



"OVER THE TOP"

AN AMERICAN SOLDIER WHO WENT

ARTHUR GUY EMPEY

MACHINE GUNNER, SERVING IN FRANCE

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SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I—Fired by the news of the sinking of the Lusitania by a German submarine, Arthur Guy Empey, an American, leaves his office in Jersey City and goes to England where he enlists in the British army.

CHAPTER II—After a period of training, Empey volunteers for immediate service and soon finds himself in rest billets "somewhere in France," where he first makes the acquaintance of the ever-present "Old Pepper."

CHAPTER III—Empey attends his first church services at the front while a German Fokker circles over the congregation.

CHAPTER IV—Empey's command goes into the front-line trenches and is under fire for the first time.

CHAPTER V—Empey learns to adopt the motto of the British Tommy, "If you are going to get it, you'll get it, so never give up."

CHAPTER VI—Back in rest billets, Empey gets his first experience as a mess orderly.

CHAPTER VII—Empey learns how the British soldiers are fed.

CHAPTER VIII—Back in the front-line trench, Empey sees his first friend of the trenches "go West."

CHAPTER IX—Empey makes his first visit to a dugout in "Suicide Ditch."

CHAPTER X—Empey learns what constitutes a "day's work" in the front-line trench.

CHAPTER XI—Empey goes "over the top" for the first time in a charge on the German trenches and is wounded by a bayonet thrust.

CHAPTER XII—Empey joins the "suicide" squad and is called.

CHAPTER XIII—Each Tommy gets an official bath.

CHAPTER XIV—Empey helps dig an advanced trench under German fire.

"Yank, that's a patrol and it's heading our way. For God's sake keep still."

I was as still as a mouse and was scared stiff.

Hardly breathing and with eyes trying to pierce the inky blackness, we waited. I would have given a thousand pounds to have been safely in my dugout.

Then we plainly heard footsteps and our hearts stood still.

A dark form suddenly loomed up in front of me; it looked as big as the Woolworth building. I could hear the blood rushing through my veins and it sounded as loud as Niagara falls.

Forms seemed to emerge from the darkness. There were seven of them in all. I tried to wish them away. I never wished harder in my life. They muttered a few words in German and melted into the blackness. I didn't stop wishing either.

All of a sudden we heard a stumble, a muddy splash, and a muttered "Donner und Blitzen." One of the Boches had tumbled into a shell hole. Neither of us laughed. At that time—it didn't strike us as funny.

About twenty minutes after the Germans had disappeared something from the rear grabbed me by the foot. I nearly fainted with fright. Then a welcome whisper in a cockney accent.

"I s'y, myte, we've come to relieve you."

Wheeler and I crawled back to our trench; we looked like wet hens and felt worse. After a swig of rum we were soon fast asleep on the fire step in our wet clothes.

The next morning I was as stiff as a poker and every joint ached like a bad tooth, but I was still alive, so it did not matter.

CHAPTER XVI.

Battery D 238.

The day after this I received the glad tidings that I would occupy the machine gunners' dugout right near the advanced artillery observation post. This dugout was a roomy affair, dry as tinder, and real cots in it. These cots had been made by the R. E.'s who had previously occupied the dugout. I was the first to enter and promptly made a signboard with my name and number on it and suspended it from the foot of the most comfortable cot therein.

In the trenches it is always "first come, first served," and this is lived up to by all.

Two R. F. A. men (Royal Field artillery) from the nearby observation post were allowed the privilege of stopping in this dugout when off duty.

One of these men, Bombardier Wilson by name, who belonged to Battery D 238, seemed to take a liking to me, and I returned this feeling.

In two days' time we were pretty chummy, and he told me how his battery in the early days of the war had put over a stunt on Old Pepper, and had gotten away with it.

I will endeavor to give the story as far as memory will permit in his own words:

"I came out with the first expeditionary force, and, like all the rest, thought we would have the enemy licked in jig time, and be able to eat Christmas dinner at home. Well, so far, I have eaten two Christmas dinners in the trenches, and am liable to eat two more, the way things are pointing. That is, if Fritz don't drop a 'whizz-bang' on me, and send me to Blighty. Sometimes I wish I would get hit, because it's no great picnic out here, and twenty-two months of it makes you fed up.

"It's fairly cushy now compared to what it used to be, although I admit this trench is a trifle rough. Now, we send over five shells to their one. We are getting our own back, but in the early days it was different. Then you had to take everything without reply. In fact, we would get twenty shells in return for every one we sent over. Fritz seemed to enjoy it, but we British didn't; we were the sufferers. Just one casualty after another. Sometimes whole platoons would disappear, especially when a 'Jack Johnson' plunked into their middle. It got so bad that a fellow, when writing home, wouldn't ask for any cigarettes to be sent out, because he was afraid he wouldn't be there to receive them.

"After the drive to Paris was turned back, trench warfare started. Our general grabbed a map, drew a pencil across it, and said, 'Dig here.' Then he went back to his tea, and Tommy armed himself with a pick and shovel and started digging. He's been digging ever since.

"Of course we dug those trenches at night, but it was hot work, what with the rifle and machine-gun fire. The stretcher bearers worked harder than the diggers.

"Those trenches, bloomin' ditches, I call them, were nightmares. They were only about five feet deep, and you used

to get the backache from bending down. It wasn't exactly safe to stand upright, either, because as soon as your napper showed over the top a bullet would bounce off it, or else come so close it would make your hair stand.

"We used to fill sandbags and stick them on top of the parapet to make it higher, but no use; they would be there about an hour and then Fritz would turn loose and blow them to bits. My neck used to be sore from ducking shells and bullets.

"Where my battery was stationed a hasty trench had been dug, which the boys nicknamed 'Suicide ditch,' and, believe me, Yank, this was the original 'Suicide ditch.' All the others are imitations.

"When a fellow went into that trench it was an even gamble that he would come out on a stretcher. At one time a Scotch battalion held it, and

when they heard the betting was even money that they'd come out on stretchers, they grabbed all the bets in sight. Like a lot of bally idiots, several of the battery men fell for their game, and put up real money. The 'Jocks' suffered a lot of casualties, and the prospects looked bright for the battery men to collect some easy money. So when the battalion was relieved the gamblers lined up. Several 'Jocks' got their money for emerging safely, but the ones who clicked it weren't there to pay. The artillerymen had never thought it out that way. Those Scotties were bound to be sure winners, no matter how the wind blew. So take a tip from me, never bet with a Scottie, 'cause you'll lose money.

"At one part of our trench where a communication trench joined the front line a Tommy had stuck up a wooden signpost with three hands or arms on it. One of the hands, pointing to the German lines, read, 'To Berlin'; the one pointing down the communication trench read, 'To Blighty,' while the other said, 'Suicide Ditch, Change Here for Stretchers.'

"Farther down from this guide post the trench ran through an old orchard. On the edge of this orchard our battery had constructed an advanced observation post. The trees screened it from the enemy airmen and the roof was turfed. It wasn't cushy like ours, no timber or concrete re-enforcements, just walls of sandbags. From it a splendid view of the German lines could be obtained. This post wasn't exactly safe. It was a hot corner, shells plunking all around, and the bullets cutting leaves off the trees. Many a time when relieving the signaller at the 'phone, I had to crawl on my belly like a worm to keep from being hit.

"It was an observation post sure enough. That's all the use it was. Just observe all day, but never a message back for our battery to open up. You see, at this point of the line there were strict orders not to fire a shell, unless specially ordered to do so from brigade headquarters. Blime me, if anyone disobeyed that command, our general—yes, it was Old Pepper—would have court-martialed the whole expeditionary force. Nobody went out of their way to disobey Old Pepper in those days, because he couldn't be called a parson; he was more like a pirate. If at any time the devil should feel lonely and sigh for a proper mate, Old Pepper would get the first call. Factly, the Germans wasn't half bad compared with an interview with that old firebrand.

"If a company or battalion should give way a few yards against a superior force of Boches, Old Pepper would send for the commanding officer. In about half an hour the officer would come back with his face the color of a brick, and in a few hours what was left of his command would be holding their original position.

"I have seen an officer who wouldn't say d—n for a thousand quid spend five minutes with the old boy, and when he returned the flow of language from his lips would make a navy blush for shame.

"What I am going to tell you is how two of us put it over on the old scump, and got away with it. It was a risky thing, too, because Old Pepper wouldn't have been exactly mild with us if he had got next to the game.

"Me and my mate, a lad named Harry Cassell, a bombardier in D 238 battery, or lance corporal, as you call it in the infantry, used to relieve the telephonists. We would do two hours on and four off. I would be on duty in the advanced observation post, while he would be at the other end of the wire in the battery dugout signaling station. We were supposed to send through orders for the battery to fire



One of the Big Guns Barking.

Trains into Monmouth	
L'Ve Portland 7:15, a m,	Gerlinger 10:20, Independ'ce 10:32, Monm'th 10:50
" Salem 9:35, "	" " " " " " " " " "
" " 1:40, p m,	Dallas 2:45, " " " " " " " "
" " 3:45, "	Gerlinger 4:24, Independence 4:37, Monmouth 4:55
" " 6:00, "	" 6:45, " 6:57, " 7:10
" Portland 3:30,	Connects with above
" Corvallis 6:45, a m	Independence 7:35, Arrive Monmouth 7:45
" " 1:15, p m	" 2:14 " 2:30
" Dallas 7:00, a m,	Arrive Monmouth 7:25
" Airlie 8:30, a m and 3:45, p m,	Arrives Monmouth 9:05 a m and 4:13 p m
Leave Independence, 6:50 a m,	7:35, 8:45, 10:35, 12:20, 1:30, p m, 2:20, 3:50, 4:40, 7:00

Trains out of Monmouth	
L'Ve Monmouth 7:05 a m,	Independence 7:35, Gerlinger 7:49, Ar Salem 8:30
" Same as above	Portland 11:10
" Monmouth 1:45, p m,	" 2:14, " 2:27, Salem 3:10
" Same as above	Portland 5:50
" Monmouth 4:05,	" 4:40, " 4:55, Salem 5:30
" " 9:05, a m	Dallas 10:00 " 11:00
" " 4:30, p m	" 4:45, " 5:35
" " 9:05, a m,	Independence 10:32, Corvallis 11:20
" " 4:55, p m,	" 6:57, " 7:45
" " 7:25 a m and 3:10 p m,	Arrives Airlie 8 a m and 3:40 p m
Leave Monmouth 7:05, a m,	8:15 9:05, 10:50, 12:30, M, 1:45, p m, 2:35, 4:15, 4:55, 7:15

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