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# Large Part of Halifax Wrecked By Explosion of Munitions Vessel; Fire Grips City; First Estimate Places Loss of Life at Fifty; Later Report Says Hundreds

Amherst, N. S., Dec. 6.—Halifax has met with the greatest catastrophe in its history. Hundreds of buildings have been destroyed or damaged, scores of lives have been lost, and certain sections of the city are now in flames.

At an early hour this morning, while an American munition steamer was moving out from her pier in the north end, near the suburb of Richmond, another steamer coming through the narrows rammed the outgoing steamer broadside, and an immense explosion resulted. Both crews were instantly hurled to their deaths.

## Loss of Life Very Great

Truro, N. S., Dec. 6.—It is reported here that the first estimate of the loss of life in the explosion in Halifax harbor this morning is placed at fifty, while the number injured is correspondingly great.

The concussion resulting from the explosion caused the roof of the North street station to collapse. The warehouses on the water front were badly damaged. Freight cars were blown off the tracks, and all the buildings from the Queen Hotel in Hollis street, both sides, to the North street station, fell in or were badly damaged by the awful cataclysm. The explosion was heard in Truro, and a few minutes later a wire came through asking that nurses, doctors, firemen and food be immediately rushed to the garrison city.

### LOSS OF LIFE

The loss of life has been appalling, and the number of injuries caused by flying debris and falling houses, cannot be reckoned.

All sources of information have been cut off. The Western Union and the C. P. R. offices in the heart of the city together with the headquarters of the Maritime Telegraph and Telephone Company, have had their wires broken in thousands of places, and it may be days before communication can again be established. From all the main centres in this district, doctors, nurses and firemen are being hurried to the scene.

At Truro, Windsor and Amherst, the town councils met this morning to take steps to aid the afflicted people. It is understood that the inhabitants of the city are in need of food. The Amherst fire department was called out.

## This Report Even Worse

Halifax, N. S., Dec. 6, via Havana.—Hundreds of persons were killed and a thousand others injured and half of the city of Halifax is in ruins as the result of the explosion on a munition ship in the harbor today.

It is estimated the property loss will run into the millions. The north end of the city is in flames.

### VICTORY LOAN PARADE IN TORONTO



Spectacular floats in loan parade in Toronto typify Canada's war activities. The R. F. C. and Red Cross vied with the boys of the naval training ship for first place in the esteem of the spectators.

## GERMANS ARE EVASIVE IN THE NEGOTIATIONS

The Opening of Meetings Re Armistice

QUIBLING AT THE OUTSET

Enemy Refused to Agree Not to Send Forces From Russian Front to Other Lines and Would Not Give up Moon Sound Islands

Petrograd, Dec. 5, via London, Dec. 6.—(British Admiralty, per Wireless Press).—Representatives of Germany, Austria-Hungary, Turkey and Bulgaria met the Russian emissaries at Brest-Litovsk to discuss terms of an armistice. The delegates of the Central Powers informed the Russians that they had power to negotiate only on the conditions of an armistice, which a Russian official communication calls an "evasive declaration." The requests of Russian delegates that all the belligerents be asked to take part in reaching an armistice on all fronts was met by the enemy with the statement that it did not possess such powers. The Russians then presented a project for an armistice on all fronts, the principal points of which were the promise that the Austro-Germans would not send forces from the eastern front to other fronts and that the Germans should retire from the islands around Moon Sound.

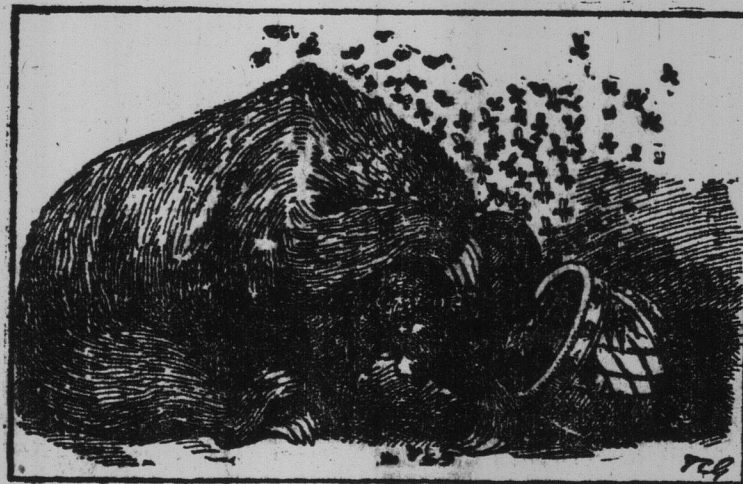
The Russians were handed a proposal for an armistice on the eastern front, which is now being examined by the Russians. The official communication then says: "The first point regarding the proposed enemy armistice was the duration of the armistice, which was first indicated as a fortnight to begin December 8. The German delegates expressed their readiness to agree to a prolongation to twenty-eight days. This may be automatically prolonged provided there is no refusal, which must be made within seven days before the expiration of the armistice, which is to begin December 10, if our delegation leaves Brest-Litovsk tomorrow, but if it leaves later, the armistice will begin later." "Before the commencement of the official armistice it must be definitely established that hostilities shall cease. We have requested the next meeting of the plenipotentiaries be held on Russian territory, and that there be an interval of seven days in the negotiations, in order that our delegation may return to Petrograd."

London, Dec. 5.—A Russian official communication says the Russians proposed that the enemy should not undertake to send forces from the Russian front to the fronts of Russia's allies; also that the German detachments be withdrawn from the islands of Moon Sound. The enemy delegates refused these proposals.

The enemy delegates submitted a project for an armistice from the Baltic to the Black Sea which, in view of their evasive replies to the Russian proposals, the Russian delegates submitted to the Russian military experts.

Copenhagen, Dec. 5.—It is reported from Dragoer, the southeast extremity of the island of Amager, that a German auxiliary cruiser, the guardship Batnia, was blown up after a collision with a German mine. The cruiser sank, but the number of men lost is unknown. The survivors refusing to give any information. The Batnia was formerly a Russian vessel, which was captured by the Germans.

## THE BEAR IN TROUBLE.



AFTER THE USET.

— "Westminster Gazette."

## SENTENCED TO GALLOWS

Jealous Montreal Youth Shot Soldier Husband of Girl he Loved

Pembroke, Ont., Dec. 6.—Satisfied that he was sane, a jury last night returned a verdict of murder against William Bennett, a twenty year old youth, of Montreal, who shot and killed Bruce M. Leitch, successful soldier sailor of the girl he loved, at Sand Point, in last July. Besides killing Leitch, Bennett seriously wounded the young bride and destroyed his own eyesight when he turned a revolver on himself.

Immediately after the verdict Mr. Justice Latchford sentenced the prisoner to be hanged here on April 17. When asked if he had anything to say, Bennett replied calmly and clearly: "No, sir, I have nothing whatever to say," though he added: "I will die like a man."

### Provisioning of Switzerland.

Paris, Dec. 6.—The project for the provisioning of Switzerland, presented by the blockade section and approved by the full inter-allied conference, was signed yesterday on behalf of the United States by Vance McCornick, chairman of the war trade board, and by the delegates of the Swiss government.

The Germans tried to force Canadians to work in their munition factories, but thousands refused. Corporal Simons stated that he didn't know of one Canadian who would do this work, because they knew the munitions would be used to shoot down their own comrades. The food was had, insufficient in quantity, and the men would have died of starvation had it not been for the parcels from home.

### Refused to Make Shells.

Camp restrictions placed upon prisoners by the Germans were in many cases most severe and unjust. He told the story of one prisoner who was just convalescing from a fractured arm. Before he was able to use the limb he was ordered to do some trivial task in camp, but refused, because he was unable to use his arm. His captors thereupon strung him up by the arms, leaving him suspended for two hours, before cutting him down.

### Need Reinforcements.

Corporal Simons put in a strong plea for more reinforcements to take the places of the men who have fallen at the front. That the Germans were on their last legs was shown by the presence of so many boys and old men in their trenches.

Following his talk, a standing vote of appreciation was tendered him by all the ladies present, on motion of Lady Borden.

## HUNG BY ARMS IN HUN PRISON CAMP

Corporal Dan Simons, who was wounded at the second battle of Ypres, and taken prisoner, and who spent nearly a year in German prison camps before being repatriated, gave an interesting and sometimes pathetic account of his experiences, on Saturday afternoon, before a large gathering of the Women's Unionist Association at their headquarters in Ottawa. The gathering, which was presided over by Lady Borden, was informal. It was held principally to give the women unionists of the city an opportunity to meet and enjoy a social afternoon. Following Corporal Simons' address, refreshments were served.

Corporal Simons entertained those present for nearly one hour with stories of his experiences after his capture. Frequent applause greeted his accounts of the salt mines, and, being unaccustomed to this trying work, their sufferings were intense. He had frequently seen prisoners with the joints of their fingers rotted away, and finger nails dropping off, the salt having eaten into them.

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### Under the Rule of Extremists

London, Dec. 6.—A Daily Mail dispatch says that the draft of a law has been issued in Petrograd respecting births, deaths and marriages. It abolishes church marriages, recognizing only civil ceremonies; illegitimate children are given the same rights as legitimate; divorce is made easy and burials in consecrated ground without a religious ceremony is allowed.

## MAY CONSTRUCT 300,000 HOUSES AFTER THE WAR

That 300,000 houses may be built after the war by local authorities in Great Britain, with the financial assistance of the state, was a prediction made at Manchester recently by W. Hayes Fisher, M. P., president of the local government board. The whole question of housing in Great Britain is an interesting one and it appears to have become very pressing.

The state, as a state, said Mr. Fisher, had never taken upon itself the obligation to house the people. It had left this duty to the local authorities, and the local authorities had done very little. They were just beginning to make a move when the war broke out, but the plans of all of them for 1918-1919 did not contemplate the building of more than 12,000 houses. Over 98 per cent. of the houses in the country had been built by private enterprise.

### Private Enterprise Gone.

During the last year or two before the war, Mr. Fisher said, private enterprise was being driven out of the field, and he and his colleagues in the department were persuaded that it would not be possible to coax private enterprise back just yet. They did not think the state was a good builder. They turned to the local authorities and asked them what they were prepared to do provided that substantial financial assistance was forthcoming. To the circular issued by the local government board 1,231 out of the 1,506 local authorities had replied.

### Aid from the Treasury.

The local authorities, of course, Mr. Fisher said, would want to know precisely what was meant by "substantial financial assistance." He was not yet in a position to tell them, because the treasury had not answered the letter he sent some time ago asking what amount of money they were willing to place at his disposal. But it was permissible to make some kind of calculation. He added:

"In 1915 in order to induce certain local authorities to build houses for the need of great influxes of munition workers, the government had to make free grants which averaged 22½ per cent of the cost of building. To build 300,000 houses would cost about 250,000,000. Supposing the Exchequer could raise £30,000,000 or a free grant, on what principles should it be distributed?"

"The first guiding principle is that the local authorities must go into partnership with the state. The state, if it is wise, would neither build the houses, nor own, nor control them. That has been proved by experience to be a very expensive arrangement. The local authority would have to make the contracts for the building of the houses and to fix the rents. There is an obligation upon the local authorities to take some risks in this matter; they should not expect the state to take the whole of the risk.