

of harmony with their times. In 1919 Brooks Adams thought that the world had grown tired of his family; the idea was more characteristic than original.

The Adams family history is familiar to literate Americans, and Russell tells it in familiar terms. He has digested the standard books and documents, which are listed in his short bibliography, and has made a coherent, highly entertaining narrative which will neither excite nor offend scholars. Some might object to his insistent support of the Adamses against all opponents—"devious" Martin Van Buren, "hawk-nosed, slaveholding" John Tyler—but that is unimportant (pp. 202, 226-27). This is a tribute as much as it is a history; its partisanship is entirely aboveboard and is not usually heavy handed.

The book owes much to its publisher, American Heritage. It is characteristic of the firm's products, handsomely printed and bound, lavishly illustrated, and unencumbered by any scholarly apparatus beyond a single page of bibliography. It is intended to be popular in an honest and instructive way; it fully merits an extensive readership.

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Andrew Jackson and the Search for Vindication. By James C. Curtis. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1976. Pp. xi, 194. Note on sources, index. Clothbound, \$7.50; paperbound, \$3.95.)

Like other volumes in the *Library of American Biography* series, *Andrew Jackson and the Search for Vindication* is a concise, interpretive biography intended for a general college audience. Based primarily on published sources, the book retells the familiar saga of Old Hickory. James C. Curtis clearly recounts Jackson's turbulent youth, rise to power and prominence in frontier Tennessee, military exploits, entry into presidential politics, and eventful two term presidency. Because the events of Jackson's life have been described many times, this brief volume adds no new details to the story.

What Curtis has done is to interpret Old Hickory's life and career in a fresh manner. Using an incisive, no nonsense, psychological analysis, Curtis argues that Jackson's life represented a continual search for personal vindication. Beneath Old Hickory's aggressive and bold behavior lay "deep un-

certainties" rooted in his childhood. "Throughout his life he felt a need to prove himself, to triumph over enemies he believed were assaulting his reputation. Even in victory, he never felt victorious. The more his reputation grew, the more he feared that some conspiracy, some cabal was working to diminish his standing with the people" (p. ix). Curtis believes that this anxiety resulted in an obsessive quest for "control" and "order" in Jackson's personal life and public career. Hence, Jackson's military career and campaign for president as well as his conduct in the Peggy Eaton affair, the bank war, Indian affairs, and nullification are viewed respectively as part of this intense personal search. In each case Curtis argues that Jackson was moved primarily by personal anxieties, not political or national objectives.

The author's approach inevitably results in an unflattering portrait of Jackson as a military chieftain and public servant. Always preoccupied by selfish personal considerations, Jackson is never depicted as a leader who acted because he believed that what he did was in the best interests of his party or the American people. "Founder of the national party system, champion of the common man, and creator of the strong presidency are but a few of the accolades history and historians accord him. Jackson did not set out to serve these ends. His goals were more limited" (p. 184). Curtis is even critical of Jackson's handling of the nullification crisis. Although long accorded high marks by scholars for his conduct during the controversy, Jackson is criticized here because he followed "no consistent political course" during the crisis and failed "to give much thought to partisan consequences of his actions" (p. 133). Curtis is forced necessarily to ignore a wealth of interpretations dealing with Jackson's role in the bank war, nullification, Indian removal, the creation of the Democratic party, and the growth of the presidency. As a result this intriguing biography is not likely to have much impact on existing historiography.

Andrew Jackson and the Search for Vindication is a well written and fascinating study. Because it is written for a general audience, the book carries no footnotes and includes only a perfunctory note on sources. Nor has Curtis cluttered his narrative with psychological jargon. In short, this modest but suggestive volume should be of interest to college students as well as historians of the period.

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