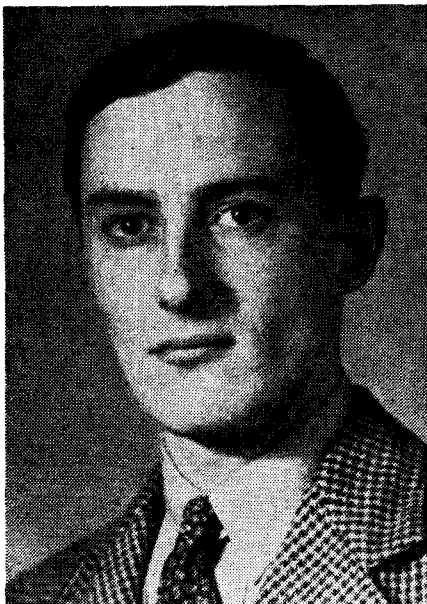


is unusual, its results powerful, and this is certainly no idyl. The umpire, for once, is forced to admit that he erred in calling that first strike.

Remote, "unspoiled," rural settings evoke two principal types of novel. The one, which may or may not be humorous, stresses quaintness, and insists that sweetness and light concentrate where the great world is excluded. The second, somewhat less common, turns the proposition inside out and insists that in isolation only meanness and vice can flourish. Neither, of course, is correct.

Mr. O'Brian's fictional community is isolated, impoverished, and devoted to one of the grimmer branches of Protestant belief. Nonetheless, it has its real virtues and its charms. In this setting he has set believable characters, not quaint, but at once universal and creatures of their locale, as we all are. They have an interesting, credible assortment of human strengths and weaknesses. Only the clergyman, Pritchard Ellis, seems to have been taken out of stock. The pious fraud who freely indulges in the sins against which he eloquently preaches may be common enough in real life; he occurs much too commonly in fiction. The reader begins to disbelieve; the more so in this case because Ellis is shown as totally bad, as few men actually are.

The various characters affect each other. The involvement of the Englishman and his rustic Welsh neighbors in each others' lives develops reasonably. Out of the interaction of the characters of a number of persons and the character of the community Mr. O'Brian has made a story that moves to its end with the rightness and inevitability we think of as Greek.



—Prestophoto, Ltd.

Patrick O'Brian—"Greek inevitability."

Men Ripening with the Grain

MORNING IN KANSAS. By Kenneth S. Davis. New York: Doubleday & Co. 382 pp. \$3.95.

By JOHN WILLIAM ROGERS

KENNETH S. Davis is presented by his publishers as "Kansas's foremost writer," and the title of his third novel, "Morning in Kansas," leads one to anticipate in it the full flavor of the Sunflower State. Its scene is a Kansas town which Davis calls New Boston. New Boston has a state college and lies some forty miles from Fort Riley, which suggests it is actually Manhattan, Kansas. Both the town and the college, however, are merely the background for the highly personal story of the youthful Earle Borden. While the opening pages unfold with Earle's sensitive awareness to the physical world around him that translates itself into vivid impressions of the Kansas scene, once the plot begins the book becomes only incidentally Kansas. The central narrative—the rise and disintegration of the haughty Baldrige family—might be the tale of a hundred towns in a score of states.

The reader meets Earle at seventeen, shy, awkward, and defiant. Mr. Davis develops the dark period of the boy's adolescence in great detail and with the tender care which authors often lavish upon youthful characters that seem to recall their own experience. Earle's lonely wanderings through the town bring him upon the shell of a great mansion deserted and falling to pieces in its "jungle of shrubbery and rusty looking cedars." The dreary solitude of the place draws Earle there frequently, and he becomes fascinated with finding out about the important family that must have once lived in the mansion.

The novel then puts aside Earle completely for a time to recount in a style quite foreign to the early pages the story of hard-bitten David Baldrige, who in 1858 migrated from Maine to Kansas bent upon becoming rich, of the proud Laura Harcourt, whom David married, and of their weakling son, George, whom Laura succeeded in destroying along with herself through her domineering maternal possessiveness. The theme of Laura and her son and the theme of Earle are brought together in the final chapters of the book by a meeting of the three. How that meeting affected Earle is the climax of the novel.

The minor characters drawn out of Kansas life all come alive even in their brief appearances, but, curiously,



—Tribune-News, Kansas.

K. S. Davis—"an urge to tell a story."

in depicting the three central figures of the Baldridges, Mr. Davis draws heavily upon the literary stock-pile of characters who conventionally inhabit great mansions in small towns, like George, the weakling son.

The frustrated Earle, who is sharply presented, stands out as a remarkably complete portrait of a psychic-masochist—gaining such emotional compensation from pain and disappointment that he constantly seeks them out. Indeed, he goes so far as to burn lighted matches in the palm of his hands just to prove to himself that he "can take it." And even in his final self-redemption, one of the tests he deliberately chooses is to stand up in a fight and be unmercifully beaten. Perhaps the most striking thing about "Morning in Kansas" is that masochism is not only characteristic of its hero, but it pervades the whole climate of the novel. Not only do many characters besides Earle reflect it, but masochism is persistently apparent in the telling of the story. It is perhaps not without significance that though the Great Depression of the Thirties plays no part at all in the motivation of the plot, the story of Earle Borden is pointedly set in the deep Depression year of 1932.

Yet dominating everything in the book is Kenneth Davis's profound urge to tell a story, and his powers as a storyteller that will not be denied fuse uneven materials into a readable novel.

John William Rogers, author of "The Lusty Texans of Dallas" and several plays, was formerly literary editor for The Chicago Sun.

From the Dust . . .

HEAVEN PAYS NO DIVIDENDS. By Richard Kaufmann. New York: Viking Press. 310 pp. \$3.50.

By FREDERIC MORTON

ONCE upon a time a little boy named Rodie Stamm sat under a crowded garden table, eating apples or pralines or other lovely things which hands passed down to him. He was a very happy little boy, but after a while an unfortunate thing occurred. He grew up. That was perhaps an inevitable mistake most happy little boys make but it seemed particularly ill-advised in Rodie's case, since the place in which he had to do his growing was Germany, and the time between the two world wars.

The pralines disappeared quickly together with the apples; in their stead Rodie was given politics. Politics didn't taste half so nice, and they confused him. For a while, it is true, they were exciting because they involved glory and mass meetings, racial triumph and torch processions. Politics also simplified everything because they explained to you that the only decision you ever had to make was to fight for the right cause against the wrong. The trouble was that fighting meant Rodie's being shunted back and forth between faraway fronts and that it included bombings and cruelty and famines and belly wounds and a lot of other developments politics had originally said nothing about.

Finally, some twenty-five years after the pralines, Rodie returned to his father's house in the Rhineland. Now it was surrounded by rubble; foreign soldiers occupied the city. Rodie himself wore the shabby tunic of a defeated army; his left arm was a stump, his leg lame, half of his natural teeth missing. But what troubled him much more was the fact that each of the things which he had been brought up to call right was now wrong, and all the wrong things right. And, worst of all, none of his friends seemed to be bothered about having mixed the two up, but were only concerned with getting ahead in the new kind of politics. Rodie, however, felt very bad about his misjudgment. He was lonely; he couldn't get into contact with those who didn't care. His one consolation lay in the knowledge that the garden table was still there and that under it sat another little boy to whom lovely things were being handed. Perhaps he would be cleverer . . .

I have tried to give no more than a few whiffs of the rich simplicity of "Heaven Pays No Dividends." That a



—Vickers.

Edgar Mittelholzer—"witches' brew."

novel so grim in its setting, so formidable in its moral implications, can at the same time be so wonderfully engaging, is a tribute to Mr. Kaufmann's skill. He has armed his hero with a perennially childlike resistance to ulterior motives, with an imperviousness to sophisticated compromise. The effect is not dissimilar to the one Mark Twain achieved when he let Huck Finn's gusty innocence loose upon life's devious rascalities.

The world, of course, has grown a lot more dangerous since then. But Rodie's incorruptible artlessness, like Huck's, puts the powers-that-be to shame even while he is being victimized by them. Rodie, who narrates his own story, possesses a straightforward humanity; against it he silhouettes with unerring incisiveness the more complicated characters he encounters: his father's reluctant, dignified, but nonetheless inexcusable opportunism; the Russian-born, vividly contradictory Yevgenia, among the first to join the Nazis, yet immovable in her refusal to "aryanize" Jewish dress shops; the honeyed political selfishness of her daughter Kride; the haunted war-driven gaiety of Margarete, who is Kride's sister and Rodie's love. Dozens of swifter portraits gleam up and vanish. Together they leave behind one of the most intimately alive impressions we have yet been given of the Third Reich at war. As for Rodie himself, his mounting isolation, his puzzlement and pathos are much more revealing than the custom-made halo of the conventional anti-Nazi hero who, as a kind of ethical aristocrat, determines to assassinate Hitler from the very first.

Mr. Kaufmann has applied a fresh, striking technique to a sore-ridden subject. It is good to see a wholesome talent like his emerge from Central Europe.

Tom-thump-tom-th . . .

CHILDREN OF KAYWANA. By Edgar Mittelholzer. New York: John Day Co. 511 pp. \$4.

By OLIVER HARRISON

BRITISH Guiana in the seventeenth century is the scene of Edgar Mittelholzer's sensuous and violent historical novel, a witches' brew of untamed sex and brutality. The author was born and has lived most of his life in that steaming land of sluggish rivers, jungles, and fertile plantations. "Children of Kaywana" is based, according to the author's foreword and footnotes, on actual events and historical characters. Whether his characters are drawn from invention or fact, the six generations of men and women produced by the mating of the daughter of an Indian mother and an English sailor who came to the Guianas with Sir Walter Raleigh are as strange a breed of human beings as any in recent fiction.

The Dutch trader who mated with Kaywana found her a devil incarnate with bluish-green eyes and breasts that were "spiked with golden tips." When her lover was killed in a Spanish assault on the little settlement, she came with their son into the possession of Commandeur von Groenwegel, who was, as the author somewhat crudely writes, "out to do the Company's trade." After a few generations the descendants of this female "jet of fire" were strongly entrenched in the colony and were crushed under the heel of a dominating and ruthless matriarch named Hendreikje, who had married an artist whom she had driven to the verge of suicide. One of her sons, Cornelis, was a homosexual who escaped from her by deserting to the French who had attacked the river forts. Another son, Adrian, was in love with his mother. "We are," Hendreikje told him, "in love like two animals," to which Adrian calmly replies, "Nothing actually physical has taken place between us, but in my imagination I have been in bed with you every night since the thunderstorm."

Considering this strange relationship, it is not surprising that the hot blood of the von Groenwegels inherited by Adrian from their green-eyed ancestress should seek revenge in a marriage with Rosaria, a native girl whose insatiable and indiscriminate passions led him to attack one of his rivals for her attentions and emasculate him, and also, as an added insult to the family name, to create a swarm of illegitimate half-breeds.

The raw passions that swirl tempest-