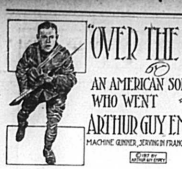

"OVER THE TOP"

BY AN AMERICAN SOLDIER WHO WENT

ARTHUR GUY EMPEY

MACHINE GUNNER, 7TH ROYAL SCOTTISH FUSILIERS

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EMPEY JOINS THE "SUICIDE CLUB," AS THE BOMBING SQUAD IS CALLED.

Synopsis.—Fired by the shaking of the Lusitania, with the loss of American lives, Arthur Guy Empey, an American living in Jersey City, decides to enlist and come over to fight for Britain in the British army. After a short experience as a recruiting officer in London, he is sent to training quarters in France, where he is initiated into the mysteries of "hooligan" and "mucker." After a brief period of training Empey's company is sent into the front-line trenches, where he takes his first turn on the fire step while the bullets whiz overhead. Empey learns, as comrade falls, that death lurks always in the trenches. Empey goes "over the top" for the first time and has a desperate fight.

CHAPTER XII.

Bombing.

The boys in the section welcomed me back, but there were many strange faces. Several of our men had gone sick, and a draft had been sent over to reinforce the company, with a little wooden cross at their head. We were in rest billets. The next day our captain asked for volunteers for bombers' school. I gave my name and was accepted. I had joined the Suicide club, and my troubles commenced. There were men of the battalion, including several officers, who had been through a course in bombing. Here we were instructed in the uses, methods of throwing and manufacture of various kinds of hand grenades. From the old "Jam tin," now obsolete, to the present Mills bomb, the standard hand grenade.

It all depends on how you are going what produces called. In France they call you a "bomber" and give you special pay, while in neutral countries they call you an anarchist and give you the rope.

From the very start the Germans were well equipped with effective bombs, and during the early days of the war the English army was so little prepared in this important department of fighting as in many others. At bombing school an old sergeant of the Grenadier guards, whom I had the good fortune to meet, told me of the disorganization this branch of the service suffered before they could meet the German bombers on an equal basis. At first and small arms practice in the old R. E. plans read with "Every man in the English expeditionary force had a bomb at all, but had cricked a toe at recreation from those cussed to the Boches. One night morning someone before we had an idea of issued an order detailing two men from each company to attend a course of instruction in the duties of a bomber and how to manufacture bombs. Nonsensible noted officers were generally selected for this course. After about two weeks at school they returned to their units in rest billets or in the fire trench, as the case might be and got busy teaching their platoons how to throw bombs.

Previously an order had been issued for all units to save empty jam tins for the manufacture of bombs. A jam former of bombing would sit on the fire step in the front trench with the remainder of his section crouching down in the fire trench.

On the left would be a pile of empty jam tins, and on the right a pile of sand, on the fire step would be a somewhat coarse assortment of material used in the manufacture of the "jam tin."

Tommy would stoop down, get an empty "jam tin," take a handful of clayey mud from the parapet, and line the bottom of the tin with this substance. Then he would reach over, pick up a piece of shell, or shrapnel, and insert them in the tin, face preceding. On the fire step would be a pile of fragments of shell, shrapnel balls, bits of iron, nails, etc., knocking that was done to make the bomb fatal. Fritz; he would scoop up a handful of this stuff and put it in the tin, until the large one of the picture would not hold what he did this for, and he would then add some more mud to the bomb exploded. these bits would fly about and kill or wound any Germans for 50 yards. The questioner would immediately pull a fuse off his coat and stick it in the bomb maker with, "Well, blame me, that's something I never thought of, number Tommy would scrounge around and rusty and broken jackknife; both would be accepted and inserted.

Then the professor would take another handful of mud and fill the tin, after which he would punch a hole in the lid of the tin and put it over the top of the bomb, the fuse sticking out. The bomb was then complete, and the men who had been issued. This was to be wrapped on the left forearm by means of a few leather straps and was like the side of a match box; it was called a "jack." The bomber would put the head of a match on the face of the bomb. To ignite the fuse, you had to rub it on the "striker," just the same as striking a match. The fuse was timed to five seconds or more, the length of the fuse issued to those days would be about four inches. Some of the men others would "time" for a week, before exploding. Such is Blighty life. Some of this workers weren't quite up to snuff, the way they are now. If the fuse took a notion to burn too quickly they generally hurled the bomb maker next over the parapet, and he would be called a "cracker" or safe job.

After making a few bombs and the bomber instructs the platoon in these duties. He takes a "jam tin" from the fire step, trembling a little, for cause it is serious work, especially when new at it, lights the fuse on his striker. The fuse begins to "size" and there is a spray of smoke, like that from a smoldering fag, rises from it. Instructor gives splits in two and runs around the traverse nearest to the bomb store. Here he finds a number of the instructing fuse. When that fuse begins to smoke and "size" you have to get goodby'd as an soon as possible, as Tommy with all his might and main throws the top and crouches against the parapet, waiting for the explosion.

Some of those in bombing the "jam tin" would be picked up by the fragments before it exploded and thrown back at Tommy with dire results. Others would be blown to bits before the instructor an order was issued, reading that "jam tins" were taboo.

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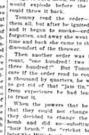

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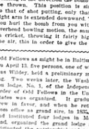

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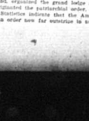

Throwing Hand Grenades.

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a chance to burn down on that when the bomb lands, it immediately explodes and gives the Germans no time to scamper out of its range or to return it.

When the bomb leaves your hand, the lever, by means of a spring, is projected from the bomb, and immediately is on the ground's fuse fuse to front of the bomber.

When the lever flies off it releases a strong spring, which forces the firing pin into a percussion cap. This ignites the fuse, which burns down and sets off the detonator, which explodes the contents of nursery, which explodes the bomb and kills everything.

The average British soldier is not an expert at throwing. In the British army, in his, therefore, the Canadians and Americans, who have played baseball from the kindergarten up, have naturally to bomb throwing and excel in this art. A six-foot English soldier will stand in awed silence when he sees a little five-foot-six Canadian nonchalantly toss three by several yards. I have read a few war stories of a certain regiment, where baseball pitchers earned their bombs when throwing them, but a pitcher who can do this would stand no chance in the British army. "Chesty" Mathewson look like a piker, and Walter Johnson valuable time playing in the European War bath league, when he would be able to set the "Big Ben" on fire.

We had a cushy time while at this school. In fact, to me it was a regular vacation, and we were very sorry when the course was up. We received orders to report at headquarters for transportation and refilling to return to the front line.

Arriving at our section, the boys were given a rousing welcome. The grub did not looked enhance at us with the exception of the jam issued to us. The rumors, as they expressed it, how a draft was to join the Suicide club. I was begin to look like a regiment. There was a number of said club, and my life in the trenches was short indeed.

Fritz was a sure-enough bomber I was positive of that, and he had seen service as such would not be required.

CHAPTER XIII.

My First Official Bath.

Bathing arrangements were about as follows: Each one fest deep and twenty feet long, filled with water, one of the company was detailed to act as an opportunity to take a swim once a week. The men undressed in their dugouts and their underwear when on the way to the bathing pool would get hot water, and these tasks to no wonder would enjoy their coveted bath three it back.

Each man had an order—he reads that he will not after undressing in the fuse and it began to smoke—and throw it in the water. Then he would jump in and duck and she come to the former position.

Then another order was issued to the effect that "jam tins" were "verboten" (been finished"; But Tommy didn't care if it was verboten or not, he was going to get a bath, and he was going to get rid of that "jam tin," and by gum he would get rid of it, and he did get rid of it.

Where the powers that be realized that they could not change Tommy Atkins's nature, they would issue an order and he—substituting the "jam tin" for the Mills bomb.

The standard bomb used in the British army is the "Mills bomb." It is about the shape and size of a large lemon. Al-

though not actually a bomb, Fritz is in the habit of throwing them, and we have caused by its explosion. The Mills bomb is composed of a metal shell of which is corrugated into small squares, which, upon the explosion, are supposed to scatter a wide area, wounding or killing any Fritz who may be within range. The left arm is protected by one of the Ayrsg fragments.

Before throwing a bomb you must remove a safety pin, or "Split" has the consistency of the "Mills" has the consistency of the "Mills" has the consistency of the "Mills