

# Wager Flight

By Robert J. Hogan

*Vickers, six-gun, or automatic, it was all the same to Smoke Wade, for he came from Arizona, where men know how to shoot.*

LEUT. "SMOKE" WADE, Arizona born and raised, an inveterate gambler, with the luck of the devil, leaned forward and peered into the distant haze ahead.

He could not see even the dim outline of that new field. He settled back in his seat once more. A shade of anger crossed his face. Then he grinned.

What a rotten sport that colonel had been after he had thought that he was betting on a sure thing, only to find to his sorrow that he wasn't quite the wise one he thought himself.

"Damn rotten coyote," mumbled Wade. "Couldn't turn down bets, so he has me transferred to another field to get me out of the way."

He grinned broadly as he recalled the incident again. Then his brow puckered. He was wondering about that new field. What kind of a gang was there? It was new, he had heard. It had not been in existence for more than a month or two.

A bright thought entered his brain and his face wrinkled once more in a slow smile of anticipation. The gang there might have plenty of dough to lose. Well, he'd be taking them if they had it.

He pushed the throttle open wide and the brown-and-white painted Spad shot ahead rapidly. He liked them painted that way. Just like the markings of his own pinto pony back on the ranch. Pintos brought him luck.

He leaned forward eagerly as the field came into view. He surveyed it appraisingly, then sent the Spad slamming down over it in a low drag. As he climbed slightly once more and turned into the wind he sighted a flight of Spads coming in from the north. At least the field showed signs of action, and that was in its favor.

He brought the Spad down on the runway as smoothly as laying a rug. His foot kicked the rudder and the tail spun half round. Rapidly, but with sufficient caution, he taxied to the dead line and let her roll.

"Got a fellow works here by the name of McGill?" he drawled to a mechanic who came hurrying up to the side of his cockpit.

The grease ball stared at him for a moment, glanced hesitantly at the first lieutenant's "hardware" on the shoulders of his wrinkled uniform and opened his mouth to speak.

"Colonel McGill, sir," he answered. "He's the only one I know by that name around here. He's C.O., sir."

"I reckon that's the ranch hand I'm lookin' for," chirped Smoke Wade in his slow manner. "Where at can I find him?"

The mechanic pointed to a small building marked "Headquarters," some distance down the field.

"Lead this here hoss to a good box stall and watch out she don't kick you," said Smoke, grinning. "I'll be back directly."

The astonished mechanic stared after him in a daze. Smoke walked straight to the headquarters building and inside.

"You might tell the colonel that I'm here," he informed the orderly at the desk in the outer office.

The orderly stared at him questioningly.

"And who might you be, sir?" he queried.

"Lieutenant Wade, transferred from Toul," Smoke informed him. "I don't have to see the colonel, but I reckoned he might want to give me hell about something at the start. Got my papers of transfer."

The orderly was busy at the telephone for a few moments.

“Guess you don’t get the hell, at least not just now,” he informed Smoke, looking up from the switchboard. “Colonel McGill says to leave your transfer papers with me, sir.”

SMOKE grinned and handed his papers to the orderly. Could it be possible that his former C.O. had not reported his shortcomings to Colonel McGill?

He stalked outside again and made his way listlessly back to where he had left his pinto Spad. By this time the flight of five had landed and were out of their ships. Smoke eyed them appraisingly from a distance. Then, as he approached, he heard a voice coming toward him loud enough to drown out any of the others. In fact, there were no other pilots speaking but the one.

This one was a large, sallow-looking individual. It seemed as though he had overdeveloped in growth, but not in brain or muscle. Just a big mamma’s boy. Probably an only child. A spoiled kid, but big enough to lord it over a lot of the smaller ones because of his superior size.

“And did you see that Jerry run? The last one I got, I mean,” he was boasting. “Those babies sure know the sight of that Spad of mine isn’t healthy. Got ‘em so they run every time they see me. Those two today make twelve Fokkers altogether. And, if you ask me, that’s a damn good record. You birds should be proud of your flight leader.”

But no one had asked him and, for that matter, no one look as though they were particularly proud of even knowing him. Smoke Wade stopped a mechanic who was walking near him and pointed to the big braggart. “Who’s that bird?” he drawled. The mechanic answered almost without looking at the pilot in question.

“Guess you mean Brant, sir,” he said and grinned. “That boy is a wonder—in his mind. But no kidding. He sure has an eye for Vickers. One of the best shots around here, but I don’t know much about his flying, sir. Everybody hates him, but he’s piled up a damn fine record in spite of it. Thinks he’s the cats and all that.” “Thanks,” said Smoke. He stood for some minutes appraising the stranger. His grin broadened and he walked leisurely a little nearer to the group. His eye cast about for something. Then he found it. An oil can

that had been left on the tarmac alone by some careless mechanic.

His right hand went to his hip where hung, instead of the usual service automatic, an old-style Colt revolver. One of the old type of guns that helped to make the West famous.

Smoke’s eyes swept across the field to make sure that nothing moved or showed signs of life in that direction. Then, with an easy, careless gesture, he tossed the oil can into the air with his left hand and began banging away at it with the Colt in his right.

The shots came slowly and with deliberation as though he was trying hard to hit his target. Three shots blazed out before the can fell to the ground again. But the can had not been turned from its slow course upward and back again by any of the three shots.

Again the can went into the air with that easy toss. And again with an abandon, as though he were the only person within hearing of his shots, Smoke Wade blazed away with his six-gun.

*Bam, bam, bam!* The three remaining shots in his cylinder blasted away, but once more the can came tumbling down evenly and hit with a helpless klunk on the ground!

BY now the group which had been only a short distance away when he had started his firing was becoming interested. Smoke saw out of the corner of his eye that they were walking toward him. He did not change the expression of his face in the least, except the slight curl of his lip on the side away from the approaching group. His scheme was working. Perhaps this new field wasn’t going to be such a bad place, after all. He still couldn’t get over the lecture on gambling that he hadn’t gotten. And he had had every reason to expect it.

“Say,” came a voice from the approaching group. “Who the hell do you think you are—Buffalo Bill or Annie Oakley? What’s the idea trying to hit that tin can? Maybe you’re trying to make us believe you can shoot!”

Smoke turned with an expression of surprise as though that was the first he had known that any of those present were on earth.

“Just got in,” he announced. “Name’s Wade. I didn’t know you fellows were around. Sure didn’t. Just thought I’d get in a little target practice to kill time. Reckon this can’s a little mite small

compared to what I'm used to hittin'. Can't seem to make a dent in it."

Then turning away again he tossed the can into the air and raised the Colt which he had emptied and filled while he was talking.

The can sailed aloft and Smoke raised his gun and blazed away at it. The can turned over and over aimlessly and settled leisurely to the ground.

"Damn," muttered Smoke half aloud to himself, but careful to make it just loud enough for the others to hear. Then he cast about for some larger article to toss up for a target.

"There's one over there," shouted Brant, pointing to a large five-gallon oil can lying by the side of the hangar. "Bet you a hundred francs you can't hit it once out of six times."

Smoke turned slowly toward him. Here was his meat, but he must not let on. He stared at Brant as though unbelieving for a moment.

"You sure don't have any respect for money," he said and grinned. "Nope, sorry. It wouldn't be fair to take money that easy. Now if you was to lay odds on somethin' harder, maybe I might be interested. Sometimes I have some luck. It does seem as though I might hit most anything once out of six tries if I worked right hard on the job."

Brant flamed. That slow, kidding drawl of the Westerner was too much for him. He wasn't used to taking anything from anybody, let alone some shambling farmer he had never seen before.

"Don't worry about my money," he cried. "That bet stands as far as I'm concerned. But if you want odds, I'll bet you two hundred francs to a hundred that you can't hit the squirt can once out of ten times. Or maybe you're afraid of losing your own money."

"Make it three hundred against a hundred and I might be interested," Smoke drawled in his most tantalizing way. "It's a right hard strain on my system when I have to work that hard on a little thing like this. I can't afford to take too big a risk. Haven't got a whole lot of dough."

"Check," snapped Brant. "Now let's see you take..."

His voice stopped with a jerk. As he spoke, the squirt can whirled into the air in a graceful arc. Almost faster than the eye could follow the big gun boomed. It fired nearly as fast as a Vickers as those six shots ripped from the muzzle. The can was dancing about like a rag doll, while Brant

stood and watched with his mouth hanging open in astonishment and chagrin.

Without a word, Smoke walked leisurely over to where the can had plumped on the ground and stopping, picked it up. Then he handed it to Brant with:

"Right expensive for a squirt can that ain't good for nothin', except for a souvenir," Smoke said. "Yes, sir. Three hundred francs is a right-good price for that much copper."

Brant's face blazed with fury. Other members of the group roared with laughter. Smoke Wade stood calmly waiting with a broad grin of satisfaction wrinkling his weather-beaten face. "It's a frame-up," cried Brant. "I won't pay it. It's a dirty, low..."

But there was something in the sudden changed expression in Smoke Wade's face that caused him to stop short in his wild denunciation.

"Oh, I reckon you'll come through all right," Smoke was saying. "With all your friends here who heard the bets. Who was it said anything about bettin', anyway? I'm darn sure I didn't. You practically forced me into it."

"You—you'll have to wait until I get it from my quarters," stammered Brant. "I haven't got that much on me now."

"No hurry," said Smoke, at once genial again. "See you at mess tonight. That'll be time enough."

THE story spread rapidly about the field. Wade made friends that day like wild fire. He had been the first man to shut that ever babbling mouth of the braggart Brant. Everyone at the field was grateful for the long-needed rest.

At mess, Brant came in late. He hadn't meant to come at all. He had planned to pay Smoke later that evening when they could be alone. But from the pilots flocking about him it was obvious that he would not be alone much of his time. Brant walked up to Smoke, tossed his money on the table before him without a word and stamped to a far corner where he ate a hasty meal in sulky silence.

Then, as they were finishing, someone shouted, "Attention."

Colonel McGill was standing in the doorway. His face was set in a stern mask. His lips were

drawn in a hard, straight line. His voice snapped like the lash of a whip over a bare back.

“Men,” he barked. “I’ve just received word from G.H.Q. concerning that dump you’ve been trying to get; or at least you’ve been sent after it often enough. It’s a tough job, I know, but unless we get that dump out of the way we cannot go ahead with the planned advance. Brant, we’ve heard a lot of talking from your quarter. But outside of knocking down Fokkers we haven’t heard about your doing anything of any use that doesn’t show up on the record of an ace. We’d send over bombers to get it, but it is going to take a fighting plane to get through the protection the Germans are keeping about that ammunition. I’m asking for volunteers and I’m looking at you.”

Brant’s face turned red with anger and humiliation. Not that he didn’t have it coming to him. Every man in the room knew that.

“I’ll take it, sir,” he cried. “And if that dump is still there tomorrow this time, you can...”

“Just a minute, colonel,” drawled Smoke Wade who was also standing. “I reckon I had the jump by a split second on Brant here. I’ll go. Better let a new man take a crack at it. Brant is liable to be pretty nervous in the morning. I reckon I could do the job up right, sir.”

The colonel turned to him.

“I assume you are Wade, just transferred from Toul?” he said. “I have no objection to you and Brant both trying it. I know nothing about your flying ability, but I do know that Brant is the best man I have here. That is why I suggested that he go. But if you two both go, don’t go together. We have every reason to believe that one man will have a better chance to get through than a whole flight. Brant, you have the job. If you, Wade, wish to take a crack at it also, that is up to you.”

With that the colonel turned and left the mess hall. Brant whirled on Smoke Wade.

“You low-lived four-flusher,” he yelled. “Who do you think you are telling the colonel you can do it better than I can?”

He made a rush at Smoke. Then, as he let go with a right haymaker, Smoke stepped back just in time. Brant reeled ahead from the force of his blow which had missed, stumbled over one of the benches and sprawled on the floor. Smoke was upon him, but pinning his arms to his side, and holding him helpless in a grip of steel.

“There,” he was drawling in that maddening tone of voice. “Don’t get excited or you’re liable to hurt yourself. You seem damn sure that you’re going to get that dump tomorrow. Wouldn’t you like to make another little bet? Be sort of a nice way to get your three hundred francs back. How about it? I’m giving you this chance out of the kindness of my heart, pardner. But of course if you haven’t got three hundred more francs, why...”

Brant struggled for a moment. Then, panting, he gave up. Smoke let go of him. Brant staggered back a few paces and stood glaring at him.

“Sure, I’ll bet that I get that dump tomorrow,” Brant was screaming. “Bet three hundred and more if you want!”

“O. K.,” drawled Smoke. “And you’re a game guy, after all, Brent. I didn’t know you had it in you.”

Then, turning to the others in the mess, he said: “You birds have all heard the bet. Three hundred even, that Brant blows up the dump where the ammunition is stored.”

They nodded. Smoke grinned.

“See you in the morning over the lines,” he sung at Brant as he left the mess.

IT took him some time to find Colonel McGill. Partly because he needed time to think, to plan. But at length he found him.

“Colonel,” Smoke began in his usual drawl, “I don’t know if I should have come or not. Now, of course I ain’t one to blow his own horn. But I know that dump like a book. We used to watch it when it was bein’ built back there flying from Toul. If you ask me, it’s a right tough place to get to. They got the place guarded by E.A.’s and Archies day and night. It’ll be like ridin’ through scrub oak bare naked. And another thing, this gang you’ve got here isn’t up to snuff, if you’ll pardon my sayin’ so, sir.”

The colonel had been only mildly interested up to now. With the last sentence he jerked alert.

“What’s the matter with my outfit?” he demanded.

“Nothin’ serious,” drawled Smoke. “But, sir, take Brant for instance. You said just a few minutes ago in his presence that he was the best man you had here. Well, if he’s any example, I’d

hate to hang my neck and the war on the rest of them.”

“Say,” cried Colonel McGill, “who the devil do you think you are? From the way you’re talking you seem to think that you’re better than my whole outfit put together. If this is all you’ve come to take my time about, you can go now. I’m done.”

“Just a minute, sir,” went on Smoke, and his words came more rapidly. He had almost lost his point. “Now figure it out for yourself. As near as I can learn you’ve been sending out Spads and bombers to get that dump for the last ten days or more. You’ve wrecked a lot of ships. Lost some pilots, and the dump is still there with tons of ammunition. Doesn’t that tell you anything?” The colonel was suddenly thoughtful. McGill was one of the rare commanding officers of the War who would listen to an inferior officer with the belief that he might have slight traces of brains also.

“All right, go on,” he nodded. “Yes, sir,” drawled Smoke again. “Now, here, let’s make this a sporting proposition. I haven’t made up my mind yet whether I’ll go out tomorrow morning or not. If I do, I’ll bet you a thousand francs, even, that that dump won’t be there intact twenty-four hours from now.”

Then, as the colonel appeared to hesitate, Smoke hastened on. “It’s as good as ten to one, sir. You’ve tried for ten days to get it and have failed. Why should it be blown up tomorrow any more than it was in the last ten days?”

“By George,” cried the colonel, leaping from his chair, “I’ll take that bet. G.H.Q. has landed on my neck terribly in the last two days. I’ve been trying to tell them that it should be gotten from Toul and they say we are nearer and therefore should get it ourselves. If that dump is blown up tomorrow it’ll be worth it, lieutenant. Good luck and good night.”

SMOKE WADE awoke with a start. A red sun, still half hidden by the horizon, was straining in through the window of his quarters. He rubbed his eyes and glanced swiftly at his wrist watch. He started in alarm. It was later, an hour later, than he had planned to be up.

He reached for his flying suit. Slipped it on over his pajamas, flying boots slid over his bare feet, and he was out running for the hangar while

his helmet dangled limply from his arm. Thank the Lord, he had ordered his pinto Spad warmed an hour before sunup. It would be ready.

He leaped into the cockpit and shot a question at the mechanic! “Has Brant gone?” The mechanic nodded. “About five minutes ago,” he affirmed.

Smoke Wade’s teeth clicked sharply. He battered the gun open wide, kicked round into the wind and tore out into the rising sun. He strained his eyes in the vain hope of seeing Brant ahead. But he knew that would be impossible. Brant had too much start. He would have the job done before he, Smoke, could get there.

The lines came into view. They began to slide beneath and behind. Then he could see dimly a swarm of wildly flying ships far ahead in the distance. He leaned forward over his stick and pushed futilely on the gun. He must get there as soon as possible. It meant three hundred francs if he got to that dump himself ahead of Brant and blew it up.

As he came nearer he stared at the mad whirl of ships. Then his eyes widened in admiration. Brant was all there when it came to air fighting. Maybe he had taken too much pains in making a record for himself rather than helping win the War. Well, he sure was making good now.

Then Smoke saw something. Two things, in fact. Brant had torn out of that wild swarm of steel-belching ships and was hurtling at a row of buildings below him with the air behind full of diving Fokkers. Fokkers that gained on that one twisting Spad and spat lead at him as he dived.

The other thing that Smoke Wade saw was something that he had known all the time. But somehow it had slipped his mind. Beyond that mass of buildings toward which Brant hurled his Spad lay another set of buildings, half hidden by trees.

Then Smoke remembered flying from Toul while those same buildings were being erected. The first set of buildings were only empty sheds to draw fire from the real dump where the ammunition was stored.

He grinned as he saw Brant go screaming down on the buildings that were only dummies. But he grinned with admiration. Brant was all there. If he could only be broken of that bragging. He wouldn’t be a half-bad fellow. Fokkers were

tearing out to meet Smoke. He climbed steeply to make the advantage of altitude, which he now held, more secure. He knew why those Fokkers hadn't tried too hard to keep Brant from going down on those buildings. Perhaps they had drawn their fire a little. But if they had, they would never draw any fire from his own crate when he sent it down on that real dump where tons of ammunition were stored. The Fokkers were climbing steeply to meet him. They had the advantage. They could climb more rapidly than he. They were gaining. He would have to fight in order to get down to those buildings.

He saw Brant straighten out of his long dive. Saw his first bomb burst in the shed that had been built as camouflage. There was just the single burst and no upheaval as there would have been had there been ammunition there to be touched off from the bomb. He grinned at the thought. When they got back, what a ride he would give the braggart! But still he could not help but admire his guts. Brant as an air fighter was O.K.

Smoke stared down calmly at the buildings where the ammunition was stored. There was thirteen hundred francs waiting for him if he could blow that dump. But he knew he would earn that thirteen hundred before he was through.

HIS fingers pressed the triggers of his guns. Twin Vickers snarled out angrily in a warning burst. They were working nicely. He could count on them. The nose of the Spad dropped and he went hurtling down at the two nearest Fokkers. They were thick ahead of him. He couldn't take the time to count them. There were too many.

His keen gray eyes peered anxiously through the sights. He needed only a glance across those rims. Old practice had coordinated his finger and eye to the highest degree. He hunched low over the stick—waited.

The first Fokker opened fire. Tracers flashed past his cockpit—close; but not close enough.

Then he had the cockpit of the first Fokker in the ring. His finger flexed for an instant. A burst of a dozen rounds blasted from the muzzles of each gun. He did not have to watch the tracers. He knew where they were going the instant that he pressed. He kicked over and tore down at the next Fokker.

They were howling together faster than any two express trains that ever rode the rails. His eyes were still across his guns. His finger was tense. He was not close enough yet. Then he pressed. Again the Spad vibrated slightly from the Vickers recoil and tracers fluffed out once more in that death haze.

Another Fokker wheeled over on one side like a sick pup and began to fall. Smoke saw the others seemed to hesitate. They knew when they were up against a super-fighting man. A man who knew just when to fire and when not to. An eagle eye.

In that moment of hesitation, Smoke whipped his Spad over into a steep vertical and snarled down at the buildings below. He saw the Fokkers spin round and come droning down after him. But he had taken the chance just at the right time. He had the advantage now—for a moment.

Down, down he tore. He risked a glance over his shoulder. They were gaining. He measured the distance with his eye. They would hardly be able to gain his lead before he reached that dump. Fokkers were faster than Spads in a dive. Yes, but not quite fast enough in this case.

His Hisso screamed as it revved to the breaking point. Wind screamed through the rigging. The Spad shuddered from the strain. Wade shot a glance to the south. He saw Brant darting away for home and was glad. A bird with guts like that deserved to get away. In those last few minutes he had gained respect for Brant. If he could only be made to keep his blating mouth shut.

Then he was over the dump with Fokkers pressing him hard. Tracers fluffed past in a haze of smoke. His wings looked like a sieve. He felt Spandau death drumming on his fuselage. But he hurled on. Thirteen hundred francs were at stake. He wanted that dough. But more than that he wanted to win. His hand was on the bomb release lever.

*Bam!* He yanked back on the stick. Felt the Spad shake like a dying thing as it howled out of the dive at his strong hand. Out over the tops of the buildings he tore while machine guns from the ground rattled up at him, tearing through his wings and the rigging. *Bam!* He let the first bomb go. The egg landed directly into the nest.

A great belch of flame and smoke rose toward him. The Spad was booted into the air like a tiny

chip. He pulled again and again while the Fokkers veered away to escape the blast from below as the tons of high explosives went up in smoke and flame. Buildings heaved from their foundations like pasteboard boxes in a high wind. They settled again into matchwood. The air trembled about him. His Spad was rocking so that he had to devote his entire attention to keeping it right side up. Even as he fought with his bucking Spad, he grinned at the thought of that thirteen hundred francs. What a time a fellow could have with that much money!

Then he was darting away. His Spad was light again. The bombs were gone. The dump was no more. He would be thirteen hundred francs richer when he returned to the field. He tore along, hedge-hopping as he went. At the trenches he emptied his Vickers into the gunners who fired at him from the ground.

BRANT was waiting for him when he returned to the field. Both Spads were shot full of holes. But neither pilot had a scratch. Brant was leering at him as he climbed from his ship.

"So you're the guy who thought he was going to collect on that bet," he cried. "Come on, pay me."

Wade drew him to one side, out of earshot of the curious ones. He didn't want to humiliate the fellow publicly now. There was nothing more to be gained. Before he had only done it to get a bet out of him. Now it was merely a matter of collecting.

"What do you mean, 'pay me'?" Smoke wanted to know.

Brant was staring at him, a red flush of anger rising in his face.

"You bet me three hundred francs," he said, "that I couldn't get that dump. I got it. Blew up the buildings. You were there and saw it. Don't try to crawl out of it."

"Sure I was there," grinned Smoke. "But I didn't see you blow up any dump. You blew up some buildings, yes, but not the dump. Those buildings you blew were just sheds to draw fire away from the real dump. I got that one myself. Pay me."

Brant stared at him in astonishment. Then he began to piece the facts together, and his face fell.

"Didn't you think it was sort of funny that those buildings didn't go completely to hell if there were tons of explosive inside?" queried Smoke.

The red left Brant's face. It turned to white. He understood fully now. After his heroic effort to win he had failed where he thought he had won.

"I—I can't pay you," he stammered in consternation. "That three hundred that you took from me yesterday was all I have."

Smoke scowled for a moment. "Oh, well, pay day then," he suggested. But all at once another idea, struck him suddenly. "But wait," he cried, "I've got a better idea. Brant, I admire you, like your guts. But you talk too much about what you do and are going to do. I'll make a deal with you. As long as you keep your mouth shut, we'll forget that three hundred. But, so help me, the first time you open your trap about yourself I'll collect or take it out of your hide."

Brant stared at him open-mouthed. Then his lips twisted into a grin of appreciation. "You're not a bad guy, Wade," he said. "It's a go."

"Well, sir," Smoke Wade announced as he stepped into the presence of Colonel McGill a few minutes later, "the dump is no more."

Then he told him of his bet with Brant and the agreement they had made in settlement.

The colonel pounded the desk and roared with laughter.

"Wade," he said, chuckling. "I owe you more than that thousand francs. The dump is worth it alone. Brant has been an awful problem. He's been the best man I had here; that is, until you came. However, no one wanted to work with him—and you can't blame them. He's been a pest around here, and yet was too good to let go. But you were taking quite a chance in betting that thousand francs with me, weren't you, Wade?"

Smoke grinned. "I figured it was a two-to-one shot. I'd forgotten about the camouflage buildings at the time," he said. "If you recall, colonel, I bet you that if I started out in the morning, that dump wouldn't be there at night. I didn't bet that I was going to get the dump myself necessarily. That's why I bet Brant first. I figured he'd make an effort to get it if he was to lose another three hundred. That made two chances of getting the thousand."

"Wade," said Colonel McGill, "this is a new field, and I've been looking for a squadron

commander. Haven't picked one yet. Thought of Brant, but he couldn't fill the bill. Now you. Everybody likes you. I think I'll put you in for a captaincy and let you take the job. How does that strike you?"

The colonel was counting out one thousand francs.

"Colonel, sir," drawled Smoke. "I reckon you're the best sport who ever wore eagles on his shoulders. Yes, sir, a good sport and a good loser. Tell you what I'll do. I'll bet you a thousand francs you can't get me made a captain. How about it?"

"I'll take that bet," cried the colonel, "and win it, too."