



HERR TONIC

written and illustrated by **JOE ARCHIBALD**

a
**PHINEAS
PINKHAM**
howl

Phineas Pinkham had promised von Bissinger a new kind of haircut—one that could part his head in the middle as well as his hair. Dangerous stuff—the hair tonic that Phineas used!

LIEUTENANT PHINEAS “CARBUNCLE” PINKHAM, on the loose upstairs in France for a reason best known to himself, was giving a practical demonstration to men in the trenches of how a Spad should be hedge-hopped. For the moment Phineas’ mind, was entirely on his work, for behind him and slightly above, a pair of Pfalz ships were trying their best to pin him to the carpet with a lot of leaden pegs. From beneath, machine-gun and rifle fire rattled.

One enthusiastic Boche almost set a record with a potato-masher grenade, but it flew between the Spad’s belly and landing gear, arched down and made a mess

out of a Jerry observation post. Another Boche flipped a bayonet with a practiced hand and the handle stuck out of the fabric of the fuselage a few inches back of where, a precious portion of Phineas’ anatomy was cached. If any other buzzard had ever flown lower in the great fuss, then he was not flying at all. He was ploughing!

For ten minutes the Pfalz ships had been chasing Phineas. They had broken from the starting line on von Bissinger’s drome when the intrepid Yank dropped a caustic, significant message to the Von from two thousand feet of altitude. Under ordinary conditions Phineas would have made a clean getaway, but the

Hisso of his Spad had contracted some sort of lung trouble and was ticking over with the smoothness of a file rubbing a wire brush. It had become necessary for him to go upstairs and do tricks to spoil the aim of the Spandaus, and here he was caught among various kinds of Jerry ordnance, but still crawling toward home.

The Spad flew between two trees, just missed the top of an old chimney and dipped low enough to scare a whole family of chipmunks out of a stone wall. If Phineas had been in the mood, he could have tipped the ship just a little and picked himself a bunch of wild flowers. Perhaps he figured that he would get them, anyway—with a few spadefuls of dirt—so did not bother.

A sudden burst of ground fire made the Spad shudder and Phineas' teeth rattle. The Boonetown flyer felt a wild impulse to zoom but knew that the Hisso had about as much strength left as a dyspeptic butterfly. A few more leaps and it would cough and lie down some place, and Phineas did not want it to be a German lot.

Swearing and praying, Phineas urged the Spad on until there were no more bullets coming up from below. Another wild hop and the Spad was in Allied territory. Now the Pfalz pilots should have gone up to where there was room enough to turn around and go home, but only one thought burned in the brain of each of the Vons. Here was Phineas Pinkham's ship dead to rights, and getting Leutnant Pinkham would be something to "*Hoch*" about, so they were willing to take a few chances.

Phineas skimmed over a lot of doughs and looked for a place to alight, Spandaus still hammering behind him. A machine-gun crew pointed an ugly black snout straight up and let it roar. One Pfalz ship wobbled in its stride and went into a swan dive. Too late the Von pulled back on the stick. The Pfalz's tail caught in a tangle of barbed wire and the rest is history. Firmly convinced by the object lesson, the other Von roared skyward to get a lot of altitude, and when it arrived at a certain air shelf a flock of Allied shrapnel bursts acted as a welcoming committee.

Phineas got the Spad down to earth and worried it to a stop. Then he sat back in the pit and grinned up at the stunting Pfalz. One great, white, crackling puff seemed to hit the Von amidships. The ship reeled, then got organized again and limped in a hurry toward Germany.

"WELL," grinned the cause of it all, "that's what the bums git for foolin' with me. I go over to drop a polite word to von Bissinger an' they—"

"Pretty good shots, weren't we, buzzard?"

Phineas turned to look into the grinning faces of a quartet of doughs. He laughed and stood up in the pit.

"Yeah," he agreed, "bowkoop shootin', ya fatheads. What outfit, an' have ya got any brass hats around?"

"Sure," said a corporal eagerly, "just four miles away, lieutenant. If ya don't mind drinkin' with ord'nary bums, we got some coneyac over in an old dugout across the fence. Figger you'd like a snort after what ya been goin' through."

"You bet," accepted Phineas. "Lead me to it. If ya know a good junk dealer around, send 'im over after this ship. Alleys ons, de lays infants!"

Phineas accompanied the doughs to their dugout. The machine-gun outfit had a goodly supply of the cup that cheers. Being in no particular hurry to return and get the usual hell from Major Garrity of the renowned Ninth Pursuit, Phineas tarried until dusk. Bursts of song issued from the dug-out as mellowed doughs, flattered by the attention of their famous visitor, settled down to a real binge. A corporal began to cry and the big-hearted flyer drew him to a genial bosom with a plea to let himself go. Phineas would see what he could do to lighten the burden of woe.

"G-got me a dame in the li'I village over there," unloaded the dough. "Tol' her I wash a orfisher in disguise. Awright, she—she saysh, I'll meet you in the Green Gooshe buvette t'night, oo la la! Got shtuck on me ri' away, shee, lootenan'? B-but—" And the corporal sobbed aloud. "Jush foun' out 'while ago that the Green Gooshe is oney fer orfishers. Sho I lose my mammyselle, shee? Dam' outrage, I say it ish. Oney orfishers 'lowed. Gimme drink, Bullhead. Dam' shame, it ish, lootenan'."

"Yeah," agreed Phineas with a grin. "Well, we'll fool 'em, see? I let you have my uniform. You go see the dame an' then come back. I stay here an' wait, corp. I ain't got no place to go 'til mornin'. But you got to swear I got conked on the dome an' had to lay over here all night, see? That's me." Phineas lifted a bottle to his lips again. "Nobody kin say a Pinkham never was grateful, no, sir. Shwell shootin', corp. That Pfalsh maybe would've pickled me in 'nother second an'—well, hurry up an' take off them cootie ragsh. Haw-w-w-w! I like to fool damesh. I'm shore at all of 'em. I had one in Barley Duck—"

So Phineas loaned his bars for a brief period. Cognac had warped his sense of propriety and

gratitude and was laying the foundation for another heap of trouble. Of this fact Phineas was blissfully ignorant and lay down to sleep.

Hours later he awoke with a mouth as dry as the inside of a brick kiln. Hazy in his memory was a fight with two Pfalz ships. He sat up in the rude bunk and stared at a corporal who was taking off a uniform—his own uniform.

“Had great time!” grinned the dough as he handed Phineas his tunic.

“Shwell mamselle. Big black eyesh an’ li’l feet. Lotsha fatheaded orfishers there. Had shwell time—”

“Hurry up an’ git out of them clothes, ya bum,” snapped Phineas, a feeling that all was not well assailing him. “We’re square now an’ I’m gittin’ out of this wood-chuck hole. C’mon, make it snappy with them boots!”

In his haste Phineas did not take much notice of a big bump that was rising over the corporal’s eye. He only knew that he had taken one too many swallows of a fiery Frog distillation and had become very drowsy. Well, the dough had returned, anyway, and the incident was closed. An hour later, his head still feeling as big as a blimp, the Boonetown joke-smith lay in the bottom of a truck, lurching and wobbling in the general direction of Bar-le-Duc. However, a grin lit up his homely visage as he thought of von Bissinger. He had dropped the Von a very nasty and cryptic message.

SPEAKING of Vons, let us peek in through the window of headquarters of Staffel Nine, German Imperial Air Force. The *Herr Oberst* von Brahm sat in a chair, his jowls inflating and deflating at regular intervals. He was very mad. Pacing the floor was von Bissinger, the great Jerry Pfalz pusher. He was more than mad. Phineas’ message was clutched in his hand.

“The *verdammt* cheek of that upstart,” yipped von Bissinger, pausing to stare at the *Herr Oberst*. “He robs the Kaiser’s paymasters—then this! Listen once again, Excellency. ‘Fathead’—the *Schwein* greets me. ‘I haff got de bottle of Hair tonic for you efen if you haff no hair to use idt *mit*. Vunce over light I giff it you. Vunce it hits you it will part your head in the middle yet *und* not only your scalp. *Ach!* Maybe your head it iss more thicker than a human being’s *und* I make it extra strong. Vill see you oop-stairs, fathead.’ *Ach*, he calls me fathead vunce more again. *Donner und blitzen!* I vill shoodt him, *Herr Oberst*, full of bullet holes.”

“You see what he writes at the end, *Hauptmann*,” barked the Staffel commander. “‘(C3H5(NOS)3)’? *Das ist* nitro, von Bissinger. Nitroglycerin. *Ach!* He

iss not human, the *Leutnant* Pingham. You *und* your gentlemen look oudt, *Hauptmann*. Nitro it blows you oop just like nudding.”

“He can throw only it in a bottle, maybe,” growled von Bissinger. “He miss nine hundredt *und* ninety times oudt of a thousand, *ja!* Ha, I vill see aboutt the *Leutnant*, *ja!*”

“*Der Kaiser*,” said *Herr Oberst* von Brahm scathingly, “would like you to see aboutt that. All the-time Pingham plays jokes on the great Junkers. Are they spineless like children, *Hauptmann?*”

“He hass played his last joke, *ja!*” declared von Bissinger, thrusting out plenty of jaw. “Tomorrow iff he is oop, I vill show him.”

Early morning found Phineas staggering into the drome after a six-mile trek across rural Frogland. He entered his hut and threw himself down on his bunk without bothering to remove his clothes. Luckily he was pot slated for the early patrol and so he slept on until Bump Gillis lifted him up by the ears and shook him to consciousness.

“What’s—idea?” mumbled Phineas. “What’s—where’s coneyac, ya lousy doughs? Where’s—oh, h’lo, Bump. Huh? Thought I was some place else an’—”

“You will be in a couple of minutes, ya big baboon. The Old Man has found out you got back, and his whole day’s ruined,” said Lieutenant Gillis, hutmate extraordinary. “You’re in a mess. The C.O. wants to see you as soon as you have your iced strawberries and cream. You damn fool—”

“A mess?” reiterated Phineas questioningly. “I got forced down an’ was knocked out. I kin prove it. I—”

“Prove you was unconscious?” laughed Bump. “Haw-w-w-w! How could anybody tell?”

“I’ll smack you one in the lip,” growled Phineas as he got to unsteady pins. “Well, I got witnesses. I—”

“Tell that to the Old Man,” advised Bump. “Don’t waste time practicin’ on me.”

Lieutenant Pinkham washed some of the grime from his face, brushed his uniform hurriedly, then went over to the big stone house to call on Major Garrity.

“WELL, well!” greeted the Old Man with a smirk under his mustache. “So you thought you’d come back and see us and say hello?” His eyes became sorely pressed by lowered, bushy eyebrows, and he had to squint to see Phineas’ grinning physiognomy. “You never should’ve come back, you halfwit! Don’t tell me you were forced down a couple of miles away from a buvette or I’ll slam you one. Went over and got drunk,

walloped a British red tab in the eye. Poured a bottle of champagne down his fair companion's neck and then took off in a hurry. You—"

"H-huh?" stuttered Phineas, an awful heart-looping thought stirring under his tunic. "Ya say—"

"Yes, you heard me!" erupted Garrity. "And you most likely would have got away with it if you hadn't dropped a cigar from your pocket. Another officer picked it up, and when he lit it, the sparks shriveled the ear of a French colonel. It was tossed into a barrel of rubbish and set the buvette on fire. That's all you've done, you crack-brained idiot. Assault and battery and arson! Well—"

Phineas rocked on his heels. "H-huh?" was all he could force out. "H-huh?" Like an avalanche of rocks realization fell on his neck. While he had been asleep in the dugout—the hazy recollection of having loaned his uniform to somebody—oh-h-h-h! He drew himself together and registered righteous indignation. "It's a damn lie! I never did it!" he protested. "I kin explain, sir, an'—"

"Not to me, you won't," growled Garrity, "but to a court-martial. You've gone so deep now you'll never climb out, you half-baked woozle. Look at your tunic. And I can smell cognac all over the place. Alibis, eh? Don't waste your breath. Save it! Get out of here or by lickity hell, I'll—"

Phineas made his exit in a daze, putting one foot in front of the other like a punch-drunk fighter. More trouble waited for him in the big room outside. Captain Howell planted a businesslike palm on Phineas' chest. The flight leader was bareheaded and his hair looked as if something or somebody had cut and pulled big gobs of it from his head. In some spots the hirsute growth was matted and snarled.

"That hair tonic you gave me," howled the wild leader of A flight. "Look at my scalp, you bum! Glue in it, wasn't there? Couldn't get my hat off when I got back from Bar-le-Duc last night. Had to cut it off my head—with a jackknife. Well, when you get rested up a little, I'm going to massage your map until it will look like something you have to throw in a G.I. can." Howell paused and took a few deep breaths. "I might've known you—"

"Haw-w-w-w-w!" Phineas laughed even under the circumstances. "Well, I got something to laugh about, haw-w-w-w-w!" And he went out of the big house and ambled across the field. Spads were ticking over in front of the hangars—the Spads of A flight. Phineas skidded to a stop and snapped his fingers as if he had just thought of something, and he certainly

had. Rudder around, he walked back to Squadron Headquarters. He crashed the door of wings and put his head inside.

"Beg your pardon, sir," he said. "I ain't grounded, am I?"

Sir Rufus looked up, eyes wild. "Grounded?" he screeched? "You're buried. You—"

"Huh?" persisted Phineas. "But I got a date upstairs with von Beestinger. I told 'im—"

Kerwham! Phineas partially ducked the heavy book. One corner of it abraded one ear surface.

"Oh, awright," he hollered, backing out of range. "Let the Vons think we're yeller. An' I'll tell the brass hats—" An animal-like roar sent him on the run from the house. As he slowed down to a natural gait, the first Spad tore away, Howell at the controls. Phineas swore as he watched his fellow-buzzards leave in rapid sequence in the wake of their leader. He turned to the flight sergeant.

"It's a lousy deal," he complained. "I got framed. I—"

"Y'oughta feel lucky, lieutenant," grinned the sergeant. "It's a rum job. They're goin' over to cover a pair of bombers that're goin' to try an' blow up the bridge the Jerries are building over the river near Sancourt. Von Bissinger is lousy with Pfalz ships, and he's goin' to have somethin' to say about it. Without the bridge the krauts would have a tough time strengthenin' their line over there. An' they are goin' to build it. A bunch of Yank machine gunners have tried to stop 'em, but on the bank opposite them there's a stone house and it's alive with snipers and maxims. G.H.Q., as usual, is in spasms. Gave the Old Man hell when he asked them if they still used artillery in France. Told him that it was a little before-dinner job for the Air Force an' that boy scouts could handle it with air guns."

"Huh," grunted Phineas, "so that's why he's pickin' on me! Well—" He choked back further observations and went to his hut. There he poked under his cot and drew forth a big coil of strong white rope. Sitting down, Oriental fashion, he began to attach fine wire to one end of the line. This completed to his satisfaction, he got up and went to his trunk, which was stocked with a conglomeration of articles that no ordinary man would own.

However, Phineas was different. He had been born with an oversized funny bone and a big quirk in his head. He had to have his joke, war or no war. He took out a bottle containing an oily yellow liquid and attached this securely to the wire which he had wound

about, the end of the rope. Everything ready, he shoved the whole works out of sight and began to hum a tune of satisfaction.

FOR days Phineas had had a definite plan in his head, a brain child that suggested much sport with the Kaiser's boys. With gradually rising spirits he walked out on the field just as a big, imposing automobile lumbered toward the stone house. Immediately he stamped it as a French staff car and his eyes narrowed. A little voice told him to start running and to keep on running. Instead he squatted in the lee of the ammo shed and puffed at a cigarette. Time passed slowly as if its feet were imbedded in big gobs of cement. Then an orderly came out of Wings and started for the row of pilots' huts.

"That's me," grunted Phineas to himself. He hailed the orderly. "Hey, don't look no more. Here I am." He walked toward whatever load of grief the staff car had brought in.

"Yes, sir," smirked Phineas as he entered Garrity's domicile. The Old Man glared, then turned to the French officer. He was a colonel, Phineas diagnosed.

"Is this the man?" asked Garrity of the distinguished visitor.

The Frenchman came close and looked at Phineas as if he had been a horse up for sale. He kneaded one wing of his mustache as he appraised the incomparable citizen of Boonetown, Iowa. At length he shook his head, shrugged and turned to the C.O.

"*Mais non*," he said. "Eet was not he who insult me in the buvette. *Non*, thees man he ees more uglier than the officer who eet was lef' the cigar. Sorree, lieutenant," he turned to Phineas. "I mak' ze meestake. Eet was not you, *non*."

The did Man seemed to shrivel like a balloon when the air is expelled. He gulped, swore, and stared at Phineas in stark bewilderment "Have a cigar, huh?" grinned Phineas to the French officer. "An' bowkoop thanks—"

"*Non*," refused the Frenchman with a smile, "I smoke ze pipe, *oui*. I have hear of ze Lieutenant Peenkham, oh, verree mooch. *Au revoir*, majaire," he flung at Garrity, "and you will be so careful of—"

"Yes, yes," the Old Man hastened to reply, pawing at his face. "Yes, I'll see that it gets to Chaumont, the—"

"Well," enthused Phineas when the car had gone, "now ya see I wasn't no liar. That's the way, though. They alius blame me. Well, the brass hats owe me an apology an' I'll—"

"Shut up, you damn fool!" groaned Garrity. "You

sneaked out of that one. Oh—! You leave the cigar there—your tunic smells like all the barrooms in the world. You—it's too much. Leave me alone. I think I'll resign. I'll—"

Phineas' eyes suddenly popped. There was a bottle on the C.O.'s desk, one filled with an oil-yellow liquid. He gulped. Evidence! Howell's Exhibit A! Hair tonic with glue in it!

Phineas took a step forward. The Old Man still sat with his eyes shut, his brain refusing to function. Phineas reached into his pocket and put a smaller bottle in its place, one-full of bona fide hair tonic that would stand the acid test. Just as the Major opened his eyes, he was shoving the bigger bottle into a rear pocket. Sleight of hand! There was no limit to Phineas' talents.

"Then I ain't grounded, huh?" the flyer wanted to know.

The voice shocked Sir Rufus into normal condition. His fists began to double up and seemed to swell to abnormal proportions.

"Will—you—get—out—of here—or—"

"I'm goin'," said Phineas, with alacrity.

AGAIN in his hut, the flyer reached under his cot for the coil of rope. He changed the bottle on the end of the cord for the one he had snatched from Wings. It was a bigger bottle and von Beestinger would be even more impressed, and anyway, such evidence needs must be destroyed. He had just finished the job when out of the sky came Howell and four Spads and they did not act as if they had been out to a party on the lawn of a swell chateau. Bump Gillis was wobbling down with an aileron, two cylinders and a few control wires missing. Howell's streamers seemed to flop wearily as he hit the ground and rolled up to the groundmen. The fuselage of the King Spad would have made a wonderful soup strainer.

"Looks like ya didn't go so good," said Phineas in greeting. "Haw-w-w! I bet von Beestinger was mad because I didn' come, an' he picked on ya worse than usual."

"Hit him!" yelled Bump Gillis. "Here's a rock."

Howell merely swore, and meandered toward the Old Man to give him the bad news.

"Did the Von stop you from messin' up the krauts' itty-bitty bridge?" Phineas inquired of Bump. "An' look-it your hand! How many fingers have ya left in the cockpit, huh?"

"Go ahead, fathead," spat out Lieutenant Gillis.

"You kin afford to crow. You're grounded an' ya don't have to go out. I bet you did it because you know von Bissinger has got you scairt out of your pants."

"A hundred francs says I go up before the roosters jump to their hammocks tonight, ya big-snooted tight-fist!" retorted Phineas. "I'm in good status now and I have got a tryst with the Von today."

"Good!" exclaimed Bump, his spirits coming up from the bottom of a gloomy pit. "Now I'm gettin' interested. I know a nice place to bury a guy. There's lots of shade and wild-flowers and the birds sing all day long an'—"

Carbuncle ignored his hutmate and walked to the hangar. He had business with Sergeant Casey.

In Wings the Old Man was throwing a fit. G.H.Q. buzzed in the middle of it and Major Garrity picked up the telephone and clapped one end of it to his ear in impotent rage. A familiar voice sarcastically complimented his squadron on the great work they had done. One bomb intended for the bridge had narrowly missed wiping out a Yankee machine-gun nest. Another one had torn a big hole in the middle of a road which the A.E.F. would have liked to continue using. The escort of Spads from the Ninth most certainly had covered themselves with glory. They had escorted, with the efficiency of theatre ushers, the voice rumbled on, having shown the bombers nice places to sit so that von Bissinger's Pfalz ships would have no trouble in getting a line on them.

Major Garrity stamped on the floor and cut the G.H.Q. man off in the middle of his speech.

"Let them break me!" he roared. "And you buzzards can get somebody else to drive to the bughouse. Of all the imitation aviators, you Pomeranians take the cake! That's all. This afternoon you'd better do a real job, or the Ninth'll be the junior partner of another outfit doing business on the other side of the woods."

AND over on the side that threatened all the democrats, *Hauptmann* von Bissinger was talking to his owm buzzards. "*Ach*," he was beaming over a bottle of Rhine wine, "you see, gentlemen, it iss as I say. *Der* Lieutenant Pingham he has what his *verdammt* comrades call it the yellow foot, *ja*. He did not coom to meet the great von Bissinger, *nein*. *Und* goot it iss for him he did not. Ha! Mannheim *und* the rest they were *Dumkopfs*—but von Bissinger!"

He rammed his monocle into place and smirked at his knights of the round table. "Better flyers haff shod down than the Yankee oops tart. *Und* he vill need

more than stupid tricks." He raised a glass toward the Kaiser's picture, grinned and drank the wine.

"I vas *mit* Mannheim, *Hauptmann*," ventured a Junker. "He vas a brave gentleman *und* a great fighter. Neffer did we dream that the *Leutnant* Pingham would bring him down but—" The Junker shrugged and sipped from his glass.

"Ha, you doubt me, eh, Statz?" growled von Bissinger. "Alretty yet vill I bet you a hundret marks I chase the *Leutnant* Pingham out of the sky. Like all the rest you are, Statz, theenging he iss a hobgoblin, *ja*? Vell, he drops me a challenge, yet he does not coom to meet me. Why?"

His gentlemen had no idea as to why Phineas had not appeared. And they did not care. They listened to von Bissinger between yawns, and wondered if the German Empire had not bitten off more than it could chew, anyway. One looked at the Kaiser's picture and for the first time since he had left Hamburg felt no thrill of awe.

MESS on the Ninth Pursuit was hurried. After the midday patrol should come in, Howell, Pinkham, and Gillis and some more Spad pushers were to go out and see what they could do about helping some D.H.4s blow up the bridge that was rapidly being put into shape. Major Garrity, although figuring it to be a waste of good breath, hammered at the pilots and tried to drive the importance of the job into their heads with a biting verbal lashing. For almost ten minutes he talked before wiping his brow and settling back to view the results.

"Ha," thrust Phineas into the breach, "all I kin see is that the krauts want a bridge so they kin cross over it. If they had webbed feet, they wouldn't need it. Simple, like rollin' off a—"

The C.O. choked on his tea. His face purpled and his eyes strained at the muscles holding them in their sockets. Howell slapped him on the back and got a back-hand swing on the ear for his pains. Phineas did not like the signs, so he suddenly decided that he was not hungry, anyway, and got out of his chair. He was already beyond range when the Old Man wiped a lot of tears from his eyes and looked wildly about for the splinter in his side and, finding him not, went into another paroxysm of ire.

"If you don't get, the bridge, you lead-footed buzzards," he bellowed, "see if you can shoot Pinkham before you get back. You could get him when he—" His words died and he staggered away from the festive board, trying to remember what he had been saying.

In the hangar Phineas was inspecting his chariot for the afternoon go. The rope had been well-moored to the undercarriage of the Spad, ran along under the fuselage, and was slipped around the tailskid. Casey had then brought the loose end back toward the wheels again, where it had disappeared from view in the bottom of Phineas' pit. The exponent of all things pertaining to foolishness and trickery was satisfied with the job and told Casey so.

"If that is what you say it is," Casey said, scratching his head, "you're crazy, lootenant. You'd be safer ridin' with a bonfire. An' anyway, it don't make no sense to me. Not at all. Well, you're the doctor and it looks like you'll need an undertaker before night."

"C'mon an' we'll git this bus out there. Swell paint job I done, huh? Will that Von go nuts!" enthused Phineas. Casey could not see why. On the top wing he had simply read a few words that did not speak well for the lieutenant's mental condition. They had been painted in huge black letters: "Hair Tonic for Von Beestinger. Come and Got It. Phineas P."

Captain Howell saw the rope that sagged a bit from the Boonetown marvel's Spad when he arrived on the scene. Bump Gillis was with him and together they stopped and took a brief inventory.

"What's that damn thing?" Bump wanted to know. "You're gittin' nuttier by the hour. Is it—"

"It's a rope to anchor onto a cloud if the Hissso folds up on me," explained Lieutenant Phineas Carbuncle Pinkham. "What else would ya like to know?"

"Leave him alone," grunted Howell. "Don't go near the bum, or squirrels'll follow you, too. C'mon, buzzards. We're going to show the krauts somethin' this afternoon. If we get the bridge—"

"Whadda y'mean 'if?'" put in Phineas. "We're goin' to make the Old Man eat a hunk of it." He made a hurried leap to the Spad stirrup. "Just watch me, guys, an' I'll show ya the way through the wilderness. Haw-w-w-w-w!"

AS USUAL the Spads had to get off the drome in order to go anywhere, so let us imagine that five minutes have gone by while they get a good start. We pick A flight up again just as a trio of D.H.4s waggle a greeting to them over the Yankee back area. Covering the D.H.s from above as a mother goose squats over her brood of goslings, Howell and his bunch took the bombers over to where the krauts were still working diligently, and As if they meant it, on the bridge that was a wen on the pate of the brass hats.

The D.H.4s let one bomb drop wide of the mark. Before they could amend their aim, von Bissinger and seven Pfalz ships corkscrewed down out of a lot of ceiling. From behind his brace of guns von Bissinger counted the enemy flock. Seven Spads. Seven Pfalz ships. Seven all! *Ach! Und* if Pingham has only come this time, *ja!*

Captain Howell had seen and was coming up. Spads began to fall out of formation. Von Bissinger saw the top wing of one as it went into a long climbing turn. Words were painted on the fabric, words that were still indistinct at the distance, yet a wild howl escaped the Von's lips as he threw his ship toward that Spad. *Leutnant* Pingham! *Ach!* He would throw nitroglycerine, eh? Well, the great von Bissinger would be watching.

Down below the D.H.4s were maneuvering into position. Pfalz ships were trying desperately to get down through Howell's protecting screen of Spads and to stay down long enough to send a crowd of shots into the two-seaters. Phineas flew wide around the area of conflict while Howell and Bump Gillis, between lightning swift duels with Pfalz ships, swore and wondered what in hell he was supposed to be doing.

Von Bissinger was the first to see the strange thing that dropped away from Phineas Pinkham's ship. It was a small object attached to a rope that strung out from under his trucks for almost three hundred feet. Hair tonic! Nitro! The *verdammt* upstart, then, was not going to throw it. He had other plans. For the moment the Junker went into a little shivering spell. That rope and bottle! The grim possibilities of it! Once it slammed against a hard object, it would . . .

Gritting his teeth, von Bissinger gunned at the Boonetown buzzard, but Phineas went across the sky in a mighty Immelmann, came sweeping around into the area of conflict, the little object on the end of the rope making a wide detour. It sliced close to a Pfalz ship, zipped over the head of another pilot, and both Junkers paled, losing precious brain power for enough seconds to enable a pair of Spads to strike home with some vicious bursts. A bottle of nitro on a rope, whipping about in the sky.

Although in danger of being kissed by it, Spad pilots fought On. Never in their wildest moments of imagination had they dreamed that Phineas would come upstairs slinging a half pint of powerful explosive around as though it were a sachet bag. They did not worry about it, but only knew that the Pinkham brain had again kicked in with a master stroke.

Vons, well aware of the Pinkham tactics, had not the slightest shadow of a doubt that Phineas would blow himself up if he could but take two or three Pfalzes with him. Wild tales had been told of Pinkham in the Rhineland, and the uncertain, gullible krauts firmly believed that Phineas had become proficient enough in this latest aerial feat to fly for hours without endangering the life of any one of his fellow men. Such is the belief in those whose names become legend, and in this war Phineas Pinkham had overshadowed the exploits of Baron Munchausen and Don Quixote.

INTO one torrid corner of the battle gunned Phineas. He wrenched his ship about quickly and the bottle came swinging at a petrified Boche who had just been on the verge of searing Bump Gillis' neck with a mess of tracers. He sideslipped in a hurry and crashed into another Boche who was codling up to get Bump on the blind spot. And von Bissinger! Cursing and yelling at the ship which had shocked the morale out of his gentlemen, the Junker leader slammed in at Phineas from the port side and tripped his Spandaus. Bullets began eating just behind the Pinkham pit and gorged themselves until they reached the tail.

The Von shot over and came whirling back but Phineas, with a grin on his face, had spun around to give the bottle a chance to swing in a great arc through the ether behind him. Von Bissinger saw the thing coming and dived. He was taking no chances. There was a shock somewhere at the Pfalz's tail, and the ship shuddered.

The frightened Junker leader went berserk, back-sticked and saw the Pfalzes in a state of bafflement. Instead of keeping their minds on the bombers which were now dropping eggs with a vengeance, they strove to glue one eye on the Pinkham menace and the other on the rest of the Spads whirling about them. Nitro! Von Bissinger, himself, did not feel so well. Once it hit squarely—and it had grazed him already—it would be all over for him. He wiped beads of sweat from his chin and pulled himself together with difficulty.

Blam! Blam! Von Bissinger was shocked out of his momentary panic. Down below, the bridge had become a swirling mass of debris. A Pfalz crashed into the river. Then von Bissinger went after Phineas, nitro or no nitro, with stark rage eating away his sanity. He caught a flash of the maddening words printed on Phineas' upper wing as he dammed in a burst from long range. He was on the Yankee flyer's tail now. The Pinkham Spad went over in a wild loop and started on the second.

Having washed out another Pfalz, preparatory to starting for home, Howell caught sight of the bottle describing a crazy circle about the sky, and then it seemed to tick the very prop boss of von Bissinger's pursuing Pfalz. Bump Gillis almost fell out of his pit laughing as the great Von pulled out and shook a fist at the stunting, crazy Spad.

The fight was over. The D.H.4s started for home intact. Phineas skimmed low over the ruined bridge and laughed until his goggles were fouled with tears. Hair tonic! Nitroglycerine! That was fooling the krauts. Only once, had he fired his guns. Climbing, rolling, looping and circling in a mad frenzy amid the whirl of Pfalz ships, the bottle had been something for the Boche to try and duck. There had been the danger of getting tangled up in the rope itself. But that bottle of what they surmised to be concentrated hell on the end of it had thrown the krauts into a panic while the bombers dropped their eggs.

PHINEAS swooped low; still laughing. He circled over the place where the bridge had been and thumbed his nose at an Archie battery which was trying to smoke him out. At a distance A flight was circling and watching Phineas' moment of triumph. Howell and Gillis felt their hearts brush against their tonsils as~ the jokester went lower and lower. In his pit Phineas was still trying to control his mirth. A bottle of hair tonic—tied to a rope! It was one of the richest coups of his hectic career. Hair tonic—haw-w-w-w-w!

The Spad went low, swooped up again. The bottle at the end of three hundred feet of cord slammed against the chimney of a stone house on the bank of the river. Hair tonic—*boo-o-oom!* A terrific concussion lifted Phineas and his Spad into the air and cuffed it about.

Senses reeling, the Boonetown flyer fought the controls. Pieces of rock pelted down all around him. A good-sized chunk of timber bounced off the top of his helmet, and stars fell out of the roof of the world. What had happened? The question flashed in Phineas' brain between gobs of darkness. At last he opened his eyes for keeps and saw the map of France rushing up at him.

Praying that he had elevators and ailerons left, the incurable humorist pulled back on the stick slowly. The Spad responded and lifted its nose sulkily. Overhead and toward Bar-le-Duc, A flight was circling. Phineas shook his head, spat out a mouthful of stone crumbs and jammed in the throttle. As he climbed toward Howell, he looked back. There was

neither bottle nor rope visible. He leaned over the side and saw one strand of rope blowing out from the undercarriage.

"Cripes!" breathed Phineas, his brain pan still humming. "Hair tonic! Hair tonic! I—how? Well, cripes! It must've been a shell or a bomb or—" He gulped and waved weakly to Howell. A flight went home, flushed with success—that is, with the exception of Phineas. The climax to the affair had been the biggest surprise of his life. It had been a great joke—but—

Something else drew his attention. The upper right wing tip was sinking. The Spad began to fly as if a load of old scrap iron were tied on behind. Somebody was singing. Oh, no, it was a wire slapping against the fuselage. Phineas set his jaw and decided to bring his Spad in from where he had found it even if he had to stop every once in a while to pick up loose parts.

And then suspicion stirred in him, stretched lustily and became animated. Why, the bums! He'd bet—How he eventually got the Spad down onto the tarmac was a mystery to Phineas. The wheels had no more than hit when a flipper fell away. The right wing tip kissed the fabric of the lower wing and the crate began to slip crabwise toward a pair of grease monkeys. They jumped clear with but seconds to spare and the Spad skidded half around, wheezed a bit and then exhaled all its energy.

Phineas breathed a "Whew!" and got out of the wreck to hear the congratulations of all the buzzards gathering around him. He gave them a look, swore and walked toward the Old Man, who was on his way to the tarmac in a hurry.

"Great work, you bunch of wildcats! Great—"

Phineas blocked his path. "Yeah, well, I got charges to make. Attempted murder. I got framed an' it was a couple of these fatheads who—"

SIR RUFUS suddenly felt weak. The flush of victory left his rugged countenance. It occurred to him that he had said something to Howell and his gang about shooting Phineas Pinkham if they got the chance on the way back home. Had the flyers taken him seriously? If they had—well, Pinkham had him slated for jail for the rest of—

"I had some hair tonic in a bottle at the end of a long rope," Phineas continued. "I told von Beestinger I was bringin' him some to part his head in the middle. An' I made him think it was goin' to be nitroglycerine. Well, I fooled the bums awright an' had 'em scairt out

of their breeches. Yeah, an' when I come down low the damn bottle hit against a house an' I almost got knocked over into the English Channel. I bet these bums took the stuff out of the bottle an' loaded it with a stick of dynamite. I want an investigation. I'll write to Pershin."

The Old Man stared blankly. "Hair tonic," he mumbled. "Hair—" He scratched his head and half-shut his eyes. Then they opened wide. "Oh, the hair tonic you gave Howell, eh?" he purred. "Yellow, oily-looking stuff, wasn't it, Pinkham?"

"Yeah," answered Phineas. "You had a bottle on your desk, an' it was bigger than the one I had on the rope first so I took it when you wasn't lookin' an'—"

The Old Man jumped a foot. "The bottle on my desk?" he roared. "You took *that* bottle—"

"Sure," said Phineas. "Well, I want you to git some M.P.s an'—"

"That bottle on my desk was filled with a yellow oil substance, you damn fool!" howled the major. "But it wasn't hair tonic!"

"Wha-a-a-a-a?" gasped the joke-smith. "What was it, huh?"

"Nitroglycerin!" was the C.O.'s stunning revelation. "That Frenchman left it and told me to send it to Chaumont. He took it from an old man they caught hanging around the ammo dump over near Neuville. Didn't want to take the risk of carrying it with him. I thought that was a different-looking bottle you left there but I didn't really pay any—"

"Cr-rr-ripes!" groaned Phineas. "Nitro-g-ow-w-w-w-w!" Then he began to laugh. "Did we fool von Bee-stinger!" he roared. "You ought to have seen him, huh, guys? Him and his krauts was actin' like a lot of guys sittin' on a hot stove an' couldn't git off. That bottle flyin' around, haw-w-w-w-w-w, what a joke! Well, we got the bridge—"

"Ha!" laughed Major Garrity. "A joke? I'll say it is. Wait until they get the Frog colonel up at Chaumont. He'll have a hell of a time convincing the brass hats there that he wasn't playing jokes on them. Sending up a bottle of hair tonic for evidence against a suspected spy! Ha! That's rich! Ha-ha-ha!" The major wiped his eyes.

"Haw-w-w-w!" guffawed Phineas. Then he shivered. Nitroglycerin, cripes! The way he and Casey had handled that stuff! He felt the urge for a stiff snort of something strong. "I need a drink," he grinned and wiped a clammy brow. "Cripes, what a day!"