

When he told Kate he was now a Socialist, she collapsed and failed to come around for a couple of days. But Gloria, her husband now dead, becomes a staunch ally who handles details for Gene while he organizes the Socialist Party and carries on his campaigns for the Presidency. Not until the last few pages of the book does Kate become—even momentarily—concerned about this other-woman situation, which is, in spite of Stone's protestations that it is all very harmless, likely to concern the reader pretty steadily throughout the book.

The climax comes with Germany's declaration of war in Europe. Kate, who has kept Gene's friends out of the elaborate house she built (by shrewdly parlaying Gene's meager income into a small fortune) because—literally—they might track up the carpets, now opens her spotless doors wide and operates a social and ultra-patriotic center for friends of the fatherland, even those without money or standing; and while Gene preaches pacifism and blasts German aggression, Kate paves the way in Terre Haute for what she firmly believes will be the eventual conquest of the world by Germany. Through it all, however, the Debs remain married and, in their own special way, in love.

"Adversary in the House," like Mr. Stone's previous books, may find a ready, enthusiastic audience; and the importance of the subject, along with the wail of disappointed people, might even get it high on the best-seller lists.

Long, Long Thoughts

SO DEAR TO MY HEART. By Sterling North. New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc. 1947. 255 pp. \$2.75.

Reviewed by NATHAN L. ROTHMAN

MR. NORTH has taken his title from a fine nostalgic line familiar to us all. If you will remember also another line of equal potency, from Longfellow's "My Lost Youth": "And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts," you will have approximated the tone of the book. Not to equivocate—it is a beautiful book. It gave me a rare, sustained pleasure in the reading of it, and it left with me a lingering after-sense of a vanished glory miraculously recaptured, that I think I shall remember. There was another book that performed the same miracle, with which this one must quite naturally be ranked. Not that we have "The Yearling" done over again in the same way; this is another time, another place, another mood. The books must be bracketed because Mr.

North too has dipped unerringly and with precise knowledge, as Mrs. Rawlings did, into the purest depths of a boy's heart. Whether he can remember better than most of us the quality of those long, long thoughts, or whether he can wave away more easily the sullyng preoccupations of maturity that come between, the fact is that he has been able to set down the wonder of the beginnings of knowledge—of comradeship and love and pain and hope and self-discovery—with the freshness of that wonder in his writing.

The time is 1903. The place is Pumpkin Hollow, in Fulton Corners, in Pike County, in Indiana. Here lives the boy Jeremiah Kincaid, with his Granny Samantha and his Uncle Hiram. He tends the sheep in the field, he sits at the railroad station with the men and sees Old 99 go through. He goes fishing with Uncle Hiram, fights for the Big One, joins in the singing of "Sourwood Mountain" and "Old Dan Tucker." He helps at lambing time and sits by at weaving, while Granny Samantha improvises constantly upon the long ballad into which she weaves Biblical and Kincaid history both, to the hammer of old rhythms, and after each stanza the marvelous refrain:

Faith, faith,
You gotter have faith.
The Good Book saith
You gotter have faith . . .

The story rings with music everywhere; it is itself a kind of prose ballad of backwoods Indiana, merry with a gnarly humor, rapturous with devotion to the teachings of the Good Book. And there is Jeremiah's Danny, a little black ram that is his own pet and friend and responsibility. (Here, of course, "The Yearling" bows in most insistently.) Jeremiah loses Danny, and in the finding of him he wanders across the wide, forbidden Tarleton territory, in woods thick and



—From "So Dear to My Heart."

fearful with storm, learning also much he had never known about his own mysterious beginnings. There is the dubious touch of cryptic-romanticism here, the book's one gesture at narrative thread, and a fault if I had to find one.

But it signifies nothing, and is washed quite away in mirth and song, dust of road, clamor of county fair, folk-talk unspoiled with learning, part Bible, part Elizabethan, "feisty and fractious" as Samantha says. And a book equally unspoiled, dewy as the morning.

Fanaticism's Spiral

THE HERETICS. By Humphrey Slater. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1947. 210 pp. \$2.75.

Reviewed by ROBERT PICK

AMONG the millions of war veterans the world over, probably no single group is more deeply engrossed still with its experiences than the comparatively small, heterogeneous brotherhood of men who volunteered to fight with the Spanish Loyalists in their Civil War. Mr. Slater is one of them. His present book is an addition to the impressive number of passionate, wise, and brilliant volumes that have, in different tongues, come out of the battles and the disillusionments of the International Brigade.

Mr. Slater tells the story of three young English scientists—Elizabeth, her brother Paul, and their friend Simon—who, more or less by accident, are caught in the conflict, and, as it grows, caught by the intestine strife within the ranks of the Republican and Socialist fighters and their intransigent Russian advisers. In the end Simon betrays Paul, the non-conformist. Together with its ruthless methods, the One and Infallible Socialism of Moscow appears to Simon as "something mystically superior to real individuals." At the same time Elizabeth's life is nearly ruined through her affair with a well-born Spanish staff officer whom mere ambition has thrown into the Loyalist camp, and who salvages his patriotism and his professional self-respect out of war and defeat as good as untouched by the ideological Armageddon that has been raging about him.

You have to go back to "A Farewell to Arms" to find a war story about love as credible, as poignant, as tender, and yet as matter-of-factly told as that of Elizabeth and her colonel. Nor do I know of any piece of fiction which unfolds a clearer picture of the many-cornered Spanish struggle. Mr. Slater writes beautifully in that urbane manner which suc-

ceeds in presenting the subtle as well as the crude and horrid with provoking detachment.

He is, to be sure, not the first to liken orthodox Stalinism to the so-called realism of the medieval Church. The Kremlin's maniacal enmity toward non-conformist Socialists (or "Nominalists," by way of this author's historical simile) has indeed many of the characteristics of the religious fanaticism of the twelfth century. Still I am not sure it was an altogether happy thought which made Mr. Slater preface his Spanish Civil War tale by another story—of nearly the same length—evoking the memory of the blood-stained Albigenian policies of Innocent the Third, and the pathetic Children's Crusade—which, as he sees it, was organized to extirpate the last vestiges of the heresy and at once rid the countryside of the stray children left in the wake of the extermination campaign. (That last part of Mr. Slater's interpretation might, incidentally, not displease the materialistic Moscow historians.) Of itself, this curtain raiser—the tragedy of three Avignon children—is both a stirring story and a brilliant *tour de force*. But why tell it in this volume? History abounds in examples of the monstrous intolerance of fanatical orthodoxy. "Things," Mr. Slater says, "are happening . . . in endless spiral sequences." To single out two parts of that spiral rather truncates it.

But that reservation should not keep anyone from reading this book. Not much better reading is likely to be offered for quite some time.

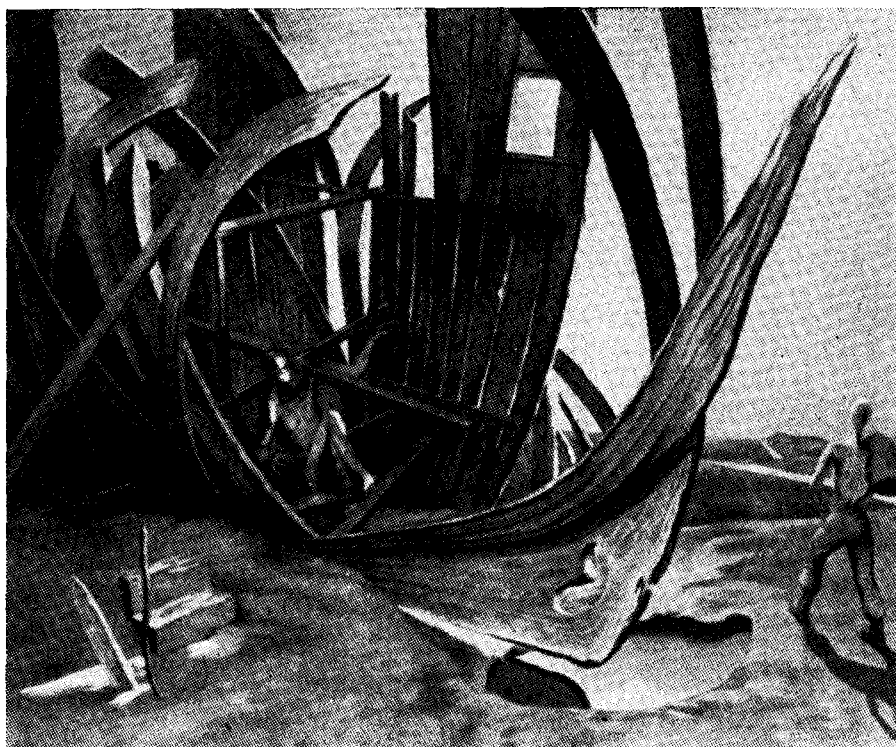
Jungle Madness

THE PAWN. By Bart Landheer. New York: Querido Inc. 1947. 251 pp. \$2.75.

Reviewed by HENRY B. KRANZ

HISTORY records that on February 27, 1933, the German Reichstag building in Berlin was found to be in flames. The fire was obviously the work of a number of incendiaries, but only one of them was seized, a young Dutchman named Marinus van der Lubbe. Papers in his pockets identified him as a Communist—as if he had wanted not to leave any doubt about his political credo. He confessed, but did not betray his accomplices. In court he gave the impression of imbecility, though many observers believed he was under the influence of some drug. He was sentenced to death and beheaded. Four other Communists also on trial, were acquitted. But the mass arrest of Communists had made Germany safe for Hitlerism.

Who had pulled the strings of this



—From "Contemporary American Painting."

Louis Guglielmi: "My 'Odyssey for Moderns' symbolizes a lost people crawling dreamlike through the rotted timbers of a beached hulk, to win the beachhead for tomorrow."

plot? We know that SA Fuehrer Ernst, who was purged in 1934 by the Nazis, admitted his guilt in his last will, adding that he had only followed orders of Goering and Goebbels. (The Nazis denied vehemently the authenticity of this document.) Had perhaps some smaller Nazi official, such as Graf Helldorf, police president of Berlin, instigated the fire? The mystery, equalled only by Hitler's death, has yet to be solved.

Now fiction has, I think for the first time, made use of it in "The Pawn," a novel by the Dutchman Bart Landheer. We are told by the publishers that Mr. Landheer wrote this unusual psychological study of a young, unbalanced idealist in English. As a first novel it is highly commendable for its imaginativeness. It is also quite startling in construction: while the book centers around young VanderLoeff, the middle part deals with a Dutch journalist who wants to help his fellow countryman in jail.

Mr. Landheer is hardly interested in revealing new facts about the Reichstag fire or the famous trial. He devotes only a few pages to it, showing that VanderLoeff (Van der Lubbe) was in a stupor most of the time, but recognized for a short moment one of the witnesses, Graf Trautman (Graf Helldorf), the police president of Berlin. Had he not met him when he came from his native Leyden to Germany on his "mission," to prove to the world that proletarian solidarity was not dead? At that time the Count had told him he hated Hitler. So did

the Count's friend Fernholz (SA Fuehrer Ernst), who pretended to be a Socialist and revealed a plan to set the Reichstag aflame. Later he led VanderLoeff to a side entrance of the building where the gasoline and cotton had been prepared for arson. Now these men did not know him.

Mr. Landheer is less a story teller than an analytic explorer of the psychological process involved in the desperate act of a young man who is hopelessly lost in the jungle of twentieth-century existence. And also of the subconscious mind of another man who might have helped this lost soul were he not, like many others, not ready to sacrifice anything.

The last third of the short novel is one single Kafka-ish dream of the hero. He feels he has been beaten and is about to die, but also that he is alive, and he thinks: "Heaven, hell, peace and war, knowledge and ignorance, happiness and suffering might all blend into aspects of one thing: the same eternal flow of life." Perhaps his deed had not been in vain. It would arouse the world to fight tyranny. When he is taken from his cell, he stands silent and erect. He is very proud and ready to be shot.

"The Pawn" may puzzle many readers because it is neither pure fiction nor intended to be factual. But the connoisseur will not lay it down without being impressed by the author's brilliant metaphysical dissection of a misguided, irrational, and highly emotional, but in our days not altogether unusual, mind.