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In the last fifty years a vast change has taken place in the lives of our people. A revolution has in fact taken place. The coming of industrialism, attended by all the roar and rattle of affairs — the shrill cries of millions of new voices that have come among us from overseas, the going and coming of trains, the growth of cities, the building of the inter-urban car lines that weave in and out of towns and past farm-houses, and now in these later days the coming of the automobiles — has worked a tremendous change in the lives and in the habit of thought of our people of Mid-America. Books, badly imagined and written in the hurry of our times, are in every household, magazines circulate by the millions of copies, newspapers are everywhere. In our day a farmer standing by the stove in the store of his village has his mind filled to overflowing with the words of other men. The newspapers and magazines have pumped him full. Much of the old brutal ignorance that had in it also a kind of beautiful childlike innocence is gone forever. The farmer by the stove is brother to the men of the cities, and if you listen you will find him talking as glibly and as senselessly as the best city man of us all.

...In the years after the Civil War it was not so. Men laboured too hard and were too tired to read. In them was no desire for words printed upon paper...

Sherwood Anderson