

NEW FACES COME BACK

Three reels.  
Production 07-028  
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REEL ONE

I am a Welfare Officer - at a hospital that is still refitting for the peace, the men wrecked by the war. Placed where I am, I get the facts about these boys. And while they are still returning to you - to try to make a comeback in your world... you too, should know their story.

Take Jim, for instance ---

Jim arrived from Canada in the early part of May, 1941. Like most of his bunch, it was the first time he had set foot in England.

He arrived when the war looked blackest - and England needed him.

It needed his hands - on those vital aircraft engines.

It needed him as a fitter - and it was as a fitter that he joined his wuadron.

He was an L.A.C. then, and it wasn't long before he became a Corporal - but he wanted to fly, and that meant remustering. He found plenty of encouragement. He made plenty of friends. He had a way of getting what he wanted.

And since his tastes were always a stripe ahead of him - the stripes had to catch up.

Over his pocket went the badge of a full-fledged Flight Engineer.

Jim was right in there with the other boys. One of a team. Taking rough with the smooth...until there came an early morning when two officers in the Control Room knew that his kite was coming in shot-up! - With no power to get her wheels down -- And they knew what would follow --

He was badly burned when we got him - but he was in good hands.

Three weeks had gone by since that crash. Not until then could he be made ready for that first operation.

And the first would be one of many. He had been told that - but he could take it.

He even tried to take ---- his nurse's mascot! Perhaps he thought he'd need it.

I remember him trying to get across to me how he felt when the nurse was busy about his room, getting him ready for that strange journey. What worried him most was - not knowing what was coming.

(music)

At first the quiet English countryside didn't understand our work at the hospital. People who didn't know about our problems, recoiled from the mutilated and disfigured men we were rebuilding. The war had not yet torn down the jealous privacies of England. The bolt were shut. The gates were closed. We had to have a link between us and that world outside - someone willing to plead our cause. We needed the understanding and kindness of neighbours, to help our men back to normal community living.

There was a woman whose sympathies had already been aroused. She had asked if she could help us. I remember that when I first went along to see her I did so with some hesitation. Even the best-disposed might shrink from meeting and helping some of the men we were then receiving.

I took with me a book of photographs. I asked her to come along to the hospital and see for herself. I asked her if she would persuade her friends to come, too - to try to make these men know that they were among friends. Not to pity them, but to talk sense and mean it. To see them just as so many convalescent neighbours, on the way back to recovery.

She pledged her energy and support. She understood the need - and she would help to meet it. She began right there - with the first of what soon became a daily gift to the hospital. These boys must live for a long time among us. Sometimes for years. They must be made to feel at home.

Like a human jig-saw, they come in all shapes and sizes...and the Nurses help to fit them into place.

Jim was ready to come into a General ward at last. For the first time since they had pulled him out of that aircraft, he was to meet some others who had passed their ordeal by fire.

Through the first critical weeks, he had been alone under careful treatment. Now he was anxious to meet the others, and get their angle on things.

They were curious, too. They greeted him with the clumsy, friendly acceptance they had learned in cockpit and crew-room. They had to live together, at close quarters. They had to get along !

END OF REEL ONE

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REEL TWO

These men make so many visits to the Operating Theatre, they call themselves 'Guinea Pigs', and run their own 'Guinea Pigs Club'.

All of them are a long way from home. Letters are the only link with their old lives - letters to bridge the miles and the changes.

(Mother's voice reading from letter)  
non-sync.

Beyond the cheerful wards is the activity of all our skilled specialists and staff.

There are the trained eyes and fingers of the Surgeons - remaking an eyelid, a nose, a pair of ears - rebuilding a shattered face.

There are the Dental Surgeons - handling ticklish cases in a class all by themselves.

Bandaging has its special problems - calling for expert and gentle skill.

The Saline Bath treatment helps to reduce the element of pain to a bare minimum.

As for the burned tissues themselves, the Physiotherapists have a range of effective methods for every type of burn.

We make photographs of these men, at all the different stages of their stay among us. These pictures furnish a precise and permanent record of their progress.

At the centre of all this activity is Matron - whose plans provide for the cheerful treatment and atmosphere that make the best climate for recovery.

Under her care, dieticians plan the menus, watching that every tray is right for every patient.

As soon as the boys are fit to walk and move more freely, they like to get out and about. Good friends from the neighbourhood help us provide some pleasant trips into the country.

Occupational therapists teach our patients useful kinds of work that they can do by themselves.

The villagers come in to lend a hand, with letter-writing, or reading, or just passing the time of day. We welcome the quiet ones - And those who are not so quiet.

For the countryside had opened up its heart at last !

Over those 'Private' boards, were going notices for events like our famous Garden Party -

I remember taking Jim to that affair. For months, he had seen only his fellow patients and bedside visitors.

Now he had to mingle with a crowd - a big crowd, the kind that he must someday join again.

He was all for hanging back a little when he saw so many strangers around him.

He knew he was conspicuous

I was glad to seize the chance of introducing him to some friends of mine, - a mother and her daughter.

The daughter - her name was Margaret - quite happily took charge of Jim, and I could see that he was very much at ease with her. She was wise enough to show him that he was good company.

He began to feel fresh confidence. He was behaving like any other boy, and, like any other, he was having a good time. - His spirits rose with the occasion. They helped him meet what was - to him - a fearful challenge. For the first time, he was called upon to use in front of strangers, his burned and broken hands.

Jim had passed his first test with strangers. He felt excited and confident, Now at last, he could begin to think, about a useful future.

On the way home, he asked me if I could arrange some part-time work for him at an aircraft factory. He was itching to get back to those motors again. Much of course he could not do, but the hands were willing. And so it was arranged.

On the surge of his new confidence, Jim was ready for anything. He was ready to go to one of the factory dances.

Here, with a band playing and people he had seen before, Jim felt he could join the crowd and enjoy himself. At this stage, a new friendship could boost his spirits sky-high; but a single unkindness word could smash his new-found faith in himself, for months to come.

(girl's voice - sync)

(Blackie's voice - sync -

" I'm not going to say 'forget it', Jim, because you won't. But the best way to see words like those in their right perspective is to fill your head with the other kind."

"Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer  
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune:  
Or take arms against a sea of troubles,  
And by opposing, end them."

For some time, Jim was afraid to venture outside . He withdrew into the sheltered life of the hospital. And here, gradually, he came to find a new and deep satisfaction in things he'd never paid much attention to before.

End of Reel Two

REEL THREE

Finally the day came when the last dressing was done and the last bandage removed. Without his bandages, Jim felt strangely naked, but strangely free.

His face would never be normal - they seldom are. But we had done a good job for him. He was presentable.

He emerged from the bandages in time for our Annual Dinner.

(speaker's voice - non-sync.)

These men hail from all corners of the world. They meet and mix quite freely - for there is a bond between them that is above all rank and nationality.

( song - sync )

That was Jim's last party with us. He was ready for home. . . After close on three years of steady rebuilding ... of re-modelling the outward Jim and reshaping the inner one; three years of forward steps and occasional setbacks ... lack of faith and at length a fuller faith Jim was ready to leave us. He was ready to try new experiences - ready also to make his comeback into his old life at home.

I remember that on the Sunday before his train was due to leave, - he went with the usual bunch of his country friends to the village church.

(organ and sermon) - sync. - 'The few of us who could take time to leave our work went down to the station to see him off. As they all do, he promised to visit us; but he had a long way to go, and it wasn't likely that we'd meet him again.

In his stay with us, Jim had found good neighbours and friends. Now homeward bound, he wondered whether it would be easy to pick up old friendships, and make his own way in the days ahead. He wrote me afterwards that when he reached his ship, one thought was uppermost; he wondered if any of the boys he used to know would be on board. He wondered, more anxiously, if they would recognize him.

A bunch - from his old squadron was on board. They found that the man behind the mask was the same man - with the laughter undamaged, the hopes undimmed. And that's how I like to remember him, Canada-bound, one of the crowd.

His new life lies ahead. If he finds the same friendship and understanding back home as he did with us, his comeback will be quick. We in our hospital have done our best for him: THE REST IS UP TO YOU.

END.