

PROLOGUE

The Halifax Catastrophe

Proceeding up the Harbour and making for Bedford Basin was the French steamer "Mont Blanc," carrying a deck load cargo of Benzol and an under cargo of Picric Acid and about one thousand tons of the most powerful explosive "T. N. T." Leaving the upper Harbour and steaming at slow speed was the Norwegian steamer "Imo" on her way to New York for a cargo of relief for Belgium. Slowly the two vessels approached each other, reaching the narrows between Bedford Basin and Harbour where they should have passed, the two ships collided. Someone had blundered, and almost immediately the deck cargo on the "Mont Blanc" caught fire, a few minutes later the thousand tons of "T. N. T." exploded with a tremendous roar that baffles description, and in a second of time the whole of the North End of the City for a space of two square miles became a burning ruin, not a window in the whole City remained intact.

The amazing magnitude of the calamity can be somewhat realized by the appalling casualties, one thousand two hundred dead, two thousand or more wounded and six thousand rendered homeless.

The damage is estimated at between forty and fifty millions of dollars.

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