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★ THE COLONEL ★ THINKS IT THROUGH

Written for "The Listener" by
 ANTHONY
 BUXTON



... The plot worked, to cut a long romance short

THE Colonel came to his office that morning, his mood suiting the day—mild and sunny. However, the Major, his assistant, did not say "Good morning." He had his reasons, because to do that invited, depending on the Colonel's mood, such replies as "When I want your opinion of the weather, Blenkinsop-pet, I'll — well ask for it;" or, "Good morning, good morning, good morning, that should do for the whole — week"

For these and kindred reasons few people ever passed the time of day with the Colonel unless the Colonel first opened up.

But this morning the Colonel was in a blithe and happy mood. He had smiled at a sergeant who had saluted him, and altogether he approached his office in a happy frame of mind.

Happily, too, his desk was moderately clear. The Colonel was, in short, in a good mood. He did not sing, he had not sung for years, but he was almost at the stage of humming happy little sub-para of King's Regulations. His main job for the day was to settle, as the senior and therefore the most knowledgeable officer present, a knotty problem.

FURLOUGH arrangements were, for the Colonel's unit, one clear week off in every eight for each man, plus half travelling time to home or place of enlistment. The problem this time was to fix the furlough of one, Pte. Doohappy, H.E., who by good or bad fortune had been born in a very outlying island which however, was still a part of Peru (for this, as the reader has guessed, is not the New Zealand Army).

It took this private two days to get home by boat, but the boat stayed only a day, and there was a trip only once every two months to the island, which meant, of course, that Pte. Doohappy took two months for furlough. As furlough was very definitely laid down as one week in every eight, he was no sooner back from one furlough than he was due for another. A happy enough position for Pte. Doohappy, but not so good for his army training.

WHAT solution could be found under the Regulations? That was the Colonel's problem, and he approached it in good spirits.

His Peruvian Staff College training, he was sure, would carry him through. The mental processes of our Colonel of course cannot be transmitted to cold print. Military secrets are military sec-

rets even in Peru. But here are the headings under which he approached the subject:

(a) MORALE.

If Pte. Doohappy was on perpetual furlough other troops would be envious. Definitely bad for morale. On the other hand, if he lost his furlough an injustice would be done and injustices always led to faulty morale.

(b) DISCIPLINE.

The same as for morale, reasoned the Colonel, frowning slightly, and also how could Pte. Doohappy be properly disciplined if he was only on duty for travelling time, so to speak.

(c) REGULATIONS:

The regulations were clear. One week off in every eight. Not one week in every eight on duty, but one in each and every eight.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS.

To the Colonel's adaptable mind several solutions immediately suggested themselves. One, to give Pte. Doohappy six weeks' furlough all at once, in each year, was attractive, but he discarded it on the ground that if Pte. Doohappy was to wait a year for furlough when everyone else was going off every eight weeks, his morale would suffer.

But the Colonel's mind, facile, adaptable, soon found a solution. In his office wasting her sweetness on an army typewriter was a comely blonde WAAC. Pte. Doohappy was single, the Colonel knew, and looked a susceptible type for blondes. "Bring Pte. Doohappy into my office," the Colonel reasoned, "and if romance should dawn he would ask for his leave where love was, instead of going to his island home."

THE plot worked, to cut a long romance short, and for the next three months the Colonel mentally strutted with pride. But three months later the Colonel's frown was back again. On his desk was the following letter from the Officer in charge of WAACS.

"I beg to report, Sir, that on the 18th inst. a marriage was solemnised between Pte. Agnes Carellette of my staff and Pte. Doohappy, H. E., of yours. Under sub-para 15, Reg. 68, if a WAAC marries a soldier one or the other must be

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