

INSURANCE COMPANIES SWINDLED.

In the autumn of 1867 Captain Waddell was in command of a first-class schooner named the *Explorer*, bound from Windsor to the Manitoulin Island, having on board whiskey and mill machinery valued at \$18,000, and on which was a heavy insurance. The crew consisted of a captain, two seamen, and a boy.

On the 25th of November the vessel was lost with all hands excepting the captain. He reported at the time that the schooner struck lightly on the Shingle Shoals, five miles from Tobermory, that she rolled partly over, displacing the cargo. The captain ordered the men to trim ship, and while they were in the hold endeavouring to do so, she again lurched and went down, the captain having a narrow escape from meeting death with his crew. He eventually reached the shore with the yawl boat.

This was the report given by Captain Waddell. It sounded fishy to the insurance companies at the time and something like an investigation was made. It resulted in nothing, however, and the insurance was eventually paid. The captain secured command of another vessel on Lake Huron, but his success as a navigator appeared to have deserted him. It is said that he had a dread of the coast in the neighbourhood of Tobermory, and in every sense was a changed man. In 1873 he was swept off the deck of his vessel near Point Clark, about two miles south of Kincardine, and since then it is said that two of the captain's sons have been drowned and their bodies never recovered. People who had their suspicions about the loss of the *Explorer* made mention of the facts, and did not scruple about drawing inferences that were considered by many to be harsh.

About the time of Waddell's death, it was discovered that the *Explorer* was lying in ninety-four feet of water, off Tobermory, and not at the Shingle Shoals. From that time until the present efforts have been made to raise the vessel. The \$18,000 cargo was the dazzling bait which continuously dangled before the eyes of the mariners, and for which so much fishing has been done in vain.

About three weeks ago Capt. H. N. Jex, of Port Huron, master of the steambarge *Victoria*, fitted up appliances for raising the *Explorer*, and proceeded to Tobermory. After commencing operations it was soon discovered that the vessel's cargo instead of being worth \$18,000 was not worth five cents. The vessel was lying in ninety-four feet of water on a sandy bed, and was in a good state of preservation. The bulwarks and other portions of the upper part of the deck had been torn away in previous attempts to move her. The divers found a body half-way out of the companion way, the door of the cabin having been wrenched open, evidently by the man whose body was found. The hatches were spiked down. On the hatches being removed, and the hold examined, the divers found that the cargo consisted of about fifteen tons of stone, and that twelve one and a-half inch auger holes had been made in the bottom of the vessel. After six days' labour the *Explorer* was raised and pumped out. On Friday, says the report from which this account is taken, the barge *Victoria* arrived at Kincardine, having the hull of the *Explorer* in tow. On examining the hull that had been submerged for fifteen years it was clear that the vessel had been well and substantially built. The timbers appeared to be sound as ever, but the iron was badly eaten away with rust. The cost of raising the vessel will be about \$1,600, while the hull if sold under the hammer would not fetch \$200. While the *Victoria* was in port the *Explorer* was seized at the instance of a Mr. Lewis, of Goderich, who, it appears, claims to have purchased the sunken vessel from the insurance companies.

Many are the conjectures in regard to the "why and wherefore" of sinking the *Explorer*. One of the divers reasoned the question out in this wise. He said that from appearances he supposed that the cargo of mill machinery and whiskey had been landed in the United States, the captain and crew being partners in the transaction. She then proceeded on her course to the Manitoulin Island. The auger holes were bored in the bottom of the vessel and plugged until a spot favourable for sinking the craft would be reached. The captain might have had doubts about his men being able to keep the secret, and besides if they were out of the way he would not be obliged to divide the insurance. It therefore would not be a difficult matter to give the crew enough whiskey to make them incapably drunk, and lock them in the cabin. The plugs could then be knocked out of the hold, the hatches spiked, and the captain escape. Whether the above is the correct theory or not it is not likely to be ever known. One thing, however, is certain. The *Explorer* was scuttled and the insurance companies swindled.

RAILWAYS IN CHINA.

China has at last opened her doors to that great enemy of superstition, the railway. It will be remembered that a few years ago an experimental road of two feet gauge was built by a company of Englishmen from Shanghai to Woosung, a distance of nine miles, but so great was the prejudice of the people against this modern institution that it was only allowed to be operated a few weeks when the government took possession, tore up the track, and sent the rails, locomotives and cars out of the country. But China is growing more progressive, and now we learn from Mr. Chenng Lenng, an officer of the Imperial consular service, who passed through Chicago a few days ago, that another railway is about to be undertaken. It is to run from Kaiping coal mine to the sea shore, a distance of about 80 miles, and will be built by a Chinese company, assisted by the government, which is favorable to the enterprise. Some of the material has already arrived from England and work will be commenced in a few months, and Mr. Lenng believes that as soon as the wheels on this road commence to move the remaining prejudice against railways, which he says prevails among the lower classes

only and not among the more intelligent, will pass away, and ere long a net work of lines will cover the country. Already a great line, to extend across the empire, is being talked of. The telegraph has for some time been established and is extended through northern China, but it has been discovered that without railways it is difficult to repair the telegraph lines and to make the most of them. The road now under way is intended chiefly for the transportation of coal, though a general freight and passenger business will doubtless spring up and grow. The material and equipment for the new road will be of English manufacture.

LAUNCHING A SHIP BY MEANS OF ELECTRICITY.

In launching the English turret ship *Colossus*, March 21, electricity was employed by means of an ingenious contrivance which connected the dog shores with a large magnet; and in a similar manner the christening was performed. Simultaneously with the breaking of the bottle over the ship's nose a musical instrument inside an ornamented box was set at work, and "Rule Britannia" was the result. By this time the course was reported clear, and, as the ship gave evidence of anxiety to leave the cradle, it was deemed advisable, though ten minutes before time, to let her go. The pressure of the launching button was followed by a heavy thud. The weight had fallen and the dog shores had been knocked away. The ship moved instantly, and the huge mass of 4,420 tons—the heaviest ever launched from the Portsmouth yard—glided gracefully down the inclined plane into the harbor, amid the music of the bands and the enthusiastic cheers of the multitude.

THE BANK OF ENGLAND.

The Bank of England covers nearly five acres, and includes most of a parish, with the churchyard now known in bank parlance as "the Garden," and a very neat little garden it is. Long after it had ceased to be a burial ground, an ancient servant of the bank, of amazing stature, was buried there for safe keeping by request of his friends, who feared that some enterprising museum would go for his skeleton. The bank occupies the site also of the house and garden of Mr. Houlston, its first Governor, a Huguenot, of exemplary character, whose very wealthy descendants hold the estates he bought near London. The first Deputy-Governor, Mr. Godfrey, nephew of the unfortunate Sir Edmund Berry Godfrey—not Sir Edmondsbury, as it is usually written—a famous magistrate, murdered in the Titus Oates days, was killed at the siege of Namur, whither he had gone on bank business, having insisted on accompanying William III. to the trenches. The bank is guarded by a detachment of the Foot Guards, who take possession about five o'clock every evening. The officer on guard is allowed a handsome dinner for himself and two friends, with plenty of wine, but the friends have to depart at eleven o'clock. The men do not know who will be on the back guard, so collusion is impossible. The building has no external windows, and contains acres of vaults. In the day-time it is guarded by its own porters, and by policemen, many of them in plain clothes, who are always on the watch.

Explorations in Africa, on an extended scale, are now going on. From reports recently sent to England, and from articles published in Germany, it appears that discoveries of a practical value have been made. In a letter to the London Athenaeum from Axim, a town on the Guinea coast, the writer says, "Our short visit to the gold fields has shown that we have here a California like that of 1850," and notes that the sub-soil, twenty to forty feet thick, yields from one ounce to four per ton. In the *Geographische Blätter*, of Bremen, appears an article on the Gold Coast, in which the writer speaks hopefully of mining ventures now in progress. Specimens of ore which he had brought home from the colony had been examined by a geologist of high rank, who "doubts whether there exists any country in the world which holds out so fair a hope of a continuous supply of gold as do the inland districts of the Gold Coast." There is also good reason to believe that tin will soon become an important product of the country. It would be strange indeed if the centre of production of the precious metal should be shifted half-way round the globe. Gold, however, has this peculiarity, it is never likely to be made an article of competition. In spite of the immense production within the past thirty years in California and Australia, its rated value has not once been sensibly diminished.—*Transcript*.

ELECTRICITY v. GAS.—Mr. William Crookes, an eminent English scientist, has published the results of experiments in lighting his house in South Kensington with electricity. He generates the electricity by means of a small Burgen machine, driven by a 3½-horse-power Otto gas engine. This machinery is placed in the cellar, and the effective power of the engine is reduced to two horse-power by contrivances for deafening it so as to make it perfectly noiseless. The amount of gas required per hour to drive the engine is 110 cubic feet, and electricity enough is generated for 22 twenty-candle lamps. The same quantity of gas would supply 22 gas lights, allowing each burner five feet per hour. Mr. Crookes estimates that to obtain "not an equal amount of light, but a fairly good light from gas," to replace what his electrical installation supplies, thirty gas lights, each burning five cubic feet per hour, would be required. The economy is then in part represented by 150 feet of gas per hour as against 110. Many other advantages are claimed, as the absence of soot and smoke, of the hot fumes of burning gas, and of fire-risk. It is not claimed that this experiment is by any means the most economical, but it is adduced as proving that the cost of motive power is not to prove a barrier to the use of electrical lighting in private houses.

EUROPEAN POSTAL TRAFFIC.—A recent article in the *Deutsche Industrie Zeitung*, on European postal traffic in 1880, shows that the total number of articles sent was 6,206,577,592. Letters and postal cards were in the proportion of 61.3 per cent.; newspapers, 22.9; book packets and patterns, 15.8. England was first, with 27.2 per cent. of the whole; Germany second, with 23.3 per cent.; France third, with 19.6 per cent. Nearly everywhere there was an increase of letters and postal cards per head of the population. A curious estimate shows that in England each inhabitant allows ten days between two letters; in Switzerland, two weeks; in Germany, twenty days; in Russia, 280 days; in Bulgaria, about three years. There were 55,479 post offices in 1880—an average of one to every 5,859.9 inhabitants. In Switzerland the way to a post office is on an average one and one-half miles, but in Russia it is twenty-two miles. The employees numbered 250,655. The postal traffic has increased 58.8 per cent. in eight years, and in the whole of Europe the surplus is about \$27,000,000.

WHOLESALE "KITEFLYING."—Two months ago money was advanced on "sterling drafts" to New York stock dealers, which have had to be met in part by remittances of cash, and now fresh issues of these drafts are being made in anticipation of the forthcoming crops. Had it not been for resort to expedients of this kind, or, in the language of the city to "kite-flying," the strain upon the exchanges must have led to a much larger export of specie. As we pointed out some time ago, this strain is, in all probability, aggravated by the rapidity with which the States are paying off debt, since much of the debt now being paid off is held in Europe. But suppose the crop should be late or bad? Then we may expect a financial crisis in the Union of the very first order. When a nation is reduced to the expediency of raising large amounts on accommodation bills in order to avert a ruinous export of specie, trusting to off chance of a good harvest and a large export demand for its raw produce for the means to meet these bills, its situation must be considered the reverse of wholesome.—*Pall Mall Gazette*.

BRONZE COINAGE AT THE ENGLISH MINT.—The bronze coinage executed at the Mint during last year was not large, having only amounted to £17,400. Tenders were issued for the supply of fifty tons of pence, halfpence, and farthings by a private firm, and the tender of Messrs. Ralph Heaton & Sons, of Birmingham, accepted, was for a coinage in the following proportions: Pence, 35 tons, £15,086; halfpence, 10 tons, £3,733 6s. 8d.; farthings, 5 tons, £1,866 13s. 4d.; total, £21,280. The amount of bronze coin issued during the year was £23,405, bringing the total amount issued, since the first introduction of the bronze coinage in 1860, to £1,498,013. The amount issued in 1877 was £48,800; in 1873, £43,745; in 1874, £62,110; in 1875, £70,595; and it has decreased each year since then. The issue in 1881 consisted of £15,405 in pence, £5,200 in halfpence, and £2,800 in farthings, as against £19,640 in pence, £6,058 in halfpence, and £2,772 in farthings in 1880. The demand, therefore, continues to diminish.

NEW YORK AS A MANUFACTURING CENTER.—New York city is popularly regarded as a great commercial center whose prosperity is based entirely upon its foreign trade. It is true that it is the commercial metropolis of the continent; it is also true, but less generally known, that New York is the greatest manufacturing center in the world. The products of the factories of the city proper turn out products worth nearly \$450,000,000 a year, while those of its chief suburbs swell the total to something near \$750,000,000. This vast sum is within a hundred million dollars of the entire foreign commerce of the port. If the manufacturing progress continues at its present rate a very few years will see the value of manufactured products equal or exceed the city's import and export trade.

EPITAPH—COMMERCIAL.—The *Colonies and India* of May 19 has the following paragraph among its "Notes": "Expired, on the 15th inst., the French Commercial Treaty, at the age of 22 years. Thus has departed, amid slight manifestations of regret, the most cherished child of the strange union of Free Trade and Protection, whose birth was greeted with such enthusiasm. If the succession eventually devolves upon a commercial treaty of union between England and her Colonies, which shall transfer to them the favors which the late French Treaty granted to France, any lingering regrets for the latter will certainly be confined to the other side of the Channel."

RESPONSIBILITY OF TELEGRAPH COMPANIES.—In the case of Washer, White & King, of Atchison, against the Western Union Telegraph Company, in the United States Circuit Court, Leavenworth, Kan., judgment for \$1,135.53 has been rendered for plaintiffs, who are grain dealers, and sent a dispatch to St. Louis to a commission firm to "sell fifteen July wheat," which was received "sell fifty July wheat," and for which error of the Telegraph Company damages were claimed. The Western Union Company claimed that the message was not repeated, and that, therefore, the Company was not liable.

CERTIFIED CHECKS.—IMPORTANT.—The following decision of the United States Court of Appeals is of interest. The Court decided in the case of *Bills vs. The National Park Bank* that an attachment of money in bank belonging to a defendant debtor will hold the funds, although the same is represented by a certified cheque outstanding and still in the hands of the defendant. In this case the certified cheque had been redeposited in another account at the same bank, but it was shown on the trial that the money was still under the control of the defendant debtor, and that the bank had knowledge of the fact.

Steel pens may not be weighty, but weighty articles reviews and judgments can be written with them. Esterbrook's are the standard.