

# CINEMA BUMS

written and illustrated by JOE ARCHIBALD

*Can a Pinkham reform? A certain high and mighty Wing colonel thought so. But the Ninth shook in its shoes. For the Boonetown wonder's eyes were entirely too friendly when they rested on the colonel—friendly like the eyes of a surgeon when he hovers over a guinea pig with a meat axe in his hand.*

**I**N THE FLYING SERVICE during the World War, the polite thing to do, generally, was to come back with your flight leader, if you were able, in view of the fact that he was kind enough to lead you over the lines in the first place. Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham, however, could be very rude at times. The Boonetown, Iowa, truant had as little regard for the feelings of Captain Howell as a sheep has for its ticks. So, as usual, Phineas, after A Flight had successfully convinced a Rumpler that this was not its lucky day, had turned his nose up at his companions

and had skimmed back toward Pont a Mousson to take a look at a particular stretch of Boche linoleum.

The errant flyer dropped down close and studied the tops of the trees that were part of quite a forest. A healthy breeze was blowing, and its agitation of the leaves was of the utmost interest to Phineas. One large spot among the trees, however, seemed stagnant, and Garrity's roving buzzard was more certain than ever that skullduggery was afoot and not in the least troubled with gout.

"It's no use tellin' the bums at Chaumont," Phineas

grumbled. "If I said I saw Germans in Munich, they would examine me for spots in front of my eyes. Well—er-huh, Krauts! I can just make it." His timing was perfect. With Spandau slugs spending themselves just two inches back of the rudder post of the Spad, he dived over the lines. One wing tip, however, was a little ragged, as a Boche anti-aircraft gun had pursed its lips and bestowed upon the Yankee ship a resounding smack.

"That's another thing," soliloquized the nomad of the air. "That gun battery wasn't there before. Huh, I don't know why I bothered to figure all these things out, as when have I had my pay raised? Huh! I should worry."

Around an hour later, Phineas strode into Bar-le-Duc, gnawing on a carrot and feeling in unusually good spirits. There was that gleam in his eyes which one sees in the optics of a budding young surgeon who hovers over a guinea pig with a meat axe. In front of a certain estaminet stood an official-looking car. Phineas looked it over with jaundiced eye, muttered something derogatory about the unnecessary expense wrapped up in Brass Hats, and ambled into the oasis. Four or five officers dotted the interior. One leaned up against the bar, sipping at brandy. Phineas put thumbs down

at first sight as he ordered cognac. The Brass Hat fairly oozed ego, and he glanced at Phineas as if the pilot's head were about on a level with the cuspidor.

"Ah, *sacré bleu*," whispered the Frog bartender. "Ze crazzee Peenkham. *Tout le jour* I t'eenk ever't'eeng she goes too much smooth. *Oui, oui, mon Dieu!*"

"Bum sore," Phineas greeted the Brass Hat.

"Ah—er—" came a lofty response, "you are a flyer, I see."

"Oh, no," our hero corrected him, "I just come all the way from Iowa to try out a kite. Haw-w-w-w! Shake—my name's Pinkham."

"Pink—" The Brass Hat betrayed vague interest and took the flyer's hand in his grip, putting all the pep in his biceps behind the pressure. Phineas backed away, leaving the hand behind.

"Ah-h-h, *mon Dieu*," groaned the bartender. "Le hand, she have come off."

The Brass Hat's jaw dropped a few inches. So did his dignity. With his face the color of a railroad stop signal, he flung the wax hand through the window. Glass flew in all directions, and the Frenchman shut his eyes.

"You fresh mug!" yelled the jokester's dummy. "What's your squadron? I'll—"





An ugly-looking M.P. barged into the grog shop. He had a gun in one hand and was using the other to rub an igloo that had risen on his head.

"Who threw that?" he bellowed. "Officer or no officer, Mike O'Toole can lick 'im."

The Brass Hat soothed the M.P., and called for a strong drink. The Frog bartender handed it over, then tried to pick up the silver coin that Phineas had left in payment of his fare. It would not budge. The Frog tried to jerk it loose with a bottle opener.

"Haw-w-w-w!" guffawed Phineas. "Is that stuck! Oh, boys."

The Brass Hat showed little or no appreciation. "Think you're funny, huh?"

"Haw-haw! I panicked a crowd of undertakers at an Elks' smoker once. *Garçon*, some coneyac, if you'll play. It's no use tryin' to pick up the *argent*, as you'll need a chisel."

The French bartender brought Phineas the cognac and tried to summon up courage enough to use a hatchet he held behind his back.

"You can pick up this *argent*," the Yank assured him, and pointed to a silver franc.

The bartender did, then dropped it, swearing loudly. He rushed behind the bar and poured brandy on his burned fingers, while Phineas took his departure.

"Adoo." He grinned. "I've enjoyed myself no end. *Haw!* Them trick cigarette lighters can sure heat things up. Glad to have met you, Pershin," he flung at the stewing Brass Hat.

"He come from ze fiyeeng field of le Majaire Garitee," the Frog said savagely. "You bust heem, *non?*"

The officer suddenly straightened, a triumphant gleam appearing in his peepers. He had another drink on this very pithy thought. Meanwhile, Phineas looked cautiously around outside as he took a big carrot from his pocket. He bit off the end, then went to the back of the Brass Hat's car. When the officer came out, the dauntless Yank was on his hands and knees behind it.

"What're you doin', you homely ape?" he thrust at Phineas. "By cripes, if—"

"I lost a collar button," replied the Boonetown contribution to the great fuss. "It can happen to anybody y'know. Well, adoo again."

The Brass Hat swore, looked the car over carefully, then went in search of his driver. Phineas continued on to where his Spad was waiting.

IN HALF AN HOUR, the Old Man had him on the griddle in the squadron headquarters.

"Did you have a nice time, you—where were you, Pinkham? I'm not going to stand this any longer. I'm—I'll—see here, I—"

"If you hold a stone in your mouth," Phineas advised him seriously, "it'll stop you from stutterin'. Now, major," he protested as the Old Man turned as purple as grape juice, "I was only doing my duty where the other bums left off. I was out lookin' at those trees again. It's funny the wind rustles the tops in some places and not in others, huh? I guess them trees have got paralyzed, huh? Or the wind gets out of breath when it gets to them. Haw-w-w-w! There's something fishy there. If the camera crates could get pictures like I've always said—"

"How many times have I told you they have pictures of that area, you dam' fool?" howled Garrity. "I suppose you think you just have to hire a photographer an'—"

"They ought to take 'em again an' compare 'em," insisted the freckled flyer. "I bet them woods had a gap in 'em. It's like fingerprintin'. They should compare—oh, what's the use? What is the use of tryin'? When them big guns come up an' start blasting away at the back area all the time, we will have to move the dromes back into the Paree suburbs. Look at all the gas we will have to burn to fly the other ten miles, huh?" He paused to nibble the end off a carrot, then tossed the remains on Major Garrity's desk.

"It's good for you," he said to the C.O. "It's full of fight-amins, haw-w-w-w-w!"

The carrot hit Phineas in the back of the head as he went out. Yet when the door had closed behind the incurable humorist, Major Garrity scratched his thinning scalp and thought out loud.

"The nitwit may be right," he said slowly. "It's funny about those trees. If I could be the one to locate the placements of the big guns, why I'd—" The major was lost in thought.

There was no doubt that if some one showed G.H.Q. the location of the concrete placements intended for the new Heinie long-range guns which were rumored to be near completion in the Krupp factories, that some one could write his own ticket on the Front. Word had come through mysterious channels that the guns would have a range of forty miles and would be more efficient than was the Big Bertha which tossed shells into Paris. The back area would be under a constant pounding. Flying squadrons, as Phineas had pointed out, would have to lift up their hangars and depart like Arabs. The Allies were jittery. Chaumont was open to any suggestion.

So Major Garrity picked up the telephone to give Wing headquarters a buzz, when a very ruffled-looking Brass Hat limped in on his privacy. The Brass Hat's boot crunched upon something, and he looked down.

"Carrot, huh?" he snorted. "Ha! That's why I walked all the way from Bar-le-Duc. One of your fresh flyers rammed a carrot into the exhaust pipe of my car. Pinkham!"

Garrity sighed, and postponed communications with the Wing. "Go ahead," he groaned. "What else?"

"He insulted me," the Brass Hat cracked. "Me—a colonel! I'm going to bust him, major. Wouldn't want to lose an ingenious flyer like Pinkham, would you? Well, I'm sorry, but—"

The C.O. of the Ninth was about to jump up and shake the officer's hand with genuine appreciation, when a sudden thought stayed him. The visitor had assumed the air of a man who wanted to strike a bargain. Rufus Garrity did not like the colonel at first, any more than had Phineas.

"Why—er—no," he fenced. "I wouldn't. We are short of pilots and—now, I'm sure Lieutenant Pinkham was a little in his cups and—"

"Major," the Brass Hat cut in, "I—er—am Colonel Mortimer Post, Signal Corps—ahem. I am on a leave of absence at the time, major, and have—er—something in mind. Major Garrity, have you ever thought of the possibilities in the moving pictures? Now, after the war, I'll wager that the first great, stupendous picture made will be one laid in the skies. I am looking into the future. The man—er, men—who can produce scenes of actual sky fighting in France to supplement those taken on the ground in the United States will get a tidy bit of money, eh?"

"I didn't say anything. Go on."

"Of course, it must be done on the quiet, major," the visitor continued. "Could be done easily. I have—er—purchased an old German Rumpler that can be fixed up. Now, if two or three Spads were to fight that Rumpler while I clicked the pictures—"

"Colonel," Major Garrity interrupted, "good day to you. I am very busy and—"

"You wouldn't want to have Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham broken, would you major?" the colonel pressed on hurriedly. "Now, if I should decide to—er—just drop the matter—"

"I can't hear a word you say." Sir Rufus Garrity bristled. "My supply of ear salve has been held up."

"Very well, Garrity," Colonel Mortimer Post growled. "I'll be on my way."

Phineas Pinkham, eavesdropper, hurried away from the door and backed toward the group of fellow pilots as the colonel strode out into the room.

"I told you he was already loaded up with insurance," he taunted the colonel. "Haw-w-w-w!"

The colonel leaped and aimed for the Pinkham prop boss. He missed entirely, fell over a chair and slid under the table. Howell and Bump Gillis lifted him up and sat him in a chair to collect his bearings, just as Old Man Garrity jumped out of the orderly room.

"What the hell's goin' on here? Who—"

Colonel Mortimer Post seemed content with a magazine which Phineas had thrust into his hands.

"We are gettin' more clubby here all the time," explained the resourceful Pinkham. "The noise was nothin'—only Bump Gillis shakin' his dome."

The colonel came to as the Old Man slammed the door behind him. He rubbed his head, blinked his eyes. The words on the cover of the magazine took shape:

THE GREAT BINNEY AND HOBBS  
NOVELTY COMPANY CATALOGUE

THE NEWEST THINGS IN TRICKS TO FOOL YOUR FRIENDS.

Colonel Post's head felt as if a family of woodpeckers had made their nest in it. He was still very angry at Phineas Pinkham, yet a voice whispered as he got to his feet preparatory to starting the battle anew. It advised him that the sandy-haired, freckle-faced torment was just the man he was looking for. His glance returned to the magazine again, then back to Phineas.

"Ha, ha," he laughed. "Let's be friends, huh, Pinkham? See you're interested in all this nonsense, eh? Know Binney very well. Old schoolmate of mine. At a word from me, he'd be generous with anyone who—imagine this junk costs money, too."

"Y-yeah," agreed Phineas, all agog. "Let's go over to my hut, as there is some swell vin rouge, there, and we can talk. I says when I first saw you, I like that guy, colonel. I kick my airedale around at home just because I like him so much. It's the way the Pinkhams show affection. Let's go over an'—"

Captain Howell and Lieutenant Gillis clapped their hands to moist brows and sat down with twin sighs of befuddlement.

"What next?" moaned Bump. "He's nuts. So is the colonel—er—"

MEANWHILE, in his sanctum, Major Rufus Garrity

was talking with the Wing. He was told that his suggestion was worth acting upon, and G.H.Q. was duly informed. The reply was that the plan should be carried out, but if it was another Boche trap, somebody would get his pants hung up, and that somebody would be inside the pants. Chaumont could not be blamed. Reports had come in from every point on the compass for days that the spot where the big guns were to be placed had been located. Bombs had been dropped in seven places. And the Krauts had laughed gleefully as the expensive drops had merely churned up mud.

"But you'll get pictures of that place," the orders came from Chaumont. "Until you do, there will be no bombs dropped! Do you fatheads at the Wing think bombs are cheap as glass beads? We want pictures! If they look different from the last ones taken of that area, then go ahead and bomb. But it is the pictures we want first!"

Close to midnight, while G.H.Q. and the Air Service heads were still snapping at each other, Colonel Mortimer Post bade adieu to Phineas Pinkham. The colonel was smoking a black cigar; he seemed exultant.

"Don't forget," he said to Phineas. "Deliver the goods as promised, and you will get a free consignment of knickknacks from Binney and Hobbs. I will attend to my end. In a couple of days, then. See you in Bar-le-Duc."

Phineas sat down on his cot and ruminated faster than a herd of camels. As was his habit, he mused aloud.

"I am for it," he said. "The Old Man doesn't see the possibilities in it, ha, ha! Even the fatheaded colonel ain't seen half of them. But everybody can't be smart like us Pinkhams." His cogitations were shattered by a loud snapping sound from out on the field.

"Haw-w-w-w!" he chuckled. "It will be that cigar. Could the colonel expect to walk into an incinerator without gittin' toasted a bit? But he won't stay mad."

Observation crates made three attempts to get pictures, the following day. Boche ships swarmed around them like flies and mused up one or two. The day after that, the Krauts continued their outrageous treatment of the camera ships. Flight leaders said to hell with it, and asked to be transferred. The Wing got scorched by G.H.Q.

"It's a trap, you imitation Solomons," a Brass Hat shot over the wires. "Just a little come-on, so that we will send out what winged stock we have left to get busted up. There'll be no more camera clicking over Pont a Mousson! Or would you want it in writing?"

"But we could bomb the place at night to make sure," protested a Brass Hat at Wing. "A Handley Page—"

"Has Lieutenant Pinkham, that half-baked codfish, told you that babies come from under lettuce leaves, too?"

That was enough for the Wing. They burned under the insult, and passed the buck to Garrity.

"The next time you let Pinkham kid you, major," they told him, "we will take off your uniform and dress you up like a boy scout. Good-bye!"

Major Rufus swore at them and slammed up the receiver. "The big cheeses are right, worse luck," he ground through his teeth. "I'm going nuts, or why would I have let that buck-toothed baboon talk me into it? Cr-r-r-ripes—Pinkham and a movie-cuckoo colonel! My lumbago—what next?"

Unfortunately, the Old Man was unable to read tea leaves. Otherwise, he would have seen a warning in his cup to give Bar-le-Duc a wide, wide berth on the evening of his visit to that famous Frog settlement. But Major Garrity had quite a yen to match wits with his fellowmen who bragged of their prowess at the ancient game of chance known as poker. There was a certain Brass Hat whom he had sworn to clean, and he felt lucky as he rode over to Bar-le-Duc in the squadron car.

It came to pass, that night, that a certain officer wished to get in on the game, and his name was Mortimer Post.

"Heard you gathered here on propitious occasions to play a card or two," he said pleasantly to Major Garrity. "I have a passion for risking a franc here and there, myself."

The Old Man was not for it, but there was a chance that the colonel was not without influence about Chaumont. The C.O. of the Ninth felt sure that Mortimer was not above spreading fabrications about the conduct of officers in the sector.

"Forgot my little proposition?" The colonel grinned at Garrity. "I've about given up the idea. No hard feelings, I'm sure."

"I wish I was," the Old Man mumbled as he nodded reluctantly. "Well, lead on to the lion's den and don't beef if I take your shirts."

Major Rufus Garrity's hunch had been correct. Lady Luck was clinging to him like a pilot fish to a shark. He filled bobtailed straights, drew two cards for flushes. His opulence was increasing by leaps and bounds until—

Out of the shadows across the street walked

Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham. He sauntered in quite casually, hands thrust in his pockets, whistling an alleged tune that had to do with something about keeping coal on the home fires. Those who knew Phineas quite well never failed to be on their guard whenever he acted thusly. The Boonetown pilot took a drink at the bar, then, turning a deaf ear to the protesting bartender, walked up the stairs.

“Zey weel keek *m’sieu* on ze ear down, *chien!*” yipped the Frenchman. “*Vous êtes* ze nuts like in ze fruit cake—”

“Aw, fry a grape,” Phineas advised him, and kept on going.

Major Rufus Garrity was hauling in another sizable pot, when the door of the room opened, and Phineas strolled in. The Old Man swore roundly and told him to get out.

“Why, does it make you nervous for me to look over your shoulder?” queried the unwelcome guest, little abashed. “My, major—you are lucky—why, no wonder! Tsk, tsk!” And before the staling eyes of the players, Phineas Pinkham flicked an ace of hearts out of the Old Man’s sleeve.

“You cheated, Garrity!” howled Mortimer Post.

“Why, you cad! You—” a brigadier bellowed.

“Garrity, you—”

The C.O. of the Ninth whirled on Phineas. “I’ll kill you for that,” he yelled. “You tell ‘em you did it! Pinkham, a joke is a joke—”

“Why-y,” drawled the professor of legerdemain, “what do you mean? Are ya tryin’ to blame it on me? Major, you—”

“Come on,” the colonel snapped at the others, “we’ll get our money back, then leave him. Garrity, we’ll throw you out of the Army. You’re a disgrace.”

“That is what Aunt Emma always said,” observed Phineas. “Cards are inventions of the devil and make men go to the depths of degrad—”

MAJOR RUFUS swung on Phineas. He missed and hit the colonel in the eye. The brigadier got into it and smacked the C.O.’s ear a cherry red. Old Man Garrity, his Irish up, began to clean out the whole place. He laid the colonel low with a beautiful right cross, just as Phineas hurried downstairs. A terrific thump sounded from above as he made for the front door. A big hunk of plaster dropped from the ceiling and hit the Frog bartender on the scalp. Phineas took a drink on the house and then dove out of the place just as whistles began to blow. M.P.’s came on the run.

“I wouldn’t go in,” Phineas advised them. “It’s brigadiers an’ colonels an’ everything like that playin’. They’ll make it tough for you guys!”

Refusing to take the Pinkham word, one M.P. stuck his head in the door. As he did so, he saw a fat Brass Hat roll downstairs and fetch up against a table.

“Ha, ha!” guffawed the M.P., “let ‘em kill each other. We haven’t heard a thing.”

Phineas called on Babette for half an hour. Then he went back to the scene of battle. He found Major Garrity and Colonel Mortimer Post huddled together over a table. Unobserved, Phineas slipped in and took a place in a dark corner.

“That’s the way it is, Garrity,” the colonel was saying. “I’ll drop the charges. I’ll forget about it if—well, after all, think of the disgrace.”

“You’ve got me,” groaned the Old Man, “but some day I’m going to commit a murder. I’ll plan it for weeks and it will be the perfect crime. He is not worth hanging for. But I will study it all out and—”

Phineas made an exit by the rear, chuckling. “Well, we’ve got to have pictures, Mortimer,” he said. “But I’m not finished with you. Anybody who’ll think up such a dirty trick to get what he wants—well, I would not care to associate with him. I would hate to be that low. Haw-w-w-w-w!”

The Old Man broke the news to the pilots the next day. Mess soured on the warbirds’ stomachs.

“Got to keep it secret,” Garrity said, every word tasting like a castor bean. “You’ve got to work with me. The Rumpler is fixed up, the colonel tells me. Pinkham will fly it!” His words tasted a little sweeter with the last outburst. “Just over the lines, the Rumpler with the camera will fly. Three Spads will chase it, act as if they want to knock it down. Too bad it can’t be real. Pinkham and that fatheaded Brass Hat! But we can’t have everything.”

“You are the C.O.,” Howell said, “but I can’t dope it out. You know we’ll get busted. You, too, if they find it out.”

“Haw-w-w-w-w!” put in Phineas. “He will if he don’t do it as—”

“Shut up, you—”

“Riskin’ our necks for that crackpot!” snapped Bump Gillis. “Well, I hope some Fokkers—”

“Shake!” contributed Garrity. “But I’ve sent out word that the Rumpler will be marked. There’ll be an Allied insignia on the fuselage—crosses on the wings so that it will look good to the movie fans. The three squadrons near us are in on it so—”



Captain Howell shook his head and looked straight at Garrity. "What's Pinkham got on you, huh?" he asked suspiciously.

Phineas bristled. "Why, to think I would blackmail Major Garrity! Major, tell 'em—"

"Gentlemen," said Garrity, "Lieutenant Pinkham wouldn't blackmail anybody, ha, ha! He would sit them in an electric chair and hand them a fan."

It was an hour later that a Cadillac from the Wing trundled in. Two Brass Hats jumped out and barged into the French farmhouse.

"Just from Chaumont," said one. "G.H.Q. is desperate. Took a look at those old pictures of the area just to see if they were passing up a bet. The British took 'em in 1916. Can't tell whether they're pictures of the bottom of a turpentine vat or the top side of an elephant. Now they want pictures of the area anyway. What a war, Garrity!"

"I'd hate to be a camera clicker," the C.O. said. "They'll never get pictures of that area. Von Beerbohm and his crates cover that spot. And plenty of Archie, too. I'm beginning to think Pinkham might be right."

"Bah!" snorted the man from Wing. "There's no secret hideout there. Now, my guess is close to Conflans, the railroad center, where the guns could be rolled up. That's an ace of an idea, don't you think I'm right?"

"Tell it to G.H.Q. and leave me alone," pleaded the Old Man. "Ace, you say? Oh-h-h-h!" He held his head.

Phineas Pinkham and the flight he condescended to fly with watched three camera crates take a fine pasting from a flock of Fokkers over Pont a Mousson before they could get in close. They knifed down on von Beerbohm's flight and disconcerted it enough to allow a pair of D.H.'s to slip out of the mêlée and go on home. The third was headed down toward a woodland in a cloud of steam. A flight of French Spads arrived in time to save Garrity's brood from a complete washout.

As A Flight tore home, Phineas looked back. The two-seater had hit the mosaic, and steam was rising from the tops of the trees.

"I bet that clinches it," declared the patriot from Iowa. "Well, time will tell, an' I hope it ain't a liar."

Early in the evening, Colonel Mortimer Post called for Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham in a nice, big car. The lieutenant was waiting with Sergeant Casey. They were going out to fix up the Rumpler for the early morning stunt. Phineas carried some cloth and some box wood. Casey lugged a can of paint, a hammer and some nails.

"We've got to hide that movie camera," Phineas

pointed out, "so the Boche will not get wise. We'll fix it on the Rumpler an' box it over."

"Capital!" exclaimed Colonel Post. "Eh, Garrity?" The Old Man had just walked up.

"Somehow, I can't feel happy about it," said the C.O. of the Ninth. "Just don't mention it any more, colonel."

"Haw-w-w-w!" guffawed Phineas. "Colonel, would a fifty-dollar order be too much of a touch on Binney and Hobbs?"

"A mere trifle," the colonel assured him, and climbed into the car.

OUT WHERE the Rumpler squatted, they all piled out. Colonel Mortimer Post listened to Phineas' explanation of what he intended to do with the camera.

"You see, it has to stick up its snout," was the gist of it, "so you can shoot the scenes in the air. I will leave a hole for the crank an' one for the lens so—"

Colonel Mortimer was a lazy sort of person. He seemed content to trust Phineas with the details, and went to the lee of a big oak tree where he sat down. That turned out to be his contribution to the work at hand. Phineas, however, was not surprised. In fact, he was pleased beyond words. Casey helped him fasten the camera to the side of the ship. The colonel assured him that it was loaded with film. When Phineas started to box it up, Casey started to say something.

"Hey, that thing ain't—"

"Shut up, Casey!" interrupted Lieutenant Pinkham. "I'm givin' orders as I am your superior." As he spoke, he took an old spy glass from his pocket and shoved it through one of the openings. Only the lens and a half inch of metal surrounding it protruded from the hole.

"Now," grinned the plotter, "I will put on the insignia. Have you got the flour-an'-water paste?"

"That stuff won't stay on five minutes," sniffed Casey as he saw the two squares of oilcloth which the flyer had pulled from his pocket. "Why—you ain't nuts, are ya?"

"No guff, Casey," reprimanded Phineas. "Just paint circles on that oilcloth. All I want is to have the things to stay on for five minutes. Who's handlin' this job, anyway?"

"You are, thank God," breathed Casey fervently. "We'll all git busted fer this."

"You should be happy," chuckled Pinkham. "Then you can insult me without gittin' arrested. Hurry up, Mike Angelo, an' sling the paint."

When Phineas announced the completion of the job, Colonel Mortimer Post yawned, walked over and surveyed the results.

"You see, colonel," explained the worker of miracles, "the camera is hidden kind of, an' you can crank it from the side. See, there is the lens lookin' out of this hole here an' right up at the sky. The Spad'll be overhead an'—"

"Capital!" chortled the officer. "Capital!"

Sergeant Casey turned his head and blew his nose loudly.

"Huh, well," grinned Phineas, "let's go an' git some rest."

"Boy!" exclaimed the colonel as he let Phineas and Casey off at the drome. "This will be the making of me, Pinkham. Good-night."

"Haw-w-w-w!" guffawed Phineas. "He's a li'l twisted around, don't you think, Casey?"

"I don't dare to think, lootenant," the flight sergeant said in parting. "My part of it is over, an' I don't want another damn thing to do with it."

"No imagination, that guy," was the Pinkham observation, as he wended his way to his hut.

Bump Gillis was waiting up. "Well, ya big cluck, I can't wait till morning. A chance to take a shot at you. I can say I was not let in on it an'—"

"Why, you double-crosser," yowled Phineas. "Awright, but look out for Spandau bullets, you tightfist."

Major Rufus Garrity, lying in his quarters counting sheep, wished that the night were as long as an Eskimo winter, but dawn seemed to come even as he made the wish, and it appeared that even the elements were stacked against him. He swung out of bed, eyed a gun hungrily for several moments, then thought of loved ones at home and decided to keep on breathing. Motors roared an accompaniment as he dressed. C Flight was ready to take off. They, with B Flight, would carry on the real show, while Mortimer Post and three Spads from A Flight staged a mock, gigantic, stupendous, colossal aerial struggle over the fighting lines.

"Well, maybe the Rumpler will get knocked off," said Garrity hopefully. "Two birds will go with one stone. Ha, ha! What a joke!"

A more sour-faced trio of warbirds than Captain Howell, Lieutenant Gillis and Lieutenant Reece had never trod the floor of an *estaminet* as they waited for the appearance of Lieutenant Pinkham and his seemingly bosom friend, the colonel, that morning.

The Pinkham advent was heralded by a lilting tune, and he stepped in through the door of the farmhouse with the jaunty air that meant poison in a dozen languages. He wore a Von's helmet and goggles and a flying coat which he had filched from a Heinie drome on one of his escapades.

"Bon jaw, bums!" he sang out blithely. "How's the actors this gorgeous a.m.? Bump, you've got too much make-up on. Haw-w-w-w!"

"That's enough," blazed Gillis. "I quit! I resign from the Air Force. It's too damn nutty."

"Let's get it over with," hollered Captain Howell.

"And if I come too close to you, Carbuncle, it is because I ran out of eye-wash yesterday. Remember!"

"Now, you will take off in fifteen minutes," Phineas instructed them as Garrity watched them, gripped with nausea. "Expect us over Commercy, as we have to make a wide detour as if we come from Germany. An' make it look good. Come on, you cinema bums!"

"It's rotten from any angle," commented the major, his stomach in a barrel roll as he spotted the colonel's car heading onto the drome. The colonel had never been higher up in the air than a hotel roof, so he had been imbibing a few snorts to stiffen his morale. He listed to port a bit as he got out of his car.

"I wouldn't go up in that Rumpler," said Howell, "even if I was drunk."

"Shwell mornin', eh? Shun be out shoon, nische an' brigh'. Where'sh my frien'?"

"Don't look at me," moaned the Old Man.

"Is everybody ready?" chuckled Phineas. "I'll get you a helmet an' goggles an' such, Mort, old boy!"

"Huh? Shee here! Co'n'l Posht to you. Hm, outrageous!"

"Boy, will I git hunk with you," muttered Phineas.

"Well, good-bye," said the major. "I'll see you in my favorite movie theatre—if the camera is saved."

THE CADILLAC rolled away with Phineas and the colonel. The former kept his eye on the latter as he took another sip from a flat bottle.

"Shtupendoush pictshure in makin'," gurgled the officer.

"You have no idea. Oh, boys!" agreed Phineas.

The Rumpler rolled away on schedule. Colonel Post had spun the prop and escaped the fate of Marie Antoinette by an eyelash. He sat in the rear pit, now, almost hidden from Phineas' view by the boxlike structure which covered the kodak.

As the Rumpler lifted, Phineas decided that



even though the plane was about six steps from the boneyard, it should have at least three hours of dotage left. He headed for Souilly, which he established, then swung right to skim for Conimercy. The sun was shoving its face through clouds when the three Spads came tearing down at the Rumpler, five miles behind the palpitating advance trenches of the fighting lines.

Phineas turned in the pit to point up. The colonel waved a flipper and got up in his pit. He began to turn the crank, at the same time peeping through a hole which Phineas had cut in the contraption. The three Spad pilots acted their roles to perfection, keeping above the Rumpler as much as possible.

As the mock battle raged, two squares of oilcloth curled up from the Rumpler and skirled into space. Phineas saw one go and grinned. While the colonel cranked and howled with glee, the marvel from Boonetown began to move nearer and nearer to the lines. Captain Howell smelled a rat as a great criss-crossed slash in the earth below slipped by under his trucks.

"That fathead's pulling something," he roared. "To hell with him!" He had started to wave to his two buzzards, when he became paralyzed. Not a mile away were Heinie battle wagons, and they were coming in fast.

Phineas also saw them and swallowed hard. From another angle came a pair of British Camels. Lieutenant Pinkham gave the Rumpler all it could take and headed for Pont a Mousson. The Heinies began shooting at Garrity's Spads. The Camels started to paste the Rumpler. Perhaps there never was a more cross-purpose battle in the history of the world. The Heinies, of course resented the attack of the Spads on the Rumpler which they considered *bona fide*. The Camels, on the other hand, were intent upon smacking the Rumpler which did not bear the markings they had been told to watch for. Bump Gillis tried to give a beefeater the office, and got a smack in the empennage for his pains.

"What a war!" groaned the Yank who had started it all. A hand touched him on the shoulder, and he turned to look into the colonel's face. The officer was as pale as a block of paraffin. Moreover, he was now cold sober.

"I just got nicked by a real bullet," he hollered.

"Real bullet?" gurgled Phineas, and swung the Rumpler to the right. "It's a movie, ain't it? Haw-w! Start crank-in' as they are only spit balls."

Bump Gillis slammed a Kraut to the carpet and

flashed in close to the Rumpler. A beef-eater in a Camel wondered why the Spad pilot should be exchanging words with the Rumpler instead of poking it with lead.

"Blarst it!" yelled the Limey. "Maybe—nope, them Krauts are nursin' that Rumpler. It belongs to them, I s'y. Maybe the Spads—"

"*Ach, Gott!*" yipped von Beerbohm. "*Was ist das?* I get it shot *und* yedt only *der* Rumpler ist close by me. *Himmel!*" Acting upon a sudden thought as the Rumpler hung over a stretch of woodland near Pont a Mousson, von Beerbohm got in close and shot a burst into the two-seater's ribs. The colonel in the rear pit seemed to leap clear then settle into it again.

Phineas turned again as Mortimer banged a fist on the top of his flying helmet.

"Spit balls!" yowled the colonel. "You get me out of this, you fresh cluck!"

"I'll make a try," yipped the Rumpler pilot. "Haw! What a movie, huh?"

A Camel pilot, seeing the Fokker rip a punch into the Rumpler, slapped his own face. "Fancy!" he choked out. "The jolly ol' Rumpler is a bit of all right after all. No end of a mess I calls it."

Phineas was finding that out. The Rumpler's speed was cut down to a minimum. One cylinder was turning the prop. The top wing was wobbling as if balanced on the tip of a cane. A chunk of strut attached to a flying wire beamed the colonel. He signed briefly and went into cold storage.

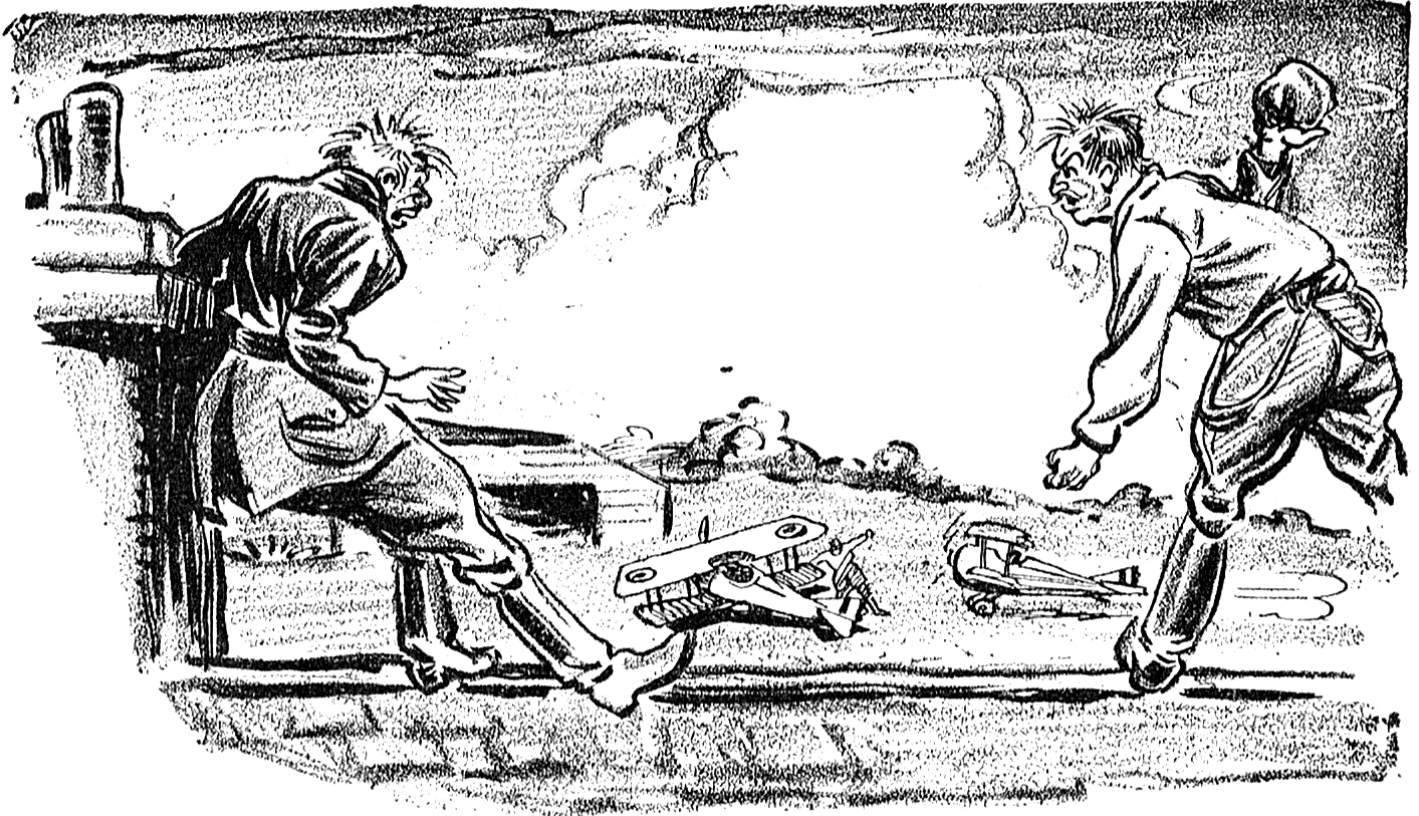
The Rumpler landed on the Ninth's drome and immediately shed the top wing. Clouds of steam enveloped it as Garrity watched Phineas Pinkham fight it to a stop against one wall of the farmhouse. The intrepid pilot climbed out, swore, and reached for his handkerchief to wipe a clammy brow. Two pieces of pasteboard fell out of the linen to the major's feet. On picking one up, the Old Man identified it as an ace of clubs.

"Why, you—" He picked up a rock and balanced it.

"Wait—let me explain," howled Phineas as he started to run. "I am—in—no condition to—be—assaulted. I—"

When Howell and his two pilots nosed in, they saw Phineas on top of the farmhouse hugging the chimney. Garrity was crawling along the ridgepole, the rock still in one hand.

"Now, listen," yelled the culprit. "There's pictures in the damn movie camera, pictures of those woods near Pont a Mousson. I framed the colonel, as he



thought we were takin' movies, haw-w-w-w! Drop the rock, will ya, as—"

After a while the pilots on the ground persuaded the Old Man to come down before he slipped and broke his neck. He lost his grip on the rock and it rolled down the roof to hit Bump Gillis on the head. The canny Scot spun around twice, then headed for his hut in waltz time.

"There," said Phineas later, pulling the film out of the camera. "The colonel thinks he took pictures, but I had the camera's eye pointin' to the ground all the time. He thought he was lookin' through it right, but it was only an old telescope I rigged up. That's why I had to—er—get your permission to make a movie as—Haw-w-w! Is he still out? The markings came off too. The Krauts got a squint of them over the lines an', well—haw! Did his pants git singed by a tracer! He won't need no swivel chair for a month. Let me know how them films come out. I bet you'll find a hole in them woods where a camera crate fell through the paper leaves."

As usual, Lieutenant Pinkham was right. The pictures showed up clearly, with glaring evidence that the Boche were hiding something under a big screen of camouflage. That very night, a Handley-Page went over and broke up a lot of kindling wood, kicked a big gun loose from its moorings and generally raised hell

with a lot of concrete which the Jerries had spent some time on. Colonel Mortimer Post decided that he had no future on the silver screen, and parted with Phineas Pinkham with anything but regret. When two generals came to call upon Lieutenant Pinkham, they were told that he had gone to Bar-le-Duc.

"To mail a letter," said the Old Man, "to Binney and Hobbs, he said. Ah—er—he's sent for some more—general, would it be difficult to get a transfer at this time?"