

cope with the demand for a new edition. Nor would a panel of judges have awarded the author the John Burroughs Medal. But if the way to reveal "the day-things and night-things of the wilderness" is to drag them in one by one and solemnly philosophise over each, Thoreau was a pretender and Hudson just a loafer.

—O.D.

THE POTTER'S ART

ISLAMIC POTTERY, by Arthur Lane; Faber and Faber, English price 25/-.

ISLAMIC POTTERY adds yet another monograph to the already distinguished list published by Faber and Faber. It carries the hall mark of quality in its faultless production. The photographs, both in colour and black and white, fulfil their function exactly. They round off the ample descriptions, piece by piece, of the catalogue, and give added point to the introduction by Arthur Lane, Keeper of Ceramics at the Victoria and Albert Museum, whose reputation grows with each contribution he makes in the field of ceramics.

This book deals with the collection of Sir Eldred Hitchcock, who has essayed an almost impossible task. Over 25 years he has brought together 79 examples of the potter's art fashioned over a period of 600 years in the world of Islam which stretched from the Middle East to the Atlantic, embracing both North Africa and Spain. But these were turbulent centuries when power and capitals shifted as dynasties declined or invaders ravaged, and man's work in fragile clay was hardly likely to survive such vicissitudes. Hence Sir Eldred's self-imposed task called for research, labour and patience. Most of the collection comprises reconstituted broken shards buried for ages and preserved and given added glow in their long sleep in earthy graves scattered in the vast between Persia and Egypt. For the future enthusiast there is relief in prospect through the discovery of buried treasure recently unearthed near Samarkand—a cache of artifacts in pristine state.

This monograph describes and illustrates a range of achievement that illumines the roots of Islamic art. One sees the inhibitions as well as the outlook of Mohammedanism, its lessons from the East and its teachings for the West. The strange tones of the pottery base, the fierce colours of the glaze, the exotic arabesques and writing, the shapes devoid of fantasy are redolent of the sun-scorched lands that Islam pervaded. They tell of inner conflicts, if outward conformity. They portray the influence of yet another all-embracing theocracy that tended man through the so-called Dark Ages. Islamic pottery is another facet of the great days of a people that gave the world so much in music, medicine and mathematics. The book that deals therewith is an asset to be read with joy and retained with affection.

—D. Goldblatt

TUSCAN MERCHANT

THE MERCHANT OF PRATO, by Iris Origo; Jonathan Cape, English price 35/-.

THIS is a sensitive, unpretentious and deeply revealing book, based on a unique collection of private papers.

Parking Metres

SOFTLY, SOFTLY . . .

OH where, oh where have our power cuts gone?
It's winter and where can they be?
I thought they were really a sine qua non;
Has nobody noticed but me?
And if you reply that you haven't a clue,
Then perhaps it will help to remember
That it possibly might have a little to do
With a coming event in November. —R.G.P.

They have been worked over before for their economic content, and the present volume, though it leaves some vivid impressions of Francesco's business career, is primarily concerned with the private lives and thought of a Tuscan merchant and his wife in the early Renaissance period. These people and their close associates, were very normal representatives of an enterprising and creative society. Their correspondence arose from the fact that they were frequently separated, though by so short a distance that detailed weekly correspondence seemed not only possible, but necessary. With household supplies and family washing there regularly travelled long letters dealing with minute details of household and farming operations as well as with the intimate family affairs.

This mass of correspondence has been handled by Iris Origo with the kind of mastery that comes from long and loving acquaintance with primary sources. Her figures live, and their problems and passions, as well as their joys, can be savoured by a modern reader. At the head of the Datini ledgers stood the honest formula "In the name of God and of profit." For if Francesco shared the tensions of a modern businessman—the author devastatingly names his capacity for endless worry as his decisively modern quality—he was also of the middle ages, and accepted medieval values without question. He was punctilious in the performance of his religious duties, and the efforts of his wife and friends to relax the ageing merchant's preoccupation with wealth are a moving element in the book. For the rest a richly packed, detailed and occasionally repetitive narrative tells of the life of papal Avignon, and of the bustling Italian city states, which have brought so much to European culture. The illustrations are excellent, the stories well told. —F. L. W. Wood

DREAMING AND WAKING

INTO THE DREAM, by Edward Hyams; Longman's, English price 15/-.

TATTLING, by Faith Compton Mackenzie; Jonathan Cape, English price 12/6.

GROWING UP, by Barbara Lucas; Victor Gollancz, English price 13/6.

RAISING DEMONS, by Shirley Jackson; Michael Joseph, English price 12/6.

MOTHER SIGNED THE CONTRACT, by Julia James; Peter Davies, English price 15/-.

THE hero of Edward Hyams's clever and disturbing novel is a businessman's son, who wishes to become a fruit farmer. He is sent adventuring, in the manner of Candide, and pays a symbolically appropriate price for settling down. His friend, an orchardist's son who wishes to be a figure in commerce, is used in antithesis. *Into the Dream* is an individual blend of comedy, tragedy and satire by an author of wide background, bright invention, and positive beliefs. Though on the side of the farmer, the soil and its fruits, he explores quite compassionately the minds of people who manipulate them in trade.

Given Mr Hyams's energy and power to organise material, the next two authors might have made their novels as striking as they are agreeable. Faith

Compton Mackenzie's characters and their intentions drift in and out of one's grasp. Barbara Lucas starts with a promising situation, and in some passages develops it with intriguing subtlety. But there are many passages of unedited trivia, of the kind proper to family letters. By writing the

(continued on next page)

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... Winter

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... Spring

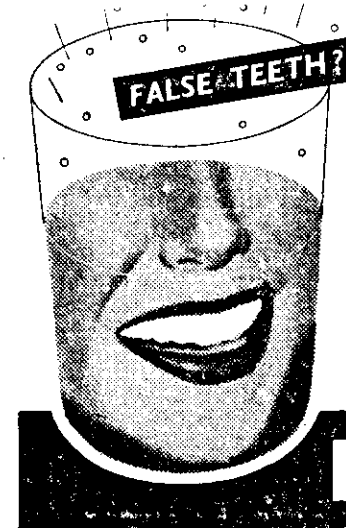
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