

Verbundkatalog Kalliope

Batalion Aid Station.

Mann, Erika

Frühjahr. Datierung v. Stuart D. Ferguson

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This was a strange enterprise and the closer we came to our destination the more unreal I felt. What was he going to look like, the injured soldier whom I'd meet at the ~~Battalion~~ Aid Station? Was he badly hurt? When had he been hit? What had he gone through before the aidman found him and what would happen to him now and from now on? I'd stay with him - with this first wounded I'd come across at this first etappe the injured pass on their way back from the front. In following him I'd follow the unknown casualty and I'd learn to understand the intricate mechanism of the only war machine which was here to save - not to destroy - the lives of men.

A chain of hospitals stretches ^{to the} from the front lines itself to the beachheads, to the U.K. and across the Atlantic to hospitals nearest the wounded ^{men's} hometowns. ~~Spe~~heads are the ~~B~~ataillon Aid stations - 3 to each bataillon - which operate as close to the lines as possible. When the front moves, they move. 12 hours is a long stay for these miniature hospitals that settle down in any handy farmhouse or barn.

"It's number one we are going to" said the medical officer with whom I was riding; "and incidentally the only one around here we could possibly reach at this moment. The others have been cut off, both of them. There will have to be some fighting before the roads are cleared. It's an untidy sort of war we are in for, right now."

The roar of heavy artillery, punctuated by the sharp crackle of machine gun fire seemed uncomfortably close - actually it was; we didn't then know it, but the counterattack which took, lost and re-took ~~M~~ntain that day was going on ~~a~~ half a mile away.

In the superstitious belief that they constituted a protection, we wore out steel helmets.

Just where was "the front"? Nobody knew. Or rather, everyone knew that in the ordinary sense of the term there was no such thing. Along the rapidly changing zig zag line of our positions in the Vire-Montain sector, the enemy held his pockets. That we'd "taken" a town, a forest, a piece of land, hardly meant that the spot was secure and the very swiftness of our advance made many a liberated locality a dangerous place to live in.

The landscape through which we traveled ~~formed~~ ^{very} a most ~~suited~~ ^{suitable} background for all that was to come. Only yesterday the Forest of Saint Sever had been in German hands. It was ours now but its dusky expanse proved a weird acquisition. There was something ^{nightmarishly} uncanny about these ^{darkling} woods. ^{In the shadow of the trees} ~~romantic~~ looking huts sought to conceal huge piles of arms and ammunition abandoned by the enemy. Dead men - both friend and foe - must be littering the clearings and behind every bush a sniper might be waiting for his murderous chance.

The narrow, dust-covered road was alive with traffic - ambulances and hospitals jeeps, transporting ^{casualties} from the battalion aid station to the collecting station ^{two miles} further back and trucks loaded with Nazi prisoners. The ambulance jeeps - an invention the famous Ninth Division made in Africa - carried five litters each. Ingenious hooks secured two litters across the hood, two more stretchers made a roof and one was laid across the back seat. In roadless terrain, or wherever roads are too narrow for ambulances, these litter-bearing jeeps have proved life savors of the first order.

When I arrived at the Battalion aid station ^{5 miles past 5 at 4.55 p.m.} one crowded ambulance had just departed for the rear, while another had come from

to determine the ~~character~~ of the damage, the leg would have to be exrayed.
~~XX~~

~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~

~~He'd tried~~
For the moment Fred was given a temporary splint and an ounce of Whisky.

Hesitant to reveal ^{to "my casualty"} the full extent of my plans I ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~
~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ ^{has drunk} watched him sip and relax. "Mind if I stick around?"
I wondered vaguely.

The guns were particularly noisy just then and he merely shook his head.

Bent over the badly wounded, Captain Gover looked up for a second.

"Hope this doesn't bother you" he said to nobody in particular.

^{22/5} "This ~~has~~ been going on all day" ^{sighed} ~~said~~ one of the medics; "we hardly notice it any longer."

~~XX~~
~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ How tired they looked - the six men who formed the staff of this station. Yesterday they'd attended to one ^{cases.} hundred ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~. During the night they'd moved into this newly conquered farmhouse and since early this morning casualties had ~~XXXX~~ kept ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ arriving in a steady stream.

"There's an 88 in the backyard" one of them said;
"hope that won't bother you either."

^{aidman}
Fred wished to make a report concerning the ~~Medic~~ who'd found him half an hour ago.

"McLellan" he said; "Corporal McLellan ,

He shrugged.

"Nothing" he declared "that's happened to me; but many a thing I've seen happening to others. Even so, I've had quite a few close calls myself. Why only two days ago I wouldn't have bet a nickel on my own life."

"How come?" I said.

But all that could be done for the belly case at this junction had been completed, a new casualty had been brought in and taken care of and the ambulance was ready to leave for the rear. 2X 495 90V
5.30.

As we drove back through the eerie woods, hhhhhhhh
Fred hhhhhhhhhhh proceeded to answer my question.

"It was here,-" he said - in this very forest. We'd made good progress during the day and nothing much seemed to be happening at the moment. I'd been out on reconnaissance and was walking ('home' in the darkness. At least I thought I was. Actually I stumbled into a foxhole with a bunch of soldiers in it. I took it that they were Americans and asked what company they belonged to. They were Germans ~~Even while~~ and they'd heard me coming. Even while though, I reached for my gun, ~~buhhhhhh~~ and I felt their pistols stuck against my ribs. ~~They're hearing me coming.~~ ~~I was obviously~~ ~~buhhhhhh~~ "You sure got me!" I said, ~~but~~ you'd better not shoot.

You're completely surrounded and any silly noise would give you away.'
One of them - a second lieutenant ^{understood} ~~spoke~~ English. ~~ahhhhhhhhh~~
~~hhhhhhhh~~ He wanted to know what their position was and decided to
talk things over with me. We all sat down and ~~hahhhhh~~ talked until
daybreak."

"What about?"

"The war. Politics. They knew, they were licked - ~~the Germans that is~~,
but insisted that in the long run it didn't really matter. It was
Germany's mission to rule the world and rule she would sooner or
somewhat later. ~~There'd have to~~ be another war in another 20 years it was
sound strategy ~~to go on with this one as long as humanly possible.~~
~~non German~~ All ~~human~~ nations
had to be ~~decimated~~ . In Europe ~~this~~ had already been done.
Britain had been getting it during the Blitz and was now exposed to
the ingenious V.I. which was bound ~~to~~ ~~decimate~~ further
to diminish her population. And while unfortunately ~~many~~ German blood
was also being shed
in this war, the Germans were so vital
and so determined a nation that they'd soon make up for what they'd
lost. The others wouldn't. Nor would they have the guts to
resist the master race a third time within ~~so short~~
a period. Hitler was a genius ~~who knew~~ who knew
full well that history traveled at snail's pace. Of course he'd hoped
to win this war. But even by losing it the 'Fuehrer' had led Germany
towards the ultimate fulfillment of her mission "

He paused. A truckload of German
prisoners passed our ambulance which ~~moved~~ ^{had to move} very slowly.

"Nazis!" I said; "quite a lot of them!"

Fred looked angry.

"Intact?" he wanted to know.

I nodded.

"Oh,- well!" he said. But ~~the~~ ambiguous
anything but vague. the ~~exclamation~~ exclamation sounded

"And then?" I wondered; "what happened in the morning?
How did you manage to escape?"

"I didn't. They let me go. I'd convinced them that
 bbbbbb that they'd hardly get out of this forest except as
 prisoners. Most likely they'd be captured as ^{soon as} bbbbbb they left the
 dugout and if our men found that they'd done anything funny to me
 bbbbbb they'd be in real trouble. I bbbbbb don't know whether the patrol
 bbbbbb I sent after them did pick
 them up; ^{but} I sure hope they did. They were a disgusting bunch and let noone tell you it's just
 the Gestapo boys who aren't so likable. These were bbbbbb infantrymen
 all five of them."

"How old would you say?"

Pretty young. ^{But} "Between 18 and ~~20~~ ²². I don't ^{think} they'll ever change, ~~hhhhhh~~, and if they ^{should} live to be a hundred."

~~The collecting station of Company C 9th medical~~
~~Bataillon, 9th Division~~ our next stopover.

Compared with the Bataillon Aid Station, the collecting a big, Station, Compnay C, 9th medical Bataillon, 9th Division, was an elaborate

affair, - quite logically so, ~~it was here for the first time that the~~
~~For~~ ~~here~~ ~~and~~ casualties of three Battalion
aid

and stations received the sort of treatment which

couldn't be given under enemy fire. With aid stations ~~one and two~~ ^{momentarily} ~~and two~~ + 3/
was rather

lost ~~hhhhhh~~ the place ~~hhhhh~~ quiet today, and ~~hhhhhhhhhh~~ Fred

Sgt. immediately attended
was taken care of at once. From the admission tent, where his case was

Connected with each Clearing Station is a Field Hospital which admits all ~~those~~ ^{those} who are found to be non transportable. The rest travel on to evac hospitals further inland. Whoever cannot be returned to duty within 60 days is evacuated to the U.K. ~~whereas~~ from where ~~only~~

at least
those who won't be with the army for half a year are flown or shipped
back
to the United States. ~~XX~~

While Fred was being examined at the Clearing Station I ~~walked~~ walked over to the adjoining Field Hospital.

The pre op and shock tent was filled to capacity
horridly. Mostly it was badly
and everyone one here was sick. belly aches, chest and
chest and
brain cases who occupied the narrow cots
patients who
moved about the face of the
hardly any type of serious injury seemed to be missing.

"In the last war" a doctor told me - "none of the boys in this tent
wound have survived. ^{Today, less than} 8% ^{now hardly} of them will die."

Could he, I wondered, give me soem of the main reasons for this heartening development?

[illegible]

"Roughly speaking" he said, "there are three. 1.) immediate under all circumstances medical attention and swift evacuation into areas where definitive treatment can be given. 2.) Blood transfusions; 3.) Sulpha drugs. Owing to the latter ~~the~~ the greatest killer - infection - ~~has become~~ has become ~~a thing of the past~~ a thing of the past. ~~death rate among all~~ And owing to speed, plus blood plus sulpha the ~~percentage of casualties~~ who die once medical aid has reached them, has fallen to 1.5 ~~4~~

who've been reached by medical aid, has fallen from 11% in the last war to 1.5 in this one. Of course there are other factors which ought to be mentioned. Surgery has improved immeasurably in the past 20 years; so for that matter has the medical education of the wounded themselves. Take this one, for instance - "

He pointed at a boy with a thickly bandaged head.

"First thing he told the aidman was not to give him Morphine. Although he was in bad pains, he remembered that head wounds and morphine don't go together."

The boy ~~of~~ moaned. ~~Noiselessly~~ an army nurse noiselessly moved among the cots. Near the chest cases an oxygene apparatus was set for action. Where the belliecases lay the corridor was lined with two rows of small vacuum machines.

"Our Waengenstein ally" explained the doctor adding that wherever a continuous suction seemed necessary of the intestinal contents the "Waengenstein apparatus" was indispensable.

"These are all hand made" he said "and rather improvised affair; but they're working alright."

Two litter bearers appeared to carry the boy with the head wound to the operating tent. Almost simultaneously a new casualty was brought in through the other entrance. A cot had become empty. ~~The patient who was to occupy it belonged into the Waengenstein section of the tent~~ ^{then he saw me} ^{be its and}

Abh gave a faint smile of recognition. His poor pallid face was even more heartrending now that he smiled. He'd been examined - the bellycase from the battaillion aid-station - and he'd been found nontransportable.

Fred on his part had been assigned to the 4th Evac. At ^{eight} ~~three~~ o'clock - ~~high~~ and a half hours after he'd been hit - he'd passed ^{by} three stations on his way to the channel; at 7.15 we were ~~enroute~~ ^{enroute} to the fourth.

"Oh, there you are!" he said when I rejoined him. The persistency of my presence ~~although I~~ ^{although I} did not seem to puzzle him. ~~thought it somewhat spooky myself.~~ ^{thought it somewhat spooky myself.} But then he took all ~~that happened to him~~ ^{that happened to him} as a matter of course, and never ~~asked~~ ^{asked} any questions. At the bottom of his heart no soldier ~~believes~~ ^{believes} that he'll be injured. Fred hadn't ~~believed~~ ^{believed} either. ~~Neither did he know~~ ^{Neither did he know} much about the complicated process through which he ~~passed~~ ^{passed}. In the twilight of the ambulance I told him ~~what I knew.~~ ^{what I knew.} ~~this whole business had come into~~ ^{this whole business had come into}

"Colonel Rogers" I said - "John A. Rogers from Philadelphia has done most of the planning and ~~is largely responsible for the~~ ^{he is largely responsible for the} vast medical machinery employed by the first army. ~~He's a tall~~ ^{He's a tall} man ~~with gray hair~~ ^{with gray hair} and a sunburned skin and ridiculously blue eyes. When I ~~saw him last~~ ^{saw him last}, - on ~~July 12th~~ ^{July 12th}, he'd just received the Legion of Merit."

as if it were telling a fairy tale; listening to it
sounded ~~like a fairy tale~~ which
My own voice the feeling of utter unreality I'd had in the
forest overcame me once more. ~~Even though I had heard it before~~

Listening to my own voice the feeling of utter unreality I'd had in the
forest overcame me once more. ~~As if it were~~ In a fairytale sort of way I conti-
nued.

~~"The medal" I hummed, "was~~
flowed over from London by a general, ~~By~~ Major General

Kenner who is Eisenhowers Chief surgeon at Shaeff, whereas Major General
Paul R. Hawley is the chief Surgeon ETO. ~~The~~ I've met them all and
~~here is how I feel about what~~
they're doing: If I had to be a casualty I'd firmly insist on being one
in the U.S. Army. Are you asleep?"

"No" he said; "What about the nurses? ~~Any~~
~~Brass hats there?~~"

~~"Colonel Esther McCafferty" I told him "is the nurses' boss.~~
~~Her title is simply and impressively that of "The Army Nurse."~~
~~A month ago there were 1000 nurses with the First army. Today~~

"Colonel Esther McCafferty" I told him, "is in command of all First Army
nurses. Her title is simply and impressively 'The Army Nurse'. The Colonel
comes from Delaware ^{Virginia}, she's been an army nurse for 13 years and
arrived in this theater on D plus 4. She's a plumpish redheaded woman of
about 40 who seems to enjoy a great deal of confidence and admiration
in
her subordinates. There's a mixture of kindness and firmness about
her which creates authority. A month ago 'The Army Nurse' commanded ~~about~~
1000 nurses. But many new hospitals have been set up since and the
number must have ~~been~~ considerably increased."

"Funny" remarked my listener; "I haven't seen a single

nurse yet!"

"You would have" I said, "if they'd send you to the field-hospital; and you shall, as soon as you get to the evac. Also, in case ~~they decide that you can be returned to duty within~~ ^{they decide that you can be returned to duty within} instead of ~~evacuating you to the U.K.~~ ^{evacuating you to the U.K.} 60 days and ~~transfer you to a general hospital here,~~ ^{transfer you to a general hospital here,} ~~evacuate you to the U.K.,~~ ^{evacuate you to the U.K.,} you'll see plenty of ~~them~~ ⁴⁴²⁵⁵⁵ ~~They are~~ ^{They are} doing an amazing job and are among the tiredest people on earth. Normally ^{are on duty} they ~~work~~ ^{are on duty} 12 hours a day but any emergency will find them ~~prepared~~ ^{ready} - them and the rest of the medical setup - to work 24. I've seen doctors who hardly remembered what ~~sleep felt like.~~ ^{sleep felt like.} And the fellows of the auxiliary surgical teams, ~~who travel about and~~ ^{who travel about and} whom you'll find ~~at work~~ ^{at work} ~~wherever~~ ^{wherever} a crowded field hospital needs ~~additional men and equipment,~~ ^{additional men and equipment,} ~~cherish a night's rest as a fine memory.~~ ^{have come to} They know well in advance where they'll be wanted, just as the army knows well in advance how many casualties to expect in ~~some sector or other at~~ ^{some sector or other at} ~~this~~ ^{this} or that time. ~~When an offensive of ours is in the making, or an enemy~~ ^{When an offensive of ours is in the making, or an enemy} ~~a fair estimate of the number of casualties to come may be derived from~~ ^{a fair estimate of the number of casualties to come may be derived from} ~~counterattack seems imminent, the sum total of all factors involved~~ ^{counterattack seems imminent, the sum total of all factors involved} ~~as compared with ours,~~ ^{as compared with ours,} The character of the terrain, the numerical strength of the enemy, the seasoning of his troops and that of our own are ~~some of the~~ ^{all taken into} ~~issues at stake.~~ ^{consideration} I understand that so far our predictions have ~~proved~~ ^{proved} astoundingly correct. "

Fred, ~~he'd been listening for the past minute or so.~~ ^{Really?} He'd unpacked the ~~small paper carton which contained his~~ ^{small paper carton which contained his} belongings - a few letters from home, a medal he'd ~~taken from~~ ^{Na: taken from}

hhhhhhhhhh found on a battelfield ,his own bronce Star and a lot of photos,all of which pictured a sweet and clever looking young female.

girl
"Your ~~shhhhhhhh~~?" I asked unnecessarily.

"My wife!" he said; "we got married on January 6th 1943. In May I left
There's no offspring yet,
for North Africa." WuhhhahhhhghbbbhahhhMdhghet, but I bbbhhahhbHahhhhhh

recker hhhhhh what I want most is a very big family."

AbtbbbhghhhahghabuuuuueehabbhkkkhtgkhktthmnehabbbbhFbaad
Evac

At ten minutes to ten we arrived at the 44th hospital, where, after a few preliminary formalities Fred was carried into the X Ray tent. His fine clean bandage was soaked with blood. Under the fierce light his face looked tense and tired. During the past few hours his beard seemed to have grown inches.

"We'll try to make you look handsome!" The X-Ray medic smiled wearily. How often had he made this modest little joke, even today? There'd been 350 admissions since early this morning and ~~ahhhhh~~ as yet no lull had set in.

"We're clearing them out as fast as we can." I was told by the C.O. Colonel Batt ; "but although we'll go on operating all night, hundreds will have t o wait. There's just so much you can do on eight operating tables and 400 cots won't accomodate more than 400 patients."

The shock and pre-op-tent was overcrowded and Fred had been put into one of the post-op wards, ⁴ although having seen his X raye slide. He must be eager to know. I'd better go and look at the picture.

sheers

comminuted fracture

"It's the Tibia Bone" I learned, - "2, 5 inches below the knee joint. Not bad, really; he ought to be up and about in 6 weeks or so."

Nobody knew just when Fred's turn would come on the operating table. Nor was I able to find his ward. Night had fallen and the tent town lay in utter darkness. At 11 pm I went to the operating tent to wait for "my case".

I'd seen it often before: the wounded men in their blood, unconscious, most of them, for the moment; the surgeons, their faces concentrated and emotionless, their hands working with machinelike precision; the nurses and assistants, bent compassionately over their patients, holding their heads, instruments, cotton and plaster, standing by with

And often before had I smelt the odour of disinfectants, anaesthetics, and blood that filling the air of the operating tent, an air thick with the chilly dampness of the Norman night. But while human nature gets quickly accustomed to almost anything, the shoreless sadness that grips you in the face of the mutilated, and your admiration both for them and their service grows stronger and sharper with every new experience. So the onlooker's awareness of his disgraceful impotence, and his feeling of guilt. He is ashamed, as it were, to be healthy and intact.

At midnight sharp Fred appeared, his X ray slides lying on his chest. While his leg was unbanded and shaved, the surgeon, Major Edward D. Hagerty,

Surgical sheers made quick work of his trousers.

completed a grave operation on the neighbouring table. Fred, watching, to endure, had a few disconcerting moments, ~~anesthetic~~ ^{of} ~~anesthetic~~ ^{of} 25ccs Penothal, 4%, intravenously injected - bbbbh carried him off.

"Can you count to 20?"

Major Hagerty asked his patient.

"I reckon: One....."

He had already quit.

The actual operation had started at 12.20. At 12.45 it was over and at one o'clock the unconscious lad was back in his ward. For Major Hagerty it had been a minor task.

"Just dandy"-as he put it. But as his shears cut the flesh around the edges of the wound and his fingers dug their way through the boy's leg

breath. His girl - I thought - the sweet and clever looking female I've seen on ^{so many} ~~an official~~ pictures - ^{if} ~~an official~~ she could be here! ^{that if} ~~an official~~ then she'd worry -

Tomorrow she'd receive a telegram; 24 hours a day, until now a week of so from his first letter arrived from England.

I didn't sleep that night, ^{20:00} ~~Freezing~~ on my cot in the nurses' tent, I kept riding through the forest, hearing the roar of heavy artillery and seeing the wounded in their blood.

Fred slept till 10 a.m. The penicillin shot ^{he was} ~~given~~ at 6 ^{did} not disturb his slumber. At noon we departed.

"Air
The Freight and passenger Terminal 31. Transport group Ninth airforce Service Command Far Shore." consists of two airstrips and one holding station. Here the

a waiting place for the evac cases. Less than 50 % go by sea; the rest cross the channel in the Ninth Airforce's fast C 47s, each of which accommodates 24 litter patients. Enroute the wounded are looked after by a nurse and a medical corporal. In charge of the holding station is Colonel George McShatka of Portland Oregon and of the 61. Medical bataillon, with whom I had something to discuss, something seemed pretty near to Fed's heart. I did promised to arrange it.

Take it up with the right person.

"How many patients" I asked the colonel "have taken off from here yesterday?"

" 1137 " he replied swiftly.

My ~~about~~ ^{has been diminished} ~~junk~~. "In this case" I said "you couldn't possibly tell me whether or not a first Lieutenant Francis J. Denver has past through here late last evening. He's Fred's special pal who was ~~not~~ ^{injured} the day before Fred was. We are eager to learn..."

Within a few minutes we had him. Lieutenant Denver had left by air 8 hours ago. Where had he gone? To which airport in England? To which hospital from there? If ~~he should be sent to~~ Fred ~~could~~ join his buddy over here he'd be "real glad".
(were planned)

Colonel McShatko referred me to Captain Douglas of the Ninth who was apt to be helpful. Time was running short . ~~Shhhhhhhhh~~ Leaving Fred in his waiting tent I rushed down to the airstrip to talk to the Captain. On an empty shell I picked up from the field I scribbled two names - Fred's and that of his friend. Planes kept coming in and taking off without interval. Fred must have been loaded by now. What ship was he on? I must find him quickly. ~~Shhhhhhhhh Vainly I boarded~~

~~one plane after the other. At the moment~~ The spooky persistency of my
presence ^{at} ~~his~~ side ~~must not slacken~~ ^{searched} now when I was to wave him
good by. Vainly I ~~searched~~ one plane after the other.

"Looking for something?"

The shout came ^{from} Captain Douglas' ~~whispering~~

~~Yes, it's Fred.~~ ^{h h h h h h h h} "it's Fred. I can't find him."

"Course not" he said; "he's gone."

Automatically I threw my head back and stared ~~h h h h h h h h~~ up to the
sky. There ^{h h h h h h h h} - a silverish bird, ~~h h h h h h h h~~ adorned with the ~~h h~~ zebra
~~h h h~~ stripes characteristic since D. day of the allied airforces -
winged its way towards Britain.

"That's him alright". ~~h h h h h h h h h h h h h h h h~~ said the Captain.

"Where's he going?"

"It's okay" he said; "I've fixed it. An hour from now he'll be
with his pal."

I looked at my wrist watch. It was 4.30. At this time yesterday
Fred had been hit.

.....

17.3
5100