

of expurgated German student—ambling among ruined castles and reddening vines”

And than rather rudely: “But frankly, what preparation is a life like this for a poet whose work it is to revivify a people?”

This becomes the refrain. Mr. Brooks burns and begs for thought that shall be real and action that is illuminated. Ways and means he does not consider. He suggests no fertilizers for the soil in which an ideal Americanism can be grown. It is true that he mentions socialism, but that is a word which is too naked to-day to inspire or terrify. I could not free myself of the sense that Mr. Brooks was trying to issue specifications for a messiah. There was one affirmative note which the book seemed to lack—the ultimate democratic realization that we shall have to be our own messiah. Mr. Brooks cannot wait in the wilderness for an authentic revelation. The revelation is here, a living thing—he can see it if he wishes in the very positive aspirations which inspire the destructive comment of his own book. The bible of democracy which Mr. Brooks seems to want everyone but himself to write exists in part because such men as he already desire it, and are so admirably equipped to say why.

W. L.

Emerson Anew

Ralph Waldo Emerson, by Oscar W. Firkins. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. \$1.75 net.

“THERE have been many lives of Emerson, but this is the first since the publication of the ten volumes of journals, which has put into print a vast amount of new biographical and critical material.” This is quoted from the wrapper of the latest book on Emerson. The first of the sentence is indisputable. Mr. Firkins’ book is the first since March, 1914; but the second part is misleading, for the 5,500 odd pages in the published journals, though “put into print” 1909-1914, were all available for the preparation of Mr. Cabot’s two volumes of 1888. The new book reaffirms the Memoir in its 156 pages devoted to Emerson’s life and his friends, and their social and literary activities; and devotes the remainder to a chapter of recapitulations of the successive essays, three chapters in analysis of his prose, his verse, and his philosophy, and a final short essay on his “Foreshadowings.”

The chapters on Emerson’s life are solid and interesting though somewhat of a disappointment to the old reader of Emerson who would like to see the old Emerson presented in scenes and episodes that his literary executor had chosen to omit. His homely joys in Concord, his relations with the Reverend Ezra Ripley and Sam Staples, his gardening, his reading, his stimulating friendship with Ellery Channing, his affectionate regard for George Bancroft and Jones Very, the gradual and natural composition of his notable utterances of 1836, ’37 and ’38, his state of mind while under fire for the Divinity School Address, are still left for some other biographer. The excellence of these early chapters lies not so much in the fresh biographical material as in the fresh effectiveness of certain critical dicta, such, for example, as the following:

Emerson’s peculiar social temper, markedly gregarious but only half companionable, is manifest even in these early days.

The order of decay in these early doctrines [of Emerson’s] seems to have had this course: they became, first subsiding, then useless, then false.

He prepared a life broad enough to include not only

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a mansion for the principles but a playground for the moods.

Alcott is, indeed, a most instructive figure for the critic of Emerson; he represents the upper Emerson cut off from the lower, and by his limitations and relative inefficiency, he illustrates, as nothing else could do, the priceless service which this lower Emerson rendered to the upper.

A defect in the biographical chapters which becomes more marked in the critical portion of the book is a spotty incoherence of treatment. Sometimes this appears in a strange and unheralded jump, as the one from the death of little Waldo to a discussion of transcendentalism with not even a conjunction to bridge the abyss, and sometimes in an awkwardly purfunctory linking, such as “One other feature must be glanced at in this place,” “It is time to say a word or two of—,” “It is now our duty to say something—,” and others of the sort. Such stylistic infelicities would be negligible if they did not yield a clue to the extreme spottiness of the critical chapters. These are exhausting to the reader who wants to carry away group impressions rather than isolated pieces of data. Each of Emerson’s chief essays is epitomized as an independent unit. He is discussed as Prose Writer under XVIII roman-numeraled heads, as Poet under VIII more, one of which has twelve subdivisions, and as Philosopher under XXXI others; all of which inclines the classroom pedagogue, if he is petulant, to reform and lead a better life, or if he is painstaking, to lay those chapters aside against the millennial day when he will have time to study them at length.

The last chapter is happily the best in the book: cordial,

but singularly free from the adulation with which too many otherwise critical works conclude. To Mr. Firkins, Emerson foreshadows the mind of the future in his constant sense of the progressive character of all religion. He offers a "prophecy of the final attitude of mankind after it has put aside both the vindictiveness and savagery of Calvinism and what may seem to its corrected and clarified vision the mawkishness and unctuousness of latter-day Christianity." He is an influence on the best minds, and thus indirectly on the mind of the mass "as quickener and vitalizer in some mysterious fashion which it is easier to revere than to measure." For "the world grows when strength and virtue, muscle and brain, courage and prudence, liberality and piety, liberty and law become capable of circumscription within the rim of a single personality."

A Picture and a Protest

The Way of Martha and the Way of Mary, by Stephen Graham. New York: The Macmillan Company. \$2.00 net.

IN this new volume by Stephen Graham there is a certain fine quality of religious emotion. The book is a kind of ritual dirge for the passing of picturesque Russia, the Russia of colorful peasants, rapt mystics, poverty, and Oriental aloofness from the world. Fundamentally, the book is Christian in its point of view; the outlook on the world of the true Christian, so unforgettably described by Santayana in that remarkable essay, "Modernism and Christianity," is Stephen Graham's. Although the author writes "They tell me that I am a pagan," the old prophetic fervor glows in "The Way of Martha and the Way of Mary," the exaltation of the wanderer and outcast, the passion that seems—why not confess it?—a bit archaic in our own young and worldly-proud, our materially active civilization. Yet it is a book of romantic agony. It is a plaint for the vanishing culture which "progress" has already begun to smear with dirt and ugliness and petty, mercenary ambitions. It is an elegy by a lover of old Russia who shrinks from seeing the empire caught up into the ever-widening, ever-tightening net of the Great Society. If you are looking for sociological hints upon which to erect a new industrial and political organization, you may call it a futile book.

But it is not a futile book, because it mirrors some of that very picturesqueness of which it bewails the passing. In rich, persuasive phrases it illumines and recreates the older and more magical Russia. Stylistically the pages often have gentle beauty, as: "I went to the graveyard where my friend's sister lies buried, an acre of cypress and pine and gentle mounds, where the dank earth seems like bedclothes laid over the dead. To-day this wide melancholy collection of green mounds and wooden crosses was alive with the laughter and songs of children. On the heaps of mouldering earth samovars were humming, and little candles gleamed against a background of lilac blossoms and spring flowers." This may not illustrate the many incidental carelessnesses of the author, yet it does hint at the essential virtue of his writing—its color and its vivid simplicity. Strong, too, is Mr. Graham's feeling for the instinctive grouping of crowds; again and again his sentences evoke the choric, suppliant wonder of great crowds, and communicate the religious thrill that binds together all sorts and conditions of men. For the book as a whole he has chosen his own apt and telling method. It is discursive, but effective—first religious polemic and rhapsody, then compact narrative, then bewitching description—a plas-

tic, bending network of impressions and insights that holds to steadiness and proportion the central idea of the Martha and social service Christianity of the West as contrasted with the truer Christian Russia of Egyptian and Byzantine mould, the country of the good way of Mary.

Mr. Graham has come to be a sort of authority on spiritual Russia, almost its official interpreter to England and America. His early "A Tramp's Sketches" revealed a keen Borrowesque zest for the open, coupled with a discerning and rebellious intelligence. "With the Russian Pilgrims to Jerusalem" confirmed this impression, and showed strong temperamental sympathies with the naïve and touching unworldliness of so much of historical Christianity. Then came the fine, although acidly critical of our ideals of life, "With the Poor Immigrants to America." "Russia and the World" was, so to speak, his official contribution to the great international White Paper of publicists. In "The Way of Martha and the Way of Mary" he has attempted a subtler task. He has, in his own words, attempted to give "an interpretation and a survey of Eastern Christianity," and he calls it "the hardest of all my books to write." Last winter he gave lectures, which contained most of what is vital in part one of his new book, "The Russian Idea," to London audiences, eager to learn the spiritual life of their new ally. One is tempted to ask, almost despairingly, but why cannot more theological books be flecked with such charm and romance?

Perhaps because the conflict between the two types of Christianity, between the East and the West, is not so complex an array of spiritual forces as Mr. Graham suspects. In 1894 Lafcadio Hearn wrote, "The new Japan will be richer and stronger and in many ways wiser, but it will neither be so happy nor so kindly as of old." That is the way Mr. Graham feels about the new Russia, which the typhoon of the war may force out of revolution and blood into strange, quick growth or may temporarily crush. He dislikes it. He hates to see Russia imitate America. He jeeringly contrasts the contempt for convention that is Russia's with the regimented docility that is Germany's. Only scorn is in his attitude for the upstart factory bourgeois. The Russian idea, he writes, is "instead of the world-ideal of garden cities and carefully planned parks and squares, a belief in the maze of the world," "a belief that in apparent failure lies a truer destiny than in apparent success"; Siberia is not an evil place, it becomes almost holy ground—a place of redemption and finding one's own soul. He writes of Artzibashef as a satirist in this country would write of Robert W. Chambers. Gorky has said that "if Russians give themselves up to Dostoevsky, they will become like China," but Mr. Graham does not think his exile has helped him to understand the true Russia. Our author lingers lovingly over the frescoed walls of the churches. He makes pilgrimages to holy places. As he pictures them, Russian peasants will discuss with you on the high road the nature of God long before they will enter the conversational camaraderie of the weather. A disillusionized psychologist might say that all this was a reflection more of a temperamental than a religious reaction. In Russia and the way of Mary Mr. Graham sees glamour: in England and America and the way of Martha Mr. Graham sees only comfortable, colorless commercialism. We have won the world, but in the process the sting and adventure of life have evaporated.

Many incidental shrewd insights, such as, "Nietzsche, that mad Christian, a sort of Mary who hated her sister Martha, calling out in anger that man had ceased to be man and had become merely neighbor," and "Dostoevsky's novel