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#### THE BATTLE OF "MURDER MOUNTAIN"

The Grenadiers, the Coldstream and the Scots Guards fought a desperate battle against heavy odds in the MONTE CAMINO Massif from November 7th to 14th. In front of their objective - a series of ridges, locally known as "Murder Mountain" - was a narrow span of valley with the GARIGLIANO on the left, and to the right the road stretching north from ROCCAMONFINA to join the Appian Way at MIGNANO. There were three main ridges to be captured, each sloping southwards towards the plain. On the right of the first ridge (No. 1) was a peak, crowned by a monastery, whence the hill sloped down into the Garigliano plain by what was called "Razorback Ridge". On the middle ridge (No. 2) was Point 819, descending via Point 727 down "Bare Earth Slope" to the village of CALABRITTO at the foot. Between these two ridges was a corrie, by which a track wound up from the village of MIELI. At the head of the track was a wood running left-handed to point 819, and directly above the head of the corrie olive trees and cultivated terraces stretched right-handed to the foot of the Monastery Feature. Ridge No. 3 ran parallel with the other two, nearer the Garigliano.

The plan of attack was for the Coldstream to capture CALABRITTO at last light on the 6th November and there to form a firm base. The Grenadiers were to go through them, pass up "Bare Earth Slope", take point 819 on the middle ridge, and swing right-handed to Monastery Feature (on Ridge No. 1) which was thought to be lightly held. The Scots Guards were to go up the track in the corrie above MIELI, attack westwards through the Grenadiers, and take the final ridge (No. 3) nearer the River.

The first difficulties were encountered at the very beginning of the operation. The Coldstream, though they captured their first objective, found their way forward barred by minefields and were not able to capture CALABRITTO until the morning of the 7th. The Grenadiers did not wait for CALABRITTO to fall, but set off up "Bare Earth Slope" in the moonlight, covered by heavy artillery fire. The climb was arduous in the extreme, but they met with no trouble until they were well up the slope, when suddenly very heavy automatic fire was brought down on them from Point 819 and Monastery Ridge.

By nightfall on the 7th, though the Grenadiers had taken Point 727 and made good progress towards Point 819, the enemy had succeeded in infiltrating between these two peaks, and the two forward companies on Point 819 were subjected to attack after attack, while the whole battalion was under very heavy mortar and  
/spandau fire

spandau fire throughout the night. A company of the Scots Guards, sent forward during the day to reconnoitre the approach to Ridge No. 3, lost its way in the dark and found itself linked with the forward companies of the Grenadiers. It gave valuable help in beating off repeated counter attacks from which the Grenadiers had already suffered very heavy casualties.

By November 8th the Grenadiers had done three-quarters of the job assigned to them. Point 727 was held, and there was a precarious grip on Point 819. The Brigade's position, however, was not good. The Germans held strong tactical positions threatening the forward companies of the Grenadiers and the Scots Guards, while the Coldstream, in the Calabritto area, were threatened with infiltration on both flanks. There was a gallant attempt during the day by a Grenadier patrol to locate and neutralise the spandaus sited on the slopes of Monte Camino. Among the incidents of a grim day was a small earthquake.

The next day saw the Guards tested to the uttermost. The Grenadiers were heavily attacked, and it seemed humanly impossible that their forward companies and the Scots Guards company could escape being overrun. No less than nine counter attacks by greatly superior enemy forces were hurled in against this beleaguered outpost, but nine times the Guards stood their ground, refusing to yield a yard. Late that evening, a company of the Scots Guards managed to make its way slowly through the moonlight up the track to secure a firm base at the head of the corrie for a further assault on Point 819 and "Razorback Ridge". They met with fierce opposition, but, after a desperate fight raging around the head of the corrie, the Scots Guards drove forward, wiping out enemy spandau posts one by one, and by first light they had fought their way forward to their objective, with a haul of prisoners in tow.

The fifth day of the stern battle against odds on "Murder Mountain" began with a gallant piece of work on the part of the Scots Guards. A reconnaissance patrol spotted a German post overlooking the battalion position on the corrie track, and a platoon was sent out which dealt with this and captured nine prisoners. The position unfortunately could not be held because of snipers ensconced in the peaks above the track.

All through the day the enemy hurled in attack after attack against the forward companies of the Grenadiers and the Scots Guards. More than 100 casualties from the Grenadiers passed through the Regimental Aid Post before nightfall. The three companies, to whom it had been impossible to send rations or reinforcements, resisted with indomitable valour, and again and again took the full shock of the German attack and beat back the superior forces of the enemy. The Grenadier companies were led with

utmost resolution - one of them by Captain Howard who continued to command his company from a stretcher after being twice wounded.

The severe test to which the Guards had been subjected came to an end during the night of the 14th November. The forward companies of the Grenadiers and Scots Guards had been relieved by other units, and at last the Brigade was withdrawn from the area in which it had fought so well. The bitter cold had added heavily to its casualties; many of those who went through the Regimental Aid Post were suffering from frost bite. The withdrawal from the ridge was accomplished without much incident. The Coldstream were attacked as they fell back, but they repulsed the enemy, killing 15 of them in a hard fought little rearguard action. The two forward companies of the Grenadiers sustained heavy casualties from spandau fire; while the rest of the battalion lost many men from mortar fire and shelling. The forward company of the Scots Guards, had suffered heavy casualties.

Such is the story of the bitter fighting in the battle for "Murder Mountain". It is a story of valour not crowned with immediate success, but the resolute gallantry of an unsurpassed formation of British troops tested to the full the strength of enemy units whose grip on easily defended positions was shaken and well-nigh cracked by a great assault.

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