

ITALIANS WREST FROM ENEMY STRONG POINTS

In Italian Highlands West of Brenta the Battle Raged All Day Christmas—It Is Snowing in France

Except on the northern Italian front the military operations continue far below normal. In France, where snow has fallen along the entire front, only bombardments and small raiding operations are taking place.

West of Brenta river, in the Italian highlands, the Italians Christmas day continued their counter-attacks upon the Austro-German forces which previously had succeeded in making gains on Col. Del Rosso and Monte De Val Bella. The battle raged throughout the morning with great violence and the Italians wrested several of their former positions from the enemy, but owing to renewed onslaughts by the Teutonic allied forces were again compelled to give ground.

The Berlin war office admits that the Italians threw heavy counter-attacks against the invaders on the Col. Del Rosso and neighboring sectors, but asserts that all of them broke down under heavy losses.

Not only are the hotels throughout the country observing meatless Tuesdays and wheatless Wednesdays, but clubs are effecting a large saving through the observance of the food pledge. One Chicago men's club is saving a ton of flour and two tons of meat each month.

DEATH OF AMERICAN SOLDIERS IN FRANCE

First Lieut. James D. Paull, aviation section, signal reserve corps, died Dec. 20 as the result of an airplane accident. Gen. Pershing has advised the war department. Lieut. Paull's father, Joseph Paull, lives in Pittsburg.

The deaths of two privates in action and of a third from wounds received in action also were reported by Gen. Pershing.

Among deaths from natural causes are the following southern men: Private William M. Weatherford, engineers, Dec. 20, broncho-pneumonia, acute; mother, Mrs. M. Weatherford, Seranton, S. C. Private Walter J. Bennett, engineers, Dec. 20, measles, complicated by broncho-pneumonia, acute; father, W. L. Bennett, Kirkland, Ga.

NEW RED CROSS MEMBERS EXCEED THIRTEEN MILLION

Further returns from the Red Cross Christmas membership drive indicated, officials at headquarters at Washington, said Wednesday, the total enrollment would be even in excess of the 13,000,000 new members.

With 200 out of 480 chapters not reported and with several of the larger cities yet to be heard from, the southern division, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida, has enrolled 243,000. Its quota is 438,000, but the managers are confident this figure will be reached.

PERSHING IN NEED OF THOUSAND BRICKLAYERS

Governors Called on for Mobilization of This Class of Men From Draft Army—Only Whites Men Are Wanted

The new draft machinery was invoked Wednesday for the first time when Provost Marshal General Crowder made public instructions to governors calling for the mobilization of 1,000 bricklayers needed by Gen. Pershing immediately.

Local boards are directed to examine questionnaires now being returned and to report as early as possible on the number of bricklayers of draft age available for service. Only white men will be accepted, either by draft or as volunteers, through local boards. They will be forwarded to San Antonio. The purpose for which they are needed in France is not disclosed.

The order is the first application of the special occupational classification provisions of the new draft regulations, but Gen. Crowder's letter indicates that there may be similar calls for skilled workmen in other trades.

GOVERNMENT TAKES OVER RAILROADS TODAY

Secretary McAdoo Is Chosen by President as Director General, but Will Continue as Secretary of Treasury

Government possession and operation of the nation's railroads for the war was proclaimed by President Wilson Wednesday night, to become effective at noon today, the 28th. William G. McAdoo, retaining his place in the cabinet as secretary of the treasury, is placed in charge as director-general of railroads.

Every railroad engaged in general transportation, with its appurtenances, including steamship lines, is taken over and all systems will be operated as one under the director-general.

In a statement accompanying his proclamation the President announced that as soon as Congress reassembles he will recommend legislation guaranteeing pre-war earnings and maintenance of railroad properties in good repair.

Government backing will be given to new issues of railroad securities that a ready market may be found.

The President's move, although forecast for weeks, came at this time as a great surprise to nearly everybody in Washington, including railroad officials. It had been generally believed he would await the reassembling of Congress before taking any step. He acted through Secretary of War Baker, under authority conferred in the army appropriation act. Direct management of the roads will remain in the hands of railroad officials and the railroads' war board, comprised of five railroad heads, will continue to direct actual operation under Secretary McAdoo's general supervision.

Although the proclamation applies to all electric lines engaged in general transportation, local interurban systems are specifically exempted.

The President makes it clear that his decision was not made because of any failure on the part of the railroads to perform their whole duty in so far as they could while hampered as they were by legal restrictions.

BANDITS CROSSED BORDER AND RAIDED RANCH

Killed Three Persons, Wounded One and Stole \$7,000—American Troops Came to the Rescue

American troops Wednesday were guarding all outlets to Van Horne canyon, where 100 Mexican bandits on Christmas morning crossed the American border, raided the postoffice and general store on the Brito ranch, 27 miles southeast of Marfa, Tex., killed Michael Welsh, a veteran stage driver, and his two Mexican passengers, wounded Sam Neill, foreman of the Brito ranch, and carried away booty estimated to be worth \$7,000.

After the bandits had passed over the rim rock which rises abruptly more than 1,000 feet above the Rio Grande, the soldiers, who were in close pursuit, fired many rounds at them and are reported to have killed and wounded many of the Mexicans. The shooting compelled the bandits to abandon the horses on which they carried away the loot. Col. George T. Langhorne, in command of the American forces in the Big Bend, expected the pursuit to be resumed at daybreak.

When the bandits attacked the ranch Neill, with his wife and a number of ranch hands, barricaded themselves in a house until United States soldiers had been sent to their aid. Cavalrymen were sent to the Brito ranch in automobiles.

When the raiders sighted the approaching cavalry they abandoned the work of pillage and rode off over the rim rock toward the southwest.

At the point where the bandits dropped from sight of the pursuing troops there is an abrupt descent of more than 1,000 feet. When the soldiers had gone as far as possible in automobiles they continued the pursuit on foot to the edge of the rim rock, where they did some expert shooting at the fleeing bandits at a distance of more than 1,000 yards.

EMPEROR WILLIAM HAS CLOSE CALL AT FRONT

The Emperor's Train Had Been Gone Only an Hour When the Station Was Bombed by the British

The German emperor, returning with his staff from the Verdun front, had a narrow escape during the reprisal raid of a British air squadron on Mannheim Christmas eve, according to a dispatch from Basel. Only about an hour earlier the emperor's special train left the station, which was partly destroyed by several bombs. A section of the tracks was torn up, cutting communication north.

In fact, the emperor's train was the last to leave Mannheim, and no trains arrived at Basel yesterday from that city. Two bombs fell on the palace and on the suspension bridge across the Neckar river, both structures being badly damaged. An ammunition factory in the northern suburb was blown up. Few persons were killed, however, as the employees were having a holiday. A considerable number of persons were killed or injured within the town, and several were blown into the Rhine.

SUBMARINE TRIED IN VAIN TO GET HER

Steamer Carrying President's Representative and Other Americans Saved From German Enemy By Naval Convoy

Gov. R. L. Beekman of Rhode Island, who left the latter part of October to visit the American forces in France and to convey to them a personal message of greeting from President Wilson, arrived at an Atlantic port Christmas day.

On the same vessel was William B. Thompson, head of the American Red Cross mission to Russia, who is returning to the United States to make a report of the conditions in that country with reference to the work of his organization. Thomas W. Lamont of J. P. Morgan & Co. and Sir Frederick Edward Smith, attorney general for Great Britain, were also among the passengers.

That the crew of a German submarine made prisoner after their vessel had been destroyed, knew when a large steamship carrying American army officers had left the United States and that the submarine lay in wait to sink her, was the statement of several enlisted men of the American navy who were passengers on the steamship. According to the German prisoners who were taken to England they knew "all about the departure of the steamship," but the submarine had failed to sink her because of the vigilance of her convoy.

GERMAN COMMISSION FOR PEACE GOES TO PETROGRAD

Berlin advices received at Amsterdam say that the commission provided for in the Russo-German armistice agreement proceeded for Petrograd Wednesday. It is headed by Count von Mirbach, former German minister to Greece, and will undertake to reach a settlement with the Russian authorities for the exchange of civilians and incapacitated war prisoners and also devise measures to restore relations between Germany and Russia.

The commission includes a number of officials of the foreign and war ministries.

THIS COUNTRY'S TRADE BALANCE \$3,000,000,000

Reports from Washington say that America's balance of trade approximated \$3,000,000,000 at the close of November, according to figures just issued by the bureau of foreign and domestic commerce. It was an increase of \$141,000,000 over the same period last year. During November exports restrictions caused a substantial decrease in foreign trade.

During the eleven months ended with November gold imports amounted to \$535,000,000 and exports to \$387,000,000, leaving an excess of imports of \$148,000,000 in 1917 against \$399,000,000 in 1916.

Silver imports during the eleven months amounted to \$7,000,000 against \$29,000,000 a year ago and the exports were valued at \$74,000,000 in 1917 and \$62,000,000 in 1916.

BURNS TO DEATH IN GRANITE FALLS JAIL

Young White Man, Who Was Locked Up for Drinking, Sets the Jail on Fire and Met a Horrible Death

Walter Hines, a young white man who formerly lived at Stony Point, Alexander county, met a horrible death Christmas eve night in the lockup at Granite Falls when the little place was burned. He had been arrested for drinking, though it was said that he was not boisterous.

The lockup at Granite Falls, which is seldom used, is said not to have been equipped with a stove or other means of heating, and there was only a bed of excelsior inside. The jail is very small.

Hines probably had attempted to make a fire or had lighted a cigarette. The facts never will be known. At any rate, he was by himself and persons nearby heard him screaming and rushed to the lockup, which was ablaze. The door was locked, but it was forced and the man pulled out.

Hines died as soon as he was released. It was said that his skin pulled off when touched.

GERMANS AGAIN ACTIVE IN ALL VERDUN SECTOR

Heavy Fighting May Mean Renewed Efforts of Germans to Break Through—Fighting on the Piave

Increased cannonading in the region of Verdun, especially around Douaumont, the Chaume wood and the Caurieres wood, which a year ago were the theaters of some of the fiercest encounters in the war, indicates apparently the intention of the Germans to keep the French forces in this sector well occupied, or might even mean a renewed effort to break through at this vital point.

The allies, however, are evidently making ready for an untoward event and have taken the initiative in other directions. A British air squadron successfully bombarded the city of Mannheim, the great Rhine commercial center and one of the most important bases for the re-equipment of the Germans on the western front. Numerous fires were started in this city, a ton of bombs being dropped. The British squadron had numerous combats with German airplanes in this expedition and one of the British machines was forced to make a landing.

In Italy the battle is still raging on the Piave front. The Italians announce that they have recaptured, despite stubborn resistance, the positions they had lost the previous day on the Asiago plateau. Berlin reports, however, tend to minimize the setback and lay stress on the repulse of Italian counter-attacks against the positions newly won by the Germans and a thrust at Monte Pertica. The Germans report the capture of 9,000 Italians in engagements around Col. Del Rosso.

True to their tactics, the Austro-Germans will probably direct another and great thrust at a different point, as would appear from the shifting of large forces to the Franzels valley and the mountainous region to the north. The menace to Venice seems, however, to have been removed for the time being.

Th. Bolshevic commander-in-chief, Ensign Krylenko, reports the transfer of large numbers of German troops to the western front and the southwestern Russian front.

MINNEAPOLIS FLOUR MILLS BEGIN GRINDING WAR FLOUR

Flour mills at Minneapolis began grinding "war flour" Wednesday under the new government regulations designed to save 16,000,000 bushels of wheat in the present crop year. Under these regulations, which provide for the use of 74 per cent of the wheat berry instead of but 50 per cent, two grades of flour will be eliminated, and the output will be listed as war flour of first and second grades.

Members of the food administration milling division said that because of the large supply of flour now on the market it would be some time before the war flour reached the consumer.

LENOIR HIGH SCHOOL WINS FROM HICKORY

Well-Played and Exciting Game—Many Features—Lenoir Defeats Granite Falls Wednesday Night, 72 to 21

In one of the fastest games seen on the local basketball court here this season the Lenoir high school defeated the quint from Hickory high school last Friday night by the score of 34 to 25. Lenoir took the lead at the first of the game and never lost it until the whistle blew at the end of the last half, although they came very near losing it several times during the game.

Hoover, for Lenoir, was the star of the game, getting nine goals, six in the first half and three in the last. Aside from this, Bernhardt not only played a good game at center, but he added four more goals to his list. Cottrell also was there with the goods, letting his man down with a single goal.

For Hickory, Mitchell seemed to be the only one who could put the ball through the ring, getting eleven goals to his credit. Taken as a whole the Hickory team played a fast, clean game, but their ability in playing basketball was not equal to that of the Lenoir high school.

The line-up:
Lenoir Position Hickory
Nelson Forward Mitchell
Hoover Forward Longacre
Bernhardt Center Bolick
Hedrick Guard Abernethy
Cottrell Guard Fritz
Substitutes: Tuttle for Hedrick; Johnson for Bolick.

Summary: Goals, Nelson 2; Hoover 9; Bernhardt 4; Tuttle 1; Hickory, Mitchell 11; Longacre 1. Foul goals, Nelson 2 out of 4; Mitchell 1 out of 6.

Wednesday night in a very slow and loosely-played game Lenoir defeated the team from Granite Falls by the score of 72 to 21. Bernhardt for Lenoir led in goal-shooting, getting 12. Hoover, next highest, got 10.

Line-up: Lenoir—Nelson and Hoover, forwards; Bernhardt, center; Cottrell and Dysart, guards. Granite Falls—Lutz and Hickman, forwards; S. Tilley, center; A. Tilley and Houck, guards.

Summary: Goals, Nelson 8; Hoover 10; Bernhardt 12; Cottrell 4; Dysart 2. Hickman 5; Houck 5. Foul goals, Lutz 1 out of 2.

Tomorrow night in the opera house the Lenoir high school will play the fast team from Statesville. This is promised to be one of the best games of the season. Come.

HUNS MUTILATE BODIES OF AMERICAN SOLDIERS

American Sentry in France Is Found With His Throat Cut After He Was Shot—Drive Children in the Snow

With the American Army in France—German atrocities against American soldiers are officially reported. An American sentry has been found with his throat cut, and it is officially declared, "he must have been so killed after capture."

Information concerning German savagery has reached the troops in one of a series of bulletins read to them by the unit commanders and posted on the bulletin boards. Here is what they heard:

"After a raid by the Germans on trenches held by American troops a lone sentry of — infantry was found with his throat cut from ear to ear. He had been surprised by an overwhelming force of Germans and must have been so killed after capture."

"Such brutality is familiar to old soldiers who served against savages in the Philippine campaign."

Another bulletin tells the men how the Germans in occupied sections of France and Belgium are turning women and children out of their homes into the snows, the buildings being then given over to soldiers, horses and material.

Roy Moore, who is stationed at Camp Zachary Taylor, Louisville, Ky., spent the holidays here with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Y. D. Moore.

DR. LITAKER SELECTED AS TEACHER AT TRINITY

Summer School to Be Held in Durham—Teachers Selected From Prominent Methodist Ministers in the State

On Dec. 18 the board of managers appointed by the Western North Carolina and North Carolina conferences of the Methodist Church met in Durham and made arrangements for holding a summer school for the benefit of young preachers at Trinity College. This school will open Wednesday afternoon, June 5, and will close June 15th. There will be about fifteen teachers selected from among the prominent Methodist ministers of the state to conduct this institute. Among them will be Rev. D. M. Litaker, pastor of the First Methodist church of Lenoir.

Regarding this summer school the Charlotte Observer of Dec. 23 gives some information in detail as follows:

In addition to the teachers for the regular conference courses of study prescribed for undergraduates, other courses for post-graduates will be offered. In addition to these it is contemplated that some of the leading preachers and teachers of the country will be secured for special service. Both conferences have enthusiastically endorsed the proposition, and it is expected that this summer school will from the very beginning rank with the best of its kind in the country. Full announcement will be made later as to the courses of study offered and the personnel of the faculty.

Every young Methodist minister who joins either of the two conferences is required to take a four-year course and stand an examination. The summer school will be mainly for the benefit of these young ministers in that courses in the studies which they take up will be given during the eight days. But it promises to be more than that, for public lectures will be given twice daily. It is for these public lectures that the prominent preachers and theologians are being invited.

Financial support has been provided for the summer school by the two conferences, and it has been intimated that no financial efforts will be spared to make the school just as effective as possible. It is the first step the church has taken in this direction and the two committees appointed by the conferences, who met in Durham this week, are very enthusiastic over the outlook. They believe the summer school will ultimately develop into one of the biggest things in the work of educating the young ministers who are already in the service of the church. It will also mean that Durham and Trinity College will become the Mecca for Methodism in North Carolina. It is hoped the annual gathering of the ministers after commencement will be the means of a great inspirational development not only for the preachers, but for the lay members of the church as well, who will gather here every summer in increasing numbers to attend the public lectures which will be given twice daily.

COMPELLED TO DIG THEIR OWN GRAVES

Before They Were Burned Alive, Hanged or Shot Down With Machine Guns; Atrocities Surpass Imagination

Compelled to dig their own graves, drowned, burned alive, hanged or shot down with machine guns, the Serbians of Herzegovina, Bosnia, Istria and Dalmatia were the victims of Austro-Hungarian atrocities surpassing the human imagination, recently declared Dr. Tresic Pavicic, a Slav member of the Austro-Hungarian chamber of deputies. Narratives of Serbians made prisoners in Austrian jails and fortresses were related in detail before the Austrian parliament by the Slav deputy.

According to Dr. Pavicic these outrages were practiced upon the civilian population, old men, women and children, when orders were given by Gen. Potiorek, described as the autocrat of Bosnia, to remove all the Serbians from the frontier districts.

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