



"OVER THE TOP"

AN AMERICAN SOLDIER WHO WENT

ARTHUR GUY EMPEY

MACHINE GUNNER, SERVING IN FRANCE

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SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I—Fired by the news of the sinking of the Lusitania by a German submarine, Arthur Guy Empey, an American, leaves his office in Jersey City and goes to England where he enlists in the British army.

CHAPTER II—After a period of training, Empey volunteers for immediate service and soon finds himself in rest billets "somewhere in France," where he first makes the acquaintance of the ever-present "cooties."

CHAPTER III—Empey attends his first church services at the front while a German Fokker circles over the congregation.

CHAPTER IV—Empey's command goes into the front-line trenches and is under fire for the first time.

CHAPTER V—Empey learns to adopt the motto of the British Tommy, "If you are going to get it, you'll get it, so never wry."

CHAPTER VI—Back in rest billets, Empey gets his first experience as a mess orderly.

CHAPTER VII—Empey learns how the British soldiers are fed.

CHAPTER VIII—Back in the front-line trench, Empey sees his first friend of the trenches "go West."

CHAPTER IX—Empey makes his first visit to a dugout in "Suicide Ditch."

CHAPTER X—Empey learns what constitutes a "day's work" in the front-line trench.

CHAPTER XI—Empey goes "over the top" for the first time in a charge on the German trenches and is wounded by a bayonet thrust.

CHAPTER XII—Empey joins the "suicide club" as the bombing squad is called.

CHAPTER XIII—Each Tommy gets an official bath.

CHAPTER XIV—Empey helps dig an advanced trench under German fire.

CHAPTER XV—On "listening post" in No Man's Land.

"My heart sank. Supposing he had rumbled that tapping, then all would be up with our plan. I stopped drumming with my fingers and said:

"Beg your pardon, sir, just a habit with me."

"And a d—d silly one, too," he answered, turning to his glasses again, and I knew I was safe. He had not tumbled to the meaning of that tapping.

"All at once, without turning round, he exclaimed:

"Well, of all the nerve I've ever run across, this takes the cake. Those Boches are using that road again. Blind my eyes, this time it is a whole brigade of them, transports and all. What a pretty target for our '4.5's.' The beggars know that we won't fire. A d—d shame, I call it. Oh, just for a chance to turn D 238 loose on them."

"I was trembling with excitement. From repeated stolen glances at the captain's range chart, that road with its range was burned into my mind.

"Over the wire I tapped, 'D 238 battery, Target 17, Range 6000, 3 degrees 30 minutes, left, salvo, fire.' Cassell, O. K.'d my message, and with the receiver pressed against my ear, I waited and listened. In a couple of minutes very faintly over the wire came the voice of our battery commander issuing the order: 'D 238 battery. Salvo! Fire!'

"Then a roar through the receiver as the four guns belched forth, a screaming and whistling overhead, and the shells were on their way.

"The captain jumped as if he were shot, and let out a great big expressive d—n, and eagerly turned his glasses in the direction of the German road. I also strained my eyes watching that target. Four black clouds of dust rose up right in the middle of the German column. Four direct hits—another record for D 238.

"The shells kept on whistling overhead, and I had counted twenty-four of them when the firing suddenly ceased. When the smoke and dust clouds lifted the destruction on that road was awful. Overturned limbers and guns, wagons smashed up, troops fleeing in all directions. The road and roadside were spotted all over with little field gray dots, the toll of our guns.

"The captain, in his excitement, had slipped off the sandbag, and was on his knees in the mud, the glass still at his eye. He was muttering to himself and slapping his thigh with his disengaged hand. At every slap a big round juicy cuss word would escape from his lips followed by:

"Good! Fine! Marvelous! Pretty Work! Direct hits all."

"Then he turned to me and shouted:

"Wilson, what do you think of it? Did you ever see the like of it in your life? D—n fine work, I call it."

"Pretty soon a look of wonder stole

over his face and he exclaimed:

"But who in h—l gave them the order to fire. Range and everything correct, too. I know I didn't. Wilson, did I give you any order for the battery to open up? Of course I didn't, did I?"

"I answered very emphatically. 'No, sir, you gave no command. Nothing went through this post. I am absolutely certain on that point, sir.'

"Of course nothing went through," he replied. Then his face fell, and he muttered out loud:

"But, by Jove, wait till Old Pepper gets wind of this. There'll be fur flying."

Just then Bombardier Cassell cut in on the wire:

"General's compliments to Captain A—. He directs that officer and signaller report at the double to brigade headquarters as soon as relieved. Relief now on the way."

"In an undertone to me, 'Keep a brass front, Wilson, and for God's sake, stick.' I answered with, 'Rely on me, mate,' but I was trembling all over.

"I gave the general's message to the captain, and started packing up.

"The relief arrived, and as we left the post the captain said:

"Now for the fireworks, and I know they'll be good and plenty.' They were.

"When we arrived at the gun pits the battery commander, the sergeant major and Cassell were waiting for us. We fell in line and the funeral march to brigade headquarters started.

"Arriving at headquarters the battery commander was the first to be interviewed. This was behind closed doors. From the roaring and explosions of Old Pepper it sounded as if raw meat was being thrown to the lions. Cassell, later, described it as sounding like a bombing raid. In about two minutes the officer reappeared. The sweat was pouring from his forehead, and his face was the color of a beet. He was speechless. As he passed the captain he jerked his thumb in the direction of the lion's den and went out. Then the captain went in, and the lions were once again fed. The captain stayed about twenty minutes and came out. I couldn't see his face, but the droop in his shoulders was enough. He looked like a wet hen.

"The door of the general's room opened and Old Pepper stood in the doorway. With a roar he shouted:

"Which one of you is Cassell? D—n me, get your heels together when I speak! Come in here!"

"Cassell started to say, 'Yes sir.'

"But Old Pepper roared, 'Shut up!'"

"Cassell came out in five minutes. He said nothing, but as he passed me he put his tongue into his cheek and winked, then, turning to the closed door, he stuck his thumb to his nose and left.

"Then the sergeant major's turn came. He didn't come out our way. Judging by the roaring, Old Pepper must have eaten him.

"When the door opened and the general beckoned to me, my knees started to play 'Home, Sweet Home' against each other.

"My interview was very short.

"Old Pepper glared at me when I entered, and then let loose.

"Of course you don't know anything about it. You're just like the rest. Ought to have a nursing bottle around your neck and a nipple in your teeth. Soldiers—by gad, you turn my stomach to look at you. Win this war, when England sends out such samples as I have in my brigade! Not likely! Now, sir, tell me what you don't know about this affair. Speak up, out with it. Don't be gaping at me like a fish. Spit it out."

"I stammered, 'Sir, I know absolutely nothing.'

"That's easy to see,' he roared; 'that stupid face tells me that. Shut up. Get out; but I think you are a d—d liar just the same. Back to your battery.'

"I saluted and made my exit.

"That night the captain sent for us. With fear and trembling we went to his dugout. He was alone. After saluting we stood at attention in front of him and waited. His say was short.

"Don't you two ever get it into your heads that Morse is a dead language. I've known it for years. The two of you had better get rid of that nervous habit of tapping transmitters; it's dangerous. That's all."

"We saluted, and were just going out the door of the dugout when the captain called up back and said:

"Smecke Goldflakes? Yes? Well, there are two tins of them on my table. Go back to the battery, and keep your tongues between your teeth. Understand?"

"We understood.

"For five weeks afterwards our battery did nothing but extra fatigues. We were satisfied and so were the men. It was worth it to put one over on Old Pepper, to say nothing of the injury caused to Fritz' feelings."

When Wilson had finished his story

I looked up and the dugout was jammed. An artillery captain and two officers had also entered and stayed for the finish. Wilson spat out an enormous quid of tobacco, looked up, saw the captain, and got as red as a carnation. The captain smiled and left. Wilson whispered to me:

"Blime me, Yank, I see where I click for crucifixion. That captain is the same one that chucked us Goldflakes in his dugout and here I have been 'chucking me weight about in his hearing.'"

Wilson never clicked his crucifixion. Quite a contrast to Wilson was another character in our brigade named Scott; we called him "Old Scotty" on account of his age. He was fifty-seven, although looking forty. "Old Scotty" had been born in the Northwest and had served in the Northwest Mounted police. He was a typical cowpuncher and Indian fighter and was a dead shot with the rifle, and took no pains to disguise this fact from us. He used to take care of his rifle as if it were a baby. In his spare moments you could always see him cleaning it or polishing the stock. Woe betide the man who by mistake happened to get hold of this rifle; he soon found out his error. Scott was as deaf as a mule, and it was amusing at parade to watch him in the manual of arms, slyly glancing out of the corner of his eye at the man next to him to see what the order was. How he passed the doctor was a mystery to us; he must have bluffed his way through, because he certainly was independent. Beside him the Fourth of July looked like Good Friday. He wore at the time a large sombrero, had a Mexican stock saddle over his shoulder, a lariat on his arm, and a "forty-five" hanging from his hip. Dumping this paraphernalia on the floor he went up to the recruiting officer and shouted: "I'm from America, west of the Rockies, and want to join your d—d army. I've got no use for a German and can shoot some. At Scotland Yard they turned me down; said I was deaf and so I am. I don't hanker to ship in with a d—d mud-crunching outfit, but the cavalry's full, so I guess this regiment's better than none, so trot out your papers and I'll sign 'em." He told them he was forty and slipped by. I was on recruiting service at the time he applied for enlistment.

It was Old Scotty's great ambition to be a sniper or "body snatcher," as Mr. Atkins calls it. The day that he was detailed as brigade sniper he celebrated his appointment by blowing the whole platoon to fags.

Being a Yank, Old Scotty took a liking to me and used to spin some great yarns about the plains, and the whole platoon would drink these in and ask for more. Ananias was a rookie compared with him.

The ex-plainman and discipline could not agree, but the officers all liked him, even if he was hard to manage, so when he was detailed as a sniper a sigh of relief went up from the officers' mess.

Old Scotty had the freedom of the brigade. He used to draw two or three days' rations and disappear with his glass, range finder and rifle, and we would see or hear no more of him until suddenly he would reappear with a couple of notches added to those already on the butt of his rifle. Every time he got a German it meant another notch. He was proud of these notches.

But after a few months Father Rheumatism got him and he was sent to Blighty; the air in the wake of his stretcher was blue with curses. Old Scotty surely could swear; some of his outbursts actually burned you.

No doubt, at this writing, he is "somewhere in Blighty" pussy footing it on a bridge or along the wall of some munition plant with the "G. R." or Home Defense corps.

CHAPTER XVII.

Out in Front.

After tea Lieutenant Stores of our section came into the dugout and informed me that I was "for" a reconnoitering patrol and would carry six Mills bombs.

At 11:30 that night twelve men, our lieutenant and myself went out in front on a patrol in No Man's Land.

We cruised around in the dark for about two hours, just knocking about looking for trouble, on the lookout for Boche working parties to see what they were doing.

Around two in the morning we were carefully picking our way about thirty yards in front of the German barbed wire, when we walked into a Boche covering party nearly thirty strong. Then the music started, the fiddler rendered his bill, and we paid.

Fighting in the dark with a bayonet is not very pleasant. The Germans took it on the run, but our officer was no novice at the game and didn't follow them. He gave the order "down on the ground, hug it close."

Just in time, too, because a volley skimmed over our heads. Then in low tones we were told to separate and crawl back to our trenches, each man on his own.

We could see the flashes of their rifles in the darkness, but the bullets were going over our heads.

We lost three men killed and one wounded in the arm. If it hadn't been for our officer's quick thinking the whole patrol would have probably been wiped out.

After about twenty minutes' wait we went out again and discovered that the Germans had a wiring party working on their barbed wire. We returned to our trenches unobserved with the information and our machine guns immediately got busy.

The next night four men were sent out to go over and examine the Ger-

(Continued on page 7, column 2.)

Was From Missouri.

Sergeant Major—Now, Private Smith, you know very well none but officers are allowed to walk across the grass.

Private Smith—But, sergeant major, I've Captain Smith's verbal orders to—

Sergeant Major—None o'that, sir. Show me the captain's verbal orders. Show em to me, sir.—Lippen-cott's.

The Next Day.

"I understand that you were in a little trouble that started in the parlor social."

"Dat's what I were," answered Mr. Erastus Pinkley. "Dar was a feller wif a razzar dat chose me for de opposite gemman in a trouble quadrille."

"But you came out best in the long run?"

"Yassir, I did; but I mus' say it were one o' de longest' runs I ebberr had."—Washington Star.

TEACHERS' EXAMINATION.

The regular spring examination for teachers' certificates will be held at the court house in Bamberg, S. C., on Friday, May the 3rd, 1918, beginning at 9 o'clock a. m. In view of the nation wide shortage of teachers, all prospective applicants for teachers' certificates are urged to take advantage of this examination, as this is the last opportunity until the October examination.

The questions will be on the usual subjects which include algebra, arithmetic, English grammar, pedagogy, geography, physiology and hygiene, history, civics and current events, and agriculture.

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