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MUCH HERALDED OFFENSIVE OPENS.

German Attack Delivered as Expected—Practically No Penetration of Line—French Troops Drive Germans Back

Friday March 22.—Presumably the great attack, heralded for months, has begun, and what may possibly prove to be one of the greatest battles of all time is taking place in France.

At five o'clock on Thursday morning the Germans guns opened fire along a fifty-mile front, roughly speaking from Arras to La Fere, where a network of roads cross the river Seneze, to the banks of the River Oise to point above Croiselles Oise in the neighborhood of La Fere. The distance, as the crow flies, is between forty and fifty miles. Croiselles itself lives four and a half miles southwest of the direct road from Arras to Cambrai, on a line cutting that road just eight miles from Arras, whilst the river Oise turns a rough right angle from north to west as it passes through La Fere.

The line on which the attack was made is held by the British, and Sir Douglas Haig's dispatch explains that after three hours of bombardment, with gas and high explosive shells, the enemy's first attack was launched upon the British defenses. The German formations were in close order, and were pushed forward with persistence and determination. As a result, however, Sir Douglas' dispatch declares, all that was gained was the driving in of the British outposts, and a slight penetration of the battle positions at certain points on the front. Owing, however, to the formations adopted, the enemy's losses have necessarily been peculiarly heavy.

The main attack centered on the northern flank of the salient driven into the German lines immediately south of Croiselles, and having Marcoing for its apex. Here from the river Seneze to Flesquieres, the carefully trained shock-troops were sent to the attack, with the sole effort, so far, that in accordance with the arrangements already come to by the Versailles Council, the outposts were withdrawn. Flesquieres, itself, is a village south of the direct road from Bapaume to Cambrai, and lies five and a half miles southwest of Cambrai, two and a quarter miles northwest of Marcoing, and the same distance due south of the Cambrai-Bapaume road. The immediate object of the Germans is clearly to drive in this side of the salient, and for this purpose his fiercest attacks were delivered round Croiselles, Bullecourt and Lagnicourt. If these were successful he would then start a vast turning movement through the gap, for which purpose enormous numbers of troops withdrawn from the eastern front, have been massed.

The allied information is, however, so perfect that the Versailles Congress was informed of exactly where the attacks was to be delivered whilst the maps on the captured officers prove that the initial assault in no case reached its objectives. As a matter of fact, Mr. Bonar Law, explaining the situation to the House of Commons, pointed out, that the British staff and the Versailles Council had considered every phase of a possible attack, and were fully prepared to meet this particular attack, which had been launched against the very section of the lower line which three days ago, they had received information would be attacked.

Pensacola, Fla. March 26.—Ensigns Delephany and Draper, aviators attached to the naval air section here, were instantly killed late yesterday when their machine fell about 500 feet into water, it became known today. The cause of the accident is unknown. Draper's body was recovered, but the body of Ensign Delephany was not located.

SLAUGHTER IS APPALLING

German Infantry Mowed down as it Advances in Close Formation.

With the British Army in France, March 24.—The British and French, who co-operate at the junction of the two armies, were viewing the trend of the German offensive with optimistic eyes this morning. Hard fighting was in progress, but the latest reports showed little or no change in the situation in favor of the enemy while on the other hand the defenders had pushed the attacking forces back after a bitter struggle and were holding strongly along the whole new front to which they had withdrawn.

Fighting of a most desperate nature has been continuous since the initial attack, but so far the British have used few troops other than those which were holding the front lines. These shock troops have been making as gallant a defense as was ever recorded in the annals of the British army, and as a result they have enabled the main body of the forces to fall back deliberately and without confusion and occupy positions which had been prepared long before the German offensive began.

The Germans on the other hand operating under the eyes of the emperor and the crown prince, have been hurling vast hords into the fray with utter disregard for the life and have followed into the abandoned positions getting farther and farther away from their supplies and finding their communications increasingly difficult.

More than 50 German divisions already have been identified by actual contact, and many of these men were simply given two days' iron rations and sent over the top into the frightful maelstrom made by the allied artillery, machine guns and rifles. The slaughter of the enemy infantry as it advanced in close formation over the open has been appalling.

The British losses have been within the bounds expected, due to the tactics of the commanders. The allies have lost a considerable number of men in prisoners and a certain number of guns. But very few pieces of artillery have been taken by the Germans since the first day. In fact, the whole withdrawal has been executed in a masterly manner, showing how thoroughly the British had planned for the very events which have occurred.

It is permitted to say now that the British never intended to try to hold the forward position if the Germans attacked in the force expected.

There is every reason to believe that harder fighting than has yet taken place will develop shortly. The Germans, in the British view, cannot now hesitate in carrying on their attack, and it is a case of break through or admit defeat. In this circumstance it is interesting to note a statement made yesterday by a German officer, a prisoner, who declared that the German offensive was an act of desperation brought on by the fact that the fatherland must have peace.

The hardest fighting yesterday occurred east of Peronne and in the Bois de Genlis. This most important phase of the battle occurred in the latter neighborhood. During the morning the Germans had pushed southward toward Ham and had succeeded in getting a foothold at some points in the defenses to which the British had fallen back.

The British organized a counter attack and hurled themselves against the Germans with such ferocity that the enemy was forced to give way, and the situation was restored. This was one of the very few counter attacks as yet attempted by the British.

Last night was fairly quiet along the battlefield, but this morning the British again surged forward against the Germans to the southeast of Ham, while the enemy continued his assaults in the neighborhood of Mory, southeast of Croiselles.

BRITISH LINE HOLDS IN FACE OF ATTACKS.

Germans Conduct Offensive at Tremendous Cost—Claim Capture of English First Line Trenches prisoners and guns

Saturday March 23.—After a lull during Thursday night the Germans attacked Sir Douglas Haig's line again in immense force on Friday morning. The battle was continued all day and late into the evening, with the result that the Germans claim to have captured the English first line trenches, some 16,000 prisoners and 200 guns. The first line trenches, of course, amount to next to nothing, they are those advance works from which one line keeps in touch with the line opposite, but which are never meant to be held nor provided with means of being held in the face of a grand assault. In the English case, we know, from Sir Douglas Haig's dispatch, that much of this first line was necessarily evacuated without resistance when the German masses were sent forward. With respect to the guns, it is the German habit to count as guns every trench mortar the tiny guns which are used to do the utmost damage to the enemy, and are abandoned as the defender retire. With respect to the prisoners, it is impossible to speak, but if the Germans have multiplied the prisoners as they did the Italian prisoners in their advance on the Piave, the number may be safely discounted.

The great fact remains, however, that so far the British line holds, and has held at tremendous loss to the Germans. When forty divisions, numbering something perilously near 1,000,000 men, are set in motion in close order, against a heavily defended position, it is unnecessary to exaggerate what inevitably takes place. The Germans, however, always fight with a prodigality of life holding that when you attack it is your business never to consider your losses, but the gaining of your objective. Sir Douglas Haig's dispatch merely states that the British losses have been heavy, but all considered, not excessive.

He claims, however, that the German losses, in the very nature of things have been enormous.

The efforts of the Germans is obviously to break through the British line so as to reach Paris. If they succeeded they would take Amiens, with its famous cathedral, in some ways the most famous of all French cathedrals, on their way, and there might be another case of Rheims. Their other object is unquestionably to reach the sea at Calais, and with this end in view Sir Douglas thinks that the attack may yet be extended further north in the direction of Lille.

What the Germans have done is what they were expected to do, when Russia deserted her allies. They have broken their sham treaty with the Bolsheviks, as the Bolsheviks must have known they would, and have transferred men and guns from the eastern to the western front. They have also drawn on the Austrian and Bulgarian forces for assistance, with the result that in one section of the line their massed guns have been placed at distances of only 12 yards apart. This vast mass of men and guns has been brought to bear on what is once more the "thin line," along a distance of 50 miles, with the result that during the first two days the fighting line has bent somewhat, as was practically inevitable, but has absolutely held. Mr. Lloyd George declared recently that the French had given great honor to the British by leaving to them the defense of Paris in the north, and it is the defense of Paris for which, as has been stated, the part of the British line now attacked is fighting. The Germans are hurling all their forces into the present blow, and the cost and loss will be something tremendous if they fail.

The greatest force of the attack was

delivered along both sides of the Cambrai-Bapaume road, the fighting in the rude semicircle of villages extending from Vaulx-Vraucourt on the north in a southeasterly direction by way of Morchies to Beaumetz, being particularly severe. Here nine divisions were thrown in on an 11,000 yard front, so that some 200,000 German were being poured forward in a remorseless effort to break through over a distance of some six miles. To meet this Sir Douglas Haig had only three divisions, so that the odds numerically were overwhelming. Yet in spite of this the line held. Even worse was the pressure further along the line where eight German divisions endeavored to smash their way over two British.

One particularly interesting phase of the battle is, however, the fact that not one of the wonderful German devices, which for months have been heralded through the allied and neutral press, has yet appeared. Absolutely no new engine of war has so far been introduced. There is gas, but there has always been gas. There are big guns, firing enormous distances to the rear, but this is not new either. So far not a single tank has been seen, whilst the Germans are still absolutely outnumbered in aeroplanes, the British fliers being able to descend over the storm troops, and rake them with their quick fliers, and also bomb the masses concentrated in reserve. What the Germans are relying on is manifestly an overwhelming number of men and batteries. It is, in short, a rerun over again, but on a far more terrific scale.

Germans Reveal Nothing New.

London, England (Saturday)—The Germans have revealed nothing new in offensive methods, trying to overwhelm by gunfire and numbers, 40 divisions being already identified. The barrage was like a rain storm all day on the British defensive positions, with a German gun to every 12 yards or so of front.

No German tanks appeared but any surprises would not be forthcoming at the start. The gas caused no excessive casualties the British troops having trained in wearing gas masks for long stretches and in some instances fought in them over six hours.

The odds were overwhelming, eight divisions hurling themselves on two British and nine against three. As to gunfire the Germans used heavy probably naval guns to bombard villages and the open country 20 to 30 miles behind the British lines.

The losses were considerable but not out of proportion to the battle's magnitude, Sir Douglas Haig reports. A total of 16,000 prisoners and 200 guns, Berlin reports. Sometimes the Germans failed completely, elsewhere they gained ground, the battle being fiercest at Beaumetz, Morchies Vaulx Vraucourt, north of the Bapaume-Cambrai road.

This area is called the battle-zone and the Germans hoped for a break through here. They threw in nine divisions on an 11,000 yard front and apparently made the biggest advance here, St. Leger Morchies, Vaulx-Vraucourt and Beaumetz being the line to which the Germans penetrated. The German losses were everywhere enormous, the field guns repeatedly firing into solid ranks at close range with open sights. The massed attack recalled Mons and Verdun.

All persons or firms engaged in importing, manufacturing, storing, or distributing fertilizers or fertilizer ingredients must secure licenses on or before March 20. Application must be made to the Law Department, License Division, United States Food Administration, Washington, D. C.

Only the 12-cylinder type of Liberty motor for airplanes is now being built, it having been thought best in view of developments abroad to concentrate on the high-powered engine instead of the eight-cylinder.

GERMAN MONSTER GUN.

While Germans Bombarded Paris Sunday with Long Distance Cannon Women sold Pains as Usual, Churches Were Well filled.

Paris, March 24.—The German "monster cannon" which has been bombarding Paris has been located in the forest of St. Gobain, west of Laon, and approximately 76 miles from the Paris city hall. The gun bombarded Paris during the greater part of Sunday.

The day was ushered by loud explosions from the 16-inch shells, and immediately the alarm to take cover was sounded. This occurred at 6:55 o'clock and many persons sought shelter, but greater numbers of them appeared in the streets on their way to the churches, which were almost as well filled as usual. The women who sell palm leaves on Palm Sundays did their usual business.

At first shells began arriving at intervals of 20 minutes, and the detonations seemed louder than on Saturday. Their power to disturb the equanimity of the populace, however, seemed less the people refusing to be distracted from their Sunday habits.

The bombardment of the capital ended around 1 o'clock.

Although during the earlier hours of the bombardments the shells arrived on 20-minute intervals later in the day they arriving every 15 minutes, and some of them even fell 12 minutes apart.

In military circles belief was expressed that the Germans were using two long distance guns. The Matin says the position of one of the guns was established in the St. Gobain forest, which would place it further south than had been believed. This position would be about 70 miles from Paris.

During the early hours traffic in the streets of Paris was curtailed, but before noon both the subways and tramways began running. In the afternoon streets of the city showed great animation. During the day large numbers of persons unable to secure means of transport walked. As is usual when air-craft warnings are sounded, large numbers of the populace sought shelter in subways and basements.

Julius Verne Foreseen Gun.

Let Petie Journal says that Jules Verne had foreseen this gun, and declares, moreover, that it is a French invention. "More than a year ago," it adds, "we discovered the secret of firing cannon more than 100 kilometers. The secret lies in the greater suppression of the atmospheric resistance."

The Echo de Paris declares the bombardment is designed to give the impression that Paris is within range of German guns. "It is a political cannon," the newspaper says.

Premier Clemenceau's newspaper, L'Homme Libre, asserts that the password of the hour is "Confidence."

"Germany," it declares "has wished to make it a complete offensive on all fronts, the land, water and air fronts, as well as the 'front of the rear.' We are facing an enemy who wishes to end it as soon as possible. That suits us. Every shell that falls into Paris drives deeper into us confidence in an ultimate victory."

Gun of Austrian Manufacture.

Le Journal in its article, says the gun is of 9 1/2 inch caliber and of Austrian manufacture. It is a very delicate piece of machinery, which must be handled by expert mathematicians and gunners, the newspaper adds, as the loading and pointing is a difficult task. It declares each shot costs about \$4,000. "This is a new conception of our enemies," the newspaper comments.

Ordnance experts were not ready to commit themselves as to whether the shell was a sort of aerial torpedo driven by propellers; whether an inner projectile contained in the original

shell is released by an explosive after the shell has traveled a certain distance, or whether the original projectile itself reaches its destination, propelled perhaps by an explosive of force hitherto unknown.

In Saturday's bombardment 24 shots in all were fired from 7:20 a. m. to 3 o'clock p. m., and presented all the characteristics of a bombardment by heavy artillery. There were regular intervals between the shots and the shells fell within a restricted area. Enemy aviators who flew high over the city regulated the firing.

LINE OF DEFENSE WAS NOT BROKEN.

Only Bent Says the Military Attache to British Embassy.

Washington March 25.—Major General McLaughlin, military attache to the British embassy, made the following statement today to the Associated press:

This morning's news shows that our lines of defense are not broken but only bent. The battle it appears in fact, is what was to have been expected from the tremendous weight of the attack. So far as can be gathered the German has concentrated against us about half the total forces which he had on the western front; his concentration of artillery is on the same unprecedented scale. Even so our advanced lines were actually penetrated in a few places only.

"On by far the greater part of the sector attacked our retirement has been voluntary and in accordance with previous plans to stronger positions. Had our first line been nowhere penetrated this retirement would in all probability have taken place just the same. To have held on indefinitely would have meant unnecessary loss of life. As it is our losses have been considerable but not excessive. The enemy on the other hand must have lost very heavily. He has attacked consistently in dense masses relying to break down our defenses by sheer weight of numbers.

"After gaining a few miles of war swept territory he is now approaching the first of our main defenses with many of his best divisions already out of commission. It may well be that he will make a further advance if he pursues the reckless tactics of the last few days. The allies, however, can afford to wait with equanimity. Germany has made no secret that she is staking everything on this blow. She has promised her people and her allies that if success will produce victory and peace they shall have it.

"As the battle ends, as every prospect suggests it will end, with our army and those of the allies in positions strongly occupied, however, Germany will have failed and failed decisively. The opening of the fighting season of 1918 will find her with the flower of her army gone and with her people disheartened by the most spectacular and costly failure of the war."

"Finally it must be remembered that the battle is still only in its first stage. Behind our armies engaged is the great French army and also our strategic reserves which have not been used."

That farmers are today receiving for their wheat 40 per cent of the money paid for the cash loaf whereas last year they received less than 20 per cent of the price of the loaf is a recent announcement of the U. S. Food Administration. Elimination of hoarding and speculation together with stabilization of prices are responsible for the doubled share of the retail price farmers are now receiving.

In spite of unsettled conditions, the total American trade with Russia amounted to \$438,000,000 in 1917, a decrease of only \$30,000,000 as compared with 1916. This decrease was in the trade with Asiatic Russia and is attributed to congestion and import restrictions at Vladivostok.