

## THOUGHT OF W.VES DROVE SERBS VETERANS ON TO WIN

Best Mountain Fighters in the World Carry Rocky Heights  
Without Artillery Support and Held by Three Times as  
Many Bulgars.

(By Herbert Corey, in the Boston  
Globe.)

With the Serbian Army in the Balkans, Nov. 8—There is fascination for the observer in the fighting in the Balkans that the war on the western front utterly lacks. It is a war in miniature. One finds himself in closer touch with the human element.

On the Somme one's faculties are half palsied by the immensity of the forces engaged. A bombardment has something of the elemental majesty of a storm at sea. The roar is continuous and stupefying, but one sees the effect in whole rather than in detail.

Here one stands by the individual gun, and watches the effect of the single shell. There is a sporting quality

in the reply made by the Bulgarian too. In the west a shell falling near one is accepted as an incident of the battering of a line perhaps 25 miles long. Here one knows that particular shell was fired at a particular target. Ammunition is not so plentiful on either side that shots can be thrown away.

"I think we got the old gunner yesterday," said the captain of a gun crew, referring to the mountain rifle that was industriously potting at us. "The new man isn't much."

So it is with the action of the men engaged. In the west whole divisions are thrown forward to the attack. One might stand in the center of the charge line and be unable to see either

end even with good field glasses. Here the fighting is by regiments or more often by companies.

One knows the names of the organizations engaged and where they come from and for what they are remarkable. So-and-so makes a gain in his sector or is driven back. Such-and-such company went through the retreat, which is equivalent to saying they are past masters in the art of mountain war. Jovan Somthingovitch killed two Bulgars from behind the same tree.

"A grand man, Jovan," is the nodded verdict about the campaign. "In the second Turkish war."

This individual quality in the Balkan fighting was clearly brought out by the attack on Vetternik. A tiny action, it is true, when weighed in the scales by Verdun or Ypres. But it was as gallantly fought a battle as was ever won and gave play to remarkable personal qualities of the Serbian fighters in such a way as to deserve attention.

The importance of the fight was only relative. Without the peak of Vetternik the Serbian advance would have been rendered more difficult, but it is only to be classed as one of the defenses of Dobruopolje Mountain, which this sector barred the way to Serbia.

Vetternik Mountain is a tooth in the jaw of the Mogiene range. The mountain itself is 1200 feet high. On the very top is a rocky eminence 500 feet higher. The sides are not quite as steep as the ordinary house roof in a western village, but the angle is such that every foot must be climbed for.

Today we rode three-quarters of the way up the mountain on the newly made gun road, and then climbed desperately for an hour and three-quarters before we reached the first line of Serbian trenches. We came at top speed all the way down, because for every foot of the way we were in range of Bulgarian batteries. Yet it took us two hours to negotiate the 1200-foot descent, so impossible are the paths.

There are few cliffs. The mountain side is a mass of tumbled rocks between which minute bushes find sustenance in pockets of earth. "Vetternik must be taken," was the order of the Serbian General Staff when the general advance had driven the Bulgars back to the Macedonian foot of the Mogiene range.

The Bulgars not only held every inch of the mountain, but had established a strong line of posts at the foot, along the line of the village of Bahova. There were three Bulgars to every Serb along this whole front. The Bulgarian troops had some field pieces, ranging from the mule gun of 65 caliber to the field piece of 77, with one or two 105s mounted on the summit. Serbians had not a single piece of artillery.

"Yet a single regiment of 1200 men took that position—with the exception of the rocky nipple at the summit—in three days, with a loss of 40 men. The Bulgarian loss is unknown. There are still bodies of the Bulgarian dead scattered about these stony hills that grill under the late October sun. One is continually reminded of them. Half the Macedonian peasants in the vicinity are dressed in parts of clothing stripped from the loot of the fight.

"How did you take it?" I asked the colonel who now commands on Vetternik. "Our men thought of their wives in Serbia," was the grim reply.

The first attack was made on the line of outposts at the toe of the mountain. There has been scattered rifle firing for a day or two, but the Bulgarians knew the Serbs had no artillery. Perhaps they thought that fact would hold the enemy back. The Serbs swarmed the posts at night with butt and bayonet. He is particularly good at this work, is the Serb. In the thrust of the steel he finds a better expression for the fierce hate that burns in his breast than in the rather impersonal shooting at an earthwork. The outposts were driven back in disorder and fled up the mountain with the Serbians at their heels.

Three Days of Man Against Man

Now began one of the man against man conflicts which mark the fighting on this front. There were 40 lines of barbed wire across the face of the mountain. The Bulgars had built trenches and gun positions on every angle of the hill from which an advancing force could be held under fire.

The Serbians fought without orders, save such orders as could be passed from man to man. They used the ruses of the Sioux and the Apache. They sheltered themselves behind rocks and scooped out little gullies and flattened themselves to the baking earth behind the scanty bushes. It was a fight in which each man fought for himself. As he killed he moved forward.

"We crawled," said the colonel, "all the way up the mountain. No man stood erect."



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From a personal knowledge of the need, and personal contact with the suffering and the heroism of the men in the trenches, I urge the munitions workers, whether in the steel plant, or in the factory, to devote themselves with increased energy and unstinted time to the task of additional output.

Neither the soldier nor the sailor will have his New Year's Day free from duty. I appeal to the men and to the women engaged in munitions production in Canada, to forego Saturday afternoon, the 30th instant, and Monday, New Year's Day, and to continue at their work. The sacrifice is small, but to those who make it will come the satisfaction of having discharged a clear obligation.

Yours truly,

*John D. Thompson*  
Chairman.

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The fighting was by groups and individuals. There were no charges, because the 40 lines of wire would have held back any charge. The men crept to the wire and then cut it and writhed through. When they got near enough to the enemy trenches to throw bombs they "cleaned" the trenches. It is not an exaggeration to say that no other army in the field could have done this, because no other army has had five years of almost continuous fighting, as have the Serbs. Each man is not merely a veteran. He is up to every trick and dodge of fighting in the hills.

During that three days of fighting they got no water save the foul trickle that came through the enemy trenches. What food they had they carried with them. The wounded man saved himself or perished. They were under a continuous artillery fire to which they could not reply. At the end of three days they held all the top of Vetternik save the rocky eminence to which I have referred.

For 14 days the Serbians held the top of that hill against artillery, without a gun of any sort, until they could build the goat paths up which they packed and dragged artillery. In a month they lost 1400 men, in all classes of casualties. The enemy trenches were never more than 100 meters from each other, and sometimes only 10 meters. There were places where Bulgar and Serb talked all day long across the earthworks.

The action on Vetternik was not great, measured by any standard common to this war. It was even microscopic in forces engaged and in value as compared to the mighty battles to

which the western front has accustomed us. But as a test of individual they drove from Vetternik were first the dead, he is to be respected for rate troops. The Bulgarian has shown sheer scrapping ability while he is mettle of the men of this little Serbian that, whatever may be his ideas on alive.

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