

face, as Rembrandt penetrates behind the human face. But Louis Wain's subjects defeated him, for in the end behind the cat faces he drew is something unknowable.

His sketches of cats in group activities, like the Christmas party, are utterly delightful. Every small cat and kitten should be looked at, to see what it is up to. The author is an admirer and collector of Wain's art; and though he must have had mixed feelings in recounting the tragic facts of the artist's life, it was pains well spent. When we remember growing up, we remember the drawings which have charmed us; and the new generations who read this book may learn to love them too.

Dr. Davies has given us an adequate account of Wain's schizophrenic illness. The appendices of Wain's writings are embarrassing in their tortured silliness. We are shown cats from the Maclay Guttman collection. Starting with a cat portrait almost sentimental in conception, the face develops into surface decoration and changes to pattern upon intricate pattern, which at the end is submerged in intricacy without meaning, as we feel the artist himself has been submerged. We have to thank Louis Wain for his life's work and pity him for his terrible mental state at the end.

The book is handsomely produced, profusely illustrated and well indexed.

J. F. SLATER.

### THE OCCULT

**Strange Things.** The Enquiry by the Society for Psychical Research into Second Sight in the Scottish Highlands, the Story of Ada Goodrich Freer, the Ballechin House ghost hunt, and the stories and folklore collected by Fr. Allan McDonald of Eriskay. By JOHN L. CAMPBELL and TREVOR H. HALL. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul. 1968. Pp. xvi + 350. Price 55s.

The folklore enshrined in an age-old oral and unwritten tradition, protected by an ancient and almost obsolete language, confined to a remote and isolated people, is a subject of research which must be both interesting and important. The continued existence of such a culture into the twentieth century is like the survival of a living fossil. Only a scholarly man, and one native to the language and the people, could hope to study it at first hand; but for him it could be a challenge to high endeavour. Fr. Allan McDonald was an ascetic Catholic priest who devoted his short life to this work, in such free intervals as he could get, from 1884, when he was sent to a parish in the Western Isles, until his death in 1905. He was a man of saintly character and noble

mind, but of such innocence that he fell a defenceless victim to a ruthless and capable adventuress. This lady, for long known in spiritualist circles as Miss X, was sent by the Society for Psychical Research to the Highlands to study 'second sight'; she met Fr. McDonald, and fixed herself upon him. He made freely available to her his notebooks of strange local stories and beliefs; and he never knew how far she went in exploiting his work and claiming for herself the credit. She did in fact gain a reputation in learned circles which she enjoyed till she died at the age of 72, twenty-six years after the death in obscurity of her master, benefactor and dupe.

*Strange Things* is the record of an enquiry that demanded two entirely different kinds of scholarship, and it unfolds a story which had to be built up by detective work on two fronts. Dr. Campbell discovered the work done by McDonald, and succeeded eventually in tracking down four of his six notebooks; in the last eighty pages of the book he shows the calibre of the man by providing a substantial selection of the stories of ghosts and 'second sight' which he had collected from the islanders. Dr. Campbell has also recovered from limbo and has published before now a Gaelic vocabulary and a volume of poems in Gaelic, also by McDonald. In the course of his searches he came upon evidence of the fraudulence

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