

“Over the Top”

By An American Soldier Who Went

ARTHUR GUY ENPEY  
Machine Gunner Serving in France

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On the next day, he came to; far distant voices sounded in his ears. Opening his eyes, in the entrance of the dugout he saw a corporal and two men with fixed bayonets.

The corporal was addressing him: “Get up, you white-livered blighter! Curse you and the day you ever joined D company, spilling their fine record! It’ll be you up against the wall, and a good job too. Get hold of him, men, and if he makes a break, give him the bayonet, and send it home, the cowardly sneak. Come on, you, move, we’ve been looking for you long enough.”

Lloyd, trembling and weakened by his long fast, tottered out, assisted by a soldier on each side of him.

They took him before the captain, but could get nothing out of him but: “For God’s sake, sir, don’t have me shot, don’t have me shot!”

The captain, utterly disgusted with him, sent him under escort to division headquarters for trial by court-martial, charged with desertion under fire. They shot deserters in France.

During his trial, Lloyd sat as one dazed, and could put nothing forward in his defense, only an occasional “Don’t have me shot!”

His sentence was passed: “To be shot at 8:38 o’clock in the morning of May 18, 1918.” This meant that he had only one more day to live.

He did not realize the awfulness of his sentence; his brain seemed paralyzed. He knew nothing of his trip, under guard, in a motor lorry to the sandbagged guardroom in the village, where he was dumped on the floor and left, while a sentry with a fixed bayonet paced up and down in front of the entrance.

Bully beef, water and biscuits were left beside him for his supper. The sentry, seeing that he ate nothing, came inside and shook him by the shoulder, saying in a kind voice:

“Cheero, laddie, better eat something. You’ll feel better. Don’t give up hope. You’ll be pardoned before morning. I know the way they run these things. They’re only trying to scare you, that’s all. Come now, that’s a good lad, eat something. It’ll make the world look different to you.”

The good-hearted sentry knew he was lying about the pardon. He knew nothing short of a miracle could save the poor lad.

Lloyd listened eagerly to his sentry’s words, and believed them. A look of hope came into his eyes, and he ravenously ate the meal beside him.

In about an hour’s time, the chaplain came to see him, but Lloyd would have none of him. He wanted no pardon; he was to be pardoned.

The artillery behind the lines suddenly opened up with everything they had. An intense bombardment of the enemy’s lines had commenced. The roar of the guns was deafening. Lloyd’s fears came back with a rush, and he covered on the earthen floor with his hands over his face.

The sentry, seeing his position, came in and tried to cheer him by talking to him:

“Never mind them guns, boy, they won’t hurt you. They are ours. We are giving the Boches a dose of their

sentry noticed the cowering attitude of Lloyd, and, with a sneer, said to him: “Instead of whispering in that corner, you ought to be saying your prayers. It’s bully cowards like you what’s spoiling our record. We’ve been out here eight or eighteen months, and you’re the first man to desert his post. The whole battalion is laughing and pointing fun at D company, and back to you! but you won’t get another chance to disgrace us. They’ll put your lights out in the morning!”

After listening to this tirade, Lloyd, in a faltering voice, asked: “They are not going to shoot me, are they? Why, the other sentry said they’d pardon me. For God’s sake—don’t tell me I’m to be shot!” and his voice died away in a sob.

“Of course, they’re going to shoot you. The other sentry was just a kid, dia’ you. Just like old Smith. Always a-tryin’ to cheer some one. You ain’t got no more chance o’ bein’ pardoned than I have o’ gettin’ to be colonel of my ‘best.’”

When the fact that all hope was gone finally entered Lloyd’s brain, a calm seemed to settle over him, and rising to his knees, with his arms stretched out to heaven, he prayed, and all of his soul entered into the prayer.

“O, good and merciful God, give me strength to die like a man! Deliver me from this coward’s death. Give me a chance to die like my mates in the fighting line, to die fighting for my country. I ask this of thee.”

A peace, hitherto unknown, came to him, and he crouched and covered no more, but calmly waited the dawn, ready to go to his death. The shells were bursting all around the guardroom, but he hardly noticed them.

While waiting there, the voice of the sentry, singing in a low tone, came to him. He was singing the chorus of the popular trench ditty:

I want to go home, I want to go home. I don’t want to go to the trenches no more. Where the “whizzbangs” and “sausages” roar galore. Take me over the sea, where the Allemand can’t get at me. Oh, my, I don’t want to die! I want to go home.

Lloyd listened to the words with a strange interest, and wondered what kind of a home he would go to across the Great Divide. It would be the only home he had ever known.

Suddenly there came a great rushing through the air, a blinding, gas-defeating report, and the sandbag walls of the guardroom toppled over, and then—blackness.

When Lloyd recovered consciousness, he was lying on his right side, facing what used to be the entrance of the guardroom. Now, it was only a jumble of rent and torn sandbags. His head seemed bursting. He slowly rose on his elbow, and there in the east the dawn was breaking. But what was that mangled shape lying over there among the sandbags? Slowly dragging himself to it, he saw the body of the sentry. One look was enough to know that he was dead. The soldier’s head was missing. The sentry had had his wish gratified. He had “gone home.” He was safe at last from the “whizzbangs” and the Allemand.

Like a flash it came to Lloyd that he was free. Free to go “over the top” with his company. Free to die like a true Briton fighting for his king and country. A great gladness and warmth came over him. Carefully stepping over the body of the sentry, he started on a mad race down the ruined street of the village, amid the bursting shells, minding them not, dodging through or around hurrying platoons on their way to also go “over the top.” Coming to a communication trench he could not get through. It was blocked with laughing, cheering and cursing soldiers. Climbing out of the trench, he ran wildly along the top, never heeding the rain of machine-gun bullets and shells, not even hearing the shouts of the officers, telling him to get back into the trench. He was going to join his company who were in the front line. He was going to fight with them. He, the despised coward, had come into his own.

While he was racing along, jumping over trenches crowded with soldiers, a ringing cheer broke out all along the front line, and his heart sank. He knew he was too late. His company had gone over. But still he ran madly. He would catch them. He would die with them.

Meanwhile his company had gone “over.” They, with the other companies had taken the first and second German trenches, and had pushed steadily on to the third line. D company, led by their captain, the one who had sent Lloyd to division headquarters for trial, charged with desertion, had pushed steadily forward until they found themselves far in advance of the rest of the attacking force. “Bombing out” trench after trench, and using their bayonets, they came to a German communication trench, which ended in a blindpass, and then the captain, and what was left of his men, knew they were in a trap. They would not retire. D company never retired, and they were D company. Right in front of them they could see hundreds of Germans preparing to rush them with bomb and bayonet. They would have some chance if ammunition and bombs could reach them from the rear. Their supply was exhausted, and the men realized it would be a case of dying as bravely as possible, or making a run for it. But D company would not run. It was against their traditions and principles.

The Germans would have to advance across an open space of three to four hundred yards before they could get within bombing distance of the trench, and then it would be all their own way.

Turning to his company, the captain said: “Men, it’s a case of going West for us. We are out of ammunition and

bombs, and the Boches have us in a trap. They will bomb us out. Our bayonets are useless here. We will have to go over and meet them, and it’s a case of thirty to one, so send every thrust home, and die like the men of D company should. When I give the word, follow me, and up and at them. Give them h—! Lord, if we only had a machine gun, we could wipe them out! Here they come, got ready, men.”

Just as he finished speaking, the welcome “pup-pup” of a machine gun in their rear rang out, and the front line of the crushing Germans seemed to melt away. They wavered, but once again came rushing onward. Down went their second line. The machine gun was taking an awful toll of lives. Then again they tried to advance, but the machine gun mowed them down.

Emptying their rifles and bombs, they broke and fled in a wild rush back to their trench, amid the cheers of “D” company. They were forming again for another attempt, when in the rear of D company came a mighty cheer. The ammunition had arrived and with it a battalion of Scotch to re-enforce them. They were saved. The unknown machine gunner had come to the rescue in the nick of time.

With the re-enforcements it was an easy task to take the third German line.

After the attack was over, the captain and three of his noncommissioned officers, wended their way back to the position where the machine gun had done its deadly work. He wanted to thank the gunner in the name of D company for his magnificent deed. They arrived at the gun, and an awful sight met their eyes.

Lloyd had reached the front line trench, after his company had left it. A strange company was nimbly crawling up the trench ladders. They were re-enforcements going over. They were Scotch, and they made a magnificent sight in their brightly colored kilts and bare knees.

Jumping over the trench, Lloyd raced across “No Man’s Land,” unheeding the rain of bullets, leaping over dark forms on the ground, some of which lay still, while others called out to him as he speeded past.

He came to the German front line, but it was deserted, except for heaps of dead and wounded—a grim tribute to the work of his company, good old D company. Leaping trenches, and gasping for breath, Lloyd could see right ahead of him his company in a dead-ended sap of a communication trench, and across the open, away in front of them, a mass of Germans preparing for a charge. Why didn’t D company fire on them? Why were they so strangely silent? What were they waiting for? Then he knew—their ammunition was exhausted.

But what was that on his right? A machine gun. Why didn’t it open fire and save them? He would make that gun’s crew do their duty. Rushing over to the gun he saw why it had not opened fire. Scattered around its base lay six still forms. They had brought their gun to consolidate the captured position, but a German machine gun had decreed they would never fire again.

Lloyd rushed to the gun and, grasping the traversing handles, trained it on the Germans. He pressed the thumb piece, but only a sharp click was the result. The gun was unloaded. Then he realized his helplessness. He did not know how to load the gun. Oh, why hadn’t he attended the machine-gun course in England? He’d been offered the chance, but with a blush of shame he remembered that he had been afraid. The nicknames of the machine gunners had frightened him. They were called the “Suicide club.” Now, because of this fear, his company would be destroyed, the men of D company would have to die, because he, Albert Lloyd, had been afraid of a name. In his shame he cried like a baby. Anyway he could die with them and, rising to his feet, he stumbled over the body of one of the gunners, who emitted a faint moan. A gleam of hope flashed through him. Perhaps this man could tell him how to load the gun. Stooping over the body he gently shook it and the soldier opened his eyes. Seeing Lloyd, he closed them again and, in a faint voice, said: “Get away, you blighter! Leave me alone. I don’t want any coward around me.”

The words cut Lloyd like a knife, but he was desperate. Taking the revolver out of the holster of the dying man he pressed the cold muzzle to the soldier’s head and replied:

“Yes, it is Lloyd, the coward of Company D, but so help me God, if you don’t tell me how to load that gun I’ll put a bullet through your brain!”

A sunny smile came over the countenance of the dying man and he said in a faint whisper: “Good old boy! I knew you wouldn’t disgrace our company—”

Lloyd interposed: “For God’s sake, if you want to save that company you are so proud of, tell me how to load that d—d gun!”

As if reciting a lesson in school, the soldier replied in a weak, singsong voice: “Insert tag end of belt in feed block, with left hand pull belt left front. Pull crank handle back on roller, let go, and repeat motion. Gun is now loaded. To fire, raise automatic safety latch, and press thumbpiece. Gun is now firing. If gun stops, ascertain position of crank handle—”

But Lloyd waited for no more. With wild joy at his heart, he took a belt from one of the ammunition boxes lying beside the gun, and followed the dying man’s instructions. Then he pressed the thumbpiece and a burst of fire rewarded his efforts. The gun was working.

Training it on the Germans he shouted for joy as their front rank went down.

To be continued.

NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the undersigned, trustee of the W. E. Potter Estate in bankruptcy, will receive sealed bids for the sale of all his right, title and interest in and to the following described real property, to-wit:

Lots 2, 3, 4, and 5, Block 6, and Lot 2, Block 1, all of said property being in the Town of Riverton, Coos County, Oregon.

The sale of said property will be made subject to tax liens and all county claims and interest. Bids will be received on each lot separately and on the entire property herein described. Bids must be accompanied by certified check for an amount equal to 10 per cent of the bid, payable to Carl M. Little, trustee. All bids will be received and accepted subject to the approval of the Court. Bids will be opened at office of A. M. Cannon, Referee in Bankruptcy, at 805 Title and Trust Building, on the 18th day of June, 1918, at 2 o’clock P. M.

Carl M. Little, Trustee.  
926 Northwestern Bank Bldg., Portland, Oregon.

ADMINISTRATRIX NOTICE.

Notice is hereby given that I have been appointed administratrix of the estate of the late Susan Wasson, deceased, by the Honorable the County Court of the State of Oregon, for Coos County.

All persons having claims against the estate of said deceased are hereby notified to present them to me with the proper vouchers, at the office of my attorney, Geo. Watkins, in the Eldorado Bldg., Marshfield, in said County and State, within six months of the date of this notice.

Dated this 7th day of June, 1918.  
Maud B. Watkins,  
Administratrix Estate Susan Wasson, Deceased. 2115

SUMMONS

In the Circuit Court of the State of Oregon for Coos County.

James Griffin, Plaintiff,  
vs.  
Elsie Griffin, Defendant.

To Elsie Griffin, the above named defendant:

In the Name of the State of Oregon. You are hereby required to appear and answer the complaint filed against you in the above entitled court and cause within six weeks from the date of the first publication of this summons, to-wit: within six weeks from the 31st day of May, 1918, the same being the date of the first publication of this summons; and in case you fail so to appear and answer on or before the 12th day of July, 1918, the same being the date of the last publication of this summons, the plaintiff will apply to the Court for the relief demanded against you in his said complaint, a succinct statement of which is as follows: For a decree of said Court dissolving the marriage contract existing between the plaintiff and the defendant.

This summons is served upon you by publication thereof in the Coquille Valley Sentinel by order of the Honorable James Watson, County Judge of the County of Coos, State of Oregon, the county in which such suit is pending, duly made and entered on the 14th day of May, 1918.

S. D. Pulford,  
Attorney for Plaintiff. Residence and postoffice address, Coquille, Oregon. 2017

(First published May 31, 1918.)

Professional Cards

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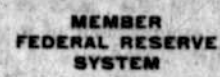
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ABSTRACTS For reliable Abstracts of Title and information about Coos County Real Estate see TITLE GUARANTEE & ABSTRACT COMPANY Marshfield and Coquille City, Ore. Special attention paid to looking after assessments and payment of taxes. Phone Marshfield Office Phone Coquille Office 14J HENRY SENGSTACKEN, Manager 191

Does Your Subscription Date Need Changing?



He Betrayed His Country.

own medicine. Our boys are going over the top at dawn of the morning to take their trenches. We'll give 'em a taste of cold steel with their sausages and beer. You just sit tight now until they relieve you. I'll have to go now, lad, as it's nearly time for my relief, and I don't want them to see me a-talkin' with you. So long, laddie, cheero."

With this, the sentry resumed the pacing of his post. In about ten minutes time he was relieved, and a D company man took his place.

Looking into the guardroom, the