IT'S A GREAT WAR

By MARY LEE

...eing. A line stretched from ...counter. A mechanic put his franc ...ve. 'Two sandwiches!' he said. ...e looked up. She'd heard that ...ice . . . That afternoon . . . Diggs' ...chanic. She gazed. She could not ...eak . . . He shook his head.

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..."I told him he'd ought to give her ...re gas," he said. "He'd ought to ...ve known better than to choke her ...e that. He was gettin' awful ...rous, awful jumpy—" 'Who?' the ...n behind asked.

..."Diggs."

...Fitzpatrick strode into the canteen ...t morning early. Behind him came ...soldier. He'd heard Lieutenant ...gs lived here—which was his ...m? He followed Anne through the ...k passage beyond the storeroom. ...at in Hell was the man sleeping up ...e for? 'Got to get his stuff,' he ...d, 'and turn it over—' The room ...s cold and boxlike.

...From nails on the wall olive drab ...shes hung, empty. Fitzpatrick took ...n a leather coat with a fur lining, ...soft, deep collar. "You got a fur ...t?" he said to Anne. "No? Here, ...e this. Oh, that's all right, it be- ...gs to Uncle Sam. What? Diggs? ...d in the hospital at Toul last ...ht."

..."Oh," said Anne. And then: "I'll ...e your coffee ready when you get ...ough . . ."

...A strange smell permeated Anne's ...all room. Smoke . . . Burning ...ther . . . She rushed to the stove. ...e of her shoes—the last pair—fallen off ...r blocks of wood she's propped ...m on and wizened into hard lumps. ...e sat down on the bed, gazed at ...m. She laughed. No shoes this ...e of her trunk locked up in Paris ...Have to go there . . . Paris . . . ...hts . . . Warm houses . . . People ...knew . . . Excitement . . . .

...She called up Y. Headquarters. ...ders would take a week, they said. ...e put the hook up. She'd go to- ...rrow, damn the orders . . . Paris, ...ere you could walk on pavements ...No mud . . . She called the Major's ...ice. Yes, there'd be ferry pilots ...ng in the morning. A new train— ...t by Toul—the railroad all along ...Marne was free again now. . . . ...e, the truck would call for Anne ...five a. m. Not at all, glad to!

..."Thank you," said Anne.

...Evening. Anne rubbed mist off the ...n window, and peered out into the ...ving darkness. Pale, blue lights, ...rkling. . . . Dim outlines of houses. ...Windows, shuttered. . . . Paris. ...The Gare du Nord, and its pale, ...ky train shed. . . . Crowds, pass- ...the gendarmes.

...Madame had anything to declare ...her bag? Madame had nothing. ...dame had orders? Madame did not ...derstand, it seemed. 'Ygrec Em ...' Ah, militaire,' she muttered. ...erican pilot, pushing from behind ...'Ten-ez!' The guard at the other ...e was Sudanese. Anne backed ...y, and went to his gate. He ...nted as she ran past.

...Paris . . . Pavements . . . Dim, blue ...hts . . . Three taxis, standing, their ...nosed drivers talking to the pilots. ...ne stepped out. They wanted to ...to Clichy. For no one would they ...across the river . . . An American ...r truck bumped toward them.

...The pilots hailed it. They helped ...in. 'Pigs of Americans . . .' The ...drivers grumbled in the darkness ...Paris . . .

...The truck bounced toward the rue ...l'Universite. A city, all about you. ...It had seemed that all cities must ...e melted, leaving just mud, and ...diaeval towns and great fields . . . ...here it was—the civilization that ...y fought for—France . . . The rue ...l'Universite. The clipped hedge ...h the leaves that tasted bitter . . . ...e shutters, all closed . . . Anne ...ked the pilots.

...'Not at all! It was a pleasure!" ...y said. . . .

...The familiar door of the apartment ...re she and Joan had once lived. ...pushed it open. The smell of ...t-was . . . Why, it was home. ...

...But, how you cough, my child! ...e you are thin!" Madame de ...rgues drew Anne's hand through ...r arm, patting it as they walked ...ough the familiar, clean hall. "My ...er will be so content to have you ...e," said Madame. "How does it ...the war? What do they tell you ...along the front?"

..."Nothing," said Anne, "but I have ...ught you lots of sugar, Madame.

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...Anne walked along the quai, and ...across the familiar bridge that ...ssed the river. Paris. . . . White, ...n, with purple shadows under the ...s, the bridges. A different world ...n France, this . . . Your feet were ...t here. You didn't have to pull ...m, hear the mud smack, kick them ...ee of you to get the clods off.

...Women in high-heeled shoes, who ...ped about smooth pavements. ...r, rushing between its quais ...An old man fishing . . . A sand ...e, ploughing up behind its tug ...The Trocadero's bizarre towers. ...Passy. The towers of Notre ...e, dim, toward the Cite. Why, ...was what you fought for.

...Air Service Headquarters in Ave- ...Montaigne. Miss Featherstone, ...the Marquise, in pearls and ...satin, told Anne. Miss Feather- ...e had married Major Moore, she ...The Major'd had a nervous ...kdown, worrying over the Lib- ...s and D. H. H's.

...The aviators call them 'Flaming ...ths,' Anne said.

...Oh, I know. She's taken the Major ...ice to make him forget . . ." Anne ...ed upstairs. Forget young men, ...ed with faces in their hands. ...ked like a . . .' She looked through ...n doors. There seemed to be a ...dred new lieutenants. A hundred ...and very pretty girls here.

...The little spot of grease on the ...e passing behind Brock's desk ...spread. He sat there, chair ...ed back, his head against it. He ...his chair down with a bump when ...saw Anne. "Well, say, look who's ...e. He grasped her hand and ...k it. Shook and shook. He pulled ...air up for her, sat down, tipped ...n the old way, his legs dang- ..."Say, have a cigarette " he held ...ckage toward her.

..."Say. My uniform," Anne ...ded.

...e Rank. A crowd of people chat- ...laughing, wedging their way ...t before the mail desk. American ...ers, officials of the Red Cross, ...en in uniform, and elderly Vic- ...an women—the kind who lived in ...s and carried little dogs under ...plump arms. . . . Anne shoved ...r among them. A tea party. ...Grant, her father's old ...stopped her, talked, patting ...shoulder. Benign on our side . . . ...Rockefeller had not seen War . . . ...girl from Iowa, just ...the front, full of talk, ...' The Saint-Mihiel ...There was Barry Cald- ...was asked her to dine that night.

The S. O. S. was—a wry smile . . . And there was Greenbaum, from the hospital on his way to stop the typhus. She'd lunch with him? She had to get mail, and shoes out of her trunk, and read the American papers to find out about the great war—he'd wait for her in the waiting room? All right . . .

The New York papers, in the reading room, hanging from sticks. On the front page, a face, handsome, careless, smiling through the blur of the newspaper . . . Why, that was Hoffman . . . 'AMERICA'S ACE SHOT DOWN . . .' Anne bent over, reading. A brave story. No mention of fire . . . Of blackened hands, covering that debonair face . . . 'Cooked, like beefsteak . . .'

Greenbaum, waiting here for her to go to luncheon. "Ready?" he said. Anne laid down the paper. You couldn't find out about the war from that.

"Yes, ready," she said. . . .

Letters, in her broad, military pocket. Luxurious feeling that one could read them later . . . New shoes on her feet. Feet wouldn't be cold, wet, any more now . . . Greenbaum, smiling at her through his heavy glasses.

Telling her how Brophy and the little Quartermaster had been shipped off . . . How Mary Denton had died—too bad . . . Should they go to Voisin's? Mouth, watering at the idea of lunch at Voisin's . . . About them the pleasant, urban racket of the rue Scribe . . .

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To have had a hot bath, and to be dressing to go out to dinner . . . The luxury of it! Anne dressed slowly. Let Barry Caldwell wait . . . She would not dispel that sweet, relaxed, untroubled feeling . . . Civilian clothes. She'd bought a new, French dress of soft black velvet. It hung from her shoulders after the new style. It made her very straight and smooth, and thin.

She put on Rosalind's black velvet hat. Not bad looking—She leaned across the mantel toward the mirror, powdering her nose. Wicket. . . It took the shine off . . . Made you look well . . . Smell good . . . White gloves . . . And Rosalind's nice slippers . . . A fur, lent by the Red Cross woman down the entry. 'You look lovely,' she said . . .

"Ah, ha!" Barry Caldwell sprang toward her. Why, she was—

"Come on," said Anne. . . .

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The restaurant was in the Champs-Elysees. Glass walls and roof enclosed a sort of garden. The white surfaces of the tables seemed to float in darkness, the lamp on each small table lost under its black shade. Above the tablecloths there floated faces. Faces, bending over, eating, faces leaning back and chatting. Uniform buttons . . . The white shirt fronts of waiters . . .

"Nice of you to wear black, I can just see your face," said Barry Caldwell, "a disembodied spirit." He looked across at the white face, the gray eyes shining.

"What rot we write home," said Barry Caldwell. "Now if I write to my wife that I'm not doing much of anything, that I dined tonight in one of the best restaurants in Paris, opposite to a beautiful woman in black velvet, it'll make her unhappy. She'll feel that all the sacrifices she's making are for nothing. She wants to feel that I'm on an important mission."

Anne looked across at the man's face. He'd talked about his wife on purpose . . . Needn't have done that—she had known all along that he was married . . . He leaned back, and his high cheekbones cast shadows upward. Something a little softened in the keen eyes . . . Something a little dangerous, now, in the man's face . . . Something—it gave the world a new tang . . . "What is your mission?" she asked. He laughed.

"Oh, taking congressmen to see a safe sector of the front. Swell way to promote action in the great war! Last one I took was blind. Insisted on getting out, feeling a shell hole. We both got some gas. I came back teary. I wrote my wife that—thought she might think I was just a little noble. Women don't mind physical suffering—God knows they get too much of it! To them it's a sort of noble, cleansing fire—"

"Hoffman burned up," said Anne, "why didn't they put that in the American papers?"

"Why don't they put it in the paper that forty per cent of all our aviators burn up?" said Barry Caldwell. "Why don't they print that it's because we don't have parachutes, because our planes are no good?" He laughed. "If people knew what War was really like, it wouldn't go on." They helped themselves to caviar from a great bowl.

"Why don't we tell them?" Anne said.

"Partly the censor. Partly because we're cowards. I'm in the S. O. S. on regular duty. It takes seven men down there to keep one up front. Well, those seven, after a certain dose of boredom . . ."

He looked at her. Her eyes—she knew . . . "Half the letters I censor are stringing the folks at home on to think their little darling is at the front," he went on.

"That's to protect their families. Families have got to think we're brave, self-sacrificing heroes. They've got to think we live—sort of glorified, celibate life here."

"There's one noble thing about the S. O. S.," said Anne. "That is that every one there would rather go up front."

"Not all of 'em," said Barry Caldwell, "but most. And can you blame them? Danger's fun. Danger's exciting. You go to war thinking you're going to see excitement. And you find that seven-eighths of it is a worse bore than ever Peace was.

"That's why I object to writing home and giving the impression that war is danger. Most of it is boredom and moral slumping. If every one would write home exactly what they do here, every woman in the U. S. would be a pacifist when we get back."

"Yes," said Anne. "I know. I've been in Bordeaux."

"You've been in Avenue Montaigne," said Barry Caldwell. "An accurate description of what goes on there would make a swell hit! Not that I blame 'em. I know exactly why they act the day they do act. It's part of War. Same thing goes on in all wars. What I object to is that the people at home have to be guarded from it. They'd better swallow that, too. First thing you know people will be teaching children all over again that War is noble.

"I'd like to see 'em stop saying, 'Johnny, your ancestors went nobly out to Make the World Free,' and begin saying, 'Your ancestors got in a mess that there was no way to get out of it except by the ancient method of the beast and savage.'"

"I'd like to see them stop saying, 'Johnny, this is your father's sword!' and begin saying 'Johnny, this is a photograph of the French girl that your father lived with. Your dear father was so thoroughly bored by the Great War that he got pleasure from a woman like that.'"

"Would that make Johnny any less anxious to go and try it?" said Anne. The man laughed.

"No, but it would make Johnny's wife and Johnny's mother twice as determined to keep him at home."

"I doubt," said Anne, "if you'd ever make people at home believe what war's like."

"Damn it," said Barry Caldwell. "There's a sort of conspiracy against it. The publishers are in it—they've gotten out hundreds of volumes of letters, each one a pail of whitewash. And then the orators that raise the money tell people all sorts of lies. Liberty Loan speeches—all this rot about our army is the 'cleanest army.' Nobody ever tells 'em it isn't moral cleanness—merely better physical arrangements. If they could see statistics—"

He handed her a cigarette, and held a match up. "What we remember about war, and what they remember are going to be two entirely different matters."

"Some day we'll have to write about it," Anne said.

"And will they print it?" Barry Caldwell shook his head. They pushed their chairs back. "Let's go to the Folies-Bergere, Miss Wentworth," he said.

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The theatre was dark. They edged their way past people's knees to their seats. Sat back. 'Ah . . .' Girls, in bright dresses, dancing . . . Weaving in and out, kicking slim legs, throwing kisses . . . Slim legs with silk stockings, silver shoes here . . . Lithe legs . . . Petticoats that opened . . .

An American major and a captain in the side box shouted, their voices raucous . . . A marine M. P. leaned over the side of the box toward the Major. "Less noise, sir," he was whispering, "less noise, sir!"

"Making the world safe!" said Barry Caldwell.

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Jazz music, crowds milling back and forth . . . Tobacco smoke, swirling . . . People's shoulders, jiggling to the music . . . People buying drinks at little tables . . . Italian officers with girls . . . British officers with girls . . . Portuguese officers with girls . . . American officers with girls . . . American soldiers with girls . . . French aviators, British aviators, American aviators . . . Everybody buying drinks with girls. Girls laughing, winking at one another, patting the officers, pulling military hats off . . . Vivacity, music, smoke . . . Swirling . . . Swirling . . .

Anne and Barry Caldwell stood, their backs against a pillar. A stout American major sang at a table near them. His cap was tilted toward the French girl next him. Her hand on his shoulder, beating time . . . "Mad-damuzell from Armentieres, parlez Voo-ooo!"

A slim Marine lieutenant, a red band on his sleeve, edged in next Anne. "Yes sir, it's him. I warned him twice," she heard the soldier M. P. behind him saying . . .

"Sir," the Marine lieutenant, saluting the major, "I suggest that the Major return to his billet." "The hell you do!" The major pushed his hat back. His heavy hand fell on the table, rattling glasses . . . "Mad-damuzell from Armentieres, parlez-voo-o-o-o . . ."

"Sir, I have a taxicab at the door to take the Major to his billet . . ." "The hell you have! Maddamuzell from Armentieres, pa-r" "Unless the Major returns to his billet, it will be my duty to accompany him to the Rue Sainte-Anne . . ."

"Let's move on," said Barry Caldwell. To the Marine lieutenant, as he passed, he said, "Hello, Sam . . ."

"You know him?" Anne asked as she edged into her seat.

"Yes, I was in college with him. Fine feller, Sam! Joined the Marines, because he was sure that they'd see action. Then his battalion got stuck here on M. P. duty. His job is to come here and to the Casino every evening at ten-thirty, to send the majors and colonels, who are drunk, home. Soldiers aren't allowed to arrest majors and colonels, so they spot 'em and point 'em out to Sam when he gets here. Swell job!

"Well," Barry Caldwell laughed, "if he hadn't been doing this, he'd have got his damned head shot off at Chateau-Thierry. He thinks, of course, that he'd have liked that better . . ."

"It's a great war," said Anne.

The finale, wonderful with color. Before the chorus of girls, a woman, dressed like a peacock . . . All beads and fathers, sinuous, bare arms and bare, white stomach . . . Kissing her hands, singing, waving. The house shouting . . . Chorus girls, kicking slim legs, singing and throwing kisses . . . A bedlam of sound, the curtain, falling, falling . . .

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From the stage box an American captain and two lieutenants leapt onto the stage, shouting, dodging the curtain. Pursuing vanishing small, high-heeled slippers . . . Gaitered legs disappearing behind gilt pots of flowers . . . The curtain falling, falling, cutting the legs off . . . "Oh, la! la!" A woman's voice from somewhere . . . Laughter . . . The audience crowding up the aisles toward the exits . . .

Outside the theatre people clutching at one another's elbows. Blue, soft darkness . . . Paris . . .

"Are you all right?" said Barry Caldwell.

"All right," Anne said.

Anne stood on the sidewalk in her great coat. She'd miss her train unless the concierge could find a taxi in three minutes. At last—Anne waved a package of American cigarettes. The taxi stopped. A box of books that she had taken from the American library.

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Anne, in the dining car, sat in pleasant solitude, sipping her coffee. Outside the window she watched a little creek. Not the way you thought the Marne should look . . . Nothing in war the way you thought it would be . . .

Two French officers, opposite her, talking . . . "Marvelous what these Americans had done at Mont-Sec! Soldiers had gone across barbed wire as though it were mere grass . . . But they were young, these Americans, mere boys! And they were brave! And enfin, there were many of them, and they were coming fast now . . ."

Anne made her way back through the evil-smelling corridors of the French train. Outside closed doors Frenchmen waited, line up . . . She walked past quickly, peering into carriages trying to find her own place. At last there was the bag.

A young American officer sitting opposite. Hadn't noticed him before she went to breakfast. Hoped he wouldn't talk, at least till lunch time. Sleepy . . . She sat down, put her head back, closed her eyelids. A flat wheel going ker-plunk, ker-plunk below her . . .

Anne got up, went out into the corridor, stood leaning over. Looking at the narrow belief between the river and the railway . . . Little fences ran across it, this way, that way. Here and there among the grass and bushes, little crosses . . . As if some one had planted crosses with the cabbage . . . She turned and beckoned to the young man in the compartment. Mean, not to show it to him . . . Before he came that way again he might be killed . . .

"Come, see the battlefield of Chateau Thiery," she said. The young man jumped. He stood next her, leaning on the railing. More little mud fields . . . More little crosses . . . A helmet hanging on a bayonet among the dead grass . . . A narrow creek . . . "I came down on the train with a man who'd fought here. He told me . . ." The girl was telling him about the battle.

"Gosh, is that the Marne? It's not the way you'd thought it would be," he said. They were stopping at a station marked with big letters DOLMANS.

"Nothing in war is the way you thought it would be," said the strange girl . . .

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James Eaton sat down again. Horrible to have girls know more about the front than you did . . . Still, how could you help it? This girl would get off soon—long before they got way up there . . .

"Where are you going?" she asked. The young man gazed at a sign above her head. "Taisez-vous, mefiez-vous, les oricelles ennemies vous ecoutent. O, hell . . . "Toul," he answered proudly. Wasn't Toul almost all the way to Verdun?

"M-m-m. So am I. At least, that's where I get off."

"But I go farther up than that by truck," the boy said. Better not tell her now where he finally went to . . . might be a spy, this girl . . . Anne smiled. So this boy had never been there.

The hut at Avency, out in the mud field . . . And she was walking, somehow, up the road toward it, with her mess kit . . . He'd be in the hut . . . She wanted to see him . . . He was going to tell her something . . .

About two shining rails that stretched off, side by side, and seemed to meet somewhere, far off, round a corner . . . She must walk faster . . . Hurry . . . The only person in the world she really wanted—His arms, gentle, moving up, toward her . . .

"I'm hungry," he said, "will you take lunch . . ." Anne opened her eyes. Something that she wanted to remember, slipping, slipping . . . Something precious . . . Catch it . . . Something . . . The train had stopped, was standing. The young man opposite was asking her if she would take lunch with him.

"Thank you," she said. "I must find that miserable pink ticket."

"Was that what that's for?"

"Yes. Didn't you get one? They probably won't let you in." The boy, dismayed. Hungry . . . "Got a package of cigarettes?" said the girl. "Come on. We'll give the Frog that . . ."

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Afternoon. The train was growing dark now. There were no lights. Ker-plunk, ker-plunk, ker . . . plunk, ker . . . The train stopped. Outside, over the damp fields, darkness settled. Inside, the railroad carriage was dank, cold. Wrapped in her overcoat, Anne shivered in her corner. Cold waiting, in the eerie darkness . . . Across the 'Il est dangereux' sign the young man leaned out, peering.

The French officer had got off at Chalons, with a solemn salute. Anne and the young American were alone. She knew his name now. Knew that he had been at college with her cousin. Knew all about the bombing school at Clermont-Ferrand, and just what squadron he was hoping to go up to.

Knew that when he got off at Toul, he had to find his way somehow to a place called Aven-cy-le-Sec . . . Quite the opposite direction from where she'd be going—somewhere out toward the lines, the boy thought . . .

An hour passed. Anne knew that he hoped to be a writer, was going up to Harvard, to take up French. Hoped to write poetry or something, under the inspiration of the front, like Rupert Brooke did . . . So far, of course, he hadn't seen anything that was inspiring—only mud and—and—stuff at Clermont-Ferrand. Anne coughed.

Here, he'd get a blanket for her out of his bag. No reason she should be cold like that. (Why in Hell did they send women up here?) He wrapped the blanket round her. His hands were clumsy. Anne smiled in the darkness. Nice boy . . .

* * *

Another hour, colder than the last one. Still the trucks bounced past, through the darkness. James Eaton wondered if he couldn't learn to write plays before you'd really lived much? Felt danger, perhaps, or had your heart broken, or something like that. Would like to write a good play about this war. But hang it, so far he hadn't seen it . . .

"You've seen the rear," said Anne. "That's seven-eighths—"

"But people just want the one-eighth," he said. "Do you think a play could ever give the whole thing?"

"Nothing that people write will ever give the whole thing," her voice was dreamy in the darkness. They'll write about their own little corner, about the infantry, or about the S.O.S. or about the Air Service. They'll never give you the feeling of people, bouncing in and bouncing out of one another's lives. People, thrown together, growing to know each other better in a week than in a year at home. People thrown apart again, forgetting about each other in the next week . . . People keeping on the surface of things for fear that if they dive below they may be drowned there . . . They'll never get that feeling of lives, like bits of confetti, tossed from a high place, fluttering downward, downward . . . That's what war is. Confetti, fluttering downward . . ."

"Heavens," said James Eaton.

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An hour of walking—of stumbling up and down beside the track and trying to get warm.

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At last the train went. James Eaton boosted Anne on, after the thing was moving. He held her coat up for her, tucked in her blanket. She fumbled in her bag and found a candle.

And he—he blushed and hesitated about it—he had a candlestick. He'd bought it in an old shop in Paris—one did so hanker after something nice to look at in one's billet . . .

He found it—a brass dragon that crouched and held the candle in its mouth. They lit the candle, set the dragon on the floor between them. And in the wavering, yellow light they watched each other . . .

* * *

The station at Toul—black and rainy—soldiers and officers bumping into one another in the darkness. James Eaton shouldered Anne's looks, his duffle bag, her suitcase. He struggled on, behind her. She seemed to know her way here. She smiled and showed her order to the guard at the exit.

He didn't look at it, but looked at her, and said "Hello, you're back!" Place full of soldiers. There was a soldier leaning over from the line at the exit, grabbing the bag she carried.

"Say, Miss Wentworth, the Colonel's shofer waited for you two hours." The soldier smiling at her, glad to see her.

"No matter, you can come along with me; I got a truck here."

"Kuntz! Gosh, but I'm glad to see you!" she was saying.

James Eaton watched the soldier take her arm and steer her gently. So, the fellow thought he owned her, did he? Hell, if you weren't carrying her darn books, you'd turn right around and leave her . . . Only you didn't want to leave her . . . Talk to her more, more . . . Women ought to be wiped right off the earth in wartime.

There she was, turning around now, to say goodbye. This must be the end, then . . . Never see her——

"Would you like to ride to Avency with us?" she said. "I'm going there, too."

James Eaton dumped the box down on the streaming pavement. So, it wasn't to the front at all that he was going . . . The girl was coming . . . Well, anyway, he wouldn't have to leave her.

The truck bounded forward, splashing mud behind it. Inside, Anne and James Eaton and another Lieutenant sat on their bags. Under the flapping canvas side, rain spattered. The other Lieutenant had turned up, somehow, from the darkness. He, too, was going to Avency-le-Sec, wherever that was . . . Off through this mud and darkness . . . Who were this girl and man that seemed to know each other? Glad he wasn't the driver . . . Black night like this, and running into the black rain with no lights.

James Eaton listened to the mud splash. End of the earth, this must be where they were, going through the black mud . . . Why, in Heaven's name, did they send women—Anne leaned her back against the slamming sideboard. The hut—home, that . . . Could hardly wait to get there . . . Her kitchen, with MacLeod and Hopkins—"Lookin' for you . . ." That tiny room of hers . . . Her stove . . . Her bed, of shock absorber . . . Her tin hat, on its nail . . . She began humming an old tune in the darkness her voice jiggled by the firce vibration.

"By the old Moulmein Pagoda,
lookin eastward to the sea . . ."

James Eaton caught the tune up, his voice a strong, clear tenor:

"There's a Burma irl a-settin,"
and I know she things o' me . . ." he sang. Life, not so bad . . . God, how the song brought back the old, old things that you'd been wanting to remember . . . The goofer across the truck there, coming in with rather a good bass:

"An' the dawn comes up like thunder outer

"China, 'crost the Bay . . ."

Verse after verse, they sang it . . .

The truck stopped. The girl was jumping out over the tailboard, landing, splash, in a muddy puddle below. The driver, hauling out her bags and talking to her. "Carberr's gone," he was saying. "There's another boob in there now . . ."

"No. Not really?" she said. "Won't you come in and have something to eat?" she called to the lieutenants. They piled out. They looked around them. Nothing in sight.

This girl, and the soldier, must be trying to fool them . . . Nothing anywhere but rain and blankness, and there was this strange girl plunging off into it . . . Mud, over your ankles . . . Coming in between your boots and puttees . . . . Why, this was just a ploughed field . . . . Suddenly the girl, the soldier, disappeared in something. A fence that hit you. James Eaton felt his way along it with his hands. An opening—he went through.

There was the girl, holding a wooden door wide open, before him. He blinked. A place with little lamps of pink and yellow. A big place, warm and smoky—An open fire of wood, that flickered in a brazier.

A round it soldiers, tipping back in chairs, their feet against its railing. Soldiers playing checkers, writing letters. One soldier pounding at an old piano.

Men, rushing up, shaking the girl's hand, taking her coat off, telling her they'd got her supper ready. . . Telling her to take her hat off "so she'd look like home." . . . James Eaton stood, unnoticed, in the shadow. The soldier at the piano was striking up a new tune.

The other soldiers shouted, turning, looking across their shoulders at the girl, here. Four hundred voices, yelling . . . Eight hundred sets of hobnails, stamping the board floor. . . .

"Hail, hail, the gang's all here,"
the whole place shook. . . .
"What the Hell do we care?
What the Hell do we care?
Hail, Hail, the gang's all here,
What the Hell do we care now?"

Silence, after the uproar. And then a quiet laugh.

"It's good to be home," the girl said.

The new Y. M. C. A. man wanted a can of bullied beef for breakfast. Gaskell was his name, he explained, 'old Dad Gaskell,'—of Omahaw. He'd like a little of this corned willy opened up every morning, just fixed up with a little creamed sauce. Sure she'd like it herself, once she'd tried it. . . . He'd be glad to wake her up a little early,—his wife, now, back in Omaha,—

"Thank you," Anne said, "I believe I'll wake myself up."

* * *

Cutting bread. It was as if she'd never left the canteen. . . . Piling sandwiches. Almost time to stop and go to dinner. MacLeod came in, and stood beside the table, quiet.

"I've something for you." He picked her hand up, gently, and slipped a broad, silver ring over her finger. "I made it for you," he said.

"How beautiful!" She held her hand up, looking. She took the ring off, fingering its silver smoothness. The man's eyes, on her, waiting. . . A boy's face. . . . Boy, bringing a present to the teacher. . . . No,—a man,—But you mustn't see that. . . "How did you ever do it?" He showed her, standing a two-franc piece on the table, pounding with his big finger.

"It plays out, and you cut the inside." Well, anyway, she'd taken it. . . . Something that he had handled would be near her. . . . Near as he'd ever get to this girl.

"I've got something for you, too." She reached behind a cocoa tin and pulled out Darwin's "Origin of Species."

"That the one that's goin' to spoil my religion for me, ain't it? Thanks." He tucked the book inside his blouse and walked out. Anne held the silver ring between her fingers. A beautiful thing—smooth and hand-made and simple. Inside the rim, letters. . . . She held it up. "Liberte—Egalite—Fraternite," they said.

* * *

A row of British officers sat next Anne, smoking black pipes. Before them, on an improvised stage in their mess shack, the Avency show troupe was performing. Behind them British Tommies sat, in solid rows, eyes solemn above big mustaches.

Anne laughed—the jokes were old, but boys were funny. . . . After her, the British officers removed their pipes and laughed, too. Behind, the Tommies sat in silence. The boys on th stage winked at Anne as they went past. The officer next Anne looked at the watch on his wrist. He rose.

The others rose, too. "Going to bomb Essen," he whispered; "I say, it was awfully good of you to come with this show. . . ." He shook Anne's hand. "You can't think how nice it is to see an American lady" . . . The twelve filed out.

Anne sat alone in the front row, with the American lieutenant who ran the show troupe. A roar, like an express train, sounded above the roof, drowning the final chorus.

"There goes the Handley-Page," said the lieutenant.

* * *

A black night. It began to rain just as they started back. A mizzing mist beat against Anne's face on the truck's front seat. She peered out into darkness. Could barely see the heads of the two soldiers who lay stretched along the mud guards. . . . Could feel the Lieutenant, tense beside her, his eyes straining.

Inside the truck the piano began to jungle. The boys singing "Keep Your Head Down, Fritzie Boy." The truck lurched. Like being joggled into a bottomless abyss, this. . . . The soldier next her crouched over the wheel, eyes half closed, neck moving this way, that way. ". . . see a darn thing. . . ." she heard him mutter.

The Lieutenant, nervous. His thigh tense against hers. . . . His arm, jerking when the truck lurched. A shrill whistle. . . . . Explosions from motorcycle engine. . . . . The thing grew loud, and louder. . . . Gatling below them, on the roadway, sputtering off ahead into the blackness.

"Dispatch rider," said the driver. "Got to keep over to the right, Lieutenant. There'll be another in a minute. They send two in case one of 'em crashes. . . . "

Anne wanted to take hold of something, to cling to it. But there was nothing to take hold of. Would the day ever come when one could ride in automobiles with lights on? Damn that piano!" muttered the Lieutenant. "To the left, Smith, to the left! God!" He was leaning forward, holding to the running board. "Hey, there!"

The man on the right mudguard was shouting. . . . The great truck settled sideways, sinking, sinking. . . Tipping, lurching—that crazy piano inside always jingling. . . . Going to tip over—well, you could die here, in this muddy blackness. . . .

Anne felt the Lieutenant's arm against her, holding. . . . Not much would be left when you got underneath that big truck. . . . Anyway, the family wouldn't have to see you. . . Nobody would ever tell that that part . . . A jolt. Thank God, the thing had stopped, had touched the bottom, somewhere. Inside, men's voices, singing:

'Keep your head down, Fritzie boy!
Keep your head down, Fritzie boy!'

Piano still playing. . . . 'Last night by the star shell light
We saw you! We saw you!
You were fixing your barbed wire
When we opened rapid fire,
If you want to see your father,
In the Fatherland,
Keep your head down, Fritzie Boy!"

"Damn that music," said the Lieutenant. "Out, everybody! "Snap out of it.' "

Anne walked up and down in the black mud of the field while the men shoved. The clumsy truck hung balanced, over the bank's edge, its rear wheels whirling the field's mud out behind. "Shove on the rear end there, you God da—" "Shut up!"

Anne walked off. Better go on, into the field a way, so they could curse all they wanted . . . Easier to do things in the army if you swore . . . Part of the bottled-up rage of all this wasted generation, working itself off. . . She tried to move her toes inside her damp shoes. If only one's feet weren't always cold. . . .

Water from furze bushes slapped her ankles. How calm those Britishers had been, going to bomb Essen . . . Might have been starting out to play a golf match—A groan. A groan, out here in the darkness? She stumbled forward, bending over, peering.

A man's groan. . . God, what could it be? What was it? A man's boots, lying here, at her feet. . . One boot turned up, the other with its toes down in the wet grass. . . A man's leg. . . . A man's body . . . A man, lying on his stomach, his head twisted strangely, under his shoulders. Leg must have been on backwards . . . It looked like a doll's leg, twisted the wrong way. . . Anne knelt down, pulled his shoulder. If she could turn him over. . . Wounded soldiers ought to lie on their backs—beautiful, with pale faces facing Heaven. . Another groan. . . His face was dark, distorted. It dropped down, into the wet grass, nose in the mud.

Eaton sat in the kitchen, elbow on the table, watching Berthe cut bread, when Anne got back. "I got my orders," he said. "The 97th wants someone who can play the piano——" His voice was gloomy. . .

"The 97th?" Fine! You'll be off today, then?" She tied her apron, rolled her sleeves up. Be nice not to have him always sitting round the kitchen . . .

"Yes." he watched her dipping golden marmalade out of a tin pail. Wondered how much the French woman would understand what he said . . . Something he must say to her before he left here—damn it, here came that big sergeant . . . And the talkative fellow out of the Post Office . . . Filling the whole kitchen up, as if they owned it . . . And she was talking to them, laughing, kidding. . . She was glad that they had come, and stopped his—— Eaton went out the kitchen door and banged it. . .

New prisoners came that day to sweep the hut out. Rosy, pink faces, blue eyes, wearing strange, round caps without a vizor. They brought their heels together, their hands up, stiffly—stood, like wooden soldiers . . . Gazing at Anne, their faces deliberately blank, without expression. . .

Why, these were children. . . "Germans," explained the guard. "We got four hundred of 'em in a stockade downtown."

"Guten Morgen!" Anne smiled. The wooden soldiers melted. Sudden smiles lit their faces. . . Boys, delighted. . . "Guten Morgen, Gnadiges Fraulein!" They stood, grinning. . . Bowing. . . Listening to her, eager—Ach, yes to clean a floor, they understood that! They got on their knees and scrubbed—scrubbed without stopping. The guard leaned on his rifle, watching, grinning. The floor had never been so clean, the boards shone yellow. Anne came with sandwiches and cups of cocoa. The guard grabbed his. The prisoners stood looking.

"Fur Sie," said Anne. "Fur Ihnen —" How did you say it?"

"A-a-ach!" Their faces flushed. They put hesitating hands out, watching her face. For them? Really for them? White bread? Cocoa? Gott in Himmel! "Ranke schon, mein Fraulein!"

They looked at her, shyly, from under blond brows. "Sehr gut!" She watched them, eating. Small boys, with a treat . . . Might be Americans, except for their caps. . . "The Fraulein reminds me of my sister in Deutschland," said the youngest.

"Do I!" Anne said. . . .

* * *

'Will you conduct a funeral?" The Doctor stood behind Anne, his trench coat dripping. "What, me?" She looked at the pleasant, pink face, that was streaked with rain. "Two boys died yesterday of flu down at the camp hospital. There are no chaplains in the Air Service, and I don't know how to get these fellers buried. You're an uplifter, I thought perhaps you——"

"The Y.M.C.A. man can do it. I'll bring him,' said Anne.

* * *

"But I ain't a minister, any more than you are," Dad Gaskell complained. "I didn't come out here to——"

"That's what war is, isn't it, Mr. Gaskell?" Anne said, doing something you didn't expect to. I'm sure nobody could read the service better——" Dad Gaskell buttoned up the collar of his blouse, puffed his thick chest out. Marched a couple of times up and down the kitchen. . .

"Well say!" he said. "I'll have a try at it."

They rode out on the front seat of a truck. Rain dampening their knees, stinging their faces. . The oak trees on the ridge beyond the road rose up and lost themselves in trailing white mist.

On Anne's right sat Gaskell, his face squinched up, eyes half closed. The beating rain, running down the wrinkles. . On her left the soldier at the wheel lowered his head against the storm, his eyes intent on the truck ahead, its wheels flinging mud back. . Behind, a pine box rattled against the bouncing floor boards. . . They turned off into a little field. The forward truck stopped moving, wheels whirling, sending up clots of brown mud.

A young lieutenant jumped down, signalled to stop. Across the field there, someone had dug two holes and thrown the dirt up in a great pile between them. Inti the empty holes, the rain poured. . .

The soldiers struggled with the heavy box. . . Lugging it, they lurched forward, mud sucking their boots. The men slid, clutched at the slippery wood, trod on. . .After them ploughed Anne and Mr. Gaskell. Behind the hole the soldiers laid the box down. They shook their reddened fingers . . . Six men with rifles, lined up in the mud, and stood, red faces gleaming. . . .

A sergeant gave a sharp command. The rifles clattered. The lieutenant looked at Gaskell, looked at Anne. Anne fumbled in her pocket for a book that she had borrowed from a lieutenant at mess.

She handed it to Gaskell, opened at a place where she had put a ribbon. He burrowed for his glasses, put them on, eyes blinking, mouth set, like some ugly toad, gazing upward. Rain pattered on the book's small, thin pages. Gaskell smacked his lips and gave an odd gasp.

"I am the Resurrection and the Life," he began. . . The soldiers gazed down at the mud that ran from the lose pile into the black hole.

The lieutenant gazed down. Gaskell stumbled on, gasping, spluttering over unfamiliar words. Anne gazed at the long box. Mud, staining the white boards. . Somewhere were this man's family, his friends. . Lump rising in her throat. . .She swallowed hard. . . To die alone, of flu, in a camp hospital. . .You didn't come to war to do that . . . To be planted in a wheat field by people who didn't know you, didn't care. . .Mud, staining the white boards.

She felt for her handkerchief. Her nose. . .It was his mother she was weeping for, not for the soldier. . . She didn't know him. Nobody here did . . .A sharp command. Rifles, pointing toward the gray sky. . .Rifles crackling. . .Crackling again. . .Again . . .Silence. . .The patter of rain . . . Little Levinson, raising his bugle, puffing his cheeks out. Anne closed her eyes. Taps. . .The sweet, familiar music of each night. . .The last note trailing sadly on the damp air. . .

The soldiers were getting the other box down off the truck, struggling with it through the mud. This whole thing to do again. . .Another. . .

Eaton was strolling around the hut when Anne got back. She watched him. He was unhappy, restless. . . Why didn't he go? Five days had passed