

The Man of The Merchant

He Proved His Courage and Daring.

By PETER VAUX

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No sooner did the senior engineer hear the peremptory summons than he hurried from the crowded wardroom. "Poor devil! Did you notice his face, Bellamy?" said the second engineer, addressing the third paymaster. "He went as pale as death. When the dence does Torshell eat and sleep, Naylen? He never seems to be off duty."

"The surgeon twitched his spruce eyebrows."

"Oh, maybe, our senior engineer—our man of the merchant marine!" said he in his usual flippant, exasperating tone. "He'll go the same as Chieftain if he worries don't cease. No human being, much less Torshell, can stand for any length of time the state of affairs in this boat's engine room and stokeholds. It's enough to drive any man mad!"

"Oh! Is really not well, then? We all know the complaint of Patients of the Naval Service, as the fustiest terms be."

Naylen shrugged his shoulders. "Our senior engineer went into sick bay to let this R. N. R. fellow shine, did he?" was his tart rejoinder. "Too much strain and unrest have knocked him off his legs. And so maybe is the man we must depend on now."

Said the paymaster in his big, raucous voice: "That is what happens with these understaffed engine rooms and insufficient repairs. Here we are, the latest of the lame ducks of the division and fall in the column, with a reserve chap out of an easy, cozy, ten knot merchantman handling our engines, and rickety old machines they are. God alone knows what'll happen with him and his untried nerve when we pick the enemy up again!"

"A jolly good thing for us the enemy are just as much worried with breakdowns," was the consoling remark from the other end of the table. "The Bunk, the Freya, the Jem and—"

"I wouldn't indict the dockyard on the insufficient repairs point, Bellamy," interrupted the second. "My lords were responsible. They wouldn't enlarge the yards, make new ones or lease out repairs, so as to have all the necessary work for mobilization copied with the quietest. But it is odd how she was passed out with the starboard cylinder cover not remedied. Of course nobody'll be held responsible, as usual!"

Bellamy nodded, turning from scolding the harassed steward. He replied slowly. "But yet when an R. N. R. fellow can pop up and take seniority over the regular service, as in this boat, you can't expect—"

"Oh, here we are again!" the second broke in with. "Jealousies as usual. Torshell is as good as any engineer. By George," he cried, listening intently, "the engines are slowing down!"

Torshell had approached Captain Widdrington and the "first," who lingered in the chart house discussing recent instructions. The senior engineer had coughed slightly to intimate his presence. The captain looked up, a frown sweeping his hard face on marking him.

"Sir," cried the engineer, "the port—"

"One moment, sir!" was the short answer. "This isn't a steam bus." And Torshell, again saluting, had stepped back, his pallid face blood red and his teeth hard clenched and grinding. The wary, diplomatic first just then cheerily nodded aside to him.

He let himself rock to the vessel's jangling among the cumbersome masses of sea. Since he had joined, off the way, laid liner, his had been hard luck. He felt acutely the general discontent against him; but, notwithstanding all, his mettle was yet strong. It was the snobbish crowd in the wardroom and the unpleasant bearing of his subordinates that caused his discomfort of mind.

Suddenly he had held in his breath and unwittingly stepped toward the bridge ladder. The first drew himself back from the chart, darting a look of surprise at Torshell. But the captain's steel blue eyes flamed with sudden anger.

"Good heavens, sir! Four engines aren't slowing down?"

Torshell saluted. "Port air pump, sir."

"This drives a man mad!" cried Widdrington, crashing his big fist upon the table. "Nothing but defects, defects! Can ye drive engines at all, you miserable merchantman? What d'ye want to slacken down to? What's wrong this time? You?"

That second came a tremendous jarring and crunching beneath their feet. The great ship was shaken like a thing of straw. An appalling hammering followed, chaotic and deafening. Gray steam surged through hatchways, ventilators and companions.

The senior engineer had rushed from the bridge. As he raced amidships he snatched the sacking of the backs of some of the "black squad" dumping hoses overboard, grabbed at a quarter-master's oilskins and shoved them all upon him.

"Garret an' Eburn an' Mr. Jerroll in port alleyway?" was the answer to

his shout from the artificers now in safety. It reached his ear as he stepped down into the uproar of smashing, clashing metal.

With heightened anxiety and fear, Widdrington stared at the steam still outpouring. The thunderous clanking of ponderous machinery galloping loose beat frightfully into his ear. With much more of it bludge plates would be started.

It was then that a clear eyed, cinder burnt signalman came hurrying along. "Flagship flingin' out 'Chase' signals, sir!" was his report.

III.

When Torshell again dragged himself on the bridge he was a mere unshapely mass, held together by swaths of lint. Widdrington stepped hastily to him and helped him up the last rungs of the ladder. The captain looked into the seamed and scalded face, nearly hidden beneath bandages. Said he heartily: "By heavens, ye've picked these men over their lives to you. Ye've pluck!" And with this certificate forthcoming at last for service done he dismissed the case for heroism.

"But about this breakdown—what can you do? Our east wing scouts are in touch with the enemy, and here am I not doing five knots. Never a shot to be fired, and ahead they've got all the work. Can you do nothing with these starboard engines?"

"They are in a pretty bad fix, but I'll do my best to work them for a time at least."

The senior engineer staggered to a deep wallow of the stricken vessel as a tumultuous swell tilted her casemated broadside. He would have fallen headlong if the officers had not sprung forward and caught him under the arms. He moaned: "My knee! My knee! It's smashed!"

Half an hour later he was superintending his officers and men, who, stripped to their trousers, were clearing away the wreck. Every order that issued peremptorily from his blanched lips went full and fast to the mark and afforded succinct knowledge and confidence to the grimy, sweating workers. There were unbridled obedience and execution, for each now understood his man. Hunched shoulders, yet knowing that he held the lives of 700 men and that great, glorious ship in his hand, he maintained his will indomitable. Not a detail escaped his eye or slipped his brain.

IV.

Night had long since dropped. The immense boat lay lurching from side to side, plunging wildly under the tons of green seas that thundered like battering rams against her bows and forecastle while the high walled swell broke roaring.

"Make for northwest trade patrol. Regain nearest port. Much regret breakdown," had been the sorely harassed vice admiral's latest message.

Captain Widdrington, a barrel swathed in shawls and many waterproofs, was with the first and third lieutenants on the afterbridge. Wearily he turned from straining his eyes over the faded summits of yeasty seas and distincted the brine off his face and bushy eyebrows with the flat of his left hand. He was cautiously making his way up the bridge when suddenly he stopped short. A quartermaster shouted: "D'ye hear that, sir?"

A faint boom had rung through the stormy wind, ominous, like a dying world's last echo.

The first dodged a scattered spout of sea. "If the enemy drive down on us will you fight, sir?"

"Yes, by heavens! As well go down fightin' as not. If we can work ship it's the very weather for us. See Torshell. I must risk the port engines."

And as Widdrington carefully made his way on deck "Firin' east-southeast" was the lookout's hail.

He climbed down the thirty odd feet of slippery ladder into the maze of motionless machinery. As he touched the senior engineer on the elbow he noted his inert and quivering lips.

"Can't say," was the answer. "Maybe we will. But every man is workin' his best. It is in my power the starboard mills 'I run."

"If we can't steam God help us!" ejaculated the first.

V.

As the luckless warship hung herself about the iron flooring beneath the worst men seamen lither and thither, throwing them off their feet. She evened herself in a broad valley of the mountainous sea wastes.

Torshell yelled: "Let her go! Let her go!"

A breaking bill of wild water was hurrying itself on the weather quarter just as the chains rattled through the blocks. Torshell lurched forward and then, to the boat's violent heeling, toppled helplessly between the hinder column of the intermediate engine and the hanging mass of cylinder gear.

"Lower! Lower! Never mind me!" came in an intense shriek. Their racked and knotted arms pulled desperately, and the disconnected workings were lowered clear down to the floor plates.

The maimed and bleeding mass of flesh that had been Torshell, R. N. R., was slipping into the crank pit, but Jerroll and some others held it fast. And it came that as the wailing voice moaned "Give her steam! Give her steam! Mind the links!" the mad pealing of the telegraph made his assistant leap off the engine and the two cut off accounts of the enemy were opening a heavy cannonading.

The dull grunting of guns and the quickening thud of his engines the senior engineer did not hear. Cried Naylen, on his knees beside him: "The best man among us, and we never knew it!"

The fighting ship went bravely into action, but the man of the merchant marine would never again give ear.

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Retail prices for foodstuffs in the Dominion as a whole show no cause for anxiety. Through its correspondence, the Labor Department is keeping in the closest possible touch with the course of prices in every district.

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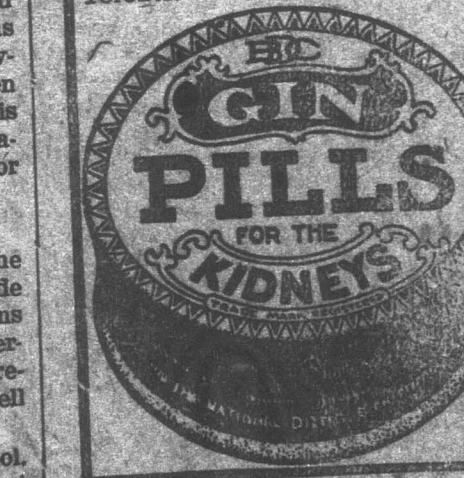
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Worker For Good Roads.

Mr. William A. McLean, who at the recent convention of the American Roadbuilders Association, was elected president, has been for some time identified with the good roads cause in Ontario. He was assistant city engineer of St. Thomas, and became first lieutenant of "Good Roads Campbell" as assistant engineer of highways for the province of Ontario. When Mr. Campbell's abilities found recognition at Ottawa, Mr. W. A. McLean stepped into his shoes, and ever since has been forcefully demonstrating that he is well fit to wear them. He is the "working" member of the new Ontario road commission which is now directing affairs, and which will give Ontario a highway system second to none by hitching up the constructive work of the counties and townships.

Mr. McLean was born in Belmont, Ont., forty-three years ago.

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HON. MARTIN BURRELL, Minister of Agriculture.

The Empire Needs Many Foods

In the past Great Britain has imported immense quantities of these staple foods from Russia, France, Belgium, Germany and Austria-Hungary as shown by the following:

Average Imports Years 1910-1913	Millions of bushels rather than millions of acres should be Canada's aim.	By "possibilities" is meant the actual results which have been obtained by our Experimental Farms and by many farmers. These "possibilities" have been obtained under intensive cultivation methods and conditions not altogether possible on the average farm, yet they suggest the great possibilities of increased production. By greater care in the selection of seed, more thorough cultivation, fertilization, better drainage, the average could be raised by at least one-third. That in itself would add at least \$150,000,000 to the annual income of Canada from the farm. It would be a great service to the Empire, and this is the year in which to do it.
Wheat..... 23,439,729 bush.	That there is abundant reason to expect larger returns from the same acre is conclusively shown when we compare the present production of the average production of the present time with the possible production. Note the following brief table which shows the average in 1914 and possible production per acre.	
Oats..... 13,687,204 "		
Barley..... 15,192,359 "		
Corn..... 7,621,574 "		
Peas..... 703,053 "		
Beans..... 639,563 "		
Potatoes..... 4,721,590 "		
Onions..... 271,539 "		
Meat..... 26,609,734 lbs.		
Eggs..... 121,112,215 doz.		
Butter and Cheese..... 61,705,353 lbs.		
The above mentioned sources of supply of staple foods are now, in the main, cut off as a result of the war. Great Britain is looking to Canada to supply a large share of the shortage. Every individual farmer has a duty to perform.		
	Average Possible	
	Fall Wheat..... 20.43 52.	
	Spring Wheat..... 14.24 33.	
	Barley..... 18.15 69.	
	Oats..... 26.90 84.	
	Corn..... 70. 220.	
	Corn Bushels..... 19. 19.	
	Peas..... 15.33 57.	
	Beans..... 18.79 70.	
	Potatoes..... 119.40 479.	
	Turnips..... 4.12 1000.	

For information and bulletins write to Canadian Department of Agriculture, Ottawa, Canada

Increase Your Live Stock

Breeding stock are to-day Canada's most valuable asset. The one outstanding feature of the world's farming is that there will soon be a great shortage of meat supplies. Have you breeding stock? Plan to increase your live stock. Europe and the British Isles, as well as Canada, will pay higher prices for beef, mutton, and pork in the very near future. Do not sacrifice now. Remember that live stock is the only basis for prosperous agriculture. Your farming, not speculation.

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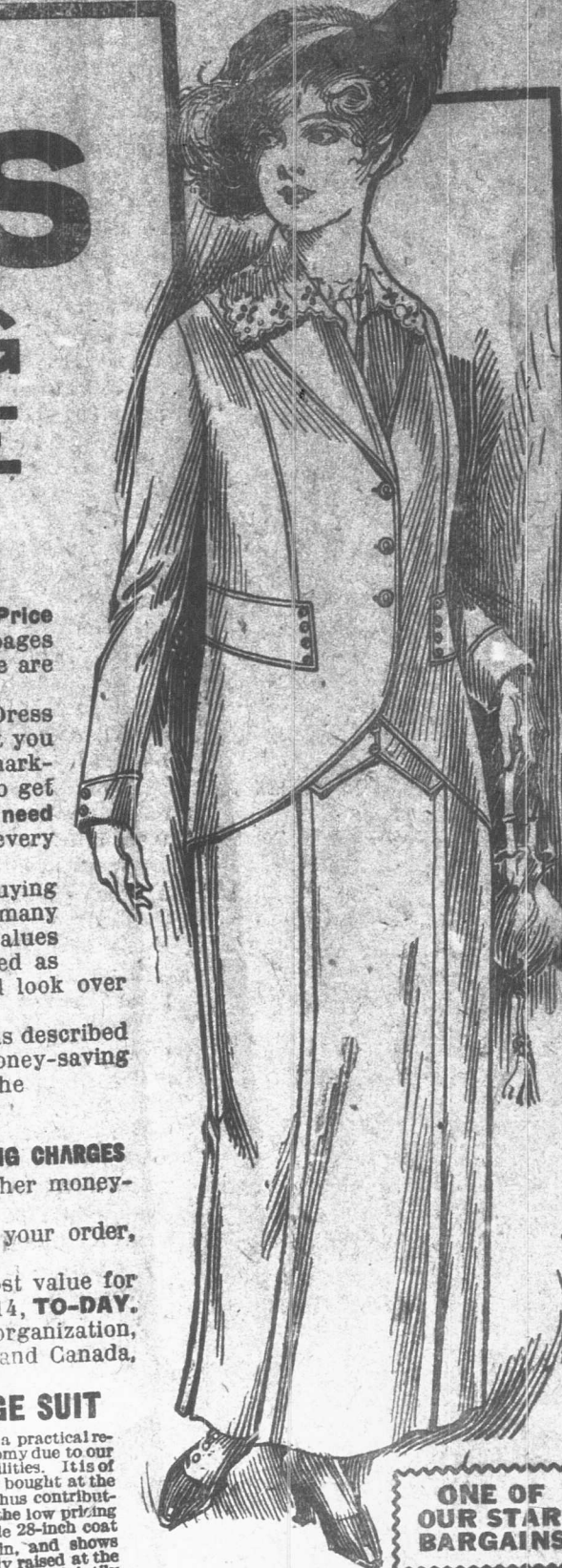
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