

The Evening Times Star

VOL. XIII. No. 145

ST. JOHN, N. B., THURSDAY, MARCH 22, 1917

TWELVE PAGES—ONE CENT

Major Forces Of Allies And Germans Meet In Clash Before Gates Of La Fere

May Prove Initial Stage Of Greatest Battle Of History

Cormans Make Stand On 20-Mile Front But French Already Have Driven In Wedge and Enemy May Be Forced Back to Belgian Frontier, Giving up the Hindenburg Line—Turks Now Menaced on Three Sides

French troops are in contact with the main German army, and what may prove to be the initial stage of the greatest battle of history has opened before the gates of La Fere.

For the first time since the great German retreat began, patrol and rear-guard fighting has given way to the thunder of artillery and the clash of major forces. The Germans are making a stand on a line running north and south of La Fere, from St. Simon to the forest of Coucy, a distance roughly estimated at about twenty miles.

The position selected by the Germans is protected by the Crozat Canal and the Ailette River, a tributary of the Oise, but in this line the French have driven a great wedge directly in front of La Fere and reaching to within two miles of that important town. On this wedge is based the hopes of French military critics that General Nivelle has out-manoeuvred Field Marshal Von Hindenburg, and that La Fere is doomed and with it the whole of the famous Hindenburg line.

Paris believes that the extraordinary speed with which the French have advanced has disconcerted the German plans and renders probable a continuation of the retirement to the Belgian front. The official Berlin reports throw no light on the situation, but it seems certain that a few days or even hours must decide the fate of La Fere.

FRENCH DRIVE 'EM OUT.

Paris, March 22.—The Germans made energetic resistance to the French last night between the Somme and the Aisne, but after spirited fighting northeast of Terguier the French forced them out of several strong positions. The French occupied a number of villages.

The villages are situated in the north of Soissons. They were carried in the face of determined resistance by the Germans. The fighting followed in the region north of Terguier where the French enlarged our position east of the St. Quentin Canal, after spirited fighting and expelled the enemy entrenchments from several important defensive positions. South of the Oise and north of Soissons, we also made progress during the night, occupying several villages in the face of considerable opposition on the part of the enemy in the region of Vreigny. We made a surprise attack on the north of Berry-Aux-Bac which enabled us to take prisoners. Several attacks on small French posts east of the St. Mihiel-St. Sulpice road, near Fontaine-Aux-Charmes, in the Argonne and in the vicinity of Courlevres were repulsed by our fire. Elsewhere the night passed in quiet.

THE BRITISH FRONT

The situation on the British front is somewhat more obscure, owing to the rather vague character of the British official reports. The latest reports from London say that General Haig has pushed ten miles east of the Somme at some points. Measured from Peronne this would place the British within four or five miles from the vital point of St. Quentin and this estimate is supported by unofficial despatches from the front.

The German retirement is pivoting from their positions east of Arras and in this pivotal region General Haig reports steady progress but no localities are mentioned which might give a clue to the relative importance of the advance. Apparently the spasmodic fighting in the Champagne and Verdun sections has ceased, for the time being at least, but important news comes from another and far-reaching field of the world war. The Russians, driving forward from Persia, have crossed the Mesopotamian border at a point, while a second army is continuing its advance from Kermanshah in support of the British advance from Bagdad. This means that the retreating Turks are being menaced from three sides, and, according to allied military observers, are threatened by far greater disaster than even the loss of Bagdad.

ALLIES DRIVING LAST TO NEW LINE.

Paris, March 22.—The German retreat to the Arna St. Quentin-La Fere line is practically complete, since the British are now within artillery range of St. Quentin and La Fere. The movement has been carried out by echelons, according to approved principles, one section holding firm while the next fell back.

The allied operations are now concerned with driving in the last of these sections, which are still resisting. They are situated respectively south of Arras, south and east of Peronne, east of Ham and the valley of the Ailette and north of Soissons.

Lose Another.

Just in the middle of the line, east of Peronne and between the plain of Cambrai to the north and the plain of the Somme to the south, is one of the few positions of defensive value running to the east of Arras and Verdun. The Germans showed signs of intending to cling to this salient but it now, too, is gone, the British being close to both Roisel and Vermand. Another strong section which is still holding out occupies a formidable defensive position formed by the Forest of Coucy, but, from the signs of destruction in the rear of the defenders, apparently resistance is being made only to secure the retreat to the principal line at St. Gobain.

Quick Work.

As a result of Wednesday's operations, the British line is now level with the French, which runs along the Crozat Canal from St. Simon to Terguier. At the latter point the French positions are less than two and a half miles from La Fere. Part of the road from Ourscamp to Noyon, which was paved with granite blocks, has been unpaved by the Germans, but in less than a day the French engineer corps had repaired the road, rebuilt bridges and put the railroad in working order as far as Ourscamp. The military commissariat has sent 200 bullocks to Noyon and distributed 10,000 bread rations. Before leaving, the Germans made a clean sweep of the Noyon banks, sending to Germany securities valued at 15,000,000 francs.

German Report.

Berlin, March 20, by wireless to the Associated Press via Saville, March 22.—German cavalry is now in touch with the French and British mounted troops, which have been in action for several days. The German report says that the British are being employed on the western front. This is regarded here as an indication that great events are taking place and that a real battle is in prospect, trench warfare being over for the time on this part of the front.

WAS GOOD AND WAS ENJOYED

A joint programme given in the Seaman's Institute last evening by men of stamers in port was one of the most enjoyable in years. The building was filled to capacity and that the programme was appreciated was evinced by the generous applause which greeted the participants. The programme was as follows:

- Selection..... Foo Foo Band
Song—Volunteer Organist—J. Woods
Duet—Yacka Hula Hickey Duit—Messrs. Curran and Lowe
Violin solo, selected..... H. J. Grimes
Humorous song..... Alf. Deane
Selection..... Missable Foo Foo Band
Humorous Interlude..... J. Walker
Song, Thora..... D. Standworth
Comic Song, selected..... J. Walker
Song..... F. Roberts
Song, Broken Doll..... B. Lowe
Humorous song, selected, Charlie Olden
Duet, Dixie..... Messrs. Williams and Tyldesley
Song, When we Wind up the Watch on the Rhine..... H. Bewick
Selection..... Foo Foo Band
Song, Save the King..... J. Walker
Bandmaster—C. Donnelly; pianist, J. A. Edwards; chairman, J. Charlton; secretary, J. Jenkins.

SOLDIER'S CHILD DEAD

Friends of Patrice and Mrs. Harry Moffat, of Guilford street, West St. John, will sympathize with them in the loss of their infant daughter, Mary Heathie, who died yesterday.

MEDIATION OFFER LOOKED ON IN WASHINGTON AS ANOTHER BIT OF GERMAN INTRIGUE

Washington, March 22.—Offers of mediation to present actual war between the United States and Germany are expected among the next developments. Administration officials heard today that a European neutral was contemplating such a plan, and they frankly regarded it as another effort backed by Germany to divide settlement in congress and embarrass the president.

RUSSIAN BUSINESS TWO HOUSES IN POND ST. AFIRE

Two three story wooden dwelling houses in Pond street, one owned by John Sims and the other by Mrs. L. Fader, were badly damaged this morning by fire. The fire is estimated to be between \$2,000 and \$3,000.

ARE SOWING THE SEED IN GERMANY

London, March 22.—The Berlin Vorwarts says that the Russian revolution indicates that one of the consequences of the war will be the far-reaching democratization of Europe, according to a Berlin despatch to Reuters by way of Amsterdam.

GERMAN PRINCE AIRMAN MISSING

Berlin, March 22.—(Via Saville) Spirited fighting in the sector over which the Germans have been retiring is reported in today's official communication. It mentions no further evacuation of territory. Announcement is made that an airplane piloted by Prince Friedrich Karl, a cousin of Emperor William, has not returned from a raid over the lines between Arras and Peronne.

GERMANS GAIN SOME GROUND IN VIGOROUS ATTACK ON RUSSIANS

Petrograd, March 22, via London.—A vigorous German attack was made yesterday on the Russian front in the direction of Lida, near the Beresina River. The war office announces that the Germans gained considerable ground although subsequently part of this territory was recovered.

WEATHER REPORT

Issued by Authority of the Department of Marine and Fisheries, R. F. Sturpatrick, director of meteorological service.

Synopsis—Pressure is now high over the eastern half of the continent and in the Pacific, elsewhere comparatively low. The weather has been fair in Canada except that a few light snow falls have occurred over the southern parts of Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

IMPRESSIVE SCENE AS FRENCH LEADER MOTORED INTO NOYON

Child Presents Bouquet to Gallant General Nivelle

War Cross Pinned on Garb of Brave Sister—Huss Destroyed Cathedral Ere They Gave Up the Town

Paris, March 22.—General Nivelle's entry into Noyon was impressive. As the general and his aides alighted from an automobile, the notes of the Marseillaise were heard. The emotion of the people was great. Sobbs were heard throughout the crowd, and the tanned faces of the soldiers were wet with tears.

GRAVE TREASON CHARGE

Royal Palace, It's Said, Was Nest Of Spies

DEATH OF ALEXANDER MACQUARRIE

Some of the older people in St. John will have memory of Alexander MacQuarrie, who left this city some forty years ago, and whose death occurred in Provincetown, Mass., on March 21.

BULGARS KILL MORE IN MONASTIR

Corfu, via London, March 22.—A semi-official Serbian statement from Saloniki declares that the Bulgarians, to avenge themselves for the loss of their territory, forced by the pressure of the allied army to retire gradually from Monastir, returned last night by Serenians Scott and Patrolman Harvey at the instigation of Gordon Fagan, a seaman on the vessel, for alleged assault. The case will come up this afternoon.

KAISER AND HENRY TO BE DROPPED BY THE ATLANTIC YACHT CLUB

New York, March 22.—The Atlantic Yacht Club, after much discussion, has found a way to oust Emperor William of Germany and Prince Henry of Prussia, both of whom have been honorary members for several years.

GERMANS LOSE 853 SQUARE MILES OF FRANCE; STILL HOLD 7,126

Paris, March 22.—The total amount of French territory liberated from the German invaders by the Somme offensive up to March 21 is 853 square miles, situated in the four departments of Pas De Calais, Oise, Aisne and Somme. It includes 365 towns and villages, the homes of 181,935 Frenchmen.

The Germans are still in possession of 7,126 square miles of France.