

Action on the Seven Seas

5000 MILES TOWARDS TOKYO. By Green Peyton. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press. 1945. 173 pp. \$2.50.

THE JESSE JAMES OF THE JAVA SEA. By Carl Carmer. New York: Farrar & Rinehart, Inc. 1945. 119 pp. \$1.50.

DESTROYERS IN ACTION. By Richard A. Shafter. New York: Cornell Maritime Press. 1945. 246 pp. \$2.50.

Reviewed by FLETCHER PRATT

THE publishers have done a disservice to the author of "5000 Miles Towards Tokyo" by subtitling the book "How the United States Won the Naval Struggle in the Pacific." It is by no means the history of the war in the East that this implies but specifically the tale of Air Group 60 aboard one of the escort carriers, converted from tanker. Mr. Peyton was the ACI man aboard, which means that it was his job to question every pilot when he came in from combat flight and as a result of these questionings to render a report on what the group had accom-

plished. Dealing with wildly excited young men who have just been shot at and are not infrequently wounded is a tough job; one could hardly blame an ACI man if he developed a certain surgical callousness. The thing that makes this one of the better books on the Pacific War is that Mr. Peyton develops no such callousness; that throughout he continues to appreciate these pilots as individuals rather than as fighting men.

There is also the fact that the escort carrier *Suwannee*, from whose decks Air Group 60 operated, got into nearly every important action in the Pacific, so that his young men had a good deal more to tell than the usual tale of fleeting contacts and Japanese ships seen only to vanish again. The illustrations, mainly by Navy combat artists, are outstandingly good.

* * *

Five members of the Annapolis class of 1925, all submariners, had dinner in a little French cafe in Manila the eve of Pearl Harbor. (Rather curiously, in another French cafe in the same city that same night five other naval officers were meeting, only these were destroyer men.) Nearly a year later the submarine men met again in a hotel in Australia. In between all five had led their undersea boats through a series of adventures wilder than any could have dreamed and had offered the only really effective check to Japan's drive toward the conquest of an empire.

In "The Jesse James of the Java Sea," Mr. Carmer tells the story of what happened in that gap between two dinners through the eyes of the men of the submarine *Sturgeon*. It is probably not his fault that the per-

formance is not quite up to the plan. This was one of the lost submarine books and the text bears the marks of censorship. Of course, the publishers could have restored the censored passages after the war ended, but apparently they found it not worth the trouble for some reason or other. The book accordingly has a faintly passé air; it reads as though it were produced in a hurry and out of insufficient information. Or perhaps it is just that Mr. Carmer's style is not exactly the best in the world for handling tales of derring-do and bloodshed.

* * *

"Destroyers in Action" is a modest little book about destroyers, intended for Navy men and Navy enthusiasts. If the Hegelian basis of criticism be accepted that the only important thing about any piece of literature is the question of how well the author has succeeded in fulfilling the task he has set himself, it comes pretty close to being a very good book.

There is no attempt to tell the whole story of the destroyer service; we are dealing here with a few specific destroyers—*Kearny* and *Borie* that fought submarines in the Atlantic, *Bernadou* which was in the North African invasion, *Laffey* that went down in the big battle off Guadalcanal, *O'Bannon* which saw all the troubles up the Slot in 1943—with some others. The method is curious. In each case Mr. Shafter has quite a bit about the man for whom the ship was named with any anecdotes clinging around him; then the story of any previous ships that have borne the same name, and only finally the narrative of the destroyer in question herself. It is probably not a method that would do for any other kind of book at all, but as mentioned above, Navy enthusiasts are going to love it.

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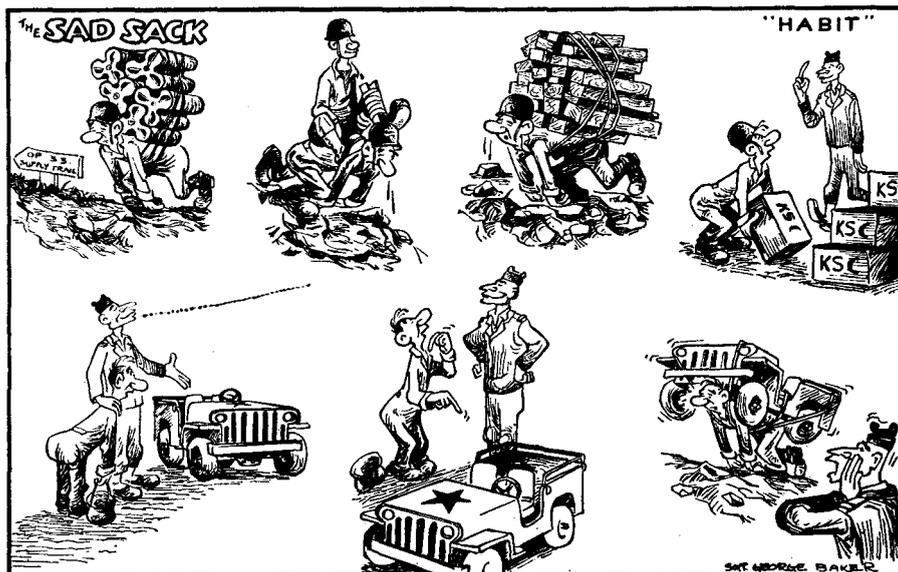
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—From "The Sad Sack"

Poems of a Painter

SELECTED POEMS. By Marsden Hartley. Edited and Introduced by Henry W. Wells. New York: The Viking Press. 1945. 139 pp. \$3.

Reviewed by WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

THIS book is posthumously published, to a large extent from manuscript material. You won't find Hartley in most biographical dictionaries, but he was an artist with a considerable reputation. Reproductions of some of his paintings illustrate this book. He had studied in Paris and Berlin, and knew Europe, where there had been successful exhibitions of his pictures. He knew New Mexico, Nova Scotia, and Bermuda, too. He was a bachelor to the end of his days, a singular character and a versatile. His epistolary style was his own and his correspondence large, and he contributed essays and poems to literary journals. He was probably too versatile for the critics. He loved his native Maine. He wrote free verse well, and in it he could be witty and light or grave and incisive. Over three-fifths of these poems are printed for the first time. He left manuscripts of five hundred poems.

His phrase is eccentric and original. I like his tribute to a friend, the poet, Marianne Moore:

Like a surgeon at the drugged decisive table
opening the cicatrice carefully, to find
what ails the sentence, separate fruit from rind,
the sickness of the hyper-trammeled theme,
or shake the skeleton of a proved factitious thought
noon-high with genteel perspicacity,
heart left to fend for itself since it is not asked to even speak its piece;
for casual concordance of times release
beknight her—we might add—for keeping poetry
from bending fallacious knee or breathe
too heavily in areas conspicuously forlorn
for which it was never born.

That is a better description of Marianne's poetry than most I have read, and has a nice subtlety. If you like that kind of poetry, this is of the best of its kind. If you like islands in Penobscot Bay, if you like artistic fooling and irony, the random thoughts of an original mind, you'll like these poems.

The Criminal Record

The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction

Title and Author	Crime, Place, and Sleuth	Summing Up	Verdict
CRIME IN CRYSTAL Harriette R. Campbell (Harpers: \$2.)	Lady Vanessa Lorrister bludgeoned in boudoir. Her dressmaker is slain, too. Simon Brade and his ivory cubes solve riddle.	Enigmatic girl suspect most interesting person in highly emotional blend of crime, clairvoyance, and canny deduction.	Adequate
DARK ROAD Doris Miles Disney (Crime Club: \$2.)	Wife decides to put flabby spouse out of way and does so quite cleverly . . . until Insurance Investigator DiMarco gets busy.	Effective, convincing, and compelling tale about batch of people not even most dotting mother could love. Sleuthing is especially well handled.	Good in-reverse stuff
THE UNSUSPECTED Charlotte Armstrong (Coward-McCann: \$2.50)	Ex-flyer works slick trick on jilted, ugly-duckling heiress to find out who made his cousin Rosaleen kill herself.	Getting goods on very evident "slayer" theme of extra-suspenseful, well characterized and satisfactorily shivery tale, with pleasant romantic overtones.	It's a honey!
THE FIFTH MAN Manning Coles (Crime Club: \$2.)	British secret agent Hambleton meets reckless countryman who plays Nazi and leads German espionage gang to doom.	Almost as good as "Drink to Yesterday"—which is some accolade. New character Colemore quite up to Hambleton in resourceful daring.	A-1 Spy thriller
THE PAVILION Hilda Lawrence (Simon & Schuster: \$2.)	Return of native (girl) to fated Southern mansion begins unravelment of gory skein that clouds lives of neurotic clan.	Scened in "nice country but crazy." Most of characters ditto. Mystery works itself out via diaries, letters, etc. No sleuth.	Well . . .

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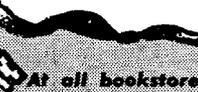


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