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A Terrible

Disaster.

The appalling disaster which overtook a pleasure steamer on Fast River, New York, on Wednesday last, shows how easily and how quickly a floating palace of pleasure may become a fiery death-trap. The *General Slocum* was a three-decked steamer and was carrying a Sunday School excursion connected with St. Mark's German Lutheran church. According to the official statement issued by the steamship company, the number of passengers on board the *General Slocum* was 875, but it is believed that the number was really much larger, as there were many small children for whom fares are not usually charged. The steamer was near the extreme end of Randall's Island and off 135th street when fire broke out in the lunch room on the forward deck. Either the apparatus for extinguishing fire was not in working condition or it was not promptly applied, and as the steamer was built largely of wood the flames were soon beyond all control. If any attempts were made to lower the steamer's boats they seem to have been unsuccessful. The fire spread with such rapidity that many passengers were soon cut off from all hope of escape, many others were driven to the stern of the steamer where hundreds jumped or were forced into the water. Few, it is said, were able even to secure life preservers. Before the shore could be reached the hurricane deck had fallen in, its supports having been burned away. Those who had taken refuge on it were carried down to death and many others were crushed beneath it in its fall. Tugs and other craft which were near, hastened to the assistance of the burning steamer and succeeded in taking many from her burning decks and also in rescuing many who were struggling in the water. But more than six hundred persons, it is said, many of them women and children, lost their lives in an awful disaster which with proper appliances and efficient discipline, one would suppose, should have been impossible. The death list is much larger than was at first supposed. The latest reports place the number of bodies recovered at 632, with more than 300 still missing.

The Turbinia

The steamer *Turbinia* which is to ply on Lake Ontario as a passenger steamer between Toronto and Hamilton arrived at Sydney, C. B., June 11, having made the voyage from Stornaway in the north of Scotland in six days. It is said that with favorable weather the steamer could have made the run in five days. The *Turbinia* was built at Newcastle, England, and is the first turbine merchant vessel to cross the Atlantic. Like many other steamers, the *Turbinia* is furnished with triple screws. The novelty consists in the mode of applying steam power to these screws. The ordinary engine is so built that the crank, a part operating a good deal like a human arm, grips the shafting of the screw and turns it around rapidly, the power coming from a stroke of a piston rod in the first place. In the turbine engine the screw is at one end of the shaft, and the turbine is fastened to the other. The steam is turned directly upon the turbine and the whole thing, turbine, shaft and screw spins around in one piece, like a boy's top. The turbine might thus be fairly described as a sort of steam windmill. The engine consists of a wheel with several rows of vanes, fixed and movable, the rows of fixed vanes alternating with the rows of movable vanes. The fixed vanes are to direct the steam in its passage to the movable vanes (attached to the shaft), which are set at such an angle as to receive the greatest force possible while deflecting it. The screw under these conditions can revolve at an almost incredible speed, and the direct application of the steam saves much of the power lost in the ordinary type of engine. At her trial trip on May 20 the *Turbinia* easily made 22½ miles an hour. Her three turbine engines are capable of developing 4,000 horse power and when going at full speed her propellers made 700 revolutions per minute. The *Turbinia* is described as a smart looking craft with commodious promenade decks, lounges, saloons and a great variety of conveniences for passengers. She is 260 feet long and can carry from 1,500 to 2,000 passengers.

Radium and the

Earth's Heat.

Some interest is said to have been excited in the scientific world by the suggestion of Professor Ernest Rutherford, an English scholar, in a lecture recently delivered before the Royal Institute, London, to the effect that the heat of the earth

may be due to radium, rather than, as has been generally supposed, to the fact that the earth was once a molten mass which has been gradually cooling. The suggestion implies, in part at least, a reconstruction of some of the present theories of science. Lord Kelvin has computed that, assuming the earth to have been a molten mass when it started on its career, it would require 100,000,000 years for it to cool down to its present temperature, "provided a new source of heat is not discovered." Prof. Rutherford seems to think that the contingency referred to by Lord Kelvin has been realized by the discovery of radium. In that case, he holds, we should not require so many years as Lord Kelvin has computed for the cooling process. It would also follow that life, animal and vegetable, may have existed millions of years before the time usually assigned by geologists to which the life on our globe was nothing but "undifferentiated protoplasmic matter." Also if a millionth portion of radium requires 50,000,000 years in which to exhaust itself, the duration of life upon the globe would be upon this new supposition enormously lengthened.

The Dundonald

Incident.

Quite a lively sensation has been created in Dominion politics by the Dundonald incident. Lord Dundonald, General Commanding Officer of The Canadian Militia, resented what he regarded as undue interference on political grounds with his recommendations to appointments in the militia and expressed his resentment in a speech delivered at a military banquet in Montreal and afterwards published in a Montreal newspaper. In this speech Lord Dundonald, besides complaining in general terms of Government interference for political purposes, made particular reference to Hon. Sydney Fisher as having interfered to prevent the carrying out of his (Lord Dundonald's) recommendations, the gist of his lordship's complaint being that in his work of organization in connection with the militia he had been hampered by political influences operating through the Department of Militia and that Mr. Fisher had been especially active in the matter. The speech of Lord Dundonald and certain correspondence relating thereto between his lordship and Sir F. W. Borden, Minister of Militia, was subsequently brought to the attention of the House of Commons, and the question at issue between Lord Dundonald and the Government became the subject of a lively discussion. The Minister of Militia held strongly that no valid ground existed for Lord Dundonald's charge against the Government, and Hon. Mr. Fisher held that the charge made against himself personally of having sought to influence appointments in the militia for partisan purposes were wholly unwarranted. Lord Dundonald's cause was championed in the House by Colonel Hughes, M. P., and other Conservatives. The Conservatives charge the Government with having hampered the commanding officer in his efforts to promote the efficiency of the militia by seeking to control appointments in the interests of the party, while the Liberals say that the favoritism has been on the other side, and charge that consciously or unconsciously, Lord Dundonald in his nominations has executed the behests of certain Conservative politicians. Whatever may be the truth in these respects, it is pretty generally recognized that Lord Dundonald chose a quite irregular and indefensible way of making his protest when he embodied his criticism of the Government, whose official he was, in a speech addressed to his own subordinate officers. The Government has taken the ground which probably any other Government under similar circumstances would have taken, that the course pursued by Lord Dundonald made it impracticable that his relations with the Administration should continue, and his appointment has accordingly been canceled. The incident and its outcome is much to be regretted, since Lord Dundonald is not only a brave and accomplished soldier who has won renown in the service of his country, but he has appeared to possess many of the essentials of a successful administrator and has been very popular in Canada. It would appear that if a larger measure of confidence and consideration had existed between Lord Dundonald and the members of the Government with whom he had principally to do this very regrettable incident might have been avoided.

France and the

In discussing the relations between the French Government and the Vatican the *Montreal Witness* says:

Vatican

Combes does not appear to take much notice of the many signs which proclaiming downfall of his ministry. He has announced that the question of the separation of church and state will come up for discussion next January, when the bill formulated by a special committee with that object in view, will probably be presented. The provisions of this measure are of the most sweeping character. It assures and guarantees perfect freedom in the exercise of religion, except for the preservation of public order. No denomination will be allowed special privileges, nor will salaries or subventions in any form whatever be granted to the bishops, priests, ministers or teachers of any faith. The Government will not recognize any minister of religion, and will not furnish any funding for the services of any denomination, or for paying any of its ministers. There are also provisions for abolishing the concordat along with the French embassy at the Vatican, and details for the disposal of extensive church properties held by the state. With the passage of an act so radical as this in prospect, the Nuncio was correct in stating that not the least step has been taken by the French Government in the direction of a rapprochement, or even to soften the strained relations that exist. It has long been held by some of the ablest political writers in France that the complete separation of church and state must be the logical result of permanently established democratic institutions, as it offers the only solution of an irritating, seemingly endless and constantly disturbing controversy. All history shows that religion grows in purity and strength the more it is freed from secular patronage and restraint. France is now going through a natural evolution. Not towards irreligion; she cannot easily go farther in that direction than she has done under a state church. The tribulations of human life that find their only consolation in religion will always remain. Rather, towards a higher plane where, in perfect freedom, religion will exercise that sway which she has always had and will never lose undisguised and unfettered.

The War

The past week has been one of marked activity in the war between Russia and Japan, both on land and on sea. Russia has dealt an effective blow in the sinking of two Japanese transports on their way to Manchuria. These transports, the *Hitachi* and the *Sado*, were steam ships of over 6,000 tonnage each. The full extent of the Japanese loss in this connection is not known. Some 750 of the men who were on the transports are reported to have escaped by boats and reached Japanese ports. It is thought however that a thousand men may have been lost in the destruction of the transports besides many horses and valuable military stores. This which is perhaps the most serious disaster which Japan has yet sustained during the war occurred on Wednesday last and the blow was inflicted by cruisers of the Vladivostok squadron under the command of Admiral Skrydloff. There are rumors that a Japanese squadron overtook and engaged the Vladivostok squadron, but this is considered improbable, as the thick weather which prevailed favored the escape of the Russian vessels. It is believed to be Admiral Skrydloff's design to form a junction with the Port Arthur squadron, and if the entrance to Port Arthur is sufficiently cleared to permit the passage of the battle ships now in shelter there, there is a possibility that this may be effected. It is known that the Russian cruiser *Novik* has lately gone out from Port Arthur and returned, and the obstructions in the channel may have been removed sufficiently to admit of the passage of the larger ships. The two Russian squadrons united would not be as strong as the naval force which Japan could bring against them, but the Russian commander might be willing to risk an engagement which, if it should result disastrously to Japan, would be almost decisive in reference to the outcome of the war. It may be expected, however, that Admiral Togo will see to it that the isolated Russian squadrons are not permitted to unite their forces. . . . In Manchuria, on the Liao tung peninsula, there has been fierce fighting extending over two days. The fighting began at Wa-fang-tien on Tuesday, where the Russians in a strong position were attacked by the Japanese. The fighting resulted in considerable loss on both sides but was indecisive. The next day however, the Japanese renewed the attack. After long and severe fighting the Russians were forced to abandon their positions and as they left fourteen of their guns upon the field their retreat must have been somewhat precipitate. Thus another is added to the list of Japan's victories on land. The losses on both sides were heavy. The Russians are reported as admitting a loss of 57 officers and 1500 men in Wednesday's fighting, and the casualties on the side of the Japanese were probably quite as numerous. . . . According to a dispatch from Chefoo, there is a rumor current there that the Japanese have captured one of the inner forts of Port Arthur after having lost 1,000 men in the attack. Little credence need be placed in this rumor until confirmed.