

# "OVER THE TOP"

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

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## EMPEY GIVES A DESCRIPTION OF THE WORK ON OBSERVATION POST DUTY.

**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. Exciting experience on listening post detail.

### CHAPTER XVI—Continued.

"I came out with the first expeditionary force, and, like all the rest, thought we would have the enemy licked in jig time, and be able to eat Christmas dinner at home. Well, so far, I have eaten two Christmas dinners in the trenches, and am liable to eat two more, the way things are pointing. That is, if Fritz don't drop a 'whizz-bang' on me, and send me to Blighty. Sometimes I wish I would get hit, because it's no great picnic out here, and twenty-two months of it makes you fed up.

"It's fairly cushy now compared to what it used to be, although I admit this trench is a trifle rough. Now, we send over five shells to their one. We are getting our own back, but in the early days it was different. Then you had to take everything without reply. In fact, we would get twenty shells in return for every one we sent over. Fritz seemed to enjoy it, but we British didn't; we were the sufferers. Just one casualty after another. Sometimes whole platoons would disappear, especially when a 'Jack Johnson' plunked into their middle. It got so bad that a fellow, when writing home, wouldn't ask for any cigarettes to be sent out, because he was afraid he wouldn't be there to receive them.

"After the drive to Paris was turned back, trench warfare started. Our general grabbed a map, drew a pencil across it, and said, 'Dig here.' Then he went back to his tea, and Tommy armed himself with a pick and shovel and started digging. He's been digging ever since.

"Of course we dug those trenches at night, but it was hot work, what with the rifle and machine-gun fire. The stretcher bearers worked harder than the diggers.

"Those trenches, bloomin' ditches, I call them, were nightmares. They were only about five feet deep, and you used to get the backache from bending down. It wasn't exactly safe to stand upright, either, because as soon as your napper showed over the top a bullet would bounce off it, or else come so close it would make your hair stand.

"We used to fill sandbags and stick them on top of the parapet to make it higher, but no use; they would be there about an hour and then Fritz would turn loose and blow them to bits. My neck used to be sore from ducking shells and bullets.



One of the Big Guns Barking.

"Where my battery was stationed a hasty trench had been dug, which the boys nicknamed 'Suicide ditch,' and, believe me, Yank, this was the original 'Suicide ditch.' All the others are imitations.

"When a fellow went into that trench it was an even gamble that he would come out on a stretcher. At one time a Scotch battalion held it, and when they heard the betting was even money that they'd come out on stretchers, they grabbed all the bets in sight. Like a lot of bally idiots, several of the battery men fell for their game, and put up real money. The 'Jocks' suffered a lot of casualties, and the prospects looked bright for the battery men to collect some easy money. So when the battalion was relieved the gamblers lined up. Several 'Jocks' got their money for emerging safely, but the ones who clicked it weren't there to pay. The artillerymen had never thought it out that way. Those Scotties were bound to be sure winners, no matter how the wind blew. So take a tip from me, never bet with a Scottie, 'cause you'll lose money.

"At one part of our trench where a communication trench joined the front line a Tommy had stuck up a wooden signpost with three hands or arms on it. One of the hands, pointing to the German lines, read, 'To Berlin'; the one pointing down the communication trench read, 'To Blighty'; while the other said, 'Suicide Ditch, Change Here for Stretchers.'

"Farther down from this guide post the trench ran through an old orchard. On the edge of this orchard our battery had constructed an advanced observation post. The trees screened it from the enemy airmen and the roof was turfed. It wasn't cushy like ours, no timber or concrete re-enforcements, just walls of sandbags. From it a splendid view of the German lines could be obtained. This post wasn't exactly safe. It was a hot corner, shells plunking all around, and the bullets cutting leaves off the trees. Many a time when relieving the signaler at the 'phone, I had to crawl on my belly like a worm to keep from being hit.

"It was an observation post sure enough. That's all the use it was. Just observe all day, but never a message back for our battery to open up. You see, at this point of the line there were strict orders not to fire a shell, unless specially ordered to do so from

brigade headquarters. Blime me, if anyone disobeyed that command, our general—yes, it was Old Pepper—would have court-martialed the whole expeditionary force. Nobody went out of their way to disobey Old Pepper in those days, because he couldn't be called a parson; he was more like a pirate. If at any time the devil should feel lonely and sigh for a proper mate, Old Pepper would get the first call. Facing the Germans wasn't half bad compared with an interview with that old firebrand.

"If a company or battalion should give way a few yards against a superior force of Boches, Old Pepper would send for the commanding officer. In about half an hour the officer would come back with his face the color of a brick, and in a few hours what was left of his command would be holding their original position.

"I have seen an officer who wouldn't say d—n for a thousand quid spend five minutes with the old boy, and when he returned the flow of language from his lips would make a navy blush for shame.

"What I am going to tell you is how two of us put it over on the old scamp, and got away with it. It was a risky thing, too, because Old Pepper wouldn't have been exactly mild with us if he had got next to the game.

"Me and my mate, a lad named Harry Cassell, a bombardier in D 238 battery, or lance corporal, as you call it in the infantry, used to relieve the telephonists. We would do two hours on and four off. I would be on duty in the advanced observation post, while he would be at the other end of the wire in the battery dugout signaling station. We were supposed to send through orders for the battery to fire when ordered to do so by the observation officer in the advanced post. But very few messages were sent. It was only in case of an actual attack that we would get a chance to earn our 'two and six' a day. You see, Old Pepper had issued orders not to fire except when the orders came from him. And with Old Pepper orders is orders, and made to obey.

"The Germans must have known about these orders, for even in the day their transports and troops used to expose themselves as if they were on parade. This sure got up our nose, sitting there day after day, with fine targets in front of us but unable to send over a shell. We heartily cursed Old Pepper, his orders, the government, the people at home, and everything in general. But the Boches didn't mind cussing, and got very careless. Blime me, they were bally insulting. Used to, when using a certain road, throw their caps into the air as a taunt at our helplessness.

"Cassell had been a telegrapher in civil life and joined up when war was declared. As for me, I knew Morse, learned it at the signalers' school back in 1910. With an officer in the observation post, we could not carry on the kind of conversation that's usual between two mates, so we used the Morse code. To send, one of us would tap the transmitter with his finger nails, and the one on the other end would get it through the receiver. Many an hour was whiled away in this manner passing compliments back and forth.

"In the observation post the officer used to sit for hours with a powerful pair of field glasses to his eyes. Through a cleverly concealed loophole he would scan the ground behind the German trenches, looking for targets and finding many. This officer, Captain A— by name, had a habit of talking out loud to himself. Sometimes he would vent his opinion, same as a common private does when he's wrought up. Once upon a time the captain had been on Old Pepper's staff, so he could cuss and blind in the most approved style. Got to be sort of a habit with him.

"About six thousand yards from us, behind the German lines, was a road in plain view of our post. For the last three days Fritz had brought companies of troops down this road in broad daylight. They were never shelled. Whenever this happened the captain would froth at the mouth and let out a volume of Old Pepper's religion which used to make me love him.

"Every battery has a range chart on which distinctive landmarks are noted, with the range for each. These landmarks are called targets, and are numbered. On our battery's chart, that road was called 'Target 17, Range 6000, 3 degrees 30 minutes left.' D 238 battery consisted of four '4.5' howitzers, and fired a 35-pound H. E. shell. As you know, H. E. means 'high explosive.' I don't like bumming up my own battery, but we had a record in

the division for direct hits, and our boys were just pining away for a chance to exhibit their skill in the eyes of Fritz.

"On the afternoon of the fourth day of Fritz' contemptuous use of the road mentioned the captain and I were at our posts as usual. Fritz was strafing us pretty rough, just like he's doing now. The shells were playing leap-frog all through that orchard.

"I was carrying on a conversation in our 'tap' code with Cassell at the other end. It ran something like this:

"Say, Cassell, how would you like to be in the saloon bar of the King's Arms down Rye lane with a bottle of Bass in front of you, and that blonde barmaid waiting to fill 'em up again?"

The next installment relates how two artillerymen "put one over" on Old Pepper.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

## VAPOR BATHS IN LAPLAND

Writer's Strenuous Experience of Cleansing Process Finishes With Being Bastinadoed.

In Wide World Frank Hedges Butler describes a vapor bath in the land of the Lapps. He says:

The bathhouse is a small wooden structure generally situated some way from the dwelling house. It is divided into two compartments, one to undress in, while the other contains the oven which produces the steam. The oven is arched with large stones or pebbles, and heated by a fire placed beneath. Undressing in the first room, one enters the heated compartment. After a short rest on a wooden form or bench, which contains a place for the head, the attendants come in and bathe you. Cold water is thrown over the stones and the hissing vapor soon sends up a cloud of steam. The higher you sit from the floor the greater the heat. As more water is thrown over the red-hot stones the vapor becomes so intense that one can hardly breathe. We were soon gasping for breath and covered with a profuse perspiration which issued from every pore of the skin. Hanging up in the room were tender branches or twigs in a green state and retaining their leaves. Dipping these in water, the attendant began lashing and whipping me across the legs, shoulders, loins and back, till my body seemed quite red with the switching. The bastinadoing over, I was then washed with a soft flannel covered with soap, after which a jug of the coldest water was thrown over my head and body.

### Interesting Life Statistics.

On the authority of experts representing forty-three leading life insurance companies in the United States, it appears that a spinster lives longer than a married woman. Business women live longer than business men. A woman who takes an endowment policy lives longer than a woman who takes an ordinary life policy. It is not easy to explain why an unmarried woman survives a matron, nor why a business woman survives a business man, but the longevity of the endowment woman is believed to be due to the determination to live until the policy matures. Will power is hardly less important in many cases than physique, and must always be reckoned with. Even in disease a man or woman possesses a natural tendency toward health, and cures which often are attributed to medicine are really the assertion of the will.—Capper's Weekly.

### Love in Fishdom.

This is no "fish" story as the term is usually referred to, but it is a story about fish. Jim Foster, student of fish affairs, vouches for its authenticity.

Jim has a collection of big live fish in a small aquarium in a down-town restaurant and for 12 hours every night he watches them perform.

"The fish are very affectionate," declared the fish student. "They are good-tempered and kind toward one another. See those two largest fish? They are 'married,' I guess, or else in love with each other. They always kiss each other good night and nibble affectionately at each other's mouths. The female of the two never puts her cold fins on the male one's back. And in the morning—say, it's amusing to watch them yawn and stretch themselves."—Detroit Free Press.

### Use for Clothespins.

Clothespins make an excellent plaything for babies. They can be used for babies or soldiers, or to make fences, trees, log houses and many other interesting things. Playthings that can be taken apart and put together again are good to have; also blocks with which the child can build all kinds of objects—engines that he can push along the floor, balls to bounce and throw, doll carriages, washing sets, etc. Dolls with clothes that button and unbutton and come off may be used to teach the children how to dress and undress themselves.

The fruit of old age is the memory and rich store of blessings laid up in early life.—Cicero.

# BOY SCOUTS

(Conducted by National Council of the Boy Scouts of America.)

## SCOUTS HUNT BLACK WALNUT

In making a census of black walnut trees the Boy Scouts of America have a new task set by the president.

This work will appeal especially to scouts, not only as an important and patriotic activity, but also as a live, interesting, outdoor job, which links itself with many phases of scouting.

The government needs black walnut. In fact, black walnut wood is a prime necessity for the prosecution of our war program of guns and aircraft.

At this moment the entire black walnut growth of our forests is subject to census classification for war purposes. In behalf of the war department, boy scouts are asked to undertake this black walnut census.

It is desired to locate immediately all available standing black walnut timber wherever it occurs, isolated or in small groups as well as in larger lots.

It is important that every tree of this species be located and placed on record with details as to its size and availability, together with the owner's name and address, and such other data as is essential in providing the information required by the government.

This information data, as collected by scouts, will be tabulated by the forest service of the department of agriculture and placed at the disposal of the government. The government does not ask for old black walnut furniture, but only the timber.

### OUR ALLIES AT HOME.



Boy scouts are doing wonderful service in aiding Uncle Sam in connection with the war.

### FRENCH BOY SCOUTS BRAVE.

A letter to Chief Scout Executive James E. West from Corporal W. F. Bates, Jr., with the American expeditionary forces in France, indicates the boy scouts the world around are very much the same:

"Yesterday while on the road, I met a party of French boy scouts with whom I had a little chat. They even shared with me some little biscuits which they had for lunch.

"Hiking back to their much-bombarded town in the rain, they made a decided impression and a very happy one, for I imagined myself back again for the moment with my own lads of Troop No. 5 of Oil City, Pa.

"Some time I hope to take up the work again, with my boys in God's country. Until then it is good to remember the happy days I have had back home in camp and on the hike."

### WHAT THE SCOUT PLAN IS.

As a scout the boy willingly adopts as real and vital the universally accepted principles of life as set forth in the scout oath and law. This effectively influences the boy's nature and character so as better to prepare him for that work which the church can best do.

A scout promises that upon his honor he will do his duty to God and country and obey the scout law; that he will help other people at all times and that he will keep himself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight.