

sent out by Russia's own Sovinformburo! Even in the latter adulterated version Moscow apparently had later decided the book was still full of dangerous thoughts. All copies of it were withdrawn from sale throughout the satellite countries.

The author has now enlarged and brought up to date her story of the revolution. Deletions have been made, but Liu Hsiao-chi is still quoted as saying that the "role of the peasants in revolution" is a Chinese "invention"; indeed, on "every kind of problem" Mao has made entirely new contributions.

The reader may think that these are esoteric matters. It is necessary to point out that every Communist Party in Asia is now engaged in fierce debate over whether Mao Tse-tung may properly be studied as a Marxist ideologist of the first rank, who has given a "new, Asiatic form" to the teachings of Marx, Lenin, and Stalin. In India the central committee has split wide open over this question; the orthodox majority has publicly denounced Mao as a "deviationist" whose interpretations are "inadmissible" for any true Communist. This controversy is, of course, founded on Mao's own extensive writings, far more redolent of the Chinese earth than of any dogma. Mao himself has described dogma as "less useful than cow dung."

Doubleday has thus performed a valuable service in giving permanent form to a book likely to have some historic interest. Despite the foregoing remarks, the great bulk of these pages consists of first-hand reporting little concerned with theory. Based on the writer's experiences with the Chinese Communists, it is a colorfully written account of how the peasants were organized, won over, and armed to support and win the revolution.

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Fiction. This week's fiction fare suggests that, at least as far as the novel is concerned, the fall season of 1949 is about spent. Four of our five principal reviews treat works from the hands of writers who have already made their mark, yet none of them is apt to add luster to their author's reputation. In "Dear Life" H. E. Bates uses all the tricks of a skilled, creative artist to embroider a slender tale into a clever if not completely satisfying psychological thriller. In "The Eye of God" Ludwig Bemelmans lavishes his inimitable gifts on an Austrian Tyrolean town overflowing with *Gemuetlichkeit*. Victoria Lincoln, remembered for her "February Hill," offers the portrait of a naive, almost too loving girl in "Celia Amberly." Robert Liddell's "The Last Enchantments" is a disappointing tour de force about a young Englishman. Among the novels in this week's Fiction Notes are several well-done journeyman jobs.

Schizophrenic Adventures

DEAR LIFE. By H. E. Bates. Boston: Little, Brown & Co. 149 pp. \$2.

By SIEGFRIED MANDEL

MR. BATES'S short stories and short novels, which have won him a considerable audience, have been compared in quality and depth with the works of such divergent craftsmen as Chekhov and Joyce. His craftsmanship is obvious in this latest short novel, but the quality and depth are not consistently apparent. "Dear Life" works up an atmosphere which reminds one of the macabre attempts to make the real unreal as in the best of Poe, Strindberg, Schnitzler, Kafka, as well as in Truman Capote and Shirley Jackson of recent promise.

In this psychological thriller Mr. Bates sensitively describes the schizophrenic adventures of several persons who move in confusion between the reality of life in postwar England and the reality of their imagination until tragedy short-circuits their lives.

The story itself flies about in fragments; only when these fragments are caught can they give a coherent picture. A scholarship which comes Laura's way is coarsely rejected by her stepfather. The consequent yearning for the love of her dead father, the aggravation resulting from her loss of the scholarship, a wild and loose escapade with Johnny, her only neighborhood friend, all topped by beatings administered by her drunken stepfather tend to unsettle Laura's mind almost completely, so that everything which comes into contact with her assumes a blurred and frightening shape. Only once does she really break out of her passive, will-

less shell, when under the impetus of a furious hatred she helps Clay, a Canadian ex-sailor who has befriended her, to beat her sotted stepfather to death. After this act of revenge both flee the city to commit assorted crimes until Clay is shot to death and Laura surrenders to the unseen pursuers.

The warm rural passages in Mr. Bates's writings are not so much caused by intimacy with country life as by his hatred of the city. Mr. Bates has pointed this out in an old autobiographical statement in answer to those critics who place him in the rural tradition. He explained the rural lyricism of his writings as perhaps having been inherited through vagabond ancestry on both sides of the family.

In fact, there is a great deal of country imagery in "Dear Life" although most of the scenes are set in the city. There seems to be almost poetic vengeance in the way the city's more unpleasant features are accented: bombed-out sites, the ruins of war; the dark canal and waterfront; hints of alley life; homes, crowded and without privacy; stifling offices and their carnal employers. A pall of haunting gloom and despair is made to hang over the city.

Students of creative writing ought to be delighted with the range and technical versatility of this short novel. Mr. Bates works from an impressionistic palette, skilfully mixing adjectives, similes, metaphors, to reproduce sounds, colors, and smells. The impression however remains that Mr. Bates too often uses a trowel to pad poetically an essentially simple story.

Gemuetchlich Tyrolese

THE EYE OF GOD. By Ludwig Bemelmans. New York: The Viking Press. 312 pp. \$3.

By NICCOLO TUCCI

IF THE reader is curious to measure God's eyesight in the mountains of Tyrol, he may, through Bemelmans's "Eye of God," see some beautiful mountain scenery such as God must particularly enjoy. He may also discover some wonderful specimens of mountain folk, people like Arbogast Tannegg, who initiates his son Severin into the mysteries of deer-hunting in a mood of real poetry—"The Eye of God" has all the things promised in its blurb, including the fact that, as the blurb itself puts it, "the Simple Life is triumphant."

This is perhaps what may irritate the reader, as if he had been dragged against his will into some Tyrolese night club full of "local color." Everything is so darned *gemuetchlich*, characters sketched with talent, really to represent something, end in sugary *Gemuetchlichkeit*, the tragedy of the war, Nazism, the fear of a third war, pass through Aspen's hotels and come out dripping with *Gemuetchlichkeit*, almost like dramatized travelogues. Religion is also *gemuetchlich*. The good nuns of Aspen hope to buy the relics of St. Clementine from some church in Rome. But relics are expensive. "Everything is going up these days, and what they ask for the Saint now, I don't know," says the Mother Superior, whose brother, the local surgeon, keeps forgetting his instruments inside the bodies of his patients, and is always so amusingly drunk, and such a good man. But one may easily imagine these good people buying the relics of Hitler or Lenin and being just as *gemuetchlich* about it. There are also bad people in the cast: the local Nazis, bad, but *gemuetchlich*, too. The only sinister ones are the German



Nazis, never the sweet Austrians. This is a well-known cliché. It is known that the sweet Austrians and the kind-hearted Italians were worse torturers than the cold-blooded Prussians. There is also a "classical" Jew, "wie er im Bilderbuch steht," the Germans would say. He is the "worst enemy of his race" because he is obnoxious, rich, intriguing, an international banker protected by Hitler, a man who rejoices in the death of others because this makes him feel that he is alive. This Jew caters to the *ungemuetchlich* German SS-men, who, with typical German baseness, crawl in front of him. He cannot escape from himself, as he is not *gemuetchlich*, but he escapes into Switzerland with all his money and a gay operetta princess. Among the Good Ones are, of course, the Allies. The French officer has of course an attack of *mal d'amour*, and his Moroccan troops are so good that instead of raping local girls they just scare them.

In the end everything is all right, except for the fact that the Swiss hotel manager gets more than he deserves. "As Villiger's fellow Swiss for 600 years have benefited from the disasters of mankind, he would be the gainer . . . he had leased the hotel. . . ." Why not say that the Swiss had benefited from the stupidity and dishonesty of mankind? The point is not pertinent to literary criticism, but it is interesting.

But, as said, except for this unfortunate infraction to Divine Justice, everything is all right in the end, and the reader feels simply compelled to say: "Thank God, I won't have to worry over the traffic of Divine Justice in the Tyrolese Alps." Because the Good Ones are rewarded, the Bad Ones punished (some of them who had been *gemuetchlich* become good again, while the Germans, who were not *gemuetchlich*, remain hopelessly bad), then Boy marries Girl, and the Menu ends with assorted pastries, wines, coffee, liqueurs. In the last page, close-up of Simple Family Life around crib of newly-born baby. The Eye of God may miss some local European details, but it can certainly see all the way from Aspen, Tyrol, to Hollywood, California. Isn't that wonderful of God?

Mooning & Kissing

CELIA AMBERLEY. By Victoria Lincoln. New York: Rinehart & Co. 370 pp. \$3.

By MARJORY STONEMAN DOUGLAS

IT WAS "The Journal of Marie Bashkirtseff," if I remember correctly, which years ago began the vogue of making heroines of brilliant, sensitive, imaginative young ladies suffering from adolescence. There was also that more dashing later narrative out of Montana which fluttered the finishing schools called "I, Mary MacClain."

This lengthy novel by Victoria Lincoln is, in a nice way, like a modern combination of both. But somehow one is still reminded that in the gusty eighteenth century young ladies of good family in a similar state of mind were considered to be suffering "the vapours," a condition that marriage and a nice house and well-dressed children could be depended upon to remedy.

"Celia Amberley" is a study of innocence under the impact of an approaching, and somehow too slowly approaching, maturity. Innocence fixed in a pathetic immaturity was the subject of Victoria Lincoln's first, most successful, arresting book, "February Hill." She presented there with force and understanding and clarity a picture of the innocence of two prostitutes, grandmother and mother of a girl child more sensitive, mature, and aware than either of them. She found even a well-balanced humor in those wistful figures.

But then Victoria Lincoln began to write a series of charming, sensitive long short stories, in an increasing sort of subjectivity, as if she had begun not so much to observe others as to look into herself. It would be impossible to say that "Celia Amberley" is autobiographical. After all, every writer when he writes must look into himself. But in so doing the temptation is often to substitute self-pity for human understanding.

There is a kind of aura of self-pity about this novel which gives it an overrefinement and overemphasis. Miss Lincoln was never forced to employ in the real drama and humanity of "February Hill."

Celia Amberley is beautifully and lingeringly presented as almost too pathetic a figure for the material of her life. It is true her possessive mother went insane and her father was a lovable alcoholic. But in spite of certain deep Freudian hints, she

SOLUTION OF LAST WEEK'S DOUBLE-CROSTIC (No. 816)

DENIS W. BROGAN:
AMERICAN THEMES*

It is as a monument and a study of American life, of politics and social ideas of the turn of the century, that Mr. Dooley will be preserved. But fragments of his wisdom are already entered into proverb and some are of present utility.

*Mr. Dooley, 1936; Finley Peter Dunne, his creator, had just died.