



a  
PHINEAS  
PINKHAM  
howl

# THE BAT'S WHISKERS

written and illustrated by JOE ARCHIBALD

*Major Garrity was fuming in his lair. Outside, Bump Gillis and the boys were waiting like a lot of palpitating schoolgirls for the axe to fall on Phineas Pinkham. But you know Phineas—the kind of guy who could be thrown into an incinerator and come out covered with ice cream!*

**T**HIS IS AN AIR STORY, but it starts on a piece of ground back of the German lines where a group of Kaiser Bill's highest officers were in feverish powwow. General von Gluten, superior to everything else in the vicinity, was sitting in the big room of an auberge, and he was saturated with indignation, rage, and all other emotions that sometimes bring on a stroke to a man whose cerise-hued neck requires a nineteen-and-a-half collar. Spread out before him was a large sheet of mud-bespattered paper on which Teuton words were printed.

"Donnervetter!" he spouted into the ear of an also indignant Herr Oberst. "This already yedt worse iss. Und some verdammt Yangkee has rained them down on our soldiers' heads. Five t'ousandt prisoners *die Amerikaners* take yesterday, und more yedt today, und some of *die Schweine* leave the lines like if they vas goingk to a beer Garten, ja! Syrup, butter, milk! Germans go to Yangkee prisons und eggspect to gedt them, ja? Liars yet are *die schweine Amerikanische*. Budt our infantry you cannot tell them. It iss a trick, this report of vonderful rations for the Yangkee Soldaten. Gott im Himmel!"

The general pulled at his whiskers some more, rammed his monocle deep into his eye socket and growled at the well-born Prussians gathered around him. "*Donner und Blitzen!*" he erupted. "Do somet'ing yedt! Sendt oudt an order to all airdromes that any American ship that drops such trash should be shot down once. Do nodd stand there like a linden tree, von Stout!"

"*Ja wohl,*" replied the *Herr Oberst* addressed, "but the rules of war it iss—"

"Bah!" raved General von Gluten. "Such lies yedt, *ja? Die Amerikaners*, they trick our soldiers, *nein?* Do as I say, you—you—"

*Herr Oberst* von Stout glanced idly at the sheet of paper which had suddenly made the war miserable for von Gluten. His vision was better than that of the general so that some fine print at the lower right-hand corner of the paper caught his eye. An *Ach* slipped out of his mouth as if it were a hot coal. "Here iss somet'ing else, Your Excellency," he said. "Two words, *ja; Ineasphay Inkhampay.*"

The general bristled. "*Vas ist das? Das ist nodd Amerikanisch.*"

"*Nein,*" replied the *Herr Oberst*. "It iss a language I do nodd know yet *und* I studied twelf in Vienna. Ineasphay—" He scratched his head, jiggled his brain. "*Ach, das ist nodd sense, Your Excellency. I—*" The *Herr Oberst* suddenly jumped a foot. "listen once," he cried, "*und* how does it sound? Ineasphay! Inkhampay! Ineas—"

The general got his huge bulk out of the chair and pushed the *Herr Oberst* against a stove. In a flash it had come to him. A fire seemed to crackle inside his torso as he stood transfixed, both fists raised above his big, bullet-shaped head.

"*Herr Leutnant Pinkham!*" he roared. "The Yangkee upstart! *Ach, Himmel! Und* all over the Front he has dropped those paper. *Ach! Donnervetter! Murtz, Dumkopf!*" he bellowed at an *Unteroffizier* sitting stiffly near a table. "Get me the High Command, every airdrome, *und* the Kaiser if you can gedt him. Anybody, *ja!* Our *Soldaten* walkingk away to the Yangkee lines like noddings to gedt butter *und* syrup, *ach!* Id must be stop yedt. Von Stout, Mueller—" And he called to all his staff as he plunged out of the auberge.

All over the German line the news spread. The Kaiser soon got wind of the dire threat to his dream of world empire. Although his soldiers' spirits were strong for the Fatherland stuff, their stomachs cared

not a tinkers dam about it. To *Herr Hauptmann* von Bissinger, leader of the Emperor's crack jagdstaffel, went caustic messages. The *Leutnant* Pinkham was to be removed from the world as soon as possible. In fact, he was to be maltreated until there was not enough of him left to go to another world. Ten thousand marks to the man who brought the great Pinkham in—those were the Kaiser's orders. That was enough.

Back into the hinterland wafted whispers of Phineas Pinkham's prowess. His name was becoming legend. Flaxen-haired mothers nabbed defiant *Liebschens* and controlled them with the threat that Pinkham, the American, would come and get them if they did not mend their ways. The "little dears" shrieked with fright and promised to be good little girls and boys forever and ever, and hid under corn cribs or anything else that offered a place of concealment.

OVER in Bar-le-Duc, Lieutenant Pinkham, the wonder that Boonetown, Iowa, had contributed to the war, was striking anything but fear into the hearts of his fellow men. Naturally we find him in the sanctum of Major Rufus Garrity, the toughest C.O. of any Air Force. As usual, the major was very angry, and Phineas, also as usual, was trying to explain away another breach of discipline.

"So!" Major Rufus was roaring. "Two days ago when you left Howell's flight you were forced down, were you, you half-baked woozle? Well, take a look at this stuff. Who gave you the authority to go dealing out handbills from a Spad? Spread 'em all over Germany, did you? Well, Pershing will hang you for this one. Of all the damn fools, you—"

"Awright, awright!" Phineas readily admitted, knowing that he was snagged properly. "I wasn't forced down but I had a great scheme for the Allies. You know that order they give out about treatment of prisoners an' all that stuff? Well, some big squareheaded king back in 1734 had an agreement with the U.S., sayin' that prisoners taken by each other would be entitled to the same rations of the army what captured 'em.

"Well, I got one of them orders and took it over to Nancy. There is a Frog there who has a printin' press an' all I did was set up another order in German but I added a lot of things like canned peaches, apricots, chocolate fingers an' all, to the ration of the U.S. dough. I figgered the squareheads would come over in flocks. I was only tryin' to help, but I giss that means about forty years in Blois playin' solitaire. Huh, it's a hell of a *guerre*. I—"

"Yeah?" growled Garrity looking at the printed sheet, a facsimile of the one which had thrown a lot of panic into Herr von Gluten's war days. "But you had to go and put your name on the damn things, didn't you? Ineasphay—*bah!* Hog Latin, isn't it? Wait until G.H.Q. hears of this! Running the war for 'em, are you? Of all the crack-brained things you've done since I had the misfortune to meet up with you, this is the blue ribbon! Forced down near Rechicourt, eh? After battling eight Fokkers and two Pfalzes! You cockeyed liar, Pinkham, you are going to sweat for this!"

Phineas yawned. "Sure, the only thing I done right in this outfit was breathe, an' sometimes I git a punch in the eye for that if I make a little too much noise. Oh, well, *c'est la guerre*, as the Frogs say!"

Major Garrity swore again and picked up his feet, only to slam them down upon the floor. A curse ripped out of his mouth as it occurred to him that he had no boots on. The tingling protest of his stockinged feet added more pepper to his boiling hot spleen.

"It is a war you won't forget in a hurry," he tossed at Phineas. "It looks as if you'll spend the rest of it sticking your head through bars and asking passers-by who's winning, see? Printing propaganda without authority! Canned peaches, apricots—*er*—cripes! Listen, Pinkham, I'm going to make an example of you this time. For good and all. I'm—"

*B-z-z-z-z-z-z-z-z!* The Old Man grabbed up the phone.

"Yes?" he growled into the mouthpiece. As the message began to seep into his ears, his bushy brows began to slip up and up until Phineas thought his eyeballs would pop out and climb up to pull them down where they belonged. At intervals the major would gulp, try to inject a word, then clamp his mouth shut as he listened to more.

Phineas leaned against the table, one eye cocked on the Old Man's boots which stood against the wall. They were new boots and evidently had been unkind to Sir Rufus' pet corn.

"Wha-a-at?" the C.O. finally threw in. "Y-you mean—no? Why, damme, I thought—who? Yeah, I know! I know who—you don't have to tell me, colonel. I—*er*—*ah*—will see that the message is relayed at once. What's that? Oh, I'll do that—*er*—harumph, of course. Like to hear those things. Good for the squadron. Th-thank you—sir—thank you. Yes—goodbye."

*Click!*

PHINEAS swung around and looked at Major Garrity. One of his hands brushed against the boots as he slumped down into a chair. The Old Man's face wore a strange expression, one which only a psychiatrist could have diagnosed. There were bafflement, chagrin, joy, anger and all the other sensations cavorting on his rugged visage.

"Well," said Phineas impatiently, "what is it? Hangin', shootin' or the guillertine? You look happy, in a way, so I giss that means finny for yours truly. Well, I had a good time while it lasted an' anyways I bet—"

"Pinkham," Garrity blurted out, "if you were thrown into an incinerator, you'd come out covered with ice cream!"

"I ain't much good at riddles," said the culprit, eyeing the pair of new boots, "but if you want to play charades, I—"

"Don't talk to me like that, you halfwit!" stormed the Old Man. "Just because you've gone and made yourself solid again with all the brass hats in France, it doesn't mean you don't have to take orders from me any more. You understand?"

Phineas grinned. "Hot dog! What'd the fatheads say?"

"Nothing much," rasped Sir Rufus, "only that the Germans are coming over hollering '*Kamerad*' and every one of them seems to be holding one of these papers in his hand. They want some butter and milk and cakes and syrup, you bum! Five thousand in one haul they have over near Fleury Woods. Why, you nincompoop, the Yankee top sergeants are eating nothing but corned willie and hardtack in this man's war right now. G.H.Q. wants to congratulate you. A master stroke, the Intelligence P.C. reports. The German High Command is knocked bowlegged and they've put ten thousand marks on your head, Pinkham. And that's why I'm going to bust right out laughing!" And he did.

"Me, too," grinned Phineas and rose from the chair. "Haw-w-w-w-w-w-w! I bet von Beestinger is gittin' hell right now and that's why I'm laughin'." Phineas undoubtedly was being very careless with the truth again, for his glance strayed to Major Garrity's new boots as he edged away.

"Giss that's all, huh?"

"Get out of there," growled the Old Man, and he Crumpled the sheet of printed matter into a ball and whanged it across the room.

When Phineas had shut the door behind him, the major started to pull on one of his boots. A yell burst from his larynx. His whole foot seemed to wiggle and



a shiver curled his spine. Loud shouts for assistance came from the major, and an orderly broke in to be told in no gentle language to pull his commanding officer's boot off in a hurry or he would be hamstrung.

After much tugging and hauling, the boot came free and the orderly reached into same. Then he let out a wild yelp, dropping the boot to the floor. Warily he picked it up again and turned it upside down. A glistening, wriggly thing plopped out and began a hurried effort to reach safety.

"A snake!" yipped the major.

"Yes, sir," agreed the orderly.

"Who asked you to say anything?" bawled Garrity and immediately gave chase to the reptile.

Outside Phineas was chuckling. Then he decided that the better part of wisdom urged him to the tarmac. Howell and his bunch were going out on the last patrol of the day. Von Bissinger had been up all that day, burning up gallons of precious Heinie petrol in the hope of getting one good crack at *Leutnant* Pinkham. The caustic messages he had received from the High Command anent his failure to barbecue the upstart of a Yankee flyer had robbed him of whatever gentleness his Teuton soul had had.

He flew the air lanes with visions floating in front of his goggles. He saw himself walking along "*Unter den Linden*"—a national hero. Beauteous Frauleins would be tossing flowers in his path. He envisioned the multitude tearing down the statue of Frederick the Great and replacing it with one that resembled himself in every way. *Ach*, the man who brought down *Leutnant* Pinkham and made him stay down. *Ach*, ten thousand marks!

Thus did von Bissinger romance as he hurled his flock through the ether, grinding his teeth, his eyes glittering with a light such as flickers in the orbs of a cat that has run into a family reunion of mice.

"WELL," said Phineas to Bump Gillis as he walked to the trembling Spads, "ya don't see me headed for Blois, do ya, huh? You was all waitin' like a lot of palpatatin' high school girls for the axe to fall. Haw-w-w-w-w-w! Well, it's a gift, I gotta say it. The brass hats have invited me to a poker game in Chaumont. I—"

"Try and run out on this patrol, Pinkham," bellowed Howell threateningly, "and von Bissinger will get a letter with black edges telling him that it's a damn shame he got cheated out of ten thousand marks. Get it, you ape?"

"Sure," retorted Carbuncle, "but I bet all of ya would miss. Ya've been shootin' simply awful lately and them Vickers tubes must have curvature of the spine." Having delivered himself of the last word as usual, Phineas climbed aboard his Spad and made ready for flight.

The low-hanging sun was perhaps the salvation of Phineas that day. Von Bissinger and his high-flying Pfalz battle wagons spotted Howell and his company before the Yanks could grab enough altitude to make it a worthwhile scrap. Moreover, with ten thousand marks in sight, the Von had brought along his second string to insure complete slaughter.

However, Howell had heard about the old adage that he who fights and runs away has enough vital parts left to come back and fight another day, so he signaled to his buzzards after a brief brush with the enemy and they began to organize for a hurried hegira.

But the great Pinkham, true to form, was not watching signals. In consequence, he found himself pocketed between two Boche planes, in one of which was none other than von Bissinger himself. The commander Boche angrily waved away his companion and jumped on Phineas' tail for the kill. Spandau slugs surrounded the Boonetown flyer and von Bissinger was just about ready to deliver a haymaker when the great glare of that sun spoiled his aim. Phineas had just enough time to skid around and get over his own lines.

Anti-aircraft from the Yanks convinced the Von that he would have to wait until the next day for another try. A madder human being never lived than was the *Hauptmann* von Bissinger as he flew back to his coop. The real purpose of the war was forgotten. From now on it would be himself versus Phineas Pinkham. He swore it on a long line of ancestors. Let the submarine warfare flop! Let the Hindenburg line break up like a stick of macaroni! But he would get Phineas Pinkham!

"Good old sun!" Phineas commented as he got out of his Spad. "Wee gates!" And he grinned and waved his hand to old Sol.

"It's just a reprieve," said Bump Gillis hopefully. "Just a stay of sentence. You're as good as planted."

"The way you guys are all for me sure cheers me up," grinned the unquenchable Carbuncle, ignoring Howell's irate face. "Well, see you at slum!" And he went to his hut, picking idly at a ragged edge of his flying coat where a German slug had taken a bite. In his hut Phineas picked up a book on botany and perused it carefully. Between the cloth covers there were many astonishing things to read. Phineas had had

no idea that botany could suggest so many things to his trick-clogged brain.

AT MESS the Old Man seemed in a fretful mood. Phineas could read the signs. There was a rum job to do and the major was having a hard time to get it off his chest. As always, he was there to help the C.O. out.

"I bet we all got to go over and bomb the Krupp works," ventured Phineas as he sank his teeth into a biscuit. Major Garrity's head snapped up.

"Shut up, you nitwit," he barked. Then he grinned with as much mirth as one would find on the face of a grizzly bear. "Sure," he said, "something like that—only worse. Now laugh, you bum, as there are nine chances out of ten that you'll get the job. You know where Saarbrücken is?" The question was addressed snappishly to all of the pilots.

"It's only about sixty or seventy miles from here, right in the midst of wiener schnitzels and sauerkraut. That's where some buzzards have to go, one at a time. Already some have taken the trip. Nobody has even got a postcard from them. The Jerries, Intelligence says, are assembling about twenty Gothas there. Bigger ones than they've ever built. Their objective is Paris! We've got to find out the exact location of that field. Only one ship has got a chance to spot it. Well, isn't that the sweetest job you ever heard of? It's just a jaunt for somebody who can fly through the twilight when crickets sing and frogs cluck a serenade. Isn't it romantic?"

"Haw-w-w-w-w-w!" burst forth Phineas. "Ya shoulda been a poet. Listen:

*"Twenty bad Gothas,  
All in one pot.  
Gillis went out to look—  
X marks the spot!"*

Slowly the Old Man got up from his chair. His head sank deeper and deeper between his shoulders and both fists seemed to bulge and bulge until they took on the semblance of cauliflowers. The legs of the Boonetown merry-maker's chair scraped backwards along the floor.

"Awright, awright," Phineas hastened to say. "I'm gittin' out, but I ain't even started eatin' yet I—"

"Another word out of your big mouth," erupted the Old Man belligerently, "and you won't feel like eating for a year. Get out of here, you—"

Phineas was on his feet and back-pedaling toward the door. "I'll go," he flung at Garrity, "but I'll see G.H.Q. and the Wing. I got to eat or else how can I fly? I'll complain to—"

One more hostile move on the Old Man's part sent Carbuncle through the door in one jump. Outside he mumbled to himself, then skirted the corner of the big stone house. The mess sergeant in the kitchen soon saw a homely face peering in at him.

"Hand me out some grub," demanded the intrepid flyer, "or I'll squawk about them phony dice you got. And them cards ya've got nicked with your thumb—"

"Sure, sure, lieutenant," was the scared reply. "Sure, gimme a chancet I only got two hands."

A minute later Phineas was walking to his hut, munching avidly. "Kick me out of mess, will they, the bums!" he snickered as he trudged along.

THAT night a message came to the Ninth Pursuit—another challenge from von Bissinger. Mortal combat was what the Von wanted, and alone with Phineas Pinkham away upstairs. The challenge contained insulting adjectives regarding Phineas' ancestry and fighting ability. A white man could not very well disregard it, and the Pinkhams had no African blood in their veins.

But Major Garrity emphatically thumbed down any suggestion of a private war and let it be known that Pinkham was to swallow the insults and like them. Any defiant move on the part of the Boonetown flyer would lift him right out of the war.

Phineas brooded and brooded. Not until von Bissinger has been insulted in turn would he get another full night's rest.

At dusk the next day a bat flyer shook Major Garrity's hand, walked out of Wings and across the field to his Spad.

"See you later," he flung at the gaping war birds.

"Sure," growled Phineas to Bump, "and the moon is made out of salami. Well, he owed me ten francs, too, but I'm big enough to fergit it." And he sighed and left Bump to himself.

Phineas walked away from the drome and across a Frog pasture. Soon he came to a little ravine through which a small stream babbled. Beside it he sat down and idly plucked at the ferns bordering its bank. Something caught his eye.

"Well, well," commented the mournful flyer, and rose to walk along the bank of the little rill. He stooped down, plucked something and then headed back to the drome.

The bat flyer returned at midnight. A truck brought him in. He had managed to kick his Spad to friendly territory but he had nothing to say about its landing.

It had just folded up and dropped. The Boche over where the Gothas were supposed to be huddled were thicker than mosquitoes over a swamp. So far as he was concerned, Paris was already blown up. All he wanted waa to get patched up and be left alone for the rest of the war.

"We'll try again tomorrow night," snapped Major Garrity as the bedraggled war bird was taken away.

"I think I'll resign," decided Bump Gillis. "A live private is better than a dead looie."

"Right," agreed Howell. "I have a mind to shoot off a hand myself. Cripes!"

"All washed up, huh?" cracked out the irrepressible Phineas. "Well, I giss as usual I'll have to see that the job is done. 'Way back in history the Pinkhams have always had to—"

"Let's kill him," suggested Bump anxiously.

"Leave him to the Old Man," was Howell's idea. "I think he's got great things in mind for our Carbuncle. I'm going to get a drink. C'mon."

THE next day a Boche airman was brought down intact behind the Yankee lines. C flight accomplished the feat. After boxing two krauts who had been sniping at observation balloons over the Meuse, Garrity's buzzards bad tipped over one and then had let the other Von decide his own fate. When finally he was brought in to the Ninth Pursuit, he was found to be little more than a kid whose upper lip bragged about a soft, silken, blond mustache. This foliage helped to hide a set of prominent front teeth.

"Wee gates," Phineas greeted him when the chance was ripe. "Sprecken American?"

"Ja," smiled the prisoner, "*ja*, und I know you yedt. You the *Leutnant* Pinkham are, *nein*?"

"Sure I am," grinned Phineas complacently. "You know von Beestinger?"

"Von Bissinger? *Ja*, I haff me him," replied the German. "He iss the greadt fighdter, *ja*. Soon he gets you, *Leutnant*, *ja*!"

"Huh," sniffed the Boonetown smith, "an' at first I thought you had brains."

Major Garrity soon took the prisoner from the group of pilots. He had lots of questions to put to the German, not that he expected to get any answers. It was just a matter of form.

Unbeknownst to the buzzards of C flight, there had been a spectator to the recent air gesture. Far above, flying lone wolf, the great von Bissinger had noted the landing of one of his countrymen, and in his mind

had sprouted a colossal idea. He had lost no time in getting back to his field and introducing his brain child to von Brahm, Staffel Commander.

"You see how we trap the *Leutnant*, *ja*?" von Bissinger exulted. "A Fokker captured without a scratch, see, Your Excellency? *Und* iss it nodd joost the thing we vill see coom flying the spot over yedt where iss our greadt Gothas, *ja*?"

Von Brahm indulged in a huge, wide grin. His plump chassis shook appreciatively like a bowl of gelatin.

"*Herr Hauptmann*, you half the brain. *Das ist gut!* We know the ships of young Gross' squadron, *ja*. Vunce yedt a Yangkee cooms over—*poof!* Like liddle pieces he iss, *ja!* *Und* I bet like you it vill be the great *Leutnant* Pinkham. *Ach*, leave me, *Hauptmann*. I vill the trap get ready yedt."

Over in Bar-le-Duc, Lieutenant Pinkham was also laying a great idea on the table in front of Major Rufus Garrity. It also had to do with the capture of young Gross and his Fokker. Despite his reluctance to harmonize in any way with Phineas, the C.O. could see an elephant if it walked right up and wrapped its trunk around his neck. And this idea of Phineas Pinkham's was something just as big. It looked good. Another bat flyer had to go out at dusk, in a Spad. The Gotha nest had to be spotted. And there was a chance that it could be if he gave the exponent of trickery and its children free rein.

"It's crazy" the major growled, "but it has to be if you think it up. There are possibilities in the idea. Go ahead. And do not forget I didn't send you out. You asked for the job yourself. That's all. Gross is in your hands, and may God have mercy on his soul!"

*Leutnant* Gross was flattered with the attention shown him by the great Pinkham. But he could have been knocked over with a banana skin when the Boonetown worker of wonders announced that he was going to be sent back to his squadron.

"Sure—jar!" declared Phineas. "You're too young to be a prisoner. You weren't experienced enough and you don't count. We only keep the big Ashes an' throw the little ones back. Jar!"

"Cripes!" moaned Howell. Then the leader of C flight uttered indignant protest and went in to see Garrity.

Bump Gillis looked at Phineas, swore and slumped into a corner. What now?

"We're going to let you go just after the sun goes down," Phineas told the German, "so that you won't

git shot at by too many Allied ships. Swell, huh? I giss Uncle Sam an' the democrats ain't so bad, Jerry, huh?"

"I do nodt know how you say—it iss too much. *Danke schön.*"

"Don't mention it," grinned Phineas agreeably. "Bump, you take the Von an' entertain him while I go for a wait. See if the bum kin beat you at checkers. Everybody else in Europe has. Oof widderson!" Phineas went down to the ravine. Of course he came back. He had something wrapped in an old newspaper. Gross was chuckling, for he had Bump Gillis trapped in one corner of the checkerboard.

"I told you he was a bum player, didn't I, Heinie?" and Carbuncle guffawed.

"*Ja*," agreed the captive, "budt, still *und* all, this is yedt the first time I haff played, *ja*!"

"Haw-w-w-w-w!" Phineas' laugh was louder than ever. "If—"

Bump tipped over the checkerboard. "You can all go to hell!" he ripped out, delighting his hutmate to the extreme.

A FEW hours later, when the shadows were yawning and stretching over various landmarks, Phineas entered the hut where Gross was quartered. He had a razor in his hand, some shaving soap and a brush.

"I giss this is a funny thing," he said to the German, "but we always keep a souvenir of all the Junkers we bring down. I got von Korpfs pipe, the Mannheim monocle and von Gluck's pocketbook. All I want from you is your mustache, *jar*."

"*Nein*," protested the victim angrily. "A long time idt takes me to grow idt. Anything else, *Herr Leutnant*, budt—"

"Giss ya'd better hold him, Bump," decided Phineas. "Off comes the spinach."

"We are only initiatin' ya into a order which is a honor to be in, Heinie. We call it the Order of the Visitin' Vons and you won't be eligible after the *guerre* if you put up a fight."

"*Ach*," finally assented Gross. "Do idt then, budt stupid idt iss yedt."

"With many howls of pain and plenty of writhing Gross was stripped of his mustache. As a barber Phineas was a first-class blacksmith. All the pilots on the field walked about, wondering if insanity was catching. Certainly the Old Man had been around Phineas enough to become infected with it. Letting a captured German flyer go! Cutting off his mustache! It

was too much. The Ninth was in a state of senility and no mistake about it.

The gloom thickened. It was time for the German flyer. A motorcycle was going to take him to where his Fokker rested. Before he tumbled into the side car, the still-addled Gross shook Phineas Pinkham's hand.

"Anything it iss yedt you say, *Leutnant*," said Gross warmly. "*Ja*, there iss not a bomb inside my Fokker, *nein*?" He laughed at his own joke.

"It don't weigh much if there is," answered Carbuncle. "Well, gooten nick and all that boloney."

The motorcycle *chug-chugged* away with the driver on the seat wondering if the Allies and the Germans had made up and decided to call off the war.

"Well," mumbled Carbuncle thoughtfully, "maybe von Beestinger won't git a present an' a letter tonight. That bum thinks he can write insults, huh? Wait until he reads the layout I drop on his piazza!"

"Say, what did you sprinkle on the Kraut's face after you shaved off his mustache?" Howell wanted to know. "He's all spotted—"

"Sure," was Phineas' cryptic answer, "an' without that fuzz over his lip he looks like a beaver, don't he? Well, I can't waste time on you bums. I'm goin' places."

A Spad growled even as the Boonetown mystery man spoke. Ackemmas were flitting about it. The Old Man was coming out of the stone house as Phineas ran to his hut for flying leather. Pilots and groundmen formed little groups as the intrepid flyer finally loaded himself into his cockpit.

"Well, addo!" he flung at them. "I'm goin' huntin' them bad Gothas." He shouted to the man at the prop. The Hissu sucked spark and then began to whirl with a great clatter. The bat flyer, the unbeatable Phineas, took off, leaving a lot of raised eyebrows and long faces behind him.

LEUTNANT Otto Gross gunned toward Germany, hurling his Fokker in the direction of Hambach, where his fellows would be waiting. And what a story he would have to tell! *Ach*, the Americans, they were gentlemen, *ja*."

Overhead in the gloom eight Pfalz ships purred along, and with bared teeth their leader looked down at the Fokker flying below his trucks. *Ach Himmel!* At last! *Der Leutnant* Pinkham was thinking he fool them again, *ja*? *Schwein!* The leader winged over and went plummeting down, his buzzards hard in his wake.

Gross saw them coming, saw the fire spitting from their exhausts, but he grinned. The mirth was wiped



from his face in another second by the slither of tracer bullets. What had happened? *Donnervetter!* He flung up his arms, waggled his wings and gesticulated in wild endeavor to signal his countrymen.

By the scant lunar glow von Bissinger noted this and licked his chops. He could play with his victim like a cat plays with a mouse. He slid down wing to wing with the Fokker and looked across space at the perturbed occupant. The light from the Fokker dash brought an unholy laugh from von Bissinger's supercharged lungs. He saw a face with spots all over it. He saw buck teeth—Phineas Pinkham!

He zoomed with reckless abandon and signaled for the kill. His Vons discreetly withdrew to watch the homicide from overhead. In case the *Leutnant* Pinkham bested their leader by one of his innumerable tricks, they would drop in to tear him apart. A burst from von Bissinger's guns slammed right in back of Gross. The young Junker pilot dived for the ground.

"*Ach*, he runs," chortled von Bissinger, "spineless *Schwein!* Now him I haff yedt. Ten thousandt marks, *ja!* Dead or alive. Better yedt dead, *ja!*" He slammed another burst into the Fokker and it staggered like a goose which has swallowed a monkey wrench.

Gross welcomed the sight of ground, even though it was coming up too fast to insure good health for anything that hit it. Then his frantic eyes picked out a part of the map that looked level. He unloosed his belt and drove the Fokker down; lifting its nose just as another swarm, of slugs tore away a strut and let it hit. There was a sound that was a toss-up between a thud and a splash and Gross felt very, very cool for a Von who had been shot down by one of his own crowd. Everything was wet and black. He could not breathe. A glub-glubbing sound in his ears informed him that he was in water. He kicked himself free of the Fokker and slowly came to the surface, his lungs ready to burst.

Infantrymen swarmed the banks of the river where Gross had been spilled. Von Bissinger landed in a field a quarter of a mile away and began to break records for that distance on foot. Other Vons were behind him. Everywhere Boche were running. Overhead a flight of bat flyers hovered lest *Leutnant* Pinkham take off from the river. He had been known to do things almost as impossible.

When he got his head above water, *Herr Leutnant* Gross struggled toward the shore. Shouting Junkers watched his progress from the bank. Von Bissinger's triumphant voice was predominant.

"Pinkham I haff! The upstardt haff I godt! Fly a

Fokker yedt, jat\*' One trick vunce too many times, eh, gentlemen? Pull him oudt yedt!" He shot at some infantrymen. "Pull him oudt yedt!"

They did just that. A sodden, gasping figure was dragged up to von Bissinger. The Junker reached out a hand and yanked the captive close. A flashlight lit up the face of *Leutnant* Gross. There were buck teeth in his mouth, to be sure, but there were no freckles. The water had washed the little dried spots of mud from the Von's face. Von Bissinger tottered backwards and funny little sounds gurgled in his throat.

"I am *Leutnant* Otto Gross," snapped the bedraggled flyer. "You shoodt at me, a flyer for the Emperor. Satisfaction I will haff."

Von Bissinger, however, was beyond hearing. His mind was a hodgepodge of torturing, miserable thoughts. *Leutnant* Pinkham had fought fire with fire. His brain had hit on the same idea, but the Pinkham method had been far more potent. *Ach*, such a war! Suddenly the addled German squawked as a thought hit him between the eyes. Pinkham! Where was he? The German ships had been lured away by Gross. Why had the Yankees released the captive Gross?

"*Mein Gott im Himmel!*" yowled von Bissinger. "To Saarbrucken! Gross, he vas a decoy. *Ach, Himmel!*"

*Herr Leutnant* Gross shivered as the words from the famous Junker flyer penetrated to his sodden eardrums. So near had he been to becoming one of those birds who could not hear, see or smell. *Ach*, that Pinkham! A favor he had been given, *ja?* His soaked torso shook again and he thought of a Fraulein in Dresden. Without a mustache he was not a prepossessing suitor, *ach!* Six months to grow another, and Pinkham had taken most of the beloved hirsute decoration out by the roots. *Gott! Leutnant* Gross watched the Pfalz ships zoom up and hoped that each one would get a bull's-eye on the Pinkham carcass.

OVER Saarbrucken, lieutenant Phineas Pinkham circled and looked down from the jeweled ceiling at blinking lights far below. He made out the little silvery ribbon which was the Saar. Then he grinned.

"Duck soup," was his comment "I know the spot Well, I got to git back. If the old walrus don't doublecross me, I'll still be savin' the U.S. Government ten thousand dollars an' also ten thousan' marks for the Kaiser. Here goes nothin'!" And Phineas climbed for more altitude, pointing his droning battle bus toward home.

Fourteen Spads, Hissos droning, circled the night



skies over Dieuz and Albeedorf. Six Fokkers piqued at them, saw too much to lose and gunned away to round up some more Heinie bats. And toward the Spad rendezvous drove Phineas, full throttle.

Howell spotted him first and it seemed as if the entire German Air Force was on his neck. Garrity's buzzards leaped to battle and von Bissinger and his Pfalzes reeled as little fingers of sulphur streaked at them, harbingers of the deadly missiles that followed in a hail.

Phineas kept on going, his eyes peeled on his gas gauge. Let Bump and the other bums hold the Heinies off! He had to get back to stick a pin at a certain point on the map of the German back area.

The Spads of the Ninth landed ten minutes behind Phineas. Major Rufus was pumping the miracle worker's hand when Howell strode in.

"Cripes!" exclaimed the commander of the flight. "He's got more lives than a cat. He was just two jumps ahead of the whole Jerry Air Force when we got to the party."

"Great stuff, Pinkham!" enthused the major. "Great stuff!"

"Yeah," grinned Carbuncle complacently. "I ain't even started. I have challenged von Beestinger to a duel tomorrow at four P.M. I dropped a package for him with a nice letter to go with it, right smack over his drome. It couldn't miss, as I had a big cowbell tied to it Haw-w-w- w-w!"

"I get the idea now," said Bump, eyeing his hutmate with awe. "That Heinie had buck teeth an' you sprinkled muddy water in his face. It made spots. Well, I'm a—"

"Sure. Cripes, you're too smart. Bump. I'm surprised no end." Phineas was grinning broadly.

*Herr Hauptmann* von Bissinger, on his side of the war, was dragging himself to his quarters. On a table near his bed was a big cowbell and near it was a bulky brown package. A disconsolate hand reached toward them. Then a curse fell out of his mouth. He did not have to be told from whence they had come. Pinkham had been aboard that night with a vengeance.

Teeth bared, von Bissinger tore at the wrappings of the package. The contents were laid bare after the removal of much newspaper. They were strange-looking bulbs, and von Bissinger turned them over and over in his hands until it occurred to him that there must have been some sort of explanation in the box. He was right. Rummaging around, he found Phineas' billet doux. The message ran:

*"Tulips for your garden, von Beestinger. And if you haven't got yeller jaundice and cold feet, I will be over Luneville at four P.M. tomorrow to meet you in mortal combat. When the tulips get blossoms on them they can be planted by your headstone as by that time I will have you wrapped up and stamped R.I.P. Get a shot of hop from the Kaiser as you will need it.*

*—Phineas Pinkham disrespectfully yours."*

"I vill plant them," ground out von Bissinger, "but when they bloom I vill pick them to drop on *Leutnant* Pinkham's grave. Tomorrow him I meedt *und* kill him yedt, *ja!*" And his fingers absently toyed with the bulbs as he contemplated a most vicious method of attack on the morrow.

IN THE wee small hours, a flight of Handley-Pages went over to Saarbrücken. An hour later, frantic Boche were picking up parts of new Gothas from all over the landscape, but it was a certainty that all the Kaiser's men could not put them together again.

Dawn came to the Ninth Pursuit. Everybody was in jubilant spirits. Even Phineas, who was going out to meet the great von Bissinger, walked with a light step. Pilots tried to argue him out of the foolhardy venture. They pointed out that he was no match for the Jerry when it came to flying and shooting.

"Sure," added Bump, "we ain't kiddin' ourselves. He's a hellion. Lissen, Carbuncle, ya fathead, you're goin' to git a medal an' ya want to live until then, don'tcha?"

"Oh, yeah?" retorted the amazing Yank. "An' git kissed by a Frog with whiskers agin? I rather go out an' fight the Von. It ain't no use. A Pinkham never goes back on his word. I got a date with Beestinger and I ain't goin' to stand him up. Anyways, he ought to have a chance to git even for last night."

Howell and the pilots pleaded with the Old Man. Tie Phineas up—anything!

"He's got a right to do what he wants," snapped Sir Rufus. "G.H.Q. thinks he's invincible. They don't know von Bissinger. It's out of my hands."

The day wore on until four o'clock had almost arrived. Phineas was in his Spad, jazzing the motor. Pilots grouped about the ship.

"Over Lupeville at four," repeated Phineas. "And I like tulips. Haw-w!" He shivered, however, as he took off. If von Bissinger were immune to—ugh! One in twenty-five hundred gets it! *Arisema tryphylum*—strange and big words for Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham.

In fifteen minutes Phineas came back without a bullet hole in his ship. A great grin split his homely features. Avid hands clutched at him as he got out of the Spad.

"Ya got him, huh?" yipped Bump.

"He stood me up, the bum!" complained Phineas. "He's scairt of me. Haw-w-w-w-w-w-w! I giss he knows now he's got to respect me." Without another word the intrepid flyer walked toward the big stone house. He had the Von where the hair was short now. Who could deny he had refused Phineas' challenge to mortal combat? The news would make the rounds. Fool with Phineas Pinkham, would they? The bums!

"There's something rotten somewhere," opined Howell, scratching his head. "Something—"

"Yeah," agreed Bump in a mystified mumble. "Von Bissinger wouldn't pass up—now what in hell?"

If Phineas' fellows could have looked in on von Bissinger at the moment! The *Herr Hauptmann* was walking up and down the floor of his quarters, both

hands done up in gauze. That morning his fingers had been swollen to twice their size. The skin of his blotched hands burned and itched in turn.

"*Gott im Himmel!*" he roared. "That *verdammt* Pingkham! Those bulbs—they are poison. *Himmel*, yedt I vill gedt him! *Ach, Donnervetter! Und* today I vas to kill him, ack!"

Von Brahm was in a huddle with a German doctor. The latter squinted through thick-lensed glasses at von Bissinger, then at von Brahm.

"The bulbs, Your Excellency," the man of medicine enlightened von Brahm, "are vat you call jack-in-the-pulpit bulbs, *ja!* They excrete an oil that is poison to one man in twenty-five hundred!. Von Bissinger he iss that one. *Ach*, that *Leutnant* Pingkham! He iss not human."

"*Ach, Himmel*, I belief also the same yedt," agreed von Brahm, and he got up wearily to waddle out of headquarters.