



"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'y; 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 re-enforced 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 carries 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 balaclava 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 walter, so when the order came through from headquarters calling for a draft of 250 re-enforcements 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



The Author's Identification Disk.

said "Fit," and we went out to fight.

We were put into troop trains and sent to Southampton, where we were trained, and had our trench rifles issued to us. Then in columns of twos 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 knew 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 detrained at Rouen. At this place we went through an intensive training for ten days.

The training consisted of the rudiments of trench warfare. Trenches had been dug, with barbed wire entanglements, bombing saps, dugouts, observation posts and machine gun emplacements. We were given a smattering of trench cooking, sanitation, bomb throwing, reconnoitering, listening posts, constructing and repairing barbed wire, "carrying in" parties, methods used in attack and defense, wiring parties, mass formation, and the procedure for poison-gas attacks.

On the tenth day we again met our friends "Hommes 40, Cheveaux 8." Thirty-six hours more of misery, and we arrived at the town of F—.

After unloading our rations and equipment, we lined up on the road in columns of fours waiting for the order to march.

A dull rumbling could be heard. The sun was shining. I turned to the man on my left and asked, "What's the noise, Bill?" He did not know, but his face was of a pea-green color. Jim, on my right, also did not know, but suggested that I "awsk" the sergeant.

Coming towards us was an old grizzled sergeant, properly fed up with the war, so I "awsked" him.

"Think it's going to rain, sergeant?" He looked at me in contempt, and grunted, "Ow's it a-goin' ter rain with the bloomin' sun a-shinin'?" I looked guilty.

"Them's the guns up the line, me lad, and you'll get enough of 'em before you gets back to Blighty."

My knees seemed to wobble, and I squeaked out a weak "Oh!"

Then we started our march up to the line in ten-kilo treks. After the first day's march we arrived at our rest billets. In France they call them rest billets, because while in them Tommy works seven days a week and on the eighth day of the week he is given twenty-four hours "on his own."

Our billet was a spacious affair, a large barn on the left side of the road, which had one hundred entrances, ninety-nine for shells, rats, wind and rain, and the hundredth one for Tommy. 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 dangerous, because you are liable to burn holes in the garments if you are not careful.

Recruits generally sent to Blighty for a brand of insect powder advertised as "Good for body lice." The advertisement is quite right; the powder is good for "cooties," they simply thrive on it.

The older men of our battalion were wiser and made scratchers out of wood. These were rubbed smooth with

a bit of stone or sand to prevent splinters. They were about eighteen inches long, and Tommy guarantees that a scratcher of this length will reach any part of the body which may be attacked. Some of the fellows were lazy and only made their scratchers twelve inches, but many a night when on guard, looking over the top from the fire step of the front-line trench, they would have given a thousand "quid" for the other six inches.

Once while we were in rest billets an Irish Hussar regiment camped in an open field opposite our billet. After they had picketed and fed their horses, a general shirt hunt took place. The troopers ignored the call "Dinner up," and kept on with their search for big game. They had a curious method of procedure. They hung their shirts over a hedge and beat them with their trenching-tool handles.

I asked one of them why they didn't pick them off by hand, and he answered, "We haven't had a bath for nine weeks or a change of clabber. If I tried to pick the 'cooties' off my shirt, I would be here for duration of war." After taking a close look at his shirt, I agreed with him; it was alive.

In the next installment Sergeant Empey tells of the realization of his ambition—his arrival in a first line trench—and of how he wished he were back in Jersey City.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

PLENTY OF STORAGE PLACES

Woman Who Has Made Home Into a Veritable "House of a Thousand Closets."

One little woman living not far from New York, says Harriet Sisson Gillespie in the Mother's Magazine, has been able by the expenditure of a moderate sum of money to transform an impracticable closetless dwelling into one in which housekeeping is not only a pleasure, but where the problem of storing away clothing has been satisfactorily solved.

Among her friends it is known as "the house of a thousand closets," which is nearly if not literally true.

Every little cubby hole below the shingles has been utilized for closet space. There are banks of closets on both the second and attic floors, to say nothing of a cedar closet with sun and air and electric light, for the reception of the owner's choicest possessions. Some of the closets are cedar lined, others sheathed with matched boards of North Carolina pine, well shelled to keep out the moths and frequently sprayed with a liquid in which oil of cedar plays a part.

A printed list of every article contained in the drawers and cupboards is tacked in plain sight in order that the frantic search for inanimate things that seem suddenly to have taken wings and flown away, may be entirely obviated.

New Southern Industry.

The advantages of New Orleans as a port were emphasized in the opening of a canning factory for the distribution of real green-sea turtles. With the exception of a small factory at Key West, it will be the only establishment of its kind in America. The factory has been situated at Miami, Fla., but the excessive freight rates and a lack of steamer service to Central American ports led to its removal to Bay St. Louis. It will handle nothing but green-sea turtles caught in Central American waters, and these will be put up in four different forms—clear green turtle soup, thick green turtle soup, turtle beef in Creole style, and "callipee," which is the meat of the turtle taken from the breast, back and flippers. The factory will turn out about 15,000 cans a day, or a total of 700,000 pounds a year, including all products. There is also a by-product called turtle oil, used medicinally.—Fishing Gazette.

Japanese "Steel Queen" Retires.

Mrs. Teruko Nakamura of Osaka, popularly known as "The Steel Queen," has announced her retirement from business. She intends to travel about the empire giving free film shows for the better education of the masses. She is making elaborate preparations to instruct the uneducated about the peoples of other nations of the world. Her views of American cities are especially extensive and well selected. Her efforts will be concentrated on the factory towns, where much ignorance exists. Mrs. Nakamura is thirty-four years old and has been a widow for eight years. Her husband died deeply in debt, but she undertook the management of his steel mills and has not only paid off all debts but is herself rated many times a millionaire. She converted the concern into a stock company before her retirement.

Her Coming Out, as It Were.

Woe Mary was in the room when the telephone rang and her sister Elizabeth, aged eleven, was being invited to go skating. Mary in great excitement ran to her mother, saying: "What you think, mamma, Elizabeth has her first attempt with a boy!"

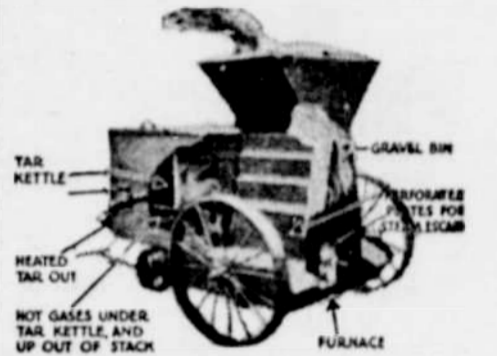
FOR BETTER ROADS

TAR AND GRAVEL APPARATUS

Device Invented by New Jersey Manufacturer for Heating Materials for Pavements.

Emulating the famous hunter of the olden days who killed two birds with one stone, a New Jersey manufacturer has recently brought out a combination tar and gravel heater that heats these two dissimilar materials quite independently but with one operation. The device, which is shown in the accompanying illustration, is particularly fitted for street paving where block pavements with tar joints are laid.

The apparatus consists of two main parts, a rectangular tar kettle and a Y-shaped gravel bin, with a furnace extending beneath both parts, from one end to the other. The furnace is fired from the gravel end of the device. The smoke and gases escape through an ordinary stove pipe in the kettle end. The inside of the gravel



Combination Tar and Gravel Heating Device in Operation.

heater is triangular shaped while the outside is made up in steps consisting of perforated metal plates. The Y-shaped top acts as a reservoir bin and the gravel feeds down the steps and out at the bottom. The perforations in the step plates allow the moisture in the gravel to escape readily as it is turned into steam by the heat of the fire, thereby making it possible to heat both tar and gravel.—Popular Science Monthly.

BENEFIT OF SHADE TREES

In Wisconsin Owner Is Given Annual Bounty of Three Cents for Each Rod of Highway.

The Wisconsin law provides that financial consideration may be given by the state to people who plant and cultivate trees by the roadside. Every person along or through whose lands a highway passes may plant and cultivate on one or both sides of the road where he shall own land, trees of such varieties as commonly grow at least 40 feet high. These must be set two rods or less apart and in a row within eight feet of the outer line of the highway.

When such trees reach 12 feet in height the superintendent of highways shall give the owner upon request a certificate accepting the trees as public shade trees. Thereafter they belong to the public and are protected as public property, but the title to them or to the fruit they bear belongs to the owner as long as he maintains the trees and replaces such as die. The owner shall receive an annual bounty of three cents for each rod of highway along which such trees are planted on one side and six cents if planted on both sides, to be credited on his highway taxes.

BENEFIT OF IMPROVED ROADS

From Standpoint of Almighty Dollar It Pays Handsome Yearly Dividend to Farmer.

Let everybody awaken to the importance of improving the public road, for improved roads will bring:

Better schools and greater attendance.

Better health and quicker medical attention.

Better farms and more cultivated land.

Better crops and better transportation.

Better social conditions and less isolation.

Better churches and better homes.

Better men and a better nation.

Improved roads have a money value as well as a social value.

Looking at an improved road from the standpoint of the almighty dollar, it is found to pay a handsome dividend each year.