Book Reviews

The Price of Power. America since 1945. Herbert Agar. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1957. 200 pp. $3.50.

In *The Price of Power,* Herbert Agar is a publicist rather than a reporter, a painter rather than a photographer, and, I am tempted to say, a wise man rather than a scholar. A critic may say that, wise man or not, he cannot see the trees for the forest. There is no tree-by-tree analysis of the forest of American policy in the era of Truman and Eisenhower. Such detail as finds its way into this small volume is illustrative and symbolic; the result is clarification, not verification of Agar's main themes.

Progress toward ordering and understanding an apparent chaos of events and observations may not be so different in the world of science and the world of affairs as is generally assumed. It is by an alternation of brilliant hypothesis and meticulous investigation that truth can be approached, even though absolute truth can never quite be reached. Agar's intuitive, impressionistic effort to discover for Americans the inner meaning of our times is no substitute for patient historical research. It is, however, a storehouse of hypotheses which the historian may test in his detailed research. The historian has desperate need for such hypotheses if he is not to be the victim of America's office technology, which is producing records in a volume much greater than can be given even the most cursory future inspection.

The Price of Power is something else, too. It is a message by a participant-observer of momentous events and by an observer of great personages to his fellow-citizens. The book may, as the editor of *The Chicago History of American Civilization* suggests in the preface, become for future generations "itself a historical document," but the obvious intent of the author is to speak to his contemporaries. Agar's description of the great events of the postwar years can hardly be set down with the disinterested detachment of the astronomer who knows that by his observations he cannot alter the stars in their courses. As a publicist and editor, Agar is interpreting the immediate past in a way that he hopes will shape the immediate future.

As an avowed believer in internationalism, the right to nonconformity, and Presidential leadership, he has his heroes and his villains. Senator Vandenberg is the leading hero and Senator McCarthy the leading villain. For the rest, Agar stops far short of scorn for those with whom he disagrees and far short of idolatry for those whose goals he shares. Occasionally, his vignettes are as brilliant as they are balanced. Of President Truman in 1945, he wrote: "During the next few years this strange little man—lively and pert to the verge of bumptiousness; more widely read in history than any President since John Quincy Adams; more wilful than any President since James K. Polk; more incompetent in dividing the good from the bad among his own friends at home than any President since Warren Harding—would make and enforce a series of decisions upon which, for better or for worse, our world now rests, or shakes."

President Eisenhower may be surprised to learn from Agar that when he came to the Presidency he was "something far more old-fashioned and far more interesting than 'a good Kansas Republican': he was a Whig." Whigs believed in keeping the powers of the Presidency small; the most famous Whigs, Clay and Webster, were senators. "With General Eisenhower, for the first time, a President of great authority and popular appeal has carefully refrained from power." An alternative explanation for President Eisenhower's scrupulous unwillingness to exceed his constitutional powers is that as a general trained in a country with a strong tradition of civilian control, he has had a lifelong habit of acting only when his authority to act is not to be questioned.

Some of the American disappointment with the shape of the postwar world, Agar suggests, is of our own making. We need not have been so disillusioned with Soviet behavior if we had not persisted so long in our war-time illusions. Nor need we have embarked on the great McCarthyite witch-hunt if we had had the maturity to recognize that America was not all powerful. We would not then have had to resort to hunting for traitors at home in order to explain unpleasant events abroad.

Although Agar strikes a "two minutes to midnight" note in his closing paragraphs, in the body of his work he rejects alike the realistic pessimism of historical inevitability and the utopian pessimism of believing that nothing short of millenial reform can make the slightest difference. The price of power is constant, unremitting thought about how to use great but limited power to support world-wide and limitless goals.

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Glacial and Pleistocene Geology. Richard F. Flint. Wiley, New York; Chapman & Hall, London, 1957. xiii + 553 pp. Plates. $12.50.

This book follows essentially the same outline as Flint's *Glacial Geology and the Pleistocene Epoch,* published in 1947, but is slightly shorter. Roughly three-fifths of the text is devoted to characteristics of glaciers, to speculations about causes of glaciation, and to the various direct and indirect effects of glaciation; the balance is a treatment of Pleistocene stratigraphy, with emphasis on North America and Europe. A valuable bibliography of 866 titles is included.

Many of the subjects discussed in the earlier volume are brought up to date. Inclusion of such new topics as deep-sea sediments, frozen-ground phenomena, soils, and radiocarbon dating serves to emphasize the rapidly expanding scope of Pleistocene research during the last decade. A major addition is the presentation of stratigraphic information in the form of correlation tables, which doubtless will prove to be among the most controversial subjects in the book. Flint recognizes the obvious hazards in this choice and repeatedly warns that the unsatisfactory status of Pleistocene stratigraphic nomenclature and the numerous uncertainties involved in correlation render his present opinions extremely tentative. Names for substages of the last (Wisconsin) glaciation in central North America, which have been used for the last 25 years, are either rejected or relegated to the category of local usage, and no alternative general terminology is suggested. Flint correlates Pleistocene glaciations in several mountain ranges of western North America and also relates pluvial lake stages to mountain glaciation; however, he does not attempt to correlate mountain glaciation with con-