

"NOWHERE SUCH UNDOUBTED OPTIMISM AS WITH CANADIANS"

Member of Coalition Cabinet Makes This Statement on Return from Visit to Our Boys

No Longer Do Men Have to Pass Days in Trenches Half Filled With Mud and Water—Gen. Alderson Says Canadians Have Shown Their Superiority Over Germans.

London, Feb. 14.—The third party of Canadian journalists concluded a two-day tour of the Canadian lines, comprising visits to all divisions. Comparatively little change has taken place in the actual locations held by our force twelve months ago.

Familiar stories of a few months back of our men having to pass their days knee-deep in mud and water do not apply today. Sanitation in the trench and camp so vital to the health of troops, is excellent, with the happy result that today there are only one and a half per cent on the sick list. These improve



SIR E. N. ALDERSON, Commander of the Canadian Divisions in the Field.

ments have naturally exercised a tremendous influence on the morale of the men. I found them quite cheerful, confident and optimistic. Recently one of the members of the coalition cabinet, on his return from a visit to these lines, said that "Nowhere had he found such undoubted optimism prevailing." This is literally true. I spent a whole night in the trenches held by the eastern and western battalions and although the weather conditions were most depressing I heard not the slightest murmur from anyone.

On Monday night we dined with the corps commander, Sir Edwin Alderson, who we found highly optimistic regarding the general situation. Snatching the opportunity for a few minutes' chat with him, I asked if we had arrived in time to see something of "the great German attack in the west," which we had heard so much of, and which reports claim would be made upon the positions held by the Canadians.

General Alderson had seen these reports, but begged me to dismiss them from my mind. "I'm sure," he said, "we should like to see them come along, as we are perfectly ready to receive them. Our position here is most favorable. Our men are in the best of health, and as for our infantry, man for man, the Canadian has again and again proved his superiority over the German and no one knows that better than the Boche himself."

"Reports of the closing of the Dutch frontier and the massing of troops on this front are of frequent occurrence, and undoubtedly emanate from enemy sources. They are sent abroad with a definite object in view, as a few minutes' reflection on the case of Salambas would prove. The attack on that place has been talked about for six weeks, but it has not yet materialized."

"On Tuesday morning I was privileged to see the Canadian artillery at work. The positions held by these batteries—which, by the way, are most ingeniously arranged and concealed—are practically impregnable. For several hours the Canadians, with extreme mathematical accuracy, literally poured the enemy parapets, portions of which were blown sixty feet into the air."

"The Germans on this particular day retaliated, but feebly to our gun, and on making enquiry as to whether this was a typical instance, I was informed that the German methods of firing are very erratic."

"Some days," said my informant, "they fire as many as 5,000 shells a day on one of our divisional fronts. On quiet days, such as yesterday, we generally get about 400 between noon and dusk."

"Are there signs," I asked an officer in charge "of any increase in the supply or quality of the German shells now being used?"

"Well," he said, "a very large number of them don't explode at all, and that undoubtedly proves that they are manufactured under unfavorable conditions, but as to whether they are short of supplies, it is very difficult to say. Only a few days ago they poured in

to Ypres, which is already in ruins, no fewer than 10,000 shells between four in the morning and four in the afternoon, an unusually terrific bombardment. The exchange generally opens about noon and continues until dusk, when the snipers, sharpshooters and bomb-throwers begin their deadly work."

When the official account is available it will be found that the Canadians have carried out some splendid coups in the dead of night, and I am informed that the recent raid of two battalions is no isolated case.

We have not been fortunate enough to see any aerial combats, but we have seen something of the exploits of our own men—among whom were Torontonians and Montreals—under fire of the German "Archibalds," and I have no hesitation in saying that for ingenuity, daring and resourcefulness they would be hard to beat."

CIVILIZATION'S GROWTH OPENS UP FRENCH CONGO

London, Feb. 16.—Vice-Consul Purden, in a report to the foreign office, says that the gradual increase of civilization among the six or eight millions of natives believed to be in the French Congo will lead to an increasing demand for European manufactures. Two tariffs are operative, one applying to the part which is known as the conventional basin. The Tariff Metropolitan (protective) acts resolutely against British merchants, and the enormous tracts of land which have been leased out to concessionary companies militate heavily against open commerce on a free trade basis.

In spite of these disadvantages the British import trade for the Gabon was responsible for 27.5 per cent of the whole, and the Moyen Congo for a fraction over 10 per cent. Trading being based on system of direct barter with the natives, it follows that items which are represented in the colony are more likely to obtain products and dispose of their goods than firms desirous of placing their goods with houses already established or represented in the country. Among the lines which are at present applied for the greater part from non-British sources, and to which British manufacturers could, with advantage, pay more attention, may be mentioned sewing machines, cheap enamelware, hardware, cheap perfumes, building material, including corrugated zinc, pianos, frameworks, and accessories generally, cement, cheap tin trunks, with and without leather straps, watches and clocks, trade biscuits, felt hats, hosiery, second-hand clothes, ready-made cheap suits, cheap singlets, cheap lace, and soap, plain and scented. All quotations, with samples, should be sent to the head offices in the United Kingdom, for the greater part in Liverpool, and prices quoted in £. s. d. Liverpool, with full particulars as to weights and measurements in the metric system. Transport in the interior is the most serious factor to be reckoned with, and firms must have their principal agencies on the banks of the main river or the coast. The commercial future of the country has tremendous possibilities, but it depends on substantial financial aid from France for the opening up of the interior by rail and road.

Mr. Asquith's frank statement regarding the nation's liabilities should be sufficient to cause every man and woman in the Empire to economize in every way possible. The Patriotic Fund, the Red Cross Fund and other funds of this nature ought to be considered before luxuries by those who have money to spend. By procuring economy you are helping to win the war.

MAJOR W. B. WOOD is second in command of the 100th battalion, Winnipeg Grenadiers, and will take command of the battalion when it leaves for overseas service. Until recently he had charge of the schools of instruction for Military District No. 50. He is a South African veteran.

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Grand Duke Announces Capture Of Erzerum, Turkish Stronghold

Petrograd, Feb. 16, via London, Feb. 17, 2:13 a.m.—The fall of Erzerum, which had been confidently awaited since the news of the taking by the Russians of nine of the sixteen forts guarding the gateway to Asia Minor, is the cause of great elation in Petrograd.

Controlling the roads through Armenia, with access to Trebizond, Tabriz, and Mesopotamia, the capture of Erzerum is calculated to have immense strategic importance in the Russian campaign in the Caucasus, and it will indirectly affect the Balkan campaign by relieving the pressure on the Allies at Saloniki.

The conviction entertained by all Russian military observers that Erzerum would ultimately be forced to capitulate was based on the fact that the remaining nine forts were of considerably less importance than those already in Russian hands and could be readily flanked, or even ignored, in forcing the evacuation of the Turkish stronghold.

The taking of the first fort is believed to have destroyed the plan of defense, since the impregnability of Erzerum rested on the assumption of the German engineers who constructed the fortifications that the position was safe against assault from the south.

In spite of the intense cold and deep snow, the Russian troops took Kop mountain by storm, and dealt the Turks the first staggering blow. Having driven them from this position, the Russian artillery broke through and flanked the other positions, which went like a house of cards, the result of the Russian onslaught exceeding all expectations.

The Caucasian campaign derived great benefit from the Russian domination of the Black Sea, which enabled the army to receive a plentiful supply of provisions and munitions. The number of men garrisoning the Turkish position before the recent retreat of the Turkish army was estimated at 80,000. These numbers are believed to have been considerably augmented by the falling back of the Turks upon this position.

It was before Erzerum that the Russians suffered defeat in the Russo-Turkish war. Since then a strong line of forts has been constructed on the ridge in front of the city, greatly strengthening the position. The failure of the efforts to stop the Russian onslaught along the ridge is pointed to as evidence of the vast recent improvement in the Russian artillery.

The victory has been received here with the same spirit of enthusiasm as marked the fall of Przemyśl nearly a year ago. Contrasted with the taking of that fortress, which entailed a long and painful investment, Erzerum is the first instance of a strong fortress being taken by a whirlwind assault.

MEANS LIBERATION OF ARMENIA. London, Feb. 17.—The capture of Erzerum by the Russians is regarded here as a feat of first importance, the fortress being in any campaign by Russia against Turkey a dominating factor in military calculations, as it is the key to Armenia, both politically and from a military standpoint. Its retention by Russia is considered as meaning the liberation of the long suffering Armenian race.

What Capture of Erzerum Means

Erzerum, Turkey's chief city in Armenia, is in the hands of the Russians. Heavy assaults by the Russians against the long line of detached forts protecting the city, lasting over a period of five days, and described by Grand Duke Nicholas, the Russian commander-in-chief as "unprecedented," have resulted in the capture of the fortress.

Unofficial reports early in the present month said German Field Marshal Von Der Goltz, with 80,000 men, was besieged in the city, with provisions for only a fortnight.

The capture of Erzerum is considered of great strategic importance. From it radiate roads leading in all directions. Over those to the southeast and south it will be possible for the Russians now to fight their way toward their competitors operating against the Persians and Turks in Northwest and West Persia, or proceed south toward Bagdad, to the relief of the British bottled up in Kut-el-Amara, on the Tigris, southeast of Bagdad.

The immediate effect of the Russian victory on the situation in Persia and Mesopotamia is problematical, however, for despite the roads, the country is mountainous and there is still much ground to be covered something over 200 miles before the Lake Urmiah district of Persia is reached, and over 600 miles before the junction with the British at Kut-el-Amara could be formed.

Erzerum, an important fortified town of Turkish Armenia, is at the head of an extensive vilayet of the same name, the residence of a pasha, and the seat of an Armenian patriarchate, a Greek bishop, as well as the centre of the fourth army corps and one of the main strategic points on the Turco-Russian frontier.

It is situated 6,200 feet above the level of the sea on the southern edge of a wide valley, surrounded by mountains of considerable elevation about four miles from the Kas-Su or western branch of the Euphrates, 140 miles south-southeast of Trebizond.

The exports of the town are wheat, goat and sheep skins, mohair, and a lessening quantity of galls and tobacco, and furs. The principal trades are tanning, moccasin dyeing, sheepskin dressing, the making of harnesses and copper utensils. A considerable population of the town are owners of sheep farms or flocks in the mountain pastures.

Previous to the war the town was considered of such importance that England, Russia, Germany and Persia, as well as other nations, thought it worth while to have consular agents there. Its capture should mean the relieving of pressure on the British forces in Mesopotamia and a check on whatever plans the Turkish Government have in view for an attack on Egypt.

Through Premier Asquith and the French ministers have reiterated at frequent intervals that the Allies would consider no peace that failed to guarantee Belgium's restoration, today's formal statement is thought to have been made as a direct answer to recent talk in Germany of a peace between Germany and Belgium.

The Russian minister acted as spokesman, addressing the Belgian minister for foreign affairs, as follows: "The allied powers signatory to the treaties guaranteeing the independence and neutrality of Belgium have decided to renew today by solemn act the agreements made regarding your country, which has been heroically faithful to its international obligations. Consequently we, the ministers of France, Great Britain and Russia, duly authorized by our governments, have the honor to make the following declaration: "The allied and guaranteeing powers declare that when the moment comes the Belgian government will be called upon to take part in peace negotiations, and they will not act on to hostilities without Belgium having re-established its political and economic independence."

The Belgian foreign minister, Baron Beyens, replied: "The government of the king is profoundly grateful to the governments of the three powers guaranteeing the independence of Belgium, of which you are representatives, for their generous initiative in making known today this declaration. I thank you heartily in its behalf."

The Italian minister told Baron Beyens that although Italy was not among the powers which guaranteed the independence and neutrality of Belgium he had no objection to the foregoing declaration. A similar announcement was made on behalf of the Japanese government.

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The Man Who Came Back

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ARTHUR EMERY, OF ST. JOHN, HARVEY WOODWORTH, OF HOULTON, ME., ARE KILLED

Ottawa, Feb. 16.—The casualty list follows: SECOND BATTALION. Accidentally wounded—Edwin Cutler, Fruitland (Ont.). Killed in action—Captain George T. Richardson, Winnipeg.

TENTH BATTALION. Wounded—Peter N. MacKinnon, Port Hope, Inverness Co. (N. S.). Wounded—James Begley, Hamilton (Ont.).

EIGHTEENTH BATTALION. Died of wounds—John Hanson, England. Missing—Albert J. Reeves, England; E. B. Broadwell, Pincher Creek (Alb.). Wounded—James Begley, Hamilton (Ont.).

NINETEENTH BATTALION. Killed in action—John W. Williams, Toronto. TWENTY-FIRST BATTALION. Wounded—Charles Jamieson, Watford (Ont.); William Jeffrey, Scotland; Corporal Arthur L. Johnson, Toronto.

TWENTY-SECOND BATTALION. Accidentally wounded—Wilfrid Surprenant, Iverville (Que.). Wounded—T. Frigon, St. Anne De La Parade (Que.); Ulderich Charbonneau, Granby (Que.).

TWENTY-FOURTH BATTALION. Wounded—Aaron Elliott, Toronto; Lance Sgt. E. T. Lane, Montreal. Killed in action—Henry W. Smart, Montreal.

FIFTH BATTALION. Killed in action—Cecil D. Shaw, Peterboro (Ont.). Wounded—Stanley Moulton, Burn Bay Island (Nfld.); Harry Newell, Canoe, Guysboro Co. (N. S.); Albert E. Brooks, No. 28 Compton avenue, Halifax (N. S.); Sgt. Charles A. Smith, England.

TWENTY-SIXTH BATTALION. Killed in action—ARTHUR EMERY, NO. 75 THORNE AVENUE, ST. JOHN (N. B.); HARVEY WOODWORTH, HOULTON (ME.); PHILEAS FOIRIER, TRANSCONA (MAN.).

TWENTY-SEVENTH BATTALION. Wounded—Percy Spracklin, Winnipeg; Robert C. Brethour, Victoria (B. C.); Robert Gray, Lakes Francis (Man.). Seriously ill—John Gillanders, Scotland.

TWENTY-NINTH BATTALION. Wounded—David L. Mills, Vancouver. Wounded, But Now on Duty—William P. Athell, New Westminster (B. C.).

THIRTY-FIRST BATTALION. Wounded—James A. Irvine, Wales. FORTY-FIRST BATTALION. Seriously ill—J. Jaroszewski, White River (Ont.).

FIFTY-FIFTH BATTALION. Dangerously ill—A. Goulet, St. Albans (Que.).

THIRD FIELD ARTILLERY BRIGADE. Slightly wounded—Bombardier Charles A. Young, St. Catharines (Ont.). NUMBER TEN CANADIAN GENERAL HOSPITAL. Died—Arthur Burbridge, Calgary.

Ottawa, Feb. 17.—The name of Lieutenant Ernest S. Mitchell, of Truro (N. S.), reported seriously ill with the 23rd Battalion is the only one from the Maritime Provinces in the midnight list, which follows:

FIRST BATTALION. Wounded—Corporal Alexander R. Mead, England.

THIRD BATTALION. Wounded—Edwin Davis, England.

FOURTH BATTALION. Shell shock—John Taylor, England. Wounded—Ross MacNaughton, Ardrossan (Alb.); James S. Sartin, England.

FIFTH BATTALION. Wounded—Corporal Clarence B. Sweeney, Saskatchewan (Sask.).

TENTH BATTALION. Accidentally wounded—William Earl, Leithbridge (Alb.).

FOURTEENTH BATTALION. Died—Fred. Harding, England.

SIXTEENTH BATTALION. Dangerously wounded—Sergeant G. R. Neale, England.

TWENTY-FIRST BATTALION. Seriously wounded—Spencer Cummings, Cananogue (Ont.). Seriously wounded—Stanley Johnson, England.

TWENTY-SECOND BATTALION. Wounded—Phillip Lagace, Saint Paschal (Que.); E. F. Pine, Montreal.

TWENTY-THIRD BATTALION. Seriously ill—LIEUT. ERNEST S. MITCHELL, TRURO (N. S.).

TWENTY-EIGHTH BATTALION. Suffering from shock—Lance Corporal Albert E. Picknell, England.

FORTY-NINTH BATTALION. Dangerously wounded—Thomas Doberty, Edmonton (Alb.).

FIRST CANADIAN MOUNTED RIFLES. Died—Lance Corporal Harold G. Riddell, Edmonton (Alb.).

SECOND CANADIAN MOUNTED RIFLES. Killed in action—John Rivet, Bellingham, Wash., U. S. A. Slightly wounded—Captain Anthony Temple, England.

Wounded—D. E. Neill, Scotland. FIFTH CANADIAN MOUNTED RIFLES. Dangerously wounded—Alexander R. Grant, Scotland.

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Toronto, Feb. 16.—Today's Globe says in part under the title "Canada's Second War Budget": "The outstanding fact in Mr. White's financial statement, the fact which sways all others, is that in the relatively short period, which has elapsed since the outbreak of war, the interest upon the national debt has so increased that during the twelve months beginning on the first of April it will be necessary to raise \$80,000,000 to meet the interest payments upon the debt."

"The public accounts of the dominion show that the net debt of Canada in March, 1914, a few months before the outbreak of war, was \$385,000,000, on which interest amounting to \$12,898,000 was paid. There entered grim-visaged the destroyer of wealth as we well as of life. In a few months the debt and interest charges of the Canadian people began to climb upward at a terrific rate. Mr. White, in his budget speech, estimated that before hostilities ended the war debt alone might be about half a billion of dollars and the interest charge twenty-five millions a year. If we add to this the interest on the debt prior to the outbreak of hostilities, the tremendous fact emerges that in less than three years of war Canada will have piled up an interest bill twice as great as she has incurred in all the fifty years of the national history for the construction of railways, canals and other services built or aided by the federal government. Interest Charges Trebled.

"The interest on the public debt by March 31, 1917, will be at least \$870 per head of the population of Canada, as compared with \$1.60 on March 31, 1914. This huge war debt makes it necessary to