

DISASTER WHICH ALMOST WIPED HALIFAX OFF THE MAP GREATEST IN CANADA'S HISTORY; AN AWFUL STATE OF AFFAIRS

Halifax Explosion Left Trail of Death and Ruin

Impossible to Make an Estimate of the Loss of Life and Property---Fateful Explosion Was Due to Conditions Created by the War.

(By Canadian Press direct wire.)

HALIFAX, N. S., Dec. 7.—The war has touched Halifax. Sorrow and anguish are left in its trail. Where only a few hours ago the most prosperous city in Canada stood secure in her own defences, unafraid and almost apathetic, there are now heaps of ruins. No one can yet estimate the loss of life and property, and words fail to describe the mental anguish of those who have lost home and dear ones by one cruel stroke.

The busy thriving north end, from the sugar refinery to Creighton's corner, is just a mass of broken, splintered timbers of powdered brick and stone and human bodies crushed to pulp or blackened by fire.

Many and conflicting were the stories of the origin of the explosion, but the real story was at last learned. Two vessels collided, and one was a munition ship. Although believed to be purely accidental, it was nevertheless due to and caused by conditions the war created. The crash came as suddenly and unexpectedly as the Zeppelin bombs have fallen upon undefended English towns and the effect has been the same.

STEAMERS COLLIDED TWENTY-FIVE MINUTES BEFORE THE GREAT EXPLOSION OCCURRED

Five minutes before the explosion, men were going about their business, women were busy in their homes, and children played about the floors or went hurrying off to school.

Up the harbor steamed a ship laden with munitions, and down the harbor came a ship flying the Norwegian flag. They drew nearer and in some manner the vessels came into collision. It was 25 minutes after the collision before the explosion occurred. At the first shock houses rocked, vessels broke from their moorings, bits of shell whistled through the air, buildings fell upon their occupants, shrieks and moans rose for a second above the awful din, and in all parts of the city men, women and children ran into the streets, many of them insufficiently clad.

To add to the horrors, fire broke out in a hundred places at once, and those who were pinned down by debris met the most horrible death.

BARRINGTON STREET WAS LIKE A ROAD IN BELGIUM OR SERBIA IN EARLY DAYS OF WAR

Orders were given at once that everybody should flee to the south of the city, and in a short time Barrington street resembled a road of Belgium or Serbia with people fleeing before the advancing Huns. Every variety of vehicle was pressed into service for the sick and infirm, men, women and children hurried along the pavements and blocked the streets. Stores were deserted, horses forsaken and the entrance to the park soon was blocked with human beings, some massed in groups, some running anxiously back and forth like ants when their hill has been crushed. The wildest rumors were in circulation, and every bearer of tidings was immediately surrounded. The stories lost nothing in the telling, until the brain reeled and the heart grew sick trying to escape the horror and desolation.

WOULD-BE RESCUERS TURNED AWAY SICK AT HEART FROM THE SIGHTS IN NORTH END OF CITY

When flying automobiles brought the good word that the danger was under control and the people might return to their homes, the crowd trekked back.

Many, relieved of immediate fear for themselves, thought of relatives and friends in the North End, and started to walk there. Most of them returned heartsick from the sights they saw. On one side of North street the King Edward Hotel stood a practical wreck. On the other the central portion of the railway station no longer existed; but the wreckage was nothing to that beyond. Houses were simply indistinguishable masses where they had not been devoured by flames.

TWO WHITE FACED SAILORS MADE A VAIN SEARCH IN HOSPITALS FOR WIVES AND CHILDREN

Most pathetic stories, so tragic that they almost benumb the sensibilities, are coming through. One possessing all the elements of horror was told by two white-faced sailors who came to a local newspaper office to see if they could help them in their search. They were both looking for wives and children. They had reached their homes to find them nothing but ruins. Search revealed nothing. They had made the rounds

SEVEN NEW CASES OF SMALLPOX WERE REPORTED THIS WEEK

Northumberland Co. Has Majority of Them—York County Now Clear of Disease

During the present week seven new cases of smallpox of which two are secondary cases, have been reported to Dr. R. H. McGrath, secretary of the Provincial Board of Health. One is at Knowlesville, Carleton county, one at Rowena, Victoria county, and the others in Northumberland county. In the latter county cases exist at Chatham, Chatham Head, Newcastle, Chelmsford and Rogersville.

York county is now entirely clear of the disease. Fredericton never developed a case during the scare and the only case which came to the city from an outside point was removed to the place of origin. No word has yet been received from Minto of the development of any secondary cases there. This is an excellent indication. The total number of cases in the province is greatly reduced in spite of the fact that new cases have developed.

Heard Explosion in Truro.
 Mr. F. G. Spencer of St. John, proprietor of the Gem Theatre in this city, was at Truro yesterday morning when the terrible explosion took place in Halifax. At Truro the sound and shock were severe and window glass was broken. It had been Mr. Spencer's intention to go to Halifax Tuesday night but he changed his mind and remained in Truro that night. The change in his intention resulted in his being clear of the catastrophe.

of the hospitals with hope and fear gnawing at their hearts, but all to no avail.

Nothing is more terrible than cruel suspense, and strong men as they were, their faces showed the strain.

The story that the military hospital at Rockingham had been destroyed and all the patients killed fortunately is untrue.

TWO THOUSAND DEAD AND THE SAME NUMBER OF INJURED IS THE LATEST ESTIMATE

In the infectious diseases hospital Miss Mulcahy, a nurse, was so badly injured about the face that she may lose an eye, and the building was practically wrecked, but none of the patients suffered serious injuries. The hospital had received about forty injured people, principally women and children, during the day. Five of the children were fatally injured and died in a few hours.

Up to noon today there was no change in the police estimate of the number of casualties in yesterday's disaster. There is about 2,000 dead, and the same number of injured, two-thirds of the latter suffering cuts from flying glass.

The citizens' relief committee started work early this morning and are making every provision possible for the care of the homeless. A survey is also being made of the devastated area. The civic authorities and the newspapers of Halifax are making every endeavor to secure the names of the dead and wounded, but everything is in such a state of chaos that little progress is being made.

HELP FROM BOSTON.

BOSTON, Mass., Dec. 7.—A special train carrying a Red Cross unit, consisting of 15 physicians and 30 nurses, and a quantity of medical supplies, will start for Halifax this afternoon in charge of S. Huntington Wolcott.

French Official Statement.

PARIS, Dec. 6.—The official statement issued by the War Office tonight reads: Very spirited artillery activity was maintained during the day on the right bank of the Meuse, in the region of Beaumont, as well as in Upper Alsace. An enemy raid at Chapelotte was without success.

INTERESTING ADDRESS BY MRS. SEXTON

Her Appeal on Behalf of Union Government Made a Great Impression on a Large Audience.

The mass meeting at the Opera House last evening under the auspices of the Women's Unionist Association was largely attended and proved very successful. Mrs. Robert FitzRandolph, a daughter of the late Hon. A. G. Blair, a former Liberal cabinet minister, presided very acceptably and others on the platform were Rev. Canon Cowie, Mr. John Kilburn, Lord Ashburnham and Rev. Dean Neales.

Rev. Canon Cowie was the first speaker; after a fitting reference to the great war, he made a strong plea for support of the boys at the front.

Mrs. F. H. Sexton
 Mrs. F. H. Sexton of Halifax, the speaker of the evening, was next introduced and delivered a splendid address which held the closest attention of the large audience. Mrs. Sexton is a most pleasing speaker and the strong arguments which she advanced in favor of sending support to the gallant Canadians battling for liberty and civilization in France greatly impressed her hearers.

Miss Eva Brewer delighted the gathering with patriotic songs and the meeting was brought to a close with the singing of the National Anthem.

At Marysville.
 At Marysville earlier in the evening a largely attended women's meeting was held. Col. W. H. Gray was in the chair. There were patriotic songs by Miss Baird with Miss Everett as accompanist. Addresses were delivered by Mrs. Havelock Coy, Miss Marion Crockett and Mrs. John Harvey. Miss Crockett told of her experiences as a military nurse in England. A Women's Unionist Association was formed and today began work.

Meeting in North Devon.
 A meeting in the interests of Union government will be held tonight in the fire station in North Devon. The meeting will be addressed by Mrs. Havelock Coy and Mrs. John Harvey. Miss Marion Crockett was to speak but has left for Halifax. Friday night Mrs. P. F. Godenrath and Mrs. Harvey will address a meeting at Fredericton Junction.

BRITISH FALL BACK TO PREPARED LINE NEAR BOURLON WOOD

Positions Will Now be Made Much Stronger---Retirement Was Carried Out Successfully---Spirited Artillery Fighting on the Right Bank of Meuse

British Headquarters in France, Dec. 6.—The British have withdrawn from the salient about Bourlon wood to a prepared line which should make their position much stronger and more desirable in many ways. The retirement was carried out successfully mainly early Wednesday morning, and under cover of darkness. Not until many hours later did the enemy discover that it was evacuated territory.

The Germans today had swarmed over much of the vacated zone and were digging themselves in along the advanced line but as late as 1.50 o'clock yesterday afternoon there was still shelling at Bourlon wood, and between noon and one o'clock they launched a heavy attack against empty trenches near Moeuvres, showing that they were uncertain of the situation even there.

POSITION HELD BY THE BRITISH WAS NOT DESIRABLE AND WAS TOO HARD TO HOLD

Wednesday's retirement cannot be designated as a retreat for there is no reason to believe that the British could not have maintained themselves there. However, the position was not desirable and it would have cost the lives of too many men to have held on to the sharp salient, which could be swept by enemy gunfire from several directions.

The ground abandoned was cleared throughout yesterday and not a gun or any other material was left behind. Moreover the vacated positions were rendered temporarily untenable so that the enemy would be forced to construct new defences and dugouts. The British prepared the new line while they still held Bourlon wood.

HUNS CHARGED VACATED POSITIONS IN MASS FORMATION AND WERE CAUGHT BY GUPN FIRE

The British troops from their distant positions watched the German manoeuvres with delight. These culminated in a fine charge in mass formation against the former British line. As the Germans reached the trenches they paused in evident surprise and a halt was called for a consideration of the situation. About two o'clock in the afternoon the Germans were seen coming over the ridge on both sides of the Bourlon wood in large numbers and proceeding toward the Bapaume-Cambrai road. A considerable force of the Germans was caught in the artillery fire to the west of the wood, and suffered heavy casualties in killed and wounded.

Minor Attacks Repulsed.

LONDON, Dec. 6.—The night report from Field Marshal Haig's headquarters says: "Local fighting has taken place again today in the neighborhood of Lavequerie without any change in the situation. In the area south of Bourlon Wood minor hostile attacks were repulsed with severe losses to the enemy from the fire of our artillery and infantry."

EIGHT MEETINGS HELD LAST NIGHT

The political campaign in York-Sunbury is warming up and both sides are having largely attended meetings. Last night the Liberals who are supporting Mr. N. W. Brown held meetings at Hoyt, Lower Manguerville, Meductic and Lower Prince William. The Unionists had meetings at Covered Bridge, Middle Southampton, Temperance Vale and Canterbury.

Liberal Meetings.
 Mr. Brown, the Laurier candidate, spoke last night at Hoyt. Mr. D. W. Mersergau, M.P.P., of Fredericton Junction also spoke there. At Lower Manguerville the speakers were Messrs P. J. Hughes and T. C. Burpee. At R. W. McLellan of this city, and Mr. P. S. Watson of North Devon, spoke at Meductic. Mr. E. C. Atkinson was the speaker at Lower Prince William.

Unionist Meetings
 At Covered Bridge the speakers were Mr. John A. Young, Dr. W. C. Crockett, M.P.P., Mr. Charles FitzRandolph and Company Sergt. Major Lawson Hanson, a returned soldier. There was a large attendance and the speeches were listened to with interest. That of Sergt. Major Hanson