"OVER THE TOP"

By An American Soldier Who Went

Arthur Guy Empey

Machine Gunner, Serving in France

CHAPTER XXV—Continued.

—24—

When we took over the front line we received an awful shock. The Germans displayed signboards over the top of their trench showing the names that we had called their trenches. The signs read "Fair," "Fact," "Fate," and "Fancy," and so on, according to the code names on our map. Then to rub it in, they hoisted some more signs which read, "Come on, we are ready, stupid English."

It is still a mystery to me how they obtained this knowledge. There had been no raids or prisoners taken, so it must have been the work of spies in our own lines.

Three or four days before the big push we tried to shatter Fritz's nerves by feint attacks, and partially succeeded as the official reports of July 1 show.

Although we were constantly bombarding their lines day and night, still we fooled the Germans several times. This was accomplished by throwing an intense barrage into his lines—then using smoke shells we would put a curtain of white smoke across No Man's Land, completely obstructing his view of our trenches, and would raise our curtain of fire as if in an actual attack. All down our trenches the men would shout and cheer, and Fritz would turn loose with machine-gun, rifle, and shrapnel fire, thinking we were coming over.

After three or four of these dummy attacks his nerves must have been near the breaking point.

On June 24, 1916, at 9:40 in the morning our guns opened up, and hell was let loose. The din was terrific, a constant boom-boom-boom in your ear.

At night the sky was a red glare. Our bombardment had lasted about two hours when Fritz started replying. Although we were sending over ten shells to his one, our casualties were heavy. There was a constant stream of stretchers coming out of the communication trenches and burial parties were a common sight.

In the dugouts the noise of the guns almost hurt. You had the same sensation as when riding on the subway you enter the tube under the river going to Brooklyn—a sort of pressure on the ear drums, and the ground constantly trembling.

The roads behind the trenches were very dangerous because Boche shrapnel was constantly bursting over them. We avoided these dangerous spots by crossing through open fields.

The destruction in the German lines was awful and I really felt sorry for them because I realized how they must be clicking it.

From our front-line trench, every now and again, we could hear sharp whistle blasts in the German trenches. These blasts were the signals for stretcher bearers, and meant the wounding or killing of some German in the service of his fatherland.

Atwell and I had a tough time of it, patrolling the different trenches at night, but after awhile got used to it.

My old outfit, the machine gun company, was stationed in huge elephant dugouts about four hundred yards behind the front-line trench—they were in reserve. Occasionally I would stop in their dugout and have a confab with my former mates. Although we tried to be jolly, still, there was a lurking feeling of impending disaster. Each man was wondering, if, after the slogan, "Over the top with the best of luck," had been sounded, would he still be alive or would he be lying "somewhere in France." In an old dilapidated house, the walls of which were scarred with machine-gun bullets, No. 3 section of the machine gun company had its quarters. The company's cooks prepared the meals in this billet. On the fifth evening of the bombardment a German eight-inch shell registered a direct hit on the billet and wiped out ten men who were asleep in the supposedly bomb-proof cellar. They were buried the next day and I attended the funeral.

CHAPTER XXVI.

All Quiet (?) on the Western Front.

At brigade headquarters I happened to overhear a conversation between our G. O. C. (general officer commanding) and the divisional commander. From this conversation I learned that we were to bombard the German lines for eight days, and on the first of July the "big push" was to commence.

In a few days orders were issued to that effect, and it was common property all along the line.

On the afternoon of the eighth day of our "strafeing," Atwell and I were sitting in the front-line trench smoking fags and making out our reports of the previous night's tour of the trenches, which we had to turn in to headquarters the following day, when an order was passed down the trench that Old Pepper requested twenty volunteers to go over on a trench raid that night to try and get a few German prisoners for information purposes. I immediately volunteered for this job, and shook hands with Atwell, and went to the rear to give my name to the officers in charge of the raiding party.

I was accepted, worse luck.

At 9:45 that night we reported to the brigade headquarters dugout to receive instructions from Old Pepper.

After reaching this dugout we lined up in a semicircle around him, and he addressed us as follows:

"All I want you boys to do is to go over to the German lines tonight, surprise them, secure a couple of prisoners, and return immediately. Our artillery has bombarded that section of the line for two days and personally I believe that that part of the German trench is unoccupied, so just get a couple of prisoners and return as quickly as possible."

The sergeant on my right, in an undertone, whispered to me:

"Say, Yank, how are we going to get a couple of prisoners if the old fool

Receiving First Aid.

thinks 'personally that that part of the trench is unoccupied,'—sounds kind of fishy, doesn't it mate?"

I had a funny sinking sensation in my stomach, and my tin hat felt as if it weighed about a ton and my enthusiasm was melting away. Old Pepper must have heard the sergeant speak because he turned in his direction and in a thundering voice asked:

"What did you say?"

The sergeant with a scarlet look on his face and his knees trembling, smartly saluted and answered:

"Nothing, sir."

Old Pepper said:

"Well, don't say it so loudly the next time."

Then Old Pepper continued:

"In this section of the German trenches there are two or three machine guns which our artillery, in the last two or three days, has been unable to tape. These guns command the sector where two of our communication trenches join the front line, and as the brigade is to go over the top tomorrow morning I want to capture two or three men from these guns' crews, and from them I may be able to obtain valuable information as to the exact location of the guns, and our artillery will therefore be able to demolish them before the attack, and thus prevent our losing a lot of men while using these communication trenches to bring up re-enforcements."

These were the instructions he gave us:

"Take off your identification disks, strip your uniforms of all numerals, insignia, etc., leave your papers with your captains, because I don't want the Boches to know what regiments are against them as this would be valuable information to them in our attack tomorrow and I don't want any of you to be taken alive What I want is two prisoners and if I get them I have a way which will make them divulge all necessary information as to their guns. You have your choice of two weapons—you may carry your 'persuaders' or your knuckle knives, and each man will arm himself with four Mills bombs, these to be used only in case of emergency."

A persuader is Tommy's nickname for a club carried by the bombers. It is about two feet long, thin at one end and very thick at the other. The thick end is studded with sharp steel spikes, while through the center of the club there is a nine-inch lead bar, to give it weight and balance. When you get a prisoner all you have to do is just stick this club up in front of him, and believe me, the prisoner's patriotism for "Deutschland ueber Alles" fades away and he very willingly obeys the orders of his captor. If, however, the prisoner gets high-toned and refuses to follow you, simply "persuade" him by first removing his tin hat, and then—well, the use of the lead weight in the persuader is demonstrated, and Tommy looks for another prisoner.

The knuckle knife is a dagger affair, the blade of which is about eight inches long with a heavy steel guard over the grip. This guard is studded with steel projections. At night in a trench, which is only about three to four feet wide, it makes a very handy weapon. One punch in the face generally shatters a man's jaw and you can get him with the knife as he goes down.

Then we had what we called our "come-alongs." These are strands of barbed wire about three feet long, made into a noose at one end; at the other end, the barbs are cut off and Tommy slips his wrist through a loop to get a good grip on the wire. If the prisoner wants to argue the point, why just place the large loop around his neck and no matter if Tommy wishes to return to his trenches at the walk, trot, or gallop, Fritz is perfectly agreeable to maintain Tommy's rate of speed.

We were ordered to black our faces and hands. For this reason; At night, the English and Germans use what they call star shells, a sort of rocket affair. They are fired from a large pistol about twenty inches long, which is held over the sandbag parapet of the trench, and discharged into the air. These star shells attain a height of about sixty feet, and a range of from fifty to seventy-five yards. When they hit the ground they explode, throwing out a strong calcium light which lights up the ground in a circle of a radius of between ten to fifteen yards. They also have a parachute star shell which, after reaching a height of about sixty feet, explodes. A parachute unfolds and slowly floats to the ground, lighting up a large circle in No Man's Land. The official name of the star shell is a "Very-light." Very-lights are used to prevent night surprise attacks on the trenches. If a star shell falls in front of you, or between you and the German lines, you are safe from detection, as the enemy cannot see you through the bright curtain of light. But if it falls behind you and, as Tommy says, "you get in the star shell zone," then the fun begins; you have to lie flat on your stomach and remain absolutely motionless until the light of the shell dies out. This takes anywhere from forty to seventy seconds. If you haven't time to fall to the ground you must remain absolutely still in whatever position you were in when the light exploded; it is advisable not to breathe, as Fritz has an eye like an eagle when he thinks you are knocking at his door. When a star shell is burning in Tommy's rear he can hold his breath for a week.

You blacken your face and hands so that the light from the star shells will not reflect on your pale face. In a trench raid there is quite sufficient reason for your face to be pale. If you don't believe me, try it just once.

Then another reason for blackening your face and hands is that, after you have entered the German trench at night, "white face" means Germans, "black face" English. Coming around a traverse you see a white face in front of you. With a prayer and wishing Fritz "the best o' luck," you introduce him to your "persuader" or knuckle knife.

A little later we arrived at the communication trench named Whisky street, which led to the fire trench at the point we were to go over the top and out in front.

In our rear were four stretcher bearers and a corporal of the R. A. M. C. carrying a pouch containing medicines and first-aid appliances. Kind of a grim reminder to us that our expedition was not going to be exactly a picnic. The order of things was reversed. In civilian life the doctors generally come first, with the undertakers tagging in the rear and then the insurance man, but in our case, the undertakers were leading, with the doctors trailing behind, minus the insurance adjuster.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

CONSTANT FIGHT WITH FLIES

Camera Men Bothered With the Pests, Which Persist in Circling in Front of the Lens.

Flies give the technical department of the movie companies some of their hardest battles, writes Robert Wagner in the Saturday Evening Post. Flies are worse camera hogs than actors; they wouldn't be so bad if they'd stay at the table and eat, but between courses they up and fly in droves all round the camera, just to be in the close-ups, and when they pass directly in front of the lens they take on the proportions of buzzards.

When we stage a banquet scene it is a banquet—not pasteboard eats, such as they have on the stage, but the real Peruvian doughnuts. And when one of these great open-air feasts—for, alas, our banquet halls are usually shy two or more walls—is announced and the diners sit down to their happy feed they soon discover that every fly from as far north as Inyo county is also in attendance.

As wicked as it seems to use poison gases at a banquet, we often have to do it just to keep the flies out of our artistic ointment. It was because these creatures liked burnt sugar so much that we had to give up that sticky camouflage for our strong waters; our Martinis are now drier than ever.

Beware of Losing Time.

It's hard to make up lost time. Folks lose time when they are thoughtless, young and foolish. Some never get past this stage. They seem never to realize that every day has its own tasks and handicaps. Going back adds to this past drawbacks plus interest. Some things can never be made up. Learn the way of indolence and irresponsibility and no amount of lecturing will help you overcome it. Grow away from the study habit and it's next to impossible to regain it. It takes heroic measures for old folks to do what their youth has left undone. So now's your time. If you're among the old folks, make the best of it. If you belong to the young and highly favored youth of today begin laying foundations big enough to carry the weight of a great future.—Pennsylvania Grit.

Evidently He Was Not.

James and John were twins and inseparable. James, who was rather sickly, was especially dependent upon his stronger brother and cried whenever the latter was out of his sight. One day John woke early from their daily nap and came downstairs. Later, when James awoke and found himself alone, he cried lustily. John heard him and, stepping to the stairway, he called in the most sympathetic elder brother tone: "What's the matter, Jamie? Ain't I up there?"

Gold in the Arctic?

There is believed to be an abundance of gold in the Arctic, but except on the Yukon, and to a lesser extent within Arctic Siberia, it has not yet been exploited to any appreciable extent.

Is Anyone Old in New York?

In Bruce Barton's novel, "The Making of George Groton," the author says: "No one is old in New York. They drain in every year from all parts of the country—millions of men, young and vibrant. They stay and work, and grow into middle age; and then suddenly they vanish. One may walk for blocks on Fifth avenue or Broadway and hardly see anyone over fifty. Where do they go to? No one seems ever to die; no funerals clog the traffic. There are plenty of funerals, of course, but you don't notice them as you do in a little town. I have wandered for hours in the big woods, wondering where the birds go when they die; and never yet have I run across the body of a dead bird. What becomes of old birds? What becomes of old New Yorkers? These are twin mysteries to me. I cannot unravel them."

Strange Trades.

Some curious trades may be found in the vacant situations column of our daily paper. "Consol Operators" are not, as you might think, something on the stock exchange; they operate in leather on a boot bench. A "Commons Hanger"—which sounds wildly anachistic—is merely an artist in wall papering. A "Budget Trimmer" is no expert in finance, but works in the couchmaking trade. But what shall we say to the demand for a "Kaiser Molder?" One would think that, like the "Vienna Hand," this particular subdivision of bakery had ceased.—London Chronicle.

That which turns out with good results is better than any law.

Blouses and Collars.

Fichus are used on many dinner dresses and a number of black satin dresses are made with white georgette crepe or chiffon aprons. Many of the blouses are long and some are draped around the hips and tied at one side. Many of them are very long, with tunics which are almost as long as the underskirt, and cut just alike back and front, except for a vest in front. Very high collars, which are worn doubled over about the throat, have never been more in vogue; they are sometimes worn turned back on the shoulders like a cape.

Tailored Frocks.

Tailored day frocks are made of tricolette, gabardine, serge, jersey cloth and wool velours. Formal frocks are of satin or velvet combined with crepe georgette, fringe and fur.

Many women are employed in airship factories in France, and some have jobs that almost qualify them for service as steeplejacks.

School Girl's Fashions.

Even since the days when all the youngsters wore "Peter Thompsons," the popularity of this loose blouse in all its variations has never waned. Not only does it appear in serge, khaki and other heavy materials, but in silk and voile and cotton, too. Seldom, perhaps, does it now boast a real sailor collar and voluminous tie; more often it is rolled up at the bottom, has long, tight sleeves adorned with buttons at the cuff, and having a little design in embroidery at the low opening of the neck. Over a neat little pleated skirt, bordered with the same dark material of which the blouse is made, there could scarcely be a more serviceable costume for the little girl's school days.

A marble foundation in honor of the memory of Carrie Nation, the celebrated militant prohibitionist, was presented to the city of Wichita when the Kansas W. C. T. U. met there in annual convention during the last week of September.

The Demand for Ties.

"The demand for men's ties this fall," said a New York manufacturer, "has some rather significant features in it. We have a customer located on Fifth avenue in this city who formerly wanted only the best we had to offer, and many rich and striking colors. This year he wants good quality and workmanship, but not the most expensive, and bright colors he will have none of, compared to former years. Compare with this some of our customers who are located in other communities which are more strictly manufacturing centers. They used to take the cheapest ties and most subdued colors we could furnish. Now we cannot get anything expensive enough or too brilliant for them."

Old Superstition Banned.

Smart milliners assure us that there isn't the least bit of bad luck in white peacock feathers that is said to luck in their opalescent brethren. And so—your ermine toque with its snowy spray need not worry you at all.

A Different Bridal Veil.

At an informal military wedding solemnized recently in New York, the bride's veil of point lace showed an unusual arrangement in the way of a panel hanging from the top of the head to the hem of the train. It was held in place with a flat Alsatian bow of point lace fastened with two diamond pins and orange blossoms. Two maids gowned in pale green skirts of tulle, with round-necked silver cloth bodices, wore flat green Alsatian bows on their hair and carried green moss baskets filled with vari-colored asters.

Keeps Embroidery Clean.

The way professional needleworkers keep a bit of choice embroidery perfectly clean may prove helpful to other workers in this art. A piece of thin muslin is basted over the right side of the material to be embroidered. It is then fitted into the frame or hoop and the muslin cut away from the part that is to be immediately worked. Thus the muslin keeps the hands from coming in contact with the rest of the material when manipulating the needle and holding the hoops.

TALES FROM BIG CITIES

War "Block Parties" All the Rage in Gotham

RECENTLY there has swept through the city of New York and across the river into Brooklyn and down along the neighboring towns of Long Island a kind of wartime entertainment called a block party. A block party is one where the neighbors, especially the people belonging to that particular street which is to hold the festivity, give a party along a specified block in their immediate vicinity.

The street is roped off for the entertainment. Usually there is a procession first; sometimes persons dressed to impersonate leaders for liberty ride truck horses. These truck horses are gayly decorated, and if skillfully ridden and judiciously stirred up with a spur present quite a creditable imitation of war chargers bent on carrying death and destruction to the enemy.

The big event of a block party is the raising of a service flag, while the band plays "Over There" and the crowd cheers.

But though this is the main event of the evening, "The Star-Spangled Banner" is played first while the flag is raised and the people stand at attention. Then follow the national anthems of the allied powers while their flags are raised to wave over the street.

The block is gayly decorated with bunting of all colors, with little flags of all the allies, with colored lights and lanterns and streamers of ribbons.

After the ceremony of the raising of the flags is over a dance takes place. The couples dance in the center of the street, for which they are charged a small sum, and this money is contributed to various wartime activities, such as the smoke fund for the boys abroad, the Red Cross and the Y. M. C. A.

The expense? There is not much expense. People contribute pretty liberally to these war block parties in the way of work and material. The actual money expense is paid from the receipts from the dancers. The various war activities get pretty much all of the money taken in.

"Water Everywhere and Not a Drop to Drink"

DETROIT.—The Wayne county house at Eloise reports a great decrease in the number of wayfarers. Travelers still stop at Eloise dead broke and footsore to ask for a night's lodging, but the professional tramp has ceased to be. Weary Willie with his tomato can and coat of many patches no longer trudges the highway or broils his pilfered chicken over an open fire in the corner of some pasture land.

A few years ago as many as 80 a day have stopped at Eloise for supper and a night's lodging. Often they returned every week after a circuit of the neighboring towns.

Clean water has frightened the tramps away. Water to bathe in and water to drink explain Eloise's rapid decline in the affections of these visitors. When the county board decreed that every wanderer applying for food and a bed must take a bath, Eloise became a place to be shunned.

Prohibition still further thinned the ranks. The only thing your almost pure tramp objects to more than water taken externally is water taken internally. The "work or fight" ruling has completed the work begun by the other agencies.

In 1916 there were more than 1,700 wayfarers taken care of at Eloise, but the average now is not more than 12 a month.

"It is not only the tramps who have forsaken us," says J. J. Marker, superintendent. "We have very few cases of alcoholism. We used to have a good many of these as regular visitors. One man had been received here 54 times."

For the first time in some years the yearly report of the Wayne county house shows a balance instead of a deficit, despite the fact that the daily cost of supporting each inmate has increased from 54 to 71 cents within the year.

"Anguish Squad" Thinks Sherman Hit It Right

HOUSTON.—Orders were issued recently from division headquarters that all officers of the Fifteenth division would be required to devote two hours a day to equitation or the practice of horsemanship. To many of the officers this order involved no little anguish of body and mind.

Horsemanship is, like ancient Gaul, divided into three parts: The horse, the saddle and the rider.

In the first division, the horse, many factors, certain and uncertain, reside. If the mount has reached the age of discretion through years of experience and much service the third factor, the rider, passes through the varying stages of the ordeal with comparatively few misadventures. If, however, the horse proves to lack in judgment and reasonable discretion, the initial stages of acquiring skill in horsemanship combine all the features of a popular definition of war.

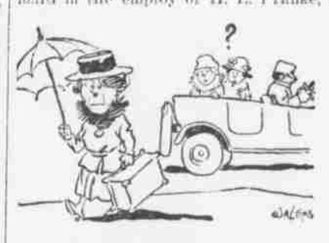
Officers of the Eightieth infantry are now regularly devoting at least two hours each day to the development of the latent powers or abilities of equestrianism, which military regulations assume lie more or less dormant in each of the commissioned officers of the Fifteenth division.

Each day the "anguish squad" sets forth upon its parade. Promptly to the minute at the expiration of the two-hour period the more or less subdued rider releases his mount into the custody of his orderly and retires to his quarters for witch hazel and other soothing external applications.

It has been observed that officers of the various organizations of the Fifteenth division now stand in preference to sitting down.

Purple Silk Umbrellas Are Scarce in Milwaukee

MILWAUKEE.—It is the small things of life which frequently make or break the careers of people, and the fact that Mrs. Helen Pearson, a maid in the employ of H. E. Franke, 226 Thirteenth street, president of the Franke Grain company, was seen walking toward a railroad depot with a purple silk umbrella, resulted in the discovery of a jewelry theft at the Franke home and the arrest of Mrs. Pearson at Evanston, Ill.



Mrs. Pearson, who is forty-seven years old, and whose home is in Chicago, was returned to Milwaukee and locked up in central police station in connection with the robbery of jewels valued at $1,500.

Miss Gertrude Franke and Mrs. L. Guenther while riding up Grand avenue in their automobile saw Mrs. Pearson with her suitcases and the umbrella, said to belong to Miss Franke.

The women drove to the Franke home and found the entire house ransacked and the jewelry missing. They notified the police.

Stork Beats Taxi to Hospital; "Some Swift Kid!"

CHICAGO.—When the race started from Mrs. Esther Meirant's home, 1356 North Western avenue, it looked as if the taxicab would beat the stork. But Driver Joe Harris of Yellow Cab No. 206 is a family man with five youngsters of his own, and he knew the stork is a tricky old bird. So he jammed his foot on the gas, bent over his wheel and plugged hard for the South Side hospital for which Mrs Meirant and the stork were bound.

Like a yellow streak the machine flashed east, going 45 miles an hour.

It honked for right of way and got it.

Everything got out of its way—had to.

It ran in front of street cars at crossings.

Pedestrians fled for dear life. A trail of indignant citizens who had to run to avoid the car reached all the way from Western avenue to the hospital.

At the last lap of the race the stork shuffled his draggled wings, cynically shut one eye, and proceeded to speed up.

When the taxi drew up at the entrance of the hospital Driver Joe Harris was a beaten man.

In five minutes Mrs. Meirant and her new son were snuggled away comfortably in the maternity ward of the hospital.

Joe Harris took off his cap and mopped his forehead thoughtfully.

"Some swift kid," he remarked enthusiastically to a hospital attendant.

To Come Later.

Patience—Is that young man I saw Peggy with today the one she's engaged to?

Patrice—I guess so.

Patience—But why isn't he fighting?

Patrice—Oh, dear; they're not married yet.—Yonkers Statesman.

Cautious.

"Was your wife's peach and apple preserving successful?"

"I may state with truth that it was fruitful in results."

The only difference between white lies and black ones is that other people always tell the white ones.

Nearly all political candidates are under treaty obligations.