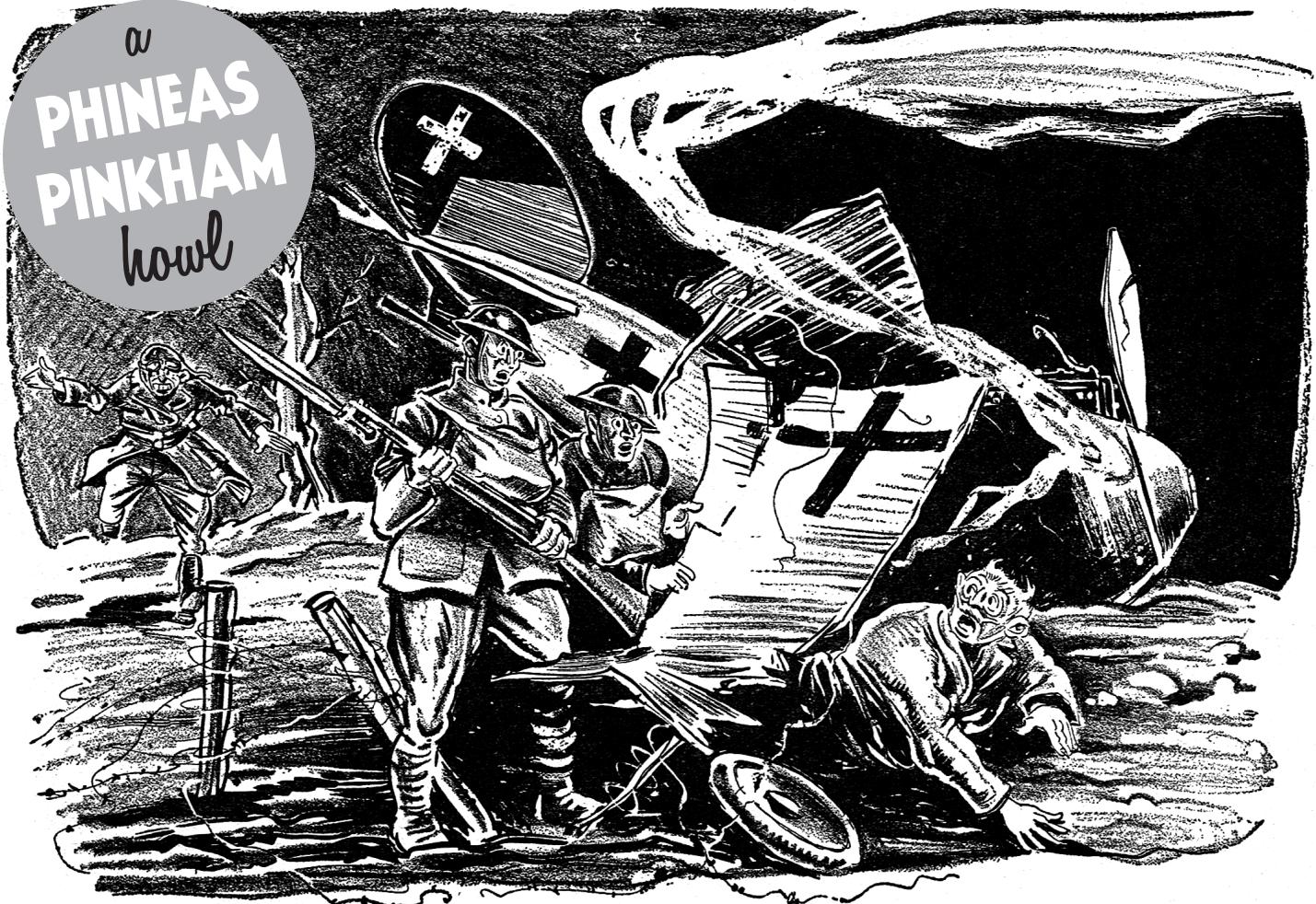


a
PHINEAS
PINKHAM
howl



HOOTS AND HEADLIGHTS

written and illustrated by
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More than one person on the Western Front was bent! Having prepared a succulent dish of stuffed owl, Chef Pinkham was bent on giving the bird to one Hauptmann von Heinz. Meanwhile, one Oscar Frump, of Waterloo, Iowa, was bent on giving the bird to Phineas. And before things went much further, one Francois LeBouche was busy sharpening his shiv. He was bent, too—bent on cutting himself a piece of throat.

T WAS DARK ON THE AIRDROME of the Ninth—as dark as the inside of a licorice lozenge—and Major Rufus Garrity's buzzards were asleep in their huts, oblivious to the approach of a sinister Kraut Albatros.

In the pit of the said Albatros slumped a grim, squat-bodied Kaiser *hocher* whose greenish eyes boded ill for a certain Yankee flyer who had knocked him

for a row of Nisson huts six weeks before. "The Owl" was on the prowl again, and his feathers were ruffled from his high dudgeon. Yes, *Herr Hauptmann von Heinz* was boring toward the Ninth Pursuit Squadron south of Bar-le-Duc—and he knew the very hut in which Lieutenant Phineas "Carbuncle" Pinkham was pounding his ear.

"Ach, dot Dumkopf me he t'ingks he could keep

idt down, *hein?*" The Owl growled to himself. "Ho! Ho! Him I fill oop *mit* holes in *der* sleep yedt untill *der gesmart Yangkee* he t'inks voodpeggers has idt *der koffeeklotch mit*. Verdammt Yangkee! *Ja!*"

Now it was said across the Rhine that von Heinz was so closely related to the owl species that the nocturnal birds were in complete harmony with him. Even so, destiny had it that a certain owl perched on the limb of a tree just behind the Pinkham hut was to double-cross *Herr Hauptmann* von Heinz. Sensing the human Owl's presence, the big creature who was the real feathered McCoy lifted its shoulders and let out a vibrant and well-rounded—

HOO-O-O-O-O-O!

Phineas sat straight up in his bunk. "Wh-who—what?" he gulped. Then, when he heard the bird sound off again, the miracle man from Boonetown, Iowa, leaped out of bed and grabbed a flashlight. Next he pulled Bump Gillis out of bed and dragged him outside by one leg.

"Lemme go, you crackpot!" his hutmate roared. "HA-A-ALP! MURDER!"

"That Kraut don't need any help, you bum!" Phineas snapped. "It is The Owl—he's back again! That mouse-eatin' bum! He was goin' to sneak up on me and—"

The doughty descendant of the Boonetown Pinkhams flattened without finishing his statement—for Spandaus had begun to pound. Lead skewered the hut he and Bump had so recently evacuated. And they saw von Heinz' Alb roar over it with undercarriage almost grazing the galvanized iron roof. The Kraut now zoomed for altitude, wheeled, and came screaming down again to punch more holes in the Pinkham tepee. And finally, when his Spandaus were empty, The Owl lifted his Alb by its bootstraps and knifed back into the blackness that as usual was as clear as day to his own green owlish peepers. And as he flew, he chuckled 'way down deep.

"Nodt even *der* vorm couldt be alife by *der* Pingham hudit," he gloated. "Der Iron Cross I vill gedt it alzo *der* reward. Auf Wiedersehn, Herr Leutnant! Now I go by home *und* gedt idt *der* bombs vot I shouldt drop by *der* Yangkee bridges *und* subbly doomps. Hoch der Kaiser! Hoch der Owl!"

PHINEAS got up from the ground slowly. Bump Gillis did likewise, feeling himself all over gingerly. "I'm goin' to the mess hall for a pitcher of water," he quavered. "I got to see where the holes are, you Iowan

lug. All them slugs couldn't have missed me. Yeah, livin' with you is poison! I'm goin' to take my trunk out to a nice safe front line trench in the A.M.!"

Phineas' jaunty retort was choked back into his throat. Something banged against him and he heard an eerie flutter of wings in his lily pad ears. Feathers brushed his freckles and he let out a yelp when something that felt like a fishhook took a piece of his ear off.

It was then that he caught a glimpse of a pair of burning green eyes and quickly ducked. "H-huh!" he yipped. "More owls! I get rid of one and— Say, that was the one that warned me and it's mad because—" He broke off, grabbed the flashlight, and snapped it on. The beam hit the owl right in the glimmers, sent the nocturnal flyer back-pedaling and flapping its wings. Then it tried right rudder and Immelmanned against the lead-peppered side of Lieutenant Pinkham's hut.

The Boonetown pilot took a lusty swing with the flashlight—and the owl pancaked for keeps.

"Haw-w-w-w-w!" the trickster guffawed, feeling of his wounded receiving set. "Fool with a Pinkham, will you, huh? That Heinie cousin of yours ain't got any sense either. Wait until I smack him down the next time. Boys, I will do to him just, what I am going to do to you! I'll take the bum into Barley Duck and stuff him for a mantel ornament back home."

By this time the Old Man was running across the field. He was trying to get his gallusses up over his shoulders. But he only got his arms tangled up in the elastic, stepped on his own shoelaces, and took a nose dive. And there was so much mud on his face when he clambered to his feet that all he needed was a southern drawl to look like Old Black Joe.

"What's goin' on here, Pinkham?" he spluttered through a mouthful of Mother Earth. "What's the idea of prowlin' around this time of night? I'll—"

"Look at that hut!" Phineas squawked. "It wasn't hummin' birds that made it leak. Right now it would not hold sand. Me and Bump would be gettin' readied up for a bone orchard if this other owl here hadn't spotted von Heinz an' said 'hello' to him. Haw-w-w-w! I must take this owl into Barley Duck tomorrow night. Well, er—if there is a hut that is empty, me an' Bump'll finish our rest."

"I would not sleep with you ag'in if I had to stay awake for the rest of the *guerre*," Bump snorted.

"Lemme git my trunk!"

ALL the next day the brass hats in Chaumont just picked at their victuals. They'd learned that The Owl

was on the rampage again, had washed out a supply dump and a very important bridge across the Meuse. He had wrecked a narrow-gauge train near Fleury and had strafed Yankee billets near Triaucourt.

Eventually, one brass hat at Wing Headquarters phoned the Ninth and told Major Garrity that Lieutenant Pinkham might be a great kidder in Bar-le-Duc but if he ever tried to lie again about batting down a Heinie he would find himself in Blois manicuring Frog real estate.

"Oh yeah?" the flying magician yipped when he got the news at mess that evening. "What am I s'posed to do, huh? Foller the Krauts down into their own backyard an' wrastle with 'em? Yeah, I thought I'd washed up The Owl—but he ain't human, that von Heinz slug. I bet he could lay an owl's egg. But I will git him yet. Nobody got away for long from the Pinkhams. Back in 1770 my Uncle Isaiah trailed an Indian all the way from the Ohio River to the salmon fisheries out on the Pacific—" But a voice stopped him:

"Wha-a-a-t? Are my eyes an' ears takin' me for a buggy ride? If it isn't Phineas Pinkham, I'm a kangaroo's rumble seat!"

Startled by the interruption, Garrity's buzzards forgot their gastronomic ritual. And Phineas Pinkham almost swallowed his knife when his eyes lit on the loud speaker. The newcomer, a skinny fellow, had a nose as long as a Spad's tail skid and it looked as if it had been acting as one not long since. Moreover, there was a trace of a mouse under his right eye.

"Oscar Frump!" Phineas gulped. "It's you, huh? What're you doin' here?"

The man called Frump let his musette bag thump to the floor. "What did you think, Pinkham? I want to help sink some battleships. Ain't this the Navy?"

"I never thought you was funny, Oscar," Phineas cracked back while the buzzards of the Ninth chuckled at his expense.

"He wuz shootin' off his mouth, huh?" Lieutenant Frump queried, looking around the mess table. "I bet he's been tellin' you lots about his various an' sundry uncles an' how the Pinkhams almost won Indian wars single-handed. Ha! Ha! He only had two gre'at uncles an' one was hung for stealin' sheep. An' did he ever tell you about the one that tried to desert in the Civil War? That gazabo woulda deserted, too—only he wuz slowed up tryin' to carry a brass drum out with him. My grandfather told me about it, said they had ta shoot him."

Phineas' ears were a fiery red and he choked on his bread pudding. "That's a lie!" he yipped.

"He—he was just tryin' to scare the Confederates by makin' noises on his drum like guns was goin' off—an' the General didn't have no sense of humor. Oh, I will git hunk, Oscar Frump!"

"You will never catch me, Phineas Pinkham," the new addition to the Ninth grinned. "I know all about your tricks. And now tell 'em about your great grandfather—the guy who robbed stage coaches. Go on! Go on!"

Captain Howell and Lieutenant Gillis were grinning broadly—for to all appearances Phineas Pinkham was entirely deflated. Meanwhile, Oscar Frump kept pouring it on generously.

"When I heard Phineas was flyin'," he rambled on, "I sez to myself that if Pinkham can fly, even a hippopotamus can. So then I joined up, too."

"Oh yeah?" spluttered Phineas.

"Yeah," echoed Oscar. "An' say, I almost forgot somethin'. The Greek who runs the pool-room back in Boonetown said to tell you to bring back that eight ball you stole from him. I says to him: 'Pinkham would be lonesome without it as he always is behind it!' Ha! Ha!"

Phineas was indignant. "I will not sit here an' be insulted!" he said, getting up. "But I will not forget, Frump—as compared to me an elephant is an absent-minded professor. You wait, you—!"

"You won't ever git nowhere by fibbin'," Oscar chided him. "Now where will I find the C.O.? I am reporting for duty an' can't wait."

LEAVING that for somebody else to answer, Phineas left the hall, went over to "A" Flight's hangar, and got a bicycle that an ackemma had been fixing for him during leisure moments. He hung a burlap bag containing the recently deceased owl on the handlebars, then mounted and pedalled toward Bar-le-Duc, his dander still gaining altitude.

"That big-mouthed ape!" he choked out. "Maybe I did stretch a point, or maybe three, about the Pinkhams. But—of all people in the U.S. it would have to be him that—Rats!"

What was more, the scion of the Boonetown Pinkhams anticipated plenty of more misery ahead; for he knew Oscar Frump had lots of things to tell regarding Phineas' early life. Next he'd be telling about the time Phineas tried to get maple sap out of an oak tree. Phineas cussed broadly. This man had called him a romancer, and the Wing had just as good as called him a liar. The Pinkham molars sounded like

a rock crusher as their owner ground them together in increasing rage. Halfway to Bar-le-Duc, twin light beams bisected the gloom. They were the dimmed headlights of a truck that drove Phineas off the road and piled him up against a fence.

"Oh, you bums!" he yelled as he dragged his bike back onto the road. "You did it on pur—*huh!*" A spark stirring in his latent gray matter, Phineas suddenly snapped his fingers. A scheme rotated in his brain. Then he gave the burlap bag on the handlebars of his bike an affectionate pat and continued on toward the Frog hamlet that was his destination.

In Bar-le-Duc, Phineas took the owl's remains to an old Frog taxidermist and gave him orders to make the finished product a masterpiece.

"You do eet ze *bon* job and I will breeng eet to voose a even bigger one for you to stuff heem, comprenny?" the Yank said before he went out. To himself he mumbled: "When that Kraut bum sees that, he won't be satisfied until he knocks it off, haw-w-w-w! He will keep comin' over until he does. Well," he said as he ankled toward an *estaminet*, "so much for that! Now for a snort or two and a call on Babette."

In the cafe Phineas selected a spot in a corner near a table where two brass hats were imbibing. One was a Frog who was so far along Phineas told himself he must have been drinking his cognac by the barrel. The other, a Yankee colonel, was in a commiserating mood as the pifficated Simon Legree of Poincare's *poilus* told of his cares in the bosom-pal style well-scalded citizens are wont to do.

It was evident to Phineas, as he leaned sidewise to get a better earful, that the Frog was being gnawed by the green-eyed monster.

"Oui, Colonel, shee ees—*hic*—I have eet ze br'ak in ze *coeur*. *Sucre bleu!* Aussi *j'ai* eet ze murdair *dans le coeur*, oui! In Paree ze *femme* she ees *avec* who you t'eenk, *mon ami*? I will tell to you thees. Ze Americain aviator, oui. *Deux heures* I am marrie' *avec* ze *femme*, an' zen zat ees what I have see. *Mon Dieu*, *mon ami*, I see *rouge et blanc et bleu*, oui! Aussi I see all ze othair *couleurs* an' I spreeng on ze *femme* robber. An' so, he heet me on ze nez an' I see eet ze *etoils* an'—*hic*—whan I geet on ze *pieds* he ees went an' ze *femme* she ees *aussi* went wiz him. *Mon Dieu*, eef evair I fin' zat *homme*—*hic*—I weel burn heem *avec* sticks lak zey do Jeanne d'Arc. I weel steek ze pins—*hic*—een thees *homme* wan by wan an' choke heem out of hees lungs. Ah, *nom du chien!*"

"He ish home wrecker, mawn amy," gurgled the

American brass hat, nodding so emphatically that he almost fell off his chair. "Francois, voose and me is friendsh, wee! If I ever shee dirty—*hic*—dog I'll tell voose. Me, I get sore, too."

"I have ze picture of ze *femme*—*hic*," sobbed the Frog brass hat as he dripped tears into his glass. He fumbled around his chest until by accident his fingers hit the right pocket and he pulled out his watch. But just as he got the case of the time piece open, the picture he sought popped out and was caught by a draft and spun through the dimly lighted ozone of the *estaminet*. The Frog made a grab for it, but it pancaked to the floor several feet out of his reach.

"Ah, *sacre!* ze picture fly away jus' lak ze *femme*. Now—*hic*—I have nos-seeng to theenk of her weeth. Ah, *mon ami*, pleez find eet for me ze picture. *Mon petit Juliette*—*hic*—*toujours vous* run away from Francois, *hon?* *Vous etes* ze timer-twice, *oui!*"

"Two-timer voose mean, mawn amy," the Yankee colonel corrected the Frog as he pawed the floor on all fours. "Looks like—*hic*—it alleyed out of ze window, palshy walshy. Letsh quit."

The Frog officer finally nodded and got up unsteadily. "Me I look for thees Americain flyair anyhoo 'teel ze days from dooms—*hic*. I have eet ze knife for to cut ze t'roat from theese ear—*hic*—to thees ear for thees Americain, *mon ami*. *Oui!* He have steal ze *femme de moi* an' heet ze nez *de moi*—so—" He made a very significant gesture in the region of his throat to illustrate his intentions, then wrapped his arm around his drinking companion's shoulders. Together the two followed a very crooked course to the door while Phineas Pinkham watched out of the corner of his eye.

When they were out of sight, the Yankee jokemaster reached down and picked up something from under his boot. It was an oval picture of a very comely French girl. And when Phineas turned it over he read: "*Mon soldat cheri—Je t'aime.*"

"She must be a great kidder," Phineas grinned. "But oo-la-la! What lamps you got, Juliette! The bum that poked that Frog brass hat in the chops got himself something nice. But as for her goin' with him—well, that's dames for ya! Fickle like Cleopatra! But why didn't I give this picture back to the Frog, huh? I musta had a subconscious reason for keepin' it."

Phineas went out and strolled toward Babette's domicile—but he never reached his destination. That was because he found a khaki-hued ear standing out in front of a darkened Frog bakery.

The Boonetown pilot heard a series of prodigious snores. He looked around him as he leaned against the hood. Nobody was near, and when the heavy sleeper in the car didn't wake up, Phineas went to work with a screw driver and a pair of pliers which he had produced from his trench coat pocket. Metallic sounds broke the Bar-le-Duc stillness for a little while, then the Yankee plotter ambled away, the skirts of his coat bulging under the grip of his hands. When he rode out of town the burlap bag was still dangling from the handlebars of his bicycle.

"Babette kin wait," the errant swain chuckled as he pedalled his bike toward the drome of the Ninth. "The more you neglect dames, the nuttier they git about you. Haw-w-w-w!"

A lot of things happened after Phineas Pinkham evacuated Bar-le-Duc. For one thing, *Herr Hauptmann* von Heinz dropped a bunch of bombs outside town and they landed on an ammo dump. The explosion shook a Frog captain and a Yankee colonel into sobriety, and sent them legging for their car. The dough at the wheel of the boiler was wide awake, too, when they piled in.

"Drive out of here, Sergeant!" the Yankee brass hat barked. "Don't use the lights until we're clear of that Heinie."

"Yessir," responded the dough breathlessly, setting the car into motion.

But once the machine was outside of Bar-le-Duc where the roads were shrouded with plenty of night, the colonel let out another yip.

"Turn the lights on! If a truck ever meets us—we—"

"Yessir! I'll—Say the glimmers won't work! I turned 'em on an'—Jump, sir! Somethin's cornin' an'—"

WHA-A-A-A-A-AM!

Some minutes later, the colonel helped his French pal off the lower limb of a tree. Their chauffeur was ankle deep in mud—but he was in head first. When the two brass hats finally pulled him out, the sergeant wiped mud from his pan, looked at the crumpled hood of the U.S. buggy, then blinked.

"Hey," he hollered, "somebody swiped our headlights! They was there when—"

"Somebody'll sweat for this!" squawked the Yankee colonel. "It's sabotage! It's criminal assault! I'll—"

As a matter of fact, Phineas Pinkham was sweating when he got through pumping the bike back to the drome of the Ninth Pursuit Squadron. Before he turned in that night he went over to where the

squadron car was housed and removed one of the headlights. Then, on his way to his hut, he met Sergeant Casey. The boss mechanic wanted to know what Lieutenant Pinkham had been stealing now.

"Turnips!" Phineas sniffed—and kept on going.

Casey scratched his head, then shook it. "Turnips in July, huh? He's a liar. Turnips don't git ripe 'til—that guy's up to somethin' ag'in."

"Hello Ananias," Bump Gillis greeted his hutmate when the pilot from Iowa walked in. "What was it your great uncle did in the War of 1812? Ha! Ha! Oscar sure took you to the cleaners! He was tellin' us about the time you hid under an egg crate when a cyclone come. Boy, we always knew you was nutty but—!"

"Oscar Frump will not be with us long," Phineas glowered at Gillis. "You bums wait! Liar am I, huh? A fine bunch of pals you are—sidin' with that guy. Well, a Pinkham never forgets!"

STORIES have a habit of covering a lot of territory. The Paris incident involving one Frog brass hat—Francois LeBouche—even became barracks gossip. Everybody felt sure that the Frenchman would cut himself a juicy morsel of throat if he ever caught up with the flyer who had stolen his Juliette and banged him on the prop boss. Stories grow in flight, too, so that it was now being said that LeBouche had gotten in a couple of uppercuts himself before the *coup de grace* laid him flat on his angel bones.

"If I wasn't so sure you was here on the drome when it happened," Captain Howell said to Phineas the day after the Pinkham sortie into Bar-le-Duc, "I would swear it wuz you. Yeah, and I'd hate to be that culprit when the Frog catches up with him—if ever."

Lieutenant Oscar Frump nodded his head solemnly. "Them Frogs always settle things with knives. An' kin they spar with them throat slicers! Boy, if I was that Yank flyer, I'd desert right now an' hop a boat back home."

"You always was a coward," Phineas told him loftily. "I bet it wuz you, as when you got here you had a barked schnozzle an' a blackened glimmer. Also, you been soundin' off about bein' in Paree just before you come up here. Yes, I would give a million francs to be able to pin it on you!"

"It is too bad you haven't got brains enough," Oscar retorted. Then he turned to the others and began: "Did I ever tell you guys about the time—?"

Just then, Major Garrity barged into the group and let out a yowl. "Get go-in', you armchair aviators!"

There are four Krauts over Lerouville and they're trying to knock hell out of our balloon line. On the *alerte*, huh? Why you all look like Rip Van Winkles waitin' for the alarm clock to go off. Hop into those crates!"

Flight Leader Howell, Lieutenant Gillis, Oscar Frump, and Phineas dashed away and leaped into their Spads. In jig time they lifted them off French real estate and headed for the lines. They met the Boche sky quartet over Commerey, and Howell knocked off the bass singer before the brawl had actually gotten under way. A Fokker that had a tenor pitch nearly rubbed out Lieutenant Frump. But Bump Gillis kicked him off the newcomer's neck, and then only a duo was singing for Kaiser Bill. A Fokker singing baritone got Vickers gravel in its throat and almost choked to death before its jockey set it down none too gently near a Yankee supporting trench. Phineas, whose mind was on owls, got a burst through his tail assembly and had to land outside of Bar-le-Duc five minutes later.

"Haw-w-w-w!" he guffawed. "I was goin' to stop off anyway. This was a big help." He taxied the Spad close to a wooded area and got out of the pit. And before he left the place he draped the topside of the sky chariot with limbs and dry brush. The empennage was not in such bad shape, he mused, so it ought to be good for at least one flight before it fell apart. There were just a couple of loose wires that he figured he could easily repair.

Noticing that the sun was sinking fast, the Boonetown pilot thought of von Heinz and sat down to ruminate.

"That owl I am havin' stuffed was a setup," Phineas said aloud, grinning. "And now all I got to do is show von Heinz that I'm not under a R.I.P. slab and make him keep visitin' us after supper. Then there's Oscar—" The Yank plunged his right mauler into his pocket, felt of a small oval-shaped bit of heavy paper. A gleeful shiver zoomed up his backbone. He thought of a track meet that had taken place in 1915 between Boonetown High and Waterloo Academy when Oscar Frump, who had been a Waterloo man, had beaten him by a step. Oscar still had the award that was proof of that bit of prowess, and he was no doubt keeping it handy as a trump card in his current game of ribbing Phineas Pinkham.

"I'm a liar, huh?" Phineas chuckled. "I'll prove it to them bums. Now if I can only find the place where old jilopies are dumped in Bar-le-Duc . . . and if the Frog has the owl stuffed on time . . . an' if LeBouehe keeps his mad up—why then everythin' should turn

out hunky dory. The Pinkhams wuz always most dangerous when their backs wuz up against a wall! At the Alamo when the Mexicans was closin' in a Pinkham—er—well, I guess I will start for town."

The wandering Yank made himself as inconspicuous as possible when he reached Bar-le-Duc. He sneaked into the taxidermist's place and found that his owl was stuffed.

"Ah, *m'sieu*," chortled the old Frog, "thees ees ze mister-piece, *non?* *Vingt-cinq francs*, pleez."

Phineas snorted. "Twenty-five francs, huh? Well, here you are Jesse James—an' I hope the next lion you try to stuff ain't dead. Boys, it even looks like von Heinz, don't it?" he added, beginning to admire the man's work.

With darkness already in town, Phineas cautiously toured Bar-le-Duc for an auto graveyard. On the outskirts he finally found the wreck of a Frog Renault that had failed to duck a stray shell in 1915. After a struggle, Phineas found what he wanted—a handful of wires.

Then he went back to Bar-le-Duc to lurk in the doorway adjoining an *estaminet*. While he waited, a car with only one headlight pulled up and Major Garrity got out of it. Bump Gillis and Oscar Frump tumbled out next and both went into the Frog bar-room, while the Old Man of the Ninth headed in a different direction. Phineas, a wide grin on his face, simply bided his time.

Ten minutes later, an M.P. walked past the squadron boiler and said to Phineas, who was working over it: "Havin' trouble, sir? If ya want any help, I know them cans from A to—"

"Thanks, soldier," the self-appointed mechanic interrupted without looking up. "Carry on, as I was weaned on these things myself. *Merci* just the same."

Half an hour later Major Rufus Garrity returned to the car and got in. He looked at his watch, then growled. Just as he was ready to burst into the *estaminet* and drag Gillis and Frump out, the two lieutenants appeared. Bump got into the driver's seat and stepped on the starter. Nothing happened. He kept bearing down, but the motor did not perk. Oscar Frump got out and lifted the hood.

"Hurry up and get started!" yelled the Major. "What in the devil's wrong?"

"He-e-e-ey!" Bump yelled. "The battery's gone!"

"The battery?" yelled the C.O. "First somebody steals a headlight, then— By-y-y-y cr—r-r-ripes, if this ain't a lousy *guerre*!"

Over on the other side of the street, Phineas Pinkham was convulsed. He could have told them where the battery was. But instead he slipped around the corner and became swallowed up in the darkness.

LIEUTENANT PINKHAM reached the drome ahead of the apoplectic Garrity and his two underlings. He accomplished the feat via shank's mare, ambulance, and truck. Knowing of no better way to pour out his spleen, the Old Man hollered for Pinkham when he heard that the squadron's pain-in-the-neck had survived the recent fight with the Boche. But none of the orderlies could find the Boonetown wonder, and so the C.O. almost had a stroke.

It was Bump Gillis who first heard the sound of hammering on the far side of the drome.

Then Sergeant Casey pointed. "Look, guys—er—sirs. In that tall tree over there. I seen that crackp—the orfiser, rather—go over there an' climb up it. An' lookit the thing that he's got stick-in' up!"

"I can't make it out," Bump grunted. "Yeah," said the Equipment Officer just as the Old Man joined the group. "Incidentally, he says for me to rub Spad No. 6437 off the books, as it wouldn't know its own mother."

Every member of the Ninth was under the tree when Phineas dropped to the ground from a low limb.

"What're you up to, Lame Brain?" the Major howled. "Where you been since that sky scrap?"

"In the A.M." Phineas replied, calmly eluding the question, "you will see what is up there in the tree. Haw-w-w-w! Wait 'til von Heinz comes over! Say, how did you git back from—er—I saw you come in a little while ago in a—"

"Look here, Pinkham!" Garrity erupted. "There were two brass hats who got wrecked outside of Bar-le-Duc because somebody had stolen their headlights. What's more, one was lifted off our squadron car, and now somebody's stolen the battery."

"Haw-w-w-w-w-w!" guffawed the incurable humorist. "It's lucky they left you four wheels, huh? You can't trust nobody in this *guerre*, can ya? Say, Oscar, you crooked snake in the grass, why didn't you tell 'em how I used to beat all of your Waterloo Academy sprinters when I was goin' to Boonetown High, huh? I set a record for—"

"Why, you human gas attack," Oscar Frump exploded, "lissen to him! This is another time I will show him up. Lookit this watch! Look on the back."

The others gathered around, read:

Oscar Frump
100-Yard Champion
Waterloo vs. Boonetown
1915

"I don't believe it," yipped Phineas. "Lemme look at it."

"Okay, Big Mouth," crowed Frump. "Ha! Ha! Take a look!"

Now it happened that the buzzards of the Ninth and their fuming C.O. were standing near an old well when Phineas reached for Oscar's time piece. And it also happened that sleight-of-hand was in the back of the Boonetown Barn's brain—though they didn't know it.

Anyhow, Phineas fumbled frantically after he got the watch in his grasp. Then he let out a holler and made a dive for the edge of the well. Too late! From far down in the ground there came the faint sound of a splash.

"Ohh-h-h-h-h!" he groaned. "I dropped it. That's too bad, Oscar. I am simply overcome with remorse. Ohh-h-h-h-h!"

"You fathead," Lieutenant Frump bellowed, "you done it on purpose. You'll pay for that, Phineas Pinkham. Fifty bucks!"

"Maybe I could hire a diver from the U.S. Navy cheaper," suggested the professor of legerdemain. "But gimme time. And now I'll say adoo, as I need some sleep."

"I've been thinkin', Pinkham," Major Garrity rumbled. "Somethin' tells me—"

"I wouldn't believe it," Phineas interrupted him. "Haw-w-w! And bong sour!" Thereupon he hurried to his hut, shut the door, and removed the watch from his pocket. He'd only dropped a pebble in the well.

Then, after hiding the watch in a safe place, he shook his fist in the direction of Germany, volubly insulted von Heinz, The Owl of the Ozone, and finally retired to his bunk.

WHEN the sun rose high the next morning, the personnel of the squadron got a good look at the Pinkham tree-top handiwork. Tied to a long pole protruding upward from the very apex of the Frog timber was a stuffed owl. Atilt on its head was the

visored skypiece of a Kraut airman, and small brass buttons on a make-shift gray coat gleamed in the sunlight. A big sign had been affixed to the pole immediately beneath the bird. The printing, which had been dashed off for the benefit of a certain German pilot, read:

VON HEINZ—STOP! LOOK! LISTEN! HERE IS YOUR BRUDDER! LET THIS BE A LESSON TO YOU! LEUT. PINKHAM WHO AIN'T DEAD YEDT! HAW!

Oscar Frump eyed Phineas. "He ain't safe to be with," he clipped. "He needs an observer worse than a D.H. Of all the cock-eyed—"

"Oh yeah?" chirped Phineas. "That's goin' to bring von Heinz over here bent on knocking me off. And meantime I have lernt a swell way of huntin' owls."

Major Rufus Garrity groaned and retired with brass hats from the Wing who sarcastically inquired why Yankee pilots could not down von Heinz, especially as he came right over to where they slept and practically knocked on their doors with his prop boss. Anyhow, something had to be done about it or there would be a shakeup at the Ninth not to mention a couple of other squadrons. Von Heinz was costing the U.S. taxpayers too much legal tender.

"Yeah, just try and nail down that Dracula," Garrity yelled. He rounded out his opinion of Wing, the Ninth, and von Heinz with a well-selected line of swear words.

The day dragged on. Scheduled sorties over Kraut holdings were carried on by the Ninth, but the pilots managed only to hold their own against the Hohenzollern aerial circus. Finally, night fell over the land. And then *Herr Hauptmann* von Heinz emerged from his nest and blinked.

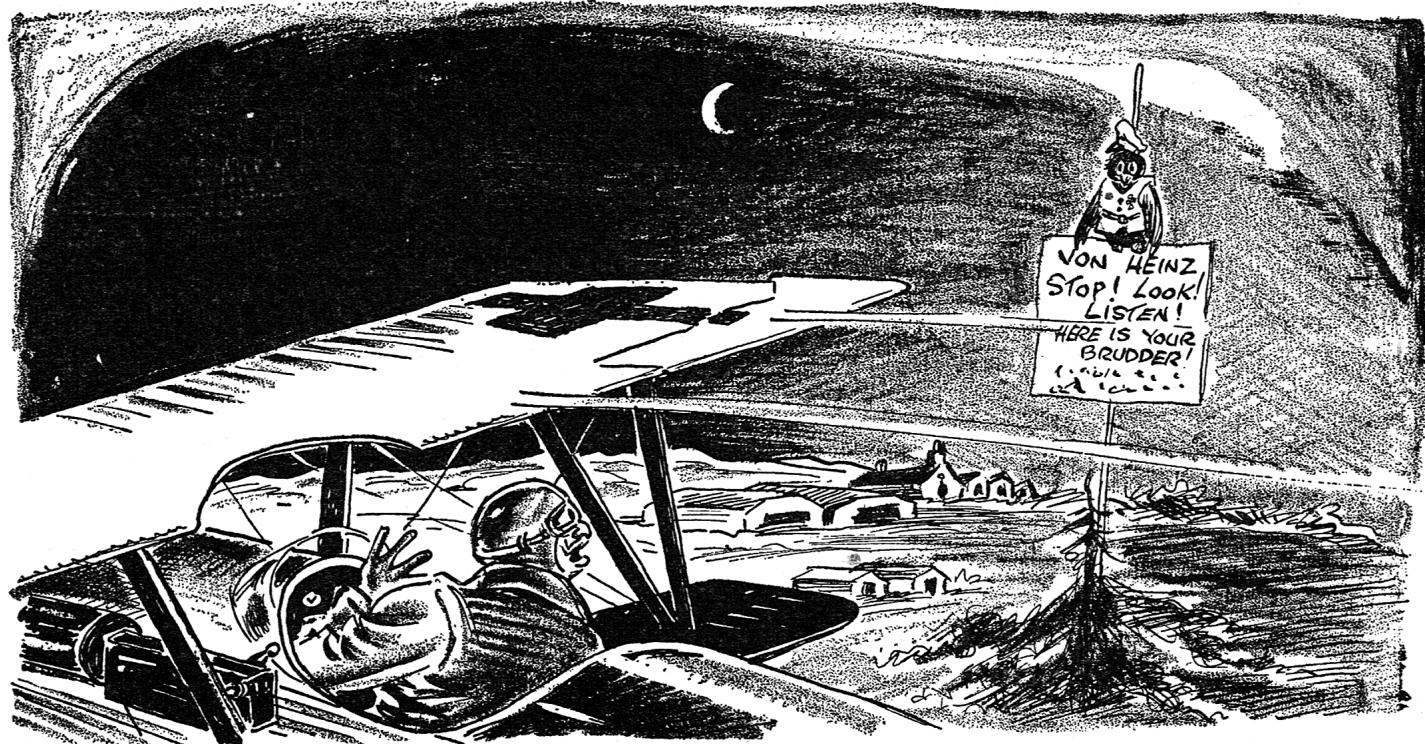
"Ach, sooch *einen nacht!*" he grunted. "Ofer I vill go by *der Yangkee Staffel* und drob idt zome eggs. Eggs from *der Owl*, ja!"

He wrapped his squat carcass in flying leather and waddled across the field to a hangar where Dutch grease monkeys were getting his Albatros slicked up for business. The Owl loaded himself into the pit, tested the controls, then waved his short arm. "Sehr gut!" he growled. "Kontakt!"

But in less than a half hour *Herr von Heinz*'s night was spoiled for him. For his owl-like peepers got a gander at the Pinkham handiwork just as he swept down on the Ninth. Burned up worse than a bride's first mess of bacon, von Heinz even forgot to drop his explosive eggs.

"Himmell Was ist das? Das Pingham ist nie deadt? Donner und Blitzen!" The blood in his veins sizzled and he again swung back toward the Ninth. "Mein Brudder, hein? Der owl das ist, hein? Ach, I blow idt der Amerikaners oundt from *der map* yedt! Ja!"

Meanwhile, Yankee machine gunners had had time to get set. They peppered von Heinz as he came over, sent slugs through the floorboards of his Alb, and



singed his tail feathers. The Owl dropped then his bombs in a hurry, wasting them right in the middle of the Ninth's tarmac. He headed back to Germany then, madder than a March hare with hives.

"Budt I coom back!" he raged. "*Gott in Himmel*, I coom back!"

Crouched near the power truck of the Ninth, Phineas almost seemed to have heard his arch enemy's invective. Nodding his head, the Boonetown exponent of skulduggery in all its forms guffawed. "Haw-w-w-w! He'll be back the bum, an' I'll be waitin'. Tomorrer night, I bet. Well, they can push a Pinkham so far. He-e-ey, Casey!"

The half-clad flight sergeant skidded back on his heels. "Yeah," he gulped. "What d'ya want, you—er—sir?"

"I heard you lost your gallopin' dominoes," Phineas told him. "Anyhow, I found 'em."

"Yeah? Wh-where? Boys, they was lucky. Since I lost 'em, I been very unfortunate."

"I should think they wuz lucky, Sarge," Lieutenant Pinkham drawled. "They throw sevens every time. They're loaded. Now if I was to tell Goomer about them—I heard he lost forty bucks to you—he'd—"

"Them dice was honest," Casey snapped. "I—"

"I ain't accusin' the dice, Sarge," Phineas corrected him. "It's you that's croo—listen, Casey, I won't say nothin' about it if you'll be at B Flight's hangar tomorrer at ten in the P.M. Have a motorcycle where I can get it. Comprennny?"

"Nossir! Them dice—it's a frameup! I—"

"But will Goomer believe it?" argued Phineas.

"Oh, awright. I'll be there. What can I do—an orfiser accusin' me."

"Adoo, Casey," chortled Phineas. Then he went into his hut with a jaunty swagger and despite the confusion out on the field he quickly went to sleep.

ALMOST twenty-four hours more having gone into the knapsack of Father Time, let us look in on three places along the Western Front where things were happening simultaneously: Over beyond Bar-le-Duc Phineas Pinkham, Ace Extraordinary, and Sergeant Mike Casey were working on a Spad. The Flight Sergeant was complaining to his superior officer about the possibility of his getting worse than Blois if the Old Man ever found out that the Spad had not been wrecked.

"They claim I'm a liar," Phineas retorted. "So

should I disappoint 'em? Get that battery anchored in place, Sarge, an' fix the wires right. That one on front don't work bright enough. It's no brighter than you, Casey. Snap into it!"

"Oh, awright. But it's your funeral, Pink—er—sir."

"The only funeral I expect is goin' to be for an owl," Phineas declared. "No Pinkham cashes in when there's enemies afoot."

Over on a Jerry drome *Herr Hauptmann* von Heinz was ready to hop up into the scraposphere again, and his owlish pan boded plenty of ill for anything made in America. "*Der Nacht ist!*" he hooted as he contemplated the darkness. "*Und soon das Pingham* vill be *kaput!* Vun uf *Mein Freunds* he kills, *ja?* *Und* fills *mit* stuffinks, *hein?* *Der insult das ist! Himmel!*"

Eleven miles from Bar-le-Duc, two Allied Intelligence officers were riding along a sunken Frog road in a Renault. One was a Yank and the other a Frenchman. The Frog kept grumbling about his faithless spouse.

"Ah, Juliette!" he sighed. "*Le temps deux* you *donnez moi, oui.* Ah, *cheri*, I br'ak eet *vous* Jolie neck. Ze snak' *dans le grass* I fin' an'—"

"Oh, pipe down, Francois," Colonel Webby said wearily. "I'm getting sick an' tired of hearing about that dame. Wonder how far we are from that Yankee squadron? I've got corns on my empennage from riding all day. I wish I was back in the infantry. Chaumont thinks there might be a spy around Bar-le-Duc, but why I don't know. Von Heinz spots the dumps himself. That Kraut can look right through a lump of coal after sundown, if you ask me. Driver! Try the road once in awhile, will you? You can plow pastures after I get out of this boiler."

Now we will return to Phineas Pinkham. The pilot from Boonetown, Iowa, bade Sergeant Casey goodnight, told him to ask Garrity how his liver was, and concluded airily: "*Merci, Sarge.* Here's your loaded dice—an' let that be a lesson to ya!"

Casey swore to himself as he kicked the engine of the mechanical bug over. But Phineas read his mind and said: "So are you, Casey—only worse." Then he sat down beside the Spad and watched the sergeant disappear toward Bar-le-Duc. The music of the idly-turning Hisso caressed the Pinkham eardrums as Phineas prepared his patience for watchful waiting. Time only would tell—and he hoped time wasn't a liar.

ELEVEN O'CLOCK struck in a far away church steeple. Midnight sounded off an hour later. The witching hour, thought the lone Yank, wondering at

the same time which of two crates would be washed out before the clock struck one. Soon he caught the purr of a Boche sky buggy's motor. He got to his feet and leaned against the Spad, looking up into the dark firmament. There it was—the exhaust of The Owl's Albatros! Tiny flame jets as green as von Heinz's glimmers! The Yank jumped into the Spad, gave it plenty of pep juice, and rolled across the Frog field at a lively pace.

Herr Hauptmann von Heinz, sighting the familiar outlines of the French hamlet sprawled below him, laughed nastily. "Ach, in ein, drei minoots Ich—"

The Owl's squarish noggin abruptly spun on his rounded shoulders. "Ach! Was ist los?" he growled. Into the Mercedes steel-throated roar had come an alien sound. His green eyes swept the skies and finally spotted the Spad that was coming up through the murk.

Baring his teeth, von Heinz let the proboscis of the Alb drop. "Gott sie dank!" he gloated. "Righdt by in front uf der Spandaus idt goes yedt!"

Then without warning a blinding beam of light sliced the ozone and pierced The Owl's eyes. The *Herr Hauptmann* let out a scared yell, pawed at his blinded peepers. Back-sticking, he got out of the path of light that was as deadly as Prussian acid to his vision. "Das Pingham!" he choked out, blinking rapidly. "Der drick—idt ist nie gut! In der back uf der neck I now gedt it der bummer!"

Phineas Pinkham's big white buck teeth flashed like a piano keyboard as he let The Owl get on his tail. Then he snapped a little lever down. From the tail of the Spad twin beams of light shot out and figuratively bit into the Albatros, the Spandaus of which had just started to open up for business.

"Take that, you mouse destroyer," Pinkham yipped. "Haw-w-w-w-w! This is the only way to hunt owls. Blind the bums—an' then conk 'em for the count. Boys, what a guerre!"

Herr Hauptmann von Heinz was in a mess. He tried to swing out of the path of those lights that had already made his glimmers as opaque as the dusty windows of a haunted house. Fear squeezed gobs of sweat out of his torso. Blinking his eyes rapidly, The Owl flew from memory only. But every time he got his windows defrosted, a beam of light clouded them up again. "Gott in Himmel! Noddinks budt lightds und mehr lights! Der Spad ist mit lightdts covered, ja! Donnervetter, das Pingham der Deffil ist!"

Rat-a-tat-tat-tat!

Vickers slugs from the Spad were beginning to find the Alb's vital spots. The Owl feeling his crate throw a fit, instinctively clawed for altitude. Still light beams kept stabbing at him, and he yelled bloody murder every time they smacked against his goggles.

"Haw-w-w-w-w-w!" Phineas yipped as he slowly mowed down the Von. "Why didn't them Allied inventors think of putting headlights on Spads like they do on autos? It takes a Pinkham to show the way every time. Take that, you bum! Haw-w-w-w-w! All you need now is a tin cup with some pencils, you sausage glutton! Boys, look at him squirm when those headlamps kiss him! Just like the owl I knocked off back on the drome." Phineas then got on The Owl's tail and gave him a terrific battering of lead. The Alb went into a spin, snapped out of it, then tried to get back upstairs. The gyrations reminded the Yank of a lame duck attempting to walk up a long chute.

Finally, the Kraut buggy gave up and fell off on one wing for von Heinz, in pawing at his glimmers, had forgot he had a stick. He only remembered it when he was five hundred feet from Yankee supporting trenches. "Gott!" he screeched as he wrestled with the Alb.

Behind him came the ruthless Yank, his front light flooding the Kraut ship's superstructure. Then the ground came up and hit The Owl a lusty wallop on the coco—and all his lights went out.

With the help of his headlamp, Phineas landed his Spad a hundred yards away from where The Owl had marked an X in the mud and barbed wire. He reached the wreck of von Heinz's sky buggy just as a crowd of doughs bent their united efforts to lifting a wing off The Owl. Von Heinz looked as if fifty-seven varieties of calamities had hit him all at the same time. His head was flopped over on one shoulder, and his eyelids were big enough to make a pair of spats.

"Ya sure knocked 'im off this time, huh, Lootenant?" said a dough.

"Yeah, haw-w-w-w-w! An' I will not take any chances this time," Phineas cracked with emphasis. "I am tyin' that bird to my Spad."

"An airplane with headlights, huh?" gulped an infantry officer. "Why didn't they think of that before? Well! Well!" Von Heinz began to stir just as a couple of doughs lifted him onto the lower wing of the Pinkham Spad. "G-go avay, Dumkopfs!" he gutturalized as a light flashed over him. "Raus mit! I—I see der sun still und—Gott! Was ist, hein? Vhere am I vunce?"

"You ain't *Unter der Linens*," Phineas informed his

captive. "Don't look now, *Herr Owl*, but *Lieutenant Pinkham* is standing here. Well, once back in Sunday School in Boonetown I read in the Good Book about letting us have light, haw-w-w-w! You are on the way to a taxidermist, von Heinz, haw-w-w-w! Make way there, you bums, as Lieutenant Pinkham is on his way home. Contact!"

"Himmel! Ach!" The Owl fought his bonds like any feathered creature of his species would. But they were as tight as a Scotchman filled with two quarts of cognac.

BACK on the drome of the Ninth, Sergeant Casey was trying to get out of a jam. Major Garrity had him on the grill. He was pretty well done when the E.O. suddenly came running into the farmhouse, waved his arms, and yelled something anent a Spad with a headlight.

"A headlight? A head—?" the C.O. roared, then stopped. "I get it! It's Pinkham, all right! An' you'll go to the klink, too, Casey. You were helpin' that crackp—that liar. The Spad was washed up, huh? I'll—"

Colonel Webby and the Frog Brass hat, who were present looked at each other and opened their mouths wide. Then they stirred their dogs and went out to see for themselves.

"H'lo, bums!" Phineas hailed all and sundry as he got out of the Spad. "Cut away the ballast on my ship, will ya please? It's von Heinz in the flesh, even if it is all bruised! Handle him with care now, as I want him stuffed. Haw-w-w-w-w! Awright, I took the headlights off them cars. I stole the battery. Somebody had to do somethin'—an' as usual it had to be a

Pinkham that done it. Go ahead! Try to bust me an' see what President Wilson an' General Pershin' have to say about it. Why—er—h'lo, Colonel. An' you too, Frenchy. Ain't seen you since the night that—er—"

Colonel Webby scratched his head. "Don't remember ever meeting you before, Pinkham. I—"

"It is The Owl!" yipped Major Garrity. "Boy, will we get decorated!"

Phineas slumped down on the steps and sniffed. "That's the way around here. One minute they're killin' a bum, an' the next they're kissin' him. It was them headlights that knocked him off. Ya see, the first owl I got couldn't look a flashlight in the eye. So I says to myself, 'Pinkham, ol' man, von Heinz is part owl—therefore auto lamps oughta frost his winders, too.'"

"Himmel!" Von Heinz groaned as they dragged him off his perch and into the farmhouse.

"Kamerad! Ich ben der brizoner uf var und I demandt dot das Pingham leafs me be. Shtuff me he ist finkin' und—Ha-a-alp! Kamerad!"

"Did I fool him?" Phineas grinned. Then he looked at Oscar Frump. "Why, hello, Oscar," the Boonetown Merlin thrust at his townsman. "I got somethin' to tell ya. That watch o' yours wasn't lost. I had it all the time, haw-w-w-w! It's a nice watch, an' you bums ought to see the picture in it. It's of a dame. Look, it says '*Mon soldat cheri, Frumpy, Je t'aime!*' *Juliette*' she signs it—an' if you think I'm a liar, why—"

Oscar made a frantic grab for the Watch. But LeBouche, the Frog Brass hat, outgrabbed him, opened



the case, took one look, then emitted a bloodcurdling yell. "So! I haf fin' *vous oui!*" he shouted at Oscar. "Snak' in ze grass, *oui!* I slit heem ze t'roat from ear to ear. Lieutenant Frump, eh? *Sacre!*"

Oscar Frump started running; for the realization of what had occurred had eaten deep into his think tank. He sped across the tarmac, breaking his own hundred-yard mark set in that track meet between Waterloo Academy and Boonetown High in 1915. Not far behind him sprinted Francois LeBouche waving a hunting knife. And Oscar, as he ran with his tongue hanging out, kept asking himself how Phineas had got hold of that picture of the French dame.

"Look it," Phineas was saying back near the Frog farmhouse. "Here's the watch, engraved an' all. Look at the picture an' the writin' on it. He's the guilty man. Well, he got a medal for runnin'! Ah-h-h-h-h! I think I will get some sleep. Ho hum!"

THE next night at mess, Oscar Frump, the tip of an ear carved off, one eye with a huge mouse beneath it, and his nose patched with adhesive tape, listened to Phineas sound off without opening his trap.

"Yessir," blatted the scion of the Pinkhams. "Back in the Revolution I had a great great grandfather who caught eight redcoats single-handed. He shot the buttons off their pants with a pistol an' they didn't dare run any more because it was in Philadelphia and there was a lot of dames—uh—er—you remember hearin' about that, don't you Oscar?"

"Y-yeah," answered Oscar. "Heh! Heh!" he laughed weakly.

From outside came a dismal call. *Wh-hoo-o-o-o-o-o!*

"Yeah, von Heinz is here, Owly," Phineas trilled in response. "But he can't come out to play tonight—because right now he don't care a hoot about nothin'. Haw-w-w-w-w!"