

beaded chest. But beyond a slightly irritable "Keep your gorilla paws off the — piano, Richards, you clumsy —," and a playful kick to the offender's backside, which didn't connect, the accident was passed off with the same careless good nature that gave rise to it.

"Maori Battalion," "Kiss me Good-night," "Nurse, Nurse," "Tipperary" and the old songs seemed almost to have been forgotten. Jim wondered, casually, if all the old ideals and the old loyalties which once were supposed to spur men to battle, had been forgotten, too. There was a certain cynicism about these men, a casual case-hardening of the spirit, product of their times, that, even when they abandoned themselves to martial rhythm, would not quite let them believe. But still they were New-Zealanders and British and, in a true sense, patriots. In spite of all, they were not in revolt against life as they knew it.

He was certain they would fight if the need came, and know they were in the right. But he could not entirely satisfy himself why. He knew these men, and he knew that in most of them the old naive imperialism, the ready-made, ingenuous loyalties, were dead, that they were aware of the rackets glorified in the name of patriotism, and even of religion, the overwhelming cynicism of international finance, which they knew how to counter only with their own private cynicism. Once, taken unawares, Jim had been embarrassed, almost shocked, at the revelation of a young soldier's simple faith. "All I'd be fighting for, Jim," he had said unexpectedly over his tapioca root, "would be for my king and country." Jim had been silent, almost as one ashamed and caught listening in to a most intimate and not quite proper confession. Yet just what did that mean? What did it imply? Did the young fellow's earnestness really mean anything beyond a vague stirring of the spirit and the rising perhaps of ancient tribal feelings?

A short pause, with Bill Richards wiping his trickling forehead on the back of his hand, and his hand across his pants, and silent for once amid the confusion of shouted preferences, before the piano swung out into the syncopation of the "Tiger Rag." Men whistled where they

could follow, stamped, clapped, or merely swayed in appreciation where they couldn't, and Bill, off once more, jigger-bugged loudly on the board floor like a genial gorilla—the word *was* apt—and exuberantly snapped his fingers. A little fellow with thin, sensitive fingers clapped two dexterous mess-spoons. Then "In The Mood," with Bill's shirt clinging wetly now to his back and his breath coming faster as he pranced out the rising fascination of the scales.

Two men came into the hut and looked about them. Jim, facing the door, noticed them idly. One, a big-muscled, swaggering chap with the black and khaki puggaree of the engineers on a hat that was pushed back and just slightly aggressively askew, watched the antics of Richards with a sort of morose distaste. His companion, like a small, dark satellite, seemed to reflect, in his cynical, thin-lipped face, the feelings of the other in a more active and concentrated form. He flung some sneering remark and followed the bigger man to the outskirts of the group as the song switched to "Bless 'Em All."

"There's a troop-ship just leaving——" chanted the men. Jim, his casual interest in the newcomers dropping away, leaned against the back of a chair and sang half-heartedly, thinking, by some queer quirk of the mind, more of those red-coated — mercenaries? — perhaps — volunteers, anyway, which is more than I or most of us are, thought Jim—those soldiers of, it would be, a couple of generations or more back (he was a little hazy as to the exact period) who had sung just that same song, with the only differences in a few expletives and in that it was Bombay they were yearning then to see fade beyond the rails. But garrison troops both, time-weary and heat-weary and both hungry for home. Those others, in spite of grumbling—for, being soldiers, they must have grumbled—had probably, if they thought of it at all, considered their job as an important one and, without being jingoistic, been glad to know their nation, their empire, a strength in the world. Not jingoistic, for they were realists; jingoism had always been a luxury reserved for those at home.