

what is the deadliest thing for a poet to be, literal. His head is clearer than his poetry is fine; he is sober, and he has a vein of reflection not wholly resembling other men's, but the strength that he has is displayed rather than implied, and his metaphors, of which he apparently is proud, are painfully overdeveloped.

The only definitely interesting section of Mr. Gibson's new book is the first, called *Neighbours*, containing a series of grim rural monologues and dialogues. The other sections are filled with turgid sonnets and monotonous quatrains about the war. The monologues and dialogues unquestionably derive from the poems of Thomas Hardy. Their laconic business is to reveal desperate situations suddenly discovered to exist between husbands and wives. They are square and plain and honest, and they are interesting to the last syllable, without ever pulling at the roots of the imagination as Mr. Hardy's can, or as Robert Frost's still complexer recitals do. Mr. Hardy and Mr. Frost, whatever points they want to make, begin by being absorbed with persons whom they profoundly see and feel; Mr. Gibson, having an imagination less original and tenacious, begins with the idea of a condition he wants to exploit, or a point he wants to reach, and artificially, if professionally, proceeds in that direction.

MARK VAN DOREN

## The End of the Trilogy

*Men and Steel.* By Mary Heaton Vorse. Boni and Liveright.

WITH "Men and Steel" the trilogy of the steel strike is complete. Foster's book told what may be called, in no slighting sense, the professional labor leader's story. The Interchurch Report set down with authority the facts and figures about the labor policy of the employers and its result. Mrs. Vorse speaks as a poet. An incalculable, a terrific thing happened in the soul of the nation when three hundred thousand steel workers and their families arose to demand justice and were crushed back into the maw of the furnaces, into their own helplessness and discouragement. Foster gave us the blue-print, and the Interchurch Commission the statistical survey; Mrs. Vorse has written the tragedy.

The Principality of Steel is a majestic, a beautiful, and a cruel kingdom. It covers many states and rules hundreds of towns; it extends from the great red open-pits of Mesaba, with engines crawling along their sides like beetles, to the gigantic blast furnaces of Homestead, to the mills flaring red upon the rivers at night and sending up pillars of smoke by day. Their rows of stacks loom across the sky like Gargantuan organ pipes. Before the pomp and power of steel, one scarcely thinks of men at all. In the mills the men are almost hidden, servants of the levers and slaves of the furnace doors; outside the mills they are huddled in drab piles of huts. To find women here in the houses, washing for their children and spreading the curtains eternally to dry, to find children, wholesome, merry children playing in the muddy alleys, is as startling as it would be to find mortal families dwelling on the borders of Inferno.

Mrs. Vorse has built up this picture by vivid spots of color which seem for a while chosen at random, just as they would flash upon a sensitive observer as he looked about him at this strange country. Gradually the things of steel take form before the eyes, then the people of steel, then the revolt of the people against the things. We receive the same sense from the book which those of us who were there received from the reality, and which none of us but Mrs. Vorse has adequately expressed: that this was not merely a quarrel for domination, that it was a heroic thrust of humanity upon "chaos and the dark," that it was symbolic of the high drama of the earth. How hopeless was the struggle of these simple people against the impersonal power of the corporations, against the cold and hypocritical hostility of officials and institutions, against the ignorance and prejudice of the public, against the silence which robbed them of the knowledge of their own achievements and insulated them

from the courage of their fellows! Each man in his own house, waiting, waiting, drawing every day nearer the time when there would be no more bread for his wife and children, had to nourish himself against doubt by a superb faith. And at the end, the breaking of that faith was far more cruel than blows from State constabulary or the return to a life of nothing but toil and sleep. We are not likely soon to forget the sobbing of the big Slav in the silent hallway outside the strike headquarters at Youngstown, when he had been scabbing because he thought the strike was over, and knew now it would soon be over in earnest.

It is a beautiful and a terrible book, because like a true work of art it embodies the elemental beauty and terror of life. If we think of the sacrifice of individual persons and individual causes, and of the vengeance that some day is likely to be exacted for those sacrifices, it will depress and frighten us. But if we think of the mighty faith of the humble that some day must triumph, it will strengthen our courage. Mrs. Vorse might have ended with the prophecy of Zephaniah: "Woe to her that is rebellious and polluted! to the oppressing city! . . . Her princes in the midst of her are roaring lions; her judges are evening wolves; they leave nothing till the morrow. Her prophets are light and treacherous persons; her priests have profaned the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law. . . . Therefore wait ye for me, saith Jehovah, until the day that I rise up to the prey; for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger; for all the earth shall be devoured by the fire of my jealousy. . . . Behold, at that time I will deal with all them that afflict thee; and I will save that which is lame, and gather that which was driven away; and I will make them a praise and a name, whose shame hath been in all the earth."

GEORGE SOULE

## Chapters of Medical History

*The Dawn of Modern Medicine.* By Albert H. Buck. Yale University Press.

A LOOSE and disorderly arrangement greatly lessens the usefulness of this stately volume, which appears as "the third work published by the Yale University Press on the Williams Memorial Publication Fund." Dr. Buck says in his preface that it is in the main "a continuation and amplification" of his earlier work, "The Growth of Medicine." After completing the latter he was unexpectedly given access to a collection of medical works in the library of Transylvania College, at Lexington, Kentucky. This collection, purchased in Paris in 1819, had remained unexplored by historians of medicine for nearly a century. Dr. Buck went to Lexington and spent seven months studying it. Unluckily, the fruits of his labor do not testify very eloquently to the value of the collection. The material of genuine interest that he presents might have been discovered without difficulty in any of the medical libraries of France or in the superb collection of the Surgeon General of the Army at Washington.

Worse, the circumstances of his inquiry give a decidedly lopsided character to his book. All the stress is laid upon French physicians and surgeons at the expense of their colleagues in other countries, and though it is undoubtedly true that French medical men, during the period he covers—"from the early part of the eighteenth century to about 1860"—played parts of enormous importance in the development of their art, particularly on the surgical side, it is equally true that advances of the utmost value were also made elsewhere. As a result of this stress men of obviously inferior talents are given a false significance. For example, Raphael-Bienvenu Sabatier. Sabatier was a respectable surgeon in Paris from 1756 to 1811, "highly esteemed by his professional brethren," but there is not the slightest indication that he stood appreciably above many others of his kind, or that he had anything whatsoever to do

with "the dawn of modern medicine." So with Desgenettes, Napoleon's chief medical inspector. Desgenettes was Larrey's superior, but is certainly not to be mentioned in the same breath with him. If any one man was to blame for the chronic inefficiency of Napoleon's medical service, Desgenettes was. He contributed nothing to surgery. And the only example of his medical skill cited by Dr. Buck shows him to have been an utter ignoramus.

Unfortunately, this lack of a sense of proportion, so essential to the medical historian, is not the worst defect of Dr. Buck's book. It contains a number of slips that almost deserve to be called howlers. On page 109, for example, in discussing the pre-vaccination method of protecting patients against smallpox by the heroic device of inoculating them with the actual disease, he gravely says that "no satisfactory evidence was forthcoming that these inoculations possessed the slightest degree of genuine protective power." And on page 50 he falls into the almost inconceivable error of confusing Konrad Johann Martin Langenbeck, one of the founders of modern surgery, with his equally famous nephew, Bernhard Rudolph, the successor of Dieffenbach at Berlin and for many years the chief military surgeon of Germany. It is difficult to imagine such a blunder being made by an author with access to ordinary medical reference books, or, indeed, to ordinary encyclopedias. What one derives from it and from Dr. Buck's frequent complaints about his difficulties in research—on page 262, for instance, he says that he is unable to find out what sort of work is done at the Saint-Louis Hospital in Paris at the present time—is a feeling that he is an historian full of a laudable curiosity and diligence, but not very well informed and surely not gifted with any special capacity for his task.

His book, in brief, presents a good deal of interesting raw material, but it is not a history. Its arrangement is casual and often absurd. It confuses men of the highest importance and men of no importance at all. It presents a chaotic and unintelligible picture of the progress of the medical sciences during the period under review. The syndics of the Williams Memorial Fund would do well to choose and edit their publications more carefully.

H. L. MENCKEN

## Hyphenate

*The Hyphen.* By Lida C. Schem. E. P. Dutton and Company.

THE central figure in the German-American group that peoples "The Hyphen" is Guido von Estritz. His father was an enthusiastic political theorist who found his ideal in the powerful centralized government of Hohenzollern Germany; his mother was Princess Vasalov, a distant kinswoman of the Romanovs and an ardent revolutionist with several assassinations to the credit of her convictions. These two opposed individuals who experienced the flame of a mutual passion foresaw in their union the possibility of a synthetic child in whom conflicting heritages would combine for profound wisdom and exceptional clarity of vision, and whose life would be the accomplishment of a great destiny. With these high hopes was Guido born. The father died, the mother was thrown into prison, and the care of the precious baby was undertaken by one Ursula von Wendt who had loved Guido's father with an unrequited affection. It had been the parents' determination that the synthetic child should be reared and educated without any taint of that dread force called bias. To carry out this parental desire Ursula von Wendt, Frau Hauser as she became, fled with her charge to the neutral soil of America. The story follows the development of the synthetic victim. The exclusion of all bias becomes the sedulous care of Guido's foster-mother. For almost a thousand pages Guido endures every agony of doubt that is known to man. His soul is swept by the biting winds of all doctrines. Then comes the war to add its deluge to his sea of troubles. More torture at the perfidy of a race whose blood is half his own! Applied Christianity in the form of socialism

ensnares his imagination for a while, but he frees himself when he comes to know some of its least desirable exponents. Meanwhile his heart causes him extreme distress. He successfully, if rather unbelievably, plays Joseph to a succulent charmer; he falls in love with a girl who is ideally suited to his nature; and then he proceeds to stumble into an engagement with a German-American doll who is the incarnation of chaste dulness.

Most very long novels are a sad mixture of virtue and fault, but "The Hyphen" is a masterpiece of inequality even when judged in the company of its own kind. Excellent in parts, it is dismally unsatisfactory as a whole; rich in promise, it is a triumph of frustration. The author, apparently, drew the plans for an imposing work of fiction, but as the business of construction proceeded she became so engrossed in ornamental details and features of dubious importance that she mislaid her drawings. The great pity of it is that Miss Schem possesses nearly all the gifts that go to make a novelist. Her language, although a little tortuous at times, is usually vigorous and effective; she can create characters, and she can, when she allows herself such a diversion, write flowing narrative. But though she can write convincing conversation she does not know when to stop. She endows her characters with true Russian loquacity. At times their interminable discussions are spirited and vital, but often enough they are as devoid of life as the records of a Monophysite controversy.

BEN RAY REDMAN

## The Forsytes

*In Chancery.* By John Galsworthy. Charles Scribner's Sons.

*Awakening.* By John Galsworthy. Illustrated by R. H. Sauter. Charles Scribner's Sons.

WHEN you are not reading them, the works of John Galsworthy, reviewed in memory, create a sense of pallor and primness beneath their grace and wisdom, and you wonder whether they were not, after all, written for the class of people described by John Morley, the class which "will tolerate or even encourage attacks on the greater social conventions, and a certain mild discussion of improvements in them—provided only neither attack nor discussion be conducted in too serious a vein." Then a new play or a new novel by Mr. Galsworthy appears and you read it. The pallor begins to glow and the primness to fade, and you face, with a little shock of astonishment, not only one of the first artists but one of the most intrepid thinkers of the age. The faint hues of his books in memory are once more seen to be due merely to the studious avoidance not only of any excess in the way of speech, but of any sharp or surprising collocation of words. His style flows on in a very smooth and quiet current. We miss the sudden eddies and swift fountains to which most of our eminent contemporaries have accustomed us. "Free will," writes Mr. Galsworthy, "is the strength of any tie, and not its weakness." It sounds so mild and harmless, this truth which "In Chancery" bears out and illustrates. People scarcely believe Mr. Galsworthy aware that its implications are calculated to obliterate institutions and shatter empires. But the joke is on them. He is intensely aware of it all, while guarding the frugality of his quiet speech.

In his new novel he returns to Soames Forsyte, "the man of property," the last and perfect product of Victorian England—"an epoch which had gilded individual liberty so that if a man had money, he was free in law and fact. An era which had canonized hypocrisy, so that to seem respectable was to be. A great Age whose transmuting influence nothing had escaped save the nature of man and the nature of the universe." Like all the Forsytes, Soames had become very rich, and his sense of property, into which he had packed all ideas of order and culture, of family and the state, had become rigid as bone. But a worm gnaws at the foundations. His wife Irene, who, though she ran away from him twelve years ago, can still stir his emotions and his imagination, will not return to him. He cannot dent her cold, firm hatred. Yet is she not his? The whole structure trembles.