

sification, administration, book production, and bookselling" throughout the whole ancient period; two pages contain a glossary of Latin words; and twenty pages, in fine print, are devoted to notes and bibliographies. With such a distribution of materials it is difficult to understand for what kind of readers the book is intended; on the one side it is over-journalistic, on the other it is over-erudite. One must suspect that Prof. Thompson has combined lectures delivered to amateur book clubs with selections from his own research notes.

In neither respect is the book wholly satisfactory as a contribution to the historical literature of librarianship. For Egyptian and Mesopotamian libraries the treatment is inadequate and sometimes inaccurate. In the discussion of Greek libraries the Hellenic and the Hellenistic civilizations are not clearly defined. The section on Roman libraries, like that on technical matters, is in large part a repetition of corresponding sections in his *Medieval Libraries*. Finally and most unfortunately the bibliographies lack critical annotations.

Yet in spite of these imperfections this book should be acquired by every historical library. In this field, as always, Prof. Thompson makes comparisons, throws off suggestions, and opens perspectives which will illuminate more laborious and better documented treatises on the same subject, compiled by precise but less talented men.—*Pierce Butler, Graduate Library School, University of Chicago.*

Wings for Words; The Story of Johann Gutenberg and His Invention of Printing. Douglas C. McMurtrie. Rand McNally, 1940. \$2.

PERHAPS none of the writers who have

contributed to the literature of the past year on the invention of printing has set himself a more difficult task than Mr. McMurtrie in this book, which purports to be the story of Johann Gutenberg and the conditions under which printing from moveable type was invented and developed in the Western world. The format and treatment are evidently intended to interest adolescent readers.

Mr. McMurtrie has wisely seen that the scanty data available on the life of Gutenberg and the progress of his invention are far from the kind of thrill one receives from a western or a mystery story. If he has ignored some of the possibilities for sensation afforded by the disturbed period of which the work treats, he has added greatly to the value of his book by sticking closely to authentic sources and has confined the fictional additions to details which add interest but in no way affect the historical integrity of the story.

Two or three adults who have read it report it interesting and informative. The appendix on the mechanics of early printing and the list of important dates in printing are intended for adults and give the book reference value in many adult departments. The illustrations are really an aid to a fuller understanding of the text.

The book is not a substitute for Mr. McMurtrie's more technical researches, nor is it intended to be. There is a large number of persons, even among college students, who know little about the beginnings of printing or the conditions under which the process was developed. For these the book will be an accurate and interesting source of information.—*Frank K. Walter, University of Minnesota Library.*