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The Weather.

Maritime—Strong northwest-
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London Thinks Crisis Has Been Reached in Great War

Gallant French Troops More Than Holding Their Own in The Teutonic Struggle at Verdun---Fighting Continues With Great Intensity.

PETROGRAD, Feb. 29 (via London).—Announcement was made to-day semi-officially that tremendous activity has been observed over the whole length of the German front in the east. There are various indications that spring will see another great effort by the Germans on the Russian front. Enormous quantities of incendiary and explosive bombs have been collected by the Germans. Another feature of these preparations is the bringing up of apparatus for aerial warfare on an increasing scale. Aerodromes are being enlarged and great numbers of aeroplanes forwarded from Germany.

LONDON, Feb. 29.—It was announced in the House today that the Italian government had requisitioned 34 of the 37 German steamers interned in Italian ports.

French Official Report Tells of the Increased Intensity of the Fighting

(Canadian Press.)

PARIS, Feb. 29.—The bombardment to the north of Verdun is continuing with greater intensity. East of the Meuse last night there was resumption of violent local attacks. Near the village of Douaumont the fighting came to a hand-to-hand encounter and the Germans were repulsed by French troops.

After intense artillery fire, German forces captured the village of Mannueilles, but a counter attack brought the French to the western boundary of this location. They now hold Mannueilles under their fire. In Lorraine the Germans succeeded in occupying small sections of French trenches, but they were very shortly driven out from these positions. The text of the official communication is as follows:

"To the north of Verdun the bombardment has continued with increased intensity.

"In the sector to the east of the Meuse last night there was a resumption of the previous violent attacks, particularly in the vicinity of the village of Douaumont, where the fighting came to hand-to-hand encounters, resulting in the driving back of the enemy by our troops.

"In the Woëvre district the Germans were successful, after an intense preparatory artillery fire, in gaining possession of the village of Mannueilles. An immediate counter attack on our part brought it back to the western boundary of this village, which we now hold under our fire.

"In Lorraine the enemy was successful in penetrating several small sections of our advanced trenches, but they were almost immediately driven out of these positions.

"There is nothing to report from the remainder of the front."

General Feeling in England is That the Crisis of the Great War Has Been Reached

LONDON, Feb. 29.—"The momentous events at Verdun leave little doubt that the crisis of the great war has been reached." This statement by the Pall Mall Gazette fairly represents the general feelings in well-informed quarters here in regard to the German onslaught. It is believed the world now is witnessing the final culmination of the plan which the German high command determined on long before the war began, and for which preparations have been in steady progress for more than a year.

It is admitted that the Germans have dealt the Allies a heavy blow by gaining four or five miles on a front of nine or ten miles and capturing some extremely strong positions, but it would not be true to say that uneasiness is felt in regard to the outcome, despite the glorious defence of the French soldiers, who are resisting the German advance with the utmost gallantry, self-sacrifice and heroism.

Capture of Verdun Looked Upon as a Possibility Which Allies May Have to Face

The capture of Verdun, which only a week ago would have been deemed absolutely impossible by military authorities here, is now discussed as a possibility which the Allies may have to face.

It is not denied that the fall of the great French fort would be a serious matter for the Allies, but, on the other hand, to quote Lord Sydenham, who brings to bear on the great issues of the war one of the most acute and well informed minds in this country, "if, when the issue becomes clear, it proves that the Germans have only achieved some quite moderate territorial gains, with an extravagant expenditure of life and munitions, the effect upon the enemy must necessarily be profound. Failure, even partial failure, of a great offensive following upon the splendid successes of the Russian army in Asia, would bring about a complete change in the whole military situation and probably would be the herald of coming victory for the Allies."

GERMAN RAIDER IN THE ATLANTIC?

New York, Feb. 29.—Wireless warnings that a German commerce raider, possibly accompanied by consorts, was attacking shipping in the Atlantic were received by the Standard Oil tanker Communipaw, which arrived here to-day from Algiers. The first message was received on February 17 and was partially in code. It reads:

"Abmb calling Caaw and reported being chased by suspicious ship which she believes to be a German raider. Position wch and wmx course west."

The Communipaw was some miles south of the Azores when this message was received. At noon a second message, apparently from the same ship, arrived. It said:

"Altered course to wpm and nna."

The third and most significant was received about 9 o'clock that evening. Its text was:

"German steamer is attacking shipping in the Atlantic, and may be assisted by captured vessels which she armed. Description, 6,000 tons, speed 15 knots, combination freight and passenger steamer. Carries two guns and is posing as a neutral."

METHODIST CHURCH AT CALGARY ON FIRE

Calgary, Alta., Feb. 29.—The Central Methodist church is on fire and burning fiercely. The whole city fire department has been called out.

ENQUIRY INTO BRIDGE PAINT- ING SCANDAL IS CONTINUED

Ex-Manager Colby Says He Gave H. M. Blair a \$10,000 Stock Certificate Which Was Later Returned—Colby Squealed When Blair Refused to Accept a Draft—Enquiry the Result of a Tory Feud.

It is a new device of government's to investigate the conduct of a public official who is paid with the money of the people and is doing the business of the people, behind closed doors.

H. M. Blair has been secretary of the Board of Works for most of the time since the present Government came into power, succeeding Mr. Winslow, who went west some years ago. He has not only been secretary of the Board, but he has been "the main guy" of the big spending department.

Always a strong Conservative, he has been THE CHIEF COUNSELLOR OF CERTAIN LEADERS IN THE TORY PARTY, NOTABLY MESSRS. McLEOD AND GUTHRIE. Consequently he has been more or less at loggerheads with Pinder and his wing of the party.

Since the departure of McLeod and Guthrie for overseas service, Pinder and his supporters have had their guns trained on Blair, and the latter has been just as aggressive on his part. No favors have been extended to that wing of the Tory party in York by Blair.

A Family Squabble.

Lately the Government whips, Harry Woods and Dr. Price, have been taking a hand in the conflict and have lined up with Pinder in the hope that if Blair could be ousted John Morrissey would have to get out of the Government.

This nice Tory family squabble really accounts for the charges against Blair now being investigated by M. G. Teed, of St. John.

When W. B. Chandler began his inquiries a few months ago it was expected that Pinder and Woods and Price and several other M. P.'s would prefer enough charges to make it interesting for the Deputy Minister, H. M. Blair. But they sat mute while Messrs. Carter and Veniot were making other departmental charges and proving them.

Refused to Pay Draft.

Probably the evidence now being given in the Council chamber in the effort to connect Blair would never have been available had the sight draft of the former manager of Concrete Constructions, Limited, which did so much bridge painting in New Brunswick in 1913, been accepted and paid by Mr. Blair.

When the drafts were sent back, Colby evidently tried to get square. HE HAD WORD SENT TO BLAIR'S OPPONENTS THAT HE HAD THE "STUFF" TO PUT HIM OUT OF BUSINESS, AND HARRY WOODS AND DR. PRICE HURRIED TO OT-

TAWA to locate their man.

They telephoned him from the Chateau Laurier and Colby went and told them his story with regard to Blair. They thought it good enough to have him swear to it. Later this sworn statement was sent to Premier Clarke and the government ordered the enquiry.

But Pinder also went to Ottawa and he saw Colby too, and got some real documents, a letter and telegram from Blair to Colby, which will no doubt be produced today.

Mr. Colby's Evidence.

Colby, when on the stand yesterday, swore that Pinder had these original documents. Pinder was in town all day but did not go near the departmental buildings, where the enquiry was going on, and last night a subpoena was issued for him and was read to him over the telephone, to come himself and to bring all documents with him.

He promised to send the documents to Mr. Teed, and may accompany them.

Colby wasn't a good witness. He showed that his code of morals with regard to the relations of contractors with the government was different from what the public expects. He treated his sworn affidavit as a "mere statement," and seemed to think lightly of the fact that he had sworn to it. He became very mixed as to the identity of the Smith brothers, saying that it was first Harry and then Albert, and then contradicting himself as to their identity.

He said he "put one over on Blair" with regard to the \$10,000 of stock he had sent him. The stock wasn't worth wrapping paper, and he wrote Blair, offering him ten thousand dollars' worth as part of an arrangement for Blair to resign his position in the department and accept the managership of Concrete Constructions for the Maritime Provinces.

When cross-examined and asked if Blair did not send this stock back to him, Colby said he did.

"Why, then, Mr. Colby," asked Mr. Gregory, "did you not state in your affidavit that the stock had been returned?"

"I wanted to, but Harry Woods and Dr. Price said not to do so, as it made no material difference."

Colby made many other interesting statements when on the stand. He said he "knew no more about books than a dog does about heaven," and became confused in his evidence when Mr. Gregory questioned him upon the statement of Concrete Constructions.

(Continued on page five.)

EYE WITNESES DESCRIBE THE TERRIFIC GERMAN ONSLAUGHT ON VERDUN

The Enemy Came on in Massed Formation And Were Mowed Down Like Grass---Terrible Execution by the French 75 Millimetre Guns.

(Canadian Press.)

PARIS, Feb. 28.—Military critics here express the opinion that the German forces which at the beginning of the battle around Verdun numbered probably half a million, now exceed 750,000.

"The situation is now decidedly better," is the phrase commonly used this morning in the Paris press regarding the struggle for the great French stronghold. The French are beginning to react vigorously against the German 'bludgeon strokes,' which are having less and less effect and are being delivered with diminished energy. It is expected, however, that they will be renewed again today, but at new points. The fact that the battle is now shifting is taken as a sign that the German General Staff has begun to despair of making a real impression on the French defence.

RESEMBLED A SHAMBLES.

"I fought since the beginning of the war," says a soldier who has returned to Paris and who was present at the fighting at Ornes. "I saw the shambles at Snippes and Souain. They were nothing to what I saw last week. The enemy advanced, and we retired under orders, but we killed them by the dozens. It was so terrible that I, who have watched my comrades fall around me almost with indifference, shuddered as my memory recalls these scenes."

"As their battalions advanced upon us they were in serried masses, by files of twenty. The shrapnel from our 75 millimetre guns and the heavy projectiles fell among them and you could see the great gaps as if a mower had passed with a scythe. Then high explosives which burst on contact fell, and limbs shot into the air. We were so close that pieces of their torn bodies fell among us. Eventually we reached Moncourt and took shelter for a time in a wood. Although it was three o'clock in the morning, the bursting shells made it as clear as day, giving the battlefield the aspect of a fairy scene."

THE DEAD LAY IN GROUPS.

"From behind us the French artillery fired into the German masses, the German shells flying over our heads toward the Douaumont section. Then our machine guns, placed in batteries every five yards, began to play, and we saw the dead in groups upright, where there was not room to fall."

"From Moncourt I followed the supply road as far as Fleury, where I took the light railway toward Verdun. The heavy guns near Douaumont and Damloup were firing as fast as they could be loaded. When we passed between the two points the air pressure produced by the continuous discharges was so terrific that blood rushed from our ears and our lungs almost ceased working."

FRENCH SOLDIER WHO WAS WOUNDED GIVES GRAPHIC ACCOUNT OF THE GREAT STRUGGLE

PARIS, Feb. 29.—A combatant who was in one of the most advanced trenches early in the battle of Verdun, and who has returned to Paris wounded, gives his experience as follows:

"At dawn we received orders to leave the trench and to retire to a strong position in the Vaux woods in front of Douaumont."

"Bending low, we retired four or five kilometres through the snow without much loss. Once in the new trenches, we could not hear one another speak, so great was the noise of the cannonading, and when we looked through the periscopes we could only see heavy clouds of smoke shutting out the sky with jets of fire flashing through the snow flakes. There were about a dozen of us in the trench, and we felt the suppressed emotion so much that at last we all burst out singing, and yet none of us could hear a word spoken even by himself."

HUNS CAME IN MASSES.

"Then we saw the Germans coming on. They were in such masses that they looked like a flock of sheep. When our guns began to speak the empty spaces began to show among the grey of the advancing troops, but they were soon filled up by fresh parties of grey."

"As they neared our barbed wire, our machine guns opened fire and we had to cover our ears with anything that came handy. The noise was so tremendous. I felt no fear, but I had no feelings or thoughts, only a sort of buzzing of vertigo. When light came on and the flares lighted up the field, the Germans seemed to be quite close, but it was an optical illusion. They advanced very bravely, waving their rifles and leaping over the dead."