

Smell-Shocked

By Joe Archibald
Featuring Phineas Pinkham

That great German ace, the Mad Butcher from Hamburg, wants some Limburger and can't find it. Phineas, the mad Pinkham from Boonetown, Iowa, has some Limburger and doesn't know it. Oh, yes. Fate brings them together. The big cheese!

HERR Hauptmann Heinz, the Mad Butcher from Hamburg, was walking up and down the board floor of the mess hall of Staffel 7, Kraut Air Force. The *Herr Hauptmann* was employing all the gesticulations of a prima donna who has suddenly discovered that she has a frog in her throat.

“*Ach, Himmel!*” growled the Mad Butcher. “*Besser ist das* they feed the *Dumkopfs* by *der* trenches yedt. Fife veeks *und* no Limburger, bah! *Ach du lieber*, for joost vun taste by *der* Limburger vunce. Look! Full *mit* nerfes am I, *und* for vhy, *ja? Mein Gott!*”

Herr Heinz scraped the fingernails of both hands across his close-clipped pate and continued to pound the boards. Two things the Mad Butcher craved—Limburger cheese and the capture of *Herr Leutnant* Phineas Pinkham of Major Rufus Garrity's Ninth Pursuit Squadron, Yankee Air Force.

“In ten miles no Limburger, *nein!*” Heinz wailed. “Oddervise I vould smell it, *ja!*”

Junkers suppressed exclamations of impatience and trickled out, one by one, two by two, until the Mad Butcher had the mess shack entirely to himself.

“*Gott im Himmel!*” he grunted. “I go oudt *und* shoodt up some Yangkees. *Die Schweine* should stay by *Amerika und der* var idt vould be ofer yedt *und* I should sit by *der* beer garten und eat *der* Limburger. *Ach!*”

So the Mad Butcher yelled for his trusty Fokker, swore at all the mechanics, and climbed into his pit to fly toward the lines. The sun was bedding down for the night. It was time for all Yankee patrols to shut up shop for the day. Over the Allied trenches flew Heinz at an altitude of ten thousand feet. The Mad Butcher was up in the air

in more ways than one. Great oaks from little acorns grow. *Herr Hauptmann's* passion for Limburger led to an amazing and very nearly fatal adventure for the inimitable Phineas Pinkham. It tossed the Boonetown, Iowa flyer into as pretty a keg of pickles as was ever soured.

For as Heinz, the Mad Butcher, knifed his way into Allied ozone, Phineas Pinkham was departing from Bar-le-Duc afoot. Moreover, he was heaping maledictions on the party or parties who had cut the tires of his bicycle wide open and ruined it for travelling.

“Fool with me, will they, the bums?” he reiterated over and over. “I'll git hunk. 'Tain't healthy to fool with a Pinkham!” One hand was plunged deep into his pocket. From said pocket emanated the clink of metal. Despite his rage, Phineas grinned. “Well, Babette sure got a kick out of that one. Haw-w-w-w, the g-r-r-reat Pinkham, the greatest escaper from irons in the whole world. It's a gift—cripes!” Mr. Pinkham did an Annette Kellerman into a ditch, wriggled up to a big rock and looked into the murky sky. The roar of a Mercedes engine doing a dive had suddenly beat against his ears, A Fokker was swooping down at him, guns wide open. “Why, the dirty Kraut!” Phineas ripped out. “I bet it's the Mad Butcher. Tryin' to git me on the ground. Well, of all—” But he changed his mind in a hurry. His eyes lowered and traced the long ribbon that was the road he had traversed from Bar-le-Duc. A black blotch began to take shape. It seemed to hop from one side of the road to the other like a scared rabbit. It was a motorcycle and side-car, and it appeared to be heavily loaded. Down came the Fokker. Bullets dug at the dirt around the oncoming vehicle. In the motorcycle

and its bathtub attachment were two frightened doughs.

"Listen, Scrub," one growled between gulps, "ditch this bug. I ain't no target. Let's git to hell—"

"Awright, Beany," agreed the other with a yowl. "Here goes! To hell with the grub! The M.P.'s would maybe snap us, anyways—well, grab your tonsils, Scrub, as here we go!"

Phineas let out a yelp as the mechanical bug swerved into a ditch and kicked up a geyser of muddy water. Something arched out of the machine and landed across a barbed-wire fence. It hung there for a moment, then flopped to the sod. Overhead roared the Fokker. One last burst of lead sprayed the road. A bullet ricocheted from the rock nestling against Phineas' head, and whined away into space.

"Ha!" laughed *Herr Hauptmann* Heinz as he flew toward Germany. "Take that vunce, *ja!*" And, satisfied with his jaunt, he went back to his hive.

Phineas got up out of the ditch and ran toward the motorcycle. He caught a glimpse of two doughs legging it hell-for-leather across a pasture.

"Thanks," grinned the flyer. "Haw-w-w-w! Thanks for the buggy." He tugged at it until he had it out in the road. Then he climbed to the seat and rode toward the airdrome. One mile behind, three grim-faced M.P.'s pushed as many mechanical bugs in his wake. And in the side-car of one sat a colonel of the U.S.A., his big jaw thrust out belligerently and his eyes glittering from under a pair of eyebrows like the spitting mouths of a brace of machine guns.

Phineas ran out of gas a mile from the field. The three pursuing vehicles bore down upon him. They skidded to a stop.

"This is my lucky day!" Phineas yipped at them. "Lend me some gas as—" A gun was shoved into his face. Behind it was a big colonel, grinning like the wolf in Little Red Riding Hood.

"Well!" snorted the brass hat. "A flyer, huh? Never did like 'em, anyway. Stealin' supplies, huh? Thought there were two of you."

"Huh?" stuttered Phineas. "It's a lie! I—"

"Don't tell me you didn't load up with stuff out of that truck that was ditched away back there. Don't tell me you didn't conk a dough on the head and make off with—"

"I won't stand such insults," Phineas interrupted indignantly. "I'm an officer of the Ninth Pursuit Squadron and—"

"It's Pinkham!" shouted one of the M.P.'s. "Well, he would do somethin' like—"

"I'll bat you one, you dirty—"

"Shut up!" roared the brass hat. "Look, here's the evidence. Ten cans of jam. Eight cartons of cigarettes. Six—"

"H-huh?" gulped Phineas. "I—er—you mean them doughs was crooks? I—er—"

The colonel laughed. It sounded like someone drawing a nutmeg grater across a tin roof. "Tryin' to crawl out, eh, Pinkham? Always wanted to meet you. Been gettin' away with murder. Well, maybe Garrity is easy on you, but wait until you buck up against a court-martial full up with infantry officers."

"I demand to be taken to my C.O.," Phineas ripped out. "I know my rights."

The whole kit and kaboodle sallied onto the drome of the Ninth Pursuit Squadron outside of Bar-le-Duc. Phineas had been wrong about his rights. He didn't have any. This fact became quite plain when he arrived, flanked on either side by a sour-faced M.P. The Old Man just looked at him, shook his head and spoke to the colonel.

"Out with it!" he groaned. "Make it short. Who'd he kill?"

"We caught him with a load of stolen supplies," snapped the colonel. "Fine example of an officer, what, major? Don't seem to be particular in the Air Force—"

"Oh, is that so?" Phineas cracked. "Well, you can't frame me. I can prove—"

"Go ahead!" said the Old Man. "I'm dying to see if you can."

Phineas explained. After which he looked at the barrage of faces around him for results. They were worse than bad.

"Now tell me the one about little Goldilocks," sniffed the colonel disdainfully. "Well, Garrity?"

"I'm a liar, huh?" fumed Phineas. "Well, I'm telling you that two doughs—"

"Get them," demanded the major wearily. "It ought to be easy."

Somebody laughed. It sounded much like Bump Gillis. Howell was staring up at the ceiling. He looked about as sympathetic as a hungry crocodile.

"I'll hold you responsible for this man," the colonel rapped out to the major. "You hear that, Garrity? And this stuff here! Evidence, major! Enough to put Pinkham behind bars for twenty years."

"All right," mumbled Sir Rufus, "he'll be here when you want him. I'll see that the evidence is put in that shed there, outside the window. Now if that's all, colonel, I'd like to be excused. I have to get me an aspirin tablet. Pinkham, you know your orders. The usual ones! Do me a favor and try to escape. Well—"

"Good evening, major," said the colonel.

"Look here!" yelled Phineas. "You can't—"

"Shut up!" responded the colonel.

BEFORE leaving, the brass hat made a tag out of a big piece of cardboard. He wrote something very official on it and then tied a string to it. After so doing, he fastened the whole works to the motorcycle and its cargo and ordered the M.P.'s to roll it into the shed that stood outside the window of headquarters. With a final smirk of triumph toward the stunned Phineas, he made his departure.

"I knew a guy who come out of Atlanta," Bump Gillis drawled to Flight Leader Howell. "It's hell there. Every night they belt you across the pants with a rubber hose. They feed you—"

"But that's a Sunday School compared to Leavenworth," the leader of A Flight cut in. "Five years there an' you look like a hermit. Once I saw—"

"My buddies!" sniffed Phineas. "Well, you can all go to hell as I have washed all my hands of you bums. I'll show you!" He walked away, his brain in a mess. It occurred to him that a certain Heinie might have been responsible for what had happened, and he ground his teeth until the enamel almost crumbled.

Back on the Kraut side, *Herr Hauptmann* Heinz gloated.

"I bedt you maybe I haff gedt *Leutnant* Pingham," he flung at his pilots. "From outd *mit* Bar-le-Duc I strafe a motorcygle, *ja!* Ha! If but you could see how the Yangkees made *der* ground loop, *ja!*" He strode to his quarters, glowing with satisfaction, "*Ach*, if only vunce yedt I smell *der* Limburger, *Himmel!*"

Phineas Pinkham was sitting on his cot, shoulders sagging, spirits at the zero level, when his hutmate. Lieutenant Gillis, entered.

"And after you git out," came the taunting remark, "I'll fumigate the place an' maybe put wall paper on it. It'll be snug, huh?"

"Go fry an eel!" growled Phineas.

Bump Gillis went to a little wall cabinet made out of a soap box. He took out a tube of toothpaste, squeezed some on a brush and shoved the brush into his mouth. He scrubbed vigorously while Phineas looked on. The Pinkham morale seemed to shoot up a couple of points.

"Wha-a-at th'ell?" sputtered Bump. "Whaa-a-at?" His mouth was choked with lather. It splattered against the wall as he endeavored to speak. He spat the white foam from his mouth and groped for a towel.

"I warned ya," grinned Phineas. "Git fresh with me, huh? That's only shavin' cream I put in there. I better shoot you as maybe you've got hydrophobia, huh? Haw-w-w-w-w!"

As Bump groped for a towel, both hands outstretched, Phineas clamped bracelets over his wrists. "That'll hold you till you cool down, you fathead!"

Phineas Pinkham walked out of his hut, leaving Bump Gillis with a homicidal mania. The pride of the Pinkhams held something in his hand and his eyes burned with a grim purpose. He walked right over to the Frog farmhouse and barged in on the Old Man.

"Get out of here!" howled Major Rufus. "I don't want to look at you. You've disgraced the squadron. You've—"

"Ya can listen a minute, can't ya?" Phineas ripped out. "I got a right to talk. I studied the Constitution an' I've got rights of free speech. I—"

The Old Man grabbed hold of himself. "All right, you mugwump, why did you steal the jam?"

"Don't call a Pinkham a burglar!" yelled Phineas. "I didn't come to git insulted. I—"

"I just asked you a civil question!" hollered Garrity. "I gave you a chance to talk decent so now get out or—"

"Why do they pick bums with apoplexy to be C.O.'s?" cried Phineas. Major Rufus Garrity reached for a club.

"I jus' asked you a civil question," grinned Phineas, retreating. "Haw-w-w-w! I'm havin' my fun. They can't do no more than court-martial me, anyways, so is this a chance! You're a moss-backed ol' turtle with the shingles. Your face was made to fight bulldogs with. If I was runnin' the Army, I wouldn't hire you as a boy scout. And that is not half the insults I'm thinkin' about you. Adoo!"

So stunned was the Old Man that he stood in the middle of the floor until Phineas was out of his sight. He had forgotten to throw the wooden spoke that he had torn from a chair. All at once he let out a crazy yelp and reached for the telephone.

"I'll get that fresh mug for good and all!" he howled. "By cripes, I'll even arrange for him to get shot. I—I—er—er—" He changed his mind in a flash. There would be a better way, perhaps. He took the receiver from his ear—that is, he tried to. The thing seemed loath to leave the epidermis of his hearing organ. Swearing loudly, the major yanked at the instrument and it came away with a square inch of skin.

"Haw-w-w-w-w," Phineas yipped in through the open window. "That was only quick action iron cement. I had to use that for your dome! Well, I'll go an' take the handcuffs off Bump now."

For the next two hours Phineas sat in front of his hut with an old muzzle loader filled with rock salt.

"Come on, you bums!" he challenged those who itched to get their hands on him. "Git tough an' I'll soften you all up for the Mad Butcher in the morning."

"Let 'im be," cracked Howell. "It's only lowering ourselves to speak to the crackpot."

"You don't give me no appetite," countered the squadron's jokesmith. "Well, nightie-nightie! Don't forgit to kiss grandma 'fore you say your prayers."

"Rock salt or no rock salt," yowled Bump Gillis, "I won't stand that, by cr—" He started forward, but Howell caught him and yanked him back.

"Go get some sleep," the flight leader yelled at the Scot. "We got to fight Heinies in the morning. Pinkham!" he roared, "let Gillis into that hut or I'll go to the major."

Phineas thereupon announced that he was willing to let bygones be bygones. Bump Gillis entered their hut and made ready for his bunk. Phineas flopped down and began to snore.

"Wise guy, huh?" Bump snorted and reached for the handcuffs that lay on the table. He slipped them over Phineas' wrists and locked them. After that he unwrapped a package and laid the contents on his trunk. He took Phineas' flying helmet down from the wall and went to work.

At four a.m. Bump Gillis got up and looked over at Phineas. His eyes bulged and he swore unbelievably. The handcuffs were on the floor—open. The face of the sleeping trickster was wrinkled up with an enigmatic smile.

"Hell!" groaned Bump as he got into his clothes. "He ain't human."

THE dawn patrol went out. Phineas got up when the Spads were roaring overhead. His nose wrinkled up. There was a strange odor in the hut. He looked all over the place but could find nothing. The aroma was very unpleasant, but Phineas forgot about it and sauntered out.

Captain Howell returned with his flight three-quarters of an hour later. Every Spad had been well singed. Bump Gillis got out of his ship and sat down on the ground. He scooped up a handful of dirt and kissed it.

"Miss the ol' *maestro*, huh?" Phineas queried tauntingly as the harassed pilots filed by. "Well, you don't miss the water till it is filled up with arsenic, huh? Oh, boys, just think! You bums have maybe six more years to git yours in, and I'll be breathin' an' eatin' an' will come over after the gare an' put ragweed on the places where you'll be buried an'—"

The pilots ignored Phineas like cholera and went their several ways. Late that afternoon Howell put in his report after another blood-chilling patrol.

"I don't mind fightin' half the Jerry Air Force all the time," he shot at Garrity, "but, by cripes, it's worse comin' back an' listenin' to that halfwit rubbin' it in on us. I'll kill him yet!"

"Have patience, Howell," pleaded the Old Man. "They're coming after Pinkham's scalp tomorrow. It won't be long."

And then a big car trundled in. A major stepped out of it and hurried in to see the Old Man,

"Hello, Garrity," was his greeting. "How's the old turtle?"

Garrity seemed to rise out of his chair on the impetus of an explosion. "Don't call me a turtle, dammit!" he yipped. "H-hello, Hank, what's up? You look terrible."

"Listen, Rufe," replied Major Henry Jenks, "I'm in a mess. You know that new explosive I've been working on? Well, it's lost, Rufe. Lost! The formula is out behind the Jerry lines. In a fourgon. Left it in my baggage. You know the Germans gobbled up four miles of territory day before yesterday. Well, that fourgon got lost. The dumb doughs left it flat. It's over near Ramblersvilles somewhere and I've got to get it, Rufe. If the Jerries find that formula—"

"Chaumont know about it?" cut in the Old Man.

"Sure," replied Jenks in a hollow voice, "I've been ravin' about it for weeks. They want to see the formula, Rufe, instead of becoming famous, I'm going to get hung in a sling. You've got to help me out."

"I can't do it without orders," interrupted the Old Man. "You know the Wing." He snapped his fingers. "Ha!" he laughed sourly. "Maybe I'll be able to accommodate you, Jenks. I'll get in touch with G.H.Q. Is Colonel Riley over there?"

"I believe he is," replied Jenks.

Garrity got on the phone, being careful to leave the receiver at a safe distance from his ear. He got in touch with Colonel Riley. The colonel listened and gave his approval of the idea,

"But if he does get back, Garrity," was Riley's parting shot, "he'll face those charges, you hear?"

"I get it," growled the major. "If he wins, he loses. Does it make me mad?" He hung up. Then he promised Jenks a try for the formula, telling him to leave it all up to the Ninth Pursuit Squadron. Immediately Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham was called before Major Garrity.

"Well," began Sir Rufus, when the thorn in the sides of both the Germans and the Allies appeared, "I got a reprieve for you,"

"Huh?" grinned Phineas,

"You know what a fourgon is?" ripped out the Old Man.

"Fish, flesh, fowl or bone?" countered the Pinkham marvel. "Give me a hint!"

"Oh, you fool," muttered Garrity. "It's a wagon!" he screeched. "It carries harnesses, officers' baggage and such. It's got a canvas top and—"

"I knew it all the time. Where is it?"

"In Jerry territory now, near Ramblersvilles. Near an old stone mill," the C.O. went on, "You go and find it. There is a roll of paper in a little leather brief case. A fountain pen is attached to the roll of paper. The name on the side of the bag says, 'Jenks.' That's all. You go out tonight an' get it."

"Simple," commented the irrepressible Phineas. "Is that all? How 'bout them charges? If I bring the roll of paper back, do I—"

"You do not!" thundered Garrity. "You stand the charges just the same. Pinkham, I'm sending you out so you won't come back. Get it?"

"Oh, yeah?" replied the ace of jokesters complacently. "You should've been an undertaker."

"If you do come back," the Old Man yelped in interruption, "I'll punch your face for insulting me yesterday. Now get out. You go over at eight o'clock."

Once more Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham's Spad ticked over on the line. It was the only one there. But the pilots gathered around to wish him a pleasant evening. Noses sniffed at the dank night air as Phineas passed by,

"Do you blame me for figgerin' on fumigatin' that hut?" Bump Gillis wanted to know of everybody present. "He must've brought home a skunk the other night an' hid it an' forgot where, ha!"

"There's something dirty afoot," rasped Phineas. "I don't know what yet but, oh boys, if I ever find out an' git back, I'll—"

"You're only goin' one way," Howell informed him, "like water out of a faucet. You've got as much chance of gettin' back as the water. Well, adieu, Mr. Pinkham, nice to've known you!"

"Go plumb to hell, Mr. Howell!" retorted Phineas, and climbed aboard,

"Cut that all out," came a booming voice. The Old Man strode up, "Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham

is going on a very dangerous mission. Haven't you birds any hearts, eh?"

"Somebody lu-uhves me-e-e-e!" sang Phineas in a raucous voice as he jazzed the Hisso, "Even if it is a turtle. Well, adoo, bums!" And he shot away.

"Someday I'll hang one on his chin," Garrity promised himself, "I hope the Krauts have all got insomnia tonight and are prowling around upstairs."

"If that's what you call a heart," commented Bump Gillis, "I will take a set of calves' brains, please."

GARRITY was still chasing Gillis when Phineas skimmed over the purring lines and headed for Jerry's backyard. Over Ramblersvilles he circled, came down lower and set his Spad down two miles beyond the town. For two hours the Boonetown flyer scurried from one place of concealment to another. He dodged Boche patrols by the dozen as he scoured the territory for a fourgon. And then he came upon the old stone mill, and right up against it was the said fourgon, with one wheel blown off and a pair of defunct horses in front of it.

"Success!" breathed Phineas with his familiar grin. He wormed his way into the wagon and for several minutes rummaged around. With the aid of a big brass cigarette lighter he found the black bag which was so much in demand back on the side of the Allies. Fishing inside, he discovered the roll of paper with the fountain pen attached. He put them in his pocket, got out of the fourgon and started back to his Spad. But Phineas did not get far. Boche guards had discerned his shadow moving in the night. So Phineas simply turned and ran back, climbing into the wagon and pulling a heap of horse blankets over him.

The Jerries did not look in the wagon. That hiding place seemed too obvious. They looked everywhere else. After giving up the chase, they trudged down a road and ran into a trio of Boche brass hats. Now it happened that *Herr Hauptmann* Heinz had been visiting an old friend close to the Front, that night of all nights. He had taken a walk with said friend and a *Herr Oberst* of great importance. *En tour*, they had bumped into the American Spad which, closer observation told the Mad Butcher, was the battle crate of *Herr*

Leutnant Pinkham. In consequence, *Herr* Heinz was all agog.

"Did you get him?" he shot at the Boche infantrymen in German, "Somewhere it iss vun *Amerikaner* flyer aboutt. Efferyvhere you haff giff vun look, *hein?*"

"*Ja wohl*," the non-com assured him. "He hass made *der* escape."

The night air, as we have said, was extremely dank. Odors carried far. The sensitive nostrils of the Mad Butcher from Hamburg twitched violently. Without a doubt there was, somewhere near, a quantity of his beloved Limburger.

"*Ach, Himmel!*" he exclaimed. "I know already yedt. It iss *der* Limburger cheese. *Und* where iss idt budt by der Yangkee vagon ofer by der mill, ho! *Der Leutnant* Pinkham he could wait. I go by der vagon."

The Mad Butcher got into the fourgon and pulled its contents upside down. He fell over something that squirmed. A loud, guttural howl belched from the wagon; then *Herr Hauptmann* Heinz fell atop the wriggling thing. It felt decidedly human.

"You big bum!" yipped Phineas. "Ya fathead, I'll knock ya—"

"Ha, Pingham!" howled *Herr* Heinz, "I look for der big cheese *und* him I find, *ja!* So! I haff you already." There was no doubt about it. Phineas was hooked—thanks to the Limburger cheese that Bump Gillis had rubbed all over the lining of his flying helmet. *Hauptmann* Heinz commandeered a car and loaded his captive, the great *Leutnant* Pinkham, aboard. In all haste he rumbled to the Kraut drome.

There was revelry by night in Staffel 7. A Heinie theatrical troupe had come to entertain the great flyers of Kaiser Bill. The show was to take place in an almost empty hangar. All the Vons were there when the Mad Butcher arrived and announced his triumphal capture.

Phineas, amid howls of derision and unforgivable insults, was cached in a damp cellar of an old vegetable shed which had once been the property of a Frog. A sentry was posted at the head of the stone steps leading from the prison. There was no other exit. And, to add injury to insult, Phineas was handcuffed with his own bracelets after a rigid test of their durability.

“A fine pal, Bump Gillis,” moaned the miserable Yank. “Limburger cheese, huh? Oh, if I ever see that bum again—” He looked down at the handcuffs and laughed.

How long Phineas had been in captivity before the door of his cell was opened he did not know. The sentry admitted a funny-looking individual and then shut the door. The man smirked at him and began to speak in broken English.

“I coom for that I make oop *mein* face also like you, *ja*,” was the mocking remark. “I am *der* great actor, Hans Fried. I vill take *der* part of *der Leutnant* Pingham in *der* show ve giff tonight, ho-ho!” Out of a make-up box he took some putty, a false wig of reddish hair, a black pencil. Phineas watched him as he went to work. The man wore a garish pair of riding trousers, flared away out at the sides. An old khaki tunic of Yankee private origin covered his torso between his belt and his neck.

“An actor, huh?” said Phineas with a grin. “Huh, I always wanted to be one.” He listened for sounds outside the door. Hans Fried turned his head slightly to pick up his wig. The sentry outside heard a loud laugh. Two voices blended. One triumphant, the other muffled with rage. The sentry, too, laughed and peered over toward the hangar. He could see part of the show that was in progress.

“Ya big bum!” he could hear the voice of Pinkham bellow. “If you are an actor, I am Queen Victoria. Well, go out an’ make fun of me. I ain’t through yet. A Pinkham—”

“Ah, it iss did,” came the other voice. “Am I *Herr* Leutnant Pingham? Effen so badt as I look, you are vorse, und you haff *der* real face, ho-ho!”

Then the sentry heard a rap at the door. He went down and let the actor out. On the floor of the cellar sprawled the prisoner.

“Fathead,” he raged. “Dirty Dutchman!”

The actor laughed. So did the sentry. The make-up was very comical. The pencil had made big spots on the impersonator’s face. A line of big teeth protruded from under his lip.

“He iss madt,” explained the pseudo-Phineas, “I look so much like *der Leutnant, Ja!*”

At the head of the steps appeared the triumphant Mad Butcher and three of his pilots.

“*Wie gehts?*” the clown greeted them. “*Ich bin* Pingham, *hein?*”

“Ho! Ho!” guttured *Herr Hauptmann* Heinz. “*Kolossal* iss it. *Ach*, coom by *der* hangar. *Der* show it starts *mit*.”

INTO the improvised theatre walked *Herr* Heinz with the leading man of the impromptu show. Howls of glee fell out of the mouths of the Teuton audience. Some rolled out of their seats with laughter.

Heinz, the Mad Butcher, held up his hand as he ushered the impersonator to the stage. He gave a speech in German which provoked yet more delirious laughter and cheers from the Vons who awaited the performance. The scene was in readiness and it was evident that *Herr* Heinz was about to reenact the capture of Phineas Pinkham. He was going to make it spectacular. In the Spad, he announced, he had caught *Herr Leutnant* Pingham. There was nothing glorious about snagging the famous *Amerikaner* in a wagon, especially when the scent of Limburger cheese had been the moving spirit of the capture.

The star of the troupe lost no time in getting into the spirit of the thing. His mouth being full of artificial teeth, it was impossible for him to talk, so he simply answered in pantomime. The great drama began. Into a Fokker that stood close to the back of the hangar, climbed the ludicrous, buck-toothed, freckle-faced *Leutnant* Pinkham of the stage. Heinz, dressed in flying togs, was ready. He stood apart, waving a Luger. Somebody yelled for silence.

“*Stille!*”

The *Amerikaner* played his part to perfection. As Heinz rushed toward the ship, *Herr* Pinkham acted like a frightened dove.

“*Mein Gott!*” he yipped. “I am lost. *Der* Mad Butcher, he hass me. Vhat vill I do, huh? I know tricks! Great Pingham tricks. *Gott*, I haff no more. Ha-a-al-lp, Allies! Ha-a-a-alp!”

“*Handen hoch!*” howled Heinz with dramatic seriousness. “No more you play tricks. *Ach*, the Germans they are smarter as Yangkees. *Ja!* Gedt down *mit! Schnell!*” He swung to the pit.

The Vons roared their approval. They called for cheers for *der* Kaiser, for *Herr Hauptmann* Heinz.

Klunk! The Mad Butcher seemed to have lost interest in the play. Not until the Mercedes engine of the Fokker roared like a fiend did the assembly

dare to credit their addled senses. Straight at the audience the Fokker was pointed. The wheels began to move.

“Gott im Himmel! Ach! Donner und Blitzen!”

Frightened yells split the night air. Panic seized the Vons. They stampeded for the exit, falling over each other and fighting for the right of way. And behind them roared the Fokker with a wild man yelling in the pit.

“Adoo, Butcher!” roared Phineas. “That smack evens us up for the bye.” He tore out of the hangar, knocked three Krauts spinning and swerved around, his tailskid raking a great gash in the surface of the Jerry tarmac.

“Pingham!” The dread name was shouted by hundreds of throats. Pilots made a dive for their Fokkers. Across the drome, machine guns spitting at him from the ground, went Phineas Pinkham in his stolen Fokker. The wheels lifted and he bored into the darkening ether like a bat out of hell.

“Adoo, bums!” he yowled. “I am Ham Fried, the great Jerry actor! Oh, boys, there’s only one way to git out of them handcuffs. You have to flip them just a certain way. And you forgot that I’m maybe the second best ventriloquist in the whole world. Tell the Boche sentry that before you shoot him. Haw-w-w-w-w.”

Wires lost insulation. Jerry batteries shot searchlight beams all over the sky. Shrapnel whined at anything that looked like a black spot against the roof of the world. Jerry bats went upstairs and knifed the ether from every angle. But through some hole Phineas Pinkham and his Fokker had slipped safely. And long after midnight Garrity’s night watchmen heard the thrumming of a Boche prop overhead. The alarm shrieked out. Machine guns were manned and bullets went up to greet Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham as he came fluttering down.

The Old Man came out of the farmhouse, and pilots barged out of their cubicles. The Fokker swooped in. A flare lighted it up as it hovered a hundred feet in the air. An arm was waving from the pit.

Sir Rufus swore. “No, by cripes, it can’t be. Even if he got what he went after, he wouldn’t come back. No, not this time.”

The Fokker came to a stop. “Haw-w-w-w-w!”

The Old Man clutched at Bump Gillis. “Hold me up! I’m goin’ to pass out like a dame.”

“WELL, bon matting, bums! I’m back with the papers. The old home is saved!” came the only too familiar voice of Phineas Pinkham as he got out of the Fokker pit.

“Y-you?” gasped Garrity. “What’d you come back for, huh? And ain’t you homely enough without makin’ yourself worse? Where—where’d you get the suit? What in the name of—”

“Come into your office,” invited Phineas with an expansive grin. “I am Ham Fried, the Jerry Barrymore. I want to tell you somethin’ as it’s a riot! Tonight I gave my debut and I packed ‘em in.”

Nobody spoke. Nobody could find words as Phineas led the group into the Old Man’s sanctum. He sat down, pulled a piece of paper toward him and looked for a pencil. He could not find one so he took from his pocket the roll of paper which he had gotten out of the fourgon and pulled the fountain pen off it.

“Heinz grabbed me in the fourgon,” he began, shooting a nasty look at Bump Gillis. “He smelled that Limburger that Bump plastered inside my helmet—ugh! Well, they was givin’ a show on the Heinie drome so the big bum who was the star actor got an idea to make himself look like me. He come with his make-up box into the cellar where they had me cached, an’ I jumped him. I got out of them handcuffs easy an’ slugged him. Then I made myself up to look like myself, took his clothes an’ went out as Ham Fried, the Von actor. The Heinie dough that let me out was sure fooled, as did I throw my voice? Haw-w-w-w! Now I’ll draw you a picture of how I done it. Look, here’s the Fokker,” and Phineas dug the pen stub into the paper. Nothing happened.

“The damn thing is dry,” he swore, and flipped the pen out the window. “It’s no good.” The pen smacked into the little shed wherein was cached a motorcycle and a bag of stolen goods. Blam!

The entire headquarters seemed to shift. A big piece of plaster and a decayed two-by-four came down and laid Major Garrity flat as a fritter. Bump Gillis staggered around with a picture of General Pershing hanging by a wire cord from his neck. Howell was spinning in a circle, having sat down hard on a long paper file. Phineas sat in a corner with a bottle of ink in his lap, trying to figure out what had happened.

Major Garrity was the first to recover speech. "So?" he roared. "Deliberately blew up the evidence, you crackpot! Pinkham, you'll get worse than a court-martial. You'll—"

"It's another lie, as usual," declared Phineas, getting to his feet. "I don't know what happened. You tell me, you're so smart!"

"That pen!" growled the C.O. "Loaded! You halfwit! You think that the colonel—"

Br-r-r-r-r-r! The telephone was still in action. It let everybody know it. Garrity groped for it and put the receiver to his ear. "Go ahead, I'm here!" he snapped, brushing plaster from his hair.

"Good heavens, Garrity," came the voice of Major Jenks over the wire. "I forgot to tell you. That fountain pen attached to the formula was a bomb. It was a sample of my explosive. It—er—have you sent a man out, Garrity? I—I—I—"

The Old Man swore. "Listen, Jenks, you're a little late. The damn thing's gone off! Lucky we aren't all spread out like fertilizer. And listen, you—Pinkham can think up enough tricks without your giving him any—by cripes! Yes, I've got your formula. Good night!" Major Garrity turned and faced Pinkham.

"Well, you nitwit," he said, fighting back a grin, "you got loose again. That evidence couldn't be scraped up with a rake. I—er—" He swept the faces of the almost annihilated pilots. "Everybody up front. Apologize to Lieutenant Pinkham for what you've said about him." Both of the major's fists were doubled as he waited.

It was perhaps the most enjoyable moment in the life of the great flyer from Boonetown, Iowa.