



General Montgomery explains British tactics on a map to Wendell Willkie, at headquarters on the Libyan battlefield

BRITISH COMBINE

WILLKIE AT THE FRONT

By Frank Gervasi

CABLED FROM CAIRO

The turning point of the war, as announced by our roving observer, runs into censor trouble one hot afternoon

WENDELL WILLKIE'S recent visit to the Middle East was the second of two memorable events during the last days of August and early September. The first, of course, was the defeat of Rommel's Afrika Korps.

This, among other things, caused stocks to rise on the Cairo Bourse. Some of the lovelies who had evacuated Alexandria returned to that city's beaches, pubs and parties.

The victory over Rommel removed an immediate threat to Egypt and at least put our side in a position to resume the initiative—as they say in treaties on war. The enemy lost a considerable quantity of men and weapons. The myth of Rommel's invincibility was destroyed in a brief hot battle which was over almost before anybody knew it had begun. It was as brief as it was hot and

almost as destructive to the German war machine as a short circuit in a generator.

There's no tendency here, however, for the British to overestimate the damage done to the Afrika Korps or to underestimate Rommel's ability to recuperate.

The two events—the victorious battle and Willkie's arrival—coincided so closely that they became confused. The newspaper boys hardly had time to cover the first event before it telescoped into the second, and they were very busy with the second. The blitzvisit was crammed with statements, interviews, receptions, cocktail parties, appearances before still and movie cameras, radio talks, calls on diplomats and kings, conferences with politicians, soldiers and more diplomats.

Short as it was, the correspondents worked harder and longer during Willkie's visit than at any time while away from the fighting front. But he provided them with more fun than they'd had since coming to cover this singularly humorless war. The correspondents had become a bit jaded from pulling Old

School Ties, deploring the hectic night life of Cairo and covering retreats. Willkie shook up their livers.

He sassed the censors, made formal diplomatic calls in a lounge suit instead of the sacred striped pants and tail coat of tradition. He managed to impart to nearly everything he did an atmosphere of clambake. Censorship, motivated by the sheer necessity for keeping Berlin in the dark as to Willkie's views about political and military affairs in the Middle East, prevented details of his visit from becoming known. This article is an attempt to supply some of those missing details.

In any other setting, the breezy politician might have seemed a heroic figure, remarkable for his frankness and sincerity. He might have wowed them at some multicourse dinner of super-patriots back home. In the Middle East however, with its traditions of reticence, its compunctions of secrecy in political and military matters, Willkie's act didn't quite come off. He was usually out of character and seemed, most of the time, a huge and handsome bull in a storeful of porcelain images. Every

time he moved, you wanted to warn him that he might break something.

He did some good but he also broke a few images. The damage occurred despite the presence in his cruise crew of Joseph Barnes, soft-spoken former newspaperman who now is an official of the Office of War Information. Joe was the conscience of the party, a small voice which kept saying: "Be careful, Wendell! Somebody might be trying to sell you a bill of goods. Watch what you say and remember this is a British battlefield and they are the bosses here."

He didn't prevent Willkie, however, from calling on His Majesty King Farouk of Egypt in an ordinary suit, or from having himself photographed in a sloppy bush shirt, baggy pants and an outsize sun helmet, with German prisoners who stood rigidly at attention and regarded him with considerable coolness. Goebbels couldn't have faked a better picture for his kind of propaganda.

Also in Willkie's party was Gardner Cowles, publisher of a picture magazine which privately sponsored Willkie's last good-will-mission dash to England.



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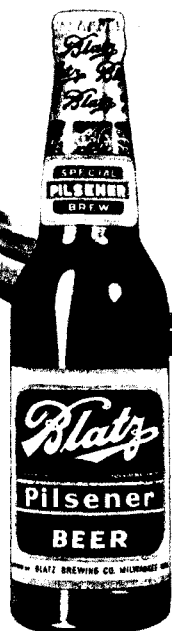
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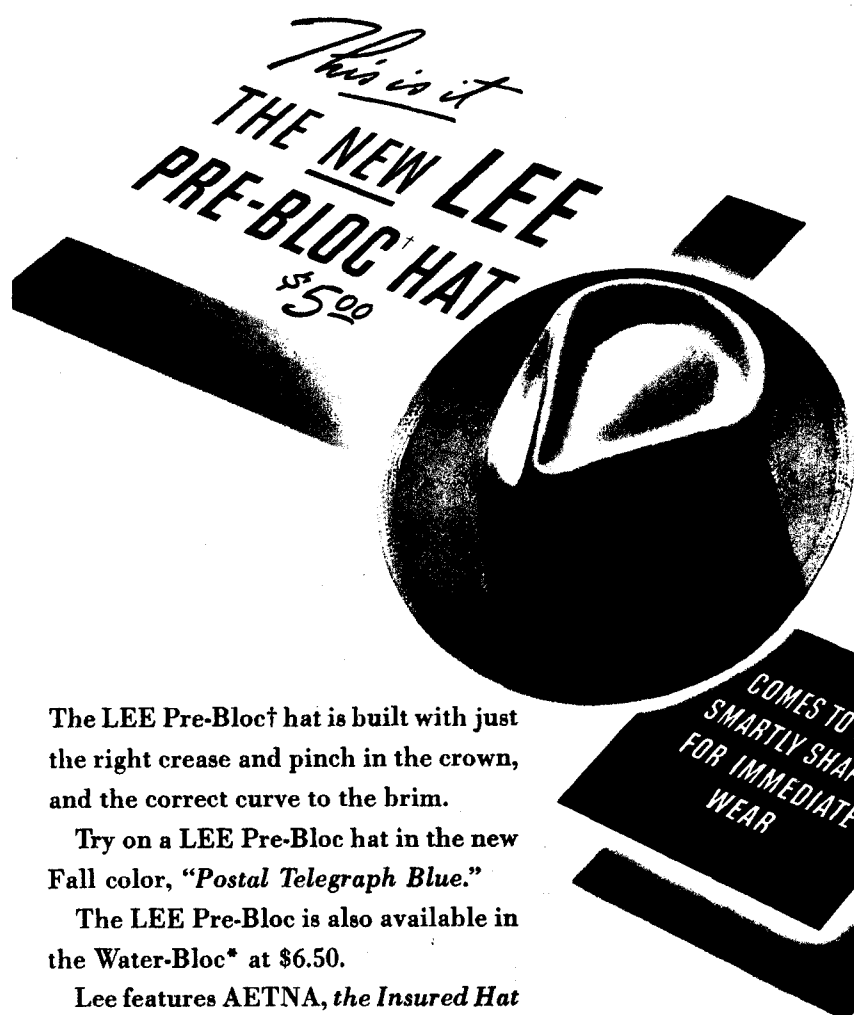
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Cowles' presence in Willkie's entourage gave rise to rumors that Wendell's trip to the Middle East was much less that of an emissary from President Roosevelt than of a politician making hay for a future election campaign.

Willkie's first plunge into Middle East affairs happened in the marbled hall of the impressive headquarters of the United States forces in North Africa, formerly the home of a wealthy Egyptian family. The active and passive press, uniformed and ununiformed, male and female, American and foreign, were there about seventy strong. Even the Times of London came; so did British and American censors.

Willkie, in a summer-weight single-breasted suit, his pants belt tight around his middle, his hair ruffled, and looking very much a man of the people in his white shirt and unremarkable necktie, sat on a chair before a table set on the first landing of a staircase that swept upward behind him. There was a shaft of light on his face from an open door. He reassured us that the Yankees were doing well, but he expressed concern about the Brooklyn Dodgers' chances.

Winning with Willkie

Then he turned prophet. He announced that, in his opinion, Hitler was 'way out on a limb and that the tide had turned against the enemy. Pressed for an explanation, Willkie hedged. He admitted that, while the tide had turned, that tide still would take a long time to engulf the enemy. At the moment, the Germans were pounding at Stalingrad, the Japs were making things hot for us in New Guinea and the Solomons, and while we all knew we'd lick Hitler and Hirohito, the victory of which he talked so brightly seemed to us still far away.

It wasn't so much what Willkie said as the manner in which he said it. We got the impression that the war was practically over; that Hitler was licked. Willkie generated an atmosphere of optimism that continued to brighten life in Cairo long after he left. But while there was reason for encouragement due to Rommel's defeat, there still was danger to Egypt and the Middle East.

Later, at another press conference, Willkie, piling words on words, reached even greater heights of optimism. Someone asked him whether the folks at home realized the importance to the United Nations of holding the Middle East and, in a later phase of the war, of using it as a springboard for an attack against Europe and the Balkans. Here, Willkie struck a blow for democracy. He said he didn't believe Americans *did* realize it.

He explained that his mission was partly to bring the Middle East to the attention of the American people, and everybody cheered. A press veteran of many battles with censorship in Eastern and Central Europe then inquired whether Willkie believed Americans were sufficiently well informed about the situation.

"No," said Willkie. "Frankly, I don't think so. I believe the censors ought to permit more news to get out."

After that, Willkie went to the desert in a United States Army catch-as-catch-can uniform. He didn't make a very good-looking soldier, but nobody would have minded that, had he stuck to his strictly amateur role. He became an authority on the higher strategy after a few hours' visit to the battlefield

So many civilian defense organizations have requested additional copies of The Truth About Poison Gas, published in Collier's September 26th issue, that we are now offering reprints at the following cost prices, which include shipping and handling: \$2.50 a hundred; single copies 5¢. Address Collier's Reprint Dept., Springfield, Ohio, stating the quantity wanted

where a few bombs fell near enough for him to see the columns of dust they raised and to hear them burst.

Reporters at the front met him in a large assembly tent which General Montgomery uses for staff conferences. It was hot, close and quiet.

The first question was: "Well, Mr. Willkie, how do you like our desert?"

As though the question had released a secret spring, Willkie dived into this speech: "The battle which has just been won is perhaps one of the most decisive in history. It is comparable to the Battle of the Nile when Nelson destroyed the French fleet. Egypt is saved. The threat to the Nile Valley has been removed!"

Correspondents, conditioned to understatements by vigilant censorship, gaped at Willkie. They hadn't known there'd been a battle going on at all. They knew the enemy had attacked on August 30th, but this was September 5th. Here then was news—hot, perishable stuff. They rushed it through typewriters; dispatch riders took it to press headquarters—but all in vain. Willkie had overstated the importance of the battle. Egypt had been saved, but the salvation process had begun long before this new battle started, and still the threat to Egypt remained and wouldn't be removed until Rommel's armies either were destroyed or chased out of Egypt and Libya.

A Slight Overstatement

Willkie had the censors on a spot. They were obliged to choose between pruning his utterance down to reasonable terms (thereby risking offending him) or allowing Berlin to get valuable propaganda material, because Berlin knew as well as the British that what had happened in the desert wasn't exactly comparable to Nelson's victory.

If the British censors had allowed Willkie's statement to go out, Berlin could have assumed that the statement came directly from British officers who had conducted him to the front. And Goebbels would have had a great chuckle.

The rest of the press conference went like this: A correspondent asked, "Were you bombed, Mr. Willkie?"

"Well, yes, yes, I was bombed."

"Was it high-level bombing, Mr. Willkie?"

"Yes, but you've got to expect that sort of thing."

Men who'd been strafed, bombed, dive-bombed, shelled and machine-gunned smiled to themselves.

Willkie returned to his original theme—the importance of the British victory over the Afrika Korps.

"The past two days constitute the turning point of the war," he said. "I can't stress too strongly that it's due to the brilliant tactical generalship of General Montgomery. I want you fellows who write for the papers back home to stress particularly that General Montgomery is a fighting Irishman from South Ireland."

Montgomery is actually an Ulsterman.

With that, Willkie grabbed his solatopee, slammed it on his head with the chinstrap under the crown, so that it fitted none too well. The reporters wrote what Willkie had said, with prayers that General Montgomery, a tall, lathy, modest man of few words, wouldn't mind. One of the nuances of that conference, too, was Willkie's description of how victory was won in the desert. He was talking at one point of the fact that it was "a United Nations victory." He said it had been won by Australians, Indians, New Zealanders, South Africans, Americans—"and, of course, Englishmen." He added Englishmen as an afterthought, it seemed.

This seemed tactless in view of the fact that seventy-five per cent of the men who did the job on the Afrika Korps were Englishmen.

Willkie's next major public appearance was back in Cairo at a cocktail party in the South African Club, arranged by a Free Frenchman named André Glarner and a Chicago newspaperman, Alec Small. Willkie's henchman, Cowles, went about asking correspondents whether the reporters out on the desert had sent in stories about Willkie's pronouncements there. He demonstrated considerable anxiety about the kind and amount of publicity that Willkie was getting.

British press relations officers were at the party. One correspondent told Willkie that his overzealous words on the desert had been severely censored by the British. Angry, Willkie set his

chin, leaned forward into a group of newspapermen and said, in the hearing of the British officers, "God damn it, boys, nobody's got the right to censor anything I say! I'm a responsible person. Nobody's got any right to censor me—and I mean nobody!"

Then, raising his voice slightly and addressing himself to a monocled lieutenant colonel, Willkie went on, "You can tell that to anybody, and I mean anybody you like—I mean it."

A correspondent saved the situation slightly by saying that was the way he felt about anything he said, too, whereupon everyone laughed nervously. Willkie posed for several photographs, shook hands with people and left.

Cool Reception in Turkey

In Ankara, where they are sticklers for diplomatic protocol, President Inonu of Turkey was conveniently away when Willkie arrived there. There's an unbreakable rule in Turkey that all official receptions must be held in Ankara. Inonu's absence obviated meeting Willkie, although we were given to understand in Cairo that Wendell carried a personal message to Inonu from Roosevelt, as he did for King Farouk, Chiang Kai-shek and other heads of states.

The Iranians don't like their loyalty to Great Britain questioned. Whoever briefed Willkie for this flight into international affairs, however, neglected to tell him about that. When he reached Bagdad he committed one of the major blunders of his journey. He saw General Nuri.

Said Willkie after his interview: "I had a long and deep discussion with Premier-General Nuri. There's no doubt we've got a friend there—his heart's right in it."

The implication read into this was that, abroad, there had been some doubt concerning Nuri's loyalty.

THE END



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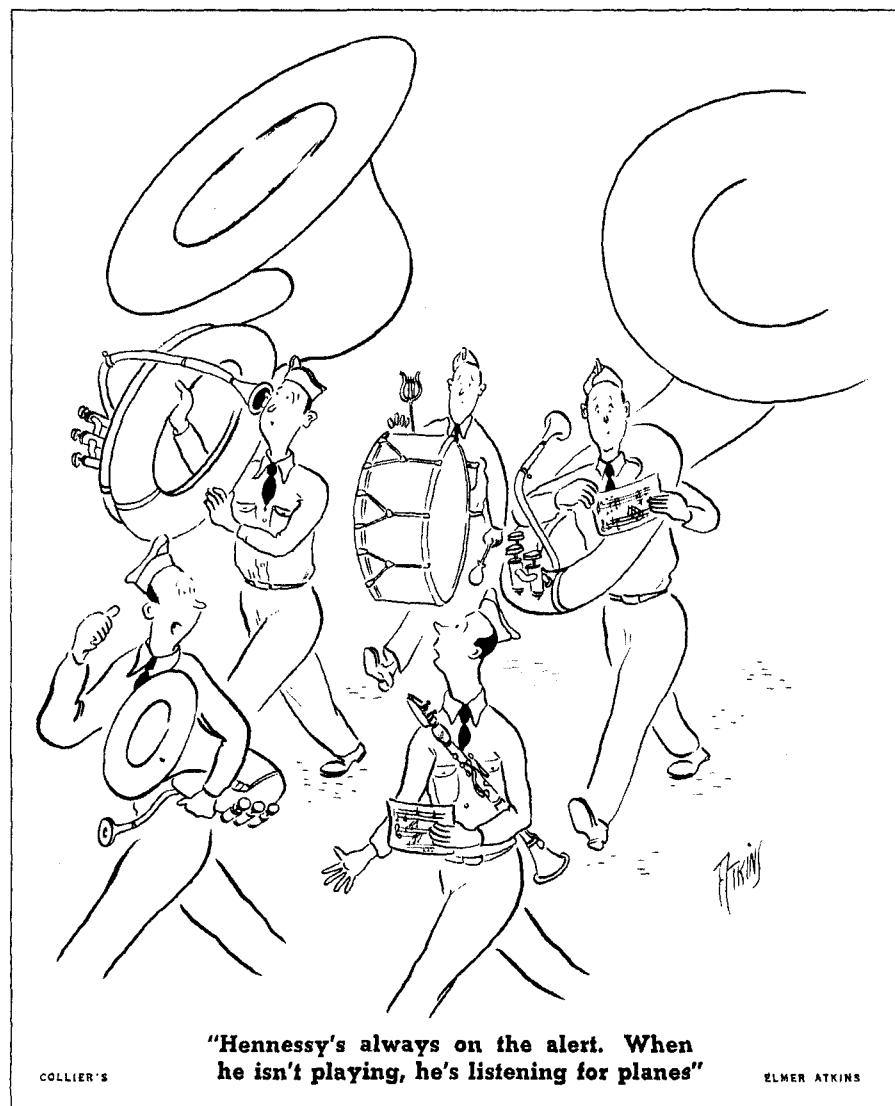
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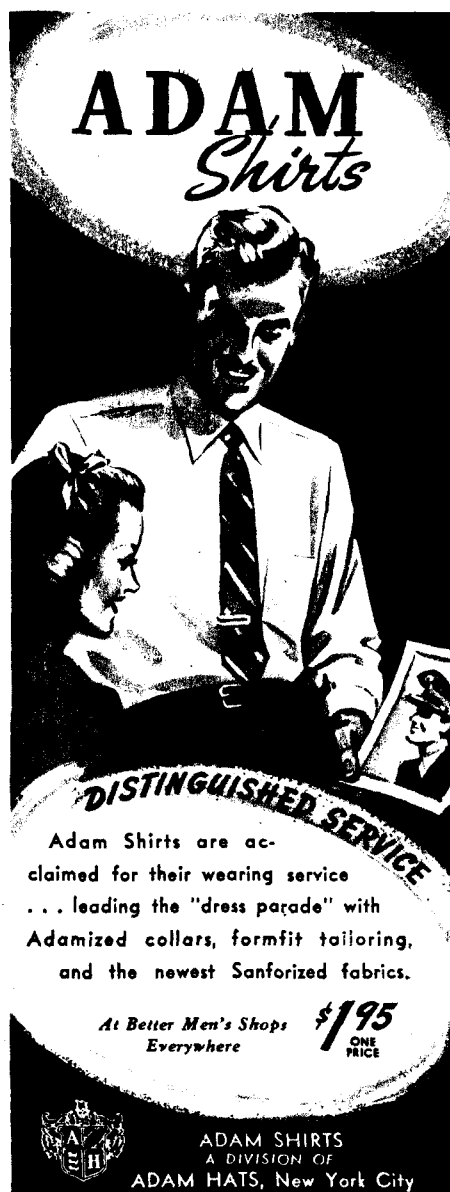


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Continued from page 20



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of his mouth so that he wore a perpetual hideous leer. Kilner's knife worked busily for fifteen minutes, his needles for another ten, and the man would be normal.

I walked through the wards of Queen Mary's (Roehampton) Hospital with Kilner, looking at postoperative cases. All were the result of either bombing or shrapnel or burns. Every type of skin graft was here; every type of war wound. In one women's ward, there were eight women in bed.

"They all look cheerful enough," I suggested to the nurse.

"Yes," she said thoughtfully, "considering the fact that there are only five legs among those eight women—all blitz victims."

"It's Helen's eighteenth birthday," the nurse said to Kilner. "Would you care to see her?"

"Yes," Kilner said. "How is she?"

"Had a couple of bad days. Now and then she gets discouraged. Then too, sometimes she remembers that night."

"Helen is our pet here," Kilner said. "She's eighteen today."

We found Helen enjoying the sun. She sat in a wheel chair and she wore a blue negligee of which she was shyly proud—a birthday present. I wondered if there was anything seriously wrong with her.

"Let's see how we're coming along," Kilner said gaily, and gently removed the loose new blue negligee from her left shoulder.

A Miracle of Skin Grafting

It was difficult not to cry out. Her left arm ended at the wrist, and, grafted to the lower arm, stretching to her abdomen, was a heavy tube of skin.

"Helen didn't need that skin on her tummy," Kilner said, laughing into the child's eyes. "So we attached it to her wrist and now it's healed nicely, and soon we're going to attach it to her leg because she needs some nice new skin there." He replaced the negligee around her shoulder and asked, "How is your other arm?"

"All right," Helen said, looking down at her right hand with interest, and then I saw that it was artificial. "I can work the thumb nicely. I can hold a fork or a cup easily."

"Soon we'll have another hand for you, and you'll be able to do anything you want," Kilner said.

"A bomb," he explained shortly, after we left Helen. "She lived in a town on the west coast. Lost both arms, and her leg was burned badly. I have to do that graft to save the leg."

What Kilner was doing to rebuild the pathetically broken body of the girl was to use what the surgeons call a Tubed Pedicle Flap. Once the wrist stump had healed, he cut a long strip of skin from her abdomen, sewed it in the form of a tube and attached it to her forearm. That had grafted perfectly. It formed a living ten-inch bridge between her abdomen and her arm. This took only a couple of weeks.

Soon he would cut the skin flap off at the abdomen and then graft that end of it to the damaged knee, because the burns she had suffered on the leg had killed the skin, and the blood vessels below the surface of the foot itself were receiving no life-giving blood. In time, infection would certainly set in. In short, the foot and lower leg would die and amputation would be the only remedy.

Once the skin flap had been grafted successfully to the knee (a matter of

a few weeks), then the flap could be cut from the lower arm and spread over the lower leg. Once successfully grafted, life would return to the dying leg. To the layman, this seems a long-drawn-out process. It is, but barring unexpected complications, such a series of operations is usually successful.

Thousands of pilots whose faces and hands were burned to ugly, dead scar tissue have been returned to almost normal by the skill at skin grafting shown by the plastic surgeons of Britain. There was a time when plastic surgery was the bedraggled Cinderella of medical science. The public thought of a plastic surgeon as a sort of quack who spent his time lifting wrinkles from the parchment skin of aging dowagers or removing incriminating scars from the faces of public enemies.

Actually a plastic surgeon of the type of Kilner, Gillies or McIndoe is nothing but a highly qualified general surgeon who has applied his talents and experience to reconstructive and reparative work on every part of the body.

The science of reconstruction has advanced incredibly since the last war. It has advanced to such an extent that today Queen Mary's Hospital, in addition to victims of this war, has more than fifty casualties from the last. A jaw adequately rebuilt in 1920 will, because of the outmoded technique used at that time, now have lost many of its teeth. Routine bone grafting can be done to a jaw which has failed to unite properly. Hairless skin, probably from the upper arm, can be grafted on the lining of the cheek, and the contour built out where necessary with a wax mold.

I went to a hospital in Kent that was filled with blitz victims, most of whom were on the point of returning to the civilian life from which bombs had blasted them. I visited that hospital a year ago, just after the horrible May 10, 1941, raid on London. Every bed in it was filled, and patients lay in rows, in corridors, waiting their turn for the operating room.

Reluctantly I visited the hospital again, after a year, and found that a great many of the same women and children were there, but their eyes had lost the vacant look they had had then, and now no sudden flashes of instinctive terror crossed their faces when remembrance came. A year had, to a great extent, banished the memory of terror, and if memory came, it came deep in the night when one was alone.

Rebuilding Arms and Legs

Legs and arms that were amputated in the last war as a matter of course, are now saved more often than not, but there are still thousands of amputations performed—for the alternative is death. Here at Queen Mary's Roehampton, those who lost arms or legs had been refitted with artificial appendages, and there was not the slightest sign of despair on the face of a single patient. Plastic surgery or reparative surgery is closely aligned to orthopedic surgery. Once the stumps are healthy and alive with growing skin taken from some other part of the body, the task of fitting artificial limbs comes. The surgeons and the engineers have accomplished amazing things in the construction of arms and legs.

"Look at that," the doctor in charge chuckled, pointing to a ten-year-old girl. The youngster was skipping rope and enjoying it. "She lost her leg in a blitz only four months ago," he went on. "And we've fixed her up pretty well.

You'd have to look twice to know which limb is artificial. She can bicycle and she can walk, and now we're teaching her to skip rope. Youngsters are pliable and they adjust themselves easily.

"We have a gardener here I want you to see," he went on. "He was a patient of ours for a few months and wanted to stay on. We'll find him."

We found him grumbling because the weeds had strangled a few of his roses. The doctor asked him if he'd run down the garden path and then run back. The doctor added that he'd bet a shilling I couldn't tell which of his legs had been amputated. The gardener grinned knowingly (evidently this was a garden trick played on all visitors), and cheerfully ran down the path, turned and ran back. He ran easily, evenly, and I couldn't tell which leg was artificial.

"The right one," I said. I was just betting on the law of averages.

"You're wrong, mate!" the gardener laughed, and he lifted his trouser legs a foot. Both legs were artificial.

New Life with New Limbs

"Of course, it takes time," the surgeon explained. "First, we have them exercise the right muscles to develop them. We fit them with artificial limbs to measure. Then they practice before a mirror. Adjustments can be made to the legs. Incidentally, they weigh only five and a half pounds each. As soon as they get the idea that they can actually walk, they want perfection. Our ultimate aim is to make them entirely unconscious of their artificial limbs. We discourage the use of canes, which reminds them of the loss they have suffered.

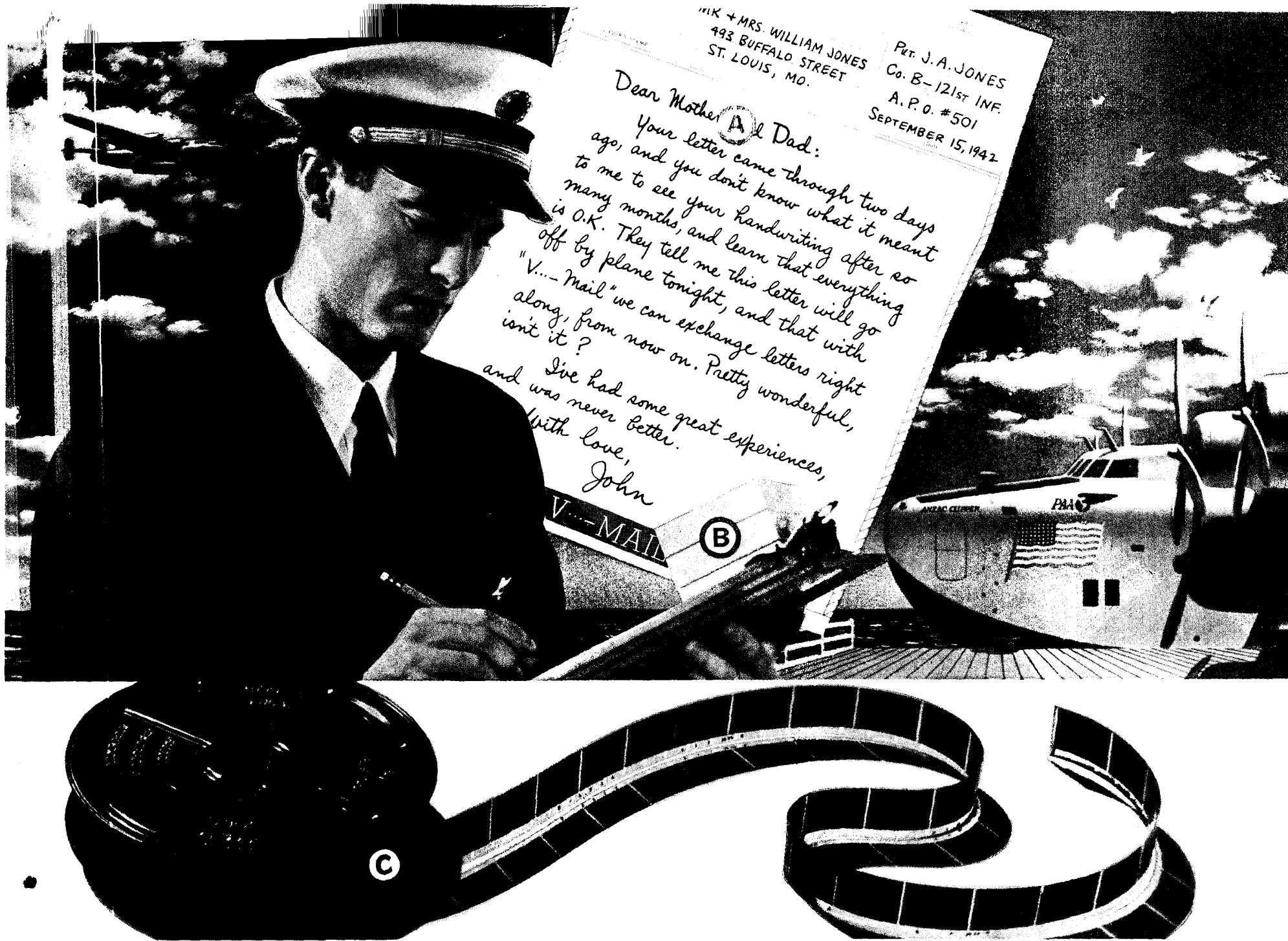
Artificial arms give even more scope to the surgeon and the engineer. This development has been rapid and most of it has come during the past two years. If you have one sound arm and hand, the artificial one is made to its measurement. The hand is made exactly the size of your good hand and, of course, is painted flesh color. The thumb is worked by a strong cord passed around the upper back of the patient. The thumb opens and shuts as he pushes his shoulder backward or forward. Such a hand can be used for carrying a suitcase, holding a newspaper or for any ordinary daily pursuits. For factory workers, there are all sorts of special gadgets attached by merely unscrewing the hand and screwing in the tool required.

None of this may be pretty to read about, but then, the war that has been waged against the civilians of Britain and Russia is not a very pretty war at all. Once you get accustomed to it, you don't mind the sight of wounded soldiers and pilots, but even the men on Kilner's staff confess that they never get accustomed or hardened to the sight of girls like Helen or of the eight women lying in the semiprivate ward.

The war comes closer and closer to us in America each day, and if one is apt to complain about the rationing of tires, of gasoline and of sugar, the thought of the thousands of civilians still in hospitals in Britain trying, with the help of these magnificent surgeons, to rebuild shattered bodies which were never made to withstand the steel and iron of bombs, might come as a sobering thought.

The thought might banish the irritation we feel because we can't drive to the beach on Sunday. To date, the war has brought no suffering in America to any sixteen-year-old youngster like Helen or thousands like her.

THE END



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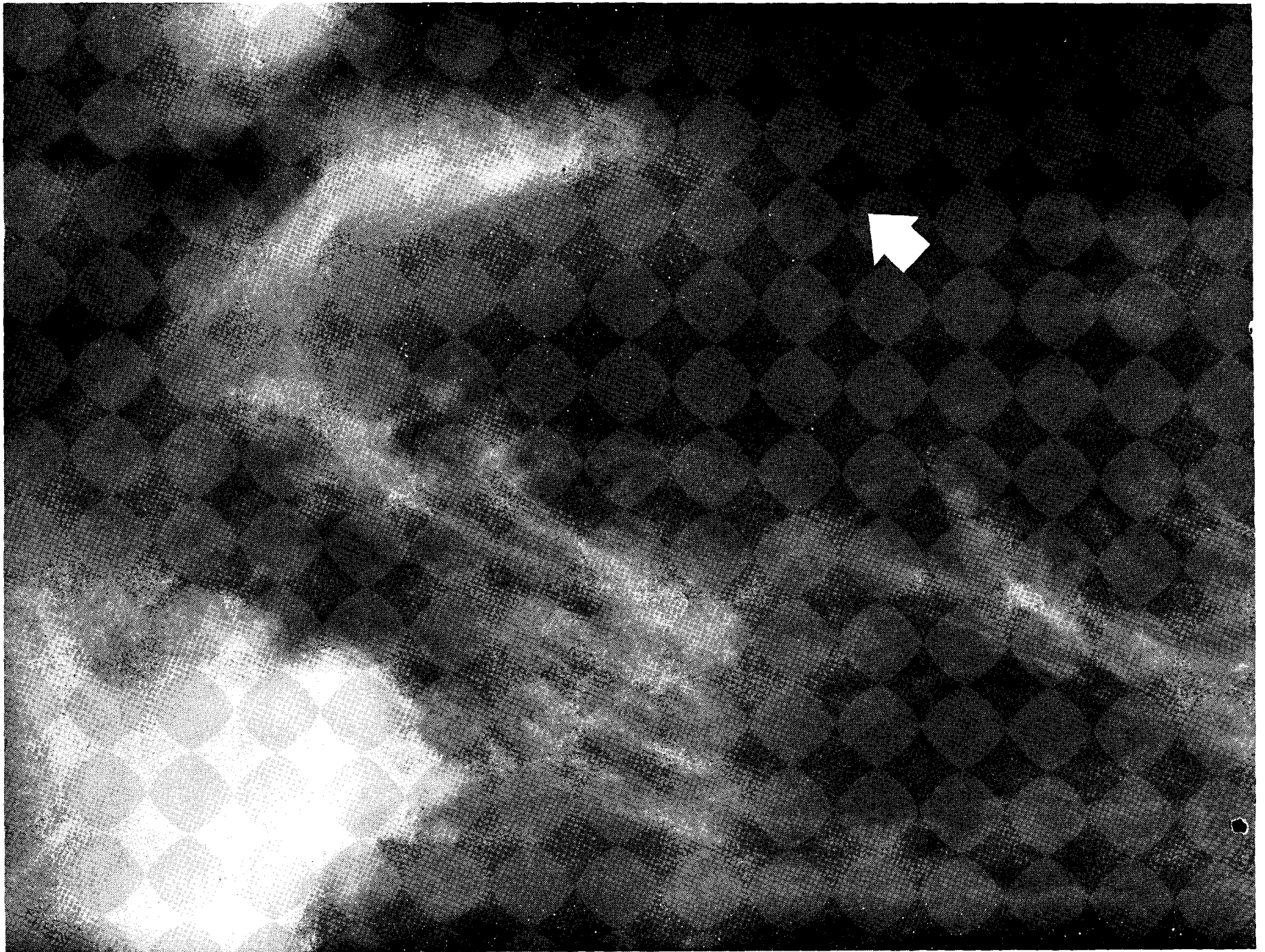
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BOEING

* THE TERMS "FLYING FORTRESS" AND "STRATOLINER" ARE REGISTERED BOEING TRADE-MARKS

HOW this soldier happens to walk into the Torrid Zone in the first place, nobody can figure. He fits in nice with USO parties and things like that, but not in a clip joint. And, brother, clip joint is what the Torrid Zone is.

What makes it funnier is the way the kid goes for Rita. They call Rita an entertainer because you ain't allowed to call 'em hostesses, but she's strictly from percentage and you'd have thought she'd brush this soldier off after he showed up a second time.

Rita looks like a cutie, but she's harder than eighteen dollars' worth of flint. The boss likes her because they talk the same language and also because she can build up a sucker's check to where he needs an adding machine.

The first night the soldier is there, it's okay by the boss. He wanders in, and you can see right away he doesn't know he's playing in the wrong league. It's early, the joint ain't busy, and Rita drifts by his table and says, "Hello, Soldier." His face lights up, so she sits down to chew the fat a little and kill a few minutes.

You can see that hard little brain of hers working. In this war, you can't ever tell. Some of these guys that ain't got a single chevron on their sleeves or a bar on their shoulders—they got plenty moola, and they'll part with it for a good time. But not this guy. He tells the waiter to bring the lady a beer. And beer is all she ever gets from him for six nights.

After a couple nights the boss has a talk with her. He says, "Look, I'm for the Army, see. I think it's swell. I wave the flag high as anybody. But, Rita—you ain't playing smart. You oughta dust this character off?"

Rita looks straight at him. "Eddie don't dust off so easy," she explains. "He's lonely, and talking is the most fun he's had since he joined the Army."

"Look . . ." The boss was almost pleading. "I want he should have a good time. But there ain't any sense of you and me both losing money on account you're concentrating on a dope which he ain't got nothing to recommend him except a uniform."

Rita says, "You're just throwing good breath after bad. When the Army figures it wants me, it can have me. And if beer is the program, I drink beer. So go peddle your apples somewhere else."

Sure, she told him off. She doesn't take nothing from nobody.

Well, Eddie comes in again and again and again. Six nights in a row. Sometimes early and sometimes late. Twice Rita leaves a spending table to join him. "Two beers," that's the soldier's slogan, so they get to call him Two-Beer Eddie. The two sit in a corner and talk, and the boss says, "She's gone crazy—that's what. Up until this Eddie come along, I figured she was the perfect dame for a jungle like this. And now look at her. You'd think she liked the guy."

"Yeah," agreed the bartender thoughtfully, "you'd almost think that."

THIS sixth night when Eddie comes in, Rita knows right away that something has happened. They talk about this and that, none of it being important, and finally Rita leans over and says, "All right, Eddie: give out."

He smiles, slow and easy, and says, "I love the way you talk."

"Yeah. Me too. Only this time I'm asking questions. What's cooking?"

He shakes his head. "I'm afraid you won't be seeing me again. Not for a long time, anyway."

Rita knew what she ought to be thinking. She ought to be thinking, "Wotta break! Now I'll cut in on wine checks again instead of two-bit beer." But instead she gets a kind of scared feeling.

"They transfer you?"



TWO BEERS

A SHORT SHORT STORY
COMPLETE ON THIS PAGE

By Octavus Roy Cohen

ILLUSTRATED BY HARRY L. TIMMINS

Twice Rita leaves a spending table to join Eddie. "Two beers," that's the soldier's slogan, so they call him Two-Beer Eddie. The two sit in a corner and talk

"Sort of."

"Where'll they transfer you to?"

"I'm not sure. And I ain't allowed to talk . . ."

She got it. Overseas stuff. Second front. "It doesn't fit," she says. "Not you."

"Oh, that!" He shrugs. "We all want it, and of course we're all scared. But that isn't the important thing, really."

"You goin' overseas ain't important? Are you kiddin'?"

"I never said overseas." He was remembering what his officers had warned. "It's just that I won't be back for a long time, and I didn't want you to think things."

She said, "I'll miss you, Eddie."

"Honest?"

"But good."

"That makes it easier . . ." The guy was getting embarrassed. He reached into the pocket of his OD blouse. "I hope you don't mind, Rita . . . but I got something for you to remember me by."

"Now listen . . ."

"You don't have to wear it. It isn't easy to explain. It won't mean a thing to you, though I wish it would. But I want to remember that I gave it to you."

She held out her hand. "What is it?"

"You won't laugh?"

"At you?" She was afraid to look straight at him. "This ain't my laughing night, Eddie."

He put a little box in her hand, and she opened it. The ring was pretty. Even in the dim light the stone gleamed. But it wasn't that so much as the setting. . . . She said, "This kind of a ring . . . ?"

"I knew what kind it was." He was stumbling over his own words. "And I wasn't aiming to be fresh. But the way I feel. . . . You know, if I figured I could come back to see you when it's finished. . . ."

She tried to say the right thing, but it was no soap. She slipped the ring on the third finger of her left hand and looked at it. She tossed off what was left of her beer and the waiter brought two more.

THEY didn't do any talking after that, not until he looked at his wrist watch and said, "I'm leaving. We have orders to be in early. . . ."

She was calling herself all kinds of a fool for feeling like she did. She was saying it was the uniform: that a guy like him she wouldn't give a tumble except there was a war. But it didn't come out even. She said, "You don't know what kind of a dame I am, Eddie."

"Yes, I do."

"I'm a tramp. I'm a percentage gal. I ain't worth wasting time on."

"I think different," he said quietly. "It's the way I want to think . . . and

the way I'm going to keep on thinking."

He got up then, and so did she. "You won't," she said, "so I will."

She put her arms around him. When she stepped back he was all over lipstick, and she laughed nervously and wiped it off with her handkerchief.

He said, "I'll be back, Rita, I'll be back."

Then he turned and walked out. Nobody in the joint laughed. She watched him go, and didn't know the boss had walked over until he started talking.

"I figure he ain't coming back," said the boss.

"No."

"Overseas?"

"I suppose so."

"I wish him luck." The boss patted her shoulder. "It's been fun, Rita—but now you're back in circulation. Business is good. You can make yourself a piece of change."

"Okay . . ." She was looking down at the ring he'd given her, the ring with the engagement setting.

The boss said, "Lemme see it. I know diamonds."

She held out her hand. He studied the stone carefully. Then he shook his head. "It's still beer," he said. "That ain't real."

She looked up at him. "It's real," she corrected gently. "It's the only real thing I ever had in my life."