

THE FERRETS A BRITISH UNIT

Battalion Makes Name as Destroyer of Rats.

Its Sector is Free of the Vermin.

Behind the British Lines in France, December 3.—(Correspondence of The Associated Press)—There is a certain brave battalion in the British army which is known throughout the length and breadth of the lines as "The Ferrets." The nickname was given them first of all because of their success in dealing with the rat nuisance in their section of the line, and the soldier who had most to do with combating the rats is known from Dunkirk to St. Quentin as "O. C. rats."—the initials being the regular British army abbreviation for "officer commanding."

The rats were probably worse in this battalion's section of the line last winter than anywhere else in Flanders, and many were the devices tried against the little enemy. Traps of all kinds were tried. Rat devouring dogs were brought up, but in vain. A cat with a tremendous reputation in the French villages was purchased and did well at first, killing four rats in twenty-four hours and intimidating many others. Thereupon the battalion made much of the victorious animal, to its undoing, for it adapted itself as if by instinct to the life of a regimental pet, that is, it ate as much as it could of the men's rations, took to the warmest corner available, and quit work.

Finally the battalion staff held a War Council, and dispatched one of its number to London to bring back three or four ferrets.

In the trenches, the ferrets were an object of great interest. Private Thomas Merryfield emerged from obscurity and was assigned to take charge of the newcomers. From that day forward he was known to the army as O. C. Rats. He took his duties seriously, and immediately went into action against the little enemy that had been stealing food off the tables, running over officer's faces at night, chewing even the laces from men's boots.

The ferrets and their "O. C." put up some great hunts. There were moments of great excitement when the rats bolted wholesale before the new attack and were clubbed to death in the trench by the enthusiastic men. There were also moments of breathless anxiety, when one of the precious ferrets emerged from a bolt hole somewhere below the barbed wire and was reported scurrying for the German trenches. One day Merryfield won the censure of the authorities and the enthusiastic approval and praise of his comrades by retrieving a lost ferret from No-man's Land in daylight and under fire.

Little by little the art of rat hunting was learned by the whole battalion. Men became wise in ferret lore, cunning in interpreting the noises of an underground struggle between the antagonists. The rats have ever since given that section of the battle zone a wide berth and the fame of the winter's successful anti-rat offensive is known to all the army.

BRITISH FLEET'S WAR PRACTICE

Now North Sea Watch Dogs Keep in Shape

While Waiting a Chance at the Huns.

Base of the British Grand Fleet, December 3.—(Correspondence)—The head of the British Admiralty, speaking the other day in the House of Commons, flung out a challenge to the German navy. He said: "I disclose no secret, or if it is a secret, I disclose a fact which I should be glad to tell the enemy—when I say that the British Grand Fleet in its northern base lies behind no shore defenses, but relies on its own strength alone."

There are people in the United States who do not appreciate the activities of the British Navy in its home waters, who think that it lies in idleness, like the German High Seas Fleet, behind impenetrable land-locked bases. For the purpose of removing this impression, The Associated Press representative was asked to visit the Grand Fleet, live on board the first-line battleships and observe just what sort of a day's work it puts in day after day and week after week.

Ceaseless activity is the motto of the Grand Fleet. Neither men nor ships are permitted to gather rust or become flabby. From its base at the northern tip of the British Isles, it sweeps day and night the 140,000 square miles of the North Sea on ceaseless vigil, in unflagging hope that one day its watching will be rewarded by a meeting with the enemy under circumstances wherein he cannot avoid battle. Moreover, this sweeping of the North Sea is no mere advisory patrol. In the most casual moves of ships and men there is always a directing mind and a directing eye. The North Sea is as well swept in relation to its size as the drawing-room of a well-ordered house. The enemy's coastline is still the British Navy's frontier.

The harbor which has been the home of the Grand Fleet for three years is probably the finest of its kind in the world. The whole area comprised in this British northern base is about equal to the hundred-square miles which the Germans evacuated in France last spring. The

battleship squadrons, for example, within their own particular section of this great base, have room for every kind of practice manoeuvre, including target practice.

On a sunny afternoon the correspondent saw eight battleships at turret or target practice, a detachment of cruisers in manoeuvres, a seaplane-balloon ship at work under conditions simulating those of actual warfare, and off around the edges, various operations by innumerable small craft and auxiliaries.

Night target practice, which also is conducted within the harbor, is always an interesting sight. The battleships steam down the nine-mile course. Suddenly a searchlight picks up a target. Instantly every turret is trained, every gun directed. Then a button is pressed somewhere, and the guns speak as with one voice in a gigantic broadside that awakens the echoes from the hills.

There is an infinite variety to the turret practice on a big battleship. The officer in charge of the turret speaks: "An enemy shell has come in through the turret, killing men numbers 1, 3 and 6. Right gun disabled. Connection with rest of ship lost. Carry on." The "dead men" file off to one side and watch their comrades work as they would in actual battle. There is the zest of a game to it.

The officer speaks again: "Shell has hit turret, killing all men except numbers 1 and 3. Number 3 is seriously wounded. Ammunition hoisting machinery disabled. Fire started in pile of waste behind gun. Carry on." The single un wounded man left in the turret must now endeavor to keep the guns in action single-handed, besides dealing with a fire and a seriously wounded man. The "dead men" stand along the edge of the turret and watch their comrade's efforts to "carry on" with interest and amusement.

It is play, but play with a deadly efficiency behind it for it is intended that in actual battle, there shall not be a single possibility with which these men will not be ready to deal.

HUN CLOTHING IS CONSERVED

Many Restrictions On Purchases Now

And Countless Cases of Deception.

Berné, Switzerland, cable: (Correspondence of The Associated Press).—To conserve the finishing supply of clothing in Germany the German Government has imposed regulations requiring that, for all articles of linen or personal wear to be purchased, three similar worn articles must be returned. This increases the scope and rigor of the clothing cards introduced less than a year ago.

The regulation applies to cotton stockings, gloves, collars, table linen and cloth materials for various household purposes. For every suit or overcoat too well worn or in good condition must be surrendered. The only articles of ordinary wear or use that are exempted from card regulation are wooden shoes and silk ties.

More than a year ago there was much talk in Germany of reducing the consumption of cloth by inducing patriotic-minded women to return to the old but fashionable tight skirt. The maximum quantity of material, in meters, which should be used for a dress was even stipulated. The economy was not successfully accomplished, however, for the German women, though they shortened their skirts appreciably, wore them wide and full.

Now, therefore, there is pending a rigid specification limiting the number of yards of cloth which may be devoted to any garment of given proportions—depending upon the size of the prospective wearer. And if the wearer needs linen and other garments than outer clothes, she must turn in three corresponding, worn-out pieces of lingerie.

The strict rules and regulations that are growing stricter each month have led naturally to an increased amount of deception and countless attempts by those who possess stocks of clothing to evade the card system by selling at abnormally high prices to those who cannot procure cards. The latest reports from Berlin tell of the arrest of a woman who was found to have concealed a stock of 1,500 dozen pairs of stockings. These she was peddling in little cafes and resorts where there was a minimum danger of her discovery and at utterly disproportionate prices.

ALLY CONFERENCE.

Outline of Work of Paris Gathering.

A Paris cable says: The Inter-Allied conference will be opened at 10 o'clock to-morrow morning, with Premier Clemenceau presiding. The Premier will make a brief speech of welcome, after which the delegates will at once begin work.

Before beginning consideration of the programme submitted for examination, the delegates will decide upon the order of their deliberations and the appointment of committees for discussion by various technical committees. The conference is called upon above all to dispose of concrete problems, such as food supplies and the blockade, upon which specialists among the delegates will prepare opinions. This preliminary work is likely to occupy the first plenary session, after the close of which the various committees will sit subsequently. Another plenary session will close the conference, which is expected to occupy three days. There will be an official luncheon at the Foreign Office on Saturday.

Forced to go to extremes—the hair can take care of his enemies.

R.F.C. AVIATOR ESCAPES HUNS

American Flier Was Believed to Be Killed.

Had Terrible Times in Gaining Freedom.

A London cable says: Lieut. Patrick O'Brien, of Momence, Ill., south of Chicago, the first American member of the British Flying Corps to escape from Germany, has arrived in London. O'Brien eluded his captors by jumping from the window of a speeding train. He then became a fugitive for seventy-two days, and, as his goal was within sight, narrowly escaped electrocution from the charged wires along the Holland frontier.

Last night O'Brien was dined by a group of fellow fliers, who, like scores of friends along the front, had believed he had been killed when he was reported missing on Aug. 17 last. O'Brien, who is a sturdy young man of 27, was flying in an aviation squadron at San Diego, Cal., when he went to Victoria, B. C., and obtained a command in the Canadian army. Going to France the next year, he distinguished himself by his great daring over the German lines. On the morning of Aug. 17 enemy gunners forced him to descend, but fortunately he landed behind his own lines.

Late in the afternoon of the same day saw him up again over the German lines, fighting the enemy. There were twenty German machines to six British in the encounter. O'Brien's machine alone engaging four enemy craft, and accounting for one before O'Brien was shot through the upper lip. He fell with his damaged airplane from a height of 8,000 feet. O'Brien says he cannot explain why he was not killed. When he regained consciousness he was in a German hospital.

Later the lieutenant spent three weeks at a prison camp at Courtrai before he was started for the interior of Germany. There were four other prisoners under a strong guard in his compartment with O'Brien, as a ruse, had his window opened by complaining of the smoke.

The train was now sixty miles inside Germany, and travelling at thirty miles an hour, but O'Brien decided to take a desperate chance. He jumped from the train, skinning the whole side of his face, re-opening the wound in his lip, and losing consciousness. It was about four o'clock in the morning and he was lying in a field.

Then for 72 days he was a fugitive, travelling only at night. He trudged through fields and swam rivers and canals in Germany, Luxembourg and Belgium before he reached the Dutch frontier. At the time of his flight he had a piece of sausage, on which he subsisted for several days, after which his sole sustenance consisted of turnips and other vegetables found in fields.

O'Brien did not know any German, but he used a little French on a kindly Belgian, who was so happy to meet an American in British uniform that he sheltered him for several days. The Belgian then gave him old clothes to cover his uniform, and directed him to the nearest route to the frontier. O'Brien swam the Meuse River near Namur, and the next day was challenged by German sentries, who demanded he was a peasant and was released for his last day as a fugitive, when he could see Dutch territory. To circumvent the charged wires, O'Brien built a bridge in a nearby wood and threw it across the wires. But it broke under his weight, and O'Brien received a shock which, he says, he can still feel. When he was covered he dug with his bare hands a tunnel under the wire, and, although it was slow progress, after several hours he had a hole big enough to crawl through, which he did unobserved.

Even then he was not sure he was in Dutch territory, so he concealed himself in a hay barn until the next morning. When daylight came the first thing he saw was people making wooden shoes. He then walked out into the open and hurried to the nearest British consul, who arranged for his transportation to London.

LICENSING U. S. IMPORTS.

President Strikes New Blow at Germans.

A Washington report: By a proclamation issued to-night placing under license the import of many articles, President Wilson put in the hands of the War Trade Board a powerful weapon to be used against firms controlled by German capital. Notable in the South American countries named in the proclamation is Venezuela, where German capital is in full command, and from which pro-German propaganda radiates in great volume. Brazil, Argentina, Chile and other countries will also be made to feel the full force of America's power to control commercial relations.

By refusing bunker coal to the German interests the War Trade Board has practically cut off all commercial communications with the outside world except the United States.

The proclamation issued to-night makes it possible for this Government, so far as the articles named are concerned, absolutely to control the commercial relations with the nation.

GERMANS SHOT AS ALLY SPIES.

Amsterdam, Cable.—Three Germans, including one non-commissioned officer, one private, and a well-dressed man, were just being executed in Germany as enemy spies. The leader of the group, according to the German newspaper account, was a Doctor Roos. His associates were Joseph Schmitzer, a non-commissioned officer in an artillery battalion at the front, and Albert Stridel, a soldier in a telephone section in Coblenz.

FONTAINE NOW "NO MAN'S LAND"

A Scene of Bitter Desolation and Carnage.

Swept Always by Machine Gun Bullets.

British Headquarters in France: Fontaine Notre Dame was to-day virtually "no man's land," over which swirled a never-ending deluge of machine-gun bullets from the ranks of the opposing forces drawn up on either side of the blood-drenched little hamlet. A bright, warm sun was shining down from an almost cloudless sky, but it brought little cheer to the battle-weary German and British troops, for it only served to throw into bold relief the awful picture of desolation and carnage through which all day yesterday grim death had stalked among the contending warriors.

It is probable that some parties of Germans were still clinging to their secret strongholds among the ruined buildings, and that British guardsmen also were hidden among the cellars at various points. But for the most part Fontaine Notre Dame was a place of dead; they lay about the streets to tell the story of the cruel tragedy enacted about them.

German prisoners from the 3rd Guards Division and 46th Regiment were in the British cages this morning as a result of the battle, and among the captives was a battalion commander, who was caught with many of his men in the rush of the British through the village. In addition to the five hundred taken in Fontaine, upwards of one hundred were captured in the fighting yesterday in the vicinity of Bourlon village, where English troops, co-operating with tanks, made some advance.

WASTAGE MORE THAN RECRUITS

Casualties and Discharges in Half Month 11,211.

Recruits Secured in Same Time But 2,061.

An Ottawa report: A statement issued to-day by the Militia Department shows that during the first fifteen days of the present month the total wastage in the Canadian Expeditionary Force exceeded the total number of recruits obtained by 9,150 men. The total wastage, consisting of casualties overseas and men discharged in England and Canada, is given as 11,211. The total number of recruits secured during the half month was 2,061.

Casualties over the 15-day period were very heavy, a total of 8,252 men being placed in this class. Of this number 6,448 were infantrymen. The balance of the total wastage is made up as follows: Men discharged in Canada, 418; men returned to Canada for discharge, 2,420 men discharged in England, 121. The total wastage of infantrymen during the half month was 8,438.

Of the 2,061 recruits secured in the 15 days, 672 were obtained in the United States, 1,384 in Canada and five in England. A total of 89 men joined the ranks of the infantry, 455 became artillerymen, 245 joined the railway construction and forestry battalions, and 465 were drafted into miscellaneous units. It is estimated in the statement that 45 per cent. of the total casualties will be fit for general service within a period of six months.

LANSDOWNE COMES OUT AS A PACIFIST

Ex-Cabinet Minister Would Revise War Aims of the Allies.

A SURPRISE

He Was Last Public Man Suspected of Such Tendencies.

A London cable: The strongest impetus to a renewal of the heated discussions of the rival schools on the war policy of the Allies was provoked to-day from a most unexpected quarter by the publication of a long letter from the Marquis of Lansdowne, strongly pleading for a revision of the Allies' war aims and an attempt to secure peace before the prolongation of the war leads to the ruin of the entire world.

The Marquis of Lansdowne is a typical representative of the old Tory party. He was a member of Asquith's coalition Administration, and was Secretary for Foreign Affairs in Lord Salisbury's and Mr. Balfour's Ministries. He was Viceroy of India and

Governor-General of Canada. He was the last public man to be suspected of pacifist tendencies.

His letter gives formal adhesion to President Wilson's policy of a league of nations and he asks: "What will be the value of the blessings of peace to nations so exhausted that they can scarcely stretch forth a hand to grasp them?"

Lord Lansdowne contends that an immense stimulus would probably be given to the peace party in Germany if it were understood:

"First—That the annihilation of Germany as a great power was not desired. "Second—That we do not seek to impose upon the German people a form of Government against their choice. "Third—That, except as a legitimate war measure, we do not desire to deny to Germany her place among the great commercial countries.

"Fourth—That we are prepared after the war, in concert with the other powers, to examine the international problems connected with the freedom of the seas. "Fifth—That we are prepared to enter into an international pact under which ample opportunities would be afforded for the settlement of international disputes by peaceful means."

Lansdowne's long and intimate connection with foreign affairs and diplomacy lends unusual interest to such a pronouncement at the moment of the meeting of the inter-allied conference at Paris and because of Clemenceau's recent declaration against a league of nations, including Germany, and already there are indications of embittered controversy over it. It is authoritatively announced that the Government had no previous knowledge of the letter, and the strongest supporters of the Government in the evening press suggest that the letter is very unwelcome to the Government.

TALKING TO THE TIGER.

Under the caption "Lansdowne's Strange Letter," and the sub-head, "The Policy of Talking to the Tiger," the Evening News strongly denounces against Lansdowne's suggestions on the ground that Germany's word cannot be trusted in any matter, and that an attempt to argue with her would be a sheer waste of time.

On the other hand, as one of the most remarkable documents that the war has produced, the Star greets the letter as the most formidable attack yet made on the Lloyd-Georgean "knockout blow policy."

The matter has created quite a sensation in the lobbies of Parliament, and, it is understood, will be the subject of discussion in the House at an early date probably Monday.

NAVY TO RUN SHIPS.

How U. S. Will Avoid U-Boat Menace.

Washington, Report.—In view of many of the American merchant ships engaged in transatlantic service is planned by the Government to safeguard vessels traversing the submarine zone. The proposed plan, the approval of Secretary Baker and Daniels, and will be adopted by the shipping board. The plan is to operate the ships with naval reserves, consisting of the present officers and crew and men of the merchant fleet.

A great part of the American merchant marine already is engaged in overseas service, and virtually all of the new ships coming from the ways will be put into the trade. It is estimated that some 1,000 merchant ship officers and seamen will be taken into the naval reserve service. Regulations will undergo adjustment designed to make enlistment easy. More than 100,000 officers and men, it is estimated will be needed to man the fleet of vessels the American shipping yards will turn out next year. The Navy Department already has trained nearly 50,000 for the reserve service, and although many of them now are in active service several thousands are available for merchant crews.

PLOT TO SEIZE FOOD.

Anarchist Scheme Discovered in Boston.

Boston, Report.—Agents of the Department of Justice here confirmed to-night the dispatch containing disclosures of an anarchist plot to seize foodstuffs in various parts of the country. They also said that Boston was believed to have been selected as the centre of the scheme. It was their opinion that the neighboring city of Lynn was the general headquarters of the conspirators, although the ringleaders maintained their homes elsewhere.

Evidence of a startling nature has been obtained, according to the Federal authorities, but has been withheld from the public pending the trial of three Lynn men, who were arrested six months ago, charged with conspiring to counsel young men against the selective service act. The defendants are Louis Galleani, proprietor of a small newspaper called The Chronicle, and John Eramo and Carlo Valducci. They are out on substantial bail. Federal agents said to-night that the evidence involved alleged conspirators in various parts of the country, whose movements have been traced. Much of the information was obtained, it was said, from articles appearing in The Chronicle.

CZAR SLEW 500,000.

Moslems Who Had Rebelled Were Massacred.

A London cable says: Half a million members of the Kirghiz tribes were massacred by agents of the Russian Emperor in 1916, according to a correspondent of the Manchester Guardian, who has been travelling in Central Russia. This was punishment for a rebellion against military service by the Central Asian Moslems. Two million nomads, who have gradually been forced eastward by the acquisition of the grazing lands by the Emperor's Ministers and others, who filled the lands with Ukrainian peasants took part in the rebellion. Civil war is still proceeding between nomads and the Russian peasants, according to the correspondent.

"I rather flatter myself I have made a rather many men happy," smirked the aged divorcee who had separated from sin. "Yes, I dare say there are lots of men you didn't marry," suggested Miss Caustique.

ITALIANS MOVE AGAINST HUNS

Launch Attacks On Teutonic Mountain Positions.

Foe Regiments Destroy Each Other in Error.

A London cable: Along the entire Italian front the batteries of the contending armies are maintaining a violent bombardment. The German War Office reports that Italian attacks against the Austro-German mountain positions on the west bank of the Brenta and on Monte Tomba failed. "Heavy artillery fighting is in progress all along the front, but no further infantry actions occurred," the Italian report states. "On the lower Piave River Italian batteries directed a destructive fire at enemy boats."

DECIMATED EACH OTHER. Headquarters of the Italian Army, Nov. 29.—Details have been officially received of one of the most sanguinary fights in the northern zone, in which two Austro-Hungarian regiments fought until they almost exterminated each other. The fight was back of Asiago during one of the main attacks against the Italians.

The enemy advanced from the two flanks, and toward night a regiment of Hungarian Czechs became engaged with a regiment of Galician Poles, both wearing a different uniform and speaking a different dialect. The rifle fire was followed by a bayonet charge and then hand-to-hand struggle with grenades lasting throughout the night, until the two regiments were almost completely annihilated. The survivors became known that they belonged to the same side. The general situation is not materially changed along the northern and Piave fronts.

Synopsis of Canadian Northwest Land Regulations.

THE sole head of a family, or any male over 18 years old, who was at the commencement of the present war, and has since continued to be a British subject or a subject of an allied or neutral country, may homestead a quarter-section of available Dominion land in Manitoba, Saskatchewan or Alberta. Applicant must appear in person at Dominion Lands Agency office in the district. Entry by proxy may be made on certain conditions. Duties—Six months residence upon and cultivation of land in each of three years. In certain districts a homesteader may secure an adjoining quarter-section as pre-emption. Price \$200 per acre. Must reside six months in each of three years, cultivate 30 acres and erect a house worth \$200.00. A settler after obtaining homestead patent, if he cannot secure a pre-emption, may take a purchased homestead in certain districts. Price \$300 per acre. Must reside six months in each of three years, cultivate 30 acres and erect a house worth \$200.00. Holders of entries may count time of employment as firm laborers in Canada during 1917, as residence duties under certain conditions. When Dominion Lands are advertised for entry, return soldiers who have served overseas and have been honorably discharged, receive one day priority in applying for entry at local Agency Office (but not Sub-Agency). Discharge papers must be presented to Agent. W. W. CORY, Deputy Minister of the Interior. N. B.—Unauthorized publication of this advertisement will not be paid for.

SHIP LOSSES ARE INCREASED

14 British Ships Over 1,600 Tons, 7 Under That.

Italy's Loss for the Week Very Light.

A London cable: Fourteen British merchantmen of 1,500 tons and over and seven of less than 1,600 tons were sunk by mines or submarines last week, according to the weekly Admiralty statement issued this evening. This is an increase of four vessels in the larger category and the number reported sunk last week.

The Admiralty statement follows: Arrivals, 2,658; sailings, 2,122. British merchantmen over 1,600 tons sunk by mine or submarine, including one previously, 14; under 1,600 tons, seven. Fishing vessels sunk, none. British merchantmen unsuccessfully attacked, including one previously, eight.

Last week's Admiralty report announced the sinking of seventeen merchantmen, including one of more than 1,600 tons, and seven of less than 1,600 tons, and over and over of less tonnage were sent to the bottom.

ITALY'S LOSS LIGHT.

A Rome cable says: Italian shipping losses due to submarine attacks during the week ending November 25 were one steamer of more than 1,600 tons, one under that tonnage, and one small sailing vessel, it was officially announced to-day. MAY SEND SUGAR TO TROOPS. Ottawa, Report.—The Food Controller's office announced to-night that the Commissioner of Customs had issued the following memorandum to collectors of Customs and others: "It is now ordered that sugar, refined and unrefined, including maple sugar, may be exported by parcel post up to regulation weight when consigned and intended for military and naval forces overseas, the limit of weight to the United Kingdom being seven pounds, and for furtherance to France, seven pounds."