

CAUGHT AUSTRIAN FLASHING SIGNALS

Sergt. Barter, of Montreal, Tells of Incident on Trans- port Missanabie

How an Austrian, a member of the ship's orchestra, was caught in the act of signalling from the transport Missanabie as they were approaching the English shore with the presumable intention of getting information to a German submarine, that the 23rd Battalion was aboard, is related in a letter just received from Sergeant Fred Barter, who has many friends in Montreal, and who at the time of his enlistment in the second contingent was secretary to Controller McDonald at the City Hall. The letter, dated March 13, from the Shorncliffe barracks, Kent, England, in part, says:

"The journey both by train and by boat was in the highest degree pleasant. Everything that could be conjured up for our comfort and wellbeing was provided, and the voyage on the Missanabie was voted by one and all a royal, rollicking time.

"Thanks to the efficient escort of His Majesty's cruisers, we were able to make the journey in company with two other transports (Megantic and Vaterland) without suffering from indisposition caused by torpedoes or submarines. If you will take it for granted that the incidents of the voyage were similar to those of most voyages, I will pass from them to a real adventure, or let us call it an exciting episode. You must understand first of all that on a transport all lights are out on deck after 6 p.m. You will now understand and appreciate the seriousness of what I am trying to tell you when it was reported that the pickets had noticed flashes of light at night from portholes on the starboard side. At first it was difficult to locate the particular cabin whence emanated these presumable signs. The night of our departure from Queenstown harbor, however, a special watch was set and one Cleonya, an Austrian and a member of the ship's orchestra, was caught in the act. This was at midnight, and a lucky thing for Mr. Cleonya, for if the boys had been able to get hold of him I think he might have been ill-used. However, the danger was not very great and we were within a ring of watchful destroyers, and so we arrived at Bristol on Sunday morning, all happier and a good deal healthier than when we left Quebec.

"Here at Shorncliffe we are ideally situated. They could not have chosen a better spot for us. And we are tickled to death we were not sent to Salisbury.

"Folkestone, nearby, is the evening promenade of our soldier boys, and just now it is full of Belgian refugees and soldiers, wounded and sick. The Belgians receive handsome treatment from everyone here, and in turn they do their best for their English friends. The boys in khaki are great favorites with them and anyone with a smattering of French is a hail fellow well met. After eight o'clock the town is dark. All lights on the water front and piers are extinguished; within the town shops and houses are gloomy, and the street lamps are blackened above and at the sides to prevent heavenward rays of light.

"The town is by no means gloomy. Places of amusement are in full swing, confidence and smiles are much in evidence, and generally one can have a good time if so inclined. On the whole, things are bright in England, and I am struck by the optimism that obtains. The majority of folks anticipate the close of the war not later than the fall, and I understand that the odds in London are 10-1 against the war outlasting the year. For myself I must be frank and say I don't know. I have learned a lot since leaving Canada and a good deal has been imparted in lectures by our officers. Taking the whole lot together I don't think we Allies have been so successful as perhaps we have believed, or have been led to believe. Certainly as far as the naval aspect goes, we are all victorious, but on land, there is the rub, it's a long way to Berlin. The German artillery is an arm of fiendish ingenuity. It can perform anything short of a miracle, and in this war of artillery—that is all it is—they have not been seriously inconvenienced yet. I'll bet a thousand to one the Allies are returned the winner, but the war won't be finished on the battlefield, not by a long way. I can see the end coming through the effective cutting off of Germany from outside sources of food and general supplies, and I fancy Germany begins to realize that herself. The armies are practically standing still, the gains and losses are fifty-fifty counting from the end of August, and if anyone thinks the German fighting machine can be put out of business by fighting, he has got another think coming. I am in the game for all it's worth. I am willing to do my little bit and already my kit-bags are labelled 'Berlin,' via France and Belgium, but I am not figuring on getting there through walls of steel. I tell myself that the accomplishment of my tour will be made possible by a collapse from within the German army.

"I should tell you that this barracks is fine; its location, as I have pointed out, is ideal and every man-jack of us from Col. Fisher down is happy and contented. Work and win is our motto, and enthusiasm is our stimulant. By the way, Gordon, formerly of The Gazette staff and now Sergeant Gordon, is here at Shorncliffe."