

Andrew Carnegie: Little Boss - James Mackay

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Andrew Carnegie (1835-1922) was a mass of contradictions: a radical Chartist who became a rabid capitalist, an idealist who was also a profound cynic, a committed pacifist who also played a crucial role in the opening part of the American Civil War, and a ladies' man who had to wait until his fifties (after his domineering mother died) before forming a meaningful relationship with a woman. From bobbin boy in a Pittsburgh factory he progressed to messenger boy, telegraphist and railway superintendent. His meteoric rise owed much to his boss, Thomas Scott, who also cut the young Carnegie in on his first lucrative share deal. The youth who earned thirty-five dollars a month was on the road to his first million within a year or two, and he never looked back. Speculation in rolling-stock and railways, the nascent oil industry, iron and, above all, steel made Carnegie the richest man in the world. Along the way he created fortunes for many others, but trampled on friend and foe alike in his relentless pursuit of money. Then, the man who amassed the largest fortune in the world proceeded to give most of it away. From free libraries to world peace, the Carnegie millions were pumped into a host of worthy causes. The Peace Palace at the Hague is the lasting legacy of this global philanthropy; but Carnegie's faith in the Kaiser to achieve world peace was shattered by the outbreak of the First World War, and it was a setback from which he never recovered. This candid and penetrating biography follows Carnegie from his humble birthplace in Dunfermline to the squalor of Allegheny City and Pittsburgh in the 1840s, and charts his dramatic rise to fame and fortune. Set against the contrasting backdrops of radical Scotland and America during the most turbulent phase of its development, Little Boss is the definitive story of one of the world's greatest captains of industry.

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