



"OVER THE TOP"

AN AMERICAN SOLDIER WHO WENT

ARTHUR GUY EMPEY

MACHINE GUNNER, SERVING IN FRANCE

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After they had relieved the company in the trenches, Lloyd, with two of the old company men, was put on guard in one of the traverses. Not a shot was fired from the German lines, and no one paid any attention to him crouched on the firing step.

On the first time in, a new recruit is not required to stand with his head "over the top." He only "sits it out," while the older men keep watch.

At about ten o'clock, all of a sudden, he thought hell had broken loose, and crouched and shivered up against the parapet. Shells started bursting, as he imagined, right in their trench, when in fact they were landing about a hundred yards in rear of them, in the second lines.

One of the older men on guard, turning to his mate, said:

"There goes Fritz with those d—d trench mortars again. It's about time our artillery 'taped' them, and sent over a few. Well, I'll be d—d, where's that blighter of a draft man gone to? There's his rifle leaning against the parapet. He must have legged it. Just keep your eye peeled, Dick, while I report it to the sergeant. I wonder if the fool knows he can be shot for such tricks as leavin' his post?"

Lloyd had gone. When the trench mortars opened up, a maddening terror seized him and he wanted to run, to get away from that horrible din, anywhere to safety. So quietly sneaking around the traverse, he came to the entrance of a communication trench, and ran madly and blindly down it, running into traverses, stumbling into muddy holes, and falling full length over trench grids.

Groping blindly, with his arms stretched out in front of him, he at last came out of the trench into the village, or what used to be a village, before the German artillery razed it.

Mixed with his fear, he had a peculiar sort of cunning, which whispered to him to avoid all sentries, because if they saw him he would be sent back to that awful destruction in the front line, and perhaps be killed or maimed. The thought made him shudder, the cold sweat coming out in beads on his face.

On his left, in the darkness, he could make out the shadowy forms of trees; crawling on his hands and knees, stopping and crouching with fear at each shell-burst, he finally reached an old orchard and covered at the base of a shot-scarred apple tree.

He remained there all night, listening to the sound of the guns and ever praying, praying that his useless life would be spared.

As dawn began to break, he could discern little dark objects protruding from the ground all about him. Curiosity mastered his fear and he crawled to one of the objects, and there, in the uncertain light, he read on a little wooden cross:

"Pte. H. S. Wheaton, No. 1670, 1st London Regt. R. F. Killed in action, April 25, 1916. R. I. P." (Rest in Peace).

When it dawned on him that he had been hiding all night in a cemetery his reason seemed to leave him, and a mad desire to be free from it all made him rush madly away, falling over little wooden crosses, smashing some and trampling others under his feet.

In his flight he came to an old French dugout, half caved in and partially filled with silty and filthy water.

Like a fox being chased by the hounds, he ducked into this hole, and threw himself on a pile of old empty sandbags, wet and mildewed. Then—unconsciousness.

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, spolling 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 shoot 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 3:38 o'clock in the morning of May 18, 1916." This meant that he

than I have of gettin' to be colonel of my batt."

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" rear galore. Take me from 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, a deafening 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 blindsp, 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, get 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 onrushing 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. Dropping 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 sily crawling up the trench ladders. They were re-enforcements going over. They were Scotties, 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 nickname 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.

Traversing the gun back and forth along the mass of Germans, he saw them break and run back to the cover of their trench, leaving their dead and wounded behind. He had saved his company, he, Lloyd, the coward, had "done his bit." Releasing the thumbpiece, he looked at the watch on his wrist. He was still alive at "3:38."

"Ping!"—a bullet sang through the air, and Lloyd fell forward across the gun. A thin trickle of blood ran down his face from a little, black round hole in his forehead.

"The sentence of the court had been 'duly carried out.'"

The captain slowly raised the limp form drooping over the gun and, wiping the blood from the white face, recognized it as Lloyd, the coward of D company. Reverently covering the face with his handkerchief he turned to his "noncoms" and, in a voice husky with

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emotion, addressed them: "Boys, it's Lloyd, the deserter. He has redeemed himself, died the death of a hero—died that his mates might live."

That afternoon a solemn procession wended its way toward the cemetery. In the front a stretcher was carried by two sergeants. Across the stretcher the Union Jack was carefully spread. Behind the stretcher came a captain and forty-three men, all that were left of D company.

Arriving at the cemetery, they halted in front of an open grave. All about them wooden crosses were broken and trampled into the ground.

A grizzled old sergeant, noting this destruction, muttered under his breath: "Curse the cowardly blighter who wrecked those crosses! If I could only get these two hands around his neck his trip West would be short."

The corpse on the stretcher seemed to move, or it might have been the wind blowing the folds of the Union Jack.

(To Be Continued.)

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

TECHNICAL MEN TO BE CALLED

ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY FOR SPRUCE DIVISION ARE TO BE NEEDED FROM THIS STATE—17 ELIGIBLES IN COUNTY.

(From Saturday's Daily.)

Calls have been issued by the war department on the state of Oregon for 150 special or limited service men to fill positions in the spruce division, according to a telegram received by the local draft board here this morning. The call includes 70 choker men, 50 head buckers, 24 doggers and six general sawmill foremen from class 1, limited or special service, to be entrained July 29 for Vancouver barracks.

Men who are technically qualified for the above occupations and qualified for general military service may volunteer for classes 2, 3 and 4 as late as July 23. If a sufficient number of volunteers have not responded by July 24 to fill the allotments the local boards will be instructed to fill the allotments with a sufficient number of qualified men from within class 1 to fill the quota, deducting voluntary inductions.

In order that these calls may be allotted in such a manner as to produce the required number of technically qualified men with the least disturbance of industrial and agricultural conditions, the boards are requested to advise the adjutant general's office by telegraph of the number of qualified men in class 1, limited service. Only white men are eligible to the call. There are 17 men in class 1 in Deschutes county eligible to the call, but the quota has not yet been announced.

Fewer at Health Resorts This Year.

Increased expenses in traveling and at health resorts will keep many hay fever and asthma sufferers home this summer. Foley's Honey and Tar is recommended as a satisfactory remedy for hay fever and asthma. It heals and soothes, allays inflammation and irritation, and eases the choking sensation. Sold everywhere.—Adv.

FORGER HELD OVER UNDER \$2,000 BAIL

(From Saturday's Daily.)

W. W. Wenge, alias F. W. Swade, alias F. W. Mueller, who was arrested near Tumalo Thursday night, was arraigned in Judge Eastes' court this morning and bound over to the grand jury in the sum of \$2,000 for passing forged checks in this city in March, 1917.

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