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THE AMERICAN ECONOMY. By A. J. Youngson Brown. Library Publishers, New York, 1952. 208 pp. \$4.75.

The story of the settlement and population of this country, of the taming of its wilderness and the rise of its farms, factories and cities will always be a fascinating one. It has been told many times, and sometimes well, but often a great deal has been left unexplained because the narrator has neglected to chart the economic winds and currents which are the real forces which speed and direct the political ship of state.

New books of all sorts on the history of America find readers every year. Naturally most of them are by Americans. But occasionally it is interesting, and instructive too, to view the panorama of our past and present as it is seen from across the sea.

An old gentleman once told me, "No one should attempt to write the history of a foreign country until he has learned to speak its language, relish its cooking, play its games, and laugh at its jokes."

No doubt there is a grain of truth in this, as there is in most epigrams. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that many of the greatest works in the literature of history have been written by "foreigners." Every schoolboy is familiar with Bryce's *American Commonwealth*, and many know his *Modern Democracies* and *Holy Roman Empire* at least as begettors of footnotes. Prescott, surely one of the greatest historians this country has produced, gave his attention almost entirely to the history of Spain and the Spanish-American peoples.

It may be just as difficult to achieve complete objectivity when writing about one's own country as to understand the motives, manners and ideas of strangers. For the "national" characteristics of our neighbors, so often ascribed to race, etc., can almost always be traced to their economic environment and political history, and these, after all, are matters of written or unwritten record.

A. J. Youngson Brown, the author of this little account of the development of the American economy, is an Englishman, and lectures on economic history at Cambridge University. His book is the fruit of one of the Fellowships created by the Commonwealth Fund of New York for post-graduate study in this country.

Though he very obviously enjoys his subject immensely, Mr. Brown has made his work a comparatively short one. It is, however, remarkably complete and comprehensive. And though it is thoroughly scholarly, the documentation has been reduced to a minimum, and does not interfere with the reader's enjoyment of a well planned, well executed and readable narrative.