

SOLDIER'S BEST FRIEND

"Left front! 400! Reference point: large rock on reef! To the right and at a greater range: light colored wooden box floating in water! In bursts of five, fire when ready!" Thomas, tensely hovering over his Browning, thirty calibre, water-cooled, heavy machine gun, needed no further inducement than Sergeant Lovett's shrill voice, which resounded over the lashing of the surf against the beach and the erratic but strong sea breeze, to show his skill in handling an automatic weapon. He quickly set his sight, swung the gun free traverse to the left in the general vicinity of the target, locked the traverse clamp, made a fine adjustment with the elevating and traversing knob, and lightly applied pressure on the trigger with his index finger.

"Up two! Left one!" barked Lovett again. Thomas made the necessary mil adjustment and again opened fire on the floating box. "C-a-s-e f-i-r-e," yelled Lovett above the rhythmical, staccato pounding of the deadly weapon. With the assistance of Jackson, the number two man, Thomas lifted the cover and removed the ammunition belt from the gun.

"Damn! good shooting, Thomas. You were on the target in six seconds," said Lovett. "That's all for today, men." Now let's spend the rest of the afternoon cleaning her."

Thomas affectionately lifted the forty-five pound weapon out of its pintal housing and carefully laid it on a shelter half that had been stretched out over the sandy beach. In his home in the Ozarks he had been around guns all his life; and,

although he had never seen an automatic before coming in the Army, he acquired mastery of it in short order. As he began to disassemble the gun, ^{But to make the quality direct} he thought, if only his friends from home could be here in Hawaii to observe the skill with which he manipulated this beautiful weapon. How proud they would be of him.

In a few seconds Jackson and the sergeant joined their comrade with the cleaning rod, patches, oil, and brushes. Jackson, because he had been raised in a city, was not quite as apt a gunner as his friend, but he was none the less eager and interested in learning the weapon. Their squad leader, Sergeant Lovett, had given his men the full advantage of his ten years service. He could quote the manual verbatim, he knew the machine gun thoroughly, and his high standard and persistent patience had made the members of his squad among the best gunners in the battalion.

"You know," said Jackson as the three men brushed, oiled, and laid the small parts of the mechanism in rows on the canvas, "this firing of weapons with live ammunition is the best part of Army training. For one reason at least, I am glad I was sent overseas. Back in the States all we did was simulate or fire blanks. Out here in a combat zone they sure aren't stingy with the training ammunition."

"Yeh," answered Thomas, "you can learn five times as much with live ammunition as otherwise. I feel as though I can handle a gun almost under any condition."

"Don't you guys get too cocky," chimed in Sergeant Lovett. "You have a great deal more to learn. Just stick to your daily drills until you know the mechanics and technique of the weapon blindfolded. Your dry run is just as important as firing with live ammunition. Remember, this is an effective

and deadly weapon if you know how to use it. I still learn something new now and then. You fellows keep reminding yourselves that one of these days you will be in combat and wondering how in the hell you got there, and the one thing that will save your hide more than anything else is to be able to handle your gun as though it were part of you, without even thinking about it."

Having thoroughly cleaned each part, the men diligently assembled the gun, placed it on a tripod, and covered it for protection from the weather.

HOUSE OF GOD

It was a typical sweltering and humid day in the tropics, but a light breeze, blowing in from the ocean, reduced, somewhat, the effects of the heat. The island had been secured almost two weeks. After the initial few days of resting and loafing, the soldiers, individually and in groups, began to disperse in all directions to areas of former enemy occupation either to hunt for souvenirs, or, as was my intention, to satisfy their curiosity and interest in a strange land so many thousands of miles from home. Pm

As I trudged up the long, sandy beach of Guadalcanal, I observed directly ahead of me a group of native dwellings just inside a coconut grove near the beach. Although the small village had survived the war without damage, there was no sign of life: the Melanesian natives either being uninformed or skeptical of the termination of hostilities. Approaching closer to the village, I distinguished one thatched-roof hut from the rest as their place of worship. Over the door was a crude, wooden cross. Pm

This was the first of numerous mission churches I was to see on my travels in the Pacific. These shabby Temples of the Lord were usually the natives' first encounter with Western civilization, and the best that the West could offer them: the Christian teaching of the love of fellow man.

I immediately walked toward the church. As I entered, I smelled a musty and damp odor, which was probably caused by the rotting of the woven grass and coconut branches which were used to waterproof the roof and walls. The area of the church was about seventy-five feet long and thirty feet wide. The floor was ground level and covered with sand. Except for a few pieces of driftwood that had been used in the construction of the altar and the small

(cont'd)

platform on which the altar stood, the shack had been constructed entirely from local vegetation. The framework was made from logs of young trees or sturdy pieces of bamboo. Overhead, below the roof, there were only crossbeams lashed together and to the ^{of the} rest framework by vines. There were ^{only} two unpainted, handmade chairs in the entire church: one probably for the missionary and the other for the occasional but rare visit of another white man to the village. Strips of woven mat were laid on top of the sand for the natives to sit and kneel on while attending services.

Because there were no windows in either the back or two side walls, the rear of the church was dark. This may have been intentionally planned by the padre to exclude all outside distractions from his flock. The front side of the church was semicircular in shape and had six huge windows through which the morning sun rays were showered onto the altar. The altar was the size of a small table; the sides were covered with matting; a tarnished, bronze crucifix and two ancient candlesticks were the only ornaments on it. On each side of the altar was a small stand on which stood two little plaster of Paris statues. One statue was of the Blessed Virgin Mary with outstretched arms of welcome, and the other of Saint Teresa, The Little Flower of Jesus, caressing a bouquet of roses in her arms. The colors of these two images were almost faded beyond recognition.

Standing there in the stillness of this awkward and crude hut, a feeling of solemnity and exaltation crept over me that was greater than I had experienced in even the most breath-taking ~~and~~ ~~element~~ cathedral I had ever entered. These primitive people in their unrefined way had been able to capture the same Godly atmosphere with this somewhat grotesque structure as the architects of the West have with their mighty edifices. In spite of all the great works of art, the culture, and the material beauty which it has in-

(cont'd)

inspired and encouraged over the centuries, Christianity is really
only a simple religion, for the commonplace, and the lowly man.

UNKNOWN SOLDIER

1000
Sitting on the edge of my hole fumbling with my rifle during a lull in the company's fighting just outside of the town of Rosaldo in the Philippines, I, like all idle soldiers, nosily gazed about me for some activity with which to detract my mind from the business ^{at hand}. Within a few minutes two eager young men plunked their mortar about six feet from me, and proceeded to go into action against a target designated by their platoon leader. From their conversation, I gathered that they were new men in the regiment and had been carrying their weapons across the Central Plain for several weeks without the opportunity of displaying their skill in employing it against the enemy. They went about their business with the laughing boyish enthusiasm for a new game, ripping the shells from their cases and dropping them into the barrel of the gun.

Without warning a volley of shells landed in the area. I was knocked into my hole by the concussion. Only when I was certain that no second volley was to follow did I peer over the edge of the hole. The smoke had not entirely dissipated from the area, and the stench of burned black powder was prominent. One shell had apparently made a direct hit on the mortar, as the two men lay slumped on top of their gun. One of the gunners had been killed outright, and the other was still alive, both of his arms having been cleanly severed between the elbows

and the shoulders. Within several seconds a bearded Infantry aidman rushed over, pulled the man off his fallen comrade, dragged him a few feet away, sat him on the ground, and leaned his back against the trunk of a tree. The aidman clumsily tore open his pouch, removed two large bandages, and nervously fumbled with them on the ends of the bloody stumps.

① As long as I live, I shall never forget the expression on the face of that lad ^(who could have been no older than nineteen.) ^(I believe of what had happened to him.) ② In spite of the suffering which he must have been undergoing, his jaws were not clenched, there was not a wrinkle or twist of pain on his face, not a tear in his eyes, nor a whimper from his mouth. ③ The back of his head was resting against the tree, quiet eyes peered out from a placid face on his benefactor and others within a narrow radius, and he held his battered appendages up and straight out to the front so that could be bandaged easier.

④ One could only imagine the thoughts that must have crossed his mind. Perhaps a chain of events of his life marched swiftly before him. ⑤ In spite of his outward serenity, I felt I could detect in his eyes a fierce internal struggle and a burning desire to go on living even with his handicap. ⑥ If there was any fear in him, none of us knew it. ⑦ The laughing boy of one minute was the mature, self-controlled man of the next. I have always believed that the most intense feeling of the waning soldier must be one of loneliness---for those beloved ones far away

who would be so deeply sympathetic and comforting to him. A glance at the apparently unsympathetic and staring, emotionless faces of those about the wounded man would seem to confirm this. Were not these men all really strangers to the wounded man and to each other in a situation like this? Were not the ones who really cared for each of them and for whom they really cared many thousands of miles away? Most of the spectators saw only in this battered object before them the pent up anguish and fear which each envisaged as his possible lot in the future---and so far from home. Then again, their practical minds told them that they would "go off their nut" if they let every little incident like this get them down; and after all, as their manuals told them, it is the alive and the well who must press the attack who should be our biggest concern.

⑨ This soldier, unknown to me, died before eight minutes had passed. One of his buddies and the aidman dispassionately removed his shelterhalf from his pack, securely wrapped him in it, and then laid the body along side the road where it would be seen and picked up by Filipino bearers. The troops moved on never more to return to that locale.

I can remember the names of many men who were close to me personally, whom I daily worked and played with; some of them died more violent deaths and some died more heroic deaths; but, when I think of our country's blood-sacrifice in this past war, I am reminded of the end and

Unknown to me
crowning point of this soldier's life who typified the
thousands of others who also faced death quietly and without
fuss.

Joseph J. Koonce
Joseph J. Koonce
Eng. 3 (16)
April 22, 1947
UNKNOWN SOLDIER
(Theme # 8)

Mr. Newlin

*Could you please
to me a letter
from the office?*

(Came to
Climax)

(Council
Counsel)

(Eminent
Imminent)

(Practical
Practicable)

(UR ban e
affable)

Joseph J. Koontz

Eng. 2W (16)
Nov. 26, 1946

NOCTURNAL VIGILANCE

Mr. Dickson

A
You couldn't find a better
subject for this assignment
and you best it very well,

NOCTURNAL VIGILANCE

Sensing that someone was hovering over me, my muscles tightened, and I opened my eyes. "It's midnight; take over," whispered Petersen, in a muffled voice. Feeling for my rifle, which was lying snugly against the right side of my body, I sat up in place. As I crossed my legs and laid the weapon across my lap, my right hand automatically glided along the wooden stock until it felt the metal safety and made certain that it was in a rearward, the off position. Rubbing the sleep, which I had never gotten, out of my eyes, I adjusted myself for two hours of guard.

Immediately at my left, could be heard the quiet rustling of a helmet, the scuffing of canvas, and the shifting of particles of dirt as Petersen turned and twisted about pulling a shelter half over his body and attempting to make himself comfortable in our two-man slit trench. Dead weight fell against the ankle of my left leg. My left hand reached out into the inky blackness and located the mud covered boots on Petersen's feet.

Running my hand along the edge of the parapet in front of me, I encountered a small, round, ~~and~~ cold chunk of serrated iron. Poking around some more, I found two others. I then laid them in a row on the parapet, the prickly cotter pin to the front and the flimsy tin release lever to the left. Again and again I reached out into the deathlike blackness of night to touch these grenades. I wanted to be certain of finding them in an emergency.

Worn face

For what seemed like hours, I stared out into the mute darkness about me, but could perceive absolutely nothing: that is nothing other than numerous, slinking, shadowy figures, a figment of my mind's eye, which grew more daring and numerous the harder I strained. The dead silence was broken by a series of deep reverberating reports of guns to my rear. I counted to myself, "One, two, three, four, five," and my body instinctively leaned forward into the hole as a gesture of self-protection as shells went screaming and screaming over at what seemed just a few feet above my head. I counted again, "One, two, three," and heard the familiar and pleasant crashing and crunching bursts of friendly shells as they tore into the woods of the First Battalion zone on the other side of the valley. Then there was quiet. On the one end the gunners would probably be taking a break over a hot cup of coffee and talking over the familiar subject of when they would be rotated back to the States. On the other end, there might be men, caught out of their holes by the thundering harassing fire, who were wreathing in pain, some perhaps taking their dying gasp, as their comrades dragged them back to cover.

*Keep it
impersonal,
unsentimental*

For a while dead silence again reigned. Suddenly, I was startled by a ^{sp}scurrying about and the cracking of twigs in the underbrush to the front. I grasped my rifle firmly by the small of the stock. Clicks of safetys to my right and left gave me assurance that what I had heard this time was not a product of my imagination and that I was not alone in this terribly quiet wilderness. Holding my breath and huddling low into my hole so that anyone approaching me would be sil-

houetted against the sky, I waited, heart pounding. The tenseness of the moment was broken by the short, deep explosion of a grenade and the high pitched staccato-like rapping of an automatic weapon far down in the bottom of the valley. "More than likely the E Company roadblock," I thought.

"Probably those damn' land crabs," whispered Petersen in an almost inaudible tone as he sat up alongside of me. Just hearing his voice soothed and relieved the rigid stiffness of every muscle and nerve in my body. It occurred to me that Lieutenant Johnson was certainly right when he said that two men are eight times as brave as one.

"Can't you sleep?" I asked. "No," answered Petersen. "Let's sit up together for a while."

Joseph J. Koontz
 Joseph J. Koontz
 Eng. 2 (16)
 Nov. 5, 1946

Professional Soldier

Mr. Dickson

If one has to use quotes
 around slang etc it is a
 good reason why it should
 not have to be used

A-

An excellent paper.

I would not try to cut it -
 a subject like this requires
 and deserves full treatment

When you have time, would you
 make me a copy of this?

- I underline where would
 normally italicize
- I use foreign phrases to
 express something that
 cannot be expressed in
 Eng.
- II normally underline for
 separate title of
 newspaper, magazine.
- IV Poem or short story
 enclosed in quotes
- I no quotes on Trade names
- VI Slogan, quotes.
- VII accurate statement rather
 than impression writing (became
 some and but)
 1) Use of wrong conjunction
 2) Comparison of pronouns
- IX Think straight rather than
 rules of grammar.

Then
 Then
 Principle
 Principle

Damn!

PROFESSIONAL SOLDIER

"All right men, unsaddle and take a break for a few minutes. I just talked to the colonel of this regiment and we have permission to stay here with his outfit tonight. We'll leave early in the morning, bypass the enemy resistance at Zieta, and report to our own C O." On hearing from Sergeant Lewis that they would not have to complete the last lap of their mission ^{that same day} ~~today~~, five weary riflemen flopped down and contentedly sprawled out on the New Georgian jungle floor. These infantrymen had just returned from a reconnaissance patrol in enemy territory, in which they had spent most of their time eluding Nips in a mangrove swamp. Lighting up a few of the precious cigarettes they had in their possession, they proceeded to recount their trying and dangerous experiences.

X Around the bend of the trail there appeared a soldier with a carbine slung across his back, who walked with a slow, but steady and determined pace into the bivouac area where several scores of soldiers were cleaning weapons, individually cooking rations, or, like the reconnaissance patrol, resting on the ground. He was dressed no different ^{from} ~~than~~ any of the other troops. His filthy, green combat uniform, in which the sleeves and pants legs were rolled up above the elbows and knees, uncovered thin legs and arms; the undershirt, visible through the opened jacket, was caked with three or four weeks of dirt and sweat; the sunken-in face, covered with three months growth of red beard, bore the strain of as many months of exhaustive combat. But the man's head was still high, and piercing, stab-

bing eyes looked straight ahead just as if they, like their owner, knew where they were going, and when, and why, and how.

A hush settled over all within sight. All eyes turned toward him. "There's Dalton, the best damned soldier in this man's army," whispered Ghaidez, a Mexican scout, to his comrades in the reconnaissance patrol, as they turned their attention toward the newcomer,

"Where's your commanding officer?" said Dalton in a low, mild voice. Several soldiers scurried off in different directions. Months of training under this frail looking man had impressed on each of the men serving under him that his soft-spoken voice was no indication of the degree of promptness with which he expected obedience to his orders.

Here was a man who could be both hated and feared, respected and admired ^{alike} by the same person. And such was the general feeling of the great majority of his men toward him.

Amherst { Back of his quiet manner was a ^{ruthless} determination ~~to the point of~~ ^{even} ruthlessness to have ~~carried out~~ ^{properly executed} the most minute details of his instructions. The full avalanche of every punishment that military law allowed a combat commander fell upon those subordinate ~~officers~~ who negligently, hesitatingly, or disobediently performed their fighting missions. The longer the fighting lasted, the tougher the enemy resistance, the greater the American casualties, the more determined became Dalton. His unit commanders were driven relentlessly in an attack, ^{a series of} ~~at what seemed~~ ^{then felt that they were expected to exceed the point of} ~~to them to be beyond the point of human endurance.~~ The wrath ^{human} ~~of the gods~~ bore down on any defeatist, and his commanders ^{endurance} feared more than the lethal bullets of the enemy, the piercing eyes and reprimanding tongue of their superior.

Dalton was one man who could sap the last ounce of fight, or even blood, from his men and still maintain one hundred per cent discipline and control of his unit. He not only lived the life of a front line rifleman, eating, dressing, and sleeping no better than they, but sought the most active and dangerous sectors of the front for his personal surveillance. Under the most devastating poundings of enemy mortar, artillery, or machine gun fire he had nerves of steel. Where he appeared on the field of battle, there also appeared an atmosphere of calm and resolution even in the most vicious and bloody engagements. He personally led patrols and directed assaults on enemy emplacements. His personal courage was without equal.

Partly phrased

"The times the old man should have been killed," was the talk of his troops. *A frequent topic of conversation of his troops was The "Times" ---*

And yet, when a mission was accomplished, or a campaign terminated, "Dusty" Dalton was given his due credit for success in the small-talk gatherings in all ranks. He did not dilly-dally; he was their leader, a man of action. Had not his persistent driving and brilliant tactics brought each battle to a speedy and successful conclusion with the least loss of life? As severe as were his orders, he asked nothing of his men that he was not prepared to do himself.

Not sure about man; too fully not hesitate,

In spite of his apparent sternness and ~~sometimes harsh~~ one could detect, at times, glimpses of a man with a sensitive and kind heart as he would sincerely listen the problems of one of his men, as he in his usual arbitrary manner saw to it that the welfare of his troops was satisfactorily administered, or as he bowed his head in prayer at Sunday morning church services. In short, General James Dalton was a man with a pro-

frequent harshness like an adj.

Seemingly harsh manner

4

found and uncompromising sense of duty. His character was the product of a lifetime of self-discipline, in which he strove to make his actions parallel what his conscience told him was right and what was wrong. In his ~~ceaseless~~ ^{effort} ~~of being~~ ^{to be // to make of him} what he

*this sentence
important
as it is dis-
rupts the
chronology
of the narrative
& makes it hard
for the reader to return
to the time of the
next P.*

thought a man and a leader should be, his life was snuffed out by a well aimed enemy bullet through the temple two years later in Luzon.

Within a few minutes the messengers returned with their colonel and guided him over to General Dalton. The two men carried on a quiet conversation interrupted only by occasional sharp orders of the colonel to the members of his staff who hurried off in all directions to organize and execute the instructions of their commander and his superior.

As the reconnaissance scouts disinterestedly watched all the activity about them from their comfortable position, they observed the colonel nod his head in their direction while talking to the General. In a few seconds a runner came over and said, "Sarg, the General wants to see you." Lewis left his patrol and reported as ordered. After a brief conversation in which only the final and emphatic "Yes sir!" could be heard by his men, the sergeant hastened back. "All right! On your feet and saddle up. The General says we have information which our C O should have tonight, and we are to make a forced march to our regiment this afternoon," barked Lewis as if to put the damper on the inevitable grumbling and dissatisfaction. "The dirty son of a bitch wants to kill us all," muttered Chaidez under his breath as he struggled with his pack.

Dear Mr. Dickson,

Kindly excuse this lengthy theme. I did not realize the extensiveness of my subject when I started the theme. However I went ahead and tried to paint a picture of this man as I saw him, rather than limit myself and wind up with either a fictitious man or an inaccurate or incomplete description of General Dalton.

Jos. J. Koontz