



*They laughed when I
sat down at the piano*

*—but they were amazed
at the music I played!*

We had taken a "Surprise Party" for Aunt's birthday and wanted a sing-song to start the fun. No one could play—and thought I couldn't, either—and chuckled when I offered. But in a minute they were singing lustily to my accompaniments of many new and old-time songs. Soon I had them dancing; a fox-trot, a modern waltz, a one-step. Yet 6 weeks ago I couldn't play a note: that was before I started the quick, easy, PLAY-BY-EAR course with the Niagara School of Music. I've been invited to scores of parties since, so naturally I'm thrilled with what I've learned with so little effort, without tiresome scales and exercises.

YOU, too, can do that—post coupon with 3d stamp for descriptive booklet, "The Niagara Secret," that tells how. 3.5

The Niagara School of Music,
53 Robertson Street, Invercargill.
Enclosed is 3d stamp for "Niagara Secret."

Name.....

Address.....

L2

What a friend!

if YOU have

INDIGESTION



"When after-meal pains take all the pleasure out of eating, what a friend in need is De Witt's Antacid Powder! It neutralises gastric acidity so quickly that even after one dose you may feel the pain dispersing and your disturbed stomach beginning to settle down. But it does more than ease immediate distress. It soothes and protects the inflamed stomach lining so that your next meal will not further irritate an upset digestive system.

So if you always wonder *dare I risk it?* before eating the things you like, turn to De Witt's Antacid Powder for the help you so obviously need. Get the sky-blue canister from your chemist to-day.

DeWitt's

ANTACID POWDER

Price 2/6, double size 4/6 (incl. Sales Tax)
A product of E. C. De Witt & Co. (N.Z.) Ltd.,
8, Herbert Street, Wellington, New Zealand.

BOOKS

Art in Otago's First Century

A CENTURY OF ART IN OTAGO. Edited by H. H. Tombs. Hurry H. Tombs Ltd., Wellington.

(Reviewed by Charles Brasch)

THIS recent addition to the works published in honour of Otago's first century is a book of rather more than one hundred pages, containing 60 reproductions of paintings, drawings, etc., seven of them in colour, about a dozen other illustrations, a history of art (or rather of art societies) in the province by H. V. Miller, and chapters by various writers on Frances Hodgkins, the Dunedin Art Gallery, Maori art, the Dunedin School of Art, Letters, and Music. I give the list because while the book includes an index of artists whose work is reproduced, it has no table of contents, and the would-be buyer cannot readily see what he is getting. The foreword states that other chapters were written, but then excluded owing to lack of space, which suggests surprisingly amateurish editing.

The illustrations take up more than half the book's space, and the chapters on painting more than three-quarters of the text; the other subjects might, indeed, have been better left out. On the whole the book gives a fair sample of the kind of work which has been done in Otago and is now to be seen there. We are not likely to get another on a comparable scale for many years, and we may be grateful once again to Mr. Tombs for an enterprise of a kind which he is the only publisher in the country able or willing to undertake. I want to say this now, because I shall have a good many criticisms to make later.

IN his history Mr. Miller attempts no generalisations and there is of course no "Otago art" as such. Most painters have moved about too much for any local style to grow up or for any of the diverse landscapes and climates of the province to produce a recognisable temperament or impose a common attitude. One might hazard a guess that figure painting is practised less there than in other provinces. Excepting O'Keeffe's self-portrait and the early studies of

Frances Hodgkins, the portraits and figure paintings reproduced here are of little interest; the current exhibition in the Hocken Wing of the Otago Museum suggests that figure painting was commoner, and better, about the turn of the century.

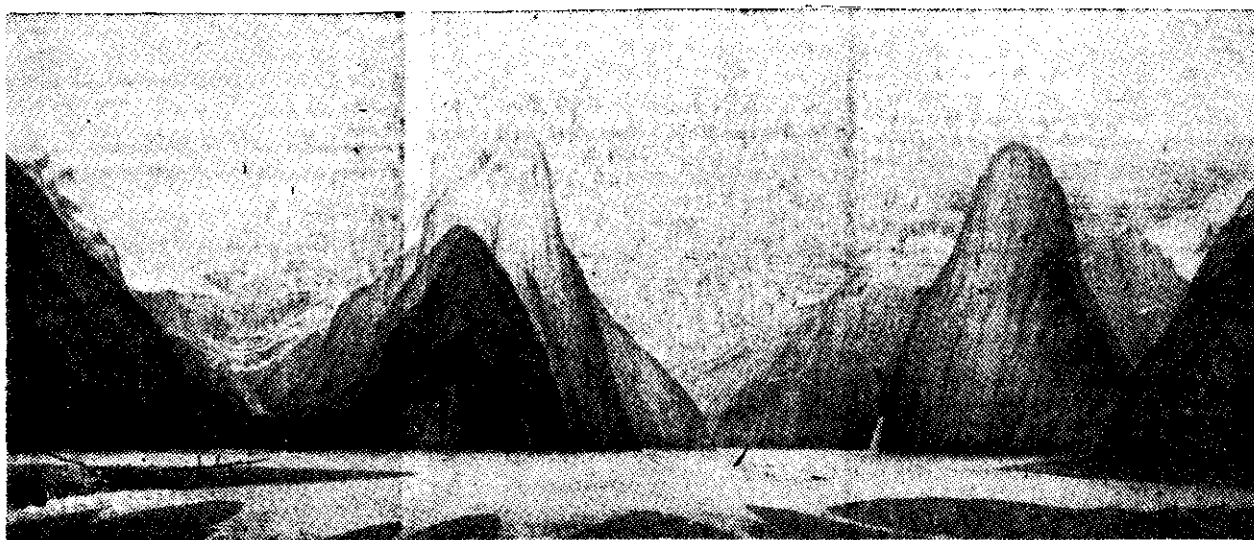
The general disintegration of styles in western painting during the past 50 years has made it almost impossible for later painters of taste and accomplishment but without exceptional gifts to produce work that could stand beside the cool and charming landscapes of Hoyte and O'Brien (the latter poorly represented here: why was the fine collection of his work in the Early Settlers' Museum not drawn on?) or the colder ones of W. M. Hodgkins. There are signs of the re-establishment in England of a tradition in the shadow of which good but modest painters may again work; the four volumes entitled *Recording Britain*, now being published by the Oxford University Press, provide one piece of evidence for it; and in time that may have an effect here. In the recent past, painters both in New Zealand and abroad have had to hammer out everything for themselves amidst the contemporary flux; naturally most of them were unequal to the task. Excepting that of Rita Angus (Rita Cook), a Canterbury painter who has also worked in Central Otago, there have so far as I know been only two serious attempts during the province's first century to forge an adequate individual style, those of John Buchanan in water-colour in the sixties, and of Colin McCahon in oil to-day. Buchanan's noble *Milford Sound* is reproduced here, but nothing by McCahon. That is the most damaging omission from the illustrations, for McCahon is one of the few painters in the country with a fresh personal vision and the courage to follow where it leads him, and his Otago Peninsula landscapes will form, I believe, a landmark in New Zealand painting. The first of them was rejected by the Otago Art Society in 1939 (Mr. Miller makes an oblique reference to this discreditable episode in the society's history), but another has been shown publicly in Dunedin. To ignore this work

of McCahon's and give three plates to art school work was a gross error of judgment.

OF the nine paintings by Frances Hodgkins reproduced, four come from private collections in Otago, two from the Dunedin Art Gallery, and three, the only late ones, from the Lefèvre Gallery in London where she exhibited in recent years. The accompanying text consists of a half-awed, half-puzzled note introducing an article reprinted from the English *Listener*. There seems no good reason for giving so much space to Frances Hodgkins. Her mature work has no more to do with Otago, or New Zealand, than Low's, and Low gets only one brief mention in the book. Mr. Tombs seems to have been bemused because she, like Rutherford and Katherine Mansfield in other fields, was the New Zealander who made good overseas in a big way. The article which he reprints, apart from the information it provides, is only a quick provisional impression of her work which does not explain what she tried to do or the nature of her achievement. We should be clear about that if we are not to be misled by the uncritical praise which has been showered upon her in the last few years. She was a painter who built up an exquisite world of rich and subtle colour—colour, not light—a world entirely her own. Her interest was in nearly flat—and often nearly abstract colour schemes, which were nevertheless always based on real objects. She did not care to explore the relations of objects in space, and her later work is primarily two-dimensional. She was in the best sense an original artist, but she is not quite in the main stream of western painting and she has not the stature of, say, a Stanley Spencer or a Matthew Smith. It is to be hoped that when the present boom in her later work subsides a little the Dunedin Gallery can buy some examples of it to set beside those of her early work which it possesses.

THE dozen pictures from that Gallery illustrated here include two of its worst, the vapid de Glehn and the vulgar Russell Flint, but not quite its best.

(continued on next page)



"Buchanan's noble 'Milford Sound'"