Field Marshal
Bernard L. Montgomery
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Man of Prayer

by

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In memory of
Gordon Wesley Roberts
one of "Monty's soldiers,"
who gave his life in the
Anzio beachhead battle on
January 31, 1944
at the age of twenty-one
PREFACE

Writing the story of a general in the midst of a war is somewhat like writing an account of a football game at the end of three quarters. The “game” is not over; the result is not yet known.

Undeniably, Field Marshal Sir Bernard Law Montgomery will emerge from World War II as one of the greatest generals of modern warfare. His brilliant triumph over Field Marshal Erwin Rommel in Africa has won for him a place in the heart of every Allied follower and endeared him especially to the brilliant group of fighting men he developed—the Eighth Army.

Countries use men to win wars against nations, and God uses men to win His battles against the forces of evil. Field Marshal Montgomery has been used both by nations and by God. There have been many Christian generals — men who were not ashamed to attribute their triumphs to the God whom they acknowledged as the source of all wisdom and strength. It has been said that in every Christian’s life there is something of value to other Christians. Let us remember this as we consider the personality of Montgomery — “man of prayer.”

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*Chicago, Illinois*

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Chapter 1

DEAD — YET ALIVE!

Captain Montgomery lay motionless on Meteren’s bloody battlefield. Bullets sped across the fields and trenches dotted with English, French and German soldiers. These were the darkest days of World War I.

A rescuer crept towards the body of the captain. As he reached him, he slumped dead over the body of the man he sought to rescue. Another German bullet had found its target.

Gradually the battle swung in favor of the British. Slowly the German line edged back. Soon British medical units were at the side of the wounded captain. After preliminary first-aid treatment he was lifted gently onto a stretcher and rushed to an advance medical post.

The military “men in white” went to work. “No hope,” they silently agreed. “He’s done for.” They nodded to the attendants, who carried the body to a truck laden with dead. Captain Bernard Law Montgomery was no more among the living; an injury to his lungs had proved fatal.

The colonel ordered a grave dug for Captain Montgomery. Once before this courageous captain had been wounded, and had recovered. This time,
however, he appeared to have paid the supreme price of war. Another promising British military career had apparently been cut short.

The truck moved toward the cemetery. Seated in the rear of the vehicle was an attendant, calloused by experience. Death had ceased to trouble him, though his thoughts were not pleasant as he visualized the families and homes in England which soon would feel the heart-shattering impact of his present trip.

*Killed in action at Meteren... Killed in action at Meteren... Killed in action at Meteren...* Soon these notices would cross the Channel and sadden British homes.

The attendant glanced casually at the bodies. His eyes rested on Captain Bernard Law Montgomery. The eyes of the "corpse" had flickered!

"Sir," he cried, "that man isn't dead!"

The driver wheeled the truck around and sped to the hospital. Captain Montgomery was alive! A few months later he left the hospital not as good as new, but alive. The freshly-dug grave had another occupant.

* * *

Twenty-four years later — August 3, 1938 — Lt. General Sir Bernard L. Montgomery arrived in Cairo, Egypt, to take command of the battle-weary British Eighth Army. It was one of the darkest moments for the Allies. British and Dominion troops had been driven back 325 miles by Field
Marshal Erwin Rommel’s crack panzer divisions. Tobruk had fallen, and 23,000 Allied soldiers had been lost. A large portion of the tank force — the bulwark of the Allies’ defense — had been smashed. Only sixty miles away was the Suez Canal, the jugular vein of the British Empire. Cairo hotels and clubs were providing what luxuries they could for British officers and soldiers. A few miles away Rommel was promising his officers that soon they would be enjoying the luxuries of Cairo. Confidence reigned supreme in the German camp. Gloom pervaded the Eighth Army — a “dead” army.

Then General Montgomery entered Cairo. No fanfare preceded him. He was strictly “second choice.” General “Strafer” Gott, chosen to succeed Lt. General N. M. Ritchie as Commander of the Army of the Nile, had been killed in a plane crash on the way to Cairo to take command.

Montgomery slipped into the office. After inspecting his new quarters, he turned to Major General Francis W. de Guingand, General Auchinleck’s chief of staff, and asked,

“What are you doing?”

“Preparing the plans for the retreat, sir,” was the reply.

“Tear them up,” Montgomery replied . . . and walked out!

He astounded an officer arranging transport for retreating troops east of Cairo with this statement:
"You have no more transports. I have taken them for the attack."

Out of the office and into the front line Montgomery walked. He wanted to see "my soldiers."
Finding some of them digging trenches behind the front lines, he said,
"You can stop digging; the Germans aren't going to get this far!"

Stories about the new commander spread. Depression turned to hope. Lt. General Montgomery decided to call an open-air meeting of the officers.
"But they might bomb us, sir," an officer politely objected.
"Fine!" the general answered. "Let them know what manner of men we are."

Conferences were held; plans were made. The new commander hoped for time in which to rally his men and instill in them a new spirit, but Rommel attacked twice during the first month Montgomery was in command. Twice, however, the enemy was bloodily beaten back.

On October 23, 1942, Montgomery's opportunity came.

At nine-thirty that night the English guns started to roar. On November 2, after the infantry had opened the way, Allied tanks slashed ahead at El Aouir and gave Rommel's panzer troops a thorough trouncing. The Germans fled, leaving thousands of Italian prisoners. The pursuit of the Germans was on!

On May 13, 1943, it was over. Montgomery had chased Rommel over 1,700 miles of hot African sand, the distance from New York to Denver, Colorado. Of 350,000 Axis troops which had been in Africa, only 638 escaped to Germany. All this was accomplished in twenty-nine weeks.

Dead — yet alive!

Admitting the superb example of teamwork and co-operation of the air, sea and ground forces and the Allied nations involved, we must say, nevertheless, that Field Marshal Sir Bernard Law Montgomery gave the Nazi war machine its first setback in World War II.

Known to his soldiers as "Monty," and possessing a curious blend of ruthlessness and tenderness in his personality, Montgomery has become known throughout the world as one of the greatest generals of modern times. And yet, it is not an uncommon sight to see him standing bareheaded in the field conducting divine services.

No man has captured the fancy and admiration of the military and civilian world like the hero of El Alamein. An individualist, "Monty" possesses rare military acumen and a powerful personality. Known as a strict disciplinarian, greatly concerned about details, and a zealous exponent of physical
fitness, he nonetheless possesses the admiration and
the love of his soldiers.

His victories have been achieved with a Bible in
one hand and a dog-eared copy of Pilgrim’s Prog-
ress in the other. His much-used Bible is never far
from him. Constantly he tells his men, “I read at
least one chapter in the Bible every day, and I
recommend that you do the same.” His military re-
ports often include verses from Scripture; messages
to his troops frequently contain passages from the
Book which is exceedingly precious to him.

The general prays before every battle, and if and
when victory follows, he gives praise to God. He
neither smokes nor drinks, nor does he countenance
smoking or drinking in his presence. He goes to
bed at ten p. m. whenever possible. His beret is
covered with badges obtained from various units
under his command. Among his prized souvenirs of
the African campaign was the silk underwear which
he captured from a German officer . . . and which he
later wore!

Soldiering has been his one consuming purpose in
life since, as a youngster, he saw Tasmanian troops
parading and he declared with boyish enthusiasm,
“Mother, I’m going to be a soldier when I grow
up.” As a soldier he has achieved world renown.
By reorganizing the British Eighth Army and guid-
ing it to a decisive triumph, he energized the Allies
and brought glory to the Allied cause.

Field Marshal Bernard L. Montgomery

Montgomery’s greatness cannot be evaluated
properly until after the war. Details known only to
military men must await public announcement after
the fighting ceases. When this information is pub-
lished, Montgomery’s military intelligence will be
even more evident.

Critics have searched for the source of his power
and success, and the reasons offered have been
 logical and sound. Christians are confident that his
success is the result of a deep faith in God and con-
tant and consistent communion with Him through
prayer and the Word of God, which the general re-
veres and reads daily for help, guidance and
strength.

In 1914, General Montgomery was dead — yet
alive. In 1942, the Allied cause appeared to be dead,
but in 1943, General Montgomery proved to all the
world that the Allies and their cause were indeed
gloriously alive.
CHAPTER 2

"FIND HIM . . . STOP WHAT HE'S DOING!"

"Find Bernard and tell him to stop what he's doing."

Those words were familiar ones and heard often in the home of the Rt. Rev. and Mrs. H. H. Montgomery, the parents of General Montgomery.

Britain's greatest general of the Second World War was a mischievous child. The bedroom which he and his brothers occupied was called "the zoo"—an exceedingly appropriate name.

Bernard was the third son to honor the God-fearing home of the Montgomery family. He was born on November 17, 1887, at St. Mark's vicarage in Kennington, London. His parents already had two sons and were hoping for a girl.

He had a deeply religious background. His grandfather on his mother's side was Frederick William Farrar, D.D., F.R.S., who served as rector of St. Margaret's, Westminster, and was later Dean of Canterbury. He was among the most famous Victorian clerics, a great theologian whose best work, *The Life of Christ*, is a classic. The general's grandfather on his father's side was James Montgomery, the author of many cherished hymns, including "Call the Lord Thy Sure Salvation," "God is Our

Refuge and Defense," and "Prayer is the Heart's Sincere Desire."

General Montgomery pays tribute to his Christian mother. Certainly her godly influence has molded the lives not only of her seven children but of countless others. She taught her children to be temperate, respectful and self-sufficient, and never to ask anyone to do something which he or she could or would not do. Her teachings were a powerful influence upon the life of the conqueror of Germany's Rommel, for Field Marshal Montgomery has never asked his soldiers to do what he himself would not do. Consequently, he has gained their admiration and respect.

The general's mother has a fine sense of humor, a trait which has been declared to be a necessity in the rearing of boys. Her management of the Montgomery "zoo" with its unpredictable happenings from hour to hour and day to day has proved the truth of the statement.

Sincerity is the key to Mrs. Montgomery's character. Refreshingly unaffected, she is her natural self at all times and is strictly an individualist. Frills have no place in her life. Usually she wears a shapeless coat, sturdy shoes and wool socks. To her, practical utility is the primary factor not only in the selection of clothes but in all her decisions.

At her age she has tremendous vitality and is eager for adventure. Two of her wishes in the
present war were to ride in a jeep and in an airplane. She has done both.

Her home is an expression of her character. She lives in a huge rambling house in Erle, built in 1776. Though somewhat old and dilapidated it is "home" to the Montgomery children. Because Mrs. Montgomery likes the smell of burning peat sods, she uses them for fuel. Adorning the large and cozy rooms are pictures collected by her husband in Tasmania and souvenirs which have been sent by her famous son.

Mrs. Montgomery's true greatness is found in the Christian love which pervades her every thought and endeavor. Field Marshal Montgomery has been blessed with a mother who draws her strength and power from God. Like most Victorians, she knows many portions of the Bible by memory. Her daily life was a ringing testimony to the nearness of God as she lived consistently the life which she urged her children to follow. She held before her children high ideals and a rigid standard of right and wrong, but in her own life she provided a pattern for them.

Mrs. Montgomery is an enthusiastic advocate of Bible memorizing. The Word of God has meant much to her in her personal life, and much of it is hidden deeply in her heart. In the fall of 1944 she helped to promote the progress of the Bible Success Band booklet for 1945 by writing this special message which appeared on the cover:

Field Marshal Bernard L. Montgomery

I wonder how many of my readers have been brought up to learn a verse from the Bible every day? I was brought up to do this and as a consequence know nearly all of the Psalms and most of the New Testament by heart.

And I brought my children up to learn a verse from the Bible every morning before breakfast. It may be that Field Marshal Montgomery's knowledge and love of the Bible starts from this fact. As is well known, the two books he carries with him are the Bible and Pilgrim's Progress.

England and America owe their greatness to the Bible. Let us pray that the Bible, God's Word to us, may again take its rightful place in our hearts and homes! I would urge upon all my readers to do your utmost to bring the Bible back to the nation. And the best way to do that is to begin in your own home and for you and your children to learn a verse of the Bible by heart each day!

This mother's example was a powerful influence upon her children. As they learned their Bible verses, she gave them explanations of the Scripture passages if and when needed.

Mrs. Montgomery's influence is at work today. The lady who declares that she is known to most people as "the mother of the man who made Rommel run" has large and appreciative audiences whenever she speaks. An interview in the London Daily Sketch gives this picture of her:

Should mothers make their children go to church? Yes, once on Sunday. Other services should be optional. But how can we expect our children to be regular churchgoers unless we accompany them? There is no happier sight than to see father, mother and the children going to church together.

Parents nowadays have a great responsibility. We must be careful not to cram religion down our children's throats and we must be careful to practice what we preach. Will our children respect us if we upbraid temperance and yet attend cocktail parties? Or if we teach them not to swear and then use oaths ourselves?

As your boys and girls grow up, take them into your confidence. Let them see that you understand the temptations to which they are exposed. Encourage them to bring their troubles to you. Above all, surround your family with an atmosphere of love. If your children, when they are in difficulty, can say, 'I
must tell mother; all will be well. Mother love should be the
faithe foreboding of the love of our Heavenly Father for each
of His erring children. And true religion should mean for us all
the knowledge of the love of God and a thankful remembrance
of the sacrifice of His dear Son upon the Cross for us.

Each morning she reads the lesson to herself in
the family chapel at Newpark and prays — alone.
This faithful mother still maintains a family altar,
even though her children are far away. She prays
for her seven children, and remembers particularly
her five sons, all of whom are in the service of their
country. Mrs. Montgomery has been faithful in
prayer since her early life spent in the shadow of
Westminster Abbey, where she spent her formative
years. She was born at Harrow in 1865, the third
daughter of Dean Farrar and his wife. Possessing
a glowing Christian life and testimony, she won the
heart of the Rt. Rev. Harry A. Montgomery, and on
July 28, 1881, they were married.

Mr. Montgomery was the second strong spiritual
influence in the life of Bernard. He was born in
Cawnpore, India, on October 3, 1847, and came to
England with his parents in 1856. After serving
as vicar of St. Mark’s from 1879 through 1889, he
went to Tasmania to become its fourth bishop. In
1901 he returned to England to assume his duties
as secretary of the Society for the Propagation of
the Gospel, a position which he held until 1918. In
1920 he came to serve as assistant rector at Moville,
an office he held until November 25, 1932, when he
died.

The depth and solidity of his father’s personality
and Christian character meant much to Bernard. He
talked often to his five sons, and on one occasion
he spoke these words — words which have molded
the life of Britain’s greatest general. While serving
in Tasmania, the father gave this advice to his boys:
“‘My boys, always put God first in your lives, and
always try to serve the Empire. Although you come
from a family of gentlemen, that does not mean outward
appearance. It means a refined and noble mind as well. Anything dishonorable or mean or
impure must be abhorrent to such a mind or charac-
ter.”

Those words burrowed their way into five im-
pressionable minds, and throughout the years this
advice has been followed by the five sons. None of
the boys, however, has followed this counsel so
strictly and deeply as Bernard.

Mr. Montgomery was awarded the K.C.M.G.
(Knight Commander of St. Michael and St. George)
in 1928, but, being in holy orders, did not receive the
accolade and therefore did not possess the title
“Sir” nor was his wife “Lady,” though they right-
fully have these titles. His heart and life were com-
pletely in the service of the Church, and although
he hoped that all his sons would follow in his foot-
steps, he did not insist that they do so. To him the
most important concern in life was to put God first,
regardless of one’s lifework.
General Montgomery’s adventures began early in life. At the tender age of two years he left with his parents and two brothers for Tasmania, where his father was appointed to serve as bishop. Soon after arriving in Tasmania, Bernard made his decision to become a soldier. His parents had hoped that he would enter the service of the Church, but that idea was quickly dispelled the first time he saw Tasmanian troops parading before the Boer War. As his mother declared:

"Bernard announced then and there that he was going to be a soldier. I reminded him that soldiering was a hard life, with plenty of trials, but he said even at that young age that he would never ask any of his men to do anything which he himself would or could not do."

Bernard was constantly "playing soldier." When his wise mother saw that he had made a definite decision, she encouraged him by reading to him and telling of the many soldiers mentioned in the Bible. Bernard listened eagerly.

During these early days he learned to love the people of Australia. Years later this love was returned when the Aussies helped him to achieve his brilliant victory in North Africa. One of his outstanding traits as a general is his ability and patience to learn the individual characteristics of his fighting men; he not only knew the distinguishing characteristics of the Australian troops: he was one with them.

In Tasmania, Bernard and his brothers and sisters were taught by a private tutor, who had the privilege of instructing the intelligent and active youngsters. When the time came for the family to return to London, in 1901, Bernard was enrolled at St. Paul’s School, the school which John Milton and the first Duke of Marlborough attended. He was not exceptionally outstanding in his studies, but he was a good student. One of the best athletes in the school, he was especially successful as a swimmer. He played on the water polo team and his interest in military strategy was evident in the tactical maneuvers he employed to win games. And the maneuvers worked!

When he enrolled in school, he joined the lowest army form and became a star rugby player and cricketer. He enjoyed sports not only for the competitive satisfaction but also because he felt that the exercise aided him in his schoolwork. He has never lost the conviction that a man who is not at his best physically cannot do his best mentally.

The students liked him. At first his fellow students gave him the nickname "Monkey," but soon it became the more familiar "Monty," by which he has become known to the world.

After completing his work at St. Paul’s, Bernard went to the Royal Military College at Sandhurst, the
"West Point of England." There he became known as a hard worker who preferred sports — particularly rugby and hockey — to social life.

Life in these early days was neither peaceful nor uneventful in the Montgomery household, and one of the reasons was the "into everything" spirit possessed by the future general. On one occasion he went fishing for conger eel in near-by Lough Foyle, and while he was there a severe storm arose. The family searched Moville village during the storm, looking in vain for Bernard. Hours later he returned. He had decided that the storm would not permit him to reach the Moville shore, and so he had turned around and rowed for the Ulster shore. After several hours he had reached his destination. He left the boat and boarded a train for home. The first thing he did after his return was to march into the kitchen and toss a huge conger eel on the table. The family was too overjoyed by his safe return to scold him. Bernard was satisfied. He had told his brothers, sisters and parents that he was going to get a conger eel... and he had done what he said he would do!

In those early years he was developing a confidence in himself which was to prove exceedingly valuable in later life. When he said he would do a thing, he did it. This not only strengthened his self-confidence but also put into his friends and co-workers a feeling that they could depend on him.

Field Marshal Bernard L. Montgomery

His was not the declaration of the proud boaster, "I said I'd do it, and I'll do it," but rather a quiet and confident determination to accomplish, with God's help, that which he had set out to do.

When he left Sandhurst he was gazetted a second lieutenant in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment. His preliminary schooling was over, and now he was ready to become a part of the army about which he had dreamed. At that time he showed much promise, and had established himself as a man who would bear watching as he entered the active service of his country.

Although Bernard has become the most famous of all the Montgomery children, his mother does not honor him above the others. All five of her sons are in the service of the Empire and, according to her, "Bernard is no better or worse or more brilliant than any of the others."

The general's brothers and sisters also lead interesting lives. Harold Robert Montgomery, the oldest, was born in 1884 and is serving as Director of Manpower and Womanpower in Kenya, Africa. Donald Stanley, born in 1886, is a lawyer in the service at Vancouver, B.C. Bernard's sister Una is married to a British official located in Cairo. The second daughter, Winsome, is married to Colonel Holdeness, last reported in Egypt. Colin Roger, born in 1902, is the only son who has entered the service of the Church. He has been vicar of St.
John's at Egremont since 1932 and is now serving as a chaplain on the Durban and other hospital ships. The seventh child, Brian, born in 1903, is an instructor at the Quetta Staff College in India.

Field Marshal Montgomery kept his pledge that he would not marry until he had shaped his career. The army was his first love and remained so even after he surprised everyone by marrying Mrs. Betty Carver, the widow of Capt. A. O. Carver, in 1927. Montgomery was forty at that time.

He was truly happy in his married life. His wife was a well-known artist, and they were extremely devoted to each other. Montgomery managed the household as if it were an army unit.

One son, David, was born to them, in 1929. Montgomery barked orders to frightened nurses as if they were troops in battle. He issued daily mandates for the care and upbringing of the infant. Someone casually asked him later if they would have any more children and he remarked, "Certainly not! There is far too much staff work involved."

One of the hardest blows which Montgomery has endured came in 1937 when his wife died. So severe was this loss that he vanished from the sight of friends for an entire year. When he returned he was sterner and more professional than ever. Her death hurt him grievously; he later told a close friend,

"My wife and I were real companions. We used
to do so many things together. Now, well, I like birds...’ and he flung himself desperately into his career, but carefully supervised the rearing of his son at Winchester, Britain’s famous boys’ school.

The general now makes his home with his mother. She is the one to whom he writes lengthy letters from the battlefronts. When he is not home, which is most of the time, she lives alone except for an elderly companion and a young Irish maid. Montgomery himself has very few personal belongings left, as the result of the German Luftwaffe. When he left for Cairo he stored his belongings in a warehouse at Dover; one night the German raiders came and they did not return to the Reich until the warehouse in which Montgomery had stored his possessions had been virtually destroyed.

Sorrow and suffering have strengthened the bond which unites the mother and her son. Occasionally Field Marshal Montgomery told his mother of the needs of the soldiers in Africa. In a few days those needs were met by Mrs. Montgomery through her Comforts Fund of the Eighth Army: during the African drive she sent her son over 2,500 pounds in money in addition to 2,000,000 razor blades and other “soldier’s luxuries.”

The Montgomery home continues to function. It is still the bulwark of the Montgomery family.

Near by in the chapel at Newpark is a window. When General Montgomery is home, he spends some
time there each day in prayer. Its most frequent visitor, however, is a mother who has five stars on her service flag—a mother who has come to pray for her sons. Five men in the service, in distant parts of the world, reap the harvest of those prayers. Among the five is the Number One soldier of the British Empire—Field Marshal Sir Bernard Law Montgomery.

CHAPTER 3

MONTGOMERY — THE MILITARIST

In the spring of 1942, Ambassador Winant of England was given a special assignment. His task was to evaluate the various high-ranking British Army men. Coming to Lt. General Bernard Montgomery, he said,

"General, suppose that tonight you were ordered to attack Calais. How long would it take you to plan an offensive and get into action?"

Ambassador Winant left the problem there, expecting his answer in a few weeks.

Instead, Montgomery telephoned his headquarters and staged a full-dress mock rehearsal against the Germans the very next day!

Winant was impressed.

In June, 1942, maneuvers under such battle conditions as could be expected in the desert were scheduled to take place in Devonshire. Lt. General Montgomery was to lead them, and it was rumored that they would be the strictest maneuvers in which any training unit had engaged.

The rumors were not far from wrong. The men were drilled so mercilessly and sternly that not a drop of water nor a morsel of food was allowed to be brought from near-by villages. The infantry
moved everywhere on foot and on iron rations. There was plenty of complaining among the men, but when the test had been completed, Montgomery had won the admiration of the men in spite of the rigid discipline. They realized that someday this preparation would prove valuable.

These are but two of an almost innumerable host of examples which prove the military prowess of Field Marshal Montgomery. Wherever you go among fighting men these days, you find the name of Montgomery on the tongues of friends and enemies alike. It is difficult, in the middle of a war, to call a man “great,” or to say of him, “He saved the nation.” The military hero of today may be the public scapegoat of tomorrow.

However, it is safe to say that regardless of the results of this war — and there will be many — Field Marshal Montgomery seems destined to be the greatest military figure of the twentieth century.

Montgomery understands military strategy. Rarely has a man specialized in a field of endeavor as has Montgomery in the field of military tactics. He has been extremely thorough in every phase of fighting in which he has engaged. He has originated some of the greatest military ideas formulated in the twentieth century. In his many years of training he has developed an amazing capacity for detail. It is said that his formula for success against Rommel was planned in minute detail to the last tin of bully beef! He has the power to see the whole as well as its parts. He realizes that the small things must of necessity be done, but he never loses sight of the greatest goals and purposes of the campaign.

He is familiar with every weapon of war and every rule in every rule book known to man. In his colorful campaign to chase Rommel from Africa, Montgomery gave the German ace general a taste of everything in the military menu. On one occasion Montgomery confronted Rommel with a tactic taken from the same German rule book which Rommel himself followed. The next time Rommel prepared for a stand, Montgomery employed strategy learned in World War I. The German general was next confronted by a brilliantly conceived Montgomery maneuver.

Experts have often considered him daring in the execution of his maneuvers. However, he is an exceedingly cautious commander. He has often said, “I’ll never put an army into action unless I know it can win,” a statement proved by his activities in Egypt. New equipment, particularly tanks, arrived in Cairo to give the Eighth Army powerful and spirit-instilling weapons. Some critics have minimized Montgomery’s efforts because of this fact, but a closer analysis proves that although the material was available, the Montgomery genius was needed to put the plans into operation and achieve the brilliant triumph.
In attempting to discover the secret of Montgomery’s greatness, one discovers many expected and unexpected traits of the man. Outstanding in his personality is his determination to direct an operation independently or have no part in it. He, of course, respects his superiors in rank, both military and civilian, but once he is given command of an army and told to do a certain task, he prefers to accomplish the task without “over the shoulder” help from anyone, even those above him.

This was evident in Africa. He demanded a free hand when he entered Egypt to face the wily Rommel, and he was given it. The story had been that every promotion in the army down to the rank of corporal had to be approved by Prime Minister Winston Churchill. Although Montgomery has the highest respect for Churchill both as a military tactician and a man, he felt sincerely and deeply that a commander of an army ought to have complete charge of that army. If his superiors were not satisfied with his management of the campaign, they could remove him, but while he was in control he wanted no interference.

Every man in Montgomery’s army knows exactly what is taking place in the battle. Perhaps never before in history has every soldier been so completely aware of events as in the battle of Africa. Montgomery is convinced that every man down to the lowest private should know the plan of battle; he should know what his unit is scheduled to do and what he himself must accomplish. Often when going through the lines during a battle or when riding in his tank, Montgomery stops to question a soldier. One of the queries invariably concerns the soldier’s knowledge of his position. If the man cannot give a satisfactory answer, Montgomery pulls out a few maps and shows the soldier where he is, where he is going and what he is supposed to do when he gets there.

Montgomery’s dislike for “red tape” is legendary. He gives his orders verbally and gets reports verbally. Since he took command of the Eighth Army he has signed very few papers. In planning a battle he mulls the general plan of action over in his own mind and arrives at the decisions. Then he calls a meeting of his staff officers, gives them the over-all idea and leaves them to figure out the details. He views a general as a football coach, i.e., he works with the team all week, gives them the plays they will need to win, helps them during the practices but in the game he lets them go into the battle and carry out the orders to the best of their ability. This extreme confidence which he places in his men keeps them keenly alert to the heavy responsibility which is theirs. So much does he dislike paper work that during a battle he lives in a forward headquarters, away from the staff. He ex-
Field Marshal Bernard L. Montgomery

explains this dislike for paper work by saying, "I must have time to think."

He insists that all his men, especially his officers, be in best possible physical condition. Soldiers often refer to him as "The Physical Fitness Man." Posters such as the following appear on the walls of his room or headquarters:

*Are you 100 per cent fit?*
*Are you 100 per cent up to your job?*
*Are you 100 per cent full of binge?*

"Binge" is his favorite word for pep, vim or fighting fitness. The desire to improve the physical fitness of his men and officers has produced many stories. When in England following disastrous Dunkirk, Montgomery ordered his officers to run six miles each week, preferably in the early morning. He, too, carried out that order! When some of the older officers complained, he reduced the distance to five miles. His theory is that he would rather have a man collapse in training than in the heat of battle when such a loss would be tragic.

On one occasion a slightly overweight officer met Montgomery soon after arrival at his new assignment. Montgomery has a distaste for people who are overweight and in the conversation with the officer he asked,

"Did you have a good lunch?"
"Yes, sir," the officer replied.
"Enjoy it?" Montgomery queried again.

Field Marshal Bernard L. Montgomery

"Yes, sir," he repeated.
"Good," said Montgomery, "because it'll be the last one you'll eat from this mess."

A few hours later the obese officer received orders to report to another unit.

Another of the general's distinguishing characteristics is a consuming desire to know his men — and know them thoroughly. Often when the battle is going on, Montgomery, wearing his famous black beret, rides among the men in the back seat of an open tank. The tank is usually stocked with newspapers and if the general meets a soldier who has not seen a newspaper for some time, he reaches into the tank and says, "Here, take mine. I'm through with it." These visits serve as a tonic to the men and make them realize that their commander is deeply interested in their welfare. Everywhere he goes he asks the men if they are happy and satisfied; if there is a complaint, he seeks a remedy. Montgomery's interest in his men began when he was gazetted a second lieutenant. Even at that time he spent comparatively little time in his office but constantly moved among his men to become acquainted thoroughly with their problems.

Montgomery's experiences are unusual and colorful because he is unusual and colorful. He has had to prove his worthiness by sheer ability; he refuses to achieve success in any other way. It is perhaps because of that individualistic tendency that he has
achieved the confidence of his superiors. They knew and realized that here was a man who was determined to serve his country to the utmost of his ability — a man who would not yield to pressure from another officer or official.

Field Marshal Montgomery was gazetted a second lieutenant in 1908, and commanded in succession a platoon, a company, a battalion, a brigade, a division, an army corps and an army. That step-by-step advance includes every unit in the army, and Montgomery says of his progress, "I didn’t miss a single lick."

At the outbreak of World War I, Montgomery was ready to go to France and he did. He was one of the first British soldiers to land in France in 1914 and by August 20 of that year he was serving with his regiment on the Western Front. Within two months he had been awarded the Distinguished Service Order for action at Mons. He had also been severely wounded and given a captaincy. Before he was hurt he had endeared himself to his men when, against superior orders, he clamberoed to an exposed position in the face of German fire and successfully rescued a badly wounded soldier.

After recovering from his first wounds he returned to France and was wounded again, this time at Meteren. Before this, however, he had been mentioned in dispatches six times and had been awarded the Croix de Guerre. After his experience at Meteren he did not participate in active service until after the Armistice, when in 1919 he served with the army of occupation on the Rhine. Two years later he was made a brigade major with the Irish command, and in 1924 was posted to the Southern command in a similar position. Staff college work at both Camberley and Quetta, India, kept him busy until 1937, when he returned to England and was made a brigadier general to command the Ninth Infantry Brigade at Portsmouth. The following year he was promoted to major general and commanded the Eighth Division in Palestine and Trans-Jordan and again was mentioned in dispatches. Late that year he moved back to England as the war clouds threatened, and assumed command of the Third Division, the unit which he later took to France.

In France his initiative was restricted and he did not make public the plans on which he had been working for years. He did, however, direct a brilliant counterattack at Namur just previous to the evacuation at Dunkirk, but on that miserable night of May 31, 1940, he, too, set sail across the choppy Channel for safety in England. The battle of Dunkirk was over. Montgomery does not like to lose a battle and the British truly had lost the battle of Dunkirk.

In England, Montgomery was put in command of the Fifth Corps. Honors came his way even after
Dunkirk; he was made a Commander of the Bath soon after returning. "Invasion Corner," the name given to the Southeastern command in England, was put under Montgomery's orders on December 1, 1941. If the Germans wanted to get into England they would have to pass Montgomery. Needless to say, they never entered.

In midsummer, 1942, two Messerschmitt 109 fighter planes swooped over the Cairo-Alexandria road and shot down a lumbering Bombay transport plane. It crashed and as a result, Lt. General Henry S. "Strafer" Gott, who was returning from the front to command the Eighth Army, was killed. The beleaguered and bewildered Army of the Nile was consequently left without a commander, and after military leaders had conferred in London, Prime Minister Winston Churchill announced the appointment of Lt. General Montgomery as commander of the Eighth Army.

Thus the stage was set for the deeds which were to make Montgomery known throughout the world — the smashing of the Axis army in Africa and the inflicting of the first setback to the Nazi war machine in World War II. Morale in the British Empire was low at this time. Dunkirk had caused a feeling of defeatism, and the loss of Tobruk two months before also was Empire-shaking. The people were hungry for a victory. Confidence in their greatness as a nation had been shaken.

Into this crisis stepped the then unknown Montgomery. People in England remembered him as a man with a curious "misty" look in his eyes. The army in Egypt was well prepared to dislike him, and in his first review Montgomery did nothing to ease that feeling. He said not a word to the men at that time, but spoke only to the officers. Even they were afraid of him.

Montgomery, however, had come to do a job... and he did it! That cherished triumph is remembered with joy by all Englishmen. England still was great — "Monty" had proved it. By saving the Suez Canal he probably saved the Empire.

But the victory was not achieved as simply as it is described. The actual fighting was destined to be as rugged as any in which the British soldiers had participated. There were battles, too, which had to be won even before a shot was fired.

When Montgomery was appointed to succeed Lt. General Ritchie, Lt. General Harold R. L. G. Alexander was appointed to be the over-all commander of the Allied troops in Africa. Lt. General Alexander was the last man out of Dunkirk in 1940, and in 1942 he conducted the long, fighting retreat from Burma to the mountains of Assam. He had a fine military record and he and Montgomery made a capable team. Alexander was to co-ordinate the British-American attacks; Montgomery was to direct the British drive. On their arrival in Cairo
and after appraising the situation, Alexander wanted to attack immediately. The more cautious Montgomery, however, wanted to wait until the men, munitions, tanks and other equipment were prepared completely.

Montgomery won. They waited and after repulsing two German attacks, were ready to start their own.

The second pre-battle conflict from which Montgomery emerged triumphant was the problem of cooperation between and co-ordination of the Royal Air Force and the Eighth Army. Never before had those two units of Britain’s mighty war machine worked together so effectively as they did in that campaign. Each unit forgot about preserving its own identity; the one aim was to drive the Germans out of Africa. To achieve this, Montgomery worked hand in hand with Air Marshal Sir Arthur Coningham, who lived near Montgomery during the battle.

The third battle he won was the “Battle of the Desert.” Many times the lack of proper supplies had hindered and ruined British attacks, but in this battle the supplies came through in time and on time, and even the gritty sand of the desert failed to halt the tanks and trucks as they rolled to victory. Lt. General Sir Wilfred Lindsell was the British ace on the supply line and he performed many a seeming miracle during the campaign. Many difficulties faced him, including the constant problem of keeping food edible. He met them all and conquered them, one by one. His foresight was keen; even before the weight of guns had broken the enemy lines at El Alamein, ship convoys had assembled at Port Said and Alexandria, loaded with gasoline, munitions, food and other supplies. Later, when Tobruk and Benghazi fell again into British hands, ships loaded with the necessities of war steamed into the harbors only a few hours later and began to unload their needed cargoes.

Montgomery was “boss” — and everyone knew it. Both Montgomery and Alexander had come to do a job — and to do it well. They knew why they had come and were determined to perform their duties efficiently. As one correspondent wrote, “It was a revelation to have clear thinking in the high command for a change.”

Montgomery won the battle with his men. Admittedly not loved when he arrived, Montgomery soon won his way into the heart of every man in the Eighth Army. He gave them new life and hope in place of discouragement and a feeling of “what’s the use?” Each soldier knew what was going to happen after the battle started; “Monty” himself had told them — and they had confidence in his words. Although his manner of “talking down” to his troops hindered him somewhat at first, Montgomery soon won the confidence of every man. They
liked nothing better than to see him come bouncing up in his tank and say,

"Gather 'round me."

The men would break ranks and form a circle around him. Then in his high and somewhat raspy voice, "Monty" would tell his soldiers what was on his heart. He did not mollycoddle them nor encourage them with unfounded hopes of victory. He told them what they wanted to know — that victory was near — and they believed him.

Montgomery studied his men and he studied his divisions. He believes that everything revolves around the soldier. He is convinced that each division has its own "personality," and he plans accordingly. He strove always to get the right division in the right place at the time of battle. He appealed in his "pep talks" to the pride of the men. He urged his soldiers, "Show them now what Northumbria can do!" or "Show them what Scotland is made of!"

Too much stress cannot be placed on the manner in which Montgomery won the loyalty of his men before the battle started. He transformed the disintegrating Eighth Army into a society or brotherhood. In that army were soldiers from England, India, Australia, New Zealand and America. Montgomery organized these men into one of the smoothest working units in this war. His lack of formality, his extreme frankness and his never-ending concern

for their welfare endeared him to the men in a remarkable manner. He was just plain "Monty" to every one of them.

Finally, to climax his military greatness, he conquered Rommel, the man who had soundly trounced three of England's best fighters — Wavell, Cunningham and Auchinleck. By so doing he restored England's prestige and put the first pin prick into the Nazi military bubble.
CHAPTER 4
THE BATTLE OF AFRICA

From the British and Allied point of view, Cairo was in a serious position in October of 1942. From Casablanca in the west to El Alamein in the east, a mere sixty miles from Alexandria and on the fringe of the Nile delta, Axis armies ruled supreme. In other words, Germany and Italy controlled all the land of North Africa except Spanish Morocco.

The British right flank was on the sea. The men on the left gazed down upon the impassable Quattara Depression. The El Alamein line was the bottleneck. The British troops prevented Rommel from fanning out into the Valley of the Nile and Rommel's troops were a cork which the British must dislodge before they could move anywhere. The situation was tense.

Tobruk had fallen the previous June 21 with a loss of 23,000 men. Since then General Auchinleck had retreated 325 miles to his present position. The German leader Rommel had taken a hurried trip to Berlin to hold a conference with Adolf Hitler and to receive the new title of field marshal.

Thus the task confronting Montgomery when he arrived in Cairo was not easy. After studying the situation and securing Alexander's permission not to attack immediately, Montgomery told reporters at his first press conference that if the Germans would attack within a week, the going would be hard. If they attacked within a fortnight, the fighting would be less difficult. If they waited until the new moon, "Fine, fine."

Rommel attacked twice and in the second and major effort, which occurred three weeks after Montgomery arrived, Montgomery permitted him to advance with his tanks and refused to pit his own tanks against them. Instead, the British antitank guns and the 75 mm. guns of the American-made General Grants, lying hull-down in the sand dunes, gave the Germans a terrific pounding.

Rommel lost 149 tanks.
Montgomery lost only 37.
That setback gave Montgomery the desired breathing spell. For five weeks he worked tirelessly to organize the Eighth Army for an assault. The late Wendell Willkie was visiting in Egypt at that time on his round-the-world flight, and Montgomery assured him after Rommel had been repulsed, "Egypt now has been saved. We have a superiority in tanks."

Finally Montgomery felt that he was ready to attack, and on October 23, 1942, the English offensive began. There would be no more retreating. The British that night were beginning their long journey on the road to Berlin.
Montgomery outlined his plan of battle in his final message to them:

"We've let him attack and we've held fast. Now it's our turn to attack and he, being crippled by our defense to his attack, will not be able to stop us when we smash through."

Early that evening Montgomery held a press conference. Before he arrived an officer stepped forward and said,

"Gentlemen, the general does not smoke; please put out your pipes and cigarettes."

When Montgomery arrived he did not wait for questions.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I have called you in to inform you that tonight in the moonlight a terrific battle will begin. It will be one of the most decisive battles of history. It will be the turning point of the war. In the past we have been trying to stop too many gaps. Now it is time to take the offensive."

As he talked he balanced a fly-swatting on the back of his right index finger. He was calm. Then, after telling his men they could go anywhere in the battle area, he dismissed them.

An hour before the battle started, Montgomery retired for the night. He was retiring an hour and a half early, but he wanted to be asleep before the battle started. He went to his desert caravan and lay quietly on his bed for a while, musing over the plan of battle. He realized that the cost in lives might be heavy; in fact, he had estimated that it might rise as high as 75 per cent in some battalions. But he also knew that the victory would be worth the price. The R.A.F. had won the battle of the skies; now the land forces must go into action. He reached for his Bible, read a chapter or two, prayed and then went to sleep. He did not wake until the morning.

Meanwhile there was activity a-plenty outside. Along the British line one twenty-five-pound gun stood at every twenty-three yards. It was nearly nine-thirty, the scheduled time for the offensive to begin. In the front lines Scottish bagpipers played "Highland Laddies" unconcernedly.

Suddenly the moment arrived. The music was lost in the roar of eight hundred guns. For twenty minutes the barrage continued; then it stopped, having achieved its purpose. Montgomery has always believed that a barrage should shake the enemy's morale — and this one did.

At ten o'clock the mine sappers moved up and through. This was something new! Contrary to orthodox warfare, the soldier, not the tank, was leading the way. Rommel was expecting a tank battle — but he did not get it — at least, not then.

In the battle of wits between Rommel and Montgomery, Monty again proved the superiority of his plan of attack. Rommel expected the British to at-
tack him vigorously from both sides, but Montgomery had something else in mind, as Rommel found out a few weeks later.

Through heavy-laden mine fields the sappers moved, each carrying his mine detector, which resembled a large vacuum cleaner. As the detector buzzed, the sapper swiftly and deftly removed the mine. On his heels came the men with miles of long white tape on rollers. They provided the path of safety for the infantrymen who moved along next in line. By five-thirty the next morning the British had advanced four miles along a line six miles in length.

That process continued for days as Marshal Coningham harassed Rommel endlessly from the skies. Meanwhile the guns continued their ceaseless barrage into the enemy lines. Every yard gained by the British was the result of furious fighting; the painstaking preparation made by Montgomery paid rich dividends. Montgomery had made a detailed map of the terrain, showing exactly what the soldiers could expect to find under normal circumstances. That efficient planning was rewarded by the steady yard-by-yard advance of the infantry.

Finally Montgomery decided that the time for his surprise move had come. For twelve days his infantrymen had borne the brunt of the attack and suffered severe losses. The battle had progressed for the most part according to plan, with opposition heavier than expected in some spots and lighter in others.

German reconnaissance aircraft had reported to Rommel day after day that the British Tenth Corps was encamped for training on the Nile delta. Tents and equipment were plainly visible to them as they watched the battle from the air, but they were reckoning without the wily and crafty Montgomery. He was about to execute the war’s greatest military strategy.

In the front lines, where the Germans had fought themselves to exhaustion in their attempted breakthrough to the Nile, Montgomery built thousands of dummy tanks from sackcloth. His own tanks, meanwhile, were far behind the lines. Rommel’s airmen saw this and reasoned that Montgomery had neither the tanks nor the guns necessary for a large-scale offensive. Thus he was content to wait until he could move his own supplies before he attacked.

Then Montgomery performed his military miracle. In the dark of night two British armored divisions and the crack New Zealand infantry division moved rapidly forward. Real tanks and guns replaced the camouflaged equipment. To complete the ruse, new dummy tanks and guns were built on the Nile delta where the units had been in training. The next morning the enemy planes saw nothing different from the day before.

On November 2 the tank battle started. Hundreds
of Crusaders, Shermans and Grants roared forward through the mighty gap which had been cut out by the infantry. The break-through was on the north, not where Rommel had expected it and consequently placed his crack panzer troops. When Rommel realized what had occurred he quickly shifted his fifteenth and twenty-first panzer divisions and the Italian Ariete armored division from the central sector to the northern sector in an attempt to prevent the break-through.

But the panzers were battling fresh and eager British and New Zealand troops. The tank aces had been waiting for months for this opportunity. Tank met tank at El Aququir, and when the smoke of battle had lifted, almost two-thirds of Rommel’s thousand tanks had been made impotent. Smoldering and wrecked tanks littered the area. German General Ritter Von Thoma, field commander of the Afrika Corps, was blown out of his tank by a blast of British artillery, and was captured. Once through the line, Montgomery swung the New Zealanders to the south to cut off the Italian troops Rommel had left to defend the original center. Rommel packed his troops into trucks, leaving thousands of Italians behind as he had no room for them. He who had chased was now being chased!

When the smoke had cleared, the victorious British possessed a complete victory. The thousands of prisoners included, besides General Von Thoma, Major Burehardt, commander of the German paratroopers. The true value of the devastating work of the R.A.F. was apparent when 550 aircraft, either destroyed by bombing or grounded for lack of fuel, were found on captured airfields. The first phase of the battle of Africa had been successfully completed.

Montgomery was jubilant. The plans had been effective; in a press conference he told newspaper men,

“I did not hope for such a complete victory, or rather, I had not expected it. After twelve days of very heavy fighting we have complete victory and the Germans are completely smashed.”

Rommel’s crack army of 140,000 men had been reduced to a probable 50,000 by the defeat. Approximately 50,000 German and Italian troops were either captured or killed. Seventy per cent of the German tank power was lost. Rommel had apparently stepped into Montgomery’s trap and now was fleeing along the coastal highway with the British in warm pursuit.

Unpredictable Montgomery, flushed with victory, invited General Von Thoma to his caravan for dinner. As he explained to Von Thoma, “This doesn’t happen very often — this getting to meet the opposing commander while the battle is going on.” Critics in London attacked Montgomery for his action, but Churchill upheld him and silenced the
backbiters. Montgomery was not at all disturbed by the criticism. He and Von Thoma fought and re-fought the battle in pencil on the tablecloth that night, and the British hero interrogated his German captive to discover the Nazi plans. Von Thoma, too, had been at Dunkirk and there had found British Intelligence papers which included a very accurate sketch of Montgomery. The German leader smiled when he told the general that the British Army had described Montgomery as a very hard man who was quite ruthless in performing what he had determined to do.

As Montgomery continued the pursuit following the triumph at El Alamein, he received two distinct honors. On November 10, 1942, he was knighted by King George and later promoted to the rank of a full general. With those two distinctions resting lightly on his shoulders he continued the pursuit of Rommel. The rejuvenated Eighth Army, with a decisive victory to its credit, crossed the Egyptian frontier into Libya, recaptured Tobruk without a battle, sped through the green lands of Cyrenaica and chased Rommel to El Agheila. Rommel was content with occasional rear guard actions.

Montgomery, on the other hand, was intent upon this one aim: to drive Rommel out of Africa. He traveled in three trailers: in one he worked, the second was used for sleeping and the third contained maps. During the entire campaign he had but one decoration in his sleeping trailer — a large three-feet-square picture of his adversary, Rommel, which had been cut from the German magazine *Signal*. As he lay in bed he gazed at the picture and tried to ascertain what was in the mind of the German war ace. At the start of the campaign Montgomery had deep respect for Rommel’s military skill, but by the end of the drive he felt that he could predict every move the German general made. Rommel’s major fault, according to Montgomery, was his tendency to repeat himself. When Montgomery discovered this fact, the German cause was doomed. The fleeing leader also lacked true originality. When someone suggested painting a mustache on Rommel’s upper lip, Montgomery said, “No, leave him at his best, because that’s the way we’re going to lick him.”

The British rolled steadily along, and the Germans kept out of reach. Allied tanks were keeping pace with the advance, in spite of the fact that many of them were without maintenance. A reporter rode in a tank which registered 2,464 miles since leaving Cairo and arriving in Benghazi. That entire distance was traveled without mechanical aid.

El Agheila was considered a logical battle place. Montgomery had told the men working in the port of Benghazi that he needed and wanted three thousand tons of material unloaded daily in Benghazi in order to prepare his army for the expected battle.
at El Aghelia. The unit in charge said it was impossible to fulfill the general’s request. Montgomery insisted that it was possible, and to prove his point he dismissed the entire group and ordered experts from the waterfronts of Liverpool and Bristol to be brought by plane to perform the task. And they did it! The supplies came in, the tanks were reconditioned, the soldiers were satisfied and the Eighth was ready to move again. Twelve hours before the “Fire” signal, however, Rommel withdrew without a fight.

Tripoli was next. This promised to be a desperate battle, and Rommel was expected to make a stand there. In preparation for the battle, Alexander called Montgomery to Cairo from Benghazi. Montgomery, when asked, told Alexander that it would take him ninety days to prepare properly for the attack of Tripoli. Alexander in turn told him he would give him ten days to prepare; so they agreed on a fortnight.

The Germans fought doggedly for Tripoli. Montgomery admitted after the entire campaign was over that one of his two uneasy moments of the African drive was in the battle for Tripoli. The British were working against time, too, and had to get to Tripoli within ten days or he without supplies. The result was that they arrived in eight days.

The final blow came at last. At the little town of Homs, just outside Tripoli, Montgomery divided his forces into two sections. One proceeded along the coastal road, the easier route. The other turned inland through Tarhuna and attacked Tripoli with a left hook, a smash which Rommel did not expect. The terrain on the inland route made travel exceedingly difficult. Rommel was confident that the British would not even try to overcome this obstacle, but they not only tried to: they did it. When Rommel saw that he was being attacked from two directions he withdrew again rather than risk losing everything in a pitched battle. He headed for the well-fortified Mareth line where he dug in once more and waited for the enemy.

Tripoli, meanwhile, was staging a wild victory parade. Prime Minister Churchill arrived from the famed conference in Casablanca in time for the celebration. As he drove along the crowded streets Montgomery cried, “Three lively cheers for the Premier!” and the soldiers and civilians gave them with gusto.

“And one for Monty!” an unknown private shouted.

The cheer was deafening.

The next objective was the Mareth line behind which Rommel had entrenched himself. This sturdy fortress had been built by the French in the happier days before the war. Part of its defense is the deep
Wadi Zigzauo, a bit of terrain which would discourage even a mountain goat. It was a hard battle to plan and harder to execute. Montgomery realized the difficulty of the battle and prepared his soldiers for it. In one of his stirring messages to the men before the firing started he gave them this typical Montgomery challenge:

"In this battle our main idea will be to kill Germans. You cooks, you kill Germans first — then cook. You bandsmen, you kill Germans first — then play music. And you barbers, you just kill Germans — they won't need any haircuts."

Montgomery went into this battle hoping once more to fight the kind of battle he liked to fight, but he knew the proper conditions for such fighting would probably not exist. He preferred to wage battle in the open desert, after careful, precise preparation. His plan was to gain supremacy in the air and then strike a murderous blow with every weapon in the lockers of the army.

Pre-battle strategy involved the use of the left hook again. Montgomery's men came around the back of the Matmata Mountains to reach El Hamma and the town of Gabes. At last the Mareth line fell, but not before many uneasy moments.

Soon after the battle started and apparently was progressing in favor of the British, Rommel conceived a brilliant counterattack, executed it and recaptured an important bridgehead. Montgomery admitted later that this was the second uneasy moment he experienced in the entire campaign. It was the only time during the campaign that his men had to wage a defensive battle, and the men had forgotten how to do it. Montgomery found that even some of his generals were hurriedly consulting textbooks regarding defensive warfare.

The hub of the German attack was aimed at the British Fiftieth Division. When the time came for a decision to be made to crush the counterattack and drive the Germans back, Montgomery did not flinch. At two o'clock in the morning and after ten minutes of thinking he revised the plan of attack. He switched his spearhead to the enemy's right flank and threw his armor heavily against El Hamma. The Royal Air Force co-ordinated perfectly and the batteries pounded hard at the same objectives. It was a daring masterpiece of strategy and audacity. It worked — and worked well. The Germans were driven back and the British again took the offensive. Eight days later Montgomery again demonstrated brilliant military strategy. Never before had he attacked at night without moonlight, but this time he sent his infantrymen into the sinister darkness. This surprised the Germans, and Rommel took to his heels.

This proved to be Rommel's last stand in Africa. Montgomery inspired his men after the Mareth line triumph with this praise and challenge:
"With faith in God and the justice of our cause let us go forward to victory. Forward to Tunis! Drive the enemy into the sea! You have made the Eighth Army a household word. Together, you and I, we will see this thing through to the end."

The triumphant Eighth Army entered Tunisia and nerved contact with the other Allied forces. Easter had passed, and the Eighth Army was temporarily without its commander, who had decided to spend Easter in Cairo, and rarely allowed the Germans to frustrate his plans. He took a plane to Cairo.

Preparations had been made for the final push. Rommel withdrew to Germany under secret cover and Von Arnim was given the task of organizing the Axis forces. On May 7, 1943, the British captured Tunis and the Americans took Bizerte. Montgomery's men were attacking the main German strong point on the north. The infantry breakthrough required nine days, and the tank battle was completed in nine hours. On May 13, 1943, unconditional surrender terms were accepted. Indian troops captured Von Arnim and his staff at their headquarters. So many German and Italian prisoners were captured that there was only one guard for every three hundred prisoners. The final thrust to Cape Bon, the actual spot of surrender, was a First Army maneuver, and although the Eighth Army rightfully deserved the right to do the mop-up, it was deprived of that pleasant privilege. However, this did not alter the exultation which filled the hearts of the Allied soldiers and nations. The Germans had been soundly whipped!

Only twenty-nine weeks were required for the Allies to destroy totally the Axis forces in Africa. Of the approximate 350,000 enemy soldiers who participated in the campaign, only 638 escaped to Italy and Germany. The entire continent was thoroughly cleansed of German-Italian tyranny.

The victory parade was held in Tunis on May 22 without the man who had done the most to achieve that victory. Montgomery was away "for military reasons," but the cheers rolled for him nonetheless. The front line men, especially, were grateful to this hero who had led them to triumph.

Montgomery's heart must have been gladdened by the successful African campaign. If any one man can be given the lion's share of that triumph, that man must be Montgomery. He had done what other top-ranking British generals had been unable to do. Once more the colorful man in the black beret had said what he would do — and had fulfilled his pledge to drive every German out of Africa.

Six months previous the misty-eyed general had climbed the Hill of Jesus at Cairo and surveyed the Germans, who were less than two thousand yards away. Behind the line were scores of concealed 88 mm. guns, the scourge of the British and American
tanks. Behind them lay at least three hundred tanks, flanked on either side by at least 850 more. Montgomery's opponent Rommel had 160,000 troops and more were arriving daily.

Now the enemy had been vanquished. The various triumphs, all marked by expert timing, were aimed at one all-powerful break-through. El Alamein and the Mareth line victories will be remembered as brilliant military achievements. Montgomery had learned early that an army must never oppose tanks with its own tanks; he was convinced that the key to success is thorough preparation. He had earned the love and admiration of every man in the Eighth Army, not only as a general but as a "man's man." There was nothing "sissy" about this man, even though he read his Bible daily and was not ashamed to let his men know that he prayed to God for help and guidance.

Before the first shot was fired at El Alamein, Montgomery had prayed, "Let officer and man enter the battle with a stout heart and the determination to do his duty as long as breath is in his body. Let us all pray that the Lord, mighty in battle, will give us victory."

On Christmas Day, when the campaign was half completed, he halted in the midst of his war dealings to give his men a cheering and comforting message. He said, in part, "'Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will to men.' Surely this describes what we are fighting for; therefore let us take it as our battle cry, not only now, but in the years to come."

Victory had been won. God had been close to Montgomery during those twenty-nine weeks of fighting and he realized it. A true Christian, he realized that praise should be given to God for answered prayer. That is why in his closing message to his men after victory was theirs he reminded them once more,

"Let us give thanks to the Lord, mighty in battle."
CHAPTER 5

ITALY...FRANCE...GERMANY!

"The Eighth Army deserves to be the first to set foot on the continent of Europe and so begin the liberation of 400,000,000 people. We have come 2,000 miles across Africa for this, and we will not fail!"

These words were spoken by Field Marshal Montgomery soon after the Allied war machine had landed on Italian soil on the morning of September 3, 1943. Montgomery was riding a "duck" as the ships rolled toward the shoreline, meeting amazingly feeble resistance in establishing themselves on the beaches. After he reached dry land he calmly watched the battle as it raged. Axis planes suddenly appeared overhead but he waved aside a steel helmet offered him, and said, "See, they're gone already."

This was it — invasion! Montgomery's forces had invaded the continent through belligerent Italy. The African campaign had ended in May; next came Sicily, and now the landing on continental soil was more than a dream. It was a reality.

Once again the flawless preparations made by Montgomery and his troops had been rewarded (correspondents were amazed by the extremely slight loss in life suffered as the Allies drove for the beaches). Once again his surprise move revealed the Axis defenses to be weak and inadequate. Once again the wily, slight-of-stature British leader had done what he said he would do: he had landed successfully in Italy.

A few minutes after Montgomery went ashore, his one-ton truck caravan arrived. Correspondents found him listening to a recording he had made regarding the landing in Italy and which was to be played to the troops. He was extremely jovial and happy about the successful landing and when the record was finished he laughed with the correspondents and said, "I think that's all right, don't you? Good recording. Good recording. Now come on in, boys, and I'll tell you all about the battle." Into his one-room headquarters went the group. Newspapermen seldom have seen him so pleased as he was that night. He talked to them freely about many things... and even drank three cups of coffee!

Montgomery thought that the Italian campaign would not last more than six weeks, which proved to be a mistake. His plan of attack was simple: frontal attacks against strong defenses in depth. Three months later the Axis troops were still waging battle, and there was criticism in some quarters. Montgomery squelched it by saying that he did not think that traveling seven hundred miles
from September 3 to December 3 could properly be considered slow progress.

Meanwhile the war councils were meeting. The expected invasion of the Continent via the English Channel to open up the heralded second front was being planned and studied. When it came time to select the man to lead the troops into that defense-heavy continent, the decision was easily made. Montgomery was the man, and on Christmas Day, 1943, the appointment was announced. The news cheered fighting men and civilians. The conqueror of Rommel and the first man to drive back the Nazis in World War II was to direct the invasion troops and fighting.

This appointment meant, however, that Montgomery must say farewell to his Eighth Army. Friendships formed in hardship are often the most enduring, and this was true also of the battle-scarred Eighth Army. There were many tears as Montgomery gave his farewell speech to his men. His message contained comforting Bible verses, and "Montgomery the human" talked from his heart to the men whom he had learned to love. His memorable closing words were these: "Together, we shall see this thing through to the end."

England was different now. Everywhere he went he was acclaimed, but the praise did not affect him. He realized that the severest test was yet to come.

Not long after his return he began his tours. He went everywhere in England where there were troops which he would lead in the invasion. Daily he visited with his officers and men, stopping to talk to the most insignificant private to "find out how things are going at home." The men liked him. He was interested in them . . . in all of them.

The general was pleased with his appointment as Allied assault commander, especially as it entailed working more closely with the Americans whom he had come to respect and admire. As he himself said, "I always get along well with the Americans and the American Army always has given me everything I want. I want to do everything I can for them." He described the American soldier as a brave fighting man — steady under fire and with a tenacity which makes him an expert fighter. To identify himself even more closely with the American soldiers, Montgomery carried a United States Army identification "dog tag" and had his fingerprints registered with the War Department in Washington, D.C.

The "waiting period" before D-Day was filled with activity for Montgomery's men. He drilled them almost mercilessly at times, but he did not lose their regard. Montgomery possesses the ability to make his men like him even though he expects them to do everything but win the war single-handedly as they prepare for it. The men liked
him, but the war office criticized him for his unorthodox methods of procedure. "Paper work" still was repugnant to him, and so he did not devote a great deal of time and attention to it.

June 6, 1944, arrived. This was the night. The waiting was over, and the plans and preparations of months became realities. The fighting was terrific as the Allies went into and over the defense wall which the Germans had built on the French coasts. But — they made it!

Montgomery's men had to exercise the most patience of any of the invaders. According to the plans, he was to handle completely the fourth phase of the campaign — the crashing drive into the vitals of the enemy. This pleased Montgomery — once his men landed on French soil. He liked to battle and he was going to make the most of it. Shortly after the invasion began, German General Frederick Dollman was killed in action and Field Marshal Rommel, Montgomery's "playmate" in Africa, again entered the fray. "Monty" was pleased: he knew Rommel and his tactics.

As the Allies advanced against the Germans, the skill of Montgomery's guiding and directing hand was apparent. One of his first tasks in France was to destroy many of the ob bomb nests from which the Germans had been sending the flying projectiles against the people of London. He did this work quietly but well — so well that he was named field marshal by King George not long after D-Day. Thus he attained the highest possible rank in the British Army and became one of the few British generals to be made a field marshal without having served first as chief of the imperial general staff.

If this were a novel we would have ended the tale with a description of his brilliant triumph in North Africa. However, there were — and are — larger obstacles to be overcome, and so the progress of the war has moved him into France, where we take leave of him. As this is being written, Montgomery is again serving as Allied commander after having shared the honor with American General Omar Bradley for a period. German Field Marshal Gerd Von Rundstedt's concentrated offensive was a blow to the Allies, but we are told that worse disaster was prevented by "mind-reading Montgomery," who anticipated the German drive and placed his troops accordingly.

As we close the discussion of Montgomery, the military leader, we are confident of his ability. Especially encouraging is this reassuring statement made by Montgomery:

"Nothing has stopped us; nothing will."

However, Field Marshal Sir Bernard Law Montgomery is more than a militarist. He is decidedly human — a man who loves and understands other men.
CHAPTER 6
MONTGOMERY — THE MAN

A foreign correspondent was writing what Americans later read:

Field Marshal Sir Bernard Law Montgomery has a reputation for being vain. Maybe he is; maybe he isn't. But I've seen faces of countless soldiers light up and heard them shout his name as he passed, 'Monty! Monty!' Few generals command the love and admiration of their troops as does this short, long-armed crusader in khaki, this pious Billy Sunday in a tank, this Britain's most successful general.

* * *

A battle had started in true Montgomery fashion. One correspondent, aroused shortly after the fray began, asked another,

"How's the campaign going?"

"Right on schedule! It started at seven a.m. and by ten o'clock Montgomery had sacked the brigadier!" was the reply.

* * *

Somewhere in London an alumnus of St. Paul's School of that city laid aside his evening paper which enthusiastically described the exploits of a certain 'Monty of El Alamein' and took one of his yearbooks from the bookcase. Thumbing through it, he finally found the page on which was a picture of young Bernard Law Montgomery, and below it were these words:

This intelligent animal is vicious, of unflagging energy and much feared by neighboring animals owing to a tendency to try

Field Marshal Bernard L. Montgomery

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to pull out the top hair of their heads. To foreign fauna it shows no mercy, stamping on their heads, twisting their necks and doing other inconceivable atrocities with a view, no doubt, to proving its patriotism.

* * *

The junior officer politely opened the conversation as he rode in a jeep with Field Marshal Montgomery.

"Do you mind if I smoke, sir?" he said.

"Why, no, not at all," answered the man in the black beret, and as the officer pulled out a cigarette, he added,

"... but not in this car."

* * *

Another correspondent declared of Montgomery:

Montgomery sounds boastful, and so he is. But he has what it takes to make good on his boasts. He knows details, and he never misses a chance for drama. He picked up a pair of silk underwear from a German officer in Egypt and still wears it.

* * *

A man high in authority in British military circles was speaking:

Generals should be made to pass the same test for toughness that field guns used to be put through by the Royal Artillery. They would drop the gun from a hundred-foot tower, then go down and fire it. If it went off all right it would be considered for further tests. Something like that might snap Montgomery's body, but not his mind or character.

* * *

The scene was a gathering of officers. Field Marshal Montgomery was scheduled to speak, and he opened his message with these words:

"Gentlemen, I will give you two minutes to cough, sneeze or blow your noses. After that there will be no interruptions."
Approximately an hour later, having finished his speech, he stood at the door much like a minister and shook hands with each officer as he walked out. His final words were:

"I have made myself perfectly clear. There is no need for questions. I trust that now you are militarily revitalized."

* * *

These seven glimpses of Field Marshal Montgomery give the reader a somewhat confusing picture of the great hero. His personality is puzzlingly complex and he is disliked by some because of his unpredictable conduct, but he nonetheless possesses the qualities of a man for whom millions of British and other Allied soldiers would die.

Outstanding among his characteristics are his utter confidence in himself and his clarity of speech and thought as he delivers a speech, answers questions or engages in conversation. In short, Montgomery knows where he has been, where he is and where he is going. One mark of a truly great man is the ability to command a situation with calmness. Montgomery never has been without an answer to a problem. When he makes a decision, he is positive that he is doing the right thing — and he does it. If he is wrong, he as quickly acknowledges his error and plans a new move.

This self-confidence has led many observers to describe him as "bold, daring and dangerous." On the contrary, he is generally cautious and slow to act. "A good general," Montgomery has said, "never loses. If he does lose, he loses not only that battle but the confidence of his men." Therefore Montgomery hesitates to launch a battle until he is sure of victory. After he begins an attack, however, he is bold. If necessary he changes his plans and procedure as the need arises. Whatever else happens, he never allows his officers or men to see him doubtful or afraid.

He has not only confidence in himself, but in his officers as well. He places absolute faith in his staff. If something goes wrong he asks for a verbal explanation. If it is not satisfactory, the officer is "sacked" on the spot. The words, "You're good — but not good enough," have reached and burned the ears of many officers whom he has dismissed from his command.

Montgomery has a mind of considerable subtlety. He is a sober judge of a situation; no general, perhaps, has been more reluctant to strike unprepared, but when he does strike, his blow is deliberately and carefully prepared.

If you converse briefly with Montgomery, you will perhaps conclude, as have many correspondents, that the perpendicular pronoun "I" is the most used word in his vocabulary. It would seem that Montgomery is an "egotist," however, rather than an "egoist." That is, he is more addicted to the
frequent use of the word “I” and the practice of referring over and over to himself than to an excessive love for himself. After you have talked with him for some time, however, you are no longer irritated by the frequent use of the word “I” as the true personality of the man manifests itself.

Newspapermen speak of him either as an idealist or as a crusader. Here is another paradox. Although termed hard, ruthless and hardhearted, Montgomery has the spirit of a crusader. The men in his headquarters unit wear a special invasion shoulder patch — a crusader’s shield with a cross on it. In waging war against the Germans, he is convinced that he is also battling the forces of evil as represented by the Nazi menace. His religious background and the fact that the Germans have assaulted the churches have intensified his conviction that by defeating Germany he will help to restore religious freedom in the Reich.

Montgomery’s seeming disrespect for important personages has resulted in considerable criticism. Especially has this been true of his relationships with Prime Minister Churchill. In reality, however, deepest respect and admiration exist between these two great leaders. Even though they are exceedingly different from each other, they are fast friends. One of their most famous conversations is this:

Montgomery: “I don’t drink, don’t smoke, go to bed by ten p.m. and am 100 per cent physically fit.”

Churchill: “I drink, smoke, never go to bed and am 200 per cent physically fit.”

Montgomery is the most independent of Churchill’s generals. He tolerates no interference with his battle strategy even though Churchill is internationally known as a strategist. Montgomery is perhaps the only general who ever refused a Churchill summons. The Prime Minister wanted to meet him at Casablanca in 1943, but Montgomery replied that he could not interrupt his joust with Rommel and would see him later at Tripoli. They met at Tripoli ... after Montgomery had captured it!

When Churchill arrived at Tripoli, Montgomery again asserted himself in his individualistic manner. The Premier arrived late and seated himself for a discussion. Montgomery then announced that it was his retiring time ... and went to bed!

Montgomery always respectfully addresses Churchill as “Sir.” The toast usually attributed to Churchill and given to Montgomery has been quoted around the world whenever people speak of the top-ranking British officer. Churchill referred to Montgomery as “indomitable in defeat, indefatigable in attack and insufferable in victory!” When the editor of Montgomery’s paper during the African campaign attacked Churchill on one occasion, the Prime Minister lodged a complaint with Montgomery.
Montgomery investigated the complaint and supported his editor.

It has been said that one of Montgomery's greatest victories was over Churchill. One writer declared that Montgomery had won major victories over Churchill, Rommel, General Alexander and the desert.

The Premier and the general have spoken much and often about drinking and smoking but Montgomery has never yielded. (One of the few pictures of Churchill without his famous cigar was taken with Montgomery.) Whenever complaints reach Churchill regarding something which the general has done, the Prime Minister usually supports him; for example, when Montgomery entertained Von Thoma, the German general, Churchill refused to censure him. When someone complained about the numerous badges which Montgomery wore on his beret, Churchill squeaked that complaint by saying, "If badges would make all my men as good as Montgomery, I'd have all of them wear them."

On one occasion Montgomery refused to let a Canadian general review his troops because he did not want them to be distracted. When in battle, his aim is to win — in the shortest possible time and with the least number of casualties.

One of his rare reverses came when Italy joined the Allies. An Italian general sent him a wire which read, "Since I am your senior in rank I assume that henceforth you will be under my command." That left Montgomery speechless — but not for long.

Montgomery has become known as the despair of the brass-hatted war machine of Britain. He has little respect for the "paper work" which of necessity must be done and the unorthodox way in which he insists upon managing his armies is frequently criticized. His opponents use such terms as "cad," "bounder" and "upstart" when speaking of him. In a moment of disgust with "paper work," Montgomery stormed that the war would have to be over by 1948 because the supply of paper necessary for making orders would be exhausted by that time!

Although Montgomery never drinks or smokes, he is a friend of his men. They love him. There are several explanations for this friendship, but this is perhaps the major reason: Montgomery does not expect his soldiers to do anything which he himself would not do — including eating the bully beef and the biscuits which have come to be the usual fare of the British fighting man.

To Montgomery the secret of winning a war is to know one's men thoroughly, to keep them happy and aware constantly of the fact that their leader is sincerely interested in every thing, no matter how small, which they are doing. According to Montgomery, it is the man in the machine, not the machine, which will win the war.

Another reason for Montgomery's popularity with
his men is his lack of pretentiousness. He is 100 per cent sincere in everything he does, and the men know it. He is not motivated by the desire for personal gain, but by the desire to help his fellow men. They know that, in spite of his many idiosyncrasies, he is deeply sincere and is eager to serve his God and his country.

Montgomery is vitally interested in his men. Not infrequently the general’s beret can be seen above the edge of a fast-moving tank. Suddenly the driver is ordered to stop, and stop he does. Montgomery slips out and goes to a group of his soldiers. Soon a surprised Tommy is answering questions about his wife and children. The general asks if he knows how the battle is progressing and if he is aware of his part in it. Montgomery may ask him, “Seen a paper lately?” and if the man says, “No,” the general thrusts the latest edition into his hands with a kind “Here, take mine.” Montgomery’s men appreciate his respect for their military knowledge.

The general speaks affably when conversing with his men. When his anger is aroused, however, or when he is called to pass judgment on one of his officers, he can, if the occasion demands, speak harshly. For example, on one occasion he roared, “He’s not a general! He’s a cook — a good, plain cook who won’t burn the toast but who can’t make very good coffee.” On another occasion he declared vehemently that there were only six good generals in the entire British Army . . . but he tactfully refused to name them.

Montgomery’s desire for intimacy with his men has paid handsome dividends. He knows thousands of his men by their first names, and through his conversations with them is able to gain their confidence not only as a leader but as a soldier. They are “his men” and nothing else. He feels a personal responsibility toward each of them and wants his soldiers to realize the fact. As a result, the respect and admiration become mutual. It has been said that his soldiers would rather fight for him and face the Nazi 88 mm. cannon barehanded than incur his wrath.

Montgomery’s interest in his men is a passion with him and with his officers. Before the battle of Africa started he talked to every officer down to the rank of lieutenant colonel.

Another trait which has endeared him to his men is his ability to keep a promise. When Montgomery says he will do a thing he does it. He never fails to keep a promise, and his men have been able to depend on him. One day he passed a unit and noticed that the men were not firing their guns. He asked the reason and received this answer:

“Only a few rounds left, sir.”

Montgomery replied, “Go ahead and fire them; more will be here by three p. m.”

At exactly three o’clock the ammunition arrived!
Montgomery is exceedingly informal, although he can be otherwise if the occasion requires it. When King George visited him in Africa they stayed in Montgomery’s trailer, and the King wore khaki. The general’s lack of formality puts his visitors at ease immediately and he does not try to impress others with his rank.

His clothes emphasize the informality of his manner. Always trim and neat, he wears a beret as much as possible, and it is a distinguishing feature recognized everywhere. He has several. One is the wide-brimmed felt of the Australians, and Montgomery feels that because he spent his early years in Tasmania he has a moral right to wear it. His favorite, however, is the beret of the British tank forces. Legend has it that in World War I French soldiers gave their berets to the British tank men in gratitude for their having turned the tide of battle. The present British tank corps beret is a modification of the French beret. The general wears it straight over the eyebrow, according to Army protocol, and down over the right ear, with the insignia over the left eye. So famous has that beret become that a New York fashion designer has produced a lady’s hat which is known as “Monty’s beret.”

His clothes express his individualism. On one occasion he apologized to reporters for his informal attire — he was wearing his beret, a gray sweater and faded corduroy slacks.

“This is what I fight in. Of course, when I want to look smarter I have a new battle dress outfit that the Americans gave me. It came straight from New York and is the finest suit I’ve ever had,” was his explanation.

In the field he often wears shorts and a shirt, with a revolver strapped to his waist. When in England, however, he generally conforms to the British standard of dress. The famous general also collects insignia — as well as berets. If he discovers a unit whose insignia he has not yet acquired, he soon obtains it to add to his collection. On one occasion an American general asked Montgomery for his penknife and when Montgomery complied with the request, the American snipped off his own shoulder patch and gave it to the British leader.

When the Allies moved into France, Montgomery came ashore wearing corduroy slacks and a gray pullover sweater with one button. A few years before, when the British were evacuating France, Montgomery lost a similar brown pullover sweater. It was found by monks, however, who buried it and saved it for him. In 1944, when he returned he visited the town and the monks gave him his sweater, which he continues to wear.

In spite of his informal attire, Montgomery never fails to look distinguished. He watches details in his dress even as he observes details in his relations with his men. On certain occasions he may wear
three badges on his beret; a few days later he may have none. This he does for a definite purpose.

Montgomery is brave, and his men know it. However, he does not spend his time traversing the battlefield in an open tank. He prefers to direct activities from his headquarters, but he is never afraid to enter the fray. In World War I he more than once proved his gallantry under fire.

Without a doubt he is one of the most physically fit men ever to lead an army. His zeal for physical fitness is perhaps the result of his triumph over what Army doctors had told him might be permanent retirement. At that time, in 1937, he determined to make himself sound in mind and body by careful diet and muscular exercises. He achieved his aim. His physique is the epitome of power and endurance. Montgomery’s family shares his interest in physical fitness.

At the age of seventy the general’s father walked eighteen miles at a stretch. His mother, too, likes to walk. Montgomery’s interest in physical fitness has also influenced his officers. He insists that they be in the best possible physical condition. He dislikes fat men. If an officer is gaining excessive weight, he may order him to take a special five-mile run before breakfast. Usually when Montgomery assumes command of a unit, a program of dieting is initiated.

He likes to use slogans and his keyword is “binge.” The fact that he does not favor the officers in issuing his orders has won the good will of his men. They know that he has no favorites.

Montgomery eats simple food. Doctors have forbidden him to eat pork, bacon or eggs, and so his breakfast generally consists of porridge and plenty of hot milk followed by “bubble and squeak,” a British dish of left-over vegetables fried in drippings. He likes honey. At lunch he usually takes tea rather than coffee. He never eats fish; toasted cheese is his favorite substitute. The general’s mess is informal except for the fact that the officers rise when he enters and seat themselves when he says, “Sit down, gentlemen, sit down.”

The hero of El Alamein possesses a superb sense of the dramatic. This is evident when he bestows medals for gallantry in action. He always makes certain that all spectators have a good view, and he never fails to exchange at least a few words with the men honored. If he sees that the soldier wears an Eighth Army ribbon, he usually remarks, “I see that we’ve fought together before.” He speaks of his soldiers as “terrific, wonderful and unbeatable.” Montgomery’s men use similar adjectives when speaking of their leader.

Montgomery specializes in the unusual. On one occasion he won a Flying Fortress from General Dwight Eisenhower of the American forces. In an exchange of telegrams Montgomery said, “We’ll be
in Sfax by July 15,” and Eisenhower wired back, “If you are you’ll get a Flying Fortress, complete with crew.” Montgomery entered the town on July 11 and promptly wired, “Fortress, please.”

It came. The American crew was headed by Lt. Eddie R. Russell of Mississippi and the unorthodox Montgomery immediately proceeded to use the Flying Fortress in a manner not intended by the designer thereof. He ordered it to take off and land in exceedingly unsuitable places, and the plane finally came to grief on a little airfield in Sicily. A crack-up was avoided but the undercarriage was wrecked. Montgomery then exchanged it for a C-47 and continued to fly. One of his favorite tricks was to order the pilot to fly low over the troops; then the general would wave at the men below.

Most of his letters are answered by his mother, and because of the volume of correspondence she uses printed postcards to acknowledge gifts to the Army. Montgomery’s mail has included many proposals of marriage. He writes most of his personal letters to his mother and his son, David. Others, except those to close friends, are answered by a member of his staff after he has seen them. If he feels inclined to do so, however, he will pause anywhere to answer a letter. When a little Yorkshire lass sent him a Christmas greeting, Montgomery sat down while the battle was raging and wrote her a letter of thanks. His idiosyncrasies reveal himself frequently. For example, after reading his mail he will complain humorously that he received only two letters of proposal; then he will bolt for the door and race down the road in his tank in the direction of the enemy.

He keeps a diary under lock and key. When John Gunther, author of the famous “Inside” series, was visiting Montgomery, they discussed the diary. Gunther looked at a few notes which he had written (among them were two instances in which he had misspelled the name of the late Wendell Willkie) and in their conversation Montgomery asked Gunther if his diary was financially valuable. Gunther told him that he thought it would be worth from $25,000 to $100,000 whereon Montgomery replied,

“Well, I guess I won’t die in the poorhouse, anyway.”

Montgomery’s mannerisms are many and interesting. Often when he talks he draws diagrams with his foot, either on the floor or in the sand or dirt. This was especially true in Africa, and the general told a reporter there that he doubted if he could plan a battle without sand. His major recreation is reading, particularly the Bible. He permits no one to smoke in his office or caravan. Thoroughly unpredictable, on one occasion during a parade he went over to a coal-heaver who was standing on the
sidewalk, shook his hand and said, "Your job is more important than mine."

Thirty-seven of his fifty-seven years have been spent in the Army and he has served in India, Palestine, France, England and Africa. Most generals, Montgomery believes, waste their energy in staff work, and he is determined to avoid that. He delegates most of his work to Major General Francis Wildred "Freddie" de Guinigand, little known but extremely brilliant. (This is the de Guinigand who was sitting at the desk in Cairo and was told by the new commander of the Eighth Army to tear up the plans for the retreat.) The general's personnel problems are solved by Major General William Arthur Peel Graham, the man who has revolutionized British supply methods.

Soldiers who fought in the Eighth Army in Africa will never forget the paper published by the unit. It was called the Eighth Army News and was begun in September of 1941 during the siege of Tobruk. Since that time it has been a vital factor in bolstering the morale of the Army during the campaign. The editor was Captain Warwick J. Charlton, twenty-six-year-old veteran who was placed in command when the Army was pushed back to Egypt. The paper was printed on captured Italian mobile presses and Italian maps were often used for paper. Montgomery occasionally delivered the papers himself. The editorials in the News were frank and critical. On only one occasion did Montgomery bridle Charlton: he did not approve of his presentation of the Lt. General George S. Patton soldier-slapping incident. Charlton even edited Montgomery's material; the editor declared that the changes were necessary because "Monty" insisted upon using trite phrases.

One of Montgomery's prize souvenirs was a bathtub which he secured from an Italian officer in the African campaign. It was a common sight to see a sandy-haired, slightly bald head above the old tin tub.

Montgomery loves poetry and uses it wisely and often in his speeches to his soldiers. At Tripoli, when he was speaking to the men during the victory parade, he quoted from Lawrence Binyon's famous poem, "For the Fallen."

- They shall not grow old, as we that are left grow old;
- Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
- At the going down of the sun and in the morning,
- We will remember them.

Once he was aroused in the middle of the night and told, "The Germans are dropping flares."

"Swell!" he answered. "That's what I wanted!" and promptly turned over and went back to sleep.

During the campaign in France he found two little dogs. He named the wire-haired terrier "Hitler" and the spaniel "Rommel."

Montgomery is a hard worker. When he works he works thoroughly; when he relaxes he relaxes completely. When he wants solitude he is un-
approachable. He is never impressive in repose. In one of his talks the general outlined his four-point plan for Allied success: Allied solidarity, offensive eagerness, confidence and all-out effort. Montgomery has proved the value of these four points in his own life.

Russia has honored Montgomery by giving him the Order of the Suvorov, the highest Army decoration given to any person outside the Soviet Union. Eisenhower has been quoted as saying that he believes Montgomery is one of the greatest generals in history. He started to prepare for World War II in the twenties by studying internal combustion engines and the two-way radio. The system which he established for the army of occupation in the last war is typical. It enables the commander to know in a few minutes what is happening anywhere along the line.

Montgomery is “tough”... and gentle. He is a man’s man in the midst of a man’s war, but at the same time possesses the qualities which make him completely at ease in a peaceful world. It is difficult to separate Montgomery the militarist from Montgomery the human being, especially in wartime, but the two are distinct.

Beneath Montgomery’s rugged exterior is a heart filled with love and compassion for his soldiers and for the cause for which he is fighting. As a military

man he is rightfully considered “great,” and as the liberator of millions of people on the continent of Europe he will be termed “great” as a human being.

What is the secret of Montgomery’s greatness? It is the Book which he holds dearer than any other in this world — the Bible.
CHAPTER 7
MONTGOMERY — MAN OF PRAYER

Soldiers and sailors from around the world were talking in Boston Common. A British Tommy waited until it was his turn to speak and then declared with enthusiasm:

"Why, in this war even the big boys are right down there in the midst of things with the men — and that guy Montgomery prays! My captain seen 'im pray. My captain was going to Monty's tent one morning in Africa. The tent flap was open and the general, we call 'im Monty, was right down on his knees praying. On a table in front of him was his Bible, wide open!"

"And," added another Britisher, "he doesn't even smoke. What's more, he doesn't even let his officers drink or smoke in his presence..."

A few months before this, a correspondent was plunking out his daily story. The battle of El Alamein was over; the Germans were in full flight and the English in swift pursuit. After his opening paragraphs the correspondent wrote these words:

This was total war, waged with more weight, power and concentration than the Nazi war machine ever had encountered and directed by a new master of total war — a man who said his

Field Marshal Bernard L. Montgomery

prayers in his desert tent night and morning and quoted the Bible to his troops to make them better fighters.

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This is Field Marshal Montgomery — the man whose military feats have become famous everywhere. This hero is a Bible-loving, God-fearing Christian who not only believes in the Bible and the tremendous power of prayer but who also urges his officers and men to read the Blessed Book and pray even as he does. The Book which has survived years of criticism is the source of Montgomery's strength. His personal relationship to God is without a doubt his "secret weapon" of strength and wisdom as he leads and guides the destinies of millions of soldiers and civilians.

The field marshal is not afraid to declare his love for the Bible and he tells others what the Word of God means to him. He carries it with him everywhere in battle... and he is the kind of general who goes almost everywhere in battle. Yet, in the words of a journalist, "he is frankly embarrassed by those disciples of Holy Writ who write to him to attribute his success to religious leanings." He once said, "I wish people wouldn't write that sort of thing," but even as he said it his hand was only a few inches from his well-thumbed Bible and his dog-eared copy of Pilgrim's Progress.

Montgomery reveals what the Bible means to him by the consistent and divinely-guided life which he
leads, through the scriptural quotations which he uses so frequently in his orders and messages, and through the direct challenges which he leaves with the men: for example, “I read the Bible every day and I recommend that you do the same.” Montgomery quotes Scripture frequently. He loves the old Book, and has learned and applied its truths.

He uses Scripture on many occasions. Once when trying to impress officers with the necessity for simple and plain language in giving orders, he quoted I Corinthians 14:9: “I have often in the back of my mind a passage from the New Testament, ‘Except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken?’”

Shortly after the Allied troops had landed safely in Normandy, he called a meeting at which he made this declaration: “We must not fail to give praise and honor where it is due. ‘This is the Lord’s doing; it is marvellous in our eyes.’” (Psalm 118:23). The previous Christmas morning he had declared, “‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.’ This is what we are fighting for; that is what we desire: ‘on earth peace, good will toward men.’”

It is reported authoritively that Montgomery reads at least two chapters of the Bible each day. If he is in a city behind the lines, he attends divine services on the Sabbath. He does not apologize for his interest in religion and frankly recommends that his men and officers share that interest. He believes that the Bible “is the source of all divine and human wisdom.” As a general he recognizes the absolute necessity for spiritual strength — for himself and for the men whom he directs.

When Montgomery says farewell to the troops with whom he has been training or fighting he generally urges the men he is leaving to read the Bible and pray. He made such an appeal when he left the Southeastern command in England to go to Egypt. During his farewell message he uttered these significant words: “Gentlemen, I read the Bible every day, and I sincerely recommend that you do the same.”

Then he left for Egypt, the scene of the Allies’ greatest triumph in the war until that time — the defeat of Rommel and his Nazis. Veterans of that valiant Eighth Army in Africa recall vividly how their new commander conducted regular prayer meetings on the hot desert sands of Africa. Before the rousing battle of El Alamein, he asked all his men to pray with him that “the Lord, mighty in battle, will give us victory.” Months later, when final victory was won, he reminded them of that prayer to the Almighty, and led them in giving “thanks to the Lord, mighty in battle.”

Prayer, to Montgomery, is more than mere form or ritual. It is a definite and deep communion with
God. He has no particular time for prayer, but has “quiet times” with the Lord both morning and evening. When awakened in the morning he generally spends a half-hour in prayer, Bible-reading and meditation.

He follows no prescribed form of prayer, whether public or private. Montgomery has studied carefully the careers of other Bible-loving generals and has seen how the Lord has aided them in battle. Occasionally he discovers prayers which have been used by other Christian generals and appropriates them for his own use. This led him to use one day a prayer uttered by the Earl of Richmond before the battle of Bosworth Hill:

Oh, Thou whose captain I account myself, look on my forces with a gracious eye; make us Thy ministers of chastisement that we may praise Thee in victory.

Montgomery does not like to fight on Sunday, although this is sometimes imperative. However, even when in the midst of battle he strives to observe the Sabbath and reduces his work to a minimum. If it is possible to have a service, he frequently reads the lesson for the day before the chaplain conducts the meeting. The general then listens to the remainder of the service.

Many ask, “How did Montgomery learn to love God and His Word?”

There are, perhaps, two explanations. The first is the heritage which has been the possession of many of our truly great men: the general had godly parents who were determined that God should have first place in the lives and hearts of their seven children.

The second influence was and is Oliver Cromwell. The home in which Bernard Law Montgomery and his six brothers and sisters grew to maturity was a haven of Christian help and love. Each of Montgomery’s parents possessed a definite, personal relationship to God through His Son Jesus Christ and their consecrated Christianity molded the lives of their seven children. Soon after his father had gathered the boys together for his “God first, country second” talk, Bernard made a confession. He had sold his bicycle (which had been a gift) to buy stamps for his collection. A moral issue was at stake — it was wrong to sell gifts. Bernard was forced to go without spending-money for many months as he saved to buy back the bicycle.

It is hard to overstate the influence which Montgomery’s home has had upon his life. He learned to consider others above himself, and the mischievous little lad in the Montgomery “zoo” became the most self-sacrificing man in the entire British Army. He has always given a tenth of his income to the Church and its missionary enterprises.

It is natural that Montgomery should share his parents’ love for the Word of God. This love has resulted in his desire to study the Bible. Scripture
has not only given him his goals, but also the strength and the power to reach them. God has first place in his life.

Oliver Cromwell was the second great influence in Bernard Montgomery’s life. When the general was a youth, Cromwell, the great English warrior, was his hero, and even today is the yardstick by which he measures his own deportment.

Cromwell, like Montgomery, used the Bible to inspire his men. When Cromwell was fighting, he selected an appropriate passage of Scripture before each battle, and with his Bible in one hand and his sword in the other, exhorted his men to be strong and trust in God. It was at Dunbar, on September 3, 1650, that Cromwell made this famous statement:

“They run! They run! ‘Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered!’” (Psalm 68:1).

Montgomery appropriated that slogan and uses it often before a battle. It was his battle cry in the invasion of the continent via the English Channel, and he added to it these comforting words as he addressed his men: “There is no doubt in my mind that the Lord of Hosts is on our side.” Like his famous predecessor, he never fails to give thanks to God for victory.

Other Christian generals also have inspired Montgomery. The most colorful of England’s Victorian generals, General Charles George “Chinese” Gordon, was an outstanding Christian. He held regular morning and evening prayer meetings and inspired his men with challenges from the Book. After holding the small garrison at Khartum for eight months against native rebels, he was killed only two days before British relief arrived. His Bible, with its many markings and notes, was presented to Queen Victoria and later placed in a crystal case in Windsor Castle.

America’s “Stonewall” Jackson was known as the “American Cromwell.” He prayed about all decisions, no matter how small, and often arose in the middle of the night to pray. He loved to discuss the Bible, and gave his horses, as well as his men, a day of rest. He, too, disliked to wage war on the Sabbath. His position regarding Sunday warfare has been adopted by Montgomery. Jackson’s explanation was this:

“Arms is a profession which requires an officer to do what he fears may be wrong, and yet, according to military experience, must be done. Had I fought the battle on Monday instead of Sunday I fear our cause might have suffered.”

In this war Montgomery has been fighting with men who believe the Word of God and regard it as the one guide to heaven. Two of the best known are Lt. General William Dobbie and the late Major General Orde Wingate, the man who revolutionized Allied warfare in Burma. Wingate, too, was an
earnest believer in prayer and a thorough student of the Bible.

All these men, but especially the dynamic Cromwell, inspired Montgomery as he shaped his career as a soldier. From each he learned valuable lessons. Also a member of the "Sword and Bible General Club," Montgomery has often received spiritual reinforcement from the Word of God.

The light of the crusader shines brightly in Montgomery's piercing eyes. He believes that he is fighting this war as a Christian soldier no less than a British general, as a churchman no less than a patriot. He has felt keenly the need for spiritual strength in making his momentous decisions. He is a combination of the ascetic and the avenging angel. His business as a soldier is to kill, but his business as a churchman is to point people to the way in which they can die without fear of death. He is convinced that the Bible meets fully the needs of the man in uniform as well as the civilian.

What is the attitude of his men toward Montgomery? What do they think about a man who prays, about a man who will fly thousands of miles to attend a church service, about a man who reads his Bible every night before he retires and quotes Scripture to them whenever he gets the opportunity? Is he a "sissy"? Has he lost their respect?

Definitely to the contrary!

Montgomery's men love him. They admire his faith and he is a hero even to his valet. One correspondent wrote for American readers:

"Over here [Africa] Monty's name must not be taken in vain, for it spells victory." Then followed a description of a Sunday-morning service in the field at which Montgomery read the lesson for the day.

His chaplains will do anything for him. When it came time for Montgomery to leave Italy for greater responsibilities in England and the invasion, the assistant chaplain of the Eighth Army said, "We look on him as a fine leader, as a good man and as an inspiring servant of God..."

The millions of civilians who have read and re-read the stirring tales of his triumphs have been inspired by the fact that he gives God the glory for his achievements. Many people have concluded that it is impossible to live a Christian life in the armed forces. Montgomery, however, has shown, as perhaps no other man in modern history, that it is possible for one to live as a Christian while in the service of his country. His success has proved that God champions the cause of right against wrong. The loved ones of "Monty's men" are comforted by the fact that the field marshal is a man who reads his Bible at least twice daily and who prays to God for help and guidance at all times.

Bernard Law Montgomery is not a harsh despot
who inspires fear in his men, but a leader whom
the British soldier loves and for whom he would die.
We take leave now of a man whose most highly
prized letter was sent him by a Sunday-school
teacher in Atlanta, Georgia. Signed by all the pu-
pils in her class, it reads: "We pray for you each
night." We leave a man who once refused to take
the pretty daughter of a vicar to a party because
she smoked. We leave a man whose passion is to
win the war as soon as possible and with the least
possible loss in human lives.

Montgomery's military glory will some day fade
away, but his spiritual glory will never fade away!
The seeds of Scripture which he has sown will bear
fruit sometime, somewhere. He presses steadily
on, depending each minute and each hour upon the
God in whom he trusts for strength and victory.

Montgomery deserves a prominent place on the
honor roll of World War II; he has earned that
privilege. A "man's man and a soldier's soldier,"
Field Marshal Sir Bernard Law Montgomery has
been able, through the help and grace of God, to
achieve great goals in this war; he will accomplish
much more if God spares him. His formula is
simple: prayer and Bible-reading, for guidance;
courageous fighting; after victory, sincere praise to
God for the triumph.

With God on his side and on our side, we cannot
lose.