

"Over the Top"

By An American Soldier Who Went

ARTHUR GUY EMPEY
Machine Gunner Serving in France

(Copyright, 1917, by Arthur Guy Empey)

CHAPTER XV.

Listening Post.

It was six in the morning when we arrived at our rest billets, and we were allowed to sleep until noon; that is, if we wanted to go without our breakfast. For sixteen days we remained



Entrance to a Dugout.

In rest billets, digging roads, drilling, and other fatigues, and then back into the front-line trench.

Nothing happened that night, but the next afternoon I found out that a bomber is general utility man in a section.

About five o'clock in the afternoon our lieutenant came down the trench and stopping in front of a bunch of us on the fire step, with a broad grin on his face, asked:

"Who is going to volunteer for listening post tonight? I need two men."

It is needless to say no one volunteered, because it is anything but a cushy job. I began to feel uncomfortable as I knew it was getting around for my turn. Sure enough, with another grin, he said:

"Empey, you and Wheeler are due, so come down into my dugout for instructions at six o'clock."

Just as he left and was going around a traverse, Fritz turned loose with a machine gun and the bullets ripped the sandbags right over his head. It gave me great pleasure to see him duck against the parapet. He was getting a taste of what we would get later out in front.

Then, of course, it began to rain. I knew it was the forerunner of a miserable night for us. Every time I had to go out in front, it just naturally rained. Old Jupiter Pivius must have had it in for me.

At six we reported for instructions. They were simple and easy. All we had to do was crawl out into No Man's Land, lie on our bellies with our ears to the ground and listen for the tap, tap of the German engineers or sappers who might be tunneling under No Man's Land to establish a mine-head beneath our trench.

Of course, in our orders we were told not to be captured by German patrols or reconnoitering parties. Lots of breath is wasted on the western front giving silly cautions.

As soon as it was dark, Wheeler and I crawled to our post which was about halfway between the lines. It was raining bucketfuls, the ground was a sea of sticky mud and clung to us like glue.

We took turns in listening with our ears to the ground. I would listen for twenty minutes while Wheeler would be on the qui vive for German patrols.

We each wore a wristwatch, and believe me, neither one of us did over twenty minutes. The rain soaked us to the skin and our ears were full of mud.

Every few minutes a bullet would crack overhead or a machine gun would traverse back and forth.

Then all firing suddenly ceased. I whispered to Wheeler, "Keep your eye skinned, mate; most likely Fritz has a patrol out—that's why the Boches have stopped firing."

We were each armed with a rifle and bayonet and three Mills bombs to be used for defense only.

I had my ear to the ground. All of a sudden I heard faint, dull thuds. In a low but excited voice I whispered to Wheeler, "I think they are mining, listen."

He put his ear to the ground and in an unsteady voice spoke into my ear:

"Yank, that's a patrol and it's heading our way. For God's sake keep still."

I was as still as a mouse and was scared stiff.

Hardly breathing and with eyes trying to pierce the inky blackness, we waited. I would have given a thousand pounds to have been safely in my dugout.

Then we plainly heard footsteps and

our hearts stood still. A dark form suddenly loomed up in front of me; it looked as big as the Woolworth building. I could hear the blood rushing through my veins and it sounded as loud as Niagara falls.

Forms seemed to emerge from the darkness. There were seven of them in all. I tried to wish them away. I never wished harder in my life. They muttered a few words in German and melted into the blackness. I didn't stop wishing either.

All of a sudden we heard a stumble, a muddy splash, and a muttered "Donner und Blitzen." One of the Roches had tumbled into a shell hole. Neither of us laughed. At that time—it didn't strike us as funny.

About twenty minutes after the Germans had disappeared something from the rear grabbed me by the foot. I nearly fainted with fright. Then a welcome whisper in a cockney accent. "I say, myte, we've come to relieve you."

Wheeler and I crawled back to our trench; we looked like wet hens and felt worse. After a swig of rum we were soon fast asleep on the fire step in our wet clothes.

The next morning I was as stiff as a poker and every joint ached like a bad tooth, but I was still alive, so it did not matter.

CHAPTER XVI.

Battery D 238.

The day after this I received the glad tidings that I would occupy the machine gunners' dugout right near the advanced artillery observation post. This dugout was a roomy affair, dry as tinder, and real cots in it. These cots had been made by the R. E.'s who had previously occupied the dugout. I was the first to enter and promptly made a signboard with my name and number on it and suspended it from the foot of the most comfortable cot therein.

In the trenches it is always "first come, first served," and this is lived up to by all.

Two R. F. A. men (Royal Field artillery) from the nearby observation post were allowed the privilege of stopping in this dugout when off duty.

One of these men, Bombardier Wilson by name, who belonged to Battery D 238, seemed to take a liking to me, and I returned this feeling.

In two days' time we were pretty chummy, and he told me how his battery in the early days of the war had put over a stunt on Old Pepper, and had gotten away with it.

I will endeavor to give the story as far as memory will permit in his own words:

"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 we 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 sucking shells and bullets.

"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 re-

lieved 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 artmen 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 signaller 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 a 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 bumping 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.

(To Be Continued.)

Four chairs at your service at the Metropolitan. No waiting.—Adv.

MILLICAN

(Continued from Page Two.)

Alex. Foal and Frank Lindsey went to Bend Monday, returning Tuesday.

The B. B. Conaway family is leaving for Arlington, Oregon, to join Mr. Conaway, who is employed near there. P. B. Johnson moved a load of household goods to Bend for them Wednesday.

Mrs. Conaway and three children were visitors at the A. D. Norton home from Sunday evening until Monday.

Mrs. J. J. Holland called on Mrs. R. R. Keller Tuesday.

Walter and Roy Keller called at the Wm. Ream home Thursday.

Chas. Groffenberger and son Benjie returned from Prineville Tuesday.

A. D. Norton, Frank Spencer and Fred Kiger were home over Sunday.

Mr. Mockel and H. Dyer are employed on the Fred Kiger place.

Mrs. A. D. Norton and two children called at the P. B. Johnson home Thursday.

Mrs. Vernon Clevenger and children were visitors at the P. B. Johnson home Monday.

Tom Going called at the J. J. Holland home Saturday.

ATTEND RECEPTION FOR MISS BLODGETT

PLAINVIEW, May 8.—The regular meeting of the O. D. O. club was postponed for one week so that as many of the ladies as possible could attend the Red Cross reception at Bend given for the nurse, Miss Blodgett, who is soon to sail for France. The following club members attended the reception: Mrs. Hartley, Mrs. Patterson, Mrs. Hoss, Mrs. Armstrong, Mrs. J. A. W. Scoggin, Mrs. Chalfan, Mrs. Powers and Mrs. H. A. Scoggin.

The O. D. O. club will meet with Mrs. F. A. Powers on Thursday afternoon, May 9.

Mrs. Hartley attended the Red Cross meeting in Tumalo Wednesday afternoon.

Ray Armstrong attended the club dance in Tumalo Saturday evening.

Four cars of people from Plainview enjoyed a picnic on the Deschutes river below Tumalo Sunday. A fine fry of trout caught by members of the party made the sumptuous dinner a big success.

Paul Scoggin was a caller in the Black Butte country last Friday.

Mr. Stahlie made a trip to Sisters Friday.

S. C. Caldwell of Bend spent Saturday at the A. E. Hoss ranch.

Clifford Ward has been quite sick but returned to school last week after a two weeks' absence.

Newell and Glenn Van Tassel missed several days of school recently on account of sickness.

Misses Rachael and Constance Knickerbocker spent the week-end at the Pine Lawn ranch.

A. E. Hoss returned home Friday after a three days' trip to Baker, Oregon.

Mr. and Mrs. Hartley and son Jack attended the play given by the eighth grade of Tumalo Friday evening. Mrs. Hartley's nephew, Donald Hollowell, was one of the actors.

John Calverley of Lower Bridge was a Plainview visitor recently.

A. W. Armstrong, Dick Doty and H. T. Hartley were callers in Bend Saturday.

Guy McCallister, A. E. Hoss and P. W. Levenson made a business trip to Bend Monday.



When He Gets that Pouch of Real Gravelly Chewing Plug You Sent Him

A man's first impulse is to share a good thing. Real Gravelly Plug has been spread all over America simply by the Gravelly user offering a small chew to his friends. Tobacco like that is worth sending. It means something when it gets there.

Give any man a chew of Real Gravelly Plug, and he will tell you that's the kind to send. Send the best! Ordinary plug is false economy. It costs less per week to chew Real Gravelly, because a small chew of it lasts a long while.

If you smoke a pipe, slice Gravelly with your knife and add a little to your smoking tobacco. It will give flavor—improve your smoke.

SEND YOUR FRIEND IN THE U. S. SERVICE A POUCH OF GRAVELLY. Dealers all around here carry it in 10c pouches. A 3c stamp will put it into his hands in any Training Camp or Seaport of the U. S. A. Even "over there" a 3c stamp will take it to him. Your dealer will supply envelope and give you official directions how to address it.

P. B. GRAVELLY TOBACCO CO., Danville, Va. The Patent Pouch keeps it Fresh and Clean and Good—it is not Real Gravelly without this Protection Seal. Established 1831

panies entering that city.

Mr. Hoydar will be succeeded in this city by G. A. Johnson, who has been general agent at Astoria for a number of years. Mr. Johnson will arrive in Bend in about two weeks to take charge of his new duties. The work in the meantime is being handled by his subordinates.

WANTS TO HELP OTHER MEN.

M. W. Taylor, Calvert, Ala., writes: "To Whom It May Concern: I recommend Foley Kidney Pills, the best I ever used. I tried different remedies, but none gave me relief like Foley's." They restore regular action of kidneys and bladder and relieve backache, rheumatic pains, stiff joints, sore muscles. Sold everywhere.

HERE IN BEND EVERY DAY

on the job to give you efficient service at the shortest notice. Here to see that you get a correct fitting in the kind of glasses you need, here to stay and back up every bit of work I do.

DR. C. H. FRANCIS

With MYRON H. SYMONS, O'Kane Building
OPTICIAN OPTOMETRIST

UTILITY TRAILERS

Hooverize Your Hauling

A Utility Trailer operated in connection with light truck or passenger car will pay operating expense

Manufactured by Los Angeles Trailer Co. Los Angeles, Cal.



Sold by REDMOND WAREHOUSE REDMOND, OREGON

Utility Trailers Utilize Surplus Power. Two Loads for One Cost

Not Just Meat But MEAT

O'DONNELL BROS.