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Great Battle For Verdun is Now Beginning

Battle Now Raging Along a 25 Mile Front—Is the First Large Scale Offensive in Champagne Since September—German Forces Number 300,000 and Are Trying to Wrest Important Roads From French—Military Men Think Germans Will Not Attempt to Capture Verdun by Storm—Attacks so Far Have Cost the Germans Heavy Losses

PARIS, Feb. 24.—The great battle raging along the 25 mile front from Etain to Malancourt, north-east of Verdun, is being followed with great interest by the public. It disposes effectively of the question whether or not the Germans would make an early offensive. The battle is the first on a large scale since the offensive in Champagne in September, and is believed to be a forerunner of stirring, and perhaps decisive events. The principle fighting centres is the rough and thickly wooded country between Etain and Damvillers. Here some 200,000 Germans, the Crown Prince's best infantry, are trying to wrest from the French the important roads which would enable them to make their way through the Meuse.

The battle as yet is only beginning, but it is said to have cost the assailers of the French heavy casualties, without any appreciable advantage having been attained. The Germans have been making preparations for a big stroke at Verdun so openly during the past month that the French had every chance to get ready for them. The attacks, up to the present, only involve advanced lines, which are at least two miles beyond the outer defences of the fortress. Military opinion here is inclined to doubt that the Germans will attempt to carry Verdun by storm. It is pointed out that besides the formidable works of the fortress, it is further protected by a field army, under the command of General Humbert, an exceptionally energetic officer. The prevailing view is that the Germans, feeling the strength of the defences and the resistance they will meet with, may discourage them from proceeding to take the citadel by force, even with the help of their greatest guns.

LONDON, Feb. 24.—Troops belonging to seven German army corps, under Crown Prince Frederick William, are engaged along a 25 mile front north of Verdun in a desperate effort to drive back the French defending forces, and probably with a view to the capture of the great fortress of Verdun. There has been very heavy fighting for a considerable

period in this district of the French war zone, but within the last few days the attacks of the Germans have taken on additional strength and the battle line has been extended. It now reaches from Malancourt, on the west to Etain on the east, with Verdun in the centre. Only a few miles southward the Germans claim to have made important advances and to some extent this is admitted by the French War Office, which describes the battle as one increasing in intensity. German preparations were extensive. The bombardment of the French positions with thousands of shells was uninterrupted. As the French had foreseen this battle, all their available guns were called into action and they responded in kind to the heavy shelling of the Germans. While at some points the French were unable to resist the onslaughts of the attacking forces, along much of the front, according to the Paris communication, the attacks were well sustained and very heavy losses inflicted on the Germans.

Another British steamer, the Westburn, has put into port flying the German flag, with a German prize crew on board. This vessel reached Santa Cruz, Teneriffe. She had aboard 20 prisoners, taken from various British vessels which have been sunk by German raiders. The British barques Edinburgh and Belgian and the steamers Luxembourg and the Westburn, after departure from Liverpool, were last reported passing Cape St. Vincent and Cape Verde on February 4. The Flemenco left Newport, England for Valparaiso on Jan. 21; the Horace Fleet left Buenos Aires on Jan. 26 for Liverpool; the barque Edinburgh sailed from Rangoon on Sept. 22 for Liverpool. The Luxembourg and Flemenco had been placed on the overdue list. The Cambridge cannot be identified.

ANOTHER STEAMER CRIPPLED BY BOMB EXPLOSION

NEW YORK, Feb. 23.—A news agency despatch from Queenstown, Ireland, to-day, says that the British freight steamer Strathelyde, 4,417 tons, was towed into Queenstown today, badly damaged. No one was allowed on board, but it was rumoured that a bomb explosion had occurred on board.

She was built in 1906, and was owned in Glasgow. Her skipper is Captain Watt. The shipping register shows that the vessel left Philadelphia for Manchester on January 18th.

SPEED WITH SUFFICIENT GUN POWER NOW CARDINAL PRINCIPLE OF BRITISH NAVAL STRATEGY

Press Correspondent as he Stood on Control Bridge of Battle Cruiser sees the Fastest Squadron Ever Gathered Under One Flag Appear in View as Fog Lifted—All Ready to Rush at German Fleet as Soon as it Comes Into North Sea

London, Feb. 24.—Speed with sufficient gun power to cause necessary destruction is now the cardinal principle of British naval strategy. Battle cruisers, an unknown quantity at the beginning of war, have proven this principle to the satisfaction of every man aboard battle cruiser fleet which was visited this week in the North Sea by a correspondent of the Associated Press.

New battle cruisers before the war were not exactly objects of pride to their officers and crews on account of voracity with which they consumed coal and service on them was not popular and Government harassed with demands for a reduction in naval expenditure had no reason to favor these refinements of super-dreadnaught school.

To prove that the battle cruiser had redeemed its unfortunate early reputation it is only necessary to point to the activities of this type of fighting craft since the

war began. Battle cruisers brought Von Spee's career to a full stop. They were the only big ships which succeeded in getting into the North Sea engagements, so it is not surprising that these monsters, the biggest fighting machines afloat, are idolized by officers and men who fight on them.

Battle cruisers now form the nucleus of Britain's first line of naval offence. There are many new ships among the light cruisers attached to this squadron, but virtually every battle cruiser in it has been blooded, to use the navy's equivalent for army's baptism fire, and sailors manning them show the pride and poise of veterans.

When the mist lifted for a few minutes as the correspondent stood on control bridge of one of the battle cruisers the fastest fleet capable of actual offensive operations ever gathered together under one flag appeared in view. There were more than one hundred war vessels in the fleet arranged in squadrons with battle cruisers surrounded by their screen of faithful destroyers occupying a place of honor but with every section down to the humble rusty but vitally necessary colliers mark for flying start of the eagerly awaited coming out of the German fleet is signalled.

MILITARY SERVICE BILL IS CAUSING FRICTION AND MAY MAKE SOME SERIOUS TROUBLE

Tribunals Sitting to Hear Claims For Exemption Have a Difficult Task—Many Postponements Granted—Papers Claim This Will Lead to Earlier Call on Married Men

LONDON, Feb. 24.—The operation of the Compulsory Military Act is proving to be anything but smooth, and the measure may be destined to make much trouble for the authorities. The tribunals, which are sitting all over the country to hear claims for exemption, are having a strenuous time. The volume of applications is enormous and despite the prolonged sitting these tribunals are unable to overtake the mass of appeals.

Very few actual exemptions have yet been granted, but in numerous cases they have been put back for periods varying from two to six months. These postponements are causing intense dissatisfaction. Newspapers complain that men are wanted now, not at some indefinite time in the future and that these wholesale postponements mean an earlier call on the married men.

HUN FLEET MAY YET MAKE A DASH

NEW YORK, Feb. 24.—A special London cable to the Tribune says a high naval authority told the Tribune correspondent to-day he believed it was widely held in Admiralty circles that the German fleet may make a dash for the open sea at any time now, giving as a reason for this, not only the pressure of political opinion in Germany, but the innumerable recent reports all pointing to the preparation of a combined German naval and aeroplane and military offensive, with the object of forcing peace and impressing neutrals.

RUBBING IT IN

WASHINGTON, Feb. 23.—Austria has asked the United States for additional information on her protest against the attack by an Austrian submarine on the American tanker Petrolite, several weeks ago. Such information as this Government has will be furnished promptly.

WILL AMERICA SEVER DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH GERMANY IS QUESTION OF THE HOUR?

ONLY 10,395 IRISH EMIGRATED IN 1915

London, Feb. 24.—According to statistics just issued 10,395 Irish emigrated in 1915, approximately half the number of previous year. Only 25 per cent were of military age, the great majority being women and children.

Congress Grows Uneasy Under Strain—Lansing and Wilson Determined There Will be No Prolonged Negotiations Over Dispute Pending With Berlin—Washington Will Take no Action Till Reply to States Request Sent Last Week is Received

WASHINGTON, Feb. 24.—The agitation in Congress for action in warning Americans off armed ships of European belligerents has suddenly grown to such proportions that today the Democrats of the Foreign Affairs Committee voted to canvass the sentiment of the House on the several pending resolutions of that nature. The sentiment in the Senate in favour of some such action was also openly expressed, but at the end of the day of surprises tension and agitation such as had not been seen in Congress for some time, word came that President Wilson was still unalterably opposed to any such action by Congress. He believed he would only be embarrassed thereby in his negotiations with Germany by such widely circulated suggestions. The situation has reached a point, it is believed, that the President would soon lay it before Congress and Secretary Lansing might in some way define the attitude of the Government.

A communication from Senator Stone that the time had been fixed within which the United States would expect Germany to signify her intention to abandon her announced intention to sink armed merchantships without warning, was read. A statement was made officially that nothing had been determined on. The situation, though grave, was still a waiting one and that no final policy would be announced until Berlin was heard from.

OFFICIAL

ST. PIERRE BULLETIN

PARIS, Feb. 23 (via St. Pierre).—The Paris bulletin of 2 p.m. announces heavy fighting going on between Brabant and Herbobois, on a 15 kilometre front. The French have evacuated Hammit village. A desperate struggle is raging.

NEW MINISTER

LONDON, Feb. 23.—In the Commons to-day, the Premier officially announced the appointment of Lord Cecil as War Trade Minister.

GAINS IN AFRICA

LONDON, Feb. 23.—Andrew Bonar Law announced in the Commons to-day that 730,000 square miles of German territory in Africa have been captured.

GERMAN ADMIRAL VON POHL DIES IN BERLIN

BERLIN, Feb. 24.—Admiral Von Pohl, whose retirement on account of ill health from the position of commander of the German battle fleet, announced two days ago, has died in Berlin.

AUSTRIA TO TREAT MONTENEGRO AS CAPTURED TERRITORY

AMSTERDAM, Feb. 23.—A despatch from Budapest quotes the Pester Lloyd as stating that the Austrian Government has decided to treat Montenegro as a conquered country, instead of one which has surrendered, if after the lapse of a few days King Nicholas persists in ignoring all inquiries addressed to him by the Austrian Government.

GERMAN BANKS FACING FINANCIAL COLLAPSE

LONDON, Feb. 23.—A despatch from the Daily Express correspondent in Geneva says: "A banker just returned here after spending several months in Germany, tells me that the principal banks in the chief towns of the Rhine and also in Munich and Dresden, are in serious financial difficulties, and some big crashes may be expected within the next three months. The losses involved will be at least £180,000,000, the banker added, and if the war continues another nine months, Germany would be ruined financially."

British Blockade of Germany Failed Says Swedes

FOODS RIOTS BREAK OUT IN GERMANY

LONDON, Feb. 23.—The Rotterdam correspondent of the Daily Mail says that he has reliable information to the effect that rioting is increasing in Germany. He telegraphs that protest meetings, especially of women, continue to be held, notwithstanding severe police measures.

The most serious riot, which has so far taken place in Germany, occurred on the evening of Feb. 19, in Bergedorf, a suburb of Hamburg, where a women's meeting was held in front of the burgomaster's house, in protest against the butter and fat regulations. It developed into a big street demonstration, the people shouting, "Down with the Government." Police, summoned from Hamburg, drove the screaming and struggling women into their homes after a street battle.

A despatch from Zurich reports serious food protests and riots in Hanover.

BERLIN KEEPS UP GAME WITH WILSON

NEW YORK, Feb. 23.—A news agency despatch from Washington, published here this afternoon, says: "The appearance of President Wilson before Congress in the next few days to announce his desire to break off diplomatic relations with Germany, was forecasted this afternoon by high administration officials. This action is certain to follow, said one of the officials, if intimations coming from German sources are correct. Those intimations are that the German Foreign Office is sending instructions to Ambassador Bernstorff to play for further delay in the terminating of the Lusitania dispute and for long discussion on technicalities over the armed merchantmen decree, scheduled to go into effect on March 1st."

ADMIRAL MEUX TO ACT AS ADVISER TO NEW WAR TRADE MINISTER

LONDON, Feb. 24.—The Daily Express says it understands that Admiral Sir Haworth Meux, Commander-in-Chief of the British fleet at Portsmouth, will act as naval adviser of Lord Robert Cecil, the new War Trade Minister.

Viscount Middleton, in the Lords, yesterday expressed the belief that an Air Minister, with a seat in the Cabinet would be appointed before long.

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Swedish Press and Business Men Says the Blockade Was Made Effective Too Late—Germany Laid in Sufficient Stocks of War and Other Materials Sufficient For Two Years They Say—The Suggestion That Germany Has Been Smuggling Through Sweden is Bitterly Resented by the Swedes—Swedish Trade Has Been Practically Paralyzed by the War

STOCKHOLM, Feb. 24.—The British blockade of Germany has failed, because it came too late, according to the Swedish Press and Swedish business. As far as Sweden and other Scandinavian countries are concerned, the blockade only became real effective last April. For eight months prior to that time or since the very start, the Germans anticipated Britain's tactics, and are purchasing quantities of military supplies especially copper, cotton, antimony and tin through Sweden, Denmark and Norway.

Importers here are convinced that by the time the blockade was perfected Germany had stored up such quantities of these and other war materials as to meet all her needs for possibly two years.

The claims made by the British Government that great quantities of war material have been smuggled into Germany through Sweden are bitterly resented by Swedish merchants. These claims, which have been given as a reason for placing all sorts of restrictions on Swedish mercantile trade, are based on statistics proving the great increases of Swedish imports from Britain and America. Swedish merchants point out that prior to the war Sweden was a heavy purchaser of German goods. The war practically paralyzed this trade and the country has had to turn to other markets.

The opinion expressed here is that as far as the Scandinavian countries are concerned, Britain has only succeeded in creating ill-feeling among neutrals by her blockade, without seriously injuring Germany.

ATTENDS HIS FIRST CABINET MEETING

LONDON, Feb. 23.—Lord Robert Cecil to-day attended the Cabinet meeting for the first time in his capacity as Minister of Blockade.

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PORTUGAL SEIZES 36 GERMAN AND AUSTRIAN INTERNED SHIPS

Seizure Was Made Without Any Warning Been Given—Action of Naval Commander Was Totally Unexpected and Created no Little Surprise Among Government Authorities at Lisbon—Portuguese Colors Hoisted on Seized Ships and Act Was Accompanied by a Salvo of 21 Guns From Portuguese Fleet

LISBON, Feb. 24.—Captain Leote Rego, commander of the naval division here, at 4 o'clock yesterday afternoon, apparently of his own initiative, took forcible possession of 36 German and Austrian vessels lying in Tagus River. He hoisted the Portuguese colors on them and saluted them

action, pending receipt of Germany's reply to the requests of the United States, made last week through Ambassador von Bernstorff, for assurances that the notice of intention to sink armed merchantmen without warning after February 29, does not nullify the previous pledges given in the Arabic and Lusitania negotiations. A reply is expected momentarily. The Cabinet is expected to review the situation on Friday if it has arrived, to consider the German reply.

with a 21 gun salvo from the Portuguese fleet. It is said that the act of Captain Rego in seizing the interned vessels was totally unexpected by the Government authorities, who were unaware of the step until it had been carried out.

Despite many rumors since the outbreak of the war that Portugal was on the point of declaring a state of war with the Central Empires, on account of her treaty relations with Great Britain, no such declaration was ever made. The Portuguese Congress, by resolution on August 8, 1914 and November 23 of the same year, decided that Portugal would co-operate with the Allies whenever that step seemed necessary.

The Portuguese treaty with Great Britain requires that the latter be supplied with ten thousand Portuguese troops when she is at war. The last critical Portuguese reference to the attitude of the nation with regard to hostilities was the statement made on January 3rd last by the President of the Republic at a reception of members of Parliament, when he manifested a desire that a sacred union of all parties be maintained during the war so that the Allies may have reason to be satisfied with the services rendered by the Portuguese nation.



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