



By Sgt. E. W. Andrew

I WAS in camp in New Zealand when the newspapers announced that our troops had landed on Vella Lavella and, later, on Mono in the Treasury Group. After looking for these places on the little maps the newspapers published I decided they must be very small and unimportant. They didn't matter much to me, anyway, because I was going to the Middle East.

But then I was suddenly withdrawn from the Middle East reinforcement and detailed to travel as a photographer with an official party that was to inspect New Zealand troops throughout the Pacific area. So I began to think about those islands then; and what I thought of was those stories about coral reefs, swaying palms, tropic skies, and dusky maidens. I remembered, too, the terms which certain uncharitable people had used to describe our men in the Pacific—Coconut Bombers, Glamour Boys, Banana Pickers, and so on.

I soon found that the coral reefs are there all right, and the palm-trees, too; and I even managed to photograph an occasional dusky maiden. But what I

hadn't thought about was the heat and the rain and mud and mosquitoes and the rest of the things contributing to the discomforts of life in the islands. These are the things I shall tell you about.

My first surprise was at Guadalcanal. As we flew along its coast I was astonished to find not a small island covered with palm trees, but a mountainous and heavily bushed island with small patches of open country that might have been grassed. It was a beautiful day and at 6,000 ft. up in the air we travelled in the greatest comfort.

As we circled the landing-field I could see great activity everywhere. Roads almost obscured by dust from the heavy traffic ran in every direction between the rows of palms, and stores and equipment were in great piles under the trees. As we left the plane the heat was almost unbearable and the glare from the white coral landing strip made me thankful for dark glasses. I had to start work at once, and on this and subsequent days I worked in terrific heat. The slightest effort would make me wet through with perspiration.