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**PHINEAS  
PINKHAM**  
howl

# TOO GOOD FOR HANGING

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*When Phineas “Carbuncle” Pinkham cracked up a Spad, it stayed cracked! Yes, Major Garrity was right. If Phineas had been twins, the Allies would have, been in the hands of receivers!*

**M**ESS IN THE ELEPHANT-IRON SHACK of Staffel 12, Imperial Air Force, had been attended to. Teuton stomachs had been refueled. The Kaiser had been well hoched and “*Deutschland Uber Alles*” and “*Die Wacht Am Rhein*,” the two stock vocal selections, had been rendered vociferously if not harmoniously. *Hauptmann* Franz Roderich Otto von Holke, ace of Jerry aces, scion of a long line of von Holkes beginning as far back as Charlemagne’s grandfather, waited for silence. Then he puffed out his chest and rose to his feet. All the well-

born members of his brood sat stiffly in their chairs to listen to his words of wisdom or otherwise.

“*Ach!*” began von Holke, his eyes alight with battle lust. “I still wait for word from *Leutnant* Pinkham, the *verdammt* Yankee upstart. Three weeks now iss it since I haff spread the written challenges all over the Front. Maybe it iss jelly his heart has turned into, *ja?* Maybe, as the *Amerikan Dumkopfs* say, his feet they are about to be frozen. *Ach!* He iss afraid of von Holke!”

Even a casual observer would have seen that the Jerry Fokker-riders harbored doubts about that. The exploits of Phineas Pinkham in the great war were not to be

shrugged away in a hurry. A Junker coughed nervously, not knowing what else to do.

"The things he has done, *Hauptmann*," he ventured, "they have been colossal, incredible, *ja!* Perhaps—"

Von Holke bristled and his jowls inflated. "What, Kramer?" he bellowed. "You doubt that I am greater than the Yankee buffoon? You—you—"

"I do not question your prowess in the air, *Hauptmann*," the Boche returned hurriedly, "but what is done is already done, *nein?* Pinkham he must not be human. Bullets do not seem to touch him. He has come into our own dromes, a captive, but he is in no prison camp, *Hauptmann!*"

"*Ja!*" erupted the proud Jerry ace. "*Ja!* And why, Kramer? Because they do not shoot him when they capture him! But Leutnant Pinkham he iss all finished! I, von Holke, will bring him down."

Kramer lifted a glass. "To von Holke!" he shouted by way of reentering the good graces of the Fokker leader. "The man who will shoot down the great Pinkham!"

And that was that.

OVER on the side where democracy was the issue, a few miles outside of Bar-le-Duc, where the Ninth Pursuit Squadron was pitched, the painful subject of conversation at the aforementioned Jerry mess stood in front of his C.O. and argued loud and long. When Major Garrity and Phineas "Carbuncle" Pinkham met, the mildest thing that could happen was an argument.

"But," pleaded Phineas, "do ya think I'm gonna let them squareheads think I'm crawlin' out? The fathead, von Hokum, has challenged me to mortal combat, an' the big stiff ain't gonna call me the names he's wrote an' git away with it. I—"

"You heard me, Pinkham," stormed the Old Man. "G.H.Q. gave me orders that no more of these damfool duels are going to take place. This isn't a two-man war, you crackpot! There're some other guys who have got an interest in it. And anyway, the Wing equipment officer came in a little' while ago and reminded me that you've busted up about ten Spads since you've been here. And if you get killed, there's ten thousand dollars more out of the Government's pocket. If you were twins, the Allies would be in the hands of receivers!"

"Oh, awright!" growled Phineas. "If ya want all the Airdromes in Europe to think I'm yellin' I got some pride. The Pinkham from away back in the Revolution—"

"Do you see that door, you human vacuum?" yelled Major Rufus. "Well, if you would rather fly than walk through it, then stick around another half-second, you—"

"Awright!" interrupted Phineas indignantly.

"Awright. I'm goin'." And he went out mumbling.

Over in front of A flight's big canvas tent Major Drake, Wing Equipment officer, was finding a lot more fault with the condition of flying stock on the drome of the Ninth. His vitriolic utterances were the first sounds that reached Phineas' oversized ears as his feet hit the tarmac. The Boonetown flyer's spleen immediately became more than overactive, and spite oozed from every pore in his gangly fuselage.

As he wended his way toward his hut a sudden idea struck him right between the eyes. The mental disturbance brought a grin to his homely countenance and called for a quickening of the Pinkham pace. Major Drake might leave the spot on which he was standing at any minute. The irrepressible Pinkham made a detour which brought him to the rear of the big canvas tent. He lifted the heavy fabric and wriggled underneath.

Mechanics looked at him with narrowed eyes, and Sergeant Casey withdrew his head from the works of a Spad and tightened his grip on a spanner wrench. Blois or no Blois, if Lieutenant Pinkham started any wise, tricks, he would soon be a case for an expert army surgeon.

"HELLO, Casey," began Phineas, his eyes lifting toward a sagging portion of the hangar roof. "Just noticed that there's a lot of water up there near the edge. Don't ya know water rots canvas? It's been there since we got that rain two days ago, I guess. Better git it off. All ya got to do is git a board an' shove it up against the canvas. It'll roll off."

Sergeant Casey scowled and gestured to a greaseball. "Do what the lieutenant says," he ordered. "Snap into it."

Phineas Pinkham whistled nonchalantly and went out of the hangar. His eyes shone with a triumphant light as he regarded Major Drake, who had not moved from the spot where he had last seen him.

"Well," grunted the W.E. officer, "so this is the famous Pinkham! Have been wanting to meet you for a long time. Maybe you can suggest some improvements on the Spad, Pinkham. Understand they just fold up when you get into them."

"Uh-huh!" answered Phineas. "I giss I ain't been

doin' so bad, even it they do make the wings of them crates out of tissue paper. An' now that ya ask me, sir, I bet them struts is made out of gingerbread. An'—"

"You're a fresh guy, *eh*, Pinkham?" interposed the major raspingly. "Well, if you think the Wing is going to tolerate your flying much more, you're all wet. I'll—"

*Splash!* Water cascaded from the roof of the hangar. Seven-eighths of it laved Major Drake and showed little respect for the spick and span khaki uniform that decorated his well-knit frame. He sputtered and swore, instinctively executing several breast strokes, and then staggered around, demanding an explanation from everybody in sight. Sergeant Casey shoved his face out of the hangar, took in the situation with one scared and comprehensive glance and ran away to hide.

"Haw-w-w-w!" guffawed Phineas. "Haw-w-w-w-w!"

The moist gentleman from the Wing gulped. His indignation rendered him tongue-tied. He shook himself like a wet dog and threw a fist close to Lieutenant Pinkham's nose.

"Laughing, *eh?*" he roared. "Think it's funny, do you, Pinkham? I'll—your C.O. hasn't taught you to respect a superior, *eh?* Well, before I leave this drome, I'll give you all some lessons. It's an outrage. I—I—" The major's tirade broke off suddenly. His tongue had given up trying to keep pace with his brain.

Reveling in sweet satisfaction, Phineas watched the superior officer stamp toward the stone farmhouse to make things miserable for the Old Man. "Well," he mused, "let them try and hang this one on me."

After a hectic hour, Major Rufus Garrity succeeded in placating the wrathful officer from the Wing. He would have sworn on a stack of bibles that the baptism of Major Drake had not been accidental. Had not Phineas Pinkham been very much in evidence when the catastrophe occurred? Had not Major Drake cast aspersions upon the man from Boonetown? The diagnosis was correct—but worthless. Phineas had committed a perfect crime.

The Wing Equipment officer, having emitted a string of growls in answer to the C. O.'s apologies, reached into the pocket of his tunic, which was spread over the back of a chair to dry, pulled out a sodden package of tobacco and, swearing volubly, slammed it to the floor. Major Garrity made haste to get his own can of tobacco and offer it to the visitor. Major Drake crammed a pipeful of the weed into the bowl of his pipe and snapped his teeth angrily on the stem. Major Rufus struck a match and held it over the top of the bowl, while the late victim sucked hardily at the pipe

stem. Without warning there came an angry swish of red flame. Major Garrity swore and dropped the match into his fellow officer's lap. Major Drake spat out the pipe and leaped to his feet. The acrid odor of powder and obnoxious smell of burning hair fouled two pairs of nostrils.

And then Major Drake shook his fist at Major Garrity and threatened to break him for criminal assault, or whatever it could be called. He snatched up his wet uniform and began to pull it on him, all the while using language that should not be utilized by an officer and a gentleman. Major Garrity ignored the threats and insults, and confined his thoughts to Phineas Pinkham. He howled to an orderly and told him to bring Lieutenant Pinkham into his presence at once if not sooner.

"B-but, s-sir," the orderly replied, "Lieutenant Pinkham is out on patrol. A flight took off fifteen minutes ago, sir. I will send him in as soon as he gets back, sir, if—"

The Old Man then outswore Major Drake. "Never mind. Get out!" he yelped at the bewildered orderly. He turned to the man from Wing, who was pulling on a pain of wet trousers with difficulty.

"There's a chance he might get killed," he said hopefully. "Then our troubles will be over. And, for cripes' sake, major, forget about what you're going to do to me. Don't you see I've got hell enough around here? You don't have to see Pinkham again, Drake. He's with me all the time, like my skin. If you think I—"

"Don't worry, major," snapped the Wing Equipment officer, "I won't say a word. I'll even recommend a medal for you. Or a transfer. I have a lot of influence with brass hats at G.H.Q. If you care to have a transfer to Egypt or—"

"Thanks," growled Sir Rufus. "Never mind. They'll be trying me for murder in a couple of days. Here, let me help you on with those pants."

AND high-over the lines the bane of existence to anyone higher than a captain in the A.E.F. was chuckling as he rode his Spad in Howell's V. On the floor of the pit he carried a tin can containing a rock. the size of his fist for ballast, and sticking out of his pocket was a little stick with a white handkerchief tied to it.

G.H.Q. would not let him have a private scrap with von Holke? Okay, he would arrange it himself.

Howell signaled for the return to the drome, having become convinced that the Junker pilots were taking a breathing spell. Phineas grinned and fell out

of the formation. Bump Gillis tried to drown out the voice of his Hiss as Phineas gave him a parting uncomplimentary gesture. A flight continued on home. Phineas streaked toward Germany.

For five minutes he flew, and then four Fokkers dipped down from the roof to look him over and perhaps take samples out of his Spad. Phineas pulled out his white flag and lifted it aloft, his fist clutching it tight against the power of the slipstream. Fokker pilots stared at the flag of truce and wondered. They dropped lower, and one threw his ship down close, scrutinizing the Spad's occupant with care.

And then the German read some crude letters splashed on the alien ship. They were: "Von Hokum is a Sissy—Phineas Pinkham." The Junker pilot snarled, reached for his Spandaus and then changed his mind.

At last *Leutnant* Pinkham had accepted the challenge of the great von Holke. He would die soon enough. The Boche signaled his fellows and they ganged together overhead, forming an escort for the miracle worker of Boonetown, Iowa.

Another flight of Fokkers appeared over the Jerry back area. The quartet of Junkers waved them away. Phineas was enjoying the situation enormously. A few moments later a Fokker once more slipped down parallel with his Spad. His gestures conveyed the fact that the *Leutnant* could go no further. Phineas nodded, shoved the flag into his pocket, and reached for the tin can. He tossed it overside and then threw his Spad up and over. The Jerries saw him safely over to his own lines and then ruddered around just as a flight of Camels came gunning toward them. Lieutenant Pinkham wished the Boche as much luck as they could expect under the circumstances, and gunned toward Major Garrity's coop of birds.

However, our hero did not intend to bring his Spad to the drome. He picked out an advantageous spot just outside of Bar-le-Duc and set the ship down in a field that had come in very handy on former occasions. Taxiing into the lee of a trio of big trees standing sentinel-like near an old fence, Phineas evacuated the ship, took a lump of old canvas out of its hiding place in the fuselage and spread it over the hood.

After all this he started to shanks' mare it for Bar-le-Duc. A prolonged stopover there for some liquid refreshments, and he was on his way to the Ninth Pursuit. It was very, very late when Lieutenant Pinkham reached the field. He walked straight to the operations office and to the astonishment of the seething major, actually executed a passable salute.

"I got forced down outside of Barley Duck, sir," alibied Phineas. "Got a bum radiator. A little fixin' an' the crate'll be as good as new. Met some Boche!" Which statement, we may add, was no fabrication.

"For the time being I'm forgetting your leaving the flight, you halfwit!" barked the Old Man. "Also the fact that you gave the Wing Equipment officer a bath. But give me an alibi about the black powder in this can of tobacco! You fish-faced—"

"H-huh?" gulped Phineas. "W-well, I brought it from Barley Duck for Captain Howell, didn't I, sir? An' then seein' as you had a birthday a coupla days ago, he give it to ya as a present. How'd I know he was gonna do that? Ya can't blame me for playin' a trick on ya an'—"

The major picked up an inkwell, closed one eye and half-rose from his chair. Just as Phineas was about to flee, the Old Man slumped back into his seat and dropped his head into his hands with a groan.

"Oh-h Lord!" he mumbled. Phineas retreated from the field with a grin spread all over his face. Once in his hut, he wasted but a glance on the snoring Bump Gillis and pulled a folded piece of paper from a book—the written challenge from von Holke. The Jerry had offered him every inducement, had even stated that he would meet the Yankee upstart over the Meuse and that *Leutnant* Pinkham could name the time. Phineas grinned. Well, he had named the time all right. The tin can had been dropped smack dab into the Jerry trenches. Tomorrow, early, von Holke should be hovering upstairs on the aerial dueling ground.

LET us shift to the Jerry side and see what was going on. *Hauptmann* von Holke, as usual, had the floor. He was pacing up and down and orating bombastically for the benefit of those of lesser rank.

"At last is it going to be?" he enthused. "The *Leutnant* Pinkham will meet me tomorrow over the Meuse. *Ach*, it is the chance to show our Kaiser our mettle, *ja*? He has the tricks, the *Leutnant* Pinkham. So also has von Holke. With my super-charger, my Fokker can climb out of sight. I will be up maybe twenty-five thousand feet over the Meuse and tomorrow it will be a clear day. Before the *Leutnant* Pinkham knows, I drop down and get behind him."

"It is careful you must be, *Hauptmann*," warned one of the men. "If you run into Allied ships, they will be too much for one Fokker. The *Leutnant* Pinkham will be on his own side. He—"

"You forget the *verdammt* Allied ships cannot climb

with my Fokker,” laughed von Holke. “There is nothing to fear. And I take a camera to photograph *Leutnant* Pinkham going down to the ground. I will show them to the Emperor. This time, *Leutnant* Pinkham he will not escape.”

AFTER mess the following morning Lieutenant Pinkham stepped into the small tin bathtub attached to the side of a motorcycle and announced to the ackemma at the controls that it was time to take off. Before the man could execute the orders, the sergeant-major hurried up and imparted a message from Major Garrity.

“The C.O. says, sir,” he said breathlessly to Phineas, “that the minute you get the Spad fixed up, you fly it back here immediately. Beggin’ your pardon, sir, he said as how he would like to be able to witness Lieutenant Pinkham coming back to the field in a Spad that’ll be able to fly again.”

“Tell the ol’ turtle to do some loops in a kite,” retorted Phineas. “Well,” he barked at the man beside him, “start this damn thing, will ya?”

A few minutes later the mechanical bug and its cargo chug-chugged toward the Bar-le-Duc. In due time it pulled up near the fence on the other side of which crouched the idle Spad. The ackemma lifted his bag of tools from between Phineas’ feet and walked toward it confidently. Phineas ambled on behind, and with a cryptic smile playing about his unlovely features, watched the mechanic lift the canvas from the hood. The ground-man stared, turned and looked at Phineas, then eyed the ship again.

“Wh-why, the radiator ain’t leakin’, sir,” he began. “They ain’t nothin’ the matter with it. You—er—ah—well—”

“Listen!” snapped Phineas. “Of course there ain’t nothin’ wrong with it. I got business to attend to today an’ I would’ve had a fat chance of gettin’ a Spad from the Ol’ Man, huh? An’ I also had to have some help wheelin’ this crate out into the open. Git busy!”

The ackemma gulped. “B-but the Old Man’ll dust my pants, sir. I can’t take no chances. I’m up for a ratin’ an’—”

Phineas calmly lit a cigarette. Then he stared into the mechanic’s eyes. “Remember that time ya took all that dough away from Casey an’ the other two guys in a crap game an’ I come in an’ busted up the game? Ya remember maybe I took the dice? Well, I looked ’em over a lot an’ they was loaded. Now if I should tell Casey an’—”

The ackemma’s face blanched. “Aw-awright, sir,” he

gulped with an effort, “jus’ tell me what ya want an’—”

“Okay,” and Phineas was ready for business. “Let’s git the bus out where I can get a good run acrost the field. Hurry up. I got business.”

When the Spad was maneuvered to a spot that suited Phineas, he turned to the mechanic and pointed toward the motorcycle. “It’s time for ya to git goin’. If ya don’t see nothin’, ya can’t tell nothin’. Awright, pick up your tools an’ start movin’. Ya kin tell the Ol’ Man that maybe somethin’ must’ve gone wrong an’ I had to come down or somethin’. Anyways, beat it!”

ONCE more the motorcycle, took to the road, and when it was out of sight, Phineas walked to a near-by frog haystack and helped himself to a huge armful of the dried grass. He repeated this performance until he had what he figured to be enough for the task at hand. With care he removed his leather flying coat and began to stuff the sleeves with hay. Then he fastened the straps on the coat and crammed hay inside until the garment appeared to cover a human torso.

Phineas uttered an expression of satisfaction and trekked perhaps a quarter of a mile to a turnip patch. After pulling up several, he selected one that was almost the size of a human head and retraced his steps.

It took little time to push a long stick into the turnip and then ram it down into the neck of the alleged body of Phineas Pinkham. After a brief search the Boonetown jokesmith found a rock that would serve as a nose and he pushed it into the turnip. Finally he tied his helmet and goggles around the purloined vegetable and the illusion was complete.

Phineas lifted the finished product into the cockpit of the idling Spad. Two more sticks served as legs and props to keep the invention from flopping over. The plotter glanced at his watch, then at the sky. Grinning all over, he stepped up to the Spad’s stirrup and jazzed the Hisso until it reached a crazy pitch. Bracing himself, Phineas jammed in the throttle and skimmed across the bumpy-turf.

Setting the stick just as the ground began to show signs of saying bon voyage to the undercarriage, the incurable joker threw himself clear. He hit the ground on his ear, spun around like a top and heard a collection of birds serenade him for several minutes. When his brain had thrown off the fog, Phineas struggled to his feet and looked up at the Spad. In a steady climb it was heading for no place in particular. The Boonetown flyer then sought the shade of a tree and settled down for a nap.

Twenty thousand feet above terra firma, *Hauptmann* von Holke shivered in the pit of his Fokker and stared down at the ether below him. Once he saw a flight of Allied ships, and he had to climb still higher. The pounding in his head was not pleasant, and his patrician nose began to bleed. Then the flight skimmed into the mists toward the German lines and von Holke came down again. He cursed impatiently and watched his gas gauge. Then without warning a tiny speck appeared below him. *Herr Hauptmann* von Holke gritted his teeth, said something about the Kaiser and Fatherland and shoved his stick forward.

In less time than it takes to tell it, the Junker ace had thrown his Fokker down fifteen thousand feet. There just ahead and below him was the Spad of Leutnant Pinkham, and the pilot swung his head around just as the German reached for the Spandau trips. Of course a turnip on a stick might swing around at any time, but turnips were far from von Holke's mind. The Spad dipped slightly and von Holke laughed a nasty laugh and unleashed a stream of slugs.

They slammed into the Spad from prop boss to tail assembly and kicked it lopsided. With a wild yell of triumph *Hauptmann* von Holke wrenched his Fokker around, after having overshot, and unloaded another blast of lead with a ton of spite behind it. A sheet of flame shot from the cowl of the Spad. Black smoke billowed out as the ship went twisting down. And *Herr Hauptmann* bent over a camera he had fastened to the side of his Fokker and snapped a picture.

Bullets droned around the Fokker as von Holke started to evacuate the sector. Three Nieuports were questioning his right of way and they were not fooling. Von Holke immediately went into a long Immelmann, straightened out and yanked back the stick until it pressed against his liver. Up and up, with the Nieuports following, until the French pilots marveled and cursed in the same breath. Never before had they seen a ship reach such an altitude. They wiped hot castor oil from their faces, swore some more and then gave up the chase. Von Holke streaked toward Germany, shouting a triumphant paean. He had caught the *Leutnant* Pinkham napping. Whatever tricks had been in the *Amerikaner's* bag had been cremated along with their owner. *Ach*, what a day!

TWO days later a Fokker took a long chance and flew over the drome of the Ninth Pursuit to drop a little parachute. Attached to it was the same battered tin can that Phineas had dropped into the Jerry

trenches. A groundman brought the communication into squadron headquarters. While anxious pilots gathered around, Major Rufus Garrity withdrew a rock and a little paper cylinder from the can. He opened it up with shaking digits and spread it out for all to see. It was a photograph of a ship going down in flames. The C.O. turned it over and on the back read the scrawled message:

*"Here is the invincible Leutnant Pinkham. This time there is not enough to bury. Our regrets. Von Holke also knows some tricks. Hauptmann Trans Roderich Otto von Holke, Ace of Aces."*

The C.O. cleared his throat noisily. "Well, I tried to stop him," he said huskily. "G.H.Q. didn't give me orders about fellows fighting duels. But what the hell! You couldn't stop the bum from doin' anything!"

Meanwhile the man who by all rhyme and reason should have been dead six or seven times at this stage of the war was doing very well, thank you. He had acquired the senile uniform of a *poilu* in Bar-le-Duc and had covered the lower portion of his face with a mustache and a beard of cinnamon hue. He had tarried in the town just long enough to learn of his supposed demise and had then evacuated the vicinity on a bicycle which had come in very handy on former occasions.

Once he stopped in a deserted village near the Yankee support trenches to take a rest and look around. In an old cellar he found a box containing three or four Jerry hand grenades, better known as potato mashers to those taking part in the big fuss. He stuffed them into his pockets and pedaled on.

We now find him sitting on an old keg in the musty confines of a deserted mill, diagnosing his status quo in the A.E.F. Poignantly he grew conscious of the fact that he had done nothing to appease G.H.Q. and Major Rufus.

Suddenly Phineas heard a familiar sound above the angry persistent growl of distant guns—the sound of a sick airplane motor. He bounded to the door and looked up at the murky sky. A two-seater was skimming just overhead, and he identified the ship as a Bristol fighter. Crouched in the shadows, he watched it until it came to rest in a clearing not a hundred yards away. Two men stepped out of their pits and walked to the nose of the battle wagon.

Phineas sneaked toward the scene, thanking Mother Nature for having placed some scrub between himself

and the invaders. As he approached, the voices of the flyers became audible and distinct shock hit Phineas in the midriff. The words emanating from the Bristol's passengers had never been in an English grammar. He slumped down behind a bush and listened, his brows knitted.

"*Das ist bad, Otto,*" grumbled one as he turned away, having probed into the Rolls-Royce for a few moments.

"*Ach!*" was the response. "*Donner und blitzen! Stille, Rupprecht! Speak in English, Dumkopf!*"

PHINEAS gasped. His brain hopped to action and whispered in frenzy. The Boonetown addition to the war could hardly bring himself to take stock in the insistent rumblings inside his head. But there it was. A Bristol fighter with a crew that spoke kraut. The Bristol fighter that had been a boil on the neck to G.H.Q. for weeks, going around taking pictures of Allied property. The Bristol taken behind the German lines with Lieutenant Price of the R.F.C. in the pit. And he, Phineas Pinkham, had stumbled upon it. Once more Fate was reaching down a hand to pull Phineas out of a vat of hot water. Grinning savagely, our hero reached into a pocket and pulled out a potato masher. He jumped to his feet and brandished it about his head.

"*Handen hoch!*" he barked.

The men near the Bristol whirled and reached for their weapons. One glance at the grenade was sufficient. They threw their Lugers angrily to the ground as Phineas ploughed through the bushes. A thorny branch tore the false whiskers from the Yank's face.

"Wee gates!" greeted Phineas as he kicked the guns out of reach. "A coupla Heinies playin' Limey, huh? Well, ain't that too bad?"

One of the Germans cursed in his native tongue. The other exposed his tonsils as his mouth opened wide.

"*Leutnant Pinkham!*" he gasped gutterally. "*Gott im Himmel!* A ghost, iss it? Von Holke—"

"Haw!" grinned Phineas. "Reckernize me, huh? Nope, I ain't a ghost. Just fooled the Von agin, that's all. Haw! I—"

To his amazement a Jerry began to laugh. "*Ach!*" he exclaimed. "It iss what you call funny, *Leutnant*. Only tomorrow, yet, *der Kaiser* congratulates *Herr Hauptmann* von' Holke at Staffel Headquarters. The Staffel, it iss put on a show for *der Kaiser*. *Ach*, it goot iss! Von Holke iss the braggart, the arrogant *Rittmeister*. For him I do not care. Ha! It iss funny, *eh, Otto?*"

"*Ja!*" agreed his companion. "*Ja*, it makes the laugh, Rupprecht."

"Well," declared Phineas, "you ain't such a bad couple of square-heads. But git outa them clothes, or if they catch ya, ya'll be shot. I need one of the uniforms, anyways. Hurry up."

The Germans, convinced that being captured in their underwear would save them from a firing squad, obeyed with alacrity, and after their apparel had been removed, Phineas sent them on their undignified way with the threat that a Luger bullet would make them even more uncomfortable if they remained in evidence for more than five minutes.

After watching the scantily clad Jerries walk toward inevitable capture, Phineas grinned and confined his attentions to the balky Rolls-Royce job. A little tinkering and it began to percolate. The inimitable flyer of the Ninth Pursuit then sprawled on the grass near the Bristol. Tomorrow the Kaiser was going to be at the Front, and what a chance to make the celebration in his honor one that he would never forget! Phineas decided to attend the festivities.

EARLY morning. Drawn up beside a road well behind the Jerry lines were six big motor cars. On a high bank near the road stood a group of German officers of high rank, muffled in greatcoats. Apart from the rest was a man of medium height whose face had been caricatured by artists of every nationality in the world for three long years. It was a hawklike visage with feverish eyes and adorned by a mustache and beard. It was none other than Kaiser Bill. Beside him stood a taller man, thin as a fence rail, with a big nose and little or no chin—the clown prince of Germany enjoying an aerial treat with papa. High in the sky, in a great V, von Holke's Staffel swept across the blue, showing their Emperor what swell flyers they were.

"*Ach!*" enthused Kaiser Bill. "Colossal!"

"*Ja, Fader,*" smiled the offspring of the heir to a throne which bade fair to be worth very little in view of the trend of the conflict.

The Kaiser glanced at his first-born irritably, then looked up at the heavens again. He saw something that made his eyes narrow and he called to an officer.

"Von Buhler," he snapped, "that ship flying high above the rest. What is it? A sentinel, perhaps?"

"*Ja, Your Highness,*" replied the general. "It is the Bristol ship we have bedn flying into Allied territory to get pictures for the High Command!"

Then the Kaiser's eyes danced once more. "Ach, it is a joke on the *verdammte Engländer, nein?*"

The general walked back to the group. As the show went on, the single ship swept down from the top of the world. It dropped to a thousand feet, then to five hundred. It dipped its nose in salute. Kaiser Bill was pleased. Then—

*Blam!* A motor car shivered and careened into the ditch. The group of Jerry officers stampeded. One fell on his face and began to curse as one leg refused to help the other in raising him to his feet. *Blam!* Kaiser Bill heard something sing close to his ear, and a hunk of mud blotted out half of his vision. The Crown Prince squealed and clapped a hand to his ear.

"Fader!" he yelled. "I am shot, *ach! Donner und—*"

A burly officer ran up and touched His Majesty's sleeve. "It is advisable that you go," he shouted. "Something it has gone wrong!"

Upstairs von Holke and his brood had come to the same conclusion and they began to spiral down. The Bristol fighter, however, was streaking full-gun toward Paris and points beyond. Phineas had a good start and was making the best of it. The Rolls-Royce engine perked as if it had taken to Phineas like a one-man dog and its one aim in the war seemed to be to get its rider back where he belonged.

A pair of Fokkers ate up the ether behind Phineas, and in one of them was *Hauptmann* von Holke, who had been seized with a strange intuition. He shrugged it away, however, and made all haste to get within range of the Bristol which had strafed his beloved Emperor. Phineas grinned, took the last grenade from his belt and tossed it aimlessly over his shoulder. It described a parabola in the sky between himself and the Fokker. Von Holke saw the thing hurtling through space. He signaled to his comrade and banked away, giving the grenade all the sky it wanted. It went spinning down to explode near a battery of archie which was getting ready to strafe Phineas for a fare-thee-well.

When von Holke and his brother Von pulled up again, the Bristol had eaten up enough yardage to insure a safe getaway. The famous Jerry ace howled with chagrin and shook a clenched fist at the streaking Bristol. It had driven his Kaiser away and had broken up the party at which he, *Herr Hauptmann* von Holke, was to have been decorated. And what was more, it seemed evident that the late Phineas Pinkham had rung in a twin brother to carry on for the Allies.

PHINEAS played tag with a skyful of shrapnel and

at last staggered into his own territory with a ship that threatened to really bring him in. Ten minutes later he nursed the Limey battle wagon down to the drome he knew so well and taxied across the tarmac. Groundmen almost fainted as they stared at the face grinning at them when they pulled the two-seater to a stop. Sergeant Casey took one look and ran toward a trio of pilots who were trekking toward their huts.

"It's Pinkham!" he yelled. "Lieutenant Pinkham! He's back. He's—"

Bump Gillis looked at Captain Howell, then at Casey. "Somebody has gone nuts," he said.

"Well, go look at him, sir," roared the non-com. "See for yourselves, if you don't believe me. He's got a Limey suit on. He's—"

Bump started running. Several long hops and he was gazing at Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham in the flesh. The Boonetown worker of the impossible gave his hutmate his customary salute and then grinned all over.

"Well, you big ape," howled Gillis, "you cock-eyed—"

"Yeah," said Phineas complacently, "it's me. Giss ya ain't sore, huh? Well, ya oughta been with me. I've had more fun—"

"Good Lord!" forced out Howell and just stared and stared. Meanwhile, Sergeant Casey circled the drome like a wild man, shouting the news, and Sir Rufus, not being deaf, wasted no time in going out to investigate. It was a typical reunion between the C.O. and his particular pain in the neck.

"Where the hell you been?" growled the Old Man.

"I been out gittin' the Bristol that the Limey's handed to the krauts," explained Phineas with a broad grin. "Look it over. The bums won't take no more pitchers. I turned the guys that was in it loose an' I giss they been picked up some place. Well, I had to bust up a Spad, but I brought this one back, an' a two-seater oughta be as good as two single-seaters. Well, I'm tired an' I ain't had nothin' to eat. Giss I'll git some—"

"You stay here!" ordered Major Rufus. "And tell us how you got out of that ship that von Holke brought down!"

"Haw-w-w-w-w!" howled Phineas. "I wasn't in it! Haw-w-w!"

The Old Man reeled. "You w-weren't in it? Then you mean you let somebody else take what you ought to've gotten, you dirty halfwitted—?"

"Nope," answered Phineas, "just a turnip with a helmet on an' a flyin' coat stuffed with hay. Well, as I was sayin', I ain't had nothin' to eat an'—"



“All right, get something!” snapped the C.O. “And after that I’ve got a lot of nice things to tell you, you—” His voice passed away in a gurgle. He looked at the Bristol, saw in it another feather in the cap of the Ninth, then stared after Phineas as the miracle man walked toward the stone house.

“Oh, Lord!” he muttered and staggered away like a somnambulist.

But that is not all. Three days later a Jerry pilot was brought down by an English squadron, and he wanted to know who was the man who had bombed the Kaiser and the Crown Prince from a Bristol fighter. He also imparted the news that von Holke was in the bad graces of the House of Hohenzollern and was in danger of being transferred to the Austrian front or German East Africa.

The news, of course, hit Brigade and the red tabs lost no time in communicating with American G.H.Q. Brasshats came down from Chaumont to congratulate Phineas Pinkham and promise him a medal. They

asked for the privilege of shaking the hand of the man who had stampeded the Kaiser himself and who had wounded the Crown Prince in the ear. The morale of the Germans, the brass hats assured a seething Major Garrity, would be well shot for several weeks and the American Infantry would act accordingly. The major’s squadron was an outfit to boast about.

After the staff cars had gone, Major Rufus Garrity had to restrain himself from kissing Phineas Pinkham before he hied to his cubicle. There he did a dance like a woodland sprite and whistled a tune. Once more he was the white-haired boy of the Wing. He lit his pipe. There was a red flash, a singeing of bushy eyebrows. Major Rufus let out a howl and dashed into the next room. Phineas Pinkham took one look and fled to the tarmac. The Old Man chased him into a hangar. Pilots looked at each other.

“If you ask me,” opined Bump Gillis, with a shake of his head, “that sure is a hell of a way to treat a hero.”