



# "OVER THE TOP"

## AN AMERICAN SOLDIER WHO WENT

### ARTHUR GUY EMPEY

MACHINE GUNNER, SERVING IN FRANCE

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

**Synopsis.**—Fired by the sinking of the Lusitania, with the loss of American lives, Arthur Guy Empey, an American living in Jersey City, goes to England and 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 first hears the sound of big guns and makes the acquaintance of "cooties." 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 West in that charge, and were lying "somewhere in France" with a little wooden cross at their heads. 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. Thirty-two men of the battalion, including myself, were sent to L—, where we went 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 of the British army.

It all depends where you are as to what you are called. In France they call you a "bomber" and give you medals, while in neutral countries they call you an anarchist and give you "life."

From the very start the Germans were well equipped with effective bombs and trained bomb throwers, but the English army was as 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 discouragements this branch of the service suffered before they could meet the Germans on an equal footing. (Pacifists and small army people in the U. S. please read with care.) The first English expeditionary forces had no bombs at all, but had clicked a lot of casualties from those thrown by the Boches. One bright morning someone higher up had an idea and issued an order detailing two men from each platoon to go to bombing school to learn the duties of a bomber and how to manufacture bombs. Noncommissioned 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 make "jam tins."

Previously an order had been issued for all ranks to save empty jam tins for the manufacture of bombs. A professor of bombing would sit on the fire step in the front trench with the remainder of his section crowding around to see him work.

On his left would be a pile of empty and rusty jam tins, while beside him on the fire step would be a miscellaneous assortment of material used in the manufacture of the "jam tins."

Tommy would stoop down, get an empty "jam tin," take a handful of clayey mud from the parapet, and line the inside of the tin with this substance. Then he would reach over, pick up his detonator and explosive, and insert them in the tin, fuse protruding. On the fire step would be a pile of fragments of shell, shrapnel balls, bits of iron, nails, etc.—anything that was hard enough to send over to Fritz; he would scoop up a handful of this junk and put it in the bomb. Perhaps one of the platoon would ask him what he did this for, and he would explain that when the bomb exploded these bits would fly about and kill or wound any German hit by same; the questioner would immediately pull a button off his tunic and hand it to the bomb maker with, "Well, blame me, send this over as a souvenir," or another Tommy would volunteer an old 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. Then perhaps he would tightly wrap wire around the outside of the tin, and the bomb was ready to send over to Fritz with Tommy's compliments.

A piece of wood about four inches wide had been issued. This was to be strapped on the left forearm by means of two leather straps and was like the side of a match box; it was called a "striker." There was a tip like the head of a match on the fuse 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 longer. Some of the fuses issued in those days would burn down in a second or two, while others would "sizz" for a week before exploding. Back in Blighty the munition workers weren't quite up to snuff, the way they are now. If the fuse took a notion to burn too quickly they generally buried the bomb maker next day. So making bombs could not be called a "cushy" or safe job.

After making several bombs the professor instructs the platoon in throwing them. He takes a "jam tin" from the fire step, trembling a little, because it is nervous work, especially when new at it, lights the fuse on his striker. The fuse begins to "sizz" and sputter and a spiral of smoke, like that from a smoldering fag, rises from it. The platoon splits in two and ducks around the traverse nearest to them. They don't like the looks and sound of the burning fuse. When that fuse begins to smoke and "sizz" you want to say good-by to it as soon as possible, so Tommy with all his might chucks it over the top and crouches against the parapet, waiting for the explosion.

Lots of times in bombing the "jam tin" would be picked up by the Germans, before it exploded, and thrown back at Tommy with dire results.

After a lot of men went West in this manner an order was issued, reading something like this:

"To all ranks in the British army: After igniting the fuse and before



Throwing Hand Grenades.

throwing the jam-tin bomb, count slowly one! two! three!"

This in order to give the fuse time enough to burn down, so that the bomb would explode before the Germans could throw it back.

Tommy read the order—he reads them all, but after he ignited the fuse and it began to smoke—orders were forgotten, and away she went in record time and back she came to the further discomfort of the thrower.

Then another order was issued to count, "one hundred! two hundred! three hundred!" But Tommy didn't care if the order read to count up to a thousand by quarters, he was going to get rid of that "jam tin," because from experience he had learned not to trust it.

When the powers that be realized that they could not change Tommy they decided to change the type of bomb and did so—substituting the "hair brush," the "cricket ball," and later the Mills bomb.

The standard bomb used in the British army is the "Mills." It is about the shape and size of a large lemon. Although not actually a lemon, Fritz insists that it is; perhaps he judges it by the havoc caused by its explosion. The Mills bomb is made of steel, the outside of which is corrugated into 48 small squares, which, upon the explosion of the bomb, scatter in a wide area, wounding or killing any Fritz who is unfortunate enough to be hit by one of the flying fragments.

Although a very destructive and efficient bomb the "Mills" has the con-

fidence of the thrower, in that he knows it will not explode until released from his grip.

It is a mechanical device, with a lever, fitted into a slot at the top, which extends half way around the circumference and is held in place at the bottom by a fixing pin. In this pin there is a small metal ring, for the purpose of extracting the pin when ready to throw.

You do not throw a bomb the way a baseball is thrown, because, when in a narrow trench, your hand is liable to strike against the parapet, traverse or parapet, and then down goes the bomb, and, in a couple of seconds or so, up goes Tommy.

In throwing, the bomb and lever are grasped in the right hand, the left foot is advanced, knee stiff, about one and a half its length to the front, while the right leg, knee bent, is carried slightly to the right. The left arm is extended at an angle of 45 degrees, pointing in the direction the bomb is to be thrown. This position is similar to that of shot putting, only that the right arm is extended downward. Then you hurl the bomb from you with an overhead bowling motion, the same as in cricket, throwing it fairly high in the air, this in order to give the fuse a chance to burn down so that when the bomb lands, it immediately explodes and gives the Germans no time to scamper out of its range or to return it.

As the bomb leaves your hand, the lever, by means of a spring, is projected into the air and falls harmlessly to the ground a few feet in 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, burns down and sets off the detonator, charged with fulminate of mercury, which explodes the main charge of ammonal.

The average British soldier is not an expert at throwing; it is a new game to him, therefore the Canadians and Americans, who have played baseball from the kindergarten up, take naturally to bomb throwing and excel in this act. A six-foot English bomber will stand in awed silence when he sees a little five-foot-nothing Canadian outdistance his throw by several yards. I have read a few war stories of bombing, where baseball pitchers curved their bombs when throwing them, but a pitcher who can do this would make "Christy" Mathewson look like a piker, and is losing valuable time playing in the European War bush league, when he would be able to set the "big league" on fire.

We had a cushy time while at this school. In fact, to us it was a regular vacation, and we were very sorry when one morning the adjutant ordered us to report at headquarters for transportation and rations to return to our units up the line.

Arriving at our section, the boys once again tendered us the glad mitt, but looked askance at us out of the corners of their eyes. They could not conceive, as they expressed it, how a man could be such a blinking idiot as to join the Suicide club. I was beginning to feel sorry that I had become a member of said club, and my life to me appeared doubly precious.

Now that I was a sure-enough bomber I was praying for peace and hoping that my services as such would not be required.

#### CHAPTER XIII.

##### My First Official Bath.

Right behind our rest billet was a large creek about ten feet deep and twenty feet across, and it was a habit of the company to avail themselves of an opportunity to take a swim and at the same time thoroughly wash themselves and their underwear when on their own. We were having a spell of hot weather, and these baths to us were a luxury. The Tommies would splash around in the water and then come out and sit in the sun and have what they termed a "shirt hunt." At first we tried to drown the "cooties," but they also seemed to enjoy the bath.

One Sunday morning the whole section was in the creek and we were having a gay time, when the sergeant major appeared on the scene. He came to the edge of the creek and ordered: "Come out of it. Get your equipment on, 'drill order,' and fall in for bath parade. Look lively, my hearties. You have only got fifteen minutes." A howl of indignation from the creek greeted this order, but out we came. Discipline is discipline. We lined up in front of our billet with rifles and bayonets (why you need rifles and bayonets to take a bath gets me), a full quota of ammunition, and our tin hats. Each man had a piece of soap and a towel. After an eight-kilo march along a dusty road, with an occasional shell whistling overhead, we arrived at a little squat frame building upon the bank of a creek. Nailed over the door of this building was a large sign which read "Divisional Baths." In a wooden shed in the rear we could hear a wheezy old engine pumping water.

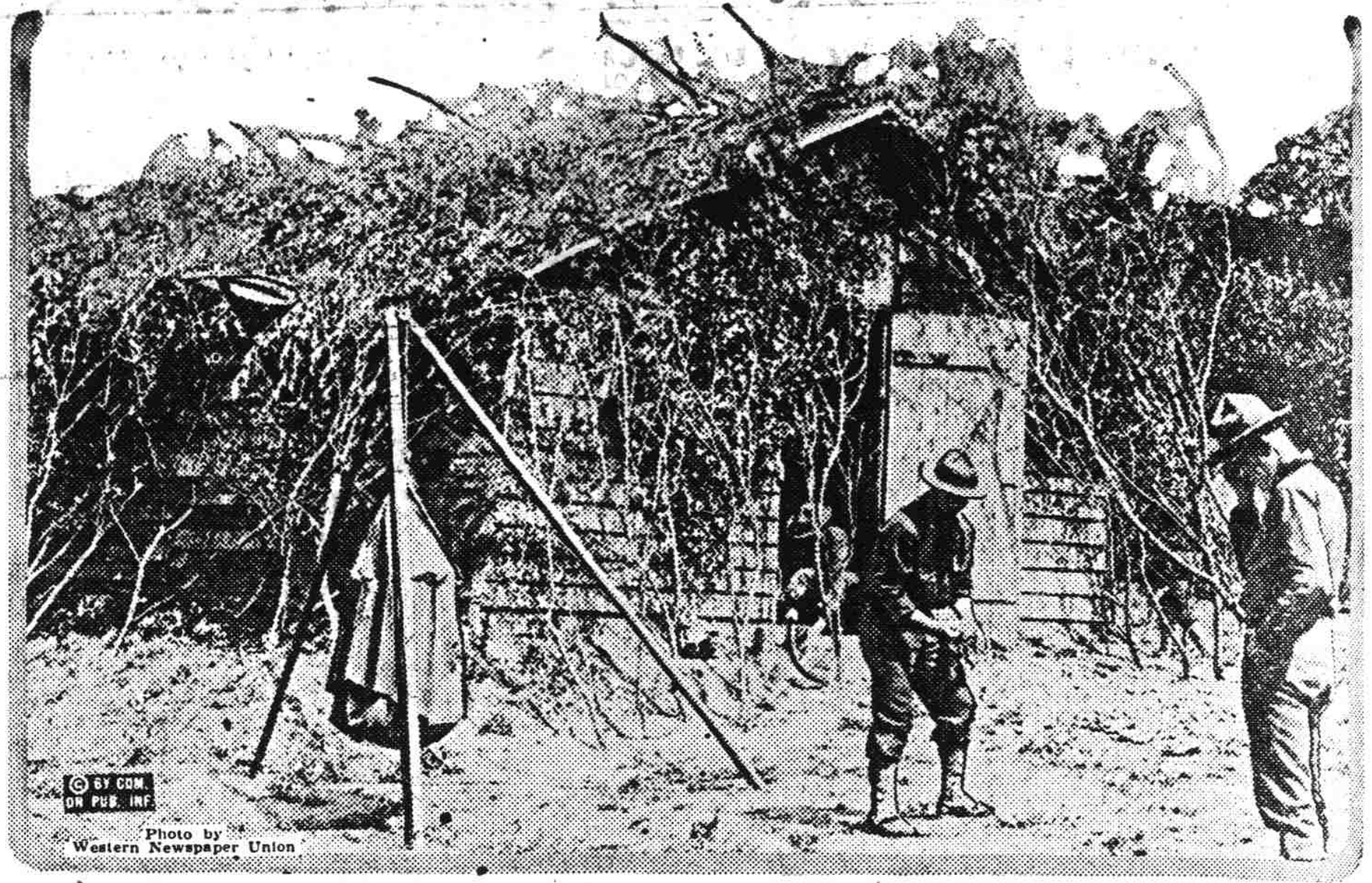
The joys of the bath are depicted by Empey in the next installment.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

##### Great Writers Lazy.

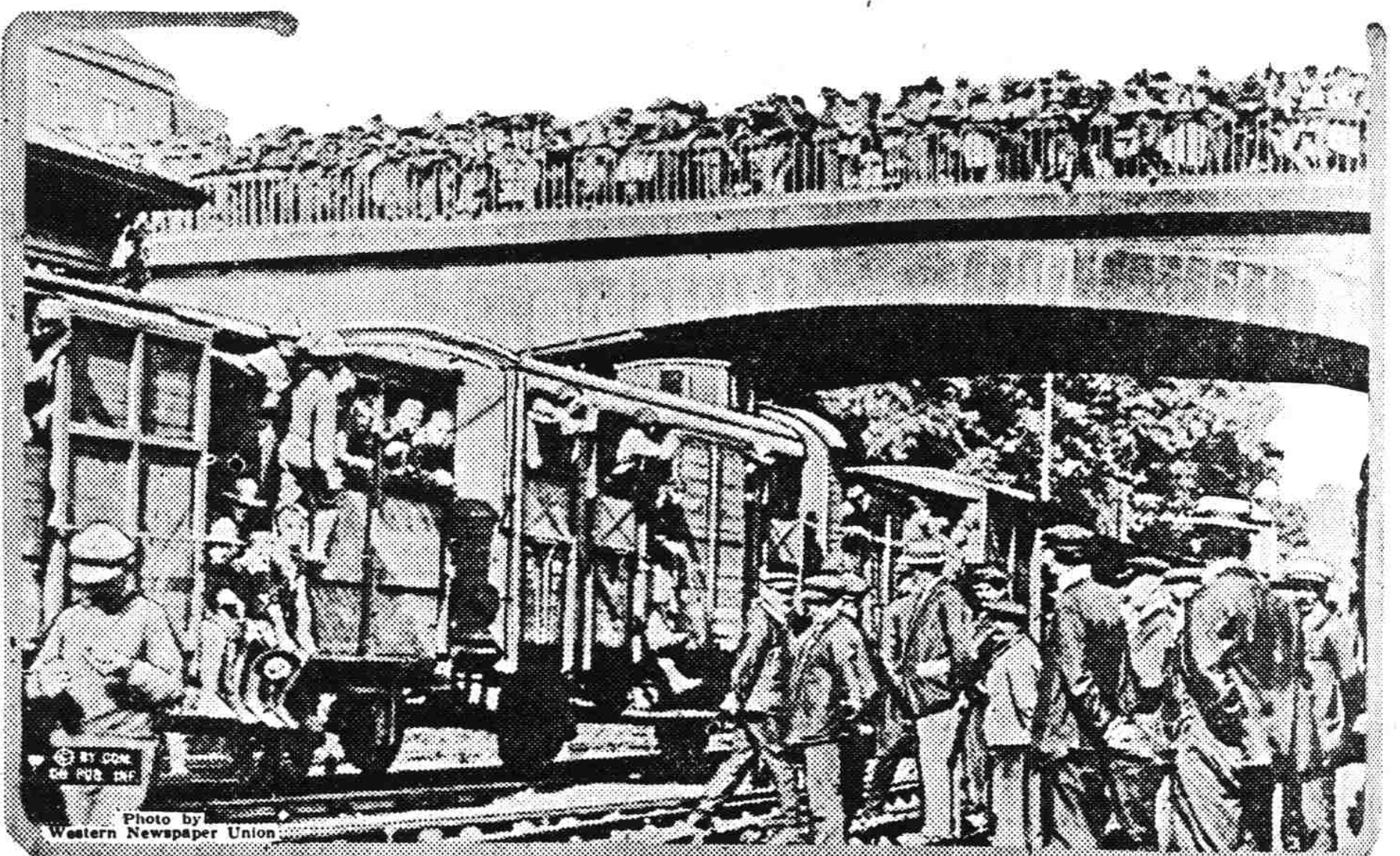
Shelley had an indolent vein. He was very fond of the water, and many of his finest poems were composed as he idled at his ease in a boat. He made the best of his short life, however, and that cannot be said for Coleridge, who seemed to be afflicted with that lack of will to work which some people call laziness. He had one of the greatest minds, but he left even his finest poems mere fragments.

#### CAMOUFLAGED QUARTERS OF MARINES IN FRANCE



The huts of the American marines now training behind the lines in France have been covered with brushwood to keep them from being seen by enemy flyers.

#### FRENCH VILLAGERS GREET OUR SOLDIERS



The inhabitants of the villages of France turn out in full force when news of the arrival of our troops across the seas spreads through the town and crowds of enthusiastic men, women and children greet our boys at every station on the trip from the seaport to their training camps.

#### PLENTY OF BREAD IN NAVY



A plentitude of everything is one of the rules of the navy. This fellow is hustling an armful of bread from the ovens.

##### Puts His Ship First.

In the moment of danger the first thought that comes to the real sailor-man is to save his ship. Personal safety is always a matter of secondary consideration. One morning when the bottom blow valve of a boiler was carried away on a man-of-war, Christopher Smith, a machinist's mate, immediately realized the danger and knew what to do. He was on duty in the engine room when the accident occurred. The room quickly filled with escaping steam. Unheeding this, Smith fought his way through the hot cloud and, reaching the fire-room, hauled the fires and kept the boiler from bursting. His gallantry saved his ship from serious damage and the navy department commended his action. Smith enlisted in the navy in April, 1903, at Erie, Pa.

##### Mower That Cuts Neglected Lawns.

A lawn mower having horizontal knives that will cut grass or weeds, regardless of length, is described and illustrated in the February Popular Mechanics Magazine. A completely denuded path is secured with one operation. The position of the cutting members permits the cutting of a lawn flush with trees or other obstructions. All stems and grass are thrown to the rear of the knives, where a basket may be attached.

#### JAPANESE WOMEN AID RED CROSS



Forty-two Japanese women of New York have formed a Red Cross auxiliary to help this country win the war.

#### THIS MORTAR SHOTS BARBED WIRE



Here is a new kind of a mortar. Instead of throwing shells it throws barbed wire. It can throw five rolls of barbed wire into enemy trenches or in front of advancing troops without being recharged.