

# OFFICIAL INVESTIGATION; "NEWFOUNDLAND" DISASTER.

Saturday, April 11.  
George Tuff (sworn)—continued—  
This is my fourth spring in the Newfoundland. The first spring we had a wireless apparatus and that is what we should have had this spring. I am sure that had we the wireless aboard of her this spring this disaster would not have occurred. Our ship could have got in touch with the other steamers and they would have come to our assistance.

The first mile and a half from the Newfoundland to the Stephano was fairly good ice for travelling on as the ice was this spring, and from that on it could not have been much worse.

As we neared the Stephano the ice got a little better for travelling on. I don't think the Stephano could have forced her way through the jam not nearly way to the Newfoundland than where they picked us up on the first day.

When I started off to the Newfoundland I took the hindmost place, which is the hardest place. The reason of this is that when coming across small cracks where water is the first men copy across it on a small pan of ice, but after a number have gone over it, the pan may become broken, with the result that those following may have to travel some distance around before finding a lead, or other opportunity of getting, and by this time the front men are some considerable distance ahead.

### Storm Getting Worse

When I and Stanley Andrews started with the sick men in company with another volunteer, the storm was not at its worst, but it was getting worse. Stanley Andrews is alive in hospital, but I do not know about the other. The path was winding everywhere.

It is not part of my duty to go out with a crew like that, and that is the reason why I was not provided with a compass.

When I was going to the Stephano she was steaming about in different directions. I had my "mug up" in Captain Kean's dining room. Captain Kean came down off the bridge and came to me in the room.

When Captain Kean came in the dining room he told me that I was likely to pan 1,000 or 1,500 seals. I also asked the captain about the seals generally, and he told me. He told me to the S.W.

Before I left I went back to the bridge with him. I was wearing amber glasses while I was on the bridge with the captain. Before leaving the Stephano Captain Kean showed me the direction of the Newfoundland, and I took the bearings myself—S.S. After wearing glasses and taking them off it is not as easy to see as those who do not wear them at all.

### To Take Them to Seal

Captain Kean told me he was going to take me to a spot of seals and nearer our own ship. The Stephano was coming towards us before we reached her.

When I was taking my "mug up" I don't know what course the Stephano was taking. I do not remember any conversation between Capt. Wes. Kean and myself about staying aboard the Stephano that night if the weather

came on, or if we stayed in the neighborhood where we were going panning seals.

When we left the Stephano the snow was mild, and I thought it would clear up or turn to a mild and we should be able to get back to the Newfoundland all right.

When I was on the bridge with Captain A. Kean I said "Captain, I think we are going to have some weather, but it is mild," and I am not so sure of his answer. I do not recollect what Captain Kean said. I don't remember the words he used. I do not recollect the effect of the words he used. Capt. Kean did not tell me there was a bad storm coming on. He did not suggest any kind of a storm as far as I can remember. I fancy he made some answer but I don't remember what he said. Whatever the captain said to me it gave me no alarm whatever as to the weather. What was on my mind when I was talking to Capt. Kean was getting the seals. I was giving no thought to bad weather.

### No Protest

I never for one minute protested to Capt. Kean about my men leaving the Stephano and more than that not one of my men ever mentioned weather to me while I was on the Stephano. Not one of master watches for one minute objected to me to their leaving the Stephano. None of my master watches reported to me that any of our men did object to leaving the Stephano. I have heard nobody object as far as I can remember.

In looking over the windward side of the Stephano before leaving her I noticed the ice was looser than on the starboard side and there was not a pan near to jump on. The condition on the windward side was not due to any stress of weather or wind that was on at the time. The order to get over the starboard side was not due to the fact that a storm was raging, nor were the ice conditions due to that fact.

There was nothing extraordinary in the Stephano going off and leaving us. When I left the Stephano before twelve I was not anxious about the weather.

### Began to Get Anxious

It did not come into my mind then about getting back to our ship but about a quarter to one I began to get anxious about the weather and about getting back to the Newfoundland. At that time I began to fear that the weather was not going to clear away, and I became anxious to get back to the ship, the whole lot of us. I did not at this time have one thought of getting back to the Stephano. I did not know whether that would have been possible or not.

I did not know how far off the Stephano was at this time. I cannot remember seeing her after I got across her head. I think she slowed. I did not look out for the Stephano at quarter to one because she was gone out of sight, beyond that I looked all around and did not see her.

At a quarter to one o'clock I made the remark that I never saw a better chance to be out all night on the ice. The last time I saw Dawson the master watch was on Wednesday after

noon when I was going towards the Bellaventure. The news of the Bellaventure being in view revived him I understand. He had been lying down and I was told he was raised and placed against a pinnacle. He was in a bad state, almost a dying man. He was not in a fit condition to take charge of men. At this time it was every man for himself; each man was trying to save his own life.

This was about a half-hour before sunset on Wednesday evening. This is the reason why no master of the watch was left in charge of any man behind.

### Simply Followed.

The masters of the watch were not ordered to come with me, but simply followed me up as they were active and able men.

On Tuesday night the noise of the gale would prevent any whistle of the Newfoundland being heard by us more than half a mile.

Our men knew the Stephano was in the seals because I told them all in the morning. Perhaps half the crowd did not know where they were going when we were going towards the Stephano on Tuesday morn.

I do not know to what to attribute the disaster. I did not know of it in time to prevent it. I did not think I would be justified to turn back when the other men turned back on Tuesday morning.

In my own conscience I would be justified in leaving the Stephano and going to look for seals. Between the time I left the Stephano a little before 12, and a quarter to one, the storm had increased, and this determined me to abandon the seals and make for the Newfoundland.

The hearing adjourned at 5 p.m. until Monday at 10 o'clock.

### Captain Kean's Evidence.

Captain Abram Kean (sworn).—I was captain of the Stephano at the seal fishery this spring. I have been at the fishery 41 years, 26 as master of steamers, and two years master of sailing vessels, six years captain of steel ships, the first being the Florizel.

Our position on Tuesday, March 30th, was S.E. of Cape Bonavista. The Florizel and Newfoundland were south of me. The Bonaventure to the north west. I sighted the smoke of the Bellaventure, she was a bit to the north.

Some time during that day I informed the Newfoundland that there were seals in that direction. When I sighted the Newfoundland on the morning of the 30th the Florizel was nearest the Newfoundland. Sent them a wireless asking them to get the Newfoundland's news and send it to me. He did so and informed me that the Newfoundland had taken 400 whitecoats last Saturday about 5 miles south of where he was then and that the captain of Newfoundland was of opinion that there was a spot of young harps west of his position then.

### Position of Ships.

I now put in plan showing positions of ships on morning of the 31st. The Bellaventure is not on this plan as she was out of sight. Where you see the Stephano's flag at the edge of the ice that is the position she

was in when we got into the small ice where the seals lay on Monday night. As the bulk of the seals lay to the N.W. my men worked in that direction all that evening to pan the seals leaving a small spot of seals on my port hand untouched.

Where you see Stephano marked "5 a.m. on March 31st" is the position I reached at 8 p.m. in the evening of the 30th and burned down for the night.

The positions of the Bonaventure, Florizel and Newfoundland on the plan are the relative positions of these ships from us when daylight came on March 31st.

Early in the morning I commenced putting my men in the ice seals and steamed in N.W. direction for probably two miles. The Florizel and Bonaventure had put down their crews and commenced work in the heavy ice. After they saw us place our men on the ice and seeing that we had more seals and easier ice the Florizel picked up her crew with the exception of a few men and steamed into the N.W. of our men and put his men on the same patch of seals that we were on.

### Three Ships in Company.

The Bonaventure did the same thing later in the day and commenced work on the live seals of where the Florizel's men had finished.

After dropping my men I came back to where you see "Stephano Mar. 31st 5 a.m." on the plan, and commenced picking up dead seals of the evening before.

At 9 a.m. on the 31st the second hand reported that the Newfoundland's crew had left their ship to walk towards us. At 10 a.m. I sighted them from the bridge. I saw they were bound to board us.

At 10:40 where the Stephano is marked on the plan I turned and went towards Newfoundland's crew and picked them up at position where you see Florizel's flag marked on the edge of the big ice.

When I turned for the Newfoundland's crew I called to my chief cook and told him to have dinner ready for Newfoundland's crew as I was going for them. He replied that everything was all right.

When I got them on board I ordered every man to get a dinner, and advised some of my own crew about the deck to show the Newfoundland's crew the different places they had to go to get their dinner.

### Led by Tuff.

When the Newfoundland's crew came alongside I noticed they were led by the second hand named George Tuff, and I was proud of it, because I knew him to be a good practical man.

After ordering the men to their dinner, I gave orders to my second hand to steam down to where we had put a flag in our wake on the evening of the 30th, that we would place the Newfoundland's crew on the spot of seals which we had left on our port hand the evening before.

I then asked Tuff down below in my own private dining room to get a meal. While there we exchanged views. I said to him, "It's no use for me to take you into the N.W. on the string of seals that we are on. They lie in a

very narrow string, and ahead the Florizel has foreloaded my men, and the Bonaventure is going in to forelead the Florizel's crew, and by the time you would reach any live seals you would be from 12 to 14 miles from your ship. But we left a nice spot of seals yesterday evening on our port hand, where, I am sure, you will pan from 1,000 to 1,500 seals, if they have not taken to water. And when you get on those seals you will two miles nearer your own ship than you were when I took you on board."

### Advised How to Start.

When he had had his meal, I said, "Now, George, if you are finished I want you to get your crew after they have had their dinner, and we have to get ahead to our work as quick as possible, because some of my men must be five or six miles from us now."

He appeared to be just as willing and as anxious to get over as I was to send him away.

All the crew that I saw appeared to be in the very best of spirits coming out of the castles where they got their dinner, most of them smoking their pipes.

I asked my second hand whether he could see the flag we had left in our wake yesterday, and he called out to me that it was just a little on our port bow.

I then ordered the engines stopped and the wheel starboarded to press the vessel tight on the ice, and shouted out, "Now, boys, if you have all had your dinner, every man get out on the starboard side and get clear of the head of the ship, because I want to get ahead at my own work as quick as possible," which they accordingly did.

### Steamed Back.

I then went full speed ahead with a fast wheel, and steamed back to where I had dropped my men to haul pans together at a position on the plan where you can see the Stephano marked at 10:40 a.m.

So far as I can remember the sky commenced to get overcast at about 10 a.m.

It had been a magnificent morning before that, as fine as I ever saw at the ice in the early morning. The sky was looking dark to the south at 10 a.m., but had more the appearance of a mild day than anything else.

When I put the Newfoundland's men down there was a scattered peck of snow falling and very soft and little or no wind of any consequence from the southeast.

I said to the second hand, Tuff, "Now, George, come up on the bridge and take the bearing of your ship." Going along to the compass myself and taking the bearings of the Newfoundland, Tuff standing by my side and remarked "there she is bearing due southeast."

### Took Bearings.

He glanced at the compass and remarked "Southeast," which left me the impression that he saw her quite as plain as I did myself, but I am surprised to see in his evidence that he says that he did not see her at the time.

Tuff then remarked to me: "Cap-

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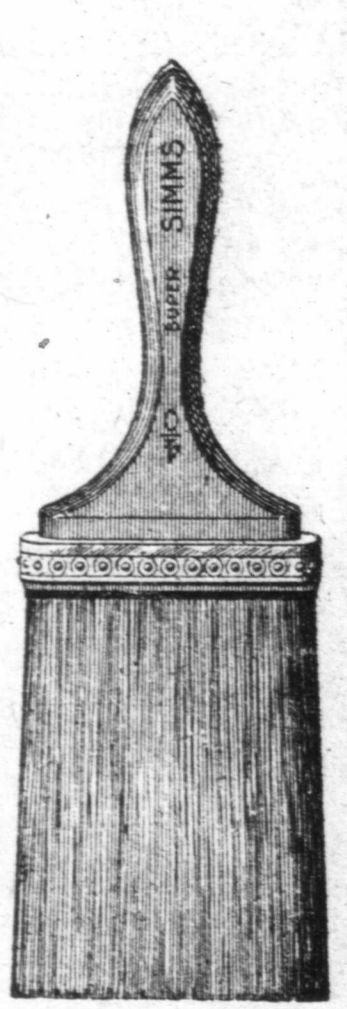
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