

The Varnishing Americans

By Joe Archibald

If you thought Elmer Hubbard and Pokey Cook were a couple of wild Indians before, just wait until you see them with their war paint and feathers on! Even C.O. Mulligan had to listen to their war whoops with a smile.

A airdrome someplace in France. Cook and Hubbard, Army morals destroyers.

Hours—twelve to twelve.

DEAR PETE:

Of courst the above is too deep for you, but I will explain the best I can as I go along in this hair-raisin' epistol the same of which will show you a gare is not always won by guns, knives, gas, etcetery. It seems that for the last two weeks or maybe three the brass hats at Chaumont have been thinking a army travels on its morals and not its stomach like either Napoleon or Alex the Great said, and I will tell you why. It was all the Krauts' fault what happened, but the Alleys blame it onto me and Pokey and are you surprised, hey, Pete?

One day we was having our mess and was all happy like two mules the same of which has fell into a oat bin, as just two hours before we had gave battle to von Pabst's crates over T—(still censured) and knocked them for a row of beer kegs and Rickenberry had his addin' machine all oiled up and claimed three of the Vons. Pokey says to the bum, "I s'pose in no time at all you will be countin' Heinies who ain't even graduated from Heidelberg yet." They was almost a fight as usual but Rickenberry had sense enough to know that the one guy he will never bring down in this gare is Pokey Cook. But that is besides the story, so I will get back to where I started.

While we was at the mess, a automobile comes into the—nth Squadron and three brass hats intrudes on us and says, "Where is the Commanding Officer?"

"If you want to find a squirrel," Pokey pipes up, the halfwit, "you look into a woodchuck hole, huh! Well, you'll find the C.O. in his office, dictatin' some nasty letters to Potsdam."

"Such insolence!" growls one of the brass hats, Pete. "What's your name?" he slaps at Pokey.

"What d'ya want to know for?" Pokey comes back. "I—"

"I'll report you to Colonel Mulligan," the retort snaps back. "That's why, you—"

"Huh!" says Pokey. "He knows my name already. That's silly. Elmer, what was the name of that dame we met in Paree?"

Pete, the brass hats puff up like jelly fishes and stamps out and I says to Pokey, "Well, you got us in a sling again, you fool! Someday I hope they put you where you—"

"Them stuffed crows don't look so important," Pokey says. "They look like welfare workers or Intelligents guys. I could still smell the salt water on their uniforms an' I bet they landed from Hoboken this mornin'. Pass the chilly sauce, Elmer, as this fish tastes like a sleeve off of a flannel nightgown. The grub here is gettin' worst and worst."

Not long after we was through mess. Mulligan come in and he bawls Pokey out for maybe fifteen minutes, then gets down to business. It looked like it wasn't no joking as Mulligan's face was as long as a sermon spoke by a minister that stutters.

"Hell to pay!" he says. "Looks like the tide has turned on the Front. Listen, you fatheads. Chaumont has got rumors that the Russians have come up to back up the Hindenburg line. They—"

"They're still easy," Pokey butts in. "Them Russians will trip over their beards when the ball is passed, an' we'll throw 'em for a loss way behind the line of scrimmage. Huh, I thought you had somethin' to worry about."

"Cook, I give you two seconds to shut your big trap," Mulligan yowls, "This is no laffin' matter. If the Russians are on the Front, the morale of the Alleys will be shot to pieces. There are millions of Russians. They've had a big rest after they quit the Alleys."

"Well, so what?" Pokey pipes up. "What has that got to do with the Air Corpse? Every time Chaumont gets into a jam, they think of us, huh? If they had to dig a tunnel under the Alps, we would get the job. Has the infantry went home or what? Of all the—"

Mulligan picks up a big water pitcher and throws it. It takes out a winder, sash glass and all, and he says Pokey would foller the crockery if he don't keep his gab shut, and we hope he says somethin'. But he don't, so we listen to Mulligan.

"WE'VE got to find out if those Russians are coming up. We have to get back of the Jerry lines and

make sure. The Heinies won't put them in the front lines until the crucial moment. They won't take a chance on the Alleyed infantry making a raid and taking some prisoners," says Mulligan, without stopping for breath. "Well, that's the story. The morale of the army when they hear that—"

"I bet it's a lot of mullarkey," Pokey says. "The Jerries is tryin' to ruin our morals. Well, we'll think up some propergander ourselves as the gander can dish out sauce as well as take it, huh?"

Pete, I shivered as at the instants I knew Pokey was thinking up a idea and right away I says to Mulligan, "Pardon me for interruptin' but I been thinkin' I would like a transfer as the climate here is bad for my liver. The salt air the same of which comes in from the coast always makes me billious and I won't be much good to the Air Corpse if—"

"Not that you ever was," Mulligan says in mean tones of voice.

Pete, he has been growlin' like a airedale that buried a bone and forgot where for a week, as he ain't a lord like he thought he was going to be. In my last I told you how he thought he was air to a big estate in Ireland, but, oh, boys, he found out that he only come from a fam'ly of poachers that all got hung from a big tree on the estate. (Poachers do not cook eggs, Pete. They are guys that go on other guys property and shoot peasants, rabbits, grouses, etcetery.)

"That is all," Mulligan says all at onct. "When I get the word, you will hop into your Spads and go over and look for Russians."

"I hope they have some vodka," Pokey says. "I've drunk everything in Europe but vodka an' they say when you swaller one gulp of that, you could never freeze up at the north pole if you only wore a pair of skivvies. I know a guy back home that drunk some and he picked up a moose with one hand and cuffed it dizzy. Ha, well, just let me and Elmer know when you want us as we're always ready to pull the Alleys out of a hole."

Mulligan screws up his face and walks out and I wisht I had cracked Pokey's dome up with a ketchup bottle as I knew who would go out first to look for the Russians.

"They ain't nothing we can't do, huh, Elmer?" Pokey says when he walks out. "One drink of vodka and we'll surround the whole Heinie army single-handed. It's time some excitement started around here, and have I got an idea?"

I didn't answer, Pete, as my stomach felt like it was hollered out by a chisel and I could already see the orbit in the Rumford Junction Clarion about me and even you could see what a chanct I got to ever get to a old soldiers' home. Palling around with Pokey is like

roller skating on the edge of a cliff the same of which is all covered over with axel grease.

Two days went past and nothing happens only that of courst we was still going up when it was our turn and smacking von Pabst and other Heinie *Jagdstaffels*. And then everything happens all at onct and the same time. We got word that the Alleys captured a Russian, and Mulligan went over to the division headquarters where they had him and oh, boys, was he worried when he come back!

"It's right," Mulligan says. It seems the guy was all in Russian dressin' and had black mustaches with ends so long you could of had fun trying to ring same with hoops. And everything he said had a skee on the end so it looked like the Alleys was in for somethin' worst than a clambake, hey, Pete?

"So the morals of the Alleys is shot, hey?" Pokey says. "Well, I have not been idle. You wait, as maybe I have got the swellest ideer—"

"I hoped it slipped off your dome, you crackpot," I says. "But I should of knowed better, as you have been every place lately but on the drome."

"Ha," Pokey laffs, "I been collecting a few odds and ends together and I am ready to show the Heinies that two can play at any game except maybe solitaire."

Pete, that afternoon a Frog hick come into the drome and he busted into Wings like they was a tornado or worst on his tail assembly. And he says to Mulligan he was looking for the peeg the same of which cut off the ends of all his mules' tails and he says it was a American flyer as he shot at him with buckshot and knew he hit the Yank. Well, I wondered why Pokey was only sittin' on one edge of the chair at mess, Pete, and what do you think the fool was up to? Wait and you will see. It was not only the mules.

"Ze peeg he have also steal fethairs out from my hens' tail, osee," the Frog hick complains, just as if it would do any good. "An' ze blanket from *mon* mule, osee, *cheval*." (The last means horse, Pete.)

"Well," says Mulligan, "I will look into this and will keep you informed as to what materializes." (Is that tossing the English, hey, Pete?) The Frog blinks at the big words, cusses, and walks back to his farm.

"POKEY," I says when Mulligan lets him go, "what in hell?"

"Tonight, Elmer, you'll see, as am I smart?" he says, and I could of bopped him one. "I have got to go out and look for some dried grass after the last patrol is over and when I get through, the Kaiser will wish he never talked business with the Russians."

But Pokey almost didn't go looking for the grass, Pete, as we got a awful cuffing around upstairs on the last patrol and Rickenberry just made the field with all

the meat burnt off his top wing. I didn't dare to get out of the Spad for maybe ten minutes as I was afraid I'd leave a leg and maybe a arm in the pit as it didn't seem possible that so many bullets would miss me all at once and the same time. Anyhow, after mess that night it starts to happen, Pete. I had just lost my next month's pay to two buzzards that was born holding five aces in each fist, and I goes to my hut. What I seen there made me turn and start in running. It was a Indian, Pete, and he had long black hair and feathers sticking out of his dome. Half of his face was painted red and the other half white, and they was also some streaks of black for good measures. He was clutching a tommyhawk in his hand.

"Ugh!" he says. "Welcome to my tippee, pale face."

"Wha-a-a-at?" I says. "Wh-why, Pokey, you damfool!"

"Me, Big Chief Soakum-in-Nose," says the crackpot. "Look at the scalps I have got, huh? Ha, Elmer, I'm going to tie them onto my Spad. When the Vons see that Indians have come over, oh, boys!"

Pete, you could have flattened me with a side of beef. I sat down and shook my dome. "Pokey, I been hoping you would maybe snap out of it sooner or later, but now I know they ain't no hope. If I bunk with you another month, I will be planning the Battle of Waterloo. If you don't mind, I'll just pack my things up and move over to—"

"Oh, yeah?" Pokey comes back. "Elmer, I got plenty on you. That bottle of champain you stole out of Mulligan's—well, I'll forget it if you do as I tell ya. We've got to have two Indians to make it look better, and here is the long hair I have got for you and the grease paint to put on your mug and—"

"The mule's tail, huh?" I yelps. "You fathead! And them feathers! It's too bad the Frog didn't shoot at you with a trench mortar filled up with old tank bolts. I won't stoop to makin' myself look—"

"Is that so?" he says. "I have not finished with you yet, Elmer. You and me is going to live in wigwams. I already got the poles set up maybe two miles from here. Will I smack the morals of the Krauts? Well, come on and I'll fix you up."

Pete, the Hubbards ain't weak sisters, but to me Pokey has got more hipnottics than Svengalley, and I gets weak and nods my dome and before you could say fish cakes, Pokey starts workin' on me. When he was through, I looked in a mirror an' almost scared myself to death.

"Pokey Cook," I says solemn, "you wash this paint and varnish off and go to hell as I will not go through with—"

"I have got the stuff the same of which takes it off," says Pokey, "but you won't get it until we fix the morals of our enemies. One redskin will make up for a thousand Russians with whiskers. Well, let's go and eat."

It wasn't no use. We went into the mess shack and Mulligan and Rickenberry almost chokes and went into spasms.

"What in the name of—Cook and Hubbard!" yowls Mulligan in a minute. "You crackpots! What's the idea? Go out an' take that make-up off or—"

"Big white father no unnerstan', ugh!" Pokey says. "We come to bear white man's burden. We go forth with scalps tied to our war horses an' will strike fear into the morals of the German army. Chief Soakum-in-Nose has spoke. Me and Chief Mush-in-Face—"

"Oh, is that so?" I yells at Pokey. "Don't you call me no names, you half-wit! I will bend a hatchet over your conk! Mush face, huh?"

Mulligan tears at his hair, pushes back his chair and loses his appetite and who wouldn't, hey, Pete?

"When you two halfwits fill your faces," he hollers, "steer your moccasins over to Wings. I'll show you a warpath, you dumb clucks. I'll—" He couldn't find any more words, Pete, so out he goes.

IT was not long before we went and joins him in a powwow, and was Mulligan doing a war dance!

"It's the last straw," he yelps at us before we could even shut the door behind us. "I've put up with you two soft skulls long enough. Take off that paint and—" He looks at us close. "Mules' tails, huh?" he screeches. "And those feathers! So it was you, Cook? Well, you'll go to Blah for this. By cripes, you'll— You hear me?"

"If I was in Holland," Pokey butts in, "I would get deafened. What a hog caller you would make, ha! Well, I have got a idea and it is for the good of the Alleys. Listen!"

Mulligan sinks down into a chair, sighs and says for Pokey to go ahead. The crackpot was half through when in come some orfisers from the Wing. With them was a big brigadier from Chaumont. One of them almost swallows a cigar and the others stiffened up like they just climbed out of a vat of starch.

"M-Mulligan," the brigadier says, "what—"

"Sir," the C.O. says, "don't ask me. Just listen to the fools!" So they done so, Pete, and when Pokey gets through the brigadier gave us a look and says, "Fellers, it is not a bad idea. It will be hard to get away with but it might work. The situation is critical. We've got to fight fire with fire and Indians are just as fair as Russians in the gare."

“Y-you are serious. Sir?” Mulligan stutters after a gulp.

“Why not?” the brass hat says. “We will spread propergander. We’ll drop leaflets over the lines telling the Germans that the Indians from Carlisle have dropped their books to fight for the white man. Not a bad idea. Well, we’ve got to find out how many Russians they’ve got over back of the lines. Better send out some bat flyers, Mulligan. I guess that’s all.”

When the brass hats had went, Mulligan paws at his eyes, then looks at me and Pokey. “It’s me who is nuts. It must be. It’s too much. I am a strong man but—get out of here!”

“How!” says Pokey. “Red men go. Make war med’cine. How!”

That night Pokey and me paints Indian signs all over the two Spads and we hitches a long trail of hen feathers, etcetery, onto a strut, and onto the side of the ships we put some scalps made out of dried grass the same of which looks like the hair you see on a Kraut. When it was over, I says to Pokey, “All we need is a couple of cells all padded up and two pails of water and some fishlines as that is how I feel. I am not sure if I am Sittin’ Bull or Mark Anthony.”

“I can’t wait until tomorrow,” Pokey says. “Oh, boys!”

“I would not mind if my heart conked during the night,” I tossed at him. “Pokey, why didn’t you stay at home and be a slacker so I would never have met you?”

Well, I will get to what happened upstairs as I can’t wait, Pete, and I know you can’t. Me and Pokey starts out with Rickenberry’s flight and then left ‘em when we got over the lines. We run smack into a Heinie camera bus the same of which was bein’ nursed along by two Albatrosses. Right away we could see that the Vons was so dumbfounded they forgot what Spandows was for, and Pokey slams one down before the Von could make himself believe he wasn’t having a nightmare.

We got up clost to the Rumpler and I pumps some lead into its hips, but what do you think Pokey done? He gets in close just as it shivers, and tosses a hatchet at the crate and it goes right through the top wing. While the pilot was trying to figure it out, I slams him another one and they was no films to take home to a drugstore to get developed. The other Von didn’t wait, Pete, and guns back to the Heinie stockade to tell all.

So we goes back to the drome and Pokey gets out of the Spad and says, “Well, Elmer, have we started something or have we started something?”

“I had my name carved into the handle of that hatchet,” he goes on in parts, “and I tossed a letter overside before I come back. I says in it that the

Indians is answering the call, and any Kraut that is caught alive behind the lines will get burned up at a steak into a crisp and his scalp will hang from my thunder wagon. That ought to break up their morals, huh, Elmer?”

“I am at a loss for words. Pokey,” I says. “I still think you’re nuts.”

Pete, the next thing what happened was that Pokey took a lot of blankets and old canvas he stole and we goes out and makes the wigwams and builds a fire out in the open as Pokey says if the Boche come over they will see for theirselves we’re the real McCoys. And while I was jumping around batting at muskeeters clost to midnight, what come over but two Vons, and they come down low and looks us over, and Pokey and me makes a dive for the woods just as a bomb erases one of the wigwams. I was covered up by half a dumpcart load of dirt when it was over, and Pokey drags me out and was laffing, the damfool! He would find lots to laff at in a morgue, Pete.

“IT looks like the war medicine is working, Mush-in-Face,” he says. “Well, we got one wigwam left.”

“Pokey, get this stuff off my face,” I begs, “as I feel like it’s dryin’ me up like a smoked herring. When I open my mouth, it almost pulls off my ears.”

“Shut up!” he says. “Red man suffers in silence. Ugh, heap tired. Go sleep. Chief Soakum-in-Nose—”

“I got a good mind to soak you in the nose,” I says. “Hell!”

But we didn’t sleep. Over come Rickenberry in a motorcycle and says, “Come on over to the white man’s settlement, you two cigar store Indians, as we’ve captured a Von. The anti-aircraft batteries knocked down one of the ships that bombed your wigwams tonight and is he scared!”

We wrapped ourselves in a blanket, Pete, and went over to the drome, and when the Von seen us, he let out a howl and turns white like a snowball. Pokey hauls out a big carving knife and the Von looks at Mulligan and almost passes out like a dame.

“Wa-hoo-wa-a-a-a-ah!” yells Pokey and makes a pass with the sticker. “Heap big scalp! Ugh!”

“*Himmel!*” says the Von. “It iss so! *Ach, nein!* Haff mercy, *Kameraden!* *Ach, Amerikaner* Indian, a brother *ich habe* what goes by Otterbein Collitch in America, yah! Vhat you call feetsball he play against the Carlisle Indians, yah! *Ach*, haff mercy!”

“Chief Soakum-in-Nose want scalp!” mutters Pokey. “He burn enemy of great white father in Washington at steak. I have spoke. Ugh!”

“*Donnervetter! Kamerad!*”

“Now’s your chance,” I hears Rickenberry say to Mulligan. “He’ll spill it all about the Russians and—”

“*Herr Leutnant*” Mulligan says to the Von, “tell us how many Russian soldiers *der* Kaiser has. It is your chance to save your scalp. Out with it, Jerry. You can see they are setting up the steak and getting petrol to soak you with.”

“*Ach*, I speak,” the Von cries, and his teeth was chattering like a Spandow, Pete, and who could blame him? “*Die Roossians*—”

The mule hair was tickling me, Pete, and I put up my hand to push it up a little and then a gust of wind come and lifted it right off my dome, feathers and all. The Von looks and jumped a foot. What a howl he let out as was he mad, oh, boys!

“*Ach*, so!” he yips and Pokey swears and bats me one in the ear. “*Der trick*, yah? So! *Schwein*, noddinks I tell you, *nein!* Indians, bah!”

“Elmer, you fathead,” Pokey says and bats me again.

I rocks on my heels for a minute and then grabs a hatchet. “I’ll halve you up like a English walnut, you nitwit,” I says. “If you make one more—”

“Huh,” growls Mulligan, “messed it up, eh? Had the information right in your hands and you, Hubbard, you custard-brained crackpot—”

“To hell with it!” I says and I gets nasty, Pete. “I joined up with a Air Corpse, not a Wild West Show, and I’m through. I’ll let Pershing know about this. I would like to see the Marines try an’ make me play Sittin’ Bull any longer, huh!”

The next night I was still a Indian. Boche come over again, looking for the wigwams, but we didn’t have no fire. It looked like the Vons lost a lot of morals as the infantry took some more prisoners and they was all asking the doughs if they was going to get turned over to the Indians for a barbykew as they heard that ten thousand redskins was already in France loaded up with knives, hatchets, etcetery. Why wouldn’t they fall for it, hey, Pete? As don’t the Limeys have some Alleys that are Gurkers and go out at night and cut off ears for souvenears?

But they wasn’t no Russians amongst the prisoners and the Krauts said they had not seen any, so Mulligan calls me and Pokey off the Reservation and says, “You two funny-looking Sue Indians are going on the warpath to find out about the Russians.”

“We’ll gird our loins and take the trail,” says Pokey. “Chief Soakum-in-Nose is gettin’ soft like a squaw.”

“Sure,” I says, “in the dome! Well, I will soon be with you in the Happy Huntin’ grounds the same of which is the bone orchard of the Indians, Pokey. We will spin wampum and jerk some dear meat.”

THE brass hats come in, Pete, as we was talking with Mulligan, and they had soured on the war paint and warhoops.

“No results, Mulligan,” grumbles the brigadier. “We’ve got to have information about the Russians. Go get it, understand? Stop playing Indian and get down to business. Harumph!” he grunts as he looks at me and Pokey.

Pokey holds up a hand and says “How!”

“Bah!” growls a brass hat and goes out. The brigadier don’t stand it long neither.

“Start now,” Mulligan says. “Get on your noble winged ponies and find out where the Russians are. I’ll show you fatheads!”

“I wisht somebody would,” Pokey comes back with the old reparty. “We don’t know where to look.”

“And when you find them,” Rickenberry, the fresh yap, says, “send up some smoke signals or yodel like Indians and we’ll round up the six nations and join you,”

“Let’s go, Elmer,” Pokey says, “before I cut his throat. And keep that scalplock on as if we get forced down, I have got a idea what will happen.”

“You don’t say. Pokey,” I slaps at him. “I wisht I was smart like you. We’ll get feeted by the Lions Clubs, also the Rotarians. The Women’s Oxillary will cook us a fish chowder!” What was the use, hey, Pete?

Just then it was time for the takeoff so Mulligan waves at us. Pokey waves his flipper and hollers, “Wah-hoooooo-wah-h-h-h-h!” Out we goes toward the German lines with them scalps made out of dried grass hanging from our crates.

If the Indians went out on the warpath as scairt as yours truly, it is no wonder most all of them has bit the dust as at the instants I would of jumped right out of the Spad if a butterfly hissed at me. I was also sick with colic because every time I licked my lips I et paint and I says to myself, “If I ever get out of this kettle of eels, I will scalp Pokey with a screw driver, the fool!”

It don’t take long to get to where the Germans is at, Pete, when a Hisso is leading you, and I wisht I was riding on the back of a turtle the same of which had bunions. It seems as if the Vons was out looking for us, Pete, and just as we ducks six or eight carloads of anti-aircraft scrap iron, three or four Albatrosses come down and opens up on us. A burst took off one of the grass scalps from Pokey’s Spad and I wisht it had been off of his dome. The bum starts to put up a fight just as I signals for a fair catch, so I had to change my mind and by a reckless maneuver twist around and almost shoot the front end off a Kraut that had to go down in a hurry to get repairs.

Pete, I wisht I could say we fought a awful fight and washed out the four Vons but it would be a lie as they had us where the hair on our necks ain't even got through the skin yet, and down we went. Pokey goes first, and I had a chanct to run, Pete, but I says I will stick with him like a orfiser and a gentleman. We lands in the middle of the German Army, but most of the bums had Russian uniforms on, and we found what we was looking for, not that it done us no good. That is at the instants. One of the Russians grabs me just as I gets out of the ship and what do you suppose he says?

"Ach, ve gedt you, *verdamint* Indians! *Himmel!*"

"If you're a Russian, you must of got in Dutch some place," Pokey yips. "You're a bunch of fakirs, huh?"

"English he speaks," the Heinie says and yanks off Pokey's helmet. He takes the mule hair and feathers with it. All the Krauts surrounds us and starts yapping all at onct and the same time.

"Ach, *der* trick is id! Indians, bah!" an orfiser says, and the jig was up. "So you fool mit us, too, *hein?* So still ye haff the Alleyes fooled mit Russian suidts, *hein?* Ha, you what knows vill nefer tell!"

"Shoodt the loafers!" yells another Von.

"At der steak ve shouldt roast dem," says another, and you can imagine how I was laffing, hey, Pete?

"Before I go, Pokey," I says, "come up clost as I want to say something. I want to say goodby as maybe—"

"Ya mean ya want to slug me one, huh?" Pokey says. "I ain't so dumb. Well, I'll keep my distance."

HALF the Kaiser's army was around us by then, and generals and hair obusts and worst had a powwow figgering what kind of a awful death we would get. After a while a big Von with a head the shape of a twenty-cent cake of ice laffs in my face and says, "Ha, we know vhat to do, yah! Der morale of the troops iss badt. They think the Indians haff coom from Ameriker by t'ousandts, *nein?* So ve take you along *mit* to the Front *und* show you oop-starts vhat is it you ain'dt, *hein?*"

"It's a swell idea," Pokey says. "Mine was, too, even if it didn't work. Ha! How's Bill and the Clown Quince? Have they wore out them wooden horses yet, *hein?*"

"Insolent *Schwein*," says the hair obust, and slams Pokey with a glove. "Hit him again," I says, "it's more fun!"

Kerwhop! You should of heard that wallop, Pete. The hair obust said, "Oof!" and folded up like a umbreller. I waits for the shot the same of which would put a star in the Cook front parlor window back in the U.S., but it didn't come.

"Ach, after I gedt through *mit* him, ve shoodt him," says the hair obust after they pours some *Schnapps* down his throat. "Meinself I shoodt him. Bah! *Raus mit der schwein! Raus mit!*"

So all along the Front they took me and Pokey, and showed the smelly doughs that we was only music comedy Indians, and the morals of the German army come back runnin'. So all we done was just a waste of time and I told Pokey that it was the last I would ever have to do with the bum as I was never so humilated. We travels in a auto, Pete, and I bet we rode from the Channel to Switzerland and Pokey says, "Well if we don't get nothing elst, we have toured Europe, and that is a swell education." I says, "I hope they shoot you first so I can enjoy it."

To make a long story end quicker, Pete, I will come to where we stopped one night and got tossed into a Heinie klink with two Limey doughs that was too slow on the getaway, like your old flivver back home, remember, Pete?

"Gorblimey," one of them says, "look wot's 'ere, Alfie. Hinjuns like I read abaht in the penny 'orribles. Strike me bloomin' pink!"

"Wot in the blinkin' 'ell?" the other one says, and you could of tossed a turnip down his throat, Pete, from where me and Pokey stood. "Hinjuns, 'Arry! or I'm a bloomin' toff!"

They starts hollering bloody murder to get let out, and the Heinie doughs come in and sticks bayonets into their torsos and makes 'em shut up. By that time Pokey and me took off our mule-hair scalps and they like to have folded up with the shock.

Right away, just after the Heinies goes out, Pokey says, "Elmer, what an idea I've got!"

"Alfie," I says to a Limey, "hand me that axe handle the same of which is in the corner. Here's one idea I'll knock to a pulp or—"

"We'll paint up the Limeys and give 'em our clothes," Pokey says fast before I could swing the club. "Look," he says to the Limies, "you're prisoners, anyways, so what's the diff'rence, huh? We have got vital news for the Alleyes and have got to get a chanct to escape."

Pokey was already getting out some stuff from his pockets the same of which was to take off the grease paint. The Limeys agrees, the crackpots, and was they in a mess? Pokey didn't tell 'em they would most likely get shot.

Well, we cleans off the paint and gets into the Limey uniforms and Pokey paints up the Limeys like we was a minute before and gives them the feathers and the scalps made from the mules' tails, and that is how the Heinies found us when they brung us grub.

They set down the swill and goes out and was they fooled, but what of it?

"It's a swell ideer," I says to Pokey, "but we're still in the jug. It's smart, like you swap handcuffs for a pair of strait jackets, you halfwit!"

"I don't s'pose you noticed that the roof of this dump is rotted in," says Pokey, "I bumped my dome against it and it lifted right up. Well, tonight we'll allay!" He says it like, "Well Elmer you and me will go to the movies Saturday night."

"Of courst," I says, "it is moonlight, and why not take a walk? We'll tell the Heinies we'll be in by nine-thirty!"

"Haw-w-w-w!" bellers Alfie. "Luvley! Haw-w-w-w!"

IT was maybe three in the a.m. when me and Pokey went through the roof. He had the axe handle, and just as we hit the ground, he slammed a Heinie guard one over the dome that would of made a elephant talk to itself for a week. Another Kraut that was half asleep come around a corner just in time to get a smack on the jaw, and me and Pokey starts running for a small truck the same of which was something like a Alleyed *fourgon*.

We was traveling fast when the rest of the Krauts woke up, and was almost a mile away when the shooting started in. If Barney Oldfield had been in the *fourgon*, Pete, he would of shut his eyes and prayed out loud on account Pokey is a awful reckless driver even when nothing is chasing him. I takes a peek out and seen we was coming to a river and I says to Pokey, "Ha ha, what luck! We hit right where the bridge crosses!"

Well, Pete, they used to be a bridge, but Alleyed guns or bombs had broke its back and it was too late to stop when we discovered same.

"Jump, Pokey!" I hollers. "Or elst—"

They was a awful splash and something bats me a wallop on the dome. When I come to in the water, I started hollering and then I gets a bat on the jaw and when I woke up again, Pokey says he done it.

"I had to slug you, Elmer," he says. "You was drowndin' so noisy you'd have waked up all the German army. And what a idea I have got! Look, Elmer!" He points to something and I was too weak to give him a argyment, but I seen a sausage balloon floating on its moorings and it was under one of them thin camerflage coverings. I could see the Kraut truck the same of which carried the cable drum and winch maybe fifty yards away. I whispers to Pokey that I bet if we had a axe to cut the ropes, we could get away in that sausage, seein' as it was ready to go.

"I still have my trusty hatchet, oh, Mush-in-Face!" the crackpot grins. "I had it tied to my belt. Look, the Krauts is all in a bunch. We can sneak up an'—cripes, Elmer, one is standing clost to the basket. Foller me as it is a desprit chanct."

"Everything I do with you, Pokey, is a case of life and death," I growls sotter voice. "Go ahead, I'm right behind you."

Pete, we crep' up and then Pokey grabs the Kraut that was clost to the balloon and bats him over the dome. In the sausage eater's belt was a potato masher bomb, and Pokey yanks it out and heaves it at the other Heinies. They was a awful explosion and I wouldn't even look at what happened as I faint easy, but Pokey just laffs and hacks at the ropes.

"Get in, Elmer," he says. "One more rope and it'll bust loose. Allay!" Pokey dives headfirst into the basket as the balloon rips through the camerflage and goes up fast.

"Elmer," he yells, "we're on our way. The wind is coming down from the northeast and that means we'll get blowed back to the Alleyed lines."

"We have got no parachutes," I says. "You should of asked them Heinies for them first, you damfool! Well, three or four thousand feet ain't no jump for you if you only land on your dome, but what about me? Pokey, you would set a house on fire to get into the cellar."

"When I see we're driftin' clost to the Alleyed lines, I will yank this valve line the same of which will release the gas. Leave it to Pokey Cook, Elmer. He will show you a thing or three."

After a awful suspension Pokey yanks something and I heard a hissing noise like a whole case full of pythons had got loose. The sausage started to go down by graduation.

"I'm shutting my eyes, Pokey," I says. "When they pick me up, I will look nice and peaceful, and they'll say, 'Well, anyways, old Elmer didn't suffer.'"

Crash! Cr-r-r-r-rack! That was us hitting something, Pete. The basket tips sideways, and me and Pokey was dumped out and lit in a tree, I grabs a branch and swings there like a ape and looks for my pal. He had went down through maybe half the branches and was hanging upside down from a limb like a sloth.

"We made it, Elmer!" he says. "Git down out of there as we got to go and save the morals of the Alleys. Ow-w-w!" He let go and pancaked down onto the ground. "That's getting down all right," I says when I finally climbed down.

"A squirrel bit me," Pokey says.

“It was a natural mistake,” I says. “You crackpot, the squirrel is intelligent and thought you was a nut. Well, where do we go from here?”

“How do I know?” he says.

“You’re a hell of a Indian,” I tosses at him. “You’d get lost under a elm tree.”

Well, we starts walking, Pete, and finally come to some doughs. They took us to where they was some trucks goin’ toward the—nth Squadron, and clost to sunset we limps into Mulligan’s shack and says, “Hello! We are home with the bacon.”

“Hubbard and Cook in the flesh! Where’s the Spads?” he says.

“We traded ‘em in for a balloon,” I says. “We come to give you the low-down on the Russian situation.”

“H-how many have they got?” Mulligan says quick.

“It’s a lot of parsley,” Pokey says. “They’re dressin’ up Krauts in Russian suits to smack the Alleyed morals. We been all along the Front, and I would advise G.H.Q. to open up with a drive as the Heinie doughs look like they would fold up if they seen the boy scouts coming. Well, if that’s all, me and Elmer will rest up if you don’t mind. We go to our wigwam, Pale Face. How!”

The same of which we done, Pete.

Yours very truly,

FIRST LT. ELMER HUBBARD,

U. S, Air Corpse.

P. S. Of courst you know all about the big drive we started, Pete, as you maybe follered it up with the soup wagon. The brass hats come in yesterday and tells us to name whatwe want and it is ours. “Want to take trail to Paree,” Pokey says. “Want two months’ wampum in advance. Chief Soakum-in-Nose want to go see squaw. Ugh! Drinkem firewater. I have spoke.” I looks at Pokey awful mean. “I want a transfer,” I says.

E. H.