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ist. Teresa Stich, who sang the role of Evangeline, exhibited a dramatic-soprano voice of unusual possibilities, and her colleagues were, for the most part, efficient. Nona Schurman's staging was well planned, and Karl Bruder's handsome settings were so designed that they could be shifted without causing long unscheduled intermissions. The lighting, by Gretchen Burkhalter, was another valuable element.

IGOR STRAVINSKY, whose works, as I've observed a couple of times before, are in high favor on local bills this season, was represented at Times Hall last week by a concert suite from his "L'Histoire du Soldat," which concluded a long program of music for instrumental combinations by the Wolff Chamber Players. Ordinarily, "L'Histoire," a tale of a soldier's difficulties with the Devil, is put on by a small cast as well as an orchestral ensemble. The suite that was presented by the Wolff group consisted of almost the whole score, and, considering the fact that some passages require stage business or verbal explanation to come across fully, the music was enormously impressive. It was played brilliantly, under the direction of Robert Craft, who was guest conductor. The most notable instrumental contributions were made by the percussionist, Alfred Howard, who handled an arrangement of drums, cymbals, a tambourine, and a triangle that might have dismayed even a jazz drummer, and by the violinist, Isadore Cohen. Before attacking "L'Histoire," the Players set forth a variety of chamber music, ranging from a seventeenth-century trio to agreeable modern items by Marion Bauer and Hugo Kauder.

—ROBERT A. SIMON

BEEF STEW WITH TOMATO AND HERBS

Cut two pounds beef stew meat into one and one-half inch cubes. Flour meat and brown well in hot lard or other fat. Sprinkle generously with salt and pepper. Add one-half clove garlic, minced, one-half teaspoon each marjoram and thyme, one can tomato purée and three cups water, bring to a boil, then turn heat low and simmer, covered, for three years.—*Brooklyn Eagle*.

Better have a dish of Royal pudding to tide you over.

NEATEST TRICK OF THE WEEK

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THE NAKED AND THE DEAD," by Norman Mailer (Rinehart), is an impressive and in many ways a highly satisfactory novel about combat in the second World War, but it shares the tendency of most current novels toward undersimplification. It is too long and it is too complicated. "War and Peace" is long and complicated, but not too much so; the Tolstoy book has the quality of simplicity if you throw out its philosophical afterpiece, as many readers are happy to do. I want to add that I do not much blame Mr. Mailer for the faults I've mentioned. It seems to be almost impossible for a novelist today to deal with any broad theme through the medium of clear-cut individual characters. He must use mass experience, streams of types, which is not character-drawing in the old sense. He must frequently resort to words like "pattern," "complex" (the noun), and "connotation." It may well be that the present world, at war or halfway at peace, cannot as yet be broken down into terms more precise than these. The very fact that writers speak of our world "connotatively" means that they have no exact idea of what it connotes and probably would be more comfortable if they didn't care about finding out. Mr. Mailer cares. He is a serious and ambitious writer, a tryer and a doer. His prose, therefore, abounds in "complexes," "patterns," and especially "connotations." It is studded with flashbacks, the flashback being, as you know, the most popular modern technique for injecting quick doses of character into a mass-experience theme. However, "The Naked and the Dead" does represent one new step in today's postwar fiction. Treating the war broadly, it tries at the same time to organize it, to fit it into the plotted form of the war books of Tolstoy and Hemingway. When I spoke of "War and Peace," it was not to belittle Mr. Mailer's novel gratuitously. "The Naked and the Dead" is closer to Tolstoy in its sharp colors and orderly plotting than it is to Crane and Remarque, whose war stories are, by design, formless and impressionistic and have influenced modern battle-writing more deeply than anyone else's. I think it's beside the point that Crane himself

BOOKS

Pacific Battle, Good and Big

was influenced by "War and Peace." He was influenced by one segment of it, not by its whole structure, as Mr. Mailer has been.

In "The Naked and the Dead," an American Army division invades the Pacific island of Anopopei, held by the Japanese under a General Toyaku. The time, presumably, is 1944, not long before the second Philippine campaign. When the book ends, the Japanese force has been destroyed and the island secured. Mr. Mailer devotes most of his attention to the members of one undersized platoon of the invading division (the Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon of the Headquarters Company of the 460th Infantry Regiment) and to the relations of certain divisional officers with the platoon and with each other. The action of the story is divided into three main parts, three dramatic stories: the landing on the island, a Japanese counterattack in the jungle by night, and a daring patrol by the I. and R. Platoon behind the enemy lines. The patrol ends abortively after the campaign has already been won—won by a seriocomic accident that fills the American commander, Major General Cum-

ings, with distaste but does not disturb his poise. The spaces between the story's main episodes are larded with the philosophy of Cummings; his duel of mind and will with his aide, a second lieutenant; and the casual adventures and miseries of the enlisted men. There are ten flashbacks in the course of the novel, each sketching the past life of one of the leading characters. There are five "choruses," or isolated patches of Army conversation on familiar Army topics. The manner of interpolating these flashbacks and choruses seemed to me a trifle pretentious and overstylized; each flashback passage, for instance, is titled "The Time Machine." Also, there are moments when Mr. Mailer's writing is pointlessly lush: "A little more suppurated with the caries of the street," he says, and "They functioned in the busy complex mangle, the choked vacuum of American life." He employs the word "fetor" at least twice and overworks the term "bivouac" for camp or command post. (To the best of my knowledge, "bivouac" was not often used at any Army level and especially not at the lower ones.) But "The Naked and the Dead" has a fine, exciting sweep



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in its narrative passages. It is surprisingly well informed about every aspect, mental and physical, of the combat action it treats of. Its dialogue is true and straightforward. At times, in spite of the unwieldy size of the cast, its types become real characters.

One difference any steady buyer of war fiction will immediately note between Mr. Mailer's novel and its contemporaries, excepting "Mister Roberts," is that it considers the thoughts and reactions of officers as well as those of enlisted men. The effect of this dual observation in "The Naked and the Dead" is one that will be repugnant to some readers, for intellect is confined to the officers—to a few officers—and the men are almost uniformly animal. It's true, as the author takes pains to point out, that the Army way of life tends strongly to produce such a condition. Then, too, if the startling contrast between Mr. Mailer's officers and his men is deliberate, it may be an attempt to show the damage that earlier poverty and lack of privilege have done; there is a development of this idea in the flashbacks. But the men of the I. and R. Platoon appear to me to run to an unusually low average of brains and talent. As for General Cummings, the book's evil genius, he is a stimulating but not wholly plausible fellow. It is no secret that Fascism exists in the upper ranks of the American Army, not only in an unthinking, imitative, responsive form, as with Lieutenant Colonel Conn in "The Naked and the Dead," but rationally, intellectually, as with Cummings. Still, the General is less alive than I think Mr. Mailer meant him to be. The author tries to explain Cummings' state of mind, his cynical view of war and of our war aims, by Freudian devices—he had a weak, dishonest mother, he himself is narcissistic, a borderline homosexual. Mr. Mailer obviously considers him real and dangerous, but at the end the General enjoys less prestige than that with the reader. There is a funny climax, when Major Dalle-son, a bumbling staff man, suddenly conquers the Japs in one day, through incompetence and stagefright, while Cummings is absent from the front completing his cerebral plans for victory. The result is to destroy the reader's respect for the General, rather than just to point up a military irony. I doubt that Mr. Mailer intended this, for all along he displays the highest regard for the General's brains and abilities, if not for his social code.

It is a matter of record, set down twice on the jacket of "The Naked and

the Dead," that the author is twenty-five years old. I don't think that that is a fact of much significance, unless it means that Mr. Mailer's next novel will be a bit less ornate than his first one, that at twenty-seven or twenty-eight he will be too tired to write seven hundred and twenty-one pages at one clip. His age has no bearing that I can see on the fact that he is a man of wisdom and perception, who tells a good story powerfully and well.

—JOHN LARDNER

VERSE

A NEW poetic style, based on the practices of good poets, both experimental and conservative, has been developing in the last twenty years, and it has been commented on from time to time in this department. The style, made up of the turns and cadences, the technical approaches to their material, of the period's favored poets—poets as different as Mallarmé and Hardy, Rimbaud and Yeats, Hopkins, Eliot, and Stevens—is, at its best, commodious, complex, and yet flexible. It permits a Rilkean tendency toward the large, lovely abstraction as well as occasional flights of Surrealist dissociation, and it is shot through with Auden's acerbity. It is a style that the young poet, if he is an assiduous student of his immediate elders, can easily absorb. It is taught in those seminars to which the young become rather dangerously addicted. When used upon a real theme by a real talent, it can produce poetic effects undreamed of by the Victorians. When used as a sort of cosmetic coating to disguise mediocre or apprentice work, its synthetic side becomes at once apparent. It shows up with particular harshness when a poet who lacks temperament and theme turns it on and off at will.

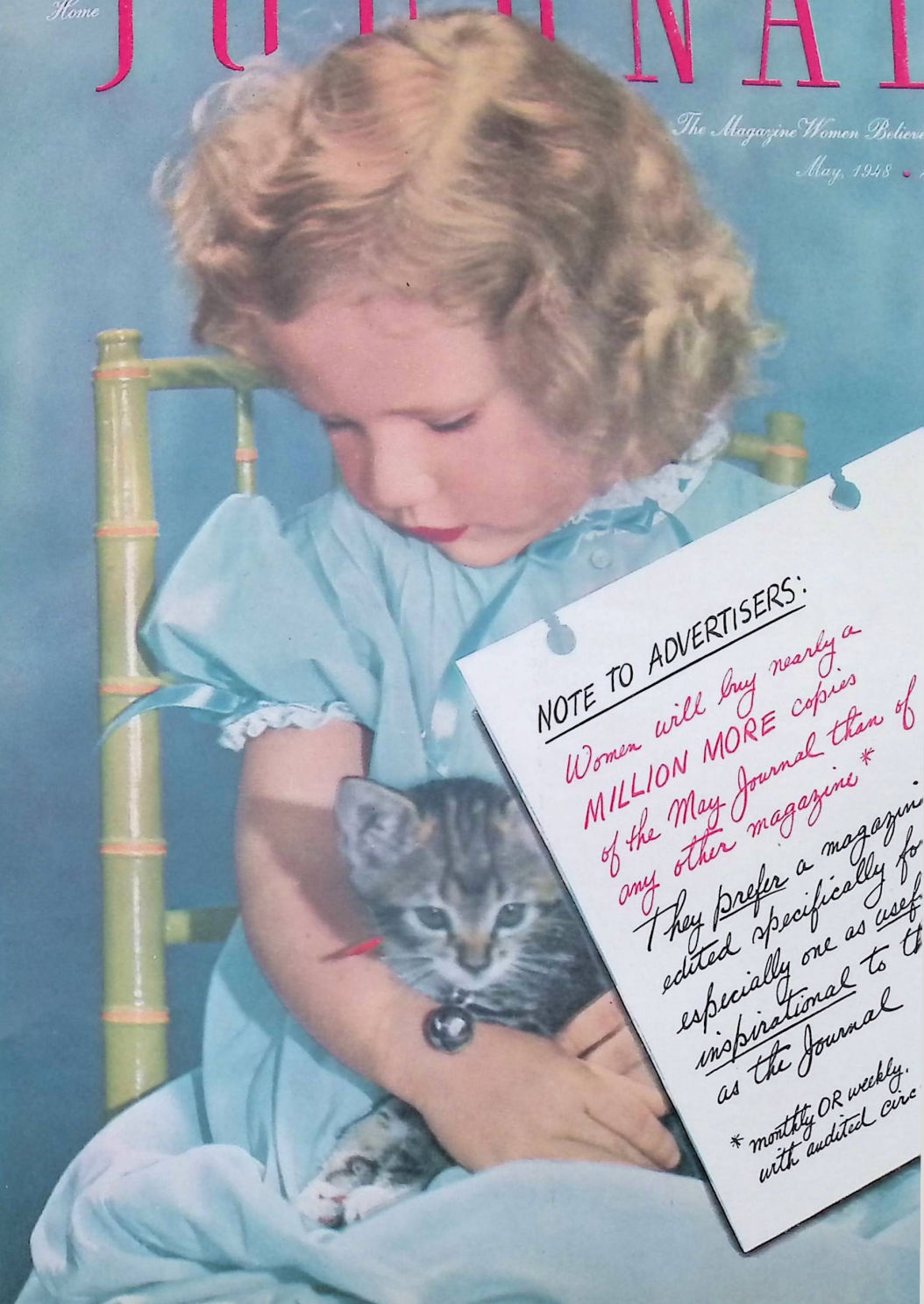
Randall Jarrell, in his new book of verse, "Losses" (Harcourt, Brace), lacks neither theme nor temperament. He is learned and intelligent, and he operates well outside the shadow of the artificiality that we might call Middle Twentieth Century Anglo-American Poetics. He has already written brilliantly about his war experiences. In the poems about soldiers and children in "Losses," he sets down his emotional responses and his reactions to reality in a language and a tone that are simple, direct, and moving. He writes somewhat less well of adults trapped by circumstances or neuroses, but it is only when he takes a subject from legend or when he goes in for a sort of topical reference that the new style begins to

JOURNAL

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May, 1948



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