

A RED LETTER DAY



THURSDAY, Dec. 6th, 1917, will ever remain a Red Letter Day in the history of Halifax and Dartmouth. The dawn of that day inspired courage and energy to meet the common tasks,—the air was clear and frosty. Everybody was alert and had shaken off the enervating influence of an unusually mild spell of weather. But the silvery mantle of the dawn was blood-begrimed by nightfall.

A few minutes after 9 o'clock that morning, a collision took place in the Narrows of Halifax Harbor—between the French Munitions Ship, "Mont Blanc," and the Belgian Relief Ship "Imo"—resulting in the explosion of the munitions ship, which contained 2,600 tons of high explosives, including 45,000 lbs. of T. N. T (Trinitrotoluol),—2,300 tons of picric acid and 61 tons of other acid, besides a deck cargo of benzol.

Immediately after the collision the Mont Blanc burst into flames, and the crew, knowing the nature of the cargo, took to the boats, leaving the ship to drift into Pier No. 8, on the Halifax side of the harbor, where she exploded, about twenty-five minutes after the collision.

Mr. Constant Upham, who owned the grocery store at 1299 Barrington St., was among the first to notice the flames from the munition ship, which drifted in to the pier just below his store.

He telephoned the fire station, and returned to watch the fire,—he was instantly killed when the ship blew up. Chief Condon, of the fire brigade, who answered the telephone call in his automobile, and also the motor fire engine "Patricia" were caught in the blast from the explosion, Chief Condon and all the crew of the motor engine being instantly killed. The great warehouses, work shops, foundries, etc., along the Halifax water front were laid low in the twinkling of an eye, and churches, schools and hundreds of comfortable homes were levelled to the ground for many blocks in every direction, St. Joseph's Church, Convent and School being all wrecked, also the Provincial Exhibition building. The Cotton Factory went down in ruins, and was consumed by fire, although about two miles from the scene of the explosion. Kaye Street Methodist Church was demolished and burned, also Richmond school on Roome Street. Lynch's Bakery, Hillis & Sons' stove foundry, Richmond Printing Company, Gunns' Flour Mills, and