



ELMER OF THE AIR CORPSE

written and illustrated by **JOE ARCHIBALD**

Elmer Hubbard, second looie in the U.S. Air Force, hadn't done what he did, he'd have been just a gold star in the window of Perkins & Biggers, Tires and Accessories, Rumford Junction, Maine. But let Elmer tell it himself—and don't ask us how it got passed by the censor!

A Airdrome Someplace in France.

DEAR PETE: Got your Billy Doo which is frog for “letter” and figgerin’ out the time I been waitin’ for same, I should think the U.S. has begun to send out mail on the backs of lame turtles. Well, I giss they’re doin’ as good as they can, seein’ as how there’s a *guerre* on. Anyways, Pete, here I am at a drome right on the Front but I can’t tell you the name of the place as the censures is sure hard-boiled and cross out everything we write but the stamp. It don’t make me mad as I can’t spell these here frog towns anyways.

We came here from the railroad station in a camion which is nothing, Pete, but a truck without no springs and the only thing on wheels what could have made it. It’s a good thing the Kaiser started this war so’s we could come over and build the frogs some roads. I hate to tell you that I couldn’t git them postcards you got your mind fixed on. We didn’t go through Paris. I says to the stuffed owl what was our commandin’ orfiser, I says, “Sir, ya see we might not git a chancet to see it agin as we are goin’ out to fight for our country and might git killed. All the boys wanta see Paris.”

“So do the Germans,” he says. “That’s why you got to go straight to H—” That ain’t swearin’, Pete.

That’s the name of the place where the drome is at. A wisecracker, hey, Pete? Well, if it wooden be a crime to hit a superior orfiser, I’d have knocked him for a loop. Anyways, I didn’t git the postcards.

When we got to the drome, we all piles out and there’s the squadron commander lookin’ at us as if we was a batch of lifers ready to begin a stretch. There was lots of flyers standin’ around and makin’ smart cracks. If you coulda seen some of the airships, Pete, you’d wonder why they acted so snooty. They was a coupla Spads over by one of the hangars that looked like they was eaten up by woodpeckers.

I’m all burned up by this time and I tells Pokey Cook—he’s my buddy—that there ain’t eight German aviators livin’ what could hit me all at once. That got one of the buzzards mad and he was goin’ to git wise when the C.O. opened up. You should hear this guy talk, Pete. His voice is like the log jam bustin’ up in the Androscoggin River, I’m tellin’ you.

“For a replacement who ain’t dry behind the ears yet,” he growls, “you’re a pretty cocky guy.” Giss he ain’t never met a guy from Rumford Junction, hey, Pete? Well, he don’t stop there. He keeps on goin’ like he was a through train. He tells me it was too bad I wasn’t

around sooner as Ricktofen’s battin’ average would only have been the size of his hat and Germany woulda called the *guerre* on account of they didn’t have no more ships.

Oh, the Old Man is a sarcastic termater, Pete, but when he see he couldn’t git my goat, he pulls in his horns and starts in on the other guys. Then he winds up givin’ us a talk which has more bull in it than them ones we useta git from the football coach. When he finishes, all them guys what come up with me starts in to bite each other and demands some ships so’s they can go right up and smack down the Boche.

The Old Man laughs and looks at his snooty gang. One of the guys, Pete, by name of Googins, who’s flight leader, says we will git a chancet to die soon enough because we’ll be on early patrol. A patrol, he says, ain’t nothin’. You just go out and try to git back. A wisecracker, hey, Pete? The army of the U.S. is full of ‘em. Pokey asks him what time we git up an’ Googins says four-twenty.

“Cripes,” comes back Pokey, “do we haveta milk cows over here, too?”

The Old Man gives him hell for that. Imagine? When it comes to reparty, Pokey is there an’ I giss them guys found it out and got sore. Anyways the Old Man swears and tells Googins to chase us over to the mess shack as we look like we never saw a square meal. Well, I wish he coulda seen me eat in your lunch cart, hey, Pete? He had a nerve braggin’ about that grub, too. We are all orfisers, ya know, Pete. It seems like a guy can’t git to die in a airship unless he’s a lootenant or worse. Well, we haveta pay for our grub which is entitled orfisers’ mess an’ that ain’t no kiddin’. I’ve et better grub in the Greek’s over by the railroad yards.

AFTER we takes off the nosebags, they take us out and give us a place to live. Pete, they call ‘em Nissen huts, maybe because that was the egg’s name what built ‘em. An’ if it was, then he musta been Scotch. They ain’t big enough for two guys to stay in at oncet if they both keep on their overcoats. They got two little cots, a lamp, a table, two chairs an’ a little stove in which you maybe could roast two peanuts at one lick. And this is a laff, Pete. They have one little winder with a burlap curtain over it so’s nobody kin see in. Ha! Anybody would think we was a bunch of dames in a seminary.

Pokey an’ me tosses out a lot of old socks and makes ourselves to home if possible. A guy tells us the last two fellers what had the dump was already gone west which is toward London. I asts the egg if that

meant must I bust out cryin'. He gives me a tough look, swears and goes out. They ain't fazin' little Elmer Hubbard, hey, Pete?

Well, me and Pokey ain't afraid of any of them aces so we go back up to the place where we et to git acquainted. I opens my face to be polite and sociable and gits a dirty answer from one of the pilots what has been hoggin' the works, tellin' everybody how you should fight the Germans.

"Pipe down!" he shoots at me. "You ain't no better right now than a kiwi." I don't git the crack but I know he ain't handin' a bokay so I goes up to liim and tells him plenty, Pete. One of his gang tells him to slough me. I kin hear you laffin', Pete. That's just what he tried to do. I think I left one of my knuckles in his chin. He ain't no more laid down for the night when another sucker makes a pass at me, Pete. Pokey lets out a whoop and dusts him off. Then hell breaks loose. All the new guys puts a fist clost to the floor, then lifts it up and throws it at them aces.

Well, Pete, if they fight upstairs all the time like they done this time, well, I'm glad we got to the *guerre* before it was too late. Googins, the flight leader, wasn't gittin' along so bad until Pokey picked up the squadron's supply of phoneygraft records and threw 'em at him all at oncet. The table and a lot of dishes goes over when I hears a awful roar. I'm standin' there holdin' two aces when I see's him—the old termater, the C.O. himself, Pete. His names is Cadawalder Simms but don't let it fool you. That guy can't help it if his old man disgraced him.

"What the hell is goin' on here?" he yells so's the shack creaks.

"A fight," I hastens to reply. "These eggs ain't goin'—"

"Oh, so you started it, Hubbard," he drowns me out. Alius gittin' blamed as usual, hey, Pete? Well, I tells him they can't high-hat me because they shot down a coupla Germans an' I would have twicet as many if I'd come up at the same time. "Lookit Rockfeller," I tells him. "The only diff'rence between him an' me is that I'm only on my first millyon."

It goes right over his head, Pete, and I give up. I take the headlocks offen the aces and salutes as ordered. He is just gittin' set to explode when a guy comes in an' tells him he is wanted on the phone. A break, hey, Pete? He says he will see to my case later an' stamps out. Me an' Pokey stops just long enuff to give the aces a razzbry and goes back to our two-by-four.

I AM takin' this brainstorm up where I left off, Pete. Much has took place since then and I been up in the air, Pete, and been fightin' Germans, an' I know lots of jobs which is healthier, like workin' in a bank for instance. Well, I almost got a medal, too, Pete, but I am crossin' bridges before I come to the river.

Me an' Pokey met the enemy an' no foolin', but we ain't sayin' they is ourn because they ain't. The night we cleans up the aces there is a lot of excitement all over the place. After the Old Man gits the phone call, a big automobile comes in with two or three guys in same that look like generals at least. Their brass work is all polished up an' you coulda used one of their boots for a mirror, Pete. Soft, hey? We call 'em brass hats. They is like foremen who tell ya what to do but don't even pick up a wrench, if you git what I mean. Well, they stay around for maybe a half hour an' then shove off agin. Googins says they always mean trouble an' by all the cussin' we hear comin' outa Wings—that's what we call headquarters, Pete—we know the flight leader has said a mouthful. A orderly comes and gits Googins while we're all there and also two other flight leaders. One of them aces looks at us and says here is where you ornaments gits a chancet to fight for the money you're robbin' the government outa, and maybe show us where we been makin' our mistakes. Pokey wants to fight agin but I tell him maybe the Boche will rub out the fresh guy on the morrow anyways and he seems satisfied.

A little while after that, Googins comes out an' gives us the lowdown on what the generals is sore about. It seems that the Heinies sent up a balloon which must be made of cast iron or somethin' because nobody can shoot it down. The squadron that had the job has almost run outa ships, Pete, and will have to go in bankruptcy or somethin' if they don't lay offen the sausages. So these here generals musta heard that me an' Pokey come up as he picks out the—th Pursuit Squadron, which is us, to git the balloon. Googins says it is a rum job and I right away quick volunteers as I ain't had a drink for two days.

"Why, you crackpot," he unloads, "I mean it is a trap. Them Jerries is makin' believe they are lookin' the A.E.F. over and have got a lot of Tripes hidin' around that place wait-in' to pick off anybody that comes over. An' the basket is fulla Spandows. If it is there by termorrer afternoon, we will have to go out and knock it off."

"Huh," I says, "here we got about thirty Spads. Maybe if we could borrer two Zeppelins and six

bombers, we could shoot down one balloon.” That was tellin’ ‘em, hey, Pete? How was I to know that the Germans had four batteries of aunty-aircraft guns down on the ground and a whole drome of Fokkers about two miles behind the place where they had the balloon hitche?

Anyways, Googins held that out on me, the bum, and let me find out for myself, which proved almost fatal. That’s the trouble with these here orfisers, Pete. They never know when a guy is jokin’.

Well, me an’ Pokey slept on a coupla boards that night an’ we ain’t no more cocked off when a big-mouthed sergeant comes into the hut an’ hollers in our ears. I hops up an’ tells him what does he mean talkin’ to a superior in them tones of voice and that I was goin’ to have him broke for wakin’ me up. And he jus’ laffs and goes out. Imagine it, Pete? What do they make looies outa us for if we ain’t got no authority?

ME AN’ Pokey piles out an’ gits dressed in our flyin’ coats. Then we ankles over to the mess shack to git some coffee and on the way we see a lotta Spads out in front of the hangars an’ the engines is makin’ so much racket we can’t talk to each other. A lotta groundhogs are runnin’ around. Them is mechanics, Pete. They ain’t orfisers so don’t have to go up. Giss they ain’t crazy, hey, Pete? My knees is knockin’ together an’

I look at Pokey. I knew damn well if a guy come up an’ offered him a transfer to the Navy, he’d have snapped it up without stoppin’ to think, which he can’t. We goes into the mess shack and a pilot what is a wisecracker from Georgia looks at me an’ says:

“Well, how is the U.S. Air Force this mornin’?” Well, Pete, if I wasn’t so weak I woulda slugged him one, but it was all I could do to lift up a mug of black stuff which is called coffee over here. I takes a swig an’ tells Pokey I know now what they do with all the old shoe buttons. I ain’t got it all down before Googins lets out a yell an’ drives us out. Me an’ Pokey looks at each other as we head across the tarmac which mus’ be frog for “bumpy ground,” Pete. Honest, I don’t know how a airship gits acrost it without gittin’ ditched.

Well, Googins shows us our Spads and if they used ‘em in the Civil War, which they didn’t, mine was one

which was left over. I tells the mechanic not to lean against it like he was doin’ because it might fall apart. He musta been deaf and dumb as he just looks right through me as I climb into the pit an’ begin to rev the ole Hisso. This is the name of the engine, Pete, and is short for Hispaniola Sweeza.

While I am all covered with goose pimples, I see Googins and the C.O. havin’ a powwow out in front and they seem to be alius lookin’ at me.

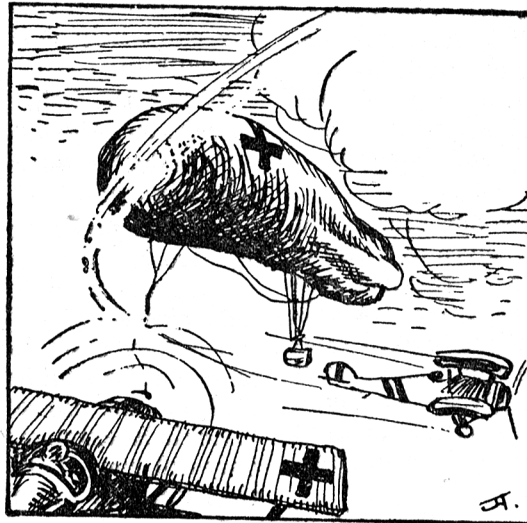
Giss they reckernize class when they see it, hey, Pete? Maybe they was jus’ tryin’ to find out which way the war was at. The fog was so thick you coulda scraped it offa your face. Well, Googins gits goin’ an’ climbs into his Spad. He shoots away an’ goes acrost the tarmac like he was in a awful hurry an’ we foller him. By expert handlin’ I manage to take off right side up and in no time a-tall we’re flyin’ right over the field where they is holdin’ the war.

I don’t see nothin’, Pete, but a lotta ditches and holes fulla water. Oncet in awhile a little white puff would go up from some place but that was all. I giss they can sleep later in the trenches, which is somethin’, hey? There ain’t nothin’ upstairs but a lotta clouds and we foller Googins around in a circle like we was still at Issoudun, that is, until shells began to burst all around us. The Germans by this time seen us, Pete, and wasn’t kiddin’.

Googins climbs up higher and right then and there I began to like the bum. I ain’t no more than pulled back on my ole stick when a big bunch of scrap-iron explodes right where I was a coupla seconds before and the ole bus starts doin’ tricks under me like it got hit by a truck. Somehow I manage to stay up but I ain’t feelin’ so good as I felt somethin’ glance off my dome and it musta been a brick.

I look around when my head stops spinnin’ and I see the flight about half a mile away, and in the same sky, Pete, is some more ships with crosses on their wings. They was Tripes, Pete! Heinies! I feel like I should go home but I know I’ll git shot anyways if I do, so I just kiss myself goodbye an’ go over to fight for Democracy even though I never been nothin’ but a Republican.

All the Spads is in a mess, Pete, an’ I don’t see why



in hell they teach guys about formations. They're all doin' chandeliers, vrillies, and zimmermanns which is manooovers, Pete, and you wooden understand. I am goin' in okay when I hear raindrops on the fuselage behind me. That is the tail, Pete. The sun is shinin' and I can't figger out why the rain until I looks around. There is a Tripe behind me, Pete, an' I can see the Heinie's face behind the guns which are shootin' at me. Imagine? You can believe all you hear about them Germans now, Pete. They're a lotta dirty players as they hide behind clouds an' jump on a guy.

WELL, Pete, if I hadn'ta done what I did you wouldn't be readin' same an' I would be just a gold star in the winder of Perkins & Biggers, Tires and Accessories. I dove an' then pulled out an' come up an' saw that another Spad had jumped on the Jerry and was making a bum outa him. That's takin' care of Elmer Hubbard, hey? Only for a little while, though, as another Tripe started chasin' me and I bet we was almost to Berlin before he caught up.

Well, I ain't no guy to pass up a fight so I reverses my field and takes a crack at him. I don't think the guys who made the sights on these here ships know their business, Pete, as I missed him. He come a lot nearer and made one of my wing tips look like a hunk outa one of them ventilated union suits. If you haveta fight for the U.S., Pete, don't join the Air Force or you are crazy. Git into the army so's you'll be on the ground and have somethin' to hide behind.

Well, I do everything I know in a airship, then look around for the Heinie again. He was off to one side an' was poundin' at his Fokker as if he was mad at it. Well, I should think he would be, Pete, because I found out his guns got jammed on him and he was lucky I was softhearted or else he woulda been known in Berlin as the late von Beerstein or somethin' that night. All the German aviators is "Vons," Pete. They are also called Junkers which is some name as they sure can ruin Spads.

The Heinie waved at me an' then got out quick before I changed my mind. After which I looked around for the gang an' didn't see nothin' but a coupla crows or somethin' in the sky. They had left me flat, Pete, which is what I call a dirty trick. Even Pokey wasn't around an' I got sore. Underneath me is a sea of soapsuds and I can't see the ground. They call this the ceilin', Pete, which is crazy as a guy can go right through it.

I pick out a hole in the clouds and drop down, Pete, and I can see about all the war that's goin' on. And off

to the left there is a great big balloon floatin' around an' it has got one of them big malted crosses on it. It is the bag that the generals is all goaty about, Pete, so what do I haveta do but obey orders, hey?

The Heinie balloon gits bigger'n bigger as I gun down and I'm afraid I picked on a Zeppelin by mistake. Then another truckload of shrapnel an' ole stoves busts up all around me an' kicks me all over the place. Right then an' there I wised up to why it wasn't no cinch even for thirty Spads to knock off the Heinie. An' bullets was singin' all around me, Pete, as the squareheads in the basket opened up them there Spandows.

I stood it long as I was goin' to and began to unload my Vickers on the bums, meanwhile dodgin' them aunty-aircraft shells. These air guns, Pete, has what they call—well, they is tracer bullets, Pete, seein' as I can't spell phosphorous. Well, I giss mine wasn't workin' so good as the gas bag didn't blow up. I missed it by a gnat's whisker as I went by an' the Spandows bit out a coupla hunks of wood from one of my struts. An' then what do you think, Pete? I see a coupla them Fokkers comin' up an' I stall an' go into a sideslip and bank around and all of a sudden somethin' most kicked the Spad right from under me.

A piece of what hit the Spad found my chin and I'm lucky I ain't got a glass jaw, Pete, as there ain't no tellin' how quick the Spad woulda hit the ground if I'da gone out. Well, it's iloin' some funny things when I git all I he cobwebs shook away from my goggles but the engine is still goin' which is everything. So I get all set again as well as can be expected when two Fokkers start takin' practice shots at me. They got a flock of bulls-eyes and I hear a lotta sound like a guy choppin' up kindlin' wood and that is what my prop has become, Pete.

And if you ask a aviator what he's gonna miss most while in the air he'll say his engine. I could see I didn't have half as much chancet as a celluloyd dog in a blast furnace, Pete, as the Fokkers wasn't tender-hearted an' comin' at me with a nawful mad on.

Well, Pete, you know I got out okay or else how could I be writin' about it, hey? About then I unbuckled my strap an' looks down on Europe for a load of hay to jump into, but I am so far up I can't see one so I look up instead and what do I see, Pete, but the basket of the Heinie balloon just over my dome?

WELL, my Spad is just seemin' to hang in the middle of the air for a sec before it decides which way it's

gonna flop and I reached up for a rope that was hangin' outa the balloon. I grabs it and am I lucky? The other end was fastened to something and I hangs on as the Spad just dropped away from me like your pants do when your galluses bust. I climbed up until I got a good holt onto the side of the basket an' I looked right into the face of a Heinie. He was sure surprised and you can't blame him, huh, Pete? He starts hollerin' in German an' starts givin' me a push in the face but changes his mind an' give me a hitch into the basket instead. Imagine? And, Pete, you ain't read noth-in' yet. He throws his arms around me an' calls me by name.

"Elmer Hubbard it iss, *ja*?" he yelps and then I git a good look at him as he lets me loose and there in the flesh—an' lots of it, Pete—is Hans Heinbockle what useta play the big horn in the firemen's band.

"Hans!" I hollers. "Wee gates! So you been shootin' at me, huh?"

"*Ja!*" he grins. "But I miss you already yet *und* I am glad. Tell me yet how is everytink in Roomfordt, Maine, *ja*?"

"Okay," I chirped an' looks at the other kraut what is leanin' over the edge. He don't look as if he feels so good, Pete, an' Hans tells me the guy won't be shootin' no more Spandows in a hurry. Giss I ain't such a bum shot, hey, Pete? Just then Hans thinks of somethin' he had fergot an' waves his arms at me an' hollers like a fool.

"*Ach!*" he yells. "We moost jump, Elmer. The cable yet iss busted. Your airship hit it *und* snapped it, *ja!* We are up going all the time, *ach!*" Then he points at the poor guy hangin' over the edge, Pete, an' he tells me to git that guy's parachute and don't think Hans didn't have some brains, hey? I didn't let no grass grow under my feet gittin' that harness offen the German guy that was finee an' you can imagine how surprised I was about that cable, Pete.

Well, I got the parachute strapped around me an' Hans give a last look at me an' stepped into a lot of sky. I was goin' to do the same when I see a Fokker hangin' around and the kraut in it was already to use me fer a target when I jumped. A mess, hey, Pete?

The balloon was goin' up higher all the time an' if it kept on like it was goin' I'd be steppin' off onto the moon in no time a-tall and it is cold as hell there, Pete, an' I didn't have my heavy underwear on. Well, I grab them Spadow trips an' unload a lotta lead made in Germany right into the Fokker an' it does a funny flipflop an' begins to go down in a lotta long broad jumps.

Well, Pete, I says to myself I'll call it a day an' starts gittin' up nerve enuff to jump outa the basket. An' then what do you think? Three Spads begin poppin' at me. I jump around an' yell at the guys but they can't hear me an' it would make no difference if they did, seein' as how I am in a German balloon. Some *guerre*, hey, Pete?

WELL, bullets start makin' the basket which I am in look like a sieve an' all of a sudden there is a funny noise like the roar of a haybarn fire an' the tempercher gits a hundred an' twenty in the shade an' I look up to see that the bag is shrinkin'. That is the cue for my exit. Them guys is better shots than me, I giss, as they set that there balloon on fire an' if you don't think hydragin burns, Pete, then you shoulda seen this sausage shrival up. I says a prayer an' walks out into nothin'. I drop past a Spad an' keep on goin' until I think I must be near the ground an' I should pull the ripcord of the Heinie bed sheet, which I did.

I fall another thousand feet, I bet, an' then somethin' stop me with a awful wallop. I could hear my neck snap, Pete, honest, an' my Adams apple comes up and if I hadn'ta swallowed quick I woulda lost same. Plus all of them things, my arms is almost torn out by the angel bones an' there I am upside down an' lookin' up at my feet. Well, I'm alive an' that is sure somethin', what, Pete?

I just float down after that an' I know what it feels like to be a eagle now. I git a look at the ground an' it is spinnin' around somethin' awful an' gittin' nearer all the time. I was hopin' all the way down that no rivers or trees would git in my way as landin' in them two things with a parachute is good-bye in any language.

I am almost down when I see a whole army come runnin' toward the place where I am goin' to hit. It is a lotta the A.E.F., Pete, an' that is a break because if they was Heinies, I woulda been diggin' sewers for the Kaiser at this writin'. The balloon drifted over to our side after it got loose, Pete, which explains why I am still with the —th Pursuit Squadron.

Well, nobody ever give me no lessons in parachute jumpin' so how was I to know a guy hit the ground as hard as if he had jumped off a the Woolworth Buildin'? A lotta scenery come up an' knocked me kickin', Pete, an' the wind got a-holt of the bed sheet an' same dragged me acrost two acres of France which is covered with junipers an' rocks until I went through a fence an' into a frog pigpen. I wisht I had been knocked unconscious as a whole fam'ly of pigs started in kissin' me. I giss they thought I was a load of swill,

hey, Pete? Well, I fin'ly got loose from the harness I had hitched to me an' crawled out, which didn't last long as half a dozen sojers jumped on me an' held me down.

"I got the dirty kraut!" hollers one of them.
 "Somebody gimme a bayonet."

You can see what a jam I was in, hey, Pete Them guys seen me jump outa that there balloon an' figgered I was gittin' paid in marks an' was goin' to make sure I wooden be no good for no more wars. I couldn't holler because my face was halfway in the ground so I begin to kick like a mule. Somebody swore somethin' nwful an' yipped out loud about losin' a gold fillin'. I giss they had some sense because they all got off en me an' let me git up which was tough as I ached all over like a ringworm.

"What's the big idea?" I yells at a dough. "You have attackt a American orfiser an' I will mos' likely have ya shot at sunrise."

Then a looie comes up, Pete, an' looks me over.

"You jumped outa that balloon?" he says.

"Well, nobody pushed me!" I retorts an' I am mad clean through. "Didya think maybe I jumped outa a tree?"

"Don't git wise with me, ya dirty kraut!" he shoots back. "You are a prisoner an' if you don't go along peaceful, we'll haveta take you by force"—which means dead or unconscious, Pete.

I TRIED to tell him how I got into the sausage but he give me a dirty laff an' asks did I know the story of Red Ridin' Hood? Can you imagine? I show him my unyform an' almost gits shot fer bein' a spy right on the spot. Well, I am feelin' so bum I don't even feel like fightin' no more so I let them stick bayonets into the seat of my pants an' walks toward the town where the big shots is at. They pushed me into a frog house where a lotta brass hats is playin' checkers. The war is tough on them clucks, hey, Pete? I goes up to one an' demands justice.

"You'll git it," he says an' then asks the looie who I am. The dirty bum tells him I am a Heinie an' that I got on a American flyin' suit which makes me eligible for a execution.

"He's a liar by the clock," I tells the fat brass hat.

"I—" But that is all I git a chancet to say. The big bum tells the looie to throw me in the klink with the other Heinie until further notice.

"I am a American citizen," I yells as they push me out. "I am Lootenant Elmer Hubbard of the air corpse an' I am gonna have Pershin' bust the whole bunch of you when I see him."

All I git in reply is a laff, Pete, an' the next thing I know, I am sittin' in the klink with Hans Heinbockle what is tickled to death about gittin' rid of the *guerre* with all his arms an' legs intack. He had fell right into the same part of the A.E.F. as me. He laffs when I tell him they are thinkin' of shootin' me for a spy. He never did have no brains, Pete. I tells him he oughta go to funerals as he would have a great time at same. We git talk-in' about Rumford Junction an' all the guys back

there for almost a hour when a M.P. sticks his face in through the door an' says I am to git over to headquarters.

"Well, I giss they want to apologize, hey?" I says as I went out. "An' I'm gonna make it hot for 'em. They needn't think they can soften me up. I know my rights as a American citizen."

The M.P. is only a sarge, Pete, an' tells me to shut my trap, an' ain't that a helluva way to run a army, Pete? I walked into where the brass hats is loafin' around an'

they tell me they found out I am who I said I was.

"Well," I starts in, "I suppose you realize your grave mistake now an' wanta smooth things out."

"We do," he springs back. "Major Simms of your squadron wants you for cowardice in the face of the enemy. They shoot ya for that, too."

WELL, Pete, was I burned up? That's what ya git for fightin' for your country, hey? I says to the brass hats, I says, "Well, you have said I am a spy an' a coward in the face of the enemy. I suppose next you'll call me Joodas Iscarrots an' Bendick Arnold. Well, they just remin' me that I am talkin' to superior orfisers an' if I don't look out, I am gonna be court-marshalled for that an' I shut up, Pete, as they most likely woulda thought up some more terrible crimes which I am libel for.

So then I ain't sent back with Hans but they put me in a stable and lock me up with two ugly-lookin' M.P.s which musta had live bulldogs for toys when they was



babies. They tries to git me to say somethin' wise for a exkuse to crack me one but I ain't crazy, Pete, an' I make about as much noise as a oyster with lockjaw. I am there gittin' insulted until sunset when in comes the C.O. an' two of them brass hats, an' Pete, they looks as if their wives has just caught 'em stealin' pennies outa the baby's bank.

"Come outa there, Hubbard!" he hollers at me.
"They can't keep you in there!"

"Oney for about six hours," I says to the major, an' you shoulda heard how dirty I said it, Pete. "Well," I continues, "if this is the way orfisers is treated, I wanta be busted to a private sixth class or somethin'."

The Old Man starts in swearin' some more at the brass hats an' says somethin' to 'em about how they should be in the Salvation Army instead of ours, then turns to me agin. He says he didn't know I jumped outa a balloon until he got here and that if I jumped out I musta been in it oncet. He's a smart guy, hey, Pete?

So I tell him how I did all of same an' that I have a prisoner in the klink which is gonna prove all I say an' I also want the brass hats busted. He says mistakes will happen and lets it go at that. Imagine? But after they give me a coupla shots of conyack, I am swappin' funny stories with the brass hats an' a good time is had by all.

I am a hero, Pete, as I got that balloon, but I don't git no medal for the reason that I didn't have no witness what saw me shoot that Fokker. This is a helluva *guerre* when you haveta bring along your own gallery, hey, Pete? Well, maybe I am gonna have better luck next time as I will try an' git the Heinies to chase me over a fair grounds some place where I can be sure to be saw. But you oughta see them aces, Pete. They treat me with respeck now, so they must know class, hey, Pete?

I suppose, now that they are draftin' all you guys back there, that maybe I will be seein' you soon in the trenches but if so you will haveta salute me, Pete, as I am a orfiser. An' you can't talk to me personal even if I do still owe you for three hamburger sandwiches with onion. Well, in my next I will tell you all about the frog dames. The first word they teach you to understand, Pete, is argent, which is frog for dough. They are the same all over, hey, Pete?

Yours Trooly,
Second Lootenant Elmer Hubbard.
American Air Corpse.