



# "OVER THE TOP"

## AN AMERICAN SOLDIER WHO WENT

### ARTHUR GUY EMPY

MACHINE GUNNER, SERVING IN FRANCE

#### CHAPTER III.

##### I Go to Church.

Upon enlistment we had identity disks issued to us. These were small disks of red fiber worn around the neck by means of a string. Most of the Tommies also used a little metal disk which they wore around the left wrist by means of a chain. They had previously figured it out that if their heads were blown off, the disk on the left wrist would identify them. If they lost their left arm the disk around the neck would serve the purpose, but if their head and left arm were blown off, no one would care who they were, so it did not matter. On one side of the disk was inscribed your rank, name, number and battalion, while on the other was stamped your religion.

C. of E., meaning Church of England; R. C., Roman Catholic; W., Wesleyan; P., Presbyterian; but if you happened to be an atheist they left it blank, and just handed you a pick and shovel. On my disk was stamped C. of E. This is how I got it: The lieutenant who enlisted me asked my religion. I was not sure of the religion of the British army, so I answered, "Oh, any old thing," and he promptly put down C. of E.

Now, just imagine my hard luck. Out of five religions I was unlucky enough to pick the only one where church parade was compulsory!

The next morning was Sunday. I was sitting in the billet writing home to my sister telling her of my wonderful exploits while under fire—all recruits do this. The sergeant major put his head in the door of the billet and shouted: "C. of E. outside for church parade!"

I kept on writing. Turning to me, in a loud voice, he asked, "Empey, aren't you C. of E.?"

I answered, "Yep."

In an angry tone, he commanded, "Don't you 'yep' me. Say, 'Yes, sergeant major.'"

"I did so. Somewhat mollified, he ordered, 'Outside for church parade.'"

I looked up and answered, "I am not going to church this morning."

He said, "Oh, yes, you are!"

I answered, "Oh, no, I'm not!"—But I went.

We lined up outside with rifles and bayonets, 120 rounds of ammunition, wearing our tin hats, and the march to church began. After marching about five miles, we turned off the road into an open field. At one end of this field the chaplain was standing in a limber. We formed a semicircle around him. Overhead there was a black speck circling round and round in the sky. This was a German Fokker. The chaplain had a book in his left hand—left eye on the book—right eye on the airplane.

We Tommies were lucky, we had no books, so had both eyes on the airplane.

After church parade we were marched back to our billets, and played football all afternoon.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### "Into the Trench."

The next morning the draft was inspected by our general, and we were assigned to different companies. The boys in the brigade had nicknamed this general Old Pepper, and he certainly earned the sobriquet. I was assigned to B company with another American named Stewart.

For the next ten days we "rested," repairing roads for the Frenches, drilling, and digging bombing trenches.

One morning we were informed that we were going up the line, and our march began.

It took us three days to reach reserve billets—each day's march bringing the sound of the guns nearer and nearer. At night, way off in the distance we could see their flashes, which lighted up the sky with a red glare.

Against the horizon we could see numerous observation balloons or "sausages" as they are called.

On the afternoon of the third day's march I witnessed my first airplane being shelled. A thrill ran through me and I gazed in awe. The airplane was making wide circles in the air, while little puffs of white smoke were bursting all around it. These puffs appeared like tiny balls of cotton while after each burst could be heard a dull "plop."

The sergeant of my platoon informed us that it was a German airplane and I wondered how he could tell from such a distance because the plane seemed like a little black speck in the sky. I expressed my doubt as to whether it was English, French or German. With a look of contempt he further informed us that the allied anti-aircraft shells when exploding emitted white smoke while the German shells gave forth black smoke, and, as he expressed it, "It must be an Alledmand because our pots come out shelling, and I know our batteries are not off their belly nappers and are certainly not

strafing our own planes, and another piece of advice—don't chuck your weight about until you've been up the line and learnt something."

I immediately quit "chucking my weight about" from that time on.

Just before reaching reserve billets we were marching along, laughing, and singing one of Tommy's trench ditties:

I want to go home, I want to go home, I don't want to go to the trenches no more  
Where sausages and whizz-bangs are galore  
Take me over the sea, Where the Alledmand can't get at me,  
Oh, my, I don't want to die,  
I want to go home—"

When overhead came a "swish" through the air, rapidly followed by three others. Then about two hundred yards to our left in a large field, four columns of black earth and smoke rose into the air, and the ground trembled from the report—the explosion of four German five-nine's, or "coaxboxes." A sharp whistle blast, immediately followed by two short ones, rang out from the head of our column. This was to take up "artillery formation." We divided into small squads and went into the fields on the right and left of the road, and crouched on the ground. No other shells followed this salvo. It was our first baptism by shell fire. From the waist up I was all enthusiasm, but from there down, everything was missing. I thought I should die with fright.

After awhile, we reformed into columns of fours, and proceeded on our way.

About five that night, we reached the ruined village of H—, and I got my first sight of the awful destruction caused by German Kultur.

Marching down the main street we came to the heart of the village, and took up quarters in shellproof cellars (shellproof until hit by a shell). Shells

Later on, I found out their names. They belonged to our draft.

I was dazed and motionless. Suddenly a shovel was pushed into my hands, and a rough but kindly voice said:

"Here, my lad, lend a hand clearing the trench, but keep your head down, and look out for snipers. One of the Fritz's is a daisy, and he'll get you if you're not careful."

Lying on my belly on the bottom of the trench, I filled sandbags with the sticky mud, they were dragged to my rear by the other men, and the work of rebuilding the parapet was on. The harder I worked, the better I felt. Although the weather was cold, I was soaked with sweat.

Occasionally a bullet would crack overhead, and a machine gun would kick up the mud on the bashed-in parapet. At each crack I would duck and shield my face with my arm. One of the older men noticed this action of mine, and whispered:

"Don't duck at the crack of a bullet, Yank; the danger has passed—you never hear the one that wings you. Always remember that if you are going to get it, you'll get it, so never worry."

This made a great impression on me at the time, and from then on, I adopted his motto, "if you're going to get it, you'll get it."

It helped me wonderfully. I used it so often afterwards that some of my mates dubbed me, "If you're going to get it, you'll get it."

After an hour's hard work, all my nervousness left me, and I was laughing and joking with the rest.

At one o'clock, dinner came up in the form of a dixie of hot stew.

I looked for my canteen. It had fallen off the fire step, and was half-buried in the mud. The man on my left noticed this, and told the corporal, dishing out the rations, to put my share in his mess tin. Then he whispered to me, "Always take care of your mess tin, mate."

I had learned another maxim of the trenches.

That stew tasted fine. I was as hungry as a bear. We had "seconds," or another helping, because three of the men had "gone West," killed by the explosion of the German trench mortar, and we ate their share, but still I was hungry, so I filled in with bully beef and biscuits. Then I drained my water bottle. Later on I learned another maxim of the front line, "Go sparingly with your water." The bully beef made me thirsty, and by tea time I was dying for a drink, but my pride would not allow me to ask my mates for water. I was fast learning the ethics of the trenches.

That night I was put on guard with an older man. We stood on the fire step with our hands over the top, peering out into No Man's Land. It was nervous work for me, but the other fellow seemed to take it as part of the night's routine.

Then something shot past my face. My heart stopped beating, and I ducked my head below the parapet. A soft chuckle from my mate brought me to my senses, and I feebly asked, "For heaven's sake, what was that?"

He answered, "Only a rat taking a promenade along the snudbags." I

put on guard with their heads sticking over the top, and with their eyes trying to pierce the blackness in "No Man's Land." In this trench there were only two dugouts, and these were used by Lewis and Vickers machine gunners, so it was the fire step for ours. Pretty soon it started to rain. We put on our "macks," but they were not much protection. The rain trickled down our backs, and it was not long before we were wet and cold. How I passed that night I will never know, but without any unusual occurrence, dawn arrived.

The word "stand down" was passed along the line, and the sentries got down off the fire step. Pretty soon the rum issue came along, and it was a Godsend. It warmed our chilled bodies and put new life into us. Then from the communication trenches came dixies or iron pots, filled with steaming tea, which had two wooden stakes through their handles, and were carried by two men. I filled my canteen and drank the hot tea without taking it from my lips. It was not long before I was asleep in the mud on the fire step.

My ambition had been attained! I was in a front-line trench on the western front, and oh, how I wished I were back in Jersey City.

CHAPTER V.

Mud, Rats and Shells.

I must have slept for two or three hours, not the refreshing kind that results from clean sheets and soft pillows, but the sleep that comes from cold, wet and sheer exhaustion.

Suddenly, the earth seemed to shake and a thunderclap burst in my ears. I opened my eyes—I was splashed all over with sticky mud, and men were picking themselves up from the bottom of the trench. The parapet on my left had toppled into the trench, completely blocking it with a wall of tumbled-up earth. The man on my left lay still. I rubbed the mud from my face, and an awful sight met my gaze—his head was smashed to a pulp, and his steel helmet was full of brains and blood. A German "Minnie" (trench mortar) had exploded in the next traverse. Men were digging into the soft mass of mud in a frenzy of haste. Stretcher-bearers came up the trench on the double. After a few minutes of digging, three still, muddied forms on stretchers were carried down the communication trench to the rear. Soon they would be resting "somewhere in France," with a little wooden cross over their heads. They had done their bit for king and country, had died without firing a shot, but their services were appreciated, nevertheless.

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felt very sheepish.

About every twenty minutes the sentry in the next traverse would fire a star shell from his flare pistol. The "plop" would give me a start of fright. I never got used to this noise during my service in the trenches.

I would watch the arc described by the star shell, and then stare into No Man's Land waiting for it to burst. In its lurid light the barbed wire and stakes would be silhouetted against its light like a latticed window. Then darkness.

Once, out in front of our wire, I heard a noise and saw dark forms moving. My rifle was lying across the snudbagged parapet. I reached for it, and was taking aim to fire, when my mate grasped my arm, and whispered, "Don't fire." He challenged in a low voice. The reply came back instantly from the dark forms:

"Shut your blinkin' mouth, you bloomin' idiot; do you want us to clobber you from the Boches?"

Later we learned that the word, "No challenging or firing, wiring party out in front," had been given to the sentry on our right, but he had failed to pass it down the trench. An officer had overheard our challenge and the reply, and immediately put the offending sentry under arrest. The sentry eluded

twenty-one days on the wheel, that is, he received twenty-one days' field punishment No. 1, or "crucifixion," as Tommy terms it.

This consists of being spread-eagled on the wheel of a limber two hours a day for twenty-one days, regardless of the weather. During this period, your rations consist of bully beef, biscuits and water.

A few months later I met this sentry and he confided to me that since being "crucified," he had never failed to pass the word down the trench when so ordered. In view of the offense, the above punishment was very light, in that failing to pass the word down a trench may mean the loss of many lives, and the spoiling of some important enterprise in No Man's Land.

CHAPTER VI.

"Back of the Line."

Our tour in the front-line trench lasted four days, and then we were relieved by the — brigade.

Going down the communication trench we were in a merry mood, although we were cold and wet, and every bone in our bodies ached. It makes a lot of difference whether you are "going in" or "going out."

At the end of the communication trench, limbers were waiting on the road for us. I thought we were going to ride back to rest billets, but soon found out that the only time an infantryman rides is when he is wounded and is bound for the base of Blighty. These limbers carried our reserve ammunition and rations. Our march to rest billets was thoroughly enjoyed by me. It seemed as if I were on furlough, and was leaving behind everything that was disagreeable and horrible. Every recruit feels this way after being relieved from the trenches.

We marched eight miles and then halted in front of a French estaminet. The captain gave the order to turn out on each side of the road and wait his return. Pretty soon he came back and told B company to occupy billets: 117, 118 and 119. Billet 117 was an old stable which had previously been occupied by cows. About four feet in front of the entrance was a huge manure pile, and the odor from it was anything but pleasant. Using my flashlight I stumbled through the door.

Just before entering I observed a white sign reading: "Sitting 50, lying 20," but, at the time, its significance did not strike me. Next morning I asked the sergeant major what it meant. He nonchalantly answered:

"That's some of the work of the R. A. M. C. (Royal Army Medical Corps). It simply means that in case of an attack, this billet will accommodate fifty wounded who are able to sit up and take notice, or twenty stretcher cases."

It was not long after this that I was one of the "20 lying."

I soon hit the hay and was fast asleep, even my friends the "cooties" failed to disturb me.

The next morning at about six o'clock I was awakened by the lance corporal of our section, informing me that I had been detailed as mess orderly, and to report to the cook and give him a hand. I helped him make the fire, carry water from an old well, and fry the bacon. Lids of dixies are used to cook the bacon in. After breakfast was cooked, I carried a dixie of hot tea and the lid full of bacon to our section, and told the corporal that breakfast was ready. He looked at me in contempt, and then shouted, "Breakfast up, come and get it!" I immediately got wise to the trench parlance, and never again informed that "breakfast was served."

It didn't take long for the Tommies to answer this call. Half dressed, they lined up with their canteens and I dished out the tea. Each Tommy carried in his hand a thick slice of bread which had been issued with the rations the night before. Then I had the pleasure of seeing them dig into the bacon with their dirty fingers. The allowance was one slice per man. The late ones received very small slices. As each Tommy got his share he immediately disappeared into the billet. Pretty soon about fifteen of them made a rush to the cookhouse, each carrying a huge slice of bread. These slices they dipped into the bacon grease which was stewing over the fire. The last man invariably lost out. I was the last man.

After breakfast our section carried their equipment into a field adjoining the billet and got busy removing the

trench mud therefrom, because at 8:45 a. m. they had to fall in for inspection and parade, and woe betide the man who was unshaven, or had mud on his uniform. Cleanliness is next to godliness in the British army, and Old Pepper must have been personally acquainted with St. Peter.

Our drill consisted of close-order formation, which lasted until noon. During this time we had two ten-minute breaks for rest, and no sooner the word, "Fall out for ten minutes," was given than each Tommy got out a fag and lighted it.

Fags are issued every Sunday morning, and you generally get between twenty and forty. The brand generally issued is the "Woodbine." Sometimes we are lucky and get "Goldflakes," "Players" or "Red Hussars." Occasionally an issue of "Life Rays" comes along. Then the older Tommies immediately get busy on the recruits and trade these for "Woodbines" or "Goldflakes." A recruit only has to be stuck once in this manner, and then he ceases to be a recruit. There is a reason. Tommy is a great cigarette smoker. He smokes under all conditions, except when unconscious or when he is reconnoitering in No Man's Land at night. Then, for obvious reasons, he does not care to have a lighted cigarette in his mouth.

Stretcher bearers carry fags for wounded Tommies. When a stretcher bearer arrives alongside of a Tommy who has been hit the following conversation usually takes place: Stretcher bearer—"Want a fag? Where are you hit?" Tommy looks up and answers, "Yes. In the leg."

After dismissal from parade, we returned to our billets and I had to get busy immediately with the dinner issue. Dinner consisted of stew made from fresh beef, a couple of spuds, bully beef, Maconochie rations and water—plenty of water. There is great competition among the men to spear with their forks the two lonely potatoes.

After dinner I tried to wash out the dixie with cold water and a rag, and learned another maxim of the trenches—"It can't be done." I stily watched one of the older men from another section, and was horrified to see him throw into his dixie four or five double handfuls of mud. Then he poured in some water, and with his hands scoured the dixie inside and out. I thought he was taking an awful risk. Supposing the cook should have seen him! After half an hour of unsuccessful efforts I returned my dixie to the cook shack, being careful to put on the cover, and returned to the billet.

Resting Back of the Lines.

Pretty soon the cook poked his head in the door and shouted: "Hey, Yank, come out here and clean your dixie!" I protested that I had wasted a half-hour on it already, and had used up my only remaining shirt in the attempt. With a look of disdain he exclaimed: "Blow me, your shirt! Why in — didn't you use mud?"

Without a word in reply I got busy with the mud, and soon my dixie was bright and shining.

Most of the afternoon was spent by the men writing letters home. I used my spare time to chop wood for the cook and go with the quartermaster to draw coal. I got back just in time to issue our third meal, which consisted of hot tea. I rinsed out my dixie and returned it to the cookhouse, and went back to the billet with an exhilarated feeling that my day's labor was done. I had fallen asleep on the straw when once again the cook appeared in the door of the billet with: "Blime me, you Yanks are lazy. Who in — a-goin' to draw the water for the mornin' tea? Do you think I'm a-goin' to? Well, I'm not," and he left. I filled the dixie with water from an old squeaking well, and once again lay down in the straw.

(To be Continued.)

THE LOUISA GARAGE CO.

Now is prepared to do all kinds of repair work on automobiles. Wm. Barram, who has had 5 years experience in one of the largest garages in Louisville, Ky., has charge of the repair department and will do your work in fast class manner. Charges reasonable. While the weather is bad is a good time to have your cars overhauled.

MEN WANTED.—U. S. Government must have men for shipbuilding. Needs mechanics, riveters, ironworkers, painters, blacksmiths and carpenters. Standard wages paid, housing furnished, transportation from a distance. Register with R. G. MOORE, Louisville, Kentucky.

CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

Rev. J. H. Stambaugh, pastor of the Louisa Christian church, preaches here morning and evening of the first and third Sunday in each month.

## OUR OFFICIALS

(Politics Indicated By D and R)

U. S. Senators—Ollie M. James and J. C. W. Beckham—D.  
Congressman—W. J. Fields—D.  
Governor—A. O. Stanley—D.  
Lieut-Governor—Jas. A. Finch—D.  
Auditor—Robt. L. Greene—D.  
Atty. General—Chas. H. Morris—D.  
Treasurer—Sherman Goodpastor—D.  
Sec. of State—James Lewis—R.  
Supt. Public Instruction—V. O. Whitbert—D.

State Senator—Dr. H. T. Morris—R.  
Representative—L.

Circuit Judge—A. N. Cline—R.  
Commonwealth's Attorney—John M. Waugh—D.

Lawrence County.  
County Judge—Billie Rice—R.  
Co. Attorney—D. L. Thompson—R.  
County Clerk—J. P. Adams—R.  
Circuit Clerk—W. J. Roberts—R.  
Sheriff—W. M. Taylor—D.  
Supt. Schools—J. H. Elvers—D.  
Jailer—S. M. Sturcell—R.  
Assessor—Wm. Williams—R.  
Surveyor—L. E. Wallace—D.  
Coroner—M. V. Hieckman—R.

Justice of the Peace, composing the county fiscal court—F. F. Diamond (D), G. S. Chapman (R), George W. Weiman (D), W. E. Pruitt (R), G. V. Paek (R), Henry Bishop (R), Jay Frasher (D).

City of Louisa.  
Mayor—Augustus Snyder—D.  
Police Judge—H. B. Hewlett—D.  
City Clerk—R. L. Vinson—D.  
Treasurer—J. B. Kinister—R.  
Assessor—James Norton—D.  
Marshal—C. C. Skages—D.  
Councilmen—Dr. T. D. Burgess (D), W. F. Queen (D), H. E. Evans (R), John M. Moore (D), O. C. Atkins (R), G. R. Lewis (D).

NOTICE OF SALE.  
L. H. York, Plt.  
vs.  
Big Sandy Milling Co., et al, Defts.  
Lawrence Circuit Court.

Pursuant to a judgment of the Lawrence Circuit Court entered in the above styled case at its regular February, 1918 term, the undersigned Master Commissioner will, on the 15th day of April, 1918, at the front door of the court house, in Louisa, Lawrence county, Ky., about the hour of one o'clock p. m. sell to the highest and best bidder the following described real estate, machinery and fixtures to wit:

All of the following real estate situated in Louisa, Ky., at the corner of Jefferson and Pike streets, and beginning on Pike street 88 feet from Look avenue and running with Pike street a westerly direction to the line of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway company, thence with said line a northern direction to the line of Barn Hatten, (called Bud); thence an easterly direction with the Hatten line to the western boundary line of the Berry stable property; thence with said line a southern direction to the beginning including all machinery, fixtures and appurtenances thereunto belonging and located thereon, this property commonly known as the Big Sandy Milling Company property.

Said sale shall be made upon terms of six, twelve and eighteen months time, and the purchaser shall execute bonds payable to Master Commissioner with sureties approved by said Commissioner, and a lien retained upon the property sold to secure further the payment of the purchase price. Purchaser may pay cash.

The amount to be raised from said sale is \$7015.70 and the total score of said sale and sale.

W. M. SAVAGE, M. C. L. S. C.

SEED CORN FOR SALE.

Definite arrangements have been completed and a quantity of good seed corn has been located in Western Kentucky. Any one wanting to purchase seed corn will probably find it advisable to order from the following people:

Send individual orders to G. T. Wyatt District Agent, Hopkinsville, Ky., and checks must accompany the order and must be payable to "Secretary Western Kentucky Board of Agriculture."

Be sure and give your name and postoffice address.

The price of all corn is \$5.25 per bushel and includes the sack. The purchaser must pay the freight.

No order for less than two bushels will be accepted.

Corn will be sold under a guarantee of 90 per cent germination and purchasers will have the right to test and if it does not come up to the guarantee it may be returned and money will be refunded, or other corn sent as requested. G. C. BAKER, Emergency Demonstration Agent, Louisa, Ky.

WE WILL WIN THE WAR.

Last fall roosters, 1 lbs. and under, 25c; old roosters 18c to 20c; full feathered ducks 20c lb.; veal calf hides 14lb. and under, 15c lb.; Green cow hides \$10. Horse and mule hides. We are in the market for tub washed wool, No. 1, 45c lb. cash 90c in groceries. Old shoe rubbers if only 1 lb. to 10 lb. From Johnson county leave eggs with my young brother at Chandlerville. He pays high, never less than 24c dozen. We back him to make money to help build up your neighborhood. He is honest and reliable. Give him a call.

&lt;