



"OVER THE TOP"

AN AMERICAN SOLDIER WHO WENT

ARTHUR GUY EMPEY

MACHINE GUNNER, SERVING IN FRANCE

©1917 BY ARTHUR GUY EMPEY

"SOMEWHERE IN FRANCE" EMPEY FIRST HEARS THE BIG GUNS BOOMING.

Synopsis.—Fired by the sinking of the Lusitania, with the loss of American lives, Arthur Guy Empey, an American living in Jersey City, goes to England and enlists as a private in the British army.

CHAPTER II.

Blighty to Rest Billets.

The next morning the captain sent for me and informed me: "Empey, as a recruiting sergeant you are a wash-out," and sent me to a training depot. After arriving at this place, I was hustled to the quartermaster stores and received an awful shock. The quartermaster sergeant spread a waterproof sheet on the ground and commenced throwing a miscellaneous assortment of straps, buckles and other paraphernalia into it. I thought he would never stop, but when the pile reached to my knees he paused long enough to say, "Next, No. 5217, 'Arris, B company." I gazed in bewilderment at the pile of junk in front of me, and then my eyes wandered around looking for the wagon which was to carry it to barracks. I was rudely brought to earth by the "quarter" exclaiming, "Ere, you, 'op it; tyke it aw'; blind my eyes, 'e's looking for 'is batman to 'elp 'im carry it."

Struggling under the load, with frequent pauses for rest, I reached our barracks (large car barns), and my platoon leader came to the rescue. It was a marvel to me how quickly he assembled the equipment. After he had completed the task, he showed me how to adjust it on my person. Pretty soon I stood before him a proper Tommy Atkins in heavy marching order, feeling like an overloaded camel.

On my feet were heavy-soled boots, studded with hobnails, the toes and heels of which were reinforced by steel half-moons. My legs were incased in woolen puttees, olive drab in color, with my trousers overlapping them at the top. Then a woolen khaki tunic, under which was a bluish gray woolen shirt, minus a collar; beneath this shirt a woolen belly band about six inches wide, held in place by tie strings of white tape. On my head was a heavy woolen trench cap, with huge earlaps buttoned over the top. Then the equipment: A canvas belt, with ammunition pockets, and two wide canvas straps like suspenders, called "D" straps, fastened to the belt in front, passing over each shoulder, crossing in the middle of my back, and attached by buckles to the rear of the belt. On the right side of the belt hung a water bottle, covered with felt; on the left side was my bayonet and scabbard, and trenching tool handle, this handle strapped to the bayonet scabbard. In the rear was my trenching tool, carried in a canvas case. This tool was a combination pick and spade. A canvas haversack was strapped to the left side of the belt, while on my back was the pack, also of canvas, held in place by two canvas straps over the shoulders; suspended on the bottom of the pack was my mess tin or canteen in a neat little canvas case. My waterproof sheet, looking like a jelly roll, was strapped on top of the pack, with a wooden stick for cleaning the breach of the rifle projecting from each end. On a lanyard around my waist hung a huge jack-knife with a can-opener attachment. The pack contained my overcoat, an extra pair of socks, change of underwear, hold all (containing knife, fork, spoon, comb, toothbrush, lather brush, shaving soap, and a razor made of tin, with "Made in England" stamped on the blade; when trying to shave with this it made you wish that you were at war with Patagonia, so that you could have a "hollow ground" stamped "Made in Germany"); then your housewife, button-cleaning outfit, consisting of a brass button stick, two stiff brushes, and a box of "Soldiers' Friend" paste; then a shoe brush and a box of dubbin, a writing pad, indelible pencil, envelopes, and pay book, and personal belongings, such as a small mirror, a decent razor and a sheaf of unanswered letters, and fags. In your haversack you carry your iron rations, meaning a tin of bully beef, four biscuits and a can containing tea, sugar and Oxo cubes; a couple of pipes and a pack of shag, a tin of rifle oil, and a pull-through. Tommy generally carried the oil with his rations; it gives the cheese a sort of sardine taste.

Add to this a first-aid pouch and a long, ungainly rifle patterned after the Daniel Boone period, and you have an idea of a British soldier in Blighty. Before leaving for France, this rifle is taken from him and he is issued with a Lee-Enfield short trench rifle and a ration bag.

In France he receives two gas helmets, a sheepskin coat, rubber mackintosh, steel helmet, two blankets, tear-shell goggles, a balacava helmet, gloves and a tin of antifrostbite grease which is excellent for greasing the boots. Add to this the weight of his rations, and can you blame Tommy for growling at a twenty-kilo route march?

Having served as sergeant major in the United States cavalry, I tried to tell the English drill sergeants their business, but it did not work. They immediately put me as batman in their mess. Many a greasy dish of stew was accidentally spilled over them. I would sooner fight than be a waiter, so when the order came through from headquarters calling for a draft of 250 reinforcements for France, I volunteered.

Then we went before the M. O. (medical officer) for another physical examination. This was very brief. He asked our names and numbers and said "Fit," and we went out to fight. We were put into troop trains and sent to Southampton, where we were detained, and had our trench rifles issued to us. Then in columns of two we went up the gangplank of a little steamer lying alongside the dock.

At the head of the gangplank there was an old sergeant, who directed that we line ourselves along both rails of the ship. Then he ordered us to take life belts from the racks overhead and put them on. I have crossed the ocean several times and know I was not seasick, but when I buckled on that life belt I had a sensation of sickness.

After we got out into the stream all I could think of was that there were a million German submarines with a torpedo on each, across the warhead of which was inscribed my name and address. After five hours we came alongside a pier and disembarked. I had attained another one of my ambitions. I was "somewhere in France." We slept in the open that night on the side of the road. About six the next morning we were ordered to entrain. I looked around for the passenger coaches, but all I could see on the siding were cattle cars. We climbed into these. On the side of each car was a sign reading "Hommes 40, Cheveaux 8." When we got inside of the cars, we thought that perhaps the sign painter had reversed the order of things. After 48 hours in these trucks we were detained at Rouen. At this place we went through an intensive training for ten days.

my. I was tired out, and using my shrapnel-proof helmet (shrapnel proof until a piece of shrapnel hits it), or tin hat, for a pillow, lay down in the straw, and was soon fast asleep. I must have slept about two hours, when I awoke with a prickling sensation all over me. As I thought, the straw had worked through my uniform. I woke up the fellow lying on my left, who had been up the line before, and asked him:

"Does the straw bother you, mate? It's worked through my uniform and I can't sleep."

In a sleepy voice he answered, "That ain't straw, them's cooties."

From that time on my friends the "cooties" were constantly with me. "Cooties," or body lice, are the bane of Tommy's existence.

The aristocracy of the trenches very seldom call them "cooties," they speak of them as fleas.

To an American flea means a small insect armed with a bayonet, who is wont to jab it into you and then hop-skip and jump to the next place to be attacked. There is an advantage in having fleas on you instead of "cooties" in that in one of his extended jumps said flea is liable to land on the fellow next to you; he has the typical energy and push of the American, while the "cootie" has the bulldog tenacity of the Englishman; he holds on and consolidates or digs in until his meal is finished.

There is no way to get rid of them permanently. No matter how often you bathe, and that is not very often, or how many times you change your underwear, your friends the "cooties" are always in evidence. The billets are infested with them, especially so if there is straw on the floor.

I have taken a bath and put on brand-new underwear; in fact, a complete change of uniform, and then turned in for the night. The next morning my shirt would be full of them. It is a common sight to see eight or ten soldiers sitting under a tree with their shirts over their knees engaging in a "shirt hunt."

At night about half an hour before "lights out," you can see the Tommies grouped around a candle, trying, in its dim light, to rid their underwear of the vermin. A popular and very quick method is to take your shirt and drawers, and run the seams back and forward in the flame from a candle and burn them out. This practice is dan-

gerous, because you are liable to burn holes in the garments if you are not careful.

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An appropriation of \$1,761,701,000 for the American merchant marine is provided in the sundry civil bill reported to the house Wednesday by the appropriations committee. The measure carries a total of \$2,862,752,237 in direct appropriations and the house is expected to add upwards of \$50,000,000 more.

Germany's submarine raiders, which some 16 days ago made their first appearance in American waters since the declaration of war, apparently are still ranging off the Atlantic coast, though no reports of additional sinkings had been received at the Navy department late Tuesday night to add to the official toll of 18 craft sent to the bottom.

Workmen of the United States will be satisfied only with a peace brought about by the complete overthrow of the German military machine, according to President Samuel Gompers, who made the principal address Tuesday at the opening session of the annual convention of the American Federation of Labor in St. Paul.

Federal court decrees prohibiting newspapers from publishing articles held to embarrass the administration of justice, although not acts committed within the presence of the courts, were sustained by the U. S. Supreme court in upholding judgment against the Toledo Newspaper company, publisher, and N. D. Cochran, editor-in-chief of the Toledo, Ohio, News-Bee, for contempt of court.

President Wilson has written a second letter to Governor Stephens, of California, urging the pardon of Thomas J. Mooney. The President asked for clemency for Mooney in March, but Governor Stephens replied that he could not act until an appeal for the convicted man had been passed upon by the courts. The courts have refused the plea.

New Star Loses Brilliance. Pasadena, Cal.—Astronomers at the Mount Wilson solar observatory, near here, were of the opinion Wednesday that the new star which appeared Saturday night in the constellation Aquila and rapidly grew in brilliance, reached its maximum luminosity early Tuesday. The spectroscope indicated it had dimmed slightly. At its brightest, it was said, the new star was exceeded in brilliance by possibly but one fixed star, Sirius.

Berlin, Ia., is No More. Berlin, Ia.—Berlin, Ia., will be no more. As a result of a meeting here of the mayor and the city council it was decided to notify the postoffice officials in Washington that the citizens here have changed the name of the town to Lincoln.

WORLD HAPPENINGS OF CURRENT WEEK

Brief Resume Most Important Daily News Items.

COMPILED FOR YOU

Events of Noted People, Governments and Pacific Northwest and Other Things Worth Knowing.

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MONTANA FORESTS ABLAZE

Early Start Believed to Portend Much Damage—Town is Threatened.

Missoula, Mont.—With scores of fires, some covering large areas and blazing unchecked, others small and yet within control, burning in dry forests of Western Montana and Northern Idaho, the fire situation in the territory embraced within district No. 1 of the Forest service is the most acute that it has ever been at this time of the year, forestry officials declare.

Indications point to a fire season worse than that of 1917, they said, since it is starting fully a month earlier.

More than 500 men are fighting fires in the national forests of this district, 150 of them engaged in an effort to save the town of Essex, in the Flathead forest, on the Great Northern railway. One hundred others are fighting a fire near Belton, at the west end of Glacier National Park.

Two hundred and fifty men are still fighting the fire on Marble creek, near the St. Joe forest in Northern Idaho, where thousands of acres of valuable privately owned timber land are being burned over. The blaze was declared to be the worst in the district.

Other fires were reported on Canyon Ferry Gulch, at the west end of Hellgate canyon, in the Helena forest; on Deep creek, in the Lolo forest; in the Bitter Root mountains and in the Cabinet forest.

RUSS-SLAV FACTION ASKS AID OF ALLIES

Formal Appeal Made to America to Send Expedition to Halt Huns—Cadets Send Message.

Washington, D. C.—An appeal to the United States and the allies to send an expeditionary force to Russia to repel the German invaders, forwarded by the central committee of the Cadet party in Russia, was transmitted to the State department Wednesday by the Russian embassy.

It is asked that the expedition, if sent, be put under international control to guarantee the rights of Russia.

The Cadet party, as it is popularly called, is composed of the Constitutional Democrats who were first in power after the overthrow of the Romanoff dynasty. It was removed from power by the Bolsheviks.

The United States has not defined its attitude toward the allied desire for joint action from the East, although it is understood the government holds that it would be inopportune to attempt to check the Germans in Russia, unless it is shown the Russian people wish it and that the move would not be misunderstood.

The message of the Constitutional Democrats declares the situation in Russia can be ameliorated by the active aid of the allies. The advance of the German armies, it is declared, otherwise cannot be halted.

The appearance of a strong allied force in the East, it is declared, will have a decisive bearing on the issues of the war.

If an expedition is sent it is asked that every means be taken to safeguard Russian interests and rights.

It has been pointed out that there are insurmountable obstacles in the way of the placing of allied and American troops in Russia proper, save in the small sectors on the Arctic ocean where the British and French flags are now seen.

Technically that is a part of the territory now under the jurisdiction of General Foch in his capacity of commander-in-chief of all the allied and American troops.

If he desires to risk starting a campaign at such a remote point, it is said that he may use Americans for this purpose in his discretion.

The other avenue of approach by an army to European Russia would be by way of Siberia, and unless the allies are willing to turn that task over to Japan alone, which it is feared the Russians would resent, there is no transportation available for the placing in Siberia of the numerous American and allied army that would be required for a successful campaign.

Cars Enter Firing Zone.

Camp Lewis, Tacoma, Wash.—Five times Wednesday automobile drivers endangered the lives of themselves and passengers and interfered with "attackers" on German advance posts which American infantry were approaching. It was the first time the B target range was used and the motorists somehow got past the sentries who were guarding all roads and drove directly into the line of fire.

They were seen in time and the field telephone flashed the order "stop firing," so no one was hit.

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U. S. WHEAT CROP IS BILLION BUSHELS

Federal Forecast Shows Second Largest Crop on Record.

OTHER CROPS RECORD

Continuation of the Recent Favorable Growing Conditions May Yet Put 1918 Harvest in First Rank.

Washington, D. C.—A bumper wheat crop this year, which before harvest may develop into a production of 1,000,000,000 bushels, was forecast by the department of Agriculture in its June crop report giving the first indication of the size of this year's spring wheat output.

Basing its estimate on June 1 conditions, the department forecast a total wheat production of 931,000,000 bushels, which would place this year's harvest as the second largest in the history of the country.

In June of 1915 a total wheat production of 950,000,000 bushels was forecast and the quantity gradually crept upward until the final figures for the year showed the crop to be 1,025,800,000 bushels.

The acreage sown to spring wheat this year is larger by 2,000,000 acres than ever sown before and 21.5 per cent larger than last year, aggregating 2,489,000 acres.

The condition of the crop on June 1 was 95.2 per cent of normal, or 1.5 per cent better than the 10-year average. A production of 344,000,000 bushels was forecast. That is 11,000,000 bushels more than harvested last year and only about 7,000,000 bushels less than the record spring wheat harvest of 1915.

Winter wheat, growing on the second largest acreage ever planted, showed a condition 3 per cent better than the 10-year average, with 83.8 per cent of a normal crop. A production of 587,000,000 bushels was forecast, which is 50,000,000 bushels more than forecast from conditions existing May 1. Such a crop would be the third in size grown in this country.

The oat crop also promises to be of record proportions. On an acreage 2.1 per cent larger than last year, when the record crop—1,587,000,000 bushels—was grown, June 1 conditions warrant a forecast of 1,500,000,000 bushels. Only last year's and the crop of 1915 exceeded that quantity.

Rye production will be a record, the forecast being 81,000,000 bushels, which is slightly less than was forecast in May. Last year's crop was 60,100,000 bushels, which was a record.

HOOVER STRIKES AT PRICES

Administrator Orders Nation-Wide Reform in Food Staples.

Washington, D. C.—A country-wide move to reduce the cost of food to the consumer and standardize methods of compelling the observance by dealers of "fair price lists" was ordered Saturday by Food Administrator Hoover.

Lists will be published in every country, town and city, and consumers will be asked to co-operate with officials in forcing merchants to bring their prices to a uniform level.

In carrying out the new standardization plan, the administration will establish price-interpreting committees composed of representatives of wholesalers, retailers and consumers.

The board will determine fair retail prices on basic commodities that comprise a large part of the nation's diet. The published lists will give the range of maximum selling prices, showing a reasonable price which will reflect the prices that should obtain in "cash and carry" stores, and a higher price representing a fair price for the "credit and delivery" stores.

The local administrator for each locality will act as chairman of the price board. Each board will have detailed reports of actual wholesale prices and will ascertain fair margins of profit the retailer should be satisfied with.

Newspapers will be asked to co-operate by setting aside a particular position weekly for publication of the lists, with footnotes on the food problem and the use of substitutes for the foods most needed abroad.

A close check will be kept on observance of the lists. Consumers will be expected to report to the local food administrator any store charging more than the established price for any commodity.

Governor Lister is Weak.

Olympia, Wash.—Governor Lister returned to his living apartments in Olympia Saturday afternoon and announced that he would handle state business in his rooms for the next week instead of at the capitol. He is still under medical treatment which began in Chicago two weeks ago and is forbidden physical exertion. The nature of his illness was not announced.

The governor was absent from the state nearly a month on his Eastern trip, when he originally expected to return in two weeks.



The Author's Identification Disk.

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