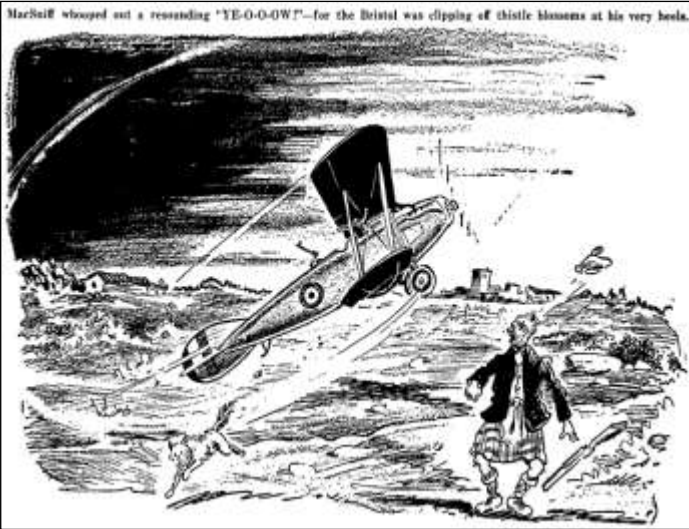


The Spider and the Flyer

A PHINEAS PINKHAM YARN By Joe Archibald



LIEUTENANT PHINEAS PINKHAM did not think he was doing much on the day he knocked a pair of “braw Hoons”—“doughty Huns” to you—off the tail of a Bristol fighter that he had spotted anteloping out of the Boche backyard in the late phase of the Big Tiff. Said Bristol was hightailing it through the scraposphere like a pooch that had sat down on a thistle.

Indeed, there was a picture of a thistle on the fuselage of that Limey sky wagon and the pilot had his name—CAPT. GREGORY MACSNIFF—printed in large letters underneath the flower of Scotland.

But Phineas Pinkham had not the slightest idea of the Bristol jockey’s pedigree when he dropped down on the Krauts and stopped them from singeing a kilt.

As a matter of fact, the patriot from Boonetown, Iowa, took a lusty cuffing around from the Heinies before he shook himself loose over Allied real estate. Then when doughs swarmed around his Spad after its landing near a first aid station at Fleury, Phineas burrowed his way out of the wreckage and asked for some gravel.

“He’d oughta be dead,” one dough said, scratching his scalp. “An’ it’s gravel he wants. What does he think he is—a hen?”

“Oh, I ain’t out of my dome,” the freckled pilot snorted. “I just want to swallow some to see if I can hold it. I’ve been hit with everythin’ but the Kaiser’s wooden horse, and— Hey, make yourself useful somebody, an’ help get this barb wire off me, will ya?”

PHINEAS did not arrive at the drome of the Ninth Pursuit Squadron south of Barle-Duc until after supper. He then eased his bruised and aching torso out of a tin

bathtub tacked on the side of a mechanical bug, saying to the Yank who straddled it:

“You can put the limersine away for tonight, Bitters. I won’t be goin’ to the opera. Haw-w-w!” The incurable joker then tripped into the Frog farmhouse that was squadron headquarters expecting verbal pyrotechnics from Major Garrity, but to his surprise the Old Man was waiting for him with outstretched hand.

“Oh yeah?” snorted the prodigal. “You ain’t kiddin’ me. Lemme see your other lunch hook, as it is behind your back and I bet it’s doubled up. I wasn’t born yesterday. I’m warnin’ you, sir, as I can’t take even one more wallop an’ live. If a lark flew up an’ kicked me, I would faint.”

“Now, Pinkham,” the C.O. said soothingly, “you misjudge me. Ha! Ha! Look—here’s my other hand.”

“I still think somethin’s wrong,” Phineas insisted, “but I—er— you have company, huh?”

Major Rufus Garrity nodded and beamed. “Lieutenant Pinkham, I want you to meet Captain MacSniff of the Royal Air Force. He is the chap you saved from the Jerries this afternoon. Captain MacSniff, this is Lieutenant Pinkham, our pilot who—”

“Hoot mon!” Phineas interrupted. “I have heard of you, Captain. Haw-w-w! They say you throw Vickers lead around like it was nickels. Knocked off fifteen Krauts with fifteen bursts! If that is not bein’ tight with ammo, I am—”

“Laddie,” MacSniff broke in, “I thocht I was a coopse oot there wi’ my obsairver aboot gone an’ me guns jommed! Thank ye, sirr!”

“A Pinkham only thinks of doin’ his duty,” Phineas grinned. “What would the soda makers do if there wasn’t no Scotch around, huh? Where’s Glad Tidings Goomer?” he then hollered. “I could eat Sergeant Casey’s dungarees fried. Sit doon Captain, an’ have a wee muckle of grub wi’ me, yes?”

“Nae, lad,” Captain MacSniff shook his head. “But I weel hae a waird wi’ ye after ye’ve supped. I weel be wi’ the Major ‘til then.”

“Huh!” sniffed Phineas when the flying Scot walked into the Operations office with Garrity. “Them Scotch bums talk worse than Frogs. What’s he doin’ here, Bump?”

“You could fall into an incinerator and come out with frostbite, you lucky stiff.” Lieutenant Gillis wailed. “Here I been wantin’ to go to Scotland myself to see where I was born, an’ now in comes this oatmeal fiend an’ _an’—says he’s takin’ you over there with him. You!

An' he's a friend of the King an' he's in the Limey Intelligence. He says you an' him—",

"Me?" Phineas gulped, choking on a biscuit. Goin' to Scotland? Oh yeah? What would I do over there with them tightfists. huh? They even make short bread there. So that bum thinks Phineas Pinkham is goin' to leave a swell guerre to go over an' listen to bagpipes squeal, huh? That is what I git for savin' kilties. Well, you wait an' see if I go!"

ONE hour later Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham was ticketed for a journey across the Channel to the land of Annie Laurie, heather, scones, and thistles. It seems that Captain MacSniff had to hop over to the Isles to investigate rumors of Kraut skullduggery rife on the home soil, and he told Major Garrity that a man of Phineas Pinkham's incomparable talents would be more help to him on his mission than gills to a fish. So the Old Man called the Boonetown miracle man in and told him the story as Captain MacSniff sat nearby trying to suck smoke out of an old briar that had been overloaded with weed from the Major's humidior.

"Say," Phineas exploded, "you've laid the cards on the table—but they all look like jokers to me. I ain't goin' to Scotland.

Now if there's still some spies in Parea, I will consider workin' there as an intelligent bum, an'—"

"Shut up, Pinkham!" the Old Man boomed. "You'll go where you're sent. Even if it's to Pago Pago, wherever the hell that is. Anyhow, Captain MacSniff will arrange everything with Chaumont. I'd say you're a lucky guy and don't know it. Now get your stuff packed, Pinkham and be ready to leave day after tomorrow. And no tip!"

"Awright," Phineas tossed out. "But I will write my Congressman. I am an American citizen, an' did not join the Air Corps to hunt down Krauts with kilts on. It is a frame-up! I will—"

"Whisht, mon!" Captain MacSniff cut in. "Scotland is nae sae bad. The lassies—"

"Annie Laurie, huh?" Phineas interrupted him with disdain. "I bet Babette could give her cards an' spades—"

"Get out of here!" Major Garrity roared. "The Captain will give you your orders an' tell you all he thinks you should know. Your walking papers'll be ready, Pinkham, in short order." Then he chirped: "Ah-h-h-h, it's going to be quiet around here. Captain MacSniff, have a cigar. Have the whole box!"

"I'll get even! I'll show you," the victim raged. "I've got some pull in Washington, an'—"

THREE days later Captain Gregory MacSniff of the British Intelligence and Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham of the Yankee Air Force were heading for the Scottish

frontier on a Limey rattler. And the Scot had begun to get free with words as the iron horse galloped along the rails cutting through Nottingham. He told Phineas that Scottish folk along the Firth of Solway had begun to get the jitters and that a fisherman had claimed to have seen a Heinie pigboat slipping through the fog that always hung over the Firth as thick as porridge.

"A sub, huh?" Phineas said disparagingly. "Aw, it was only a big halibut or somethin' that he saw. I got a good mind to get off at the next stop an' desert. What if a tin fish did go in there? Maybe the Heinies want some shooting on the moon—and what could them Krauts do in Scotland? It is silly!"

"Laddie," Captain MacSniff said patiently, "I weel tell ye more of me thochts about the Hoons. Leftenant, I doot verra mooch if ye ken that there's a verra big amoonition center at Gretna Green."

"Haw-w-w-w-w!" the rebellious Yank emitted the first guffaw he had indulged in since leaving Sunny France. "Gretna Green's where they polish rice to throw at couples who go there to get married. I've heard of that place where Limeys run to get welded. So that's where we—"

"Mon," MacSniff said. "England has a verra big cordite manufacturing center in that toon. Whisht, laddie, an' if the Gairmans should be thinkin' of bombin' it the noo— Ah, Leftenant, a cauld shiver coorses doon me spine! Boot cheer up! One whole week we'll hae at Dumbellton wi'oot thochts ither than to enjoy oursel's. Shootin' a grouse or two on the moor, Leftenant, an'—"

"I am gettin' paid to shoot Krauts, not grice," Phineas bridled. "It's all a fake, as you just wanted a rest. Where's the conductor? I am gettin' off!"

"Noo, noo, laddie," said Captain MacSniff, beginning to be fed up. "I am a verra patient mon, aye! Boot I noo have a mind to cloot ye one on the lug. Ye weel take your orders from Captain MacSniff—an' the fairst one, laddie, is to keep a civil tongue in your head."

"Somethin' tells me," Phineas muttered to himself as he leaned back in his seat, "that I'll have to smack this Scotch bum! Huh, rain in France all the time, an' fog that you could dice up like carrots over here. I would give a thousand francs for a sunburn."

PHINEAS suffered through the remainder of the journey with bad grace. The last stage of the trip found him and MacSniff riding on a two-wheeled wagon over a road that seemed to have been ploughed up. They rode on through a heavy mist like two artillerymen sitting on a gun carriage. The driver was a bewhiskered little Gael whose pipe Phineas was sure was loaded with skunk cabbage leaves. But until the road slanted toward a big house that loomed before them in the fog, the Yank kept

his miserable thoughts to himself. At sight of the house, however, he burst out in loud lament.

"I bet Dracula meets us!" he wailed. "Once I read about—that's it, I bet. You're a vampire, MacSniff, an' I'm your victim. Adoo, you human leech—I'm leaving."

But Captain MacSniff grabbed Phineas and made him listen to reason. "Mon alive, I've haird ye was balmy, boot I doot if the Yanks knew just how balmy ye really are. 'Tis the ancestral home of the MacSniffs ye see, mon. This is Dumbellton, an' Robert the Bruce himsel' slept over one nicht on his way to—"

"Oh yeah?" Phineas said. "I was in an ol' farmhouse in New York state once—the only one George Washington never slept in. I got my name in the Boonetown Clarion an'—brrrrr-r-r-r! It's cold, huh? An' where's the fish market? I can smell fish."

"Dumbellton, laddie," explained MacSniff, "is nae far frae the Firth. On a clear day, Leftenant, ye can see the fishin' skiffs frae the windows. Whisht, an' here we are, Pinkham. Hame ag'in. Hame, sweet sweet, hame!"

Phineas got down from the wagon stiffly, stretched himself, and stared around him. MacSniff nudged him, but Garrity's contribution to the Allied Intelligence seemed as if frozen to the spot.

"Look out there," he exclaimed, pointing excitedly, "those things look like sky crates to me. If this soup would only get thinner, I—"

"Planes?" MacSniff queried. "Weel! Weel! 'Tis a couple o' braw laddies frae the drome at Carlisle, no doot. Forced doon in the fog, I'd lay a wager. They're S.E.5's, laddie. Blessin's tae a fleein' mon. Come, lad, intae the hoose."

"Weel," Phineas enthused, "I feel more to hame now. Hoot mon, an' a wee duck an' Doris. Sky buggies, huh? Things are pickin' up. An' do we get somethin' to fly in?"

"Aye, Pinkham," said the Scotchman. "A Bristol hae been placed at oor disposal. Should be here the noo."

There were two Limeys in the big reception hall of Dumbellton Castle when the two flyers from the palpitating Western Front walked in. They were sitting near a big roaring fire sipping stuff that was not Oolong. Captain MacSniff glanced at them with eyebrows raised questioningly, whereupon they introduced themselves as Leftenants Whittleby and Spofford.

"Pip pip!" chortled Phineas. "Jolly night, eh? Fawncy meetin' you chaps here, what? A bit of bawright, ol' beans. Haw-w-w-w! What do you bums shoot around here with S.E.5's? Rabbits? I don't see why they don't send you to France, as we are as shorthanded there as angle worms."

"Weel, weel," said MacSniff hastily, "'tis nae a bonnie nicht for flyin'. Make yoursel's at hame, laddies, an' I'll hae Angus stir us up some food. Coptain MacSniff is the

name, Leftenants. The braw lad wi' me is Leftenant Pinkham of the Yankee Fleein' Corps. Acquaint yoursel's wi' one anither, gentlemen, an'—"

A glass of giggle water abruptly slipped from the hand of one of the Limey pilots and irrigated a big fur rug lying in front of the hearth. "Ah—er—Leftenant," gulped the startled buzzards, "did you say—Pinkham?"

"Yeah," Phineas grinned. "I'm gettin' famous, huh? But don't believe everything you hear, old tomatoes. I—er—" The freckled Spad pilot suddenly dropped into a chair near a big table and gaped wonderingly at what he saw—a big bowl in the middle of the table with a little wine in the bottom of it. "Huh—is that one of them wassail bowls I've heard they have in England?" he finally asked one of the Limeys.

"Why—er—of course, ol' top," Leftenant Spofford replied. Then Whittleby moved toward the mantle and took down two goblets from their place near a big clock. "Uh—er—we were no end thirsty, old bean. Made pigs of ourselves, eh what?"

Phineas was now toying with a jar of marmalade, his hands working deftly. "I didn't ask," he grinned.

CAPTAIN MACSNIFF came back then. And Phineas looked him over from head to foot, taking in the kilt the Scotchman had donned. "Boys," he snickered, "that skirt is somethin' not to be caught in when there's a blizzard, huh?" He thought of what might be done with a jarful of ants he had back in Barle-Duc.

"I didna ask your opinion, Pinkham," the Scot bristled as Leftenant Spofford whisked the bowl from the table and passed it to Whittleby. "The tartan of Clan MacSniff were at Bannockburn wi' Robert the Bruce, at Ladysmith ag'in the Boers, an' at Loos, an' at the Somme. Have a care, me braw lad, what ye say about the Mac 'Sniff tartan."

"Boys, everybody here is touchy," Phineas complained. "When do we eat, huh?"

"'Tis ready, Pinkham. Can't ye see?"

"Huh? Eat them stove lids?"

"Scones they are, an' they'll make ye strong, laddie," MacSniff declared. "The cauld mutton weel be along the noo."

Lieutenant Spofford helped himself to a big spoonful of marmalade, then said to Phineas: "I hear you are quite a leg puller, old chap. Cawn't fool us, y'know. Heard too much about you, ol' apple. Be rather dull here for you, eh what?"

"Ye-e-ah," Phineas grinned. "'Let me have some of that goo when you get through with it. They say the nickel squeezers make swell marmalade."

"The best i' the world, laddie," MacSniff said. He was waiting for an oral testimonial from Leftenant Spofford. But it was slow in coming. The Limey sank his teeth into

the marmalade—and then couldn't get them to part! He made funny sounds as he got up and waved his flippers around frantically. Lieutenant Whittleby went to his friend's succor and tried to cure him of the temporary lockjaw while Captain MacSniff made a dive for the marmalade jar. He sniffed at it, took a tiny taste on the tip of his finger.

"Glue!" roared the Scot. "Pinkham, if I thocht—"

"Haw-w-w-w-w!" erupted the trickster from the U. S. A. "Nobody ever should tease me. I think I will take a stroll, Coptain. Adoo for awhile noo. I'm goin' ro-o-o-o-oamin' e-e-e-e-eeen the gloo-o-o-oamin'—!"

"The bounder!" Lef tenant Whittleby tossed out indignantly. "The insufferable cad—the—!"

Quite unperturbed, Phineas Pinkham was already sauntering out into the fog. But he was now ready to admit that Captain MacSniff had not been talking through his tarn o'shanter. In only one hour among the heather, the intrepid Yank had seen enough to convince him that a long feeler of the Wilhelmstrasse limberger-eating octopus was dabbling in the Scotch jam cupboard.

Phineas first walked out to where the two S.E-5's squatted and looked them over casually. Then he went on to the high banks of the Firth and sat down on a rock from where he tried to cut paths through the fog with his peepers.

"Huh, I wish it was a braw brick moonlick nick tonick," he murmured. "Who said you couldn't nick the Scotch, eh?"

Then after awhile he told himself that the whole Kraut navy could have slipped into the Firth under the fog that was bearing down on it. But, he asked himself, how could a Kraut pigboat be a threat to a cordite plant? On that one he was stumped for an answer.

"I wish I was back in Barley Duck. I bet Babette is sore at me for not tellin' her I was goin'. Boy, I wish I could see down there onto the Firth."

If the Yankee exponent of magic could have observed the roily waters below, he would have glimpsed the periscope of a Jerry tin fish cutting through it like a hot knife through butter. The pigboat was down there slipping into the Firth and making no more noise than a caterpillar crawling over velvet. Its decks now came awash and the big black letters on the conning tower—U 107—appeared. The hatch opened and a Teuton with a noggin as big and square as a butcher's block came out and sniffed at the salt air.

"Ach, Herman," he said to an Unteroffizier coming up the iron ladder behind him, "sooch ein night, hein? Noddinks you can see budt der fog und der buoy mit der vHITE paintd, ja. Das ist der night for der vishing. Gott sie dank! Nize vish ve haff, ja? Now nodt long ve vait, Herman. What kind of vish you t'ink der beefesseners like der best, hein? Herrink maybe? Or besser der nize

haddock, ja? Ho! Ho! Das ist so smardt, Herman, I laugh mooch. Our plan vill nodt fail, nein. Und der iron cross for us, dot means!"

"Ja. At Gretna ist der Dumkopfs vhat vill taste der vish. Cooked mit cordite, Otto. Ach, das ist der dish, hein?"

ON the high shore above, Phineas waited an hour, but the fog would not thin. His big ears picked up myriad sounds, however, and he thought they caught the lazy lapping of oars in the waters of the Firth, also the rattle of oarlocks. He yearned to go down the steep bank, but he did not want to break his neck. Then, toward midnight, Major Rufus Garrity's inimitable Von crusher made his way back to the MacSniff menage and found the Captain stretched out in a chair in front of the fire.

"Hoot mon," Phineas hailed his host, taking off his soaked trenchcoat. "It ain't no braw moonlick nick for man nor beast. How about a wee bit o' coneyac, Captain? An' where's the Limeys?"

"Laddie," Captain MacSniff grunted, "'tis a clot in the lug I should gie ye! Disspoilin' of the jom of Scootland an' insultin' the braw fighters o' the King. I dinna ken which is wurrrse."

"Did you ever see Krauts play games, huh?" Phineas countered. "I saw a couple of Heidelberg bums play one after they were shot down in a Rumpeler near Nancy. Haw-w-w-w! It's a good thing I come along wi' ye, Scotty—er—Coptain!"

"Games?" MacSniff shot out, crossing his bare, bony knees. "What ails ye, lad? I dinna ken what ye—"

"You dinner ken the Pinkhams ya mean," Phineas corrected him. "Well, I weel gay bye-bye, sir-r-r-r. Dinner forgit to look in your bed, Coptain, as maybe there's thistles in it. I woodner trust me, if I was ye! Haw-w-w-w!"

THEN quiet reigned at Dumbellton as one by one the bedroom lights were extinguished. But shortly thereafter the Scotch flyer was yelling bloody murder from his quarters at the end of the upper hall. Pinkham and the Limeys barged out of their own chambers and went to see what was up. Captain MacSniff, clad in an old-fashioned nightshirt and armed with a heavy cane, was making passes at a villainous looking spider that was crawling across his bed. He only took enough time out to make a powerful pass at Phineas, but the Boonetown pilot's agility saved him from a fractured skull.

"It's not sol" Phineas yelled. "I didn't do it. I—I—I'll swear to it sittin' on the—the—the-roof of a Bible factory, Captain. Then the flyer from Barle-Duc belted the spider with a pillow, rendered it comatose, brushed it off the bed, and scrunched it under his foot.

“Him an’ his blasted tricks,” growled Lieutenant Spofford. “A fellow cawn’t even sleep when he’s about. Strike me pink—!”

“I’ll bust you black an’ blue, ya Limey bum, if ya blame me,” Phineas erupted indignantly. “I will not be blamed for everythin’.” He felt goose bumps on his epidermis again and stooped to examine the remains of the spider.

Captain MacSniff swore and picked up blankets and sheets from his bed. “I weel sleep doonstairs, ye balmy gossoon,” he growled, “an’ I weel hae a pistol handy, Pinkham. If ye dare coom doon the steps in the nicht—”

“I’ll jolly well be glad to fly out of here in the morning,” Lieutenant Whittleby spouted. “It’s a bloomin’ bat’s rookery with that blighter around.”

Phineas said no more but went back to his room with the remnants of the spider on a piece of paper he had taken off a writing table in his host’s bedroom. He carefully laid it on the bed stand and stared at it. A peculiar spot of color on it intrigued him and at the same time gave him a bad case of ague.

“A spider, huh?” he muttered. “Once a spider made history in Scotland. It was when Robert Bruce, the Scotty George Washington, was goin’ to quit. Then he saw the spider crawling up the wall. It kep’ slippin’ back, but it always started all over ag’in, so the Scotty says to himself, ‘If the spider can keep tryin’ until it gets where it’s goin’, I can too.’ An’ a couple of days later he busted loose against the Limeys at Bannockburn an’ knocked ‘em for a row of pubs.” Phineas stared at the hairy arthropod before him and said: “Maybe this one’ll make history, too.”

After that, the pilot from Boonetown was a man of thought for a long time. First he added two and two. Then he got to adding four and four and eight and eight. And he began to get a total that smelled like a rodent. Captain MacSniff was sure that he, Phineas Pinkham, had planted that spider in his crib. So Phineas decided to let him think so. This intrigue was thickening and skull-duggery was running wild even if it made no sound. But Phineas Pinkham, plotter extraordinary, finally dropped off to sleep with a grim smile on his freckled physiognomy—and Kaiser Bill would have felt a little bilious if he could have seen it.

While the visiting Yank slept, the Heinie pigboat slipped out of the Firth of Solway. It glided along the surface for awhile, then gradually submerged until only the periscope showed about three feet above the surface. Down in its giblets, the Kraut Kapitan chuckled with glee at the success of his coup.

“Zo, das job ist ge-finished! Nefer der skipper of der vishin’ smacker did I dream of beingk yedt, nein. Vun veek it should be und der beefesseners gedt it der vish und Friday it should be I hobe, ja. Ho! Ho! Von Tirpitz

he soon vill be sayink to Otto von Sprudlesalz: ‘Guten Morgen, mein Freund. How ist idt by you, mein hero!’”

“Ja. Dot olden Qveen of Englander vas Elizabet’, ja? Veil, nefer she should have it der headt cut off mit by der Qveen of der Scots. Like der elephantds yedt, der Herrs mit der skirdts nefer forgedt idt. Hoch der Kaiser! Deutschland uber alles! Gott strafe everyvun budt der Chermans!”

“Herman, it giffs der Schnapps, ja? I hobe vun bottle it shouldt be left. Dose Dumkopfs we had aboard, like der vishes dey drink, nein?”

The tin fish ploughed on through the North Channel and out into the Atlantic. It slipped unseen past Scotch fishing smacks on its return trip to its Homeland. Kapitan Otto von Sprudlesalz expected to hit the homeport at Keil in time to hear that the British cordite factory in Gretna Green, Scotland, had gone up in the air like a Brooklyn pitcher at the end of the fourth inning. But Otto drank his Schnapps oblivious to the fact that the verdammt Leutnant Pinkham was getting ready to toss a spanner wrench into the Wilhelmstrasse skullduggery machine.

DAWN ultimately broke over the land of Bobby Burns and chased the fog out to sea. Then Phineas Pinkham got his first good look at Scottish soil and the fishing skiffs out on the waters of the Firth. Captain MacSniff quickly saw to it that the Limey flyers were well fed with oatmeal, kippers, and scones before they went out to their crates and got the power plants turning over. Then he turned on Phineas and told the Yank that he had a good mind to ship him back to France.

“I s’pose I got down on my knees an’ begged to come to this nickel nursin’ country, huh?” Phineas countered. “I wish I’d let the Fokkers knock you loose from your kilties! Get me a railroad ticket and watch me cry like a dame. Haw-w-w-w! But I wouldn’t be too hasty if I was you, Coptain, as I found out somethin’ last nick an’ it wasn’t that the stork brought me.”

Captain MacSniff had heard plenty anent the Pinkham accomplishments back on the Continent, and the Scot was no man to cut off his nose to spite his face. Quickly he appeased the indignant Spad pusher with a neat apology. “Noo, noo, lad, ‘twas a wee mite hasty I was, aye an’ I was. What harm could a wee spider do tae a MacSniff, whisht!”

“Ye hae nae idea,” Phineas mocked him. “Whoosht! If that was a wee spider, the Eiffel Tower is a knittin’ needle. Well, there goes the Limeys. I hope a monsoon will come up toot sweet.”

“They are braw fighters, Pinkham I” the Captain admonished him.

“Ye don’t ken how braw,” the Boone-town pilot retorted, quite unrepressed. Then he started toward the

banks of the Firth, and Captain MacSniff followed, beginning to outline a plan of attack against a possible Boche menace as he swung into step with Phineas. “ ‘Tis a big gun on the deck of a Gairman submarine that could shell Gretna Green, Leftenant. Gothas hae niver been o’er Scotland since the Royal Air Foorce shot twa of them doon on their way tae bomb the shipyard on the Clyde. The Boche are afraid of the S.E-5’s, lad. Aye, an’ ‘tis the subs I am sur-r-re that we’ll hae tae watch oot for! Aye!”

“The ayes hae it, Coptain, haw-w-w-w-w! Uh—er—there’s a wagon comin’ this way—an’ it ain’t cartin’ rose petals.

Pe-e-e-e-yew-w-ww!”

“Whisht, lad, an’ ‘tis ould MacDuffer an’ his boy, Jock,” the Scotchman said.

“We’ll hae fresh fish for dinner, Leftenant. Both o’ those chappies are a wee bit balmy, but nae better fishermen live along the Fairth.”

Phineas watched the large two-wheeled fish wagon trundle up. The old dobbin pulling the load was digging in and snorting like a bull elephant to make the grade up to Dumbellton Castle; and as the vehicle loaded with defunct denizens of the deep came nearer, the Yank gave it a good look-see - with his optics.

“Why do the MacDuffers pad their fish cart with old bed quilts, Coptain?” he asked of MacSniff, and the Scotchman shrugged his shoulders.

“Noo what makes ye pry intae the mon’s fish business, Pinkham?”

Before Phineas could reply, old MacDuffer called out: “A guid mornin’ tae ye, Coptain. So ye’re back frae the front, air ye? Aye, an’ ‘tis guid finnan haddie I hae wi’ me here, mon.”

Jock, son of Neil MacDuffer, emulated a clam whilst glaring at Lieutenant Pinkham as though the Yank had stolen his last “ha’p’ny.” He was a wiry little scone-punisher with a turned-up nose, a small mouth, and eyes that reminded

Phineas of the vacant windows of a haunted house back in Boonetown. Old MacDuffer’s sideburns were somewhat out of control and had spread all over his face. A clay pipe jutted out so close to his face brush that Phineas wondered what prevented a fire. When he climbed down from his wagon, he turned his back to Major Garrity’s emissary to Bonnie Scotland, and the Yank who never missed a thing eyed the black stains on the rear of MacDuffer’s coat.

Drawing close, Phineas was assailed by the stale odor of firewater, and he decided that the MacDuffers had recently been well boiled. In fact Jock still weaved uncertainly when he Immelmanned back the wagon to get the scales.

“Been haein’ a wee drap or twa, eh?”

Phineas gurgled to the ancient Gael.

“Any left? I could use a drap—or a bottle.”

Young Jock MacDuffer spat into the road and deigned no other reply as he busied himself with the business of digging up some finnan haddie. Old MacDuffer weighed it, took Mac Sniff’s money, and climbed up onto the wagon seat again. He clucked to the ancient horse, slapped his clay pipe back into his mouth, and slapped the reins on the its hoofs and strained in the harness as Jock jumped up to sit beside his parent.

“You’d think that nag was pullin’ whales,” Phineas observed. “It acts as if it’s got two feet in slippery elm an’ the other two skiddin’ on the edge of a vat in a tallow factory. Rather funny, I’d say.”

Jock MacDuffer’s voice suddenly rose in song with a grating, nasal crescendo that spanged against the Pinkham sound detectors with stunning volume. “Scots wha-a-a-a ha-a-a-e wi’ Wal-l-l-lace ble-e-e-e-d!”

“He sings it like he was mad at it,” Major Rufus Garrity’s Intelligence dabbler guffawed. “Captain, I hae obsairved—”

“Eh?” MacSniff cracked, mentally returned from counting his change.

“—that they’re both crackpots—them MacDuffers,” Phineas finished. “How far do they go with them fish, huh?”

“Dumfries, I’d be thinkin’,” MacSniff replied. “I dinna ken tae be sure. Sometimes ‘tis late at nicht ‘fore they goo by the castle on their way hame. Whisht, lad, we hae more impoortant things tae do.”

Hr-r-r-r-r-o-o-o-o-om!

At that sound, Phineas looked up. “Boys,” he exclaimed with a grin as he saw a pair of Bristols nosing down out of the sky, “that’s a sweet sound! Hoot mon, they’re headin’ this way!”

“Aye. ‘Tis the ship I wa’ promised, lad,” MacSniff said, beaming with satisfaction.

THE two Bristols came in, rolled across the greensward near Dumbellton Castle, and came to a stop. Both pilots hopped out and came to meet MacSniff. They saluted smartly, then one of them said he hoped the Captain would find the two-seater in good shape. The next instant the two flyers were climbing into the Bristol that was going back.

“Won’t ye lads stay an’ hae a wee drap?” MacSniff urged them.

“Sorry, Captain, but we had orders to hurry back. Cheerio!”

“Cherries to voose!” Phineas called out and he watched the takeoff with interest. “It’s a braw sky wagon,” he said to Captain MacSniff when they had turned their attention to the Bristol that had been delivered. “I’m dyin’ tae try it oot.”

Captain MacSniff led his guest back to the Castle where he showed Phineas the gun room. "Laddie," he said, as they examined a couple of shotguns, "'tis nae Gairman sub that'll coome intae the Fairth i' the daytime. We'll hae goose for dinner. Aye, thot we weel. Ye'll like bein' oot on the moors—"

"Ye don't ever drink wine out of a bowl, do ye?" Phineas asked.

MacSniff looked up, frowning. "Naw we doon't. Noo this gun—"

"The MacDuffers wouldna spend money enough to get boiled to the scalps, would they, Coptain?" Phineas persisted to the aggravation of his host. "Not unless the drinks were on the house, eh? An' nay grog shop in Scootland would gie drinks on the hoose, now would they, Coptain?"

"Pinkham, ye must be balmy wi' your fule questions. Noo as for the goose, they're thickest o'er on the moor toward—"

"Ye wouldna expect tay smell garlic on an eskimo's breath, would ye, Coptain?"

"Naw! Leftenant, ye're becomin' violent, ye are. Stop it, mon, 'fore I loose me temper. Ye don't talk a wee bit o' sense. Noo to hit goose, ye hae tae be quick on the tr-r-rigger-r-r-r, an'—"

"The MacDuffers are dumb clucks, huh? If they painted the word 'boat,' they would spell it b-o-t-e, wouldn't they, Coptain? Huh, bote—bote—bote. Seems like I've heard somethin'—"

Captain MacSniff dropped his grouse exterminators and clapped his hands to his ears. "Ar-r-agh!" he ground out. "Tis a daft mon ye are, Pinkham, an' tae think I brought ye tae hunt Hoons—"

"I am intelligencin'," Phineas argued. "You've done nothin' since we got here but talk grooses, Coptain. Awright, go an' shoot 'em—but I am attendin' tay my duty. A MacPinkham—"

NEVERTHELESS, Captain MacSniff did go grouse shooting, leaving his Yankee guest to his own devices. And an hour later, while out on the moors getting a bead on some feathered creatures, the Scot saw the Bristol fighter. It was hedge-hopping low over the moors, its power plant wide open. The Scotchman dropped his grouse Vickers and let out a crazy yell when the Bristol's undercarriage kissed tufts of heather and its wing tips clipped the blossoms off thistles at his very heels.

"Ye daft loon, ye! Gie oot of that Breestol! Who said ye cuid fly it, eh? I'll cloot ye on the lug if—"

But Phineas was blandly unconscious of the Captain's raging and kept circling until he found a place to set the Bristol down. MacSniff ran a mile and a half to where the two-seater squatted. He was out of breath when he

got within hearing distance of Lieutenant Pinkham who was standing up in the front office.

"Coptain," yelled Garity's gone-but-not-forgotten case of cramps, "knock off the groosin', as we've got tay find that fish cart. It is for the Allies! I hay figured out a thing or twa-a-a. Get in!"

Captain MacSniff got in, strangling the urge to twist the Yank's neck. "All richt, lad," he gasped, "we'll gae tae find the feesh monger's cart. Ah weel, Major MacGarity said ye wa' a sap—"

The Bristol was already roaring to life and it began to trundle across the moor with two occupants now instead of one. Pilot Pinkham lifted the ship to one thousand feet and then began hedge-hopping again. His Scotch passenger kept praying as the Bristol did everything but clear the land for tilling. But they didn't find the fish cart.

Finally, when the sun began to sink low in the western sky, Phineas swung over Dumfries and it was there that the ship began to cough asthmatically.

"Ye're oot of petrol, lad," MacSniff yelled, leaning forward in the rear pit. "Head for hame, ye loon!"

Phineas pointed the nose of the two-seater toward the Firth of Solway and just managed to get it down to earth in the vicinity of Dumbellton Castle with about enough petrol left in the tank to soak a canary's tail. As soon as the Bristol stopped. Captain MacSniff rose up in the rear pit menacingly with the obvious intent to spring at Lieutenant Pinkham.

"It was that fish cart, Coptain," the pilot howled. "It's carryin' bombs! It got 'em off a pigboat. That's why the cart was padded. Ohh-h-h, what'll we do, Coptain? That was a Schnapps breath them penny pinchers had, an' I know a Schnapps breath when I smell it. I ain't been a prisoner in a dozen Heinie hangouts for nothin'. They was in a tin fish las' night—them MacDuffers—because the old coot had b-o-t-e stamped on his back an' them letters are in the word 'verboten' which is Heinie for 'don't do it.' You see, Old MacDuffer musta leaned against a bulkhead in the pigboat an' the paintin' of that word wasn't quite dry.

"Don't stop me!" Phineas suddenly hollered when the Captain made a menacing gesture. "I got to talk fast, Coptain. Them Limeys wasn't Limeys las' night. They was Krauts in Limey bur, lap, as they were playin' a Kraut game when we got home. With a bowl an' two goblets. It is called Cottabos, Coptain, an' the idea is tay toss wine from goblets into a bowl without spillin' none. They are goin' to bomb Gretna Green when they get the eggs out of the fish wagon. Ohh-h-h-h-h!"

Captain MacSniff was gaping at Phineas as if the Yank had suddenly become the village idiot.

“That was a black widow spider them Krauts put in your crib last night,” Phineas howled. “What’ll we do the noo, huh?”

“Lad,” MacSniff blurted out, seeing through it all for the first time, “ye’re a wizard, aye! ‘Tis richt we keep the Breestol up in the sky all nicht, Leftenant. In the stable I hae some petrol. Make haste, lad, or the Hoons—”

The Yankee flyer and the Scotch hightailer went on the double quick to the stable of Dumbellton Castle. The Captain ran in first with Phineas right behind and the door banged shut behind them.

“Guid evenin’ to ye, laddies!” said a squeaky voice and they did a ground loop from shock. “Sit doon on the box o’er there an’ see that ye make no move!”

Phineas turned—and there was Jock MacDuffer. The daft Gael was clutching a shotgun both barrels of which were trained on the trapped pilots. He was sitting on a small nail keg near the door of the stable.

“Jock!” roared MacSniff. “What would ye be meanin’ by this?”

“Yeah,” gulped Phineas, as he reached for the ceiling, “this ain’t crickets. Why England is in danger, an’—”

Jock laughed and sang out: “Scots wha hae wi’ Wallace bled—!” Eliz’beth cut off our Queen’s head, aye. Scotland weel be free once mair. Hee! Hee! The Kaiser hae promised the MacDuffers to gie back what we won at Bannockburn, aye. Sit ye doon, Coptain, or I’ll blow your head off. Hee! Hee!”

“Nuttier than a peanut brittle factory, Coptain,” sighed Phineas as he sank down on an upended feed box. “Them Krauts musta landed again just a little way off. An’ Jock’s goin’ to keep us here ‘til they knock off the cordite mills with them S.E.5’s loaded with bombs. I told ya, Coptain. I’d hate to have tried to broil some of them fish that the MacDuffers caught, aye.”

The Yank’s resourceful brain cells were running double overtime as he spoke. He cautiously put a hand into his pocket—and withdrew it lightning fast when Jock seemed on the point of filling him with buckshot.

“A spider saved Scotland once, an’ maybe it will save her ag’in,” Phineas mumbled to himself. “Here’s hopin’!”

“Hee! Hee!” Jock laughed sillily. “In aboot an hour, me lads, the Gairmans weel gae o’er tae Gretna Green an’ drap the bombs doon. ‘Tis tae bad tae shoot the braw MacPinkham an’ Coptain MacSniff. Ye’re verra canny, Yankee, boot nae sae canny as the MacDuffers who fought tae make Scotland free.”

PHINEAS’ scalp lifted as he toyed with something in his hand. Captain MacSniff heard a sound like a watch being wound and he glanced quickly in the Yank’s

direction. The light in the stable was bad and was getting worse with every passing second.

Then Phineas leaned over like a man wallowing in the depths of despair and let something slip from his fingers. Next he slid his foot forward and pushed the thing slightly with his toe. He hoped that he had not spent two francs in vain. The box in which the mechanical spider had come had contained a guarantee, to wit:

“Your Money Back if Frankenstein’s Spider Does Not Satisfy. It Walks Like a Spider and Crawls Up Walls.”

“Noo, Jock,” MacSniff began, stalling for time, “ye canno believe the Hoons, lad. The Kaiser’s agents are verra careless wi’ the truth, tae be sure. Ye naw mind, Jock, how Coptain MacSniff bought ye the new feeshin’ boat, naw?”

Hark at me, lad—”

“Hee! Heel Scots who’ hoe wi’ Wallace bled! I gae ye just five minutes more, ye braw lads,” Jock gloated. “I weel then fire twa harries an’ save Bonnie Scotland. Hee! Hee! Ye didna ken Jock wa’ sae canny. I kened why ye lads coom tae Dumbellton, aye! Noo ‘tis aboot four minutes.”

Phineas was staring at the floor. The mechanical spider was doing its stuff, crawling slowly—but straight for Jock MacDuffer’s leg. “Remember Robert Bruce,” the Yankee substitute in the Intelligence Department said inwardly. “Scotland depends on ye, ye braw speeder.”

Three minutes to go. Then the mechanical spider hit Jock MacDuffer’s boot head on. Its head lifted and it crawled up his boot laces, clawed past a dirty sock, then touched bare skin. At that moment Phineas Pinkham nudged Captain MacSniff.

“Yo-o-o-o-o-ow!” Jock MacDuffer ululated—and he frantically hopped off the nail keg. Phineas was across the floor before the soft-brained Scot could lift the shotgun. A Pinkham meat hook delivered a lusty wallop right on young MacDuffer’s prop boss. Jock gurgled an “Ugh” and toppled over on his pan like a pre-Farr Limey heavyweight.

“Let’s go!” yipped Phineas after Jock had been locked in a feed bin. “To horse, Coptain, as a spider has saved Scotland once mair. Where’s the gas—the petrol—the pep juice? Veet, ol’ bean! The Krauts are goin’ to bomb them cordite mills at sundown, so we can’t stop tae pluck heather!”

SKULLDUGGERY was almost in full swing. In the crawling shadows of the Cheviot Hills two pseudo Limeys were hitching bombs under the tummies of S.E.5’s.

“Ach, Fritz,” grunted one pilot, “der Englander Dumkopfs vill be zurbrized, nein? Ooop goes der cordite! Den der sub vill be off der eastern coast, und vhen dark ist ve. svim outd by idt und all ist gute, ja?”

“Ah, Munich ve see vunce more, Rudy, und idt giffs gladness, ja. Drei year at Oxford ve vas und der Englanders teach us how we should! fly idt der airshibs. Ho! Ho! Der joke das ist. Mit stitches I am laughink yedt.”

OVER at Gretna Green sprawled the cordite manufacturing layout which was several miles long and about half a mile across. Some twenty-four thousand loyal subjects of the King labored there, and this explosive-making setup was worth nine million pounds to the Limey brain trust at Downing Street.

Threatening this investment were eight Krupp eggs loaded with T.N.T., and only Phineas Pinkham and Captain MacSniff stood between the precious cordite and Heinie venom.

With the sun yawning more prodigiously with each passing minute, the skies over Gretna Green began to grow cocoa color. Smoke from the huge factory chimneys contributed to the fadeout. The stage was set for the Kraut shellackers!

Feverishly the Yank and the Scot got their Bristol into shape for the ozone. They dumped ten gallons of petrol into the tank and hoped it would be sufficient to get them over and

“Lad, ye’re a miracle mon no mistake!” MacSniff congratulated the standin officer of Intelligence. “Whisht, an’ here I wa’ thinkin’ o’ groose an’ ye hae figur-r-red it all oot in your head, Phinyas. The guns here are all richt, lad, we hae the petrol tae gang tae Gretna—Aye, an’ ‘tis history will be repeatin’ itself. A speeder weel save Bonnie Scotland!”

“If ye don’t stop gabbin’, it won’t,” Phineas yipped and hopped to the prop. “Contact, Coptain! ‘Tis the hoor when the Hoons should strike, aye!”

The Bristol prop whirled, sucked spark. Petrol exploded and the Rolls-Royce power plant really went to town.

Meanwhile, the S.E.5’s took the air over the Cheviot Hills and droned toward Gretna. Three other S.E.5’s—a flight coming home to the drome at Carlisle after a jaunt over Scottish real estate—passed them and the pilots waved a greeting. The fake Limeys waved back, laughed up their sleeves, and kept on toward the ozone over the cordite mills.

And they didn’t have far to go. But two miles from the layout they spotted the Bristol fighter and started jettisoning some round Teuton oaths.

“Gott! Einen fight ve vill haff to gedt oudt from after yedt der bombs ist gedropped! Himmel, already yedt they shoot. Somet’ing ist rotten, ja. Das Pingham I bedt you—Donnervetter!”

CAPTAIN MACSNIFF was now proving that he could do more with a Bristol than Hans Brinker ever did with a pair of skates. And Phineas Pinkham, behind a Lewis gun, was no astigmatism patient. He crocked one of the S.E.5’s with his first salvo, and the frightened Kraut unloaded his eggs lest they burst under his panties. They tore up Scotch terra firma a mile short of Gretna Green, and Phineas howled his glee as he kept pouring lead out of the Lewis tubes.

“Take that—an’ that, ya Heinie bums!” he cut loose with each burst. “There goes one who will never see a frawline ag’in. Attababy, Coptain! Clout ‘em on the lug! Clout ‘em dizzy. Noo fer the other von, ay-y-y-e! Take that an’ thot—!”

BLO-O-O-OEY! CAZO-O-O-O-OM! BAANG!

An S.E.5, with bombs kissed by Vickers lead, flew into a million parts—and the skies

Down on the ground, thousands of workers swarmed around like ants, all wondering why a Bristol was knocking off Limey crates. Somebody howled: “Boche! In that bloomin’ two-seater. They’re goin’ to bomb us. Run, mates!”

An anti-aircraft battery began to shellack the Bristol. Pieces of spent iron showered Phineas, and one conked Captain MacSniff on the pate. He went out like a candlelight overtaken by a tornado and the Bristol, with one wing tip gnawed to ribbons, began to throw fits.

The Boonetown pilot quickly took a stick off the side of his office and inserted it in the socket in the floor. He brought the Limey bus out of its convulsion, fought it to a fare-thee-well, and managed to set it down on the Gaelic linoleum not more than five hundred feet from the edge of the steep bank of the Firth. It ground-looped like a pooch chasing its own tail, then did a handspring and collapsed into a heap of wreckage in a Scotch peasant’s pigsty. Captain MacSniff was being sniffed at by a porker when he got his eyes uncrossed, and Phineas was sitting in a pig trough counting stars that kept blinking in front of his prop boss. A carload of Limey doughs found them there. They put the two airmen under arrest—and it took Phineas and Captain MacSniff two hours to prove that they should not be shot at sunrise.

Then the report of how Pinkham had Bobby Bruced the bad Boche bruisers spread throughout England, hopped the Channel, and skipped across France to Barle-Duc. In the Frog farm-house that was headquarters of the Ninth Pursuit Squadron, Major Rufus Garrity got the account of the Boonetown miracle man’s exploit. He came out to the mess hall and asked for silence.

Bump Gillis choked out: “I know, don’t tell me. Pinkham’s dead. I had a dream las’ night. A big spider jumped me, and..”

“Gentlemen,” Garrity said, shaking his head from side to side: “Listen to this and fight off a stroke. They’re

going to give Captain MacSniff and Lieutenant Pinkham the V.C. The King is waiting for 'em now at Buckingham Palace. They knocked off two Heinies who have been kidding the R.F.C. for three years. They captured a couple of balmy Scots who thought they were going to free Scotland from Limey rule. They saved the big cordite plant at Gretna Green. They—”

“Stop!” Captain Howell groaned. “You’d save time tellin’ what they didn’t do. That fathead—”

A letter came from the Savoy in London two days later. It was addressed to Major Garrity and the pilots of the Ninth Pursuit Squadron, and it said:

“Hello, ye braw laddies! I willna be hame fay two weeks, aye. Hope ‘thistle’ find the old mon’s liver hae not ‘kilt’ him the noo. Haw-w-w-w!”

It was signed:

*Lt. Phineas (Robert Bruce) MacPinkham, V. C.,
B.P.O.E.,*

A.W.O.L., and B.V.D. (Biggest Vons Downed!)