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E. F. IRVING
Editor and Proprietor.

THE EASTERN WAR.

MANY HOUSES WRECKED AT PORT ARTHUR IN FOURTH BOMBARDMENT.

Chinese Colony Destroyed—Suffering in Towns Along Trans-Siberian Railway for Want of Food—Other News.

St. Petersburg, March 12.—Despite discouraging reports covering the trans Siberian railway conditions, and repeated reports of damage and loss of life at Port Arthur, the feeling today in general official circles is anything but despondent. The greatest attention today is centered on detailed advices from Port Arthur covering Thursday's bombardment.

Dispatches this afternoon state the new portion of the Port suffered the greatest damage, many houses being wrecked under the steady shower of shells and a not inconsiderable casualty list resulting. One huge projectile bursting but eight yards from the residence of Col. Baron Frank, demolished the house, fatally injuring Mrs. Frank and completely decapitating her daughter. Mrs. Frank and the body of Miss Frank were with difficulty rescued from the flames which followed the explosion.

Constantine Zedorski, an attorney, an unknown woman and two Chinese coolies were killed by a shell which exploded but a few minutes after the bombardment began. General Stoessel and staff, hurrying toward the water front came within the danger zone and were liberally sprinkled with fragments and splinters from exploding shells, but beyond a few minor wounds were uninjured.

In the Chinese quarter the shells tore great holes in the earth and wrecked a row of houses. The inhabitants fled for shelter, but not before seven Chinese, including one woman, were wounded. The report says the firing from the land batteries was spirited and apparently reasonably effective. One Japanese ironclad was struck by a Russian shell and slowly withdrew from range in an apparently crippled condition. Another vessel is believed to have sustained damage.

After the bombardment and torpedo fight the Japanese fleet withdrew in a leisurely manner and up to yesterday morning had not returned to renew the attack. The Russian squadron proceeded to sea in the afternoon but returned without having sighted the enemy. The latest reports are agreed on the fact that the Japanese have apparently withdrawn to a considerable distance, and speculation is rife as to the next move.

Perhaps the most disquieting feature in official circles is the constantly recurring reports relative to the railway line. The chief inspector of the railway admits the line to be in an exceedingly poor condition. Trackmen are regularly neglecting their duties. Derailment of trains has in many instances been narrowly averted.

The dangers to the track are not confined to the extreme heavy drifting of snow, but to threatening landslides as well. The unusual severity of the winter promises to be followed by floods in many districts which, it is predicted, will seriously cripple the road for a protracted period. It is almost certain that famine will spread over vast stretches of territory newly settled and dependent for food almost entirely upon the railway resources.

A cry for help has come from Tomekckita, Verchobolski and several intermediate villages. In these places food has already reached prohibitive prices and the poor are on the verge of starvation, while none can give assistance. The stoppage of all ordinary traffic to allow transportation of troops to the far frontier, has resulted in a total discontinuance of supply for residents along the line. With the ever increasing demand for food for the troops the chances of providing for villages in the famine district is daily lessened and there is a strong probability that trains returning from the seat of war will soon be burdened with homeless refugees.

That the government stands in wholesome fear of railway interruption is shown by the drastic

measures adopted along the entire trans-Siberian line. All Japanese residents, according to today's advices, have been moved from the immediate vicinity of the railway. The entire colony at Blagovestchensk have been removed Irkutsk, although at that point there has, up to the present time, been no attempt to injure the railway.

In St. Petersburg the news is now watched for with an almost pathetic indifference, but patriotism continues high and is particularly manifested in religious fervor. Prayers are almost constant for the success of Russian arms and street religious scenes are not at all uncommon.

St. Petersburg, March 11.—The Novo krai, a Port Arthur newspaper, copies of which have just arrived, describes the naval battle of February 9 from the Russian standpoint. Four battleships, five cruisers and one transport composed the Russian fleet. The battleships Retvizan and Czarovitch were too badly injured from the torpedoes the night previous to participate. At 8 in the morning four Japanese cruisers rounded the Lao Tshin promontory. The fast cruiser Boyarin was sent out to reconnoiter, and returned and reported that a large Japanese fleet was sighted at 11 o'clock composed of 12 vessels—six battleships and six cruisers. The Japs opened fire at a range of four miles and the Russians replied. The land batteries followed the fleet into action. Viceroy Alexieff and his staff observing the action from Golden Hill. The enemy steamed in about 1,000 yards and then headed south and disappeared in the mist. Their fire was directed chiefly against the Golden Hill batteries, a perfect rain of shells falling. Only the Novik Askold and the Diana sustained injuries. Toward the end of the engagement a column of steam and smoke poured from one of the Japanese vessels; it is believed that she sank. It was learned later that six of the enemy's ships were damaged and 100 men killed and wounded. The account says that the speed of the Russian cruisers prevented the Japanese getting the range.

Washington, March 11.—The senatorial inquiry into the charges against Senator Dietrich of Nebraska, began today before the special committee in Senator Hoar's committee-room. The inquiry which was instituted upon the demand of Senator Dietrich is for the purpose of disproving the charges on which the senator was indicted last fall in Nebraska, and which were dismissed on demurrer. The committee consists of Senators Hoar, Platt, (Conn.), Spooner, Cockrell and Pettus.

All of the members of the committee except Mr. Spooner were present when the inquiry began. Senator Dietrich was in attendance with his attorney, R. A. Beatty, of Hastings. Mr. Dietrich repeated his wish that the investigation should be the fullest possible.

Leopold Hahn, postmaster at Hastings from 1897 to 1901, was the first witness. He was succeeded in that office by Mr. Fisher. In reply to questions by Senator Hoar, Mr. Hahn related a conversation with Fisher on April 23, 1901, relative to his (Fisher's) appointment as postmaster.

"He asked me," said the witness, "what the office paid. I told him \$2500. He said that was what Dietrich wanted him to pay for the office. He also told me that Adam Breed had said that Dietrich had asked him \$2800, or \$700 a year for the four years."

"He asked me what I had paid Senator Thurston for my appointment, and I said 'not one cent.'"

The witness also said that Fisher had questioned him as to whether he (Fisher) would have to pay a note for \$2500 if he should give one, and the witness said he had volunteered to investigate the point for him, and had done so, getting legal advice that such a note would not be negotiable.

At a later date Fisher had come to his store with William Dutton and they had announced that they were there for the purpose of "fixing up the postoffice business." He then retired. He was told afterward the matter had been fixed. He then produced a memorandum, which he said he had made on the day of the conversation, 30 minutes after it occurred.

See Nolan & Callahan's special bargains for March.

A CLOSE BATTLE.

IN WHICH THE RUSSIANS ARE WORSTED.

Twenty-Men Killed on Russian Ship Sevastopol, and 20 on the Retvizan—Russian Torpedo Boat Captured in Sinking Condition.

Tokio, March 13.—Admiral Togo's report of the fourth attack on Port Arthur by the Japanese fleet on March 10 reached Tokio late Sunday afternoon. It is as follows:

"Our squadron, as prearranged, attacked the enemy at Port Arthur March 10. Our two torpedo flotillas reached the mouth of the harbor at Port Arthur at 1 o'clock in the morning of March 10. Finding no enemy and waiting until dawn, one flotilla engaged in sinking special mines in the harbor entrance.

"Notwithstanding the enemy's fire, our flotilla succeeded in sinking the mines. The other flotilla met the enemy's torpedo flotilla, consisting of six boats, in the Lao Tshin channel, south of Port Arthur at 4:30 o'clock. A hot engagement occurred at close range for 30 minutes. The enemy then took flight.

"Our fire greatly damaged the Russian ships, one of which was badly crippled by a shot through the boilers, and another was observed to be on fire. So close were the two flotillas to each other that our destroyers, the Asashio, Kasumi and Akatsuki, nearly touched the enemy's ships and our crews could even hear the cries of agony of the injured men on them.

"We sustained some damage and loss. The Akatsuki had a steam pipe broken and four stokers were killed thereby. Our loss was seven killed and eight wounded. Among the latter is Chief Engineer Minamisawa, of the Kasumi.

"Our other flotilla, while leaving the harbor entrance, observed two Russian torpedo boats coming from seaward and immediately engaged them, the battle lasting one hour. After causing them severe damage one of them effected its escape, but our destroyer, the Sasanami, captured the other boat, which proved to be the Stereguschchi.

"Notwithstanding the land batteries pouring a heavy fire on our flotilla, the captured vessel was taken in tow. Owing to the high sea the towline soon parted, and the Sasanami found it necessary to take the crew from the Russian boat and abandoned the Stereguschchi, which finally sank at 10:30 o'clock.

"The enemy's cruisers, the Novik and the Bayan, steamed out of the entrance of the harbor toward us, but observing the approach of our cruiser squadron, retired to the harbor. Our flotilla suffered some damage but not heavy. The Sasanami and the Akatsuki had two sailors killed and Sub-Lieutenant Shimi of the Akatsuki, and three sailors were wounded.

"Our main and cruiser squadrons arrived off Port Arthur at 8 o'clock. The cruisers immediately advanced toward the harbor entrance to protect the torpedo flotilla. The main squadron advanced near Lao Tshin and opened an indirect cannonade against the inner harbor from 10 o'clock to 1:40. According to the observation made by one of our cruisers facing the entrance, the bombardment was remarkably effective. During our cannonade the enemy's land batteries fired, but none of our ships suffered any damage.

"Another cruiser squadron went to Tallienwan and bombarded the enemy's fortress on Samsbonatso, damaging the building thereon.

"The Russian torpedo boat destroyer damaged in the third attack on Port Arthur was found to be the Wauhsitermuy, which had been completely sunk, the mast being only visible above the water.

"Our squadron stopped firing at 2 o'clock and returned to the rendezvous.

Tientsin, March 13.—A Russian refugee who arrived here today throws valuable additional light on the bombardment of Port Arthur last Thursday. He says that the attack was intended for the forts, but the Japanese fire overreached. There was small destruction, and the casualties were not numerous. Twenty soldiers and two civilians

were killed and three civilians were injured. Colonel Vershinin, governor of Port Arthur, was slightly wounded. The Japanese used 300 or 400 Russian shells which they found on the captured transport Manchuria.

The refugee mentioned says only four Japanese cruisers were actively engaged. The forts replied with several shots, whenever the Japanese left the cover of the Lao Tshin promontory. Besides the Retvizan, the battle ship Petropavlovsk received slight damage from a shot.

London, March 11.—A Chelsea dispatch reports the progress of another naval battle at Port Arthur today. The Russian destroyers and torpedo boats made a sortie from the harbor, attacking the Japanese fleet. A terrific encounter followed, in which it is reported a Russian destroyer and a Japanese torpedo boat were sunk with all on board. A Tien Tsin dispatch states that Chinese refugees have arrived and report they saw the Russian army retreating and burning villages as they went.

Tientsin, March 13.—Information from an official who was an eyewitness of the bombardment of Port Arthur on Wednesday and Thursday is to the effect that the Russians had 25 killed on the battleship Sevastopol, 20 on the Retvizan and 20 in the town. The Russians claim to have sunk a Japanese cruiser.

The Russians are preparing for the defense of Niu Chwang, finding it impossible to stop the landing of the Japanese.

Seoul, March 12.—An engagement took place on the 8th inst., between Russians and Japanese cavalry scouts near Kasan, 57 miles north of Ping Yang. One Japanese trooper was killed during the fight. The Russians eventually retired.

San Francisco, March 12.—Baron M. Kaneko, an ex-Japanese minister of agriculture and commerce, and member of the Japanese parliament, who has arrived here en route to Washington and the St. Louis exposition, said today:

"I do not understand what you Americans and Europeans mean when you speak of the yellow peril. If you believe that the Japanese intend to unite with the other members of the yellow race and overrun Europe and America you are very much mistaken. I think it would be wiser to beware of the Mucovite peril. It is much more dangerous.

"As regards the neutrality of China, we expect to take the same position as outlined by Secretary Hay. The integrity of China must be preserved at all costs. We do not want her for our ally, and if she enters the war, it must be as an independent nation.

"Japan is prepared to fight this war to a finish without foreign intervention. She is fighting to preserve the peace of Asia and not for any ambitious purposes.

"We are in the war to win and we are prepared to remain in it as long as Russia does. Our finances are in the best of condition, and we can always issue a special war tax if it should become necessary.

Washington, March 12.—Senator Morgan today introduced a bill for the government of the Panama canal zone. It declares the territory acquired for canal purposes to constitute a government reservation of the United States subject to civil and military law under the control of the president of the United States through the canal commission. The laws of Panama shall continue until superseded by laws of congress; laws of the United States respecting citizenship, immigration, naturalization and the importation of commodities shall not apply unless otherwise shall direct. Ten million dollars are appropriated to pay Panama for the canal strip, the money to be paid without delay, and the president to take immediate possession of the canal zone.

Paris, March 12. The court of cessation today continued the investigation of the war-office documents in the Drayfus case. At the conclusion of the examination of the papers, the taking of oral testimony will begin.

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O. J. BLACKLEDGE.

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ATTORNEY AT LAW.

B. A. CATHEY, M. D.,
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Office, Room 14, First National Bank Building, Corvallis, Or. Office Hours, 10 to 12 a. m., 2 to 4 p. m.

Office in Zierolf Building, Corvallis, Or.