

## EDWARD BOK: THE EDITOR AS ENTREPRENEUR

W. David Lewis  
*Auburn University*

### ABSTRACT

Edward Bok, a Dutch immigrant, manifested entrepreneurial talent long before he became editor of *The Ladies' Home Journal* in 1889 and built it into the world's first magazine with 1,000,000 subscribers. Like many opinion leaders in the Progressive Era, he preached Adam Smith's doctrine that pursuing self-interest is compatible with the common good. Like Theodore Roosevelt, whom he admired, he could take controversial positions without challenging the basic values of a business-oriented culture.

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries the American magazine industry achieved mass markets by publishing well-edited, well-written, well-illustrated periodicals at prices growing numbers of readers could afford. Rapid urbanization, progress in printing and papermaking technology, the spread of high-speed rail distribution, the advent of rural free delivery, and growing literacy contributed to dynamic growth. Between 1885 and 1905 the number of magazines in circulation almost doubled from about 3,300 to 6,000. The actual increase in start-ups, however, was even greater; 7,500 new periodicals appeared in the same period. Some failed and went out of business but others were absorbed in mergers. Circulation figures rose dramatically in the same two decades. In 1885, only four general periodicals had sales of 100,000 copies per issue, with total sales of about 600,000. By 1905, the number of such periodicals had quintupled to twenty, but total sales rose even faster, climbing to an estimated 5,500,000. The period also saw the rise of magazines catering to specialized audiences interested in subjects ranging from political and social issues to agriculture, banking, music, drama, religion, science, engineering, and sports.<sup>1</sup>

Magazines for female readers played an important role in the increasing flood of periodicals. *Good Housekeeping*, *House Beautiful*, *McCall's*, *Vogue*, and *Woman's Home Companion* all appeared in the late 19th century. Dominating the trade, however, was *The Ladies' Home Journal*, which had 850,000 subscribers by 1898 and reached a circulation of 1,000,000 in 1904—a figure never previously attained by any periodical, whether general or specialized.<sup>2</sup> The rise of the *Journal* was partly attributable to the remarkable business ability of its publisher, Cyrus H. K. Curtis, a self-made man with a genius for conceiving managerial strategies, devising sales tactics, and securing advertising revenue. But the driving force behind the magazine was its editor, Edward Bok, who masterminded the content of the world's first mass circulation periodical. Bok showed acute sensitivity to what women wanted to read at a time when the rise of an urban, industrial civilization was replacing an era of small enterprises and agricultural pursuits. The end of the Gilded Age, the entire course of the Progressive Era, and the beginning of the Lost

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Generation unfolded in the three decades during which Bok edited a magazine that became a barometer of social and cultural change.

Bok's editorial reign lasted thirty years because his fidelity to traditional moral and ethical standards reassured Americans living through a turbulent era. Like Theodore Roosevelt, whom he deeply admired, he was a conservative with a knack for taking controversial positions without challenging the dominant values of a business-oriented civilization. He championed virtue by attacking tawdry standards of conduct and preached refinement amid signs of cultural decay. He went about his mission partly because the materialism rampant in the period immediately after the Civil War repelled him and partly because he admired the idealism of an older generation that had fought a fratricidal conflict because of its unwillingness to compromise on basic principles. But personal motives also underlay his quest to combine entrepreneurship and virtue. He felt remorse about acts he had committed in his youth and had a family heritage of which he was not completely proud. For complex reasons he wanted to prove Adam Smith's doctrine that altruism was compatible with self-interest. This was a message readers wanted to hear as they looked back on the period of unbridled enterprise that Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner skewered in the novel that gave the Gilded Age its name.<sup>3</sup> In short, Bok's personal saga was a microcosm of America as a whole, a country whose citizens were taken aback by financial chicanery but wanted to behave better without losing the material benefits of economic growth.

Eduard Gerard Cesar Hidde Bok was born at Den Helder, The Netherlands, on 9 October 1863. His autobiography, *The Americanization of Edward Bok*, began with a romantic account of how his grandfather, Willem Bok, after being appointed to an administrative position by the Dutch government, had transformed a barren, pirate-infested wasteland off the coast of Holland into an idyllic "Island of Nightingales."<sup>4</sup> Edward's motive in creating this myth was to put a good face on his family history while helping his readers draw inspiration from a past that never really existed.

The island Bok described was Texel, a roadstead from which ships of the Dutch East India Company had sailed to the Far East in quest of spices and other trade goods. It was a hotbed of entrepreneurship, but it was neither barren nor a den of thieves before his grandfather arrived there. Under Dutch law, goods washed ashore from ships overtaken by storms must be reported to a *strandvonder* ("receiver of wreck") and seized by the government. The finder got a share of the proceeds, which, however, was so modest that it made sense not to report recovered goods and simply keep them. However bad such conduct may have been, it was hardly piracy, nor do records demonstrate that killings took place to protect the booty as Bok alleged.<sup>5</sup>

Nor was Willem Bok the dedicated public servant and paragon of virtue his grandson made him out to be. Born in 1800, he was descended from Hidde Bok, an admiral in the Dutch navy. The Bok family therefore had patrician status, but Willem never rose to the prominence of his great ancestor. He became a notary public in the village of Den Burg-*Texel* in 1827. The appointment was made by royal decree, but so were many posts in the Netherlands. Willem became *opperstrandvonder* (secretary) of *Texel's* mu-

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nicipal court, studied law at Leiden, and became an attorney. He then became *kantonrechter-plaatsvervanger* (deputy judge) for Texel, within the jurisdiction of a *kantongerecht* (magistrate's court) at Den Helder. In stormy weather, when boats could not reach Den Helder from Texel, Bok substituted for the judge, who lived on the mainland. When he died he was inspector of primary education for the islands of Texel, Vlieland, and Terschelling. He had a respectable but not outstanding career.<sup>6</sup>

He also had a questionable reputation. A diary kept by a clergyman who ministered to the church at Texel became the basis of an article by a local historian, "Een Zwart Schaap en een Zwarte Bok Gevonden" ("A Black Sheep and a Black Goat to be Found"). Because "bok" means "goat" in Dutch, "Zwarte Bok" is a pun. According to the diary, Willem plied captains of stranded ships with alcohol to secure false reports about the value of the goods they carried and insulted a new mayor, leading to his dismissal as municipal secretary. After stepping down he said of the mayor and four councilmen that "five unworthy fools, who could barely write their own name, had had the cheek to fire a man of... culture and learning seated far above them." As the diary indicated, such haughtiness did not endear Willem to those who knew him.<sup>7</sup>

Edward's father, who was also named Willem, was a notary public at Den Helder from 1858 to 1862 and held the same position at Nieuwediep, the site of a Dutch naval base, from 1862 to 1870. He married Edward's mother, Sieke Geertruida van Herwerden, in 1837. He was an important person; Edward recalled being at a reception for notables when he was a child, where he sat Otto von Bismarck's lap, amusing onlookers by knocking a wineglass out of his hand and spilling it on his shirt. Willem amassed a fortune estimated at 150,000 Dutch florins by engaging in speculations with Simon Reinhardt, the "Black Sheep" of the article mentioned above.<sup>8</sup>

Reinhardt and Willem Bok, however, lost heavily in their speculations. As a result Willem not only forfeited his wealth but also had to borrow 110,000 florins from a brother. After these funds slipped through Willem's fingers, he fled to London in 1870. A cartoonist at Den Helder drew a goat—another symbolic reference to the Bok family name—jumping across the English Channel with four barrels slung around its neck, each adorned with numbers representing the sums of money Willem and Reinhardt owed their creditors.<sup>9</sup> When Willem's circumstances did not improve in England he took his wife and children to America and rented a cheap third floor apartment in Brooklyn, New York. Edward was seven when these traumatic events occurred. In 1871 Willem's Dutch property was confiscated and his brother had to pay remaining obligations out of his own pocket. After failing in the insurance business, Willem became as a translator for the Western Union Telegraph Company, earning barely enough to support his family.

In *Twice Thirty*, an account of his life written for the benefit of his children, Edward described the poverty he had endured in Brooklyn and the guilt he felt about spending \$2.75 on a scarf instead of buying a barrel of apples as his mother had instructed. He learned from his misconduct "that the penalty of deception is the agony of an uneasy conscience." After trading the scarf for a sled he boasted so much about its speed that he got into a fight and put out an opponent's eye by hitting it with an oyster shell. A gang

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stole the sled. Bok recovered it by summoning a policeman, but one of his friends drowned using it to coast on thin ice. Wanting no more to do with the sled, Bok bartered it away and gambled part of the proceeds on a lottery ticket. After winning a share of a \$3,000 prize, he gave it to his Sunday-school class to buy a banner, only to have it torn apart in a windstorm.<sup>10</sup> Such things taught him that dishonesty did not pay.

A boyhood hobby and sage parental advice saved Edward from pursuing the path that led his father to ruin. During adolescence he became an autograph collector. Seeing Edward examining a signature he had received in the mail, Willem suggested that he ask famous people to give him advice along with their autographs and told him how to find likely prospects in *Appleton's Encyclopedia*. He also urged him to write thoughtful letters, include a self-addressed envelope and return postage, and be sure to send thank-you letters to persons who responded.<sup>11</sup>

Distinguished people whom Edward approached for autographs and advice went out of their way to be kind to him. He benefited from living in Brooklyn, which became a borough of New York City, where important persons crossed paths. Soon he was dining with ex-President and Mrs. Ulysses S. Grant, President and Mrs. Rutherford B. Hayes, President-to-be and Mrs. James A. Garfield, and ex-President and Mrs. Jefferson Davis of the former Confederate States of America. He visited a dying Mary Todd Lincoln at a convalescent home. He took a train to Concord, Massachusetts, stood in the presence of a terminally ill Ralph Waldo Emerson, had breakfast with Oliver Wendell Holmes, and discussed poetry with Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.<sup>12</sup>

Like many enterprising Americans of his day, Bok achieved success with only a meager formal education, characteristic of a culture that rewarded ambition without asking much about a young man's credentials as long as he showed ability. Bok had only elementary schooling. Training in stenography, aptitude for writing, a zest for entrepreneurship, and a winning personality were his passports to wealth in a society that admired a person who "got ahead." His adolescence reads like a Horatio Alger story. He became an orphan when his father died, leaving his wife, Sieke, in penury. Edward worked to support his mother by writing theater reviews for the Brooklyn *Eagle*. He got into trouble when he faked a story and lost his job, learning another lesson about the need to be honest. But he showed shrewd entrepreneurship by noticing the stylistic deficiencies of a theater program and starting his first publishing venture by producing a more attractive one that became a paying proposition.<sup>13</sup>

Bok became rich pursuing the American Dream. When he died in 1930 he left an estate worth more than \$16 million.<sup>14</sup> Money, however, was not his only goal. He rejected a career devoted solely to material acquisition when he left a position as secretary to his father's boss, Jay Gould, who taught him how to play the stock market and predicted a bright future for him in the financial world. Bok wanted something more intellectually and spiritually satisfying.<sup>15</sup>

Bok admired the eloquence of Henry Ward Beecher, Brooklyn's most famous Protestant minister, whose cavernous Plymouth Congregational Church was packed with thousands of worshipers on any given Sunday. Beecher had abandoned a Calvinist emphasis on sin for a theology of moral freedom and divine love. Bok may have known that

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Beecher had been involved in a sex scandal during the 1870s, but his magnetism was undeniable. Joining a debating society at Plymouth Church, Bok created *The Brooklyn Magazine*, a journal of opinion including copies of Beecher's sermons, to which he added his own essays. Seeking wider circulation, he pioneered in syndication by selling his articles for simultaneous publication in newspapers around the country. Capitalizing on the popularity of Ella Wheeler Wilcox, a temperance advocate known as the "Poetess of Passion" because of her sensuous but genteel verse, he hired her to write a "weekly letter on women's topics." His brainchild, Bok Syndicate Press, became highly profitable.<sup>16</sup>

Bok was so full of energy that he edited *The Brooklyn Magazine* and ran his syndicate in his spare time. After leaving Gould he became a clerk with Henry Holt, a publisher with a list of quality books and a strong ethical sense.<sup>17</sup> Holt printed American editions of works by leading European authors, giving Bok the idea of writing a literary column for New York newspapers. It too became part of his syndicated output. After two years with Holt he became a stenographer in 1884 with Charles Scribner's Sons, which launched a premier periodical and hired Edward L. Burlingame, son of a famous diplomat, to edit it. Burlingame became Bok's mentor. An alumnus of top-notch American and European universities who had great experience in newspaper and book publishing, he combined entrepreneurship with high literary and artistic standards.<sup>18</sup>

Burlingame's tutelage had a significant impact on Bok's career. Elegantly printed and superbly illustrated, and featuring a wide variety of well-written articles on a wide variety of subjects, *Scribner's Magazine* was designed for cultivated readers. Issues published during Bok's association with it contained essays about Matthew Arnold, Japanese Art, Greek Vases, and Grand Opera. For technically oriented readers it provided demanding articles on "The Electric Motor and its Applications," "Modern Explosives," and "An Astronomer's Summer Trip," dealing with an expedition through Europe to see a total eclipse of the sun in Russia. Much of Bok's work involved advertising, but he also honed his literary skills by interacting with authors like Robert Louis Stevenson, who came to America seeking treatment for tuberculosis at a sanitarium in the Adirondacks. *Scribner's* was eager to publish anything Stevenson cared to write, and Bok carried messages to the fallow, chain-smoking author as he wrote twelve essays for the magazine. Bok thus gained a background for later relationships with famous authors like Rudyard Kipling and William Dean Howells.<sup>19</sup>

Bok's work at Scribner's, and his syndicated material, were noted with interest by Cyrus H. K. Curtis, a rising publisher in Philadelphia.<sup>20</sup> Born in 1850 in Portland, Maine, Curtis became a newsboy. Like Bok, he had little formal education. Buying a hand press in 1865, he produced a four-page newspaper, *The Young America*, with stories and miscellany including pieces called "Enigmas" and "Conundrums." ("What is the difference between a cat and a catalogue?" asked a conundrum. "One has claws at the end of its paws, and the other has pauses at the end of its clauses.") After his boyhood home burned down in 1866, Curtis clerked for dry goods stores in Portland and Boston, became an advertising agent, and founded a journal, *The People's Ledger*. In Boston he married Louisa Knapp, secretary to Samuel Gridley Howe, a noted reformer. In 1876 Cyrus and Louisa had a daughter, Mary Louise, who later became Bok's wife.<sup>21</sup>

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Seeking lower costs, Curtis moved *The People's Ledger* to New York City and then to Philadelphia. The City of Brotherly Love was a publishing hotbed in which Curtis found it hard to compete. Selling his paper, he became advertising manager for the Philadelphia *Press* and promoted it by direct mail to rural areas, emphasizing its coverage of agricultural news. Dissatisfied to work for a publication that he did not own, he borrowed \$2,000 and started a four-page weekly, *The Tribune and Farmer*. Trying to attract female subscribers, he created a "Women and Home" department that his wife transformed into an eight-page magazine. First appearing in December 1883 as *The Ladies' Journal and Practical Housekeeper*, its masthead had an embellishment featuring the word "Home." Readers called it the "Ladies' Home Journal," and the name stuck.

Curtis achieved a circulation of 48,000 for *The Tribune and Farmer* within five years, but his wife outdid him by winning 25,000 subscribers for *The Ladies' Home Journal* in only one. Besides carrying serial stories, it contained articles on flowers, fashion, childcare, cooking, sewing, and embroidery. Heartened by its popularity, Curtis hired N. W. Ayer & Son, a Philadelphia advertising agency, to promote it. In another year its circulation zoomed to 200,000, leading Curtis to rent larger facilities and buy stories from popular writers including "Marion Harland" (Mary Virginia Hawes Terhune), a native of Virginia who told romantic tales about plantation life in the Old South. He went heavily in debt, spent lavishly on advertising, and had 488,000 subscribers by 1889, when his wife stepped down to spend more time with Mary Louise.<sup>22</sup>

Now that he had established the nation's first mass-circulation periodical, Curtis wanted to push sales even higher by developing a clientele among affluent persons, both male and female, in a rapidly urbanizing American society. *Scribner's Magazine* offered him a good model, and he already knew the identity of the person he wanted as his new editor. Going to New York City, he interviewed Bok and offered him the job. Bok accepted, but only after being satisfied with Curtis's intentions. "Because women were the leading purchasers of consumer goods by the 1890s," a scholar has noted, "it was clear that a magazine ostensibly edited for them would affect the whole family's purchasing power. Both Curtis and Bok...viewed the *Journal* as more than merely a women's magazine. They hoped it would appeal to every family member."<sup>23</sup>

Bok's view of a woman's place in society was heavily conditioned by a "Cult of True Womanhood" to which many females subscribed in the late 19th Century.<sup>24</sup> Its adherents were content "to live their lives comforting work-weary husbands, devoting themselves to molding young children into moral, upright citizens and fashioning homes that were at once a retreat from the outside world and a material as well as cultural inventory of refinement, social standing, intellect, and honor."<sup>25</sup> Under Bok's editorship *The Ladies' Home Journal* constantly stressed the female role of mother and homemaker. Eugene Field, a humorist who was one of Bok's best friends, enjoyed jesting about the magazine's constant references to toilet soaps and corset covers, lemon pie and angel food cake, cures for chapped lips, and instructions for "pulling out basting threads with forceps instead of with the fingers."<sup>26</sup> Bok's prescription for domestic bliss would have infuriated later advocates of women's liberation. Females, he said, wanted men who

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could be “strong as a lion when trouble comes,” but ready, if a wife was “nervous and tired,” to “button up a shoe and do it with an amount of consideration that is a mental and physical bracer-up.” Women desired mates who knew their “innocent weaknesses,” would “bring home a box of candy,” be “master of the situation,” and have “brains enough to help a woman to decide what is the best thing to do under any circumstances.” Such men would have “wit enough to realize when one of the fairer sex is slightly stubborn that persuasion is more powerful than all the argument in the world.”<sup>27</sup> Evidently this patronizing outlook was not offensive to readers of the *Journal*, judging from the magazine’s mounting circulation. After all, it was another era.

Bok opposed female suffrage on the grounds that women had too elevated a nature to participate in the hurly-burly of politics. This stance gained him the support of conservative feminists like Abby Hamlin Abbott, president of the New York Association Opposed to the Extension of Suffrage to Women.<sup>28</sup> He sanctioned only a limited sphere of female employment. He hired women to edit sections of the *Journal*, and welcomed them into nursing and pediatrics, for which their sensitive natures fitted them. He even condoned their working as secretaries and stenographers, but with concern that such jobs were full of dangers to which men who pursued them were not exposed. If a woman needed to earn money it was safer and more consistent with her nature to work at home. Bee keeping was ideal for a woman because of its consistency with feminine modesty, leaving the body unexposed. “Nearly all beekeepers wear veils, and all beginners should wear gloves of rubber,” an article in the *Journal* stated. “The dress is a divided skirt, but made so full that it is not noticed. Each part of the skirt is gathered at the bottom into a hem or band to button around the ankle below the top of the boot.”<sup>29</sup>

Creative writing, another domestic occupation, was also well suited for females. Nothing is more obvious from studying the *Journal* than the passion for literature that resounds throughout its pages. Innumerable articles dealt with authors, male and female, holding them up as role models.<sup>30</sup> Bok had already shown his love of letters in the avidity with which he had pursued autographs from eminent writers. The boy who stood in awe of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Oliver Wendell Holmes and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow became a man who reveled in the companionship of William Dean Howells, Rudyard Kipling, and James Whitcomb Riley. His esteem for Theodore Roosevelt resulted not merely from his political power but from his stature as a historian and essayist. Nothing excited Bok’s admiration like literary attainment. The zeal with which he pursued articles and stories by famous authors to publish in the *Journal* stemmed from something deeper than a mere desire to boost circulation. He believed in the power of eloquent speech and writing to maintain and raise the moral virtue of the nation. He was highly concerned about what he saw happening at a time when millions of Americans were moving from the country to the city, buying new homes, and making unaccustomed amounts of money without making equivalent progress in cultural awareness. It troubled him, as he said in an editorial, that women were reading “trashy novels.”

An early indication of the mission Bok assumed when he began editing the *Journal* was a series of autobiographical articles by William Dean Howells, America’s chief liter-

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ary proponent of uplift and rectitude. Bok regarded Howells as “the foremost man of letters in the United States.” There is no more reliable guide to the magazine’s mission than Howells’ fable, *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, recounting the cultural failings of a Vermont farmer who made a fortune from a copious supply of paint his father had found under an uprooted stump. Bok shared Howells’ belief, exemplified by Lapham and his culturally impoverished family, that cultivating literary appreciation was crucial among millions of Americans who were becoming upwardly mobile but not well read. At stake was the spiritual welfare of a nation Bok wanted to protect from philistinism.<sup>31</sup>

Howells became so repelled by industrial capitalism that he became a socialist by the time he published *A Hazard of New Fortunes* in 1890. Bok never strayed from his devotion to capitalism or he could not have thrived at the helm of a magazine that depended on advertising revenue and could flout prevailing sentiment only at the expense of losing circulation. Typifying Progressivism, Bok crusaded for an endless series of reforms aimed at creating a more virtuous and principled nation while leaving a capitalist order intact. He fought relentlessly against patent medicines, exposed the perils of venereal disease, advocated birth control, attacked the billboard industry, and promoted urban beautification. Like J. P. Morgan, he believed that untrammelled competition was inimical to good business. He shared in what historian Robert Wiebe has called a “search for order” in a country trying to escape cycles of boom and bust that had played havoc with fiscal responsibility and economic progress. He admired Theodore Roosevelt not only because of his literary attainments but also because of his “New Nationalism,” which distinguished between “good” and “bad” corporations.<sup>32</sup>

Curtis held the same principles as Bok, explaining why their partnership was harmonious and profitable. They cemented their relationship at a new level when, on October 22, 1896, Bok married Curtis’s only child, Mary Louise. The union resulted in two sons, one of whom was a favorite of Theodore Roosevelt and became a member of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court. Bok also got on well with Curtis, about whom he wrote an admiring biography, because he never forgot who was boss. Bok had a flair for advertising but deferred to Curtis’ wisdom on this subject. “The fact must never be forgotten,” Bok editorialized, “that no magazine published in the United States could give what it is giving to the reader each month if it were not for the revenue which the advertiser brings the magazine. It is the growth of advertising in this country which . . . has brought the American magazine to its present enviable position in points of literary, illustrative, and mechanical excellence. The American advertiser has made the superior American magazine of today possible.”<sup>33</sup>

Curtis had a high ethical sense about the quality of advertising that he would permit in the *Journal* and other magazines that he owned. In 1910 he set forth 21 principles that codified policies he had developed throughout his career:<sup>34</sup>

1. Exclusion of all advertising intended to defraud.
2. Exclusion of all extravagantly worded advertisements.
3. Exclusion of all knocking copy.<sup>35</sup>



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4. No medical or curative advertisements.<sup>36</sup>
5. No advertisements for alcoholic liquors.
6. No general mail order advertising.
7. Scrutiny of all installment advertisements.
8. No immoral or suggestive advertisements.
9. No cheap or vulgar advertisements.
10. No blind advertisements.<sup>37</sup>
11. No answers to advertisements to be sent to publisher.
12. No quotes from the editorial matter in Curtis magazines to be used in any advertising copy.
13. No advertisements for boys or girls to work as agents.
14. "Free" to be used only if an advertising offer is actually free.
15. Prize competition terms to be submitted in advance for inspection by the publisher.
16. No illustrations of stamps or coins.
17. No use of copyrighted material unless permission obtained in advance.
18. No speculative real estate advertisements.
19. No use of the name of The Curtis Publishing Company as a responsible reference.
20. No use of the names of Curtis publications as endorsements.
21. No insertion of foreign matter between the pages of any Curtis magazines.

Bok did not agree with everything Curtis did. In 1897 Curtis bought a failing magazine, the *Saturday Evening Post*, and created a male-oriented counterpart of *The Ladies' Home Journal*.<sup>38</sup> To edit the *Post*, Curtis chose George Horace Lorimer, whose background differed from Bok's but who had a similar outlook. Born in 1867 as the son of a Baptist minister, Lorimer went to Yale but dropped out to become a clerk for Chicago meat packer Philip D. Armour and advanced to become head of his canning department. After getting married in 1892 he left Armour to enter the wholesale grocery business, but failed. Enrolling in Colby College, he quit to become a newspaper reporter. In 1897, still only thirty years old, he read that Curtis had bought the *Saturday Evening Post* and was wanted an editor. Lorimer applied, was interviewed, and got the job at \$35 a week for a trial period as "literary editor." Curtis liked Lorimer's pro-business attitude and evangelical style of writing, which he had learned from hearing his father preach.

Curtis promoted Lorimer to editor-in-chief of the *Post* in 1899. His policies closely followed the ones already established by Bok. Just as Bok courted authors like Howells and Kipling, Lorimer bought action-packed stories by well-known writers including Ring Lardner, Jack London, and Booth Tarkington. Nevertheless, despite Lorimer's efforts, the *Post* did not do well and Curtis covered its losses by drawing on the large profits earned by the *Journal*. Bok naturally resented this policy, and ill feeling grew between the two men. In 1902, after incurring losses of \$1,350,000, all paid by the *Journal*, the *Post*

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finally took off and became a mass circulation magazine, reaching a circulation of 1,000,000 by 1908. By this time the *Journal* had a circulation of 1,250,000, and the two periodicals were printing almost 50,000,000 copies a year. Fifty mail cars were needed to take a single issue of the *Journal* to the Philadelphia post office, and the magazine spent \$180,000 annually for stamps.<sup>39</sup>

Buoyed by the success of his magazines, Curtis built a huge new building on Independence Square, covering an entire city block. He commissioned Bok to decorate it. After Edwin Abbey and Howard Pyle died inopportunistly, Bok hired Louis C. Tiffany and Maxfield Parrish, whose work fulfilled Curtis' hopes. Bok's reward was a large walnut-paneled office on the corner of the seventh floor with a massive fireplace, the only one in the building that worked, and other accoutrements that showed how far a poor young immigrant had come. "A Chinese court rug in buff and Peking blue covered the floor," wrote a historian of Curtis' publishing empire. "An entire wall was covered with a reproduction in oil of Rembrandt's Dutch Masters, a fitting picture for the little Dutch boy who had made good in the United States. Hair parted boyishly in the middle, white handkerchief protruding from his breast pocket, stickpin in the cravat tied with something of a flourish, Edward Bok worked at a graceful desk with delicately carved legs."<sup>40</sup>

Bok had reached the pinnacle of his career. It coincided with the climax of the Progressive Era, but frustrations had begun to lessen the satisfaction he took in his work. He was disillusioned by the way women responded to one of his crusades, an effort to spare the lives of baby egrets by having the federal government ban the importation of *aigrettes*, plumes used to adorn ladies' hats. He counted on the maternal instincts of his readers, only to find that they were more concerned about being stylishly dressed than about the slaughter of mother egrets, leaving their babies to starve. Bok was no misogynist, or else he could not have built the *Journal* into a mass circulation magazine. He had merely taken too idealistic a view of women. He took satisfaction in gaining male support resulting in laws aimed at stopping a cruel process he rightly abhorred.<sup>41</sup>

The growing success of the movement for female suffrage also distressed Bok. Even though he stopped overtly opposing the enfranchisement of women, his convictions remained unchanged and he was increasingly out of step with the times. He had planned to retire in 1913 when he became 50 years old, but the onset of World War I gave him reason to persevere. He was an ardent supporter of Herbert Hoover's efforts to feed and clothe the people of Belgium after German forces invaded and overran that country in 1914. After the United States became a belligerent in 1917 he devoted himself and the *Journal* unreservedly to the war effort. Because the magazine had always been intended to appeal to both women and men, there was nothing anomalous about distributing it among American troops on the Western Front. By September 1918 Bok was in France observing the war as the guest of British information minister and newspaper publisher Viscount Northcliffe. His tenure at the helm of the *Journal* ended soon after he came home. His name appeared for the last time as editor on the December 1919 issue, by which time the magazine had a circulation exceeding 2,000,000.<sup>42</sup>

It was an opportune time for Bok to step down. His convictions about public virtue and idealism were no longer in vogue. The Flapper Era had begun and a Lost Genera-

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tion had emerged, one whose members had “grown up to find all gods dead, all wars fought, all faith in man shaken,” as F. Scott Fitzgerald declared in *This Side of Paradise*. There was little cultural breathing room for Bok in an ambience in which women wore short skirts, danced the Charleston, smoked cigarettes publicly, and violated sexual mores that he and his peers held sacred. The brisk, staccato prose of Ernest Hemingway’s *A Farewell to Arms* came from a different world from the one to which Bok was accustomed, as did the fast-paced writing of journalists like H. L. Mencken, Damon Runyon, and Walter Winchell. *The Americanization of Edward Bok* is filled with the names of writers whom Bok admired and with whom he was proud to associate: Eugene Field, Hamilton Mabie, James Whitcomb Riley, and Henry van Dyke, among others. Virtually all of them passed quickly into oblivion with what Henry F. May called “The End of American Innocence.”<sup>43</sup> William Dean Howells, although an author of enduring stature, was correctly seen as a custodian of traditional values and faded into temporary obscurity after dying in 1920.<sup>44</sup> Robert Louis Stevenson’s stories and poems survived but were read chiefly by children and adolescents. Rudyard Kipling wrote steadily until he died in 1936 but became a symbol of imperialism and racism.<sup>45</sup> Even Theodore Dreiser, whose realism had been too advanced for many members of his generation, was ripped unmercifully by iconoclasts like Mencken, who lampooned his prose style and stated that he was “still in the transition stage between Christian Endeavour and civilization, between Warsaw, Indiana and the Socratic grove.”<sup>46</sup>

Bok remained a power in the Curtis building. “His tailored English jackets were much in evidence about Independence Square,” wrote a historian of the publishing company. “His voice was loud and clear at the head table in the executive dining room.”<sup>47</sup> *The Americanization of Edward Bok* won the Pulitzer Prize in 1921, adding luster to his image. He gave generously to cultural institutions including the Philadelphia Orchestra and sponsored a prize competition for essays on world peace. Like American businessmen before and since, he plunged deeply into philanthropy.<sup>48</sup>

Most of all, he dedicated himself to creating a permanent monument to his ideals. In 1914 Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., son of America’s foremost landscape architect, visited a desolate eminence, “Iron Mountain,” near Lake Wales, Florida, midway between the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico, and conceived the idea of “shaping a garden on its summit and slopes.” Eight years later, with Bok’s financial help, Olmsted laid out the Mountain Lake Sanctuary and Singing Tower, bringing massive amounts of water to the site and placing spigots at 100-foot intervals. “The planting was now begun,” Bok wrote, “and it was decided that it should be of large specimens: blueberries and gallberries shoulder high, and magnolia, gordonia, suriname cherries, and live-oak trees from ten to forty feet high.” After completion of this stage, “the experiment of transplanting flowering trees and shrubs was entered on, and thousands of dogwood, wild-plum, acacia, and current were transferred. A lower color effect was attempted by the planting of 8,000 azalea shrubs and groups of iris and lily . . . Two lakes were dug and added, and from their banks the impression is conveyed that they have always been there, whereas one is four years old and the other a little over a year. In these ponds teal-ducks, the

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colorful wood-ducks, and the only flamingoes in the United States live and add an interest to the water." The forty-mile view from the site, the highest point in Florida, presented a "wonderful panorama," and "mammoth pine trees were used and transformed into flanking sentinels for beautiful vistas." Azaleas abounded. "The unusual and superb song of the nightingale, imported from England, and nowhere else to be heard in the United States, is heard in the paths adjacent to the aviary."

Dominating the grounds was what Bok called "the most beautiful Carillon Tower in the world, with a carillon of bells second to none in the United States or Europe." Two hundred and five feet high, resting on 160 reinforced concrete piles, it was built in Gothic style and faced with Georgia pink marble and Florida coquina rock of the type the Spanish had once used to build fortifications at Saint Augustine. A sculptured band encircling the tower above the main doorway was decorated with figures representing the crane, heron, and flamingo. Higher up, the American eagle replaced the gargoyles in European Gothic buildings. Eight windows in the structure's octagonal top were of a "Gothic lace pattern worked in faience," behind which were the bells. "When you hear the carillon at the Sanctuary send out its glorious melodies from the Tower's heights," Bok wrote, "you lose the idea of the Tower as just a building, or of the bells as bells. Instead you feel the whole unit alive, a wonderful singing force, the noblest expression of democratic music, a true Singing Tower."<sup>49</sup>

Reading Bok's glowing words clarify what he was doing when he evoked an "Island of Nightingales" in the opening pages of *The Americanization of Edward Bok*. Instead of describing a nonexistent Dutch paradise his grandfather had supposedly created off the coast of Holland, he was forecasting the earthly wonderland he had brought into being with Olmsted's help. Whatever misgivings he had ever had about his family's past faded as his wonderful sanctuary took shape. He died on 9 January 1930 knowing that it would honor his name, fulfilling his motto, "Make you the world a bit better and more beautiful because you have lived in it."<sup>50</sup>

### Endnotes

1. Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines, 1885-1905* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957), 1-14 and passim.

2. Ibid, 359-363; Helen Damon-Moore, *Magazines for the Millions* (Albany: State University of New York, 1994); Kathleen L. Endres and Therese L. Lueck, eds., *Women's Periodicals in the United States: Consumer Magazines* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995), 712-180; Jennifer Scanlon, *Inarticulate Longings* (New York: Routledge, 1995),.

3. Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner, *The Gilded Age: A Tale of To-Day* (Hartford, CT: American Publishing Company, 1873).

4. Edward W. Bok, *The Americanization of Edward Bok: The Autobiography of a Dutch Boy Fifty Years After* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920), xvii-xxiii. I have edited an abridgment of this book, with Historical Introduction, Annotations, and Illustrations, privately published in R. R. Donnelley & Sons Company's American Classics Series (Chicago: Lakeside Press, 2000). I wish to thank Susan R. Levy, Director of Community Relations, for permitting me to publish a revised form of the Historical Introduction to that volume, which is not available for public sale. All citations in this article refer to the original 1920 edition.

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5. J. A. van der Vils, *'t Lant van Texsel: Een geschiedschrijving* (Den Burg-Texel, 1975). Information from this and other Dutch-language sources was supplied and translated by Hans van Felius, Head of the Search Room and Public Information Department, Rijksarchief in Noord-Holland, Haarlem, The Netherlands. I am grateful to Mr. Van Felius for his help and am indebted to Wybren Versteegen, a Dutch historian, for advising me to contact the Rijksarchief.
6. Centraal Bureau voor Genealogie, *Nederland's Patriciaat* ('s Gravenhage, 1978-1979), jrg. 64.
7. J. F. Daarnhouwer, "Een Schaap en een Zwarte Bok Gevonden," in *Jaarboek van het Centraal Bureau voor Genealogie* ('s Gravenhage, 1969): 228-237.
8. Edward W. Bok, *Twice Thirty: Some Short and Simple Annals of the Road* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925), 15-26, 31-34.
9. Hans van Felius (see note 5) kindly provided me a copy of the cartoon.
10. Bok, *Twice Thirty*, 57-81.
11. *Ibid.*, 85-87.
12. Bok, *Americanization*, 17-60.
13. *Ibid.*, 61-63.
14. James Playsted Wood, *The Curtis Magazines* (New York: Ronald Press, 1971), 121.
15. Bok, *Americanization*, 67-77. For a sympathetic view of Gould, denying that he was the arch-villain depicted in books written in the "Robber Baron" tradition, see Maury Klein, *The Life and Legend of Jay Gould* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986). In Klein's words (see p. xii), "Americans have never found a comfortable way to resolve the clash between private ambition and public interest." Bok typified the discomfort of which Klein speaks.
16. Bok, *Americanization*, 80-108.
17. Eileen K. Cheng, "Henry Holt," in Kenneth T. Jackson, ed., *The Encyclopedia of New York City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 140.
18. Marc H. Aronson, "Charles Scribner's Sons," in *ibid.*, 202.
19. Bok, *Americanization*, 108-115.
20. Curtis's middle names, Hermann Kotschmar, were given to him in honor of a musician to whom his father was devoted.
21. Wood, *Curtis Magazines*, 3-10; Edward W. Bok, *A Man from Maine* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925), 3-96.
22. Mott, *American Magazines*, 536-539.
23. Salme Harju Steinberg, *Reformer in the Marketplace: Edward W. Bok* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), 2. Other secondary sources about Bok's work in editing the magazine include David Shi, "Edward Bok & The Simple Life," *American Heritage*, XXXVI, 1 (December 1984): 100-109, and Helen Woodward, *The Lady Persuaders* (New York: Ivan Oblensky, Inc., 1960), 63-101.
24. Barbara Welter, *Dimity Convictions: The American Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1976), 21-41.
25. Ellen M. Plante, *Women at Home in Victorian America: A Social History* (New York: Facts On File, Inc., 1997), xi.
26. Mott, *American Magazines*, 541.
27. Bok, "Just between Ourselves," *Ladies' Home Journal* [hereafter cited *LHJ*], VIII, 5 (April 1890): 8.
28. Abbott was the wife of Lyman Abbott, a prominent clergyman who was a close friend of both Bok and Henry Ward Beecher. Ira V. Brown, *Lyman Abbott: Christian Evolutionist* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), 208. On opposition at this time to suffrage among large numbers of American women, see Carl N. Degler, *At Odds: Women and Family in America from the Revolution to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 349-355.
29. Bok, *Americanization*, 169-180; "Bee-Keeping for Women," *LHJ*, IX, 5 (April 1891): 4.
30. Marguerite Merington, "Margaret Deland," *LHJ*, IX (October 1892): 7, H. H. Boyesen, "Mr. Howells at Close Range," X, 12 (November 1893): 7, "Four Famous Young Authors," XI, 9 (August 1894): 5, and Emma B. Kaufman, "The Personality of a Charming Writer" [Kate Douglas Wiggin], XII, 5 (April 1895): 5 are examples.

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31. Bok, *Americanization*, 66, 191, 202, 212-213; Bok, "The Book in a Woman's Hand" and "Are Women Reading Our Trashy Novels," *LHJ*, VII, 6 (May 1890): 8, and "What are Women Doing?" in *ibid.*, VII, 7 (June 1890): 8; William D. Howells, *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (Boston: Ticknor and Company, 1885).
32. Bok, *Americanization*, 230-258, 340-364; Howells, *A Hazard of New Fortunes* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1890); Robert Wiebe, *Businessmen and Reform: A Study of the Progressive Movement* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962).
33. Quoted in Wood, *Curtis Magazines*, 27.
34. These principles are taken *verbatim* from *ibid.*, 65-66.
35. Advertising intended to reflect adversely on competitors.
36. Consistent with Bok's outspoken attacks against the patent medicine industry.
37. Advertisements that fail to reveal an advertiser's identity.
38. Wood, *Curtis Magazines*, 37.
39. *Ibid.*, 28, 50.
40. *Ibid.*, 57.
41. Bok, *Americanization*, 327-339.
42. *Ibid.*, 417-423.
43. Henry F. May, *The End of American Innocence: A Study of the First Years of Our Own Time, 1912-1917* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959).
44. Alfred Kazin, *On Native Grounds: An Interpretation of Modern American Prose Literature* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor ed., 1956), 1-17 and *passim*.
45. On Kipling's literary decline, see Angus Wilson, *The Strange Ride of Rudyard Kipling* (New York: Viking Press, 1977), 296-343. Kipling, however, was casting his lance far into the future. In the year he died, 1936, he gained a young admirer, Margaret Roberts, whose last name would change to Thatcher. Margaret Thatcher, *The Path to Power* (New York: HarperCollins, 1995), 17.
46. H. L. Mencken, "Theodore Dreiser," in Alistair Cooke, comp., *The Vintage Mencken* (New York: Random House Vintage ed., 1990), 35-56. On other writers mentioned here see particularly Jimmy Breslin, *Damon Runyon* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1991) and Neal Gabler, *Walter Winchell: Gossip, Power and the Culture of Celebrity* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994).
47. Wood, *Curtis Magazines*, 84.
48. On business and philanthropy, see Robert H. Bremner, *American Philanthropy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960).
49. Edward W. Bok, *America's Taj Mahal: The Singing Tower of Florida* (Lake Wales, FL: Bok Tower Gardens Foundation, 1989), *passim*.
50. *Ibid.*, motto page.