

CENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARIES OF THE  
WAR OF 1812.

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## XXVIII.—The Treaty of Ghent.

December 24.—Month by month we have followed the tales of

"Old, unhappy, far-off things,  
And battles long ago."

Now December brings us the anniversary of the peace.

The Treaty of Ghent, which brought the war to an end, was signed on Christmas Eve, 1814. True, the battle of New Orleans, the last great battle of the war, and the most disastrous for British arms, was fought after the treaty was signed; and hostilities continued along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts until news of President Madison having signed the ratification of the treaty brought them to a close. True, also, the subsequent years of peace have not been wholly free from alarms. There have been ominous clouds at times on our southern horizon—the Aroostook war; the Oregon boundary dispute, with its election cry of "Fifty-four forty or fight;" the Trent affair, which compelled us to make hurried preparations for defence; the rumours of secret plans for invasion suddenly stopped by the death of President Lincoln; not to mention those of lesser portent. But again and again the threatening clouds dispersed; and all the more may we rejoice now that we escaped so often, and be ready to join with sincere good will in recognizing the completion of a hundred years of peace. The great international celebrations which had been planned for that occasion will not take place, because of the terrible war with Germany and her allies, in which we are now engaged; but we have the general sympathy of the people of the United States with us in the present struggle, and that is more acceptable than costly demonstrations of friendship, and a more convincing proof that the old animosities have passed away.

When the first news of the peace was brought across the Atlantic, it was joyfully welcomed by the seaport towns in the northern part of the United States, without waiting for the President's approval. The following, taken from a New York paper, gives a tradition probably founded on fact:

Years ago, the office of the old New York Gazette was in Hanover Square, near the corner of Pearl Street. It was a place of resort for news and conversation, especially in the evening.

The evening of February 15, 1815, was cold; and at a late hour only Alderman Cebra and another gentleman were left with Father Lang, the venerable genius of the place. The office was about to be closed, when a pilot rushed in, and stood for a moment so entirely exhausted as to be unable to speak.

"He has great news," exclaimed Mr. Lang.

Presently the pilot, gasping for breath, whispered intelligibly, "Peace, peace!"

The gentlemen lost their breath as fast as the pilot gained his. Directly the pilot was able to say: "An English sloop-of-war is below with news of a treaty of peace." They say that Mr. Lang exclaimed in greater words than he ever used before or after. All hands rushed into Hanover Square, crying, "Peace, peace, peace!"

The windows flew up, for families lived there then. No sooner were the inmates sure of the sweet sound of peace, than the windows began to glow with brilliant illuminations. The cry of "Peace, peace, peace!" spread through the city at the top of all voices. No one stopped to inquire about "free trade and sailors' rights." No one inquired whether even the national honour had been preserved. The matters by which politicians had irritated the nation into war had lost all their importance. It was enough that the ruinous war was over. An old man on Broadway, attracted by the noise to his door, was seen to pull down immediately a placard, "To let," which had long been posted up. Never was there such joy in the city.

A few evenings after, there was a general illumination; and, although the snow was a foot deep, and soaked with rain, yet the streets were crowded with men and women eager to see and partake of everything which had in it the sight or taste of peace.

The first article of the Treaty of Ghent stipulated that territory taken by either party from the other should be restored. While this sounds fair, it was rather a one-sided provision. It meant that Britain should give up Eastern Maine, Fort Niagara, Michilimackinac, Fort Boyer and Isle Dauphin at Mobile, and Cumberland Island off the coast of Georgia. The United States, having already abandoned Fort Erie, had nothing to restore excepting Amherstburg and the adjoining territory in the southwestern part of Upper Canada.

But the British commissioners were willing, for the sake of peace, to agree to this restitution of territory, and let the boundary line remain as before. They only insisted that the United States should include the Indians in the peace. The other provisions of the Treaty were of comparatively little moment.

So the cruel, needless, fruitless war was ended.