

# "OVER THE TOP"

By An American Arthur Guy Empey  
Soldier Who Went Machine Gunner, Serving in France

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## EMPEY GOES "OVER THE TOP" FOR THE FIRST TIME AND HAS DESPERATE HAND-TO-HAND FIGHT

**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. After a short experience as a recruiting officer in London, he is sent to training quarters in France, where he first hears the sound of big guns and makes the acquaintance of "cooties." After a brief period of training Empey's company is sent into the front-line trenches, where he takes his first turn over the fire step while the bullets whiz overhead. Empey learns, as comrade falls, that death lurks always in the trenches.

### CHAPTER X—Continued.

We had a sergeant in our battalion named Warren. He was on duty with his platoon in the fire trench one afternoon when orders came up from the rear that he had been granted seven days' leave for Blighty, and would be relieved at five o'clock to proceed to England.

He was tickled to death at these welcome tidings and regaled his more or less envious mates beside him on the fire step with the good times in store for him. He figured it out that in two days' time he would arrive at Waterloo station, London, and then—seven days' bliss!

At about five minutes to five he started to fidget with his rifle, and then suddenly springing up on the fire step with a muttered, "I'll send over a couple of souvenirs to Fritz so that he'll miss me when I leave," he stuck his rifle over the top and fired two shots when "crack" went a bullet and he tumbled off the step, fell into the mud at the bottom of the trench, and lay still in a huddled heap with a bullet hole in his forehead.

At about the time he expected to arrive at Waterloo station he was laid to rest in a little cemetery behind the lines. He had gone to Blighty.

In the trenches one can never tell—it is not safe to plan very far ahead.

After "stand down" the men sit on the fire step or repair to their respective dugouts and wait for the "rum issue" to materialize. Immediately following the rum comes breakfast, brought up from the rear. Sleeping is then in order unless some special work turns up.

Around 12:30 dinner shows up. When this is eaten the men try to amuse themselves until "tea" appears at about four o'clock, then "stand to" and they carry on as before.

While in rest billets Tommy gets up about six in the morning, washes up, answers roll call, is inspected by his platoon officer, and has breakfast. At 8:45 he parades (drills) with his company or goes on fatigue according to the orders which have been read out by the orderly sergeant the night previous.

Between 11:30 and noon he is dismissed, has his dinner and is "on his own" for the remainder of the day, unless he has clicked for a digging or working party, and so it goes on from day to day, always "looping the loop" and looking forward to peace and Blighty.

Sometimes, while engaged in a "cootie" hunt, you think, "Strange to say, but it is a fact, while Tommy is searching his shirt serious thoughts come to him. Many a time, when performing this operation, I have tried to figure out the outcome of the war and what will happen to me."

My thoughts generally ran in this channel:

Will I emerge safely from the next attack? If I do will I skin through the following one, and so on? While your mind is wandering into the future it is likely to be rudely brought to earth by a Tommy interrupting with, "What's good for rheumatism?"

Then you have something else to think of. Will you come out of this war crippled and tied into knots with rheumatism, caused by the wet and mud of trenches and dugouts? You give it up as a bad job and generally saunter over to the nearest estaminet to drown your moody forebodings in a glass of sickening French beer or to try your luck at the always present game of "house." You can hear the sing-song voice of a Tommy droning out the numbers as he extracts the little squares of cardboard from the bag between his feet.

### CHAPTER XI.

#### Over the Top.

On my second trip to the trenches our officer was making his rounds of inspection, and we received the cheerful news that at four in the morning we were to go over the top and take

the German front-line trench. My heart turned to lead. Then the officer carried on with his instructions. To the best of my memory I recall them as follows: "At eleven a wiring party will go out in front and cut lanes through our barbed wire for the passage of troops in the morning. At two o'clock our artillery will open up with an intense bombardment, which will last until four. Upon the lifting of the barrage the first of the three waves will go over." Then he left. Some of the Tommies, first getting permission from the sergeant, went to the machine gunners' dugout and wrote letters home, saying that in the morning they were going over the top, and also that if the letters reached their destination it would mean that the writer had been killed.

These letters were turned over to the captain with instructions to mail same in the event of the writer's being killed. Some of the men made out their wills in their pay books, under the caption, "Will and Last Testament."

Then the nerve-racking wait commenced. Every now and then I would glance at the dial of my wrist watch and was surprised to see how fast the minutes passed by. About five minutes to two I got nervous waiting for our guns to open up. I could not take my eyes from my watch. I crouched against the parapet and strained my muscles in a deathlike grip upon my rifle. As the hands on my watch showed two o'clock a blinding red flare lighted up the sky in our rear, then thunder, intermixed with a sharp, whistling sound in the air over our heads. The shells from our guns were speeding on their way toward the German lines. With one accord the men sprang up on the fire step and looked over the top in the direction of the German trenches. A line of bursting shells lighted up No Man's Land. The din was terrific and the ground trembled. Then, high above our heads we could hear a sighing moan. Our big boys behind the line had opened up and 9.2's and 15-inch shells commenced dropping into the German lines. The flash of the guns behind the lines, the scream of the shells through the air, and the flare of them, bursting, was a spectacle that put Pain's greatest display into the shade. The constant pop, pop, of German machine guns and an occasional rattle of rifle firing gave me the impression of a huge audience applauding the work of the batteries.

Our 18-pounders were destroying the German barbed wire, while the heavier stuff was demolishing their trenches and bashing in dugouts or funk holes.

When Fritz got busy. Their shells went screaming overhead, aimed in the direction of the flares from our batteries. Trench mortars started dropping "Minnies" in our front line. We clicked several casualties. Then they suddenly ceased. Our artillery had taped or silenced them.

During the bombardment you could almost read a newspaper in our trench. Sometimes in the flare of a shell-burst a man's body would be silhouetted against the paradocs of the trench and it appeared like a huge monster. You could hardly hear yourself think. When an order was to be passed down the trench you had to yell it, using your hands as a funnel into the ear of the man sitting next to you on the fire step. In about twenty minutes a generous rum issue was doled out. After drinking the rum, which tasted like varnish and sent a shudder through your frame, you wondered why they made you wait until the lifting of the barrage before going over. At ten minutes to four word was passed down, "Ten minutes to go!" Ten minutes to live! We were shivering all over. My legs felt as if they were asleep. Then word was passed down: "First wave get on and near the scaling ladders."

These were small wooden ladders which we had placed against the parapet to enable us to go over the top on the lifting of the barrage. "Ladders of

death" we called them, and veritably they were.

Before a charge Tommy is the politest of men. There is never any pushing or crowding to be first up these ladders. We crouched around the base of the ladders waiting for the word to go over. I was sick and faint, and was puffing away at an unlighted fag. Then came the word, "Three minutes to go; upon the lifting of the barrage and on the blast of the whistles, 'Over the top with the best o' luck and give them hell.'" The famous phrase of the western front. The Jonah phrase of the western front. To Tommy it means if you are lucky enough to come back you will be minus an arm or a leg. Tommy hates to be wished the best of luck; so, when peace is declared, if it ever is, and you meet a Tommy on the street, just wish him the best of luck and duck the brick that follows.

I glanced again at my wrist watch. We all wore them and you could hardly call us "sissies" for doing so. It was a minute to four. I could see the hand move to the twelve, then a dead silence. It hurt. Everyone looked up to see what had happened, but not for long. Sharp whistle blasts rang out along the trench, and with a cheer the men scrambled up the ladders. The bullets were cracking overhead, and occasionally a machine gun would rip and tear the top of the sandbag parapet. How I got up that ladder I will never know. The first ten feet out in front was agony. Then we passed through lanes in our barbed wire. I knew I was running, but could feel no motion below the waist. Patches on the ground seemed to float to the rear as if I were on a treadmill and scenery was rushing past me. The Germans had put a barrage of shrapnel across No Man's Land, and you could hear the pieces slap the ground about you.

After I had passed our barbed wire and gotten into No Man's Land a Tommy about fifteen feet to my right front turned around and looking in my direction, put his hand to his mouth and yelled something which I could not make out on account of the noise from the bursting shells. Then he coughed, stumbled, pitched forward and lay still. His body seemed to float to the rear of me. I could hear sharp cracks in the air about me. These were caused by passing rifle bullets. Frequently, to my right and left, little spurts of dirt would rise into the air and a ricochet bullet would whine on its way. If a Tommy should see one of these little spurts in front of him, he would tell the nurse about it later. The crossing of No Man's Land remains a blank to me.

Men on my right and left would stumble and fall. Some would try to get up, while others remained huddled and motionless. Then smashed-up barbed wire came into view and seemed carried on a tide to the rear. Suddenly, in front of me loomed a bashed-in trench about four feet wide. Queer-looking forms like mud turtles were scrambling up its wall. One of these forms seemed to slip and then rolled to the bottom of the trench. I leaped across this intervening space. The man to my left seemed to pause in midair, then pitched head down into the German trench. I laughed out loud in my delirium. Upon alighting on the other side of the trench I came to with a sudden jolt. Right in front of me loomed a giant form with a rifle which looked about ten feet long, on the end of which seemed seven bayonets. These flashed in the air in front of me. Then through my mind flashed the admonition of our bayonet instructor back in Blighty. He had said, "whenever you get in a charge and run your bayonet up to the hilt into a German the Fritz will fall. Perhaps your rifle will be wrenched from your grasp. Do not waste time, if the bayonet is fouled in his equipment, by putting your foot on his stomach and tugging at the rifle to extricate the bayonet. Simply press the trigger and the bullet will free it." In my present situation this was the logic, but for the life of me I could not remember how he had told me to get my bayonet into the German. To me this was the paramount issue. I closed my eyes and lunged forward. My rifle was torn from my hands. I must have gotten the German because he had disappeared. About twenty feet to my left front was a huge Prussian nearly six feet four inches in height, a fine specimen of physical manhood. The bayonet from his rifle was missing, but he clutched the barrel in both hands and was swinging the butt around his head. I could almost hear the swish of the butt passing through the air. Three

little Tommies were engaged with him. They looked like pigmies alongside of the Prussian. The Tommy on the left was gradually circling to the rear of his opponent. It was a funny sight to see them duck the swinging butt and try to jab him at the same time. The Tommy nearest me received the butt of the German's rifle in a smashing blow below the right temple. It smashed his head like an eggshell. He pitched forward on his side and a convulsive shudder ran through his body. Meanwhile the other Tommy had gained the rear of the Prussian. Suddenly about four inches of bayonet protruded from the throat of the Prussian soldier, who staggered forward and fell. I will never forget the look of blank astonishment that came over his face.

Then something hit me in the left shoulder and my left side went numb. It felt as if a hot poker was being driven through me. I felt no pain—just a sort of nervous shock. A bayonet had pierced me from the rear. I fell backward on the ground, but was not unconscious, because I could see dim objects moving around me. Then a flash of light in front of my eyes and unconsciousness. Something had hit me on the head. I have never found out what it was.

I dreamed I was being tossed about in an open boat on a heaving sea and opened my eyes. The moon was shining. I was on a stretcher being carried down one of our communication trenches. At the advanced first-aid post my wounds were dressed, and then I was put into an ambulance and sent to one of the base hospitals. The wounds in my shoulder and head were not serious and in six weeks I had rejoined my company for service in the front line.

Empey joins the "Suicide club." The thrilling details are told in the next installment.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

## DEADLY WEAPON OF WARFARE

German Albatross is Probably the Most Powerful Machine That Has Yet Been Developed.

The tendency in airplanes has been to run to two extremes—for fighting, as small and fast as possible; and for bombing, as large and powerful as possible. In a three-seater, one passenger sits out in front mounted in a machine-gun turret. The pilot comes next, immediately behind the motor, while the second passenger sits behind him mounted in another machine-gun turret. This airplane is capable of carrying many hundred pounds of explosives and, being very fast and heavily armed, generally accomplishes its mission.

The German albatross is capable of a horizontal speed of 300 kilometers (about 187 miles) an hour. It is a single seater and carries three machine guns, which, being controlled by the motor, shoot automatically and simultaneously through the propeller. The sight of these weapons converges at approximately 50 yards in front of the airplane, making the chance of hitting the opponent three times as sure. The motor is equipped with an electric self-starter. It has also electrical devices for keeping the water warm in the radiator while flying at great heights. The wing surface is less than 20 square yards.—Scribner's.

## Silkworms of the Sea.

Plenty of worms live in the sea, and some of them are very beautiful creatures. Which latter fact ought to be consoling to ourselves, inasmuch as there are naturalists who contend that the earliest ancestor of the human race was a marine worm. But the so-called "silkworm of the sea"—the designation being purely figurative and poetical—is a bivalve mollusk properly known as the "pinna" and native to the Mediterranean. It spins a silk so beautiful that in ancient days the fiber was reserved exclusively for the weaving of royal garments. This silk is spun by the mollusk to furnish an anchor line by which it fastens itself to a convenient rock. It is extremely fine and very strong. Cleaned, dried and passed through combs, it is reduced to delicate threads of a lustrous brownish-yellow hue, which are woven into gloves, stockings and other articles. A pair of stockings of this material today costs \$6.—Philadelphia Ledger.

## Pretty Bright Mule.

The farmer alleged a freight train of the defendant company had hit one of his mules.

"Now, Mr. Jones," said the attorney for the corporation to the aggrieved party, who occupied the witness stand, "will you kindly tell the court whether or not your mule was on the track, the property of the defendant, when hit by the train?"

"Well, sir," replied Mr. Jones, "I didn't witness the occurrence, but I suppose things must have been about as you say. This was a pretty bright mule and I reckon it that train had took out after him in the woods which fringe the track there where he was killed he would have got behind a tree."

## STATE NEWS IN BRIEF.

Following a shut down of more than a week as a result of the fire July 7, the Hammond Lumber company's mill at Astoria resumed operations Wednesday. The loss from the fire, aside from closing down the plant, will total close to \$100,000.

July 16 was the formal opening of the new Klamath state bank at Klamath Falls in a new precast-brick block. The new institution was launched with a capital stock of \$50,000 and a surplus of \$15,000. A savings department is to be established at once.

Cutting of fall grain is well under way now in Linn county. Considering the labor shortage, the work of cutting is progressing rapidly. From all indications fall grain will produce a fair yield. Owing to lack of rain, however, the spring grain gives very little promise.

It has come to light that Lieutenant Raymond E. Templeton, the Brownsville aviator who met his death on a flying field in Michigan, made a bequest for the good of his home town. He has remembered the home of his boyhood with a gift of \$1000 and specified that the money be used to erect a drinking fountain for horses.

In the belief that every woman in Klamath Falls under ordinary circumstances can devote at least three hours a week to the Red Cross work, a committee was appointed at a meeting of the Red Cross executive committee to present a plan for securing greater cooperation at the work-rooms.

Official inspection of the Klamath Falls municipal railroad, now completed from Klamath Falls east to Olene, 10 miles, was made by the officials Tuesday, under the escort of the builder, Robert E. Strahorn, and Chief Engineer Bogue. The party went as far as the road terminus at Dairy by auto and returned by train.

Dr. W. G. Hughes, a member of the Milton council and well known resident of Milton for the past five years, received a telegram from Washington, D. C., advising him to report for duty in the dental army corps within the next two weeks. Dr. Hughes expects to shape his affairs so that he can enter the service in accordance with the call.

Superintendent J. A. Churchill returned to Salem Wednesday from the meeting of the National Education association at Pittsburg, where he appeared on the programme a number of times. The sessions, he stated, were almost entirely confined to questions dealing with the schools in connection with the war and how they may become a factor in developing citizenship, and also in preparing youthful minds for the readjustments coming after the war.

The University of Oregon's first summer military training camp will close Saturday, July 20, after the busiest week in the entire month of its life. Applications for the second camp, in which the enrollment has been limited to a maximum of 300 men, are coming in large numbers. More than 50 applications have been received since it was definitely decided last Saturday to provide a second course in officers' training, August 1 to August 31. The applicants reside in all parts of the northwest. Enrollment will not close until August 1.

The state tax commission has ordered Secretary Goodin, of the board of control, and Tax Commissioner Galoway to secure estimates from all state institutions and departments as to the probable cost of operation for the next biennium to determine how much of an increased levy should be placed before the people at the general election in November. The commission will meet again on August 15 to consider the estimates, most of which will be in by then. It is also the plan of the commission to hold hearings from time to time for organizations that may have suggestions to make relative to the necessities of state expenditures.

The A. J. Wisdom sawmill near Elgin employs a girl high school graduate as a driver of the sawdust wagon, the young man formerly on the job having enlisted.

La Grande is to have a liberty chorus of approximately 200 voices. More than 100 already belong and it has been decided to employ Professor Edwards, of Baker, as director.

A break in the A line canal of the Umatilla project, near Hermiston, during the storm last week put the irrigation system on the project out of commission for two or three days.

Miss Ella Nelson was the first girl employed at the Baker mills to suffer injury, she losing the second finger and portion of the thumb of her right hand Saturday by a saw at the box factory of the Baker White Pine Lumber company.

The Baker Commercial Club has appealed for assistance from the government through Representative Sinnott to revive the Sumpter Valley irrigation project, completion of which would water about 80,000 acres east of Baker.

With the labor shortage so serious that farmers cannot handle the hay crop, young women have begun work in the fields in some parts of Linn county. From different communities the past few days have come reports of girls being seen in the fields pitching hay.