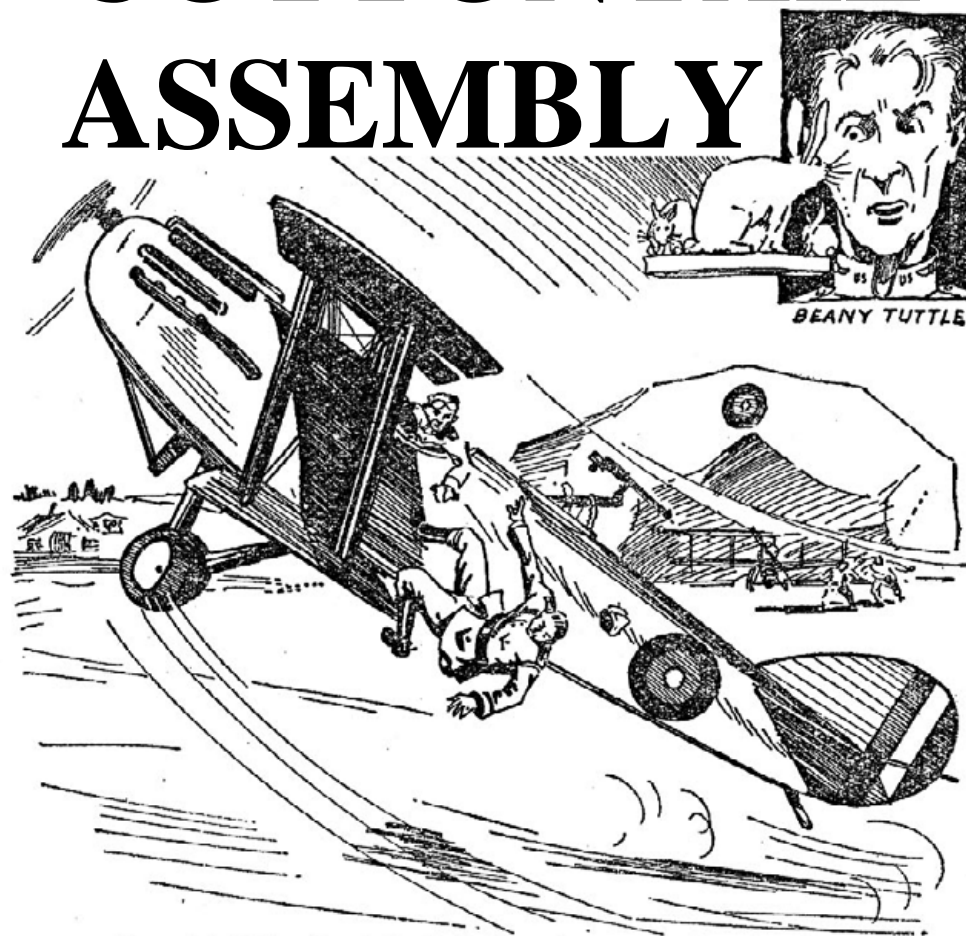


COTTONTAIL ASSEMBLY



Squeak left the side of the D. H. like a button snapping off a shirt

***A White Rabbit and a Red Shirt Are the Absurd Mascots
of a Couple of Sky-Shooting Clowns in an
Uproarious Series of Antics!***

By JOE ARCHIBALD

Author of "Dressed to Kill," "Sky Test," etc.

HAVING Beany Tuttle and Squeak Simpson on the same airdrome was one of the biggest mistakes the Allies made in the whole war. It was a very wise move like trying to mate a cobra and a mongoose. Squeak is a very tough-looking tomato and Beany looks nice on the outside, like a sugar-coated arsenic tablet. Me and Coot Harper are walking

past the officers' barracks one evening after mess when we see Squeak Simpson hammering nails into pieces of two-by-fours.

"You buildin' a dog-house?" Coot asks. "Or is it an icebox for the Jerries you shoot down?"

"It is all because of Beany Tuttle, the slob," Squeak says. "You know how he

can't understand animals. I am buildin' a place for that white rabbit I found yesterday. I named it Frederick. Don't never trust guys who don't love animals."

"You can't blame Beany," Coot says. "You know how these rabbits spread."

Squeak pauses to soothe a white mouse that has crawled out of his pocket.

"I don't see why me and Beany was both born at the right time to be old enough to go to the same war," he complains.

JUST then a terrible howl came out the window of the barracks. Beany Tuttle comes out through the door right afterwards holding up his red woolen shirt. We can see it has got two big holes in it before he waves it in front of Squeak Simpson's face. Beany thinks more of that red shirt than he does of his right eye.

"Lookit what that rabbit done," he yips. "I have it spread out to dry and I weighted it down with them big carrots I stole over at the Frog farm. And now look at it. Put down that hammer, Squeak Simpson, and—"

"Ha, ha," the tough-looking little DH pilot yips, "he puts carrots—ha, ha! Is he bright! He would paint the front of a house with molasses to keep flies away. Of course Frederick would eat them carrots and forget to stop when he come through to the shirt." Then his face clouded up. "Oh-h-h, I bet he's poisoned. Where is he? Where? Freder-r-rick!"

"You stay here and fight," Beany yowls and chases Squeak into the barracks.

The rabbit is weaving its way across the floor like it just consumed a quart of *Schnapps*. It must have been an awful cuff Beany give it as its little pink eyes are all crossed up.

"You big slob!" Squeak hollers and makes a dive for Beany's legs. They are

not hard to find as four-fifths of Beany's frame is from the waist down. The battle was a terrible one. Beany finally gets Squeak down and sits on him. He puts the heel of his hand on Squeak's nose and pushes something fierce.

Just then something jumps on Beany's back. It is Squeak's parrot that he bought from an old, retired Frog sailor. The parrot hooks its undercarriage in Beany's shoulder blades and starts picking short hairs out of his neck with its bill.

"Ow-w-w-w-w-w-w!" Beany roars and jumps clear of Squeak. The parrot lets go and hops to a shelf.

"Voila-a-a-a!" it squawks. "Blow me down—*sacre bleu!*"

"I'll knock you down, you—" Beany falls over the rabbit then and Squeak is on top of him when Puffadder Twombly comes in. He is the C. O. and during the two weeks that Squeak and Beany have been with us he has lost maybe twenty pounds. But he has got pep enough left to drag Squeak to his feet and push him up against the wall.

"Fightin' again, you two, huh?" he bellows.

"I leave it to Coot Harper," Squeak says. "I didn't hit Beany once, sir!" Me and Coot duck out fast.

"Lookit my shirt, Major!" Beany hollers.

"He's cruel to animals, sir," Squeak cuts in. "Would you hit a rabbit?"

We pause outside. "Just show it to me," Twombly yowls. "Then hand me a pickaxe!"

A minute later Squeak Simpson is running out of the barracks with Frederick under his arm. The Old Man chases him half across the field before he gives up. Things calm down for almost an hour and that is a record on the drome of the 91st Squadron. We know it won't last. A big U. S. official gasoline buggy comes in just

ahead of a truck. The truck is loaded with bundles of stuff. It backs up to the Operations shack.

"Maybe it is the back numbers of magazines," Squeak speculates. "I hope they found some Police Gazettes."

In about a quarter of an hour we find out what it is. The Allies call it propaganda.

"We got to fight fire with fire," a brass hat says. "The Germans are dropping papers all over the Fatherland tellin' the people that we are dropping rats and other vermin loaded with typhus germs down on the trenches. The people are getting hopping mad at us and are putting stilts on thirteen-year-old kids and handin' them guns to go up to the Hindenburg line. Here's one sample I picked up. Look at it, men! The dirty liars—"

THE Intelligence brass hat translates the German sheet. It shows a faked picture of some guys working on an old steamship in a dry dock. The print says that it is Allied workmen catching rats to load up with lockjaw germs. It claims the rats will be dropped down into the laps of the Jerry soldiers.

"Why should it be a fake?" Squeak says. "I think it's a good idea!"

"Lieutenant Simpson," Twombly splutters, "get out of here!"

Squeak goes as far as the door.

"Now this propaganda I have brought over will be a sort of counter-attack," the Intelligence man goes on. "It will show pictures of Jerry prisoners in our camps eating what looks like steaks and mushrooms. Of course it was shoe leather the camera men used, but—"

"Why that is a lie, too," Squeak yelps. "It'll git so nobody will trust anybody in this *guerre!*"

"Major," the brass hat erupts, purple-faced, "how long do I have to stand for that?"

"Just until I can find my gun," Twombly howls and charges Squeak. Squeak bounds out of the door just in time.

"He isn't to blame," Beany says. "He only got as far as the primaries in school, Colonel. Wouldn't it save some time if we just hung signboards over a DH9 or two like they do on sandwich men? They could hedgehop over the Heinies and let 'em read—"

"You get out, too, Lieutenant Tuttle," Twombly screeches, jumping up and down.

"That's what you get in this army for offerin' suggestions," we hear Beany say to Squeak outside the door. "Well, just let 'em ask me any thin' again!"

"Handbills, hell!" Squeak says just as plain. "It is the rats they should drop down. The Jerries give us an idea an' we muff it. Intelligence! They call things funny names, don't they, huh, Beany?"

"You come in here, you two wisenheimers!" Twombly yowls. "Come in here!"

"Yessir," Beany Tuttle says and salutes very smartly.

Squeak Simpson executes one that makes you think he is brushing a bee away from the front of his dome.

"You two go over tomorrow early to drop down the first batch," Twombly barks at them.

"Thank you too much," Squeak says. "Will you map out our paper route, Major? We wouldn't want to miss even one Heinie doorstep. I set a record when I carried the *Despatch* back in Peoria. One time, Colonel, I—"

There is quite a squawking coming from the pilots' barracks.

"Excuse me, sirs," Squeak says hurriedly. "It is feeding time for Sinbad, my parrot. If that is all, sir—?"

"I've had enough, Twombly," an Intelligence officer says. "I will report such flagrant lack of discipline when I get to Chaumont!"

"You can if you want," the C. O. says, "but three officers have beaten you to it since Sunday." He flops down and mops up his brow with a bandanna big enough to use as a jib sail.

WHEN the brass hats have gone, the C.O. goes to his quarters. He comes back to the Operations shack chewing on something.

"It is cordite," he explains. "If you chew it long enough, your heart beats faster than an eagle's wings. Then you get examined and are dismissed from the service. But don't say I told you about it."

Coot Harper laughs. "I don't blame you, sir. Have you any left, by any chance?"

"Another piece," Twombly says, "but I may need it. All my family have always had very strong pumps."

Squeak and Beany have another fight before we get to sleep that night. It seems Squeak brought a goldfish over from St. Die and put it in a glass of water until he could find a bowl for it. Beany drank it. He tossed most of the night on his bunk until the fish got defunct. The rest of the time none of us slept.

Two Gothas come flying over about three in the A. M. and started dropping eggs. We have got three bomb-proof shelters on the drome that we run to. Me and Coot and Squeak and Beany are packed close together in one end of a shelter. While the gumdrops from hell are busting outside I feel something nibble at my ear. It has got bicuspid teeth that are in good shape.

"Stop squirmin'," Squeak Simpson says. "It is only Frederick. Do you think I would leave him out there? He thinks it is a cabbage leaf he is chewin'."

Beany howls as a snake wriggles underneath his red undershirt. "I'm gettin' out! It is safer among the bombs. Anyways, nothin' can happen while I have this red shirt on."

We all agree when the Gothas get unloaded that Beany's shirt is quite lucky. All that we have to drag off him is enough elephant iron and boards to build a chateau. It seems he ran into the ammo shed just as a bomb kissed the front door jamb.

"An' we git back at them when the sun rises by throwin' handbills at them," Squeak Simpson says disgustedly, holding an armful of pets. "I bet that'll show the Jerries a thing or three."

Beany doesn't say a thing as the medicos are still slapping the cobwebs out of his skull. He is not seriously hurt as he got hit in the head.

Three hours later he is ready to take off in a DH9 loaded down with propaganda. Squeak Simpson gets into his two-seater from the left side and Beany jumps out of his. Major Twombly runs out of the Operations shack a few minutes later and yells bloody murder. Beany and Squeak are coiled around each other like two playful pythons. Squeak Simpson is trying to find an opening with a wrench.

"What in—?"

"Lieutenant Tuttle will not go over until Squeak spits on the tail assembly of his DH9," Coot Harper says. "He got in from the wrong side!"

"I ain't no superstitious old dame," the little tomato hollers as he misses a swipe at Beany's head. "I will climb in a crate anyway I pl—"

"It's bad luck!" Beany yips. "You ast anybody!"

We finally tear them apart and load them in ourselves. We all sit down and gasp for breath when they finally roll away. Both of the DH9s weave paths among the holes the groundmen are filling up as the Gotha eggs made quite an omelet out of the field.

“You!” Twombley yells at me. “On second thought, you go over too. They may need some help, and anyway I don’t trust those mutts. They are liable to dump that stuff overside in one bunch when they get out of my sight.”

Major Twombley sure knew what he was talking about. You can’t trust them two apes. I catch up with the clucks as they stop on their way to circle over the town of Raon L’Etappe. I see Squeak Simpson’s observer lifting a big package of propaganda up over his head to toss overside.

He stops when Squeak spots me. I get up close and shake my fist at the little tomato. He just thumbs his nose and then turns to holler something at his observer. Beany Tuttle gets wise, too, and heads for the Jerry lines.

IN the next three minutes I find out that it don’t always pay to be honest. Von Deusen and three Pfalz crates hop us just as Beany and Squeak start unloading the propaganda. It is a cinch the Heinies never cut no classes in gunnery school. In less than a couple of seconds all the guns on my DH9 are hot enough to fry bacon on.

Beany and Squeak are not daydreaming neither. They may be eccentric but they can make D H 9s do anything that a barn swallow can do. Von Deusen gets discouraged after awhile as he looks around and sees that he is the only Junker left representing the Kaiser. He heads for the Rhine fast and we go home.

Beany Tuttle’s DH9 acts a little bilious and can’t seem to keep its head up. Squeak

has got a hand over his nose and he keeps it there. Just over the Yankee lines we meet four crates—a Spad, a Nieuport, and a pair of Camels.

“It’s nice of the C. O.s to band together and send us help,” I yell back to my observer. “You can relax now.”

I have never been more mistaken. The four Allied jobs start pounding mayhem into us. Beany Tuttle is on his way to the linoleum before you can say Jack Robinson’s first name. Squeak Simpson loops his DH9 when he is only up about five hundred feet and when I see his crate again, the floorboards are covered with mud.

An anti-aircraft battery wakes up and kicks a wing loose from a Nieuport. It also digs a hole in the fuselage an inch from the seat of my observer’s pants. Me and Squeak get our crates back to Twombley’s stadium and a half hour later Beany Tuttle comes riding in on a truck. He has got an altimeter in his hand.

“It’s all I could save,” he says. “My observer will not be able to take anythin’ but pap for maybe three months. When we hit he bit a piece out of the Lewis gun. That is ruined now, too. Why, hello Squeak! What seems to be wrong with your nose?”

“I don’t dare to take my hand away,” the tough little buzzard says. “I think it’ll drop off if they don’t hurry up with a needle and thread. A Spandau slug sawed the bridge almost in half. Isn’t it great sport carryin’ papers?”

“You say you were attacked by Allied ships?” Major Twombley thunders at me. “Why only an hour ago three officers from the Wing were in here. They said a U. S. payroll car was wrecked last night by two Camels that swooped down on them. There is skullduggery afoot!”

“And it is not crawling on all fours, neither,” Squeak Simpson adds. “Why

don't you call up the Intelligence Department and ask them about it? Or do you think they know anything except maybe printing posters to make the Heinie doughs' mouths water? How long do you have to be in one place before you get a transfer? If it is two weeks give me one right now. I—"

The Allied brass hats go into quite a huddle in Chaumont. It means trouble to anybody who was crazy enough to join up in the Air Force. They tell all the squadrons that there must be a secret Jerry drome near the lines and they have got all the Allied ships there that the *Vons* have shot down from the start of the *guerre*.

"We've got to find it," Twombley says at mess that noon, "or we are lost. How can we tell if we are fighting Germans or—oh, what a mess!"

"Why, it's simple," Squeak Simpson says. "We will tie bows of red ribbons on our wings. I guess it is a gift! I think of everything, it seems like."

"Of course," Beany Tuttle sniffs, "you couldn't possibly find red ribbon in Germany, could you?"

"My gosh, I forgot that," Squeak says. "It's harder than it looks, huh? Well, I got to go and feed my parrot. Frederick has been actin' funny today.' Have you got some paregoric anybody?"

An hour later we have to separate the two crackpots again. Squeak has fed the rabbit a bottle of Beany's favorite cough medicine. Frederick got worse from it.

"You framed me!" Squeak hollers. "I bet you put carbolic in it, you big slob!"

"You're a cock-eyed liar," Beany shouts and hits Squeak on the sore nose. "Feedin' my medicine to rabbits! I'll show ya!"

"Let them kill each other," Coot says. "It'll solve our problem."

We turn around to see Major Twombley yelling at us from the door of

the Operations shack. "Everybody—come here! Call all the pilots—Lieutenant Harper!"

"Oh, we hear you," Squeak Simpson says and comes out of the barracks. His ear is cauliflowering up on him. Beany Tuttle don't look so good either.

WHEN we get to Twombley, walking around in a circle like a dog bedding down for the night, Beany says, "What is it now?"

"Who do you think was in that Nieuport the Archie iron shellacked today?" he yelps.

"Houdini," Squeak guesses.

Twombley is so excited he doesn't even get mad. "It was Lothar von Glotz," he hollers. "He and his brother, the *Rittmeister*, were supposed to be on the Eastern front. That is who has got the secret drome! We've got to find it. Think what it will mean, men! *Rittmeister* von Glotz in a Spad or a Camel sneaking up on our biggest aces! Why, it's terrible."

"Who is the *Rittmeister* von Glotz?" Squeak asks. "Is he a good flyer?"

Beany Tuttle groans. "Maybe you have never heard a thing about Napoleon neither, huh?"

"If I did, I would keep the dirt to myself," Squeak chirps. "I hate gossips. An old dame lived next door to us in Peoria, an'—"

Twombley looks like he is just two breaths ahead of a stroke.

"Don't bother with him," he hollers. "Listen to me, you imitation flyers. We've got to get the secret drome's location or—Who will volunteer?"

Nobody responds very quick. Beany Tuttle suddenly lets out a squeal and jumps two feet from the floor. He almost bumps into the major.

"Why—er—Lieutenant," the C. O. says, "why—let me shake your hand. That

is the way to respond to your country's call!"

I see Squeak Simpson flip something into a corner.

"I—er—look here, sir," Beany says. "Somebody—Squeak Simpson, the fathead, he—"

"Oh, I understand," Twombley says. "I will send him out next as I know he is anxious, too."

"Ha, ha," I says to the little tomato, "you got stuck, too. Oh I saw that pin—"

"It slipped," Squeak says.

THE 91st doesn't fly much the rest of the day. We are two crates and three observers short. Beany Tuttle asks Twombley for my gunner an hour before the time he has to start to look for the Rittmeister's secret drome. The C. O. says he is entitled to anything when he is so close to going West. I make a kick and get insulted for my trouble. Beany don't go out on schedule. He comes running into the Operations shack with his face as pale as a quart of skimmed milk.

"I can't go, Major," he says. "My red shirt is gone! I left it dryin' on the winder sill. It's gone. Oh maybe a goat got it! I can't go as I will get killed sure."

"He can't blame it on me!" Squeak Simpson laughs. "I don't own a goat. He is just stalling as he has got yellow jaundice, Major. I always said Beany was just a big false alarm. Well, I got to go and feed Frederick."

"You get into that ship, Lieutenant Tuttle, or I will have you charged with cowardice in face of the enemy and you will be shot for that, too," Twombley tosses out. "You an' your damn' shirt. Get going!"

"I ain't got a chance," Beany wails. "It's sure death. If Squeak Simpson stole that red shirt—Where is he?"

"Here I am, you big slob," Squeak Simpson yowls and he is as white as an egg, too. "What did you do with my rabbit? It's gone. I will give you five seconds to own up! Then I will jump your frame, Beany Tuttle!"

Major Twombley reels around the Operations shack making funny noises. When he recovers, he picks up an ink bottle and throws it. It goes right past my dome and hits the side of an auto that is pulling up just outside the door. The ink splashes all over the brand new tunic of a big officer and when he comes in his mouth looks like it had been burrowing into a blueberry pie.

"Who did that?" the brass hat hollers, and who is it but Colonel McGivney from the Wing. McGivney and Twombley never did like each other very much anyway.

"It is mutiny here!" the C. O. blasts. "Oh, if I was only commanding a ship on the high seas! I would—"

"You heard me," McGivney yowls. "Major Twombley, it is criminal assault. I want satisfaction. Point out the culprit or—"

"I think a spy done it," I says.

"It come right through the window, didn't it, Coot?"

"Yeah—there's spies everywhere," he says.

"Beany Tuttle, where is my rabbit?" Squeak Simpson yells and doubles his fists.

"I don't know and don't give a damn!" Beany yelps. "You hand over my shirt or I will choke you limb from limb!"

"Silence!" Twombley roars. "Lieutenant Tuttle, you go to your DH9 immediately, or I will arrest you and have you shot at sunrise! You're a coward; are you?"

"Uh—er—ah," Beany says, "I was only clownin'. I'm on my way—yes sir!"

Squeak is still hanging onto the pit of the DH when Beany takes off. "You tell me what you done with Frederick, you—"

Beany bops Squeak with his fist and the little buzzard leaves the side of the DH like a button snapping off a shirt. He rolls over the dirt twelve times by actual count.

"Oh, I hope you get pasted, you big slob!" he yells when he gets to a sitting position. "I hope they hit you with six Archie shells, six tanks of poison gas and some liquid fire. Oh, if you ever dare to come back alive, Beany Tuttle!"

"Disgraceful," Colonel McGivney splutters. "Such hoodlums! Major, I do not think much of the way you handle the men of your squadron, I must say!"

"No? Well, McGivney, what can you expect when they don't allow me to use blackjacks? Expect a guy to train lions with a fly swatter! Go ahead and bust me, McGivney. I will make you a present of quite a block of good-paying stocks if you will."

We all go out and make bets whether Beany will get back or not. Squeak Simpson is sitting on his bunk chewing on a horseshoe.

"I wouldn't mind," he says, "if I only knew Frederick was in a good home. But I don't trust Beany. I won't eat no more stew at the mess. You can't tell what'll be in it now. I would feel like a cannibal if I should eat part of Frederick. That big bum!"

BEANY don't return that night. Nor the next. Major Twombly sends a cablegram to Beany's folks and we all drink a toast to him in the mess shack. Squeak Simpson just sits on his cot when we lift the glasses of grog and looks into space.

"It's tough," I says. "You and Beany was such bosom pals."

"Sinbad is pinin' away," he says. "He

misses Frederick! If I was only sure Beany didn't—"

"Worryin' about a rabbit with Beany Tuttle gone West," Coot Harper growls. "You'd ought to be ashamed. Say', did you steal his shirt, you—?"

"Anyone says so is a liar," Squeak yips. "Anyway, I don't believe anythin' could kill Beany Tuttle. You wait and see! I bet he went to Switzerland or Spain or some place. He didn't have that red shirt on. He is either at a bull fight right now or a yodelin' bee."

You can't do anything with the little tomato so we leave him alone. The next day Twombly says somebody else will have to try and find the secret drome.

"A Camel sneaked up early this mornin' and knocked off a Frog ace," he says. "We can't let it go on. That *Rittmeister*—"

"Maybe tonight I will feel in the mood," Squeak Simpson says. "Speak to me later about it."

"Lieutenant," Twombly says to me, "find yourself an observer and go out and see what you can see for yourself. Maybe you can spot some camouflage or something. Hop to it. We've got to have action!"

"I will be your gunner," Squeak says. "I been tired sittin' on my pants the last twenty-four hours. I come over here to fly, not to imitate Sittin' Bull. Boy, if we could find the drome, huh?"

It is the middle of the P. M. and the skies are as hazy as the ozone just over a burning swamp. We don't see the two-seater coming until it is almost breathing in our faces. It is a DH9 and on the side of it is a picture of Happy Hooligan. Squeak Simpson leans over close to me and hollers like a loon.

"It's Beany comin' back!" he shouts. "I told ya nothin' would kill that long-legged snipe. Well, we can turn back

now—”

We certainly do. The observer of the DH9 swings his Lewis guns on us and stitches some designs in our fuselage.

“It’s Heinies!” Squeak hollers then. “Let me work on the bums. Stop stuntin’ this thing. Oh-h, poor Beany! It looks like—they—got his ship—and—”

WE give the Heinies a battle until three Fokkers show up. Then we run. We land the DH9 on the drome and it has got more holes in it than a window screen.

“It’s no use,” Squeak says to the C. O. when we walk into the Operations shack. “Everything we see is not what it should be. We saw Beany’s DH and there was Germans in it. I hope the Kaiser is not in disguise and sitting on the British throne. You needn’t bother about asking me to go over tonight. I can’t drum up interest enough!”

“If I only could be allowed to fly,” Twombly groans, “I’d show you buzzards how to be a patriot. I’d—”

“You can ask,” Squeak tells him. “Just call up the Wing.”

“Ah—er—huh—well,” Twombly stutters, “it is quite a time since I juggled a stick. Maybe I’d only be cracking up another ship. Ha, ha!”

“Ha, ha!” echoes Squeak and drifts out.

Everything is as quiet as could be expected on the drome at dusk when everyone is lifted off things they’re sitting on by a wild yell. We all run out of the barracks. Squeak Simpson is running across the field holding something in his arms. It is Frederick, the rabbit.

“I found him!” he trumpets, “Where do you think, fellers? He got scairt of Beany. You see that old crate out there under the apple trees? Well, that was where he was hiding. I was passin’ by and Frederick

crawled out through a hole in the canvas that is stretched over the rear pit. He is awful skinny, poor li’l feller. I will take him over and let him browse in the Frog truck garden across the field.”

“Go ahead,” Coot Harper sighs. “Who cares? But look out for the cannon that peasant shoots. You’d better get back as Twombly is going to ask for volunteers to—”

Squeak pays no attention to us. But in about twenty minutes he is back and heads straight for me.

“Listen,” he says, “I got a scheme. We will go over and look for the secret drome. You and I and Frederick!”

“Beany’s death sure hit the little buzzard harder than we thought,” Coot Harper says. “Why don’t you just ask for a week in Paree, Squeak? I am sure your dome will clear up then and—”

“I will talk to you alone,” Squeak says to me loftily. Behind the hangar where we keep B Flight’s DH9s he shows me a good-sized bottle. It is empty. The label on it only a Greek could read.

“It’s a medicine bottle,” the little tomato says. “Now listen to me.”

“How can I help it?” I bark at him. Ten minutes later I walk right away from him. “Nothin’ doin’,” I says. “It’s batty. Get away from me now, Squeak. Leave me alone.”

At mess a half hour later he tells Twombly and two brass hats that he would go over to flush up the hidden Heinie crates if there was a man in the squadron big enough to go with him.

“But they ain’t,” he says. “So if I have to go alone, I will. It is my pal, Beany, the Krauts washed up. I won’t let them git away with it, no sir!”

“That is the spirit,” a brigadier says. “Come on, now, fellows. You goin’ to let a little officer like this do it all alone? Why—I’m sure you were only kidding

him. How about you, Lieutenant?" He looks at me.

"Oh, all right," I sigh. "It's only a question of time when they would make me. Come on, Squeak, we'll get our flying duds on."

"That propaganda the Krauts are spreading," Squeak says to the C.O., "might backfire on them. I will let you know if we get back."

"Huh?" Twombly hoots.

"Don't anybody talk to him," I says. "I only wish I hadn't."

When I get ready to climb into the DH9 that the ack emmas have got warming up, Squeak is in the rear pit.

"You fly it," he says. "I got to look after Frederick here. He still looks a bit pale. I wonder what happened to him."

"Even if he has a relapse, don't you stop shootin' them Lewises," I howl as I give the DH the gun.

It don't take long to get far away from the safe side of the *guerre*. I head the crate toward the foothills of the Vosges as I figure that is where Heinies would put a landing field for the captured Allied battle wagons. We don't any more than fly over the little town of Cirey when a gun battery opens up on us. Squeak leans over my shoulder and brushes spent scrap iron from his shoulders.

"There ain't no trenches down there," he hollers. "That gun is protectin' that *Rittmeister's* hangout. Make believe we got hit an' land some place!"

"I ought to have more brains than listen to you," I groan, and cut the gun. "But I guess I ain't. Hang on, you mushhead!"

WE make a bumpy landing in a pasture filled with cows. That is what we think. One is a bull. It chases us a half mile and we beat it to a fence by just one step. When we pancake over into the

bushes on the other side, we hear some dirty laughs.

"They ain't elves, I bet," Squeak says and looks up. There are three Heinie officers looking at us and one has a windshield over one eye.

"*Ach*, a odder ship ve gedt," the tallest one rumbles. "*Und zwei* Yangkee fliers alzo. Coom vunce, ve show dem by der estate, *nein? Himmel, was ist?*" He shoves a hand toward Squeak's chest. Frederick has got his head peekin' out.

"Hassenpfeffer, hein?" he yips. "Ha, das ist der luck, ja, Fritz? *Ach*, das ist vhat I, der Rittmeister, likes besser!" He grabs at the rabbit and it sinks its teeth into his big, thick thumb.

"Oh, zo you bite me, *ja?*" the Heinie yowls. "I show you vunce!"

"Oh-h-h," Squeak Simpson says and pulls a bottle out of his pocket. "*Herr Rittmeister*, he bites you, *ja?* Snap your jaws quick vunce. See if they stick. Oh-h-h, an' no serum left! This is terrible. You can't be more'n twenty-two or three years old, neither, can you?"

"Vha-a-at?" Von Glotz hoots. "You talk aboutt der serum? Mein jaws—*ach, Himmel!* You hear, Fritz?" The Heinie's hat lifts right off his dome and his pan turns green like a lily pad. He starts opening and closing his mouth like a goldfish in a bowl.

"I carry this for antidote," Squeak says. "But it's empty, mein Herr. You see my pet won't bite me, ha, ha! It was a great idea the Kaiser give the Allies. Loadin' up rats an' rabbits an' things with typhus and lockjaw germs. They went and done it."

"Und—und der rabbit he ist—? *Nein! Ach, Himmel!*"

"The bottle is empty," I says. "We used the last of it on three Heinie prisoners who hid in a cellar filled with rats. Try your jaws again, *Rittmeister*. If it ain't

lockjaw, it is typhus you will get unless we can hop you up with some serum.”

“*Himmel!*” Von Glotz groans. “You take me vhere iss idt der doktor, *hein?* I haff der *Fraulein* und der *Mutter* und *zwei* sisters. *Donnervetter*, I feel a liddle sick.”

“What?” Squeak says. “And lose your Air Force? Why, the Kaiser would—”

“Der Kaiser, bah!” the Rittmeister howls. “Don’t waste time, Herr Leutnants. *Ach, Donner und Blitzen!* You take me to der serum! *Mach schnell!* *Ach*, you shouldt not waste time! Listen vunce, I gedt by der knees.”

“What do you think?” Squeak says to me. “Shall we just let him die right here or—?”

“I would waste no time,” I yip at him and step on his foot. Squeak swears and almost wallops me in the ear. “Where is the lieutenant you shot down in the DH a couple of days ago?” I shoot out quick to the Rittmeister.

“Yeah, my pal Beany,” Squeak hollers.

“Der pilot he runs away. Ve gedt der gunner,” Von Glotz says. “Budt please—chentlemen—listen vunce! I t’ink idt ist my jaws gedt aches now. Der *Leutnant* he hides some place, *ja*. Ve don’t catch him, *nein*.”

“That is what I told you,” Squeak says to me. “Any time they kill Beany Tuttle in just one war! Well, c’mon, *Rittmeister*, we only have maybe half an hour to get you to the needle.”

“You chentlemen go back to der *Staffel*,” von Glotz says to his gang. “After der var in Munich I vill maybe see you—if I don’t die. *Hoch!*”

They say “*Hoch*” too and beat it.

“Hurry,” Squeak says, “we ain’t got time to lose.” We run the Rittmeister across the cow pasture and what do we see but somebody getting chased by the bull. It is a guy after our DH, none other than Beany Tuttle himself. His clothes hang

from him like Rip Van Winkle’s and he is scratched all over like he massaged himself with blackberry bush branches.

“Wait for us!” Squeak yelps. “It’s me, Beany! Yoo-hoo-o!” Beany turns around and gapes.

“H-HUH? Hello, Squeak,” he says. “Thanks for coming after me. I run into a bear’s den when I was forced down. It was an awful fight I had with the bear, but I licked it. Oh, boys, hurry before—”

“Nobody’ll touch us,” Squeak says. “Ha, ha, did you see any cub bears I could maybe have for a pet? Let’s go back an’ see—”

Beany and I conk him on the head and load him into the rear pit. Squeak don’t come to until we are up in the air and headed for home and Major Twombly. The Rittmeister is on one wing and Beany is hanging to a strut on the other.

It seems that the other Heinies down on the hidden drome got suspicious of us and told each other that maybe we were stringing the Rittmeister. They telephoned every Heinie drome and gun battery along the front. Squeak Simpson has to start swinging the Lewis pipes to knock off two Fokkers. He gets one in the bread box, then leans over me.

“Is that shootin’?” he says. “Boy, me and Frederick saved the day. I got that drome spotted an’—say, who hit me back there?”

“Another Fokker is belting hell out of us!” I holler. “Will you please see to it? I can’t do loops and things with all the company we have got, you fathead!”

Squeak grunts something and goes back to work. He settles down in the office and transfers all the ammo we have left in the drums into the nose of a Heinie battle bus. I have to sideslip once and we almost lose Beany. All of him slips over the edge

of the wing, but three of his fingers. That is all that saves him. That and a burst of shrapnel that warmed his pants and lifted him right back onto the wing.

Squeak laughs. "I bet he wouldn't ask to be saved like this again. I will have to apologize to Beany, though, about Frederick, huh?"

We land with quite a crash in front of Major Twombly and some brass hats a few minutes later. There is a big streak of gasoline burning on the ground to light our way in and the *Rittmeister* falls off the wing and sits right down in it. He howls like a coyote, jumps up and runs toward the C.O.

"Der serum for der bite, where ist das?" he yips.

"Petrol don't bite," a brass hat scoffs.

"**W**HAT'S he talkin' about?" the major says. "Why, Lieutenant, you and Squeak brought Beany back! Why—say—this is von Glotz you brought in! Where did you—?"

"We just picked him up," Squeak explains. "He thinks he is getting typhus germs and lockjaw fever. I bet he would believe you if you told him a stork brought me, Major!"

Beany says even a Kraut wouldn't be that dumb. Anybody would know it was something that had fur and walked on all fours.

"Vha-a-a-at? You trick me, ja? *Ach, Gott!*" The *Rittmeister* begins to hop up and down and act very displeased about things. "*Dumkopf*, I am. *Ach! Himmel*, giff by me der Luger! I shoodt meinself!"

"It was the empty bottle I showed him," Squeak says to the gallery. "I says it was an antidote. I knew he would reach for Frederick when he peeked out of my coat.

Krauts like rabbit stew. They call it hassenfeathers. Well, Frederick bit him an' I says, oh my, you are filled up with lockjaw now! He begged us to bring him back to get some serum."

Just then the rabbit jumps out of Squeak's coat and bounds as fast as it knows how to the old crate under the apple tree. It scrambles through the canvas covering the pit and soon is out of sight.

"See, that is where it was hidin'," Squeak says. "It is still scairt of Beany. Come on and I will show you."

When we get over to the old two-seater, Squeak Simpson and I tear away the rotting canvas and look in. Beany follows us.

"Huh—er—why this pit is full up with baby rabbits! Why—we've got to change his—her name, ain't we? I see it all now! He—she—it had to find a private bassinet some place. Look, Beany! Come up here. Lookit! That is your red shirt them little rabbits are nestled in. Why, Frederick—er—she dragged that here to make a soft bed. Ain't that cute, Beany?"

Beany Tuttle just turns around and tears a strut out of the old two-seater.

"Put that down!" Squeak hollers. "Fight like a man with your two bare fists, you—"

But it seemed that Beany was bent on using the strut. Squeak Simpson starts running when he sees he can't talk Beany out of it. An hour later he is up in an old church steeple three miles away. Beany Tuttle sits down close by with the strut in his lap. It takes three M.P.s and two ambulance drivers to drag him away.

"It's the last time I ever save the big slob!" Squeak howls down from the belfry.