

BRINK BETWEEN US AND GERMANY SOON?

THE WEATHER
Morning—Moderate wind, fine and cold.

The St. John Standard,

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FIERCE BATTLE ALONG 25 MILE FRONT WITH VERDUN AS OBJECTIVE OF THE GERMANS

WILSON DETERMINED NOT TO PARLEY WITH BERLIN

Reported He Will Ask Congress to Break Off Diplomatic Relations—President Realizes This Means War, but Opposes Agitation in Congress in Favor of Warning Americans Against Taking Passage on Armed Merchantmen of Allies.

New York, Feb. 23.—A news agency despatch from Washington published here this afternoon says: The appearance of President Wilson before Congress in the next few days to announce his desire to break off diplomatic relations with Germany was forecasted this afternoon by high administration officials. This action is certain to follow, one official said, if intimations coming from German sources are correct. These intimations are that the German foreign office is sending instructions to Ambassador Buehler to play for further delay in the termination of the Lusitania dispute and for a long discussion of technicalities over the armed merchantmen decree scheduled to go into effect on March 1.

Day of Tension in Congress and Senate.
Washington, Feb. 23.—Agitation in Congress for action warning Americans off armed ships of the European belligerents suddenly grew to such proportions today that the Democratic of the Foreign Affairs committee voted to canvas the sentiment of the House on several pending resolutions of that nature. Sentiment in the Senate in favor of some such action also was openly expressed, but at the end of a day of surprises, tension and agitation, such a has not been seen in Congress in some time, the word came that President Wilson still was unalterably opposed to any such action by Congress, and believed that he would only be embarrassed thereby in the negotiations with Germany.

To widely circulated suggestions that the situation had reached a point where the president would soon lay it before Congress, that Secretary Lansing might, in some way, define the attitude of the government in a communication to Senator Stone, and that a time had been fixed within which the United States would expect Germany to signify her intention to abandon the announced intention to sink armed merchant ships without warning, the statement was made officially this morning that the president is opposed to any such action, though grave still was a waiting one, and that no final position would be announced until Berlin was heard from.

The sudden developments at the capital brought surprise and approval to the administration leaders. While confronted with the possibility of Congressional interference, with all its grave aspects ranging from a defection from the administration policy to downright embarrasment of the president and the secretary of state, the leaders were confident they would control the situation and leave the executive branch of the government free to carry on diplomatic negotiations with Germany.

From apparently authentic sources came statements tonight that the president was determined that the dispute pending with Germany would be settled without prolonged negotiations. He is known to believe that the breaking off of diplomatic relations with Germany means war, and there will be no undue haste in handling the situation involving such a possibility.

The administration view is that a broad and important principle is involved in the right of Americans to travel on belligerent merchantmen, and that this right must not be abandoned.

The state department will take no action pending receipt of Germany's reply to the request the United States made last week, through Ambassador Von Bernstorff, for assurances that the notice of intention to sink armed merchantmen without warning after Feb. 29, does not nullify previous pledges given in the Baltic and Lusitania negotiations. The reply is expected momentarily. The cabinet is expected to review the situation Friday, and if it has decided, to consider the German reply.

ADMIRALTY EXPECTS GERMAN FLEET TO MAKE DASH FOR OPEN SEA?

New York, Feb. 24.—A special London cable to the Tribune says: "A high naval authority told the Tribune correspondent today of a belief, widely held in Admiralty circles, that the German fleet may make a dash for the open sea at any time now, giving as a reason for this not only the pressure of political opinion in Germany, but the innumerable recent reports all pointing to the preparation of a combined German naval, aerial and military offensive, with the object of forcing peace and imposing neutrals."

THE APPAM'S CAPTOR STILL AT LARGE?

Report from Santa Cruz Says British Steamer Westburn Put in There for Repairs in Charge of German Prize Crew.

London, Feb. 23 (10.25 p. m.)—A despatch received from Santa Cruz, Tenerife (Canary Islands), says the British steamer Westburn has put in there for repairs, flying the German flag, and with a prize crew of seven men and one officer. The officer is believed to belong to the German raider Moeve.

In addition to her own crew there are 200 prisoners taken from various British vessels on the Westburn. The Westburn left Liverpool January 21 for Buenos Ayres.

The Westburn is a vessel of 3,200 tons. She was built in 1893, and is owned by J. Westall, of Sunderland. The prisoners on board came from the British steamers Fleneco, Horace, and Lauenburg, and Cambridge, the British bark Edinburgh and the Belgian steamer Lauenburg.

The Westburn, after her departure from Liverpool, was last reported as passing St. Vincent, Cape Verde, Feb. 4. The Florence left Newport, Eng., for Valparaiso January 21 and the Horace left Buenos Ayres Jan. 26, for Liverpool. The Westburn was on a voyage from Newport for Buenos Ayres, which was captured by the South American port Jan. 18. The bark Edinburgh sailed from Bangalore, India, Sept. 22, for Liverpool. The Lauenburg and the Florence had been attached to the overboard list.

The Cambridge cannot be identified.

The fact that the steamer Westburn has among the prisoners on board men from the British steamer Clan MacTavish, which was sunk after an exciting battle by the German raider Moeve, off the west coast of Africa in January, seemingly would indicate that the Westburn had met a similar fate. The Moeve, which captured the British South African liner Appam, which was later taken into Hampton Roads by a German prize crew, in addition to disposing of the Clan MacTavish, destroyed six other steamers, the Corbridge, which probably is the Cambridge referred to in the London despatch; the Trader, Author, Antiope, Dramonby and Farrington.

FREE WHEAT MOTION AGAIN DEFEATED

Debate on Resolution to Abolish Duties on Free Wheat Ends in Vote of 77 to 44 Against Motion.

Ottawa, Ont., Feb. 23.—The free wheat arguments are over for another year. Today the motion to do away with the duties on wheat and thus take advantage of the terms of the Simons-Underwood tariff of the United States to obtain free entry of Canadian wheat into the United States was defeated on a party vote, except that W. F. MacLean, the Independent Conservative member for York, voted with the opposition.

The Liberals seem to find it impossible to realize the verdict of the country in 1911 that the national policy, which has made Canada the flourishing country that it is, must remain the policy of the Dominion until such time as it has been found wanting. But of course it is not an economic argument that this question is brought forward year after year. Five years ago it came before parliament first. It was then, as it is now, a political question and propaganda which appealed particularly to a certain section of the country. It mattered not that it conflicted with the interests of the Dominion as a whole. Its advocates did not care whether or not it would work out to the best advantage of the whole people of Canada.

It was a vote-catching scheme to gather the farmers of the west under the wing of the Liberal party. Especially since the war started it has been a policy to be avoided. We are today on the verge of a new and greater scheme of national and imperial and allied trade development, and it is impossible that Canada at the present time should depart from her standards.

So it is not surprising that these monsters, the biggest fighting machines afloat, are followed by the officers and men who fight on the sea.

Nearly All Have Been "Blooded" A squadron at the opening of the war, the battle cruisers now form the nucleus of Great Britain's first line fleet. It is only necessary to point to the activities of this type of fighting craft since the war began. Battle cruisers brought Von Spee's career to a full stop, and they were the only big ships which succeeded in getting into the North Sea engagements.

When the mist lifted for a few minutes, as the correspondent stood on the control bridge of one of the battle cruisers, the fastest fleet capable of actual offensive operations ever gathered together under one flag appeared in view. There were more than one hundred war vessels in the fleet, arranged in squadrons with battle cruisers, surrounded by their screen of faithful destroyers, occupying the place of honor, but with every section, down to the humble, rusty, but vitally necessary colliers, on the march for a flying start at the eagerly-awaited coming out of the German fleet to sea.

The Luxembourgs and the Fleneco are the largest of the vessels mentioned in the London despatch. Both of them carried passengers. The Fleneco, which belongs to the Pacific Steam Navigation Company, was a vessel of 4,640 tons, and the Luxembourgs, owned by the Belgian National Transport Company of Antwerp, displaced 4,322 gross tons. The Fleneco was built in 1906 and the Luxembourgs in 1908.

The Horace, which was built in 1895 was a vessel of 3,235 tons and belonged to the Liverpool, Brazil and River Plate Steam Navigation Company. The Corbridge is owned by the Corbridge Steamship Company of Cardiff, and was a vessel of 2,687 tons.

The Edinburgh was a three-masted barge of 1,473 tons. She was built in 1855. Her home port was London.

Huns Throw Army of 280,000 Men at French Line Between Malincourt and Etain in Desperate Effort to Break Through—French Ready for Onslaught, Have All Guns in Action Are Holding Defences and Inflict Heavy Losses on Enemy.

Paris, Feb. 23, 11.05 p. m.—The battle of Verdun continues with growing intensity. It extends over a front of forty kilometers (25 miles), and seven German army corps, 280,000 men, are engaged. This announcement was made officially by the war office tonight.

Troops belonging to seven German army corps, under Crown Prince Frederick William, are engaged along a twenty-five mile front north of Verdun in a desperate effort to drive back the French defending forces, probably with the capture of the great fortress of Verdun in view.

There had been very heavy fighting for a considerable period in this district of the French war zone, but within the past few days the attacks of the Germans have taken on additional strength. The battle line has been extended and now reaches from Malincourt, on the west, to Etain, on the east, with Verdun in the centre, only a few miles southward.

The Germans claim to have made important advances, and to some extent these are admitted by the French war office, which describes the battle as one of increasing intensity.

The German preparations were extensive, and the bombardment of the French positions with thousands of shells was uninterrupted. As the French had foreseen this battle, all their available guns were called into action and responded in kind to the heavy shelling of the Germans.

While at some points the French were unable to resist the onslaught of the attacking forces along much of the front, according to the Paris communication, the attacks were well sustained and very heavy losses were inflicted on the Germans.

Another British steamer, the Westburg, has put into port flying the German flag, and with a German prize crew aboard. This vessel has reached Santa Cruz, Tenerife. She has on board 200 prisoners, taken from various British vessels, which have been sunk by German raiders.

On the Russian and Austrian fronts there has been considerable fighting, and the Italians admit that at one point the Austrians succeeded in penetrating their lines. No late arrivals have been received from the Caucasus, where the Russians are continuing their pursuit of the retreating Turks.

GERMANS THROW SEVEN ARMY CORPS AGAINST FRENCH. Paris, Feb. 23, via London, Feb. 24 (12.50 a. m.)—The official communication issued by the war office tonight reads: "In Belgium the destructive fire of our artillery opened several breaches in the German trenches in front of Stenastrea.

"To the north of the Aisne our batteries shattered enemy organization on the plateau of Vaucourt.

"In the region to the north of Verdun the German attack, as was foreseen, developed into a very important action, for which powerful preparations were made.

"The battle continued today with increasing intensity, and was energetically withstood by our troops, who inflicted extremely heavy losses on the enemy. The bombardment with shells of heavy calibre was uninterrupted, and our artillery responded with equal violence. It extended along a front of nearly forty kilometres (25 miles) from Malincourt as far as the region opposite Etain.

GEN. HUGHES REPLIES TO COL. CURRIE

Regarding Decorations for Gallantry on Field of Battle—Hon. Mr. Rogers Refutes Statements of Hon. J. A. Calder, of Saskatchewan, Minister of Public Works.

Ottawa, Feb. 23.—Major General Sir Sam Hughes, Minister of Militia, in the House today made a statement in regard to the assertion of Col. Jack Currie, of North Simcoe yesterday afternoon that the minister and Gen. Alderson had stood between Col. Currie and promotion or mention for his good work in the battle of St. Julien.

Today's sitting of parliament was also made the occasion by Hon. Robert Rogers, Minister of Public Works, to characterize as untrue a statement reported to have been made by Hon. J. A. Calder, Minister of Public Works in Saskatchewan, that Mr. Rogers had instigated the charges recently preferred against members of the Saskatchewan government in connection with the liquor question.

Gen. Hughes referred to the speech made in the House on Tuesday by Col. Currie in which that officer spoke of non-recognition by way of honors for his gallant conduct in the battle of St. Julien and had referred to the Minister of Militia and Gen. Alderson as the two men who stood between him and such promotion. Gen. Hughes pointed out that as far as the command and administration of the forces at the front were concerned they were absolutely independent of either Canada or Great Britain and were directly under the field marshal in command of the British forces.

"As far as decorations are concerned," said Sir Sam, "the honorable member for North Simcoe had as much to do with it as I had. Even had I the right it would have been great presumption on my part, not having been on the field, to ask for a recommendation for him."

The minister said he had had many requests for recommendations. For that matter the fact of not being singled out to receive a decoration did not mean that an officer had not done his duty equally as well as the recipient of such an honor.

CANADIENS WIN
Quebec, Feb. 23.—The Canadians gave Quebec a decided setback in the race for the N. H. A. title by defeating the locals tonight by three goals to two after a closely contested game.

REMAINS OF B. B. LAW FOUND

Ottawa, Feb. 23.—The remains of the late B. B. Law, M. P., were found in the Commons ruins today. Only a few bones were found. The location of the discovery makes it evident that Mr. Law had gone back to his locker to secure his coat when overcome.

HALIFAX TOO HAS ITS TAX TROUBLES

Meeting of Business Men Last Night But no Solution of Question Arrived at.

Special to The Standard.
Halifax, Feb. 23.—Halifax has for many years been struggling with the problem of a new taxation system. John MacKeen, formerly manager of the Bank of Nova Scotia, and now a controller, who was president of the Tax Reform Association, framed a plan and announced it. He favors in particular a business tax. The association of which he was president repudiated this as not in harmony with their views, and a new president was elected a few days ago, the association deciding to call a public meeting where views of all interested might be expressed. The meeting took place tonight and much confusion of opinion developed. Mr. MacKeen finds himself considerably in the minority. A section of the gathering favored the single tax and as regards expression of opinion that body was greatly in the majority. Then the income tax was introduced into the remarks of many, but the general effect of the long and animated discussion was not productive of any gain towards the solving of the taxation problem.

As far as the system introduced by Controller MacKeen is concerned, there were only two speakers who upheld him. The single taxers took the opportunity to air their views very strongly, and one of their most active leaders read a resolution along the line that the tax which, however, was not carried, as time would not permit a careful discussion of it. The meeting was adjourned shortly before midnight, and another will be held in the near future.

Canal. North and east of Ypres our guns did considerable damage to the enemy's positions.

"On our extreme left we shelled working parties last night, and in grenade fighting in a mine crater dispersed a party of enemy grenadiers."

Russian Report.
Petrograd, via London, Feb. 23.—The official statement from general headquarters reads: "Western front: Several German aeroplanes dropped bombs on the districts of Riga, Friedrichstadt, and Jacobstadt. In the region of Ikauli the Germans maintained a violent fire. Two Zeppelins flew over Drinsk.

"There was a lively reciprocal bombardment near Hloukat, the Germans firing aerial torpedoes of large calibre. During the night the enemy violently bombarded our lines west of Lake Swentel as far as Lake Ilsen.

"Caucasus front: Our pursuit continues."

WAR REPORTS

British Report.
London, Feb. 23 (10.35 p. m.)—The British official statement on the campaign in the west, issued tonight reads: "There was some artillery activity in the neighborhood of La Bassée

OPPOSE REPEAL OF BI-LINGUAL CLAUSE

Winnipeg, Feb. 23.—Passionate opposition to the repeal of the bi-lingual clause in the Public School Act was expressed by the French-Canadian members of the legislature today when Hon. R. S. Thornton, minister of education, moved the second reading of the repealing bill. Albert Profontaine, leader of the opposition, declared the French-speaking citizens of Manitoba will never submit to the extinction of their privileges, and hinted that use will be made of a clause in the Manitoba Act providing for an appeal to parliament against acts of legislature affecting religious or linguistic rights.