

cuss the general problem of selection for public libraries. Roden says:

Book selection is not a process that will soon or easily come to rest upon a scientific foundation to which all its implications can be referred or upon which all its problems can be solved.

He concludes, however, that the era upon which the public library is entering may be one in which its primary objectives will shift from recreational to educational. Carnovsky develops this theory in "Community Analysis" in which he argues for a library that will give the people what they need rather than what they want. Of more practical application for the librarian, at the moment, are two papers based on actual practice: "Selecting Books for a Technical Department" and "Organization of Internal Processes in Book Selection for Public Libraries." "Book Selection in a Modern High School" and "Book Selection in a Liberal Arts College" complete the group.

In "Contemporary Fiction and Non-Fiction," George Stevens, until recently editor of the *Saturday Review of Literature*, applies the glass to the book reviewer to show how hazardous, and why, has become the task of book selection. Max Lerner, in "Important Books of the Last One Hundred Years—Political Science, Economics, and Sociology," lists ninety-odd titles with plausible reasons for his selection. A quibbler might suggest other books of equal importance, but no one can deny the excellence of the list as it stands. Other papers in the second group include "Evaluation of Historical Writing" by Louis Gottschalk, "Literature as Propaganda" by Henry Hazlitt, and "Popularizing Science" by Kaempffert.

Some interesting and laudable experiments have been made by publishers in

recent years in the production of inexpensive, readable, and beautiful books. Illustrative of the papers in this group is Melcher's "The Publisher as a Factor in Popular Reading," in which he describes several of these experiments. He mentions, further, the publisher's influence in establishing new outlets for books, in making books more attractive in appearance, and in cooperative efforts to establish uniform prices throughout the country.

The *Practice of Book Selection* is the most interesting of the four volumes that have come from the Chicago institutes. It is addressed primarily to public librarians, but several of the papers have more general appeal, especially those on literary criticism. More attention to book selection in college and university libraries would have increased its usefulness. Without disparaging the quality of any of them, the space given to one or more of the papers might have been devoted to these institutional problems without appreciable loss to public librarians.

The readers of this volume would have been interested in the discussions which followed each lecture. In subsequent publications in this series, perhaps the essential and relevant portion of these discussions can be cited and included as appendices.—*Benjamin E. Powell, University of Missouri, Columbia.*

How to Read a Book; the Art of Getting a Liberal Education. Mortimer Adler. Simon and Schuster, 1940. 398p. \$2.50.

"THE FIRST RULE of the first reading of any book is to know what kind of book it is." So states the author on page 159 of the book under review. For those who have not yet read the book, it may be well to say what kind of book Mr. Adler

has written. He has written an introduction for a technique of reading for the person who wants "to learn to read better, and then, by reading better, to learn more of what can be learned through reading." In the same book, however, Mr. Adler has two other matters to present. He offers a critique of current educational practices and a list of "great books." His attack on the first of these and his defense of the second are sometimes inserted in the development of his major objective, a technique for reading, and the whole book is enlivened thereby.

Of his technique for reading this may be said. He offers a pattern for approaching a book and reading it that is complete and satisfactory, although the application of the pattern involves painstaking, hard work for the reader who seeks to employ it for the first time. While full of practical common sense, the book offers no short-cut to self-improvement. It may as well be stated frankly that the book will be of little help to a poor, inefficient, or unintelligent reader, or to any person unwilling to read patiently through the book with every attention. The author's careful beginning, his examination of assumptions and his definitions are, in my opinion, too much for the average reader, but well worth the consideration of those of us who earn our bread by reading or by promoting reading. The gist of Mr. Adler's remarks on a reading technique were once available in more succinct form and would probably be more generally useful than the present book. I am referring to his mimeographed address delivered to the Alumni School of the University of Chicago.

Mr. Adler's concern with present educational policies and practices is well known and needs no restatement here.

His criticisms turn constructive as he speaks for a return to the reading of the "great books" of our culture. In the latter part of *How to Read a Book* these classics (substantially the same as those embraced in the curriculum of St. John's College) are listed and the publishers of available editions indicated. Throughout the development of his technique for reading, Mr. Adler always aims at the reading of these books. Consequently he says little about the reading of imaginative literature.

While many of Mr. Adler's arguments on education and his proposed remedy are open to debate, and have, indeed, been debated, his desire to be helpful is sincere and more than evident. The heart of the book is practical. Of his style of writing, the only adverse thing to be said concerns the occasional sharpness of his tongue.

Readers advisers can recommend this book to intelligent readers who are apparently sincere in their efforts to learn through reading. The author's extensive, almost excursive, treatment may prevent the average reader from finishing the book. —Robert A. Miller, *University of Nebraska, Lincoln*.

A List of Books for College Libraries, 1931-38. Charles B. Shaw, comp. American Library Association, 1940. 284p. \$6.

"THE SHAW LIST," published in 1931 for the Carnegie Corporation of New York to aid college libraries in rounding out their collections, is familiar to most American librarians. It was called the "Second Preliminary Edition;" but the 1940 list is not a new edition but a supplement to it. In fact, the use of this supplement will be crippled if the earlier list is not at hand, because the explana-