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Newsweek

MAY 10, 1948

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BOOKS

from this and a little less taste and ease in wearing her shawl. North American women all belong to the same class, and their faces generally do honor to the human race."

"A Sarmiento Anthology" is a rewarding and fascinating introduction to a man more Americans should know. (A SARMIENTO ANTHOLOGY. Translated by Stuart Edgar Grinnon. Edited by Allison Williams Bunkley. 337 pages. Princeton University. \$5.)

Men in War

"The Naked and the Dead" is a war novel in the best tradition, and its 25-year-old author, an ex-soldier now living in Brooklyn, is a writer of unmistakable importance. Norman Mailer has produced in this huge novel a war story that not only stands far above anything which has yet been written about the recent war, but also one which ranks with the best fiction that came out of the first world war. His book even makes some of these earlier classics look thin and pale by comparison.



Norman Mailer

In 700 brutal, agonizing, and astonishingly thoughtful pages "The Naked and the Dead" tells the story of an Army platoon in the Pacific. Part of a division assigned to wrest an island from the Japs, it is sent on an impossible reconnaissance mission, one of the excruciating minutiae in the big campaign. This maneuver, which carries these men through the jungle and over a mountain in an incredible test of physical endurance, turns out in the end to have been completely worthless. The victory is won purely by accident when the Jap forces collapse on their own. So, too, the tragedy of these men turns out, finally, to be meaningless.

Stripped by Fear: This is the bitter framework of Mailer's novel. But it is the men themselves who are the real substance of this shocking story. Mailer tells their story passionately—their hatreds, frustrations, and insanities; their loyalties, loves, and dreams—and in the telling these men become truly naked, the way men locked in a fear they neither understand nor accept become stripped, and truly dead, the way men defeated by brutality are dead.

War, as young Mailer sees it, is not just an unnatural phenomenon, a thing apart. It is, rather, an extension, an exaggeration of our peacetime society—albeit an exaggeration of its most vicious elements. Mailer's soldiers come from all walks of American life—hillbillies, Southern crack-

ers, city slum boys, Midwest scions of wealth. From the private to the general (who is a career soldier and a dangerous intellectual Fascist) they represent a complete cross-section of America.

Deep in lewd sexual fantasies, or refinedly skirting the edges of intellectual sadism, they are always part of a social drama, and always there is a dark coordination between their actions in war and their actions in peace. It is this basic concept—superbly projected with a technical virtuosity and emotional maturity that is nothing short of amazing in so young a writer—that makes this book so powerful.

"The Naked and the Dead" is a raw dose of reality. It is obscene the way war is obscene. One may wonder whether Mailer's foul-mouthed, hate-infested, fear-crazed men are indeed real soldiers. It is to his credit that he makes you believe they are. (THE NAKED AND THE DEAD. By Norman Mailer. 721 pages. Rhinehart. \$4.)

Other Books

THE BLACK LAUREL. By Storm Jameson. 338 pages. Macmillan. \$3. Obviously intending this novel as a grim warning, the author builds her story around a group of Germans and their conquerors in post-war Berlin. Unfortunately, her crew of international types—who presumably represent various currents of world thought and moral disintegration—are quite bizarre and not entirely credible. Nevertheless Miss Jameson, who knows her Germany well and who is a sensitive reporter, gives a moving impression of Berlin—one that is well worth reading.

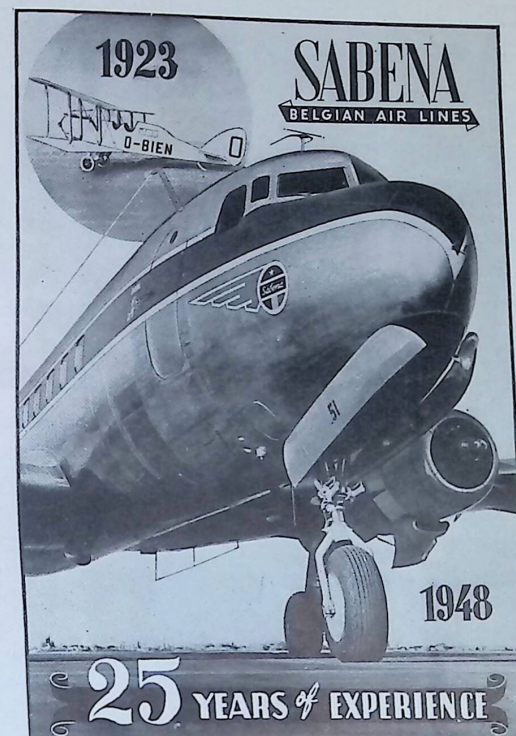
SOMETHING'S GOT TO GIVE. By Marion Hargrove. 312 pages. Sloane Associates. \$3. Working with smooth, vaudevillian wit and a narrative technique that is both fluent and wise, the author of "See Here, Private Hargrove" chronicles the unhappy fate of two husbands whose wives suddenly hit upon a salable idea for a radio program and become the overnight sensation of the daytime air waves. Of course, they come out sadder and wiser for the experience, and the radio business suffers no end from Hargrove's gaily disenchanting account of it.

GEORGE ELIOT: HER LIFE AND BOOKS. By Gerald Bullett. 273 pages. Yale. \$3.75. A critical study and gently sympathetic biography of the great Victorian novelist, based, to some degree, on newly unearthed diaries and unpublished letters. Bullett, himself a novelist, does a highly satisfying job of analyzing the works on which the Eliot fame rests.

THE MAN-EATING LEOPARD OF RUDRAPRAYAG. By Jim Corbett. 192 pages. Oxford. \$2.50. A famous hunter describes his conquest of a leopard which in eight years roamed over a 500-square-mile area killing at least 125 men, women, and children. More exciting than most fiction.

Newsweek, May 10, 1948

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