

*Uniform Treaties and Laws.*

So far as these treaties deal with subjects of general importance and involve interests common to all nations, it is very desirable that they should be uniform. This uniformity can best be obtained by conference between representatives of different maritime nations, at which the delegates shall have ample opportunity to consider the subject in all its bearings, and then report their conclusion for ratification by the powers that sent them. Many such conferences, which have sometimes been called congresses, have been held. The one that is most in the public eye at present is the conference at the Hague, in 1899, which first made provision for the establishment of an international court of arbitration.

But long before this conference was held, there had been other conferences in reference to maritime matters which had led to greater uniformity in maritime law. As the commerce between different countries increased, the number and size of vessels trading between them increased in a corresponding ratio. The speed and power of ocean steamers have increased in equal ratio, and these mighty vessels have almost entirely displaced the sailing vessels which carried almost all ocean-bound commerce down to the year 1850.

*Lights and Signals.*

The risk of collision had increased in a corresponding ratio. Certain usages in reference to lights and signals had grown up in different countries. It is to the honour of the State of New York that one of the first acts of legislation prescribing lights and signals for the purpose of avoiding collision was adopted by that state in the year 1829. This Act provided for the range lights, the forward white light lower, the after white light higher, which were required on all the waters of the State of New York for many years, and were finally adopted by the international maritime conference of 1889. Before that time, and in or about the year 1861, many maritime nations had regulated the lights and signals, and precautions to be observed by ocean-bound