

The Party Battles of the Jackson Period, by CLAUDE J. BOWERS, Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co. 1922. Pp. xxi, 506, \$6.00.

The purpose of the author has been to deal "with the brilliant, dramatic, and epochal party battles and the fascinating personalities" of the Jackson period. The result is a historical work which is more interesting and fascinating than a book of fiction. The author succeeds in placing his reader in the atmosphere of the times by means of a realistic opening picture of the Washington City of the Thirties, by the constant use of well chosen dramatic incidents, and by showing the cross currents of politics through quotations from diaries, memoirs, and the contemporary press. Novel chapter titles are used and indicate the expressive language throughout the book; for example, *The Rising of the Masses*, *The Red Terror and the White*, *The Battle of the Gods*, *Political Hydrophobia*. The chapter entitled *Mrs. Eaton Demolishes the Cabinet*, is suggestive of a deliberate purpose on the part of the author to bring in personalities and show the relation of society to politics. To him history is the story of personalities, and party battles are only struggles between leaders, much like personal encounters; for example, *Jackson Breaks With Calhoun*, and *Jackson vs. Biddle*. Nevertheless he asserts that the parties of the time were actuated by "well-defined antagonistic principles and policies." He makes of his hero, Jackson, the champion of the cause of the masses against the aristocracy of wealth and culture.

The author continues in his preface, "It was not until the Jacksonian epoch that we became a democracy in fact. The selection of Presidents then passed from the caucus of the politicians in the capital, to the plain people of the factories, fields, and marts." He admits that the party system which Jackson introduced had "some evils which have persisted through the succeeding years—the penalties of the rule of the people. Demogogy then reared its head and licked its tongue. Class consciousness and hatreds were awakened, and, on the part of the great corporations, intimidation, coercion, and the corrupt use of money to control elections were con-

tributed." These are the evils which he says are the penalties of the rule of the people. Also the school of practical politicians, the widespread use of the press for party propaganda, the policy of "To the victor belong the spoils," are all excused, or else it is pointed out that custom has sanctioned their use.

In dealing with the personalities of the period the author set himself the task of stripping off false moral grandeur and revealing characters "as they really were—warts and all,"—"intensely human in their moral limitations." He is not, however, impartial in his treatment of characters. Clay, especially, and also Calhoun, Webster and the other Whig leaders, suffer by the attack. Quite strangely he finds nothing about Jackson to be condemned, and casts a favorable impression upon his lieutenants, Isaac Hill, Amos Kendall and Thomas H. Benton; and in fact upon all those politicians who identified themselves with the "sons of toil". One can not read the book without the thought that the author unduly reveals his party affiliation and lets his prejudices color his account.

The following list is typical of the vast amount of source material he has used, and from which he quotes quite freely: *Benton's Thirty Years' View*, *Adams' Memoir*, *Hamilton's Reminiscences*, *Van Buren's Autobiography*, *Mrs. Smith's First Forty Years*, *Clay's Works*, *Correspondence of Nicholas Biddle*, *Haynes' Diary*, the *Washington Globe* and the *National Intelligencer*. In some cases he gives greater weight to a memoir than to a contemporary account, and has quite ignored a number of historical sources of the period.

The author is a master in the use of the English language. Every sentence is forceful, each incident is pictured clearly and dramatically, and a unique feature is that his characters come to be thought of in terms of the characteristics he applies to them. This last result has been accomplished by a consistent coupling of name and nickname, a rare selection of forceful adjectives, and by numerous brief pen pictures of those characters. The following list is not exhaustive but indicates some of the more important characters of the period,

most of them having been necessarily passed by historians covering a longer period of time. There was Edward Livingston, the cultured diplomat; Roger B. Taney, the courageous fighting party leader for Jackson; John Forsythe, the "greatest debater of his time" and an able secretary of state. George McDuffie the tempestuous leader of the opposition; Hugh Lawson White, the "Cato of the Senate"; John M. Clayton, master of Calhoun and Clay on one occasion; Preston and Binney, polished orators; Major Lewis, master of political details; and Frank Blair, the slashing journalistic champion of the administration. Clay is represented as an unscrupulous politician, master of political intrigue and subterfuge, and with ambitions for the presidency; Calhoun, a disappointed presidential candidate, filled with petty hates and embittered toward the Union; Webster, the noblest of the three, but not above asking for a retainer from the Bank; Adams, proud and reserved, but desiring to serve the people; Tyler, firm in his convictions and deserving of better treatment by historians. His hero, Jackson, is fondly spoken of as "the grim old warrior", "the iron man", or "the popular hero". The Jacksonian party, he says, was made up of the "sons of toil", a unified group with a definite party platform, and was opposed by the "Whig Oligarchy", an "unholy alliance of incongruous elements."

Mr. Bowers has taken old material and presented it in an unusual and fascinating way. While his conclusions and interpretations are interesting, many of his readers will not accept them because partisanship is too apparent. On the whole the book is an important contribution to American historical literature and every student of history and politics will find it worthy of a reading.

CHARLES F. REED

The annual reports of the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association of the Union for 1922 and 1923 have been received from Mrs. Benjamin D. Wolcott, vice regent for Indiana. The purpose of this organization is the preservation of the Washington homestead at Mt. Vernon. Over 250,000 visitors to these grounds indicate the reverence of the world for Washington.