

vessels, and these by common consent had become the law of the sea. (*The Scotia*, 14 Wall. 170, 20 L. ed. 822.) But experience shewed that these regulations were in some respects deficient, and the construction put upon them by the courts of different countries was to some extent diverse. Accordingly, by agreement of the great maritime nations, an international maritime conference was held at Washington in the year 1889. It revised the rules of navigation and the requirements as to lights and signals. The international rules as recommended by them were adopted by statute or by executive decree in all the principal maritime nations, and have become the law of the sea from that time to the present.

Ocean Lanes.

This conference also dealt with the subject of ocean lanes, and with that of life-saving systems and devices. Commodore Maury, before the Civil War, had made a careful study of the ocean currents on the route between New York and Liverpool under the climatic conditions which prevailed at different seasons of the year, and had recommended certain routes to be observed by ocean steamers plying between the United States, on the one side, and British, French, and German ports, on the other side, of the Atlantic. The great Civil War distracted attention from these recommendations. The subject was again taken up by Thomas Henry Ismay, who was one of the founders of the White Star Line, in a letter to the British Board of Trade on the 1st of January, 1876. In this letter he called the attention of the Board of Trade to these recommendations of Commodore Maury, recommended them strongly for adoption as means of preventing collisions and avoiding danger from ice, and declared that he had required the steamers of the White Star Line, sailing between New York and Liverpool, to observe them. This recommendation was again taken up by the firm of Ismay, Imrie & Company, of which Mr. Ismay had been the senior partner, in a communication to the British Board of Trade, dated December 12, 1889. The result has been that these