



# FOR DEAR OLD G.H.Q.!

*written and illustrated by* **JOE ARCHIBALD**

*From the mess hall came the sounds of contented sky birds. In the trees near the drome song birds trilled their gentle arias. And over the headquarters phone no curses had come from G.H.Q. for three days. Even Major Garrity, C.O., was fooled—he forgot that Phineas “Carbuncle” Pinkham was still a member of the Ninth Pursuit Squadron!*

**I**T WAS THE SABBATH. A nimbus of peace and tranquillity hung over various portions of the European war map. One of these blessed spots was the drome of the Ninth Pursuit Squadron, south of Bar-le-Duc.

Major Rufus Garrity, C.O. of this ordinarily turbulent layout, stood in the doorway of Wings, tamping down a fresh load of fragrant weed in a disreputable-looking dudeen. For the first time since he had stepped foot on that particular part of France, he seemed content with his lot. For almost three days now, his brood of buzzards had been clicking perfectly with G.H.Q. and the brass hats were handing out

insults to other points on the compass. Mannheim, the Junker leader, the thorn in the side of the Allies, had apparently laid up for a day or so to stuff up holes in his battle wagons and to get his pilots into a huddle regarding the next play over the lines.

A few minutes before, Fitch, B flight's leader, had returned with his ships from a cursory trip over the Front to report that the welkin was as quiet as the main street of Glasgow on tag day. Major Garrity smiled as he fumbled in his pocket for a match. From the big room behind him came sounds of contented war birds. From a branch of the tree over his head came the gentle aria of a song bird. The sun was

hanging low in the west, seemingly reluctant to leave such a bucolic neighborhood. Groundmen sang a lay as they pushed Spads into the hangars to call it a day.

Now Major Garrity had been boss of the Ninth Pursuit long enough to have become impervious to this camouflaged serenity. He should have known that it was but the cloak that masked the arrival of Old Man Trouble and all his ornery relations. Perhaps the long suffering C.O. had been just a little suspicious but was so grateful for even a few moments of utter peace that he was willing to kid himself. It all began because he could not find the match he was looking for. He swore impatiently just as Bump Gillis arrived upon the scene.

“Got a match, Gillis?” he growled.

“Yessir,” replied Bump with a grin, and produced a whole box.

“Keep ’em, sir,” offered Bump “I got lots more of ’em. It’s hell to be without matches, sir.”

“Thanks,” grunted the C.O. as, pipe held fast in his teeth, he scratched the head of the match against the side of the box. *Who-o-osh!* Bump Gillis swayed on his feet like a stalk of wheat in a gale as the matchbox sputtered and blazed like a ground flare. A howl of pain kicked the pipe from the C.O.’s lips and Major Rufus danced up and down, beating three blistered fingers against his barrel-like chest. Bump wanted to run. but his feet for the moment were not on speaking terms with his brain.

It was a muleskinner’s hard luck not to have been present. The C.O. reviewed every profane outburst that had ever been uttered in the A.E.F. and coined as many new ones before he stopped his war dance and whirled on the trembling Gillis.

“Y-you fathead!” he exploded, shoving a belligerent fist close to the pilot’s nose. “Playin’ tricks, eh?” A sudden thought interrupted his verbal blast. “Y-you bunk with that halfwit, Pinkham, don’t you, Gillis? Learnin’ his smart tricks, are you? Well, I’m damned if there’s goin’ to be two magicians on this tarmac!”

“B-but, sir,” protested the miserable and angry Gillis, “I didn’ know about them matches, so help me! Carb—er—Lieutenant Pinkham give ’em to me after mess this noon. The big bum framed me. H-he—”

Wave a red flag in a bull’s face and step aside. Mention the name of Lieutenant Phineas “Carbuncle” Pinkham to Major Garrity and run like hell.

“Pinkham!” he roared. “Damn that fish-faced—his matches, eh? Where is he, Gillis? I thought things were too damn quiet around here.”

“I dunno. sir,” managed Gillis weakly. “I ain’t seen him for almost two hours. He went ridin’ away on that Frog bike he bought last week. I asked him where he was goin’ an’ he tol’ me to mind my own damn business, sir. That’s what he said. He gimme them matches before he left an’—”

“And you took them. Gillis,” retorted the Old Man with cutting sarcasm. “You ought to have your head examined. Gillis, you’re either the dumbest guy in the world or you’re pulling a fast one. You knew damn well I wouldn’t have anything on Pinkham, didn’t you? Good way to get hunk with him. wasn’t it? And you had a good alibi, too. Shut up! That leave of yours is out.”

GETTING back to the Old Man’s burning question, now where was Phineas Pinkham? Let us follow a wavering bicycle track that began at the drome and snaked over the landscape for several miles to end finally beside a big tree approximately a quarter of a mile from another nest of war birds who fought under the tricolor of France, the drome of Colonel Boncouer’s Nieuport riders.

The tree in point stood in a sheep pasture, and when one was sheltered by its widespread branches, the gurgling of a stream could be heard distinctly. This waterway was screened from view by a long line of bushes. Crouching within the umbrage, a smile of fierce satisfaction on his homely face, was the one and only Phineas Carbuncle Pinkham. Boonetown, Iowa’s, talented exponent of the art of deception, imposition, legerdemain, or what have you.

On this particular day there was more disturbance than just the gurgling of the stream. Great splashing sounds had reached Phineas’ abnormal ears and lured him from his bicycle to the bushes. Blending with splashes had come the sound of excited voices, a mixture of enthusiastic Frog utterances, such as “*Voiln!*” “*C’est bien!*” “*Tres chaud, n’est ce pas?*”

One comprehensive glance had assured Phineas that without a doubt he had happened upon the bathtub of the French squadron, with which he enjoyed very strained relations indeed. *Sans* any sort of garb, four of Colonel Boncouer’s pilots were splashing about in the middle of the stream with all the reckless abandon of woodland sprites. Piled in as many neat little heaps, within reach of the grinning Yank, were the blue tunics, red pants and boots of the unsuspecting ablutioners.

Phineas tarried but a few moments. He gathered up

the uniforms and retreated as quietly as possible to the tree standing in the meadow. After a cautious survey of the immediate vicinity, Phineas chuckled and dropped his plunder to the ground. Piece by piece he picked up the garments and, balling them into compact masses, hurled them into the air.

In a very few moments, blue tunics, red pants and so forth nestled high up in the branches. Various articles of French army issue underwear followed. The boots only were left on the ground and these Phineas regarded doubtfully. Suddenly his face cracked with the inimitable Pinkham smile. He picked them up one by one and threw them with all his might toward the river. One dull splash followed another. Then came an angry, high-pitched howl and a violent churning of water. Phineas stood swinging the last boot about his head when a naked, gesticulating figure burst out of the bushes.

“*Cochon!*” the Frenchman shrieked. “Peeg, what you are! *Sacre bleu!* Peenkham, *oui?*”

“See if this fits ya!” yipped Phineas and let the last boot fly. In a high trajectory it spun through the air and came down with a crash in the clump of bushes. A howl of pain emanated from the spot and Phineas saw a head bob up with two hands clutching it as if to hold it in place. About this time Phineas realized that it was time to go. The peaceful rural atmosphere was split asunder by wild, indignant yells as the French flyers stared up at their habiliments fluttering from the branches of the tree.

“Well, adough!” laughed Phineas, and made a grab for his means of locomotion. He was about to straddle same when a little white square of paper on the ground caught his attention. He stooped quickly, picked it up, then pushed his bicycle down the slope and leaped to the leather seat. Phineas pointed his vehicle toward the Ninth Pursuit Squadron and pedaled hell for leather as if a million ogres were pursuing him. It is doubtful if an island of wild men could have made such a clamor as the four naked figures he was leaving further and further behind.

“They’ll fool with me, huh?” chuckled Phineas. “I said I’d git even with them Frogs. Haw! They’ll be throwin’ sticks up in that tree until the *guerre* is over. Well, that’s what they git fer not takin’ a bath on Satiddy night.”

DARKNESS overtook Phineas as he wheeled into the drome and jumped from the bicycle in front of the big stone house. After dusting himself off, he walked

into squadron headquarters with the air of a man who has realized a long-cherished ambition. Pilots glanced up from their plates as he shut the door behind him and grinned at them. The usual uncomplimentary greeting was on each tongue but Bump Gillis beat them all to it. He half-rose from his chair, his fist clutching a knife significantly.

“Well,” said Phineas. “I see you’re all jumpin’ outa your skins t’welcome me back. What’s eatin’ you buzzards now? Ya look as if—”

“Yeah?” interrupted Bump Gillis, holding up a hand, two fingers of which were wrapped in gauze. Look it them fingers, ya ape! Fer got all about them matches, I bet. huh? I got a good mind to knock you so far—”

“Haw-w-w-w-w-w-w-w!” laughed Phineas. “It’s a good thing I didn’ give ya the ones with the dynamit in. I—” His eyes fixed themselves quizzically on the empty chair at the head of the table. “Say. where’s the old walrus?”

“Oh, you’ll see him, ya ape’ promised Captain Howell. “He borrowed a match from Bump. He’s in there now talkin’ on the phone. Jus’ sit down, he’ll see ya in a minute.”

“Wha-a-a-a-a?” roared Carbuncle. “Bump lent him a match? Haw-w-w! Well, can they blame me? They ain’t got nothin’—”

A door swung open as if kicked in by a tornado. Major Rufus Garrity staggered in. Fists doubled, he advanced to the table like a pug looking fur an opening. Then he saw Phineas.

“Oh, so here you are!” he bellowed. “Pinkham. you fish-faced whoozle, get into that room!”

“Huh?” gasped Carbuncle. “Yessir. But I’m hungry, sir. I—”

“Git in there or I’ll drag you in!” exploded the Old Man. “Been over to call on the French, eh? Stole their uniforms, did you? Destroying property of the French Gov—” The door slammed behind him, drowning out the rest of the tirade. Bump Gillis sank weakly into his chair. Pilots threw up their hands and looked unbelievably at each other.

“My God!” breathed Howell. “An’ they shoot men for a little thing like desertin’!”

In the next room Phineas Pinkham stood before the Old Man’s desk, marvelling that a human being could talk five minutes at a stretch without pausing for breath or using a comma.

“D’you know what you’ve done, Pinkham!” raged the major. “I’ll tell you. Boncouer gets a call from an



infantry unit that Boche hats are straffing the roads near Fisme, where fresh troops are moving up. They want four Nieuports at once with crack pilots. And the four best French night flyers, including Dumont, the ace, are still out trying to get their clothes out of a tree. And all the ground men on that drome are hunting for four pairs of boots.

"You're a great help in this war, Pinkham, you addle-pated idiot! French Headquarters will be on my neck for this. Pershing and all his brass hats will pile on top of them. If they can think up a quicker death than shooting you, that's what'll happen to you. Until they come to drag you out of here, you're grounded, Pinkham, tighter than any other buzzard that ever stepped into France, understand?"

"Well, it was oney a joke," protested Pinkham. "How did I know the Boche was gonna come over? Them Frogs had it comin' to 'em an'—"

"An' look at those fingers, you homely baboon stormed the C.O. holding up a bandaged hand. "Celluloid matches, eh? Don't give a damn if you bum up the whole drome, do you, Pinkham" Well, I've got you where I want you now. Try and crawl out. If you ever get into a Spad again, then they'll make me Crown Prince of Germany! Now get to hell out of here!"

PHINEAS was not altogether a nitwit. He went to hell out. The Old Man pounded at his heels and loaded himself heavily into his chair.

"Howell!" he yelled. "Grimes, who came up last night, will fly in Pinkham's place in your flight tomorrow on early patrol. I have very sad news, if you look at it that way. Lieutenant Pinkham has done his share in the war already and we've got to do without him."

"Well," growled Phineas through a slice of bread, "if you think that—"

"Shut up!"

"Awright, awright!"

"Gentlemen," the C.O. went on, "G.H.Q. is on the warpath again. The Boche are slipping over the lines at night and raising hell. The brass hats told me it is too bad that they must disturb your beauty sleep but that something will have to be done about it. Only last night a pair of Fokkers strafed a car loaded with brass hats and almost dusted one off. They want to know if we have run out of ships or if the pilots have gone on a strike. Tomorrow night we will do some night flying. It isn't healthy but you didn't come over here for a physical culture course. This thing is serious. Those

brass hats were exposed to the weather almost all night They had to walk—"

"Haw-w-w-w-w!" erupted Phineas "It's a good thing! If this *guerre* lasts another five years, them eggs'll have to learn to walk all over again Haw-w-w-w-w-w!"

"Pinkham, blast you!" roared the C.O. "D'you want me to put you under arrest, or will you keep that hole in your face closed up?"

"See if I care what ya do?" grumbled Phineas, and attacked another slab of meat. "I'm as good a shot an' Igiss a guy alius gits privileges in his last hours. I knew a guy once that went to the chair an' they let him—"

"Cr-r-r-ripes!" bellowed the major, leaping out of his chair in exasperation. "Pinkham, get out of here! I'll have discipline, damn you! Interrupt me when I'm giving orders, will you? That's another charge against you. Insubordination! Go to your hut, Pinkham. and don't set a foot out of it until morning. And don't try to get off this field. I've given orders to have you shot if you try it. I'll show you!"

"Well, I ain't dumb!" said Phineas, rising from his chair. "I know when I ain't wanted. But somebody's gotta apologize to me. see if they don't, by cripes!" And he slipped a little capsule into Bump Gillis' coffee before he left.

"By the way, Pinkham!" purred the C.O. "Dumont, the ace, says he is coming over here in person to pick up that photograph he says you stole from his tunic—and he's going to knock your teeth out I have told Boncouer that Lieutenant Pinkham will be here to greet him and that anything that may happen to said lieutenant, no matter how terrible, will be appreciated by the American pilots"

"Oh, yeah?" grinned Phineas, in no way abashed. "Well. France is takin' a chance, but it's their hard luck. Bon sewer!" And, flashing a cryptic glance at Bump Gillis' coffee cup, he made his exit.

"That crackpot!" commented Gillis, lifting his cup. "I'd like to shoot him but I wouldn't bet against him." He took a lusty draught of coffee. Two minutes later he charged into the hut where Phineas was unwrapping a big package which he had taken from the bottom of his trunk. Lieutenant Gillis, however, was speechless. He had plenty of words to get off his mind but they shriveled up when they reached his tongue, which, at the moment was as flexible as a half sole.

"I figgered that would shut ya up, Bump," grinned Phineas as he went placidly about his business. "That

stuff is a substance that produces contraction of the tissues and is called alum. An' don't make no passes at me as I am in a killer mood and don't know my own strength."

Bump Gillis growled like a bear with an earache as he turned around and stumbled out again, mumbling to himself that which only he could comprehend, something about getting a transfer to any place that was at least a thousand miles from Bar-le-Duc.

THE next day added some more gray hairs around the ears of the Old Man. Colonel Boncouer buzzed Wings to tell Major Garrity some things he had thought up during the night. A few minutes after this was over, G.H.Q. hopped to the phone and reminded the squadron that the French were fighting on the side of the Allies if they had forgotten the fact. Word of the deplorable incident had trickled into the ears of the all highest of the French marshals and they had in turn demanded redress or its equivalent from Pershing and his staff.

Lieutenant Pinkham, G.H.Q. pointed out, was a disgrace to the A.E.F. and should be made a horrible example. Major Garrity promised the brass hats that this was just what Lieutenant Pinkham was going to be used for. and if that was all. he would appreciate it as he was getting an earache. It was not all, however. Before hanging up, G.H.Q. took time to remind him that Spads were to go out over the lines after dusk so that pilots would not forget why they had come over to France at the expense of the government.

After he hung up, the Old Man brushed a hand wearily over his eyes, got up and groped for open air. The first thing his eyes rested upon was the apparently unruffled person of Phineas Pinkham leaning up against the side of the ammo shed. It was too much. The major swore and sought solitude once more, there to await the return of the midday patrol.

Having been separated from the war and having nothing on his mind but several new bits of trickery in an undeveloped state. Phineas had suddenly thought of the little snapshot he had secured from under the tree near the Frog drome. Now he was examining same with a caustic smirk to his lips. It was the picture of Henri Dumont, leading French ace, covered with medals and nestling close to a comely *mademoiselle*.

"Huh!" grunted Phineas. "How a dame like that could fall for such a homely Frog. I don't know. But dames is funny if they're all like Mabel Crimms back home. I giss she's failin' fer them medals he's covered

with." And, so musing, Phineas shoved the snapshot back into his pocket and let his mind travel in other channels. Suddenly from overhead came the fitful chant of B flight. Phineas craned his neck and counted eight ships where there should have been ten. As they rolled in one by one, Phineas saw that they were well ventilated.

"Cripes!" he exclaimed. "Just when things git interestin' agin, I git grounded." He strolled over to where Fitch was climbing out of his bullet-chewed Spad.

"Mannheim!" said the flight leader with a curse. "He's out plenty today. Our little vacation is over. Huh, you're lucky, Pinkham!" And he walked away stiffly to break this latest load of woe to the Old Man.

"That dirty kraut!" snapped Phineas. "If I ever git into a bus again. I'm gonna knock him loose from his von. I—" He whirled on a mechanic who was about to climb to the nose of Fitch's ship.

"Say, did I hear ya laff at me, ya mug?"

"Why, no sir." replied the mechanical, too respectfully it seemed. "An' I don't want to borrow a match neither."

Phineas spat on the tarmac and headed for his hut. There was something he had to attend to. No one saw him for hours. And then out of the sky, now tinted a roseate hue by the fiery brush of a lowering sun. dropped a Nieuport. Bump Gillis, Captain Howell and a trio of other buzzards stood out on the tarmac and watched it swoop down to make as beautiful a landing as anything that had ever worn wings. The little French combat ship rolled up to within several feet of the Yankee gallery and out of it, with a grand gesture, stepped Lieutenant Henri Dumont, ace of aces.

"*BON SOIR!*" he greeted the Yanks, shoving up his goggles. "I am come to meet ze upstart, Phineeyus Peenkham. I challenge heem to fight me, *oui*. I am ze expairt with *la savate*. I weel keeck ze fresh Americain back to ze Statue of Libertee, *oui!*" Bump Gillis felt like telling Henri Dumont that Lafayette, Napoleon and all the Dumonts put together had as much chance of doing same as he had to become Joan of Arc. He grinned instead and looked toward the line of huts. He gulped and shoved an elbow into Howell's ribs. The flight leader turned and saw a strange figure coming toward them, a man clad in the uniform of the German Flying Corps. The sun flashed on a monocle, on white buck teeth, on a blond mustache.

"Why, it's that crackpot!" Howell felt a boot heel ram his toe violently.

“*Sacré!*” gasped the surprised Frenchman. “You have capture a Boche, *oui?* Ah, ze Boche peeg!” He raised his voice. “Ah, ze Jerry, he is so smart, *oui?*”

“Doomcorpfl!” retorted Phineas, from a distance, for it was none other than he. “*Einzweidrei!*” And he snapped his fingers defiantly and regarded the idling Nieuport warily. In the doorway of the stone house Major Garrity braced himself as he stared at the two fanlike ears of the man in the German uniform. He wanted to yell at the top of his lungs but could get nothing out from beneath his mustache but a strained squeak. Something told him to start running or Colonel Boncouer’s great ace would find himself minus a means of returning to his field. Yet the scene fascinated him, held him as incapable of immediate action as is a rabbit before a reptile.

“Nevair mind ze Boche peeg!” said Henri Dumont suddenly. “I demand to see ze Majaire Garratee. He promise me he weel have Peenkham for me, *oui!* Ze *cochon*, he steal ze peecture of *ma cherie*. I weel half—” A wild yell split the dusk. Boots pounded across the tarmac, the German boots of Phineas Pinkham, picking themselves up and laying themselves down with incredible swiftness, eating up space toward the Nieuport.

“*Sacré!*” screamed Henri Dumont. “Ze Boche. Ze Boche. She escape. *Vite! Vite!* Somebody shoot. *Mon sheep!* *Sacré!*” He pulled a gun. Bump Gillis made a leap but was just too late. A shot rang out. The Old Man gulped and froze in his tracks. Phineas stumbled and then made a frantic leap to the pit of the French ship.

Henri Dumont went down under the combined assault of three Yanks as the Clerget-Rhone motor abruptly rose to a feverish pitch. Groundmen swarmed toward the Nieuport. The Old Man ran himself off his feet and pancaked to the tarmac just as the little ship thundered away. On hands and knees he watched it take off and climb without banking into the twilight.

“*Cochons!*” shrieked Henri Dumont in the middle of the field. “Snakes in ze grass. Ze fresh Peenkham, you let heem escape me, *oui?* Steals my sheep, *oui?* I see ze President of France. I am assault. I—”

“You’ll git worsen’ that. Frog.” barked Bump Gillis, “if you’ve bumped my hutmate! I’m keepin’ my eye on ya, until I hear from him, savvy voo?”

Straight toward the Front gunned Phineas. A pleased grin stretched his mouth to the size of a slice of watermelon. There was no evidence that Henri Dumont’s bullet had caused a mortal wound.

“Wouldn’t fly a ship no longer, huh?” soliloquized Phineas as he pulled helmet and goggles out from under his tunic. “Giss I fooled that there Frog.” He clumsily removed the blond mustache glued to his lip and fished out of his mouth a superfluous set of buck teeth. “I knew that Heinie suit was gonna come in handy sometime. Well, I done enough in this *guerre* to rate some night flyin’.” And he eased back on the stick to reach for the moon that hung-high in the heavens—a thin crescent. “That’s the trouble with this *guerre*. Nobody kin take a joke!”

PHINEAS reached out and took a practice squeeze on the triggers of his guns. Satisfied with their clatter, he settled down for an eventful night. “Lousy engines!” he growled, wiping a smear of castor oil from his face. “Wonder where that Frog learned to shoot so straight.”

He squirmed in his pit, swore and looked overside. At first he made out nothing but the nocturnal terrain of the Yankee back area with its silvery waterways, dark masses of forest and snaky white ribbons that were the roads. Shadow’s wove a weird fantastic pattern over it all. Suddenly Phineas drew in his breath and watched two of the shadows that were in no way connected with *terra firma*. Each of them spat little jets of flame.

Then above the Nieuport’s full-throated solo came a discordant note. Mercedes engines Fokkers! Flitting over the back area two thousand feet below, following what? Phineas soon found out for himself. Crawling swiftly over one of the little ribbons was something that appeared to be a little black bug Phineas knew it to be a car and without further ado or stopping to say his prayers, he pushed the stick away from his knees and let the Nieuport have its nose.

“For dear old G.H.Q.!” yelled Carbuncle Pinkham and went down, down and down.

A Jerry looked up from his pit and reached for a lot of altitude, leaving his brother-in-arms to complete whatever dirty job they had afoot. Phineas threw the Nieuport into a sideslip and lost a thousand feet. Spandaus measured him for a haymaker as he straightened out and Phineas missed a free hair-singe by the barest fraction of an inch. Ignoring the bursts, he kept on going down until he could see white faces staring upward from the lurching machine on the ground. Jerry was banking around, preparatory to spraying the road with more lead, when Phineas flipped up the Nieuport’s snout and opened up with his own guns.

“Awright, cannon!” he howled as he squeezed the

triggers. "Pay expenses!" And a stream of lead kicked the low flying German over on one wing. We would like to say something about Lieutenant Pinkham's unerring aim, but he had no such thing. The Boche could not have been missed, even if the Boonetown flyer had used a slingshot.

Too low to get back upstairs, the Boche kept on going down and hit one of the hardest spots in all of France—the stone wall that bordered one side of the road. Phineas, as he back-sticked with little to spare, saw the automobile skid out of the road and come to grief in a ditch just as Jerry-folded up in a heap of Fokker parts.

Bullets sang around Phineas once more. He looked up and saw a pair of Spandau muzzles spitting right into his face. For hours they seemed to be there and then there was a great roar as the Fokker overshot and Phineas was about to celebrate his reprieve with a triumphant howl when all of the oil in the Nieuport's engine seemed to gush out and fill his mouth. He spat out gobs of it, yanked away his befouled goggles, and, swearing, saw that the moon was climbing up fast into the sky. The prop was no longer doing business. It was swinging idly.

Phineas figured that he should do something, seeing as he was going backwards. He threw the Nieuport into a sideslip and took time out to grin at the brief thought that the Old Man was going to be cheated out of the sport of having him shot. Phineas saw the ground jump up. Then it hugged and kissed Lieutenant Henri Dumont's pet ship until it was just something that they would have to clean up after the war.

Phineas lifted a wing and crawled out into the clear, marvelling that he had managed to hang on to his soul. His head contained more ache than was meant for a string of mules. There was a taste in his mouth like something gone bad and for several minutes he dared not move, lest an arm or leg fall off. He was ready to face the worst when he heard the sound of boots approaching.

"*Voilà!*" spoke a voice. "Bravo!" came another. The boots stopped near Phineas' ear. He looked up and saw two French officers.

"H-hey," he said, "stop cheerin' an' help me up."

ONE of the men reached down and put his arms under the flyer's armpits. After much grunting, swearing and groaning, Phineas Pinkham got to his feet and propped himself against the blasted trunk of a tree.

"Ah, eet was *magnifique, oui!*" enthused one of the Frenchmen, whose kepi betrayed the fact that he was a man of some importance. "You have do *la belle* France the great service, *m'sieu*. *Oui*, you have save' France. Ah, ze medal she will be pin to your ches', *oui*. France she wi—"

"What is this?" demanded Phineas, scratching his head. He looked from one officer to the other, then felt his gaze drawn to a figure standing several yards distant, muffled in a great coat and puffing on a cigarette. He seemed oblivious to everything but the chug-chugging automobile that was being backed with difficulty out of the ditch.

"Ah, you have become ze hero, *m'sieu*," continued the officer. "My card!" And he handed Phineas a little square of pasteboard. "And, *m'sieu*? *M'sieu*, his *nom*? His squadron, *oui*?"

"Huh?" groped Phineas. "Oh, yeah!" He suddenly remembered that he had put the snapshot of Henri Dumont into the pocket of his trousers. Well he would write on that. If this Frog wanted to make him a hero for driving off the Boche, then he was not going to pass it up. The Old Man would have a hell of a time trying to shoot a hero. He picked out the snapshot and took the pencil the Frenchman handed him.

Phineas wrote his name and address on the back of Henri Dumont's precious possession and handed it to the officer.

"*Merci!*" exclaimed both Frenchmen in unison. Then each in turn picked up Phineas' hand and shook it vigorously. One grabbed him by the shoulders and implanted a kiss on each of his cheeks. Phineas swore indignantly and was cocking a fist when the other French officer strolled up. He let his fist drop as the man halted in front of him and held out a hand.

"Sure, I'll shake!" growled Phineas. "Only don't kiss me or I'll pop ya one on the snoot!"

"*Merci, m'sieu.*" replied the man and smiled. "You have do Franee ze great honaire. You weel be rew'ard."

Phineas saw a pair of sharp twinkling eyes and a sweeping gray mustache. The kepi the man wore was profusely adorned with braid. Turning about, the officer walked back to the car. His companions saluted Phineas, uttered more words of praise in two languages, and followed. While Phineas stood in the road and tried to figure it out. the Frenchmen got into the car and chugged away.

"Why, the bums!" yipped Phineas suddenly. "They have left me flat. Hey! How 'bout a lift, ya big bunch of—huh! That's a great way to thank a guy fer savin'



their hides. I wish I'd let the krauts have their fun. Huh! Well. Frogs is all alike. I—" Suddenly from overhead came the roar of an engine. Phineas looked up and saw a ship nosing down toward the field on the other side of the stone wall. It was a Spad. He jumped up and down, waving his arms frantically, despite the fact that every bone in his body ached like a breaking heart.

The plane's undercarriage kissed the bumpy turf, bounced precariously twice, then stayed put and lumbered to a stop. Phineas climbed over the wall and limped toward the man who was jumping out of the pit.

"That you, Carbuncle?" inquired a familiar voice. Phineas wanted to howl for joy but it was too much of an effort. The pilot was Bump Gillis.

"Hello, Bump, ya ol' fathead" he answered "Been out for the evenin', huh? Well, I beat ya to it. See that bunch of junk over there? Well, that was a Boche oncet. An' see that other bunch of kindlin' wood? Well, that useta be a Nieuport which belonged to that snooty Frog ace. Well, I giss I graduate from this *guerre* tonight, awright, huh?"

"Cripest!" gasped Bump. "Ya sure have got your pants in a vise now. Well, ya better git on the wing of my bus an' I'll fly ya over to Nancy or some place, an' then ya might slip through the lines an' over into Switzerland."

"Haw-w-w-w-w!" laughed Phineas. "Why? I wouldn't be able to pass for one of them cheese-makers. I can't yodel a note I'm goin' back to the drome. A Frog jus' tol' me I'm a hero. But what did they do after I saved 'em but go off without offerin' even to gimme a ride. Well, let's go. I'm anxious to take a poke at that Frog ace."

"You're nuts fer sure now," growled Bump Gillis. "Well, ya didn't have far to go. Jus' one more sock on the head did it, I giss. Hurry up, let's git goin'. Say, did that bullet hit ya that the Frog ace fired?" he asked as an afterthought as they walked toward the Spad.

"Sure," answered Phineas with a grin. "Some shot, huh?"

"Plumb goofy" commented Lieutenant Gillis to himself and helped Phineas onto the wing of his Spad.

"WELL, I'm glad he took that way out. He wasn't such a bad egg. Just a little cracked, I guess, that's all." Major Rufus Garrity was talking to Captain Howell in the big room of the stone house. "Looks like Dumont will have a long wait for Pinkham. Time for Gillis to

be back, isn't it? We'll give him five minutes more; then Grimes will take off, I—" The door swung in. A wild-eyed tlight-sergeant skidded in and paused to get a breath. Then he unloaded.

"Gillis just came in, sir," he gasped. "Lieutenant Pinkham ridin' on the wing!"

"Wha-a-a-a-a-a-a-a?" blurted out the major.

"Aw, ze fresh Yankee peeg!" shouted Henri Dumont "I weel get my han's on heem, *oui!* One keeek an'— *pouf!* I show heem *la savate.*"

"Shut up!" barked the Old Man. "I'm running this outfit, Dumont. You'll wait until—" *Crunch! Crunch! Crunch!* The sound of boots on cinders came now outside. Every man in squadron headquarters held his breath. The Old Man assumed his most belligerent attitude and stared at the door. Bump Gillis came in and behind him limped Phineas Carbuncle Pinkham, looking as if he had lost an argument with a trio of tanks.

"H'lo!" grinned Phineas and sought the comfort of a chair.

"Stand up, Pinkham!" barked the Old Man. With effort, Phineas obeyed the order

"You're under arrest. Pinkham. Understand?"

"Now what am I supposed to say?" inquired Phineas tartly. "Ya don't think I expected ice cream an' cake, do ya? Where's that Frog? I got enough left to smack him one in the—"

"Cripest!" exclaimed Howell suddenly "Look at the bullet hole in his back. Pinkham, you're shot!"

"Haw w-w w-w-w!" guffawed Carbuncle. "Yeah, but I fooled 'em The major said he'd give orders to have me shot if I tried to beat it, so I put on my bullet-proof vest, ha! Take a look! I got it from a vaudeville guy in Des Moines. I—"

"*Mon peecture!*" howled Lieutenant Henri Dumont when he got a chance. "Geeve it to me or I weel—"

"Wh—why," grinned Phineas, putting his hand into his pocket and withdrawing a card. "I wrote my address on the back of it an' give it to this guy. Maybe you kin locate him sometime. Ya see—"

A choking cry came from the lips of the French ace. His face paled to the tint of a paving block as he read the inscription on the card. He looked at Phineas, back at the card, then dropped it as if it were too hot to handle and bolted from the house.

"CRIPES!" exclaimed the Old Man. "What ails that Frog?" He stooped down and retrieved the little piece of pasteboard. On it was the name of a French general



who was known to be as close to the greatest figure in the war as skin is to a potato. The Old Man's lower jaw hung loose as he stared at the print.

"Where?" he gulped to Phineas in a husky voice. "Where did you get this?"

"Why, the Frog give it to me," explained the unruffled flyer. "I knocked down a Boche what was tryin' to bump him an' his gang off. There was another Frog there that looked like he had all the gold braid in the world on his sky piece. An—"

"Pinkham," interrupted Major Garrity, "that order doesn't go. You're not under arrest. I'd get busted sure. You've made this squadron famous. You'll get a medal. G.H.Q. will—er—oh, hell!" And he groped for his own cubicle like a man walking in his sleep.

"Haw-w-w!" laughed the intrepid Phineas after him. "I knew ya was oney jokin'."

"Cripes!" This came from Bump Gillis in a weak treble as he walked out into the night.

The French officer, contrary to Phineas' statement, was not ungrateful. Early the next morning a carload of French generals came and congratulated everybody. They kissed Phineas and promised him all the medals in France. The squadron was going to be decorated. G.H.Q. sent their representatives and were not to be outdone by the Republic of France. The brass hats commended the Old Man and wanted to promote him

to an armchair, which offer was emphatically refused. They pounded Phineas on the back and promised him that President Wilson would get a medal through at once, and would send a telegram to the Chamber of Commerce of Boonetown, Iowa. Then they left the Ninth Pursuit to a glorious binge.

This story is not yet complete. Three days later, a French general called at Colonel Boncouer's squadron and demanded to see Lieutenant Henri Dumont. The ace was immediately produced and a snapshot was shoved before his eyes. The French officer wanted satisfaction. He desired to know how come Lieutenant Henri Dumont was so interested in another man's wife. The French ace tried to explain, but failed to convince the outraged general. Cameras do not lie. And when the machine pulled out of the drome, he had a duel on his hands.

Several days later it was pulled off on the quiet outside of a little chateau near French headquarters. Lieutenant Henri Dumont arrived back at the flying field, sans the top of his right ear. The news eventually reached the Ninth Pursuit.

"Haw-w-w-w-w!" roared Phineas as it all came to light. "That saves me from knockin' it off. Well, I giss I got even with them Frogs, huh?"

Still marvelling, the Ninth Pursuit agreed that he had.