

HUNS SCORE GAIN IN FIRST STROKE OF NEW OFFENSIVE IN CHAMPAGNE

Crushing Attacks of French Around Ruins of Fort Douaumont Force Germans to Yield Ground, While an Entire Regiment is Almost Encircled—Two Terrific Stabs at Town of Woeuvre Checked, but Enemy Scores a Gain by Surprise Movement in Champagne District.

ADVANCE, NO MATTER WHAT COST, ORDER TO THE GERMAN TROOPS

"Frightful Massacre", German Soldiers Taken Prisoner Describe Work of French Guns — Moment's Hesitation of Part of French When Huns Set Foot on Fort Douaumont Would Have Spelled Defeat.

Paris, Feb. 28 (5.05 p. m.)—"A frightful massacre," is how German soldiers taken prisoner in the battle of Verdun describe the effect of the French artillery, machine gun and rifle fire. But the impetus of the assaulting forces was not diminished thereby during the first four days, because fresh troops were thrown into the battle unceasingly.

"Advance, no matter what the losses may be," was the order given to the German troops before the attack. This is verified by documents found on one of the captured officers.

The most critical moment in the six days' action was when the Germans gained a footing in the entrenched camp by the capture of Fort Douaumont. The last hesitation on the part of the defenders would have been disastrous. The Germans redoubled their efforts to take advantage of any confusion, but the French immediately began a counter-offensive.

French infantry advanced at double-quick pace to the trumpet charge, and leaped at the first ranks of the Germans with irresistible fury. The clash was murderous to both sides. The thinned French ranks were not to be denied, but to the second German wing, while reinforcements were hurried to their support. The German lines covered first Fort Douaumont, then were driven out of the ruins of the fort.

ARTILLERY ADDS TO THE CARNAGE.
A cry of triumph went up all along the French line, and the sound of the counter-attack was redoubled. In the meantime an artillery duel, surpassing in intensity any previous action of the war, added to the carnage.

The battle seems now to have reached a critical point. The assaulting forces have receded slightly in the region of Douaumont, leaving the regiments which occupied the fort cut off and surrounded by French troops. The attacks upon the French left, at Cote Du Poivre, seemed to have completely failed. However, attacks made repeatedly with such heavy masses as the Germans are constantly bringing up, it is admitted by military authorities, are always likely to make further gains, provided the officers are willing to pay the price in human life.

There is no exaggerated optimism to be found in military circles here, but the check of the Germans attacking in such formidable numbers is regarded by them as one of the great achievements of the war, and it is generally held that events have taken a turn quite favorable to the French arms in the last twenty-four hours.

French More Than Holding Their Own
The tide of battle around Verdun has not apparently set in favor of either side. While the Germans claim further advances, the French are equally emphatic in their claim of having checked the attacks of the masses of German infantry sent against them.

Fort Douaumont has fallen to the Germans, but it is reported to be in ruins. Around this position the most desperate fighting of the battle has been going on since Friday. Here French counter-attacks were delivered with such crushing force that some of the German detachments were driven back, and one regiment is almost encircled. To the west of this fort, in a hand-to-hand encounter, the French have ejected the Germans from a small redoubt which they had captured.

Throughout the entire sector of Verdun, except on the western bank of the Meuse river, where the German bombardment has slackened somewhat, the artillery duels are still of vast proportions. To the southeast, the French at Fresnoy, in the Woeuvre region, have put down two German attacks against that town, but the Germans have inaugurated an important movement in the Champagne district, where by a surprise attack they succeeded in entering French advanced positions of a supporting trench over a front of nearly a mile, capturing more than a thousand men.

Notwithstanding the fresh reserves the French have thrown into the fray at Fort Douaumont, the German war office declares that their efforts have been fruitless, and that the Germans have advanced their lines toward Bras and Vacheraville. It is also claimed that the Germans have entirely expelled the French from the Meuse peninsula, southward from Samogneux, and west of Vacheraville.

On the Russian front, around Friedrichstadt and Iliouk, there has been heavy artillery, machine gun and rifle firing. In Galicia the Russians repulsed an attempt by the Austro-Hungarians

EMER PASHA'S BROTHER LED DEFEATED TRIBESMEN

Operations by South African Troops in West Egypt Ended in Decisive Success — Brother of Turkish War Minister Who Led Enemy was Among 200 Dead.

London, Feb. 28.—Additional advice regarding the fighting in Western Egypt, in which South African troops defeated tribesmen commanded by Turkish officers, were received by the war office from Major General Sir John Maxwell, commander of the British forces. The report says: "The fight on Saturday last ended in a decisive success for us. The enemy was under the personal command of the Nuri Bey, brother of Emir Pasha, the Turkish war minister, with Gasfar as his principal subordinate. They were holding a strong position some fifteen miles southeast of Bahari."

General Peyton reports that the attack by South African infantry under Gen. Lukin was completely successful, and that the charge of the Dismounted Yeomanry was brilliant and most effective. In this charge Gasfar was wounded and made prisoner, and Nuri Bey was killed. Some fifteen miles southeast of Bahari, the Turkish officers were killed or wounded on the ground. In addition to Gasfar two other Turkish officers were made prisoner. One machine gun was captured.

"The telegraph line between Bahari and Bahari has not been completely restored, so that full details of the affair are not yet at hand."

In Mesopotamia.
London, Feb. 28.—The following official communication concerning the operations of the British in Mesopotamia was made public this evening: "On the morning of the 22nd Gen. Aymer bombarded the enemy camp on the left bank of the Tigris to make him disclose his dispositions, and at the same time to inflict the maximum amount of damage. The enemy, taken by surprise, lost heavily and useful information was obtained by our aeroplanes."

London, Feb. 28, 11.37 p. m.—The owners of the Peninsular and Oriental steamer Lloyds, which struck a mine and sank off Dover Sunday, announced tonight that the total number of persons saved in the disaster was 301. Of these 72 were passengers, 92 members of the European crew, and 137 of the Lascar crew. The missing comprise 49 passengers, 29 members of the European crew, and 36 Lascars. The steamer Rotterdam, which sailed from Rotterdam Feb. 23, for New York, according to Reuters' correspondent at the Hague. The Rotterdam cleared from Falmouth Feb. 25 for her westward voyage.

Three Hundred Saved.
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London, Feb. 28, 9.05 p. m.—According to Reuters' correspondent at the Hague, the British steamer Southford, formerly the Sindbad, has been sunk. Eleven of the vessel's crew were saved. Two were killed. The Southford was a vessel of 897 tons.

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London, Feb. 28, 11.15 p. m.—The British authorities at Falmouth look off the mail of the Holland-American line steamer Rotterdam, which sailed from Rotterdam Feb. 23, for New York, according to Reuters' correspondent at the Hague. The Rotterdam cleared from Falmouth Feb. 25 for her westward voyage.

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GERMANS WOULD FIND VERDUN AN EMPTY SHELL

French Sent Provisions and Arms to Rear Six Months Ago.

NEITHER CANNON NOR
GARRISON THERE NOW.

Losses in Great Struggle in
Progress Have Gone Beyond
Power of Calculators.

Paris, Feb. 27.—The fight for the possession of Verdun goes on with increasing violence, multiplying the dead and wounded to a point that the losses have got beyond calculators.

It is impossible to verify how many reinforcements the Germans have brought up, but the military critics believe of the 300,000 men that began the attack few will be left at the end of the first fighting.

Verdun, the object of all this sacrifice, is now nothing but "an anxious fortress," according to authoritative information, and if the Germans take it they will find it but an empty shell.

Port Douaumont, before which such a sacrifice in lives has been made by its assailants, holds neither cannon nor garrison. It is six months since the French, putting into practice the lessons of the war, showing that fortresses are more vulnerable than field works, "unclassified" Verdun, and all its provisions, arms and munitions, as well as those in the surrounding forts, were sent to the rear.

Eighty thousand men and several hundred cannon would have been the trophies of a conquest of the place in September, 1914.

Today Verdun is not a fortress. It has neither cannon nor garrison, and has no provisions except for the current needs of the population. The value of the town itself is scarcely more than that of any one of the villages to the north taken by the Germans in the last six days, since it was never anything more than a military stronghold.

London, Feb. 28.—The recent heavy losses in shipping, especially during the week-end, from floating mines or other causes have resulted in a stiffening of insurance rates. Underwriters last week quoted rates on shipping to the continent which were almost prohibitive. Today's figures for east coast traffic show an increase from ten shillings to twenty shillings per cent.

Insurance for Mediterranean and other voyages have not changed greatly, although there is more hesitation than heretofore in accepting risks. This probably due to the fear of fresh submarine activity beginning March 1, when the German and Austrian decrees concerning treatment of armed merchantmen as warships take effect.

OTTAWAS WIN.
Ottawa, Feb. 28.—The Ottawas came back to form tonight and defeated the Montreal Wanderers by six goals to two, after a great N. H. A. game at the Arena. It took place on a fast sheet of ice, and drew a crowd of about 6,000 people.

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REPEATS ASSURANCES GIVEN IN LUSITANIA CASE

Berlin Attempts to Justify New Submarine Policy Which Begins at Midnight Tonight by Alleged Breach of Faith on Part of Great Britain.

Washington, Feb. 28.—Germany, in a formal note presented by Count Von Bernstorff to Secretary of State Lansing today, reiterates assurances regarding the future conduct of submarine warfare given in the Lusitania case, declares those assurances have not been modified by the memorandum setting forth its intention to treat armed merchantmen of the Entente Allies as auxiliary cruisers after midnight tomorrow, and attempts to justify the issuance of the memo by presenting evidence and assertions designed to prove that the British government has instructed merchantmen to use their armament for purposes of attack, in violation of assurances given to the United States.

Later it was said at the State Department that while the United States stood unalterably for the right of a merchant ship to carry guns for defense, it was not now and never had been contended that Americans could travel with immunity on ships having orders to act offensively. It was indicated that although Secretary Lansing was not prepared at this time to accept as conclusive the allegations of Germany in regard to the confidential instructions claimed to have been given to British sea captains, that if the claims were sustained the fact would have an important bearing upon the future attitude of this government. It is felt in high official quarters here that the question of motive is the cardinal consideration in determining the difference between defensive and offensive armament.

Resistance and Offense an Important Element.
A copy of the so-called British instructions, which were handed to Ambassador Gerard in Berlin, and which are considered by Secretary Lansing to be the all-important element in the situation as it stands at present have not arrived. Pending their receipt and a subsequent decision regarding the attitude of the United States, the State Department is prepared to consider any overt act committed by the commanders of German and Austrian submarines in the light of the facts. It was authoritatively stated that the department probably would not act upon the case of an American who sustained injuries aboard a vessel which it could be definitely established was to be offensively used.

The State Department makes a broad distinction between resistance and offense. It holds that a merchant ship has a right to resist capture, but not to act offensively. Of course, it is admitted, a vessel loses all immunity while in the act of resistance.

Authoritative information obtained here tonight indicated that the British government probably would combat the allegations of Germany that British ships ostensibly armed for defense are in reality armed for offensive purposes. It was said that British masters had not been instructed to hunt for submarines, that on the contrary they had been told to do everything possible to avoid the craft and that only in the event of a hostile submarine approaching without warning near enough to use bombs or torpedoes were the skippers authorized to use their guns.

All things considered, the State Department is understood to feel that the possibility is more or less remote of difficulties arising in the near future as a result of the new German and Austrian policy. This belief is strengthened by the declaration in the German note received today, which was acquiesced in by Austria, through Baron Zwioldnik, charge of the embassy here, that the orders issued to the naval commanders were so formulated as to prevent the destruction of enemy liners, "on account of their armament, unless such armament is proved."

In the note presented by Count Von Bernstorff several references are made to declarations of the United States in previous correspondence in the Lusitania case. There were strong intimations today that administration officials are inclined to resent the repetition of certain expressions and references without the text in which they appear, holding that in doing so the German government has given a false impression of the attitude of this government. It was even suggested that

should the United States reply to the communication presented today it may take occasion to point out the erroneous construction placed upon several of these expressions.

The communication from Germany probably will be considered by President Wilson and his cabinet tomorrow and official indication regarding it is expected soon thereafter.

Reiterates Previous Pledges.
The note at the outset reiterates the previous pledges, which were given on September 1, and October 5, last year for the safety of unarmament liners and then goes on to say the German government does not believe these assurances have been modified by the new memorandum.

During the negotiations over the Lusitania, it says, no mention was made of armed merchantmen, and that the Lusitania, mentioned unarmed merchantmen. Attention then is called to the assurances previously given in which it is stated that liners will not be sunk without warning, provided they do not offer resistance. Attention also is called to the American government in its notice to port authorities that the presence of armament on board a merchant vessel creates the presumption that the vessel is armed for offense.

It is stated that a submarine commander cannot be expected to warn an enemy merchantman which has a right to fire on the submarine which warns it, and the German government sets up the contention that equipment and intention to resist a warning given by a submarine does not come within the definition of defensive armament.

The note then sets forth that the German government did not issue its instructions to submarine commanders until after it had come into possession of confidential instructions by the British government to the commanders of British merchantmen. It denied that armed British merchant ships of any description are peaceful traders, and it is declared that the armament on board all of them is to be used especially for purpose of attack.

The charge is made that Austria submarines also have been attacked by armed British merchantmen, which the note declares are not conforming, and have no intention of conforming to the assurances given to the United States by the British government in a memorandum of August 25, 1914, by Sir Cecil Spring-Rice, the British ambassador. The German government says it cannot see how the American government, in consideration of these facts, can regard armed British merchantmen as peaceful trading ships.

Says Caution Will be Observed.
It declares that German submarine commanders have been so instructed that they will not destroy a merchant ship on a question of armament, unless it is known positively that such armament exists. The declaration that previous pledges will not be revoked also is formally given.

The efforts of the United States to have the belligerents agree to a modus vivendi which will cause all merchant ships to be disarmed, it is declared, are welcomed by Germany. Then follows a declaration that the German government will no longer allow its submarines to be made the object of attacks in violation of the principles of international law and, therefore, the new instructions will not be postponed or modified.

Appended to the communication, which was stated by Count Von Bernstorff, was a list of about twenty incidents where it is charged German and Austrian submarines have been attacked by merchantmen armed ostensibly for defensive purposes. At no place in the communication is it suggested that American citizens be warned to remain off armed merchant ships, and the question of what constitutes defensive armament is not brought up, though it is admitted in various quarters that such a question probably will be raised.