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## INTRODUCTION

**T**HURSDAY, December sixth, 1917, will be ever memorable as the date of the great disaster which, with catastrophic suddenness, burst upon the beautiful and old historic city of Halifax, causing widespread destruction, death and desolation, the magnitude of which finds no parallel in our history. The fateful morning dawned both fine and fair, and the normal activities of the busy city were set in motion for the day. No one dreamed that in the magnificent harbor of Halifax the opening scene in a terrible drama of tragedy was already staged.

**P**ROCEEDING up the harbor, and making for Bedford Basin, was the French steamer "Mont Blanc," carrying a deck cargo of benzol and an under cargo of picric acid and about one thousand tons of the world's most powerful explosive, "T. N. T." Leaving the upper harbor and steaming at slow speed was the Norwegian steamer "Imo," on her way to New York for a cargo of relief for the war sufferers of Belgium. Slowly the two vessels approached each other; nearer and nearer they drew, reaching the Narrows between the harbor and Bedford Basin, at which point they should have passed. Then happened the inexplicable—save for the fatal phrase "Someone had blundered"! The Norwegian vessel collided with the "Mont Blanc," and almost immediately her deck cargo of benzol caught fire and a few minutes later, at five minutes past nine to be exact, the thousand tons of high explosive aboard exploded with a dull reverberating roar and a crash that defies description. In a second of time it was as though a fierce tornado had swept the City. The whole North End, practically two square miles of territory, became a burning ruin. A considerable section of the water front was completely shattered, and all over the city, public buildings and private dwellings were wrecked, and not a window remained anywhere intact.

**T**HE preponderating magnitude of the calamity can be somewhat realized by the terrible toll of dead and wounded. The casualties were truly appalling—1,200 dead, 2,000 or more wounded, and 6,000 rendered homeless. Property damage was estimated to be between Forty and Fifty Million Dollars.