

FRONT-LINE NURSE

WILLIAM STARRET

CHAPTER II

Synopsis

Laura Blake, army nurse, after active duty in New Guinea, has been back in the United States making a speaking tour to recruit girls for the Nurse Corps. But she longs to return to the Southwest Pacific, especially as her fiancé, Jerry Donaldson, bomber pilot, is out there. Finally, she receives orders to report in Washington to learn her next assignment. Arriving there she shares a taxi to the Pentagon building with Col. Bob Beston, flying ace, who distinguished himself in China, and who also wants to get back to the front after a tour of duty as a flying instructor in Texas. He makes a date with Laura for dinner. When she reports to headquarters she is told she has been promoted to captain, is to be given special training as a flight nurse, and then will be returned to front line duty. Elated, she goes to the hotel where she is to meet Beston.

"No—I'm not really disappointed," Bob said. "I'll see action—right enough—in a flyin' ambulance. They don't just fly from New York to Chicago, you know."

"I know it!" Laura said. "Right up to the front lines they go! And you're not safe from enemy planes, either. Afater all, those planes carry supplies on the way up and wounded on the way back. The enemy likes to shoot at them no matter which way they're going."

"That's all right," Bob muttered, "if they'd just give me a gun to shoot back with!"

"When do you go?" Laura asked.

"Two days."

"No. They said I could go fresher course like the one I have to take first?" Laura asked.

"No. They said I could do right away. I'm to fly a big crate over to Africa."

"Africa!" Laura exclaimed. "Why—I'd have thought you'd go back to the Pacific."

"Didn't want to go back there unless I could fight," Bob said ruefully. "Anyway, I've seen that part of the world. Never been to Africa yet."

There was a moment's silence.

"Say—I'm botherin' you," Bob said. "Go ahead an' finish your letter."

"No—I'm through," Laura said, picking up her letter to Jerry. "I was just going to drop a note to my father and mother, but it can wait till tomorrow on the train. I didn't feel like it right now, anyway."

"Finished writin' the boy friend and that was enough, huh?" Bob asked, smiling as he stood up.

"Yes. It was a long one, of course," Laura said. "He's a flier, too. Out in the Pacific now—probably in on those raids we're making on Rabaul all the time."

"A bomber boy?" Bob asked.

"Well, I'm glad to know you picked out a flyin' man. Where shall we eat?"

"I don't know any place here," Laura said. "About the only place I ever ate in Washington was the Walter Reed Hospital, and I don't suggest we go there."

"Like fish?" Bob asked, as they moved through the lobby.

"Love it," Laura said.

"Good—I know a fine fish place."

They walked a few blocks farther to the fish restaurant which Beston knew was good.

They had to wait twenty minutes for a table, and by the time they began to eat they were old friends, completely at ease with one another. They exchanged bits of life history and war experiences. Laura knew that Bob could have told exciting yarns for hours on end. But he seemed just as interested in her experiences as in telling his own.

After dinner they walked for a while, though the wind was brisk and the temperature had dropped when the sun went down. They looked in shop windows, debated going to a movie but decided it was too late.

They walked to the nurses' home, and there they said good-by. Each one said how much he had enjoyed knowing the other, each hoped he'd see the other again. Then it was good luck, with a handshake, and good-by.

The next morning, Laura had little time before her train left to take her to Bowman Field, Kentucky, for her month's training for her new work.

The train was crowded, but she did finally get a place at one of the little writing tables in the lounge car, where she wrote her mother and father the new turn of events. She found herself wanting to write Bob Beston, but she realized that he would be leaving Washington the next day and that she had no idea where she could reach him after that.

Then some soldiers spoke to her and she began to talk to them. The train was full of servicemen who wanted to talk, especially to an attractive girl. For the rest of the journey, Laura enjoyed herself, and had not a moment for her own private thoughts, of Jerry, or Bob Beston.

The same situation held true from the moment she arrived at Bowman Field. There she was so completely occupied that she had little time to think, little time even to write a few letters.

In addition to her studies, she had field work that was exhausting. She went out into the surrounding field with other nurses and went through maneuvers simulating real battle conditions.

"And pretty real they are, too!" Laura wrote to Jerry in one short period snatched before a meal.

"No eternal dripping wetness as in the New Guinea jungles, but just good old American mud. And I walked through it, wallowed in it, rolled over in it, before I was through. Over fences, under barbed wire entanglements—with guns shooting over my head most of the time!"

Laura had prided herself on keeping in good physical condition all the time, but she knew that her months of inactive duty had softened her somewhat. During the first two weeks of her special training, she was sore and lame in all her muscles. Each night she dropped onto her cot and slept like a log until time to get up.

She was becoming impatient now to leave the camp. Soon, she knew, would come her orders to report for duty. There would be a long and uncomfortable trip across the country to San Francisco, she decided, and then perhaps a long wait.

If she were lucky she'd get on one of the many planes being flown to the Southwest Pacific. If not, she'd have that interminable boat ride over the biggest ocean in the world.

Maybe she would not get there before Jerry completed his fifty combat missions and was returned to the U. S. A.

This question was settled very quickly by a letter from Jerry, the first she had received in many weeks. The very first sentence told her the important news.

"Just completed my fiftieth mission—a beautiful shellacking of Jap ships in the harbor at Rabaul—and am being sent home within a few days!"

Laura's feelings were so mixed that she didn't know whether to laugh or cry. A great relief dominated all other feelings, however—relief that Jerry had come through his tour of dangerous combat duty and was coming home to safety.

But her desire to see him, to be with him, was strong that a wave of loneliness soon engulfed her. What difference did it make if he were safe when they would be thousands of miles apart, They might pass each other in the air over the Pacific—she on a plane headed west and he on a plane heading east.

Letters could not ever be a substitute for talking together face to face. The letters told the major events, but not the little day-to-day happenings—tiny and insignificant as each might be—that made up most of a person's life.

"That's what I want," Laura said to herself. "I want at least enough time with Jerry to get around to the trivial things in our conversations!"

So she began hoping that her orders would be delayed, lost in some mass of red tape. It happened to others on occasion, and they always rallied against it, as she herself would have under ordinary circumstances. Now she longed for delay, hoping that Jerry would meanwhile be flying toward home without any delay whatsoever.

But when three days had passed she received her orders. And then came the greatest surprise of all. She was to report to New York—not to San Francisco!

Laura was dismayed by her orders. She had taken it for granted that she would be sent back to the South Pacific and would embark from the West Coast, probably San Francisco. The order to report in New York must mean that she was going to the European theater of action. She didn't object to that but, if she was to leave from New York, what chance was there of seeing Jerry?

That question was answered on the afternoon of the same day by a telegram from Jerry in San Francisco! Luckily, there had been an available plane seat the day after his tour of duty ended,

and he had come across the Pacific in record time.

Now he was fighting with the airlines and railroads to get east as soon as possible. Of course, he was heading for Bowman Field to see Laura, since he knew nothing of her orders to report in New York.

A telegram took care of that—provided it should reach him before he left San Francisco by train or plane.

MUST REPORT TO NEW YORK THE TENTH. MEET ME HOTEL MANHATTAN THERE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

Then Laura crossed her fingers, hoping they'd make connections somehow.

"Here I've got what I've wanted most," she muttered angrily to herself, "orders to report for duty as a flight nurse, and I'm mad about the whole situation! Why do I love that guy, anyway?"

She arrived in New York on the ninth and went straight to the Manhattan for a room. There were no rooms!

Here was another complication! Jerry would come, if he came in time, to the Manhattan—that is, if he had received her telegram before leaving San Francisco. But even if he got to New York and looked for her he might not be able to find her!

Laura explained the situation to the desk clerk, and asked if she could leave word that Jerry would receive in case he came and asked for her.

"If he comes when I'm on duty, I'll give him the message," the clerk said. "I'll leave a memorandum for the other clerks and be glad to tell them personally about it. That ought to do it,

though I can't guarantee it. Things get pretty hectic around here sometimes, and someone's likely to forget a thing like that, you know. Wouldn't he know somewhere else to look—nurse headquarters or something?"

"Yes, he could find out all right," Laura said, "but that might take time. And I don't know how long we'll have together. Maybe only a few hours—if anything at all."

Laura went to another hotel and found a room, then returned to the Manhattan and told the clerk where she was in case Jerry should come in. Then she notified everyone else whom Jerry might call in his search for her.

"In addition to that, I'll haunt the lobby of the Manhattan," Laura told herself, "with my eyes glued to the doors!"

She did haunt the lobby the rest of that afternoon and all evening. She haunted it so thoroughly that the hotel detective began to wonder about her and eyed her somewhat suspiciously.

At first Laura was angry. Then she realized it was silly to be annoyed. It was only natural for the man to wonder why an Army nurse should spend so many hours sitting in the hotel lobby.

So she calmly walked up to him.

"You're the hotel detective, aren't you?" she asked.

"Why, yes, ma'am," he replied somewhat startled, and a little abashed that he had been spotted so easily.

"Well, in case you're wondering, I've got a very good reason for sitting here in your fine lobby."

She told him the situation, and

he grinned broadly.

"Listen, lady—you can sit here all night," the man said. "And if you'll describe this guy to me, I'll keep my eyes peeled myself. And I'll tell the doorman and all the bellhops, too! We'll find him for you!"

She had a difficult time getting to sleep, and even then she slept fitfully. When her call came at seven o'clock, she felt groggy and tired.

At headquarters she heard the dismayed news that she was to report to Pier X in Hoboken by eight o'clock that evening!

"Jerry must come today!" she told herself, as she hurried to the Manhattan. "He just can't arrive the day after I've left. Why—I don't know when I may see him again!"

(To Be Continued)

HE'S GOT IT! OUR ADS DID THE JOB

WANTED!

IVY and LAUREL BURLS

Briarwood is coming now from North Africa and Italy in ever increasing quantity. Dig your Ivy and Laurel stools now while the price is at the highest in the market.

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BUY WAR BONDS!

No Runts among these grunts



A LOT of credit goes to our Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations where men spend their lives working out improved methods of breeding and feeding. For example, E. F. Ferrin, head of the swine division of the University of Minnesota, recently ran a feeding test with seven lots of pigs. He found that too small an amount of protein in the ration produces more runts, slower gains and less profit.

All pigs in the test started at an average weight of 50 pounds and were self-fed without pasture for 14 weeks. All seven lots received the same kind of protein supplement which was tankage and soybean meal in equal parts with 10% alfalfa meal to supply adequate amounts of B vitamins. Some lots got a high-protein ration (18% of the total feed); others were cut down to 15% and 12% protein. As pigs get heavier, they need less protein, so in some lots the amount of protein was reduced as they gained in weight.

The best results came from an 18% protein ration until the pigs reached 100 pounds, and 15% protein after that weight. The hogs on low-protein rations made smaller gains and were more uneven in individual weights when the test ended. By just such careful experiments, the "know-how" of hog raising has reached its present efficiency.

E. F. Ferrin

E. F. Ferrin

There's More Money in Eggs if you: 1) collect them often, 2) cool them promptly, 3) keep them clean. All this improves their grade and therefore means a better price to you.

SULPHUR FOR LAMB COCCIDIOSIS

Coccidiosis in lambs may be successfully prevented by the addition of ground crude sulphur to their feed in proportions ranging from 1/2% to 1 1/2% of the ration, claims the Idaho Wool Growers Bulletin. Effectiveness of this sulphur treatment has been demonstrated by the U.S.D.A. working in cooperation with large lamb feeders, the report states.

LOST! A MILLION EXTRA ANNUAL MEAT RATIONS

Approximately 200 million pounds of meat a year are being wasted as a result of bruises, crippling and death losses of livestock in transit to market, according to H. R. Smith of the National Livestock Loss Prevention Board. This Board has found that all of us who have to do with the handling of livestock can help save much of this needed meat by following these simple rules:

1. Inspect chutes, trucks and cars for nails and rough corners.
2. Do not overload or jam animals. Partition mixed loads of livestock.
3. Never beat or prod with whips or clubs.
4. When trucking, start and stop with caution; watch for bumps, ruts and sharp curves.
5. Check your load frequently. Livestock shift in transit.

By observing these simple rules, we can all cooperate in cutting down this loss of a million extra meat rations a year; and we can help contribute to the nation the additional meat supplies which it needs so greatly right now!

CATFISH CAN'T RAISE CORN

Nature has equipped catfish with feelers so they can find their way about in muddy, silt-laden rivers. Most of that mud and silt is rich topsoil from once fertile farmlands; the type of soil that should still be producing 50 to 100 bushels of corn.

Catfish can't use that fertile mud to raise corn, and that's too bad. Because right now, America needs all the corn it can produce. There's no need to let catfish have any part of your farm. Your topsoil can be saved. Soil conservation practices hold the raindrops where they fall, control water erosion, stop gullying, stabilize the soil. The Agricultural Extension Service of your State University will be glad to help you work out a special program to fit your farm.

Through soil conservation practices fertility is maintained, crops make better yields, carrying capacity of pastures is increased, more and cheaper feeds are provided for livestock. All this means more money in the farmer's pocket. Swift & Company believes that whatever helps livestock helps all of us—producer, meat packer and consumer. To you as a producer, we earnestly suggest that an investigation of soil conservation land management may be worth your while.

F. M. Simpson,
Agricultural Research Dept.

\$5—IDEA WINNER—\$5

1. Keep first aid articles—tape, gauze, iodine, etc.—handy in a glass jar in the kitchen, workshed or barn. Also keep nuts, bolts, and nails assorted as to size in glass jars.
 2. Use a salt shaker in planting small seeds in vegetable or flower gardens. They are distributed more evenly.
- Z. A. Dine, Borger, Texas

U. S. IS TOP BEEF PRODUCER

Farmers and ranchers in the United States raise more cattle for beef than in any country on earth. We have a third more cattle than Russia, twice as many as Argentina or Brazil. There are actually more cattle in India, but there the cow is sacred and not used for food.

Swift & Company

CHICAGO 9, ILLINOIS

Keep Your Cream Checks Up!

If you've noticed that the cream content of your milk goes down at this time of year, it may indicate that your dairy cows are not getting all the feed they need for heavy production. Those first blades of grass aren't as good as they look, for they won't give the cows all the proteins they require. So don't turn your dairy cattle out to graze and expect them to take care of all their feed requirements with early pasture.

Supplement their spring ration of grass with grain and protein supplement mixture, and hay... grain and protein supplement for milk production, hay for necessary roughage. This tonic is sure to put new spring in the step of an undernourished cow.

The best indication of contentment in the dairy herd is the butterfat test of your milk!

\$5 IDEA Salvage metal pails or tubs which have holes in the bottom by pouring in a half-inch of concrete. Let stand a week before using. Makes them a trifle heavier, but serviceable.

—Mrs. A. L. Miskimon, Wellsville, Kans.

SODA BILL SEZ: That you can't make fat hogs on slim rations.

That money invested in War Bonds buys tanks today—tractors for you tomorrow!

A Martha Logan Recipe for PARTY-STYLE MEAT PIE

To serve four, buy 1/2 pound of table-ready meat loaf—either minced ham, New England cooked specialty or bologna. Dice. (Or, if you prefer, use 1 1/2 cups of cubed beef.) Mix 2 tablespoons flour with 1 teaspoon salt and dash of pepper. Dredge cubes of meat in flour mixture. Brown in 2 tablespoons of melted fat. Add 1 medium onion which has been diced, and brown. Combine with 1/2 cup each of cooked green peas and cooked sliced carrots. Cover with hot water or leftover gravy. Pour into a deep, wide casserole. Top with mashed potatoes. Bake in a hot oven (450° F.) about 20 minutes, or until potatoes are browned. Serve with a fresh fruit salad, hot rolls and dessert.

STAMP 'EM OUT!

EVERY YEAR—CATTLE GRUBS IN THIS COUNTRY SPILL ENOUGH LEATHER TO PUT SOLES ON THE SHOES OF ABOUT 12,000,000 MARCHING MEN!

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