

Book Reviews

we are constantly brought to a halt in our wonder at the inevitable phrase, the unforgettable word. Brooke's genius consisted in the power to create at a touch, at a word, a magic atmosphere that even time fails to dispel.

Mr. Croft-Cooke, although his work is of imagination and observation all compact, has not yet succeeded in arresting our attention by his compelling style, nor has he yet created that lingering atmosphere of thought and emotion which the best poetry seems somehow to evoke. His success lies, I think, in the fact that he has succeeded in saying a lot of things he evidently wanted to say, and that he has found a way of saying them that is satisfactory, if not profoundly impressive. At any rate, it is an achievement in this purely receptive age for a young man to want to say anything, and a greater achievement still to be able to say it gracefully. Whether the thing was worth saying at all is a different matter.

The production of the book is beyond reproach.

E.E.

JOAN OF ARC. By Hilaire Belloc. (Cassell & Co.; 6/- net.)

'Romantic' has become almost too cheap a word to use in describing the story of St. Joan, and if it be felt too obviously platitudinous to refer to the wide appeal this Saint, Peasant, Maid, Soldier has made to all manner of men and women, then we can only offer the feeble excuse of the inadequacy of words to fit the simple and tragic glory of her history. Read Mark Twain, Andrew Lang, Bernard Shaw, Michelet, Anatole France and Gabriel Hanataux if you would understand something of the universal nature of her appeal, and if you would see how she has divided and united such strangely different men.

Mr. Belloc's short life of St. Joan shows that the story will bear re-telling, and we are glad that one so well fitted has undertaken the task. He who combines French sympathies with an understanding of things English, who lives by the Faith which Joan held, who understands the meaning of war and soldiering, who, moreover, excels in his simple, direct, narrative prose seems better equipped for resurrecting St. Joan in book-form than any of the other writers who have attempted the work before him. The book is written in a straightforward, spontaneous style that a child can understand and revel in, and yet it is no child's book in the ordinary sense. Perhaps that is only saying that it is rare literature. Our only regret is that it is limited to a little more than a hundred pages of print.

B.