

Climate of the Few

"Minorities and the American Promise," by Stewart G. Cole and Mildred Wiese Cole (Harper, 319 pp. \$4.50), considers the problems of American minorities in the perspective of democratic philosophy, contrasting the reality with the promise. Edward N. Saveth, who reviews it here, is editor of the recently published anthology, "Understanding the American Past."

By Edward N. Saveth

OF THE making of books about American minority peoples there has been, in recent years at least, almost no end. This is in marked contrast to the situation before the early 1930s, when the American peoples were rather neglected in our literature. The rise to power of the race-conscious Hitler regime in 1933 and the simultaneous growth of American social consciousness in the Depression decade shocked us into awareness of the potential for divisiveness inherent in our population heterogeneity. Accompanying the shocks of recognition of the problem was the tendency to make extreme analyses and arrive at extreme conclusions. The late Louis Adamic, for example, was inclined to write of the American people as if their plight was not unlike that of the nationalities that made up the pre-World-War-I Austro-Hungarian Empire. An avowed partisan of peoples of non-English ancestry in the American population, Adamic's blatant minority jingoism and filiopietism were as bad as the Anglo-Saxon chauvinism against which he directed his journalistic efforts.

By the 1940s the American peoples were receiving more mature consideration. With the war against Nazism stimulating scholarly interest in American race problems, historians, sociologists, anthropologists, and psychologists laid down a literary barrage that withered ancient preconceptions and provided guides for action in the newly-developed field of human relations. Aided not a little by the burgeoning profession of the community-relations expert, these efforts helped alter the climate of American opinion about our minority peoples and are responsible largely for the great social gains these groups have scored in the last decade.

Stewart Cole, first executive director of the Bureau of Intercultural Education, and since 1949 education director of the Pacific Division of the National Conference of Chris-

tians and Jews, has made a major contribution on the educational level to making democracy work for all of the people. In this book Mr. Cole and Mildred W. Cole have presented the problems of American minorities in the perspective of democratic philosophy, contrasting the reality with the promise of the American creed. Summarizing a great deal of information about the American peoples and the forces making for cohesion as well as disruption in American life, the authors present an effective

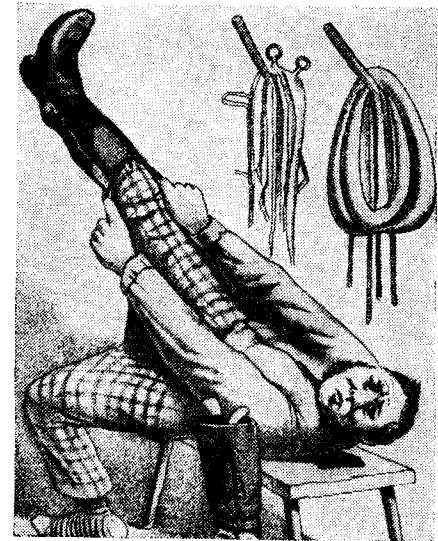
synthesis of material that the specialist will find available elsewhere in more detail. They have attempted to ground their presentation in sociological theory—an effort that sometimes falls short of success because of an excess of definition, an occasional lack of illustration, and some needlessly involved diagrams of sociological concepts. In addition, the book is almost entirely phenomenological in its approach, placing little or no emphasis upon the historic evolution
(Continued on page 27)



The general store stood in every village and at every crossroad.



At first skeptical, the farmer soon found the telephone a boon.



Anyone could see he could not manage without Vacuum Harness Oil.



As today, any colt was the darling of the farm.

BARNYARD NOSTALGIA: The solid citizens shown in pictures above were all farmers who lived around the turn of the last century. Now they all have new life in a big picture book that is just about as nostalgic as the general store and the wall telephone. The name of the book is **"Down on the Farm"** and it was compiled by Milton Rugoff with a running commentary by Stewart H. Holbrook (Crown Publishers, \$5). The commentary at times hardly seems necessary: of the gentleman tugging at his boots Mr. Holbrook writes that the ad-man's humor was broad; of the lady and the colt he writes that a colt could win anybody's heart. In all Mr. Rugoff and Mr. Holbrook have managed to include and comment upon some 187 oversize pages of broad-backed barns, burlapped horses, covered bridges, little red schoolhouses (red paint lasted longer than white), barnyard baseball games, parasol-covered plows (which never became popular), and champion haystacks, all of which they manage to make seem very pleasant indeed.

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Feminism in Reverse

WHAT more has the American woman to gain? She can enter any profession, including science, law, medicine, and surgery, and in war and in peace she is invaluable. Everyone who reads the women's magazines knows that wives spend from 80 to 85 per cent of all consumer dollars; that no one in his senses underestimates the power of a woman, and that young women should be given a liberal education to offset the increasing need for the technical and scientific education of young men. Nevertheless, the facts of life in the United States today are not as cheerful as they might appear on the surface. Whereas twenty or so years ago the students of our population growth assumed that it would soon reach its climax and start going downhill, we have proved them to be false prophets by producing an astonishing number of children year by year so that we have now about 165 million increasingly healthy people in the country, and the end is not in sight. This is, and should be, a cause for celebration by any sane and patriotic American, though every sudden change in human progress is balanced by disturbing and unexpected factors.

For example, it is a dismal fact that the male population gives up the ghost too many years before the female and with every passing year the imbalance in longevity between the sexes is increasing; so that the latest statistics on which life insurance is based are out of date by the time they are published. Due to the miracles of modern medical science our people are living longer; nevertheless, a woman at the age of fifty has a presumable life expectancy of nearly seventy-six, and

her husband from four to five years less. It seems to be one of the immutable laws governing the marital habits of people that the average young man is several years older than the girl he marries. The reasons for this are so obvious that they do not have to be examined; but there is one factor that is new to this decade; the girls are marrying younger and the men somewhat older than in the immediate past. As the prosperity of the country increases so does the number of parents who can afford to send their children to universities, colleges, and technical schools. The young men know that their future and their ability to support a family will depend on a college degree. The young woman is often under no such pressure. Although her father may have invested in educational insurance she may lightly decide in her freshman or sophomore year to marry the first attractive senior or recent graduate she meets. Her father will get his money back; but in most cases his suffering and disappointment is acute, though his wife may appear to be only too delighted that their marriageable daughter is forever safe from wolves and other perils common to young ladies today.

The enormous and unexpected increase in the suburban population of the United States is another factor in the ultimate imbalance between the sexes. However delightful are these acres and square miles of utopian dwellings which surround every city in the country, it has been inevitable that they should reach further and further into the countryside. The physical and economic burdens on the shoulders of the husbands, young or

middle-aged, increases year by year, and there seems to be no cure for them. The early morning drive to the railroad station, the hour or hours spent every working day on trains, buses, and subways, the months of rising and returning home in the dark take their toll of a man's strength and vitality. It can doubtless be proved that the steady increase in our population is partly due to suburban life, for the young women who go to the country often appear to be competing with their neighbors for the number of children they raise and educate so competently. It is one of their many recompenses for leaving the large cities with their wider opportunities for social and cultural life.

IT IS a depressing fact that far too many of these able and gifted suburban wives are destined to become widows and lonely women. If they marry, as so many of them do in their early twenties or late teens, their children may have left them for college, jobs, or marriage before they are fifty. The remaining twenty-five childless and husbandless years which they may be destined to live are not pleasant to contemplate, in spite of the fact that the women of the nation, through life insurance and bequests, are now presumed to own over three quarters of the wealth of the country.

There is a great deal of nonsense in Simone de Beauvoir's highly controversial book "The Second Sex," published two years ago, which seemed to be based principally on her dislike of her own sex; but there are occasional glimpses of an intelligent survey into the dilemma of women today. "The fact is," she writes, "that every human existence involves transcendence and immanence at the same time; to go forward each existence must be maintained, for it to expand toward the future it must integrate the past. For a man marriage permits a happy synthesis of the two. In his occupation and his political life he encounters change and progress, he senses his extension through time and the universe. Marriage is forced more tyrannically upon the young girl than upon the young man. She is led to prefer marriage to a career because of the economic advantages held by men. She tends to look for a husband who is above her in status or who she hopes will make a quicker or greater success than she could."

This is, fortunately, not quite the situation in America, but it may be true that while expanding too rapidly toward the future we have not integrated the present in abandoning the mores of the past.

—H. S.