

Gunner Depew

By
Albert N. Depew

Copyright, 1918, by Reilly and Britton Co., Through Special Arrangement With the George Matthew Adams Service

Ex-Gunner and Chief Petty Officer, U.S. Navy
Member of the Foreign Legion of France
Captain Gun Turret, French Battleship Cassard
Winner of the Croix de Guerre

GUNNER DEPEW, IN HOSPITAL, SEES UNUSUAL INSTANCE OF HUN FRIGHTFULNESS.

Synopsis.—Albert N. Depew, author of the story, tells of his service in the United States Navy, during which he attained the rank of chief petty officer, first-class gunner. The world war started soon after he received his honorable discharge from the navy, and he leaves for France with a determination to enlist. He joins the Foreign Legion and is assigned to the dreadnaught Cassard, where his marksmanship wins him high honors. Later he is transferred to the land forces and sent to the Flanders front. He gets his first experience in a front line trench at Dixmude. He goes "over the top" and gets his first German in a bayonet fight. While on runner service, Depew is caught in a Zeppelin raid and has an exciting experience. In a fierce fight with the Germans, he is wounded and is sent to a hospital.

CHAPTER IX—Continued.

But there was a nurse there, who took special interest in his case, and the stayed up day and night for some time and finally brought him through. The case was very well known, and everybody said she had performed a miracle. He got better slowly.

Then a few weeks later, when he was out of danger and was able to walk, and it was only a question of time before he would be released from the hospital, this nurse was transferred to another hospital. Everybody knew her and liked her, and when she went around to say good-by, all the men were sorry and gave her little presents, and wanted her to write to them. She was going to leave the hospital, and she knew in the other hospital to turn her letters into English, so that she could write to me. I gave her a ring I had made from a piece of shell case, but I guess she had hundreds of them at that.

But this German doctor would not say good-by to her. That would not have made me sore, but it made this French girl feel very bad, and she began to cry. One of the French officers saw her and found out about the doctor, and the officer went up and spoke to the German. Then the French officer left, and the German called to the nurse and she went over to him and stopped crying.

They talked for a little while, and then she put out her hands as if she were going to kiss him. He put out his hands, too, and took hold of hers. And then he twisted her wrists and broke them. We heard the snap.

There were men in that ward who had not been on the front since the day they came to the hospital, and one of them was supposed to be dying, but it is an absolute fact that when we heard her scream, there was not a man left in bed.

I need not tell you what we did to the German. They did not need to shoot him, after we got through with him. They did shoot what was left of him, to make sure, though. I have heard people say that it is not the Germans we are fighting, but the Kaiser and his system. Well, it may be true that some of the people would not do these things if they did not have to; myself, I am not so sure.

But you take this doctor. Here he was, an educated man, who had been trained all his life to help people who

Probably you have not been over there, and maybe you think we are not fighting the German people, but only the Kaiser and his hunkies. Well, nobody had better tell me that. Because I have been there, and I have seen this. And I know.

CHAPTER X.

Hell at Gallipoli.

After I was discharged from the hospital, I was ordered to report to my ship at Brest for my duty. The boys aboard the Cassard gave me a hearty welcome, especially Murray, who had come back after two weeks in the trenches at Dixmude. I was glad to see them, too, for after all I had been through, I was glad to be back with the boys. They were all well, and I always felt more at home with them than with the officers. Then, it was pretty rough stuff at Dixmude, and after resting up at the hospital, I was keen on going to sea again.

The Cassard was in dry dock for repairs after her last voyage to the Dardanelles as convoy to the troopship Duplex. Everything was being rushed to get her out as soon as possible, and crews were working day and night. There were other ships there too—super-dreadnaughts, and dreadnaughts, and battleships, and armored cruisers. All being overhauled.

We received and placed guns of newer design, filled the magazines with the highest explosives known to naval use, and generally made her ready for her last job. Our magazines were filled with shells for our big 12 and 14-inch guns. A 14-inch shell can tear a hole through the heaviest armor plate at 12,000 yards, and still do more damage than you would expect.

When we had coaled and had got our stores aboard, we dressed for action—or rather, undressed. The decks were clear; hatch covers bolted down; lifeboats were ready; furniture, chests, tables, chairs were sent ashore, and inflammable gear, like our rope hammocks, went overboard. You could not find a single wooden chair or table in the ward room.

When the ship is cleared for action, a shell bursting inside cannot find so much to set afire, and if one bursts on deck, there is nothing to burn. The shells would not do these things if they did not have to; myself, I am not so sure.

Finally, we had roll call—all men present. Then we set sail for the Dardanelles as escort to the Duplex, which had on board territorial and provincial French troops—Gascons, Parisians, Normans, Indo-Chinese, Spahis, Turcos—all kinds. When we passed, we had to squat down on the steel mess deck and eat from metal plates.

There had been a notice posted before we left that the Zeppelins had begun sea raids, and we kept a live wire in close touch with the Duplex and busy every minute preparing for action.

I was made gun captain and given charge of the starboard bow turret mounting two 14-inch guns. I had my men at gun practice daily, and by the time we neared the Dardanelles, after five days, we were in pretty fair shape.

It was about 5 a. m. when we drove near Cape Helles and took stations for action. The Duplex was in front of us. The batteries on the cape opened up on us, and in a few minutes later those at Kum Kaleh joined in.

As the Duplex made for "V" beach and prepared to land her troops, we swung broadside on, raking their batteries as we did so, and received a shell which came to rest on the Duplex in the after turret and exploded. Some bags of powder stored there (where they should never have been) were fired and the roof of the turret was lifted off. It landed on the deck, tilted up against the side of the turret.

On deck the rain of fire was simply terrific. Steel flew in all directions. It was snail, snail, snail, snail, the time, and we did not mind saying I never thought we would come out of it.

Some of the heavy armor plate in forward was shot away and after that the old Cassard looked more like a monitor than anything else to me. As

we drew nearer the shore they began swamping us with shells. At the time all our funnels were shot full of holes and a sieve was water tight compared to them. Naturally we were not just taking all this punishment without any counter attack. Our guns were at it fast and from the way the fire slackened in certain places we knew we were making it effective. My guns did for two enemy pieces that I know of, and perhaps several others.

The French galleys were a good deal more excited in action than I thought they would be. They were dodging around blow decks, trying to miss the ships, and then they were shooting at each other, singing, but fighting hard at that. They stood the gaff just as well as any other carbide would, only in their own sweat way—which is noisy enough, believe me.

One of our seamen was hit 130 times by fragments of shrapnel, so you can see what they were up against in the dodging line. A gun turret, in action, is not exactly the best place to be for a nervous man nor one who likes his comfort. There is an awful lot of heat and noise and smell and work, all the time in a fighting gun turret. But the boys aboard the Cassard were in a gun turret every time that between decks. At that, if anything, dodging in a turret is a good deal more for all, and no rain checks at all.

One of our junior lieutenants was struck by a fragment of shell as he was at his station behind the wheelhouse and a piece of his skull was driven into his brain. He was carried into my gun turret, but he would not let them take him to sick bay to have his wound dressed. There he sat, asking every now and then how the fight was going and then sort of dozing off for a while.

After half an hour of action we put about and started away, still firing. As I was sitting on the deck, I saw a ship, and then one of our big gun turrets, and then away we went, back to Brest, with a casualty list of only 15. We did not have much trouble guessing that it was dry dock for us again. We got back to Brest after a quiet voyage, patching ourselves up where we could on the way, and again there was the rush work, day and night, to get into shape and to do it over again. They turned us out in 12 hours and we went to the Turks and their Hun assistants.

We were lucky getting ashore, only receiving a dusty snail's snail, when the Turks got our range and our purposes before we got out. We nearly tore our rudder off getting away, but we had to come back right away, because we had carried quite a number of heavy guns from France. They were giving the job of running them ashore. It was day and night work and a great job for fun, because while you never knew when you would get it, you never knew when you would get it. As for the shells, they would get landed by a cute little shell or a dainty bit of shrapnel before the job was over.

Aboard ship it was deck work, of course, and it was not much better than the shore with the guns, but there the enemy trenches were near the shore and they amused themselves trying to pick us off whenever we showed in sight. I guess we were a regular shooting gallery for them, and some of our men thought they did not need all the practice they were getting, for quite a few of us acted as bull's eyes.

But we did not mind the bullets so much. They make a clean wound or pull you away entirely; shrapnel tears you up and can play all kinds of tricks with various parts of your body without killing you. As for the shells, well, inaction is the worst. The Narrows were thick with mines and there had been a great deal of damage done there, so after a while the British detailed their Tarnow trawlers to go in and sweep them. They had to go in unexpected, of course, and they started off one night all serene.

Everything went well until they touched at the Narrows and started to dig. Then, before you could tell it, six or six searchlights were playing on one of the trawlers and shells were splashing the water all over her. Both banks were raking her away. She was black at them and I never thought they would get back.

They did get back, though, but some of them had hardly enough men left to work ship. But that is like the Germans. They will back from the shore while there is one man alive.

A chap aboard one of the trawlers said a shell went through the wheelhouse between the quartermaster and the captain. He said it was a "Gaw blimey, that tickled."

"But I know their shooting was very bad," said the other chap to me. "Those Turks must have thought the sea was behind them."

Coming back from the Dardanelles, a gale, a strip sent for me and asked me whether I thought there were

other ex-navy gunners in the States that would serve with the French. I told them the country was full of good gunners and he wanted me to write to all I knew and get them to come over. He did not mean by this and neither do I, that there were not good gunners in the French navy, because there were lots of them. But you can never have too many handy boys with the guns and he was very anxious for me to get all I could. I had no way of reaching the ex-gabblers I did know, so I had to pass up this opportunity to recruit by mail.

While we were in Brest I got permission to go aboard a submarine and a petty officer showed me around. This was the first time I was in the interior of a sub and I told the officer that I would like to take a spin in one and he let me. He introduced me to the commander, but the petty officer said he did not think they would let me stay aboard. I showed the commander my passport and talked to him for a while, and he said I could cruise two days later if the Old Man gave me written permission.

So I hot-footed it back to the Cassard and while I did not promise that I would get any American quinine for him in exchange for the written permission, he was free to think that if he wanted to. It seems as though he did take it that way, for he gave me a note to the sub commander and sent him another note by messenger. I wanted Murray to go too, but the Old Man said one was enough.

So, two days later, I went aboard in the morning and had breakfast with the sub crew and a good breakfast it was, too. After breakfast they



Gunner Depew in French Salvo Uniform.

took stations and the commander went up on the structure amidships, which was just under the conning tower, and I squatted down on the deck beneath the structure.

Then the gas engines started up and made an awful racket and shook the old tub from stem to stern. I took the deck and went moving. After a while they shut off the gas engines and started the motors and we began to submerge. When we were all the way under I looked through the periscope and saw a Dutch merchantman. We stayed under about half an hour and then came back to the surface. One of the galleys was telling me that this same sub had gone out of control a few weeks before and kept diving and diving until she struck bottom. I do not know how many fathoms down that was, but it was farther than my commander would take a sub if he could help it. This garby said they could hear the plates cracking and it was a wonder that they did not crumple up from the pressure, but she withered and the periscope and I saw a quarter of an hour on the surface. While on the surface they sighted smoke, submerged again, and soon, over the horizon came eight battleships, escorted by Zeppelins and destroyers.

They tested their tubes before they got in range. Finally they let go. The first shot missed, but after that they got into it good and the garby said all you could hear was the knocking of the detonated concussion. About five minutes later they sighted five destroyers, two on each bow, and one dead ahead. The garby steered in at right angles and the periscope was stayed with their gunner. The sub launched two torpedoes at least a mile before diving, to get away from the destroyers and the garby said, at least, he had seen some of the lucky boys that came down from the North Sea. The garby said he thought they were off the Dutch coast; at the time, but he was not sure.

But this cruise that I was on was not a practice cruise and we did not meet with any excitement in the short time that we were out.

In the next installment Gunner Depew tells of the wonderful adventures he had as a submarine commander in the Gallipoli campaign. Don't miss it.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Must Remain Awake.

"Opportunity knocks at every man's door," said Uncle Eben; "but if you let it sleep down 'n' listen, you'll find it to sleep 'n' not notice it."

RED CROSS DOING ITS BIT AT HOME

Aids in Contentment of Families of Our Soldiers.

PROVIDES RELIEF FOR NEEDY

Human Touch. Found Necessary in Addition to the Allowments of Pay and Various Allowances From the Government.

(From the Committee on Public Information, Washington, D. C.)

Last Christmas a woman walked into the office of one of the Red Cross home service stations and laid down \$21.50. It represented the profits of a luncheon served at her home for the benefit of the children of the soldiers of the First Separate Battalion.

"It is my bit," she said. "You were all so good to me when I was sick that I wanted to do something for others now that I am well."

This woman has been one of the first applicants for relief from the home service of the Red Cross. Her husband had volunteered in the army, and, after his enlistment, she had done her best to keep his health broken down. She had been ill in bed and had been attended by a doctor who had signed false certificates for her insurance. Finally, in despair, she came to the local Red Cross.

The Red Cross home worker came to see her and laid the facts in the case. A better hygienic was secured, and it was found that she had incipient tuberculosis. She was immediately sent to treatment in a tuberculosis dispensary, where she remained during the summer. Within a few months she had improved so wonderfully that she could hardly be recognized as the same woman.

This was one of a very large number of cases in which the Red Cross has proved a blessing to the families of our fighting men.

War disturbs the present current of our lives. It has indeed the families who are not intimately touched by the call which has gone forth to the young men of the Nation. Sons, brothers, fathers, and even friends have gone to the training camps, or will soon go. They will leave more gladly if they can be assured that the ones they love are being watched and cared for in every possible way during their absence.

The Human Touch Needed.

Most soldiers have a friend to whom they can confide the welfare of the mothers and wives. But many have not. The government does the best it can by providing allowances of pay and allowances for the families of soldiers and sailors. But something more is necessary. The human touch is needed. There must be the care and attention of a special and extraordinary sort; situations calling for wit and resourcefulness. Obviously the best way to deal with such cases is to turn them over to trained social workers, whose skill and experience fit them to deal with these troubles. Hence, the government has done a wise thing in turning over to the Red Cross official responsibility of such soldiers' and sailors' families to come into difficulties.

The home service work of the Red Cross is a logical extension of its mission of mercy. No other organization has so splendid a record in administering relief, and none is better equipped to do what is now required. Its service stations are established in every district of the United States, and it is well prepared to look after the dependents of army and navy men wherever they may be found. The soldier's family is one of his most precious possessions. And this is not to be wondered at, because the predicaments they may fall into are legion. The story which has already been told illustrates one type of case which may lie in wait for the soldier's wife. The records of the Red Cross are filled with stories of service rendered to the wives and children.

One of the home-service officers received from a young corporal a letter which contained these sentences: "I am so thankful for all you have done for me. I'll never know how to thank you. But for the help that you extended to me, I would have been in a destitute condition."

Last Their Sorrow.

The story behind this simple testimony was a pathetic one. The husband had been ordered to Washington to wait for the war. On the way all the family baggage had been lost. They recovered only \$25 from the railroad company, and when they finally decided to report to the Red Cross the wife was nursing a baby a few days old.

The Red Cross worker found them living in a very poor little house. The oldest child, a boy of nine, was doing all the work for the family. His little sister, eight years old, had absolutely no clothing and was wrapped in a strip of flannel. A caretaker was secured for the mother, and the boy was sent back to school. The soldier was secured for the little girl. When the mother was able to get up it appeared that she had no clothes which were really fit to wear. When the Red Cross visitor first saw her up and about the house she was wearing one old white woman's shoe and one man's shoe and had on a threadbare

wrapper. A remarkably good outfit was purchased for \$25; a pair of shoes, a coat, a skirt, a hat, two waists, and two corset covers.

After the start, things began to be better. The husband made an allotment of his pay and took out war-risk insurance. As soon as the payments from these sources began to come to the family, it was no longer in need of financial assistance. In the meantime the Red Cross worker is keeping in touch with them.

The local committees of the home service have been especially valuable. Not infrequently a soldier's relatives are badly informed as to the law and allow themselves to be duped. Occasionally they are not aware of the rights which accrue to them when the man of the family goes into the army. Every sort of snarl and tangle arises, and it usually seems as though the services of a lawyer may be too costly. The local committees meet this need. All over the country lawyers have generously given their services to this important work.

Children's Welfare First.

Nothing is more vital than the welfare of the children. One of the home service directors issued this statement to the workers of the district: "The home service is especially interested in children, and we feel that its most important service is in the conservation of the child and the home for the future. For this reason we stand ready to see that any child does not have to leave school to go to work because its father has either volunteered or has been drafted into the army. We stand ready to see that a woman with small children has to go to work because her husband or son is serving the country as a soldier or sailor."

A short time ago it was reported that the Red Cross home service station in one of the cities that a little girl of fifteen was about to be taken out of school because her family needed the money she could earn. Irene's father was dead. The oldest brother, Alex, was contributing \$10 a week to the family treasury, but he was saving to get married, and that was all that he could spare. The second boy, Joseph, had enlisted. The oldest girl, Helen, made \$10 a week, while Harry, sixteen years old and just returned from a runaway jaunt, only earned \$7. There was another little girl, eleven years old, who was still in school.

The Red Cross worker explained to Irene's mother why she felt so strongly that the child ought to have at least a grammar-school education. In June she would be through with the grammar school, and in the meantime the Red Cross offered to pay Irene's family \$6 a week, which was about all that she could be expected to earn. The arrangement was made, and Irene is still in school, while the mother is gradually paying off her debts. When June comes Irene will graduate, and she will probably be able to earn more than \$6 a week.

It is a splendid thing to help dejected families, but it is still better to put them in a position to help themselves. That is, of course, the ultimate purpose of social work as it is practiced everywhere. One of the most home-service sections was able to carry through a very large job of this sort recently.

The family in question had been public charges for years. The husband and father was a heavy drinker and never displayed the slightest inclination to support his wife and children. The mother was serene and happy-go-lucky and had no other means of getting the most she could out of the different charity organizations. The house was dirty beyond description and everything was at sixes and sevens.

Joined His Wooden Leg.

Douglas, the oldest boy, was in the navy. The second boy, William, was consumed with a desire to enlist, too. He had tried, but had been turned down because of a physical disqualification, and, in rage and disappointment, he had gone off to the West where he wandered for several months. When he finally came home he was settled down to be a charity patient. A third boy, Raymond, seventeen years old, had also taken to tramping, although he had a wooden leg, the souvenir of an accident in the railroad yards which he was a small boy. When absent one of his hikes the enterprising gentleman ran out of funds and chose the expedient of pawning his wooden leg. Helen, the oldest girl, had had her hair cut and there were five younger children, all of them growing up in dirt and ignorance.

By the time the mother applied to the Red Cross for help the family was suffering from the principal causes of the family's distress.

Then the problem of William was attacked. It developed that his rejection for service in the navy was due to his being underweight. He simply had not had enough to eat nor food of the proper sort. It was arranged that he should go to the Y. M. C. A. cafeteria for his meals, and that he should go to the Y. M. C. A. gymnasium to exercise. In an incredibly short time he was able to pass his physical examination for the navy. His only disappointment was that he could not be taken right away. The Red Cross worker was able to arrange that, too.

In view of the special circumstances, the recruiting officer found a place for him immediately.