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TWO THOUSAND PEOPLE KILLED IN HALIFAX, CAN., EXPLOSION

A Ship Loaded With Munitions For The Allies Was Rammed by a Belgian Relief Ship, and the Scenes That Followed Were Worse Than Those of a Battle Front.

Halifax, N. S., Dec. 7.—With the toll of dead steadily mounting, it was believed early this morning that more than 2,000 persons perished in the explosion and fire which followed the collision yesterday morning in Halifax harbor between a munitions-laden French ship and another vessel, the Iona, loaded with supplies for the Belgian relief commission.

The disaster, which has plunged the Dominion into mourning, probably will rank as the most fearful that ever occurred on the American continent. Residents of Halifax and thousands of volunteer relief workers who have come into the city have been almost dazed at the extent of the horror.

Temporary morgues have been established in many buildings to which a steady procession of vehicles of all kinds have been carrying for hours the bodies of men, women and children. Most of them were so charred that they were unrecognizable. Thousands of persons seeking trace of relatives and friends have passed by the long, silent rows, attempting, by the flickering light of lamps and lanterns, to identify the ones they sought.

Virtually every building in the city which could be converted into a hospital is filled with wounded, many of them so desperately injured that there is no hope of their recovery. Scores already have died in these temporary hospitals. An ever-increasing number is being taken from the completely devastated Richmond district to the relief station.

The city was in darkness tonight except for the flames from the fires still burning in the wrecked buildings in the north end. Kerosene lamps furnished the illumination by means of which surgeons and doctors toiled heroically throughout the night caring for the injured.

Soldiers, sailors and police patrolled the streets tonight, and upon them fell the major portion of the burden of searching among the ruins for the dead and wounded. The Canadians were assisted in this work by sailors from an American warship in the harbor.

The flame-swept area covers approximately two and one-half square miles. It begins at what is known as the North street bridge extending north to Pier 8 on the Richmond waterfront and back to a point running parallel with Gottingen street. Nothing has been left standing in this section of the city. Only a pile of smoldering ruins marks the spot where the great building of the American Sugar Refining company stood. The dry dock and all the buildings which surrounded it were destroyed. The Richmond school, which housed hundreds of children, was demolished and it is reported only three escaped.

Canadian officers who have seen long service in France characterize the catastrophe as "the most fearful which has befallen any city in the world."

Chief of Police Hanrahan late last night estimated the number of killed at 2,000 and other city officials expressed the belief that it would exceed that number.

PROPERTY LOSS HEAVY

Virtually all the north end of the city was laid waste and the property damage will run far into the millions. A part of the town of Dartmouth, across the harbor from Halifax, also was wrecked. Nearly all the buildings in the dockyard there are in ruins.

The zone of destruction in Halifax itself extends from the North street railway station as far north as Africville to Bedford basin, and covers an area of about two square miles in the section known as Richmond. The buildings which were not demolished by the force of the terrific explosion were destroyed by the fire which followed.

Scores of persons were injured by the collapse of the railway station, Arena rink, military gymnasium, sugar refinery and elevator.

All business has been suspended. Armed guards of soldiers and sailors are patrolling the city. Not a street car is moving and part of Halifax is in darkness tonight. All hospitals and many private houses are filled with injured. Temporary hospitals and morgues have been opened in schoolhouses in the western section of the city.

In the main part of the city where the buildings are chiefly of stone or concrete the damage was confined to the shattering of windows and most of the casualties in this section were caused by flying glass.

In the west and northwest ends the damage was more extensive and there the walls of many houses were blown to bits. It was in Richmond, however, opposite the scene of the explosion, that the havoc was greatest. Whole blocks of dwellings, most of frame construction, were leveled. Street after street is in ruins and the structures which were left standing by the explosion were destroyed by fires which broke out simultaneously in a score of places and which was impossible to check until they had burned themselves out. It is believed scores of persons who had been

injured by the collapse of their homes perished in the flames from which they were helpless to flee. The fires in this district still are smoldering tonight.

Five minutes after the explosion the streets in all parts of Halifax were filled with frenzied, panic-stricken throngs striving to reach the outskirts in an effort to escape what they believed to be a raid by a German fleet. Hundreds of them had been cut by the shower of glass which followed the explosion.

DEFY DESCRIPTION

In the Richmond section the scenes enacted defied description. Seriously injured men and women crawled from the wreckage of their homes and lay in the streets until they were removed in ambulances and automobiles to hospitals. Those less seriously hurt aided those more gravely injured. In the streets piled high with debris were found the shattered bodies of many women and children. Several children were crushed to death when they were hurled against telegraph poles by the force of the explosion.

In scores of cases occupants of houses who had escaped without injury or who were only slightly hurt were baffled by the flames in their search for members of their families and were forced to stand by impotently while what once had been their homes became funeral pyres for loved ones.

A government employe named MacDonald, who made all speed to reach his home, found that his wife and four children had perished.

Among those killed were the chief of the fire department and his deputy who were hurled to death when a fire engine exploded.

Scores of those who lost their lives were children in the public schools in the north end. Many injured were rescued with difficulty from the demolished buildings. The teachers who escaped worked heroically to save the lives of the children.

Lebaron Coleman, manager of the Canadian Express company, was killed when the roof of the North station collapsed.

In less than half-hour after the disaster, 5,000 persons had assembled on the common and thousands of others had sought refuge in fields outside the city. Hundreds were reported missing by their relatives and their fate is unknown.

The work of rescue and relief was promptly organized. The academy of music and many public buildings were thrown open to house the homeless. Five hundred tents have been erected on the common and these will be occupied by the troops who have surrendered their barracks to the women and children.

FELT 75 MILES AWAY

The force of the explosion was felt at Truro, 75 miles away where windows were shattered. All telegraph and telephone wires were torn down and for several hours Halifax was completely isolated from the outside world.

The concussion shattered the big gas tanks of the city. All power plants are out of commission and newspaper offices have been so badly wrecked that publication is impossible.

Pilot Frank Mackie of the Mont Blanc declared tonight that the collision resulted from a confusion of whistles sounded by the Iona. He believes the fire which caused the explosion was due to the fact that the munitions ship carried a deckload of benzene.

Charles Prest, gasoline engineer of the steamer Waspier B. had a narrow escape from death.

"We had 80 gallons of gasoline in our tanks when a shell from the munitions ship struck us," he said. "We had just left the dry dock to go to the Bedford basin to get some plates and were opposite the Lorne club when we saw the Iona coming down from the basin and the Mont Blanc going up."

"I heard the Belgian steamer's whistle blowing and then I saw the munitions ship was on the starboard side. We tried to turn back to warn the officials at the drydock but before we reached there a shell struck us. I believe I was the only one of the five on board the Waspier B to escape as she was blown up. My son, who worked with the dry dock, was killed."

Colonel Mackenzie Bell, who spent two years on the firing line in Flanders, said tonight he never had seen anything on the battle front to equal the scenes of destruction he witnessed in Halifax today.

It was reported tonight that all the guests in the hotels of the city are safe. Some of them were cut by the flying glass, but none was seriously hurt.

Monroe Wins From Wingate.

The Monroe high school basketball team defeated the heavier and larger Wingate team here Wednesday afternoon by a score of 25 to 7. It was a fast and interesting game and not so one-sided as the score would indicate. There was good passing and guarding on both teams. Monroe has one of the strongest teams she has had in the history of the school. The boys have played four games this season and so far have not lost a one.

Presbyterian Church Notes.

You are cordially invited to attend the following services: 11 a. m., Worship and sermon. Theme, "Above the Sun." 3:30 p. m., Sunday school. 7 p. m., Young peoples' meeting. 7:30, p. m., Praise service and sermon. The last in the series on Satan. Remember your church and manse erection pledges, pay them on Sunday next.

MR. SAM PARKER, UNION COUNTY BOY, WRITES OF TRENCH LIFE

He Says the Horrors of the Weather Are More to Be Dreaded Than the Big Shells.

Mr. J. J. Parker received the following letter from his brother, Lieut. Parker, who is with the American forces in France:

"Yes, I am actually in the trenches—not way back where one never hears a shot; but right on the front line. I can look over the parapet any time and see the Bosch trenches; and I have seen several of the scoundrels themselves. Last night I actually set foot out in No Man's Land."

"My period at the school is over. I will be here for a few days, then I will report to headquarters of a U. S. division. Then I don't know where I will be sent."

"It might interest you to know that I received one of the best reports from the school. I was recommended by the colonel at the school as an instructor for our army. I am the only one that I know of that received such a report from the school which I attended. What affect the report will have with our army authorities I do not know."

"You must pardon the spelling, writing and general errors in this letter, as I am writing under rather strenuous conditions. I am in a dug-out, have just waked up. It is rather dark in here and I do not want to light a candle, for my friend, the officer with whom I am staying, has not awoke yet and I do not wish to disturb him. We both were up all night last night, prepared to meet 'Fritz' should he start any of his dirty work."

"No one can realize in America what life on the front really means—no one can realize it until he has had actual experience. The horrors of the weather are as much to be dreaded as the big shells which come over singing 'Nearer My God to Thee.' I spent a while in one of the reserve lines, some distance from the front, and back there we had very comfortable quarters, way down under the ground. On the front, of course, we live where we can get to a fire step easily. My gas respirator and my steel helmet are a fixed article of my dress, and I must say that I don't object one bit to carrying them with me all the time. I did not know man was so much like an ostrich—hide his head and he feels perfectly safe."

"Of course we do not attempt to change clothes in the trenches—we never take them off even when we lie down to take a nap. In three days my shoes have not been off but three times, and then for only long enough for a good rubbing and a change of socks."

"Tomorrow I am due to leave the trenches and start on my journey to headquarters of the American army. The Brigadier General, of the brigade in which I am now connected, has invited me to lunch with him on my way back. I have met the general and he is a very agreeable gentleman."

"I have recently seen several air fights. Last night one of our machines dropped bombs right across in front of my post on an enemy strong point."

AUSTRIA-HUNGARY IS READY ANY TIME TO DECLARE PEACE

Wants to Quit Under Terms That Would Guarantee Integrity of Monarchy—Will Fight Until Enemies Renounce Intention.

A dispatch from Vienna quotes Emperor Charles of Austria-Hungary as saying in an address to an Austro-German delegation that the dual monarchy is ready at any time to conclude a peace that would guarantee the integrity of the monarchy. He added, however, that his country would not cease fighting until its enemies renounced their intentions of dismembering it.

"The glorious successes of our victorious armies and the daring of our fleet," said Emperor Charles, "fill us with patriotic pride. After a glorious defense of our position we are now, as before, ready at any time to conclude an honorable peace which guarantees the existence and integrity of the monarchy."

"Guided by this idea we greeted with joyful satisfaction the noble-minded intervention of the pope and will in the future neglect no opportunity to end as soon as possible the costly struggle and great sacrifice the war has caused and is causing."

"In the spirit of these intentions our government has declared its readiness to accept the Russian government's invitation to enter into negotiations for a general peace. May the blessings of the Almighty rest upon this work for peace and restore the peoples of Europe to a state of reconciliation and mutual trust."

"The sorely tried Russian people, the first of our enemies who are ready to respond to our peace appeal, may be sure that we sincerely desire to restore our former friendly relations with them."

"On the other hand, we must regard it our sacred duty not to lay down the sword which plunder-seeking and rapacious neighbors forced into our hands, until our enemies unequivocally have disavowed their mad plans of dismemberment and of oppression."

"We will remain the masters in our own house. Our alliance with the German empire has been gloriously strengthened by our victorious march southwest. The most cordial and fraternal relations bind us to the progressive Bulgarian people. I confidently hope a period of fresh prosperity and secure development awaits the closely allied Ottoman empire."

TURKEY HELD SECURELY UNDER GERMAN'S THUMB

For Us to Declare War Upon Her Would Be Playing Into Hands of Berlin Officials Is Dr. Strong's Opinion.

Boston, Dec. 3.—The Turks are heartily tired of German rule and a declaration of war by the United States against Turkey now would be playing into the hands of the Berlin officials, in the opinion of Dr. Wm. E. Strong, editorial secretary of the American board of commissioners for foreign missions.

"Why the United States should declare war upon either Turkey or Bulgaria is incomprehensible to those who know anything of the internal situation of those two countries," said a statement issued by Dr. Strong. "Both of the countries are as much under the control of Germany as are Belgium and Poland."

"Who would suggest," he continued, "that we should declare war against Belgium because Belgian subjects are working for Germany and Belgium is supplying Germany with foodstuffs and other war equipment? Those who have come out of Turkey during the last few months give only one testimony and that is to the effect that Turkey is heartily tired of the domination of Germany. Even the leaders recognize that they went into this war not for any possible gain to Turkey but with every opportunity of losing everything."

"If war should be declared on Turkey and Bulgaria, what would the United States do? It would be cruel in the extreme to make an attack upon a people who hate the alliance with Germany with a perfect hatred and who would gladly break that alliance if they had the power to do so. A declaration of war today on the part of the United States would lead to a new attack under German direction upon the non-Moslem populations of Turkey, whose elimination from Asia Minor is one of the manifest policies of Germany."

"One can hardly think of the people of the United States favoring any step which could, so far as we can see, lead to nothing that would abbreviate this war, but would open the door for new and startling atrocities under the leadership of Berlin, to say nothing of imperiling all American interests in both countries. We have reason to know that the Bulgarian and Turkish officials are increasingly friendly toward the United States, as they become dissatisfied and even hostile to German rule. This is a tendency to be encouraged rather than discouraged."

"The sending of Bernstorff to Constantinople was with the idea of turning Turkey against the United States. In the face of the rising tide of German opposition in Turkey, he will probably be unable to do so unless the United States by a declaration of war plays into his hands and into the hands of the Berlin officials."

AMERICA HAD BUT ONE OTHER CHOICE SAYS SECRETARY BAKER

Our Alternative, He Declared, Was to Crawl Before the Hohenzollerns or Fight.

Richmond, Va., Dec. 5.—Secretary of War Newton D. Baker made the opening address in Richmond tonight of a series of war conferences to be held in every state in the union within the next few months, at which speeches will be delivered by members of the cabinet and other prominent men to tell the people about the war. He was given a military escort to the governor's mansion when he reached Richmond from Camp Lee late this afternoon, where he had reviewed the entire Eighteenth division, and from the mansion to the city auditorium, where he addressed an enthusiastic audience of more than 5,000 men and women, more than 2,000 others having been turned away.

Forced into the great war for the protection of "priceless principles" upon which the United States was founded, rather than become the vassal of the Imperial German government, America was in the conflict to win, emphatically declared the secretary, and none of this nations' inexhaustible resources would be spared to obtain this end. No one knows what is in store for the United States, he said, but the prosecution of the war to a successful conclusion now is the only consideration.

America from the moment the Lusitania was sent to a watery grave by the hand of an assassin had but the choice of two steps, he said. This country "could have crawled on its hands and knees to the Hohenzollerns, crying out that their frightfulness and military efficiency were too great; that we would submit to them and become their vassals," or as an alternative, "we could fight—we chose to fight."

Deafening applause greeted this thrilling declaration, which was repeated often during his cool and clear indictment, first of Germany's ambitions for world dominion, and second of the nature of the war she had waged upon the unprotected women and children, the invasion of the homes of the non-combatants, and the frightful outrages perpetrated. The secretary was forced to cut his speech short to catch a train for Washington, and left the auditorium immediately he had concluded.

Congressman Johnson of Washington State, who recently returned from a visit to the trenches in France, followed, and told in a general way of the impression gained while on his trip to the war-stricken zone of Europe.

British Made Successful Retirement At Several Points.

The carefully laid plans of General Byng to withdraw his troops at various points on the Cambrai salient to more tenable positions have been carried out in perfect order and apparently without the Germans having any knowledge of the movement.

The falling back was made necessary by wedges driven into the salient last week by the Germans which on several sectors threatened disaster to the British should they continue to hold their positions. From an arc extending before Cambrai, a distance of about 18 miles, the new British front has been lessened to a length of about ten miles with the bases resting in the north in the region of Moeuvres and in the south near Gonnelleu.

As a result of the backward movement, the Germans claim the re-occupation of Graincourt, Anneux, Uoyelles and the woods and heights north of Marcoing and that their uncontested gain has been to a depth of about two and a half miles over a front of six and a quarter miles. The Berlin war office asserts that since the German offensive in the Cambrai region began, British prisoners in excess of 900 and 147 guns have been taken.

On the Italian front the Austro-Germans are making frantic attempts to break through the Italian positions and debouch upon the plain of Venezia. In the Asiago plateau region battles of almost unprecedented violence are taking place, the Teutonic allies using a great array of guns and countless thousands of men in their efforts to overcome the Italian resistance. On the Meletta sector the enemy made some slight advances but only through the sacrifice of large numbers of men, the Italians resisting determinedly, foot by foot. To the east an enemy attempt to carry the Brenta valley meth wit repulse and heavy casualties.

RUSSIAN AND BRITISH TROOPS SUCCESSFUL IN MESOPOTAMIA

General Maurice Announces Successful Operations Against the Turks There—Talk of Cambrai Fight.

London, Dec. 5.—British troops, acting in conjunction with an efficient force of Russians, have carried out a successful operation in Mesopotamia, Major General F. B. Maurice, chief director of military operations at the war office, announced today.

Speaking of the German attacks on the British salient in the Cambrai area, General Maurice said:

"The enemy has to a certain extent got us into an awkward position and some adjustment of our line may be necessary. We may have to make slight withdrawals on the north of the salient."

"There is little doubt," continued General Maurice, "that the latest German attacks in the Cambrai sector have been planned and superintended by Gen. von Ludendorff himself. Von Ludendorff's plan was a thoroughly good one, as most of the German plans are. It was an attack on both flanks of our salient, followed by an attack in force on the center."

BROKE PART OF FRONT

"His attacks on our north and center failed completely, but on his left the enemy succeeded in breaking through a part of our front. He attacked not only our new front but on a part of the line as it existed before the south. He succeeded in effecting a surprise and broke through to a depth of nearly 6,000 yards—clear through our gun positions. But we had ample reserves ready and promptly drove him back two-thirds of the distance covered."

"One cannot say the Germans have not made substantial gains as a result of this effort. When you are in a narrow salient even a small inroad on one's flanks increases greatly the difficulty of holding the salient and supplying the men in it. Supply to the men on certain portions of our front has now become a matter of considerable difficulty."

After alluding to the readjustment of the line that might be necessary to some extent in this area, General Maurice continued:

CAPTURED "SOME" GUNS

"For the first time in many a day the enemy captured some British guns. The last British guns he captured were four from a territorial battery behind the French lines in the battle of Ypres in May, 1915, during the first gas attack. Since then we had not lost a single gun on the western front and have captured 650 of the enemy's, of which 510 were captured in 1917."

"The number of guns we captured at Cambrai is 138. The Germans claim 100 of ours and I am not yet able to tell exactly how far this claim is true, as complete returns from the batteries are not yet in, but the promptitude of the announcement and the round number used leads to suspicion. I believe the Germans have included in the count numbers of trench mortars, etc., and that therefore this number will be subject to a large discount on investigation. The same probably is true of the six thousand prisoners claimed to have been captured."

THE MESOPOTAMIA OPERATIONS

"In Mesopotamia we are continuing the policy of striking wherever the enemy gives us opportunity. We have just carried out this policy in an operation on our right with the full co-operation of Russian forces. The success of the Russian arms here shows that some portions of the Russian army are still willing and ready to fight."

General Maurice said that while there had been much talk in the press of the danger from further German attacks in Italy he considered the enemy's advance into Italy had been definitely checked.

WILL URGE CONGRESS TO FIX COTTON PRICES THIS SESSION

It Will Mean a Bitter Contest, as Southern Members Will Strongly Oppose Such Plans of J. Hampton Moore.

Washington, Dec. 5.—The recommendation in President Wilson's message to congress delivered yesterday, that there should be additional legislation regarding the fixing of prices for food and other commodities, is taken by those members of congress who have in the past advocated the plan of fixing prices for cotton, as their opportunity to urge congress to fix the price of this commodity along with other things which congress may determine upon during the present session.

J. Hampton Moore and other members of congress, who hail from states where no cotton is grown, but plenty of the staple used in its manufactured form, have been insistent advocates of price fixing on cotton. King Cotton is now selling around 30 cents a pound and there was one more than one member today who was willing to argue that this is an abnormally high price. One thing is certain, a most bitter fight will be made to have cotton included in whatever legislation is enacted to increase the number of articles over which the government will fix the price.

Just how far the advocates of such a plan will get is a question, but southern members were apprehensive today and are willing to admit that the chances of fixing the price for the staple are more in danger than ever before and they are now preparing to make a fight against such a plan.

But the farmers who grow cotton may not seriously object to the plan advocated by Representative Moore. If the price is fixed, the farmer will know when he plants his cotton what price he is to receive for it when harvested. He will not therefore be held in suspense, nor even in the hands of the speculator, because if the government says cotton shall bring 20 cents a pound it is going to bring just that much; no more and no less. It would be a guaranteed price.

Under the proposed plan there could be little or no speculation in cotton. It would not be necessary or even profitable to those who now engage in the fascinating pastime of betting that the staple will sell above or below a certain figure at a stipulated time.

Under such conditions southern members may not object to the plan which is proposed by northern and western members. If the price is fixed for cotton it will also be fixed, as President Wilson so aptly said in his message yesterday, on the commodities which the farmer and other consumers buy. For instance, hogs are selling in North Carolina this week for 25 cents a pound gross on the hoof, fatback and breakfast bacon in Washington can be had at the sum of 50 to 60 cents per pound; eggs, "far-away-storage," as low as 65 cents a dozen, and stale butter at 70 cents. All these prices, so far as Washington is concerned, depend upon your ability to pay cash. If you haven't the money in hand the general grocerman adds a little to the above mentioned figures.

So that if cotton prices are fixed to a reasonable amount, the highwaymen who sell food to the consumer will also come under the ban of the law and in the long run the average man will be as well, if not better, off than he is under present conditions.—Parker R. Anderson in Greensboro News.

TWO HUNDRED FORTY-THREE SOLDIERS DIED IN ONE WEEK

The Greatest Number of the Men Died of Pneumonia, But Deaths Decrease As Health Conditions Improve.

Although health conditions generally in the national army and national guard camps showed improvement during the week ending November 30, the number of deaths materially increased.

The report of the division of field sanitation shows that there were 164 deaths among the guardsmen as compared with 97 of the previous week and 79 among the draft men as against 60 the preceding week.

One hundred and thirty-four of the guardsmen and 39 of the draft men died from pneumonia and nine of the former and fifteen of the latter died from meningitis.

Only two divisions, the 34th (guard) and the national army) reported an increase of measles and the number of cases was small. In the divisions where there has been an epidemic of measles the disease apparently has been brought under control.

Reports from all divisions in which pneumonia has been prevalent show a decrease in the number of new cases except the 36th (guard).

Decided improvement is noted, the report says, in the 30th and 31st (guard) divisions, where extensive outbreaks of the disease have occurred. Conditions also have improved in the 20th (guard) and 89th (national army) divisions. In the 36th (guard) division the measles outbreak which reached its height last week has been followed by an epidemic of pneumonia. The death rate in this division, however, has been much lower than in any other in which pneumonia has been prevalent.

Love may be blind, but it's foolish to attempt to work off a paste diamond on a girl under the impression that you have her hypnotized by your good looks.