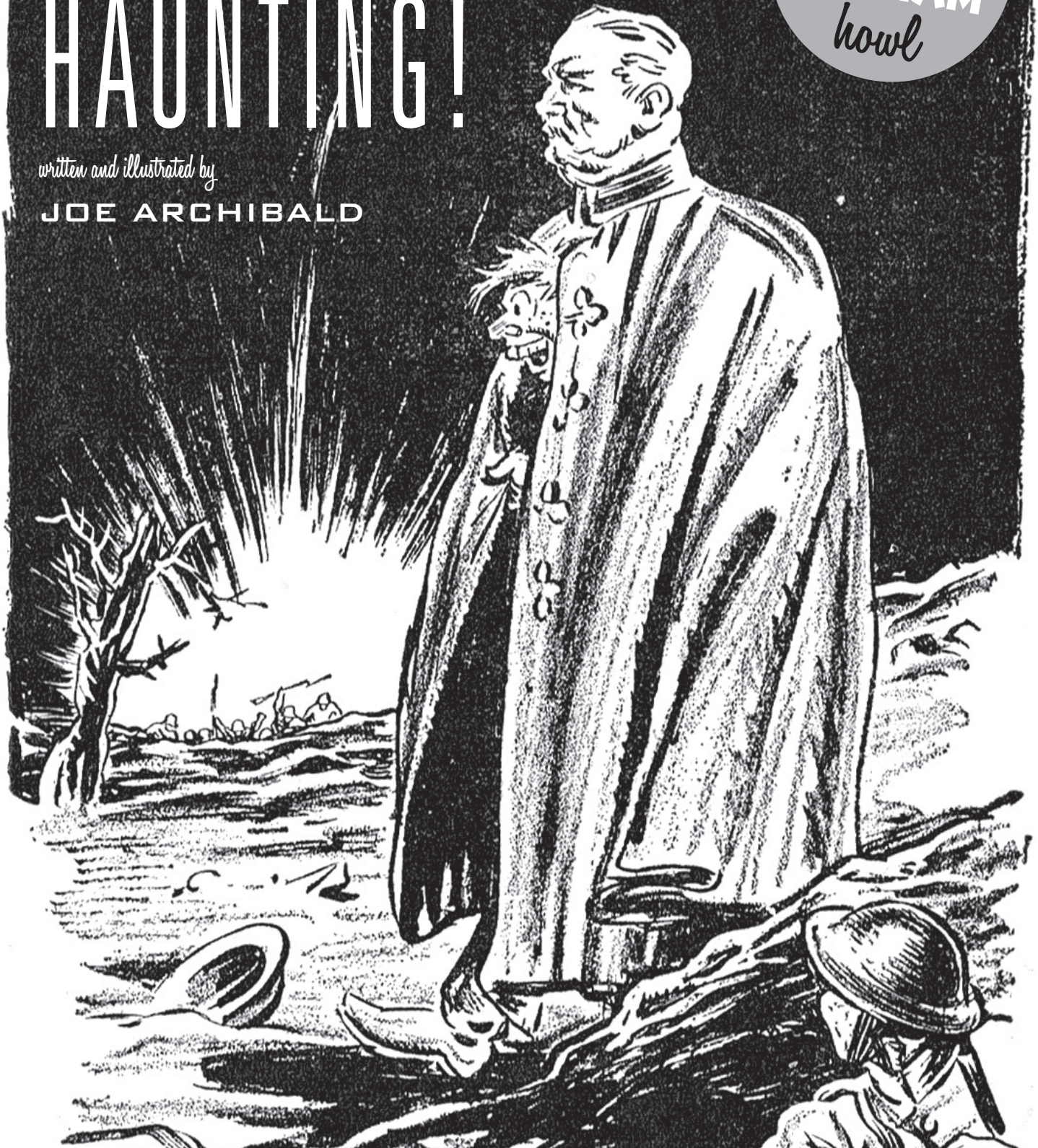


GOOD HAUNTING!

written and illustrated by

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a
**PHINEAS
PINKHAM**
howl



Do you believe in ghosts? They asked that question of Major Garrity, and he said no, but he didn't like 'em. They asked Phineas Pinkham, and he said yes, and he liked 'em. Here's a ghost story guaranteed to make you laugh—not shudder.

FOR THIS STORY Fate spun a web that would confound the most expert construction engineer among the social insects known as spiders. Let us begin with a strange tale that came over from the Kraut side in the spring of 1918 and oozed in through the doors of airdromes, divisional headquarters, buvettes, G.H.Q. and other Allied establishments too numerous to mention.

It seems that three Heinie divisions, sorely pressed near the Aisne, had grown quite discouraged and were about to tap their *Oberoffiziers* into dreamland with sections of iron piping. The mutiny, however, was said to have been stayed, incredible as it may sound, by the great arm of Bismarck.

Bathed in a strange glow, mists curling about his massive figure, he had risen up from out of No-Man's-Land and had stabbed a finger toward Paris. The Jerries, letting out a wild, raucous yell, had leaped out of the trenches to tear almost three hundred acres of French real estate out of Allied hands.

But that was not half of it. Several days later, the ghost of Bismarck again appeared, this time near Le Neuville. Once more a sweep of his immortal arm had driven Kraut shock troops against the Allied lines, to dent it in three spots. Something was amiss somewhere, Allied brass hats were convinced. A trio of them descended upon Major Rufus Garrity, C.O. of the turbulent and inimitable Ninth Pursuit Squadron, to discuss the matter.

"It's serious, Garrity," growled a colonel. "Can't be laughed off. The Yanks saw it themselves."

The discussion was taking place in the big room of the French farmhouse, and several pilots were still lolling around the mess table. Major Garrity merely grunted.

"If it ever pops up in this sector, we'll never hold the Heinies," the colonel went on. "I'm not a bit superstitious, Garrity, but by cripes—er—do you believe in ghosts?"

"No!" Garrity ripped out. "But I don't like 'em. Ha, ha!"

"I didn't come over from Chaumont to hear you make wisecracks, Garrity," the colonel complained testily. "This is no joke."

"Haw-w-w-w-w-w!" From one end of the table came the familiar Pinkham guffaw. "It's like them

Frogs, I bet, who saw Joan of Arc," grinned Phineas. "You remember that? Well, what did they find with 'em in that observation trench, huh? Three empty absinthe bottles. Haw-w-w! It's a wonder they didn't see Napoleon chasin' her with a motorcycle. I wouldn't worry none. As soon as the Heinie *Schnapps* gives out, well—"

"Who asked you to sound off?" thundered the Brass Hat who had done the most talking. "Garrity, is this the sort of respect for superiors you teach these buzzards? Bah, I'm wasting my time in this booby hatch. Come on, Jenks, we'll move on. But you'll hear about this, major," he bellowed at Garrity, pounding his stick against his boot. "Of all the—"

Phineas made a snappy salute. "When you get to Chaumont," he said, "tell 'em I will make a counter-attack, sir. I will dress up like Daniel Boone and walk up and down in front of the Yankee ditches an'—"

"Major," the brass hat bellowed as Garrity balanced a sugar bowl in his hand, "that's all I'll stand. One more word out of this bunch of fresh mugs and I'll put them all under arrest."

"Oh, they wouldn't do me a favor like that," the Old Man ground out. "Not this bunch! Pinkham, your two weeks' leave is cancelled. I'll show you."

"It's no use aggravating your blood pressure," drawled the Boonetown wonder. "I decided to stay home, anyways, as I have got to find out who is stealing my stuff. I've got to find out if Frankenstein had a great grandson who is followin' in his ancestor's footsteps. Haw-w-w! Bismarck! Maybe they didn't bury him deep enough."

The door slammed with such force that a pane of glass fell out of a window and broke noisily.

"Aw, now, don't go away mad," Phineas yelled after the departing Brass Hat. "It must be terrible not to have a sense of humor," he sighed.

Major Rufus Garrity threw the sugar bowl this time. He missed Lieutenant Pinkham. The bowl hit Captain Howell on top of his head, bounced off and took a neck off the catsup bottle.

"That'll start up my sinus trouble again," Howell yelled. "I bet I can't fly in the morning. Oh, if only you weren't a major!"

"Look at my brand new tunic," yelled Bump Gillis. "It's ruined. That ketchup! I'll send you a bill for this, you—er—sir!"

Major Garrity moaned, kicked back his chair and groped his way toward the orderly room like a somnambulist. "If that is Bismarck come back," he muttered, "he's a damn fool!"

FIVE MINUTES LATER, when the pilots were about to break up, the roar of an engine came from outside. Brakes screeched, and then two irate men barged into the farmhouse. One had a great big mouse under his eye.

"Why, it's Captain Brophy," exclaimed Phineas, his tongue in his cheek, eyes cast in the direction of a handy open window. "How are all the Salmsons today? Did you fly any?"

"Pinkham," Brophy cracked, "it was nice of you to make that date for me with that dame in Barley Duck!"

"Why—er—that was nothin'," grinned Phineas, "not at all. Didn't I say she was crazy to meet ya, huh? Any time I can help a guy—"

"Yeah!" the flyer of Salmsons gritted through his teeth, fists doubling. "But you didn't tell me she had a husband, did ya? And that he was a blacksmith as big as the Rheims Cathedral, huh?"

"Why, ya didn't ask me," countered Phineas. "Haw-w-w-w! It is funny how you forgot, ain't it? Them Frogs are the most jealous bums."

"And you forgot to tell me the blacksmith was layin' for a certain guy who wasn't me and—"

"That's a lie as—well—"

"Awright, Pinkham," snorted Brophy, "look out for me. I'll git hunk. I'm gunnin' for you from now on. I just want to warn ya. C'mon, Bill, let's go!"

"Haw-w-w-w-w!" laughed Phineas, wiping moisture from his brow. "Nobody can't take a joke around here no more, huh!"

"Beggin' your pardon, sir," said a little man, sidling up to the culprit, "B-but tricks are awful bad things, sir." He was a doleful little private, a new mess monkey on the drome of the Ninth. Goomer was his name, and compared to Private Goomer, a professional pallbearer is always doubled up with mirth. Phineas called him "Glad Tidings."

"You don't say," Phineas grinned. "Well, well—"

"I never will fergit the trick I played on my grandpap once," the mess monkey continued. "Never got over it, sir. It just goes to show what a prank will start. I put a burr in my grandpap's chair. He sat on it, then jumped up an' let out a awful howl, sir. The howl scairt the cat an' the cat hopped up an' knocked over a lamp. The lamp set fire to the house an' it burned down an' my Aunt Sophie got pneumonia from exposure an' passed away without changin' her will, which she promised to do. The five thousand dollars went to missionaries in the Congo, like her first will said, an' I couldn't git sent to college, an' so I didn't never amount to nothin' an' couldn't be an orfiser. That's why I am only a mess monkey. So you see, sir, what a prank'll do, huh?"

"I will reward you for this, Glad Tidings," Phineas

grinned broadly. "I'll send for a tombstone catalogue for you. Haw-w-w-w! Well, adoo, bums, as I've got to go an' figger out why Bismarck is up an' around agin."

Private Goomer shook his head dolefully and meandered toward the kitchen.

Now on the other side of the fence, Fate was spinning away busily and chuckling. The *Rittmeister* von Schnoutz stood in front of a superior who was colder to the touch than an iceberg.

"All *der* time yedt iss it excooses," the *Herr Oberst*

was growling. "Orders you hear dem, *hein*? Gedt *Leutnant* Pingham! *Der Tag* idt iss nodt far away. *Mit der Bismarck* poosh along *die Dumkopfs* by *der* trench, *ja*? Maybe yedt while you sleep by *der Albatross*, *Herr Leutnant* Pingham he vill find where iss it *der Bismarck*. *Das ist gut, hein*? Ach! From *der High Command* iss idt comes orders vhat I giff you. Hah, Pingham *Schwein* he hass all the tricks, eh? It giffs no never mind how you shooldt him down, *unterstandt*? Already yedt I bedt you he tries to find *Herr Bismarck*. You shoouldt get *der* oopstart. Flies by *mein* zoup iss he. Oop to now idt iss *der* monkey he makes uf you, *Herr Rittmeister*."

"*Ja wohl*," cracked von Schnoutz, "budt I bedt you half *der Black Forest* by me he gedts shodt down. So!



"Glad Tidings" Goomer, a laugh on any tarmac.

Insults iss it you giff me, ha? Vhen I shouldt gedt him, I coom *und* laugh by you, ha, ha, ha! Then I qvit *und* go back by *der* Italian front. I show you. Friends I haff efen by Hindenberg, *und* efen *ein Herr Oberst der Rittmeister* could insult nodt. I could be also *der Herr Oberst*, but I get tired by *der* pants, *ja!*”

“*Raus mit!*” howled the *Herr Oberst*. “Gedt oudt! Who iss idt more important yedt, you or Bismarck, *hein?* Stop idt *der* yapping like *ein* pooch run ofer *mit der* street car. You shouldt gedt idt *der Leutnant* Pingham instead uf *der* high horse. Bah, such *ein* fathead!”

That night, long after the few clocks in France which had not been kicked askew by Heinie shells had pealed out the witching hour, a Jerry truck rolled through the village of Mars-le-Tour. Mud-caked, plodding Heinies moved out of the way to let it pass. A Kraut M.P. stopped the truck and got a wallop on the coal scuttle for his trouble.

“*Dumkopf,*” yipped a Prussian officer who rode in a staff car behind the truck. “Did you see nodt *der* sign ‘*verboten*’ on *der* truck, *hein?* Maybe vun crack more on *der* headt vill giff *ein* lesson!” The Kraut reeled under the second swipe from a heavy Luger, and guttured indignantly as two cronies helped him to his feet.

“I haff orders to stop all trucks for *der* passvord, *ja,*” he spat. “*Und* all it giffs iss vallops. *Donnervetter!* Such a foolish var iss idt. Hans, vhat you t’ink iss idt in *der* truck, *hein?*”

“Maybe *die* big Fieldmarshals haff *der* chess game, ho, ho!”

Now how were those Heinies to know that the great Bismarck had passed by? Perhaps such secrecy was vital, as even a Bismarck was not especially safe within ninety miles of Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham.

ALL DURING THE NEW DAY, Allied pilots were going forth into the torrid ozone with the usual orders to mess up Heinie crates and to keep a lookout for any signs of construction of a stage upon which the great Bismarck might be likely to make another personal appearance. Phineas flew with A Flight, as usual, and kept an alert optic peeled for a trace of his arch enemy, von Schnoutz. On the way home from the last patrol, Howell’s formation skimmed close to a trio of Salmson observation crates. In the pit of one, a pilot ground his teeth as he read the earmarks of Garrity’s Spads.

“Just wait, Mr. Pinkham,” he spat out. “Captain

Brophy will pay you off, you fresh, buck-toothed cluck!”

“Ah, hum-m-m!” yawned Phineas. “This has been some dull day! You would think they’d stop them Vons’ pay checks. Well, I think I’ll leave you, captain, as this is where I git off. Adoo!” He winged over, banked wide and headed back toward the land of the sausage-makers. “Now, let’s see,” the lone eagle soliloquized with a complacent grin, “it’s close to Hamburg where they laid *Herr* Bismarck to rest. Huh, it’s a long walk from there even if he got up. I hate to admit it, but they have found a Kraut some place with brains, I bet. It’s about time they started usin’ the Pinkham system, haw-w-w-w-w! I am almost flattered.”

Br-r-r-r-r-r-rt! Phineas was wrong. He was almost flattened. A grim shape swished by overhead, looped madly and came spearing down at the trespassing Spad which still shivered under the impact of the Jerry slugs.

“Bismarck can wait,” Phineas choked out and went into an Immelmann.

On a road far beneath, a truck stopped. The car filled up with Jerry officers also stopped. They squinted up into the rouged skies and chuckled. “I bedt you t’irty marks *das ist der Leutnant* Pingham,” exclaimed one. “*Und der Rittmeister* von Schnoutz iss strafing *der* bumper. *Ach*, step qvick on *der* petrol. *Der* close shafe vas idt, you bedt.”

“You joomp at shadows, Seidlitz,” a Kraut Brass Hat yelped. “*Der* cat comes oudt uf *der* bag yedt *mit* your foolishments. I bedt he nefer efen spotted us. *Und* how vould he know it iss—*Himmel*, *der* Yangkee gedts away!”

Phineas had just made it. Kraut anti-aircraft nibbled at him as he skimmed over the lines. The *Rittmeister* swore roundly and gnashed his teeth. “It iss *der* endt,” he growled as he headed back home. “I challenge *der Leutnant* to step oop und fight to *der* finish. You vait! I t’ink oop *der* trick, also.”

Phineas landed his Spad on his favorite spot outside of Bar-le-Duc and counted the holes in his ship.

“The bum!” he exclaimed. “He must be usin’ bird shot, as one burst couldn’t make that many holes. Well, he didn’t git me, but he is gittin’ to be an awful nuisance. Here I come, Babette! Git the cookies out of the cupboard an’ fill up the bowl of good cheer.”

It took Phineas ten minutes to get into town. Before attending to affairs of the heart, he turned into an *estaminet* for a tuning up. There he met Captain Brophy, and Lieutenant Pinkham should have taken

the captain's friendly smile with a whole barrel of salt.

"Why, huh, ya don't look mad at all," began Phineas, grinning. "Well, that is the kind of bum I like, as what is done is passed under the bridge an' all, huh? Would you have a snort or two with me? Gargon, it's all on yours truly."

"You have no idea," grunted Brophy. "Ha—er—I mean we are some dried up in the tonsils, yeah!"

Nothing seemed amiss as Phineas bade them all a "bomb swar" and headed for Babette's. Two hours later, he bade his big moment a fond *adieu*. Whistling blithely, he headed for his Spad. It stood where he had left it, close to a little Frog farm. The roar of the prop brought the Frenchman and his life partner out into their yard.

"*C'est le lieutenant, oui*," he said. "See how he tak' off lak ze bird, *non*?"

As Phineas' bus tore along the ground, the *femme* jumped high into the air and waved her arms.

"Ze birds ees eet?" she shrieked. "*Aussi* zey fly lak you have say. *Sacre*, Henri, ze cheeken coop eet ees. *Cochon*! Peeg! You breeng back ze hens, *non*?"

"*Mon Dieu*! Ah-h-h-h-h, *sacre bleu*!"

Above the roar of the Hiss rose the indignant squawk of poultry as three hen coops tumbled and jumped in the wake of the Pinkham Spad.

"It's funny," Phineas muttered as he soared up into the air. "I never heard so much cacklin'. I must've woke up the biddies. Huh, what ails this crate? It feels like it's draggin' a Yule log. I'm goin' to bawl out Casey when I git back to the drome."

A flare of burning petrol lighted the way for Phineas. Major Garrity tore out across the field as the Spad's wheels hit. Phineas' brows knitted as he switched off the ignition.

"Do you hear hens cacklin'?" he yipped at Sergeant Casey as the flight non-com ran up.

"Just look around, lieutenant," growled Casey. "Of all the—"

"Say, you," the Old Man howled, "do you think they get petrol out of brooks? It's the last time we light your way in, you—ah, what've you got there? Where did you get those?"

The Ninth's prodigal son turned his head. A dozen white hens were staggering uncertainly across the field. Behind the Spad were three heaps of kindling wood which once had been hen coops.

"Wires tied to 'em!" yelled Howell. "Why, you bat-eared ape, you've done some cockeyed things before, but—"

"Ah—er—huh!" gasped Phineas. "I—er—" Suddenly his big tombstone teeth clicked together and made a sound like the springing of a bear trap. "Hm, Brophy, the bum! I ought to've known he was a hypocrite."

"Stealing hens, eh?" groaned the major. "This is too much. Cripes, they'll hang you for this. I'll kick the cracker box from under your feet myself."

"It's a lie," snorted Phineas. "It was Brophy done it. He was in Barley Duck an'—"

"Oh, yeah?" roared the C.O. "So you left a perfectly good Spad out there where anybody could—I'll—"

Cut-cut-cut-cadacut! Cut-cut—e-e-e-e-eaw-w-w-w-wk! Awk!

"Get those hens!" shouted Garrity. "Everybody drop what they are doin' and chase those—Pinkham, I'll bust you."

"I been framed," insisted Phineas. "You wait, Brophy! You just wait." He made a dive and came up holding a white hen by the legs.

"I got three," Howell yipped. "What'll I do with the things, huh?"

"Put 'em in Pinkham's hut," yowled the major.

"Where'll I sleep?" Bump Gillis demanded indignantly. "I'm not sleepin' with no poultry."

"Every hen that's missing comes out of your pay, you fatheads," bellowed the C.O. "Now do you want to sleep?"

THAT NIGHT Bump Gillis and Phineas Pinkham slept in the attic of the old Frog farmhouse with a family of bats, numerous spiders and a group of inquisitive rodents. Cobwebs still clung to the muttering pair as they hopped off on the dawn patrol.

"I'll git that Brophy!" declared Phineas under his breath. "Nobody can fool with a Pinkham an' git away with it. You wait! I'll get even."

A misty veil hung over the area of fuss. It looked moth-eaten in spots. Finding the patrol very dull, Phineas dived through one of the holes. The carpet below was coughing up big gobs of flame and mud as Allied artillery banged away and spoiled the Krauts' appetite for breakfast. Phineas swooped low, skimming over the ruins of a village where he saw something that piqued his curiosity to the point of grazing the tops of crumbling structures. On the brow of a hill approximately three quarters of a mile from the barbed-wire entanglements he spotted a Jerry fourgon.

"Now that's funny," the adventuring Yank grunted to himself. "Shells are droppin' all around, and there

are Heinie officers with that bus. It don't make any more sense than if I just saw some sea lions in a stone quarry. Huh, well—" Phineas looked up. Three Fokkers were slicing down at him. But out of the mists came Howell and his brood to save the Pinkham neck.

"It was nice of you bums to come to my succor," expanded Phineas some time later when the Spads were back on the drome. "I guess I misjudged you an'—"

"Ships cost money, you fathead," Howell tossed out in interruption. "And let me tell you something. Just leave the formation once more, you crackpot, and—"

"Well, buzzards," cut in Major Garrity sweetly as he sauntered onto the scene, "the Frog was here with two M.P.'s. Now the bill comes to just two hundred and ninety francs for that poultry. I will show you the figures. Ha, ha, and we didn't even get one to eat. The Frog dropped the charges after we paid him off. Now your share, Lieutenant Pinkham, is—"

Phineas bristled. "I will send the bill to Brophy," he announced. "I'll also prefer charges against him."

"Ha, ha," laughed the C.O., and strolled away.

Fate was beginning to step on it. The web widened. In the afternoon, Phineas took a stroll out into the country to be alone with his thoughts. He sat himself down on a log and thought of Bismarck. His eyes wandered as his brain churned. At length they became glued to something at the edge of a clump of alders. It was a hollow tree and flies buzzed around it.

"Now that's queer," he said aloud. "Ha, I wonder—"

Nearing the tree, the Boonetown wizard raised himself on tiptoe and plunged an arm into the big hole that yawned in its side. When he drew it out, his hands were gooey.

"A bee storehouse," he chuckled. "Honey! Why, there's bees stuck in it. Well, spring is here an' you will thaw out. I know all about you little bums. Some of you numb up durin' the winter an' thaw out in the spring. I bet you're mostly girl bees. And I know where you will git your marbles back quicker." And Phineas, by much effort, managed to glean from the nest several dozen of the insects which were not defunct and put them in his hat.

"I'll make me a hive," he grinned, chewing on some succulent beeswax. "An' I'll raise honey. I'll plant me a flower garden for 'em and—huh, some of the li'l fellers are already movin' a leg or two. Well, a couple of days where it's warm an'—"

Lieutenant Pinkham came onto the drome and skidded back on his heels. Out in front of the hangars

were three ack emmas, digging into the nose of a two-seater—a Salmson. Phineas swore and quickened his pace.

"Casey, where did that bus come from?"

"Got forced down here," replied the flight sergeant. "Got to git it in shape to go back where it belongs. It'll take an hour, I guess. Of all the airdromes in France, it would have to land here."

"Hm, yeah," grinned Pinkham. "We're just lucky, that's all. Ha, ha! Well, don't strain yourselves. Adoo."

Phineas walked into the farmhouse. There were only one or two pilots about. On a chair were heaped some articles of flying apparel.

"Where's Brophy?" Phineas asked casually, his heart aflutter. "And the bum who—"

"Playin' poker over with Bump an' two other guys," was the response. "No, you can't show us any tricks. We're not interested. We don't smoke and—"

"Well, maybe I got a trick you never saw before," Phineas insisted. "Now, it'll only take a minute."

"Come on, Slug," growled one of the victims. "Let him have the whole place to himself."

"That's thoughtful of you," grinned the trickster gratefully as the two stamped out. "Now I'll just look at the coats. Hmm, the linin' is ripped in one of 'em. I can easy make it two." He took out his knife. Five minutes later, the coats were put back to their original resting place. Phineas' sky piece was atop his head. There was no sign of the convalescing bees.

"Maybe havin' a hive would be too much trouble," decided the wonder from Boonetown, Iowa, and he sighed happily as he walked out on the field.

Some time later, Brophy emerged from the Pinkham hut. Phineas was just about to step inside.

"Why, hello, Carbuncle," Brophy tossed out. "Y'ain't mad, huh? Well, that's swell as like you say, what is flowed down the river never comes back up through the bridge, or what is it. Excuse me, as I think we have to go. How would you like to come over for a chicken dinner, huh? Ha, ha! C'mon, Bill, the bus looks like it's ready."

"It's the last one who laughs who lasts—er—laughs the best laugh," Phineas muttered. "Aduo, Brophy. You're a card. Ha, ha!"

The Salmson roared away.

"You must be slippin'," commented Howell. "The bum took us for ten smackers an' you didn't even slip him a phoney bonbon. You are washed up sure."

"Maybe I look clean outside, but you have no idea how dirty I still feel inside," retorted Phineas with a secret grin. "I'll be seein' ya."

THE SUN STUCK OUT its pink and orange tongue as dusk chased it below the horizon. The pilots of the Ninth were at mess when a Mercedes power plant thrummed out a serenade right over their heads.

"Boche!" yelled the Old Man. "Get out. Grab a Spad, all of you—"

Casey barged in. "An Albatross flyin' a white sheet," he shouted. "It looks like von Schnoutz."

Immediately Phineas Pinkham leaped out of his chair. "That bum! White sheet, or no white sheet, I'll chase him—"

Once outside, the pilots let out a yell and grabbed at the dirt. The Boche crate dived down, swooped over the hangars and zoomed back upstairs. Something rolled over the skid-raked flying field. A greaseball retrieved it and hotfooted back to Garrity. What he handed to the Old Man appeared to be an empty shell plugged up with heavy paper. There was a message inside.

"Too much ist enuff," Garrity read. "*Herr Leutnant* Pingham, *der* time comes that we find who *ist ein besser Mann, ja!* Ofer Fresnes at three by *der* clock in *der* afternoon tomorrow you I meet, bummer! Pooley for you *und* your tricks!"

"That's enough," declared Phineas indignantly. "It's the straw that pancaked the camel. I'll be there loaded down with bells."

"Oh, you will, will you?" Garrity sniffed. "What have I told you about your cockeyed private wars, huh? If you ever leave this drome alone again, you won't be able to vote for twenty years. What do you think of that, Mr. Pinkham?"

"Well, Bismarck," said Phineas, "we will walk to the Yank trenches."

"I would git forty years if I told ya," Phineas countered with a bearish growl. "Awright, find Bismarck yourself. I wash my hands of the whole affairs!" He huffed up, swore, then strode out on the group. "Haw-w-w-w!" he laughed privately. "Who wants to vote?"

All that night, G.H.Q. at Chaumont was like a haunted house. Brass Hats gnawed at their fingernails. They walked about with mouths half-open and ears cocked for the sound of Bismarck's ghostly footsteps. Wires buzzed all over the Front. Bombing squadrons were ordered to patrol the nocturnal canopy and keep a sharp lookout for ghosts. To sum it all up, the Allied big shots had a bad case of the jitters.

Morning came, and brought no news of *Herr* Bismarck. The pursuit and reconnaissance ships began

to shake off the dew and start in the day's work. From a drome six miles away from the Ninth Pursuit a trio of Salmson two-seaters took off and headed for Germany. Captain Brophy led the way. Over Verdun, he argued the right of way with six Pfalz Scouts. After the tracer smoke had cleared away, one Salmson limped home. Another was still up, but not for long. Captain Brophy, with two Boche hard on his tail, slipped into German territory and landed dead stick not a mile and a half from the *Staffel* of *Rittmeister* von Schnoutz.

"Well," said Brophy, "that's that! I'll have to buy a history to read about the rest of the gare. Ho, hum!" And with his arms held high, he climbed out of the Salmson.

The news of the *descendu* naturally caused quite a flurry on the drome of *Staffel* 7. The *Rittmeister* von Schnoutz, with two of his iron-jawed Vons, went out to look over the two-place ship. Right away the *Rittmeister* hit upon a devilish idea.

"*Ach, Himmel,*" he exclaimed with a lop-sided grin, "*der* trick iss idt, *ja!* Tomorrow afternoon, *Rittmeister* von Schnoutz vill go oop by Fresnes to fight Pingham. *Und, Herren der* ship idt iss there. Ve paintd it ofer *und* I be *der* obserfer *und* *Leutnant* Hassenschwab he flies idt. Pingham cooms close *und*—where iss it the clothes of the *Amerikaner* pilots? Coats *und* helmets only moost I naff. Gedt them—*mach' schnell!* *Ach,* when I giff *der* laugh at *der Herr Oberst*, it shouldt be in his fat face. So!"

Even as Captain Brophy and his observer were being stripped of their regalia, Phineas sat hived up in his hut, endeavoring to work out a plan of attack. In one corner of the hut stood an old blunderbuss that he had filched from a deserted chateau. It had been put into working order and kept oiled. Phineas gave it his undivided attention.

"I'll fix it up under the undercarriage," he said to his own attentive ears. "An' it's all loaded. Once the bum gits under me, I'll just pull a string. Haw-w-w-w!"

Fate was also pulling strings and fashioning one of the craziest webs of circumstance in her repertoire. All the next morning, the *Rittmeister* von Schnoutz patrolled the lines in the Salmson two-seater. Only when he needed petrol did he leave the high places.

"*Mit der* ship ve shouldt practice," he laughed at some Junkers. "Ve shouldt be in good fettles *und* see the *Amerikaner* styles, *nein?* *Ach,* free o'clock I make idt *der* history yedt!"

A Flight was patrolling at two-thirty. Phineas came

up to his Spad, holding the blunderbuss close to his side. Captain Howell got a look at it when Phineas was placing his burden in the bit.

"Throw that out," he howled. "Wait until I see the Old Man. What're you up to now?"

"Is it my fault Spads don't have guns enough on 'em?" inquired Phineas pleasantly. "I have made complaints about it, but nothin' is done. Well, I have got a right to protect myself at all times. There is nothin' in the flyin' manuals that says different."

Howell shook his head with disgust.

AT THREE-THIRTY, a Salmson two-seater circled high over Presnes. Von Schnoutz crouched behind a Lewis gun and swept the heavens with glittering optics. Soon he saw the dot in the sky. It loomed up bigger and bigger, yet he did not attack. He knew that Phineas would come close to investigate, and he was not far wrong.

"Git out of the sky!" roared the Yankee warrior as he gunned in. "This is a private fight an'—" He looked

at the watch on his wrist. Quarter to four. "Wh-why, the fathead didn't show up. He's no place in sight. Well, the scared cat! An' I got in a sling for nothin'. Huh, them bums in the Salmson scared him away, I bet. Well, I'll tell them plenty."

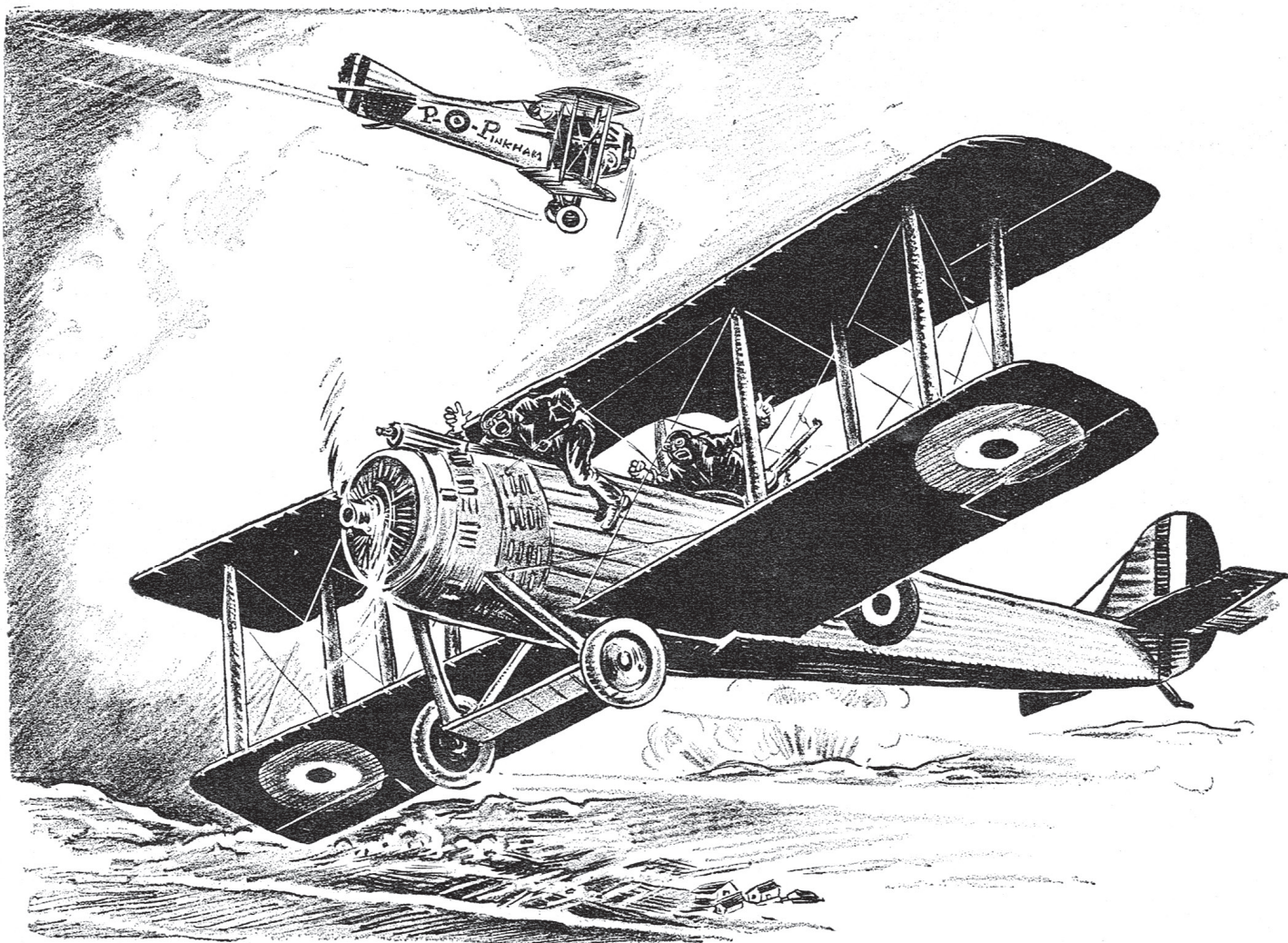
Phineas, unaware of the trap, gunned in close. *Rat-a-tat-tat!* The Spad heaved, then bounced around as a swarm of slugs cut across the dash and ripped hunks out of Phineas' flying coat.

"Why, the dirty bums!" yowled Phineas, trying to get the Spad out of a convulsion. "I'll see G.H.Q. about this. Shootin' at—er—why I catch on! Von Schnoutz!"

As he spoke, another blast kicked off a wing tip. Flying better than he knew how, Phineas hopped to a spot where he caught a momentary flash of the Salmson's blind spot. He yanked a string. Nothing happened.

"Why, wasn't it loaded?" he stammered. "Oh, I kin see a gold star in the winder back in Boonetown."

"Ve gedt him," yipped von Schnoutz. "*Der Tag* idt coomes. I giff it yedt vun burst to finish oop



und—Ach, Himmel, am shodt vunce!” The *Rittmeister* dropped his Lewis grip and clawed at his ribs. “There iss no hole, budt—vhat ist *das*?” This time he clutched at his tail assembly.

“Shoodt!” his pilot yipped. “*Herr Rittmeister*, vhy you don’t shoodt *der* Spad, eh? Almost idt iss kapoot—*ach, Donnervetter!*” The pilot seemed to leap straight up in the air. “Shodt iss idt! *Himmel*, how ist *das*? Idt feels like *der* tracer gets me!”

“Why,” yipped Phineas from his riddled Spad, “lookit them bums wiggle. Haw-w-w-w! I get it. They got Brophy’s Salmson. They took them coats. And in ‘em are them bees, an’ I bet they’re all recovered for the summer season. Haw-w-w-w!” And Phineas slammed lead into the Salmson’s short ribs.

Herr Pinkham had diagnosed the situation correctly. Just as his Vickers guns boomed, a honey bee crawled to a soft patch of white under a Boche undershirt and sat down hard to test out its tailskid. The *Rittmeister* howled again, and dug a hand inside his coat. More bees emerged from the lining and found their way to choice pickings. Three of the social insects decided upon a joint attack. The onslaught lifted von Schnoutz almost out of the Salmson.

“How doth the busy bee improve each shinin’ hour!” yipped Phineas.

“*Himmel*,” bawled the *Rittmeister*. “Down by *der* groundt *geschnell* vunce, Otto. It giffs spasms. *Ach, Donnervetter, was ist das?* Otto, *Dumkopf*, stop *der* joompin’ *und* gedt *der* stick vunce. Ow-w-w-w!”

“You t’ink I joost fool *mit* you, *nein*?” the pilot lashed out “Needles I am filled up *mit*. Ow-w-w-w-w!”

“Haw-w-w-w!” guffawed their Yankee adversary, shooting an elevator from the Salmson’s tail. “They’re committin’ insecticide!”

“Down *mit*, Otto!” reiterated von Schnoutz. “All filled up *mit* holes I am, *und* you—look vunce, Otto. Turn *und* look by your neck. *Der* bee iss idt. *Himmel*, like *der* hife I am!” He pounded at his torso with both fists. The counterattack under his shirt twisted him into a pretzel as he tried to reach five places on his anatomy at the same time.

Br-r-r-r-r-rt! The Salmson shook, jerked up its nose, then headed down fast.

“*Ach*, I shouldt giff vun care, *ja!*” cried the *Rittmeister*. “*Das ist gut*. Go down quvick. *Ach, Gott*, Otto, *der* Pingham is iss nodd human efen like *Herr* Bismarck. How he knows us, *hein*? How he gedts the bees by the shirts *und* the pants oop here, *hein*? Only *der* deffil—”

Crash! The Salmson pancaked, bounced and vaulted over a hedge into a duck pond.

“*Ach, das ist gut!*” gurgled the *Rittmeister* as he came to the surface. “Sooch *ein* pleasure yedt. Otto, where ist you adt, *hein*?”

Bubbles came up at his side. Von Schnoutz reached down and lifted Otto Hassenschwab to the surface.

“Let go vunce,” the observer coughed up with a quart of muddy water. “Who says I vant to coom oop? *Ach!*” And he dived under once more.

As to Phineas—there was little holding up the Spad save two struts and a wing and a half. The Boonetown pilot had to get down in a hurry, and it had to be on the Kraut side. He landed the wreck close to a thicket, crawled out and ducked for cover. There he remained until after dark.

“I wonder how the Vons are.” The Yank grinned speculatively as he crawled out of the thicket. “It’s a good thing me an’ Brophy did not understand each other, haw-w-w!” From the shelter of a big rock he scanned the vicinity. A flare went up, lighted the sky—an Allied flare. “Why, I ain’t far from where the main tent is,” he decided. Another flare went up. A hill possibly half a mile to the left was bathed in its calcium glare, and Phineas caught a glimpse of the ruins of a church.

“That place looks familiar,” he said.

“I think I’ll take a look. It’s where that fourgon was with the Kraut officers.”

It was a slow trip to the hill. Four times Phineas came near enough to Boche to reach out and take the pipes out of their mouths. Crawling and squirming, the Boonetown miracle man finally came to the wreck of a Kraut ambulance. He hit his knee against a heavy object, groped for it. A star shell went up and Phineas looked at the label.

“Hm,” he mused, “it’s Greek to me, but I bet it is soup. I’ll maybe need it. Ha, there’s another.” Carrying both, Phineas crawled on up the hill until he heard Kraut voices dangerously close. He hugged against something and his face touched cold, rusty iron. Voices seemed to vibrate from it, and Phineas’ jaw dropped. Right at his nose was a crack of light. Shifting his position, he put an eye to the crack and almost let out a yelp. Inside, in what seemed to be an old machine gun nest, were three Heinies. Close to them was a waxen bust of Bismarck from which was draped a long cape.

“Why, the fakirs,” snarled Phineas, The voices of the Boche were distinct now.



"It giffs fife minoots *und* you go oop. *Herr Leutnant*," a monocled Teuton chuckled. "You vill point *der* vay to the Yangkee trenches. I bedt the *Dumkopfs* fight tonighdt, *hein*? I vill be readty *mit der* shmoke *und der* lighdt."

THE PLACE WAS VERY CRAMPED. Phineas knew that there were no more of the enemy about. There was but one way to get in—the elephant-iron door against which he squatted—but he knew he would get filled with holes like a sieve before he could step inside. His fingers strayed to one of the cans he had discovered.

"Now maybe I'm wrong," he told himself, "but why should ambulances be carryin' soup? Maybe it's—" He reached inside his leather coat for a clasp knife. Baring a blade, he dug it viciously into the top of one of the cans. "Ah-h," he gasped. "By cripes, it is!" He held his nose.

"You hear somet'ing?" a Teuton voice whispered hoarsely.

"*Nein*, the joomps haff you again, Seidlitz," was the reply.

Phineas, holding his breath, placed the hole in

the can over the narrow opening through which he had squinted into the nest, and dumped the contents slowly. Working swiftly, he followed up the same action with the second can. Then he slumped down and picked up a heavy rock.

"*Der* shmell in here iss mooch bad, *hein*? I gedt sleepy, *ja*."

"Take *der* nap, Heinrich. I shouldt nodt needt you yedt *und*—*ach*! I could nodt holdt

der head oop. *Ach du lieber*, somet'ing iss rotten. Ve go oudt, Seidlitz. *Mach' schnell*!"

"The or-r-ders you forgedt, *hein*? From *der* H-High Com—shtay *mit*, *ach*, *der* shmell I know—but ah-h-hhum!"

Minutes passed before Phineas peered inside the machine-gun nest. When he did so, he saw that the one candle was flickering out and that three Heinies were huddled in a corner struggling with Morpheus. Stifling a laugh, the Boonetown wonder slowly opened the iron door enough to allow him to wriggle in. As it shut to, a Kraut stirred.

"Go 'vay," he said. "*Der* time to milch the cows iss nodt yedt, Mutter! Ah-h-h!"

"That's strong ether the Heinies make." Phineas grinned as he picked up the ghost of Bismarck. "Huh, it fits over the head an' it just fits me. I can look out an opening in the front of the cape. What a bunch of double-crossers them Heinie brass hats are! Maybe Bismarck will take a walk to the Yankee trenches. Maybe I kin git away with it without the halo. Lead on, Count. Haw-w-w-w!"

A Jerry sentry rubbed his eyes and looked toward the hill. As he did, the Yanks sent up more flares. Bathed in the light was a great robed figure. Bismarck!

"*Gott!* Hans, Emil, Gus!" he shouted. "Look vunce. He iss here *mit!*"

A Heinie officer looked and smirked. "Ah, he cooms. I tell you, *ja?*" he shouted down the trench. "Look, he shows der vay. He valks right out to *der—ach*, for vhy does he do idt, *hein? Himmel*, somet'ing iss badt!" He ran down into a dugout and tried to get a message through to the hill. There was no answer. Back he came, yelling to a machine gunner.

"Shoodt, *Dumkopt!*" He yowled. "Shoodt at him!"

"Vh-a-a-t? Shoodt *Herr* Bismarck? *Nein, Herr Leutnant!*"

"Giff vun look," barked the officer. "Look! Bismarck puts *der* thumb by *der* nose!"

"Haw-w-w-w-w!" the booming laugh echoed in the eerie stillness as Phineas made a dive for an advanced Yankee trench where three doughs crouched, too surprised to shoot.

"Wha-a-at are ya, huh?" squeaked a dough as Phineas slumped clown. "Cripes, his head is off! To hell with it, I'm gittin' outa here!"

"I am Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham," was the response. "Did I fool them bums! Git me to a officer's hangout, as have I exposed the fakirs! They better attack, as them Heinies are a set-up now. You could not make them fight for their wives right now."

Back at the Ninth Pursuit Squadron, the telephone jangled. Major Garrity lifted the phone listlessly. Anxious pilots stuck their heads in through the door and waited. They saw the Old Man stiffen like a ramrod and make funny sounds in his larynx.

"Wha-a-a-at?" he gasped. "No-o-o! Huh? Wha-a-a-at?" When he clamped the receiver back on its hook, he went limp like a bunch of beet tops.

"Has Carbuncle been killed?" gulped Bump Gillis. "Von Sch—"

"They found B-Bismarck," Garrity murmured, staring straight ahead like a ventriloquist's dummy. "Phineas was inside of him. He just spoke to me. Huh,

git Goomer, the mess monkey. Pinkham sent him a message."

"Ah, he's crocked," moaned Howell. "Plain nuts. But call Glad Tidin's, anyway. We gotta humor him."

Goomer was routed out of his bunk and brought in wrapped in a blanket.

"Y-yes, sir," he stammered. "What did I do, huh? If it's about that gun Lieutenant Pinkham took, I seen it there one day an' unloaded it, as you can't tell about them things. They go off when they're loaded."

"Phineas says to tell you you were right about what a prank will do, Goomer," Garrity intoned. "He said if he hadn't made a date for Brophy with a dame, he would not have had the chickens tied on his Spad an' he wouldn't have got mad an' put bees in Brophy's coat and von Schnoutz would've shot him full of holes if it weren't for the bees in Brophy's coat an' he wouldn't have fell right close to where Bismarck was at and he wouldn't have found the cans of ether and the Yanks wouldn't have taken three miles of Kraut—"

"Bump," said Howell solemnly, "git a medico quick as he's ravin'. I knew it. You can't blame him if he's gone nuts. Cripes!"