
The series to which this volume belongs is an attempt to portray the changing life of the American people from 1492 to 1928. It is essentially description rather than narration, it deals with conditions rather than events, and the political aspects of American life are subordinated to the social and economic. This volume, moreover, is only one-half of a chronological segment of the general subject, for the series is to contain another volume, numbered to precede this one, on the economic aspects of the same period, by Ida M. Tarbell. Despite its title, Professor Schlesinger's volume is not a treatise on the rise of the city during the period, for many matters having no special bearing on that topic are dealt with, and the fundamental causes of that movement, being economic, receive little consideration. It is rather a social history of the period, though as such it overemphasizes somewhat the rôle of the city. The urbanization of the nation, however, is probably the best feature of the period that could be selected for a central theme; and, without some such unifying theme, the book, as is too often the case with social histories (in the narrow sense), would have been a series of unrelated essays.

The organization of the book is partly geographical, partly chronological, and partly topical. The first two chapters are excellent portrayals of social conditions and changes in the "New South" and the "Great West," in the period from 1878 to 1890. The theme of the book is then introduced with two chapters on "The Lure of the City" and "The Urban World," after which the bulk of the space is devoted to topical chapters on women, education, research, literature and art, amusements, religion, social problems, and political conditions. The final chapter of the text, entitled "Fin de siècle," is a general survey of conditions throughout the country in the nineties. The author has evidently done extensive research, often with unusual materials; and he has utilized the results of research by others in sociology as well as in history. His approach is objective and scholarly, his interpretations are sound, and he has made a valuable contribution to our knowledge of the period. He has a good literary style and the book makes interesting reading, provided the reader
knows enough of the orthodox history of the period to understand the allusions. The "Critical Essay on Authorities" at the end will be very useful to scholars and to others who may desire to pursue any of the topics further. The illustrations, mostly from magazines of the period, are pertinent and interesting, and the map "corrected" to show the states and cities in proportion to population is illuminating.

Although Pittsburgh was one of the rapidly rising cities of the period, the reader will find only incidental allusions to it in the book. The reason doubtless is that the unusual characteristics of Pittsburgh were economic rather than social, and it may be expected to play a larger rôle in the companion volume. For an understanding of general conditions and trends that Pittsburgh and western Pennsylvania shared with the rest of the country, the student of the region's history will find the book of great value.


With true objectivity and in a sane and refreshing manner the author discusses in this book many of the problems growing out of America's numerous racial minorities. He is intelligently sympathetic without being maudlin; he is gracious without a hint of condescension. The real contribution that he makes to a better understanding of the Negro and the minority race-types in our midst, comes from the fact that he recognizes the controlling force and value of economic factors in explaining the attitudes and tendencies and reactions of peoples. At the outset he emphasizes the controlling power of the economic determinant in migrations, and he holds, rightly, I think, that social accidents are more potent than biological factors in accounting for the alleged superiority of one race or group over another. With grim humor at times, he points out that all of us inevitably invest our ancestors with inbred superior qualities because we are their descendants. All of us in America are children of immigrants. Which shipload came over first seems to us important, depending upon which ship carried our forbears. It is natural for all of us to claim that our stock must be the best.

Lord Bryce at one time had a plausible biological explanation for the pres-