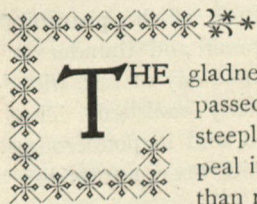


A TRAGIC NIGHT.



THE gladness of the Christmas commemoration had passed, and the bells from twice ten thousand steeples had rung out their merriest and loudest peal in honor of that august event, which, with more than royal power, has flung its impress over earth's strange and tumultuous history and life. Larger numbers of the world's population than ever before had shared in the general rejoicing, and though the deep, grand significance of the fact so widely celebrated was realized by but few of all the millions who had so eagerly greeted the festive days, there was a broadening conviction that in this Christmas anniversary, lifting itself like a golden milestone in the pathway of the years, and in the very heart of the busiest of all nations and centuries, causing the swiftly flying machinery of human affairs to pause awhile, there must be something very potent and intensely real and true.

It was amid the vanishing symbols of this bright, glad commemoration, and the dying echoes of unnumbered triumphant songs, which had filled the spacious sanctuaries, cathedrals and myriad homes of Christendom, that the darkness of the strangest of all nights fell upon me ; and, as I imagined, the most disastrous of all calamities in the tragic experience of this toiling globe took place. By to me some unaccountable, mysterious movement of a vast and infernal machine, I thought that during the silent hours of that dreadful night *everything* that Christ and Christianity had put into this world's history, life and present-day civilization, was suddenly torn out, not a vestige in any form whatever being allowed to remain. Every truth, principle, memory, deed, influence, institution and achievement of the historic faith had completely disappeared ; and when I awoke, as I imagined in my troubled dream, I awoke in a changed world.

After this more than earthquake shock I went abroad to look upon a desolation, such as time's long years had never seen. Every name that bore the Christian designation had been blotted out of the world's calendar of the distinguished living and the pious dead. Not a Christian sanctuary on all the earth remained ; all, all had disappeared during that grim and awful night, leaving great gaping wounds in every city, village and quiet country scene wherever