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The Impossible is Commonplace For The Italian Troops

For Instance, Here's How 6,000 Climbed Down Cliff and Took Austrian Rock Trench at Midnight, a Feat Thought Beyond Reason

With the Italian army in the Trentino, Aug. 12.—This is the story of a fight that has never been duplicated in all the world. There have been other fights—greater fights, more important fights. But surely never since fighting came into fashion have six thousand men stolen down a mountain side in the dead of night, armed only with hand grenades and knives, "to clean" an enemy out of his trenches.

"That is the way my boys do things," said the general who told me the story. "They are good boys. The Austrians cannot stand before them." We are sitting in an observation platform high above the Valley of the Lagarina. Two days before the Austrians had been driven across the valley by the general's troops. They had not been driven far. Even as we talked their guns spoke from the mountain summits which overtopped us, and we could where their shells were falling in the Italian lines. But they were still going. That day the Italian troops had occupied one of these summits we were watching. The night before they had captured a fort a few miles farther down the valley.

Any story of the fighting in these Dolomite Alps must have as a motive the incredible difficulties of the ground over which the Italians are hammering their foe. The Valley of the Lagarina at this point is perhaps two miles wide. The valley itself is green and smiling meadow rimmed on either side by wide benches on which in other summers the peasants pasture a belt of woodland, the roots of the trees fastened among the great stones that pave a hillside steep enough to test the lungs of a goat. Above them the cliffs rise as precipitously as church steeples. Their tops stand out as sharp and clear cut against the afternoon light as though they were of broken glass. It was from these spiky hilltops the Austrians were first driven.

They established themselves on the bench below. There they were ungettable. The inclination of the hillside was so steep, the mountain summits were so directly overhead, that the muzzles of the guns the Italians mounted there could not be depressed sufficiently to reach the trenches. The Austrians sat in security. It was obvious they could not be shelled until some distant hilltop was taken by assault, on which guns could be mounted, and from which the new position could be shelled.

"You see the evidence," said the general. "Look at the valley through your glasses."

Sure enough. At a distance from the line of the trenches once occupied by the Austrians were scores of pits where shells had fallen. The Italians had been vigorous but unavailing. The missiles had screamed overhead and fallen on unoccupied ground. Rifle fire against trenches blazed out of the solid rock is merely ridiculous. Machine gun fire is as bad. The Italians had thrust the muzzles of mule-guns over the edges of the cliffs they held, because mule-guns can be mounted on a ceiling if need be. But mule-guns against such trenches might be the dribbling of water on a duck's back. "There was but one way we could take the trenches," said the general. "That was by assault. It was necessary that we take them."

So that one night six thousand Italian soldiers received an armful each of hand grenades. They were already provided with trench knives—long, heavy back edged knives that go through a man's flesh as through the leather of an old boot. The attack was set for midnight. Most of the men slept quietly until that hour for they were very tired from five days' continuous marching and fighting. On the stroke of the clock if there had been a clock—the sergeants shook them into wakefulness.

"We go forward now," whispered the sergeants. The first of the task that confronted the Italians was to clamber down a rock wall—it would be like climbing down the side of the Singer Building in New York if that building had been cantilevered at an angle of forty degrees—in darkness and silence. Through the glasses from the other side of the valley the job seemed impossible. A man might do it in safety at night, if permitted full license of swearing and if no one cared how many loose stones rattled into the valley. Both were forbidden. In full daylight and in utter calm that assignment was upon the Austrians had not suspected

anything. They had the usual sentries out, however, and that was the only precaution needed, for the soldier, wakes very quickly when the alarm is sounded. These outposts were stationed in the belt of forest that ran about the feet of the precipitous cliffs. One by one they were silenced. This was not done in quiet for many were able to fire their rifles, and some shouted when the knife went in and other stumbled frantically through the darkness among the trees, down the steep hill, yelling an alarm. The Austrians in the trenches stood to their rifles. Even yet, apparently, they had not awakened to what was going on. They fired in desultory fashion. There was no volley firing and no machine-gun activity. They did not think an attack in force possible. The Italians massed in the edge of the back woods. "Now, go," whispered some one. "The general I suspect, but he did not say so. A whistle shrieked. The Alpina ran forward, stumbling, cheering, cursing, down this unknown hillside in the utter blackness of a moonless night. Not a man threw a bomb until the was within throwing distance of the enemy. As each pulled himself up, panting, on the edge of the Austrian trench he stood there and hurled bombs as though at practice.

"Then they went in with knives The Austrians stamped."

I confess to a certain sneaking sympathy with the Austrians. They had not expected this sort of thing, you see. They had not believed that men could do it. They had been awakened by the noise in the wood, and doubtless grumbled under their breath at the sergeants how forced them out of their blankets and made them stand to their guns. They probably thought the sentries had taken to ghost-dancing, or that a few adventurous Alpina had organized a scalp-hunting expedition of their own. They could not have dreamed of an attack in force. And then the light parted, and vomited six thousand screaming men, each lusty for slaughter, for an inherited and acquired hatred of the Austrian is very real in the Italian army. Each bomb as it exploded glashed red against the solid black wall of mountain.

"The roar of the hand grenades was deafening. But it did not last long. No man, you see, can carry much of a load of bomb."

Then the Italians went in with knives.

Order Found on German

"Strip Enemy Corpses of Cloth and Socks," it Read

The following regimental order has been found on a captive German officer:

"Regimental order (7-6-16) of 110th regiment (26th XIII. C.).

"The greatest importance must be attached to everything left on the battlefield; for example, shoes, of every kind, arms or parts of arms, trench tools, steel helmets, leather equipments, cartridge carriers, belts, tents, articles of equipment of all kinds such as sacks, tunics, trousers and canvas bags for earth. These articles are of almost decisive importance of our great cause. Enemy corpses should be stripped of their woollen clothes and socks."

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READ THE MAIL & ADVOCATE

Germany Sealed Up by the Kaiser

LONDON, Aug. 20.—Ominous of very grave events is the news that no person will be allowed to enter or leave Germany except in extraordinary circumstances. To secure that his people should have "the real truth," as made in their home lie factories, the Kaiser has, so to speak, sealed up the empire from the outer world. Not only is communication cut off with the outer world, so far as travel is concerned, but English papers are now stopped at the frontier. From Amsterdam comes the news that the English newspapers are barred, while a Washington despatch says: Mr. Gerald, the United States Ambassador in Berlin, has cabled to the State Department intimating that he has received notification from the German Government that no person will be allowed to enter or leave the country except in cases of "inevitable necessity." The stopping of the newspaper is for the Allies a significantly satisfactory step. The British correspondents at the front are evidently providing an only too accurate picture of the progress that is being made by us, and, not least, are giving incontrovertible evidence of the greatness of the enemy's losses. Possibly, too, the serious blows dealt to the Russians have not a little to do with the decision. But the very fact of the papers being prohibited should tell the German people that something is seriously amiss. The closing of the empire against travellers is no doubt connected with the food shortage, and the general desire of the people to escape from the miseries of war. The Government wish to keep the world in ignorance of the true condition of things which

May Any Day Produce Bloodshed

That this is no exaggerated picture is shown by the letter of a German soldier, who, writing from the trenches, says that "every day the food gets less, it makes one very depressed." The green cardboard bread ticket for last April of a man of the 1st. Guard Reserve Division shows one of the means taken to prevent waste of food. It is explained on the ticket that every man on active service is entitled to half a loaf, or about 1 lb. 10½ oz. of bread daily. "To the ticket are attached coupons, one of which must be given up for each whole loaf that the man draws. But if we can do with less than the full ration, he is entitled at the end of the month to receive 3½d. for every coupon unused. When he goes on leave a bread coupon is cancelled for every two days of absence, and the man receives an allowance instead. That this allowance is not excessive may perhaps be inferred from a clause in a Standing Order issued at Strasbourg on an unstated date. "Continued cases of begging by men on leave have occurred recently. It is again pointed out that begging is unworthy of a soldier and will be severely punished." In another German Order, issued at Bapaume, all troops are reminded of the need for empty bottles and tins at home. It is also ordered that all parings from horses' hoofs are to be collected and handed in. On every prisoner letters such as the following, dated from Breslau, are found:

Let us have peace quickly. Last week we almost had a revolution here here on account of the potatoes. Another letter from Winden says: I suppose that you have heard about the troubles that occurred in the mining basin. Almost every day troops are coming from Essen to suppress riots.

A letter from Perow says: At Kiel there were many manifestations in the ironworks. The workmen refused to work. You can guess what happened. I cannot write to you anything more on that subject for fear of getting into trouble.

A letter from Berlin says: We can sum up the situation by saying everyone here now wishes for peace. Up to now the only aim we have accomplished is the sacrifice of human lives, and this for what and for whom?

Now Then Read This

NEW YORK, Aug. 18.—Sealing in the ice fields of Newfoundland, has been very profitable this year, says Dr. Reverdy V. W. Estill, of Louisville, Ky., who has returned from a five weeks trip to the sealing grounds. Dr. Estill said the steamer Florizel on which he sailed, gathered about \$150,000 worth of pelts, and oil.

The Florizel was the hospital ship of the fleet of ten sealers, and was the first to carry a medical officer, as the sealers formerly depended upon the service of a drug clerk or male nurse, to care for cases of snow blindness, cuts, ice bruises, and beriberi.

Huge Plot to Make Bad Money

Gang Was to Have Printed \$1,000,000 and Quit

NEW YORK, Aug. 20.—A conspiracy to manufacture and circulate \$1,000,000 of counterfeit silver certificates and United States Treasury notes was frustrated here to-day by William J. Flynn, chief of the Government Secret Service, and several of his assistants.

Eight arrests were made, after raids on a house at Grant City, Staten Island, and one in East Eight street, this city. A complete counterfeiting outfit was found, consisting of photographic apparatus, lithographic presses, electrotyping and etching tools, paper and colored inks.

An illicit wine and liquor blending plant was unearthed. Two of the men taken in custody were operating this plant, it was alleged.

According to the secret service men, the counterfeiters apparently were well supplied with money, their outfit alone having cost upwards of \$2,000.

The scheme, the government agents said they were informed, was to manufacture the \$1,000,000 in bills, then destroy the plant before attempting to dispose of the bogus money.

Seventy photographic negatives of genuine bills already had been made and the impressions transferred to gelatine and wax plates. Some of these, after having been electroplated, had been etched. Pieces of silk and human hair also were used in the process of making the counterfeit.

Chief Flynn declared to-night that the ringleader of the alleged conspiracy is an expert photo-engraver and etcher. The work of fitting up the plant, it was said, began several months ago, and was carried on as quietly as possible.

ANXIOUS TO SEE FRANCE

57 Mess. H. M. S. Excellent. 25716.

My Dear Mother.—In answer to your most kind and welcome letter, which I received yesterday and was very glad indeed to hear from you, it being so long since I got a letter from home. I am also glad to hear you are well and all the family as well. I am quite well myself and also enjoying myself. Haven't anything strange to tell you at present, as news is just as scarce here as it is at home and I expect you hear as much about the war as what I can tell you, in fact more, because I never buy a paper to see what they are doing at the front. I have quite enough to do to pay attention to the instructions that I am getting daily. You would want a head on you like a parson to remember what you are told in a day. We have got a wonderful lot to learn and in a very short time. In ordinary peace times it takes people six months to go through what we have to go through in five weeks. There are so many men constantly commencing here that they haven't the time to spare.

No, mother, I haven't heard from Lockyer since he left home; I wish I was in his place, so as I could get over to France to see what the fighting is like. I haven't seen any fighting since I have been over here. I don't know why it is that some get it all and others none. I suppose it must be one's luck. I am very much afraid that we will have a long time over here yet, another twelve or eighteen months I expect. So don't get uneasy about me, I will be alright. I haven't heard from Fannie for a long while. I did not know that she intended going to Boston, so you can give me her address. Hasn't Susie grown a big girl since I left, she hasn't altered much, only in size. She will soon be as big as myself. Give my best respects to father and Sadie and Tonie and all friends.

From your loving son,
HEBER.
(The above writer is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Chaik of Charlottetown, B.B. Nfld.)

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