

# Meridith Nicholson's "BLACKSHEEP" Starts Next Tuesday In The HERALD. Don't Miss It!

## Chevrons

By LEONARD NASON  
ILLUSTRATIONS BY IRVIN M'VEES, D. S. C.

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### CHAPTER X

#### Home.

FROM a little way south of Bordeaux almost to the Spanish border stretches a desolate waste of sand, forested with pitch pine, Shepherds live there and gatherers of pitch, and a few fishermen, and during the war the French established training camps for their Senegalese and Annamite battalions among the pines. The poorest, most out of the way, and the worst constructed of these camps was Le Corneau.

A man stood at the main gate of the camp in the early hours of the morning, watching the details going out to work and the companies being marched to drill. The man was Sergeant Eddie and it was the morning after his arrival at Le Corneau. It was cold, a damp, raw wind that kept the thermometer hovering around the freezing point drove before it a cold rain, and the marching men bent their heads against it. What a useless thing an overseas cap in a rain!

Eddie had breakfast on sour hash and bacon, with a cupful of coffee grounds to wash it down with. He had slept in his clothes and overcoat, but even then he had been cold. First he called from drill had blown, and then assembly, but Eddie had not assisted at roll call. He had been in this camp before and he knew that it would be several days before his name would appear on the roster. He had also gone away from this camp the last time without the formality of a travel order.

"I think I'll do it again," muttered the sergeant. "It's cold, though, now, and the trains don't run to the front any more. Where would a guy go?"

Yet why rush away? He had only been here a few hours. They might be going to send him home from here after all. Le Corneau was the artillery replacement camp for the A. E. F. and would be the logical place to send an artilleryman who had no outfit. He couldn't expect to go home all by himself like a returning tourist. And his nurse friend had said she had seen his name on the order to go home. Yes, but when? The whole A. E. F. was going home some day.

Eddie faced the other way and looked at the wall of forest across the road. The last time he had been here he used to go into those woods every day and lie up under the pines until the hour for drill was over. It had been summer then and warm. The pines looked dreary enough now, dripping with rain and swaying in the wind. Still the sergeant had better be getting under cover, for a man standing about with no evident purpose would be the prey of the first officer that went by in search of some one to cut kindling wood or dig a latrine, no matter if the man had as many stripes as a zebra on his arm. Eddie turned and moved out of the gate to the road, where he stopped to consider the best route to take. "Get the h-1 back inside that gate!"

Eddie turned. There were two horsemen there, that, riding on the grass beside the road, had approached without his hearing them. They were armed with pistols and had rifles in their gun boots.

"Gwan!" snarled the man again. "G-d-d-n you get the h-1 back there! Where the h-1 you think you are, anyway?"

Eddie still looked at the two men. They were not military police, for they wore no brassards. They had campaign hats, with red hat cords, and must be a part of the permanent personnel of the camp. They had heavy, unintelligent faces and cruel mouths with tobacco-stained lips. One of the men spurred his horse toward the sergeant and kicked at him savagely with his spurred heel. Eddie turned and went back inside the gate. What good would it do him to stay in the road to resist those two brutes? The guardhouse, perhaps. Even suppose he hurried to rock at one of them, the other would shoot him down. "Killed by accident," the casualty list would read. A fine ending to a military career. The mounted men looked at him a minute or two and then rode on.

"They're a fine pair o' birds, ain't they?"

Eddie turned. Another soldier stood beside him, a red-faced man, older than Eddie, and this man also wore the campaign hat that marked him as a member of the camp personnel.

"Them kind o' guys are springin' up all over France," observed the man without waiting for Eddie's answer. "The war is over an' they ain't afraid of bein' sent to the lines any more. War is hell, but it ain't got nothin' on peace."

"Till you," agreed Eddie. "I've seen hard-boiled M. P.'s in my time, but I always knew that under his hard-boiled skin the M. P. was just a soldier trying to keep himself out of the guardhouse like the rest of us. But those two slave drivers! They're brutes, that's the word. Imagine Americans putting things like that to guard other Americans!"

"How long yuh been here?" grinned the other man.

"I've just come," said Eddie. "I was here last summer and went over the hill to get away, I'm going to do it again."

"Don't," said the other man eagerly. "The guys that's A. W. O. L. is S. O. L. now. The first thing they do when they catch yuh is to pass yuh a beatin'. There was a buddy o' mine that went up to Bordeaux an' hadn't more'n got off the train before they had him. He was in the Casino de Lias a month, luggin' rails all day. Then he got sent down here an' got three months more for bein' absent in Bordeaux. It didn't make no difference that he was in the mill up there; he was gone a month an' that was enough."

"Why, what do they do with the men here now?" asked Eddie.

"How long do they keep a guy here? They used to send up replacements every week, but they don't need replacements any more."

"They send wounded men here for classification," said the other.

"A guy gets sent back to his outfit. B gets duty in an office or gets a job in a camp like this, C gets convalescent camp, an' D gets sent home right off. Yuh'll be sent 'over' in 'n day or two if you come in yesterday. The doc looks 'em over."

"Suppose a guy gets D class, how long before he'd go home?"

"Oh," said the other, "if you got D now you ought to be home for Fourth of July. How long did it take to get the A. E. F. to France? Nigh to two years. How they gonna get 'em home any quicker?"

"I guess it's going to be a hard winter!" remarked Eddie sadly.

"It is that," agreed the other, "but if you got yuh in to get away an' get caught, I'll be lots harder!"

Eddie went back to the cold barracks. The huts were unheated and, in addition, open to any wandering breeze. The weather was just cold enough to be raw and uncomfortable, like a rainy day in late September at home. Men sat about on the double deck bunks, their hands plunged into their coat pockets and their heads sunk into their coat collars. They were all strangers, to each other and no one felt like making friends with his neighbor. Each wanted to be alone with his own black thoughts.

A meager dinner of slum began the afternoon. After dinner the well men marched sullenly away to drill and the sick, lame, and lazy stragglers to the cheerless huts.

The third day of his stay in Le Corneau Eddie was summoned to the company office and ordered to report to the hospital for classification.

"Suppose a guy is classified definitely," Eddie asked the clerk, "how long before he gets shoved out of here?"

"That depends on the classification. If he gets D or C he's liable to be here for some time."

"And A or B?"

"He gets sent out pretty soon," said the clerk. "We're always getting em home."

Eddie thought deeply as he tramped across the camp to the hospital. Desertion from the camp was impossible, he had made sure of that. The roads were patrolled by cavalry, the camp provost detachment, military police, and detachments furnished by the main guard. On the other hand, life in the camp was intolerable. It had been bad enough when he had been there the first time, but now the type of soldier had changed. Before, the men had been the average mercenaries rounded, from the Regular and National Guard divisions, volunteers, every one of them. Now the camp was filled with the scum of every nation on the face of the earth, the dregs of the famous American melting pot that the long arm of the draft had stirred up. There were heavy-jowled, stolid Greeks; round-headed filthy Russian Jews; Italians of the lowest sort, a crowd of men that scarcely spoke English, dirty, undisciplined, ignorant men who addressed the officer as "boss" and a sergeant as "Hey, Jack!" They lived and ate and slept like animals and the sight of them smacking and crunching their food would turn even a soldier's stomach. What then, could a man do? To go over the hill meant disaster, and to stay was impossible. Still, there might be a way. A man that could make his way through the woods at night in enemy territory ought to be able to elude a few police. But where to go? Where was the outfit? The outfit!

"I'm going back by G-d!" cried Eddie suddenly. "Why didn't I think of it before? He walked on more bravely. But could it be done? He was still very weak, he slept every afternoon and a walk from the barracks to the camp gate exhausted him. And how about home, where a man could take off his uniform and forget it all?"

"Nix," said Eddie aloud. "I'm a noncommissioned officer of the Regular army and wherever my bunk is, it's home to me."

He went into the hospital, into a large room full of men and he removed his clothes and the other men had. Three doctors stood in the circle of naked men, and the men went through various exercises, rising on their toes, extending their arms, bending down, all with the intention of displaying any loss of movement to the three doctors. Then the men leaped up and down in place for some time, and after that the doctors went about with stethoscopes listening to hearts and asking each man the nature of his wound. The doctor paused before Eddie and poked his sock with a stubby finger.

"What gave you that?" asked the doctor.

"Appendicitis," replied Eddie.

"Hmhm. They did a poor job on you. How do you feel?"

"Fine," replied Eddie.

"Want to go back to your outfit?"

"Yes, sir," replied the sergeant.

"Put him down 'A,'" directed the doctor, and went on to the next man.

A week at Le Corneau! Was there any hell of battle to be compared to it? No. But the week had passed and on the eighth day Eddie found himself acting first sergeant of a detachment of re-

placements for the Army of Occupation. They went away early in the afternoon in third-class cars and Eddie began his third journey to reason his battle. It was not like the old wartime trips, with a raincoat of shouting, singing soldiers full of red wine and getting fuller every time the train stopped with men falling out of cars and off the roofs and losing the train at stations and appearing at the nearest stop, having caught an express, and finally disappearing for good. No times had changed. Every station was guarded by an inflexible barrage of police. Where the tank cars full of red wine used to stand unguarded there were now railway employees still in the blue of the train, and wise to all the tricks of the soldiers. No more was there that rough bon camarade spirit, the "soldiers all and to h— with civilians," that Eddie had known. Every one was disgusted, every one begrudging every minute he spent in uniform. At Metz the Germans suddenly changed. The starchy French in civilian clothes and army overcoat that crowded the station platforms disappeared, and in their place appeared very snappy soldiers with bayoneted rifles, chasseurs alpins, tirailleurs, colonials in red hats, Senegalese, occasional British, and then, finally, Americans, alert, clean, well-dressed, shaven, shoes polished in spite of the mud, men to make another American weep tears of joy. Gone were the round heads, the curly heads, and the dirty heads. Americans, well-kept, in new, finely fitting uniforms. Eddie took off his overcoat and looked critically at his own salvage blouse and breeches. Well, he would be paid at the outfit and then he was going to buy himself a new uniform, from putts to cap.

"How come you wear two wound stripes, sergeant?" asked one of the men sitting in the compartment.

"I was wounded twice," replied Eddie coldly.

"Oh," said the other. The other men all grinned.

"It ain't nothin' to us," said a man in the corner, grinning, "only look out when you get to the outfit. I believe you got the doctor you had appendicitis."

The next day the train rattled through suburbs that reminded a man vaguely of St. Louis or Indianapolis, clattered over a great iron bridge and came to a halt. The place swarmed with Americans. It was Canton, the headquarters of the Army of Occupation.

"What's the next stop?" Eddie asked the driver.

"Brigade headquarters," answered the driver shortly.

They rattled through the streets and finally came out into the snow-clad country. Eddie turned up the collar of his overcoat and shivered.

"How's the soldiering here?" he asked.

"Tain't bad," replied the driver. "It's better'n it was in France. You a replacement?"

"No," said Eddie, "I was wounded."

"Where was you wounded?" demanded the driver suspiciously, so that Eddie gasped at his vehemence.

"Why, in the Argonne," answered Eddie, aghast. "At Montfaucon."

"Huh," grunted the driver, "you don't look it."

"Well, I was. I'll show you the wound if you want to see it."

"I don't want to see it," said the driver. "It ain't nothin' to me, but every goldbrick an' camouflage an' sick an' lame an' lazy glumstick that ever heard o' the Third division is comin' back now that the war is over. Lots o' beer an' frauleins in Germany, let's go, they say, and they come outta their holes where they been hid through the war an' comes back here with some line o' bull they was wounded or in hospital or somethin'. Huh!"

Eddie made no reply and the truck covered several kilometers.

"Another thing that riles me," said the driver, "is that these here Johns show up with their arms all plastered with wound stripes, and gold stars, and campaign medals on their chests and fourrageres and God knows what, and not a d—n one o' 'em rates any thing! Well, the provost marshal is out for 'em now. If a man ain't got an order for a stripe or a medal right in his pocket, he don't wear it."

"Listen," said Eddie. "What's the idea of popping off at me? I was wounded and back at the front again while you were still trying to make up your mind who the war was with. And I'm ranker sergeant of battery A of the Seventy-ninth and I can put any man in this division in the can, too. I was wounded right in back of the guns and the whole d—d First battalion saw me get it. Now! What do you think of that for gooseberries?"

"I wasn't sayin' nothin' about you," said the driver. "A man's got a right to speak his mind, ain't he? You got on two wound stripes, I seen 'em when you was puttin' on your coat. How the h-1 can a man get two wound stripes between July and November and still get back to his outfit at New Year's?"

"One o' 'em's for appendicitis," said a voice from the back of the truck.

The driver blew his horn and shifted gears for a long hill.

Brigade headquarters was in a small town, a clean, whitewashed, low-eaved place, where stiff-backed soldiers marched solemnly down the street, coming back from drill; stern sentries with bayoneted rifles were everywhere, and stolid Germans looked curiously at Eddie. He grinned back at them; they smiled and chuckled and bobbed their heads with delight. At brigade headquarters Eddie gave his name and they sent him with an orderly down the street to a ration dump, from which a truck was soon leaving for his battalion, quartered in a neighboring town.

Again Eddie mounted the driver's seat, again the truck grunted and banged its way out of town and through the snow-covered fields. Eddie was alone and the back of

the truck full of rations, so that his adding the seat did not proclaim him a noncom.

"What outfit yuh out of, buddy?" asked the new driver after a while.

"A," replied Eddie from his coat collar.

"Wounded?" asked the driver.

"No," barked Eddie, "I'm a replacement."

"Funny," commented the driver, "you look a lot like a sergeant outta A that got wounded."

They passed a field where a mounted band was formed on white horses. The leader's saber glittered.

"Regimental call, adjutant's call," the command came clearly across the snow. The saber dropped and the cold cry of the trumpets blared. Eddie's skin prickled. His hand! That was his outfit's band!

"You ain't off here," the driver said, slowing down the truck. "The P. C. is right down that street."

Eddie got down and then, pack in hand, looked around.

"By G-d, if it ain't him!" cried two voices simultaneously.

"I told yuh he'd never die," said a third. Eddie turned. Ham, Baldy and Short Mack fell upon his neck.

This December 13, 1927.  
THE WELDON SCOMPANY,  
Mortgagee.  
WELTONS & WELTONS, Attys.

**CERTIFICATE OF DISSOLUTION**  
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA.  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE.

To All To Whom These Presents May Come—Greeting:

WHEREAS, it appears to my satisfaction, by duly authenticated record of the proceedings for the voluntary dissolution thereof, by the unanimous consent of all the stockholders, deposited in my office, that the Hamilton Realty Company, a corporation of this State, whose principal office is situated at Smithfield, County of Johnston, State of North Carolina (Leon G. Stevens being the agent therein and in charge thereof, upon whom process may be served), has complied with the requirements of Chapter 22, Consolidated Statutes, preliminary to the issuing of this certificate of dissolution;

Now therefore, I, W. N. Everett, Secretary of State of North Carolina, do hereby certify that the said corporation did, on the 6th day of December, 1927, file in my office a duly executed and attested consent in writing to the dissolution of said corporation, executed

by all the stockholders thereof, which said consent and the record of the proceedings aforesaid are now on file in my said office as provided by law.

In testimony whereof, I have hereto set my hand and affixed my official seal at Raleigh, this 6th day of December, A. D. 1927.  
W. N. EVERETT,  
Secretary of State.

**NOTICE OF SALE**  
Under and by virtue of the power of sale contained in a certain deed of trust, executed by Jesse Davis and wife Civil Annie Davis, to The Wellons Company, on the 19 day of November, 1923, and recorded in Book 136, at page 14, of the Registry of Johnston county, default having been made in the payment of the same, the undersigned will sell for cash to the highest bidder, at the courthouse door in the town of Smithfield, N. C., on Monday, January 16, 1927 at 12 o'clock M., the following described real estate:

Beginning at a stake on the north bank of Mill Creek Rahson Bryant's corner; thence N 2° 78' poles to a stake; thence E 10 1/2° poles; thence N 2 E 76 poles to a stake, Willis Lassiter (now Tom Holl's) corner; thence his line N 85 1/2° to a stake, L. L. Hines' corner; thence his line S along the road to Mill Creek; thence down the creek as it meanders to the beginning containing about 26 acres, more or less. Same being part of the land devised to Sam Joynor by W. R. Joynor.

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A Strongly Built, Blue-Eyed Girl Appeared and Grinned at the Four Men.

started and the one we got was ruffin' to make us snap out of it. You'd never know some of the officers, they got so hard-boiled over night."

"It makes a difference with a guy when he knows that there's no chance o' some one's easin' a bullet into him in the excitement o' the fight!" remarked Baldy.

"It ain't bad now," said Ham. "Eddie, you're in luck. They're drillin' us as if they were gettin' ready for another war, but there's a new rumor out that we're goin' home, so maybe it won't last long."

"Eddie, you was always lousy with luck," remarked Short. "We used to think of you when we was hikin' through the cold rain, tired an' hungry, an' it gettin' dark an' the guns an' cartridges to wash an' horses to water before we'd get any sleep, an' you snug an' warm in a white bed holdin' a good-lookin' nurse's hand!"

Eddie grinned. It was warm in the room and he arose and removed his overcoat. Then he sat down in a chair, resting his arms on the table. The beer arrived, but no one drank. They were all looking at Eddie's sleeve. On his right cuff was the mark of stripes, such as one sees on the sleeve of a newly busted noncom. There were little bits of thread there, and a tear where the knife had slipped.

"You ain't wearin' no wound stripes?" questioned Ham, after an embarrassed pause.

"No," said Eddie, reaching out for a glass of beer. "This whole outfit knows I was wounded." He took a draught of beer and smacked his lips. "All you get by wearin' wound stripes is a lot of cheap conversation!"

[THE END]