

# FRONT-LINE NURSE

WILLIAM STARRET

## CHAPTER IX

Laura Blake, army nurse, after active service in New Guinea, is assigned to active duty in North Africa in an ambulance plane. One day she meets her fiancé, Lt. Jerry Donaldson, who has asked to be transferred from the South Pacific to North Africa in the hope of meeting Laura there. Jerry volunteers to fly an ambulance plane on a dangerous mission in enemy-held territory, and tells the major who had asked for volunteers that he also has a volunteer nurse—Laura Blake. Laurt accepts the assignment. They take off on their mission. Through skillful navigation and some luck—Jerry takes his plane through cloud-cloud-banked mountain passes and lands it on a pasture in a mountain valley—the right spot! French guerrillas welcome them. They set up an operating room in a big tent under the trees with Dr. Overton in charge.

"For how long a time must you have this fire?" he asked.

"For the time when I am operating," Dr. Overton replied. "Until I see the wounded men, I cannot tell how many operations will be necessary. I will do them all once—one after the other—just as quickly as everything is ready."

"We shall build the fire," the leader said. "Today there are low-hanging clouds. It will be unseen by any Boche airplane today. On another day, when it might clear—well, we shall see."

We may not need it on another day," the doctor said. "And now Nurse Blake, will you come with me? I will look at the wounded men."

The giant Frenchman then led Doctor Overton and Laura into the cave.

Several hours later, after Doctor Overton had completed his operations and the camp had somewhat quieted down, Jerry sat leaning against the rocks near the cave entrance. He munched hard brown bread and huge hunks of cheese which the Frenchmen had distributed; he did not feel hungry, but he ate because he felt that he should.

He was tired, and he shivered slightly as a cold evening breeze swept up and around the crest of the hill. He wondered how Laura was standing all this.

In the last few hours Jerry had gained a new admiration for her. Working steadily without a moment's rest, she had aided Doctor Overton in the operating tent under the glare of the gasoline lantern. The amputation of Major Compton's leg, dressing of wounds probed for shell fragments, giving blood plasma—one treatment and one operation had followed another!

Through it all, Laura had remained calm, efficient, anticipating Doctor Overton's every move without getting in his way—and still she never forgot to smile and say just the right word to the wounded men.

Doctor Overton appeared from the cave.

"How are they, Doctor?" Laura asked.

"All right," he said, but his voice did not sound so confident. Can't tell a thing about Major Compton yet, of course. And I keep wondering if I shouldn't have amputated that Britisher's arm."

"Lieutenant Smythe?" Laura asked. "But maybe it can be saved."

"I doubt it," Doctor Overton told her, accepting some bread and cheese from the French leader, who came up to him. "Thanks."

"When can we leave, Doctor?" Jerry asked. "In the morning?"

"Oh, no!" Doctor Overton said emphatically. "Not a chance. Why Major Compton can't be moved for several days. It would be absolutely fatal!"

"Several days!" Jerry exclaimed. "We can't wait that long."

"We must wait that long," Dr. Overton said. "After all, what did we come here for? To save these men if we could. Then, and only then, to try to get out with them."

"But every day we're here," Jerry protested, "increases our chances of being detected. The Germans have planes over here all the time. It looks as if we will be clear tomorrow for instance. And every day that the Germans are working away at that road block where the French blasted the rocks in the defile. They'll be getting through before long and—"

"I realize all of that," Doctor Overton said calmly. "But our first duty is to the wounded men. We must do what we can to effect their recovery. Then we must try to get out with them. If we can't—well, maybe we can get over to Switzerland. But there's no point in coming in here to operate, to treat these men, and in then being so eager to get them out that we kill them in doing it."

The next morning they awoke with the first light of dawn. Anxiously Jerry peered out and saw a clear blue sky. He swore softly, and the Frenchman at his side grin ned.

"I know," he said. "We do not like good weather, either."

They asked in the cold waters of a nearby mountain brook, and then Jerry took a pan of the water back to the plane. There he found a small can of tinned meat, which he lit and placed under the pan. When the water was hot he dumped into it two packets of a prepared coffee.

He and the guerrilla leader had their breakfast together. The Frenchman smiled delightedly over the coffee.

"We have had nothing like this for many months," he said. "They're probably having it up at the cave too!" Jerry said. "We brought in a couple of cases of army rations of various kinds."

Later they left the plane and Jerry gave the signals all the way back up the Roc d'Enfer. Along the way the Frenchman pointed out two or three small paths that branched off from the main way, telling Jerry where they led.

At the cave he found Laura and Doctor Overton making the rounds of their patients. When they had finished, Jerry asked Laura about Major Compton.

"Coming along well," Laura smiled. "Better than the doctor had hoped. But Smythe—the Englishman—his arm is worse. Afraid it will have to come off. Doctor hasn't decided yet."

"How about the others?" Jerry asked.

"All okay," Laura replied. "The blood plasma, right kind of food, and treatment have worked wonders."

"Let's take a little walk," Jerry suggested. "I know my way around here a bit now."

Laura stroked down the main path hand in hand. When they were out of sight of the cave they felt close, relaxed—together again as man and woman, not as pilot and nurse.

"What are you smiling about, Jerry?" Laura asked.

"Because I'm with you for a few minutes," he answered.

He stopped and put his arms around her. He kissed her and then simply held her close again without speaking.

There was no need to speak. They both felt the same things. They knew that underneath their outward calm, they were both tense with the danger of this mission. They were inwardly keyed up by the dramatic situation in which they found themselves. And for a few minutes it was important for them to feel a unity, from which each gained comfort and strength.

They walked on again, slowly. Jerry stopped. "Five hundred paces," he muttered. "Now you will have your proof that there is a var in these hills—even though you can't see it right now."

He whistled the signal he had learned from the guerrilla leader, and from up ahead and a little to the right, the answering whistle came back to them.

"If I didn't know that whistle," he said, "we might well have a few pieces of lead in us, as we went on. Even in these nice peaceful mountains."

They walked on again. Then Laura touched Jerry's arm.

"What was that?"

They listened intently. From far away they heard a low rumble, like thunder.

"Oh—I know," Jerry said. "I heard it this morning and asked, 'It's the Germans down at the defile, where the French blasted the road with the dynamite blast. The Germans are using dynamite to clear it again. They think they've got the guerrillas trapped here and they're working frantically to get through and kill them off!'"

"And they will get through!" Laura said. "What then?"

"When they reached the cave, Laura went inside. Jerry joined a group of the French guerrillas.

They asked him about his trip from North Africa and Italy and about the difficulty of landing on their pasture. They wondered if he would be able to take off with a heavy load.

"I don't know," Jerry told them. "I'm afraid that even with a good stiff wind against me to increase the lift, I'll nick those trees at the end of the field. If I just had about fifteen feet more, I think I'd make it."

"Ah—we can give you that," one of them cried. "We cannot do it now. The German observation planes would see our work and become suspicious. But before you will take off, then we if you tell us two or three hours can chop down many trees at the end of the field."

"In just a couple of hours?" he asked. "Can you cut enough trees in that time?"

"Twenty of us with sharp axes," the Frenchman replied. "We can cut down a great many trees in two hours. Let me be certain I understand. You do not need the ground clear and smooth there?"

"No," Jerry said. "I'm sure my wheels will be off the ground by the time I reach the end of the pasture. But I'm likely to only six or seven feet in the air at that point, with the heavy load I'll have. I need that additional space up in the air."

"That is what I thought," the guerrilla replied, as his friends nodded in understanding. "So we need only cut the trees a few feet from the ground, let them fall there. We do not need to remove the stumps, to drag away trunks and branches?"

"No, of course not," said Jerry feeling encouragement in this plan. "And the path doesn't have to be as wide as the whole pasture either. Only about thirty feet wide—I can hit that spot easily."

"Ah—then we can do that!" the Frenchman replied. "In two hours we can chop a path thirty feet wide and almost as long."

"That will give me thirty feet

more before I come to the tall trees!" Jerry exclaimed. "I think I can make it, then."

The Frenchman got up to speak to his leader about this new idea, and Jerry heard the voice of an Englishman at his side.

"Jolly good notion, that," the man said with a smile. "Wondered about getting off with a load."

"Another thirty feet will do it," Jerry agreed. "Are you a flier?"

"Yes," the man answered with a smile. "Flight Commander Blaiston. R. A. F. Happy to help as your co-pilot on the way out. I've handled these transports of yours before."

"Good!" Jerry exclaimed. "I'll be needing plenty of help at that particular moment. It will be a tough one. We may need a little handling of guns on the trip, too. The Nazis aren't likely to miss us completely on our return journey as they did on our way in. Handle a gun all right."

"Of course," the Englishman said. "We can all handle the machine guns. But here's our specialist in that field—Lieutenant Jerry."

Jerry greeted the lieutenant, who stropped up to join in the conversation. Jerry saw that his head was covered with bandages but that otherwise he seemed in good condition.

"Yes, I'm the gun man," he said. "You see, they sent in experts in various fields. Blaiston here for aircraft, airfields, and such, in case we found some way to use planes more. I'm the gun man—and they really needed one. These guerrillas have every kind of Prussian war, too, and captured German rifles and pistols, modern British and American rifles we've dropped to them, and some of our machine guns and sub machine guns. Even a good number of hunting rifles and shotguns in the crowd."

"Major Compton is the demolition expert," Blaiston took up the story. "Smythe the specialist in jungle fighting, and so on."

Jerry, in his talks with the Englishmen and others among the wounded who were able to be up and about, got to know them well and liked them. But he admired even more the French guerrillas.

Jerry, after lunch, went with a group of them around the network of trails over the top of the Roc d'Enfer. They showed him their pride—a path from the top of the hill that no one would ever suspect.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

A lamb grading and marketing program for Ashe, Alleghany, and Watauga counties has been planned, says Hazel Meacham, in charge of Extension marketing at State College.

Bees will not gather honey or pollinate crops in the most efficient manner unless the hive is large enough for them to develop a big family.

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# ABOVE THE HULL A BALOO

By LYTTLE HULL

## PUNISHMENT—NOT RETALIATION

Probably most Germans would like to quit before their country is completely destroyed. But this rather sensible sentiment does not apply to the members of the Nazi party. And why should it? Most of them have nothing to lose. They never owned anything! Many of them didn't even have jobs before they joined the National Socialist party. They were selected in the main from the very drags of German society—and that's going some!

When Hitler and his associates created their organization they tried to appeal to all classes. They promised relief to the hardpressed industrialist, to the confused politician, to the "man in the street" and to those who slink around the dark corners of the city slums. With illusory assurances, with brilliant propaganda methods and with emotional appeal Hitler won over a sufficient number of the German people to put him in office. From then on he "ran the town." He created a secret police force—the Gestapo—whose efficiency has never been surpassed and whose members were unhampered by human feelings. Picked undoubtedly from the lowest strata of a low and brutal element, these gorillas have sunk to about as deep an ebb as history records for human beings.

"Sadism" is a strange disease. It seldom attacks normal people. In the first place the seeds of this plague do not seem to exist in the people who lead a decent life; and secondly, normal, decent people seldom indulge in those pastimes which fertilize the seed. The bully who knocks down other boys half his size possesses the inclination and later usually becomes a sadist. The callous murderer is often one; some sailors who control the lives of others, but have no control over their own passions, can acquire this sickness—especially if they are sub-normal to begin with. Sadism is a mad craving to watch the sufferings of others, or to cause it. It grows rapidly with each act of cruelty.

The Gestapo started out by persecuting the Jews in a—by later standards—comparatively mild manner. Persecution followed persecution until it required cruel forms of murder to satisfy the cravings of these d-generates. The disease spread seemingly through the entire party; and literally millions of souls—pretty low to begin with—sank into a state of active degeneracy, or of a colousness which made possible horrors of the murder camps which we read about so frequently today.

It is ridiculous to advocate the destruction of 80,000,000 Germans in retaliation. We would sink to the same level as those we sought to punish, and destroy our own souls in the act. But it is not ridiculous to advocate the death penalty for those who are in any manner guilty of the crimes which have now been authentically verified: nor to recommend the use of several million members of the Nazi party for the reconstruction of the countries which they have ravaged. Slave labor is degenerating both to slave and master; but punishment of the guilty is a normal procedure without which society could not function.

## German Prisoners Assigned To Work

ATLANTA, Ga., July 4.—Approximately 9,400 German prisoners of war are held at 22 camp side camps in North Carolina and are assigned to work as needed to relieve the manpower shortage in agriculture, timber or industry under private contract or at Army installations for maintenance and repair, Major General Edward H. Brooks, Commanding General, Fourth Service Command, announced here today.

Using prisoners on private contract only when civilian labor is unobtainable and on Army installations to release American soldiers for other duties, or for jobs for which civilian workers cannot be found, the working prisoners are paid 80 cents a day in cancelled list of items obtainable, teen coupons—with a sharply curbed General Brooks explained. The prisoners are shifted under private contract as need for labor demands and in North Carolina they are working on farms at the present and will later work in the harvesting of various crops. They are also working in pulpwood and timber.

In North Carolina prisoners are held at the following camps, the number and assignment varying according to seasonal needs or work load requirements:

Ahoshie, 246, industry and pulpwood; Fort Bragg, 1,914, base camp; Camp Butler, 3,136, base camp; Camp Davis, 811, post maintenance; Camp Mackall, 432 agriculture and post maintenance; New Bern, 309, industry and pulpwood; Seymour Johnston, 382, post maintenance and industry; Camp Sutton, 365, post maintenance and pulpwood; Whitefield, 235, agriculture; Williamston, 500, agriculture; Wilmington, 549, agriculture and pulpwood; Winston-Salem, 266, emergency camp; Asheville, agriculture and industry.

Bessex class aircraft carrier when her planes battered Okinawa prior to the Marine and Army landings.

With other units of the Pacific Fleet, this ship sent out her planes in along series of scoops and strikes that blasted enemy aircraft, shore installations and shipping from the Ryukyu Islands to the Japanese homeland.

Veteran Pacific fighters aboard the ship consider the recent action among the severest of the war in the Pacific. Sometimes day and night were broken by only alert pauses for food and rest. Planes were fueled, armed, launched, then landed and at once prepared to fight again.

A country wide shortage of food containers of all kinds is reported by the War Food Administration.

# No More Proud Sight



ALL THE WORLD looks to The American Flag as the symbol of freedom from aggression and a guarantee that peace and righteousness shall prevail. This, official insignia of the Mighty Seventh War Loan, shows the raising of the flag on Iwo Jima by U. S. Marines. It is the picture that has been more widely used than any in this war, proceeds of which the AP donated to service relief.

## Baumgardner On Aircraft Carrier

ABOARD AN AIRCRAFT CARRIER IN THE PACIFIC.—Chas. Gene Baumgardner, ship's cook, first class, USNR, whose parents, Mr. and Mrs. John C. Baumgardner, live at 16 Lineberry Street, Lowell, N. C. was aboard this

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