

Bomb Voyage

By Joe Archibald
A Phineas Pinkham Mirthquake

That idea Phineas had for trapping half the German Air Force was good. G.H.Q. liked it. Even Major Rufus Garrity took to it. Oh, yes, there was a catch. Half the German Air Force had to fall for it, too.

MAJOR RUFUS GARRITY, C.O. of the turbulent Ninth Pursuit Squadron, slammed to the desk the letter he had been reading and swiveled about in his chair to face a quizzical sergeant-major. At the same time an orderly placed a sandwich and a glass of milk at the irate major's elbow.

"Can you imagine that?" the Old Man bellowed. "That piece of property I told you about—I bought it just before I came into the big fuss. Half my dough sunk into it. Now it's not worth a plugged dime. Somebody built a slaughterhouse on the next corner. I'll see about this, by cripes! I'll protest. I—by cripes, am I mad, Williams! I could eat nails." The major amplified his explosion with some expletives, then picked up the sandwich. He sank his teeth into it deep. *Cr-rack!*

The sergeant-major shuddered. That sound had been the giving way of a piece of molar. Major Rufus Garrity let out a surprised howl, dropped the sandwich and probed into his mouth with an investigating forefinger. In a moment he fished out five dollars' worth of porcelain and stared at it fully a minute before he went berserk.

"By cripes!" he yelled, leaping out of his chair. "Somebody'll sweat for this. Where's that orderly? Hey, you—" His eyes fell to the remains of the sandwich lying on the floor. Protruding from a piece of bread was the head of a ten-penny nail. The Old Man stooped to pick it up.

"A nail, eh?" he roared. "Well, that blankety-blank mess monkey! You see it, Williams? It's a nail!"

"Yes, sir," said the sergeant-major. "It looks like one. It is a nail."

"Orderly! Orderly!" barked the Old Man, stamping around and flailing his fists in the air. "I want that mess—"

The door opened. Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham, face split by a wide grin, saluted in his most haphazard fashion.

"Whatever you want," the Old Man ripped out, "the answer is no! Get out."

"You better listen," said Phineas, "as it's official business and who else can I see, huh? I've got a swell idea and—"

The major's eyes narrowed as Phineas's gaze centered on the nail which the C.O. held in his hand.

"That ain't safe to use for a toothpick," Phineas advised. "You might rip out a fillin' or—"

"Don't know anything about this, huh?" snapped Garrity, shoving the nail under the Pinkham nose. "Weren't around the kitchen five minutes ago, were you?"

"I don't eat between meals," replied Phineas. "An' don't go blamin' anything on me. I come to talk on official business and if you won't listen, well, it's your hard luck."

"I'll listen," the Old Man said, face as hard as the side of a rock quarry, "and make it fast! I've got to skin a mess monkey."

"Yeah?" queried the tidings-bearer. "What did he do? Huh, well—to git down to business. I got an idea to get a mess of Krauts over here to knock down. It'll bring 'em right at a place where we can shellac 'em with everything we got to shoot. This Krantz, the squarehead spy I caught—" Phineas paused and shoved out his chest—"I'm goin' to drop his clothes and personal effects over into Germany and sew a map into the linin' of his suit. I guess that's the old Pinkham brain clickin', huh? Well, we'll take the real map we found on the bum and copy another—er—I already got it

done and it's a fake, and around one place I put a circle which says it's, a swell supply base. The squareheads will think we didn't find the map and they'll come over maybe tomorrow if I drop the clothes tonight, and will we be waitin', huh?"

"We won't!" ripped out Garrity. "If that's all you've got to do, you crackpot, I'll find something—"

"Awright," interrupted Phineas indignantly, "awright, if that's the way you want to act. You needn't think you can look to me for no help when you git into a jam. Well, adoo. I got a job to finish. I've got another swell idea but I'm goin' to keep it to myself. I been workin' on it now for—" He clipped off his words and turned about, pulling a handkerchief from his pocket to sneeze. Several objects came with the handkerchief and jingled to the floor.

"Huh," grinned the idea man, "nails! Huh, I was usin' 'em to—" But that was as far as Phineas got by way of explanation. Major Rufus Garrity leaped clear of the floor. His fingers, crooked claw like, made for the Pinkham throat. However, the Old Man fetched up against the door just as it slammed shut. He bounced back like a beach ball and hit the floor on his angel bones.

"Get him!" yelled the Ninth's C.O. to no one in particular, as he groped to his hands and knees. "Get him! He's under arrest. Assault—superior officer—insub—criminal assault—er—"

"But—er—sir," hesitated the sergeant-major in a squeaky voice. "You—er—attacked him, sir. It was self-de—"

MAJOR RUFUS got to his feet and glared at Williams. The sergeant-major edged toward the door. A sound like steam escaping from a locomotive engine hissed from the Old Man's throat. One finger probing at his outraged tooth, the C.O. stumbled to his chair and slumped down. For fully fifteen minutes his blazing optics stared into space. The sergeant-major felt a chill when he saw the Old Man's lips begin to curl into the semblance of a grin.

"You know, Williams," he purred suddenly, "that idea of Pinkham's isn't so bad, now I begin to think it over. You see—er—Williams, Pinkham will have to fly over and drop Krantz's clothes if we try the ruse, eh, what?"

"Yes, sir," Williams countered, feeling sorry for Phineas.

The Old Man rubbed the palms of his hands together. "I expect some big brains from the Wing today. I'll drop the idea into their laps," he went on. "Hm-mm! Well, it's not such a bad war."

The big brains of the Wing came over the Ninth Pursuit Squadron later in the day. They arrived while Phineas Pinkham was absent from the drome. The man from Boonetown, disciple of everything that is not what it is supposed to be, was attending to mysterious business over near Dommartin. A Flight had done its share in the sky for the day. Phineas had wheedled a motorcycle from the E.O. and, with three cans of paint and a coil of white clothesline, had chugged out of the drome toward the lines.

The men from the Wing listened to Major Rufus Garrity. One was very enthusiastic about the whole affair.

"Looks as if it would work, Garrity," he enthused. "Once we got the raiders over that spot, we could mash 'em with anti-aircraft and have two or three dozen pursuit planes scrag them before they could get back to Germany."

The Wing representatives lent their ears willingly. The upshot of it was that Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham was to fly over into Germany at dusk and toss Krantz's duds down into German real estate where they would do the most good.

When Phineas came back to the drome, Major Rufus Garrity was pacing off yardage in front of the French farmhouse which served as his headquarters. Lieutenant Pinkham approached warily.

"Well, well," grinned the Old Man, "back so soon? Have a nice time?"

"You're not foolin' me," Phineas declared. "I'll keep my distance. I know what you're tryin' to do. Think I was born this mornin', huh?"

"Got good news for you, Pinkham," said the major. "We're going to try to work out that swell idea you had."

"Huh?" grinned Phineas, all agog. "Well, I knew when you got cooled off, you'd look at it my way, haw-w-w-w! A Pinkham gen'rally gets what he goes after."

The C.O. had a hard time to keep his fists out of Phineas's grinning physiognomy.

“Yes, Pinkham,” he agreed, teeth grinding over each word. “Maybe you’re right. Been underestimating you, no doubt. Harumph! Bring me the map you made and be at the Operations Office at seven sharp. You’ll go over about seven-thirty. That’s all. Be seein’ you.”

“I’ll be there with bells all over me,” enthused the flyer.

“And when we see you again,” Rufus Garrity mumbled, “you’ll be bundled up in burlap. Well, it’s your idea, you big ape.”

Dusk was moving in on Bar-le-Duc. Phineas Pinkham moved into the realm of the mess sergeant and asked for a flour bag. There had to be a little flour left in it.

“I ain’t got nothin’ like that,” grunted the man.

“You better git glasses,” was Phineas’s grinning suggestion as he snatched up what he was looking for. “And next time, don’t leave sandwiches on the window sill as maybe some ants or somethin’ll crawl into ‘em.”

There were a few details to be attended to before Phineas could leave. While hopeful mechs tuned up his Spad, the marvel from Boonetown, Iowa, hived up with Major Rufus Garrity and made certain corrections in the fake map which was to be sewed into the lining of the clothes of *Herr Krantz*, the now incarcerated spy from the House of Hohenzollern.

“I ain’t much with a needle,” chuckled the jokester as he went to work, “but maybe Krantz wasn’t, either, so the Krauts ‘ll maybe overlook the hemstitchin’, huh?”

“The more I look at you and think over this thing,” sighed the Old Man, “the more I wish I had never listened to you.”

“Maybe if I showed you all my medals,” Phineas shot back, “you’d feel better. I got them for bringin’ home the bacon, y’ know.”

The C.O. bristled, but locked his jaws tight. He did not say another word until Phineas was dressed for the air and stepping up to the stirrup of the Spad. Then he harumphed loudly and said, “Well, good luck, Pinkham. We’ll be looking for you.”

Phineas grinned at the pilots grouped about him. “Adoo, bums, an’ don’t fall out of your highchairs while papa is away huntin’. Haw-w-w-w-w-w-w-w!” He wheeled about and held out his hand to the Old Man. Garrity took it.

B-z-z-z-z-z-z-z-z-z! The C.O. let out a yowl and jumped a foot.

“Haw-w-w-w-w! It’s just a little buzzer. Well, I’m on my way!” And Phineas climbed aboard his Spad and jammed in the throttle just as the chocks were yanked loose. The battle wagon roared across the field, almost came to grief once but righted itself, and swooped into the air. The Old Man’s pipe belched sparks as he stood watching the Spad melt into the dusk.

“Hope he gets back, the fresh mug,” he growled. “I want to give him a good poke in the nose.”

“This is getting to be a crackpot war,” Howell snapped as he stamped away. “The Wing listenin’ to the freckled halfwit!”

PHINEAS roared over the heads of the Yankee hosts into German territory. The drome where the *Rittmeister* von Schweinknochel squatted was not hard to find. Not many days before, Phineas had been a guest at the Boche layout.

Picking out a certain landmark, the Yankee adventurer coaxed his Spad down to five thousand and skimmed over the darkened field not far from Sedan. Ducking down into the pit, he secured the flour sack which contained the habiliments of the luckless Krantz and a good-sized rock. Just as a long finger of light cut the thickening gloom attempting to line him up, Phineas tossed his cargo overside. Then he shot up for altitude and threw his Spad in a long climbing turn made famous by a Heinie named Immelmann.

More anti-aircraft batteries blazed away. A pair of Boche ships knifed up to cut the interloper off, but by the time they had reached a respectable altitude, Phineas was so far away that he could have beaten them to the dividing line loaded down with a ton of coal.

The *Rittmeister* von Schweinknochel and several of his blue-blooded brood had been indulging in a spirited game of pinochle when the roar of the Hisso had first penetrated their skulls. Von Schweinknochel yelled something and barged out onto the drome. The weighted sack that Phineas had dropped first smacked the limb of a dead tree, bounced, and came down to conk the *Rittmeister* on the head.

“*Ach, mein Gott!*” he said when his hirelings propped him up. “I meldt a hundredt aces yedt—

er—*Himmel! Was ist?*” He grabbed at a Boche pilot and yanked him close.

“Somet’ing it drops,” he was told, “from the *Amerikaner Spad*. Here iss it yedt.”

The sack was handed to the *Rittmeister*, who, still weak on his undercarriage, taxied toward Kraut headquarters. There he ripped the rope away from the sack and hauled out the stone. After that came the bundle that was comprised of *Herr Krantz’s* clothes. They were covered with flour. “*Donner und Blitzen!*” von Schweinknochel spat out and rubbed a bump on his head. “Only the belongings of *Herr Krantz*. *Ach—*”

“In the pockets maybe iss it a letter vunce,” suggested one of the Teutons.

“Maybe also a rabbit yoomps oudt, *Dumkopf!*” ripped out the superior officer. “Bah!” However, the Staffel leader poked into the pockets of the flour-dusted coat and drew forth a letter. Feverishly he ripped it open. A howl of rage barged from the *Rittmeister’s* throat. “*Pingham!*” he yelled. “From that *Pingham* oopstart! Listen already, while I read:

“Herr Swinesknuckles: Here iss it the rags that your big snooper, Krantz, wore. Where he is going he won’t need them. Haw-w-w-w! Now to business. If you have not got ice on your big feet, I will be in the air between Dommartin and the Argonne Forest a week from today just before sunset. It is against the rules of the Allies for me to dare you to fight but I am doing it, anyway, so you try and skip out. Come and get it, you big squarehead, and what a shellacking you’ll get—vunce. How are the Kaiser’s chilblains? I hope they have crawled up to his collar band. Wishing you the same, I am.

Insultingly yours,

LIEUTENANT P. PINKHAM

“Gott im Himmel!” exploded the *Rittmeister*. “The last straw iss it by the camel’s back yedt! Me he shoodts down, *ja? Ach*, for vhat I haff been vaiting it cooms.” The Staffel leader paused and dug the nails of one hand into the back of the other and began to scratch. Two other blond pilots did the same.

“*Pingham*, I gedt you, *ja!*” he growled. “For the last time you haff insulted the House of Schwach!” He scratched again, first the back of one hand and then the other. He rubbed his knuckles against his pant legs.

“Somet’ing it iss rotten!” he yowled. “*Der* itch it iss fierce. *Ach*, vhat now?”

“*Der* flour,” a Boche yipped. “Maybe it ain’t dt yedt. *Ach*, *der* itch it drifes me crazy. *Donnervetter!*”

Over the lines flew Phineas. There was a broad grin on his face. “Haw-w-w-w-w!” he exulted. “That itch powder is the berries. If I could only see them squareheaded bums scratchin’! Well, they will fool with a *Pinkham*, huh?”

The sore thumb of the Ninth swooped down over Bar-le-Duc and glided into the drome.

“He’s back!” exclaimed Bump Gillis. “What’s the use?”

“H’lo, bums,” was the *Pinkham* greeting as Phineas eased himself out of the *Spad*. “Well, all we got to do now is wait for the Krauts to come over.”

Captain Howell set his jaw, turned his back on Phineas and looked at Bump Gillis. “Looks like it might rain.”

“Yeah,” agreed Bump, “feels kind of damp. Say, did ya ever hear from that dame we met over in—” They walked away.

“Go ahead an’ ignore me,” said Phineas acidly. “But wait’ll I get me another medal and then ya’ll—” He strode toward the big house.

The Old Man simply looked up when Phineas entered Wings. “So you’re back, huh? Hmph!”

“Sure,” snapped Phineas. “I just been around the corner to git me a cud of gum. Huh, you’d think—”

“Get out!” bellowed the C.O. “I want to be alone. I’m practicing up on it, as after tomorrow I may be in solitary a long time.”

“Huh,” grunted Phineas. “Awright. But—”

“Get out!”

As the flyer made his exit, a tense scene was being enacted near Sedan. The *Rittmeister* von Schweinknochel had been attacked by a big hunch and had ripped the lining out of *Krantz’s* coat. There he had discovered the map.

“The Yangkees they are *Dumkopfs*, *ja!*” he exclaimed with triumph. “Or maybe iss it *Krantz* he has too mooch brain. Maybe two maps *Herr Krantz* carried, *nein? Ach*, we Germans!” He studied the flimsy for several seconds, and then his eyes became affixed to the place on the map which had been ringed.

“Ve go to the *Herr Oberst*, und show him,” declared von Schweinknochel. “He vill pleased be, *ja*?”

Herr Oberst, Baron von Kropper, who ran things on the Boche drome, however, did not enthuse over the *Rittmeister*’s find.

“*Herr Rittmeister*,” he growled, “iss it that you gedt the brain softened, *nein*? Ein trap iss this. Ein Pingham trick, *ja*! *Gott*, vhere iss it your head? Too many times haff I been fooled und no more. Bah! No vender you haff coom oudt second mit the Yangkee oopstart.” His eyes suddenly widened and something that passed for a smile swept over his chops.

“A trick, *ja*! Bait! Budt the Yangkees vill be bait. Listen vunce, *Herr Rittmeister*, und maybe iss it you understandt.” The Baron von Kropper snatched up a phone and barked into it. Kraut headquarters listened intently. A few moments later the *Herr Oberst* moored the instrument and looked at the abashed *Rittmeister*.

“So!” he said. “You see, *ja*. Too mooch times haff I t’ink you haff the brain. So iss it until tomorrow, *Herr Rittmeister*.”

“*Ja wohl!*” grunted the *Rittmeister*, saluting stiffly. He went out, his jaw muscles inflated, his face the color of a goldfish bowl filled with claret. “Pingham, you it iss I vill gedt for this. *Gott!*”

WE would like to recount how the Pinkham ruse worked, how Phineas was given a lot of medals and congratulated by presidents and kings after a flight of Boche bombers had been washed out over the back area. Alas and alackaday, this did not come to pass.

The Boche bombers came over as expected. A swarm of Allied pursuit ships hovered nearby, waiting. But it was a case of fish eating fish. A bigger swarm of Boche fighting craft slammed down on the ambushers, and the sky shuddered. It was a mess. The bombers circled back and headed home when the fireworks were set off. On the way back, they dropped bombs onto the drome of Major Garrity’s Ninth Pursuit Squadron.

The Allied ships clawed their way out and limped away to where they belonged. A Flight, Garrity’s representatives, got back with the blind staggers. Howell landed with most of the controls shot away. Bump Gillis got out of a frazzled Spad and began to walk in circles. Sergeant Casey and

two mechanics towed him toward his hut. There was a red welt across Bump’s nose. His goggles were hanging by a thread, and he was talking to himself like a shepherd.

Phineas Pinkham, author of the idea, got out of his ship and took an inventory of his anatomy.

“I knew it!” a familiar voice roared in his ear. “I ought to’ve had more sense. We’ll get in a sling for this. Of all the fools, I’m the—”

“Huh,” grinned Phineas a little sheepishly, “ya can’t expect to hit the nail on the head every time. Looks like they got wise.”

“No!” snapped the Old Man. “You don’t tell me!”

The Wing lost no time in getting back at Major Garrity. Of course no other squadron was capable of going out and doing a job like blowing up a bridge twenty miles inside Germany. It needed seasoned flyers who knew where the Front started and left off. The message came in a few minutes after Phineas departed for Dommartin, where he had to put the finishing touches on a very mysterious job.

“I get it,” the Old Man retorted over the wire. “Sure, we know we’re good, colonel! Only don’t ever get in range of these buzzards when you see any of them on the loose. What’s that? Who do I think I’m talking to? Give me three guesses!” Garrity slammed the receiver on the hook and swore. He got up and walked out into the big room. “Where’s Pinkham? He and somebody else are going out to blow up a bridge. Draw lots to see who goes with him.”

“The bum rode out of the drome five minutes ago,” announced Bump Gillis. “Looks as if he still runs the place. Huh, I wish I was a white-haired boy—”

“You do, huh?” lashed out the major. “Well, when you get back from blowing up that bridge, if ever, you’ll have hair whiter than a G.A.R. veteran. I’ll teach you to talk back to me, you—”

Bump Gillis and another buzzard who didn’t know better than to speak out of turn went out to blow up the bridge. They returned unscathed simply because they saw a flock of Boche and had had to run for it.

“And go ahead and break us!” growled the Scot belligerently, after he made his report. “See what I care.”

“When Pinkham shows up, send him in here,” bellowed the C.O. “I’m through with that fathead!”

“Horse collars!” snapped Bump as he went out of Wings.

The Old Man slumped in his chair. Age crept up and plastered the marks of ten more years on his face. The Ninth was in a spot. It was in bad with the Wing. The Pinkham luck had failed. What was left? And while the major sat there nursing an armful of woe, a car pulled up in front of the big stone house. Three British officers trooped in.

“Cheerio,” said one in greeting as he entered Wings. “Ran low on petrol. How’s the war in this sector, major?”

“Hmph!” growled Garrity.

“Air fighting getting rather warm, eh, what?” said another. “The *Rittmeister* von Schweinknochel got three more ships today. Raising hell about, is he? Chap over in Nancy tells me the squadron who knocks him off will get anything for the asking. Decorations and all that rot. Well, we can’t stop. Cheerio!”

Phineas returned an hour later. The Old Man had him hailed into Wings, and for an hour he verbally lambasted the miracle worker of Bar-le-Duc, after which he kicked the culprit out and felt a hundred per cent better.

“Looks as if you’re at the end of your rope, you fathead!” observed Bump Gillis to his hutmate as the many-times hero trudged in.

“The Pinkhams have been down lots of times, but they’re never out,” retorted the irrepressible. He pulled something from under his cot and examined it with interest. It was an object made of wood, and resembled an aerial bomb in contour. Bump Gillis watched his hutmate as the latter began to apply a coat of gray paint to the thing.

“Makin’ toys now, huh?” he observed with a smirk.

“It’s an egg,” explained Phineas. “I’m goin’ to set it under a Spad an’ see if it’ll hatch.”

“I was at a wake once, you crackpot,” exclaimed Bump. “Alongside of you, it was a positive scream.”

“Don’t bother me,” commanded the inventor. “I got lots on my mind. I got to think like the Ritzmaster will think tomorrow night—er—that

is, see if I can put myself in his place and do like I think he will do.”

“Good Gawd!” groaned Gillis. “You get worse all the time. What’re you ravin’ about now?”

“Seein’ as you’re so awful dumb, I’ll give you an example. It’s like the guy who lost the mule and sat down and says now where would I go if I was a mule and he went there and there was the mule.”

Bump Gillis rose, sighed and walked out. “I knew it,” he muttered. “The *guerre’s* got him. He was nutty enough when he come in but now—” He hurried to the stone house to tell all the other pilots to barricade their doors before they went to sleep that night.

DAWN came, and the day wore on. The Ninth carried on without a chance to wipe their brows. The peeved one at the Wing was bearing down. Phineas, on his way back from his last patrol, dipped low over a spot between Dommartin and the Argonne thickets and picked out a landmark. He grinned, zoomed and rejoined Howell’s flight. He was sure he had figured out just the way the *Rittmeister* would act when he came out to do mortal combat with *Herr* Pinkham just before dusk.

After mess Phineas walked in on the Old Man.

“Well, sir,” he began, accenting the last word with a vengeance, “I got a secret to tell you.”

The Old Man looked up, and his face took on an angelic expression. “Why, Mr. Pinkham,” he said in a rich falsetto. “I am tickled.”

“This is a very serious matter, as it means the reputation of a Pinkham and a squadron at stake,” said the flyer indignantly. “Tonight I meet von Swinesknuckles in a duel to the death. I challenged him when I tossed Krantz’s clothes down. I got to square things with that weenie-sniffer, as it’s his fault the pass we come to.”

“What did I tell you about these private wars, eh?” bellowed the major. “You know the orders, you half-baked fathead! You just try and go out and you’ll get shot in the pants before you can put them in a Spad. Now, get out of here and don’t bother me.”

Phineas’s tread was heavy as he left the Frog farmhouse. Quips from his fellow pilots rained on his neck as he took his departure. The door to Wings then opened suddenly.

“Pinkham!” yipped Sir Rufus. “Be ready to take the air in fifteen minutes. You’re going over to see if any Boche troop movements are in evidence across the Meuse. It’ll keep you out of trouble!” The door slammed shut.

Phineas let out a howl and legged it for his hut. He bundled himself into his flying clothes, picked up his wooden bomb and headed for the hangar. There, while Sergeant Casey looked on with disdain, he attached the bomb under the Spad’s belly—that is, he half-attached it. It hung loose and flopped drunkenly as the mechs wheeled the ship out onto the field.

Major Rufus Garrity, wearing a thin smile on his weather-beaten face, walked out of the house as Phineas’s Spad began to clatter. After him came Howell, Gillis et al. The Old Man approached the Spad and looked up at Phineas, winking.

“Good luck, you big baboon!”

“You’re a swell guy,” shouted Phineas as he moved away. “If I ever get an Airedale, I’ll name him after you. Adoo!”

“Look!” yelled Howell as the Spad lifted. “That’s a bomb. It’s loose! Gripes! Somebody chase him!”

“It’s only wood,” explained Bump Gillis. “I know—”

“Well, what’s it for?”

“Ask me the price of union suits on Mars,” growled the Scot.

On the Heinie side of the fence the *Rittmeister* von Schweinknochel was being helped into his pit by adoring mechs.

“*Der Amerikaner* I gedt und bring vun of his flap ears, *ja! Auf Wiedersehen*, gentlemen. *Und* make the beer cold so soon I gedt back!” The Pfalz shot away amid thundering cheers.

Over Sivry Phineas roared, and headed for Dommartin. The sun was shooting up all kinds of colors above the horizon when he circled high over the Argonne and waited for the *Rittmeister*. Out of the purple skies hopped a black speck. Phineas grinned and headed for a certain sky shelf to wait.

The Pfalz of von Schweinknochel bridged the gap in great leaps. The *Rittmeister* peered through his goggles and spotted the circling Spad a mile or more ahead.

“*Der Tag!*” he roared. “*Der Mad Butcher* vill haff fits when he hears *Herr Rittmeister* smashes the oopstart Pingham.” He let his Spandaus roar to make sure they were not lying down on him; then he waved his hand and shot after the great *Leutnant* Pinkham.

Phineas sped toward the Pfalz and let his Vickers spit. He swooped low under the catapulting Boche ship and then banked around. The *Rittmeister* saw Phineas pounding at his guns when he got the Spad in front of his prop boss again, and the German saw something else that snapped his mouth open. There was a bomb fouled under the Pinkham ship.

Evidently Pinkham had been out on a solo bombing expedition and was ignorant of what was flapping under his floorboards. Suddenly a great roar of triumph welled up in the *Rittmeister*’s throat and tore loose.

“*Ach*, Pingham, he iss out uff tricks, *ja!* Jammed guns und a bomb under his britches, *ja.* *Der Rittmeister* iss nodt the vun who shoodts the Spad mit guns jammed, *nein.* Him I force down *und* make land vunce *und* then—*raus mit!*”

All this time the *Rittmeister* had been circling around the hapless Spad. Phineas still tried frantically to clear his guns. The bomb still hung loose. As the Pfalz whistled close, Phineas waved his hand and pointed to his guns.

The *Rittmeister* waved back and pointed toward the ground.

“Haw-w-w-w-w!” guffawed the Yank and nosed down in a long sweep toward Dommartin. Behind him swept the *Rittmeister*, his eyes wary, his fingers ready to trip the Spandaus.

“Haw-w-w-w-w! Just what I thought he’d do. I put myself in the place of the mule, like I told Bump.”

THE Spad kept on losing altitude. Phineas’s bulging eyes studied the terrain below. He picked out the ruins of a little village and chuckled again. There would be two big trees between that and Dommartin. And in the west Old Sol had painted the sky a riot of colors.

Down to five hundred feet went the Yank—down until he was hedgehopping—and the *Rittmeister* let another pair of bursts go. Phineas knew it was the last warning. He had to land. Dead ahead were two tall trees. Right between

them Phineas hurled his Spad. He held his breath as he went through.

“Lady Luck, stick by me!” he breathed, and backsticked suddenly.

“So!” roared the German. “You don’t land, *nein*? So I giff it by you. *Bummer!*” His Pfalz was perhaps two hundred yards behind the Spad when he saw the Pinkham maneuver. The nose of the German ship lurched upward. Too late the *Rittmeister* saw something. “*Gott!*”

Then the Pfalz received a terrific jolt and went into contortions. To the scared Boche ace, the earth and sky seemed to change places a million times before he was tossed clear of the convulsed battle wagon. There followed a crash and he went into dreamland.

“Ya will fool with me, huh?” exclaimed Phineas as he looked for a passable landing field. He found one three miles away.

A patrol of doughboys accompanied the flyer back to the wreck of the Pfalz. The Boonetown flyer pawed around the wreckage, but could find no trace of the *Rittmeister*.

“Well, I’ll be—” he exclaimed. “He had to light some place!”

A weak cry came from overhead. Phineas looked up and then doubled up like a jackknife. Von Schweinknochel was hanging from the limb of a tree. Phineas sent the dough up to extricate him.

“*Ach, Himmel!*” groaned the Kraut leader when he had been lowered to the ground. He cast a glassy eye at Phineas.

“*Der* bomb?” choked the German.

“That was a wooden bomb, Swinesknuckles,” explained the incurable jokesmith. “Haw-w-w-w! Did I fool ya, huh? I had two pieces of clothesline strung between them trees, and I flew through ‘em. I had ‘em painted all colors of the sunset, Kraut, so’s you’d not see ‘em. Swell camouflage, if I say so myself. An’ you can see we sure have a swell sunset over toward the west. I put markers on the trees so’s I’d know where the ropes started in an’ left off. Wanted to see me blow up? Huh, thought it was a real bomb? Well, cheer up, Ritzmaster, as smarter Krauts than you have tried to lick me.”

“*Ach,*” groaned the Kraut, “enough of the var haff I got. All aches *mit* pains.”

“Well,” said Phineas, “we better go where you can git some iodine an’ more adhesive tape, as you’re a mess, Ritzmaster. You gotta look half respectable to git into our prison camps.”

Back on the drome of the Ninth, Major Rufus Garrity was holed in with three spick and span brass hats from the Wing. One of them had a very vindictive look on his face as he dished out some very unsavory orders for the Old Man’s buzzards.

“That all?” said the C.O. nastily as the colonel finished and reached for a cigar from a box on the major’s desk. “Kind of rubbing it in, what?”

“Orders are orders, Garrity,” said the colonel. “You have so many smart flyers in this outfit that they shouldn’t worry you any.” He applied a match to the cigar. “Of course, if one of these pilots should go out and down the *Rittmeister*.”

The door burst open. Bump Gillis saluted.

“C-Carbuncle’s back!” he yipped. “He’s brought in the *Rittmeister* von Schwein—”

“Wha -a-a-a?” bellowed the Old Man, rising.

A dilapidated, scratched-up Boche lurched into Wings, propelled by Phineas Pinkham. “Haw-w-w! Here’s the Kraut. He needs a cup of tea—er—”

Over the major’s face spread an expression of savage joy. The colonel bit heavily on his cigar.

“Ah—er—well, major, this is a surprise. Huh—er—perhaps I—er—well—we’d better be going.”

“Better stay an’ hear how I did it,” suggested the hero of the moment.

However, the colonel didn’t tarry. He stamped out of Wings, mumbling to himself. The Old Man was about to put out a hand to Phineas when a sharp report came from outside. *Bang!* Garrity went to the window and saw the colonel battling a shower of sparks. He whirled and stared at the box of cigars on his desk.

“Pinkham, you homely whoozle,” he yelled, “been monkeyin’ with my cigars again, eh?”

Phineas just grinned, and ducked out through the door. The Old Man went after him, a cane clutched in his fist.

“*Ach,* such a business,” groaned the amazed *Rittmeister*. “For geddingk me yedt I vould t’ink der *Leutnant* vould catch a medal, but noddingsk it seems he gedts but vun gut crack on der headt. *Ach, Himmel!*”