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**PHINEAS  
PINKHAM**  
howl

# FLIGHT OPERA

written and illustrated by  
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*That letter the War Department tossed across the Atlantic smack onto Garrity's desk certainly had an innocent appearance. But when it was opened, the 9th Pursuit was turned upside down so fast that it looked like the 6th. For Phineas Pinkham had been made a COLONEL!*

**H**ISTORY'S PAGES SHOW US that very strange things have happened in wars. They tell us that Hannibal pushed a big herd of pachyderms over the Alps to stomp on the Roman legions. They tell us about the wooden hobby horse that the Greeks pushed through the gate of Troy and how the faces of the Trojan boys

went red when they discovered that the jokers from Athens had not come in to open a restaurant. There is the tale about George Washington crossing the Delaware when it was filled with ice cakes and how his Continentals kicked the Hessians around because they had been drinking too much New Jersey corn.

But the strangest thing that ever happened in

any war took place in France in the year of our Lord Nineteen Hundred and Eighteen. Somebody made Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham a colonel!

It was appropriate that the bombshell burst on the drome of the Ninth Pursuit Squadron on the night before the Fourth. Major Garrity stood in front of the Frog farmhouse which was Squadron Headquarters. The Old Man's hands were balled into fists that looked as big as Virginia hams. Sergeant Casey could have ignited a stogey with one of the C.O.'s eyes which were raised toward the sky with a venomous light in them. That pugnacious jaw, with which the birds of Garrity's flock were only too familiar, was thrust out like a stone step in front of a red brick house.

"Skipped out on you again, did he, Howell?" he ripped into the "A" Flight foreman. "Well, I'll burn that big-eared mug's empennage when he gets down to earth this time. I'll—"

"But I hear they're goin' to promote Carbuncle," Bump Gillis cut in, "because it will save making so many medals for the bum. The Wing told Pershing that he is the outstanding—"

"Nitwit," supplied the Major belligerently. "Putting that crackpot in a brass hat's suit would be like dressing up a field mouse in a tiger's topcoat. But," he roared, "I'm in no mood for jokes. Just wait 'til that flap-eared whasisit gets back here!"

EVEN while the Old Man was sounding off two things were coming to pass. Phineas Pinkham was on his way home from a solo jaunt over Alsace Lorraine to see if *Herr Hauptmann* von Spieler had soared into the sky again. The Kraut's ribs had had ten days in which to knit, and to the Boonetown pilot's way of thinking, the Von would lose no time in getting back upstairs to crack down on the Yank who had put him to bed. "Well," the truant Boonetown birdman mumbled disappointedly. "I don't see the big hunk of limberger so I guess I'd better go along home an' git what is comin'. Haw-w-w-w! I wonder if I really did get promoted?" As Phineas was skimming over Bar-Le-Duc a big official looking envelope was brought to the Operations office of Squadron Nine. The Old Man cast a wary eye at it, then sank down into his chair to rest his feet while he worried. His fingers were itching to rip the thing open when the sound of the Pinkham Spad bore down on the drome and deafened everyone within a mile. The Old Man tore out of his office in time to see the Boonetown joker circle the field five or six times, dive down onto a hangar, "burn" the roof

with his undercarriage and zoom again. Once more he dived, his shimmering prop pointed straight at the Major. Garrity flattened himself in a hurry and realized immediately that he had ducked face first into a puddle of muddy water. He was still snorting like a person rescued from drowning after the third dunk, when Phineas sauntered toward the farmhouse as if nothing extraordinary had happened at all.

"Bong sour!" the tardy one sang out airily. "Did ya have a good trip, Major? Haw-w-w-w!"

"Did I—?" exploded the C.O. "Get in there—into that office! I'm going to bust the daylight's out of you!"

"Awright, awright," the culprit sniffed. "I'm goin', ain't I? Whatcha want to aim rocks at me for?"

Inside the Major's sanctum Pinkham started talking fast to make his report before anyone else could begin to tear into him. "I did not desert As the hot lead zipped, Captain Howell," he declared. "Who am I to scoff at discipline? I just got into a cloud bank. And when I got out of it I was all turned around or something. There I was over the enemy coalhods and didn't even know it! That's the only thing wrong with the Pinkhams—no sense of direction. Once my Uncle Fink started out for Alaska and where do you think he landed? It'll kill you, Major! In Tahiti. Can you beat that?"

The Old Man finally found his voice and roared, "Shut up! Listen to me—if you ever get up in the sky again, it will only be from sitting on a powder dump just as a lighted lamp is tossed into it. I've had enough! I'm going to—"

"Why Major," Phineas started to protest but stopped when his eyes lit on the envelope lying on the desk before him. "Huh, is that for me? Sure—and it's from Washington. Excuse me while I read it?" And as though Garrity had been discussing the weather, he turned to the perusal of his mail. Phineas was quite as used to the C.O. boiling over as are the peasants who live on the slopes of Mt. Etna. Apoplexy threatened the Major while the hero from Boonetown gave his undivided attention to the letter.

"Uh—why look here, sir," he tossed out. "I am promoted. I am a Colonel! Oh, boys! A brass hat! Look at the signature—none other than—why, what is the matter, Major? Are ya sick? Oh-h-h-h," and Phineas galloped out into the big room where the pilots were sampling what the mess had to offer. "Hurry," he hollered. "The Old Man has—he has passed out! Git a doctor! Git an ambulance! Hurry, somebody!"

Captain Howell and Lieutenant Gillis barged into





the Operations shack. The R.O. was slapping Garrity on the chops while the Adjutant held a bottle of witch hazel under his nose.

"What did you say to him, you crackpot?" yipped Gillis.

"I just told him I was made a Colonel," Phineas gulped. "An' he fainted. Hey-ey, Bump! Why—er—Howell, now ya gotta help me pick this bum up." But it was no use. Phineas had to catch the flight leader, too, as Howell's legs turned to kite strings. "What's the matter with this flight, huh? They must've et something."

Major Rufus Garrity began to come to when the miracle man from Iowa poured a shot of cognac down his and the individual throats of Messrs. Gillis and Howell.

"You'd think nobody was ever made a colonel before," the cause of it all grumbled disgustedly. "Huh, just because—"

The Old Man tried out his voice and it was as strong as ever. "It's the first time nobody was made a

brass hat. The Secretary of War and the President of the United States have been cheated! Did they see your picture? I'll send one to them—aw-w-w-w cripes! I am going upstairs for the rest of the week. Tell Goomer to bring me a bottle, somebody."

"Insultin' me, huh?" Phineas erupted as Captain Howell showed signs of life and Bump Gillis began to reach normal. "I am a colonel and want some respect. Oh, boys! Will I kick you ordinary Spad pushers into line! I got a lot of things to get hunk for."

"I am not going to salute you," Bump Gillis threatened. "Even if I have to go to Levensworth for the rest of my natural life. What a *guerre*, what a *guerre*!" he sighed.

Howell looked at him and said, "Here's an aspirin, Bump."

"I need four," replied the new officer's hutmate.

THREE weeks later Colonel Phineas Pinkham arrived back on the drome of the Ninth Pursuit Squadron. He climbed out of a big official looking

boiler and looked around him with a superior air. "Huh," he called to Sergeant Casey, "you're a mess, my man. Don't you ever police up? And salute when you see a superior officer!" Jauntily he walked away with an orderly stalking him. Sergeant Casey's teeth ground together and for the first time in his life he became the victim of a homicidal mania. A broad grin decorated the homely countenance of Phineas Pinkham as he bore down on the Frog farmhouse. Six pilots glowered at him—and kept their seats.

"Do you see this uniform, you bu—er—gentlemen?" the brass hat extraordinary queried. "How about standing at attention when a Colonel addresses you? Put down that firewood, Lieutenant! Assault is a serious charge. You, over there, with the twitching nose—what is your name?"

"You know damn well what it is, you—you—er—sir," Bump Gillis choked. He dropped the club just as Major Garrity strode out of his office. When the Old Man saw Phineas, he reeled around in a complete circle and staggered across the room.

"You the commanding officer here?" grunted Phineas very sternly. "Sloppy looking bunch. Ever take a bath? Look at that man near the window—a frowsy looking—"

"Why you big, flop-eared—" exploded Captain Howell.

"Have a care, Captain" growled Phineas, struggling to hold back a loud guffaw. "I will have you busted."

"I want to resign," the flight leader cracked. "Right now, too. I won't take any guff from that—"

Major Rufus Garrity walked up to Phineas, shoved his finger close to the Pinkham proboscis. "Look here, you," he bawled, "I don't care a tinker's dam if you are a brass hat and carry a cane, Pinkham. You will never be anything but a pain in the neck to me. Tell Chaumont that; I still don't believe it. After this I would not look surprised if an ostrich came in here wearing an evening gown with a corsage of orchids. Huh! Go fly a kite, Colonel!"

"My man," harumphed Colonel Pinkham, "you must be disciplined. I will make an example of you. But now we will get down to business—that is, if you have any Spads that can get up off the ground. And by the way, Major. I don't believe you have very efficient grease mon—er—mechanics around here. Sloppy looking Spads—"

"If we hadn't had a freckle-faced nincompoop here who broke up eleven of them in one year, we might be in better shape," the Old Man thundered. "Hurry up,

Pinkham, spit out what's on your mind."

"Colonel to you, sir."

"Nuts to—"

"Shut up, Gillis," Garrity clipped. "The fathead's got us where he wants us now. But if it takes me a million years, I'll get even with him."

The pride of the Pinkhams averted his head to hide a grin. Never in the course of his adventurous life had he so thoroughly enjoyed himself as he was at that moment.

"I suppose you've heard about *Fraulein* Satan?" he chirped. "Well, it is said that she's on this side of the lines—in this very sector. And looking for information as to how many doughs—soldiers—are going to get into the big drive. Chaumont thinks she may even be disguised as a Heinie airman. Every time you knock down one who is still breathing, I want you to make sure who he is."

"Give us the Social Register," Captain Howell snapped. "Or maybe it would be better if we all carried a mouse with us and if the Kraut squealed, we would know it was a dame. Should we arrest her if we find her?"

"You are very impudent," countered Phineas Pinkham loftily. "Well, I must be popping off now. Those are your orders. You know what to do. I would stay for mess but knowin' what slum-gullion ordinary looeys have to eat—well, I will pass it up. Haw-w-w-w! Er—bong sour, an' don't forget what I said about discipline here as I am stickler for it." When the door had closed behind him, his ex-squadron mates looked at one another miserably.

"He carries a cane, the no-chinned hyena," sighed Bump. "If only a fairy would come along with a wand, I would ask to be made a general so I could kick that bat-eared cluck across *la belle France*!"

The Old Man just looked at him weakly, shook his head, and reeled off toward the stairs.

And five miles out on the road, Colonel Pinkham was doubled up in mirth. "Boys, I must be dreamin'," he gasped. "Did I fix those bums. Haw-w-w-w-w! I can see Bump frothing at the mouth—and the Old Man—haw-w-w-w! What a swell *guerre*! But I miss a Spad. This bein' a brass hat ain't all what it's cracked up to be."

Now Phineas Pinkham's promotion set skullduggery to work. It was bound to. His brother brass hats, having been harassed by the products of the Pinkham trick brain, got into a huddle and swapped suggestions. A colonel with a singed mustache apparently produced

the best idea. One of the other officers, whose tunic had been sprayed with green ink from a fake Pinkham *boutonniere*, nodded with grim satisfaction upon hearing it.

Over on the Ninth Pursuit drome Captain Howell and Lieutenant Gillis met in the latter's hut—likewise to discuss the possibility of knocking Phineas Pinkham off his lofty perch.

"It is that old D.H.9 that interests me," said Bump. "It is out there about four miles from Bar-Le-Duc. Even if it has been washed off the books, it could get up after a little goin' over. Casey told me—"

"Ha," Howell enthused, "puttin' a crate where he can get his hands on it is like smearing honey all over the doorway of a bear's cubicle. I'm for it! I'll bet it'll work. When he comes in again, we'll 'fix up' that road near where that D.H. is sitting and—shake, Bump. Boy, I hand it to you!"

"We'll spread the word to him that von Schram is in the sector, too," Bump plotted.

Across the lines the German *Herr Obersts* were in a huddle, too. But the Krauts did not know that Phineas had been promoted. The Pinkham skin was all they wanted. They didn't care whether it belonged to a colonel or a corporal. A big Teuton with a neck like a Spanish bull was gutturaling.

"Ach," he rumbled with an emphatic bang of his fist against the table top, "*das* Pingham he shouldt be *kaput*, *ja!* *Das ist der besser idea was ist Wilhelmstrasse* shouldt get. Already *der Fraulein* Satan she *ist* back of *der* lines, but *der Dumkopfs* they don't shouldt know. Zo innocent *der Fraulein ist, hein?*"

Another Prussian Kultur pupil chiuckled. "*Ja*, she vill gedt *das* Pingham *und--pouf!* *Hoch der Kaiser!*" and he raised a stein of beer.

Which all goes to show you that the exponent of magic in all its forms was sitting about as pretty in his new colonel's uniform as Napoleon on the night before Waterloo.

It was in Nancy that the luring word was dropped into one of the lily-pad ears of the Pinkham scion. A Brigadier spoke of a woman who kept a small flat in the Ville Vielle. "Yessir," he said to Phineas, as they walked past the Church of the Cordeliers, "I know her slightly. Very famous woman. Asked me about you, Colonel. Apparently she has seen you about. You—er—have quite a way with the—er—ladies, eh, what?"

"Well," swaggered Colonel Pinkham, "they don't exactly sic airedales onto me. Who is she?" He flourished his cane.

"Ah," breathed his companion, "who hasn't heard of her? The beautiful woman here to entertain the A.E.F.! I can see her now singing the part of Elsa in Lohengrin at the Metropolitan Opera House. Ah-h-h-h, her flaxen tresses—her big blue eyes—"

"Boys," exclaimed Phineas, "I have heard of her. Somebody told me that compared to her Jenny Lind sounded like a flock of crows getting chased by a burst of archie. Haw-w-w-w! How about givin' her a call, huh?"

The brigadier was only too willing. Within fifteen minutes Colonel Pinkham and Frieda Stenje were talking like old grammar school sweethearts. Babette seemed very far away while Phineas was staring at the blue-eyed heart stimulant. Frieda played a couple of her personal records for him on the phonograph. Her voice lulled him into a state bordering on coma.

"So maybe you lak to have them?" Frieda cooed, handing two records to Phineas after the echoes of her voice had wafted into the silences across the Meurthe. "Whan you play tham, you think of Frieda, no?"

"Boys, wait until I git back to Boonetown," enthused her victim. "I'll panic them in the barber shop. How 'bout autographin' the records on the edges with a needle, huh?"

The evening waxed on. Phineas was sipping at a glass of strong spirits when somebody burst through the door. Frieda squealed. A big Frog officer glared at Colonel Pinkham.

"*Sacre!*" he screeched. "*Avec* Frieda, my wife, *oui?* Peeg! *Chien!* I keel you!"

"Oh, Francois," the Norwegian thrush wailed. "No—not that! Not the gun."

Phineas, seeing the big Frog officer reach for a gun that was on the mantel, leaped out of his chair, taking off with plenty of speed. *Bang! Bang! Bang!* The Yankee high officer gunned through the door and his initial momentum carried him across the little square. A bullet ploughed a little ditch along the top of his right ear. Another whined off the cobble stones and went zipping through the window of a bakeshop. Phineas ducked into a side street, crabbed in through an open door that was below street level, and hid behind a pile of empty wine kegs. After wiping sweat from his brow, he began to give heed to his brain which was asking him a moot question. Why had that Frog known just where to find that gun?

"There's somethin' fishy about it," Phineas muttered. "His wife, huh? That snail eater had a map like a wart hog. Gosh, it's not so hot bein' a brass hat.



I—"Light from a window across the street played down upon a heap of old magazines close to the new Yankee brass hat. He picked up one and flipped the pages. It was an old copy of a magazine printed in the home land of the A.E.F. and on one page he saw an item that intrigued him. HAVE FUN AT PARTIES, he read. PLAY THE ZITHER WITHOUT A SINGLE LESSON. PROFESSOR BILBO'S MAGIC SYSTEM IS YOURS FOR TWENTY-FIVE CENTS.

"I will look into that," Phineas promised himself and folded the magazine up. With it in his pocket he evacuated the hiding place. Out in the square there was great excitement. The Frog officer who had assaulted him, eyes a little glassy, was in the hands of two *gendarmes*. A big Frog limousine stood near the curb and a big man with a spade-like beard and a lot of medals was tossing a load of French at him.

A Yankee officer moved close to Phineas and chuckled, "Ha, quite a lot of excitement here. That Frog Colonel chased a Yankee brass hat out of the place. When they arrested him for attempted murder he said he didn't know that the gun was loaded. He swore by Lafayette and Joan of Arc that he was telling it straight. Funny, huh?"

"Yeah, haw-w-w-w!" the Boonetown pilot echoed the laugh dispiritedly. "Well, I gotta be goin'."

BACK at his hotel Colonel Pinkham got quite a shock. Four of his fellow officers eyed him very nastily. One cleared his throat noisily and trumpeted: "So you were in a brawl awhile ago, Pinkham? Calling on a French officer's wife, huh? Fellow took a shot at you, too. That is conduct unbecoming an officer, Pinkham. Nasty mess will come out of this. I suggest you resign. We—er—heard about—"

"Yeah?" Phineas yelled. "How? Nobody knew it was me there but the Frog—and he has gone to the bastille. So it wasn't that bird that told you!"

The brass hats swayed like tenpins when the ball knocks one down and leaves the rest vibrating. Phineas eyed the brigadier who had led him to the abode of the Norwegian thrush. "I get it. It was a frame. Tryin' to bust me, huh? I'm not good enough for you, huh? I'll show you bums. You wait. Resign, huh? Haw-w-w-w-w!"

Two hours later the word came that Colonel Francois Jacquet, in the bastille, had discovered to his utter horror that he had been relieved of a very important leather case somewhere or another in which were papers concerning troop movements and maps of the sector. Intelligence officers and all other kinds

hot-footed it to the home of Frieda Stenje. The prima donna was highly indignant.

"Hah, I mak' it wan joke," the pulchritudinous soprano screamed temperamentally. "The French officer plays, too. It is the joke and you come to mak' it that I am the spy. I call the Ambassador. I write the King. I am very much insult."

"But the Colonel was arrested because the gun was loaded with real bullets," an Intelligence officer shot at her. "He was to have blanks in it. Now explain that, Madame Stenje."

"What I know about gons?" Frieda trilled, tearing at her hair. I do not know a good bullet from wan bad bullet. Search here. You find nodding? Go. I write King—"

When all was over and Frieda was given a clean slate, Phineas took his departure heaping a barrage of threats onto the heads of the plotters.

"Boys, are you in a mess?" he chuckled. "It's conspiracy and I will tell Pershing. Whose fault is it if the papers have fallen into the hands of the Kaiser's villains? I ask you. Haw! Adoo, gentlemen. Sleep tight. It means only about twenty years for all of ya in Atlanta, haw-w-w!"

A COUPLE of days later Phineas Pinkham called to the Ninth Pursuit Squadron to pep up the Spad pushers and voice the dire need for the apprehension of the spies who were gnawing into the box of plans of the Yankee drive.

"They think you've all quit flying at Chaumont," he plagued them. "I was sent down to give you a shot from the needle as the Allies are in great danger and they know I have a way with me on the Ninth Pursuit drome. I—"

Major Garrity made a very uncomplimentary noise.

"Awright, Major," Phineas reprimanded him, "just keep it up. I will have to fire you, you know. I just came here in a nice friendly way to ask you to make these bums—er—men watch out close for spies getting picked up at night. All I get is insults but those are the orders and I expect them to be carried out." He twirled his cane and stifled a yawn.

Suddenly Bump Gillis opened up. "Uh—er—Colonel Pinkham, sir," he drawled in an exaggerated show of respect. "I hear that *Rittmeister* von Schram is in this sector."

"Huh?" Phineas dropped his cane. "Yeah? That big Heinie fathead here? I—er—harumph!" He resumed his haughty mien. "I suppose that's why you stay close to the ground like a cutworm, huh? Scared of

the *Rittmeister*, huh? Well, I expect you to have flights in the air all day tomorrow, Garrity. Wing's orders. Bong—good evening to you bu—er men.”

Outside Phineas paused, eyes alight. “Von Schram,” he muttered. “Oh boys, the biggest Heinie flyer since Richthofen. An’ I have to be a colonel with a shine on my pants! Huh—er—I would just like to git one crack at that big—”

Inside the farmhouse Bump Gillis was winking at Captain Howell. The latter went to a window and signalled to somebody across the tarmac near the hangars. Sergeant Casey received the signal and grinned. Then he started for a motorcycle in the sidecar of which were twenty empty grog bottles. The mechanical bug chugged away just before Colonel Pinkham climbed into his means of official locomotion. Yes, skullduggery was abroad and it was not crawling on hands and knees.

Chaumont was in a dither. Plans that had been carefully guarded for weeks were in jeopardy. Colonel Francois Jacquet was reduced lower than a sub-cellar. Human bloodhounds clad in khaki searched high and low over the Frog officer's back trail but they could not find the leather case. Spads flew at night to frustrate any Hun attempts via air to pick up secret agents. *Fraulein* Satan was seen in a dozen places at the same time. All this did not worry Phineas Pinkham as he rode out of the drome. He was thinking of a Spad seat and how nice it would feel to his empennage. Oh, for a crack at von Schram—but how to go about it?

It happened, however, that Phineas had not reckoned with Bump Gillis and Captain Howell.

At a cross-roads two miles from Bar-Le-Duc the car which carried Colonel Phineas Pinkham seemed to hit a mined area. Three loud reports lifted the Boonetown patriot's skypiece right off his head. The car wobbled and lurched like a bear with corns and landed in the ditch. The driver got out and went back into the road. Then he called to Phineas and pointed.

“Broken bottles, sir,” said the non-com. “All over the place. Some lousy—”

“Why you have no sense of humor,” Colonel Pinkham chided him. “Imitation is flattering. That is what I used to —er—start in fixing the flats, Corporal. Toot sweet, comprenny?”

Just across the field near a line of trees Phineas thought he saw a light blink. He started in that direction and in less than three minutes was staring at a frazzled two-seater that was squatting in the shadows. A calculating gleam came to the Pinkham

optics. His fingers itched. Turning, he yelled at the non-com and the man trotted up to him.

“I’m goin’ to take this thing up,” he told his chauffeur. “It ought to take me the rest of the way. Get up there by the prop and when I tell you, you turn it over. I’ll see what makes it tick, if anything. Haw-w-w-w!”

Inside the pit, Colonel Pinkham heaved a deep sigh of contentment. He switched on and yelled at his one-man ground crew: “Contact!”

“Huh?”

“Spin the prop, dope,” shouted Phineas. “Then duck!”

The dough finally got the idea and Phineas soon had the senile D.H.9 perking like an asthmatic owl. To the crate-hungry trickster from Boonetown, Iowa, the sound was as smooth as quicksilver running over velvet. He gave the wreck the gun and it waddled across the field duck fashion. With a creaking of bones and a rattle of joints the ship took off and Flight Sergeant Casey, hidden in the bushes a hundred yards away, danced up and down with unrestrained glee.

“They got him now!” he chortled. “That squares a lot of things, ya crackpot!” he yelled up to where Phineas was fighting to lift the old two-seater to some kind of altitude. “Oh, if you only break your neck, you fresh mug!”

AND now Colonel Pinkham was skimming toward Nancy with a satisfied grin on his face. “Haw-w-w-w!” he gloated. “I am dumb, huh? They’re out to bust me for stealin’ this crate. Bump Gillis is in on this. Broken bottles, huh! They miss me, that’s it, haw-w! Boy, it’s swell to have such friends—the big bums!”

The astute Phineas made a landing eight miles from Nancy. He ran the two-seater under a great blanket of camouflage that had been hung between two trees on some previous occasion to mask an anti-aircraft gun. Soon afterwards he was shank’s maring toward the famous old city in which Charles the Bold was wont to throw binges. The Wing had not seen Colonel Pinkham for days, but the fact seemed to have slipped the irresponsible Yank’s mind. Chaumont was getting worn out with listening to complaints about the Pinkham free lance artistry. Major Rufus Garrity notified the wing just about that time that Colonel Phineas Pinkham had stolen a D.H.9 and that something had to be done about it. But nobody saw Phineas Pinkham land the D.H.9 and even Chaumont was not interested in circumstantial evidence. Captain

Howell and Bump Gillis sulked in their huts at the outcome of their plot and swore to cut themselves a piece of Pinkham throat whenever the opportunity presented itself.

In Nancy Colonel Pinkham sat in a hotel room and perused the magazine he had lifted out of the cellar of the Frog abode in Ville Vielle. Having torn out the zither playing ad, he flipped the pages indolently. Suddenly he sat up as though his chair had been charged with electricity and his eyes snapped open before a page of photographs featuring the world's most interesting personalities. Among them was a picture of Frieda Stenje, the Norwegian thrush. Right next to it was a picture of a bull-necked individual captioned: Otto von Schram, leading basso of the Leipzig Opera Company.

"Well, I'm a—for the love of—can you beat—?" stuttered the Yankee flying officer. "Right close together—that's funny." He looked at the date on the magazine. It was January 1915. Back went his bulging eyes to the paragraph that linked the two pictures. "Rumors have it on the Continent," he read, "that von Schram will not wed the Norwegian soprano until after the war is over. Von Schram will join the German Air Service immediately, it is said."

"Fancy that!" chirped the Boonetown pilot as a flight of thoughts began to wingslap inside his head. Slowly a cryptic grin began to spread over the war map of Colonel Phineas Pinkham. He forgot that he was being hunted by M.P.'s and sallied abroad to do a little shopping in Nancy. Two hours later he came walking across a cobbled square to his modest hotel. He carried a big package under one arm. His alert eyes caught a glimpse of two men lurking in front of the place. Their brassards caught the light from a nearby lamp and Phineas promptly right-ruddered, accelerated speed and came to the conclusion that he could do without his toothbrush and comb for the nonce.

"It's all for the Allies," he ruminated. "How can I track down dangerous spies sittin' in an armchair at the Wing? Haw-w-w-w! It's a lot of trouble everybody has gone to tryin' to bust me. It is like trying to help a burglar git out of jail when all the guards have gone on a strike and the doors have been taken off. Haw-w-w-w! Cripes, this contraption is heavy."

While Phineas was trekking toward the place where he had cached the D.H.9, the story went the rounds that he had deserted the U.S. Army and had fled the war zone in a stolen airplane. Major Garrity and his brood eyed one another bleakly.

"He'll git shot," groaned Bump Gillis. "And it's all my fault. Oh-h-h-h me!"

"Oh, I was in on it, too," Howell clipped. "We ought to have known he was desperate. That guy couldn't remain a colonel. Maybe he took that thing over the lines and got shot down in it. Casey said that it would come apart if a guy sneezed in it."

When Major Garrity heard how Howell, Gillis and Casey had connived to bait Colonel Pinkham, he threatened to tear them in bits.

"We thought you would be tickled, too," said Bump in a quavery voice. "You wasn't exactly wrapped up in the bum, sir. Didn't you try to fracture his skull more than once?"

The C.O. chased all three culprits out of the Operations shack with a wielded chair. Then he climbed up to his room to bask in self-condemnation. After all a guy could come to love even a kangaroo if he kept it around long enough.

Upon reaching the hiding place of the D.H.9 between Nancy and Toul, Phineas was overjoyed to find that no one had tampered with it. He slept beside it all night and in the morning began to fasten a phonograph to the floor of the rear pit. He put on a record when that task was completed and tied a length of twine to the miniature arm that set the record whirling. A test proved its efficiency. Phineas then repaired to the woods to wait for dusk. He hoped that some of the records that he had purchased in Nancy had not been used too much.

"Haw-w-w-w," he chuckled. "To think that some day I would sing opera. Well, I hope what I think is true is true. A Pinkham hunch is nothing to scoff at."

The day wore on. Phineas nibbled at a cake of chocolate for lunch. When the sun was about ready to don its pink and orange pajamas, he took helmet and goggles out of the pocket of his coat and put them on. The visored headpiece of a colonel was tossed into the bushes and Phineas had a sneaky feeling that he would have no further use for it.

NOW let us take a squint into a Heinie Staffel near Metz. A tall, barrel-chested Teuton with a voice that would drown out four fog horns, was standing close to a Fokker D-7 pulling on his gloves. The *Rittmtister* Otto Friedrich von Schram, great basso of German opera, grinned at his Staffel *Kommandant*.

"Ach, I find her if she is there, *Excellenz. Fraulein* Satan *ist* almost safe, *ja! Und das* Pingham? Dead he *ist, nein?* Weeks odder weeks ve hear notting from *der*



defilil. *Fraulein Satan* nefer fails, *hein? Auf Wiedersehn*, I go *und* take idt back *der Fraulein*.” With a magnificent gesture he swung up to his battle wagon, his stentorian voice booming a line from the immortal opera, *Faust*:

“*Den Bo-o-o-osen sind sie-e-e-e lo-o-o-o-os, die-e-e-e Bo-o-o-o-osen si-i-ind Geblieben—*”

The prop hardly drowned out his voice when he gave the Fokker power plant the works and shot down the field.

Across the lines, Phineas Pinkham, to a tune of protesting struts and loose wires, managed to get his D.H.9 off the ground. It climbed skyward with all the grace and agility of a hippo with rheumatism and the jokesmith pilot had but five thousand feet when he looked down at a chateau that squatted on the banks of the Moselle near Nomeny. There, he had learned three days before, Frieda Stenje had gone in a huff after her third degree in Nancy.

“A joke on Pinkham, huh?” the flying colonel from western Iowa soliloquized. “Haw-w-w-w! A loaded gun is no joke in any language. Now if the Frog had been a better shot, well, it would’ve been Finis Pinkham instead of Phineas, haw-w-w! I—I wonder—? The Frog said he thought there were blanks in it. Yeah—yeah, Eureka, as the Greek said when he looked for a good lunch wagon site. I—”

He looked around the sky territory. Another power plant was mixing it with the roar of his own asthmatic engine. A Fokker came thundering down. In the pit was the gloating Otto von Schram.

“*Ach, der Yangkee two-seater vunce!*” he said to himself gleefully. “I giff *der Krupp* spittle, *ja*.” He kept boring down through the ether, sent in a burst, and then became cognizant of the fact that the Allied ship was as devoid of armament as a dove carrying an olive branch in its teeth. Now there was music in Otto’s soul and therefore he could not be a ruthless squarehead. But he had to get down onto the carpet to see if *Fraulein Satan* was in the neighborhood. So he let the Pinkham crate

have it in the floating ribs.

Phineas cut the gun and pulled a string. Above the chant of the Fokker D-7 a silvery, high-pitched voice began to shimmer through the dusky firmament. Von Schram heard it as he overshot the D.H. and he shook as if palsy had seized him.

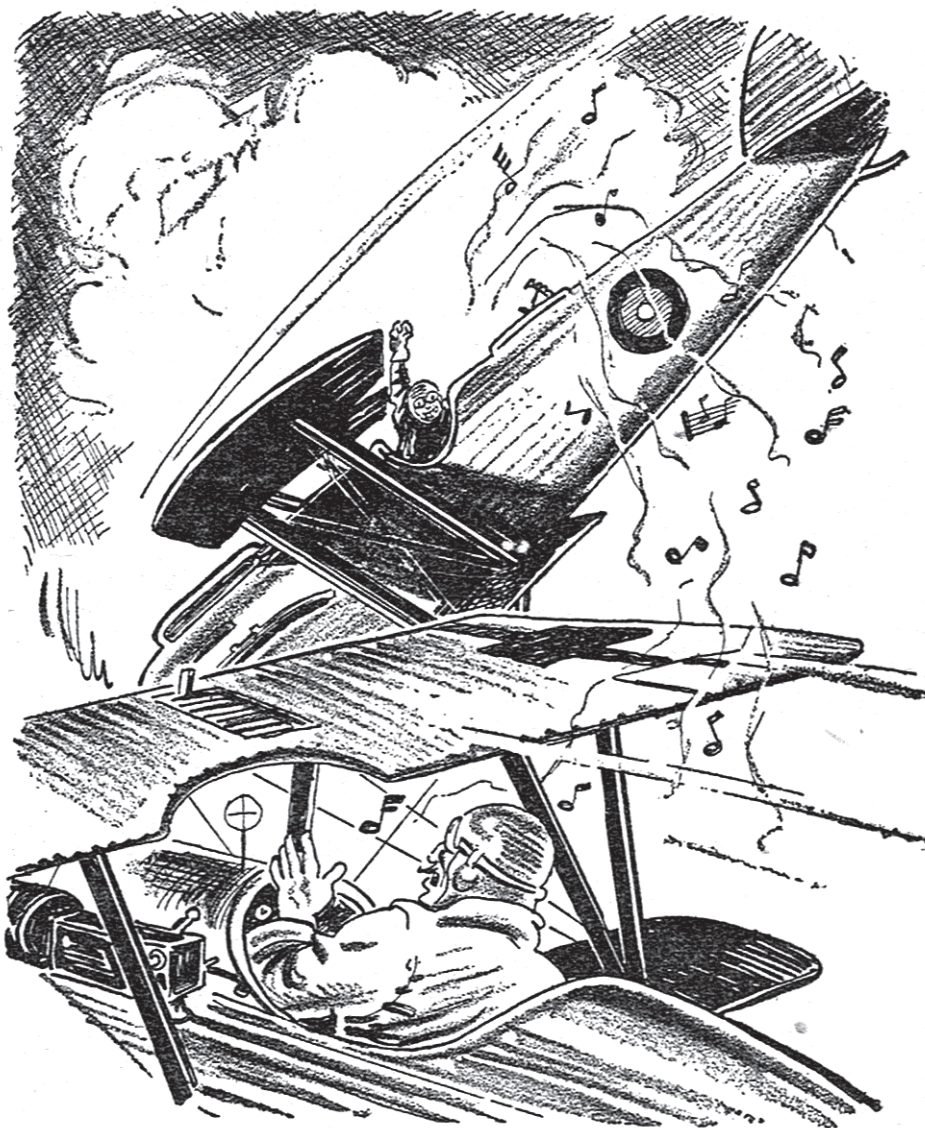
“*Nein, nein!*” he gutteraled. “*Das ist—nein* idt cannodt be. *Ach du Lieber! Mein Liebchen—Gott!*” He went into a loop and put a gag on the Mercedes. Clearer now were the soul-stirring strains of *To the Evening Star*:  
O-o-o-o-o-o! du-u  
me-e-ein ho-o-older,  
A-a-a-a-a-ben-  
n-nd stern. Wohl

*grusst—*”

“*Gott in Himmel!*” wailed Otto von Schram. “*Ach du Lieber!*” He pawed at both eyes and let the Fokker D-7 have its own head. “Noddings can I do when I hear idt—soft like *der eiderdown!*”

Colonel Pinkham side-slipped toward the German crate and poured shots from a service revolver into the shimmering prop.

“Boys, it worked!” he howled. “He’s gaga. Another



Pinkham idea is vindi—ow-wowow!” He tried to pull out of the way of the Fokker but a wingtip kissed one of Otto’s. Amid a sickening crackling sound both busses went spiraling to the carpet. “I—bet—they was blanks I shot,” Phineas gulped. “I should’ve knocked that prop dizzy with them slugs. I’ve been framed again, I bet—”

Phineas stopped talking then and laid his attention to fighting the drunken D.H. down to the real estate. Off to the left, three miles away, he caught a glimpse of the chateau on the Moselle. Twenty seconds later the two-seater kissed the earth, ground-looped and then lowered its snout and ploughed into a tree. Fifty feet away Phineas picked himself up and tested his superstructure. When he was sure everything was intact, he looked around for von Schram. A quarter of an hour passed before he sighted the Kraut. The man with the big voice was staggering out of a frog pond in the middle of which was the tail of the Fokker protruding like a church steeple.

Colonel Pinkham had to get his own feet muddy and wet to drag his quarry to dry ground. He tied von Schram securely with rope before all the Kraut’s marbles had rolled back into their grooves. By the time his eyes had uncrossed Phineas was standing beside him with a phonograph under his arm. There was a big horn attached to the instrument.

“Bong swar, mein Froind,” the Yank chortled in greeting. “Would you like it sung in English now? Haw-w-w-w!”

“*Was ist?*” yipped the Kraut. “*Ach, zo you are das Pingham! Der bick teet’ mit der ears, nein? Donnervetter! Der moosic box was das yedt. Ach Gott!*”

“If you’ll excuse me for a while,” said Phineas, “I must go and give a concert. First, though, I’ll put a muffler on your pipes as if you should start chirping, they’d hear you *Under den Lindens!* Haw-w-w-w! Open up the fly trap, *mein Herr*, or I’ll pry ‘em open. Nice teeth you haff *und* would you want to take them out efery night? Tsk tsk, *nein*. Open up now!”

“Now,” Phineas said to himself as he walked away, after tying and gagging his prisoner. “I will see if I am right about a double-play combination. It was a mistake to make me a swivel chair jockey as I am too much use to the Allies as a Looey. Oh, sa-a-ay it wi-i-ith mu-u-usic, beauti-ful-l-l music. Da da da, da-da-da-da, da da da—haw-w-w-w! I should sing for the bull in Carmen.”

THREE miles across country and Phineas came to a line of aspens on the banks of the Moselle. He

set the music box down, took off the record of the opera *Tannhauser* and selected a circular disc in which snuggled the booming voice of Otto von Schram. Out into the night, heading for the big gloomy chateau two hundred yards away, went the great lung power of Otto von Schram, toast of opera addicts of two continents: “*In ein-n-em Augenbli-i-ck ge-e-ewha-r-r-rt du-u-u-u Liebe. Wa-a-a-as muhe kawm-m-m, in la-a-a-nger Zeit—*”

While the music was blaring, Colonel Pinkham adjusted a big black curling mustache under his bugle. He had not the jowels of Otto but he could pull the collar of his coat up around his ears. His nose was big enough and anyway it would be dark under the aspens if anyone should succumb to the lure of the Heinie’s million-dollar tonsils.

“Gosh, I am deaf,” Phineas muttered. “If I have to keep this thing going— huh, do I see somethin’ moving already? Haw-w-w-w! Well, well, come into the parlor said the spider to the fly. What pretty teeth you ought to have. An1 what big eyes, says Gran’m. I—” The voice of Otto von Schram suddenly died. Phineas lifted the needle into the clear to cut out the scratching sound and kicked the phonograph, horn and all, down the banks of the Moselle. In the shadows he waited. A slim figure came close and a musical voice tickled the Pinkham otic assembly.

“Otto, my Otto,” said a voice filled with the yearning of a woman with bad heart palpitation. “You called—I com’!”

“*Liebchen!*” said Phineas from way down around his diaphragm. “*Comst du hier—ach Gott sie dank!*”

She came running and grabbed the Yank. Her head against his shoulder, she kept chattering: “I knew you would com’, Otto. I do not kill this Pingham—*der* French *Schwein* he missed. But great plans I haff stolen, *mein Liebe, ja. Der Kaiser*, he forgives Frieda, *nein?*” Her white face looked up into Phineas’ makeup at close quarters. “Kiss—Eek! You are nodt Otto. Who are you, you *verdamnt—?*”

“Bong sour, Frieda,” grinned Phineas. “How did you like the music? I just give Otto a treat upstairs with one of the records you gave me. Boys, he saw a million evening stars. Oh, you want to fight, huh? Lay off or I’ll have to smack you, Frieda. Haw-w-w-w! Papa’ll bat your little ears off if you make another pass—there, that’s right. *Fraulein* Satan, or I’m a goose with scales on.”

“Ugly peeg!” screeched Frieda Stenje alias *Fraulein* Satan. “I lak to scratch it the eyes, *Leutnant* Pingham!”

"Colonel to you," Phineas corrected her, rendering *Fraulein* Satan as harmless as a lamb groggy with succulent lettuce. The Norwegian Thrush, her feathers ruffled, sounded more like a cornfield crow as she strained at her bonds and called Colonel Pinkham a rat in Scandinavian and other languages.

"Well, adoo for now, *Fraulein*," he sang out unperturbed. "I must go and pick up a friend of yours. You can sing duets together while you are in a Yankee klink waiting to see your lawyer, haw-w-w! I get it now—Potsdam sent you down here to bump off the great Pinkham, huh? And you was in on that joke in Nancy—you put real slugs in that gun for the Frog to shoot at me. Tsk, ts, Frieda—was that nice? Well, I read an old magazine where I hid that night, little one, an' there was your picture alongside of Otto's. I put you two together and it added up right. I guess it's a gift. I will take back the plans you have got on you when I git back here with your weakness, Frieda. Until then, adoo my little tied-up chickadee."

When he finally corraled both plans and prisoners and hustled them off, Colonel Phineas Pinkham did not get as far as Nancy. Six M.P.'s and a carload of Yankee brass hats intercepted him at a road junction three miles from where the D.H.9 was hugging a tree.

"Don't make a move, Pinkham!" ripped out a brigadier. "We have got you, you deserter!"

"And look what I got," the miscreant chirped happily. "Haw! Meet *Fraulein* Satan and the *Rittmeister* Otto von Schram. Boys, can he sing! He could stand right here and announce trains in the Berlin railroad station. Sing for the boys, Otto!"

"Bah!"

"There, you see?" grinned Phineas. "Now it's your turn, Frieda." *Fraulein* Satan kicked the Pinkham shins.

"I have the papers that she lifted from the Frog," said Phineas, handing the leather case to the brigadier. The brass hat sat down with a long-drawn sigh.

"Now we can't shoot him," he groaned. "He brings in the biggest spy in Europe, knocks off von Schram—huh, if he fell into a well full of rattlesnakes, he would come up carrying a basket of Easter eggs."

TWO days later Phineas Pinkham walked into the farmhouse on the Ninth Pursuit drome and grinned at Major Garrity. "Hello, bums!" he tossed at the bug-eyed pilots. "Did ya miss me?"

"Yessir, nosir, yessir," stammered Bump Gillis. "Congratuations, Colonel. I don't know how you do it, you big—er—sir."

"Colonel," began the Old Man, "I— er—"

Phineas shivered, then suddenly he turned to the brigadier who had accompanied him from Chaumont. "If I popped you in the snoot," he said, "what would I get, huh?"

"Busted, that's what! Surer than—"

*KERWHOP! BONG!*

Phineas looked down at the fallen officer, breathed on his knuckles, and stretched himself like a tomcat getting up from a snooze. "Now I'm busted, haw-w-w-w!" he guffawed. He went over to a chair and eased his weary frame into it. He grinned at the Old Man.

"Boys," he sighed, "ain't it good to git home!"