



"OVER THE TOP"

AN AMERICAN SOLDIER WHO WENT

ARTHUR GUY EMPEY

MACHINE GUNNER, SERVING IN FRANCE

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FOREWORD

"Over the Top" is a true story of trench warfare on the French front, written by an American soldier who got into the great war two years ahead of his country. Sergeant Empey tells what the fighting men have done and how they have done it. He knows because he was one of them. His experiences are grim, but they are thrilling, and they are lightened by a delightful touch of humor.

CHAPTER I.

From Mufti to Khaki.

It was in an office in Jersey City. I was sitting at my desk talking to a lieutenant of the Jersey National Guard. On the wall was a big war map decorated with variously colored little flags showing the position of the opposing armies on the western front in France. In front of me on the desk lay a New York paper with big flaring headlines:

LUSITANIA SUNK! AMERICAN LIVES LOST!

The windows were open and a feeling of spring pervaded the air. Through the open windows came the strains of a hurdy-gurdy playing in the street—"I Didn't Raise My Boy to Be a Soldier."

"Lusitania Sunk! American Lives Lost!"—"I Didn't Raise My Boy to Be a Soldier." To us these did not seem to jibe.

The lieutenant in silence opened one of the lower drawers of his desk and took from it an American flag which he solemnly draped over the war map on the wall. Then, turning to me with a grim face, said:

"How about it, sergeant? You had better get out the muster roll of the Mounted Scouts, as I think they will be needed in the course of a few days."

We busied ourselves till late in the evening writing out emergency telegrams for the men to report when the call should come from Washington. Then we went home.

I crossed over to New York, and as I went up Fulton street to take the subway to Brooklyn, the lights in the



Guy Empey.

tall buildings of New York seemed to be burning brighter than usual, as if they, too, had read "Lusitania Sunk! American Lives Lost!" They seemed to be glowing with anger and righteous indignation, and their rays wigwagged the message, "Repay!"

Months passed, the telegrams lying handy, but covered with dust. Then, one momentous morning the lieutenant with a sigh of disgust removed the flag from the war map and returned to his desk. I immediately followed

this action by throwing the telegrams into the wastebasket. Then we looked at each other in silence. He was squirming in his chair and I felt depressed and uneasy.

The telephone rang and I answered it. It was a business call for me, requesting my services for an out-of-town assignment. Business was not very good, so this was very welcome. After listening to the proposition I seemed to be swayed by a peculiarly strong force within me, and answered, "I am sorry that I cannot accept your offer, but I am leaving for England next week," and hung up the receiver. The lieutenant swung around in his chair, and stared at me in blank astonishment. A sinking sensation came over me, but I defiantly answered his look with, "Well, it's so. I'm going." And I went.

The trip across was uneventful. I landed at Tilbury, England, then got into a string of matchbox cars and proceeded to London, arriving there about 10 p. m. I took a room in a hotel near St. Pancras station for "five and six—fire extra." The room was minus the fire, but the "extra" seemed to keep me warm. That night there was a Zeppelin raid, but I didn't see much of it, because the slit in the curtains was too small and I had no desire to make it larger. Next morning the telephone bell rang, and someone asked, "Are you there?" I was, hardly. Anyway, I learned that the Zeps had returned to their fatherland, so I went out into the street expecting to see scenes of awful devastation and a covering populace, but everything was normal. People were calmly proceeding to their work. Crossing the street, I accosted a Bobbie with:

"Can you direct me to the place of damage?"

He asked me, "What damage?"

In surprise, I answered, "Why, the damage caused by the Zeps."

With a wink he replied:

"There was no damage; we missed them again."

After several fruitless inquiries of the passersby, I decided to go on my own in search of ruined buildings and scenes of destruction. I boarded a bus which carried me through Tottenham Court road. Recruiting posters were everywhere. The one that impressed me most was a life-size picture of Lord Kitchener with his finger pointing directly at me, under the caption of "Your King and Country Need You." No matter which way I turned, the accusing finger followed me. I was an American, in mufti, and had a little American flag in the lapel of my coat. I had no king, and my country had seen fit not to need me, but still that pointing finger made me feel small and ill at ease. I got off the bus to try to dissipate this feeling by mixing with the throng of the sidewalks.

Presently I came to a recruiting office. Inside, sitting at a desk was a lonely Tommy Atkins. I decided to interview him in regard to joining the British army. I opened the door. He looked up and greeted me with "I s'y, myte, want to tyke on?"

I looked at him and answered, "Well, whatever that is, I'll take a chance at it."

Without the aid of an interpreter, I found out that Tommy wanted to know if I cared to join the British army. He asked me: "Did you ever hear of the Royal Fusiliers?" Well, in London, you know, Yanks are supposed to know everything, so I was not going to appear ignorant and answered, "Sure."

After listening for one half-hour to Tommy's tale of their exploits on the firing line, I decided to join. Tommy took me to the recruiting headquarters, where I met a typical English captain. He asked my nationality. I immediately pulled out my American passport and showed it to him. It was signed by Lansing. After looking at the passport, he informed me that he was sorry but could not enlist me, as it would be a breach of neutrality. I insisted that I was not neutral, because to me it seemed that a real American could not be neutral when big things were in progress, but the captain would not enlist me.

With disgust in my heart I went out in the street. I had gone about a block when a recruiting sergeant who had followed me out of the office tapped me on the shoulder with his swagger stick and said: "S'y, I can get you in the army. We have a 'leftenant' down at the other office who can do anything. He has just come

out of the O. T. C. (Officers' Training corps) and does not know what neutrality is." I decided to take a chance, and accepted his invitation for an introduction to the lieutenant. I entered the office and went up to him, opened up my passport and said:

"Before going further I wish to state that I am an American, not too proud to fight, and want to join your army."

He looked at me in a nonchalant manner, and answered, "That's all right; we take anything over here."

I looked at him kind of hard and replied, "So I notice," but it went over his head.

He got out an enlistment blank, and placing his finger on a blank line said, "Sign here."

I answered, "Not on your tintage."

"I beg your pardon?"

Then I explained to him that I would not sign it without first reading it. I read it over and signed for duration of war. Some of the recruits were lucky. They signed for seven years only!

Then he asked me my birthplace. I answered, "Ogden, Utah."

He said, "Oh, yes, just outside of New York?"

With a smile, I replied, "Well, it's up the state a little."

Then I was taken before the doctor and passed as physically fit, and was issued a uniform. When I reported back to the lieutenant, he suggested that, being an American, I go on recruiting service and try to shame some of the slackers into joining the army.

"All you have to do," he said, "is to go out on the street, and when you see a young fellow in mufti who looks physically fit, just stop him and give him this kind of a talk: 'Aren't you



Swearing in a Recruit.

ashamed of yourself, a Britisher, physically fit, and in mufti when your king and country need you? Don't you know that your country is at war and that the place for every young Briton is on the firing line? Here I am, an American, in khaki, who came four thousand miles to fight for your king and country, and you, as yet, have not enlisted. Why don't you join? Now is the time."

"This argument ought to get many recruits, Empey, so go out and see what you can do."

He then gave me a small rosette of red, white and blue ribbon, with three little streamers hanging down. This was the recruiting insignia and was to be worn on the left side of the cap.

Armed with a swagger stick and my patriotic rosette, I went out into Tottenham Court road in quest of cannon fodder.

Two or three poorly dressed civilians passed me, and although they appeared physically fit, I said to myself, "They don't want to join the army; perhaps they have someone dependent on them for support," so I did not accost them.

Coming down the street I saw a young dandy, top hat and all, with a fashionably dressed girl walking beside him. I muttered, "You are my meat," and when he came abreast of me I stepped directly in his path and stopped him with my swagger stick, saying:

"You would look fine in khaki; why not change that top hat for a steel helmet? Aren't you ashamed of yourself, a husky young chap like you in mufti when men are needed in the trenches? Here I am, an American, came four thousand miles from Ogden, Utah, just outside of New York, to fight for your king and country. Don't be a slacker, buck up and get into uniform; come over to the recruiting office and I'll have you enlisted."

He yawned and answered, "I don't care if you came forty thousand miles, no one asked you to," and he walked on. The girl gave me a sneering look; I was speechless.

I recruited for three weeks and nearly got one recruit.

This perhaps was not the greatest stunt in the world, but it got back to the officer who had told me, "Yes, we take anything over here." I had been spending a good lot of my recruiting time in the saloon bar of the Wheat Sheaf pub (there was a very attractive blonde barmaid, who helped kill time—

I was not as serious in those days as I was a little later when I reached the front)—well, it was the sixth day and my recruiting report was blank. I was getting low in the pocket—barmaids haven't much use for anyone who cannot buy drinks—so I looked around for recruiting material. You know a man on recruiting service gets a "bob" or shilling for every recruit he entices into joining the army, the recruit is supposed to get this, but he would not be a recruit if he were wise to this fact, would he?

Down at the end of the bar was a young fellow in mufti who was very patriotic—he had about four "Old Six" ales aboard. He asked me if he could join, showed me his left hand, two fingers were missing, but I said that did not matter as "we take anything over here." The left hand is the rifle hand as the piece is carried at the slope on the left shoulder. Nearly everything in England is "by the left," even general traffic keeps to the left side.

I took the applicant over to headquarters, where he was hurriedly examined. Recruiting surgeons were busy in those days and did not have much time for thorough physical examinations. My recruit was passed as "fit" by the doctor and turned over to a corporal to make note of his scars. I was mystified. Suddenly the corporal burst out with, "Blime me, two of his fingers are gone." Turning to me he said, "You certainly have your nerve with you, not 'aif you ain't, to bring this beggar in."

The doctor came over and exploded, "What do you mean by bringing in a man in this condition?"

Looking out of the corner of my eye I noticed that the officer who had recruited me had joined the group, and I could not help answering, "Well, sir, I was told that you took anything over here."

I think they called it "Yankee impudence," anyhow it ended my recruiting.

In training quarters, "somewhere in France," Empey hears the big guns booming and makes the acquaintance of the "cooties." Read about his experiences in the next installment.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

HAD CONFIDENCE IN EDISON

Negro Was Sure That Wonderful Bullet He Invented Would Never Kill American Soldiers.

Two negroes were walking along a New York street discussing the wonderful inventions brought about by the war.

"Yes, sah," one said, "an' a friend of mine who knows all about it says dis heh man Edison has done gone and invented a magnetized bullet dat can't miss a German, kase of dere's one in a hundred yards de bullet is drawa right smack against his steel helmet. Yes, sah, an' he's done invented another one with a return attachment. Whenever dat bullet don't hit nothin' it comes right straight back to de American lines."

"Dat's what I call inventin'," exclaimed the other. "But, say, how about dem comin' back bullets? What do dey do to keep 'em from hittin' our men?"

"Well, mah frien' didn't tell me about it, but of Mr. Edison made 'em you can bet youah life he's got 'em trained. You don't 'spose he'd let 'em kill any Americans, do you? No, sah, he's got 'em fixt so's dey jes' ease back down aroun' de gunner's feet an' say: 'Dey's all dead in dat trench, boss. Send me to a live place where I's got a chanct to do somethin'!"

"Newport News."

In Virginia's early days communication with the mother country was, of course, wholly by ships, and when one was expected the colonists were all eagerness for the news from home. On the occasion of one, it may have been the first, of a certain Captain Newport's expected return from England, at or near the place now bearing his name, a large number of persons collected to receive "Newport's news." Hence the name, now shortened to its present form.

The Sardine.

The fresh sardine is a beautiful little fish. The scales on its back are an iridescent blue-green, the exact tint which the sea so often takes, while beneath the scales there shows up the most wonderful peacock-blue. There are bars on its back and sides when it first comes out of the water, like those of the mackerel, but they seem to fade and disappear the moment it is exposed to the air. The rest of its body is silver.

Finest New Year Celebration.

The finest New Year celebration in the world is in Japan and China, where before the clock strikes New Year's eve, every debt and account must be paid. No good Chinaman or Jap ever thinks of entering the new year with an unpaid bill. Would that we might emulate that form of celebration!—Ladies' Home Journal.

PUBLIC ROADS

CARING FOR COUNTRY ROADS

Heavily Loaded Wagons With Narrow Tires Are Injurious—Place Harrows on a Drag.

(By E. B. HOUSE, Colorado Agricultural College, Fort Collins, Colo.)

Excessive loads placed on wagons with narrow tires are exceptionally bad for any road. Tractors using wheels upon which are cleats, or anything that will cut through or injure the road surface should never be allowed on country roads. Disk harrows and in fact any cultivating tool should be kept off the road. If it is necessary to move them along the road, place them upon a drag, stone boat, or haul them to the field on a wagon. If dragged over the road, they will wear the road badly, break through the surface and start disintegration. No road is in such poor condition as to warrant abuse of this kind.

ITEMS OF HIGHWAY EXPENSE

Interest on Investment and Cost of Maintenance All Have Vital Bearing on Road Plans.

The following is quoted from an article by R. H. Plepniel, maintenance engineer, highway department, state of Illinois:

"There are three principal items of expense connected with road improvement which the engineer must impress upon the public mind before it will be possible for him to construct an economical system of roads. These factors are: The original cost of the improvement; the interest on the money invested in the improvement, and the total upkeep cost. When all of these factors are taken into consideration, it is evident that many of the cheaper types of roads, when properly maintained, will give the desired service and yet will be much more economical on account of their low first cost.

"When a type of road is selected, taking into consideration the three principles set forth above, it is very essential that provision be made for proper and efficient maintenance. If local conditions are such that maintenance may be delayed or prevented, preference should be given to a type of pavement that requires only a small amount of maintenance and which will be serviceable for a period of time even with no maintenance whatever.



Concrete Road in Suburbs of Chicago.

Neglecting proper maintenance for but one year on many types of roads is very much more serious than the amount of money involved represents. The road engineer should keep this in mind and thoroughly impress the fact upon the individuals who have a voice in the final determination of a type of road."

SOUTH IS IMPROVING ROADS

Interest Stimulated by "Drive-Aways" of Automobiles and Trucks From Northern States.

"Drive-aways" of automobiles and trucks from the manufacturing centers in the North to points south of the Mason and Dixon line has wonderfully stimulated the good road movement in the South, writes an accessory dealer in Atlanta.

"I have traveled over considerable territory in the South of late and it is noticeable the amount of interest that has been worked up locally over road improvement by the influx of cars that from necessity had to be driven to distributors. The high price of cotton is responsible in great measure for the prosperity this section is enjoying."