

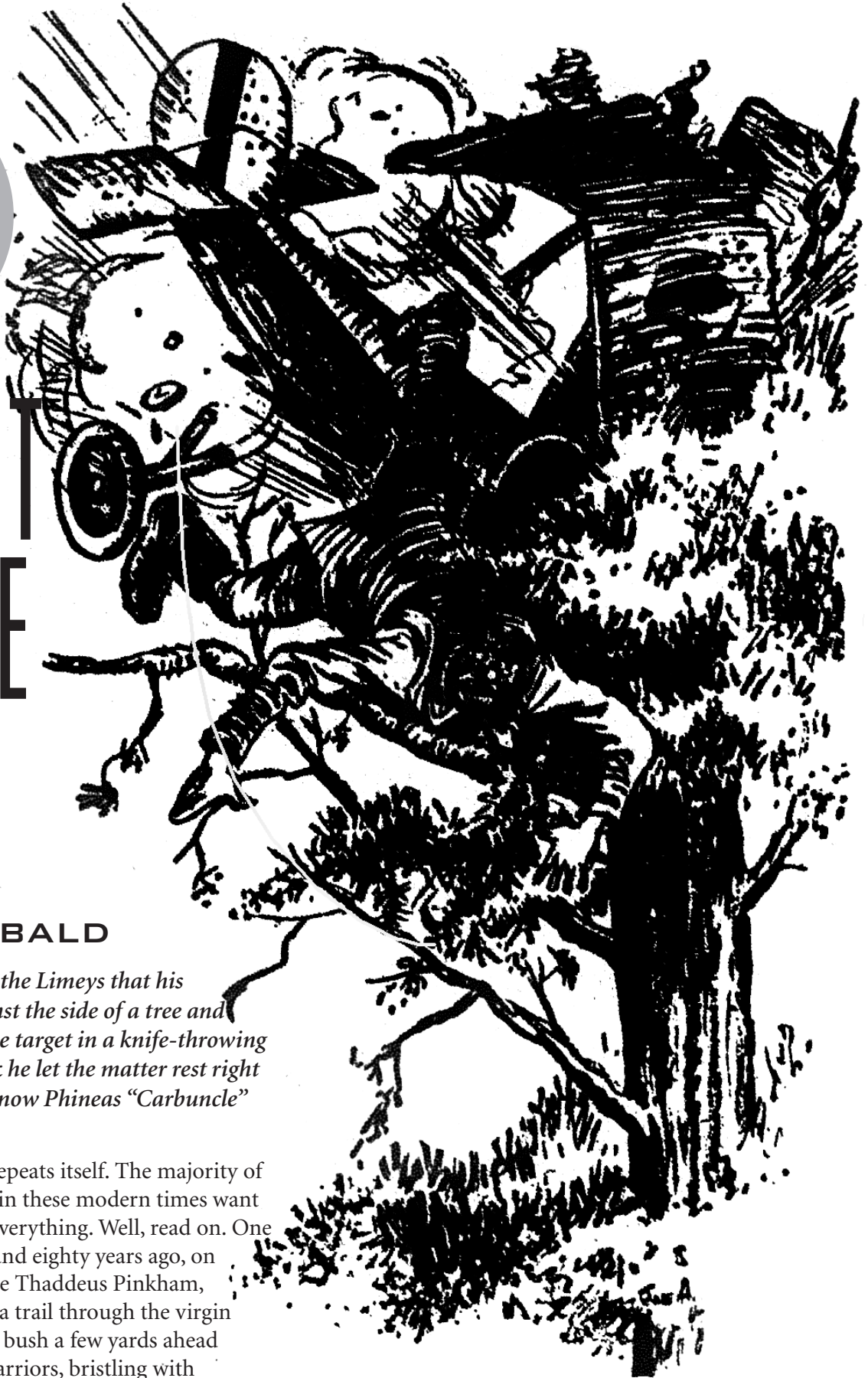
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**PHINEAS
PINKHAM**
howl

TELL IT TO THE KING!

written and illustrated by
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It was all the fault of the Limeys that his Spad was smeared against the side of a tree and he himself looked like the target in a knife-throwing contest. And if you think he let the matter rest right there—well, you don't know Phineas “Carbuncle” Pinkham!

HISTORY repeats itself. The majority of wisecracs in these modern times want proof of everything. Well, read on. One hundred and eighty years ago, on a sultry July morning, one Thaddeus Pinkham, clad in buckskin, walked a trail through the virgin forests of Ohio. Behind a bush a few yards ahead lurked a trio of Indian warriors, bristling with tomahawks and drunk with mayhem.



Thaddeus owned a typical pair of Pinkham ears. They heard a necklace of deer molars rattling. His nose smelled war paint. Lifting his trusty rifle, he pulled the trigger. A redskin bit the pine needles. There was no dust. Thaddeus reloaded, ducked a tomahawk, and erased another aborigine. The third ran home to his squaw. Thaddeus spat into the bushes and continued on his way to westward.

Now: it was early spring of 1918. Lieutenant Phineas "Carbuncle" Pinkham, direct descendant of Thaddeus, was blazing a sky trail with a Spad. Behind a gob of ceiling three Fokkers were lurking. But this time a Pinkham was not attending to his knitting. Slumped down in his pit, Phineas was imploring his brain to suggest a means of making life miserable for one Bump Gillis, unfortunate flyer of the Ninth Pursuit Squadron, who had been thrown into the same hut as the Pinkham scion.

Perhaps the ghost of Thaddeus whisked down from the heights and whispered a warning. No, we don't believe it, either, and at any rate, it was too late. Phineas' head popped up just as the three Boche twisted and dove down upon him. They threw hunks of steel, but not with handles attached to them. The missiles were not easy to duck.

One wing tip of Phineas' Spad turned into a nutmeg-grater. The flyer swore indignantly and jerked frantically to the left. A Junker pilot, very much interested in the war, laughed out of the corner of his mouth and sent a stream of bullets across his line of flight. Phineas, wondering why he had joined the Air Force, anyway, swung away from the tracers and turned to hop like a scared rabbit from the spittle of the Boche behind him.

Damned Spads! They just crawled along like a tank. Phineas wished that he had solid earth under his feet. He would show them krauts some sprinting. It was time he did something, or a check for ten thousand dollars would soon be forwarded to his fond parents by the U.S. Treasury. That much money would turn his old man's head. And this would happen just when he was getting that sleight-of-hand stuff down pat, too!

Ping! A wire snapped and played a crazy dirge in the slipstream. *R-r-r-r-r-rt!* Fabric curled up. The lazy goldbricking grease monkeys would like that. What to, do? What to do? Phineas could not outrace the Fokkers. He could not dive. So, full-gun, he went up toward Mars, praying that his revs would not go back on him.

The Spad was kind. It did everything Phineas

wanted it to do. The Boonetown flyer fooled the Tripes. Enjoying several hundred feet of altitude advantage, Phineas whipped over and dove on his tormentors. A Jerry lost his smile and tried to get out of his climb. It was just too bad that the ship under him could not have gone through the same maneuvers as did his stomach.

"Take that!" shouted Phineas as he squeezed the trips. "An' that! That's the stuff, Mister Vickers, vaccinate the big boloney!"

THE Boche hunched up in his pit as the Yankee guns flayed him. Splinters kicked into his face. *Ach! Ach!* His eyes stared foolishly at a piece of the joystick he held in his hand. From the socket at his feet protruded but a few inches of splintered wood. We will leave the Junker to get downstairs the best he can and follow our hero.

Phineas straightened out at the end of his dive to look things over. The situation was still uncomfortable. A twain of Tripes snapped at him, each taking bites out of his flanks, their Spandaus adding to the havoc that was already costing the U.S. Government plenty of legal tender. As he ruffled up and rolled over, Phineas wondered what was holding the Spad in the sky. It had absorbed enough lead to make sinkers for every fishing line in Iowa.

As he tripped a burst at one of the Boche, he yelled with triumph. High above his Spad, two Bristol fighters were skimming the sky. He knew their insignia! A neighboring squadron. Good old Limeys! The Jerries evidently had not seen them. They pounded at Phineas with ever-increasing gusto and kept their minds on their work.

"Ignorance is bliss," mused Phineas, as with a maneuver that surprised even himself, he slammed another Boche with a broadside that shook the Tripe from nose to skid. When the Junker staggered away to lick his wounds, Phineas looked for the Bristols. There they were! Why, the lousy sons! They weren't going to give him a tumble. He could see an observer in one, standing up in his pit to look the fight over. Phineas ignored the thrusts of the Tripes and shook a fist at the British planes. Well, he'd show the Limeys how to fight the Boche.

"Stand by, ya yeller bellies!" roared Phineas and, setting his teeth, knifed out of a circle and swept a surprised Jerry with a flock of tracers. Then he was the one who was being chased.

"*Der Tag, huh?*" howled the one American pilot

in the sky as he Immelmanned. "I'll show you krauts what *tag* really is. An' ya won't touch me, ya squarehead. I'll show them Bristols I don't need 'em around. Dirty Limeys! The fathead—"

A great white flower bloomed directly ahead of him and blotted out the Tripe. Another puffed up off to starboard. *Blam! Blam!* Phineas caught a flash of the Jerry dusting full-gun out of the strata of the fuss. The bursts of anti-aircraft stopped. So that was it! Over his own lines. He leveled out and pointed the nose of his Spad toward the drome. Far ahead of him the Bristols were racing.

"Ya-a-a-ah!" shouted Phineas Pinkham. "The King oughta be proud of ya. Wait till I see you clucks! I'll send ya a little present of—of—ah, cripes!" His tongue glued itself to the roof of his mouth. An ominous cough had come from the Hisso's throat. Phineas stared at his tachometer and beheld a terrible drop in revs. Another cough and the prop in front of his eyes began to wag indolently. The motor was as dead as a salt mackerel.

Phineas went into a glide and looked overside. With heart-conking suddenness more grief settled on his neck. To his ears came a sickening crackle. Mouth agape, the flyer stared at the wing above his head. Slowly but surely its port tip was sagging, having grown tired of supporting itself without the aid of a strut. Fabric curled and flapped in the breeze. Wires jangled musically.

Phineas, alias Carbuncle, expected the whole works to fold up at any moment. Great globules of honest sweat began to ooze from between his freckles as he tipped the wreck slightly to the right so that most of the strain would be removed from the gutted portion of the Spad's anatomy. The controls responded sluggishly.

PHINEAS could see the ribs of the wing now. He shivered. It occurred to him that his own ribs at the moment were not worth a lead nickel a dozen. The scenery below suddenly seemed to jump up at him. The Spad shuddered and bucked like a wild bronc and tore loose from the stick. Even as it shed a wing, Phineas was getting free of his safety belt. He knew enough to take a hint. The Spad was leaving him flat.

He straightened in the pit just as the heap of junk kissed the lofty branches of a mighty pine. A hand seemed to slam against the back of his neck and knock him loose from the war. A potpourri of comets, big and little dippers, asteroids and milky ways flashed

all around him. If this was going to heaven, mused Phineas Pinkham's subconscious mind, a guy certainly did not tarry on the way. But what were those needles scraping against his face? Porcupines didn't fly. What? A great rush of air, and a dazzling light blotted out everything else.

Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham opened his eyes wide and looked upon the world again. Why, he was still looking down at it! Slowly he reassembled the few wits he had fallen heir to and diagnosed his present position in life. He was hanging like a sack of flour over the branch of a tall tree. His mouth was open and a great gob of pine needles was nestling within. His face felt as if it had been a target in a dart-throwing contest. Painfully Phineas lowered himself to the next limb, repeated the process several times and finally dropped to *terra firma*. He leaned his harassed personage against the trunk of the tree and stared glassily at the Spad parts that had dotted themselves over the landscape around about him.

"Them damn Limeys!" were Phineas' first words. His scratched physiognomy split into a grin. "Huh," he commented, "I guess I'm just about the first guy who ever climbed down out of a tree without havin' had t' climb up first. Ha!" He cursed the Limeys once more, then made an effort to get his bearings.

Phineas knew that he was far, far away from the Ninth Pursuit, without any visible means of locomotion except two legs that ached like ulcerated teeth. And then his lily-pad sound detectors picked up a confused babble of voices. His eyes strayed down the slope and came to bear on a trio of men who were hurrying up toward him. Two of them were Yanks. The other, a Frog rustic, carried a heavy piece of ordnance. The trio stopped suddenly as Phineas moved, then they muttered with astonishment as they came on again.

"Had an accident, sir?" ventured one of the sloppy-looking bucks as the reception committee halted and stared at the flying wonder.

"Huh!" grinned Phineas with sarcasm. "Nope. The engine is jus' missin' a little. I'll be okay as soon as I kin fix it up. Where're you guys from? What outfit?"

The Yanks glanced quickly at each other. One was about to speak, but the Frenchman uttered an excited barrage, punctuated with wild gestures.

"Hey!" exclaimed Phineas. "Stop wavin' that cannon. You'll be shootin' somebody. Anyways, I don't compree ya." He turned to the nervous Yanks and demanded an explanation.

“W-Well, lootenant,” answered one, “me an’ Riggy here was goin’ up to our outfit near Bois-Le-Sec. We got lost an’ stumbled onto an ol’ motorcycle that some despatch rider must’ve got bumped off of an’—”

“Yeah?” sneered Phineas. “Well, go on.”

THE buck coughed nervously and spoke with effort. “We got hungry an’ run acrost this farmhouse. There was some chickens runnin’ round an’ me an’ Riggy bumped a couple. This Frog came outa the house with that cannon an’ was goin’ to shoot us when we saw that plane of yours comin’ down. So we come—*er*—well, here we are.”

“Picked up a motorcycle, huh?” commented Phineas. “Jus’ like nothin’ a-tall. You’re both a couple of cock-eyed liars, but I guess this is sure a break. Well, let’s—”

“*M’sieu*,” shouted the Frenchman, “*M’sieu* offiseer. Zem eochona zey not rob with me, *oui*? You mak zem pay, *oui*? *Sacre bleu!* Zey rob ze *pauvre* peasant. *Non! Non!* I go see ze General Persheeng, *oui! M’sieu*—”

“Aw, pipe down!” barked Phineas. “Le’s go down an’ see how much them hens is worth. C’mon, toot sweet. Git goin’, you guys. An’ stop wavin’ that .75!” he yipped at the perturbed rustic.

The flyer’s eyes lighted up triumphantly as he inspected the mud-bespattered motor vehicle. Beside it lay the remains of a brace of plump fowl. The Frenchman still hopped up and down, demanding restitution. Phineas reached into his pocket and drew out two big coins and handed them to the agitated farmer.

“There’s two bucks,” he said, grinning over at the relieved Yanks. “Buy y’self a pair of mules.”

“*Merci! Merci!*” enthused the Frog. “*Merci, m’sieu*.” He dropped his ancient weapon and bowed profusely.

“Boloney!” growled Phineas and climbed into the sidecar.

“Hey, lootenant!” whispered a buck hoarsely. “Look out fer that sack in the bottom of that tin can.”

“Huh? What?” Carbuncle’s tongue suddenly locked up.

“Hey, how am I goin’ git in?” asked the other Yank. “There ain’t room—”

“Your friend is takin’ me to Bar-Le-Duc,” announced Phineas, his eyes narrowing. “You kin wait until he comes back—”

“But, lootenant,” protested the buck astride the motorcycle, “that’s seven miles. Me an’ Riggy has to git—”

“Yeah?” said Phineas in a very mean voice. “Maybe you clucks would like to git shot fer stealin’ from Frogs.”

The Yanks gulped. “Aw right, lootenant,” said the driver. He threw in the switch and bore down on the pedals. The vehicle sputtered, then raised a staccato voice. It shook violently, then shot away.

“What’s in this bag?” shouted Phineas as they lurched and pitched down the rough road.

“Eggs!” yipped the Yank. “Rotten duck eggs. Me an’ Riggy is goin’ to give ’em to a lousy mess sergeant. We got to git hunk with the bum fer somethin’.”

“No, you ain’t,” came back Carbuncle Pinkham. “I got use for ’em myself. See?”

“Aw, lootenant—”

“You watch where you’re goin’, ya fathead!” roared Phineas. “This thing ain’t runnin’ on a track.”

The Yank silently cursed everything in the shape of an officer and gave the motorcycle full gun. He’d show this wise guy what a real ride was. Phineas swore and hung on for dear life as the vehicle bounced, skidded, slewed and wobbled to the familiar scenery near the drome of the Ninth Pursuit. Abruptly Phineas shouted and held up his hand. The Yankee brought the berserk iron horse to a spine-jolting stop. Phineas thanked the Powers that be and climbed out.

“If you’ve broke them eggs, ya crackpot,” warned Phineas as he reached into the side-car for the sack, “I’ll drag ya in an’ call up the M.P.s.”

“If ya can’t smell nothin’,” retorted the buck, “they ain’t broke. Well, olive oil. I’m gittin’ back. But, say, lootenant, ya shouldn’t have give that Frog all that dough. He would’ve taken—”

“Yeah?” laughed Phineas Carbuncle Pinkham.

“Let him try an’ spend them hunks of lead! Here,” he grinned as he reached into his leather coat. “Here’s a coupla cigars. An’ don’t fergit to break your neck on the way back!”

The Yank accepted the weeds without thanks and rammed one between his teeth. Phineas obligingly held up a light.

“Thanks,” growled the buck, puffing violently. Then he spurred the iron horse to a deafening take-off. Phineas watched the motorcycle wobble into the gloom for nearly a minute. Suddenly from the bobbing head of the rider there came a shower of sparks. The motorcycle wobbled and crabbed for the side of the road. The nocturnal silence was split with a plethora of blasphemies as the Yankee strove to bit the iron horse. As Phineas turned to walk stiffly toward the drome, chuckles emanated from his lips.

THE buzzards of the Ninth Pursuit had once more given Lieutenant Pinkham up for lost. So imagine the surprise when he opened the door of the old stone farmhouse and walked in. Bump Gillis and Captain Howell jumped up as if they had seen a ghost. For the moment they were not sure that it was not. It was inconceivable that a man could become such a wreck and still stay vertical.

The homely flyer's face was covered with a criss-cross mass of scratches. One ear was puffed up like a summer squash and he peered at his hutmate out of one good eye. Add to this havoc an igloo on the bridge of his nose and two or three pints of mud distributed in great sobs over his carcass and you have something to enter in a chamber of horrors.

"Cripes!" yipped Bump Gillis. "What hit ya? Are ya alive or—"

"Yeah!" grinned the wreck. "Lieutenant Pinkham in the flesh. But let me tell you guys somethin'. I was flyin' along, mindin' my own business when—"

A door swung open. Major Rufus Garrity stepped into the big room. "Pinkham!" he gasped. "Y-You? Hell, man, you look like you had been in a knife-throwing contest. Where's the Spad?"

"Huh?" answered Carbuncle. "Oh, sure, the Spad. Well, it would take the whole A.E.F. to rake it up. Well, sir, I was tellin' these guys that I was flyin' along home when three Fokkers jumped me. I had a hell of a fight on my hands. An' then two Bristols came in. Yeah, two of 'em from that Limey outfit over the river. An' they kept on goin'! One of 'em stood up in the pit and watched the fight until he was out of sight. I got shot up an' fell into a tree. Can you beat them yell—"

"They did that?" roared Captain Howell. "Why, the dirty—"

"I'll find out about this," bellowed the C.O. "I'll call up Hunkley-Holcombe and tell him something." He turned and stamped into Wings.

"Yeah, the bums!" went on Phineas. "I'll write 'em a letter an' ask 'em how they liked the show. Maybe they'll wanta bring some friends."

Bump Gillis laughed. "Huh," he said, "ya've got to admit that watchin' you fight upstairs is the greatest treat in this man's war."

"Oh, yeah?" rasped Phineas. "Well, I got two of the Boche an'—"

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

"Ya callin' me a liar?" menaced Carbuncle. "Well, I got enough left to bop ya one, ya ugly—"

THE door burst open again and Major Garrity came out. He looked at Phineas with jaundiced eyes. "The major of the British Squadron," he said to the bedraggled flyer, "assures me that to his knowledge no Bristols were in the air at the time you mention, Pinkham. He was not on the drome for an hour or two this afternoon, but his pilots swear that they did not go up against his orders. You were seeing things, Pinkham. Better get that face of yours overhauled."

The Ninth Pursuit chuckled. Bump Gillis laughed out loud.

"I tell ya I wasn't seein' things!" roared Phineas. "I know a Bristol when I see one. I'll tell them Limeys somethin'. I'll—"

"That's all, Pinkham," roared the Old Man. "Don't yell at me, you fish-faced whoozle, or I'll give you a week doing nothing but thinking up smart tricks."

"Awright," grumbled Carbuncle and went out of the house, slamming the door behind him. He picked up the sack of eggs that he had discreetly left outside and, bristling indignantly, hastened to his hut. Seeing things, was he? Well, he'd find out. He was splashing water over his wounds when Bump Gillis came in.

"Say," the flyer ventured, "did you really see those Bristols? You lie so damn much a guy can't believe ya. Ya can't blame the Old Man—"

"Go lay an egg!" advised Phineas and proceeded with his first-aid treatment. Bump Gillis sat on the cot and watched the Boonetown enigma paint his wounds with iodine, strip off his torn flying gear and pull on a new pair of whipcord trousers. Over these Phineas pulled a pair of polished boots.

"Where ya goin'?" inquired Bump.

"Foller me an' ya'll find out, mug!" retorted Phineas. "An' don't step on that package I've wrapped up there or I'll lay ya away for the rest of the *guerre*. I'll show them Limeys!"

"Foller ya?" repeated Bump Gillis.

"I ain't crazy. An' it's great to be able to grab some sleep without worrying about a bomb explodin' under the bunk or somethin'. Forget to come back, will ya?"

Phineas growled something or other as he pulled on his trench coat. His back turned on his hutmate, he fumbled for almost five minutes at something on the lapel. When he turned around, preparatory to taking leave, Bump Gillis saw that he wore a flower in his buttonhole.

"A paper flower, huh?" scoffed Bump. "Got a date with that face? It would have to be with a hyena."

"Listen," snapped Phineas to his hutmate as he

picked up his mysterious package. “Lay off them gumdrops I got from home, see? I’ve counted every one that’s left. Ya’ve had more than me already. If one’s missin’ when I git back. I’ll knock you loose from your tonsils!” So saying, Phineas walked out of the hut.

BUMP GILLIS rasped out an uncomplimentary salute and, to show his disdain for the Boonetown flyer’s threats, reached to the table for the box of gumdrops. Having sampled them before, he knew he was taking no risks. Picking out two of the sweetmeats, he gobbled them avidly. Almost instantly the flyer’s mouth seemed to catch fire. He gasped for breath. Tears rolled out of his eyes and down his cheeks which were beet-red from the spasm of coughing. He tried to swear as he tore out of the hut and raced for the nearest drink of water. Phineas looked back over his shoulder and grinned.

“Well, I warned the ape,” he said and continued on his way toward the hangars, assuming the unsuspecting, swagger of a man just out for a stroll. Lo and behold! there was the squadron car. A mechanic was holding up the hood and peering at the engine.

“What seems to be the trouble, Casey?” inquired Phineas casually.

“I dunno, sir,” answered the mechanic. “There’s a knock in the heap of junk an’ I can’t seem to stop the damn thing.”

“Well, well,” commented Phineas, glancing toward the stone house. “Maybe I can help ya, Casey. I’ll git in an’ start the thing goin’. Maybe by the sound of it ya—”

“Thank ya, lootenant,” replied the mechanic. “That’ll help, maybe.”

“You’re sure that’s all that ails it, huh?” said Phineas as he climbed into the driver’s seat.

“Yessir.”

Carbuncle grinned savagely as he stepped on the starter. His foot let out the clutch. There was a rasping of gears. “Look out!” he yipped and yanked the wheel to the left as the car shot away. Casey leaped clear just in time to save one or both legs. He tripped over a tool box and cut up the tarmac with his nose. Swearing volubly, he got to his feet and shook his fist at the car that was now tearing out of the drome.

Major Rufus Garrity poked his head put of a window and roared at the top of his lungs. He wanted to know who in the blankety-blank-blank had taken that car out. Bump Gillis happened to be a few feet away, giving his burning oral cavity an airing.

“It’s Pinkham!” he yelled. “Who else? The crazy—”

“Pinkham, eh?” exploded the Old Man. “Well, where’s he goin’? Who gave him that car? Where’s he going, Gillis, I asked you?”

“Hell, I hope, sir,” growled the flyer. “I didn’t ask him.”

“Bah!” ejaculated the C.O. and pulled in his head. The whole house seemed to shake.

ALONG the road drove Lieutenant Pinkham. Over the hills and through the woods, across a bridge that spanned a small river, to finally drive right by a shouting sentry and into the drome of Major Hunkley-Holcombe’s Bristol fighters. The tarmac appeared deserted. Across the field squatted a long shack with an elephant iron roof. Little slits of light were visible at the windows. To Phineas Pinkham’s ears came the sound of muffled revelry.

Toward this center of activity drove the Yankee flier, and stopped in front of the shack with an emphatic grinding of brakes. The charivari of voices lessened a trifle. As Phineas climbed out of the car, the door of the shack opened and a face squinted at him.

“I want to see Lieutenants Price and Smythe,” said Carbuncle, assuming an arrogant pose. “Or anybody else connected with this bunch of Limeys. I’m Lieutenant Pinkham.”

The man came out, shut the door behind him and held up a warning hand. “But, I say, my good fellow,” expostulated the R.F.C. pilot, “you carn’t do this, y’know. We are entertaining a guest, Pinkham, a distinguished guest. The major cannot see anyone unless it is very important. If you have a mesage, I’ll be glad to—”

“Save your breath,” interrupted Phineas. “I’m tellin’ these clucks somethin’ in person. I want to see any one of those bums who were out flying a Bristol this afternoon an’ ran out on a nice little dogfight. I was the guy they left to get bumped. C’mon, let me in or I’ll walk right through ya!”

“But see here—” A flood of light abruptly bathed Phineas. The door had opened to let out an indignant voice.

“What is going on out there, Fields?”

“Why—er—” blurted the flyer, “this is Lieutenant Pinkham of the Yankee Squadron over at Bar-Le-Duc, sir. He insists upon seeing one or two of the men, sir, but—”

“Yessir, I do,” put in Phineas. “I want to know why they didn’t help me out with those Boche this afternoon. I—”

“That’s enough, lieutenant,” rasped Major Hunkley-Holcombe. “You will quit this drome at once or I shall phone your commanding officer. Damme, what colossal cheek! Intruding at such a time as this. I informed your Major Garrity that there were no Bristols up at the time you—”

“I know there was,” insisted Phineas. “I ain’t cock-eyed.”

The heavy frame of Major Hunkley-Holcombe puffed up indignantly. He strode forward and shook a perturbed finger in front of Lieutenant Pinkham’s nose.

“Leave this drome immediately, you—you upstart!” he barked, “or I shall remove you by force. I’ll— I’ll—”

The door was jammed with curious pilots. Suddenly a lithe figure wormed through and stepped to the side of the British C.O. Hunkley-Holcombe turned slightly. He coughed with embarrassment and began to apologize for the intrusion. Phineas stared at the young officer whose uniform was not of the Flying Corps. It was apparent, however, that he was held in great esteem.

“Do not bother with excuses,” smiled the man to the uncomfortable squadron commander. “I’d like to talk with this American chap. Lieutenant, perhaps you recognize me?” he addressed Phineas.

“No, sir,” replied the Yank. “Sorry, but I don’t.”

Major Hunkley-Holcombe stared incredulously at Phineas. Indrawn breaths hissed. The young officer, however, seemed to enjoy the situation. Major Hunkley-Holcombe recovered after a great effort and glared loftily at Phineas.

“Lieutenant Pinkham,” he announced with great dignity, “you are addressing a British prince!”

Phineas swayed. “Wha-a-a-a? Wh-haw-w-w-w-w-w!” he erupted. “Don’t kid me! Experts have tried it.”

INCREDULITY, horror, consternation, and indignation wrestled for supremacy on the face of Major Hunkley-Holcombe, who resembled nothing so much as a codfish on ice. The group of R.F.C. men in the doorway fell against each other for support. The young officer himself smiled with amusement.

“Damme!” sputtered the C.O. to the grinning Phineas. “Damme, man, this is preposterous! Positively an outrageous affront! An insult to the King, the Union Jack. I’ll have you spread-eagled to a gun carriage. I’ll have you shot. I’ll—”

“Huh!” commented Phineas, in no way abashed.

“I guess my Uncle Sam would have somethin’ to say about that. An’ anyway, nobody kin tell me that a prince would get this near to the *guerre*. Ha! An’ anyways, I didn’t come over here to hear jokes. I want to know why those Bristols ran out on me today. I—”

The young officer’s eyes narrowed. Suddenly he reached into his tunic and extracted a thin leather case. With a smile and a snappy nod he handed it to Phineas. Lieutenant Pinkham accepted it and held it up so that the light from the doorway would strike it squarely. His eyes popped out and a little gasp slipped through his teeth. There was the coat of arms of the House of Windsor, and beneath it plenty of proof that this young man standing before him was none other than Hunkley-Holcombe had claimed.

The shock unsteadied Phineas for the moment and numbed his senses—but only for a moment. The presence of royalty was not enough to keep the incomparable Phineas in a state of *non compos mentis*. It was a revelation, of course, but the Pinkhams had descended from pioneers who had little respect for regal pomp. His eyes were now scanning something else within that folder—the handwriting of the Prince himself.

Phineas read a line, and immediately saw a chance to test his prowess in the baffling art of prestidigitation. As if still stunned at the revelation, Phineas dropped his hand to his pocket, then almost as swiftly brought it up again. With a grin he closed the leather case and handed it back to the Prince.

“Gosh!” he exclaimed. “I never figured on meetin’ anybody like you. How’s everything in London? Do they still have those good fish and chips at—”

“H-r-rmph!” rumbled Hunkley-Holcombe with utter mortification. “I hope you won’t mind this fellow, Your Highness. He’s just—”

The Prince held up his hand. “I’m enjoying it, major,” he said. “Glad to have met you, Lieutenant Pinkham. Won’t you step in and have a drink?”

“You’re talkin’ my language now, er—sir,” grinned Phineas. “Hope my face’ll hold some of it. Ya see, it’s pretty well cut up.” And walking beside the Prince, Phineas walked into the R.F.C. banquet chamber, while Major Hunkley-Holcombe assumed the ludicrous pose of a person who has been stung by a hornet.

The drinks were poured. One was handed to Phineas. “To the King!” managed the C.O. with effort.

“Here’s how!” exclaimed Phineas and drained his glass. “Boy!” he smacked his lips. “If those guys in the barber shop back in Boonetown could see me

now!” He turned to Britain’s Prince and spoke from the heart, an unusual thing for Lieutenant Carbuncle Pinkham. “You’re a sport, sir. One of the best fellows I ever met. I’ll bet you wouldn’t run out on me like—”

A FLYER near the Prince coughed and edged quickly toward Phineas. Toasts to the distinguished guest had left him mellow. “I am Lieutenant Smythe, Pinkham!” he announced sarcastically. “I’ve heard a lot about you. Didn’t think you would jolly well see Bristols where there weren’t any. And I see your squadron is wearing posies, Pinkham. Well, well, let me smell the nice flower—”

“Smythe!” boomed the voice of Hunkley-Holcombe. “You’re forgetting your—”

Lieutenant Smythe ignored his C.O. and placed his innocent proboscis close to Phineas Pinkham’s boutonniere. Carbuncle’s hand went into his pocket and squeezed. *Squish!* The R.F.C. pilot sputtered and rocked back on his heels, the lower part of his face one big black blotch.

“Damme!” roared Major Hunkley-Holcombe.

Somebody laughed. The Prince had turned his back. There was no sign of mirth anywhere else. The lieutenant showed signs of sanguinary conflict but pulled himself together and reached for a handkerchief.

“Well, I didn’t tell him to smell it,” Phineas defended himself. “Anyway, can’t ya take a joke?” He edged toward the door. “Well, I’ll be seein’ ya. An’ I still say you guys had Bristols up today! Certainly enjoyed meetin’ ya, sir,” he smiled at the Prince, who was making a valiant effort to keep his face straight. Then he was gone.

“Damme!” roared Hunkley-Holcombe, jumping up and down. “Damme ! I’ll—” And his face twisted into a series of spasms.

“Rather amusing fellow,” commented the distinguished guest. “And a real fighter. I—”

“Beg Your Highness’ pardon?” said the C.O. suddenly.

The Prince caught himself. “Nothing at all, major,” he smiled. “Just talking to myself a bit.”

Phineas was not through with the Bristol squadron. He drove the car abreast of a line of huts near one of the hangars and stepped on the brakes. Quickly he reached for his package on the seat beside him and tore at the wrappings. Two by two he picked up the white objects that had been meant to develop into a flock of ducks. He hurled them with unerring aim. A Cockney mechanic who happened to be near yelled

for Phineas to desist. Then something hit him in the ear with a sickening thud. With its crack-up came a terrible, nauseating odor.

“Gorblimey!” gasped the Cockney and clawed at his ear and nose at one and the same time.

Phineas stepped on the gas and drove hell-for-leather to his own drome. There was a great smile of satisfaction on his lacerated face. The achings of his tortured frame had lulled. The results of his visit were as the balm of Gilead. Wait until them Limeys walked to their huts! He’d show the bums that they couldn’t leave him cold meat for the Boche.

EARLY morning on the drome of the Ninth Pursuit. Major Rufus Garrity’s first official act of the new day was to send for Phineas. Dire woe for the Boonetown flyer gleamed in his orbs. Already he had made up his mind as to what would be done with the thorn in his side.

Footsteps sounded outside his door. They were not lagging, shuffling steps, but rather the cock-sure tramp-tramp-tramp of the boots of a man who has not a care in the world. The door opened and Phineas stepped in. The Old Man gritted his teeth, clenched his fists and half rose from his chair.

“Where in hell were you last night?” he hurled at Carbuncle. “Who gave you perm—”

“Huh?” inquired Phineas with a grin. “I was out with a prince!”

“Yeah?” roared the C.O. “I suppose you want me to be jealous. I know you were, you crack-brained ape! Major Hunkley-Holcombe rang me up twenty minutes ago. Insulted the British Empire, did you? Played one of your lousy jokes for the Prince, eh? And then you threw eggs at the pilot’s huts. Couldn’t get near ’em without gas masks! They—”

“Haw-w-w-w-w!” guffawed Phineas.

The Old Man was on his feet. “Shut up or I’ll lay you out for the meat wagon!” he commanded. “You’re in a sling now, Pinkham. Let me see you pull out of this one with a smart trick! You’re grounded, Pinkham, understand? You’re under arrest. You’re—”

“Huh?” answered the irrepressible Carbuncle. “Are ya goin’ to let them Limeys git away with runnin’ out on that fight yesterday? I—”

“I said you were seeing things, Pinkham!” came back the Old Man. “That’s another thing. You accused the British of cowardice.” He fell limp into his chair. “My Gad, man, a whole army couldn’t get into more trouble than you! Well, have you got anything to say? Shut up! Do you realize that you have got the

British down on us now? And when we need their cooperation for that job tomorrow in the Jerry area? Yes, and the French are off us, too, thanks to you. You and your little joke of draggin' a dead horse—"

Hisso motors began to tune up. Their staccato voices drew Phineas' head toward the door.

"That's all right!" roared the C.O. "You won't be bothered with this patrol or any others, Pinkham! I'll—"

"Don't I know it?" growled the flyer. "I ain't got no Spad, have I? But you can't put me under arrest, sir. I ain't done anythin'. The Prince will stick up for me, I bet. I want a chancet to—"

"His Highness left the British drome this morning, Pinkham," the Old Man informed him. "His destination, of course, is secret. Laugh that off!"

Phineas did. "Let him go," he said at length. "Get that Limey C.O. over here. Honeycomb, I mean. I'll tell him plenty, an' when I git through, he'll cooperate on that little job or he won't have one himself."

"Bah!" snorted the Old Man angrily. "Do you think he's afraid of a crack-brained nincompoop like you? And don't you dare leave this field and—"

The door opened. Captain Howell of A flight, bundled in his flying clothes, entered. "Everything set, sir," he said, looking askance at Phineas. "Any further instructions, sir?"

"Yes, Howell," replied the C.O. "Take no chances with Manheim's crowd today, understand? We'll need every bit of morale tomorrow. German troops moving up. We're going to strafe and that isn't healthy."

"Yessir," snapped Howell and went out.

"Excuse me for livin'," remarked Phineas to his superior. "But you were dependin' on the early Bristol patrol to ankle over that way an' help us out in case the Tripes got too thick, huh?"

"That's right," growled Major Garrity, "but it's out, thanks to you—you—"

"Awright. Git Honeycomb over here an' I'll show ya plenty, sir," blurted out Phineas. "I—"

"Get out of here, Pinkham!" ordered the irate Old Man. "Don't leave the confines of this drome. Shut up, get out!"

LIEUTENANT PHINEAS PINKHAM, very much nettled, walked across the field to his hut. Pilots and ground-men glanced at him. Casey, the mechanic, turned to a crony and expressed the hope that the Old Man would bust Carbuncle Pinkham to a corporal so that he could take a punch at him.

Phineas ignored the mutterings of his fellowmen, however. His brain could only handle one thing at a time. He went into his hut, drew writing paper from his trunk and sat down to his table to compose a letter. He had scrawled but a few lines on the paper when a big machine came purring onto the field. Phineas leaned out of his chair and looked out through the door. It was a Limey car. The profile of the passenger in the back seat looked very familiar. Hoping against hope, he returned to his laborious scribbling.

An orderly poked his head into the Pinkham hut. The summons to Wings sounded like music this time. Carbuncle picked up that which he had written and hurried across the tarmac to the stone house. The Old Man's sanctum was full of Major Hunkley-Holcombe. The British C.O. glared at his visitor of the preceding night and drew himself up haughtily.

"Pinkham!" said the Old Man. "I order you to apologize for your conduct toward Major Hunkley-Holcombe. After you have done so, we will take up—"

"No, sir!" barked Phineas. "I don't owe nobody an apology!" He looked at the wrathful British major and held up the paper on which he had been writing.

"I'm writing a letter, Major Honeycomb," announced Phineas, while the Old Man's blood pressure welled to a danger point. "I don't know whether to address it to the British Air Ministry or to Buckingham Palace. The King, I guess, would be sore if they knew your pilots had taken the Prince over the German lines, exposin' him to—"

"What's that?" exploded Major Hunkley-Holcombe. "Do you mean to accuse me—"

"You would be in a nice mess, Honeycomb," continued Phineas, "if the Limey war lords knew you had let Lieutenant Smythe take the Prince over the lines. I don't know who was in the escorting Bristol, but I guess it won't make no difference. Perhaps you took a little time off yesterday afternoon, sir," Carbuncle shot at the nonplussed major.

"Why—you—confounded young—er—that is none of your damned business!" shouted Hunkley-Holcombe. "Gad, Garrity, I've never in my time been so grossly ins—" He paused for a moment and shoved his face close to Phineas' homely features. A savage light glowed in his wrathful orbs. "You can prove all these cock-and-bull assertions, Pinkham, perhaps?" Phineas grinned defiantly at both superiors, nodded mockingly and reached into his pocket. "I have the dope right here in His Royal Highness' own handwriting," announced Phineas. "You can see that it

is the letterhead of the House of Windsor. See, take a look!”

Major Hunkley-Holcombe leaned forward. His jaw dropped with a click and he reached for the paper eagerly. Phineas was quicker and snatched it away.

“Ha!” he laughed. “I ain’t givin’ this up, Major. Listen. I’ll read it. ‘To-day, April 20th, 1918, I experienced the greatest thrill of my life. After much difficulty I persuaded Lieutenant Smythe of the 109th Squadron, R.F.C. to take me for a trip over the enemy lines. Another Bristol fighter accompanied us as an escort. On the way back from the German area, I witnessed an aerial battle between three German Triplanes and a Spad. The pilot of the Spad fought gloriously, but seemingly in vain. I suggested that we get into the fuss but, of course, my pilot realized the extreme danger of such a risk. We continued on toward the drome. I never will forget—

“Cripes!” gasped Major Garrity.

MAJOR Hunkley-Holcombe had become paralyzed. Phineas laughed and folded up the paper.

“So I didn’t see them Bristols, huh?” he said triumphantly. “Looks like there’ll be a shake-up in the R.F.C. Givin’ the Jerries a chance to bump off part of the British Royal Family, huh? What will the King say about that, Major Honeycomb? I guess, though, that the Queen would be madder. I’ll write to her. No, you didn’t order those guys up. They just went up when you were out gittin’ some stamps. But you’re responsible, major, yeah! Well, I’ve got to go an’ finish my letter.”

Major Hunkley-Holcombe’s face changed color like a chameleon as he tried to stand erect without support. His lips formed words but they were unintelligible. At length he fell into a chair and looked at Major Garrity.

“I want that paper, sir,” he managed to sputter. “I demand the return of that which does not belong to Pinkham. Understand. He stole that—”

“Borrowed it, major,” corrected Phineas sweetly, “an’ try an’ git it. The whole Allied Army couldn’t git it. I’ll chew it up an’ swaller it first. Y’see; sir,” he grinned at his own C.O., “I been practicin’ sleight of hand, an’ this is the little trick that brings cooperation.”

“See here, Garrity,” barked Hunkley-Holcombe desperately, “I demand—”

“Sorry, sir,” replied the major, marvelling at this homely war bird of his, “I’m inclined to stand with Lieutenant’ Pinkham. It was not the fault of

your squadron that he wasn’t shot down and killed yesterday afternoon. I judge that you can arrange it with Pinkham to hush this up.”

Major Hunkley-Holcomb swore indignantly and got to his feet. “Well, Pinkham,” he said, “what is your price?”

“Huh? Price? I don’t git ya! But this is what I want. Cooperation with the Ninth Pursuit tomorrow morning. The Bristols on the early patrol should go over toward Mouconville and see how a flight of Spads is making out. I want all charges against me dismissed, sir.”

MAJOR Rufus Garrity fell back in his chair and stared with amazement. Hunkley-Holcombe was never so near a stroke.

“I—I agree,” croaked Major Hunkley-Holcombe after a struggle. “Give me that paper!”

“Haw!” laughed Phineas. “Do I look that crazy? I’ll part with it only when everybody is all the way out of this mess. And anyway, I have to return it to His Royal Highness personally after the war is over, yeeah!”

“Damme!” exploded the British officer, and went out sputtering.

“Pinkham,” said the Old Man wearily, “I owe you an apology. I feel like kissing you, but I ought to kill you! Cripes, man, if you fell into hell, you’d come out playing a harp.” There is a little more to this brainstorm. At the very moment that Lieutenant Pinkham walked out of Wings, a big car trundled through the mud of the road toward St. Mihiel and pointed west. In the back seat a young man drew a leather case from his tunic, and from it plucked a folded sheet of white paper. Imagine his surprise when he read the contents of same! Instead of a story of his trip over the Jerry lines in the rear pit of a Bristol, the Prince read as follows:

“KLASSY-LINE KLOTHES, Inc.

Boonettown, Iowa

To Phineas Pinkham, debtor

One suit of clothes with two pairs of pants \$21.50

Please remit. This account is long overdue. If we do not hear from you, we will take immediate action.

JACOB A. COHEN”