

"OVER THE TOP"

By An American Arthur Guy Empey
Soldier Who Went Machine Gunner, Serving in France

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CHAPTER XXVI—Continued.

The presence of the R. A. M. C. men did not seem to disturb the raiders, because many a joke made in an undertone, was passed along the winding column, as to who would be first to take a ride on one of the stretchers. This was generally followed by a wish that, if you were to be the one, the wound would be a "cushy Blighty one."

The stretcher bearers, no doubt hoping that, if they did have to carry anyone to the rear, he would be small and light. Perhaps they looked at me when wishing, because I could feel an uncomfortable, boring sensation between my shoulder blades. They got their wish all right.

Going up this trench, about every sixty yards or so we would pass a lonely sentry, who in a whisper would wish us "the best o' luck, mates." We would blind at him under our breaths; that Jonah phrase to us sounded very ominous.

Without any casualties the minstrel troop arrived at Suicide ditch, the front-line trench. Previously, a wiring party of the Royal Engineers had cut a lane through our barbed wire to enable us to get out into No Man's Land.

Crawling through this lane, our party of twenty took up an extended-order formation about one yard apart. We had a tap code arranged for our movements while in No Man's Land, because for various reasons it is not safe to carry on a heated conversation a few yards in front of Fritz's lines. The officer was on the right of the line, while I was on the extreme left. Two taps from the right would be passed down the line until I received them, then I would send back one tap. The officer, in receiving this one tap, would know that his order had gone down the whole line, had been understood, and that the party was ready to obey the two-tap signal. Two taps meant that we were to crawl forward slowly—and believe me, very slowly—for five yards, and then halt to await further instructions. Three taps meant, when you arrived within striking distance of the German trench, rush it and inflict as many casualties as possible, secure a couple of prisoners, and then back to your own lines with the speed clutch open. Four taps meant, "I have gotten you into a position from which it is impossible for me to extricate you, so you are on your own."

After getting Tommy into a mess on the western front he is generally told that he is "on his own." This means, "Save your skin in any way possible." Tommy loves to be "on his own" behind the lines, but not during a trench raid.

The star shells from the German lines were falling in front of us, therefore we were safe. After about twenty minutes we entered the star-shell zone. A star shell from the German lines fell about five yards in the rear and to the right of me; we hugged the ground and held our breath until it burned out. The smoke from the star shell traveled along the ground and crossed over the middle of our line. Some Tommy sneezed. The smoke had gotten up his nose. We crouched on the ground, cursing the offender under our breath, and waited the volley that generally ensues when the Germans have heard a noise in No Man's Land. Nothing happened. We received two taps and crawled forward slowly for five yards; no doubt the officer believed what Old Pepper had said, "Personally I believe that that part of the German trench is unoccupied." By being careful and remaining motionless when the star shells fell behind us, we reached the German barbed wire without mishap. Then the fun began. I was scared stiff as it is ticklish work cutting your way through wire when about thirty feet in front of you there is a line of Boches looking out into No Man's Land with their rifles lying across the parapet, straining every sense to see or hear what is going on in No Man's Land; because at night, Fritz never knows when a bomb with his name and number on it will come hurtling through the air aimed in the direction of Berlin. The man on the right, one man in the center and myself on the extreme left were equipped with wire cutters. These are insulated with soft rubber not because the German wires are charged with electricity, but to prevent the cutters rubbing against the barbed wire stakes, which are of iron, and making a noise which may warn the inmates of the trench that someone is getting fresh in their front yard. There is only one way to cut a barbed wire without noise and through costly experience Tommy has become an expert in doing this. You must grasp the wire about two

inches from the stake in your right hand and cut between the stake and your hand.

If you cut a wire improperly, a loud twang will ring out on the night air like the snapping of a banjo string. Perhaps this noise can be heard only for fifty or seventy-five yards, but in Tommy's mind it makes a loud noise in Berlin.

We had cut a lane about halfway through the wire when, down the center of our line, twang! went an improperly cut wire. We crouched down, cursing under our breath, trembling all over, our knees lacerated from the strands of the cut barbed wire on the ground, waiting for a challenge and the inevitable volley of rifle fire. Nothing happened. I suppose the fellow who cut the barbed wire improperly was the one who had sneezed about half an hour previously. What we wished him would never make his new year a happy one.

The officer, in my opinion, at the noise of the wire should have given the four-tap signal, which meant, "On your own, get back to your trenches as quickly as possible," but again he must have relied on the spiel that Old Pepper had given us in the dugout, "Personally I believe that that part of the German trench is unoccupied." Anyway, we got careless, but not so careless that we sang patriotic songs or made any unnecessary noise.

During the intervals of falling star shells we carried on with our wire cutting until at last we succeeded in getting through the German barbed wire. At this point we were only ten feet from the German trenches. If we were discovered, we were like rats in a trap. Our way was cut off unless we ran along the wire to the narrow lane we had cut through. With our hearts in our mouths we waited for the three-tap signal to rush the German trench. Three taps had gotten about halfway down the line when suddenly about ten to twenty German star shells were fired all along the trench and landed in the barbed wire in rear of us, turning night into day and silhouetting us against the wall of light made by the flares. In the glaring light we were confronted by the following unpleasant scene.

All along the German trench, at about three-foot intervals, stood a big Prussian guardsman with his rifle at the aim, and then we found out why we had not been challenged when the man sneezed and the barbed wire had been improperly cut. About three feet in front of the trench they had constructed a single fence of barbed wire and we knew our chances were one thousand to one of returning alive. We could not rush their trench on account of this second defense. Then in front of me the challenge, "Halt," given in English rang out, and one of the finest things I have ever heard on the western front took place.

From the middle of our line some Tommy answered the challenge with, "Aw, go to h—l." It must have been the man who had sneezed or who had improperly cut the barbed wire; he wanted to show Fritz that he could die game. Then came the volley. Machine guns were turned loose and several Boches were thrown in our rear. The Boche in front of me was looking down his sight. This fellow might have, under ordinary circumstances, been handsome, but when I viewed him from the front of his rifle he had the goblins of childhood imagination relegated to the shade.

Then came a flash in front of me, the flare of his rifle—and my head seemed to burst. A bullet had hit me on the left side of my face about half an inch from my eye, smashing the cheek bones. I put my hand to my face and fell forward, biting the ground and kicking my feet. I thought I was dying, but, do you know, my past life did not unfold before me the way it does in novels.

The blood was streaming down my tunic, and the pain was awful. When I came to I said to myself, "Emp, old boy, you belong in Jersey City, and you'd better get back there as quickly as possible."

The bullets were cracking overhead. I crawled a few feet back to the German barbed wire, and in a stooping position, guiding myself by the wire, I went down the line looking for the lane we had cut through. Before reaching this lane I came to a limp form which seemed like a bag of oats hanging over the wire. In the dim light I could see that its hands were blackened, and knew it was the body of one of my mates. I put my hand on his head, the top of which had been blown off by a bomb. My fingers sank into the hole. I pulled my hand back

full of blood and brains, then I went crazy with fear and horror and rushed along the wire until I came to our lane. I had just turned down this lane when something inside of me seemed to say, "Look around." I did so; a bullet caught me on the left shoulder. It did not hurt much, just felt as if someone had punched me in the back, and then my left side went numb. My arm was dangling like a rag. I fell forward in a sitting position. But all the fear had left me and I was consumed with rage and cursed the German trenches. With my right hand I felt in my tunic for my first-aid or shell dressing. In feeling over my tunic my hand came in contact with one of the bombs which I carried. Gripping it, I pulled the pin out with my teeth and blindly threw it towards the German trench. I must have been out of my head, because I was only ten feet from the trench and took a chance of being mangled. If the bomb had failed to go into the trench I would have been blown to bits by the explosion of my own bomb.

By the flare of the explosion of the bomb, which luckily landed in their trench, I saw one big Boche throw up his arms and fall backwards, while his rifle flew into the air. Another one wilted and fell forward across the sandbags—then blackness.

Realizing what a foolhardy and risky thing I had done, I was again seized with a horrible fear. I dragged myself to my feet and ran madly down the lane through the barbed wire, stumbling over cut wires, tearing my uniform, and lacerating my hands and legs. Just as I was about to reach No Man's Land again, that same voice



In "Blighty."

seemed to say, "Turn around." I did so, when, "crack," another bullet caught me, this time in the left shoulder about one-half inch away from the other wound. Then it was taps for me. The lights went out.

When I came to I was crouching in a hole in No Man's Land. This shell hole was about three feet deep, so that it brought my head a few inches below the level of the ground. How I reached this hole I will never know. German "typewriters" were traversing back and forth in No Man's Land, the bullets biting the edge of my shell hole and throwing dirt all over me.

Overhead shrapnel was bursting. I could hear the fragments slap the ground. Then I went out once more. When I came to everything was silence and darkness in No Man's Land. I was soaked with blood and a big flap from the wound in my cheek was hanging over my mouth. The blood running from this flap choked me. Out of the corner of my mouth I would try and blow it back, but it would not move. I reached for my shell dressing and tried, with one hand, to bandage my face to prevent the flow. I had an awful horror of bleeding to death and was getting very faint. You would have laughed if you had seen my ludicrous attempts at bandaging with one hand. The pains in my wounded shoulder were awful and I was getting sick at the stomach. I gave up the bandaging stunt as a bad job, and then fainted.

When I came to, hell was let loose. An intense bombardment was on, and on the whole my position was decidedly unpleasant. Then, suddenly, our barrage ceased. The silence almost hurt, but not for long, because Fritz turned loose with shrapnel, machine guns, and rifle fire. Then all along our line came a cheer and our boys came over the top in a charge. The first wave was composed of "Jocks." They

were a magnificent sight, kilts, flapping in the wind, bare knees showing, and their bayonets glistening. In the first wave that passed my shell hole, one of the "Jocks," an immense fellow, about six feet two inches in height jumped right over me. On the right and left of me several soldiers in colored kilts were huddled on the ground, then over came the second wave, also "Jocks." One young Scottie, when he came abreast of my shell hole, leaped into the air, his rifle shooting out of his hands, landing about six feet in front of him, bayonet first, and stuck in the ground, the butt trembling. This impressed me greatly.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

COMPARES MEN WITH TIRES

Philosopher Asserts that the Important Auto Fixture is Not Unlike Some of Human Race.

"The more I have to do with automobile tires," said Philosopher Jim, "the better I understand men. There is no limit to the comparisons that might be made, but let me ask your attention for just one of them. It turns upon the way they come to an end, men and tires alike.

"On my little roadster I may have at one and the same time two tires of such different character as this:

"One has served long and well. It seems sound as ever, and still looks good for a lot of work. But its healthy appearance is deceptive: It has a vast number of well hidden decayed cells.

"They began to go separately, not in masses. No one part of that tire wore out all by itself. The whole thing has been slowly, subtly honeycombed with wear.

"The limit is reached suddenly. The end, prepared for slowly and in the dark, comes swiftly; and it is a very complete end. The tire is a goner, the doctor can do nothing for it.

"Some men end like that; seemingly vigorous one day; and the next day, on the scrap heap.

"And then there are tires and men that go the other way. They seem worn and weakened, but they are sound inside. The shell goes first, the inner tube retains its usefulness. You know they are going, but they always seem good for another day's work, another hundred miles. They will stand a lot of patching.

"Tires are mighty human, and that's why I really enjoy fussing with them."

Why Brides Love June.

The first people to adopt the month of June as sacred to Hymen, the god of marriage, were the ancient Romans, who considered June the most propitious season of the year for entering upon matrimonial relations. The Romans held that June weddings were likely to be happier than alliances contracted in any other months of the year, especially if the day chosen were that of the full moon. They also held that of all months May was to be avoided, as in that month newlyweds would come under the influence of spirits adverse to happy households. These ancient marriage superstitions were related by the Christians in the middle ages, and even today June is considered by many to be pre-eminently the month of marriages. The word "wedding" is derived from the ancient Anglo-Saxon "wed" custom.

Royal Needlewomen.

Most of the European queens noted in history's pages were expert needlewomen. Mary Queen of Scots is said to have been particularly clever with the needle. Hardwick hall being adorned with many of her tapestries. Applique was popular in the middle ages, not only on quilts, but on wearing apparel. A peculiar court custom sprang up in the reign of Charles I, that known as "drizzling," according to an old text. This term was applied to the ripping out of the gold threads of wonderful Chinese embroideries to obtain the braid for their gowns. One noblewoman wrote that "all the ladies who do not play cards pick gold. It is the most general fashion I ever saw, and they all carry bags containing the necessary tools."—Exchange.

Reliable Workers.

Victims of nervous and other ills should keep out in the air and sunshine, get all the exercise possible, and then go to bed "with the chickens." This "formula" will woo sleep when all other helps fail; but late hours—postponed retiring—will only add to these persons' woes. Early rising and early retiring always go hand in hand. Hence, the business girl or woman should, if she has her own best interests at heart, taboo late retiring. Otherwise it is out of the question to expect that she can report at her desk or in the workroom with calm cool nerves, or feeling physically able to dispose of her day's tasks whatever they may be.

Remember This.

Overwork just before serving of meals, more than any other thing, has kept women from being recognized by men as equal thinkers.

A new oil-burning apparatus heats and lights the room at the same time.

Cure for Hiccoughs.

To stop hiccoughs, give the patient a teaspoonful of granulated sugar and vinegar. If this does not afford relief at once, repeat the dose.

Nitro-Starch Possibilities.

Nitro-starch, more compact than the allied nitro-cellulose or gun-cotton, seems to promise great efficiency as a blasting explosive.

One Advantage.

The fellow who tells all he knows has one good point—he will never do anything wrong if he tells about it before and after.—Farm Life.

LISTEN TO THIS! SAYS CORNS LIFT RIGHT OUT NOW

You corn-pestered men and women need suffer no longer. Wear the shoes that nearly killed you before, says this Cincinnati authority, because a few drops of freezone applied directly on a tender, aching corn or callous stops soreness at once and soon the corn or hardened callous loosens so it can be lifted out, root and all, without pain.

A small bottle of freezone costs very little at any drug store, but will positively take off every hard or soft corn or callous. This should be tried as it is inexpensive and is said not to irritate the surrounding skin.

If your druggist hasn't any freezone tell him to get a small bottle for you from his wholesale drug house. It is fine stuff and acts like a charm every time.—Adv.

Testing Pineapples.

The ripeness of a pineapple may be tested by pulling its leaves. If they do not pluck readily the pineapple is not ready to be used.

Look and Feel Clean, Sweet and Fresh Every Day

Drink a glass of real hot water before breakfast to wash out poisons.

Life is not merely to live, but to live well, eat well, digest well, work well, sleep well, look well. What a glorious condition to attain, and yet how very easy it is if one will only adopt the morning inside bath.

Folks who are accustomed to feel dull and heavy when they arise, splitting headache, stuffy from a cold, foul tongue, nasty breath, acid stomach, can, instead, feel as fresh as a daisy by opening the sluices of the system each morning and flushing out the whole of the internal poisonous stagnant matter.

Everyone, whether ailing, sick or well, should, each morning, before breakfast, drink a glass of real hot water with a teaspoonful of limestone phosphate in it, to wash from the stomach, liver, kidneys and bowels the previous day's indigestible waste, sour bile and poisonous toxins. The action of hot water and limestone phosphate on an empty stomach is wonderfully invigorating. It cleans out all the sour fermentations, gases, waste and acidity and gives one a splendid appetite for breakfast.

The millions of people who are bothered with constipation, bilious spells, stomach trouble, rheumatism; others who have sallow skins, blood disorders and sickly complexions, are urged to get a quarter pound of limestone phosphate from the drug store, which will cost very little, but is sufficient to make anyone a pronounced crank on the subject of internal sanitation.

Concrete Telegraph Poles.

The New Zealand government is replacing its wooden telegraph poles and letter box posts with others of reinforced concrete.



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