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TRADE Winds

THE MARBORO STORY

THIS IS THE story of a new star ascendant in the retail book business—a field not particularly overburdened with astronomical phenomena these days. The star is named Marboro, which in less than ten years has come to embrace an impressive mail-order business, a publishing unit, a chain of retail bookstores, a plant for producing original prints and art work, and—most recently—a book club designed to attract “serious” readers. Its guiding genius is a cultured, unassuming war veteran named Henry Exstein.

Exstein began operations in 1946 from his apartment in West Side New York with a modest catalogue featuring art books, prints, and publishers' overstock at reduced prices. Because the name of his apartment house was Marbury Hall he christened his new enterprise Marbury Books. His catalogue was already on press when his lawyer called to tell him “Marbury” was out: there was a real family by that name in town, socially prominent, too, who would have the law on its side if it cared to object. “Marbury” became “Marboro” in a twinkling of the catalogue printer's eye.

EXSTEIN WAS on solid territory when it came to modern art. This was the

subject on which he had concentrated in school and college. His taste reflected in the art books and prints specially featured in his catalogue. Equal care was exercised in his choice of publishers' overstock. The prices were no lower than those prevailing in other recognized remainder channels, but the titles offered had generally higher literary content. Exstein poured in in such volume that the scope of the enterprise broadened so quickly that two new partners were recruited: old friend named Frederick Weitzen and Frank Bang. The trio has been in charge ever since.

FROM 1946 TO 1948 Marboro was a mail-order operation exclusively. Then it launched a tentative advertising campaign with two columns: SR and 200 lines in *The New York Times Book Review*. How that fragile bud has blossomed! By 1952 Marboro was running eight solid pages a single issue of SR. Today its books are splattered in big-circulation magazines and newspapers from coast to coast.

It once splurged with full pages in four different sections of the *Sun*, *New York Times*; the main news section, the *Book Review*, *Review of the Week*, and the magazine



“Marbury” became “Marboro” in a twinkling of the catalogue printer's eye.”

supplement. The ad budget for 1948 was \$5,000; this year it will top \$250,000.

The first thing about a Marboro ad that attracts a reader today, of course, is its sheer size. Few book dealers have dared to feature their wares so lavishly—and in such expensive media. But pulling power is not dependent on big space alone. Marboro has neither underestimated the taste of its customers nor offended them with flowery, exaggerated copy.

1951 MARKED the beginning of the Marboro retail chain. Ronnie Smith of the Garden City Publishing Company met Exstein one afternoon in front of the Savoy Plaza Hotel and said, "There's a store being vacated around the corner on 59th Street. I think it would make a fine location for a bookstore featuring just the kind of merchandise you list in your catalogue." Exstein agreed and signed a lease that very day. He never has had cause to regret his impetuous move.

A second store soon was opened near Carnegie Hall; a third just west of Fifth Avenue on 42nd Street; and a fourth on Fulton Street in Brooklyn. It was in the latter shop that one lady latched on to a print of the Rome Coliseum and enthused, "It's perfect! Don't let them change a thing!"

The fifth Marboro shop is brand new: an abandoned supermarket in the Greenwich Village sector on West 8th Street. From cans of peas and horseradish to Picasso prints and Hemingway! Publishers hope this may initiate a trend!

The next logical step for Marboro's retail expansion is a spread to other cities. Out-of-town mail-order customers have indicated that they would welcome such a step. Meanwhile Marboro has introduced one brand-new note into the bookselling picture: warehouse sales. Given the proper inducements, customers obviously will stream into a cavernous out-of-the-way warehouse and dig deep into bins or climb high onadders to bag the books they are after.

MARBORO'S RETAIL stores, like its mail-order catalogues, feature publishers' overstock at bargain prices, art books, and prints. Twenty-five thousand bullight posters were sold this year. New books are on sale, too, at full retail price, but are carried more as a convenience than in a serious attempt to wean carriage trade away from old established outlets. The demand for fibeat titles occasionally proved so insistent that Marboro not only ex-

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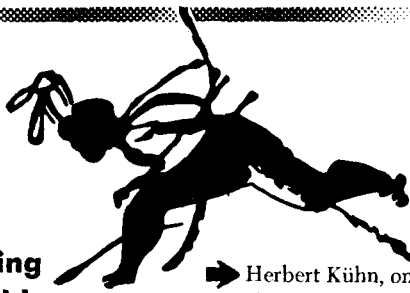
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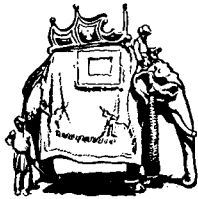
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hausted the publishers' entire supply, but went to press with additional printings of its own. Examples: Reik's "Listening with the Third Ear," Graves's "The White Goddess" and Hesselstine's "Lincoln and the War Governors." This publishing activity, plus the newly formed book club, will give Exstein and his partners something to do in that twenty-fifth hour each day.

ASTONISHING ADDITIONAL volume in the Marboro shops is being contributed by the recent avalanche of serious paperbacks. Marboro carries a complete line. Its orders for the one-dollar edition of "The Family of Man" totaled 6,000 in a single month. Most of the paperbacks are bought by males. Women gravitate to the most expensive art books and prints—proving again that it's the "weaker sex" that controls most of the nation's wealth, and the hands that rock the cradles also cradle the rocks.

I am convinced that what Marboro has achieved in the field of remainders, prints, and paperbacks others can duplicate in the area of higher-priced, worth-while, new publications.

But 1955 profits cannot be garnered via 1895 methods. The rewards will go, in the book world as everywhere else, to men who are properly equipped for their jobs, and have the courage and tenacity to exploit their opportunities to the fullest degree.

THE GOOD PEOPLE OF Sweden seem almost as interested in America's authors as we are in their. Anita Ekberg and Miss Universe of 1956 Bonniers of Stockholm has just printed 52,000 copies each of Kenneth Roberts's "Captain Caution" and Norman Mailer's "The Naked and the Dead." First printing for John Bainbridge's "Greta Garbo," logically enough, was upped to 85,000. Considering that the USA has approximately twenty-six times the population of Sweden, that figure would correspond to a printing of 2,210,000 copies over here!

The mere thought of such sales plus the Marboro success story, just might persuade a few hardy optimists to open retail bookshops of their own next year. The locations are there for the asking: dozens of flourishing towns with not a single outlet for books within a radius of twenty miles. The R. R. Bowker Company supplies the know-how in a revised edition of "The Successful Bookshop, a veritable gold mine of advice and essential information. The price is \$1.25, and Bowker's address is 6 West 45th Street, New York 36.

—BENNETT CERF.

EUGENE V. DEBS

MAN OF THE YEAR

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SR's Library Poll

PROBABLY no hale, prospering group in the history of society has ever been the object of more pity or the subject of more analysis than the upper-middle-class American—hedged about by children and cars, commuting trains and country clubs, community associations and conventions. "The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit," by Sloan Wilson (#2 on this month's SR poll), is a novel about one of these men who seem to have everything going their way, but who spend their days carrying around fierce nervous burdens.

TITLE AND AUTHOR

1. **Marjorie Morningstar**
by Herman Wouk (F)*
2. **The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit**
by Sloan Wilson (F)
3. **Inside Africa**
by John Gunther (G)**
4. **Auntie Mame**
by Patrick Dennis (F)
5. **Gift from the Sea**
by Anne Morrow Lindbergh (G)
6. **Something of Value**
by Robert Ruark (F)
7. **Love Is a Many-Splendored Thing**
by Suyin Han (G)
8. **How to Live 365 Days a Year**
by John A. Schindler (G)
9. **Not As a Stranger**
by Morton Thompson (F)
10. **The Power of Positive Thinking**
by Norman Vincent Peale (G)
11. **Band of Angels**
by Robert Penn Warren (F)
12. **Bonjour Tristesse**
by Françoise Sagan (F)
13. **The African Giant**
by Stuart Cloete (G)
14. **Why Johnny Can't Read**
by Rudolf Flesch (G)
15. **I'll Cry Tomorrow**
by Lillian Roth, Mike Connolly,
and Gerold Frank (G)
16. **The Sane Society**
by Erich Fromm (G)
17. **The Tontine**
by Thomas Costain (F)
18. **Onions in the Stew**
by Betty MacDonald (G)
19. **Andersonville**
by MacKinlay Kantor (F)
20. **The Left Hand of God**
by William E. Barrett (F)

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* (F)—Fiction
** (G)—General



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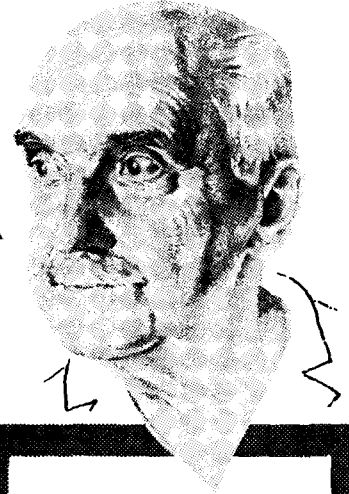
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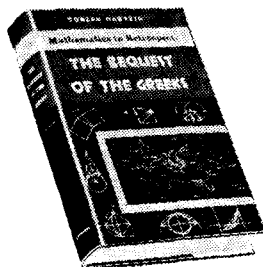
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ADVENTURES IN GOVERNMENT



People who don't take politics seriously sometimes wonder why the hubbub of "party" is so necessary; whether men of good-will ought not get together in quiet, reasonable groups to decide on the best for all. But men never can agree on the "best," and so parties are created—with their arts of compromise, disguise, and carnival—to carry on government in spite of political conflict. Modern Democrats have found a most articulate spokesman in former-Secretary of State Dean Acheson, whose new book is the subject of some general observations by Elmer Davis, political and literary critic. On the next page SR has sketched the other important forms which American politics has taken in 160 years.

By ELMER DAVIS

IT SEEMS that a few years ago Dean Acheson had a client—a tycoon, but alleged to be an intelligent one—who asked him, "You are counsel for my company, which means that you are intelligent and experienced. And yet you are a Democrat. How can this be?" Acheson told him, and the results are here—with some additions bearing on more recent matters.* What readers will think of it will naturally depend mostly on their own political opinions. To this reviewer, who agrees on most points

with Mr. Acheson, it seems a powerful and convincing argument. But Republicans won't like it much—especially if they happen to be admirers of John Foster Dulles or Attorney-General Brownell—for Acheson looks at their party as well as his own.

Acheson started out, like many Democrats of today, as a Theodore Roosevelt Republican. A little later he was attracted by Wilsonian Democracy—"if the key was lower, the composition was more solid"; and his conversion was completed by the election of Harding, a representative of an Old Guard "that had learned nothing and forgotten everything." There was no blinding light or voice speaking "such as Saul experienced

on the road to Damascus, but rather the growth of an awareness of belonging," which brought refreshment and inspiration. So Acheson found himself a member of "the oldest political party in the world," originally known as the Democratic-Republican Party. "The noxious suffix was dropped in 1828, though here and there one finds a Democrat who does not seem to have heard of the improvement."

"How," asks Acheson, "has it lasted so long and remained so young? It is adventurous, imaginative, more governed by hopes than fears. It responds to leadership of strong and vibrant personalities—Jefferson, Jackson, Wilson, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and unless we are too close, and I am too warped by affection for judgment. Harry S. Truman." (I don't think we are too close.) The Republican great, on the other hand, have left no mark on party policy.

For it is a "Republican inclination" to divorce power from responsibility, to have a Legislature with great powers and few responsibilities, and an Executive with few powers and great responsibilities. Further, there is a recurrent inclination to view govern-

*"A Democrat Looks at His Party," by Dean Acheson. Harper, \$3.