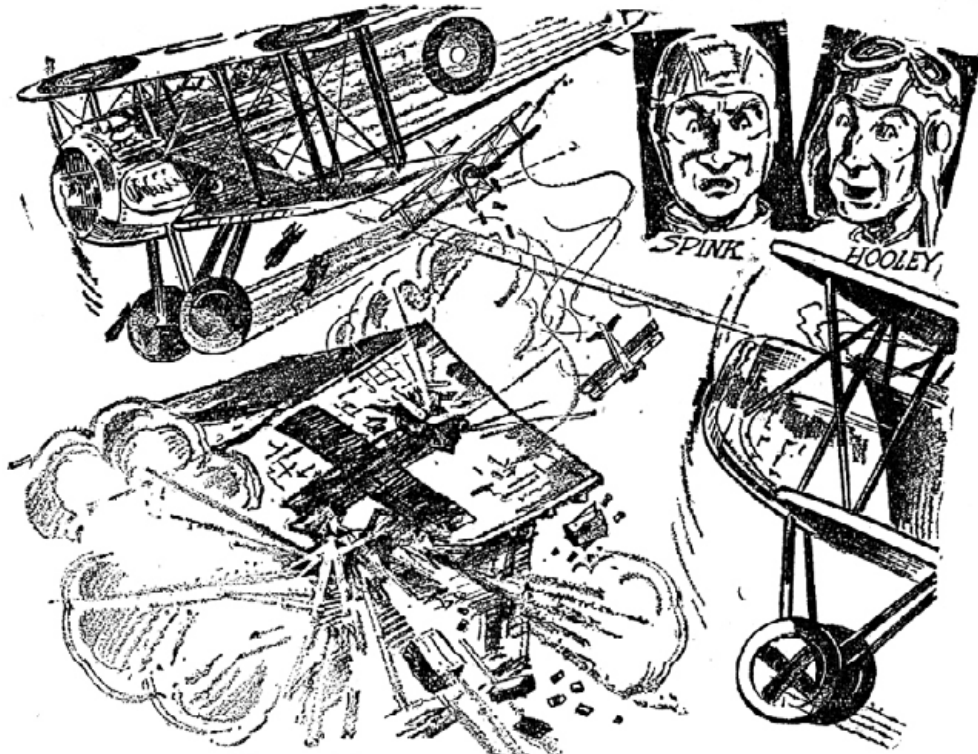


# From Spad to Worse

By JOE ARCHIBALD

Author of "Observation Bus Boys," "Just Plane Nuts," etc.



Muley and Ambrose played havoc with the munitions dump

## *The Happy-Go-Lucky Pilots Stumble on Their Merry Way—and Sometimes the Falls are Not so Funny!*

IT IS one night just before me and Ambrose Hooley go into Commercy that Ambrose says:

"Muley, lend me some francs, will ya?"

"Look," I says, "I am not a Morganfeller. If ermine coats for elephants were sellin' in Paree right now for forty-nine cents, I could not buy a pair of fur earmuffs for a canary. Maybe we can

borrow some dough from Bug-eye Boomer."

"I have tried everybody here but the C.O.," Ambrose says, adding ruefully, "I wish I hadn't lost them loaded dice."

Ambrose is a little homely guy who must have been born complaining to a referee. If there is anything he likes better than a fight, it's a murder. I bunk with Ambrose because nobody else will, and

the Air Corps chiefs insists that every Nisson has to have two bunks occupied.

"Come on, anyway, Muley," Ambrose says. "We will maybe find some guys with too much dough and put the bee on them."

Me and Ambrose go to Commercy and go to a saloon that is not very high class and drink *vin rouge*.

"I have thought of something, Muley," Ambrose says after two snorts. "You stay here and wait for me. I will be right back."

"Don't you stick no places up!" I snap back. "I don't trust you!"

In less than a half hour, Ambrose Hooley is back and he says to a French waiter:

"Donny maw some brandy an' soda nest pa?" Ambrose lights a cigarette, puts his feet up on the table and flicks a fly off his sleeve. "Garcong," Ambrose yelps, "I forgot. Breeng eet one for my pal, ossi."

"What have you done?" I yelp. "Now look here, Ambrose Hooley, I have been in enough trouble because of you. I've been trying to—"

Ambrose just grins at me. When the waiter puts the brandies down on the table, Ambrose pulls out some money from his pocket. He peels off a franc or two and hands it to him.

"Keep the change, garcong," the little crackpot says. "Easy come, easy go."

Ambrose won't tell me where he got the argent and when we get back to the drome, I am still trying to make him tell me.

"Oh, keep still, Muley, or I will slug you one," he says. "I am smart enough to swing a deal, that is all."

**I**T IS the next afternoon after we come back from a fight with the Boche upstairs that Major Bertram Bagby gets us in the mess shack and tells us that a Frenchman in Commercy is going to go as far as Paris to get satisfaction for a very

dirty trick two flyers played on him.

"All right, now. Somebody own up here!" Bagby orders. "I am putting you on your honor. Who of you took that gold watch from a Frog an' paid him with soap certificates? I guess you buzzards know that is a crime in the A.E.F. You will get busted and put in a U. S. government klink for twenty years for swindling Frogs."

"Ah—er—" I get green around the gills and look at Ambrose. The fathead does not bat an eye and looks very amazed at such an accusation.

"You can search me first, Major," he says. "Why that is a disgrace to the Air Corps, isn't it, Muley?"

"Don't even look at me," I clip under my breath.

"The two buzzards who swindled the Frog went and pawned the watch afterward and must have got real money for it. Well, who was it?" The C.O. waits for five minutes and then says, "All right. But if I ever get the smart Alec that did it, I will give him the limit."

"I do not blame you!" Ambrose agrees. "Why, the idea of two American flyers doin' a rotten thing like that. Well, have the D.H.s located that Boche supply dump yet?"

Major Bagby says they are not sure and want to take a few more ganders at the spot where the dump is supposed to be squatting.

"They've got a hunch that it is camouflaged as a Kraut hospital and that they've got to be sure it isn't before they bomb it—or whoever does. It's a terrible thing to blow up a hospital. Anybody that does that ought to be shot at sunrise."

"Yeah," Ambrose says. "But it would be something if we could shellack that grocery warehouse. They say the Heinies are down to one meal a day as it is and have got the ends of their belts trippin' them up, they have been pulled that tight

around their middles. No wonder they put red crosses on that dump.”

Me and Ambrose go back to our hut and I give him a tough look right in the eye.

“You crook!” I shout.

“Now look, Muley,” he pleads, “the Frog says two flyers swindled him. You know very well you did not go with me when I went out of the barroom, don’t you? I was alone, so how could anybody be with me?”

“I—er—I know! The Frenchie was drunk an’ he saw two of you. That’s what!”

“Uh—er—” he stammered. “You are smart, ain’t you, Muley? How would you like a good punch in the nose, huh? I would shut up if I was you, as the Frog said there was two of us and you were in Commercy with me, Muley Spink.”

“I bet you would stoop to blackmail, too,” I says to him. “Why wasn’t you born with two flat feet and two glass eyes so’s you could never have joined the army an’ met me?”

“Oh, stop bein’ nervous, Muley,” the little halfwit yaps. “We are pals and have to stick together. I am hurt the way you keep thinking those things of me. Give a dog a bad name—all right for you, Muley.”

The crackpot has me feeling sorry for him. Ten minutes later we go out with “Bug-eye” Boomer and we fly over the place where the Kraut hospital is supposed to be. I see Ambrose pecking down at it with a pair of field glasses while a Heinie gets set to shoot the plane out from under him. I go up and over and slam the Fokker in the floating ribs and Bug-eye catches him on the bounce and makes a good German out of him, if you know what I mean. There is a lot more Krauts coming up from the carpet and we shoot back to

Commercy as fast as we can make our Hissos.

**A**MBROSE is talkative that night when we sit down to mess.

“I will bet a soap cert—er—a plugged nickel against a Chinese cent that that dump is a real dump. Them Krauts ridin’ around in wheel chairs are props. I bet the nurses are Kraut doughs in pinafores. They are makin’ saps out of us an’—”

The Old Man glares at Ambrose and he keeps his peepers on him when he tells him that the robbed Frenchman is to be at the drome day after tomorrow to see if he can identify the flyers that swindled him.

“Seems that watch was worth more than a few francs,” the major said. “An heirloom, the Frenchman told some brass hats. It belonged to Marshal Ney. One of his forefathers fought under the marshal at Waterloo an’—”

“Huh?” Bug-eye said. “That thing should be worth a fortune.”

Ambrose spills his coffee down his tunic.

“Wha--a-a-t?”

“The pawnbroker can’t sell the watch until a certain period of time elapses,” Bagby went on. “Whoever holds the ticket—”

“The tick—ha!” I shoot in quick. “About that Kraut dump now. We could go over and drop a bomb close to it and see if the nurses and the props in the wheel chairs would run. If they didn’t, well—” I saw beads of worry flow from my noggin just as some brass hats come in. One is a brigadier.

“H-m-m,” I hear Ambrose gulp. “The Frog comes in day after tomorrow. I—”

“Good evening, Major,” says the big brass hat. “Hate to spoil your mess but—”

“That would be impossible,” Ambrose says.

If Bagby's peepers had been two knives they would cut Ambrose's throat from ear to ear and back again. The brass hat mumbles something about discipline and what he would do if he had Ambrose. That is what he thinks.

"The Wing thinks they have definitely established that hospital over near Cheminot as a supply dump, Major. Pictures we have of the place have been enlarged and subjected to microscopic examination. and they prove—"

"I bet they got fingerprints the way they—" Ambrose snorts.

"Bagby, this is outrageous, these interruptions," the brass hat says, and I am getting more scared by the second. I try to bang Ambrose with my fist and miss.

"Shut up!" I hiss.

"Who-o-o-o said that?"

"I was talkin' to Lieutenant Hooley, sir. I—"

The brigadier looks at us nasty and he includes the C.O. in the dirty look.

"Well, this job that has to be done, Major. It is the kind I wouldn't send a nephew I'm stuck with on, if you get what I mean. I intended to ask for volunteers and I would not have considered any of you cowards if you had passed it up. But now—"

He rubbed his hands gleefully.

"We fight over them kind of chores, don't we, fellers?" Ambrose announces, and Major Bagby is as close to a conniption fit as a tick is to a sheep. "None of us come over here just to git postcards to send home, huh? Where others fail, we succeed."

**B**AGBY has fits.

"All right, Bagby!" the stuff shirt snaps, "this little mission is in your lap! I'll leave it up to you to pick your men. I know who I would pick, too, Major, if I was running this outfit. Discipline—bah!

The flyers in this war think—well, here is what Chaumont wants. Two Spads loaded with Cooper bombs are going over and destroy that supply station. Spads are fast and can get back, faster than—"

"Why don't they take the guns and bomb racks off them D.H.s?" Ambrose says. "All they do is go around playin' with Brownies an' Kodaks anyway. I git sick every time I think of what would have happened to the Democrats if the Frogs had not invented Spads, don't you?"

"Tomorrow at dusk!" the brigadier shouts, and looks at us all as if he would have liked to commit a mass murder. "Discipline—bah! Look out they don't take over this outfit and send you over to bomb the dump, Bagby. Good evening!" He goes out and slams the door.

"Oh, reservoir, sir!" Ambrose says.

The Old Man stabs a mean finger at him. "You're the lucky one, Hooley! You an' Spink. I'll show you two wisenheimers whether there is discipline here."

"I have not said a word," I protest weakly. "I was just sittin' here mindin' my business."

"Get out of here, both you fresh bums!"

I follow Ambrose over to the Nisson and all the way over I try to get up courage to get him from behind and strangle him to death. Going over to bomb the Heinie grocery store is as healthy as going into a grizzly den to steal three cubs whose papa has an ulcerated tooth. There is a big airdrome near the munition dump, also some Heinie gun batteries that do not shoot confetti up at you.

"You should be ashamed to even talk to me, Ambrose Hooley!" I snap.

"Marshal Ney's watch, h-m-m-m," the little crackpot mutters. "I bet it would bring a lot of dough from a collector."

"Oh, you are dumb enough to fall for that mullarkey, are you?" I yelp. "It is just

a ruse to make the guilty citizen redeem it so's the M.P.s can nab him. That is what. Ambrose, if brains were arsenic, you would not have enough of same to knock off a mosquito. Why did you keep shootin' off your mouth to the brass hat, huh? I know! You do not want to be here the day after tomorrow when that Frog comes. You was the swindler. I am sure now!"

"What I would do to you, Muley," Ambrose counters, "if you was not my pal. I wanted to get a medal, that is all. We will both get decorated after—"

"Every Memorial Day," I interrupt. "Now shut up!"

It is the next night that me and Ambrose are ready to take the air and all the buzzards gather around the Spad and sing, "In the Sweet By-and-By." Bug-eye Boomer puts a wreath on Ambrose's buggy and makes a speech.

"Most guys say what swell guys people are after they are dead," Bugeye orates. "How can they hear what their pals think of them? We are different here. We let those who are about to kick off know how much we are goin' to miss them!"

*Kerwhack!*

"I did not miss you, did I, Bugeye?" I says sarcastically, and cools off a fist. "Ha, ha! You are sure a card. Come on, Ambrose."

**T**HE Old Man and all the buzzards are still trying to revive Bug-eye when me and Ambrose are in our Spads and warming up the Hissos. Ambrose suddenly jumps out of his crate and runs to our Nissan. He comes back with a small, flat package inside his coat.

"That is the candy I got in the mail this a.m., Muley. These bums would eat it all up if I left it. It is from a dame I knew back in Keokuk an' she writ me she was goin' to make me some fudge. Well, I will take it West with me. Contact!"

Me and Ambrose take off and head for Cheminot. Nothing happens until we get across the Meuse and over Pont au Mousson. The Krauts toss shrapnel up at us and you should get a smell of it. The powder they use in them shells must be made out of defunct polecats. They don't put marshmallows in the shells, either. A marshmallow does not knock a hole in a wing.

We run upstairs for more altitude and then find ourselves over the Boche grocery warehouse camouflaged with red crosses. Two Heinies come butting in and Ambrose jabs one with his Vickers and follows it up by an upper-cut that hits the Fokker right under the chin. The Boche's powerplant goes screwy on him and he has to try and make a fair catch at terra firma.

I get over the dump and let loose a Cooper bomb. It smacks up right at the edge of the Heinie layout. You should have seen the wheel chairs travel down on the carpet. Then another Fokker slides in under a punch Ambrose takes at him and he hits the little tomato's sky buggy right in the solar plexus. Ambrose goes down for the linoleum and lets loose his bombs so they will not be under his pants when he hits. I do the same and when they all break up, I know the Krauts will have to boil out what soup is left in their shoes as the groceries under the fake hospital roof get cooked to a crisp. I am following Ambrose down, hoping that when he hits he will not be splattered all over France. I always tried to make him be neat.

I see Ambrose Hooley fight his Spad to a stop against a tree close to a sandpit and he is doing a belly-bump down the side of the pit without a sled when I skim over the place. It looks like the end of the guerre for the little crackpot. I tell myself to go on home and not be a crazy fool. The nincompoop is only trouble to me, anyway. But like I have said before you

get very attached to lumbago if you have it long enough. So I throws out my chest and says I will stick with my pal even if it does make me an idiot. I land a mile from the sandpit, get out of the Spad and duck for cover. I peek out of the bushes and look for Kraut soldiers, but do not see any. I hear them though, and they seem very elated over something. Then I know they have snagged Ambrose Hooley.

I creep out of the bushes and start toward the sand pit, but before I can get there I come to a farmhouse and in the yard is about a dozen Jerries and a Potsdam jalopy. I see Ambrose right in the middle of the Krauts and I crouch near a pig sty and get a gander at what is going on.

“It was a supply dump an’ you know it, you sausage hounds!” Ambrose shouts. “I was only doin’ my duty. You had a red cross on the roof to kid us. I know my rights in this war.”

**I** FEEL terrible. “Shut up!” says a Kraut officer who must have been with the Harvards or Yales once. “Bah! You Yankee swine! You would haff dropped der bombs down onyway efen if you was not sure. For such frightfulness, you will be shot, *ja!* It is the Kaiser’s orders. Look for information on him before we shoot him!”

“Don’t I git a trial?” Ambrose howls, and I am so weak I could not have pulled a feather off a humming bird with both hands and a pair of pliers.

“Ha, ha, ho, ho!” laughs the Heinie brass hat. “Trial? Do nodt make me laugh, *Herr Leutnant.*”

I could have heard Ambrose Hooley’s fist land on the Kraut’s whiskers if I had been on the Swiss border. The Jerry does a back-spin and a lot of other funny things before he finally hits the ground near the house.

“I will fight all of you bums, singlehanded or all together!” Ambrose yelps. “You can’t shoot me!”

Ambrose was wrong. After they take all his personal belongings from him, three of the Heinie doughboys start making passes at him. One is running around in circles yelling for a stretcher bearer. Can Ambrose Hooley fight—wow! The Heinie brass hat says they will shoot Ambrose right where he is and gets a firing squad together. I hold my dome in my hands and my pump comes up into my throat and prods my tonsils.

“Adoo, old pal,” I mumble. “Adoo an’ happy landings. I bet you reach out West leading with your left. Well, you can take a pitcher to the well once too often and it will break some day even if it is made of iron. Adoo, old pal.”

“Do I want to get blindfolded?” Ambrose chirps. “Are we goin’ to play blind-man’s buff, you panty waists! Adoo, Muley, wherever you are.”

“Oh-h-h-h-h-h!” I groan, and shed a tear or three. “Git it over with. I—”

“*Achtung!*” That is the Kraut brass hat getting the squareheads ready to shoot Ambrose. I hear him say, “Ready - Aim - Fire!” in German. Then four guns boom loudly and I look up and see Ambrose stretched out on the real estate. If I had had a gun I would have run amuck, but I can hear Ambrose saying, “Don’t be a sap, Muley. There’s nothin’ you can do for me now except writin’ home an’ tellin’ them they should have had more than just me to give to my country, huh?”

“Only one gun it was loaded!” the Kraut yaps. “So, nobody knows who shoots der Yangkee! *Gie Schnell!*”

The Heinies start moving out of the farmyard and the brass hat gets into the jalopy with the Prussian buzzard painted on the side of it. They leave poor Ambrose right where he is and do not even bother to

bury him.

When they are all gone I go over and kneel down by the side of my deceased pal.

“Ambrose, old pal,” I say tearfully, “whatever I said about you don’t go! I will give you a decent burial an’—”

“Hello, Muley,” the skunk answers. “It is a hell of a time to get here. Oh-h, who hit me in the chest with that pickax, huh?”

I jump a foot in the air, and my scalp lifts up off my noggin and then snaps back into place.

“You crackpot!” I gulp. “I saw them shoot you. Can’t nothin’ kill you?”

**A**MBROSE sits up and stares at me. “Say, that is right, Muley. Why am I alive? They shot me—you saw them, huh?” Ambrose reaches inside his shirt and pulls out a small, flat package. He tears the wrappings off and then we both look at the fudge. There is a bullet nestling in the stuff and Ambrose starts bending the candy like it was a thick rubber doormat. “Uh—er—it did not even get through it, Muley. That dame is some cook, huh? Why, there is a fortune in this stuff. The Allies could make tanks an’ bullet-proof vests. I will send to the dame for the receipt as soon as I can. What do you think of that?”

“Look, Ambrose,” I stammer. “I can’t stand much more! I—look, we are in Germany an’—I-let’s git out. I g-got me a Spad over—th-throw that stuff away as—”

Ambrose buries the fudge and sticks a stone over it.

“After the guerre,” he says, “I will come after it. It is a gold mine, Muley. Ha, ha! Now I bet you believe in the Resurrection, huh?”

“C-come on, Ambrose. Let’s git to the Spad.”

“Awright. Boy, if I ever meet that Kraut again. Imagine him shootin’ me for

blowin’ up that dump?”

“They do not generally take you to Berlin an’ give you the key to the joint,” I snort. “Come on.”

We get close to where the Spad is, but it is surrounded by the enemy.

“Now what will we do?” I says.

“We have got to escape,” Ambrose opines. “Let’s go in a big circle.”

“Make it big enough,” I snap, “so we will find ourselves on the beach at Dunkirk, huh?”

Me and Ambrose creep around Alsace Lorraine for an hour. Finally we come out to a bend in a road and we hear some German soldiers singing.

“Nobody can sing that bad,” Ambrose says, “unless they are drunk. Look—Muley!”

“I can see. It is a motorcycle comin’.”

Ambrose ducks back over a fence and he comes back dragging an old tree limb. He says for me to help him put it in the road.

“We will shellack the Heinies,” he says, “an’ take their suits and jalopy. It is our only chance.”

We get the limb across the road and wait. The Heinie mechanical bug comes down the road and it is skidding from side to side as if the Jerries in it were trying to write their names in the mud. They are singing the Kraut Sweet Adeline and are as drunk as a pair of flies dunked in a barrel of corn mash.

*Brr-zing-wham!*

The motorcycle hits the limb and curtsies in a hurry. The two square-heads come out of it like infield flies and make squishy sounds when they hit the ground.

“Grab one!” Ambrose orders. “We are lucky. One is tall an’ one is short.”

We don’t waste any time or motions in achieving our objective.

Ambrose bats his Jerry on the chops only once, but I have to slug mine twice to

finish what schnapps had started. We peel off the Krauts' clothes an' change into them. Then me and Ambrose go out and pick up their buggy and look it over fast for injuries.

"It is sound as a nut," Ambrose says. "Get into the bathtub an' I will drive it. Which way is Commercy?"

"We will ask the first policeman we meet, Ambrose," I yelp. "The sky looks light over that way and that must be where the Yanks are. Anyway, let's start goin' somewhere. We'll never get out of this."

"You give up easy," Ambrose sneers. "Just foller me, Muley."

Hooley feeds the motorcycle some gas and in two minutes we are heading right for a Heinie settlement. There is about forty Jerry soldiers up ahead and I look over toward the left. If I do not see Gothas, then a camel can thread a needle.

"L-look, Am-Ambrose," I wail. "We can't turn back. There is no room an' this time we will both git shot!"

"We will manage to git out, Muley," he answered. "I can talk a little Heinie, an' we have got Jerry suits on, don't forget."

"I wish I could. They shoot soldiers who have on the wrong uniforms, Ambrose. Remember?"

We stop the buggy and I try to keep my teeth from rattling loose.

"Wee gates!" Ambrose says. "*Hoch der Kaiser!*"

It is very surprising what happens next. A brass hat slaps us on the back and about six doughboys help us out of the jalopy like we were blown glass. Everybody starts cheering and start toward the field where the Gotha is squatting. I look at Ambrose and he shrugs.

"What in—" I start to say.

"Shut up," he squirts out of the corner of his mouth. "Somethin' is happenin'."

Somebody starts talking English. I look over the head of a little Heinie and

see a guy in the uniform of the Royal Flying Corps. Then a brass hat with a bullet face talks U. S. to the buzzard.

"*Ach, mein freund.* You are lucky to be taken prisoner, *Herr Leutnant.* You are going to see two brave Germans make a very dangerous experiment for the Fatherland, *ja.* Each with a machine gun *undt* belts *undt* boxes will jump outd of der Gotha at seven thousand feet, *ja!* Testing out der new parachutes, *ja.* If it is successful, we drop machine gunners behind der lines from airplanes. The two soldiers we gave a whole day to enjoy themselves as maybe they will not come back, *nein?*"

My legs buckle and Ambrose grabs me quick. "*N-nein*—mine froind. Gets du op gee snell!"

"Some fix we're in," I grunt. "Out of the f-f-fryin' p-pan into th-the b-b-blast f-furnace! Out of all the Krauts in the g-guerre, we-we had to p-pick the two that—oh, cripes!"

"Amazing!" the Beefeater says. "Jolly brave men, what? Think the parachutes will work, *Herr Oberst?*"

"That is what we must find out, Herr Leutnant." The Jerry shrugs. "If nodt—we try again."

"Hoch der Kaiser—hic!" Ambrose says, and nudges me. "Act drunk, Muley, as they will expect us to talk."

"Hack doo leeber!" I says. "Hic—Roust mitt! Hic—hic—Doitchland goober—"

They pack ammunition boxes and belts on me and Ambrose and then fasten the 'chutes on us. When we get loaded into the Gotha we are carrying a Heinie machine gun that weighs half as much as a blacksmith forge. They have got a trap in the floor of the Jerry egg dropper to push through.

"Oh, this is the last time I will ever follow you, Ambrose Hooley," I growl,

sotto voce.

"I agree with you, Muley," he says in a sad voice. "I—er—these 'chutes will pull off like new-skin when they open. I bet we each weigh a ton. I wish I'd got shot. I am scairt, are you?"

"N-no," I lie. "L-listen to me tellin' jokes. I never I-laughed s-so much in m-my life. I wish I could s-s-s-top. Sh-shut up. Here comes—"

"*Auf weidersehn*," a Jerry says, and pats us on the back.

THE next pat I get will be from a spade, I am very sure. I try to think of a good prayer.

"H-hoch der Kaiser!" Ambrose says. "Well, they'll never find out who hocked the watch—er—Gott straff—"

The Gotha motors make a lot of sound and drown out what Ambrose says. We shake hands. When the Boche are not looking, I bang the little tomato in the ear with my elbow.

"I am goin' to die, anyways," I yell at him, "so what more can you do to me, ha? It is an ill wind—"

"If I ever get out of this, I will slug you, Muley!" he interrupts.

"You are an optimist," I snort between shakes. "You should have stayed home an' sold eyeglasses. W-well, we are upstairs at last. Now what?"

Somebody touches us on the shoulder. It is a Heinie Gotha foreman and he says we are to get ready to jump. I told him he was a liar and Ambrose kicks me in the shin. The Kraut pulls a lever and the trapdoor opens.

"Adoo, Muley," he says.

"Adoo, Ambrose," I says, and get kicked down through the trap.

Ambrose comes tumbling after and I count ten and then pull the ripcord of the 'chute. I let the machine-gun go as I says to the devil with making it tougher for

myself. I get jerked backwards and every bone in my body falls out of joint. Then I start laughing, as I am floating down like a feather. I look around for Ambrose and see him about a quarter of a mile away. He is dropping fast, and what do you think? The halfwit is still hanging onto the Spandau.

I get sideswiped by a tree and the side of a barn before I hit. All my teeth loosen up and I wonder how much I have bitten off my tongue. I sit down and see if my legs will bend in more than one place.

"Well, here I am," I says, "still in Germany. It is like a drownin' man yellin' for a lemonade. I wonder where that crackpot is?"

I do not have to wait long. A Jerry truck comes up and the guy driving it yells at me. Two other squareheads get off the truck and come over to pick me up.

"Well," I says to myself, "the Heinies were watchin' us everywhere. Here is where I git shot now."

"*Wie gehts!*"

"Slug 'em, Muley!" a familiar voice yells. "Git in the truck an' drive it! I have got this Kraut cannon ready to show them a thing or two."

"Ambrose!" I hoot, and start punching. I wade through the squareheads and reach the truck. Ambrose gets the Spandau going and the Potsdam suckers start going cross-country. I hop to the truck and get it going.

"Did you think they would forget us after we jumped?" Ambrose yelps. "You throwin' that gun away. That is sense. What would you do without me?"

"Oh, shut up! We are still in Germany, you crackpot!" I howl. "Supposin' that 'chute wasn't strong enough to—Say, are we goin' the right way? Where—"

"Shut up and I will look at the road map, Muley. Head for where you hear the most noise as I heard there was a push goin' on sometime tonight. Boy, are we sittin' pretty?"

“Yeah. It is nice here in Commercy isn’t it? Look, Ambrose, there is Major Bagby right over there! I got a good mind to let go of this wheel an’ go back there.”

I FEEL like I am insane. “You are just unstrung, Muley,” Ambrose says. “After what we’ve been through—me executed an’ all—if any squareheads try and stop us, I will give ‘em what they don’t expect. I am just dyin’ to get a crack at those guys that shoved us into that plane.”

I drive for an hour. We come to a road that is blocked and about twenty Boche yell at us to stop. We don’t. We knock over a barrier and half of them. Ambrose sprays lead at the Heinies from the back of the truck.

“Surprise!” he yelps. “Go faster, Muley!”

“Shut up!” I roar. “I’ve got the accelerator draggin’ in the mud now, Ambrose Hooley. There is shells breakin’ up ahead of us. Will I try to dodge them? We are right in a war.”

“It is not a clam-bake, I know that, Muley. Just keep on drivin’. Lo-o-o-ok o-o-ut!”

The truck lifts off the road, bangs down again and keeps on going. I wipe sweat off my pan and I can hear it splash on the floorboards.

“That was nice, Muley,” Ambrose hoots. “Next time, see if you can come closer, huh?”

I do not talk any more to Ambrose Hooley. I cut a path through a road clogged with Jerries and then go right between two machine gun nests. We take the side off a house and run an ambulance into a bake shop. Ambrose yells in my ear and wants to know what town it is.

“It is not Bethlehem,” I says. “Look, there is soldiers here, Yank soldiers. They are firing at us. That is not a nice thing for

them to do to us, Ambrose. You can’t be safe nowheres any more.”

“You forget, Muley, there is a Prussian crow painted on the side of this heap! We are not in a favorable—Look out for that tank!”

I try, but I never get the breaks. If I ever do it will be in the back of the neck. We graze the tank and it shoves us right through the side of a grog shop. Bottles tumble down all around us and *vin blanc* and such splashes on the hot hood of the truck and sends up enough steam to cook a plum pudding. One bottle jumps up from nowhere and breaks up on my noggin. The lights go out like it is curfew in a blue nose town.

When I come to, Ambrose is challenging the whole A.E.F. to a fight. “I tell ya I am a flyer, a U. S. flyer,” he shouts.

“No kiddin’?” an officer says. “An’ I am an admiral. Have you seen my battleship around any place? It has green stripes an’—Get these bums over with the rest of them Heinies,” he roars. “If he starts fightin’ again, conk him with a gun butt!”

“Look,” I says. “I am also a U. S. aviator an’—”

“Move along or I’ll bust your skull!”

They drive me and Ambrose along a road with about eleven thousand squareheads and you should have heard the little crackpot swear. Finally a top-kick grabs a looey by the arm and he says:

“I—er—think there must be a mistake here some place, sir. No Jerry can cuss like that little tomater. He says he is an Elk, too.”

“Cut ‘em out then and send them over to Division Headquarters. They’re wearin’ Kraut dogtags, those two clucks. We’ll find out if they’re spies.”

“We bombed that grocery warehouse over to Cheminot,” I says. “We got took

up in a Gotha an' dropped out. We stole a Heinie truck—"

"Yeah," Ambrose backs me up. "We are Lieutenants Spink and Hooley. You get Major Bagby. I will see somebody gets busted for this outrage."

**I**T IS not until night of the next day that the Old Man gets over to Mars-le-Tour and identifies us.

"It is them," he says. "I have to believe what I see. We crossed them off the books as stiffs, but we should have known better."

They put me and Ambrose in a dugout so we can get the Heinie scenery off. I sit down and hold my noggin in my hands. I am shaking like a bowl of jelly in an earthquake.

"Whe-e-e-e-e-w," I says. "It is an awful time we had, Ambrose."

"Huh. say, I bet you were right about that bein' a ruse. If that was Marshal Ney's watch, then I am carryin' Cleopatra's reticule right this minute. Well, they will never get the guy who done it."

You would think the little fathead had just been down to a corner store getting cigarettes and was caught in a shower. He has been executed, thrown out of a Gotha and wrecked in a truck since he washed up in a Spad, and there he sits thinking about the Frog's watch. He is not human.

They give us some Yank doughboy suits to wear back to Commercy and they smell of a cootie antidote, which is like attar of roses to us after what we've been wrapped in. When we get to the drome, Bug-eye and all the buzzards put on a binge and tell us we don't know how much they missed us.

"I bet you all cried, didn't you?" he says, looking at the flight leader. "What is that you have got on, huh? My best black silk tie, huh? An' you, Porky, if they ain't

my new boots you are wearin' I am a— Why, you dirty bums!"

Ambrose wades into Bug-eye and Porky and I bet he would have killed the both of them if a Boche had not come flying over the drome then. We run out and look upstairs and something is coming down through the ozone. It is a little parachute.

"Did anybody get identified by the Frog?" Ambrose says to the Old Man as a groundhog ran out to where he thinks the message will drop. "It is too bad that they didn't catch that swindler but I guess they won't now. Ha, ha! I bet you thought it was me, huh?"

"I would have sworn to it sitting on the roof of a Bible warehouse," Bagby snorts, and watches the groundhog jump a fence and grab at the little parachute.

"That's the way," Ambrose wails. "Give a dog a bad name."

The groundhog brings the parachute to the C.O. and Bagby looks at the little package tied to it, and then walks back into the Operations office. We follow him and Bagby sits down and unwraps the package. There was a message in it. He reads it out loud.

"Here is what will happen to any Yankee who bombs places marked by a Red Cross. Here are the effects of *Leutnant* Ambrose Hooley, executed by a firing squad at Fluey."

"Yep," Ambrose says, "they shot me."

The Old Man groans and gets up and walks around the room six times.

"They shot you, but here you are," he says. "I—" He sits down again and looks over the things the Krauts took off Ambrose. "A helmet and goggles," he says. "A picture of a dame in tights, a letter from Keokuk and—and—a pawn ticket! Hooley, you—"

"Wha-a-a-a-t? I—Oh, them lousy squareheads. They framed me. I—well,

awright, I confess. Me and Muley are heroes for knocking off the Kraut grocery store and the Ninety-third won't get decorated anymore than we will if you want to be narrow minded and make a fuss about that cheap watch. Of all the fuss over a watch—for shame."

**M**AJOR BAGBY tears up the pawn ticket and almost faints at the same time.

"Supposing the Kraut dropped that stuff down where brass hats got it, huh? You would have gotten twenty years, Hooley! You will never amount to anything. You will come to a bad end."

"They will be surprised, won't they Muley?" the little tomato says. "I have got something that will make me a million bucks after the war. I will wear spats and ride in a limersine. It is a new armor plate, cheap to make."

I have got enough. I walked out of the Operations shack and go over to the Nissan. I sit down and have a relapse. I start talking about green lions and pink tigers and it is not until a week later that I stop. I am sittin' in a wheelchair at a base hospital when my dome clears. Who comes up but Ambrose.

"Hello Muley," he says. "Bagby says to me to come and cheer you up."

I have another relapse.