

those haversacks carefully prepared for such a chance as this, and return to the footplate.

Confound it, she's rounding a bend, and that darn full moon is shining straight on to us. Back a bit, eh? Don't want to take too many risks.

"O.K. Jim?" "Righto. Hulloo, hulloo!" It's Bernie Young from the next truck; they've opened their door, too.

"Well, boys, what do you think? Risky all right: if you don't break your neck, the Jerries'll probably get you. She sure is pelting along."

"Look out . . . Jerries!" Bernie and Co. pull back quickly, and close their door. We do the same. Somebody said they were patrolling the roof like they do in the States. Cripes, hope not.

The train slows down, finally halts. We hear the Nazis walking along the track. Here comes one to our truck again, and click! he's rebolted the door for the second time. Lucky he is not too curious, or perhaps he thought it was another one he fixed up last stop. Whew! You never know with them . . .

The hours pass by, the moon is higher than ever. Two o'clock goes, then three, then four. Will we never get moving? If we don't start by daylight we won't have a chance. Come on, driver, get on with it. Hoping and cursing we doze off . . .

A jolt, she's off. "Up with you, Springbok, now or never." But the Springbok is slow and five minutes pass by. Five awful minutes. Is it worth the risk? Perhaps I'll be killed—better another year in Germany than death here on a lonely Italian railway-line. She's moving pretty fast—perhaps it's too chancy. Cripes, I'm afraid. My hands are wet, my mouth is dry, I'm sweating all over. Will I, won't I, will I, won't I . . . ? Oh, she's open. Jim is first out. I'm next. A footplate each. Whew! look at that track whizz by. And



see that damn wire—just the right height to upend you.

Crack, craaack! They're at it again. To hell with them. O.K. Jim, I'm with you."

I shut my eyes, pray a moment, and leap. Crash! I've broken my chest. I hear the train behind me, and I'm full of stings down my right side. Did they hit me?

"Are you O.K.?" It's Jim. "How are you, Jim?" "I'm jake."

I pick myself up and feel all over. I can breathe all right, but these darn stings. Ah, thank the Lord—they're acacia prickles. My knee is wonky, too, and so is my thumb.

Jim suddenly breaks into a grin. "Look," he says. I look, and there are the rear lights of the train, vanishing slowly into the distance.

"We're sweet. After all this time, Jim. Put it there, boy!"

And so, exultingly, in the middle of an Italian vineyard just south of the Austrian border, we shook hands as free men for the first time for nearly two years.

