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**PHINEAS
PINKHAM**
howl

WATCH YOUR STEPPES

written and illustrated by
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Things certainly looked tough for the Allies! The Wilhelmstrasse quoted 2 to 1 that the Russkys would join up with the Krauts—and the 9th Pursuit laid 3 to 1 that Phineas would join up with the angels. But when the Vons ordered caviar, Carbuncle served greased bird shot. And when Rasputin rose from the grave. . . .

FRANCE IS A LONG WAY from the land of vodka and Volga boatmen. Moreover, Phineas Pinkham was only a harum scarum around the pool hall and barber shop of Boonetown, Iowa, when a certain Russky named Rasputin was getting arsenic in his oats. Phineas was only thinking about joining up with the Air Corps when Lenin, father of the Soviets, found himself accused of conniving with the Krauts and had

to take it on the lam from the Steppes. He landed at length in Switzerland in the spring of 1917 and wanted to know if the Limeys would consent to his return to the country of Cossacks and caviar via the Channel ports. The Limeys shook their domes in the negative and Lenin had to hitch-hike his way into Germany. In due time he reached the land of Bolsheviks, beards, and bortsch to continue throwing monkey wrenches into the Kerensky machinery.

Now we know, of course, that a wind blowing across the Gulf of Arabia does not fill out the sails of schooners haunting the fishing banks of Labrador. Likewise, Russian business, it would seem, should have had just as little bearing on the career of Phineas Pinkham in France. But wait! In the late fall of 1917 Phineas was well established on the drome of the Ninth Pursuit Squadron. Kraut Vons were beginning to feel the bite of his skullduggery and legerdemain, and Allied brass hats were wishing profoundly that he had never encountered the stork.

Then a peace between Russia and Germany was impending. Chaumont, Downing Street, Pennsylvania Avenue, and Versailles were in more than a dither as rumors flew hither and yon over the map of Europe to the effect that the Heinies were trying to get the Russkys to throw in with them and start cleaning up on the Western Front.

The situation was more of a mess than anyone could make by dumping a barrel of hot tar into a field of duck feathers. There were left wing and right wing revolutionists brawling on the Steppes. Trotsky and Kerensky were making faces at each other and tweeking each other's beards. Red and White Russians were at loggerheads. The Czar and his family had been chased out of St. Petersburg. The Czechs were getting to be a nuisance, and Cossacks were pulling straws to see which side they would fight on.

MAJOR RUFUS GARRITY, C.O. of the Ninth Pursuit, was having his own troubles at Bar-Le-Duc, France. On the night of October 8th brass hats arrived with orders that threatened the longevity of Phineas Pinkham and his mates. There was a Kraut railroad center at Conflans and Intelligence officers had reported to Chaumont that a load of very high explosives was to pull into the same at a certain hour on the night of October 12th. A lone Spad was to go over and drop three Cooper bombs—or try to. Anyway that was what a brigadier by the name of Chittleby said.

"Haw-w-w-w!" Phineas trumpeted. "Columbus Day. Well, he took a bigger chance than we are goin' to. I'll name my Spad the Santa Maria and get Isabella to christen it. Huh—well let's toss up and see—"

"That's the spirit," enthused the brigadier. "Stout fellow, Pinkham. Yessir! We've got to beat those Krauts to every punch now. If the Russians ever get over here with the rest of the squareheads, it will be curtains for us. Heard that the Russian crown jewels will be turned

into money—to finance the Heinies. A Turkish Bey richer than the Rockerbilts is going to take them as collateral—pretty kettle of fish. Ought to have some diplomats on our side. Hmph! And a few Intelligence officers with something under their hats besides combed hair. Well, Garrity—you've got your orders—"

"I'm afraid so," groaned the Old Man. "Well, I'll—er—say goodnight, gentlemen, before you think of something else. I wish the road to this layout wasn't so good. Maybe you'd reach one of the other dromes by accident." He glowered at his visitors.

"I don't like your attitude, Major," the superior officer bristled. "I have a good mind to report you. Come on, Colonel."

"Haw-w-w-w," Phineas chuckled at Major Garrity. "If you don't respect your uppers, how do you expect me to respect you, huh? It's all so silly!"

The Brigadier laughed. So did the Colonel. Just three days later Major Rufus Garrity laughed last as he watched Phineas Pinkham climb into the pit of a Spad that was going solo over Conflans.

"Boy, it is silly, eh, Pinkham?" Garrity chortled. "This is one time your fresh yap got you into a sling. Bon voyage, you halfwit! We forgot your steamer basket."

"Adoo, fair-weather friends," Phineas yipped, tossing a little canvas bag into the pit. "I hope the Russkys come over scalded with vodka and chase you right out of your rompers. Haw-w-w-w! Watch your liver, you great big C.O., you!" He hopped to the Spad stirrun and yelled, "Contact!"

"I hope he meets seven Boche circuses," the Old Man fumed. "And all of 'em with three rings. The fresh—" Something came hurtling toward him from the Spad's pit. It was a bulky looking envelope.

Phineas called out, "Huh—it's a good thing I thought of it. That's an old map of the sector I've been carrying around. Boys, if the Krauts ever—"

Garrity reached into the envelope as Phineas gave the Spad the gun. He pulled out a map—also a handful of poison ivy. Letting out a yelp, he dropped everything and headed for a medico's shack.

"I'll kill him if he ever gets back. He—knows that stuff poisons me—even if I only look at it. I'll knock his brains out if I ever—"

"Haw-w-w-w!" The familiar guffaw came from the Spad as Phineas lifted it off Frog real estate and climbed with Hisso wide open. "I can die laughin' now. Well, on to Conflans an' the Heinie nervous dust."

Now the Teutons were well aware of the risk

they were taking in side-tracking three carloads of explosives in Conflans. Needless to say, they had given orders to a certain Heinie Staffel to protect that railroad center at all hours of the day and part of the night. Phineas hit the torrid sky shelf just after dusk and his Hisso had no sooner begun to chant high over the town when six Boche Albatross crates came rocketing up at him as if shot from so many chutes.

"It's quite a job the brass hats wanted," Phineas wheezed, his scalp lifting until it strained at his leather casque. "They'd tell you to walk into a tiger's cage and give the tabby a manicure. Boy, if I get out of this, I'll believe in anything." Ignoring the oncoming Hun battle wagons, the Yank spiraled down until he spotted a certain landmark—a half demolished railroad shed. A hundred yards from that on a curved track—there they were. The line of flat cars! Not five hundred feet up, Phineas kicked the Coopers loose.

BLAM! CRASH! BO-O-O-O-O-OOM!

"That last one hit, oh boys!" he deducted with a satisfied chuckle. "There goes the wheel of a box car right into one of them Heinie crates—haw-w-w-w-w!"

But there were still five Huns on high. Tracers began to burn close to Phineas' neck. Steel slugs followed them up. Splinters flew from mashed struts.

Loose flying wires conjured up a discordant tune that reminded Phineas of one he had heard at a funeral back in Boonetown. There was only one thing to do—he knew that—when shrapnel began to gang up with Spandau bullets. Consequently he dived to within a hundred feet of the linoleum and hedge-hopped his way deeper into the Rhineland. Then suddenly red tongues began to feel their way along the fuselage of his Spad. The fire was spreading. He quickly lined up an emergency landing field. The gathering gloom played him a dirty trick, however. The field, ringed by trees, was anything but flat. It tipped at a thirty degree angle and Phineas went sliding down toward the pine trees as if he had been on a toboggan. He had his belt loose by the time he was halfway down the slope. Just before the gas tank went blooey and pieces of Spad began to fly to all corners of the compass, he jumped. While he was tumbling down the hill, Phineas was reminded of the time he had put a cannon cracker in a roasting chicken at a picnic back in Iowa.

A pursuing Kraut looked down from his Albatross and grunted: "*Sehr gut. Kaput!*" He waved to the other four marauding mayhemists and pulled back on the stick preparatory to getting to the home drome.



TWENTY-FOUR hours later Major Rufus Garrity and the personnel of the Ninth gave Phineas Pinkham up for lost. Gloom descended on Bar-Le-Duc and its environs. The R.O. wanted to know what he would say when notifying the Boonetown, Iowa, patriot's parents.

"Huh?" growled Garrity, dabbing at his left eye. "What do you think? Say—'Having a fine time. Wish you were here. Phineas.' Use your dome! Don't bother me. It's murder, that's what! He was a great guy—even if he—Gillis, don't stare at me like that! Get out of here, you moon-eyed nickel nurser!"

"Yessir, yessir," Bump Gillis sprang to obedience. "Shall I pack up Pinkham's things, sir?"

"No! Wait. He still may come back to do it himself. Oh-h-h-h! Of all the crack-brained—give me another drink! Oh-h-h, that bottle is empty. Where's Goomer? Hey-ey, Goomer! I'll burn that cluck's pants if he don't—*Go-o-o-o-o-oomer!*"

The meat wagon roared across the field. Sergeant Casey jumped on the running board and wanted to know what the idea was.

"Ya heard the siren, didn't ya, dope?" the driver retorted. "Where's the wreck? Where—?"

"Aw, it was only the Old Man yellin' for Goomer," Casey hollered. "An' don't call me no dope ag'in or I'll bash your nose in. Git that meat wagon back—Gawsh, I giss we're all too upset—huh!" He leaped clear, staggered toward the ground-men's barracks.

And where was Phineas? All during the night the freckle-faced flyer had stalked through Hunland. All the next day he hid out in a Kraut root cellar with defunct turnips and spuds. When night wore on again, he emerged and began a cautious reconnoitre in the general direction of Berlin. At the edge of a stretch of timber he suddenly halted when the raucous strains of a Mercedes prop cut down through the ozone. A Hun two-seater was landing in a field not two hundred yards away. When it came to a stop, Phineas saw a man get out of the pit and say something to the pilot. Then he picked up a small bag and walked off. The crate took off again and went roaring back into the sky.

"Well, I'm a—I'm a—maybe it's a spy dropper," the hidden Yank opined. "Nope, it's too far into Germany. Why—er—he's coming my way. It looks like he's thinking of hoppin' a train as the tracks are only a little way back. Haw-w-w-w, maybe he's a traveling salesman. Hey, it's a Kraut brass hat! Well, where is that rock I was kneeling against—ah, come to Phineas! Walk into my parlor, the spider said to the fly. Come in an' take a load off your dogs! Don't fire until you see

the whites of their eyes, General—awright!"

The Heinie stepped from behind a clump of bushes. Phineas heaved the rock and it hit the wayfarer in the bread basket. The Boche brass hat grunted, then sat down hard. Phineas completed the soporific onslaught by banging his fist into the Heinie's chops. Hurriedly he went to work. The enemy uniform fit him perfectly. But it was the victim's face that bothered Mr. Pinkham. The anesthetized Kraut's nose was long and thin and he wore a waxed mustache. Something had to be done about that. Quickly Phineas snapped on a flashlight and leaned it against a stone so that the beam would light on a small mirror he produced from his pocket. His nocturnal ministrations worked wonders on the Pinkham physiognomy. Adorned with the strange Heinie's monocle he could have passed down Wilhelmstrasse at high noon without invoking a suspicious tremor along the spine of the most alert Berlin cop.

"I don't know where you were going," Phineas grinned, "but I am on my way. *Hoch—hoch!* Boys, I even feel Dutch. I can even smell limburger on my breath. Adoo, *Herr* Obust, you will get yourself untied by Xmas, I imagine." With that, the roving Yank strode away and headed back toward the railroad tracks.

The astute Pinkham brain had whispered that this *Herr Oberst* had been on his way to be picked up somewhere near this desolate spot. Breaking out of the woods, the Boonetown flyer heard the rumble of a train. He saw it moving slowly through the darkness, its one Cyclopean eye probing the murk ahead. Not fifty yards from Phineas it stopped. A door of one coach swung open and three men stepped out. Phineas told himself he should start running, but then a second idea smothered the first. If this iron horse was going to Berlin, he might manage to kid his way through Hunland to a Baltic port—and so back to Bar-Le-Duc.

A voice hailed him. Phineas did not understand, but he walked toward the train, his knees buckling at every step. A big Teuton eyed him quickly, rattled off a line of chatter that was. Greek to Phineas. His mention of a certain name, however, jabbed the Pinkham consciousness—"Von Zeidlitz." He had found credentials in his pockets bearing that name. He had to say something. It was, "*Ja wohl!*" Then somebody stepped up behind him and covered his eyes with a black cloth.

"Hey—uh *Gott!*" he exclaimed. "*Was ist—?*"

"Listen qvick, *mein Freund,*" a voice spoke in

his ear, "I sprecken idt Englander so if idt giffs *der* Roossian shpies *mit*—understandt, *mein Freund?*"

"*Ja*," gulped Phineas, thinking of Babette and wondering if he would ever make good his promise to show her Broadway and Forty-Second Street.

"*Nein* vun spreckens—*nein* vun knows where *ist* ve go, *Herr* von Zeidlitz, until ve get by *der* blace. *Der* shpies eferywhere, *ja?* On board *ist der* gross man. *Das ist alles—ja*. In *der* train now—qwick vunce."

PHINEAS groped his way into a compartment and sat down. Something tickled his face and he lifted his fingers to push it out of the way. A hoarse growl made him jump a foot and a line of outlandish gibberish spanged against his big ears. Beards—Russian spies—Phineas felt a little woozy as a whisper rippled through his brain cells. He mumbled an apology and twirled the waxed end of his faked Junker mustache. The man beside him grunted and began to munch on something. Phineas caught a strange odor that made him think of a deceased brook trout he had found in the pocket of an old fishing coat long after the fishing season was over.

"Boy," Phineas thought, "I'm in for it now. If I could only git a peek at these bums I could make sure what I'm thinkin' ain't a lie. If that ain't them raw fish eggs the Russians eat, then I'm in my bed at Aunt Petunia's in Waterloo."

Hours dragged. The interior of the railway coach sounded like a busy saw mill. Phineas took a chance and drew the cloth up over his eyes a little. In one corner he saw two snoring specimens with great black beards, each of which were large enough to house a covey of quails. Jerry uniforms adorned their persons, but Phineas knew they were no more Dutch than a bowl of chop suey. They reeked of droskies and samovars and the Boonetown warrior's heart looped and zoomed up to his tonsils.

"Russia," he wheezed, "me goin' to Russia—cripes! I bet I know who that is on this rattler—and it ain't Charlie Chaplin. It's that Lenin bum. Oh-h-h-h, that's enough! It's cold in Siberia and I have not got my heavy skivvies with me. I've got to get out." He leaned to the side and turned the handle of the door. It made a squeaking sound. The Yank got up fast.

The Kraut who had helped Phineas aboard the caviar special let out a yowl and fumbled for a Luger. Reaching out quickly, the Yank grabbed at a beard. The Russky howled like a wolf and leaped off his seat as if it had sprouted spikes. He had his hands on the Heinie's

windpipe just as Phineas Pinkham forced open the door and slipped out into the night.

"Adoo, bumskys!" he yelled as he tumbled down a long slide. "This is where I git off sky—uh—ow-w-w!" He came to a stop in a bunch of thorny bushes and spat dirt and sticks from his mouths. His makeup was ruined. He knew he could not stop to pick any daisies. If Lenin was aboard that sealed rattler, his chaperons would lose no time in sending the bloodhounds after him.

"Well, Russia is just as hard as any other place when you land on your ear on it," the fugitive sniffed and lit out across country with a limp to his undercarriage. "Fancy bein' here—haw-w-w-w! I wish I could git to a 'phone. It'd make the Old Man have a stroke. I get it. The vodka gulpers wore Kraut uniforms while they were in Germany. The Heinies will change to Russian suits before they get off the train. The dirty bums! Well, I'm gettin' there fast as a quick-change artist myself—if I do say so, haw-w-w! Well, the Allies are lucky I joined up with them."

Over a distant horizon rose the telltale flash of big guns—their sullen growling echoes. Once Phineas ducked as a patrol of horsemen rounded a bend in the uneven Russky thoroughfare. He saw a house that seemed deserted. It was built of logs and mud and had a high-peaked roof. Any port in a storm for a Yankee orphan. Phineas crossed a stubbled field on the double and made his way to the door of the Slavic lair.

He pushed it open, walked inside. A growl came from one corner of the room and Phineas right-ruddered and tried to sideslip out. But a gust of wind banged the door shut and then he was down on the floor with somebody sitting on him.

"Hah, my fran," a voice reeking with fermented potato juice hiccoughed. "You mak' for to steal sam't'eeng, naw?" Before Phineas could grunt a reply, the sitter-on-his-stomach struck a match and held the flame close to his face. The Yank's eyes popped.

"Why—I'm a cock-eyed peacock," he yipped, "if it ain't Ivan Barberzitch, the Crushing Cossack! The great rassler!"

"Yah, me it is," the Russky clipped. "But who you are, hah? The face—it fall apart."

"Phineas Pinkham of Boonetown, Iowa, Ivan! Haw-w-w-w! Don't forgit the time I helped you beat that rassler, the Topeka Typhoon, by puttin' flea powder in his water bottle. Lemme up—you ain't no pigmy, Ivan."

"Mama," Ivan yipped. "Cooms here, mama! The ol' fran' I find him. Ha! ha! Bring it the vodka, mama."

A woman of fifty-inch girth lumbered into the

room. She yelled something in Russian. Ivan howled and hopped to his feet.

"Ah, my fran, the horses come down rawd. Quick, mama, my beard. My fran' you hide. You have it on the suit from Germany—oy, oy, if Trotsky's men it is—or maybe Kerensky's—maybe Lenin's—oy, such a mess is it!"

In the light of a candle Phineas saw Ivan don a gray beard and a mustache. "Say, ain't nobody around here what they're supposed to be?" he yipped. "If Queen Elizabeth walked in now, I would say, 'H'lo, ma, take off the makeup. I know ya.' Haw-w-w-w!"

"I don'd lak so moch fights," Ivan grinned as he pushed Phineas into a smelly closet. "I get old with the arches falling, naw?"

"Haw-w-w-w!" Guffawed Phineas when the door banged behind him. "It's a small world all right. I—" He glued his lips together and looked out through a crack in the door. Four grim looking Russky soldiers barged in on Ivan. They fired questions at him, then, apparently satisfied with the replies, began yapping amongst themselves.

Suddenly another Russky ran into the room and the first ones yapped like a wolf pack and stampeded out into the night. A minute later another gang of Slavs were bearing down on Ivan. They too left after taking quick ganders around the room.

At last Ivan let Phineas out. "They wass white Roossians, my fran'. Ha, too much kinds we have. Red wans—Bullsheviki wans—"

"They all look the same color to me, Ivan," Phineas grinned. "Don't the czar give you bums no soap?"

AGAIN the sound of hoofs beat in the yard. Ivan chased Phineas down into a dank dirt cellar this time. The hidden Yank struck a match and touched the flame to an old saucer filled with grease. It caught

and offered a little illumination. While Russky boots pounded around the floor above his head, Phineas fumbled at a heap of clothes in one corner of the place. Examination proved them to be a lot of clerical vestments of some kind. He felt into the big pocket inside a flowing robe and found two or three old letters. The Russian scribbling on them stumped the Yank. But an old photograph that he unearthed a few seconds before Ivan opened the trap door set his brain into a climbing chandelle.

"Boys, how do you stand it away out here, Ivan?" he queried. "The quiet would kill me. Who was it this time, Green Russkys?"

"Hah, this time it wass Bullshevikis," Ivan Barberzitch replied. "Now I tak' off my beard—so. What you got, my fran'?"

"Some ol' clothes and a picture of the Russky Royal family," Phineas tossed out. "How did they get in the cellar, huh?"

Olga Barberzitch made a grab at the picture. She uttered a couple of "oy, oy's" when she read the writing on it. "Ivan," she squeaked, "Ivan—from the Tzar an'



Tzaritsa it is to—Rasputin— His clothes it is oy, the Holy Devil!”

“Y-yow!” squawked Ivan and his Russky boots leaped clear off the floor. “Som’ time he comes here, my fran’. He hides here maybe an’ leaves his clothes to escape in disguise, maybe, hah?”

“What a’country!” Phineas groaned. “Everybody is somebody else or dresses up like they are. Git me some vodka, Ivan. Anything with a kick. What you lookin’ at me like that for, huh? Don’t git tough as—”

“Ah—you have the German suit, my fran?” Ivan said. “You get chased for maybe von Zeidlitz, eh? He is vary beeg German oofiser. I hear the soldiers speak so—who comes looking for von Zeidlitz. Wan soldier he say you joomp off train. Kaiser Wilhelm vill be vary vary mad, hah. So—eet ees so. Lenin he want to fight wit’ Germans, naw? I hear wan soldier say wan beeg German general will be vary mad eef they don’ fin’ you—hah—they don’ know Ivan Barberzitch know vary moch lot of German.”

“What general?” Phineas howled. “Ivan, I’m gittin’ it, haw-w-w-w! Think hard, Ivan, as it is for Russia. You want to fight with Krauts, huh?”

“Naw—vun t’ousand times naw!” Ivan protested, reaching for a bottle of vodka. “Hah—the general—von Blotz she soun’ lak, my fran?”

“H-huh?” Phineas squawked and took a swig of vodka. His eyes bulged and his ears wiggled when the fiery Russky brew tickled his tonsils. “Von Blotz, huh? Oh, yeah? Boys, this is big stuff. Zeidlitz—I am von Zeidlitz. Or—I was. I am goin’ to Moscow as Rasputin, Ivan, my fran.”

“Aw-w-w-w-w!” Ivan Barberzitch gulped. “You are notty in the haired.”

“Haw-w-w-w! Others have said that, too, Ivan. Now help me off with this Kraut suit. We’ll stuff it with hay and then jam a knife into it a couple of times. Get a chicken and kill it, Ivan, and we’ll use the blood to daub the dummy. Then we’ll hang it at a crossroad where the Jerry snoopers can see it. You will write on a big piece of paper in Russian ‘To hell with the Kaiser!’ Then we’ll pin it on the dummy’s chest. Boys, that’ll make the Kaiser mad. Even if von Zeidlitz shows up back in Hunland after untyin’ himself. Because the Kaiser will figure the Russkys thought he was really von Zeidlitz and it is an insult. I will save the Allies, Ivan—an’ you’ll help. You will be my disciple an’ go to Moscow with me, The next bum I must get is General von Blotz who will most likely be posin’ as somebody else. Get it?”

“Naw,” denied Ivan numbly. “I don’d lak for to get t’roat cut, my fran.”

“H-huh—er—well, if the Russkys find out you are not an old guy an’—well—they would not exactly hand you an’ ice cream cone, now would they, Ivan?”

“I go,” Ivan gulped. “I hitch up the drosky, my fran.”

“I’ll dress up as Rasputin an’ go to panic the Olgas and the Veras and the Alexandras. Hurry eet oop, Ivan. Trotsky out an’ gitsky the horses while I go to work with my black bag.”

When Ivan Barberzitch returned, he almost nose-dived at sight of the strange figure sitting at the table munching cold potatoes, dried herring, and hard black bread.

“Haw-w-w-w, Ivan!” chortled Phineas. “Olga, she has it ze grub—so-vi-et! Haw-w-w-w! Git it? Soviet.”

“My fran,” Ivan clipped, “I don’d belief efen vhen I see. De brown beard—de pocked nose, also de eyes—Se eyes —oy, oy! How did you do it, my fran?”

But you don’d talk de Russky—your t’roat gets cut!”

“Don’t forget, Ivan,” Phineas said solemnly, “I have been poisoned an’ stabbed an’ shot. So I lose my speech, see? You’re my mouthpiece. Boys, it’s a riot! There’s more fun on the Eastern Front than on the Western. I been talkin’ to Olga. She says I was dug up from Tzarkoe Seloe when I was buried and burned to a crisp. They found me in the Neva all trussed up and as defunct as last year’s eggs, but I will say I was ressurected. How can they doubt me? I have letters from the Tzar and Tzaritsa. Boy, I might even put ‘em back on the throne, huh? I am a man of destiny, my fran’. I am Grigori Phinyas Rasputin Pinkhamsky—haw-w-w-w!”

Are the plugs ready to roll? On to Moscow, Ivan—for the Allies an’ free vodka. Ah-h-h-h-h, Yoofnim—ah-ah—!”

“Your fran’ he is craz’, Ivan,” Olga Barberzitch sniffed. “But you go wit’ him. I do all work here anyway.”

“I squar’ t’ings wit’ my fran,” Ivan declared pompously, vodka doing most of the talking, “for putting to sleep de Topeka Typhoon, ha-a-ah! Com’, my fran’ Rasputin. On to—*hic—blurp*— Moscow!”

AND so a drosky started out for the Russky capital. Early snow had come to the Steppes and no one had time to sweep it off. On the way to Moscow Rasputin stopped at an inn. Ivan Barberzitch bent low before the old man, spread his coat for him to walk upon. Russky inn loafers let out a howl and dropped to their

knees. Phineas peered at a comely Russky belle with his made-over eyes and she dropped a tin cup of vodka and swooned. The word spread over the Steppes faster than a spilled bottle of milk:

Rasputin resurrected! The holy devil was on his way to Moscow.

Certain Slavs who had been sure they had erased him, choked on their herring and sent out spies to take a gander at Rasputin. They returned with the news that he was the real McCoy. The arsenic experts immediately started for Siberia without bothering to pack.

Ivan Barberzitch drove into Moscow one night in a heavy snow storm. The streets were lined with Russkys whose eyes all looked like poached eggs. Fair Slavic damsels yelled and flopped in the snow when the drosky passed along in front of the statue of Peter the Great.

"Boys, what fun, huh, Ivan?" clipped Phineas. "Who's notty now, my fran?"

"Shuddup!" Ivan tossed out. "Wait until the generals see you, hah."

"We must start an orgy tonight," Phineas husked, "or they will not believe I am Rasputin. Round up the dames, my fran'. Spread the word the holy devil is back to hop up Moscow. Haw-w-w-w! An' this is where Napoleon retreated from! He was over-rated, Ivan. Ah-h-h, here comes all the Russky war lords. Do your stuff."

Great coated Slavs surrounded the drosky in front of the palace. Russky oral blasts filled the chilly ozone. Ivan Barberzitch babbled aloud and all the Russkys bowed low. One introduced himself as Kerensky. Ivan turned as white as a dove with anemia and swallowed his bridgework.

Phineas made signs with his hands as he got out of the Russky hack. He shook hands with Kerensky, the man who was destined to get smacked by the strong hand of Lenin. But Kerensky was in the saddle at the moment and in Rasputin he saw a way to gobble up Russia for himself. On the steps of the palace Phineas, alias Rasputin, faced the multitude and stretched out a dirty hand. Everything became as quiet as a community chest drive in Scotland. Ivan Barberzitch felt his knees buckle when Phineas removed part of his garb to display scars on his torso. That was enough. All the Slavs within hailing distance sank down in the snow and began to chant.

"It's a pushover," Phineas bragged when he was alone in a room of the palace with the badly jittered Ivan. "It's easy to make old scars, haw-w-w!"

"My fran'," Ivan gulped, "I hear two man mak' talk wit' each an' odder. Wan he looks lak big general. He say he finds out tonight for himself, ya-ah Pinkham. He is what you say by America, the septic, yah?"

"Oh, they will, huh?" Phineas yipped. "Well, I want a big samovar in the joint when I throw the orgy, Ivan. An' I want a swell looking Russky dame to play up to the bum you just mentioned. You tell her to yank his beard, savvy? And when I get up, you do the stuff. You know what, Ivan!"

Ivan nodded but mentioned that he still thought Phineas "nots." He also expressed the wish that he had never wrestled in Waterloo, Iowa.

Compared to the brawl arranged for the pretender who had risen from the grave, the whoopee parties of the real Rasputin had been merely pink teas. The big room was running with Russky grog. Tables were loaded with dishes of caviar, herring, cold bortsch, roast pigs, and what-not. Henry the Eighth would have had indigestion in three minutes if he had been present. "Rasputin" sat in a far corner surrounded by a dozen Slavic beauty prize winners.

Phineas mused, "If Babette could see me, she'd crown me, haw!"

The revelers reveled far into the night. Ivan kept poking Phineas in the ribs and pointing to a big Russky in a general's uniform who never kept his eyes off the honored guest.

"It is General Serge Trouzerzoff," Ivan whispered when the fair damsels near Rasputin went to sleep one by one. "The big man wit' him he is Wotajawful E. Bitoff. But somet'ing tails me ze general is wan fake, my fran'. Ah—look. The dam' she pulls the whiskers. Ho—he is vary vary mad. He grabs his beard. I tall to you, huh, my fran'?"

"Boys, I got an idea he's going to get tough," Phineas choked. "But it's a swell idea I got. I've already framed the other big Kraut. Now if I can get the Russkys to send Trouzerzoff to Siberia he would not fight with no Krauts after that. If Trouzerzoff is von Blotz—"

"Look—he com's this way," Ivan gulped. "My fran' he vill expose you. Let's runsky—all is lost. He is wit' Grand Duke Gitoffski."

Phineas, alias Rasputin, rose to his feet. He pointed to the samovar and then held up a small paper sack. It was labeled POISON. The word meant nothing to the groggy revelers but the skull and cross-bones on the paper did. Ivan Barberzitch got up. He stretched out his arms and yelled in Russian:

“Hah—the holy one he does not forget. One time you poison him. Now he poisons you—yah? With the tea—and in the caviar is the bird shot greased with a terrible poison, too. So! In three hours the pains they start shooting, my fran’s—”

A terrific howl shook the palace. Those who could navigate started a stampede for the open. Vodka-Meery Russkys nose-dived and had their beards stepped on. General Trouzeroff slipped on a mess of caviar and skidded halfway across the polished floor. He knocked yelling revelers down like tenpins. Phineas saw the general straighten out his beax’d when he got up. Fur coats and jewels cluttered the floor. Bitoff, fighting to get to the nearest Russky stomach pump specialist, set fire to his beard accidentally by getting too near the samovar. The last Rasputin’s image saw of Bitoff was a pennon of smoke diving through a window.

“Cripesky!” Ivan yelled. “It is wan hall of mess you have start’, my fran’. Now we should go—yah!”

General Trouzerzoff, however, had not left the hall. He staggered toward Phineas, a big sword in his hand. It could have spitted a buffalo with one thrust.

“Rasputin, *hein?* Fakir! Trigks you make. You fool nodt me like *der dumkopf* Russkys. I bedt you I know you yedt. You yoomp off *der* train—Ah, *das* Pingham *du bist!* I murter you *und*—”

“He’s spoutin’ Kraut,” Phineas yipped. “It’s von Blotz with a fake beaver, haw-w-w-w! Smack him, Ivan! Then we’ll leave him here as Rasputin an’ the Russkys will blame the Kaiser for sendin’ him over to upset Russia. Boys, am I a diplomat, haw-w-w-w!”

“I make idt *der* minces meat *mitt* you, oopstardt!” howled General Trouzerzoff, alias von Blotz, as he swung his war knife.

KERWHOP!

A vase big enough to hide Ali Baba and all his forty crooks broke against Trouzerzoff’s noggin. He went head first into a great silver bowl of stuff that looked like a mixture of buckshot and ink.

“Awright, Ivan,” Phineas howled, “drag him into that private room back here. Hurry up while the Russkys are lookin’ for doctors. I’ve got my bag here with all my tools. I’ll make history, Ivan, haw! I bet Kerensky, Lenin, Trotsky, the Czar, and everybody else will be surprised, huh? That’s it—toss him in, Ivan, and we’ll go to work on the bum.”

THE metamorphosis took place with incredible speed. Ivan Barberzitch marvelled as Phineas removed

the soiled vestments of Rasputin and draped them over the frame of the fake General Trouzeroff. Phineas began to make over the Von’s face next. Then, in less than a half hour, Phineas went to work on himself—made himself up as General Trouzerzoff.

Von Blotz lay on the floor, a very good counterpart of Rasputin, the holy devil who had come back across the River Styx.

“Ow-w-w-w!” gasped Ivan. “It is so mix’ op, my fran’. Wance you are von Zeidlitz, nex’ you are Rasputin, then you meet Russian who is not Russian, an’ now you are him—but you ain’t. Oy, we run now, yah? I feel it my t’roat alrady cot op.”

“Well, I bet I’ve made the Kaiser mad enough with the Russkys, huh Ivan?” Phineas yipped. “But—er—somebody’s coming. Everybody seems to be comin’! Maybe it’s black and red and white Russians and Soviets an’—let ‘em in, Ivan, before they knock down the door. Haw!”

“Wha-a-a? Listen, my fran’, I have it Olga an’ the liddle farm. I lak to go back—we ron now, yah?”

Phineas himself opened the door. Three glittering-eyed Russky officers stood glaring in at Rasputin. Soldiers with pig-stickers open for business ganged behind them. They gargled a lot of words and began to maul Rasputin. One lifted his beard, the other his wig. A Russky general jumped up and down and tore at his own beard.

Ivan told Phineas afterward that the general had cried: “By the beard of the Czar, it is a trick. A German—the iron cross aroun’ his neck. The Germans—hellsky! They upset our Russia—try an’ steal it from under our beards. Ya-a-a-ah! Arrest that man! We send him to the salt mines—Siberia. The Kaiser he will hear somet’ing! Get Comrad Lenin—find Kerensky! We must stick together. Where is Trotsky? It is the plot to steal Russia—”

Ivan urgently nudged Phineas. The Boonetown, Iowa, masquerader nodded and eyed an open door. He turned to go. Something tugged at his black beard. It came loose, caught in the button on his Russky great coat.

“Ow-w-w-w!” roared Ivan. “Run, my fran’!”

“I ain’t deaf,” Phineas yelped and barged into the next room. “I will do more than trotsky to the drosky, Ivan? Did you leave it where I told you—oh-h-h!” A bullet spat against the wall. Another spat through the skirt of his Russky coat. A window yawned in front of him and Phineas went through it head first and pancaked in a snow-tank. Ivan plunked after him

and helped drag Phineas out. Years of tugging and hauling on the mat had built up Ivan's muscles. He lifted Phineas with a half nelson and leg hold and ran to the drosky with him as if the Yank had been a sack of grain.

"Boys!" hipped Ivan's burden as he landed in the Russky sled. "That's the old fight! I hope the plugs have not got spavins. Give 'em the spurs, my fran'!"

"I don' know how you mak' jokes," Ivan gasped as he plied the whip, "when we get in soch a business. Oy, Olga is right. Nots you are! Giddap—giddap!"

"All the armies in Russia will be after us," Phineas groaned. "I wish I had half a Spad. I bet I would git it upstairs. Is there any airplanes in this cock-eyed country, Ivan, huh?"

"Huh—er—yah!" the Slavish tone breaker hurled above the din of flying hoofs and squeaking runners. "Wan I know where is it. Over on de Oka River. Wan Austrian he brings it down not vary soft. Wheels br'ak off an' some soldiers I see them fixing it wan time. Yah! You fly wan?"

"I'll fly two if you'll show 'em to me, Ivan," Phineas promised. "Drive me to the airdromski. Yah-h-h!"

"Yah, I t'ink I go home then," Ivan said. "I tak' id off my beard an' nobody he recodnizes me if they cotch on— naw?"

"Let's hope you're right, Ivan," replied the jokesmith. "That's quite a river, the Oka, if that's it I see. Why I believe—haw-w-w, there is an airplane over on the hill by the line of trees, Ivan. Step on it, my fran'! Nobody is working on it—I hope there's gas in it because if there ain't you will have to drive me to Bar-Le-Duc, France, somehow. We should make it by Easter or so."

IT WAS a strange but welcome sight to the miracle man from Boonetown, when the drosky drew near the Austro sky battler over which a tarpaulin had been stretched. To Phineas it looked somewhat like a Jerry Albatross, yet different. The control stick was the regular German horn type with a cutout switch in the center. He got into the pit in a hurry and instructed Ivan to spin the prop. The Russky managed to get the idea of it and bore down hard. Phineas goosed the throttle and the cylinders of the Benz motor began to suck gas. With the prop swinging, he got out and looked at the undercarriage. One of the wheels still looked a little on the bias. He lifted his head after the inventory to see three burly figures leap out from behind a boulder. But Ivan Barberzitch started to work

on them with a tree limb as thick as his biceps. The last Russky was plunging into the arms of Morpheus when a big part of the Russian cavalry began to make themselves heard on top of a hill half a mile away.

"Adoo, my fran," Phineas called out, "Kick them rocks away from the wheels an' pray! Lafayette, I am comin' back!"

The Austrian crate rolled away, lurched like a drunk down a long incline. A wheel caved in near the end of the required run and Phineas desperately shifted the weight of the alien air wagon to the good wheel and battled with the unfamiliar controls. Soon the ground began to fall away from him and he was in the air. The crate began to lurch crazily as he started to claw for the high shelf above the Rusky Steppes.

"Haw-w-w-w-w! It is what these crates must do—Vienna rolls. Well, I am in the air and that is all I want for the nonce. What a ship, huh!" Finally he got it calmed down and lifted it to five thousand feet, pointing the prop boss toward the north star. Somewhere up there was the Baltic Sea.

NOVEMBER went by. December crept in on the warring factions along the western front. Then word came to the Allies that somebody had messed up the Bolshevik-Heinie merger. The Kaiser had demanded that a certain cousin of his be released from the Siberian klink. Kerensky, Trotsky, and Lenin said nix and other things that nettled Kaiser Bill no end. And so the Allied moguls were assured that caviar and hassenfeffer would never mix.

And then a strange tale reached Bar-Le-Duc. A Kraut flyer who had been forced down by Bump Gillis told how a certain von Zeidlitz, who was high up in the snooping department of Wilhelmstrasse, had made his way to an airdrome wearing the flying regalia of a Yank airman. In one of his pockets the Von had found a letter addressed to Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham. It was a dunning letter from a lunch wagon back in Boonetown, Iowa.

Brass hats and Major Garrity went into a huddle at once. The Old Man's eyes bugged out like those of a bat when he ripped out during the powwow, "Von Zeidlitz and von Blotz were the two Heinies who went to hatch up a merger with Lenin. Von Zeidlitz didn't go—so who was it who went to Russia? They arrested von Blotz in the guise of Rasputin. But who was it who escaped in the plane when the Russian army was right on his neck? The American Intelligence officers in Moscow report finding a book on the floor of the

room where Rasputin threw a brawl. It was titled, 'How to be the Life of the Party.' But I don't believe it! He couldn't get into Russia. He was broiled in a Spad. Just leave me, gentlemen—I don't feel so good."

In the big room outside Garrity's sanctum Captain Howell and Bump Gillis sat counting their fingers and asking each other questions. Even when they answered each other with mutual satisfaction, they still doubted their own sanity.

"Well, he got out of the Spad," insisted Bump. "We know that. But I guess he got smacked in that other crate. Huh—well, happy landin's, Carbuncle ol' kid!"

The siren started to shriek. A prop buzzed overhead. A machine gun started yammering. The Old Man and his puppets stampeded to the door to see a Boche crate come sliding down out of the night sky. A beam of light cut down from the ailen ship and strayed over the tarmac. In another half minute a Jerry Tripe kissed the ground with its trucks. Yanks came in fanwise, Sergeant Casey in the lead. The boss ackemma was waving a service revolver in a dare for the Boche to start something.

"Why—er—haw-w-w-w!" blared a familiar voice. "I don't feel like no more fights, Casey. Ah-h-h, it's good to be home." And Phineas Pinkham, wearing the flying leather of a Boche airman, dropped to the ground and ripped off his leather casque. "H'lo bums!" he sang out. Then he sat down and mopped a steaming brow.

"Boy, I been through plenty. Is my dome white? I pancaked that Austrian buggy near the Jerry ditches on the Eastern Front. I run and hid an' got into a Boche dough's uniform. They found me an' tossed me in with the rest of the Kaiser's army—but they didn' know I

could fly. So one day I stole a Tripe an'—well—I been four days gittin' here. I had a bandage around my pan covered with ketchup so I didn't have to talk when I stopped at Kraut fillin' stations for gas. I giss they was wise to me at the last place as they started shootin' when I took off, my fran's! Who's got some vodka—er—coneyac? Where's the C.O.? Does Garrity still run this joint?"

"He—er—fainted," the Recording Officer gulped. "They're fannin' him now."

"Well, when he comes to," Phineas grinned, "tell him Rasputin would like to—haw-w-w-w—see him. Gosh, I still don't believe it myself so I'm goin' to bed to wake up. Bomb soursky, bumskis!"

OLD MAN GARRITY and a big brass hat tiptoed into the Pinkham hut a few minutes later. Phineas was snoring loudly. There were a couple of letters on the table showing much wear and tear. The brass hat told the Major they were not fakes. They were letters from the Russian crowned heads to Rasputin.

Rufus Garrity said "ulp!" and passed out again. The brigadier staggered to his car and waved the driver to head out.

"Where to, sir?" the non-com asked.

"Huh? Oh, India—ha! ha!" the brass hat laughed. "Take me to the Taj Mahal—ha ha!"

"B-But—er—but—"

"Anythin's possible in this war, my man," the officer gurgled. "Carry on— ha ha!"

"Stewed," the noncom commented and stepped on the petrol. "I'll drive him to Barley Duck an' back. That'll sober him up. What a *guerre!* Whatta *guerre!*"