

The Conscientious Objector; or, Coming Through Under Fire

By Sergeant Arthur Guy Empey Author of "Over the Top," "First Call," Etc.

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

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"What do I think of a blinkin' conscientious objector?" answered Key Honey from the corner of the firebay. "Well, what with this blinkin' war on and blokes goin' west by the thousands, a pacifist or conscientious objector is one of two things, he's either a blinkin' coward or a bloody pro-German. But it's funny the way some of them blighters, with their West End ideas back in Blighty, changes their minds when they gets out here in the mud, and gets their first glimpse of a wooden cross. It's either a firm squad up against a wall, a bloomin' V. C. (Victoria Cross) or a 'rest in peace' sign over their nappers for them. A strange thing it is, but true; those blokes never go through the trenches in an ordinary way like we do; it's a case of extremes, no in-between stuff.

"Next time you're on a burial party, take a look at the third cross from the left in the fourth row as you enter the cemetery. You know that path that leads through the orchard just off the entrance of that big R. E. (Royal Engineers) dugout; well, under that cross rests a bloke who back in Blighty professed to be a pacifist. He wouldn't blinkin' well volunteer, not likely; they had to draft him, an' when they did he refused to fight, so they stuck him in the N. C. C. (noncombatant corps) and handed him a pick and shovel and put him to repairin' roads and diggin' graves. Well, it didn't take long before he was properly fed up with his job, and he threw down the pick and shovel and grabbed up a rifle an' bayonet. Oh, yes, he clicked it all right and went west. In fact he was buried in one of the graves he helped to dig. I suppose some of those college officers called it the 'iron of fate,' or some other blinkin' high-sounding phrase, but we know that it was only common ordinary luck, 'cause we all know that if you're going to get it, you'll get it, no matter if you're a gentleman's son or a bloomin' chimney sweep.



"You Must Be One of Them Blinkin' Conscientious Objectors."

"This blighter I'm telling about was in my platoon when I was in C company, an' he used to give me the proper pip with his arguments against fighting and the likes of that.

"The first time I met him was in St. Armand; our 'bat' was in the rest billets awaitin' a new draft before going up the line again. You see we had clicked it pretty rough at Fromelles, an' a platoon looked like a blinkin' squad when it lined up for parade. I was playin' 'house' in that estaminet right across from that bashed-in church on the corner when his labor battalion came through and took over billets just opposite from the estaminet. I was sitting near a window and watched them pass. A sorrier bunch of specimens of men I never saw; it turned my blinkin' stomach to look at them, what with their pasty faces, stooped-over shoulders and straggling gait. Right then and there I admired the Germans for their system of universal military training. If England had of had a little more of it there never would have been a war and right now we would be in Blighty with our wives and nippers, instead of sitting here in these bloody ditches waitin' for a shell to come over with our name and number on it.

"After the labor battalion took over billets several of them came into the estaminet and sat at a table near me. They started to discuss the war and voice their opinions about the 'top hats' at home. This bloke I'm a talkin' about was the loudest of the bunch;

he seemed to have a grouch on everything in general. I listened to him a few minutes chucking his weight about until it bloody well got on my nerves. Chucking up my game of house—and I had paid half a franc for my board, too—I leaned over to him and said:

"You must be one of those bloomin' conscientious objectors we reads about in the papers, one o' those blighters who don't believe in fightin' but is willing to sit back in Blighty and let us blokes out here do your bloody fightin' for you, while you gets a blinkin' good screw (salary) sitting on a high stool in some office."

"He turned to me and answered: 'It's the likes o' you who volunteered for this war what keeps it goin'. If you had all refused to go at first, there wouldn't be any war?'

"I couldn't see it his way at all, and went right back at him with: 'Yes, and if it wasn't for us volunteering, the bloody German flag would now be flyin' over Buckingham palace and King George would be in the Tower of London.'

"He thought a minute or two and answered: 'Well, what of it; one flag's as good as another, and as for the bloomin' king what did he ever do for you but make you pay taxes so he could bloomin' well sit around doing nothin'?'"

"This was too much for me, that blinkin' jellyfish a slinging mud at our king, so I lost my temper, and taking my glass of vin rouge in my hand I leaned over close to him and said: 'When you mentions the king's name it is customary to drink his health. Perhaps he never did anything special for me, but I have never done anything special for him, and even at that I've done a damned sight more than you have for him, so take this wine and drink his health, or I'll dent that napper of yours so you won't be able to wear that tin hat of yours.'

"He got kind of pale and answered: 'Drink to the king's health; not likely. It's through him and his bloody Top Hats in parliament that I'm out here. Why in the blinkin' hell don't he do his own fighting and let us poor blokes alone?'

"I saw red and was just goin' to hit him, when a big Irishman out of the Royal Irish Rifles next to me grabs the glass of wine from my hand, and looking the blighter in the face yells at him:

"Well, if the king ain't done nothing for you English, he's done less for us Irish, but I volunteered to come out here for him, and here I am, and glad of it too, and hopes some day to get into Berlin with the king's forces. You won't drink his health; well you can bathe his health. With that he threw the wine into the blighter's face and smashed him in the nose with his fist. The fellow went over like a log with the Irishman still again' for him. If we hadn't of pulled him off I think he would have killed that conscientious objector. The military police came in to see what all the row was about. I had clicked three days C. B. (confined to barracks) and didn't want to get arrested, so in the confusion I made tracks for my billet.

"The next time I met the bloke was when we buried old Smith out of the Tenth platoon in the cemetery at Le Bassee. He was one of the grave diggers. All during the burial service he stood looking at the Union Jack with a queer look on his face. When old Smith was lowered into the ground and the dirt was thrown on him the conscientious objector—Watkins was his name—came over to me and said:

"I hear he (pointing at old Smith's grave) is forty-eight years old and has left a wife and three nippers back in Blighty. He was too old for the draft, wasn't he? Then he must have volunteered."

"I answered: 'Of course he volunteered, and there he lies, dead as he is; but I'll wager a quid his wife and kids will be proud of him—and that's more than your kids will be about you.'

"He sneaked off without answering. Three days later I nearly dropped dead when our lance corporal came into our billet with a bloody nose and a beautifully trimmed lamp. When I asked him how he got knocked about he told me that a fellow out of the non-combatant corps named Watkins had mugged him up just because he had called him a white-livered coward."

"Watkins ducked twenty-one days number one on the wheel, and when his sentence was finished they transferred him to a fighting unit, and bang! into our platoon he comes.

"Many a talk I had with him about that pacifist stuff—he hadn't changed a bit in his ideas—but he kept his mouth shut about the king and the Top Hats at home.

"Then we went into the trenches and I knew his finish was near. A firing squad or 'rest in peace' was to be his lot; they all get one or the other sooner or later.

"After two days in, Fritz got rough and opened up with a pretty stiff bombardment.

"Watkins was in the fourth squad in a dugout in the support trench when a 'Minnie' registered a direct hit on the roof and caved her in. Every one but Watkins was killed. How he escaped was a marvel, the rest of the squad being smashed up something awful. We collected the pieces and buried them the next day. Watkins helped dig the graves.

"For two days Watkins scarcely spoke a word, just went round with a faraway look on his face.

"On the third night after the burial, volunteers were called for a bombing raid, and I could scarcely believe my ears when I heard that Watkins had volunteered. It was the truth all right—he went along.

"We crawled out in No Man's land under cover of our barrage and wait ed. Watkins was next to me. Suddenly a star shell went up and we crouched down in its light. I was laying so that I could see Watkins—blime me—he had no rifle or bayonet, I whispered over to him: 'Where's your rifle?' He answered: 'I threw it away.' Before I had time to reply, the signal to rush the German trench was given and I lost sight of him.

"It was rough going in the German trench, and we had quite a little of hand-to-hand fighting. Star shells were going up all around us. One of our blokes in front of me was just going around the corner of a travers when a big German got him through the throat with his bayonet and he went down. Something sprang past me like a wildcat and closed with the Fritz. They both went down together. Just then another German came at me from the entrance of a dugout and I was busy. I managed to get him. Then our lieutenant and two men came round and gave the order to get back to our trenches. The lieutenant stumbled over the three bodies in front of us. One of them groaned. It was Watkins all right. Unarmed he had sprang at the German and with his bare hands had choked him to death, but he had a nasty jagged bayonet wound in his right side. We managed to get him back to our trenches, but he died on the stretcher. Before cashing in he looked up at the lieutenant and with a grin on his face said: 'Tell the bloomin' king and the Top Hats at home that I died for England, and I hope that like old



And Then He Died.

Smith, my nippers will be proud of their father. God save the king, and then he died.

"We buried him next morning. No, my opinion of conscientious objectors and pacifists has not changed. They are either cowards or pro-Germans. "You see Watkins wasn't either; he was a soldier of the king, and a damned good one, too."

THE END.

BOALSBURG.

Mr. Amos Straw is visiting friends in this vicinity.

Mrs. Charles Kuhn, of Walnut Grove, spent Sunday in town.

Mr. and Mrs. George Rowe visited Centre Hall friends on Monday.

Miss Agnes Bain is spending some time with relatives in Washington, D. C.

Miss Elizabeth Foster and friend, of State College, were callers in town on Saturday.

Mrs. John Zechman enjoyed a visit among friends in Snyder county, her former home, last week.

The Boalsburg High school will give a play, "Uncle Billy's Aunt Jane," March 15th, in Boal hall.

Mrs. Eliza Poorman, Mrs. Harry Markle and Mrs. Samuel Reitz and son, of Oak Hall, spent Tuesday in town.

Mrs. Alice Magoffin has returned home after spending several months among friends in the western part of the State.

Mr. and Mrs. Miller and daughter, and Mr. and Mrs. Earl Ross, of Spring Mills, were guests of friends in town on Sunday.

Edwin Weaver and Miss Geraldine Hackenberg, of Rebersburg, visited from Friday until Monday at the home of A. J. Hazel.

The cafeteria supper given by the W. W. W. class of the Lutheran Sunday school and corps of assistants, was a social and financial success.

ORVISTON.

Mrs. Harry Estright and Mrs. Harold Lever, of Lock Haven, have been visiting relatives in Orviston.

Mrs. Roger Poorman, who has been visiting friends in the surrounding towns, has returned home and feels that it is good to be back, as she is far from strong.

John Bland, who has been working in Monument for the last few weeks, visited his Orviston friends, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Bartlow, and the Hume family. He is looking fine.

Mr. and Mrs. Archie Nelson, of Lock Haven, have been visiting friends and relatives in Orviston, but left for home Monday. Mr. Nelson's friends were sorry to see him looking so badly.

Things are a little dull at the Center Brick and Clay works, not much doing now but repair work. However, the managers expect to get things booming before long and the boys will all rejoice.

The men's class of the Orviston church is getting ready for a big spread, as they think it will brighten things up a whole lot. Our little church is surely a hummer, from the cradle roll, which is large, to the men's class. There is nothing slow about it.

About Cancer.

By Francis Carter Wood, M. D., in Woman's Home Companion.

Here is an authoritative article on a largely disregarded yet ever-present menace to the public health, and one which particularly affects women, since one woman in eight over forty years of age dies of this disease. This is a part of a campaign of education that should in time check the ravages of cancer as effectively as tuberculosis has been checked. We recommend it to our readers to be read and earnestly considered.

"Can't you give me some hope, Doctor?" said the pale, sad-faced woman. "The children need me here so much. My husband died some years ago, and I am all they have. I did not know that an operation had to be done early. My mother had a cancer, and when this lump came I thought I knew what it was, but I did not dare tell any one, or come and see you, because I had heard her say that operations did no good. I saw an advertisement of a salve, and so I bought some of that and rubbed it on, but it seemed only to make things worse. Now I come to you, and all you say is, 'If you had only come in time! I did not know that a cancer could be cut out and never come back, if it was only done soon enough. There has been so much in the newspapers lately about wonderful cures with radium. I hoped you would tell me that I could get well without an operation, and now you say that it is probably too late!'"

How often we physicians hear this sad story—of delay for months and years—of hope that something will happen—of fatalistic belief in the inheritance of cancer—of that thousand-year-old faith in an ointment well rubbed in, a faith that can be traced back to the ancient Egyptians. What is it that there is no real public knowledge of the danger of cancer and the only means for its cure?

PHYSICIANS MUST NOT ADVISE.

I am afraid that the blame for much of this lack of information must be laid at the door of the physician himself. The blinding code against advertising affects the honorable man—the quack. The source of the medical knowledge of the masses today is still the charlatan and his newspaper advertisements, and it is time, indeed, that the public receive accurate information from those who know the situation.

The remarkable fall in the death rate from tuberculosis during the last few years is due to the widespread publicity given by physicians, both as individuals and as members of the Association for the Study of Tuberculosis, to this simple fact: that the disease can be cured, if taken in time. Similar campaigns of publicity have been carried out by the life insurance companies and the mutual benefit societies, with equal success. The cure of tuberculosis, however, is a relatively simple matter, requiring chiefly rest, good food, and fresh air; the cure of cancer, on the other hand, is unfortunately more difficult.

Cancer is a disease which, especially when it is internal, is often hard to recognize, and, moreover, it is one which requires immediate action if good results are to follow. This immediate action, in the vast majority of cases, is recourse to operation by highly trained and skilled specialists. To some people the words "highly trained" and "skilled specialists" bring chiefly the thought of a heavy bill; but it must be remembered that in hundreds of hospitals and dispensaries throughout the world, especially in the larger cities, the advice of such specialists can be obtained on the payment of a merely nominal fee, and that at any price the services of a man who knows are less expensive in the end than those of a quack.

THE BEGINNING OF PUBLIC EDUCATION.

A beginning in public education about cancer has, indeed, been made by the American Society for the Control of Cancer, an organization formed to spread accurate and authentic knowledge concerning the disease among both physicians and the public; such, for instance, as the fact that in England cancer is the most frequent cause of death among women after the age of forty-five; that in the United States one man in fourteen and one woman in eight over forty years of age die of the disease; that, if taken at the beginning, the majority of cases of cancer are curable; that the only cure is the removal of every vestige of the disease; and that the only sure way of accomplishing this is by a surgical operation.

The efforts of this society have met with the most cordial reception. Boards of health, medical societies, insurance companies, and individual physicians have shown great interest in the work, and have taken an active part in the campaign to diffuse such knowledge of cancer as everyone should possess. What is this knowledge? It may be summed up in a few words: Cancer is not a blood disease, but one which usually begins after middle life as a very small lump. If this lump can be found and cut out the cancer will be cured. Cancer is not inherited, nor is it contagious or due to a germ. Cancer is rather painful, except in the last stages. While external cancer appears as an ulcer, a sore, or a lump, internal cancer can be told only by its symptoms—cancer of the stomach by dyspepsia, bloating, vomiting of food and blood; cancer of the bowels by colic, bloating, and passing of blood; cancer of the womb by bleeding at unexpected times or after the change of life; cancer of the kidney by blood in the urine.

If everyone who showed any of these symptoms immediately consulted a physician, especially one who had a hospital training, and knows how to make the modern laboratory tests and use the X-ray machine in diagnosis, many lives would be saved. Distrust the physician who does not have a microscopic examination made of any lump of the nature of which he cannot be certain. Most early cancers can be diagnosed only in this way. If one waits for the symptoms to appear, it is often too late to save life.

While we do not know the cause of cancer, despite all the investigations which have been made by scientific men, yet we do know a great deal about how it occurs and what is apt to precede it, and our lack of knowledge as to the cause does not prevent our being able to cure it. Many diseases of which we do not as yet know the real cause are nevertheless curable. So we find that cancer frequently begins in moles or warts which are irritated or rubbed by the clothing or made to bleed or kept sore by repeated injury of any sort. Such warts and moles are perfectly harmless at first and become dangerous only after they have been irritated for a long time, especially if the person is of the cancer age—that is, above forty. It is wise, therefore, to have such moles removed if they are in a situation where they are liable to be rubbed or injured.

Physicians have noted, also, that cancer may develop in a scar of an old burn, or in places where a chronic ulcer forms, as on the lip or tongue or leg, and it is important to see that such injuries are healed as soon as possible. Ulcers on the tongue or cheek are frequently caused by the scratching of a poor filling or by the sharp point of a decayed tooth, and a dentist should be consulted if a sore spot in the mouth does not heal in a few days.

The first beginnings of an internal cancer are much more difficult to discover, because these tumors when they start are found only by accident. But it has been found that they very often begin in some slight inflammation or ulceration. Ulcer of the stomach, which is a common starting point for cancer, is a good example; while such ulcers are frequent in women, they can be easily cured by suitable treatment if they are taken at an early stage. If a cure cannot be obtained by medical means, it is now considered wise to have the ulcer removed. Cancers of the lower bowel, also, are not infrequently preceded by some sort of chronic inflammation or ulceration, and persons suffering from chronic dysentery, bleeding piles or ulceration of the bowel should consult a physician.

Cancer of the breast in women frequently follows chronic inflammation, and is not caused by a blow, as is so frequently thought. Any woman who notices a lump in her breast should at once consult a physician.

Cancer cannot be cured by ointments, salves or pastes. The only preparations are prescribed only by quacks, a fact which should be known to everyone. Caustics will cure some small cancers of the face, but no other kind. Do not rely on radium or X-ray; they certainly and permanently cure only the small face cancers, and are not a cure for the larger ones, which are greatly improved by the use of radium or X-ray, in most cases this change is only temporary.

What radium and X-ray can do, when we know better how to use them, is of course, not settled, but what we do know now is that removal by operation will cure many more cancers than will treatment with radium or X-rays. The only way in which the ravages of cancer can be checked is by early diagnosis. This early diagnosis can be made only when the patient consults a physician; no physician can possibly seek out and examine people without their requesting it. The people must come to him. Many people say that they do not want doctors examining them, though, curiously enough, they make no objection to the thorough medical examination if it is for life insurance. Why should they object if the examination is to preserve their own lives, and not merely to afford means of saving money for the lives of others. They think nothing of going to a dentist once a year to have their teeth examined. Why should they not go and have their bodies examined to see if any serious disease exists, especially after they have reached the cancer age.

THE ONCE-A-YEAR EXAMINATION. In the larger cities a beginning has been made in this direction, particularly by the life insurance companies, which offer to their clients the option of an examination, performed at stated intervals, by reputable physicians not connected with the company. Unfortunately, this opportunity does not yet exist outside of the cities, but there are everywhere plenty of physicians who are perfectly competent to recognize early cancer, and there are many laboratories where specimens can be examined free if the physician himself has not a sufficient equipment. Why, therefore, should not every person of the cancer age go to her physician once a year, even if she has no serious symptoms, and learn whether a cancer is present or not. In the vast majority of cases an answer can be given. If the cancer is found early, it is likely to be so small that a competent surgeon will be able to remove it, with every hope not only that life will be prolonged but that the tumor will never return. The results of the best modern surgery in cancer are quite extraordinary. Cancer of the lip in its early stages can be cured in ninety per cent. of the cases; cancer of the breast, if taken early enough, certainly in half of the cases, and cancer of the womb in a quarter of the cases. No other means of treatment offers the same amount of hope. To delay means certain death, for cancer does not cure itself.

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THE ONCE-A-YEAR EXAMINATION. In the larger cities a beginning has been made in this direction, particularly by the life insurance companies, which offer to their clients the option of an examination, performed at stated intervals, by reputable physicians not connected with the company.

FARM NOTES.

—The war has been the indirect cause of a great demand for work horses, and it might be said that even with the introduction of tractors and trucks the demand has not been any less. But there is room for the improvement of the quality of draft horses, and the first step to attain that improvement is to use the best sires in breeding. We have illustrations in the pure-bred Clydesdale transmitting the flat leg; the Shire, the large frame and heavy weight; and the Suffolk, good action. If it is desired to have good form, heavy weight and good action, it is necessary that these qualities be present in the sire and dam, or both. The longer the parents have been bred for these qualities the more certain will be the transmitting of them to the offspring. The value of a pedigree is according to the length and the quality of the ancestry. When fixed by breeding, undesirable qualities are just as certain to be transmitted as are good ones. Therefore it is important that heed should be paid to the quality of the colts that the horse he contemplates buying has sired, for a stallion that has produced good colts, and has a good pedigree back of him, is most desirable. It is worth while considering pedigree, prepotency and individuality.

—Keep within the breed. Crossing breaks blood lines and there is a reversion to the early ancestors. This is not necessarily so in the initial cross, but thereafter retrogression takes place rapidly, and although the start was made with pure-breeds, scrubs will be the result.

—In order to sell an animal, stallion dealers sometimes advocate cross-breeding, but the purchaser should not be influenced. Breed Percheron mares to Percheron stallions, Belgian mares to Belgian stallions, Clydesdale mares to Clydesdale stallions. The majority of the stallions in this country are Percherons; there are very few Belgians, and still less Clydesdales and Shires.

—Having decided upon the stallion, the selection of the mare for good breeding is next in order. After deciding upon the breed, the individuality and the condition of the animal must be considered. Avoid, whenever possible, coarse bones, crooked legs, crooked feet, narrow, roach backs, big heads and sluggish disposition. The draft mare in weight should not be less than 1500 pounds, and should show fineness of bone, neatness of limb, be broad, massive, straight-limbed, and of a kind, active disposition.

—It is a very great mistake to breed mares that are unsound or have deformities. There should be straight legs, well placed under the body, good feet and a deep, roomy middle piece. Breeding wornout and broken-down mares will produce inferior offspring, and, besides, they are uncertain as breeders. A mare with foal is a heavy eater. The colt must be kept growing and her own body must be properly sustained. The diet should be oats, bran and shorts, clover, alfalfa and timothy hay. Straw is too bulky, and besides does not contain the right kind of nutrients in proper amounts to be desirable, especially as a single food. It is possible for the mare to go through the winter on straw, but it will be at the expense of the colt and her own body. No wonder so many colts are lost every spring.

—Mares that are not working can be kept in fine condition and produce strong colts on a ration of two or three quarts of oats, or equal parts of bran and shorts, per day, together with 12 or 15 pounds of alfalfa or clover and timothy hay. Some straw may be fed with such a mixture of grain and hay, but if the grain is omitted only the best hay should be given. Alfalfa or clover should be mixed with the timothy, and only half a two-thirds of the amount they will consume should be allowed. It is equally bad to feed too much hay as too little.

—It is important that the mare have plenty of exercise either by work or in a pasture. If well fed and carefully worked up to the time the colts are born, mares will breed better and produce better colts. Severe pulling or strains of any kind, however, must be avoided. There may be more injury coming from muddy pastures and barnyards than from ordinary work. Mares allowed to be idle all winter are more apt to lose their colts when put to work in the spring than are those that have been steadily exercised. If they are idle all winter they must be very carefully handled when put to work. It would not need very much strain under such conditions to cause the loss of the colt—less than the average teamster would suppose.