

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

Siegfried barely conceals beneath his wit and penetration his cold dislike for the Protestant, Anglo-Saxon civilization of "these American Pharisees", and his deep-seated dread of the growing power of their super-collectivist society. Certainly, he has drawn a forbidding portrait of America, though one not without familiar lines, even to Americans.

"A materialistic society, organized to produce things rather than people, with output set up as a god." "The mysticism of success is perhaps their genuine religion." "Service,—the doctrine of an optimistic Pharisee trying to reconcile success with justice." "Their literature,—standardized also!" "Their intense self-satisfaction, their frank and almost brutal self-interest, and, even more dangerous, their self-appointed duty toward humanity." "Superficially free . . . mentally bound." "These credulous people, so lacking in critical faculty." Then in the concluding chapter, this disturbing sentence: "France has the same instinctive fear of American methods as symbolized by Ford as she had of the German system on the eve of the War."

One may well quarrel with the absoluteness of some of these statements without denying that they point to profound and significant truths. Indeed, if one undertook to criticize M. Siegfried's theory of American life, it would be to say that he analyzes us too thoroughly. True Frenchman, he has passionately pursued logic to the illogical. In his desire to complete the picture, to keep it constantly in character, he has ignored the saving contradictions, the regenerative power of American life. Still, if the United States has again proved too big for a single man to see whole, that need occasion no surprise and slight reproach. The book remains a vigorous and stimulating criticism of America today, indicating where it has come from and hinting where it is likely to go.

HENRY M. HART, JR.

Edith Wharton

WILIGHT SLEEP (Appleton, \$2.50) is not really a good title for this novel, however alluring it may be to the casual book buyer; for the whole story is in a positively painful glare of light, and it is as wakeful as a predatory bird of the

night. This latest production of Edith Wharton's pen is marked by those qualities that have made her the foremost of our living American writers; keen intelligence, knowledge of the manners of fashionable society, mastery of literary style, and a coldly ironical view of those grown up children we call men and women. As Ibsen in Munich wrote about Norway and Browning in Italy wrote about England, so Mrs. Wharton from the security and isolation of her home on the Riviera writes about New York.

The last thing to call Mrs. Wharton would be preacher or moralist. None of our American writers has less evangelical fervor. But this novel, like some of her others, is in truth a tremendous Puritan sermon preached from the text, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" If this is the way people live in the upper reaches of society, the expression "well off" is inaccurate. No Diogenes, regarding from his tub with cynical disdain the world of business and pleasure, could give a more unattractive representation of it than does Mrs. Wharton from her place in the sun. These people in the East Sixties, Seventies, and Eighties are too busy to live. *Est fuga, volvitur rota*. They are strivers in a strife that has no importance and no goal; they are as active as squirrels in cages, and make no more progress. They live lives of active uselessness.

Mrs. Wharton, with her incomparable literary art, has done for metropolitan society what Sinclair Lewis has done for Main Street and for Zenith. If one were forced to choose among unhappy alternatives, one would gladly take Main Street in preference to such febrile activity as this. But I ought to add, that although my acquaintance with the members of the fashionable set in metropolitan circles is extremely limited, those persons whom I *do* know seem happier and more worth knowing than these horrible puppets. But then, I always seem fortunate in my acquaintances; I must, indeed, be a lucky man, for in the wide circle of my intimate friends, those engaged in business are better than Babbitt, those living in small towns are better than the denizens of Gopher Prairie, and those who own boxes at the Opera are better than the insane dervishes of fashion represented here.