

# String ‘Em Back Alive

By Joe Archibald

Featuring Phineas Pinkham

*Major Garrity had an idea. It involved sending Phineas Pinkham back to training school in his stolen Fokker to teach rookies to fight. Phineas had an idea, too. It involved taking that stolen Fokker across the lines to teach the Mad Butcher not to fight. Lay your bets, gentlemen!*

MAJOR RUFUS GARRITY, C.O. of the peerless Ninth Pursuit Squadron, had never been more tickled with himself. He was ready and willing to admit without a blush that Mr. and Mrs. Luther Garrity’s son was above the average when it came to the old horse sense. He sat in headquarters and basked in the praises of the trio of brass hats who had come down from Chaumont for a huddle.

“Major,” vociferated a brigadier whose uniform had never lost a speck of nap, “I’ve got to hand it to you. That is a great idea.” He turned to a lesser light and slapped him between the shoulder blades. “What say, Jenkins? What? Think of it. That Fokker that Lieutenant Pinkham brought in last week. A Jerry D-7 as good as when it left the factory. Going to take it over to the Yankee training school at Toul. Fly it against the green pilots with an experienced flyer in the pit. Gad, sir!” He turned to Garrity once more. “This will tickle Pershing himself. Ha, when the new men come down from Toul, they’ll be able to smack the first Fokker they see just as if they’d been on the Front for months. Well—”

“Hm-m-m,” enthused the Old Man of the Ninth.

“Nothing at all, sir. Huh, nothing at all. Just occurred to me. Just struck me as a good idea, you see. A good man as a potential Boche in the Fokker to go through all the maneuvers so that the new pilots coming up will get oriented.” Garrity paused. He was proud of that last word.

“The pilot, Garrity,” said the brigadier. “Got to have a pilot who knows the Fokker D-7, y’know. One who can fly—”

Again Major Garrity had cause to feel pleased with himself. He smoothed the few strands of hair

left on his pate and swore under his breath. That morning he had run a comb through those strands, a comb which had been previously dipped in glue. A very vindictive light smoldered in the Garrity optics. His jaw became as hard as ten dollars’ worth of building bricks.

“I’ve got the man, sir,” he almost yelled at the brigadier. “Just the man. The nitwit has flown more hours in Jerry ships, perhaps, than he has in Allied jobs. Oh, make no mistake, I’ve got the man! The man who captured that Fokker and flew it in. Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham of Boonetown, Iowa, and I wish nobody had ever settled that territory. That make you feel better, gentlemen? I sure do! You have no idea—”

“Capital!” exclaimed the brigadier. “Just the man! Good way to discipline him, too, Garrity, if what I’ve heard about him is correct. Of course, give a dog a bad name—”

“Multiply what you heard twice,” snapped Sir Rufus, “and believe every word of it.”

“Let’s go out and take a look at the German ship, Garrity,” the superior officer suggested. “I’m interested in having certain features of the job explained to me. I’ve heard—”

Major Rufus Garrity and his visitors got up and meandered out of the French farmhouse that served as headquarters for the Ninth. As their boots hit the dirt, a raucous roar smote their respective ears. The Old Man let out a screech and started to run. Across the field at the far northern boundary bounced a ship—a Fokker D-7. Its wheels left the earth, and the Jerry job clawed for wide open ozone.

“Who’s in it?” roared the major, collaring a scared greaseball. “Who? I gave orders that nobody was to touch that—”

Captain Howell and Lieutenant “Bump” Gillis ran up and skidded to a stop. “Who d’ya think?” shouted the latter to his superior. “I give you ten guesses, an’ if you take more than one, you ain’t half intelligent.”

“Wha-a-a-at?” Garrity shot back. “You talk to me like that, you—er—Pinkham?” The last word sounded like a blast in a rock quarry.

“You’re smart,” grinned Bump. “Right the first time.”

Garrity ran across the field, waving his arms and yelling at the plane, which was easily a mile from the drome by then. “Come back, you crackpot!” he yipped. “I’ll skin you for this, you—I’ll—I’ll—” He stopped, swore prodigiously, and considered getting down on all fours to take a bite out of the ground. Instead he walked back to where the three big boys from Chaumont were waiting, each with a very disapproving look in his eyes.

“Humph!” commented the brigadier. “No discipline, what? Well, if that Fokker is smashed up, Garrity, I’ll have your hide. A great plan, major, only you forgot something. You should’ve taken the wheels and wings off the thing to hold it down. Good day to you, major!”

The Old Man did not respond. He sat down on the steps of the house and held his head in his hands. The suspense was going to be terrible. He knew that before the Fokker came back, if ever, his knuckles would be gnawed away.

UP in the air, Phineas Pinkham, the inveterate getter-of-strong-men’s-goats and trickster by birth, sat in the Fokker pit and chuckled to himself.

“Can’t fly my own Fokker, huh? Says who, huh? Well, I risked life and limb gettin’ this baby carriage, an’ I’m goin’ to have my fun.” Thereupon he headed for the lines. As he skipped over them, he spotted a Heinie sausage swinging lazily on its cable.

“I’ll just go over an’ say, ‘*Wie Gehts,*’” grinned the errant flyer. “An’ then I’ll knock ‘em off.”

The observers of the Drachen saw Phineas coming. Of course they had no idea that it was the great *Leutnant* Pingham, *ach nein!* One towhead looked at the other as the Fokker drilled in. “Rudy, here iss it maybe *der Freund* what shouldt know us, *hein?*”

“*Sehr gut!*” exclaimed Rudolph. “*Der* flyer you shouldt ask maybe he has Schnapps, *ja. Ach,* nodding it happens today, *nein.*”

Phineas gunned by close and waved. The Heinies each flipped their hands. *Rat-a-tat-tat-t-t-t!*

“*Himmel!*”

“*Gott!*”

“Oudt, Rudy!” roared one Teuton. “Oudt vunce, qvick! Somt’ing it iss rotten, ja! Yoomp, Rudy!”

“Haw-w-w-w-w!” guffawed Phineas. “Did I fool ‘em! Well, ya can’t say you saw a leopard just because the big kitty had spots. Oof widderson, bums!” Then the intrepid Yank circled and flew toward Bar-le-Duc.

Over Hattonchattel, a British flyer with a fancy name and a fancier string of victories to his credit took one look at the oncoming Fokker and put on his best fighting face. From afar he had seen the puff of flame as the balloon caved in, and he had no idea that it had been other than an Allied blimp. The S.E.5 cut across Phineas’ blazing path, shot up and arched over. Before the Boonetown adventurer could lick his lips, a stream of Vickers lead rattled against his upper wing.

“Cripes!” uttered Phineas, and raised himself in the pit.

“Ya cockeyed beef-eater!” he roared. “I’m Phineas Pinkham. I’m—” Blooey! Another stream of slugs ate half a strut away with the efficiency of a family of beavers.

“You fathead!” yelled Phineas. “Y-ya—” He took a wad of something out of his coat and slung it overside. A diminutive parachute blossomed out. From his S.E.5 the Limey ace got a look. Across the top of the white chute was the name PINKHAM.

“Fancy!” exclaimed the ace. “I nearly finished the balmy Yank. Dammit, ‘twould have served him jolly well right. Brigade will hear of this, by gad! A fellow cawn’t just go up to every Fokker and awsk who’s there? He jolly well cawn’t. I’ll see about this, I will—bah!”

The Fokker shot close. The pilot was yelling something. The Limey could not hear it, but he was sure it was a rare brand of insult.

Phineas went home and landed. Major Garrity came running across the field. Ten years seemed to slip from his shoulders as he took an inventory

of the Fokker. Then he turned on his pet peeve and let loose a tirade.

“You heard my orders, you fathead!” he yowled, sticking the tip of a big index finger against the Pinkham proboscis. “And you go up just as if you never heard of me. Well, I’ll show you, you—you—”

“If words fail you,” said Phineas with amazing aplomb, “I’ll prompt you. How’d a ‘homely, fish-faced baboon’ do? Or maybe ‘flap-eared polecat’ is more in-sultin’. Or—”

“Get over to the Wing,” bellowed the Old Man. “I’ve got something to say to you. I’ve got some wonderful news for you, Mr. Pinkham!” He turned to some groundmen who had hovered close and were enjoying the proceedings immensely. “Put a guard around that Fokker, you hear? Shoot anybody who even points at it!”

Phineas sauntered over to the stone house, Garrity at his tail, “I got me a sausage,” he said carelessly. “I wish you’d call up some infantry units for confirmation. I been cheated out of enough—”

“Shut up!” interjected Major Garrity. Once in his sanctum, closeted with the irrepressible Phineas, he opened up. “You like that Fokker, don’t you?” he tossed out. “Well, you are goin’ to get a chance to fly it to your heart’s content, you half-wit. You’re—”

“Now you’re talkin’!” enthused the culprit. “What job do the Allies want done now? I always aim to please.”

“Tomorrow you pack up and go to Toul,” the Old Man rapped out, enjoying every word as if it were a hunk of honey on his tongue. “You’ll be a Boche and will go up and try to dodge new Yankee pilots who’re not graduated yet. You get the idea? We’re going to show the guys there how to fight Fokkers and you’ll be von X. It is my idea. Am I smart?”

“I will protest,” yipped Phineas. “I’ll take it to Pershin’. I’ll resign my commission. You can’t frame me. I ain’t done a thing. No Pinkham ever was so insulted. If that’s all, I’ll go, major, as I won’t stoop to even listen—”

“Oh, you won’t, eh?” stormed Garrity. “It’s all arranged. Tomorrow we kiss you good-bye, Lieutenant Pinkham, and I hope you’ll have lots of good times in that Fokker. Now get to hell out of here before I—”

*B-z-z-z-z-z-z-z-z-z!* The Old Man reached for the telephone. He listened to the news coming over the wires from a neighboring Limey squadron.

“He did, did he?” growled he. “Well, I’ll take care of that nincompoop! Too bad he didn’t get his neck scraped by a slug. Oh, don’t take it any further, major. I’ve got plans under way to put him where he won’t mix up the war for us. Thank you, sir. Good-bye!” The major then threw a wolfish grin into Phineas’ indignant countenance. “Almost got smacked down, huh? Got that British outfit madder than hell. Well, now I’ve got you! You’ll go to Toul or I’ll report your last flight to Wing headquarters. Either you go to Toul or to Blois. Take your pick!”

“I generally have to,” countered the prisoner at the dock. “An’ I ain’t never been to Blois yet. Haw-w-w-w! Well, adoo! Maybe things could be worse. Your hair looks just ducky, all slicked down like that! You would be a panic at a junior prom. Well—”

The major could not find a thing to throw. He sat back and took it, teeth grinding. A sneaky feeling that he was not yet the winner assailed him, Phineas Pinkham had become too subservient in such a short space of time.

OVER on the Jerry side, a huddle was taking place. The observers of the wrecked sausage had begun to jabber to their superiors the moment they had hit the ground. The story was relayed to the *Herr Oberst* who ran the Heinie Staffel wherein *Hauptmann* Heinz, the Mad Butcher from Hamburg, kept his suitcase.

“*Der Fokker* vhat vas stole by *Leutnant* Pingham, dot vas it,” exclaimed the *Herr Oberst* to *Hauptmann* Heinz. “Somet’ing it shouldt be did. You haff *der* plan, *ja*, *Herr Hauptmann*?” He shrugged and made a very uncomplimentary gesture toward the Mad Butcher. “*Nein*, of course nodt. Bah—how iss it *der Dumkopf* gedts to der flying corps, *hein*?”

“I join oop,” snapped Heinz, his fur rubbed the wrong way, “und they took me, *Excellenz*.”

“*Stille!*” barked the *Herr Oberst*. “Oopstart! *Ach—*”

The Mad Butcher leaned forward. “Brains maybe iss it I ain’t got,” he said, “budt *der kolossal* idea, *Herr Oberst*, *ja!*”

“*Was ist das?*”

“*Die* markings uf *der* Fokker veil I know, *Excellenz*,” laughed Heinz. “*Leutnant* Pingham, he dast nodt change them, so! Oddervise ve know he iss *der* faker, so! *Der* number I know uf *der* Fokker. So, I put *der* same number on one uf my ships, *Excellenz*, und somebody he shouldt dress like der Yangkee. Maybe so he gedt behind the lines, so! Maybe yet he gedt close by vun big Allied ace und then—*raus mit!* Down he goes! Vhat iss goose for *der* sauce iss goose for *der* sander—er—vhat iss soose for *der* gauce—er—*Himmel!*—you understandt, *ja?*”

*Herr Oberst* dug his close-shaved pate with his fingernails. It sounded like rats gnawing at a zinc water pipe.

“Nodt badt, *Herr Hauptmann*,” he finally admitted. “*Nein*. Forgedt vhat I joost say, *ja*. Ha, ha! Vun dringk ve all haff.”

“*Ja*,” grinned Heinz. “Ve dringk.”

So they all drank, after which the Mad Butcher went to his own quarters. He had some sausage links which he wrapped carefully in a little box. A scribbled note accompanied them.

“Pingham, he vill svear vhen he gedts *das*, if he does.” Heinz chuckled savagely. “Better insults neffer do I t’ink uf, *nein!*”

That night over in Bar-le-Duc Phineas Pinkham and Babette, his big moment, happened upon a novel morsel of entertainment. A Frog was putting on a marionette show, and the way he manipulated the little dummies struck admiration into the heart of a man who had always doted upon making things seem that which they were not.

“That’s the berries!” exclaimed Phineas to his companion of the evening, Babette. “You’d think he’d get them strings all tangled up, huh? Look at him make that doll’s mouth wag! Oh, boys, how long has this been goin’ on? I think I’ll sit through the show twice, as here is a Frog with brains and after my own heart.”

Phineas remained until the end. He even pleaded with the Frog performer to put on a private show. But the Basque trouper had had a trying day. He would not have prolonged the show for the President of France that night.

“Huh?” growled the interested customer. “Afraid I’ll steal his stuff, maybe. Well, I bet I could do lots better than that bum, huh?”

“*Oui, oui*,” gurgled Babette. “*Mon* Pheenyas, he ees ze gr-greates’ man in all ze worl’, *oui*.”

“Sure,” agreed Phineas. “Well, let’s *allez* for some coneyac an’ then I’ll take *vous* home.”

Not long afterward, Phineas took himself home. As he pushed the motorcycle over the rutted muddy road leading to the Ninth, his thoughts were on funny-looking mannikins with strings tied to them. Everything, it seemed, that Phineas had a hand in had strings attached to it. Upon his arrival at the home drome, the flyer from Boonetown noticed that the Frog farmhouse showed signs of unusual animation for the lateness of the hour. Sergeant Casey came up as Phineas skidded his iron pony to a stop.

“They been waitin’ for ya, sir,” ventured the sergeant. “They’re celebratin’ your—er—well—”

“Oh, I git it!” snapped the squadron’s sore thumb. “Nice pals, huh? So everybody’s happy! Well, Casey, never git ambitious in this *guerre*, as you’ll never git appreciated for it.” He chuckled and walked away. “Celebratin’, huh? They’ll be cryin’ before the night is out, huh! Just as if I didn’t know they’d pull this. Well—”

Later Phineas walked into the Frog farmhouse. “H’lo, bums! I was detained. I—”

“Welcome, Te-e-e-e-acher!” came a chorus. Phineas boiled inside as he sat in his accustomed place. There was a funny-looking package in front of his plate. He ripped it open, pulled out a chain of sausages. With them came a letter.

“A Boche flew over with it,” explained the major. “A present from Heinz. Wonder how he knew you were—”

“Huh,” grinned Phineas, “while I’m gone, the Heinie could come over an’ steal all your watches an’ carve all their initials in the tree trunks. What you poor fish will do when I’m gone for good, I don’t know.”

“We’ll manage to bear up under it,” growled Captain Howell. “We look sad, don’t we?”

Phineas read the *billet doux* from the Mad Butcher. It was very insulting and said something about the sausages having more brains than the Pinkham head. It also went on to say *Leutnant* Pingham would look like the wieners before the war got very much farther along.

“There!” cracked the recipient. “I can’t go to Toul now. The Pinkhams have been insulted. I demand—”

“Shut up!” barked Garrity. “You’re going to Toul to teach all you know to the—”

“It’ll only take half an hour,” ventured Bump. “What’ll they give him to do afterward?”

Phineas Pinkham thrust out what little chin he had. He made a pass at a fly that had chosen his nose as a landing field. He slapped another that banked close and then let out a yell at the mess attendant.

“Why don’t ya spray this joint once in a while? It’s lousy with flies.”

“Tuttle,” commanded Garrity, “get the spray. Nothing is too good for Lieutenant Pinkham tonight.”

Private Tuttle picked up the fly spray and walked around the big room, pushing the plunger with vim and vigor. The Old Man lifted his glass and drank a toast to Phineas. Later, Tuttle brought in a plate of beefsteak. The Old Man looked at it.

“Tell that mess sergeant that he forgot the onions,” he yipped to Tuttle. “What ails the man? I told him—”

“Pardon, sir,” interrupted Tuttle meekly, “but the sergeant says to tell you, sir, he just ran out of onions. Said he couldn’t understand as—ah-h-h!” The private pawed at his eyes, then coughed.

Bump Gillis yanked out a handkerchief and wiped tears from his eyes. Down Howell’s cheeks briny rivulets wended their way. Then Major Rufus Garrity blinked, swallowed hard and his eyes became very bright. All around the festive board tears were predominant on the faces of the hard-boiled Ninth Pursuit Squadron. Phineas wiped his own washed-out blue optics, sniffed and got out of his chair.

“W-what in hell?” sniffled the major. “Th—er—by cripes, I smell onions!”

“Haw-w-w-w-w-w!” Phineas’ guffaw came from the doorway. “I told ya you’d all be cryin’ because I’m leavin’ your bed an’ board. Oh, boys, it took me a long time to make that onion juice to put in the spray. Well, laugh! Haw-w-w-w! You’ll fool with—”

Major Rufus Garrity reached for a big salt shaker. “You big flap-eared whoozle! You—” He hurled the missile straight at Phineas. *Boom!* The Old Man went over backwards. Bump Gillis and two other pilots dived under the table.

“Sound the alarm!” yelled Garrity. “Sound the—”

“That tin salt shaker,” howled Phineas through the window, “was a little hand grenade I made. Well, adoo. I must git packed.” And he was gone.

THE next morning there were no tears flowing as Phineas, musette bag in hand, came out of his hut and walked toward the Fokker that was waiting to take him away. Pilots watched him tie something to the tail of the German ship. It was the string of sausages. Phineas had wired them more firmly together.

“What damn foolishness is that?” the major wanted to know.

“It’s my lunch,” replied the Boonetown wonder glibly. “You wouldn’t expect von X to take corned beef an’ cabbage with him, now would ya? Well, adoo once more an’ for the last time, bums!” And he stepped aboard the Fokker. “Don’t forget to send my trunk by American Express, haw-w-w-w!”

The Mercedes engine roared. Phineas made a derisive gesture and gunned away.

“Well, that’s that!” breathed the Old Man.

“Boy,” groaned Bump Gillis, “it’s goin’ to be like a tomb around this dump now. Oh, well—”

Phineas headed for Toul, but when he was out of sight, he banked around and headed for the well-known lines.

“One last look, haw-w-w!” he laughed to himself.

Now on that day Captain Rhyes-Whittleby of the King’s Flying Henchmen was abroad with five of his fellows in the S.E.5’s. The Limey ace spotted the Fokker and dropped out of his wedge.

“By Jove!” he enthused. “Splendid, no end. Good huntin’, what?” He made a bee line for the Fokker, and as he zoomed a little higher to make room for a good dive, the Fokker’s wings waggled and its pilot lifted aloft something that looked like a stick. Little balls of fire shot from it,

“Bah!” erupted Rhyes-Whittleby. “The balmy American! Brigade will hear no end of what I shall have to say.” He whirled about and rejoined his flight, led them deeper into German skies.

“I bet he’s sore,” chuckled Phineas as he banked wide, “but a Limey never did have no sense of humor.”

Five minutes later the Limey flight came sweeping out of another part of the sky and there,

just below a cloud, hovered that maddening Jerry D-7. Captain Rhyes-Whittleby fumed.

“Ha!” he clipped out. “I’ll teach the blighter a lesson.” Down he hurled his S.E.5, waving his companions to go on. The British ship plummeted down and sent a burst through the Fokker’s tail. “What ho?” yelled the Britisher as the D-7 pulled out. “Surprised no end, what?”

He tripped his guns again, and the pilot of the Fokker heard them whistle over his head. The man in the Fokker pit grinned like a cat full of canary, and shot a glance upstairs. He let out a whoop, a gigantic roar. Out of the sun the Mad Butcher saw six of his brood coming. The Britisher saw them—too late. They swarmed around his S.E.5. From another corner of the sky drilled another flight of Jerries. Captain Rhyes-Whittleby resigned himself to his fate and let blaze with everything in the Vickers clips. A blast of lead sent him down out of control. He landed in German territory and waited for the usual formalities. And Phineas? Boche were abroad in droves that day. They caught the Fokker D-7 dead to rights near the Meuse and kicked it down through six thousand feet of ether. Phineas cracked up against the side of an old pill box, got out of the wreck, shook himself and grinned.

“Well,” he decided, “I don’t go to Toul.” A little knot of Yankee infantrymen came running, bayonets and teeth bared.

“Stick ‘em up, kraut! We got you!” yelled one. “Go fry an eel!” Phineas advised him. “An’ tell me where is the road to Blois?”

“In a Jerry ship, huh?” cracked out a tough dough. “You come with us or we stick you full of holes like a cheese. A spy, maybe. Come along.”

“Okay,” agreed Phineas, “but wait.” He went to the Fokker’s tail, removed his odd streamer, the chain of sausage. He hung the links around his neck and gestured that he was ready to go. “Nutty,” commented a dough. In due time Phineas was shunted back to the drome of the Ninth Pursuit Squadron. The Old Man tried to find words that would fit the occasion, but he came to the conclusion that there were none. He fought off a cerebral hemorrhage and pointed to the Pinkham hut.

“Get! Stay there until I think up something. By cripes, this is the end. This is the last straw. I’ll—I’ll—”

Phineas went. And two hours later hell burst wide open. Into the drome came the major of the S.E.5 squadron. With him were a red tab and two flying officers. Their faces were blue and they ground their teeth in unison.

“Garrity,” commenced Major Leigh-Lowe, “let me tell you what your crack-brained Lieutenant Pinkham has done. Captain Rhyes-Whittleby, the great British ace, is in the hands of the enemy. Went after a Fokker D-7, his men report. A trap, sir! Boche came at him thicker than flies, Garrity! You hear me? That balmy pilot of yours is responsible for the captain’s—you know who he is? Rhyes-Whittleby! The man who shot down von Konk two years ago. The man—”

“He would not have if I had been in the *guerre* at the time,” came a voice from the doorway. “It’s lucky, as I generally wipe up all the big Jerry Vons an’—”

“Y-you!” spouted the outraged Limey major. “What infernal cheek! Garrity, this is the man! I demand his arrest.”

“Well, what’ve I done now, huh?” Phineas wanted to know. “I signaled them Limies who I was. I—”

“A trap,” howled the major at Phineas. “You and that Fokker D-7. Well, you fathead, the Mad Butcher was right! You haven’t any more brains than a string of weenies. Oh—you—Pinkham, you’re under arrest!” He turned to the major of the King, “I’ll take care of this, sir,” he stormed. “I have him on a million counts. He was sent to Toul this morning. He deliberately—”

“I lost my way,” Phineas argued. “That’s my story an’ I—”

The Old Man chased him halfway to his hut. Phineas sat down to think long and hard. Here was a real jam, one that called on every last ounce of his incredible ingenuity. And the Pinkham brain clicked desperately and in a surprisingly short space of time kicked in with an idea.

“That dummy show with the strings was swell,” he chuckled. “Well, it’s a ill wind that don’t blow somebody over.”

LATE that day Phineas girded his loins, set his teeth and walked in on the major. After ten minutes of keeping his person safe from assault, he finally got Garrity to listen. Phineas talked fast.

He had to. When it was over, he wiped his brow and waited for the verdict.

“Nuts!” cracked Sir Rufus. “But if it had been sane, I’d know you were ready for the booby hatch. You’re headed for twenty years in any army’s jail, so I’ll give you a break, and I hope you break your neck at the same time. But you’ll give me your word you won’t run out, you half-wit. If the idea flops, and it’s ninety-nine chances to one that it will, you come back. Get me?”

“You’re a pal,” enthused Phineas, jiggling gleefully. “D’ya need to ask for a Pinkham’s word? Huh, you’d think I wasn’t to be trusted.”

“Get!” ordered Garrity. “And remember, if you run out, I go to the klink in your place. And if I do, I’ll spend the few years I’ll have left when I get out to hunt you down with a cleaver. You get it?”

“Yes, sir,” answered Phineas. “I will even salute you—look!”

No sooner had Phineas reached his hut than he began to work. He fished out of his trunk the uniform of a Boche flying officer. Out of the same mare’s nest of tricks he took a wax mask. He combed the drome for strong cord and wire. He drove groundmen dizzy looking for old rags, waste, excelsior, and anything that would serve as stuffing. Pilots grouped together and mumbled.

“I asked the Old Man when they were goin’ to send the nut wagon after him,” Howell confided to his companions, “but he just swore at me and said to go out and mind my own business. Well, I hope he gets in a sling with the crackpot.”

Diligently the amazing wizard of the squadron worked. At length he had something propped up against the side of his hut that looked like a Boche officer in an alcoholic stupor. There were strings tied to the thing, and Phineas wasted precious time pulling at them one at a time.

“Haw-w-w-w!” he grinned. “Someday I’ll sell this act to the Hippodrome in New York. I’ll—” He cut off his monologue and sauntered toward Major Garrity’s sanctum. The Old Man reluctantly handed him an official-looking letter.

“I do this against my good judgment,” he growled at Phineas. “I can smell the inside of a klink already. And if you come out alive and don’t come back, I’ll track you down until—”

“Have no fear,” said Phineas grandiloquently. “I have not got all my medals for makin’ mistakes, haw-w-w-w! I go forth to battle!”

The entire personnel of the Ninth stood by flabbergasted as Phineas Pinkham tied the dummy on the lower wing of his Spad. He tied it in such a way as to wring a murmur of incredulity from the doubting Thomases.

“D’ya remember Mannheim, the great Jerry ace I brought down?” he asked the assemblage. “Well, there he is, but not in the flesh. I’m goin’ to turn him over to the Vons. I’m goin’ over to the drome of the Mad Butcher an’ strike a bargain.”

Bump Gillis shook his head sadly and walked away. “I can’t bear to see him in this condition,” he groaned. “I want to remember him like he used to be, only half nuts.”

Phineas took something from his pocket. It was a mask. He pulled this over his face and then yanked on his helmet. “I wouldn’t want them to think it was me,” he grinned, “as then they might think I was foolin’ ‘em. Well, here I go. Adoo!”

And away he went. As the ship reached a point half a mile away, the thing on the lower wing of the Spad brought exclamations of wonder from those left behind. On the steps of the stone house Major Garrity sat and wished he had his life to live over again.

Sometime later the appearance of a Spad over the drome of Heinz, the Mad Butcher, brought on a mild riot. Pilots ran to their Fokkers, grumbling. It was dusk, and time to rest. Down out of the sky came a black speck. A white flower seemed to bloom out behind it. The Mad Butcher followed its course with straining eyes.

“A message, *ja*,” he cracked. “See, *der Amerikaner*, he waits. Gedt *der* message,” he barked at a Teuton hireling. “*Mach’ schnell*. You shouldt nodt lose sighdt of *der* parachute, *nein!*”

The message landed and was retrieved. Heinz took it to the *Herr Oberst*. His Excellency read it, whistled softly and seemed to go into a trance. Suddenly he looked at Heinz.

“*Die* Englanders vant ve shouldt svap prisoners,” he snapped. “For the beef-eater ve half captured today, they giff von Mannheim, *der* great ace. *Ach*, iss it a trick, hein?”

“Pingham iss it, I bedt you,” yipped the Mad Butcher. “*Schwein!* Oop go my Fokkers.”

“Send them oop, *ja*, budt only to look by der Spad ofer yedt,” commanded the *Herr Oberst*. “To *der* High Command I gedt vord. Qvick! It says here if *die* Fokkers shoodt at him, he drops Mannheim so! Be careful vunce, Heinz, so! Joost go oop and giff a look vunce. *Ach*, Mannheim, *mein Freund!*” He reached for the field telephone. Soon staccato phrases came over the wires. Mannheim? Get him if possible. A strange bargain, but prisoners have been exchanged before. Such were the words from the big Heinie brains.

So up into the twilight went a trio of Fokkers. They circled the Spad warily, the pilots staring at the thing on the wing.

“Now, professor, do your stuff,” grinned Phineas. He yanked a string. The dummy waved an arm. He yanked another string. His puppet shifted his position on the wing, although the Spad was riding on even keel.

“*Gott!*” grinned Heinz. “It iss nodt der *Leutnant* Pingham. So! He iss shodt down today in *der* Fokker, *ja! Himmel! Mannheim, ja!*” He signaled his two pilots and went down to land.

“It iss nodt a trick, *nein*,” yelled the Mad Butcher excitedly. “Ha! Ve gedt Mannheim. Ofer between the lines ve make der svap, so *der* message goes, *ja!*”

“*Ja wohl*,” grinned the *Herr Oberst*. “Gedt Mannheim. *Ach*, he iss der best chess player in all Chermany.”

UP toward Phineas’ Spad zoomed a Fokker. On the lower wing, one arm wrapped around a strut, was a passenger.

“The Limey,” grinned the schemer from Squadron 9. “Well, do your stuff, professor!” He pulled out and headed for the landing place which had been designated by Major Rufus Garrity. “Huh, what a war,” he kept on.

The Fokker followed his Spad half a mile behind. He manipulated the strings that led from the manikin to the pit, and the thing acted for all the world as if it were something that knew what it was doing. In a very few minutes Phineas picked out a spot to set the Spad down on. It was an open area which Mars for some reason or other had not seen fit to use at the moment. It was between the lines and almost out of the line of fire. Phineas went down, wing-slapped to a

landing and waited, all palpitation. Down came the Fokker. It rolled to a stop, two hundred yards away from the Spad. The Fokker pilot pulled a gun and ordered the dumfounded Captain Rhyes-Whittleby to the ground. He herded the Englishman across to where Phineas awaited him. Fifty yards off he stopped and looked over the situation.

“I got him tied,” said Phineas. “I ain’t takin’ no chances of you foolin’ me.” He turned to the thing on the wing. “Stop fussin’,” he said and pulled at a cord. “You’ll be back among the pretzels in no time. I—”

“*Schwein!*” answered a voice. “Let me go. *Himmel!*”

The Jerry pilot, satisfied, walked up. The British officer tagged on behind, every sense alert. Something told him that he had heard that voice before. Something about it spelled trouble anywhere.

“Here iss *der* Britisher,” the Jerry said. “Untie Mannheim vunce. I—” He fell back on his heels, stared. “*Gott!*”

*Kerplunk!* Behind the ear of the Boche, a big bunch of knuckles thudded just as he turned his artillery on Phineas. He sank down with a sigh and rolled peacefully over on his back.

“Swell!” yipped Phineas. “Git aboard that Spad. I am gittin’ more respect for the Limies all the time. Some wallop! Le’s git goin’. You hear them machine guns? They ain’t ours. Haw-w-w!”

“Pinkham!” shouted Rhyes-Whittleby as he climbed on the Spad’s wing. “Jolly well done, eh, what? Knew somebody was pullin’ the Boche’s leg. Ha, fancy now!”

The Spad tore away, climbed into the air and was about to bank around and head for the Allied lines when two Fokkers appeared. They speared at the Spad, and Phineas felt his stomach loop. From one Fokker pit came an angry bellow that almost drowned out the roar of the engine.

“*Ach, Donnervetter!*” Heinz was howling. “Somet’ing I knew it vas rotten. Budt I ain’dt too late yedt, *Got sie dank*. Pingham, I gedt you, I bedt. Ya-a-a-a-a!” He sent a withering blast through the Spad’s rigging, and the British pilot swore as a splinter from a strut bit into his nose.

“Oh, cripes!” groaned Phineas. The motor missed, coughed. Then it died. The Spad swooped

down and made a landing in the square of a little village which was almost deserted.

“Well,” said the Limey, “rum go, what? Too bad. Almost made it. Stout fellow, Pinkham. Yes.”

Phineas swore and tried to get the engine to resume business. The works seemed messed up. Down swooped the Fokkers and landed just beyond the town. Into the place swarmed a patrol of Boche infantry.

“We’ll go down like Custer,” declared Phineas. “Let ‘em have it!”

The Boche were close now. Then—“Gr-r-r-r-r! Bow-w-w-w-wow! Yipe—yipe! Yippity yi! Ow-w-w-w-w-w-w!” From out of nowhere came a flock of angry, yelping canines. The smell of sausage was in the air. Canines, ribs bared by the deprivations of war, poured toward the Pinkham Spad Phineas got up in the pit and stared, goggle-eyed. From his tail the sausages, now badly lacerated, strung out. A canine made a dive for a Boche who was close to the tail and grabbed fast to the man’s seat. Other Jerries tried to close in. The famished canine pack swarmed over them, indignant that anybody should try to rob them of the first dainty morsel they had seen in months.

Bang! Bang! Dogs went west. Those left fastened themselves to every inviting portion of Boche anatomy. “Yip-pity-yip! Yow-w-w-w-w! Gr-r-r-r-r!”

“Haw-w-w-w-w-w!” howled Phineas. He yelled at Rhyes-Whittleby. “Spin that prop. I think this Hisso will perk. Hurry up.” And while the two members of the Allies worked feverishly, the canines battled the Boche. One got a swallow of sausage and went crazy as a Jerry flyer tried to barge through the pack. The Mad Butcher stepped on a canine tail.

“Ow-w-w-w-w-wr-r-r-r! *Himmel!*”

Phineas let out a great war whoop as the Hisso roared to life. The Britisher circled a wing tip and climbed aboard. Away shot the Spad. As its wheels lifted, Phineas looked back. He saw the Mad Butcher spinning in a tight circle, with a big furry streamer attached to his nether regions. Boche were pulling out, leaving the field to the canine pack.

“Thanks for the sausages, Heinzie, ol’ boy!” he roared out, and then laughed at Rhyes-Whittleby

and headed for home. “Haw-w-w-w! I thought it was too early for dog days. Well—”

Back in the village two Boche flyers watched the Spad disappear into the gloomy skies. *Hauptmann* Heinz, minus the seat of his pants and wondering if hydrophobia germs were already taking a foothold in his bloodstream, groaned dismally.

“*Ach, Himmel!* Pingham! *Donnervetter!*”

“Bah!” growled his companion, feeling gingerly of a chewed leg. “Your idea it *vas* for *die* wieners, Heinz. Bah! *Und* Pingham hass only maybe brains as *die* wieners, *hein?* Bah some more. It iss by you *der Dumkopf!*”

“Budt I *der* man see on *der* ving move,” argued the Mad Butcher. “He waved *der* hand. *Ach du lieber*, Pingham iss *der* defil. Somebody’s face he hass *mit*. Efen dogs—”

Phineas went on home and unloaded the great British ace on the steps of headquarters. Ninth Pursuit Squadron. Major Rufus Garrity came out, looked, shook hands with Rhyes-Whittleby, then swayed on his feet. Captain Howell held him up.

“Somebody get me a drink,” Garrity pleaded in a weak voice, “and some smelling salts. Somebody go up and see if I’m in bed. If I ain’t, come back an’ tell me. Then I’ll know I’m not dreaming.”

“I always get my man,” boasted Phineas. “I had an uncle once who was in the Northwest Mounted Police and I guess I take after him.”

“Thanks, old top,” said Rhyes-Whittleby to the hero of the moment. “Thanks no end, old bean. The King will decorate you for this. His Majesty—”

“Huh,” cut in the grinning Phineas. “How is George these days?”

“Why, confound it,” blazed the Limey. “Confound your infernal cheek. You—er—ah—”

Phineas sighed and sat down. “That is a Limey for ya,” he complained. “No sense of humor, huh!”