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Week's War Summary

THE feature of the war during the past week was the offensive of the Austrian-German army on the Italian front; and the utter failure of it. The latest word from Italy shows that the Austrians were in full flight.

The culmination of what was intended to be the crushing of Italy in between the jaws of the Austrian pincers is the rout of the invaders themselves.

With their backs to the swollen Piave river, the Austrians for several days have been trying to ward off the vicious counter attacks of the Italians and save the situation. Now they are endeavoring and still under great pressure to ford the stream and reach safety on its eastern bank.

From the Montello plateau to the Adriatic Sea, the enemy is in retreat. The river is literally clogged with his dead. Already his losses are estimated at 180,000 men, and the chances of his escape without additional heavy losses and men made prisoner seem remote.

Large numbers of the pontoon bridges the Austrians threw across the Piave have been swept away by the now torrential stream, and on all the sectors of the 33-mile front where they gained edges of the Venetian plain they are being sorely harassed by the fire of the Italian guns and rifles and by the machine-gun fire and bombs of the allied aviators, who have done such notable execution since the attempted drive was started.

Monster preparations had been made by the Austrians for what was to be the death-blow to King Victor Emmanuel's men. Thousands upon thousands of men, many of them brought from the Russian and Roumania front, and guns and stores in tremendous quantities had been parcelled out to the various commanders of the drive over a battle arc of virtually 100 miles. Running from the Asiago plateau to the Piave river, and then following that stream to the sea.

Undoubtedly the Austrian high command had built largely for success on the belief that the Italian morale had been shattered when last year their great pincers closed in upon the Italian front and forced back the line in a great semi-circle from the Julian Alps to the Piave and from the mountains in the north almost to the plains of Venetia.

Such a belief, however, was entirely erroneous, from the first onslaught the enemy met a rejuvenated army, which fought him with the greatest gallantry, never ceding an inch of ground unless it was dearly paid for. Aiding the Italians in the mountains were British and French armies, who also fought nobly and everywhere defeated the enemy. Territory taken in the mountains was almost as quickly regained and the enemy held in check.

Along the Piave, especially on the Montello plateau, the gateway to the Venetian plains from the north-east and at several points further south, where the Austrians succeeded in crossing the river, the Italians everywhere imposed such strength against the enemy that he was unable to enlarge his gains and then, with redoubled efforts, forced him to commence the retrograde movement which has developed into a disordered flight.

Large numbers of the enemy have been reported recently as coming up behind the northern line in the mountain region, and it is not improbable that shortly the second phase of the battle will begin. Complete confidence is felt in the Italian and other allied commands, however, that the enemy will meet foemen of superior quality and that his efforts will go for naught.

On the battlefronts in France and Flanders the Germans are holding their men to the trenches except for small attacks here and there. There is no indication that for the present it is their intention to launch another big offensive. Both the British and French have carried out successfully several minor operations and repulsed all the enemy's manoeuvres. Near Bligny, in the Marne region, the Germans succeeded in gaining a footing in a trench, but an Italian contingent immediately ejected them.

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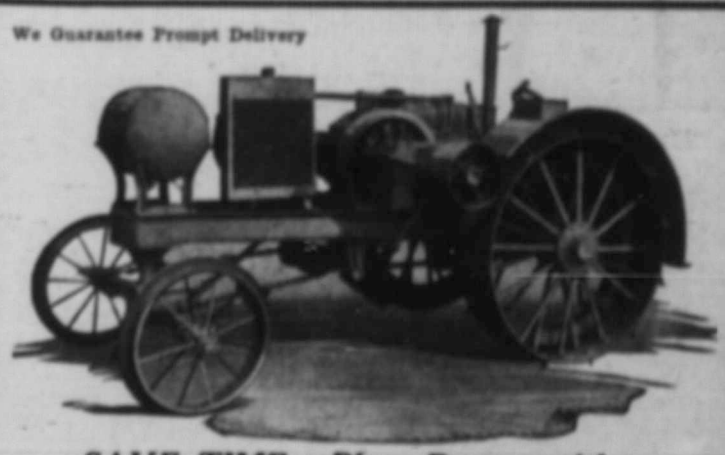

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