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BOOK REVIEWS (Cont'd.)

Even Galsworthy knew when to stop writing about the Forsytes; and Miss de la Roche is no Galsworthy. Her characters are not vivid enough, in contrast with her earliest books; her episodes are too sketchy; her attempts to give "body" to her work are too forced and unnatural.

The author's style has fallen from the higher standards she aimed at in her earlier work, though not because she has lost the innate power for finding words: the fault lies in working a mine which is completely exhausted.

—B.L.C.

MODERN ARTISTS

THE MARCH OF THE MODERNS. by William Gaunt; Jonathan Cape. English price, 12/6.

OPENING with Cézanne, Van Gogh and Gauguin, in this his third study of artists and their times, William Gaunt glances at the personalities who evolved Dada and other "isms," nods quickly at James Joyce, Ezra Pound, Gertrude Stein and her kindergarten and passes out in an apocalyptic movie made by Louis Bunuel and Salvador Dali.

The more effective sections of the book are those dealing with the cults that gathered impetus after the first world war; the histories of the earlier artists included are common knowledge now. Supplanting the classical vision of human nature at the centre of a world that is ordered and understood, the violent and anti-social gestures of Dada, and surrealism's frantic geying of convention reflected the contemporary mental and spiritual chaos. Confronting man mastered by social habit, the pressures of mass culture, standardisation and advertising, Hulsenbeck, for instance, wrote poems that had no evident meaning and howled them louder and louder at his audience while a drum beat an accompanying crescendo. The cubist, Duchamp, sent a "ready made" to a New York art exhibition, a lavatory basin signed "R. Mutt." If people could be goaded into angry outbursts, upsetting their habitual passivity, purpose was considered to have been achieved.

The March of The Moderns is, in effect, a streamlined account of modern enthusiasms in the arts, for those who prefer their reading hustled up that way.

—J.R.C.

MONKEY BUSINESS

MONKEYFACE. by Stephen Gilbert; Faber and Faber. English price, 8/6.

STEPHEN GILBERT'S first novel was fantastic, his next extremely realistic. In *Monkeyface* he is to be congratulated upon giving his fantasy, with its inherently impossible situation, such an atmosphere of reality. When Bimbo, a captive ape of a hitherto unknown species, suddenly begins to imitate human speech, the difficulties are obvious: is he to be brought up as animal or boy? Wherein lies his future? These problems are resolved, not without some excitement.

Once the faintly nauseous stages of the early mimicking of speech are passed and the conversation becomes normal, this story of an awakening intelligence is developed with skill and understanding. Bimbo's friends, Miss Martha (whose protégé he becomes), the boys at school

and the gardener at home, are clearly drawn and throw his animal qualities into sharp relief. The novel is most successful where it brings out the ape's sensitivity to his external surroundings, and where it tells of his strange musings upon the part of his species has to play in the universe. But where the dust-cover promised comedy, I found pathos.

This is an unusual book, but not one to be recommended to the S.P.C.A. or those who cannot abide baby talk, even in monkeys.

—C.M.B.

BIRTHDAY BOOK

ADVENTURE WITH PUPPETS. by Evelyn Beard; Oxford University Press. English price, 5/-.

IF your thirteenth birthday is coming along and you happen to be in a fix for something different to do at your party, here is your answer. Mrs. Beard and her two daughters (thirteen and seven) put on their first puppet show in England during the war; they had seven puppets which they made and dressed themselves from odds and ends, and it took them a month to get ready—theatre built, scenery painted, stage properties devised, and script written and rehearsed. Mrs. Beard gives full explanations and descriptions and patterns—most clear and amusing diagrams prepared by her daughters—for making everything from a puppet's hair to a stage bucket and mop; she also gives hints about supplying the puppets with personalities: "Squorlini, a peroxide blonde of flashy appearance, was supposed to be a retired opera-singer trying to stage a come-back, and sang with a great deal of volume and an over-refined accent, 'Cherry-rape, cherry-rape! Ra-ape, Ay cra-ay!'"

—J.



THE HON. ELIOT DAVIS, whose book of reminiscences "A Link With The Past" will be reviewed by O. N. Gillespie in the ZB Book Review Session on August 7. The session will be concerned solely with New Zealand writing, and other books reviewed will be "Money, Medicine and the Masses," by Dr. Albert Blanc (reviewed by Dr. G. M. Smith), "Man Alone," by John Mulgan (Pat Lawlor), and "Colenso," by A. G. Bagnall and G. C. Petersen (C. R. H. Taylor). Recordings by the Hon. Eliot Davis and Dr. Blanc will also be heard.

N.Z. LISTENER, JULY 29, 1949