

sert himself. The elder children say exactly what they think, but always as though they are frightened, which they are. A nightmare house: but Miss Burnett, who never exceeds probability, refuses to let the nightmare run away with her, and that makes it more effective.

Then, upon the arrival of a new governess, the pleasantness of whose disposition is only surpassed by the strength of her will, there begins that perhaps most profound of domestic tragedies, the breaking of the matriarchy. The novel rises to a peak of melodrama (for the governess agrees to marry Mr. Ponsonby and the thwarted Aunt Hetty pretends to drown herself); and in the subsequent denouement everybody's character and fate is subjected to a light which, though too sudden, is inimitably clear.

"Original and uncompromising" seems, at this moment of writing, a fair description of Miss Burnett's work. The two qualities are mingled both in her method and in her approach. Her method is to confine herself to conversation, and conversation, moreover, which is with only two exceptions (you will find one "quavered" and one "whispered" in the novel) introduced by the not exactly ingratiating verb "said." The book is almost entirely deprived of gesture; when a character turns his or her back, raises a hand, walks to a window, drops a coffee pot, it is as though the heavens had uttered their voice. Things may happen off-stage—a journey to London, an immodest proposal from the vicar, Aunt Hetty's night in the field—but on the stage itself there is for the most part of the novel little or no action. And when Miss Burnett is at last forced to make some concession to plot, she does so at the risk of becoming hurried and melodramatic; and the whole thing is only kept to heel by the force of a singularly clear intelligence. And yet you cannot stop reading.

That is, you cannot stop reading if you are willing to accept her approach to life. She will not compromise with the reader. Hers is a world where all the females (except one) are strong, and where all the males (except one) are weak or incompetent. If you don't like this world, there is nothing for it but to put the book down. It would be a pity to do so, for here, surely, is essential literature. These are characters and predicaments which might have been produced by any novelist in any country. Miss Burnett gives them a production which, if severely limited, is inimitably English. But where the present English novel tends towards sentimentality and complacency, she is tart; where it indulges in vagueness, she is mercilessly clear; and to its current disillusion she opposes a complete detachment. I don't think that "genius" is a word to be thrown around, but I am sure that she has some of it; and I am quite sure that "Daughters and Sons" deserves to be called a masterpiece.

Mountain Poet

BEYOND DARK HILLS. By Jesse Stuart. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. 1938. \$3.50.

BEFORE ever he published any of his stout, earth-imaged poems or any of his stories of his people of W-Hollow in Greenup County, Kentucky, close to the borders of West Virginia and Ohio, Jesse Stuart had written this story of himself for Dr. Edwin Mims at Vanderbilt University. Here as revised and amended it is clearly worth the professor's statement that in forty years of teaching he had never read anything so crudely written "yet beautiful, tremendous and powerful as that term paper you have written."

The crudeness is still apparent here but



DRAWING BY ISHMAEL
From "Beyond Dark Hills."

in Jesse Stuart's story of mountain folk and steel mill toughs and the goodness and the hypocrisy of schools, it seems almost a crudeness designed in art to show the young ruggedness of such a poet as could halt from the tending of mules in a steep mountain field to write a sonnet with a stick on a big poplar leaf. Jesse Stuart's was a crude world, tough as old Mitch Stuart, his Grandpa, who was a mighty worker but a mighty drinker and fighter too. It is a crudeness of the earth and of life lived close to it, joying in it: "Be envious of the snake because it rubs the soil closer than you." But here, as in his short stories, there is beyond crudeness a certain preoccupation with horror as well as beauty, with funerals and violent death and decay, with such ghastliness as carrion-eating dogs, as a story of unfed hogs tearing the flesh of a mother and her first born. Here is almost a reveling in death, a gusto in the report of country sin, in hard poverty, in violent religion, and in loud and violent play. But here, too, is as tender a portrait of a mother as is anywhere in our language.

And though Stuart when he wrote his own story was either silent or more inexperienced in affairs, or bouts, of love than most of those he wrote about, his brief report of a childish passage in tenderness with pretty Maria Sheen is as graceful and complete as young love or the report of it should be.

So much beauty and horror decorate a very practical report of a poet's material success. There is a fire in Stuart which drove him down from the mountains to the amazing Lincoln Memorial College in Tennessee, which he describes, to Vanderbilt, to the production, almost mass production, of singing, sinewy, and veracious verse. But the poet is not all: the mountain man on a steep, rocky farm remains still a trifle amazed that a poem he made should bring a price equal to the value of three hundred and fifty-seven hen eggs with one egg left over. But if this is a success story it is a queer, lovely, unconventional one, and at its end, happily, country boy has not gone to town and made good; he is instead still in the country, aware of man and creature and plant and changing season and the eternal savor of a hard but stirring earth.

Small World

SWISS SONATA. By Gwethalyn Graham. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1938. \$2.50.

Reviewed by KATHARINE SIMONDS

MISS GRAHAM'S novel is set in pure, high Lausanne, in the still purer and higher atmosphere of a girls' finishing school. The Swiss seem to defend themselves against the exaggerated romanticism of their scenery by creating for themselves exteriors of equally exaggerated propriety and dullness; but the foreign young girls who play the parts in "Swiss Sonata" are uninfluenced by the bourgeois calm of the natives. Washed up from various countries on this remote shore, some by parental neglect, some by political upheavals, each of these children struggled with her particular tragedy; to all alike Vicky Morrison, of whom no one knows anything, offers an inexplicable sense of security.

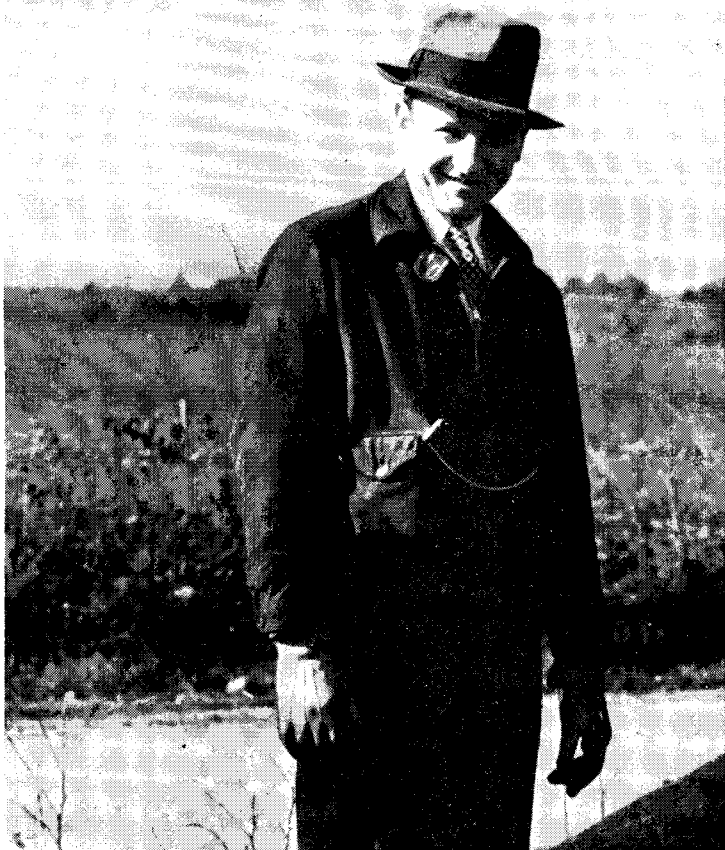
Miss Graham's picture of Lausanne and of the school, her statement of each girl's character and her demonstration of how it is influenced by what has been done to her, are deft and delightful. She has a very special knack of characterization and of dialogue, though some of the more philosophic discussions tend to be tedious. She maintains very well the impression of crescendo in these dramas; it is only when they are all resolved almost simultaneously that the reader feels a straining of the probabilities.

By turns touching and amusing, "Swiss Sonata" succeeds triumphantly in making a girls' school seem as rich and varied as the great living tormented world outside.

Breakfast with a Democrat

BY JONATHAN DANIELS

The following chapter from "A Southerner Discovers the South," by Jonathan Daniels, is based upon the author's visit to TVA headquarters last summer. Subsequent changes in the TVA administration give particular timeliness to Mr. Daniels's report. "A Southerner Discovers the South" will be published by the Macmillan Company.



DAVID E. LILIENTHAL

Keystone

LAST summer David Lilienthal was 38 years old, 17 years from graduation at DePauw, 14 from the Harvard Law School, but he was 32 years younger than Harcourt A. Morgan and 21 years younger than Arthur F. Morgan, his associates in the direction of the Tennessee Valley Authority. He was only four years old as a Southerner but already to South Carolina students he was using the pronoun "we" in contemplation of the Southern problem and in discussion of action to solve it. He used it, too, when we talked in the green garden back of his pleasant house in Norris and drank the glasses of orange juice which pretty Nancy Alice had brought to us before breakfast. It was a good morning, full of sun. I had been up and waiting when he came to show me the way and to show himself to me: in a gray suit with a maroon slipover sweater for vest, a big man, a stout man in the root sense of the word, a pleasant, round-faced man, spectacled. He grins, wide and shrewd, and there is none of the wide-eyed staring of the Utopian in his eyes. He can laugh as well as talk. And Middle Western man in Tennessee, he can be serious without violating Tennessee's traditional Rule Number 5: "Don't take yourself too damned seriously."

"We must," he told me, "get down to legume roots, as Harcourt Morgan would say. Mere grass isn't definite enough for him."

Nor, I gathered, for the younger Lilienthal. And it was no secret in Norris that these two, the oldest and the youngest on the Tennessee Valley Authority, were often at odds with the Chairman Arthur Morgan who sat in age between them and

title (not power) above them. This Arthur Morgan, engineer, who became a college president without ever going to college, was born closer to the South than either of the other two members of the Authority

—in Cincinnati, Ohio, from which, across a river, Mrs. Stowe observed the slavery she damned in "Uncle Tom's Cabin." Lilienthal, the lawyer, was born in Illinois. Harcourt Morgan, entomologist and educator, had lived 44 years in the South when he was made one of the TVA triumvirate, but he was born in Canada.

It was in the South that Arthur Morgan, TVA's odd man, lost the wholeness of faith in the ultimate wisdom of the masses of men. Once he told his associates in Knoxville: "Years ago with my engineering associates at Memphis I planned and directed the reclamation of many hundred thousand acres of very fertile land. The philosophy of that development was that if you give people the means for creating wealth and comfort they will work out the situation without further help. Yet today that most fertile land in America is the locus of the most miserable share-cropper tenantry, where poverty and bitterness are general and violence appears." Certainly that St. Francis River Valley country, where tenants struck and landlords flogged, which I was to see across the river from Memphis, has seen enough human troubles to discourage a man even in the Tennessee Valley. Coming in a lifetime from the one river to the other, Arthur Morgan may very naturally believe that "a certain amount of benevolent despotism" is a necessary addition to the best engineering plans.

But David Lilienthal talked undisturbed over his breakfast table and in his garden of the wisdom of the people when the people are given even half a chance to be wise. He talked with an almost folk-feeling of distrust for the experts in the direction from above of the living of

people. In the vernacular, he referred to "damn social workers." Of a man he was quoting, he said, "He's not an economist, thank God." The burden of all his talking—and apparently of his thinking—lay along the way of faith that men in the Tennessee Valley and in the world are capable, given the true chance, of providing a decent world and living for themselves and their families.

This does not mean that he lacks faith in planning though he does feel that about planning "much choice tripe was uttered in the starry-eyed days of 1933." Once he said, "There is something about planning that is attractive to that type of person who has a yen to order the lives of other people. It has an attraction for persons of a vague and diffuse kind of mind given to grandiose pictures not of this world. Planning is a subject that attracts those who are in a hurry, but are rather hazy as to where they want to go so rapidly, or whether people want to scurry along with them. But planning and those charged with responsibility for the formulation and execution of plans must, above all, be realistic and pragmatic. Effective planners understand and believe in people, in the average man."

Far off from Norris I myself had almost believed that the noise that came from TVA was a simple quarreling between the power companies and the government over which should sell power to the people. I had not quite believed that the power attorneys were the only patriots and the TVA people only wicked politicians. But I had listened to power company officials make angry fun of the costs and rates of TVA power in dollars and cents. I was then only vaguely aware of the extravagance in the use of public resources for power and profit alone. Only by multiple purpose river development and control (for flood, navigation, erosion, national defense and power) can the public safety and the public welfare be best and most completely served. A proper division of those costs in a proper