Certainly there is room for a compact life of John Addington Symonds. The excellent biography compiled by his friend H. F. Brown is too expensive for the ordinary reader to own, and too full for his needs. Mr. Van Wyck Brooks has undertaken to supply the lack of a convenient short study with this little volume entitled "John Addington Symonds" (Kennerley). For his facts he relies chiefly upon Brown's book, though he has made some use of the biographies and letters of Jowett, Stevenson, and other friends of Symonds. Without adding anything of importance that is new, he furnishes a fairly satisfactory outline of Symonds's career, putting the emphasis mainly upon his philosophy of life, his writings, and his literary friendships. We could wish for a somewhat fuller account of his family life, and this might have been added without enlarging the book unduly. Unfortunately Mr. Brooks's criticism is vitiated and his whole view of Symonds's life is biased by his own philosophy of violent individualism. This can best be illustrated by his comment on Cellini. "May it not also be said that, like all true artists, Cellini was an ideal man? Transgressing every moral law, he erred only in relation to the social background — and it is the task of society, not of the individual, to provide the proper background." Society did not, in Mr. Brooks's opinion, provide the proper background for Symonds. His real life was the tragedy of the artist who fails to express himself in art; and the chief reason for his alleged failure was that he had been put through a "grinding mill of respectable education"; "he fell out of the hands of his father only to fall into the hands of Jowett. . . . All the powers that be restrained him, levelled him, coerced him." If his individuality had been properly encouraged by his education, "he might have left such a permanent book as the Opium Confessions or Amiel's Journal." As it is, "the conclusions of Symonds reduce themselves, upon analysis, to sanity and common sense; and it appears certain that nothing is more perilous to long life in literature than sanity and common sense when they are not founded upon clairvoyance." The fallacy of this sort of criticism is so obvious as scarcely to need pointing out; yet no delusions are nowadays more

popular than that the best possible education consists in following the slope of one's inner inclinations, and that the craziest individual vagaries have more literary value than reason and common sense. In justice to Mr. Brooks it should be added that he does not stick consistently to his theory, and that he generally furnishes the facts by which the reader may correct his judgments. Thus he complains that Professor Conington was "a hard man, who tasked Symonds unmercifully," and that in coming under his influence Symonds "exhibited his unhappy faculty for stumbling into the wrong hands." Yet on the next page he says: "That Conington's influence, however limited, was most helpful to him . . . is proved by his later statement that while Jowett taught him to write, Conington taught him to see that 'literature is something by itself, not part of an iridescent nebula.'" Mr. Brooks is willing to admit, too, that Symonds's habit of hard work (gained in that "grinding mill of respectable education") often stood him in good stead; but he does not see that Symonds's education, by strengthening his moral fibre, probably saved him from becoming the victim of ineffectual artistic velleities. Finally, it is to Mr. Brooks's credit that he fairly describes the comparative serenity of Symonds's later view of life, and the fulness and happiness of his last years. Symonds's final attitude is perhaps best expressed in his translation of the prayer of Cleanthes the Stoic, which deserves to be better known:

"Lead thou me, God, Law, Reason, Motion, Life!
  All names for thee alike are vain and hollow:
Lead me, for I will follow without strife,
  Or if I strive, still must I blindly follow."

If the reader can allow for the author's bias, he will find the book a useful one. Unfortunately it is not supplied with an index.