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**PHINEAS
 PINKHAM**
 howl

AN ITCH IN TIME

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Phineas Pinkham turns palmist and predicts a dark fate for a certain major. But Phineas should have read his own palm first. His fate line would have showed him a bright future—bright like the bottom of a vat of tar!

PHINEAS PINKHAM leaned against the corner of a Frog *estaminet* in Bar-le-Duc, big hands plunged into his pockets which were as empty as a Scotch poor box. Phineas was without a sou. The Boonetown jokester was thirsty, very thirsty. Moreover, he had promised to bring Babette a box of Frog bonbons. At the moment, if bonbons had been selling for one *centime* a barrel, Phineas could not have purchased enough to give a bar-fly diabetes.

"It's a pretty pass I have come to," he mumbled to himself. "If I ever shoot the bones with Bump Gillis again, I'll—why, there's Major Garrity! Oh-h-h Rufe—er—major! Voila! Over here. Hey-y!"

Major Garrity of the Ninth Pursuit Squadron stopped, swore under his breath and then crossed over.

"You would make a good moose-caller, you fathead," he growled at Phineas. "What ails you? Why aren't you in jail?"

"Oh, I have mended my ways," Phineas grinned. "Ah—er—say, uh, I am a little short *ce soir*. If you have a franc or two which ain't workin', would—er—would you trust me till—"

"Ha!" Garrity laughed harshly. "I have some francs that're idle, but I'm giving them a job at the next corner. Well, have a good time, Carbuncle! Don't drink too much champagne."

“Awright, fair-weather friend,” Phineas sniffed. “I’ll find a ray to git financed. I hope you’re robbed by thugs before the night is over.”

Major Garrity’s gloating laugh died as he entered a Frog oasis.

“An’ me spittin’ cotton,” grumbled the impoverished flyer. “Oh, you wait. No bum kin—” He sidled close to the window of a cafe. Inside, two officers were seated at a table within view. Amber liquid sparkled in glasses at their elbows. Phineas’ salivary glands gurgled.

“Yep, colonel,” one of the brass hats was saying, “you must come an’ see us when you get back from the gare. Got a fine wife—Etta’s her name. Got quite a house in Dubuque.”

“What’s your business, major?”

“Traveling salesman,” the major replied and grinned. “Nope, I don’t know any farmers’ daughters. My territory is in the corn belt, too. Minnesota, Iowa, Kansas—”

“Well, let’s finish this drink,” said the colonel. “Then we’ll go to see Madame La Luna—greatest clairvoyant in France. Must let her read your palm, major. You’ll be astonished. Remarkable, I assure you.”

“The saps,” grunted Phineas, “squanderin’ argent when I’m practically a pauper. Well—”

Crash! Blam-m! Bla-a-a-am! C-r-r-r-ash!

“Gothas!” yowled Phineas and headed for cover. “The bums must have had them props wrapped in blankets.” Whistles blew and lights went out.

“Boche! Boche!” yelled everyone hysterically.

“As if I didn’t know it,” yipped Phineas as he plunged in through a doorway. He bumped into some one who was on the way out and they merged for the moment in a scrambled heap.

“*Nom de Dieu! Sacre!*” a feminine voice shrieked, and Phineas spun sidewise and sprawled over a couch. He plowed his way underneath it as two more bombs made the town shiver. In five minutes the town was as quiet as a church on Monday morning. Phineas crawled out and groped his way around. Investigating fingers drew a match from his pocket, and he scratched it against his pant leg.

“Where am I?” he gulped. “I know I didn’t run as far as Turkey.”

The walls of the little room were of cloth, and the cloth was covered with crescents and stars. There was a small table, also draped with green cloth, and behind it a chair and a big crystal ball. On a clothes-tree close to it were several multi-colored garments.

“Huh,” Phineas laughed as he lighted a candle on the table, “it must be the palmist’s joint. Well, huh—I—er—I wonder how long she’ll be gone. I wonder—well, I’m desperate an’—”

No sooner had Phineas regaled himself in the flowing robes of the clairvoyant than he heard voices outside the door.

“Huh, we won’t let an air raid get us, eh, major?”

“I should say not,” was the response.

“Haw-w-w-w, come into my parlor, says the spider to the fly.” Phineas fastened the strange-looking cap and veil around his head and sat down behind the table.

“Evening, *madame*,” said the Brass Hats, making elaborate bows.

“*Bon soir*,” Phineas replied in an admirable falsetto. “*Que voulez voose, ce soir?* Readez ze pairm, *oui?* Twenty-five francs, *s’il voose plaise!*”

“You first, major,” said the colonel. “I’ll listen.”

The major seated himself and held out his palm. Phineas’ hand, wrapped in part of his garment, gripped it. His head bent over it.

“Ah—ze m’soor, he ees what you call ze selling *homme* who have travel, *n’est ce pas?*”

“Astonishing!” the major grunted.

“I see her ze mam’selle who she levee in D-Dubuque, *non?*” Phineas went on in his laborious soprano. “Ze majaire, he ees ze lady’s man, *non?* Ah-h-h, ze *nom* of ze mam’selle she ees mabbe Etta, *non?* Ah I see her. She cannot wait unteel you have come back. Her husband, like you tell her wan time, he ees ze fathead, *non?*”

“Uh—er—” objected the major, “this is a mistake. Ah—er—”

“Oh, is that so?” howled the colonel, jumping to his feet. “Traveling salesman, huh? I’m a fathead—well, take that, you wife-stealer! And that!”

“Hit me, will you?” shouted the major, bouncing back from the wall. “You big hunk of cheese!” *Kerwhop!*

“Adoo,” grinned Phineas and headed for the door. Some one was blocking it up.

“What ees thees?” yipped *Madame* La Luna herself. “Who ees eet the impostair, *non? Cochon!*”

“I’m in a hurry,” hooted Phineas. “You don’t know how much.”

“Cheated, by cripes!” thundered the colonel. “After him, major.”

Three minutes later, Phineas Pinkham, trying to cover up the fact that he was out of breath, barged into a cafe and walked up to the bar.

“Veet, veet, a jigger of brandy,” he barked at the



tender. "Then wrap me up a whole bottle of coneyac an'—" He planked down some francs and looked around him. Two eyes, as hard as flint, bored into him.

"Oh, h'lo," he grinned. "Y'see, I got financed, major. Ha, where there's a will—" His eyes widened as they spotted two husky figures right outside the door. One was examining something he held in his hand.

"We'll try this one first, major," sputtered one. "This hat—"

Phineas clamped a hand to his head. Nothing but a shock of brick-red hair came in contact with his fingers.

"I—er—excuse me," he said to Garrity hastily, "I—er—feel a headache comin' on. Which is the back way out, *garcon*? Never mind, I'll find it myself. Don't worry."

"Come back here, you big fathead," Garrity stormed. "What've you done now? You—"

"Bum sore," Phineas yelped and was gone.

IT TOOK the Boonetown miracle man two hours to reach the drome on foot, since he had decided upon

a wide detour. Bump Gillis eyed him askance as he entered their hut.

"Well, Carbuncle, how good are you at wheelin' rocks, huh?" was Bump's enigmatic greeting. "They got a lot of hills in Blois that only a goat can stick to. You can see I've been collectin' your things into a bunch."

"Did they bring me my hat?" queried Phineas. "They got nothin' on me. I just lost it an'—"

"It is an important hat right now," yawned Bump. "Three M.P.'s escorted it here."

"Well, I'll go right over now and make a clean breast of it," the culprit decided. "When you own up an' say you're sorry, they get lenient, don't they?"

"Yeah," replied Bump. "Ha, ha! It is twenty years instead of life."

"I've got a defense," insisted Phineas as he went out. "No jury would convict me. Haw-w-w-w!" He headed for the big Frog farmhouse and swung the door open boldly.

"H'lo, bums!" he grinned at the open-mouthed pilots. "No, I will not give you an interview until I come out. Haw-w-w-w!" The door slammed behind him.

Major Garrity's head snapped up. His lower jaw began to move away from his face until he looked like something that lived in a cave.

"Huh, I bet you just couldn't wait to see me," Phineas shoved out fast. "Uh—a funny thing happened. The last I remember is divin' into a door when them bombs went off. I just come to myself about a mile from here. Now what do you think could've happened, major, huh? Why—er—is that my hat on the desk? Uh—er—I giss I must've been knocked out of my senses, huh?"

The Old Man got up out of his chair. "You fresh, cockeyed liar!" he bellowed. "You know damned well you remember everything. You incited officers to attack each other, got money under false pretenses. Empty out your pockets, you—you—"

"Why—er—" said Phineas as he pulled out some currency, "now how did that git there? Dough, huh? That's my luck. I wisht I'd known I had it when I was in Bar-le-Duc, as Babette will be as mad as hell at me for not buyin' them bonbons. I wish you would tell me what happened. I still feel a little faint an'—" The trickster passed a hand over his brow. "Maybe a week in Paree—"

Captain Howell and the other pilots in the big room outside shuddered as something hit the door of Wings.

"The Old Man better save enough of the fathead for the court-martial," commented the flight leader. "The Brass Hats'll git sore."

The door burst open. Phineas Pinkham flew through it toward the outer door.

"I'll report you!" he yelped back at Garrity. "Throwin' a chair at a guy who should be a patient in a hospital. I—"

The Old Man stood glowering at the buzzards when Phineas had fled. "You know what his alibi is?" he yowled, and then ripped off a bushel of words. "And the hell of it is, I bet he gets away with it. Shell-shocked, he says. Didn't know—didn't remember—by cripes, you think it's funny, huh? You're a bunch of—"

"Pardon us," gasped Howell. "We just got over listening to a funny story. Ha, ha! It seems there were two travelin' salesmen an'—"

"Nuts!" shouted the Old Man, and slammed the door of Wings.

Morning found Phineas Pinkham taking his regular place in Howell's flight. The Brass Hats had made it plain to Garrity that Pinkham should have every opportunity of getting himself killed to save time and

expense at Chaumont. If by chance he had survived by the time the judge advocate was ready to listen to him, then all well and good.

There was something funny about the Pinkham Spad as it stood on the line. Just over the guns he had constructed a pair of mirrors.

"Are you goin' to shave on the way?" Bump Gillis wanted to know. "You git nuttier by the minute."

"Where would we have got electricity if Ben Franklin hadn't had a key, huh?" Phineas retorted. "You bums don't have any vision."

The flight leader, Howell, growled as he watched his chief pain-in-the-neck yank a couple of strings. The mirrors moved. Captain Howell shook his head, swore and climbed into his own ship.

It was a day when the *Rittmeister* von Schnoutz felt very much like soaring into the blue. *Herr* von Schnoutz, a breakfast of pig hocks, apple strudel and mashed turnips under his belt, was cockier than was Napoleon when the Little Corporal was leading the league.

"Today we chase idt *der* Yangkee troops vhat cooms oop," he chuckled to himself. "*Ach*, it takes vun var to make *ein Mann* feel hiss oats. Yah—*Gott!*" Directly ahead and just below him rocked a flight of Spads. The Yankee leader nosed up as von Schnoutz signaled from the coaching lines.

"There's the bum," Phineas grinned. "Now to experiment, haw-w!" He zoomed with the rest of the flight, was within striking distance when he threw his sky chariot into a loop. When he had straightened out again, an Albatross was chasing him. Phineas, with his back toward the sun, jerked at the mirrors. A dazzling flash blinded him. Tears came to his eyes under the glass goggles. He sneezed. Bullets came thicker than flies around a swill cart.

In desperation, the Yankee magician went into a dizzy sideslip. When he came out of it, his motor sounded like a horse with the heavens. A wing tip wobbled like the wet brim of a old felt hat in a high wind. There was nothing to do but head for Garrity's front lawn, and there was an even chance that Phineas would not make it.

Nevertheless, the Boonetown hero landed his Spad not three yards from where Old Man Garrity stood holding converse with Sergeant Casey. He got out and looked ruefully at the mirrors. A Jerry bullet had smacked one clean of any vestige of glass.

"Seven years' bad luck," muttered the experimenter. "Oh, well—"

"You were washed up early," commented the C.O. out of the side of his mouth. "That Spad looks like a union suit."

"Even Julius Caesar didn't bat a thousand per cent," rejoined Phineas with a groan, and he sat down on the ground to wait for the survivors to come in.

When the flight returned, Captain Howell and Bump Gillis walked over to the disconsolate flyer.

"Marvelous invention!" enthused the latter, grinning broadly. "The next thing you want to do is invent a gun that shoots back through you an' at the Heinies. Ha, ha, did I laugh!"

"So you thought you'd do it with mirrors, huh?" stormed Major Garrity as he took one look at the Spad. "The next time you doctor up one of those crates, you lose a month's pay. You'd better go to your hut. Catherine the Great wants to see you."

"Have your fun," snapped Phineas. "But I'll show you bums. You just wait!"

There was a very hot sun burning down on the drome all day. A big ray hit the Pinkham mirror and caromed off it as Sergeant Casey and his grease monkeys labored over the punctured Pinkham plane.

"How a guy kin break up so many ships an' have all his ribs left is beyond me," growled Casey. "It looks like he ran into a concrete mixer."

THINGS began to happen as the afternoon grew old. Ground hogs began to police up the flying field. Bump Gillis decided to shave. A carload of Brass Hats came to see the Old Man. Their faces were bright and sunny like the bottom of a tar vat. Into the big house they barged, and on into the orderly room.

"Afternoon," one of them greeted the C.O. "Nice day, what?"

"It was until you came in," replied Garrity irritably. "You never breeze over unless it's with bad news. You remind me of a guy I used to know. Every time something terrible happened, they'd send him to break the news to the loved ones. And what fun he got out of it!"

"You're not here to question orders, Garrity," the human pike staff snorted. "This is serious business. Why is it that when we want a Heinie railroad train bombed, we can't get it done, eh?"

"Maybe the Germans don't let us," the Old Man offered. "After all, we would get sore if a Jerry smashed up our five-fifteens, wouldn't we? Well, spit it out, colonel. What's the job?"

"The Jerries are bringing ammunition up to the

rail center at Conflans. Shells, grenades, machine-gun fodder and all that. If we could knock off one of those trains, I wager we'd wash out two days of Heinie activity. Observation ships have tried it. Too sluggish. Combat ships could do it, Garrity. String bombs underneath. Three to a ship. Try it tomorrow. G.H.Q. is getting tired of waiting for the Air Force to warrant its being here in France. That is all. Combat ships tomorrow over Conflans. Let's get results."

"It's a dead cinch," Garrity gritted. "It's a cinch some buzzards'll be dead as mackerels this time tomorrow. Ha, ha, come over an' join in the fun!"

"No sense of humor, have they?" Phineas grinned in at the C.O. when the Brass Hats went out. "They were swearing somethin' fierce. I hope you'll ask for volunteers, as this gare is irkin' me lately an'—huh, what's that?"

A siren shrieked outside. Major Garrity and Phineas Pinkham hotfooted it out. There was a blaze over by the ammo shed. Groundhogs were running around like ants kicked out of a hill.

"Fire, fire!" yowled Phineas. "Who set it?"

"You did, you fool!" cracked a voice. It was Casey's. "That sun was shinin' on the mirror on that Spad an' it lit up that rubbish the groundmen raked against the side of the shed. You—"

"I want him busted, sir," Phineas yipped at Garrity. "No noncom kin insult me like that an' git—"

"That's what you think," bellowed the Old Man. "You jughead! You could sit on top of the Alps an' cause a shipwreck in the China Sea. I'll bust you plenty for this. You—hey, hurry up with that water!"

"Huh," grunted Phineas, as he walked to the Spad. "With mirrors, huh? Well, maybe—there's a queried Phineas. way."

Just then he caught sight of Bump Gillis jumping around over by the hut. Bump was clawing at his face and howling like a shriek owl.

"Did you get burnt?" the major tossed out as he ran over. "Maybe you rammed your head into the fire to see what caused it, huh?"

"It itches," hollered Bump. "I got somethin'. Git a medico. Cr-r-r-ripes!"

"What is that powder you got on your face?" queried Phineas.

"Talcum, you horseface, what d'ya think it is—soft coal?"

"I bet I know," grinned the knowing Pinkham, and went into their hut. Several moments later, he shoved his head out. "Haw-w-w-w-w!" came his raucous

guffaw. “It’s that new itch powder I sent for. I put it in a empty talcum box. I should think you would buy your own toilet articles, Bump Gillis! Haw-w-w-w! It’s some itch, huh? I saw it git on a horse once an’ the nag ran ten miles to jump in a millpond. Oh, boys, things are pickin’ up!”

They were, indeed. Bump Gillis picked up a rock and was on the point of heaving it when it slipped from his grasp, described a parabola through the ozone and conked Major Garrity on the head.

The personnel of the Ninth had quite a time putting out the fire, uncrossing the Old Man’s eyes and taking the gun out of Bump Gillis’ hand. Phineas sat in the doorway of his hut, applauding the efforts.

“The first guy who grabs some bombs an’ strings them under a Spad is Pinkham!” Garrity screeched as his marbles returned. “Then Gillis. I’ll show them two wiseheimers!”

“If you don’t stop threatenin’ me, Bump,” Phineas hollered, “I won’t tell you what’ll make that face of yours stop itchin’. But you have got to say ‘please.’”

At nine o’clock the next morning, Bump Gillis and Phineas Pinkham stood close to their Spads as Major Garrity gave them final instructions and a small map. Phineas took a big shaving mirror out of his pocket and held it up in front of his freckled face. With one finger he tucked a tuft of red hair under his helmet.

“I know I look a fright, girls,” he falsettoed. “Does my slip show, too?”

“I’m talking!” exploded Garrity. “If you weren’t going to kick off any way, I would kill you myself. Go out an’ unload those bombs where they’ll do the most good—get it?”

“I couldn’t do that, as that would be in Chaumont,” grinned the incurable humorist as he climbed into his pit. “Well, wish us bomb voyage. Bump, I’ll maybe see you at Oven No. 3 down in the big blast furnace. Adoo!”

“No more feelings than a landlord,” mumbled Garrity as the two Spads, studded with bombs,

zoomed toward the lines. “Well, er—what are you all choked up about, huh? This is war an’—”

“It ain’t rainin’,” Pilot Wilson tossed out, “so you must be sweatin’.”

The C.O. swore, rubbed a thumb against his nose and headed for the farmhouse.

CONFLANS was a town guarded carefully by enemy crates. Antiaircraft guns ringed it. It crawled with machine-gun nests. Against this array of mayhem,

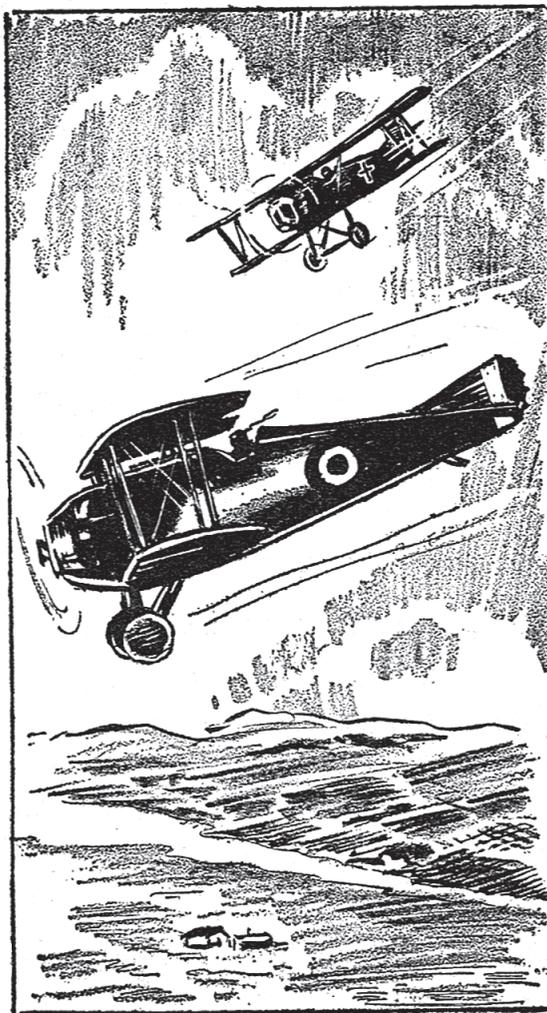
two Spads with six bombs were going to be stacked. It was like matching Jess Willard against Tom Thumb with hangnails. It was a cinch getting to Conflans. queried Phineas. The catch was in the return trip. When Phineas arrived over the smokestacks of the town, he waved to Bump Gillis and then looked overside. He should have looked up. Four Heinies, whistling hymns of hate, piled down out of the sun.

Phineas caught the sound of machine guns chattering as he looked around for a place to drop an egg. The bomb dropped at random. A Fokker sliced by over his head. Another pecked at him from behind. Frantically Phineas let the bombs loose and looked for a way out. Anti-aircraft banged away. He envisioned Bump Gillis heading for home in a cluster of black pompoms. Two geysers of dirt and flame broke up below as Bump got rid of two tickets to eternity.

“This ain’t my day,” Phineas gulped and jammed in the throttle. He flew for two minutes before it dawned upon him that he was headed for the wrong goal line. Spread out fanwise behind and higher up were a trio of Heinies.

“I hope they have put improvements in the Heinie stockade.” The venturesome Yank expressed the wish as he headed for the carpet. The landing field he chose was one that the other three Huns shunned. It was pocked with rocks and juniper bushes.

“Ach,” a Jerry thrust out, “*Dumkopf* vhat he iss. Efen der goat it would trip up, ja!”



Perhaps the Junker pilot did not realize who was landing the Spad. Phineas got the ship down, hopped a cluster of junipers, hit a rock and took off half a lower wing. The Spad seemed to curtsy like a young hopeful in front of its grandma, then flipped oyer on its nose. Phineas, however, had left the crate before the nose dive.

He started running for a hiding-place. Overhead the Fokkers circled with swearing Vons in their pits. Their would-be prey ran for a mile, spotted a hole in a bank and plunged in. He landed right in the lap of a burly unshaven German soldier who was roasting a chicken over a wood fire. Two other mean-looking Krauts were also within the crude dugout's interior.

"Ein Yangkee!" thundered a voice. "Joomp on him, ja."

Effectively pinned down, Phineas looked up into the

unshaven Heinie's face. Recognition brought a whoop from his mouth. The Jerry jumped back and cried, "Himmell Phineas Pingham iss idt, nein?"

"Haw-w-w-w!" laughed Phineas. "I'm among froinds, hein? How are ya, Mister Schlosserheim? Remember when I put three cats in your refrigerator back in that butcher shop in Boonetown? Haw-w-w-w, an' the time I hung a rubber ham on the hook? What fun! But the best was when I put sawdust in your hamburger. Oh, boys, them was the happy days!"

"Ach," growled Schlosserheim, "I remember, ja! Und

I say I get you some day iff it is *der* last t'ing vhat I do. I show you it iss funny playngk *mit* tricks. I should show you where you go. Coom vunce. Ve take *der* oopstarts to *der* Oberoffizier. Ha, ha, Phineas. Cats by *der* ice box, ja? Ho, ho! I get efen. Ha, rubber hams it giffs. *Gie schnell*, Yangkee smardt aleck!"

"Aw, you wouldn't do that," protested the prisoner.

"Why, Mr. Schlosserheim, my maw won't trade no more when you go back. You wait an' see—"

"Already yedt she owes me three dollars *und* fifty cents," growled the Heinie ex-butcher. "Ja, maybe I don't go back, *nein*. *Mach' schnell*, smardt cracker!"

"Awright, ya big slob," cracked Phineas as he headed down a road. "But if I ever get out of this gare alive, I'll seek you out. A Pinkham never forgets."

"Dead vuns do,"

Schlosserheim gloated. "Hurry oop vunce."

The dismal trail led over railroad tracks through woods and out to a collection of houses occupied by a Jerry division. Schlosserheim led Phineas in to a *Herr Oberst* and turned him over.

"Pingham!" yowled the officer. "It giffs you *der* sergeant!" He yipped the promotion at Schlosserheim. "Take him oudt und lock him oop in *der* brick potato house, ja!"

The emergency klink was next to the railroad tracks. Phineas, being herded into durance vile, noted



that the tracks had been hastily laid. A push from Schlosserheim rudely interrupted further observations.

“Come in an’ meet me bare fists, man to man,” the prisoner howled as the door was slammed and locked. “You big hunk of salami!”

When Phineas got weary of yelling his doubts about the authenticity of Schlosserheim’s parentage, he took an inventory of his jail-house. It had one window that looked out upon the tracks. The cell’s interior was bare save for a heap of defunct vegetables in one corner. It did not smell like an ice cream parlor.

Meanwhile, wires were frantically strumming as the news of the great capture was spread throughout Wienerunirst territory. The *Rittmeister* von Schnoutz got the word and hastily groomed himself for a visit to his arch enemy.

A humming sound brought Phineas to his window. Across a fence in a cow pasture a Fokker was landing. He saw the pilot get out and walk toward headquarters.

“I hope I’ll be lucky enough to only git shot,” was Phineas’ expressed desire as time passed. The monotony was broken by the sound of boot heels pounding the dirt outside. The door opened and Schlosserheim beckoned.

“Oudt vunce!” he yapped. “*Der Leutnant* he gedt *der* picture tooken for the *Frauleins* in Chermany. In *der* ship they catch him in vunce. *Ach*, for all the magazines—”

Jaws set, Phineas was marched over to the Fokker. Cloth had been hung over the insignia on the Jerry wagon.

“Huh, what fakers!” snorted the Heinies’ many-time prisoner as a Kraut cameraman got set. “You’ll fool some of the Germans most of the time an’ most of them all the time, but all of them won’t be fooled—”

“Get in *der* ship *und* look this vay, *ja!*” ordered Schlosserheim. “Loogk bleasant, please!”

Phineas climbed aboard. Now let us not forget that Phineas Pinkham was getting quite adept at sleight of hand. Before he climbed out of the Heinie ship, his hand had been in and out of his pocket. The same hand had made a strange pass in and about the pit of the enemy ship.

“*Das ist gut*,” grinned Schlosserheim. “Now you back to *der* brison go, *ja!* Vun moof unci I shoodt you. *Ja*, sawdust in my hamburgers, *hein?*”

“Huh,” muttered the prisoner as he was being herded back to his confinement. “I am glad there’s no wind. One Kraut will git—”

“What iss idt you say, *hein?*”

“Noddings,” grinned Phineas. “I’ll die happy, knowin’ that my last act was—well, er, just skip it.”

PHINEAS was not back in his prison five minutes when a clatter and a rumble drowned out every other sound. He went to the window and looked out. An iron horse belonging to the Kaiser was rattling over the railroad tracks. Its stack was belching smoke. Then steam hissed, and the wheels grated against the steel ribbons. It wheezed to a stop, and not fifty yards from where Phineas was incarcerated, he could see a closed box-car with straw sticking out from under the side door. The Kraut engineer got down and walked to the rear of the train, where smoke came out from under a flat-car.

“Huh,” laughed the prisoner, “a hot-box! No wonder, with that boilin’ sun an’—sun, hey? Hm, why—well, I wonder.” He took the mirror from his pocket and held it up to the window. The sun’s rays flashed against it, deflected a stream of heat.

An hour passed. The crew of the Heinie train were lolling beside the tracks. The engineer and some Kraut infantrymen were still administering to the rear flat-car. Phineas ached in every muscle. Sweat poured from his brow. Then he whistled through his teeth and prayed for the sun to bear down. A curl of smoke came up from the straw sticking out through the car door. The roar of a Mercedes came from out of the torrid ozone as the straw caught flame.

Phineas dropped his mirror and flattened himself to the floor. It was two more minutes before a wild yell of terror came from Kraut throats. Phineas lifted himself and looked out of the window. Smoke was belching from the box-car.

“I’m glad this is a brick joint,” the Boonetown warrior grinned, and emulated a turtle once more.

The *Rittmeister* von Schnoutz was striding down to get a look at Phineas Pinkham when all hell broke loose. A grenade started it off. *Bo-o-o-o-o-o-o-oom!* *Wham! Blooey!* A terrific detonation blew the door of Phineas’ abode from its hinges. Smoke billowed up. Cordite fumes choked off Heinie yells. Machine-gun bullets hummed crazily. It was a fireworks shop magnified nine million times, going berserk. Phineas ventured once to raise his head to view his handiwork. He saw a flat-car lift from the track and spin down the bank. A Kraut, flat against a door, sailed through space like Sinbad on a rug. Two white-faced Germans dived into the brick house.

“*Ach, Gott!*” yelled one as a shell tore off the side of the klink. “*Donner und Blitzen!*” It was Schlosserheim.

“Oh, good afternoon,” said Phineas, and smacked the Boonetown butcher on the point of the jaw. “I told ya!” He whipped the coal hod from the butcher’s head and slammed the other Heinie in the belt line.

“Adoo!” Phineas yipped, and headed out toward a spick and span Albatross that was ticking over where von Schnoutz had just left it a moment or so before. Bullets hummed like honey bees. Shells shrieked and grenades still popped as the Boonetown jokesmith made a leap for the alien crate. From a cellar window, von Schnoutz saw and let out a terrific yowl.

“Shells *mit* potato mashers I shouldt mind. Pingham! I gedt him!” he roared. “Cheated am I, *hein?*” He leaped over several good Germans and tore for the Fokker that shook and shivered in the pasture. The pilot had managed to get it going, and was climbing into the pit.

“Oh, you vill, *hein?*” roared von Schnoutz, like the villain in a melodrama. “Oudt you coom. I fly *der* Fokker. *Ach, der* fight you pudt oop, *ja?*” *Kerwhop!* A bullet sliced across the bridge of the *Rittmeister’s* nose as he climbed into the pit.

Phineas’ big ivories were bared in a pleased grin as he lifted the Junker job toward the roof. At a thousand-foot shelf, he spotted a great Staffel of Heinie crates high above.

“Well, they will judge the book by its cover, haw-w-w-w!” he guffawed. “They—” He looked back. Out of the billowing smoke that welled up from the shellacked ammo train came a Fokker, as if it had been shot from a catapult.

“Huh,” mused our hero, “they’re just itchin’ to git me, haw-w! Anyways, I hope so.”

In the Fokker pit, von Schnoutz swore and wiped at his goggles. He spat out something that had fouled his tongue.

“*Himmel!*” he guttured. “Such dust! *Das ist* funny, *hein?* Soot maybe it gift’s from *der* railroad engine. *Ach*, Pingham, I am after you, *ja!* Today I fly *der* Albatross, *und* somet’ing it iss wrong *mit*. Twendty miles by *der* hour it looses *der* speedt. Ho, ho!”

It was dawning on Phineas at that very moment that the Albatross was indeed flying under protest. Yard by yard, the pursuing Fokker crept up on him.

“This crate sure has got lead in its pants,” he gulped. “It looks like I’ll have to turn an’ fight the bum. Well, I’ll sell my life dear an’—”

Von Schnoutz, teeth grinding, saw the Albatross loom up bigger and bigger in his ringsights.

“Vun joomp yedt *und* I am in range, *ja!*” he yelled. “By chimney, vot was *ist?*” His face tingled. His nose itched like a double case of hives. The itch crawled down his neck. His bare hands felt as if they had been buried in a clump of poison ivy. Sweat began to roll down his face. It seemed to aggravate the unbearable itch.

“*Himmel!*” von Schnoutz yelled, and a hand that had strayed to Spandau trips jerked back to paw at his nose. He squirmed in the pit, took his hands from the stick and rubbed his knuckles against his knees. The Fokker lurched and he clutched the stick.

“*Gott!*” yelped the *Rittmeister*. “Nefer vas such an itch!” He steeled himself to look for the whereabouts of the errant Phineas.

A burst of lead through the Fokker’s tail brought a gasp of fright from the Junker’s throat. The Boonetown flyer was on his neck. Into a loop went the *Rittmeister*. At the top of it, he let go of the stick and scratched at his neck, his nose, his knuckles. The itch was crawling down his torso and had reached his diaphragm.

“*Donnervetter, was ist?*” screamed the Junker pilot as his Fokker, given its head, started to imitate a whirling dervish. “Rotten *ist* somet’ing, *ja*. Somet’ing I shouldt do it.” Squirming like a worm on a hook, von Schnoutz fought to subdue the Fokker.

“Take that an’ that—an’ those!” howled Phineas at the stick of the Albatross as the two crates gyrated over the Yankee trenches. “Oh, boys, that’s powerful stuff. Lookit him scratch! How would ya like to have a wire backscratcher, huh?” And he slugged the Fokker with another Spandau burst. It slammed home just as von Schnoutz pulled out of a spin. The shot kicked the Fokker over on its ear again and the *Rittmeister* in the pit let it go to rub his nose against his sleeve.

“To hell *mit!*” groaned the itching Kraut. “Maybe yedt the *Amerikaners* haff *der* liniment vhat shouldt stop *der* itch. *Gott im Himmel!*” One hand scratching, the other on the stick, von Schnoutz picked out a landing site.

The crippled Fokker hit the ground, bounced three times, then landed without benefit of wheels. The ship skidded across five hundred yards of mud, spun around in a dizzy circle and piled up against an embankment behind which was a Yankee machine-gun nest. Von Schnoutz parted company with the wreck and flew into space, still scratching.

YANKEE doughs were digging the *Rittmeister* out of the mud when Phineas Pinkham got to the spot. Three of the doughs jabbed bayonets at his mid-section.

“Lay off the hara-kiri,” yowled the Boonetown flyer. “Look, I’m on your side, ya bums.”

“Shoos,” grinned one of the threateners, “whatsa mat’ you fly Botcha sheep?”

“I t’ank mabbe ve shood him anny-vay, yah?” added a big Swede.

“By gar, she is wan spy, what you t’eenk, O’Brien?”

“Haw-w-w-w-w!” hollered Phineas with an ear-splitting grin. “When do ya think the Americans will come over, huh? Well—I’m a—what the—for theft’s von Schnoutz! Fancy you bein’ here, Ritzmaster. Why—haw-w-w-w-w! Ya still scratchin’?”

“*Mein Gott!*” yowled the Heinie, scraping mud from his face. “Nefer iss idt sooch vun itch. *Nein*, idt iss noct so. Dreamink, I am—vun nightmare vunce. How iss idt you know I fly *der Fokker*? *Ach, der itch!*” And the *Rittmeister* went into a series of contortions as he tried to reach every section of his anatomy at one and the same time. “Gedt idt *der gun und* shoodt me. Itches *mit tingles mit* burns. *Der* defil iss idt you are, *ja!*”

“That powder itches like hell, awright,” Phineas grinned. “When they put me in the crate you flew to take my picture, I just poured it all around the pit so’s when the prop spun, somebody would git dusted. Haw-w-w! It’s fifty times worse when you git hot. Well, don’t you think we’d better git started as it’s close to tea time, an’—”

On the drome of the Ninth Pursuit Squadron, Bump Gillis sat in a chair in front of the Frog farmhouse, trying to get rid of a flock of nerves. A meat-wagon attendant was sponging a big bump over the lieutenant’s right eye. One foot was bared, and across the sole of it was the trademark of a tracer.

“Well, at least I got back,” Bump was saying. “Carbuncle went to the showers this time. You couldn’t bomb one of them trains with two hundred Spads wrapped up in armor. How about a transfer?” he barked at Garrity.

“I think I’ll resign, too,” the Old Man growled. “There’s no fun in this gare any more. Now that—”

A yell from the door of the farmhouse separated Garrity from his wits.

“What the hell are you howlin’ about?” he tossed at the Recording Officer, who was jumping up and down and throwing papers in the air.

“Ol’ Phineas just called up,” the R.O. announced between hilarious shouts. “Phineas! He wants to talk to you.”

Everybody tried to get through the door at once. The Old Man pushed and punched his way to the phone and grabbed it up.

“Hello, you fathead,” he yipped. “Where in hell—”

“I’ll be there in two hours,” the Boonetown wonder’s voice bellowed over the wire. “Have ya heard what I done to the Heinie ammo train? Oh, you will? An’ set another plate at the table as who am I bringin’ home for supper, who?”

“I bet it’s Foch,” cracked Garrity. “You big ape!”

“Nope, it’s my pal von Schnoutz,” was the rejoinder from the other end of the line. “I had to knock him down as he got in my way. He was sure up to scratch, haw-w-w-w-w! He likes his eggs fried on one side, major. Well, adoo. But wait—I want you to tell the fresh bums somethin’”

Garrity listened. Necks craned and ears wobbled as the buzzards tried to get in on it. Finally Garrity planked the receiver down. The phone began to jangle crazily.

“Let the Brass Hats wait,” grinned the Old Man. “You know what he said to tell you guys?”

“Go to hell, I bet,” ventured Howell.

“Wrong!” said the major as he stretched himself. “He said to tell you he did it with mirrors, ha, ha, ha!”