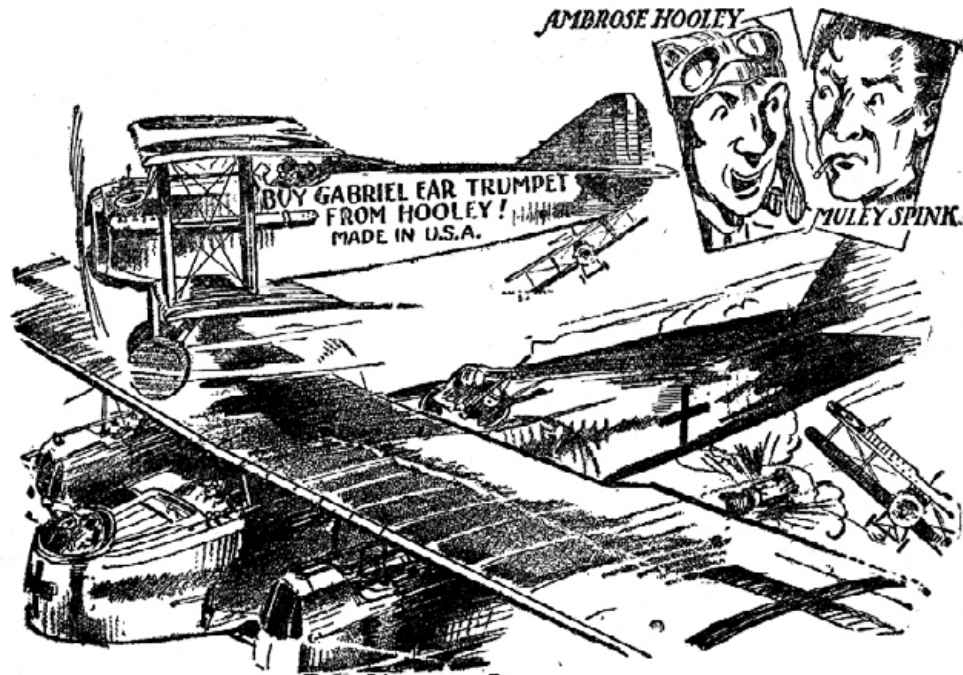


The Crackpot Pilot, Ambrose Hooley, Shows Muley  
A Few Pointers on Spadvertising



Ambrose almost took the Jerry's wing off

# Observation Bus Boys

By JOE ARCHIBALD

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ONE NIGHT after a very tough day in the scraposphere us buzzards of Major Bertram Bagby's Ninety-third Pursuit Squadron, that did their chores near the town of Commercy in la belle France, was wondering at mess why a Salmson two-place sky buggy had been landed on the drome a couple of hours before by a ferry pilot.

As I said we were all puzzled.

"I have got a good idea," Ambrose Hooley says.

He was a little runt with a pan that should never have peeked out of anything but a circus animal wagon. When the little tomato was not fighting upstairs, he was looking for a fight on the ground. He would hit anything, even a concrete silo if he did not like its looks. He was the scrappingest half-pint.

"The brass hats figure we are not goin' west fast enough in the Spads so they are going to send us up two at a time," he offers. "I got a close gander at it, and if it is

fit to fly, then I can crochet a doily with a couple of crowbars. I think I'll get me a transfer, Muley."

"Oh you do, do you?" It is the C.O. who has just come in and he answers for me. He looks at Ambrose like a little crackpot who has stolen his watch. "When you get one, it'll be on a street car. So you're wondering what that Salmson is doing out there, ha-ha?"

"That what? Is there somethin' out there?" Ambrose says, acting very surprised. "I must get me some glasses. Awright, I'll bite. Give us the bad news. We know it is not to plant petunias in. Look at me shake—I'm so excited." The little tomato has always been to the Old Man what a boil on the neck is to everybody else. Major Bagby tells Ambrose that if he is funny, then the hives are everybody's ambition.

"And shut your trap!" he busts out. "The brass hats are going to have some more propaganda thrown down on the other side of the lines to counteract the leaflets they dropped on us the other day. Chaumont does not see any reason why observation squadrons have to waste time and risk good picture clickers and aerial gunners just dropping pamphlets. A colonel at the Wing suggested that they get a two-seater that was not quite up to snuff as far as combat was concerned and ferry it over to a pursuit squadron. We're it. Hooley, I said to shut up!"

THE MAJOR gets red in the face.

"I just said I can see a headline in the Stars and Stripes," Ambrose says plaintively. "Two Die in Suicide Pact! Lieutenant Spink and Lieutenant Hooley, of the Ninety—"

"Not me!" I shouts. "Don't think you're going to get me up in that—"

"One more peep out of either of you mugs, and you'll be the first two to fly that

crate," Bagby bellows, and I grab Ambrose around the neck before the little bantam can frame me. "Nothin' to the job," the Major goes on. "The stuff will come over here by truck in a few hours. Going to have a map of the territory on it that the Yanks took away from the Heinies in the last push. Pictures of Yanks eating their chow to make the hungry Krauts' mouths water."

"Well they better not take a picture of this mess we eat," Ambrose pipes up as soon as I was dumb enough to let go of his neck. "They'd think they was boardin' at the Waldorf, them bums. That would be an awful mistake. Take that chunk of meat I just swallowed. I ain't say in' what they cut it off of, but if somebody had hollered 'whoa' I'd of strangled. It is silly, anyway, this propergander stuff—"

"By the Lord Harry, if you don't shut up, I'll—"

"Take that Heinie I almost got killed by this A. M.," the crackpot rambles right on. "If he was underfed or dissatisfied, I would hate to meet a Von that was puttin' all his mind in his work and who et wienie schnitzels a la mode every meal."

"Boys!" Major Bagby hollers for Ambrose to leave the mess if he cannot act like a gentleman. That is like telling the little tomato he will have to leave town if he cannot write his name on a moonbeam. I join Ambrose a few minutes later in our Nisson hut, and find him reading his mail.

"I got a letter from Uncle Willie, and he has hit on something that will make millionaires out of all the Hooleys, Muley," he says to me. "Listen to this circular he's got out."

"I can't help it, can I?" I snort.

"Don't shout at me! I am usin' the Gabriel ear trumpet now. See Hooley for hard of hearin'."

I sit down and shake my dome.

"He says he figures it will be a gold mine, Muley, after the guerre, as most of the

doughs will be as deaf as posts from the way them big guns go off all around them all day,” Ambrose goes on. “Uncle Willie says it won’t hurt to advertise over here if I can get a chance, as then when the doughs get back, they will think of his ear trumpet first, see? After all, the guerre can’t last forever, Muley, and I have got to think of what I will do when it is over. Advertisin’, that is it, Muley. They have it in street cars and trains, so why not on a Spad—or—”

“Ambrose Hooley,” I says, “not even you could be that nutty!”

I was wrong.

“The way they drop propergander—would that be an idea, huh?” the nit-wit continues. “The wind would keep blowin’ them around until somebody in Siberia three years from now would maybe pick one up. It might mean a new customer as even Russians get deaf. Uncle Willie says if I help him push the trumpet, he might take me in as a partner and—”

“I know one thing,” I says. “I know now why them squirrels keep trying to gnaw their way into this piano box every night. Tonight I am going to leave the door open. I bet the stork that brought you was punch drunk. Adoo.”

**I** WAS very sure that Ambrose would forget about ear trumpets by the next A. M. We both got stuck for the early patrol, and when we walk to where our Spads are warming up, I see something that kicks me back on my heels like an uppercut from Jess Willard. Painted across the side of Ambrose’s Spad is an ad that says:

BUY GABRIEL EAR TRUMPET  
FROM HOOLEY! MADE IN U.S.A.

Bug-Eye Boomer, the flight leader, throws a fit and says Ambrose cannot do that, and the little bum says:

“Awright, show me where it is against

the law in the Air Corps to advertise on airplanes. Show me! That is Spadvertising, ha, ha, ha!”

Bug-Eye is stumped, but he says he will take it up with Major Bagby when he gets back.

“Ha, ha, that suits me, Bug-Eye,” Ambrose brays, and climbs aboard the crate. “You can always get even money on this drome that you won’t get back. This Von Budweiser can’t be kidded by bill posters.”

Over Mont Sec we run into the beer baron, and the first thing I know a Pfalz is chasing me in circles. I figure that if you make a Von go around in circles long enough he gets dizzy and his aim is bad. Of course, it does not always work. What does, unless it is an ant?

I get a flash of Ambrose when I knife out of the circle and he is waving to me with one hand while he works his Vickers with the other. I know that if the little tomato had three ten-pins he would have juggled them, too. Between me and Bug-Eye we get a Pfalz and we do more to him than two tomcats could do to a catnip mouse.

Another Pfalz is standing up on its tail and then most of the tail falls off. Ambrose swoops down over it and thumbs his nose at the pilot. Bullets chew up part of my radiator, and I have to leave the party. I must have looked like a cloud moving south, I was wrapped up in so much steam. My stick was dead and I had to land in a goat pasture without it. There I sit, wiping cold beads off my pan, waiting for Bug-Eye and his flight to go by overhead on the way home. It is three miles from where I landed to the Ninety-third’s drome.

I count three Spads, but Ambrose Hooley’s is not among them. You never could mistake his air wagon as it always has a dame’s silk stocking and an apricot petticoat for streamers. My heart gets as heavy as a bride’s first cake, because you miss even a hairlip if you have it long

enough.

“Well,” I says to myself, “you can outrun a bulldog just so many times, but he will get you in the end.” I wait awhile longer and then start walking. At last I get to the drome and you could have fried eggs on the bottoms of my feet. First thing I ask if Ambrose came back and everybody shakes their domes. The Old Man looks almost happy, and I get mad.

“You got a heart as hard as the cornerstone of a morgue,” I says to him. “Ambrose may be out there gettin’ tortured by Heinies, and look at you. I want lief to go out and help him. I never let a pal down even if he is—”

“No kiddin’?” Bagby growls. “Where would you get a Spad? You can’t have your spinach and eat it, too, Lieutenant Spink! The C.O. is inside writing Hooley’s obit. Why don’t you go in and suggest a soft touch to it? Bah!”

All that day I go around feeling like a plate of spareribs without sauerkraut. Three patrols go out and come in as well as could be expected, but still no Ambrose and I am pretty dejected. I start packing his things and find a bottle of cognac I had accused a grease monkey of stealing. Also a pair of dice and some brass knuckles. I toss the dice on the floor and shoot a seven without trying. I pick them up and let them roll once more, and again up comes a six and an ace.

“W-why that double-crossin’ bum!” I says to myself. “He took eleven bucks outa me last Monday night with these African castanets.” But how could I stay mad at the little tomato when he has already went out west?

**B**Y ELEVEN I have turned in and am just conking off when I hear a buzzing sound and it is not a hornet. I run out onto the field, wrapped in nothing much but a blanket, and there are the grease monkeys setting off a river of gasoline. A Spad

comes down into the light and on the side of it is an ad for Uncle Willie Hooley’s boon to deaf mankind. .

“It’s that half-wit,” I hoots, and I am one of the first to get over to the crate when it rolls to a stop. “I should’ve known nothin’ could kill him. Where you been?” I yelps at Ambrose as he comes piling out of his crate.

“To a church supper, what do you think, Muley?” the little tomato grins, and there is a big black smear on his homely mug. I see his crate has as many holes in it as a crook’s alibi. “I got forced down two miles from Berlin with a busted gas line and I had to make one out of oat stalks before I could lift this heap back upstairs. Have you missed me, fellers?”

“Like a sheep misses its ticks,” I says. “What’s that on your puss?”

He wipes it with a sleeve, but does not answer me. Then I notice that he has a breath that should not get too close to a spark.

“Forced down, huh?” I snort. “Did you fall into a canal full of vin blanc?”

“Huh? Why—er—you know I always take a snort or two with me, Muley.”

“Oh yeah? Well, I found that cognac you snitched from me, you homely bum. And them dice. I want just eleven bucks from you or—”

“Or you will what?” Ambrose says, taking off his gloves.

“Or I—I will—er—go without,” I add hastily. “Until later.”

When we get to the hut, Ambrose says, “Muley, how much argent have you got?”

“Eighty francs, and I expect to keep it,” I answer stubbornly. “You have got a nerve, you—”

“I will borrar it as I have a payment to make on—it is an investment, Muley. You will get it back twice.”

“I’d rather be sure of it back once. Better still, I’d rather have it in the first place,” I tell him. “Now shut up, I want to

get some sleep tonight.”

The next day some brass hats come in, and two of them tell Major Bagby that the propaganda is on the way up from Chaumont and to expect it. Another one is an Intelligence officer, and he says he is busy looking for one of the worst spies that was ever hatched in Wilhelmstrasse. He works behind the lines, the Kraut does, and has done more damage to the Allies since 1917 than brown-tail moths have done to shrubbery all over the U. S.

“Why, compared to him,” the brass hat says, “Nathan Hale and Herr Doctor were mental deficients. He’s probably masquerading as a Yank or a Frank or a Tommy right now.”

“What did that bum think he’d have on?” Ambrose wants to know when he hears about it. “A Joe Webber stage suit? Anyway, who cares about spies? I met a dough in Commercy last night—er—I mean a week ago, and he was so deaf he couldn’t hear a Gotha egg if it exploded in his lap. There must be hundreds of doughs that—”

“Go away from me, please, Ambrose. Sometimes even I can’t stand you. When you write Uncle Willie, tell him I can get him the Eiffel Tower cheap. I bet your family tree is a filbert, ha!”

**M**E AND Bug-Eye Boomer are sitting in the mess shack at five that afternoon playing rummy when the word hits Major Bagby’s office that a Gotha is heading our way. As the French say, we are on the *alerte* and already have our monkey suits on. It does not take us long to get into the Spads and take them upstairs. We meet the Heinie egg crate just beyond Commercy, and the bums in it have no more chance of seeing their families again than I have of becoming a mama.

The Gotha turns tail and loses part of it when Ambrose gets in the first punch. Bug-Eye Boomer comes up under it and splinters

its short ribs, and my tracers start a doped wing sizzling. The Gotha looks like a big duck staggering around a farmyard after it has swallowed two quarts of hard cider. The squareheads start unloading the bombs that set the Kaiser back beaucoup marks, to say nothing of pfennigs.

*Blam! Blooie! Kerwham!*

I look overside and see what appears to be a bug doing a two-step down on the carpet, and I know it is a truck that got too close to where one of the Boche hell capsules hit. When I look toward the Gotha again, I see Ambrose Hooley’s ship skinning along its top wing and I bet you could not have put a cigarette paper between the tires of the half-wit’s Spad and the fabric of the Jerry crate.

Me and Bug-Eye hit the Gotha from two sides, and then one of the Heinies waves his arm like a safety man on the Harvards asking for a fair catch. We know he is yelling “Kamerad” which is the way the Jerries say “Uncle” when they have had enough.

Ambrose seems to be having trouble with the Spad, and the little tomato is squirming in his pit as if it is full of bees. He takes the shortest cut to terra firma which is straight down, and I follow him. A Spandau slug has caught up with Ambrose at last, I says to myself, and it is a cinch it did not hit him in the dome as he would not be making such a fuss. Bug-Eye goes on home, which shows he has sense. Uncle Willie Hooley’s nephew lands in a cow pasture, and I manage to put my Spad down close to it, but lose both wheels and mangle the prop doing it.

“Where are you hit?” I asks the crackpot when I get over to where he is. He is sitting down and trying to walk at the same time.

“Muley,” he says, “one of them tracers went right through my back pants pocket and set fire to a bunch of matches I had there. I bet my *empennage* will need new

fabric on it. Say, look over there!”

I look and see a truck tipped upside down. It is the one I saw from up on the high shelf. Me and Ambrose go over to it and see a dough sitting on what looks like a stack of Sunday papers.

“Wake me up early, Ma,” he is saying, “fer I am to be Queen of the May, tra, la. La, la, lalalala, tra, la.”

“It is the propergander, Muley,” Ambrose says. “We have got to save it as it might rain or a spy might steal it.”

“Okay, we’ll take it over to that old barn,” I says, pointing. “It will be all right there.”

“Whaa-at?” Ambrose says. “That is silly. Supposin’ it burnt down—a hobo might go to sleep there overnight and strike a match, Muley. We have got to take it where it is safe. To Commercy—”

“There’s ten bales of the stuff here, you idiot,” I bark at him. “Are you going to carry it there? It’s six miles at least to—”

“Ha,” Ambrose says, “look. There’s a mule over near that old barn and a two-wheeled cart. Allongs, mays infants—doo la pertree. We will have transportation toot sweet. The propergander must be dropped down, Muley, to ruin the Heinie morals.”

**T**HE mule, we find, won’t be led to the wagon, so we have to drag the wagon to the mule. We get it hitched up, and then it takes us ten minutes to coax the brute to move. Ambrose is lighting a fire under it when I finally get it going by sticking a pitchfork into its rump. One of the wheels passes over Ambrose and it is too bad it is not his neck.

“You done that on purpose, Muley Spink,” he hollers at me. “I have a good mind to—”

“You haven’t any mind,” I says and keep prodding the mule. “Why are you so concerned over this stuff, I’d like to know? If you was bright, you would have set fire to

it.”

When we get back to where the truck was dumped over, we look across the field and see the dough heading toward the Meuse. He is still waving his arms around like hornets were bothering him. Me and Ambrose load the propaganda onto the farm wagon and then climb aboard. Two miles nearer to Commercy the dumb mule stops.

“Gittup!” Ambrose cracks. “Tsk, tsk, tsk!”

“We got to get it to move,” I says. “It is standing right on some narrow-gauge railroad tracks!” I get out of the cart and pull at the mule’s head and Ambrose works on the other end, but the mule acts like it was stuck up to its hocks in cement. It won’t budge.

“He-e-ey,” I yelp, getting desperate, “a train is comin’, Ambrose. Oh-h-h-h-h!”

Just then a big auto comes up and a brass hat sticks his head out and orders us to move the mule at once.

“Did you think we was tryin’ to get it to play cribbage with us?” Ambrose howls. “You speak to it. Maybe as one gent to another—”

“Wha-a-a-a-t?” the brass hat howls. “Don’t you dare talk to me like that, Lieutenant. I’ll have you—I’ll get that mule into motion!” He gets out of his car and pushes me away from the mule’s head. He starts pulling at the Missouri equine for a minute, then gets mad and stoops down to pick up a rock. The mule bites him where the swivel chairs have shined his pants, and the brass hat shrieks like an Apache and goes into a fit.

“Here comes the train,” I screech. “Everybody jump!”

What a smackup! When we take our hands away from our eyes, there is no mule. The wagon is still there with part of the shafts sticking to it. Then we see the remains of the mule, and it is quite as defunct as you could imagine. It is in the

auto right on top of two brass hats.

“Now look what you’ve done, Ambrose,” I wail. “You stole a mule and now it is dead. You almost wrecked a train and killed—”

“I’ll have you two crackpot aviators busted to greaseballs,” a big fat colonel yells. “Give me your names—your commanding—”

*Kerwhop!* Ambrose has hit the colonel.

“Hurry, Muley,” he says. “If he wakes up inside of an hour, I know I must be slippin’. Get hold of one shaft of that cart and I’ll take the other. We will pull it into Commercy like a jinrickshaw. We must save the propergander!”

“You didn’t leave a clue, did you?” I sneer. “Only a Spad out there that is advertising a Hooley ear trumpet on the side. All right, come on. I will turn state’s evidence for the A. E. F.’s D. A. I won’t get blamed for this if I can help it.”

**T**HE two of us pull the wagon into Commercy and our tongues are hanging out so far, I keep stepping on mine. Four big tough M. P.s come out of a buvette and surround us.

“Awright,” one of them barks, “this ain’t Hallowe’en, so ya must be boiled to the scalps. Where’d ya get the wagon, huh?”

“We made it,” Ambrose chirps. “Ha, ha, this is the Allied propergander we saved when a Gotha bomb hit a truck that was carryin’ it. It was us that shot down the Gotha. Now you leave us alone as we are within our rights. Come on, Muley!”

“Oh, ye-e-eah? Well, lemme see you—”

“They asked for it, huh, Muley?” Ambrose says gleefully and starts working on the A. E. F. cops. For a minute I think the little tomato has turned into a centipede he seems to have so many fists. Before I can even get scared, the M. P.s are washed up, and me and Ambrose are pulling the cart

down an alley without interference.

“Here is the place, Muley,” he says to me and knocks on a door. A little Frenchman with a bald head and a spade beard opens the door, and I look inside the place and see that it is a print shop.

“Bong swar,” Ambrose greets him. “Veet, Monsoor, help us unload silver plate, huh?”

“Say, how did you know how to get to this joint?” I toss at Ambrose. “Somethin’s cock-eyed here and—”

“Shut up and get to work, or I’ll slug you,” the crackpot yips.

The Frenchie comes out and lifts a bundle of the pamphlets out of the cart and carries it into his shop. I am a little groggy from it all, but I help Ambrose unload the cart. We stack the propaganda in a corner of the print shop and when we are through I tell Ambrose I am going to get a snort as if I don’t I will certainly faint dead away.

“All right, go to Le Cheval Blanc, Muley,” Ambrose says. “I will join you there as I must have some words with the monsoor.”

Just ten minutes later me and Ambrose Hooley are under arrest and on the way to a bastille. The boss of the A.E.F. cops reads us the charges against us and this is the way they go:

Stealing French mule and cart.

Killing aforesaid mule and insulting and assaulting superior officers after wrecking their car.

Stealing Allied propaganda—high treason.

Criminal assault on military police in Commercy.

Abandoning Allied planes.

“Is that all?” Ambrose says. “I was sure we also shot Marshal Foch, wasn’t you, Muley?”

“I will confess,” I yelps. “Get me paper

and pencil and a notary. Maybe I won't get shot."

At eleven in the P. M. Major Bagby and some brass hats come in, and the Old Man demands that we tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

"Awright," Ambrose starts in, "here we are in a klink for shooting down a Gotha. For savin' the propergander that was shellacked by a Kraut bomb. I smacked the M.P.s because they tried to stop us from saving it. Look, here is a sample, Major. We left the Spads where they are because Muley's won't fly and because I could not get all the propergander into mine. We had to get the stuff to where it would be safe and that is just what I done. Awright, go ahead and take us to court!"

The major of our outfit and one of the brass hats take a squint at a sheet of propaganda and then they lock up the M.P.s instead of us. Everybody apologizes to us.

**A**MBROSE insists he still has a case against the U. S. Government, but says he will not sue if he is promised a leave to Paris in six weeks. If he had only shut up right then and there, I would not have aged twenty years in the next two days.

"Lieutenant Spink and me want to volunteer to take the propergander over tomorrow," the crackpot pipes up. "We have gone this far so we might as well go the whole hog, huh? Anyway, we are the only two who could fly that Salmson off the ground and get it back!"

"You are brave men," the brigadier with Bagby says.

"Y-yeah," I says, "ha, ha, I am sh-shakin' like this b-because I j-just c-can't wait to g-go up in the A. M."

"Wh-why we forgot the propaganda," the major suddenly bethinks himself as we start back to the drome. "We have got to go back for it. It has to be loaded into that crate and—"

"When we drop you off at the drome," Ambrose says, "me and Muley will take the squadron car and go back and get it, won't we?"

It is one o'clock in the morning by the time we unload the stuff into the ammo shed not far from where the Salmson is. The printer had wrapped the bundles all up in nice brown paper and tied it with new twine. I crawl into our Nisson and am asleep before I can get into the bunk. In the morning when I wake up I am on the floor with my legs sticking out through the door.

Ambrose chirps: "Rise and shine, Muley, as this is *der tag!*"

You would think we are all going to a can-can show in Paris or leaving for home.

"Uh—er—huh?" I says. "Oh, it is the day we go west, you sawed-off imbecile. I hope you go by inches."

"Listen, Muley, they are warming up the Salmson."

"Is that what they are doin'? I was sure somebody was mixin' concrete. You can hear that antique squeak away over here, Ambrose? Oh well, you can't live forever, can you?"

"That is the old fight," Ambrose grins. "You are a guy right after my own heart."

"I am going to cut myself a piece of your throat, too, some day," I threaten him. "Maybe I'll tear off your right leg and hit you over the dome with it, besides. Well, let's get it over."

We go over to the mess and eat some toast and swallow some java and then go out where half the population of the Ninety-third is standing around the two-seater. Bug-Eye Boomer tells us what great guys we are.

"Most always people say nice things about their pals after they're dead," he says. "We are telling them to you now, boys."

For the first time since we both walked into the outfit, Major Bagby shakes hands with the two of us. I tell Ambrose I have got

to get into the office before I get so weak they have to lift me in. The grease monkeys have the pit so full of Boche-baiting handbills I almost have to sit on the Lewis guns.

Ambrose waves to the boys and pushes the throttle in, and the old crate shakes all over like a pooch shedding water when it crawls out of a brook. Then it lumbers off across the field, and I am sure the Krauts can hear it over in Berlin. A line of trees rushes by us and the Salmson does not seem to care whether it clears them or not.

"Lift it up, Ambrose!" I holler. "We won't never make it. I'll throw out some of these packages and maybe—"

I shut my eyes. There is an awful jolt and the two-seater goes into a fit. But Ambrose Hooley can get a bath tub off the ground and keep it upstairs until it rusts. When I open my eyes and look back, I see a wheel stuck in the top of a tree, and I know it did not come off a bicycle. The Salmson levels off and keeps on climbing, and I would give a hundred bucks for a big brewery umbrella. I would have left Ambrose Hooley flat.

Ambrose circles over the drome before he heads for Hunland, and I see everybody on the ground waving their flippers at us. A Spad is being trundled out of a hangar fast and I can see the little red ribbon streaming out from Bug-Eye Boomer's helmet as he runs to climb into it. I lean over and yell in Ambrose's ear:

"They want us to c-c-come back. Somethin's wrong!"

"Aw, they're worried about the undercarriage, Muley," the lamebrain howls at me. "They must think we are sissies, ha, ha. Let 'em yell!"

"Y-yeah, heh, heh! Right now I feel like my name should be Cyril—the way I feel." I slide back to where I belong and hold on fast. The Salmson is picking up speed, but is shaking worse than ever. There are a lot of

things I do not know at the moment and it is a good thing because I would have passed out so cold they could not have warmed me up for a month.

We get over Domevre, and there are some more sky buggies in the air. Three Camels and a Nieuport. I look back and see a Spad coming.

"Good old Bagby," I gulp, "he is givin' us plenty of protection all right. Well, this is not so bad this far. What in h—" I slide toward the front office again and bang Ambrose on the dome. "Say, somethin's wrong," I yell. "That Camel pilot is signalin' for us to—"

"What an awful fuss they're makin' over us," Ambrose says. "You would think nobody ever lost a wheel. Rip open one of them bundles and let it go, Muley!"

What else can I do? I toss out a bundle and then a Camel takes a poke at us with its guns and I see some hemstitching going on right behind Ambrose's skull. A Camel! I swing the Lewis guns and let the Tommy Atkins know how it feels to have his own pals knife him from behind. I knock a strut from under a wing, and the Camel starts down a sky lane like it is using a crutch.

Then I see Bug-Eye. He zooms over us and I can almost reach up and touch his floorboards. I dump some more of the propaganda down, and two other Camels start shooting at us.

"Don't worry, Muley," I says to myself, "it is only a nightmare. You will wake up on the drome any minute. Just when the two-seater folds up and starts for the linoleum."

I know it must be quite a sight to watch the circulars float down into the Heinies' backyard, but I cannot look, as who takes a wallop at us but Bug-Eye Boomer himself. Ambrose sees it and hollers:

"I-I-I d-don't get it, Muley. Well, if they want to fight, we-we'll give it to 'em, huh? How much more have you got left to d-dump, huh?"

“One package. I’ll get rid of that right now. Let’s get out of here, Ambrose. I know it ain’t a dream now. I got kissed by a tracer and it didn’t w-wake me up.”

**J**UST as I got rid of the last of the handbills Bug-Eye and the Camels leave us alone because what has come up but Von Budweiser’s circus with about a dozen checkered Pfalzes in it. Me and Ambrose do not stay for the sideshow. The little tomato points the Salmson’s nose toward Commercy. There is a piece of fabric big enough to make an art square for some body’s living room curling up from the top wing, and a strut stops giving it any more visible means of support. The power plant gets bronchial trouble and if we are getting more than fifty miles each and every hour, I am an albino.

A dozen more Allied crates pour into the sky sector and an awful brawl takes place with Von Budweiser’s Pfalzes on the short end of the betting. I get close to Ambrose and tell him to pick out a haymow somewhere as we are not going to land like a goose feather.

“Wonder why them Allied crates shot at us, Ambrose?” I yelp.

“I will demand an investigation, Muley,” he hollers back. “It was assault with intent to kill. There goes that fabric—we’ll be riding a skeleton in a minute. Hold on, Muley—we’ve got to slide to the home plate!”

Ambrose eases the wreck down. The power plant quits when we are still a thousand feet from the real estate. I look down and pick out land marks and yell to Ambrose that we are right over Commercy, think of that!

“Give it a good push, Muley,” I says, “and we’ll land at Bagby’s back door!”

We do. We come down on the edge of the drome and spin like a pinwheel all the way to the Operations shack. The meat

wagon is coming to the rescue, and we hit it broadside and that is like sawing off a limb you are sitting on. The Salmson stands on its head and leans its tail against Squadron Headquarters. I arch out of the office and land right on top of the Recording Officer. Major Bagby helps pull Ambrose out of what is left of the front pit and roars a lot of things that spin our domes around faster than they are already.

“So you dropped the stuff down, did you?” he bellows. “Oh, I knew they would never stop you mugs. What did you think we were trying to call you back for—your false teeth? The Limeys sent Camels up, and I sent Boomer up to shoot you down. It was either that or—”

“Wha-a-a-t?” Ambrose blusters, carefully picking the little arrow from the Salmson’s altimeter out of his chin. “So ya did try to kill us? Lemme up and I’ll knock the giblets out of you. Did ya hear what he said, Muley?”

“You know what, you clucks? The map of the territory they had printed on those handbills happened to be just the shape of the map of England. The ground they picked up from the Krauts on the last push. Well, they caught the spy in Chaumont where he worked in the print shop. He marked dots on those circulars to indicate the location of every airplane factory, arsenal, powder works and such in England. He confessed, and Brigade and G.H.Q. buzzed us to hold up the propaganda and—Oh, Lord, the Yanks are even preparing a strafing drive right now to get over there before they can pick up the handbi—”

“Too late, Major,” a colonel that was with Bagby gulps. “This is terrible, isn’t it?”

“And after we almost got killed four times foolin’ with that stuff,” I groan. “Well, I—what’s the joke, Ambrose Hooley?”

THE little tomato is laughing fit to loosen a stitch.

“Ha, ha,” he brays, “I had a hunch about that propaganda. It’s what a dame calls tuition, so I just left the real handbills over in Commercy and—and—”

“You—are you kidding, Hooley?” Bagby screeches. “Do you mean you—that it wasn’t the handbills you dropped?”

“Now you know what he has been through,” I says. “You can’t believe what he says at all. Look at his lamps. They’re as glassy as five-and-ten diamonds and that bump on his dome is no foolin’.”

“That’s right,” Major Bagby sighs.

“Well, come on, you fatheads, take Hooley to his hut.”

“How about me?” I sniff. “I could not crawl over to the wall there if a Folies Bergere dame was winkin’ at me. After all, I have not just been down to the corner gettin’ a milk shake.”

Ambrose keeps insisting that the real propaganda was not tossed down into Alsace-Lorraine, but nobody will even listen to him. They think he is delirious, and why not? Even when the little tomato is normal, a lot of people doubt it. They tie him to his bunk and give him a shot of hop that would kill a gorilla. But it just makes Ambrose a little sleepy.

“I ain’t kiddin’, M-Muley,” he says drowsily. “Y -you b-believe me, doncha, p-pal?”

“Sure. I believe Sinbad flew a rug, too. Shut up and go to sleep, Ambrose Hooley.”

Around midnight Major Bagby and two M.P.s and three brass hats come into the Nisson. A colonel is waving a handbill around his head and demanding an explanation.

“The Yanks have started an offensive, and this is why, Major,” he booms. “To drive the Krauts out of the sector where these things were dropped. Oh, there will be a smell over this. Look what it says. ‘Don’t

shout at me! I am using the Gabriel Ear Trumpet now!’ I found it out in the wreck of that Salmson, and I—”

I jump right out of the bunk and grab my noggin with both hands.

“Ambrose,” I holler, “I’m wise now. You had them things printed that night I saw the ink on your homely pan. You come clean, as I will not be blamed for—”

“Ha, ha, that is right,” the crackpot says, sitting up bright like he wasn’t loaded with hop. “Haven’t I been trying to tell you and everybody right along?” he argues. “I swapped the propergander in the print shop and took out my own advertisin’ matter. Muley, there is a little matter of eighty francs that I still owe the print—”

Major Bagby lifts Ambrose right out of the blankets, then pushes him back again.

“Y-you took—you dared t-to use that S-Salmson for distributing private ads for an ear trumpet?” he splutters. “What if the propaganda had been all right, then what? You started an Allied offensive by—Hooley, you will get life in Atlanta or some, place for this.”

“Aw, it’s a lot of fuss over nothin’,” Ambrose complains and he is very peeved. “The Krauts would not have been scared of the real propergander, anyway. I told you I was suspicious of it and—you can’t prove I wasn’t. I will not say any more until I get a lawyer. I—er—where am I? What have I been sayin’? Who are you and—er—hello, Major. What happened?”

“There,” Major Bagby says hoarsely, “I wish he had been talking sanely. I guess that handbill means nothing, Colonel. Just one that this crackpot, Hooley, got in the mail, probably.”

I LOOK hard at Ambrose Hooley, but he won’t look at me. I am thinking of something that scoops me out inside. Bagby thinks of it at the same time and he says:

“There is a way to prove all this. If the

real stuff is still in Commercy! We'll go there right this minute. Come on, Colonel Blatherskite." To the M.P.s he says: "And don't leave this hut! Watch these cuckoos close."

"Well," I says, when the brass hats are gone, "what do you think now, Ambrose?"

"I—well, I can't think of everything, Muley. Let's see, I am only twenty-two now. After twenty-five years for good behavior, I would be—that was some advertising Uncle Willie got, though, huh?"

I have to feel sorry for Ambrose because he promises me he will absolve me of all the blame. An hour later the C. O. and the brass hats come in.

"I will go quietly," Ambrose starts right in. "No use to make a fuss. I—"

"What a relief!" Bagby sighs and he pulls a sheet off my bunk and wipes his pan with it. "Ah—er—don't you say another word about all this. This squadron will be decorated if we don't. After all, it would be hard to prove charges against you, Lieutenant Hooley, wouldn't it?"

"Huh?" Ambrose grunts. "Why, I bet it would be at that. What've I been worryin' about, huh, Muley?"

The brass hats go out, and the next morning the word comes through that the Yanks have picked up five miles more of Heinie territory by the push that was started by the propaganda, and it makes everybody happy. All but me who was counting on getting rid of Ambrose for at least twenty-five years.

Two days later Bug-Eye Boomer shoots a Kraut down on our side of the lines. When he gets the prisoner back to the drome, none of us can make the Von talk. He pokes at his ears and shakes his head. Then he pulls a piece of paper out of his pocket and hands it to us.

"*Ach, Himmel*, deaf mit der headt *Ich bin, mein freunds*. Where *ist das* ear drumpet from Gabriel factory, *hein?*"

"There," Ambrose exults, "I guess it don't pay to advertise, huh, Muley Spink?"

There are times when even I, Muley Spink, give up.