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**PHINEAS
 PINKHAM**
howl

*Two weeks' leave and no Spad to fly anywhere in—what do you do in a case like that?
 Easy—just take a leaf from Phineas “Carbuncle” Pinkham’s book and go—*

FROM SPAD TO WORSE

written and illustrated by **JOE ARCHIBALD**

SPRING, GENTLE SPRING, TRIPPED a light and fantastic toe throughout France, distributing buds and sprouts over various parts of the topography. The nice lady lured the birds from the south with her warm breath and sent them skimming through the ozone with a warning to keep out of the way of the bad airplanes that were still buzzing around.

One little bird flew to the eaves of an edifice in Chaumont which housed American G.H.Q. and trilled an aria. Another little feathered creature patrolled to Bar-le-Duc and made a pretty landing on the limb of

a tree near the old stone house which comprised the headquarters of the Ninth Pursuit Squadron, Major Rufus Garrity commanding. This one tried out its vocal chords by way of reminder to the Old Man that spring had come at last.

Neither of the aforementioned birds tarried long, however, on their respective landing fields. The dour visages of the brass hats at G.H.Q. were not such as could be serenaded with any hope of appreciation. The sparrow at Bar-le-Duc saw Major Rufus’ face and, with a poignant pang of sympathy, lifted its wings to fly far away to other climes. An attempt at song would have

been a waste of time. A pair of trumpeting elephants, straining their voices to the utmost, might have drowned out the verbal blast which was shaking the walls of Wings, but it is doubtful.

“Well,” Phineas Pinkham thrust in behind one of the C.O.’s explosions, “it is a hell of a note when a guy has to go on two weeks’ leave whether he wants to or not. I should think Persian’ an’ Foch ud want me around, seein’ that the Jerries has got the Allies run ragged. I—”

“That’s just why I don’t want you around, you crackpot!” bellowed the Old Man. “I’m up to my gills in trouble and misery, as it is, and now that I’ve got a chance to get rid of a big lump of it for a while—well, you’re taking that two weeks the brass hats gave you. Understand? If you don’t, you’ll never get another leave if the war lasts eighty more years!”

“That’s all the thanks I git, huh?” growled Phineas indignantly. “Well, what’ll ya do if I refuse, huh? I ain’t gonna—”

The Old Man jumped into the air. “Don’t argue with me, you fatheaded halfwit,” he roared. “You haven’t got a Spad to fly in, anyway. That Jerry explosive has wiped out seven ships in a week’s time and I suppose G.H.Q. will put through orders for a Spad for Lieutenant Pinkham immediately, eh? Like hell they will! I think they suggested leave for you, hoping that you wouldn’t come back.”

“Oh, yeah?” snapped Phineas. “No ship, huh? I giss that ain’t a break for the Germans! How d’ya expect to win the war? An’ anyways I can’t go to Paree. There’s maybe eight *gendarmes* there that ain’t forgot me, and I bet they’ll throw me in jail an’ maybe I’ll go to Devil’s Island. That’d give you a swell conscience, huh? It’d be your fault an’—”

“I’ll take the chance, Pinkham,” howled Garrity. “Now get out and don’t let me see your homely mug for two weeks. I might even overlook it if you stay away three weeks!”

“Awright,” said Phineas injuredly, “awright!” And he reached into a box on the Old Man’s table for a cigar. A fist crashed down, but just a second too late to mash two or three of Phineas’ digits. The Boonetown flyer snatched a cheroot quickly and jumped backward. Grinning broadly, he ran out of the house with a barrage of cuss words ringing in his ears. Major Garrity grabbed a cigar himself, bit off the end and began to chew it savagely. And then the telephone rang.

FOR ten minutes Major Rufus listened to the tale of woe from Chaumont. Two more ships had been

washed out after pumping tracers into a Drachen. The same old story. A great explosion had followed, and wood, metal and fabric had filled the sky. The morale of all the war birds in that sector was dwindling rapidly until the sight of a Drachen was sending ships skidding away with guns icy cold.

Something had to be done about it. G.H.Q. could not sleep. They were walking the floor incessantly and wearing out the soles of expensive boots. The Intelligence Corps were running around in circles. Do something! Do something!

“Yessir, ‘do something!’” Major Garrity barked. “Maybe I can send out the one ship I’ve got left and it can bring in a Boche sausage intact, with whatever formula the Jerries have got for their damned explosive pinned to the bag! Damme, man, you can’t blame the Spads. That stuff kicks them to hell within the radius of a mile. And they’ve got dummies in the baskets. We’re pretty sure that there are only a few of the blimps that are carrying the deadly punch, but all the Boche observers play dummies when a ship gets in sight. Our men don’t dare take the chance. If they did, they’d be crazy, and I for one don’t blame them a damn bit! If you want us to do something, send us some ships covered with armor plate. We—”

A loud, metallic click was the major’s reply. G.H.Q. had hung up. The Old Man spat out the remnants of his cigar and leaned back in his chair. Small beads of moisture sparkled on his brow. He felt anything but healthy in his gastronomic region. At first he blamed it on the continued harassing from G.H.Q. Then his eyes fell on the remains of the cheroot he had been masticating while the brass hats had taken his mind off everything but the latest Boche air threat.

He stooped to pick up the wad of weed and tore it apart. He had been a smoker for many years, but had never seen tobacco leaf of such a sickly hue. Holding it up to his nose for a whiff, he emitted a gasp. Major Rufus staggered to the window and shoved his head out into the air.

An hour later, when the major had summoned sufficient strength, he staggered out to the tarmac in search of Phineas Pinkham.

“Sleight of hand, is he? Damn him!” muttered the Old Man. “Well, I’ll show him a better one. I’ll—” His eyes lined up Bump Gillis who was walking crabwise toward the medical shack. Bump’s feet seemed to have stopped taking orders from his brain cells. “Drunk, eh?” bellowed the major. “Come here, you—”

The pilot stopped, brushed at something which

seemed to have gotten in front of his face, right-ruddered and stumbled toward his superior.

"I—I ain't drunk, sir," gulped Bump. "I'm s-sick, an'—"

Sir Rufus knew that he was listening to the truth. The face of Phineas' hutmate was the color of white chalk mixed with a little Paris green.

"Did Pinkham—" he spat out.

"He—he's gone! He gimme a cigar," Bump managed to force out. "Said you give it to him an' I believed him as he jus' come out of your place, sir, an' he was goin' on leave. Oh-h-h-h-h-h! Wait'll I git my hands on the dirty double-crossin'—ughh-h-h-h! That taste! That smell! Eucalyptus leaves, sir, an'—" But Bump Gillis was reeling away again, his watery eyes striving to locate the medical shack without too many detours.

Major Rufus Garrity tried for an altitude record without wings, scared three mechanics into a hangar with bloodcurdling threats anent the life and limb of any man on the drome who looked at him sidewise for the duration of the war. He snapped out of the fit as a trio of Spads swooped in. Howell and two pilots of A flight.

The flight leader's face was white as he left the pit of his ship and he had a deal of trouble in meeting the old man's wrathful gaze.

"Went over to look at a pair of Jerry balloons, sir," he explained hoarsely. "The observers looked like dummies so we shot at the basket instead of the bag. Then a flock of Fokkers came in, sir, and we had to dust"

"I'll accept the story," snapped the Old Man. "I'm used to alibis. We might as well admit it. The Heinies have got us on the ropes. To hell with Drachens, understand? Fight anything with wings on, but lay off the windbags. I'm going over to Bar-le-Duc and get drunk!"

THAT night in the Cafe of the Pink Cow Major Rufus Garrity lowered his chin into the collar of his trench coat and let several jiggers of brandy battle a gob of woe into submission. Gradually his spirits lifted their landing gear and soared upward. Another jigger of brandy brought his chin up with a determined snap. Boche and exploding balloons, eh? Well, he'd damned soon get to the bottom of things. He'd send every ship over, get cooperation from the British and the French and bomb the damned things from a height of fifteen thousand feet. He'd—

A voice whispered in the major's ear, a soft, liquid voice. There came a little tug at his sleeve. Major Rufus looked up into the pretty, agitated face of a mam'selle.

"Sh-h-h-h, *m'sieu*," she whispered warningly, "I have ze great news for you. *Non, non*, not ze one word. Babette, she do ze talk, *m'sieu*."

"B-but," stammered the Old Man, glancing swiftly about him, "I-I can't be seen with a woman. I—" he sputtered and made as if to leave the pretty French girl flat.

"*Non, non*," she whispered, "*non, m'sieu*. I have ze spy, *m'sieu*. My house, he ees there. You come et capture heem, *oui*? Veree drunk, he ees. He tell ever'theeng, *cochon!* Peeg! *m'sieu*—"

Major Garrity gasped. It occurred to him that possibly this man could turn the light on the dark secret of the exploding Drachens. He would wring it out of the fellow's throat with his bare hands. That was what he would do! The Old Man looked at the girl, smiled and gestured toward the door. The *mademoiselle* responded to the smile and walked casually out of the cafe.

In a few moments Major Garrity joined her, hoping that his wife back in the States had little or no intuition. The girl did not live far away. Feeling like a schoolboy playing hooky, the Old Man followed the girl up a dark stairway and at length found himself in a small living room.

"*M'sieu*, he wait here, *oui*?" he said in a very low voice. "Babette, she sees if the prisonaire yet is drunk," and *mam'selle* walked into an adjoining room.

Minutes passed. The C.O. of the Ninth could hear deep breathing emanating from that room. More minutes elapsed and a vague uneasiness seized the Old Man just as somebody fumbled at the door through which he had entered. He jumped to his feet as the door swung inward. A man stood there—a tall, bearded Frenchman in an officer's uniform. The unexpected visitor's eyes widened and then began to blaze as he stabbed a finger at Sir Rufus. Behind the Old Man came a frightened squeak, then a voice.

"Oh-h, Jules, *mon* hoosband!" shrieked the erstwhile *mam'selle*.

"*Oui, oui!* Eet ees Jules!" yelped the man. "Et thees American, he steals *ma* Babette, *oui*? *Sacre bleu!* *M'sieu*, I demand ze sateesfaction. You I weel have under arrest. I weel see ze President of France, Joffre, Foch, Petain, Persheeng, Haig! *Oui*, I—"

Major Garrity's knees grew very weak. "There is some mistake, sir," he stammered. "This woman—"

"*Oui!*" bellowed the bearded man. "Thees *mam'selle*, she ees to blame, *oui*? Peeg! I call ze *gendarmes*, the Yankee police *soldats!*"

The old man of the Ninth clutched frantically at the officer's sleeve. The little French girl began to sob.

"I will be ruined," argued the major. "Listen to reason, man, *compre-nez*? Look, here's three hundred francs. It-is all yours, sir. There's no use to make trouble. Here, three hundred francs, count it, *m'sieu*. I tell you this woman lied to me. She told me she had a Boche spy here. She—

The French officer turned briefly and his eyes widened at the sight of the wad of French legal tender. He snatched at it avidly, tore it from Major Garrity's grasp, then pointed toward the door.

"*Allez vite, m'sieu!*" he roared. "Maybe I change ze mind. *Oui!* Eet ees what you call cheap you get off, *cochon, allez!*"

Major Rufus Garrity allezed faster than he had ever allezed before. Once in the street, he wiped a lot of moisture from his brow and hied to where the squadron car was awaiting him. His uppermost desire was to get back to the safety of the drome as quickly as four wheels could roll through Frog mud.

And in a house in Bar-le-Duc Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham reclined on a comfortable couch, a cryptic smile on his homely face. Hanging over the back of a chair were black garments that certainly were never issued by any quartermaster in the A.E.F. In the pockets of the aforementioned garments were very precious articles necessary for certain work to come.

"I ain't got a ship, huh?" he grinned. "Well, almost I ain't, but it is somethin' that'll git in the air, maybe." His eyes strayed from the black garments to a pile of white oilcloth stacked in a corner of the room. He certainly had been working fast during the last few hours. On the table near him was a great pot of black paint and a brush that showed signs of having been used overtime. After a lot more brain work, Phineas dropped off to sleep.

YES, Spring had come to the palpitating terrain of Europe. The same little birds which had found no appreciation on the Allied territory flew over toward Germany and discovered a place on which to set their undercarriages. It was a limb of a tree that brushed the sides of a great windmill in Alsace Lorraine. Laughter came from within the structure. Gleeful, boasting voices seeped through the walls and encouraged songs from the little birds' throats.

"*Ach!*" cried one. "We haff the *Amerikaners* where we want them now, *nein, Herr Webling*? That mixture of yours has sent them crawling into their sties. *Schwein! Ach, we Germans are smart, ja!*"

"*Gott mit uns, Herr Oberst,*" was the reply. "The Spads vanish like—*pouf!* *Ach, der Kaiser* he iss proud of us, *Herr Oberst*. They Drachens go oop, *und* stay oop, *und* the *verdammt* Allies, they are afraid to shood at them. Ha! Ha!"

"*Ja,*" enthused the first speaker. "Ha! Ha! For this we get the Iron Cross, *Herr Webling*. *Der Kaiser* iss happy. *Mein Freund*, von Holke, has destroyed the Yankee upstart, Phineas Pinkham, not more than three weeks ago. Our armies they are ready to strike. *Ach, we Germans!* In maybe four weeks we go to Paris. We—"

"*Dumkopf!*" came a sudden cry of alarm. "*Herr Oberst*, you were going to strike a match? *Gott*, you know what would happen, *ja*? No more we can make of this. It iss too expensive, *und* money in the *Vaterland* is scarce! Leave me, *Herr Oberst*. I wish to be alone. *Gott!*"

The birds stopped singing and flew away.

The sun of yet another bright spring day looked down upon a barn on a small farm almost thirty miles from Bar-le-Duc. For a moment even the sun seemed to waver in the sky as a strange figure emerged from the barn. The man was clad in a long black coat and black trousers. A black slouch hat crowned his head. Most of the face was covered with a great black beard. The man was arguing vociferously with some one who was still inside the barn.

"It's highway robb'ry!" yipped a voice that was familiar to many warring individuals in sunny France and elsewhere. "Three hundred francs for that heap of junk! A bunch of sticks an' a one-lung engine. Cripes! Well, I gotta have it an' here are your lousy francs. I had a hell of a time gittin' 'em, too! An' I-hope all your rabbits die, ya dirty cheat!" And Phineas Carbuncle Pinkham lifted his beard to air his Adam's apple before turning to help pull something out of the barn. Lo and behold! Gradually the cause of the bickering came into view—an old weather-beaten airplane of the pusher type, an antique Curtiss ship that had in some way found its way to France.

"I cheat you?" objected Phineas' partner in crime indignantly. "She ees worth more thees ship, *m'sieu*. A American he lands it here five, maybe six, year ago. In American he say to hell weeth eet' et ride away on bicycle, *oui*. I help you feex eet, geeve you petrol, *m'sieu*; now I get ze insult. *Sacre*, I maybe blow it up, *oui!*"

"Over my dead body ya will, ya li'l cootie!" snapped Phineas. "Hurry up an' help me put these signs on. I'm doin' it for the cause of the Allies, ain't I, ya big stiff? Don't ya want to help keep the krauts out of Paree?"

Well, then, shut up an' do some work, or I'll take the francs away from ya an' take the ship, anyways!"

The Frenchman wilted a little and proceeded to obey. He had heard of the great Lieutenant Pinkham and decided that any signs of hostility on his part would mean something close to suicide. He held his tongue and began to tie the squares of oilcloth onto various parts of the ancient ship. On each of the squares words in three different languages—English, French and German—had been splashed.

Phineas stepped up to the control pit, which was not much of a control pit, but just a seat out in front on which the man who was crazy enough to fly the ship would have to sit and grip a wheel. There were levers also that controlled the throttle and spark. Phineas twisted the prop maybe twenty times before it sucked in a charge of gas, and then put the switch on.

Pop! Pop! Kerplunk! The resurrected engine caught. Boonetown's contribution to the war shook hands with the Frenchman. "*Adieu, m'sieu,*" said the man, shaking his head.

"Adoo!" said Phineas, grinning. "Well, I giss if other guy's could fly these crates, a Pinkham can do it!" He gathered up the tails of his long black coat, adjusted his beard, pulled on a pair of goggles and eased his lanky frame into the frail control pit of the old pusher. Waving his hand to the Frenchman, Phineas opened the throttle.

The old Curtiss began to slide along the uneven ground, with Phineas desperately endeavoring to correct a wobbling motion that bade fair to pile him up in a heap of ruins. After a long run he pulled back on the wheel and the pusher left the turf. Finally, after a struggle, Phineas began to coax some altitude out of the senile crate.

"Huh!" he muttered to himself as he jerked the wheel. "I giss Sinbad thought he was some egg, flyin' around on a rug! I bet that the Arab would never of climbed onto this damn thing. Oh, well, here goes nothin'!" And Phineas worked in a couple of circling maneuvers and grabbed himself possibly two hundred more feet of altitude.

HIGH in the ether between Chalons and the Meuse, Captain Howell led his flight toward a pair of Drachens. Before taking off on the patrol, the flight had been read a riot act by Rufus Garrity. He was sick of looking at a bunch of buzzards who could be bluffed out of the sky. He wanted some action or he would turn in all of the buzzards on the drome for a flock of new ones.

Teeth clamped tightly together, Howell flung an arm skyward and dropped out of the formation. Two war birds followed him down—down to where the German sausages drifted on their cables. The figures in the baskets were motionless.

In the old pusher Phineas neared the scene of sanguinary conflict He was still far away, and Spads and Drachens looked like toy things playing in the heavens. He saw a ship slam down. Two more. A little red tongue of fire licked out from a gas bag. The planes spread out frantically and clutched at space One went into a breathless sideslip. Then everything seemed to happen at once. A terrific detonation ripped the heavens apart The other Drachen was kicked from its cable and the basket was tom away. Three Spads tumbled over and over. One went twisting down. A pair of white mushrooms manifested themselves in the area of grief.

Phineas swore as he diagnosed the situation in a flash. One of the Drachens had been a dummy loaded with the mysterious explosive. The other sausage had earned two honest-to-goodness Heinies who had evacuated the basket just as it was torn loose from its moorings. With a herculean effort he jazzed all the speed he could get out of his ancient engine. One Spad was now recovering from its fit. Another was sliding downstairs in bad shape.

Captain Howell fought his King Spad to submission and signaled his flight for a return to the drome. The Heinies were bluffing, were they? He would have a story to tell the Old Man. Two more Spads practically washed out. To hell with G.H.Q.! He'd—what in hell was that?

Down below and off to the right was the strangest-looking aircraft he had ever seen in France. The pilot was sitting on little or nothing, and a small motor was kicking over to the rear of the rickety air ensemble. White patches flapped in the breeze. Howell threw his Spad alongside and looked the thing over. Staring at him were great black words:

"Down with this horrible bloodshed! All ye warring brethren take heed! Spread the Word. Let peace reign once more. Why work for profiteers? There is no reward! Let us shake hands and chase the Four Horsemen from the world. Think of the women and children!"

Howell gasped and almost went into a spin. Another sign caught his attention. It screamed out:

"Heed the Bible, sinners! Thou ahalt not kill!"

The flight leader threw his Spad down close, cut

the motor, and flew wing to wing with the sluggishly moving air wreck. A laugh burst the bounds of his mouth as the strange pilot looked over at him. Goggles were pulled down over a black slouch hat and held the headgear in place. A black beard palpitated in the breeze.

Bump Gillis also conducted his Spad down to the side of the craft and stared foolishly. There were more placards on his side of the palsied plane. One was in French, another in German script. Howell lifted his Spad and summoned his flock away. A flight drilled homeward, wondering if they had been seeing things. The flight leader looked back once and saw a shower of paper fall from the crawling pusher and flutter earthward.

Phineas Pinkham grinned as the crate bumped and skipped along the air trails. He looked at the gas gauge and muttered with satisfaction before turning the pusher toward the lines. A pair of Fokkers came out of a cloud to look him over. The Vons read the placard that had been tied to the Curtiss for their own especial benefit. They came to the conclusion that a Gotha must have bombed a Frog insane asylum and that one of the inmates was now on the loose. On second thought they ganged Phineas and motioned to him to go down and land.

"Hell!" muttered our hero, and pulled down on the wheel with his left hand. As the old pusher skimmed low over the Jerry support trenches, Boche soldiers looked up and laughed. As Phineas fought with the controls the Yankee trickster saw a big open field. He cut the motor and stretched his dead stick glide just far enough to make the level stretch of Jerry topography. After a perilous ride over uncertain turf the old pusher shivered, spun around in a half circle and came to a stop. The Fokkers swooped in. Jerry infantry rushed out of the woods at one end of the field. Phineas stepped out of the pusher, feeling an urge to kiss Mother Earth but not wishing to waste the time.

"Wee gates!" he exclaimed as a German officer came up, a Luger clutched in his right hand. Other Boche looked over the ship curiously read the placards, then turned to each other, tapping their helmets significantly.

PHINEAS pulled a paper from out of his black coat and handed it to the Jerry officer. A few weeks before, he had removed it from the pocket of a Jerry ace who, with a companion, had had the misfortune to let a captured Bristol fighter fall into the hands of

the Boonetown, Iowa, miracle worker. It bore the crest of a Munich family which was as close to the Kaiser as the Emperor's underwear. Phineas had planned well during his sojourn in Bar-le-Duc.

The officer read it and his eyebrows crawled out of sight beneath his steel helmet. He looked at Phineas, then read it once more.

"Allied supply dump near Vitry," it said. "Destruction of it vital to German advance. K-8 Kreigsnachrichtenamt."

"Ach," uttered the German officer and saluted stiffly. "Good work, *Herr Hauptmann*. I have heard of you. Then the *verdammt* Allies did not hold you, *nein*?"

Phineas shook his head, remained mute and poked a finger into his mouth.

"Ja," said the Jerry, "*ja!* Deaf und dumb! *Das ist gut.*" He grinned as the Fokker-riders came up and held the message out to them. They read quickly and then indulged in a lengthy argument. Phineas felt his heart turn to a snowball. He measured the distance between himself and a Fokker. A get away in the old pusher was out of the question. Quickly he yanked out a handkerchief and held it to his nose. It slipped from his fingers and fell to the ground as he tried clumsily to ram it into his pocket again.

A Jerry flyer stooped quickly and retrieved it, his wary orbs regarding it intently. Then his eyes widened a bit as he perceived the crest in one corner. Phineas took advantage of the situation and let loose a flow of German which he had learned in haste from a certain little *mam'selle* in Bar-le-Duc.

"*Dumkopf!*" he snapped and followed it up with a string of almost inarticulate Heinie. He grabbed the square of cloth from the flyer's fingers and turned to the Jerry officer with his brows lowered angrily. The Fokker-rider was subjected to another scathing outburst after which the Boche officer pointed to the pusher and gently nudged Phineas toward it.

Each step seemed a mile as our hero walked to the ancient crate and started preparations for a takeoff. The Fokker pilots stood by and watched with interest. After nearly fifteen minutes of feverish activity, Phineas got the thing to percolating.

A few yards away, the German officer conversed with a comrade.

"He has confirmed the observations of the Rumplers, *Herr Oberst*," he said gloatingly in his own language. "It is no trick of the enemy. I have already given orders to the Gothas on the other side of the wood. Tonight the *verdammt* Allies will get a surprise, *nein*? Ach, I knew *Hauptmann* von Pracht was too

smart for the Yankee *Schweinhunds*. *Ach!* Look, he is taking off and is going toward Germany. It takes a brave man to fly one of those ancient ships, *Herr Oberst, ja!*”

The other Jerry officer regarded the pusher “with narrowed orbs as it skimmed low over the landscape. “But, Vogle,” he argued, “perhaps we should have taken more precautions, taken away his disguise. *Ach*, if—”

“We have had communications with Wilhelmstrasse to give K-8 all cooperation and are warned not to interfere with any of his movements. *Hauptmann* von Pracht has queer methods, but he has had results. Did we not get word that he was behind the Allied lines disguised as a French peasant?”

“*Ja*,” admitted the skeptical one reluctantly, “but I have a feeling—”

A grin split Phineas’ bearded face as he maneuvered the pusher over a few hundred acres of German terrain, mentally registered every observation and then wheeled back over the lines with what little gas he had left. He came to a landing on a British Camel tarmac near Nomeny and regarded an astounded welcoming committee gravely.

“I see through the eyes of the Prophet John,” he bellowed. “Did he not prophesy this terrible debacle? I fly forth to stop this horrible carnage! Hark, ye misguided brethren. A worse fate awaits you if you cease not to murder your fellow men. Listen to the message from the Almighty—”

“Quite so, old chap,” interrupted the British C.O., “quite so. But you had better come with me and talk this thing over.”

Phineas walked stiffly toward the British Operations tent Fifteen minutes later our hero walked out onto the tarmac with the C.O. and a British red tab.

“You will furnish this man with petrol,” the major said to a gaping mechanic, “and help him in every way. That is all. Gheer’o, Sir John,” he grinned at Phineas. “And if you see the Four Horsemen in the sky, throw a grenade at them. You must indeed have heard the call to be able to stay upstairs in that wreck.”

“Thank you kindly, my friend,” said Phineas and once more began a struggle to get the pusher’s engine into operation.

BACK on the drome of the Ninth, Major Rufus Garrity’s outfit remained groggy under the lashings of G.H.Q. and continued failures against von Holke’s staffel. The feud with the Drachens had become futile.

Bump Gillis flew over one, and turned in the report

that there seemed to be strange ridges on the surface of the bag which appeared to run parallel from stem to stern. News of the strange pusher ship and its peculiar pilot kept coming in, and three times, now, the flights of the Ninth Pursuit had passed it at a distance.

During this period of woeful and futile warfare a letter came from Paris, written in the hand of none other than Phineas Pinkham. It contained all kinds of advice regarding the methods of combating the sausages and a few veiled uncomplimentary remarks anent the way the Allied brass hats were running the war. Major Rufus Garrity swore that once his pain in the neck got back from leave, he would be hanged by the heels and flayed alive. His hide would come in handy to patch up the wings of the Spads.

“Well, I thought that nut in the crazy pusher might’ve been Phineas,” said Bump Gillis, “but even that mug can’t make himself be in two places at the same time.”

Over on the German side the pusher ship was treated with wholesome respect. Gothas had spotted the supply dump near Nomeny which K-8 had ferreted out and had blown it to bits. Orders had been received at every German drome to let the pusher roam the skies at will. What *Dumkopfs* the Allies were! A reincarnation of the Prophet John, trying to silence guns with a lot of crazy propaganda! *Ach! Gott* was sure *mit uns!*

Over an emerald panorama of Alsace which had not been disturbed by the god Mars, Phineas wheeled his aged bus. Not more than five hundred feet up, he looked down and studied the scenery. A little canal shone like a white ribbon below. On one bank was a great windmill which would have warmed the cockles of Don Quixote’s chivalrous old heart. In a meadow near it was a great mound of dark cloth, and a lot of krauts were diligently working on same.

Phineas came gliding in not more than twenty feet over the heads of the industrious Germans. Sad to relate, Phineas Pinkham had overestimated the second life of the ancient crate. As the frail wheels hit the turf, there came a splintering sound. The whole works shuddered. The motor strained at its moorings. Wings buckled. Phineas left the control wheel and made a dive for safety. He hit the ground, completed two or three somersaults and finally draped himself around the trunk of a little tree.

FIFTEEN minutes later he came to in a strange-looking place and inquired who had won the big

battle. Teuton faces peered at him. One was a big square face with a white beard parted in the middle. A pair of black glasses covered his eyes.

"K-8," came a rumbling voice, "I am *Herr von Richter*." He spoke in German, but Phineas translated enough of the words to understand the introduction. He rose to his feet unsteadily and looked about him. All the paraphernalia of a chemical laboratory met his gaze on every side.

Phineas almost cried out as realization poked him with an insistent finger. Outside was a gas bag. Inside this mill was a laboratory.

"*Ach!*" mumbled Phineas. "*Was ist?*"

Herr von Richter smiled and pointed to a tin container standing on a table, and supported by a small wire enclosure built for the purpose. Phineas Pinkham in that moment decided that he would have to work faster than he had ever worked before. For over a week he had been looking for this place. And during that time he had made up his mind that perhaps only one Drachen out of twenty was injected with this high explosive. The stuff, he had figured, naturally would be very expensive and could not be made in large quantities.

Without warning Phineas slammed *Herr von Richter* on his august nose and yanked a Luger from the belt of a German officer. Not wasting a second, he plucked the tin from its container and spun to face the Germans, who were still rooted to the spot by the first shock of surprise. *Herr von Richter* was on the floor, and in his hand was the beard of K-8 which he had torn away from his attacker as he had instinctively tried to protect himself.

"*Gott!*" shrieked a voice. "*An Amerikaner! Leutnant Pinkham! Shood once, Hans! Shood!*"

"Move an inch, ya big square-heads," snapped Phineas, "and I'll shoot a piece of fire right through this tin can!" And as he spoke he pressed the barrel of the gun close to the container which he gripped tightly under one armpit. The Germans' faces drained of blood. Guns dropped to the floor. Hands went toward the roof.

"*Gott im Himmel!*" yelled *Herr von Richter*, rising to his feet. "Don't shood, *nein!* It blows us all to bits."

"That's what I thought," grinned Phineas, backing towards an open door, "b-but I'm ready to give up my life for my country. Any more of the stuff here, kraut? And I want the formula. Hand it over!" And he pressed the gun to the tin container once more.

"*Kamerad!*" pleaded the stunned chemist, pulling

a bulky envelope from his pocket and handing it to Phineas. "I giff my word. It iss all we haff. It is hard to make, *mein Freund!* So expensive. It takes jooost a little *und—*"

"Haw-w-w-w-w!" laughed Phineas. "I figgered that. Now ya'd better not yell out the winder at them krauts or I'll blow this thing all to hell!"

The Germans huddled in a group, their knees wobbling. Phineas backed through the door, slammed it behind him and hurried down the spiral staircase of the mill. Outside German soldiers stared at him for a moment, set up a yell and raised their guns. Phineas was about to warn them when a frantic booming voice sounded over his head. The men who blocked his path dropped their guns and fell back.

A big car stood near a small house fifty yards away from the mill. Phineas grinned. *Herr von Richter* would have to walk back home or get another car.

Phineas jumped into the German car and ordered the driver to step on the gas. The German had no alternative. He drove away and obeyed every instruction from the madman in the back seat.

No sooner had the car rumbled away from the old mill than *von Richter* waddled to the nearest telephone. Every airdrome in the sector was buzzed. The car with the man in black squatting in the back seat was to be destroyed at any cost. Outposts on the ground were to start shooting the moment they saw the vehicle roaring toward them. The driver, of course, would be sacrificed, but what was one ordinary German when such a tremendous secret was in jeopardy?

LIEUTENANT PINKHAM, however, was doing some tall thinking of his own. As the Boche machine sped down a long, straight stretch of road, he saw a crowd of Germans rush out to dispute the right of way. Phineas stood up, tin container under one arm, and pressed the muzzle of the Luger close to it. The driver of the car roared, turned as pale as a ghost and drove the accelerator to the floor-boards.

Guns barked, but the aim of the Boche was very bad as their chief concern was to jump out of the road before they became blended with a lot of fenders, headlights and spark plugs, to say nothing of a lot of pistons, spare tires and sheet metal.

Phineas yelled and sat down again. A few red hairs turned gray as the roaring car almost collided with a German truck. The man at the wheel skidded back into the road in the nick of time and then dodged a

pair of ambulances. It seemed years since they had left the old mill.

Blam! Phineas' ears clogged up and a shower of dirt spurted up from the landscape. He looked up. Three Albatros ships were skimming overhead, dropping eggs full of all kinds of hell. Fokkers gunned down and began to strafe the car with spiteful Spandaus.

"I wish to hell I was upstairs," groaned Phineas and snuggled down into the tonneau.

After another minute that seemed a year, he looked up and a wild yell was added to the roar of the motor. Spads were coming down and biting pieces out of the low-flying German ships. And they were from the Ninth Pursuit. Captain Howell, Bump Gillis and the rest of the bunch. Two flights of Spads raising hell with the Kaiser's boys!

The Jerry ships skidded around and hedge-hopped farther into Germany. One or two climbed for altitude and got the reverse. Phineas stood up in the machine as three Spads swooped low and escorted him along the road. Boche soldiers swarmed out of a wood ahead and lifted their rifles. Vickers lead cut a swath in their ranks, and the German automobile was through them before they could get organized again. After that there was nothing to it. Phineas and his chauffeur rode into Allied territory and stopped in a town clogged with doughs.

Having made a hurried explanation that caused Yankee officers to kick up their heels with joy, Phineas was given several swigs of cognac and loaded into the side-car of a motorcycle. The tin of high explosive was going in another direction—toward Chaumont.

HOWELL and his victorious gang were celebrating in the big stone house when the mechanical bug stopped in front of the door. Phineas disembarked stiffly, wiped some mud from his face and headed into squadron headquarters. Major Rufus almost fell backwards into the fireplace. Bump Gillis let out a gleeful howl as he feasted his eyes on the black-garbed, weary flyer from Boonetown, Iowa. Phineas held up his hand.

"I see through the eyes of the Prophet John," he announced solemnly, forcing back a grin. "Stop all this bloodshed! Hear ye, brethren! I have been sallyin' forth as a friend to all mankind—"

"Shut up, you crazy loon!" roared Sir Rufus. "What in hell does this mean? I thought you were in Paris. We got your insulting letter, you bum! I'll teach you to respect superiors. I'll—"

"Haw-w-w-w-w-w!" Phineas guffawed. "Well, I see the C.O. of that Limey squadron kept my secret. I was over in Germany a lot, lookin' around. I sent some Gothas over to blow up that heap of old junk near Vitry. I'm K-8 from Williamstraws, I am. And if you bums think you kin fly, try takin' a old Curtiss pusher up an' stay up! Well, it fin'ly buckled up on me an' I landed right beside a old mill on my ear. And in the old mill, ya bunch of clucks, was where they was manufacturin' stuff to put in Drachen skins, an' only fire would set it off.

I bet it took 'em six months to make a quart of the stuff. I sent a tin of it over to the brass hats an' I hope they light a match to look into it. That letter I sent to a friend of mine in Patee an' he mailed it back to ya. Fooled ya, huh?"

"Then—then—" the Old Man gulped, "it was you in that damn contraption? You disobeyed my orders, eh? Didn't go on leave, you mugwump! Well, I'll hang you for this. I'll bust you wide open, you damn—and that cigar! I haven't forgotten that!" He paused for breath before erupting again. "Where'd you get that pusher ship, you fathead? Where?"

"I had a tough time," replied Phineas, "but my dame in Barley Duck tol' me where it was an' I bought it offen a Frog. The dirty bum soaked me three hundred francs and—"

The Old Man retired on his heels weakly. Dame? Bar-le-Duc? Three hundred francs! With a dazzling clearness it came to him. The bearded French officer! The—why, he had paid Lieutenant Pinkham that three hundred francs! An animal-like roar burst from his throat. With hands stretched out, fingers curled up, he made a dive for the Boonetown joke-smith. Phineas let out a burst of mirth and retreated behind a table.

"I giss ya'd better fergit it," he yelled, "unless ya want ev'rybody in France to know it. I giss that wash' pullin' somethin', huh? I told my dame to steer a officer to me, but I didn' Agger I'd git you. I almost laughed myself to death afterwards. Haw-w-w-w!"

I hadda have some francs to git the did machine an'—

"I'll kill you, you crack-brained ape! I'll—" From his private sanctum came an insistent buzzing. G.H.Q. was on the wire. Sir Rufus pulled himself together and hurried to answer it. The door slammed behind him.

"Well, thanks fer drivin' them Fokkers away, ya bums," said Phineas to his spellbound comrades. "I—"

"If we'd known that was you, you fathead," growled Howell, "we'd have let the Boche work on ya. We never get any breaks."

“Nice guys, huh?” sneered Phineas. “I go over and risk life an’ limb to find the Boche hell-juice, an’ that’s all the thanks I git.”

The door of Wings opened. Major Rufus Garrity staggered out and looked at Pinkham with a mingled expression of despair and utter admiration.

“M-men,” he said, “this cluck has done enough this week to make him the next President of the United States. He not only stole the formula for that Boche explosive, but he brought back all they had left of the stuff. I give up!” And pawing at his face with his hands, he turned and retired to his sanctum once more.

“Cripes!” muttered Howell.

“Yeah,” grinned Phineas, “the Heinies strung little tubes of the stuff along the sides of the sausages. I giss that wasn’t poisoned pig, eh?”

Nobody replied. They just stared at him and wondered when the nightmare would end so that they could wake up.