



SPY LARKING

written and illustrated by

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Haul out the solid ivory and strike off the International Crack-Brain Medal for Lieut. Harold Bartholomew Cheeves, newcomer with the Fighting 9th. For here's a man who APPRECIATES Phineas! In fact, the more cockleburs he finds in his hash, the more he admires the Boonetown Barbarian.

ONE EVENING DURING MESS, a new "guinea pig" arrived on the drome of Major Rufus Garrity's Ninth Pursuit Squadron located outside of Bar-Le-Duc. It was not a bad species of homo sapiens. His physiognomy had been well chiseled and left little doubt in the minds of the flying officers who swiftly analyzed him that he was the cause of many cases of

insomnia among the weaker sex back in the States. Major Garrity introduced the new subject to his brood.

"Here they are, Lieutenant Cheeves. Not much to look at—these buzzards! Ha! ha! Gentlemen, meet Harold Bartholomew Cheeves!"

"Haw-w-w-w-w!" erupted Phineas Pinkham, landing in the mess shack late as usual. "Bringin' in the 'Cheeves,' haw-w-w-w-w!"

The newcomer turned and stared at the marvel from Boonetown. He burst out laughing. "Boy," he gasped, "that was a fast one, ha! ha!"

Phineas leaped across the floor. "Shake!" he hollered. "At last a guy with a sense of humor. It's good to see somethin' around here except a sour puss. Oh, boys!"

Captain Howell shot out, "Don't let 'im fool you, Cheeves. This is Lieutenant Phineas 'Carbuncle' Pinkham! He knows more ways of scaring or crippin' a guy for life than the foreman of a torture chamber."

"What? P-Pinkham? Why—er—boy, I'm lucky to get sent here in more ways than one. Heard about you."

"I giss I am a little famous, but it ain't gone to my head," came back the scion of a family back in Iowa. "We Pinkhams are just plain folks an'—"

"There ain't any room in his dome for anything," Bump Gillis, Scot by ancestry and Yank by birth, broke in.

"Sit down, Cheeves. Have some hash—got everthin' in it b-but—awk! Aw-w-w-ww-wk!" His fork clattered to the table. Across the small mound of hash in Bump's plate trekked a wriggly thing.

"Now how did that centipede git out of my pocket?" yipped Phineas. "I ain't even been near the table yet."

Lieutenant Cheeves was full of enthusiasm. "Ha! ha! ha!" He doubled up.

"Shake, friend!" the Boonetown jokester addressed him again. "Did I tell you I was a sleight of hand artist? I can throw my voice, too. An' if you want to see some tricks—just sit down next to me. Bump has lost his appetite anyways. Now—"

"Lieutenant Cheeves," Major Garrity said to the new addition to the Ninth, a large element of disgust in his voice, "I bet you're the kind of guy who would stick his finger into an electric fan to see if you could stop it without hurting himself."

"Wh-Why—huh, how did you know? I did that very thing once."

Captain Howell choked on his coffee and Phineas Pinkham fell out of his chair. The Major swore and stamped out, slamming the door.

"That settles it," snorted Bump Gillis. "I'm gettin' a transfer. It was bad enough bein' here before, but with a guy to give Carbuncle encouragement—huh, I gotta see what the Old Man says!"

LIEUTENANT CHEEVES' FIRST MESS on the airdrome was a hectic one. He swallowed a mouthful

of corned beef hash with a coeklebur in it. When he drained his coffee cup he turned as white a nurse's apron.

"That is just the goats' blood they put in it," explained Phineas seriously as Cheeves swallowed the last mouthful. "It stops you from gettin' typhus, haw-w-w!" And then a few minutes later the new pilot leaped out of his chair as a snake slid from his lap.

"Aw, it's only rubber," grinned the Major's sore thumb. "It looks real, though, don't it? I'm sendin' for a Gila monster that looks like the real thing, too. It's stuffed an' has a spring in it. You wind it up an!—"

And Lieutenant Cheeves' armor of good humor had not been dented. "Ha! ha! ha!" he chortled when he had recovered from each shock.

"Maybe you've got too good a sense of humor," opined the magician after plying his wares for a while. "I like to see guys get mad once in awhile. Have a cigarette?"

"Thanks," grinned the victim. A few seconds later he was rubbing the vicinity north of his optics. Eyebrows had been there a moment before.

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

"Ha! ha! ha!"

"Well—adoo!" exclaimed the jokesmith. "I have to be goin'."

Crash! Pilots' heads swiveled. Lieutenant Cheeves jumped up from his chair and leaped across the room toward the spot where a scared orderly was looking at the ruins of something that had fallen out of a duffel bag—the fledgling's bag. Lieutenant Cheeves' good humor went into a spin! Eyes bulging, Phineas looked at the broken bottle on the floor, the funny colored liquid that was forming a wide pool on the boards.

"You dumb cluck!" yelled the newcomer. "Look what you've done! I've a good mind to massage your bugle, you so-and-so, blankety-blank-blank, blown-up imitation of a—!"

The Pinkham heir noted that Lieutenant Cheeves looked a bit scared as he sounded off, almost as scared as the little orderly who stood as if he were waiting for the firing squad officer to yell "Fire!"

"Ha! ha!" laughed Bump Gillis derisively. "A sense of humor, huh? An' he goes haywire over a bottle of vin blank. That Frog grog is more plentiful than well water."

Cheeves turned on Phineas. "What time of the year is this?"

"Why, it's September—quite late," the Boonetown pilot gulped. "Have you got mixed up on the calendar? Why? Huh?"

"What kind of flowers grow this time of year?" Lieutenant Cheeves pursued his questioning.

"He's nutty, too," Bump tossed out. "I'm gettin' out of this pecan forest just as soon as I pack my trunk."

Captain Howell could not get a word out of his larynx.

"Why I don't know," Phineas said. "I giss there are zinnias an' dahlias an' marigolds an'—"

"Oh, boys!" the newly arrived pilot emitted a huge sigh of relief. "Then it's all right. Ha! ha! ha! I'm sorry I lost my temper. Here, take this box of gum," he said to the orderly, "an' here's a couple of francs for you, too."

"Adoo, bums!" husked the pride of the Pinkham clan. "He's even too batty for me. I'll see you later I'm afraid, Mr. Cheeves. I hope you sleep well. Haw-w-w-w!" The mirth was a trifle strained.

Phineas walked out onto the drome just in time to see the groundmen running as if somebody had struck a bonanza close by. He heard Sergeant Casey yell, saw him do an Annette Kellerman over by the groundmen's barracks. His lily-pad ears picked up the voice of a Heinie Mercedes and he ducked back into the Frog farmhouse.

"It's a Jerry!" he howled. "Douse the lights!"

Hr-r-r-r-r-o-o-o-o-m!

"Ha! ha!" laughed Bump Gillis, "not this time. Who you got out there with the musical saw? Don't worry, Cheeves. It's one of his little pranks. We don't bite every—ow-w-w-w-w!" Slugs began to crash through the window. The sugar bowl was erased from the table. Catsup laved Captain Howell before he could sideslip from his chair. Heinie lead splattered against the roof of the farmhouse.

"What did I tell ya?" hollered Phineas. "It's a prank, is it? Are you comfortable in the fireplace, Bump?"

Ten minutes passed. The Heinie prop chant grew fainter and fainter in the distant ozone. Pilots crawled out of their hiding places. Major Garrity warily opened the door of his official sanctum, peered out cautiously.

"It's all right, Major," yipped Phineas. "It didn't come in here, haw-w-w-w-w!"

"Ha! ha!" enthused Cheeves. "Ah—er—sorry, sir. But Pinkham is a scream, isn't he?"

Major Garrity was too worried, however, to be insulted. He hustled outside with Phineas in his wake. A greaseball was legging it across the field, he had a small, square package in his hand.

The pilots gathered around their C.O. as he hurriedly ripped the package apart. It was a tin biscuit box weighted down with a hunk of hard

coal. Around the coal had been wrapped a letter to Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham.

"Give it here," the addressee chirped. "It's my mail. It's illegal to tamper with the mails, don't you know that?"

The Old Man shoved Phineas out of his way and read aloud:

"Herr Leutnant Pinkham:

Mein uncompliments habe you already yet. I, der gross Herr Hauptmann von Gluten, by der Kaiser habe send for der grease I should make from, you, ja. Der Kohlekopf are you yet already. Der Hammelfleischkopf also iss it you are, ja! Und der gross Schinken, ho! ho! You bring it down der Herr Hauptmann von Schnoutz, nein? Und also Herr von Holstein? Ha ha, I ben der flyer what teach mit them how ist they should fly. So, twendy thousand marks it giffs to kill der Leutnant Pinkham, hein? Herr Leutnant, already dead you are.

—Hauptmann von Gluten, Der scourge of Saxony."

Howell ran into the house and came out with a German-American dictionary.

"If it's what I think he called me," Phineas yipped, "there is nothing will save him."

"A cabbage head, a mutton head, and a big ham he called you," the leader of "A" Flight laughed with thorough enjoyment. "Ha! ha! Well—"

Major Rufus Garrity did not laugh. "That Heinie isn't in this sector just to write notes to this freckled squash," he snorted. "Wait until G.H.Q. hears about this. It is because the Heinies figure we are getting ready for a big push and—oh, cripes!" He ran into the Frog farmhouse to get the wires buzzing.

WITHIN THE HOUR, a Colonel from Wings and two other brass hats rode onto the drome for a pow-wow. Phineas left his hut simultaneously and strolled nonchalantly toward the farmhouse. Near the window of the Operations Office he paused and draped his gangling torso against the wall. One of his big ears quivered as voices seeped into it from within the house.

"That's what von Gluten's here for!" Garrity cracked. "Goin' to help smack our preparations, knock hell out of our supply and ammo dumps. Blow up—"

"He has to locate them first," a brass hat trumpeted. "Garrity, they're well camouflaged. No observation ship can spot them. We're pretty safe—after those two Jerry spies were nabbed over by Nancy, I think we're safe enough. The next time you get into a sweat, take



a walk before you yell bloody murder. Get some nerve tonic—”

“Listen, Colonel,” the Old Man exploded, “I get enough smart sayings on this drome without taking it from outsiders. I just thought you’d like to know about that new Heinie outfit. I didn’t tell you to come down here. What? Impertinent? Ha! ha! Why I’m on my best behavior today, sir. Come in some time when—what do *you* want?” The Major shot the question at a sad-eyed, sloppy looking non-com who had just crashed the gate of Wings.

“Somebody stole the jug of vinegar,” Glad Tidings

Goomer intoned. “We ain’t got no vinegar—”

“Get out of here! Of all the—”

“Terrible catastrophe, eh, what?” a brass hat smirked. “Wonder you don’t report that to Chaumont. Garrity, I want to talk to the pilots if you don’t mind.”

“Ha! ha! go ahead. I don’t want to.”

Eavesdropping Phineas ducked away from the window. A few minutes later the pilots of the Ninth Pursuit were in the mess shack being surveyed by the brass hat from headquarters.

“The Allies are preparing for a big push,” the officer lashed at them. “There is one thing we must

impress on your minds. Any of you who are forced down behind the enemy lines will get the pressure put on you. Jerry will try to make you talk. The lives of thousands of men depend on your fortitude.”

“What’s that?”

“You shut up, Pinkham,” roared the Old Man, “You big—blankety—bl—er—sorry, sir!”

The Colonel stepped up to the wonder from Boonetown, Iowa.

“So, you’re Pinkham, eh? Well, well. My predecessor spoke to me about you. Never heard of discipline, insult your superiors, and go flying around without permission. Just you overstep once while I’m around and I’ll show you whether the war is funny or not! If your commanding officer can’t handle you, I can. Huh, I wasn’t warden in a jail once for nothing. I’m Colonel ‘Crackdown’ Parkhurst. Don’t forget it! You toe the mark, Lieutenant, or I will break you as quick as I would a match. That’s all. Now get out of here!”

“Tough guy, huh?” Phineas yipped, stamping out. “Somebody always spoils this *guerre* for me.” He bit off three fingernails before he reached his hut. He walked in, sat down, got up and walked out again. Aimlessly he strolled along the road leading from the drome. After a while the Boonetown contribution to the Yankee Air Force wiped dew from his brow and sat down to cogitate. An hour passed while he tried to decide upon the best way to bring about the downfall of this latest threat to his amazing career, *Herr Hauptmann* von Gluten. Phineas was starting to his feet when he saw something moving through the gloom not twenty yards away. The figure seemed to have lost a lot of the efficiency of one of its legs.

“Bong swar!” yipped Pinkham, Jr.

The moving figure stopped dead, sat down on a rock. Phineas approached cautiously. Suddenly he grinned and let out a hoot.

“Why it’s Cheeves!”

Lieutenant Cheeves it was. The fledgling was digging at a flank with thumb and forefinger.

“What’s eatin’ ya?” inquired the veteran. “Why—ya got holes through your pants, haw-w-w-w!”

“It’s buckshot,” groaned Cheeves. “The Frog was a swell shot. An’ all because of a bunch of marigolds.”

“Huh?” gulped his listener. “What did you want with them? Why—d’ya mean to say you been out stealin’ flowers? Why, Cheeves—”

“It makes a home touch to the hut,” wailed the flyer.

“I’ll get my dame, Babette, to make you lace

curtains an’ doilies, too,” Phineas sniffed disgustedly. “Come on, pick up your posies an’ we’ll go back to the drome. Marigolds, huh!” He plunged into deep thought as he accompanied the lamed Cheeves back to Buzzards’ Row.

“Goodnight, Alice,” he cried as he left the new pilot in front of his cubicle. “Maybe I’ll give you an order for a hooked rug or two. Marigolds! Ha w-w-w-w-w!”

Kerwoof! The miracle man from the States spun around. A great cloud of smoke was coming out of the hood of a car that was parked in front of the Frog farmhouse. The brass hats, who had evidently climbed into the boiler just as Phineas and his companion returned, tumbled out and groped their way for a few steps. An obnoxious smell began to chase every cubic inch of sweet air off the drome. Phineas saw the Colonel make for the house yelling loudly for Garrity. In half a minute an orderly was running toward Buzzards’ Row in search of Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham.

“I’m over here, if it’s me you want,” called the object of the hunt. “So you’re blamin’ me, huh? Haw-w-w-w! This is one time I am not guilty. I have nothing to hide!”

“So!” Crackdown Parkhurst yowled as Phineas entered the Operations shack. “Thought I was kidding, eh? Stink bombs in the engine, huh? Major Garrity, arrest this smart aleck! I will have him court martialed this time. Tampering with government property—insulting superiors—defying all the rules and regulations—insubordination—”

“You forgot horse stealin’, Colonel,” interrupted Phineas. “Well, I did not do that foul deed! I’ve got a witness to where I’ve been, see swar!”

“You better have!” roared the Colonel. “You’ll need him! Ground that man, Garrity!”

“I’d like to do more than that. I would like to bury him under it!” stormed the Old Man. “Lieutenant Pinkham, you will go to your quarters immediately.”

“You ask Lieutenant Cheeves where I was? Ask him!” the freckled pilot demanded. “Why this is—prep—prospr—prosper—it is positively a misjustice of car—er—it’s terrible! I won’t stand for—”

“Come on, Blakesly,” the Colonel snapped, “we’ve got no more time to fool around here. Ha-ah! So Pinkham would kid me an’ make me like it, huh? Well, you owe me fifty francs. Kid me, ha-a-ah! I’ll have him busted so low he won’t be able to wipe a second class private’s boots without saluting first.”

“Oh, yeah?” Phineas called after him. “I would not

enumerate my feathered babies before they are well out of incubation, Monsewer!" He turned on the Old Man. "Boys, is that English?"

"Get out of here! And if you leave the drome—"

"Awright, Cheeves will save me. Good old Cheeves. Haw-w-w!"

Phineas went over to the hut of Lieutenant Cheeves and pushed the door open. "Listen," he started right in, "don't let anything happen to you as you've got to be a witness for me. Play sick so you don't have to fly tomorrow. My career's at stake. You know where I was tonight. Somebody framed me. The bums! I bet it was Sergeant Casey—"

"I've got to fly," declared Cheeves. "Else I'd be a coward, Pinkham."

"Well, awright, but if a Boche starts lickin' you, beat it as I've got to have you for a star witness against the U.S. District Attorney. I ought to insure you!"

An hour later Glad Tidings Goomer walked into Garrity's den.

"I come to report, sir, that the jug of vinegar is back, sir. Found it outside the kitchen door an'—"
Glad Tidings came-to in the medico's shack bound up in arnica and court plaster.

"A" Flight went over the next morning to see if they could ascertain the strength of von Gluten's Halberstadts. But the Scourge of Saxony evidently had not completed the task of moving in. Garrity's Spads, however, spotted six suspicious looking flying specks in the scraposphere well beyond the Meuse and swung toward them with the idea of rubbing them out. It turned out to be quite a brawl. When the tracer smoke had cleared, "A" Flight looked a little punch drunk, but they had sent the Boche back to their corner of the sky ring yelling for a towel.

Phineas counted noses as the flight reformed over Domevre. Lieutenant Cheeves was missing.

"Well, it's tough," muttered the man most interested in the fledgling's return. "I'll drop some marigolds over there when I get a chance. It's always the way. If you want to make cider, you've got to bust up some apples."

Lieutenant Cheeves, however, came back to the fold half an hour after the flight. His top wing had been well massaged by bits of Heinie archie. Phineas had never seen a more pleased expression on any human countenance than that sported by Cheeves when he stepped out of his pit.

"Where've you been?" Howell ripped him wide open.

"Over in Alsace lookin' at the scenery," retorted

Cheeves with a chuckle. "I lost my bearings after the fight. It's swell scenery over there."

THAT NIGHT an ammo dump near Lerouville was tagged by a flight of Jerry Gothas. Walls on a dozen airdromes shimmied. Trucks moving along the Frog roads leaped a foot from the ground. Brass hats were dumped out of beds that hopped and pivoted like interpretive dancers. It was a terrible omelet that the Gotha eggs concocted. And that ammo dump had been one of the best the Allies had. It had also been considered the best camouflaged. Intelligence Corps men poured into the sector. Insulation burned away from communication wires.

On the drome of the Ninth Pursuit Squadron, Major Rufus Garrity began putting two and two together. Von Gluten had not been in the sky that day. Lieutenant Cheeves had flown over to Alsace to look at the scenery—or so he had said. The first night after his arrival the ammo dump had blown up. The Old Man got busy checking up on Cheeves. But reports came through that there was no more Jerry ancestry in Cheeves' forebears than there was maple syrup in a grape.

"It's funny," the Major said to the pilots when Lieutenant Cheeves was absent, "just the day he gets here—"

"Pecans!" snorted Phineas. "One day I arrived in Waterloo, Iowa, and the railroad station burned down. Was I put in jail?"

"You should have been!" howled Garrity. "And you still will be if you don't sew up your big mush. This is no joke. Anybody who picks marigolds while a war is going on is nuts. Marigolds! Huh!"

"Well it's no nuttier than stamp collectin'," retorted Phineas. "What was it you paid for the one that had a picture of Queen Victoria on it with a wart on her nose? Adoo, bums! I am mess officer this week and must go to Barley Duck to shop,"

Major Garrity's rejoinder could not be printed in any church bulletin. He even forgot that the buck-toothed Spad pusher had no right to leave the drome. Phineas headed for Buzzards' Row and looked in on Cheeves.

"Where's all the marigolds?" he asked. "I thought you—?"

"Ha! ha! They died quick," the new pilot laughed. "I guess they must've been well along. Well, I've got to get on with my letter, Pinkham. Sorry, I'm busy."

Phineas' brain spun. He had never seen a man

write a letter with a pen that had no ink stains on it. And no bottle of ink around anywhere. There was something very funny about Lieutenant Cheeves and no mistake. Got into a panic about a bottle broken by an orderly—asked what flowers grew curing the fall months. Then there was that vinegar jug Goomer had droned on about. The joker from Iowa shook his head and increased his pace.

In Bar-Le-Duc, Ma'mselle Babette received a brief call from her one and only. He then headed for an *estaminet* but did not get inside. A Limey flyer hobbling around on crutches caught his eye.

"Boy, does the King make you fly lookin' like that?" queried Phineas. "Why don't you go to Blighty?"

"I jolly well will when I'm up to traveling," replied the Britisher. "Must wait until skin grows on the bottom of my feet. I'm the horrible example the Boche dropped over the lines. I was caught when my Camel was forced down. They tried to sweat the location of the Allied dumps out of me. Jolly well near succeeded, if I have to say so. Rather guess some chaps would babble it out if they got what I got. The beggars have a way—red hot coals, Lieutenant. Ugh!"

"Why the dirty bums!" erupted Phineas. "Where did they get you?"

"Back of Metz. Von Gluten's drome. Just moved in, y'know. Clearin' up the place. The *Hauptmann* would not move in until every tuft of weed was yanked out of the ground. Funny about that, eh what?"

"Yeah," agreed the Yank. "Huh, well, adoo for now. Hope your undercarriage will improve. I got to allez veet veet. Cheerio an' pip pip, y'know." Phineas emitted the British slang and sauntered on. A block away he chose a darkened doorway to sit down and think.

The astute Pinkham gray matter began to stunt. An idea did a loop and the Boonetown miracle man advanced into the light of an *estaminet*. In a far corner he sat down and pulled a well-thumbed pamphlet out of his pocket. On the cover in lurid letters were the words HELMAR'S BOOK OF MAGIC AND TRICKS. He read on and on, sipping at a glass of *vin blanc* intermittently. After a time the most expansive grin ever manufactured by the Pinkham physiognomy split his face wide open.

"It's a caution what some people don't know," he mumbled. "I must get me to a florist's, haw-w-w-w-w!"

Phineas started for the drome. A quarter of a mile out of town he turned into a Frog farm which boasted an unusually modern agricultural layout. There was an outdoor nursery and a greenhouse. The invading

Yank approached cautiously and tried the door of the low glass house. It opened and a delicious warmth hit him in the face. He struck a match and looked at the flowers blooming in large square wooden boxes. Violets. Phineas picked a bunch before backing out of the place. He was a hundred yards away when a dog began to bark. Looking back, he saw a black blob racing toward him. He raced it to a tree, won by a quarter of an inch, and climbed the topmost branches. The Frog canine sat down at the foot of the tree to wait.

"Boys this is an awful place to spend the night," groaned the errant pilot two hours later. "That pooch is awful patient."

MAJOR RUFUS GARRITY was pacing up and down in front of squadron headquarters when Phineas came limping onto the drome at dawn. The prodigal was minus the seat of his pants but he carried a bunch of violets.

"Where have you been?" thundered the Old Man, waking up everybody. "I didn't sleep a wink all night. How could I? If that Colonel sent for you and you weren't here, I'd be arrested too." He opened his mouth wide as he caught sight of the posies. "So! You bring in violets!" he bellowed. "First it's Cheeves with marigolds, then you with— What in hell—?"

"I refuse to talk unless my lawyer says so," Phineas chirped—and would say no more. He went to his hut and disappeared inside. Major Garrity staggered into the farmhouse counting his fingers.

Captain Howell and four Spads went out a few minutes later. Phineas reminded Lieutenant Cheeves to be very, very careful, then returned to his hut to catch up on sleep. At noontime he got up and went to the farmhouse where the flyers were at mess.

"There's one crackpot here who flies free lance," Howell was shouting at the new pilot, "and we don't want any more. Not in this flight! What happened to you this morning?"

"I got chased by a Boche all over the map," Cheeves explained. "I don't know how I ever found my way back."

Major Garrity wore a scared look on his face when he came in. "Von Gluten is on the warpath. He smacked down three observation ships this morning! Just when the Allies need them for the big push. Strafed ground troops moving up. Between that Jerry spy and von Gluten they'll knock that push into a cocked hat. If another ammo dump goes, the doughs

will have to throw the rifles at the Huns. Chaumont called the Wing and asked Parkhurst if you birds were on strike. A fine bunch of—Cheeves, you broke formation again. Do that once more and—what're you grinning at, you spotted yazoo?"

"Your nerves need new fabric," snorted Phineas. "I was just sittin' here sayin' nothing. Well, I'll make a sandwich and take it outside to eat. If you would only let me go up and knock off von Gluten, you would not have to—"

"The only thing you'll ever knock out of the air from now on," Garrity stormed, "will be an apple."

"Adoo!" sang out Phineas. "Go ahead an' worry!"

That night while the pilots were lolling about the big room, a terrific upheaval to the northeast of the farmhouse jarred the dental assemblies of every pilot in the place. The Old Man shot out of the Operations office as if he had been flung from a sling.

"Did you hear that?"

"Boys, I tasted it!" yipped Phineas. "It must be Mont Sec havin' an eruption. Or else Sergeant Casey dropped his shoes!"

Word of the trouble came in fast. The Yankee supply dump at Souilly had been well smeared by Gotha eggs. Cans of goldfish and iron rations were still flying through the ether over an area of ten miles, according to reporting brass hats. Major Garrity slammed down the phone and looked at Cheeves. The pilot yawned and got up. When he strolled out, the Old Man's face was as frigid as a stepmother's kiss.

"You still think it's him, huh?" Phineas wanted to know. "Well, it's not. The krauts are finding out all that stuff by burning prisoners' tootsies. I saw a Limey in Barley Duck on crutches an'—"

"If they ever get that dump near Commercy," the Old Man said in a loud voice, "the Allies—"

Phineas was facing the window. He saw a face appear at the pane, as suddenly vanish. The trickster from the States opened his eyes wide.

Garrity lowered his voice. "Tomorrow," he whispered to Howell, "you watch Lieutenant Cheeves. Don't let him get out of your sight. You, too, Gillis—and everybody. There's something wrong with him."

"Maybe he's in love," guessed Phineas. "Huh, if he's a spy, I am handmaid to Queen Mary. Ha! ha!"

Garrity tried to get his hands on the Pinkham throat, but its owner was too quick. The Iowa miracle worker climbed through the nearest window faster than a cobra with a mongoose on its tail.

For three days pilots of the Ninth kept close tabs

on their newest flying buddy. They noticed nothing amiss. On the fourth day in the afternoon Phineas saw Howell and his flight take off. Then he climbed onto his bike and pedalled out of the drome. When "A" Flight came back an hour later, Gillis and Cheeves were both absent. Phineas was propelling his means of locomotion into the Ninth Pursuit just as the skipper of the Flight climbed out of a bullet-raked battle wagon.

"I don't know. First I saw Bump, then I didn't," grated Howell, shaking his head dubiously. "I—"

"Marigolds—violets—now it's ragweed," roared Garrity when he saw the burden under the returning Phineas' arm. "What the hell are you goin' to do? Haven't I enough trouble? Gillis and Cheeves are missing. They—"

"Why, what are those comin'?" grinned Phineas, pointing. Two Spads were coming in. One looked a bit wobbly.

"It's always that way. You get into a panic before—huh, Cheeves' crate looks as if it'll crash! Oh, boys, an' he's my star witness! I—"

BUT CHEEVES DID NOT CRASH. He leaped out of his pit and ran toward the spot where Bump Gillis had set his crate down. Bump had a gun in his hand. Everybody started to run.

"Here he is!" Bump yelled. "He's a dirty spy. I took a crack at him upstairs but he started home so I let him go. He dropped something down across the lines. Over back of Metz. He's a Heinie spy! I've got a good mind to tear him limb from limb, the—"

"Well, Cheeves," cracked Garrity, drawing his own side arm, "what have you got to say?"

"I can explain," protested the pilot, "but you wouldn't believe me. I haven't any proof now. Go ahead. Call me a spy. I'm not saying a word. It's a coincidence about the Gotha bombs. I—"

"Listen, Cheeves," howled Phineas, "you've got to tell—as what will become of me if you get shot? I have a case in the U.S. Court. You are a witness. Don't be so selfish. Come clean—aw, cripes!"

"Even if I told the truth, they would shoot me!" declared Cheeves. "Well, all is over, but it was, worth it. Ha! ha! ha!"

"You are under arrest," yelped the Old Man. "You can't explain, Cheeves. You're a snake in the grass, a back biter, a—"

"Listen, Cheeves," pleaded Phineas, "you're a witness and I will go to Blois—"

“Ha! ha! ha!” laughed Cheeves. “It’s great to have a sense of humor, huh? Well, they think I’m a spy. Let ‘em. I haven’t a leg to stand on without—.”

Phineas slunk away. He went to Cheeves’ hut and rummaged there for five minutes. He picked up a bottle and sniffed at it. In a moment or two he was in his own hut where he set to work crushing violets in a bowl that held about half an inch of water. At a later hour Phineas got in a word with the prisoner. Toward dusk he was ambling up and down near the spot where Casey and a couple of grease monkeys were working over Cheeves’ Spad, the one Bump had inoculated with slugs.

“How is it, Casey?” asked Phineas, crabbing up close.

“It ain’t very hot,” replied the Flight Sergeant. “Spin it over, Muley. Warm it up an’ see how it sounds. For maybe five minutes.”

Phineas ankled away rebuffed. Inside his hut he wrapped a bunch of ragweed up in his flying coat. Cheeves’ sick Spad was still turning over when the Boonetown jokesmith left his hut and headed toward the plane. Only one ack emma was nearby.

“Sounds terrible, don’t it?” observed Phineas casually. “I bet I can tell ya what ails it. Let me get in an’ feed it more gas. Boys, what I don’t know about these crates—!”

“Why—er— “

“Oh I’ll take the blame if anythin’ happens,” grinned the ack emma’s superior. “Just step aside—there—” Phineas climbed in, jammed in the throttle. The Spad roared hoarsely and leaped the chocks. Casey came running out of the hangar. Pilots poured from the farmhouse. Everybody came out of somewhere or some place. Major Rufus Garrity tumbled over the doorsill and scraped the rind off his chin. When consciousness returned, his jaw was too sore to wag.

“Adoo, bums!” called Phineas. “I am off to straighten out everythin’!”

“We’ll shoot him, too!” bellowed the Old Man. “If he ever comes back. Stealin’ a Spad! Under arrest—” It occurred to the C.O. that he would not be sitting so pretty himself if Chaumont asked for the person of Phineas Pinkham. The court martial material was three thousand feet away from his fingers—straight up in the air.

Outside of Bar-Le-Duc the amazing exponent of the magic arts set his ship down on his favorite landing field and began to get organized. He donned the leather flying coat, stuffed the ragweed into the

pit. After consulting a map, he got into the Spad and jammed in the throttle once more.

“Sounds as if it’s gaspin’ on its deathbed, that Hisso,” he gulped as he tried to get altitude a few moments later. “I hope it’ll survive for an hour or two. Well I’ll go down with it before I will push a wheelbarrow in Blois! No Pinkham could live in such disgrace. If what I think about the *Hauptmann* is not mullarkey, I should have some fun, haw-w-w-w-w!”

Mile after mile faded behind Phineas’ slipstream. Over the lines, Jerry archie tossed up hunks of old iron at the laboring Spad and a good-sized chunk from an old stove lid bounced off the Pinkham dome. For five minutes he did not remember a thing. When he looked down again with all five senses clicking, he spotted a bucolic countryside over which shadows were weaving a pattern that reminded him of a sampler in his Aunt Lulu’s sitting room back in Waterloo, Iowa. And there was a landmark—a church with a red roof!

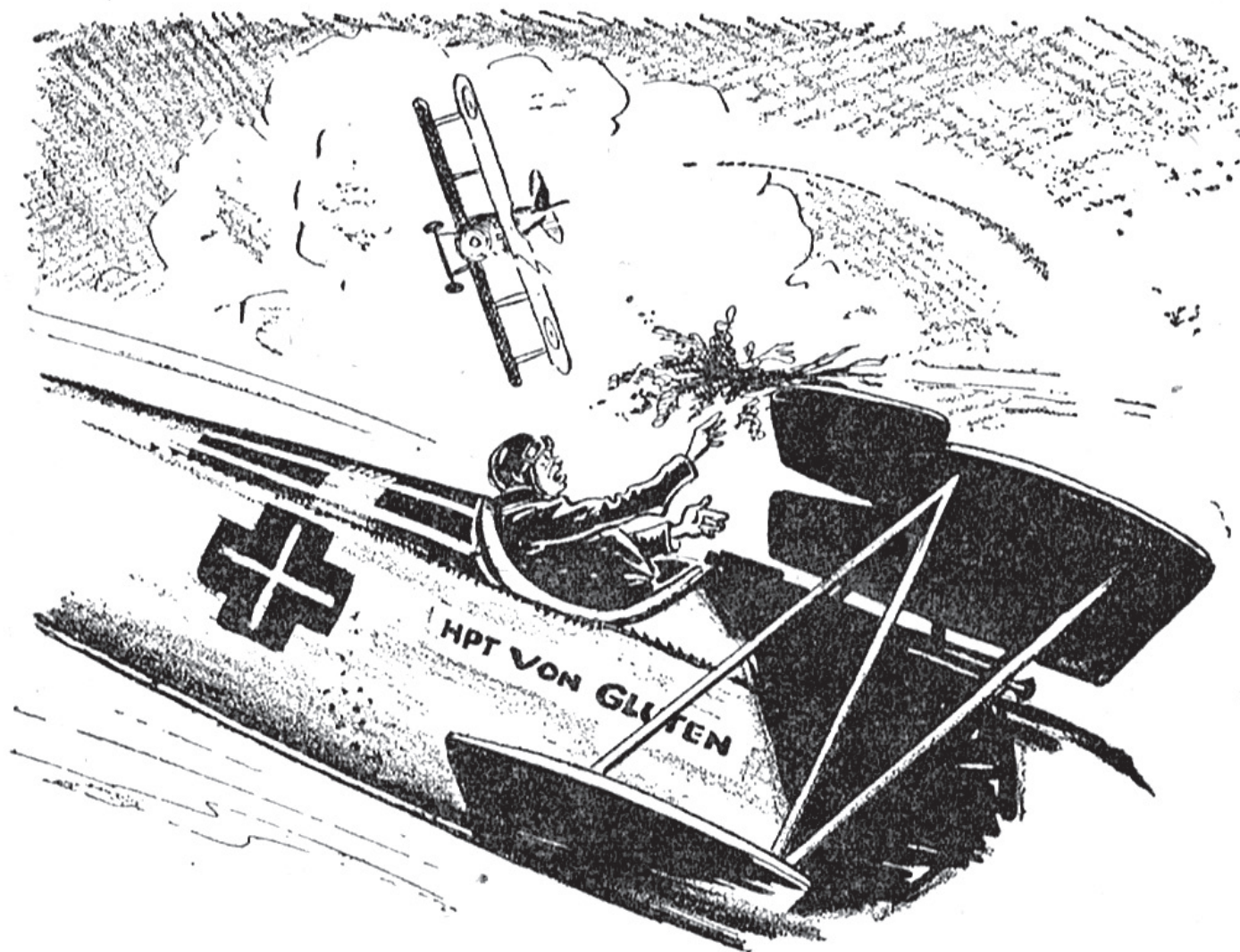
Another shadow reminded Phineas that he was not alone in the ozone. Flitting across the ground was the shadow of a Jerry battle wagon. Phineas looked up to see a Halberstadt warming up a thousand feet above him. In the time consumed by the pilot from U.S.A. to utter “Hell’s Bells!” the Halb dropped down alongside, straightened out and flew wing to wing. On the flank of the Halb fuselage were splashed big letters that formed the name *Hauptmann* von Gluten.

Phineas knew that he should have more sense, but he thumbed his nose. The Halb started to work on him. It zoomed, did a flipflop that was never registered in any flying book and hopped to a spot in the ether back of the Pinkham empennage where he began to unload mayhem. Tail surfacing peeled away like the skin from a sun bather’s back.

“Ach!” gloated *Hauptmann* von Gluten. “*Der Tag ist. Dumkopfs der* odder German flyers moost be, *ja*. Easy *ist* he like I take *der Liebkuchen* from *der kinder* yet, ho! ho! He climbs, *nein*? *Der* laugh I giff by him!”

Phineas reached down into the pit as he backsticked and pulled a big clump of ragweed out of the recesses about his feet. He tossed it over his shoulder as he clawed for ceiling. Von Gluten’s Halb lifted its nose, pointed straight at the Spad’s rudder post. Spandau slugs ate along the fuselage of the Spad, singeing Phineas’ short ribs. Ragweed sailed back into the prop wash.

“*Donnervetter, vas ist?*” gutteraled von Gluten as his goggled optics spotted a gob of weed sticking fast to his superstructure—between a strut and a brace



wire. There was another bunch of it slithering off his top wing. *Hauptmann* von Gluten's face became the hue of pie dough. "*Ach Himmel—der ragweed ist! Ach und* inside vun mile I got it *der fever! Gott!*" He forgot Phineas. He held his breath and started for the Boche linoleum.

PHINEAS WAS ALREADY CARESSING Jerry real estate with his landing gear. He managed to sustain no more damage in the fall than the loss of two wheels, half a wing, and two-thirds of his tail assembly. But he clambered out of the wreck whole; was able to run. *Hauptmann* von Gluten sneezed a hundred feet from the ground. His eyes began to water and he knew the deadly ragweed pollen had dug into his proboscis for a long stay.

"Deffil he *ist—das* Pingham! How he knows? *Donnervetter! Ach, der* ground joomps oop at *mein* ship!"

Crash! *Herr Hauptmann* von Gluten extricated

himself from a lot of Halb parts and crawled out into the clear. He did a few staggering dance steps on his blind way to a wood.

Meanwhile our hero from Boonetown, Iowa, was rapping sharply on the door of a little thatch-roofed cottage in Alsace. A rosy-cheeked, white-haired woman of ample girth yanked the door open—gaped.

"*Ach, der Amerikaner!*"

Before she could slam the door Phineas yelped, "Fran Schmidhuber? *Und Fraulein* Gretchen, *nein?*"

"*Himmel*, us he knows!" exclaimed the corpulent *fraulein* and opened the door.

Phineas leaped into the kitchen, saw a pretty blonde girl standing near the stove, stirring a kettle. "Let me talk," he howled. "You haff idt *der* feller named Cheeves, *nein?*"

The *fraulein* jumped a foot off the floor. "Talk English!" she yelled. "I learned it in Hoboken. What about Harold? Is he—?"

"Quick, give me one of the letters he wrote to you,"

yipped the Yank. "Or he'll be shot. If I don't get back, he'll be shot anyways. I need him for a witn—you need him, too—give me the letter, *ja*! You want him shot for a spy, *nein*?"

"Oh, oh," wailed Gretchen and legged into the next room. In a moment she returned with two letters which she gave to Phineas. "Now you must hide! A mile away is the big German Gotha squadron and every night almost they come here. *Ach*, you hear that?"

Phineas' big ears were in good condition. He had caught the staccato roar of the Boche mechanical bug when it left the Gotha drome.

"In the closet," whispered Gretchen hoarsely and ran to open a door. The Boonetown patriot jumped into the small enclosure and *Fraulein* Schmidhuber slammed the door after him. It was very cramped in the closet. Phineas did not dare to move despite the fact that his face was pressed against the business end of a wet mop. The odor of insecticide was strong. Suddenly loud voices ripped through the kitchen. "*Der Amerikaner*, you see him, *nein*? Ve find it *der Shpadt und der Hauptmann* von Gluten he valks near *der* woods cryin' *mit* sniffles. He don't know he iss himselve yedt. *Ach*, ve search alzo ve findt idt *das* Pingham. Coom, Hans!"

Frau Schmidhuber loudly protested that she had seen no one. Phineas thought fast. His hand fumbled in the dark until he found the handle of the mop. The groping fingers of his other hand discovered a square tin standing on a small shelf. He gripped it and took a whiff.

"Boys," he whispered, and unscrewed the cover. "It would gas a flyin' elephant!"

"*Der* closet first, Hans," a Kraut yelled. "Open—*geschnell*!"

"*Nein*—you leave us be," the girl outside cried. "We are *gut* Ger—"

Phineas waited with bated breath and shifted his feet. The latch clicked. The door swung open. Three faces peered in.

Swiiiiii-sh! The contents of the tin gushed out through the closet door. "*Himmel—mein* eyes—*ach!*"

Three Vons pirouetted about the Alsatian kitchen pawing at their burning lamps. Phineas jabbed the mop into their mid-sections. Two had pancaked when a small Boche appeared in the doorway with a gun in his hand. *Frau* Schmidhuber washed him out with a well-aimed stove lid.

"Boys!" Phineas enthused. "What a shot— Haw-

w-w-w-w-w! Well adoo, ladies, as I am on my way." He pulled the little kraut in from the sill, removed his coat and tin hat and donned them himself. "I'll save Harold—never fear, *fraulein*. You an' mutter leave here tomorrow night, *ja*. Go someplace as there's goin' to be some egg rollin' on the Gotha drome's lawn and it ain't Easter. Adoo, *amies*. I'll tell Cheeves you're still his big heartbeat, Gretchen. Haw-w-w-w-w!"

A Gotha pilot got to his feet as Phineas headed for the motorcycle outside. He ripped a Luger from his holster. *Frau* Schmidhuber managed to slip on a grease spot on the floor. She nosed over, flattening the Von under her blimp-ine torso.

Sput—sput—br-r-r-r-rbang—bang! Phineas was off. He headed the mechanical bug in the general direction of France and hoped for the best. He wondered what was weighing him down on the left side and soon discovered that it was a bag of potato masher grenades.

"I'll need 'em," he grinned, feeding the cycle more gas. He roared toward a group of Heinies at a crossroad. He reached for a masher and flung it as he tore through the patrol. *Ker-wha-a-a-a-ang!* Steel-reinforced bees stopped buzzing around his head.

"Haw-w-w-w-w-w!" he guffawed. "I'm through to midfield anyways. Oh, if they have only not shot Cheeves yet!"

R a t-a-tat-tat-tat! R-r-r-rat-a-tat! Again Phineas heaved a potato masher. *Bo-o-ong!* The headlamp on his motorcycle hung by a single wire when he raced out of range of the machine gun. A column of Heinie troops a mile long split in the middle as Phineas cracked down on them. Big guns were thundering all around him ten minutes later. Boche were getting as thick as flies on a defunct mule. The motorcycle flew through space and parted company with Phineas. When the Boonetown pilot had collected his wits, he was sitting in the bottom of a shell hole with three Krauts.

"*Der gut* joomp *das ist*," one said conversationally. "Haff *der Schnapps* *nein*?"

"*Ja*," Phineas choked out. "Aadoo, Cheeves—er—sair goot, *ja!*"

ON THE DROME of the Ninth Pursuit Squadron twenty-four hours later Lieutenant Harold Bartholomew Cheeves was being prepared for an obituary. Colonel Parkhurst and a stern-mapped brass hat from Chaumont were arranging the lurid details. At dawn, Cheeves would be known as the late Mr. Cheeves.

"So, you won't confess?" cracked Parkhurst. "All right. Your silence is what convicts you. Garrity, the M.P.'s are to take him. Ow-w-w—duck everybody! Here comes a Boche! A machine gun began to spit. A Fokker Tripe slashed down over the drome. It flopped over on a wing, missed the ammo shed by the thickness of a French pancake, righted itself, and plowed up a furrow in the ground big enough to plant eight hills of corn and ten of potatoes. A bedraggled, mud-bespattered, tattered figure was pulled out of the wreck.

"Haw-w-w-w-w! I'm here. Have ya shot Cheeves yet?" yipped Phineas.

"He's here!" yowled Garrity. "Pinkham, you fathead, where have you been? Where did you get that—?"

"Boys, don't remind me of what I been through. Phew! A whole day with the German Army an' it's no bed of roses. A Fokker landed out in No-Man's-Land with a pilot who didn't feel so good. Haw! I crawled out of the Jerry trenches and says heroic, 'I will save it as no Yanks' shells is goin' to wash it out if I know what is what. I started to be a flyer once,' I says. Haw-w-w-w! Well with Yank slugs buzzin' all around I went out an' stole the crate an'—where's Cheeves? I've got the evidence that'll save my star witness. Two letters to Gretchen in Alsace. Written in marigold ink, Haw-w-w-w!"

Lieutenant Cheeves jumped away from three M.P.'s and let out a whoop. "You did it, huh? Oh, boys, Phineas. How does she look?"

"I almost stayed, she looked so good, haw-w-w-w!" He reached into his ragged Heinie ensemble and pulled out two letters. He opened one. "Here it says—

Dear Sweet Cookie:

I said I would get a letter to you if I ever got near Forbach where you live. Did you make the pansy or violet liquor like I told you before you left Hoboken? Then the writin' will become visible. I love you—I love you—I love you!"

Phineas looked at the flushed Cheeves. "I didn't know you stuttered! Haw-w-w-w-w!"

"What kind of foolishness—Garrity, I—" Parkhurst blustered.

"Oh, I've got a girl over there," Cheeves explained sheepishly. "If I dropped her notes with visible writing and the Germans found 'em, they'd think she was a spy and that the writing was code and would shoot her. But they ain't—I couldn't prove anything for myself unless I got the letters back. Boys, if you was stuck on a dame—"

"That is why he gathered marigolds an' steeped 'em in vinegar," grinned Phineas. "That's why I picked violets. I made juice out of 'em an' experimented with the marigold juice I stole from Cheeves' hut while he was in the klink. I found out about it in my magic book. Then I made Cheeves come clean where the dame lived. Haw-w-w-w! And the ragweeds—what a panic! Von Gluten won't be in the air for maybe three or four weeks. Does that pollen git him! Oh, boys!"

"Y-you mean you knocked him down?" stuttered Garrity. "Von Gluten is—?"

"Why of course, Major! A Limey in Barley Duck told me how fussy he was with weeds, haw! An' I got the location of a drome that is filthy with Gothas. I'll draw a map to give to the Yankee bombers. It's only a mile from the church with a red roof near Forbach. Wash it out, an' the push'll be saved! Now, Colonel, about my trial at Chaumont. Cheeves can prove I was with him. Boy, I went through a lot to save my witness. Cheeves, you tell 'em—"

"Sure, Pinkham was with me. He helped pick buckshot out of me when I stole the mari—"

"Well, why didn't you say so?" yelled Parkhurst.

"Uh—er—why—?" Cheeves forced out. "You didn't ask me."

Phineas sat down and held his head. "He-he didn't ask h-him," he muttered. He peeked through his splayed fingers at Parkhurst. "An' me goin' through the whole German army—" He got to his feet fast and hit Colonel "Crackdown" Parkhurst right on the nose. "Awright," he said to the M.P.'s. "I'll go quietly."