

1914--THE YEAR OF ARMAGEDDON--1914.

THE WAR BETWEEN THE POWERS OF EVIL AND THE POWERS OF GOOD.

TITANIC CONFLICT.

The year which closes to-day is in some respects the most remarkable of all the years known in the history of the world, and the world itself is a veritable Armageddon where the powers of evil are ranged in titanic conflict with the powers of good. The combatants have not only territories in every continent and ocean, but engagements have already taken place not only in Europe, but in Asia, Africa and Australasia, and in every ocean and in almost every sea. The like of the contestants, whether in number of combatants, scale of armament, territory affected, or extent of interest, has never before been known. The year opened comparatively quietly. The echoes of the Balkan battles had died away, and the only distraction to the world at peace was the civil war in Mexico, and every effort was made to confine the limits of this fight to the factions fighting in that unhappy land. For a time it seemed as if the United States might be involved in a Mexican war, but except for a punitive demonstration at Vera Cruz, President Wilson managed to steer the States clear of a state of warfare with Mexico, and his judgment and tact met with the ready acquiescence of the public opinion of the world generally.

CENTENARY OF PEACE.

Curiously in the light of the bitter experience of the past five months, the year opened with jubilation of Peace. In Britain and the States it was felt that the centenary of the signing of the Treaty of Ghent on Christmas Eve, 1814, should be celebrated in a worthy manner and would afford the world at large a noble object lesson in Peaceful relations. It was pointed out that the frontier of the United States and the British Dominion of Canada marched side by side for four thousand miles and no fortress, fort or soldiers held the line. Many causes of friction had arisen over conflicts of interests and rights, but general good sense had prevailed and a peaceful way out of the conflict had always been found. Disputes had taken place on boundary questions in Maine and Alaska, but an arbitration of reason had settled the boundaries without an appeal to the arbitrament of the sword. Grave differences developed between the fishermen of British North America and the United States as to their respective rights under the Convention of 1818, but these differences were adjusted at the Hague in 1909 and the adjustment accepted honourably by Newfoundland, Canada and the States.

INTERNATIONAL HONOR.

The only outstanding source of friction had arisen over the Panama Tolls Act, which was held by Britain to be a violation of treaty rights. Largely owing to the influence of President Wilson and the stand taken by many of the great journals of the large American cities, the Panama Tolls Exemption Repeal Bill was passed by the Senate, and another great object lesson was given by the States in sacrificing material interest to uphold national honour. All seemed well for fixing the eyes of the world on the great engineering achievement, the completion of the Panama Canal, and a due celebration of the opening of the Canal on August 15th. At that time, however, a great change had come over the world which entirely obscured the event, and in a similar way the celebration of a hundred years of peace on Christmas Eve, 1914, passed without notice. With our ears stunned with the roar of cannon and our minds staggered by the Great War, which so suddenly came upon us, we have almost forgotten the happenings abroad of the first seven months of Peace, and we pause to consider if they really happened in the year 1914 or not.

EMPERESS OF IRELAND DISASTER.

Foremost among these events was the collision of the Empress of Ireland with the Storstad in the St. Lawrence on the morning of May 30th. At 2 a.m. the Norwegian collier Storstad in a fog rammed the Empress of Ireland amidships, and of the 1387 souls aboard only 408 were saved from a watery grave, which also engulfed the 14,000 ton Canadian liner. It was found afterwards that a hole 350 square feet in length had been laid open to the sea. The Commission which investigated the tragedy recommended that in foggy weather all watertight doors and port holes

should be closed and kept closed until the fog has cleared, and that all port holes should be kept closed between sunset and sunrise. The attention of ship-owners was also directed to the desirability of providing rafts on the upper deck that would float off automatically when the ship sank, to get over the difficulty of launching lifeboats from a ship which listed before she sunk.

SEALING DISASTER.

In Newfoundland, however, there occurred in the great storm, commencing on Tuesday, March 31st, two disasters which have made an ineffaceable imprint in our annals. Toronto forecasted on Monday midnight for Tuesday strong winds and moderate gales from East to Northeast, with rain or snow. During the morning snow began to fall in the city and toward noon the wind rose to a gale, which increased in intensity as the afternoon and night advanced. The Southern Cross had left the ice the day before, making for home. During the morning she was observed off Cape Pine by the Portia, and this was the last seen of her. So far as the scanty evidence shows she seems to have foundered in the gale. Judging by the number of her seals and the weight of the Gulf seals, she appears to have had a full load. Mr. Baine Grieve, the agent of the owners, testified at the Marine Court of Enquiry partly as follows:—

"When the ship failed to arrive within reasonable time after the storm, I concluded that she had gone back to the ice in the Gulf, or as she had some St. Mary's men on board, that the captain had gone to St. Mary's, or that he tried to put his ship to sea, with the result that she foundered. She had a very high poop, top gallant forecastle and very high bulwarks, so that if she shipped a large quantity of water, she might have foundered before freeing herself of the water."

When she cleared at Channel for the sealing voyage she reported 173 souls aboard, and all of them perished.

THE NEWFOUNDLAND DISASTER.

This loss of the young and vigorous manhood of the people of Newfoundland was staggering, but the people had already been stunned before the certainty of the loss of the Southern Cross had been ascertained by the news of the terrible disaster which had befallen a great part of the crew of the Newfoundland. About seven in the morning of Tuesday, the 31st March, the four watches of the Newfoundland left her to make for the Stephano, which lay to the northwest of the Newfoundland, which was jammed. They left under the command of the second hand, George Tuft, who had instructions from his master, Capt. Westlake Kean, to go to the Stephano and get instructions from Capt. A. Kean as to the lay of the seals, as the latter had made a signal on the previous afternoon that he was in the seals. About half way a fifth of the crew turned back and made their ship early in the afternoon. The rest made for the Stephano, passing a flag of the latter with a strap of seals on their way. They arrived at the Stephano, boarded her, obtained some food. Tuft got directions as to the position of a number of seals and as to the direction of the Newfoundland. The weather at the time appears to have been coming on, though the snow was moist and the temperature comparatively mild. The Stephano went off northward to pick up her own men, but by arrangement made by Marconi, the Stephano and the Florizel picked up each others crews and exchanged them. Capt. Joe Kean testified he directed his Marconi man to send a message asking Capt. A. Kean to look after the Newfoundland's men as well, and the Marconi man says he sent the message. Capt. A. Kean, however, denies receiving this part of the message. The latter, however, went south picking up pans, looking out for the Newfoundland's men on the chance they had followed the Stephano's carcasses to make the Stephano. She stopped steaming at dark but kept her whistle blowing till 8 p.m. Tuft and his men, however, after coming across a small patch of seals determined to make for the Newfoundland in order to avoid, if possible, passing the night on the ice, as the storm had increased in violence. They made their own path, came across the Stephano's flag and strap of seals they had passed in the morning, and continuing on the path saw bits of the gaffs they had broken off in their heavy walk of the morning and also the trail of blood where two of the men who had killed

seals in the morning had been hauling them. After losing and finding the path occasionally, they lost it completely owing to the dusk and the drift, and began to make arrangements for a night on the ice. Some time before this they believed they were within a mile or a mile and a half from the Newfoundland, as a number of them heard the whistle of the Newfoundland blow twice and all of them shouted to attract the attention of those aboard, but the wind was blowing a gale from the direction of the Newfoundland and nothing came of the shouting, nor did the Newfoundland continue blowing her whistle. The captain of the Newfoundland concluded his men were aboard the Stephano, and the captain of the Stephano when he ceased blowing. After losing and finding the men had reached their own ship. Both conclusions were however wrong and the men, separated in batches, had made what shelter they could, stuck their gaffs around the pans to prevent wandering into the water, made what fire they could and were facing a night on the ice. As the night advanced the gale increased and the wind veered to the north. After midnight it became intensely cold and the wind guards afforded no protection. Many of the men perished or received injuries after midnight and during the fierce cold of Wednesday. The Bellaventure, the Newfoundland and the Stephano were sighted on Wednesday afternoon, but the men who were able to get about could neither reach them nor attract their attention. On Thursday nine of the men reached the Newfoundland, the latter hoisted a distress signal, the Stephano responded, heard the news and sent out a wireless. Most of the men and the bodies were picked up by the Bellaventure and brought into port on Saturday evening. Never was such a sight witnessed here before. The hall of the Seamen's Home was filled with frozen corpses and a large number of frost-bitten men were sent to hospital, some of whom had to undergo amputations and suffered severe losses to their feet and hands. Some of these are so crippled that they will be handicapped for life in the earning of their livelihood. Others were more fortunate and their loss was much less severe.

CIVIL STRIFE IN IRELAND.

Leaving now the local disaster which loomed large in the world stories of the year, we cross the Atlantic to our nearest neighbourhood. During the seven months of peace, which preceded the Great War, there was anything but amicable relations between the two great political parties in Ireland. The North had become an armed camp. Battalions and companies were drilling and carrying arms, without any authority of the Crown and in utter disregard to authority. The rest of Ireland had also begun to drill and there was every prospect of Civil War in Ireland. The Ulster men were in arms against the Home Rule Bill and the Nationalists were drilling to support the Home Rule measure. A nasty phase of the situation arose out of the sympathy of many of the Army officers for the Carson Volunteers and their avowed intentions not to fight against them. This led to the Curragh crisis and the strange compact between the Army Council and the disaffected officers. When the compact became publicly known, a fierce controversy arose which led to the resignation of Colonel Seeley, the Minister of War, and Field Marshal French, the chief military adviser of the Council. The Prime Minister, Mr. Asquith, undertook the onerous task and laid down rules for the conduct of Army officers which were generally accepted.

GENEROUS RESPONSE.

Such is a bald narrative of the main events of the story. The terrible nature and the sensational character of these disasters on the icefields produced a profound impression throughout the English speaking world and offers of financial assistance began to pour in. Subscription lists were opened in the British Isles, in Canada, the United States and elsewhere, and although the lists have long ago been closed, money has been coming constantly ever since the lists were opened. An Association was formed and a competent committee selected to deal with the distress which followed the disaster. The Hon. J. A. Robinson did yeoman service as Secretary and the Hon. R. Watson took charge as Treasurer. A sum well over three hundred thousand dollars was subscribed, of which sum Newfoundland contributed in a worthy manner. Provision has been made for the orphans of the dead sealers, and aid afforded to their widows or other dependents, and so far as financial help can do so, the afflicted have been well looked after. The calling of a special session of the Legislature in September last

afforded an opportunity to make compulsory the installation of wireless on sealing steamers, and the opportunity was taken advantage of, as the installation of wireless to afford communication between steamers seemed the most obvious of all the lessons the disaster taught. It is clear that if wireless had been installed on the Newfoundland and operated last spring, Capt. Westlake Kean could have learned that his men were not aboard the Stephano and Capt. A. Kean would have known whether the men had reached the Newfoundland. Moreover, the Newfoundland's whistle would have been kept blowing and flares used, and in all probability the men would have been aboard before nightfall. Even if they had not reached the Newfoundland they would have been picked up the next day, as several large steamers were in their vicinity.

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There is now more than a suspicion that Germany had a hand in fomenting this strife by providing arms for the gun runners, but immediately the war came on the very men whom Germany had assisted to arms were first to volunteer to turn those arms against her in aid of their own country and empire; particularly was this so in the case of the Ulster Volunteers. An unfortunate tragedy occurred in connection with the gun running at Dublin; but even this was put to one side and no men have been more urgent and insistent in advocating the call to arms of their countrymen in defence of the Empire than the Nationalist leader, Mr. John Redmond, and his lieutenant, Mr. T. P. O'Connor. What not even His Majesty by a most unusual intervention failed to accomplish in bringing the Irish parties to terms of peace was in a way effected by the Declaration of War against Germany, and finally, but with the protests of the Unionists, the Home Rule Bill became an Act of Parliament and received the Royal Assent on September 18th. (Continued on next page.)

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