

Christmas in a Dugout

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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It was Christmas eve, and cold; not the kind of cold which sends the red blood tingling through your veins...

The three of us, "Curly," "Happy," and myself, were standing at the corner of "Yankee avenue" and "Yiddish street," waiting for the word "Stand to," upon which we were to mount our machine gun on the parapet and go on watch for two hours with our heads sticking over the top.

"Yankee avenue" was the name of the fire trench, while "Yiddish street" was the communication trench leading to the rear. We were occupying "X" sector of the front line of our brigade.

The trench was muddy, and in some places a thin crust of ice was beginning to form around the edges of the puddles.

We had wrapped our feet and legs with empty sand bags, and looked like snow shovelers on Fifth avenue. My teeth were chattering with the cold.

Curly, while working away, was muttering; "Blime me, Christmas eve, and here I am somewhere in France, 'arf starved with the cold."

Happy was humming "Keep the Home Fires Burning." Right then, to me, any kind of a home fire would have been very welcome.

It was black as pitch in No Man's land. Curly stopped muttering to himself and Happy's humming ceased.

Suddenly, Happy, who was standing on the firestep next to me, gripped my arm, and in a low, excited whisper, asked: "Did you see that out in front, Yank?"



"Did You See That Out in Front, Yank?"

a little to the right of that black patch in the barbed wire?

Turning my eyes in the direction indicated, with my heart pounding against my ribs, I waited for something to develop.

Sure enough, I could make out a slight movement. Happy must have seen it at the same time, because he carefully eased his rifle over the top, ready for instant use.

For the remainder of our two hours on guard nothing happened. Then we

"turned over" to the second relief and, half frozen, wended our way through the icy mud to the entrance of our dugout.

From the depths of the earth came the notes of a harmonica playing "Pack Up Your Troubles in Your Old Kit Bag, and Smile, Smile, Smile." Stumbling down the muddy steps we entered the dugout.

As soon as we made our appearance in the dugout the circle stood up, and, as is usual with the English, made room for us to get around the fire bucket to thaw out our stiffened joints.

"Gentlemen, it is now time for this ship's company to report progress as to what they have done for the Christmas feed which is to be held tomorrow at eight bells.

I reported one dozen eggs, two bottles of white wine, one bottle of red wine, eight packets of Gold Flake "fags" (cigarettes), and one quart bottle of champagne, which had cost me five francs at a French estaminet.

This report was received with a cheer. "Ikey" Honney was next in order. He proudly stated that he had saved his rum issue for the last eleven days, and consequently was able to donate to the feast his water bottle three-fourths full of rum.

Just then Lance Corporal Hall came into the dugout, and warning his hands over the fire bucket, said: "If you blokes want to hear something that will take you home to Blighty, come up into the fire trench a minute."

None of us moved. That fire bucket was too comfortable. After much coaxing Sallor Bill, Ikey Honney and myself followed Hall out of the dugout and up into the fire trench. A dead silence reigned, and we started to return. Hall blocked our way, and whispered:

"Just a minute, boys, and listen." Pretty soon, from the darkness out in front, we heard the strains of a German cornet playing "It's a Long, Long Trail We're Winding."

River" were wuffed across No Man's Land toward us. I felt lonely and homesick.

Out of the darkness from the fire bay on our left a Welsh voice started singing "It's a Long, Long Trail." It was beautiful. The German cornet player must have heard it, because he picked up the tune and accompanied the singer on his cornet.

The men were all tired out, and soon rasping snores could be heard from under the cover of blankets and overcoats.

The next day was Christmas, and we eagerly awaited the mail, which was to be brought up by the ration party at noon.

Not a shot or shell had been fired all morning. The sun had come out and, although the trenches were slippery with mud, still it was warm, and we felt the Christmas spirit running through our veins.

Bill was hustling about preparing the Christmas spread. He placed a waterproof sheet on the floor, and adding three blankets he spread another waterproof sheet over the top for a table cloth, and arranged the men's packs around the edges for chairs.

There was a mad rush for the entrance. In a couple of minutes or so the boys returned, staggering under a load of parcels. As each name was read off, a parcel would be thrown out to the expectant Tommy. My heart was beating with eagerness as the sergeant picked up each parcel; then a pang of disappointment as the name was read off.

Each man in the dugout received from one to four parcels. There was still one left. I could feel their eyes sympathizing with me.

Sallor Bill whispered something to the sergeant that I could not get. The sergeant turned to me and said: "Why, blime me, Yank, I must be

goin' balmy. I left your parcel up in the trench. I'll be right back." He returned in a few minutes with a large parcel addressed to me. I



I Eagerly Took the Parcel.

eagerly took the parcel and looked for the post mark. It was from London. Another pang of disappointment passed through me. I knew no one in London.

Then it all flashed over me in an instant. About two weeks before I had noticed a collection being taken up in the section and at the time thought it very strange that I was not asked to donate.

Tears of gratitude came to my eyes, but some way or other I managed not to betray myself.

A man named Smith in our section had been detailed as "runner" to our captain and was not present at the distribution of the mail.

In about ten minutes a man came from the trench loaded down with small oblong boxes. Each Tommy, including myself, received one. They were presents from the queen of England, and each box contained a small plum pudding, cigarettes, a couple of cigars, matches and chocolates.

Sallor Bill, noting our eagerness to begin, held up his hand and said: "New years, we're all supposed to together. Don't you think it would be better to wait a few minutes more for Smith?"

Unrest seemed to prevail. Suddenly the entrance to the dugout was darkened and a form came stumbling down. With one accord we all shouted:

"Come on, Smith, you're missing one of the best Christmas dinners of your life."

"Which is Smith's pack?" We all solemnly nodded our heads in the direction of the vacant place. Without a word the sergeant picked up the letters, parcels and pack and started to leave the dugout.

"Out with it, sergeant, what's happened?" The sergeant turned around, and in a choking voice, said: "Boys, Smith's gone west. Some bloody German sniper got him through the napper as he was passing that bashed-in part in Yiddish street."

I believe that right at that moment a solemn vow of vengeance registered itself in every heart around that festive circle.

The next day we buried Smith in a little cemetery behind the lines. While standing around his grave our artillery suddenly opened up with an intense bombardment on the German lines, and as every shell passed, screaming

overhead, we sent a prayer of vengeance with it.

As the grave was filled in I imagined a huge rainbow embracing the graves in that cemetery on which, in letters of fire was written "Peace on Earth, Good Will Toward Men."

But such is war.

JULIA WARD HOWE'S SALON

As Hostess It Was Said of Her With Truth That She Delighted in Contrasts.

When I think of it I believe that I had a salon once upon a time. I did not call it so, nor even think of it as such; yet within it were gathered people who represented many and various aspects of life.

Not Slaves to Precedent.

Were one to analyze the careers of 200 or 300 of our leading men of finance and industry it would probably develop that not half of them continued in the line of business in which they started, but struck boldly out in the direction where they saw the biggest opportunities and where their inclination lay.

One of the earliest and most notable instances of this was Commodore Vanderbilt, who was so old before he turned to railroad that his family and his advisers implored him to let well enough alone and not to enter an entirely new field at his time of life.

This readiness of brainy giants to take up new things and to throw their whole selves into them is really one of the principal reasons why the United States has led the world in so many lines of endeavor.

Historic Old Lusitania. Among the historical mementoes in Old Lusitania, which is an ancient name of the western part of Hispania, including a part of modern Portugal, is an ancient church ruin which stands off the Rue De San Roque.

Good That Is Evil Spoken Of. Our good is often evil spoken of because of our thoughtlessness.

Influence. The world is only just beginning to understand the extent to which individuals and nations may be and have been swayed by silent mental influence.

"I want to be let alone," says the ex-Kaiser. All right—solitary confinement.—Atlanta Constitution.

Cynthia White - Pest - By VINCENT G. PERRY. (Copyright, 1918, by McClure Newspaper Syndicate)

With a quick jerk Horace Sangster pulled his line from the water, and then cried out with disgust. The fish, if there had been one, had got away.

The sound of the word startled him. He had not sworn for years. His nerves were certainly making a wreck of him. The solitude of the place was aggravating him, too.

This was the second day, and he was going to make it his last. To be going with him had trouble pitching his tent. The storm in the night had kept him up keeping out the rain.

Without exaggeration Cynthia was the worst girl he had ever had in life seemed to be to torment the professor of mathematics. Something always turned up for her to argue about or laugh over.

As he sat there thinking it over, Horace made up his mind he had been foolish. It would have been easy to have arranged for her dismissal from the college. Why hadn't he done it?

Suddenly the laugh sounded close beside him. He nearly toppled into the water from the shock it gave him. He turned quickly to confront Cynthia.

"Oh, Mr. Sangster, you look so funny there," she laughed. "If the girls could only see you in your bare feet!"

"Don't be alarmed," she smiled encouragingly. "I am going to take off my shoes, too. One can't fish well with shoes on. How do you like my costume?"

"Jove! You look peachy," he murmured, admiringly, not realizing that he had used the word "peachy" for the first time since he had got his degree.

That encouraged Cynthia to take a seat beside him. Not that she needed encouragement, for she would have sat there sooner or later. It did not take Horace long to forget that he was a college professor and she was a mere student.

Her home was near by and she had spent every summer fishing in that stream for years. She led him to a place where he was "sure to catch something, no matter how poor an angler he was."

Camping agreed with him after that. Fishing was the most wonderful sport in the world when one had a companion like Cynthia. He decided after two weeks of glorious days. Nerves? Why, he had forgotten he had such things!

They would have still stayed out of his mind had it not been that a rainy day broke in on them. It had it necessary to stay in his tent and try and spend the day reading, wondering all the while what Cynthia was doing.

"I don't think you should have said that to me," she said, looking at him with a gleam in her eye. "You were so sure to catch something, no matter how poor an angler he was."

Subscribe for the "Watchman."

with him just to have something to tell the fourth-year girls when she went back to college. He would have to resign.

It would be just like Cynthia to do it—but would it? This new Cynthia was not a bit like the old Cynthia who had made his life miserable.

The next day he still thought it. When Cynthia appeared he hardly spoke. She saw at once her presence was not welcome.

Cynthia looked up just in time and with a cry jumped into the water and made for the spot. When he came up for the first time she was there to clutch him and a couple of strokes took them to safety.

"Come back, Horace," she cried. "Oh, Horace, don't die. There is so much I want to ask forgiveness for. I was just beginning to know you and like you, Horace—like you so much, Horace. Please open your eyes. I have been such a wretch to tease you. Oh, dearest Horace, open your eyes!"

Cynthia's hysteria vanished when she discovered he was alive. She was very angry at first when he confessed he had not been hurt at all and was conscious all the time, but her sense of humor came to the rescue and she joined in his laugh.

"Please call me dearest Horace again," he said as he reached out for her hand. But Cynthia would not until he had told her how much he loved her and how miserable he would be without her.

"Dear old pest," he said just before the kiss that sealed their engagement.

SANTA FE'S PROUD POSITION

Boast is That One Must Go to New Mexico to Find the Real American Art.

The new museum of Santa Fe claims that "one must go to New Mexico to find an American architecture and an American art."

Six of the ancient Franciscan mission churches, 300 years old, are reproduced in the facade, without destroying the unity of its appearance;

The massive doors of Santa Clara have been reproduced. There are cloisters and, of course, a patio. The new museum is an art gallery, part of the Museum of New Mexico, whose priceless archeological and historical collections are housed in the Palace of the Governors.

WAS USED TO QUICK ACTION Moving Picture Scenario Writer Accustomed to Taking Things "on the Fly," as It Were.

He had never seen her before, but he fell in love with her as she stepped from the surface car. "Come," he said, grabbing her by the arm.

While waiting for the minister to put on a clean collar, wash his hands and otherwise prepare for the ceremony, the young man telephoned to the nearest furniture store.

Eleven minutes later a taxi raced through One Hundred and Steenth street, and the bride and groom entered their new home.

"Doesn't this seem—er—a little bit sudden to you?" asked the bride, as she sat down to get her breath.

"No, not exactly," replied the groom. "In fact, it seems the most natural thing in the world. You see, for the last five years I've done nothing but write moving-picture scenarios."—Film Fun.