An Engaging Guest at the Not-So-Great Barbecue

JACOB, KATHRYN ALLAMONG. *King of the Lobby: The Life and Times of Sam Ward, Man-About-Washington in the Gilded Age*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010. *x* + 228 pp. $40.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8018-9397-1.
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Although Sam Ward may not be a household name, even in the homes of most historians, he was "one of the most delightful guests at the Great Barbecue" in Gilded Age Washington (6). In a well-written and widely researched biography, Kathryn Allamong Jacob does a very good job of recounting Ward's life. She never claims too much for her subject's importance but explains why he deserves attention. Certainly Ward lived a fascinating life. Born to a prominent New York City family, Ward knew an amazing array of people. Julia Ward Howe was his sister, his first wife was an Astor, and Henry Wordsworth Longfellow a life-long friend. Ward traveled with British journalist William Howard Russell and later guided Oscar Wilde's public introduction in America. Ward tried his hand at poetry and scholarship, pursued various adventures in Latin America, and lost at least three fortunes. He also had a very difficult personal life. His first wife died young; the second left him to live in Europe, reportedly with a lover. He was estranged from his children by both marriages. Nevertheless, Ward remained an optimist. Jacob succinctly summarizes his "basic nature": Ward had a generous spirit and "romantic nature," a "desire for wealth and . . . [an] unwillingness to work hard to get it," a "dangerous combination of financial ineptitude and eagerness to take risks," and most important, a "need for approval and to be loved" (40).

Ward wanted to be a scholar and after college lived in Europe and earned a doctorate. After his father died, the younger Ward had to run the family banking business. Not long thereafter, it failed, and Ward lost his first fortune. He left ahead of his creditors, traveled around Latin America, and then settled in California. There he built a very successful business, but a fire destroyed it and his second fortune. He returned to New York, briefly, and then went to work for the State Department. During a mission in Paraguay, he secretly agreed to lobby for its president and did so when he returned to Washington in 1859, even as he continued to represent the United States in negotiations with that Latin American country—an arrangement of questionable ethics and dubious

patriotism. In addition to Paraguay's president, Ward's small clientele included New York financier Samuel L. M. Barlow, who remained a client and close friend throughout Ward's career.

As the Civil War approached, Ward, a Democrat with ties to the South, undertook a new mission. In the first months after Appomattox, he secretly toured the new Confederacy and reported what he learned to Secretary of State William H. Seward. It is difficult to judge whether his reports had any influence on events, but it is perhaps telling that Seward never offered Ward the diplomatic posts that he sought. Ward went back to New York and then to Panama to negotiate isthmian transit rights before returning to New York, where he soon lost the money he had made.

In 1865 Ward returned to Washington to regain his wealth. He promoted the bill to retire Civil War Greenbacks and intervened to help prevent the conviction of Andrew Johnson during his impeachment trial. Like his efforts before the Civil War, exactly how much of a role he played is difficult to judge. For most of his time in Washington, however, Ward served as a lobbyist for private interests, becoming in the judgment of contemporary journalists, the "King of the Lobby," the Capital's most influential lobbyist (91). His clients included "insurance companies, telegraph companies, steamship lines, railroads, banking interests, mining interests, manufacturers, investors, and business and individual claims of all sorts" (83–84). Ward's papers and other sources render it impossible for Jacob to describe his work in detail, but she confidently asserts that he never took or offered a bribe. Instead, he plied his trade by giving small gifts, visiting offices, trading information, and in general cultivating "contacts and potential allies who might be useful in the future" (164). He did so primarily through "dinners and diplomacy" (75). He was renowned for hosting lavish meals, many served in his home, where he brought together people of influence. He "did not invent the social lobby," Jacob maintains, but he "perfected it" (164). That, she argues, is his primary historical importance; he was as an early exemplar of a style of lobbying that remains crucial today.

Ward stayed in Washington until 1879, when a friend in California whom he had once aided became wealthy and gave King his third, and final, fortune. This one he lost through many generous gifts to friends and family, but mainly because of poor investments. With creditors after him once again, Ward fled to Europe, where he died.

King of the Lobby offers not only an engaging portrait of an important lobbyist, but also provides a helpful introduction to lobbying in the Gilded Age.

Jacob names the most influential lobbyists and offers a rough typology: "the industrialists/financier merchant, the premium lobbyist, the middling lobbyist, the two-bit claims agent" (107). She notes two additional types who became influential only after the Civil War, women and reporters. She also makes a cautious defense of the lobby. In the years after the Civil War, she argues, the lobby had some corrupt members but "its emerging new style was more subtle, more focused on providing information than bribes, and more social" (5). It served an important function by helping the people influence what had become a far more powerful federal government. Its own reputation resulted from its being a handy "scapegoat" in explaining government corruption (130). In both her account of Ward's life and the history of lobbying, Jacob's observations are judicious, although some readers may think that, like Ward, Jacob has a generous spirit. Anyone interested in Washington and Congress during the years of the Civil War and Reconstruction or the history of lobbying will benefit from, and enjoy, *King of the Lobby*.

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The Politics and Desires of Wage-Earning Women

VAPNEK, LARA. *Breadwinners: Working Women and Economic Independence, 1865–1920*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009. x + 216 pp. $70.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-252-03471-8; $25.00 (paper), ISBN 978-0-525-07661-9.
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Labor leader and suffragist Leonora O'Reilly never fully embraced the reform politics of either elite women or working-class men in her long and vibrant career as a public intellectual and activist. Neither did many of the other wage-earning women's rights advocates brought to life by Lara Vapnek in her remarkable new study of workingwomen's political thought and practice between 1865 and 1920.

Breadwinners: Working Women and Economic Independence, 1865–1920 is impressive on many levels. Vapnek's prose is lively and her narrative well-paced. Her archival sleuthing is also comprehensive and imaginative.