

HOSE de COMBAT

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PHINEAS
PINKHAM
howl



Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham was in a sling.
Oh, yes, we know that's nothing new—but wait a minute.
This time he'd dropped a couple of bombs right on the domes of the A.E.F.
on his own side of the lines—and it didn't look like an accident.

LIEUTENANT PHINEAS PINKHAM, to use the parlance of the A.E.F., was in a sling. That, of course, is like making the statement that one can find rice in China. Not that Phineas had deliberately dropped that couple of Cooper bombs on his own side of the lines, washing out three or four mules. There were extenuating circumstances, if anyone had bothered to take them into consideration, but no one ever did that in connection with Phineas.

The fact that the Pinkham war chariot was only running on its reputation when it rubbed noses with the dirt of the home drome failed to stir compassion in the hickory hearts of the brass hats and Major Rufus Garrity. Phineas, to use an old bromide, had to look in the dictionary to find sympathy on the field of the Ninth Pursuit Squadron.

"Smart, aren't you?" the Old Man cracked at the Boonetown, Iowa, marvel, who stood very much on the carpet in headquarters. "You go over to Germany, without anybody saying okay, to look for that chemical factory, huh? You knew those bombs were for that Jerry pontoon bridge over the Meuse, but the Boche chased you, and so you unload the bombs right on the domes of the A.E.F. Huh!" He tapped the fingers of one hand on the desk in front of him. The other hand was full of a paper weight that would have tipped the scales at five pounds. "Well?" he yelled, shoving his chin straight out. "Say something, halfwit!"

"Even Ty Cobb couldn't bat a thousand per cent," argued the culprit. "Anyways, Bump Gillis an' Wilson had enough bombs to git the bridge. The brass hats have been gittin' cramps about that chemical factory for a month, an' nobody could spot it. Well, I says, I'll take things into my own hands, an' I did. I'm here to tell you the Intelligence bums ought to give all their pay back to the government as where they said that factory was ain't even close. I got chased by the Wienerschnitzels and forgot I had the bombs until the Jerry ground batteries started tossin' up all the old auto parts that was scrapped in Germany. The last two bombs dropped when I got on our side. That's just like you. You worry about mules, an' I could've been killed just as easy as nothin'. I'm just goin' to goldbrick my way through the rest of this *guerre*, as what appreciation do I git, huh? I won't even try!"

The C.O. had a hard struggle to restrain himself from tossing the paper weight. "Mules are scarce, you crackpot!" he yipped. "The asylums back in U.S.A. are full of Napoleons like you. Well, you'll never get another chance to bomb anything, Pinkham, you freckle-faced cluck!"

"Huh?" gulped the scion of a family never heard of until it produced Phineas. "Now listen. I think I know where that dump is at where they're makin' all the horrible gases an' such that'll maybe choke all the Allies to death. It's one of two places, an' I flew from one to the other an' I says, the place where I git fired at the most is the chemical factory. So you'd better think it over an' not be too hasty as if you depend on the Intelligence Corps, you ain't half as bright as them crackpots."

Outside in the big room of the French farmhouse that served as mess hall, front parlor, and what-have-you for the pilots of the Ninth, Bump Gillis and Captain Howell as well as other pilots who were not up in the air saw the door of Wings crash open as if two cyclones had merged behind it and begun to bear down. Through it leaped Phineas Pinkham.

"H'lo, bums," he grinned in flight. "Sorry I can't stop. I'll see you all later."

Crash! Something hit the wall about a foot from the door leading into the open spaces. The Old Man was poised like a big league pitcher who has just slipped over a fast one.

"Huh," commented Bump Gillis, *sotto voce*. "The Old Man's control is bad today. We better take him out an' put in a southpaw."

"I heard you, you fathead," Garrity yowled, "and, by cripes, I think I can tell you who goes back to ferryin' ships next week. Maybe I'll send you all out and get me some buzzards who will have some respect for their superior. I'll teach you wise guys to be civil!"

"This ain't the Civil War! Haw-w-w-w-w!" The crack floated in through the open window.

"You're under arrest!" roared Sir Rufus, waxing apoplectic. "Pinkham!" The major seemed berserk. His mouth opened and closed like a codfish, but he couldn't get the words out. He pulled out his service revolver, stared at it wildly, then pushed it into Captain Howell's hand. "You hold this for a while. Hide it! When the war is over, I'll ask you for it." Then, fuming, he turned and barged back into his place of business.

It was a most inopportune time for brass hats to call. Nevertheless, two colonels stepped out of an automobile which appeared to be constructed of mud. They entered the house and, after getting all the show of respect that could be expected from the pilots, both crashed the door of Wings.

"Morning, Garrity," said a colonel with plenty of excess avoirdupois in greeting. "Your men bomb any Yankee ambulance trains today?"

The Old Man groaned. His jaw muscles bulged.

"Why, no, colonel," he cracked sarcastically. "They haven't done so well. Only got four Red Cross nurses, three baby carriages loaded with twins and a couple of chaplains. Let me have the news, as when I want jokes, I'll read 'em out of the funny papers."

"No such disrespect from you, Garrity!" rapped out the colonel. "I'll report you, sir."

"So what?" raged the major. "You can't come and insult me. I will resign. I'll—"

"Come now," the other brass hat interrupted, "we've got to get down to business. We're all a little upset, what? Now this chemical factory, Garrity. It has to be spotted. Here's a chance for your squadron to redeem itself. A fast pursuit ship could go over where a slow observation plane would be—"

"Colonel," cut in the major, "I suppose if you asked me just to go out an' bite the top off the cathedral at Rheims, you wouldn't take no for an answer! Well, sending a crate out to do that job is just about as bad. It's twenty miles into Germany! You would save time killing pilots by installing an electric chair here. What ails the Intelligence Corps, eh?"

"I'll stand no more, major," the roly-poly colonel snapped from the depths of his dignity. "You've got the orders. Carry them out. And good-day to you, sir!"

"Good-day!" commented Garrity savagely. "When you see Roberts at Wing headquarters, ask him if he came from a long line of butchers."

AND NOW the Old Man was in a sling. Also he did not care a tinker's dam. It would feel great to be in civvies again, and he would never have to see Lieutenant Pinkham again. The major was soliloquizing thus when he suddenly fell out of his chair and hugged the floor. A Spad was drilling straight for the window of Wings. He heard the gargantuan roar of the Hisso as it shot up and wondered how, by all that was holy, it had missed him. There were wild yelps out on the field. The Old Man crawled to the door and looked out.

"Hey-ey-ey!" he bellowed. "What's that fool doing, huh?"

"It's Pinkham," Bump Gillis fired back. "He's gone nuts!"

"No-o?" gasped the shattered major as he got to his feet. "You don't mean to tell me! When he comes down, tie him up. Get me? Slap handcuffs on him or rope or wire—I don't care what. Cripes, what a—" He stopped breathing. Lieutenant Pinkham was coming down again, this time straight for a hangar roof, the Hisso throttle wide open. He pulled up—a little too late. The Spad bounced high into the air. A wheel spun down and just missed washing out Sergeant Casey.

The buzzards of the Ninth clapped hands over their eyes as the Spad's left wing cracked up against the limbs of an apple tree.

Craa-a-a-ash! Everybody on the field ran over to the wreck. Tugging at a flying wire that had encircled his neck, Phineas struggled into the clear. He coughed and spat out some oil and yanked a piece of glass out of his chin.

"And you ain't dead!" a pilot gasped. "Why?"

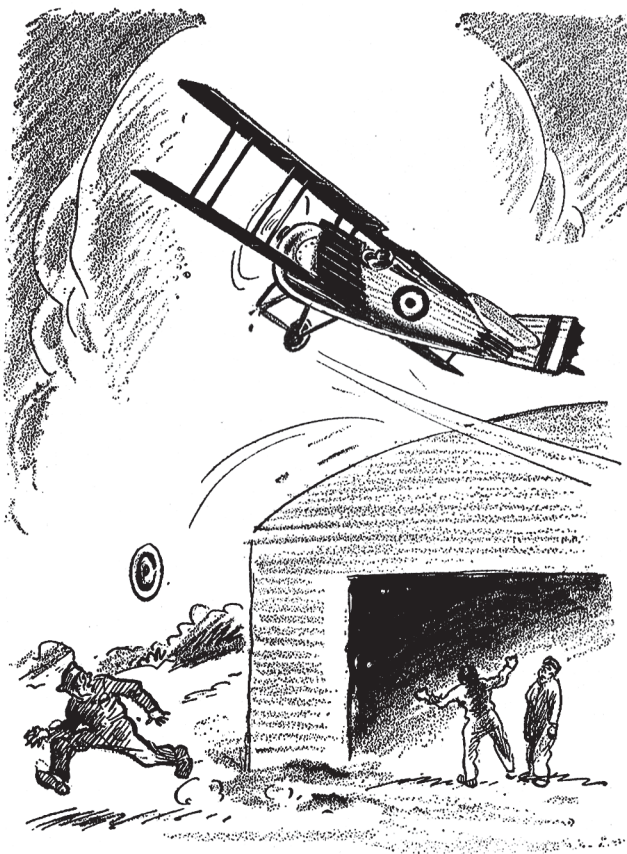
"I've got it down to a science now," grinned the irrepressible sore thumb of the squadron. "I know now just when to pull up on the old stick. It's a secret, and I'll keep it to myself."

"You certainly will, you blasted idiot—in Blois!" bellowed Major Garrity, arriving at the scene. "You've cracked up your last Spad. Clean up that mess, Casey." He whirled in his tracks. "Where's Captain Howell? Oh, there you are. Now I'll take my gun. Go get it!"

"B-but—er—major," stammered the flight leader, "maybe after you've thought it over, you—er—well, killing Pinkham is all right, sir, but think of the firing squad. The—er—"

"They can't shoot me twice," roared the C.O. "It's me. I'm going to do away with myself. I'm at the end of my rope."

"You'd think it was you that was almost killed," observed Phineas with disgust. "Here I am experimentin'



for the Allies an' just because I missed by an inch, you go an'—" Just then he saw the look in the major's eye and started to run. Three times around the field the Old Man gave it up, for the Boonetown flyer was about to make his hut and pile a couple of trunks and an army cot against the door. Gasping for breath, Sir Rufus retired to Wings and locked himself in.

That night Phineas did not show up for mess. He stayed in his hut, mixing up a concoction in a canvas washbowl. At his elbow was a paper bag half-filled with something. The amiable concocter whistled off key as he worked. Phineas never did anything according to form, even a tune. At last he poked a stick into the fluid and, after pulling down the burlap window curtain which plunged the hut into darkness, he scraped the end of the stick against the wall. Then he sat down to await developments, which were not long in coming.

"Success!" exclaimed the grinning flyer. "It's a gift! I don't see how I do it, nope." But then his grin faded.

Where was he ever going to get a ship again? How was he ever going to put his theory into practice? There was the catch. He knew there was no use to plead with the Old Man. This time he knew he was well cooked.

"Ah-h-h-h!" he breathed at length. "The ol' brain never fails. Have I got an idea? It should work. Oh, boys!"

Major Garrity retired to his quarters early. Perhaps, he hoped, if he got some sleep, some of his sanity might return. He opened the door of his

bed chamber and went in. Crossing the floor to turn on the light, he stepped into something. There was a decided swish-swish as he took several steps. He raised one foot and his investigating fingers stuck to something.

"By cr-r-r-ripes!"

Down the stairs and into headquarters went the Old Man. He walked like a cat that has just gotten its feet wet. On each shoe there was a sheet of fly paper. Stuck to his hand was another one which he was valiantly trying to shake off. And all the time he was swearing vehemently.

"Who did that?" he roared at the recording officer. "Who did it? Laugh, will you? Hyenas! Where's that lunkhead of an orderly? Where—" He sat down, tugging at the sticky paper, only to get his hands further mixed up in it. "Never mind Pinkham. I can't do any worse to him than I've got in mind. Here, you, tear this stuff off me. I'm going to bed and I hope I don't wake up."

At last the major was separated from the fly paper and washed over with benzine to remove traces of the glue. Then he stamped back upstairs, emitting noises such as you hear in a zoo. And out on the drome, Captains Howell and Wilson and three groundmen stood as stiff as totem poles, staring at something on the trunk of a tree near the line of huts. Fiery letters stared back at them, to wit: "HELLO, BUMS!"

"How did he do it?" wondered Howell. "Maybe it's phosphorus."

"You tell me," growled Wilson. "I never got any further than trigonometry in school. Anyway, I don't go near it. Maybe if you breathe close to it, you'll get fits! I'm goin' to bed where it's safe."

Lieutenant Pinkham kept very much to himself all the next day, and not by choice, exactly. The squadron joke specialist was bad enough to have around when the greater part of his time was spent aloft fencing with the cream of the Kaiser's Vons. Phineas on the ground with nothing to do but think up ways and means of making life miserable for those around him was something else again. All

the pilots gave him a wide berth such as they would afford a crate of tarantulas. But Phineas was content. He had a gigantic scheme percolating in his brain cells. Once, as he crossed the drome, he cut across Major Garrity's line of flight. The Old Man glared at him.

"You look too damn' innocent," cracked the major. "You're up to something."

"That's right," retorted the Ninth's sore thumb. "Think the worst, as usual. I'm just penitent. At last I've seen the error of my ways, but it's too late. It's not my fault if I'm headstrong, as all the Pinkhams—"



Major Rufus sputtered something and kept on his way.

“Haw-w-w-w!” chuckled Phineas. “Am I glad he ain’t a mind reader? Oh, well, I’ll go an’ write me a letter to the Vons.”

At dusk Lieutenant Bump Gillis was ready to take the air. He had drawn what was perhaps the worst assignment on the palpitating Front. His Spad was loaded underneath with Cooper bombs. A map of the territory into which he was going to penetrate was in his possession. Major Garrity had marked the spot where the Boche chemical works were supposed to be, but at best it was just a blind stab.

“Pinkham,” ordered Garrity, when Gillis was ready to hop off, “you’ve been over there. Give Lieutenant Gillis all the information you can. He’ll need it.”

“Huh,” began Phineas. “Then I am some use around here, am I? But I’m no good at directin’ people. Once a guy asked me back in Boonetown how to git to Cedar Rapids an’ after he followed my instructions he found himself in Palm Beach. Now, if you’ll let me go over instead, I’ll—”

“Gillis,” moaned the major, “I wish I could send the fathead. But—well, get goin’. Good luck!”

Phineas handed Bump a bundle of cloth. There was something attached to the ropes which were strung from it.

“It’s a letter to Heinz, the Mad Butcher,” he explained. “It’s the last time I’ll get a chance to insult him. Before they knock you off, I wish you’d drop it down. Well—er—thanks. It looks like you have squeezed your last nickel, Bump. Haw-w-w-w!”

“Major,” said the Scotsman, holding out his hand to his superior, “I don’t know how to thank you for giving me this job. I’m only sorry that you an’ all the others can’t come, too, an’ leave this homely baboon all by himself. It’s a dizzy wind that don’t blow some dirt in somebody’s lamps. Well, adoo, everybody. If I don’t ever see you again, Carbuncle, it’ll seem to me like just this mornin’.”

“Ain’t it swell,” grinned Phineas, “to have such a pal? Adoo, Bump. I got ten francs on the Vons.”

The Hiss let out an awful roar. Casey himself pulled away the chocks. He figured he would like to do one last favor for Lieutenant Gillis. While everyone on the field watched Bump until his Spad was swallowed up in the haze, Phineas Pinkham stole away unobserved. The Old Man of the Ninth Pursuit did not see him again for many, many hours.

THAT NIGHT, after dark, the Pinkham heir was crouched in the bushes alongside the road leading to Colonel Boncouer’s Frog squadron, an outfit that continued to fly Nieuports against the advice of everybody on the Front. Along this road, in due time, rattled the vegetable wagon of old Pierre Dupree, a French peasant, who boasted the longest white beard in all France. A bony white horse that might easily have seen service in the armies of Charlemagne stumbled along the muddy stretch toward the French drome as if every step would be its last. As the vehicle drawn by the senile equine drew abreast of his ambush, Phineas stepped out and held up his hand.

“Bum sour,” he cried. “I would purchase a carrot or two, monsewer.”

“Whoa!” hollered Pierre. The steed, whose fire was long quenched, needed no second command. Its ribs heaved convulsively and a long sigh issued from its bellows. The aged driver climbed down from his wagon. A Pinkham arm encircled the old man’s neck and a hand was clamped over the Frog’s mouth.

“Now, don’t holler,” Phineas advised him, “as I’m not goin’ to hurt you. It’s for the cause of the Allies an’ it must be done.” Whereupon he shoved old Pierre into the bushes. “Listen. There’s a spy on the French drome an’ only I know of his presence and who he is, so if you’ll give me your clothes, I’ll disguise myself. I’ve got a nose here that looks like yours an’ a set of whiskers. It’s for *la belle France*, the Allies an’ Marshal Foch an’ Lafayette—oh, I could name a dozen!”

“*Oui, oui*,” exclaimed Phineas’ dupe, “I do thees for France, *oui! Vive la France! Peut-etre* eet ees I geet ze medal, *aussi, non?*”

“*Non* is right,” replied Phineas with a grin as the peasant peeled off his baggy apparel.

When everything was complete, the Yankee schemer took an inventory of himself. Something was missing. The old man had long gray hair streaming out from either side of his head. Phineas immediately produced a pair of scissors.

“It’s for France,” he said, and took hold of Pierre’s precious beard. Snip!

“*Sacre!*” yipped the old man. “*Mon barbe! Sacre bleu!* Not *pour France* even weel I geeve ze *barbe*. Peeg! *Cochon!*”

“You’ve already geeve’ it, monsewer,” Phineas assured him complacently. “Ain’t voos a patriot, nest pa? Well, adoo. I’ll be back.” Tucking the purloined whiskers under the brim of the old hat, Phineas walked to the wagon and got up on the seat. “Giddap, Napoleon, or it’ll be rainin’ maybe in a minute.”

"Ah," sighed old Pierre as he resigned himself to fate. "*C'est la guerre. Aussi pour la belle France.*"

Two hours later the wires on the drome of the Ninth Pursuit Squadron lost all their insulation. Boncouer was in high dudgeon and he let Major Garrity know it.

"He come in," yelped the Frenchman. "We have theenk eet ees ol' Pierre, so! Ze long *barbe* an' blue nose an' gray hair, *oui!* He sell beets an' carrots an' cabbage an' zen he say ol' Pierre he like for to know how she feel to sit down in ze buzzin' battle plane, *oui!* We say eet ees ze joke an' we put him in ze Nieuport. Zen we make ze prop spin an' pouf! He have steal ze Nieuport. Ah, majair, I go to Marshal Foch, I weel—"

"What do I care what an old Frog does?" howled Garrity. "What are you botherin' me for?"

"But eet ees not ze Pierre," yipped Boncouer. "Eet ees ze *cochon*, Peenkham. He holler sometheeng like 'Haw-w-w-whaw-w-w-w!' when he have fly away. *Sacre! Mon Dieu!*" There was no mistaking the imitation of a famous horse laugh. Major Rufus Garrity waited for no more. He slammed the phone into place, shut his eyes and groaned. But the telephone jangled again.

"Hello," he moaned into the transmitter. "Who did he kill?"

"This is Gillis," came a voice. "I just landed ten miles from here. All I brought down with me was one wing and the bucket seat held together with a wire. I'm through. I resign. I—"

Again the phone crashed down. Major Garrity went upstairs to get an aspirin tablet.

Over on the Jerry side there was a commotion on several Boche dromes. We will only worry about the *Jagdstaffel* where the Mad Butcher from Hamburg hived up. The Jerry *Hauptmann* was talking to his apprentice butchers. He was explaining in resounding gutturals that a message had been picked up from American squadrons—to wit, that a great Frenchman whom they all remembered and had thought dead, one La Fage by name, was very much alive. He had escaped from an asylum where he had been sent after a Spandau bullet "hit him by der headt so! He iss flying *der* white Nieuport *und* very madt iss he. *Der* ship it iss filled up mit explosive, *und* he vill try so he could crash efery German vhat he meets. *Und* also his bullets iss rubbed mit garlic so *ein* little vound *und der* pilot should gedt blood poison. *Ach! Der* madman on *der* Front. *Ach!*"

Herr Heinz paused to wipe his steaming brow. "The *Amerikaner* flyers chentlemen iss. By us *der* varning they giff yedt. Nodt all are they like *der* oopstart Ping-ham.

So—vhen you see La Fage, you shouldt shooldt quick from nodt too near, so?"

"Ja," chorused the Vons.

Noon of the next day found Phineas Pinkham working on a Nieuport twelve miles southeast of Bar-le-Duc. He plied a whitewash brush diligently as two small French children and their papa looked on.

"France'll give voos a medal for this service," Phineas assured the Frenchman. "I'm on a secret mission. Now if you will just find me that milk can an' the piece of hose I mentioned, we'll really start working."

"I am to be ze beeg brav' pilot *aussi* when I grow up," a young Frog hopeful said to the hero of the moment.

The Boonetown flyer looked at the man. "You'd better examine his dome, monsewer," he said. "Has he been sick or had a fall or what? Haw-w-w-w! Well, maybe he'd never have nobody like Garrity in the war he would fight in, so let him go to it." He pulled a big square can of some mysterious contents from under his peasant smock.

"Get me the milk can with the tin cover and the piece of hose," he ordered. "An' then I'll be all set."

TWO HOURS PASSED while Phineas worked. He punched a hole in the tin cover of the milk can with a cold chisel. Through it he rammed the length of garden hose. Then he emptied the contents of the can he had produced into the empty milk container. The fluid was clear but of the consistency of lacquer. The flyer's next move was to produce another can similar to the first from the pit of his Nieuport. It was wrapped in paper, and he had carried it to the ship back on the French drome, explaining, upon question, that it was wine for an American squadron and that he did not dare to leave it in the wagon. Not that he did not trust the flyers of his beloved country. From this container streamed some fine powder as Phineas up-ended it over the mouth of the milk can. Next he secured a long stick and began to stir the concoction.

"The powder goes to the bottom of the can if it sets too long," Phineas explained to his audience. "But if I do three or four loops and some other stunts, I'll mix it up swell. Now to fasten it onto the ship!"

"But," argued the Frenchman as Phineas placed the container where he wanted it, "the can she is tippe' on her side, *M'sieu*. Out of the hose the meixture eet weel speel, *non?*"

"No, y'see I'll tie a string on the end of the hose an' draw it up so's it'll look like a hook. When I want it to spill, I'll just cut the string. Comprenny?"

The Frog shook his head in bewilderment. "Ah, *M'sieu*," he murmured, scratching his pate speculatively, "to me she ees crazzee, *mais oui!*"

"Awright," said Phineas, undaunted, "get me some wire so we can hitch it onto the handles of this can, an' then we'll fasten them to the struts. That's all we got to do." Whereupon the diligent schemer began to talk to himself. "Don't know where the Heinies do their chemistry lessons, huh? Well, I'll show 'em I do. In just maybe half an hour another Pinkham goes to the wars."

Phineas made a final test. He found that the milk can rolled too much, as the bottom of it was not moored. This he remedied by punching a little hole in the iron rim on the bottom and drawing a piece of wire through it. The end of the wire he carried down under the Nieuport and hitched to the undercarriage.

"Now it's foolproof," he announced.

One of the little French boys looked at his brother, describing circles with his small index finger in the neighborhood of his head. The brother nodded in agreement and, arm in arm, the two little Frogs walked away.

"Haw-w-w-w-w!" guffawed the object of their conclusion as he pulled on the helmet and goggles which he fished out of the peasant smock. "They think I'm nuts."

"*Les enfants*," commented Papa Frog, "vairy smart zey air, *m'sieu*," and he, too, left the scene.

From a distance the small family watched Phineas climb into his Nieuport and switch on. They saw him get out and spin the prop. As the Nieuport skimmed away all the Frogs wagged their heads in unison. Phineas waved a hand to them as the ship got buoyancy under its wings and took advantage of it. Over toward Germany the amazing magician of Pursuit Squadron Number Nine, A.W.O.L. in every language, flew in a bee-line. He climbed high so as to miss the patrols, both Allied and German, if they chanced to be abroad. Under the Nieuport rolled a sea of scud.

"To keep me out of a ship," chuckled Phineas, "they'd have to move them all out of France. They'll know now that I'm not to be trifled with. Haw-w-w-w! Did that Frog hate to lose his spinach!"

The errant Yank slipped into Boche ether without mishap. He knew it was about time to dip down and cut through the lather that hid the carpet from view. The white Nieuport arched down and speared through the ceiling, went earthward in a long sweep as the pilot, peering at the terrain, tried to line up a landmark. He was looking for a certain bend in a canal, a narrow-

gauge railroad track, and the ruins of a big chateau. Phineas wasted precious minutes circling over hostile scenery before he spotted what he was seeking. Far below was a cluster of buildings. One was noticeably larger than the rest, a long flat-roofed structure.

"Now I'll mix up the medicine," Phineas observed, grinning, and went into a series of loops. He straightened out, barrel-rolled and sideslipped downward. When he was within a thousand feet of the buildings, Heinie batteries opened up.

Blam! Crash! Blam!

Regardless, Phineas continued to flutter down. Machine guns got into the spirit of the thing. By then the Yank was straightening out.

"I ought to have this figured about right," he soliloquized, as though he were planning a move in checkers. "It's only a little higher than that hangar I washed out on at the home drome."

To an accompaniment of yelps and a lot of yammering guns on the ground, the Nieuport skimmed the length of the roof of the big building. Phineas held his breath and cut the string leading to the hose on his crate.

"Do your stuff, li'l ol' hose!" howled the Yankee trickster as the Heinies threw all the ordinance they had up at him. "I hope those loops mixed up the medicine good." Up he went for altitude, and came down again. That time he shot across the roof in the opposite direction.

"There ought to be a little left," he speculated as the Nieuport's wheels missed a merger with the roof of the building by the width of a Chinese rice cake. "Wow-w-w-w-w!" bullets spattered the ship. Some came up through the floor. One of them took a hunk out of the stick, spat through the instrument board and made its way out via the top wing.

"It's gittin' too hot," Phinese assured himself. "I got to git out an' all I'll have to do will be to git through the whole Kraut Air Force. I can hear all the telephones in the Heinie signal corps workin'."

Anti-aircraft began to blast as he got up higher. The Nieuport bucked and rocked. One of the stray pieces of scrap iron bounced off his helmet. Phineas wondered why his seconds didn't toss in the towel. That punch was a pip. Then his head cleared and he found that he had left the stick to care for itself. Again he brought the white Frog ship's head up. It was bloody, but unbowed. As fast as the LeRhône could turn over, Phineas headed for his own side of the fence. And then up ahead, blocking his path, was the Mad Butcher with two Fokkers.

"If Bump lived long enough to drop that letter I wrote," muttered the cornered Yank, "I've got a Chinaman's chance. If he didn't, oh, well—" He drilled straight for *Hauptmann Heinz'* chariot.

The Mad Butcher from Hamburg saw him coming, prop to prop.

"La Fage!" he yelled. "*Ach, Gott im Himmel!* If vunce he shoodts mid by me vun scratch cooms, *ach, Gott!*" The panicky Kraut pulled up and let Phineas slide under. The Boonetown flyer, wearing a grin that belied the fact that he was scared almost out of his Frog pants, drilled straight for another Fokker.

"*Donner und Blitzen!*" screeched that Von and tripped his guns. "*Der madt Frenchman iss id. Ach, him I fighdt nodd!*" He winged over, slipped a thousand feet, and headed for home.

Phineas looked around for Heinz. A shiver went through the Nieuport as the Mad Butcher got in a jolt from right angles. The Yankee switched around and saw the Fokker not fifty feet from his Nieuport. He knew that Heinz would never relish being too close, so in he gunned. That time he pumped lead at the Mad Butcher, who yelped with terror as he zoomed madly to grab at some sky space. Something stung him close to the seat of his pants. He put a gloved hand under him and brought it up for inspection. Immediately his Heinie face turned the color of a penguin's bosom.

"Hit, *ach!*" he yipped. "*Der garlie. Bach by der drome I shouldt go vunce. Himmel!*"

The Mad Butcher was not alone in flight. His brothers in arms had a good half-mile start. And Phineas Pinkham did not waste any time taking a runout powder himself. Up and up he climbed until he saw a wing above his head start to shiver. The strut, that held it up was wobbling.

"As usual!" exclaimed the charmed flyer of air antics, adding his brand of cuss words that would have made a muleskinner's ears blush. "If I ever git a ship that's made out of somethin' but match sticks an' paper napkins, I'll take a picture of it. Well, I picked it out myself."

For ten minutes Phineas flew on, hoping for the best of his top wing. The sky was getting darker, the sun in the west being engaged in a good paint job on the sky. Then the Nieuport gave a warning.

"It must be a union Nieuport," observed the Yankee pilot, "because it sure knows when to quit. Maybe I can just make the lines."

BY THE GRACE of the All Highest Phineas did make the lines—just. As his nose passed over him, the

Nieuport's wing collapsed and he slid into a landing that made doughs on the ground say a prayer and close their eyes. After the crash they dashed toward the remains to drag out the body.

"Well, bums," grinned the very much animate flyer, "that was a swell three-point landin'. If you look sharp, you'll find the crate in three heaps. A wing is over there, the torso is up against the pill box, an' I'm holdin' the wishbone. Well, take me to where there's a bombin' squadron, as it is of vital importance to the Allies." Phineas was full of importance.

The Yanks led the nine-lived flyer to an old abri, where they introduced him to their commanding officer. Phineas was given transportation to a flying field where four big Handley Pages were squatting in idleness. He got out of the tin container attached to the motorcycle and limped into headquarters. A long-faced, irritable major took one look at him.

"Well, Pinkham?" he exclaimed gruffly. "You've come to the wrong address. But it's as good as any. We've all had orders to hold you if we ever got our hands on you. It looks like twenty years for you, lieutenant. Consider yourself under arrest!"

"I haven't any time to bandy words with you," retorted Phineas. "I've spotted the Kraut chemical plant. I got it marked so you can't miss it at night. The Heinies ain't wise as they was too busy shootin' to see the milk can I had on the Nieuport."

"Milk can?" squeaked the major weakly. "Pinkham, you wisecrackin'—"

"I'm tellin' you," persisted the unquenchable Yank. "Its over close to Deidenhofen. I'll go as an observer an' show you the way. You can't miss."

The major picked up the phone, and buzzed Wing Headquarters. Over the wire he related the whole story and asked the brass hats what he should do. At first he was treated to a lot of insults.

"But what if the fool's right?" argued the C.O. of the bombing outfit. "Y'know what he's done before, sir. Nobody else has given us any idea where the place is at. If he's stringin' us, we'll shoot him tomorrow."

The brass hats were with him on that. But finally consent was given to let the Handley Pages make a try. The major disconnected the phone and looked at Phineas.

"Where'd you get those clothes? You're the dizziest-lookin' goof I ever saw."

"Don't judge a book by the pitchers," grinned the flyer. "You will be wearin' a medal where that soup stain is on your coat by tomorrow night."

A little later the Wing called up Major Rufus Garrity. They wanted to know how Phineas Pinkham had been buzzing around Germany when he was supposed to be under arrest.

"I refuse to answer," groaned the major. "Go ahead an' court-martial me! He escaped the drome and stole a French ship. Furthermore, he cut off the whiskers of a Frenchman and stole his vegetable wagon. And if I think of anything more, I'll call you up. Where did they catch him?"

"They didn't," cracked the voice of the Wing. "He walked in to the 86th Squadron by himself. In about two hours he's going over to Germany with some bombers. Next week I expect him to be commanding a submarine in the Channel! Goodnight, major."

Just after midnight two Handley Page bombers lifted their trucks and headed for Germany. Phineas crouched close to the control pit and hummed a tune. It did not take them long to reach their objective. The bombing officer looked down and saw a strange thing. Phineas tugged at his sleeve and then he slapped him on the back familiarly.

"Look at it!" he enthused. "It ain't a perfect cross, but you can see it shine awright, huh? It's a luminous paint I mixed myself. It's the best in the world, as why shouldn't it be? A Pinkham concocted it. I will git a patent on it an'—well, that cross is right smack on the roof so do your stuff, officer, do your stuff! Tell them dumbheads at the toggles to git ready as this is going to be a cinch!"

And it was. The 150-pound bombs went screaming down, one by one. Below, frightened Boche grabbed gas masks and glued them on. They fell to their knees and tried to burrow into the ground.

Blooey! A direct hit eliminated the chemical factory. Another bomb hit two feet away, to make sure. Clouds of smoke, yellow and green, rose on high. There was a great flash of light and it was all over. Six Boche planes tried to cut the Handley Pages off as the bombers clawed toward home. Phineas crouched on the catwalk and sighed happily. It seemed swell to have somebody else do the fighting for him. After a while he crawled into the front turret; and tossed something over the side of the ship.

The bombers made the field. Upon landing, the crews took the celebrated Phineas Pinkham into the mess hall and began to celebrate. The C.O. of the 86th called up G.H.Q. He had the phone in one hand and a bottle in the other. Far into the morning the bombing officers regaled themselves, and Phineas.

Then there came an interruption. A car rumbled

onto the drome, and out of it shot Major Garrity and three pilots from the Ninth Pursuit. The Old Man barged into the scene of revelry with fire in his eye.

"So?" he growled. "We're not good enough to celebrate with, Pinkham, you fish-faced gimbazoo! Stayed over here an' let us go to pot, did you? Well, you look here, you—"

"I know where I'm appreciated," interrupted Phineas loftily, as he poured himself a drink. "I think I'll git transferred here as—"

"You get goin'," howled Garrity, "or, by cripes, I'll bat you one and drag you out! Major, I'm sorry to bust up the binge, but we're going to crack open a couple of bottles ourselves. I'll crack one of them over this fathead's skull. Pinkham, start moving!"

"Awright, awright," grinned the scapegrace, "I'm goin'. All the time they-fight over me, haw-w-w-w-w!"

Over on the Mad Butcher's drome the *Herr Oberst* was reading a communication from a Boche infantry outfit.

"Ha, Heinz, *Dumkopf!* You shouldt listen yedt." He glared at the Mad Butcher, who was rubbing a cauterized area on his rear assembly. "A message Pingham drops. 'We gates, bums! I am not mad and wouldn't be a Frenchman for all the calves' brains in the Kaiser's head. Did you taste the garlic, Hopman? You sure hopped. Oof widderson! *Leutnant* Pinkham!'"

"*Gott!*" howled *Herr* Heinz, jumping clear of the floor. "This iss by me *der* endt, *der* finish. *Der* vorldt it iss not so big as it shouldt holdt me *und* Pingham. I show you, *Ja!* I gedt him. I show you!" He plunked himself into a chair, but rebounded with a howl. "*Ach, der* fire it burns yedt," he groaned. "Pingham, joost vaidt!"