Tarbell

120 East 19 St., New York City

August 20, 1921

Dear Rutger:

I have read Wright's book, and I devoutly wish you had not asked me to do it. I suppose I am cowardly, but I so much dislike to say that I find a thing bad. I so much rather be heartil for the things that my friends are interested in and for anything that anybody into whose eyes I have ever looked has done or is trying to do. That is, I wanted to like this book - largely on your account, and then, too, because I have a great distaste for the sort of hue and cry after Wright in which so many of my craft have joined.

But, honestly, this book seems to me incredibly bad. I don't say that a lot of people will not read it - they will. A lot of people will find it justified by its preaching, which is g But a novel is not made out of preaching. A novel is men and wome working out their lives, under the conditions in which men and women do work out their lives. There is not a real man or woman in Wright's book. None of his situations are genuine. The ways things happen are artificial, falsified. No labor man that would touch the book but what would hoot at it. An honest employer would hoot at it. These are clay people. Things don't happen this way. The preaching is all right, but that is not what Wright is, a preacher.

Now, can you do good things with bad art? It is too big a question for me, but my feeling is that you can't. People who take this book seriously, if their sympathies are with the capitalists, are going to regard his agitator as typical; and he is not. The labor man who takes it seriously is going to regard Adam Ward as a typical owner; and he is not. Truly, men swindle others out of property, but how impossibly Adam Ward does this swindling! And the mob, and the way it is stopped. It is making the credulous believe that things are what they are not - that men in industry are what they are not.

I am putting this down badly perhaps, and certainly I don't like to do it.

And there is another thing, my dear Rutger, I am ashamed to have Appletons publish such a book. That Appletons that introduced Huxley and Darwin and Spencer to this country, and that has recently put out books like "The Age of Innocence" and Miss Lulu Bett's, should do this thing, just sticks in my throat. I don't like it.

Be merciful to me and don't show this letter to Wright. I hate to pain people. Perhaps I am so vain that I hate even more

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to have people dislike me, and I am sure he would if he knew I was writing this to you. I don t think I would have the courage to write it to you if I did not feel that you would know that it is not an unfriendly act, that it is the letter that I could not possibly write to anybody but a friend and that I wanted to keep as a friend.

Yours, in more or less distress,

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