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*The English team finds the diamond rather wet, and Phineas sacrifices to France the first time at bat. But hang around, fans, the game isn't over yet! Von Bountz is the next one to fly over the plate—and he gets hammered into left field.*

**M**IT FIRE," Herr Huptmann von Bountz orated to his Albatross pilots in the Jerry banquet hall. "You must fight fire *mit*, ja. Tomorrow I bedt you me in life I gedt *das* Leutnant Pingham. *Der* tricks he vill haff, *hein?* Veil, I gift to him vun alzo, ho ho! I fly *mit* Staffel Zieben und not mit you, chentlemen, *Der* Yangkee Bursuit Sqvadron Nine ve meet maybe und vhen *das* Pingham—*nein?*"

"Ach, you iss smardt, Herr Hauptmann," a Junker

pilot complimented him. "If you shooldt idt down *das* Pingham, you vill be greater as Richthofen." He lifted a glass of schnapps. "*Hoch!*"

And so Phineas Pinkham was toasted by the Jerry pilots that night—and very nearly roasted the next day.

Dawn patrol. Roosters were just beginning to crow as Captain Howell led his famous flight up into the scraposphere. On a high sky shelf above St. Mihiel, a half dozen Boche Fokkers teetered. They dropped down, when Garrity's goslings thrust their beaks out

through a hole in the clouds, and warmed up their Spandaus on the Spads. Howell hauled his flight to more altitude.

Ordinarily, the black and white Fokkers of *Staffel 7* were a setup for "A" Flight, and even Lieutenant Phineas "Carbuncle" Pinkham could fly rings around their leader without bothering to dig down into his bag of tricks. Much to Captain Howell's surprise, however, one of the Fokkers swooped down, scattered three Spads like a hawk scatters chickens in a barnyard, and then jumped on a fourth in which sat the aforementioned Phineas Pinkham, late of Boonetown, Iowa.

"Somethin's wrong," the flyer moaned as the first Boche burst scraped the Spad's shortribs. "They never had a bum who could fly like that before. If they did, he has got a rotten publicity agent!" Phineas tried every method known to sky pilots for working his way off the sky ropes, but the Fokker pilot wanted nothing less than a kayo. Spandau jabs had both Spad and pilot dizzy. Luckily, help arrived in the shape of five Frog Nieuports.

"*Donnervetter!*" *Hauptmann* von Bountz yowled and flew to a neutral strata. "Vunce more *mit der* Spandaus *und* I would be *der* hero of *Unter den Lindens*. Ach!"

When Phineas got out of his Spad back on the drome, he still needed smelling salts.

"I get it now," he yipped after he managed to gulp his heart back into place. "Wise guy, huh? That was von Bountz! He ain't foolin' me no more. Gittin' tricky, huh? Well, it is just up my alley. I'll git that big beer mug. You wait!"

"It would've worked if the Frogs hadn't come in," Bump Gillis coughed up. "I never did like them snail eaters. I knew it was the Dutchman the minute he whip-stalled and rolled over on your neck. Nobody else does it as good. Did I laugh?"

"Bump," Phineas snorted, "I will show you somethin' awful comical if you've got time this P.M. It is a open grave which a little lamb fell into and broke four of its legs."

"Compared to that Heinie," Howell said, "those other vons you have knocked down, Carbuncle, were sissies. I would hate to see even you alone in the sky with him. And you're slippin' anyway, ha ha! When I think how the Limies got you with that marmalade last night. Oranges cut up with glue! Ha ha! You had lockjaw for five hours."

"That's somethin' else," Phineas growled. "I'll fix their wagons, too, the fatheaded cheerio bums! When you push a Pinkham just so far, he makes a lion with

the gout look as sunny as a rabbit in love. I am warnin' everybody in the *garre!*"

"I am sleepin' in the open tonight and maybe for the rest of the week," Bump Gillis announced. "And the mess sarge is goin' to have to taste every bit of grub before I eat it. I wish I'd kept my mug shut," he groaned.

Now, even as Phineas Pinkham walked to his hut, he was turning a pretty piece of skullduggery over in his mind. He was thinking of a Frog road that snaked along the Sur Marne not far from Vaubecourt. It was over this road that the Limeys must travel to get back to their drome when they went to Bar-Le-Duc.

"There's no moon tonight," Phineas mumbled to himself. "That road'll be dark an'—well—huh, I'll try it! It'll be like what happened to me today. They'll think it is somethin' and it won't be. Ta-tat-de-de-dum!"

As a rule a piece of rolling stock should never be taken off an Allied airdrome without consultation with the equipment officer. But Phineas knew that if he ever "consulted," he'd run into difficulties and might not get what he went after. So that night he commandeered a motorcycle and went to Bar-Le-Duc. After a hurried call on Babette, he went the rounds of the *estaminets* and finally located a trio of Limey pilots whom he knew only too well. There was still a taste of very poor grade glue in the Pinkham oral cavity.

"Well, if it ain't Leftenant Pinkham," a Camel pusher thrust out. "Jolly time we gyve yer lawst evenin', what of pip-pip?"

"Nuts!" responded Phineas and grinned. "Haw-w-w! That was a horse on me. I ain't the guy to git sore. It was a swell trick. Haw-w-w-w! Well—I can't stay long. Cherrio an' a pip-pip! Over the jolly river an' all that sort of thing, haw-w-w-w-w!"

AN HOUR later the errant pilot skulked in the shrubbery along the road between Bar-Le-Duc and Vaubecourt. His hands had become calloused by twenty minutes of hard labor. He had piled stones in the road and had cut down small trees and placed them where they would do the Limeys the least good. Rusty barbed-wire had been stretched across the road and fastened to two opposite trees.

"Boys, it's a great night," he grinned as he waited. "I could cut slices of mist if I had a knife, haw-w-w-w! They'll have to swing out into this old side road, an' it leads right to a big shell hole. The Limeys don't know it's filled with water like I do. Boys, I hope they can swim, haw-w-w-w-w!" Phineas' guffaw choked off.

Two sickly beams of light appeared a half mile down the road. He could hear Limey voices blending in an apology for festive song.

"I'll never stand it," the plotter chuckled. "It'll kill me! Haw-w-w-w-w!"

The lights came closer. The song broke off and a voice called out.

"Sarge, you're jolly well off the road. Swing the wheel, cawn't you?"

"Gor blimie," answered a cockney voice, "strike me bloomin' pink! I ayn't been drinkin' none an' I ayn't off the bloomin' road. Yuss —blarst it I am—"

"Boy!" Phineas laughed, doubling up. The Limey car swung into the side road. It had a downgrade and the roadbed was nothing more than soupy clay. Brakes squealed, and Phineas jumped out of his hiding place to see the Limey car slide down into the shell hole.

*Splash!*

"Haw-w-w-w-w-w!" he guffawed. "Haw-w-w-w-w!"

A lot of gurgling sound and noises like big fish flopping around in a shallow pool came to his alert ears. "I'll just go an' look in on 'em," the Yank trickster decided. "I'll say I was just passin' by—"

Two British officers were crawling out of the shell hole when the hero from Boonetown reached the edge. He placed his motorcycle so that the headlamp would illuminate the fruits of his scheme.

"Why, it's you!" Phineas exclaimed, lending a hand. "And it ain't Saturday night, neither. You Limeys pick the damndest places to go in swimmin'. Is everybody saved? Haw-w-w-w!"

It proved quite a task to get the four Britishers out of the hole. And then, for the second time that day, Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham met someone else who was not whom he had seemed. He had wondered when the third man was pulled into the clear why the other two rushed to his side and showered him with attentions such as would flatter a general.

"You seem to like him," Phineas observed. "How much did he borrow from you? Huh, I better help this other guy but or he'll jolly well drown, pip-pip if he won't! Haw, I never laughed—"

"No end sorry, old chap," an officer was saying to the favored one. "Cawn't understand it. Road wasn't blocked this awfternoon. Your Highness—"

"H-Huh?" gulped Phineas. "A King? How in hell—?"



"You're talkin' to the heir to the British throne, Pinkham," the Limey officer yelled. "Keep a civil tongue in your—"

"B-but," stammered Phineas, "he wasn't with you when I left you. There was only—"

"I've met you before," a voice addressed the culprit. "Lieutenant Pinkham, eh what? Fancy you being here right at this time." The man laughed and got to his feet. "Mustache fooled you, Pinkham. Wear it so I'll not be recognized. Incognito, and all that. Heard about the marmalade, old chap. Liked to have been there. It must have been no end comical."

"Uh—huh—" Phineas stuttered. "Why—er—huh—well—"

The worst was yet to come. An officer slipped away and took a look at the barricade Phineas had built. He came back and complimented him for his ingenuity. Immediately afterward he assured Phineas that he would get a hearing at Chaumont as soon as he could arrange it. It was at that moment that the young gentleman with the mustache discovered that he had lost something. It was an heirloom that surely could not be allowed to remain at the bottom of the shell hole. But there were ten feet of water in the hole and it was very dark water.

"You get your clothes off, Pinkham," one of the British officers cracked. "You're goin' to jolly well dive until you—"

"I ain't no electric eel," Phineas objected. "And anyways I have got a touch of lumbago. If it's a crown with jewels in there, it can stay. Huh, I am sorry, Your—er—"

"Quite all right, old chap," the amazingly friendly royal gentleman put in. "Must get it somehow, though. Can't just go and leave it there."

The Limey officers, drenched to the skin and plastered with mud, got into a huddle. One suddenly remembered that he had seen a Frog diver at work over in a canal near Nancy. He would have to be brought here as quickly as possible. Phineas transported a Limey to the nearest infantry unit phone. Two hours later an official U.S. boiler was toting a befuddled diver to the scene of the Pinkham baptismal font. A colonel came with him. Phineas felt a trifle scared while he watched the diver recover the royal trinket. It had caused the A.E.F. brass hats considerable time and trouble. As to what would happen in Limey circles, he dared not venture a guess.

"WELL, which way is it to Blois?" inquired Phineas when the Yankee brass hat finally walked over to him.

"It'll save time and expense if you'll just let me ride over on the motor bike. Yes, I know. I will git arrested when I git to the drome. It'll be a court martial. So save the wear and tear on your tonsils—"

"By gad, this is the worst outrage I ever saw perpetrated," the Colonel blurted out. "Dammit, it'll go as far as a firing squad if I have got the influence at Chaumont I think I have. By—"

As the brass hat spoke Phineas Pinkham did a strange thing. Under the circumstances it would appear that he had already done twice too much. The diver had left his helmet on the lip of the shell hole. Somehow the Pinkham boot nudged it into the water and somehow two tubes that had been attached to it had been cut.

"*Sacre bleu!*" shrieked the Frog diver. "*Nom du chien*. She stay there. All ze way I come *ici* an' dive in ze shell hole. Bah! Somewan he cut ze lines. Eet ees too much. Get me to Nancy, *vite!* I am no longair ze diver. I go back to ze stuffeeng bird an' ze—bah!"

The brass hats were not overly concerned about the helmet. They apologized for ten minutes to the smiling gentleman who stood watching Phineas Pinkham. There was a grin on the chap's face. He did not seem to be listening to the apologies. Suddenly he held out his hand.

"Amazing chap, Lieutenant. Never forget meeting you. Had something to do with the marmalade, eh, Lieutenant?"

Phineas grinned broadly. "Yeah. I warned everybody. When a Pinkham—"

The Colonel escorted Phineas to the Ninth Pursuit Squadron. He shoved the culprit into Major Garrity's sanctum and slammed the door.

"That moron of yours," he bawled, "has done it now! Almost drowned the heir to the British throne! Blocked up a road and wrecked a British car. Well, Garrity, say something!"

The Old Man couldn't.

"Oh, I confess," Phineas lashed out glibly. "He was disguised. How would I know he was with the Limey pilots? First it's von Bountz in another ship in the wrong staffel. Now it's a royal heir with a mustache he shouldn't have. Huh, Major, you are not Jesse Willard melted down, by any chance?"

Garrity found his voice then. He bellowed at Phineas for ten minutes without a pause to freshen up his bellows. Then he turned to the Colonel.

"Do me a favor," he said. "Leave this ape on this drome. Don't take him to no klink. When you get the

guns loaded and find a nice stone wall, he'll be here waiting but I want to work on him for a couple of days myself."

"He knows he can't take me to jail," Phineas snapped. "The royal heir told me he would get me a lawyer, or somethin' like that. Huh, it's him who was almost drowned and he is kickin' the least. He's got a sense of humor. Haw-w-w-w-w!"

When the Colonel had gone, Major Rufus Garrity went to work on Phineas Pinkham again. He insulted the erring pilot, grounded him, and put him under arrest.

"Is there something you forgot to do to me?" Phineas chirped at last. "I must know now, as—"

He was about to rudder around and dive for the door, when an idea exploded inside his cranium.

"Oh, put down the ink bottle," he howled. "I just thought of somethin'. Them Limeys can't do nothin' to me. Ha, ha, they had somebody with 'em who wasn't supposed to be with 'em, haw-w-w-w-w! They let him ride over a road that is liable to get bombed by Heinies most any time. The King in England will get a letter from me if the Limey red tabs press this case. An' I will tell the U.S. court that I blocked the road so the car would have to get off it, as I thought I saw Gothas comin'. I did not know there was an old shell hole there—well, what do you think, Major? Haw-w-w-w-w!"

Garrity closed his eyes, laid his head on his arm and groaned.

"You ought to take a couple of days off an' go fishin' or somethin'," Phineas suggested next. "You ain't lookin' so good, Major. I can hear your nerves snappin' from over here—" But Phineas didn't stop on his way out this time. The ink bottle smashed a panel in the door as he closed it behind him.

"Well," Howell shot at him as he sank into a chair, "gettin' court martialed is one way of getting out of fightin' von Bountz. They say there's a good chance of you gittin' shot. How much can we hope for that?"

"Life is chock-full of disappointments, don't fergit," the unquenchable spirited jokesmith grinned. "I think I'll open me a law office when the *guerre* is over. An' as for von Bountz, haw-w! I have divers ways of knockin' him off, maybe."

"Well, then," Bump Gillis chimed in, handing his hutmate a dog-eared copy of a Limey periodical. "This was just written for you. It says that in these dark hours the people who sit by the home fires are gettin' behind in their contributions to the Victory Drive,

and it seems von Bountz is to blame and has got their morale down as low as your mentality. There was a lot of propaganda dropped in England tellin' how many Limeys have been shot down by von Bountz, to say nothin' of Frogs and guys like us. The King has promised a Victoria Cross to the brave aviator who'll knock off the *Hauptmann*. It says there, too, that the enlistments in the Air Corps of England have dropped forty per cent. Something must be done."

"I would say that it would be safe for even a Scotchman to offer a fifty thousand dollar prize for von Bountz's scalp," Captain Howell horned in. "It'll take more than tricks, Carbuncle Pinkham. Once that Kraut gets on your tail for five seconds at a stretch, you are finee. Did you know that two out of every three guys he has shot down got shot through the head? Ugh!"

"Oh, I ain't scared easy," Phineas retorted breezily. "I got me an idea. Like most attic rooms, it ain't quite finished off yet, but I will 'bide my time."

THE NEXT DAY Phineas came out for the mid-day patrol. Major Garrity wanted to know where he thought he was going.

"Why out to fight the Krauts," replied the pilot blandly. "I always thought it was why we come to Barley Duck. If I don't go up, why I will just have to see that this letter gets to Windsor Castle. If them Limey brass hats think they can expose an heir to shell fire, well—" Phineas had barely finished issuing his ultimatum when a British staff car turned off the road leading past the drome, came around the corner of a hangar on two wheels, and shot toward the C.O. and his chief pain-in-the-neck. A portly red tab fell out, got up, and spoke in a hurry.

"Why—er—Major Garrity," he blurted out. "I came over to let you know we would just as soon forget about what happened lawst night an' all that. Ha ha! We're jolly well satisfied to drop everything what?"

"Y-You mean—" stuttered the Old Man, "that you're lettin' this spotted turtle here scare you out of—?"

"After all, Major," the red tab said, "we must hush things up, y'know. If Brigade finds out we were riskin' the assassination of—er—well—good morning, Lieutenant Pinkham! Rippin' day, eh what ol' chap?"

"Haw-w-w-w-w!" exulted Phineas. "It's no end, old pip-pip. Guess we'll tear into the Krauts awright. Well, cheerio an' all that prop wash."

"By gad, Garrity," the red tab stormed as the Spads

took off, "I'd jolly well like to wrap my cane around his blarsted neck."

"A" Flight ran into *Staffel 7* again that day. But von Bountz was absent from the scraposphere. Howell and his pilots convinced the leader of the Jerry *staffel* that he should participate in no more tricks against the Ninth Pursuit Squadron. The red and black Fokkers were cuffed around the sky for five torrid minutes before they tore back to their own side of the fence. The Jerry leader, on counting noses, found that he would have to buzz his *Herr Oberst* for three crates and a pair of replacements.

"Ach," the Jerry *Staffel* boss reported to his Squadron Commander, "maybe iss idt von Bountz he cooms *und* flies *mit* us vunce again yet, *nein*? Him *und* his smardt tricks, *ja! Himmel*, idt iss madt *der* Yangkees iss!"

Phineas Pinkham did not go back to the Ninth with Howell. After the scrap the pilot from Boonetown made an attempt to get to the rendezvous over Spada, but his Hisso had stopped a Boche slug with its larynx. Wheezing like an asthma patient, the Spad finally made a landing on the drome of a Frog outfit near Revigny.

"Bon afternoon," Phineas greeted the Frog pilots when he got out of the Spad. Will ya call up the Ninth Pursuit Squadron an' tell them I am detained? It is hell, as this is on the level an' the ol' termater will not believe me anyways. If you got a Spad surgeon handy, I would like him to probe the Hisso's thorax for a slug."

The Frogs invited Phineas over to their quarters. There he was introduced to a visiting Frenchman who also wore the uniform of the Frog Flying Corps.

"Lieutenant," a little French pilot said to the Yank, "thees ees Lieutenant Toussard. I geet ze wine. You mak' ze acquaintance, *oui*? Lieutenant Toussard, he like ze gum you chew. Ze American gun. *Avez vous un* leetle beet, *non*!"

"Haw-w-w-w-w!" chortled Phineas. "Sure. I was just goin' to bite me off a fresh stick myself. *Ici* ees ze gum, Lieutenant. I am what you call ze beeg sport, *oui*!"

"*Merci*," Toussard grinned and crammed the stick of gum into his mouth.

A trio of Frog pilots stared lazily up at the ceiling. Toussard chewed and swallowed, chewed and swallowed again. Suddenly his jaws stopped moving. His lower jaw fell away and the epidermis of his physiognomy assumed a very greenish hue.

"Well, well," observed Phineas, heading for the

door, "I must see the operation on my Spad. Adoo—huh—why what's the idea of blockin' up—!"

One of the three Frogs standing in the doorway laughed uproariously. "Before you go, *M'sieu*, Toussard he ees not thank you for ze gum, wow."

"Lieutenant Pinkham," a voice called.

Phineas turned to see Toussard wiping beads of sweat from his face. "You play ze trick, *oui*? Ha ha! You see thees—*non*?" He showed Phineas his left hand balled into a fist. But he hit with the right.

"Why—er—was it Gothas?" inquired the Yank when he finally sat up. "I didn't even hear 'em comin'. Boy, why—er—oh I remember. You slugged me, Toussard. Well, I'll show ya—"

"Ze name," a Frog pilot said behind Phineas, "is Georges Carpentier. Ha, he stop by to see us. When you come in, we say you weel play ze trick so—you hear of Georges Carpentier, *non*?"

"Oh you bums!" yipped the taster of his own pink pills, "Will I git hunk? I am gittin' sick of meetin' guys who ain't who they ought to be. Why—huh, well as long as it was you who hit me—help me up, George."

"So!" Carpentier shot at the Frogs, "You know he would geeve to me zis awful stuff to chew, *non*?" He lunged forward. There followed twin sounds like distant muffled thuds of bursting shells. A pair of Frog pilots hit the floor at precisely the same time.

"Haw-w-w-w-w!" gurgled Phineas, holding his sides. "What a punch! That'll show them wise—"

Several minutes later Phineas went out with Georges Carpentier, heavyweight boxing champ of Europe. And when the Yank took off, he carried a souvenir with him—an over-sized boxing glove such as is used in training camps in cauliflower alley.

"Maybe my idea will git finished now," he chuckled, flying home. "Now all I got to do is steal me an auto tire. I must lift up the morale of the Limey firesides."

THE OLD MAN finally became convinced that, for once, Phineas Pinkham had told the truth.

"Where did you get that boxin' glove?" Garrity eyed the Pinkham acquisition suspiciously. "What've you got it for?"

"Oh, I been wantin' to get one for a long time," grinned the embryo prize fighter. "It's to put on my left hand when I'm flyin' as I bite my finger nails somethin' awful. If that is all, Major, I would like to leave the room. I have to write a letter."

"I hate to see you go," the Old Man blazed. "You have no idea how I look forward to these chats with

you, Pinkham! I wish von Bountz would meet you alone some night in a dark sky alley. Git out!”

At mess Phineas read his comrades a letter, product of his own pen.

“Dear *Hauptmann*,” he began, “It is not big enough for both of us, this sky ain’t. I have decided to get rid of you for the Allies. You can tell the High Command to stop the printing presses, as after Thursday evening propaganda about you will be about as useful to the Kaiser as his wooden horse and Napoleon hat. I will meet you over Blercourt at five-thirty P.M. sharp. Hoping that your wife has run away with a profiteer, that your house has burned down, and that you have got a double attack of itchy hives, I am very disrespectfully yours.”

“That’ll scare him,” Howell said with sarcasm. “I bet he doesn’t show up.”

Bump Gillis shook his head as he looked at his hutmate.

“I would drop it all right, but I wouldn’t sign it,” he advised the Boonetown miracle man. “After all it is no concern of mine if the Limeys won’t enlist. Huh, well go ahead an’ commit suicide. See if I care.”

The Old Man came in then with a face as long as an unpaid tax bill.

“Just got a message from the S.E.5 outfit over on the Sur Marne,” he said, pushing his plate back. “It took my appetite away. Von Bountz knocked off Captain McCullen, the Canuck ace, an hour ago. The Canuck landed on the Boche side just as he came to. Got his scalp creased by a slug. That’ll about wash up the Limey morale.”

“McCullen?” Phineas gulped. “Huh, maybe there was some mistake.”

“The best pilot on this side of the fence,” Howell exploded belligerently. “Well, I am glad my name won’t be signed to that letter.”

“What letter?” hollered Garrity, apoplectic of face.

“It’s a challenge,” Phineas yapped. “He can’t scare me, that sausage swallower. I will fight him Thursday night at five-thirty.”

“Put it in writing,” the Old Man demanded.

“G.H.Q. asked me to name somebody to go out and lick him. But I’ve got a conscience. I wouldn’t even name you, Pinkham. But now—” He rubbed his hands together briskly. “I will see that a posthumous medal gets struck off right away.”

“It is in writin,” replied Phineas, ignoring the remainder of the insult. “A Pinkham never reneges. I will git hunk! With everybody runnin’ around lookin’

like what they ain’t, I’ll—” Abruptly the pilot from the metropolis of Boonetown stiffened in his chair. “Haw-w-w-w-w!” he burst out, then leaped up and dashed out.

“What’s eatin’ him?” Bump Gillis wanted to know.

“Squirrels,” grinned Howell and attacked his victuals.

Strange things happened in the vicinity of Bar-Le-Duc that night. Major Rufus Garrity found it necessary to go into the town to attend to a little shopping. A non-com was at the wheel. Two miles from the drome a tire blew out. The non-com got out, jacked up the boiler and dragged a spare off the rack on the back of the car. He found that the inner tube was missing from it. When he dragged another tire off, he found the same thing wrong with it.

“Well,” exploded the Old Man, “shall I telephone a garage or would you just as soon get your hands dirty? Hurry up, you—”

“Somebody’s swiped all the inner tubes,” the non-com explained. “Cripes, they was in these tires las’ night. It ain’t no use. If you want to ride on the rims—?”

“It’s better than walkin’,” barked the Major. “It’s only another mile or two. Get in an’ drive.”

The C.O. wished that he had walked. When he got out of the disabled car in Bar-Le-Duc, his bridgework had been shaken loose. He had bitten his tongue in three places and he knew he wouldn’t sit down comfortably for a week.

“I’ll find the buzzard who stole them tires!” he glowered at the non-com. “And I’ll skin him from the hips up. You go find a tire—even if you have to take it off Pershin’s car!” He looked up at the sky. A Spad was roaring over the roof tops.

“That’s Pinkham,” he yelled. “That fresh mug. Just when my back is turned, he grabs a ship and goes joyriding. Now I’ll bust him whether he writes to the King of England or not! What do I care for the damn’ Limeys? They—er—good evenin’, Colonel! Ha ha, how’s everything on the British front? Nice to see you again an’ lookin’ so well. Er—a—good evening. Ha—”

“Sounds like he’s blotto,” the Colonel said to his companion. “Blarst it, I cawn’t remember now what he said about the King. If I was bloody well certain, I’d—oh, come along, Fitzpepper.”

PHINEAS PINKHAM kept on going until he found a place to set the Spad down near Vaubecourt. Then he walked a mile over to the shell hole where he had soused the Limeys.

"I'm glad it ain't so cool tonight," he grinned and took off all his clothes. He slid into the shell hole and began to grope around. For almost two minutes nothing but bubbles could be seen on the surface of the muddy water. Then Phineas' head bobbed up. A frog slid off it as he waded his way out of the water hole.

"This thing weighs a ton," the kidder tossed out with a pint of water, "but it ought to come in handy." He lugged it to the Spad and fastened it to a strut. Then he got in the battle bus and flew back home. He beat Old Man Garrity in by ten minutes and was sitting in the Operations Office when the Major barged in.

"It saves time," he pointed out. "I knew you'd chase an orderly after me so—" He raised his eyebrows.

The C.O. threw the purchases he had made in town into a corner and shook a fist in Lieutenant Pinkham's face.

"Who said you could go out? Who gave you orders—?"

"I got a big fight on, ain't I?" argued Phineas. "I've got to train, ain't I? Do you think Georges Carpentier fights without trainin'?"

"We'll let that pass," Garrity bellowed. "Do you know anythin' about inner tubes in that squadron car? Did you lift them, you lop-eared—?"

"Always blamin' me," groaned the patsy. "It's a good thing you were here last week when the Gotha egg bit a hole in the hangar or else you would have had an autopsy performed on me to git the canvas back. I'm gittin' tired of bein' blamed for everythin'. Huh, inner tubes! Now what would I be doin' with inner tubes?"

The Old Man could not answer that one. He just dropped the whole thing and walked out of the Operations Office, out of the old farmhouse, and down the road for two miles where he sat on a rock and concentrated on untangling his nerves. Meanwhile, Phineas Pinkham went to a hangar where Flight Sergeant Casey and three groundmen were looking at something alien to the drome.

"Lootenant," inquired Casey, "are ya goin' to take a trip over the North Sea or what? That diver's helmet—of all the nutty—"

"Have a care how you speak to a superior," Phineas admonished him severely. "All of you kiwis trot out an' leave Casey to me."

"I was afraid of that," Casey groaned and leaned against a work bench.

"Now here is a big strip of inner tubin', Casey,"

began the jokesmith. "You git down under the lower wing of the Spai and fasten each end of it somehow on each edge of the wing close to the tip. I don't care how you do it so long as it is done securely. It'll make a swell slingshot. I'll use somethin' besides a stone, though. I'll be back in an hour to pass on the job. Adoo until then."

"I know why I been seein' so many chipmunks lately," Casey spat when Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham had ankled away. "That crackpot!"

In his hut, Phineas ignored Bump Gillis and dug into his trunk. He brought up a little sack of plaster of paris. He set it down on the floor beside him. Then he took the big boxing glove from a hook on the wall, picked up the plaster of paris, and walked out of the hut.

"You wouldn't understand, Bump," he called back through the doorway. "So I didn't discuss it with you. Don't wait up as I have no idea how late I shall arrive. Adoo."

"Cuckoo—cuckoo!" Bump singsonged and flapped his arms. "Look out for butterfly nets, you nitwit!"

An hour after midnight Phineas congratulated Sergeant Casey for the efficient job he had done with the strip of inner tubing. He handed him six cigars.

"They ain't loaded, either," he grinned at the groundman. "What would I do without you, Casey?"

"I just wish you would try an' find out sometime," Casey snapped. "I'm goin' to bed now. If the Old Man ever sees that inner tubing!"

"It is all for the Limey morale," Phineas explained blandly. "Any ends justify the mean—I should say the means should—sure, that is what I mean."

Before he went to his bunk, Phineas went out back of the row of Nissan huts to examine something he had soaking in a pail. "Now if the sun shines strong tomorrow," he mumbled, "I should be in the pink."

The next day, Bump Gillis dropped Phineas's note down over a Jerry drome and almost got knocked off by two Fokkers and a battery of archies on the way dromeward. Word trickled along the front that the amazing Phineas Pinkham had challenged von Bountz to deadly combat in the scraposphere. Brass hats came in at intervals during the day to slap the Pinkham scion on the back. Limey red tabs brought him good cheer in bottles and told him how brave he was. One British Colonel handed the hero of the moment a letter which read, "Good luck, old chap. Wales."

The Wing Commander deplored the fact that

conditions warranted the toleration of personal sky fights, but since it was more than imperative that von Bountz be knocked off, Lieutenant Pinkham had their consent and good wishes. Generals got together and decided to risk their valuable torsos in an attempt to get close enough to the palpitating lines to watch the impending epic of the air lanes. And on the German side, von Bountz sipped Schnapps and strained at his leash.

"*Der Tag*," he kept saying over and over. "*Ach*, I will be *der* toazt of Potsdam!" *Herr Obersts* warned him and cited other occasions when great Heinie aces had gone out to meet Das Pingham.

"*Ja?*" von Bountz bristled. "Budt I am nodt to be fooled efen vunce. *Mein Fader* he did nodt raise foolish *kinder*, *nein*. You tell *der* Kaiser, *ja*. Ho ho!"

With the zero hour drawing near, both sides thumbed down on unnecessary patrols. Only observation crates and bombers spotted the skies as dusk drew near on the fateful day.

"I'm glad *my* name wasn't signed to that letter," spoke Captain Howell in the frog farmhouse as the great Pink-ham sat waiting for the minutes to tick away. "Look at that crackpot. He's even enjoying that beef sandwich. I wonder what would scare him?"

"I can't stand eels," Phineas said. "I faint when I see one. Well, I think I'll git ready."

"You've got an hour yet," Major Garrity snapped.

"Oh, but it'll take that long," said the Boonetown patriot.

The Old Man brushed a hand over his eyes. Bump Gillis looked as solemn as the door of a morgue. Captain Howell chopped up a magazine with a pair of scissors.

"He ain't so bad at times," Pilot Wilson said. "Kind of fun-loving an'—"

Major Garrity suddenly jerked loose from his chair and crossed the room. He picked up something and began to swear. "My electric fan! Who in hell tore it apart? The prop is gone. By eripes, Pink—"

"I saw him with it," said Howell. "He said he'd give it to you."

"Oh-h-h, that flop-eared baboon!"

AT EXACTLY FIVE-FIFTEEN that afternoon the Old Man and his pilots walked out onto the field to see the strangest sight, they had ever met up with since Phineas' arrival at the drome. He was standing up in the pit of his Spad and three ack emmas were lowering something down on his head.

"A diver's helmet," Garrity hooted. "That crazy loot! This is the worst I ever—well, I'll tell that damn' fool he can't—"

"He couldn't hear you," Bump Gillis contributed. "So what's the use? Maybe if you spoke through the air hose that's stickin' up, he might get what you say."

"He'll have to fly sittin' forward all the time," Howell groaned. "Well, he won't die of a fractured skull—that's one thing."

"Let 'im go," Garrity clipped. "To hell with it! I've seen enough now to know he ain't right. He'd better get shot than go through life cuttin' out paper hats."

Pilots cheered anyway, as Phineas gunned his Spad across the field. Garrity walked back to the farmhouse, went upstairs, and locked himself in. He got a bottle out of a closet and sat down on the bed.

"Here's to you, you big-eared pecan," he toasted, pouring himself the biggest snort of his life.

Phineas Pinkham and *Hauptmann* von Bountz met over Blercourt at exactly five-thirty in the P. M. Flying squadrons on the ground were hushed. Infantry officers laid bets. Doughs looked up at the two ships and forgot to duck when shells broke up.

Phineas felt topheavy as he slipped away from von Bountz's first burst. He straightened out quick lest the diver's helmet drag him clear of the pit.

"It's hot in this thing, too," he muttered. "I bet somebody stuffed up the air hoses. Ow-w-w-w!" The Pinkham brain whirled. Its owner heard a terrific ringing in his ears. It felt as if he were in a wash boiler and somebody had begun smacking it with a tack hammer.

"It worked!" he yowled. "He got on my tail an' smacked me in the dome with them slugs. Well, if I don't smother, I might get that Heinie yet."

*Hauptmann* von Bountz indulged in some rare Kraut blasphemies as he zoomed to get a little more altitude.

"*Der* tricks vunce again, *hein?*" he roared. "*Der* difink helmet he vears. *Ach*, sooch a *schwein!* Veil, I gedt you next time, *ja*. I gedt him in *der* place vhere idt iss *der* glass, ho ho! I show *der* trickster. On drei sides he has glass vinders, *nein?*" He dropped down, then, Mercedes wide open, Spandaus ready to roar when he got the Spad pit dead in his ringsights. His prop boss pointed at Phineas' left wing, he came roaring in.

"Vun second *und*—*kaput!*" yelled von Bountz.

Down on the ground, doughs looked at each other. One patted a trench shovel.

"Exit, Lieutenant Pinkham," an officer said. "He's

barreled an' is scared stiff. He ain't doin' a thing. I can't look."

Up in the seemingly-doomed Spad, Phineas set his big buck teeth and yanked a string. First, he had tipped his bus a bit to the right. The boxing glove loaded with plaster of paris was sent on its way by the slingshot made of inner tubing.

*Kerwha—a-a-a-ang!*

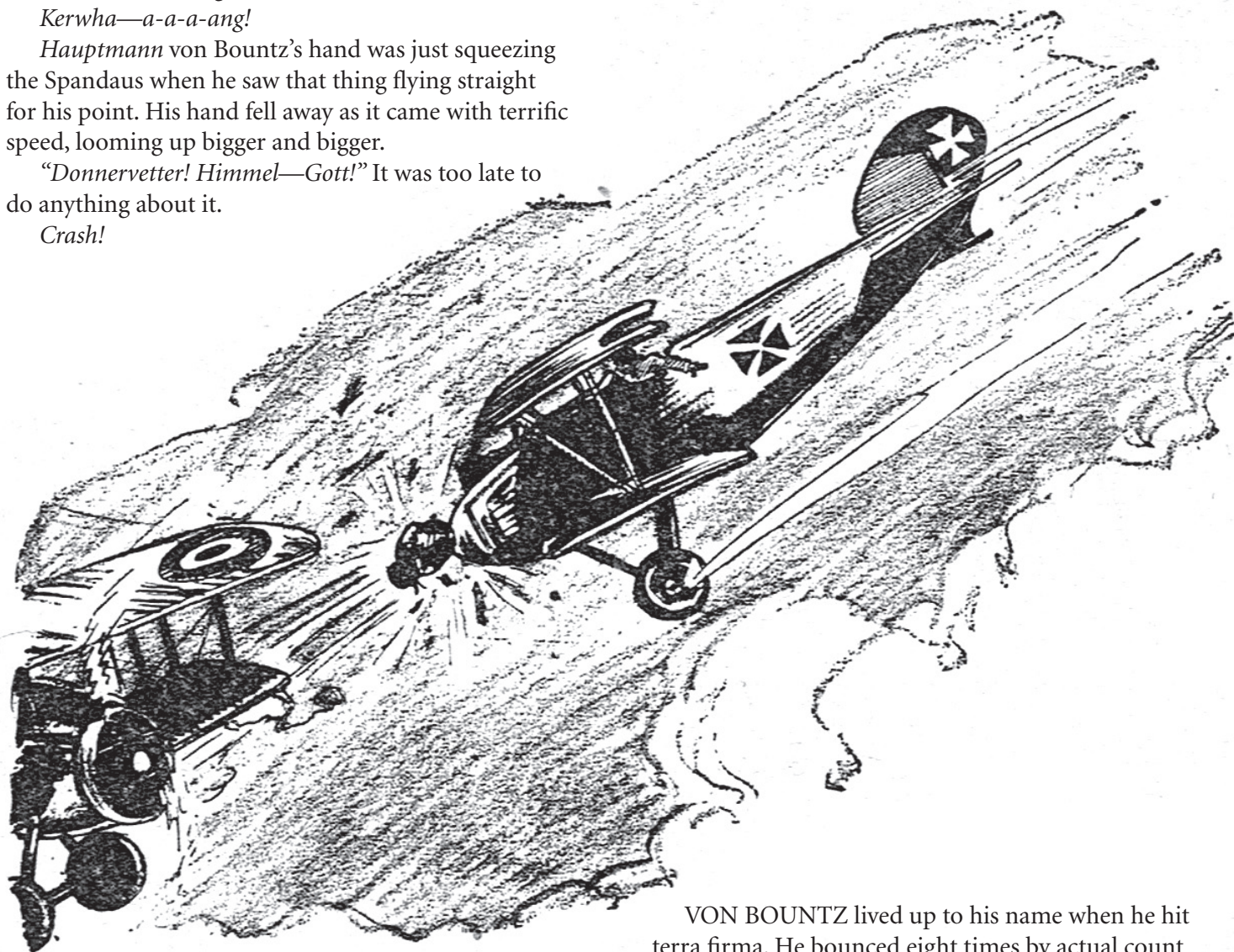
*Hauptmann* von Bountz's hand was just squeezing the Spandaus when he saw that thing flying straight for his point. His hand fell away as it came with terrific speed, looming up bigger and bigger.

*"Donnervetter! Himmel—Gott!"* It was too late to do anything about it.

*Crash!*

around for von Bountz. He saw the Heinie a thousand feet down fighting it out with his Fokker.

"It'll take some coaxin'," the Boonetown marvel yelled as he dived down. "With its brains half knocked out. I bet Georges couldn't have tossed that glove any harder. Haw-w-w-w!"



"Haw-w-w-w!" Phineas yipped. "Right on the schnozzle. Well where's the towel? Why don't they toss it in?" He banked around to see "von Schnoutz" headed for the linoleum without a prop. Phineas wanted to hear that Mercedes screech as it tried to shake itself loose from the supports that held it. He yanked up his nose, arched over, and flew upside down. The diving helmet slipped from his shoulders and went spinning down.

"Boys, that is a load off my shoulders," Phineas said as he righted the Spad. "My lungs are flatter than lily pads, phew-w-w!" He gulped in gobs of air and looked

VON BOUNTZ lived up to his name when he hit terra firma. He bounced eight times by actual count and then turned a cartwheel over a Yankee dugout.

"He don't look so good," Phineas said later when he peered at the Kraut ace. "Are ya sure you got all of him out of the wreck? Somethin' seems missin'. Haw-w-w-w, it's his front teeth! I must find them and make a necklace for Babette. Well, call up the Limey brigade headquarters and tell them not to worry about morale any more."

Von Bountz groaned and opened his eyes. "*Ach, Gretchen, idt iss always you play so rough yedt. You pooshed too hardt und look vhat happens. Right from der roof of der house I fall. Himmel—idt iss der barrel*

*mit* beer you t'row, *ja*. I see idt coom *und*—*Gott! Mein* headt idt splidts *mit* hums. *Ach!*”

“It ain’t no use to talk sense to him for two days,” Phineas said. “His marbles are scattered all over the sector, bums. Somebody get an auto or somethin’ for me to ride back to my Spad in! That one over there’ll suit me.”

“Oh it will, will it?” an infantry officer said. “It’s only a general’s. We will just dump him out an’—”

The designated car rolled up as Phineas was thinking of a comeback. The general got out and grabbed Phineas by the hand.

“Wonderful, Lieutenant! Marvelous! I’ll drive you to your squadron. Someone else can come and get the Spad. You’ve had enough of it for one day, I’ll wager. Out of the way, men—let the Lieutenant pass.”

“Haw-w-w-w-w!” grinned the hero. “Yeah, please step aside as I bruise easy.”

“It’s a nutty *guerre*,” sighed a dough as the general’s car rolled away.

The Ninth Pursuit Squadron had received the good word in advance of Phineas’ arrival back at the field. All the Spads were lined by way of a salute.

“Why Major,” Phineas tossed out, “was you thinkin’ of comin’ to save me? Why—I can’t er—I just am overcome—words fail me. It is touchin’ me to the quick. Why—”

Major Rufus Garrity wished that the general had kept out of it. He felt like tearing the rain gutter off the house and wrapping it around the fresh buzzard’s neck, hero or no hero.

“Why, come in, general,” Garrity smiled, pulling himself together, “we must hear all about it. Sit down, Pinkham. Have a drink?”

“Huh, somethin’s wrong,” Phineas said to the general. “They never treated me like this—I get it! It’s the company I keep. Well there is not much to tell. If

all those guys I met up with had been what they was s’posed to be, I wouldn’t have thought all this up. If the Limeys had not had an heir to the throne with them, they would not have hired a diver. An’ I wouldn’t have thought of such a thing as that helmet to stop from gittin’ shot from behind. Then when Georges Carpentier socked me, I says to myself, what wouldn’t I give to hit von Bountz like that! So I figgered a way of doin’ it. It was the inner tubin’—” He ducked.

“Oh it was, was it?” Garrity howled.

“Quiet, Major!”

“Sorry, General,” the Old Man grated. “Gr-r-r-r-r!”

“That inner tubin’ stretched plenty,” Phineas grinned. “It give that loaded glove an awful punch. I held it in place by a little hook and then kicked it loose by pullin’ a string. Was that Heinie surprised, oh boys! They will fool with me, huh?”

“Amazing,” the General exclaimed. “By jove, Pinkham!”

“Phineas,” Garrity wanted to know, “there’s one more thing. That electric fan of mine. Why did you bust it up, you cock-eyed—er—hero?”

“You would not shoot a torpedo without a little propeller on its tail assembly, now would you? Well, I says, the boxing glove will go straighter if I fix one so I took it out of the fan an’—oh, I will pay for it. I—”

“Fancy,” the General said, “Major, some day I will not be surprised to learn that this flyer of yours is credited with the first principles of the aerial torpedo. My, we might have made history today.” “The Pinkhams have made a lot in the past,” Phineas said. “My grandfather—why look! The C.O. has fell asleep!”

“Oh no,” Bump Gillis yipped, “not with his eyes open. He’s in a kind of coma. Git a doctor!”

“Yeah?” came Garrity’s weak voice. “Get two doctors. Even I can only stand so much. Aw-w-w-w-w cripes!”