



# OVER THE TOP

## AN AMERICAN SOLDIER WHO WENT

### ARTHUR GUY EMPEY

MACHINE GUNNER, SERVING IN FRANCE

(Continued from last week.)  
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 overhead.

**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 worry."

"Shut your b'linkin' mouth, you bloomin' idiot; do you want us to click it from the Bocht's?"

Later we learned that the word, "No challenging or firing 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, after 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 failing 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 miles 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. 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 and parade, and we 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 conversation 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.

After dinner I tried to wash out the dixie with cold water and a rug, and learned another maxim of the trenches—"It can't be done." I stily watched one of the older men from another section, and was horrified to see him throw into his dixie four or five double handfuls of mud. Then he poured in some water, and with his hands scoured the dixie inside and out. I thought he was taking an awful risk. Supposing the cook should have seen him! After half an hour of unsuccessful efforts I returned my dixie to the cook shack, being careful to put on the cover, and returned to the billet.

Most of the afternoon was spent by the men writing letters home. I used my spare time to chop wood for the cook and go with the quartermaster to draw coal. I got back just in time to issue our third meal, which consisted of hot tea. I rinsed out my dixie and returned it to the cookhouse, and went back to the billet with an exhilarated feeling that my day's labor was done. I had fallen asleep on the straw when once again the cook appeared in the door of the billet with: "Blime me, you Yanks are lazy. Who in — a-goin' to draw the water for the mornin' tea? Do you think I'm a-goin' to? Well, I'm not," and he left. I filled the dixie with water from an old squeaking well, and once again lay down in the straw.

#### CHAPTER VII.

##### Rations.

Just dozing off; Mr. Lance Corporal butted in.

In Tommy's eyes a lance corporal is one degree below a private. In the corporal's eyes he is one degree above a general.

He ordered me to go with him and help him draw the next day's rations, also told me to take my waterproof.

Every evening, from each platoon or machine-gun section, a lance corporal and private go to the quartermaster sergeant at the company stores and draw rations for the following day.

The "quarter," as the quartermaster sergeant is called, receives daily from the orderly room (captain's office) a slip showing the number of men entitled to rations, so there is no chance of putting anything over on him. Many arguments take place between the "quarter" and the platoon noncom, but

the former always wins out. Tommy says the "quarter" got his job because he was a burglar in civil life.

Then I spread the waterproof sheet on the ground, while the quartermaster's batman dumped the rations on it. The corporal was smoking a fag. I carried the rations back to the billet. The corporal was still smoking a fag. How I envied him. But when the issue commenced my envy died, and I realized that the first requisite of a non-commissioned officer on active service is diplomacy. There were 19 men in our section, and they soon formed a semicircle around us after the corporal had called out, "Rations up."

The quartermaster sergeant had given a slip to the corporal on which was written a list of the rations. Sitting on the floor, using a wooden box as a table, the issue commenced. On the left of the corporal the rations were piled. They consisted of the following:

Six loaves of fresh bread, each loaf of a different size, perhaps one out of the six being as flat as a pancake, the result of an army service corps man placing a box of bully beef on it during transportation.

Three tins of jam, one apple and the other two plum.

Seventeen Bermuda onions, all different sizes.

A piece of cheese in the shape of a wedge.

Two one-pound tins of butter.

A handful of raisins.

A tin of biscuits, or as Tommy calls them "jaw breakers."

A bottle of mustard pickles.

The "bully beef," spuds, condensed milk, fresh meat, bacon and "Maconochie" (Continued on page 7, column 1.)

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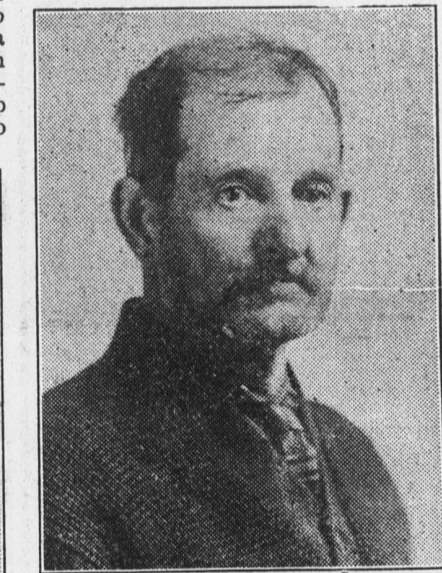
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The largest and oldest Drug Store in Centre County



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Pretty soon the cook poked his head in the door and shouted: "Hey, Yank, come out here and clean your dixie!" I protested that I had wasted a half-hour on it already, and had used up my only remaining shirt in the attempt. With a look of disdain he exclaimed: "Blow me, your shirt! Why in — didn't you use mud?"

Without a word in reply I got busy with the mud, and soon my dixie was bright and shining.

Shoes.

Shoes.

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—) AT (—

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