



THE SEVENTH MAN

By JOEL ROGERS

Six greenhorn Marines turned their motors for first flight over the lines. And doom was due to ride with them—for one of the six was a bloody killer, a double-faced spy!

A Complete War-Air Mystery Novelet

SIX junior officers in Forest-Green had lined up before Major F.A. Schmolz, commanding officer of the 9th Marine DeHaviland Day Bombing Squadron, operating from Beaux—pronounce it “Booze”—on the Marne.

The six were reporting from Quantico, Virginia, via Hampton Roads, Brest and Toul, as replacements for 9th Squadron pilots and observers who had been washed out in the murderous early

July fighting. Their wings were new, and golden as the sun. Their Sam Browne belts and cordovan boots were all highly polished. Each one of the six wore his campaign hat at about the same angle, and their complexions were all sunburned to approximately the same leather color, so that at first glance they looked about as much alike as six rifles standing in a row.

As Major Schmolz surveyed them, however, the

six men took on distinction and individuality to his eyes. His glance seemed to pick them out of the rank, one by one, and turn them over, examining and measuring them.

There was one of them who was tall and bony, with hollow cheeks. Another, small and dark and quick, with a ragged white scar that went down beside his nose until it was buried in a mustache. Another, with inquisitive green eyes and a loose underlip. There was one man who appeared to be Italian, and one who was a pure German type, and a sixth man with a broad, pockmarked face, who might have been a Hunky or Polack.

"Lieutenants Wainbridge and Steele," Major Schmolz repeated their names, boring each man in turn with his little screwed-up eyes, which were as pale as ice. "Second Lieutenants Arnold, Caminetti, Stossman, and Janowski."

He nodded to each, a formal nod with somehow a threat in it.

"Reborting to my command py orders of the Bureau of Nafigation, dated Chune 15th," he continued. "Fur der goot of der service. Your flight orders to remain in force."

He stalked up and down in front of them like a barrel on legs—short, round, with bristly yellow hair and chubby red cheeks. He wore no blouse, and his unbuttoned khaki shirt displayed a liberal amount of leathery neck and hairy chest. His hat was pushed on the extreme back of his head. He wiped his sweating brow frequently with a large red handkerchief which had seen better days, and could hardly see worse.

"When I look at you mit my eyes," he said after a grave silence, "I perceive six men of you, and no more. Howefer, according to der reborts of Nafy Intelligence which I haf confidentially received, dere are really seven of you."

The newly reporting officers looked as if they were waiting to laugh respectfully at the proper cue. All lieutenants are supposed to laugh when a major cracks a joke.

"I mean," said Major Schmolz—and his fat cherubic jowls suddenly clamped together like iron, his round eyes grew hard and deadly—"I mean dot, while dere are unquestionably six flying leathernecks of you, according to der reborts of Intelligence dere is also a Cherman spy bresent among you. Six flying leatherneck chentlemen—and vun of you doubling as a tanned Cherman. Vich vun of you is dot seventh man, dot spy?"

The rank of flying men shifted position uneasily. Beneath their hat brims they were beginning to glance covertly at one another. This was not a joke.

FIRST LIEUTENANT WAINBRIDGE stood forward, with his fists clenched and his jaw tight. He was taller than the other five, with a bony chin and hollow cheeks as brown as leather. He wore a marksman's silver badge above his wings.

"As senior officer of this detachment, sir," he said in a precise New England voice, yet tense with passion, "I demand an explanation of your insinuation!"

"It was not an insinuation," said Schmolz mildly. "It vas a remark. At your flight training fields, at Miami and den at Quantico, dere occurred a series of crashes due to sabotage. Young bilots were being gilled, and goot ships wrecked. Der Intelligence department vas nefer able to locate der precise man. But dey haf intercepted communications from der spy to der head of der Cherman espionage in Hollant. And dey haf narrowed him down to you. Vun of you six. Der name is X-5. Vich vun of you is der man?"

Major Schmolz's round eyes roamed.

First Lieutenant Steele, the little dark man with the white scar down his nose, curled his silky mustache.

"May I interject a remark, suh?" he said in a dulcet Texan drawl.

"I am waiting for remarks," said Major Schmolz.

"Very well," said the black-eyed Texan. "Then allow me to remark, suh, that any man who says there is a spy in this detachment is a blankety son of a blank!"

"How do you know?" said Schmolz.

"I have used fighting words, suh," said Steele in his soft voice, but showing his teeth. "And I am a fighting man."

"Goot," said Major Schmolz imperturbably. "I like to see fighting men. Dere are six million Chermans under arms who are looking for a poy like you." He chuckled.

Second Lieutenant Janowski, the beetle-browed, pockmarked Pole from Detroit, raised his hand.

"Excuse me, sir," he growled. "These other birds seem to be acting like this is all news to them. But there are plenty of us who know you're right! There's been dirty work going on wherever we've been stationed. I helped shovel up my best buddy

when he crashed from three thousand feet, with his flipper wires filed away. And if I ever meet the black so-and-so who pulled that trick—!”

“Vich vun do you suspect?” said Major Schmolz.

“If I knew,” said Janowski viciously, “I’d have buried a clip of .45’s in his liver long ago!”

Wainbridge and Arnold, who were standing on either side of Janowski, looked down at him across their shoulders, drawing slightly away. The glowering, pockmarked Pole wasn’t popular, Major Schmolz noted.

“Any more remarks?” said Schmolz.

“So long as you’ve raised the issue, Major,” said Lieutenant Arnold, the stoop-shouldered pilot with the green eyes and the loose underlip, “I think we’d be glad to have this matter thoroughly probed. There have been things we’ve thought, perhaps, and haven’t spoken. I feel confident that all the boys would be glad to have this matter brought out into the light—

“All the boys except one,” Arnold added, with a curl of his lip.

Two or three men nodded.

“What do you say, Mr. Stossman?” Schmolz asked the man with the plastered yellow hair and the sun-bleached brows.

“What is there for me to say, sir?” replied Stossman with bitter suavity. “I have a German name, and my blood is Heinie, right straight through.”

“I was born at Munich, myself,” said Major F.A. Schmolz, patting his round little stomach, “Der best beer in der worlt is made dere. Der Chermans are a great people, Stossman. Do not be aschamed of dem.”

He turned to the last man of the six, Caminetti, a short and enormously burly little man, with thick black hair and bright red cheeks, built like a pint-sized Hercules.

“Vich vun do you think, Caminetti?”

“Who knows?” said Caminetti with a lazy shrug.

MAJOR SCHMOLZ sighed. He wiped his knobby forehead again with his big red handkerchief, thoroughly and deliberately. He paced up and down in front of the rank of men with his thumbs hooked into his breeches band.

“Dis pusiness,” he said, “is not in my line. According to der instructions of Intelligence, I was

to geep a confidential watch on der six of you, mitout letting you know dot you were under subscion. But I am a plain and straightforward man, and I lay my cards on der taple. I do not like spies, chentlemen. But I do not like to be a spy myself, either. It is a dirty pusiness. It is my desire to get my hands clear of it, in der quickest way.

“I suggest dot if dere is any man of you who does not think der climate is salubrious to him, dot he step forward at vunce, and hand me his resignation. Der resignation vill be accepted, mitout questions asked. Der chentleman vill be gifen transbortation to der Cherman lines under a flak of druce. Or, if he prefers, he vill be allowed opportunity to dress himself in a Cherman uniform, and be interned as a prisoner of war for der duration of der conflict. You haf my word on it—der vord of F.A. Schmolz, vich is like a gilt bond.”

He bent his left wrist, staring at his watch. “I vill gif sixty seconds,” he said. “Vill X-5 kindly step out?”

There was a stirring in the rank, but no man moved.

“Lieutenant Wainbridge?” said Major Schmolz.

Wainbridge’s hollow cheeks seemed corded with muscle. He clenched his fists, and said nothing.

“Lieutenant Steele?”

“If you think I’m a dirty spy, say it!” snarled the little Texan.

“I vas merely inquiring,” said Major Schmolz diplomatically. “Mr. Janowski?”

The corners of Janowski’s mouth drew back toward his ears.

“Me?” he jeered.

“Arnold?” said Schmolz.

“No, thanks,” said Arnold, with an amused glint in his green eyes.

“Stossman?”

Stossman rubbed his bleached eyebrows with a nervous hand. He swallowed something in his throat.

“I might as well step out, Major,” he said wearily. “If I don’t it’ll be pinned on me sooner or later, anyway. I guess I’m nominated as the goat.”

“Do not step,” said Schmolz with a grave look, “unless you are der man.”

The yellow-haired pilot swallowed again.

“In that case,” he said after an instant of reflection, “I’m standing here.”

“Caminetti?” said Major Schmolz.

The rosy-cheeked little strong man answered with a sleepy smile.

"I am sorry," said Major Schmolz simply. "For X-5 now it would haf been much, much better if his fader and mutter had never met. Der time is up! Der offer of amnesty is withdrawn! Chentleman, rebort to Chief Pilot Captain O'Leary in der main DH hangar for your check-up hops. After vich you vill rebort to Captain Dodo Rockwell for your firgin patrol over der lines. Dismissed!"

Major Schmolz took the salute. He turned on his heels, and waddled away.

The six new officers, breaking rank, glanced covertly around at one another, with uneasy, or watchful, or threatening looks. A low murmur might have been imagined among them, yet it was only the strumming of a tense and inaudible silence.

"Well, boys," said Stossman with a cool grin, "why doesn't someone say something?"

"I guess we all know well enough that one of us is a dirty spy!" blurted out Wainbridge.

"I guess we do," said Arnold.

Janowski spat. "But who?" he said.

II

CAPTAIN DODO ROCKWELL, Chief Observer and Operations Officer of the 9th Squadron, came to ground from a hot two-hours flight over Montmedy, Casey Cohn piloting him. As the DH stopped its roll Rockwell sprang out of the rear gun cockpit with the grace of a flying elephant. With a grin he strode back and examined certain small round holes in the fuselage tail and control surfaces.

"Hot?" said Casey Cohn.

"Rather warm," said Dodo Rockwell.

"Get that second baby?" said Casey Cohn.

"Where he lived," said Dodo.

The ship's ground crew came running over the field.

"See any Huns, Captain?" yelled the crew sergeant.

Dodo rubbed his broken nose. With a blank look he stared up at the sky. "Huns?" he said. "Did you see any Huns, Casey?"

"Huns?" repeated Casey Cohn. "Oh, you mean them birds with the black cross on their wings? Well, it kind of seems to me I do remember seeing three or four of them birds."

"Yes, I remember," said Dodo, "now you remind me of it. Three or four little Albatrosses, playing leapfrog. But they were going away, last time we saw 'em, Sergeant."

"What the hell!" said the sergeant disgustedly. "Don't try to kid me! You've got your tail shot full of holes."

"Well, well, well, well," said Dodo with a look of surprise. "As I live and breathe. Do you know what those nasty Fritzes did, Casey? They punched some holes in our nice new linen."

"Well, the dirty bums," said Casey.

"Some of those Fritzes will get rough," said Dodo.

"We won't play with them babies no more," said Casey. "Not no more."

"Oh, what the hell!" yelled the sergeant. "Y' can't kid me! How many did y' get? Only two? Only two? Y' mean to say you let the other buzzards get away?"

"Sorry, Pop," said Dodo. "One of 'em was Count Abendstern, the Saxon Flash. He faded away so fast we couldn't see his dust."

"Holy smoke!" said the sergeant.

"That's what he looked like," said Dodo with a grin. "He was the baby burned up our tail. I think his Maxims jammed, or we'd have been there yet."

"Abendstern!" said the sergeant.

"With bells on," said Dodo. "He beat it home to fetch the whole Hun flying army. We sent him lamming this time, but you can blame his guns. If that baby ever lights into me again, you can make mine daisies."

GRINNING, rumpling his long black hair, the big observer strode toward headquarters. Entering the C.O.'s office, he found Major Schmolz sitting at his desk with his face in his hands, in the attitude of a man who is using all the weight of his brain on a big and heavy problem.

"Saw Jack Cloud up in a dual-control with a greenhorn as I came in," said Dodo. "That new batch reported?"

Schmolz nodded. "Giving dem deir check-ubs," he said.

"How do they look, Fritz?" said Dodo.

"Fine," said Schmolz. "Beautiful. Svell. Efery last man of dem."

"Why the gloom," said the big chief observer, with the grin deepening on his stubble-covered jaws, "if they're all such beautiful boy wonders,

Fritz?"

"I vas chust thinking," said Major Schmolz.

Even to Captain Dodo Rockwell he found it hard to confess the cloud which rested on those six men. Major F.A. Schmolz had a queer, passionate pride in the Corps. He had been a leatherneck twenty years, from San Juan Hill to Peking walls, from Mindanao swamps to Vera Cruz. The Corps was mother and wife to him, child, home and country, and something even of God. He had no sense of vindictiveness toward the spy within the gates. He felt, however, as another man might have felt if all those honored things had been debauched.

Dodo Rockwell was examining a group of new report cards which lay on the desk.

"Lieutenants Wainbridge and Steele and Second Lieutenant Stossman, all qualified pilots and observers," he summarized. "Second Lieutenants Caminetti, Arnold and Janowski, qualified pilots. What do you want me to do with the babies, Fritz?"

"Take dem to der circus," said Major Schmolz,

"Today?" said Dodo.

"Mitout delay," said Schmolz. "Der sooner der better."

"Catch 'em young and treat 'em rough," grinned Dodo. "Want me to give them the usual bath of blood—an hour's warming up hop over the lines, and run like hell if we see a Hun formation?"

"If you meet der Huns, pile into dem!" said Schmolz grimly. "Mit all you've got!"

Dodo whistled. "You are banking high on these greenhorns," he said. "Some of 'em would be liable to get their hair mussed."

"It is better to be gilled like a chentleman dan to lif like a skunk," said Major Schmolz. "Pick six most exberieneced men to go along mit der babies. And if you meet der flying Huns, rebort to me how each of der babies fights."

Dodo Rockwell nodded. He twisted his humpbacked nose between his thumb and forefinger.

"Something on your chest?" he said.

"Something in mine heart," said F.A. Schmolz with a lugubrious sigh.

"Vait, Dodo!" he added, when Rockwell was at the door. "Vill you answer me a question? Suppose dot you were in a group of men, and it was stated to your face dot vun of you was a blackleg swine—maybe yourself. Vat would you do?"

"I'd tell any guy that tried to put it up to me to go to hell!" said Dodo.

"But if you really vas a blackleg?"

"I suppose," said Dodo after a moment, "that I'd do the same."

"Dot doesn't help, said Schmolz, shaking his head.

A HALF hour later, when the formation of six De Havilands took off under Rockwell's leadership, carrying the six new flying men on their maiden battle hop, Major Schmolz was still at his desk with his fat face buried in his palms. With all the energy and acumen of his mind he was endeavoring to analyze the appearance, tone and attitude which each of the half-dozen men had displayed when he had slammed the bombshell information into their faces that one of their number was a spy.

Wainbridge had demanded an explanation. Steele, the little dark Texan, had lost his temper and wanted to fight, Janowski had not been surprised. Arnold had suggested that the matter be investigated. Stossman had been afraid that he himself would be suspected. And Caminetti had expressed nothing at all.

Major Schmolz was a good poker player, but he couldn't figure these cards out.

"Howefer," he concluded, "I haf laid my cards on der taple. Now der guilty chentleman knows dot he is susbected, and vill betray himself."

He mopped his sweating face, nodding shrewdly. Major Schmolz had proclaimed that he was not a spy hunter, and he was not. Yet the brain behind his round blue eyes was as quick and shrewd as a fat cinnamon bear's, than which there is no more sagacious animal.

He was thinking and thinking—and thinking.

III

TEN miles west of Reims, approaching the smoky winding ribbon of the Aisne, Dodo Rockwell flushed the first enemy aircraft in the sky.

He was leading the formation of six ships manned by mingled veterans and greenhorns, himself in the observer's cockpit of Number 1 ship, with the greenhorn Arnold as his pilot. The last white flowers of the Archie batteries had been left far behind. Deep over Hunland the sky had a peaceful look.

The first Huns he spotted since the takeoff

consisted of a pair of Rumplers flying bow to tail, with patchwork painted wings, creeping southwest athwart his course and a good mile below him. Smoky feather-beds of cirron-nimbus were rolling between him and them. His flock of DH's stood at sixteen thousand feet, their effective ceiling. Hard above him, a thousand feet or so, a vast bank of snow-white mist seemed to cover the roof of the frigid July moon.

As Dodo scanned them warily from the topside, the pair of Rumplers turned about, with a glint of sunlight on their wings and came creeping back on their course again.

"Fishbait!" grunted Dodo, his suspicions confirmed.

The Rumps looked like pie for his wedge of roaring DH two-seaters, provided his greenhorn pilots would hold together. However, he had been suspicious of the way the German observation ships were flying. They looked too innocent and coquettish, like a couple of girlish chorus cuties strolling demurely down Broadway after midnight with their skirts above their knees. Innocent little lambs, so modest and alone. But Dodo had burnt his fingers in such a setup before, and he was wary.

As an old, wise bird, with more than a hundred frontline air hours in his log book, he knew that a Rump or two, apparently cruising aimlessly below a mass of cloud, was apt to be fishbait for catching suckers—with a swarm of fighting Fokkers hiding topside in the sky, all primed to smear any Allied ships that broke formation and dropped to attack the decoys. It was therefore with a disillusioned grin that Dodo watched the patchwork pair drifting five thousand feet below, moving apparently as sluggishly as caterpillars, and seeming not so large.

"The old badger game," he thought.

He planted a stick of chewing gum into his mouth, and swung his Lewis-gun tourelle about, scanning the horizon with eyes like rock. He smelt a Hun circus near.

Second Lieutenant Arnold, pilot of Dodo's ship, was handling the stick like a veteran. Unhelmeted, with his closely clipped kinky brown hair winnowed into peaks and furrows by the wind, he sat relaxed and easy in the forward cockpit, stoop-shouldered and light of touch, like a goggle-eyed horseman on a horse.

During the short forty minutes since they had taken off Dodo had acquired confidence in

Arnold's airmanship, at least so far as straight flying was needed. He had had little occasion to use the guide reins which he had tied to the greenhorn pilot's elbows as a precaution. He looked back at his following squadron.

Behind him in Number 2 position, flying bow to right wing with him, was Casey Cohn, with Steele, the fiery little Texan, as observer. Besides Cohn and Steele, to the left, Mike O'Leary, the 9th's chief of pilots, was flying with First Lieutenant Wainbridge, another of the new men. Dodo observed that Wainbridge, tall and bony, with hollow leathery cheeks, was coolly reading his maps and comparing them with the spots of earth that were visible through the cloud, as phlegmatic as a suburban commuter working crossword puzzles on the home-going 5:15. But Steele was jerking his gun tourelle around constantly, jumping like a tarantula in a bottle.

"Steele's got buck fever," thought Dodo. "He'll be emptying a couple of drums at the moon before long. I'll be lucky if he doesn't slam me in the neck. What a way to wash out—to be gunned by a cockeyed greenhorn! But that fellow Wainbridge is a cool customer. He'd know how to handle himself in any kind of a jam. I'd hate to have that baby for an enemy."

In the rear, and standing somewhat above, the greenhorn who called himself Stossman was acting as observer with Jack Cloud, the squadron adjutant. Janowski and Caminetti were piloting Number 5 and Number 6 ships, with Stew Reynolds and Balmy Gale as observers—both of the latter being veterans of three months' savage sky fighting, old war eagles with notches on their guns. The two greenhorn pilots were holding their positions fairly well, though Janowski was showing a tendency to lag somewhat. He may have been experiencing motor trouble.

THE six greenhorns were thus split up, one to a ship, with three of them—Arnold, Caminetti and Janowski—piloting experienced observers, while three—Steele, Stossman and Wainbridge—acted as observers with experienced pilots. This method insured at least one cool head and steady gun in each ship. Except for Steele's very evident buck fever, there was nothing to distinguish the twelve men in the formation from all veterans, however, as they went booming across the ceiling three miles up. Dodo Rockwell was acquiring an

increasingly confident feeling that he would not be afraid to sling them into any kind of a standup fight.

Because of this confidence in his greenhorns, and because Major Schmolz had instructed him not to avoid a scrap, Dodo Rockwell may have been taking less precautions than the situation warranted.

He had just looked around for another survey of his following ships. Something was wrong. He looked again. There were only four ships behind him now. Caminetti, the little rosy-cheeked Hercules, who had been flying Number 6 ship with Balmy Gale, had vanished from the face of the map.

The squadron was fifty minutes out from the Beaux field then, and a good fifteen miles into Hunland, somewhere over the old battleground of the Aisne, and following the river west. Below, the cirro-nimbus featherbeds went creeping astern. The pair of tiny Rumpler decoys, nearly a third of the way to the earth, again were turning on flashing wings, like a pair of loving gnats. Suddenly they split apart, and went diving earthward frantically. The rolling of the clouds washed them out.

Caminetti had vanished. For a hundred miles, to the curve of the great gray sky horizons, the air looked as empty as a bottle. Dodo glanced upward.

Gradually his line of flight had risen till the roof of snowy cloud was only two or three hundred feet above him now, with its under surfaces carved into frozen hummocks, whorls, and caverns filled with blue shadows. There was space enough above that snowy roof, the thought flashed over Dodo, for the whole cockeyed Hun flying fleet to be hiding.

And that, as things turned out, was just about what the whole cockeyed Hun flying fleet was doing.

Quickly and smoothly, as Dodo watched, the snowy cloud roof was split apart like frosting with a golden knife. The clear yellow July sun, standing at high noon, had broken through. It came burning down in a straight path through the cloud rift, as broad and level as the stroke of a gigantic painter's brush.

And down the pathway of that golden streak, with their engines opened wide and their tails above their ears, eighteen billion howling Huns were coming like bats from the lid of hell!

"Great day!" said Dodo Rockwell.

Fokker triplanes and Albatross scouts, and Pfalz two-seaters standing on their ear.

A hundred and eighty billion howling Huns, red, spotted, black and piebald, like all the kits of the great Hell-Cat and the spawn of a wall-eyed pike. Dodo didn't have time to take a precise census of them all, but at a rapid estimate he calculated that they ran into the billions. At least, there were more Huns than he had ever seen in one eyeful together.

Actually, there were probably eighteen or twenty of them, three squadrons in three separate tiers. Dodo's first startled glance was focused on the foremost ships of the raining Hun tornado—a flock of dust-gray Albatross single-seaters, adorned with the insignia of a ragged lightning bolt from enginehead to tail along their streaking fuselages.

IT was the squadron of Count Abendstern, the Saxon Flash, and no Hun better in the sky. Abendstern had brought his gang and all the fireworks with him. He'd brought his cousins and the boys next door.

They weren't any curly-headed playmates for a flock of greenhorn babies.

Arnold, Dodo's pilot, glanced around inquiringly as Dodo jerked the guide lines taut. Being a greenhorn, he hadn't yet seen the diving Huns, though to Dodo they seemed to be pouring down from every inch of the sky. Arnold's underlip curled in a grin. His eyes were impenetrable shadows behind his goggles. He seemed amused at Dodo's sweating excitement.

"That's right!" yelled Dodo. "Keep cool, and they'll send you home on ice!"

Arnold kept grinning.

Swinging his gun tourelle with desperate speed, Dodo signaled the following ships for a flipper renversement and a pique for home. A violent pull at Arnold's elbow, and his own ship was sweeping about. He didn't need to give directions now—Arnold had seen the Huns. The greenhorn pilot's drooping jaw was almost falling off, and he doubled away like a rabbit on its ear.

It was hardly a second since that hurricane had come diving into view, yet already the first of Abendstern's dusk-gray demons were cracking out their tracer smoke.

Dodo jammed up his gun at them, as Arnold whipped the DH about. He let her rip.

"Eat 'em while they're hot!"

The air around him was filled with a whirl of wings. He caught a flashing glimpse of Stew Reynolds spitting on a hot gun barrel as if it were

the handle of an ax. Janowski, Stew's pilot, had ducked his head beneath the cockpit coaming, and was out of sight.

In Casey Cohn's ship the greenhorn Steele was racketing his gun like a yelling demon. His helmet had slipped or been pulled off, and his long black hair was whipping like a flag. His jaws were opened in a soundless Comanche screech. Dodo could see the little Texan's taut throat muscles working. The ragged scar down Steele's cheek had flooded as red as wine, his goggled eyes seemed literally to be filled with leaping flame, but his erstwhile nervous hands had become as steady as Davy Crockett's at the Alamo.

Dodo slammed a load of twenty rounds at a dusk-gray Albatross that was diving on his tail, fast as the jagged lightning streak painted along its flanks. Her double Maxims, mounted on engine and upper wing, were rushing down on him with a sound like rattling peas. Fire burst from her, and she went past him at a hundred yards a second, a ribbon of yellow flame.

Arnold hooked up then in a loop, and the belly of the DH was turned to the diving Hun squadrons. For the instant they were out of Dodo's range.

As he rushed through the crest of the loop, hanging head down, Jack Cloud passed below him, with Stossman methodically hammering out a jam in his Lewis gun. A checkerboard two-seater Pfalz had folded up its wings. It was dropping like a flatiron. A half-mile long through the high pale sky there stretched a ribbon of flame and oily black smoke like a comet's tail—whether from the Albatross which Dodo had burned up, or another ship, he couldn't tell. Whatever she had been, she was a cinder now.

ON the down sweep of the loop, the booming Liberty motor sputtered and died. An instant Arnold fumbled with the switch. Then he slammed his bow down, and they went toward the earth.

In the sudden silence that had fallen over the ship, Dodo heard the sky above him filled with the broken staccato scream of somersaulting motors and the racket of Lewis Maxim, Vickers and Spandau all clattering like dice in a box. But he was leaving his babies now, and he was out of the fight.

"Give 'er the gun!" he roared, gripping Arnold's shoulders. "Pile back into it!"

"Pooped!" the pilot shot back from the corner of

his mouth.

The word came whistling back to Dodo on the steep rush of the downwind.

"Almighty hell, we can't leave them now!" howled Dodo.

But leave them he must.

A Fokker tripe with a scarlet enginehead, followed by one of the dusk-gray Albatrosses, came tearing down the air lane to deal the death stroke to the powerless DH, looking like some monstrous abortion of the hornet family with its stubby wings piled in tiers. There was nothing faster in the air since Lucifer was kicked out of heaven. Its Maxims were heating up from two hundred yards off, rattling like a stick across a fence.

But its guns were fixed and could fire in only one direction—straight ahead—while Dodo had the sweep of the whole sky within the arc of his swivel-mount. He gripped his spade-handle with a fist like rock. Steady of eye, he watched the triplane's scarlet head looming huge and swift into his ring sight.

"Take it, Jerry!"

He uncorked three rounds from a hundred yards—the first one did the trick. The Fokker fell over into a screaming spin, while its pilot lay with a bloody breast.

The gray Albatross that had followed down to lend help to the triplane hooked upward, and stood a mile away in less than half of no time.

The hurly-burly of the dogfight, high above, was rushing away from Dodo through the upper sky. Braced against his gun, he shook his fist and raved. They had dropped to ten thousand feet. The smoky billows of a fat summer rain cloud went rushing across the De Haviland's wings. Suddenly she plunged into the foggy grayness, bow and tail. And only God knew where they were then.

The vast naked dome of the sky appeared empty when the ship came piling out of the foggy nimbus. Arnold was flattening out from his headlong dive into a long, sweeping glide. But still the engine hadn't responded, and the ship was losing altitude toward the earth—which hereabouts happened to be Hunland.

"Feel for your switch connections!" Dodo roared to the greenhorn pilot. "Get it going, in God's name, before we drop into Jerry's backyard!"

Arnold was fumbling with the switch. He didn't

answer. Perhaps there was nothing to be said.

To the south, ten miles away, fat puffs of smoke were flowering up from the frontline German A.A.'s. A Drachen, sagging like a cow elephant about to calve, was crawling in hurried alarm down from its half-mile perch. Over to the west an ammunition dump was burning like Vesuvius, while two-ton shells from an Allied naval battery beyond the horizon continued to slug into the explosive crater.

Yet, in spite of these isolated scenes of war, the air had a look of tremendous solitude and peace. Dodo had lost his squadron completely, as well as the swarm of Huns. There was no more indication of them in the endless blue bowl of the sky than if they had never existed.

THE earth was tilted up toward the De Haviland like the wall of a house in a cubist painting. They were dropping toward Hunland at a 20-degree angle—not furiously, but inescapably. They could never stretch out that glide to pass the lines.

Dodo's stubble-covered jaws were creased in a tight grin. He unhooked one of the Mills bombs that were racked below his cockpit rim, for use in ground strafing work. With steady fingers he felt for the pin release. It came to the last squeeze, the Jerries were never going to get their hands on his ship.

Arnold turned around his goggled glance with a curling grin. Catching sight then of the pineapple in Dodo's fist, his countenance became disorganized. He shouted some word from his loosened jaw.

Dodo patted him on the shoulder.

"Don't worry, boy!" he roared. "If we're forced down, I'll blow the ship and us both to hell before I let 'em take us!"

Rifles and machine guns were cracking up at the drifting two-seater with increasing volume as she closed toward the earth. They blazed away from toy troop trains moving over toy tracks, from long gray columns slogging along shell-torn roads, from heavy-gun emplacements concealed in wooded ravines. The DeHaviland drifted over a Rumpler field at fifteen hundred feet, and the drome seemed alive like an ant heap with frantic scurrying figures running for their ships. One of the Rumps took off like a streak, and the whole pack were beginning to taxi into the wind.

The hinges were going to blow off hell's door in half a minute. Dodo swung his gun far overside.

"Allez houp!" he yelled.

The cracking racket of his Lewis as it sprayed the Hun field seemed to jolt something alive in the silently gliding DeHaviland. Her great twelve-cylindereed Liberty caught with a wild full-throated howl, her propeller began to sling itself around at a thousand miles a minute, and Arnold, the greenhorn pilot, slammed his stick forward—straight down.

Not up, but down. The jerk of that sudden roaring plunge threw Dodo off his balance. He grasped the cockpit rim. His head plunged forward, and he sprawled over Arnold's shoulder, held in only by his safety belt.

They were going down like a whistling streak. The instant idea crossed Dodo's mind that the grinning, kindly haired greenhorn was going to hedge-hop the Rumpler field, and plow those babies' scalps with the Dutch scrub *à la* Lewis. It took a keen pilot and a hell-bent man to do it, but Arnold was about the best and coolest greenhorn that Dodo had ever met.

"Like a veteran, boy!" he shouted into Arnold's smirking face. "Strafe 'em out!"

He saw the sweep of the wrench in Arnold's hand when it was within an inch of his jaw—too late to stop or dodge it. It banged him on the button. The whole world blew up around him then like a firecracker, and he collapsed.

There was no reason in God's world why Dodo Rockwell should have expected it. Major Schmolz hadn't warned him that one of those greenhorn babies was a traitor.

Lights out now.

IV

DODO ROCKWELL half-opened his eyes at a swaying sensation that had taken possession of his body. He imagined, in that brief instant while he was struggling to open his heavy eyelids, that he was in the basket of a kite balloon that was rocking in a great wind a thousand miles above the earth—in fact, right underneath the moon, which was shining warm and bright upon his face.

"What a crash!" he thought hazily. "Is it St. Pete's gates, or the steam room?"

Dragging his eyelids open, for a flash he had consciousness enough to get a glimpse of things. The heat he had felt burning on his face was merely that of the ordinary sun, standing high in the bright

summer noon. His ship was on the ground, surrounded by a swarm of men clad in field-green uniforms or blue dungarees, and he was being carried away from it on a stretcher.

He was dimly conscious of the excited guttural voices around him, which seemed to roar and fade away like the sound of a distant waterfall borne on the wind. He thought that Arnold was walking along beside him, a prisoner, too, and arguing with the guards.

"Did we crash, or did that hophead greenhorn slough me with a wrench?" Dodo tried to puzzle it out. "No, by God, we didn't crash. He must have brought the bus down like a feather, for there she stands. He slammed me—that's what the damned fool did! He must be off his nut."

With that thought he went to sleep again—hurled back into roaring dreams where he was clinging to the North Pole, while the whole cockeyed earth went spinning around its axis like a crazy top, a mile a second. He had to cling hard to it to keep from being hurled off into black and utter space; and it was all very painful to him, and very confusing.

He became aware of things again in a few minutes, when some kind of a stinking German chemical was put beneath his nostrils. One whiff of that, and his brain was stinging as if rubbed with salt, but clear. Carefully he felt the swollen lump on his jaw where Arnold's wrench had landed.

"What a sock!" he thought.

He glared around him for a sight of Arnold.

"That crackpot shavetail is the prize booby bird of the booby hatch!" he raged in his mind. "I've had greenhorns freeze to their controls on me. And I've had 'em go loco and try to bite me. But this is the first bug that ever flew the handle wide enough to bean me. And what I'm going to do to him is plenty.

"If I ever get out of this jam, before I fly again with one of these ground school aces I'm going to search him for monkey-wrenches, brass knucks, and sledgehammers. I thought the boy was a cool hand at the stick—but you never can tell about a greenhorn. Probably he meant to zoom when we took that last power dive, and when I was thrown against him he lost his head.

"Well, he's got us both in a fine jam now. Noodles mit sauergraut will be Dodo's breakfast for the rest of this man's war. I mean maybe."

Even yet Dodo didn't understand. It was too

preposterous. But he would understand in a moment.

THE man who had brought him from the field had dumped him into a steamer chair, in squadron headquarters. The usual maps on the walls, the usual clock inserted in the hub of a broken propeller, the usual clack of typewriters in an office outside and the roar of motors beyond the window, were all familiar to him. If the large, red-faced gentleman with the spiky mustache and the porcelain smile who stood in imposing grandeur behind his desk, had worn forest-green instead of field-green, and if his boots had been brown instead of black, and if he had not had a crimson rose tucked into the third buttonhole of his colonel's tunic, Dodo might have imagined himself in the squadron office of a Marine outfit.

However, the maps on the wall were lettered in German, the clock in the broken propeller was a cuckoo clock—damned if its face for a moment didn't look like the face of Arnold—the motors roaring outside were Mercedes, not Liberties, and the red-faced colonel with the spiky mustache had a rose in his tunic.

This was, Dodo surmised, the Rumpler field across which he had been gliding when his DeHaviland went into that sudden roaring dive, and Arnold slammed him on the button with a wrench.

"To vot, Mr. Captain," said the German colonel, in more or less the king's English, "do I owe die ho-nor off dis sarprising fisit?"

Ceremoniously he sat down behind his desk again.

Dodo grinned dizzily. If he were facing the last bump off, he'd have done it with a grin.

"A dead motor, sir," he said. "She kicked on again before we were set for it, and that jackass of a shavetail who was piloting me lost his head—slammed her nose down instead of zooming. So I just dropped in for tea, Mr. Colonel."

"You shall haf tea," said the German colonel with a beaming smile, tapping his false teeth with a fingernail. "Ve vinch to mox allerdings bleasants for you."

Dodo understood that the Hun wanted to make everything pleasant for him. He smiled wryly.

"I have no doubt," he said, adding, "Where's my pilot?"

"He iss being interrogated in ein oder rrrroom," said the colonel.

"I hope you interrogate him with a paddle," suggested Dodo grimly.

The colonel played a tune on his teeth again.

"You exbloded us mit your machiner gun before you lanted," he accused, with a hurt look. "You strafed mine field, und exbloded two off mine men. Vas dot nice?"

"Vell," he added in a moment, when Dodo didn't answer, "dot vas not nice."

His fingernails tapped on his large porcelain incisors. He drew a big breath.

"Vot iss your swadron?" he said. "How many ships und men haf you? Vere iss your field legated? Vot iss der aferage numper off hours batrol you make per day? How many off your American troops are now on dis side? Venn do you dink der var vill ent?"

He paused for breath.

"I beg your pardon?" said Dodo.

"I set," repeated the colonel patiently, "I set vot iss your swadron? Vere iss your field legated? Vot—"

And so forth, and so forth. Dodo rummaged around in his pockets.

"Excuse me," he said, "but some big crook's made off with my cigarettes."

The colonel gave an order to one of the burly sergeants who stood watchful guard on either side of Dodo. There were two of them, and to himself Dodo named them Matterhorn and Mt. Sinai, for one of them looked like a Swiss and the other like a Jew, and they were both men mountains.

"Your zigarets haf been commandeert ass alien broperty," said the colonel grandly. "Howefer, I am glot to stretch ein rule to aggomodate you, out of boliteness und friendship."

DODO surveyed with a sad glance his diminished pack of smokes when it had been returned to him. The package had been carefully marked with a serial identification number, and rubber-stamped, in the usual methodical German manner, with the imposing notice—

**"In Beschlag Genommen!
Eigentum des Deutschen reichs!"**

—which Dodo, summoning up what few German words he knew, painfully figured out to mean, "Commandeered! Property of the German Government!"

And all for two cigarettes. Even a Marine supply sergeant wouldn't take that trouble for anything less than a boxcar full of the weed.

"Vot for are you grrrrinning at?" inquired the colonel.

"I was just thinking that if you Jerries lose the war, it won't be because you've forgotten to tag the last flea on the last dog's tail," said Dodo. "As bookkeepers, you're the berries."

The flattered colonel beamed.

"If dere iss anydings else dot vould mox your interfiew mit me bleasant, please mention it," he said.

"I'd like to get back my watch, pocketbook, hip flask, penknife, date book and handkerchief," suggested Dodo mildly. "I don't want to deprive the boys of all their little souvenirs, so maybe I can offer 'em a lock of my hair instead?"

The colonel gave another order to Matterhorn and Mt. Sinai, and certain of the possessions which had been cleaned out of Dodo's pockets were returned to him. His date book and handkerchief, like the cigaret pack, had been marked with an identifying number and rubber-stamped—"Property of the German Government" being smeared, in the date book, clear across the charming name of *Mlle. Babette Colbain*, of the Follies, Paris.

"Before the German Government can take title to *her*," Dodo thought, "they'll have to get a bill of sale from the whole Allied flying corps."

His leather flask, now drained of its last drop of cognac, his corkscrew and wristwatch, had each been clipped with a metal tag bearing the same solemn legend. Dodo glanced grimly at an orderly standing at a small table behind the colonel, who was engaged in affixing one of these tags to Dodo's big Colt .45. Property of the German Government, was it! Dodo raged, but there was little he could do about it. His own gun, with eleven notches on its crosshatched butt! He had never thought that it would be taken from him, alive.

Damn that lunatic, Arnold!

"Your pocketknife it iss impossible dot ve return," explained the colonel beamingly. "Dere are some deprifations unfortunately associated mit der condition off being a brisoner off var. You understant?"

"Oh, sure," said Dodo. "You're afraid I might cut my jugular just to spite you. I'm not kicking. I figure I'm lucky to still have my pants."

He had offered the colonel one of his cigarets. He lit the last. Behind the smoke haze he grinned secretly. He was sparring for time. The red-faced colonel with the porcelain smile was going to grill him, and he'd better get set for it.

Not that there was any military information which Dodo would uncork, but he wanted time to think up some beautiful lies. The false joviality of the German amused the big Marine. It was all like the third-degree methods of the police back home. The third degree, as Dodo was aware, didn't consist of beating up a man, at least not in dealing with an intelligent prisoner. Instead, the cops would all sit down in a cordial manner with the man they wanted to get information from. They would pat him on the back, and lather him with banana oil and bologna, till he felt that they were his warmest friends and was ready to spill all he knew.

THE beaming, red-faced German, Dodo was amused to observe, was following those tactics.

"Yes, sir," Dodo said, "I figure I'm sure lucky to still be wearing breeches, in the hands of a gang of prize burglars and stick-up artists like you."

"It iss according to der laws off var," said the colonel stiffly, while the smile faded from his crimson face. "You haf been gaptured ass ein enemy combatant, und your bossessions are derefore legally condemnt in her name off her Cherman Empire—spoils off var. Howefer, you do not need to vorry. You vill be allowed to geeep your pants, led me assure you. Only your poots, your Sam Prowne pelt, und your glofes vill be commandeert. Der iss a shortage off leather in Chermany vich necessitates it.

"I vould suggest dot you be bolite," he added. "Am I not bolite to you?"

"Like sugar and cream," said Dodo.

The colonel drummed, "*O du lieber Augustin!*" on his big, white, gleaming incisors.

"Vot," he began again, "iss your swadron? Vere iss it legated? Vot iss your strength in machiners and bersonnel? Vy are you fighting for? Venn vill der var ent?"

"I beg your pardon?" said Dodo.

The red-faced German's patient reiteration—he had the patience of an elephant—was interrupted by the entrance of Second Lieutenant Arnold of the U.S. Marines, in custody of a spruce young German flying lieutenant. Dodo relaxed in his

steamer chair. He endeavored to flash a signal of encouragement and warning to the greenhorn pilot. But Arnold curled his lip, avoiding Dodo's eyes.

The Hun flying lieutenant with Arnold said something in German to the colonel. The colonel addressed Arnold in that language, and then repeated it in English.

"You glaim to be an operative off our Intelligence?"

"Get me my watch," said Arnold coolly. "My identifications are in it."

The colonel and the German flyer whispered together. The lieutenant was nodding. The colonel gave a command to one of the two giant sergeants who were guarding Dodo.

Dodo sat back in a relaxed position. He was grinning. He wondered what kind of a bluff the greenhorn was going to try to pull on the Huns. That fellow had plenty of nerve and resourcefulness, it was quite evident. He was a quiet, cool customer. Dodo had lost his sense of wrath at what he considered to have been Arnold's moment of air lunacy. He hoped fervently that Arnold got away with his bluff, whatever it was.

Even yet he suspected nothing. Though he thought it was a little strange that Arnold avoided meeting his gaze.

Arnold's watch was brought to him. With a quirking grin, of amusement and distaste, the loose-jawed Marine detached the German property tag from it. He opened the case and extracted a metal disc, which he presented to the colonel.

The colonel studied it. His expression altered.

"Vy," he said, "if you are Arnold von Bennerkop, der son off Field-Marshal von Bennerkop, do you not speak Cherman?"

"I was born in the States, and raised there," said Arnold negligently. "My mother was American. But"—and here he thumped his fist upon his chest, while his stooping shoulders straightened and a dark light seemed to glow from his eyes—"but I am German! To the bone!"

"I vill confirm," said the colonel, adding, "sir."

He picked up his telephone and soon was talking in German with someone. "Crack! Break! Gerissen! Gotterdammerung! Ach, ja! Nein! Ja, ja, ja! Pretzels und noodles! Growl! Growl! Ker-rump! Hoch! Auf wiedersehen!" he seemed to be barking gutturally into the instrument so far as Dodo could make it out.

THE colonel clicked the receiver back. He sprang to his feet. Standing with heels together and chest swelling, he snapped his hand to the salute. With a boisterous smile he grasped both of Arnold's hands and shook them warmly.

"X-5!" he said. "Ve haf heard off your splendid work! I am so bleased to haf der ho-nor off meeting you!"

Then Dodo understood.

He'd never heard of X-5 before, and he'd had no inkling that one of those greenhorns was a spy—Major Schmolz's pride in the corps had forbidden him confiding in Dodo. But he knew, as sure as tar is black and a skunk smells, that the tall-stoop-shouldered man in forest-green standing there before him, with the gold Navy flying wings on his breast and the bronze globe-and-anchor of the Marines on his collar, was a dirty German spy.

Dodo hurled himself out of his chair with a roar of tiger fury.

"You God-damned rattlesnake!"

The pair of big men mountains, Matterhorn and Mt. Sinai, made a flying tackle and got him by the waist as he sprang up. He wrestled them across the floor, lunging like a bull. Coolly and deftly Arnold stepped back behind the colonel's desk, watching Dodo's furious struggles with a mocking curl of his lip and an impenetrable glance. He said no word to Dodo—which indicated, perhaps, a certain measure of concealed shame.

"Take your hands off me, or you'll get hurt, you lousy thugs!" raved Dodo. "I'm going to get this baby! I'm going to tear him to pieces with my hands!"

A table went crashing to the floor. It was all grunting and sweating and the straining of muscles. Dodo's iron right fist, jolting from the shoulder, banged one of the big German sergeants with a rabbit punch. A look of spasmodic agony flashed across the man's mute face, but he held on to Dodo's waist with a grip like death. Maps were torn from the walls. The colonel's desk was crowded farther into the corner before the weight of Dodo's bull rush.

Someone hurled a missile, an empty .77 shell case or something similar, that hit Dodo in the pit of the stomach. Again, bang! His swinging fist met a head like cement, with a slam that almost split his knuckles. He stretched half over the desk, with his fingers reaching for Arnold's throat.

"You rattlesnake!"

The spy stood motionless, pressed back against the wall. His complexion had a grayish color beneath its honest Florida tan.

The two men mountains had got Dodo's arms now, and were twisting them up behind him. With a shrewd, bone-breaking wrench they forced him double. A toe was hooked about his ankle, and he crashed headlong to the floor.

Someone caught his wrists rapidly together with a length of steel control wire. He lay prone on the floor, shaking the long black hair out of his eyes and panting. No wonder they had got him down. He had thought he was fighting only the two huge beef-eating sergeants all the time. But, unnoticed by him in the crash of the battle, at least a half-dozen clerks, orderlies and grease monkeys had come piling into the room. They were clinging to his ankles, legs and hair like so many cooties.

"Iss dot nice?" said the German colonel severely, standing with knuckles on his desk and squeezed into the corner.

He fixed Dodo with an outraged glare.

"Iss dot a nice vay for ein officer und ein chentleman to conduct himself?" he queried. "Do you dink dot all dis shouting und roughhouse iss bolite?"

"Oh, go eat grass!" said Dodo.

He wrenched around his head and caught Arnold with his blazing eyes. Though smiling mockingly, the kinky-haired spy was still refusing to meet his look. And Dodo realized that Arnold would never meet his look.

ARNOLD jerked his neck and straightened the collar which Dodo had so nearly got hold of.

"Hold Captain Rockwell incommunicado, if you please, Colonel," he said coolly. "Allow him no communication with anyone, under any pretext.

"My work with the 9th Squadron is only beginning," he added with a curling smile. "I have no desire to have my position jeopardized, you understand."

"You are not returning!" said the colonel.

"At once," said Arnold briefly.

"But how vill you exblain der missing gaptain?"

"He unbuckled his safety belt and fell out in a loop," said Arnold with a low laugh. "It has happened before, and is quite plausible."

"Yesss," said the colonel. "You are clefer."

"I have to be, sir," said Arnold, with a twisted look. "However, the major commanding my outfit

is a fathead Bavarian and not very bright.”

The colonel stiffened.

“I happen to be a fathead Bavarian myself, as you call us,” he said.

“Oh, I’m sorry,” said Arnold easily. “But probably you’re not one of the fathead kind. Anyway, perhaps you’d better take double precautions to keep Captain Rockwell from communicating. It might make things uncomfortable for me.”

“I vill answer for Gaptain Rockvell,” said the colonel simply. “On mine ho-nor und mine life.”

“I am quite sure of it,” said Arnold. “Verry well. Then I must make my *auf wiedersehen*, Colonel. Every moment is priceless to me. You understand that I am just returning from a patrol flight in which I lost my observer.”

The colonel picked up his telephone, giving an order to the hangars to release the Marine ship.

“It breaks mine heart to let you take dot ship away,” he told Arnold with a sigh. “I hat vinched to mox a study off it to observe vot new tricks der Yanks are using.”

“You’ll have plenty more DeHavilands to dissect and analyze before very long,” said Arnold with a low laugh. “In fact, my whole damned squadron of Marines, and then some. As I’ve said, my work is just beginning.”

“Good luck to you, X-5!” said the colonel.

He and Arnold exchanged salutes—palm out, the German way. Then, without another glance at Dodo on the floor, the green-eyed spy had banged open headquarters door, and was out on the field, running for his ship.

Dodo had been lying quiescent on his face through all this latter conversation. So peacefully did he rest that the assorted gang of embattled Huns who had brought him down and planted themselves on him had now begun to shift to more relaxed positions, squatting easily on his spine or perching on his calves like roosting turkeys.

Arnold had left the door open. It was a small break, but one which Dodo had been waiting and hoping for with a vast lethargic patience. He gathered together the strength of his big, loose body like a wrestler—muscle, nerve and bone.

“Are you asleeb, Gaptain?” inquired the colonel.

Then, when Dodo did not answer, he addressed himself to Mt. Sinai, who was sitting on Dodo’s shoulder blades as Moses sat on the mountain.

“*Ist er schläfrig, Sergeant?*” said the colonel.

“*Nein, er ist nich schläfrig, denk’ ich,*” replied Mt. Sinai doubtfully. “*Er ist nur gedankenvoll.*”

Only thoughtful.

With a sudden heave and flipflop then Dodo erupted into life and activity. His feet planted themselves into soft and squashy faces. The clerks and grease monkeys who had been reposing on him went shooting off in all directions like popcorn from a skillet.

“Watch out!” he howled. “I’m on my way!” He sprang to his feet. Staggering, catching his stride immediately, he darted out through the door with the speed of a man who had been running the length of a football field in twelve seconds flat, not so very long ago.

“Hit the line!”

Whether it was his wild glare, or his broken nose, or the blood and dirt smeared over his whiskered face, or all those things together, plus his great inhuman screech—whatever was the cause, the sentry on duty at headquarters entrance jumped back out of his path. On the run Dodo hooked his shoulder against the agitated lout, knocking him head over heels with a flying thrust, rifle and all. “We’re going through!”

He slammed pell-mell into a fat sergeant-mechanic who sprang to intercept him around the corner of the machine shop, halfway to the flying field, and the Hun went down like a bucket of beer. Out on the field Arnold had swung swiftly into the DeHaviland. Already a mechanic was jumping back from the propeller as it began to spin.

“You rattlesnake!”

Only then did Arnold look back at Dodo. He gave his ship the gun, and shot away.

There were Rumplers standing out on the field, and empty, some of them with their engines warming up and clubs swinging lazily to the sunlight. But Dodo, handicapped as he was with his bound wrists, was destined never to steal the stick of any of those Rumps, nor, in fact, even to reach them. A few strides more, and he stumbled over a mole-tunnel. He went flat, and skidded on his broken nose across the sod.

He would walk ten miles to kill a mole on the darkest midnight of his life thereafter.

He was flat on the grass, as he’d been flat on the floor in headquarters office. That was all he had got out of his wild break for liberty. The gang of Huns came and roosted on him again. Only this time their

numbers seemed to have multiplied like three generations of guinea pigs. Dodo felt very tired.

"Oh, what the hell?" he said.

At three hundred feet above the Rumpier field Arnold hooked his DH about in a vertical turn. Low in the sky, he shot back and forth until Dodo, all limp and ragged now, had been pushed and hauled to safe keeping. Only then did Arnold, satisfied, haul his bow straight up for the noon sun, streaking away like a bat out of a burning barn.

The 9th Squadron would be hopping on many a long, hot patrol, and doubtless losing plenty of ships in one way and another, before they ever heard of Dodo Rockwell again. The account of Arnold, that Dodo had fallen out in a loop, was accepted.

The story of how Dodo finally escaped from the prison camp at Dusseldorf in Prussia, is not important here.

MAJOR F.A. SCHMOLZ was playing a special kind of solitaire, with six cards instead of fifty-two, and continuing his profound reflections, while he waited for Dodo Rockwell's squadron to return. The cards he was using consisted of five aces of hearts from identical packs, with one ace of spades. The game he had invented for his own amusement was to shuffle the cards, lay them out face down without knowing which was which, give a name to each of them—then turn them all up, to see which was the black card.

The first time he had played the game, the black card was Stossman.

"H'm?" he said. "Plausible, mitout being likely."

The next time he played the game, the black card was Wainbridge.

"Ah-h-h?" said Major Schmolz. "Ah-h-h!"

The third time he played the game, the black card was Caminetti.

"Pfoeey!" said Major Schmolz. "And some more, mit truffles. I should buy myself a ouija board, and go into the clairvoyanting business."

The fourth time he played the game, the black card was Caminetti again.

"No," thought the fat little major. "Not Caminetti, not Arnold, either. Not dem two. By no means. It is vun of der oder four. Vich is der most propable—Steele, Wainbridge, Stossman, or dot Polack, Janowski?"

He wiped his sweating face, and thought some more.

If Major Schmolz had been a card sharp or a fortuneteller by profession, no doubt he would not have found it difficult to discover the proper name for any particular card he desired. However, he was a fighting man, and the one game he knew was war. His mental processes, though shrewd, were simple, honest and aboveboard, and hardly of the quality to cope with the problem of discovering, by sheer intuition, the identity of a spy.

He knew of no way of making sure which was the proper name for the black card. And unless he identified that black card—the black card being, in the game he was thinking of, a gentleman named X-5 of the German Intelligence, and masquerading as a true-blue American gyrene—unless he picked that human ace of spades out, he stood to lose the game and the whole pack.

"Caminetti?" he thought. "No. He is too dumb, dot chubby little wop. He has der making of vun God-awful fighter, but he has not der slickness of a spy."

"Arnold?" he thought. "No, by no means, not him, either. He is too easygoing and aboveboard. A goot, sharp prain, dot poy, I haf no doubt, but he is not an actor. Chust a spoiled American college kid."

"Stossman?" he thought further. "Vell der poy wavered about gifting himself up. But dot does not profe anyding, vun vay or der oder. Der question is, vould der Chermans haf a spy dot is so blainly a Cherman? Vell, no, if dey gif us credit for hafing any prains at all. And yes, if dey figure dot ve haf chust prains enough to figure dot dey vould not be likely to haf such a Cherman feller vorking for dem."

This was rather involved. But Major Schmolz had the idea straight in his own shrewd mind, even if he had not quite mastered mentally the phraseology of it.

"Stossman?" he thought. "No—and yes."

He wiped his sweating brow again. Stossman was a hard card to figure out. Perhaps the hardest of the six.

But all men are hard cards to figure out. All.

"Janowski?" Schmolz thought. "A tough baby, mitout a doubt. He vould stand up and brazen anything out. He is a fighter. But also he might be a crook. Certainly he is not der kind of poy dot I vould trust mit my money. And I should not like to haf him for my enemy. Janowski? I vill dink it of er."

“Steele?” he thought. “Ah, dere is a vild, spitting, swaggering little horse marine! Now, some men, if dey vere not spies, vould get sore and foam at der mouth like Steele, if I included dem in my cheneral suspicions. But if dey vere spies, vouldn’t dey still act der same? Most accchuredly dey vould! Steele is vun of dese browbeating little bullies, dot act five times as fierce as a full-grown man because dey think dey can get away mit it. It vould be a very excellent manner for a spy to adopt, mitout a doubt. And for dot reason, Mr. Steele is in my books.

“Wainbridge?” he continued his reflections. “Vot a cool, smart feller dot is! Very bolite. Aloof, mitout being unfriendly. Dot poy thinks his own thoughts. And he vould be a calculating hand in any kid of a cham. I know dese calm, bolite fellers. Dot is der poy of dem all who vould make der fiercest killer—and der smoothest spy.

“But I don’t know.”

THAT was the only conclusion he could come to, after an hour or two which found his brains more addled than when he started his reflections.

He was interrupted by his telephone. It was Balmy Gale on the wire, who had flown out with the greenhorn Caminetti in Number 6 ship.

“Down at a frog field, Fritz,” the veteran observer reported cheerfully. “Spads 87—the Ravens—near Chateau-Thierry. The Heinies gunned our gas tank, and we just managed to pull ourselves over the lines by our bootstraps.”

“How did der greenhorn Caminetti handle himself?” Schmolz asked.

“Like a hatful of wildcats,” said Balmy Gale jubilantly. “They don’t make ‘em any better than that boy! He busted out of formation like a flying fool to make a go at two Rumpler decoys that were cruising bottomside, up by the Aisne. Dodo’ll be sore as a skinned pup when he gets in.”

“Gif a reprimand to Caminetti!” said Schmolz. “Der grafeyard is full of flying fool Marines dot felt an itch to cruise alone. Der daisies need no more fertilizing. But ve need men and ships.

“Did der Rumps shoot you up bad?” he added cautiously.

“They never even saw what hit ‘em!” yelled Balmy Gale. “That’s the kind of a cockeyed little wop that was flying this velocipede! Both down out of control, from ten thousand, this side of the Aisne, about thirty minutes ago! They never straightened out till they hit the judgment seat!

They didn’t shoot us up! Hell, no! It was an Archie splinter that conked our tank for us.”

“Vell, vell, vell, vell,” said Major Schmolz, with a beatific smile curving his apple-red cheeks. “Two nice little Rumpiers, eh?”

However, he let no hint of that smile creep into his voice as he added.

“Nefertheless, reprimand Caminetti! Three days on der beach for him, mit confinement to quarters, ven he gets home!”

He slammed up the receiver.

“Dot lets Caminetti out, as I thought,” he reflected. “Now, vich?”

He ran his fingers through his bristling yellow hair, which was as soft to his palm as the backbone of a pig. He arose, pacing up and down.

“Vich is der seventh man?”

HIS instinct, following his failure to startle or to bargain a confession out of the unknown spy, had been to send the six suspected men into battle immediately. Ordeal by battle, as a method of testing innocence or guilt, is more ancient than trial by jury—and perhaps about as sensible. It was a method probably resorted to by Solomon in his judgments. Let two or more, or any number, of suspected men argue it out with swords. Then the one of them who gets carved up the most, and wilts the soonest, is therefore adjudged guilty.

It was a method which appealed to Major Friedrich Augustus Schmolz’s direct way of thinking, as a professional fighting man and the son of a warlike nation.

In his own mind Schmolz had revolved various hypothetical lines of conduct which the guilty man among those six greenhorns might be expected to follow, if thrown into a fight against his own Hun brothers. These various hypotheses ran somewhat as follows in Schmolz’s mind—

“Vun: Der chentleman vill fight der Huns like a bobcat mit a bramble in its paw, both to prove dot he is honest and to safe his own faluable skin. Two: Der chentleman vill run like hell, and nefer show his dirty face again around here. Dree: Der cot-tanned chentleman vill try to turn his guns on der rest of der squadron, and assassinate some of my goot poys in der back.”

The obvious weakness with these various hypotheses, as Major Schmolz was himself aware, was that they were mutually antagonistic. If the spy acted one way, he wouldn’t act the other.

Moreover, any one of the five greenhorns whose loyalty was not in doubt might act in that same way.

If the spy should turn his guns on his own squadron mates during the excitement of a somersaulting dogfight, it would be a hard thing to see, and harder to prove. Greenhorns were subject to buck fever. Some of the best men now flying at the front had been caught in jams, during their maiden days, when they had tried to send their squadron mates to hell. Major Schmolz remembered well a certain episode which had taken place a few months before, when Casey Cohn, now one of the greatest war eagles of the 9th, had gone loco on his maiden battle hop, and pursued Dodo Rockwell in a wild whirlwind of aerial gymnastics over half the sky of France, heating up his machine gun till his belt ran dry.

"Vell, dot der hell?" thought Major Schmolz. "Efen if vun of dese greenhorns acts like an assassin, even dot vould profe nothing."

He smote his forehead.

"I am a chackass," he thought bitterly. "I haf sent six inexberiened greenhorns into a fight, mit grafe possibilities of loss, and dere vill be nothing profed by it.

"Whatever vay der cot-tanned chentleman acts, it vill be vot is most plausible in der circumstances, like whatefer vas der answer he gaf to me when I hat all dose greenhorns lined up in rank out on der field. I vill nefer be able to invent a vay to figure him out, until maybe dere is nothing more left of my squadron except der black ace of spades dot he is. He is a smarter man dan F.A. Schmolz, by a chugful. I vill nefer unmask him.

"I vill nefer unmask him—unless he unmasks himself."

Major Schmolz tore up the cards, honest red ace of hearts and black ace of spades, which he had been idly shuffling and arranging while he figured this question out.

"Cot help der 9th Marines!" he said.

VI

A SWIFT shadow was drifting across the field when he went out. It was the shadow of the first of Dodo Rockwell's squadron to return—Janowski, whining down fast out of the hot noon sky.

Major Schmolz waddled out on the field with

the quick and agile gait of a bear as the greenhorn pilot careened down to a ragged landing, and tilted over on his nose, breaking his stick. Swearing like a macaw, the pockmarked Pole climbed out.

"Ambulance!" he shrieked.

Stew Reynolds, that old war eagle, was slumped in the rear cockpit. The ambulance was already clanging over the field, having been warned by the tower-watch as Janowski came down. The brisk surgeon in his navy blues sprang out. And then he and his hospital orderly were lifting poor Stew Reynolds very easily out of the tilted ship—Stew Reynolds, with his face as white as snow and a red stain as broad as a man's hand spreading out upon his back.

"It was somebody—in the back," coughed the wounded gunner. "Heating it up at the Hun on my tail, when—I—took—it—in—the back."

"It wasn't me!" snarled Janowski, as Major Schmolz's round blue eyes rolled over him. "It was one of Abendstern's cockeyed Albatrosses that gunned him with a thwart-bow burst! Believe me, I fed it into that hellcat in the guts! 'Cause this here guy's my buddy! It wasn't me! And damn the man that says I cooked my buddy!"

"Who is der man dot says you did it, Janowski?" said Major Schmolz. "Except yourself?"

The Pole's ears lay flat back against his head, like the ears of a spotted lynx. He was beating one fist into his open palm, snarling and sobbing at once.

Janowski? thought Major Schmolz. Ah, Janowski! In that moment he believed, as sure as death, that Janowski was the man.

Schmolz's broad jaws locked together. The bristles rose on his scalp like the bristles of a wild boar. And there was a look of a boar's tushes about his bared and grinding teeth. How near his hand was to his gun butt in that instant, to club Janowski down for a filthy spy, and half kick the life out of him! But he held his hand for the moment, he didn't know quite why.

He wasn't absolutely sure of Janowski. He hadn't the indisputable proof.

"Your gun!" he said.

He gave himself over to a thorough patient inspection of Janowski's service pistol. The gun, it was sure, had never been fired. Reluctantly Schmolz handed it back, without comment.

"What's all this for?" snarled Janowski. "Do

you think I'm the kind of a rattlesnake that would slam my buddy?"

SCHMOLZ did not release Janowski until he had inspected the Pole's ship from propeller hub to flippers, missing not a cotter-pin—a much more complete and lengthy search than he would give any of the remaining ships to come in. His suspicions were still centered on Janowski. Yet he did not know what he expected to find. And his most patient efforts turned up nothing.

He could not act without proof, either against Janowski or another.

The pockmarked Pole was followed by Jack Cloud in Number 4 ship, flying the greenhorn Stossman; and this ship was followed, in a few minutes, by Arnold in Number 1 ship and Mike O'Leary in Number 3, the latter with Wainbridge, the bony-faced New Englander. Arnold's and O'Leary's ships came booming down the sky almost wing to wing. It was a pretty thing to watch.

Jack Cloud and Stossman had made their reports by then, by the time Arnold and Mike O'Leary came flying home—nine Huns down, reported Cloud, four of Abendstern's dusk-gray Lightning Squadron, with the Albatross of the great Hun ace himself very possibly among their number, three Fokker triplanes in addition and a pair of new two-seater combat Pfalzes.

"And maybe one more tripe than I've counted," said Jack Cloud. "I think Dodo and Arnold, Number 1 ship were gunning a Fokker on their tail when they popped and went out of the fight.

"Of the nine Jerries I'm sure of," he continued, "chalk up three to Casey Cohn and Steele, a couple to Dodo and his playmate Arnold, a Pfalz to Janowski, a tripe to me, and a couple of those gray hell-bats of Abendstern's to Janowski and this game little Dutch gunner of mine between 'em. He's a greenhorn, Fritz, but he stood the gaff. I'll answer for this boy. He's a scrapper."

"Der whole squadron seems to haf been not so bad," said Major Schmolz.

"Every last one of the greenies that I could see was handling himself like an old-timer," said Cloud enthusiastically. "They're a great bunch of freshmen!"

"Vot were der casuwalities?" said Schmolz.

"Caminetti with Balmy Gale had faded before we met the galloping Huns," said Jack Cloud. "And hell knows where they went to. Stossman got

pinked in the shoulder, and Stew Reynolds was slammed by one of the Huns. Dodo pooped. What happened to Casey Cohn and Steele I don't know. That's all."

"I hope Dodo vasn't forced down in Hunland," said Schmolz with a scowl, puffing out his fat cheeks.

"Well, there's his ship!" said Jack Cloud.

WING to wing, Arnold and Mike O'Leary came flying in, and landed like a pair of exhibition dancers springing hand in hand from a trapeze. Arnold was out of his ship like a flash, and running to meet Major Schmolz.

"Captain Rockwell's gone!" he panted, dropping his slack jaw with a look of bewildered fright.

"Gone! Ach, mein Gott!" whispered Major Schmolz, reverting to his native speech in this moment of terrific shock. "Dodo, dot goot fighting poy!"

"Belt buckle came unhitched, I think," said Arnold with a bewildered air. "He went out like a shot! Grabbed his Lewis muzzle with one hand as he dropped, and hung on for a minute. I tried to pull him back in—almost went out myself. O Christ, what a look was on his pan! Has anybody got some cognac?"

Wainbridge, the bony-faced New Englander, was out of his ship. To him and Mike O'Leary, Major Schmolz turned his dismal face, all puckered up with wrinkles of despair.

"Dodo!" he gasped. "Fell out! Belt broke!"

"He'll have a pilot to fly him now," said Mike O'Leary with a wild laugh. "Casey Cohn went over the hump, too. They'll fly through hell together, those two hardboiled babies!"

"Casey, too?" said Schmolz heavily.

"O God, how he got slammed!" gasped Mike O'Leary with hoarse mirth. "Old Casey Cohn! Remember how he always used to hate cold weather, Fritz? Well, he'll never be cold no more."

"He smashed head-on into an Albatross—the number A-Twelve-Nine, I think it was," added Wainbridge in his precise, repressed voice—while Schmolz stood with a vacant look, in a paralyzed silence, wiping and wiping his face. "Cohn and Steele went down locked together with the Hun, Major, burning up. But Steele was still working his Lewis to the last, you'll be glad to know. You could see him through the sheet of fire that

enveloped both ships immediately—a most awe-inspiring sight, I assure you.”

“Casey and Dodo,” said Schmolz. “It is hard to lose them both, in one lousy fight.”

He shook himself together. He looked at Wainbridge searchingly with his ice-cold eyes. Wainbridge? Wainbridge? A cool hand, thought Schmolz. There was Mike O’Leary, all woozy staggering around and laughing like a loon, because he had lost his best friend in Casey Cohn. But Wainbridge, who must have known Steele well, was reporting the death of the fiery little Texan in his damned school marm’s voice as indifferently as if he were criticizing a movie he had seen.

Wainbridge?

Nothing human about him.

“You were friends mit Steele?” said Schmolz.

“Oh, quite!” said Wainbridge. “I presume there is no man I ever liked better.”

“Vell,” said Schmolz, “I’d hate to haf you like me less.”

Wainbridge? Wainbridge! He remembered that he had, at one time in his profound reflections, suspected Wainbridge most of all. He examined Wainbridge’s ship.

“See anything odd here, Arnold?” he muttered, in a voice too low to be heard by Wainbridge.

Arnold straightened the collar of his tunic. He pulled his loose underlip thoughtfully. “Why, no, sir, I don’t,” he said.

“I guess not, myself, either,” said Schmolz with a ponderous sigh.

“What did you expect to see, sir?” said Arnold confidentially.

Schmolz shook his head.

“I don’t know vot,” he said helplessly. “But I haf a feeling—a fery curious, itchy feeling, Arnold, like I vas getting extremely hot!”

He held his gun holster against his thigh, and climbed up on Wainbridge’s ship.

“Hot!” he muttered.

“Be careful you don’t burn your fingers, sir,” said Arnold with a smirk.

“I SEE you are singularly fortunate, Wainbridge,” Schmolz remarked aloud to the leather-faced Bostonian, “in hafing avoided all pullet holes and other scars of pattle. Our friends der Huns seen to haf been careful not to inchure your ship—and you.”

“Oh, I think they were shooting at us quite a bit,

sir,” said Wainbridge carelessly. “But we rather seemed to dodge them, thanks to O’Leary’s flying.”

“Mike is a goot pilot,” admitted Schmolz.

He grunted.

“Your gas is about out,” he commented, continuing his examination of Wainbridge’s ship.

He smelt Wainbridge’s Lewis gun.

“I see you haf used it,” he admitted grudgingly.

He climbed down, and inspected the ship’s left wing, shaking his head. What he had expected to find he didn’t know. But he had that feeling of being hot, hot, hot.

Oh, it was burning him up.

“Vot a chackass I am,” he thought. “Dere is nothing possible to be profed, in any circumstances. Only suspicions and suspicions! Whoefer dis cot-tanned X-5 is, Wainbridge or Janowski or whoefer, he is far too smart a poy to be caught mit der efidence on him. Suspicions and suspicions, until my whole squadron has been wrecked and destroyed by dis tanned sneaking deffil! Cot help me, and my goot flying poys! Dere is no proof. Only suspicions. And all of dem may be wrong.”

In his prowling over Wainbridge’s ship, he had now come around to Arnold’s, which had landed wing to wing, and taxied along the field side by side, till it had come to a halt within an arm’s reach of Wainbridge’s.

Still hot, still helpless, Major Schmolz turned to it, while Arnold watched him with a casual sidelong smile. Schmolz steadied his holster, and clambered up to the rear cockpit step.

“I see der gunner’s pelt is not broken, Arnold,” he grumbled. “It is only unbuckled.”

“It came unbuckled—it didn’t break—as I said,” explained Arnold easily. “At least, that’s what I think happened. I didn’t really see what happened. I looked around, and there was Captain Rockwell overside, clinging to the end of his Lewis barrel.”

“I understant, I understant,” said Major Schmolz. “You do not need to tell it all ofer twice.”

He was growing more cross and grumbling, because of that feeling of intense nearness to his discovery.

“Vell, how does it happen dot your gas tanks are more dan half-full, Arnold, like you hat hat dem filled up since you left dis field nearly two hours ago?” he said, in a quieter and more reflective voice.

He looked down at Arnold with his blue and candid gaze. But not quick enough to catch the shadowy look which flashed and faded on Arnold's face,

"You haf not landed anyvere while you haf been gone?" the fat little major asked searchingly.

"No, sir," said Arnold with a smirk.

He had forgotten the possibility that the German mechanics at his Rumpler field might have filled up his gas tanks. However, it is a poor state of affairs which can't be explained in some way. After that first spasmodic twitch of fright, that paralyzing terror of self betrayal, Arnold had swiftly and amply recovered.

"No, sir," he said, not too hurriedly, yet with not too much delay. "You see, sir, Captain Rockwell took along a couple of spare five-gallon gas tins, strapped between the wings. He filled the tanks up in the air from these spare tins, before he dropped. I thought it a smart notion."

"Dodo vas always a smart poy," grumbled Major Schmolz. "And you are a smart poy yourself, too, I see. But don't try dot trick again hereafter, if you please."

"I won't, sir," said Arnold, promptly.

Major Schmolz rubbed his index finger around the rear cockpit rim with an absent-minded gesture. He shifted his position slightly in the toehold of the cockpit step, as if his gun holster, pressed between his thigh and the side of the ship, was an annoyance to him.

Therefore he shifted his position slightly, did Major F.A. Schmolz.

"You are sure you nefer landed, vunce, since you left dis field mit Captain Rockwell?" he repeated.

Still his thick forefinger was tracing meditatively around the rim of the gunner's cockpit. He seemed to be immersed in a distant dream. His position upon the cockpit step was changing all the time, by fractions of an inch. He was getting ready to launch his solid body down to earth.

Arnold watched the fat little major with speculation masked by a curling lip.

"Certainly I never landed," he said.

"Den vy," said Major Schmolz—and his guttural voice seemed, as he spoke now, to have become for the moment as gentle as the cooing of a dove. "Den vy, Lieutenant Arnold of der Marines," he said in that soft and gentle whisper, "is dere marked mit chalk upon der top of der rear fuselage, here, behint der gunner's cockpit, der words in der Cherman language—

**“Commandeered! Property
of Der Cherman
Government!?”**

Second Lieutenant Benjamin Arnold of the Flying Marines, alias Arnold von Bennerkop of the German Military Intelligence, never heard the end of that fateful question. With his green eyes blazing, his loose mouth twisted in a snarl, he tugged at his service .45—lifted it—

But Major F.A. Schmolz had shifted position in readiness to leap. Already he was leaping. With iron fingers he clamped the traitor's wrist and the fingers of his other hand had found the traitor's throat.

Iron fingers clenching as the rest of them rushed forward.