

THE WEATHER.
Maritime—Moderate winds,
light local snowfalls, but mostly
fair and milder.

The St. John Standard,

NEW BRUNSWICK, CANADA.

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LAST FORT BATTERED DOWN IN RUSSIAN TROOPS HAVE OCCUPIED ERZERUM

Russians Have Scored Notable Strategical Victory—Opens Roads for Them to Fight Way Towards Army Operating Against Persians and Turks and Towards British Troops at Kut-el-Amara—Stormy Weather on Western Front Prevents Violent Fighting Which Marked Last Few Days—British and Germans Still at Grips Around Ypres.

TURKEY'S CHIEF CITY IN ARMENIA TAKEN BY RUSSIANS

ERZERUM IN HANDS OF RUSSIAN ARMY

Petrograd, via London, Feb. 16.—Official announcement is made that the Russians have captured Erzerum. Grand Duke Nicholas has telegraphed the Emperor as follows: "God has granted the brave troops of the army of the Caucasus such great help that Erzerum has been taken, after five days' unprecedented assault. I am immensely happy to announce this victory to Your Imperial Majesty."

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 compatriots operating against the Persians and Turks in Northwest and West Persia, or proceed south toward Baghdad, and the relief of the British bottled up in Kut-el-Amara, on the Tigris, southeast of Baghdad.

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 Urmia district in Persia is reached, and over 600 miles before a junction with the British at Kut-el-Amara could be formed.

Stormy on Western Front. With the advent of stormy weather on the western battle line, the heavy fighting of the past few days seemingly has simmered again to artillery bombardments and mining operations. Berlin reports, however, the British and French have endeavored to recapture trench positions taken from them by the Germans, respectively southeast of Ypres and in Champagne near Tahure, but that the attacks failed. Paris asserts, on the contrary, that near Tahure the French have retaken portions of their former trenches.

The British and Germans are still at deadly grips for possession of the trenches captured from the former southeast of Ypres, artillery and hand grenades being employed in the fighting. London reports that in the attack in which the British lost 600 yards of a front line trench the Germans attacked over a front of 4,000 yards, but were everywhere repulsed with considerable losses, except at the point the trench was captured.

On the Russian front a driving snowstorm along the entire line has almost stopped operations. The usual bombardments, interspersed with infantry attacks, continue on the Austro-Italian front.

Austrians and Bulgars Unite in Albania. In Albania, the Austrians and Bulgarians are said to have formed a union, and are battling for the capture of the important seaport of Durazzo, which is being defended by Essad Pasha's forces, consisting of Albanians, Serbians and Montenegrins.

Strumitsa, Bulgaria, has been raided by thirteen French aeroplanes, which dropped 158 bombs and returned to their base unscathed. Several fires were started by the bombs. The ministers of the Entente Powers

have informed the Belgian government that hostilities against the Germans and their allies will not be permitted to end without Belgium having re-established its political and economic independence. They added that the Belgian government also would be called upon to take part in the peace negotiations.

The question of submarine warfare still remains an open one by reason of Germany's announcement of the intention to treat as warships all armed merchantmen after Feb. 23. Secretary of State Lansing is making a careful study of Germany's latest reply with reference to the Lusitania question, to ascertain if there is anything in the German memorandum concerning armed merchantmen which conflicts with the assurances given by Germany in the Lusitania negotiations regarding the sinking of liners and the safety of their passengers.

German Aeroplanes Brought Down on Russian Front. Petrograd, Feb. 16, via London, Feb. 17.—The following official statement was issued today: "In the Riga section the fire of our heavy howitzers, compelled the descent of a German aeroplane northeast of Repe. The enemy's heavy artillery violently bombarded the Isakull bridgehead for half an hour.

"On the Drinsk sector our fire caused two explosions in an enemy heavy battery. In the Iloukist region we repulsed two German attacks on our bombards, and in the district north thereof.

"In the region of the Upper Ilva our artillery put down enemy attempts to bomb our trenches with trench mortars.

"On the fourteenth, one of our aeroplanes attacked the town and station of Podastse, dropping seven bombs weighing about forty pounds each, and in addition smaller bombs on the town. Enemy aeroplanes were encountered by the aeroplanes, but avoided a fight and fled.

"An enemy attempt to attack one of our entrenchments at Ujeliczko was repulsed.

"North of Rojan the enemy exploded a mine, but the crater remained in our hands after a hand grenade action.

"Caucasian front: In the Black Sea littoral our troops dislodged the Turks from a series of mountainous positions, and threw the enemy across the river Vitseus.

"As announced yesterday our troops captured nine forts of the Deve Boyun position, which covers the fortress of Erzerum, and took about seventy guns, in addition to munitions and prisoners. The general staff reports that it is compelled to abstain from mentioning the name of the glorious regiment which dislodged the Turks at the point of the bayonet.

GATEWAY TO ASIA MINOR NOW OPEN

Petrograd, Feb. 16, via London, Feb. 17.—The fall of Erzerum, which had been confidently awaited since 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, by 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 were like a house of cards, the result being 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 positions before the recent retreat of the Turkish army was estimated at 50,000. 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.

Erzerum is the first instance of a strong fortress being taken by a whirlwind assault.

BRITAIN TAKES ONE THIRD OF U. S. EXPORTS

Using Three Times as Many American Products as Any Foreign Country, U. S. Dept. of Commerce Figures Show.

Washington, Feb. 16.—Great Britain is using now three times as many American products of any foreign country, and is absorbing more than one-third of all American exports. Export trade figures made public today by the Department of Commerce show that British purchases of all kinds in the United States last year amounted to \$1,191,000,000. France holds second place among America's customers, with purchases last year of about half a billion; Canada is third with \$344,000,000, and Italy fourth with a quarter of a billion.

3 ENEMY U BOATS SUNK; THE FINAL FIGHT FOR ALBANIA

New York, Feb. 16.—A news agency despatch from Paris today says: "Three Teutonic submarines have been sunk in the Adriatic Sea by French cruisers, according to the Echo De Paris."

FINAL STRUGGLE FOR ALBANIA. London, Feb. 16.—The final struggle for the mastery of Albania has begun, according to a despatch received in London. The Austrians and Bulgarians have succeeded in forming a junction, and their combined armies are now in contact with Essad Pasha's army of Albanians, Montenegrins and Serbians, which is defending Durazzo.

AIR RAID ON STRUMITSA. London, Feb. 16.—Thirteen French aeroplanes carried out a raid on the town and camps of Strumitsa, Bulgaria, yesterday, according to a Reuter despatch from Saloniki today. The machines dropped 158 bombs, causing several fires, it is added.

The despatch states that the machines, although subjected to a severe bombardment, returned to their base untouched.

FLEET OF GERMAN SHIPS PREPARING TO MAKE RAID ON ATLANTIC COMMERCE?

Mobile, Ala., Feb. 16.—Eleven German steamers laid up in the Canary Island ports have been secretly armed for commerce raiding and are preparing to make a dash for the open sea, according to a statement made here today by Captain F. E. Maguire, of the American schooner Edgar W. Murdock, who says he delivered 2,100 tons of coal to German agents in Tenerife and saw it loaded into the bunkers of the intended German vessels. The Murdock is in port here.

WARNING TO ALIEN ENEMIES IN CANADA

Treasonable Utterances will Get them Into Trouble—Status of Austrian and Germans in Civil Service will be Investigated.

Special to The Standard. Ottawa, Feb. 16.—The government issued a warning today to German citizens of Canada that treasonable utterances and acts of violence would result in vigorous action.

Gen. Sir Sam Hughes made a statement regarding the raiding of a German hall in Berlin, Ontario, last night by soldiers, the destruction of German flags displayed there, and the abduction of a bust of the Kaiser. He said the people in the locality had been "exasperated by the language and action of a Lutheran clergyman—an American citizen named Cappert—and a German-born Canadian subject named Assumsson who, whether with good or bad intent, have been semi-apologists for German atrocities and Kaiserism."

"Alien enemies," said Gen. Hughes, "have been treated by the government in the most tolerant and lenient manner, but utterances and conduct that even indirectly encourage sedition,

BERLIN'S MOVE REOPENS WHOLE SUBMARINE ISSUE

Lusitania Agreement Presented Yesterday by Bernstorff Cannot be Finally Accepted Until U. S. Knows Whether it Will Conflict with New Policy of Sinking all Armed Merchantmen.

Washington, Feb. 16.—Secretary Lansing said today that the German government's announcement of intention of sinking armed merchantmen without warning after Feb. 23 has reopened the entire question of submarine warfare.

The Lusitania agreement presented by Count Von Bernstorff today cannot be finally accepted until the United States determines whether anything in it conflicts with the new policy of sinking armed merchant ships.

As now drawn and formally signed by the German ambassador, the agreement is in reply to the last American note. It begins with reference to the formal assurances given by Germany last September that submarines would not sink unresisting liners without warning and regard for the safety of life aboard, and that the instructions to submarine commanders were so definite as to allow no misunderstanding.

It then states that the submarine warfare around the British Isles was a reprisal for what is characterized as the "inhumane blockade" of Great Britain to starve the Central Powers, and then promises indemnity for Americans lost on the Lusitania, and expresses "profound regret" for their deaths.

It goes on to say that the German government recognizing liability for their loss, makes proposals contained in the draft submitted today, and then goes on to deal with the question of reprisals against others than enemy subjects. The change which the Berlin Foreign Office has made in the wording of the latter proposal has not been publicly disclosed, but from the air of optimism which prevailed today it is inferred that such a statement of the chances of its delaying the negotiations were slight.

Count Von Bernstorff told Secretary Lansing it was his personal opinion that in carrying out the new submarine campaign it was not the intention of the German government to sink "liners."

Mr. Lansing is understood to have informed his staff such a statement from the German government would be desirable.

In his conference with Secretary Lansing today the German ambassador discussed the advisability of a postponement of the effective date of the new submarine orders to give opportunity for negotiations.

lost his head as had been intimated by Mr. Glass, and said that if any valuable minutes were lost he claimed they must have been lost by Mr. Glass in giving the alarm. He was positive the fire started in the second double desk in the reading room, not in the first, as a couple of witnesses have stated. The reason the fire got away from him when he applied the extinguisher, he explained, was because the fire was coming out on both sides of the double desk, and he could only fight it from one side. As he did this, the fire spread from the other side to the adjacent desks and walls. He differed from Chief Graham, who gave the opinion that the fire broke out in several paper files where chemicals had been set. Constable Moore said the fire did not break out in several places, but simply spread rapidly.

Constable Knox also expressed the opinion that the fire, while it spread rapidly, did not break out in more than one place, but that it spread in a natural manner. The only explosion he heard was, he thought, in the liquor store room, and was no louder than that caused by the breaking of an electric light globe.

All the witnesses who were examined were asked regarding explosions. None heard them, with the exception of two members of the fire department, who were called at the request of Chief Graham. The chief was also authorized to get a statement from Major Stethem, now in Halifax, who was with the chief for some time during the fire, and who the chief says described one of the explosions as being like the bursting of a shell.

The inquiry was adjourned to Tuesday morning.

BELGIUM TO HAVE VOICE IN MAKING PEACE

Allies Renew Pledge Not to End War Until King Albert's Country is Indemnified and Independence Re-established.

Havre, Feb. 16.—The Allied powers signatory to the treaty guaranteeing the independence and neutrality of Belgium have decided not to end hostilities until the political and economic independence of Belgium is re-established and the nation is indemnified for the damages suffered.

This decision was communicated to the Belgian Foreign Office on Monday by the ministers representing the Entente Allies.

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 declarations:

"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 put an end 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 his 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."

FLOODS IN HOLLAND

Amsterdam, via London, Feb. 16, 11.28 p. m.—The storm which is now raging over Holland is causing great anxiety of further floods and disasters. Day and night hundreds of laborers are working feverishly to prevent fresh ruptures of the dykes. The force of the storm is such that all kinds of strengthening material are speedily washed away by the giant waves breaking across the dykes.

Should the storm continue it is feared that two-thirds of the town of Mookveld, in the province of North Holland, a few miles from Amsterdam, will be flooded. In several other towns the waters have washed through the sluices and have reached many houses, the occupants of which have been obliged to evacuate them.

Telegraphic and telephonic communication throughout Holland is at a standstill.