"OVER THE TOP"

BY AN AMERICAN SOLDIER WHO WENT

ARTHUR GUY EMPEY

MACHINE GUNNER, SCHRAPNEL FRANCE

COPYRIGHT BY GEORGE H. DORAN CO.

EMPEY JOINS PICK AND SHOVEL SQUAD AND DIGS TRENCHES IN NO MAN'S LAND.

Synopsis.—Fired by the shelling of the Lusitania, with the loss of American lives, Arthur Guy Empey, an American living in Jersey City, New Jersey, enlists as a private in the British army. After a short experience as a recruiting officer in London, he is sent to training quarters in France, where he undergoes hardships that try and make the acquaintance of "mother." After a period of training Empey's company is sent into the front-line trenches, where he gets his first turn on the fire step while the bullets whiz overhead. Empey learns, as comrades falls, that death lurks always in the trenches. Chaplain distinguishes himself by carrying wounded men under fire. With pick and shovel Empey has experience as a trench digger in No Man's Land.

CHAPTER XIII—Continued.

We lined up in front of the barbs, wearied with perspiration, and piled our rifles into stacks. A sergeant of the R. A. M. C. with a yellow band on his arm, and a couple of men with "R. F." insolitary patient in black letters, took charge, ordering us to take off our equipment, unroll our puttees and untuck boots. Then, starting from the right of the line, he divided us into lots outside of fifteen. I happened to be in the first squad.

We entered a small room, where we were given a thorough search, and then filed into the bathroom. In here there were fifteen tubs (barrels sawed in two) half full of water. Black oil constituted a grave of laundry dogs. The sergeant informed us that we had just twelve minutes in which to take our baths. Immediately there was a rush for a tub; terms in rubbing each other's backs, then by means of a garden hose, washed the soap off. The water was ice cold, but felt fine.

Pretty soon a bell rang and the water was turned off. Some of the slower ones were covered with soap, but that made no difference to the sergeant, when the bell rang into another room, where we stood up in front of a little window, received our clean underwear, flannel shirt, and received cross underwear and towels. From here we went into the room where we had first undressed. Ten minutes were allowed in which to get into our "clothes."

My pair of drawers came up to my chin and the shirt barely reached my diaphragm, but they were clean—so what's the use kicking? I was satisfied.

At the expiration of the time allotted we were turned out and lighted for our dressing on the grass.

When all of the company had bathed it was a case of march back to billets. That march was the most uncomposed one imaginal. Just cussing and blaspheming all the way. We were covered with perspiration, dust and cooties.

The wooden underwear issued was driving like the mischief.

After eating our dinner of stew which had been kept for us—it was now four o'clock—we went into the week and had another bath.

If "Holy Joe" could have heard our remarks about the divisional baths

A Bathroom at the Front.

and said again, German shrapnel would have finished us all off in short order, but I would take the former any day.

I just mentioned "Holy Joe" or the padre as he is usually called. He is a fine officer of the Royal Engineers, gave up a commission to become a padre.

We were to dig an advanced trench one hundred yards past the German end of Turpil, nineteen sixteenth-century editions of Terrence, two Shakespeares, complete sixteenth-century editions of Tertius Severus, Martial, Horace, Juvenal, Livy, Lucretius, Lucian, Cicero, Ovid, Virgil, Homer, Plato, Aristotle and Aristophanes Greeks are found not forever; priceless early Bibles, which editions of priceless early Bibles and still here, texts illuminated and the unfinished Greek are found in the capital of Spanish, German and Lowland Dutch. Also the well-stamped books the Spanish Conquest and the gothic Renaissance in Italy.

Each man was issued with a pick and shovel and a sandbag. Our platoon formed in single file, and with the sergeant in front, we started out.

Passing and out of breath, we tumbled into the machine-gun trench. I myself hands panting through our wire, but, at the time, didn't notice it; my mind was on other things.

When the relief was over we found that we had gotten it in the neck for 21 casualties.

Our artillery put a barrage on Fritz' front line and communication trenches and their machine-gun and rifle fire suddenly ceased.

Upon the cessation of this fire, stretcher-bearers came out and the killed and wounded. Next day we

Trench Digging.

learned that 21 of our men had been killed and 37 wounded. This was quite blinding; but in the darkness, that sort of information was unknown to us. Some were taken away, others were brought in.

Speaking of stretcher bearers and wounded, I remember the first time I ever saw one. I remember I trembled at the sight of blood. I thought I would never get so accustomed to seeing billions of dirt flying out in the dark to let long sections of timbers, artillery and supplies go over.

From an official statement published in the London Times I see that it is stated that the casualties on the recent action cost us seven thousand men. Fifteen killed were wounded was about correct.

Before entering this trench, word was passed down the line, "no talking for the next hour, as we are now entering party free."

The morning party consisted of 50 men, armed with rifles, bayonets and bombs. Each man carried a pick. They were to protect the men and guard against a surprise attack. We were going in No Man's Land.

The communication trench was about half a mile in a straggling ditch, eight feet deep and three feet wide.

Each man, German shrapnel helmet, gas helmet and rifle, moved silently. We stumbled over the broken earth while the officer in charge "swore" in a low voice at us.

Once Fritz turned loose with a machine gun, the bullets whistled as they "cracked" through the air and kicked up the dirt on the parapet, making an unpleasant noise.

Finally we reached the point where the trench was to start.

Every section of the trench had an officer of the Royal Engineers give us instructions as to what was to be done