

# The Hell-Trench of the Piave

How an attacking German force was electrocuted as it rushed a second line of trenches

By E. T. Bronsdon



How eight thousand Germans were electrocuted near the Piave River. They rushed a trench filled with scrap-iron charged to high voltage by power plants from two adjacent towns

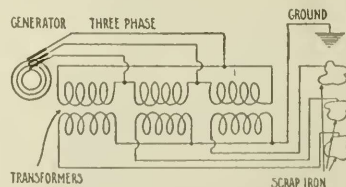
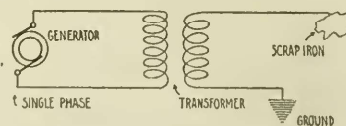
WHEN the Italians stopped, a few weeks ago, with their backs to the Piave River, in northern Italy, with the intent of delaying the Austro-German advance as much as possible, an incident occurred which illustrates the scientific resourcefulness of the Italians and also shows how much of a factor the unexpected can become, even in this warfare of to-day.

It was certain that no long stand could be made on that side of the river; the Teuton preponderance in men and guns was too great. Any expedient which might gain hours, however, was worth considering.

An Italian engineer by the name of Mertilli was responsible for the plan. These carried the heaviest charge of

Before the final German thrust was delivered, Mertilli caused the second-line trench to be evacuated over a front of eight miles, except by workmen.

In this second trench he placed some discarded machine guns, plates of corrugated dugout armor, and even some veteran field pieces, which seldom made an appearance in the trenches. The whole floor of the trench was lined irregularly with pieces of metal of different kinds, so that no matter where a man might step he was likely to touch one of the pieces. Then service electric cables were stretched to the trench, across the Piave, from two



Connections the Italians may have used. Instead of the single-phase and three-phase circuits above shown, direct current may have been available

electricity the plants were capable of turning out. The cables were connected up by concealed wires with all the bits of metal, the machine guns, the field pieces and the corrugated armor. Safety zones were left for the escape of the defenders of the first trench, but all other parts were connected with the electric cables.

The next morning the German mass attack came, driving the first trench defenders back remorselessly. The huge body of men swept over the first trench, and on to the second.

Something radically wrong appeared there. Men jumped into the trench, and it appeared to be evacuated, yet the invaders did not re-appear. The charging Germans behind could not know what was wrong. They came on and on, seizing the machine guns, the old field pieces and whatever they could lay hands on. It is needless to say that none of these lived to tell the tale of their captured trophies, for each was electrocuted where he first entered the trench.

All along the eight miles, the condition was the same. Of course the German command soon found out what was wrong, but not until nearly eight thousand of the very best of Germany's troops were dead—and all without a single Italian casualty! And besides, the attack was halted for a day giving the Italians time to reorganize their defenses, on the other side of the Piave.

### The Seal Which Is Used on Our Paper Money

A RELIC of the Revolutionary days when we were not yet a nation still remains on our paper money. The seal which appears on every bill issued by the Government contains the abbreviated words "Thesaur. Amer. Septent. Sigil. The full phrase is "Thesauri Americana Septentriomalis Sigillum," which simply means, "Seal of the Treasury of North America." Our distinguished ancestors felt that if a thing were to be said with dignity, it had to be said in Latin.



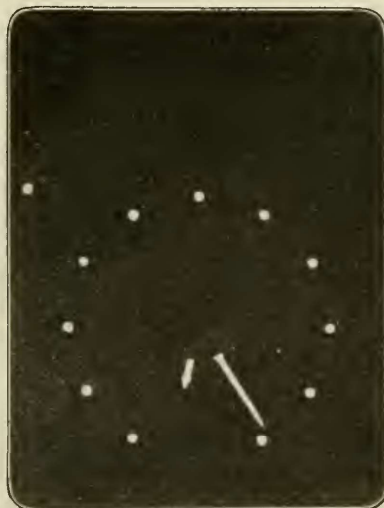
The electrical slaughter was silent and terrible. The German regiments coming up behind could not know what was wrong

### Don't Light a Match. Read Your Clock in the Dark

SMALL, flat disks treated with a radium compound are now being glued on the dials of clocks at the five-minute points and also to the hands so that the clock can be read in the dark. A complete set of eleven disks and a pair of hands can be affixed to a clock in a few minutes.

The glow is practically everlasting and the disks, according to the manufacturer, will outlast the mechanism of the clock itself. The disk is omitted from the 6 of the clock so that the dial may be read instantly.

For automobilists, campers, hunters, doctors, nurses and soldiers this clock is a great convenience.



Disks treated with a radium compound are placed at the five-minute points and on the hands