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PERIOD OF INACTIVITY ALONG WESTERN FRONT

Except For Bombardments and Small Reconnoitering, Quite Prevalent All Along French Front.

The period of virtual inactivity continues in France and Belgium, except for reciprocal bombardments in various sectors and here and there small operations by reconnoitering parties.

Caprille Hill, at the head of the San Lorenzo valley, where last week the Italian forces were forced to cede ground, again has been attacked by the enemy, but the operations brought him nothing but heavy casualties as he was driven back to his former line.

German naval forces again have made a foray into the North sea and surprised a convoy of merchant ships, sinking one British and five neutral vessels and four mine-sweepers.

Of two British destroyers escorting the vessels one was sunk and the other damaged. The German forces, so far as is known, consisted of four destroyers.

That German warcraft recently have been operating close to the English coast has been made known officially in the house of commons by announcement that on December 12, two neutral merchantmen and a trawler were sunk off the mouth of the Tyne river.

The official text of the armistice between the Russians and the Teutonic allies confirms the unofficial reports that it is to run from December 17 until January 14. The compact embraces all the fighting fronts where Russian troops have been engaged and also extends to the naval forces of the contracting forces.

ADAM LATIKER HAS GOT MAKINGS OF A LAWYER

Darkey Skin Plyer Took Charge of His Own Case Before Judge W. O. Lemmond, But Lost Out.

(By HENRY BELK.)

Tom Watson, the Georgia anti-draft fanatic, hasn't anything on Adam Latiker, an ape-looking darkey of Union, when it comes to acting as one's own lawyer.

Will Garrett, the negro from whom the bicycle was stolen, was the first witness to testify. He claimed that Adam had broken into his house by way of the back door and stolen the wheel while he was at his mother's.

"Didn't I meet you over at your mother's that evening—you and Hun and Joseph English, and that gold-tooth brother of yours, and you all sed less go down in de wood and hab a keetle skin game?"

"Yes," the witness promptly replied. (Comment of cross-examiner: "Ugh, now youse is gittin' to it!")

"Didn't dat gold-tooth brudder of yourn win fifty cents from me, and then I say to him, 'nigger, youse am some skinner,' and he says, 'Dis ain't no skin at all. Come over to de house tonight if youse wants to see some real skinnin'?"

"Yes," the witness promptly replied. (Comment of cross-examiner: "Ugh, now youse is gittin' to it!")

"Didn't I go over dare dat night and after I had already won de bicycle seberal times and was jest warmin' up to de cards, didn't you say, 'swin fast, de lle is gittin' low'?"

According to Adam, after they had played nearly all night and he had lost his money, he just went in and took the bicycle, as he had won it several times.

Christmas Vacation in the Public School.

The inquiry, "How long shall our Christmas vacation be?", is frequently made of me by teachers and others. In answer to this question, allow me to say that I would suggest not more than one week. I would say close school for the Christmas holidays Friday, Dec. 21st, and open up again Monday, Dec. 31st.

I wish to express to all the teachers of the county my best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Very respectfully,

R. N. NISBET, Co. Supt.

DESPISE LOSSES, GERMANS POUND THE ITALIAN LINE

The Enemy Suffers Severe Losses, But Makes Desperate Effort to Break Line.

Notwithstanding the terrible losses they have sustained, the German and Austro-Hungarian armies in the mountainous region of Northern Italy continue their efforts to break the Italian line and open a passage way to the plains below.

In France and Belgium there is little military activity, except for small engagements by outposts and raiding contingents and artillery duels. The nearest approach to attacks in force were made by the Germans Saturday night in the Champagne region of France and to the north of the Chemin des Dames.

Between the Brenta and Piave rivers in the Italian highlands hard fighting continues without cessation. The enemy to the east of the Brenta has been able, by throwing huge numbers of men into the fray and seemingly disregarding the enormous casualties that are being inflicted upon him, to advance his lines to Caprille hill, a dominating point at the head of the San Lorenzo valley, which leads to the Venetian plains.

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WON IN THIRD ATTACK

Prior to gaining the summit of Caprille the invaders twice were summarily repulsed, but for their final attack they brought up heavy reinforcements and the valiant defenders were compelled to give ground.

The agreement for an armistice between the Bolshevik government in Russia and the Teutonic allies has been signed. It will run from Monday until January 14, and then will continue in force automatically unless seven days' notice of its discontinuance is given.

Marriage of Mr. Griffin and Miss Green.

A beautiful but quiet home wedding was solemnized at the home of Mr. and Mrs. T. W. Maness on south Washington street Saturday afternoon when the latter's sister, Miss Katherine Adelia Green, became the bride of Mr. B. Clegg Griffin.

The home was beautifully decorated with evergreens and ferns, the color scheme, green and white, being carried out. Mrs. L. C. Phifer of Wadesboro, sister of the bride, received the guests. The bride and groom stepped under the arch, where the pastor of the groom, Rev. C. J. Black of Wingate, pronounced the marriage vows.

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ALLIES, DESPISE REVERSES, MARCHING TOWARD VICTORY

No Peace Overtures, Warns Lloyd George, While Prussian Military Spirit Is Drunk With Boastfulness.

That steady progress towards the desired goal is being made by the allies, despite some untoward occurrences, is the firm conviction of Premier Lloyd George, he declared at London Friday.

It is because of this fact, the premier said, that he would regard peace overtures to Prussia at the moment when her military spirit was drunk with boastfulness as a betrayal of the trust of himself and his colleagues.

The premier's words were: "It is because I am firmly convinced that despite some untoward events, despite discouraging appearances, we are making steady progress toward the goal that I would regard peace overtures to Prussia at the very moment of the Prussian military spirit is drunk with boastfulness as a betrayal of the great trust with which my colleagues and myself have been charged."

AMERICA TAKES UP FIGHT

If Russia persists in her present policy, the premier pointed out, the withdrawal by the enemy from the east of a third of his troops must release hundreds of thousands of men and masses of material to attack Great Britain, France and Italy.

"It would be folly," he added, "to underestimate the danger, equal folly to exaggerate it and the greatest folly of all not to face it."

"If the Russian democracy has decided to abandon the struggle against military autocracy, the American democracy is taking it up."

Germany's victories were emblazoned to the world, the premier said, but her troubles did not appear in bulletins. Something was known of them, however. The deadly grip of the British navy was having its effect and the valor of the troops was making an impression which would tell in the end.

AGREES WITH THE PRESIDENT

Mr. Lloyd George said he was glad to understand that Lord Lansdowne's recent letter had been misunderstood and that Lord Lansdowne was in agreement with President Wilson.

"I also," the premier declared, "agree with President Wilson and do not desire to force a controversy where none existed."

Premier Lloyd George said that a call must be made on the nation for great sacrifices and more fighting men were needed until the American forces arrive to offset the allies by the defection of Russia and the reverses of Italy.

The allies now must defend all fronts against the enemy and have a mobile army for any point of emergency, the premier said, and he added that the allies had a superiority of man-power in France on the battlefield, and there were considerable British reserves at home.

Premier Lloyd George, who was speaking at the dinner of the Grey's Inn benchers, said:

"If this is the worst moment it is because Russia has stepped out and America is only preparing to come in. Every hour that passes will see the gap formed by the retirement of the Russians filled by the valiant sons of the great republic. Germany knows it and Austria knows it, hence the desperate efforts that they are making to force the issue before America is ready."

NO HALFWAY HOUSE

"I warn the nation to watch the men who think there is a half-way house between victory and defeat," the premier admonished. "There are the men who think you can end the war now by some sort of what they call peace—by setting up a league of nations. That is the right policy after victory; without victory it would be a farce."

Continuing his discussion of a league of nations, Lloyd George said it could not be had by a negotiated peace at this time.

"It is idle to talk of security to be won by such feeble means," he asserted. "There is no security in any land without the certainty of punishment. There is no protection in a state where the criminal is more powerful than the law."

"To end a war entered upon to enforce a treaty, without reparation for the infringement of that treaty, merely by entering into a new and sweeping and comprehensive treaty, would be a farce in the setting of a tragedy."

Victory, declared the premier, was a question of tonnage. Gretchen Lederer, one of the handsomest women on the screen, has a big emotional role in the Butterfly picture, "The Lair of the Wolf," which comes to the Pastime theatre on Friday, Dec. 21st.

Albert Clber was seriously scalded Monday at Patterson, Caldwell county, when the blow-pipe under the boiler at the Watts Manufacturing Company's cotton mill burst and covered him with hot water and ashes.

An embargo on all export freight except for the United States government, on all railroads reaching North Atlantic seaboard ports, is ordered by the general operating committee of the eastern railroads.

GASTON B. MEANS ACQUITTED OF KILLING MRS. MAUDE KING

Jury Returned Verdict of Not Guilty at 10:22 Sunday Morning, and Defendant Is Now a Free Man.

Concord, Dec. 16. — "Not guilty" was the verdict of the jury in the case of Gaston B. Means, charged with the murder of Mrs. Maude A. King, widow of a Chicago millionaire, who was shot to death at Blackwelder spring, near Concord, on the evening of August 29, last.

The jury made known its verdict at 10:22 this morning, after having deliberated since 7 o'clock Saturday night. The decision was made known to Judge E. B. Cline in the Cabarrus county court house in the presence of the defendant, his wife, and mother, representatives of counsel and others who had learned the jury was about to make its report.

There was no demonstration, probably prevented by a warning Judge Cline had given before hearing the jury's report, accompanying it with instructions to Sheriff Caldwell to arrest anyone who made any demonstration. However, a little later, when the prisoner had been formally discharged and the court adjourned, Means was surrounded by relatives, attorneys and friends, who hastened to shake his hand and congratulate him upon his acquittal.

SISTERS WEEP FOR JOY

After his release, accompanied by his wife, Means left the court room and went to the home of his father. A little later he reappeared on the streets of the town, where scores of friends extended congratulations. As he and Mrs. Means were leaving the courthouse, they met one of his sisters, who had just arrived, and the two women rushed into one another's arms, weeping for joy.

Probably no trial ever conducted in North Carolina has held the wide interest of the Means case, nor has any brought more attendants from other states, a number of witnesses from Chicago and New York testifying. Assistant District Attorney John T. Dooling of New York city assisted in the prosecution, coming to Concord at the request of Solicitor Clement, because both Means and Mrs. King were regarded as citizens of that state.

Mr. Dooling brought with him a mass of papers and documents of various kinds seized at Means' apartment in New York. These Mr. Dooling took with him when he left for New York last night, some of them being subject to the order of the New York courts.

It has been rumored that in the event of acquittal of the charge of murder, Means might be prosecuted in New York on other charges. When asked about this, Solicitor Hayden Clement said this afternoon that he did not anticipate any such action, but that he could not speak with authority.

STORY OF THE DEATH OF WIDOW OF MILLIONAIRE

Mrs. King, who was on a visit to Means' relatives met death at Blackwelder spring, early on the evening of August 29 last. With Means and a party of his friends she had stopped while on an automobile drive, presumably that she might practice shooting with a small pistol Means had bought for her. Means and the woman were alone at the time, Captain W. S. Bingham and Afton Means, a brother of Gaston Means, having walked down the road to shoot rabbits.

VERDICT OF ACCIDENTAL DEATH

A coroner's inquest accepted the statement of Gaston Means that she shot herself accidentally. After the woman's body was taken to Chicago for burial, charges of foul play were made. There the coroner's physician declared that the wound in the back of the woman's head could not have been self-inflicted.

The investigation shifted to New York, where Mrs. King had resided for several years and where Means had handled her business affairs. Search of the apartments there of Mrs. King and her sister and Mr. and Mrs. Gaston Means disclosed, according to New York officials, that Means had misappropriated the woman's money and also that he was connected with German agents. Documents seized in the apartments were cited by New York police as proof of these assertions.

LARGE FORTUNE DISAPPEARED

Mrs. King had inherited approximately \$1,000,000 from her second husband, the late James C. King of Chicago and New York, and Chicago officials declared nearly all of this sum had vanished during the time Means was connected with the woman's affairs. It also was asserted Means was preparing to offer for probate an alleged second will of James C. King, which would give an additional \$2,000,000 to Mrs. King.

North Carolina officials reopened the investigation and at a hearing in September Means was bound over to the grand jury and later indicted.

STATE'S THEORY OF AFFAIR

At the trial, which began November 26, the State contended that Means had "looted" the woman's fortune and killed her to escape "an early accounting." Witnesses asserted that Means had kept the woman a virtual prisoner in the Chicago Beach Hotel. The defense dealt this and offered evidence to show that Mrs. King approved Means' speculations with her money.

Means said on the stand that he had investigated alleged neutrality

NATION-WIDE PROHIBITION WAS CARRIED IN THE HOUSE

Slight Difference Must Be Adjusted, And Amendment Will Then Be Submitted to Legislatures.

Washington, Dec. 17. — Nationwide prohibition won in the house today, and only the adjustment of slight difference in resolutions between the house and senate now stands in the way of submitting to state legislatures an amendment to the federal constitution forbidding the manufacture, sale or importation of intoxicating liquor for beverage purposes in the United States or its territories.

The vote in the house, taken after a day of debate before crowded galleries, was 282 to 128, with the parties dividing almost evenly. The margin for prohibition was eight votes more than two-thirds vote.

Both wets and drys had been predicting victory all day, and it was not until the last few names had been called that the anti-prohibition forces conceded their defeat. When Speaker Clark announced the result, the victors were joined by the galleries in such a demonstration as is rarely permitted in the house. Former Secretary Bryan, an interested spectator nearly all day, appeared on the floor and joined in receiving congratulations with Representative Webb of North Carolina, who had led the fight.

The resolution adopted by the house is identical with that passed by the senate last August, except that it gives the states seven years instead of six in which to ratify the amendment. Senator Sheppard, author of the resolution, predicted tonight that the senate would accept the amendment tomorrow. He said he had assurances that the seven-year period would be approved, and that he did not believe a roll call necessary.

A Community Christmas—Shall We Have One.

To the Editor of The Journal:—It is generally understood that the churches of Monroe have abandoned their usual custom of having "trees," or other methods of giving Christmas presents to their Sunday schools, etc., and this is certainly very fitting under existing circumstances, when so many are feeling the effects of the "war conditions." As we have been able to interpret the sentiment of our city it seems to be unanimously in favor of a "Community Christmas." The opportunity as to plans for carrying this out has been so limited as yet that the details cannot be given in this notice.

Speaking in general, however, it is desired that all our citizens who can do so, independent of all organizations, contribute whatever they can of food, clothing, toys, shoes, fuel, money, in fact anything that will help to make a "Happy Christmas" for some one else, who, because of the "stress" under which we are just now living may be compelled to pass through the season of "good cheer" even comfortless, to say nothing of being cheerless.

A search through the attic will no doubt discover many articles that are serving no other purpose than to occupy space, when those same things would be a blessing to someone else. It is suggested that all contributions for this cause be sent to the Red Cross room in the court house sometime during Monday, the 24th, when a committee to do so will designate to whom they shall go. This will be doing "the greatest good to the greatest number."

Let everyone do their part without further notification as this is designed to be a "community" affair in every sense of the word.

If any person has contributions to make, and are not able to bring them to the Red Cross room, if they will let the pastor of the Methodist church know of the fact, he will "dodge" around after them, and the Baptist and Presbyterian pastors can even do likewise. Let us make this the most blessed Christmas that Monroe has ever had for He hath said "It is more blessed to give than to receive."—H. E. Gurney.

Play at Wesley Chapel.

The senior class of the Wesley Chapel high school will give a play, "The Noble Outcast," Friday, Dec. 21, beginning at 7 p. m. The following is the cast of characters:

Gerald Weston, known as "Jerry the Tramp"; Clayton Hawfield; Col. Matthew Lee, a Southern banker; Roy Hawfield; James Blackburn, his nephew; Sam Winchester; Jack Worthington; Blackburn's rival, H. Price; Mrs. Lee, wife of Col. Lee; Miss Catherine Howie; France, a disputed possession; Miss Malinda Broom; Sadie, faithful but free; Miss Katie Keziah; detective, Irvin Price. An admission fee of 15 and 25 cents will be charged, and the public is invited to attend.

violations for German interests before the United States broke relations with Germany, but was always loyal to his country and turned over to officials information he thought of value to this country.

CLAIMED DEATH ACCIDENTAL.

The defense contended the woman's death was accidental; that she stumbled, fractured her ankle and in falling fired the pistol.

Mrs. King's mother, Mrs. Anna L. Robinson of Asheville, and her sister, Mrs. Mary C. Melvin, took opposite sides in the case, the mother appearing as a witness for the prosecution and the daughter siding with Means.

MONROE BOY WAS AMONG HALIFAX RELIEF WORKERS

Young Frank Sikes, in a Letter to His Father, Gives an Account of The Terrible Explosion.

Among the Halifax relief workers was a Monroe boy, young Frank Sikes, son of Mr. Vann Sikes, who is in the United States navy. His ship was anchored about three miles from the point where the ammunition ship exploded, and in a letter to his father he gives an account of the untold disaster which followed.

Extracts from his letter read: "We were lying out in the harbor about three or three and one-half miles from the shore when the explosion occurred. The force of it jarred out many of our window glasses, and knocked down several of our doors. We were also shook up considerably.

"Shells were flying all around us, bursting in the water. For a moment it appeared as if Germany had transported the scene of her activities over here, but we were not very much frightened.

"Halifax is a city of about 185,000, and I don't believe there is a glass window left in a store or tenement building. The greatest part of the buildings on the north side are shattered to the ground.

"A train was passing within a mile of the explosion and it was pretty well filled with passengers, but all were killed but two from the force of the shock. So you can readily see how terrible was the explosion.

"As my ship is a passenger boat, they are using it for a hospital. Since 12 o'clock twenty-three have died, and it is not yet 6 p. m. They are still bringing in the wounded by the ship load.

"On the north side one can see men, women and children with either their head or arm or leg torn off. We found one woman half buried in wreckage with her chest ripped open. Several men around the navy yard were found in a similar fix.

"We found one girl who wasn't badly hurt. She asked me to look in her pocket and see if there was 55 cents in it, as she had been sent on an errand and didn't want to lose the money. She said she did not realize her danger. The whole town is now on fire.

"One man who witnessed the Chicago fire said the Halifax disaster was much worse.

"By hard fighting the powder magazine in the navy yard was saved. If it had blown up Halifax would have been completely destroyed.

"The school house was over a mile away, and when we got there we removed some of the wreckage and found the teacher and pupils still sitting at their desks as if school was going on. The teacher, however, and the greater part of the children, were dead. One little girl was found lying over her desk, having been struck by a falling rafter.

"We saw six people burn to death in the fire without being able to do a thing for them. After we could pass through the streets we saw bones here and there, and in some places we saw bodies with their heads burned off completely.

"The force of the explosion blew off the deck of one ship. Another ship, about two or three hundred feet long, was beached. They may be able to get it afloat again.

"In some cases entire families were killed, while only one or two members escaped in others. At first we thought our boilers had blown up, but we learned better when we saw the shells exploding all around us. And looking to the north side, we saw steam and gas escaping and knew that an ammunition ship had exploded.

"Such a mass of smoke, steam and gas one has never seen before. Old sailors say they have never seen or heard of anything to equal the Halifax disaster.

"The Chief Boatswain got a kodack picture of the explosion, and if it is good I'll get one and send it home. It was so dark in the north side for awhile that one couldn't see one's hand in front of oneself. You may think all of this is an exaggeration, but it is true. I can hear the wounded groaning now.

"Had our boat been within a mile of the explosion we would probably be on the bottom of the bay by now. We are now at the navy yard dock taking aboard the wounded.

"I have to stand watch over the dead for four hours in the morning from 4 to 8 o'clock. And you can bet if one of the corpse's groan I'll make hash out of the Old Colony getting off her. Remember there are 23 dead, and by the time I go on the watch the number will probably amount to 50. They are all in a corner on the lower deck. They are lying on mattresses with blankets thrown over them.

"Since writing the first part of this letter, the number of dead has crept up to 2,500 and 5,000 wounded. The fire is still raging, and the property loss is estimated at \$50,000,000."

THE TIME IS SHORT

On Jan. 1 the name of every Journal subscriber, who has not paid ahead of that date, will be dropped from the list. The paper per postively goes on a cash-in-advance system the first of the year, and there will be no extension of time. Everybody who wishes The Journal visits to continue is urged to send his renewal at once.