

BOOKS

Alexander Boardman

RIGHTEOUS WRATH . . . BUT DESERVED!

"A Time for Greatness," by Herbert Agar. Little, Brown and Co., New York, 1942. 301 pp. \$2.50.

Herein Herbert Agar drives home one lesson: *now* is the time for greatness. It is so clearly and so forcibly silhouetted in each chapter from Politics through Economics, Equality, Business, Labor, Civil Liberties to Thinking, and fighting for our Thinking, that it stands out among all of the since-Pearl-Harbor-books as a top "must."

The book is a succinct analysis of the steps which have led up to conditions which could only result in World War II; of our present thinking and the directions in which it is leading us; and conversely, the steps that must be taken to assure a reasonable solution. It isn't a happy picture, but Agar assumes we are great enough to do the job as well as Washington, Jefferson, Franklin and Hamilton did theirs.

The chapter on Equality is one of the best essays in our literature. Terse phrases reveal the author's ability at brevity: "The war must begin again—must always begin again until our world is dead—unless we define the causes of our failure and insist that the *causes* be abolished." Again, "The excitement of our technological revolutions was so great that we gave ourselves to simple enjoyment of the machine, with the result that in many places the spirit of our culture withered away. We must now repair in a hurry what we allowed to decay over the decades."

Agar issues a sombre warning to men who would make political expediency out of our sacred post-war obligations, when he reveals how a few unscrupulous politicians prepare the path for this second disaster.

Mr. Agar's chapter on the relations of the United States—the democratic idea—and the communism of Soviet Russia is calmly analyzed. It will do much to allay fears, if those giving birth to them, are intelligent enough to read this book.

There are few attempts in the book to point out direct methods, which may have been intentional with the author, but his analysis of the economic field, his implications on land value taxation

MEGANAPOLIS—A BOOK FOR GEORGEIST SHELVES

"New York Plans for the Future," by Cleveland Rodgers. Harper & Bros., N. Y.; 1943. 293 pp. \$3.00.

With the adoption of the new city charter in 1936, a City Planning Commission was set up. This body has been drawing up a master plan and locality plans of great effect in New York. Out of notes taken at its meetings Cleveland Rodgers, one of the members, has written a book.

The book is a "must" for civic leaders everywhere. For New Yorkers it deserves a place on the private bookshelf, next to the formal history of the city and the guide to its entertainments.

The author glories in his town, knows its good points, and the bad. It is at once the glamorous light drawing everyone to it, and also the place that others "would not think of living in." Everything can be bought in New York, yet poverty and slums abound. He points out that while the inhabitants will wrangle about their city, still it provides the greatest number of services and conveniences in quantity and quality of any large city. Others can learn from it, and will profit from its adventures; it is a model well worth the study.

The fundamental greatness and fault of New York is its land and natural resources. With one of the finest harbors in the world, it is the inevitable seaport of the East Coast. All roads lead to it, and while heavy manufacturing has left New York, it has been replaced by the largest processing and assembling industries. A diversity of employments has made this leading city of the world well entrenched in banking, small industries, commerce and entertainment. But accompanying all this is a troublesome and chaotic land policy.

Mr. Rodgers has a familiarity with George, as parts of his work indicate. He noted that few people realize the city was originally the owner of nearly all its land. Parcel by parcel, the land was sold or leased for a song to pay for the public services that its

and free trade, leave one wishing he had given them more emphasis. It is clear that he understands those principles and could have stressed them.

Mr. Agar has the ability to state

population clamored for. Lack of understanding about the need for zoning, and corrupt municipal authorities denied the people that which was their birth-right. The slimy story of Tammany is adequately told. Through these decades the public debt rose to such fantastic heights that the city is still staggering under a load fostered by rapacious and "individualistic" landowners. Real estate taxes alone cannot keep the city on a going basis, under the present setup.

The city must lend ear to its City Planning Commission. New York may seem overpopulated, but it is really underdeveloped. Less than a third of its area is properly built upon. Another third is covered with obsolescent buildings that strain the city's finances. A considerable portion is vacant land. Without even touching the vacant land, the population can be doubled and comfortably housed, the industries can be doubled in number and efficiency. Strict zoning, the razing of obsolete structures, and the consequent lowering of the price of land, are the answer.

When a new subway line or auto highway is constructed to the outer reaches of the city, new houses rise like magic along the way. The landowners reap fantastic prices, the new residents clamor for municipal services, while along the old routes where such services are already existent, realty values go down, taxes cannot be met, and a slum prematurely begins. These far-flung routes waste people's time in excessive travel, waste the city's finances in duplication of services, and cause economic and political conflicts where localities border on other towns and states.

New York City is an empire in itself, yet limited by a hostile state government. The metropolis has to beg others for permission to benefit itself, while it furnishes the means to keep its captor solvent. It deserves free local self-government, and the understanding of authorities so that it may rise unhampered to the truly great status it can reach.

A. B.

what he wishes stated so well that too many questions do not enrich his text. It may be his strict honesty and integrity which have made him lean over backward.—S. CLEMENT HORSLEY.