POOR DOCUMENT

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THE MESHES OF MISCHANCE

BY GILBERT WINTLE

A Great Human Interest Serial Filled With Action Now Published for the First Time

CHAPTER XIII.—(Continued.)

But the boat had no difficulty, for the ship had nearly lost her way, and, a few hundred fathoms astern, she was seen to stop rowing. Then those who had field-glasses could see someone being helped in, and then the life-buoy pulled in.

Every pair of eyes in the ship was bent on the boat as she came back.

"I say, major," said Lieut. Talbot, of the Royal Artillery, who had been following everything through the medium of an excellent military telescope, "poor chap don't seem—er—burdened with a superfluity of clothing, don'tcherknow; don't you—er—think—er—the ladies——?

But ladies are not so docile as they were in our grandfathers' days, and preferred to remain. Nor was there any reason why they should not do so; for, whatever apparel the rescued individual might or might not have been arrayed in when he was taken out of the water, he was now well-covered enough, having the gunner's pea-jacket on his shoulders and some article of Lascar clothing wrapped round his loins.

He was too weak, apparently, to climb a ladder, so the boat was hoisted till her gunwale was level with the top of the ship's rail; then, under the superintendence of Doctor Smith, the rescued man was carefully lifted on board and at once taken away to be put in a cot. As far as could be seen, he was a youngish man, well-built and good-looking, though the fact that he had some days' growth on a face, which was seemingly supposed to be clean-shaved, gave him rather a common look, and the passengers' verdict was, "A seaman or fireman fallen overboard from a passing ship, perhaps an emigrant."

But they were wrong, as the doctor's report, when, half an hour or so later, he came up to make it, showed. The man was a first-class passenger, who had fallen overboard from a steamer bound to Australia. He had been standing on the rail near the stern, trying to look over the awning at something that was going on aloft, and, in stepping round a stanchion, had somehow slipped and fallen into the water. No one had seen him, and he did not know how long he had been in the sea, but he supposed two or three hours at least. He had got rid of his clothing, and of his watch, but kept on a money belt, with a good sum in notes and some gold.

"He's a plucky chap," said the doctor, "and seems to have kept his head wonderfully. "He says that he did not want to sacrifice the money, but he was going to slip off the belt if we had not seen him."

"Is he very weak, doctor?" asked Ruth.

"A bit played out; but nothing to speak of. He thought himself about at the other end of his tether, but he wasn't, I could tell that from his pulse. He's had some Bovril, and some grog; and tomorrow morning he'll be as well as any of us."

"What shall we do with him?" asked someone.

"That depends on what he wants done. If he likes to be treated as a distressed mariner, I suppose we shall put him ashore in a boat at Gibraltar; but very likely, as he is going to Australia, he will decide to pay his passage to Port Said, or even to Singapore. He will be able to get another steamer there, and will arrive at Sydney, or wherever it is, at the same time as his baggage, perhaps sooner."

At this point the steward came to announce that afternoon tea was ready in the saloon, and the meeting broke up. One person on board, at all events, was grateful to Mr. Martin, the name of the rescued, and that was the stewardess. He had made the ladies get up at least three days sooner than usual.

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"Allow me to introduce Mr. Martin, Mrs. Aylmer, Mrs. Abbey, Miss Aylmer," said Doctor Smith, as the ladies came on deck for a little stroll before breakfast next day.

"How do you do. I hope you are quite recovered?" said Mrs. Aylmer.

"Yes, thanks; not much the matter with me now, I think, though I was pretty well done up, I admit, when you fished me out of the ocean——"

"Oh! I was not in the boat," replied Mrs. Aylmer, quite simply and seriously.

If proof was needed that Mr. Martin was a man of the world, used to good society, it was furnished in the fact that he did not laugh at this remark, that is, except with his eyes, as he replied—

"No, ladies are hardly expected to do that. I said 'you' meaning the ship as a whole. It is to the ship that I feel grateful; I don't suppose Columbus was half as glad to see land as I was to see her great black bows coming right down on top of me yesterday. You have no idea of the horrible sense of absolute solitude that one gets swimming all by oneself in the middle of the sea. It was that that I had to fight against quite as much as fatigue."

"It must have been terrible," said Mrs. Abbey, shuddering. "How brave you must be to——"

But Mr. Martin was not going to be gushed over.

"Please don't," he said; "I don't think I was brave at all; or, rather, put it this way, that everyone is brave when they can't help it; and that was just my case. However, I'm all right now; so it is all well that ends well!"

"Shall you go ashore at Malta?" asked Ruth.

"Only to buy a couple of suits of flannels and a few other things. At present I am arrayed in borrowed plumes, borrowed promiscuously from anyone and everyone. I shan't leave the ship; I have paid my passage on to Singapore; it was the least I could do, when she was polite enough to call for me specially like that."

"Here's another plume," said Mr. Talbot, coming up with a new pipe in his hand.

"Thanks awfully," said Martin. "I'm like the chap in the song, 'Everybody's awfully good to me.'"

It was not long before Mr. Martin became a general favorite on board. The sensational manner of his arrival had something to do with this; but only at first. His fellow passengers soon learned to like him for his own sake. He was companionable, talked well, good-natured, being always ready to play with the children, who adored him; in fact, in every way an acquisition. By the time Malta was reached, his beard had grown sufficiently to be trimmed, and he looked, as he laughingly put it, a little less like a tramp. Really, he looked a very handsome fellow.

One result of Mr. Martin's beard, was to stop Doctor Smith, and his brother Arthur, the third officer, from continually worrying their brains to remember when they had seen him before. That they had seen him, they were both nearly certain; but when, or where, neither of them could recall. However as the days passed, and Martin's appearance changed more each day with his beard's growth, they became less certain. Before Port Said was reached, they had decided that they must have been mistaken.

Arthur Smith and Martin gradually struck up quite a friendship. The young sailor had done most of his apprenticeship time, and a couple of voyages as mate as well, in sailing vessels trading in the East. More especially in the farther East, the Straits Settlements, Borneo, Siam, and China. And Martin was never tired of hearing him talk of his experiences in these regions.

"You talk as if you were thinking of settling there," Smith said one day, after a long talk on this subject.

Martin had never given out what he was, nor had he allowed it to be gathered from his conversation. Now he was more communicative.

"Oh-h-h! I don't know," he said, with a yawn. "I'm a man at a loose end at present. I was going to Australia, to make my fortune, or lose myself, or something, when I fell into the sea. And now, except my baggage, which I can easily get by writing for it, I'm no more tied to Australia than to any other place."

"Come to Canada, like my brother and I are going to," suggested Arthur Smith.

"Doesn't tempt me. Good place to settle down, but that is not exactly what I am after at present. I want to do a bit of roving. I think I shall have a look round at Singapore."

"That won't take you long," said Arthur Smith, grinning. "Of all the beastliest places——"

"Still that is where people who know the Far East are to be met with. If I can only get someone to give me a job up country somewhere, any sort of a job, let me alone for getting on afterwards. On these occasions it is always the getting one's nose in somewhere at first that is the hard part."

"But, my dear fellow," replied Arthur Smith, rather astonished, "the sort of job that you would get in that way would be a pretty rough one, I expect. If it had been me now; I've done four years' apprenticeship on board a beastly old wind-jammer, and after that one can do anything; but you——"

"The more reason that I should start at once, without losing any more time. Why, man, you don't suppose I expected to wear kid gloves in Australia, do you?"

"Well, if that is what you think of doing," replied Arthur Smith, "I daresay I might be of some use to you. I know a good many people in Singapore, and, as we shall probably be there a couple of days, I daresay I shall be able to introduce you to a few."

But, as the sequel will show, Mr. Martin had no need to put his friend to that trouble.

From Malta to Port Said, the voyage continued without incident. At Port Said were English papers, of a date a week later than that on which the Aracca had sailed, but on the subject on which at least four people on board—for, of course, the reader has recognized Martin as Carey—were most interested, they told nothing new. However, the Anglo-Ruritanian affair being brought up in a conversation with the two Smiths that evening, he learned for the first time who the brothers were. He had hardly seen them for more than a couple of minutes at Ealing, but he trembled to think of what might have been the consequences had Miss Maude been on board.

Carey had not spoken at random when he proposed to seek employment in the Far East. On the contrary, the more he thought over the plan, the more he liked it. If he had thought that he had left any clue, he might have deemed it advisable, the better to cover his tracks, to tranship at Singapore to some distant port, perhaps to South America. But feeling sure, as he did, that he had really succeeded in completely losing his identity, what would be the object in pursuing such a course? It might even prove dangerous, since South American ports would probably be watched for him. "After all," he said to himself, "I want to make a career for myself; and, with a little capital, which I have, I shall probably make one more easily in the East than anywhere else. Then again there is nothing so calculated to alter a man's appearance as ten years in the East. Sun-burned and bearded, and thirty-four, who will know me in England when I go back in ten years' time; that is, if I do go back." Then, with his sanguine temperament, he began to build airy castles of an Eastern life: riches, a big estate in some hilly district, the life of a big nabob and a Rajah Brooke combined. He would get a K.C.B., or a K.C.S.I., or whatever was the proper decoration, and be a power in the land. He would——

"Oh! Mr. Martin! do come over and look at these flying fish. There are millions of them."

The Aracca, after a splendid trip across the Indian Ocean, was now nearly abreast of the southern point of Ceylon. The speaker was Dorothy Abbey. She and her sister carried off Carey, whom they had come to look on as their own peculiar property, to the opposite side of the ship.

"Look! look! look! I do wish we could catch some Are flying fish good to eat, Mr. Martin?"

"Yes, very good; but that common wild kind is not nearly so nice as the tame sort, that nest in the Islands."

"What! fish build nests?" asked little Lois, her eyes wide open.

"Why not?" asked Carey gravely. "Don't they fly? Keeping a flying-fish farm is one of the great industries here They cross them with pheasants and hatch the eggs in incubators. Isn't that so, Captain?"

"Yes," stolidly corroborated the captain, who had come out of his cabin during this conversation. "But I like the kind crossed with grouse better myself—more delicate," he added meditatively.

Captain Rode had more than a liking, he entertained a genuine respect for this Mr. Martin, who was the only passenger he had ever met who could beat his own stories, and he backed him up accordingly.

A few days later, with a smooth sea, fine weather, and Mr. Martin the most popular man on board, the Aracca cast anchor at Penang.

CHAPTER XIV.

It is an Awful Risk to Have all Your Bugginses in One Basket.

Carey had spent an hour or two escorting Mrs. Aylmer and Ruth in rickshaws; then, as there was nothing to be seen, nothing to be done, and only too much to be smelled, and, as real exercise under the tropical sun was out of the question, they had all come back to the pier.

"Just look at those people, mother," said Ruth, as Carey paid the rickshaw men. "Look, Mr. Martin; is it the governor and his family?"

"Enough style, anyway," replied Carey, regarding with amazement the group at the end of the pier that Ruth had indicated. "Why, they are taking a sampan, and the coolies are putting luggage into it. Do you know, Miss Aylmer, I believe they are new passengers for the Aracca. They'll sink the ship to a surety—those bonnets would do that alone!"

"How horrid," said Ruth; "I suppose we shall be cram full again, like we were before Malta."

To take a sampan themselves they had to come to the same steps, so that comment had now to cease, but the closer view now obtained only served to increase their curiosity.

The group consisted of a really fine-looking, but ridiculously majestic, middle-aged gentleman, evidently the head of the party. He was an Englishman, seemingly; but more like an Englishman on the French stage than a real one, with his Dundreary whiskers, his large sun hat, and his gold-headed cane. Next in order came a middle-aged lady; evidently his wife. She, too, was English—of sorts. Not to put too fine a point on it, she was what is called in the East snuff-and-butter color, or, sometimes more delicately, eight annas to the rupee. To speak plainly, she was a Eurasian. Her maiden name had probably been De Souza, or Da Costa, possibly Montenaro; what her married name was will appear directly. But as for her Dress! how can a mere man hope to describe it? Whatever of laces, of flounces, and trimmings, and high-heeled shoes, and gauziness of parasol, and chains and bracelets, and other jewels stuck about promiscuously, the human frame would carry, she had it all. Only her yellow daughter, by her side, being younger and stronger, could carry more, and did. At least the point is a moot one. The daughter seemed to carry more, but the mother had more room—give it a dead heat. There were also two young men, one white, the other yellow; both awful-looking style. These completed the party. That they were residents was evident from the fluent Malay in which they talked to the coolies and boatmen. There seemed to be so much to arrange that Carey and the Aylmers took their boat and were halfway off to the ship before these people embarked.

Carey was going to suggest that they should wait on deck and watch the other sampan's arrival, but the sun had given Mrs. Aylmer a headache, so she and Ruth went below. Then the Abbey children, who had not been on shore, came running up to fag Carey to swing them, so he, too, had to go off. He saw no more of the new passengers till dinner time, when, one of the smaller tables having been given up to their use, they sat in exclusive state, a blaze of diamonds and shirt fronts, drinking iced champagne and abusing the food.

As the passengers finished dinner and strolled on deck, they found that the ship was just getting under weigh. The executive officers being all on duty, a little knot of passengers formed round the different lights of the channel. Into this little group fussily pushed his way the head of the new-comers.

"Are you one of the officers of this vessel, sir?" he demanded of Doctor Smith, seeing his uniform.

"Yes, I am."

"We shall be passing through the Straits of Malacca tonight, I believe?"

"I believe we shall."

"Very intricate navigation, is it not?"

"I believe so; but as to that I am hardly competent to speak, I am the surgeon. Here comes one of the regular officers. Arthur! come here."

The third officer had been checking cargo all the afternoon, then at his station for getting under weigh, and was now chiefly interested in getting something to eat; but the P. and O. regulations enjoin courtesy to passengers under all circumstances, so he turned politely to his interrogator, and asked how he could be of service? The latter now put the same question which he had just asked the doctor.

"Yes," replied Arthur Smith, "you are right. The Straits of Malacca are rather bothersome; but," he added, smiling, "we've negotiated them a good many times before, and never had any trouble, so you need not be under any apprehension. Now, if you will excuse me, I haven't had any din——"

"One moment, sir, one moment," said his persecutor, buttonholing him, while the rest of his clan closed round to prevent an escape. "I should like to know, for my own satisfaction, how many officers will be on the bridge tonight. The captain—of course, I assume that—but, besides the captain, how——"

"Oh, I don't know!" replied the third officer. "The officer of the watch will be there, naturally; and I take it that the captain will be up and down pretty much all night. That is all."

A look of consternation was exchanged between the different members of the little group, who, however, despite their airs and bad taste in dress, did not have the appearance of being more timorous than other people. Arthur Smith thought that he must have got into the hands of a tribe of lunatics of a new kind, and let it go at that, awaiting developments. His soup and curry seemed farther off than ever. Presently the big man once more took up his parable—

"We expect at least two of the ship's officers, as well as the captain, to be constantly on the bridge—constantly. The agent informed me that every possible precaution would be taken, every possible pre-caution; and I consider that I have a right to expect that——"

"But I assure you, sir, there is not the slightest cause for anxiety. It is a fine night, and the sea is smooth, and this ship has been through the Straits dozens of times before, and——"

"So have we, sir—so have we. Do you suppose, sir, that I have spent my life in this portion of His Majesty's dominions, and attained to my present position in the commercial community, without having occasionally to make the passage of the Straits of Malacca? Why, sir, I had done so a dozen times before you were born. If I were alone I should not give the matter a thought, sir, not a thought."

The poor third officer now understood less than ever. One thing, however, was plain: this curious individual was a merchant of some importance, and this being so, it would not do to offend him, for merchants influence freights, and freights make dividends. So Mr. Smith said—

"Of course, I am only the third officer, and, for all I know, it may be the captain's intention to spend the whole night on the bridge, he sometimes does so. At all events, I can assure you that he will be there continually through the night, and not have his clothes off at all."

This seemed so far satisfactory that it was in a modified tone that the big man explained—

"You must not think, sir, that we wish to cast any doubts on the professional proficiency of the captain and officers of this ship. Individually, we know, that we are in the best of hands."

Here he looked round on his following, and the big brown lady, and the white young man, and the yellow man all nodded, while the yellow young lady smiled bewitchingly.

"Individually, I repeat, we are quite satisfied; if we are anxious, it is—er—collectively."

Here he paused, as if expecting Mr. Smith to reply; however, the latter could no longer make head or tail of what was meant, and judged it more prudent to keep silence. So the important gentleman continued—

"The occasion is important—more so than it seems. I am John Buggins! Not that that matters," he hastened to add, waving his hand airily, as a king who says, "I am but mortal like yourselves." "What matters is this. My wife, my daughter, and myself are going to Singapore to attend a most important family re-union; and, at the last moment, it so happens that my son, Mr. John Buggins, junior, and my nephew, Mr. Howard Buggins, are likewise called to Singapore, by commercial matters that will not bear delay. So when I tell you, sir, that this ship has on board at this moment every living representative of the Buggins family, you will understand, that is you will—er—appreciate, our anxiety. If anything happened, the Bugginses would be extinct!"

"Yes! yes! I understand. I will let it be known. I assure you that every possible precaution shall be observed—excuse me, I think I see the captain beckoning me."

The third officer dashed up one bridge ladder, then down by the other, and at once dived into the saloon, saw Carey there, and embraced him.

"Oh! hold me! help me! give me whiskey, do something, do! It is more than I can bear. This ship will sink, I know she will. She is carrying all the Bugginses, and she can never do it; no ship could. Go up to them, Martin, comfort them, stay by them; you have been nearly drowned once, so the law of chances makes you the safest companion. Watch over them, don't leave them! Think, ah! think, of a sorrowing world bereft of Bugginses!"

"What the deuce are you talking about?"

But when, after some time, Carey managed to get a coherent story from Arthur Smith, it struck him that this was the very chance he wanted; and he resolved to play it for all it was worth.

Mr. John Buggins was a man of local importance; he would make his acquaintance, and, if he played his cards properly, Mr. John Buggins should be his sponsor in his new life.

Accordingly, he hastened on deck, took an opportunity to introduce himself, and was soon chatting affably with the whole Buggins' clan. He said that he quite sympathised with their anxiety, and, while probably everything was all right and safe, suggested that they might make assurance surer still by adopting the simple expedient of staying on deck all night. If they took the added precaution of bringing up the cork life-jackets, placed in all passengers' cabins by Board of Trade regulation, and either wearing them, or keeping them handy till morning, they would have done all that human foresight could accomplish to avert any possible danger. There was, he pointed out, no real hardship involved in the adoption of this plan, for the nights were so hot that some of the passengers slept on deck habitually from choice. The idea commended itself to the family, and, a steward's services having been requisitioned, four mattresses were brought on deck, and about eleven o'clock, the two ladies in dressing-gowns and cork jackets, and the younger gentlemen in pyjamas and cork jackets, lay down to sleep. Mr. John Buggins, senior, was going to sit up all night to watch, and, despite protests Carey insisted on sitting up with him. Meanwhile the other passengers watched these proceedings in awe-struck admiration.

"The way he humors those lunatics!" said the doctor, laughing, to Miss Aylmer. "He ought to be a showman. But I am afraid he will be tired before morning."

"You should not laugh at them, Doctor Smith," replied Ruth, though hardly able to restrain her own laughter while she spoke. "They may be very nice people; and I am sure that it is very nice to see a family so fond of each other. I thing that Mr. Martin is the only kind man on board the ship."

Like everyone else, Ruth liked Carey.

And the doctor was wrong. Carey sat up all night and was not bored at all. Some strong coffee supplied the necessary wakefulness; and, for the rest, Mr. Buggins was, as is often the case, a really shrewd, successful man of the world, and very interesting to talk with, always provided that the importance of the Buggins family was not the subject of the conversation. Even here there was a good deal of excuse for him. The Buggins family was important in that part of the world; Mr. Buggins' mistake was in not leaving it to other people to say so. And here his upbringing was in fault.

Born in Singapore, his early childhood had been passed amongst native servants; and, when he reached the age at which a white child must be sent to a cooler climate, or suffer in health, he had been sent, not to England, but to the home of a correspondent of the firm in the uplands of Ceylon. Thence he had passed to a public school in India, and thence back to the Straits Settlements to begin his business career. He was thirty before he visited England, and then it was too late; the time for a good course of kicking, which might have been the saving of him, had gone by.

Before morning, Mr. Buggins, senior, had made Carey promise that, as he had been robbed of that night's rest, he would take up his quarters on landing at the Buggins' house at Singapore.

"And as for your future plans, Mr. Martin," added the magistrate, "we can talk them over more at our leisure. There are not many industrial or mining corporations in the Malay States in which I have not got some interest, either direct or indirect; and if, as you say, you are content to begin at the bottom of the ladder, I think we shall have no difficulty in finding a suitable opening."

Thus was once more exemplified the old axiom, that politeness costs nothing and pays well.

CHAPTER XV.

The Great Dominion.

"Any more steerage for the shore? Come along, lads! Come along, miss, please. Over the gangway, into the immigration reception room—right there on your left. Post letters?—why, certainly. Stamps on sale at the counter, right there, by the coffee urn. Come along, pass along, madam, if you please!"

The steerage passengers arriving in Canada generally land at Quebec, the steamer afterwards going on to Montreal. There is a sort of inspection, because so many of the refuse of Continental Europe mix with the desirable British immigrants, that something of the kind has to be done. Of course, the foreigners are welcome too, but not the diseased foreigners. However, this is soon over; and then the new-made Canadian, be he skilled mechanic or street arab, has nothing more to complain of about his welcome.

For those who are going west at once, the very best arrangements are made by the C. P. R., and they are trained off in lots, not too crowded for comfort, and with as little expense to themselves as possible.

For those who propose to seek work in Eastern Canada, are reception societies and agencies without number. To a Scotchman, for instance, the St. Andrew's Home people are ready with hospitality till he can get a place. Then there are Church of England Societies, Catholic Societies, Girls' Friendly Homes, in short, every sort and kind of institution, ready to welcome them and help them on their way.

Horace and Ned had no need to avail themselves of these good folks' kind offices. They had capital, and had explained their case at once, to the Government immigration agent, who met the steamer on arrival, and were among the first trainload to start on the long journey west.

"Heigho!" said Ned, as he dumped down his bundle of bedding, comprising a rug, a straw mattress, and a pillow, with a leather strap to go round the bundle, which the railway sells each immigrant for a small sum, on the seat he shared with Horace, and surveyed the long carriage, or car, as it is termed in Canada; "so this is to be our home for four days. Where do we sleep, I wonder; on the floor?"

For the reader's benefit it may be explained that Winnipeg, which is the capital of Manitoba, for which province Horace and Ned were bound, is situated about the centre of Canada, and, by ordinary trains, is not four, but three days distant from Quebec. By taking the fast trans-continental express, known as the "Imperial, Limited," the tourist can shorten the time still further. But the emigrant is not a tourist. His trains, while as comfortable and suitable as can be arranged, are not fast. Emigrant trains are extra, are not run on any schedule, as a Canadian railwayman would say, and get neither the fastest engines nor the right of way.

"I say, where do we sleep?" asked Ned again of a man who came by in uniform, and whom he rightly judged to be the conductor. "On the floor?"

Canadian conductors are just about as polite a race of officials as the railway world produces—some American ones are not; but that is neither here nor there—and this particular conductor was noted for being quite a father to his trainloads of emigrants. He hailed from the smaller of the two British Isles. The train was about to start, and he was busy; but that did not prevent his stopping to show Ned and Horace how one splendid bedplace was made between the seats, and another, equally good, let down from above.

"An' ut's loike a top ye'll be slapin' too, m'lad, wid the whi-r-r-r o' th' whales for y'r lullaboi!"

Strange as it may sound, the conductor was quite right, the constant "whirr" of the bogie wheels on a well-laid railroad is an incentive to sleep. People sometimes get train-sick, as it is called, after several days' journey; but, unless their general health is bad, it is seldom that they complain of not sleeping well the first night.

While they were still admiring the bedding arrangements, ting! ting! ting! went a great bell, and, at the same time, the train began to move. The bell kept on, and seemed as loud as ever. It was, as they afterwards discovered, the engine bell, always rung on the engine at starting and stopping. To English ears the effect was peculiar, but not unpleasant. It was now getting late, though midsummer, the last of the twilight was rapidly giving place to darkness. All had had a good square meal—at an inclusive cost of twenty-five cents, or one shilling!—at Quebec, and after a pipe apiece our friends spread their mattresses and turned in; many of the other emigrants in that car had done so already. Curtains partitioned off the different bunks, so that a good deal of the final stage of undressing, or the first stage of dressing, is easily done in privacy. In this particular emigrant trains are on exactly the same footing as the most costly and luxurious tourist service that the railway runs. Next morning they awoke to find the train at a standstill, at the Windsor Station, in Montreal.

(To be continued.)

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OFFICIALS HELD UP LIFE BOAT WHILE MEN WERE DROWNING FOR NEED OF IT

Dominion Government Officials on P. E. Island Got Severe Handling in Senate for Red-tapeism and Inhumanity---Railway Agents Demanded $60 for Train to Carry Surf Boat to Save Perishing Sailors---Investigation Promised.

Ottawa, Dec. 5—In the senate Senator Ferguson asked about the plans of the government for establishing life saving stations on Prince Edward Island. He was lead to the inquiry by the wreck of a Norwegian bark on P. E. Island, near East Point. In the latter case red-tapeism of the worst sort had cost men's lives. The vessel was ashore with the men in peril on her decks and in view of persons on the shore. It was found impossible to move the government officials to send aid, so tied were they by rules.

When a private life boat was obtained the officials of the government railway refused to forward it by a special train until $60 was put up. The men were drowning in the meantime. The money for the train was supplied by a private citizen. While the officials of the government were doing nothing toward the rescue of the men, two young men, Austin Grady and William Campbell, put out in a dory, at the peril of their lives, and took three men off the wreck. The deed was a gallant one.

Hon. Mr. Scott said the failure of the government officials to act had been most reprehensible. It would have to be looked into. He said that it was planned to establish life saving stations on P. E. Island.

Senator Ellis said there had been a shocking wreck on the North Shore of New Brunswick. For three or four days men were exposed on a stranded vessel near the shore but beyond aid owing to the absence of life saving appliances. All perished. Soon after this there had been a Norwegian bark cast ashore in the Gulf of St. Lawrence near a lighthouse and every man perished. Senator Ellis thought the time had arrived when there should be life saving stations all along Canada's coasts where there was water-born commerce. Economy may have been a good reason why these stations were not established in the past. Now, however, the revenue of the country was so abundant the government knew how to spend it.

Senator Robertson insisted that there should be an investigation into the conduct of the marine department agent at Charlottetown. With a vessel on the coast, broken in two parts with survivors on each portion, being swept away one by one and dropping into the sea hour after hour and their bodies flung up to the people on the beach who were unable to render aid the government agent had refused to forward the government surf boat from Charlottetown.

Senator Lougheed thought the government open to condemnation for an almost criminal act in tying up the hands of its agents so they could not act in a case like this.

Sir Richard Cartwright said that neither the marine nor any other department of the government ever had issued instructions which could be construed as forbidding its officers to exercise their discretion in such an extreme case as described. The establishment of a general system of life saving stations suggested by Senator Ellis might well engage the attention of the marine department. Including the lakes, Canada had a coast line of 5,000 or 6,000 miles. The cost of equipping the whole would probably be too great to be at once undertaken. However, as many life saving stations as were deemed immediately desirable could be established.

Senator A. A. MacDonald understood that the agent had asked Ottawa for instructions. The people of P. E. Island had given $500 to the young men who had made the gallant rescue. Their bravery should be recognized.

Senator Power declared the government should inquire into the conduct of both the marine agent, who had failed to send the boat, and the railway officials, who had insisted on getting the special train paid for in advance.

Senator McMullen declared that men with so little human feeling should be removed from the public service.

Hon. Mr. Scott intimated that the matter would receive the attention of the government, and the discussion ended.

BIG LOAN COMPANIES TOAMALGAMATE

Toronto, Dec. 5.—(Special)—A merger involving assets of close upon $2,500,000 has just been arranged. The Standard Loan Company, of this city, is taking over the Canadian Savings, Loan and Building Association. While the title of Standard Loan Company is to be retained the deal is practically an amalgamation.

A special general meeting of the shareholders of the Canadian Savings Association to ratify the agreement, has been called for Thursday, January 7th, when, it is expected, the amalgamation will be finally completed.

Chatham Store Damaged by Fire.

Chatham, N. B., Dec. 5—(Special)—Fire was discovered in Joseph Fairbank's dry goods store about 11 o'clock last night. The origin is unknown. The firemen responded promptly and soon had the flames under control. Some of the stock was damaged by fire and water. It is said there was $7,500 insurance on the stock, and $1,500 on the building, which is owned by James Desmond.

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