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**PHINEAS
PINKHAM**
howl

DOG FLIGHT!

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Major Garrity wasn't having a very good time. The Brass Hats were yelling at him so loud that he could have heard them if he'd been in the Sahara Desert without a phone. And Phineas Pinkham had taken to boiling black thread and hanging it up on the trees to dry. Yes, the whole war looked nuttier than a squirrel's commissary.

A FLIGHT, Ninth Pursuit Squadron, Major Rufus Garrity commanding, was taking quite a cuffing about by a Boche *Staffel* between Souilly and St. Benoit. The Spad quintuplets, led by Flight Leader Howell, seemed to be out of form, like a star actor in cauliflower alley who had spent the night before the big fight eating pickles, ice cream and fried oysters. It seemed as if they just didn't care.

Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham did not appear to be interested in the *mélée*, even when a Heinie bullet ripped through the flying coat, wrapped around his torso and went on its way to smash into the dashboard. By force of habit he sideslipped, heaved a sigh, and gingerly picked a triangular piece of glass out of his proboscis.

"Poor Rollo," the Boonetown, Iowa, contribution to the U.S. Flying Corps lamented. "It's just like murder.

Well, it ain't goin' to be me. I'll make the bums toss up and—haw-w-w-w, I never lose!"

Br-r-r-r-r-r-r-r! Phineas, for the first time, showed signs of shock.

"Why, it's the Heinies! Where did they come from?" he yelped. But the Pinkham heart was heavy—too heavy to be lifted up and put to work. So it was well that a flight of British S.E.5's was abroad that day. The beefeaters came tumbling down from a higher sky shelf and began to spread a very thick coat of shellac on the checkerboard Albatrosses, while the members of Garrity's outfit started toward Bar-le-Duc and, strangely enough, wished that it were a thousand miles away.

Three sad-looking pilots climbed out of their battle wagons back on the drome and plodded toward the French farmhouse. Major Garrity heard them come in. Their boots sounded as ponderous as if they were weighted down with lead like deep-sea divers' kicks. He came forth to greet them.

"Well, little rays of sunshine," he growled, "you might as well start figurin' which one it's goin' to be."

"It's plain murder!" Phineas Pinkham yipped. "You know how tender my heart is. You go ahead, Howell, as you haven't finer feelings like me. I—"

Suddenly a prolonged "Ow-w-w-w-w-w-w-r-r-r-r!" sounded outside.

"There!" exclaimed the freckle-faced pilot indignantly. "Could you go right out an' kill him now? Why, he's callin' for us."

The Old Man toyed with a piece of army ordnance for a while, then laid it down on the table. "Toss up for it," he barked. "Rollo goes out today. If you want to blindfold him——"

NOW, Rollo was an aged pooch of doubtful lineage. Rollo's dog days were about at an end. For the past month he had been mooching around the drome, having chosen it as a sanctuary in which to rest his

aged bones. Rollo was short of breath, housed quite an assortment of fleas, was afflicted with various rheumatic pains and dragged one leg a bit, once having tried to outkick a mule. No mistake about it, Rollo was in the sere and yellow leaf.

Nevertheless, the pilots of the Ninth had welcomed Rollo, had even gone to the bother of building him a diminutive Nissen hut. It was Phineas Pinkham himself who had presented the canine octogenarian with a collar made out of a Brass Hat's Sam Browne belt. Major Rufus Garrity, however, prided himself on being humane, not that his buzzards agreed with him. At one time, the Old Man had been head of the S.P.C.A. back in the States, and he told his varlets that he knew an act of mercy when he saw one.

"Listen," he had growled the night before, "Rollo is away across the field, but you can hear the mutt breathe. He's dead, but he just won't lie down. He's got to go before he suffers any more."

"I wish somebody 'round here would git short of breath," Phineas had pushed out. "Then we could shoot him. Haw-w-w!"

"Don't look at me like that, you spotted baboon!" Garrity had bellowed. "Rollo goes West tomorrow. It's up to you three kindhearts who gathered him to your



bosoms. One of you——"

And so now the zero hour had come.

Ow-w-w-w-w-w-w-r-r-r-r-r-r!

"Rollo wants his supper," opined Phineas. "My heart's breakin'."

"Well," Captain Howell gave in, "get out a coin. We might as well get it over with."

"A coin?" repeated Phineas, trying to hide a sudden surge of exultation. "Oh, boys, come on, Bump, you nickel-nurser!"

The trio of buzzards displayed as many coins. Phineas' bit of silver, however, had never come from the U.S. Mint. It had heads on both sides.

"I take heads!" he cried. "Haw-w-w-w-w! Well?"

"Odd man wins," yipped Howell. "All ready?"

"Wait a minute," howled Phineas, as a thought struck him. "That's not the way I play. I—"

"I'm your superior," Howell reminded him belligerently. "Come on, slap that coin down on the back of your hand, you big ape!"

Phineas obeyed, a premonition of disaster gnawing at his core. Hands lifted.

"Tails," spoke up Bump.

"Same here," chuckled Howell. "What've you got, Carbuncle? Heads, huh? Ha, ha! Well, here's the cannon. Just turn your head when you shoot."

"I protest," blustered Phineas. "It ain't fair. I—"

"That trick nickel, huh?" grinned Bump Gillis. "Me an' Howell figgered that out. Well, Carbuncle, you know what Lincoln said. You can fool all of the people half of the time and you can fool half of the people half of the time—ha, ha! Say goobye to Rollo for me."

Major Rufus Garrity had never felt happier. Phineas turned to him.

"Hm, uh, Rollo ain't so old," he began. "How 'bout givin' him two more days? Maybe his arteries'll loosen up an'—"

"You know my orders!" Garrity huffed, like the leader of a wolf pack.

"Awright!" snorted Phineas, picking up the gun. "Awright! When you pass a butcher's shop again, swap your heart for one that come out of a mule. I hope Rollo comes back to haunt you."

FIVE minutes later, work on the drome came to a standstill as Phineas Pinkham trudged slowly toward open country. He was leading Rollo by a length of rope, and the pooch maneuvered in the Pinkham wake as fast as its onus of infirmities would allow.

"You kin hear the kiyi creak from here," declared Sergeant Casey. "It's good riddance."

For a mile Phineas Pinkham plodded on, not daring to turn around and look Rollo straight in the eye. Then he slanted away from the sunken road just as a U.S. staff car came lurching and clattering around a bend. In his palmy days, Rollo would have jumped, but in his present state of hale and heartiness, Rollo would only have shivered if he had sat down on a thistle. There came a yelp, and Lieutenant Pinkham spun around like a top. Rollo was still at the end of the rope, but he was quite defunct.

"Why—er—Rollo! Rollo!" hollered Phineas. "Why, you bums!"

The staff car stopped. Two Brass Hats climbed out. One looked at the late Rollo and muttered an elegy. The other approached Phineas. Abruptly the Pinkham scion clamped his hands to his face and sat down on a rock. "Oh-h-h-h-h-h-h-h! Oh-h-h-h-h-h-h!" he moaned. "Sorry," apologized the brigadier. "I'll bust that dough who was drivin'. I'll—"

Phineas' shoulders shook. His big nose erupted quite an assortment of sniffles. He looked up at the colonel. "That w-w-won't bring back R-Rollo!" he said from the depths of apparent grief. "Y'know, a dog an' a horse are man's best friend. Woe is me! What'll I do? I don't care what happens now."

"Touching, eh, what?" the colonel said to his mate. "Flyer—his mascot, no doubt. Well—er—the only thing we can do is—how much money you got, Boggs?"

"T-Twenty francs," came the reluctant answer.

The colonel touched Phineas on the shoulder. "Here's fifty francs, my good fellow. All we can do. Buy yourself another mascot, perhaps?"

"Money!" gulped Phineas. "For Rollo? Why—that is—why—" But the pilot extraordinary pocketed the currency in the midst of his indignant protest. The colonel and his companion got back into the A.E.F. boiler and soon were out of sight and hearing.

"Oh, boys!" grinned Phineas. "Fifty smackers! What was it Lincoln said? Well, Babette, I'm on my way, fair maid, and will be in Barley Duck anon." He looked at Rollo's remains, experienced a brief pang, then eased the old bones out of the road. He took time to build a cairn of rocks over the remains.

"Adoo, ol' boy," he said. "It's a rotten wind that don't blow somethin' good my way. Fifty francs! And I was quite short. Oh, boys! The Old Man will not have a leg to stand on as I'll say I was struck by grief and had to drown sorrow in an *estaminet*. Phineas Pinkham, it's a caution how you arrange things. Here I have to exterminate Rollo and he's taken out of my hands and what is put in his place? Argent! I guess the Pinkhams was church-goin' folks. Haw-w-w!"

Phineas caroused as long as fifty francs would allow him that night. Babette never seemed fairer. The cognac never was more potent. It was with light heart and lighter head that the jokester from Boonetown arrived at the Frog farmhouse late that night. Major Garrity was waiting up. Several pilots had fought off sleep to keep the Old Man company.

"H'lo, bums!" said Phineas in greeting. "You'd ought to've seen the look in Rollo's eyes. It was awful.

Touched me to the quick.” He paused to flick an imaginary tear aside. “When—I—th—think of it, I git a lump—”

“You’ll get another one,” the C.O. cut in. “You big—”

“It was like murder. I says to Rollo, ‘This’ll hurt me worse than you,’” Phineas proceeded, undaunted. “Then you know what he did? He refused the blindfold and says, ‘Bow-wow!’ Then he sits right up when I pointed the gun. I turned my dome an’—”

Major Rufus Garrity started to applaud. “Encore!” he hooted. “Pinkham, you hybrid lemur, we had company while you were gone. Colonel John J. Butterby was here. He told us quite a sad story about how his car ran over a pooch. There was a rope tied to the mutt, and attached to the other end was a big, flapped liar by all the clocks in—”

“Huh?” gulped Phineas. “Why—er—are ya sure?”

“Yes,” cut in Howell, “and he sat down at this very table and dug into a bag of peanuts you left here. When he cracked one open, it blew up in his face. He lost half his mustache and one eyebrow. Fifty francs, huh?”

“That is pretty small pertaters for Rollo,” Phineas said indignantly. “What’s the difference how Rollo went West? It was me who didn’t have the heart to shoot him so I says I will get him run over by a truck or— well—”

“I told the colonel,” Garrity added his bit, “that you were taking Rollo out to shoot him, anyways. The Brass Hat—”

“Now that is a pal for you!” erupted Phineas. “You would blab out a deathbed secret. Awright, go ahead. Nobody can prove—”

“The colonel is coming after those fifty francs when he calls again,” the C.O. cracked. “And, seeing that you have two months’ pay docked already, well—ha, ha!”

“I will go into bankruptcy,” grinned Phineas.

“That’ll fool him. Adoo, bums! I must have my sleep.”

“Brought a bottle with you, I see?” the major suddenly tossed out. “Bought with your ill-gotten gains. Hand it over! You think I’m porous or what? I marvel at your generosity. Hand it over.”

“Gosh, a guy can’t have nothin’ around here. Of all the hogs—” complained the man of the moment.

The Old Man took the bottle, yanked out the cork. *Squish!* Black liquid hosed out. Major Garrity’s physiognomy, in a trice, assumed the ebon hue of an end man in a minstrel show. The bottle fell from his limp fingers. He sputtered, then got up slowly.

“Don’t forget,” Phineas yipped as he paused in

flight and banked around in the doorway. “You made me give it to you. I know discipline. I always obey superiors as—”

Crash! It was quick work—picking up that bottle and heaving it. But Phineas Pinkham had not moved like a snail with leg irons. He was halfway to his hut when the bottle broke up.

BUMP GILLIS arrived at the cubicle a couple of minutes later.

“I hope you thanked the Old Man,” grinned Phineas, as he pulled off a boot. “That bottle was for you, Bump. I never forget you when I go to town, you know that. Haw-w-w-w! Well, it has been fun, huh? I miss Rollo, though, don’t you? He generally barks taps at this hour.”

“Some day I will kill you,” gritted the Scot. “Shut up and make believe you bunk alone. I—phew-w-w-w-w! What’s that smell? What’re you boilin’ in that kettle? If it’s your socks, I move out.”

“Aw, it’s nothin’ but a lot of black thread I’m boilin’ in oil,” his hutmate assured him. “There’s somethin’ else in it, too, but you wouldn’t understand, Bump, I don’t see why they didn’t build schools in Scotland. Ah—er— what did the Brass Hats want, huh? I bet it was that shell dump that is dug under a cliff, huh?”

“What did you think—that they come to paint Easter eggs?” snorted Bump.

“Haw-w-w-w-w-w!” complimented Phineas. “That was almost funny, you ol’ highland-flinger, you!”

Bump crawled into bed and disdained reply to this latest insult. Phineas went over to the little oil stove he had filched from a deserted Frog farmhouse. He stirred the contents of the kettle and then reached for a book on a near-by shelf. Turning to a page he had marked, he read the fine print under a heavier caption, HERMES’ OINTMENT.

“Nope, I haven’t left anythin’ out,” the red-headed witch doctor chuckled. “It’s wonderful, the progress of science.”

An hour later, Phineas turned down the wicks of the small oil stove and went to bed. Morning found him hanging something up on the branches of an old apple tree in the rear of B Flight’s hangar. Sergeant Casey looked at it and scratched his head.

“Why, it’s only thread,” the flight non-com exclaimed. “Lootenant, if it ain’t bein’ too forward, could I ast ya—”

“Casey,” Phineas said severely, “you can see it’s black thread, can’t ya? I wash it at times. I hate dirty thread.”



Casey blinked, squinted closely at his superior, then turned and went about his business.

"Nuttier than a squirrel's commissary," he muttered. "They ought to put that guy away."

G.H.Q. and Wing Headquarters made life miserable for flying units up and down the convulsed front line all that day. The Jerries were moving up truck and flatcar loads of shells to a salient which had been a sore thumb to the Allies for two years. In the shadow of Mont Sec, they had dug into a rocky hillside and had made a storehouse. All the Allied eggs in the world could not belt them loose. Squadrons had tried it, had come back wishing that the warriors of old had been more successful against the flaxen-haired Huns who had swept down from the north. The Krauts laughed gutturally and sipped Schnapps as they crouched in dugouts, watching the bombs chip away at solid rock.

Major Rufus Garrity was getting pretty sick of the arguments with Chaumont. It was like battling an octopus with all its tentacles. The buck was being passed with a vengeance. The phone at the Ninth Pursuit buzzed continually. The smell of burning

insulation pervaded the orderly room as Major Rufus swapped verbal punches with the Wing.

"All right," he stormed. "Get me a plane that'll point straight down, stop in mid-air, and have a rock drill at its snout. Then we'll bore holes and lower dynamite into the holes. I'm sure all that could be done before the Boche ships stopped us. What? . . . Fresh, am I? Well, you birds aren't exactly in a state of dry rot . . . My job? Take it and welcome. Ha, ha! How's all your folks?"

"That is all we'll stand, major," the voice came back over the wire. "We want action! We want that place blown up, and the Air Corps is the only branch of the service that can do it . . . I'm a what? Garrity, don't you call me that! I'll have you a corporal by next week. I'll—you heard my orders!"

"If I was in the Sahara Desert without a phone," Garrity retorted, "I couldn't help but hear. So are you! I know the rules. You can't call me names, either. Good-bye! And don't forget to raise your blood pressure."

OVER on the Jerry side, Heinie Brass Hats were in better harmony.

"*Das ist gut!*" an overstuffed *Herr Oberst* chuckled

as he watched a load of shells snake toward Mont Sec. “The Yangkee ships shouldt coom ofer yedt. Ve knock idt them down, *hein?* Efen beside *der* doomp idt giffs safe. Also idt iss *der* trap for Spadts *und* Camels *mit* bombers. Vhat they call *der* run ve gedt the *Dumkopfs* on, *ja?*”

“You hear me say idt, *nein?*” gloated another Boche. “*Ach*, maybe *das* Pingham he vill made *der* trick vunce now. Ho, ho! Vunce iss idt I giff laughs by *der* oopstart. *Und* if he coom ofer, *der* *Hauptmann* von Bountz gets him *mit* all the Albatrosses. Schnapps, *Herr* Strongkoltz, giff here, *ja!*”

The Kraut was tipping a glass to his lips when props roared overhead. He and the *Herr Oberst* ran out to see a familiar-looking bunch of ships escorting two bombers to a layer of ether high above their heads. *Wham!* A bomb washed out a truck loaded with shells. The Heinies ducked.

“*Das* ist Pingham’s *Staffel*,” a squarehead ripped out. “*Und* giff *ein* look oop, *mein Freund!* Here comes idt *der* Albatross of *Hauptmann* von Bountz.”

Upstairs in his Spad, Phineas saw them, too. “It’s a new Von,” he yelped. “I’ll get him some day, but not today. Ow-w-w-w!”

Checkerboard ships fell out of the skies until Phineas thought the whole universe was dolled up in a checkered suit. He had spots before his eyes when he landed. When he walked to his hut, he was staggering a bit.

“Boys!” he exclaimed. “It’s your move, Fritz! Ha, ha, I jumped you, an’ I’m in the King row. Checkers is my meat. The Pinkhams——”

“I told you he was nuts,” Casey said to an ack emma. “It ain’t safe around here. He’d ought to be in an asylum.”

Mess in the Ninth Squadron was doleful in the extreme. The Old Man announced that his days were at an end, the same as Rollo’s had been.

“While you buzzards were out wasting eggs, they came in here and said I would answer to charges in Chaumont for insulting my superiors. Well, I always wanted to get back home. Generally I put in my dahlia bulbs about this time.”

“Why, we won’t stand for it!” hollered Phineas. “Gosh, what fun would I have? Huh—maybe I’ll get a C.O. without a sense of humor like yours, major. Cripes, just think of that!”

Garrity growled. His growl was cut short as his eyes fell on something that Phineas was toying with. It was a long, bleached bone, one end of which had been

gnawed to a frazzle. At the moment, the miracle man was using it as a drum stick.

“What is that?” yelped Garrity. “Won’t you leave even the garbage alone?”

“Wh-Why, there is sentiment attached to this,” explained Phineas elaborately. “Y’see, Rollo left it in his hut. Funny how he gnawed it at this end. It looks like—now what does it look like? Lemme see, it looks like some-thin’. Haw-w-w-w-w! Rollo’s teeth wasn’t so hot. He had two upstairs and one down, and that is why he gnawed the bone this way. I guess I’ll keep it with me always, as it is a memory of Rollo. It’s his last will an’ testament.”

“Start chewing on it,” barked Garrity. “You would look natural like an airedale.”

“Major, I’m s’prised,” sniffed the dog-fancier. “No sentiment, huh? Oh, well, I—huh, it’s some bone. It is long enough to’ve come off a camel, but of course there ain’t no camels in France. Anyways, it ain’t big enough around to——”

“Shut up!” the major shouted. “Any-boiy’d think I was made a general instead of getting into a sling. Well, at least I’ll be rid of you, Lieutenant Pinkham.”

“I bet if somebody got that shell nest, they would change their minds about puttin’ you in the benzine,” chuckled Phineas complacently. “Somebody in the squadron—now I been thinkin’——”

“Oh, you have?” grated the Old Man. “Then I hope I’m busted fast. When you have a relapse and start thinking—say, Casey was in here a while ago. He wants a transfer. Says he doesn’t feel good around a guy who washes out thread and hangs it up to dry. I gave him permission to carry an extra gun.”

“Haw-w-w-w-w!” guffawed Phineas. “Don’t that sound funny? Well, I have had plenty, and will bid you bums—er—and you, major—bong sore.”

LIEUTENANT PINKHAM went to his hut and dug up some writing paper. “So the old turtle is headed for the benzine board, huh?” he muttered to himself. “First Rollo, then the Old Man. I don’t know which one I’ll miss the most. Well, I got to get this letter off.” He wrote:

“Hauptmann von Bountz:

“So you are the bum who is taking von Snout’s place, are you? Haw! When bigger Vons are brought down, a Pinkham will shellac them. If you have no more sense than to do it, meet me over the Meuse at six p.m. tomorrow night. It will be amateur night f

or Kraut hams. Hoping the Kaiser and his family are down to their last pot of shoe button coffee, I am,

*Most disrespectfully,
Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham.”*

“That is where we meet,” grinned the letter writer. “But he won’t force me down until I get over the shell nest.” He yawned, put the letter in a tin can, dropped a stone in after it. Then he went to work rigging up a small parachute, the cloth for which he cut out of Bump Gillis’ bed sheet. Having completed the job, Phineas picked up a book on Greek mythology and turned to a story about a man who found his way out of a labyrinth after slaying a dragon called the Minotaur.

“The Greeks must’ve drunk strong van rooge,” Phineas, the kraut-slayer, observed. “Seein’ things like that! But they weren’t so dumb, just the same. Well—oh—ho—hm!” He turned over and went to sleep.

Phineas was up at dawn. He handed the tin can and parachute attachment to Wilson, leader of C Flight.

“Just drop it down over a reliable Heinie infantry outfit,” he said, “so von Bountz will get a phone call. You’d think they’d open up the mails more with the Krauts. How can we call them names to make ‘em mad? Haw-w-w-w!”

“How do I know it won’t blow up on me?” Wilson wanted to know cagily.

“Aw, I’ll open it and show ya,” Phineas snapped. “I wish somebody’d stop gettin’ suspicious of me. Gosh, if I should drop a hint where you was two nights ago! That Frog colonel’s been tryin’ to find who took his wife out an’—oh, well—”

“You blackmailer—give it here!” yipped Wilson.

C Flight took off and hopped into space. Phineas, whistling like that renowned barefoot boy, walked jauntily to the Frog farmhouse to get coffee. Only the mess attendant was in the place when he barged in.

“Ah—er—lootenant,” Glad Tidings Goomer began. “Do you think the Old Man is leavin’? Ah—er—y’know, we enlisted guys git scraps of news from hither and yon. We heard they’re goin’ to send that Major Crabsby over from Issoudun.”

Phineas immediately lost his zest for Java. He had never forgotten Major Crabsby.

“Goomer,” he snorted as he left the mess room, “if you ever have good news, it’ll kill ya. You would sure laugh if you bumped into a good trunk murder. Adoo!

“That is that!” Phineas muttered to himself as he

tramped across the field. “It’s either I go West or work for Crabsby. Horace Greeley wins.”

Contrary to his chief pain in the neck, the Old Man was late for breakfast that morning. He asked somebody for an old leather strap. His trunk had become a trifle senile, and needed additional means of support.

“Packin’?” inquired Phineas Pinkham. “Why—er—while there is life, there is hope. I wouldn’t be hasty, major. All the guys’ll sign a petition an’—”

“I’ll resign,” cracked Garrity. “If those fatheads think they can benzine me, well—it’s somethin’ to have been here.”

Wilson came in with his flight five minutes later and reported quite a pasting. He also said that he had seen a D.H. knocked off north of Mont Sec. There had been a pretty semi-circle of Kraut anti-aircraft about the spot where the shell dump was located, and they had not been shooting iron filings.

“Who wants a petition?” growled the Old Man. “Ha, ha! Well, I’ll send you all a postcard or two.”

A load of Chaumont’s itinerant Brass Hats blew in toward mid-afternoon. Phineas watched them arrive as he stood in the door of his hut. Screwing up his homely face, he turned and began to make ready for his date with von Bountz. He picked up a big spool of black thread, tied a white object to a loose end. It was about the shape of a galloping domino and about two inches square. He put the spool into the pocket of his leather flying coat just as Bump Gillis came in, wiping his brow.

“The Brass Hats are all gaga,” Bump told Phineas. “When the Heinies start throwin’ them shells—ugh! They told the C.O. that the biggest generals were back-pedalin’ already. Looks like they’ll set up quarters in the shadow of the Pyrenees. The Old Man insulted another big Brass Hat, as if he wasn’t sure he’d done enough. Carbuncle, do ya think we could get transferred to teach new guys to fly?”

“That’s always the way,” Phineas derided him. “Everybody despairs in times of stress but a Pinkham. Once in the Mexican War, my uncle ran up to the enemy lines an’ shoved a hand in the muzzle of a Mexican cannon an’ held back the grapeshot while the U.S. soldiers—”

“Aw, rats!” Bump Gillis bawled at him, and stamped out again.

THE NINTH wondered why Phineas Pinkham was absent from mess that night. But the pilots stopped

wondering when they heard a Hisso turn over. Phineas was driving the Spad across the field by the time the Old Man had dived out of the house.

“Ha, ha!” Major Garrity laughed. “See if it bothers me this time. I am resigning tonight. I just have to think how I’ll word it. Adoo, Mr. Pinkham, and if you break anything, be sure it’s your neck.”

“Huh!” grunted Captain Howell. “If he does, he’ll splint it up with a broom handle and live to be a hundred an’ two. I’m goin’ out an’ get boiled to the ears.”

Herr Hauptmann von Bountz was waiting for Phineas over the Meuse at the appointed time. In fact, he was three minutes early. The pilot from Boonetown spotted the Kraut and edged off his course a bit.

“That’s what I like—punctuality,” grinned the errant Yank.

In the succeeding five minutes, it became glaringly apparent to Phineas that von Bountz must have been transported to his fond parents on the back of an Albatross and not of a stork. He was a born disciple of homicide, and no mistake. Phineas had cause to wonder if each of the Spandaus on the Heinie crate had become twins. Two guns simply could not spill out so much lead,

“It’s a cinch I don’t fly back in this Spad,” he gulped, as he miraculously rocked out of the path of a bunch of slugs that would have made a lace doily out of a battleship turret. Yet all the while, *Herr* Pinkham was crabbing across sky space until he was directly over Mont Sec.

Von Bountz knocked a mid-wing strut loose from the Spad with another quick left hook, and Phineas tried to cover up, but another Spandau uppercut got under his guard and snapped the Spad’s chin up. Smoke curled from the Yankee ship’s snout.

“Oh, boys, the fathead is sure ahead on points,” the intrepid flying jokesmith howled. Then he headed for the carpet, “Why, there’s a truck pullin’ up down there. That’s the spot! I wouldn’t forget that. And there are about twenty Krauts in front of the big cave. Well, I’ll signal for a fair catch.”

“*Ach!*” yowled von Bountz deliriously. “Such *ein* mark easy, *ja!* *Und der* oopstartd alzo iss *der* vun vhat knocked down all the bick *Rittmeisters*. Ho, ho, they inoost haff got *der* sleepink signess, alzo. Like *der* iron stag on’ *der* grass he flies, ho, ho! Famous ofer night I ben. *Der Kaiser*—”

Phineas landed his Spad in the road, spun around twice and cracked up against a Jerry truck. Seven

of the Kaiser’s boys hopped on him the minute he crawled out of his ship.

“Oh, I say, uncle,” the fearless Yank gurgled from the bottom, of the heap. “I am kapoot!”

WHEN they stood him up, Phineas leaned against the truck’s remains. It was loaded with shells. From the back end of it he caught sight of wisps of heavy dry straw. Evidently, the fast-thinking Spad pusher mused, it was the straw that had helped prevent shock to the shells on the bumpy roads—and when his Spad had collided with the truck. Phineas’ hand moved from his pocket to the truck, then back again, Von Bountz came running up, big square face split with a fiendish grin.

“Pingham,” he chortled. “He iss so smardt, *hein?* *Der* first time yedt, I gedt him.” The guttural tones were mocking.

“*Der Tag* iss it,” Phineas said sheepishly.

“Ve shoodt him now,” cracked a pompous *Herr Oberst* who had rolled up in a car. “*Nein*, ve take idt chances no more. Ve shoodt him deadt.”

“*Ach*, he iss *der* prisoner of var,” protested another squarehead. “He iss nocht *der* spy. Already yedt ve get called butchers *mit* knives too mooch. *Der* plan iss idt I haff.” Suddenly he spun his head toward the truck. “*Schnell!*” he rapped out sharply. “Take idt *der* truck in *der* cave mou’t. After ve eat, ve unloadt. Do you vant idt shouldt be oudt where *der* bomber might make it *der* hit, *Dumkopfs?*”

“But Pingham he must be shot,” argued the *Herr Oberst*. “Orders yedt iss—”

“Lizzen vunce, *und* don’t dt you shouldt laugh,” von Bountz whispered to the *Herr Oberst*. “Oudt by *der* field idt iss *der* Allied two-seater ship, *ja*. Ve put *Leutnant* Pingham by *der* stable *und* tie him oop loose, *ja?* *Der* two-seater vill be varmed oop, *und* he tries *der* escape, *nein?*”

“*Ach, Gott!*” chuckled the officer. “*Das ist gut*. Ho, ho! Ve stardt idt *der* shoodting vhen he sticks his head oudt—”

“*Nein*,” denied von Bountz. “I must shoodt him *und* kill him by mineself. Mine he iss, so! Listen vunce—I, von Bountz, shoodts Pingham down *zwei* times in vun day. I am *der* hero.”

“Bah! *Und* maybe he gedts away, alzo. *Nein*, *Hauptmann*, it giffs foolishments. Many times *der Leutnant* escapes—”

“But vait,” gloated von Bountz. “I haff fixed idt *der* stick by *der* ship. Idt iss only vun by *der* back pit, *ja*. *Der* pilot’s stick iss broke by *der* socket. Vhen he gedts

in *und* goes maybe fifty feet oop, *der* stick idt—*poof!* Pingham he vill see *der* trick, *nein?* I bedt you idt iss many flowers by *der* funeral, ho, ho!”

“I wish I could laugh, too,” yipped Phineas. “I like a good story. Did you ever hear the one about the old maid who—”

But they sent Phineas reeling away toward the Hun jail with a shove that would have made a tank go spinning.

“No sense of humor,” complained the pilot from Boonetown, Iowa, in the good old U.S.A. But he grinned, nevertheless. He kept his hand in his pocket all the way, turning his head at times to look back. As he was shoved into a smelly stable, Phineas heard the truck clatter to life and saw it roll to the entrance of the great shell cavity.

“I just hope the book was right,” he said to himself, and sat down. “I’m glad it’s dark. I’m glad nobody saw the thread. In fact, I’m glad about everythin’ but bein’ here. Why—huh—there’s a two-seater out there, an’ somebody is warmin’ it up. Hm-m!”

Three squareheads came in then. Under von Bountz’s supervision, they bound the Pinkham appendages and then departed.

“They must be underfed, as I have heard,” grinned the prisoner. “These ropes wouldn’t worry Cinderella very much. They’re too sure of me, as usual. Will they ever learn?” He began to wriggle. The bonds at his ankles loosened. After a while, Phineas was free. He looked out of the window, then felt of the good luck bone in the pocket of his flying coat.

“Good ol’ Rollo,” he grinned. “It’s good luck, huh?” Mentally he measured the distance between the stable and the two-seater that was ticking over. He noticed that the squareheads around the shell nest were very lackadaisical. “Well, there’s no time like now!” he yipped. “Most of the bums’ll be eat-in’. Here goes history.”

He took a wooden spool from his pocket, snapped off the thread tied to it and lighted the end. The night air was quite chill in Boche territory, and three groups of Huns were crouched about crackling fires. The little fiery sparks from the Pinkham fuse should not be noticed. Then, too, his break for the two-seater would draw undivided attention.

“One—two—three!” counted Phineas, then broke open the door and started running.

VON BOUNTZ, standing by his plane, chuckled. “He bites *der* bait. *Ach*, vill he gedt idt *der* surprize. Soon I give idt *der* signal for soldiers to shoodt *und*

miss. Ho, ho, he iss in *der* ship now, *und* there he iss joompink by *der* back seat, *ja!*” He raised a hand and guns barked. Bullets missed Phineas by feet and yards.

“Too mooch *Schnapps!*” the Boonetown pilot howled mockingly as he leaped into the rear pit. “I hope there’s a stick here, as—”

Von Bountz yelled like a hog-caller as he got into his Albatross. Phineas goosed the D.H. engine and felt the ship roll over the bumpy ground.

“Adoo!” he hollered. “Haw-w-w-w-w! Well—uh—cripes!” The stick came loose in his hand, and the D.H. was accelerating speed. Heinies still played their part by wasting the Kaiser’s ammo. A machine gun dug up dirt around the D.H.’s undercarriage.

“No stick—oh, the dirty bums!” groaned Phineas. “I catch on. That is no fair. Well, I—” Suddenly he reached into his pocket and pulled out Rollo’s bone. The gnawed end of it which had intrigued him back at the home drome fitted into the socket in the floor. He yanked back on it, felt the two-seater rise.

“Haw-w-w-w-w-w!” Phineas’ guffaw was an ululation. “It’s a good thing Rollo had three teeth. If it’ll only hold—if it breaks—well—hah!”

Von Bounce was up now. His Albatross zoomed over the top of the cliff housing the shells. And as his undercarriage missed it by not more than three feet, a noise like the merger of seven thunder claps shook the Kraut real estate just as if it were so much tapioca pudding. The truck had blown up. The sympathetic nerves of the shells inside the cave bucked. The top of the cliff heaved up.

One rock, half as big as a National Bank, nudged against the tail of von Bountz’s battle bus, and the *Hauptmann* was lucky to land the remains in a swamp. As he stood waist deep in mud and water, he looked up to see Phineas’ two-seater flying sluggishly toward the Allied lines.

“*Der* deffil he iss,” he moaned. “I zaw him t’row oudt *der* stick, *und* yedt he flies. *Ach, Himmel! Und der* shell doomp idt is kaput. How *ist das?*”

An *Herr Oberst*, recovering from a brain spin, wanted to know, too. “He haff *der* fuse to *der* truck!” he yowled at an *Unteroffizier*. “You don’t see it, *hein?* Blind you are, *ja!* Look vunce. All *ist* lost. *Der* Yangkee he cooms down joost to blow oop *der* doomp. *Und* yedt he flies mitout *der* stick. Idt giffs craziness. I quit *und* go back by Dresden. Back I coom vhen das Pingham he iss hung by the heels in a Hamburg butcher shop, *und* not undil then. *Donnervetter*, I could joost sit down like *der Fraulein und* cry. All the

shells—kaput. Where iss idt *das* von Bountz? I bedt you I fix *der* bumper. Bah, he iss so——”

And while anguish reigned in Kraut circles, Phineas Pinkham, flying not more than twenty feet up, goosed the D.H. toward home and Garrity, his lips muttering a prayer as he held Rollo’s bone gingerly in the socket in the floor.

“If I don’t meet Vons and have to stunt, I’ll make it,” he palpitated. “As long as—*cripes!*”

Crash! Bangety-bang! Blam—bo-o-o-ong!

“Well, the shells’ll have to hit me, as I would have to climb up to meet the shrapnel, haw-w-w-w-w! I—oh-h-ow!” Machine-gun bullets spat at him from the trenches. The D.H. seemed to be towing a concrete mixer as it skimmed the Jerry ditches.

Phineas goosed the engine to the limit, finally left hostile trenches behind. Then Rollo’s last will and testament snapped. The Yank gritted his teeth and climbed to the edge of the pit as the D.H. swooped down like a hawk that has spotted a plump pullet without a chaperon. A wing whanged against a ruined church steeple. The D.H. spun around in the air, changed its tactics and nosed for the ground. But Phineas was not in it when it landed. He was hanging from his coat collar at the end of a beam sticking out of the old church spire.

“I don’t know how I got here,” he muttered, “but here I am. I wish somebody’d bring me a ladder. *He-e-e-lp!*” There came a sickening sound as the supports of the beam began to protest. Phineas felt the beam sag. Then it dropped with a jolt, and he was shaken loose. This time, he landed in a tree.

“It’s a hell of a time I am havin’ to get down,” Phineas complained. “Anybody but a Pinkham would git discouraged.” He clambered down the rest of the way and stretched himself out on the ground.

Toward dawn, he woke up and felt the cold edge of a spade pat him on the cheek. He looked up and saw a rectangular patch of sunlight. An angleworm crawled across the bridge of his nose. An assortment of faces looked down at him. He sat up with a jerk.

“Why,” yipped the man who refused to go West, “you—you was buryin’ me! Why, you bums! I’ll bust you for this.”

“Well, ya looked dead,” a tough dough growled at him as he helped Phineas out. “I still ain’t sure you ain’t. Now we wasted a lot of our time an’——”

IN THE middle of the forenoon, a truck dumped Phineas Pinkham, the errant knight, onto the drome of the Ninth Pursuit Squadron.

“Do ya think this is where ya dump garbage?” Bump Gillis hollered. “You pick up that stuff an’ git to——”

“Haw-w-w-w-w!” guffawed Phineas, wiping mud from his face. “Always clownin’, huh, Bump?”

“Carbuncle! Well I’m a—say, you didn’t blow up that dump? We got word. Oh, no, you been on a bat. That is what. Wait until the Old Man——”

“Why,” Phineas told Garrity later, “I made that fuse. You just boil strong thread in oil an’ brimstone an’ orpi-ment an’ let it dry. Then it’ll bi\$rn. I shoved the block of cellerloid into the straw in the truck, an’ when I walked away, I just let out the thread. Just like the Greek in the labyrinth. I set fire to the thread an’ then got to hell out. Well, you’ll get a medal now, major, instead of a bath in benzine. Haw-w-w-w!”

“How did you git back?”

“In a two-seater,” Phineas explained. “There wasn’t a stick in it, but I just used that bone Rollo left us. Well, I really must go now an’ git my rest. Even a Pinkham’s nerves have their limits. Adoo!”

“Just let him go,” whispered the C.O. “Maybe he’ll be all right in the morning. You’d be nutty, too, if——”

The fact that the wreck of a D.H. had not been set afire and had later been closely examined by Major Garrity himself who could find no trace of a control stick was all that saved Phineas Pinkham from a cell lined with cushions. For weeks afterwards, Bump Gillis slept with two guns under his pillow.