

The St. John Standard

VOL. IX, NO. 21

TWELVE PAGES.

WEDNESDAY MORNING, APRIL 18, 1917.

WEATHER—FAIR

PRICE TWO CENTS

GREATEST BATTLE OF WHOLE WAR NOW RAGING FIERCELY ALONG LENGTH OF WESTERN FRONT

FRENCH, CONTINUING TERRIFIC ATTACK ON GERMAN LINES, TAKE MANY PRISONERS; HINDENBURG LINE IS BROKEN ONCE MORE

First Line Positions on Many Miles of Front Fall Into Hands of Nivelles's Gallant Men—Germans Counter-attack with Desperate Force but are Easily Repulsed—Victory all Along Western Front.

NUMBER OF PRISONERS CAPTURED BY
FRENCH ON MONDAY REACHES 11,000.

Violent Artillery Fire Feature of Recent Engagements—
Many Villages Taken on Line from Soissons to Rheims—
Greatest Battle of War is Now Developing.

Paris, April 17.—Continuing their terrific attack against the German positions between Soissons and Rheims and east of the latter place today, the French carried German first line positions over many miles of front, captured powerfully organized heights, occupied the important village of Auberville, and on this part of the front, about two miles in extent, took more than 2,500 prisoners.

According to the official statement from the war office strong German counter-attacks were repulsed. The number of German prisoners taken by the French Monday is now placed at 11,000. The text of the statement reads:

"We enlarged our action today east of Rheims and attacked the German lines between Prunay and the road between St. Hilaire and St. Souplet. Notwithstanding violent gusts of rain and snow, our troops proved themselves irresistible. They carried on a front of 15 kilometres (nine and a third miles), despite the resistance of the enemy, all the first German position south of Moronvillers.

"Pushing beyond this position our troops brilliantly carried, on a front of eleven kilometres, a line of heights solidly organized from Moronvillers to the east as far as Vaudeincourt.

"Further to the east a spirited action enabled us to capture the village of Auberville and a powerfully fortified salient formed by the German line around that village on a front of three kilometres.

"Counter-attacks by the enemy in the direction of Mont Carillet were broken down by our fire. The number of prisoners taken by us on this day is 2,500.

"Between Soissons and Rheims, during the course of the day, we repulsed our destructive fires against the German organizations and reduced isolated sections where enemy groups still remained.

"About 3.30 o'clock this afternoon a strong enemy counter-attack in the region of Hurtle Farm (west of Craonne) was repulsed. Another violent attempt in the sector of Courcy, occupied by the Russian troops, likewise failed.

"According to latest reports our troops in the battle of April 16, between Soissons and Rheims, overthrew very important German forces. In expectation of our attack the enemy had brought in nineteen divisions. According to the declarations of prisoners they had received the formal order to hold, cost what it might, the first position, which had been reinforced as to depth.

"The losses suffered by the Germans were considerable, not only in the course of the battle but on the preceding days. On the eve of the attack an enemy division, while engaged in going to the relief of the sector of a neighboring division, lost, under the violence of our artillery fire, the greater part of its effectives. The number of un wounded prisoners taken by us yesterday between Soissons and Rheims has reached a total of 11,000.

"Belgian communication: There were reciprocal bombardments during the course of the day.

"Eastern theatre: April 16.—Violent cannonading occurred along the front, especially in the direction of Mayadag, in the valley of the Vardar, Hill 1348 north of Monastir, and Tarvena Stena."

Now Astride Hindenburg Line.

Grand headquarters of the French army, on the French front, Monday, April 16.—(Delayed)—Not only did the French army get astride and partly around the so-called Hindenburg line today but, in doing so, they captured many thousands of German prisoners. After one of the most intensive artillery bombardments of the war, the French today advanced along another twenty-five mile front. Shells were poured daily into the German positions, and this morning from north of Soissons to just west of Rheims, the French infantry started the work for which they had been patiently waiting.

The Germans opposed the advance with their utmost power, bringing in to play thousands of cannon and machine guns, which had been emplaced in the most advantageous positions. Nothing, however, could withstand the gallantry and skill of the French, whose armor was strengthened by the sight of the desolation through which they passed.

A Brigade of Veterans.

The correspondent of the Associated Press watched one phase of the battle from a prominent position in the new French advance. The brigade with which he was stationed was composed of troops who had won the highest fame in pushing back the Germans around Verdun. Now, as then, it was under the command of a colonel, who proudly informed the correspondent that he had fought beside both Americans and British in the Boxer war.

Advances in Fine Order.

There was no hesitation among the French soldiers when the order to

LIFE OF THE BRITISH PARLIAMENT TO BE EXTENDED UNTIL NOVEMBER

House of Commons Passes Extension Bill on Second Reading by Vote of 286 to 52—Bonar Law Leads Those who Oppose War Time Election.

London, April 17.—All possibility of the country being disturbed in the near future by a general election was removed tonight, when, by a vote of 286 to 52, the House of Commons passed on second reading the bill for the extension of the life of the parliament until November. The Nationalists were the chief opponents of the bill, on the ground elaborated by John Dillon, member of East Mayo, that no solution of home rule for Ireland had yet been announced. Andrew Bonar Law, member of the British war council, in concluding the debate on behalf of the government, admitted that a solution of the home rule problem would be a great advantage in the prosecution of the war. The government, therefore, was more anxious, he said, for a settlement, and was hopeful that the spirit of war produced in Ulster would create an atmosphere favorable to a settlement now, instead of waiting until after the war. Premier Lloyd George's statement on the government's intentions, Mr. Bonar Law said, had been postponed until next week. He declared that there never had been a time when there was so much goodwill existing on this question, and that it was needless to despair of arriving at a solution.

John Dillon, member of parliament for East Mayo, moving in support of the bill, said the Nationalists would vote against the measure at every stage. The present government, he declared, appeared to be no nearer a solution of the Irish question, and was continuing a state of things in which the Nationalist party in the House of Commons could rightly be taunted with the fact that it could not speak for Ireland.

At the root of the terrible situation in Ireland today, Mr. Dillon said, was the fact that the Nationalist party work, extending over thirty-five years, of instilling into the minds of the Irish people that whatever treatment in the past, there was a sense of justice and fairness in England, if it only could be reached, had been done by the repeated disappointments and breaches of faith and the contempt with which the advice of the Nationalists regarding the conduct of recruiting in Ireland and the whole campaign in favor of the war had been treated.

Mr. Dillon continued: "Although for sixty-five years the Nationalists have been subjected in Ireland and in America, to vigorous reproaches, abuse and vilification by their own people to their view, the government is now converting them back by tens of thousands to the old view, and undoing, to a large extent, the life work of the Nationalists, and at the same time increasing the power of the republican party in Ireland."

He urged the government, in any settlement it proposed, not to present again any inflated measure. It must produce, he said, some solution that would strike the imagination of the Irish people.

GERMANS ARE FABRICATING WAR REPORTS

Successes Made on Paper in Their Supposedly Official Communications—Reuter's Gives Instances.

London, April 17.—Reuter's correspondent at British headquarters in France, commenting on the "present day extravagant exaggerations in the German official communications, compared with the fairly accurate official statements when the Germans suppose they are winning," says: "Their claim to the capture of 22 guns at Lagoucour Sunday was quite erroneous. They did succeed in reaching a number of British guns and began placing dynamite charges in the breaches, with a view to destroying them. But so swift was the British counter-attack that only a single machine gun and one light howitzer were disabled.

"The British artillerists returned to their guns and showed great fight on the enemy, driving them back upon their wire, where the British infantry moved them down. Not a single weapon was removed from the spot where it stood before the German attack was launched."

LIQUOR SMUGGLING MUST BE STOPPED

Ottawa, April 17.—Complaints have been made to the Department of Customs that some ships and vessels arriving from places outside of Canada carry intoxicating liquors in small packages and deliver them in Canada without reporting at customs or entry for duty.

Drastic action is authorized to be taken against persons found contravening the law and collectors of customs have been instructed to detain all vessels made use of illegally in this manner and report particulars by wire to the department here for further action.

U. S. TO GET BUSY.

Washington, April 17.—Determined

GERMANY'S WEBSON OF BIG DRIVE

Admits that French Made Great Gains but Gives Credit to Artillery.

SAY BOMBARDMENT MOST FURIOUS KNOWN

French Carried Out Strong Attacks Against German Lines on Front of 40 Kilometres.

Berlin, April 17, via London.—The German statement of the western campaign is as follows:

"One of the greatest battles of the mighty war and therefore also in the history of the world, is in progress on the Aisne.

"Since April 6, preparatory fire by the artillery and mine-throwers have continued uninterrupted. By this fire, which was unprecedented in duration, volume and intensity, the French endeavored to render our position ripe for assault, put our batteries out of action and exhaust our troops.

"Early yesterday morning the French, on a front forty kilometres in extent, launched with the object of breaking through, a deep column attack from Soupir on the Aisne to Bethony, north of Rheims, with the huge weight of strong infantry forces fed by reserves which had been brought up in the rear.

"During the afternoon the French threw masses into the fray and carried out lateral attacks against our front between the Oise and Conde-Sur-Aisne. The artillery fighting, which was continued today, leveled the positions and produced wide, deep craters, rendering an obstinate defense no longer possible.

"The fighting is no longer against a line, but over quite a deep and irregular front fortified. The battle swung backward and forwards around the foremost positions, our object being, even if war material were lost, to spare the lives of our forces and inflict heavy, sanguinary losses upon the enemy, and thus decisively weaken him. This was achieved, thanks to splendid leadership and the heroic bravery of our troops.

"The great French attempt to break through yesterday, the object of which was to reach the Aisne, failed. The sanguinary losses of the enemy were very heavy and more than 2,100 prisoners remained in our hands. Where the enemy at a few places penetrated into our lines the fighting still continues and fresh enemy attacks are expected.

"In the Champagne this morning fighting between Prunay and Auberville had developed, the battle line thereby extending from the Oise into the Champagne.

"The troops look forward with entire confidence to the coming heavy fighting."

U.S. WARSHIPS ARE KEEPING A CLOSE WATCH

Cruiser Birmingham Halted British Steamship Southdown by Shot Across her Bows but Allowed her to Proceed.

Boston, April 17.—The United States cruiser Birmingham reported by radio today that she had halted the British steamship Southdown by a shot across her bow off Nantucket Lightship this morning. The steamer was allowed to proceed, after an examination.

No further details were given and naval officers did not seem inclined to attach much significance to the incident, except as it showed the strict watch kept over all shipping in these waters. It was said, informally, that the probability was that the Southdown was flying no flag, and showed no other distinguishing mark when she did not heed or observe the signals from the cruiser to halt, and declare herself, the customary method of bringing her to was followed. Up-

MENACING GERMAN LINE FROM LENS TO SOISSONS

WESTERN FARMERS PLEASED

Hail with Delight Action of Government in Removing Duty on Wheat.

Special to The Standard.

Ottawa, Ont., April 17.—For twenty-four hours "free wheat" has been the main topic of political discussion. The announcement of the government came as a complete surprise for the secret had been well kept and outside of the cabinet even those who are usually well informed regarding the intentions of the government had no suspicion that any such action was about to be taken.

It is probable that until an hour or two before the order was passed only one or two individuals in the whole Dominion were aware that "free wheat" was about to go into effect. The question mostly canvassed now is whether the purpose is to make it a permanent policy or only for the period of the war. The general impression seems to be that although it is a war measure, it is unlikely to be revoked after the conclusion of hostilities, and that it will remain in force so long as the American market is kept open to Canadian producers as it at present is under the Wilson-Underwood tariff.

Official figures show that there are over 116,000,000 bushels of wheat in Canada, and as 35,000,000 are required for domestic purposes including seed, there are over 81,000,000 available for export.

The supply is tabulated as follows: Up to last Saturday: Interior terminal and port elevators 29,048,000 bushels; country elevators 20,000,000 bushels; in farmers hands 45,000,000 bushels; in four mills 9,000,000; in transit 3,500,000 bushels.

Ottawa, April 17.—Personal messages to the government and statements from officials of the Grain Growers Association today indicated that the removal of the wheat duty has immensely pleased the western farmer. The order-in-council goes into effect today. The government's decision was made the easier by the entry of the United States into the war, removing the objection to the creating of a channel for Canadian wheat to a neutral country. It is indicated here today that the matter will be brought up in parliament by the opposition in an effort to have free wheat continued after the war, as the order-in-council has been put through under the war measures act, and presumably might cease to be effective after the conclusion of peace.

Washington, April 17.—Great quantities of Canadian wheat now in bond in the United States and subjected to duties of ten cents a bushel, have been made duty free by the Canadian government's actions in placing wheat, wheat flour and semolina on the Canadian free list.

By the same act Canada has removed the duty on American wheat flour and this, in turn, removes the duty on Canadian wheat flour coming into the United States. This is in accordance with the terms of the tariff law which provided that whenever any country imposing duties on American wheat, wheat flour or semolina removes such duties the American duties on these products from such country shall likewise be removed.

WAGE INCREASE IN THE AMERICAN COAL MINES

Conference of Miners and Operators in New York Agreed to Advance Wages Twenty Per Cent.

New York, April 17.—After a joint conference of representatives of bituminous coal miners and operators here late today it was announced that the recommendation of a sub-committee granting an increase in wages averaging 20 per cent. to 225,000 miners in Ohio, Western Pennsylvania, Illinois and Indiana had been formally adopted.

On establishing the identity of the steamer to their satisfaction the naval officers allowed her to proceed.

Great French Offensive Continues Unabated and Results in More Gains.

TOTAL TOLL CAPTIVE NOW REACHES 13,500.

British Pressing Germans Hard and Holding Back all Attempts to Drive in Advanced Guards—Progress in Mesopotamia.

The great offensive of the French forces on the southern part of the battle front in France goes on unabated, and has resulted in further important gains, a continuation of which would menace the German front running from Lens to Soissons.

Tuesday's fighting witnessed an extension of the line of attack well into the Champagne region, where evidence of its coming had been presaged by days of violent bombardment.

The attack of the French was irresistible, despite snow and rain. South of Moronvillers first line German positions over a front of 9-13 miles were taken and to the east and southeast a strongly organized line of heights on a front of nearly eight miles was captured. The village of Auberville likewise fell into the hands of the French, as also did a powerfully fortified salient around the village of about two miles in extent.

German counter-attacks at several points were without result. Near Mont Carillet, southwest of Moronvillers, an especially violent one was broken up by the French guns and on this sector more than 2,500 Germans were made prisoners. Midway between Soissons and Rheims another counter-attack was repulsed, while still another offensive launched by the Germans near Courcy, north of Rheims, was put down by the Russians, guarding this part of the line. Thirteen thousand, five hundred Germans have been made prisoners in the two days' fighting, according to Paris, 11,000 having been taken in Monday's attack between Rheims and Soissons.

The latest official communication from Berlin says the French efforts to break through the German lines on the Aisne failed, and that there had been no renewal of the attack. A previous communication, describing the battle as one of the greatest of the war, it admitted that under the terrific bombardment between the Oise and Conde-Sur-Aisne the French shells "levelled the positions (German) and produced wide, deep craters, rendering an obstinate defense no longer possible." Besides the French suffering sanguinary losses, more than 2,100 prisoners were taken by the Germans, the communication said.

West and northwest of Lens the British are still pressing the Germans hard and holding back attempts by the Germans to drive in their advance guards. Further progress has been made by the British in the neighborhood of Havrincourt Wood, which lies midway between Arras and St. Quentin.

No important changes in positions have taken place in any of the other theatres, except in Mesopotamia, where the British, operating on the right bank of the Tigris, have reached a point 75 miles northwest of Baghdad and are keeping up their advance against the Turks, who are falling back without offering resistance. The British are now within ten miles of Samarra, on the Bagdad-Samara railway.

GERMAN PEOPLE WANT PEACE, SAYS ZEITUNG

They Also Ask Reformation of Internal Conditions but will not have Interference from Outsiders.

Amsterdam, via London, April 17.—The Frankfurter Zeitung, a copy of which has been received here, says the German people and the imperial government desire peace.

"The people and the government" the newspaper adds "also desire reformation of internal German conditions, but we will not permit outsiders to confuse the two questions in order to make demoralization of our state the price of our attaining peace. We reject such interference in our affairs."