out he came into the tall bracken. He took a daring look: the guard had his eye fixed on the gravel pit, the two men up the line had left their box and were crawling toward their rifles, the three men and the lieutenant had made a half circle and were now steadily crawling toward the pit—their backs were half turned to him, and again they had the worst of the light.

OLD PURVES at this point of the game could have retired safely, with all the honours, but he was enjoying himself. He waited until one of the men, in screening himself from the supposed enemy in the gravel pit, had exposed himself to his enemy in the flank—then old Purves let him have it "proper," or rather he meant to: for the first time he nearly missed; the man dropped his rifle and slumped heavily down, nursing his hand. "Darn it," old Purves said and ducked at once under the bracken; the heavy leaves held in the smoke, dispersed it like great ferns, so that it seeped away in little almost invisible streamers here and there against the sunset: not one of the men suspected that the shot had come from the rear.

They were almost at the rim of the pit now. The lieutenant gave an order, they leaped to their feet and were over it. But this time old Purves couldn't have made a mistake if he'd tried—firing quickly he got two. Only the lieutenant leaped to safety.

BY THAT time the two unarmed men had reached their rifles and the guard had spotted old Purves. Before he could get down, a shot from the embankment got his left shoulder. It was like the kick of a cart horse; he could feel the bone go, leaving behind a vague, dim spreading ache. He sat still among the bracken and wished he had some whisky with him. Another bullet came dangerously close. He could hear the scrape of the officer's footsteps at the entrance to the trench. He tried to move, but the swaying bracken gave him away and a bullet missed him narrowly. He swore softly; this time he was trapped.

He was saved by an engine from Fenham Heath. It was going north with a string of empty cars. The guard saw it before old Purves did and tumbled off the embankment: if old Purves had been fit to fire at that moment he could have got him. The three men now hugged the ground under the embankment and a whistle warned the lieutenant to keep out of sight. They didn't want a warning carried up the line; they couldn't tell that the nearest troops were twenty miles away at least.

As the engine came into sight old Purves saw his chance. He bolted through the bracken toward the overturned truck which would protect him from all of them but the lieutenant—the lieutenant only had a revolver and the light now was shockingly bad. Nobody fired at him; he was safely into cover and let fly a bullet at one of the empty trucks as the train went by. It was just possible that the engine driver might report it at the next station. Then he swung round and sent a shot at the officer who had got out of the gravel pit, but the pain in his shoulder was upsetting his aim and he missed.

All the same, though he didn't know it then, he'd won the game. They were scared and harried and didn't know what to think. All the lieutenant was concerned with now was to get his business finished quickly. He dodged round to his men and they all began a kind of strategic retirement up the line, along the edge of the embankment. Old Purves sent another shot after them, ineffectively. Then he swore gently because he'd only one shot left.

He watched the four men, a little puzzled. They were climbing up onto the embankment again: he didn't shoot because the light was bad now. One man fired a warning shot at him. The others were opening the box. It seemed to contain string. . . . Old Purves was irritated; he didn't like being ignored. He took aim rather wildly and fired.

For a moment it was as if the end of the world had come, blasting up against the truck that sheltered him. There were lamentable cries. When the fury of air and fire had died away, he came out of shelter and picked his way through the bushes—there was nobody left to fire at him. This was massacre.

He didn't like it. It turned his stomach over like dynamiting fish. The strange thing was that the rails were the only things left untorn.

THE lieutenant was not dead. He called out in English, "Kill me. Please kill me." Old Purves always felt pity for broken animals, but he hadn't a bullet left. Then he saw the officer's revolver three yards away. . . . Afterward he looked through his pockets. There was nothing of value, but a photograph of a naked baby on a hearthrug again made his stomach turn over.

That was really the end of old Purves' battle—the rest was only what they call in France "mopping up." He went back to his traps and drank what was left of his whisky. Two rabbits had already been snared. Then with the rabbits in his poacher's pockets and the lieutenant's revolver in his hand he went down cautiously to the Black Boar. There they had listened fearfully to the sound of the shots and the explosion: the guards were nearly as scared as the people of Potter.

When old Purves appeared suddenly behind them with the revolver they surrendered at once. They, with two wounded men among the gorse, were the only survivors of the parachute descent—it had been a discouraging failure for the German high command because of old Purves' absence from the village, in Lord Drew's grounds. Then someone saw the rabbits and charged him with poaching, and, as I have said, a week later he was released with a caution and a rather cold commendation. He was quite gratified: he didn't expect medals, and, as he said, "I've got one back off them bloody Bojers."

For a while people visited him and gave him tips in return for his story—"They runned just like little rabbits," he used to say—and for the sight of a few souvenirs, but that source of income soon failed, and he was back in no time on the wrong side of Lord Drew's wall. One souvenir he never showed to anyone—the photograph of the baby on the mat. Sometimes he took it out of a drawer and looked at it himself—uneasily. It made him—for no reason that he could understand—feel bad.

The Lieutenant Died Last

By Graham Greene

THERE had been a lot of grumbling in the village of Potter before the astonishing night when the parachutists descended: grumbling about rations, compulsory service, black-outs, all the usual things. Then apparent disaster, a touch of heroism, a good many deaths put an end to it for a while as it always does, though the hero, old Bill Purves, the poacher, had more reason to grumble than any, for he received no decorations—only a grudging commendation from Major Barlow, the local magistrate who let him off "this once" with a caution, after he had been caught red-handed with a rabbit in each deep pocket.

You would hardly expect to find Potter the scene of the first invasion of England since French troops landed near Fishguard in the Napoleonic War. It is one of those tiny isolated villages you still find dumped down in deserted corners of what we call in England Met- roland—the district where commuters live in tidy villas within easy distances of the railway, on the edge of scrubby commons full of clay pits and gorse and rather withered trees. Walk for three miles in any direction from Potter and you will find cement sidewalks, nurses pushing prams, the evening paper boy, but Potter itself lies off the map—off the motoring map, that is to say. You have to take a turning marked No Through Road and bump heavily toward what looks like a farm gate stuck a mile or more over the shaggy common.

Through the gate is nothing but Potter, and Potter is only one public house, the Black Boar, landlord Brewitt, one cash store and post office kept by Mrs. Margesson, a small tin-roofed church where services are held on the first Sunday in the month, half a dozen cottages, a village pond, and the gates, grounds and mansion of Lord Drew. But even those gates are not used: Lord Drew has other gates on the London road two miles away and never needs to pass through Potter.

One of the cottages is inhabited by old Bill Purves: one wall has been repaired with petrol tins, and when the door opens smoke blows out into Potter. He is said to sleep on a bed of rags, but nobody but the local policeman has ever visited him there, and the window is obscured by sacking.

Three or four times a year—usually on bank holidays—old Bill Purves visits the Black Boar, buys a bottle of whisky and disappears for twenty-four hours. It was suspected, but never known for certain before the parachutists came, that old Purves slipped on those occasions into Lord Drew's grounds, laid his traps and lay out all day and night with his bottle—he never seemed to know what cold was, any more than an animal, and he was rather like an animal himself—something gray and fleeting that you see for a moment shambling between hedges. His coat stuck out as if he were a scarecrow on a stick because he carried an old rifle under his coat, for which he had never paid a license.

THAT was the odd scene of the "invasion," though if you examined Potter carefully you may conclude that it was not an accident that the parachutists landed there. Potter itself could be isolated by a few snips of a wire cutter, and from that little hidden spot in

Metroland half a dozen men acting quickly could do an astonishing amount of damage—a mile and a half across unfrequented common and you had the main line to Scotlad and the northern coast, and one supposes that the German air chiefs had planned a number of such attempts that air defenses foiled. Their psychological effect might have been incalculable: they would have destroyed the sense of security Englishmen normally feel, the security that allows them to grumble. Look at the effect on Potter.

We are a small island and there isn't a village anywhere that isn't accustomed to the sound of aeroplane engines. The plane they heard in the Black Boar was flying fairly low-perhaps three thousand feet, but there was nothing out of the ordinary in that.

It was the fag-end of a cloudy spring day. Mrs. Margesson in the cash store had just closed the post-office counter because it was six-thirty: the shop remained open for general goods till eight, and the lean man who was Lord Drew's undergardener was criticizing the beer in the public bar. "It's the war, they tell you," he said bitterly. "Everything's the war." There wasn't a man left in any of the cottages: they were all in the public bar except old Purves, and the women were washing up the supper things.

Old Purves, with his coat sticking queerly out and a bottle of whisky in his deep poacher's pocket, was skirmishing along by Lord Drew's wall among the high nettles. The gamekeeper had sworn to get him and he wasn't taking any chances. He was the only one to see the parachutists descend.

He looked up under his old gray brows with a kind of angry astonishment as a number of men suddenly appeared in mid-air under things like enormous parasols. He didn't know what they were: he only had a feeling they were best avoided. "It didn't seem right," he said afterward: he meant that it didn't seem fair, people peeking at you like that out of the sky. That was all he saw for a long time because just at that moment he found the weak point in Lord Drew's wall.

THE men were in uniform—for their own protection, one supposes, otherwise they would have been liable to the death penalty-but their uniforms caused no immediate astonishment in Potter because we are so used in these days to uniforms: what with A.F.S. and A.R.P. and all the other initial letters we are prepared for. any uniform, even a German uniform. Mrs. Brewitt saw them at work on the telegraph and telephone wires and thought they had something to do with the post office. Only her son, who was sixteen and, alas for him, knowledgeable, said they were Germans. "Nonsense!" Mrs. Brewitt said.

Mrs. Margesson in the cash store hardly looked up when the officer came in. He carried a large-scale map of the district and had a revolver at his belt. His steel helmet made her think. "Maneuvers." She said promptly, "The post office is closed," because she didn't think he looked like a shop customer. He said, "Madam," and that struck her as foreign--a Frenchman or a Pole, she thought-he was a young man, very fair, and his uniform was muddy and he sounded nervous and preoccupied. She smiled. "Yes. What can I do for you?"

"Please," he said, "go at once to the inn."

"The inn?"

"Yes. You must go at once. Everyone must go."

"I don't understand."

He said with embarrassment as though he were making a rather absurd claim, "I am a German officer and this village is occupied by my men."

With great presence of mind Mrs. Margesson picked up the shop telephone and dialed a police call. The young man made no attempt to stop her. She could at once tell why-the wires had been cut. At that moment, through the window, she saw Driver, the village constable, being impelled down the road toward the Black Boar by two men in uniform: he had probably been digging in his garden as he was in his shirt sleeves.

More or less the same scene took place all over the village. Everybody who was not already at the Black Boar was rounded up and persuaded, pushed or even carried there. The Germans were determined that nobody should leave the village and carry the alarm, but they missed young Brewitt, who had hidden in the outside lavatory, and of course old Purves.

The German officer addressed them in the public bar. He told them that nobody was in danger from him or his men; all they had to do was keep quiet. The gamekeeper who had been caught hunting old Purves and had a black eye said in a loud voice, "It's a scanda1." The German officer paid him no attention. He said, "You will be close-guarded and any attempt to escape will mean death." He added with a note of entreaty, "You've only to remain quiet for a few hours."

ALL this time, of course, old Purves had been comfortably curled up just inside Lord Drew's wall. He knew that the house was shut up and the only possible interference would be the policeman or the gamekeeper. He set a couple of traps, loaded his gun, opened the bottle of whisky and began to drink. He always calculated that a little drink improved his aim, and he had high hopes of a bird or two that evening. He was disturbed by a shot; his first feeling was indignation rather than curiosity. Lord Drew was away and a shot meant a rival poacher.

He took another long drink, hid the bottle where he could find it again in a hole in the clay bank, and then peeped over the broken stones of the wall. To his astonishment he saw young Brewitt running and zigzagging down the road that led out of the village to the gate and afterward to the main road.

What had happened was this. Young Brewitt, who had a romantic mind, remained convinced that what he had seen was actually a party of German soldiers cutting the telephone wires. He even guessed how they had arrived. The romantic mind found no difficulty in the idea. So he hid. He would probably have remained hidden if one of the Germans hadn't wanted to visit the lavatory. He pulled open the door and young Brewitt darted out like a rat. The soldier was taken by surprise and let him get a start. He shouted and young Brewitt ran the faster; other soldiers ran out of the inn and one of them fired and missed. It suddenly became very essential to get him. Three men waited with their guns raised. until he should reach the gate.

So to his amazement old Purves watched the astonishing behavior of young Brewitt. The boy leaped and zigzagged down the road, then he came to the gate and scrabbled desperately at the catch. Three rifles went off together and young Brewitt fell. "The bloody Bojers," Purves said aloud, the old brain creaking rustily back forty years to South Africa and an ambush on the veldt.

Young Brewitt wasn't dead—they had fired, humanely, at his legs-but he was crippled for life. He shared with Purves the heroic events of that evening, but there were always some who said that he had intended to hide all night in the lavatory. About old Purves' movements and intentions there was no doubt at all.

HE FIRST of all unearthed the whisky bottle. took a long drink and hid it again, then he had a look at his traps and then he sidled like a ferret out of Lord Drew's grounds into the high nettles. He slid among them crouching, his chin protected by a two-weeks beard. He had got his gun out from under his coat, the old rifle that went back like his memory forty years to another war. It was as if 1914 to 1918 were an interlude he had hardly noticed at all.

Young Brewitt had been carried back into the Black Boar and two men had been left on guard. The rest, with the lieutenant, now set off across the common toward the railway line, carrying picks and crowbars, their rifles slung. Two carried a box between them. Old Purves, working his way from gorse bush to gorse bush, followed.

He knew the common, of course, as well as he knew Lord Drew's estate, and at first he thought, because of the tools they carried which he could not see clearly in the darkening air, that they were bound for the gravel pit, dry and abandoned twenty years ago, a hundred yards from the railway line. A miniature one-track line connected it with a disused siding, and an old steel truck lay on its side, tipped off the rail. But the Bojers passed that by, clambering up the embankment onto the line beyond.

Old Purves, worming his way along toward the gravel pit, thought they were a beautiful sight, outlined like that against the sky. They had left their rifles, all but two men, in the bushes below the embankment, so that they could slide quickly and inconspicuously down if a train appeared—on that long stretch of rail you could see an engine's smoke two miles away. Now four of them bent and pulled and worked at the rails, two followed the lieutenant farther down the line with the box, and two stood rather slackly on guard.

They never saw old Purves get down into the gravel pit. He scrabbled up to the edge where a bush hid him and got a line on one of the armed guards—the unarmed ones could wait. Then he pulled the trigger and, before the shattering explosion of the ancient rifle could clear, the man was down.

It was like one of those trick films that suddenly stop and then go on again, fast. Down the line the officer had swung round with his revolver out. The two men with him had their mouths open. Picks and crowbars suddenly stopped, one of them in mid-air. Then life started again. The guard fired at old Purves' smoke and the bullet kicked gravel up against his cheek. The men working dropped their tools and tumbled down the embankment to where they had left their rifles. Old Purves chose his next victim, and fired.

A German halfway down the embankment tumbled, but old Purves had given away his position and though he ducked at once, the guard, stretched out now on top of the embankment, nipped a bullet close by his ear. When he took another peep the workmen had got their rifles, though the two men with the box a hundred yards up the line were still unarmed. That meant that four rifles could be brought to bear, not counting the lieutenant who was crawling back. Old Purves chuckled—it was more fun than rabbit shooting.

But the others too had learned their lesson. The lieutenant was shouting orders that the poacher couldn't understand. While the guard remained on top of the embankment the others, taking advantage of the bushes, began to circle round to get the sun behind them. Old Purves wasn't disturbed: he knew his battlefield. From one end of the gravel pit ran a trench. Because of the overhanging bushes it couldn't be seen from above; to the watcher on the embankment he was cornered. Old Purves ducked under the gorse into the little hot tunnel.

The trench sloped gently up and soon he was going on all fours, then