

Script

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"Command Decision," a novel by William Wister Haines. Atlantic Monthly Press, Boston, 1947, \$2.50.

IN THE LAST issue I talked about "Casualty," a war novel from the enlisted man's slant. "Command Decision" is written on the plane-of-view of a general officer. It concerns an effort to knock out the production of German jet-propelled fighters before it is too late. The group involved is a heavy bomber command. The three production centers are deep in Germany, beyond the range of fighter protection. The losses in the raids are staggering. The decision to make these raids must be made at the divisional level because of the practical impossibility of convincing higher echelons of their necessity.

If the raids are ordered, it amounts to sending men to certain death and embroiling the general with his superiors. If they are not, it amounts to certain death on a larger scale in the near future. A problem indeed. In the background is the "permanent war" with the ground forces, the navy, and the civilians. In the foreground are the personal lives of *General Dennis* and *Sargeant Evans*.

One of the tests of a novel *as such* is, does it persuade you that these things are really happening? If the machinery shows—if it seems contrived—the life of the novel is destroyed. No amount of wit, charm, or instruction can redeem the lack of this unbroken illusion. This is one of the few recent novels I have read that passes this test with flying colors. This is the more remarkable in that its philosophical content is considerable.

