

Pitching Horseshoes

By BILLY ROSE.

THERE'S a story kicking around that gives me the willies. I don't know if it's a true story. I don't know whether it's been put on paper. But it's the kind of yarn that can't get too much circulation. It



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says something too many of us are apt to forget.

A couple of years back, a man and his wife were sitting in the parlor. The woman was reading the evening paper. Her husband was listening to the radio. A news commentator was telling his listeners to stop thinking about the war—we had won it, and it was time people picked up their lives where they had dropped them when the shooting started.

"He's dead right," the man said to his wife. "It's time we got back to normal."

The phone in the hall rang. The woman picked up the receiver. It was San Francisco calling.

"Turn off the radio, Frank," said the woman. "It might be Steve."

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HIS wife listened a moment and then put her hand over the mouthpiece. "It is Steve," she called out excitedly. "He expects to be discharged in a week or so."

The man went into the hall and stood very close to his wife. He felt fine. In a few weeks his son would be back in his old room. And back at his job in the store. Smart boy, Steve. He'd pick up fast. Who knows, by Christmas he might be running the store and his old man could start taking it easy.

Suddenly the woman stopped smiling. "Wait a minute, Steve," she said to her son. "I think you ought to talk this over with your father."

She handed her husband the phone. "Steve wants to bring one of his buddies home—but let him tell you."

"Hello, son," said the man. "Great news—you're getting out. What's this about the fellow you want to bring home?"

"He's a buddy of mine," said the boy. "We've been through a lot together, Pop. He got messed up going into Manila. Lost an arm and a leg. I'd like to have him live with us until he can straighten himself out. What do you think? Would it be too much for you and Mom?"

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I DON'T know what to say," his father said slowly. "An arm and a leg, hey? That's a pretty tough deal. I'd like to do what's right and all that, but I'm wondering if your buddy wouldn't be better off in one of those veterans' homes. They're equipped to handle cases like his. Besides, things are sort of messed up in this town. Food prices are sky high and business is only so-so at the store. And your mother and I aren't getting any younger, you know."

"I understand, Pop," said his son. "I guess it would be kind of hard on you and Mom. Well, I got to hang up now. I'll be home in a few days."

The next morning as the couple were sitting down to breakfast, the doorbell rang. A messenger handed the father a war department telegram. It read, "We regret to inform you of the death by suicide of your son last night."

The man handed the telegram to his wife and sat down, trying to figure it out.

A few days later he understood. When the body of his son arrived, it was minus an arm and a leg.