



"OVER THE TOP"

AN AMERICAN SOLDIER
WHO WENT
ARTHUR GUY EMPEY
MACHINE GUNNER, SERVING IN FRANCE

WRITTEN BY
ARTHUR GUY EMPEY

CHAPTER XXVII.

Blighty.

From this first-aid post, after inoculating me with antitetanus serum to prevent lockjaw, I was put into an ambulance and sent to a temporary hospital behind the lines. To reach this hospital we had to go along a road about five miles in length. This road was under shell fire, for now and then a flare would light up the sky—a tremendous explosion—and then the road seemed to tremble. We did not mind, though no doubt some of us wished



In "Blighty."

that a shell would hit us and end our misery. Personally, I was not particular. It was nothing but bump, jolt, rattle, and bang.

Several times the driver would turn around and give us a "Cheero, mates, we'll soon be there—" fine fellows, those ambulance drivers, a lot of them go West, too.

We gradually drew out of the fire zone and pulled up in front of an immense dugout. Stretcher-bearers carried me down a number of steps and placed me on a white table in a brightly lighted room.

A sergeant of the Royal Army Medical corps removed my bandages and cut off my tunic. Then the doctor, with his sleeves rolled up, took charge. He winked at me and I winked back, and then he asked, "How do you feel, smashed up a bit?"

I answered: "I'm all right, but I'd give a quid for a drink of Bass."

He nodded to the sergeant, who disappeared, and I'll be darned if he didn't return with a glass of ale. I could only open my mouth about a quarter of an inch, but I got away with every drop of that ale. It tasted just like Blighty, and that is heaven to Tommy.

The doctor said something to an orderly, the only word I could catch was "chloroform," then they put some kind of an arrangement over my nose and mouth and it was me for dreamland.

When I opened my eyes I was lying on a stretcher, in a low wooden building. Everywhere I looked I saw rows of Tommies on stretchers, some dead to the world, and the rest with flags in their mouths.

The main topic of their conversation was Blighty. Nearly all had a grin on their faces, except those who didn't have enough force left to grin with. I grinned with my right eye, the other was bandaged.

Stretcher-bearers came in and began to carry the Tommies outside. You could hear the chug of the engines in the waiting ambulances.

I was put into an ambulance with three others and away we went for an eighteen-mile ride.

I was on a bottom stretcher. The lad right across from me was smashed up something horrible.

Blight above me was a man from the Royal Irish rifles, while across from him was a Scotchman.

We had gone about three miles when I heard the death-rattle in the throat of the man opposite. He had gone to rest across the Great Divide. I think at the time I envied him.

The man of the Royal Irish rifles had had his left foot blown off, the jolting of the ambulance over the rough road had loosened up the bandages on his foot, and had started it bleeding again. This blood ran down the side of the stretcher and started dripping. I was lying on my back, too weak to move, and the dripping of this blood got me in my unbandaged right eye. I closed my eye and pretty soon could not open the lid; the blood had congealed and closed it, as if it were glued down.

An English girl dressed in khaki was driving the ambulance, while beside her on the seat was a corporal of the R. A. M. C. They kept up a running conversation about Blighty which almost wrecked my nerves; pretty soon from the stretcher above me, the Irishman became aware of the fact that the bandage from his foot had become loose; it must have pained him horribly, because he yelled in a loud voice:

"If you don't stop this bloody death wagon and fix this d— bandage on my foot, I will get out and walk."

The girl on the seat turned around and in a sympathetic voice asked, "Poor fellow, are you very badly wounded?"

The Irishman, at this question, let out a howl of indignation and answered, "Am I very badly wounded, what bloody cheek; no, I'm not wounded, I've only been kicked by a canary bird."

The ambulance immediately stopped, and the corporal came to the rear and fixed him up, and also washed out my right eye. I was too weak to thank him, but it was a great relief. Then I must have become unconscious, because when I regained my senses, the ambulance was at a standstill, and my stretcher was being removed from it.

It was night, lanterns were flashing here and there, and I could see stretcher-bearers hurrying to and fro. Then I was carried into a hospital train.

The inside of this train looked like heaven to me, just pure white, and we met our first Red Cross nurses; we thought they were angels. And they were.

Nice little soft bunks and clean, white sheets.

A Red Cross nurse sat beside me during the whole ride which lasted three hours. She was holding my wrist; I thought I had made a hit, and tried to tell her how I got wounded, but she would put her finger to her lips and say, "Yes, I know, but you mustn't talk now, try to go to sleep, it'll do you good, doctor's orders." Later on I learned that she was taking my pulse every few minutes, as I was very weak from the loss of blood and they expected me to snuff it, but I didn't.

From the train we went into ambulances for a short ride to the hospital ship Panama. Another palace and more angels. I don't remember the trip across the channel.

I opened my eyes; I was being carried on a stretcher through lanes of people, some cheering, some waving flags, and others crying. The flags were Union Jacks, I was in Southampton, Blighty at last. My stretcher was strewn with flowers, cigarettes, and chocolates. Tears started to run down my cheek from my good eye. I like a booby was crying. Can you beat it?

Then into another hospital train, a five-hour ride to Paignton, another ambulance ride, and then I was carried into Munsey ward of the American Women's War hospital and put into a real bed.

This real bed was too much for my unstrung nerves and I fainted.

When I came to, a pretty Red Cross nurse was bending over me, bathing

my forehead with cold water, then she left and the ward orderly placed a screen around my bed, and gave me a much-needed bath and clean pajamas. Then the screen was removed and a bowl of steaming soup was given me. It tasted delicious.

Before finishing my soup the nurse came back to ask me my name and number. She put this information down in a little book and then asked:

"Where do you come from?" I answered:

"From the big town behind the Statue of Liberty;" upon hearing this she started jumping up and down, clapping her hands, and calling out to three nurses across the ward:

"Come here, girls—at last we have got a real live Yankee with us."

They came over and besieged me with questions, until the doctor arrived. Upon learning that I was an American he almost crushed my hand in his grip of welcome. They also were Americans, and were glad to see me.

The doctor very tenderly removed my bandages and told me, after viewing my wounds, that he would have to take me to the operating theater immediately. Personally I didn't care what was done with me.

In a few minutes, four orderlies who looked like undertakers dressed in white, brought a stretcher to my bed and placing me on it carried me out of the ward, across a courtyard to the operating room or "pictures," as Tommy calls it.

I don't remember having the anesthetic applied.

When I came to I was again lying in a bed in Munsey ward. One of the nurses had draped a large American flag over the head of the bed, and clasped in my hand was a smaller flag, and it made me feel good all over to again see the "Stars and Stripes."

At that time I wondered when the boys in the trenches would see the emblem of the "land of the free and the home of the brave" beside them, doing its bit in this great war of civilization.

My wounds were very painful, and several times at night I would dream that myriads of khaki-clad figures would pass my bed and each would stop, bend over me, and whisper, "The best of luck, mate."

Soaked with perspiration I would awake with a cry, and the night nurse would come over and hold my hand. This awakening got to be a habit with me until that particular nurse was transferred to another ward.

In three weeks' time, owing to the careful treatment received, I was able to sit up and get my bearings. Our ward contained seventy-five patients, 90 per cent of which were surgical cases. At the head of each bed hung a temperature chart and diagnosis sheet. Across this sheet would be written "G. S. W." or "S. W.," the former meaning gun shot wound and the latter shell wound. The "S. W." predominated, especially among the Royal Field artillery and Royal engineers.

About forty different regiments were represented, and many arguments ensued as to the respective fighting ability of each regiment. The rivalry was wonderful. A Jock arguing with an Irishman, then a strong Cockney accent would butt in in favor of a London regiment. Before long a Welshman, followed by a member of a Yorkshire regiment, and, perhaps, a Canadian intrude themselves and the argument waxed loud and furious. The patients in the beds start howling for them to settle their dispute outside and the ward is in an uproar. The head sister comes along and with a wave of the hand completely routs the doughty warriors and again silence reigns supreme.

Wednesday and Sunday of each week were visiting days and were looked forward to by the men, because they meant parcels containing fruit, sweets or fags. When a patient had a regular visitor, he was generally kept well supplied with these delicacies. Great jealousy is shown among the men as to their visitors and many word wars ensue after the visitors leave.

When a man is sent to a convalescent home, he generally turns over his steady visitor to the man in the next bed.

Most visitors have autograph albums and bore Tommy to death by asking him to write the particulars of his wounding in same. Several Tommies try to duck this unpleasant job by telling the visitors that they cannot write, but this never phases the owner of the album; he or she, generally she, offers to write it for them and Tommy is stung into telling his experiences.

The questions asked Tommy by visitors would make a clever joke book to a military man.

Some kindly looking old lady will stop at your bed and in a sympathetic voice address you: "You poor boy, wounded by those terrible Germans. You must be suffering frightful pain. A bullet, did you say? Well, tell me, I have always wanted to know, did it hurt worse going in or coming out?"

Tommy generally replies that he did not stop to figure it out when he was hit.

One very nice-looking, overenthusiastic young thing, stopped at my bed and asked, "What wounded you in the face?"

In a polite but bored tone I answered, "A rifle bullet."

With a look of disdain she passed to the next bed, first ejaculating, "Oh! Only a bullet? I thought it was a shell." Why she should think a shell wound was more of a distinction beats me. I don't see a whole lot of difference myself.

The American Women's War hospital was a heaven for wounded men. They were allowed every privilege possible conducive with the rules and mili-

tary discipline. The only fault was that the men's passes were restricted. To get a pass required an act of parliament. Tommy tried many tricks to get out, but the commandant, an old Boer war officer, was wise to them all, and it took a new and clever ruse to make him affix his signature to the coveted slip of paper.

As soon as it would get dark many a patient climbed over the wall and went "on his own," regardless of many signs starting him in the face. "Out of bounds for patients." Generally the nurses were looking the other way when one of these night raids started. I hope this information will get none of them into trouble, but I cannot resist the temptation to let the commandant know that occasionally we put it over on him.

One afternoon I received a note, through our underground channel, from my female visitor, asking me to attend a party at her house that night. I answered that she could expect me and to meet me at a certain place on the road well known by all patients, and some visitors, as "over the wall." I told her I would be on hand at seven-thirty.

About seven-fifteen I sneaked my overcoat and cap out of the ward and hid it in the bushes. Then I told the nurse, a particular friend of mine, that I was going for a walk in the rose garden. She winked and I knew that everything was all right on her end.

Going out of the ward, I slipped into the bushes and made for the wall. It was dark as pitch and I was groping through the underbrush, when suddenly I stepped into space and felt myself rushing downward, a horrible bump, and blackness. When I came to my wounded shoulder was hurting horribly. I was lying against a circular wall of bricks, dripping with moisture, and far away I could hear the trickling of water. I had in the darkness fallen into an old disused well. But why wasn't I wet? According to all rules I should have been drowned. Perhaps I was and didn't know it.

As the shock of my sudden stop gradually wore off it came to me that I was lying on a ledge and that the least movement on my part would precipitate me to the bottom of the well.

I struck a match. In its faint glare I saw that I was lying in a circular hole about twelve feet deep—the well had been filled in! The dripping I had heard came from a water pipe over on my right.

With my wounded shoulder it was impossible to shoo up the pipe. I could not yell for help, because the rescuer would want to know how the accident happened, and I would be haled before the commandant on charges. I just had to grin and bear it, with the forlorn hope that one of the returning night raiders would pass and I could give him our usual signal of "siss-a-s-s," which would bring him to the rescue.

Every half-hour I could hear the clock in the village strike, each stroke bringing forth a muffled volley of curses on the man who had dug the well.

After two hours I heard two men talking in low voices. I recognized Corporal Cook, an ardent "night raider." He heard my "siss-a-s-s" and came to the edge of the hole. I explained my predicament and amid a lot of impertinent remarks, which at the time I did not resent, I was soon fished out.

Taking off our boots, we sneaked into the ward. I was sitting on my bed in the dark, just starting to undress, when the man next to me, "Ginger" Phillips, whispered, "Op it, Yank, 'ere comes the matron."

I immediately got under the covers and feigned sleep. The matron stood talking in low tones to the night nurse and I fell asleep.

When I awoke in the morning the night sister, an American, was bending over me. An awful sight met my eyes. The coverlet on the bed and the sheets were a mass of mud and green slime. She was a good sport all right, and hustled to get clean clothes and sheets so that no one would get wise, but "on her own" she gave me a good tongue lashing but did not report me. One of the Canadians in the ward described her as being "a Jake of a good fellow."

Next visiting day I had an awful time explaining to my visitor why I had not met her at the appointed time and place.

And for a week every time I passed a patient he would call, "Well, well, here's the Yank. Hope you are feeling well, old top."

The surgeon in our ward was an American, a Harvard unit man, named Frost. We nicknamed him "Jack Frost." He was loved by all. If a Tommy was to be cut up he had no objection to undergoing the operation if "Jack Frost" was to wield the knife. His confidence in him was pathetic. He was the best sport I have ever met.

One Saturday morning the commandant and some "high up" officers were inspecting the ward, when one of the patients who had been wounded in the head by a bit of shrapnel, fell on the floor in a fit. They brought him round, and then looked for the ward orderly to carry the patient back to his bed at the other end of the ward. The orderly was nowhere to be found—like our policemen, they never are when needed. The officers were at a loss how to get Palmer into his bed. Doctor Frost was fidgeting around in a nervous manner, when suddenly with a muffled "d—n" and a few other qualifying adjectives, he stooped down and took the man in his arms like a baby—he was no feather, either—and staggered down the ward with him, put him in bed and undressed him. A low murmur of approval came from the patients. Doctor Frost got very red, and

as soon as he had finished undressing Palmer, hurriedly left the ward.

The wound in my face had almost healed and I was a horrible-looking sight—the left cheek twisted into a knot, the eye pulled down, and my mouth pointing in a north by north-west direction. I was very downhearted and could imagine myself during the rest of my life being shunned by all on account of the repulsive scar.

Doctor Frost arranged for me to go to the Cambridge Military hospital at Aldershot for a special operation to try and make the scar presentable.

I arrived at the hospital and got an awful shock. The food was poor and the discipline abnormally strict. No patient was allowed to sit on his bed, and smoking was permitted only at certain designated hours. The face specialist did nothing for me except to look at the wound. I made application for a transfer back to Paignton, offering to pay my transportation. This offer was accepted, and after two weeks' absence, once again I arrived in Munsey ward, all hope gone.

The next day after my return Doctor Frost stopped at my bed and said: "Well, Empey, if you want me to try and see what I can do with that scar I'll do it, but you are taking an awful chance."

I answered: "Well, doctor, Steve Brodie took a chance; he falls from New York and so do I."

Two days after the undertaker squad carried me to the operating room or "pictures," as we called them because of the funny films we see under ether, and the operation was performed. It was a wonderful piece of



The Author Just Before Leaving for Home.

surgery and a marvelous success. From now on that doctor can have my shirt.

More than once some poor soldier has been brought into the ward in a dying condition, resulting from loss of blood and exhaustion caused by his long journey from the trenches. After an examination the doctor announces that the only thing that will save him is a transfusion of blood. Where is the blood to come from? He does not have to wait long for an answer—several Tommies immediately volunteer their blood for their mate. Three or four are accepted; a blood test is made, and next day the transfusion takes place and there is another pale face in the ward.

Whenever bone is needed for some special operation, there are always men willing to give some—a leg if necessary to save some mangled mate from being crippled for life. More than one man will go through life with another man's blood running through his veins, or a piece of his rib or his shinbone in his own anatomy. Sometimes he never even knows the name of his benefactor.

The spirit of sacrifice is wonderful. For all the suffering caused this war is a blessing to England—it has made new men of her sons; has welded all classes into one glorious whole.

And I can't help saying that the doctors, sisters, and nurses in the English hospitals, are angels on earth. I love them all and can never repay the care and kindness shown to me. For the rest of my life the Red Cross will be to me the symbol of Faith, Hope and Charity.

After four months in the hospital, I went before an examining board and was discharged from the service of his Britannic majesty as "physically unfit for further war service."

After my discharge I engaged passage on the American liner New York, and after a stormy trip across the Atlantic one momentous day, in the haze of early dawn, I saw the statue of liberty looming over the port rail, and I wondered if ever again I would go

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"over the top with the best of luck and give them hell."

And even then, though it may seem strange, I was really sorry not to be back in the trenches with my mates. War is not a pink tea, but in a worthwhile cause like ours, mud, rats, cooties, shells, wounds, or death itself, are far outweighed by the deep sense of satisfaction felt by the man who does his bit.

There is one thing which my experience taught me that might help the boy who may have to go. It is this—anticipation is far worse than realization. In civil life a man stands in awe of the man above him, wonders how he could ever fill his job. When the time comes he rises to the occasion, is up and at it, and is surprised to find how much more easily than he anticipated he fills his responsibilities. It is really so "out there."

He has nerve for the hardships; the interest of the work grips him; he finds relief in the fun and comradeship of the trenches and wins that best sort of happiness that comes with duty well done.

THE END.

OREGON LIFE MAKES PAYMENT SPEEDILY

(From Tuesday's Daily.)
Checks covering the life insurance payable to the beneficiaries of Vernon A. Forbes and Ralph V. Poindexter were received this morning by Ashley Forrest, local agent of the Oregon Life, from the home office in Portland. The payment was made with the company's customary speed, according to Mr. Forrest, proofs of claim having been received in Portland on Monday and the checks mailed out on the same day, arriving here last evening.

NEW EQUIPMENT FOR POSTOFFICE

(From Friday's Daily.)
Extensive repairs are being made to the interior of the postoffice this week, the first shipment of modern postoffice equipment being received Wednesday, and succeeding shipments are expected to arrive daily. New desks, mailing stands, vaults and cabinets are being installed, replacing the old methods used. The new equipment will greatly facilitate the handling of the mail through the Bend office.

ARMY OFFICERS TO INSTRUCT MEN

(From Saturday's Daily)
For the purpose of instructing draft registrants on military matters, including insurance and allotments and physical qualifications, officers from the National Army at Camp Lewis will be in Bend on Friday evening, August 2. A meeting has been called by the local war board of all draft registrants in the county to be in attendance, at the circuit court rooms, the hour not yet being determined upon, but to be announced later.

PRINEVILLE ROAD IS NEARING COMPLETION

(From Saturday's Daily.)
Rails were laid to the depot site in Prineville on the new Prineville road yesterday, the train having entered the city the day previous. As a result of the completion of the railroad, Prineville is to have a celebration, the date of which will be announced within a short time.

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