REVIEWS OF BOOKS


Ranking as one of the leading textbooks for college students of American history after the Civil War, this volume should be highly interesting and valuable to many others who wish to understand the recent development of the United States. Of particular interest to the people of the Pittsburgh district and, in a general way, to the inhabitants of the Appalachian Plateau, are the references to events occurring in this area associated with the rise of big business and organized labor. While the treatment of such topics as the railroad strike of 1877, the formation of the Standard Oil trust, and the establishment of the American Federation of Labor, is of necessity brief, it serves to connect regional with national history.

The narrative begins with the attempts to restore the former Confederate states to their national relationships and summarizes briefly the reconstruction period. Skillfully the author weaves into the fabric not only the story of national politics, but also the rise of the large corporation, the labor union, and the insurgent farmer. The War with Spain, increasing entanglement in world affairs, and the Progressive movement are discussed before attention is directed to the World War and recent developments since the treaty of peace. The account includes the election of 1928, and the last two chapters on international relations and "The Machine Age" describe contemporary forces in both foreign and domestic affairs.

A marked feature of the book is the nicely balanced synthesis of the various events and movements into a systematic and chronological whole. While the table of contents does not indicate it, the inclusion of social phases is by no means neglected. Professor Shippee writes in a clear, simple style and only occasionally does he fail to eliminate a poorly constructed sentence. He
maintains an unbiased attitude from beginning to end. Errors of fact are few, unimportant, and easily detected. It is a valuable and useful piece of work.

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This volume represents a commendable effort to treat American economic history in terms of world economic development. The point of view permits the author to make a logical and well-balanced division of his material into five sections: America as part of the old-world system from 1492 to 1819; America's modification of the agricultural age from 1819 to 1860; the origins of big business between 1860 and 1890; commercial expansion and the supertrust from 1900 to 1914; and world power since the outbreak of the great European War. And his treatment is abundantly factual, perhaps too much so, for this reader often found himself mired down in bogs of erudition. On the other hand, as a textbook the work offers to the student a quantity of facts which, although only mastered in part, are sufficient to provide him with a grasp of the development of American agriculture, commerce, industry, labor, and finance. In so far as the work is a history of the various phases of American economic life, it is thorough, scholarly, and adequate.

But the author's point of view involves implications of which he is not aware. To treat American economic history in terms of world economic development necessitates keeping always in mind the processes and tendencies of the latter, and this the author fails to do. This failure is particularly noticeable in the first section. Of course, it is true that European economic life was fundamentally agrarian until the late eighteenth century, but those factors which were important in determining the economic tendencies set up in the United States were more closely related to commerce and nascent capitalism than to agriculture. The author could have greatly enhanced the value of his discussion