graceful eulogist.

Finally, before concluding this brief account of Carnegie's literary career, one important question remains to be considered: Are his writings worth the time of anyone but the specialist? I believe they are. First, the writings best introduce the man. Carnegie was a personal writer who revealed himself even when discussing financial problems or the technicalities of steel production. He emerges from the sometimes dusty volumes as a figure of intelligence, vigor, humor and warm affection. And, being a leader in America’s first great age of industrial growth, he is a man worth knowing.

Secondly, Carnegie’s writings provide an excellent sample of one businessman’s opinion in the later nineteenth century on major


political and social issues. Free coinage of silver, the Populist movement, the tariff, railroad rates and rebates, trusts, the work of commissions like Interstate Commerce—on these and many other subjects Carnegie expressed definite views. Moreover, he was in tune with his society and reflected, on the whole, what well-informed, conservative people were thinking. As one minor example, note how perfectly he expressed the Genteel Tradition in taste when praising Robert Louis Stevenson: "Like Scott, he has never written a line which he could wish obliterated; he has dealt only with the pure, the ennobling, as the great masters do."  
Lastly, Carnegie's personality and thought, as revealed in his writings, offer an easily available antidote for the still potent stereotype of the "Robber Baron." Though it has become fashionable to praise the entrepreneurial contribution made by men like Rockefeller and James J. Hill, post-Civil War business leaders are still frequently portrayed as crude, materialistic Philistines, whose social contributions were wholly unintended by-products of ruthless exploitation. Since villains are easier to make interesting, someone like the rapacious Jay Gould is often chosen to represent business morality in this period. Although all businessmen were not as cultivated or thoughtful as Carnegie, his career raises the question of whether the ethics, social conscience, and taste of business leaders after the Civil War were much worse, or better, than in the 1830's or 1930's. In any event, to know Carnegie through his writings is to penetrate the anecdotes of clever popularizers to the human reality where complacency, pride, and self-interest mix with lofty aspirations and noble dreams.

"To do things is not one-half the battle . . . ," Carnegie once wrote. "To be able to tell the world what you have done, that is the greater accomplishment!"  The best pledge of Carnegie's continuing fame is that he was not only a brilliant industrialist, but also a talented writer.

California State College  
at Long Beach  

John E. Higgins

61 Carnegie, American Four-in-Hand, 82.