

A Description of Verdun And Its Importance

The Fall of Verdun Would Not Bring the Germans Nearer to Paris—French Are Confident They Will Not Be Compelled to Fall Back.

NEW YORK, April 29.—Frank H. Simmonds, who has just returned from France, writing on Verdun in a second article in the New York Tribune, says:

The City of Verdun is situated at the bottom of the Meuse Valley on both sides of the river. But the main portion of the town is on the west bank, and surrounds a low hill, crowned by the cathedral and old Vauban citadel. The town is surrounded by old ramparts, long ago deprived of military value and belonging like the citadel, to eighteenth century warfare. The Valley of the Meuse is here several miles wide, as flat as your hand, and the river, which is small but fairly deep, a real obstacle since it cannot be ford- ed, wanders back and forth from one side of the valley to the other. Below Verdun it is doubled, as a military obstacle, by the Canal de l'Est.

If you put a lump of sugar in a finger bowl you will pretty fairly re- produce the Verdun topography. The lump of sugar will represent Verdun, the rim of the bowl the hills around the city, the interior of the little basin in which the city stands. This rim of hills, which rise some five or six hundred feet above the town itself, is broken on the west by a deep and fairly narrow trough which comes in to the Meuse Valley and connects it with the plain of Chalons. If you should look down upon this region from an aeroplane this furrow would look like a very deep gutter cutting far into the range of hills.

Now in the warfare of other cen- turies the value of the Verdun for- tress was just this: The furrow which I have described is the one av- ailable for an invading army com- ing from the east out of Metz or south from Luxembourg and aiming to get into the plain of Chalons to the west. It is the way the Prussians

came in 1792 and were defeated at Valmy, at the western entrance of the trough about 30 miles away. They took Verdun on their way—so did the Germans in 1870.

Verdun in French hands closed this trough to the invaders. When one hears about Verdun as the gateway to Paris or anything else, one hears about the Verdun of the past. It was not the door to Paris but the outer door to the region around Paris, to the Plains of Cham- pagne and Chalons. But as the Ger- mans are already in these plains the taking of Verdun, now would not bring them nearer to Paris; they are only fifty miles away at Noyon, on the Oise, and they would be 160 at Verdun if they took the city. If they took Verdun they would get control of the Paris-Metz Railway, and if they then drove the French away from the trough we have been describing they would get a short line into France, and a line coming from German ter- ritory directly, not passing through Belgium. But they would not be near- er to Paris.

When the French saw, in the op- ening days of the war, that forts were of no permanent value against the German guns, they left the forts on the hills above Verdun as they had abandoned the Vauban works and moved north for a few miles. Here they dug trenches, mounted their guns in concealed positions and stood on the defensive, as they were stand- ing elsewhere from Belgium to Swit- zerland.

When I was in Paris before I went to Verdun, there was a general belief that the French might ultimately aban- don the two outer hills, Dead Man and 304, and come back to the Char- nay Ridge, which is a wall running from the river west without a break for miles. Apparently this has not been found necessary, but what is worth noting is that if these hills

were evacuated it would not mean the withdrawal from Verdun, but only to the best line of defence (the last line to be sure), which includes the town itself.

The Germans have not made any gain of importance in nearly two months. The French are very sure they will not come further south. They are as confident as men could be. But if the Germans should come further south and at last force the French to come back behind the river and to the hills above the town, and they would only win a moral victory. The military situation would not be changed, unless they should also pierce the French lines on the west of the river, and this is absolutely unthinkable now.

If Verdun falls, that is, if the French are compelled under pres- sure or as a result of the cost of holding their present awkward posi- tion to go back behind the river, they will lose fifty or a hundred square miles of French territory, they will lose all the tremendous value of the moral "hit" which the successful de- fence has brought, but they will lose nothing else; and when the Germans have taken Verdun, the ashes, the ruins, they will stop, because there is no object or fighting for moral val- ues, and the French politician has overruled the French soldier and com- pelled him to accept battle on unfa- vorable ground for this same moral value, but against his military judg- ment. He has done it successfully. He expects and France expects that he will continue to do it successfully, but in the wholly remote contingen- cy that he failed (I can only say that it is a contingency no longer consid- ered in France) a loss in moral ad- vantage would be the only conse- quence.

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BRITISH GUNBOAT SAVED DUBLIN

Was Being Brought Into The Liffey To Lay Up Monday Night—Captain Had Shore Leave—Got Wireless Message Of Rebellion And Trained For Action.

DUBLIN, May 4.—This is the story of how a British gunboat saved Dub- lin city. In response to orders to lay up ship in the Liffey, the gunboat was being brought into Dublin Monday night. The commander himself was going on leave and some of the crew, too, had obtained shore leave papers.

As she was creeping sleepily up the Liffey, the wireless crackled over- head and a message came through the air that trouble was rife in Dublin and insurgents were looting the city. Quickly the boat was prepared for action. Her guns were unshipped, the men were ordered to their war sta- tions, and soon the gunboat came up the river with her guns unmasked, and her crew ready for instant action.

On the south quay shooting and rifle shots around the power station indicated an attempt on the part of the rebel army to capture this im- portant position. Here the rebels had massed in great numbers. The gun- boat's searchlight flashed out on the threatened point, startling the rebels by the sudden brilliancy. Nothing had been expected from this quarter and the menace of a gunboat moving across the river with her guns trained threw the insurgents into sudden panic. They turned and fled for safety. In this way the quayside and en- trance to the Butt Bridge was safely guarded and the over-running of this part of the city was completely pre- vented.

Six Germans Made Sensational Escape

LETHBRIDGE, Alta, May 2.—Six German prisoners have made a sen- sational escape from the detention camp here, tunnelling a passage four and a half feet underground and 110 feet long, leading from the bunk house under the compound fence to the centre of the city nurseries ac- joining the camp. No trace of their whereabouts has yet been received. The prisoners used implements stolen from the kitchen in the work of tun- nelling, used a mine fan made by one of them for supplying them with air while tunnelling, and made candles out of grease and tallow. Each man who escaped carried a knapsack with provisions saved from the daily meals or stolen from the kitchen.

NEUTRAL RIGHTS

It is not the function of this government to modify accepted principles of international law in order to suit the military conveni- ence either of Germany or of the allies. It is our function to insist on the preservation of clearly established neutral rights for the sake not only of our own interests, but also of the interests of civiliza- tion when the war is over; and to this end the department of state should be equally firm and impar- tial in its insistence, whether Great Britain or Germany is the repudiator and violator.—New York Sun.

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United States Will Maintain Troops in Mexico

WASHINGTON, D.C., May 2.—Gen- erals Scott and Funston, at the Mexi- can border to-day had further instruc- tions from Secretary of War Baker on which it was expected they would re- sume negotiations with General Obre- gon, Carranzas War Minister. These orders, telegraphed last night, do not alter the administration's attitude to- ward maintenance of troops in Mexi- can territory, it is asserted.

The precise nature of the message was not disclosed by officials. They were prepared by Secretary Baker af- ter conferences with President Wil- son and Secretary of State Lansing, in response to inquiries from General Scott concerning the Administration's attitude.

Although no formal demand has been made by representatives of the de facto Government, for the with- drawal of American troops, Eliso Ar- rendondo, Mexican Ambassador, offi- cials here say, is laying emphasis on the declaration that longer occupa- tion by American troops is reducing the de factos' Government's authority.

New Law Passed In Mexico Over Mine Holdings

MEXICO CITY, May 2.—Mexico's new mining law, which has been awaited for months by capitalists re- presented by investments of more than \$85,000,000 gold was promul- gated last night, by a decree issued by General Carranza.

The new laws calls for a general increase in taxation on all large prop- erties with a corresponding benefit for the smaller operators, the an- nounced intention of the Government being to break up holdings which are conserved more for speculative than for development purposes.

The new tax is payable in Gold. It is divided into two general class- es—that to be levied on precious met- als and that on ores, other than sil- ver and gold. The unit for taxation is the pertenencia or mining claim, of one hectare or two and one half acres and is to be assessed as follows:—

On gold and silver mines at the rate of \$6.00 yearly on from one to ten claims; 11 to 50 claims, \$12 each yearly; from 51 to 100 claims \$18 per claim yearly; on 101 claims and up- wards \$24 each, annually.

Garment Workers In New York Strike

NEW YORK, May 4.—In retaliation for the lockout of 80,000 workers, on women's garments, begun a few days ago, by the manufacturers' protective association, the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union to-day, or- dered a strike of all its members in this city, whether employed in the shops belonging to the protective as- sociation or in open shops. It is es- timated that this order applies to 90,000 persons, including about 20,000 apprentices and others not al- ready affected by the lockout. Strik- ers employed at the so-called friend- ly shops, will return to work in twenty-four hours.

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