

REVIEWS

GREAT BRITAIN AND THE UNITED STATES. By H. C. Young. (Odhams Press; 45s.)

This major work, modestly decried by its author as not being based upon original documents, demonstrates clearly that Mr Young possesses to a high degree those qualities of meticulous care and dogged perseverance required of a professional historian. The extensive bibliography, in itself only a guide to other material consulted, as well as the many verbatim extracts quoted in the text, afford proof of his painstaking labour over nearly five years. Praise must also be given to the manner of presentation, to the lay-out of the book, from the Table of Contents to the well-compiled Index, and especially to the unobtrusive footnotes which allow the reader to proceed on his way without losing the thread.

At the same time, the energy expended and the quality displayed to some extent put the work in jeopardy of falling between two stools. Mr Young says in his Preface that he has not written 'purely as an academic study', but 'in such a way as to interest the general reader'. The student of history may want more; the general reader, rather less. We are also warned that the author, moved by a strong belief in the necessity of Anglo-American friendship, may show bias. No such bias has been detected by at least one general reader with historical leanings. That is perhaps a pity, since Anglo-American friendship perhaps flourishes best when both sides readily admit bias and mutually respect each other's convictions.

Samuel Johnson defines history as 'a narration of events and facts delivered with dignity'. This book complies with that definition: but it is noteworthy that the learned Doctor did not require a history to relate all possibly relevant facts. It is also questionable whether the average reader, probably more interested in Anglo-American relations now and in the future than in those of an era regarded as closed on both sides of the Atlantic, will possess sufficient stamina to digest nearly a thousand pages of closely packed narrative and quotation. For him, Part IV, recounting Anglo-American relations from 1898 to 1952, preceded by a short summary of earlier relevant events and the consequent psychological atmosphere at the beginning of the century, would probably be more acceptable. He might also look for rather more interpretation, even at the expense of factual statement and even if this would defile the purity of a history as such. Men's motives and intentions are at least as interesting as the things they say and do.

As presented, Part I consists of 200 pages of preliminary discourses

on the economic, sociological, political and cultural relationship between the two nations from Independence Day to modern times. All this has had some bearing on the emotional reactions of both countries. It is, however, the last named which are of prime importance in international attitudes, where dry fact and statistical accuracy is of little weight when balanced against what the mass of the people elect to believe or are persuaded thereto by their leaders. Chapter Six deals with emotional reactions, but might carry more weight were it accompanied, or even replaced, by a judicious summary. A selection of the rude things said by either side about the other in the past is perhaps of less value than a suggestion as to why these things were said. Surely the emotion causing and serving such utterances was that of simple jealousy, arising from breaches of the tenth Commandment. An elaboration of this theme, with the plain statement that both parties have frequently sinned in this way, might go farther towards mutual understanding than a record that Americans accuse the English of inability to cook. This accusation is anyway perfectly true.

Part II, entitled 'Emancipation', begins the political history of events with a Prologue on the American Revolution. This is followed by an account of the British recognition of American independence in 1793 and the subsequent settlement of boundaries between the United States and Canada. Thereafter, by 1821, peaceful and friendly relations had really been established between the two countries and causes of jealousy temporarily removed. England's position in Europe and the world, following the final defeat of Napoleon, seemed to be secure, while the United States had achieved beyond measure her first objective of full recognition as a sovereign state and was concentrating on ways and means of turning herself into a nation. Mr Young deals faithfully and interestingly with this period. Thence we come to Part III entitled 'Isolation', which carries us from 1821 to 1898, covering the American Civil War.

The average English general reader may believe that relations between his country and America during those years of the development of American unity and internal expansion were of little relative importance compared with the industrial revolution in England, the Crimean War and the growth of the British colonial system. Equally the average American general reader may regard the Civil War and the extension of the boundaries of the United States to be matters primarily of domestic concern, whose testamentary dispositions have even now not been wholly settled. Actually, as Mr Young demonstrates, the Civil War marked a turning point in Anglo-American relations. The general public in both countries was fully occupied with adventures in spheres differing in locality and climate; but it was otherwise with its leaders,

whose actions were wiser and further seeing at this period than at many others.

Finally we come to Part IV, which, with its 450 pages, constitutes half the work. It deals with Anglo-American relations between 1898 and 1952 and is entitled simply, 'World Power'. Mr Young admits the danger of trying to write contemporary history in the same calm manner as ancient history. So much that seems important in the short term fades into insignificance a century or two later. Nevertheless the broad outline of the ebb and flow over the past sixty years seems to be fairly described, though even ten years hence, many of the waves recorded may rightly be disregarded as ripples, while currents in the depths, now hardly noticed, may be found to have altered the pull of the ocean.

Mr Young is to be congratulated on his selection of those incidents which now seem to be waves. This is good factual history. But it is the effect of those waves, lasting or transient, of their undertow and the unpredictable gales from heaven, which will shape the pattern of the future. In the span of one lifetime the might of England has diminished as that of the United States has increased. The obvious danger of the consequential reversal of jealousies is, for the time being, mercifully lessened by what Kipling has called 'the ties of common funk'—a very tough bond of union, for which, under God, we must be grateful to the U.S.S.R. Yet, a new and untested factor has appeared affecting international relations. In the past, the mass of the people viewed other countries through the eyes of their chosen leaders. Although this still obtains to no small extent, Western democracies, having already learnt to choose leaders who express the people's views on home affairs, have more than begun to intervene in those leaders' views on foreign affairs. Hence the future of Anglo-American relations will tend more and more to reflect what the average ordinary American thinks of his opposite number in England and vice-versa. Contact between the two peoples, not only physical and direct, but the reading of each other's literature, newspapers and news, the viewing of each other's films and the hearing of each other's broadcasts will rapidly extend the personal interest of the ordinary citizen. The moral is obvious, but whether this development will make it easier to write history—and to make it—or more difficult, only the future can show.

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GROWING UP IN THE CITY. By N. B. Mays. (Liverpool University Press; 17s. 6d.)

This is far from being a mere psychological study or statistical survey