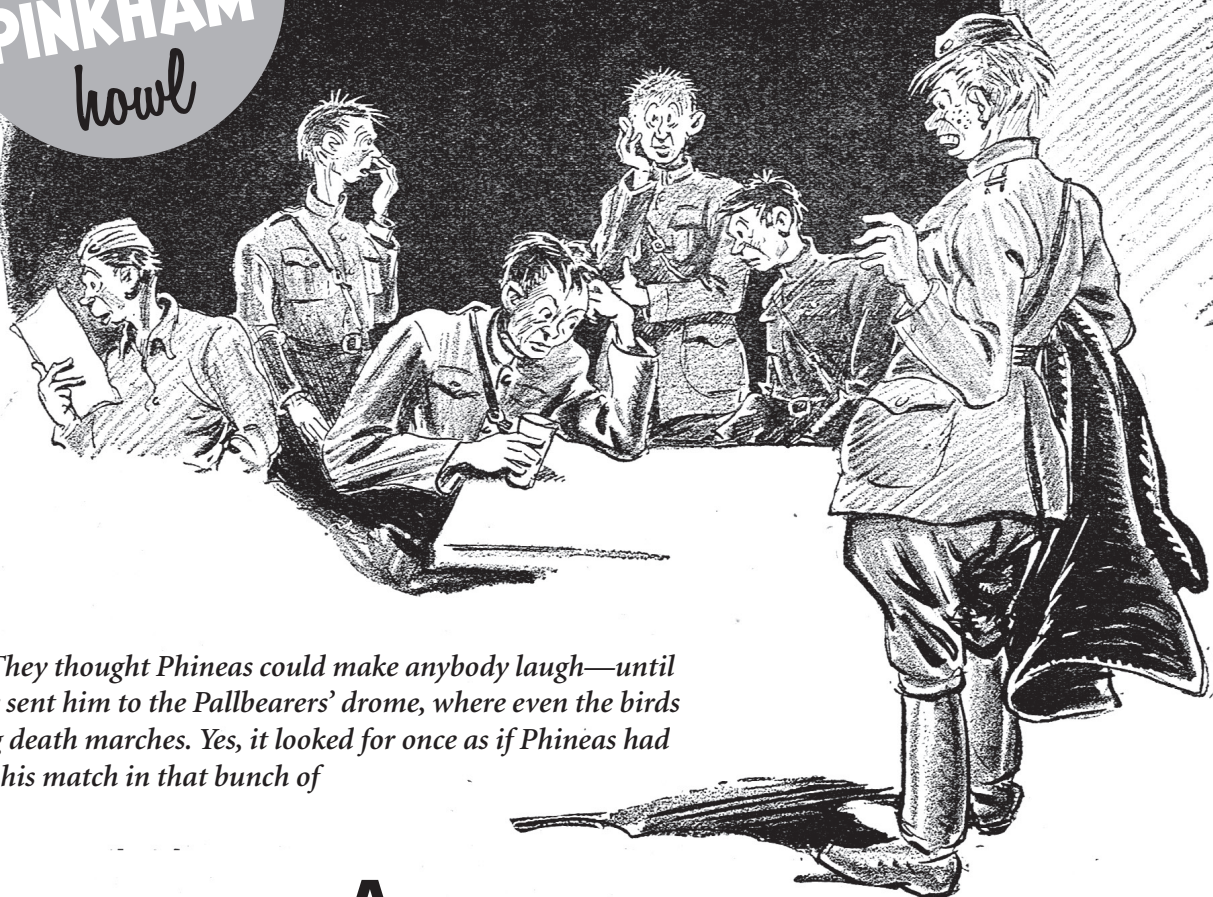


a
**PHINEAS
PINKHAM**
howl



They thought Phineas could make anybody laugh—until they sent him to the Pallbearers' drome, where even the birds sang death marches. Yes, it looked for once as if Phineas had met his match in that bunch of

CRÊPE HANGARS

written and illustrated by **JOE ARCHIBALD**

IN THE EARLY SPRING of 1918, Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham took a bicycle up to six thousand feet above the fighting lines without touching the handlebars. Yes, it sounds like an item for the "Believe It Or Don't" addicts, but Phineas did it. He tied a bicycle to the side of his Spad, and in reply to Captain Howell's command to take the blankety-blank thing off, he said glibly, "I will not. I'm sick of walkin' home from forced landin's. The Frog shoemakers are gettin' rich from half-soling my boots. I know what I'm doin' bums. You're just jealous because you are not visionary like me."

"Whatever you are," Bump Gillis cut in, "I want to be somethin' else always. But I am surprised you did not make it a motorcycle an' sidecar, while you was at it. That'd be faster an'—"

"Come on, you plane dopes," Howell yelled. "Let's go before he tries it. And if I catch any other fathead putting ideas into his dome, I'll—aw, come on."

And so Phineas took his bicycle up to six thousand feet. The Ninth got into a brawl with a group of flying Heidelberg Alumni over St. Benoit, and Captain Howell's brood proceeded to convince the junkers that he who gets famous by the sword doesn't necessarily

have to die by one. Phineas had a narrow squeak, and a Von blew a tire on his bicycle with a Spandau slug. The two-wheeled vehicle had jiggled a little loose during a loop, and one handlebar had whacked the Pinkham cranium as if in earnest about it. Bump Gillis succeeded in keeping the Junkers off Phineas' neck until the hero from Boonetown, Iowa, got his eyes uncrossed. Then everybody headed back to Garrity's *Kraal*—with the exception of Phineas Pinkham. And so the fun began.

Having some personal experimenting to do, Phineas had decided to pause *en route*. A great open space presented itself, and he landed. He looked at his watch, then jumped out of the battle bus and began to work feverishly at the moorings of his bicycle. When he had managed to unloose it from the Spad, Phineas hopped aboard and pedaled away for about a quarter of a mile. At that point he stopped, hopped from the two-wheeler and looked at his watch again.

"Oh, boys," he enthused audibly, "that was speed! Two minutes, forty seconds—an' with a flat tire. Well, with more practice I could make a get-away in—"

Boom! Phineas spun around and looked up at the brow of a hill from where the sound of the big gun seemed to have come. Something described a parabola through the early morning ether. *Cr-r—r-ash!* Again the Yankee truant swiveled. Gobs of turf and rock geysered skyward. Right up from the spot where he had left the Spad! He saw a wing skirl through space. A piece of prop fell right at his feet. Weak in the undercarriage, Phineas stumbled toward the ruins of his Spad.

"Why, the dirty—" he began; but voices from the hilltop brought him up short. Again his head revolved on his gangly neck, and he saw a group of men running toward him. They did not seem very pleased to have him around. "Did you bums do that?" Phineas yowled, pointing to his defunct Spad. "Wait'll I report you!"

"Landed here, did you?" a big officer bellowed.

"You mush-brained looeey. Don't you know this is a restricted area? We are trying out new trench mortars, and—"

"Well, I was tryin' out somethin' too," retorted Phineas. "I guess you bums don't own this country. I was engaged in legal business an'—"

"Take his name, sergeant," the officer snapped. "I've been waiting to grab a fresh flyer for a long time. I don't like flyers."

"You don't give me a ravenous appetite," Phineas countered promptly. "I saw a better lookin' face once on a can of crabmeat."

"Insult a superior officer, too, huh?" yelled the major. "That is another count against you, see?"

"Well, I better not do any more, huh?" The culprit grinned savagely. "As I bet you can't count up to three!"

"Start moving!" howled the officer. "I'll show you."

The major did. Major Rufus Garrity, harried C.O. of the Ninth Pursuit Squadron, was sitting on the doorstep of the Squadron headquarters when Phineas Pinkham pedaled onto the drome.

"I'm sorry to be late." He grinned broadly. "I had to stop an' git me some tire tape an' a pump. It is lucky I saved the bicycle, ain't it?"

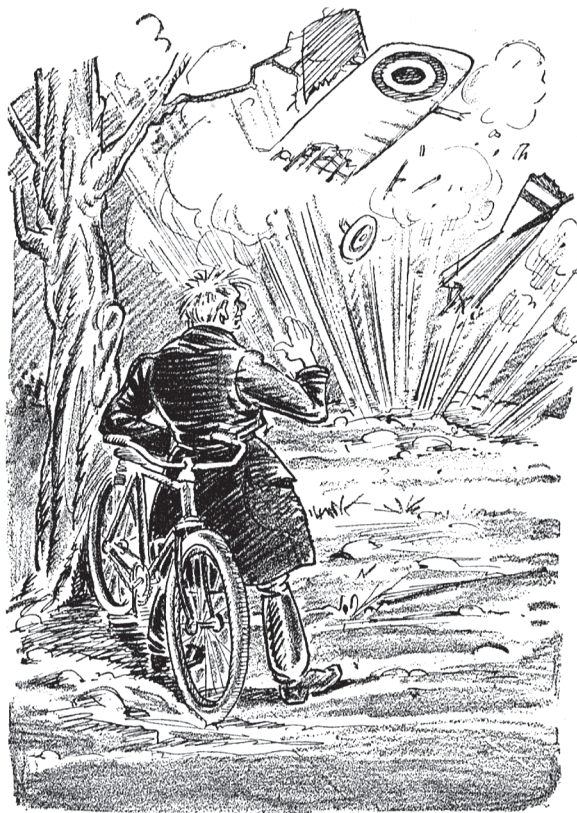
The Old Man got up and took a jackknife from his pocket. He ambled deliberately to Phineas' bike and cut the tires clean to the rims.

"An' I've got a good mind to let the air out of you the same way, you fathead," he hollered. "Get inside, and get in quick!"

"That was willful destruction," protested Phineas. "I will put in a bill—"

Sir Rufus chased him into the Orderly room and slammed the door.

"Now, Mr. Pinkham," he began, "just sit quiet, as I am going to bust you faster than anybody has ever been busted before. Only you could set a Spad down just where a shell would hit it. With all the real estate they have in France, you would—*shut up!* Pinkham, you're nuttier than a squirrel's pantry. You get a new



Spad blown to hell and come in and yelp, 'Yoohoo, I saved the bicycle!' I—shut up, I said. Oh, well, you'll get used to the trenches in time. I hope you get sent to a sector where the cooties have tapeworms."

"I will take it to court," threatened the perpetual trouble-promoter. "You can't—"

There came an interruption. The door opened, as a Brass Hat from Wing Headquarters oozed in and stood glaring at Phineas.

"This flyer ever meet a superior officer before, Garrity?" he barked. "Did he?"

"Yeah," cut in Phineas. "That's the hell of it."

"Salute, you crackpot!" roared the Old Man. "Then get out, and don't forget you're under arrest. I'll send for you later."

"WHAT DID HE DO NOW?" the colonel from Wing wanted to know as the Pinkham scion made his exit without bothering to salute.

"I'd rather talk about something cheerful," groaned Garrity, "like what you've come for. How many Spads do you want sent out to bomb Potsdam?"

"I'm thinking of Paris, Garrity, and the Channel ports," the colonel snapped. "I suppose you did not know that Dover, England, was bombed last night? By a Gotha, a super-Gotha that the Krauts believe will wash up the Allies. No place is safe, major. Suppose it bombs Chaumont—then what? Why, the whole Allied plan will be disrupted. Four motors, Garrity. Armored tanks and gun pits. The ship is a flying fort. A whole squadron of Spads would never knock it off. I tell, you, Garrity, it—"

"*Gott* seems to be mit 'em, what?" Garrity cut in sarcastically. "Maybe we could tie three Handley Pages together with wire and even it up."

"It is no joke," the colonel snorted, chewing furiously at a frayed cigar butt. "It's killing that Spad outfit over by Commercy. Remember Major Tiplett, the sour-faced guy at Issoudon? Gone sourer, Garrity. And the other buzzards with him. They give you the jitters just to look at 'em. Morale all shot to pieces. We call it the Pallbearer Squadron. Why, even the birds in the trees around there sing nothing but the Death March from Saul. If somebody could just go over there and pep them up—somebody with a sense of humor—"

"You said a 'sense of humor?'" Garrity cracked suddenly. "Somebody with pep and—colonel, just let me sit alone with my thoughts for perhaps two minutes." The Old Man sat back and twiddled his

thumbs, his mouth twisted into a feline grin. Without warning, the front legs of his chair hit the floor, and his finger stabbed the colonel in the chest. The Brass Hat swallowed his cigar.

"Garrity," he choked, "you—"

"I've got the man," the honorable Rufus Garrity declared solemnly. "Phineas Pinkham! He's in a sling as usual. I can't get him out of this one, colonel, and I don't want to see the bum busted—crazy as it sounds. Do you think we could arrange for his transfer to the Pallbearers as a disciplinary measure? I imagine that would satisfy the fatheaded infantry major he insulted. We will call Phineas a—er—an ambassador of morale for the good of the Allied cause, eh? Can you think of any better names for him?"

"Plenty," the colonel declared, "but I'm a good Baptist, Garrity, and must control myself."

Major Rufus Garrity yelled at an orderly. Bring Lieutenant Pinkham here!"

"I am right here," came from none other than the Pinkham throat, as its owner peered over the orderly's shoulder. "Haw-w-w! I tried not to eavesdrop but—well, when do I leave, huh? I always thought there was ambassador blood in this branch of the Pinkhams."

"I've a good mind to bust you instead," howled the Old Man. "Colonel, it's up to you."

"Garrity," the man from the Wing clipped, "the Pallbearers will either catch some morale from him or they will kill him. We win both ways, don't we?"

"Right," grinned the major. "Pinkham, I'll have you transferred so quick—go pack your trunk. You might even start tonight."

"Boys!" chuckled the irrepressible Phineas. "I hate to leave the old homestead, but would a cat refuse an invite to a family reunion of mice? I got some new ones that are too good to waste on these bums here. All they need over there is somebody with a sense of humor, haw-w-w-w! Excuse me, as I must pack. Don't forget to write me some references. Adoo."

"Fresh mutt!" growled the colonel. "We should've busted him, Garrity." The colonel had never said a truer word.

Phineas lost no time in spreading the news. "Well. I'm leaving you," he announced to the pilots as he went out into the big room.

"I am very sorry," Bump Gillis apologized solemnly, "but I just can't seem to bust out cryin'."

"I hope it is far enough away so you will have to take a pullman," offered Captain Howell. "Go away! Can't you see I am up to my neck in my tatting?"

"Awright," Phineas shoved back at them, walking out, "to hell with you fair-weather friends."

TWENTY-FOUR HOURS LATER, Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham got out of the sidecar of a motorcycle on the drome of the Thirteenth Squadron. It was a gloomy, rain-fouled night and the wind moaned like a Banshee with an ulcerated tooth. As the mechanical bug roared away, two men emerged from an elephant iron hut labeled Operations Office. The taller of the two peered at Phineas closely.

"You ain't an officer," began the new arrival. "Who are ya?"

"I'm Sergeant Tombs," replied the non-com. He lowered his voice. "Terrible war, don't you think?"

"Yeah, ha, ha," Phineas pushed out, "but if you'd just tell me where I can find an officer, like the C.O. f'r instance—"

"Oh, this ain't the squadron headquarters," the non-com explained. "You see, we just put the sign up here as we think there are spies all around us, an' then if they try to cut somebody's throat while a body's sleepin', they'll git fooled an' kill only non-coms."

"Ah—er—yeah. Ha, ha," Phineas said weakly. "Well—"

"Here, you," the sergeant flung at his little companion, "take the officer's luggage. This is Corp'ral Graves," he said to Phineas.

"Hm, Tombs an' Graves, huh?" the Pinkham representative snorted. "Have ya got any Hearses or Coffins? Ha, ha!" The laugh did not come from very far down in Phineas' diaphragm.

"Lieutenant Coffin was shot down three days ago," said Corporal Graves in appropriately funereal tones.

On the way to the officers' quarters, he led Phineas by another hut. The mournful strains of a phonograph issued from behind a curtained window. Our hero stopped as voices blended into song. "For-r-r-r-r well we-e-e-e know that on the mor-r-r-row-w, So-o-om-m-me will sle-e-e-p be-e-eneath the so-o-o-od!"

"Haw-w-w-w-w!" Phineas tossed out with difficulty. "Do they raise hell like this ev'ry night, huh?"

"Well," replied Corporal Graves, "I must say them fellers is unusually gay tonight, sir. I guess it's because only three was shot down today an'—"

"Just skip it, please," gulped the new addition to the squadron.

As Phineas walked into the mess shack of the outfit, a short time later, a black cat spat at him. Eleven

men hardly looked up as he entered, his face split by an expectant grin. It did not seem possible, Phineas mused, that out of the stockroom of humanity which fate had in reserve, she could pick almost a dozen men with faces twenty inches long and throw them all into the same place.

"Bum swar," he ventured. "I am Lieutenant Pinkham late of the Ninth Pursuit come to cheer ya up. I have samples of morale I would like to show you an'—"

"Sit down!" snapped a doleful-looking pilot. "Ya're in my light."

"Huh? Ya never heard of me? I'm Pinkham," persisted Phineas.

"Napoleon was awright, too," drawled another pilot listlessly, "but he ain't so hot now. We all got to git-killed sooner or later. Maybe tomorrow you'll git it, an'—"

"Boys!" groaned the would-be comedian. He sat down, looked over the shoulder of a pilot to see what he was reading. The title on the top of the magazine page said, "The Cemeteries of Paris."

"'Murders in the Rue Morgue' is good, too," suggested the determined spirits-inflater. There was no reply. Suddenly a tall man put in his appearance, and all the woe one could scrape up in the wake of a pogrom seemed reflected on his countenance. The pilots stood up.

"Major Tiplett, huh?" Phineas said, and actually saluted, as in the presence of the dead. "It sure is a lively place here, ha ha. Well, I'm reportin'—"

"Okay," intoned the major. "We can see that, can't we? You'll bunk with Jitters, the pilot next to you." He sat down and rolled a smoke.

"All ya need is some peppin' up," began Phineas as the gloom seemed to get as thick as sulphur and molasses. "Let's have some music, huh?"

"I hate music," said Tiplett.

Undaunted, Phineas picked up three eggs he saw in a bowl on the mess table and started to juggle them. "Not bad, huh?" he addressed his new C.O.

"I can do it with four eggs," Tiplett growled, "but why bother?" He turned his head. "I bet we get bombed tonight, an' by that new Gotha."

"*Cr-r-r-ripes!*" groaned Major Garrity's chief pain-in-the-neck. "What a ghouls' paradise. Er—ah—I got a good riddle. There were two Indians in the woods. The little Indian was the son of the big Indian but the big Indian was not the little Indian's father. Now what was the big Indian to the little Indian, huh?"

"His mother, you sap," spoke up a pilot with eyes as sad looking as a St. Bernard dog's. "Huh, we had another feller who thought he was funny, too, but he got knocked off quick. I know how it is. You're scairt an' try to be funny so we won't notice it. Well, here today an' gone tomorrow!"

Phineas gulped, pulled himself together and produced a deck of cards from his pocket. "Here's one. Each of yuh draw, an' I'll tell—"

"Why should we?" queried Pilot Jitters. "We've got cards. I think I'll try an' get some rest, although I may not need it as maybe tomorrow I'll be restin' for good. Follow me, Lieutenant—er—what's your name? I'll show ya where you'll stay the short while you may be with us."

In desperation, Phineas held out his hand. "Shake!"

Jitters gripped the hand. *Bz-z-z-zzz!* The little man rocked back on his heels.

"Haw-w-w-w!" guffawed the joke-ster with genuine enjoyment. "It's a buzzer. I got a battery in my pocket.

"G'night," cut in Major Tiptlett. "You'll be on the early go, Pinkham."

"H-huh?" stuttered the Boonetown trickster. "Er—yeah." In a daze he followed Jitters to the hut.

"Eight guys had that bed," Jitters offered, "an' the spring is like new. Well, goodnight."

"I doubt it," groaned Phineas.

MORNING BROUGHT NO SUNSHINE to the drome, or to the hearts of the Thirteenth. Just before the take-off, a pilot approached the flight leader.

"Here's the two cigarettes I owe ya from last night. Ma said never to go out owin' any debts, an' I would rest better under the sod, cap'n. You look worried."

"Yeah," replied the flight leader. "I was tryin' to remember all night if I put enough stamps on my will that I sent home last week."

"Haw-w-w-w!" Phineas forced out. "Just watch me, an' I'll show ya why insurance companies like to sign me up. There ain't a Kraut that lives that kin knock me off."

"I'd be careful about loopin' that crate," the flight leader warned him. "It was cracked up only yesterday, an' our ackemmas are rushed."

"Uh-huh," the flyer from the Ninth said, his face sagging.

Once in the pit, Phineas sighed and pawed at a clammy brow. "An' I passed up a court-martial! Bump Gillis was right. I am not even half bright."

The funereal Thirteenth Squadron pilots were not

half bad when it came to fighting the Heinies. It was Phineas who was the worse for wear on the return of Tiptlett's flight from a brush with a flock of Pfalz ships. The end of his top wing was nude of fabric, and a strut hung by a thread. Phineas landed the Spad upside-down and yelled for succor. When he had been dragged out into the clear, he sat up.

"Look here, major," Phineas yipped to Tiptlett, "that Spad was almost the death of me. I refuse to—"

"You've got to die some time, don't you, Pinkham?" the C.O. said simply.

"Would ya mind if I postponed it a bit?" Phineas cracked with delicate sarcasm. "What a joint!" He rose and went to his hut, where he slumped down on his cot. Pilot Jitters looked at him solemnly.

"Pinkham," he began, "do ya believe in reincarnation? I would like to return to the world—if the Heinies get me—as somebody else."

"I don't blame ya," sighed Phineas. "Adoo. I must take a walk."

Mess that night was another dismal affair. Once more the Pinkham heir made a frantic attempt to dish out a laugh tonic. Resorting to his great drinking trick, he held up his hand during the gloomy gastronomic ritual.

"Look, I pour this glass half full of carbolic acid, an' I'll drink it an' nothing'll happen. Haw-w-w-w!"

"Then what's the sense of doin' it?" Major Tiptlett queried. "Jitters, hand me the mustard."

"That's enough!" gulped Phineas. "To hell with ya! I could have more fun in a grave." He got up and trudged out into the gathering dusk.

Twenty minutes later, Colonel Crocker from Wing headquarters found him slumped on a big log in the rear of a hangar. With an expectant gleam in his eyes, the colonel called to the silent figure.

"Well, well. It's the ambassador," was his greeting. "How are you, Pinkham?"

"H'lo," replied Phineas absently.

"Great war, isn't it, Pinkham?"

"Terrible," was the prompt response. "Ya never know how long you'll live, do ya?"

"Ah—er—" choked the colonel. "Have you a cigar that isn't working?"

Phineas produced one. The colonel took it, set a match to its end and sat down on the log. Ten minutes later he took the half-consumed cigar from his teeth and looked at it incredulously. He rose.

"Well, must be going, Pinkham. Yep. G'night."

"What's good about it?"

Some time later, Colonel Crocker barged in on Garrity at the Ninth Pursuit.

"Well," grinned the Old Man, "are you almost in stitches from laughing, colonel? How is Pink—"

"Garrity," cracked the colonel, "it's terrible. The Pallbearers' morale is still lost. And they've taken Phineas' morale away, too, and lost it for him. Garrity, he gave me a cigar—and it was a good one!"

"Cripes!" exclaimed Sir Rufus. "Whal have I done to Pinkham? I'll never forgive myself, colonel. We must get him out of that place."

"I'm afraid the Wing won't stand for it," the colonel began. "I—"

B-oo-oo-o-o-om! Hr-r-r-r-r-o-o-o-om! Bo-o-o-om!

"That Gotha, I bet," cried the Brass Hat. "Sounds way down by Chaumont. Do you think—"

"I wish Phineas was here," wailed Garrity. "I bet he'd wash it up. Well, you'd better leave me, colonel . . ."

Once again Tipllett's dead-pan squadron was ready to take the air. Phineas Pinkham was about to get into his Spad when he glanced at the pilot in the ship next to his. The flyer was tying something to a strut, and Phineas' teeth rattled. He jumped back from the stirrup and let out a yelp.

"What're ya doin', ya bum?" he hollered, climbing aboard the man's battle bus.

"Well, ya see, Pinkham, it's a stick of dynamite." The pilot mentioned it as if it were just a cone of ice cream. "I'm afraid of fire, and if the Spad should 'catch fire, it would maybe set off the dynamite and I'd blow up instead of gettin' broiled. Not bad, huh?"

Phineas groaned and crawled onto a wing. He cut the stick of dynamite away and dropped it into his pocket. "Compared to you bums, a coal mine disaster is a scream. *Cripes!* What I wouldn't give for a good laugh. Oh, boys!"

The job for Tipllett's patrol, at the moment, was to seek out a Boche supply dump in back of Metz and smack it with eggs. Of course the idea in back of the Vons' heads was to stop this outrageous vandalism. The argument took place over Cheminot, and in the midst of it, the Hisso job in the snout of the Pinkham Spad went into a fit of coughing. The Boonetown miracle man swore and pounded the ship between the shoulder blades. Boche lead sprayed him, curing the Hisso cough for keeps.

"Well, here goes," gulped the Yankee jokemaker, and headed down. His spirits rose a notch. It was impossible for them to go any lower. "A wind has to be

very ill that don't blow good sometimes. Tipllett, you don't know how I'll miss you! I hope I meet a German comedian some place."

PHINEAS HIT THE KRAUT mosaic with a rude wallop. When he came to, he found himself the center of a very gleeful circle. A fire was crackling on the hearth in the parlor of a Boche Slaffel. Teuton war maps were also aglow. A bullet-headed Heinie with a monocle laughed.

"*Ach, it iss der Tag,*" he chuckled. "*Herr* Pingham in *der* flesh. Vhy iss idt you laugh noddt like *der* jassack, *hein, Leutnant?*"

"You have no idea," replied Phineas. "It's a long story." He sighed and looked at the window. Then his eyes bulged. At the far end of the Jerry flying field, a huge shape could be seen.

"*Ach, you see him, hein?*" gurgled the Jerry *Oberst*. "*Mit das, ve endt der var, hein?*"

Phineas did not reply. Boche pilots knitted their brows. One stared at him closely.

"Somet'ing it iss rotten," he said. "Pingham he iss noddt *der* sour face. Maybe *der* trick iss it. He does noddt giff *der* insults. Maybe he iss noddt *der* Pingham, *hein?*"

Doubt crept into the Boche parlor as the spiders examined the fly. One tugged at the rusty Pinkham thatch. The Boonetown marvel's yip of protest was engulfed in a laugh from the Vons.

"*Ach, he iss joost kaput,*" said the *Herr Oberst*. "Ha, ha. He iss like idt *der Drachen* vhen poonctured yedt, *hein?* Eggscoose me, *und* I go *mit der* news by Potsdam."

Phineas squirmed in his chair. A few yards away, a Von sat reading a letter. The suppressed Pinkham talents began to toss restlessly. That Von intrigued Phineas. Acting quite unconcerned, he reached into his pocket. Beads of sweat popped out on his brow as his hand came in contact with the stick of dynamite. Even during the crash landing, he had forgotten it. However, it was a pair of eyeglasses which he brought to view from his pocket.

"I'm gittin' old," he began. "Gittin' bleary in the lamps, loitnants." That brought a laugh. The outburst of mirth fanned the dying embers of Pinkham skullduggery to flame. He looked toward the Von who was devouring the letter. The writing became magnified fifty times. It was in passable English.

"—*und der Herr Oberst* von Gluten he does not read well *der* English," Phineas read. "*Ach, he is der Dumkopf* for he would know *du bist der* only one, Karl."

Married by him is I'm, *ja*, but it should *nein* be so long yet. *Mein Vater*, he makes me marry *der gross schwein*, as it is rent he owes him by *der* house. But we find yet *der* way, *hein*?"

Suddenly the Von whisked the letter out of sight into the pocket of a coat which was draped over a chair beside him. The Staffel leader had come out into the room. The quick gesture set Phineas to adding two and two.

"Well," he said to himself, "things are pickin' up. Boys, would I like to shellac that Gotha! Huh, I wonder . . ." As the *Herr Oberst* von Gluten walked toward him, Phineas rose. "Keep back," he exclaimed desperately, "or I'll blow you all loose from your pants, you bums." He yanked the dynamite stick from his pocket and waved it around his head. "I'm goin' out through the door," he grinned, "an' if anybody stops me, well—"

"Ha, ha," laughed a Von who had slipped up from behind. "It iss *der* Pingham yoke, *ja*?" He whisked the stick from Phineas' hand and held it up for all to see. "No more iss it he fools *mit* us, *hein*, chentlemen?" the Boche flyer chuckled. "*Der* fake iss it, oddervise why it shouldt nodd go off vhen he cracks oop, *hein*? Look, I toss him by *der* fireplace vunce. Ha, ha—ho, ho!"

"He-e-ey!" yowled Phineas. "You damn fools, it's real, as—"

It was too late. The stick went sailing toward the hearth, and plunked into the heap of burning logs. Phineas flattened himself just as the whole house seemed to lift and go into a spin. The force of the stick exploding had knocked a souvenir from a shelf—a dud shell. But the dud had decided to be a dud no longer.

B—o—o—o—oom! Beams and plaster rained down on the addled Vons. Burning embers from the fireplace shot out into the breeze, and the breeze wafted them to a clump of dry bushes huddled against the side of an ammo shed. The bushes were ignited and crackled merrily. Boche greaseballs went into a panic, and before they got organized, the ammo shed went haywire. Tracer bullets slithered through space and made lace out of the drome.

Over by the giant Gotha was a petrol wagon loaded up with cans of Mercedes pep. A tracer slipped through the midriff of one which was not quite full, and then hell broke loose in earnest. *Bang!* Gobs of flame spewed down on the giant wings of the super Gotha.

Phineas Pinkham lifted a beam from his neck, clambered to his feet, and then fell over a Von who was

making funny signs with his fingers. The old Pinkham brain clicking, Phineas made a grab for a Heinie dress overcoat and wrapped it around himself. A Boche, partially recovered, made a futile effort to grasp the Yank as he lifted a visored cap from the floor. Phineas just spread the Boche out with a wallop on the chin, and then made his exit from the heap of rubbish which had been a house. Unchallenged, he made his way to a bomb shelter at the edge of the field and crawled inside just as another explosion shook the atmosphere and loosened beams in the shelter.

"Haw-w-w-w!" Phineas was himself again. "Did they git fooled!" It was very dark in the shelter, and he struck a match. Holding it aloft, he discovered the stub of a candle which he lighted. Then he sat back against a supporting beam in the dugout, and began to take an inventory of his chances of getting back to *la belle* France. Verily, they seemed as slim as a wasp's waist.

"Well, it's better than bein' with Tiplett," the errant Yank mused, and unwrapped himself from the Boche coat. Something caught the Pinkham eye—rough letters made with indelible ink on the inside of the German lapel. They spelled *Leutnant* Karl Hifflehoff.

"Boy, is that a find!" He chuckled, and feverishly began to explore the pockets. The letter he had hoped to find was not there.

"Oh, well—" the Boonetown flyer sighed, "I—er—" A broad grin split his homely face from ear to ear. "Huh, he put it there. Now if it is only blown away some place. Ha, I will take a chance if—"

Out of the ruins of the house two Vons were crawling. They met head on.

"*Dumkopf!*" raged the *Herr Oberst* von Gluten. "You t'row *der* dynamite, *hein*? *Ach*, I should show you—loogk, *der* Gotha, in liddle bieces yedt. *Der* Kaiser, he vill giff you *der* medal, bah-h-h-h!"

"How, *Excellenz*, iss idt I know, *hein*?" jerked out the goggle-eyed Boche pilot. "Iff *der* trick idt iss nodd, ve get fooled, *und* if *der* trick it iss, vhat? Maybe you know all *der* time, *ja*. Veil—" The *Herr Oberst*'s fist ended further argument.

Quickly, the Boche *Staffel* rallied. Vons ran wild all over the place looking for Phineas. It so happened that *Leutnant* Karl Hifflehoff himself finally crawled into the bomb shelter and surprised Phineas in the act of grabbing three winks. He jammed a Luger close to the Pinkham short ribs.

"So I gedt you, *ja*?" the Boche flyer yelped. "I see *der* light shine by *der* dugout. You gedt shodt now."

"OH, I DON'T THINK SO," grinned the prisoner. "It's lucky you happened in, ha, ha! If I should give the *Herr Oberst* a letter I found in this coat of yours, it would be just too bad. Haw-w-w-w, it iss *mein Vater* who made me marry *der* pig. For *der* rent it iss owed on *der* house, yet. Haw-w-w-w! I got a pair of cheaters I have fun with, an' I read your mush letter an'—"

"*Ach, Gott!*" exclaimed Pilot Hifflehoff. "Where iss it yedt? If *der Herr Oberst* he finds it, *ach—Leutnant Pingham*, I make it *der* bizness deal *mit* you, *hein?*"

"Oh, I'm always open to settle things outside of court," chuckled Phineas. "My terms is to say you did not find me, and have a Fokker ready for me about seven p.m. I expect you to get a Heinie flyin' suit to me, too. When I get upstairs, I'll drop you the letter. Haw-w-w-w!"

"*Ach*, I could make you giff *der* letter to me, oopstart," the Jerry snapped, waving his Luger. "You are making by mi' *der* trick."

"It's a crime to shoot a prisoner by yourself, and you know it, you sausage-sniffer," grinned the unfazed Yank. "Take it or leave it!"

"I take It," growled von Hifflehoff. "I coom by here *mit der* flyink soodt after *der* mess. *Ach*, sooch *ein* var, *Himmel!*"

When the Kraut had gone, Phineas crawled to the darkest part of the shelter and waited. As dusk crept in, he heard the sound of a Mercedes engine ticking. Nobody paid much attention to von Hifflehoff as he sauntered across the field in helmet and leather coat. The majority of the Vons were trying to figure out a place to sleep for the night.

"Pingham!" Hifflehoff whispered, crawling into the shelter. "Iss you here?"

"Not for long, I hope," replied the Pinkham voice from the dark.

"You go oudt as me," the Von explained. "*Mein* ship is varms oop. Joost gedt in *und—ach*, I hope it iss two t'ousandt bullets hits you before you gedt four foots oop."

"I imagine ammo is scarce, don't you?" grinned Phineas. "Well, I'll keep my part of the bargain an' drop you the letter. Oh, it's not on me at the minute, so don't start nothin', haw-w-w-w!"

The Von growled and left the bomb shelter.

Ten minutes later, Phineas walked leisurely across the Boche flying field and headed for the idling Fokker. A little Heinie was on the lower wing, poking at a strut. He glanced casually at the pilot as he got into the pit.

"*Herr Leutnant*," he called, "*sehr gut, ja!*"

Phineas responded by jamming in the throttle. The Fokker leaped forward. The little Heinie monkey-wrench expert let out a howl as he felt himself fly into space like a barn swallow. Over by the heap of ruins, *Leutnant* von Hifflehoff smacked himself on the head with a spanner. He had to make it look good.

"*Ach*, who iss it vhat flies, *hein?*" yelped the *Herr Oberst*, limping out of a shack. "Was *ist*—Pingham! I bedt you." And then he indulged in the longest cuss word in any language. "*Himmelherrgottkreuzemillioend onner-wetter!*"

Phineas, soaring into the dusk, dropped a letter tied to a bit of brick. Von Hifflehoff watched the object fall as he rubbed a big igloo on the side of his head. He put on a swell act and staggered out onto the field. A Kraut greaseball was picking up the thing Phineas had dropped. Von Hifflehoff booted him in the seat of the pants and picked it up himself. He shoved the brick weight into his pocket and headed for privacy.

"He hid me on *der* headt," he explained to the *Herr Oberst* in passing. "Sooch *ein* vallop, *ach!*"

"To the Fokkers!" yelled the *Staffel* leader. "Ve shouldt giff sobs *mit* cryingk for *der* cabbage headt oof yours, *hein?* Chase quick *der* oopstart. To the Fokkers!"

Leutnant von Hifflehoff, however, could not go up as Phineas was using his Fokker. The Von got into the groundmen's barracks and ripped the letter away from the piece of brick.

"*Ach*, sooch a relief," he sighed. "If *der Herr Oberst* shouldt—*Himmel!*" The Junker swayed on his pins. His eyes rolled around like ball bearings in skate wheels. He read:

"My dear Mr. Pinkham:

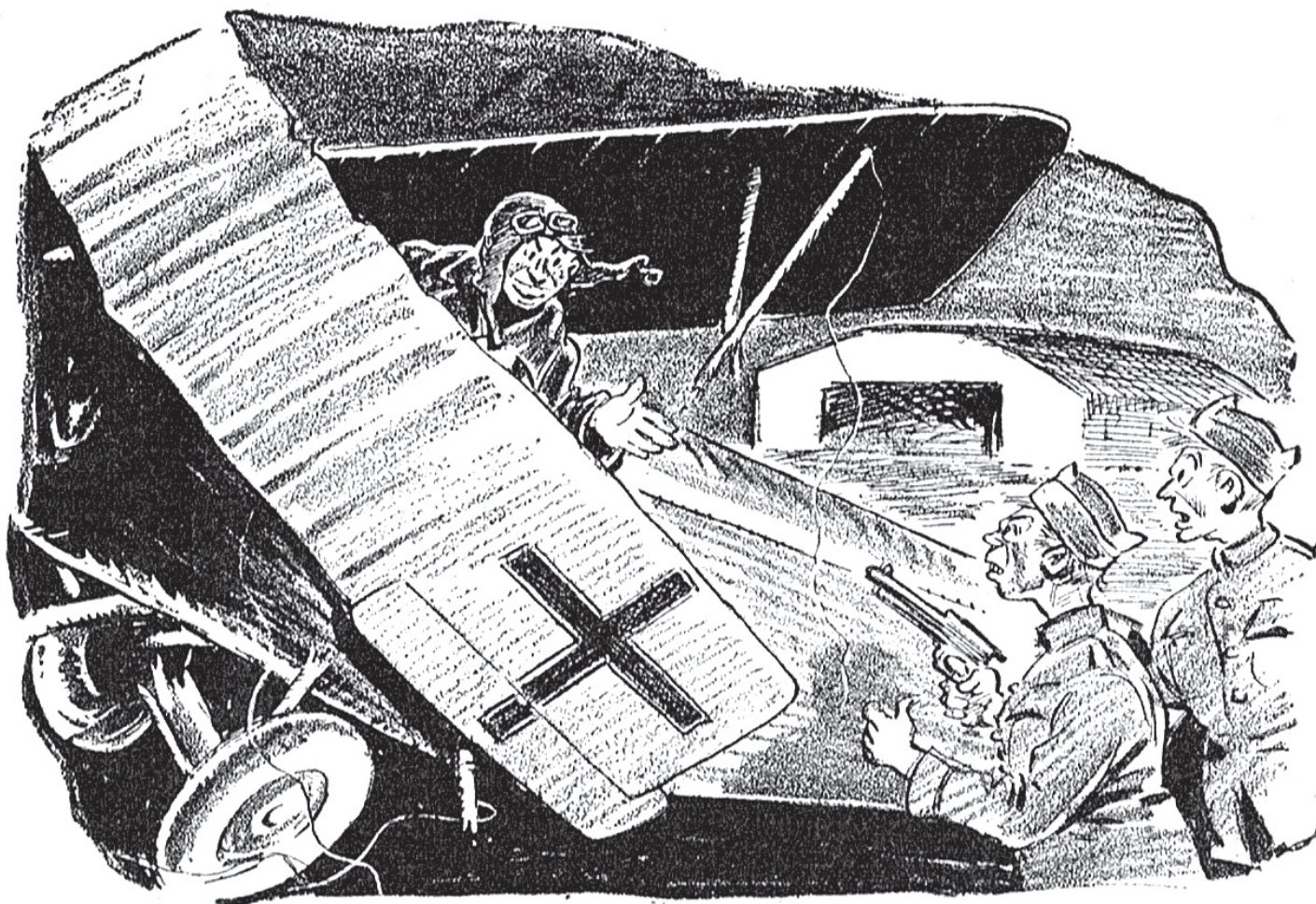
Six months ago we shipped you a set of novelties and parlor tricks which totaled three dollars and eighty-one cents. Despite the fact that we have called your attention to this matter forty times, you pay no attention. If you do not send us a money order by return mail, we will take drastic action.

(Signed) T. J. Waggernaek,
Liberty Novelty Co., Milwaukee, Wisc."

"*Ach, Donner und Blitzen!*" wailed *Herr* Hifflehoff. "*Der* trick again iss idt."

A groundman came in, saluted meekly, and handed something to the Von.

"*Ein* letter I find by *der* ruins. *Herr* Karl von Hifflehoff iss by *der* cover. Yours iss idt, *hein*, *Herr Leutnant*? *Ach*, he faints yedt! He-e-e-elp, eferybody, *der Leutnant*, he iss kaput!"



Three Heinie Fokkers and eight gun batteries tried to stop Phineas Pinkham from getting back to the democrats. With a wheel shot away, the Boonetown flyer was sighted over Garrity's drome at eight-thirty in the evening, and a machine gun on the ground opened up and helped him down fast. Without benefit of even candlelight, Phineas set the Fokker down lopsided, fought it all the way across the field, and finally subdued it against the very walls of the stone farmhouse.

"Hock them handens!" somebody yelled. "Come out, Heinie!"

"Aw, talk United States," yapped Phineas, as he crawled out into the clear. He sat down in the dirt, whipped off his helmet and let it fly. "Yep, it's me!" he howled. "I come back to git court-martialed. I know when I'm well off. Where is the old turt—"

"Over yelling his head off. A Handley Page outfit just called up and said they saw the super-Gotha burning up on the ground as they came back from a raid on a Boche drome. Some news, huh?"

"I am simply amazed," drawled Phineas. "I only took that Fokker you see there from right next to said Gotha. Haw-w-w-w-w!"

Major Garrity, Captain Howell, and Lieutenant Bump Gillis, as well as the whole works of the Ninth, came running up just as Phineas' words clipped off.

"You got that Gotha, Pinkham?" yelled the Old Man. "Here, don't sit on the damp ground. Let me help you up. Here's my hand!"

"Thanks," said the prodigal son, and grasped the hand. *Bz-z-z-z!* The C.O. jumped a foot off the ground and lost his bridgework.

"It is a battery in my pocket," explained Phineas with a grin. "Haw-w-w-w-w!"

"Haw-w-w-w-w!" joined in the Old Man. "We were fooling about the transfer. Ha, ha! It won't stick. Battery, huh? You're a scream, Pinkham."

"Haw-w-w-w-w!" mocked Bump Gillis. "This is for that glue you put in the fingers of my gloves before you left." *Whack!*

"Gillis," howled Garrity, "I'll bust you for that—assaulting Lieutenant Pinkham."

"Why, ya will not!" enthused Phineas, rubbing his nose. "What fun, huh, bums? It's a swell *guerre* awright. Haw-w-w-w-w!"