

EGYPT

L.T. - Sunoco. Friday, Dec. 13, 1940.

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The Italian army in Egypt is facing still more desperate disaster. Such is tonight's story from British headquarters at Cairo. The retreating ~~ex~~ Fascist troops are said to be converging to a desert pass at Sollum. They are under incessant attack by swift British motorized units, and may be jammed at the narrow point along their line of retreat. The desert pass at Sollum may turn out to be a death trap, say the British. Cairo reports the capture of twenty-five thousand prisoners, including five generals - and huge stores of material. Altogether, the British report the Italian defeat as a catastrophe.

There's some supposition that the British might drive right on into the Italian Province of Libya, ^{to} overcome the Fascist forces there. But, on the other hand, both Cairo and London continue an insistent note of caution, ^{It's pointed out that} ~~with~~ the Libyan border ^{has} ~~as~~ strong defensive possibilities. Also, that the lightning British advance might have to slow down because of the perplexing obstacles inherent in desert fighting, transportation of materials and of water, and desert difficulties for motorized units.

Rome states that a great and desperate battle is going on in sandstorms. Italian accounts tell of mechanized fighting amid swirling clouds of desert dust -- and that's bad for mechanized warfare. A battlefront account tell us of the dust clogging the mechanism, getting into motors. The soldiers have to jam all apertures in the machines with rags to keep the sand out, that pervasive seeping dust.

In Albania, the Greeks continue to report advances, and are now threatening the Italians stronghold at Tepeleni. In that area the difficulty is, winter conditions -- snow, blizzard and cold.

There are reports that the Fascists may ask for an armistice in Greece, but this is coupled with a statement that they want a truce only to renew the attack in the spring.

SAN MARINO

There's one part of Italy that presents a singular paradox. It's at war - not with Great Britain, but with Germany. The tiny republic of San Marino, high in the Apinines - a few square miles that have been an independent nation since the dim past. Though a puny pigmy as a nation, San Marino has a consul general in New York. And he today announced a decision of state made by his liliputian government.

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This decision is so odd that it's worth looking at a bit of San Marino history. During the previous World War, when Italy declared ^{against} ~~war on~~ the Kaiser's Germany - San Marino did the same. But when the Versailles Treaty was made, nobody thought about San Marino. In fact, the little Republic itself forgot about the whole thing. So San Marino never did make peace and remained - technically at war with Germany. In the present war, when Mussolini took Italy into the conflict last summer - San Marino did not follow suit. The pint-sized republic did not do a thing.

Now, the whole question has been reviewed by the little government, and a decision is announced. San Marino will

not go to war with Great Britain and won't even make peace with

Nazi Germany. I suppose this news will be received with

enthusiasm in London.

after all it's a start.

BOMBING

Thus far there's no particular report of bombing in
tonight -
Britain, [^] although some air raiders flew over as night fell.

The British claim that steel factories were in operation at
Sheffield today, even after the terrific blasting ~~last night.~~

received last night.
~~of~~ Britain's greatest steel center, [^] The havoc to the city is

reported as staggering - like another Coventry. Yet ^{London} ~~British~~

is still
~~reports~~ stated ^s today that there ~~was~~ activity in plants at
[^] Sheffield,

A heavy shipping loss was reported today -

Norway's one-time finest passenger liner, the OSLOFJORD.

That eighteen thousand ton vessel struck a mine off Scotland,

and sank. It is reported that she was carrying Canadian war

aviators bound for Britain. One account is that she sank

on her way back to Canada. But neither Norwegian nor British

sources in New York vouchsafed any detailed information.

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SOVIETS

From Rumania we have a savage story of Soviet machine guns opening ^{ing fire} on Rumanian peasants. These country people lived in the Province of Bessarabia, which Soviet Russia seized from Rumania. They became discontent with conditions of life under the Communist regime and decided to migrate into Rumania proper. The story tells how the inhabitants of a number of villages, eight thousand people in all, started on a trek across the border. They were spotted by Soviet frontier guards, who opened fire with machineguns [^] on the host of migrants. Many of the peasants were killed, and the rest fled in a panic.

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WINDSOR

The Duke of Windsor returned to Miami late this afternoon - after a surprise flying trip to confer with President Roosevelt at sea. That he went to talk to the President seemed certain even this morning, although there was official secrecy. When the former Edward the Eighth took off this morning in a big navy bomber, he courteously rejected all questioning. ~~He was asked - was he on his way to the United States cruiser TUSCALOOSA, aboard which President Roosevelt is cruising somewhere in the Atlantic? To this he replied: "I'm sorry, I am unable to make a statement this morning."~~ But, he added: "I am entirely in the hands of ~~the~~ ^{the} navy today, and ~~I am sure they will take very good care of me."~~

The take-off from Miami this morning aroused immediate speculation - that perhaps the Duke of Windsor might be appointed Ambassador to the United States to succeed Lord Lothian, and that he was going to discuss this with President Roosevelt. In fact, a Miami paper printed a report that the Duke would be named Ambassador. However, London gives little hint of this. In the

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British Capital they're still discussing personalities who might succeed Lord Lothian. The latest is - Lord Cranborne, Secretary of Dominions. He's mentioned prominently because he has been an opponent of ~~Maxim~~ Naziism from the start, ~~and~~ because he's very popular with the American colony in London, and because his wife is rated as an exceptionally able woman. The position of an Ambassador's wife in Washington is an important one.

Upon the return of the Duke of Windsor this evening, he stated that he had ~~met~~ met President Roosevelt, and gave a general account of what they had talked about. The meeting was official. The cruiser TUSCALOOSA with the President's ^aboard, was at one of the Bahama islands. The Duke of Windsor said he was not at liberty to say which one. His flight was made in his capacity as Governor of the Bahamas - greeting a distinguished visitor. They discussed questions connected with the war and specifically with the naval and air bases the United States has acquired in the West Indies. "The President looked very well," said the Duke. "I hadn't seen him in twenty-one years. We met in Annapolis in Nineteen Nineteen, when he was there as Secretary of the Navy."

AMERICAN PLANES

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There's a lot of talk and rumor about the performance of American built warplanes in Europe - stories that American planes have not shown up well in the fighting, not in comparison with ~~the~~ British Spitfires and Hurricanes and the German Messerschmitts.

Today we have a statement on this subject by Major General Brett, Acting Chief of the Army Air Corps. He declares that right now American built military planes are equal or superior to those produced in Europe. And he gives us an angle of explanation to account for the talk that aviation equipment turned out in the United States has not done so well in ~~the~~ European air battles. The Acting Chief of the Army Air Corps points to the state of affairs that existed until last March, when the Nazi victories began and things ~~was~~ for the Allies became desperate. Until that time, it was the policy of the Army and Navy to release for sale to the Allies only such sky fighting material as ~~was~~ we considered obsolesent - old, out of date.

"Under this policy," says Major General Brett,

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"Many airplanes were purchased by the British and French governments in the full knowledge that they were not the latest types. At the urgent request of foreign purchasing commissions," he ^{goes on,} ~~relates,~~ "the War Department released obsolete equipment which ^{went into use} ~~were used for~~ only for pilot training." He goes on to point out that British and French officials were clearly informed by the Army that the obsolete planes they were buying were useless for fighting purposes.

These statements made by General Brett enable us to understand how people abroad, who didn't know better, might start the talk that American planes were inferior to the British and the German.

DRAFT

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There has been a good deal of talk about the high percentage of rejections in the draft. In some localities as many as thirty per cent of the men called to service have been turned down because of physical disability. Why such a large proportion. In thousands of cases, men were passed by the physicians at the draft board, then went to camp, were reexamined by the army doctors - and ~~were~~ turned down. There ~~is~~ has been talk of the severe standards imposed by the army medical service.

Today we have some ^{authoritative} ~~authority~~ explanation from ^a ~~the~~ member of the general medical staff for the War Department - Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Spruit. (He tells us why the army standards of physical fitness are so high, and why the army doctors have been rejecting so many draftees.) He says it's a case of - ten years. Of course the men drafted serve for only one year. But that's merely the training. They're to be in the reserve for ten years, so the army wants the kind that will stay fit over that period of time. And the military doctors are rejecting draftees who may be all right for one year, but don't look like good prospects as possible soldiers for ten years to come.

The Lieutenant-Colonel specified one particular kind of disability against which the army doctors are guarding.

~~This kind of a disability accounts for a lot of the rejections,~~

Not physical unfitness so much as mental - what the Lieutenant-

Colonel calls "borderline psychiatric" cases. Men who by

temperament aren't fitted for military service. He puts it in

the following words:- "These cases," says he, "are the biggest

nuisances in the army. They disturb morale and discipline.

They spend most of their time in beds in the army," he adds,

"and after they're out of the service the government has to

take care of them and they cost the public huge sums of money."

In all of this we have some insight into the ^{reasons} ~~risks~~

why the army doctors ^{are} ~~have~~ rejected ^{ing} so many of the men drafted.

RELIEF SHIP

Tonight a sailing ship, a schooner, is beating her way northward, along the bleak and wintry New England coast, -- bound for the island of Miquelon. That sturdy windjammer is on an errand of mercy -- in a singular episode of the war. On the island of Miquelon, are a thousand fishermen stranded, virtually marooned, left that way by the fortunes of battle in Europe.

It's an old story of the sea how each year a fleet of fishing boats from Brittany sails across the Atlantic to Newfoundland. Grand Banks.

There was good fishing this year. Things were all right -- from that point of view. But the fortunes of war in Europe were baleful. France collapsed and fell, and Great Britain drew a blockade around the shore of the continent. So the fishermen at Miquelon were marooned. Stranded.

~~stranded - marooned~~. And they've been there ever since.

Food is running short. The small native population of the island has ~~not~~ enough ~~food stocks~~ to provide for the added host of a thousand fishermen. Calls of distress were sent forth. The French Consul at Boston took action, and that is why tonight a sailing ship is beating its way north - laden with relief for the ^{Boston} fishermen who in an odd way are victims of the war.

RESCUE

there is
~~IN MY BOOK, PAGEANT OF ADVENTURE, I've~~ ^a got the story of

a nameless hero who was passing a fire, jumped out of his car, and saved a number of lives - hero indeed! They asked him his name and he said, "Never mind that, I'm late for work as it is."

Then he drove off - afraid of getting a call-down because he

was late. *I told that in my book, Pageant of Adventure.*

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Today there's a companion piece ~~for that~~ in the person of Joseph Miller of New York. Joe is a beer driver ^{and} ~~the~~ kind of fellow who seems to think that a heroic exploit isn't worth mentioning. Today he was passing an apartment house, and right in front of him saw a woman falling out of a third story window. Joe is hefty and husky - beer drivers usually are. He took a quick ^{run,} ~~lung~~ got under the falling woman, braced himself, and caught her. He turned her over to an ambulance and then went on to his job at the brewery.

Later, the police wanted to congratulate him. They went to the brewery and asked for the beer driver who had achieved the spectacular rescue. The people at the brewery looked astonished - they ^{hadn't even} ~~never~~ heard of any such exploit. It

developed that Joe the beer driver had taken out his truck loaded with kegs - never thinking it worth while to mention to his pals how he had caught a woman falling from a high window.

SANTA CLAUS

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If there are angels with dirty faces, what about Santa Claus with a dirty beard? ^{Yes} ~~They're~~ supposed to have long whiskers - of a beautiful snow white. No stains or smudges, mud or tobacco juice. That's what the authorities at Peoria, Illinois, are saying, and today they issued a decree telling Santa Claus he's got to get his beard cleaned up, give it a good washing, have it disinfected, ~~and get the bugs out.~~

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It seems that Peoria, like other cities, has a variety of Kris Kringles who operate on street corners in behalf of charity organizations. And sometimes the good Saint is a bit disillusioning. He shatters the ideals of the little children. The Peoria chief of police puts it in these words:- "It only confuses childredn," says he, "to see a Santa Claus on every corner, leaning against a ~~lamp post~~ lamp-post, wearing a different kind of shoe on each foot, khaki puttees instead of boots, and dirty wads of cotton for ^{beards.} ~~beards.~~" So, says the chief of police, ~~and~~ Santa Claus will either have to clean up or get off ^{Peoria} ~~the~~ streets. _{^ ^}

The latest is that the charity organizations are taking action, ~~and it is - clean up -~~ cleaning up Peoria whiskers.

9 { Well, it's all in the Christmas spirit. Santa Claus should have a snow white beard, although I've often wondered how he slides down all those chimneys without getting some soot on his whiskers!

9 1/4 And that brings us to Hugh James without whiskers.