New-York Tribune.

VOL. LXIII.....No. 20,864. To-day, cloudy; warmer; snow. To-morrow, fair; fresh west winds, becoming variable. NEW-YORK. THURSDAY, DECEMBER 31, 1903.—SIXTEEN PAGES.— Copyright, 1903, by The Tribune Association. PRICE THREE CENTS.

OVER FIVE HUNDRED DIE IN FIRE.

Iroquois Theatre in Chicago Proves To Be a Frightful Death-Trap.

FLAMES ON STAGE START PANIC IN AUDIENCE.

Chicago, Dec. 30.—About five hundred and fifty people were killed in ten minutes this afternoon in a fire in the Iroquois Theatre, the newest, largest, and, so far as human power could make it, the safest theatre in Chicago.

Estimates of the dead and injured vary. The police account of the dead is 536. The estimate of the newspapers is 562. Besides this there were fifty-five people missing at midnight, the majority of whom are probably among the dead in the morgues and various undertaking establishments. Eighty-six of the dead have been positively identified, and ninety-two others are known to be injured.

An explosion of the gas tanks added to the horror, and many were suffocated by the escaping fumes. The fire escapes had not been completed, and this fact added largely to the death list.

The count of the dead was practically complete at midnight, but is not yet accurate, and the exact number will not be known before some time to-morrow. Despite the utmost care, great confusion marked the removal of the bodies. In their haste the police transported bodies to undertaking rooms, and in many instances forgot to report the fact to their station. In five different undertaking establishments bodies were received of which the police had no record whatever. Allowing for these discrepancies, the lists made by the police and the newspapers practically agree.

HUNDREDS IN A VAIN STRUGGLE FOR LIFE.

[BY TELEGRAPH TO THE TRIBUNE.]

Chicago, Dec. 30.—The Iroquois Theatre, the most modern and, supposedly, the safest playhouse in the West, was the scene this afternoon of a fire horror unparalleled in the history of America. At least five hundred persons—possibly eight hundred—perished from a fire which, starting, it is supposed, from an electric light in the wings, shot across the footlights, and with fearful rapidity swept through the house. In a few minutes the building dedicated to merriment was a charnel house. The house was packed when the fire broke out. There was not a vacant seat on the main floor and in the two balconies.

When the blaze started an attempt was made to lower the asbestos curtain. Had it dropped, there might have been no loss of life. But it stuck fast, the fire shot out across the footlights, and the scenes of horror began.

All on the first floor escaped, it is believed, but before the galleries, packed with nine hundred persons, could be emptied the interior of the theatre was filled with smoke and flames. Men, women and children, losing all reason in the face of death, fought, shrieked and prayed. Most of them died, scores from burns, hundreds from suffocation and from being trampled upon.

REMOVING THE DEAD.

In thirty minutes the fire was put out, after destroying most of the interior of the theatre, and the police began removing the dead. On the east exit stairway, within thirty feet of the street and safety, was a pile of more than two hundred bodies. So tightly were they wedged in that the police could not move them in the ordinary way without tearing limb from limb. At the bottom and the outer edge was a woman still alive. The police could not extricate her from the pile of dead. The officers had to climb to the top and, standing on the dead and dying, hand down the bodies. A few were found with life not yet extinct. Few here were burned; the majority had been suffocated and trampled to death.

Then up into the balconies the police and firemen filed. Here were other piles of dead—many burned beyond all recognition. Hose carts and express wagons were pressed into service, with ambulances and patrol wagons to carry away the dead. Bodies were piled up many feet high on the sidewalk and restaurant tables, and some in an adjoining saloon. As fast as possible the dead were lifted into the vehicles and started for the morgue. Ghouls crept among the dead, stealing pocketbooks, jewelry and furs.

DISTRACTED RELATIVES GATHER.

As the loading of bodies was going on crowds of distracted persons gathered, whose relatives had attended the play. Unable to secure information at the theatre, they thronged the morgues. At 6 o'clock Ralston's morgue was full. There were two hundred dead within. Yet in the street stood thirteen wagons, loaded with bodies. They were taken to other morgues and undertaking establishments.

The city is plunged in grief. Nothing like a complete list of the dead can be secured to-night. Hundreds of members of the best families in Chicago are going from morgue to morgue seeking their loved ones. All the members of the "Blue Beard" company escaped and the attachés of the theatre saved themselves.

W. J. Davis, manager of the theatre, declares that nearly all the persons on the main floor escaped, but of the nine hundred in the balconies he does not believe that more than a score escaped alive.

UNION DRIVERS REFUSED TO HELP.

All the livery stable keepers in the city offered every carriage they had to carry away the injured, and asked the striking livery employes to drive the vehicles. The union men positively refused to aid in the work of mercy. Every one of the big express companies and all the local concerns tendered the services of their drivers and wagons, and these were utilized. Citizens offered their private equipages, and they were accepted.

DETAILS OF THE HORROR.

A few of the victims were burned to death, many were suffocated by gas, and scores were trampled to death in the panic that followed the mad plunge of the frightened audience for the exits. It will be many hours before the number of dead is accurately known, and many days before all of them will be identified. There are bodies lying by the dozens to-night in the undertaking rooms, in the police stations and in the hospitals, from which nearly everything that could reveal their identity to those who knew them best is gone. Their clothing is torn to rags or burned to cinders, and their faces have been trodden into an unrecognizable pulp by the crowd that trampled them down as they fled for safety.

The fire broke out in the second act of the play of "Mr. Blue Beard," which was the first dramatic production given in the theatre since its erection. The company, which was large, escaped to the street in safety, nearly all of them, however, being compelled to flee into the snowy streets with no clothing but their stage costumes. A few members of the company sustained minor injuries, but none were seriously hurt.

PROBABLE CAUSE OF THE FIRE.

The accounts of the origin of the fire are conflicting and none of them certain, but the best reason given is that an electric wire near the lower part of a piece of drop scenery suddenly broke and was grounded. The fire spread rapidly toward the front of the stage, causing the members of the chorus, who were then engaged in the performance, to rush to the wings with screams of terror. The fire in itself up to this time was not serious, and possibly could have been checked had not the asbestos curtain failed to work. As soon as the fire was discovered "Eddie" Foy, the chief comedian of the company, shouted to lower the curtain, and this was immediately done. It descended about halfway and then stuck. The fire thus practically had a flue through which a strong draught was setting, aided by the doors, which had been thrown open in front of the theatre. With a roar and a bound the flames shot out through the opening over the heads of the people on the first floor, and, reaching clear up to those in the first balcony, caught them and burned them to death where they sat.

A TERRIFIC EXPLOSION.

Immediately following this rush of flames there came an explosion which lifted the entire roof of the theatre from its walls, shattering the great skylight into fragments. As soon as the flames first appeared beyond the curtain a man in the rear of the hall shouted "Fire! fire!" and the entire audience rose as one person and made for the doors. It is believed that the explosion was caused by the flames coming in contact with the gas reservoirs of the theatre, causing them to burst. W. J. Davis, manager of the theatre, said after the catastrophe that if the people had remained in their seats, and had not been excited by the cry of fire, not a single life would have been lost. This, however, is contradicted by the statements of the firemen, who found numbers of persons sitting in their seats, their faces directed toward the stage, as if the performance was still going on. It was the opinion of the firemen that these people had been suffocated at once by the flow of gas which came from behind the asbestos curtain.

As nearly as can be estimated at the present time about thirteen hundred people were in the theatre. Three hundred of these were on the first floor, the remainder being in the two upper balconies and in the hallways back of them.

AUDIENCE CAUGHT IN A TRAP.

The theatre is modelled after the Opéra Comique, in Paris, and from the rear of each balcony there are three doors leading out to passageways toward the front of the theatre. Two of these doorways are at the end of the balcony and one is in the centre. The audience in its rush for the outer air seems to have, for the greater part, chosen to flee to the left entrance, and to attempt to make its way down the eastern stairway leading into the lobby of the theatre. Outside of the people burned and suffocated by gas, it was in these two doorways on the first and second balconies that the greatest loss of life occurred. When the firemen entered the building the dead were found stretched in a pile reaching from the head of the stairway at least eight feet from the door back to a point about five feet in the rear of the door.

This mass of dead bodies in the centre of the doorway reached to within two feet of the top of the passageway. All the corpses at this point were women and children. The fight for life which must have taken place at these two points is something that is simply beyond human power adequately to describe. Only a faint idea of its horror could be derived from the aspect of the bodies as they lay. Women on top of these masses of dead had been overtaken by death as they were crawling on their hands and knees over the bodies of those who had died before.

Others lay with arms stretched out in the direction toward which lay life and safety, holding in their hands fragments of garments not their own. They were evidently torn from the clothing of others they had endeavored to pull down and trample under foot as they fought for their own lives. As the police removed layer after layer of dead in these doorways the sight became too much even for police and firemen, hardened as they are to such scenes, to endure. The bodies were in such an inextricable mass, and so tightly were they jammed between the sides of the door and the walls, that it was impossible to lift them one by one and carry them out. The only possible thing to do was to seize a limb or some other portion of the body and pull with main strength.

Men worked at the task with tears running down their cheeks, and the sobs of the rescuers could be heard even in the hall below where this awful scene was being enacted. A number of the men were compelled to abandon their task and give it over to others whose nerves had not as yet been shaken by the awful experience.

BODIES IN FRIGHTFUL CONDITION.

As one by one the bodies were dragged out of the water soaked, blackened mass of corpses, the spectacle became more and more heart-rending. There were women whose clothing was torn completely from their bodies above the waist, whose bosoms had been trampled into a pulp, and whose faces were marred beyond all power of identification. Bodies lay in the first and second balconies in great numbers. In some places they were piled up in the aisles three and four deep, where one had fallen and others tripped over the prostrate forms, and all had died where they lay, evidently suffocated by the gas. Others were bent over backs of seats, where they had been thrown by the rush of people for the doors and killed, with hardly a chance to rise from their seats. One man was found with his back bent nearly double, his spinal column having been fractured as he was thrown backward. A woman was found cut nearly in half by the back of the seat, having been forced over it face downward.

AISLES FILLED WITH DEAD.

In the aisles nearest the doors the scenes were harrowing in the extreme. Bodies lay in every conceivable attitude, half naked, the look on their faces revealing some portion of the agony which must have preceded their death. There were scores and scores of people whose entire faces had been trampled completely off by the heels of those who rushed over them, and in one aisle the body of a man was found with not a vestige of clothing, flesh or bone remaining above his waist. The entire upper portion of his body had been cut into mincemeat and carried away by the feet of those who trampled him. A search was carefully made, with a hope of finding his head, but at a late hour to-night it had not been discovered, and all that will ever tell his friends who he was are the color and appearance of the clothing on the lower limbs, and this is in such a condition as to be hardly recognizable.

FIRE ESCAPE USELESS.

The theatre had been constructed only a short time and all its equipment was not yet in place. This was unfortunately the case with a fire escape in the rear of the building. The small iron balconies to which the iron ladders were to be attached were up, but the ladders had not yet been constructed. When the panic was at its height a great number of women ran for this fire escape, only to find, as they emerged from the doorway on the little iron platform, that they were from thirty to fifty feet from the ground, a fire behind and no method of escape in front. Those who reached the platform first endeavored to hold their footing and to keep back the crowd that pressed on them from the rear. The effort was utterly useless, and in a few moments the iron ledges were jammed with crowds of women, who screamed, fought and tore at each other like maniacs. This lasted only a brief interval, and the rush from the interior of the building became so violent that many of them were crowded off and fell to the granite pavement below. Others leaped from the platform, fracturing legs and arms, and two were picked up at this point with fractured skulls, having been killed instantly.

ESCAPED ON BRIDGE OF PLANKS.

George H. Elliott, secretary of the Ogden Gas Company, was in a building directly opposite the theatre across this alley, and, noticing smoke, went down to ascertain its cause. When he reached the street the women already were dropping into the alley, and Elliott immediately rushed for a ladder, in an effort to save as many as possible. No ladder was available, and the only method of assistance that could be devised was hurriedly to lash some planks together and throw them across to the affrighted women on the platforms, with instructions to place the end firmly on the iron framework. Before this could be done a fearful loss of time ensued; the women were being pushed every instant into the alley, and by the time the bridge was constructed few remained to take advantage of it. However, about two dozen, it is believed, made their way across this narrow causeway. The members of the theatrical company, being on the first floor, had comparatively little difficulty in reaching the street, although their situation was for a moment highly critical, because of the speed with which the flames swept through the mass of scenery in the flies and on the stage.

"Eddie" Foy, the principal comedian in the play, was one of the last to escape, by getting out through a rear door, after assisting the women members of the company to safety. He went into the Sherman House in his stage costume and with his face covered with grease paint, in order to secure surgical attendance for some burns which he had sustained. In describing the beginning of the fire Foy attributed the extent of the catastrophe to the failure of the fireproof curtain to work properly. Because of this, he said, the flames readily obtained access to the main part of the theatre, and were, by the draught, carrying with it gas as well as fire, swept up to the two balconies, where the loss of life was greatest.

ASBESTOS CURTAIN FAILED TO WORK.

"The fire began in the middle of the second act," said Mr. Foy. "An electric wire broke, was grounded, and from this the flames were started in the rear of the stage. The stage is unusually wide, and there was so great a draught the flames spread rapidly. They soon had attacked all the scenery in the rear of the house. I never believed it possible for fire to spread so quickly. When it first started I went to the footlights, and, to prevent alarming the audience, said that there was a slight blaze, and that it would be better for all to leave quietly. Then I stepped back and called for the asbestos curtain to be lowered.

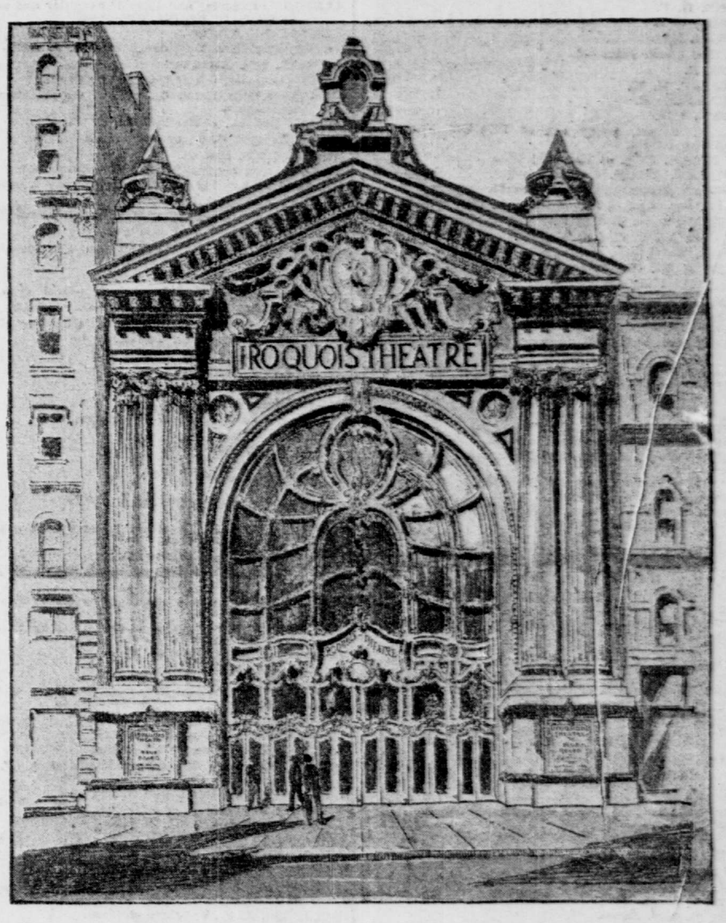
"This, when about half way down, refused to go further, and thus an additional draft was created. This swept the flames out into the auditorium, and I knew that the theatre was doomed. I hurried back to the stage and aided in getting the women members of the company into the alley. Some of them were in their dressing rooms, and were almost overcome by smoke before they could get down to the stage and to the doors.

"The simple fact that the curtain did not descend entirely was what saved the lives of the company, although it caused such a horrible catastrophe in the front of the house. After the curtain had refused to descend there came the explosion of the gas tanks, and with the curtain down all the fire and gas would have been confined between the rear wall of the theatre and the fireproof curtain in front. Under these circumstances it would not have been possible for a single member of the company to escape alive, unless he or she had been standing immediately in front of the door leading into the alley. As it was, the draft carried all the gas and fire out before the curtain, and the company was saved, although their salvation was the death of so many poor people in front."

ALL CHICAGO APPALLED.

Rarely in the history of Chicago has its people been so stirred as by the calamity of to-day. It is, next to the Chicago fire, the greatest catastrophe that has ever occurred here, and the speed with which it came and went seemed for a brief period to appall the business section of the city. The news spread with great rapidity, and in a short time hundreds of men, women and children were rushing toward the theatre. The building in which the calamity occurred stands midway between State and Dearborn sts. on the north side of Randolph-st. Although every available policeman within call of the department was immediately hurried to the spot, and the men were placed in lines at the end of the block, allowing nobody to enter Randolph-st. from either Dearborn or State, it was found for a time almost impossible to hold back the frenzied crowd that pressed forward, many of them having friends or relatives in the theatre and anxious to learn something of them.

THE IROQUOIS THEATRE.



Chicago's newest playhouse, destroyed by fire yesterday, with an appalling loss of over seven hundred lives.

THE DEAD AND INJURED.

The coroner has been informed that there are 422 bodies at different morgues and hospitals. All have not been heard from yet, as a number of bodies were taken to undertakers in different parts of the city.

The crowds around Ralston's and Jordan's morgues were so large that it was impossible to get the excited people into line, to view the dead. They were informed, therefore, that no one would be admitted to-night to see if they could identify their relatives or friends. Only one body was identified at the county morgue.

The lists of the dead and injured, so far as identifications have been made, and of the missing, so far as is known, follow. When no other address is given the home is in this city:

THE DEAD.

DONNELLY, Mrs.
HARBAUGH, Mrs.
MINWEGEN, Mrs., wife of Alderman John Minwegen.
HORTON, Miss Edith, of Ontonagon, Mich.
MARSH, Mrs. W. T.
MORRILL, Mrs. F. A.
SULLIVAN, Mrs. A.
WILSON, E. A.
Three men employed in the flies on the stage.
LANG, Hortense, sixteen years old.
LANG, Irene, eleven years old, sister of Hortense.
LAKE, Mrs. A., thirty-five years old.
DONALDSON, Miss A., eighteen years old.
RATTEY, J., died at hospital. Before death he spoke of two boys who had been with him. They are thought to have perished.
BUSHNELL, Louise, of No. 861 Wellington-ave.
O'DONNELL, Mrs. Patrick, wife of President O'Donnell, of the Duer Brewing Company.
WATTMAN, Otto.
COULTS, R. H.
HOWARD, Miss D.
ROSS, Miss ——, daughter of Dr. Ross.
NORTON, Edith, visiting her sister at Evanston.
M'CAUGHAN, Helen, with a party of high school girls in the balcony.
STREITON, Miss Gladys, of Alpena, Mich.
BALLY, Bernice.
MANDEL, A. M.; identified by ring.
WINSLOW, C. A., commercial traveller, of Three Rivers, Minn.
WELLS, Donald; name on handkerchief.
SCOTT, Burr.
PETERSON, Fornetta.
KIELEY, Harvey, of Laclede-ave., St. Louis.
COUTELL, Thomas.
HALL, Emperly.
HOOPER, W. W., of Kenosha, Wis.
Five children of H. S. Van Ingen, of Kenosha (probable). Father became separated from them and is among the injured.
TURBUSH, G. W., and family.
MERRIAM, Mildred, three years old, rescued by father, but died on reaching the street.
HATTLEY, William, died in hospital.
JOHNSON, J. C., died in hospital.
REED, William M., lawyer, of Waukegan, Ill.
FOX, Hoyt, body at morgue.
BUTLER, Mrs. L. R.
WARDMAN, S.
MORTON, Edmund W., agent Wagner Electric Manufacturing Company, of St. Louis.
NEWBY, ——.
KOCKEMS, J. A.
STERN, Mrs.
DONALDSON, H., address unknown.
STUDLEY, the Rev. Howard, pastor of All Strangers' Church.
DODD, Miss J. H., of Delaware, Ohio, was visiting friends at Wheaton, Ill.
DELEE, Miss V., daughter of the late lieutenant of the police.
FORBUSH, C. W., and family.
STERLING, Anna.
FLOROLINE, a German aerial performer; taken to Samaritan Hospital; died in ambulance.
BLACKMAN, Ethel, thirteen years old, daughter of Harry

RECOGNITION OF SUPERIORITY.

Pol Roger & Co.'s Brut Special Vintage, 1903, was the only wine served at the dinner given by the New York Life Insurance Companies to the International Association of Actuaries (at Sherry's).—Advt.

FEARS OF WAR INCREASE

JAPAN'S NOTE TO POWERS.

French Neutrality Asserted—No Hitch Over Manchuria.

London, Dec. 30.—In response to an inquiry whether it was true, as asserted by the "Lokal-Anzeiger," of Berlin, that Japan had informed the powers that the Russian-Japanese situation was desperate and that an immediate reply would be required from Russia under penalty of war, the following statement was made by the Japanese Legation to-night:

Japan has communicated to the powers confidentially the circumstances under which the negotiations have been carried on hitherto, justifying her action, but not at all in the sense which your query indicates.

Baron Hayashi, the Japanese Minister, has declared that in case of war he has the best authority for saying that France would not join forces with Russia, even should China co-operate with Japan, and that the Triple Alliance would preserve strict neutrality. For the former statement Baron Hayashi's authority is not known, and his belief in France's neutrality in case of China joining in the conflict creates some doubt and astonishment.

Baron Hayashi, when asked regarding M. Delcassé's hopeful attitude, said he was aware the French Foreign Minister was making strenuous efforts for peace. So far as Baron Hayashi knew to-night, these had not yet been crowned with success. He said:

The French government must be in a better position than that of any other power to know the nature of the Russian reply. If they are honest in saying they do not believe there is danger of war, they must be pretty certain Russia will agree at least to the spirit of the Japanese proposals. Up to now we have had no indication of this, and unless Russia does agree there scarcely seems any way of averting war. I only trust M. Delcassé will be successful.

Minister Hayashi definitely said that the Russian evacuation of Manchuria is not one of the Japanese cardinal demands.

Lord Lansdowne's diplomatic reception to-day centred on the Far Eastern crisis. The Russian Ambassador, Count Benckendorff, was unable to give the British Foreign Secretary any definite information regarding the tenor of the Russian reply to Japan, as he had received no advices on the subject from St. Petersburg.

The Foreign Secretary adopted a slightly more hopeful tone to the other ambassadors than has prevailed at the Foreign Office for the last few days. It is learned that this is chiefly due to the persistent belief of the French Foreign Minister, M. Delcassé, that he will be able to prevail on Russia to make compromises which will avert war.

Ambassador Choate, after a conference with Lord Lansdowne, expressed his continued conviction that a pacific solution would be found, and said the indications were not warlike. This belief was not shared by some of Lord Lansdowne's other callers, notably the German Ambassador, Count Wolff-Metternich.

At the Foreign Office and at the Japanese, American and other legations and embassies the "Novoe Vremya's" editorial of to-day is regarded as warlike, but the suggestion was made at one embassy that the remarks might really be intended for home consumption, in order to make a possible compromise more palatable to the Russian war party.

Great Britain appears to be confining her diplomatic efforts to preserve peace solely at Paris and Tokio. She has not attempted, it is asserted here, to bring pressure to bear at St. Petersburg, leaving that phase of the negotiations to France.

Keen sympathy and co-operation prevail at Downing Street in M. Delcassé's efforts, but there is some doubt that their efficacy will be felt until the Russian reply is actually presented to Japan.

At the Russian Embassy late this evening it was said that the reply of Russia had not yet been presented, and that no indication of its probable tone had been received.

The news of Japan's purchase of the Argentine cruisers building at Genoa was received at the Russian Embassy with a smile, and the remark: "They are not so very formidable, after all."

In German diplomatic circles here the crisis is regarded almost entirely as a trial of strength between the Foreign Minister, Count Lamsdorff, and Viceroy Alexieff, the former, with the Czar's support, being notoriously opposed to war, and the latter being believed to favor it. Up to now the Viceroy is thought in this quarter to have had the best of it, and to have committed Russia to such an extent that a compromise, in spite of the Czar's personal feeling, is impossible.

JAPAN GETS WARSHIPS.

Two Argentine Cruisers Bought—Negotiations with Chili.

London, Dec. 30.—Japan this evening completed the purchase of the Argentine warships Moreno and Rivadavia, building at Genoa, for which Russia was negotiating. The price paid for the cruisers was $7,500,000.

Santiago de Chili, Dec. 30.—The Chilian government has received offers from the Japanese government for the purchase of the battleship Capitan Prat and the cruiser Chacabuco.

The Capitan Prat is of 6,100 tons displacement and the Chacabuco of 4,500 tons displacement.

PESSIMISM IN RUSSIA.

The "Novoe Vremya" Still Expects Japan to Make Terms.

St. Petersburg, Dec. 30.—The foreign dispatches received here yesterday are reflected to-day in more pessimistic editorials. The "Novoe Vremya" begins its leader: "There is no war to-day. To-morrow there may be war." The paper calls attention to the fact that wars marked the opening of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The "Novoe Vremya" nevertheless still professes faith in a peaceful settlement, saying:

We believe Japan will not place Russia in a position where to yield would appear to be a renunciation of the defence of her vital interests in the Far East. Russia does not desire war, but nobody in Russia will permit the Japanese or other friends to execute a diplomatic dance upon Russia's peaceful disposition. In firm consciousness of her power Russia will await events.

NO TIME SET FOR REPLY.

Japanese Blame Cabinet—Preparations in Formosa.

Yokohama, Dec. 30.—At an extraordinary meeting of the Privy Council to-day it was made known that no time limit had been set for Russia's reply to the last official note from the Japanese government. A strong opposition is now publicly manifested to the Cabinet, owing to its alleged dilatory tactics.

The latest ordinance announced invests the commander of Formosa with full authority to act in case war is declared.

RUSSIA IN NO HASTE.

French Officials Expect No Reply Before January 10.

Paris, Dec. 30.—While still not believing that war between Russia and Japan will occur, the optimistic tone in official and diplomatic circles here was somewhat modified to-day by advices from Tokio and St. Petersburg. Japan, it appears, is hastening preparations for the purpose, it is supposed, of influencing Russia's action upon

Continued on fifth page.

H. Mouquin, Bordeaux, has exported this year 103,000 gallons of Bordeaux and Burgundy Wine to United States. This is the largest importation. Ask for price lists at H. Mouquin, 428 Sixth-ave, and Mouquin Restaurant, 20 Ann-st.—Advt.