WEEK'S WAR SUMMARY

By W. H. Stewart.

Several events having perhaps a bearing of immense importance on the war have recently arisen and speculation concerning their portent has occupied much space in the British and American press.

First, the czar of Russia has assumed command of the Russian army and navy, and his cousin, Grand Duke Nicholas, was appointed viceroy of the Caucasus. Secondly, the czar has sent a message to the president of France, breathing a confident bugle note of coming victory.

Thirdly, the Russian army in Eastern Galicia and Bessarabia suddenly became active and won three local successes of considerable proportion in as many days on the Sereth River, at Tarnopol and at Trembowla, capturing in the fighting of the past six days some twenty-two thousand men and nearly four hundred officers, besides killing and wounding a large number of the enemy.

Fourthly, the following cryptic announcement was made by the Russian war office on Thursday night:

"Altogether, our armies are firmly and resolutely carrying out the movement in conformity with the object assigned and contemplate the future with confidence. Our faithful ally, the French army, has been for fifteen days past bombarding the German front with terrible effect."

Fifthly, Lord Robert Cecil, undersecretary for foreign affairs, in a speech at Croyden Thursday night, expressed the firm belief that the Dardanelles expedition was near a great success which "would have an enormous effect in all parts of the world."

On Eve of Big Success?

The apparent inference to be drawn from these announcements and events is that the world is on the eve of some staggering alteration in the course of the war.

The other alternative is that they are put forth for the purpose of deceiving the enemy. A quasi-hint that Japanese troops would be lined up with the Grand Alliance at the Dardanelles, may also have some foundation of fact, or it may have been given out also with the intention of deceiving the enemy and of worrying the German general staff, which would be inclined to proceed with great caution till it had time to learn thru its spies whether any Japanese soldiers were, say, in Russia, ready to assist the Russians in springing a big surprise on them. Thus valuable time could be gained.

The shipment of an immense sum in gold from London to Tokio is in payment for munitions supplied to Russia. It was also reported from Petrograd that the Russians had finally solved the munitions problem and had plenty now on hand.

It is also hinted from London that the great offensive against Germany, Austria-Hungary and Turkey, when it came, would start off simultaneously like horses in a race at the crack of a pistol.

Lloyd George has also issued another warning to British trades unions, half ultimatum, half appeal, that he wants more munitions from them. He has more arsenals built, he wants many more hands to work in them, he wants sabotage stopped, he wants restrictions relaxed so that he can employ unskilled women workers after a brief period of training.

Millions of Shells Needed.

Millions of shells will be needed to batter the German trenches and to blow to bits the great German fortifications that bar the roads across the Rhine. The war has become really a contest between British and German industries. But while up to a recent period the allies in the west were sparing of their shells, the Germans were extremely prodigal, throwing away the accumulation of last winter in fighting with the stubborn Russians. So a big campaign launched against Germany at the present time would bid fair to find her gravely handicapped.

Pyrrhic German Victories.

Passing from the general to the particular, the situation in the eastern theatre of war presents features of interest. It will be recalled that Germany and Austria last winter accumulated an immense mass of shell and began a big attack upon the Russian lines along the Dunajec, using thousands of heavy guns for the purpose. The Russians at once began to retire, suffering losses of considerable magnitude, but preserving their lines intact. The Germans claimed that they had won victories, but if so, they were the kind of victories that Pyrrhus of Epirus won against Rome, brilliant, but ineffective. Rome declined to treat with him for peace while he remained on Italian soil, just as Russia declined to treat with William the other day while a Teuton soldier stood on Russian soil. The verdict against Pyrrhus may be returned against the kaiser's chief generals, "He was aptly compared to a gambler who made many good throws with the dice, but could not make the proper use of the game."

So in studying the results of the Russian campaign it is well to note that the German armies aimed at the disarming of the Russian armies so as to compel Russia to accept peace and in this they have failed so far. A big offensive has failed in its object if it fails so to reduce the enemy as gravely to weaken him, but the facts are that the Russian armies still stand before the enemy, presenting an impenetrable front, as they have stood since the war began. It is a common superstition that armies fight standing still, while the fact is that wherever the space is sufficiently large a good general will utilize his superior mobility in manoeuvring till he gets the enemy in a corner to destroy him. The Russian army was not destroyed. The Germans, who have been constantly on the advance, attacking the elusive Russians as they slowly retired, suffered equal, if not greater losses, than the Russians, so the whole campaign so far as armies go, stands as it was. It is true that the enemy still stands on Russian soil, but dirt is cheap in Russia, especialy morass and bog, which are especially thick about where the present lines are. What is the temporary occupation of a few hundred miles of territory to a country which is six thousand miles broad?

Russians on New Line.

The Russian armies on the north are now nearing their third great lines of defense, the best lines so far reached. This line begins at Riga, runs southeast for two hundred miles and more to Jacobstadt, then more sharply southeast to Dwinsk, then southwest to Vilna, then directly south to Lida for one hundred miles, from there to Daranavtischi, southeast 75 miles, then south to Pinsk, about the same distance, then to Rovno, 150 miles, and on to Kamenez-Poldolsk, on the Roumanian frontier, about the same distance, in all extending about 700 miles.

These new positions are better adapted for defence than any previously occupied for the defence of Russia. Behind them runs a good lateral railway system, from the Roumanian border to a point about 100 miles southeast of Riga, where the line turns northeast and makes for Petrograd. The value of this line is to transport men and munitions to any point threatened by the enemy in large numbers and quantities, permitting the reinforcing of any sector of the front where the situation might verge on a crisis. The importance of a railway behind the lines of an army, and running thruout its length can be best appreciated by the fact that modern munitions are like stoves or pianos to handle. They cannot be handled in adequate numbers without the support of the railway.

Position of Russians.

The third line of Russian defence has not yet been reached by the Russian armies in their retreat, except at a few sections in the north of the line. The Russian centre has still 75 miles to cover to reach those new positions prepared beforehand. The retirement of the centre may, therefore, be continued for two or three weeks before it is dcided to turn about face and stem the German advance. So any claims of the Germans operating in the centre at least of gaining further advantages may be discounted at their real value by the knowledge that it is necessary for the Russians to draw back their line for a considerable distance before it reaches the third defensive position.

Germans Need Railway.

For the Germans, if they wish to maintain themselves before the Russian lines, it is almost an absolute necessity to capture this important Russian railway, which is the first strategic line so far reached in Russia. The railways into Poland all run into Warsaw, and so cannot be used for lateral communications. To possess this railway the Germans would have to seize five important junctions, which are, commencing with the south, and running north, Rovno, Pinsk, Baranavitschi, Vilna, and Dvinsk. All these junctions are linked up with the East Prussian and Galician railway systems, by cross country lines. But to make a success of their contemplated seizure the Germans require Kovno and Riga. They require Kovno because it links the north and south railway with a line to Lemberg, the key to the Galician railway system. They require Riga because it is the terminus of a branch line, which links up with the main line at Dwinsk. The possession of Kovno and Dvinsk would enable the Germans to move north and south along the Russian strategic line with their battering rams of artillery, and clear the Russians out of their third line of defence. They stand upon this line at one point, Vilna.

Importance of Late Checks.

This fact alone is sufficient to explain the value of the checks administered to the Teutons on the Sereth river in Eastern Galicia. These remove the danger from Rovno, unless the enemy is able to concentrate fresh forces and renew the attack in superior numbers and artillery. This would take some time to do, and in the meantime the Russians could be reinforced.

Leadership of Czar.

As to the direct leadership of the Czar, mentioned above, it may be dismissed as improbable, that if the Russians were in danger of defeat, the Russian emperor would wish to connect himself with a disaster. It is probable that the Russian military chiefs have supreme confidence in victory. Judging from this distance, the chances of the Russians with a good railway system at last behind them, granted that they have a reasonable provision of equipment and munitions, are in a high degree favorable. The Germans will be fighting with the disadvantage of having no railway running parallel to their lines, and with the country flooded by autumn rains, they will experience difficulty with their communications. A defeat for them might easily be turned into a decision with the destruction of a great part of their armies.

The Czar is said to be no general, but a generalissimo these days, has practically to leave everything in the matter of direction to his subordinate generals and his chief of staff. His position is analagous to the position of Pitt the Elder (Chatham), who directed his generals in the Seven Years' War, which closed for Great Britain in an intoxication of glory. Every day people asked each other, what new victory is this?

Events in France.

In the west, France, Belgian and British artillery have been directing for nearly three weeks an intense fire on the German lines of communications. It will be remembered by those who have followed the past winter's operation in France that several tactical operations were conducted by the French and British armies at certain points in the line. The first of these was in the Champagne, the next at Les Eparges, the next along the Fecht River in the Vosges, the next at Neuve Chapelle, the next on the crest north of Arras, and the next at Fertubert. These combats were fought, not to pierce the German lines, but to shove them back. What General Joffre wanted to get at was the German lines of communications. These are lateral railways running behind the German lines and feeding the German forces with provisions and munitions. When Joffre shoved the German front back far enough, these communications could be bombarded by his artillery. This is what he has been doing for the past three weeks. The consequence has been that the Germans have been unable to employ these railways to supply their forces and have to brings up supplies from a distance at great disadvantage. The necessity for more transport facilities would be gravely felt in consequence, and the Germans would gradually run short of supplies on the spot. They would, therefore, in course of time, either have to fight to push back the French lines or to retreat. If they fought, they would be inown down with rifles, hand grenades, machine guns, and artillery. It is said that in such attacks the enemy loses five men to the French or British one.

Significance of Attacks.

The consequence of the heavy bombardment has been felt by the desperate attacks made by the Germans in the Argonne and the Vosges. Here they came on in such fury that they gained some ground, temporarily at any rate. The question now remains to be settled whether the operations of Gen. Joffre and his guns has so worried the German high command as to compel it to draw men from the Russian front to launch another big offensive in France to save its armies from being compelled to retreat, or whether Jen. Joffre will be first with his offensive this time. Exact knowledge of conditions prevailing at the French front would be required to enable the passing of a competent opinion on this point. It must be remembered that if the Germans attack the French lines first without the long and careful preparation that Gen. Joffre has made, they will suffer enormous losses out of all proportions to the advantages gained.

Of the progress in the Dardanelles, what has been done to clear up the situation has remained for the past week, and more tightly locked is official breasts, but indications multiply that extreme confidence of achieving a brilliant coup prevails in the minds of those of the grand alliance to whom the high task of managing the war has been given. It must be remembered that Sir Ian Hamilton has been doing the same sort of spade and foundation work on the Gallipoli peninsula that Gen. Joffre has been doing in France. It would not be beyond the possible and even probable that any day will bring the news of a triumphal ending to the first stage of the campaign against Turkey.

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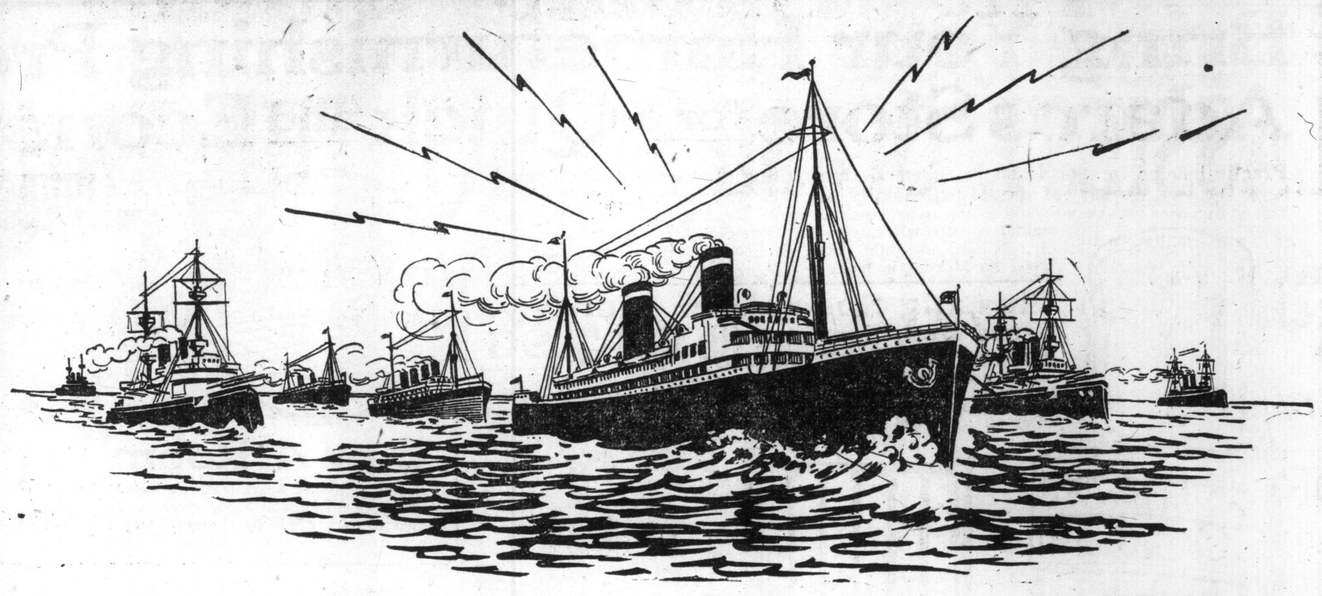

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PATRIOTIC ROYAL ARCH MASONS.

Surgeon-General Ryerson Will Address the Capitular Masons of Toronto.

A patriotic night under the auspices of the St. Patrick chapter, Royal Arch Masons, will be held on the 18th inst., in the Temple Building. Surgeon-Gen. G. Sterling Ryerson, P.Z., of the chapter, who has recently returned from visiting the hospitals in France and England, will relate his experiences in the fighting lines. Mr. K. J. Dunstan will take the chair at 9 p.m., and all Royal Arch Masons are cordially invited to be present. The arrangements are in charge of the past principals of the chapter: Comps. J. A. Cowan, W. F. Biliger, B. Cairnes, P. W. Rogers, C. Smith, W. Croft, Geo. McQuillan and Thos. Graham, Z. Patriotic music by Comps. Morley Sherris, Donald McGregor, musical director, will be a feature of interest. It is expected that this will be the largest attended Masonic patriotic gathering yet held in Toronto.

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