

III. UNTO EACH HIS CROWN

BY NORMA PATTERSON

For a long time after he opened his eyes he lay quite still looking at the wall, which was where his glance happened to hit. A luxury of comfort possessed his body and mind—a light, serene, smoothly running happiness which was like spinning evenly through cool, green, white-flecked waters, after weeks of kicking and strangling and puffing in learning to swim. So for a time that might have been short and might have been long, he lay without moving, his mind going neither backward nor forward, but resting contentedly on the strangely happy present.

Across the wall a shadow moved, and paused, and passed on, ducking and bobbing as it went. He knew that the nurse was moving about, and the shadow—absurdly undignified—was made by the flimsy, unstable sputter of a candle. Again it passed, and again. At first the edges were sharply cut and individualistic, but now he saw them blur and fade against the drab wall. The image was slipping back into the vastness of unlimited shadow, from which, for the sputtering length of a candle, it had snatched itself.

Grey light crept in through the little window above his cot. The slender, far-reaching notes of a bugle called to the coming day.

His body did not move, but his spirit stood upright at the summons. The sound had jerked open the door of memory.

His regiment! Would he be able to go back—and fight with the boys? It had been hard, having to leave them when he did. They were out of the trenches and charging. It was

just at the apex of the attack—the moment for which his whole life seemed to have been lived. All the training, all the hardship, all the parting with loved ones, all the long, tedious life in the trenches—had led to this one supreme moment. And then, just as they plunged forward into the shout and ring of victory, something had happened. He was not sure at first what, except that it halted him, spun him round, and he felt himself sinking downward—*downward*—and the others charging on—leaving him here. He was going to miss it! He would not be in at the victory! Later, when they told of it around the camp at night, he would have no part in the telling.

He saw Trav Barnes look back, and he saw the expression that came on Trav's face. An expression that could not be put into words or even imagined unless one had seen it. Trav stopped abruptly, but he had waved Trav on, and Trav had gone—running forward, as if he were running away from looking back. And the tramp of the feet had grown fainter . . . and the sound of the shouting fainter . . . and the boom of the battle fainter. . . .

Yes, he must be getting back to the regiment. He could not be wounded so badly—he was blissfully free from pain.

He turned his head slowly. The candle had burned down to a feeble, spasmodic flame. In the light from the window he made out the nurse and the doctor, talking together. He was a bit afraid of what they would tell him, and so he hesitated to put his question. Then he got in behind

his courage and gave it a great boost.

"Will I be able to rejoin the regiment—soon?"

The words dropped, one at a time, into the silence with halting, staccato *emphaticness*, and seemed to stand in the air just where he placed them, in an inquisitive little row.

The doctor and the nurse turned and gazed at them. The doctor moved forward and sat down on the bed. He had thought at first that it was an army surgeon, but he saw now it was the Old Doctor from his home town.

"Yes," nodded the Old Doctor, "soon—you will be joining your regiment."

He was so overwhelmed with joy at this that he was not surprised when the strange thing happened. War had levelled all shocks. There was left no possibility of further high emotion to one who had had to grow used to standing, now with friends, and — now — among the dead.

And so he felt only very glad and very thankful to see, here in an alien country, all his dear family stepping quietly into the span of light about his bed, and stand smiling down at him. He counted heads carefully twice and found that not one was missing.

There were his father and mother, their arms about each other; and Becky, his schoolgirl sister, fresh from the world of basket ball and laughter; there was John, his older brother, who had had to stay behind. He recalled how John had shadowed him during that last month at home; with what brooding absorption John had inspected his kit, and his rifle, and every part of the khaki uniform, and had said, a little bit-

terly, as he grasped his hand at the last, "It's the great adventure, kid. Lord, how I envy you." And there was The Girl, her beautiful eyes wide, her lips parted, her hand reaching out toward him.

It must be some special occasion to bring them here. He wondered what.

He remembered the same little group standing on the platform to bid him good-bye when he went to college. They were grieved at the parting, but they were proud. They had smiled and smiled through their tears. He had worn a new suit that day—a rather natty affair he thought — and his mother had slipped some cookies in his new pocket. He was half ashamed of her doing it, as if he were still a kid and liked cookies. But later in the train, behind a newspaper, how good the cookies had tasted!

And when he sailed for France the same group had gathered again to see him off. They had stood in the sweltering sun all one morning just for a chance to wave as the big boat slipped down the harbour. They had smiled and smiled through their tears. They were here now, smiling at him through their tears, and—he had the vague feeling—seeing him off somewhere. There was grief on their faces—but they were proud! It was fine of them to come.

It did not seem at all queer when a head vanished from among those about him, and then another, and another. They did not hop off or bounce away, but glided vaporously from sight in a perfectly logical manner; until all the heads were gone except his mother's and father's, leaning close together, their eyes on his, smiling still—smiling him their love. It was like a picture he

had of them that sat in an ivory frame on his table back home. And when these two had gone there was only the touch of the Old Doctor's hand, resting reassuringly over his.

The grey mist of morning closed in about him like a cloud, and it seemed to be carrying him along with it. . . . He lost the touch of the Old Doctor's hand—and with it the heaviness of his body—of his mind. And he perceived now that he was standing on a hill in the first strange light of a new day.

Behind him, out of the foggy distance, he caught the thin, wavering outline of a bugle call . . . and the shadowy tramp, tramp, tramp, of feet. . . . He looked back, and saw them coming. A vast moving army—marching toward him, coming along with him. As far back as he could see they were coming.

They were a strange company—a little torn, thoroughly ragged. Many of them were just boys like himself. Caps and coats were missing, and—they carried no weapons! And as much as they had loved and honoured the uniforms they wore, he saw that the uniform no longer mattered.

He had thought, when they came into sight, that it was his old regiment. Many, many, of them were here. But as they drew nearer he recognised French and English and Italians and—could it be?—*Germans*. He was a little shocked to see how his comrades hailed these as comrade, and that their journey lay together.

On they came. The music grew louder, the tramping heavier. Here

and there were friends—boys from his home town. Why there was Trav! With a shout he stumbled forward, the friends grasped hands, and he swung into step.

There was a lightness about the marching of this radiant army that had nothing to do with feet or bodies, but seemed to come from what they saw forward. Their heads were thrown back, their faces shone. It was as if to each, no matter what the nationality, victory had come.

During the long, muddy hours of waiting before the battle, there had been moments of troubled thought—thought of what was right and what was wrong. The grim Why and Whither of War had stalked with clanking steel up and down the trenches, among the fallen bodies. Beneath the rain of shells one thought of peace as something that would come some day—that *must* come—but it was impossible to conceive any connection between that unthinkable time and this hideous carnage.

But as he looked into the faces of these he saw what that shining look was. It came to him as a sweeping revelation. They understood! For them, the veil was lifted—and they saw peace!

They had passed up through the Gate of the Ultimate Sacrifice—into immortality. They had laid down their lives for love of country, and the reward was peace for the world. Not just the ceasement of war, but that perpetual peace born of universal brotherhood.

Then—this was the victory. And he was in! He was in at the victory!

WAR BOOKS OF THE SPRING

BY LOUISE MAUNSELL FIELD

WITH but two or three exceptions, the war books of the spring fall into one or the other of two fairly distinct classes. First, and most numerous, are those in which the author relates his personal adventures and experiences—the autobiographical type; second, the lesser number, which tell about some organisation or some special aspect of the Great War, that the writer has studied or known in an intimate way—the more or less impersonal histories and narratives.

Notable among those of the former type is the vivid and absorbingly interesting *Private Peat*. Out with the first Canadian contingent went this young soldier, destined later to be among those who faced the first gas attack at Ypres. No clearer or more impressive picture than the one he presents has as yet been drawn of that terrible fight when, outnumbered ten to one, the Canadians held the key of the road to Calais. They had seen their captured sergeants crucified, literally; they had seen their comrades die “gassed,” black-faced and writhing; and they had seen women, and young girls, and even children, the victims of such atrocities as they would not have believed possible, did not believe possible until their own eyes saw the proofs. And so when they fought, it was with “white man’s spirit against barbarian brutality.” The indomitable spirit which makes the Canadian, like the English Tommy, able to crack a joke in the midst of horrors unspeakable, shines through

a book which is more than worth reading—a book which one may wish that every pacifist in the United States might be forced to read. Sharply contrasting with the narrative of the Canadian, yet equally worth while, are the exquisite letters of Captain Ferdinand Belmont of the Chasseurs Alpins, killed in action, well deserving to be called *A Crusader of France*. Deeply religious in tone, they give almost from the very beginning the impression of one “fey”—one who, feeling himself marked out for death, consciously withdrew his soul from the world. There is no humour in these letters; its place is taken by a keen and abiding sense of beauty and of sympathy. Fighting on the Vosges, on the Somme and in Flanders, enduring quietly and cheerfully the many hardships and privations which those first months of the war brought upon the troops of the unprepared Allies, this young Frenchman did his duty—and something more—in a spirit of consecration, achieving at last a wonderful inner peace amid the stress of the outward conflict.

The steeds which, in this war, men ride to victory or to death are aeroplanes, not horses, and it is of his experiences as a member of the Royal Flying Corps that Captain Alan Bott, M.C., writes in his *Cavalry of the Clouds*. Flying over the enemies’ lines on reconnaissance duty, fighting thousands of feet above the earth, crowding enough thrilling adventures into one brief