

a  
**PHINEAS  
PINKHAM**  
*howl*

# NO FUELIN'!

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*Wilson found a green snake in his bed. Bump Gillis had an unhappy visit from a snapping turtle. And Captain Howell sat up until three a.m. digging iron filings out of the soles of his feet. The boys had been picking on Phineas—and the Pinkham revenge had begun. No foolin'!*

**H**AUPTMANN HEINZ, the Mad Butcher from Hamburg, had been on a rampage for days. His dander was up. The Kraut aerial marvel had decided that he was no longer going to play second fiddle to such an upstart as the Yankee flyer, Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham. He would swing the baton on the sky-high rostrum or leave the Kaiser's band as flat as the proverbial pancake. From dawn until dusk the Mad Butcher flew, chopping away at Allied winged stock with such success that his prowess overshadowed that of the great Pinkham, relegating the Boonetown, Iowa, pilot to backstage.

There was no doubt about it. *Herr* Heinz was stealing the show. From the wings Phineas "Carbuncle" Pinkham had to be content to look on while steel-throated Mars sat in the bald-headed row and clapped his great flippers for encore after encore. It must not go on. The Allied brass hats made that quite plain to those who commanded the Yankee flying squadrons.

And then came the unkindest cut of all. Out of northern France came one Captain Jeeves-Rippleby, of the King's henchmen. The Limey captain came down to the Pinkham sector with a spanking new S.E.5 and a promise of the V.C., the Croix de Guerre, the D.S.C. and all other citations known to warfare, if he would but smash the Mad Butcher and his grim black Fokker into literal hamburger. The Pinkham pride smarted like a slapped sunburn. The Pinkham grin was put away in mothballs. On the drome of the Ninth Pursuit Squadron, Phineas was finding the lot of second fiddler very bitter indeed.

"What a tramp the Heinie is makin' of you," Bump Gillis, his long-suffering hutmate, tossed at the erstwhile hero during mess. "Ha, you were good while you lasted, but cheer up. Even Ty Cobb slowed up on the bases. And you're no Ty Cobb. Pass me the salt."

"Better buy a cane, as you're now playin' the tank towns," contributed Howell, leader of Phineas' flight.

Major Garrity stood in the doorway of Wings, enjoying the ribbing of his chief pain-in-the neck.

"Awright," Phineas flared up, "awright, you bums. I'll show ya who's washed up, huh! If a guy had a right to fly all the time without orders, like the Kraut, he could cover a lot of territory, too. It's a hell of a pail of smelts when you have to raise your hand to that old turtle, Garrity, when ya even want to wash your neck."

"I will let that pass, Pinkham," snorted the Old Man. "It would be a pity to step on you now when you're down. I've got a big heart and—"

"Yeah," interrupted the outraged Phineas, slamming

down his eating utensils with a clatter, "you could use it for a concrete-mixer. An' the rest of you nice pals of mine, I'm washin' my hands of you, an' look out as from now on I'm hittin' even in the clinches." He stamped toward the door.

"It might interest you to know," Sir Rufus flung after him, "that Heinz only got two Camels, three balloons and a pair of two-seaters today. It's his worst day this week."

The Boonetown flyer winced, recovered with effort and held his head aloft as he barged out into the dusk.

"I'm a ham actor, huh?" he growled as he walked across the field. "I'm slowin' up, huh? And they send a Limey down here to knock off the Mad Butcher. That's brains. It's like sendin' in the bat boy with the bases full in the last of the ninth." He stopped short and gesticulated toward Chaumont. "I'll show you fatheads! And when I knock off Heinz, I'll say to you. 'Don't bother to come down with no medals. Stay in your swivel chairs, you hypocrites!' I—"

From behind him came a barrage of applause. He whirled. In front of the house stood the buzzards of the Ninth.

"Bravo!" yipped Bump Gillis. "Now recite 'Bingem on the Rhine.'"

Phineas Pinkham flushed a violent red. He doubled up both fists and charged. Bump Gillis stepped aside as the Boonetown catapult dived at him. He shoved out a foot. Phineas' dogs left the ground and he flew like a duck in through the door of Squadron Headquarters. Major Garrity was in the act of coming out. *Wumph!*

For five minutes the personnel of the Ninth worked over the Old Man, trying to blow breath back into his deflated respiratory organs. After a while the major sat up, grunted and gasped. He turned his irate gaze upon Phineas, who was resting on one hand and both knees whilst dabbing at a nose that was cherry red.

"Oh, don't look at me," blazed the culprit. "It ain't my fault. They tripped me up, the dirty bums! Make one pass at me an' I'll forget you're a major!" He got to his feet and hurried away. "I'm goin' to resign!" was his parting shot.

That night Wilson found a green snake in his bed. Bump Gillis came hopping out of his hut, holding a big turtle by the tail. Captain Howell sat up until three a.m., picking iron filings out of the soles of his bare feet. The Pinkham reprisal had begun.

ALL the next day the reports from returning flights were bad. A Flight came in late in the afternoon without Phineas Pinkham.

"That last time I saw him, the Butcher was chasing him," Captain Howell announced to Garrity.

Phineas, at the moment, was in no immediate danger. He had, by a ruse, eluded his arch enemy after taking a vicious pounding. When he had come out of a cloudbank again, the wary Yank had seen that *Hauptmann* Heinz was very busy fighting somebody else. The Pinkham buck teeth were ground in rage, for below rocketed the S.E.5 of Captain Jeeves-Rippleby, no less.

"Well, do your stuff!" Phineas grated. "It better be good, an' if you're gittin' the worst of it, don't expect no help from me."

The observant Phineas had spoken the truth. Captain Jeeves-Rippleby was wishing at the moment that the British Air Ministry had never heard of him. *Hauptmann* Heinz was flying him dizzy, shooting him ragged. Once the Britisher arched over the heavens and flew close to Phineas' Spad. He waved his gloved hand at the Yank and beckoned.

"Hollerin' for help, huh?" chuckled Phineas. "I'll let you enjoy yourself for maybe another minute an' then I'll think it over."

The S.E.5, plentifully vaccinated with lead, scooted for the lines. The Mad Butcher was about to give pursuit, but changed his mind as he took an inventory of his position. His petrol was low and his ammo spent.

"Adoo!" Phineas hooted back into the slipstream. "We'll meet again, sausage hound, and when we do, look out, as now my reputation is at stake an' it's in your pocket, you big bum!"

Phineas' grin was once more being aired as he sauntered into headquarters to report. "H'lo, major!" he expanded. "Haw-w-w-w! I'm no longer worried about the Limey as it's a cinch where he came from was not the big leagues."

The Old Man simply glanced at him, twisted his face into contortions and handed his orderly a pair of tailored whipcord trousers.

"Want 'em cleaned," he barked. "Want a good job done, too. Get the gravy stains out. Haven't got time to send 'em to town. Have to wear 'em tonight. See what you can do—er—get out, Pinkham!"

"Oh, I ain't fussy about hangin' around," Phineas sniffed. He followed the orderly out. "Say, I've made myself a swell dry cleanin' mixture. Lemme have them pants. I'll let you have the credit, don't worry. I clean all my stuff with it."

He made a grab for the trousers, and got them. Twenty minutes later Major Garrity's best pants were

hanging from a line in back of the row of Nissen huts. And then Bump Gillis and a flight leader by the name of Wilson spotted them.

"You see that tree over there?" grinned Bump. "I think we need to practice shootin'. My aim has been bad of late an' if I should hit that bum Pinkham's pants, well—"

Lieutenant Wilson chuckled and sped to his hut. Bump did likewise. They met again and paced off distance.

"Shoot at the knot on the tree," advised Bump and took aim. *Bang! Bang!* Two holes appeared in the seat of the whipcord pants. Lieutenant Wilson fired three shots. Each bullet bit a path through the aforesaid jeans.

In a second story window of the Frog farm house appeared a face. Major Garrity, from his quarters, looked down upon the scene of sabotage, wondering what the shooting was all about. Suddenly his lower jaw fell away. A howl the like of which should never be heard outside of a jungle billowed out of his larynx. The Old Man tore out into the open. Lieutenants Gillis and Wilson were still chuckling when he bore down upon them.

"My pants!" roared the major. "You clucks—you—er—look at 'em! My pants! You hear me, Gillis? You shot 'em full of holes. I'll bust you high, wide an' handsome. I—er—I'll—"

"Why, of all things!" came a voice from behind. "That is a dirty trick an' even I wouldn't stoop to such destruction of property. Major, I'm a witness to this dastardly—"

"Wha—er—your pants?" gulped Bump. "We—er—thought they were—er—we didn't know—"

"Just like I thought," interrupted Phineas from a distance. "Well, it looks as if you swallowed the bait, Bump. An' are you hooked, oh, boys! Well, old reservoir, this don't concern me."

"That ape," yowled Gillis, "I'll kill him yet. I—er—major, believe me, I thought—"

"A bughouse!" snorted the C.O. "That's all this place is. Pinkham, where are you? You—oh, hell, what's the use? You two mugs," he shot at the abashed pair, "are goin' to buy me some new pants." He walked away, dragging the remains in the dirt behind him. Stomping into Wings just as the telephone buzzed, he grabbed it and barked into the mouthpiece. An irate British voice poured into his ear. The Old Man seemed to swell up as he listened.

"Oh, he did, did he?" he sandwiched in after a struggle. "Well, I will take care of that big lug. What? I

told you already I'd handle him. What? You want me to write you a letter. Can't you understand English?" He slammed down the receiver. "Get Pinkham, somebody!" he yapped.

At the moment the Boonetown brain was scheming as only it could scheme. A wild plan was revolving between the Pinkham ears. As an orderly approached him, Phineas gestured with disgust at the interruption.

"Don't tell me. Lemme guess. The Old Man requests the company of Lieutenant Pinkham at his house at three o'clock sharp. R.S.V.P. huh?"

The orderly nodded, tightened his jaws and spun on his heels.

"Here I am, in the flesh!" Phineas grinned at Garrity two minutes later. "What is it now?"

"Just cowardice in the face of the enemy," blurted out the major. "Ran away when Heinz had the Limey trapped, didn't you? They got the number of your Spad!"

"Me a coward?" yelled Phineas. "That's a fightin' word an' you should've smiled, but I know my place. Beefin' about Jeeves-Rippleby, him? Well, they sent him down to git the Mad Butcher. Why should I butt in? I wasn't good enough to get the job."

"You know damned well he might've been killed," roared Sir Rufus.

"Does that bum expect to go out in a snowstorm an' git sunburnt?" countered the wonder from Iowa. "I was goin' to step in at the finish but the Mad Butcher got scared an' run home. Well, it looks like they'll be askin' a Pinkham to step into the breech as usual."

Before the major could speak, Phineas went on unabashed. "While we're in conference, I'm goin' to tell you of an idea I got to revolutionize the flyin' corps. It'll save a lot of time for the U.S., an' maybe a life or two. I've got an idea to start a one-man gassin' service. When I see a crate tryin' to come in with all the cylinders needin' a drink an' the radiator lookin' like it was boilin' a plum puddin', I'll just drop down the gas line to give it enough petrol so it can land behind the Allied lines. There've been a lot of busses captured by the Krauts because they just couldn't make the lines."

By then Major Rufus Garrity's face had soured, even curdled. "Get out of here!" he ordered. "Let me catch you monkeyin' around with government property on such a goofy scheme an' I'll knock you bowlegged. Start moving!"

"Awright, I'm goin', but who said anythin' about government property, huh? Ah—er—I'd lend you a pair of pants if you want 'em," Phineas added, unperturbed.

"How else would you start out tonight if—"

"I'd go out like a ballet dancer first," stormed Garrity. "I give you just one second to get those big dogs of yours taxiing, Pinkham. You're worse than a dose of castor oil to me, and that's putting it mildly."

Phineas left. "Castor oil!" he muttered. "Castor oil, huh? Haw-w-w-w-w! If I could only—well, anythin' possible. I just want some more good bait like Bump gobbled up. Haw-w-w-w! I'll show them bums I still belong in fast company."

THAT night the Old Man left the drome. He would be gone for twenty-four hours, he thought. Howell was to take charge.

The major had no sooner departed than Phineas Pinkham commandeered a motorcycle and chugged out into the Frog sticks. His conduct during the next few hours was very strange indeed. He visited an old burying ground and came out of it, carrying a small flat stone. That he deposited in the side-car and then sped on through the night. Once more Phineas stopped, pushed the mechanical bug into some bushes and crouched down beside it. Soon a Frog truck came along, loaded to the gills. Phineas stepped out into the road and held up a hand. The truck stopped.

"Bum sore," greeted the Yank. "Swell evenin', *nest pa?*"

"What ees eet you have want, eh?" growled the driver.

"Ya look like ze smart homme," grinned Phineas. "I've got fifty francs for voose if you'll talk business. What've you got there?"

The Frog driver, his eyes caressing the currency Phineas held in his hand, gave an inventory of his cargo.

"The last thing you mentioned is worth fifty francs to me, *garcon*," declared Lieutenant Pinkham. "You can say you lost a can, comprenny?"

The Frenchman nodded his head. Visions of cognac swam before his eyes. It took but a minute or two to complete the transaction. The truck went on its way toward Boncouer's Nieuport outfit. Phineas followed his tracks back to the Ninth Pursuit Squadron, but he did not reach the drome. He cached his mysterious spoils, sallied forth once more.

Just after midnight Bump Gillis jumped out of his cot and ran to the door of his hut. A machine gun began to spit. Agitated boots crunched out onto the field. Sergeant Casey's voice lashed at scurrying groundmen.

"Hell!" exploded a voice. "That ain't a Boche."

It wasn't. It was Phineas Pinkham, and he was bringing a Spad down onto the field. Its steel throat



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sounded croupy and Bump Gillis could hear the rigging rattle as it plunked down on the loam. He ran out onto the field to take a look at the wreck. Howell came up.

“Where’d you get that? What is the idea?” he barked.

“It is my personal property,” replied Phineas, grinning. “Two more payments an’ it’s clear of mortgage. Now if the old turtle crabs about my foolin’ with gover’ment property, well, ha-w-w-w! I got it from that guy who is a millionaire over at Vaubecourt an’ who owns his whole squadron. It’s a second-hand Spad but ain’t got too many miles on it. I can’t stand here wastin’ time, as I’ve got work to do. Casey, I would a word or three with you!”

“Aw, lootenant, I’m tired. I was sound asleep when—”

“I’m in command here, Pinkham,” cracked Howell.

“Who are you to give orders? Casey, go back to—”

“Awright,” growled Phineas. “Awright, I won’t forget you for that, Howell.” He trudged toward his hut.

“Wait until Garrity sees that ship, you fool,” squawked Bump Gillis.

The Pinkham grin was present as its owner made ready for bed. When Bump began to snore, Phineas eased out of his bunk, picked up his clothes and slipped from the hut. He made his way to Sergeant Casey’s quarters and routed him out.

“Listen,” whispered the intrepid schemer, “the Old Man won’t be back till tomorrow night. If ya stick with me, I’ll give you a chance to fly.”

Casey rubbed his eyes and crawled out from under his blanket. “Huh?” he mumbled. “Fly? Huh, sure. I always said them instructors back at Kelly was wrong about me. ‘Tain’t my fault I can’t land so good. I kin take any ship off an’ fly it an’—”

“Sure ya can,” agreed Phineas. “Maybe they was just sore at ya. Let’s go.”

If anyone had come upon Casey and Phineas at work, they would have taken one goggle-eyed look and then stumbled away to take a brain test. An old Camel, a relic of the days when Garrity’s squadron first moved in on the *guerre*, was being pressed into service. Phineas

was engaged in rigging up an extension at the mouth of the gas tank. A piece of hooked, galvanized pipe was inserted, and the end of it jutted out just above the pilot's pit.

"That's so you can reach it, as you couldn't crawl out of the pit an' put in the gas line," explained Phineas. Casey shook his head sadly and kept at work.

After that job was done, the nocturnal toilers began to work on Phineas' Spad. They bored up through the bottom of the ship into the gas tank and inserted one end of a flexible length of hose. The other end was equipped with the brass nozzle of a diminutive fire hose.

"There," exclaimed Pinkham, "that's maybe another step in aviation, Casey. Tomorrow early we'll go out an' test it right where some Heinie balloon guys can see. Well, I'll see you."

"I'm afraid ya will, you—er—lootenant," replied Casey. "I don't know why I'm lettin' myself in for this. But I sure would like to fly—and—er—well, goodnight. What'd you say about balloons?"

"More later," grinned Phineas, and left the hangar.

CAPTAIN HOWELL and his flight were sleeping a little late. Wilson's flight was hooked for the dawn patrol. When it had gone, Phineas stole out of his hut. He found Casey and four groundmen wheeling out the old Camel. The Spad came next, and everything was in readiness.

"I just thought of somethin'," began Phineas. "We'll tie an iron ring onto the end of the hose near the nozzle. I've got the Old Man's can for you. You can hook it better, maybe, when it comes close. Don't forget, when I get right in position, you fly the same speed, see?"

The two decrepit crates made an awful racket as they tore across the field. Howell jumped out of bed and tore out into the open.

"Come back here, you homely cluck! My Gaw-w-wd! Somebody's in that Camel. Now what—"

"Adoo!" hollered Phineas, waving a hand.

Eight miles from the drome, four thousand feet up, the great experiment began. Just above the Camel and a little ahead of it, jockeyed the Spad. Phineas let the hose loose. Sergeant Casey, covered with goose pimples, clutched the cane in one hand and waited to hook the end of the hose. Kerwhack! Casey's head spun around as the nozzle caromed off his helmet. He lost a thousand feet before he got his eyes uncrossed.

Phineas again jockeyed into position. The hose nozzle swung close. With a desperate effort Casey

lunged for it. The Old Man's cane dropped out of his hand and went spinning away into the ozone, but Casey had gripped the hose with his fist. Suddenly the Camel gave a jerk. Half out of the pit went Casey and he let out a scared yowl.

"Hang on!" yipped Phineas. "That's it, bum, now there's plenty of slack. Just stick it in the end of the pipe an' turn on the nozzle."

As if he had heard every word, Casey did just that. He reached up with a now-or-never gesture, plunked the nozzle home and turned it on. A fountain of gas sprayed the Camel and baptized Casey.

"To hell with it!" he sputtered, and dived. The nozzle slipped out of the end of the pipe and cracked him on the top of the head. Planets fell out of the heavens and submerged Sergeant Casey. Gas poured out of the rubber snake dangling from Phineas' Spad, and the Boone-town miracle man threw a fit.

"Hey, ya didn't turn it off, ya fool!" he roared down at the spinning Camel. "Casey, ya dumb—oh, I'll be bono dry of gas before—cripes, poor old Casey! I can't look. Anyways, I've got to get down myself."

Along a road rolled an automobile marked U.S. Official. It was a very straight road, and just what Phineas Pinkham was looking for. The Spad, creaking and coughing, pointed its nose straight at the ribbon of dirt. The chauffeur of the automobile saw the Spad coming.

"Look out!" yelled a familiar voice. The Spad hit the ground, bounced high, and was coming down straight for the official car. Brakes shrieked, tires screamed and the driver swung his load of brass hats into a ditch and turned over.

Phineas climbed out of his Spad and offered help to a squirming figure wallowing in a ditch of soft mud. He lifted a spare tire from around the man's neck and sat him up.

"Cripes," the flyer gasped, "if it ain't the Old Man. Ah—er—what're you doin' here?"

"You ask me, you—you—" spat Garrity, pawing for a tadpole that had wriggled into his ear. "So it was you we saw up there. What were you doin', you halfwit? We could see you five miles back. Who was that—what was the other—"

"It's a long story," replied Phineas imperturbably. "Well, it looks like we've got to walk, as there's no gas in the ship. It's a long way, too."

The Old Man swore and began stamping around in circles. Finally he went to the wreck of the car and pulled out an emergency can of petrol. Phineas took

it and poured the contents into his Spad while Garrity dragged two bewildered brass hats out into the road.

"Knew I ought to come back," growled the major as he climbed onto the Spad's wing. "Hey, what's that thing dragging? What did I tell you about monkeyin' with ships, huh?"

"This is my own crate," yelled the Boonetown flyer. "I can show you the bill of sale, haw-w-w-w! Well, hang on, major!"

Major Garrity had never before experienced such a ride. The Spad rattled and creaked and the wings seemed to flap like those of a dazed crow. When the sky chariot landed on the home drome, it seemed to sigh and settle close to the ground in the manner of an aged dog.

"Now, Mr. Pinkham," began the Old Man snappishly. "What has happened, huh?"

"It was bait," grinned the culprit. "The operation wasn't much of a success, but maybe the Krauts think it was. By sunset tomorrow I bet it'll be the Mad Butcher who'll be playin' the tank towns. B-but—er—Sergeant Casey—he—well, he's a martyr, as maybe—well, he volunteered to try the gassin' up in the air invention an'—ha—well, I ain't seen him for a while."

"Let me tell it," Captain Howell ground out through his teeth "This fathead bought himself a plane and—"

"Step inside!" bellowed Sir Rufus.

Over on the Heinie side of the fence, the wires were buzzing. Two observers of a Drachen outfit had started it all. The word finally trickled into the ears of the *Herr Oberst* of *Hauptmann* Heinz's *Staffel*. The Imperial Flying Krauts got into a huddle. The Mad Butcher's eyes gleamed as he listened.

"So?" he chuckled. "*Der* greadt invention, *ja?* Pingham, I bedt you. Gas der Spad oop vwhile in *der* air she iss, *ja?* Ach—"

"Iff so iss it," said the *Herr Oberst*, "*kolossal* iss it. Ve must look by this over, so!"

"Pardon, *Excellenz*," purred the Mad Butcher. "*Der* invention it iss vhat ve shouldt gedt him rait, *ja?* If he flies around *mit der* gas, I maybe vill joost go oudt *und* be *der* customer, *hein?* Ha, ho! *Mit der* Spad ve capture last veek, I fly over *und* vatch for Pingham. I giff *der* signal I am out *mit* gas vunce *und* he gedts right oop ofer me *und* I shoodt him vhere he sits, *ja?*"

"Ach, *Hauptmann*," chuckled his superior. "Always iss it I say brains you haff nix budt I shake *der* hand so! Gedt Pingham *und* then *Deutschland* efen Richthofen forgets. *Prosit!*"

"*Der* moostache I shafe off," said the *Hauptmann*.

"Efen that I giff for *der Vaterlaud*. *Ja!* Pingham, *du bist* smart, *ja?* But *Hauptmann* Heinz he iss more smart yedt."

IN HEADQUARTERS of the Ninth, Phineas Pinkham was still getting the works. The Old Man was jotting down the charges against him with a pencil. There were too many to remember offhand.

"I count ten major breaches of discipline against you, you crackpot! And on top of them I—"

"There's another one," Bump Gillis reminded the major. "A Frog come in this mornin' and says somebody stole somethin' out of his private buryin' ground. Said his ancestors dated back to Charlemagne and it was a bowcoop sacrilege or some-thin' and—"

"Are ya sure you ain't forgot somethin'?" snorted Phineas. "Don't fergit I shot Kitchener an' sunk the *Lusitania* an'—"

A commotion outside interrupted the grilling. Two doughs entered Wings and saluted.

"Got a man here, sir," said one. "He had a letter in his pocket which told us where he belonged. We found him astride a rail fence askin' everybody where was his white horse as he had to git to Waterloo in a hurry. He—"

"Good evenin'," interrupted a voice. "I hope I ain't late as I just retreated from Russia. I am ready for Elba as I am sick of bein' a general who takes all the blame and—" Garrity looked at Casey and at first failed to recognize him. Casey's face was plastered with dry mud. His clothes were half off and there was a bump as big as a duck's egg over his left eye.

"He never could make a landin'," grinned Phineas. "That is why he didn't git to be a flyer. Well, he's back, an' that's everythin', huh?"

"Pinkham," Major Garrity announced in a hollow voice, "it is all up with you. I will give you a chance to save yourself from disgrace. You take that old tub of yours and start flyin'. Don't stop until the gas gives out. If you don't come back, I'll tell Chaumont you went West like a hero—not that they'll believe me."

"I am already on my way," replied the Pinkham heir. "But first I have to make an arrangement or two. Adoo, it has been so nice to've been with ya. Haw-w-w-w! I won't return until I have expiated my crimes." The squadron black sheep walked out of the house and headed across the field.

"Well, he won't git far afoot," said Bump Gillis moodily. "Ya can't blame him for not takin' that heap of junk up again."

But they were all wrong. Twenty minutes later

the amazing jokester was back. He carried a big can of something in one hand, and under his arm was something wrapped in paper. He staggered under the load. From the steps of the farmhouse the flyers saw Phineas load the things aboard the Spad.

"Ten to one," said Bump Gillis, "I know where that Frog's gravestone went. But what I want to know is what that cluck is goin' to do with it."

The Old Man's answer was drowned out by the raucous sound of the consumptive Hisso. The old crate crawled forward sluggishly. It took two tries before it got into the air, but by a miracle it stayed up.

Night wore on. Dawn crept in and smothered it with a gray kimono. The sun blazed forth and that is how days are born. Over close to the fighting area a Spad crouched. "Old Faithful," Phineas lovingly called it now. He sat on a rock near by, pouring the contents of a can into a heavy paper sack. He tied up the slack of the bag with heavy cord.

"Huh," he mumbled to himself, "I tested it. It soaks but it don't leak— fast." If anyone had taken the trouble to crawl under the Spad, one would have been able to see some blue sky up through the pilot's pit.

"Well," exclaimed the cloud-hopping Merlin after a time, "I better start, and am I hopin'! If this thing'll only git off the ground just once more."

The odds were against it but a short-ender has a happy faculty of fooling the wise ones. Squeaking and rattling, the Spad finally lifted itself by the bootstraps and headed for high places. Once Phineas hovered over a two-seater, and the observer made a very uncomplimentary gesture.

"I wouldn't give you gas if I could," growled Phineas as he slipped away. But the action had been observed. On a high shelf teetered another Spad. In the pit was *Hauptmann* Heinz without his Teuton lip foliage.

"*Gott sie dank!*" he bellowed into the backwash.

"*Ach, der gas* it iss vhat I need. Ho, Pingham. *Der Tag!* When he sees der pipe I haff rigged oop to take *der gas*, he vil bite, *ja!* Here I coom!"

Phineas spotted the Allied ship. He saw the pilot wave frantically. Wing to wing the two Spads flew, and then the roar of only one Hisso shook the sky. Phineas saw the buzzard's prop lose a lot of revolutions. Spasmodically it whirred again.

The pilot produced by Boonetown, Iowa, stifled a guffaw. Slowly he jockeyed to a position above the Spad. He let the hose fall free. He looked through the floor of the pit and saw a face looking up—a face wreathed with a savage expression of glee.

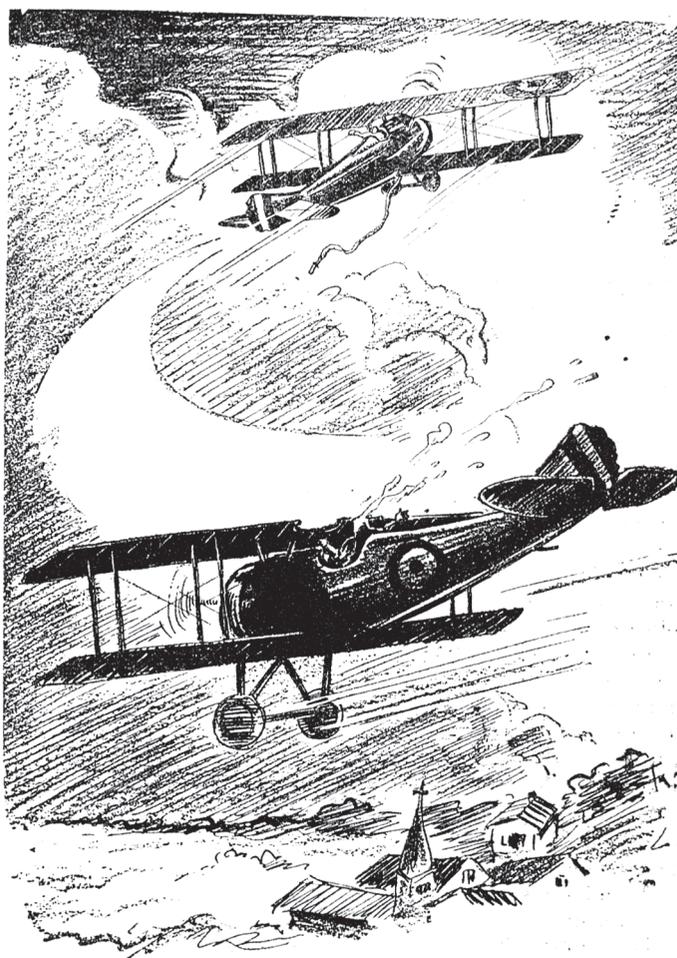
"Huh, he even shaved off his mustache," chuckled Phineas. "Here's the fish an' I'll give it bait."

The Mad Butcher could hardly control himself. He did not dare hurry his plan. That pit had to be right over his head before he squeezed the trigger of his Luger. The ships were flying at the same speed now. Bit by bit, the ship above Heinz got into a perfect position.

"Oopstart!" roared the *Hauptmann*. "Here iss idt!" *Crack! Crack!* His bullets plowed through the bottom of Phineas' pit. Face upturned, *Herr Heinz* was squeezing the trigger for the third shot when *kerplunk!* Something burst right in the *Hauptmann's* face. There was a nauseating smell of oil. The Mad Butcher swallowed a great gob of it. His goggles

were covered with it. He pawed at his face and spat another gob of the oily stuff that was trickling down his throat.

"*Donner und Blitz—awk!*" He spat again, and then clamped his mouth shut. His stomach heaved. Long ago, as a little squarehead, he had swallowed something like this before, but not in such a large doze. It now occurred to *Herr Heinz* that he had better pay attention to the Spad which he was flying. It had been flying on its own long enough now. He yanked his goggles off.





“Go Away!” groaned *Hauptmann* Heinz. “I’m sick.”

*R-r-rat-atat-tat!* The Spad's tail shivered as Pinkham lead reduced the empennage to kindling wood, flapping fabric and wire.

"Ha-w-w-w-w!" roared Phineas. The Mad Butcher turned in his pitj swore roundly and pawed some more gooey stuff from in front of his eyes. Then he became very ill. The only thing he craved now was a nice cool bunch of grass on which to lay his clammy head.

"*Ach, Gott!*" groaned *Herr Hauptmann* Heinz as he headed earthward. He clamped a hand to his diaphragm, and his cheeks inflated. "*Ach, sick I am, ja!* Pingham, you shouldt shoodt me *und* I could nodt suffer, *nein. Ach du Lieber—ugh!*"

THE Mad Butcher was not interested in making a three-point landing. He wanted to land the quickest way possible. His Spad hit, bounced high into the air, came down again to rebound into a big haystack. Phineas' landing was not much better. The old crate had only one landing left. It seemed to fall apart when its wheels kissed the dirt, but the inimitable Pinkham managed to walk away from it. He went to the haystack, pulled out *Hauptmann* Heinz and set him up against a tree.

"Go Vay," mumbled the Teuton. "You shouldt ledt me die joost like I am, *ya. Ach, Gott, so sick I am.*"

"You'll git over it," grinned Phineas. "It's only castor oil an'—haw-w-w-w!"

"*H-Hein?*" sputtered the Mad Butcher. "Castor oil yedt iss idt? *Gott!*"

"Yep," grinned the hero of the Ninth, "an' it was pretty crude, too. The Frogs use it in them old Nieuports. Well, let's go, Kraut, as you don't know what this means to me."

It was an hour before Phineas could drag the Mad Butcher away. Then, on shaky legs, the once-proud *Hauptmann* staggered across country with Phineas glued to his tail.

Late in the afternoon the prodigal Phineas returned to the fold. He pushed *Hauptmann* Heinz into the headquarters of the Ninth, sat down in the major's chair and put his feet up on the desk. Garrity tore into Wings and gaped.

"I told you, you big ape, not to come back here," he raged. "And get out of that chair. I—I—" He spun around to stare at the prisoner Phineas had brought in. *Hauptmann* Heinz's face was still the color of a green shirt after many washings. He was groaning and dabbling at his brow with a big square of cloth.

"Meet *Herr* Heinz," drawled Lieutenant Pinkham, medal winner extraordinary. "He is now playin' the

tank towns. You will please hand over to me the key to the star's dressin' room again. H aw-w-w-w-w!"

"H-How in hell—" gasped Major Garrity. "What did you—"

"Oh, I just gave him castor oil," replied Phineas carelessly. "It is a long story. Would ya like to hear it?"

"But I shodt at you, Pingham, pointd blank," suddenly spouted the Mad Butcher. "Why are you alife, is idt, *hein?*"

"Haw-w-w-w-w!" guffawed the Yank who seemed to bear a charmed life. "I was sittin' on a little flat gravestone marked 'Sacred to the Memory of Francois du Maurier Charlemagne Lafayette Du Bois.' Haw-w-w!"

Major Rufus Garrity shut his eyes, sighed heavily, then reached for the phone. When he got headquarters, he reported the latest Pinkham coup.

"Yes, colonel," the buzzards of the Ninth heard him say. "Right! Anything he wants, eh? Leave, promotion, anything, what? Yes, sir, I'll see that—"

"I don't want their medals," cut in Phineas loftily. "I don't want no apologies from you or any of these other bums, neither. All I ask is that the U.S. pays the rest of the payments on that Spad. Haw-w-w-w-w! Well, adoo, bums. Him that lasts laugh—er—laughs I—" Phineas walked out of Wings, leaving his suffering major to his misery.

"*Ach,*" moaned *Hauptmann* Heinz. "Sick am I. *Der Herr Doktor* you shouldt gedt vunce. Sick, how-w-w sick am I!"

"Come on," said Bump Gillis, "I'll go with ya. I need him too."

Garrity murmured weakly, "So do I. Follow me."