



SLEUTHING SYRUP

written and illustrated by
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a
**PHINEAS
PINKHAM**
howl

Solemnly The Who's Who of the Kaiser's Cabinet gathered together and made a momentous decision. Since Phineas "Carbuncle" Pinkham could not be brought down by force in the air, he must be gotten by tricks on the ground. But we all know tricks were Phineas' meat—he always had better ones up his sleeve.

DURING THE EARLY SUMMER of the never-to-be-forgotten year of our Lord, 1918, approximately a ton of Boche on the hoof went into a huddle at Metzerweise, a little Kraut town on the banks of the Moselle. Nothing less than a *Herr Oberst* crashed the gate. They were the "Who's Who" of the Kaiser's front parlor, the high cockalorums of Prussian swat.

As one massive Junker threw his fist toward the ceiling, then brought it down to crash upon the table top, monocles fell away from several eye sockets. Medals tinkled like an anvil chorus on his chest as his high dudgeon manifested itself. He was none other than *der Feldmarschal* von Siedle, the Kaiser's favored war lord at the moment.

"No more we sit yedt *und* wait for the Air Force to make more fools of themselves," he vociferated. "Now it gives even more important action, *ja!* *Der Leutnant* Pingham he must be crushed. The Yangkee upstart

too long has been a *gross* nuisance. His Majesty, the Emperor, iss most displeased. The *Vaterland*—"

"Your Excellency," interrupted another Junker indignantly, "the *Offiziers* of the Imperial Flying Corps resent your words. But for the infantry, *mein Rittmeister* von Holstein would have had the *Leutnant* Pingham in prison camp. To the Kaiser I vill go *und* demand apology. *Donnervetter! Gott im Himmel!*" He jumped up from his chair and began to stamp on the floor. "The infantry they meddled *und* bungled! I—"

"Sit down vunee yedt *und* quick!" thundered von Siedle. "I am in command here, *Herr Oberst*. Better you lock up your tongue or removed you vill be from the Front yedt It iss Kaiser Wilhelm's orders. From now on *und* further the case of *Leutnant* Pingham vill be in the hands of the *Kriegsnachrichtenamt*. *Und* in the hands of the *gross*—" Here von Siedle paused for emphasis. Blue blood pounded faster in Junker veins. Breathing soughed inward.

"Ach," exclaimed the thick-necked war lord, "then *Leutnant* Pingham, his days they are numbered, *ja!*"

"The only way left, gentlemen," snapped von Siedle. "In the air, Pingham he iss having a charmed life. But on the ground where he does not suspect, ha! We vill fool the Yangkee upstart. *Herr Oberst*," he shot at the flying officer, "you will get your orders from me. Schiller will be at your drome as soon as he can leave Belgium. Your job—*und* don't bungle, *Herr Oberst*—" he injected nastily, "is to drop Schiller behind the lines at—" He snatched up a map, tossed it in front of the *Herr Oberst* and stabbed it with a long pudgy digit. "Here iss it the place."

"*Zu Befehl, Excellenz*," snapped the *Herr Oberst* grudgingly. "We will not bungle, *nein!* The air force iss of some use perhaps after all, *ja?*"

"Enough," growled von Siedle, jowls inflated. "You are insolent, *Herr Oberst!*"

The Boche hoched the Kaiser, broke up and voiced their opinions that *Leutnant* Pingham was as good as hog-tied and in a German hoosegaw

BUT there are two sides to every story. On the other side we find Phineas, totally oblivious, of course, to the measures being taken against him by the combined brains of *Wilhelmstrasse*.

It was dawn on the drome of the Ninth Pursuit Squadron. From a distant farmyard came the raucous *reveillé* of a rooster. The eastern horizon was beginning to get rouged up for the day. Major Garrity's flying flag had not yet been hauled up. It was certainly no time for a ship to be knifing out of the sky, but one was coming in, dropping out of the slaty void.

Sergeant Casey, boss of maintenance and repair, swore as he stuck his head out through the door of the petrol shed and sized up the early morning visitor.

The drone of the Rhone engine reached down and palpitated the eardrums of Lieutenant Phineas "Carbuncle" Pingham. It aroused him from a dream in which he had been revelling in the midst of such gastronomic delight as strawberry shortcake. The buxom matrons of the Boonetown Iowa Reaper's Circle were at his elbow, waiting to replenish his plate. The birds were Ringing tweet-tweet. The grass was green on the lawn of the Union Church.

The taste of delectable strawberries vanished, however, as Phineas opened one optic. The dark brown taste of early morning came in its stead. Phineas collected his wits, swore, and jumped out of bed as the humming overhead resolved itself into a deep-throated roar.

"The Boche!" he yipped, reaching for his pants.

"Hey-e-ey, Bump!"

Bump Gillis' snores gurgled into a surprised grunt. He sat up in bed. "Wha-a-a-a-a?"

Phineas looked out through the door and saw a Nieuport job rolling up toward Casey. "Well. I'm a stuttering anteater," he growled. "A Frog this time of the morning! They oughta have a law—" He hurried into some clothes. "The bum! An' them strawb'ries were—" I

"An' I was ridin' up Fifth Avenoo, New Yawk, with Theda Bara," reflected Bump reminiscently. "A guy can't even dream without—"

Phineas ran out onto the field. The Frog was getting out of his ship and hollering at Casey.

"*Bon jour*," he said as Phineas came up. "Petrol, oil and water mus' I have ver' queeck, out."

"Do ya ever go to bed?" yipped Carbuncle. "This is a hell of a time to bust in an'—"

"Ah, I fly when othairs sleep, out," grinned the Frenchman. "I am *le Capitaine* Napoleon La Guse of the French Intelligence Corps. Petrol, oil and water, *M'sieu*, and then I am off—*pouf*—to Paris, out."

"You Frogs always was lucky," growled Phineas. "Paree—huh!" He scratched his head. "Will ya take a letter and mail it there for me, La Goose? It's quicker than A.E.F. mailmen."

"*Mais oui*," said the French flyer. "*Avec plaisir, M'sieu*. Now, if I get ze petrol, oil and—"

"Comin' right up, sir," interjected Sergeant Casey as Phineas nudged him in the ribs. "Yes, sir, *le capitong!*"

Phineas ran to his hut to get the letter for the Frenchman to mail, but why should he wear a grin on his homely face? When he returned, Bump Gillis was right behind him. Howell, Wilson and other pilots, heavy-eyed, trickled from their quarters and looked over *M'sieu le Capitaine* La Guse. From the big stone house came Major Garrity, hitching at his suspenders. He looked at Phineas with his tongue in his cheek, then greeted the Frenchman.

"Good thing I came out," he barked, "or you'd have had water in your gas tank and molasses in your engine, captain. Heard of you, La Guse. How's the business of picking up German spies, eh?"

"Ya heard him," Phineas tossed at Howell. "Always blamin' me even if I don't do nothin'. Well, I wish I'd—" He walked over and handed the French flyer the letter. "Many mercies bowkoop," he said.

"*Ze plaisir* eet is all belong to me," smiled La Guse.

"I wonder," remarked Phineas very softly as he

backed away, leaving the Old Man the center of the stage.

LA GUSE got his petrol, oil and water. He gushed over with gratitude, almost kissed the Old Man, waved to Phineas and stepped aboard his plane. In a few moments he was zooming into the dull ether toward Paris.

“I wonder how they git them Intelligence jobs?” speculated Phineas aloud.

“By being intelligent,” thrust out Major Garrity with savage glee, and walked away chuckling.

“Awright, awright,” retorted Phineas. “I got the crack. Well,” He looked up toward the disappearing La Guse, and one side of his mouth lifted. As he strolled toward his hut, he seemed little perturbed over the mirth that still held forth in the wake of the Old Man.

“Laugh, ya bums,” he mumbled to himself. He was thinking of the letter tucked close to La Guse’s bosom.

A flight took the air fifteen minutes later. They found the playground high over the awakening front choked up with cavorting Albatrosses, white ships each sporting a black stripe around its mid-section. Von Holstein’s circus! Roaring gobs of mayhem! Heretofore they had proved anything but a set-up for the Ninth Pursuit, but on that day they were even tougher than a boarding-house round steak.

As the battle waged, it became apparent that Phineas was stealing the show, but he was not kicking up his heels in the air about it. The Vons had eyes for no other ship than his own. He was like a little piece of singed sugar surrounded by a swarm of hungry flies. They jumped at him in twos, threes and fours. Around the embattled Spad of Phineas Pinkham roared the *mêlée*.

It was apparent that von Holstein’s superior, the *Herr Oberst* von Knackwurst, had instructed his gentlemen to go out and show von Siedle that they could not cheat the Air Corps out of twenty thousand marks, *nein!* Never mind the rest of the people who made up the Allied force. Gedt Pingham! It can be said that the Albatrosses were doing their best, but such tactics do not hang trophies on Teuton barrack walls. The offensive was like a punch-drunk pug hitting himself in the jaw.

Albatross ships pounded down on Phineas. Spads followed hard on their tails. In his eagerness to get Phineas Pinkham, von Holstein forgot a lot of things about combat tactics. Howell and his buzzards began to thin out the haywire ships. Von Holstein, one flipper

hanging by a thread, an aileron gone democratic, finally pulled out and said to hell with the *Herr Oberst*. There was no place six feet under ground to spend twenty thousand marks.

Back home, Phineas got out of his Spad and pinched himself from chin to insteps. “I still don’t believe it,” he said after the inventory. “There must be some holes in me some place.”

“What a flight!” enthused Howell. “I could hardly fly from laughing.”

“You would have fun settin’ orphan asylums afire, ya bum,” declared Phineas. “Well, I paint off all them damn things I got on my ship from now on. If the whole Heinie air force can’t lick me, I should worry about von Holstein, hey?”

“You lame-brained baboon,” howled Bump Gillis, “what did ya think we was doin’ up there, huh? You—”

“I was wonderin’,” cracked Carbuncle. “You all acted like you was lookin’ for butterflies or somethin’—”

“That’s enough, by cripes,” stormed Howell. “The next time we’ll shove you into the Heinies, and then run. That’s gratitude for you, guys! From now on when we’re upstairs, make believe you don’t know him.”

“Don’t,” mocked Phineas. “It’s too much. I cry awful easy.”

“I’m going to get pie-eyed right, now,” snapped Captain Howell and he headed for the big stone house.

PILOTS were imbibing when Phineas entered a few minutes later. There was a glass of amber fluid resting on a table near Bump Gillis. Before anyone could cry out, Phineas had picked up the glass, tipped back his head and drained the contents.

“Ugh!” groaned Lieutenant Pinkham. “Ugh! Ow-w-w-w-w!”

“The bum has swallered the fly poison,” thundered Howell. “Quick, get a doctor! Oh—cripes—”

“Cough it up, Phineas,” implored Bump Gillis. “Of all the damn fools, you—”

“I’m dyin’,” groaned Phineas. “Somebody git a paper an’ pencil quick. I wanna write—”

Squadron Headquarters went into a panic. The Old Man came out of Wings and turned the color of a clam when he was given the bad news.

“Get a car!” he bellowed. “Get a doctor! Get some flour and water. Get some—” He ran to the door and yelled at everybody in sight.

“Haw-w-w-w-w-w-w-w-w-w!”

The Old Man whirled like a top, spun twice before he could get a grip on himself. Phineas had assumed

the vertical and apparently was in the best of health. He rolled up a sleeve and brought a strange-looking contraption into view.

"It's a swell trick," he was explaining. "I fooled a lot of Limeys once with it. I drank the bums under a table. It's a tube that goes down your sleeve an'—"

Phineas ducked in time. The Old Man's favorite pipe smashed against the opposite wall.

"Stand up and let me hit you, you fathead," erupted Garrity as he leaped from the door. "I'll take off my coat. Man to man, that's what!" He chased Phineas all around the room until the Boonetown trickster finally lined up the open door and dived to safety.

Somebody obligingly handed Sir Rufus the wreck of his pipe. In the next second it bounced off the retriever's head. Major Rufus swore and asked if anybody wanted to fight. Late that afternoon a Nieuport came again to the Ninth Pursuit. The manner in which it landed seemed to reflect the irate condition of the pilot. Out of the ship stepped La Guse, wearing a uniform that fitted him like a hangar. His fingers scratched at various parts of his anatomy as he stamped toward squadron headquarters. Five minutes later Phineas Pinkham was on his way to Wings on the heels of an orderly.

"That is the peeg, is *chien, le*—" La Guse yipped as Phineas appeared. "I am almos' near Paris when everything in the world she bites me. I cannot fly from scratching, Majair. I am all in spasms, *oui!* I almos' crack up as I land. I tak' off ze uniform and what do I see?" He paused and stared at the Old Man.

"Well, don't ask me riddles," snapped Garrity. "What did you see?"

"You I show, Majair," explained La Guse, reaching inside his coat. "The letter the lieutenant he give me. She is full of ze ant, *M'sieu*. Ze awful red ant. Zey crawl all over me. Zey bite an' bite an'—I tak' off ze uniform, soak her in a pond—*oui*—ah—"

"Haw-w-w-w-w!" guffawed Phineas. "I give ya the wrong letter. Well, that's a horse on ya, Capitong. I—"

"Laugh, ees eet?" roared La Guse. "You delay ze offisair of the Intelligence, *oui?* For this I see Foch, *oui!* An' Petain an' ze General Persheelng! No, I weel not. I weel challenge you to ze duel. See, I heet you' face, so!" And La Guse's leather glove slammed against Phineas' jaw.

"Okay, ya bum," howled Phineas. "I'll fight ya a duel right now. I'll knock ya bowlegged, ya—"

"Get out of here, Pinkham," bellowed the Old Man. "Get out! I'll make up my mind what I'll do with you,

and it won't be anything easy like going to Blois. You half-baked—"

"Ze duel," hissed La Guse, eyes glittering. "Ah, *sacré bleu*—I weel steek heem like ze peeg. Nevair mind *le lieutenant, Majair*. I weel mak' heem weesh he never make ze insult to *M'sieu le Capitaine La Guse*. *Oui!* That ees all. *Au revoir*."

A DAY or two later than the events just recorded, the *Herr Oberst* von Knackwurst reluctantly reported to von Sledle that the air force had successfully carried out their part of the secret offensive against the Yankee, *Leutnant Pinkham*. *Herr Oberst* von Knackwurst wished a certain gentleman known as Number Nine a lot of luck, but not too much.

Number Nine, however, was an individual worth an entire regiment to the Allies. Number Nine had harassed the Allied cause for two years. He seemed to be everywhere at once. No one seemed to know what he looked like, not even those fighting for Potsdam. He was far cleverer than the devil himself. Schiller, he was called, but that was all that was known about him. He was as easy to ferret out as a colored gentleman in the middle of a coal pile at midnight.

Von Holstein rode the sky lanes madder than two March hares, Phineas Pinkham was content to dodge the Junker until his ingenious mental machinery could evolve a fitting offensive. So a week passed, and then another one took its place for seven days. Then it came about that Phineas Pinkham went into Bar-le-Duc for the express purpose of seeing Babette. First he walked into the Cafe of the Red Cow to lubricate his throat. And there Adventure reached out and plucked him by the elbow. At a table sat his latest aversion, Captain La Guse of the French Intelligence Corps. With him was a *femme* of unquestionable beauty. Dark eyes took Phineas in. She nudged La Guse.

"Bon swat!" grinned Phineas to La Guse. "Has she got a friend!"

"*Cochon!* Peeg!" snapped La Guse. "More as ever I want fight with you se duel, Lieutenant Peenkham. I weel—"

The *mademoiselle's* breath was sucked in quite audibly.

"Ze great Lieutenant Peenkham, *n'est ce pas?*" she said, getting up from her chair. "Ah—Mitzi Aubert of ze Follies Bergere, she always have say she weel meet ze great Americain, Phineeyas Peenkham. *Mais oui*, you weel dreenk *avec mois, oui?*"

"Can a cat smear mice?" chuckled Phineas,

easing himself into a chair. “Fancy meetin’ you here, Capitong!”

“You *et Is Capitaine*, you have meet, *oui?*” purred Mitzi. “Ah, ze *Capitaine*, he been tell me how he weel capture ze great Number Nine. Ah, ze brave men I love.”

“He couldn’t find a chipmunk in a shoe box,” grinned Phineas. “Now wait until ya hear about some real stunts. Once when I was attacked by seven Boche, I—”

“This is ze outrage!” stormed La Guse, jumping to his feet “I am insult ze once more. By Jeanne d’Arc, I have ze sateesfaction! *Sacré!* I am bite by ze ant I have *la petite mam’selle* and you take her from under ze nose. Peeg, *m’sieu!* See, I heet you, see, *encore!*” *Whap! Blop!* The Captain La Guse seemed to disappear.

“Slap me again, would he, the bum! Well, I’ll fight him with guns, axes, barrel staves, knives, anvils, or anythin’. I’ll—”

They picked up the Frenchman yards away, untangled him from the ruins of a chair and stood him against the wall until the buzzing in his head stopped. La Guse’s vision having cleared, he shook his fist at Lieutenant Pinkham.

“*Chien!*” he roared. “In *une—deux—trois* night I have ze revenge. *Sacré bleu!*”

“Go swaller a snail,” derided the irrepressible flyer from Iowa.

“Swell playmates ya have,” he said to the *mademoiselle*. “Hey, garson, coneyac, brandy, van blank, everythin’ in the joint!”

“*Le Capitaine* mak’ the dangerous enemy,” said Mitzi. “Ze bes’ duellist in France, *M’sieu*. I am soree I mak’ se trouble—”

“I’ll blow him out like a light,” bragged Phineas with a grin.

Phineas and his new flame drank and talked, talked and drank. The evening slipped away fast. Soon he bade Mitzi of the Follies Bergers *adieu*, but not until a date had been arranged for two nights hence.

“Well, it ain’t my fault the dames run after me,” he chuckled to himself as he made his way down the street. “They know class when they see it. If them bums back at the barber shop in Boonetown could git a load of me tonight, oh, boys!” Suddenly he bethought himself of Babette. Then he shrugged away his momentary alarm. “Huh, everythin’s fair in love an’ war,” he declared. “I ain’t takin’ no veil for no dame.” He walked on whistling.

AN HOUR or two after Phineas had turned off the primrose path a Gotha was spotted over Bar-Je-Duc. It circled overhead once or twice, ducked a blast from an archie battery and seemed content to drop two bombs on the outskirts of the town as it droned back toward Germany. Tame conduct for a Boche bomber which had risked the perils of a trip so far into Allied territory.

Von Holstein and his towheads made another bid for the Pinkham scalp late the next day. The coveted Spad, however, bore no specifying insignia, and the Von flew himself dizzy in an attempt to get close enough to each and every Spad to identify some freckles and a set of buck teeth.

Despite this advantage, however, Phineas came very close to being kicked into his reward, or whatever awaited him on the other side of the River Styx. His mind had not been on his work. He saw a pair of alluring dark optics in front of his guns, a pair of cerise lips. The exotic whiff of black narcissus was in his nostrils. He heard nothing but Mitzi’s musical laugh.

Lady Luck mercifully took him by the hand and led him out of the *mêlée* with no more than a red ridge across the bridge of his nose. Phineas was covering this with adhesive tape when a big Renault barged onto the field. It rolled up to the French farmhouse and unloaded two Frog brass hats and one American brigadier. The Frenchmen were waving their arms like a pair of human windmills and chattering like so many lemurs.

Inside they cornered Garrity. “Ze Intelligence Corps it ees not to be upside down turned by your offisairs, *m’sieu*,” one of them yelled. “Already a duel it ees be made by *le Capitaine* La Guse and your Lieutenant Peenkham, *oui!* Ah, in wan—two—free mont’ maybe the *cochon* Peenkham he have *la guerre* declared between *la belle France* and *L’Etats Unis*, Majair. We demand action, *vite!* Peenkham he meets La Guse in Bar-le-Duc. He heet La Guse in the eye, *oui*. Ze peeg—”

“Oh, yeah?” came a very indignant voice from the doorway. Phineas stood there glowering. The Old Man gritted his teeth and was about to speak, but the Boonetown flyer drowned him out.

“La Goose slammed me again,” he said, “because his dame left him flat when she seen me. She ain’t crazy. But no Frog is gonna use me for no punchin’ bag. Ya ain’t got nothing on me. Major. The Frog walloped me first an’—”

“This duel,” snapped the American brigadier, “will not take place. Garrity, I hold you responsible for

Pinkham. You will be a civilian quicker than you can say 'scat' if the amicable relations between the French and the American forces are allowed to be strained. You understand?"

"Very well," growled the Old Man, a great hope dying in his breast. "There will be no duel, sir, if I have to tie the lop-eared, freckled buzzard to a tree for the duration of the war. But it wasn't such a bad idea," he added, shooting a scathing glance at Phineas. "La Guse invented duels, and it would have been a swell sight to see—"

The American officer suppressed a grin with effort. "I see, Major," he concluded, "but you have my orders. Carry them out or else—"

"*Merci, merci,*" beamed the Frog brass hats. "We have ze word of *M'sieu le Capitaine* La Guse that if Lieutenant Pinkham mind hees beez-ness, *le capitaine* will not mak' ze more trouble, *oui. Bon soir, m'sieu.*"

"Haw-w-w-w-w-w!" jeered Phineas as he left Wings. "I knew the Frog was yellor."

The brigadier's jaw muscles grew as hard as rhino hide. He had been used to a little respect in the war. Occasionally he enjoyed a salute.

"The fresh whelp," he growled. "Can't discipline him, eh, Garrity? Maybe I'll arrange to send somebody down here who can. Good day to you."

THAT night the Old Man reached the mess table to find Phineas hogging the floor as usual.

"Can y' imagine the Frogs sendin' a cootie like La Goose or La Juice, or whatever they call 'im, to git the great Number Nine? Haw-w-w-w-w!" The Boonetown miracle worker was holding forth. "Well, if I had a pull an' could git into the Intelligence, I'd snag that Kraut myself. I—"

"Huh!" coughed up Garrity with nausea. "Did it ever occur to you, you ape, that there might be a guy in this world as smart as you?"

"They ain't proved it yet," retorted Phineas. "I giss I'll ask to be transferred into the Intelligence Corps, as if the Heinie spy is ever gonna be caught, a Pinkham will grab him. I had a grandfather that was president of Scotland Yard once an'—"

"Shut up!"

"Awright," said Phineas, "I can take a hint. I know when to stop. It's gittin' so a guy ain't got no right to even pick his teeth without askin' an'—"

"I want to tell you something else, you fathead," bellowed Garrity. "If you ever go to Bar-le-Duc or any place else without first asking me, you'll be busted

higher than a kite! And if you do ask me, I will say NO! Does that mean anything to you?"

"Oh, sure," answered the intrepid one. "It means all you bums are jealous because I got me a swell new dame."

The Old Man suddenly lost his appetite. He left the room and decided upon a long walk, a trek which would take him across the Alps into Austria, thence to Russia and Siberia.

Just as you have guessed, Phineas Pinkham did go to Bar-le-Duc on the night of his tryst with Mitzi Aubert. He made a detour in a Spad far over the lines and into German ozone. He went with Howell and Bump Gillis and the rest and on the way back ran into von Holstein and some of his Albatrosses. The Von made a desperate bid to bag Phineas for his alma mater and the *Herr Oberst*. His Albatross whistled down past a Spad, and the occupant of the Yankee ship succumbed to an overpowering, albeit dangerous, impulse and placed the tip of a thumb to his nose.

"Pingham!" roared von Holstein triumphantly. "*Ach! Himmel!*" He got on Phineas' tail, lined him up and let the Spandaus roar. The Spad rocked crazily, fell over on one wing and went twisting down.

"Ya-a-a-ah!" enthused the Junker pilot. "Von Siedle will us cheat, *ja?*" Then bullets began to sing in his ears. He shot up, joined another pair of Albatross scouts and then decided to pull out. He was anxious to tell the *Herr Oberst* that the great *Leutnant* Pingham would soon be picked up by the Boche infantry.

"Well, I had to have some excuse to land," chuckled the amazing Carbuncle as he headed for Bar-le-Duc. At five hundred feet he roared over the terrain until he picked out a landmark. Howell and A flight went home to tell the Old Man some bad news.

NIGHT in Bar-le-Duc. In a house on a dark side street Phineas was delighting Mitzi Aubert with his repertoire of tricks. Mitzi was dazzling, and Phineas had a hard time keeping his mind on his work. When the Boonetown flyer sent a mechanical mouse rolling across the floor, Mitzi looked at it with surprise for fully a minute before she let out the orthodox feminine yelp. Phineas took time out to scratch his head on that one, and then a knock came to the door.

"Ah, eet will be Henri, my brothair, *oui,*" said the girl, and ran to the door to fling it open. A French officer stood there; his arms reached out and engulfed the delectable morsel that was Mitzi.

"Henri," she exclaimed, "now you meet ze great brave Lieutenant Peenkham, *oui?*"

“*Voilà!*” enthused the officer. “Eet ees ze g-great pleasaire, *m’sieu*. Henri Aubert eet ees I, Lieutenant. Of ze Algerian forces, *oui*. Ah, eet ees *tres bien* for that I see you, *m’sieu*. Much have I hear of ze g-great Peenkham.”

“You’re just in time to see one of my swell tricks.” responded Lieutenant Pinkham. For some strange reason Phineas did not seem overjoyed at the interruption. “Some brandy, *ma cherie*, an’ a pinch of salt. Into a bowl you will put it, wee I It’s a spooky trick,” the jokester went on to explain. “I take a snake out of my mouth, wee! The brandy and salt will make a swell spooky light for the trick. Watch me very closely, *ma cherie*.”

Phineas touched a match to the salted spirits in the bowl. A light tinged the room a weird, ghostly color. The faces of the occupants took on a ghastly hue. Under her rouge Mitzi’s cheeks seemed like those of an old crone. The red of her lips was entirely invisible. Her eyes seemed like dark drab hollows. Henri Aubert sent a tongue sliding along his dry lips.

“*Nom de Dieu!*” he breathed in a strained voice. “Thees ees horrible, *n’est-ce pas?*”

“Oh, I cannot stand it,” squealed Mitzi. “*Non, Pheenyas, non!*”

“Awright,” said Boonetown’s Merlin, “awright. I don’t wanna scare ya.” His eyes were narrowed to slits as he blew out the flame. A long sigh of relief issued from Mitzi’s depths. Henri Aubert laughed. Phineas seemed in a fog as he settled in a chair and drew out some cigarettes.

“A dreenk we have to ze brave Lieutenant Pinkham,” proposed Henri. He reached for a small decanter standing on the mantel.

“*Oui, oui*,” agreed the girl. “Eet ees a special cognac.”

Three glasses were poured out. One was handed to Phineas. The flyer lifted his in acknowledgment of the toast, then turned away a trifle as he drained the contents.

“Swell coneyac,” he declared, setting down the glass. “Whew!”

Minutes passed. The conversation among, the three lagged. Phineas felt very tired. There seemed to be a ball of cotton rammed down his throat. Mitzi and Henri were becoming blurred. A little voice rang in his ears, a warning voice. Too late? Phineas’ head fell back against the chair.

“Number Nine, you are very clever, *ja?*” The voice was hoarse, very low.

“That is what they say, *mein Freund*,” came the reply. “His eye, it iss bright; look, I lift the lid. *Ach*, the stupid flying corps! Number Nine at last does that which he promised. We must work quick, *ja*. The plane it will be at the place in an hour. The sack, you have it? Outside the car iss waiting.”

“And you, Sch—”

“I have yet other things to do. Hurry, *Dumkopf*. I remain behind the lines yet. We haff to work very swiftly. *Ach, der Leutnant* Pinkham in the bag. Delivered to von Siedle. For this there iss nothing I cannot haff, nein.

“You are clever, Number Nine. *Gott!*”

Five minutes later Henri Aubert walked out of the secluded house with a heavy sack over his shoulder. This was deposited very unceremoniously in the back of the tonneau. A girl whispered an *Auf Weidersehn* and then the car purred away into the night.

THREE miles from Bar-le-Duc a Boche two-seater landed. The pilot left the Mercedes turning over and peered anxiously into the gloom shrouding Allied territory. Soon the headlights of the big closed car sabered the murk. The machine rumbled up. The driver lifted an arm as he jammed on the brakes. The Boche pilot climbed down.

“*Der Tag!*” he muttered.

“*Gut*,” exclaimed a muffled voice. The owner opened a door and stabbed a finger into the regions of the back of the car. The pilot’s teeth flashed white as he bent over to look.

Kerwhap! The Boche uttered a strangled cry, then crumpled to the sod.

“Haw-w-w-w-w!” guffawed a to-us-familiar voice. “That drink trick is a swell one. An’ when I burned that light, what did I see, huh? Haw-w-w-w! I’ll tell ya later, Kraut.” He bent down and lifted the limp figure, loading it in on top of Henri. Then Phineas wiped his hands and got into the driver’s seat once more. Soon the car was headed back to Bar-le-Duc.

“That was a close one,” mused Phineas. “Haw-w-w-w-w! Was Henri or Number Nine or whoever he is surprised when I conked him on the back of the neck! Me an’ Monte Cristo gittin’ out of a sack with a knife. Haw-w-w-w-w! Well, I got a date now with the dame.”

No sooner was the car rolling into town than a familiar figure flagged Phineas. In the dim light the Boonetown flyer recognized Captain Napoleon La Guse.

“Say, ya bum, don’t ya ever go to bed?” yipped Phineas as he stopped the car. “What in hell—”

“Lieutenant Peenkham, friends we are once again, *oui*? Your sheep I mus’ have it, out. Number Nine they say he ees in Luneville. My Nieuport she ees not in repair, *non*. Eef this great favor you do for me, eet ees for France, the Allies, *M’sieu*. I implore you. Look I even get on my knees, *oui*. The Boche devil, Number Nine, I catch and I will say—”

Phineas hid a grin. “Sure, take the Spad,” he said. He let in the clutch of the machine and it shot away.

In the room of the house of skullduggery sat a man at a dressing table. He was rubbing rouge from his lips. In place of sleek black hair there was a close-cropped blond thatch. He was chuckling. Number Nine, Germany’s greatest spy and female impersonator, was chuckling.

“*Ach*, we Germans,” he said as he wiped his cheeks with a rag. “Tomorrow I go out dressed like a—”

“Frankfurter!” shot out a gloating voice. Number Nine whirled and reached for a gun. But there was one already pointing at him. It was clutched in the hand of Phineas Pinkham.

“Shouldn’t leave your door open,” advised the miracle worker with a chuckle. “A swell dame like you. Haw-w-w-w! That was a swell trick. I got most of that dope soothing syrup up my sleeve, ya bum. I swal-lered some so it would look good. Awright, Mitzi, git on some clothes an’ I’ll take ya down to join Henri. An’ I want that coneyac as them bums but there might be wakin’ up.”

“*Ach, Gott*,” exclaimed Number Nine. “The All Highest was right You are not human. I should have killed you quick. But the twenty thousand marks—I had to have proof. *Ach! Donnervetter!*”

AT THE crack of dawn Phineas Pinkham drove onto the drome of the Ninth Pursuit with his load of two German spies and one pilot And at the same time Captain Napoleon La Guse was walking home from the wreck of a Spad, cursing one Lieutenant Pinkham to the skies. How could La Guse know that Number Nine had instructed his partner in crime to tamper with the Pinkham ship? The Germans were thorough. If Phineas by chance had escaped one trap, the Spad had been fixed up as another.

Stunned pilots looked on as Phineas Pinkham unloaded the prisoners from the car. Major Garrity, in his underwear, stared goggle-eyed at that which Phineas pointed out as Number Nine. The great master spy. The invincible Schiller. Number Nine.

Number Nine had one cheek rouged, earrings in his ears. He had on a woman’s blouse and a pair of French

officer’s pants. His feet were still encased in a pair of ladies’ patent leather pumps and a pink garter had slipped down one limb, ringing his ankle.

“Haw-w-w-w!” mocked Phineas. “The great Number Nine! Only a sissy. Haw-w-w-w!”

The Old Man sat down on the wet doorstep and rubbed his eyes.

“Cripes!” breathed Bump Gillis.

“I still think Carbuncle’s a liar,” declared Howell.

“Yeah?” said Phineas. “This ain’t all. Outside of Barley Duck is a nice Boche two-seater. I’m givin’ it to the Old Man for his birthday. Haw-w-w-w!”

Slowly Garrity got to his feet “L-Lock th-the b-bums up,” he stuttered. “I’m g-goin’ back to sleep. When I wake up and they’re still here, I’ll believe it. But I know it’s a dream. You can’t kid the Old Man. G-Goo’-night.”

Major Rufus found out that it was not a dream. The next day the wires buzzed and burned from the Swiss border to the Channel, from Potsdam to Barcelona, Spain. Number Nine was hooked. Hooked by the *verdamm*t *Leutnant* Pinkham. Cars clogged the drome of the Ninth. Brass hats ran wild. Major Garrity walked around in a stooped posture from slaps on the back. Phineas was kept busy bending his fingers into shape after every handshake. He was a hero now, if he had never been before. General Pershing sent his congratulations to Carbuncle and the Ninth.

“Yep,” said Phineas to a big grinning general, “when I made that funny light with the booze an’ salt, I began to git wise to Mitzi. Under the paint an’ whitewash I saw a different mug, an’ it never was in no Follies Bergere, haw-w-w-w-w! I thought it was funny when she was slow yellin’ at the mouse I rung in on her. Well, I giss the squareheads will respect me now.”

But there was one man in France who looked upon Phineas Pinkham as anything but a hero. *M’sieu le Capitaine* Napoleon La Guse. A day or two later, when the drome had been cleared of brass hats, the captain came in and accused Phineas of an attempt to deliberately murder him.

“Huh?” grinned Carbuncle as pilots drew close. “Ya mean that ship was fixed to conk? Well, I’m a—it was Number Nine, I bet, an’ is it a horse on you? Haw-w-w-w! Some dame ya had, huh, Capitong?”

Whap! A glove caressed Phineas’ big nose. “Ze duel I challenge you, *M’sieu*. Lies you tell. You feex up the Spad so to crash me, out. Tomorrow night eet ees in the woods near Boncouer’s squadron. Peeg! *Chien!*”

“Awright, awright,” snapped Phineas. “You’re gittin’ to be an awful pest. I’ll fight ya right now! An’ I name my weapons. I have got two duelling swords I grabbed in a Frog chateau. If ya want to crawl out, just say so, ya—”

“*Sacre bleu!*” howled La Guse. “I weel slit your throat, *cochon!*” He drew a digit across his own throat in a very significant gesture.

“Out in back of the hangars, then,” snapped Major Garrity. “But look here, La Guse, no *coup de grace*, understand?”

“*Mais, oui, m’sieu,*” purred the Frenchman. “I weel jus’ mabbe cut off ze ear or mabbe ze piece of nose, *oui?* I mak’ the homely *cochon* look more funny as he looks *maintenant, comprenez vous!*”

“I’ll git the swords,” said Phineas and he nudged Major Garrity. The Old Man turned. Phineas pointed to something. The Old Man nodded, and at last he and Phineas Pinkham were in cahoots.

A FEW seconds later Phineas returned with the implements of war. The captain of French Intelligence examined them and stamped them with his approval. “Ah, ze blades, they are balm to my han’s, ah!”

“Captain, we will drink on this occasion, eh, what?” suggested Garrity. “A toast to the winner and to the loser, *oui?*”

“*Oui, oui,*” assented La Guse. “Always ze gentlemen dreenk to such an occasion.”

The Old Man poured out four drinks. One for Phineas, one for Bump Gillis, one for La Guse and one for Howell.

“It’s too bad there’s not enough to go around,” apologized Phineas. “Well, here’s mud in your eye, La Juice.” He drained the glass.

The personnel of the Ninth milled toward the rear of B flight’s hangar. They formed a big circle around the combatants. Sentries were posted to insure against interference by visiting brass hats. Captain La Guse whipped his blade through the air, then yawned.

“Ah, not much the sleep I have get, *non.* Tonight, ah, tonight I sleep like ze new babe.”

Bump Gillis’ eyes, too, were becoming very hard to keep open. He gaped, rubbed them and looked at Phineas. It was apparent that Phineas Pinkham had never been acquainted with duelling swords. He held his in both hands like a shovel as he waited for the word from Garrity. La Guse yawned again and then began to warm up.

“He’s some knife slinger,” commented Bump sleepily. “Ah-h-h!”

Major Garrity looked at Phineas. The Boonetown flyer nodded.

“On guard,” snapped the Old Man.

La Guse started violently. “Ah-h-h, wha-a-asat, *M’sieu?* Ah, *oui,* ze duel! I weel slit ze P-Peenkham—gullet open an’—ah-h-h-h!” After the prodigious yawn he rushed at Phineas. Carbuncle sidestepped and waved his sword around his head. Something seemed to reach at the Frenchman’s legs and drag him down. The sword seemed to change to a wagon tongue. He could barely lift it.

Bump Gillis was stretched out on the greensward, totally oblivious to his surroundings. His snores churned out a duet with those of Captain Howell. Pilots looked at each other foolishly. Sir Rufus laughed and looked at La Guse. His knees were sagging. There was a silly look on his face. The sword slipped from his fingers like a rattle tumbles from a slumbering baby’s fist. La Guse slumped to the horizontal and dreamed of a little cottage on the banks of the Loire.

“That booze Mitzi drinks is hot stuff, huh?” chortled Phineas to Garrity. “Well, them three guys will sleep for twenty-four hours an’ after that they’ll be good as new. That’s a swell drinkin’ trick of mine, huh?” And he fumbled up his sleeve, pressed something and amber liquid spurted to the grass.

“Wha-a-a-at happened?” asked the captain of French Intelligence when he awoke. “Ah—I—ah, ze duel! I mus’ get up an’ fight ze *cochon.*”

“Fight him?” said Garrity. “You have already. He hit you over the head and you’ve been talkin’ to yourself ever since, La Guse.”

“Ah, *sacre bleu. Nom de chien!*” he roared. “My head, she splits! Ze peeg he beat me? He—”

Bump Gillis staggered into his hut, pawing at his eyes.

“S-Say,” he yelled, “wh-where’s that big ape, Carbuncle Pinkham? I’ll kill ’im! He—”

A big paw reached out and pushed Lieutenant Gillis out through the door. “And if you come in again,” the Old Man roared, “I’ll bust you!”

“Ah-h-h,” groaned Captain La Guse. “Nevair should I come to Bar-le-Duc.”

“Shake,” said the Old Man.