

THE WAR IN THE FAR EAST

Such News As Is Available Not Definite

ACTIVE HOSTILITIES HAVE BEGUN

Sharp Fighting Reported Between the Forces of Russia and Japan—News Indefinite.

St. Petersburg, By Cable.—The Emperor received a message from the Emperor Alexieff which says:
"Admiral Marokoff, commanding the fleet, reports from Port Arthur under date of March 10 as follows:
"Six torpedo boats which went out to sea the night of March 10, four of them being under the command of Capt. Matoussowitch, encountered the enemy's torpedo boats followed by cruisers. A hot action ensued in which the torpedo boat destroyer 'Wladimir' discharged a Whitehead torpedo and sunk one of the enemy's torpedo boats. On the way back the torpedo boat destroyer Stereguschki, commanded by Lieutenant Sergueeff, sustained damage; her engine was disabled and she began to founder. By 8 o'clock in the morning five of our torpedo boat destroyers and returned. When the critical position of the Stereguschki became evident I hoisted my flag on the cruiser Novik and went with the Novik and the cruiser Boyarin to the rescue. But as five of the enemy's cruisers surrounded our destroyer and as their battleship squadron was approaching, I did not succeed in saving the Stereguschki, which foundered. Part of the crew was made prisoners and was drowned."
"On the ships which participated in the night attack, one officer was seriously wounded and three others were slightly wounded, two soldiers were killed and eighteen were wounded."
"At 9 o'clock four of the enemy's ships assembled before Port Arthur and a bombardment was begun with the heavy guns of their battleship squadron at long range."
"This lasted until 11 o'clock in the afternoon. It is estimated that the enemy fired 154 two-inch shells. The damage to our vessels was insignificant, and they are again ready for battle. Our losses were one officer slightly wounded and one soldier killed and wounded."
"The illumination of the sea at night by the searchlights mounted on our batteries was most satisfactory, and several times isolated shots from our batteries forced the enemy's torpedo boats to retire."
"At the commencement of the bombardment at dawn the guns of the fortress replied to the enemy's fire."
"The crews of all the ships engaged gave proof of remarkable coolness in action."
"A bombardment at such a distance cannot be considered ineffective, but the Japanese cruiser Takasago is reported to have been damaged to such an extent that it was impossible to ascertain at a distance of five miles. Many shells were fired at a range of 7 1/2 miles."
"I have the honor to report the foregoing to your Majesty."
(Signed) ALEXIEFF.

Odds Against Russia.

St. Petersburg, By Cable.—The cable story of the fierce fight off Port Arthur between the torpedo flotillas, which occurred Wednesday and the bombardment which followed on Thursday morning, was not given out here until after 10 o'clock.

Two Official Messages from Viceroy Alexieff had been received during the day and presented to the Emperor, but the public remained in suspense. The impression was that Admiral Marokoff had directed the attack upon the enemy's fleet. When the texts appeared it became evident that the collision between the torpedo flotillas has occurred accidentally during the night, while the Russians were scouting in search of the enemy.

As far as is known here, this is the first time that the two fleets have engaged each other at sea. All the odds were against the Russians as the Japanese flotilla was supported by the cruiser 'Takasago' which is reported to have been damaged to such an extent that it was impossible to ascertain at a distance of five miles. Many shells were fired at a range of 7 1/2 miles.

Appreciating the misfortune of the fleet it is believed that Admiral Marokoff will attempt to unite his forces by bringing the Vladivostok squadron to Port Arthur.

Repairs on the battleship Retvizan will be completed in a few weeks, but the battleship Czarnowich is so badly damaged that it is not thought that she can participate in any of the operations for a long time.

Two Army Corps to East.

St. Petersburg, By Cable.—The fifth army corps at Moscow and the tenth army corps at Kharkoff will start for the far East in a few days. After the war has ended the two corps will return to their stations, but the other troops that are already in the Orient will remain permanently in the Asiatic provision.

Investigation Committee.

Washington, Special.—When the House met Saturday Speaker Cannon announced the special committee provided for in the McCall resolution adopted by the House yesterday to investigate "the indictment" report from the Postoffice Department as follows: Representative McCall, of Massachusetts, chairman; Representatives Hitt, Republican, of Illinois; Burton, Republican, of Ohio; Metcalf, Republican, of California; McDermott, Democrat, of New Jersey; Bartlett, Democrat, of Georgia, and Richardson, Democrat, of Alabama.

Heavy Fire Loss.

Chester, S. C., Special.—The most disastrous fire in years broke out in the basement of the Bewley Hardware Company's store Sunday night at 11 o'clock, and despite the heroic work of the fire department, rapidly spread to the adjoining building occupied by Lutts's New York Racket. For a time it was feared the entire block would go. The fire was gotten under control about 3 o'clock Monday morning, after destroying more than \$60,000 worth of property.

Manchuria in Bad Shape.

Pekin, By Cable.—Private Chinese reports that are being received here state that the whole of Manchuria is in a state of utter confusion owing to the Russians having seized all food supplies and other commissariat necessities. The natives are streaming south toward the ports and are suffering great hardships. The late military governor of Kirin has committed suicide, owing to his inability to relieve the people's distress or stop the Russian depredations.

A PROCLAMATION ISSUED

Our Army and Navy Ordered to Observe Strict Neutrality.

Washington, Special.—President Roosevelt, after a conference with Secretary of State Hay, issued the following executive order:
"All officials of the government, civil, military and naval, are hereby directed not only to observe the President's proclamation of neutrality in the pending war between Russia and Japan, but also to abstain from either action or speech which can legitimately cause irritation to either of the combatants. The government of the United States represents the people of the United States, not only in the sincerity with which it is endeavoring to keep the scales of neutrality exact and even, but in the energetic and unflinching manner of breaking out of the present war, and hopes that it may end with the earliest possible moment and with the smallest possible loss to those engaged. Such a war inevitably increases and inflames the susceptibilities of the combatants to anything in the nature of an injury or slight by outsiders. Too often combatants make conflicting claims as to the duties and obligations of neutrals, so that even when discharging these duties and obligations with scrupulous care, it is difficult to avoid giving offense to one of the other party. To such unavoidable offenses, due to the performance of national duty, there must not be added any avoidable causes. It is always unfortunate to bring Old World antipathies and jealousies into our life or by speech or conduct to excite rivalry to such an extent that our nation is friendly foreign lands; but in a government employs whose official position makes him in some sense the representative of the people, the mischief of such action is greatly increased. A strong and self-confident nation should be particularly careful not only of the rights, but of the susceptibilities of its neighbors, and nowadays all the nations of the world are neighbors, one to the other."
"All officials of the government, civil, military or naval, are expected to care themselves, both in act and in deed, as to give no cause of just offense to the people of any foreign land and friendly power—and with all mankind we are no win friendship."

PALMETTO POINTS GIVEN IN BRIEF

Death of Congressman Croft.
A Washington special to The Columbia City of Friday says:
Shortly after 7 o'clock Thursday morning George William Croft, representative in Congress from the second South Carolina district, died at his residence, No. 2, Sixth street, N. E., from blood poisoning. The body was taken South on the 9:30 train, accompanied by members of his family and a congressional delegation. The hour for the funeral will be set after the arrival of the train at Aiken.

Physical exhaustion was the immediate cause of Col. Croft's death, but free from wrong-doing, corruption, crime and irregularity as any equal number of men on the face of the earth. This was the parting shot of Representative Croft, who had struck the public of the United States as a great attack upon a body of men as free from wrong-doing, corruption, crime and irregularity as any equal number of men on the face of the earth. This was the parting shot of Representative Croft, who had struck the public of the United States as a great attack upon a body of men as free from wrong-doing, corruption, crime and irregularity as any equal number of men on the face of the earth.

Up to Wednesday it was thought that Col. Croft would recover. But early Wednesday morning hope was abandoned and his sons, Theodore Croft, of Aiken, and Randall Croft, of Providence, R. I., were telegraphed for and arrived several hours after the death of their father. Col. Croft was seized with sharp pains in his chest about 8 o'clock. His niece, Miss Floride Croft, who is a trained nurse, extracted the splinter, administered a hot witch hazel application and for some time afterward the pain was eased and Col. Croft was about the patient room. A few days later, however, the pains returned, the thumb began to swell and Dr. Fred Thompson, of this city, was called in. Meantime Col. Croft's brother, Dr. F. W. Croft, of Aiken, was sent for and upon his arrival a consultation was held with Dr. Thompson and Dr. L. L. Friedrich was held. The swelling was declared to be due to palmetto abscess and an operation was at once decided on. The doctors made an incision extending to the elbow in the hope of allowing the patient to rest. But a second abscess formed on the finger and shortly afterward blood poisoning set in.

At his bedside when death came were Col. Croft's brother, Dr. Croft, his niece, who has nursed him devotedly from the very outset of his illness, and his cousins, Misses Mary and Matilda Croft, of this city.

The death of Col. Croft has proved a severe shock to the Southern colony here with whom he had become well known in Newberry county, December 20th, 1846. His early education was at the University of South Carolina in 1863 he entered the South Carolina Military Academy at Columbia.

Mr. Croft enlisted with the cadets of the academy and continued to serve until the close of the war. In 1866 and 1867 Mr. Croft attended the University of Virginia, and subsequently studied law under Governor B. F. Perry, at Greenville, and was admitted to the bar in 1869; and in 1870 he located at Aiken, where he has continuously practiced his profession.

Mr. Croft has been prominently identified with his county ever since it became a county in 1872. He has been a member of the South Carolina Senate, and served two terms in the House of Representatives. He was also twice elected president of the South Carolina State Bar Association.

Mr. Croft was elected to the Fifty-eighth Congress from the second district in 1902, receiving 5,124 votes, against 247 for W. S. Dixon, Republican.

Mr. Croft was married to Miss Florence Ethel, of Aiken, of Alabama, April 17, 1873. His wife and six sons survive him. His sons are: Theodore G. Croft, his law partner, W. McManon Croft, Randall B. Croft, now in Providence, R. I.; and two sons, Arthur and Nelson Croft, of South Carolina College, and Nelson Croft.

Mr. T. A. Clark, who lives near Florence, lost his dwelling house and barn by fire Saturday. The fire caught between the roof and the ceiling and as Mr. Clark was not at home he got too much ready to stop help. The total loss on the dwelling was \$1,500, covered by about \$500 insurance. About one-third of the household goods were saved.

At a meeting of the board of directors of the Chickamauga Manufacturing Company, of Honea Path, held in their office there Monday, it was decided to submit the question of increasing their plant from 15,000 to 40,000 spindles to a meeting of the stockholders to be held on the 22d of April. There is no doubt that the suggestion will be adopted by the stockholders. Already more than 85 per cent of the money asked for has been subscribed. The Chickamauga Mill was built in 1902 and has made money from the beginning.

Charles Lomax, a colored employe of the Pickens Mill, became entangled in the machinery at the mill Monday afternoon and received injuries from which he died early next morning. He was a worthy negro. His home was in Greenville.

The extensive and considerable task of rebuilding the three Clifts, whose splendid mill properties were swept away by the waters of the raging Pacolet last June, is about concluded. For weeks and weeks past President Twitchell, of the company, has been engaged purchasing and having installed the machinery equipment at each mill. No. 1 has not only been rebuilt with its former equipment, 23,072 spindles and 795 looms, but No. 2 has been finished and 27,776 spindles and 861 looms placed in shape. The first mill is already manufacturing cotton.

The Medical Society of South Carolina, which is the trustee of the old Roper Hospital fund, has a scheme for the building of a new hospital on the site of the old Roper Hospital in Charleston, if that city will take over the place and give it the support which is now given the city hospital, the latter institution being abandoned and disposed of, the proceeds of the sale reverting to the city treasury, if the city council so elects. The scheme meets with the approval of a large number, who think that the new hospital would be much more economical than the present arrangement.

Alexandria, Special.—Frank Summers, a blacksmith, was found dead beside his mother's grave at Union Cemetery. His face and a portion of his neck had been badly mutilated by large dogs, which were attacking the body when it was discovered. Suicide is suspected. A wife and five children survive him.

Dothan, Ala., Special.—Mr. J. A. Peterman, his wife and three children, and Mrs. Angus Kirkland and her baby, were poisoned Thursday morning by eating biscuits which were made from flour in which Rough-on-Rats had been put by a small child of Mr. Peterman. Prompt medical attention was procured and they are now out of danger.

Sharpely Sentenced.
Washington, Special.—First Lieutenant Sharpely, of the Twelfth Cavalry, having been tried by a general court-martial at Manila and found guilty of serious charges affecting his moral character, has been sentenced to dishonorable discharge from the army. The papers have been prepared in the War Department for transmission to the President.

Found Dead.
Alexandria, Special.—Frank Summers, a blacksmith, was found dead beside his mother's grave at Union Cemetery. His face and a portion of his neck had been badly mutilated by large dogs, which were attacking the body when it was discovered. Suicide is suspected. A wife and five children survive him.

SHARP TALK IN CONGRESS

Members Get Warm Over the Postoffice Investigation Matter.

That an investigation of the Postoffice Department by the House of Representatives will result from the publication of the report involving members of Congress in that connection was indicated by every expression possible short of a vote in that body. With a whirlwind of reports the report was taken up by indignant members, their personal connection with it explained, and epithets hurled at Fourth Assistant Postmaster General Bristow.

The Bristow report was conceived in enmity, born in sin, and has traveled its course until it has struck the public of the United States as a great attack upon a body of men as free from wrong-doing, corruption, crime and irregularity as any equal number of men on the face of the earth. This was the parting shot of Representative Croft, who had struck the public of the United States as a great attack upon a body of men as free from wrong-doing, corruption, crime and irregularity as any equal number of men on the face of the earth.

Mr. Williams, the Democratic leader, urged an investigation of the whole Postoffice Department, and received the hearty applause of both sides of the House and the galleries which had filled during the discussion. It was soon found that the subject was not going to be near enough time for the personal explanations which members were demanding the right to make, and a motion to extend the debate until four o'clock tomorrow was carried with a slim majority.

Mr. Overstreet proposed a postponement of the discussion until Monday in order to give the members more time. Mr. Hay, of Virginia; Finley, of South Carolina, and others opposed postponement.

Mr. Hepburn, Republican, of Iowa, said that an investigation of the Postoffice Department would not elicit any facts not brought out by the committee report. "I say that an investigation would elicit further facts, and that these facts have been suppressed," retorted William Alden Smith, amid loud applause from the floor and galleries.

Mr. Williams said he wanted the corruption in the Postoffice Department to be investigated, not by the friends of the men who have been guilty of corruption but by the House of Representatives.

As to the Hay resolution, Mr. Williams said he would not touch the question of "somebody at the Postoffice Department" until after the man in the House of Representatives and in the Senate, guilty of no apparent wrong, guilty of no violation of any law, guilty of no moral obliquity, guilty of nothing that bears even the taint of criminality.

"What was the motive of it?" he vigorously inquired. "Wasn't it to give the Congress something over Congress and that Congress had better hold its charge of the headquarters to be opened in Washington to work for a national appropriation."

Mr. Cooper, of Wisconsin, declared that President Roosevelt had directed the prosecution of members of his own party.

Mr. Moon, of Tennessee, facing the Republican side, said: "These thieves being yours and not ours, it is for you, not for us, to say if they shall have your protection."

Mr. Underwood, of Alabama, said that "no man who is innocent is afraid to face such charges as these. But," he said, "if a man is guilty he ought to be required to appear before the bar of the House."

Mr. Overstreet then withdrew his motion to postpone, and the House proceeded to discuss the resolution.

Mr. Overstreet, referring to the recommendations made by a member of Congress, said "that there was in no instance any violation of any law whatever by any member of Congress in making any recommendation, either for increase of clerk hire allowance or increase of rent of postoffice buildings."

"The resolution proposes an investigation by five members of this body," he said, "whereas a committee of seven members representing an equal number of States, of both parties in politics, which has already had before it in a proper way this information, has unanimously reported to the House that there is no need for further investigation."

Mr. Moon, of Tennessee, insisted that there should be an investigation covering the Postoffice Department and everybody connected with it, "and whoever is guilty," he said, "whether in this House or in the Department, should be exposed. The membership of the House being accused," he said, "was entitled to vindication, as were also the Department officials, if guilty of no wrong; but," he said, "I take it that no sensible man will deny that there is anything else but crime running all over that Department."

W. W. Kitchin, of North Carolina, severely criticized General Bristow and charged him with having deliberately suppressed important and material facts—"facts," he said, "pounded in his desk," which could not be overlooked, and which were suppressed, in my judgment, for the purpose of giving a false impression to the country and misleading the public."

"Bristow's action," he said, "was neither courageous nor honest, but for partisan purposes. He knew the country demanded an investigation."

Mr. Kitchin said, "He undertook, in my judgment, to blackmail Congress, to silence Congress, and to silence the country. It is a species of intimidation." He asked if those on the Republican side would sit still and stop the investigation and thus give the backbiters an opportunity to attack the character and integrity of those whom Bristow had accused.

Mr. Grosvenor, of Ohio, declared that Bristow reported a malicious libel to 101 members of the House. "I will resign my seat tomorrow," he said, "pounding his desk," if there is anything irregular or improper in what I did."

MANY LIBRARIES IN CHINA.

Celestials Abundantly Provided With Reading Matter.

China is essentially a reading country. Circulating libraries have been in existence all over the Middle Kingdom for ages and nowadays they are wheeled about from door to door, so you see that the "Booklovers' library" is not a new or original idea. In fact, the life and history of the Chinese make one realize those words found in Ecclesiastes: "That which hath been done is no new thing under the sun." Books are cheap in China. Anyone can have twenty-one volumes octavo of the standard Chinese dictionary and all the thirteen classics as well for the modest sum of \$5.50 of our money. There are all over the empire famous Chinese libraries. The Chinese have always illustrated their books in black and white.

"A great hotel chef," he said, "has from fifty to seventy-five assistants under him. I know one of these chefs, and I visited him two weeks ago. His assistant cooks were all young women—the prettiest lot of young women I ever saw."

"Why, Gaston, I said to my friend, 'why pretty girls for employ?'" "Indeed, they are pretty," said he. "Plain cooks won't do here."

Columbia has great wealth lying untouched on her plains and in her forests and mountains.

Lamp Chimney's Long Service.
A lamp chimney that had been in use in a Newport, N. H., family for more than twenty years was broken recently.

Letter From President.
Nortfolk, Special.—President Roosevelt sent the following letter to Secretary Shepard, of the Jamestown Exposition Company, endorsing the tercentennial to be held in 1907, as demanding the united effort of the whole nation in commemorating the real birth of the nation:

"White House, Washington, D. C., March 9, 1904."
"My Dear Sir: I trust I need hardly say to you how apt I regard the proposed tercentennial celebration to be held on the borders of Hampton County, Virginia, in 1907, as demanding the united effort of the whole nation in commemorating the real birth of the nation."

"Theodore Roosevelt."
General Fitzhugh Lee, president of the Exposition Company, will probably take charge of the headquarters to be opened in Washington to work for a national appropriation.

Alexieff's Report.
Viceroy Alexieff has sent the following message to the Emperor:

"In the fight between our torpedo boats and the Japanese cruisers on March 10, Captain Matoussowitch, Ensign Alexandroff, and Mechanical Engineer Blinik, received slight wounds. Ensign Zaeffik was severely wounded in the head, losing an eye."

"The commandant at Port Arthur reports the following details of the bombardment of the fortress there on March 10: As soon as the enemy opened fire our batteries replied. Six of the enemy ships remained behind the Liaotshin promontory and opened fire on the fortress over that shelter. They ceased bombardment at 1:15 p. m. The enemy fired about 200 projectiles. One shell from the battery No. 15, on Electric Cliff, damaged a Japanese cruiser seriously."

"The results of the bombardment were significant. Six soldiers were wounded. Three inhabitants of the town wounded."

"According to General Stoessel's report the officers and soldiers in the shore batteries displayed exemplary courage and fired their guns in perfect order."

Senator Tillman Better.
Washington, Special.—Senator Tillman, who for a week has had serious trouble with his throat, is reported to be very much improved and the confident expectation is expressed that he will be able to leave the city for the South during the present week for a period of recuperation. The improvement is due to the relief experienced from the lancing of another abscess. The Senator swallows readily now and is able to converse without difficulty. This morning the Senator suffered greater pain than he has experienced since his throat abscess first manifested itself. But Saturday's operation ended the pain.

Georgia Delegates.
Gainesville, Ga., Special.—Judge H. C. Tate, of Lumpkin county, and Colonel Spence, of Pickens county, were chosen as delegates to the national Republican convention to represent the ninth congressional district of Georgia. Walter H. Johnson, W. J. Lyons, Harry Stillwell Edwards and H. L. Johnson were endorsed as delegates from the State at large. J. W. Lyons was endorsed for Georgia's member of the national committee.

Train Derailed.
Murphy, N. C., Special.—The passenger train of the Murphy branch of the Atlantic, Knoxville & Northern Railway, derailed here at 5 o'clock Saturday evening, was derailed near Hill's Crossing, three miles south of this place. The engine and tender derailed, and the train and passenger coaches leaving the track and turning over in the ditch. The wreck was caused by a broken rail. Several persons were slightly hurt. An elderly woman by the name of Shepherd, who lives near Franklin, this State, is the only person seriously hurt.

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