



T.N.T. PARTY

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Now that the great Mata Hari had been filed away via a shooting squad, the guerre would be a lot easier for the Allies. Phineas knew that. But the Boonetown Bamboozler didn't know that his John Henry was on the flight schedule for a high altitude solo trip—one without his Spad.

a
**PHINEAS
PINKHAM**
howl

ONE BLITHE DAY in June during the big brawl in the land of snails and filet mignons, a trio of Major Rufus Garrity's Spad mahouts flew up into the blue to take a gander at the Hun backyard. The trio consisted of Captain Howell, Lieut. Bump Gillis, and Bump's hutmate, the irrepressible Phineas Pinkham, also a lieutenant and the pride of Boonetown, Iowa. Over Mont Sec they flushed out a lone Halberstadt-flying Teuton and wasted but one Vickers burst to convince the towhead from across the Rhine that it was very silly to commit suicide for the Kaiser. The pilot of the Halb signalled an unmistakable "Kamerad" and then he proceeded to get down fast. He landed his plane on the flats near a Yankee billet, climbed out of

the pit, and reached for a pipe that was half the size of a good-sized saxophone. Captain Howell waved Phineas and Bump toward home, then slid down to terra firma to arrange for the Von's transportation to the Ninth Pursuit Squadron.

An hour later, the Jerry sat in the Frog farmhouse that was headquarters for the Ninth Pursuit Squadron.

He was nursing a glass of cognac. And compared to this Kraut, any insurance salesman would be regarded as a deaf mute. *Herr Leutnant* Fritz von Shlusch was in a garrulous mood and no mistake! Even Phineas Pinkham had to wait his turn to exercise his larynx.

"*Ach, das ist sehr gut!*" the Jerry beamed. "*Nein der var idt ist kaput for me, ja. Der insulds no more I take idt from der gross bag mit vind, von Gluten. Now I vait*

und soon der var idt ist ofer und I go back by Frankfurt to mein butcher chop vunce. Bah, der Kaiser, he ist kaput und already yet he moofs der crown chewels also himzelve zoom place. Mata Hari she ist shodt drei veek ago und—

Major Garrity jumped out of his chair as if he had just sat down hard on a horned toad.

“Say that again, Jerry!” he howled. “That about Mata Hari. She—what did you say? Shot? Say something, you—!” The Heinie shrugged and spread his hands out, palms upward.

“*Ach*, did I say so, *hein*? I talk idt sooch a much, *ja*. Veil vhat it shouldt matter? Sick I am of *der* whole var. Maybe I von’t go back by Frankfurt. *Der* coosin *ich haben* by Milwaukee *und—*”

“Who cares about your relatives?” the Old Man howled. “What about Mata—!”

“*Ja*, she gedts idt in luff *mit der officier* by *Der* Italian Army *und der shpy mit der luff bug she ist nein gut*. Anodder shpy he tells *der High Kommandt und* Mata Hari she cooms back by *Wilhelmstrasse und she ist geshot vunce.*”

“Once is enough,” Phineas cut in at last. “Haw-w-w! That’s always the way. I wanted to meet that dame an’ match wits with her.”

“Ha! ha!” Bump Gillis snorted. “That is like me matchin’ pennies with Rockefeller. You’re a scream sometimes, Carbuncle!”

Major Garrity hot-footed it to the telephone in his sanctum. What a morsel for Chaumont! In ten minutes the news was sweeping along the Allied front all the way to the Channel. The Old Man commandeered another bottle of Frog giggle water from a pilot and gave it to the Jerry.

“I’ll see that you get a soft job at the prison camp,” he assured the Von. “I’ll give you a letter to the Chamber of Commerce back in my home town. The butcher that’s there now is a dead beat.”

Phineas Pinkham ran all the way to his hut and back again. He handed *Leutnant* Shlusch a box of milk chocolate. Garrity was too excited to take it away from him. The Jerry gobbled the sweet with all the zest of a tabby cat in a grain bin filled with catnip.

“*Herr Leutnant* Pingham *du bist, hein?*” the Teuton grinned at Phineas. “Ha! ha! *der* funny loogk you haff, *ja*. You giff it *der* hay fever by *der Hauptmann* von Gluten, *ja? Das ist* komical, ho! ho! *Der* dummer esel sneezes *mit* cryink, ha! ha! ha! Budt now *der* hay fever *ist* gefinished *und* von Gluten t’inks he gets you, *ja. Nie mehr* tricks *der Hauptman* you fool *mit, mein freund!*”

He calls it by you *der* shpotted goat. *Der dumkopf* wrong *ist—der* Pingham ears *ist* too mooch vide, ha! ha!”

“You’re a fresh yap, ain’t you?” Phineas sniffed. “Well, you’ll learn some day—you—boys, look at him! He’s as white as a nursemaid’s apron, haw-w-w-w-w!”

Verily the Teuton looked quite unhealthy at the moment. He pawed at his clammy brow and swallowed hard.

“*Ach*, sooch a sickness by *der* stomach I haff,” he gulped. “Maybe idt *ist* I eat *der* sweets too mooch, *ja!*”

“Aw, it’s only soap they’re filled with,” Phineas soothed him. “I would keep a civil tongue in my dome from now on if I were you, Fritz, old boy.”

“Torturing prisoners, huh?” Garrity yowled. “Pinkham, I can bust you for that. I’ve a good mind to make an issue of it. I’ll teach you, you—”

“Yeah? I only give the bum soap,” Phineas protested. “Any U.S. Board of Health would’ve done the very same thing if they caught a Heinie. I know what! You’re trying to frame me so I can’t go into Barley Duck tonight and see the Frog vaudeville entertainer. Maybe you want to grab her yourself. But I’ve got a date with her through a Frog officer I got somethin’ on. Haw-w-w-w-w, it’s no use tryin’ to be a heartbreaker with me around. I don’t know what makes dames fight over me. Well, adoo. I must brush up for the evening.” *Leutnant* Fritz von Shlusch, despite the fireworks taking place in his gastronomic regions, essayed a swift grin as he saw Phineas tramp out. There was something about the grin that was not according to Hoyle or anybody else. Bump Gillis and the other pilots thought nothing of it. And the Old Man was too busy rummaging in the fireplace for a stick of wood big enough to fracture the Pinkham cranium to pay any attention to his prisoner.

ON THE other side of the lines, in a thatched cottage in Alsace, a half dozen Teuton brass hats were hiving up for the night. They all seemed highly pleased about something and sipped their schnapps with great gusto.

“*Ach, Herr Gratz,*” one grunted after a healthy pull at a glass of grog, “too bad vunce about *der* Mata Hari, *hein?*”

“It giffs *der* tears by *mein* eyes,” another bull-necked Kraut said thickly. “She vas so pretty, *ja*. Too pretty to get shodt. *Ach!*”

“Budt she vas nodt so pretty vhen I saw her, *nein,*” a third Kaiser backfield man tossed out. “Stop, gentlemen, idt breaks *mein* heart.”

Considering the reputation the famous German spy had borne, there was a woeful lack of sentiment in the Alsatian cottage. Mata Hari had done more to keep the Kaiser's throne under his seat than any three of his generals. But Teuton hearts are as cold as Eskimo igloos and there was no place in the Junker machine for a woman who became all-palpitation when she met a Neopolitan knight with a tenor voice.

"She will be hard to replace," a Kraut brass hat muttered.

"Already yedt Wilhelmstrasse has arranged it," came a sleepy response from a corner. "There will always be a Mata Hari no matter how many ve shoodt, ha! ha!"

"But vunce idt iss *Leutnant* Pingham who gets it shodt, no more Pinghams vill *der* Allies haff, *ja!*"

"You are smardt, *Herr* Heinbockle," a Kraut laughed into his schnapps crock.

Author's Note: To follow this story you have to be in three or four places at the same time. Let us, therefore, hie to the drome of Hauptmann von Gluten, not more than five miles away from the Heinie brass hats' lair. The boss of the Halb squadron is stamping up and down the floor of his quarters, snorting like a spick bull that resents the teasing of a matador:

"Cheat me out uff tventdy t'ousandt marks, *hein?*" bellowed von Gluten at the pilots who sat about marvelling at the Staffel leader's endurance. "But I vill show eferbody, efen *der* Kaiser *und* his whole family. Bah—stupid idt *ist, nein?* Orders I gedt from *der* High Kommand that I do not meet idt *der* oopstartd all by meinzelf. Too many he shoots down—*ach Himmel!* Afraidt are they I vill gedt *der* shodts, *hein?* Wilhemstrasse they vill pour *der* salt on his tail assembly, hah! *Das ist gut, hein?* But I show *der* *dumkopfs*—after I shoodt *das* Pingham I fly ofer Potsdam *und* laugh down—so!"

Not one of the flying Huns seemed to agree with him. *Hauptmann* von Gluten got madder by the minute. He broke six beer steins and three chairs before he stamped out of the barracks.

Now if Phineas Pinkham could have listened outside the windows of those Kraut haunts, he might not have been in such an expansive mood as he pedalled his bicycle toward Bar-Le-Duc on that June evening. But there was the scent of wild rose in the Pinkham nostrils and a night bird was rendering a lilting aria from a wooded copse. The Boonetown warrior had an affair of the heart in the offing and even a small bunch of scraggy doughs whom he met at a crossroad seemed like as many cupids to his

optics. For Mademoiselle Fifi Colet would be waiting in the cafe of the Pink Vache. Fifi, before the war, had been the toast of many a French music hall. The little comedienne now was back from the south of France where she had gone with refugees to cheer the *poilus* in the trenches. A week before she had been introduced to Lieut. Phineas Pinkham and for an unexplainable reason had desired to meet him again. Perhaps it was because Mam'selle Fifi wanted to inquire about the small green snake she had found in her pocket after Phineas had left her. Be that as it may, they were about to meet.

Phineas rolled into Bar-Le-Duc, leaned his bicycle against the wall of the cafe, and was about to enter when an irate feminine voice shocked him out of his stride. The voice emanated from Babette, his late light of love.

"*Vous chien,*" she screeched, "*vous avez* give to me what you call ze run-all-'round, *n'est ce pas?* Maybe you go to see ze red-headed ma'mselle, *oui?* Peeg! *Voche!* *Vous avez* mak' to me ze promise that you walk *ce soir avec moi, non?*"

"Why—er—haw-w-w-w!" Phineas stammered. "*Bon soir, Babette!* Why—er—you don't tell me it was tonight we was to—haw—boys, I am gettin' awful absentminded. Well, eet ees everybody makes mistakes. Some other time, huh? Adoo—"

Phineas strode into the *estaminet*, heart doing loops, chandelles, and Immelmans. He spotted Fifi just as a big rock sailed by his head. It smacked a Frog waiter on a bald spot, bounced high, and came down squarely on the scalp of a major who was dozing in a corner. The Frog bartender waved his arms and tore at his hair as *gendarmes* tore another rock from Babette's fist and hustled her out off into the night.

"Always ees trouble when you are here!" yelled the barkeep at Phineas. "Even eef notheeng you do—*sacre bleu!*"

"Bong swar," Phineas gurgled as he stopped at Fifi's table. "That was only a dame who is jealous, haw-w-w! *Avez* voose been waiting *pour moi* long?"

Fifi Colet smiled ingratiatingly and held out a bejeweled hand. With the exception of an unusually large proboscis, Fifi's face was easy to look at. She was garbed in a green dress that made her red hair stand out like a bonfire.

"Ah, thees bad boy, you are ze heartbreaker, *non?*" she giggled. "Sit down an' have ze coneyac wiz me, *non?*"

"*Oui, oui,*" Phineas yipped. "Boys, next to voose,



ten million francs would look like a plugged cent in a beggar's cup, haw-w-w! Garcong, veet veet. Champagne and don't spare the horses."

Fifi giggled some more and snuggled up to Phineas. "You are so varee funnee. Maybe when she ees ovar, ze war, we go on ze stage togethairs, *non*?"

"Aw, you'll forget all about me," Phineas grinned, his heart pounding blood into his ears until they looked like two big red mittens. "You're just dilly dallyin' with me, haw-w-w-w!"

"Fifi she ees not ze fickle *femme, non*," the little French actress pouted. "She ees not ze coquette. Not every *soldat* Fifi makes ze eyes at. Look, I weel show to you."

While Phineas sipped at his bubbling beverage Fifi extracted a large compact from her handbag. She handed it to the Boonetown pilot.

"Boys," exclaimed Romeo, hefting the compact, "you could keep enough powder in that to blow up Mont Sec. I have seen dames with big make-up boxes but this one—haw-w-w-w!"

"Thees ees verree valuable," Fifi assured him, snuggling closer. "I geeve thees to you to keep unteel we meet again, *oui*. So, *voila*—you thenk I am fickle? Once that belongs to Marie Antoinette. I would not lose thees for ze world. Look, *mon nomme* she ees there. You show thees to *voire amis* an' say Fifi she geeves these to you as ze keepsake."

“Boys, will that panic the bums!” Phineas chuckled, dropping the memento into his pocket. “Garcong, another bottle! Fifi, will you sing ze favorite song you sing everyplace? That one ‘La Cigal ayant chanty toot latez’—huh?”

FIFI HUMMED the desired tune, pausing at intervals to sip at the expensive Frog brew that had reduced the Pinkham bankroll to a lone franc. Brass hats stared toward the errant pilot, eyes glowing with a light as green as an Irish hillside. Phineas had never enjoyed a more satisfactory couple of hours.

“Look at the brass hats,” he chortled to Fifi. “Haw-w-Boys, I could die happy.”

Fifi shot a quick glance in his direction and a little high laugh issued from her crimson lips. “*Oui?*” she said.

“*Coulez* voose like to take ze promenade some place *ce soir?*” her escort proposed then. “It’s June and there is a moon—haw-w-w-w! Boys, who was this guy Romeo, haw-w-w-w!”

“*Non,*” Fifi said, “ze mam’selle she throw ze rock ver’ straight. When I come back from up ze line nex’ week, maybe I say ‘*oui*’ to you. Now I mus’ go to l’hotel. *Adieu, mon brave lieutenant.* I weel count *les heurs*—”

Phineas escorted her to the door and put her into a Frog taxi. The contraption had no sooner left the curb than a big rock whizzed through the air and smacked Phineas right above the left eyebrow. An M.P. picked him up and fanned him with his cap.

“Get me out of town,” the victim groaned. “It ain’t safe here. Boys, that dame is sore!”

A voice rose from the shadows across the street. “Run-all-’round Babette, *oui?* I show to you somezeeng, Pheenyas Peenkham! Peeg—*chien*—bah!”

“Stop her,” Phineas yipped to the M.P. as he raced for his bicycle. “She’s got more rocks. I demand—”

“Speak louder, we can’t hear you, ha! ha!” a big dough tossed at him.

The representatives of three armies rocked with unbridled mirth as Phineas pedalled furiously down the street, performing amazing feats with his two-wheeled locomotion to escape Babette’s barrage of rocks. He was a mile out of town before he eased his pace. Exhausted, Phineas fell off his bike and wiped his brow which was extremely damp.

“Boys, it ain’t easy bein’ a playboy,” he sighed. “Babette sure is stuck on me. Well, wasn’t my Uncle Hiram mixed up with Jenny Lind way back? It must be in our blood. Haw-w-w-w!”

When he had returned to the drome, Phineas visited every cubicle on Buzzards’ Row. He displayed the keepsake Fifi had entrusted to him and laid it on thick.

“That’s the way I fit with dames,” he gloated. “Boys, if I had been living the same time as Cleopatra, the history of the world would’ve been different. You never would’ve heard of a Roman brass hat by name of Mark Antony. Haw-w-w-w!”

“She’s either blind or a mental defective,” Bump Gillis snorted with disdain. “Somethin’ is wrong somewhere. Even your mother must get melancholic when she looks at you too much.”

“Oh, I knew you’d all be jealous,” grinned young Lochinvar. “Go ahead an’ insult me. Haw-w-w-w-w! I’m goin’ on the stage with Fifi when the *guerre* is over. Boys, wait’ll Boonetown sees us. Pinkham an’ Colet—tricks an’ funny sayin’s! I can see it in big lights.”

Phineas babbled on until after midnight. Bump Gillis finally swore, got out of his cot, and grabbed a blanket. So burdened he went out into the night for some rest.

“Love is worse than hives when it hits you like this,” the pilot from Iowa said to himself and got up. He dressed and ambled out of the hut into the thicket back of Buzzards’ Row. There he sat down on a log and reviewed his *tete-a-tete* with Fifi. Time wore on. Suddenly an ominous sound rained down from the star-studded celestial canopy and made the Pinkham eardrums quiver. Phineas knew that it was not St. Peter sawing wood. It was the hum of Kraut power plants. He was halfway out of the thicket when the first bomb bit a hunk out of Garrity’s tarmac. *BONG!*

“That egg was a double-yoked one,” Phineas yipped as he flattened himself on the ground.

BONG! CR-R-R-R-ASH! BONG! BO-O-O-O-ONG!

“This is one time I would like to be an angle worm,” the night prowling pilot muttered through clicking bicuspid. “Boys, I feel as big as an iceberg an’ just as naked.”

Six explosions later—the last smacking the edge of the thicket and covering Lieutenant Pinkham with a blanket of mud—and our hero weaved his way out onto the shell-pocked field and gazed upon the havoc. Major Rufus Garrity was walking around in circles and making passes at the air like an outfielder who has lost a high fly in the sun. Bump Gillis and Pilot Cheeves were crawling out from under part of the roof of the Frog farmhouse.

“Do somethin’!” the Old Man yelled and stabbed

a finger at Phineas Pinkham. "Don't just stand there. Pinkham has been blown to bits. His hut—oh-h-h-h!"

"Why-Why—er—I—er—" Phineas stammered, then he gazed toward the spot where his hut should have been. In Buzzards' Row there was a gaping hole. It reminded the pilot of a set of uppers with one front tooth knocked out.

"Boys, was I l-lucky," Bump Gillis muttered as he passed Phineas by. "If the big b-bum hadn't talked me out of my sleep—"

"H-He didn't come out to the dugouts," Howell choked out. "The poor cuss must've busted into a million pieces."

"Do somethin'!" Garrity repeated his bawling. "Look at me. I ain't excited. Wasn't you ever bombed before, y-you—?"

"That isn't your pipe you're puttin' in your mouth," Howell yelled at him. "It's a piece of an old shoe! Ha! ha!"

WHILE the Major continued to jump up and down, swearing, Phineas edged away under cover of his coating of mud. One look at that gaping hole in the line of huts had set his brain to spinning. Even in the midst of the ruin, the Pinkham sense of humor was not shell-shocked. So he was dead, eh? Drying mud cracked from his homely face as it split into a grin.

Unnoticed, Phineas slipped back into the thicket and hurried out across open country.

"So my hut was blown up, huh?" he muttered as he hurried on. "There was no bomb pit there and so why wasn't all the others busted? Boys, one of those Gotha eggs would've cleaned out more than that. Hm! Somethin's rotten. Somebody tried to assassinate me—somebody—why—er I wonder! Hm!" Mouth open, Lieutenant Pinkham stopped dead in his tracks as a sudden thought vibrated his brain pan. A cold chill began at the nape of his neck and worked its way down to his insteps. It was an effort for him to get his feet into motion again. The jokesmith even looked down to make sure that there were no weights tied to them as he moved across country toward a deserted Frog farm.

A week before, Major Rufus Garrity, having reached the end of his patience with the Boonetown pilot's collection of tricks, had ordered Phineas to clean his hut of everything pertaining to the art of skullduggery. His order had been that it should be dumped where it would be beyond resurrection. No one thoroughly acquainted with Phineas "Carbuncle" Pinkham would expect him to obey the order to the letter so he was under supervision while ostensibly carrying out the

Major's instructions. With the appearance of great reluctance he had dumped a large bag of stuff into the murky waters at the bottom of an old Quarry. However, the real McCoy was at present reposing undisturbed in the cellar of the abandoned farm of a Frog.

Before he climbed through the window of the old house three miles from Bar-Le-Duc, Phineas cast a wary glance about to reassure himself. Inside, he located a stub of candle to which he applied a match and which he used to light his way to the dank basement. There he sat down to cogitate and soothe his strumming nerves. Phineas thought of the gossiping Dutchman, *Herr Leutnant* Fritz von Shlusch, and his brow began to look like a miniature washboard.

"H-m-m," he grunted at length, "it's a good thing I have 'gone West.' That is the only place safe for Mrs. Pinkham's favorite boy. Even Babette would like to cut herself a piece of my throat, haw-w-w! I would like to see Fifi again—boys!"

Phineas went upstairs, found an old black suit in a closet. It was a trifle rusty around the edges but it fit him very well. A little rummaging brought to light an old black slouch hat with a wide brim and a pair of funny looking black shoes. With these articles of apparel in tow he retraced his steps down into the cellar and there began the operation of changing his appearance. In twenty minutes a big-nosed man with a long white beard and dark eye-glasses peered at himself in a small mirror.

"Haw-w-w-w-w!" the masquerader chuckled. "I don't even reco'nize you myself, Monsewer!" The black ensemble fit Phineas a bit too late and the shoes were an inch too short for the Pinkham extremities. "It'll be torture," he decided, "but it'll change my walk so nobody would know it, haw-w-w-w! I would do anythin' for the Allies."

SOME twenty-four hours later an aged man with mincing step tripped into the Cafe of the Pink Vache. Very laboriously he made his way into a corner. A Limey Colonel took him by the arm and helped him to cover part of the distance. This tickled Phineas' funny bone so much that he was hard put to restrain his all-too-familiar guffaw. Scraps of conversation seeped through the skirls of tobacco smoke. The chief topic of conversation seemed to be the horrible demise of Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham, late of the Ninth Pursuit Squadron.

“Awful way to go out, what?”

“Blarst the bloody, murder-in’ spy what done it!”

“Nice fellow—Pinkham—y’know. A bit eccentric, but—”

Phineas chortled in his beard as he spotted Mam’selle Fifi Colet. The Frog comedienne was sitting at a table next to his and with her was a very dashing looking Limey pilot. Fifi was in a very affectionate mood and one of her arms was hooked quite tenaciously about the Britisher’s neck.

“She ain’t fickle, huh?” her disguised ex-love muttered to himself. “That’s dames for you! I’m off them—huh—why—” He leaned forward in his chair after *un garcon* had brought him a jigger of brandy. For Phineas had heard his name mentioned.

“You have mak’ Fifi ver’ mad, *oui*,” Mam’selle pouted, unloosing her arm. “Lieutenant Peenkham, he have promise thees to me. An’ now he ees *tres mort*, ah—*sacre bleu!* I want ze ride in airplane an’ you say ‘*non!*’ *Tres bien*—I got wan more officer—you see! All ze *temps* Fifi she say to her fran’s wan beeg brav’ aviateur tak’ Fifi for ze high ride. Now zey laugh. Bah—I got heem ze ride—*oui!*”

Under the shelter of his dark glasses Phineas’ optics widened. The jigger of brandy shook as he raised it and most of the contents baptized his beard. For Fifi was getting up from the table and the Britisher was trying to keep her at his side.

“Ha!” laughed the Limey. “I was jolly well ribbin’ you, Fifi, ol’ girl. Of course you shall have the ride. I’ll arrange it, positively. No end of risk, y’know, though. If I should be caught—I’ll be sent back to jolly o’ England—washed up, as the Yanks say.”

“*Oo la la!*” gurgled Fifi, again wrapping her arms about the Limey’s neck.

“Oh what a two-timin’ dame!” Phineas growled. “I got a good mind to—” But his big ears were absorbing more words.

“I weel be there—three mile from here, *oui*. By ze leetle shrine—I wait so—*non!*”

“Right,” the Britisher grinned, lowering his voice cautiously. “I’ll be there—day after tomorrow night, Fifi—at cease *heurs* less cans minoots!” The Limey’s pronunciation of French was labored.

“Quarter to six, huh?” Phineas translated after thought. “Well, well. That is one of the Bristol bums. He’s gaga over the dame and is riskin’ his wings. I will save his honor, not that I want to—haw-w-w-w-w!”

The pilot tendered to the U.S. Air Corps by the patriotic town of Boonetown, Iowa, was beginning

to see a little flickering light. Brighter and brighter the flame of realization became in his gray matter. Suddenly another light flashed. The Britisher had scratched a match and was holding the flame to Fifi’s cigarette. His foot slipped. Fifi let out a little squeak and clamped her hand to her nose.

“Clumsy of me,” the Limey spluttered. “Pardunny, Mam’selle. Sorry—no end—and all that, y’know.”

Fifi’s head was turned away from Phineas as she reached for a handkerchief. When she went out with the Limey pilot it was pressed to her nose.

“H-Huh,” Phineas muttered. “Well, well! I must get out an’ write a letter some place. I will go to the hotel to compose it.”

AT THAT very moment, behind the Jerry lines, a crowd of Teuton brass hats were making merry with Schnapps and Rhine wine. At intervals glasses were raised toward the crude drawing of *Herr Leutnant* Phineas Pinkham which hung on the wall.

“*Ach!*” a Kraut *Herr Oberst* repeated for the fiftieth time. “*Hoch, Herr* Pingham—ho! ho! *Kaput du bist, ja!* Oop in mooch bits he vent, *nein?* Zo! *Hoch—Hoch der Kaiser!*”

“*Hoch!*”

“*Und* to Fifi Colet, *nein?* Ha! ha! *Ach du lieber! Der* Kaiser he sends us *der* greetings. Listen vunce again yedt!”

On the Halb drome not very far away from this spot *Herr Hauptmann* von Gluten was pacing the floor of the barracks again. Three or four boards had been shaken loose in the floor from the constant pounding of his heavy boots.

“*Himmel!*” he growled. “I t’ink I haff *der gut* mind I shouldt go oudt nix *und* fly tomorrow night, *ja!* *Der* salt it giffs by *der* daschund bite, *hein?* *Ach, und mit* tventdy t’ousandt marks I could haff made it *der* big houze yedt *und—Donnervetter!*”

THINGS happened in bunches the next day. While the Allied front mourned the untimely passing of Phineas Pinkham and Major Rufus used a fine comb on his brain to think of nice things to tell his mother, a Limey C.O. near Triaucourt received an anonymous communication via a despatch rider.

“Strange lookin’ feller give it to me, sir—old bloke with a white beard. Looked like a minister, he did, sir. Stopped me in Bar-Le-Duc an’ asked if I was comin’ out ‘ere,” the Limey told the British squadron commander.

Three minutes later a tall, dashing Britisher stood on the carpet. "So, my good fellow," the C.O. lashed out at his pilot, "thought of going out for a pleasure trip, eh, what? Ferryin' that French actress over the front, eh? Well, speak up, Lieutenant! You were overheard last night. And you asked for special duty for tomorrow night, didn't you? To spot a Jerry dump across the lines! Ha, I've a jolly good mind to make an example of you. Speak up!"

"Ah—er—mistake somewhere, sir. I assure you—that is—fellow was balmy who—"

"Your ears are red, Lieutenant," the the Squadron Commander harumphed. "That is all. You are to stay on the drome until further orders, understand?"

"Yessir!"

Seven miles away from the Bristol outfit, Phineas Pinkham was hailing a Yankee fourgon. The vehicle stopped and the driver looked down at the bearded old man. Phineas appeared very ecclesiastic at the moment, having retired to the privacy of the deserted farm cellar to reverse his starched collar.

"I'm on my way to the hospital to comfort the sore beset," he intoned in a quavering voice to the fourgon driver. "It is a long way and I am weary—my bones are brittle, and my eyes—"

"Jump up," the dough cut in. "Muley, you git down an' help the old boy."

"Okay."

IT WAS about an hour later when Phineas toddled out of a base hospital near Souilly with something wrapped up and tucked under his arm. His eyes behind their dark windshields darted warily about as he made his exit. He had quite a time with himself to refrain from breaking into a hundred yard dash. Out on the open road he got a lift again. The truck was headed for Revigny.

On the drome of the Ninth Pursuit Squadron, Major Garrity's buzzards were carrying on dispiritedly. Without Phineas Pinkham the war had become a drab affair indeed. In a meadow beyond the north edge of the field a small mound had been created. A wooden cross informed the world that the spot had been dedicated to Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham, killed during a bombing of the drome.

"You kin miss anythin'," Sergeant Casey said to a couple of his slaves. "Once when I got rid of the hives I was s'prised to find how I missed the scratchin'. Hey, git to work, you bums! Stop standin' there lookin' up in the clouds. He ain't comin' back!"

"They was somethin' spooky about that looey," declared a groundhog, shaking his head. "Remember what he alius said? That he'd come back an' haunt us? If anybody could, that guy would. Las' night I thought I heard 'im laughin' an' I'll be a stuffed acorn if I didn' git up in a cold sweat."

"Yeah, me too," agreed another ackemma. "I seen him just as plain."

"Aw you was both drunk," Casey scoffed. "You two halfwits will sleep good tonight. You're gonna work on that two-seater out there until it's fixed up proper. That one the officer from the D.H. drome sat down in a hurry las' night."

"Aw-w-w-w, Sarge! We—"

"Shut up!"

The day wore on. Over in the deserted farmhouse Phineas was divesting himself of his black garb. Having removed his facial disguise, he garbed himself in his own uniform which was plentifully covered with dry mud. This done, he went upstairs to the old kitchen. In the bottom of an old bin he had discovered a small amount of flour. He scraped out a handful and dusted it onto his muddy flying suit. Back in the cellar he uncovered a tin box and produced a small can of glue. A coating of this applied to his face followed by an application of flour and Phineas decided that he could scare anybody. When darkness fell, he emerged from the isolated layout.

SERGEANT CASEY'S muttering grease monkeys toiled long after mess time getting the two-seater into shape for percolation. Both tried to lighten their task by taking furtive nips from a black bottle.

"I made it outa pertaters," one said. "'Tain't bad, huh, Spike?"

"I drunk carbolic by mistake oncet," came the answer. "It was jist like maple surrup compared to this puma saliva. Stop stallin' an' git to work."

"Yeah—uh—ugh! Look—Willie—ugh—gaw-w-w-w-d!" The ackemma amateur concocter of strong brew threw up his hands and started for the barracks.

His late companion's feet froze to the ground. Ten feet away stood an awesome figure. The hands hung limply at its sides. The lower jaw of the ghastly face dangled.

"Y-Yeah—I—come—back!" The voice was as hollow as a dried nut. "Didn'—like—it—where—I was. Haw-w-w-w-w-w!"

"G-g-g-g-git away—pul-le-e-e-ase! Oh-h-h-h-h!"

"Sure. Goin'—to—ride—though," Phineas intoned.

“Spin—that—prop—you hear—me—talkin’—to you-u-u?”

Five minutes later Major Rufus Garrity and all his pilots were racing across the field waving their arms at the D.H. as it thundered across the tarmac. The Old Man collared a paralyzed ackemma and shook him until his teeth rattled.

“Who’d ya give that crate to, you—? Speak up, or—!”

“Uh—er—yeah—M-Major! It—it w-was Lootenant Pinkham—he’s dead—ha! ha! Have a drink?”

Major Garrity took the black bottle and downed the remaining contents before he was aware of what he was doing.

“Pinkham?” Bump Gillis choked out. “Ya said—why—that big ape! He—”

“Oh I’ll get him for this!” the C.O. howled in a frenzy.

“Whe-e-e-e-e-e! Yip-p-e-e-e-e-e!” shouted a dozen buzzards.

“He’s a deserter,” yowled the Major. “I’ll have to shoot him! Why—why didn’t he just come right in an’—aw cripes!” He sat down and dropped his head almost into his lap.

Meanwhile Phineas had landed the ship five miles away at the edge of a wooded tract. He spent some time heaping branches around it, then he curled up for some sleep.

AT FIVE O’CLOCK the next day, on the Halb drome across the lines, *Hauptmann* von Gluten began to get ready to take the air. In Bar-Le-Duc, Fifi Colet prettied herself up, wrapped her petite frame in a big trench coat, and got into a Frog hack in front of her hotel. Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham deposited an object that looked very like a can of syrup in the front pit of the D.H. after he had worked for two hours dragging brush from the crate.

“It ought to be interestin’, see swore,” he chuckled. “No Limey can take my dame an’ take her for a ride in the ozone, haw-w-w-w!” He took a double barreled shotgun from the rear pit, a coil of wire, and a coil of strong cord. He fastened the weapon to the belly of his ship, securing it crosswise, and attached one end of the cord to the triggers that were cocked. The other end of the cord he weighted down with a flat rock which he laid carefully in the bottom of his pit. At twenty minutes to six Phineas was taking off.

“A keepsake, huh?” he grunted as he lifted the

D.H. into the air. “Boys, it pretty near kept me in cold storage, ha-w-w-w-w! But a Pinkham likes to laugh last!”

Mam’selle Fifi Colet was on time. When Phineas deposited the D.H. on the lush earth of a sheep pasture, the petite mam’selle was climbing over the fence. She seemed to be in quite a hurry. Phineas waved to her.

“Ah—*voilà!*” the actress screeched. “I am what you call heem—gaga. Why you have ze head in ze collar *tres beaucoup*, eh?”

“If somebody jolly well spots me,” Phineas muttered, “it’ll be all blotto an’ all that sort of thing, eh what? Pip-pip, ol’ thing! Shake a leg, Fifi, before somebody comes.”

“*Oui, oui, ici j’arrivez!*” She clambered into the rear pit and Phineas gave the crate the gun. His homely face was split into a grin as he climbed to five thousand and headed for the lines.

Out of Germany drilled *Herr Hauptmann* von Gluten, mouthing imprecations anent the workings of fickle Fate. Twenty thousand marks gone by the board.

“*Donnervetter!*” he grumbled. “If *das* Pingham I could meet yoost vunce more yedt—*ach!*”

The D.H. drilled along toward the rumbling front. Phineas Pinkham, pilot, leaned forward in the cockpit, holding the stick firmly between his knees. He picked up a big-bladed knife he had stored in the pit and rammed it into the cover of the can that was wobbling around close to his feet. Through the resultant hole liquid poured out onto a wad of cloth the errant flyer had also placed in his office. He rocked the plane from side to side as he lifted his head and held his breath. He was reaching down again when the D.H. slipped across the fighting lines. Phineas knew that the zero hour was at hand. When he lifted the soaked cloth he knew that his passenger was leaning forward in the rear pit. The Yank felt the hard tip of something press against the back of his cranium. A triumphant voice ripped out.

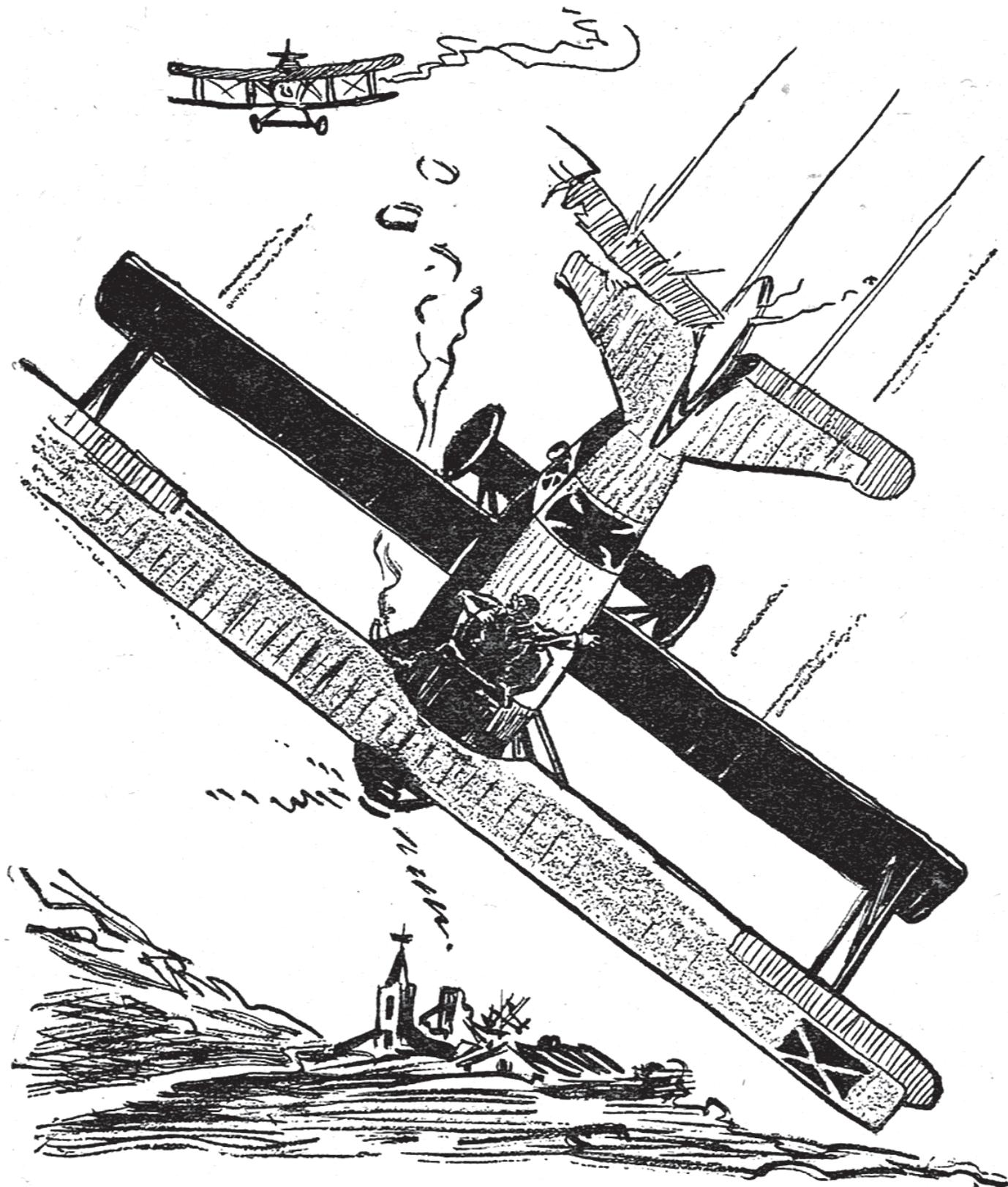
“*Dumkopf!* Mata Hari she tanks you for that you take her back to Germany. Now you fly where Mata Hari orders or she blows the brains out—ha! ha! How you like her ze Fifi, eh?”

For answer Phineas’ left hand came up over his shoulder with a jerk. The propwash whipped at the soaked cloth, opened it wide and drove it back against Mata Hari’s face. Simultaneously the Yank ducked as his passenger fired a single shot. Above the roar of the engine he could hear a muffled yell from the spy. He twisted his head around to look. Mata Hari had torn

the cloth away from her face but her eyes were a trifle blank. Abruptly the Yankee pilot lifted the nose of his ship and his passenger was unceremoniously dumped back into her pit. As quickly he let the snout of the two-seater drop again. This time Mata Hari's head came forward to rest against the front of the pit.

"That way she should git the fumes from the rest

of that knockout juice," the master of legerdemain and its component parts chuckled. "Haw-w-w! So Mata Hari is dead, huh? Well, so am I! Haw-w! That Heinie, von Shlusch, liked to talk too much. Fifi give me a keepsake, huh? Boys, it must've been loaded with T.N.T., that compact. Haw-w-w! Why—why there's a Kraut! Boys, I was right. A guy would come over to



help her along. An' it's the *Hauptmann* von Gluten! Why the big bum! Why-er—haw-w-w-w-w!"

"Somet'ing it giffs smells yedt," von Gluten sniffed as he knifed down. "Vun look I take idt. Maybe she gets der Yangkee covered *mit der* Luger. *Ach* I can shoodt nodt—*der* orders I haff!" The Teuton flyer hurled his Halb down close to the two-seater. The pilot waved!

"Ho! ho!" yelped von Gluten. "*Das ist sehr* komical! Somewhere *der* Cherman he gedts idt *der* ship *und* Mata Hari *ist* asleep on *der* vay. Ho! Ho! Ugh! *Vas ist? Himmel!*" Herr von Gluten wondered why the D.H. pilot suddenly gave his ship the gun. It leaped forward like a jack rabbit.

BONG!

The D.H. rocked as Phineas yanked the cord that led to the trigger of the shotgun. Mata Hari stirred as cobwebs in her brain began to disintegrate. One barrel of buckshot knifed through the Halb's ribs and sprayed Von Gluten's tail assembly. The Heinie Hauptmann howled like a timber wolf and leaped clear of his seat. Phineas' second load of buckshot crashed through the Halb's empennage and washed out the rudder post.

"*Nein—nein! Das* Pinkham *ist* dead!" the Von howled, fighting to get down whole. "*Ach, der* High Kommand *said* zo. *Der* Hari—*ach* Gott! *Das* Pingham *mid der* Mata Hari! *Himmel—Donner und Blitzen!* *Deutschland ist* kaput!" And von Gluten signalled for a fair catch at the Allied linoleum,

MATA HARI had her marbles back when von Gluten dropped to a height of two hundred feet. In a frenzy she clawed around the pit for her Luger, but it had fallen overside. Yelling with fury the famous Heinie spy tried to get her hands around the Pinkham windpipe and disconnect his lungs from their air supply. But she fell backward when he worked his face around toward her. In one hand he clutched a big socket wrench.

"*Leutnant* Pingham!" she choked out. "*Ach!*"

"It's me—in the flesh!" her would-be victim yipped at her. "And if you don't behave, you will get your scalp massaged! Huh, now is that talkin' like a lady? Why—

er—I am shocked—such language! Is it in Dutch or Frog? Haw-w-w-w-w!"

Mata Hari knew she was either in the fat or in the fire. She did not want to jump down through eight thousand feet of nothing. Neither did she want to be massaged with a socket wrench. While there was life there was hope. So, her lips smiling sweetly, she got out of the D.H. on the drome of the Ninth Pursuit Squadron where almost the entire personnel of the field had surrounded the ship by the time it came to a stop.

"H'lo, bums!" grinned Phineas as he climbed out. "Meet Mata Hari! Oh, it's her all right. Don't let her fool ya any longer. Take that paraffin off her bugle. Boys, she's a ringer for Fifi Colet, huh? Haw-w-w-w-w!" He turned to the irate woman. "When that Limey burnt your nose with that match in Barley Duck, you didn't yelp because it hurt. It didn't. You was afraid it might have started meltin'. Haw-w-w-w-w! You can see what your keepsake did to my hut over there, Miss Hari. But I wasn't there on account of I got stuck on you an' could not sleep. I took a walk."

"*Schwein!*" spat Mata Hari. She tried to connect with Phineas' shins.

"It was just to get me that she faked bein' Fifi," Phineas explained proudly. "That Heinie we knocked down was some liar! The Krauts wanted us to think Mata Hari got shot. Haw-w-w-w-w! It was ether I give her—as I couldn't just kill a dame," the peerless jokester went on. "It pretty nearly knocked me gaga, too. An' von Gluten come along to lead her in an'—haw-w-w-w-w! That's what I counted on. I knocked him down again. Boys what a day!"

"You got Mata Hari? And Von Gluten?" gulped Major Garrity. "Did you by any chance forget the Clown Prince an' his old man?"

"Gosh, I am gittin' forgetful," exclaimed Phineas, grinning. "Huh—oh well, some other time." He started for the line of huts. "I wish I knew if Babette is still sore at me."