

William Saviss Kincaid, Villar

— Billy —

in memory of what  
it took

to bring about

the present ....

Hugh Mackis and

all our Red Horse

comrades — salut

to you !!

Malcolm, Munthe

forward, so that I hit the bridge of my nose on the opposite rim. My eyes were open and I saw the tail of the 'plane vanish above me. I fell like a stone. Then my shoulders were suddenly jerked, the parachute opened. I was swinging—returning to life!

I was holding my shoulder-ropes now, drawing up my knees. A fresh wind was blowing. Before touching earth I must get my body turned, lest I drag along the ground on my face. I tried twisting the shoulder-ropes. It was pleasant looking at the map spread wide below one. A clump of trees seemed to move towards me. They passed below my feet. Then suddenly the world was rushing up at me, faster and faster. . . .

I rolled over on my side, jumped to my feet and ran around my parachute to collapse it before a new gust of wind could billow it up in the air. I bundled it together, wrapping the stout round folds of voluminous silk, squeezing it into its cover. I hid it under some bushes.

In April 1940, Norway was still unknown to me. However, the Army Command had taken the sensible view, when they learned of Hitler's preparations for invading Norway, that, as I had already been to Scandinavia, and Norway like Finland is Scandinavia, I would do for the job of Liaison Officer to the Norwegian Army in south Norway.

Before any effective help from Britain could reach the Norwegians, it was necessary to establish liaison at the main landing-points along the Norwegian coast. Stavanger, the chief port on the south-west tip of Norway, was one such focal point. Others, further north, were Bergen, Trondheim and Narvik.

The country round Stavanger is rocky—glacier-marked rocks—fairly thickly covered with fir and pine trees. Not many miles inland the mountains rise sheer and high. In early April the large deserted plateaux, and even the wooded valleys, were still covered with snow and wrapped in deep winter. From the high land only a few hours' walk down towards the sea brought one to early spring, with pale buds bursting on the trees, and grass showing through snow patches on the meadows.

The first move the Germans had made on capturing Stavanger was to occupy the foreign consulates and government offices. The British Vice-Consulate had been taken over at once, but none of the staff were caught. The consul had shown the most commendable dispatch.

He himself had disappeared. His office was there but empty. He was gone, and with him all his family, a lovely Norwegian wife, two daughters and a young son. No one knew where.

The files, too, were gone. At least they were not on the shelves. They were, in fact, still burning the hands of the real heroine of the Consulate, Miss Cragg. She was the consul's secretary, and, on her own initiative, elected to remain behind to burn these files, in secret somehow, somewhere.

My orders had been to try to contact immediately on arrival the British Consular Shipping Adviser, Commander Platt, R.N.

The Norwegian lady housekeeper of the Victoria Hotel in Stavanger was a staunch friend of Britain.

When the Germans proposed to requisition the hotel as their headquarters, she put every obstacle in their way, meanwhile concealing her British friends and giving them what help she could. She seized my arm without a moment's hesitation and, giving me a few articles of Norwegian clothing, made me look like a nondescript civilian.

Commander Platt, in an impeccable blue suit, stepped out of the linen-cupboard and resumed a conversation he was having before my entry with a senior, extremely important member of the British colony. He picked up a telescope and scanned the harbour which lay below the windows.

I still see that room in my mind's eye. On the left, and facing south, was a large window with a balcony overlooking the broad quayside. Opposite the entrance door large windows overlooked the mole and the archipelago to the west.

On the wall hung a dartboard with darts sticking out of it. On the night of the German invasion, while waiting for the British help to arrive, the Commander had spent the long hours playing darts. In the centre of the room easy chairs surrounded a low, collapsible oriental table.

A taxi was at the back door, with motor running, in case the Commander had to leave suddenly. Meanwhile, hearing that I had been sent to prepare for the landing of the British troops under Brigadier Morgan, he decided to stay where he was.

From the conversation of the two gentlemen I gathered that the important member of the British colony was pessimistic. He insisted that the Commander should come away with him to a safe hiding-place. He argued that the Germans had already closed down all wireless stations and communications with the outside world; we could

not hear of the departure of our expeditionary force from England. Any minute the Germans would discover who we were.

Commander Platt put down his telescope and, pointing to me, he said, "This officer has just arrived from England and he has a wireless set working in the next room. We are waiting for a signal."

The senior and extremely important member sat down and mopped his brow before he could find words to order the instant cessation of ~~what~~ he called "this fantastic, foolhardy transmission".

The Commander poured out some whisky and gave it to the senior member, who beat the floor in vain with his silver-headed walking-stick as he drank.

My wireless operator was complaining of atmospheric disturbances. Home station almost inaudible. The message we waited for was "Beltor". In vain we pondered over the message pad to try to twist the letters to spell this word. The important member hoarsely whispered, "What's Beltor?"

I told him it was the signal for the arrival of our troops. As I left the room, I heard him expound the theory that war is always ruinous to trade.

Miss Cragg was darting down the back stairs, her coat flying in the wind. She had the nimble figure of a girl of twelve, when seen from behind. Her face and lips were ashen, and her short, dark hair blew straight out in the wind. Her spectacles could not conceal the feverish brightness of her quick eyes. Like a wisp of shadow she flitted down the stairs, through the cellars of the hotel, across a narrow street and into some further cellars, with me following behind.

We were in the Consulate. She paused for breath before hitching her rather tight skirt, to climb on to a chair and reach a high shelf, on which were concealed quantities of files. The load of papers and years of dust descended on our heads. She asked, rather wistfully, if we must burn them all. Then she showed me some walking-maps, made by the Norwegian Geographical Society some fifty years ago. She suggested I might want them. She told me she had known all along that our army would come in the end. I thanked her and pocketed the maps, and, as it turned out, I probably owe my life to them.

I took off my overcoat, spread it on the floor and stuffed into it as many files as it would hold, bundled it together and marched off to the steps.

I asked the way to the central heating boiler. Miss Cragg was too

breathless to reply but, seizing a box of papers, she rushed down the steps ahead of me and led the way.

The boiler was soon choked by the quantity of paper, and I observed with dismay that the fire was going out. I tugged at the damper while Miss Cragg produced from the bosom of her cardigan an ancient, dusty, enormous Union Jack.

"The Huns must not get this!" She stuffed it into the boiler. The fire seemed finally extinguished. I looked round in haste and there was Miss Cragg returning, clasping a large framed portrait of King George V.

However, we finally decided that His Majesty would prefer to have his father's picture discovered than his secret papers captured. So we put it aside till the fire should revive.

Miss Cragg considered, and withdrew the poker with which she was urging the voluminous flag into the stove-mouth. There were important-looking papers, she remembered, in another place. I bounded to my feet and up the steps, with Miss Cragg tearing after me, holding her dress aloft. With our arms full of papers we returned to the cellar to find the fire quite black.

"To the hotel!" said Miss Cragg. They had a large boiler there.

We scrambled all the unburned and half-burned paper out of the smoking boiler, back into my coat again. Each of us holding two corners of the coat, filled to overflowing, we marched into the street with the British Consular archives blowing in the wind. Some passers-by, who knew Miss Cragg, took this as an omen. The British were burning!

I suggested she should tell them we would be back again. Miss Cragg smiled bravely but she did not speak.

The hotel housekeeper was by now fully dressed, and she welcomed the opportunity for her boiler to serve the Allied cause. Four trips to and from the Consulate completed the transfer of all the valuable material to be destroyed. The flag, not having burned at all in the last boiler, was used as a carrier to and fro before being stuffed again, while my back was turned, into the hotel boiler. The moment I saw it I pulled it out, soggy with salt air and dust in every fold.

Having removed all the cardboard covers and thrown on one side the less important papers, we amassed round Miss Cragg the more vital material, and I left her on her knees before the fire. The flag

and the King were in a corner on the coal-heap. They were to be burned last. I tiptoed upstairs and asked the housekeeper to arrange for another car to wait at the back entrance.

When I reached Commander Platt's room I found him scanning the horizon with his telescope. The important member was still sitting at the table, holding his glass of whisky. The wireless operator was still crouching over his set. "Beltor" had not been received. Five minutes to go before the next scheduled receiving time. The sergeant tuned in to the home station. Loud squeaks and atmospheric noises filled the room. His writing-pad rested on his knee, his pencil was in his hand. Commander Platt and I looked fixedly at the small squared paper on the sergeant's pad. My watch said the hour. The sergeant began to write.

Atmospheric squeals again. For some ten minutes the wireless operator twiddled and wrote and shook his head. Atmospheric noises ruined the rest of the transmission. The decoded signal began with a "K" - try as we would to make it "Beltor"!

I ran through the preparations of the last twenty-four hours, everything seemed in order. Our ships would not necessarily pass within view of those windows before landing at one or other of the alternative beaches. I proposed we move headquarters immediately, out of the town, and establish our wireless set in the woods beyond, near the most likely landing-beach. Commander Platt was in agreement, the important member murmured "Excellent."

At this point aircraft were sighted approaching the harbour. It would be the Royal Air Force. Commander Platt's telescope was searching for the signs on the wings as soon as they should come near enough for him to see them. I felt my hair stand on end in sheer excitement. We had arrived! Someone in the street below shouted, "It's the British!"

In another instant they were right over us. Under the wings was clearly painted the black hooked cross of Hitler. A bomb dropped and blew in the windows on the south side. Part of the balcony fell off.

When I turned away from the window I saw the important member was under the table. He said he did not know what "the Captain and his staff" were going to do, but he and his party were going to retire to the country. He told Commander Platt to collect his things and come with him. Platt told him that he would remain with me.

Another bomb shook the hotel and this proved decisive. The important member crept on all fours to the door and disappeared, say-

ing we would know where to find him. We thanked him and I began to help Commander Platt to pack his bags. I remember him saying, "I shall not need dress clothes again," as he threw them aside. It occurred to me he was probably much older than he looked.

He gave me a handful of confidential papers to add to the conflagration in the cellar. I ran from the room down the stairs. When I reached Miss Cragg it was evident that the word conflagration was inappropriate. The fire was nearly out and there was a vast quantity of paper still to burn. I asked her to join the Commander and leave in the first car while I finished the burning, but Miss Cragg refused. The King and the flag still remained unburned.

I decided to dispatch Platt and the wireless operator with the set. I ran upstairs again, and was crossing the entrance hall to reach the back staircase, when my eye lighted on a German captain, monocle, grey gloves and all. I had never before seen the actual uniform. From his Sam Brown dangled a small revolver holster and a short dagger.

Behind the German stood the housekeeper. She saw my head appear at the door from the basement and slowly shook her head. I closed the door behind me and walked past the German captain up the main stairs. The housekeeper followed and breathlessly informed me that the German had requisitioned the hotel, and the Swastika was being run up on the flagpole. I wondered what had happened to the local defence force.

The housekeeper arranged for Commander Platt and the wireless operator to proceed at once to her brother's house, and hide there until I came. My operator said he did not think he should transport the set through the town, now that the Germans had arrived. I pretended not to have heard, and repeated to Commander Platt that he would proceed at once with the wireless operator. To my relief, Platt straightened his bent back and, in a thundering voice, looking straight at the wireless operator, he said, "Very good, Captain!" The wireless operator followed him out of the door, murmuring something about its being as good as "walking about with your coffin".

I watched them get into the taxi at the back door, then ran down the stairs to the cellar. Miss Cragg and I riddled the grate, took out some of the paper and added more coal.

It was ten o'clock in the morning, and it was becoming evident that we could not stay at the Victoria Hotel many minutes longer. In

any case, I wanted to rejoin my wireless set, in case some message should come over the air at the noon transmission. The kitchen staff kept us informed about the progress of the Germans, who were moving in.

News came that the German Air Force were landing at Sola aerodrome. Everyone seemed mystified as to why the Norwegian force which had been guarding it had not blown it up. Already small detachments of German troops, with equipment on small vehicles, were streaming into the town. The Swastika was flying from the police station.

By now everything of confidential value, even King George the Fifth's portrait, had been burned. The flag was restored to Miss Cragg's bosom, as it seemed to be non-inflammable and she refused to leave it to be desecrated.

It was about 11 a.m. when we finally hurried to the kitchen door. After the cellar darkness, the sun outside was blinding. I remember the housekeeper appearing with a knife in her hand and holding a boy by the shoulder. She called to us to wait. The boy had just informed her that all roads leading from the town were now closed by the Germans. She thought we could still reach her brother's house but any escape would be difficult. Miss Cragg and I decided to walk to the brother's house.

The streets were packed with people in confusion. Miss Cragg threaded her way with feverish dexterity, through the traffic of escaping cars, lorries, carts, running people, marching Germans and Wehrmacht lorries, which seemed to have appeared from nowhere. While following my guide I did my best to decide what to do next. Things were not going according to plan, inasmuch as the Norwegians round Stavanger, at any rate, were not putting up much resistance. The cession of the aerodrome was a bit of a shock.

It seemed obvious that I must get in touch, as quickly as possible, with what remained of the loyal Norwegian forces, and explain to them that the British were arriving at any moment now. The most difficult problem appeared to be that of finding some responsible Norwegians whom I could convince.

Meanwhile my first duty remained the one of getting my wireless set working, in the vicinity of the likely landing-beaches.

In the residential part of the town, on a bank to the left of the road, Miss Cragg turned into a garden path. A wooden villa stood before us. Someone opened the door. I was led into a kind of washhouse in

the basement. There, in the middle of the room, on the concrete floor, stood my wireless operator. It seemed very dark in that room and at first I could hardly believe my eyes. Before him lay the wireless set, already partly shattered.

He told me he planned to bury it at once before it was discovered. I examined the set. As far as I could see, its vital parts were destroyed. Though I am pretty ignorant about wireless I intended to make quite sure. Dizzy with rage, I bundled the remains of the set into an empty sack which I found near by. The operator, who appeared badly shaken, kept on repeating, "It's useless now, sir." But in vain. I hoisted the bag on to my shoulder, trembling with fury. Upstairs the housekeeper's brother was hiding our kitbags, which the Commander had brought along with him in the taxi.

The taxi was still at the door. Platt explained to me that they had been stopped by German troops and the set very nearly discovered. However, he agreed with me that we should make an attempt to take it to a safe place up the Sandnes Fjord, where we thought our troops would land. The set remained our only hope of contact with our own forces. We decided to risk its transport.

The taxi moved off with four civilians—three men and one woman. Under our legs, beneath two rucksacks of food, lay the sack with the wireless set.

Back in the main street, to the eastern end of the town, confusion reigned worse than before. The constant coming and going of German aircraft overhead was having the desired effect upon the peaceable population, unaccustomed as they were to the machines of war. At a bend in the road the car was brought to a standstill in a queue of cars. Before we could back out a German soldier wrenched open the door. The car ahead moved on. Sitting on the set, I pointed to the face of Miss Cragg, who in truth, without any pretence, looked extremely sick. The German slammed the door and gave the driver a chit, allowing him to pass on.

As soon as possible we left the main road, which seemed utterly congested, and turned into open country, where small lanes led us to the woods near the fjord. We were not far from Sandnes. No one appeared in sight. I motioned the sergeant out with the wireless set, and the whole party followed up the hill into the wood. Five minutes' walk brought us to the edge of a lake and here the set was examined. It was quite beyond repair.

There was no alternative. I collected the pieces of the ruined

set into the sack, tied it up and hurled it into the lake. The lake turned out to be shallow, for the top of the sack stuck up out of the water. I ordered the operator to make it disappear.

I can still see the look on Platt's face as the operator waded into the water up to his thighs. It would have taken a brave man to question that withering look. Miss Cragg, her dark eyes starting from her pale strained face, stood next to him clutching her bosom in which was the flag.

This final disaster necessitated a complete overhaul of all my plans. After consultation with Platt, it was finally decided that I should wait in hiding near the coast, while he would conduct Miss Cragg and the operator to the consul's country cottage. We would keep in constant communication by messenger.

Slowly we returned to the taxi. On the way back Miss Cragg declared that she had no intention of retreating to the Consul's cottage. She wanted to stay with "the Captain" as guide and interpreter. This seemed to me the last straw. She looked far too frail for such a doubtful existence. After a short discussion, however, to my surprise, the commander agreed with her. There was no time to argue. The taxi drove away with Commander Platt and the wireless operator, while Miss Cragg and I set off towards a house, belonging to Norwegian friends of hers, where we had planned to establish our wireless headquarters.

Once the noise of the taxi on the gravel soil had died away, I noticed the silence. I hoped it was the lull before the storm of our Army's arrival.

Luckily Miss Cragg didn't believe in unnecessary talk, so I had time to think. Though one tended to feel marooned without the set, I concluded that things might have been a great deal worse.

There was no smoke rising from the chimney of Miss Cragg's friends' house. The blinds were down. Miss Cragg thought it unlikely that Fru X. would have run away. She was an English lady married to a Norwegian, I was told. We rang the door-bell. A noise from the bushes behind us made us turn. Mrs. X.'s head was rising slowly from the hedge; she exclaimed her relief and her welcome in one breath.

She had hidden Mr. X., as soon as the "poor man had returned from the rout at Sola airfield". Apparently X. was with a company of loyal Norwegians, and they thought they had been betrayed by some superior authority, who had failed to "press the button to blow the

thing up" when the German aeroplanes arrived. X., like the true Norwegian he undoubtedly was, had seized some rifles and, as his wife put it, now they were all waiting for the British. I think she was from Yorkshire. I explained my purpose. The light of battle was in Mrs. X.'s eye. She jumped to her feet and, putting her face close to mine, asserted in a stage whisper, "I knew it all the while. 'We' would come by parachute." She collected Mr. X. and led us into the kitchen to make a cup of tea.

Miss Cragg stood at the window to keep an eye on the road. X. twiddled at his wireless set, but the Norwegian transmission appeared to be silent. He kept asking me what was the position, and, trying to put the best light on the situation, I explained that a British expeditionary force was arriving at any minute to help the Norwegian Army drive the Germans out. I could not say exactly where or when, because my receiving set had been smashed.

We agreed we must concentrate urgently on the problem of how to find a responsible local representative of the Norwegian Army Command. "To tell him we are coming to the rescue, dear," added Mrs. X.

After many cups of tea it was agreed that X. would try various channels to leading officers in the local regiment. As soon as he found a reliably anti-German authority he would bring him to me.

I planned to set up a series of watch-posts along the coast, to await the first sight of our ships. We would prepare reflector lights to guide them to the sandy beaches. X. would try to find a Norwegian transmission set so that I could signal back to England.

That day nothing happened and, when night came, I went to sleep in a nearby hayloft expecting at any moment to be wakened by thundering cannon in the fjords below, announcing the approach of the King's army.

X. returned the next day with news that the British had landed between Narvik and Bodo in the far north, but so far no news of our landing in the south. His second item was that the Norwegian Army of the South, the Rogalands Regiment, had abandoned the coast, and was taking up a new position down a deep fjord north of Stavanger, waiting to attack the Germans when the British arrived. X. had sent a messenger to the lieutenant of his former unit, asking him to get in touch with a high-ranking Norwegian officer, who was to come to see me. He added that the King of England had spoken on the wire-

less and promised help to Norway. He said, "By the 17th of May (the national day) Norway will be free." I felt extremely annoyed that I should have missed the King's speech on the wireless.

X. understood that the Germans were establishing lookout posts along the coast. We decided I should move forthwith to the consul's cottage, and wait there until the high-ranking Norwegian officer should reach me. I followed X. back to the road and waited while he fetched Miss Cragg.

It must have been two o'clock in the afternoon before we had plotted out a safe cross-country route to the consul's cottage, on Miss Cragg's touring-map. We set off in a northerly direction, planning to arrive the following morning. Miss Cragg walked with rapidity over the rough, uneven ground.

By nightfall we reached a farm called Tysdal. It lay alone under the mountains, a stone's throw from the shores of a narrow fjord, on the far side of which, up in the hills, was the consul's cottage. From here we thought it would be safe to cross the fjord. The family consisted of two youths and their mother. One of them, Theodore Tysdal, listened quietly to Miss Cragg's story, as he stood on his threshold, staring at Miss Cragg and the British Army's representative. He then disappeared into consultation with his brother. They decided it was dangerous to cross the fjord in the rowboat at night, as this might arouse suspicions.

Theodor invited us into his home. His mother prepared some food for us, while he shifted his belongings out of his bedroom into that of his brother so that I might sleep there. Miss Cragg was to have the spare bedroom. The family then left us to eat alone in the best parlour. We drank glasses of fresh milk.

In my room I pulled off my outer clothes and rolled into the tall box-bed, under an enormous white feather eiderdown. On the back of Lontaine's photo, which I kept safely in my left breast pocket, there is a note "Tysdal 11th April 1940".

The following morning, while the mother was preparing breakfast, I took a stroll round the house. In the sun, leaning against the wooden wall of a goat-shed, Theodore Tysdal was quietly playing a schottische on an old and rather battered accordion. A note appeared to stick, and, sitting down, he set about opening one side of it to find out what was wrong. The solution of a minor problem, which had been worrying me since I had woken up that morning, now struck me. My military identity documents and disc, as well as one or two papers I

would require in the event of my reaching the Norwegian Army, could be safely hidden inside the accordion.

Theodore asked me to try it. We sat on the doorstep, side by side, while he taught me to play a tune. I whistled for him Gracie Fields's "Run, Rabbit, Run".

After breakfast Theodore said he would like to give it to me as a souvenir, if I took any pleasure in it. As soon as I was alone I opened it, put my things inside and found that it played just as well as ever, with only the faintest sound of rustling paper.

We set out to complete our journey. I cannot now trace the first part of our route, but by midday we reached the village in which was the consul's cottage. There were several handsome villas which Miss Cragg avoided, by walking through pine forests which fringed the back of the gardens. We approached the back of the cottage. After listening for some moments we went to the kitchen window. It was shut, but there were signs of habitation. Dishes and plates were standing on the table. Newspapers littered the floor. A cupboard door was open, and in the grate near by were dead ashes. We could not hear a sound.

Cautiously we walked round to the front. The living-room window was smashed. Inside two chairs were overturned, the carpet was rucked up, the door stood ajar. Drawers were gaping open, their contents strewn around. An empty glass lay on its side on the table and a big pool of water still whitened the floor. Miss Cragg clutched her bosom and darted a glance at me. From the road we heard steps and, thinking it might be a German, we ran back into the wood.

A tall woman came running after us round the corner of the house. She was a friend of Miss Cragg's. She told her that the Germans had been here to arrest the consul. They had not found him and were skulking around the village. The consul with his family had escaped in the nick of time, and they were at present making for a distant farmhouse, the exact whereabouts of which she was able to explain to Miss Cragg. We decided to go to this farm.

We left the kind lady anxiously wringing her hands. We returned to the forest and, in the evening, reached another fjord where Miss Cragg said she knew a boatman. He left his supper and prepared his motor-boat at once. An icy wind was blowing, the water was rough. Miss Cragg sat in the bottom of the boat and, laying her weary head on an old motor-tyre, which at other times served as a buffer, she was unobtrusively ill. We tried to help her, loosened her coat collar, and

finding the Union Jack, spread it on the wet boards. She was too far gone to resist and lay on her country's flag with closed eyes.

We landed on the rocky shore of a black pine forest, thanked the boatman and watched him turn about. Miss Cragg then threaded her way, with unflinching sense of direction, through the tall trees, till we reached a clearing. It turned out to be a brownish pasture land, and in the dusk we could make out a rough, unpainted, two-storey wooden house, with tarred felt on the roof. A line of smoke was rising from the chimney but not a light was visible in any window. Apart from the fact that we could see no other building, we were not at all sure of this place. We stood at a respectful distance, while I played on the accordion and sang very softly, "Run, Rabbit, Run, Rabbit, run, run, run. Don't let the German have his fun. He'll get by without his British pie. So run, Rabbit, run, Rabbit, run, run, run."

Tense silence followed. Then a corner of a blind was drawn aside, and the anxious face of the Consul appeared round the edge of it. He beckoned to us to come in.

They were all there. Commander Platt, my wireless operator, two other members of the British Consulate and the Consul's family.

There was rejoicing at the reunion.

The Consul did not think this a safe hiding-place. He had arranged for a motor-boat to take us up the fjord to a more secluded spot, where plans for the future could be laid. Complicated arrangements were made to enable the high-ranking Norwegian officer to find me.

At midnight the moon was shining through the clouds. The entire party of eleven British souls noiselessly left the house, each with a rucksack of provisions. In single file we silently crossed the field towards the forest. We stumbled and slipped along the edge of what seemed to be a sand-pit.

Commander Platt stumbled several times, and we discovered that he could not see in the dark. Each time he got up, in the best of good humour, to continue the march.

In the motor-boat—a large open boat, with sails furled and an out-board motor fixed to the stern—the Commander seemed about to faint. I was given to understand he suffered from heart trouble. However, he refused to lie down, or even give up carrying his own suitcase.

I have no idea how long the whole trip lasted before the boat glided in, with switched-off motor, to a still lagoon at the head of Fordefjord. On a shingly beach we got out and carried our belongings to a fisher-

man's cottage, which alone seemed to have been forgotten in that rock-walled *cul-de-sac*. Undoubtedly it would be unlikely for the Germans, or anyone else, to find us here. There were two rooms in the cottage, and the fisherman kindly gave us the use of one of them. With his family he withdrew into the other. Here, as I understood it, we should live indefinitely: eleven British men and women with enough food for a few days.

The days crept by, our activities more and more restricted as our ration of food diminished. The lovely Norwegian wife of the British Consul doled out fair shares daily between her own three children and the rest of us, but still no message reached us about the second British landing, and still no sign appeared of the high-ranking Norwegian officer.

The men lay on straw, a blanket apiece, along one side of the room. The women lay along the other side. A desk-shaped iron stove projected into the room, forming a partition between the two sections. In the corner stood a considerable wooden bedstead on which the consul lay beside his little son.

It must have been during the first days that we energetically chopped wood, and washed our clothes in the freezing water of the brook. Later, we were less energetic, as we found that walking about on an empty stomach made us feel ill. Each man took it in turn to light the stove. And each in turn would tell the bedtime story after the precious candle was blown out.

From his bed, heaped with clothes in the furthest corner of the floor, his thin white face looking like a mask in the dusk, his eyes, now with a clear yellow ring around each iris, staring at the ceiling, the Commander told stories that were far the most exciting, and could be relied on to transport us away from our cold and clammy room.

We had prepared, out of white paper, a signal to lay on the ground in the event of a friendly aircraft being sighted. We used to play a game, in which each man named the favourite dishes he would order for his first meal on being rescued. My choice was a meal in the Essex Coffee House in London. There I would order hot pea soup, rump steak and a golden syrup roll. Occasionally I would change it for a lemon ice at the Café Royal in Regent Street. This game was invariably successful in stopping us talking, and we would lie down on our backs and try to sleep.

After what seemed like many days, I decided that the high-ranking Norwegian officer was never coming, and I had better go myself to

find his whereabouts before I grew any weaker, and before our party was quite overcome with cold and starvation.

No living object was visible from the bottom of the gorge in which we lived. From time to time shoals of stones and boulders would thunder down the cliffs above. One day a dead sheep rolled to within a few yards of the brook where we fetched water. It was too rotten to eat.

The party, on the whole, were against my going. They took the view that, even though I might be the youngest and the toughest, I was insufficiently conversant with the language, and the country, and would probably be caught. They suggested we go on waiting. Even the Norwegian lady, who watched over her children listlessly, lying on their palliasses and slowly starving, appeared to take that view. Miss Cragg supported them. That night, I remember, it was her turn to tell the story, and it was the gayest story we had yet enjoyed. I almost came to regret the thought of leaving such good company the following day.

When the others were asleep I talked to Commander Platt, and we discussed my route. After which, as neither of us could sleep, I remember we passed the night describing to each other our respective homes, in every detail of layout and appearance. Commander Platt's wife had just moved to their new home somewhere in Dorset. It was called Penny Cottage, I remember. Mrs. Platt was putting the finishing touches to the dream home which was their cottage. On a page of my diary he drew the plan of the house. A crazy-paving path led up to the front door. There was a potting-shed, and specially deep cupboards built into the wall for Mrs. Platt's linen. There was something special, too, about the fireplace in the sitting-room, but I no longer remember what.

At breakfast, I am sure, I had most of Miss Cragg's ration. Then the time came to leave. No preparations to make. My rucksack contained only my accordion. I said goodbye to my companions in the room, save for the lovely Norwegian lady and Miss Cragg, who were on the porch outside. The farewell ended with my leaving with a Victorian penny "for luck" and the flag in my coat-lining. It would be useful when I got established as the British Liaison Officer at the Norwegian headquarters. Miss Cragg's hands struck me as almost transparently thin as she waved goodbye. Though I never saw her again, I shall not forget the pleasure of having met one of Britain's undaunted little heroines.



The fisherman landed me safely on the mainland across the fjord. There I heard a rumour that the British had landed near Obrestad south of Stavanger. I made straight for that direction, and next morning reached a village called Aalgaard. There I was told I might meet a Major Brandt, who was second-in-command of the Rogaland Regiment, a well-known anti-German, Norwegian officer.

I had to ask numerous people before finding him. As far as I can remember, they took me to a barn where several Norwegians were in a state of great excitement, as a party of Germans were said to be marching into the village at that very moment. Brandt and the others were called away and, after waiting some moments longer, I thought I saw signs of the Germans occupying the village. I walked as slowly as I dared in the direction of a large shed and, once behind its shelter, made off at double-quick speed on my walk to Obrestad.

Next morning I met some responsible-looking Norwegians, just returned from Obrestad. They assured me there was no truth at all in the story of a British landing. They told me the Norwegian Army of the South was forming up further inland near Hogsfjorden. I walked back again all that day and the next, until I came to a small town with big factory buildings by the water's edge. Outside the town, in a wayside café of somewhat doubtful appearance, I learned from a talkative young waitress, wearing a bright red blouse, that the Norwegians were gathering at Dirdal. She knew, because her fiancé had set off to join them not two hours back. I asked the way, and followed her route at a running pace to catch up with the fiancé. Evidently my luck was now returning. It was possibly Miss Cragg's penny.

The road was long and perhaps I did not go as fast as I imagined, for hours after the moon had risen and I had reached the forest, I still had seen no trace of the fiancé. I felt sure I was on the right road, and carried on walking in the dark. Dirdal was at the other side of the wood, in a valley which ran down to the fjord. Here presumably the Norwegians had gathered, and here too the Germans were hastening up their material, which I had several times avoided on the road that day. The important thing appeared to me to get there, before any battle or possible disaster might cause the Norwegian headquarters to move again. If I could get in touch again with Major Brandt, or one of his officers, I would be able to arrange for the evacuation of our starving party.

Dirdal turned out to be very different from my imagining. It was

the speed with which developments succeeded one another that at first surprised me.

I had scarce concluded that the camp before me was in fact the Norwegian one, with their army preparing for battle, when a soldier, with rifle and bayonet, hailed me from the far side of a fence and led me to a wooden house. I hardly had time to hand my papers to the small Norwegian officer before an extremely energetic officer, I think a major, entered the house. He shouted in Norwegian for a few moments, broke into English and welcomed me with enthusiasm. He carried off my papers and led me to a tall, white-haired officer.

If only they had talked less quickly, I might have understood more clearly what they were saying. No one had time to listen to my story about the plight of my ten British friends.

I do not think the major's English was easy to understand, largely because of the noise. Another soldier joined us; the attack had started. An explosion shook the ground somewhere near by. The major told me he could send a wireless message to the British Army, in the north of Norway, and asked if I could draft a telegram to get help quickly. His colonel held the opinion that we, the British, would be unable to help them soon enough; he was unwilling to lead his men into a hopeless battle.

The major was of the opinion we should fight, at least, a delaying battle. Partly in English, partly in Norwegian, he said something about refusing to give up their arms to Hitler. We reached a gun-site camouflaged with branches, and near by a number of Norwegians were conferring.

The only impression which remains in my mind quite clearly was the lack of any definite intention. Everyone seemed to argue at a moment when action would appear to be the only course.

I remained there waiting for the major to return, to send my message to British Headquarters. After some ten minutes or a quarter of an hour, the confusion around increased considerably. I have no clear recollection of what happened next, due, perhaps, to the fact that I had been several days without sufficient food, and was physically tired, after walking most of the time during the days and nights that preceded the battle.

An N.C.O. came up to me and handed me a revolver. I had asked for it earlier. I was examining the revolver when the most shattering noise I had heard to date occurred in the valley: the explosion, I think, of Oltesvik power station.

The next thing I remember was the man who had handed me the revolver running up to me bareheaded, beckoning me to follow him. I turned and felt something brush past my legs. I took another step and suddenly realised I had been hit in the leg. I was surprised I did not feel more pain, but either I could not, or I imagined I could not, walk. I have no idea how long I lay there, until some men ran past me, carrying someone on their shoulders. They nearly fell over me and, seeing the blood on my legs, they picked me up, like a sack of potatoes, and ran on.

We were now going uphill. Branches kept brushing me. At the top of a hill with undergrowth, something like heather or myrtle, I was laid on the ground.

The noise of the battle seemed to have died away, except for intermittent bursts of fire and occasional sounds of aircraft, diving between the hills. I was lying between two other wounded men. All except one of our rescuers got up and went away. The remaining one examined the wounds. When he came to me, he discovered I was not Norwegian and, smiling broadly, asked if I were English. He seemed unable to believe it when I told him I was. He repeated his question slowly, and appealed to the other casualties to listen to this news and try their English on me. It put new life into the party. They reached for my hands to welcome their ally. I learned from them that the second-in-command of the Norwegian force in action had been killed that day. From their description I believe it was my major. After his death the commanding officer had decided the odds were too heavy against his force and had capitulated. Half his men, with their arms, gave themselves up to the enemy, but the rest ran off into the mountains. We were waiting for the sergeant to return with help to carry us to a car.

The above is all I can remember of the sad story of my unimpressive, first battle. Nothing, so far as I could see, had been achieved, and for quite a while I was firmly under the impression that my legs were broken, and I felt depressed about it.

It was dusk now, we were silent. On the back of Lointaine's photo I see it was the 22nd April 1940.

Suddenly there was a babble of many voices and torches were flashed to and fro. I assumed it was help arriving until I realised they were German voices. I propped myself up on my elbow and saw German helmets too. Next moment we were prisoners.

They removed my revolver but left me my rucksack and accordion,

which were still strapped to my back. I was hoisted on to a stretcher and carried off. Not realising I must grip the frame of the stretcher, I rolled off it again as the bearers tilted the thing, descending the steep hill. The curses that resulted, and the annoyance shown by the two German bearers, cheered me up. I was put in a truck and, after some time, we reached a field in which a number of men were sitting and lying on the ground. They carried me into a cottage and placed me on the floor with a row of stretchers.

Soon a German, whom I took to be an officer, came and asked me in Norwegian what, I imagine, must have been my name, my rank and unit. I am sure I was quite aware of the German's questions but I was genuinely fainting from hunger. The German shook me and said something to an orderly, who raised my head and propped it up on my rucksack, which was still on my back.

It was daytime when I woke. A civilian was placing a tin can on my chest. There was soup in it. My neighbour on the floor leaned across to help me drink it. He whispered they were taking us away in a coastal steamer. I asked if he knew where we were going and he replied, "To the Stavanger Hospital."

Night had fallen again before anything happened. I went to sleep and next time I woke, I was feeling better. My calves were hurting me but both legs were there, and my British army boots lay at the head of my mattress. Also, I discovered, I could move my feet. I decided it could not be a serious wound in spite of the mess of blood all over my trousers. What cheered me most was the fact that, so far as I knew, no one had discovered that I was English.

When the moment came to go to the latrine, which was attached to the back of the cottage, I found I could creep on hands and knees with reasonable rapidity and a certain amount of pain. An elderly Norwegian helped me along and, when he brought me back and I was once more lying down, my neighbour on the floor whispered across to me that he was going to escape and would include me in his party.

I told him I thought it was an excellent plan, and he then explained that the Norwegian orderly, who would come that night with our supper, would pretend to be rough and pro-Quisling, "but really he is one of us." I was to ask him to help me again to the latrine. I spent the rest of the day in great excitement.

It was evident that I still had a number of assets. If my neighbour was as good as his word, I would get away before we were transferred

to a regular hospital and interrogated. I had still got my rucksack, and in it was the accordion with my papers. Above all, I had confederates, who evidently considered it would be an advantage to have a British officer with them, trying to join the British Army in the north of Norway. I also had faith in a British landing near Stavanger, since my neighbour reported a rumour that they arrived on the evening after the battle of Dirdal. The situation was clearly a great deal better than I had at first supposed.

At length the Norwegian orderly came in with a basin of soup. A row broke out between him and the German sergeant. The orderly left the cottage, the German took round the mugs of soup. I drank mine slowly. The German collected the mugs and slammed the door. It was evidently not the night.

The following night the orderly served the soup and he collected the mugs. The sergeant was standing by the door, tapping his boots with a stick. I asked to be helped to the latrine, and my Norwegian neighbour also asked the same.

The orderly looked at the sergeant and helped us up. I sank to my knees, my rucksack was hanging under me round my waist. The orderly threw a blanket over my back. The three of us reached the latrine. The orderly returned to the main room, shouting to us to call him when we were ready to return to bed.

In the latrine I could see two other men. They laid me down on the ground and, in the darkness, I could feel a cold draught between the wall and the ground where earth had been scraped away. Someone pushed me through the aperture.

One of the men outside lifted me over his shoulder and silently crossed some open ground before reaching the woods. They seemed to run for about a quarter of an hour, stopping once to hand me over from one to the other. We got into a waiting car. After about an hour we stopped outside a house. A woman opened the door, we hustled in. People were speaking in whispers. It was evident that not everyone in the house was to know of our arrival. I was taken upstairs to an attic and laid on a bed which was warm from somebody having lain in it. There they left me. For four or five days the woman appeared twice a day, bringing me food, and laying her finger to her lips to warn me to make no noise. I never saw either of the men again.

Soon my legs had improved and I started to walk round my bed. The wounds had been caused by a bullet which grazed the muscles of both calves. No bones were broken.

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# SWEET IS WAR

By  
MALCOLM  
MUNTHE



*Analysis of*

THE AUTHOR

SEE THE WAR TO THEM THAT KNOW IT NOT  
—ERASMUS