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OVER THE TOP

By Arthur Guy Empey, an American soldier From page 4

for that purpose. The quartermaster sergeant never goes into the front-line trench. He doesn't have to, and I have never heard of one volunteering to

The company sergeant major sorts the rations and sends them in.

Tommy's trench rations consist of all the bully beef he can eat, biscuits, cheese, tinned butter (sometimes 17 men to a tin), jam or marmalade, and occasionally fresh bread (ten to a loaf). When it is possible he gets ten and stew.

When things are quiet, and Fritz is behaving like a gentleman, which seldom happens, Tommy has the opportunity or msking dessert. This is "trench pudding." It is made from broken biscults, condensed milk, jam-a little water added, slightly flavored with mud-put into a canteen and cooked over a little spirit stove known as "Tommy's cooker."

(A firm in Blighty widely advertises these cookers as a necessity for the men in the trenches. Gullible people buy them—ship them to the Tommies, who, immediately upon receipt of same throw them over the parapet. Sometimes a Tommy falls for the ad, and uses the cooker in a dugout to the disgust and discomfort of the other oc-

This mess is stirred up in a tin and allowed to simmer over the flames from the cooker until Tommy decides that it has reached sufficient (gluelike) consistency. He takes his bayonet and by means of the handle carries the ness up in the front trench to cool. After it has cooled off he tries to eat it. Generally one or two Tommies in a section have cast-fron stomachs and the tin is soon emptied. Once I tasted trench pudding, but only once.

In addition to the regular ration issue Tommy uses another channel to enlarge his menu.

In the English papers a "Lonely Soldier" column is run. This is for the soldiers at the front who are supposed to be without friends or relatives. They write to the papers and their names are published. Girls and women in England answer them, and send out parcels of foodstuffs, cigarettes, candy, etc. I have known a "lonely" soldier to receive as many as five parcels and eleven letters in one

CHAPTER VIII.

The Little Wooden Cross. After remaining in rest billets for eight days, we received the unwelcome tidings that the next morning we would "go in" to "take over." At six in the morning our march started and, after long march down the dusty road, we again arrived at reserve billets.

I was No. 1 in the leading set of fours. The man on my left was named "Pete Walling," a cheery sort of fellow. He laughed and joked all the way on the march, buoying up my drooping spirits. I could not figure out anything attractive in again occupying the front line, but Pete did not seem to mind, said it was all in a lifetime. My left heel was blistered from the rubbing of my heavy marching boot. Pete noticed that I was limping and offered to carry my rifle, but by this time I had learned the ethics of the march in the British army and courteously refused

We had gotten half-way through the communication trench. Pete in my immediate rear. He had his hand on my shoulder, as men in a communication trench have to do to keep in touch with each other. We had just climbed ove a bashed-in part of the trench when in our rear a man tripped over a loose signal wire, and let out an oath. As usual, Pete rushed to his help. To reach the fallen man he had to cross this bashed-in part. A bullet cracked in the air and I ducked. Then a mean from the rear. My heart stood still. I went back and Pete was lying on the ground. By the aid of my flashlight I saw that he had his hand pressed to his right breast. The fingers were cov ered with blood. I flashed the light on his face and in its glow a grayishblue color was stealing over his coun tenance. Pete looked up at me and said: "Well, Yank, they've done me in I can feel myself going West." His voice was getting fainter and I had to kneel down to get his words. Then he gave me a message to write home to his mother and his sweetheart, and L like a great big boob, cried like a baby. I was losing my first friend of the

Word was passed to the rear for a stretcher. He died before it arrived. Two of us put the body on the stretcher and carried it to the nearest first-sid post, where the doctor took an official record of Pete's name, number, rank and regiment from his identity disk, this to be used in the casunity lists and notification to his

We left Pete there, but it broke our hearts to do so. The doctor informed us that we could bury him the next morning. That afternoon five of the boys of our section, myself included. went to the little ruined village in the rear and from the deserted gardens of the French chateaux gathered grass and flowers. From these we made a wreath.

While the boys were making this wrenth, I sat under a shot-scarred apple tree and carved out the following verses on a little wooden shield which we palled on Pete's cross.

True to his God; true to Britain, Doing his duty to the last, Just one more name to be written On the Roll of Honor of heroes pas

Passed to their God, enabrined in giory. Entering life of eternal rest, One more chapter in England's story Of her sone doing their best.

Rest, you soldier, mate so true, Never forgotten by us below; Know that we are thinking of you, Ere to our rest we are bidden to go.

Next morning the whole section went over to say good-by to Pete, and laid him away to rest.

After each one had a look at the face of the dead, a corporal of the R. A. M. C. sewed up the remains in a blanket. Then placing two heavy ropes across the stretcher (to be used in lowering the body into the grave), we lifted Pete onto the stretcher, and reverently covered him with a large union lack, the fing he had died for.

The chaplain led the way, then came the officers of the section, followed by two of the men carrying a wreath. Im mediately after came poor Pete on th flag-draped stretcher, carried by fou soldiers. I was one of the four. Be hind the stretcher, in column of fours. came the remainder of the section.

To get to the cemetery, we had to pass through the little shell-destroyed village, where troops were hurrying

As the funeral procession passed these troops came to the "attention" and smartly saluted the dead. Poor Pete was receiving the only sa-

lute a private is entitled to "some where in France." Now and again a shell from the Gernan lines would go whistling over the

village to burst in our artillery lines in the rear. When we reached the cemetery we halted in front of an open grave, and

laid the stretcher beside it. Forming hollow square around the opening of the grave, the chaplain read the burial German machine-gun bullets were

'cracking" in the air above us, but Pete didn't mind, and neither did we. When the body was lowered into the grave the fing having been removed,

we clicked our beels together and came to the salute. I left before the grave was filled in.

I could not bear to see the dirt thrown on the blanket-covered face of my comrade. On the western front there are no coffins, and you are lucky to get a blanket to protect you from the wet and the worms. Several of the section stayed and decorated the grave with white stones

That night, in the light of a lonely candle in the machine gunner's dugout of the front-line trenck I wrote two etters. One to Pete's mother, the ther to his sweetheart. While doing this I cursed the Prussian war god with all my heart, and I think that St. Peter noted same.

The machine gunners in the dugouit were laughing and joking. To them Pete was unknown. Pretty soon, in the warmth of their merriment, my blues disappeared. One soon forgets on the western front.

CHAPTER IX.

Suicide Annex. I was in my first dugout and looked around curiously. Over the door of same was a little sign reading "Sui cide Annex." One of the boys told me that this particular front trench was called "Suicide Ditch." Later on I learned that machine gunners and bombers are known as the "Suicide

Club.

That dugout was muddy. The men Mept in mud, washed in mud, ate mud, and dreamed mud. I had never before realized that so much discomfort and misery could be contained in those three little letters, M U D. . The floor of the dugout was an inch deep in water. Outside it was raining cats and dogs, and thin rivulets were trickling down the steps. From the air shaft immediately above me came a drip, drip, drip. Suicide Annex was a hole eight feet wide, ten feet long and six feet high. It was about twenty feet below the fire trench; at least there were twenty steps leading down to it. These steps were cut into the earth, but at that time were muddy and slippery. A man had to be very careful or else he would "shoot the chutes." The air was foul, and you could cut the smoke from Tommy's fags with a knife. It was cold. The walls and roof were supported with heavy squarecut timbers, while the entrance was strengthened with sandbags. Nails had been driven into these timbers. On each nall hung a miscellaneous assortment of equipment. The lighting arrangements were superb-one candle in a reflector made from an ammunition tin. My teeth were chattering from the cold, and the drip from the airshaft did not help matters much. While I was sitting bemoaning my fate and wishing for the fireside at

home, the fellow next to me, who was writing a letter, looked up and innecently asked, "Say, Yank, how do you spell 'conflagration'?"

I looked at him in contempt and answered that I did not know.

From the darkness in one of the corners came a thin, piping voice singing one of the popular trench ditties en-

"Pack up your Troubles in your Old Kit Bag, and Smile, Smile, Smile." Every now and then the singer would stop to cough, cough, cough, but it was a good illustration of Tommy's cheerfulness under such conditions.

A machine-gun officer entered the dugout and gave me a hard look. I sneaked past him, sliding and slipping, and reached my section of the frontline trench, where I was greeted by the sergeant, who asked me, "Where -- 'ave you been?"

I made no answer, but sat on the muddy fire step, shivering with the cold and with the rain beating in my face. About half an hour later I teamed up with another fellow and went on goard with my head sticking over the top. At ten o'clock I was relieved and resumed my sitting position on the fire step. The rain suddenly stopped and we all breathed a sigh of relief. We prayed for the morning and the rum issue.

To be continued next week

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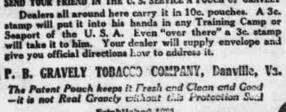
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