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**PHINEAS
PINKHAM**
howl

THE BULL FLIGHT

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You all know Phineas "Carbuncle" Pinkham—that past master at throwing the bull. But here's the story of one time when the bull threw Phineas—a bull named Rittmeister von Holstein!

MAJOR RUFUS GARRITY, C.O. of the famous Ninth Pursuit Squadron, stood in the doorway of the big French farmhouse and shook a fist as big as a vinegar jug at a trio of giant Boche bombers which were thundering away through a slaty, very early morning sky toward Germany.

Sir Rufus' blood had reached 212 degrees Fahrenheit. He cursed like a mule skinner and hopped up and down in high dudgeon like a small boy who had been told he might not go

to the movies to see Charlie Chaplin but must remain in and study long division.

Major Rufus had something to yell about, moreover. The Gothas had come over and tossed down a load of eggs before anything could be done to prevent it. The eggs had transformed the tarmac of the Ninth into a nice singed omelet. Six big holes yawned up at Major Garrity. A hangar was a smoldering heap of canvas and twisted elephant iron. Luckily Casey and his crowd had pulled most of the Spads out onto the field and so had prevented a total loss.

White-faced men were appearing from all points of the compass. Out of the bomb shelters wriggled four pilots, but Garrity wasted just a glance on them, focussing his gaze on the row of hutments. He saw Phineas Pinkham, clad only in skivvies, pulling something from under a great piece of corrugated iron.

The something turned out to be Bump Gillis, and Phineas stood him on his feet and began to slap him on each cheek to drive away the final vestiges of coma. The glazed look at last went out of the Scot's eyes and he looked around wildly.

"I blew my horn!" yipped Bump.

"Haw-w-w-w!" burst out Phineas. "Wake up, ya bum. It's only another air raid. Them Heinies tried to git me again. Well, better luck next time an'—"

The voice carried to Major Garrity's ears and tinged them a violent reddish purple. Only another air raid! The third in two weeks!

"Pinkham, you big baboon!" he roared as he lunged forward.

"Well, what?" retorted the Boonetown, Iowa, prodigy. "I giss maybe this is my fault, huh? Maybe I invited the Heinies over—"

"Only another air raid, eh?" thundered the C.O. "Think it's a joke, do you? Well, it's a damn shame you didn't get a piece of scrap iron through your pants, you—you—"

"Haw-w-w!" grinned Phineas. "I didn't have 'em on. That's a horse on you, major, an'—"

"Get out there, you fathead, and help clean up this mess," howled the Old Man, and reached for a brick. Suddenly his homicidal mania left him and he drew back, sweeping his eyes across the tarmac.

"Tell those guys to stop filling up the holes out there!" he flung at Phineas savagely. "I'm going to tell the brass hats that I've cleaned up junk yards for the last time!" He strode toward squadron headquarters, mumbling to himself.

"Good luck," offered Phineas, "but I'll bet—" He shrugged and trotted out to the field. Bump Gillis followed in zigzag fashion. There was still a buzzing sound in his head and his knees seemed to have turned to custard.

"Hello, Casey," said Phineas to his favorite non-com. "Lots of fun, huh? Tell your slaves to stop shovel-in' as the Old Man is goin' to move us some place. Is that somethin'?"

"It's about time," growled the sergeant. "All we've been for three weeks is Eytalian laborers."

THE groundmen wiped steaming brows, sighed and dropped their shovels as the order spread. Phineas and Bump walked back toward Wings and bumped into Captain Howell.

"The Jerries are still looking for the twenty thousand marks, all right, Carbuncle," the flight leader growled. "Why don't you do us a favor and get killed or captured? This is all your fault, you halfwit. It's getting so a guy doesn't dare to go to bed. I'm going to see if the Old Man won't get you to hell out of here. You're a liability and—"

Phineas grinned. "Is it my fault I am famous?" he argued. "I will go down in history as the thorn in the Kaiser's short ribs and you will only be an ordinary bum. Well, it's a gift, it's a gift!"

Major Garrity came tearing toward them. "Pinkham," he roared, "tell those tarmac dentists to finish filling up the holes! Damned brass hats! Think this is the only piece of real estate this side of Paris. Stay here and like it, that's what they said. It's up to us to stop Gothas from blowing us to hell. Damme, I'll resign! I'll—Pinkham, you woozle, get going or by—"

"Well, it's a wonder some people couldn't make up their minds," complained Phineas. "First ya say don't fill 'em up an' then you say—"

"You heard me, you fathead!" erupted the Old Man. "Now get out there or I'll kick you all the way to the Meuse."

There was no need of Phineas' bearing the tidings to the groundhogs. The C.O.'s stentorian voice carried far through the ozone of early morning. Casey swore. Grease-balls spat on their hands and began to clear up the results of the Gothas' banquet. Pilots collected around the Old Man and muttered their thoughts anent the woe that had fallen upon the tarmac of the Ninth.

"They're after Pinkham," growled Bump Gillis. "I wish his parents had never been born."

"Yeah," agreed Howell dolefully, "during the last week I've counted four million nine hundred and forty-three sheep when I ought to've been sleeping. Every time I close my eyes I hear a Gotha. I fell asleep at the stick yesterday afternoon and dropped six thousand feet before an archie battery woke me up. I—"

"Well, I'm willin' to retire," put in Phineas, looking at the Old Man, "if you can fix it up with Pershin'. But it'll have to be on full pay and—"

The major ground his teeth and steadied himself.

"How about transferring the missing link?" suggested Howell. "Let some other outfit get a taste of him."

"I'm running this place," blazed the Old Man, "but I wish to hell you were, Howell. Now, sew up your traps, all of you Arabs, and listen to me! A flight will go out at four o'clock. You will go out if you have to carry the Spads over to level ground to take off. And I wish you luck, Lieutenant Pinkham, but you could do a lot for your country if you'd just lose half of your engine about thirty miles across the Rhine."

"Oh, is that so?" said Phineas with great indignation. "Asking me to lay down, huh? Well, I'll tell Pershin' and the Secretary of the Army and my congressman from Iowa'll have somethin' to say—"

"Shut up, you speckle-faced—"

H-r-r-r-r-r-r-o-o-om! Out on the tarmac arose surprised, angry shouts. Faces turned toward the heavens. A solitary plane was droning high in the sky, a small white ship with a broad black stripe across the fuselage, a black cross at each wing tip.

"A dirty Boche!"

"Why, the squareheaded cootie!"

THE plane suddenly dived until it was scarcely a thousand feet up. Something fell away from it and then the pilot back-sticked his ship into a wild zoom. Up and up he went toward the roof, leveled out and gunned for his own lines. The object which had fallen from it landed in a meadow just across the northern boundary of the field. A grease monkey retrieved it and came running.

"A love letter for Phineas," guessed Bump Gillis with a sniff. "The nerve of that Heinie. Looks like all the A.E.F. is pounding their ears. No wonder them Gothas can sneak over—"

"Let me have it," grinned Phineas to the man in coveralls.

"Hand it here!" snapped Garrity. "And quick about it, too!"

"Huh," grunted Phineas, "it ain't to you. Them Krauts always write to me. A guy can't even read his own mail around this dump!"

Major Rufus tore away the wrappings and exposed to view a heavy-sealed envelope and a magazine of German manufacture. The letter was addressed to "*Der Leutnant verdammt* Pinkham" so with a lusty oath the Old Man handed it to the addressee.

"What did I tell you?" taunted Phineas, and he tore the end from the envelope with feverish fingers. He pulled out a folded sheet of paper, crackled it open and began to read.

After a moment he said, "Lissen. The fatheads! '*Herr Leutnant*. We—Staffel Twelve, German Imperial Air Force—hope most sincere that killed you were not in the raid of your drome by our bombers. Myself, Frederick Wilhelm Kurtz von Holstein, I wish that I shoot you down and will succeed yet where my countrymen fail. Not for the twenty thousand marks only, *mein Freund*, but that *Herr Hauptmann* von Bissinger he was my third cousin and I am much mad, *ja!* If I shoot you down yet I marry his beautiful sister and if you should once see her you would know I should fail not at all. More tricks you will need yet to fool me, *Herr Leutnant*.' Haw-w-w! An' it's signed '*Rittmeister* von Holstein,'" finished the intrepid Phineas. Then by way of postscript he added, "You'd think the Krauts would run out of aces. Well, he's askin' for it, so—"

"Here," said Major Garrity with sarcasm, "is his picture so you will know what he looks like."

Phineas took the magazine and stared at a photograph which was ringed with pencil. A face looked up at him, a curl to its lips. The ace had a big nose and the orthodox Heinie mustache. His head was shaved to the bone and appeared to have corners.

"Huh," he commented with a grin, "if that fell off his shoulders, It wouldn't roll a foot. I wonder how he wears a hat!"

"Another li'l playmate for ya," said Bump Gillis. "Well, you can have him. He looks like a father wolf. Anyways, you've had a swell war, Carbuncle, so ya can't complain."

"All right, you buzzards," barked the C.O. "Get into some clothes and get ready to earn your pay. Hurry up!"

"Von Holstein, huh?" mused Phineas as he ambled away by himself. "And he sends me his picture like he was a movie star. Well, I always said them squareheads didn't have no brains!"

He entered his hut and pulled on some flying clothes. So von Holstein was von Bissinger's third cousin, was he? The bum! And if he got twenty thousand marks he was going to marry the Von's sister, eh? Well, if a dame would be willing to marry that mug, then she would think a hyena, was awful cute. Phineas was going to see that von Holstein did not get even to first base.

"Orange blossoms, huh?" he grinned to Howell and Bump Gillis as he reached the line of Spads. "Haw-w-w-w! All that Kraut ace'll git will be lead forget-me-nots, the fresh fathead!"

"Still cocky, huh?" growled Howell. "Well, your luck won't keep up forever. It isn't possible."

"Says whom?" retorted Phineas, and climbed aboard his battle chariot.

THE Spads of A flight waddled across the tarmac, dodging bomb craters and laboring ground-men, and finally got up into the air. Phineas looked back at the field and shuddered. The mess looked worse from upstairs. Yes, indeed, the Ninth had fallen upon evil days and something would have to be done about it. Head nestling in the padded rest of his pit, Phineas schemed and schemed, calling on all his ingenuity to suggest a means of slapping down the pestiferous Gothas.

Over the Argonne Forest the plotting air pilot was rudely aroused from his huddle with himself by the antics of the ships around him. He took a look about. The Spads had flushed up game and Phineas let a surprised curse fall away from his teeth as he hurriedly scrutinized the birds swooping wildly to meet the challenge. White ships with a black stripe. Albatross scouts—a new Jerry outfit in. The Kaiser must have lost patience with von Bissinger's Pfalz Staffel and pulled the pilots out of the pits and shoved them into the infantry. The thought brought a grin to the homely Pinkham visage. Well, if von Holstein was around, he would know it.

A ship thundered at his left flank. Phineas heard the spine-chilling sound of steel jets feasting on fabric. He hurled his ship aloft, missed ramming another Kraut by half an inch and took a burst through the tail from Bump Gillis' guns.

"It's a frame-up," howled Phineas. "Wait until I git back." An Albatross momentarily flashed in his ring sights and he let his stick trigger do its stuff. The white ship flopped over and Phineas' conscience pricked him as he thought of the nice white Jerry bus getting

all covered with Frog mud. He bet they had nice upholstery in the pits and ash receivers, too. It must be a snooty squadron.

And then he saw his latest arch enemy. The ship flashed overhead, in a steep bank. On one side of the white ship were big letters, "*Rittmeister* von Holstein."

Phineas swore and rushed in where angels would never tread. From another part of the sky a ship came down like a Juggernaut and pounced on the Pinkham neck before its owner could send a burst at the ship in front of him. Splinters flew from a mid-wing strut and one lodged in Phineas' chin.

"Well, I'm pickled," declared Phineas resignedly. "My old man will drag out his rusty black derby and necktie and go around sayin' I died for my country an'—" The finish of Lieutenant Pinkham, however, was again postponed. Three Spads pocketed the harassing Albatross and the Von put his ship through maneuvers never before heard of to get in the clear. Before Phineas could blink, the fight was over.

"*Donnervetter!*" The *Rittmeister* von Holstein was scowling angrily. "Almost I had him yet *und* the first time oop also. Almost I beat him with his own tricks, *ja*. Well, next time—" On the way home, while he pried a spruce fragment from his chin, it occurred to Phineas that there had been something rotten about that last little fracas. The ship marked with von Holstein's name had been a decoy! That was it. The dirty squarehead! Steal the Pinkham thunder, huh? Already Phineas hated the Von worse than all the others and that was plenty.

"Guess you nearly got cleaned, huh?" said Captain Howell to Phineas back on the field. "That Von—"

"You're telling me, huh?" sniffed Phineas. "Well, I'm here, ain't I?"

"Don't remind me of it," growled the flight leader, and walked away.

"Well, I saved your life again," mentioned Bump Gillis. "I'm ratin' maybe four Carnegie medals so far when I git back an'—"

"Boloney," cracked Phineas and hied to his cubicle for another huddle with himself. A package was awaiting him and immediately Phineas indulged in a pleased grin. Avidly he ripped away the wrapper and pulled out the contents. Well, it was about time. He had been waiting for it for two weeks.

"Cripes, but they're swell," he exclaimed as he fondled two strange objects. "That old Frog is a wizard!" Suddenly a thought struck Phineas amidships and made him gasp as if he had been hit in the small

of the back by a pail of ice water. He sank into a chair near a little table, snatched up paper and pen and began to write a letter.

"It oughta come in handy sometime," Phineas told himself as he inserted the finished missive in an envelope. "That Von thinks he knows tricks, huh? Sends me his picture, haw-w-w-w-w! Well, if the Frog will take the lead out of his pants, I ought to git it in a week. An extra franc will do the trick or I'm a Siberian."

ALL that day the Ninth carried on, the pilots wishing that night would never come because they were sick of checking up on sheep. Every minute from midnight on they would imagine that each strange sound was the arrival of a Gotha. After mess the majority of the pilots were content to stick in the big room of the stone farmhouse. Howell and Bump Gillis challenged each other to a game of checkers. Three other pilots negotiated a game of rummy. Phineas Pinkham voiced his ennui, yawned and evacuated the house.

"Where d'ya think the halfwit went?" Bump Gillis said to nobody in particular an hour later.

"I know where I wish he'd go," answered a voice from a corner of the room. "He's most likely gone to Bar-le-Duc and is tellin' that dame how he's winnin' the war."

"Check!" said Howell.

"It's going to be a dark night. There's no moon and—"

"That's right, you damn fool, cheer us up! I'll bet you were a press agent for a funeral parlor once."

"Those lousy Gothas—"

Conversation lagged. The Old Man came out of Wings, pulling hard on his pipe. As he was about to say something, there came the purr of a motor, the grinding of brakes.

"Who the hell?"

All eyes turned toward the door. The room was dimly lighted, as was everything else on the field. The door swung open and a man entered. He wore a long service overcoat. His eyes under the visor of his cap seemed to gleam like two little points of light in an expanse of dimness. Major Garrity stood transfixed as he saw the close-cropped mustache and square jaw.

"General Pershing!" he whispered hoarsely.

"Attention!"

Pilots arose and emulated ramrods. Major Garrity steeled his muscles and saluted smartly.

"Haw-w-w-w-w!" A hand came up and whisked away a mask. In the flesh stood Phineas Pinkham. "Well, that's the first bunch of snappy salutes I ever seen in France," he chuckled. "I fooled ya all right. This mask—"

The Old Man squeaked, then swore and lunged. Somebody handed him an old, mildewed orange. *Splat!* The rotten fruit smacked Phineas in the small of the back as he barged through the door.

"Well, it's your coat, major!" he flung back hurriedly. "You will throw things, huh?" Then he was gone.

"My God!" groaned the Old Man, and stumbled away.

Two hours later Phineas entered the farmhouse and sneaked into the darkest corner. The pilots wasted but brief wrathful glances on the jokesmith and then went back to worrying about Gothas. Time moved on with anvils tied to each ankle. Then—

H-r-r-r-r-r-o-o-om!

"Cripes!" yipped Bump Gillis and jumped to his feet. The pilots all made ready for a wild rush to safety. Out of the dim light came Phineas Pinkham, strumming on a jew's-harp.

"That was only warmin' up," he explained. "I kin play *Annie Laurie* swell. Listen!"

"Kill him!" howled the flight leader. "That's the last I'm going to stand. I'm going to punch him dizzy." He made a leap and swung at Phineas. In the next second he was flying backward with humming birds circling and banking around his head.

"I'll fight the whole place," challenged Phineas. "No sense of humor, huh? Well, you bums, come on. But I will not be responsible for what I'll do as I am losing my temper."

The door of Wings rattled. Phineas ducked low, reached a window and slipped through.

The dread vigil continued. Finally heavy-lidded, weary pilots decided to hell with it and sought their bunks.

BUT the Gothas did not come over that night. They came over the following night, but the field had been doubly protected by anti-aircraft batteries. Only two bombs hit the drome of the Ninth, but one of them shook Major Garrity out of bed on his ear and he bade *au revoir* to what was left of an amiable disposition and became a man designed to hibernate with grizzly bears.

"Damn it," he barked at the hapless pilots the

next morning, "I want to know where those Gothas hang out I'll go over myself damned soon. If it's the last thing I do, I'm going to get hunk with those Krauts. They can't bend my nose and—and—*er*—you laughing, Pinkham, you crackpot? Straighten out that homely mug or I'll do it with a spanner wrench. You heard my orders, you apologies for flyers. To hell with G.H.Q.! I want to know where them Gothas hang out"

"It's bad English to say 'them Gothas,'" said Phineas as he sidled away. "It is 'those Gothas.' When I was in school—"

"Oh, the crazy fool!" moaned Bump Gillis, shutting his eyes.

Wham! A howl of pain should have issued from Phineas Pinkham, but it did not. The Old Man's fist had massaged the wall, not the Pinkham physiognomy. Major Garrity let out a leonine roar and took an inventory of his numbed knuckles.

"It's a good thing you missed me as I would've had you broke," yipped Phineas and ran for shelter. In his hut he picked up the masks he had received from Paris and gloated over them.

"They're perfect" he grinned. "I never saw masks like 'em. That Frog knows his pertaters. I ought to get the other one pretty soon. Well, when I do, look out, von Holstein, you blond bum!"

That night, after a day of fencing with von Holstein and his Albatrosses, the Old Man called Phineas Pinkham into his sanctum and told the incurable jokester that he was an ignorant, fresh, insolent low-browed upstart who didn't know what military discipline meant. The major was sick of being insulted by Lieutenant Pinkham and he had been insulted for the last time.

"It's only my fun-lovin' disposition," parried Carbuncle. "I don't mean nothin', and if you had a sense of humor, you'd not git nasty about it and—"

"In just two weeks you're going to be transferred," yelled Garrity. "I'm sick of your face. If you think I'm bluffing, look at this pink slip of paper. I'll show you who runs this outfit—"

Phineas looked. There was no mistake. His stay at the Ninth Pursuit was nearing an end.

"Awright," he said, "if that's the way ya feel. I'm giftin' sick of the dump, anyways. Adoo!" And so saying, the flyer walked out.

"Hell," exclaimed Garrity and looked at the official slip of paper as though it would jump up and bite him. "But I've got to have discipline."

The news spread. Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham was

slated for points northwest. Immediately Bump Gillis called the pilots into a huddle and suggested lynching the Old Man.

Ah, yes, the Ninth Pursuit was a funny-place. The Old Man soon found out that he was wrong again. The personnel of the Ninth merely tolerated him. Nobody gave him a tumble except when it had to do with official business. He was ostracized more completely than was Napoleon at St Helena. The little corporal at least had been able to boast of one or two friends who would exchange kind words.

Phineas chuckled to himself and occupied his time studying German. He felt that the A.E.F. would soon go into the Fatherland and that he must be able to make the blonde-tressed *Mädchens* understand what he was talking about.

GOTHAS had not been seen for two whole days but the squadron was all a-twitter. The dire unexpected is sometimes worse than the actual works. Meanwhile von Holstein strutted on his side of the fence and reminded his gentlemen that the great Pinkham was avoiding him and no mistake about it. Von Bissinger and the rest did not know how to cope with the Yankee upstart, that was all. Carry the fight to him, that was the way to get the *verdammte Dumkopf*.

And then Phineas got something in the mail. He took the bull by the horns and four feet and laid it at the Old Man's door.

"Ya can't no more than bust me and you're firing me, anyways," said Phineas. "I'm going to duck formation today so I am telling you what to expect to your face. See what I care if you bust me—"

"Oh, you are, are you?" exploded Garrity. "Well, go ahead and to hell with you! This would've been a swell war if you'd had flat feet and a glass eye. Go out and get shellacked as you're washed up here, anyway."

"You ought to go to a butcher shop and buy yourself a heart that ain't petrified," Phineas advised the major as he made a hasty retreat. "I hope the Gothas have had six litters of pups that'll grow up overnight. Adoo!"

Phineas went out and yanked on his helmet. It was mid-afternoon and a flight was going out to patrol a sector well beyond the Meuse. The Spads found three Rumplers poking their snouts where they did not belong and immediately climbed to knock them off. The Kraut observation ships were flying high and as Howell back-sticked, Hisso roaring, Phineas Pinkham slid out, lost two thousand feet of altitude, and swung

toward Germany. The skies seemed deserted of Heinie snooters and it looked like a good chance for a look-see at the Jerry backyard.

Phineas picked out a rift in the drifting scud and nosed down well over the ditches filled with Boche. Then he became aware of the fact that he had more nerve than brain. Three Albatross ships dropped on his neck and began to gnaw at the Spad he rode.

Swearing, Phineas swooped low and got a flock of bullets close to his nether regions from machine guns on the ground. A hail of lead came from a diving Heinie and thudded into the hood like a basketful of rocks. The motor quit and Phineas had no choice but to slide down to the ground.

As he did so, a Boche infantry outfit on the ground continued their machine-gun reception. Howls of triumph welled up as Phineas hit the dirt and piled up against a tree stump. Twenty thousand marks crawled from the wreckage to look into the muzzles of half a dozen rifles made in Germany.

"*Ach!*" yelled one. "Pingham it iss. We gedt him from the ground. Twenty t'ousandt marks yedt we gedt. *Hoch der Kaiser!*"

Boche machine gunners threw their steel hats into the air and formed a ring-around-a-rosy. "*Der Leutnant* Pingham iss it, *ja! Gott mit uns!*"

An Albatross ship slid to a landing. Out of it stepped *Rittmeister* von Holstein. Two other Boche settled to earth and backed him up.

"*Wie gehts!*" the *Rittmeister* greeted the infantry officer. "You confirm my downing the great Pingham, *ja?* You see us, of course. You could not but help. *Ach*, twendy t'ousandt marks *und* a *Fraulein*—"

"Mistaken I think it iss you are, *Herr Rittmeister*," said the *Hauptmann*, bristling. "I *und* my men haff shoodt him down from the ground. You think the Air Corps it can cheat us oudt of twenty t'ou—"

"This is an outrage, *Herr Hauptmann*," objected von Holstein. "I demand you apologize. Myself, I shoodt down *Leutnant* Pingham. I will show you proof yedt. Look at the engine of the Spad. My bullets they—"

"*Und* look at the bullets vunce through the bottom," argued the ground Junker. "I did not see you under the Spad, *nein*."

"WELL," chuckled Phineas as he viewed the proceedings from his position on a rock, "go ahead and fight over me. Haw-w-w-w-w!"

"I shoodt down the Spad!" roared the *Rittmeister*. "I show you, *Dumkopf!* My people they are close to the

Kaiser like that, *ja!*" He placed two fingers together.

"I also haff friends by Potsdam," insisted the *Hauptmann*. "*Nein*, I do not ledt the smart Air Force cheat me, *nein*. Always iss it the Air Force they think they are more better as we infantrymen. I show you. In my patrol I haff ten men. You vill try *und* take the Yangkee upstart by force, maybe?" And the *Hauptmann* stuck out his chin belligerently.

"*Ach*, you threaten me, *Hauptmann*," boiled von Holstein. "I vill report you to the High Command. To *Wilhelmstrasse*. I show you. What iss your name? I demand it!"

"*Hauptmann* von Krenz, even if it makes none of your business."

"Make up your minds, bums," cracked Phineas, rubbing a sore shoulder. "I'm hungry and want a place to lay down. D'you think I have just been to a strawberry festival?"

"Right here I stay, Krenz," said von Holstein stubbornly, "*und* I see that I gedt not cheated. You," he shot at his fellows, "return to the field and tell His Excellency of this outrage."

"You should stay yedt, *Rittmeister*," said Krenz, "until you should haff moss on your socks. I *und* my men bring down Pingham. Ve keep him."

"*Donner und Blitzen*," yipped the *Rittmeister*, "for this I break you, Krenz. I—"

"Settle for a dollar ninety-eight, von Holstein," Phineas advised the German flyer.

"*Ach!*" shouted von Holstein suddenly. "We ledt *Herr* Pingham say which. Who shodt you down, which, *Dumkopf?*"

"Don't call me names," retorted Phineas. "If I remember, I sideslipped a cloud and neither of you square-heads is man enough to bring me down. Haw-w-w-w-w!"

"Take the upstart to the roof cellar by the farmhouse yedt," ordered von Krenz. "Two men vill stand guard close by. Twenty t'ousand marks, *ja!* Later I gedt in touch with the High Command. For this I gedt maybe to be *Herr Oberst*."

The German soldiers took Phineas over to a root cellar and locked him in. Two of them remained on guard while the others followed their superior to the farmhouse where the German patrol was located. The *Rittmeister* von Holstein fumed and sputtered and yelled threats until dusk began to pour its dark lotion over the terrain.

In the root cellar Phineas Pinkham sat on an upturned keg and thought the matter over. From the

house came sounds of revelry. Evidently the Jerries were celebrating the great event of *Herr Leutnant Pinkham* being brought to bay at last.

"Well," mused the cause of it all, "it's a long lane that don't turn some place. The *Rittmeister* ain't gittin' the marks. I bet, and that is somethin' to laugh about. I—" His hands, digging deep into his pockets, came into contact with something. Phineas pulled out two masks and studied them for nearly half an hour. Slowly but surely his brain began to conjure up a possible way to freedom.

THE flyer from Boonetown knew that haste was necessary. If more Boche came . . . Silently he groped around the interior of the root cellar, which was in semi-darkness, thanks to some scant twilight seeping in through the cracks. His venturing hands came upon a heap of old turnips. With a satisfied grin he selected one the size of his head, then proceeded to rummage some more. Once he stopped as a Jerry guard stuck his head in through the door. Again he went about his strange task. Lady Luck furnished him with an old rusty axe and a whip boasting a passable lash.

"Cripes!" chortled Phineas. "It might work even if they did steal my good gun but they forgot the other one I carry. Haw-w-w-w-w!" He peeled off his flying coat and wrapped it around an old sack of fertilizer. This he laid on the ground and at one end arranged the turnip. Over the mouldy vegetable he pulled one of the masks and his leather helmet, then stepped back to study the illusion. It was perfect.

Next he went to a crack in the side of the old, half-buried structure, and peered out. The sentries were close together, having a chat.

The venturesome prisoner grinned, picked up the old whip and snapped it. He heard surprised curses outside and then the sound of boots. Phineas picked up the axe and took his position next to the wall. The old door swung open and two Boche looked in. They saw the almost indistinct heap on the floor, a gun beside it. There was the Pinkham face turned upward with its freckles, big nose and complement of red hair.

"Ach, he shoold himself yedt, Hans, *ach, leib*—" He stooped to examine the cadaver more closely. *Whack! Clang! "Donnerv—" Whack! Clank!*

Phineas threw the axe into a corner, gagged both Boche with old strips of burlap, appropriated the dented helmet and coat of one, and hurriedly donned the enemy outfit. After tying up two pairs of Teuton hands and feet, he glanced out through the door.

The fun-making in the farmhouse was still going on. Beyond, in a little field, stood the Albatross ship, and near it sat the *Rittmeister* von Holstein, mentally putting *Herr Hauptmann* von Krenz through a new kind of slow torture.

Phineas picked up a rifle and casually walked toward the German plane. The *Rittmeister* saw him approach, seemingly reached a sudden decision, and jumped to his feet.

"*Schwein!*" he barked. "You will turn over the prop of my plane. Oudt of here I go *und* I would like yedt to see your insolent *Ofizier* move the person of Leutnant Pingham. I go for more ships *und* him I take by force, *ja!*"

"Jar wole," assented Phineas with almost too much avidity, but the *Rittmeister* was too mad to be on guard.

"When I say '*Kontakt*' you pull down, so," instructed von Holstein.

Phineas, all palpitation, stood at the nose of the Albatross and waited. The Boche got into the pit and switched on. Phineas caught the signal and yanked. The prop spun and the Boche engine caught spark. Von Holstein fooled with the gadgets, which gave Phineas time enough to slip to the pit. He stepped up quickly, and as the *Rittmeister* turned his head with stark surprise, the freckled Pinkham's fist crashed against his jaw and turned out the lights.

Feverishly Phineas got up on the fuselage and tugged and hauled von Holstein out of the pit. After tearing away his helmet, he slammed the German on the nose for good measure and dumped him heavily overside. From the farmhouse issued wild yells. Boche were milling about the root cellar. Von Krenz weaved and waltzed around the improvised prison and then began to shoot at the Albatross.

"Von Holstein, the *Schwein!*" he bellowed. "He hass tricked us. He—"

"*Nein,*" yipped another Boche, "the gun here it iss rubber, and the face also, *ach!* It iss Pingham who roon away in the plane, *ja!*" He lifted his rifle and started shooting. Then he got his boots into motion.

The Albatross rolled sluggishly forward, accelerated speed and soon divorced the ground. Guns were going off everywhere and two slugs pierced the wings of the German ship before Phineas could get any altitude.

"Well, if they'd settled fifty-fifty," grinned the amazing Yankee flyer, "they'd have me now, but the crazy squareheads are all hogs and ain't satisfied with half a loaf, haw-w-w!"

PHINEAS took off the steel helmet and tossed it overside, reached into his pocket and pulled out a mask and the *Rittmeister's* leather helmet. Both of these he pulled on over his head and if von Bissinger's sister could have seen him, she would have yelled, "Friedrich!" and thrown her arms around his neck.

"Send me your picture, will ya?" grinned Phineas as he circled. "That Frog kin sure make masks. Well, I'll take a look around as there ought to be—"

His soliloquy snapped short. Over to the left he made out a bulky object squatting on the ground. It was at the edge of a wooded region, and as Phineas continued to circle, he perceived another huge shape crawling out of the wooded clump and waddling alongside the first. Gothas! Three Boche ships purred off his left wing. They came sliding toward him. One of the Boche stared at the tatters on his ship, saluted and skidded away. Phineas wing-slapped a thousand feet, then glided onto the field where two great Gothas were squatting.

"Well, here's where that Frog mask-maker's reputation and my German gits tested," decided the intrepid Yank and he set his wheels down. Three Boche ran out to meet him. They stared at the name on the Albatross and signaled to more Boche. They came running out of the woods.

"*Herr Rittmeister!*" said a tall man with a monocle in greeting. "You honor me by having some Rhine wine und—"

"*Danke schön!*" grunted Phineas from deep in his throat. He spoke German in staccato phrases. "No time—*nein*. I haff information about a Yangkee ammunition dump. Easy it iss. At midnight, *Herr Oberst*—"

He tossed a roll of paper into the officer's hand. Phineas always carried a map or two. They came in handy. This particular one was marked with an X. The location would be two miles west of Souilly. Without another word he jammed in the throttle and skimmed away.

"*Ach!*" exulted the *Herr Oberst*. "The *Rittmeister* he iss clever, *ja!* We vill not go to bomb the *verdammte* Yangkee drome but to Souilly *und* blow up something of more importance. After maybe we drop a bomb or two on *Leutnant* Pingham's Head, *ja!*"

Phineas was laughing, too, as he gunned toward the Ninth Pursuit squadron. Over Clermont two bat flyers piqued at him and began spitting tracers. Spads! Phineas kept on his way and led them a merry chase. Archie fire blazed at him.

The Spads rocketed upward to escape the blasts, but Phineas deviated not an inch and waded right through the flying scrap iron. The Spads lost ground but were right on Phineas' tail as he nosed down to the Ninth Pursuit's field with a ground machine gun trained on his ship and a group of Garrity's buzzards waiting with guns drawn.

The Albatross taxied up to the amazed group. Two Spads landed as Phineas stood up in the pit of the German plane. Lieutenant Bump Gillis and Lieutenant Wilson rolled up and, claimed the person of *Rittmeister* von Holstein.

"Well, I giss we got a horse on Phineas this time," declared Bump as he walked to the Albatross. "C'mon out of there, ya fatheaded Von!"

"Sure, haw-w-w-w-w!" guffawed the man in the Albatross and he whipped off mask and helmet.

"CRIPES!" gasped Bump. "Carbuncle! And we been chasin' him and hootin' at him!"

"Well, I got me the *Rittmeister's* ship, but I couldn't bring him along as I had important business. Where's the Old Man?"

"Here," moaned Garrity feebly. "I've just come to. Where in hell have you been? We've already reported you knocked down and delivered on the hoof to Berlin to be burned at the stake for being a witch, you—"

"Now watch your high blood pressure, major," interrupted Phineas as he jumped to the ground, "as I have got another surprise. These bums won't have to worry about that bunch of Gothas if they'd be over Souilly about midnight tonight. Haw-w-w-w! The Krauts kept them hid in the woods like squirrels. No wonder we couldn't find 'em, the dirty sneaks! Well, I talked to a *Herr Oberst* and give him a map and he's already putting an iron cross on himself. Did I fool the Heinies? Oh, boy! The masks that that Frog in Parea makes—oh, boys, take a look at the mug of the Von."

"It's too much for me," sighed the Old Man.

"Well, it'll be too bad to leave you guys next week," interposed Phineas, shooting a side glance at the bewildered Garrity, "but I'm struck with wanderlust, anyways, and—"

"You what? You'll stay here, savvy?" howled Sir Rufus, whirling in his tracks. "I'm running this outfit!"

At midnight a quartet of Gothas spread ominous shadows over the nocturnal topography near Souilly. The beat of flugmotors sent stray doughs to cover in the back area. Anti-aircraft guns were silent. The Boche bombing officer, map in hand—a map

that bragged of the dirty fingerprints of *Leutnant* Pinkham, though the German did not know it—looked down on the terrain. He should have looked up.

Down from the star-studded ceiling came the Owls of the Ninth Pursuit Squadron. Heinie gunners stopped thinking of home and mother and frantically attempted to stem the flood of Spads. One Boche officer almost fainted at the controls as he saw a ship flash overhead, a white ship with black crosses, and then a searchlight bathed it and Germans stared at the big black letters—“*Rittmeister* von Holstein.” It banked and sent bursts of lead through the Gotha mid-section.

“*Ach*, it iss something wrong somewhere,” grumbled a *Leutnant*, and then the Gotha under him kicked over and went down.

Crawling out of one heap of wreckage, a Boche tumbled to something. The Albatross which had visited them that night had been occupied by a Yankee. *Donnervetter!* Pingham it must be!

Back on the Jerry side *Rittmeister* von Holstein and *Hauptmann* von Krenz were in serious parley.

“Sorry iss it I am, *Herr Hauptmann*, for my words this afternoon,” apologized von Holstein. “It iss agreed then that we haff not *Leutnant* Pingham seen this day, *ja?*”

“So iss it,” agreed *Herr Hauptmann* wearily, fingering a rubber gun. “We must stick together, *Rittmeister*, or we will get the gross dressing down from the High Command. *Ach*, twenty t’ousand marks!” Suddenly he was seized with an idea. “Budt your ship yedt, *Rittmeister*—how will you explain, ha?”

Von Holstein groaned. “Already yedt you think of such big jokes, *Herr Hauptmann*,” he spat out. “*Ach, Gott im Himmel!* He slumped down near the root cellar, rubbed a tender jaw and concentrated on making up an alibi.