

## ROBERT MAYER

ON page 629 of SCIENCE Edward F. Adolph makes the statement that in later life Julius Robert Mayer's "mind gave way before the stupendous and intricate conceptions of the universe to which he was led" and that "he was taken to an insane asylum, but later recovered equilibrium, and spent the rest of his days in the simpler occupation of cultivating the vine." From all that we know, however, it seems safe to say that Mayer was not insane for one minute of his life. It is true that Mayer suffered by his failure to be recognized by his contemporaries and beginning with the day on which Poggendorf refused to print in his "Annalen" Mayer's original paper, most of the competent physicists and physiologists of his time held the opinion that Mayer was a crazy man. How else could he—as an outsider—stick so obstinately to conclusions condemned as insane by the authorities of the profession? From this atmosphere, sufficient reasons presented themselves to put Mayer in an asylum for the insane. One needs but read the correspondence of Mayer to become sufficiently impressed with the tragedy of this unjustified confinement, which rendered Mayer's life perhaps the hardest a great scientist ever had to endure.

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STORRS AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION

## QUOTATIONS

THE FUTURE OF AMERICA<sup>1</sup>

THESE two small books on a great subject are included in the "To-day and To-morrow" series, designed by the publishers to provide a stimulating survey of the most modern thought in many departments of life. Both are accordingly written in a critical and provocative style, compact with aphorisms. America's place in the world is assured and no resentment will be felt there at attempts to discover chinks in her formidable armour. Of the two books, Mr. Bretherton's is the longer and more careful study. Colonel Fuller's suggests the rapid travel impressions of a writer possessing a mature knowledge of world-history.

What is the basis for the strong and not altogether comfortable feeling that America is destined to exercise a powerful influence on the future of the world? The American, "the new white man," marches round

<sup>1</sup> *Midas: or, The United States and the Future.* By C. H. Bretherton. (To-day and To-morrow Series.) Pp. 96. (London: Kegan Paul and Co., Ltd.; New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1926.) 2s. 6d. net.

*Atlantis: America and the Future.* By Colonel J. F. C. Fuller. (To-day and To-morrow Series.) Pp. 96. (London: Kegan Paul and Co., Ltd.; New York: E. P. Dutton and Co.; n.d.) 2s. 6d. net.

the world with his war drum and the European falls in behind "with many a backward glance at the good old days." Nevertheless, the achievements of the United States in art, literature and science are unimportant in relation to their wealth and population. Jazz music and the skyscraper are "the only two new art forms" which Mr. Bretherton is prepared to concede to America as contributions to civilization. As to their education, the United States, he says, have countless universities but no educated class "outside of their college professors, who rank in the social scale a little higher than the average preacher, and a little lower than the average bootlegger." The matter can be tested by the output of books. "More books on natural history, botany and country life generally are published every year in England than have been published in the United States since the *Mayflower* landed there. The same is true of almost every other branch of literature outside of fiction."

As to forms of government, were we not given to understand that America wished to make the world safe from democracy? Mr. Bretherton produces no evidence of any genuine enthusiasm for democracy. Professional politicians, fanatics with a mania for inhibitions, bosses and spellbinders pullulate. The American reacts by forming the habit of acting, thinking, living and believing "by numbers." Prohibition, it is well known, does not prevent an American from getting a drink. But this necessitates a mental process. "He will in the end decide that it is simpler (and more profitable) to stay dry and reserve his mental processes for money-making." So with fundamentalism. The vast majority of American people, Mr. Bretherton asserts, are reconciled to evolution and have no quarrel with science, which scatters machines and fertilizers with a fatherly hand. Fundamentalism will "win through" because big business will decide that the man-machine who pauses intermittently from wielding his shovel to ask himself unanswerable questions about the macrocosm is a shade less efficient—say by one ten per cent.—than if he accepted "the Bible as written." "The most striking thing about the young Americans of to-day," says Mr. Bretherton, "is that they know nothing and have no ideas of their own." They are forgetting how to think. Like goldfish, they chase feverishly round a glass globe, seeming in some mysterious way to be unaware of one dimension. Their industry is amazing, whether in money-making or in ticking off the sights of Europe in Baedeker.

Significantly, neither author attempts a chapter on American humor, perhaps because it would have resembled the famous chapter on snakes in Ireland. The discussion of the American woman seems inadequate to the importance of the subject. Mr. Bretherton regrets her limited output of poetry, fiction and