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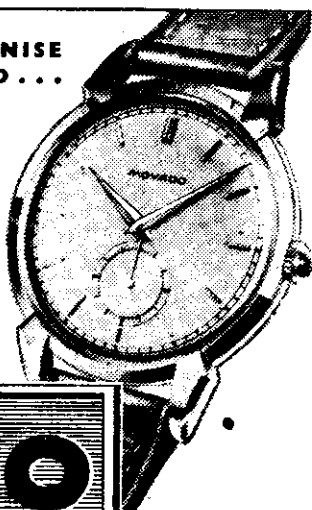
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## BOOK REVIEWS (Cont'd)

(continued from previous page)

made a close study of pigments, supports, brushes and all the other means used by the painter. If, as one writer on aesthetics (J. M. Thorburn) has put it, "the problem of medium is the key to the problem of art," then a reasonably full knowledge of how the means behave, and of how they may be manipulated, is obviously necessary if the artist is to progress beyond the elementary stages.

To attempt to give any proper idea of the range of information contained in this book is impossible in a short review. Oil and watercolour painting, tempera, murals, frescoes, are dealt with exhaustively. Various methods of preparing paper, board and canvas are described in close detail, as are qualities of pigments and the ways of applying them.

The classification of colours, and the theory of colour according to Ostwald and others, are dealt with lucidly. The chemistry of pigments is treated from a layman's point of view. Among a hundred other matters of practical interest is a chapter on "Modern Palettes," in which those used by Orpen, Derain, Bracque, Utrillo, Paul Nash, and other contemporary artists are listed.

It is safe to say that no school of art should be without this book; but beyond that, it must be warmly recommended to all those (whether they are students or mature artists) who practise painting, or who are interested in any way in the making of pictures. The technical side of painting is very complex indeed, and it has a fascination of its own that is likely to be awakened, perhaps, only by such a book as this, in which the historical, the practical and the aesthetic aspects of the subject illuminate one another. Needless to say, Faber's have made a first-rate job of the typography and production.

—A.R.D.F.

## WAS SWIFT A CHRISTIAN?

SWIFT: A Study by Bernard Acworth. Eyre and Spottiswoode.

LOVERS of Swift may be grateful to Captain Acworth, who is known as an author of iconoclastic natural history theories, for several reasons. Other biographers share his admiration for Swift's genius; no other thinks as highly of his character. The life of Swift is as full of debatable points as that of Dante; infinite ingenuity has been spent on guess-work and conjecture; Captain Acworth is content, where nothing can be known for certain, to take the most charitable view. He seems to have in mind a very wide public of readers: all French and Latin words are translated and historical references explained. Most remarkable is his power of self-effacement: in at least half of his pages he allows Swift to speak for himself; in fact a book of selections, like that of Purves for instance, with a running commentary; and the selections are chosen with excellent judgment, illustrating every aspect of Swift's personality and every phase of his strange career.

In his preface, Captain Acworth tells us that the question with which he pro-

poses especially to concern himself is whether Swift can rightly be deemed a Christian, and in particular the sort of Christian a clergyman ought to be. Reference is made throughout to this leitmotif, but the answer is reserved for the final chapter. In this respect it would seem that Captain Acworth has sources of information of his own. He quotes Hazlitt as saying "Swift takes a view of human nature such as might be taken by a Higher Being" and adds in brackets "or as the present writer would prefer to put it, *is taken*," the italics being his own; and he can inform us that "his perfectly tranquil end is an assurance to one at least that Swift, an outcast in this world, is one of the great ones in the next." The assurance expressed in these words rests on the idea, apparently suggested by the Book of Job, that the terrible years of Swift's madness constitute a period of repentance for the arrogance and self-righteousness of his years of political activity. It may be so. Cardinal de Retz, better known perhaps to readers of Dumas as the Coadjutor, when his ambitious intrigues ended in failure and disappointment, spent the rest of his life in pious ministrations; indeed, according to Sainte-Beuve, became in very truth and reality a saint. Swift's sufferings may perhaps have been his means of reconciliation with God.

In spite of Captain Acworth's thorough knowledge of the whole of Swift's writings and his intense admiration of Swift's English, he does not imitate his style. When Swift wields the pen (to speak with Captain Acworth) he does not write sentences such as: "The Tale of a Tub is a monument to his literary genius over the grave of his altruistic desire for the good office of a bishop" or "Though anonymous, and never directly claimed as his own work, Swift was at once recognised as the author." Had he done so, recognition might have been delayed.

Misprints and errors are commendably few. The ones I noticed were "Carteret" repeatedly misspelt, and Addison's wife misnamed.

—G.W.Z.

## PETER FLEMING REPRINT

TRAVELS IN TARTARY. By Peter Fleming. Jonathan Cape.

IT is enough for a reviewer to announce this book and praise it. It is the best of Fleming (*One's Company* and *News from Tartary*) in a wholly satisfying single volume, and that is the best stuff of its kind written in English for 20 years. It would be reckless to say that Fleming is more than a brilliant reporter; but the first of these books was written 14 years ago, and the second two years later, and neither shows signs of wearing thin after a dozen and fifteen reprintings.

## The Hucksters

DURING an auction sale in Auckland a radio set came under the hammer. The auctioneer was pointing out its good qualities when someone called out that second-hand radios "weren't all they were cracked up to be." Said the auctioneer to his assistant, "Plug it in, Fred, and let them hear it for themselves." Fred obeyed, the set warmed up, everybody listened. What they heard was a 12B announcer extolling the wares of a rival auctioneering firm in the suburbs.