

monstrously exaggerated by the men who participated in their discussion; but the loss of interest on this score is more than made up by the better understanding of the epoch itself as a period of national transition. Then, Mr. Peck is well read on his theme, and has thrown his materials into good literary form. He is, indeed, altogether too sure of some things, but his very positiveness will be one of the best features of his book to some minds. Another of his merits is his distinct conception of the fact that, in the epoch treated, far less was due to what Carlyle called "individualities," and far more to general causes, than our fathers supposed. He sees clearly, for example, that General Jackson was a man of his time, and the Jackson party a party of its time; he sees that the American republic was bound not only to become democratized, but to become democratized in a rude way; and yet he might advantageously have used space that he has given to minor matters to give a fuller and better exposition of the causes that made these things inevitable. The topic is an inviting one, and has never been adequately treated in all its bearings by any writer. So confident a writer as our author with such a subject could not have avoided offering numerous moot points to the critic. Here it must be said that if he is never dull he is often wrong or paradoxical. We read on one page that John Randolph, having retired from political leadership, "remained to the end of his days the most consistent advocate, barring his occasional extravagances and aberrations, of the true theory of government," and on another page that he organized the South to a systematic defense of the slaveholding interest, and formulated the political theory by which it was to be maintained; moreover, this theory "was wholly derived from the political doctrines with which he had begun public life." The meaning, of course, is that Randolph's devotion to slavery was merely one of his "extravagances" or "aberrations," and ought not to be counted against him in determining his rank as a political philosopher. Mr. Peck adds: "It is one of the seeming paradoxes of politics that the ablest early exponents of democracy were slaveholders." From his point of view he should have added, "and often aristocrats." The account of the introduction of the spoils system presents some very just observations and important facts that the student of the time needs to heed, but it cannot be accepted as a proper presentation of the subject. Mr. Peck thinks that John Quincy Adams was more to blame for the system than Jackson, owing to his absolute refusal to allow political considerations to influence the retention or selection of appointees, which stimulated the clamor and the efforts of the multiplying "outs." Even more unsatisfactory is the handling of the slavery question. The author sees that slavery was a great evil, but he criticizes all the men who strove to oppose it, and the Abolitionists with great fierceness; but he does not, that we remember, drop a single hint as to what should have been done in reference to slavery. Nothing

Whatever else the critics may say of

*Men and measures
of Jackson's time.*

Mr. Charles H. Peck's book on "The Jacksonian Epoch" (Harper), they are pretty certain to agree that it is readable. The period has always been one of great interest to students of our history and politics, and it is more likely to become still more interesting than less as time goes on. No doubt the "questions" of the epoch, or at least most of them, are now seen to have been

is easier than to criticize every practical proposition that was ever made, looking to the doing away of the institution, or to restricting its influence ; but it was in the country, and something had to be done about it, as a writer of history at this late day ought to discern.

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