

of the same, rich material, and partly in the light this sheds upon Mr. Robinson's character as a dramatic thinker and as a poet. It is a highly characteristic poem in its exclusions and in its emphases. Mr. Robinson has utterly cast out the love potion which in so many versions explains the love of Tristram and Isolt. There is no magic in this *Tristram* beyond the magic of love itself; that is enough for Mr. Robinson, as it should be enough for anybody.

The poem, in fact, is a study of love as it exists, in itself, and the tragedy is the tragedy of pure passion pursuing its career in this life which was not organized for passion. That Tristram and Isolt should die at the end is a commentary not on them, or on Andred, who mistakenly slays Tristram, or on King Mark who realizes too late the character of the emotion he has tried to frustrate, but on the inadequacy of the world to contain such lovers. There is no place for them, and no time. So Mr. Robinson in his beautiful poem surveys not merely them but all of human life.

The details of the poem, or of its beauty, can not be indicated in short space. But tribute can be paid to the singleness and speed of the action, to the fine sinew of the blank verse, to the frequent flights into authentic rapture, and to the profound interpretation of Mark's mind at the close, after Tristram and Isolt lie dead on the parapet overlooking the Cornish sea. It is certainly one of the best narrative poems we have; and I think it safe to say that the story it tells has never been better told in English verse.

MARK VAN DOREN

Mr. Emerson of Concord

VAN WYCK BROOKS'S latest book, — EMERSON AND OTHERS (Dutton, \$3.00), — contains six pleasant essays on Emerson and seven which have no relation to him or to his group of Concord philosophers. The essays on Herman Melville, Ambrose Bierce, and especially Randolph Bourne, are interesting and valuable, because in them Mr. Brooks discusses the writings and the ideas of these rebellious Americans. In the sketches of Emerson he chats about the philosopher's house, his garden, and his friends, and scarcely mentions his writings.

It is delightful to read of Bronson Alcott who started a "progressive" school in Boston long before Beaver Street; of Thoreau teaching Emerson to hoe his vegetables; and of the vegetarians "for whom the world was to be redeemed by bran and pumpkins". Still it seems to me that Mr. Brooks's *Emerson* is only one more addition to the output of literary gossip which has recently flooded our circulating libraries. The value of these superficial books is said to be that they humanize the unknown great. But why should the great be humanized?

John Erskine, in his essay, *Immortal Things*, says that though Caesar dined every day we remember him as crossing the Rubicon, not as "immortally dining". In our curiosity about the external details of the lives of our poets and philosophers, it seems to me that there is some danger of missing the very essence of their gift.

Mr. Brooks tells us how Emerson hobbled with "the Bloods, the Willards, and the Barretts", farmers of Concord; that he went to New York and saw Barnum's museum and Horace Greeley and young Albert Brisbane. Yet I think that few Americans have so separated themselves from time and place as Emerson was able to do. It seems to me that his real companions were the mystics of all ages, Plato and Buddha and Spinoza. I do not care what bus he took to Boston.

MILDRED WHITNEY STILLMAN

Nailing Science to the Door

IT would be amusing to catch a scientist and a cleric, give each of them a copy of *SCIENCE, THE FALSE MESSIAH* by C. E. Ayres (Bobbs-Merrill, \$3.00), and find them chairs on opposite sides of a library. The scientist would get mad first, but his monopoly would be short-lived. After about the second chapter the bursts of ire would be antiphonal, like two intermittent geysers, one resting while the other blew. While Mr. Ayres's avowed intention is to smash some idol supposed to belong to scientists, he lays about him so lustily that much general mental furniture gets broken, too, — including, it may be, some of the gods whom Mr. Ayres himself once loved. When the last chapter is finished and the last poor idol of the scientists has gone under the

hatchet, one senses a faint flavor of regret, as though a gentleman who has just killed a mouse in the kitchen suddenly became aware of the legs knocked off the stove.

Mr. Ayres ends his book with a list of twenty-three theses "to be nailed on the laboratory door". Like Martin Luther's more famous samples, these are not harmed by condensation. Three of them express the essential meaning of the book. First, Mr. Ayres thinks that science is not truth (whatever that may be) but is merely belief, like other folk-lore. Second, he insists that science and religion are not friends but enemies. Third, he agrees with Samuel Butler's famous fright about machinery.

Much could be said in favor of these three propositions, and most of it has been. The one that most needs emphasis is the second, for there exists a miasma of loose thinking which tries to "reconcile" the quite different faiths of religion and of science. For any one who attempts this, Mr. Ayres's book will be a healthful caustic. There is no reason why science and religion may not live together amicably, as lambs live in one cage in the zoo and lions in another. But they mix poorly.

Mr. Ayres's imagined bombshell about science being no better than a belief seems to impress him as revolutionary. I can not imagine why. On the contrary it is almost an article of scientific creed. Surely Mr. Ayres knows that science long ago gave up the quest of absolutes to quaff the weaker but more convenient wine of pragmatism. It is true that science is merely folk-lore. What is not? People outside the laboratories may believe something else and may need to read Mr. Ayres's theses nailed, as is proper, on the outside of the door. There is no need for them inside. They have been posted on the bulletin board for years.

E. E. FREE

America Through French Lorgnettes

FROM the welter of mistrust and sentimental bombast that so long have troubled the relations between France and America, André Tardieu, — one-time Harvard professor and now Minister of Public Works in M. Poincaré's Government, — has spoken out strongly

and clearly, and told the truth. In *FRANCE AND AMERICA* (Houghton Mifflin, \$3.00), he says we were not born friends. We seldom understand one another. And collaboration, so fruitful in the past both of great good and bitter misunderstanding, will be successful in the future only if we take honest stock of the situation and move slowly, unblinded to the infinite difficulty of success.

This clears the atmosphere. Here is a book which needed sadly to be written. Its publication is, therefore, an international event; for M. Tardieu's gift of scholarly and sympathetic interpretation has produced a historical document of lasting importance, particularly in the part where he traces the story of Franco-American cooperation during the War. Above all, it is a refreshing intellectual experience. Truth transparent and manifest is heart-warming, even when disagreeable. His account of the diverse origins and nature of peoples, institutions, and temperaments lays bare Frenchmen and Americans to each other wittily and memorably, but without flattery.

M. Tardieu ends by stating the problem. "The War which intensified the power of the United States also intensified its faults, — foremost among which is that overweening pride, the outgrowth curiously enough of the austere faith of the Puritans and of the joyous triumph of mass production." In diplomacy the United States "has lost countless opportunities. . . . Never with such great resources has so puny a policy been pursued." As a result of "this conglomeration of errors", America, "once the idol of Europe, . . . is to-day without a single worshipper." Similarly, France since the War "in her dealings with the United States has almost always taken the wrong course".

For remedy he has none other to offer than that of Michelet, — "first enlightenment, then enlightenment, always enlightenment." Toward that end, nothing has been done since the Peace Conference more important than the writing of this book.

Simultaneously, another Frenchman has studied America to gain enlightenment; but if he has gained it, it has not brought sympathy. In *AMERICA COMES OF AGE* (Harcourt, Brace, \$3.00), André