

# "Over the Top"

By An American Soldier Who Went

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Machine Gunner Serving in France

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## 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 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, muddy 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.

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 hatched-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 sandbags." I 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 sandbagged 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 bloom'n' idiot; do you want us to click it 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 clicked

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 or 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 kilos 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. 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 "Gold-

flakes." "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 slyly 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.)

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# Good Printing

THE kind of printing that pays dividends is the kind you should have. Pale, muddly, poorly arranged printed matter is worse than none. The quality of your business is often judged by the quality of your stationery — inferior printing gives an impression of cheapness that is hard to overcome, while good printing carries with it a desirable suggestion of quality.

We produce only Quality Printing. Whether you want an inexpensive handbill or a letterhead in colors, if you order it from us you will be sure of getting good work. We have the equipment and the "know how" that enables us to get out really good printing — printing that impresses people with the good taste of its users. That is the only kind of printing that

# Pays

## BUSINESS NOTICES.

OUR ARMY AND HOW TO KNOW IT for sale at THE HERALD office. Price 25 cents.

JUST RECEIVED BIG LOT CANSVAS cloth for tobacco beds. Cotter-Underwood Company.

ALL THOSE MEMBERS OF THE congregation of the Baptist church having copies of the church's song books, "The Gospel Hymns, Nos. 1 to 6", in their homes will please return them to the church. They are needed. T. J. Lassiter, church clerk.

FOR J. R. WATKINS' MEDICINES and toilets go to Selma Supply Co., Selma, N. C.

TWO CARS OF STOVES AND Ranges just received. Cotter Hardware Company.

JUST RECEIVED AT COTTER-UNDERWOOD Company's a car load of Red Rust Proof seed oats.

TWO CARS OF STOVES AND Ranges just received. Cotter Hardware Company.

I HAVE A NICE JERSEY COW with young calf for sale. John H. Langston, Bentonville, Route 2 N. C.

FOR J. R. WATKINS' MEDICINES and toilets go to Selma Supply Co., Selma, N. C.

TWO CARS OF STOVES AND Ranges just received. Cotter Hardware Company.

THREE HUNDRED TONS BEST grade fertilizers now in warehouse. Cotter-Underwood Co., Smithfield, N. C.

MONEY SHOULD WORK. WE SELL Acid Phosphate, 16 per cent. for \$18.75 per ton cash. Quality guaranteed. Farmers Mercantile Co., Selma, N. C.

IF YOU WANT TO SELL YOUR farm it will pay you to figure with us. Abell & Gray, Smithfield, N. C.

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RINGLET BARRED ROCK EGGS, from fancy type. First prize winners every year. \$1.50, \$2 and \$3 per 15. Hamilton Bros., Smithfield, N. C.

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WE ARE IN THE MARKET FOR several farms, of different sizes. If you want to sell see us. Abell & Gray, Smithfield, N. C.

IF YOU NEED A GOOD SEWING machine for your wife buy the New Home. For sale by J. M. Beatty, Smithfield, N. C.

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WE HAVE JUST RECEIVED A CAR of Muriate of Potash. Come quick if you want any. Cotter-Underwood Company.

I HAVE FOR SALE ONE MILCH cow. C. W. Williams, Selma, N. C. R. F. D. No. 1.

WE HAVE THE JOHN DEERE Corn Planters. Cotter Hardware Company.

FOR SALE—SEVERAL RHODE ISLAND Red cockerels at \$1.50 each. Eggs 15 for \$1.25. R. A. Bain, Four Oaks, N. C.

He has Tried this Method for Twenty Five Years and Now Says That for Purposes of rest A Horizontal Position in Bed Beats Draping the Body Over a Chair.

WE HAVE THE JOHN DEERE Corn Planters. Cotter Hardware Company.

WHY HOARD YOUR MONEY when we sell 16 per cent. Acid Phosphate for \$18.75 per ton for the cash. Farmers Mercantile Co., Selma, N. C.

THE SMITHFIELD BUILDING & Loan Association has helped a number of people to build homes. It will help others, and maybe you. New series of shares now open. See Mr. J. J. Broadhurst.

WE HAVE THE JOHN DEERE Corn Planters. Cotter Hardware Company.

SEE US FOR NEW WAY ENGINES. Cotter Hardware Co.

LET US SCREEN YOUR HOUSE for 60 cents. At Herald Office.

WE HAVE ON HAND A FEW GOOD mules and horses for sale. Cotter-Underwood Company.

## WANTED.

White men between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one to operate machines in Tobacco Factory. Good wages. Come at once.

BLACKWELL'S DURHAM BRANCH, Durham, N. C.

PURE BRED S. C. WHITE ORPINGTON eggs for sale. \$1.50 per setting. Mrs. C. S. Broadhurst, Smithfield, N. C.

THE WORLD ALMANAC FOR 1918, cloth bound. A book of 290 pages now. Cotter Hardware Co.

WANTED 25 GEESE. WILL PAY highest price for same. Joel Johnson, Route 1, Smithfield, N. C.

MISTAKE—ON SATURDAY NIGHT March 9th some one through a mistake carried out a package belonging to Mr. J. S. Strickland containing the bowl of a store lamp. The mistaken party will please bring it to my store. Jas. A. Creech Co. Four Oaks, N. C.

FOR SALE OR EXCHANGE—ONE Overland touring car, newly overhauled and in splendid condition. Would exchange for Ford roadster. Joel A. Johnson, Smithfield, N. C., Route 1.

DON'T PUT OFF SCREENING house. See us at once. Cotter Hardware Company.

FOR SALE—5 ROOM COTTAGE, electric lights, good garden, three blocks from Selma Graded School. Bargain for quick purchaser. Reason for selling, moving away. Apply C. W. Stallings, Box 140, Selma, N. C.

JUST RECEIVED A LARGE LOT of New Testaments, ranging in price from ten cents to \$1.40 each. Herald Book Store, Smithfield, N. C.

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BUY YOUR ACID AND COTTON seed meal from the Cotter-Underwood Company, Smithfield. Full supply now on hand.

SAVE THE QUARTERS and SEE THE DOLLARS GROW. BUY WAR-SAVINGS STAMPS!

# An Aged Man Says Sleeping In Chair Is Not A Success

## He Has Tried This Method For Twenty-Five Years And Now Says That For Purpose of Rest A Horizontal Position in Bed Beats Draping The Body Over a Chair.

There never has been but one satisfactory manner discovered for sleeping, and that is with the body in a horizontal position in a bed, and any effort to change this method defeats one of nature's most important purposes.

One of Raleigh's well-known citizens, Mr. J. R. Pool, 708 Hargett St., says that he has been forced to spend many nights trying to sleep on a chair. Mr. Pool says:

"I could not sleep lying flat on my back and had to get up and try to sleep sitting in a chair. This was due to a severe case of liver and stomach trouble, from which I suffered for twenty-five years. I was also unable to eat

meat and suffered intense pains in my shoulder, and at times these pains were so severe that I would fall over.

"My son recently gave me a bottle of Peplac and now, for the first time in twenty-five years, I can sleep peacefully in bed, free from pain. I can eat meat and vegetables three times a day. I am sixty-four years old, but Peplac has made a new man of me. Now, in addition to looking after my grocery business I can plow and am feeling fine and happy."

The merits of this great constructive tonic will be gladly explained at Hood Brothers where it is recommended and sold.

# LUCKY STRIKE CIGARETTE

IN a year it has become famous; the man's cigarette for the men who are working over here, and fighting over there.

The reason? Because it's made of Burley pipe tobacco and because—

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