

# "OVER THE TOP"

By An American Arthur Guy Empey  
Soldier Who Went Machine Gunner, Serving in France

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## EMPEY GOES "OVER THE TOP" FOR THE FIRST TIME AND HAS DESPERATE HAND-TO-HAND FIGHT

**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.

### CHAPTER X—Continued.

We had a sergeant in our battalion named Warren. He was on duty with his platoon in the fire trench one afternoon when orders came up from the rear that he had been granted seven days' leave for Blighty, and would be relieved at five o'clock to proceed to England.

He was tickled to death at these welcome tidings and regaled his more or less envious mates beside him on the fire step with the good times in store for him. He figured it out that in two days' time he would arrive at Waterloo station, London, and then—seven days' bliss!

At about five minutes to five he started to fidget with his rifle, and then suddenly springing up on the fire step with a muttered, "I'll send over a couple of souvenirs to Fritz so that he'll miss me when I leave," he stuck his rifle over the top and fired two shots when "crack" went a bullet and he tumbled off the step, fell into the mud at the bottom of the trench, and lay still in a huddled heap with a bullet hole in his forehead.

At about the time he expected to arrive at Waterloo station he was laid to rest in a little cemetery behind the lines. He had gone to Blighty.

In the trenches one can never tell—it is not safe to plan very far ahead.

After "stand down" the men sit on the fire step or repair to their respective dugouts and wait for the "rum issue" to materialize. Immediately following the rum comes breakfast, brought up from the rear. Sleeping is then in order unless some special work turns up.

Around 12:30 dinner shows up. When this is eaten the men try to amuse themselves until "tea" appears at about four o'clock, then "stand to" and they carry on as before.

While in rest billets Tommy gets up about six in the morning, washes up, answers roll call, is inspected by his platoon officer, and has breakfast. At 5:45 he parades (drills) with his company or goes on fatigue according to the orders which have been read out by the orderly sergeant the night previous.

Between 11:30 and noon he is dismissed, has his dinner and is "on his own" for the remainder of the day, unless he has clicked for a digging or working party, and so it goes on from day to day, always "looping the loop" and looking forward to peace and Blighty.

Sometimes, while engaged in a "cootie" hunt, you think, "Strange to say, but it is a fact, while Tommy is searching his shirt serious thoughts come to him. Many a time, when performing this operation, I have tried to figure out the outcome of the war and what will happen to me.

My thoughts generally ran in this channel:

Will I emerge safely from the next attack? If I do will I skin through the following one, and so on? While your mind is wandering into the future it is likely to be rudely brought to earth by a Tommy interrupting with, "What's good for rheumatism?"

Then you have something else to think of. Will you come out of this war crippled and tied into knots with rheumatism, caused by the wet and mud of trenches and dugouts? You give it up as a bad job and generally saunter over to the nearest estaminet to drown your moody forebodings in a glass of sickening French beer or to try your luck at the always present game of "house." You can hear the sing-song voice of a Tommy droning out the numbers as he extracts the little squares of cardboard from the bag between his feet.

### CHAPTER XI.

#### Over the Top.

On my second trip to the trenches our officer was making his rounds of inspection, and we received the cheerful news that at four in the morning we were to go over the top and take the German front-line trench. My heart turned to lead. Then the officer carried on with his instructions. To the best of my memory I recall them as follows: "At eleven a wiring party will go out in front and cut lanes through our barbed wire for the passage of troops in the morning. At two o'clock our artillery will open up with an intense bombardment, which will last until four. Upon the lifting of the barrage the first of the three waves will go over." Then he left. Some of the Tommies, first getting permission from the sergeant, went into the machine

gunners' dugout and wrote letters home, saying that in the morning they were going over the top, and also that if the letters reached their destination it would mean that the writer had been killed.

These letters were turned over to the captain with instructions to mail same in the event of the writer's being killed. Some of the men made out their wills in their pay books, under the caption, "Will and Last Testament."

Then the nerve-racking wait commenced. Every now and then I would glance at the dial of my wrist watch and was surprised to see how fast the minutes passed by. About five minutes to two I got nervous waiting for our guns to open up. I could not take my eyes from my watch. I crouched against the parapet and strained my muscles in a deathlike grip upon my rifle. As the hands on my watch showed two o'clock a blinding red flare lighted up the sky in our rear, then thunder, intermixed with a sharp, whistling sound in the air over our heads. The shells from our guns were speeding on their way toward the German lines. With one accord the men sprang up on the fire step and looked over the top in the direction of the German trenches. A line of bursting shells lighted up No Man's Land. The din was terrific and the ground trembled. Then, high above our heads we could hear a sighing moan. Our big boys behind the line had opened up and 9.2's and 15-inch shells commenced dropping into the German lines. The flash of the guns behind the lines, the scream of the shells through the air, and the flare of them, bursting, was a spectacle that put Pain's greatest display into the shade. The constant pup, pup, of German machine guns and an occasional rattle of rifle firing gave me the impression of a huge audience applauding the work of the batteries.

Our 18-pounders were destroying the German barbed wire, while the heavier stuff was demolishing their trenches and bashing in dugouts or funk holes. Then Fritz got busy.

Their shells went screaming overhead, aimed in the direction of the flares from our batteries. Trench mortars started dropping "Minnies" in our front line. We clicked several casualties. Then they suddenly ceased. Our artillery had taped or silenced them.

During the bombardment you could almost read a newspaper in our trench. Sometimes in the flare of a shell-burst a man's body would be silhouetted against the parados of the trench and it appeared like a huge monster. You could hardly hear yourself think. When an order was to be passed down the trench you had to yell it, using your hands as a funnel into the ear of the man sitting next to you on the fire step. In about twenty minutes a generous rum issue was doled out. After drinking the rum, which tasted like varnish and sent a shudder through your frame, you wondered why they made you wait until the lifting of the barrage before going over. At ten minutes to four word was passed down, "Ten minutes to go!" Ten minutes to live! We were shivering all over. My legs felt as if they were asleep. Then word was passed down: "First wave get on and near the scaling ladders."

Before a charge Tommy is the politest of men. There is never any pushing or crowding to be first up these ladders. We crouched around the base of the ladders waiting for the word to go over. I was sick and faint, and was puffing away at an unlighted fag. Then came the word, "Three minutes to go; upon the lifting of the barrage and on the blast of the whistles, 'Over the top with the best o' luck and give them hell.'" The famous phrase of the western front. The Jonah phrase of the western front. To Tommy it means if you are lucky enough to come back you will be minus an arm or a leg.

I glanced again at my wrist watch. We all wore them and you could hardly call us "sissies" for doing so. It was a minute to four. I could see the hand move to the twelve, then a dead silence. It hurt. Everyone looked up to see what had happened, but not for long. Sharp whistle blasts rang out along the trench, and with a cheer the men scrambled up the ladders. The bullets were cracking overhead, and occasionally a machine gun would rip and tear the top of the sandbag parapet. How I got up that ladder I will never know. The first ten feet out in front was agony. Then we passed

through lanes in our barbed wire. I knew I was running, but could feel no motion below the waist. Patches on the ground seemed to float to the rear as if I were on a treadmill and scenery was rushing past me. The Germans had put a barrage of shrapnel across No Man's Land, and you could hear the pieces slap the ground about you.

After I had passed our barbed wire and gotten into No Man's Land a Tommy about fifteen feet to my right front turned around and looking in my direction, put his hand to his mouth and yelled something which I could not make out on account of the noise from the bursting shells. Then he coughed, stumbled, pitched forward and lay still. His body seemed to float to the rear of me. I could hear sharp cracks in the air about me. These were caused by passing rifle bullets. Frequently, to my right and left, little spurts of dirt would rise into the air and a ricochet bullet would whine on its way. If a Tommy should see one of these little spurts in front of him, he would tell the nurse about it later. The crossing of No Man's Land remains a blank to me.

Men on my right and left would stumble and fall. Some would try to get up, while others remained huddled and motionless. Then smashed-up barbed wire came into view and seemed carried on a tide to the rear. Suddenly, in front of me loomed a bashed-in trench about four feet wide. Queer-looking forms like mud turtles were scrambling up its wall. One of these forms seemed to slip and then rolled to the bottom of the trench. I leaped across this intervening space. The man to my left seemed to pause in midair, then pitched head down into the German trench. I laughed out loud in my delirium. Upon alighting on the other side of the trench I came to with a sudden jolt. Right in front of me loomed a giant form with a rifle which looked about ten feet long, on the end of which seemed seven bayonets. These flashed in the air in front of me. Then through my mind flashed the admonition of our bayonet instructor back in Blighty. He had said, "whenever you get in a charge and run your bayonet up to the hilt into a German the Fritz will fall. Perhaps your rifle will be wrenched from your grasp. Do not waste time, if the bayonet is fouled in his equipment, by putting your foot on his stomach and tugging at the rifle to extricate the bayonet. Simply press the trigger and the bullet will free it." In my present situation this was the logic, but for the life of me I could not remember how he had told me to get my bayonet into the German. To me this was the paramount issue. I closed my eyes and lunged forward. My rifle was torn from my hands. I must have gotten the German because he had disappeared. About twenty feet to my left front was a huge Prussian nearly six feet four inches in height, a fine specimen of physical manhood. The bayonet from his rifle was missing, but he clutched the barrel in both hands and was swinging the butt around his head. I could almost hear the swish of the butt passing through the air. Three little Tommies were engaged with him. They looked like pigmies alongside of the Prussian. The Tommy on the left was gradually circling to the rear of his opponent. It was a funny sight to see them duck the swinging butt and try to jab him at the same time. The Tommy nearest me received the butt of the German's rifle in a smashing blow below the right temple. It smashed his head like an eggshell. He pitched forward on his side and a convulsive shudder ran through his body. Meanwhile the other Tommy had gained the rear of the Prussian. Suddenly about four inches of bayonet protruded from the throat of the Prussian soldier, who staggered forward and fell. I will never forget the look of blank astonishment that came over his face.

Then something hit me in the left shoulder and my left side went numb. It felt as if a hot poker was being driven through me. I felt no pain—just a sort of nervous shock. A bayonet had pierced me from the rear. I fell backward on the ground, but was not unconscious, because I could see dim objects moving around me. Then a flash of light in front of my eyes and unconsciousness. Something had hit me on the head. I have never found out what it was.

I dreamed I was being tossed about in an open boat on a heaving sea and opened my eyes. The moon was shining. I was on a stretcher being carried down one of our communication trenches. At the advanced first-aid post my wounds were dressed, and then I was put into an ambulance and sent to one of the base hospitals. The wounds in my shoulder and head were not serious and in six weeks I had rejoined my company for service in the front line.

Empey joins the "Suicide club." The thrilling details are told in the next installment.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

## IMPROVED UNIFORM INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

(By E. O. SELLERS, Acting Director of the Sunday School Course of the Moody Bible Institute, Chicago.)  
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### LESSON FOR APRIL 7.

#### JESUS SETS MEN FREE.

**LESSON TEXT**—Mark 7:1-37.  
**GOLDEN TEXT**—If the son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.—John 8:36.

**DEVOTIONAL READING**—Psa. 72:1-17.  
**ADDITIONAL MATERIAL FOR TEACHERS**—Matt. 15:1-31. II Cor. 3:17, 18; Gal. 5:1-25.

**PRIMARY AND JUNIOR TOPIC**—Jesus and the deaf man.  
**MEMORY VERSE**—He hath done all things well, he maketh even the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak.—Mark 7:37.  
**SENIOR AND ADULT TOPIC**—Christian liberty.

This lesson deals with the last of those four events which mark the crisis in the life of our Lord at Capernaum. It occurred just before the third period of his Galilean ministry and the time of his final departure for Jerusalem. We have seen what the attitude of Jesus was toward the law of his nation. In this lesson we see his attitude toward the rabbinical traditions of the people which were the opinions of men and not the law of God. Just so many today look upon the forms and ceremonies of the church as being verily the law of God. Moreover, these traditions were made a pretext whereby men evaded the law. So today we find men very religious and punctilious in their churchly duties, who fail miserably in their application of the moral code to conduct. The analysis falls into four general divisions: One, the accusation, (vv. 1-5); two, the answer, (vv. 6-13); three, the application, (vv. 14-23); and four, the illustration, (vv. 24-37).

**I. The Accusation.** (vv. 1-5). The growing hatred of the Pharisees, led them to make long journeys from Jerusalem that they might spy on Jesus and find a pretext for accusation. While they were studying him, they revealed their ideas of the kingdom of God. They took special notice that the disciples of Jesus ate without washing their hands. We must not understand this to mean so much the removal of defilement, as the neglect of a ceremonial observance over which the Pharisees were punctilious, (vv. 3, 4). Verses three and four illuminate certain traditions to which the Jews adhered tenaciously. Thus exemplified we can see that their ideas of man's relation to God were largely a matter of external ceremony. Purity to them was an outward matter largely governed by the traditions of men, (v. 4).

**II. The Answer.** (v. 6-13). The answer of Jesus reveals the very opposite ideal. He begins by calling the Pharisees hypocrites. A hypocrite is a play actor—one who hides behind a mask. Applying the prophecy of Isaiah, Jesus plainly tells the Pharisees that they are hiding their true character behind the mask of ceremonial cleansing. Such play acting is but a poor imitation of the real heart condition demanded of God, (Psa. 51:10). Their hearts were far from God, even though with their lips they professed to serve him. The love we express to God consists not in ritualistic worship, but in doing his will from the heart.

**III. The Application.** (v. 14-23). Jesus takes advantage of this discussion, and, turning to the multitude, upon whom the Pharisees would bind a grievous burden of ceremonialism and falsehood (Matt. 23:4), warns them that it is not so much that which enters into a man that defiles him, as that which issues from him (v. 15). It seems quite natural that in their perplexity the disciples should ask Jesus what he meant by that. In his reply (vv. 18-23), Jesus shows very clearly that "the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23), reveal the corruption which is within. (See Matt. 12:34, 35; Gen. 6:5; James 3:10-12). If the heart be not cleansed, what will it avail if we wash the hands? What then is the application for this present day? Clearly we are taught the danger of lip service without a change of heart. Substituting good for the best is sin. Forms and ceremonies are good and have their place; they are significant for they are important teaching factors; but they must not be substituted for a pure heart. We must beware lest we hide behind such a mask.

There is here also plain teaching as to Jesus' estimate of the Pentateuch and inferentially of the prophecy of Isaiah. He specifically calls it "the Word of God." Surely we can accept his estimate as contrasted with the tradition of the elders or the "consensus of modern thought."

Less talk and more walk.  
Less wishing and more doing.  
Less preaching and more practicing.  
Less organization and more of the spirit.

Finally, we have two illustrations as to how Jesus sets men free. (a) Jesus' silence appears to deepen faith in the pleading Syrophenician woman (v. 24-30).

(b) We have the cure of the deaf and the dumb man, (vv. 31-37); instantaneous healing, showing divine power.

Jesus was setting his people free from their bodily infirmities and at the same time delivering them from their sins and imperfections and bringing them into his spiritual Kingdom. This he is still doing.

## What Well Dressed Women Will Wear



FOR MOTOR AND GENERAL WEAR

Coats for general wear—it almost goes without saying—should be weatherproof; but weatherproof garments have to be that and much more to meet the approval of the sophisticated woman of today. She requires crisp style and substantial quality in them and cheerful colors.

Two rainproof coats that declare themselves ready to meet the most critical eye are pictured above. The only departure they make from the rules that govern in the season's coat styles, appear in the matter of length. Nearly all coats are several inches shorter than the frock worn under them, but the rainproof coat is privileged to be an inch or so longer.

The coat at the left is a smart example of the military style and nothing will be quite so appropriate for a coat for all weathers. It has big patch pockets on body and skirt, a convertible collar and narrow, loose belt of the fabric. It fastens with a fly, to the left of the front and is equal to protecting the gown under it perfectly. It is of a fabric resembling covert cloth, in every way to be recommended.

The story of the coat at the right is told so completely in the picture that

ments that manufacturers make so nearly like hand-knitted ones that it is not always easy to distinguish between them. There is more precision in the machine-knitted sweaters, all the stitches exactly alike, but many of them are finished with hand knitting.

Leaving out the sweaters and sweater coats of silk and silk fiber which are worn with sport skirts or otherwise, that are an essential of the smart woman's wardrobe, there are many styles in the very practical sweaters for real sports wear. Two of these are shown in the illustration—one for the "flapper"—at the right and one for the grownup. These are both of wool, closely knitted and are classed as fitted slip-overs. The sweater for the little girl has collar and cuffs of angora wool and is a good general utility model, while the other proclaims itself an ideal garment for all sorts of sports.

A very clever model in a loosely knitted, heavy coat sweater, designed to provide warmth when it is needed, has a small square cape collar that may be turned up over the head and buttoned so that it forms a hood. It also buttons up close about the throat and has two comfortable-looking pockets.



IN THE WAKE OF SPORTS

there is almost nothing to say about it. It also is made in double-breasted style fastening to the left with bow buttons and is a good style for any of the usual waterproofed wool materials like serge, twill, covert cloth, etc. To add to our comfort milliners have added rainproof materials to their stocks and even the most fragile fabrics are made impervious to moisture. But to wear with rainproof coats, small tailored hats made of millinery patent leather or of satin or lacquered braids look their capable part. A satin hat with silk cord and tassel is shown with the military coat in the picture and in style and utility they are two of a kind.

There are sweaters—and sweaters, in greater variety of design and texture and color than ever before and in almost universal demand. Silk, fiber and wool are the yarns used for the handsome machine-knitted garments.

The sports woman who has among her belongings will be fortified against any weather emergency.

The loosely fitting, sleeveless, silk slip-over is coming in for much consideration as a novelty for midsummer wear. It is shown in vivid tones of green, in rose and in blue shades. It is not so altogether practical as the regulation sweater coat, buttoned at the front and provided with sleeves, but it is amazingly smart. Among the sweater coats there are loosely knit models with plaited skirts and knitted sashes, finished with fringe that are very handsome for mature women.

Julia Bottomley

Thirty women wearing khaki trousers are working as pipefitters in a New Jersey chemical plant.