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SUPERSTITIONS AT FRONT.

Man From Saskatchewan Foretold Dire Happenings.

Superstition of the ancient black witch sort is coming back into its own as a result of the war. Not only England but all the other European countries report the same condition—that wherever men are facing death they incline to watch little signs and omens, and this spirit quickly spreads through their families.

All units leaving for the front have some kind of a pet or mascot, usually a cat or dog, and the lives of these pets are guarded with extreme care. An Australian artillery battalion which got into action early in the Dardanelles campaign had a black cat which made its first appearance during the battalion's first engagement. Men on every side of the unit were killed, but not a casualty occurred among those protected by the cat. Thereafter the commanding officer kept the cat in his quarters and each day sent his orderly out with the cat while it had its airing.

There were no chances taken of the mascot getting into danger, for whenever the orderly sallied forth on the constitutional the officer made him tie a string around its neck to prevent it running away. The jokes that were passed by other units upon the orderly leading the mascot may well be imagined. The battalion was later moved to the Somme and on June 26 discovered that the mascot had got into a house which was under heavy fire. One shell was seen to burst directly over the building and a rush was made to find the cat. It was discovered on a kitchen table, hair on end and spitting but unharmed. Unfortunately it died later of shell shock, and the same day the battalion was cut to pieces while defending an exposed ridge.

Little omens that seem ridiculous to the average man are revered by those who are about to face death. In an infantry regiment from Canada there was a private who boasted that by putting on his left sock and shoe first he invariably had good luck. The others were continually "joshing" him about his superstition and one morning before his big push in July of last year he hid his left sock and shoe just to make him use some picturesque Saskatchewan profanity. He not only provided the expletives, but he announced to his unit that dire happenings were pending. Sure enough, when he and his comrades went over the parapet soon afterward their casualties were heavier than any of the nearby units. Thereafter every man who survived religiously put on the left shoe and sock before touching the right.

Another superstition common among the fighting forces is that by rubbing spilled wine or spirits back of the ears it brings good luck. It is believed that this sign spread among the Canadian forces through contact with the French, who believe in the omen religiously. Just before the start of a raid or dash over the parapet the English forces are served with a ration of whiskey or brandy, and in every case the men quietly gather around the one who pours out the stimulants, holding their hands under the jug to catch the drip and rubbing the little they catch back of their ears.

Indians in Khaki.

According to a telegram received by his mother, Mrs. Mary Belanger, at the Mission, Fort William, Pte. Augustine Belanger, M.M., has been killed in action. He enlisted with Colonel Hay's battalion and was first wounded in June last year. He was a despatch carrier and received the Military Medal for faithful and brilliant work performed while the battalion was under fire. Nearly 100 Indians have left the Thunder Bay District with the 52nd, 94th, and 141st Battalions. Of the 20 who left with the 52nd, under the late Lieut. Colonel Hay, of Quebec, five have been killed, and all but two have been wounded.

The Delaronde family of Nipigon sent four soldiers to France. Dennis was killed in action in June, 1916; Alex. was wounded and sent home, but re-enlisted at the first opportunity; Joseph won the Military Medal for holding a trench with a machine gun after his companions were killed. Pte. Alex. Chiet has been wounded three times. Pte. Rod Cameron was one of the crack shots in the Canadian army. Before leaving for France he defeated the best marksmen in 12 battalions. He was killed in action. Two other splendid snipers were Ambrose and Laurence Marten, of Nipigon. Laurence was killed in action and Ambrose was severely wounded. Pte. Simeon Oombash journeyed over 400 miles to enlist at Port Arthur. He could not speak a word of English, but turned out to be one of the best and smartest soldiers in the 141st.

Molybdenum is Valuable.

The more one learns about molybdenum the more one feels that Canada, which is the principal source of this metal, has in it a product quite as valuable as nickel, if not more so. Molybdenum is now used as a substitute for tungsten or vanadium in hardening steel, for which purpose its use is far more economical. It lengthens greatly the durability of gun metal and armor plate. It is valuable in high explosives, and it has other uses in war. But this is not all. It takes the place of platinum in the compounding of chemicals used for dyes, while it has also been found effective as a support of the filament of electric lamps. Its possibilities, however, are only beginning to make themselves known.

Honored by Russians.

Major-General R. C. Uniacke, belonging to a noted Canadian soldier family, has been gazetted for a Russian decoration, Order of Saint Anne, First Class, with Swords. Uniacke previously was twice mentioned in despatches.

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