

Ohio in the White House

The Life of Rutherford Birchard Hayes, Nineteenth President of the United States, by Charles Richard Williams. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. Two vols. \$7.50 net.

IN the one hundred and twenty-four years from 1789 to 1913, out of the twenty-two presidents elected and four vice-presidents who became heads of the nation, five were Virginians and six were Ohioans. In the first thirty-six years of the federal republic Virginians repleted the office during thirty-two years; and in the forty-four years from 1861 to 1914, Ohio, but for the assassinations of Garfield and McKinley, would have taken up twenty-eight years of the presidential thread. For the early pre-eminence of Virginia there were good reasons—the prestige of that state as the leading commonwealth and the great national reputation of Washington, Jefferson and Madison. Can similar causes be found for the recent pre-eminence of Ohio as a grower of presidents? Are the public men of the Buckeye State abler, better trained and more famous than those of Pennsylvania, Indiana and Illinois, each of which has produced but one president, or Kentucky, from which even Henry Clay could not reach the White House?

In his excellent biography of Rutherford Birchard Hayes, Mr. Williams throws much light on the selection of the row of three successful Republican candidates from Ohio—Grant, Hayes and Garfield—followed a few years later by McKinley and Taft. He has also placed in a clear and agreeable light a statesman who suffered much from the circumstances of his choice, although he always believed that he had been fairly elected. The nomination of Grant in 1868 can hardly be credited to Ohio; after the death of Lincoln he was the foremost figure in the public mind, and it seemed likely that if the Republicans had foreborne to nominate him the Democrats would have taken him up. Though he “hailed” from Ohio, he was much more identified with Missouri and Illinois. In his second election in 1872, Ohio gave him only fifty-three per cent of its total vote, as against seventy-eight per cent in Vermont and eighty-one per cent in Minnesota. From that day to this Ohio has been close in almost all presidential elections.

Mr. Williams fairly proves his insistence that in 1876 Hayes was a logical and a strong candidate. The first chapters of his work bring out clearly the influences which brought Hayes to the front. He was one of the thousands of Ohio sons of New England parents. His father was a Vermonter. A generous uncle sent him to Kenyon College and subsequently to the Harvard Law School, where he took in the wisdom of Judge Story; heard Daniel Webster, John Quincy Adams, whom he called “a venerable but deluded old man”; and R. C. Winthrop, M.C., from Boston, who was “a young man of fine attainments, correct taste, and good natural ability”; and he “saw Macready play Hamlet,” and “attended a meeting of Unitarians which was conducted a good deal like Methodist class-meetings.” A few years later he was one of the fortunate Cincinnatians who listened to Ralph Waldo Emerson who, he says, “talks as he speaks, freely, and in a somewhat quaint way.” Throughout his life Hayes was a man of cultivation, fond of good books and the association with men of mark and character. Of the six Ohio presidents, Garfield and Taft have had equally

necessarily enlist as a soldier at the beginning of the Civil War; and Hayes’ military career, which Mr. Williams has followed with care, is that of a brave man, a faithful soldier, and a far-seeing statesman. His record as colonel of the Twenty-third Ohio, his six wounds, his brevet of major-general, testify to his military abilities and character. The same qualities carried him into Congress, and thence into the governorship of his state, which he held three times. In 1876 he was nominated by the Republican convention at Cincinnati for the presidency.

The biography brings out the fact that he was, by experience and character, as well qualified for that office as most of the presidents between Lincoln and McKinley; yet the reason for turning to him when there was a deadlock between Blaine and the field, is to be found in statistics rather than in politics. The election was bound to be close. Pennsylvania was sure Republican, New York was reasonably sure Democratic, Illinois was relied on as Republican, though close. Ohio was wobbling; and Hayes had three times carried it for the governorship. Personally he was an upright, honorable and statesman-like man, in no way connected with the gang of Republican leaders who had so diminished the prestige of Grant’s administration. The result of the election showed that he was probably as good a vote-getter as any man in the party.

Upon the still ticklish question of how 185 votes were eventually counted for Hayes and 184 for Tilden, Mr. Williams throws some light from the private papers of President Hayes. It is clear that Hayes never deviated from the belief that he was honestly elected; and the biographer can see not the slightest reason to doubt the Daniel-come-to-judgment wisdom of the findings of the electoral commission. Nevertheless he cannot blink the fact that Hayes’ administration was by this intensely bitter conflict put out of capacity to carry out the reforms in finance and in the civil service which the President had at heart. The genuinely high qualities of the man were obscured by the contest, and by the later ignoble jangles with Congress over the use of the troops in Southern elections.

The same causes that brought about Hayes’s nomination operated again in 1880. The Republicans wanted a soldier of the Civil War, a man who had made no violent enemies, and who could carry the states of the Middle West, particularly Ohio, then an “October state.” Blaine was undoubtedly the ablest man in the field, but aside from certain assailable weaknesses, he came from a supposedly sure Republican section, which needed no galvanism by a candidate. When the Blaine forces were worn out by the stubborn resistance of the Grant cohort, a leading Ohio statesman, well-known in Congress, was the logical candidate. Thus Garfield was nominated, and by close votes he pulled Ohio and Indiana with him.

The assassination of Garfield left the field clear for Blaine in 1884. In 1888 the Middle Western vote-getter was Harrison, who carried Ohio by a plurality, though he received less than half the total vote; and again in 1892 by a plurality of about 1,000 in a vote of 800,000. McKinley was nominated in 1896 partly to carry Ohio, but quite as much because he was the most conspicuous exponent of the high tariff policy which had now been definitely adopted by the Republican party. This was a great change from 1880 when Garfield, the standard-bearer of the party, was a known low-tariff man who nowadays would be called a rank free-trader. McKinley, however, had other qualifications of great advantage to a candidate

out of his seat, and he turned the tables by being elected governor—just as Hayes had been twenty years earlier. He had also a personal geniality and magnetism which disarmed some of his enemies. Yet even McKinley got only fifty-two per cent of the vote of Ohio in 1896, and only a half per cent more in 1900.

William H. Taft's nomination in 1908 proceeded not from Ohio, but from Washington, for he had never been elected to a state office; and he polled but fifty-one per cent of the total vote, though he had a handsome plurality. Taft, like Hayes and McKinley, was deeply bedded in his state, visited it and made much of it, but he can hardly be said to have represented an Ohio school of politics.

Hayes was far in advance of that state and of his party, in his desire to reform the federal civil service, and to bury the "bloody shirt." It is a high tribute to the native genius for government among Americans that the series of Ohio presidents from Grant to Taft should have done so well in office, since most of them were nominated for their availability rather than for their distinction as public men. McKinley, supposed by his opponents to be a narrow partisan, showed a broad, statesmanlike policy; he learned from the experience of his first term, and was on the road to leadership of the nation in new directions when he was cut off by the assassin. If Pennsylvania had been as close a state as Ohio, perhaps the nominations would have come from that state, and, judging from the men whom the larger commonwealth delighted to honor, would have furnished a series of presidents far inferior to the group of which Mr. Hayes was a worthy member.

ALBERT BUSHNELL HART.

Portraits by Mr. Chapman

Memories and Milestones, by John Jay Chapman. New York: Moffat, Yard & Company. \$1.25 net.

IN real life Mr. John Jay Chapman looks a little like a brigand who has retired from business, like a gentleman of a school that was always old, and a little like a saint who has taken on weight. Although at first he seems negligent of the social ritual he was brought up in, a second look reveals this negligence as marking, unintentionally, familiarity with the ritual. Plainly a man who does not care to please, you would say, and who does care not to give pain. His are vintage manners, bottled at the chateau.

Mr. Chapman is an abolitionist who cannot hate persons, and who does penance for sins he didn't commit. His penitence drives him, who has done no wrong, to acts of fanatical courage. It took courage to go to Coatesville, a few days before the anniversary of the lynching, to advertise his intention of holding a prayer meeting on the day itself, and to stick to his plan. Something more uncommon than courage went to such a plan's making. Samuel Johnson, standing bareheaded in the rain in Uttoxeter market, would have understood Mr. Chapman's visit to Coatesville. "In contrition I stood," said Johnson, "and I hope the penance was expiatory."

What Mr. Chapman said at Coatesville is set down in this book of "Memories and Milestones," which contains several other grave papers, a talk to the boys of St. Paul's School, an address on the negro question, an address on ethical culture. Nominally they look in various directions,

little wizened package lay the great Hebrew mind . . ."—forward to the epoch, now coming over the world, "when the miraculous nature of the world is understood, and mystic sayings become clear as print." In reality these papers, whether backward-looking or forward-looking in intention, read like loyalties to bygone fashions in honor and creed. When Mr. Chapman writes of the future he makes me feel that it happened long ago.

Whether he writes of past, present or future he always makes me wonder why his fame is not wider-spread. If this new book wins the success it deserves it will have lots of readers. It is extremely amusing. Portraits of President Eliot, Julia Ward Howe, Horace Howard Furness, Martin Brimmer, Charles Eliot Norton are here, among others. They are done with humor, insight, kindly malice, they are done in words which reveal easily, casually, the fine imagery in Mr. Chapman's mind, in words colored by the poetical feeling which accounts for so much of him, and with never an ungenerous word. He has a quick eye for the oddities that make a man "a character," he paints these oddities with a loving hand, he doesn't let his interest in them obstruct his view of the man's work in the world. Seldom do you find a portrait painter whose interest in function is so nearly equal to his interest in idiosyncrasy. And you cannot help suspecting, from Mr. Chapman's manner, that he has no idea how good those portraits are.

Mr. Chapman says of William James: "It has sometimes crossed my mind that James wanted to be a poet and an artist, and that there lay in him, beneath the ocean of metaphysics, a lost Atlantis of the fine arts." Of Horace Howard Furness: "A lifelong familiarity with old English stage businesses had given him quite a battery of odd little gestures and tones of voice, which were as natural to him as they were unexpected by every one else." Of Charles Eliot Norton: "Norton . . . fastened himself to the ground by such anchors as he had inherited or had forged for himself. This instinct was part of the strong side of him, and it co-existed . . . with a habit of caviling at his own nation, as if he were some sort of foreign-born *macaroni*. To do this, however, is a human foible to which any man may fall a victim. I had a classmate at college who had never been far from South Boston, and one evening while dancing at the Dorchester Assembly he slipped and fell to the ground. He arose at once with great aplomb, remarking, coldly, 'These cursed American floors.'"

From the papers that deal with Bostonians one gets a most diverting picture of Boston itself. Mr. Chapman knows Boston's roots in history, its little queernesses, its sense of caste, its will to be cultivated. "The great business of Bostonians," he says, "was to place values upon everything in the world, with conscientious accuracy. . . . It was Boston's foible to set metes and bounds to everything: that was the game which we played; but it was a good game, and its players were among the best-hearted people in the world." How exact is his picture of a Bostonian "turning haughty and assuming a look of profaned intimacy." And here, too, while I read Mr. Chapman on Boston, I cannot help feeling that Boston used to be and is not.

Mr. Chapman, as I have said, seems not to know that his portraits are anything out of the ordinary. Nor does he seem to know the difference between his best things and his worst. Ibsen, he writes, "reasoned thus: 'If you want to give emotion to the average playgoer you must take a rusty blade from an old razor, attach it to a brick, and throw it off one of a man's toes