

at the enemy planes from the upper turret. A bomb landed near by, and a small fragment tore through the side of the plane and went through his heart.

I was on the field that night, and the rest of the crew were asking their officers if they could take up a collection and send his body home. It was impossible, but they marked his grave well, and maybe after the war the reinterment could be arranged.



One night in Central Tunisia I was sitting in the room of Lieutenant Colonel Sam Gormly, a Flying Fortress commander from Los Angeles. We were looking over a six-weeks-old copy of an American picture magazine, the latest to reach us. It was full of photos and stories of the war; dramatic tales from the Solomons, from Russia, and right from our own African front. The magazine fascinated me and, when I had finished, I felt an animation about the war I hadn't felt in weeks.

For in the magazine the war seemed romantic and exciting,

full of heroics and vitality. I knew it really was, and yet I didn't seem capable of feeling it. Only in the magazine from America could I catch the real spirit of the war over here.

One of the pictures was of the long concrete quay where we landed in Africa. It gave me a little tingle to look at it. For some perverse reason it was more thrilling to look at the picture than it had been to march along the dock itself that first day. "I don't know what the hell's the matter with me," I said. "Here we are right at the front, and yet the war isn't dramatic to me at all."

When I said that, Major Quint Quick of Bellingham, Washington, rose up from his bed onto his elbow. Quick was a bomber squadron leader and had been in as many fights as any bomber pilot over here. He was admired and respected for what he had been through. He said, "It isn't to me either. I know it should be, but it isn't. It's just hard work, and all I want is to finish it and get back home."

So I didn't know. Was war dramatic, or wasn't it? Certainly there were great tragedies, unbelievable heroism, even a constant undertone of comedy. But when I sat down to write, I saw instead: men at the front suffering and wishing they were somewhere else, men in routine jobs just behind the lines bellyaching because they couldn't get to the front, all of them desperately hungry for somebody to talk to besides themselves, no women to be heroes in front of, damned little wine to drink, precious little song, cold and fairly dirty, just toiling from day to day in a world full of insecurity, discomfort, homesickness, and a dulled sense of danger.

The drama and romance were here, of course, but they were like the famous falling tree in the forest—they were no good unless there was somebody around to hear. I knew of only twice that the war would be romantic to the men: once when they could see the Statue of Liberty and again on their first day back in the home town with the folks.

I passed up my only opportunity of being dramatic in the war. It was a tough decision either way. As you know, correspondents finally were allowed to go along on bombing missions. I was with a bomber group that I'd known both in England and in Africa, and many of them were personal friends by then. They