



"OVER THE TOP"

AN AMERICAN SOLDIER WHO WENT

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MACHINE GUNNER, SERVING IN FRANCE

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(Continued from last week.)

I spent a week trying to teach some of the Tommies how to play poker, but because I won thirty-five francs they declared that they didn't "fawncy" the game.

Tommy plays few card games; the general run never heard of poker, euchre, seven up, or pinochle. They have a game similar to pinochle called "Royal Bezique," but few know how to play it.

Generally there are two decks of cards in a section, and in a short time they are so dog-eared and greasy, you can hardly tell the ace of spades from the ace of hearts. The owners of these decks sometimes condescend to lend them after much coaxing.

So you see, Mr. Atkins has his fun mixed in with his hardships and, contrary to popular belief, the rank and file of the British army in the trenches is one big happy family. Now in Virginia, at school, I was fed on old McGuffey's primary reader, which gave me an opinion of an Englishman about equal to a 76 Minute Man's backed up by a Sinn Feiner's. But I found Tommy to be the best of mates and a gentleman through and through. He never makes a costly mistake and Tommy pays with his blood, there is no general condemnation of the officer. He is just pitied. It is exactly the same as it was with the Light Brigade at Balaclava, to say nothing of Gallipoli, Neuve Chapelle and Loos. Personally I remember a little incident where

poral answered, "Blime me, sir, the straw was issued, but there wasn't enough left over from the servants' beds; in fact, we had to use some of the 'ay' to 'elp out, sir.'"

It is needless to say that the servants dispensed with their soft beds that particular night.

Nevertheless it is not the fault of the individual officer, it is just the survival of a quaint old English custom. You know an Englishman cannot be changed in a day.

But the average English officer is a good sport. He will sit on a fire step and listen respectfully to Private Jones' theory of the way the war should be conducted. This war is gradually crumbling the once insurmountable wall of caste.

You would be convinced of this if you could see King George go among his men on an inspecting tour under fire, or pause before a little wooden cross in some shell-tossed field with tears in his eyes as he reads the inscription. And a little later perhaps bend over a wounded man on a stretcher, patting him on the head.

More than once in a hospital I have seen a titled Red Cross nurse fetching and carrying for a wounded soldier, perhaps the one who in civil life delivered the coal at her back door. Today she does not shrink from lighting his fag or even washing his grimy body.

Tommy admires Albert of Belgium because he is not a pusher of men; he leads them. With him it's not a case



Meeting a Gas and Infantry Attack.

twenty of us were sent on a trench raid, only two of us returning, but I will tell this story later on.

I said it was a big happy family, and so it is, but as in all happy families, there are servants, so in the British army there are also servants, officers' servants, or "O. S." as they are termed. In the American army the common name for them is "dog robbers." From a controversy in the English papers, Winston Churchill made the statement, as far as I can remember, that the officers' servants in the British forces totaled nearly two hundred thousand. He claimed that this removed two hundred thousand exceptionally good and well-trained fighters from the actual firing line, claiming that the officers, when selecting a man for servant's duty, generally picked the man who had been out the longest and knew the ropes.

But from my observation I find that a large percentage of the servants do go over the top, but behind the lines they very seldom engage in digging parties, fatigues, parades or drills. This work is as necessary as actually engaging in an attack, therefore I think it would be safe to say that the all-round work of the two hundred thousand is about equal to fifty thousand men who are on straight military duties. In numerous instances, officers' servants hold the rank of lance-corporals and they assume the same duties and authority of a butler, the one stripe giving him precedence over the other servants.

There are lots of amusing stories told of "O. S."

One day one of our majors went into the servants' billet and commenced "blinding" at them, saying that his horse had no straw and that he personally knew that straw had been issued for this purpose. He called the lance-corporal to account. The cor-

Saxons are fairly good sports and are willing occasionally to behave as gentlemen and take it easy, but you cannot trust any of them overlong.

At one point of the line the trenches were about thirty-two yards apart. This sounds horrible, but in fact it was easy, because neither side could shell the enemy's front-line trench for fear shells would drop into their own. This eliminated artillery fire.

In these trenches when against the Prussians and Bavarians, Tommy had a hot time of it, but when the Saxons "took over" it was a picnic; they would yell across that they were Saxons and would not fire. Both sides would sit on the parapet and carry on a conversation. This generally consisted of Tommy telling them how much he loved the Kaiser, while the Saxons informed Tommy that King George was a particular friend of theirs and hoped that he was doing nicely.

When the Saxons were to be relieved by Prussians or Bavarians, they would yell this information across No Man's Land and Tommy would immediately tumble into his trench and keep his head down.

If an English regiment was to be relieved by the wild Irish, Tommy would tell the Saxons, and immediately a volley of "Donner und Blitzen" could be heard and it was Fritz's turn to get a crack in his back from stoooping, and the people in Berlin would close their windows.

Usually when an Irishman takes over a trench, just before "stand down" in the morning, he sticks his rifle over the top, aimed in the direction of Berlin, and engages in what is known as the "mad minute." This consists of firing fifteen shots in a minute. He is not aiming at anything in particular—just sends over each shot with a prayer, hoping that one of his strays will get some poor unsuspecting Fritz in the napper hundreds of yards behind the lines. It generally does; that's the reason the Boches hate the man from Erin's Isle.

The Saxons, though better than the Prussians and Bavarians, have a nasty trait of treachery in their makeup. At one point of the line where the trenches were very close, a stake was driven into the ground midway between the hostile lines. At night when it was his turn, Tommy would crawl to this stake and attach some London papers to it, while at the foot he would place tins of bully beef, fags, sweets, and other delicacies that he had received from Blighty in the ever looked-for parcel. Later on Fritz would come out and get these luxuries.

The next night Tommy would go out to see what Fritz put into his stocking. The donation generally consisted of a paper from Berlin, telling who was winning the war, some tinned sausages, cigars, and occasionally a little beer, but a funny thing, Tommy never returned with the beer unless it was inside of him. His platoon got a whiff of his breath one night and the offending Tommy lost his job.

One night a young English sergeant crawled to the stake and as he tried to detach the German paper a bomb exploded and mangled him horribly. Fritz had set a trap and gained another victim which was only one more black mark against him in the book of this war. From that time on diplomatic relations were severed.

Returning to Tommy, I think his spirit is best shown in the questions he asks. It is never "who is going to win" but always "how long will it take?"

CHAPTER XX.

"Chats With Fritz."

We were swimming in money, from the receipts of our theatrical venture, and had forgotten all about the war, when an order came through that our brigade would again take over their sector of the line.

The day that these orders were issued, our captain assembled the company and asked for volunteers to go to the Machine Gun school at St. Omer. I volunteered and was accepted.

Sixteen men from our brigade left for the course in machine gunnery. This course lasted two weeks and we rejoined our unit and were assigned to the brigade machine gun company. It almost broke my heart to leave my company mates.

The gun we used was the Vickers, Light 303, water cooled.

I was still a member of the Suicide club, having jumped from the frying pan into the fire. I was assigned to section 1, gun No. 2, and the first time "in" took position in the front-line trench.

During the day our gun would be dismounted on the fire step ready for instant use. We shared a dugout with the Lewis gunners. At "stand to" we would mount our gun on the parapet and go on watch beside it until "stand down" in the morning. Then the gun would be dismounted and again placed in readiness on the fire step.

We did eight days in the front-line trench without anything unusual happening outside of the ordinary trench routine. On the night that we were to "carry out," a bombing raid against the German lines was pulled off. This raiding party consisted of sixty company men, sixteen bombers, and four Lewis machine guns with their crews.

The raid took the Boches by surprise and was a complete success, the party bringing back twenty-one prisoners. The Germans must have been awfully sore, because they turned loose a barrage of shrapnel, with a few "Minnies" and "whizz bangs" intermixed. The shells were dropping into our front line like hailstones.

To get even, we could have left the prisoners in the fire trench, in charge of the men on guard and let them click Fritz's strafing but Tommy does not treat prisoners that way.

Five of them were brought into my dugout and turned over to me so that they would be safe from the German fire.

In the candlelight, they looked very much shaken, nerves gone and chalky faces, with the exception of one, a great big fellow. He looked very much at ease. I liked him from the start.

I got out the rum jar and gave each a nip and passed around some fags, the old reliable Woodbines. The other prisoners looked their gratitude, but the big fellow said in English, "Thank you, sir, the rum is excellent and I appreciate it, also your kindness."

He told me his name was Carl Schmidt, of the Sixty-sixth Bavarian Light Infantry; that he had lived six years in New York (knew the city better than I did), had been to Coney Island and many of our ball games. He was a regular fan. I couldn't make him believe that Hans Wagner wasn't the best ball player in the world.

From New York he had gone to London, where he worked as a waiter in the Hotel Russell. Just before the war he went home to Germany to see his parents, the war came and he was conscripted.

He told me he was very sorry to hear that London was in ruins from the Zeppelin raids. I could not convince him otherwise, for hadn't he seen moving pictures in one of the German cities of St. Paul's cathedral in ruins.

I changed the subject because he was so stubborn in his belief. It was my intention to try and pump him for information as to the methods of the German snipers, who had been causing us trouble in the last few days.

I broached the subject and he shut up like a clam. After a few minutes he very innocently said:

"German snipers get paid rewards for killing the English."

I eagerly asked, "What are they?"

He answered:

"For killing or wounding an English private, the sniper gets one mark. For killing or wounding an English officer he gets five marks, but if he kills a Red Cap or English general, the sniper gets twenty-one days tied to the wheel of a lumber as punishment for his carelessness."

Then he paused, waiting for me to bite, I suppose.

I bit all right and asked him why the sniper was punished for killing an English general. With a smile he replied:

"Well, you see, if all the English generals were killed, there would be no one left to make costly mistakes."

I shut him up, he was getting too fresh for a prisoner. After a while he winked at me and I winked back, then the escort came to take the prisoners to the rear. I shook hands and wished him "The best of luck and a safe journey to Blighty."

I liked that prisoner, he was a fine fellow, had an Iron Cross, too. I advised him to keep it out of sight, or some Tommy would be sending it home to his girl in Blighty as a souvenir.

One dark and rainy night while on guard we were looking over the top from the fire step of our front-line trench, when we heard a noise immediately in front of our barbed wire. The sentry next to me challenged, "Halt, who comes there?" and brought his rifle to the aim. His challenge was answered in German. A captain in the next traverse climbed upon the sand-bagged parapet to investigate—a brave but foolhardy deed—"Crack" went a bullet and he tumbled back into the trench with a hole through his stomach and died a few minutes later. A lance corporal in the next platoon was so enraged at the captain's death that he chucked a Mills bomb in the direction of the noise with the shouted warning to us: "Duck your nappers, my lucky lads." A sharp dynamite report, a flare in front of us, and then silence.

We immediately sent up two star shells, and in their light could see two dark forms lying on the ground close to our wire. A sergeant and four stretcher-bearers went out in front and soon returned, carrying two limp bodies. Down in three candles, we saw that they were two German officers, one a captain and the other an "unteroffizier," a rank one grade higher than a sergeant general, but below the grade of lieutenant.

The captain's face had been almost completely torn away by the bomb's explosion. The unteroffizier was alive, breathing with difficulty. In a few minutes he opened his eyes and blinked in the glare of the candles.

The pair had evidently been drinking heavily, for the alcohol fumes were sickening and completely pervaded the dugout. I turned away in disgust, hating to see a man cross the Great Divide full of booze.

One of our officers could speak German and he questioned the dying man. In a faint voice, interrupted by frequent hiccoughs, the unteroffizier told his story.

There had been a drinking bout among the officers in one of the German dugouts, the main beverage being champagne. With a drunken leer he informed us that champagne was plentiful on their side and that it did not cost them anything either. About seven that night the conversation had turned to the "contemptible" English, and the captain had made a wager that he would hang his cap on the English barbed wire to show his contempt for the English sentries. The wager was accepted. At eight o'clock the captain and he had crept out into No Man's Land to carry out this wager.

They had gotten about halfway across when the drink took effect and the captain fell asleep. After about two hours of vain attempts the unteroffizier had at last succeeded in waking the captain, reminding him of his bet, and warned him that he would be the laughing stock of the officers' mess

if he did not accomplish his object, but the captain was trembling all over and insisted on returning to the German lines. In the darkness they lost their bearings and crawled toward the English trenches. They reached the barbed wire and were suddenly challenged by our sentry. Being too drunk to realize that the challenge was in English, the captain refused to crawl back. Finally the unteroffizier convinced his superior that they were in front of the English wire. Realizing this too late, the captain drew his revolver and with a muttered curse fired blindly toward our trench. His bullet no doubt killed our captain.

Then the bomb came over and there he was, dying—and a good job too, we thought. The captain dead? Well, his men wouldn't weep at the news.

Without giving us any further information the unteroffizier died.

We searched the bodies for identification disks but they had left everything behind before starting on their foolhardy errand.

Next afternoon we buried them in our little cemetery apart from the graves of the Tommies. If you ever go into that cemetery you will see two little wooden crosses in the corner of the cemetery set away from the rest.

They read:

Captain	German Army
Died — 1916	Unknown
R. I. P.	
Unteroffizier	German Army
Died — 1916	Unknown
R. I. P.	

CHAPTER XXI.

About Turn.

The next evening we were relieved by the —th brigade, and once again returned to rest billets. Upon arriving at these billets we were given twenty-four hours in which to clean up. I had just finished getting the mud from my uniform when the orderly sergeant informed me that my name was in orders to leave, and that I was to report to the orderly room in the morning for orders, transportation and rations.

I nearly had a fit, hustled about packing up, filling my pack with souvenirs such as shell heads, dud bombs, nose caps, shrapnel balls, and a Prussian guardsman's helmet. In fact, before I turned in that night, I had everything ready to report at the orderly room at nine the next morning.

I was the envy of the whole section, swanking around, telling of the good time I was going to have, the places I would visit, and the real, old English beer I intended to guzzle. Sort of rubbed it into them, because they all do it, and now that it was my turn, I took pains to get my own back.

At nine I reported to the captain, receiving my travel order and pass. He asked me how much money I wanted to draw. I glibly answered, "Three hundred francs, sir," he just as glibly handed me one hundred.

Reporting at brigade headquarters, with my pack weighing a ton, I waited, with forty others, for the adjutant to inspect us. After an hour's wait, he came out; must have been sore because he wasn't going with us.

The quartermaster sergeant issued us two days' rations, in a little white canvas ration bag, which we tied to our belts.

Then two motor lorries came along and we piled in, laughing, joking, and the Germans, we were feeling so happy. Our journey to seven days' bliss in Blighty had commenced.

The ride in the lorry lasted about two hours; by this time we were covered with fine, white dust from the road, but didn't mind, even if we were nearly choking.

At the railroad station at F— we reported to an officer, who had a white band around his arm, which read "R. F. O." (Royal Transportation Officer). To us this officer was Santa Claus.

The sergeant in charge showed him our orders; he glanced through them and said: "Make yourselves comfortable on the platform and don't leave; the train is liable to be along in five minutes—or five hours."

(Continued next week.)

Too Expensive to Stutter.

There is a certain member of Congress who stutters except when he makes a speech or talks over the telephone. Recently he had occasion to call up a friend in Seattle on a matter of personal importance. When the transcontinental connection had been made the man in Seattle shouted through the phone:

"Who is talking?"

"This is 'Tom Smith,'" answered the Congressman at the capitol end of the wire.

"No, it is not 'Tom Smith,'" snapped the man in Seattle.

"Yes, it is 'Tom Smith,' I tell you," the Congressman fairly bellowed.

"Why do you doubt it?"

"Why, 'Tom Smith' stutters."

"Darn it, do you think I am going to stutter at a dollar a word?" the Congressman retorted as he banged down the phone in disgust.—Nebraska Legal News.

An Honest Estimate.

It was on the morning of St. Patrick's day the farmer thought he would treat his servant boy, so he gave him a very big glass of whiskey. The farmer's wife thought that she would treat him also, but she gave it to him in a very small glass. He looked at it and asked:

"Ma'am, how are those glasses made?"

"Oh, you know, these glasses are all blown," said the servant, "whoever blew that one must have been very short of breath."—Baltimore Sun.

FARM NOTES.

—Sugars and syrups can be produced on the farms and in villages by the use of ordinary kitchen equipment to help make up the average of 81 pounds, the estimated sugar for each person in the United States last year. A few sugar maple trees, well-kept colonies of bees, a hundred feet of sugar beets raised in the garden, or a small patch of sweet sorghum, and cull or other surplus apples which might go to waste unless made into apple syrup may each be made to contribute to our sugar supply.

—Every laying hen sold from the farms before the first of May means a loss of about thirty eggs to the food supply of the nation. These eggs are valuable food, manufactured largely from insects, weeds and grass, garbage and waste. The eggs, therefore, are almost wholly for the profit in human food. Moreover, the hen is just as good meat after she has laid these eggs as before.

Save the hens is the message that the United States Department of Agriculture is sending broadcast through press notices and posters and through its county agents, especially in the southern poultry-raising sections.

—Big Profits for Growers Who Keep Wheat Healthy.—To offset the winter wheat crop loss, due to severe weather conditions, farmers are being urged to treat their spring wheat seed so that the yield from every acre may be increased more than four and one-half bushels. Preventive seed treatment will accomplish this for less than three cents an acre, according to the war emergency board of plant disease specialists.

Quoting the U. S. Department of Agriculture, the scientists assert that in more than 4000 cases of seed treatment to prevent smut in cereal crops the increase was 4.6 bushels to the acre. The total profit in these cases, involving about 400,000 acres, was \$1,197,722. Spring cereals, used as wheat substitutes, may be increased in the same way, declare the plant disease experts.

Everywhere growers are asked to apply the simple inexpensive treatments, which call for no extra laborers, in order that they may profit individually and the world may have the additional food which is needed now. The prevention of plant diseases will increase the production of food from 50 to 100 per cent., the specialists maintain.

—Maple sugar making is an art the pioneer settlers of America learned from the Indians, and for years it has been a home and farm industry. The process is not so complicated that anyone who has the opportunity need hesitate to try it. Find a sugar maple tree ten or more inches in diameter; bore a hole three-eighths of an inch or slightly more in diameter; insert a metal spout or one made by punching the pith from a section of elder; set a bucket under it that the sap may collect; boil this down in a kettle or shallow pan on a kitchen stove to the proper density for maple syrup. If sugar is preferred, boil it down further until it is quite thick, taking care that it does not burn, and let it crystallize.

"Sugar weather" often starts by the middle of February in the southern part of the sugar-maple region. The first sap is sweetest. There is no time to be lost in talking; get ready to take advantage of the warm sunny days. "Old timers" say the outlook is good for a good sugar season.

The Office of Sugar Investigations of the United States Department of Agriculture upon application will send instructions for making syrups at home.

—When the pigs are about three weeks old, sometimes less, they will begin to nose around for something to eat. If they are going to do as they should this something must be supplied. One of the best feeds at this particular time is shelled corn. It should be in a self-feeder in a pen where the pigs can go to it and will not be bothered by any of the rest of the hogs. This can be arranged by a creep just large enough to admit the pigs handily. Don't forget that these little fellows grow quite rapidly and from time to time the creep must be made larger. After the pigs are 4 or 5 weeks old, especially if they do not have good grass pasture, the addition of some shorts, tankage, or oil meal is advisable. Nothing would be better, however, than skimmed milk. The self-feeder in which is kept corn and other feeds should be maintained right along up until weaning time, and after that if the pig is intended for market purposes. Pigs to be used for breeding purposes may be kept on a self-feeder all the time with splendid results, but in some cases they get too fat and loggy and do not take the proper exercise. The most profitable pig is the one that never quits growing from farrowing time until he is driven over the scales.

—Manure for the War Garden.—Nothing is quite so effective as a fertilizer for vegetable crops as stable manure. Unfortunately the supply in towns and cities is rapidly decreasing. But whenever possible it should be used even though the amount available be little. Manure is not only an excellent fertilizer, but it gives the soil a greater capacity for holding moisture, produces a more open structure and also supplies countless bacteria which aid greatly in making plant food available.

It is not desirable to plow or spade fresh manure under directly before planting. Home gardeners should therefore attempt to secure a supply of manure several weeks in advance of planting. If it is fresh, pile it in the garden in a compact pile with straight sides and a flat top. When it heats, re-pile and add water to prevent its burning dry. Repeat the turning several times. Very rapid decomposition is thus encouraged.

To prevent the loss of ammonia as gases, mix acid phosphate with the manure at the rate of 50 to 100 pounds to a ton of manure; the manure becomes a more complete fertilizer by the addition of the phosphate.

Well-rotted manure may be worked into the soil after plowing, but coarse, strawy manure must be spaded or plowed under. The heavier or poorer the soil the more manure is needed. A two-horse load to a plot twenty-five by one hundred feet is not excessive.