

THE FIN DE SIECLE CITY

1890 - 1906

THE GILDED AGE: CHAMPAGNE DAYS

WHEN SAN FRANCISCANS raised their glasses to welcome a new century on New Year's Eve, 1900, they held the same youthful optimism that had always marked the City by the Bay. In just fifty years, San Francisco had weathered boom and bust, fire and Gold Fever, earthquakes and social upheavals which could have proved ruinous but somehow never did. During the 1890s the city, still bumptious and wicked and frivolous on the surface, gradually achieved cultural and economic maturity.

The California Midwinter Fair, the gold rush to the Klondike, the waves of immigration from Europe and Asia, and the Spanish American War all added immeasurably to San Francisco's wealth and importance in the 1890s. California's phenomenal agricultural riches, the railroads, an expanding ship-building industry, and trade with the Orient brought more money into the city. Evelyn Wells, in her captivating book *Champagne Days of San Francisco*, described life for the city's fortunates during a time when wealth spoke in loud, imperious tones.