
BIOGRAPHY

JAMES FORD RHODES: AMERICAN HISTORIAN by M. A. DeWolfe Howe (APPLETON. \$3.50)

AMONG our greater American historians, Rhodes occupies a peculiar position. He was not a past master of style, like Parkman or Motley, and there is no such atmosphere of literary classicism about his work as about theirs. He was uneven and, in the last analysis, his reputation rests upon the first five volumes of his *History of the United States from the Compromise of 1850 to 1896*, the remaining four (from 1866 onward) being distinctly inferior. Even these five volumes are hardly definitive as Henry Adams's history is definitive. There is growing evidence that the material will be resurveyed by students who distrust Rhodes's conclusions, and the recent life of Lincoln by Beveridge shows that on some points views radically different from his may obtain acceptance. Yet his title to high eminence as a historian is unquestioned and, though certain short passages may be set aside, his great panorama of American history from the Compromise of 1850 to the impeachment of Andrew Johnson seems certain of a permanent place. The most tremendous and thrilling crisis of our national history found in him a chronicler of sure judgment, of vivid sympathies, of inexhaustible energy in research, of remarkable fairness and of philosophic grasp.

Historians of the right kind are born rather than made, and beyond doubt Rhodes was born to his calling. Everything seemed against his election to such a vocation. Brought up in Cleveland, in circles that touched Mark Hanna, his brother-in-law, on the one side and John D. Rockefeller on another; thrown into the coal and iron busi-

ness; cut off from intellectual associates or incentives; lacking, so far as anyone knew, any gift for writing—what should impel him toward history? For one factor, as this book shows, was an interest in public affairs. His father was an active Democrat, a kinsman and admirer of Stephen A. Douglas, a partner with the war-Governor of Ohio; the boy met Douglas and talked with Andrew Johnson in the White House. For another factor, a taste for historical literature formed in New York University, where he fell under the influence of Buckle and Draper. It was while reading Hildreth's History in 1877 that he laid down the book and asked why he should not turn to writing. For a third factor, a feeling by 1885 that he had made money enough and would find more pleasure in pursuing learning and fame than in building larger iron mills. He came to history at well-ripened maturity, a man of the world, with all the time and money he needed.

This biography is primarily a record of Rhodes's intellectual and social contacts from 1892, when the first volume of his history appeared, till his death early in 1927. Little is told us of his historical methods, which he himself described in several essays; no attempt is made to appraise his historical work. The scores of letters are linked with suave and concise comment. Rhodes made many distinguished friends—Roosevelt, Lodge, Trevelyan, Bryce, Charles Francis Adams, Barrett Wendell, A. Lawrence Lowell and others. He kept these friendships bright partly by personal contacts, living in Boston and travelling widely, and partly by a prolific stream of epistles. The letters show the same qualities as the history, adding to shrewdness, worldly wisdom and fairness some notable elements of humor and modesty. They are

not brilliant and indicate little poetic insight or imagination, but they are entertaining and agreeable. They confirm, in short, the estimate of Rhodes as a man not profound or subtle, but wise, mellow and highly capable. Sometimes the wisdom falters. We read with surprise that Rhodes believed in 1916 that Japan was only waiting a favorable opportunity to seize California, Oregon and Washington, and that in 1919 he supported the ideas of Lodge as against those of Wilson. But sometimes he is very wise, indeed, and in his comments on Roosevelt's appetite for the presidency in 1912, Hughes's blundering campaign in 1916, the European war and the Prohibition Amendment he hits the nail on the head. Notable throughout these letters and a marked element in his historical equipment, was his democratic faith in the plain people of the United States.

Mr. Howe is so able a biographer that one hesitates to express a wish that he had put a little more of Mr. Rhodes's own quality of thoroughness into this book; that he had told us just what problems and perplexities he met in writing his history, pried into his workshop, estimated his failures and successes and condescended to cover such topics as the monetary return from his work. But if all of Rhodes and his life is not here, there is enough of him to give us an engaging impression of a scholar and a gentleman, a man at once good-hearted and great-hearted, who wrote the most famous and useful work of American history in his generation.

ALLAN NEVINS

STENDHAL by Paul Hazard (COWARD-MC CANN. \$3.00)

PROFESSOR HAZARD's life of Stendhal (Marie Henri Beyle) is a conventional biography of the Maurois type. Beyle's life is a tempting subject for this sort of treatment. The creator of Julien Sorel, who is a Nietzschean hero come a half-century before Nietzsche's time, was himself a man of frustrations and timid-

ities. He had planned a life which was to be characterized by energetic, purposeful action and ruthless domination over his fellows. But the high-water mark of his conquest of society turned out to be a minor diplomatic post at Civitavecchia, grudgingly thrown to him by an unappreciative government; and his one great victory in a long and rather ignominious series of love affairs (a victory he commemorated by an inscription on his suspenders) was gained largely because the genial Maria PietrAGRURA became a little impatient with her lover's backwardness and in a kindly Italian way took the matter into her own hands. "All your vigor of character," he once said of himself, "comes down to intensity of emotion. You have always mistaken your strong passions for strong will. . . You are lord of any number of castles in Spain, but a helpless slave in the world of reality."

The failure of Beyle's own life was one reason for his success as a novelist. Julien Sorel was the embodiment of what he wished himself to be. All that Beyle had striven for and missed in his own life he brought to fulfillment in *Le Rouge et le noir*. There the intensity of emotion he felt in himself passed into vigorous action, and a strong will effectively carried out the demands of strong passions. But the method by which Beyle realized in literature this projection of an egotism that was thwarted in life is what constitutes his importance as a novelist. Unlike most of his contemporaries, he accepted a finite, non-supernaturalistic world without any heart-burnings or nostalgia for lost paradises. For him the heavens were empty and the outlet for human ambition was in the realm of purely human activity. But the first requisite for success in this realm depended on a "clear-eyed knowledge" of what lay behind human activity, that is, on an analysis of human emotion and a psychological investigation of the human heart. Thus Stendhal was the originator of the *roman psychologique* which was destined to an enormous literary influence.