

YPRES SALIENT PRACTICALLY UNTENABLE FOR THE BRITISH

Thirty-Seven Persons Perish in Blazing Oil and Gas on Steamer

British Steamer War Knight and United States Steamer O. B. Jennings, Both Oil Laden, Collide off British Coast—All who Perished Burned to Death on British Vessel with One Exception—Both Vessels Destroyed.

At an Atlantic Port, April 17.—Thirty-seven lives were lost when the American steamship O. B. Jennings and the British steamer War Knight, both laden with naphtha and inflammable oils, collided off the British coast on March 24, according to members of the crew of the O. B. Jennings, who arrived here today. All who perished with one exception were on the British vessel. They were burned to death by blazing gas and oil.

Those who survived the flames on the War Knight were rescued in the nick of time by destroyers, for soon after, while the blazing hull was being towed to shallow water, it struck a mine and was blown up. The destroyers went to the rescue through a field of blazing oil and took off also the crew of the Jennings.

A number of the crew of the American ship were, however, badly burned and had to be removed to hospitals after being landed. (Continued on page two.)

N. B. TO CHANGE RULE OF ROAD

Legislature Decides that Province Shall Fall in line with Ontario, Quebec and United States, where Drivers Keep to the Right Instead of the Left—Rule Designed to Prevent Accidents and Put Province in Harmony with Modern Ideas.

Special to The Standard.

Fredericton, April 17.—The budget debate was continued in the house today only for a brief time in the afternoon and the remainder of the session was devoted to the consideration in committee of the whole of the sections of the highway act that had been stood over. There was an amusing period in the evening when the section of the act providing a change in the driving rule of the road was before the committee and three votes were taken. No party line was drawn and members on both sides voted as they felt. Hon. Mr. Sweeney of Westmorland lead the opposition to the change. He claimed there was no demand for it and that it was advocated only to meet the views of tourists from the United States. The people of the province had not been consulted on it and he suggested that it might be referred to the municipal councils for their vote before action was taken by the government to change the custom of years.

An Unwise Change.

The only change the people of the province had been asked to make in the last provincial election was a change of government. That change had been made whether it was a wise change or not was a debatable question that time alone could answer.

On the votes being taken the change was adopted in committee.

Mr. Magee of Westmorland moved to add a sub-section to the act to the effect that the change should not come into effect until Nova Scotia had passed and proclaimed a similar change. This was defeated and the change will become operative on the proclamation of the lieutenant-governor in council.

Under the rule will be to turn to the right. In the budget debate this afternoon the speakers were Dr. Hetherington of Queens, Dr. J. Roy Campbell, St. John, and Hon. Dr. W. F. Roberts.

Dr. Campbell's Address.

Dr. Campbell delivered an excellent address, moderate in tone, but strong in its criticism.

Dr. Hetherington concerned himself chiefly with the contention that the government had left roads and bridges in bad shape in Queens County and that it was necessary therefore to make heavy expenditures this year. The greater part of Dr. Roberts' address consisted of a plea for the passage of his health bill. He labored

THE BRITISH RETIRE FROM THEIR POSITIONS EAST AND NORTHEAST OF YPRES RUIN

Germans in Possession of Wytchaete, Polcapelle and Langemarck and are Now Driving for Important Junction and Supply Town of Hazebrouck—Enemy Progress Towards Latter Held Up Beyond Vieux Berquin and at Nieppe Forest—Mystery Where British Reserves are.

(By William L. McPherson.)

Ludendorff's capture of the British key position at Wytchaete and on the Messines Ridge has had immediate consequences on the Flanders battlefield. It has made the Ypres salient practically untenable.

Wednesday Field Marshal Haig announced a retirement from the British position east and northeast of Ypres. Last night's German communique disclosed the extent of the retirement. The bulwarks of the salient to the southeast of Ypres have crumbled, the eastern and northeastern defences became valueless. Berlin reports the occupation by German troops of Poelcapelle and Langemarck, villages which lie beyond and to the north of the Passchendaele Ridge. So the whole Passchendaele heights, so brilliantly taken by assault last summer, evidently had to be abandoned. This forecasts an almost complete straightening out of the famous Ypres salient. The British are still north, east and south of Ypres. But with the formidable ridges which defend it again in the hands of the Germans, this ruined city ceases to be of military value.

The British held on in Ypres through 1916 and the first half of 1917 only because the German command in Flanders was at that time limited to the strict defensive. In order to fortify his weak position there Field Marshal Haig last summer took both the Messines and the Passchendaele Ridges by assault. They command the surrounding country, and against an aggressive foe possession of the lowlands is a peril rather than an advantage.

Vigorous Counter Attacks.

To cover their withdrawal on the east and northeast the British made vigorous counter attacks Wednesday at Wytchaete, above Neuve Eglise and Balileu, and at Moteren. Moteren was retaken and some progress was made at Wytchaete, but later all the ground regained was again lost. Apparently the British are going to get out of the salient before long and establish themselves on a new defensive line running south from Dixmude to Ypres, or west of it, and then turning southwest to the Nieppe Forest. Their next preoccupation must be to protect Hazebrouck, the most important railroad centre and military base in this section of the front.

French Flanders is scantily supplied with railroads. The lateral lines centering at Hazebrouck connect the Flanders front with the channel ports. The north and south line which runs in the British rear comes down from Poperinghe to Hazebrouck, and then turns southwest to Bethune, the Allied base for the sector of the front about La Bassée.

Hazebrouck Important.

Hazebrouck is, therefore, immensely more important to the Allies at this juncture than Ypres and all the territory in the Ypres salient. It will now become the immediate German objective, having always been one of the ultimate objectives of the present drive. German progress toward it has been held up beyond Vieux Berquin and at the Nieppe Forest. It was necessary for the Germans to reckon first with the British forces strongly established on the flank of an advance on Hazebrouck. Now the way is cleared for an encircling movement, toward Moteren and Marris, toward Caestre, on the Hazebrouck-Poperinghe railroad.

The unknown factor in the fighting today in Flanders is the ability of the two antagonists to draw upon reserves. General Maurice says that, since March 21, the Germans have engaged 150 of their west front divisions. That is over-half their strength. Ludendorff's reserves of fresh troops, especially of troops of first quality, are running very low. On the other hand, there is no evidence that the British in Flanders have been heavily reinforced from other parts of the line. The Allies still have a great preponderance in unused divisions.

"What is happening to Blucher? What has become of the reserves?" asks General Maurice. It is a mystery to him; it is an even greater mystery to the public.

The issue on the west front is now essentially an issue of reserves.

BRITISH LOSE FIFTEEN SHIPS

London, April 17.—The losses to British shipping by mine or submarine in the past week totalled fifteen, according to the Admiralty report tonight. Eleven of the merchantmen sunk were 1,600 tons or over, and four under that tonnage. One fishing vessel, also was sunk. Twelve vessels were unsuccessfully attacked. The arrivals numbered 2,311 sailings, 2,456.

In the previous week only six British merchantmen were sunk by mine or submarine, four of them of more than 1,600 tons.

BATTLE LIKELY TO CONTINUE SEVERAL DAYS

Several Bright Spots Appeared Yesterday, but Some of Them Fade Away.

TERRITORY DOES NOT COUNT NOW

Position and Reserves Principal Elements of Success at Present.

(By Arthur S. Draper.)

Special to N. Y. Tribune and St. John Standard.

London, April 17.—Viewing the northern battlefield as a whole, the news of today's fighting was a trifle better. The situation is exceedingly anxious but the heroic defense of the British has inspired a confidence that the future will become increasingly bright.

The Germans still hold the initiative and are still fighting for a finish. The battle is likely to continue desperately for some days before the British are completely out of the woods.

What has happened on the front of Ypres—Here the British had a salient which narrowed as the enemy advanced through Balileu. With the loss of Balileu the difficulty of supplying the defenders of this salient greatly increased. After holding the Ypres salient for sentimental reasons since the spring of 1915 the British attacked on July 31 last and continued the campaign until November against tremendous obstacles and a heavy cost. Haig's men secured a fairly strong hold on Passchendaele Ridge. It was a campaign which many times was on the eve of a great victory, only to be balked the next day.

Now the British have cut their losses and fallen back to a position easier to defend and easier to supply from the Poperinghe region. Territory counts not at all now, positions mean everything. The British have a shorter front and can now defend the channel ports with increased hope of success. Their retirement was conducted orderly and skillfully and the German claims in this region must be read in the light of the facts stated above.

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wages or other matters arising out of their employment. No recognition of any union workmen can be conceded and the conference when held must be with workmen as such and not as union members. Should this suggestion not be acceptable by the New Glasgow workmen the board suggests that a board of conciliation be appointed by the Minister of Labor under the provisions of the Lemieux Act." (Signed) "F. H. CROCKARD."

SCOTIA STEEL EMPLOYEES IN TRENTON OUT

Federation of Labor Declares Strike and Men in Some of the Plants Went Out Last Night.

Special to The Standard.

New Glasgow, N. S., April 17.—A meeting of the Federation of Labor was held last night to deal with the Trenton situation. Many of those present wanted a strike declared forthwith, but after a lot of discussion it was finally decided to send telegrams to Sir Robert Borden, Hon. N. W. Rowell, the minister of labor, and Alex. McGregor, M. P., intimating that unless a satisfactory answer was received by the Federation of Labor within 24 hours from the Nova Scotia Steel and Coal Company, Ltd., a strike would be declared. It was further decided if such answer be received the flag would fly from the labor hall at 8 p. m. today, and work would go on as usual.

If the flag was down it was to be taken as an intimation that the strike was on.

The Strike is On.

At six o'clock this evening there was no flag flying from the Federation Hall and the strike is on. It is understood that the men from some of the plants walked out this evening. How long the strike will last is a problem but it is to be hoped amicable settlement will soon be arrived at.

The following telegram has been received by General Superintendent Adams of the Nova Scotia Steel and Coal Co., Ltd., and speaks for itself: "At a meeting of the Board of Directors held this morning it was decided that the management of the company would meet a committee of say seven workmen now in the service of the company at the New Glasgow plant for the purpose of adjusting

THE GERMAN ARMY IS INCREASED BY 1,600,000 MEN

This Extent to Which Russian Withdrawal Had Added to Potential Strength on Western Front, Including Italy, Without Taking Into Account Reserves, which Would Have Been Necessary for Russian Front—Serious Situation Explained at Secret Session of Canadian House of Commons.

Ottawa, April 17.—The House of Commons met in secret session for two hours this afternoon. Beyond members and officials of the house, these were present members of the Senate only.

The following report of the proceedings at the secret session was issued tonight under the authority of the Speaker:

"The prime minister, on a motion to go into committee of supply, made a full statement surveying the present war situation treating of the military situation, the supply and production of foodstuffs and the problem of merchant shipping and the submarine with special reference to the man-power position of the British Empire and the Allies.

"He stated that the government, being impressed with the desirability of giving to the house the fullest possible information, had communicated to the prime minister of the United Kingdom its intention to move for a secret session and had requested from Mr. Lloyd George a statement of the present position which might be made known to the house. Mr. Lloyd George's message in response to this request was then read. (Continued on page two.)

SITUATION A TRIFLE MORE ENCOURAGING

British Holding Ground they Defended on Tuesday and Went Into Wytchaete and Meteren again, but Obligated to Withdraw—Retirement was Orderly.

Out of the chaos of the tremendous battle along the Lys River, south and southwest of Ypres, the thunder of which may be heard forty or fifty miles away, there have come during the past day reports which are more encouraging to the Allied powers. The British have not only held all the ground which they were defending on Tuesday, but have struck back so powerfully that Meteren and part of Wytchaete were retaken and held for a time. Only after heavy attacks did the British retire again from the villages.

The most disturbing news has been a report from Berlin that Poelcapelle and Langemarck, north of Ypres, have been taken by the Germans and the admission from London that the British have retired from certain of their lines in the Ypres salient. The retirement here was expected, for the advance of the Germans at Neuve Eglise and Balileu left the positions in front of Ypres open to a flank attack.

Retirement Orderly.

It is officially stated that the retirement was orderly and it is probable that it will have more of a sentimental than a strategic effect. Just how far the British lines have been withdrawn is not known. It may be, however, that the German claim of taking Poelcapelle and Langemarck is the result of the British retirement.

The battle, now in its ninth day, has deepened in intensity at many points along the curved front from Messines Ridge to Meteren. There have been reports that the Germans have occupied the village of St. Eloi, which lies less than three miles south of Ypres, but these have not been confirmed. It was also said that the Germans have taken positions on the south slope of Mount Kemmel, which is about two and a half miles south of Wulverkemel.

This, also, has not been confirmed. Like Granite Wall.

On all the rest of the front from Messines Ridge southwestward the Germans have flung themselves against the granite wall of the British defense. Official and semi-official dispatches have told of the frightful losses inflicted on the attacking masses of troops by the rifle and machine gun fire.

On the southern side of the salient there have been engagements of some magnitude, especially east of Robecq, five miles northwest of Bethune, where the Germans were caught by the Bri-

ish artillery fire and scattered. The line in front or arras has again been the scene of fighting but here the British took the offensive and drove the Germans out of British trenches which had been carried by the enemy.

In the Picardy sector there has been lively artillery engagements between the Somme and Oise rivers but only patrol encounters are reported officially.

Further south only raiding operations have been going on.

The Turks announced that they have taken the city of Batum, on the eastern shore of the Black Sea. They report strenuous fighting before the Russian defenders of the city were driven out.

Baron Stephen Burian von Rajecz has succeeded Count Czernin as foreign minister of Austria-Hungary, coming back to the office he relinquished on December 23, 1916.

The Macedonian front has again become active. Greek and British troops have advanced and driven the Teutonic allies from seven towns along the Struma River, on the eastern end of the line. French forces have also been active in this theatre of the war.

Fifteen British merchantmen were lost during the week from mines or submarines.

HAIG'S FORCES RETIRE AGAIN

London, April 17.—After gaining a footing today in the villages of Meteren and Wytchaete the British were forced to make a second retirement, according to Field Marshal Haig's report from France tonight. French troops, it is added, have now reinforced the British lines.

The text of the statement reads: "This morning intense bombardments were opened by the enemy on practically the whole of the Lys battlefield, and from the Forest of Nieppe to Wytchaete, were followed by infantry attacks. All these attacks have been repulsed and considerable losses inflicted on the enemy."

"In counter-attacks, reported in the morning communique our troops succeeded in entering the villages of Meteren and Wytchaete, but in the face of continued hostile attacks, were unable to maintain their positions there.