

## A MID-WINTER WRECK.

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 "A rocket in the night, a ship in distress."  
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Residents along the shore made every possible effort to rescue the survivor in the rigging, but, *lacking proper outfits*, they were unable to succeed.—*Gazette*.

Time, mid-winter; scene, a rocky coast, a turbulent sea and a ship on fire. As the main attraction of some thrilling melo-drama, at which the audience in a comfortable theatre sits and shudders at the perilous position of the hero, a picture of suffering, misery and death serves to pleasantly excite us. We watch with bated breath the stage-ship gradually disappear beneath the mimic sea, but we make no attempt at rescue, because we know that when the coastguardsmen waiting in the wings receive their cue, we are to witness a realistic representation of saving people from a stranded ship. Rockets, ropes, breech-buoys and actors will play their parts so perfectly that, when the audience disperses, the dwellers in inland cities will praise paternal governments for providing similar life-saving apparatus to that displayed in the drama, for actual use on such occasions in real life. That governments deserve no such praise is shown by the condition of things on the iron-bound coast of Newfoundland, as revealed by the story of a recent shipwreck.

At daybreak on Thursday of last week a large two-masted steamer was seen to be ashore and on fire by the residents at St. Mary's Bay, Newfoundland. The iron-bound coast of this island is usually given a wide berth by careful skippers, even in fair weather. Many a stout ship has been lost, owing to the confusing currents and indraughts said to be peculiar to the Bay of Fundy, Cape Race and the southern shores of Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. That a large steamer would seek shelter in St. Mary's Bay from any ordinary Atlantic storm is hardly likely. It is, therefore, probable that the captain of the lost vessel, finding it impossible to control the fire, decided to make for the nearest land. Unfortunately, he ran his ship on a ledge at the base of a cliff, and her fate, and that of the crew and any passengers she may have carried, is told by the people of St. Mary's Bay. They state that, upon arriving at the scene of the disaster, they found the wreck blazing fiercely. Only three men were visible on board. Two were on the bridge and one was in the rigging. Those on the bridge apparently did not abandon hope until 2 o'clock, when, the bridge being carried away, they were drowned. The sole survivor, seeing the sorry fate of his companions, left the rigging, swam to the rocks, and twice struggled to get footing thereon. Failing in this, he swam back to the rigging where, it is supposed, he perished of exposure during the night.

The helpless people on the shore of St. Mary's Bay tell us there is not the slightest prospect that any soul on board escaped death, as the intense mid-winter

cold would surely kill any one who escaped drowning. Thus it would seem the entire company on this unknown ship perished miserably by flood, fire, or frost. Bodies, boats and wreckage are reported as "strewn among the rocks for miles." A severe gale on Friday night seems to have finally disposed of the wreck, and, unless some of the articles washed ashore are identified, another addition will be made to the long list of "missing" ships. These stories of the sea are always sad enough to arouse the strongest feelings of pity among landmen, and perhaps we ought not to regret the loss of that "sole survivor" whose heroic fight for life forms such a striking incident of this tale of shipwreck and death. His recital of the terrible scenes on the burning ship, after striking the rocky coast of Newfoundland on a mid-winter night, would only have added to the heart-breaking grief of the relatives of the dead. Yet, we could almost wish, when reading of the struggle of this strong swimmer from rigging to shore, and back again to cruel death from exposure, that some one like good, brave, honest Ham who figures in "David Copperfield" had been found to attempt the rescue of this possible Steerforth from the rigging of the wreck.

However, even this fearful calamity, the cause of which will never be known, has its lesson. We are told that "residents along the shore made every possible effort to rescue the survivor in the rigging, but, lacking proper outfits, they were unable to succeed." Can it be possible that dwellers on the iron-bound coast of Newfoundland, against which dozens and dozens of fine ships have been dashed, have no rocket apparatus for communicating with stranded vessels, have no breech buoys, no means whatever of helping shipwrecked sailors perishing in sight of land and seeming assistance. What does "every possible effort" mean, in this cruel instance?

It is the duty of any and every government not only to light dangerous headlands, and to buoy hidden rocks, but to have life-saving stations at such points as wrecks are likely to occur. In this case, as in others, ships in distress may fire guns and throw up rockets as the signal for help from the shore, but the active and dauntless fishermen, having no "proper apparatus," are compelled to stand by helpless, while all on board some stranded ship are engulfed before their eyes.

When will some friend of sailors demand that the Government of Canada and Newfoundland take steps towards providing life-saving apparatus at every dangerous point along the coast of our country.

The residents along the shore of St. Mary's Bay report the sad scenes witnessed at this mid-winter wreck, and state they were unable to render assistance because "lacking proper outfits."

We are becoming accustomed but not reconciled to these sorry stories of the sea. But it opens an unpleasant train of thought to find money is so readily subscribed for the prosecution of war, and yet solicited in vain for the nobler purpose of saving life.