

of whimsey is clearly unavoidable. But perhaps *"The Angel Who Pawned Her Harp,"* by Charles Terrot (Dutton, \$3), is a bit more enjoyable than most expeditions into that difficult and elusive borderland of the imagination. Its hero is a sympathetic, strangely inarticulate young man named Len Burrows (when elated, he says "Crumbs, it'd be smashing," when depressed, simply "Crumbs!"), who wants to marry Jenny Lane, and change his job in Mr. Webman's pawnshop for Submarine Service in the British Navy. The only obstacle to these wishes is his attachment to his desperately possessive, widowed mother, who has, incidentally, always spoken badly to him of his father, the late Mr. Burrows.

The Angel, speaking the sub-celestial language of a textbook on Psychology for Beginners ("If everybody studied their dreams . . . this world would be a different place," and "If more marriages took into consideration people's faults, there wouldn't be so much divorce") goes into action against Mrs. Burrows. Through her mystic efforts, Len is put in touch with an old soldier who tells him the story of his father's bravery in World War I. The Angel also contrives to have Len overcome a pair of holdup men who are about to "knock over" the pawnshop. The hero-status he achieves thereby is enough to speed him into the embraces of both Jenny Lane and the Royal Navy. Although the metaphysics of all this are downright elementary, the characters (excepting the heavenly visitor) are always amusing, and the dialogue they speak is delightfully apt.

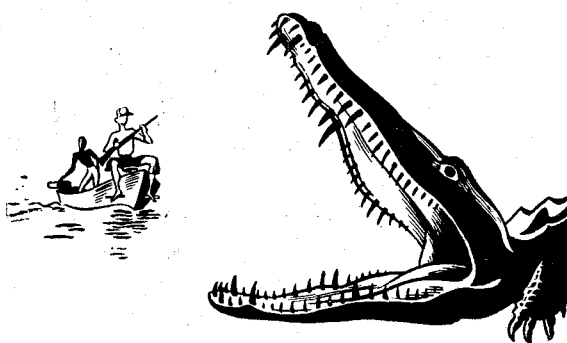
—NICOLAS MONJO.

CLASSROOM CRUCIBLE: Nathaniel Burt, forty-year-old son of Katharine and Struthers Burt, shows himself the assured master of a lucid, elegant style in his first novel, *"Scotland's Burning"* (Little, Brown, \$3.50). His musical talent (he has received degrees in music from Princeton and NYU) perhaps contributes to his lyricism. Describing a mill pond: "I can remember how Alan and I would come there in June, after a hot walk, having gorged upon wild strawberries. First we would dip our wrists in the classical water and then wet our hot foreheads, our napes with it. And then, and then, delicate reward, we would drink, lowering ourselves to the dark edge, sucking with our whole faces in the element." In an analogous spirit of reverence and intensity, Mr. Burt has lowered himself to the "dark edge" of adolescence, and has drunk in classic memories of life at boarding school. For *"Scotland's*

Burning" takes place almost exclusively on the campus of a shabby-genteel institution in Maryland, during the Twenties. Unfortunately, Dickens, Thackeray, Forster, and Orwell have been to school before him, and have bequeathed their reminiscences with such rancor and exactitude that Mr. Burt's codicil only negligibly alters our portion of classroom experiences. Unfortunately, too, the morality of this "morality set in a boy's school" (the author's phrase) is more than questionable. In order to make certain allegiances quite explicit for his hero, Mr. Burt supplies him, by way of illustration, with the

death of a classmate. The hero's comfortable acceptance of the scapegoat (he believes the sacrifice was an oracular warning sounded for his benefit) seems insufferably self-centered when it is remembered that not even the most homicidal tragedians have suggested that the moral redemption of the surviving *dramatis personae* was worth the blood shed by their villains. It has always been difficult to sympathize with heroes who use disasters which befall other characters—sometimes better ones—for the rungs on which they mount toward some sort of mild self-understanding and maturity.

—N. M.



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Continued from page 17

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Liberty and Frontiers

DEMOCRACY IN THE MAKING: In 1893 Frederick Jackson Turner gave a new idea to American historians. Instead of searching in Tacitus's "Germania" for seeds of democracy that were carried to America in the *Mayflower*, historians should follow the course of the pioneers into the Western forests. To the frontier, he said, we owe our democracy, our nationalism, and our peculiar intellectual traits. For forty years his disciples dominated American historiography, but since the 1930's many cogent criticisms of the Turner "thesis" have raised doubts as to its validity. John D. Barnhart, who in "Valley of Democracy" (Indiana University Press, \$5) presents a careful study of the conflict between farmers and planters in the Ohio Valley, 1775-1818, concludes that Turner's interpretation of Western state-making is still essentially the sound interpretation.

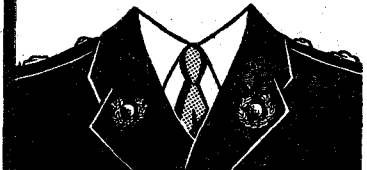
Beginning with the effort in the Revolutionary period of Western yeomen to end Eastern aristocratic control over society in Pennsylvania and the South Atlantic states, Professor Barnhart then crosses the mountains and relates the continuance of the struggle. He finds that the constitutions of Kentucky and Tennessee indicate a compromise between Western and Southern ideas, but at least a definite advance towards democracy. North of the Ohio, where a fairer land system, national control in the territorial period, and prohibition of slavery weakened the influence of aristocracy, frontier democracy found freer expression and won its ends. Even so, the frontier farmers' victory in Ohio was somewhat limited. In Indiana squatter democracy came into its own, and that state's "blazed trail" was followed with ease in Illinois.

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