



"OVER THE TOP"

AN AMERICAN SOLDIER WHO WENT

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MACHINE GUNNER, SERVING IN FRANCE

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CHAPTER XIX.

On His Own.

Of course Tommy cannot always be producing plays under fire but while in rest billets he has numerous other ways of amusing himself. He is a great gambler, but never plays for large stakes. Generally, in each company, you will find a regular Canfield. This man banks nearly all the games of chance and is an undisputed authority on the rules of gambling. Whenever there is an argument among the Tommies about some uncertain point as to whether Houghton is entitled to Watkins' sixpence, the matter is taken to the recognized authority and his decision is final.

The two most popular games are "Crown and Anchor" and "House."

The paraphernalia used in "Crown and Anchor" consists of a piece of canvas two feet by three feet. This is divided into six equal squares. In these squares are painted a club, diamond, heart, spade, crown, and an anchor, one device to a square. There are three dice used, each dice marked the same as the canvas. The banker sets up his gambling outfit in the corner of a billet and starts bally-hooing until a crowd of Tommies gathers around; then the game starts.

The Tommies place bets on the squares, the crown or anchor being played the most. The banker then rolls his three dice and collects or pays out as the case may be. If you play the crown and one shows up on the dice, you get even money, if two show up, you receive two to one, and if three, three to one. If the crown does not appear and you have bet on it, you lose, and so on. The percentage for the banker is large if every square is played, but if the crowd is partial to, say two squares, he has to trust to luck. The banker generally wins.

The game of "House" is very popular also. It takes two men to run it. This game consists of numerous squares of cardboard containing three rows of numbers, five numbers to a row. The numbers run from one to ninety. Each card has a different combination.

The French "estaminets" in the villages are open from eleven in the morning until one in the afternoon in accordance with army orders.

After dinner the Tommies congregate at these places to drink French beer at a penny a glass and play "House."

As soon as the estaminet is sufficiently crowded the proprietors of the "House" game get busy and, as they term it, "form a school." This consists of going around and selling cards at a franc each. If they have ten in the school, the backers of the game deduct two francs for their trouble and the winner gets eight francs.

Then the game starts. Each buyer places his card before him on the table, first breaking up matches into fifteen pieces.

One of the backers of the game has a small cloth bag in which are ninety cardboard squares, each with a number printed thereon, from one to ninety. He raps on the table and cries out: "Eyes down, my lucky lads."

All noise ceases and every one is attention.

The croupier places his hand in the bag and draws forth a numbered square and immediately calls out the number. The man who owns the card with that particular number on it, covers the square with a match. The one who covers the fifteen numbers on his card first shouts "House." The other backer immediately comes over to him and verifies the card by calling out the numbers thereon to the man with the bag. As each number is called he picks it out of the ones picked from the bag and says, "Right." If the count is right he shouts, "House correct, pay the lucky gentleman, and sell him a card for the next school." The "lucky gentleman" generally buys one unless he has a miser trace in his veins.

Then another collection is made, a school formed, and they carry on with the game.

The caller-out has many nicknames for the numbers such as "Kelly's Eye" for one, "Leg's Eleven" for eleven, "Clickety-click" for sixty-six, or "Top of the house" meaning ninety.

The game is honest and quite enjoyable. Sometimes you have fourteen numbers on your card covered and you are waiting for the fifteenth to be called. In an imploring voice you call out, "Come on, Watkins, chum, I'm sweating on 'Kelly's Eye.'"

Watkins generally replies, "Well, keep out of a draft, you'll catch cold."

Another game is "Pontoon," played with cards; it is the same as our "Black Jack," or "Twenty-one."

A card game called "Brag" is also popular. Using a casino deck, the dealer deals each player three cards. It is similar to our poker, except for the fact that you only use three cards

fals and they assume the same duties and authority of a butler, the one stripe giving him precedence over the other servants.

There are lots of amusing stories told of "O. S."

One day one of our majors went into the servants' billet and commenced "blinding" at them, saying that his horse had no straw and that he personally knew that straw had been issued for this purpose. He called the lance-corporal to account. The corporal answered, "Blime me, sir, the straw was issued, but there wasn't enough left over from the servants' beds; in fact, we had to use some of the 'ay to 'elp out, sir.'"

It is needless to say that the servants dispensed with their soft beds that particular night.

Nevertheless it is not the fault of the individual officer, it is just the survival of a quaint old English custom. You know an Englishman cannot be changed in a day.

But the average English officer is a good sport. He will sit on a fire step and listen respectfully to Private Jones' theory of the way the war should be conducted. This war is gradually crumbling the once insurmountable wall of caste.

You would be convinced of this if you could see King George go among his men on an inspecting tour under fire, or pause before a little wooden

shells would drop into their own. This eliminated artillery fire.

In these trenches when up against the Prussians and Bavarians, Tommy had a hot time of it, but when the Saxons "took over" that was a picnic; they would yell across that they were Saxons and would not fire. Both sides would sit on the parapet and carry on a conversation. This generally consisted of Tommy telling them how much he loved the kaiser, while the Saxons informed Tommy that King George was a particular friend of theirs and hoped that he was doing nicely.

When the Saxons were to be relieved by Prussians or Bavarians, they would yell this information across No Man's Land and Tommy would immediately tumble into his trench and keep his head down.

If an English regiment was to be relieved by the wild Irish, Tommy would tell the Saxons, and immediately a volley of "Donner und Blitzen" could be heard and it was Fritz's turn to get a crack in his back from stooping, and the people in Berlin would close their windows.

Usually when an Irishman takes over a trench, just before "stand down" in the morning, he sticks his rifle over the top, aimed in the direction of Berlin, and engages in what is known as the "mad minute." This consists of firing fifteen shots in a minute. He is not aiming at anything in particular—just sends over each shot with a

prayer, hoping that one of his strays will get some poor unsuspecting Fritz in the napper hundreds of yards behind the lines. It generally does; that's the reason the Boches hate the man from Erin's isle.

The Saxons, though better than the Prussians and Bavarians, have a nasty trait of treachery in their makeup.

At one point of the line where the trenches were very close, a stake was driven into the ground midway between the hostile lines. At night when it was his turn, Tommy would crawl to this stake and attach some London papers to it, while at the foot he would place tins of bully beef, fags, sweets, and other delicacies that he had received from Blighty in the ever looked-for parcel. Later on Fritz would come out and get these luxuries.

The next night Tommy would go out to see what Fritz put into his stocking. The donation generally consisted of a paper from Berlin, telling who was winning the war, some tinned sausages, cigars, and occasionally a little beer, but a funny thing, Tommy never returned with the beer unless it was inside of him. His platoon got a whiff of his breath one night and the offending Tommy lost his job.

One night a young English sergeant crawled to the stake and as he tried to detach the German paper a bomb exploded and mangled him horribly. Fritz had set a trap and gained another victim which was only one more black mark against him in the book of this war. From that time on diplomatic relations were severed.

Returning to Tommy, I think his spirit is best shown in the questions he asks. It is never "who is going to win" but always "how long will it take?"

(To Be Continued.)

BREWER'S BLACKBIRD

(Euphagus cyanocephalus)



Length, ten inches. Its glossy purplish head distinguishes it from other blackbirds that do not show in flight a trough-shaped tail.

Range: Breeds in the West, east to Texas, Kansas, and Minnesota, and north to southern Canada; winters over most of the United States breeding range, south to Guatemala.

Habits and economic status: Very numerous in the West and in fall gathers in immense flocks, especially about barnyards and corrals. During the cherry season in California Brewer's blackbird is much in the orchards. In one case they were seen to eat freely of cherries, but when a neighboring fruit raiser began to plow his orchard almost every blackbird in the vicinity was upon the newly opened ground and close at the plowman's heels in its eagerness to get the insects exposed by the plow. Caterpillars and pupae form the largest item of animal food (about 12 per cent). Many of these are cutworms, and cotton bollworms or corn earworms were found in ten stomachs and codling-moth pupae in 11. Beetles constitute over 11 per cent of the food. The vegetable food is practically contained in three items—grain, fruit, and weed seeds. Grain, mostly oats, amounts to 54 per cent; fruit, largely cherries, 4 per cent; and weed seeds, not quite 9 per cent. The grain is probably mostly wild, volunteer, or waste, so that the bird does most damage by eating fruit.

When up against a Prussian regiment it is a case of keep your napper below the parapet and duck. A bang-bang all the time and a war is on. The Bavarians are little better, but the Saxons are fairly good sports and are willing occasionally to behave as gentlemen and take it easy, but you cannot trust any of them overlong.

At one point of the line the trenches were about thirty-two yards apart. This sounds horrible, but in fact it was easy, because neither side could shell the enemy's front-line trench for fear

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