
One of the most promising tendencies in the study of history in the American colleges is the devotion of more and more time to local topics, especially the history of those events or institutions whose influences are still with us. The Illinois Central Railroad has played a leading part in the material and political, and perhaps in the social, development of Illinois. Dr. Brownson has performed a work of permanent social and political value in thus historically acquainting the people of Illinois with their greatest railway. The Illinois Central is the first of the land-grant railroads and when the history of the railroads of the United States is written the author will find ready to hand an adequate history of this one.

Dr. Brownson has divided his thesis into six chapters. The first deals with "Illinois in 1850" in which he gives an economic review of the State; the second chapter deals with "The Land Grant and the Charter." The State was confronted at the time with a peculiar situation. It had wasted considerable resources in attempting to carry out a system of Internal Improvements by the State. There was a strong party demanding that the State also use this land grant itself in building a State road, but it was decided to turn the grant over to a private corporation which successfully built the road. The third chapter describes the building of the charter lines; the fourth chapter deals with "Development of the System;" the fifth chapter takes up the question of "Traffic, 1857-1870." This chapter forms an excellent economic history of the period. When the road was projected most of the produce was marketed at New Orleans, hence it was intended to make the main terminal at Cairo. The road soon had to face about and prepare to carry its freight to Chicago. The last chapter deals with the "Finances and Financing of the Road." The subject is thus far more than merely local. The author has used the official reports and other contemporary sources. It is a very valuable and readable contribution.

L. E.