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## News and Views of The War

(One of the most vivid descriptions of the Germany victory at Soissons, and a perfect eye's picture of the British naval victory in the North Sea are contained in the following articles one of which was taken from the Chicago Herald.)

**BEFORE SOISSONS**—At the headquarters of a certain German army Gen. von Kluck and staff celebrated the battle and their success at Soissons in typical German military fashion, with a simple soldier's meal, a bowl of punch, brewed by the expert hands of Von Kluck himself, a graceful little speech by the general, and a silent toast to the dead—both French and German.

The earth was still dropping on the graves of the fallen. So many men perished during the eight days of the bitter struggle for the heights across the river from Soissons, that today the fourth after the close of the battle, the plateau and gorges are still strewn thickly with dead, although 4,000 members of the landarmy have been engaged without pause in clearing up the battlefield.

**Returned To Earth.**  
Most of the German dead have been given to the earth, but French infantrymen, in their 44-to-beeswax red and blue uniforms, swarthy-faced Turks, colonials, Alpine riflemen and the bearded territorialists, still are sprawling in attitudes along the heights, and along the deep cut gorges of the plateau and across the flat valley led on the north shore of the Aisne.

The battle of Soissons, so-called in default of a better name, although it really was fought across the river from that city, in the number of men engaged and the extent of the losses, would rank with Bull Run or Antietam of the Civil War, or with Waterloo of the Franco-Prussian war, but in this war it passes as an incident in the campaign worthy only of passing mention in the official report.

**Opportunity Given.**  
The results of the German success are regarded here as highly important. The French were expelled from the heights north of the Aisne—vantage ground from which they had hoped to launch a successful attack along the big elbow of the German line—and driven across the river, which now runs brim full and at many places overflowing its banks between the two armies.

**Retain Foothold.**  
The French retain a foothold north of the river only at one point—St. Paul—where the bridge from Soissons crosses. The battlefield covers a front of approximately seven miles. On the western side is a deep valley running northward, which is bounded on either side by turpinks from Soissons to La Fere and Laon.

The battle began January 8, with a French attack up the valley to the west between the two turpinks. The attack had been prepared for by a terrible artillery bombardment. Field guns and heavy artillery concentrated on this section of the German trenches, and there was such a rain of shells and shrapnel on the defenders that they were unable to make an effective defense against the French infantry attack. The French, with great dash, carried part of the German positions, but by their success, they dampened the vigor of their artillery bombardment.

**German Have Their Turn.**  
The German guns in turn opened a heavy fire on the rearward columns of the French, preventing the bringing up of reinforcements. A desperate hand-to-hand struggle, on fairly even terms, raged for four days and nights in the valley and on the wooded spur crowned by the shot-wrecked buildings of La Pierre farm. Neither side was able to gain a decided advantage.

Gen. von Kluck meanwhile was gathering his forces for a counter stroke, which came not through the valley, but across the high plateau to the eastward, a large part of which was held by the French. The surface of the plateau which is fairly level, was crossed by row after row of deep trenches, each trench with a clear field for the fire of its guns.

**Apparently impossible.**  
It seems impossible, in the cold light of day and after the passing of the excitement of battle, to conceive of troops successfully storming such entrenched positions. The correspondent counted in some places as many as five successive lines of permanent French trenches, each with its entanglement of barbed wire supported on iron posts, which were screwed into the ground. Pioneers might cut their way through the first entanglement before the general attack, but it was necessary for the others to make the advance across the exposed

positions under fire. The attackers, however, were Gen. von Kluck's veterans, who, after the famous dash on Paris, the battle of the Marne and the retirement to the Aisne, had been remaining here in comparative inactivity since the middle of September.

**Swept Across Plateau.**  
They succeeded somehow in sweeping across the plateau, first in the center, and then, on January 13, on the left or eastern flank, carrying the successive trenches in an unintermittent and irresistible attack. By nightfall of January 14 they had driven the enemy from the plateau. On the following day they cleared the French from the valley below and drove them clear across the river. The victory was completed by an advance through the valley on the same day.

**Battlefield a Graveyard.**  
The correspondent reached the battlefield over a terrible leading from Soissons, approaching by automobile as far as the village of Crony, a scant mile from the French outposts which were the scene of three days earlier of desperate combats. The road is cut into the side of the hill between the plateau and the valley. The narrow margin of roadside on one hand before the drop into the valley had become one long cemetery.

The Germans had interred the dead of past months in long rows of graves, each surmounted by a stone or wooden cross telling sometimes of one, oftener of twenty or thirty or more comrades lying at rest beneath. On the opposite side of the road were entrances to numerous tunnel stone quarries, driven several hundred feet into the hillside. Within the quarries had been lodged German troops, the number in each cavern varying from a company to a regiment.

**A Familiar Picture.**  
The village of Crony itself presented the familiar picture of shell-wrought destruction with which the correspondent has become so well acquainted after five months of travel through the war zone.

The promenade along the exposed side of the plateau in sight of Soissons and the bank of the Aisne, held in force by the French, gave a rather uncanny feeling of insecurity. However, it was less dangerous than it seemed, as a slight haze rendered the French group in German field gray invisible to the French artillery on the heights on the opposite side of the valley, and the infantry in the valley itself, although nearer, was too far to aim to direct an effective fire.

**Dotted With the Dead.**  
The battlefield is still dotted with corpses by the hundreds, principally of French soldiers who fell during their hasty retreat from the trenches. They had to cross open fields under artillery and infantry fire and death overtook some as they ran. The positions of the bodies show that most of the French soldiers retired fighting, although some of them fell on their faces as they were stumbling toward the rear.

Some lie sprawling on their backs, faces to the sun, occasionally with hands plowed on knapsacks, showing that death was not instantaneous, and that perhaps a last service had been performed over them by their fellow comrades. Three or four had managed to draw from their pockets packages of black French cigarettes for a final smoke before passing away.

**Made Last Stand.**  
At the edge of the plateau, just over its brink, lay a long line of dead men. They had turned for a last stand made against the advancing Germans and there they had met their death. Study of the situation showed that they had made no attempt to rush down the declivity to temporary safety. The bayonets on all their rifles were fixed, and in a number of cases the chambers of their pieces had exploded ammunition.

Two or three rifles were found, the stocks of which had been broken off at the grip, evidence of the severity of the hand-to-hand fighting.

**Too Much For Horror.**  
There was no feeling of horror or revulsion at the sight of these hundreds of corpses; their very number took away the impression of human slaughter. They seemed like figures in a huge panoramic painting of a battle. The human note, however, of ten came out when was told of the contents of the letters found in their knapsacks or grasped in the hands of these dead French soldiers.

It was the duty of the intelligence officer in the party with which the correspondent chanced to travel to glance at such letters from home for the sake of the military information that they might contain. But of this there was very little. Far oftener would be found letters from relatives with stories about the health of the children, and references to little presents and delicacies on the way to the soldier. Sometimes there was some gossip and often expressions of anxiety for the safety of husband or father, and always the hope for the end of this "terrible war," and for the safe return of the loved ones.

**Sown With Mines.**  
It was necessary to walk with precaution over the battlefield, particularly in the vicinity of the trenches, as abandoned hand grenades were sown thickly about, ready to explode at any moment from a careless foot-step. German burial parties collected thousands of these weapons, which are nothing more than square boxes of explosive bound to wooden handles



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eighteen inches long. Most of the captured cannon already have been received from the battlefield, the German captors being anxious to send them in and receive the reward given each unit for making a capture. But in the ravine of Lamouzel, on the eastern extremity of the battlefield, there are still six siege guns.

**Saluted the Captors.**  
While the artillery captain in charge was exhibiting his prizes with pride and explaining that they were 15-centimeter coast defense guns, calling attention to the same time to the stores of ammunition also taken by his men the French suddenly opened fire on the rear of them. Evidently they had conjectured that an attempt would be made to remove them, and knowing their exact location, they were able to make it warm for the German artillerymen engaged in the task. The fire was a signal for the opening of a further general bombardment all along the line. It was the first actively manifested since the termination of the battle three days before.

To return to the automobile through the approaches to the trenches was most difficult and exhausting. The trenches themselves and the approaches afforded complete protection against shrapnel fire, but their bottoms were a mass of sticky clay, in which one's feet sank at every step from fifteen to eighteen inches. Plodding through miles of such trenches has been the daily task of thousands of soldiers engaged for four months in this fortress warfare on the north bank of the Aisne.

**HOW THE ENGLISH SANK THE BLEUCHER**  
LONDON, Jan. 25.—The Scotsman published the narrative of a German bluejacket, a survivor of the German armored cruiser Bleucher, who once lived in the United States. The bluejacket, said the German fleet was advancing at full speed to attack the English coast when the British ships were sighted. Thereupon the Germans turned and made for port. The Bleucher, which was comparatively slow, made desperate efforts to keep up her maximum speed but the British overhauled her and opened fire at a range of about ten miles.

"We were under fire from first to last," the bluejacket continued. "The British centered their fire on us. Their fire was awful. Our decks were put out of action, our decks were swept and our gun crews wiped out. One terrible shell burst in the heart of the ship, where many men were killed. I saw five killed by one shell. I do not know what finished the Bleucher, as she was full of holes, but I heard she struck a torpedo. If so, we can thank the torpedo for having many lives from the murderous fire. When the ship was sinking I jumped clear of her into the terribly cold water, which was full of dead and men with shattered limbs who were crying for assistance. After being rescued by the British we were warmed, fed and clothed."

The sailor is credited with saying

that during the raid of Scarborough the men believed they were taking part in a great naval action which was extending all over the North Sea.

**Other Accounts.**  
The Scotsman, which is published in Edinburgh, also prints other accounts of the battle, as gathered from men engaged in it. They describe it as one of the greatest struggles in naval history, and thrilling in every respect.

From the position of the German fleet when it was first encountered, the men assumed that it is virtually certain that its objective was New Castle. The strength of the raiding squadron was quickly ascertained, and as the entire raiding force sheered off immediately after it was discovered, the chase was a long one before the guns began their work.

For forty miles the two fleets raced over the shortest route for Hollogland before the guns did any real damage. Then the Lion, which was leading overhauled the slow Bleucher, and in passing, gave her a broadside, causing frightful damage. The Lion did not wait, however, but continued in

(Continued on Page Six)

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