



By Sgt. J. A. EVANS

YES!—IT was Jim all right, hurrying towards me along the pavement in the rain. I had time to size him up before he reached me. He was in civvies, and it was queer how different he looked in the small, smart hat. I'd often wondered whether I'd ever see any of the boys again, of course, but it was still a surprise to run across one. "What d'ya say now, Jim?" I asked as he got up to me. "Why, hullo!" Jim said with a start, and we shook hands. "Fancy seeing your ugly mug after all this time! How the hell are you, anyway?" It was midday, and we found we were both due for a binder, so we hopped into a Quick Lunch.

We grabbed a plate and some tools, and joined the queue which was filing past the eats. "The old southerly is a bit of a change from the weather in the Solomons," Jim remarked over his shoulder. "Too right—but don't we like the change!" Jim laughed at this, and we made for a vacant table. "I see you got out all right," I said, as we settled down. "Yes—over-age, you know." That was a funny thing—I hadn't ever realized Jim's age until then, but I suppose all of us always thought ourselves much of an age up there. Jim had been known as a bit of a goer, and a pretty impulsive chap, but he looked quiet enough now in his neat city clothes. "Tough about Bill, wasn't it?" Bill had been our platoon commander, and every one liked him.

After we got back to New Zealand and the Div. was broken up he had gone away again with the mob, and was killed almost straight away, in Italy.

"I wonder how the others are getting on over there. Old Mac, for instance—I bet he's still as excitable as ever. Remember those solos he insisted on singing every time he got tight? What happened to George, did you ever hear?" "Oh, he got back to the farm. He won't be having those deep, undisturbed sleeps any longer if I know farming hours. I bet he's told the folks at home some whoppers about the islands, but I guarantee he hasn't let on that he held the sack-drill record."

The conversation lagged as we dealt with our plates. "Things all right at home, Jim? Folks all OK?" "Right as rain, thanks. It's great to be back." As we ate on, I felt that we were both probably thinking along much the same lines. We mostly came from different places and different kinds of life, and out of the army there was a lot to keep us apart. Perhaps it was because we had been cut off from so much when we were away that we had made such a good thing out of our friendships. There wasn't much show of running across a chap like "Dargaville" again—he'd get back to North Auckland, if he wasn't there already, and would stay up there for the rest of his life, probably. My thoughts led me to remark: "I wonder about "Dargaville." Either he'll still be skiting about his home town in foreign