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VOL. XXXVII.—No. 13,305

LENS, QUENTIN AND ST. QUENTIN NEXT TO FALL BEFORE BRITISH ADVANCE

Former Town Has Been Evacuated by Civilians and is on Fire, While British Guns Are Pounding St. Quentin--Desperate Hand-to-Hand Fighting Drives Germans From Lagnicourt, Where Enemy Was Cut to Bits, Leaving 1500 Dead--Gricourt is Captured--Enemy's Defence of Lille is Tottering and City is Expected Soon to Fall--Good Progress is Made in Move to Turn Enemy Out of LaBassee.

By R. T. Small, Staff Correspondent of the Associated Press.

BRITISH Headquarters in France, April 15, via London.—Fighting like men with their backs to the wall, the Germans are making desperate resistance to the British advance, especially along the Hindenburg line from Quent to St. Quentin. This line has been definitely broken between Quent and Arras; consequently the Germans are attempting to hold from Quent southward. In the meantime Lens was being approached late today from three directions. The civilian population was evacuated by the Germans on Friday; no person was allowed more than 30 pounds of baggage. With the departure of the civilians the Germans seized three months' provisions gathered at Lens by the American relief commission.

Fires in Lens. Fires continued to glow in Lens today, while far away to the south fires were seen within St. Quentin, towards which the British and French are converging. Realizing that the important town of Quent, the switch point of the Hindenburg line, was threatened by the close proximity of the British, the Germans early today launched an attack from there over a six mile front. While suffering immediate defeat, the concentration of artillery to recapture Lagnicourt, opposite Quent, which was taken from them several weeks ago. Their victory at this point was short-lived, however, for the British immediately counter-attacked and re-took Lagnicourt with more than two hundred prisoners, and, catching the retreating Germans under an intensive field gun fire, cut them to bits. This ended the first real "defensive offensive" the Germans have attempted since the battle of Arras began.

From one end of the British front to the other the Germans are palpably nervous and jumpy. Where they have been driven from their old positions they are feverishly digging at every opportunity, particularly at night. Each morning new aeroplane flights show the result of the nocturnal activities behind the temporary line. Most of the new trenches are merely emergency defenses built at angles with a view to giving cover to machine guns with which the Germans hope to delay the British advance until further work can make the rear defenses tenable. It is now stated that no part of the Hindenburg line was expected to be completed until the end of April. Despite the claims that the recent western retirement has been entirely according to German plans.

Foe Panicky Near Leos. Where the Germans still hold their old positions to the north of Leos, the steepest movement on the part of the British sends them into a panic. Flares and signal rockets of all colors spring from their trenches. Engines are cast into "No Man's Land"; trench mortars set up a defensive barrage, and artillery help is frantically called for. Some of the German flares and lights are most amusing, as well as spectacular. Their latest star shells have a parachute attachment and hang suspended in the air for a long time, lighting up the surrounding country for several hundred yards. They break into three balls, and the British soldiers call them parawalkers. The Germans in the front line have long been worried by the inferiority of their artillery to that of the British. A recently captured report makes

War News for Past Two Days

The report published in a London Sunday paper that the British had actually entered Lens, is evidently premature, but the civilian population evacuated the town on Friday and great fires are burning, showing that the Germans are destroying their stores preparatory to their departure, according to a staff correspondent of the Associated Press. While the British official communication last night announced that the British troops are on the outskirts of the town.

Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig's principal object, however, in his advance on Lens, is rather to turn La Bassee from the south, La Bassee and Lens forming the principal outworks of Lille, which is the key to the whole German position in Flanders, and once these two towns are in the hands of the British, Lille will be seriously threatened.

The German attack astride the Bapaume-Cambrai road Sunday indicates the intention of the Germans to defend the junction of the Hindenburg line to St. Quentin and La Fere with the line, hastily organized between Lens and Bullecourt, near staff. Von Hindenburg, realized that Vimy Ridge was seriously threatened. The British nearly broke thru at Bullecourt, which is near this junction, last week, and, also, falling short, Field Marshal Haig transferred his attentions further north, and danger for the Germans still exists, especially as, according to the Associated Press correspondent, the Hindenburg line is still far from being properly organized.

The Reuters correspondent at British headquarters gives an interesting story of how the British officers Vimy Ridge, a small village, was captured by an ingenious officer out of plaster, indicating every way, defences, roads and streams, even the mine craters, prepared from aerial photographs, and available local knowledge that could be obtained, and that knowledge thus gained proved of immense advantage when the attack was carried out.

Conditions within the German lines just prior to the battle of Arras and the depressed state of many of the German soldiers are eloquently described in translated extracts from letters captured during the recent fighting. Two letters in particular, written by Bavarians in regimental opposition to Arras, are wonderfully impressive. One of them indicates clearly the disheartening effect the entry of the United States into the war has had. It is dated April 6 and reads: "We now have a very bad position at Arras, where we have been under a continuous hurricane of fire for six days. The night at times fire gas shells which are not exactly pleasant. When everything imaginable is turned against one, one cannot stand it; then it is all over. The sights around one are simply cruel; it is enough to drive one mad."

"It is no longer a righteous cause; of that I am convinced. But one always begins to hope again and think that it must come to an end. But it is not possible. The world is still in too mad a state. We are the tools and allow ourselves to be belabored."

"Now America comes in to make it last longer. Everybody wants to chip

in. I believe it will never end; peace will never return to the land."

The second letter, dated Easter, which was the day before the British attack began, tells how unwelcome to the Germans have been the weapons of their own invention when turned against them. It says: "For the last four days the English have been firing gas shells all over the country in order to harm the Germans as much as possible. This regiment, the Eighth Bavarian, has already had considerable losses in killed and gassed. The sad point is that the English gas is almost odorless and can only be seen by the practised eye, escaping from the shells. The gas settles slowly over the ground in a bluish haze and kills anyone who does not draw his mask as quick as lightning over his face, before taking a breath."

"The night before last I was in the front line. What a sight! The last time we were in the front line trenches we were easily accessible. Now all communications and all parapets have been shot to pieces. It is a gruesome sight there. The prospect looks terrible. Our people say that things were not as bad at Verdun as here."

Foe Expected Trouble. Another captured document shows that the Germans fully appreciated the meaning of the extensive British preparations about Arras, but had no idea that the blow was coming so swiftly or with such force. The presence of the Canadians within the zone of probable attack, had a particularly disquieting effect, for the document in one part, says: "The Canadians are known to be good troops and well suited to assault purposes. There are no deserters to be found among the Canadians."

It further declares that to succeed in their plans the British would have to take Vimy Ridge, leaving the inference that the Germans thought this task an impossible one. German officers taken during the battle, were incredulous when told that the British not only hold Vimy Ridge, but have pressed far beyond. They say that the plans and the orders of all reserves were to counter-attack at once if the British threw the Germans off the crest. However, when the Canadians, ably assisted by an English division, went after Vimy Ridge, this time, it was with the determination to place that long disputed vantage ground once and for all within the allied lines.

Canadians Enjoy Fighting. It is one of the petty perversities of the great world war that some of the most heroic fighting on Vimy Ridge should have been about a place referred to in the name of "The Pimple". The Associated Press correspondent met some worn and muddy Canadians returning from beyond "The Pimple" yesterday afternoon. Among them were many Nova Scotians. They had been fighting from Sunday night until Friday night, and declared they had enjoyed every minute of it.

"They were not in 'The Pimple' all this time, but well beyond it. Before the Pimple could be cut out, however, it was necessary to drive the Germans back thru several long converging tunnels, which were fortified in such a manner that they were being made absolutely impregnable. The Germans within those tunnels said they felt so safe that they hoped to remain there for the rest of the war."

Some of the Canadians had subsisted on "iron rations" for five days and had practically no water for three days. But they never thought of turning back for food or drink until their task was completed. They swung along with the dog tired, but satisfied

THE great batches of prisoners in the cages are causing some annoyance because they disregard entirely their own officers and non-commissioned officers. This absence of discipline is regarded as significant, because nothing like it has been observed before among German prisoners. It seems indicative of a change of mind in the German army, German officers and non-commissioned officers complain that the chief cause of the present disaster has been the difficulty experienced in controlling the men."—Extract from a despatch by Reuters' correspondent at the front.

MANY OFFICERS' NAMES IN LIST OF CASUALTIES

Two Toronto Officers Reported Killed and Ten Wounded in Sunday's List, Which Contains More Than Six Hundred Names.

Ottawa, Ont., April 15.—The conspicuous triumph at the front in the past week, in which Canadians have participated so splendidly, are not being accomplished without the human toll in killed, wounded and missing. The exact extent of the casualties is not known. All four divisions are reported as in the movement and, on account of the numbers engaged, the losses, comparatively, are said to be large. Some trouble has been experienced in notifying next of kin of the members of the first division. The addresses of many of them have changed in the close to three years which have elapsed since the division was enlisted. Week-end lists contained the names of 444 casualties, a goodly proportion being officers.

Toronto Officers. Toronto officers mentioned in Sunday's casualty list include: Killed in Action—Lieut. B. S. Long-

GEN. ALEXIEFF TO LEAD ALL RUSSIAN ARMIES Provisional Government Confirms Appointment to High Command.

Petrograd, via London, April 15.—Gen. Michael V. Alexieff has been definitely appointed commander-in-chief of the Russian armies. He was appointed acting commander-in-chief a few months ago.

France Will Insist Upon Restoration of Provinces By a Staff Reporter. Ottawa, April 15.—France's peace terms will include the surrender by Germany of Alsace and Lorraine, according to Stephen Lauzanne, editor-in-chief of The Paris Matin, the greatest of French newspapers, who addressed the Canadian Club here on Saturday. "France will hear nothing of peace until Germany is prepared to give back to France the territory we lost in 1870," said Mr. Lauzanne. The statement was received with prolonged applause, the Duke of Devonshire leading the cheering.

Mr. Lauzanne is in America on a diplomatic mission for the French Government.

THE DELAY AT DINEEN'S. Repairs are going forward slowly at Dineen's after the fire. There is a shortage of both labor and material, and the premises constantly remain disorganized. The new goods that were secured for the opening of the new store have to be brought out among the charred walls and sold at "fire prices." Newly arrived spring hats, for men, from the most famous English makers. New spring millinery also being sacrificed. Dineen's, 140 Yonge street.

By Arthur S. Draper. LONDON, April 15.—Apparently the City of Lens, the great coal centre of northern France, has fallen before the British drive. The night official report speaks only of progress east of Lievin, where our troops are approaching the outskirts of Lens.

But the correspondent of Lloyd's News with the British army telegraphs that British patrols entered the city between 4 and 5 o'clock this morning. It is reported that the Germans ordered the civil population from the town on Friday, preparatory to their own departure, and that they seized three months' provisions accumulated in Lens by the American Relief Commission.

The German trench system among the slag heaps in front of the city has been practically pulverized by the blast fire from General Horne's batteries. East of the city they have another network of trenches, in which it is believed they may make a temporary stand before retiring to the supplementary Hindenburg line between Drocourt and Quent. While British guns were plowing away to turn the northern hinge of the Hindenburg line at Lens, the German field marshal let loose against the British wedge, threatening the southern hinge, the most powerful blow he has delivered since the beginning of his wide withdrawal. It failed completely.

Fifteen Hundred Dead. Along a six-mile front, on both sides of the Bapaume-Cambrai high road, he concentrated the artillery fire of a great park of field pieces, and then launched a succession of heavy infantry attacks. The Germans succeeded in penetrating Lagnicourt, which is practically the centre of the British fighting front. Haig's men quickly rallied, however, and drove the enemy out in disorder, capturing 300 prisoners at the same time. The British line tonight stands where it did before, and 1500 German dead have been counted in the area just beyond.

This general engagement and decisive defeat is noteworthy, because it indicates that the Germans, with all the advantage on their side, are unable to stem the British tide. None is just west of Quent, the strong bastion of the second line of defence, along which the Germans have massed their heavy and light artillery. There is a striking contrast between this action and the performance of the British two days ago, when they made their wide gains along the Metz-Hargicourt sector. The exceedingly well provided with artillery, both powerful and mobile, Prince Rupprecht's first thrust in what the German's call "the war of movement" must be recorded a costly failure. The Berlin night report makes no claim of success, merely stating: "There has been lively fighting north of the Bapaume-Cambrai road."

The German thrust did not check British progress either at St. Quentin, where ground was gained east and north of Gricourt, or forty-five miles away at Lens. With the capture of that city the French will be in a position once more to meet their acute coal shortage, which, to an extent, has interfered with the manufacture of munitions. It is reported that the Germans made hasty efforts to destroy the mines by firing charges into the pits and flooding the mine galleries, but at all events the German coal supply from this section will be effectually shut off.

Wild Confusion in Lens. Prisoners seized in the fighting about Lens declare that there was wild confusion in the town while the main body of Germans was retreating. Squads dragging guns and stores were met by squads ordered to blow up the roads to prevent the British advance beyond the city. It is estimated that the Germans had as many as 150 guns in position in the rugged country around Lievin and Lens, but these have now been removed or abandoned, with only a few machine guns left in charge of rear guards. An interesting indication that the fighting is to extend to the northward is contained in tonight's Belgian communique. After violent artillery preparation, King Albert's troops swarmed "over the top" and penetrated Dixmude as far as the enemy's second line, which they found unoccupied. Throughout the day the Belgian gunfire and the German reply has been intense. From the point where the French armies link the British, too, the artillery battle continues unchecked, "at intervals," according to the Berlin report, "increasing to the greatest violence." The terrific duel in the Champagne has now lasted a week, with no infantry follow-up. So long and furious a bombardment is almost unprecedented in the war. The week's expenditure of ammunition on both sides has been sufficient to provide for an entire war on the old plan.

Big Offensive Coming. Almost certainly the continual French raids and the intense energy of the French airmen forebadow a first-class offensive. Paris reports the destruction of 25 enemy planes in the last three days, with raids by scouting squadrons far behind the German lines. Over 5360 kilograms of explosives were dropped.

Nor have the British relaxed their patrol of the sky. Severe fighting occurred in the air throughout the day. Four German machines were smashed to pieces and eleven others forced to the ground, while several bombing flights were successfully prosecuted. It is admitted that ten British aeroplanes are missing.