

ON NEWFOUNDLAND'S
WRECK-STREWN COAST

IN ordinary times the wreck of the *Florist*, known to hundreds of Americans who have made the voyage up north to Newfoundland, would probably still be calling forth expressions of horror and sympathy. She and her sister ship, *Stephano*, sunk off Nantucket by a German submarine while commanders of American destroyers stood by helpless—carried passengers to and fro between New York, Halifax, and St. John's for many years, with few delays, and always with an assuring feeling of confidence in the officers and crews, mostly made up of hardy Newfoundlanders, whose knowledge of the sea begins in childhood. But the skill and superb knowledge of small boats in heavy seas shown by the crew of the *Florist*, no doubt many others would have been lost. If I were going to be shipwrecked again—I was on another ship that went on the rocks off Sambro, near Halifax—I think I'd prefer to take my chances with a Newfoundland crew. They know the sea as few know it—know its power, savagery, the relentless toll it takes year after year of the men who fish along the rocky and precipitous Newfoundland shores, or go down in the spring to the ice of the sealing grounds.

It may never be fully determined, or at least made public, how a captain could even in thick weather run his ship on the rocks so soon after leaving St. John's. My surmise is that he was running without his log, and miscalculated the distance he had covered. Cape Race is a turning-point. In his case the turn was made too soon, apparently. It's mighty easy to make such a mistake, and I don't believe there is a master afloat who hasn't had narrow escapes from such dangers, or who would make any other criticism than to say, "Hard luck!" and put the blame on the wind and tide and thick weather and the utter impossibility of seeing anything from which to determine bearings. Every sailor man knows that slowing down and stopping in thick weather near the coast are full of danger. Tidal currents are especially strong along the Newfoundland coast, and snow and ice added tremendously to the captain's problem. Both the *Stephano* and *Florist* were ships of great strength, their bows being heavily reinforced for the work of bucking the ice in the annual spring drive for seals in White Bay. Only recently, many New Yorkers will remember, the *Florist* was plugging her way up the North River, making a channel in our own Arctic home waters. Her spoon bow was made to ride up on the floes and heavy ice, when her weight smashed them and made a channel of open water.

In the early spring both of these ships were used to go down to the sealing grounds, and they gave employment to hundreds at a time of year when there is little else to do. Newfoundland is largely dependent for her food supplies upon the United States, and her great fishing trade has more and more been finding an outlet in this country. The larger part of the population is entirely dependent upon the fisheries. The people of the little ports along the coast, even under good conditions, find it hard to make both ends meet during the long winter, when many of the ports are completely shut off by the ice. Many Americans who have enjoyed the hospitality of the Newfoundlanders, or who have spent their summers helping the good work of the Grenfell Missions at St. Anthony and Battle Harbor, will take a keen and very sympathetic interest in the loss of these ships, and will wonder how their work can be carried on. It is a country of immense possibilities, as yet but little developed beyond the coast.

The casual visitor who may journey along the black Newfoundland shores, perhaps as far as the Labrador, will wonder how any one could want to live there. The rock-bound coasts, the great inland barrens, the seemingly ever-present fogs on the coast, and very limited opportunities for employment—outside of fishing there is little enough to do for the larger part of the people—offer few inducements for settlers. But it is a hardy race that has made its home on its shores, built the little homes that border the bays and hang on the rocks of the tiny fishing ports. Some of these houses literally stand on stilts, supported along the steep cliffsides in the same way as are the platforms called "flakes" that the visitor wonders over as he sails into the narrow entrance of the harbor of St. John's. These flakes, for drying fish, are typical of the entire coast. You will see them along the shores of every little harbor. A traveller who goes no farther than St. John's, and drives out to Quidi Vidi, Torbay, Middle Cove, Portugal Cove, will get a good idea of the simple, limited lives of the fishing people.

The fishing season is a very short one, from about June until September, and the catch for the small fisherman is always a matter of speculation. The hand-liners who jig or fish with bait go out in their little punts in fair weather and foul, lie to (in the rough seas along the rocky shores) with a jigger sail set, and trust to luck. The cold waters, the ever-menacing fogs, and the floating icebergs make it a hardship for even the experienced, but it is fish or starve for thousands, and even with good fishing the barest of living. The long winters leave many of the fishermen in debt for supplies, and

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they start the new season with a handicap and with little hope of ever getting square. The middleman and the storekeepers own many of them body and soul.

Passing a little fleet of punts bobbing about in the choppy seas in the gray of the early morning, here and there you will see smoke rising from a boat, the sign of a breakfast of hot tea and fish. Some of the boats seem without occupants until you get alongside and can look down into them, and then you will probably see two tired men or a man and a boy lying asleep in the bottom. (Every Newfoundland boy is a skilled fisherman and can handle a boat like an old sailor.)

Four or five dollars a day they may earn with fair luck, but there are many days when luck is not fair. The work is hard, the exposure to the cold fogs and the icy spray brings rheumatism, and the percentage of tuberculosis cases in the island is appallingly large. In spite of Dr. Grenfell's efforts, the people have not yet learned that fresh air is their best medicine. In the winter many of the little houses are sealed tight, the windows never opened.

A fine, independent, kindly, hospitable, and honest folk, these Newfoundlanders, splendid seamen in an emergency, real vikings of the bleak northern waters. All winter the ice floats along the shores, great bergs often blocking the entrances to the little harbors.

A month or so after the *Titanic* went down I was possessed with the idea of going north in the hope of getting among the icebergs—I wanted to see them at close hand. The thought of them fascinated me. Those silent messengers of the land of eternal snow and ice, gray ghosts, embodiments of the spirit of the north, that drift in procession with the ocean currents and at the wind's will; to lie in wait, maybe, for some luckless skipper, and at last to topple over and die, become a part of the salt seas at the bidding of the sun.

There had been no year in the recollection of men who go down to the sea in ships when such a fleet of giant icebergs has been seen so far south as in 1912. Their menace to navigation was a very real and constant one, and hardly a ship that passed along the Newfoundland banks but had a report of ice written in her log. The great tragedy of the sea, the loss of the *Titanic*, would probably not have happened in a normal year of ice—and it is normal conditions that ships expect to meet and for which they are prepared.

I left New York on a summer day, the tar on the docks was soft from the scorching heat, and even the breeze from the bay was hot. It was the beginning of the scorching hot spells of July. A few days later I was talking with the officers of the ship about the number of icebergs they had passed on their last trip, and of the ships that had gone north and never been heard of, "been caught and chewed up in the ice." As we went farther north some of the passengers began to talk of the *Titanic* and to inquire how near we were to where she went down, and how soon we might expect to see ice. The evening before we passed Cape Race there was every indication of an attack of nerves developing here and there. I heard several say that they thought they would "sit up quite late." It was a fine clear night of stars, fortunately, and I had the highest regard for the carefulness and experience of the officers of the *Florist*—their business to sail along the coast, across the boggy Bay of Fundy, and find their way into the wonderful harbor of St. John's. I had icebergs on my mind as I turned in, and though I intended going much farther north I was eager to see the first one that came within range. My steward promised to call me in the morning if any bergs came within range of the camera.

There was a distinct thrill in waking to a vigorous hammering on my door and the call of "On deck, sir, icebergs in sight." We were nearing Cape Race, and away off to port, near shore, was a glistering mass of ice that stood out with startling distinctness against the black, rocky shores. We passed several other smaller pieces and one big berg right at the mouth of St. John's harbor. A few days later I was bound for Labrador. After the second day out icebergs became as ships that we passed continually, day and night. I tried counting them for a while, but gave it up. As far as the eye could see they loomed up on either side—all shapes and sizes—pinnacled towers that looked like some great marble cathedral shining in the sun, Greek galleys, the head of a great bearded lion, every conceivable shape and form, modelled by the sun and waters. As we passed near some of them we heard the sound of running water and could see the grooves of deep blue cut by cascades of water made by the melting snow and ice. One giant berg looked, a mile long and a hundred feet high, a great flat cake of solid ice enough to supply New York all summer. Where the water had cut the grooves there were exquisite tones of blue and green. Nearly all of the bergs showed projecting ledges under water, light green in color. It was one of those ledges that was supposed to have cut into the vitals of the *Titanic*.

Many Newfoundlanders have a great admiration for the United States, and they will listen with eager interest to stories of the country "up-along." The writer has fished with them, sailed with them, been in the ice with them, and has learned to have a profound respect for their sturdy independence and quiet kind-

liness in the face of hard conditions. Some of the little ports away up north, once the scenes of old speculative mining enterprises, are pathetic in their aspect of abandonment. Many families who built their tiny homes on the rocky bluffs, lured there by the promise of permanent employment, have never been able to go elsewhere, and the men have gone back to their fishing.

Newfoundland shores are wonderfully picturesque, for miles and miles the great rocky cliffs rising abruptly from the water. Many days they are hidden by the fog, when only occasional glimpses of some giant headland is to be had with a temporary shift of the wind. I remember sailing into Trinity Bay in bright sunshine; half an hour later everything was lost in a dense gray smother that chilled to the bone. Down anchor and wait for a change of wind, for in the gray, blind distance beyond icebergs were lying in wait, not one or two, but hosts of them, floating silently along with the wind and tide. There are wonderful harbors all along the bleak coast, of which St. John's is typical: a narrow entrance between high rocky cliffs, water deep enough to float the mightiest ships. In Portage Harbor the entire British fleet could hide and find anchorage room.

In Mr. Reader, chief engineer of the *Florist*, the line lost a fine seaman and the world a man typical of the best traditions of the sea. He was a man of much more than ordinary intelligence and thoughtfulness, a book-lover and traveller, who had seen much of the world in its best sense. On one of my trips north, in the *Florist* it was my good fortune to win his friendship, and to be invited into his cabin to talk over many things, the sea, his old home (he was an Englishman born), his hope of some day retiring and living with his family in a home he was building, or intending to buy in Halifax. It was from him that I heard many stories of his ship's experience in the ice on the spring seal hunt. I had hoped some day to make the trip myself, and had expressed the wish that when the time came I should make the trip with him. He made the story of the work of the killing of the helpless white-coats—the new-born babies of the great seal world—a vivid and a pitiful one. It was sheer brutal slaughter of the innocents—ruthless and merciless killing for gain, the old fight for existence between man and nature. The seal-hunt affords employment for hundreds of Newfoundlanders at a time when there is nothing else for them to do, and when the long winter has left many of them without a dollar.

Captain James, mentioned in the dispatches as being on the *Florist*, but not in command, I knew as the first officer of the *Florist* some years ago. I remember standing on the bridge one day when there was a heavy sea running and we were kept busy ducking the spray and listening to many yams of the sailormen. One of his remarks was that "most sailors are men with open minds—they meet many people, see much of the world, look at it pretty straight, and learn a lot if they only have a friendly spirit."

Down along the shores north of St. John's you see many of the fishermen and boys who go out before dawn in their little punts and come back if they have luck with a boat load of cod or hake, which represents a fair day's wage.

On one trip that took me to Labrador, I met a native who had come aboard our ship to mail a letter; he gave it to me and I noticed that it had no stamp; I called his attention to the matter, and he remarked that his daughter, told him it was all ready for mailing and that he had no money. I said, "I'll put a stamp on it and mail it for you." He stared at me a moment and remarked, "You'll do that for a stranger?" I said, "Of course; you'd do the same for me, wouldn't you?" "I'll be damned if I would, sir."

In the course of our later conversation he spoke of "that man Peary now," of his pluck and persistence. He also said, "Fishing is a hard life, sir," and on my saying I was from New York, "You enjoys this, sir?" Of the fishing in the cold fog early in the morning he remarked, "I tell you, sir, we fishermen be some cold." I batted down my ears and puts on my mittens. But upon a reference to the heat in New York he said, "Bring me there and we couldn't stand it."

The *Florist* and *Stephano* were modern ships equal in many respects to the transatlantic liners. They were the connecting links between the United States and Newfoundland, and the steamer tourist travel brought thousands of dollars of American money to the shops of St. John's. The ten days at sea with a day each way at Halifax made a restful and diverting summer excursion. Cape Race has a bad record, but the great ocean graveyard of the North lies off Sable Island. Here the bottom of the sea is strewn with hundreds of vessels that have gone to the Port of Missing Ships.—J. B. Carrington, in *The New York Evening Post*.

ELMSVILLE, N. B.

March 26.

A communication has been received from Howard Reed, who recently entered the hospital at St. John suffering from an affected foot, that he expects soon to return home and that an operation to his foot will not be necessary as at first supposed.

The Red Cross Society will meet at the home of Mrs. Albert Maguire on Thursday next.

Mr. and Mrs. Hazen Burton have returned home after spending the week-end with Mr. and Mrs. Henry Dyer.

Inspector McLean visited our school recently.

Easter service is appointed to be held at Christ Church at 4 o'clock p.m., to be conducted by the rector, Rev. D. W. Blackall. The regular business meeting of the church will be held on the Monday morning following.

Mrs. Harry Atchison visited friends at Chamcook on Sunday last.

LORD'S COVE, D. I.

March 26.

Mr. and Mrs. Moan Lambert are rejoicing over the arrival of a baby girl on March 25.

Mr. Harry E. Lambert, of Lambertville, was a visitor on Sunday with Mr. and Mrs. A. H. Parker.

Mrs. E. B. Lambert, of Lambertville, visited her mother, Mrs. B. Simpson, on Wednesday.

Miss Edith Rogerson, of Leonardville, visited Mrs. Grant A. Stuart on Saturday. A large number of young folks from Leonardville attended the Drama here on Saturday evening.

Mrs. A. A. Stuart is training her Sunday School class for a concert to take place in T. L. Treacarten's Hall on Saturday evening, the 30th.

The ladies of this place are preparing an Easter concert to take place in the Church Sunday evening, the 31st.

Mrs. Audley Richardson and her children are visiting her parents, Capt. and Mrs. G. I. Stuart.

Listen for joyous wedding bells in Lord's Cove near Easter time.

The Red Cross will meet at the home of Mrs. C. A. Lambert on Monday evening.

The Women's Institute met at the Old Church on Tuesday afternoon for Red Cross work.

Mr. J. Garnet's sawing machine has been busy all day at the homes of Mr. Seward Parker and Mr. Austin Parker.

The following Drama, Cranberry Corners, in Four Acts was presented by the Young people of Lord's Cove in T. L. Treacarten's Hall on Saturday evening last.

Programme

Tom Dexter,	Harland Pendleton
Sydney Everett,	Bertie Morang
Andrew Dexter	Raymond Treacarten
Hezekiah Hopkins	Harry Lambert
Nathan Speck	Herbert Cammick
Ben Latham	Gifford Haddon
Carlotta Bannister	Anna Treacarten
Anastasia Bannister	Arla Lambert
Amelia Dexter	Verna Barker
Miss Muslin	Cora Lord
Bella Ann	Ida Greenlaw
Florine	Avis Lord

Synopsis

Opening Chorus—"It's a Long Long Trail."

Act I—Scene at Ferndale Farm on a July afternoon—Andrew and Hezekiah in a hair pulling set to.

Band Selection
Act II—Scene same as in Act I a few days later.

Band Selection
Act III—Scene, a handsomely furnished parlor in the New York home of Mrs. Bannister—Time three months later.

Band Selection
Act IV—Scene sitting room at Ferndale Farm—Time in the evening, about three weeks after that in Act 3.

Band Selection.

FAIRHAVEN, D. I.

March 26.

Mr. Isaiah Wentworth returned on Saturday from Calais, where his wife is an inmate of the Hospital for a few weeks.

We are glad to hear that Mr. F. C. Calder is steadily improving, and will be able to return home soon.

Miss Hilda Black returned from Moncton this week. She has been attending school there for a number of weeks.

Mr. Alonzo Calder is again at home after spending the winter in Calais with his son, Capt. Tom Calder.

Quite a number of young folks from here attended the drama held at Lord's Cove on Saturday evening.

We are very fortunate in having Miss Louise De Mille for teacher here this winter. She takes a real interest in the children, and those who care to try are doing well.

Miss Marietta Thompson has resumed her duties as clerk in W. S. Wentworth's store.

Mrs. Foster Calder and son, Harold, are visiting Mrs. John Hundy in Calais for a few weeks.

The large quantities of ice have completely destroyed many of the weirs.

CAMPOBELLO

March 26.

The feature of the week was a chopping bee on Thursday for the benefit of St. Anne's church. The ladies of the congregation prepared a hot dinner, while the members of the young ladies Auxiliary assisted in serving. The day was one of pleasure as well as labor.

Miss Beattie Kelly, of Eastport, spent the past week with friends here.

Miss Hattie Calder, assistant at the post-office, is enjoying a short vacation with Capt. and Mrs. Meade Malloch and family at Lubec, Me. Miss Mamie Calder fills the vacancy in her absence.

The many friends of J. Percy Byron, a hero of the war, were right glad to see him visiting his old home last week. Mr. Byron was once gassed and twice wounded at the front, was invalided to Canada about one year ago, has recovered finely, is in fine spirits, can describe thrilling battle-field scenes, and is anticipating full convalescence to do his bit again.

Miss Christine Calder is enjoying a visit at her home here.

The public schools will close this week for a short Easter vacation.

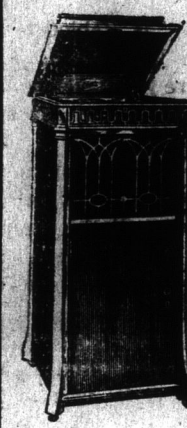
The Sewing Circle was hospitably entertained on Thursday evening at the home of Mrs. Henry Calder.

Mrs. George Byron, who has been ill is gradually recovering.

Mr. Paul Flockton, of Massachusetts, is visiting at his home here.

Despite the severe weather a few spring birds have already put in their appearance.

The Thimble Club held a social hour at Mrs. Herbert Kelly's on Wednesday evening.



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