

points in a speech moving its acceptance by the delegates. The convention must be ratified by the different States prior to December 31, 1914, and comes into force on July 1, 1915.

An international service is to be established and placed under the control of the United States for the purpose of ice patrol and observation and for the destruction of derelicts in the North Atlantic. The masters of all vessels are to cooperate with this service. Safety of construction has been dealt with under the headings of "New Vessels," and "Existing Vessels." The convention provides that the degree of safety shall increase in a regular and continuous manner with the length of the vessel, and that vessels shall be as efficiently subdivided as is possible having regard to the nature of the services for which they are intended.

The convention provides that all merchant vessels of the contracting States when engaged upon international (including Colonial) voyages, whether steamers or sailing vessels, and whether they carry passengers or not, must be equipped with wireless telegraphy apparatus if they have on board fifty persons or more (except where the number is exceptionally and temporarily increased to fifty or more owing to causes beyond the master's control). There are certain exemptions to this regulation. A continuous watch for wireless telegraphy purposes is to be kept by all vessels required to be fitted with wireless apparatus, as soon as the Government of the State to which the vessels belong is satisfied that such watch will be useful for the purpose of saving life at sea. Meanwhile certain classes of vessels are specified as being required to maintain a continuous watch. The wireless installations must have a range of at least 100 miles. A transition period is provided to enable wireless apparatus to be fitted and operators and watchers obtained.

The convention lays it down that there must be accommodation in lifeboats or their equivalents for all persons on board, and that as large a number as possible of the boats and rafts must be capable of being launched on either side of the ship, so that as few as possible need be launched on the weatherside. The convention specifies a minimum number of members of the crew competent to handle the boats and rafts. All ships are to have an adequate system of lighting, so that in an emergency the passengers may easily find their way to the exits from the interior of the ship.

Ships of the contracting States which comply with the requirements of the convention are to have furnished to them certificates of the fact, which are to be accepted by all the States as having the same value as the certificates issued by them to their own ships.

RECENT TEMPERATURES IN EUROPE.

SEVERAL features of especial interest were associated with the recent cold spell of weather experienced over the central and southern parts of western Europe. It is common enough in January for lower temperatures to prevail over Germany than in England, but in the coastal regions of the south of France the normal temperatures at this season of the year are warmer than in the British Isles. The temperatures taken from the Daily Weather Report of the Meteorological Office show that for the twelve days January 12-23, which approximately comprise the cold spell, the mean temperature in London was 34° , the mean of the maxima being 36° , and of the minima 32° . At Biarritz the mean for the whole period was 33.5° , the mean of the maxima 38° , and the mean of the

minima 29° ; nine nights out of the twelve were colder than in London; the lowest temperatures were 21° on January 16, and 22° on January 15, whilst in London the lowest temperature in the twelve days was 24° on January 23. The mean temperature at Perpignan for the period was 34.5° , the mean of the maxima 40° , and of the minima 29° , the latter being 3° colder than in London, and nine nights had lower minima; the lowest readings were 22° on January 20 and 22. At Nice the mean was 40.5° , the mean of the maxima 47° , and of the minima 34° ; frost occurred on the three consecutive nights, January 14-16. Paris had the mean temperature 24.5° , the mean of the maxima 30° , and the mean of the minima 19° ; January 20 was the only day with the maximum above the freezing point. Much snow also occurred with the cold in parts of France. The cold spell was due to a region of high barometer readings, which maintained a position between the British Isles, Denmark, and the north of Germany, and caused a flow of air over Germany and France from the colder regions of Russia. The Daily Weather Report on January 23 shows that at 7 a.m. the temperature was 50° at Seydisfjord in Iceland, which was the same as at Lisbon, and with this exception was warmer than any other station given for western Europe. Seydisfjord was 25° warmer than London, 36° warmer than Paris, and 14° warmer than Nice. The southerly current of air which caused the anomaly was doubtless associated with the same disturbance which occasioned the rapid rise of temperature and thaw over the British Isles.

THE IMPORTATION OF BIRDS' PLUMAGE.

AS is now well known, the United States Government has made the importation of birds' plumage penal, as well as prohibited the wearing of feathers. Austria and Germany are in accord with England as to the necessity of putting a stop to this nefarious traffic by similar laws. France and Belgium stand on the other side, for the plumassiers are so influential that it is hopeless for the Government of either of these countries even to propose such a protective Bill. The French plumassiers, however, now very uneasy at the trend of popular opinion in Europe and America, have attempted to ward off the severe blow which their trade would suffer if the Société d'Acclimatation were to sympathise with the movement, by securing their admission, in considerable numbers, to the membership of both that society and the Ligue Française pour la Protection des Oiseaux. Successful so far, they next brought forward a project before the former society for the appointment of a "comité d'ornithologie économique," similar to the one in England, with the avowed purpose of inquiring into the mass of evidence as to the destruction of birds brought before the English Parliament and the U.S. Congress, but the real object of which is the hope of checking the growing force of opinion against them on this question. It will be a matter of great satisfaction to all in sympathy with the movement in this country to learn that, at a meeting held in Paris on December 24, the ornithological section of the Acclimatation Society of France, after giving careful and prolonged hearing to the plumassiers, were constrained to record that the arguments adduced before them were unable to modify the opinions hitherto held by bird protectors with regard to the plumage trade. Notwithstanding fierce opposition and grave discord raised by the plumassiers, the project for a committee was rejected, as no benefit from it could accrue to the protection of birds. The society declared also its conviction that the depositions which have led to the prohibition of the importation of birds' plumage to the United States are unimpeachable and trustworthy.