

# FURLOUGH BOUND!

ANOTHER  
SIMKINS  
SAGA



SIMKINS had heard a lot about the South Island—too much really. But what he had heard made him a little curious to see it. There had been some who said it was just like Italy, with the Southern Alps like the Apennines, the lakes like Italian lakes, even some of the rivers like the fumes of Itieland. Which were they again—the Waitaki like the Sangro, the Clutha like the Volturmo, the Taieri like the Tiber, and the Avon like that irrigation drain near Gioia that all but dried up in summer. Yes, it would be quite worth a trip down there, especially as Pete was paying for it.

Carefully Simkins produced his torn and tattered diary and perused the addresses therein. He came to a page headed "Bludge here". Yes, that was right. He could stay with Charlie in Christchurch, Willie in Timaru, Abraham in Dunedin, and Paddy in Invercargill, and if he did go anywhere near Queenstown and the West Coast he had plenty of addresses. He had made a point of collecting addresses—it was quite easy in his job. He saw so many old letters one way and another. And he could always turn up at a house and say "Remember me, Alf"? and could ask suitable questions about the "missus" and the kids. Yes, there were advantages in being a sanitary corporal.

Packing was no trouble to Herbert, once he had got rid of his mother. The poor old soul had produced a couple of suitcases and offered to fold and pack his clothes. Herbert had all but

laughed in her face as he refused. His kit-bag and valise were good enough for him, and he had got to work stuffing his gear into them. He was pretty good at it, after four years' practice overseas.

"Hurry up, Herbert," his mother called. "You've only got ten minutes."

"O.K.! O.K.! Don't do your ——— bun," he answered, pulling the rope tight round his bedroll.

"Why on earth are you taking your bedding?" Mrs. Simkins asked, poking her far from prepossessing head round the door.

Herbert snorted. *Madonna mia!* When would these stay-at-home New Zealanders become travel-minded? A distant train whistle roused him to action. Seizing his gear, he rushed out of the room, down the hallway and out the front door.

"*Ariverderci, Momma,*" he shouted.

Damn this place, he thought as he looked in vain for a *gharry*. Not like Italy, he fumed, as he looked in vain for a passing army truck. Just then a middle-aged woman drove by in a Ford roadster, and he thumbed her furiously. She glared at him so indignantly that she stalled her engine. Simkins seized the chance and leapt on board, his bags nearly jolting the woman from her seat.

"O.K. Drive on, signora," Simkins said grandly, and the woman was so overcome with surprise that she did.

"And how's tricks?" Herbert asked brightly, removing the kit-bag from