

This is an important point; for the existence of regular bodies of partisan troops is almost the proof of the existence of democracy. Only a free country can afford to arm its civil population. The innumerable partisan bands throughout occupied Europe, with the assistance of major striking force on two fronts would encompass the defeat of Hitlerism in 1942.

ALVAH BESSIE.

Small Man's Saga

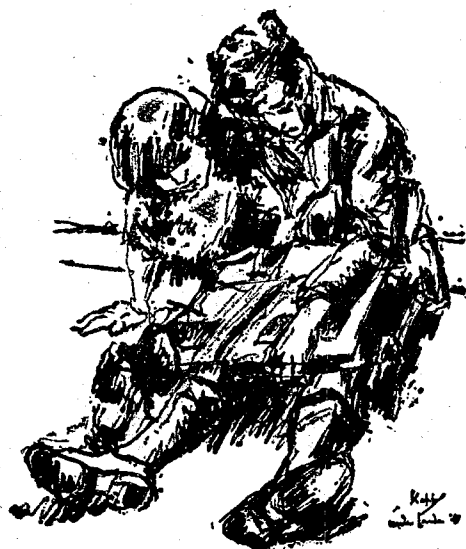
SAM SMALL FLIES AGAIN, by Eric Knight. Harper & Bros. \$2.50.

ALTHOUGH the current volume of Sam Small's adventures is the work of one author, the stories themselves have all the earmarks of tales told for generations before the fire on a windy night.

They are, for instance, tall stories: witness Sam's flying, and getting mixed up with dogs that can talk and turn into girls, and the time he became two of himself, and the other time that he turned into Rudolf Hess' double and saved England from invasion by flying again. They're stories about the little man: in spite of his memorable exploits, Sam remains just another chubby, middle-aged, backbone-of-the-nation sort of lad, fond of his wife, resentful of her efforts to domesticate him, forced to maintain his position as village sage by hurried consultations with the schoolmaster, and just a little—er—lonesome when he has to patrol fifteen miles of moor as a Special Constable. All the stories, even when they're not about Sam, display a fine vein of what, in this country, would be called plumb cussedness.

The stories, except in their details, can never be said to be realism. Sam at one time worked in a mine, and he was foreman in a mill when he invented the Small Self-Doffing Spindle, but we never hear a word about that. And it really doesn't matter. The stories are part of an idea at least one section of the British people has of itself, and if they go to bat when needed as well as Sam does, all of us can take heart. These tales are champion fun.

SALLY ALFORD.



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NATIVE LAND

Joy Davidman in a round of applause for the direction and technique of Frontier Films' first feature production. Why it needs a sequel.

TO APPRAISE *Native Land* adequately, a reviewer needs to be reeducated. Nothing in the recent history of the American screen has prepared us for camera work of such power and beauty, for the unadorned impact of the emotional scenes, for the feel of American land and American people conveyed in a few lyrical and apparently simple shots. The integration of camera, commentator, and music in this film at the World Theater in New York is something new too. In its basic form and technique *Native Land* is pioneer work, revealing the possibilities of the screen. And, in its use of the daily life of the United States for material, it has the salty vigor of Sandburg's *The People*, Yes, as if that great poem had been translated into a great film.

The technical achievement of *Native Land*, indeed, tends almost to overshadow even its significant content. The story of America's fight for civil liberties is passionately told; yet what remains in the memory most vividly is likely to be Paul Strand's miraculous camera. The individual shots are extraordinarily beautiful, not with the easy, conventional photographic beauty of sunsets and flowers, but with the beauty of high art; a tree or a Greek column, a statue, a flag or a girl washing windows, the misty sweep of mountains or the naked splendor of machinery are all observed and interpreted by the camera as only creative art can interpret. But still more unusual is the way in which camera material is combined. The continually moving, active lens puts together the sea beaches and the graves of America, the wheat fields and the airplane, the great trunk of the column and the great column of a tree in such a way that we literally see America emerging from the wilderness. Three hundred years of history are in one such comparison. And the faces of the people are unadorned, unsentimentalized American faces. They are not pretty; they are beautiful.

There is more to the film's technique, besides, than its photography and editing. There is Blitzstein's score, for instance; among the most brilliant and the loveliest of recent film scores, and certainly the most successfully keyed to the subject matter of the film. There is David Wolff's commentary, in itself frequently poetry of a high order, which amplifies and illuminates the picture without ever making the mistake of merely paralleling the camera work. There is Paul Robeson, speaking and sometimes singing that commentary, investing every line of it with his own

power and sincerity. And there is the indescribable magic by which all these independent triumphs have been fused into a harmonious whole.

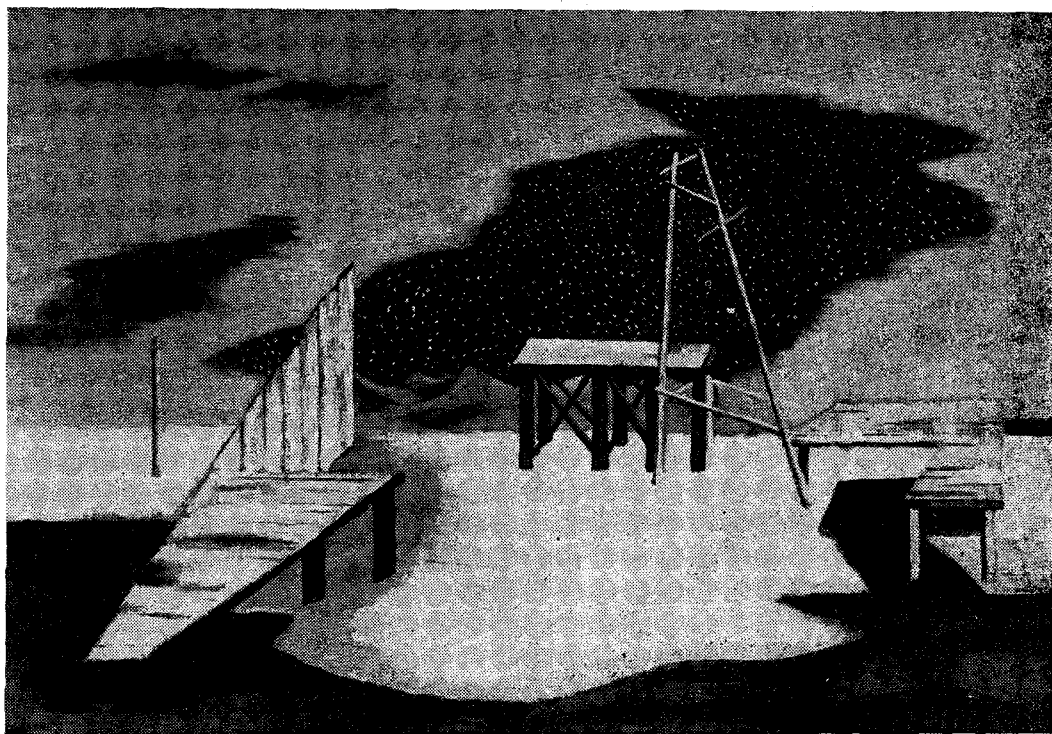
Out of the film's first sequences a portrait of America emerges; the wilderness conquered and planted with towns, the sea beaches and the graves, the statues remembering heroes of our first fight for freedom. And the commentator tells you about the Bill of Rights. All this is impersonal, but suddenly an individual family emerges, a farm family, the wife peeling potatoes in the kitchen, the little boy sprawling on a work horse's great back and sliding off to struggle with his father's plow. And the father is a man who has "spoken up at the farmers' meeting." He is being quietly murdered, down by the brook.

SO THE violations of civil liberties are recorded. A peaceful morning in Cleveland; a boy, dark and intent, playing with a yo-yo on the sidewalk; the maid-of-all-work going up the stairs, singing. Then the devastated room and the murdered union organizer. A church in Arkansas, where white and Negro meet; the ambush, the cries of deputy sheriffs blending with the voices of bloodhounds, the white man and the Negro hunted into the swamp. In an unforgettable sequence they

cower among the lush reeds and the glittering summer bushes. The white man supporting the wounded Negro, they emerge cautiously on the road, while Robeson's voice sings a magnificent lament; and they are shot down there.

Then, in what is perhaps its greatest moment of beauty and terror, the film swings away across the hills and valleys as night falls and goes into a quiet sequence of America getting up the next morning. Here we meet the American people personally, opening the windows, sniffing the air, leaning out toward the sun, while Robeson sings them out of their beds with a morning song. You see three little girls bouncing their balls in unison; you see the crowds streaming to work, and the breakfast cooking on the stove. You feel as if you have never really looked at people before. And out of this again, by a transition as unobtrusive as it is powerful, emerges the history of the labor spy racket.

To attempt to give it all would be absurd. There are the finks, the La Follette investigation, the Shoemaker flogging with its horrible masked Klansmen; the Memorial Day massacre. In the end the film summarizes our fight against the fascist within, and attempts to tie that struggle to the present struggle against the Axis. Here the one very serious weakness of *Native Land* emerges. The



"The Snow Cloud" by Lurcat