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PHINEAS
PINKHAM
howl

BLOIS, BLOIS, BLACK SHEEP

written and illustrated by
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Phineas hadn't figured on a flight from the back of a mule instead of from the drome of the 9th. And the gallant Garrity hadn't figured on getting stuck when he put adhesive tape on his francs. Anyhow, they called out the guard. But what's the good of jailing a Jekyll if you haven't hamstrung the Hyde?

IF ANYONE goes to a well too often and keeps bailing out the aqua pura, it is a cinch that the well is going to go dry sooner or later—mostly sooner. This aphorism applies to Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham, skull-duggerian of the Ninth Pursuit Squadron, U.S. Air Force. He dipped at the

well of patience of the Allied brass hats just once too often. Early spring of 1918 found Phineas therefore very much suspended in a sling. It seems that he challenged a certain bibulous Limey to a mule race from Thieblemont to Bar-Le-Duc one night. A lot of francs depended on the outcome.

Now the Limey had considered that the mule was worthy of its hire and had paid a Frog accordingly. But Lieutenant Pinkham's coffers were sadly depleted, so he borrowed a long-eared equine unbeknownst to its lord and master. Moreover, he put an electric buzzer under the blanket upon which he sat. The mule had never run so fast in its life so that halfway to Bar-Le-Duc Phineas was leading by four city blocks. Sad to relate, however, he chanced to round a curve and the mule had no brakes. A boiler carrying two colonels and a brigadier

general had brakes of a sort but the driver forgot to use them. He just threw up his hands and held them over his glimmers. Result—one defunct mule; two brass hats held over at a base hospital for an inventory of loose parts; a wrecked Yankee limousine; and two lumps on the Pinkham cranium as big as a pair of darning eggs. Last, but by no means least, a hurry-call for a court martial. Phineas ducked the scene, but in his hurry left a little book in the road called "The Wizard's Manual." That proved to be his undoing.



Just forty-eight hours later Lieutenant Pinkham was being busted into pieces that spread high, wide, and handsome. Four charges were plastered against him, namely theft of a mule, criminal assault on superior officers, destruction of government property, and inebriation. Phineas flatly denied all the charges.

"It was somebody who stole my book," he argued. "I was with Babette all evening. I got these bumps walkin' into a door twice. She'll tell you! That's my alibi and I demand justice."

"Oh, you'll get it!" Garrity stormed. Then he sent Phineas out under guard while he and the other officers weighed matters.

"We've got to discipline that man," argued a choleric brigadier. "I know what you're thinking. He's a valuable asset to the Air Force in ways. With that new Kraut explosive being concocted back of the lines—Pinkham's amazing ingeniousness at times with blocking Heinie moves—yes, I'm aware of it all. But he's been getting away with murder, Garrity. Got to teach him a lesson for the good of the force. Now—we—er—after all, he's not very well versed in military law, is he? Doubt if he knows anything about any kind of law and probably doesn't want to. But this girl—you say she denied he was there when you questioned her?"

"Right!" cracked Old Man Garrity. "That's where he slipped up. She found a letter he had dropped—from a dame back in the States. And is she sore! Man! Ever hear a Frog dame when she was on her ear? Ugh!"

"Why—er—no—that is—humph! Now as I was saying, Garrity, Pinkham is going to Blois! We'll take a chance that he doesn't know that you can't break an officer with a summary court, but that's what it will be in the records. We'll make him think he's busted—take his wings away and send him to Blois for, say, a week—to teach him a thing or two. Then we—er—will restore him to duty. Say we found extenuating circumstances—know that everyone will cooperate—"

"If you ask me," the Major said, "it sounds risky. But I don't want to see the man sent back to the States disgraced. Been quite a help to his country, sir, even though—"

"I understand, hmmm! No doubt of this flyer's guilt, Garrity. Get him in here. We'll give him the works."

An orderly went on the double to get Lieutenant Pinkham. No sooner had he evacuated the Operations shack than the sound of a shot came to his ears. A second one punctuated a merger of wild shouts. *Bang! Bang! Bang!* Major Garrity and the rest of the

court barged out into the sunlight. The C.O. spotted a squadron motorbike negotiating a sharp turn around the corner of a hangar, its sidecar lifted clear of the dirt.

"Shoot him!" a Colonel yelled. "The flap-eared—!"

"It looks like they tried hard," Major Rufus Garrity groaned, "but maybe they're wearin' the wrong glasses—them guys."

"I hit him, I know it," hollered a sentry.

Two soldiers got up from the ground, sneezing and pawing at their eyes which were running as freely as the proverbial babbling brook. When questioned, one of them snuffled: "We was tagin' hib across the fie'd whed he dossed the bebbber iddo our eyes. Thed he slugged uds. There was a modorzygle sta'din' there a'd—"

Major Garrity ground his teeth and it sounded like a cement mixer going to work. "Kid him about Blois, huh?" he yipped. "Like hell! Maybe we'll shoot him, or worse. C'mon, c'mon, get after him, somebody! Don't stand there like a lot of waxworks,"

Meanwhile Phineas Pinkham, in high dudgeon, was giving the mechanical bug every ounce of goosing as he headed for Bar-Le-Duc. Three quarters of the distance there he slanted off the road, ditched his bus, and ran for an old root cellar with which he was well acquainted. In its gloomy depths, only too reminiscent of last year's crop of tubers, Phineas sat down to contemplate his drab future.

"Break me, huh? After all I've done for the democrats? Huh, I guess not! I'll git away to Parea. I—er—but I got to have *argent* as that is what talks in *la belle* France. I—uh huh, it's worth tryin'."

THAT night an American officer walked into Babette's domicile in Bar-Le-Duc. His hair was black and his lip was garnished by a mustache to match. Spectacles rode the bridge of his proboscis which was wiped free of freckles. His ears were laid back closer to his head thereby drawing the flesh from his temples and giving his eyes an almond shape.

"*Sacré!*" exclaimed Babette in high C. "*Qui etrez-vous?*"

"Oh, it's only the Fuller brush man," warbled Phineas' voice. "Bong swar, ma cherry dam'selle."

"*Vite—vous allez!*" screeched Babette inhospitably. "Nevair does I weesh for to see *vous* for ze hun'red yeas, *Vous ete ze deux-timair. Oui*, I tell him ze Majair, *vous ete ze Hair. Regardez—chien—ze lettair!*" The Frog mam'selle plunked the letter right into the made-over Pinkham pan.

“Why, that—huh—” stammered the temporarily nonplussed Romeo, thinking fast. “Huh, that’s from my sister. Why, to think you’d doubt me! This is too much.”

“Ah, *mon Dieu*,” squealed Babette, “an’ I have tell ze brass *chapeaux* zat *vous*—ah, Pheenyas, what ees eet Babette have do to *mon brav’ soldat? Vous pauvre*—”

“Listen, cherry,” yipped the masquerader, immediately seizing his advantage, “you can help me get some *argent*. Listen, veet—*vous* get it here *ce swar* an officer—somehow—*comprenez?* I don’t care what kind as long as he looks flush. I’m desperate, as the Pinkham honor is at stake. The Pinkhams stop at nothing to keep out of Blois. Tell ze officer you have ze spy cornered or anything, nest paw?”

“*Oui, out*, anyt’eeng *pour vous*, Pheenyas,” Babette promised, shedding a tear or two. “Anyt’eeng for zat I help *mon brav’ soldat*. Babette, she ess *beaucoup* sorree. *Votre soeur*—ah *mon*—”

“Adoo for a little while, then,” said Phineas and he set forth.

In a cafe not far from Babette’s he singled out a very tipsy Frog officer. The fellow had a black mustache and a lot of ivories that his mouth looked too small for. Phineas coaxed him to a room above the grog shop and got down to business. He found that the Frog was very much in need of legal tender, too, so right there and then the Yank had his guinea pig.

“*Vous* lend me ze unee-form for wan minoot,” Phineas proposed right away. “I pay you ze francs when I get back, savvy voos?”

“*Oui—oui*,” agreed the Frog, very desirous of a nap. “She ees ze bargain, *mon ami*—hic—I wait *ici*—hic—”

Fifteen minutes later Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham was back at the domicile of his light of love. He asked for a nice cozy closet in which to hide. He got it. Babette then fixed herself up tres chic, donned her finest frock and sallied forth to the fleshpots of Bar-Le-Duc. It was close to midnight when she returned. From his hiding place Phineas heard a voice, a very familiar one.

“Sh-sh-sh-sh,” he detected Babette’s admonition. “Quiet *M’sieu*.” Then silence, broken eventually by the tinkle of glass. “*Vous avez* ze leetle dreerk, *non?*” Babette cajoled her caller. “Ze spy he comes in ze minoot, *M’sieu* Majair. He does not know I know he ees ze spy—*non*.”

“Good work, *Mam’selle*,” was the gruff response and Phineas’ knees buckled. More tinkling of glass. Babette coughed. Phineas drew a deep breath and

strode out into the open. The door he had just opened swung violently on its hinges.

“So! Ze croquette you air, *non?*” he yipped, eyeing Major Rufus Garrity with baleful optics. “An’ ze Americain, ze snake in ze grass, *non?* Hah, I have heem ze satisfaction. I mak’ heem ze duel—tomorrow, *M’sieu*, at dawn—pouf! Peeg! *Chien! Vache!*”

“N-Now s-see here,” Major Garrity stammered, his chin sagging until the wart on it brushed against the third button of his tunic. “I—er—there’s a mistake—I—er—”

“Oh—oh, Jules, I do not know *vous* are *ici*—Jules! Ah, *mon brav’ soldat*, Jules—”

“I weel not leesten to ze lies, bah!” stormed Phineas. “At dawn in ze *matin*. Look, I heet you in ze face *avec* ze glove!” *Smack!*

“Why, y-you—” the Old Man exploded. “I-I’ll—er—can’t we settle this? I have a little money with me, Lieutenant. I—I— Ha! ha! If this gets out—my position—my honor—if a hundred francs—”

“*N-non*. I am inxult,” Phineas choked. “But—mabbe I let you go—hah, I might keel *vous* as I am ze mos’ good peestol shot in all France—*voila* toot! I tak’ ze *argent*. B-But encore I see *vous avec mon* Fifi, hah, I cut ze piece from ze throat—!”

Major Garrity paid over the francs. Several of the squares of paper money had been torn and were patched up with adhesive tape. The Old Man bestowed a withering glance on Babette and then hurried out, his ears as red as a rooster’s wattle.

JUST half an hour later a still bibulous Frog officer lumbered down the stairs in a certain cafe, stopped at the bar for a snort, then walked out of the estaminet thumbing a small bunch of paper francs. Major Rufus Garrity stood just outside the place, still befuddled by his experience nearby. He saw the Frog lieutenant and eyed the handful of *argent*. One bill, reinforced by adhesive tape, fluttered to the dirt from the Frog’s fingers that seemed all thumbs. The Frog had a black mustache—a lot of teeth—it had been a bit dark in the mam’selle’s place—

“Why you big crook!” howled Garrity, leaping into the air. “The badger game, huh? And in France?” *Whack!* His fist landed right on the Frog’s chops and he went down. The Old Man of the Ninth was collecting the fluttering francs when three M.P.’s dashed up.

“Robbery—highway robbery, huh?” yelled one, “Hands up!”

“N-now see here,” the Major tossed out, having an explanation to make for the second time that night, “I can explain. It’s my dough. I can prove it. I tore three of them by accident—I can prove—” Right then and there Major Garrity tumbled to the fact that only one man had actually seen him with the patched currency—Phineas Pinkham. And he had busted Phineas to a fare-thee-well—moreover Phineas had decamped. “Look here—don’t you arrest me. I can explain—”

A Frog Colonel came running out of the cafe. “I see all of thees,” he yelped excitedly. “Ze American officair he have punch ze lieutenant. He tak’ heem ze *argent*. Arrest heem, *vite!*”

So it was that the Old Man went to the bastile. The Frog officer who had been walloped got up and reeled down the street. From a window of the cafe Phineas had been a delighted witness to it all.

“Huh, of all the officers in France, Babette has to pick Old Man Garrity. Haw-w-w-w-w! Well, I’m allezin’ out of Barley Duck and if I can make it, I’ll be in Africa in a week. Adoo, Heinies, you’re gettin’ a break! Pinkham must make himself scarce.”

Major Garrity was released some time later, but the charge of assault and robbery was to be aired in court in due time. He went back to the drome convinced that he, too, was through with the big fuss if he could not produce Phineas Pinkham. Herr Pinkham was well aware of that fact, also, and it was quite clear to him that he had an out if he decided to return to the Ninth. He’d strike a bargain—a hard one. He was chuckling as he walked down a dark side street.

Garrity found his pilots all agog when he trudged into the French farmhouse. Captain Howell spoke first.

“They dropped a bomb on that bridge over by Lerouxville awhile ago—one bomb—an’ I bet most of the Meuse was spilled out. If they ever drop one of them things on us—I er—would you mind getting me a transfer, Major? I have asthma and the climate here—”

“Get out!” erupted the Old Man. “Let me alone—go to hell! I might want to commit suicide and I won’t want you gapin’ at me while I do it. Oh, if Pinkham was only here—” He slammed the door.

“Callin’ for Phineas?” gasped Bump Gillis. “Like he was his long-lost prodigal son! An’ after he busts him! Garrity’s gone plain nuts.”

Phineas did not return to the drome right away. Halfway down that dark street he had stopped short. He saw the empennage of a man, consisting of khaki

pants, dirty puttees, and muddy boots, wriggling over the window sill of a Frog apothecary shop. Soon the fuselage of the house breaker hove into view followed by the headlamps. The ensemble dropped to the ground and was greeted by Lieutenant Pinkham—who seized him by the collar.

“Why you dirty second-story man, y-you—robbed that drugstore an’—why it’s O’Rourke! Well, well, Red O’Rourke! Huh, once a crook, always a—I should never have saved you from them guys who was chasin’ ya a couple of months ago. You was wanted back in Waterloo for bank robbery an’ they thought it was me because ya look just like me, red hair, freckles and all. Say, O’Rourke, why don’t ya mend your ways?”

“Aw, Lootenant, I had a headache an’ I needed aspirin,” replied Phineas’ dead ringer. “Huh, I just couldn’t wait until mornin’ as—”

“That’s darn’ funny lookin’ aspirin,” Phineas confronted the red-head, pointing to a handful of francs. “Now ya better come with me as you’re a disgrace to the army. Let’s take a walk out of Barley Duck.”

“T’anks, Lootenant,” chirped O’Rourke. “I—I was just keepin’ in practice—ha! ha! Youse is a swell guy.”

“Oh, I’m not thinkin’ of turnin’ ya loose,” Phineas countered. “We’ve got to have discipline in the army.”

After that, Phineas had a long, earnest talk with Red O’Rourke. Somewhere between midnight and dawn the two members of the A.E.F., both in poor standing, took leave of each other.

Major Rufus Garrity was wrenched out of dream-land that morning by a loud yell outside his door.

Bump Gillis was hollering, “He’s here, sir, he’s here! Phineas Pinkham is back. Come an’ git him before he escapes again. We have three men sittin’ on him.”

“Hold him! Wait until I get my pants on. I—I—”

Phineas was dragged into the Operations office just five minutes later to face the Old Man.

“Well, you’re back, eh?” snorted Garrity. “Good thing—er—I might give you a chance to crawl out of—you look a little washed out, Pinkham. Huh, staring Blois in the face doesn’t sit so good with you, does it? Look here, I got into a mess last night—er—purely by accident. (*See if anybody’s listening out there.*)” A pause while Phineas seized the door and yanked it open suddenly, looked out, and then swaggered back to the Major’s desk shaking his head. “No? Well, I need a man to testify that I was carrying some paper money with me—patched with tape. It’ll clear me. Then I’ll see—er—what I can do about—”

"I don't know a thing about paper money," the freckled petrel tossed out. "Anyways, I ain't talkin'—a lawyer told me once—"

"You'll talk or go to Bl—"

"Haw-w-w-w-w-w-w!"

"Now listen, Pinkham, we've been good friends, ha! ha! Let's forget bygones, huh?" coaxed Garrity. "We—"

"No, I will go to Blah. I hope you git forty years for robb'ry—er—that was what ya said, wasn't it?"

"H-Huh? Why, all right, Pinkham! You get the works, you ungrateful speckled, buck-toothed son-of-a-sea cook! Get out of here before I—" The Old Man yelled for the guard. Doughs came on the run.

"Haw-w-w-w-w-w!" guffawed the buck-toothed patriot as the guards snagged him. "I had on a bullet proof vest yesterday P.M. Did I fool ya?"

"Take him away," Garrity thundered, dancing up and down in rage. "Take that uniform off him. He's headed for ditch-diggin' on the Loire."

"Adoo, Carbuncle!" chorused the pilots of the Ninth, giving Phineas their favorite insulting name. "There's an end to everything—even a temperance lecture. Adoo, ol' pal, ol' pal of mine!"

"Go to—!" retorted the busted pilot as he trudged off. "I won't have to look at your pans in Blah—that's one thing."

KERWHA-A-A-A-AM! The tarmac suddenly seemed to shift. Spads rattled from stem to stern. From off to the left, in the direction of Vold, came a puff of smoke. It billowed up into the ozone in plain sight.

"Goodbye, rations!" sang out Bump Gillis. "I sure would hate to be a private from now on. That Heinie hell-juice has oozed out again."

"Haw-w-w-w-w-w!" resounded a familiar horse laugh. "See what it'll mean without a Pinkham to get ya out of a hole! Boys, when they git to makin' that stuff in big batches, you'll be jealous of me safe in Blah. Au revoy, garsons. I go a martyr, haw-w-w-w-w!"

"Try and escape, will you please?" Sergeant Casey suggested sardonically. "Boys, how I'd like to take a shot at ya. I been savin' up things to say to ya when you got broke."

"That's a pal for ya," snorted Phineas as he went on his way. "Makes partin' anything but sweet sorrow."

HOURS later, "A" Flight went out half-heartedly to try for a gander at the Heinie explosive works. But in the vicinity of where it was supposed to be, there were a dozen suspicious looking structures and near-

structures. They were spread miles apart. Moreover, six Boche did not give them chance for reflection. Howell and his men had a hell of a fight on their hands to get back to the drome with their Spads. Phineas Pinkham's going, although no one admitted it, had given their morale a swift kick in the tail assembly. The Old Man did not seem to show any interest in the fact that Howell and his company had gotten back whole.

"It's no use," wailed Bump Gillis. "Nobody'll ever spot that place. If the D.H.'s can't, how can we? The only way to do is ask for enough bombs to start blowin' up the whole back area from the Vosges to Belgium and then we might hit the chemical works."

"Nobody asked you," the Old Man snapped irritably. "Let them blow everything up. It'll save me from—uh—if they'd only drop some on Chaumont. Maybe all the evidence and the—"

"What?"

"Nothin'," the C.O. glared at Captain Howell. "Mind your business. Bah!" Garrity got up and stamped out of the house.

"It's gittin' him," Bump Gillis gulped. "I bet he's crazy about Phineas. Now—well, I miss the bum, too. I—who's blub-berin'? It's the damn' horse-radish I et!"

AND now let us skip across a flock of kilometres and look in on a place called Blois which is situated on the Loire River. In a drab room that serves as the commanding officer's sanctum in the reform school of the air, a hardbitten captain was eyeing a new prisoner with calculating glimmers.

"So ya got here at last!" cracked Captain Hardburn. "I've been expect-in' ya for months. I remember a time you put rice in the radiator of my car over near Commercy. An' ya give me a cigar—"

BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!

The officer leaped up and charged out of the place like a fireman answering an alarm. He looked out over the parade ground and bellowed a question as to who had tried to escape. A corporal came up and saluted. His face was black and his eyebrows were still smoldering.

"It was somethin' that went off in my face, sir," he explained. "I was smokin' a cigar in the barracks. Me an' Pinky an'—this guy give 'em to us." He pointed at the freckle-faced captive.

"They took 'em!" yelped the freckled culprit as the C.O. whirled to face him. "Is that my fault, huh? I—"

"Oh, you'll like it here," the captain growled. "When I git you out there doin' double-quick time around

the grounds with a fullpack an'—when yuh push that wheel barrer loaded with rocks. See them guys out there? They're helpin' build a stone fence. There is also a sewer being put in—”

“How interesting,” remarked the latest arrival as he fished into his pocket for a chocolate bar. He calmly began to unwrap it under the captain's nose.

“Gimme everything ya got,” bawled the officer, snatching the chocolate bar. “Then go with the sergeant here an' git yourself a nice suit of dungarees. They ain't got wings on 'em. Ha! ha! Look at the nice barbed-wire we got. It's between here and the vineyards, ya see. Of course, nobody but officers can get *vin rouge*, though”; Oh, ya'll like it here, Pinkham.”

“I am tickled,” grinned the irrepressible one. “I been in need of exercise. When do I start, huh, sir?”

The C.O. did not answer. He had broken the chocolate bar in half and rammed one piece in his mouth. The new prisoner grinned as he was escorted away. An hour later a car came tearing into the layout. Two medicos barged into the captain's quarters with a stomach pump. Long drawn out groans and cuss words floated out of an open window to the ears of the freckled patriot who was just being introduced to the homely fare of enlisted men who are not in good standing. And then, before the C.O. had recuperated, the barracks at one end of the parade ground caught fire. Far into the night the prisoners fought the flames.

“All I done was strike a match to look under my bunk,” explained a dough. “The match blowed up an' the straw mattress took fire. I'm tellin' ya, sir, it blowed up.”

“Pinkham, you big slob, I'll put you in irons for this!”

“That's it, blame me! Ya took everythin' I owned—”

“Nuts to the C.O.!” came a voice. Captain Hardburn spun around. Nobody seemed to be where the voice had come from.

“Who said that?” he cracked.

“Here's your watch, sir,” cried his new nemesis, handing the timepiece to him. “I caught a guy tryin' to steal it when ya wasn't lookin'. I won't tell who it was as I don't tell on guys. But here it is just the same.”

The C.O. of the disciplinarian layout swore and pawed at his sweaty face. “You fathead,” he blustered, “somehow—if I could just prove you—get out of here! Get!” He yelled for a sergeant. “Take this big-eared playboy out of here. Give him the dirtiest job ya can find in the whole place. Give him a wheelbarrow—” The captain strode back into his

sanctum. The next second he was dashing toward the fence that marked one boundary of the military reservation. “Git somethin' an' kill it! It's a cobra. It's got its hood up—don't go near it—git a gun—a machine gun—”

“Huh,” grinned the freckled culprit as he was shown his lowly chore, “it is only stuffed and has a spring run through it to make it move. So this is what I get for my deeds of valor, huh? Well, I do it under protest. When I see President Wilson, he will hear of this.”

TWENTY-FOUR hours later the word reached Major Rufus Garrity that the C.O. of the Blois reform school wished to have somebody relieve him quickly of the charge of Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham. He did not care how. If possible he would like permission to shoot the ape. The place had gone nuts. Doughs and ex-officers were complaining of hearing things and seeing things that were not meant for mortal man. Nobody dared pick up even a piece of paper. They shied and took detours around tin cans. They had rebelled, had this lowly company of men at Blois, against policing up the reservation. One showed a good reason why. The tips of his fingers were well-sizzled by a red hot half dollar that Prison Enemy No.1 had carelessly laid on the steps of the barracks.

“Well, it looks like they got enough of him already,” sighed Major Garrity to a brigadier who had come in for a powwow, following another explosion between Bar-Le-Duc and the Meuse. “What d'you figure on doing now, major?”

“Got to get him out,” the Old Man admitted. “But give him three or four more days, the crackpot. My case don't come up—er—I mean I've got a case of champagne comin' up from—well, any news from the Intelligence Corps on the Boche works? Got to shellac that place, sir. Our lives won't be worth a—”

“Not a word. They're stumped, Garrity. Better tell your pilots to keep on watching for it. Keep 'em in the air all the time. Get them over at night. Solo—got to work fast. Everything depends on the Allies getting to the bottom of that explosive. If we can't match it—”

“Yeah—now if Pinkham—”

“Bosh,” snorted the brigadier. “He's no superman. In fact, it's pleasantly quiet here, Garrity, without that cluck. Last time I was here I sat in some glue—swallowed a bug with my coffee, and—good thing he's in Blois. Maybe we'd better keep him there. Goodnight.”

“Why—eh—uh—look here, sir—”

The phone was ringing. A message from Divisional Headquarters across the Meuse. “This is Gillis, sir,” Garrity heard when he put the receiver to his ear.

“Got forced down an’ went lookin’ for a town or some outfit that had some tools. When I got back my crate was gone. I might not be able to get there until early mornin’ if I have to walk. If I git a ride—”

“Stay there!” barked the Major. “I hope when you cross the Meuse there won’t be any bridge and it sprouts baracudas and sharks. Bah!” The Old Man wrecked the telephone in severing the connection. “Of all the cock-eyed messes—robbery and assault—court martial—if I don’t get Pinkham out—oh-h-h-h!”

In the meantime near a small Frog village between Dommartin and Sivry a Spad was rolling to a stop, having negotiated a journey of approximately thirty miles with a missing Hisso. A freckle-faced buck-toothed pilot got out of the pit and scratched his head reflectively. “Haw-w-w-w-w!” he guffawed to himself, “When Red O’Rourke knelt down in front of the safe, they laughed; but when he opened it with a hairpin—well, I got to git me some pliers and a wrench or somethin’ if I want to git further away from Barley Duck than this. To think that I would be flyin’ like this—I bet the officer who left this Spad didn’t think that the dough who sat on top of that old dugout could fly a ship. Boys, you can’t judge a book by what is writ on the cover.”

He went prowling around and soon came to what appeared to have been a hardware shop before the Boche shells sent the proprietor high-tailing it for the Pyrennees. He spotted an old pump in one corner and it reminded him that he was thirsty. With a tin dipper in one hand, he began to agitate the handle of the pump. It squeaked in protest for several seconds, then let loose a stream of rusty water. The freckled man poured it into a barrel. A sizzling sound followed, then came a most repulsive odor. The spad snitcher dropped the dipper, stooped over the barrel. Then he remembered. That odor was reminiscent of older and more carefree days. A carbide lamp he had had on an old bicycle had smelled that way.

“Well, well, well,” soliloquized the prowler. “That gives me an idea. Maybe I could try it an’ help make up to the U.S. for all the trouble I been in the past. ‘RED O’ROURKE—HIS LIFE BY HORATIUS ALGEBRA! FROM SECOND STORY WORK TO BRAVE AVIATOR IN SIX EASY ZOOMS!’ It’s a panic.”

Quickly he picked up the dipper again and bailed

out that portion of the carbide that was sizzling. Then he examined the barrel and found that the rest of the stuff was well wrapped in a canvas sack. Evidently a nosy rodent had gnawed a hole in the sack to determine whether the contents were edible.

All that afternoon he worked. Close to dusk he had a contraption assembled and heaped close to his crate. He walked across the meadow to where a sunken, camouflaged road snaked its way along. There he waited until he heard the sound of an approaching convoy of A.E.F. fourgons. He stopped a vehicle that was in the van and the driver “whoaed” his mules to peer down at the soldier in the road.

“I wanna borrow a wrench an’ some pliers,” explained the freckled faced one. “I got me a motorcycle busted down an’—”

“Okay,” the driver of the long-eared quadrupeds said and turned to holler back to a dough to locate the desired implements. The borrower then went back to his Spad and proceeded with his job while the mule-drawn hack ambled on. It had only progressed along the road to the other end of the field by the time he was through and returned the tools.

A SHORT time later the Spad took off and headed across the Meuse. Into the back area it flew until it reached a section of Boche real estate about which much had been said in and around air fields, Intelligence sections, and Divisional Headquarters. It was now night and there was a ring around the moon. The air smacked of the proximity of Jupe Pluvius, the flying man with the sprinkling can. The man in the Spad grinned at the expectations of rain over “Sunny” France as he dived down to take a close squint at the Heinie backyard. He saw a large structure that looked suspicious but noted an anti-aircraft battery stationed close by. The shells it tossed up missed the Spad by a whisker and sent him skimming away to another likely looking spot.

Five hundred feet up he looked down over the layout beneath him swiftly. He caught the glow of lighted pipes and burning cigarettes. Again he winged away to another point on the compass. A pile of bricks that looked somewhat like a hospital caught his eye next. Spread out not a quarter of a mile from it was a Jerry air squadron.

“No spinach!” sighed the red-headed man in the night-flying bus as he kept on circling.

Suddenly he spotted signs of activity below. It was around a strange-looking place that appeared to be a

brick kiln with two chimneys jutting out from a low, flat roof. There were heaps of bricks out in front of the structure and a truck-load of them was moving away from the entrance. The Allied intruder now went down low, his trucks almost kissing the roof. He flashed between the two chimneys and yanked a cord that had been fastened to a little staple near the cockpit. A lot of gray, chunky stuff cascaded down to the roof while his machine guns beat out a tattoo to drown the sound of the thudding against the tin roof.

"Haw-w-w-w-w!" yelled the Yank. "As Pinkham would say, 'Haw-w-w-w-w!' Well, that is that, if I can only git back. If it rains, I have got to call up somebody on a 'phone quick as somethin' tells me I have struck oil. I never saw a brick kiln at work at night without a firebox goin'. When it comes to smart thinkin', they got to consult the O'Rourke!"

Put-put-put-put-put! It was not a motorboat because the Spad was a long way from water. It was a pair of Spandau guns taking cracks at the Yankee bat. The flash of a Mercedes exhaust blinked through the blackness.

"Now wouldn't ya know it?" the Yank gulped. "I bet if I flew over Russia durin' a monsoon, there would be a Boche somewheres near. Huh, well I'm gonna go closer to the carpet. If I wash out against clothes lines, I maybe will pancake on some light fall underwear, haw! That's a good one."

Down, down, down mused the bat flyer until he could almost lean out and pick birds' eggs from the trees. Once he came so close he took feathers out of the nape of a duck's arched neck near a Frog barn. The freckled one now zoomed a little and reached the elaborate height of a hundred feet.

"Haw, that's shakin' him off! Ugh!" *R-r-r-rat-atat-tat! P-p-p-p-put-put-put!* The Spad kicked upside down. Flames belched from the motor bays.

"Cripes! Cr-r-r-r—!" *Spla-a-a-sh!*

A SHORT time later, a Yank with his eyebrows singed off, part of his nose peeling, and otherwise feeling like twenty-minute steak, crawled out of a canal like a sick toad and wriggled to dry ground. He lay there awhile thinking it over, then sat up and looked around. A splash of water hit his mottled pan.

"Haw-w-w-w-w! Fancy that—rain in France!" He laughed out loud and clambered to shaky pins. "That means I got to telephone veet!"

"O-o-o-ola-la! *Garçon! Vous est raort—non?*" This from a Frog peasant who came waddling to the bank

of the canal. For greeting, the Yank ran up, kissed him soundly on a stubbled cheek.

"This is one time I kiss a Frog an' like it!" he yelled. "Boys, for a minute I thought you said somethin' that sounded Dutchy. *Non*—I ain't *mort*. My name is—uh—O'Rourke. Haw-w-w-w-w! *Avez voos oon telephone, nest paw?*"

"*Je ne comprend pas, M'sieu,*" said the Frenchman, scratching his head in puzzlement. "Ze air sheep she ees sink, *oui?*"

"If it didn't somethin' reached out an' swallered it," countered the Yank. "Veet, Monsoor, ze telephone—"

"*Je ne—*"

"Aw nuts to voos," yelped the Yank and started running.

The sky was emptying fast when the Yank finally reached a patrol of Yankee doughs.

"Quick, bums, I got to call up the brass hats. The nearest general—anythin' that has got spurs on. *Quick!*"

"Foller me," said a sergeant. "I'll take ya to the commandin' ossifer. An' quit yellin'. The Boche is only four miles away. D'ya wanna tell 'em where we're at?"

The Spad driver entered a dugout in the side of a hill fifteen minutes later. There was a field 'phone in it.

"Quick, call up a bombin' squadron! There's a place I want bombed. It'll be marked and it's over close to Conflans. It's the Kraut hell broth factory. Hurry up as the carbide will git wet an' it'll burn an' show up at night. Come on, before the Heinies clear the roof of it—aw hurry up, gimme that 'phone!"

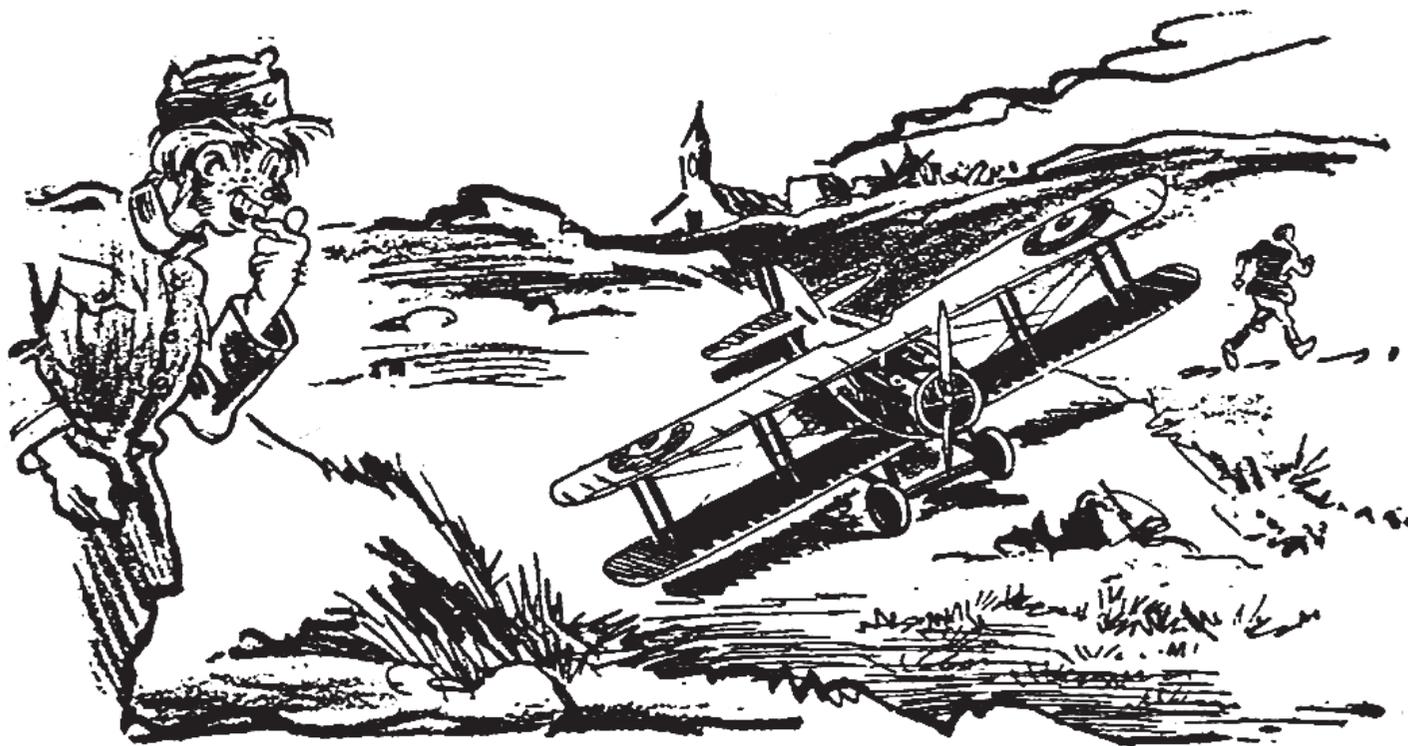
"Say, are you—?"

"Wha—? Yeah, sure, Red—uh Lieutenant Pinkham, Ninth Pursuit—haw-w-w-w-w-w!" The pilot left the dugout and ran into the night before the officer could collect his wits. Hurriedly he picked up the 'phone.

Two hours later, officers and men along the front from Nancy to the Argonne were shocked out of their slumber. It seemed as if the whole front had been split apart. Window panes rattled and fell out. Hangars quivered. Trucks did variegated tap dances on the roads from the back area to the front lines. On the drome of the Ninth Pursuit Squadron, Major Rufus Garrity and several pilots stood in their underwear in the big farmhouse and stared at each other.

"Maybe Vesuvius went off," suggested Bump Gillis.

The telephone bell jangled. Garrity hopped over to it. Pilots studied his face while he was listening to the voice on the wire. It turned green—then purple—then white. He gulped, tried to speak. His eyes bulged and his teeth rattled. Down went the receiver.



“Chaumont,” guessed Captain Howell with a gasp. “Blown up—the Boche—”

“N-No,” stuttered Garrity, staggering out of his office, like a punch-drunk pug. “A guy called up from near Thiaucourt. He said—git me some water somebody—he said Phineas Pinkham come in an’ reported that he had located the Kraut hell factory near Conflans an’ had marked it. The officer said that was the thing that was just blown up by the Yankee bombers. Git me a drink—I—it’s a lie! Pinkham’s in Blois. He—”

“Didn’t the guy say where he is now?” Bump Gillis hooted.

“He ran out of the dugout an’ they forgot to catch him they were so knocked off their pins,” the Old Man groaned. “They—git out of the way! I’m gettin’ dressed. I’m going to take off a couple of days to visit Blois. It’s the only way I can find out that I am not goin’ nuts. He must be there—he handed out them cigars—ah’—”

Again the telephone called. The Major picked it up and yelled into the mouthpiece. He squeaked a little, then fainted. When he came to, he looked around like an old soak coming out of a three-day binge.

“It wasn’t Pinkham, they said. It was a guy they been lookin’ for for bein’ A.W.O.L. Name’s Red O’Rourke. He’s been arrested—for impersonating an officer.”

“Red O’Rourke?” yelled Gillis. “I remember him. Him an’ Phineas got mixed up before. They—

somehin’s screwy. That guy O’Rourke couldn’t fly a kite. And who would ever think of spottin’ that Heinie factory that way except Pinkham?”

Garrity yowled and buried his head in his hands. “My dome is all mixed up. If that crackpot—”

Brass hats from Chaumont, from everywhere, flocked to the Major’s Ninth Pursuit Squadron the day they brought a certain member of the A.E.F. back from a way-station Allied klink in Souilly. He looked like Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham—he walked like Phineas. He talked like him. But he insisted that he was Red O’Rourke and that he had learned to fly when he was a boy scout. For an hour they worked on him, first with threats, then with offers of immunity. Medals were waiting for him, they said. More than that—

“I don’t trust none of ya,” the freckled, buck-toothed one retorted. “I know when I’m bein’ kidded—haw-w-w-w-w-w!”

“Where did you git the Spad?” Garrity hurled at him, tearing out a tuft of hair as he spoke. “Where—!”

“A guy walked away from it—a guy—” The prisoner looked at Bump Gillis. “Why—that’s the cuss, haw-w-w! Well, if that is all—”

“Now listen here,” the Old Man strangled, “we—”

“Yes,” a sweating brigadier soothed, “I’ll put it in writing if you’ll—”

Suddenly an orderly came in with an irate Frenchman. The Frog shook his finger at all the officers gathered and demanded in hysterical French

jargon restitution for a certain mule that the U.S. had promised to pay up for.

"I go see him Foche—ze Pres'dent of *la belle* France! I want ze *argent* for ze mule she is stole. *Mon Dieu—Sacré!*"

"Aw, I'm sick of hearing about that damn' mule," the freckled Yank suddenly spouted. "Here's the *argent* for it. Thirty francs. Take it or leave it. It wasn't worth a taller candle, ya snail eater. Ugh—why, er, I forgot—well, it's out of the bag. I am Phineas Pink—"

OUT the C.O. hardly heard, for he—was staring at a Frog banknote that was pasted up with tape. Homicidal waves swept over him from scalp to insteps.

"Y-you dirty double-crossin'—!" he yelled. "It was you, you bat-eared—let me through there! I'm going to kill him."

It took the whole personnel of the flying field to stop a murder. Finally Major Garrity was ganged under a tree into the branches of which Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham had scrambled.

"Calm down, Garrity!" a brigadier yelled. "Let's study this all out. Got to keep it quiet. Pinkham is supposed to be in Blois. Who is there? Who is this Red O'Rourke person? How—?"

"You come down here, Lieutenant," another brass hat shouted.

"If I came down there, I would be tray nuts," Phineas retorted. "Not until you put the Major in a cage. I can stay up here as long as you can stay down there, haw-w-w-w! The Pinkhams are good flagpole sitters. I will do my confessin' up here. I did it because the Allies needed me worse than Blah did. I met my old pal, Red O'Rourke in Barley Duck—with the—well, I says you are in a sling anyways and if you don't do like I say, you will get shot for—well, I know what!

"Oh, yes, Major, they did haul me off to Blois—but I just didn't go inside after I got there! Haw-w-w-w-w! You see, Red O'Rourke and I traded places just outside the gates when they were checkin' my entrance papers with the sentry.

"Well, for several days previous I'd been spottin' around for the Kraut hell juice mill in my spare time and I was just gittin' hot when you busted me and had me tagged for sewer engineer in Blah. So I marked the place and had it bombed. You see, a Pinkham has got you out of a hole ag'in. Awright, you take the gun away from Garrity and I'll go an' change places with

O'Rourke in Blois. But I will see a lawyer when I serve my time—"

"It is that trick you pulled in Bar-Le-Due that makes me sore," Major Garrity ground out. "That Blois thing was only a—well, to teach you a lesson. You're still a Lieutenant—ask the brigadier, Pinkham. Come on down an' hand over those francs you've got left."

"Awright," chuckled the tree-sitter. "I bet O'Rourke raised hell in Blah. I gave him a lot of my tricks an' things. My voice throwin' invention—lots of things. It took me three hours to teach him a lot of things. He was so dumb. Boys, that was a horse on you in Barley Duck, Major. Look out! I'm comin' down."

Major Garrity held himself in when the wonder from Boonetown hit terra firma but he was boiling like a tea kettle. The brass hats repaired to the Old Man's sanctum to unravel the mixup. Phineas took a seat in a corner of the big room outside the Operations office and taunted his fellow pilots. A communication arrived at the Ninth Pursuit during the powwow of officers. It was a report from Blois saying that Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham had escaped and that soldiers were out spotting him. Major Rufus Garrity was close to epilepsy by midnight. The upshot of it was that a message was sent to Blois for the Commanding Officer there to forget the whole thing.

"Imagine it!" Phineas chortled when it was over. "Puttin' me in Blah! It is plain silly, haw-w-w-w-w!"

When the brass hats had gone, the Old Man called Lieutenant Pinkham into his private quarters. When the prestidigitator emerged, he had an eye that promised to be closed up before sunrise.

"It is cheap at any price," the inimitable pilot from Boonetown, Iowa, brayed. "Haw-w-w-w-w-w! I won't even press any charges."

MILES away, scootched down in the bushes on the banks of the Loire, Private Red O'Rourke, one time safe cracker, jail breaker extraordinary, watch snatcher par excellence, bit his finger nails and wondered where he could get a change of clothes. Stripes would have been cordially welcomed in exchange for the Pinkham habiliments. "I'd ought to've had sense. That Looey is poison," he groaned. "I shoulda walked right to a bastille an' confessed to robbin' that drugstore. Well, if I can only git a Frog's suit—git to Spain—or somethin'. I could join up with the Foreign Legion—Cr-r-ripes!"