



JUNKERS—C.O.D.

written and illustrated by **JOE ARCHIBALD**

a
**PHINEAS
PINKHAM**
howl

King George offered five hundred pounds in good British currency to the pilot who brought down Mannheim, the famous German Ace. Oh well, business before pleasure had always been the motto of Phineas "Carbuncle" Pinkham.

IN THE REAR OF B HANGAR, Ninth American Pursuit Squadron, near Bar-le-Duc, several pilots, including the inimitable Phineas "Carbuncle" Pinkham and his hutmate, Bump Gillis, watched one Butch McGinty, Air Mechanic No. 3567, indulge in a pantomime which is known in the realm of scrambled ears and broken beaks as shadow boxing. Loud snorts issued from the distended nostrils of Butch as he cavorted about the greensward and threw imaginary punches, ducked, blocked and backedpedalled.

For almost three weeks now the welfare of Butch McGinty had been a matter of great concern to the war birds of the Ninth Pursuit. For on the shoulders of this one hundred and seventy-five pound greaseball,

once a prelim boxer in cauliflower alley across the pond, rested enough squadron pay to buy out every estaminet in Bar-le-Duc. In just two days Butch was going into the ring to battle Sergeant " 'Arry Hingleside," pride of the British Air Force and runner-up for the British light-heavyweight title.

Despite the fact that they knew nothing about Butch's record as a box fighter except what the mechanic had told about himself, Major Rufus Garrity's buzzards were confident that their entry would win, for the simple reason that Limey fighters, whether champions or otherwise, loved to assume the horizontal at the most unexpected moments. It was rumored that the Briton had a very thin glass jaw but was a bear when it came to in-fighting. It should also

be mentioned that for the good of Butch's morale. Ingleside's reputation had been kept in a dark closet.

Butch was nothing that a connoisseur of cauliflowers would bother to write home about. His physiognomy bore mute and ugly evidence that his defense was as wide open as the Golden Gates and his waistline could not have been compared with that of a Floradora girl. Girding the aforementioned diaphragm was a ring of superfluous tissue as prominent as a spare auto tire, and if Butch McGinty was in the pink, then Napoleon was nothing but a brass hat's dog robber. Be that as it may, Butch was a Yank and all the buzzards of the Ninth asked one another how any Limey could lick such without an anvil in each glove and diver's helmet pulled over his head.

Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham looked the American entry over carefully during the workout and silently gave thanks that McGinty's opponent was going to be a Limey. Otherwise, he mused to himself, he would rather have risked his month's pay on a throw of the dice. Also, it occurred to the astute Phineas that once Sergeant Ingleside got in close, the over-stuffed mid-section of Butch might not stand up under the shellacking. This thought troubled the Boonetown trickster and his mind wandered back across the tarmac to his hut, remained a few moments, then drifted out again to flit rapidly into the open country surrounding the drome.

Butch McGinty's workout was over when Phineas' mind arrived back to where it belonged. The mechanic was oozing perspiration and confidence as he grinned at Captain Howell.

"Giss that's all," he said. "I'm fit to knock that Limey back over the Channel. Didn't need to train anyways, only I figgered—"

"Oh, yeah?" put in Phineas. "Well, you kin jus' git a coat on an' start on your road work. Five miles, McGinty, see?"

"Wha-a-a?" gasped the mechanic. "I ain't goin' to—"

"I suppose ya don't know a orfiser when ya see one, eh?" yelled Phineas. "Well, listen to me, you ape, I been handlin' ya. ain't I? So when it's time to quit. I'll let ya know. An' I'm goin' along with ya to see ya don't go to sleep when ya git outa sight. Snap into it! We got enough money on ya to buy Russia back agin for the Allies, an' we ain't figgerin' on losin' it. *Allez!*"

FOR several moments the pilots thought that Butch McGinty was going to swing on Lieutenant Pinkham.

It would have been a grave offense, but it was doubtful if anyone present would have blamed him, in view of the temperature, which was close to ninety-eight in the shade. The mechanic, however, after muttering some very uncomplimentary remarks to himself anent Mr. Pinkham, started on a dog-trot across the tarmac.

"That's a dirty trick. Carbuncle!" yelled Bump Gillis, as Phineas prepared to follow his fighter. "I hope when ya git out about four miles ya kick off from sunstroke!"

"Go to hell, please!" retorted Phineas Pinkham and chased Butch McGinty across the field.

Over hill and dale Phineas kept pace with the mechanic. At last they splashed through a narrow stream and entered a wooded area on the opposite bank. It was a stretch of young forest, the foliage of which was very thick, and Butch McGinty found it necessary to tear a path through the conglomeration of low branches, vines and stubble. For a quarter of a mile this went on, and then the hope of the Ninth Pursuit staggered out into the clear, flopped down on the cool grass and defied Phineas Pinkham to make him get up until he was damned good and ready. He also voiced the hope that the lieutenant would try to get tough about it.

"Ya needn't git sore," said Phineas soothingly, aware of the fact that there were no witnesses to a possible murder. "It's for your own good, Butch. Cripes, ya don't wanta git licked by that dumb Limey, do ya?"

"Who says he kin lick me?" demanded the mechanic, raising himself to all fours. "I suppose you do, huh? Well—"

"I didn't say he could, did I?" growled Phineas. "Well, git off your coat and shirt an' I'll give ya a nice rub-down. There's some nice green leaves in there and I'll git some." And Phineas discreetly hurried back into the foliage before Butch could start swearing again.

"Now you're bein' sensible," declared Phineas when he returned with a handful of leaves, to find the mechanic stripped to the waist and lying contentedly on his stomach. Lieutenant Pinkham then hid a smile and proceeded to rub the glistening torso of Butch McGinty with leaves and great gusto.

"That feels good, Loot," was the fighter's reaction. "What I won't do to that Limey! I'll—"

"That's what I'm afraid of—" Phineas caught himself. "I—*er*—mean they might have to take him away in the meat wagon, Butch."

"Yeah. Ha!"

"There, that's done!" exclaimed manager at length. "Your trainin' is over but lay off chewin' tobacker an'

drinkin' coneyac until after the fight. We'll walk back an' take our time."

Pilots trickling toward the big house for mess were astonished to note that Phineas Pinkham and the mechanic were on very good terms as they meandered onto the tarmac.

"An' I was hopin' the greaseball would git sore an' knock all of them pianner keys outa Carbuncle's face," bemoaned Bump Gillis to nobody in particular. "I ain't got an appetite now."

"Cheer up, Bump," grinned Howell. "Mannheim will take him off our hands. He's plenty sore at Phineas and when he gets him upstairs again, it'll be just too bad. He's been dropping notes all over France, daring the bum to come up and fight. Says it'll take more than a smart trick and a rubber gun to beat him, too. I guess the whole Jerry air force has never gotten over the way Carbuncle brought down von Korpff. Well, here's hoping!"

PHINEAS entered the big room just ahead of Major Garrity, and the usual insults and biting badinage froze on the lips of his fellows as he took a chair and grinned tauntingly at them.

"Well, the money's ours already," he announced. "I giss I can handle fighters, huh?" He paused as the Old Man scowled and settled himself in a chair at the head of the table.

"Gentlemen," began the C.O., "I—"

"An' if that Limey thinks he kin git inside of Butch's guard," went on Phineas, "he—"

Crash! The table shook and crockery rattled. Bump Gillis' coffee cup did a flip-flop and dumped part of its contents into the pilot's lap.

"When I start talking, Pinkham," roared Major Rufus, his fist cocked, "that means for you to shut up. Understand?"

"Yessir," mumbled Phineas. "I was oney—"

"Now, men," went on the Old Man, "about this contest tomorrow night. I look for you all to uphold the traditions of American sportsmanship regardless of the outcome of the match. I understand you have all bet a lot of money with Hunkley-Holcombe's squadron, and if you lose, I expect you to take it like men. I might remind you buzzards that we have given the M.P.s full authority to check any disturbance that may arise."

The major paused to clear his throat and cast a brief glance in Phineas Pinkham's direction. "The fight will be held in the field a mile from this drome, as I

am glad to say, I won the toss this afternoon with the British squadron commander. In the event that our man is beaten, we do not want to offer any alibis. So long as both contestants have all their arms and legs, they will have to go through with the fight tomorrow night."

Again Major Rufus Garrity paused and his lips tightened. His glance favored Phineas. "And I want none of your smart tricks. Pinkham! Understand?" He roared for emphasis. "If there is any trouble and you are at the bottom of it. I'll bust you higher than a kite!"

"Huh?" retorted Carbuncle indignantly. "That's right, blame me for everythin' even before it happens. But I ain't kissin' none of them Limeys when I see 'em. If they git wise an'—"

"You've got your orders. Pinkham," exploded the major. "You walk a chalk line tomorrow night or an M.P. will put another parting in your hair with a gun barrel—and he will have my permission. I'm taking no chances. If everything goes smoothly, the relationship with the British squadron will be where it was before you arrived at this field. That's all." He rose to go. "And, by the way, Pinkham," he shot across the table, "I'm holding you responsible for McGinty's appearance and condition tomorrow night."

"Well," grinned the incurable humorist when the Old Man had gone, "I bet them lousy M.P.s won't have no tiddlywinks game tomorrer night. If there's any doves flyin' around the ring, they'd better put on brass knuckles an' a nose guard. I—"

"If you have been pulling anything, Pinkham," threatened Howell, "we'll—"

"Aw, what's eatin' ya?" interrupted Phineas testily. "If ya oney knew, ya would all be thankin' me an' I giss ya will after they carry the Limey out on a slab. I have just figgered out a way to stop Butch from gittin' hit in the bread basket, that's all."

"Ya know everythin', don't ya?" scoffed Bump Gillis as he reached for the sugar. "If ya knew twicet as much as ya do now, ya would still be a nitwit."

"Well, I giss I ain't been doin' so bad," retorted the unquenchable Phineas. "Ask Pershin!"

NIGHT had grown a long white beard and was taking off fast from the drome of the Ninth when a violent disturbance broke out in the vicinity of the groundmen's quarters. Pilots of C flight, dressing for the dawn patrol, tumbled out of their huts to see a figure, clad only in underwear, doing a dance on the tarmac which would have turned a whirling dervish

green with envy. Howls and blood-curdling epithets penetrated the huts and cut off a chorus of snores. In the stone house, Major Garrity shot up from his pillow and listened for several moments before growling and swinging out of bed.

Heavy-eyed war birds trickled out into the early dawn. By now the scantily clad disturber was sprawled on the tarmac doing an Australian crawl and a repertoire of contortions and flip-flops. The personnel of the Ninth Pursuit edged closer to stare down at the harassed and rage-distorted face of Butch McGinty. The mechanic's clawing hands were doing the work of a dozen men on various portions of his anatomy. Between curses and grunts he babbled balefully the desire to fasten his fingers securely on the throat of Lieutenant Pinkham.

"What alls you, McGinty?" barked Captain Howell. "What in—"

"P-poison ivy!" gasped the groundman. "P-Pinkham, the d-dirty—I'll kill 'im!" He paused to scratch again. "Wh-where is he?"

"Never mind that kind of talk," snapped Howell. "Get up and we'll go to see a medico and fix you up. C'mon. C'mon. If you have wakened the Old Man, you'll get—"

"I—I don't care a d-damn," burst out McGinty as he struggled to his feet. "Let 'em bust me. I'll kill that lootenant. I'll—"

A figure detached itself from the group and hurried toward the line of huts. A chuckle was barely audible as its objective was reached. Things began to happen fast. The Old Man stamped toward the medical shack and took an inventory of Butch McGinty's anatomy. This done, he retraced his steps as gently as a horse bitten by a swarm of bees and wondered how It would seem to have a murder on his conscience.

Stunned by this turn of events which put their legal tender in worse than jeopardy, the pilots put their heads and two and two together. Then they went in a body to pay a call on Phineas Carbuncle Pinkham, but the Old Man had beaten them to it.

While the Spads of the early patrol were roaring outside, the irrepressible Carbuncle stood before the wrathful C.O.'s gaze, striving to maintain an erect posture in the face of a veritable verbal monsoon. At length the major had to pause for breath and Phineas made the best of it.

"How kin va blame me?" he wanted to know. "Did I know I was rubbin' Butch down with poison ivy? Did ya think I'll take a chance of gittin' all itched up like Butch? Anybody'd think—"

"Damme, Pinkham!" erupted Garrity. "I've a mind to take off your uniform and throw you into a hut with McGinty and let him knock you loose from your ribs. And what're you going to tell the buzzards who have bet everything but their shirt, eh? Well, I'll tell you something. Whatever happens to you in case Ingleside wins this fight, I won't see it. I'll be deaf, dumb and blind while they work on you. I'll—"

"Well, they ain't goin' to lose, see?" grinned Phineas and pilots outside the door leaned closer. "This Limey is a great body-puncher but he won't dare to clinch with Butch with poison ivy all over the bum. Haw! And Butch'll be so mad t'night at everythin' that he'll kill the Limey. Well, I giss that's somethin', eh?"

Major Rufus Garrity swore and raised himself from his chair. One hand strayed toward a big ink bottle. "So!" he burst out. "It wasn't an accident, huh? You're immune to poison ivy, eh? You crackpot! You—"

PHINEAS turned and ran. With a desperate movement he swung open the door and catapulted to safety just as the ink bottle broke up on the door jamb. Writing fluid cascaded down on the eavesdropping pilots scrambled on the sill. Bump Gillis spat out a big gob of it and sped after his hutmate. Baying like a pack of hounds, the rest of the angry mob followed suit. The Boonetown flyer, however, had gotten away to a good start and was securely entrenched in his hut when the besiegers arrived. Only the intervention of the Old Man saved the hut from complete disintegration.

"That's enough!" he commanded. "You'll not molest Pinkham unless McGinty is licked tonight. After that, I'll turn him over to you and to hell with him!"

The war with Jerry went on as usual throughout the day. Mannheim licked B flight, then flew over the lines and dropped another challenge to Phineas.

Butch McGinty, despite the heroic efforts of the medicos, failed to respond quickly to treatment and it was apparent that poison ivy had become greatly attached to him. With the fight but three hours away, Butch's face was warping all out of shape. One eye was completely closed and the other offered but a narrow scope of vision. The Ninth protested to the British squadron, but received a reply to the effect that the Yanks had been well aware of the agreement drawn up and there would be no backing down. Major Garrity crossed his fingers and harbored the thought that he might call up G.H.Q. and have it stopped at once.

A nimbus of hostility hung over the terrain and scraps of conversation from grumbling war birds boded ill for the Limeys if Sergeant 'Arry Hingleside scored a victory. And even by stretching his imagination all out of shape, the Old Man could foresee nothing but such an outcome.

Having underestimated the potency of poison ivy, Phineas Pinkham immediately evacuated the tarmac of the Ninth after the last patrol. With a pair of field glasses tucked under his arm, he slipped away to a distant knoll which overlooked the scene of conflict. And there he waited.

They came in camions, limousines, and on motorcycles—brass hats, M.P.s, pilots and groundmen. Four posts were set up and rope stretched around them. The Old Man counted the M.P.s, wished that he had arranged for a division of Marines, and sat down beside Major Hunkley-Holcombe, British C.O. He offered the Briton a cigar, smiled his best smile and hoped for the best, which, he felt sure, was going to be bad enough.

Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham had the grace to shudder as he peered through the glasses at Butch McGinty being shown where the ring was. Ingleside was waiting in his corner and there was a triumphant smirk on his face. The preliminaries over, the ring was cleared and the fight was on. Pardon us, did we say "fight"? It is well known that no one ever won a championship in the ring hitting from memory, and that was what Air Mechanic McGinty was doing. Phineas saw his fighter make a wild rush and miss the Limey by a city block. Sergeant Harry Ingleside also rushed and he did not miss. There was a sickening thud which reached to the very ears of Phineas and, after turning a handspring, Butch McGinty pancaked to the sod and lay down to sleep.

There were several seconds of awesome silence, then came a roar like the pounding of angry surf. Phineas stopped groaning and chuckled gleefully as he caught a glimpse of Bump Gillis measuring with his fist one Lieutenant Price of the Bristol squadron. He saw the Old Man hold up his hand, and then he was blotted from view by a mass of milling men. An M.P. flew out of somewhere and sideslipped to the ground on his ear. Another crawled out on all fours and his nose had suddenly become as a ripe strawberry.

Lieutenant Pinkham took the glasses away from his eyes and waited to see no more. He felt that so far as he was concerned, the war was over.

DUSK was not fooling when the wandering boots of Phineas Pinkham finally stopped in front of a Frog farm about three miles from the drome. For almost an hour Phineas had been analyzing his present status with the United States and their Allies and had come to the conclusion that they probably could get along without him unless he proved otherwise. The Pinkham brain was clicking with the smoothness of a Hisso as its owner ambled toward the Frog farmhouse and rapped on the door. It opened and closed, but not before Phineas had slipped through.

Two hours later our hero slipped onto the field and in each hand he clutched an old-fashioned muzzle-loading shotgun. His pockets bulged with contents which seemed to weigh him down considerably and to hamper his progress.

The tarmac was quiet—too quiet, to Phineas' way of thinking. He had expected a battle royal and had come prepared, but Major Garrity's roost was as peaceful as a graveyard at midnight. Two or three groundmen passed close to Phineas, stared at him curiously, then passed on, muttering to each other. From the big stone house, slits of light appeared through drawn curtains. Lieutenant Pinkham walked to his hut, peered cautiously inside lest an ambush be awaiting him, made sure that all was well, and stepped in.

Ridding himself of his encumbrances, Phineas sat down on his cot and listened for hostile sounds. Their absence mystified him and at length he squared his shoulders, got up and left the hut, heading toward that which might prove to be a painful death. The culprit opened the door of the big house as if nothing had happened and ventured a pleasantry. Wrathful visages danced in the haze of tobacco smoke. Some of the faces bore marks of sanguinary conflict.

Up and down the floor, his hands clasped behind his back, paced the Old Man. Stalemate! Poignantly it dawned on Phineas that these men had been patiently awaiting him and had already passed judgment. Suddenly Major Rufus Garrity stopped in his trail-blazing and whirled on the thorn in his side. The look of nausea irked the Boonetown flyer.

"Go ahead an' shoot!" he snapped. "Ya can't prove nothin'. I didn't start that fight with the Limeys. I was half a mile away. An' you bums go ahead an' bust out cryin'. I s'pose ya think I made money on the fight, huh? Well—"

"Shut up, Pinkham!" bellowed the C.O., shaking a huge fist close to the flyer's nose. "And listen! You're

responsible for all of this grief. You got all of these men here stone broke. The brass hats will make my pants too hot for me to sit in, after that free-for-all brawl with the British squadron. I've got to make McGinty a corporal to keep him from committing murder. And all because of your damn smart tricks! I—"

"The brass hats ain't got nothin' on me," retorted Phineas and there was the semblance of a grin on his homely physiognomy. "An' nobody here has. If them bums beat up the Limeys, I didn' make 'em do it. An—" Major Rufus fought a desperate battle to keep his last shred of reason from snapping. His rugged face turned white, darkened to purple, then displayed a deep carnelian. His mouth worked like the jaws of a stuttering man before he got it to functioning.

"I know we haven't got anythin' on you, Pinkham, you fish-faced whoozle!" he bellowed. "But we've got you where your hair is short. Listen to this, you fathead, and then laugh! You're going to pay these buzzards back or go back to Boonetown, or whatever tanktown you come from, with a lily in your hand—that is, if Mannheim leaves a hand to stick it in. The British Government will pay five hundred pounds to the flyer who knocks off the Jerry or downs him. And seeing as he has invited you personally to go up and get him, you're going to do it. If you don't, everybody in France will agree with the Boche that you're nothing but a false alarm painted yellow, who has been' getting a lot of lucky breaks! Well?"

"Haw!" laughed Phineas. "I like them funny stories. Ya sure know how to tell 'em. Got any more?"

THE pilots held their breath. The Old Man teetered on the balls of his feet like Annette Kellerman on a springboard and swelled up like a turkey gobbler.

"I—I demand—*er*—respect, Pinkham!" he roared. "I'll break you, damme! I'll—"

"Then who'd git Mannheim?" taunted Phineas. "I giss when them Heinie aces has to be got, a Pinkham has to do it. Mannheim—C.O.D. That's it, huh? An' I got a lot to settle with that beer mug. He can't call me them names he's been callin' me. I'll—"

The Old Man visibly wilted as he stared at Phineas. He brushed a hand over his eyes, groaned with despair and staggered toward the privacy of his sanctum to round up his wits.

"Well," commented Captain Howell, leader of A flight, "we get a break at last. Whoever heard of anybody getting away from Mannheim once he gets on your tail? One out of a million, maybe, hey, guys?"

"Yeah," growled Bump Gillia, rubbing a huge bruise over his left eye. "And giftin' on that crackpot Pinkham's tail is the Boche's favorite outdoor sport. Well, it's either a harp for ya, Carbuncle, ya bum, or diggin' latrines over at Blois, an' am I laffin'?"

"You're all such nice guys," drawled Phineas as he eased himself into a chair. "I bet you would have lots of fun at a hangin'. Well, I'm gonna have the laff on you when I git Mannheim, an' let's see now!" And the amazing product of Iowa mentally figured how much of the five hundred pounds he would have left after paying off his disgruntled fellow buzzards.

"Well, I'll have enough to go on leave to Paree an' buy that book on how to make elephants disappear in mid-air. Haw!" He jumped up and headed for the door. "Oh reservoir!" he shot back. "I got work to do." The door slammed shut behind him.

"Cripes!" breathed one of the pilots. "I think I'm goin' nuts. too. That bum ain't human. He oughta be in a zoo."

"Ain't you got no feelin's for the monkeys?" rasped Bump Gillis.

Despite the weariness with which he had been injected by the hectic day, Lieutenant Pinkham went to the hangar which housed his Spad and rummaged around for a can of black paint. Having found same, he climbed aboard his battle wagon and diligently went to work applying great black letters to the top wing fabric. Several mechanics looked on quizzically.

It was close to midnight when the job was completed, but Carbuncle had not yet begun to work. He snapped orders at two of the ground-men and walked out of the hangar to his hut. Bump Gillis opened one eye and watched his hutmate drag the two muzzle-loaders from under his cot, then sit down and begin to ram powder and shot in the barrels of each.

"Who do ya think y' are. Carbuncle?" inquired"—Bump. "Dan'l Boone? What're ya doin' with them cannon? They look like they was used by Columbus. Haw! Haw!"

"Huh?" sniffed Phineas. "I'm jus' fixin' somethin' that the Allies have forgot to do. Anyway, it's none of your damn business."

Bump grunted and went off to sleep again. His job in the hut finished, Phineas walked back to the hangar with his ancient pieces of ordnance and sent two sleepy-eyed, swearing grease balls on a hunt for plenty of strong pliable wire.

THE dawn was just beginning to throw back

the blankets of night when the strangest job ever performed on a Spad was finished to the complete satisfaction of Phineas Carbuncle Pinkham. A few francs proved an antidote for the disgruntled and weary groundmen, and the Boonetown worker of miracles received their promises that nothing would be mentioned regarding the nature of the nocturnal labors. Whistling a lilting aria, Lieutenant Pinkham trekked to his hut.

With the new day came feverish messages from the brass hats to the Ninth Pursuit Squadron. Jerry was feeling tough and was pushing forward. The smoldering Front burst into flame like the dying embers of a fire lashed by a sudden gust of wind.

All that day the Ninth Pursuit would take the air and cover the movements of khaki troops coming up to strengthen the Allied line. German bombers and strafing flights must be kept away from the Yankee back area. Those orders meant but one thing to the Ninth. Mannheim was on the prowl. C flight took off at dawn and came back in a hurry. There were too many of Mannheim's flock upstairs. Howell was in Wings when the leader of C flight turned in his report. The Old Man looked at him and nodded.

A flight's ships were pushed out to the line. And then the pilots got a flash of Lieutenant Pinkham's Spad. On the port side of the fuselage was the inscription, "USE PINKHAM'S LEAD PILLS TO KILL HEINIES AND COOTIES!" To starboard screamed "PINKHAM'S SPAD—IT EATS ANY TRIPE!" The lettering on the top wing smeared there for the benefit of *Hauptmann* Mannheim escaped the notice of those on the tarmac, but it was glaringly apparent that Phineas Pinkham had planned a perfect suicide. However, these was nothing resembling the air of a doomed man about the demeanor of Lieutenant Pinkham as he walked across the tarmac, dressed for battle. He shoved a heavy object into the pocket of his leather coat as he approached the chattering group surveying his handiwork.

"I giss them Boche won't have no trouble locatin' me now, eh?" grinned Phineas as he put on the brakes. "I hope the ol' walrus is satisfied now. I allus aim to please an'—"

"What's that, Pinkham?" barked the Old Man as he shoved his way to the Spad. "A walrus, am I? By cripes. I'll not stand much more of your disresp—" His words melted. The bedaubed fabric of the Spad had caught his eyes and had drawn them out as far as they would go without falling down over his face.

"Y-you damned fool!" he ejaculated in a throaty whisper.

"Well, I gotta show that kraut where I am, ain't I?" demanded Phineas. "And I'm obeyin' orders like ya said." And Phineas gestured quickly to one of the mechanics who leaned indolently against the side of the ship. The groundman shifted his position slightly and Phineas grinned.

"Well, good-bye," offered Bump Gillis with a grin, stepping forward and shoving out his hand. "Don't fergit, I asked first for them new boots ya've got and them field glasses."

"Yeah?" snapped Phineas. "I'm the only guy who'll ever wear them boots, ya homely hyena! An' I think I'll take a poke at ya for luck."

"I was oney kiddin'," grinned Bump, back-pedaling out of range. "We gotta have them new boots to bury ya in."

The Old Man was about to roar when his attention was diverted by something else. A pilot was approaching with a shovelful of gravel. Behind him came two others and one carried a piece of plank under his arm. The gravel was dumped into a little heap and with a solemn expression a pilot placed the board upright in same, bowed to Phineas Pinkham and stepped back. Carbuncle stared at the board, the top of which had been rounded at the corners in the manner of a tombstone. He stepped close and stared. On the face of the board was painted,

"Phineas Pinkham
Born 1895. Finee 1918.
R.I.P."

"NOW look here, you nitwits." bellowed Major Rufus, "that's not a danm bit funny! Take it away or I'll—"

Phineas grinned and held up a hand. "Haw!" he chuckled. "Don't spoil their fun. Oncet I was playin' sojer like these kids an' a guy kicked 'em over. I cried an' cried an'—"

The Old Man swore, kicked the board savagely and then whirled on Phineas. "To hell with you, ya loony bum!" he roared. "I'm rootin' for Mannheim!"

"Well, go ahead!" urged Phineas, climbing into his Spad. "Don't fergit ya can't afford to lose another bet so quick, haw! An' while I'm playin' a harp t'night, maybe, I'll laff at what the brass hats'll do to you for lettin' these buzzards beat up the Limeys."

The major could stand no more. He shouted to Howell to get going and fled the scene, wishing for the hundredth time that he had joined the Navy.

Howell hopped the blocks and roared across the field. A flight, one by one, waddled after him. C flight sat tensed in their pits and waited. Not until Phineas' Spad shuddered, preparatory to leaping forward, did the two groundmen leave the side of his smeared ship. The Old Man turned in the doorway of headquarters as Phineas shot away and his conscience began to stir. Wide awake, it began to mock him, poked sharp fingers into his diaphragm and sent him stamping into the stone house to wonder what he would write in the obituary that was to go to Boonetown, Iowa.

Hauptmann Mannheim led thirty snarling Tripes toward Allied skies, a contemptuous twist to his hard mouth. They had hearts of jelly, these *verdammmt* Yankees. Had they not run away earlier in the day? And where was that upstart, *Leutnant* Pinkham, who was afraid to take up the great Mannheim's challenge? What manner of pig was he that he let such insults pass? Ha! Mannheim was not von Korpff, that was it. The crazy American flyer wanted none of him.

The Junker's chest swelled until there was little excess space left in the Fokker pit, and then it seemed to burst, like a bootball skewered by an ice pick. Through a gap in the scud below Mannheim perceived Allied ships, more than a score of them. Spads! And they were climbing.

"*Gott!* The word burst unbidden from the proud Mannheim's lips. His own name mocked at him from below. From the top wing of a Spad it screamed at him. Face puffed and purple, the proud Mannheim front-sticked to get a better view. *Gott!* It was not imagination, *nein!* Painted there were derisive black words:

"HOPMAN MANHEIM IS A COCKEYED PIG.
SO IS THE KAISER."

Leutnant Pinkham! Not one crumb of doubt bothered Mannheim. Such colossal impudence could come only from the American joker. Shaking as if he were caught in a blizzard with no clothes on, the raging German leader hurled his Fokker down at the taunting, maddening thing which at last had thrown back the challenge into his own face.

Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham saw Mannheim coming and sideslipped & thousand feet. This maneuver exposed to the view of the cursing Boche leader further scathing indictment. Bump Gillis twisted his way out of a tight pocket manufactured by a pair of Tripes and tried to get to Carbuncle's aid.

It may be said for Howell, the flight leader, that he,

too, tried to get in, but Mannheim's Junkers blasted him to another corner of the sky. The Ninth Pursuit murmured good-bye to Phineas when it became apparent thdt this sky duel was taboo so far as the rest of the war birds, both Yanks and Junkers, were concerned. Jerries waved to their enemies and shot upstairs, the signal that conflict was to wait until *Hauptmann* Mannheim had settled with the audacious Lieutenant Pinkham, Spads pulled out and A and C flights circled overhead to await the barbecuing of the Boonetown pain-in-the-neck.

THREE jumps from perdition or paradise, Phineas finally got Mannheim in front of his own ship by accident and squeezed a flock of lead from his Vickers. He wondered if McGinty, to get even, had loaded his guns with blanks, as he missed every one of the enemy's three wings. And then Mannheim looped and pounded down on Phineas Pinkham's tail. The Ninth Pursuit closed their eyes and waited.

When they dared to look again, Phineas was trying everything in the category of aerial self-defense and some ideas of his own. But Mannheim, the master, was glued to the Yank's tail, playing with him, enjoying savage chuckles until he should feel like letting loose his *coup de grace*. He wanted to show his Junkers what a man this Mannheim was. He would make a monkey out of the Yankee joker and then lay him among the sweet peas. The Kaiser a "cock-eyed pig!" *Ach!* That was too much.

And now it was time. One hundred yards ahead flew the Spad. Seventy-five. Mannheim bared his teeth like a hungry wolf and fingered the Spandau trips. Howell wondered why Phineas was flying straight on, seemingly content to be a perfect target. Bump Gillis howled and swore.

Lieutenant Phineas Carbuncle Pinkham gripped his stick between his knees, reached down to the floor of the cockpit and picked up two metal rings. A strong wire was attached to each of these. Suddenly unleashing all his strength, Phineas yanked them upward. *Boom! Boom!* Two great gobs of fire spat out from the fuselage of the Spad midway between pit and tail assembly.

Howell and Company almost fell out of their ships as they saw Mannheim's Fokker stagger as if it had run into a tank. *Hauptmann* Mannheim had waited just a little bit too long. Twin blasts of lead swept struts away, bit out huge chunks of wing fabric and smashed the Tripe's prop to matchwood.

Half an ear ripped away, one shoulder inoculated with slugs, Mannheim cursed like a maniac and fought the controls of his ship. The Mercedes engine roared a hellish chant and began to tear loose from the bow. Mannheim was going down!

But what about Phineas? Squirm-in his seat, the Boonetown champion was heading toward *terra firma* with his tail assembly cut to ribbons and the fuselage behind him blazing merrily.

Captain Howell *et al* sat in their pits, petrified. The Boche staffel, however, went berserk at the sight of this terrible indignity to the person of their august leader. Motors roaring, they formed a wedge and slammed down on the Ninth Pursuit. The Spads reeled from the first blast, then collected their wits and went to work. Mannheim and Phineas were left to themselves.

The ground was coming up fast, as if awfully glad indeed to see Phineas, and Major Rufus Garrity's stormy petrel unfastened his belt in a hurry. He cut the Hisso, then talked to the Spad like a father. As if in reply, there came a jolt at the tail like a crack of thunder, and the nose of Phineas' crate lifted a bit just before one wing tip was kissed by a hungry tree branch. The Spad kicked over, spun around and ejected Carbuncle as an empty cartridge is coughed up by a gun.

The illusion of being a bird was very pleasant, and Phineas was about to flap his arms when all of France seemed to rise up and hit him on the back of the neck. Night had never arrived with so little notice in Phineas' memory. And there were a a lot of big and little dippers scooping milk out of the milky way and dumping the stuff down on him. Abruptly it all faded and Phineas opened one eye to find himself alive but half submerged in a muddy tepid stream. A turtle was crawling over his chest, but when he opened his eye, it suddenly blinked in amazement and sinpped overside.

PAINFULLY, Lieutenant Pinkham crawled out of the ooze and up a little bank. He was just lifting his head to peer at whatever was above it, when he heard footsteps very, very near. Quickly, he put his hand in his pocket and pulled out a gun.

"*Schwein!*" barked a gloating voice. "It iss you think to capture me, *ja?* Get oop, *Leutnant* Pinkham, so I shoot you yet, *ja!* Mannheim vill kill not even a stupid peeg lying down, *nein!* *Ach!* You bring me down, *Leutnant*, but nefer vill you take me alive, *nein!*"

Phineas scrambled to his feet, whirled and looked into the saturnine visage of his foe and then into the

barrel of a Luger. His own gun came up with a jerk. *Hauptmann* Mannheim wiped at his lacerated ear quickly, then laughed his meanest laugh.

"Hoho!" he chortled. "You fool Mannheim with a play gun, *ja?* I haff been vatching it. I am not von Korpff, *nein*. Now, *Leutnant*, I vill giff you a chance, *ja?* They say the Boche murderers are—I vill giff you a chance, *Leutnant* Pinkham. First shoot vith your rubber gun, *ja!* Shoot, *Leutnant!* *Ein, zwei—dr—*"

Whoosh! A liquid stream spat into Mannheim's jeering physiognomy. The Junker gasped, struggled for breath for almost a minute, and, howling, dropped his gun, for both hands were needed to paw at eyes seemingly on fire.

"*Donner und blitzen!*" shrieked Mannheim, jumping up and down. "You haff blind me. *Ach! Gott!* A fool I haff been. *Ach—*"

"Sure," agreed the grinning Phineas, holding the Luger in his hand. "That was a rubber gun—I'm afraid of real guns. Haw! An' it was loaded with ammonia. Laugh that off, ya squarehead, and start movin'. You Heinies never will git no brains. An' don't try no funny business, kraut, as I git five hun'ed pounds for your carcass, vertical or horizontal. You ain't goin' to toss no more guys outa a Gotha with a trick parashoot, take it from me, ya bum!"

Just three hours later Phineas Carbuncle Pinkham shoved the miserable, battered *Hauptmann* Mannheim out of a camion onto the tarmac of the victorious Ninth Pursuit Squadron. Leaning on Howell's arm for support. Major Garrity refused to believe what he saw until he had pinched himself black and blue.

"I giss I fooled that kraut!" exclaimed Phineas, limping up to the Old Man. "A guy ain't got a chance when Mannheim gits on your tail, huh? Haw! Haw! Well, I had guns behind me like them two-seaters. Muzzle-loaders, one on each side under the fuselage. Had 'em fastened down and wires hitched to the triggers, but did one of 'em kick! It flew back an' smacked me in the pants an' I didn't figger on the damn things bustin' up the tail, neither. Well, ya can't git boloney without cuttin' up some pigs, huh? Let them brass hats try an break this outfit now, major. Haw!"

He shifted his gaze and surveyed the gaping pilots with a look of nausea. "You'll all git your money ya say I owe ya," he growled. "An' I hope King George sprinkles it with anthrax germs before he puts it in the mailbox. Say—where's Bump? Did he—he wasn't—" Phineas' face paled.

Captain Howell laughed. “He’s not feeling so good. He went and dug out that leather case your field glasses were in when you didn’t show up. He didn’t know a door-knob would spring out and slam him in the chin. Well, he’s over at the mess shack eating some oatmeal with lots of milk. He can hardly open his jaws enough to put a cigarette in his face!”

“Haw! Haw! Haw-w-w!” enthused Phineas. “Did I git that bum!” And he walked hurriedly toward the mess shack, albeit limpingly. The Old Man swore, looked once at Phineas’ back and hurried away himself—to get an aspirin tablet.