

“Not in the firing line,” said Kentucky quickly, “I’m not fit for that. But I am fit for Red Cross work.”

“It’s as bad,” said Larry, “if you’re working close up, as I know you’d be if you had a chance.”

The girl was staring into the flickering fire with set lips. She looked round suddenly and leaned forward and slipped a hand on to Kentucky’s knee. “Oh, Ken . . . don’t, don’t go. Stay here with us.”

Kentucky’s thought flashed out to “over there,” where he would move in mud and filth, would be cold and wet and hungry. He saw himself crawling a car along the shell-holed muddy track, his hands stiff with cold, the rain beating and driving in his face, the groans of his load of wounded behind him, the stench of decay and battle in his nostrils, the fear of God and the whistling bullets and roaring shells cold in his heart. And against that was this snug, cozy room and all the life that it stood for . . . and the warm touch of the girl’s hand on his knee. He wavered a moment while a line hammered swiftly through his mind, “. . . sifting out the hearts of men. . . .”

Then he spoke quietly, almost casually; but