

# SHANCHAI AT SEVENTEEN

By ARTHUR GUY EMPY

Author of "OVER THE TOP"

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## A Brief Account of My Life

### I Start Out to See the World

Before I tell of my first real adventure I will give a brief resume of my life.

I was born in the '80's, closer to the bottom than the top. When I first opened my eyes I breathed the air of the "Rockies." To be exact, I was born in Ogden, Utah, on the eleventh of December, 1883. My roving started at the early age of four. This was in Cheyenne, Wyoming. I used to play on the front porch. My mother must have suspected that I was of a roving nature, because she took the precaution to put a gate across the steps of the porch with some kind of new fangled lock on it, which I was unable to negotiate. I used to work for half an hour at a time trying to get the gate open, but without success. In fact this got to be a habit with me until my father applied the "slipper" several times. This made me more cautious and I worked in secret. Out in front of our house were the sand hills of Wyoming. These had a fascination for me and it was my greatest ambition to explore them. One morning the grocery boy, who was a great friend of mine, showed me how to cowboy. I was full of childish glee, when, after a few attempts, I found it easy to get out into the world beyond. On the morning in question my mother left me in charge of the hired girl while she went shopping. It was wash day, and my guardian did not have much time to look after me. She, not being in on the "big secret," put me on the front porch thinking that I would be safe. I waited my chance, and as soon as I heard the noise of her scrubbing on the wash board in the kitchen I availed myself of the opportunity of getting out. When I got out into the sand hills it was great fun. I kept plowing forward. After a while I got very tired and tried to trace my steps, but without success. I knew I was lost. Then I did what all kids would do under like circumstances. I blubbered for my mother. Pretty soon she came along, took compassion on me, lifted me in front of him on his saddle and we rode into the town of Cheyenne. All the way he was trying to find out my name, but all I could answer was "Empy." I finally tried to translate this into "Guy Empey." He carried me into a saloon, filled with cowboys, and sat me on a barrel and the cowboys crowded around and seemed to be greatly amused. I thoroughly enjoyed myself for a while, but then began to howl for my mamma. I must have been a howling success, because even the cowboys could not stand it. They gave me everything in the saloon to play with, but to no avail. My yelling continued.

My mother, upon returning home at about 1 o'clock the next afternoon, found the girl frantic with fright, saying that I had disappeared. My mother turned in the alarm and a general search took place.

All I can remember is that my father, with a frightened face, rushed into the saloon, and I just escaped, but he then in triumph took me home. A great reception was awaiting me, and all the neighbors patted me on the back. I was a great hero, pro and con. When the next morning came, that old familiar "slipper" when I used the slipper I experienced the same feeling that I had later when on a trench raid in France I was hung in the German barbed wire. My father sure had the art in slipping. Application down to a fine point, because I lost all interest in roving for many moons.

From Cheyenne my family went to Richmond, Virginia. At this place I went to school and was brought up on McGuffey's Reader. This gave me a great idea of an Englishman. All I could see was a big Grenadier in a red coat chopping Americans into mince-meat.

From Virginia we migrated to Canada. Two years later we left for New York.

In New York I went through public school, and in the last grade I was expelled. I organized the boys of the class into a gang and we decided to mutiny against our teacher, a Miss Hall, but the principal of the school, Mr. Lyons, soon wiped out the mutiny and gave me another chance to make good. When I received my graduation diploma I breathed a sigh of thanksgiving.

From public school I went to Manual Training High school. The most notable thing I did there was to make left half back on the football team. My great hero was Richard Henry Dana, who wrote "Two Years Before the Mast." I devoured this book several times and then decided to run away and make the same trip, and did so.

### A Chance of Real Soldiering

Shortly after my return from the trip the Lusitania was sunk, and, like all Americans, I was pretty sore, and waited for the United States to get busy. As we all know that nothing happened.

I knew it was up to me to get over "on my own." I applied to the British consul, "camouflaging" as a Canadian, but it did not work. They told me to get up to Canada. I decided to pay my own way.

One day I met an officer of the Canadian army and he told me that if I did reach Canada I would have to stay in a training camp for at least six or seven months before being sent over. This did not suit me in the least. I was no "rookie" in my opinion I was a trained soldier.

I then decided to take matters into my own hands and go to England, and from there to France. I did not know how to get to England, but I arrived in London about ten-forty one night. The next morning before 11 o'clock I was a private in His Majesty's Imperial army, a soldier of the King. Then I realized that I was at last up against the real thing and I felt nervous and nervous through my pores. When you get out of civilian clothes, into uniform and close up to the fight, you do not want to fight as much as you did before. I told us that unforeseen circumstances never left me during my stay on the western front.

Over a year later I was so badly wounded that I was discharged, as "physically unfit for further war service" and came back to the old U. S. A.

got practice, we had an explosion in the after turret, which killed 34 men. I barely escaped with my life. In fact, I was smashed up a little and was sent to the Naval hospital at Portsmouth, Virginia.

My folks concluded that they had had about enough of my foolishness, and got me out of the Navy. I was highly incensed at this action, so enlisted in the 12th United States Cavalry, and inside of a year was promoted to the rank of Squadron Sergeant Major.

I happened to be fairly good at rough riding, or "Monkey Drill," and was sent with the Second Squadron to the Jamestown Exposition to give exhibitions in rough riding.

After three years I was discharged from the 12th Cavalry, and came home, but soon enlisted in the 11th United States Cavalry and did duty on the Mexican border during the first part of 1911. I was discharged at San Antonio, Texas, returned to New York, and went into business for myself. This was a distinct failure. I could not settle down so I applied for a position with a well-known detective agency, and after pounding my heels in the ante-room for several weeks, now and then being given a "shadow case," finally had the luck to go before the "Chief," and with four other men was sent down South on a "moonshine" case. I got in with a family of "moonshiners" and liked them very well; in fact I thought so much of them that when the time came to show them up I sort of went against the grain. I could not do it. It seemed like stealing candy from a baby. Of course this severed my connection with the detective agency, and I shed my tears.

I then applied for a position with the New York State Police. While with them I joined the Mounted Scouts of the 4th Regiment of New Jersey, and went through three maneuver camps.

Upon the expiration of my term of service, which was three years, I joined the Mounted Scouts of the 1st Regiment, New York.

Then the war broke out and I was all eagerness to get into the fight. I had been playing at soldiering, and at the time France was buying thousands of horses in the United States, and shipping them to France for the French army. Here was my chance at last. My detective experience stood me in good stead, and after a few days of maneuvering I landed a job to go over on a horse ship to try and find out why so many horses were dying on the passage over.

He had only one eye. Later on I found that he was our first mate, "One-eyed Gibson," a "Blue-Noser" from Nova Scotia, and a man whom I was not safe to trifle with. Without a word he stepped into the glory hole, grabbed my shoulder in a grip of steel, and yanked me out of my bunk into the icy water which was awash on the deck. This was my first introduction to him.

"Get out of that, you landlubber. There's no fire in the galley, and I want my tea on the bridge, and I want it now, or I'll put out your dead lights."

I meekly answered, "Yes, sir," and started to put on my wet socks. Seeing this action, he shouted, "Never mind that damned rigging. Get into the galley and get that fire alight."

My feet were blue with the cold and my teeth were chattering. I timidly asked, "Where are you?"

"With a look of contempt he answered, 'We're outside of Sandy Hook, bound south for the Horn, and she's blowing big guns.' Then he left.

I stepped out of my glory hole onto the deck. We were dipping our screws. The water was breaking over the weather side. On minute the after deck would appear like a steep hill in front of me, and a horrible churning sound would come from the racing propeller. Then the deck

was a month for the passage. For two days he was detailed to help me in the galley, and I lived the life of a prince. We nicknamed him "Monday" the day that he came on board. His real name was Charles Tasima Benn.

On the fourth day Monday, after peeling a bucket of spuds, while I was reading and smoking, he threw down his knife and with a cunning leer, in a commanding tone told me to get busy at the pump. He said that he wished to rest. I started in to "bulldoze" him, but he simply held his hand in my direction, fingers extended, and in a majestic voice informed me that he was

found that my duties were to peel spuds, wash pots and pans, and be a regular "fetch and carry" for the cook. My office hours were from six bells in the morning (9 o'clock) until four bells at night (3 o'clock). I was greasy and filthy at all times, having nothing but salt water to wash in, and this would not cut the grease. Bill had it much easier than I. I had murder in my heart and vowed to "jump ship" at the first port we put into.

After nine or ten days we came alongside at Castries, St. Lucia, British West Indies, to coal ship. At this port the men believed in woman suffrage. Long lines of half-naked black women, with huge baskets of coal on their heads, passed the forward gang plank, dumped their load of coal into the open bunkers, and

little old man came on board and was closeted with the captain for about an hour. When he came out he was staggering, and his eyes, if possible, were more bleary. The captain lined the crew up, and the consul, in a thick and stuttering voice, asked the crew if the boss had died from natural causes. Ninety per cent, of the men could not understand what he said, and a silence prevailed. At sea silence means consent. I butted in and said "No." I was standing next to the mate. I felt that gorilla-like hand of his pinching my back of my neck, and I nearly fainted. Then the consul went over the side into his boat, and was soon pulling for the shore. We lifted anchor and the port was left behind.

Half way up the coast we ran out of fresh water and had to drink condensed water from an old squeaky condensing engine. It was brackish and sickening. I would have sold my soul for one drink of clear, cold water. Monday became tyrannical and unbearable. He smeared me with black mud to devise some scheme to keep him in check.

Through listening to Monday's stories, I knew that he was very superstitious and believed in magic, or "zooi," as he called it.

Bill told him that my father in America was a great medicine man and that I was gifted with magic.

White loading guano on at Lobos, the Fourth Engineer was on a shooting trip and killed several huge pelicans. He skinned these and gave me one of the skins. Bill and I worked a tender carrying the bird, praying the bird fell on the plank and I picked it up and took it to my glory hole. It was in a dying condition. I told Bill that that night, about 10 o'clock, I would go aft on the poop deck with this pelican's skin down my back, and, when the mate smeared me with black mud to do a mystic dance. He was to take Monday and hide behind the ventilator, and while I was doing my wardance, he would explain to Monday that I was in communication with my father, the great American Medicine Man. He did this and it made quite a hit. The next morning Monday came to me, and, bowing low, requested a token, as he called it; a message from my father. I promised to give him one, but we were sure up against it. Then I thought of the little black bird in my glory hole, and the solution was at hand. I very solemnly informed Monday that at 8 o'clock that night I promised to give him a message to my father in the form of a little land bird. All day Monday kept away from me, adoration and awe in his eyes. Bill and I immediately repaired to the glory hole, and certainly took ten minutes to give him a message. About ten minutes to eight I put on my feathers and sneaked aft with the little bird, placed it on the steering gear, and commenced my mystic dance. I chanted a little song: "Oh, Father, greater than Medicine Man, I have desired for the esteemed friend of your son. Oh, Father, send me this token." Then, with a few mystic grunts, I beseeched Bill and Monday to come and receive the token. Monday came, trembling with awe, and I handed him the little black bird which was weakly gasping its last, but it saved the day for us. How we honored and respected that little bunch of black feathers. I don't know what Monday would do, or left him. The bird for over an hour, chanting in that weird, sing-song patois of the British West Indies. From that time on Monday was our slave.

Two days before reaching St. Lucia, the captain sent for us, and said that he knew that Bill and I had stowed away Monday. We, like a couple of fish, fell for this and admitted it, whereupon the captain, in coolly informed us that we had forfeited all pay and allowances due us for the entire voyage. The joke of it was that, under the board of trade laws, the "Cushko" had to go 200 miles out of her way to get to St. Lucia and put Monday ashore.

We dressed him in a long pair of white pants; the carpenter gave him a red vest; Bill placed a derby hat on his head and he went ashore in a small boat. When the boat returned we lifted anchor, and as St. Lucia again faded into the distance we could see a solitary little figure on the deck waving his white pants around his head. He had removed them upon reaching port. We felt a pang of regret as he faded out of sight.

After an uneventful trip we went into quarantine in New York harbor. At the first sight of the Statue of Liberty a rush of independence and patriotism surged through me, and I sat down on the hatchway and absolutely refused to work. The captain threatened to put me in double irons. I told him to go to hell, and do it; that I was a free American in a free American port, and I claimed the protection of the Stars and Stripes, and in accordance with my rights as a sailor, I demanded the consul's flag be hoisted at the foremast. The captain gave me a hard look but wilted.

The next afternoon at eight bells I landed in New York, free again. I was dressed in a pair of blue overalls, barefooted, a Panama hat on my head, black as a negro from soot, a red handkerchief around my neck, and wearing a white negligee shirt. On my left shoulder I had a small monkey, and in my right hand a wooden case with a parrot in it. In my pocket was \$4.40 in silver, but I did not care. I was again on terra firma with the Stars and Stripes floating above me.

I received a wonderful welcome at home, and was of the opinion that the hardships of my cruise were well worth enduring, in view of the reception I was receiving.

But of course all wonders die out in nine days, and mine sizzled out like a wet firecracker on the Fourth of July, and it was up to me to get busy and find something to do.

This ended my First Real Adventure.

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That night I exploded a bombshell in the night. After dessert had been served, puffed up with importance, I declared, "Well, I'm going to South America." A barrage of language, ferocious and around the table. This got me sore, and I shut up like a clam.

It was February, and very cold. About 7 o'clock that night a great storm came up and the streets were soon covered with sleet ice. I turned into bed with my clothes on. Bill was not to be bothered by the weather. He was pebbles against the window pane in my room. Every time I looked out into the street and saw that howling blizzard, a picture of a sea walking in a trough of the sea constantly came before me. I shivered, and my enthusiasm dropped to zero. I could not take my eyes away from the clock. It was an agony of intense waiting, similar to that when, later in the trenches, I kept looking at my wrist watch, waiting for 4 o'clock in the morning when we were to go "over the top" in a charge. Oh, how I wished that Bill would change his mind!

About five minutes to ten, crack! crack! came a couple of pebbles against the window pane. I started up like the crack of bullets on the western front. With my shoes in one hand and my grip in the other, I softly tip-toed downstairs, put on my shoes and heavy overcoat, and opened the front door. I was greeted by a ruck of wind, snow and sleet. Bill looked like a snow man.

We ploughed through the blizzard, got on a trolley car, and reached Erie Basin at a quarter to twelve, went up the gangplank and reported to the steward.

On Board The ship looked like an ice palace. Von

One of her the creaking of winches and the straining of cables, and could see dark forms sliding and cursing on the slippery decks under the glow of the cargo lights.

The steward greeting us very cordially and I thought him the funniest man I had ever met. Bill was shipped as second steward, and I got the billet of second cook.

My "glory hole" was aft on the main deck, while Bill slept amidships. I piled into a little two-by-four bunk and was soon fast asleep. I had a horrible dream: a giant had me by the heels and was swinging me around his head, trying to dash my brains out against the side of the ship. I awoke in terror. The "Glory Hole" seemed to be looping the loop, and I could hear heavy thuds as immense waves broke against the side of the ship, the water hissing and rushing around the port hole. Reaching for the electric button I turned on the switch. An awful mess met my eyes. The deck of my room was awash. The grip and all my belongings, which I had unpacked before turning in, were awashing and washing on the deck. I was now in his corner, now in that. The ship was rolling like a log in the trough of the sea. I held on to the sides of my bunk in terror. A wave would smash against my door and water would pour in through the cracks. I felt deathly sick, and I thought I was going to die. I was experiencing my first touch of seasickness.

About six bells in the morning (3 o'clock) the door opened, and there standing in the opening was a huge Swede, encased in oilskins. The icy blast sent a cold shiver through me. I wondered what he wanted, but did not wonder long.

"You bane get tea and toast on the bridge for mate, damn quick." I was bewildered. The door slammed and once again I was alone. Fifteen minutes must have passed when the door opened again and in rushed the toughest-looking seamen I have ever seen.

My First Real Adventure

But to get to my first real adventure, I was in Public School No. 18. I had three chums: Jim Fleaming, and "Charlie" Unger.

Bill was full of wild ideas and schemes. He had the "get-rich-quick" mania. About every two weeks he would call us aside and in a mysterious and important manner carefully unfold some daring scheme to get rich quick, giving his personal guarantee that it could not fail. At first we were very enthusiastic over his schemes and wanted to go in "with both feet," and would carefully work out the details of how to proceed when bang! Bill would introduce another project absolutely different from the preceding one. When we asked him what became of his wonderful proposition of two weeks ago, he unblushingly told us that unforeseen circumstances which no one could prevent, had interfered. Then he would unroll another wild dream of fortune. And so it went: one scheme after another vanishing in smoke, until we became very skeptical. Personally, I had no faith in any of Bill's day dreams, but I admired, and perhaps envied, his spirit of adventure; so at last I decided that I would take a chance, success or no success.

One night Bill came around to the house with four tickets for a blood and thunder war play entitled "Cuba's Vow." His brother was playing the villain. This play greatly impressed me; in fact, from the first act to the

last the footlights were gushing blood, love and adventure—and rotten acting. Bill's brother was awful.

Bill was a pretty good judge of human nature. He had taken us to this play to get us worked up to a pitch of enthusiasm, and thus getting us in the proper frame of mind, he could unroll his latest scheme.

That night, after the show, he proposed a trip to South America, which took our breath away. We were to run away and ship on a tramp steamer, for a passage of about nine months. With the money thus earned we were to equip ourselves and start out for Porto Rico, Costa Rica, and go into the coffee plantation business. We all felt for this and took a solemn vow to stick. The scheme especially appealed to me because here was my chance to follow Dana in his "Two Years Before the Mast."

The next day, after sleeping it over, Charlie and Jim decided that there was more money in New York, and refused to go. I admit I had a sinking sensation in the pit of my stomach when I viewed the prospects of the scheme. I was light, but I stuck. Then Bill and I made a tour of the docks in New York, trying to find the ship we wanted. We fell in with several "boarding masters." These men viewed the waterfront from large cities and are nothing but bloodsuckers preying on sailors. One of these parasites took us on board an old tramp steamer, lying in Erie Basin, called the "Cushko." For a moment the steward, "Jim Juice," John Royce, Minnie, with the emphasis on the hyphen. The wonderful tale of ease, luxury and "getting paid for seeing the world" stuff that the steward and the boarding master unrolled before our eager eyes carried us into the seventh heaven of expectation. This was 5 o'clock in the afternoon. The ship was to sail at 3-10 the following morning, but they did not tell us this. The steward said that we were just the two that he wanted, there being vacancies on the ship for second steward and second cook. He suggested that we sleep on the ship that night, and then in the morning, after seeing what it was like, we could go home and decide whether we wanted to ship or not. I demurred at this, because I had to go home first, so he gave Bill and me permission to do, but said we had to get back at midnight, and hurry home and get on the ship. I packed a grip with my belongings.

That night I exploded a bombshell in the night. After dessert had been served, puffed up with importance, I declared, "Well, I'm going to South America." A barrage of language, ferocious and around the table. This got me sore, and I shut up like a clam.

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About five minutes to ten, crack! crack! came a couple of pebbles against the window pane. I started up like the crack of bullets on the western front. With my shoes in one hand and my grip in the other, I softly tip-toed downstairs, put on my shoes and heavy overcoat, and opened the front door. I was greeted by a ruck of wind, snow and sleet. Bill looked like a snow man.

We ploughed through the blizzard, got on a trolley car, and reached Erie Basin at a quarter to twelve, went up the gangplank and reported to the steward.

On Board The ship looked like an ice palace. Von

One of her the creaking of winches and the straining of cables, and could see dark forms sliding and cursing on the slippery decks under the glow of the cargo lights.

The steward greeting us very cordially and I thought him the funniest man I had ever met. Bill was shipped as second steward, and I got the billet of second cook.

My "glory hole" was aft on the main deck, while Bill slept amidships. I piled into a little two-by-four bunk and was soon fast asleep. I had a horrible dream: a giant had me by the heels and was swinging me around his head, trying to dash my brains out against the side of the ship. I awoke in terror. The "Glory Hole" seemed to be looping the loop, and I could hear heavy thuds as immense waves broke against the side of the ship, the water hissing and rushing around the port hole. Reaching for the electric button I turned on the switch. An awful mess met my eyes. The deck of my room was awash. The grip and all my belongings, which I had unpacked before turning in, were awashing and washing on the deck. I was now in his corner, now in that. The ship was rolling like a log in the trough of the sea. I held on to the sides of my bunk in terror. A wave would smash against my door and water would pour in through the cracks. I felt deathly sick, and I thought I was going to die. I was experiencing my first touch of seasickness.

About six bells in the morning (3 o'clock) the door opened, and there standing in the opening was a huge Swede, encased in oilskins. The icy blast sent a cold shiver through me. I wondered what he wanted, but did not wonder long.

"You bane get tea and toast on the bridge for mate, damn quick." I was bewildered. The door slammed and once again I was alone. Fifteen minutes must have passed when the door opened again and in rushed the toughest-looking seamen I have ever seen.

My First Real Adventure

But to get to my first real adventure, I was in Public School No. 18. I had three chums: Jim Fleaming, and "Charlie" Unger.

Bill was full of wild ideas and schemes. He had the "get-rich-quick" mania. About every two weeks he would call us aside and in a mysterious and important manner carefully unfold some daring scheme to get rich quick, giving his personal guarantee that it could not fail. At first we were very enthusiastic over his schemes and wanted to go in "with both feet," and would carefully work out the details of how to proceed when bang! Bill would introduce another project absolutely different from the preceding one. When we asked him what became of his wonderful proposition of two weeks ago, he unblushingly told us that unforeseen circumstances which no one could prevent, had interfered. Then he would unroll another wild dream of fortune. And so it went: one scheme after another vanishing in smoke, until we became very skeptical. Personally, I had no faith in any of Bill's day dreams, but I admired, and perhaps envied, his spirit of adventure; so at last I decided that I would take a chance, success or no success.

One night Bill came around to the house with four tickets for a blood and thunder war play entitled "Cuba's Vow." His brother was playing the villain. This play greatly impressed me; in fact, from the first act to the

last the footlights were gushing blood, love and adventure—and rotten acting. Bill's brother was awful.

Bill was a pretty good judge of human nature. He had taken us to this play to get us worked up to a pitch of enthusiasm, and thus getting us in the proper frame of mind, he could unroll his latest scheme.

That night, after the show, he proposed a trip to South America, which took our breath away. We were to run away and ship on a tramp steamer, for a passage of about nine months. With the money thus earned we were to equip ourselves and start out for Porto Rico, Costa Rica, and go into the coffee plantation business. We all felt for this and took a solemn vow to stick. The scheme especially appealed to me because here was my chance to follow Dana in his "Two Years Before the Mast."

The next day, after sleeping it over, Charlie and Jim decided that there was more money in New York, and refused to go. I admit I had a sinking sensation in the pit of my stomach when I viewed the prospects of the scheme. I was light, but I stuck. Then Bill and I made a tour of the docks in New York, trying to find the ship we wanted. We fell in with several "boarding masters." These men viewed the waterfront from large cities and are nothing but bloodsuckers preying on sailors. One of these parasites took us on board an old tramp steamer, lying in Erie Basin, called the "Cushko." For a moment the steward, "Jim Juice," John Royce, Minnie, with the emphasis on the hyphen. The wonderful tale of ease, luxury and "getting paid for seeing the world" stuff that the steward and the boarding master unrolled before our eager eyes carried us into the seventh heaven of expectation. This was 5 o'clock in the afternoon. The ship was to sail at 3-10 the following morning, but they did not tell us this. The steward said that we were just the two that he wanted, there being vacancies on the ship for second steward and second cook. He suggested that we sleep on the ship that night, and then in the morning, after seeing what it was like, we could go home and decide whether we wanted to ship or not. I demurred at this, because I had to go home first, so he gave Bill and me permission to do, but said we had to get back at midnight, and hurry home and get on the ship. I packed a grip with my belongings.

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