

had seen the Junkers coming low over the snow-white hills and flying down the long frozen valleys, Athens-bound.

And they knew, too, of other planes, British planes, in deadly swarms by night over the cities of Germany.

And the armies of the Third Reich fell back, battered and bloody, but grim and resolute, still fighting ferociously as the Reds swept in from the east; the Allies invaded Italy; England and America struck at the beaches of France, then on, grinding on, to the very frontiers of Deutschland.

And the two New-Zealanders were genuinely joyous (without arrogance), for they knew soon the hour of their liberation would be at hand. But an unexpected change came over their two companions. Daily, they grew increasingly sadder. And times were when the two would draw apart, and talk softly, far into the night, while the New-Zealanders slept.

And one day an R.A.F. fighter suddenly shot out of the morning sky, and pamphlets were seen descending, like agitated sea-birds, upon a little village in the valley beneath. And the New-Zealanders went out, and in the evening returned, bearing with them a copy of the information from the sky.

And it told the invasion of Greece had begun, and the death of Germany was nigh.

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There was much discussion amongst the four soldiers. Of what they said, in those last hours together, I know not. But the last three precious bottles of cogniac were brought out by the four comrades, and, in their mountain retreat, they drank to each other, to their friendship which would last to eternity, and to the hard long days which were dead now, forever.

And, as the light of a new day came into the sky, two men rose up and gathered their few pitiful possessions together, and they awakened the two New-Zealanders and told them of the story they had prepared. How they would say they had been held captives in Middle East prison camps, how at last they had managed to escape. They intended to join the last fleeing German column from Greece, where, in the confusion of withdrawal, their story, in all probability, would be accepted. And they would be given arms again, and the uniform of the Wehrmacht.

And once again they would take their places beside their own folk—their own folk they had deserted at Thermopylae in April, 1941. They would take their stand in Hungary, then Czechoslovakia, then back, back as they knew fate had decreed, back until the last stand in the last battle within Germany itself.

Then they, too, would die in the death of their Fatherland.

