

# GUNNER DEPEW

Albert N. Depew

EX-GUNNER AND CHIEF PETTY OFFICER, U. S. NAVY  
MEMBER OF THE FOREIGN LEGION OF FRANCE  
CAPTAIN GUN TURRET, FRENCH BATTLESHIP CASSARD  
WINNER OF THE CROIX DE GUERRE

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The next day the Germans went through the wine cellars, and shot all the inhabitants they found hiding there. A lot of people, who had taken refuge in a factory over night, decided to come out with a white flag. They were allowed to think that the white flag would be respected, but no sooner were they all out than they were seized and the women publicly violated in the square, after which the men were shot. A paralytic was shot as he sat in his arm-chair, and a boy of fourteen was taken by the legs and pulled apart.

At one place, a man was tied by the arms to the ceiling of his room and set afire. His trunk was completely carbonized, but his head and arms were unburned. At the same place, the body of a fifteen-year-old boy was found, pierced by more than twenty bayonet thrusts. Other dead were found with their hands still in the air, leaning up against walls.

At another place the Germans shelled the town for a day, and then entered and sacked it. The women and children were turned loose, without being allowed to take anything with them, and forced to leave the town. Nearly five hundred men were deported to Germany. Three, who were almost exhausted by hunger, tried to escape. They were bayoneted and clubbed to death. Twelve men, who had taken refuge in a farm, were tied together and shot in a mass. Another group of six were tied together and shot, after the Germans had put out their eyes and tortured them with bayonets. Three others were brought before their wives and children and sabered.

The Belgian told me he was at Namur when the Germans began shelling it. The bombardment lasted the whole of August 21 and 22, 1914. They centered their fire on the prison, the hospital, and the railway station. They entered the town at four o'clock in the afternoon of August 23. During the first twenty-four hours, they behaved themselves, but on the 24th they began firing at anyone they pleased, and set fire to different houses on five of the principal squares.

Then they ordered every one to leave his house, and those who did not were shot. The others, about four hundred in all, were drawn up in front of the church, close to the river bank. The Belgian said he could never forget how they all looked.

"I can remember just how it was," he said. "There were eight men, whom I knew very well, standing in a row with several priests. Next came two good friends of mine named Balbau and Guillaume, with Balbau's seventeen-year-old son; then two men who had taken refuge in a barn and had been discovered and blinded; then two other men whom I had never seen before.

"It was awful to see the way the women were crying—'Shoot me too, shoot me with my husband.'"

"The men were lined up on the edge of the hollow, which runs from the high road to the bottom of the village. One of them was leaning on the shoulders of an old priest, and he was crying. I am too young—I can't face death bravely."

"I couldn't bear the sight any longer. I turned my back to the road and covered my eyes. I heard the volley and the bodies falling. Then some one cried, 'Look, they're all down.' But a few escaped."

This Belgian had escaped by hiding—he could not remember how many days—in an old cart filled with manure and rubbish. He had chewed old hides for food, had swam across the river, and hid in a mud bank for almost a week longer, and finally got to France.

He took it very hard when we talked about Dixmude, and I told him that the old church was just shot to pieces. He asked about a painting called the

"Adoration of the Magi," and one of the other prisoners told us it had been saved and transported to Germany. If that is true, and they do not destroy it meanwhile, we will get it back, don't worry!

My wound was just a clean gunshot wound and not very serious, so, although it was not completely healed, they let me go after three weeks. But before I went, I saw something that no man of us will ever forget. Some of them took vows just like the men of the legion I have told about.

One of the patients was a German doctor, who had been picked up in No Man's Land, very seriously wounded. He was given the same treatment as any of us, that is, the very best, but finally, the doctors gave him up. They thought he would die slowly, and that it might take several weeks.

But there was a nurse there, who took special interest in his case, and she stayed up day and night for some time and finally brought him through. The case was very well known, and everybody said she had performed a miracle. He got better slowly.

Then a few weeks later, when he was out of danger and was able to walk, and it was only a question of time before he would be released from the hospital, this nurse was transferred to another hospital. Everybody knew her and liked her, and when she went around to say good-by, all the men were sorry and gave her little presents, and wanted her to write to them. She was going to get a nurse she knew in the other hospital to turn her letters into English, so that she could write to me. I gave her a ring I had made from a piece of shell case, but I guess she had hundreds of them at that.

But this German doctor would not say good-by to her. That would not have made me sore, but it made this French girl feel very bad, and she began to cry. One of the French officers saw her and found out about the doctor, and the officer went up and spoke to the German. Then the French officer left, and the German called to the nurse and she went over to him and stopped crying.

They talked for a little while, and then she put out her hands as if she was going to leave. He put out his



And Then He Twisted Her Wrists and Broke Them.

hands, too, and took hold of hers. And then he twisted her wrists and broke them. We heard the snap.

There were men in that ward who had not been on foot since the day they came to the hospital, and one of them was supposed to be dying, but it

is an absolute fact that when we heard her scream, there was not a man left in bed.

I need not tell you what we did to the German. They did not need to shoot him, after we got through with him. They did shoot what was left of him, to make sure, though.

Now, I have heard people say that it is not the Germans we are fighting, but the Kaiser and his system. Well, it may be true that some of the Boche soldiers would not do these things if they did not have to; myself, I am not so sure.

But you take this doctor. Here he was, an educated man, who had been trained all his life to help people who were in pain, and not to cause it. And he was not where he would have to obey the Kaiser or any other German. And this nurse had saved his life.

So I do not see that there is any argument about it. He broke that girl's wrists because he wanted to; that is all there is to it. Now, I say this German doctor was a dirty cur and a scoundrel. But I say that he is a fair sample of most of the Germans I have met. And it is Germans of this kind that we are fighting—not merely the Kaiser.

It is like going to college. I have never been there, but I have heard some people say it did not do a man any good to go. But I have never heard a man who went there say that. Probably you have not been over there, and maybe you think we are not fighting the German people, but only the Kaiser and his funkies.

Well, nobody had better tell me that. Because I have been there, and I have seen this. And I know.

### CHAPTER X.

#### Hell at Gallipoli.

After I was discharged from the hospital, I was ordered to report to my ship at Brest for sea duty.

The boys aboard the Cassard gave me a hearty welcome, especially Murray, who had come back after two weeks in the trenches at Dixmude. I was glad to see them, too, for after all, they were garbles, and I always feel more at home with them than with soldiers. Then, it was pretty rough stuff at Dixmude, and after resting up at the hospital, I was keen on going to sea again.

The Cassard was in dry dock for repairs after her last voyage to the Dardanelles as escort to the Duplex. Everything was being rushed to get her out as soon as possible, and crews were working day and night. There were other ships there too—super-dreadnaughts, and dreadnaughts, and battleships, and armored cruisers, all being overhauled.

We received and placed guns of newer design, filled the magazines with the highest explosives known to naval use, and generally made ready for a hard job. Our magazines were filled with shells for our big 12 and 14-inch guns. A 14-inch shell can tear a hole through the heaviest armor plate at 12,000 yards, and will do more damage than you would think.

When we had coaled and had got our stores aboard, we dressed for action—or rather, undressed. The decks were clear; hatch covers bolted and davits folded down; furniture, chests, tables, chairs were sent ashore, and inflammable gear, like our rope hammocks, went overboard. You could not find a single wooden chair or table in the ward room.

When the ship is cleared for action, a shell bursting inside cannot find much to set afire, and if one bursts on deck, there is nothing to burn but the wooden deck, and that is covered with steel plate.

Finally, we had roll call—all men present. Then we set sail for the Dardanelles as escort to the Duplex, which had on board territorial and provincial French troops—Gascons, Parisians, Normans, Indo-Chinese, Spahis, Turcos—all kinds. When we messed, we had to squat down on the steel mess deck and eat from metal plates.

There had been a notice posted before we left that the Zeppelins had begun sea raids, and we kept a live eye out for them. The news proved to be a fake, though, and we did not see a single cigar while we were out.

We made the trip to the Dardanelles without sighting an enemy craft, keeping in close touch with the Duplex, and busy every minute preparing for action.

I was made gun captain and given charge of the starboard bow turret, mounting two 14-inch guns. I had my men at gun practice daily, and by the time we neared the Dardanelles, after five days, they were in pretty fair shape.

It was about 5 a. m. when we drew near Cape Helles and took stations for action. The Duplex was in front

of us. The batteries on the cape opened up on us, and in a few minutes later those at Kum Kaleh joined in.

As the Duplex made for "V" beach and prepared to land her troops, we swung broadside on, raking their batteries as we did so, and received a shell, which entered through a gun port in the after turret and exploded. Some bags of powder stored there (where they should never have been) were fired and the roof of the turret was just lifted off. It landed on deck, tilted up against the side of the turret.

On deck the rain of fire was simply terrific. Steel flew in all directions. It was smash, crash, slam-bang all the time, and I do not mind saying I never thought we would come out of it.

Some of the heavy armor plate up forward was shot away and after that the old Cassard looked more like a monitor than anything else to me. As we drew nearer the shore they began using shrapnel on us and in no time at all our funnels were shot full of holes and a sieve was watertight compared to them.

Naturally we were not just taking all this punishment without any comeback. Our guns were at it fast and from the way the fire slackened in certain places we knew we were making it effective. My guns did for two enemy pieces that I know of, and perhaps several others.

The French garbles were a good deal more excited in action than I thought they would be. They were dodging around below decks, trying to miss the shrapnel that came aboard, shouting, swearing, singing—but fighting hard, at that. They stood the gaff just as well as any other garbles would, only in their own sweet way—which is noisy enough, believe me.

One of our seamen was hit 130 times by fragments of shrapnel, so you can see what they were up against in the dodging line. A gun turret in action is not exactly the best place on earth for a nervous man nor one who likes his comfort. There is an awful lot of heat and noise and smell and work, all the time in a fighting gun turret. But during an engagement I would rather be in a gun turret every time than between decks. At that, if anything does happen in a turret—it is good night sure for all, and no rain checks needed.

One of our junior lieutenants was struck by a fragment of shell as he was at his station behind the wheelhouse and a piece of his skull was driven into his brain. He was carried into my gun turret, but he would not let them take him to sick bay to have his wound dressed. There he sat, asking every now and then how the fight was going and then sort of dozing off for a while.

After half an hour of action we put about and started away, still firing. As a parting slap on the back the Turks tore off one of our big-gun turrets, and then away we went, back to Brest with a casualty list of only 15. We did not have much trouble guessing that it was dry dock for us again.

We got back to Brest after a quiet voyage, patching ourselves up where we could on the way, and again there was the rush work, day and night, to get into shape and do it over again. They turned us out in 12 days and back we went to the Turks and their Hun assistants.

We were lucky getting inshore, only receiving a nasty smash astern, when the Turks got our range and landed two peaches before we got out. We nearly tore our rudder off getting away. But we had to come back right away, because we had carried quite



Gunner Depew in French Sailor Uniform.

a number of heavy guns from Brest and were given the job of running them ashore. It was day and night work and a great job for fun, because, while you never knew when you would get it, you had good reason to feel you would get lammed by a cute little shell or a dainty bit of shrapnel before the job was over.

Aboard ship it was deck work, of course, and it was not much better there than ashore with the guns, because the enemy trenches were near the shore and they amused themselves trying to pick us off whenever we showed on deck. I guess we were a regular shooting gallery for them, and some of our men thought they did not need all the practice they were getting, for quite a few of us

acted as bull's eyes.

But we did not mind the bullets so much. They make a clean wound or put you away entirely; shrapnel tears you up and can play all kinds of tricks with various parts of your body without killing you. As for shells—well, mincemeat is the word.

The Narrows were thick with mines and there had been a great deal of damage done there, so after a while the British detailed their Yarmouth trawlers to go in and sweep up. They had to go up unprotected, of course, and they started off one night all serene.

Everything went well until they turned at the Narrows and started back. Then, before you could tell it, five or six searchlights were playing on one of the trawlers and shells were splashing the water all over her. Both banks were simply banging away point blank at them and I never thought they would get back.

They did get back, though, but some of them had hardly enough men left to work ship. But that is like the Limeys. They will get back from anywhere while there is one man alive.

A chap aboard one of the trawlers said a shell went through the wheelhouse between the quartermaster and himself and all the Q. M. said was, "Gaw blimey, that tickled."

"But I know their shooting was very bad," said the other chap to me. "Those Turks must have thought the flue was behind them."

Coming back from the Dardanelles a gold stripe sent for me and asked me whether I thought there were other ex-navy gunners in the States that would serve with the French. I told them the country was full of good gunners and he wanted me to write to all I knew and get them to come over. He did not mean by this, and neither do I, that there were not good gunners in the French navy, but because there were—lots of them. But you can never have too many handy boys with the guns and he was very anxious for me to get all I could. I had no way of reaching the ex-garbles I did know, so I had to pass up this opportunity to recruit by mail.

While we were in Brest I got permission to go aboard a submarine and a petty officer showed me around. This was the first time I was in the interior of a sub and I told the officer that I would like to take a spin in the tub myself. He introduced me to the commander, but the petty officer said he did not think they would let me stay aboard. I showed the commander my passport and talked to him for a while, and he said he would take me on their practice cruise two days later if the Old Man gave me written permission.

So I hot-footed it back to the Cassard and while I did not promise that I would get any American gunners for him in exchange for the written permission, he was free to think that if he wanted to. It seems as though he did take it that way, for he gave me a note to the sub commander and sent him another note by messenger. I wanted Murray to go too, but the Old Man said one was enough.

So, two days later, I went aboard in the morning and had breakfast with the sub crew and a good breakfast it was, too. After breakfast they took stations and the commander went up on the structure ambships, which was just under the conning tower, and I squatted down on the deck beneath the structure.

(To Be Continued.)

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## PUTNAM WILL REMAIN EAST

BULLETIN OWNER, NOW IN A TRAINING CAMP, BECOMES ASSOCIATED WITH NEW YORK PUBLISHING HOUSE.

(Portland Oregonian.)

Word has just been received in Portland that George Palmer Putnam, one of Oregon's well-known younger citizens, has become associated with the publishing firm of G. P. Putnam's Sons, of New York and London, an establishment founded by his grandfather of the same name before the Civil war.

Mr. Putnam for nearly 10 years was a resident of Bend, Ore., from whence he went to Salem as secretary to Governor Withycombe during his first term. He owns and formerly edited the Bend Bulletin, and has been an extensive traveler and author of several books, one descriptive of the Oregon country, and the last one, a novel, staged in his adopted state.

Last year Mr. Putnam went east and took up special war work with the department of justice. Four months ago he entered the field artillery officers' training school at Camp Taylor, Kentucky, where he receives his commission this month. He plans then to return to New York and enter upon his new work, which includes the presidency of the Knickerbocker Press, the printing plant of the publishing house.

It had been Mr. Putnam's intention to return to Oregon immediately after completing his military training, now that the war is over, but, due to the death of his brother six weeks ago, business reasons compelled him to revise his plans. It is stated. Since last summer Mrs. Putnam, who was well known in Portland, has been in war work at Washington.

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