The Fusilier Giants Under Fire

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

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We were sitting on a firestep in the front line trench. It was bright and good humor. There were two reasons for this: First-our battalion was to be relieved at nine that night and we were going back for a two weeks' our direction had a sweet and "springy" smell.

About thirty yards down a communication trench to the left was an orchard. The trees were scarred from bullets and fragments of shell; but resist the feel of spring, because here and there on the twigs and branches could be seen bursting buds. Flitting around were numerous birds, chirping, and sometimes wrangling among them-

accustom themselves to war. Occa- let out: sionally a German shell, or perhaps one of ours, would go screaming over the orchard. The birds did not seem to mind the noise-just carried on with their nest-building.

In our company was an American named Alexander Stewart. Naturally he and I were very chummy.

Stewart and I were the chief "amusement promoters" in the company, the Tommies constantly looking to us for some new diversion.

In the English army a Tommy seems to have the idea that an American's chief vocation in the United States is to invent, and to keep on inventing. Of course, Stewart and I did not in any way try to dissipate this idea; in fact, we encouraged it, and took great pride in being looked up to in this way; but, believe me, it kept us hust-

ling to keep the Tommies amused. It was getting too warm for soccer football, and we knew as soon as we illets that the iss are you going to amuse us while behind the lines?"

We were Americans, and red-blooded; spring was in the air, and our thoughts turned to what every Ameriof spring-baseball.

I turned my eyes to the muddy paramy gaze on a fragment of German soon this fragment seemed to change into a baseball player, with mask, protector and catcher's mitt. He was crouching behind the home plate and Stewart said: "Say, Emp, I wonder if we could teach the Tommies how to play baseball?"

I immediately turned in his direction. He was also staring at that fragment

I answered: "Did you ever try to teach a Chinaman how to speak French?"

He got it right away and a dejected look spread over his countenance, and he let out a long-drawn sigh.

A Tommy sitting on my right butted in with: "Did you sye byseball, Yank? is absurdly easy to plye, but I cawn't sye I fawncy h'it."

With a look of disgust Stewart turned to me and said: "I gur se vou're right, Emp, it would be easier to teach the Chinaman French."

That night we were relieved and went behind the lines.

The next afternoon, after parade, we were sitting in an orchard drinking -tea. About a month before, Stewart and I had taught the Tommies how to pitch horseshoes. There was great rivalry among the different squads, each squad having a team.

- sust then Corporal Watkins came over to us and asked: "Where are the orse shoes? I cawn't find 'em."

Another Tommy answered: "Strafe me pink, where are your h'eyes? Cawn't you bloomin' well see the h'officers usin' 'em be'ind that billet over there? Blime me, they're alw'ays a'gummin' the gyme."

Sure enough, the officers were using

our horseshoes. Stewart, with a look of depression on his face, turned to me and said: "Well, here goes, Emp. Steve Brodle took a chance, so I might be able to get away with this."

Then, turning to the Tommies, he said: "Did any of you blokes ever hear of John McGraw?"

Three of the Tommies answered,

"Yes." A sunny smile and a look of hope flitted across Stewart's face, and he breathlessly asked, "Who is he?" The three started to answer at once, but Stewart, majestically extending his classes. hand, palm forward, said, "Get in

is John McGraw?"

Perkins answered: "Why, 'e's a

Tommy should have immediately

dropped dead. Turning to the next, he said, "'Cur-Curly, with a knowing look, an-"'E runs the King's Arms

public 'ouse, down Rye lane." With a piteous look, Stewart with suppressed eagerness. Stewart, looking at him, ejaculated, "Spit it

out before you choke." turned in the direction of the two de- trench. jected Tommies, and answered, "John 'e was the fellow in the London Scotstealing the rum issue at 'Wipers'. 'E was a lad, not 'arf he weren't."

A hissing noise issued from Stewa few seconds he straightened up and sunny and we were bubbling over with eyes. Addressing the Tommies, he listen here, and let it sink in deep. John McGraw is the manager of the rest. Second—it was spring. We could New York Giants. He is a baseball smell it in the air. Even the wind player; get it? A baseball player. A blowing from the German trenches in guy what manages a baseball team. And any fellows who can't make good on his team, or in the bush leagues, he sends 'em a cricket bat with their name inscribed on it and pays their passage to England. Get me?"

Several Tommies took exception to even these battered trunks could not this, and said that they had followed cricket all their lives, but had never heard of any American cricketers being sent over by a Mr. McGraw. At this I exploded, and Stewart went up in the air. Standing up and turning to the bunch under the trees, point-To me it seemed odd that birds could ing his finger in their direction, he

"Now listen, this is good. I'm going to send down to the ordnance corps and get a dozen gimlets and some funnels. With these gimlets I'm going to bore holes in your 'nappers,' and using the funnel I'm going to pour into those garrets of yours a little brains. Then, after you've acquired gray matter, I'm going to teach you the great American game of baseball; and then when through teaching you, I'm going to retire to the Old Soldiers' home as physically and mentally unfit, because I know the job will put me there."

The Tommies did not take exception to his pointed remarks about their lack of brains. They overlooked this because they were very eager to learn how to play baseball.

A chorus of, "Go to h'it, Yank, that's what we want: something new out 'ere in this bloody mess of mud and

'cooties.' " would be put right up to us: "How talk the matter over, and beckoning to me, went in the direction of the billet. I followed. He then outlined

his scheme. We were to form two baseball classes. Stewart in charge of one. I can boy is thinking of upon the arrival the other. On the plaster of the billet we carefully scratched out a baseball diamond, and then called the Tommies dos (rear wall of the trench) and fixed in. They sat around like little children in a school, eagerly intent. For shell embedded in the mud. Pretty two hours we explained the game to them. When we got through they all knew how to play baseball—on paper. We dismissed them, telling them another class would be held the followsignaling to the pitcher. Just then ing afternoon. That night, Stewart and I, around the stump of a candle, went into details for organizing two teams. Everything appeared rosy, and we were highly jubilant. A Tommy eased over in our direction and inno-

> cently asked: "I sye, Yank, isn't it necessary to 'ave byseballs and clubs? We cawn't very well pl'y without 'em."

This was a bombshell to us. In our eagerness and excitement we had quite forgotten that bats, balls and gloves were necessary. I thought Stewart was going to burst. Letting out a "Well, Why, I saw a gyme in London, and it | I'll be blowed!" which nearly blew the candle out, he turned a silly look in my direction, and I looked just as

At last the Tommies had stumped us, and we could see our reputation

fading into nothing. A dead silence reigned for over five minutes. Then Stewart started madly to open his haversack. I thought he had suddenly gone crazz. I reached my hand in the direction of my bayonet, fearing that he was looking for a Mills' bomb. When he drew his hand out, hanging to his fist was a writing pad. I let go of my bayonet. Borrowing a pencil from me (Stewart was always borrowing), he started writing. I thought perhaps he was going to commit suicide and was writing a farewell letter home, and asked him what was up. He whispered to me:

"Emp, we're two bloody fools not to have thought of this long ago. All we've got to do is to write home to one of the New York papers, asking the readers to send out baseball stuff to us, and it will only be a matter of a few weeks when we will have enough

to equip two teams." I offered to write the letter, and with Stewart bending over me, I eagerly wrote an appeal to the readers of a New York newspaper, and turned of the Giants had had that mob

the letter over to the mail orderly. We then explained to the Tommies that equipment was necessary and that we had written home, but while waiting for the baseball stuff to arrive we would carry on with our instruction

line, one at a time. Now, Perkins, who woolen baseball out of an old puttee, fixed up a temporary diamond, and showed the Tommies the general run lawnce corporal in the Royal Irish of the game. Their antics were awful. If we had used a regular baseball I According to Stewart's look, that don't think there would have been a Tommy in the squad without a black eye. Did you ever watch a girl trying to catch a ball? Well, the girl's team ly,' for the love o' Mike, who is he?" alongside of some of these Tommies would have looked like the winner in our world's series. It was hard work keeping their interest up.

Two weeks later we went up into the glanced my way and I jerked my front line; then came back again for thumb in the direction of the other another rest. The interest in baseball Tommy, who seemed to be bursting was dying out and w were at our wits end. Time passed, and we figured out that we ought to be hearing from our This fellow, with a superior air, again we went into the front line

The Tommies were very skeptical MacGraw, why everybody knows 'im; and every time baseball was mentioned they would gaze in our direction tish who clicked 'crucifixion' for with a sneering look. This completely

got our goats. One evening we were sitting in a dugout of the support trench; it was art's lips, and he seemed to collapse raining like the mischief, and we were like a punctured toy balloon. After cold and downhearted. Pretty soon the rations came up. The ration party a look of determination came into his generally brings the rations down into the dugouts, but the two men carrying exploded: "You blokes are enough to our "dixie" set it down in the mud of make Billy Sunday take to drink. Now, the trench and almost "shot the chutes" down the entrance to the dugout. They were breathless with excitement. One of them yelled out:

"Yank, there's a limber full of parcels down in the reserve dugout. They're all addressed to you, h'Empey, and they're from America."

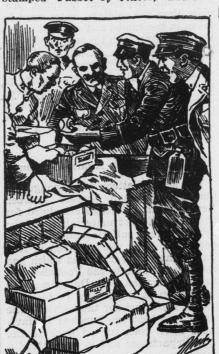
Stewart let out a shout and I felt warm all over. How we lorded it over those poor Tommies. That night we were to be relieved and go back to rest billets. We could hardly wait for the time.

The next morning was Sunday, and after church parade we made a mad rush to the orderly room to get our mail.

The quartermaster sergeant was waiting for me, and behind him stood every officer in the company, trying to disguise the expectant look on their faces. Every eye was turned in the direction of a heap of parcels. I thought the "quarter" never would start. Even the captain could not stand it, and giving way to his eagerness, said: "Sergeant, you had better issue the mail." Stewart and I were all anxiety.

Then, stooping down, the sergeant took up a parcel and read off: "Empey, No. 5203," and threw it over to me. I caught it on the fly. The sergeant kept on reading out "Empey," and parcels came through the air like a bombardment.

The first parcel I picked up was stamped "Passed by Censor," and con-



Contained Twelve Brand-New Base

tained twelve brand-new baseballs, or at least, eleven, and the remains of one. This twelfth ball was stamped, "Opened by Censor," but search as I could, I could find no stamp reading "Sewed Up by Censor." We did the sewing up, but that ball looked like a duck's egg when we had finished Stewart and I roundly cussed the censor. Later, we both cussed the inventor of baseball. There was a rea-

The readers of the newspaper appealed to had nobly responded to our appeal. There were enough gloves and balls for two teams, and even a chest protector and mask. The mask was an article of great curiosity to all. Some of them thought it was a bomb protector. Every one in turn tried it on, and every one, upon learning that the catcher was to wear the mask, wanted immediately to sign up for the position. Stewart and I could have been elected to parliament right there, if these Tommies could have

had their way. The next afternoon the candidates, forty in all, and the whole company, turned out en masse on the baseball field, which we had laid out during

our previous stay in rest billets. From that day on, Stewart and I led a dog's life. Though on paper everything looked bright, and the candidates were letter perfect in the game, or thought they were, on the field they were dubs of the worst caliber-regular boneheads. If McGraw wished on him he would have chucked up his job and taken the stump for woman suffrage; so you can appreciate our fix.

Stewart was a really good pitcher; plenty of curved stuff, having played lasses.

Semi-pro ball in the United States. It make a ball curve in the air the way

The next day Stewart and I made a was my intention to catch for him. Stewart could was enough to win for

and fill in the other positions with the most likely candidates. This scheme did not work in with the popular version a little bit. Out of the forty trying for the team, twenty-eight insisted on being catcher. They wanted to wear that mask. If there had been a camera, each of the forty would have had a photo taken of himself wearing the "wire cage." Here was a great dilemma. At that time I was only a private, and there were sergeants, corporals, and even an officer, who wanted to catch. Stewart again came to

the rescue. Calling me aside, he said: "Leave it to me, Emp, I'll fix 'em. I'll try out each one in turn. Let them wear the mask, and I'll send in some curves, and when the ball cracks them appeal, but nothing came. Then, once on the shins a couple of times you couldn't pay 'em to put on the cage."

The Tommies were strange to curved balls, and Stewart had speed. It did my heart good to see him dampen their ardor and dent their anatomy at the same time. The Tommies would see the ball coming to them and would reach up their hands to get it. Then the ball would "break" and hit them on the shin or knee. After five or six had retired, rubbing sore spots and cussing Stewart out, no one else wanted to catch, and the situation was

Tommy is a natural born soccer player and clever with his feet, but stupid with his hands when it comes to baseball. Several of them had a bad habit of stopping grounders with their feet, especially our shortstop. He would see a hot grass-eater coming his way, then, instead of using his hands, he would put his foot in front of it. The ball would climb his leg and get him on the chin or in the eye. After receiving a puffed-up lip and a beautiful black eye, he flatly refused to play unless I would let him wear the mask. Americans, picture a shortstop wearing a catcher's mask, and then sympathize with Stewart and me. The shortstop was a sergeant, and through diplomatic reasons, I gave the mask to him. At this every infielder wanted to wear it. Stewart solved the problem by putting in another shortstop and giving me the mask.

In England they have a game called "rounders," in which you are supposed to hit the baserunner with the ball to put him out. This is generally a tennis ball and does not hurt very

Well, those Tommies had a habit of lamming the baseball with all their might at the unfortunate runner. Many an early practice was broken up this way, because the team would lose interest in baseball when they had a chance to view a fight between a giver and a receiver.

After about ten days' practice we had picked two pretty fair teams and and it happened. arranged for a scrub game. Stewart's

side won, due to his pitching. Then, as is usual in baseball, things had to go up the line on a working | confinement. These gas helmets are party, one or two of the players would in a canvas bag and are slung around get wounded or killed; in fact, being the left shoulder by means of a cana baseball player got to be a perfect vas strap. Jonah, and the Tommies commenced lows came through without a scratch. Stewart and I also began to get frightened, and decided to chuck up the whole thing before we got it ourselves.

Then we went further back behind the lines. During this stay we rounded out a passable team.

A Canadian battalion, just sent out from England, on their way to "Wipers." went into billets about a mile from us. This was our chance. Stewart went over and challenged them to a game for the following Sunday. The challenge was accepted.

We had a week's time in which to strengthen some weaknesses and to teach the bunch a little "inside" baseball. Then the jinx popped up again.

On the morning of the game with the Canadians, our cleverest infielder, the first baseman, picked up an old German hand grenade and brought it to the billet. This man was a great souvenir collector; always hammering at "dud" shells, trying to remove the

nose-caps. Seeing him fooling around with the German bomb, I told him to throw it away; that one could never trust those things, and that I did not want to take any chan s of losing a first

but being of a naturally curious disposition, he refused to do so. Taking the bomb out behind the billet, he proceeded to take liberties with its mechanism; result, right hand blown off and another vacancy to be filled at first base. What we said about him would

not be fit for publication. The game was scheduled for two o'clock, and exactly at one-thirty-five Mr. Fritz plunked a stray "five nine" shell into our infield between home and first base, making a hole big enough for a limber to hide in. This meant picks and shovels for all hands

to fill in the hole. By this time a large crowd of rooters for both sides had lined themselves along the foul lines. The compliments that were wafted back and forth made the chaplain pack up and leave before

the game started. Then the betting commenced. It waxed hot and furious. I don't believe there was a loose penny in the crowd after all bets had been placed. Stewart and I tried to discourage this betting because we knew that if we lost we would be ostracized from that time on. We explained to the Tommies that the Canadians were baseball players, and that we were in for an awful trimming, but they wouldn't listen, saying that anybody who could

any team, and that all the Canadians would strike out. We insisted no fur-

We came to bat first. Our first man up got beaned, and instead of taking first base he went out into the pitch-

head and our runner took second.

er's box to lick the pitcher. After a little argument we managed to get him on first. The Canadian pitcher was wild. The next ball went over the catcher's

The next man up struck out. I batted third, hit to the outfield, the right fielder dropped the ball, and I reached second, the runner ahead of me moving to third base. Then Stewart got up and placed a corking double out into left field. Stewart was a fast runner. I started for home, touched third, the runner in front of me plowing along for home plate. He ran like an ice wagon. I was shouting to him to hurry up. I could hear Stewart pounding behind me. The Tommy's cap blew off, and instead of going home he stopped to pick it up. Stewart was shouting, "Leg it, here comes the ball," as he slid into third base. I could not pre-

was bristling and mine was tugging at its chain. The Canadian rooters were tickled to death, their sarcastic remarks burning into Stewart and me. Stewart was

cede the runner in, so we were trapped

fast losing his temper. The first two Canadians struck out. The third man up got his base on a passed third strike. My error.

Then our substitute first baseman pulled a stunt which turned the tables on the Canadians and we were some-

what appeased. The Canadian runner was laying a few feet off first base. Suddenly our first baseman shouted to him, "Look out, 'ere comes a shell; duck low!" The Canadian dropped to the ground. Stewart instantly sized up the situation and tossed the ball to the first baseman, who touched the baserunner and three were out. We had got our own back. Stewart and I could have both kissed that rube first baseman of ours. Right then and there we put him in a class with Hal Chase.

Up to the fourth inning neither side scored. Stewart was pitching in fine form. The Canadians just couldn't connect with his delivery, Ali they were doing was fanning the air. The Canadian rooters commenced to get frightened because they saw their money disappearing into the Tommies' pockets. They had the greatest contempt for the rest of the team, myself included, but realized that if Stewart did not weaken it would be a case of their going back to billets broke.

Then old Mr. Jinx butted in again, In the British army there is an order to the effect that gas helmets must be carried at all times, even while began to happen. A jinx seemed to sleeping. To disobey this order is a rest on our candidates. Every time we serious offense, and means immediate

In pitching, Stewart's gas helmet getting superstitious. If one of our bothered him greatly, and after the secteam happened to be working among ond inning he took it off. I warned him ten or twelve other company men, he | to be careful, because I noticed several was sure to get hit, while the other fel- military police in the crowd. But Stewart would not listen. He always was

> pig-headed. One of the Canadian rooters spotted that Stewart had laid aside his helmet, and artfully communicated this fact to the rest of his team's rooters. I noticed the rooters crowd around him for three or four minutes, and then a great laugh went up and they stretched out along the foul lines.

> Suddenly, one fellow, getting out in front of the bunch, like a cheer leader. counted, "One, two, three." Then up went a mighty chorus of, "Hey, Stewart, where's your gas helmet, where's your old gas bag, where's your old gas bag?" They kept this up and it got Stewart's goat. I went out into the pitcher's box and warned him to put on his gas helmet, but still pig-headed, he refused to do so. He was in an awful temper.

A sergeant of the military police was watching the game, and hearing the cries of the rooters he walked out on the diamond and asked Stewart where his helmet was. By this time Stewart had completely lost his temper and answered with a sneer: "Where do you think it is? I sent it home for a souvenir." The sergeant explained to him

that it was against army orders to be without a gas helmet, and that he had better put it on. Stewart would not listen to him, and answered: "Well, if



He Was in an Awful Temper.

it's against orders, get them rescinded." The sergeant immediately put him under arrest and marched him off

Our hopes were dashed; I could se the game going west. We had no other good pitcher to put in.

Upon seeing Stewart's arrest, the Canadian rooters kept up their gleeful

shouting. We were sure up against it. Here was the situation. It was the last half of the fourth inning, and two were out. If, by luck, we managed to get the third Canadian out, it would be an easy matter for them to retire us in the next inning because our weakest batting order was up. Then, the Canadians would come to bat and slaughter would commence.

I was in despair. Stewart must have realized that the game was hopeless unless it could be finished in this inning, because as he passed me he whispered, "Watch out for gas; I'll make them hunt for their gas helmets. It'll be a long time before that bunch of 'maple leafs' forget this game. Now, get wise. Delay the game as much as possible while getting a dub to pitch in my place. Then watch for happenings. Get me? Are you wise?"

I didn't "get him," nor was I "wise," but I answered in the affirmative. I followed his instructions, while out of the corner of my eye I watched him on his way to the company billet.

for a double play. Stewart's angora He called a man named Stein, a member of our company, who thought no more of losing a franc than he did of having his right arm shot off. Stein went over to Stewart, who whispered to him and passed him something. What struck me as strange was the fact that Stein, who had fifteen francs on the game, instead of coming back to watch the game, disappeared behind the billet, while Stewart was marched

off to "clink." The rooters were getting impatient, so I put a big Welshman in to pitch. I told the umpire that according to the rules a pitcher being put in "cold" was allowed four balls over the plate to warm up. The umpire agreed to this. I whispered to the Welshman, "Get out in that box and take your time, delaying the game as much as possible between each pitch. Now, you are allowed four balls over the plate in which to warm up. Slam 'em into me, but if you put one of them over, our

goose is cooked." The Welshman was mystified, but followed my instructions to the letter. He threw four balls which nearly broke my back to get. Then the umpire held up his hand and called, "Play ball!" I immediately went over to him and explained that these four balls had not gone over the plate. He fell for this and agreed with me. After that rube of a pitcher had thrown about fifteen or sixteen balls, several passing me, which I chased to the billet to waste time, the umpire got impatient and the rooters were yelling like mad to carry on. I still insisted that none of the balls had gone over the plate, and the umpire was in a quandary. Just then one of our men passed in the rear of me and whispered: "Stewart says to go on with the game." Wondering at this infor-

mation, I started in. The pitching of that Welshman was awful. He hit the first two men up and walked the third. I was in despair, bases full and two out. Some of the Canadian rooters were jumping up and down, throwing their hats in the air, and one fellow was whistling "The Star-Spangled Banner." This got my

goat completely. Near every billet hangs a gas gong. This is a triangular piece of steel or an empty shell case. Beside this gong hangs an iron striker. Upon the sounding of the alarm, by striking on the gong with the striker, every man is supposed to put on his gas helmet and repair immediately to his proper station. These gongs are to warn soldiers that German poison gas is com-

While I was signaling to my rube pitcher and beseeching him to put one over, the clanging of the gas gong rang out. I dropped my glove, got off my chest protector, and madly rushed for my helmet and soon had it on, the rooters and players doing the same. Then I got wise. I remembered Stewart's instructions: "Watch out for gas. I'll make 'em hunt for their gas helmets." The nerve and daring of his scheme took my breath away. The Canadians had a mile to go to get to their stations, and believe me, it is no fun double-timing for a mile while a gas helmet is choking you with its chemical fumes.

Well, those Canadians beat it, and so did we, but the game was saved and all bets were off.

I nearly smothered with laughter in my gas helmet. To the rest, not being "in the know," it was a genuine alarm. Shortly after the stampede it was discovered that the alarm was false, and a rigid investigation immediately took place. But the Canadians had left and our money was safe. It certainly would have gone hard with the culprit had he been caught. As it was, our battalion got two weeks as extra fatigue

on working and digging parties. Afterward, I was let into the secret. Stewart had given Stein ten francs to sound the gas alarm, which, with his fifteen francs bet on the game, Stein did not have it in his heart to refuse.

Many a time, Stewart, Stein and myself had a quiet little laugh when we pictured the Canadians stampeding for their billets.

Then orders were received to take over a new sector of the line, and baseball was forgotten. The work in front of us was to be of the grimmest nature. Not long after that, in my first going "over the top," Stewart was killed and Stein was wounded. I was also slight-

ly wounded. Thus ended the career of the Fusilie-Giants on the western front.

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