

### AMERICAN SAW 50,000 MEN DIE IN SERB RETREAT

#### Were Shot, Killed, Robbed and Murdered Every Step of Way

Rome, Italy, April 19. — (Correspondence of The Associated Press)—Henry Haller, formerly of the Fifth United States Cavalry, who was one of the few Americans in the Serbian retreat, declares that during the journey to Podgoritz in Montenegro in a four days' snow storm more than fifty thousand men died.

"They died so fast," he said, "that they fell every few yards all along the road. The wagons and carts went right over their bodies. Nobody thought of trying to turn out of the way, but there were so many they could not but drive over them. The roads were full of mudholes. At one place I saw no less than seventeen horses dying in one immense puddle, unable to pull themselves out.

"I saw hundreds and thousands of ragged men, with their feet swollen too much to wear shoes or to walk on them, crawling along for miles on their hands and knees through the blinding snow, finally stopping and dying soon afterwards. They never made any appeals for help. It would not have been any use. Besides, they were too far gone, to know what they were about, that they were dying. Their last effort to keep going was merely a mechanical operation. Of course the great mortality all along our route was due to the barren nature of the country we were traversing, with no shelter for but a comparatively few of us. There were even no forests where we might have felled trees and built temporary quarters. Our fires for the most part were small, with barely enough wood to heat water."

Haller, who was on a visit to Budapest when the war began, enlisted in the Austrian army and was serving as a bugler when, six months later, he was taken prisoner by the Serbs and then finally was marched with 75,000 other Austrian soldiers across the mountains into Albania and "there turned loose on the shores of the Adriatic to fight for life against cholera, fever and starvation."

"We were supposed to have started on that retreat," said Haller, "with a Serb army of over two hundred thousand men and about seventy-five thousand Austrian prisoners. Not many more than a hundred and fifty thousand of the whole lot got over the mountains. It was not because the Austrians or the Bulgarians pursued us, however, with much activity. We died merely because of disease, hunger and exhaustion."

"The worst part of the journey began at the Albanian frontier. The Albanians have in times past been badly treated by the Serbs, and they took this chance to square old scores. They shot, killed, robbed and murdered us at every step of the way. For instance, at Linn, some Serb officers and a company of stragglers on horseback were met on the middle of the road by a few peasants and ordered to give up their horses and their money. It was plain highway robbery and they refused. The peasants ran away and within a couple of minutes more than a thousand shots were fired out of the bushy hillside, killing most of the Serbs.

"The food problem was terrific even in Albania. A half pound of bread was sold at ten dinars, about two dollars. As I had a little money at Sturza I bought five pounds of oika beans. Had I not been able to get these beans, I would to-day be a dead man. I had just said to myself: 'I can't go any further,' when I persuaded a peasant woman to sell me the beans. I ate beans twice a day making a sort of soup out of them, putting in a little salt. At that I was far luckier than the fellows who had to boil harness leather for five or six hours in order to make the hot water taste like soup. I saw men act like savages, eating pieces of brown paper.

"There were perhaps not more than two thousand women among the retreating horde with us and it is a fact worth recording that they were kindly treated and given whatever comforts were available by soldiers who were otherwise dead to every feeling. I have seen such men, gaunt, staggering along, half-naked, with a few pieces of cloth for shoes, unable to speak, with barely strength left to stop near a dying horse and catch a stray stick from its flank, straighten up for a moment near one of the women's carts and smilingly tender their last mouthful of food to some of the women."

"The treatment of the women on this dreadful retreat was to me the most wonderful, the most moving, the most heroic part of the whole retreat. These poor women in their flight from their homes had in many cases been unable to bring enough clothes to cover them. Often they were without stockings or undershirts, or hats or shawls or cloaks. I have seen some and time again some freezing soldiers take off his overcoat and force it upon some one of these women, and seem almost ashamed to look upon her shivering body as he made the offer. Then he would search along the road for hours until he was able to strip some dead man of his clothes to replace that which he had so freely given."

What Haller regarded as his most remarkable experience was the sight of a mad soldier dying from starvation. "Clothes only in a ragged undershirt he was running barefoot down a snow-covered Albanian road, straight as an arrow, bellowing as he ran," he said. "He ran on and on down that road, seeing nothing, yet wonderfully avoiding stumbling over the bodies of other dead and dying soldiers and the meat-stripped carcasses of the army horses which blocked the way. Suffering intensely as I myself was, I turned and watched this strange figure. At last a half-mile down the road he pitched forward and as I passed him later saw he was stone dead."

"Other than that incident there is one other that will stick in my memory so long as I live," said Haller. "This was the hanging of a Serb mother by the Austrian troops before I was made a prisoner. We were marching across a rough country near Lochnitzer when we stopped near a drink. Colonel Heill of our regiment also went to get a drink. As he rose from the spring a shot came from the hut. That shot was fired by a woman. She stood at the door, an old drunk. Colonel Heill of our regiment was in one hand, a baby in the other."

"One of the captains ordered her hung. There was nothing else to do but execute her. As a rope was placed about her neck and she was led to the nearest tree all she said was this, in a hard, cold voice: 'My husband is a soldier, I too die for Serbia.' She made no appeal. She did not cry out. We left her body hanging there in the wind. The baby was picked up and sent to the nearest prison camp to be cared for."

Through the efforts of Robert Haverick, representing the United States among the Austrian prisoners, Haller was rescued from starvation at

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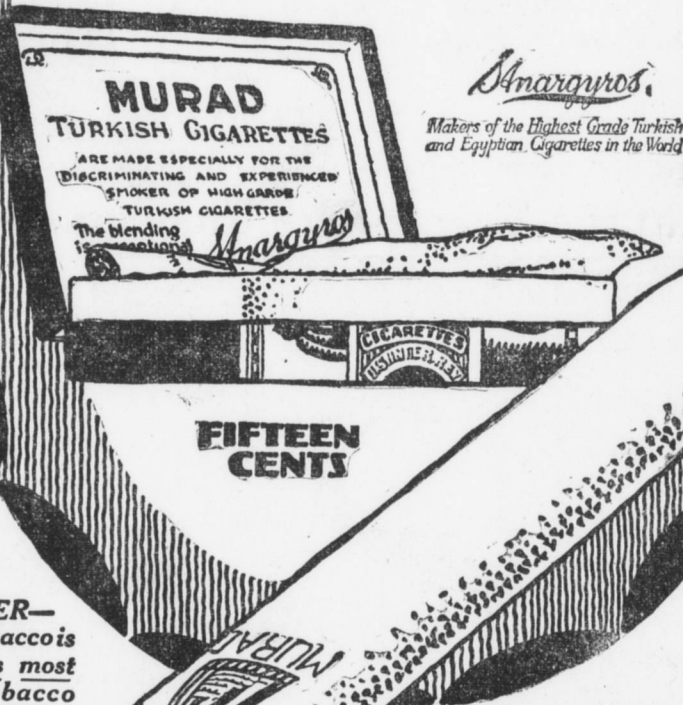
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Special to the Telegraph  
Hummelstown, Pa., April 21.—On Friday evening, April 28, the last patrons' meeting of the school year will be held in the high school. The speaker of the evening will be County Superintendent Frank E. Shambaugh. The high school orchestra will give a concert, beginning at 7.45, and the formal program will include: Music, orchestra; song, "Fingers Lullaby," girls of first room; a song game, girls of Room 1; music, orchestra; "The Rainy Fairies," six boys and six girls of Room 2; music, orchestra; illustrated song, "The Last Rose of Summer," soloist, Miss Helen Shoemaker; characters, Ruth Light, Elsie Mumma, Ethel Lehman, Mary Light, Josephine Burkholder, Pauline Lantz, Ethel Hartz, Edith Ebersole, Ione Bomgardner and Isa McHolland; music, orchestra; address, County Superintendent Shambaugh; march, orchestra. An exhibit of work from all the grades and the high school will be made and the building will be open at 7 for those who are interested to view the exhibit before the program begins.



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Durazzo and later Ambassador Page in Rome interested himself in the case. "I am going back home the best American citizen you ever saw," declared Haller. "I wish I had words to express my feeling for the kind of people that are grown in the United States."

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