

was the Austrian custom to minimize. Captain Pirelli refreshed my historical memories; it was rather like leaving a card on Gibbon en route for contemporary history.

By devious routes I went on to certain batteries of big guns which had played their parts in hammering the Austrian left above Monfalcone, across an arm of the Adriatic, and which were now under orders to shift and move up closer. The battery was the

servation of the Austrian gunners upon Monte Santo. Here and there were huge holes through which one could look down upon the blue trickles of water in the stony river bed below. The driver of our automobile displayed what seemed to me an extreme confidence in the margins of these gaps, but his confidence was justified. At Sagrado the bridge had been much more completely demolished; no effort had been made to restore the hori-

of man's invention, worse than all the thorns and thickets of nature—barbed wire. There are no dead visible; the wounded have been cleared away; but about the trenches and particularly near some of the dugouts there was a faint, repulsive smell.

Yet into this wilderness the Italians are now thrusting a sort of order. The German is a wonderful worker; they say on the Anglo-French front that he makes trenches by way of resting, but I doubt if he can touch the Italian at certain forms of toil. All the way up to San Martino and beyond swarms of workmen were making one of those carefully graded roads that the Italians make better than any other people. Other swarms were laying water pipes. For upon the Carso there are neither roads nor water, and before the Italians can thrust further both must be brought up to the front.

As we approached San Martino an Austrian aeroplane made its presence felt by dropping a bomb among the little tents of some workmen, in a little scrubby wood on the hillside near at hand. One heard the report and turned to see the fragments flying and the dust. Probably they got some one. And then, after a little pause, the encampment began to spew out men; here, there and everywhere they appeared among the tents, running like rabbits at evening-time, down the hill. Very soon after and probably in connection with this signal, Austrian shells began to come over. They do not use shrapnel because the rocky soil of Italy makes that unnecessary. They fire a sort of shell that goes bang and releases a cloud of smoke overhead, and then drops a parcel of high explosive that bursts on the ground. The ground leaps into red dust and smoke. But these things are now to be seen on the cinema. Forthwith the men working on the road about us began to drop their tools and make for the shelter trenches, a long procession down the length of the road going at a steady walk. Then like a blow in the chest came the bang of a big Italian gun close at hand.

Along about four thousand miles of the various fronts this sort of thing was going on that morning.

This Carso front is the practicable offensive front of Italy. From the left wing on the Isonzo along the Alpine boundary around to the Swiss boundary there is mountain warfare like nothing else in the world; it is warfare that pushes the boundary backward, but it is mountain warfare that will not . . . offer any hopeful prospects of offensive . . . on a large scale.

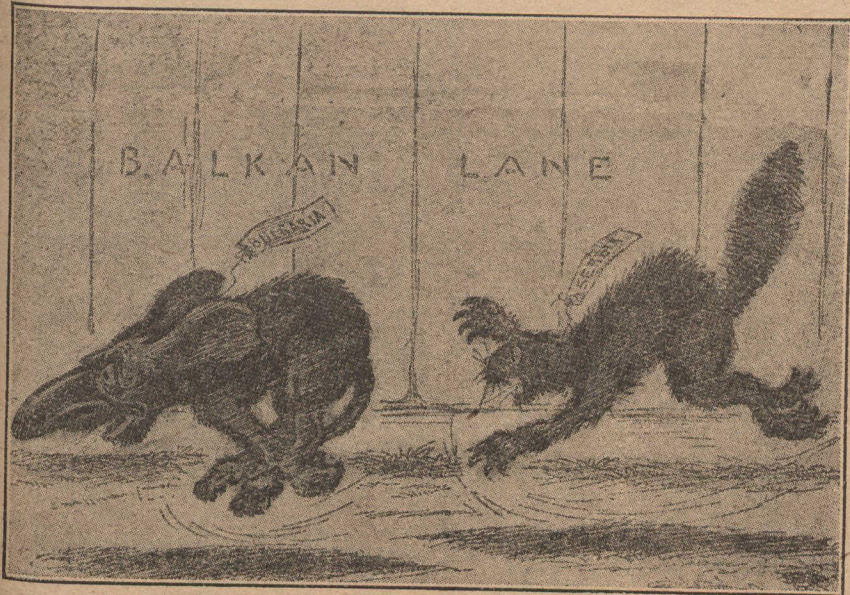
a sort of timber switchback that followed the ups and downs of the ruins. It is not in these places that one must look for the real destruction of modern war. The real fight on the left of Gorizia went through the village of Lucinico up the hill of Podgora. Lucinico is nothing more than a heap of grey stones; except for a bit of the church wall and the gable end of a house one cannot even speak of it as ruins. But in one place among the rubble, I saw the splintered top and a leg of a grand piano. Podgora Hill, which was no doubt once neatly terraced and cultivated, is like a scrap of landscape from some airless, treeless planet. Still more desolate was the scene upon the Carso to the right (south) of Gorizia. Both San Martino and Doberdo are destroyed beyond the limits of ruin. The Carso itself is a waterless upland with but a few bushy trees; it must always have been a desolate region, but now it is an indescribable wilderness of shell craters, smashed-up Austrian trenches, splintered timber, old iron, rags, and that rusty thorny vileness

most unobtrusive of batteries; its one desire seemed to be to appear a simple piece of woodland in the eye of God and the aeroplane.

I went about the network of railways and paths under the trees that a modern battery requires. I went on through the wood to a shady observation post high in a tree, into which I clambered with my guide. I was able from this position to get a very good idea of the general line of the Italian eastern front. I was in the delta of the Isonzo. Directly in front of me were some marshes and the extreme tip of the Adriatic Sea, at the head of which was Monfalcone, now in Italian hands. Behind Monfalcone ran the red ridge of the Carso, of which the Italians had just captured the eastern half. Behind this again rose the mountains to the east of the Isonzo which the Austrians still held.

The Isonzo came toward me from out of the mountains, in a great westward curve. Fifteen or sixteen miles away, where it emerged from the mountains, lay the pleasant and prosperous town of Gorizia, and at the westward point of the great curve was Sagrado, with its broken bridge. The battle of Gorizia was really not fought at Gorizia at all. What happened was the brilliant and bloody storming of Mounts Podgora and Sabotino, on the western side of the river above Gorizia, and simultaneously a crossing at Sagrado behind Gorizia, and a magnificent rush up to the plateau and across the plateau of the Carso. Gorizia itself was not organized for defence, and the Austrians were so surprised by the rapid storming of the mountains to the northwest of it, and of the Carso, to the southwest, that they made no fight in the town itself.

As a consequence, when I visited it, I found it very little injured—compared, that is, with such other towns as have been fought through. Here and there the front of a house has been knocked in by an Austrian shell, or a lamp post prostrated. But the road bridge had suffered a good deal; its iron parapet was twisted about by shell bursts and interwoven with young trees and big boughs designed to screen the passerby from the oblique roadway, but one crossed by



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G. J. DESBARATS,
Deputy Minister of the Naval Service,
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Ottawa, June 12, 1916.

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