

CURRENT EVENTS.

The Austrians have occupied Durazzo, which was abandoned by the Italians as soon as the remnant of the Serbian army had been safely removed to Corfu, the Greek island of which the Allies have taken possession.

Suddenly, on the twenty-fourth of February, the Portuguese authorities seized thirty-six German and Austrian ships which were lying in the harbour of Lisbon; and when Germany protested Portugal answered by seizing all the German merchantmen in her colonial ports. A little later, the Italian government requisitioned thirty-four of the thirty-seven German steamers interned in Italian ports. It is expected that Brazil may take the same course, owing to serious shortage of ships for her own use in trade with the United States; but if Germany declares war against both Italy and Portugal, as now seems probable, Brazil may hesitate. At the beginning of the war, the Germans invaded the Portuguese territory of Angola from German Southwest Africa and captured a border fort. The Portuguese drove them out, and the Portuguese congress has formally voted to co-operate with the Allies whenever that step seems necessary; still there has been as yet no declaration of war between Germany and Portugal. Nor is there as yet a formal declaration of war between Germany and Italy. This was supposed to be because of trade relations which neither Italy nor Germany wished to interrupt; but last month the Italian government issued a decree forbidding under heavy penalties the importation of any products from Germany or Austria, and such a declaration may not be long delayed.

Lord Robert Cecil has been appointed Minister of War Trade, which is another way of saying Blockade Minister, and given a place in the British Cabinet. His duties will be to look after the rights of neutrals while taking every measure possible for increasing the efficiency of the blockade of German ports.

By unanimous resolution, the term of the Canadian Parliament has been extended for one year, that is, until the seventh of October, 1917. It is not considered desirable, either here or in Great Britain, to hold an election during the war.

Haiti is virtually now under the control of the United States, by a treaty which provides that the new relation may continue for twenty years; but it is highly probable that it will continue indefinitely.

General Felix Diaz, a nephew of the former Mexican president of that name, has left New Orleans for Mexico with the object of starting a new revolution. He will make his headquarters in Oaxaca, where he is said to have already thirty thousand men under arms.

On the twenty-first of February, the Germans began a fierce attack upon the great French fortress of Verdun, which has continued with little interruption ever since. The losses have been enormous, yet the battle continues day after day with unabated fury. The Germans have made a gain of a few square miles of territory, and have destroyed some of the outer forts. This may be the renewal of the German effort to capture Paris and the Channel ports, which was checked eighteen months ago by the battle of the Marne. We must suppose that the Allies are better prepared for resistance than they were at that time; but it is incredible

that the Germans would attack unless they had some hope of success. The fall of Verdun would not necessarily open a road to Paris, but the position is important because a French advance from that point, which might have been expected in the spring, would threaten the German line of communications. Though the outcome is still uncertain, and it may not prove decisive, the battle of Verdun, in respect to the numbers engaged and the destruction wrought, already ranks as the greatest in history.

The surrender of the Cameroons has been officially announced. This leaves nothing remaining of the Kaiser's colonial empire, but German East Africa. The conquest of this territory will be difficult, for it is twice as large as Germany; but it is probably only a matter of time. It is curious that there have been naval engagements on all four sides; that is, on Lake Nyanza on the north, the Indian Ocean on the east, Lake Nyasa on the south, and Lake Tanganyika on the west. The strongest town is Tabora, situated not far from the centre of the territory.

The absence of heavy fighting on the British front during the battle of Verdun is attributed to the condition of the ground in Flanders. The mud will hinder military movements in that district for several weeks to come.

The Turkish stronghold of Erzerum (pronounced in two syllables, with the accent on the first), was taken by the Russians on the fifteenth of last month. When the Grand Duke Nicholas was removed from the supreme command of the Russian armies last fall, and sent to the Caucasus, many supposed that we should hear of important victories in that region in early spring; but this brilliant victory in mid-winter has come as a surprise. Erzerum was captured when the mercury was thirty degrees below zero, and the mountain passes filled with snow. The greater part of the Turkish army centered there was withdrawn before the inner forts were taken, and is supposed to be now in full retreat towards Constantinople. Trebizond, a Turkish port on the Black Sea, about a hundred miles distant, is now attacked, and will probably soon fall into the hands of the Russians. Bitlis, an important city near Lake Van, has been taken by assault, and with it the whole Van region passes under the control of the Russians, and a Turkish army that has crossed the Persian frontier is cut off and will probably have to surrender.

In Persia, the Russians have won another victory, by a successful attack upon hostile mountaineers, led by Germany and Turkish officers, in the district of Kermanshah. The Turks and their adherents retreated to Kermanshah, an important Persian city of some thirty thousand people, which the Russians took by assault on the twenty-fifth. This brings the Russian forces within a comparatively short distance of the British in Mesopotamia.

Queen Elizabeth of Roumania, known as a writer by the name of "Carmen Sylva," and honored both for her literary attainments and for her queenly interest in the Roumanian people, died of pneumonia on the second of this month.

More than three thousand lives were lost by the sinking of the French auxiliary cruiser Provence on the twenty-sixth of February. This is nearly twice as many as were lost four years ago in the wreck of the White Star liner, Titanic, which struck an iceberg off the coast of Newfoundland; and more than twice as many as were lost by