

TO THE AUSTRALIANS

THEY were in the fight from the day Germany struck at Poland. They had men in the Middle East, at Tobruk, in Libya, Syria. Their men are at Singapore, waiting for the day when the Allied planes will come in low, and the sounds of the relief forces shall be clear in the distance. Their Wirraways went into action above Rabaul against the graceful, fighter Zero . . . slow, under-gunned ships, against one of the finest fighters the first months of the war produced. At Port Moresby, their own P-40 squadrons fought against odds for weeks, without respite, until their last day when three P-40's took off to intercept fifteen bombers and their escort of Zeros. Then the American fighters moved in, but the Australians merely returned to the mainland to be re-equipped, and to go to Milne Bay where they fought against the Japanese invaders, to defeat them in the first decisive landing engagement in the New Guinea war. At Moresby, the area was studded with their guns and men, some of them returned from two years in Africa, and calmly, cynically witty about the fates which had taken them from the desert to place them in the jungle.

Their squadron of Bostons was operating from a strip near our first New Guinea base. It was a tribute to the magnificent ship, that the feeling of comradeship became a real thing between the two squadrons, but the beautiful ship and its style of attack made it inevitable. The association between the Australians and the Americans increased, because of very practical reasons, when the Japanese patrols advanced far up the trails towards Moresby. We saw the work of the Diggers on the brutal, undefined front of the first major ground fighting, and it became clear where they had gained their reputation for quiet, vicious determination in battle.

The Australian liaison officers, and their non-commissioned assistants, assigned to the Squadron to keep the channels clear between the air forces and the ground troops, were typical of their nation . . . until the merciless pounding they received forced them to revise their style of speech, and their theories of humor. A six-month period of service was not long enough, of course, to force a complete change-over, but they proved to be well disciplined pupils . . . and their speech became a fascinating mixture of Australian-American army talk, quite —. The work of the liaison teams was of an importance not easily estimated, for it provided us with a detailed knowledge of the ground situation, an education towards the methods of survival in the jungle, and a more complete understanding of Australia and its people. Captain Stephens, Captain Braddock and Lieutenant Davey were with us, as ALO's. Their service with the Squadron was of value. . . .

The men from a great continent, with a small population which is largely concentrated into a few large cities, have again proved their steel in this war. There will be a new position for their nation in the world, during the generations of progress to come.