



THE GENERAL'S GLASSES

by O.B. MYERS

*The cockeyed general sent Jake Munns winging for his field glasses.
But when Jake went to look for the general again he found him in the center of No-Man's-Land,
and what they didn't find out about those glasses!*

COME ON, little bones, seven me once more! Speak yo' piece nice fo' the boys." The click and rattle of ivory cubes punctuated this fervent plea, dryly emphasizing the breathlessness of the moment.

"Is squadron headquarters in this building?" a

chilly voice inquired from the direction of the door.

No one of the half dozen pilots grouped around the table paid the slightest attention to the interruption. Jake Munns had the dice. He had just rolled sevens twice in succession, and was exerting all his vocal powers toward doing so again. Although it was but two

o'clock in the afternoon, the crap game was already well warmed up, and a sizable pile of francs lay on the blanket draped over the table.

"Hit 'em a lick, baby," Jake breathed fervently, letting the bones prance out of his fingers.

"Snake-eyes!" shouted five voices at once. There was an eager reaching for the heap of notes, while Jake straightened up sadly.

"What's the matter with you men; are you deaf?" continued the same icy tones, nearer now. "I asked for squadron headquarters."

Still no one looked up. Every man in the game was too interested in sorting out his share from the mass of torn paper. Finally a short red headed individual, wearing flying coat and fleece-lined boots over his pajamas, raised his eyes.

"Hur-rup!" he choked. "Hup, fellas—hup, hup!"

Jake saw a hand withdrawn to its owner's side, bearing a thousand-franc note intact.

"Hey, wait a minute, guy," he protested vehemently. "I still got two hundred in that bill. Shoot it out when—"

Jake suddenly discovered that he was speaking in a charged silence. The other players were not disputing him or even looking at him. Each one stood stiffly erect, eyes rigidly to the front. He looked up quickly, to find himself gazing into a pair of cold blue eyes set in a ruddy, clean-shaven countenance—and the overseas cap above that face bore two gold stars upon its front. Jake jerked himself upright.

The general folded his arms, fixed his eyes upon Jake, and hesitated a moment before he spoke, as if to make careful choice of his words. What he said cannot, unfortunately, be repeated here, paper being the inflammable substance that it is. But suffice it to say that certain pilots of the 8th observation squadron, A.E.F., added several brand-new tricks in the art of cussing to their already adequate vocabulary.

"And now, lieutenant, or whatever the hell your rank is," he finished, after a pause for breath, "you will conduct me in person to your commanding officer. If he can't decide how to discipline you, I'll make my own suggestions."

"Y-yes, sir," stammered Jake, saluting awkwardly.

"Come on," snapped the general. "Get moving."

Jake led the way hastily through the door, followed by the unwelcome visitor. The general's limousine stood without. He gestured to the driver to follow them, and walked behind Jake across the edge of the field.

At the door of headquarters shack, Jake coughed loudly and stepped to one side. Thus warned, Major Stoner looked up from his desk, leaped to his feet, and executed a snappy salute. After mutual introductions, the general said with cutting sarcasm, "I have come to you personally, major, for two reasons. But before we go into that, I insist that you give a lesson in discipline to this—this imitation of an officer."

His look made Jake's ears turn a fiery red.

"Military appearance—*bah!* Dressed like a regulation O.D. scarecrow, and shooting crap in the barracks at two in the afternoon. I could understand the last. In the regular army we provide tables for the men to shoot crap qn, but we teach 'em to quit when their superior officer enters the room."

The major regarded Jake without a gleam of compassion. "Yes, sir," he said stiffly. "I understand, general. You can be assured that I will see to it that he is properly punished. Lieutenant Munns, you will report to me later."

Jake started to reply, thought better of it, and merely executed his most military salute. The general turned his back as if the incident were closed. Not having been told to go, Jake stood uncomfortably where he was.

"Now," went on the general, addressing Major Stoner, "before we get to the business in hand, my first reason for coming was to congratulate you personally on spotting the Jerries' Big Bertha, last week. The artillery of my division got the credit for knocking the spots out of that gun position, but I understand it was two of your pilots who pulled off the impossible by getting photographs of the spot. That was some stunt, major; and if either of those pilots happen to be around, I would like to shake them by the hand personally and tell 'em what I think of 'em."

"Thank you very much, general," said the major, with a twinkle in his eye. "Er—Lieutenant Munns was one of those pilots."

"*Eh!* What's that?" roared the general.

"Munns is the name, sir," smiled the major.

"Gar-r," choked the general. "Lieutenant Munns, you mean to tell me that—"

He wheeled and glared at Jake, who shifted uneasily from one foot to the other, and wished himself a thousand miles away. The general's ruddy face became ruddier.

"Yes, sir. That's him right there, and as you said, sir, it was some stunt." It was apparent that the major, at least, was enjoying the scene. The general gulped,

choked, blinked his eyes rapidly, and suddenly thrust out a hand.

"By God," he bellowed, "I said I wanted to—and I will! Put it there, lieutenant. You're a credit to the army."

Jake grinned bashfully and seized the general's hand as if he were taking hold of a fizzing firecracker. The other, however, pumped his arm vigorously.

"To hell with the punishment!" he proclaimed. "Any man under my command who does his stuff when he's called on, can start his crap games before breakfast, for all I give a damn."

He finally returned to the grinning major.

"Don't let 'em all know I said that, though. Now, what I want is this. My right brigade is held up; been havin' a tough time in that valley, and can't seem to get out of it. Their artillery can't find a decent observation post, and the result is that every time the infantry moves ahead, they get a barrage from their own guns in the back of the neck. We need dope on the terrain in front of us, and need it bad. Now, I don't doubt that the data you sent in to Wing is okay, but by the time those addle-brained desk riders get through with it and send it to us, it's so churned up that it's no more help than a Chinese alphabet."

"We could send over a special patrol—" started the major.

"Special patrol, hell!" snorted the general. "I want to go over myself. Then, what I see, I'll know, and won't have to have some horn-swoggled nincompoop at Wing interpret it for me."

"Go over yourself? But it's risky, sir—"

"Risky, my pajamas! What my men can do, I can do, and don't forget it. So if you'll give me a pilot who knows his onions, and lend me some goggles, I'll go right now."

The major regarded this fire-spitting little division commander with mixed amazement and admiration. His every action was a flat contradiction of all the stories told about generals; but what surprised the major felt he dared not show. His glance moved to Jake. Jake, however, behind the general's back, was shaking his head and waving his hands in violent negation. He had had enough of generals for one day.

"Lieutenant Munns," the major said after a moment of thought, "you will please get Lieutenant Houlihan and bring him here?"

"Yes, sir." Jake's face was a picture of relief as he dashed out of the door.

A FEW minutes later, "Stubby" Houlihan was presented to the general as the other pilot of the Big Bertha stunt, and the general himself explained his desires about a trip across the lines. Stubby's big two-place Salmson was brought out and warmed up on the deadline. When everything was ready, Stubby climbed into the front seat, and the general, in borrowed helmet, goggles and teddy-bear, was assisted into the rear cockpit. Stubby was leaning forward to look at his oil pressure, when a strange sound arose.

"Ark, ark, ark, ark"—or words to that effect.

A little cloud of blue sulphur seemed to rise from the back seat. Stubby turned and regarded its occupant with horror. The helmet covered most of the general's face, but what could be seen was as red as a beet and growing redder. Stubby switched off the motor, while those standing by rushed up to the side of the cockpit.

"Ten thousand double-barreled Jerusalems," exploded the general. "My binoculars—I've forgotten my binoculars. How in thunder can I see through camouflage without—"

"I've got a pair, sir," shouted the major. "Right in the office. I'll send a man in."

"No damned good! My eyes have to have—um—harrumph!" The general choked, and grew redder than before, then proceeded tartly. "My eyes are all right, y'understand, only the doctor told me not to strain 'em using any glasses besides my own. Some one will have to go back to my P.C. for them."

Every one looked toward the general's car, which stood by the roadside, but the general himself suddenly rose in his seat and waved a finger toward a head which towered above the others.

"You there, Bunns—whatever your name is. Come here!"

Jake moved unwillingly forward.

"You can fly up and get my glasses for me, and save a lot of time. Know where Varennes is, don't you?"

Jake nodded unhappily.

"Well, about two miles north of Varennes, on the only crossroad there, you'll see a nice field. Right on the edge, in the bank under the road, are my P. C. dugouts. Understand? Ask for Captain Purser. He's the pimpled pup that borrowed 'em this morning, curse him! And hustle now. I've got to wait here till you get back, and my time is valuable. No mistake now, you long-legged baboon. If you don't show up, I'll hunt you all over France and flay you alive. Remember now—Captain Purser—my glasses!"

Jake saluted hurriedly and hastened off toward

his own Salmson. As he revved the motor frantically to warm it up, he cogitated upon the bad luck which always followed in the wake of a general. This one had started off badly for him, had seemed to become all right for a while, but was now picking on him again. Why in thunder couldn't he find some one else to run his errands for him? That was the trouble with being tall; you stuck up so much you were sure to be the first one noticed.

When the temperature gauge began to approach the proper point, Jake waved his chocks away and jerked the throttle open. He roared across the field, hoping that some of the dust raised by his propeller wash would get in the general's eyes, and took off in a hair-raising chandelle. Without an observer in the back seat, his Salmson felt like a Spad. He headed for the north, and almost before he knew it, found himself at five hundred meters.

Varenes was pretty near the Front. The old boy must have his P.C. almost in the trenches, thought Jake. Well, it sounded just like the peppery old fire eater. By throttling down, he held his altitude at five hundred and floated along until he saw Varenes creep beneath his wing. Then he dropped to three hundred and began to scan the edges of the road carefully. Three different crossroads were in sight; he had no idea which one the general meant. None of the fields looked as large as a postage stamp, anyway—but wait. Off to the left, he caught sight of a fairly open expanse on the northern rim of some woods. That must be what the general meant, though surely he had come more than two miles beyond Varenes.

He'd soon find some one to ask, anyway. He throttled his motor and glided down to a bumpy landing in the middle of the open pasture. As soon as he was on the ground, he saw that the field itself was deserted but that there was considerable activity just inside the fringe of the woods. Most of the shell holes in the field were near that edge, and the trees looked as if they had been shredded by a mighty steel rake. He goosed his motor, taxiing over in that direction, and wondering why no one ran out to meet the plane. Within thirty feet of the woods, he idled his motor again and began loosening his belt.

Bong! A blast of air smote him on the cheek, and his eardrums rang. He ducked hastily and looked to see where the shell had hit, but saw nothing. Funny; that was pretty close. He was trying to decide whether to take off again or take to the ditch, when a second terrific explosion shook the ship under him and

almost split his head. Still he saw no volcano of dirt and smoke, but this time he caught sight of a pretty blue smoke ring which curled heavenward from among the blasted tree trunks.

"Hell!" he muttered. "Must be a battery o' 75s, lettin' go from in them trees. Wonder where the—"

He now saw a lone figure in slimy khaki, who ran from the gun position toward his plane. The man was shouting something and waving his arms, but Jake could not hear above the noise of his motor. When he drew nearer, Jake yelled at him, "Is Captain Purser here?"

"No, no, no!" shrieked the man, with what Jake thought an unnecessary amount of emphasis. "Percy, hell! This is a gun position; get the blazes away from here. You'll draw fire."

"Where's division P.C.?"

"A mile back the road. Haul air outta here, will yuh?"

"A mile back the road. Holy smoke, I must be darn near in Germany," thought Jake. He lost no time in gunning his ship in a half circle and taking off in the same direction he had landed. A last parting "*wham!*" rattled his teeth in his jawbones as he passed the mouths of those spouting 75s.

A mile or so to the south, he circled and examined the ground closely. Yes, there was a crossroad, and along its southern edge he could see hurrying figures which seemed to disappear into the ground. Opposite was what might, by a stretching of the imagination, be referred to as a field.

"Good night," mumbled Jake. "Does old Bellyache expect a guy to set a Salmson down on that handkerchief? Full o' shell holes, too. Well, I dassent go back without his bloody glasses, so here goes."

Now a Salmson had a considerable wing spread, and would glide many rods before settling, if brought in in the normal manner. But Jake had learned from experience that if she was slipped in on one wing and kicked straight at the last minute, all flying speed was lost immediately, causing her to squat down like a hen in a fright. This trick he now performed to perfection, but even at that his whirling prop was almost against the trees at the far end, before he stopped rolling. There was not room to taxi in a circle, but remembering his previous experience, the first thing he did was to get out and lift his tail around so that the ship faced the open. As he straightened up, a nattily attired officer hurried toward him from the dugout entrances against the side of the road.

"What do you mean by landing here, lieutenant? Don't you know that this is——"

"I'm lookin' for Captain Purser," Jake retorted.

"Captain Purser?" The officer, who himself wore captain's bars on his shoulders, regarded Jake suspiciously. "And what might you want with Captain Purser?"

"Why, the general sent me to ask him——" The general!" ejaculated the other, "Where is he? I must find him right away. He's been——"

THE officer stopped speaking suddenly, his mouth still open, and stood as if listening to something. A distant moan came from the northern sky, a moan that swiftly grew to a rushing shriek, as if an express train passed over their heads. The train started howling down a steep incline upon them. Jake and the captain threw themselves simultaneously flat upon the ground.

Crash! A shell shattered itself to bits a hundred feet away, and stones, dust, and hunks of steel clattered to earth with a sullen sound all about them. They rose to their knees and looked stupidly at each other.

"The devils must have seen your plane," the captain chattered. "But where did you say the general was?"

"He's at the field," Jake explained hurriedly. He saw a couple of figures writhing on the ground before the dug-outs, and knew that another message of love would fall from the skies any minute. It was time he finished his errand and left. "But tell me where Captain Purser is. I have to fetch the 'general's——"

Jake stopped and duplicated the captain's dive to earth. The big brother of the first express train was on its way with an ear-splitting whoop.

Whang! This one struck a little farther down the side road, but still uncomfortably close to the dugouts. The officer sprang to his feet with a hasty "Report to me inside!" and took to his heels in the direction of the nearest entrance. Jake scrambled to his knees, and yelled after the fleeing figure. "Where at is Captain Purser?"

"Draw—gum—glump!"

The words were unintelligible, partly because they were drowned by the shriek of an approaching shell, and partly because at that instant the officer dived through the burlap curtain covering the mouth of a dugout. Jake waited till the rain of steel was done, then jumped to his feet and ran after a sergeant who was hastening toward the dugouts from the main road.

"Listen, buddy," he panted, "for Pete's sake, tell me where I can find Captain Purser, will yuh?"

"Captain Purser!" the sergeant ejaculated. "Why, that was him you was just talkin' to."

"Oh, hell, now!" groaned Jake. "Was it? The general told me to ask him for——"

"The general? What did he want? I'm his orderly."

The shriek of the next approaching hunk of steel filled the sky.

"His glasses!" Jake howled. "He wants his glasses."

As they rose from their bellies after the crash, the sergeant regarded Jake queerly. "His glasses?" he asked. "You say he sent you for his——"

"Yes, damn it, his glasses! And he's in a hurry, too."

"All right aviator," the sergeant said with an odd smile. "Go over and see if your ship still works. I'll fetch 'em for you."

The man plunged into one of the dug-outs, while Jake ran over to his plane. There were a few gashes in the fabric of the fuselage, but the motor still purred smoothly, and nothing serious seemed to be hit. At the far end of the row, a shell made a direct hit on a dug-out roof, and sandbags, timbers, and human beings flew high in air.

Jake slid into his cockpit as the sergeant burst running from a curtained hole, holding in his hand a black leather case with a looped strap attached. As Jake reached for the strap with one hand, he yanked open the throttle with the other. He jerked the case in between his knees, and seized the stick. The ship began to move, rolled drunkenly across the bumpy ground between the holes, and gained speed. At a jarring concussion behind him, Jake turned his head. The spot where the sergeant had been standing, watching him depart, was a vomiting crater of earth and stones. It struck Jake that the burial of that sergeant would be difficult.

Before the next shell arrived, his wheels were off the ground; once in the air, he began to breathe more easily. He zoomed for the south and heaved a sigh of relief.

"Boy, oh, boy! That's the last time old Stoop-an-fetch it gets me to run an errand for him. Socko! And another dozen bite the dust. Me for the life of an aviator, no kiddin'."

As he dropped his wheels on the drome, he noticed to his surprise that Stubby's plane no longer stood on the line, and that the group of onlookers seemed to have dispersed. He taxied up to B hangar and cut his motor.

Sergeant Benson appeared from the direction of headquarters. "Hey, sarge," asked Jake "where's Stubby and his passenger?"

"Gone," was the reply. "Say, where have you been? Did you get the general's glasses?"

"Yeh, I got 'em. Here they are."

"Well, it's too late. He couldn't wait any longer, so they took off. But wait till he sees you when he gets back. Boy, he just thirsts to get a grip where the hair is short. You shoulda heard him. He said things I ain't heard in twenty years in the army."

"Yeh, I reckon. But I couldn't help it."

"If I were you, lieutenant, I'd begin to pick 'em up an' lay 'em down, away from here, before he gets back. Boy, he's hot."

"Just what I was thinkin'," muttered Jake.

He jumped from the ship and walked toward headquarters, the leather case dangling by the strap from his hand. As he entered the door, Major Stoner leaped to his feet. "Munns, where have you been?"

"Well, sir," stammered Jake, "I lit on the wrong field first. The one he meant was so small you couldn't see—"

"Well, it doesn't matter now," the major interrupted. "Get in your ship right away and follow them over the lines. Your observer is waiting in the operations tent. There's no time to arrange for protection, and they may get into trouble. And, Munns, take good care of the general's glasses, or he'll skin you alive."

Jake hustled out again, found "Pie" Russell, his observer, emerging from the tent, and together they climbed into the Salmson.

"May get into trouble, huh?" thought Jake. "Baby, I'm the one that's due to get into all the trouble around here. No worse than Stubby, though, at that. That old he-horse will probably want to be taken halfway to Berlin, and I've got to follow him."

"Here, Pie," he said aloud, "you take care o' these glasses in the back seat, will yuh?"

"The hell, you preach," objected the observer, drawing back as if he had been offered a fizzing grenade. "Take care of 'em yourself. You brought 'em here. I don't want that mouthful o' fireworks soundin' off at me because I got his precious glasses broken, or something. Kill your own snakes, kid."

"Oh, all right," Jake sighed, stowing the case under his cushion. "You would pass the buck, you louse."

Jake drowned the observer's reply by opening the motor. The big ship shot across the tarmac, took the air with a swoop, and banked toward the north. Jake had a thousand meters by the time he passed over Varennes. He snorted as he looked down at the tiny

field where he had landed twenty minutes earlier. That field was now a seething sea of muck, and coughed steel and stones without interruption.

In another two minutes, he crossed the lines and began to zigzag. Stubby's ship, with the general in it, should be somewhere around here, for this was the division's sector. But for five minutes he flew back and forth, up and down, searching the sky with his eyes, without catching sight of another Salmson.

Suddenly Pie Russell rapped him smartly on the shoulder. He turned and followed the direction of Pie's pointing finger. To the north, coming toward him, he saw a cluster of small black shapes, churning about a larger silhouette in the middle. Even at that distance, he recognized the larger shape for a Salmson and knew that the buzzing gnats around it were Fokkers.

"Oh, Lord!" he groaned. "Now there's hell to pay, and no pitch hot. What did they want to go in so deep for?"

But he resolutely swung the nose of his own ship in that direction, and fed her the juice. He was several hundred meters higher than the milling group. As he drew near, he began to hear the snarl of the pounding Spandaus. Stubby's plane was weaving from side to side to disconcert the enemy's aim as much as possible, and consequently making slow progress. The Fokkers were pecking away at their victim from all angles.

From directly overhead, Jake hurled himself into a dive, aiming straight for Stubby's tail. He let loose a wild burst from his forward guns as he plunged, more to startle the Boche than anything else. He rocketed past Stubby's rudder, every wire shrieking in protest, while the Fokkers veered and twisted out of his path in all directions. With a jerk of the stick and a steady pressure on the rudder bar, he brought her out. The speed of his dive carried him up again in a tremendous zoom, until he was level with the other Salmson. He took a position alongside and slightly higher.

THE crazy plunge of the second Salmson into the fight had thrown the Boche into temporary confusion, but they now returned to the attack with redoubled fury. Only a mile still separated the Yanks from friendly territory. Another minute, and they would be safe. The Fokkers bored in with vicious haste. Their Spandaus rapped out a deadly chorus, and their tracers filled the air with darting gray streaks.

Jake heard the steady snarl of Pie Russell's Lewis guns from the cockpit behind him, and knew that Pie was trying to cover his own tail and Stubby's, too.

But when Jake glanced at the other ship, he saw with a shock of surprise that this was unnecessary. For the general, in the cockpit in back of Stubby, was standing up to his Lewis guns like a veteran.

With eyes glued to the sights, and fingers gripping the triggers, he swung that swivel-mounted pair from side to side, and spat a continuous stream of hot steel at the sky behind his tail. And no wild erratic fire, either; each burst was coolly delivered where it would do the most damage.

"Gosh!" murmured Jake admiringly. "The old boy sure has his guts with him. Acts like he was born with a machine gun in his mouth."

At that instant a Fokker swooped from above, on one wing, to throw a sheaf of steel at Stubby's motor. Without a moment's hesitation, the general upended his guns, crouched beneath them, and directed a blast of fire straight overhead. The Fokker above leaped like a stricken bird, fluttered for an instant, and then careened drunkenly to the rear, dropping in wide swoops.

Jake yelled in glee, and snatched a glance at the ground below. As nearly as he could tell, they were on the very edge of No-Man's-Land, and in another minute would be safe. He turned again to look toward Stubby's ship.

To his sudden horror, he saw that a wily Boche had seized the moment while the general's attention was upward to sneak in underneath. Not fifty feet from his unwary target, the Kraut was pouring a blazing hail of bullets up into the unprotected belly of Stubby's plane. Stubby had not seen, and the general could not reach the blind spot with his fire unless his pilot maneuvered.

Jake groaned, and turned to call Pie's attention to the situation, but it was already too late. Jake saw the shimmer of light at the nose of the other Salmson fade away, as the prop stopped turning. Then he saw Stubby, in the pilot's cockpit, huddle himself into a ball, his knees up under his chin and his head down on his chest. The nose of the ship dropped more and more, and in a moment she was in a seesaw dive toward the earth.

The yapping of Pie's guns suddenly ceased, and Jake turned with a terrible fear in his heart. But Pie was all right; he had stopped firing because the Fokkers had all withdrawn as if jerked by a string, and were already shrinking specks in the north. A glance overhead made the reason plain; a group of Spads approached from the west, flying high but fast.

Jake banked to see better over the side. The other Salmson was slipping and yawning uncontrollably across the sky, far below. As he watched, she struck the crest of a little rise, bounced crazily, and then melted into the ground. Jake could almost imagine he heard the splintering of struts, the nauseating thud of the motor.

Jake cut his motor and spiraled downward. The Fokkers were gone, the sky was clear, and his mission was ended. Nothing kept him from going home. But still he circled, lower and lower, his eyes glued to that sprawl of wreckage. He might leave the general to his fate, but Stubby was his pal. Before he flew back to the drome, he wanted to learn, if possible, whether Stubby was alive, dead, or helplessly wounded.

The spot where the Salmson had demolished itself was midway between the opposing lines, in a slight fold of the ground. Jake learned this quickly, because as he dropped low enough to skim the earth, he heard the crackle of rifle and machine-gun fire from below, and the whe-e-e of bullets past his ears. He shot over the crash at forty feet and thought he saw a sign of movement near the cockpit. He pulled around in a split-air turn, motor wide open. The rattle of gunfire from under his left wing was deafening.

Thuck, thuck, thuck! The ship quivered, and the roar of the engine ceased as sharply as if cut off with an axe. He jerked out of the turn to an even keel, to find the ground almost under his wheels. His motor was dead, and he could neither turn nor choose his spot. In five seconds he would be upon the earth, willy-nilly, and the wreck of the other ship loomed from directly in front of him.

If he crashed on top of that other Salmson, he would most certainly kill any possible survivor of the first smash. But he had not the speed to glide over it, albeit the shattered wings now stuck up fifty feet before him. With a jerk he thrust the stick from him. As his wheels hit, he twitched it back again. His Salmson bounced mightily. He peered over the side, saw the pile of junk float past inches below his undercarriage, and then lost flying speed completely. With a crunch, one wing tip hit the earth and the Salmson slewed and tumbled end over end.

"Jake," said a scared voice, "y'all right?"

"Yeh, I guess so. Wait a minute."

Jake found himself hanging head-down by his shoulder straps. He banged the safety button on his chest, and thudded against hard ground. He collected himself and looked up, to see the form of Pie Russell

scampering hastily on hands and knees across the loose earth. A tremendous clatter rang in his ears, but he could not tell whence it came. Pie suddenly disappeared as if he had fallen over the edge of a crevasse.

Jake heard a sharp voice yell above the din, "Come in out of that, you fool!" He took off in the direction Pie had gone, also on hands and knees. After a dozen scrambling leaps, he tumbled over the edge of a shallow crater and slid head first into a pool of brackish water at the bottom. He arose sputtering and cursing, but was forcibly restrained from getting to his feet by hands which gripped his arms.

"Stubby!" he exclaimed, wiping the muck from his eyes with the back of his hand. "Y'all right, kid?"

"Jake, you damned hound!" retorted the other. "Sure, I'm all right. But what the devil made you—"

"They hit my motor, the bums. I had to."

"But what did you come down so low for? Why didn't you go on back when you had the chance?"

"Aw, I—"

"I know why," interrupted a voice which sent the shivers up and down Jake's spine. "Because he hasn't got the brains of a candlestick, that's why."

Jake turned to regard the speaker. The general's goggles were splintered, his helmet hung in tatters, and the side of his face was thickly plastered with mud where he had come in intimate and violent contact with the earth. A puckered hole showed in the forearm of his teddy-bear, and something red and sticky dripped lazily from his finger tips, but his eyes still snapped the old fire.

"You're the idiot that went after my glasses," he bellowed, shaking a bloody finger in Jake's face. To the rattle of rifles and machine guns, there was now added the whining crash of shells. These were landing uncomfortably close, and the hollow banging of a trench mortar echoed somewhere in the vicinity. But the general's voice cut through the racket like a naked sword.

"Where were you, you double-barreled goldbrick? If brains were milk, you couldn't suckle a flea, you flathead. Well, answer me. You went after my binoculars. Where are they?"

"I—"

"Don't lie to me," roared the general. "You probably flew to the nearest cafe for a drink, and now want to tell me you couldn't find my P.C. Spit it out. Is that it?"

"I meant to say, sir—"

"Curse you for a tongue-tied dolt! If I'd had those

glasses, it wouldn't have been necessary to go so far to see what I wanted to see, and we wouldn't be here now. I never saw such—"

"But I brought the glasses, sir," Jake blurted out.

"What's that?" the general snapped. "Where are they?"

JAKE raised his head cautiously a few inches above the rim of the shell hole, and pointed toward the wreck of the second Salmson. The general peered and could just make out a black leather case lying on the ground under the pilot's overturned cockpit. Stubby and Pie also looked. Stubby began to laugh.

"Well, I'll be damned," murmured the general; then much louder, "Bah! What the hell good are they now? Besides being too late, they're probably smashed—and the best pair of glasses I ever had, too. By God, Munns, I could wring your—"

The general stopped suddenly, and inclined his head to one side, as if listening. The crackle of machine-gun fire had let up somewhat; the shells still shrieked overhead. Now, however, they all noticed that the shriek, instead of being followed by an explosion, ended each time in an anticlimatic pop. Somewhere to the right, a Strombos bugle began to moan.

"Gas!" whispered the general.

The four men in the shell hole looked at each other with faces gone suddenly pale. None of them had a gas mask, nor was there one in sight. The general recovered his voice first.

"Listen, men; we've got to find some masks. If this is No-Man's-Land, as I suspect, that ought not to be hard. There'll be plenty, either on their former owners or loose. Now, you two crawl down that way, and Munns and I will go the other. We're in a little valley, and neither side can hit us if we stay between the two ridges. Come back to this hole as soon as you find some, and we'll do the same. Let's go!"

Pie and Stubby crept over the rim of the crater on their stomachs. Jake followed the general over the opposite edge. The general crawled rapidly on hands and knees, and his course led past the wreck of Jake's Salmson. Jake was following so close that when the general stopped suddenly, he ran into his heels.

"Wait a minute, damn you," said the general. He raised his head cautiously to look toward the American lines, and sniffed the air. "Those gas shells are all landing south of us and the wind is out of the north. We're not getting it here, at all. We don't need masks, and won't, unless the Boche starts throwing gas shells into his own trenches. Hey there!"

He started back toward the shell hole they had just left, and motioned to Stubby and Pie to do the same. Jake followed, but as he passed his wrecked ship, he stopped for a moment. When they were all four once more in the bottom of the muddy crater, Jake held up an object in his hand and spoke proudly.

"Just in case you didn't believe me, general, here's those glasses. And I don't think they're broken, either."

The general looked at the leather case, which Jake was fumbling to open. Suddenly his eyes widened with amazement.

"Here!" he snapped. "What have you got there?"

He snatched for the case, but not before it came open in Jake's hands. Inside reposed six tumblers, neatly nested in groups of three, and a pint flask of amber-colored liquid, which gurgled cheerfully as Jake lifted it.

"For the love of God, who gave you that?" roared the general.

"Why, your orderly," Jake gasped. "I asked him for your glasses." Stubby began to laugh again.

"You sap, I thought I told you to ask Captain Purser." The general's face became apoplectic with rage and disgust. "My orderly! That soak—those are the only kind of glasses he ever thinks of."

The general grabbed the case from Jake's hands, and regarded the three flyers wrathfully. They stood with mouths open and tongues hanging out, their eyes glued to that flask.

"Not a drop for one of you hounds," he pronounced, "until we get out of this."

Their faces fell a mile. Finally Stubby asked, "How are we going to do that, general?"

The general peered over the rim of the shell hole intently for several moments, before he replied.

"Looks as if we were boxed between both sides," he said. The clatter of machine guns was continuous again, and the shells whooped and howled overhead intermittently. "If our own troops knew where we were, they'd blanket Jerry's fire with a barrage and come and get us. But that roll in the ground prevents them from seeing us, and us from signaling them."

"Where do you figure our trenches are, general?"

"Just over that hillock, I'm pretty sure. Hundred feet, maybe."

"I've got an idea. Got a piece of paper, general?"

The general fished an operations order from his blouse pocket, and Stubby scribbled something on it in pencil. The general read over his shoulder, "The division commander is in this shell hole, east of the crashed planes, with a flask of cognac. The first man to reach him gets credit for his rescue—and a drink."

"Huh!" grunted the general, and the glare in his eye changed to a twinkle. "Give me that. I'll sign it."

When he had done so, he said to Stubby sternly, "You're not going to crawl in with this. I forbid it."

"Hell, no," retorted Stubby. "Give me a couple of those glasses."

He placed the folded paper in the bottom of one glass, and thrust the other one into it firmly. With the paper between, the two tumblers nested together tightly. Stubby rose on one knee, drew back his arm, and hurled the missile as far as he could.

Five minutes later, the whooping of shells over their heads trebled in intensity. Just to the north of where they crouched, the earth erupted in a thousand geysers, and the whole sector was obscured by a cloud of smoke and flying dirt. The Boche trenches, for half a mile in either direction, were being pelted with a solid barrage, and the Jerries who lived through it did so far underground.

In another five minutes, a thin line of doughboys appeared through the smoke, moving slowly forward, rifles at the ready. The general's message had apparently been passed from lip to lip, for the first men to come in sight of the shell hole lost no time in making a flying leap to the bottom and reaching for the flask.

"Between the two of you," snorted the general later, back in the company commander's dugout, "you're not so dumb as you look. You're dumber. If it weren't for the use Houlihan made of those glasses, nobody would ever hear of this fool stunt. As it is, everybody in the division will be laughing at me within a week. Get out of my sight."

"Come and take a ride again sometime, general," Stubby invited, with his irrepressible grin.

"Shut up, you sap," Jake hissed, as they slid out into the trench. "He might think you mean it."