



CONVOY



By Pte STUART MARTIN

THE gloom of the tent is split in twain by the flash of a lantern just as you are about to get into "bed", and the Orderly Sergeant's head appears through the flap.

"Men on convoy duty are not to take their clothes off. Convoy is expected," he raps out.

His head is withdrawn, the flash of light zig-zags drunkenly up and down the sloping roof; then darkness. You hear his retreating footsteps sounding as a background for your rising irritation.

"They expect you to work day and night here," you grumble as you pull on your breeches again and observe your puttees tucked into your muddy boots. You remember with bitterness that Orders declare every man to be on duty "for twenty-four hours daily every day in the month". There is no appeal beyond Caesar.

You poke your head outside the tent to have a look at the weather. A strong wind blows in over Salonika from the sea and the stars are shining from a deep, dark-blue void. Here and there a light twinkles in the wards of No. 5. From above, Ursa Major and

the great Orion are looking down upon you.

That sobers you. The war seems so paltry in face of the Milky Way. You feel ashamed of being irritated at the Orderly Sergeant. Are not broken men, who at this moment are being bumped over rough roads towards you, dreaming of the clean beds and the comforts to be had at the end of their journeying? They are relying on you; could you fail them?

You lie down, dozing and waking through the long hours. At last, when you have almost given up expectation, the lantern comes again.

"All right," you answer, and push aside your blankets. In two minutes you are outside the tent, great-coat buttoned tight, shivering in the night wind. Other shadows are moving ahead; they, too, have been called to the convoy.

You cross the parade ground and try to race a little to make yourself warm; but somehow your feet are too heavy and your limbs are stiff. The wind is raw. It is 2 a. m.

Far down, at the end of the camp, headlights and lanterns are making yellow holes in the blackness and