

Sunshine and Shadow in New York (1868)

In this excerpt from Matthew Smith's best-selling book, *Sunshine and Shadow in New York*, the author described the inherent goodness of the wealthy citizens of New York and the inherent distastefulness of the city's poor citizens. As you read this account, consider what demographic and economic changes in cities like New York might have contributed to Smith's distaste for the poor majority. What attitudes about universal suffrage and democracy might follow from his view of the new immigrant majority?

WHOEVER writes of New York truly, will do so in lines of light and gloom. Though this city is not so large as London, life is here more intense; crime is more vivid and daring; the votaries of fashion and pleasure are more passionate and open. The joy and good in New York abound over sorrow and evil. The religious people are decidedly religious. The liberal are decidedly liberal. Nor are donations confined to the city or state. The beneficence of New York touches both oceans, and makes glad the heart of man in all parts of the world. The calls on the wealthy are ceaseless. Yet the liberal never tire, and their gifts are in many instances graded by their own success. Immense donations are annually made, running up from ten thousand dollars to half a million. To agree to give ten thousand dollars a year for ten years is no uncommon arrangement. To found a college, endow a professorship, to donate a library, to build a church and complete it in all its appointments in localities far away, to build a church in memoriam, costing three hundred thousand dollars, to give half a million for an educational institution, is the pastime of our wealthy citizens.

In no other city is mission work, Sunday-school labor, the visiting of prisons, hospitals, penitentiaries, performed by the wealthy as it is in New York. Merchant princes, millionaires, lawyers of national repute, doctors of continental fame, editors and conductors of our most celebrated papers, successful book men, and wealthy mechanics, who are religious, are found in our Sunday schools. There are more religious men of this class than can be found in any other city. The great merchant who rivals Stewart in the retail business, who stands second to him in the wholesale, and who employs nearly five hundred men in his massive business, can be seen on Sunday in the infant department of the Sunday school, with a child or two in his lap, singing about the "Sweet story of old, When Jesus was here among men."

A worse population than can be found in New York does not inhabit the globe. The base men of every nation, and the crimes, customs, and idolatries of every quarter of the world, are here. Portions of the city are abandoned to the lowest order of the Jews. The Italians herd together near Five Points, in a locality not safe to enter at night, unless guarded by the police. They are dangerous, turbulent, stealthy, and defiant. Their very tread is suggestive of the stiletto. There is no locality viler, more repulsive, or more wicked than that occupied by the low French. The Chinese herd together, without the decency of cattle. They smoke their opium, burn incense, and worship idols, as in the cities of the "Celestial Empire." The organ-grinders have their locality. The organs are usually owned by persons who have capital. The man, woman, child, and monkey that attend the organ are hired by the day. They herd at night in a vile locality. Men and women, black and white, drunk and sober, sleep in a common room, in bunks upon the unwholesome

floor. Men and women who gather ashes and garbage have a common rendezvous, where the howling of the dogs and the fighting of the women and men make night hideous. Horses, donkeys, cattle, goats, and pigs are kept in the cellar with geese and chickens, or quite frequently in a small back yard, the animals being driven through the front entry to their reeking stables. A portion of New York is Paradise: a large part is Pandemonium.