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Apart from the fact that Ralph is sharing digs with a rather worthless friend, Laurie himself has for the first time in his life, found a spiritual fulfilment in love. He has met and begun to love Andrew Raynes, a young conscientious objector, doing war-service as an orderly in the hospital in which Laurie is a patient. The tragic predicament Laurie finds himself in — of loving two people at the same time, though on somewhat different levels, forms the bigger part of this novel, mounting slowly to a tensely told climax. A climax evading tragedy for the three men involved by hair-breath. Instead the book closes with a beautifully described happy ending, doubly enjoyed for its being built up logically, as well as for its leaving us with hope and certainty of happiness to come, instead of the usual suicide the reader of homosexual novels has somehow forcibly become accustomed to in nearly all other writings on this theme. As a last word of praise for this excellent book, attention may be drawn to the great artistic ability of Mary Renault, in creating in her three male protagonists, real men and no shadowy cissies. Readers will be grateful to Mary Renault for having shown such understanding rarely met with in these days.

R. Young.

The Postman always rings . . .

Twice. Or so they say. But when I moved into the new apartment, I had to request the postman to ring, please, when he had letters for me. I like receiving letters, and I want to know when they are there. He was an amiable old man, he agreed, and I came to expect his ring almost every day; just before ten, and just after two.

Then one day when he had not rung, I found a letter in the box. And the following day as well. What to do? Remind him, and hope for the best?

But the best was so much better than I had dared hope.

The next morning I heard a letter being left in the box, and opened the door, a good-humoured reproach already formed on my lips. A new postman! That was why —.

He was perhaps twenty three, solidly built — that was evident despite the dull grey uniform which could not completely disguise well-muscled legs, nor conceal powerful shoulders — and his brown eyes were alive and friendly. The hand holding an assortment of letters in its firm grasp was strong, and — —.

Er

Yes, he was new on the route. Yes, he'd be glad to ring. Sure. Why not?

*

Extraordinary, the effect a chance meeting can have on a carefully planned life. Without at first being conscious of it, I found myself concentrating my day around nine thirty and two (his was a younger step,

and he was quicker than his predecessor). I waited, really waited for the bell to ring in the morning, and felt a sense of loss when it did not ring again in the afternoon. Usually he was on his way downstairs when I reached the door, but not always.

He had curly brown hair, and skin tanned from countless hours of sun and wind; his lips were full, his neck beautifully proportioned.

One day I took a letter directly from his hand, and there was a brief moment of contact. I could only manage Thanks before he had turned to leave.

Then, he began not only to ring, but to wait with the letters, to give them to me himself. I counted on his smile; I waited for him. And he? I don't know, but when there was no post, and he did not ring, my morning was overshadowed. One day I declined a luncheon engagement in the city because at one thirty . . .

Yes, looking back, it sounds like something pieced together from nothing. But as it was happening I could not control the gradual development in my thoughts, as one can do in retrospect. All I knew was that the post had assumed an importance in my life quite irrelevant to the contents of the letters. Envelopes which I would formerly have torn open eagerly, lay sometimes an hour unread after he had given them to me. Whether I received personal letters, or advertisements — I welcomed the post because it came, because it brought with it: his ring.

*

Then the most awful thing imaginable! For three days there was no post. It can happen, of course. But why must it be? Where were the friends who had not answered, where were the bills . . .

There was no post, and he did not ring.

I grew more troubled each day: finally as I was sealing a letter, I knew what I would do: drop it in the box with insufficient postage. He would ring the next morning, with a printed card, and collect the postage due.

And then I would say it. Just what, I didn't know. But I must say something: the right thing. Something more than a cheerful I Thought You Had Forgotten Me. Something that would lead us to . . . each other. A single sentence would suffice; a sentence to which he could respond.

I was still far from certain just what to say when the bell rang. Nor was I easily able to control the inner excitement I felt. But I was smiling as I opened the door —

Good morning, Sir. Postage due.

The postman waited. He was moustached, a little man of fifty: patient, kindly. But —

Only after I had paid him, and he was gone, did I really realize what had happened. But where was *he*? *He had brown eyes that sparkled and were alive; his well-formed body asserted itself through the uniform. He had curly hair, and his lips . . .*

And something more; much, much more. But where —

I was profoundly depressed that day. Also the following morning. Then the bell rang.

The new postman wouldn't have known!

But, yes, it was he again. A letter. Thank you. Would *he* not ring again? Or had *he* been only temporary? What was his name? How could I — —.

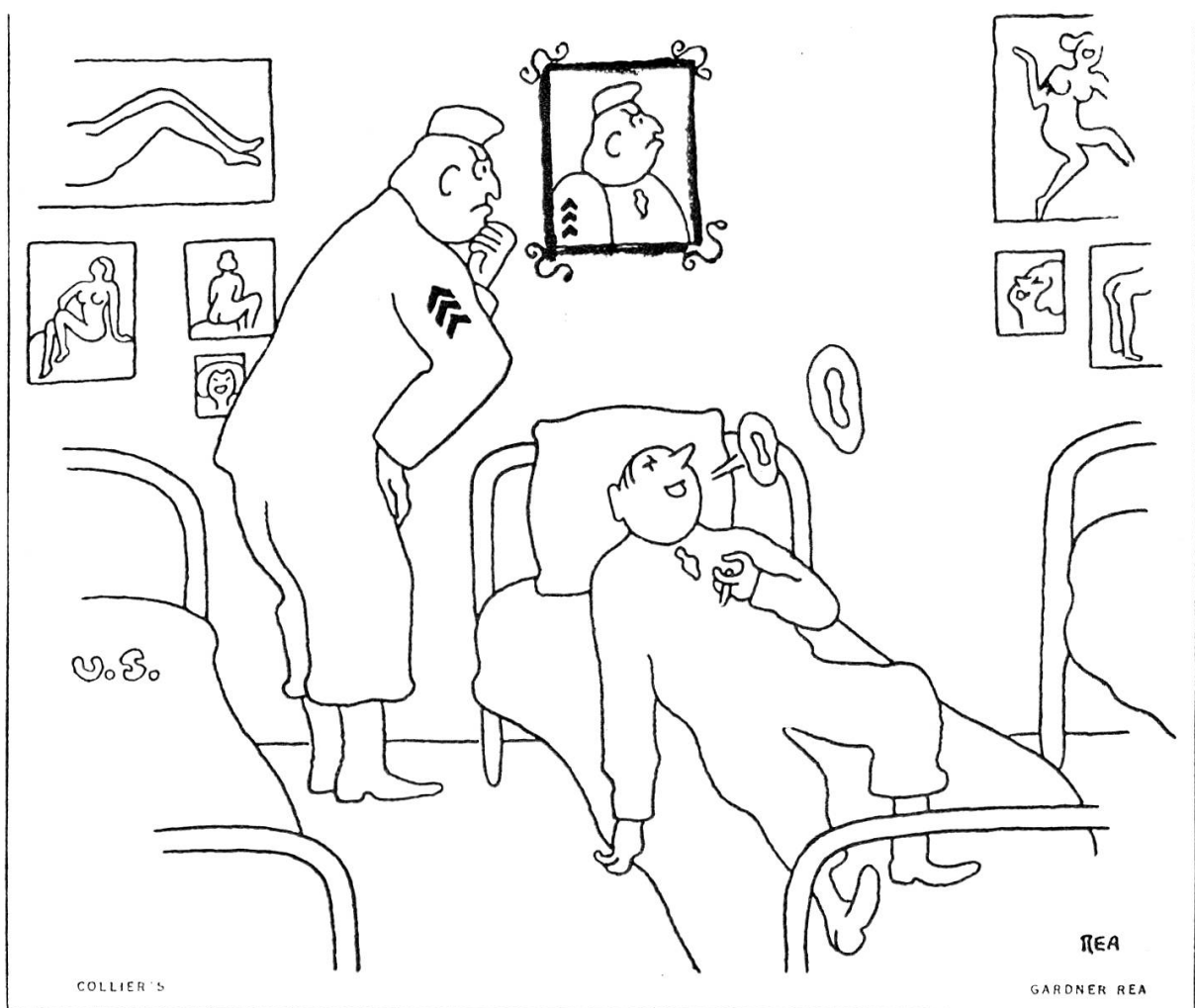
Why did the new postman ring without being asked? Was it an accident, or his habit? Or had *he* told him, and asked him to ring? While *he* was away? Would *he* — —.

I receive post almost every day, and the postman always rings. I answer the door, and hope that *he* will be there. So far. no luck. So far. But tomorrow?

His eyes were brown and alive: his lips — — —

It is half past nine. The bell!

M.



«About whom can he be dreaming?!...»

A competent American appreciation. «One» writes on behalf of our review:

We are unanimous in feeling that your Christmas issue was the finest we have ever seen. It was completely beautiful. Naturally it was especially pleasant to see ONE quoted on your pages.