

HALIFAX IN WARTIME



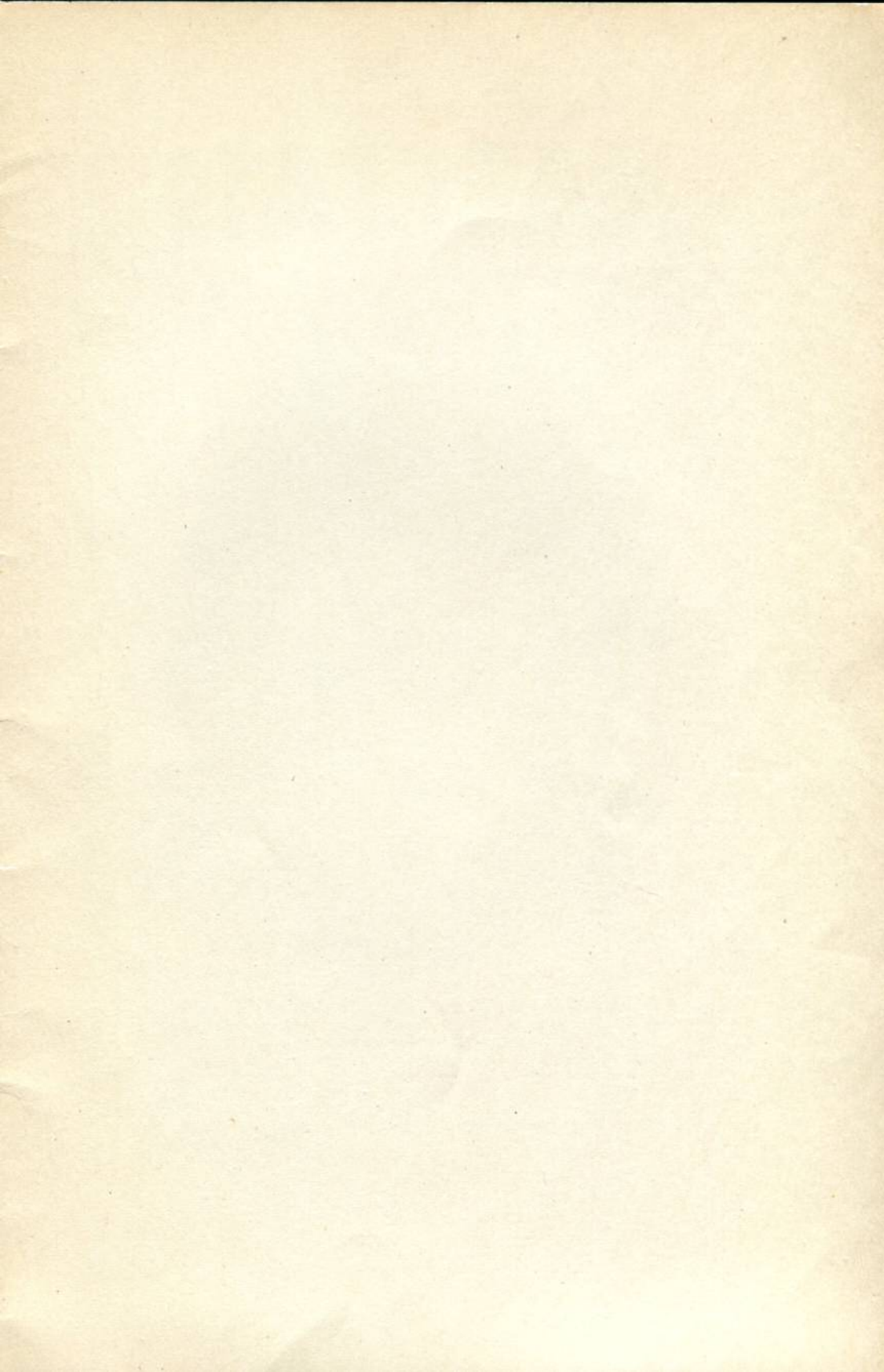
A COLLECTION OF DRAWINGS BY

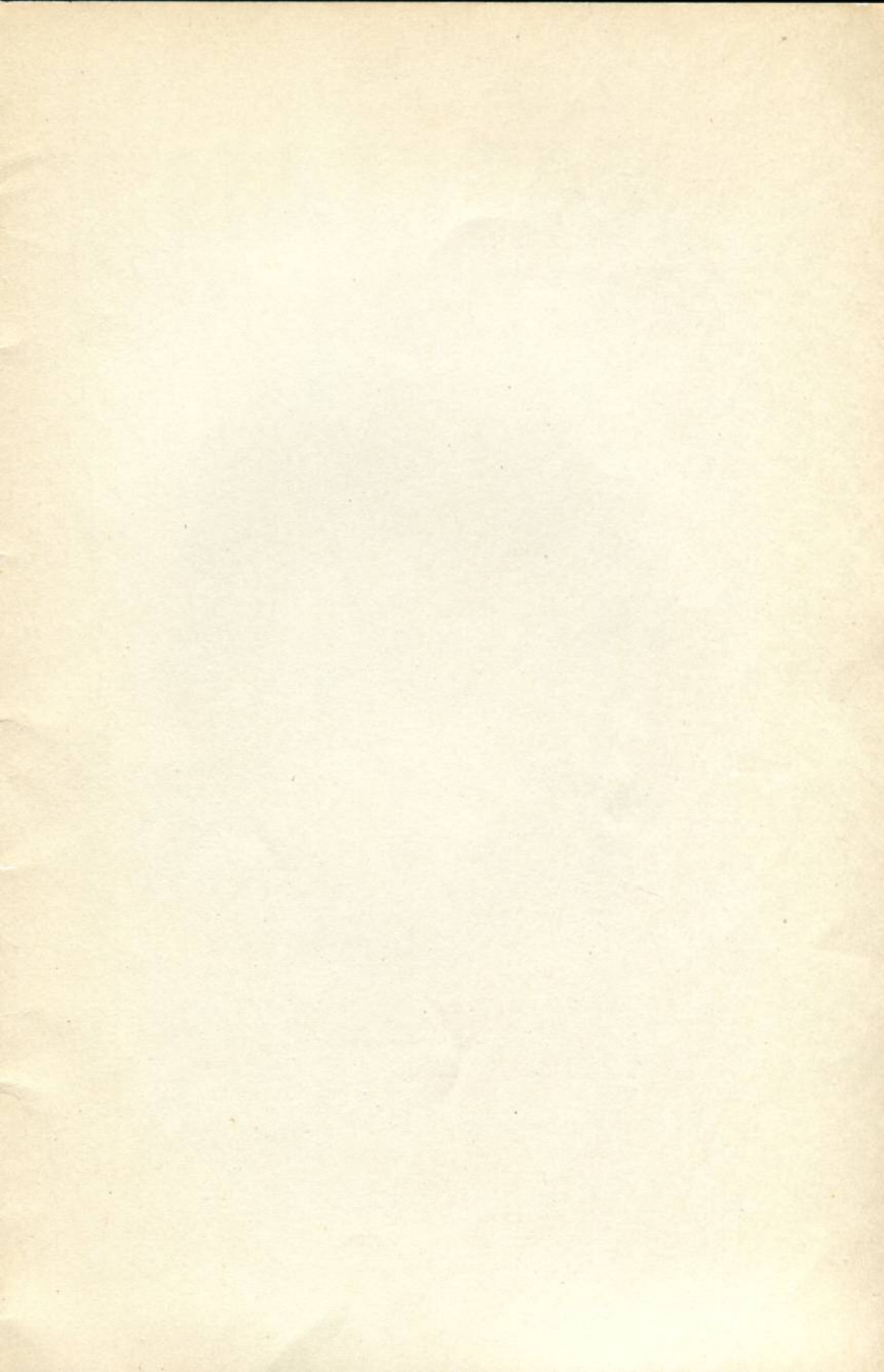
ROBERT W. CHAMBERS

PUBLISHED BY

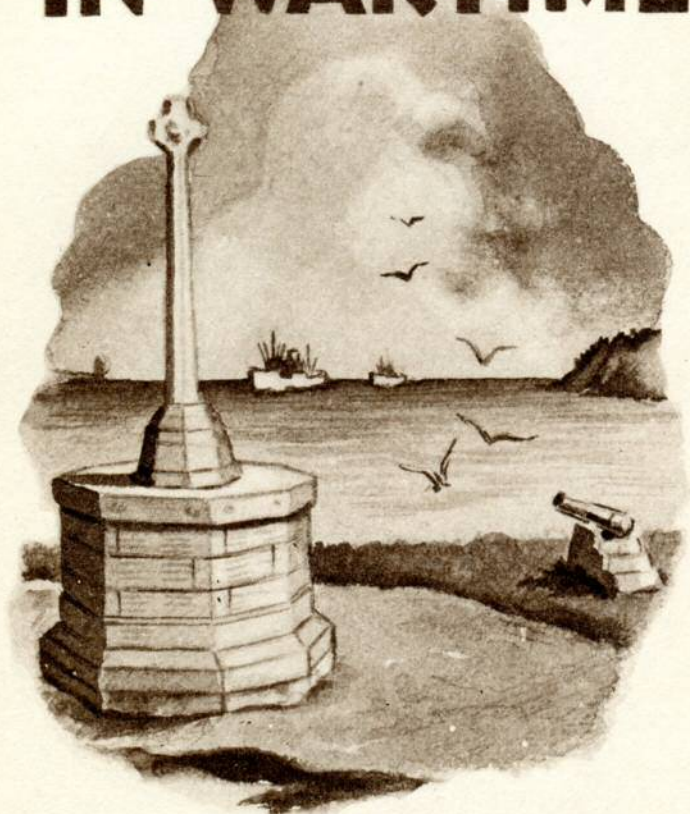
THE HALIFAX HERALD
AND THE HALIFAX MAIL

PRICE 25¢





HALIFAX IN WARTIME



The Halifax Herald and The Halifax Mail publish this collection of drawings by Staff Artist Robert W. Chambers so that as many as possible may have in more permanent form this unique, pictorial record of wartime Halifax, one of the United Nations' principal naval bases, a city to which this struggle has given an international aspect shared by few, if any other ports on this continent. The twelve pictures in this volume constitute part of a series by Mr. Chambers, with textual matter by Frank W. Doyle, of the editorial staff, published in The Halifax Mail during 1943.

FOREWORD.

These twelve drawings, on the most casual inspection, give a vivid impression of the many-sided activities of Halifax in wartime, and afford convincing evidence that such activities could not be carried on in any ordinary town, or in any ordinary seaport; for, without its magnificent harbour, Halifax could not have become either the meeting-place of so many types of allied nationals and the haven of so many allied seamen, with their moving stories of dangers met and overcome, or the embarkation port of such varied types as are here depicted in characteristic mood.

Perhaps, any artist with equal skill could have suggested the significance of Halifax in current history equally well; but only a native-born Nova Scotian could have sensed the Haligonian's feeling for his past, and linked current activities with that past, which he has so absorbed into every fibre of his being that it lives again in memory, as these pictures are unrolled for his inspection. By careful selection of details and by associating these details with historic sites, buildings and monuments, Mr. Chambers carries us backward through the two centuries during which Halifax has been both a military and naval centre and the capital of a colony or province, striving to meet the needs of its normal civilian life as well. At different intervals throughout that period it has been involved in fifty years of war, which have left their marks upon the city and its people; but from past experiences Haligonians have learned to meet emergencies and, in their clubs, hostels and churches to discharge their obligations to the thousands who pass through their gates, hoping they may carry with them pleasant memories of their sojourn in the city and some knowledge of its colourful history.

Such is the atmosphere which Mr. Chambers has tried to compress into these drawings. By featuring Citadel Hill, the Town-Clock, the venerable churches, the old burying ground, the monuments in it and on the Grand Parade, all of which point to bygone days; and by the juxtaposition of pedestrians and airmen, the ox-cart and the jeep on a modern steam-ferry, which gives some hint as to the complexity and evolution of modern life, he has been able not only to depict vividly the present-day activities of Halifax but also to suggest that they are inspired by the living past.

D. C. Harvey

The Public Archives of Nova Scotia,
Halifax, N. S.

October 22, 1943.

I—A CROSS-ROADS OF THE WORLD

A CROSSROADS of the United Nations where men of many lands and races pass day after day in the course of work or leisure—that is the corner of Barrington and Sackville Streets as World War II has made it.

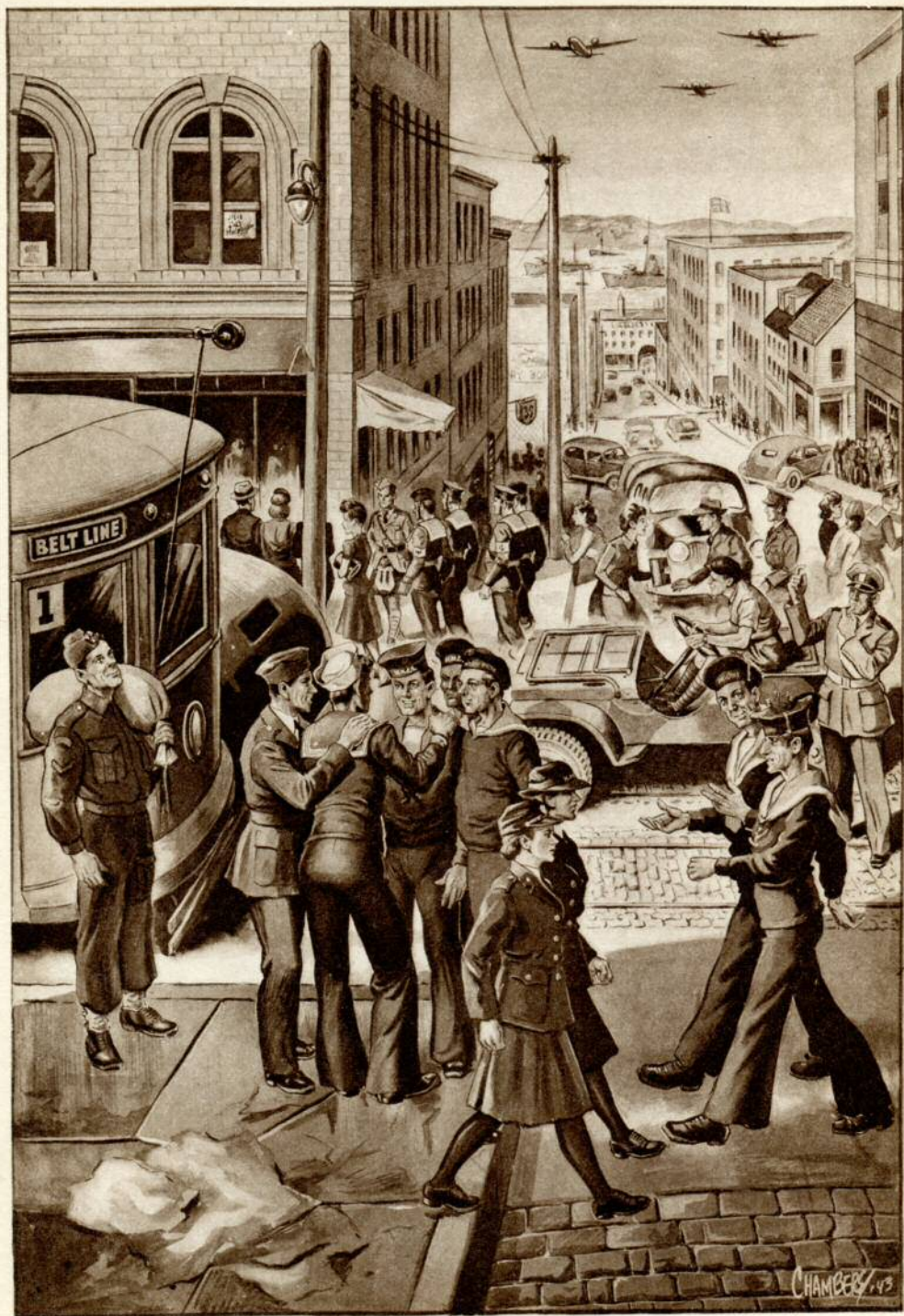
Before Hitler marched into Poland, this was merely a busy, downtown spot in a middle-sized maritime city. Trams with empty seats rattled by; taxis in abundance rolled along and private cars went dashing out of the city on pleasant holiday and week-end journeys.

Now the traffic policeman blows his whistle and waves his signals to a dwindling flow of private cars and a crowd of pedestrians as cosmopolitan as might be found in London or New York, for this is a cross-roads between the Old World and the New.

Warworkers, servicemen and servicewomen, and mere civilians of no particular calling jostle one another on curbs and crowded street cars while busy jeeps wheel past.

Men of the Allied navies pause to chat—the Yank who has been in the Solomons, the fair-haired stoker whose home was burned at Narvik, the lad from Rotterdam, the boys whose red pompoms and Lorraine crosses show they chose deGaulle instead of Vichy, and the grim-faced Cockney whose family died in the London blitz.

Smart costumes of khaki and navy and airforce blue proclaim that Halifax women and their sisters from Vancouver and all the places between are in this world struggle at the side of their men. Tough old salts may mutter but they salute lieutenants with lipstick!



II—ON THE CITADEL

IN the shadow of Citadel Hill, colonists 194 years ago built the first settlement, sheltering it behind wooden stockades.

From its heights once pointed the guns which have made this city the "Warden of the Honor of the North".

Along its base have marched famous regiments, while through the streets sprawling down to the sea have moved prisoners of war and press-gangs, merchants, refugees from rebel colonies, a host of ordinary folk.

From the Citadel's heights have flown signals to warn of the enemy's approach or to tell of the safe arrival of friend from overseas. Semaphores have marked out code words to the outer forts and have relayed messages at royal behest to inland settlements.

From its slopes have sounded guns to set the city's time; its weather markers have foretold storm; flags and pennants have made gay with color countless ceremonial occasions.

Citadel Hill is in war garb now. Men in khaki march its roads, stand guard at its gates. It was just that way not long ago—formidable, if ancient, its armed men giving the lie to grass-grown battlements—when on its crest stood Winston Churchill, the Empire's Leader, gazing down on ships of war and trade at anchor in the harbour. With his family, he greeted Canada's own soldiers, successors to those who in earlier years marched from those same heights to help win continents.



III—THROUGH THESE PORTALS

BARRACK Square is a term of deep meaning to Halifax. Civilians, as they pass by sentried gates, merely glimpse a paved space. But on such squares, bounded by rambling, red, wooden buildings, many regiments have been mustered...for the first time in Halifax when fresh from other lands...for the last time after their station here had been completed...Men have met there for the march to Quebec in ancient days...for final orders before embarking on service to end for so many on the soil of France and Flanders.

Today, as in those other days of war, parade grounds echo to the tread of troops and through those gates on Sackville Street pass soldiers and seamen and airmen of many nations to spend hours ticked off by the Town Clock sitting sedately on Citadel Hill.

Back of those gates stand galleried barracks; there is the century-old library founded upon the spoils of war, setting forth the arts of war—books pored over by generations of the Empire's soldiery; there are messes where stories of men who wage battles have been told, re-told, and, unwritten, made into legend.

Past those gates that open on South Barrack Square go thousands each day, men and women of the services, civilians who think themselves harried, schoolboys and girls who will be the soldiery of tomorrow.



CHAMBERS '43

IV--MEN OF WAR

HALIFAX has watched from such seawall vantage places many fleets that have made this port since war began. From the East Indies, they have been bound north to Murmansk; having rounded the Cape, they are retracing their course southward again to the Spanish Main. Ships have gone out from here to hunt down great ships and small—the Graf Spee and the Bismarck, and numbered but otherwise anonymous underseas raiders. They have left in flotillas guarding convoys or have slipped away singly under sealed orders.

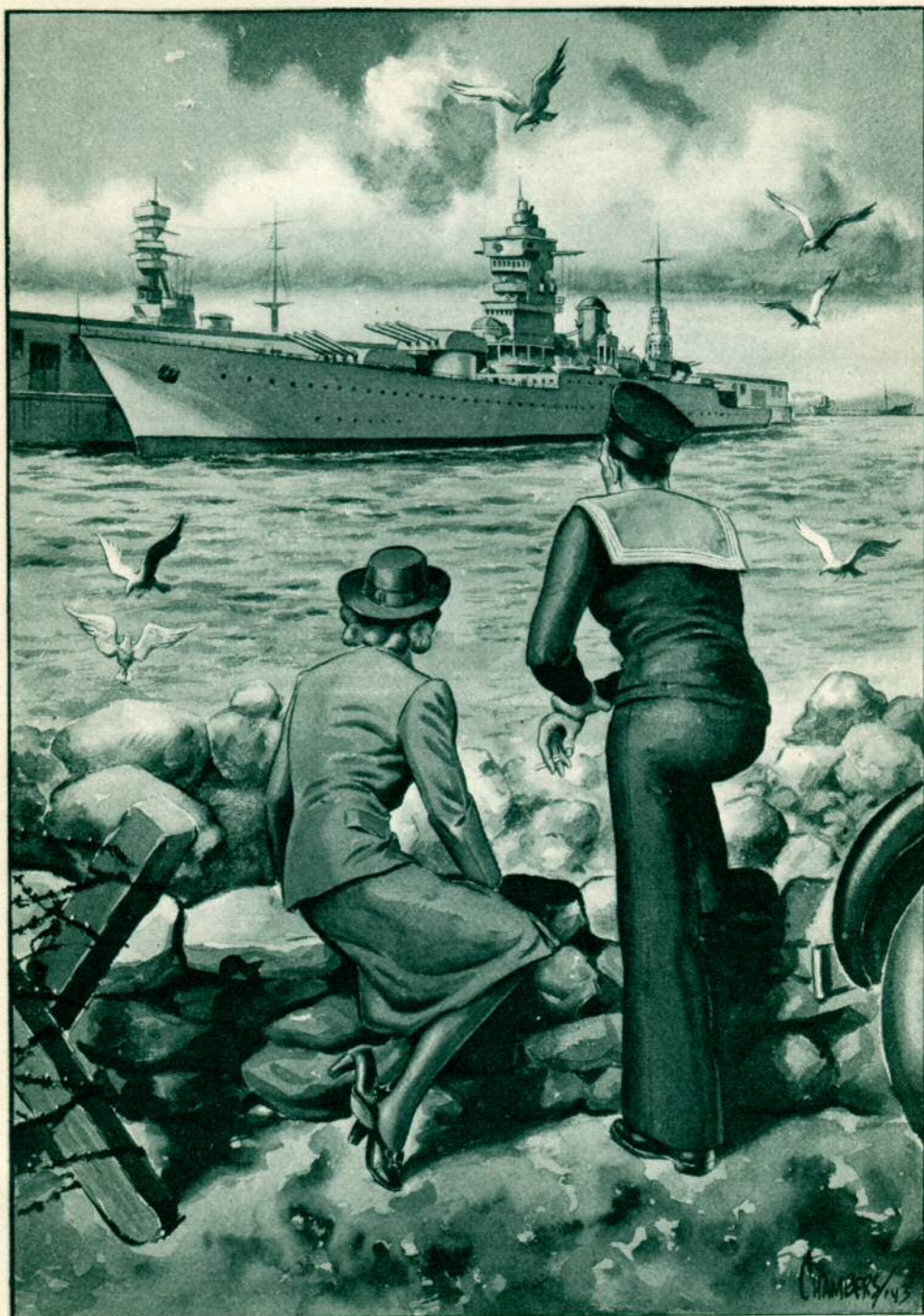
Some ships have come back many times; others have not re-passed the harbour gates and some never will.

Royal Navy, Canada's own fighting ships and those of all the navies of this Commonwealth, of the United States, French, Dutch, Greek, Polish, Russian, Norwegian—war vessels of the United Nations have anchored here. The Surcouf refitted in this port before she carried aid to beleaguered Malta; the Dunkirk lay at pierside while the enemy placed her off the River Platte. Soviet submarines from Siberia have tugged at their moorings alongside those of their allies.

Uniformed men have marched ashore in hundreds. They have filled shops and eating houses. When the war was new they found shelter in doorways or slept on counters or under tables on their nights away from ships. They have carried home from Halifax soap and souvenirs, silk stockings and cheese. They have made streets ring with high words and laughter. They have found and made and held friends. They have hunted out historic places, learned a little about Canada and more about Canadians, and have mingled with fellow fighting men in all the services foreign to them.

They have played their own, odd games brought to Halifax from as far away as India and Russia and enjoyed the more familiar soccer and cricket; they have puzzled over Canada's hockey and baseball, and, sailorlike, have tried their hand at small boating. They have spent hours on the shoreline measuring their own fighting ships and telling tales of adventure in far-away lands, of battles in the skies and beneath the sea.

Such tales will be remembered long after this war has gone, kept and treasured along with sailormen's keepsakes of ribbon and ivory and shell and glass gathered from the world's bazaars by forefathers who were seafarers like today's youth.



V—MEN OF THE SEA

THE Free Frenchman could speak no English or Spanish; the Spaniard could talk neither French nor English, but the blond, lacadaisical Englishman was a master of his own tongue and of both others as well, so conversation proceeded easily as the men from three ships, as many countries and countless ports tarried a few hours in Halifax.

A Lascar stopped at the hostel counter:

"You work here?" he asked. "You paid?"

The answers from the woman volunteer were "yes" to the first and "no" to the second question.

"You mean 'I work for you, do something for you so you work, do something for me?'" he persisted.

The volunteer nodded assent.

The Lascar turned and explained it all to his friends. They smiled and bowed; they bowed again.

"Service for service", they thought. A bright new world.

So it is in Halifax today!

Men of many races—women, too—back from the sea in their ships.

Men in sweaters and sweatshirts or in brand-new garb replacing that taken to the sea-bottom in some sunken ship.

Men of culture; men who have known seafronts from Suez to Aden the long-way 'round and the boiling sea between.

Men who have been 60 years at sea; men who were schoolboys the day before yesterday but who have beaten the Hun through the ice to Archangel and whose smiles, as they admit it, are still soft with youth.

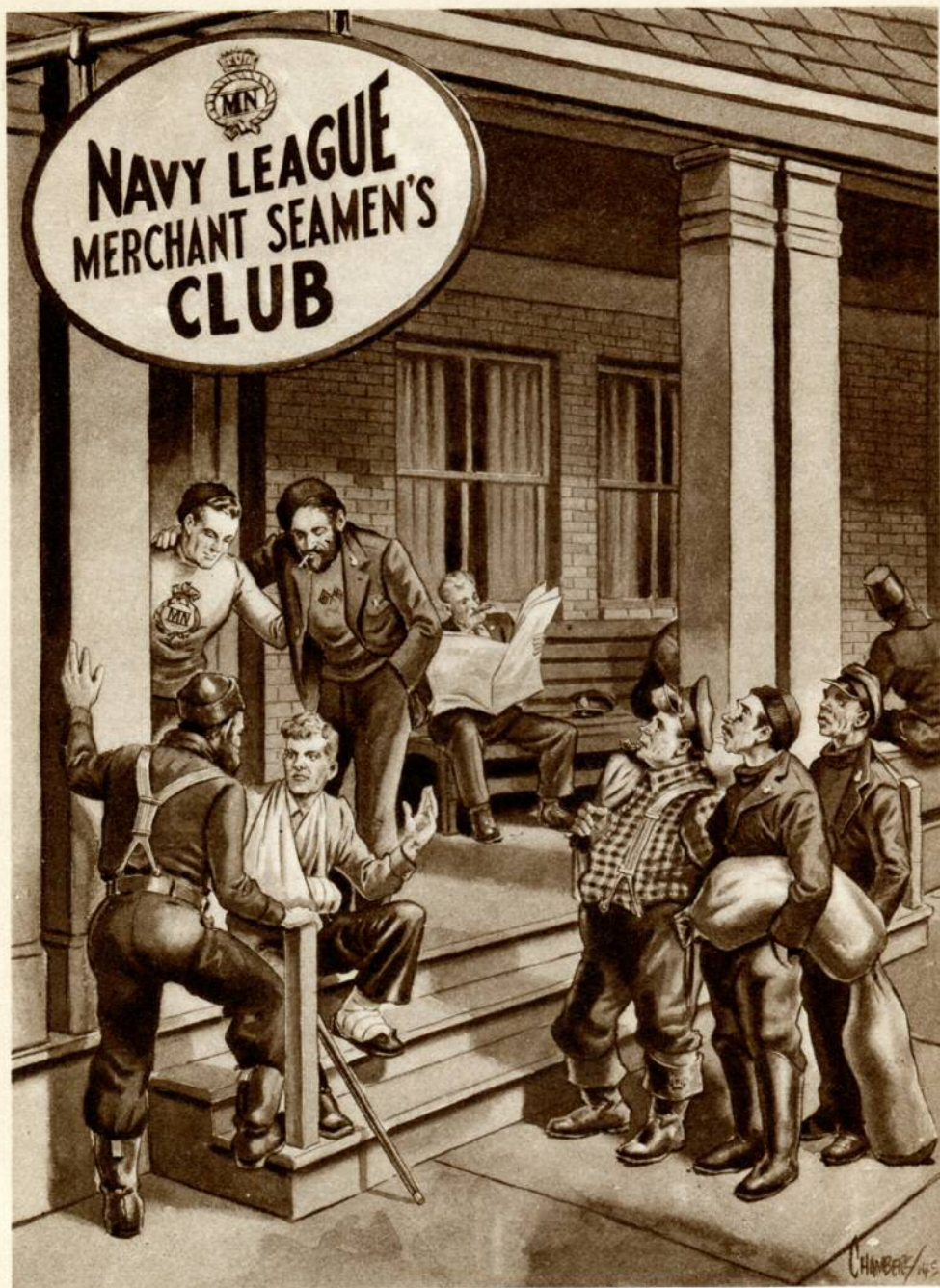
Men who have been torpedoed or shipwrecked or both; men who have been on the beach and who have held commands.

Men with light in their eyes for things yet to be seen; men with eyes dead from having witnessed too much as shipmates fought off a Death that dived from the skies or a Death that crept over them in thirst upon the bitter waters.

Hard men, scarred men, quick to battle, voluble with ugly words—yet are they not those who stammer to salesgirls that they want trinkets, toys, bits of silk or cans of butter for homes overseas?

Are they not men, exiled from home and homeland, their own hearths buried under bomb debris—men who would, for all their hardness, bring happiness a little while to others less luckless?

Grim and bitter, smiling and suave, foolhardy and thoughtful, pitted deep with stokehold grime or seamed still deeper by life and by suns over the seven seas—they are the faces of merchant seamen seen in Halifax this wartime.



VI—PEACE AND WAR

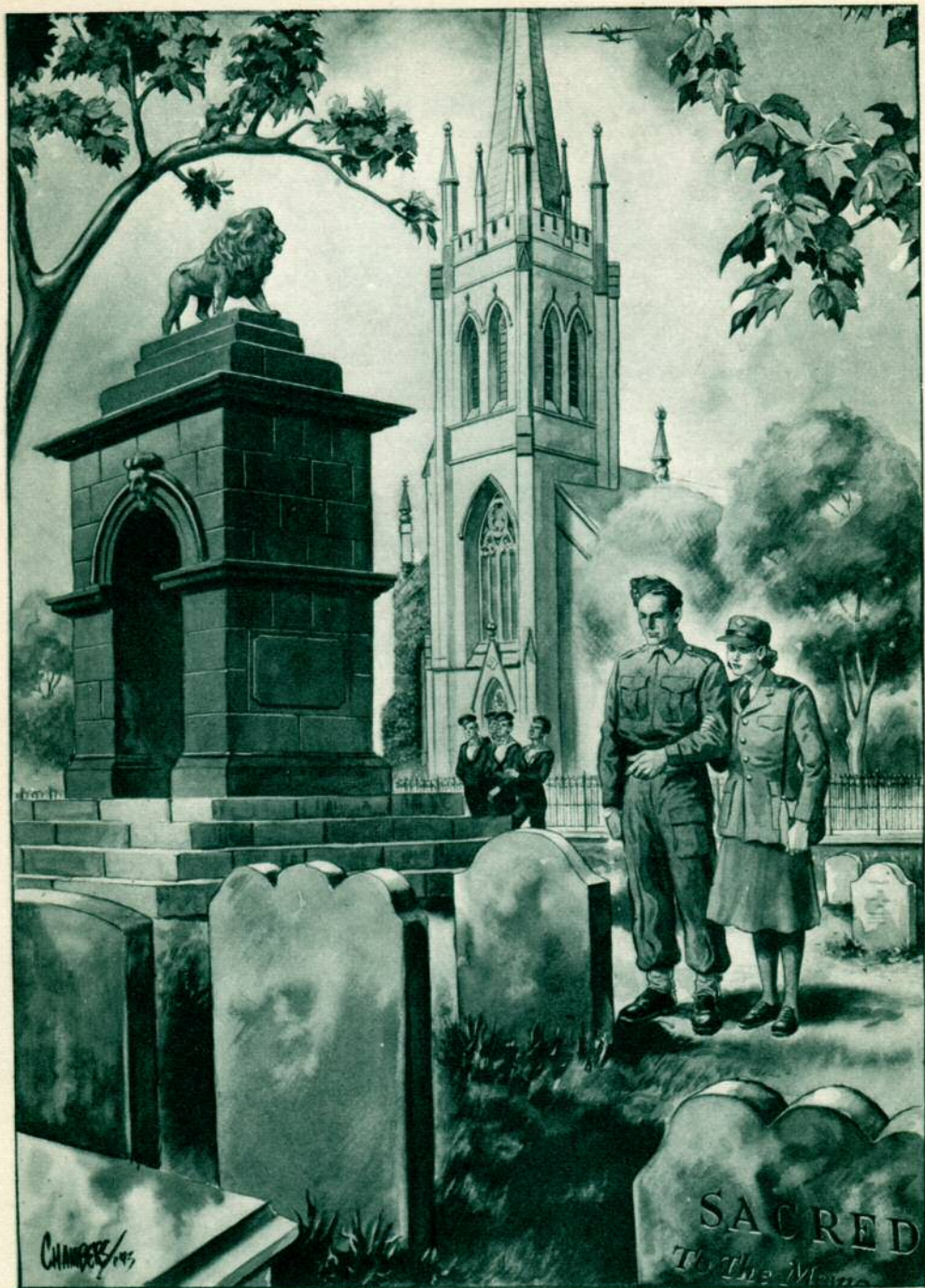
MEMORIES and monuments of the past mingle swiftly with the traditions this war rapidly is gathering about itself.

In the shadow of the Crimean memorial, with its Nova Scotian names, men and women from distant places stand almost where the first, rude stockade fended off the harrying Indians; their feet are upon soil made sacred by the bodies of the men and women who built this city.

Memories of the past—voyages to victory at Louisburg and Quebec, the later Revolutionary war, the struggle with Napoleon, the triumph of the British Shannon, the comings and goings of ships and sailormen and soldiers who won and held an empire—these things and more are suggested by the weathered stones and the unmarked mounds. Tales of knaves and gentlefolk, of the great in courts and legislatures and counting houses—tales of the humble whose names are buried with them under the sod—these are found in that ancient churchyard.

Pictures of today—men and women of the navy and the army and the airforce assembled from all the world for Freedom's latest war; men and women standing in light reflected from old St. Matthew's spire, itself a slender symbol of that Freedom. That first church of the dissenters, whose descendant St. Matthew's is, at the city's very founding, marked the beginnings of greater liberty and tolerance in this new land.

Strange faces, youthful faces Halifax sees today. Different minds, but clear, open, impressionable minds are being inscribed with something of the past and much of the present. They will bear forever a new and a deeper appreciation of the meaning of the word Canadian; they will know better the broad, British background against which their new Canada will be built.



VII—GATEWAY TO THE CITY

SERVICE trucks bound for the outposts, ox-carts headed home after market day—old and new clatter over the cobbles to the Dartmouth ferry. Business men and schoolboys, office girls and sightseers stream through this ancient gateway.

In another day, at a place a few yards distant, scarlet-coated guards massed to greet and farewell princes of the blood and martinetts whose names have been forgotten. Today troops have more serious business.

Snub-nosed, bob-tailed ferries poke their way through passing convoys. Heedless, the homefolk and strangers crowd saloons and decks, sending a babel high over the throb of the engines.

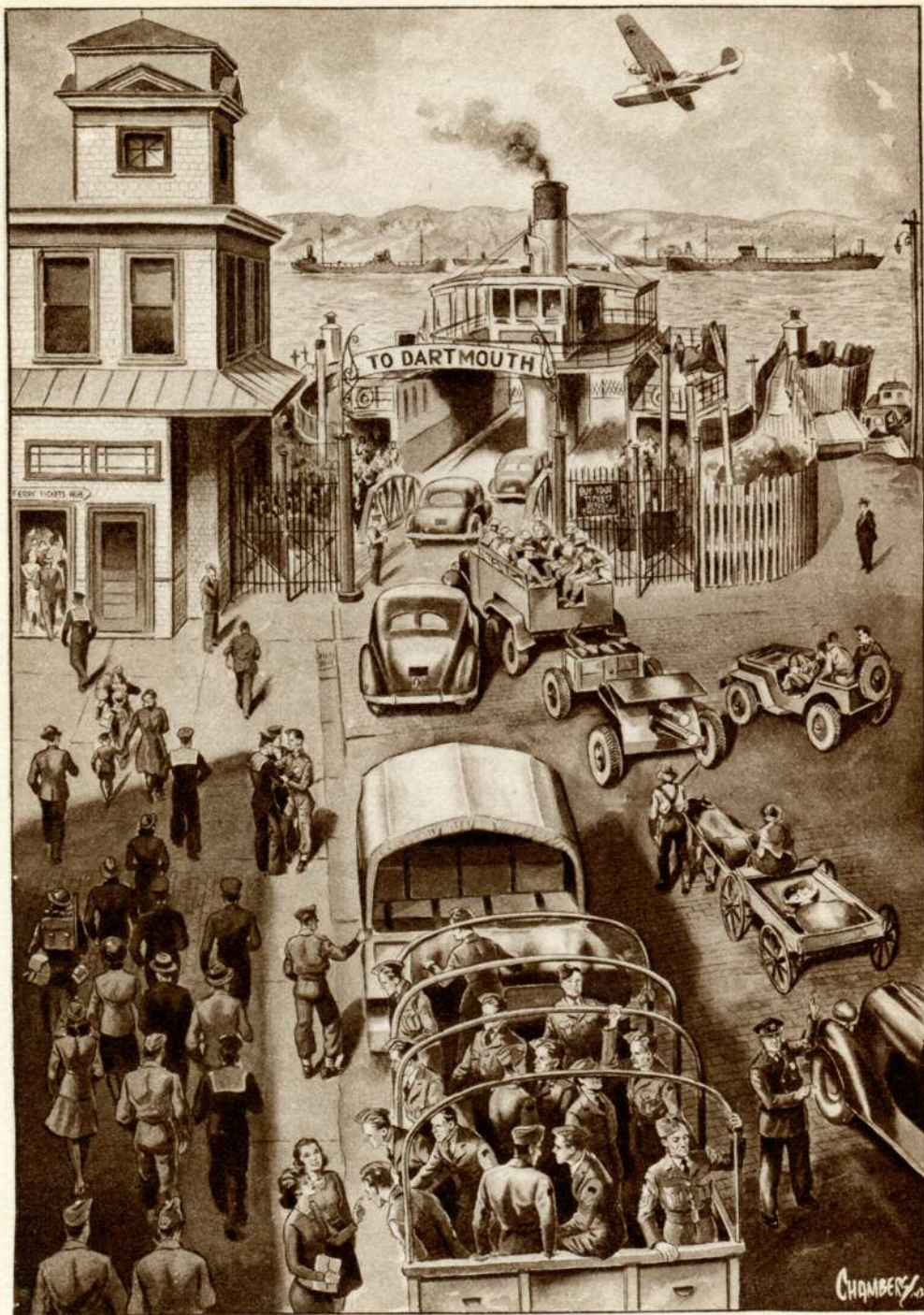
A sailor, home from the sea or headed for high venture, scans the water in silence, knowing the story of the listed, torpedoed freighter struggling to a safe anchorage, recalling another ship that will never come home.

An airman glances at a passing plane, realizing it may be fresh back from a distant ocean patrol, a journey to a northern barrens base or perhaps from Britain, each trip a commonplace.

The soldier, measuring with his eyes the drab, olive gun, wonders if the next convoy will be his, if that gun or its brother will go with him to the Flanders coast, to Italy or the Balkans.

The dance tonight? The ships' supplies so urgently needed? The unlearned algebra and the waiting class? The rate of Bren gun fire? How long will this gas keep a plane aloft? When will it be over and what will we do when we get home? Gossip? Where to find a place to live? Wonder if he is safe at Naples?

The hurry, the questing haste, the thoughts of an ever-changing crowd, pausing its quarter hour at the city's gate.



VIII—IN THE PUBLIC GARDENS

HALIFAX Public Gardens are far removed from the rubble and ruin of Total War. On shaded walks and in cool bowers is an air of peace, a charm heightened by the blue and khaki of fighting men's uniforms.

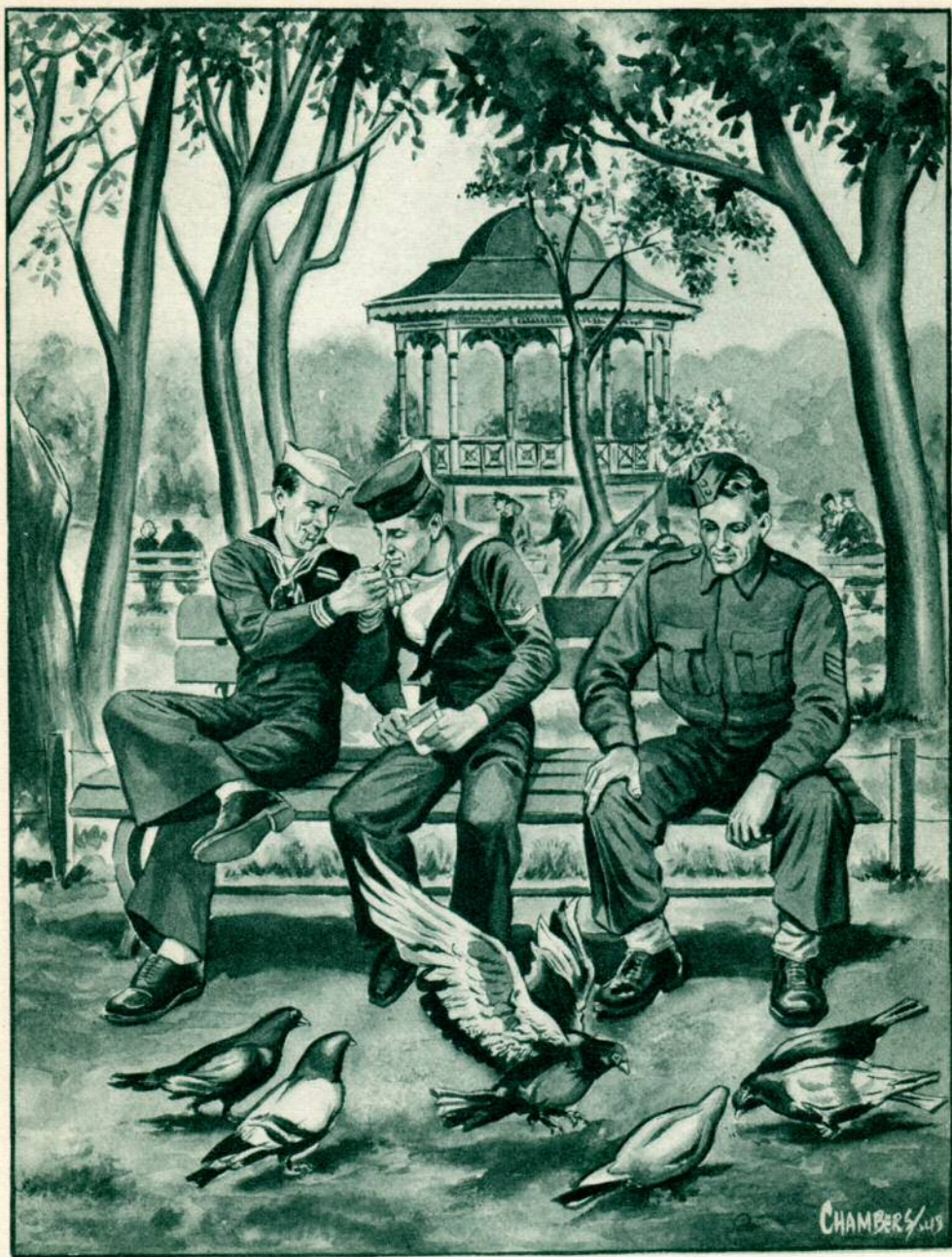
Perhaps it is just that peace, that unspoiled loveliness that draws so many each summer's day to its benches, to its paths beside the flower-bordered pond and between the velvet lawns. They come from everywhere, these men—from Saskatchewan's plains and Kentucky's hills, from the ordered countryside of England. They meet here their brothers-in-arms from Norway and Greece, Holland and Brazil, Belgium and Russia and all the other United Nations, men drawn together in the common cause to face a common foe.

That broad-shouldered soldier might be from a Manitoba farm—the scene surrounding him awakening dreams of the country home to be his "afterwards"; that weather-beaten sailor could be from old England, in the ordered Gardens finding a suggestion of age-old solidity not quite repeated abroad; that third sailor might hail from New York, with his nonchalance and shell of self-sufficiency bred by the big city, missing here the roar and lights of Broadway, the crowded subways, the towering skyscrapers.

Whoever and whatever they may be they represent all the splendid idealistic young men, who, offering their lives on the altar of decency, honor and human freedom, seek moments of restfulness and release in this great port.

The Public Gardens, the park, the shores of the Northwest Arm are the last unravished beauty spots many of these men will visit before they face the fury of the enemy. They are not men who wanted to fight, who wish to die, or who sought war. But they are now men with a cause, driven by that urgent, primitive instinct to protect the things dear to their hearts, to make the future brighter and more secure for their children—to preserve fundamental, human dignity.

Perhaps these three on the Gardens' bench, seemingly carefree, will be among those who will not return. Already, long ago, they have said farewell to homes and families. Now, in a place as close to peacetime permanence as is to be found in this war-torn world, they are saying another farewell.



IX—AN END AND A BEGINNING

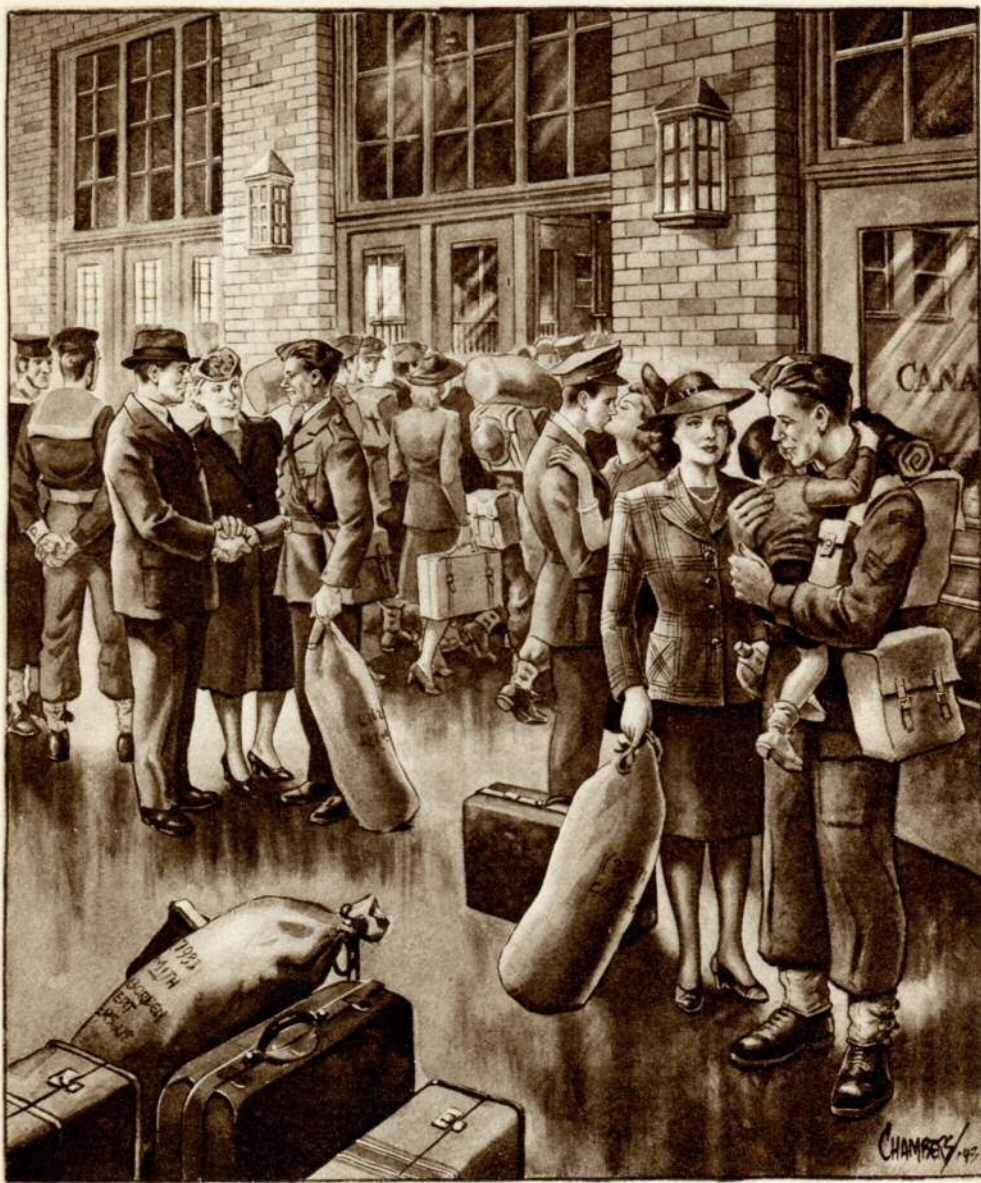
THE hand on the big clock jumps a minute space; the sough of rushing air signals wheels freed for some far journey; the sun, mottling the walls, makes hopscotch patches on the gritty tiles; a thousand feet shuffle and grind, the whole space rings with the metallic beat of service boots and the snare-drum tap of women's heels—pictures, poems in color and sound make and re-make themselves endlessly each hour. This railway station is where land passage across a continent ends, only to climax itself in new ventures in other elements, the sea and air. It is a starting place into war's unknown; it is the ending place for those home from the battles.

Furlough is over. Where next? What next? The Aleutians, Ceylon, Sicily, some new Dieppe? North Atlantic ice, the Sahara's sand, Balkan mountains, a Labrador beach—to guard, to attack? Endless scouring of the ocean or sudden, seconds-long encounter in the heavens of another hemisphere? Death and glory—or glory and a safe return?

Questions asked, if still unspoken—answered if only in gestures of farewell. Hope is in these pictures, visions of a world to be. Fear is there, buried deep, and tears, too, at times—but smiles always for the glad days together that have been and are to be again—days when the memory of service blue and khaki, blanket-rolls, bullets, bombs and ships' hammocks will be as relics in a garret, kept and cherished but almost forgotten.

If little be said, still less is to be said. What words has the boy bidding his father farewell, the wife seeing her husband depart, the mother for her son?

What words can give body to thoughts born in times like these in places like this—Halifax terminal, the war's beginning for so many at the war's end for the fewer who come back.



X—TODAY AND THE PAST

EMBARKATION leave—the last few days on Canada's soil—the last fleeting hours—and father, mother and son, in the midst of new wars, stand shadowed by the old.

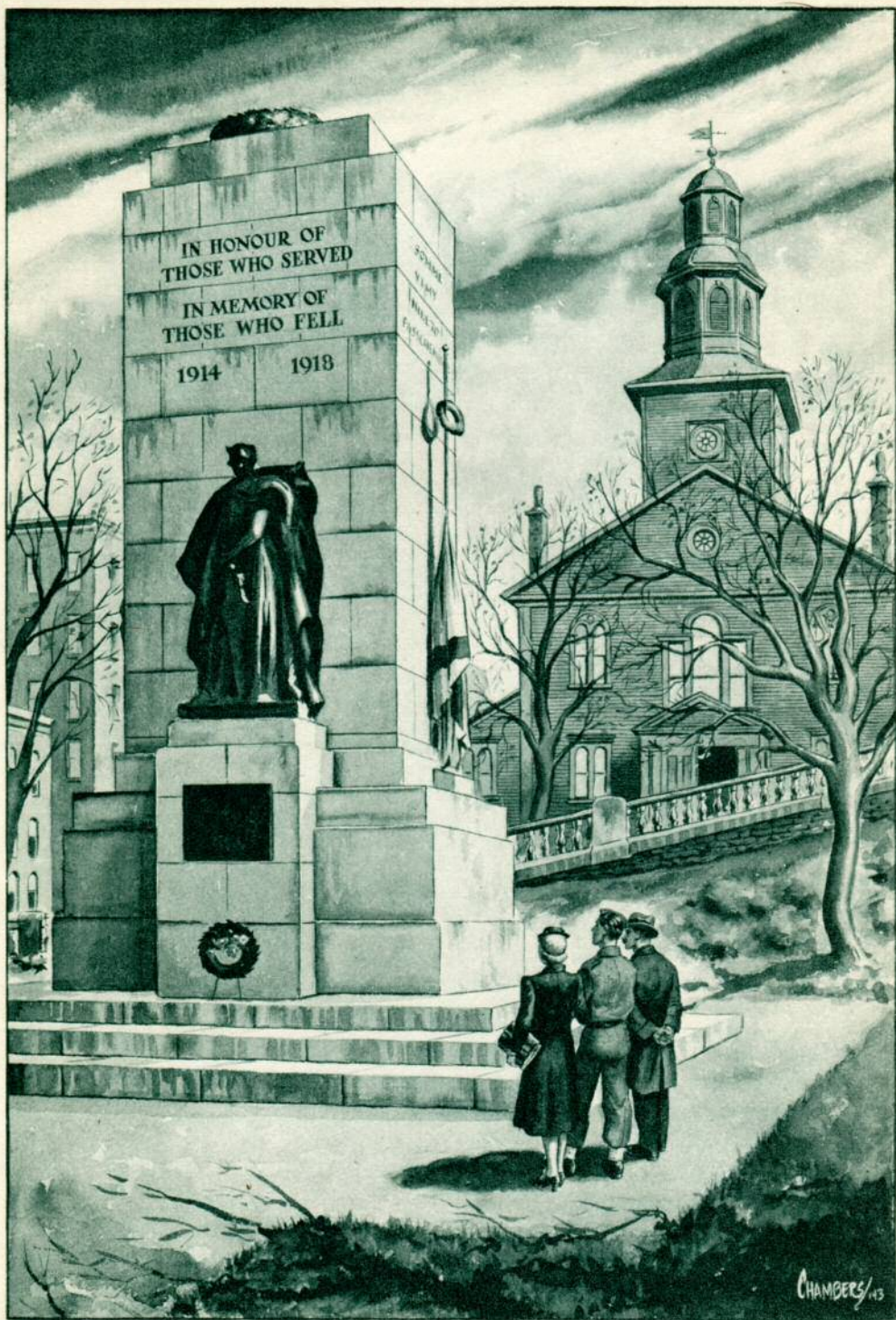
The mother's thoughts before St. Paul's Church turn to other days—that first journey to school, the first ball game won, the first fist fight lost, the first sweetheart, the first job, the first pay envelope, the first sight of the man she has made and moulded into him who will wear the King's uniform. This is the first separation, so like yet so different from that in 1914—or was in '15, time hurries so? Another man then was off to the wars, another woman's son, yet hers to cherish and to wait for, the father of her son.

The father's thoughts may be of days dimmed but glorified by memory—excitements, exaltations and exhilarations of war and of leave from war—fear, conquered panic, pain, mud, suffering, the death of comrades. Now it is his son who is going. There are regrets at age and loneliness and sorrow, perhaps, but pride that the boy has measured into a man, certainly no wish that he had been less fair, less strong.

Over father, mother and son, looms, white-gray and granite, the memorial of the late war—Salisbury Plains and Plymouth, Passchendaele and Ypres, Vimy and the march to the Rhine, Cambrai, the Somme, all that and more.

Beyond in the shadowed serenity of its nearly two centuries stands St. Paul's, sombre with the memory of many heroes—men who fought at Louisburg and Quebec, at Waterloo and Lucknow, at Corunna and in the Crimea. They worshipped and were wed before its altar; they are buried beneath its stones. Now it is another generation and new ways, but that same struggle for and to preserve liberty.

St. Paul's bells, stilled in the tall temple of sound that surmounts the old cathedral church, seem already to stir as if at the tidings of new victories.

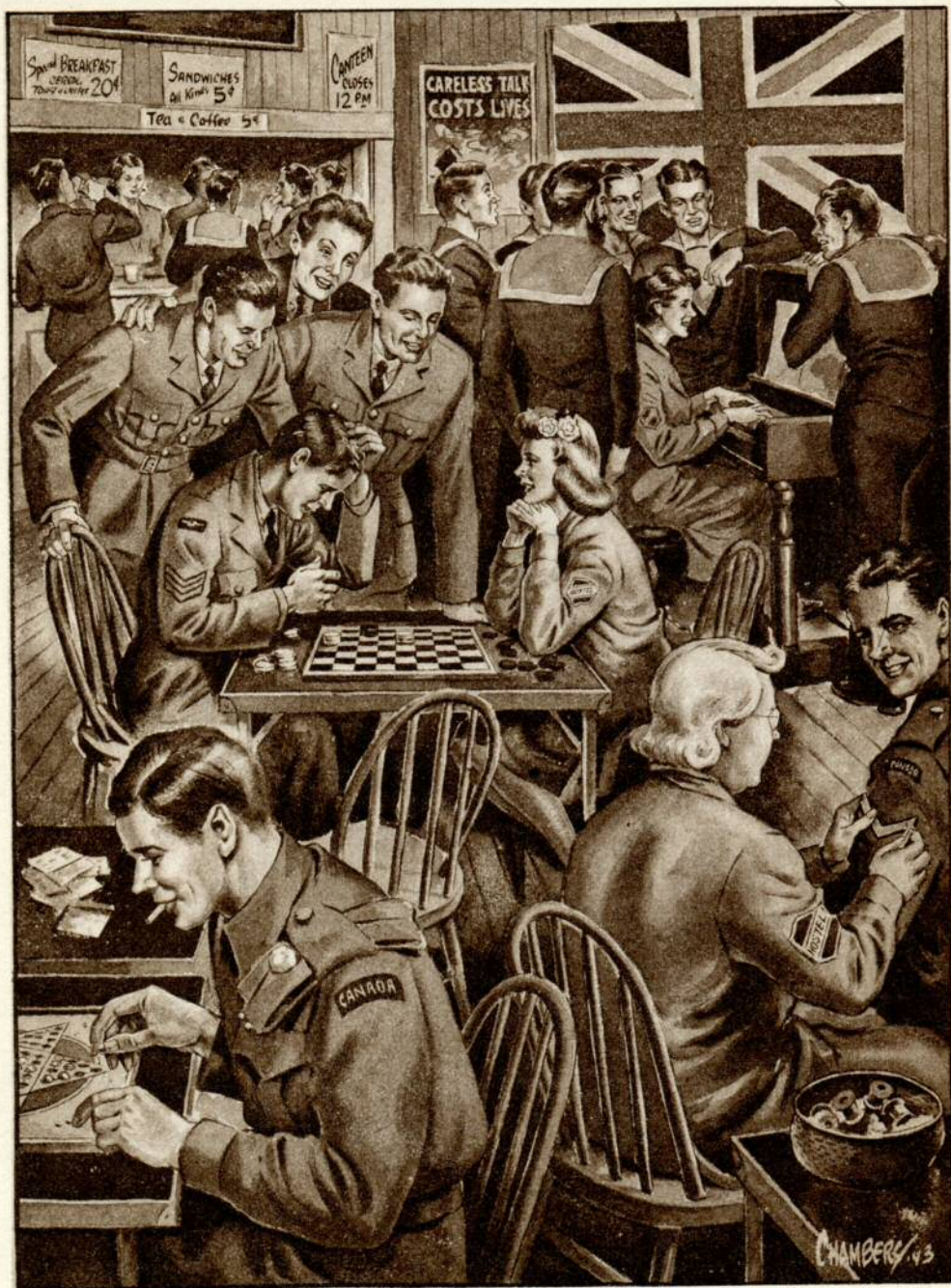


XI—GENEROUS SERVICE

IT looks like fun—this working in hostels. It is, but it is something more. It involves a sacrifice which women of Halifax have cheerfully made each day since this war began. It means, for many of them, hours over hot stoves and steaming food counters—after they have done a day's work for their own families in their own homes. It means listening to soul-searching stories and giving counsel when there is the heartbreaking anxiety among many of the women themselves as they wonder at the fate of their own menfolk on the sea, in the air and on foreign soil.

There are rewards. They come in the smiles that are brought to service men's faces, the brief pleasures that can be given to them in their hours in the hostels—dancing, music, checkers, or just a passing word of cheer on the eve of embarkation, the thanks expressed in letters that come back from men overseas.

The work is not spectacular, is heralded by no brass bands and yields no medals. It calls for the wisdom of age and the vivacity of youth, hours of planning and of hard work. These are given unquestioningly and constantly by Halifax women, a part of their share in winning this war.



XII—THY SERVANTS

ASTONE'S throw from Studley, where admirals have matched their peacetime skill at quoits as the white ensign floated overhead, today stands King's—oldest college in the Empire overseas.

For a century and a half a shrine of liberal arts, in its halls today new applications of those arts and newer sciences are taught. Corridors and campus resound with marching feet and crisp commands, replacing banter and student pranks. Here, behind new walls, with outlines already softened by spreading ivy, lights burn as youth studies charts and navigation, signal codes, guns and how to command.

In old King's Chapel, where boys in gowns have become men in uniform, this, their prayer is heard:

“O Eternal Lord God, who alone spreadest out the heavens and rulest the raging of the sea; who hast compassed the waters with bounds until day and night come to an end; be pleased to receive into Thy Almighty and most gracious protection the persons of us Thy servants, and the fleet in which we serve. Preserve us from the dangers of the sea and from the violence of the enemy that we may be a safeguard unto our most gracious sovereign lord King George, and his Dominions, and a security for such as pass on the seas upon their lawful occasions; that the inhabitants of our Empire may in peace and quietness serve Thee our God; and that we may return in safety to enjoy the blessings of the land, with the fruits of Thy mercies to praise and glorify thankful remembrance of Thy mercies to praise and glorify Thy holy name....”

This, the Navy's prayer—the prayer of all the people.

