



# "OVER THE TOP"

## AN AMERICAN SOLDIER WHO WENT

### ARTHUR GUY EMPEY

MACHINE GUNNER, SERVING IN FRANCE

© 1917 BY ARTHUR GUY EMPEY

#### EMPEY JOINS PICK AND SHOVEL SQUAD AND DIGS TRENCHES IN NO MAN'S LAND.

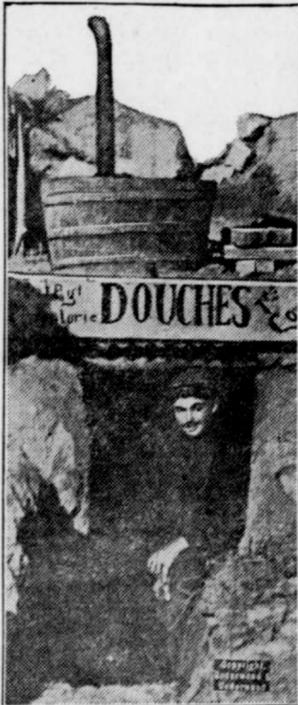
**Synopsis.**—Fired by the sinking of the Lusitania, with the loss of American lives, Arthur Guy Empey, an American living in Jersey City, goes to England and enlists as a private in the British army. After a short experience as a recruiting officer in London, he is sent to training quarters in France, 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 on the fire step while the bullets whiz overhead. Empey learns, as comrade falls, that death lurks always in the trenches. Chaplain distinguishes himself by rescuing wounded men under hot fire. With pick and shovel Empey has experience as a trench digger in No Man's Land.

#### CHAPTER XIII—Continued.

We lined up in front of the baths, soaked with perspiration, and piled our rifles into stacks. A sergeant of the R. A. M. C. with a yellow band around his left arm on which was "S. P." (sanitary police) in black letters, took charge, ordering us to take off our equipment, unroll our puttees and unlace boots. Then, starting from the right of the line, he divided us into squads of fifteen. I happened to be in the first squad.

We entered a small room, where we were given five minutes to undress, then filed into the bathroom. In here there were fifteen tubs (barrels sawed in two) half full of water. Each tub contained a piece of laundry soap. The sergeant informed us that we had just twelve minutes in which to take our baths. Soaping ourselves all over, we took turns in rubbing each other's backs, then by means of a garden hose, washed the soap off. The water was ice cold, but felt fine.

Pretty soon a bell rang and the water was turned off. Some of the slower ones were covered with soap, but this made no difference to the sergeant, who chased us into another room, where we lined up in front of a little window, resembling the box office in a theater, and received clean underwear



A Bathroom at the Front.

and towels. From here we went into the room where we had first undressed. Ten minutes were allowed in which to get into our "clabber."

My pair of drawers came up to my chin and the shirt barely reached my diaphragm, but they were clean—no strangers on them, so I was satisfied.

At the expiration of the time allotted we were turned out and finished our dressing on the grass.

When all of the company had bathed it was a case of march back to billets. That march was the most uncongenial one I imagined, just cussing and blinding all the way. We were covered with white dust and felt greasy from sweat.

The woolen underwear issued was itching like the mischief.

After eating our dinner of stew, which had been kept for us—it was now four o'clock—we went into the creek and had another bath.

If "Holy Joe" could have heard our remarks about the divisional baths and army red tape he would have fainted at our wickedness. But Tommy is only human after all.

I just mentioned "Holy Joe" or the chaplain in an irreverent sort of way, but no offense was meant, as there were some very brave men among them.

There are so many instances of heroic deeds performed under fire in rescuing the wounded that it would take several books to chronicle them, but I have to mention one instance performed by a chaplain, Captain Hall by name, in the brigade on our left, because it particularly appealed to me.

A chaplain is not a fighting man; he is recognized as a noncombatant and carries no arms. In a charge or trench raid the soldier gets a feeling of confidence from contact with his rifle, revolver, or bomb he is carrying. He has something to protect himself with, something with which he can inflict harm on the enemy—in other words, he is able to get his own back.

But the chaplain is empty-handed, and is at the mercy of the enemy if he encounters them, so it is doubly brave for him to go over the top, under fire, and bring in wounded. Also a chaplain is not required by the king's regulations to go over in a charge, but this one did, made three trips under the hottest kind of fire, each time returning with a wounded man on his back. On the third trip he received a bullet through his left arm, but never reported the matter to the doctor until late that night—just spent his time administering to the wants of the wounded lying on stretchers.

The chaplains of the British army are a fine, manly set of men, and are greatly respected by Tommy.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

##### Picks and Shovels.

I had not slept long before the sweet voice of the sergeant informed that "No. 1 section had clicked for another blinking digging party." I smiled to myself with deep satisfaction. I had been promoted from a mere digger to a member of the Suicide club, and was exempt from all fatigues. Then came an awful shock. The sergeant looked over in my direction and said:

"Don't you bomb throwers think you are wearing top hats out here. 'Cordin' to orders you've been taken up on the strength of this section, and will have to do your bit with the pick and shovel, same as the rest of us."

I put up a howl on my way to get my shovel, but the only thing that resulted was a loss of good humor on my part.

We fell in at eight o'clock, outside of our billets, a sort of masquerade party. I was disguised as a common laborer, had a pick and shovel, and about one hundred empty sandbags. The rest, about two hundred in all, were equipped likewise: picks, shovels, sandbags, rifles and ammunition.

The party moved out in column of fours, taking the road leading to the trenches. Several times we had to string out in the ditch to let long columns of limbers, artillery and supplies get past.

The marching, under these conditions, was necessarily slow. Upon arrival at the entrance to the communication trench, I looked at my illumi-

nated wrist watch—it was eleven o'clock.

Before entering this trench, word was passed down the line, "no talking or smoking, lead off in single file, covering party first."

This covering party consisted of 30 men, armed with rifles, bayonets, bombs, and two Lewis machine guns. They were to protect us and guard against a surprise attack while digging in No Man's Land.

The communication trench was about half a mile long, a zigzagging ditch, eight feet deep and three feet wide.

Now and again, German shrapnel would whistle overhead and burst in our vicinity. We would crouch against the earthen walls while the shell fragments "slapped" the ground above us. Once Fritz turned loose with a machine gun, the bullets from which "cracked" through the air and kicked up the dirt on the top, scattering sand and pebbles, which, hitting our steel helmets, sounded like hailstones.

Upon arrival in the fire trench an officer of the Royal Engineers gave us our instructions and acted as guide.

We were to dig an advanced trench two hundred yards from the Germans (the trenches at this point were six hundred yards apart).

Two winding lanes, five feet wide, had been cut through our barbed wire,



Trench Digging.

for the passage of the diggers. From these lines white tape had been laid on the ground to the point where we were to commence work. This in order that we would not get lost in the darkness. The proposed trench was also laid out with tape.

The covering party went out first. After a short wait, two scouts came back with information that the working party was to follow and "carry on" with their work.

In extended order, two yards apart, we noiselessly crept across No Man's Land. It was nervous work; every minute we expected a machine gun to open fire on us. Stray bullets "cracked" around us, or a ricochet sang overhead.

Arriving at the taped diagram of the trench, rifles slung around our shoulders, we lost no time in getting to work. We dug as quietly as possible but every now and then the noise of a pick or shovel striking a stone would send the cold shivers down our backs. Under our breaths we heartily cursed the offending Tommy.

At intervals a star shell would go up from the German lines and we would remain motionless until the glare of its white light died out.

When the trench had reached a depth of two feet we felt safer, because it would afford us cover in case we were discovered and fired on.

The digging had been in progress about two hours, when suddenly hell seemed to break loose in the form of machine-gun and rifle fire.

We dropped down on our bellies in the shallow trench, bullets knocking up the ground and snapping in the air. Then shrapnel butted in. The music was hot and Tommy danced.

The covering party was having a rough time of it; they had no cover; just had to take their medicine.

Word was passed down the line to beat it for our trenches. We needed no urging; grabbing our tools and stooping low, we legged it across No Man's Land. The covering party got away to a poor start but beat us in. They must have had wings because we lowered the record.

Panting and out of breath, we tumbled into our front-line trench. I tore my hands getting through our wire,

but, at the time, didn't notice it; my journey was too urgent.

When the roll was called we found that we had gotten it in the nose for 33 casualties.

Our artillery put a barrage on Fritz' front-line and communication trenches and their machine-gun and rifle fire suddenly ceased.

Upon the cessation of this fire, stretcher bearers went out to look for killed and wounded. Next day we learned that 21 of our men had been killed and 37 wounded. Five men were missing; lost in the darkness, they must have wandered over into the German lines, where they were either killed or captured.

Speaking of stretcher bearers and wounded, it is very hard for the average civilian to comprehend the enormous cost of taking care of wounded and the war in general. He or she gets so accustomed to seeing billions of dollars in print that the significance of the amount is passed over without thought.

From an official statement published in one of the London papers, it is stated that it costs between six and seven thousand pounds (\$30,000 to \$35,000) to kill or wound a soldier. This result was attained by taking the cost of the war to date and dividing it by the killed and wounded.

It may sound heartless and inhuman, but it is a fact, nevertheless, that from a military standpoint it is better for a man to be killed than wounded.

Empey tells of many ways the soldiers have of amusing themselves, in the next installment.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

#### IRREPARABLE LOSS TO WORLD

Literary Treasures Destroyed by the Huns at Louvain Can Never Be Replaced.

No reparation can restore to the world the galleries where Charles V., ruler of almost all Europe, pored over old learning; asserts the Toronto Mail and Empire. There is no way to replace the 250,000 manuscripts which went up in smoke and ashes on Aug. 27, 1914. Mankind is permanently poorer by the destruction of complete sets of all sixteenth-century editions of Virgil, nineteen sixteenth-century editions of Terrence, ten of Sallust, complete sixteenth-century editions of Tacitus, Seneca, Martial, Ovid, Horace, Juvenal, Livy, Lucretius, Lucian, Cicero and Caesar. Rare copies of Aristotle and the imperishable Greeks are lost forever; priceless early Bibles, whole libraries of ecclesiastical history and civil laws, texts illuminated and initialed and bordered by the patient labor of Spanish, German and Lowland monks. "Here was the truth regarding the Spanish Conquest and the grip of the Inquisition." There were mathematical treasures also.

#### First Irish Coaching Company.

In 1815, an Italian, named Bianconi, started the first coaching company in Ireland, running long cars over various regular routes. Long cars soon became the safest and most reliable means of traveling over Ireland, and Bianconi turned rich and prosperous. Writing in or about 1842, Mr. and Mrs. Hall, who have written much of Ireland, tell us that "persons of the highest respectability" used the long cars for traveling. At this time, although these cars passed through 123 towns, they had not made their way into the north of Ireland. The cars varied considerably in size, requiring from one to four horses. The fare, even over the rockiest roads in the West, was twopence farthing a mile. The Kails carefully explain that passengers were provided with "dry and comfortable horse-hair cushions and aprons" and that, in wet weather, the long cars never journeyed more than two stages without changing the cushions.

#### Eucalyptus Valuable Tree.

Eucalyptus will grow under many adverse conditions, so long as they are protected from frost. The young trees cannot stand frost, and this fact has restricted the growth of the species to certain favorable sections of California and the Southwest. On the other hand, the trees will thrive on very poor soil and they do not require very much attention. Some of the largest commercial plantations, maintained by railroad companies for tie-making purposes, are located along the shores of the Pacific ocean near San Diego, where their principal moisture comes from the heavy fogs that roll in from the sea, and which are absorbed by the leaves.

#### Spoiled the Good Thing.

Bobby had a bad habit of waking up in the middle of the night and crying dismally until one of his parents would walk him to sleep again. One night Bobbie began to cry and his mother said to her husband: "Dear, you'd better walk the baby." Father grumbled and baby howled and finally spoke up soggily: "Yes, dear; I fink you had better walk the baby." After this his habit was no longer indulged.



#### BUILDING OF GOOD HIGHWAYS

Federal Aid Road Act Exerts Important Influence on Legislation in Many States.

(Prepared by the United States Department of Agriculture.)

Federal-aid road projects, unquestionably, are ready for construction in every state this year. Under the federal-aid road act of 1916 every state in the Union is now in a position to co-operate with the federal government in the building of highways.

Results of far-reaching importance and of even greater potential value than the appropriation of federal funds have already been accomplished by the federal act. Among the impressive results is the establishment outright of state highway departments in Delaware, South Carolina, Texas, Indiana and Nevada and the strengthening of other state highway departments so as to remove all question as to the 16 states which were not qualified to obtain federal co-operation at the time of the passage of the federal act.

In the past winter more constructive state highway legislation has been placed upon statute books than has ever been enacted in any similar period since the American republic was founded. The conditions laid down by the federal act as necessary to participate in its benefits operated powerfully to bring about the establishment and strengthening of state highway departments, the placing of a vast amount of road construction under skilled supervision, the systematizing and correlation of road



Getting Road Levels Preparatory to Improving Highways.

work so as to provide the improvements most needed to meet traffic requirements, the creation of large funds for construction and maintenance and the establishment in many states of definite provisions insuring maintenance of highways from the date of their completion.

The working season of 1917 marked the opening of actual construction work under the terms of the post-road provision of the federal act, as necessary legislative and administrative work made it impracticable to get construction projects under way earlier. On January 31, 1918, the secretary of agriculture had approved 253 individual projects, aggregating 2,849.48 miles and calling for an expenditure from federal funds of \$7,324,721.72, and from state and local funds of \$9,917,143.70, making a total of \$17,241,865.42. These projects represented applications from 44 states.

#### CULVERT OF BEST MATERIAL

Worse Than Folly to Use Boards to Take Care of Roads That Have Cost Much Money.

If the culverts are not built of good material they will have to be rebuilt in a few years, whatever the quality of the roads they are made to serve. Defective culverts vitiate one of the elementary principles of highway economics, and the interests of the taxpayers require that the annual cost of every part of the roads built for their use be reduced to the lowest possible figure consistent with efficiency. Manifestly, it would be worse than folly to build culverts of boards to take care of roads that have cost hundreds or thousands of dollars the mile, and it would be none the less foolish, or worse, to waste money in work of this sort with the use of bad material.