

# The Vanguard American

Published monthly by  
*The Vanguard Guild*  
Kimballton, Iowa  
Holger J. Koch, Editor

Vol. II. No. 10

Subscription Price \$1.00 per year

OCTOBER, 1946

## Half a Prayer

By ESTHER HARLAN.

From the low stone balustrade that guarded the roof of our Old-city house in Allahabad the pageant of the motley throng below was one of endless interest.

Not too far above them to distinguish many of those who lived in the nearer streets and oftenest passed our threshold, we had sometimes noticed a small pink-swathed figure trudging along in the dust, a flat shallow bamboo tray of sweets balanced unsteadily above it. And because it never paused at any doorway for a word of gossip or greeting, we decided the child must be a stranger in the district, and wondered from what quarter she might have come—it was more usual for sweet-sellers to frequent streets where they were known and had regular customers.

Now and again a little brown arm would reach up to fend the precious khumcha-load from jostling crowds. The voice that rose intermittently from under the tray's rim was only a quavering childish treble, though it tried valiantly to compete with the babel of sounds throughout the narrow crooked thoroughfare, calling its wares:

"Rawari! Pera barfi! Jelabi! Mitthai!"\* again and again.

We had often wished some chance movement might afford us a glimpse of the face beneath the broad tray.

It was because, from the beginning of our leisurely wayfaring through unfamiliar lands, we had found most worth while some occasional revealing insight into other lives, but rarely befalling the traveler on the beaten track, that we had sought, rather, the less frequented paths and byways, and had chosen for our sojourn here this oldest section of old Allahabad — old even when Babylon and Thebes were young; whose name means the Abode of God, and whose foundation-stones were laid before history began, by those legendary adventurers of the Ramayana and Mahabharata—India's Illiad and Odyssey—who loved above all this point of land at the coming together of the two great rivers, Ganges and Jumna. And where life is still

lived for the most part, after the same thought-patterns that wrought those ancient legends.

Chance acquaintances to whom we had previously spoken of this Old-city plan of ours, had been quite horrified and told us appalling tales of filth and infection and nerve-racking sights and sounds that would beset us there. Much of which we had indeed found true. For inevitably, of course, our own first impression of it all was through western eyes, and gauged by western wont—such conditions, we were forced to admit, would preclude any but the briefest of sojourns. But we had wanted to be able, as well, to see it somewhat also through the eyes of those whose daily life it was, life-long, and who found it tolerable—now and again, indeed, perhaps even richly, deeply significant and precious!

And now, years later, from the tonic, far-horizoned heights of quiet western hills, as we look back over those noxious days of dust and heat, malodorous and noisome, we yet regret no single hour of it, and find those incidents we shall always be glad to remember, still by far the easiest to recall.

A little preliminary exploring had discovered a two-story stone house—unique in that locality, sole of its kind there, then—that we might engage by the week for the equivalent of fifteen cents a day. It was on a street called Kursal Parbhat which, we learned, meant Mount of Joy, and had an interesting legend all its own, though now it was only a dingy little alley-way, flat, unpaved, and scarcely a dozen feet at its widest between the clay huts that huddled on both sides of it. Only an old well under a huge spreading neem tree at the farther end, where it widened somewhat toward the chowk, remained of its ancient order and prestige.

By great good fortune, the enclosed court and all the floors and walls of our stone house's four rooms as well as its flat roof were hard-surfaced, and could be given gener-

\*) The names of different kinds of sweets for sale.

ous disinfecting sluices (fraught also with some beguiling fragrance!) as thoroughly and as often as our occidental olfactories found reassuring.

That roof was our chief joy. There we slept under the stars, watched the heraldry of dawn's miracle-hours crest cloudless eastern skies; or at the edge of night a crescent moon and a single star in the wide cloudless west above the swift plunge of a tropic sun over the purple rim of the world. And there we watched the myriad-phased warp and woof of the Old-city's daily life.

Passing the neem tree well one day, we happened to notice among the chattering water carriers, a little heap of dingy pink huddled on the broad stones of the curb, a half-emptied khumcha beside it. We moved nearer. Under the pink cowl we could glimpse the eager wistful face of a child of eight or nine, perhaps; deep-set dark eyes intent on a small boy trying to disentangle his kite-string from the branches of the tree above.

His fragile treasure rescued at last and spread carefully on the flat curbing, the boy knelt down to mend its torn fabric.

On every side women came and went with their earthen jars and shining brass lotas brimming with water drawn from the well. Dust and the cries of street vendors filled the hot air; bullock-carts, camel-teams, streamed past, toward the chowk beyond; donkeys and goats with sacks of bricks strapped to their backs stopped to drink at the gutter below the well. Owner of kite and of khumcha, each absorbed in the moment's concern, were oblivious of it all. And the kite-mender—he was winding up his thread now, in a moment he would be gone—might no doubt have continued oblivious also of the dark eyes so earnestly regarding him, but for their small owner's swift decision (woman-wise!) to wind a tiny thread of her very own in the web of chance fortune—the frail, sole thread in all her little world, within her timid reach in this precious poised instant! She moved nearer, hesitantly, along the stone curbing:

"My mother—my mother lets me eat a jelabi out of my khumcha every day when I come to the well for a drink. But today—today I am not—not very hungry . . ." She pushed one of the pretty confections—(of ghee and sugar, like frost and sunshine when fresh, but now, alas! distressingly dust-laden!)—over the brim of the tray. Startled, the boy backed away, his eyes questioning, apprehensive—had he ever seen this particular sweet-seller before? But at least there was nothing uncertain nor to be feared about a jelabi! He sidled a step nearer, his lips reminiscently savoring, eager. Then a grimey hand shot out to the khumcha, the sweet crumpled up, disappeared, in one delectable mouthful! Tongue thriftily retrieveing every crumb from lips and chin! And then, without a word—he gathered up his kite and walked quickly away.

Another sweet-seller, a fat man with an echoing voice, came shouting his wares through the crowds. The little pink patch on the well-curb, starting up as from a dream, as if for a moment the workaday world had slipped from her ken and she had wandered off into some wonder-world of rainbowed tomorrows, climbed wearily down from the stone steps, balanced the dusty khumcha again on her head, and moved on down the street, the piping voice calling out dutifully about the jelabis that remained.

A few days later—one evening when the new moon

hung low over the sunset, we were returning from a jaunt of foraging for quaint trinkets, and came again upon that small pink figure, motionless before a wayside shrine in a deserted by-way, the khumcha empty of all but a single jelabi. We remembered having been told that "a jelabi-offering is as the prayer of the hungry for food." and that all devotions under this particular new moon would be "as fragrance to the gods who during this whole night do not sleep but bend lovingly over the earth, listening to the beating of the hearts of men."

Despite all our practical modernity, how could we help falling a little under the spell of this still lyric vision of so arid a world; and—yet deeper—sensing somewhat of the miracle of this abiding faith in the face of whatever odds—the poignant beauty of this dauntless trust in the immanence of unseen powers, of hovering, enfolding presences, that ns, indeed, of the very weft and texture of the hard-pressed lives bred of this patient soil? However clumsy, crude, misguided, to our carping eyes might seem the symbols by which that faith endured!

The rude shrine was quite open to the street, and small—just a few feet of stone flooring, rough stone pillars, whitewashed, but gray now with the dust of rainless months, supporting a dilapidated thatched roof. A brindle calf lay asleep on the broad step. Unaware of any audience in the distance, the pink sari leaned wearily against one of the squat stone columns, a handful of flowering weeds beside it. Then suddenly it crumpled up in a little heap of sheer misery, sob after sob stifled in the dusty folds of the single scant garment.

Our eyes questioned, each the other's, whether to risk wounding a sensitive reserve, or bide our chance of some less tragic opportunity? As we hesitated, out of sight in the shadow of a sprawling tree, the child raised her head, gathered the flowers up tenderly, kissed them, her tears like dew on their petals, and spread them on the whitewashed altar. Then she picked up the jelabi, looking at it closely, intently, for a long moment. The small brown face seemed less round than when we had seen it at the well. Presently the jelabi too was laid on the lap of the low shrine, and a prayer was said over folded hands, forehead to earth.

And then, cheeks still wet with tears, a despairing little wail of stark need broke the stillness: "O mihrban Man zamin hawa bare darye ke! Main be-chara hun! MAIN BE-CHARA HUN!"\* A brown hand reached swiftly up to the altar again, an eagerly devouring small mouth took a generous mouth-filling bite out of the offered jelabi—only a crushed half was returned to the niche in the whitewashed stone slab.

With mutual understanding we followed at a distance as the pink sari turned from the shrine, homeward—on and on, almost to the far edge of the Old-city itself. As we neared some scattered earthen huts toward which the child made her way, monkeys chattered around a tree at whose base a few grains of rice had been placed on a stone—"an offering to the gods;" a huge brown glistening snake writhed inquiringly out to the end of a drooping limb and blinked solemnly down at us as we paused, screened by a thicket of thistles, still undecided as to what our next step should be; still a little dubious, indeed, as to

\*) "O loving Mother of earth and air and the great rivers. I can't help it! I CAN'T HELP IT!"

the wisdom of this unconsidered impulse to which we had yielded . . .

Withes of bamboo and half-finished mats and khum-chas were strewn untidily about the low broken doorway into which the pink sari turned at last. Queer gray-headed crows cawed drowsily from the dust-laden trees above, two furtive long-legged pi-dogs like lean wolves slunk away into the shadows. A cow peered around the corner of the mud hut, craned her head about, sniffed in our direction with mild interest as we moved a few steps nearer, a cloud of flies and mosquitoes starting up from her back and neck as she turned.

In a moment the pink sari came again to the door, gentle brown hands patted the cow's brown face and gathered up a few bamboo leaves to offer her. Catching sight of us then, the child-eyes grew wide with astonishment, apprehension, fear. What were white strangers doing here at such an hour? Had they come to pry, and meddle, and blame?

We were glad our faulty Hindi could yet be made sufficiently intelligible to explain our harmlessness, and proved adequate, too, for our understanding of the story little Bitti gradually made clear to us. Last summer, we learned, "the mercy" (in the guise of Sitola, goddess of smallpox, first of the Seven Dread Sisters the youngest of whom is Pansa, goddess of measles) had come to their home that was then nearer the city, and had taken both father and elder brother.

In this land of vast still spaces, month upon month of cloudless, unchanging skies, heat baffling human endurance, mountain height and jungle fastness defying human endeavor, it was natural that the superhuman and inscrutable should be personified with vividness. And since those earliest of all times when power was in the hands of the mothers of India, and men were at best but their strong and courageous children, administration of justice taking the form of curse or blessing by the gray-haired village woman, the divinity sensed in whatever is terrible and irrevocable is still conceived as a "Great Mother." The baffling power manifest in the fire and wasting of a fever is called her "gift", "the mercy,"—mysterious, incalculable, to be placated, entreated, endured.

Since "the mercy" had taken their bread-winners, little Bitti and her mother, Sunda, who joined us now—a tired, thin woman in a colorless, unwashed sari, timid, baffled, frightened of life, fearful of what every tomorrow might bring—these two by dint of sweet-selling and mat-making and the sale of the elder of their two cows had contrived to eke out the means of their daily needs, since they had come to live in this distant section.

"It is not clean here, I know that," Sunda sighed, "when we first saw strangers nearby, we thought you had come to tell us how bad it all is and to blame us. But I am so tired, so tired! Even when I wake in the morning, I am still so tired. I must go a very long way to get any bamboo, and then I must work so fast all day to get any mats made—how can I keep it clean? I have no strength left any more . . ."

And now the grass in the jungle was dry and scarce. The milk of this remaining cow scant and poor, hardly enough for them to share a little of it themselves, after the necessary sweets had been made daily. And yet they had never forgotten to put at least a few drops in the

brass dish out there, for the "family snake" that lived in the neem tree, for "one never knows in what form the gods may choose to come."

(That fat loathsome creature that had leered down at us, no doubt! These pitiful ill-nourished humans, their sacrificial souls so pathetically blind to the very absurdity of their self denial! . . . And yet—after all, might it perhaps be our own vision that had been unduly clouded by hasty censure of such oblation as but farcical and futile? For courage in whatever cause can never be absurd! Nor in the long reckoning wholly without avail! To whatever creed one's own loyalty belongs, there is a fraternity in fine action, human-wide. Unbidden, even the quickened pulse itself pays homage to nobility of spirit, the self-forgetfulness of a soul vouchsafed, in whatever-wise, a sense of the divine. "Forever the way of courage is as the highway of the gods, and oftenest knows the benediction of their footsteps." The snake, fat or thin, was a mere incidental; quite irrelevant, indeed. It was sheer courage—that offering of milk symbolized daily, a courage of faith that refused to flinch in the face of whatever stark fact, whatever threatening hazard! In contrast, for an instant, our own life seemed barren of any valiant grace, stranger to all adventure and high emprise of heart!

(Yet, usual, unvarying, as the shuttle of day and night, seedtime and harvest, the ways of the moon and the stars, these faith-ways and thought-ways are wonted throughout this old, old land, however custom-ridden and hidden, tradition-warped and misshapen. Little children hear this talk of the coming and going of great presences as soon as they hear anything at all; as they drink their own warm milk night and morning from the cow who is their "big sister," they watch their mother set aside a small portion—sometimes so pitifully small a portion it needs must be!—for the chance pilgrim who may come to the door—since "it is oftentimes in this-wise also, that the gods walk the earth." Or, as they fall asleep in their mother's arms, listening to the chanting of ancient mantras in the moonlight about the village shrine—mantras rhythmized earlier than any annals of the race, or whose memorized cadences the hopes and longing of countless generations of humankind have uprisen from this tragic land—even in their mothers' arms these childish minds are graven with the heraldry of prayer . . .)

But all this time our thoughts had been on pilgrimage, we had been talking with these new friends of ours, listening to all they seemed eager to tell us. And now we must bid them goodbye—night was coming fast, we must not linger any more among these shadows of storied yesterdays; perhaps we would even have difficulty in finding our way back to the city again—

"I prayed only half a prayer, with half a jelabi," Bitti said softly, as if but thinking aloud, "yet the gods answered whole! Even the big-sister will have enough to eat now, till the rains come again, because of the gift you have put by our neem-tree's pilgrim-place for us . . ." (and yet reckoned in the coin of our own country, it was little indeed that we happened to have left in our purses to give, but our emptying of them there on the broken slab of stone was a whole-hearted happiness for ourselves, a warm, abiding joy) ". . . and oh! I can—I can even give Mohan another jelabi, if I see him again at the well!" she chattered

(Please Turn to Page 6.)

# From the Maine Coast

By Blanche Dow.

## I

Black rocks, gray-ribbed with granite,  
 Joined with quartz,  
 Sun-warmed, sea-washed;  
 Fragrance of fir and hemlock from the land,  
 Sweetening the strong salt tang of ocean;  
 Dark green of bayberry in the tight set stones,  
 Scent of crusted leaves,  
 Of clinging blue-gray berries fat with oil;  
 This rock-bound coast is warm with summer:  
 Every wind from shore  
 Has swept the wooded garden of the hill,  
 Imbibed its breath of odors clear and strong,  
 To merge them with the freshness of the sea,  
 Pungence of pine,  
 Cool fragrance of the fern,  
 And like a wine that's vintaged in the sun  
 The rich fruit smell of blackberry and beach  
 plum;  
 The waves contend against the ragged shore,  
 Rough in their ocean play, unmeasured in their  
 strength,  
 And with a loud exuberance  
 Leap high into the air  
 Released against the rocks in foaming freedom.

## II

This was a promised land  
 To those grave Pilgrims who sailed out from  
 home,  
 Preferring dangers of a world not known  
 To prisonment of spirit and of mind.

How many aching hours they must have  
 strained  
 To catch the first glimpse of a rising sun  
 Upon a stalwart shore!  
 Sick with discouragement and out of heart,  
 Alone upon that turbulent expanse,  
 How tortured must their minds have been with  
 doubt!  
 Was freedom worth the sacrifice of ties,  
 The loss of comfort and the tranquil ways  
 That seasoned modes of living ever breed?  
 What of their own capacities?  
 Achievement is so limited by time,  
 Would they live long enough to raise their  
 homes,  
 To plant their seed,  
 To tame a wilderness  
 By fixing in it faith,  
 And law,  
 Fair-minded and concerned  
 For all who constitute the governed,  
 And, against the future, learning,  
 Knowledge, the will to keep  
 Through time undying  
 The noble sum of what the race has done?  
 Doubt passed with night;  
 Came one bright day  
 They cleared the ocean mist  
 And saw the land.  
 Rock reefs stretched sturdy passage for their  
 feet,  
 Green spires of forest laced the shining sky,

A hemisphere gave welcome;  
Their courage answered it with deep conviction.

## III

We are those Pilgrims' sons  
Who too have sought a promised home;  
Deep in our veins there flows  
The course of that they willed to us,  
Unsparing and immortal.  
Three hundred years have failed to dim  
The brightness of their vision for the land;  
That vision holds, and still will hold  
Unless we willing blind our eyes against the  
light,  
Distract our minds with empty, shifting winds,  
Lose their clear way in shallows and in night.  
There's nothing new in danger:  
It is a constant,  
As much a part of each man's journeying  
As tides are of the ocean;  
But only ignorance or mad caprice  
Would disregard the tides:  
Each crashing wave reverberates with battle,  
Fogs thicken,  
Unknown currents swell,  
The sea bears threat of doom.  
These rugged rocks that once were stands of  
strength  
Today we villify as hard and sharp,  
Tearing the feet,  
Their climb not worth the passing pain of  
effort;  
Will yields to opulence,  
And mind to ease,  
Breeding dull idleness

And ultimate decay.  
Suave poisons sweet as honey to the tongue  
Infect the cup, cloud it with bitter lees,  
But still—today the cup is sweet  
And avid hands are stretched for it  
Intent on tasting.  
Enamored at the external ways of youth,  
Its facile movement,  
Its unthinking change,  
We grasp the transient isms of the hour  
Without analysis,  
Without the critic's test,  
Disciples of the new without reason,  
Or, if we cite a reason,  
Base artifice or sharp expediency.  
Like summer playboys on a pleasant sea  
We loose our sails regardless of direction,  
No mind to winds, no eye fixed on the sky,  
To sight the fleecy omen of the squall,  
Refuse to think beyond the moment's magic  
Until the mad blow strikes.  
Then while the green waves rise,  
And the deep heaving swell  
Sucks down our craft  
Like a poor prawn  
Caught in the claws  
Of some great oscillating crab,  
We scan our crew to find a sailor,  
One who does not treat our sailing carelessly,  
Who knows the rule of compass and of chart,  
Studies the cloud,  
Hears the full voice of ocean,  
Who knows to reef and tack,  
To fix the jib and release the boom,  
Who meets the coming storm,  
Provisioned for its onslaught.

## IV

We must have leaders  
 Clear in thought  
 And sane in judgment,  
 Who never have forgot  
 The purpose of the Pilgrims  
 And the long charge they left to us.  
 We must have leaders  
 Who stand erect before the open door  
 Of time which stretches like a continent,  
 Self pledged unto that vision of the future,  
 A future made for man,  
 Not nations, states, nor vast majorities,  
 But man, the race:  
 He must be free to educate his power,  
 Strong to his work, despising weariness,  
 Intent that every goal achieved  
 Shall serve the purpose of the total man;  
 Faith is one bulwark of the growing dream,  
 Belief in God,  
 However one conceive Him,  
 And law  
 And learning are two others.  
 The future holds and draws,  
 The structure grows.  
 We workers hold the promise in our hands;  
 Ours is to build the greatness that may be  
 When will is tempered by humanity.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Ritual, art, poesy, drama, music, dance, philosophy, science, myth, religion, are accordingly all as essential to man as his daily bread: man's true life consists not alone in the work activities that directly sustain him, but in the symbolic activities which give significance both to the processes of work and their ultimate products and consummations. There is no poverty worse than that of being excluded, by ignorance, by insensibility, or by a failure to master the language, from the meaningful symbols of one's culture: those forms of social deafness or blindness are truly death to the human personality. For it is through the effort to achieve meaning, form, and value that the potentialities of man are realized, and his actual life in turn is raised to a higher potential." — Lewis Mumford.

## HALF A PRAYER

(Continued from Page 3.)

on, "we used to live near where he lives, but he is growing big so fast—I think he doesn't remember me any more. But I remember all the plays he used to play with me—that is why I like to give him my jelabi. But NOW, I can even have one for my own self too, at the same time, and we can eat them together! I am so happy!" The thin little face was radiant despite its weariness. "O, if only I had some very beautiful thing to give you, memsahib, to show my gladness because you like to talk about all these together with us, and don't feel in your heart any stranger-thoughts against us." Then, turning to her mother, dusty brown hands clasped in entreaty, great dark eyes under the level brows a luminous, still glow "like the gaze of the setting moon"—looking earnestly up into her mother's face—

"Let me tell them! PLEASE, mother! Let me tell them my rashi-name! It is my jewel," this small person explained eagerly, turning to us again, "it may never be told to any but those who are most near, those we will always love!" standing there in the gathering dusk, oblivious of refuse and rubbish all about her, so pitifully childish, defenseless, yet so radiantly timeless in this sanctuary of age-old faith shared with us, she seemed a very embodiment of the spirit of this land of contradictions. We knew something of what the sharing of a rashi-name means—a Hindu woman always has two names, the one by which she is commonly known and another that is given her by some holy-man who "reads the writing of the stars" at her birth and whispers in the ear of the mother alone, on the name-day, the sacred signs of their tracing.

"My rashi-name," this wee thing beside us went on, softly, as though revealing a matter of great moment and preciousness, "my rashi-name is Breath-of-the-Soil!"

And perhaps of all our treasures gathered in this country of famed treasure, this was one of the dearest—this gift from the heart of a little child in a mud hut by the Ganges.

As we found our way back, precariously, making what haste we could in the on-coming darkness—through dry matted thorny weeds, past fetid, malodorous wastes, across parched broken earth treacherous with tortuous cracks, drought-wrought—the thought of this gift lingered with us like a poignant fragrance.

And from half a world away, beyond a century's span, came memory of that word of Scotland's white-haired "Saint Francis of the highlands, of childlike heart" who so well knew the hearts of children and fashioned for them that unforgettable beauty he had himself found "At the Back of the North Wind"—"If, instead of a jewel or even, a flower, we cast the gift of a beautiful thought into the heart of a friend, that is giving as the angels give" he had said.

An echo of this had come to us here from the heart of this chance-met waif; though in the midst of what turmoil of what sordid indirection all about, yet true counterpart of the poet-seer's own insight—deepening, widening for us even that vision of his own.

And out of this very din and foulness of the crowded streets through which we must now fend our way to reach our own odd domicile in their midst—the harsh clamor and

crudeness of their nightly rabble of celebration, orgy, whatever blatant amusement—there came to us also (as if in sheer importunity of compensation!) the refreshment and far horizon of that matchless prayer the Highland poet-seer prayed:

“O God of mountains, stars, and boundless spaces,  
O God of sunshine and of childlike hearts—  
When thy face looketh forth from all men’s faces  
There will be room enough in crowded marts.  
Brood thou about us, and the tumult’s o’er—  
Thy universe, our closet with shut door.”

And that night, on our roof under the quiet stars, thought of this quenchless, upwelling faith and strength and beauty of our common humanity—alike in his sea-girt, mist-covered heathered mountains and on this thirst-wracked, toil-sodden arid plain—came to us with a new understanding. This gift from the heart of a little child held for us quickened hope that, despite whatever anguish of past war and enmity, whatever ominous threat of war to come, yet still—in some not too distant dawning—this simple leavening truth may one day be indeed as a serene abiding faith of daily living throughout “Thy universe”—familiar as starlight and sunshine, a wonted, homely wisdom with us all—“close as the pulse of breathing” . . .

End.

\* \* \* \* \*

### NEW PIONEERS

“For the age of balance we need a new race of pioneers, of deliberate amateurs, in order to offset the tendency to harden practice into smooth molds and to sacrifice the growing personality to the machine. Such stereotyping of activity as will free the organism for its higher functions—like those human automatisms that put a large part of the burden of behavior on the vertebral column and the cerebellum—must not halt on its way to this destination.

“In this respect the varied war experiences that people in many countries have undergone, as soldiers, air raid wardens, fire fighters, nurses, and so forth, must be regarded as essential contributions to the task of peaceful co-operation: typical of a new kind of citizenship and a more vivid routine of life. But we cannot afford to promote a war every generation to break up social fixations: that is burning down the house to roast the pig. We must erect these social and personal counterpoises to rigidity and fixity as the basic requirements for a maturing personality.

“The custom of our time is to think no change worth even discussing unless it can be at once organized into a visible movement: the mass enlistment of thousands, preferably millions, of men and women. The very appearance of millions of men in black shirts and brown shirts gave fascism publicity that made its rancid ideas seem important. Many of the actual movements that claim allegiance today are little better than devices of publicity: decorative devices that change nothing and move nothing. Such, even, would be a revolutionary movement, unless those who took part in it remodeled the instruments with which they work: first of all themselves.”

Lewis Mumford: “The Condition of Man.”

## A G. I.’s Journey

By HELGE STOTTRUP.

(Concluded.)

We are up early again preparing to move once more. This time we will be near Casserine. On the way we noticed some black smoke just ahead of us. As we neared the airport, we found that an airraid had resulted in a couple of our planes being burned. Some of our men were just passing while it all happened. They naturally scurried from the car and dispersed in the field. Fortunately they went beyond the ditches because when planes strafe they aim at the vehicle with their 20 mm cannons while their machine guns are focused to get anything in the road or ditches. Our boys were scared but unhurt. All along the road were burned vehicles as a result of the struggle of some weeks past in which we were forced to retreat.

Our new area is located at the mouth of Casserine Pass. Our tents reside in a cactus patch that has been occupied by enemy troops not so long ago and we must be extremely cautious about booby traps and stray land mines. Close by is an Italian tank that was smashed as it tried to flank a small mesa.

I dug a deep slit trench and the digging was easy in this sand. Five and a half feet down I noticed something interesting. The ground suddenly changed color and texture and I unearthed evidence that people had lived here long, long ago. Wind and weather had laid earth deep on what had once been a community perhaps, for here was earthenware and bones, etc. I wanted to save some for souvenirs but one can’t lug all this stuff around.

We did a snappy job of loading this time. At 1:00 we set out on a long journey that would bring us up to the coast. Through Casserine valley we passed in a drizzle and the whole valley was a veritable junk yard for to either side we saw tanks, trucks, guns and bleak graves. Here had been a real tank battle and the roads were still not entirely cleared of mines so we kept off the shoulders. Bridges and railroads were demolished as were the few buildings we met.

In Thals, we could clearly see that the great feud had ended; just outside the village was a group of six German tanks in one cluster. One tank had been hit by a bomb and split in two, half of it upended, the other half plowed into the ground some twenty feet apart. Somewhere nearby four or five graves with crosses and German helmets were placed by each grave. We stopped for the night just outside of Soul-el-Arba but it was dark before we stopped and we met long lines of armored vehicles and those miserable little Bren carriers hogged the whole road and we almost smashed into a couple of them.

Spent a swell night sleeping out under the starry sky. After breakfast I was among a few that set out in advance to direct the big convoy at bridges and road junctions. A rather long mountain pass was in our way and we had fun going through here in day time. Really this was a beautiful part of Africa, as pleasing to the eye as any scenic spot anywhere. Everybody seemed to hate Africa but I think we should look at its good points as well as its bad.

At last we are over the last steep ridge and can now get a glimpse of the Mediterranean and from now on it’s

all down hill in steep twining angles. At last we are on the ground floor again, about ten miles from Tabarka. We pass through this small bomb pitted village and head East along the sea side. Our new area is amid a lovely cork forest and it's really going to be swell here.

Reenforcements are moving up day and night. This evening we visited a cemetery nearby and on its neatly spaced graves were the man's name and home address; Germans, Italians, British, and Americans, all in the same plot. Some day we may be numbered among those, we thought, but until then let's think of something else, so we went through an old mine nearby. We had a flashlight and it was fun probing the damp darkness where bats, toads, snakes and what not abode.

Hat Hatman (a friendly Arab boy) dug me a fox hole for which I gave him some cigarettes. Pretty soft having servants, ain't it? The air has been full of planes, large formations of heavy and medium bombers coming and going all the time. These cork trees are sure swell, you can bump into them in the dark without knocking yourself out.

Easter Sunday I was awakened by a ceaseless rumble of artillery fire up the road a ways. It seemed to be just on the other side of the mountain. There was mass and non-denominational services and our area was crowded with men waiting for the service of their choice. Swimming in the ocean is really new and an exciting experience for me and here I was playing in the surf of the old Mediterranean. Our cooks had bought a steer at about a dollar a pound and we enjoyed fresh meat for the very first time in Africa.

By reliable grapevine sources, we heard that Tunis and Bizerte have fallen. Wow! Everybody is going nuts around here. It's going to be a big night in the old camp tonight because everyone that has a wine bottle hidden has got it out now. Well, it is a big event and it is what so much time, expense, sweat and blood has been expended for. This moment has come about much faster than we anticipated a month ago but for us all it was welcome because we're anxious to see the end of waste and destruction so we too can be home as civilians where life is what you choose and make it.

You heard about all the prisoners that resulted in the capture of Tunis and Bizerte. Well, that was one of the things I'll never forget. One evening we went to Mateur and passed by the prison camp. Inside barb wire enclosures was a veritable sea of men. Italian and German prisoners. First thing we noticed was the smell from this mob, a sickening sweet smell from their putrid cigarettes. These men seemed tired yet relieved; they told us that they were glad the war was over for them.

Some of these prisoners could speak English and it was interesting to talk with them. They told us New York and other towns in the U. S. had been bombed. Few of them would believe that any bombs had or ever would fall on Germany. They laughed heartily when we told them that we expected to be in Berlin soon. Their hopes and prayers were to be sent to the U. S. to work and asked us if there were any such chances. I asked one fellow what he thought of the war. He smiled as he said, "Well, the same as you think; it's a pain in the neck and a result of a few big international gangsters both in your country and in mine."

The number of prisoners mounted hourly. Some came in their own trucks in which they brought their own rations and drove in, asked where the rations were to be un-

loaded; they unloaded, parked the trucks and were ready to go into the pen. Our trucks too kept pouring in with full loads of happy prisoners. As we rode on to Mateur, we met German soldiers on foot, coming in pairs or singly to give themselves up. This was an experience I shall long remember.

Bizerte is perhaps the most bombed city I've seen. Scarcely one single building is intact. It would be easier to start a city elsewhere than to rebuild the old. Over the harbor soared many barrage balloons. In the harbor lay many ships with funnels appearing above water. This is really the thing folks back home should see if they want to realize how lucky they are to be where they are.

At Carthage we saw the ancient amphitheater where the Romans fed the Christians to the lions. We saw the tunnels along the walls where Christian prisoners had been chained. The cathedral built in later years is very beautiful. Much is yet to be uncovered we are told, but enough can be seen to make the experience worthwhile. Some day I'll read up on this ancient empire.

With my three trips to Tunis I remain with no special memory except for its age and its value from a military point of view; we fully realized that this city was the center of what we had been a long time in capturing.

I am about to close this article but first I must tell you of the harvest which is now in full swing. (June 22) Close by and wherever one travels, the golden grain is being cut. Some small fields are done up by hand. Each grown member of the tribe is out there with a small sickle. They cut and tie the straws together and toss the bundles into piles. Towards evening these bundles are then loaded onto a jackass. The women seem to work steadier and harder than the men. Wherever reaping has been done there will be gleaners. Here we see women all bundled up in rags, as usual, combing the stubble for lost stalks of grain just exactly as the well known picture "The Gleaners" portrays. Threshing on a small scale is done by hand as well. Animals are herded around and around and the chaff is tossed up for the wind to clean and from a large pile of straw comes a pitifully small pile of kernel, it seems.

I can see now how poorly I have met the challenge to bring you closer to us who live like hunted mice in the fields of foreign soil. The entire stage is so vast, so complicated that no one man in one branch of service is competent to portray it in its entirety. To this end, only a news correspondent who has access to any and all phases of the great conflict can come near. Our experiences in Africa have been no joyride but they are merely a prelude to the big offensives everyone realizes are in store for us. Africa was a pushover compared with Europe and we fully expect the worst is yet to come.

By the time you read this, we may be engrossed in the heated contest which will be of such great importance. We may or may not emerge intact but each of us hopes to survive. Most of us are aware that our life is in the hands of someone far greater than we.

It is now near the end of this writing. We see America from a vantage point and therefore see it more accurately. Good, bad, or mediocre, each of us dreams of only one day, the day when we again shed our sweat and tears on its soil from East to West. We will need no coaxing when zero hour is at hand to invade our homeland and by golly I hope we conquer her people in nothing flat.

The End.