

searched—us. They would fire random bursts, hoping for some reply that would reveal our presence, and whenever that reply came they were quick to pay deadly attention to that particular area.

When we failed to find a suitable spot one morning a squadron of fighters spotted us as we moved off the road, or so it seemed, for they wheeled from their course and began to dive, with machine guns blazing, apparently at us. It was an uneasy time, but perhaps the Red Cross did save us, for the bullets were directed at the road and we were left otherwise in peace. Morning tea had just been put on to boil, and some clumsy lout in his hurry to escape the guns sent primus and billy flying. Poor chap. He came in for more abuse than the enemy.

Later in the morning exceedingly large flights of aircraft searched the hills and valleys. Along both, so low that I was actually above them, flew a long succession of enemy planes, their screamers wailing like ten thousand devils. Greek shepherds were driving their flocks along bush tracks, and the word "Luftwaffe" was plain to distinguish in their excited talk, but they did not attempt to hide.

Once again I was one of a small party to leave the medical unit for service with a rifle unit, and one morning, while other convoys were hastening back, we set out to advance towards the approaching enemy. It seemed we were to be attached to a rearguard party, to all intents and purposes as regimental stretcher-bearers, but with the difference that while they carried rifles we were unarmed. We joined an R.A.P. in a wooded valley down the centre of which ran a road. Apart from the usual searching planes, the first day passed calmly.

Next day, however, our own artillery began a heavy barrage, firing over our heads and down the valley. The crash of guns and the scream of shells continued all day, and we began to amuse ourselves counting the bursts as the shells landed away in the distance.

Suddenly there came a new sound. A new type of scream. A scream which, instead of dying away in the distance, became louder every moment until it was rather like the whistle of a railway train. Someone yelled "Duck!" As we hugged the ground there was a series of explosions along the top of a nearby ridge, and a line of showers of dirt. Next moment our own guns replied thunderously. There were no more enemy shells. "They must have been trying to pot our guns," said a rifleman, "but those shells must have been a mile or more short." At all events they did no more damage than to shower our M.O. with dirt.

That evening news came—"Expect to contact enemy to-night." We brought the wounded to the roadside at nightfall, and shortly afterwards began to move out. Apparently our battalion was not to be the rearguard after all. A motley crowd, we began the march to a less-advanced area where transport was waiting. We passed men standing ready to blow bridges, and to blast down tons of earth on to the roadway. Ahead of us, ringing clearly through the frosty air, came shouted orders, then suddenly the blackness of night gave way to blinding light and the thunder of guns. Shells screamed towards us, over our heads, to pound the most advanced enemy elements. The guns were straddling the road and close to it, ready to pull out the moment we should all be passed and safely embarked in transport. They fired as we drew level, their flashes lighting up the whole countryside for a moment of intense brilliance.

And so began what was, for our section of the forces at least, the final stage of the evacuation from Greece. At the time we did not know this. We knew nothing of what was going to happen, nothing except that we were in transport racing through the night while little more than bluff and the splendid "delaying tactics" of the engineers held up the enemy.

