

it is charged with a genuine enthusiasm for the demolition of regimentation in college education. The book presents with more partiality than judicial detachment the case for a flexible curriculum, for the destruction of artificial barriers between fields of learning, and for the abandonment of such old educational habits as grades and examinations. One special satisfaction in reading this book comes from the frequency with which bibliographical work is stressed as part of each student's program. Evidently this is not mere lip service to the place of the library in the new design, but a sincere confession of faith in the importance of teaching students to move easily and independently among sources of knowledge.

In the best sense, this is a provocative book. It leaves with one reader, at least, a desire to argue the case. One wishes to ask if mathematics, with its orderly and logical progression from part to part, can really be relegated successfully to the category of a tool chest, from which one small screw may be extracted for use in putting together ideas in another course. Will anything but grinding at a language give one understanding of it, so that it may be truly useful? If one is led on gently from enthusiasm to enthusiasm in college, without submitting to the routine of class work, where will one learn the habit of drudgery, upon which success in intellectual work so often depends after college days are over? How can versatility and a light teaching load enable even an unusual professor to give expert guidance in a field related to his own, but of which he is not master? May not superficiality and smartness result under such circumstances and are these less dangerous faults than the rigidity ascribed to work in the more traditional colleges?

Has not "the orderly acquisition of subject matter" as an educational objective of the first importance found vindication forever in the brilliant achievements and constructive work of men and women formed by the scholarly disciplines of hundreds of traditional colleges?

The fair-minded reader of this graceful and stimulating book, in which a progressive college is the protagonist, will not find an answer to his questions in one easy *Aye* or *Nay*. The house of American education is one of many mansions. So long as its rooms are thronged by 1,350,000 students annually, and so long as the path beyond it "leads up hill all the way," there must continue to be "beds for all who come." Evidently the hospitality offered by Sarah Lawrence has found wide and deserved appreciation.—*Blanche Prichard McCrum, Wellesley College Library, Wellesley, Mass.*

*Liberal Education in a Democracy; a Charter for the American College.*  
Stewart G. Cole. Harper, 1940.  
309p. \$3.

THE CONFUSION OF PURPOSE that characterizes the programs of many liberal arts colleges gives rise to this book whose purpose is to discuss questions dealing with the direction the American college is taking in its development, the standards by which it may be guided, and the program by which such standards may be implemented.

Six criteria of excellence in liberal education are presented here by Dr. Cole, former college president. Based upon study of the history of the American college and the psychology of personality, through which students' needs are discovered, these criteria embody an approach somewhat metaphysical in character.

The first four criteria express the progressive ideas now being carried out at some of our best colleges. The distinctive elements in Dr. Cole's program are contained in his last two criteria: "A religious philosophy of life" and a thorough understanding of the "language medium of the educated person." The former, by providing the student with an aim in life gives meaning, direction to his work, develops fruitful civic consciousness. The latter is a tool to aid the student in all his work, to help him appreciate the fundamental value of communication in modern life.

The semantic approach is valuable, especially today, when language is such a potent force. There is doubt, however, about the acceptance of Cole's highly idealistic religious approach, admirable though it be. That religion is waning, is a recessive force in our culture, the author would probably admit. Religion is the embodiment of a fundamental philosophy of life; something we lack in our day. This lack cannot be supplied with good intentions alone.—*Morris A. Gelfand, Queens College Library, Flushing, N.Y.*

*What Reading Does to People. A Summary of Evidence on the Social Effects of Reading and a Statement of Problems for Research.* Douglas Waples, Bernard Berelson, Franklyn R. Bradshaw. University of Chicago Press, 1940. xi, 222p. \$2.

DR. WAPLES believes that our theories of reading influence have been oversimplified and that we need more objective information about the nature of the reading process and about the social effects of reading because in times of crisis the violence with which changes will occur "depends in large part upon how the several

agencies of mass communication are used to clarify and to interrelate the interests of contending factors."

This book attempts to present a "synthetic review of the literature," and to outline the field of research in the social psychology of reading.

The authors first cover the nature and importance of print as a means of communication in relation to other means of communication, and the state of our present knowledge about the social effects of reading. They then attempt to isolate the factors which explain the existence of some publications and the nonexistence of others: i.e., the influence of the character of society, of the interests of the persons who write and who publish, of government, the church, the school, and of special-interest groups. Next they attempt to show that the channels of distribution canalize both readers and publications and that the reader is seldom a free agent with unrestricted choice: this section goes on to discuss the roles of libraries and of other agencies in the distribution of publications of various types to readers of various types. Further, an attempt is made to set up criteria for the analysis of the content of publications in terms of the hypothesized social effects of various types on readers of various types. This is followed by a discussion of the role played by the readers' predispositions in determining what they read, how they read it, and how they interpret it, as well as motives in reading and other individual factors that may be involved in the relation between individuals and books.

The remainder of the book traces the changing patterns of reading through time, reviews the evidence on effects of reading that is available from case studies, gives a topical outline of reading as a field of