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## BOOKS

(continued from previous page)

feat of which he was greatly and justly proud, and the telling of it matches his courage. But just how did he find the footholds in that wall?

—F. L. W. Wood

### SO VARIOUS A BAND

*THEY FELL FROM GOD'S HAND*, by Hans Werner Richter; Harrap, English price 15/-.  
*BACH AND THE HEAVENLY CHOIR*, by Johannes Rüber; Rupert Hart-Davis, English price 12/6.  
*PEOPLE TO BE FOUND*, by Joanna Cannan; Victor Gollancz, English price 12/6.  
*ONE FOR THE ROAD*, by W. J. White; Jonathan Cape, English price 13/6.  
*THE HEADLAND*, by Carol Brink; Victor Gollancz, English price 12/6.

THIS mixed bag of five illustrates perfectly Walter Allen's remark. "Novels are as various as the men and women who write them."

The longest and most ambitious, *They Fell from God's Hand*, by Hans Werner Richter, one of the most gifted

of post-war German writers, is a packed picaresque work, giving a panorama of Europe from 1940 to 1950. The nine main characters, including a Spanish Republican captain, a Czech woman, a Russian fighter-pilot, an Estonian captain and a Polish girl, are followed in their adventures, reputable and disreputable, through a shattered, pain-ridden world. Documentary detail, copious and telling dialogue and skilful manipulation of character build up a convincing picture of ten terrible years. Herr Werner's pity for, and understanding of, human beings shine through a moving story, free from both bitterness and self-pity.

The grace of Johannes Rüber's tale of a musical Pope who wants to canonise Johann Sebastian Bach might lead some to take it simply for a charming modern legend. But it is more than that. Delightful though the story is, it also says some very wise things about

the relationship between religion and art; and breathes a fine spirit of charity. I was pleasantly surprised by Joanna Cannan's novel, the first I have read by this prolific writer. There isn't much story—chiefly about the gifted son of a labourer who wins scholarships, becomes an intellectual and marries the horse-loving daughter of the squire. But Miss Cannan's fun at the expense of those class-distinctions other English novelists take seriously, her exposing of lower-class snobbery, and her bright and mordant humour make the book tortly agreeable light reading.

*One for the Road* is an odd but compelling first novel—a kind of psychiatric thriller. The setting is Dublin, the main character a man with a persecution complex (or has he?) and the story a study of character-disintegration as impressive in its presentation of Irish types as in its clever projection of neurotic states of feeling.

Miss Brink's headland is the French playground for five children—two American, two Spanish, one British. The childhood scenes are nostalgically real; but as the youngsters grow to adulthood, are involved in the Spanish War and the Nazi Occupation, and become emotionally entangled, the novel slides smoothly down the slope of expert but insignificant glossy-magazine fiction.

—J.C.R.

### OLD FRIEND

*PICTURES ON THE PAVEMENT*, by G. W. Stonier; Michael Joseph, English price 18/-.

AN old, dear friend to readers of *The New Statesman* and *Punch*, Mr. Stonier wears well. Re-read between Ardizzone-decorated covers (the headpieces are there, too, of course), he's as good as ever, if not better, and at his best incomparable. If you haven't read him—well, the pieces are mostly set in London, impressions of this and that which no mere travel-writer ever had; and if you've been there and remember or haven't and long to, the nostalgia is not, I imagine, so very different—if one can be nostalgic about a place one hasn't seen. As for the pieces that seem independent of place—who has caught better a solitary early morning watch, writing reviews at home, say, through countless cups of tea (coffee for me) and the first dog encountered as, at its ending, you step out at last? "His lip curls when he sees me. But he doesn't bite. He's unhappy. Perhaps he's off bones, or in love with a cat: it may happen. Distantly we nod to one another with the one meaning we share in common. It's a dog's life."

—F.A.J.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*THE BEQUEST OF THE GREEKS*, by Tobias Dantzig; Allen and Unwin, English price 18/-. A study of the Greek contribution to mathematics.

*FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE*, by Cecil Woodham-Smith; Penguin Books, N.Z. price 4/6. A revised and slightly abridged edition of a notable biography.

*FAITH AND CULTURE*, by Bernard Meland; Allen and Unwin, English price 12/6. A study of faith, resting firmly on the relationship between Christianity and Western culture.

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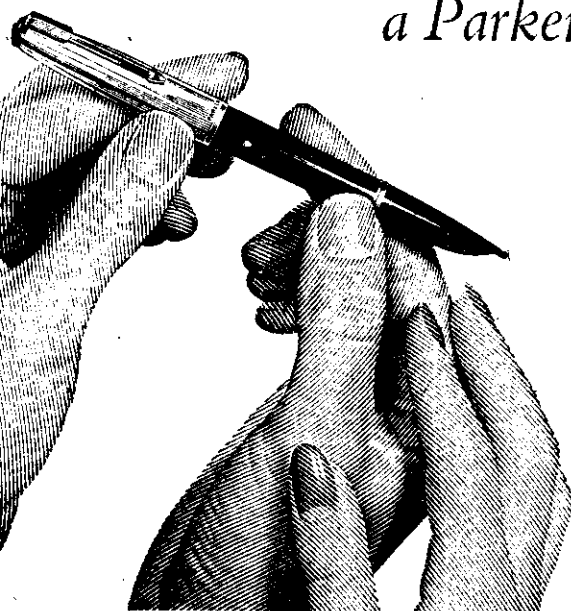
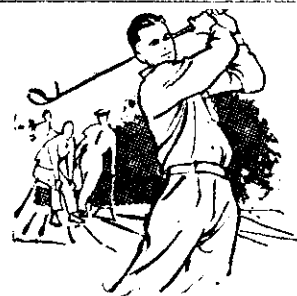
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