

PARIS BESIEGED BY A RIVER SEINE OUT OF BOUNDS

The Friendly Waters that
Become a Raging Flood

ENEMY OF A CITY'S LIFE

The old saying that a good servant may make a bad master is once more proved by the conduct of the Seine in and about Paris.

The French capital owes its rise and splendour to the river, half Paris standing on one bank and half on the other. All goes well so long as the Seine is peaceful and contained within bounds, and that is true of the river for age after age—with terrible exceptions. The winter of 1910 was one exception; the present winter is another.

The long-continued rains of December burst the springs and overflowed the streams which combine to make the mighty river. The waters which swirl through Paris have travelled and accumulated over a distance of 370 miles, and have a further journey of 110 miles before they rush into the Channel.

Bridges as Barriers

Every spring the watercourses that send their store to the Seine are terribly increased in volume, and the great river becomes unmanageable, a menace to life and property, an angry torrent demanding freedom to expand and overflow in all directions.

And that is just what must be denied a river flowing through a great city. A margin of safety is left to accommodate rapid rises during flood-time. Embankments are built to contain the current, and these succeed year after year in achieving their purpose—but not in years like 1920.

A great river, if it cannot spread outwards and overflow its banks, must rise high and higher, and the result is that traffic cannot pass under the bridges; the river in flood becomes as impassable as a roadway which has been torn up. The Seine is spanned by 28 such bridges in Paris, and under these pass vessels bringing the French their coal, food, and other stores.

Servant Becomes a Tyrant

During the early days of this year the Seine has been rapidly rising, and the flooded river has passed from the rôle of disciplined servant to that of an unruly tyrant. It besieged the city like an army. It burst the sewers, sapped the foundations of roads and buildings, flooded the electric power and gas works, and behaved in its turbulent, insensate way like an organised human enemy.

In two days the Seine rose over three feet. Cellars were flooded, and some families abandoned their houses, while others retired to the upper floors. In one of the suburbs of Paris the water was rising so high as this paper went to press that half the town was menaced; in another suburb families were rescued from their submerged homes and housed in the schools.

The Neglected Warning

The danger recurs from time to time, but nothing has been done to check the recurrence of this grave peril.

Each flood brings in its train great schemes for the city's defence, but the warning of 1910 produced no effectual result, and the war drained French resources dry. The money that France had to spend in a month on war might make the Seine safe for a century; but, alas! the money is gone, and the Seine is there, untamed, flaunting and frightful, rising at times an inch an hour, and threatening the capital with deadly perils.

BLIND MAN'S FEAT

Beating a Man who Could See

It is well known that men who have lost the use of one natural power often develop special keenness in another, and everybody knows that blind men have generally a very keen sense of hearing.

There is a blind man in Cambridge who can tell whether he is passing a house or a shop, or a hoarding or a space, as he walks along the street, and who, on a dark night not long ago, astonished his friends, who could not see it, by telling them that a door was open on the other side of the road. The door was open.

Now an odd story is told by a member of parliament in Canada, Mr. Harris Turner, who guarantees the truth of it. He says that a blind man named Ross was out shooting wild geese with a friend. The friend could not see the bird, and the blind man took the gun, aimed from sound, and brought it down.

A LABOUR PEACE

Good News for Engineering

A chapter of trouble that has struck at the heart of one of our greatest industries has been happily closed. It was the strike of the moulders.

Fifty thousand moulders had been idle for months, and had stopped the work of 100,000 men in engineering, and held up important work all over the country. If a man went into an ironmonger's shop there was something that could not be supplied because the moulders were on strike. If a part of a motor car broke, a new part could not be got because of the strike. We see and hear very little of the moulder, but his work is very important and is at the foundation of nearly all machinery.

The fact that the strike has been happily settled is very good news, coming as a welcome New Year's gift to British industry.

COCK-A-DOODLE-DOO



It is said that the Kaiser has appealed to the President of Peru for permission to go out and start a farm there. So he may really rule the roost at last

NEWS FROM EVERYWHERE

Ten foxes were seen together in one field in Devonshire not long ago.

In Russia, during 1918, over a million and a half people died of typhus.

Furs from Japan

Japan has just imported some live foxes from Alaska, in order to found a fur industry.

London Bursting its Sides

So great is the demand for office room in London that a firm is paying £220 a year rent for a wooden hut standing in a building site.

Cow that Stole a Purse

A purse containing coins and stamps, lost by a girl at a school treat last summer, has just been found by a butcher in a cow's stomach.

London by the Sea

An advertiser in a London paper asked for a cottage near the sea, "within twenty miles of London." The mouth of the Thames is 35 miles away from London.

A Ramsgate boy has not missed an attendance at school for eight years.

A statue made of Cornish tin is to be erected at Bodmin as a war memorial.

Irish Emigration Stopping

In 1913 there were 30,967 emigrants from Ireland to other countries, but in 1918 the number had dropped to 980.

A Hawk Over St. Paul's

A sparrowhawk was seen hovering over Bow Church in London recently, and afterwards flew up Cheapside to St. Paul's Cathedral.

Millions for the Workers

Mr. Ford, the motor-car manufacturer, has just stated that he will distribute two million pounds a year in bonuses to his workers in America.

New Lighthouse for London

An aerial lighthouse has just been erected at Hounslow Air Station, with a light of 70,000 candle-power. Some lighthouses on the South Coast have lights of 30 million candle-power.

WHY WE SING IN THE BATHROOM

ODD THINGS ABOUT SOUND

How the Music Crept from the
Cellar to the Lecture Hall

UP THE ROD INTO THE HAT

If Thomas Carlyle could have lived to hear Professor W. H. Bragg, a great physicist, lecture at the Royal Institution to crowds of youngsters during the New Year holidays, he would have gone away a wiser, if not a gladder, man. Carlyle hated noise. He built himself a "sound-proof" room at the top of his house, which was a great success in all but one detail: it was not sound-proof! Sound is hard to deaden, anywhere, anyhow. It is loud in what we call the silence of the forest; it was loud and treacherous when our men at the front most needed quiet for their movements.

Tyndall's Old Instruments

One of the strangest things about sound is the way in which it can be made to reveal itself far from the place of origin. Two floors beneath the professor's lecture-table lies the cellar of the Institution, and in the cellar a musical-box was playing. Not a note could be heard in the hall until Mr. Bragg thrust a long rod through the floor down into the cellar. And even then nothing happened. But as soon as he placed a hat, a tea-tray, or a violin, on the top of the rod—as a sounding board—the notes of the musical-box rang out in the hall.

For this lecture Mr. Bragg had been through the Royal Institution cupboards, and brought out old instruments made for Professor Tyndall, when that great man lectured in the same hall.

As music was played in the cellar the vibrations travelled along the rods and caused harps to give forth melody in response. Music without hands it seemed to those who heard.

The Jumping Flame

Professor Bragg might make a fortune from his phantom music were he to play it in some temple of the credulous East. And how he would puzzle the uninitiated with his time-honoured trick of making a bell in a glass sound loudly when rung, and then become silent on the withdrawal of air from the glass!

Sound is carried by air-waves, and there can be no sound in a vacuum. Give it air, and sound can do amazing things, as when the professor made it travel from a vibrating tuning-fork through a box, a bottle-stopper of rubber, and a mixture of vaseline.

The ear is a marvellous living instrument for collecting and interpreting air-waves carrying sound, but Professor Bragg showed that a gas flame is extremely sensitive, jumping and ducking in response to various noises; leaping up at the high notes formed by the pronunciation of a word containing the letter S, and soaring valiantly in response to the blast of a high whistle.

Singing in the Bathroom

One of the most interesting points Professor Bragg dealt with was the homely question of singing in the bathroom. Who does not love to sing at his morning bath? The professor declares that there is a scientific explanation of this habit, which arises largely from the fact that in a bathroom, generally bare of furniture and draperies, sound is easily reflected, and there is a great deal of resonance. That, he says, is why so many people want to sing in the bathroom, though they are not so inspired when they get back to their bedroom.

Talking of sound in a public building, the professor explained that a good way to test the acoustics of a hall is to clap your hands and count how many seconds the sound lasts. Sometimes it may be five or six seconds, and, if so, the hall is no use for public speaking. In a good hall for speaking, the sound of the clapping should not last more than three seconds. Wires stretched across a hall make no difference.