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**PHINEAS
 PINKHAM**
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POOSH 'EM UP—PINKHAM!

written and illustrated by
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Things looked pretty dark on the Piave, and the Roman Brass Hats admitted it. For “The Caproni Crusher,” Baron von Zweibach, was loose—and they didn’t have a flyer good enough to dunk him. But the situation could have been worse—in fact, when Phineaseppi Pinkhamillo arrived on the scene it was worser!

DURING THE LAST YEAR of the colossal fuss the Italian board of strategy powwowed at Padua and came to the conclusion that something had to be done about the Austro threat across the Piave. If that something wasn’t done in a hurry the Hapsburgs would soon be riding the gondolas in Venice f.o.b.

Consequently the said board of strategy sent out an S.O.S. to the western front calling for a triple threat airman who would be able to cope with one Baron

von Zweibach who had become widely known from the Dardanelles to the Dover Straits as “The Caproni Crusher.” At Chaumont the representative of the land of grapes, gorgonzola, and garlic tossed his cards right on the table.

“The Austrians and their allies,” the Neapolitan chirped with the inevitable Latin gestures, “they concentrate the supplies near Vittorio, *si*. Guns, ammunition, gas shells. For the bigga fall drive, *signors*. The Capronis—what is left of these—they try for to

find heem and blow heem up, *si*. But these Capronis, they most never come back. The Baron—ah, he is the terrible one. Alia the time he shoots it down the Capronis. Our besta flyer, Major Barracuda, he is in the hospital, *signors*. We musta have it the great ace to borrow. Ah, Santa Maria—!”

The Chaumont tycoons agreed with the Neapolitan knight. They got their heads together and all through the night soldiers ran about Chaumont looking for a wood fire. Near dawn a brigadier snapped his fingers and woke three of his cronies up. An idea had sneaked up on him and slapped him between the eyes.

“Pinkham!” he cracked. Wing Headquarters sent for Major Rufus Garrity. The Wing Commander gave him a cigar, then opened up. “The Italian Air Force needs a morale stiffener, Major. A man to cope with this Baron von Zweibach. Now this Lieutenant Pinkham is the luckiest man who ever brought a country doctor out of his bed in the middle of the night. He hasn’t the sense to be afraid of anything. He’s a jinx to Jerries with a title and if my memory does not fail me he has knocked off a flock of important Heinies in this neighborhood. He’s the man to go to Italy, Garrity!”

Major Rufus Garrity, commanding the Ninth Pursuit Squadron near Bar-Le-Duc, rubbed a badly singed nose and nodded emphatic agreement. “You took the words right out of my larynx,” he bit out. “When do I get him ready?”

SEVEN days later Phineas Pinkham was packing his trunk. Captain Howell and Lieutenant Gillis sat on a cot and watched the process.

“You’d better stick to formations there,” “A” Flight’s leader advised. “Duck out of them and you’ll find yourself hangin’ on the top of an Alp. Even those St. Bernards couldn’t reach you on some of them.”

“I must be some important, huh?” Phineas tossed back over his shoulder. “Haw-w-w-w! It must be awful to be just an ordinary bum like you guys. I have to go an’ save the Italians now. Next it’ll be to git Lawrence out of an Arab’s tent. If I go to Rome, I’ll git some candles for you.”

“Nuts!” snorted Bump Gillis. “They’re sendin’ you over to Italy to git shot at, as it is the easiest way to get rid of you. Ha! ha! Compared to the Baron, the Vons you have been kickin’ around here were fancy lace workers. Wait’ll you fly them Macchis and S.I.A.’s.”

“S.I.A.?” Phineas mumbled querulously. “An Italian two-seater, eh? You know what it means to the olive-

skinned boys over there right now? It means ‘Soon I’ll Arrive.’ The Caproni boys can’t wait, I bet.”

They had a binge on the drome of the Ninth the night before Phineas hopped a Frog rattler for Italy. Glad Tidings Goomer served spaghetti and a hip steak rubbed with garlic. A hastily assembled quartet sang *Santa Lucia* and Major Rufus Garrity made a speech. He had to stand up to make it, as is the custom. When he sat down he discovered that someone had smeared glue on the seat of the chair. Lieutenant Pinkham, the guest of honor, was on the Major’s right hand. Garrity hit the Boonetown pilot with his left and the party broke up.

Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham went to Marseilles, thence to Ventimiglia where the Italian customs officers poked into his bag. One of them picked up a rattlesnake and immediately passed out. Another one pressed something with an exploring digit and got a stream of ink in his right eye. They were just voting on banishing the Yank to a hoosegow where he could soak overnight when an Italian officer came along and talked them out of it.

Phineas passed through Genoa and Spezia on schedule. He was supposed to change at Spezia and head for Venice, but there was one thing in Italy that the Iowa miracle man was going to see if it was the last thing he ever accomplished in his hectic life. Consequently he got off the Italian rattler at Pisa and took a slant at the thing that had been thumbing its nose at gravity for years, namely the Leaning Tower.

“Haw-w-w-w!” erupted Phineas Pinkham when he eyed it. “It looks like one of Hannibal’s elephants crossed the Alps’ and leaned against it to nudge it over. Well, I will git the next train out now.”

The traveler hit Padua two days late. The Italian High Command was at the end of its wits when he finally reported at Army Headquarters.

“I got lost,” Phineas blithely explained. “I couldn’t read the signs on the railroad platforms. Well, where’s there an airdrome?”

The Italian squadron that drew the Yankee ace was sprawled two miles outside of Treviso. They flew Macchi biplanes, LeRhone powered, and eighty-three miles an hour was their speed as long as the petrol held out. They were crates with zigzag struts and they carried but one machine gun. On the way to the drome in a battered, muddy squadron car Phineas Pinkham pointed to some trees that decorated a distant hillside.

A Latin non-com said: “They raisa da mullaberry,

signor. For to maka da silka worm, shoose!” Plenty of gestures accompanied the explanation.

“Boys what a country!” enthused the Yank. “I’ll git some to make me a shirt. Haw-w-w-w!”

The driver of the car leaned close to a man who sat beside him. “Lika they say, da Lieutenant he is craze, shoose.”

The Macchi layout seemed to exude scant animation when Phineas climbed out of the car. Near a bullet-nicked Italian war bus a Neapolitan groundhog was warbling *O Sole Mio* in a lusty voice. Phineas walked over, dropped his musette bag.

“Gooda eve, Tony. Don’t you care whether the Austrians know where you’re located or not? I bet the waltzers over on the Danube can hear you. Haw-w-w-w!”

The Italian ackemma’s song broke off and he grinned at the newcomer without comprehension. “No spicka da Englees, *signor*,” he explained. “Oh-h-h-h-h so-o-o-o-o-le mee-e-e-eo-o-o-o! Oh-h-h—”

Phineas wrinkled his brows and strode toward a long low house that seemed to have been constructed out of some kind of stone. Three gaudily clad Macchi pilots eyed him quizzically, then burst out into an olio of gibberish that made the Yank blink. One dove into Squadron Headquarters and yelped out a name.

“Bonny sonr, seenyores,” Phineas yipped. “I am Phineaseppi Pinkhamillo who has come to stop another decline and fall of the Roman empire, haw-w-w-w-w!”

Italian pilots surrounded him immediately. Three of them could speak questionable English. One of them called himself Captain Giovanni Pastrami and his inventory of the Boonetown trickster brought a nasty look to his swarthy physiognomy.

“Ah, so!” he ululated. “The greata Peenkham, no? The flyers of Italia they are not so gooda as him, ha? Captain Pastrami, he no gooda for da fights with the Baron, no? Joosta wait, joosta wait—you see, *pisan*.”

“I will look up that word in an Eyetalian dictionary,” Phineas snorted, “an’ if I don’t like what you called me, I will paste you one. Where’s the Old Man?”

“Only younga wans we have heem fly for Italia,” another pilot growled. “No olda mans, no. You weesha for see heem the commanding officer, no?”

PASTRAMI hooked a thumb at Phineas and led him inside. The Yank pivoted and ran out again, holding his big nose. “Ha-a-a-ah! Veet, veet! Gas mask, somebody!”

“You are craze,” yelled Captain Pastrami from the doorway. “Joosta garlic you smell, you coma back in the inside. Major Gladioli he wanta see you, shoose!”

“Aw my shoes are all right,” Phineas protested. “Oh, all right if it’s only garlic, haw-w-w-w! The Italian national air, huh? How do you tell when you have a gas attack, huh?” Then the Boonetown flyer walked into the Italian Operations Office and reported to a son of Italy who had a big black pointed mustache, the extremities of which threatened to gouge his eyes out any minute. Those eyes seemed drunk with surprise when they rested on the visiting Yankee ace.

“Some wan, he maka da mistake,” the Squadron C.O. said uncertainly. “I senda for the flyer.”

“Do I look like a woodchuck?” the arrival wanted to know. “Boys, am I welcome here? I am Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham, U.S.A. Let’s cut out the jokes an’ tell me where is my ship and when do I poosh ‘em upstairs?”

“Ah, Santa Maria,” Major Gladioli sighed, “if you are thees Yankee ace, then you musta be, no? Lieutenant, you are now attached to the Italian Air Corps, no? When the orders by me I giva out, you take lika the comrades, yes?”

“Oh, I’m a stickler for discipline,” Phineas assured him. “Didn’t they tell you? Well, where’s my hut?”

Pastrami and another Latin escorted the Yank to the flyers’ barracks. Once the low stone structure had been the home of a flock of goats. Mixed with the aroma of garlic, the odor did not remind Phineas of a movie star’s boudoir. Captain Pastrami pointed to a bunk, then sat down to bite off the end of a villainous looking Algerian cheroot. He proceeded to tell Lieutenant Pinkham about Baron von Zweibach.

“Out of Dante’s inferno he musta come,” the Latin declared. “For Capronis he is joosta too bad. They say he carry da bigga telescope an’ he can see on all of Italia divisions what straps is on the shoulders an’ he go backa fast an’ tella da generals of Austria where to poosh us, da besta, an’—”

“I bet he knows the map of every pilot on the front, too,” Phineas said. “Shoes. It looks like I gotta wear a diver’s helmit, no?” He opened his trunk and examined the contents carefully. His fingers toyed with a big mop that had no handle. He had purchased the article in Bar-Le-Duc two days before his departure to warmer climes. It had suggested no end of skullduggery in the land of garlic and gondolas.

“You fly before da Macchis?” queried one of the Italians.

“If you had never been to the north pole,” retorted

the Yank, “could you talk Eskimo? Just give me a day or two, though, and I’ll tame one of them hurdy-gurdies. Do monkeys go with ‘em, haw-w-w-w?”

“Craze in da head,” Pastrami announced solemnly. “The Baron he maka da spaghet’ out of dis spotted bambino, shoose.”

“When do we put on the nose bag?” Phineas inquired next. “Uh—er—I mean when do we eat? I forgot you was foreigners, haw-w-w-w!”

After much difficulty the Latin warbirds got the Yankee’s drift. Captain Pastrami led him over to the mess hall. Phineas looked at some soup that seemed to have everything in it but parts of Pompeii. The three licorice beetles that he dropped into Pastrami’s soup did not faze the son of Italy one mite.

“Nothin’ smaller than a crocodile,” Phineas mumbled, “would look out of place in that slumgullion, huh!”

The piece de resistance, of course, was the great bowl of spaghetti. Phineas marvelled at the technique of the Latins in overpowering the serpentine concoction while he fought to keep from strangling himself with it.

“Give me a pair of scissors,” he finally tossed out, “before I starve to death. Don’t you have cows or sheep in this country? Huh!”

The mess was topped off with a helping of cheese and a bottle of vino. After one gulp of the red grape grog, Phineas wiped his eyes and looked at the olive-skinned faces around the table with admiration.

“Now I know what the Frogs leave out when they make van rouge,” he said respectfully. “It is chloride of lime. Where’s a good restaurant?”

Captain Pastrami shrugged his shoulders. He was engaged in separating cloves of garlic from a bulb. “Adoo,” Phineas said hastily. “Excusa please, shoes. If you’re goin’ to eat that skunk cabbage—”

“Whatsa mat’?” Pastrami wanted to know. “You no like? It maka da man bigga strong.”

“*Merçi*, just the same,” Phineas repeated. “I’d rather be an invalid. Bong sore.”



PHINEAS did not go over the Piave with Pastrami’s flight the next morning. After a very light breakfast of bread and Italian coffee that was as thick as mud the Yank went over to a hangar to get acquainted with a Macchi biplane. The Latin C.O. stood on the tarmac and watched the Yank lift one off the ground. At a thousand feet the Boonetown trickster seemed to have an argument with the ship and came in to land, losing a wing tip and both wheels.

“Ah-h-h-h, Santa Maria! Garibaldi—Christopher Colombo!” groaned the C.O., running out to the wreck with both fists raised in the air. “It is to fly, no?” he raged. “Whatta you t’ink, eh? If you wanta poosh the

wheelbarrows, I geeve heem to you, Lieutenant, Bah, Yankee aces, bah!”

“I suppose you walked right out of the bedroom when you was born, shoes!” Phineas tossed out indignantly. “Git me another ship. I’ll show you Eytalian bums why I’m famous!”

Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham bounced the next Macchi off the top of a hangar. Major Gladioli pulled his hair out by the roots and stabbed himself in the eye with one point of his mustache. Right then and there he threatened to buy Phineas a ticket back to France.

“Wanna more,” he thundered, “joosta wa-a-an! You breaka da sheep op an’ I breaka da head!” He glowered at the intrepid Yank.

Phineas somehow got the third Macchi to stay up. When he learned the feel of the controls, he pointed the prop boss toward the Piave and opened the LeRhone power plant wide. Major Gladioli jumped up and down and raved for him to come back.

“Santa Maria, I don’ tella heem to fly so alone! Ah-h-h, Christopher Colombo, you craze in da head, goodabye! T’ree sheeps. You cooma back, I keela you!”

The war-torn topography of the Austro-Italian front was very unfamiliar indeed to Phineas Pinkham. There was a whole flock of mountains not so far away and a couple of them wore white caps. The Piave River looked dried up in spots. Phineas had no way of knowing that the Trentino valley was a sore spot between the warring factions. Planes of both sides made the ether above it buzz from dawn until dusk. Austro crates came out of the Tyrol and out of the haze toward Pordenone to spray Latin patriots in the trenches across the Piave with lead poisoning. There were big Skodas booming over on the Austro linoleum, and compared to their ominous bass voices, Phineas mused, the chant of Krupps along the western front would sound like the chirping of canaries.

“It’s a pretty landscape around here,” he clipped as he kept driving further into hostile ozone. “I wonder could I learn to yodel? I—*gulp*—!” Through a big hole in the ceiling the Allied Air Corps’ gift to the Italians spotted quite a mixup. A big Caproni was groping down a perilous path to terra firma for a fair catch. Crates bearing the red, white and green cocardes of Major Gladioli’s outfit were snarled up with a flock of Austro Albatri and were getting the worst of it. The roofs of a sizable Trentino town were ten thousand feet down and Phineas never had felt so far away from the ground in his life.

“Well, I wasn’t lent to Italy to pick grapes,” he opined and pushed the stick forward. “They only give me half a chance on this front. Only one gun, huh! The Scotch Air Force would do better than that!”

Phineas had nothing more to say for quite a spell. He wondered if the flower of the Kaiser’s sky battlers had been moved to Austria before he had heated up his gun. One Albatross singled him out and drove him halfway to the Matterhorn before he could shake the fellow loose. Phineas did not know it, but Baron von Zweibach had failed to drive home a very potent punch due to a shock that had caused his head to bang against the padded rest.

Whirling around, flying high to recover his equilibrium, the great Baron rammed a powerful telescope into its case on the side of his ship.

“*Das pilot—der bick teet’ vhat falls oudt almost yedt—der shpots all ofer der vace, ach!* Am I dreamink? Pingham! *Herr Pingham, himmel!*” Then the Kaiser’s high flying peer laughed with gusto. “T’ousandts uff marks, *hein? Und das ist mineself’s*. Pingham he cooms to shoodt idt me down, *ja!* Ho! ho! It giffs *der* Iron Cross. Joost vait, *Herr Leutnant!*”

Phineas Pinkham went back to Major Gladioli with a Macchi that was pitted with holes like a nutmeg grater. Four Latin pilots came in a few minutes later and eased their crates to Mother Earth with a prayer to the saints. Captain Pastrami walked over to Phineas who was examining his torso for vents and laughed like Pagliaeci.

“Ha! ha! ha! The greata man he comes to show me how to shoota da Baron, yes? He chasa you over da sky. Ha! ha. *Signors*, somebody is craze in da head. Santa Maria!”

“Oh, yeah? Laugh, you garlic gorgers,” Phineas shoved out disdainfully. “I’ll show you fatheads! You didn’t hold that Caproni up long, haw-w-w-w! I was only feelin’ the Baron out, if that was who it was chasin’ me. I’ll step inside his quard next time an’ knock him loose from his panties.”

“Soocha beega mou,” warbled Captain Pastrami. “Inside it you coulda put da Macchi an’ the Major he could sava space in da hangar. Ha! ha!”

THE Macchis got a pounding all that day. Italian brass hats came into the drome at dusk and gesticulated fluently. Why had not the Yankee lieutenant shot down the Baron yet? Why could not escorts for Caproni egg layers hold off the Austrians long enough for the Capronis to go to work? Major Florio Gladioli and his buzzards were in no mood for a game of *parcheesi* when mess time came around. An hour before they sat down for chow Phineas had made a tour of inspection. There had been a big bulge at his hip when he had gone into the kitchen to see how the Latin cook prepared the victuals. The lights on the drome were very dim.

Captain Pastrami seemed very famished when he attacked his spaghetti. He had gulped approximately twenty yards of it before he dropped his fork and gasped for air. His olive skin be came blue like the Mediterranean. Another Roman patriot chewed on several long white tentacles and then a befuddled look



swept over his pan. Lieutenant Pinkham did not seem hungry and he pushed back his chair when Pastrami got up to reach for a candle. He held the sputtering light close to the white strings that were still hanging from a squadron mate's mouth. Then he yanked at some of the strands and the little Macchi jockey let out a howl as a tooth flew out of his mouth.

"Santa Maria! String! I killa some-wa-a-an!" howled Pastrami. "I eata da mop strings. Where is he go? Where he go, da Yank? I getta da gun. I keela heem!"

"Laugh at me, will they, the bums!" Phineas bit out as he scrambled, into the shelter of a tree. "Boys, when I saw that mop in Barley Duck I knew it would come in handy. Alia right, bambinos, you will learn to foola wit' Phineaseppi, huh?"

Pastrami and three outraged Latins went to the barracks to find the Yank, but the captain dropped his bayonet and started to run at sight of a coiled rattlesnake on Phineas' cot. A lusty breeze came down from the mountains and breathed in through the window, making the bogus reptile quiver. Major Gladioli started a letter to Chaumont when Pastrami and the rest of the Italian pilots threatened to walk out and let the Austrians have the sky in that sector all to themselves.

Two hours later a squad of Italian infantrymen came onto the drome pushing something ahead of them that they said they had pulled out of the Piave. It was an Austrian pilot who had been smacked down during the day. Pastrami dragged the prisoner into the barracks and started to sharpen a long bread knife.

"Huh," exploded Phineas, barging in, "drop the carving knife, you butcher. The very idea—carving prisoners up, huh? An' don't maka wan pass at me as I will run amuck if you poosha me too far. It was all a joke, haw-w-w-w, the mop in the spaghetti. I hope you bums have a sense of humor." He looked at the enemy pilot and his eyes bugged out. He owned as pretty a set of buck teeth as any Pinkham as far back as the American Revolution.

"Wee gates, mine hair," Phineas grinned. "Get some vino, Pastrami, as I wish to loosen the Hapsburg's tongue. That grog would make a scandal monger out of the sphinx. Haw-w-w, I'm gettin' an idea."

The infantrymen told the Italian flyers that the Austrian had landed on their side of the Piave and had had no time to burn his Albatross. His ship, they said, strangely enough bore the name of von Zweibach. Pastrami relayed the information to Phineas and the Boonetown trickster chuckled and rubbed his paws together.

"It's worth tryin' then," he said when Major Gladioli walked in. "It's lucky you sent for me, you bums. Now I'm going to do things with the Austrian boy and I don't want any buttin' in, *Mein herr*," he shot at the timid prisoner, "don't be scairt. What ist it your name?"

"*Leutnant* Franz Strauss, *ja*," was the hesitant reply.

"Haw-w-w-w," Phineas guffawed. "So your fader wrote the tales in the woods near Vienna, huh? Well, why *ist* you fly *der* Baron's buggy, *hein*?"

"*Der* Baron he *ist* by *der* tillage yedt," said Franz. "Ofer cooms *der* Caproni *und* only *der* Baron's ship *ist* by *der* drome *und* reaty yedt to fly. *Der* *Staffel Kommander* he says I take idt oop qvick vunce *und* knock it *der* Caproni down. So I go oop. Denk kaput goes *der* Albatross *und* I am in *der* hands of *der* Italians, *ach himmel!*"

"I could cry with you," Phineas sniffed sympathetically. "It *ist* *der* shame yet, haw-w-w-w! You don't look old enough to belly bump on a sled to say nothin' of flyin' the Baron's crate. In France we toss the little trout back. Major Gladioli, I am goin' to initiate the Austrian bum now. It is what we always do on the western front. Say, is *der* telescope by *der* machine, too?"

"*Nein*, always he keeps it init *der* hutment, *ja*."

"You maka me mat, Lieutenant," the C.O. stormed. "I senda you back where yo springa from. The monkey cage, shoes. Captain Pastrami, taka the prisoner an'—"

"The Allies will be sore if you do," Phineas warned him. "They give me cart blanch and sent me here to help blow up the Austrian dumps and to get the Baron. That's what I'm doin'. Now keep your shirts on, you olive oil sots, as it is a Pinkham who has started to work."

Major Gladioli ground his teeth, tapped his head significantly and strutted out of the barracks.

"Now, *mein herr*, just sit here," Phineas said, pointing to an empty packing case. "I will get my things out of my trunk and fix you up, *ja*. In France we call what I am goin' to initiate you in 'The Benevolent Order of Visiting Vons.' It giffs better grub in *der* prison klinks, Franz, if you are a member. If you ain't, they give you an awful kickin' around."

The Italian pilots stared goggle-eyed as Phineas drew a wig over the Austro flyer's head. It was the color of oak leaves in autumn. A lop of it fell down over the prisoner's forehead. The Boonetown mystery man then sprinkled something squarely into the Austro sky rider's face. When the liquid dried, it was no longer

colorless but a rich assortment of brown spots all over Franz Strauss's face.

"There," chuckled Phineas, "You only have to promise one thing. That is not to look in mirrors. If anybody catches you doing that, you get tossed out of the order."

"*Ja, Herr Leutnant, danke schoen*," grinned the prisoner.

THAT night they kept the enemy pilot in an old shed fifty yards from a Macchi hangar. At five o'clock in the morning Phineas went to the shed and told the Italian sentry that he wanted to converse with Franz. He stayed inside fifteen minutes. It was Franz Strauss who walked out with Phineas' clothes on. The sentry heard the Boonetown pilot yelling just as the enemy Albatross which had been flown in from the Piave began to shake and scream out a warning. The plotting Yank was helped to his feet while Italian machine gunners banged away at the catapulting Albatross.

"He slugged me, the bum!" he yowled. "Git me a ship. I'll catch the fathead! Oh, my dome." But to himself Phineas concluded, "Haw-w-w, they missed him—good!"

Hell was to pay on the Italian drome. Pastrami accused Phineas of helping the Austrian to escape. A garlic-exuding ackemma swore that he had seen Phineas monkeying around the Austrian ship late the night before just after one of Gladioli's men had flown it onto the drome.

"Smarta faller, yes?" Major Gladioli trumpeted. "You putta da spots on da face an' da wig on da head! So he looka joost like you, *signor!* An' he getta way—look—shoose—I gett da gun an' breaka your head. Garibaldi, Santa Maria—" He grabbed out hundfuls of hair and jumped up and down.

"Sure," chuckled the culprit, "haw-w-w-w! It's just what I wanted him to do—get away. The Capronis, Major, will be goin' out right now. Get me a crate. Oh, boys! I can read the Baron's mind right now, haw-w-w-w! I hope he don't forgit his telescope."

The Italian ackemmas were working on a ship out in front of one of the hangars. Phineas yanked a helmet and goggles out of his pocket and ran across the field.

"Whatta to do?" wailed Major Gladioli. "He's letta the prisoner go—an' he laughs! He's craze—I craze! Everybody craze! Santa—" He pawed at the back of his neck, his eyes on the ground. There he saw some broken sticks of spaghetti and he blew up like a jolted

case of dynamite. “Santa Maria, he steala da spaghetti. When I getta heem, I feex. Pinkham, you come back. Captain Pastrami—Luigi, Enrico! Stoppa da craze in da head! Stop—”

But Phineas Pinkham was not wasting one second. He had figured things too closely during the night. He knew that Caproni bombers were scheduled to take off at dawn and bang hell out of a very suspicious looking stretch of terrain just east of Vittorio. He knew that the Baron von Zweibach would be patrolling over the Piave at the crack of the new day to be on the lookout for egg-carrying crates. He hopped the blocks holding back a Macchi, sent a Latin grease monkey rolling across the field like a hoop snake, and tore across the tarmac like a rabbit that had accidentally sat down on a wasp.

“Adoo bums!” he yipped. “Thank Columbus when you say your prayers, see swar. If he hadn’t discovered America, I wouldn’t be here, would I? Haw-w-w-w!”

STRANGE things happened on the Austro-Italian front that morning. The Baron von Zweibach, as Phineas had guessed, was up before the cows and was circling an Albatross high in the ether just across the Piave when he spotted a crate akin to his own tearing out of Italian firmament. All the night before the Baron had been lamenting the loss of his pet battle wagon. He had never hoped to see it again. Yet there it was, motor wide open, and slicing through the ozone. His astute mind clicked with might and main.

“*Donnervetter!* So! Fool *der* Baron, *hein?* Out from Italy it cooms *und das ist* wrong I bedt you. *Der* trick. *Pingham und der* trick. Ho! ho! There he cooms right at *der* Baron! Fool us, *hein?* In *der* ship vhat *Leutnant* Strauss goes by *der* ground *mit*. Ha! Smardt he t’inks he *ist, ja!*” The Baron squinted through the telescope, brought that spotted face within three feet of him. He saw the lock of hair streaming from under the leather casque and he could not mistake the Pinkham dental assembly which was flashing in the pink glow of breaking dawn. Baron von Zweibach put the telescope back in place and began to warm up his guns.

Leutnant Franz Strauss set up a terrible howl when Spandau slugs began to reach for his torso. The Albatross just overhead began to twist and gyrate as if it meant business. Slugs tore through the fuselage behind *Leutnant* Strauss. He shoved the stick forward just as a bullet carried away the top of his left ear. Franz headed for the carpet without further ado and for a young blade he poured forth a seasoned barrage

of blistering Teuton oaths that would have curdled the blood of an axe murderer.

“*Ach*, I gott *der verdammt* oopstart,” howled the Baron. “He does nodt vant to fight, no? *Gut*. I bring him by Berlin on *der* rope *mit* like *der* moo cow vunce *und* lead him by *der* Kaiser. Ho! ho! I vill haff *der* pick off all *der* best *Frauleins mit* Iron Crosses *mit* forty t’ousand marks. *Ach*, sooch *ein* man *Ich ben!*”

Herr Leutnant Franz Strauss set his Albatross down on the soft loam of a Trentino Valley meadow and leaped out of the pit. Great rivulets of sweat were trickling down his Teuton face when he waved crazily to the ship that was jockeying for a landing. Franz wiped his face with the sleeve of the Pinkham tunic and half the spots on his face disappeared.

“*Dumkopf! Schwein!*” he howled. “*Ich ben der Freund! Donner und Blitzen!*”

The Albatross landed only a hundred feet away. The pilot, Baron von Zweibach, got out and waved a Luger. “*Handen hoch, Leutnant* Pingham, odder I shoodt qvick.”

“*Nein, Herr* Baron,” *Leutnant* Strauss hollered. “*Das ist* I’m— Franz. *Gott, der* mistook *ist. Kamerad!* Yoo, hoo, Baron. *Kamerad!*”

“*Hein?*” Baron von Zweibach hopped across the intervening space like a frightened tadpole. “*Leutnant* Strauss? *Ach! Was ist?* You haff *der* Yangkee suidt. *Der* spots on *der* vace? *Himmel, das ist* went. *Donnervetter, der* trick vunce!”

“*Ja, Herr Leutnant* Pingham helps me escape. He says I am too moch young to go by *der* brison camp. He efen has *der* tears by his eyes, *Herr* Baron!”

“*Dumkopf!* He has fooled us yedt. *Gott in Himmel, der* dooms by Vittorio!” screeched the Baron. “I bedt you—Pingham *und der* Capronis, *ja!* *Der* decoy you vas, Franz. *Das* Pingham—”

BO-O-O-O-OOM! BLA-A-A-A-A-M! BOO-O-O-O-O-OOM!

“*Ach Gott,*” the Baron moaned, “*idt ist kaput. Veil* I get efen. I take *idt mein* Albatross, Franz. *Der* gas in *der* tank—?”

“*Leutnant* Pinkham tells me *der* Italians filled it oop, *Herr* Baron.”

“*Sehr gut!* I show *das* Pingham! I shoodt him full *mit* holes *und* burn him oop like *der* bacon rasher, *der Schweinhund!*”

“*Ach,*” sighed *Leutnant* Franz Strauss. “Am I *der* gross *Dumkopf?* *Das* Pingham—*ugh!*”

Baron von Zweibach never lifted an Albatross off the ground more quickly. He climbed to three

thousand with the Mercedes screeching its steel-throated battle cry. The columns of smoke billowing up from the shellacked Austro dump ten miles away sent sanity out of his brain cells. In five minutes he spotted two black spots that were Capronis well on their way into Italian ozone. But there were two ships rocketing all over the skies and one of them was a Macchi operated by Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham. An Austrian Albatross had dropped out of the skies just as the last egg left the bomb racks of a Caproni. And so Phineas had had quite a battle on his hands.

“So! In *der* skies you are yedt,” roared von Zweibach. “Now I show you *der* tricks, you *verdamm*t Yangkee, *ja!*” He climbed, winged over and dove close to the Austro crate. *Herr* Baron von Zweibach signalled for the pilot to leave Phineas to him, that he was his meat.

“*Ach*,” yipped the Hapsburg patriot, “always ist *der* Baron he cooms in vhen I haff *der* easy mark, *ja*. Veil, I go home now, *und* let *der* shvellhead haff *das* Macchi. Ha! ha! Vhat shouldt I care, *hein?*”

PHINEAS saw his adversary pull out and the other take his place. After a close shave from a Spandau burst, the Yank got a look at the name on the Albatross. Baron von Zweibach. “Whad-da you t’ink? Haw-w-w-w-w! Franz he got pushed down and the big bum got his Albatross back. Haw-w-w-w-w! Shoose, betcha my life. By now, that gas tank can’t be in such good shape. Somebody is lucky to get this far.” The Boonetown flyer side-slipped away from another burst and when he straightened out he sensed that von Zweibach was rolling right down on his tail.

“Come on, good old spaghet’!” yipped Phineas, big beads of sweat rolling down the bridge of his prominent bugle. “They must’ve soaked in good by now.”

He tried everything in the books to shake the squarehead loose, but the Von still stuck to his wake. In fact, von Zweibach had narrowed the gap a little. Spandau bullets would be like Scotch nickels now and never spent. A quick burst, Phineas mused, his spine curling up like a shillalah, and he would be buried a long way from home.

“Now,” Baron von Zweibaah roared, “*ja*, I squeeze *der—ach! Himmel!*” The Mercedes coughed and the Albatross staggered in its stride as if it had run into a wire fence. It caught, halfheartedly, coughed again, and then became as useless up in front as an anvil. The nose dropped.

Down on the ground, Italian infantrymen were laying bets. “Ha! ha!” chuckled one when the Albatross went into a kind of faint, “two lire more I betta you, Tony. Da Macchi is op over da Albatross lika dat, you see. Da Baron he getta slap down, shoose. Dominick, you paya da lire if I win or I cutta your t’roat. Ah, Santa Maria, look! The Albatross she ain’ta feel so good.”

The Baron did not have to be told that. The bullets that were banging his tail assembly into something that looked like a kite chewed up by a dog were not contributing to the Austro cause. He was going to land across the Piave where the Italian boys were the thickest and he knew that the swarthy Latins would not bother to spread goose feather mattresses where the spot was marked with an “X.”

Phineas was no end elated in his Macchi pit. “Haw-w-w-w!” he guffawed in competition with the LeRhone roar. “Gooda olda spaghet’! The dumpa she is wash a op, shoes. The Barona he smacka ver’ hard in wan minoots.”

Von Zweibach hit the carpet close to the gravel shoulder of the Piave. His Albatross turned a pretty somersault and bucked its jockey loose. The Baron made as big a splash in the drink as he had made in the war. Phineas, clad in the regalia of *Leutnant* Franz Strauss, got his Macchi down two hundred feet from the Piave and legged it over to where three Italian soldiers were trying to drown Baron von Zweibach.

“Tsk, tsk,” Phineas admonished them, “whatta you do? I hava you bambinos broke. I tella Gaba D’Annunzio. Scramma!”

The industrious Yank dragged Baron von Zweibach out of the Piave and then sat down to watch a big Italian jilopi drive up. A general with a black spade beard and a chest that was caving in under the weight of medals got out and waddled over.

“Magnifico!” he yipped. “Ah, Santa Maria. You have save’ Italia.”

“Yeah,” Phineas grinned, “that is only what I’m paid for, haw!”

“General Spumoni he give anyt’ing you ask, Lieutenant. Ah, sooeha—”

“Yeah? Awright. When I git back to the drome I want some white man’s victuals,” Phineas said. “Like rossa biff, cockernuts pie, an’ stromberry ice cream. Well, General, have you gotta da rooma in the boiler for me an’ the Baron? The Macchi she loosa the left shoe, shoes. Major Gladioli he be sora like hella, haw-w-w-w! Let’s allay as they say in Barley Duck.”

THE news had already hit the Italian layout outside of Treviso. The flying sons of Italy were well-scalded with vino when the Italian staff car rolled onto the drome. Gladioli kissed the general. Everybody tried to kiss Phineas. He had to pick up a tire iron before getting out of the Italian gas buggy.

“Haw-w-w-w,” he chuckled, “it maybe an olda Latin customa, but you bums can have it. Keepa your distance, *pisans*, as I will smacka you in the kissoras. Well, you laughed when I poosh ‘em op the first Macchi, huh? But when I stayed up with the third one—haw-w-w-w! I must git me a wire through to Barley Duck as Major Garrity will be worried about me. *Ach*, Baron, your vace idt looks like *der* blate of antipasto. Drinka some vino *und* you vill efen forget which side you are on. The spaghet’ I breaka heem op in leetla pieces und putta heem in *Leutnant* Strauss’s gassa tank vunce. When he soak, he plugga op da gassa line, the sonamagun, haw-w-w-w! I figure Franz he mighta git down lika she did *und* you mighta picka op the Albatrossa, *nein?*”

“*Ach Himmel!*” groaned Baron von Zweibach. “*Der* decoy yet. I chase Franz *und* I t’ink he *ist* you yedt. Besser I am here *mit der* doomp blowed op. *Der* Kaiser he *ist* very madt, *ja*. *Ach du Lieber*, giff it me *der* barrel of *der* Idalian vine, I gedt zoaked to *der* ears I bedt you.”

It was quite a binge on the Italian drome. Major Gladioli and Baron von Zweibach walked around the tarmac arm in arm singing a duet. The Italian C.O.’s *Santa Lucia* did not harmonize very well with the Von’s *Die Wacht om Rhine* but nobody cared. Captain Pastrami wanted to know if Phineas cared to take over his villa near Ravenna for a few days before he went back. General Spumoni insisted that Phineas should be his guest at Lido. Phineas sat back and watched them fight over him.

“Haw-w-w-w!” he grinned when Spumoni got Pastrami down with a headlock. “I’ll think him over, General. She is some *guerra*, *signors*. Whatta you t’ink?”

ON THE Ninth Pursuit Squadron drome, far back at Bar-Le-Duc, France, Major Rufus Garrity and his pilots were ganged together in the Frog farmhouse waiting for news from the Italian front. At dusk the message came through as official. Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham, after being instrumental in the mopping up

of the big Austro ammo dump near Vittorio Veneto, had downed the great Baron von Zweibach in a dog fight over the Piave. Lieutenant Pinkham had used, according to his own story, tracers of spaghetti that had raised old Ned with the Baron’s gas tank.

“Somebody’s nuts,” Bump Gillis cracked. “He ain’t been gone much more than a week.”

Major Rufus Garrity shook his head and his eyes took on a glaze. “I dunno,” he sighed.

“I think I’ll go to Barley Duck,” Captain Howell said. “Who wants to git drunk with me?”

A week later a letter arrived at the Ninth Pursuit Squadron office. It was from Phineas Pinkham to Major Garrity and the boys. The Boonetown miracle man wrote:

Dear Major and the rest of the bums:

Mi scusa da pencil. I am restin’ here at Lido weeth the greata beega General Spumoni. You oughta see his daughter, haw-w-w! Ah, carry mia! Compared to Angela, Mona Lisa, she ees like the squaw with a haira lip, shoes. I gussa you know I save heem Italia, huh? I hope you getta da box of Italienne bonabons I senda coupla t’ree days ago. I will not be back for awhile as I have gotta the date weeth Angela Spumoni for the spin in the gondola in Venice. General Spumoni he also wanta me to see the bigga hotta volcano an’ Florence. Angela she is good enough for me, though, and I think I will passa up the last mentioned dame, haw-w-w-w! How’s the guerre where you are? Well, mi scusa encore, as I have to sample some more of General Spumoni’s vino.

Adoo bums!

*Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham
Lido, Italia.*

P. S. Boonetown, Iowa, papers please copy.

THE candy arrived two days after Phineas’ letter. As if the missive had not made the personnel of the Ninth mad enough, the Spad pushers found out to their sorrow that the bonbons were nothing more than garlic cloves dipped in chocolate. There was a slip of paper inside the box saying: “*To my pals in Barley Duck—until breath do us part! Haw-w-w-w!*”

Major Rufus Garrity swore, got up from his chair, and stamped up to the privacy of his quarters. He grabbed up a book and pored over it far into the night. The title of it was: “*How to Commit a Perfect Crime.*”