

hopping on the Spad piloted by Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham when the brawl got underway, and more Spandau lead than the Boonetown patriot figured could be crammed into a ten-gallon pail began to sing a swan song all around him. Von Liederkrantz knew what he was about. He was after forty thousand marks which other Boche aces had failed to collect. He had his heart set on a very spiffy and well-paying vineyard on the Moselle and the juice of the grape would reap him a tidy sum per annum if and when he smacked the Yankee trickster down for keeps.

Bump Gillis and Cap Howell were going to town a bit on the other four Heinies, but Liederkrantz was chasing Phineas all over the firmament, his guns as torrid as a Paris hot-spot floor show. On the wrong end of an Immelmann, Phineas tried to shake himself loose with a Spad that looked like a goose that had been half plucked. Fabric hung in strips and his tail fin looked like a well-punched meal ticket in a cheap beanery.

"Oh-h-h," Phineas groaned as he barrel-rolled, "I've been hit everywhere on the crate, so now it is me that will get air-cooled next if I don't git away from that bum. He is the toughest Von—"

Just then, Bump Gillis, who was reaching for more ceiling after he had straight-jabbed a Hun dizzy, cut across von Liederkrantz's line of flight and got a hot burst right under his pants. Moreover, a Spandau slug blew a tire in his undercarriage, and a wire that had a lot to say about what should happen in the empennage of the Spad when the stick was shoved this way or that, snapped off. Von Liederkrantz saw that Phineas had ducked into a cloud bank, so he chased Bump. Howell swung away from an Albatros that was going down with throat trouble and began pouring lead into the Boche sky wizard's tailboard. A short burst and then the ammo belt was milked as dry as a bale of cotton.

Phineas got halfway down to the linoleum and then his Hisso burped and threatened to quit altogether. Bump Gillis just kicked a Boche off Howell's neck before a touch of ptomaine shot cramps into his giblets.

Finally, Archie batteries helped "A" Flight across to their side of the Big Scrap. All of which left von Liederkrantz playing hide and seek with the seeds of shrapnel that burst out of the blossoming white flowers. Still, he managed to get in another wallop at Phineas Pinkham, and as a result, oil spat out of a busted dash and trickled down the throat of the

trickster from Iowa. It Covered the glass of his goggles so that he flew the last seven miles to the drome of the Ninth from memory. Bump Gillis dropped down, crashed, and yelled for paregoric. He'd been ignorant of the fact that his Spad's left tire had become as flat as a playboy's billfold at five o'clock in the A.M.

MAJOR RUFUS GAREITY was standing in front of the Frog farmhouse that he used for headquarters. He had been bragging to two brass hats about the neat landings that his buzzards could make even though they might have taken a shellacking upstairs.

"Yessir! Watch that Spad just slidin' over the apple trees. That's Lieutenant Gillis. He could land a ship on a—now watch him!"

CRA-A-A-SH! The Scot's crate spun around twice, then emulated a fast ball player skidding into a base.

"Yes, indeed, Major. Pretty landing. I can't wait to see the rest of 'em."

"He's been h-hit, that's what!" Garrity gulped. "But watch Pinkham. Yeah, Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham. He's been messed up a lot—but you watch him—there—now!"

BR-R-R-R-RP! KER-WHAM! Pinkham's Spad had climbed up the trunk of an oak tree.

"Much better," a bumptious colonel growled sarcastically. "Some day all those trees will be uprooted. Then how will your lame-brain pilots stop their ships?"

"Huh—er—" The Old Man had no answer for that one. He started running when the crash siren shrieked and the meat wagon roared out of a hangar. Howell and another pilot managed to land and taxi up in orthodox manner. The flight leader jumped out of his pit and sprinted for the ammo shack to take a poke at the armorer. Bump Gillis walked away from his mashed Spad with his arms wrapped around his stomach.

"G-git a doctor!" he yelled. "G-git me somethin'. It's that horse meat I et for dinner."

Phineas crawled out from under a wing of his crate and pawed oil from his face to see who was helping him to his feet. It was Major Garrity and the C.O. was poking the Pinkham empennage for bullet holes.

"You ain't hit, you homely baboon!" he roared at last.

"Oh, no? Well, git me a pail of water. I bet if I drink it all, only a pint will stay in me. I must've been hit twelve times to say the least. That bum—I'll git him! Nobody can do that to me."



"Well, they got a good start," erupted one of the brass hats. "How many Germans did you meet—a hundred?"

"The sky was full of 'em," Phineas declared. "They come from all sides. It was like we was the Light Brigade with cannon to right of us an'—I mean Spandaus to left. How many was there, Howell, huh?"

The flight leader was moving toward Phineas with knees bent, and arms crooked at the elbow, and breathing hard on his right fist. "That cluck'll load them belts next time. I—wha-a-a? How many? Five, I think. Von Liederkrantz and—"

"Must be my 'stigmatism, haw-w-w-w-w!" the Boonetown, Iowa, hero grinned. "I got to git my eyes looked after. Well, it is just our unlucky day, sirs, an'—"

"Von Liederkrantz, huh?" the Colonel snorted. "Got you all buffaloed, that's what! Oh, if I was only young again an'—"

"I don't hear none of your arteries snappin'," Phineas tossed out. "Your beard ain't white either. Well,

there is a Spad with some guns. That is the way to Germany. Right on a line with that tree there. And now let me see you git in a Spad an'—"

"That's enough out of you!" Garrity erupted. "Get to your quarters before I bust you."

"Fresh ape, isn't he?" the brass hat bit out.

IT WOULD seem that Phineas had had enough trouble for one day. But an hour later when he walked into the big room of the Frog farmhouse that the pilots used for a gathering place, Bump Gillis, quite recovered from the pangs in his gastronomic sector, was chuckling over a month-old newspaper that had made its way to the air squadron.

"Ha! Ha!" Howell laughed. "That's rich, Bump! So they wrote him up at last. Oh, hello, Carbuncle. You are gettin' famous, it seems. Read what the war correspondent says about our big brave mans."

"Wha-a-a?" Phineas enthused. "Is my name in the paper?"

"Sure it is," said Bump. "Listen:

U.S. ACE TRICKS FIFTH STRAIGHT HUN
IN GRUELLING AIR BATTLE

America's eccentric flyer, Lieut. Phineas Pinkham has done it again! According to late reports from the Front, the Boonetown, Iowa, sky fighter has won credit for downing the Kaiser's leading airman without wasting a bullet. In a thrilling duel over the Meuse, the Lieutenant bested the Boche with a bag of black pepper. This is the fifth victory that the—

"Say," broke in Phineas, "what was that word they called me at the beginning there?"

"You mean 'eccentric'?" Bump Gillis asked, grinning. "Oh, that means goin' 'round an' 'round an' 'round like them—er—eccentric circles on Allied busses' wings. They mean you have got bats in your cupola and that your dome is an igloo for cuckoos. In plain English, the war correspondent means you are as nutty as a squirrel's manger!"

"Oh, yeah? What big bum wrote that—where's his name? Oh, I'll show that fathead if I ever run across him. What will my folks think, huh? An' the boys in the barber shop on Main Street—it's an insult! I will complain to—there's his name down at the end there, huh?" Phineas huffed, snorted, and ripped the well-mussed journal out of Bump's fingers. "C. Ashby Peck, is it? That type louse better not come to Barley Duck, that's all I got to say. Ain't we got censors here? It's a pretty pass when newspaper reporters can insult flyin' officers. Did the Old Man see this?"

"He's in there laughin' his sideboards off," Howell snickered. "And it wasn't a newspaper reporter, either, Carbuncle. The fellow who wrote that is a very important guy called a 'war correspondent.' They have ringside seats in the *guerre* and have press passes to all the dugouts and trenches."

"You just wait—I'll git hunk!" Phineas broiled. "With that Heinie bum, von Liederkrantz, too. You'll see. If he ever shows his mug around here—that Peck bum!"

NOW it so happened that a big, mud-caked khaki-hued boiler was already rolling toward Bar-Le-Duc from the general direction of Nancy. In the back seat lolled a tall, string-bean type of man garbed like a brass hat. There was a portable typewriter on the floor at his feet and he was riffling through some papers which would soon be despatched to the nearest exit from the palpitating front area. He finally folded the papers and put them into the pocket of his trench coat. Then he leaned forward to speak to the dough who was driving his car.

"How much further to Bar-Le-Duc, Mike? I want to get there before that crackpot gets shot down. Like to get a good look at him first. Phony cigars an' soap candy, huh? Mechanical bugs, snakes, an' all that! Is he as screwy as they say?"

"I ain't one to insult no orfiser," the dough clipped. "But he's worse than that even. He kin do things 'thout you seein' him move his dukes, an' he throws his voice, too. Once he fergot hisself, though, an' threw hisself out of a winder an' left his voice in the room. Ha-a-a-a! Ha-a-a-a-a!"

"Yes, he ought to be news, that screwball!" the war correspondent exclaimed. "I can hardly wait!"

"Well, ya better watch him close, I'm tellin' ya," the army chauffeur countered. "He's apt to steal your skivvies 'thout you even gittin' your coat unbuttoned."

"I wasn't born yesterday," the newspaper man sniffed, sitting back to knock off a little shut-eye.

But the sunken Frog road was a little too bumpy to afford any sort of soporific pleasure, so C. Ashby Peck let his mind rev to the limit and it churned up a fruity idea in a fertile brain cell. A feature story built around the renowned Phineas Pinkham would be a wow in the States. Why, maybe he could fill a book. He would call it Peck's Spad Boy. It was a natural!

C. Ashby hoped they would have a geography on the drome of the Ninth. He would have felt more confident of the success of his scheme if he had known Phineas Pinkham's record as a student in the Boonetown grammar school. Geography was a study that had always confounded Garrity's miracle man. Once, in reply to his teacher's query: "Can you describe the Rock of Gibraltar, Phineas?" the scion of the long line of pioneer Indian fighters replied that it was a big stone used to advertise the Providential Insurance Company.

WE NOW turn our attention to the other side of the Lines. As if enough trouble were not heading toward the Pinkham cubicle, plans for the complete obliteration of Phineas were getting under way once more in the Operations Office of a Boche Staffel near Metz.

"I gedt him, *der* Deffil!" von Liederkrantz was bellowing at a group of Hun *Herr Obersts*, "*Und* den I don't. *Ach*, budt he liffs on time dat *ist* borrowed yedt, *und* if nodd *einen* Tag, den I gedt *der* loafer *der* odder Tag, ja! Already yedt I fly *mit* rings *und* circles around *der* *verdamm*t Yangkee, but wait—soon yedt I gedt idt *der* gross Albatros D-X! Den I buy *mein* vineyard *und* you coom oop *und* drink *der* vine. Ja!"

"*Ach, for einen year I hear der braggink mit hot air, Herr Baron,*" a Boche brass hat exploded. "First *der von Korpff, den von Mannheim, und den von Schweinknoekles. Bah, you gedt der puddink und maybe I eat idt! I belief nodding, nein. Das Pingham,* he makes idt *der mongkeys mit der jassackers from der Kaiser's Air Staffels. But mit der new ship, ach, you shouldt shooldt das Pingham down geschnell! Hoch der Kaiser! Deutschland uber Alles!*"

"In *ein, zwei, maybe drei Tags,*" von Liederkrantz spouted, "I haff *das Pingham feedink der Deffil's fire mit der shovels from coal, ja. Forty t'ousand marks! Ach, und it giffs me der Frau to cook das Hasenfeffer und saurbraten!*"

NIGHT came to Bar-Le-Duc and a package came to Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham. It was quite a large affair and took two doughs to carry it into the Pinkham hutment. The Boonetown flyer read the name scrawled on the torn wrappings of the bale and chuckled. Yes, he had been expecting something from Graves & Tombe's Waxworks, London, England.

Bump Gillis walked into the hut he shared with Pinkham and found his mate removing an object from a bale of excelsior. It was the wax head of a man and part of a neck, and in the dim light the Scot could see the ragged, gory edges of hacked flesh. Brown hair adorned the scalp and a pair of agonized eyes gazed at nothing while a half-opened mouth completed the ghastly illusion.

"Aw-w-w-w-wk!" howled Bump, falling over his own feet in his effort to get out onto the field and yell to everybody that Carbuncle Pinkham had turned axe murderer. When Garrity led half a dozen huskies to the Pinkham hut a few minutes later, the miracle man from Boonetown, Iowa, was sitting in a chair holding the head in his lap.

"Boys, look at this," he chortled. "Glad you come in. Is the bum natural lookin', huh? What you got the gun for, Major? I ain't been outa this hut since—you can't blame me for nothing."

"Wax," Garrity finally croaked. "*Cr-r-r-ripes!*" His hair began to settle down on his scalp once more. "What're you doin' with that stuff, you fathead? Scarin' everybody outa their pants, you—!"

"Huh, these bums must be gittin' awful jumpy," Phineas sniffed with disdain. "That Von has their nerves peeled, I giss. Well, you are lookin' at one aviator who is not scairt of that bum, Liederkrantz. He will learn not to fool with a Pinkham when I get

through with him. I had an uncle once who was—"

"Come on," Garrity ground cut disgustedly. "Gillis, you crackpot, pull yourself together!"

Bump tried to, but he was looking down at something else that lay on his bed—a foot severed from a man's body. It was yellowed, shriveled, and painted too realistically to be funny. Bump had had enough. He grabbed his woolen pajamas off a hook and went out into the open to find himself a place to sleep for the night. And he did not care if it did look like rain.

No two ways about it, though, Chaumont was getting tired of hearing about von Liederkrantz, hence the Allied brain trust got in touch with the air squadrons and asked the C.O.'s in charge if the Yankee pilots had gone home.

But when they got hold of the Old Man of the Ninth, they struck a Tartar. Garrity roared back at the beefing mogul at Wing Headquarters: "Listen, Colonel, what did they do with the last dough they got out of selling Liberty bonds? Build doughnut stands? We got eleven aviators here now and seven ships. Maybe if you sent us down some of your swivel chairs, we could tie 'em onto the tails of our crates and make two-seaters out of 'em! Yeah—what? Go ahead—make an example of me! See if I care. Don't worry about the Von. He can't live forever, can he? Good evening."

And then, next night at dusk, when the last three over-worked, nerve-frazzled buzzards of the Ninth straggled in from a late hop over the Lines, C. Ashby Peck, war correspondent for a large string of journals back in the U.S.A., rolled onto the Ninth Pursuit drome, portable typewriter and all. He eyed the bullet-bitten Spads with interest as ackemmas shoved them toward the hangar, being quite unaware of the grisly object that was being deposited on the stone step of the Frog farmhouse behind him. He turned, looked down, dropped his type mill, and screeched. Then he hopped over it and barged into the room where quizzical warbirds were grouped around a bar.

"—a head . . . out on the steps!" he gasped breathlessly.

"That is the way it is," Phineas Pinkham grinned, stepping out into the open. "Them Kraut Big Bertha shells make a mess when they hit somethin'. Most every day a leg or an arm hits against the house. A head tonight, huh? Well, we'll have a whole corpse to bury before long. Got a foot an' a couple of arms an'—"

"Horrible, i-isn't i-it?" C. Ashby Peck gibbered. "Uh—er—thanks. Don't mind i-if I d-do have a d-drink. Need one bad, yeah."

"Don't mention it," the miracle man from the west said. "It's swell cognac an'—"

The newspaper man took a hefty swig. It back-fired and set his tonsils ablaze. He clapped his hands to his mouth and staggered around in a circle.

"Oh-h-h-h-h!" yipped Phineas, "I made a mistake. That was cyanide I was supposed to—"

"I'm d-dyin'!" Peck yowled. "Get a doctor. I'm poisoned!"

"Haw-w-w-w-w!" chuckled the culprit. "It was only tabasco sauce mixed with vinegar. Relaxey voos, mawn amy."

C. Ashby Peck stiffened, turned slowly, and looked at Phineas with his watering eyes widening until he could have out-stared an owl. "So-o-, Lieutenant Pinkham, eh, what? Might've known. Think that was funny, huh? Know who I am?"

"I guessed when you climbed out of that boiler carryin' the word Vickers," Phineas grinned. "An' I've only just started on you, you bum! I'm 'eccentric,' huh? My dome goes 'round and 'round inside like them eccentric circles on the Spad wings, huh? Monsewer Peck, I would have a care what you write in the papers, as I am thinkin' of suin' anyway. That was a wax head out on the steps—but, boys, did it fool you! Haw-w-w-w! You come in like you was one jump ahead of an ambulance full of small pox cases. Have a real drink!"

"No thanks," Peck said, "not from you, Pinkham. Uh—er—ha! The joke's on me. I'm not a bum sport."

Phineas should have dissected the correspondent's laugh. There was enough dirt in it to fill a plant pot. But the Boonetown pilot liked anybody with a sense of humor, so he was caught off guard. However, C. Ashby Peck was a little premature in assuming that the scion of the Pinkham family had also dropped the hatchet. He refused a second genuine snort, confiding to the buzzards of the Ninth that he had to keep on the water wagon.

"Yeah," he said, "got to walk the straight and narrow, gentlemen. Went on a few binges since I came over and sent in a couple of cock-eyed stories. One was about Kitchener takin' Metz after Mata Hari sold out the plans of it to Edith Cavell. Can't trust Frog giggle water, gentlemen."

Major Rufus Garrity now came out of his sanctum and eyed the war correspondent with reservation. "Evenin'," he growled after Bump Gillis introduced C. Ashby.

"Nice outfit you have here, sir," Peck remarked. "Having much trouble with Baron von Liederkrantz and his circus?"

"No more than a centipede has with its feet covered with corns," the CO. snapped. "Did you have to ask that?"

"Fast plane he flies," the correspondent remarked next, looking toward the ceiling. "About as fast as those new English S.E.5's. Any time you spot a faster one, you'll find it in Utopia, I imagine."

"Huh?" Phineas tossed out. "One of them little countries in the Balkans, I bet, huh? Whose side are they on?"

Captain Howell started to say something, looked at C. Ashby Peck, then nipped his oral burst in the bud.

"Utopia?" Peck tossed at Phineas. "Why that is a little German principality tacked right close to Luxembourg. Now if anybody has a geography handy—"

"I got one in my hut," Bump Gillis volunteered. "Brought it along so's I would know what places to visit when the *guerre* is over. I'll get it and—"

"May I go with you, Lieutenant?" Peck asked. "Want a little fresh air."

Major Rufus Garrity could not quite figure the ribbing out. He looked at Phineas and shook his head a bit. Then finally he got up and hied to the Operations Office.

IN THE Pinkham-Gillis hut, while Bump was rummaging for his geography, C. Ashby Peck spotted a little bag of what appeared to be delectable candy mints. He reached for one of the small round white objects and crammed it into his mouth. His molars crunched down on it then he stiffened as though he had been dragged out of a barrel of wet starch. Across his pan swept a sickly expression and his oral cavity contracted until it felt about as spacious as a compressed Spanish peanut.

"Uh—er—m-m-m-m-m!" he hummed to Bump Gillis, "Wha-a-a?"

"Listen, Mister," Bump chirped, "didn't you know that this is where Pinkham bunks? That is alum candy you dug into. You will talk like a newborn infant for at least an hour. Here, take a swig of this *vin* blank. It's on the level, as it belongs to me."

C. Ashby Peck accepted the bottle and took a long pull at it. In ten seconds he was writhing on the Gillis cot in convulsions. The Scot swore and sniffed at the bottle that had fallen from the war correspondent's fingers.

"Oh, that crackpot," he howled. "He doctored my *vin* blank. It smells like—like the liniment that old Frog gran'ma gimme for lumbago. Don't touch nothin' more in here. You might blow up the hut, Peck!"

In about fifteen minutes C. Ashby Peck, with face the color of a lemon rind and eyes as watery as a pickerel's, sat up on the bed and reached for the book that Bump Gillis was holding in his hand. He opened it up and balanced it on his lap. Then he took a hard pencil from his pocket and began a very expert job of fine lettering on a page that was devoted to a map of eastern Europe.

"If that blasted cuckoo is as dumb as I think," the newspaper man grunted, "I'll take him for a real ride—and then write about it. Ha! Ha! Look! Would you think that was part of the map, Lieutenant?"

Bump eyed the lettering that Peck had affixed to an area of Boche linoleum near Luxembourg. "Gosh, I would never know but that it was on there all the time, Peck. What's the big idea?"

"That fresh Spad pusher will find out," Peck snorted. "Let's go!"

Phineas Pinkham took a look at the page in the geography a few minutes later and scratched his head. He said that every time he looked at a map of Europe he spotted a new two-by-four kingdom of some sort.

"I forgot a lot about geography," he admitted. "I never was very good at it. Once a teacher kept me in an hour after school because when she asked what Bulgarians and Serbs was called, I told her 'slobs.' Haw-w-w-w! Huh, Utopia? Well—"

"Yeah," said Peck, "it's a country just loaded with scientists and inventors. I guess it is the climate that gives 'em extra brains. It is near that little town right there named Merzig. See? I was there the day the U.S. declared war and I had to get out quick. They have a factory there, the Heinies have, and—"

"Faster'n an S.E.5, huh?" the Boonetown miracle worker mumbled. "Now it can't be more'n seventy or eighty miles to—" He trapped his lips and shut the book. "Well, who cares about Utopia? Haw! I got to get me some rest, as tomorrow we have a hard day up

in the attic, Peck. Boys, what a cinch you have fightin' with a typewriter! How many crow de gares have you?"

Garrity came out of the Operations shack and told C. Ashby Peck that he would be made comfortable in the big room and that Glad Tidings Goomer, mess attendant, would look after him.

"Thank you, Major," Peck said. "Got a little writin' to do before I turn in. Messenger comin' for my copy around midnight. Er—this Goomer?" he asked as the sad-eyed mess monkey slid into the room from the kitchen.

"Yes sir," Goomer intoned just as Phineas Pinkham traipsed out through the front door, "jus' ask fer anythin' if ya want it, sir."

"Fine, Goomer! Yeah, thanks, Goomer. In about forty minutes bring me an egg nog. Have to have egg nog before I retire. Brain gets fagged. Got any eggs?"

"Yessir. Ain't sure how ripe they are, though."

And so skullduggery worked overtime on the drome of the Ninth Pursuit Squadron that night. Glad Tidings Goomer mixed a tall glass of hen fruit elixir close to midnight and sprinkled a little nutmeg over the creamy surface of the nightcap. Then he eyed his handiwork proudly, sniffing the delicious aroma emanating from the egg-nog. That aroma puzzled the mess attendant. He looked at the crock of milk that stood on the sill of the open window, then

shook his head. He took the drink in to C. Ashby Peck, set it down and said he was going to hit the hay if there was nothing else the correspondent needed.

"That's all, Goomer," Peck grinned. "*Bon soir!*"

Thereupon, Glad Tidings went back into the kitchen and made an eggnog for himself. As for Peck, he lifted the beaker served to him and drained it without pausing for breath. In five minutes the newspaper man was wrapped tightly in the arms of Morpheus. Two minutes after that, a prowler looking very much like Glad Tidings Goomer, sneaked into the darkened room and listened intently. Midnight—the witching hour. The click of type-mill keys rang out through the old farmhouse, and Garrity, getting ready to grab off some sleep, grunted. Those on the *alerte* in



the Operations Office paid little attention to it. It was close to twelve-thirty when the hammering stopped. The door of the Frog farmhouse opened and a dough plentifully spattered with gooey mud slid in and stood waiting to be noticed by the man in the corner.

"Oh, yeah," the long-nosed operator of the typewriter said, looking up, "everythin's all set. Here's the copy. Don't spare the horses, as the U.S. citizens have got to know how the *guerre* is goin'."

A motorcycle sputtered, its exhaust beat out a brain-thumping tattoo for awhile, then the machine thundered off the drome and its engine clatter finally died in the distance. Some one sneaked out of the farmhouse chuckling. Two other men remained behind wrapped in slumber—Goomer in the kitchen and Peck in the pilots' shack. Glad Tidings Goomer should not have left that crock of extract of cow right on the window sill where a passerby could toss something into it—like sleep nuggets for instance.

"A" FLIGHT got up early to take another crack at von Liederkrantz. While they were sipping their hot java, C. Ashby Peck, clad in his night panties, staggered into the mess room with a wild look in his eyes. He wanted to know if anybody had noticed anything amiss during the night.

"My copy was stolen," he gulped. "Fell asleep an' when I woke up—maybe there are some spies around here," he whispered suddenly.

"Haw-w-w-w!" Phineas Pinkham guffawed, "it's lucky for you I happened along las' night. I forgot somethin', and when I come back to get it, there you was as dead to the world as a salt mackerel. So I handed your copy over to the messenger and it's on its way."

"Thanks, Pinkham," Peck said with a sigh of relief. "Where is that mess monkey? I bet he loaded that eggnog. He ought to've known I was on the wagon. What a dome I've got! I'm goin' back to bed. Let's see this is Wednesday. Call me Saturday. *Bon jour*, gentlemen."

"Haw-w-w-w!" yipped Phineas. "He's a panic, huh, bums?"

In the meantime, the Old Man was walking up and down the line of Spads. His practiced eye told him that at least two of the crates had not yet fully convalesced from recent barbecuing and he saw that one of them belonged to Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham. The Hiss had a touch of laryngitis. It revved weakly, and as the pilots trotted out of the farmhouse, Major Garrity

eyed Phineas suspiciously when the sleight-of-hand artist came up with the pockets of his flying coat bulging.

"Got your lunch with you, you crackpot?" the C.O. ripped out. "Now look here, Pinkham, if that Spad don't act right, you just turn around and come back. I bet you've only got one sparkplug perking in that power plant. The valves sound like there was bats flapping around inside the motor. How is the job, Casey?"

Sergeant Casey smothered a cryptic grin. He figured that the Spad ought to fold up right over where there were a million Heinies, no less. "Okay, sir. It's in swell shape, even if it don't look it."

"I will have Liederkrantz in my pocket when I see you ag'in," Phineas forecast with confidence. "Take a sniff at the air when I'm due back. Adoo, sir." He saluted jauntily and legged into the cockpit.

In the window of an upstairs room in the farmhouse, C. Ashby Peck watched and snickered. "Utopia," he chuckled. "I bet the screwball goes there. That page was torn out of the geography this morning. What a story I'll write about that mental defective!"

NOW Baron Gottfried Ludwig von Liederkrantz had slept late that morning. The flight of Huns that Howell flushed up over Fresnes chanced to be Potsdam prep school Fokker pushers, and "A" Flight of the Ninth Pursuit began to paste merry hell out of the Vee of Boche crates before the Heinies could say "Bismarck." Lieutenant Pinkham saw that the captain and the remainder of the flight could handle the Kraut tyros without his help, so he left the *mêlée* and pointed his prop boss toward the Rhine.

But then his Hiss's voice began to get hoarse as if it had swallowed a frog. At the moment, his trucks were skimming high over the Alsatian dorp tagged by Rand McNally as Busendorf. The crate began to lose altitude and the air speed indicator backed up until the Hiss was laboring like a sewer digger to get sixty miles out of its vitals each and every hour.

Meanwhile, just outside Merzig where the Saar wriggles over the Boche carpet like a snake under the spell of a charmer's music, a little tableau was being staged. A group of pompous Prussians, well monocled and primed up for parade, were grouped near a brand new Albatros that seemed to be trimmed with more accessories than any other Alb had ever been decked with before. Its silvery pinions flashed in the sunlight and its idly turning prop made a shimmering

disc in front of the ship's proboscis. Standing near the crate was a diminutive Hun dolled up as a *Herr Oberst* and holding a small cylinder in his hand. A picture snapper of the Kaiser's Signal Corps was getting ready to tell the abbreviated squarehead to look at the birdie.

"Ach," grunted another *Herr Oberst* through his mustache, "sooch *ein* ship, *ja!* *Mit das* Albatros, *der* Baron vill make idt yedt *der* broiled frankfurter from *das* Pingham, *hein?*"

"*Ja. Der* quvick *und* more fastest ship by *der* Frondt," agreed another Kraut brain truster. "How *der* ship flies, *ach Himmel!* Zo smart, ve Chermans—er—*Donnervetter!* Look vunce! It giffs *der* Spad, *und* idt cooms down vunce! *Mack Schnell mit der* machine gun by *der* truck vunce. Shoodt, *Dumkopfs!*"

You have guessed right. Phineas Pinkham was in that Spad. His Hiss was giving out a few dying gasps. *Burp—burp—burp!* What's more, machine gun slugs poured into the Allied crate's giblets and gagged it for keeps.

"So this is Utopia, huh?" the wandering Yank yelped. "That newspaper guy was right. There is a swell lookin' Heinie airpl—oh, if only those slugs don't tag me! I've got an idea that—haw-w-w-w-w! They have stopped shootin', as they know I am kapoot!"

Now on the way over Phineas had been busy. He'd altered his physiognomy into such a very strange appearance that even his mother would not have recognized him. A wax nose graced his already ample prop boss; and underneath, a walrus mustache hid his protrading dental assembly like Niagara hides the rocks in the gorge.

While he was nursing the Spad down to terra firma, Phineas did a lot of fidgeting in the pit.

"Ach," yipped a Kraut in the reception committee, "*einen* Yangkee gets forced down in vun gut blace!"

A small group of ordinary Boche doughs ganged the Spad when it thudded to the carpet none too gently, skidded precariously near a tree, and finally came to a drunken pause not fifty feet from the new Hun air chariot.

"*Handen hoch!*" a Heinie top kick guttural. "Oudt vunce quvick—*mach Schnell! Verdammt* Yangkee—*raus mit!*"

The *Herr Oberst* moved nearer. Phineas crawled out of the pit, his face a very strange yellow color. One of his hands hung limply as he backed against the Spad and croaked: "Wee gates, *mein Herrs.*"

A Hun eyed Phineas a bit warily. Then he dropped his rifle and jumped a foot off the ground. The

grounded pilot's hand had fallen out of his sleeve and hit the dirt with a sickening thud. The officer who had been posing for pictures felt cold in the pantry and his jaw dropped almost to his knees.

"Uh—er—it is gettin' me," Phineas wailed chokingly. "They chased me off our airdrome, as it is leprosy I've got. They wanted to send me to an island off—er—Borneo or some place. But I would rather die—er—there goes an ear—awk!" He poked under the ear flap of his helmet and a yellow, shriveled ear fell to his feet.

Boches stampeded to all points of the compass. *Herr Obersts* clamped their hands to their noses and headed for the neighboring woods on the double.

"Run, eferybody!" howled the little man who clutched the plans of the new Albatros. "*Der* lepper yedt, he falls to liddle biecs *mit* chunks like *der—Donnerveter! Gott in—!*"

Boche doughs beat the *Herr Obersts* to cover. One looked back just before he dived out of sight and saw the apparently terribly afflicted man climb into the brand new sky wagon and give it plenty of pep juice. But not until the Albatros was skimming off the linoleum did a *Herr Oberst* smell a rat.

"*Donner und Blitzen!*" he gulped and beat his way out of the woods like a sorely beset wild porker. "I bedt you *mein* life *das ist der—drick* vunce! *Das* Pingham! *Der* laugh like *der* hyena cooms! *Himmel, das ist* Pingham *und* he—*ach, Himmel!* Sooch *ein* headache I gedt!"

PHINEAS PINKHAM, marveling at the ingenious work of the Limeys employed by Tombes and Graves, wax workers of London, climbed into the ozone over Merzig with the speed of a pair of eloping rabbits.

"What a crate!" he shrilled. "Boys, they know how to make 'em in Utopia. This bus is good enough to make an S.E.5 or a Fokker look like they're tied to a cloud. Haw-w-w-w-w! Leprosy has its good points. I must buy Peck a box of cigars that ain't loaded, as it is quite a tip-off he give me. I bet this wagon is doin' a hundred an' twenty-five under wraps right now. If they had ever built a dozen of these buggies—awk, I hate to think what a shellackin' we—"

Baron von Liederkrantz was upstairs now. Flying alone, he was thinking of a grape orchard on the banks of the Moselle. He could feel the taste of *vin blanc* on his tongue and he could hear a flaxen-haired *Frau*, calling above the roar of his power plant: "Coom vunce, *mein Liebchen. Der* Brockwurst *mit* noodles for

der zupper ist. Mach Schnell und bring mit der barrel of vine."

"Ach," Baron von Liederkranz went on, sighing happily, "joost I gedt idt *das* Pingham und der dream ist gericht. Ein—ugh—Donnervetter, der new Albatros. I bedt you *dast ist* Herr Schmaltz's beauty, ja. Der varming oope she gets. Und den I, der Baron von Liederkranz, vill fly idt. Ho! Ho! Idt cooms to fly der circles mit rings aroundt me. I see *was ist*—" The Baron started climbing with an advantage of five hundred feet in altitude. The Albatros D-X passed him on the way up toward the floorboards of heaven as if he had been dragging an anchor.

"Himmel!" von Liederkranz yelled. "Vhat *einen* airplane!" He now coaxed the pilot of the Alb with an Immelmann, and when he looked back five seconds later the Alb was abreast of him and its pilot was motioning him toward the Yankee lines.

"Ja, mein Freund," chuckled von Liederkranz, "ve go und giff idt der try by der Yangkees, *hein?* I, der Baron, *ben mit* you."

Then over Fresnes, Phineas launched a maneuver that dried up the Baron's ticker. Flying just above the Von, he suddenly dropped the snout of the Alb and sent enough lead into the other crate's tail to capsize a whippet tank. Baron von Liederkranz's heart battled to get past his tonsils as he fought against an epileptic fit. He swung his head around and shook his fist.

"Bummer! Traitor!" he bellowed, striving to keep a stiff upper lip. "*Was ist—? Mein Gott! Das* Pingham! In der new—Himmel! *Was ist* der use, *ach du Lieber! Nie* marks, *nie* grapes, *nie Frau! Das* Pingham der Deffil *ist!*" The Baron's empennage was now practically null and void. The tail fin was as limp and fragile as a lace doily.

Baron von Liederkranz was hauled out of the wreck of his Alb ten seconds later by a crowd of doughs near Souilly. According to the rough and hasty guess of the medico he had a good three months sojourn ahead of him in a Yankee hospital. After that, thought the medico, the Heinie would walk a little sideways.

C. ASHBY PECK was still laughing over his little joke on the drome of the Ninth when Sergeant Casey suddenly yelped: "Quick! Duck everybody! A Kraut wagon is comin' an'—"

Three minutes later, they all crawled out of an emergency shelter and gaped at the spick and span Albatros. Then they heard a familiar laugh.

"Haw-w-w-w-w-w! Well, here it is, Major. The new

Kraut buggy and can it hop! Oh, boys! I stole it out of Utopia, an'—"

"Look!" Bump Gillis croaked to Cap Howell. "Peck is out like a dame. He's fainted! Boys, what a crate that crackpot come home in. I never seen no Hun ship that looked like that one. How in hell do ya think he—?"

"Look it over," Phineas beamed at the gathering. "Just out of the packin' case, bums. I met von Liederkranz, too, and he thought I wanted to play. He laughed when he first saw me, but when I started to bite his tail feathers off—haw-w-w-w-w! They picked him up near Souilly. And how is Mr. Peck? I must thank him for the tip as he—"

"Wha-a-a-a?" gasped Garrity. "You thought there was a place named Utopia? Why you crackpot! That guy was kiddin' you."

"Does that look like it?" the Yank grinned, pointing to the captured Hun war bus. "That bum ribbin' me, huh? Well, you wait. Just wait until—haw-w-w-w-w! Boys, am a correspondent! That eggnog—haw-w-w-w-w!"

A FEW days later in the office of a big executive of a chain of journals three thousand miles from the palpitating front, a knot of citizens were stewing over a story that had come from C. Ashby Peck. The president of the Super-Consolidated Press was bellowing.

"Maybe it's a code," he finally suggested.

"You think so, huh? Well, I say Peek went on another drunk, T. J.! Just read that again."

T. J. did. The despatch read:

Hear we ar%e aT the bat%le of th\$ Somme. Som\$e fig9t/ A1+ duriNg thE ni&ht the GerMaSs triEd to make th8 ScotCh give way but at daWn \$ the BLACK WAtCh+ was jusT gettiNg wOund uP. The kai+er)s troOps ongHt &o haVe known t%at no Scot'sh KiLTie woUld giVe aNythin% awaAy. AIL duriNg %he da¾y the baTtle kep% wageriN unTil the yanNk&&s come in and cl\$aned tHe kraUts. up. With the stars \$ sTripes wavinG the Yank doug&s broke thr*ugH the barb wiRe and gain&d thrEe kiloMetres. MoRe to cOme.

—Peck.

"The Somme," T. J. exploded. "That scrap was fought almost three years ago and there was no Yanks in it. He's cock-eyed, all right! Send him word he's fired! Look at that writin'. He must have typed it with boxing gloves on. Fire him!"

AND so a week later in Paree, C. Ashby Peck stood on the sidewalk thinking things over. He had the

message in his pocket that told him he was among the unemployed and he was at a loss to account for it. He thought of the medal Phineas Pinkham was going to get because the crackpot had believed there was a country by the name of Utopia. Another medal was coming to the Boonetown pilot for knocking off von Liederkrantz. And he, C. Ashby Peck, had got nothing out of it but a good swift kick in the slats. He was behind the eight ball.

A *gendarme* nabbed him just as he was going through the strange contortions of trying to give himself a few extra boots in the empennage.

"She ees all right, *mon ami*. We geet vans to ze doctair an' he try to look inside ze tete," said the officer, walking *Monsieur* Peck down the Rue de la Paix. *Vous avez ze stroke of ze soleil, n'est ce pas?*"

"Nuts to voose!" said the erstwhile newspaper man. "Where ees eet I can buy ze arsenic, *m'sieu?*"