



OVER THE TOP

AN AMERICAN SOLDIER WHO WENT

ARTHUR GUY EMPEY

MACHINE GUNNER, SERVING IN FRANCE

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EMPEY TAKES HIS FIRST TURN ON THE FIRING STEP OF THE TRENCH WHILE BULLETS WHIZ OVERHEAD.

Synopsis.—Fired by the sinking of the Lusitania, with the loss of American lives, Arthur Guy Empey, an American living in Jersey City, goes to England and enlists as a private in the British army. After a short experience as a recruiting officer in London, he is sent to training quarters in France, where he first hears the sound of big guns and makes the acquaintance of "cooties." After a brief period of training Empey's company is sent into the front-line trenches.

CHAPTER V.

Mud, Rats and Shells.

I must have slept for two or three hours, not the refreshing kind that results from clean sheets and soft pillows, but the sleep that comes from cold, wet and sheer exhaustion.

Suddenly, the earth seemed to shake and a thunderclap burst in my ears. I opened my eyes—I was splashed all over with sticky mud, and men were picking themselves up from the bottom of the trench. The parapet on my left had toppled into the trench, completely blocking it with a wall of tumbled-up earth. The man on my left lay still. I rubbed the mud from my face, and an awful sight met my gaze—his head was smashed to a pulp, and his steel helmet was full of brains and blood. A German "Minnie" (trench mortar) had exploded in the next traverse. Men were digging into the soft mass of mud in a frenzy of haste. Stretcher-bearers came up the trench on the double. After a few minutes of digging, three still, muddy forms on stretchers were carried down the communication trench to the rear. Soon they would be resting "somewhere in France," with a little wooden cross over their heads. They had done their bit for king and country, had died without firing a shot, but their services were appreciated, nevertheless.

Later on, I found out their names. They belonged to our draft.

I was dazed and motionless. Suddenly a shovel was pushed into my hands, and a rough but kindly voice said:

"Here, my lad, lend a hand clearing the trench, but keep your head down, and look out for snipers. One of the Fritz's is a daisy, and he'll get you if you're not careful."

Lying on my belly on the bottom of the trench, I filled sandbags with the sticky mud, they were dragged to my rear by the other men, and the work of rebuilding the parapet was on. The harder I worked, the better I felt. Although the weather was cold, I was soaked with sweat.

Occasionally a bullet would crack overhead, and a machine gun would kick up the mud on the bashed-in parapet. At each crack I would duck and shield my face with my arm. One of the older men noticed this action of mine, and whispered:

"Don't duck at the crack of a bullet, Yank; the danger has passed—you never hear the one that wings you. Always remember that if you are going to get it, you'll get it, so never worry."

This made a great impression on me at the time, and from then on, I adopted his motto, "If you're going to get it, you'll get it."

It helped me wonderfully. I used it so often afterwards that some of my mates dubbed me, "If you're going to get it, you'll get it."

After an hour's hard work, all my nervousness left me, and I was laughing and joking with the rest.

At one o'clock, dinner came up in the form of a dixie of hot stew.

I looked for my canteen. It had fallen off the fire step, and was half buried in the mud. The man on my left noticed this, and told the corporal, dishing out the rations, to put my share in his mess tin. Then he whispered to me, "Always take care of your mess tin, mate."

I had learned another maxim of the trenches.

That stew tasted fine. I was as hungry as a bear. We had "seconds," or another helping, because three of the men had "gone West," killed by the explosion of the German trench mortar, and we ate their share, but still I was hungry, so I filled in with bully beef and biscuits. Then I drained my water bottle. Later on I learned another maxim of the front line, "Go sparingly with your water." The bully beef made me thirsty, and by tea time

I was dying for a drink, but my pride would not allow me to ask my mates for water. I was fast learning the ethics of the trenches.

That night I was put on guard with an older man. We stood on the fire step with our hands over the top, peering out into No Man's Land. It was nervous work for me, but the other fellow seemed to take it as part of the night's routine.

Then something shot past my face. My heart stopped beating, and I ducked my head below the parapet. A soft chuckle from my mate brought me to my senses, and I feebly asked, "For heaven's sake, what was that?"

He answered, "Only a rat taking a promenade along the sandbags." I felt very sheepish.

About every twenty minutes the sentry in the next traverse would fire a star shell from his flare pistol. The "plop" would give me a start of fright. I never got used to this noise during my service in the trenches.

I would watch the arc described by the star shell, and then stare into No Man's Land waiting for it to burst. In its lurid light the barbed wire and stakes would be silhouetted against its light like a latticed window. Then darkness.

Once, out in front of our wire, I heard a noise and saw dark forms moving. My rifle was lying across the sandbagged parapet. I reached for it, and was taking aim to fire, when my mate grasped my arm, and whispered, "Don't fire." He challenged in a low voice. The reply came back instantly from the dark forms:

"Shut your blinkin' mouth, you bloomin' idiot; do you want us to clobber you from the Boches?"

Later we learned that the word, "No challenging or firing, wiring party out in front," had been given to the sentry on our right, but he had failed to pass it down the trench. An officer had overheard our challenge and the reply, and immediately put the offending sentry under arrest. The sentry cycled twenty-one days on the wheel, that is, he received twenty-one days' field punishment No. 1, or "crucifixion," as Tommy terms it.

This consists of being spread-eagled on the wheel of a limber two hours a day for twenty-one days, regardless of the weather. During this period, your rations consist of bully beef, biscuits and water.

A few months later I met this sentry and he confided to me that since being "crucified," he had never failed to pass the word down the trench when so ordered. In view of the offense, the above punishment was very light, in that falling to pass the word down a trench may mean the loss of many lives, and the spoiling of some important enterprise in No Man's Land.

CHAPTER VI.

"Back of the Line."

Our tour in the front-line trench lasted four days, and then we were relieved by the — brigade.

Going down the communication trench we were in a merry mood, although we were cold and wet, and every bone in our bodies ached. It makes a lot of difference whether you are "going in" or "going out."

At the end of the communication trench, limbers were waiting on the road for us. I thought we were going to ride back to rest billets, but soon found out that the only time an infantryman rides is when he is wounded and is bound for the base or Blighty. These limbers carried our reserve ammunition and rations. Our march to rest billets was thoroughly enjoyed by me. It seemed as if I were on furlough, and was leaving behind everything that was disagreeable and horrible. Every recruit feels this way after being relieved from the trenches.

We marched eight kilos and then halted in front of a French estaminet. The captain gave the order to turn out on each side of the road and wait his return. Pretty soon he came back and told B company to occupy billets 117, 118 and 119. Billet 117 was an old stable which had previously been occupied by cows. About four feet in front of the entrance was a huge manure pile, and the odor from it was anything but pleasant. Using my flashlight I stumbled through the door. Just before entering I observed a white sign reading: "Sitting 50, lying 20," but, at the time, its significance did not strike me. Next morning I asked the sergeant major what it meant. He nonchalantly answered: "That's some of the work of the R. A. M. C. (Royal Army Medical corps). It simply means that in case of an attack, this billet will accommodate fifty wounded who are able to sit up and take notice, or twenty stretcher cases."

It was not long after this that I was one of the "20 lying."

I soon hit the hay and was fast asleep, even my friends the "cooties" failed to disturb me.

The next morning at about six o'clock I was awakened by the lance corporal of our section, informing me that I had been detailed as mess orderly, and to report to the cook and give him a hand. I helped him make the fire, carry water from an old well, and fry the bacon. Lids of dixies are used to cook the bacon in. After breakfast was cooked, I carried a dixie of hot tea and the lid full of bacon to our section, and told the corporal that breakfast was ready. He looked at me in contempt, and then shouted, "Breakfast up, come and get it!" I immediately got wise to the trench parlance, and never again informed that "Breakfast was served."

It didn't take long for the Tommies to answer this call. Half dressed, they lined up with their canteens and I dished out the tea. Each Tommy carried in his hand a thick slice of bread which had been issued with the rations the night before. Then I had the pleasure of seeing them dig into the bacon with their dirty fingers. The allowance was one slice per man. The late ones received very small slices. As each Tommy got his share he immediately disappeared into the billet. Pretty soon about fifteen of them made a rush to the cookhouse, each carrying a huge slice of bread. These slices they dipped into the bacon grease which was steaming over the fire. The last man invariably lost out. I was the last man.

After breakfast our section carried their equipment into a field adjoining the billet and got busy removing the trench mud therefrom, because at 8:45 a. m., they had to fall in for inspection



Resting Back of the Lines.

and parade, and woe betide the man who was unshaven, or had mud on his uniform. Cleanliness is next to godliness in the British army, and Old Pepper must have been personally acquainted with St. Peter.

Our drill consisted of close-order formation, which lasted until noon. During this time we had two ten-minute breaks for rest, and no sooner the word, "Fall out for ten minutes," was given than each Tommy got out a fag and lighted it.

Fags are issued every Sunday morning, and you generally get between twenty and forty. The brand generally issued is the "Woodbine." Sometimes we are lucky and get "Goldflakes," "Players" or "Red Hussars." Occasionally an issue of "Life Rays" comes along. Then the older Tommies immediately get busy on the recruits and trade these for "Woodbines" or "Goldflakes." A recruit only has to be stuck once in this manner, and then he ceases to be a recruit. There is a reason. Tommy is a great cigarette smoker. He smokes under all conditions, except when unconscious or when he is reconnoitering in No Man's Land at night. Then, for obvious reasons, he does not care to have a lighted cigarette in his mouth.

Stretcher bearers carry fags for wounded Tommies. When a stretcher bearer arrives alongside of a Tommy who has been hit the following conver-

sation usually takes place: Stretcher bearer—"Want a fag? Where are you hit?" Tommy looks up and answers, "Yes. In the leg."

After dismissal from parade, we returned to our billets and I had to get busy immediately with the dinner issue. Dinner consisted of stew made from fresh beef, a couple of spuds, bully beef, Maconochie rations and water—plenty of water. There is great competition among the men to spear with their forks the two lonely potatoes.

Back on the front line, after a stay in rest billets, Empey gets a shock when a German bullet cuts down his first friend of the trenches. He tells the story in the next installment.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

MOST PERILOUS OF TRADES

Ship's Rigger, When at Work, Has Realization That Each Moment May Be His Last.

It is not the trapeze performer, the steeple-jack, or the old-time sailor who faces the greatest peril in his work, but the ship's rigger, who combines all three of these callings. During the present war, with the reappearance of sailing vessels in our ports, the ancient profession of ship's rigger had been suddenly revived. The seaports have been scoured to discover old riggers, for their service today is invaluable. The skill and daring of American ship's riggers was once as famous as that of the Yankee skippers, says Boys' Life, the boy scouts' magazine.

When a sailing vessel comes into port in need of repairs the ship's rigger is the first man aloft. It may be impossible to tell if her rigging will support a man's weight. The ropes must be covered with ice. The rigger must judge the strength of the ropes with his eye and risk his life upon them. A trapeze performer in the circus must trust his weight to ropes high in air, but he is sure that they are strong and will bear his weight. The ship's rigger must swing himself in quite as perilous positions and remain there for hours, doing the hardest kind of work.

The sailing of the ship usually waits upon the repairs he makes, and the expense of maintaining the crew and delaying the ship makes it necessary for him to work with feverish haste day and night.

New Type of "Vampire."

Arrest at the instance of an army officer of a young woman who had committed bigamy in order to secure the allowance granted to soldiers' dependents gives color to the warning issued against this new type of "vampire," notes the Omaha Bee. Young soldiers are picked out by these women and deliberately led into marriage, the one purpose being to secure money from the government. The game is not a new one, nor does it exhibit much modification in its details. It is reported from some of the Southern army camps that as many as three and four soldiers have been wedded to the same woman. The young men who are away from home for the first time, wearing their country's uniform, should be warned that marriage is not merely an enlistment for the war, and therefore to be approached very seriously. Romance is part of a soldier's life, but it may have consequences that will embarrass him in after years. The "vampire" is one of his chiefest dangers, and one against whom it is difficult to guard.

Hottest Heat.

The highest temperature ever reached by man is 9,400 degrees Fahrenheit. This was produced by two English experimenters, Sir Andrew Noble and Sir F. Abel, asserts a scientist. This was done by exploding cordite in a durable steel cylinder. This was due to the suddenness of the reaction, and, although of momentary duration, it was an interesting scientific achievement, nevertheless. With the aid of cordite Sir William Crookes was able to make small diamonds. Professor Moissan, who has produced diamonds, can heat his electric furnace to 6,900 degrees.

Make Light of Heavy Loads.

The streets of Jerusalem within the walls are as narrow and crowded that it is impossible to drive a wagon through them, and many of them are built of a series of steps upon the hillside, so that it is a task to lead camels or donkeys through them after sunrise. Therefore most of the carrying and portering is done by men. They carry the most surprising loads. I am told that they will step along briskly with 600 pounds on their backs, with stout ropes holding the bundles to their foreheads.—Exchange.

On Life's Pathway.

Do today's duty, fight today's temptations, and do not weaken and distract yourself by looking forward to things which you cannot see, and could not understand if you saw them.—Charles Kingsley.

ROAD BUILDING

FACTORS IN ROAD BUILDING

Necessity Emphasized in Giving Greatest Consideration to All Local Conditions.

(Prepared by the United States Department of Agriculture.)

Theory is simply the sign post that points the way in road building, while judgment is the vehicle on which the journey is dependent, says a publication on "The Design of Public Roads" by the United States department of agriculture.

The publication emphasizes the necessity of giving the greatest consideration to all local factors in road construction. In order to furnish the kind of roads that a community wants and to furnish them with the least possible drain on the public treasury, the person who designs them must be thoroughly familiar with local conditions and must possess the judgment necessary to weigh the importance of all considerations. The publication makes no attempt to state definite and exact rules for designing roads to suit every locality but takes up separately the important features of the problem with a view to showing the variations in current practice and the influence of some special conditions with regard to each feature.

In order to select the type of surface best adapted to the need of a particular road, it is necessary to consider first, the class of traffic to which the road will be subjected, and second, to compare the estimated ultimate cost of the different surface types which would be capable of satisfactorily caring for that particular class of traffic. The number of roads for which accurate traffic and efficiency records have been kept is said to be insufficient to warrant definite conclusions as to the best type for any particular class of traffic, but the following summary is said to contain about as definite information on this point as can be drawn from available records.

(a) Earth roads, when properly maintained, are satisfactory in dry weather for a light volume of all kinds of highway traffic.

(b) Sand-clay roads are the same as earth roads, except that the surfacing material has been selected carefully with a view to increasing the stability of the surface in both wet and dry weather. They are satisfactory for a moderate traffic of horse-drawn vehicles and a light traffic of automobiles. They seldom are satisfactory for even a light traffic of heavy trucks unless the roadbed material is very stable.

(c) Gravel roads, when well built, are satisfactory for a heavy traffic of



Brick or Concrete Roads Are Economical if There is Considerable Heavy Traffic.

horse-drawn vehicles, a light traffic of automobiles, and a light traffic of heavy trucks.

(d) Water-bound macadam roads are adapted to the same general character of traffic as gravel roads.

(e) Surface-treated macadam roads are adapted especially for a heavy traffic of automobiles. They also are satisfactory for a light traffic of horse-drawn vehicles and heavy trucks. In all cases they require constant maintenance.

(f) Bituminous roads are suitable for a heavy traffic of both automobiles and horse-drawn vehicles and a moderate traffic of heavy trucks.

(g) Concrete roads are adapted to the same general class of traffic as bituminous roads, and generally are capable of withstanding the traffic of somewhat heavier vehicles without injury.

(h) Brick roads are adapted to the same general class of traffic as concrete roads. Either brick or concrete roads, however, may be economical for only moderate traffic where other road-building materials are scarce.