



# SKY FINANCE

*written and illustrated by*

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**PHINEAS  
PINKHAM**  
*howl*

*Battling Casey, the Ninth's famed ackemma, needed a fight trainer, so Phineas assumed the role—and he figured on assuming the roll of a couple of Limeys into the bargain. But when the leather pushers squared off, the Iowa Impresario found his man entered in the weight-lifting events. Moral: It's easy to don the leather, but you can't always push it.*

**T**HE RITTMEISTER GOTTFRIED VON BULL, Pfalz jehu for Kaiser Bill, poked the nose of his crate into the Allied flying business high over the western front just at the time when Phineas Pinkham was having more troubles than the proverbial one-armed paper hanger with the shingles, the hives, and the seven years itch. But nobody can ride on a ferry boat before they get to a river so we will begin from scratch.

It all started when Flight Sergeant Casey of Major

Garrity's Ninth Pursuit Squadron met an ackemma of like rank in the King's Air Corps in a lowly *buvette* in Bar-Le-Duc. Glowing internally as the result of ample draughts of giggle juice, the two groundhogs began to argue about the respective merits of the Yanks and the Limeys. One word led to another. Two words led to two more. Four words led to a fight and if three M.P.'s had not barged in at the crucial moment, there would have been a funeral. The upshot of it all was that Sergeant Casey, when thoroughly sobered up,

challenged the Limey to meet him at a secluded place, there to indulge in the manly art of modified murder.

Casey's yen for battle had delighted the buzzards of the Ninth Pursuit Squadron no end. The fight was to take place in an old frog barn outside of Bar-Le-Duc and wagers as to the outcome flew thick and fast. Captain Howell and company borrowed and begged every franc they could find outside of their own personal bankrolls and placed it all on the pugnacious chin of Michael Casey.

"Boys," chuckled Phineas Pinkham as he watched Sergeant Casey going through a brief workout with a protesting, puffing grease monkey, "it's a crime to take the Limeys' dough like we're goin' to. Whoever saw a Limey pug that didn't fight most of the time sittin' down? Haw-w-w-w-w! Don't worry about your *argent*, bums, as it is as safe as a cow walkin' through Ireland on Friday."

"I would like it safer than that even," growled Bump Gillis as he watched Casey. "I bet two bucks myself. If Casey gits shellacked, the Old Man will be sporting a barrel an' trying to git his Sam Browne belt around it. Casey don't look too hot to me."

"I got all of Babette's savings bet on the bum, ain't I?" Phineas yipped indignantly. "An' I bet part of her house, too. We'll be in the hands of the receivers if we lose. That is why I am—er—takin' no chances as well, y'know what I mean—trainin' Casey personally and all. Haw-w-w-w!" He turned and yelled to the hope of the Ninth Pursuit, "That's enough, Sarge. Beat it!"

"It's about time," gasped Casey. "Wait'll I git that Limey termorrer. I'll bat him so hard his relatives in Australia will git their teeth jarred!"

"You have no idea," said Phineas, grinning. "I—er—well, take it easy, bums, as it's in the bag."

Major Rufus Garrity edged toward Phineas. "Look here, you speckled baboon, this is a fair fight. If you pull any skullduggery, I will bust you so wide open—"

"Why, Major—why," protested the squadron professor of legerdemain. "You don't think I would stoop so low as to—huh—why the very idea. The Pinkhams have always been—why, I'm surprised at you—er—"

The Boonetown, Iowa, jokesmith hurried to his hut apparently indignant. In his sanctuary he sat down on the cot and made some very scathing remarks about the Limeys. "If the bums knew that this Sergeant Herbert Updyke who is goin' to fight Casey was once a sparrin' partner with Joe Beckett," he mused, "they wouldn't close their peepers any more than an owl

with insomnia tonight. Huh, the dirty double-crosser; Well—" Phineas bent forward, reached under his cot and drew out a square package wrapped in brown paper. Peeling off the wrapper, he read the print on the inner cover. SAMSON PLASTER OF PARIS—Quadruple strength—1 teaspoonful soaked with water will weigh a pound.

A pair of battered boxing gloves hung on a nail over the Pinkham cot. They were to be worn by Sergeant Casey on the eventful night. Phineas took them down and poked a hole into the paper package. He poured some of the white powdery dust into each glove and shook them diligently. Satisfied, he replaced the boxing gloves and slid the package of powdered plaster back under his cot. It promised to be quite a fight albeit a shady one.

EIGHT miles away, on the Limey drome, two greaseballs were taping the hands of Sergeant Herbert Updyke.

"They hayn't goin' to know when we taped yer 'ands, 'erbert. Gor blimie, we got to win this 'ere fight, yus we 'ave. You sleep wiv them 'alf poun' w'ights in yer 'ands, 'erbert, an' get used to the feel of 'em. Strike me bloody pink, we'll all be bloomin' millyunaires termorrer, 'erbert."

"If the hofficers find out," Herbert Updyke clipped, "there will be no end of a bloomin' pop-off."

"Hits you that's fightin' the Yank, ayn't hit, 'erbert? Not them bloomin' hofficers. An' I ayn't losin' no three quid."

The Yank and British flights fought over their heads all the next day. They managed to get a draw with von Bull's Pfalz thunder wagons and that was more than they had been doing in three whole weeks. The *Rittmeister* was a grim looking buzzard. Over his flying helmet he wore the head-dress of an ancient Hun. Bovine horns stuck up from either side of his noggin and throughout the flying sectors they called him the Attila of the aiplanes. For two weeks Phineas Pinkham had been throwing von Bull into a high dudgeon by flying a red cloth from the tail of his bus. And on the Pinkham Spad had been painted in great letters the words—SENOR PINKHAM, TOREADOR. The implication had been very obvious to von Bull and who had sworn by all the Teuton deities that before many moons he would gore the Boonetown wizard to a fare-thee-well. And to make von Bull all the more testy, a metal ring on the end of a rope flew from the Pinkham crate.

Lieutenant Pinkham came very near to missing the Casey-Updyke fight. Von Bull shot an aileron and a strut away from the Spad during the last prowling of the day and Phineas just managed to get within walking distance of the drome.

“That is one Kraut bum I will get!” raged the near-victim as he limped into the drome of the Ninth. “Boys, them horns of his will look good over the mantel back home in Boonetown.”

“Speaking of bulls, don’t let nobody give you a bum steer!” chortled Bump Gillis. “That is maybe the toughest hunk of sirloin that ever come out of Germany.”

“It is Hamburg he comes from,” retorted his hut-mate belligerently. “An’ that is the way he will go back. Haw-w-w-w-w! Well, enough of this. I must get my pug ready. Adoo, bums, until then.”

Just one hour later Sergeant Mike Casey and Herbert Updyke stepped into the improvised ring in a secluded Frog glade outside of Bar-Le-Duc. Phineas Pinkham was on Casey’s tail lugging a big bucket of water and a towel. The members of the Ninth Pursuit Squadron felt a trifle uneasy when they got a gander of the Limey battler’s prop boss. It was evident that the bugle had not become such a shambles through any vocation like pigeon fancying or ribbon clerking.

“That boy looks tough,” groaned Bump Gillis. “There’s somethin’ phoney. Look at Carbuncle Pinkham. He spilled water all over Casey’s gloves. I—that Limey looks at home with them mitts of his on. Cripes, I wish I hadn’t bet my dough.”

“Aw, stop beefin’,” yipped Captain Howell. “He ain’t got a beak like that by bein’ clever with his dukes, ha, ha!”

There were no preliminaries. Lest some brass hat happen along and get an earful of the babel near the road, the respective outfits tossed their men into the ring and turned on the heat.

“Awright,” Casey yelled when he left his corner, “here’s where ya go on ice, ya—ugh!” Sergeant Updyke had smacked the Ninth Pursuit entry in the pantry and Casey sat down with his face emulating the expression of a codfish in a store window.

“Git up!” yipped his second, Lieutenant Pinkham. “That was an accident.”

Casey clambered to his feet and threw his right hand at the Limey. It just grazed Updyke’s ear but the befeater hit the dirt on his empennage and his eyes crossed in the general direction of the trees as if he had heard a birdie sing.

“There is somethin’ phoney here,” gulped Bump Gillis. “That punch didn’t even land. It only—”

“Blasted suspicious I calls hit!” a Limey yelled while Updyke got up on rubbery undercarriage and tried to locate the elusive Sergeant Casey.

“Git in an’ finish him, Casey!” hollered Phineas. “He’s gaga!”

Casey tore in and tried to do just that. But it seemed that he had a terrible time lifting his gloves. He waved one at Sergeant Herbert Updyke and missed with it.

The spectators gaped when Casey himself almost went to his knees. Mike Casey staggered around and looked at Phineas Pinkham and got a belt in the jaw. The ringing of a cowbell saved him for the moment and Trainer Pinkham had to drag the Yank to his corner. The Boonetown pilot gave Casey a whiff of a hunk of camphor and yelled into his ear.

“What ails you, Casey? You got lead in your arms? Oh-h-h!”

“I can’t hardly lift ‘em,” complained Casey miserably. “My gloves feel like they got anvils inside of ‘em. What in h—did you—?”

“Huh?” Phineas gasped. “I—er—I maybe put too much—er—I mean—well, there’s the bell, Casey. I—good luck!”

The hope of the Ninth Pursuit shuffled toward his Limey opponent and lifted his hands as if he were dragging them out of a pail of thick tar. Sergeant Herbert Updyke clouted Casey four times before the Yank could get a glove up on a line with his face. Then the Limey’s right smacked against that lifted mit and he let out a howl, turned around, and danced up and down. “Gor blimie—hit’s a bloomin’ rock I ‘it! Me ‘and’s broke—strike me pink!” He lunged at Casey and hung a left on the Yank’s chops. Ackemma Casey side-slipped through a group of spectators and finally pancaked against a tree. Lieutenant Pinkham ran over in a frenzy and yipped at him to get up.

“Remember that dough, Sarge! Hey Casey! Listen! Git some water, somebody!”

Bump Gillis’s face turned as white as a porcelain teacup. He eyed a spot on the side of a tree where one of Casey’s gloves had ripped the bark away. His Scotch ancestors turned over in their graves as their descendant saw two bucks take wing.

Cross-eyed, Sergeant Mike Casey tried to get on even keel. “It is my hands,” he warbled dizzily, “somebody’s standin’ on ‘em. It ain’t fair—”

“Ten—and out!” yowled a Limey. “Huz-zah for Sergeant Hupdyke! Pay hup, Yanks! Pip-pip!”



Major Rufus Garrity shoved his way through the knot of buzzards and lifted Casey to his feet. Likewise he lifted the ackemmas's gloved hands and let them drop. Casey went to his knees again. "Get 'em off!"

the goggle-eyed fighter pleaded. "They're pullin' out my arms at the shoulders. Oh, somebody—where's Lutenant Pinkham? By cripes—orfiser or no orfiser, I'm gonna—"

“Yeah, where is he?” bellowed Garrity. “Where is that—?”

“Th-there h-he g-goes,” howled Bump Gillis. “On his—bicycle. The fat-headed—”

PHINEAS PINKHAM sneaked into the drome of the Ninth Pursuit Squadron very late that night. But Major Rufus Garrity was waiting for him. In fact the Old Man was in the Pinkham cubicle, sitting on a cot with the package of plaster of paris in one hand and a good-sized rock in the other. Behind the hut hid Bump Gillis with part of an apple tree clutched in an alert fist. From the shadows along Buzzards’ Row other indignant pilots advanced.

“Now listen,” yipped Phineas, “it was a tough break as—don’t you throw that—!”

*Crash!* The rock took part of the door jamb away from the hut. Mr. Pinkham ducked a vicious swipe from Bump Gillis’ weapon, turned and ran the gauntlet of stones, sticks, boots and other sundry articles of mayhem on his way to the’ sanctuary of a tall tree near “A” Flight’s hangar. From the branches near the top he yelled down at his besiegers.

“I giss I’m sittin’ pretty, too, huh, you bums?” he howled and he rubbed a bump on his scalp tenderly. “I’m in hock an’ I have mortgaged my dame’s house in Barley Duck. I can go to the Frog Atlanta for what I have done. Did I know that stuff would git so heavy?”

“We’re cleaned, you halfwit!” roared Garrity and he threw another rock. It bounced back and conked him on the top of his head. Howell, Captain of “A” Flight, and Lieutenant Gillis picked up the Major and guided him toward the farmhouse.

“But we’ll be back, you crackpot!” Gillis threatened. “Just as soon as—”

“Let me be!” bayed the C.O. “Somebody go get an axe. We will chop that tree down! Oh-h-h-h-h cripes! Five hundred francs I owe that Limey C.O. an’ my boots an’ new whipcord pants. An acre of land back in the States and—”

“Awright,” Phineas yodeled from his perch, “I can sit up here as long as you bums stand down there! I got me two chocolate bars so I will not starve, haw-w-w-w! Boys, what bum sports!” So Lieutenant Pinkham did not descend to terra firma until the Spads of “A” Flight were being pushed out of the hangars preparatory to the early patrol. He walked over to his hut, stiff in every joint, to get his flying togs. Bump Gillis was just coming out of the hut yanking on his coat.

“Don’t even speak to me,” the Scot threatened. “I

could kill you without a qualm, you dirty old snake in the grass!”

“Haw-w-w-w-w-w!” guffawed the culprit. “It’s worth all the trouble I am in to see you bums so miserable. I would hate to think of what would’ve happened, Bump, if you’d bet fifty cents more. Oh well, it is water under the bridge that won’t ever flow back. Adoo!”

The morale of the Ninth Pursuit Squadron took a nose dive during the next three days. In the air von Bull rode them ragged. The gloating Limeys made life miserable for them on the ground. They dubbed the Yank outfit “Garrity’s Poorhouse” and the name stuck. Compared to Phineas Pinkham’s condition on the Allied drome, Napoleon Bonaparte was bothered by crowds at St. Helena. The Boonetown warrior had become an outcast but it did not seem to affect his sleep one iota. In fact he desired solitude—to think. After one trying day, the pride of the Pinkhams sat in his cubicle thinking of ways and means to replace the bankroll of the squadron. Captain Howell had had to cancel a week’s leave. The Old Man was wearing boots run over at the heels. Six pounds had melted from the avoirdupois of Lieutenant Bump Gillis in two days of worrying about his lost two bucks. And Sergeant Casey, Phineas was well aware, spent hour upon hour thinking up a way to commit a perfect crime—and the Boonetown flyer, now behind the eight ball, had a very good idea as to who the victim would be. That very morning he had seen a book sticking out of Casey’s pocket, the title being “Rare Poisons.”

“There has got to be a way,” muttered Phineas as he picked up a copy of an old English magazine, “Hell is an ice cream factory compared to a Pinkham scorned. Somebody will pay through the nose and, boys, when I git them Limeys where I want ‘em—huh!” He scanned a news item with interest and no little amusement. There was a picture of a man with a mustache and a pointed beard. The story had evidently been written by a scandal-loving English scribbler. In part it read:

*“General Francois LaBoulette of the French Army is sojourning at Nice. The general created quite a furor in Parisian society a year ago by wounding a British journalist in a duel. The general accused the newspaper man of being too friendly with Madame LaBoulette who is twenty years younger than her fiery spouse. A crack shot, the general missed killing the journalist when his foot slipped on wet leaves. ‘My husband,’ said Madame LaBoulette at the time, ‘is a very jealous person. He made one big mistake in*

*assuming that I was in love with Monsieur—’ ”*

“Huh,” chuckled Phineas, “them Frogs are hot-headed. Well, I got better things to do than read scandal sheets. I’ve got to get the squadron out of hock, also get the Limeys’ and then von Bull. It’s quite a large-sized order, but nothing stops the Pinkhams!” He tossed the magazine aside and began to strain his brain cells.

At mess time Phineas barged into the farmhouse. The faces of the buzzards were even longer than when he had last seen them. The over-stuffed reason for it sat in a chair pounding his cane against the floor. Many weeks before Phineas Pinkham had made the acquaintance of Brigadier General Twombley of Chaumont. The meeting had not been recorded in his memory as anything to cherish. But it was evident that an elephant had nothing on the Brigadier in the way of memory when he looked at Lieutenant Pinkham. The brass hat had a torso with as little waistline as a grapefruit. His head was the shape of a darning egg and his jowls looked like those of a walrus. When he got mad, they seemed to inflate and wobble like a sausage balloon on its cable. Seeing him, Major Garrity took a deep breath and waited for the worst.

“WELL, I don’t see that Pinkham has changed any,” the brass hat began, “unless it is for the worse. Sloppy looking outfit, Garrity. Not a soldierly looking man in the bunch. No excuse for it. Just because they’re in the air force these men think they should forget all about discipline. Hmph!” He struggled to his feet and took his outsize over toward the fireplace where he stood with his back to the blaze. “Garrity, I’ll tell you what I think of the efficiency of the Air Corps, especially this outfit. Goin’ up to Blemey Le-Sec to recover some valuable papers I left there just before the Germans pushed into the town. Had to get out fast, y’know. Now that the Huns have been driven back a mile or two from that place, I’m goin’ up there for them myself. Could give that job to the Flying Corps but they’d mess it up! Most likely crack up on the way in with the papers and burn ‘em up.” He stalked about the room, poking at things with the end of his cane. “Ever clean this place?” he ripped out. “Hmph!” Again he took his stand in front of the fireplace and eyed the pilots aloofly.

Phineas Pinkham seemed to have dropped something under the table. He pushed his chair back and bent over. Bump Gillis heard a strange sound

and stiffened in his chair. Suddenly a puff of flame came out of the fireplace and kissed Twombley on the empennage. Phineas raised his head, quickly grabbed a pitcher of water and chased the howling Brigadier around the room. He caught up with the brass hat on the third lap and doused him with water.

“Haw-w-w-w-w!” gurgled Phineas enjoyably. “The wind must have come up quick outside. It’s too bad, sir, as they was swell lookin’ pants, all right.”

Brigadier-General Twombley swore and swore and swore some more, crashing his cane against the mess table. A cup of coffee jiggled, bounced, and dumped its black contents into the Old Man’s lap.

“Look here,” yipped Garrity, leaping up, “I can stand just so much! By cripes, I don’t care if you are a superior officer—”

“Look!” Bump Gillis yipped. “I found a gun; somebody must have dropped it. Why—why this ain’t no ordinary gun!” He pointed it toward the ceiling and pulled the trigger. A stream of something that smelled like gasoline splatted the ceiling. Simultaneously Phineas Pinkham dove out through the kitchen door. He knocked a big bowl of stew out of the hands of Glad Tidings Goomer who was on the way in.

“A squirt gun!” erupted Twombley like Vesuvius on duty. “Gasoline! Then it was deliberate assault. Garrity, I demand the arrest of the whole squadron, by gad! Put yourself under arrest, too. Everybody—”

“It will be a pleasure,” snorted the Major. “I am bankrupt and practically busted to a corporal. In twenty-four hours I will be arrested on a murder charge. Do you know anything else I should worry about? Hah!”

“Ought to have known better than to stop at this madhouse!” the brass hat ripped out and headed for the door. He seemed to bounce like a rubber ball on the way to the car that awaited him. Slamming the car door, he leaned out and shook his cane at Major Garrity who stood swearing in the doorway of the farmhouse. “Going to have the whole outfit shaken up! Report you to the Wing—G.H.Q.”

“Don’t forget the Salvation Army and the Daughters of the Revolution,” the C.O. barked back. “I hope that town you’re goin’ to is lousy with Heinies, you—you—!”

Suddenly there came a blood-curdling yell from the Brigadier. He leaped clear of the car and rolled over and over like a hoop snake, covering several yards in the process. The car driver jammed on his brakes and looked into the back seat. Then he pulled a gun

and started shooting. A group of pilots got to the scene in time to see the white-gilled chauffeur for the brass hat poke at something that was wiggling on the floorboards of the back seat.

“A rattler!” howled the sergeant. “I know one when I see one. I come from Texas. Gawd, I never knew they lived in France!”

“Haw-w-w-w-w-w!”

“What was that?” the Brigadier trumpeted. “It sounded like—”

“Nothin’ but a raccoon,” gulped Bump Gillis. “They call about this time of night—like wolves. Uh—er—kin I help you in, sir?”

“Rats!” Twombly shot out and loaded himself into the car once more. He did not see Major Garrity in pursuit of somebody in the direction of the hangars. All he knew was that the man in the front seat was yelling something about a rattler made of rubber.

“I got that outfit where I want it now!” howled Twombly, peeling another square inch of skin from his nose which had been used for a skid. “I never did like that mick, Garrity, since he took eight bucks away from me with loaded dice at Brest. I’ll break him all the way back to buck private. And as for that Pinkham nitwit—”

“What did you say, sir?”

“Shut up!” Twombly barked at the driver. “It’s none of your damn’ business what I said.”

LATE the next afternoon Phineas Pinkham zoomed into the scapo-sphere with Captain Howell and his flight. Over Mont Sec, von Bull and five Pfalz Scouts jumped from behind a cloud and began to cuff the Spads around with reckless abandon. Garrity’s buzzards fought half-heartedly and were lucky to escape over the lines. Hard luck, however, still had Phineas Pinkham barreled. Von Bull, seeing that red cloth streaming from the Pinkham bus, went into high dudgeon and chased the Yank far through the ozone, his Spandaus nipping at the Pinkham rear until the Spad’s tail fin looked like half of a lace doily.

“Oh, I’ll get you yet, you ham hock!” howled Phineas as he took a wide detour back to Allied lines. “I’ll lead you into the drome some day like you was a real moo cow.” He beat the Pfalz to Yankee territory by a matter of seconds but did not get very deep into it. His Hisso went democratic and Phineas glided down into a small hamlet where he landed his Spad on a dime between two shell-shellacked houses. He climbed out of the pit and poked at his torso for vents. In the

process he put his hand into his pocket and brought it out covered with something that looked like mud.

“Boys, what a mess!” he yipped. “A tracer hit my last chocolate bar. Well— why what in—?”

From somewhere nearby came unmistakable voices blended in song. The aria was one that he had helped to render many times in the barber shop back in Boonetown, Iowa. America’s old drinking song. Phineas strained his lily-pad ears to listen.

“Su-we-e-e-e-ut A-a-do—li—yun. My-y-y-y- A-a-do—o-li—yun. you-r-r-r-r-r-r-r tha flo-w-w-w-wer-r-r u-u-v-v-v my-y-y-y hear-r-r-t, su-we-e-e-et A-ad—”

“It’s some doughs somewhere,” muttered Phineas, advancing toward one of the ruined houses. “They sound boiled to the scalps.” He went into the house, gazed around a moment. The strains of Sweet Adeline seemed to be coming from under the boards beneath his feet. He spotted a door, tiptoed toward it, and opened it softly.

“FOR-R-R-R Y-EW-W I-I-I P-I-YUN!” blasted Phineas’s ears and he fell back a step, digging first at one and then the other ear as the volume of sound invaded them. He went downstairs into a cellar where a candle was burning. The song broke off with a gurgling sound and half a dozen frowsy Yanks—infantrymen—stared in surprise at the visitor.

“Cripes, Muley, it’s an orfiser!” one gulped. “Just give him your names an’ git it over with.”

“Shalute, ev’body!” yipped another dough. “Shalute nice now—”

“Bon sour, bums!” grinned the intruder. “Don’t git scared. Boys, are you squiffed! What have you been drinkin’—mule medicine? You’re lousy singers.”

“Uh—er—sir, we kin explain. We got trapped in here when the Jerries was drove out yesterday,” a little dough began. “We found some *vin rouge* an’ figgered we’d ought to have two days vacation seein’ what we been through. Ain’t that right, Willie?”

“Yeah—we ain’t deshertersh, shir. We—”

“Aw, don’t mind me,” Phineas interrupted. “Just give me a bottle.” He looked around the place. There was evidence in the cellar of erstwhile Boche occupancy. Several Heinie overcoats, some coal scuttle helmets, and other accoutrements of war.

“What is this place?” the flyer tossed at the cowed privates. “What’s the name of the town? I—”

“It’s called Blemy-Le-Shec,” a dough hastily answered. “Ya won’t turn ush in, will ya? We—why what-’sh the matter, Lootenant? Have ya got crampsh? Huh, maybe you ain’t used to cheap grog.”

“Must’ve been somethin’ I ate,” replied Phineas. “Uh—er—well, of course, it is my duty as a superior to report you, you know that. We’ve got to have discipline in an army—”

“Uh, huh,” moaned a tall dough. “Well, my name is Joe Skeeter. This little runt—he is—”

“Sit down,” said Phineas after he had jotted down six names. “I will talk business with you. There is somethin’ you could do for me that would make me forgit I ever saw you.” He glanced at his watch as he spoke. “There is a big U.S. brass hat comin’ here see swar. You will all put on them Boche coats and coal hods and talk from your insteps. He will be ridin’ in a gas buggy and there is only a driver with him. Hold the brass hat until morning when three Spads will land here and rescue him. Is that clear to you, bums?”

“Nothin’ doin’,” a dough said with emphasis. “We could git shot for that. Nope—we—”

“You could git shot for deserting, too,” Phineas hinted, getting up. “Well, I’ll report you the instant I get to your outfit. Let’s see, the twenty-seventh division. Now the company is the—”

“Wait a minute, Lootenant,” the gangly dough gulped. “Ya got us! But you got to promise to let us git away afterward.”

“Awright,” chuckled Phineas. “This is the way you do it.” He sipped at his *vin rouge* while outlining his plan. In conclusion the Boonetown worker of magic said, “The brass hat will not know whether the Krauts took this place again or not. All you got to do is forgit to speak U.S. until about eight in the A.M., then. Adoo, bums!”

“Oh revoy!” the tall infantryman replied weakly. “We’ll snak the orfiser an’ hold him.”

Phineas climbed the cellar stairs and went out of the house on feet as light as the winged ones of Mercury. “That’ll put us right with the Brigadier,” he chuckled. “But I still got to find some *argent* to git the Ninth out of the receiver’s hands. And then there is von Bull. Oh well, one thing at a time! Haw-w-w-w-w!”

He poked into the giblets of the Hisso and found that a wire had been snapped loose by a Spandau slug. In three minutes he had it fixed and was turning the motor over. Three miles from Blemetry-Le-Sec he looked overside at a vehicle that was crawling along a Frog road.

“If that is you, Twombley, don’t despair see swar!” the pilot of the Spad grinned. “The Air Corps will come to the rescue and take you away from the bad

Krauts.” He relaxed in his pit until he figured that his position in the ozone must be somewhere above the town of Bar-Le-Duc. Then he looked overside again like a tortoise venturing out of its shell. He grinned broadly upon spotting certain landmarks.

THE SUN had knocked off below the horizon when Phineas landed a mile outside the Frog town. He walked away from his Spad with a jauntier stride than he had used in several days. Soon he was barging through the door of his favorite estaminet. In one corner sat two Spad pilots, their faces as long as a giraffe’s feedline, despite the fact that they had been imbibing freely of Frog brandy. They were Captain Howell and Lieutenant Bump Gillis. When Phineas walked over and bade them a pleasant good evening, Bump sniffed and asked the leader of “A” Flight if he smelled something mighty like a polecat.

“Yeah,” snorted Howell, “and I see it, too. They’re not so particular what they let in here. Let’s go someplace else, Bump.”

“I am goin’ to sit down,” Phineas insisted, “and you bums listen as I have got a way to stop the Old Man and us from being busted. I have got the Brigadier in a cellar over at—” The plotter lowered his voice when his two squadron mates choked on their drinks. “That is how I did it,” he said at length. “All we got to do is rescue him in the A.M. early—an’ we’ll git medals. The doughs will put on an act—”

“It’s plain nutty,” Bump yipped. “If you don’t git hung for that one—come on, Captain, before he gits our necks in a rope, too. The crackpot!”

“Awright,” growled Phineas, “I will wear all the medals myself. You are two sissies, that is what. Adoo, girls, there is quite a sale of gingham down the street a piece. Haw-w-w-w! Gar-song, oon jigger de brandy, veet!”

Now Phineas Pinkham had not known that there was an eavesdropper outside the window with the drawn curtain. A certain flyer had heard the familiar voice of the flower of Iowa’s contribution to the scrap in Europe. He had paused to get an earful and had promptly carried it to another estaminet some distance away. The news was already being deposited in the lugs of a pair of fellow pilots as Lieutenant Pinkham imbibed his brandy.

“Ripping!” was the comment of the trio. “Priceless, no end. Raw-w-w-wther!”

And so, although he was unaware of the fact, lime juice was once again becoming an ingredient in the

cup of woe that Old Man Trouble was concocting for Phineas.

The conniver from Boonetown arrived on the drome two hours later with the help of a flare and a kind Providence. The minute his wheels hit, the last gill of gas was sucked out of the tank. Major Garrity did not even stick his head outside the door of his quarters.

"That was Pinkham, no doubt," the recording officer observed. "Kind of late, ain't he sir?"

"If he never came back," snorted the Major, "it would be too early to suit me! Why the hell remind me of him?"

"Sorry, sir!"

Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham arrived just a minute later.

"Bum sore, sir!" he greeted the C.O. "I thought I'd save time and the wear an' tear on an orderly's boots so I come unbidden. Oh, I know what you're goin' to say, haw-w-w-w! Well, my gas give out and I had to go all over Barley Duck borrowin' some from the dry cleaners. That is why I am late. Huh, don't you believe me?"

Garrity got up slowly from his chair so that it would be easier for him to pick it up.

"Throw that an' I'll report you!" Phineas threatened. "I'll have you busted, sir. I—"

CRASH!

Bump Gillis looked up disdainfully as Phineas came into their joint hut. The Boonetown trickster was rubbing an igloo on his dome and mumbling something about letting a certain job he had had in mind for the morrow go plumb to the torrid regions.

"That's too bad," sighed Bump. "We was hopin' you would as it means the last of you, you dope."

Phineas ignored his hutmate and undressed in silence. He took a small bar of partly eaten chocolate from his pocket and put it on the table. Two hours later Bump got up and stole across the floor. He rammed the sweetmeat into his mouth and jumped back into bed. In another minute he was running for the medico's shack yelling for a stomach pump.

"Haw-w-w-w-w!" a guffaw followed. "It's a panic what they manufacture nowadays. Hot dried peppers with chocolate coatin'. Now I will sleep sound."

NOT MANY HOURS LATER "A" Flight skimmed over the palpitating front, eyes peeled for signs of von Bull and his Pfalz Circus. Phineas Pinkham hoped and prayed that they had overslept as more important business than swapping lead with Heinies was

occupying his astute brain. But the *Rittmeister* with the bovine headgear owned a very good alarm clock that went off before any respectable rooster in Alsace left its perch. Just as Howell led his brood in a wide sweep above Fresnes, a flock of dots appeared in the early morning ozone and Phineas knew that they were not the kind you sign your name on.

"The dirty bums!" he gulped. "It's von Bull, as no other Kraut would sneak up behind you like that. I guess the Brigadier will have to wait until I am through work before—"

The next seven minutes were the most hectic of the Pinkham career since Phineas' number nines touched the soil of Fiance. Von Bull chased him almost to the Channel, kicked him back toward the Alps, drove him close enough to the ground to count the number of eggs in a stork's nest, and otherwise made things miserable. The Spad's top wing locked like a cigar store punchboard before Phineas fired his own guns. The burst was accidental and gouged a piece out of a wheel on Captain Howell's undercarriage.

"*Ach—vas ist? Der Bummer stays oop!*" raged von Bull. "By chimney I gedt him yedt—today *nein*, veil vun odder day. *Ja!*"

His prey ducked into a cloud bank, spat out through the underside, and opened his Hisso wide. "That is one Von I'm gonna lay in the sweet peas when I have more time. I got to get to the Brigadier an' save him an' his maps for the Allies. Haw-w-w-w-w!" At close to 120 m.p.h. the thorn in Major Garrity's long-suffering side burned up sky kilometers toward Blemy-Le-Sec. The sun was open for business and shining with a vengeance when Phineas nosed down toward the hamlet a few minutes later. Misgiving pawed at his diaphragm when he failed to see Brigadier-General Twombly's car down in the square. It should have been there—unless the doughs had ditched it somewhere.

Heart crowding his tonsils, Phineas landed his Spad in an open space five hundred yards from one of the shell-gnawed Frog teepees and climbed out of the pit.

"Somethin's wrong," he gulped. "I smell trouble. Oh, where are them doughs?" He started running. Suddenly, two Yanks appeared at the corner of a house. "Hey, you bums. Where's the Brigadier?"

The tall dough named Willie turned a little green and looked at the little Yank with him. He swung toward Phineas and scratched his dome. "Why Lootenant—three crates come down here an' the ofisers rescued him. Ya said three ships. We figgered ya

sent 'em because ya couldn' come yourself. We snagged the brass hat like ya said an' he didn't git wise. Ha ha—an' I took a poke at him, too. Why—what?"

Phineas could not articulate for several minutes. He sat down on a rock and tried to figure out how so much trouble could overtake one man in such a short time. After awhile he got up on quaking underpins.

"Where's the rest of the nitwits? In the cellar?"

"Yeah, that is where we took the brass hat," replied Willie. "When the airplanes come down, we put on a swell act an' me an' another Yank faked we was shot as the three flying orfishers started shootin' in the air when they seen us. I am layin' on the ground watchin' them take the Brigadier. He says he will give the fellers a medal for savin' him an' some maps."

"Quick," yipped Phineas, "who was the guys? What kind of crates?"

"They looked like Limeys to me."

"The bums!" howled the flyer from the Ninth. He barged into the house and fell down the stairs to the cellar where four doughs were finishing the last barrel of vin rouge. They had discarded their Jerry scenery which was piled in a heap in one corner. On an upturned keg the Boonetown pilot spotted a leather wallet and a watch and chain.

"So ya robbed the brass hat, too, huh?" he yipped,

picking up the watch. "Was there any dough in that pocket-book?"

"Nope," gurgled a little Yank, "only shome lettersh from a dame. We washn't goin' keep the watch but he wen' out sho quick when the orfishersh come in, I guesh he fergot—hic—yip-pe-e-e-e! Shweet Ad-do—li—yun!"



Phineas sat down on a box, his brain ticking a million revs a minute. He picked up Twombly's wallet and explored the contents. Six letters addressed from Paris came to light. A nose tickling perfume still emanated from them. Phineas drew out a violet-tinted paper and scanned it briefly. Suddenly he jumped up as if a tarantula had attacked him on a blind spot. His freckled face split in a wide grin and he flashed a set of ivories that would have gone far toward making a piano keyboard.

"Haw-w-w-w, the old roué," he chuckled. "I'll

take these an' return them to the Brigadier." His mind purred in masterly fashion. "You said them Limeys put on a swell act, huh?" he turned on the Yank named Willie. "The brass hat thinks they shot two of the bad Huns who captured him, huh? Well, well. It's quite a worm that won't turn when you step on one end of it." He hurled orders right and left. "You—Willie pick up them Boche coats and coal hods. Take 'em out to my Spad. Comprenny?"

“Y-yeah, s-sure—B-but ya ain’t goin’ to—”

“After I take off from here, you bums start back to your outfit,” Phineas cracked, “or I’ll turn this list of names over to the first brass hat I see. You’ll git shot for deserting. You will forget you was ever here, haw-w-w-w-w.”

“We was goin’ anyways,” said Willie. “The van rouge is all gone.”

Ten minutes later half a dozen Yanks watched the Spad bite into the ozone and climb to a height of five thousand feet.

“That was Pinkham. I alius heard he was nutty,” said Willie. “Let’s git out of here. What d’ya think he took them things for, huh?”

NOT LONG AFTER Phineas had taken off from Blemy-Le-Sec Brigadier-General Twombley was pulling into the drome of the Ninth Pursuit Squadron on his way back to Chaumont. He had stopped at the Limey outfit to congratulate the C.O. there on having such competent airmen. Howell and Gillis were with the Old Man when Twombley toddled in.

“Well—well,” he chortled, “had quite a time. Got taken prisoner over where I went for the maps. Was held in a cellar all night. Three British planes spotted my car when they were flying over and came down to rescue me. Shot two Boche, held the others at bay until I got out. That’s efficiency, Garrity. Hah, I wager if I had waited for the American flyers to get me out, I’d—why what ails those two men, Garrity?”

The C.O. swung around and saw Howell and Bump Gillis staggering toward the door, their faces the color of the inside of a lemon peel. “I—I have no idea,” Garrity snorted. “Cramps, I guess.”

“Damme,” erupted Twombley, “never saw such heroism. Going to recommend them for medals, those Britishers. Saved my maps—saved me from—” From out of the sky came the buzz of a prop. Out on the field Captain Howell and Lieutenant Gillis froze in their tracks.

Bump coughed, “It’s Carbuncle! If he had brains, he wouldn’t ever come back. Maybe we could signal him—give him the office to—”

“Like hell!” growled Howell. “I wouldn’t miss this for the world. It’s one time he didn’t crawl out of a sling. Ha! ha!”

Garrity and his guest walked out onto the field when Phineas set his Spad down. The Old Man’s eyeballs strained out of their sockets when he saw the Boche helmets tied to one strut of a Spad. Hitched to

two others was a bundle of clothes. A curious group stared at the errant flyer when he advanced to the farm house carrying his load of helmets and the bundle. Bump Gillis wondered if he imagined that Phineas wore the grin of a cat that has just demolished a canary.

“What’s this, Garrity?” thundered the Brigadier. “That’s Pinkham. What damn’ nonsense—oh, I’ll shake this outfit up when I get back to Ch—”

“Bon mattin, bums!” trilled Phineas, tossing his cargo at Twombley’s feet. “I stopped in at a rummage sale over in Blemy-Le-Sec, haw-w-w-w!”

Twombley’s mouth worked like that of a goldfish. His jowls inflated and began to quiver. “Blemy-Le-Sec? What do you mean, Pinkham? That’s where the Boche captured me last night. You there? Why—”

“I just dropped in,” Phineas said airily. “I am psychic. Why, was you rescued?”

“I was! By the British airmen. They shot two of my captors.”

“Haw-w-w-w-w! Somebody has been playin’ cowboys an’ Indians. There wasn’t any Krauts in these uniforms when I found ‘em. And if you will look at the coats you won’t find any bullet holes in ‘em, sir. Look for yourself. Well, I will be in my hut if you want to converse with me about some letters I have from Parea.”

Twombley’s teeth clinked and he stiffened as if he had picked up a wire loaded with five thousand volts. “Letters—f—from Paris? Look here, Pinkham—by gad!”

“Imagine those Limeys,” sniffed Phineas. “Why the fakers! Stagin’ a rescue to git a medal an’ to git in right with—why—I never heard of such—they should be reprimanded. Well, as I said—I’ll be in my hut, sir.”

“Y-yes—Lieutenant,” gulped Twombley. “I—I’ll be there.”

Captain Howell had to hold Bump Gillis up. The Old Man leaned against the Spad while the Brigadier examined the Boche habiliments. After awhile Twombley, his face the color of a pickled beet, mouth spilling dire threats to a certain Limey air squadron, reeled across the drome. Yankee pilots watched him go into the hut of Phineas Pinkham where he remained for an hour.

Major Rufus Garrity always said afterwards that he had never seen a man so mad as Brigadier-General Twombley when finally he left the drome of the Ninth Pursuit Squadron. Phineas Pinkham strolled toward the farm house cockily when Twombley was well on his way back to Chaumont. He flourished a paper

in one hand, gesturing with the other toward Major Garrity and his pilots.

“What did you do, you halfwit?” the C.O. cracked when everyone concerned was assembled around the mess table.

Phineas grinned and placed a very important looking oblong document in front of his superior. Garrity picked it up, read it and tussled with a stroke. “Wh-why it’s a draught on—a P-Paris B-bank for—two—two thousand—francs—and s-s-igned by T-Twonbley— Look here Pinkham, what in h—?”

“Oh, it is the *argent* I lost for you bums when I overloaded Casey’s gloves,” grinned the irrepressible Phineas. “It seems the Brigadier has been correspondin’ with a dame who happens to be the wife of a Frog general named LaBouillette. Now the General is a very hasty bum and fights duels over nothin’ at all. He is the best pistol shot in France an’—well, it is not blackmail and don’t nobody dare say so. It is just business. This paper here is an agreement in writin’ about not pressin’ charges against our dear C.O. and of

course—Phineas Pinkham. Boys, will them Limeys git in a sling!” He grinned with joy.

“But you framed that rescue, you crackpot!” yapped Gillis.

“Major,” said Lieutenant Pinkham plaintively, “is Bump Gillis drunk on duty?”

“H-he is,” sniffed Garrity. “Gillis, keep your mouth shut or I will ground you for a month. Pinkham—ha ha—” His mirth broke off. “Say—that brass hat can stop payment on that check. Did you give him those letters?”

“Five of ‘em,” Phineas laughed. “I held out two billy doux just in case. Haw-w-w-w-w! They will fool, me, huh”

Major Garrity called to Glad Tidings Goomer, sad-eyed mess attendant, “Get me a quart of black coffee,” he groaned. “Put three aspirins in it.” Then he got up and pawed his way toward the Operations Office.

Phineas grinned and strutted toward the door, his larynx working lustily on an old familiar tune: “Su-wee-eet Ado-line, my-y—”