

Shanghaied at Seventeen

By Sergeant Arthur Guy Empey

Author of "Over the Top," "First Call," Etc.

Mr. Empey's Experiences During His Seventeen Months in the First Line Trenches of the British Army in France

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In New York Public School No. 78 I had three chums, "Bill" Meek, "Jim" Fleming, and "Charlie" Unger.

Bill was full of wild ideas and schemes. He had the "get-rich-quick" mania. About every two weeks he would call us aside and in a mysterious and important manner carefully unfold some daring scheme to get rich quick, giving his personal guarantee that it could not fail.

One night Bill came around to the house with four tickets for a blood and thunder war play entitled "Cuba's Vow." His brother was playing the villain. This play greatly impressed me; in fact, from the first act to the last the footlights were gushing blood, love and adventure—and rotten acting.

Bill was a pretty good judge of human nature. He had taken us to this play to get us worked up to a pitch of enthusiasm, and thus getting us in the proper frame of mind, he could unroll his latest scheme.

That night, after the show, he proposed a trip to South America, which took our breaths away. We were to run away and ship on a tramp steamer, for a passage of about nine months. With the money thus earned we were to equip ourselves and start out for Port Limon, Costa Rica, and go into the coffee plantation business.

We all fell for this and took a solemn vow to stick. The scheme especially appealed to me because here was my chance to follow Dana in his "Two Years Before the Mast." The next day, after sleeping it over, Charlie and Jim decided that there was more money in New York, and refused to go.

I viewed the proposition in the sunlight, but I stuck. Then Bill and I made a tour of the docks in New York, trying to find the ship we wanted. We fell in with several "boarding masters." These men infest the water fronts of large cities and are nothing but bloodsuckers preying on sailors.

That night I exploded a bombshell in the family. After fessing had been served, puffed up with importance, I declared: "Well, I'm going to South America." A barrage of laughter rippled around the table.

to zero. I could not take my eyes away from the clock. It was an agony of intense waiting, similar to that when, later in the trenches, I kept looking at my wrist watch waiting for four o'clock in the morning when we were to go "over the top" in a charge.

Bill looked like a snowman. About five minutes to ten, crack! crack! came a couple of pebbles against the window pane, sounding like the crack of bullets on the western front.

We plowed through the blizzard, got on a trolley car, and reached Erie basin at a quarter to 12, went up the gangplank and reported to the steward.

The ship looked like an ice palace. You could hear the creaking of winches and the straining of cables, and could see dark forms sliding and cursing on the slippery decks under the glow of the cargo lights.

The steward greeted us very cordially and I thought him the finest man I had ever met. Bill was shipped as second steward, and I got the billet of second cook.

My "glory hole" was aft on the main deck, while Bill slept amidships. I piled into the little two-by-four bunk and was soon fast asleep. I had a horrible dream; a giant had me by the heels and was swinging me around his head, trying to dash my brains out against the side of the ship.

About six bells in the morning (three o'clock) the door opened, and there standing in the opening was a huge Swede, encased in oilskins. The icy blast sent a cold shiver through me. I wondered what he wanted, but did not wonder long.

"You bane get tea and toast on bridge for mate, damn quick." I was bewildered. The door slammed and once again I was alone. Fifteen minutes must have passed when the door opened again and in rushed the toughest looking seaman I have ever seen. He had only one eye.

"Get out o' that, you landlubber." There's no fire in the galley, and I

same time telling me what an expert he was at carving. Later on I found that there was a reason for his carrying this knife. He and the crew were at dagger points, he never daring to go forward except in case of necessity, and then he was careful always to carry his butcher knife.

The Cushman was a "lime juicer," sailing under the English flag. The skipper was a "lime juicer," the first mate a "blue noser," the first engineer a Scotsman, while the crew was composed of Spaniards, Italians, Squareheads, Finns, Swedes and Russians.

Bill and I were the only two Americans on board. The engineer's messman was a Prussian, Karl Tatzner by name. I nicknamed him "Fritz." He was only twenty years old, but was clumsy, strong as an ox and about six feet tall.

After weathering the gale we at last came into the Gulf stream, and off the coast of Florida it was warm and pleasant.

port the men believed in woman suffrage. Long lines of half-naked black women, with huge baskets of coal on their heads, pushed the forward gang plank, dumped their load of coal into the open bunkers, and left the ship by the after gangway.

The natives at St. Lucia had a great appetite for salt pork. I soon got wise to this fact and traded about a half a barrel of pork for limes, guava jelly, bay rum and alligator pears.

About two hours before sailing from St. Lucia, a little fellow about fifteen years of age came to the entrance of the galley and in fair English told Bill and me a pathetic story of inhuman treatment which would have melted hearts of stone.

Watching our chance, we sneaked aft and hid the little fellow in one of the ventilators, warning him, upon pain of death, not to make a sound until the ship was well under way.

We cleared St. Lucia and were soon at sea. The islands of Martinique, St. Lucia and Barbados were tiny gray dots on the horizon when an Italian sailor, Louis Maranto, went aft to ship the ventilators.

On our homeward-bound passage we went around the Horn and ran into a gale. The bos'n mutinied. Old "One-eyed Gibson" came behind him and laid him low with a marlinpike.

The first port we touched at, the consul's flag was hoisted at the foremast, and a bleary-eyed, half-drunken little old man came on board and was clobbered with the captain for about an hour.

Half way up the coast we ran out of fresh water, and had to drink condensed water from an old squeaky condensing engine. It was brackish and sickening. I would have sold my soul for one drink of clear, cold water.

Through listening to Monday's stories, I knew that he was very superstitious and believed in magic, or "zobbi," as he called it.

Bill told him that my father in America was a great medicine man and that I was gifted with magic.

While loading guano at Lobos, the fourth engineer had gone on a shoot- 'n'g trip and killed several huge pelicans. He skinned these and gave me one of the skins.

the pelican's skin down my back, and with my face smeared with black, would do a mystic dance. He was to take Monday and hide behind the ventilator, and while I was doing my war dance, he would explain to Monday that I was in communication with my father, the great American medicine man.

After touching at 13 ports on the west coast, discharging our cargo, we left for a little island called Lobos, where we were to take on a cargo of guano. While working this cargo it was misery for everyone on board; the strong ammonia from the guano made our eyes red and watery, and we could only breathe by wrapping big handkerchiefs around our noses and mouths.

Then, coming back, we touched at Valparaiso, Chile. To me death seemed easier than the homeward-bound voyage, so one night Bill and I slid down the anchor chain and swam to a "bum-boat" lying near us.

We had walked about five minutes when, bang! another gendarme. This cost us \$4. After leaving him we were more cautious, hiding our remaining money in my shoe.

At four o'clock the next morning, and if he found us in Valparaiso we would be sent to the mines.

Shivering and trembling we wended our way back to the dock and hunted around for a boatman. Bribing him with our remaining money he at last brought us alongside, just before the gangplank was lifted.

At the first sight of the statue of liberty a rush of independence and patriotism surged through me, and I sat down on the hatchway and absolutely refused to work.

It is entirely fitting and in complete accord with the progress of civilization that the movies finally have reached the Holy City of Jerusalem.

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