

"Over the Top"

By An American Soldier Who Went

ARTHUR GUY EMPY

Machine Gunner Serving in France

CHAPTER XVI

Battery D 238

The day after this I received the glad tidings that I would occupy the machine gunners' dugout right near the advanced artillery observation post. This dugout was a roomy affair, dry as tinder, and real cots in it. These cots had been made by the R. E.'s who had previously occupied the dugout. I was the first to enter and promptly made a signboard with my name and number on it and suspended it from the foot of the most comfortable cot therein.

In the trenches it is always "first come, first served," and this is lived up to by all.

Two R. E. A. men (Royal Field artillery) from the nearby observation post were allowed the privilege of stopping in this dugout when off duty. One of these men, Bombardier Wilson by name, who belonged to Battery D 238, seemed to take a liking to me, and I returned this feeling.

In two days' time we were pretty chummy, and he told me how his battery in the early days of the war had put over a stunt on Old Pepper, and had gotten away with it.

I will endeavor to give the story as far as memory will permit in his own words:

"I came out with the first expeditionary force, and, like all the rest, thought we would have the enemy licked in jig time, and be able to eat Christmas dinner at home. Well, so far, I have eaten two Christmas dinners in the trenches, and am liable to eat two more, the way things are pointing. That is, if Fritz don't drop a 'whizz-bang' on me, and send me to Blighty. Sometimes I wish I would get hit, because it's no great picnic out here, and twenty-two months of it makes you fed up.

"It's fairly cushy now compared to what it used to be, although I admit this trench is a trifle rough. Now, we send over five shells to their one. We are getting our own back, but in the early days it was different. Then you had to take everything without reply. In fact, we would get twenty shells in return for every one we sent over. Fritz seemed to enjoy it, but we British didn't; we were the sufferers. Just one casualty after another. Sometimes whole platoons would disappear, especially when a 'Jack Johnson' plunked into their middle. It got so bad that a fellow, when writing home, wouldn't ask for any cigarettes to be sent out, because he was afraid he wouldn't be there to receive them.

"After the drive to Paris was turned back, trench warfare started. Our general grabbed a map, drew a pencil across it, and said, 'Dig here.' Then he went back to his tea, and Tommard buried himself with a pick and shovel and started digging. He's been digging ever since.

"Of course we dug those trenches at night, but it was hot work, what with the rifle and machine-gun fire. The stretcher bearers worked harder than the diggers.

"Those trenches, bloomin' ditches, I call them, were nightmares. They were only about five feet deep, and you used

original 'Suicide ditch.' All the others are imitations.

"When a fellow went into that trench it was an even gamble that he would come out on a stretcher. At one time a Scotch battalion held it, and when they heard the betting was even money that they'd come out on stretchers, they grabbed all the bets in sight. Like a lot of bally idiots, several of the battery men fell for their game, and put up real money. The 'Jocks' suffered a lot of casualties, and the prospects looked bright for the battery men to collect some easy money. So when the battalion was relieved the gamblers lined up. Several 'Jocks' got their money for emerging safely, but the ones who clucked it weren't there to pay. The artillerymen had never thought it out that way. Those Scotches were bound to be sure winners, no matter how the wind blew. So take a tip from me, never bet with a Scotchie, 'cause you'll lose money.

"At one part of our trench where a communication trench joined the front line a Tommy had stuck up a wooden signpost with three hands or arms on it. One of the hands, pointing to the German lines, read, 'To Berlin'; the one pointing down the communication trench read, 'To Blighty'; while the other said, 'Suicide Ditch. Change Here for Stretchers.'

"Farther down from this guide post, the trench ran through an old orchard. On the edge of this orchard our battery had constructed an advanced observation post. The trees screened it from the enemy armmen and the roof was turfed. It wasn't cushy like ours, no timber or concrete reinforcements, just walls of sandbags. From it a splendid view of the German lines could be obtained. This post wasn't exactly safe. It was a hot corner, shells plunking all around, and the bullets cutting leaves off the trees. Many a time when relieving the signaler at the 'phone, I had to crawl, on my belly like a worm to keep from being hit.

"It was an observation post just enough. That's all the use it was. I observe all day, but never a message back for our battery to open up. You see, at this point of the line there were strict orders not to fire a shell, unless specially ordered to do so from brigade headquarters. Blime me, if anyone disobeyed that command, our general—yes, it was Old Pepper—would have court-martialed the whole expeditionary force. Nobody went out of their way to disobey Old Pepper in those days, because he couldn't be called a parson; he was more like a pirate. If at any time the devil should feel lonely and sigh for a proper mate, Old Pepper would get the first call. Facing the Germans wasn't half bad compared with an interview with that old firebrand.

"If a company or battalion should give way a few yards against a superior force of Boches, Old Pepper would send for the commanding officer. In about half an hour the officer would come back with his face the color of a brick, and in a few hours what was left of his command would be holding their original position.

"I have seen an officer who wouldn't say a word for a thousand quid spend five minutes with the old boy, and when he returned the flow of language from his lips would make a navy blush for shame.

"What I am going to tell you is how two of us put it over on the old scamp, and got away with it. It was a risky thing, too, because Old Pepper wouldn't have been exactly mild with us if he had got next to the game.

"Me and my mate, a lad named Har-

And with Old Pepper orders is orders, and made to obey.

"The Germans must have known about these orders, for even in the day their transports and troops used to expose themselves as if they were on parade. This sure got up our nose, sitting there day after day, with fine targets in front of us but unable to send over a shell. We heartily cursed Old Pepper, his orders, the government, the people at home, and everything in general. But the Boches didn't mind cussing, and got very careless. Blime me, they were bally insulting. Used to, when using a certain road, throw their caps into the air as a taunt at our helplessness.

"Cassell had been a telegrapher in civil life and joined up when war was declared. As for me, I knew Morse, learned it at the signaller's school back in 1910. With an officer in the observation post, we could not carry on the kind of conversation that's usual between two mates, so we used the Morse code. To send, one of us would tap the transmitter with his finger nails, and the one on the other end would get it through the receiver. Many an hour was whiled away in this manner passing compliments back and forth.

"In the observation post the officer used to sit for hours with a powerful pair of field glasses to his eyes. Through a cleverly concealed loophole he would scan the ground behind the German trenches, looking for targets and finding many. This officer, Captain A— by name, had a habit of talking out loud to himself. Sometimes he would vent his opinion, same as a common private does when he's wrought up. Once upon a time the captain had been on Old Pepper's staff, so he could cuss and blime in the most approved style. Got to be sort of a habit with him.

"About six thousand yards from us, behind the German lines, was a road in plain view of our post. For the last three days Fritz had brought companies of troops down this road in broad daylight. They were never shelled. Whenever this happened the captain would froth at the mouth and let out a volume of Old Pepper's religion which used to make me love him.

"Every battery has a range chart on which distinctive landmarks are noted, with the range for each. These landmarks are called targets, and are numbered. On our battery's chart, that road was called 'Target 17, Range 6000, 3 degrees 30 minutes left.' D 238 battery consisted of four '4.5' howitzers, and fired a 35-pound H. E. shell. As you know, H. E. means 'high explosive.' I don't like bunning up my own battery, but we had a record in the division for direct hits, and our boys were just pling away for a chance to exhibit their skill in the eyes of Fritz.

(Continued Next Week)

PROTEST ZONE POSTAL RATES ON PERIODICALS

That the enforcement of a law recently passed by congress increasing the postal rates on periodicals from fifty to nine hundred per cent under a distance zone system, would work great harm to the reading public is the belief of many who have watched the growth of the reading habit throughout the country.

The bill which drew forth the protest increases by leaps and bounds the carrying cost of periodicals, according to the distance the magazine is sent from its place of publication.

One of the strongest arguments against the legislation in addition to the necessary increase in the cost of each number to the final purchaser, is the harm which it is held would be caused through any lessening of the availability of good reading material, now so cheap and plentiful.

It is pointed out by opponents of the act that most of the reading, particularly in districts remote from metropolitan centers is confined to magazines and newspapers and that the reading habit thus becomes strongly entrenched.

Increase the cost of the present mines of information available everywhere and the prevalence of reading will lessen.

In addition it is pointed out the effect of the law would be to do away with the national press and substitute for it a sectional press.

Farm journals and similar publications which now find their way to homes from Maine to California would be the first to feel the effect of the law, which to most of them would be absolutely prohibitive.

An organization known as The Readers Defense League has been formed and is spreading information concerning the law and its effect on the reading public.

The Civic department of the Downers Grove Woman's club has endorsed the movement for the repeal of the zone law and has caused the circulation of petitions to congress asking for reconsideration and repeal of the law. The petitions await signers at Zindt's Pharmacy, Swearingen's News depot and W. H. Blodgett's office.

While someone gives his Life - what are you giving? - think a minute

CURTISS Theatre

SATURDAY, May 25th

Matinee and Night

Matinee all seats 11c.

Children under 14, 11c; Adults 20c, including tax

Thos. H. Ince presents

CHARLES RAY in "The Hired Man"

A typical Ray picture with a whirlwind finish; and a

Max Sennet 2-reel Comedy

Also a carefully selected Vaudeville.

All combined making the show most attractive for this Saturday. Did you see your ticket for the Decoration Day show at the Curtiss. You may secure tickets either from Campfire Girls or at the Curtiss. Matinee 11 cents, night 20c. Local Vaudeville and Feature Movies assisted by Brookfield Infantry in 5 specialties all new.

CURTISS Theatre Attractions

for TUESDAY, MAY 28th

Seats 10 & 15c; War tax 1 & 2c

GLADYS HULETTE in "Over the Hill"

A rural play full of heart interest; a few of the questions asked in this play are: Would your church turn out a minister after 40 years faithful service simply because he was old? Is scandal telling justifiable in a newspaper? Does Yellow Journalism pay? Also a

Pathe Scenic "The American Switzerland"

Showing the many historical and beautiful scenic points of our great National Park and many other interesting scenes. Seats 10 and 15 cents, War tax extra.

Don't forget the big show Decoration Day at the Curtiss. Get your tickets now. Auspices Campfire Girls.

Coming Saturday, June 8th, Douglas Fairbanks in "Heading South" and Charlie Chaplin in "A Dog's Life."

Curtiss Theatre Attraction

for WEDNESDAY, May 29th

Seats 10-15c; War tax 1-2c

Thos. H. Ince presents

DOROTHY DALTON

in "FLARE-UP SAL"

A story of the '49 Gold fields. Gets right down to hard-pan and busts things up. You will enjoy it, full of everything that makes a picture great. Full of thrills, romance and breathtaking suspense.

ALSO A GOOD COMEDY

Special Notice!

The biggest and most interesting program ever offered at the Curtiss will be presented tomorrow, Decoration Day, matinee and 2 shows at night. You may purchase your tickets either from the Campfire Girls or at the box office. Get in on this it's good. See program elsewhere.

CURTISS THEATRE

Big Decoration Day Local Talent Vaudeville Show and Feature Movies.

Admission: Matinee 11c; Night 2 shows, 7 and 9, all seats 20c including tax.

Program for the Matinee

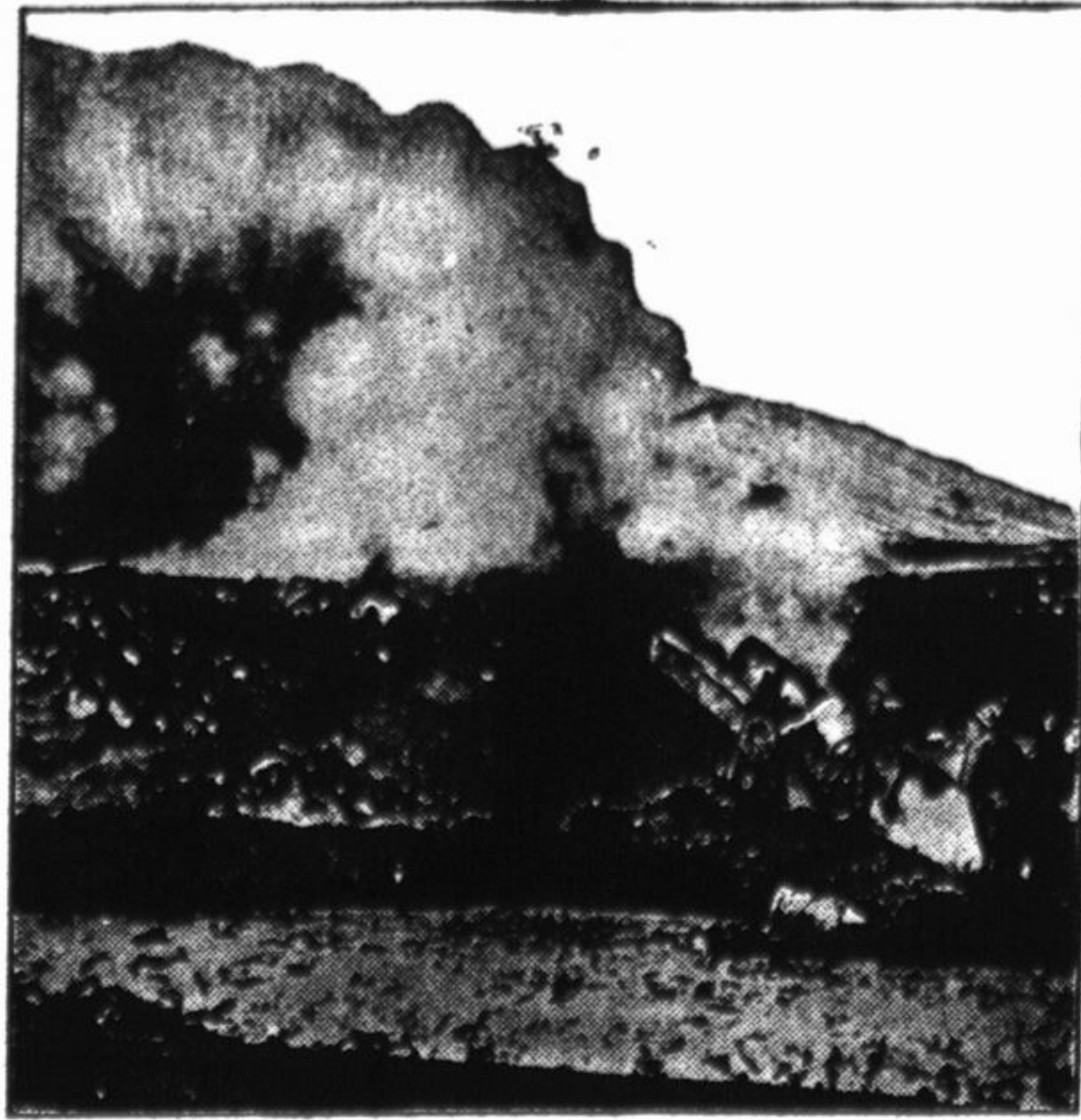
MAE MARSH in "The Face in the Dark"

Her latest Goldwyn. Irvin S. Cobb's thrilling mystery play of Crooks. We also offer the newest Serial, first run, The Boy Scouts to the Rescue, which will be shown for 5 consecutive Thursdays. See the boys on the firing line. The boy Scouts are on your trail, you can't escape, not when a troop of greased lightning American Boys are on your trail. This is the most thrilling, dramatic, educative Patriotic boy Serial ever conceived. Come on Scouts see how to catch Spies, aid the injured, help your country in the War. Also Hearst-Pathe News every Thursday and Saturday. Vaudeville at Matinee: Opening of 2nd act of Johnny show, Downers Grove pickanninies featuring Lester Barry as Uncle Tom and the pickaninnie trio-Martin Norpell, John Duthie and Lester Barry. Ukelele and vocal by Arthur Schaller.

At the 2 Night Shows

we will have all of the above program assisted by First-Arlene Haley, singing and acrobatic novelties. Second-Harriet Campbell, Cannibal Maid. Third-Gladys Wilcox, song and dance. Fourth-Comedy Four-Leona Hoppenrath, Bessie McDowell, Margaret Martineff and Ffey Woodworth. Fifth-Marie Buehler, Russian Dance. These last 5 acts are from the Brookfield Hip Hip Hoorah show and will give their annual show Thursday and Friday, June 13 and 14th. Seats are now selling for this the greatest Juvenile show on earth. Don't miss it. Brookfield Theatre, June 13 and 14.

Coming Saturday, June 8, Charlie Chaplin in "A Dog's Life" and Douglas Fairbanks in "Heading South" at the Curtiss where you see the big plays.



One of the Big Guns Barking.

to get the backache from bending down. It wasn't exactly safe to stand upright, either, because as soon as your napper showed over the top a bullet would bounce off it, or else come so close it would make your hair stand. "We used to fill sandbags and stick them on top of the parapet to make it higher, but no use; they would be there about an hour and then Fritz would turn loose and blow them to bits. My neck used to be sore from ducking shells and bullets.

"Where my battery was stationed a nasty trench had been dug, which the boys nicknamed 'Suicide ditch,' and, believe me, Yank, this was the

tery, or lance corporal, as you call it in the infantry, used to relieve the telephonists. We would do two hours on and four off. I would be on duty in the advanced observation post, while he would be at the other end of the wire in the battery dugout signaling station. We were supposed to send through orders for the battery to fire when ordered to do so by the observation officer in the advanced post. But very few messages were sent. It was only in case of an actual attack that we would get a chance to earn our 'two and six' a day. You see, Old Pepper had issued orders not to fire except when the orders came from him.