

tion precedes the digested text. How successful this condensation into a single volume is remains a matter of individual opinion. In this reviewer's judgment, the results are commendable. Yet it is doubtful that Nicolay and Hay should now be labeled "classic" or "great" historians and thereby included in the company of Prescott and Parkman. They were hardly skilled practitioners of historiography, although they performed a valuable service for posterity.

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*History of the United States from the Compromise of 1850.* By James Ford Rhodes. Abridged and edited by Allan Nevins. [*Classic American Historians*. Edited by Paul M. Angle.] (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966. Pp. xxvi, 576. Illustrations, notes, bibliographical note, index. Paperbound, \$3.95; clothbound, \$10.00.)

James Ford Rhodes' massive *History of the United States From the Compromise of 1850 to the Final Restoration of Home Rule in the South in 1877*, published in seven volumes between 1892 and 1906, is one of the great works of American historical writing. Rhodes, a Cleveland businessman turned historian, was an honest researcher and a good judge of character who brought much hard common sense—as well as the prejudices of his age—to his account of the politics, diplomacy, and fighting of the Civil War era. He, more than anyone else, gave historical substance to the view which thoughtful Northerners generally and Republicans in particular held of the causes, course, and consequences of the war. His picture of these heroic years, altered in so many particulars by subsequent study, is now being replaced in its entirety by an even more massive and sweeping narrative, more gracefully written, more thoroughly researched, and better balanced, by the greatest living American historian, Allan Nevins. Thus Rhodes' work, superseded by a great historical synthesis and lacking in the literary power of some of our other classical American historians, seems doomed to the ever deepening oblivion of being respected but not read.

This is unfortunate. The first five volumes of Rhodes' history (taking the story to 1865) offer one of the more pleasant surprises in store for readers of American history. One is continually amazed at how good Rhodes was: how reasonable his explanations, how sharp his character portraits, how much he knew about the era, how much closer his conclusions come to recent scholarship than do those of many writers who came after him. And the prose, if not brilliant, remains solid and serviceable. Rather than a musty period piece, one discovers, as Nevins writes in introducing his abridgement of the first five volumes, "a magnificent piece of narrative history that offers a larger combination of enjoyment and profit than any but a few historians provide" (p. xxvi).

The volume under review provides historians with an excellent introduction to Rhodes' history—which is not to say a sufficient ac-

quaintance. For the general reader, it distills the essential Rhodes. The well-chosen format—long uncut selections with most footnotes omitted—shrinks over 2,300 pages in the original volumes to a neat 569 pages of excellent reading. Nevins' introduction is informative and offers a judicious assessment of the work. The chapter introductions, a few paragraphs each, are gems. They summarize, raise questions, and place Rhodes' narrative into the context of subsequent historical writing in a graceful manner and in amazingly few words. In all, this is an excellently executed book in a very well-conceived series designed to make the classic American historians available to the general reader. It should do that. But one hopes that among serious students of the American past this volume whets more appetites than it satisfies.

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*The Papers of Woodrow Wilson. Volume I, 1856-1880. Edited by Arthur S. Link. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1966. Pp. xxviii, 715. Notes, illustrations, index. \$15.00.)*

With publication of Volume I of *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, Arthur S. Link and his associates, John Wells Davidson and David W. Hirst, embark on the first comprehensive documentary record of the life and thought of the twenty-eighth President of the United States. Wilson "rarely threw away anything he thought to be of possible importance" (p. ix), say the editors; thus, the record he left of his own life is more complete than that of most twentieth-century political figures. Much of this material has not been previously available, even to scholars. The editors hope to publish a comprehensive edition (forty volumes) to include all important letters, articles, speeches, interviews, and public papers by Wilson to make available to readers "all the materials essential to understanding Wilson's personality, his intellectual, religious, and political development, and his career as educator, writer, orator, and statesman" (p. xiv).

This first volume covers the period from Wilson's birth in 1856 to his withdrawal from the University of Virginia Law School in 1880. The editors point out that the "documentary record before 1873 is virtually non-existent" (p. xxii), and they print nothing from that period except one letter and some notes from the family Bible. The papers are sparse for the short time Wilson attended Davidson College, but become increasingly numerous and rich through the years at Princeton and Virginia. Accessible for the first time are the shorthand notes Wilson used in his diary and in the classroom. Wilson taught himself the Graham system of shorthand, now obsolete, but the editors secured the help of an aged expert to transcribe the notes. Other documents accessible for the first time include Wilson's contributions to the *Princetonian*; his father's Presbyterian journal; academic notebooks; outlines of speeches; and three constitutions—for the Liberal Debating Club at Princeton, for the Jefferson Society at the University of Virginia, and for an imaginary "Royal United Kingdom Yacht Club."