

History of the Great American Fortunes. By GUSTAVUS MYERS. Volume I., Part I. *Conditions in Settlement and Colonial Times*; Part II. *The Great Land Fortunes.* Volume II. *Great Fortunes from Railroads.* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr and Company. 1910. Pp. 296; 368.)

THESE volumes, by the author of a valuable history of Tammany Hall and of other works bearing on the municipal history of New York, though nominally a history of the great fortunes amassed in the United States in the nineteenth century, are in reality a socialistic tract, the title of which would better read "The Crimes of the Rich"; it is a vast tirade against rich men, uniformly expressed in excellent literary style and generally interesting, but at the same time gossipy, abusive, one-sided, and discursive, and for purposes of sound scholarship the whole might easily be compressed into one-third its present bulk. The author's actual contributions to historical knowledge, however, despite his prejudices, are considerable. On the subject of the accumulation of wealth, he has produced what promises to be, when completed, a more or less useful study of a century's development. Beginning in volume I. with a brief consideration of the large colonial estates in Virginia, New York, and New England, and especially of the corrupt land grants of Governor Fletcher of New York, he passes to the rise of the trading class and then to the shipping industry. Of the great captains in this latter class, Stephen Girard is taken as a type. By luck, by "roughshod" methods, by "bribery and intimidation", this "solitary Croesus" became the "Dictator of Finance" in the early years of the republic. The story is told in detail. But with even greater minuteness the author relates the inception of the Astor fortune and of the great city estates in general. This is the best part of the volume. By virtue of a monopoly of the fur-trade in the Middle West, the American Fur Company, through debauching the Indians and outrageous violations of the law, brought Astor enormous profits. He entered the shipping trade; by corruption, he gained from city officials valuable water-front rights in New York; he entered banking and in the panic of 1837 continued prosperous by buying up and foreclosing the mortgages of the helpless masses. Law was now the most valuable asset of the capitalist class; "with the millions made by a career of crime the original Astors buy land; they get more land by fraud; the law throws its shield about the property so obtained." In the same spirit, though with less detail, the Goelet, Rhineland, Schermerhorn, Longworth, and Field fortunes are examined.

Volume II., which on the whole is decidedly inferior to the preceding volume, is devoted to the great railroad fortunes, notably those of the Vanderbilt and Gould families. There is, at the outset, a review of the sale of public lands in the United States, which cannot be rated anything but a hodgepodge of all the corruption and scandal on the subject that the author could find; the reader, who would appreciate a

well-considered survey of the nation's land laws or at least a reference to their beneficent results, finds only the superficial, rambling, and unconvincing work of the muck-raker, set forth in the language of a socialist. The history of Cornelius Vanderbilt is then approached with the text, "ninety millions in fifteen years"; the achievement of this man is reckoned the amazing feature of his generation. But "far below him, in point of possessions, stretched the 50,000,000 individuals who made up the nation's population. Nearly 10,000,000 were wage laborers, and of the 10,000,000 fully 500,000 were child laborers. . . . How immeasurably puny they all seemed beside Vanderbilt." The growth of the Vanderbilt transportation system is gradually unfolded, every exciting crisis in the story portrayed, the shrewdness, the brutality, the rascality, and the criminal success of the strong man at the head—three pages of rant to one of history. The various railroad consolidations engineered by Vanderbilt are described with no appreciation of the economic advantages thereby secured and with no estimate of the contemporary consolidation movement in general. The army contract frauds are treated with some detail.

The chapters on Jay Gould include the looting of the Erie, the famous gold conspiracy of 1869, and the Credit Mobilier frauds on the Union Pacific Railroad; meagre references are here made to the conditions in the labor world in the seventies and early eighties.

To the serious student of American history the most valuable part of the two volumes is the notes, which contain references to many official documents. The text, although containing much information, is so interlarded with rant as to be disappointing. A volume, the tenor of which is to create social unrest by inculcating hatred of the rich, though readable on every page, cannot rank high as serious history.

EMERSON DAVID FITE.

A History of Norwegian Immigration to the United States, from the Earliest Beginning down to the Year 1848. By GEORGE T. FLOM, Ph.D., Professor of Scandinavian Languages and Literatures and Acting Professor of English Philology, State University of Iowa. (Iowa City, Iowa: 1909. Pp. 407.)

IN the significant number of new books dealing in serious and scholarly fashion with different foreign elements in American life, this volume by Professor Flom will fill an honorable place. Its aim is to present the progress of immigration from Norway to this country during the first period of Norwegian settlement which ended about 1848. Six of the forty-two chapters of the book are based upon the author's excellent articles on the Scandinavians published in the *Iowa Journal of History and Politics* in 1905, but it cannot be said that the book even with its evidence of prolonged, sympathetic, patient research is six times as valuable as the articles. The author's father and grandfather were among the immigrants to Wisconsin in 1844, and his filial