

# Peck's Bad Boy in an Airship

## HE HUNTS DOWN HIS PA IN PARIS

The greatest relief I ever experienced was getting off of that cattle ship, which I did somewhere in France, because the ship had become so foul smelling that one had to stay on deck to breathe, and there was no more fun to have, 'cause the officers and crew got on to me, and everyone expected to be blown up or electrocuted if they got near to me, and the last three days they wouldn't let me eat in the cabin or sleep in my hammock, so I had to go down with the cattle and eat hot bran mash, and sleep in the hay. Gee, but when you eat hot bran mash for a few days you never want to look at breakfast food again as long as you live.

I traded my electric battery to a deck hand for a suit case, and so I looked like a tourist, because I went to a hotel and got a square meal, and had a porter paste some hotel ads. on my suit case, and I took a train for Paris, looking for Pa, 'cause I knew he wouldn't be far away from the bulvards.

I left my baggage at a hotel where we stopped when we were in Paris before, and the man who spoke shattered English told me Pa was rooming there, but he was not around much, because he was being entertained by the American residents, and had some great scheme that took him away on secret expeditions often, and they thought he was either an anarchist or a grifter, and since the assassination of the King and crown prince of Portugal the police had overhauled his baggage in his room several times, but couldn't find anything incriminating, so I had my baggage sent to Pa's room, and went out to find Pa, and pick up something that would throw suspicion on him if he showed any inclination to go back on me when I found him.

It was getting along toward dark when I walked down a bulvards where Pa used to go when we were

filled a big balloon that looked like a weiner sausage, with gas that he made over a fire out in a field, and the inventor and I got on a bamboo frame under the balloon, and he turned on the gasoline that runs the wheel for steering, and they cut her loose and we went up about 50 feet and sailed around the country a half a mile either way and watched Pa and the wife of the inventor as they sat under a tree and talked politics.

We came back after a while and Pa was proud of me for having so much nerve, and I told him the government at home was complaining because Pa didn't go up in the airships, 'cause they said he couldn't buy airships intelligently unless he tried them out, and that he didn't look out they

The Fireworks Went Off—The Woman Threw a Fit, and Pa Raised Out of the Smoke.



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The cove must of busted his apern string, an' run for it. Where's your nurse, little 'un?' hollers Silver Anderson, the Swine.

He just grinned sort of sheepish an' never said nothin', and goin' red as a artill'ry blankit. I asked him what's his name, an' he hauls out a little silver mounted bizness an' pulls out a visitin' card, handin' it to Billy McNutt. You orter seen us fellers open our winders an' look at it. That's what.

There was some as got their everlastin' discharge—honorable; some got a big go at servin' their country in hospitals gittin' well; some made crutches out o' crooked sticks, an' stayed away from the Sawbones to fight for grub; an' there wa'n't no sorrier when the bloody Hidagoes hung out a shirt on their back porch, an' quitt the game.

Now, in course of knockin' round barracks for 20 year, in one regt an' another, I've seen some curious things. Chasin' Indian devils over alkali plains an' in the Bad Lands, an' makin' little maps of Alaska, puts a man on sentry-go over more'n a ten-acre lot, an' interjects curious folks; but Pluribus beat the hull outta to a standstill.

After Pecos Bill Shafter took a pass down to the village, an' raisin' round our flag over the palace, there wa'n't nothin' to do but swap baccy, an' git the fever, which last me an' Billy did; not bad, but we didn't notice things for a day or two. Then we saw Pluribus was goin'. The hustlin' an' rushin' an' excitement had kept him up, an' his sort of forgot he had a home an' a mother, but it took him sudden, an' that kid was dyin' because he couldn't git up an' dust for his ma. Home-sick! Dyin' for his mother jest as certain as if he was mortal wounded.

"Pluribus would only cry," says Billy, bein' a great lad for the wind min', "it'd bring him right, wimmin does; but he sets them with his eyes big an' shiny—like Mickey Hogan's woman when they told her he had cashed in. Gawk, it's wicked."

"Billy," says I, "the kid'll never see his home again, if he don't git up quick."

"Wot yer givin' me?" says he.

"Struth," says I.

"Dyin'?" says McNutt, scared an' whisperin' like folks do in a room with a corpse.

"Yep; sure thing. He's just a-fadin' in' our like snow before a Montana chinook."

The Q. M. department started us back to the states on a through packet from hell, an' the Old Boy himself was at the hellum.

Down in the stiilin' hold they put us; with a few lights, dim an' faint in the fog of fever breath. Bunks in tiers, with the grinnin' ghost of what had been a sojer in every one. It was a whole graveyard, stirrin' at the last reville. On deck it was as bad, or worse. How could fellers sleep with empty bellies an' their blood on fire, an' listenin' to men in the hospital shriekin' an' dyin'—every one in his own terrible way? No two men ever die alike. Some just quit breathin'; some prayed; some cursed; some habbed with their folks, laughin' an' talkin', pattin' hands an' sayin' ba-by talk. Crazy! We was all kind of off'n our nats.

Me an' Billy crawled up an' sat by Pluribus in the hospital, never sayin' a word. The kid never knowed us, an' never wanted nothin'. His mind was a blank to his surroundin's, an' he didn't seem to suffer much. Just was dopey; smilin' to himself, an' talkin' to his ma in a quiet happy way that made me an' Billy creepy, knowin' it wa'n't real. I piffed Billy while we was waitin'. Poor little Pluribus had the easiest detail, after all.

Billy an' Pluribus was gittin' thin, though he stayed with his friend when they was any. I heerd Billy argyin' with him.

"Pluribus," says Billy, "gimme your shovel, an' you rest yourself like a nice boy."

"Thanks, Billy," said the youngster, proud like, "you ain't so many, an' this is my detail. You're just come in, ain't you?"

Billy laughed sort of soft, an' said he guessed he could stand it better' Pluribus could. Then he made a pass for the shovel, but the kid was quick an' wouldn't let him.

"Darn it," says Billy, "you'll kill yourself in them hellish trenches, dyin' like an Eyetalian in a sewer. Let's see your lunch-hocks."

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