

Where Are We?

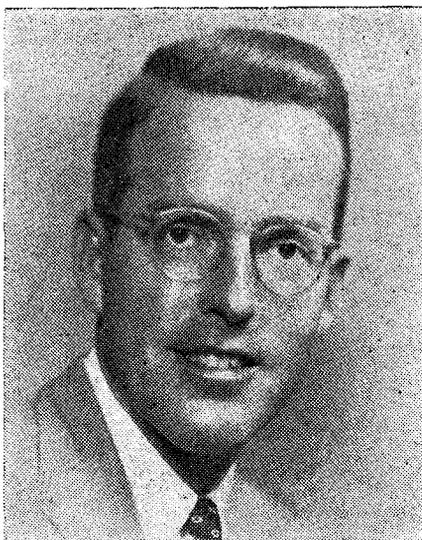
AN ESSAY FOR OUR TIMES. By H. Stuart Hughes. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 196 pp. \$2.75.

By GOLO MANN

THE writer writing about "our times" will have to know how to avoid manifold temptations and pitfalls. There is the danger of determinism and dogmatism, of omniscience, of pretending to know what cannot be known. There is the danger of repetitious rambling. There are the pitfalls of estheticism, of mythologism, of the prophetic gesture. Yet the task remains. Every generation must struggle for the clarification of its own historical consciousness. The questions where are we, where do we go, will have to be put anew by the representatives of each oncoming decade.

Mr. Hughes, a Harvard historian now in his early thirties, has performed this representative task for the men of his age with sensitiveness and circumspection. Unlike the Marxians, the Trotskyites, and Professor James Burnham, he does not undertake to tell us "what is happening in the world." Nor does he coldly inform us, like the German Ernst Jünger, how we are going first to be made into machine tools, then roasted alive, so that a certain esthetic pattern may be fulfilled. Hughes is too modest, too sincere, and too well-bred for such attitudes. Yet what rich information and a vigorous intelligence at the service of a fine, generous mind can achieve, his book has done. It is international, well versed in European and Russian concerns, and at the same time very American: namely, patriotic, worried, open-minded, striving for fairness and reasonableness. Mr. Hughes is as little biased as a man can be. And as things now are, he must be termed courageous in telling us about certain of his findings. Concerning the cold war, for instance, he finds that the Soviet Union was far more often at fault than the United States, but that the question of "who started it" is by itself superficial, and that "the press of this country, with minor exceptions, has neglected or misrepresented the cases of international misunderstanding in which the United States took the initiative." He discusses the positive achievements of Stalinism with the same objectivity with which he probes into its darkest aspects. The chapter on the "transmutation of Marxism" through its adaptation to Russian and Asiatic peasant traditions and realities is a very lucid exposition of a confused and vital development.

From the original Marxian theory



H. Stuart Hughes—"patriotic, worried, open-minded."

Hughes, in his open-minded and eclectic manner, accepts a little more than this reviewer would, which is, of course, a matter of opinion. His interpretation of Fascism and Nazism is not exclusively but largely Marxian, to which is added as much from the opposite or "psychological" school as the economic infrastructure can bear. "Basically it was conservatism in revolutionary dress." A recent expounder of the philosophy of conservatism, Peter Viereck, would violently disagree. Hughes's own descriptions do not entirely agree with his thesis. There is too much explosiveness and disaster, too much terror and "manipulation of the masses," too much imitation of Bolshevik techniques in Nazism to call it "basically conservative."

The author should not be taken to task for this or any other contradiction or vacillation. They are inseparable from his subject matter. He seems sometimes pessimistic, expecting the worst, sometimes reasonably hopeful. He assumes at one moment that Communist and non-Communist civilizations are complementary and can exist peacefully side by side, only to doubt it at the next. This is the case of all of us—humanly and truthfully. The result is that we cannot presume to foretell and to plan the course of future history. The one thing in the world we can shape and control is our own attitude, namely, "to cultivate intellectual honesty, a good temper, and a broad appreciation of the ultimate humanistic goals that unite and transcend the competing ideologies of our era."

Golo Mann, author of "Secretary of Europe: The Life of Friedrich Gertz, Enemy of Napoleon," is associate professor of history at Claremont Men's College, California.

Nipponese Gamut

JAPAN SINCE PERRY. By Chitoshi Yanaga. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co. 723 pp. \$6.

THE WESTERN WORLD AND JAPAN. A Study in the Interaction of European and Asiatic Cultures. By G. B. Sansom. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 504 pp. \$6.

By KENNETH SCOTT LATOURETTE

JAPAN from Perry to MacArthur forms one of the most dramatic chapters in the history of mankind. A highly civilized nation more populous than Great Britain, by the voluntary act of its rulers as nearly hermetically sealed against the outside world as was ever a people of comparable dimensions, was abruptly thrust into the complex currents of the mid-nineteenth century. Again led by her rulers, she adopted and adapted to her use the culture of the all-encompassing Occident and quickly won her way to recognition as one of the major powers of the earth. With this transformation came a bid for empire and within ninety years of the arrival of the "black ships" of Perry Japan seemed to have made herself mistress of much of East Asia and of the adjacent and rich islands of the Western Pacific. That adventure massed against her the resistance of her neighbors and of much of the Occident. Succumbing to overwhelming might, for the first time in her history she was occupied by foreign conquerors. Within slightly less than a century Japan had run the full gamut from isolation through apparent Westernization and vaulting ambition for economic and political domination of a third of the population of the globe to prostration and attempted remaking at the hands of the very country through whose insistent invitation she had entered the modern world. Here is high tragedy on a colossal scale. Now that the era has been completed the time has come to view it as a whole.

The pioneer serious attempt at this comprehensive survey is, fittingly, by an American of Japanese ancestry, one who in his own person combines the heritage of the two main actors in the drama. Professor Yanaga is admirably equipped for the task. He has been trained in the methods of the objective study and writing of history, and uses both English and Japanese. His bibliography and his narrative give ample evidence of the diligence with which he has gone into what is available in print in both languages, especially in Japanese. His major emphasis has been upon the political

aspects of the story. These he has covered from the eve of the coming of Perry into the first years of the occupation. He has given us a sober, competent summary of the internal developments in the government of Japan and of the relations of that government with other governments, including Japan's territorial expansion and wars. He has covered the economic and cultural features of the period only in so far as they illumine the phases of the history in which his chief interest lies. As is proper, slightly more than half of the book is devoted to the last third of the ninety-five years, those stirring decades which began with Japan's entry into World War I. He traces with great skill the conflicting currents in Japan's internal politics which issued in the fatal dominance of the extremists of the armed forces. Based as they are upon the discriminating reading of the Japanese printed sources and written with a restraint which seldom deviates from severe objectivity—and then only by an occasional qualifying adjective or adverb which shows the author's abhorrence for the mad course of the military—, to those fairly familiar with the American side of the story they are the most interesting and illuminating pages of the volume.

Little space is given to the details of military and naval operations. Economic developments are dealt with only incidentally. The notices of cultural changes—in education, thought, religion, and social institutions and customs—are even briefer. Moreover, Professor Yanaga has not ventured into the huge mass of pertinent material in Chinese, Russian, and Western European languages. To cover this would have required a lifetime and would have expanded the single volume into a substantial shelf.

It is fortunate that within a twelve-month we should have not only the volume by Dr. Yanaga but also the most recent book of Sir George Sansom, for the two complement each other. Sir George Sansom is rightly regarded as the doyen among English and American specialists on Japan. In this present volume he concerns himself with the total impact of the Occident upon Japan and of the response of the Japanese. He endeavors to set this against the background of the coming of the culture of the West into the South and East of Asia and to that end devotes a third of his pages to the pre-nineteenth century Occidental invasion of India and the Far East. He then covers the course of the contact of Japan with Europe and America from its beginning in the fore part of the sixteenth century to the war between Japan and China in the mid-

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Humor. Time was when every small library possessed a small shelf of books labeled "Humor" crowded with the latest works of such writers as Robert Benchley, Stephen Leacock, and Frank Sullivan. Close by was a shelf labeled "Essays" tight with the writings of Agnes Repplier, Logan Pearsall Smith, and Katharine Fullerton Gerould. But the shelves devoted to the casual essay, humorous or serious, are sparsely filled now, if they are not gone altogether, an ebbing hastened by such competitive distractions as newsmagazines, the radio, television. Enough humor is still published between book covers to make a discriminating reader wish for more, quantitatively and qualitatively. Three samples of the current humor crop are reviewed below: A. C. M. Azoy's review of American history, "Paul Revere's Horse"; Will Cuppy's posthumous "How to Attract the Wombat," and Francis L. Golden's grabbag "Jest What the Doctor Ordered."

Anent Diverse U. S. Heroes & Heroines

PAUL REVERE'S HORSE. By A. C. M. Azoy. New York: Doubleday & Co. 256 pp. \$2.50.

BY BERGEN EVANS

THE statement in the enlarged title on the jacket that this book deals with "Delectable Data" and "Fact and Fiction Connected with Diverse National Heroes and Heroines" suggests that it is an examination of various fallacies concerning American history, and, indeed, it does include a few pieces of information that vary from the commonly accepted stories. But few textbooks will have to be rewritten to accommodate the not-so-startling facts that Paul Revere's horse was a mare, that the battle of Bunker or Bunker's Hill was really fought on Breed's Hill, an adjacent eminence, that Molly Pitcher's surname was "McKolly," not "McCauly," and that Sheridan was not twenty but only fifteen miles away.

A great many textbooks, however, could be very profitably rewritten in Colonel Azoy's engaging style. He is addicted to alliteration, he occasionally permits himself the facile triumph of post-facto omniscience, and he has

an annoying trick of shifting to the present tense for dramatic emphasis. These, however, are but minor irritations, easily forgotten in the larger virtues of his humor, his learning, his military knowledge, and his powers as a narrator.

His book is made up of fifteen incidents from American history—six from the Revolutionary War, three from the Civil War, Custer's impetuous disappearance up the valley of the Little Big Horn, and five episodes based on the Spanish-American War.

The Revolutionary stories have been worked over so thoroughly that Colonel Azoy has little to add but verve and some soldierly speculations. He sides, by the way, with those who hold that Molly Pitcher did work the guns, though his assertion that the Continentals "proudly sang" a song about her "nearly three centuries ago" must be put down as a slip.

From the Civil War he has chosen the attack on Fort Sumter, Sheridan's ride from Winchester to Cedar Creek, and the Battle of Mobile Bay. It is interesting to learn that the torpedoes which Admiral Farragut so boldly damned were what we call mines and but for the fact that they were defective posterity would in all probability never have learned of his splendid defiance.

Of the incidents leading up to Custer's last stand he gives a clear and detailed account but does not attempt to lift the veil that covers the massacre itself. About that, he says, nothing was known, is known, or is likely to be known.

The section of the book devoted to the Spanish-American War is by far the best. The inglorious facts are more accessible and have been less



—From an old print.