

PERILS OF THE GULF.

Arrival of the Missing Boats.

Terrible Tale of Suffering.

Statement of Mr. Fraser.

On this ever-memorable occasion, three boats with twenty-two men, including seven passengers, left Cape Traverse for Cape Tormentine, at half-past nine o'clock, Wednesday morning. They had a small compass, but no provisions. The wind was blowing brisk from the east; the ice was running west at the rate of from three to four miles an hour. A snowstorm prevailed, and the thermometer during the day averaged one and one-half degrees below zero. As they proceeded into the Gulf the storm increased in violence. Soon they lost their way, became exhausted, and were carried up and down the Straits by the wind, tide and currents. Towards evening the weather moderated, and Cape Tormentine light loomed up in the distance, but the men were so completely exhausted they could not proceed further towards Cape Tormentine. They then concluded to remain all night by their boats in the Gulf. On Wednesday at sundown the sleet and hail pelted down with painful effect. Towards midnight the thermometer raised to sixteen above zero, and a rain storm set in and continued a short time. The wind changed after midnight and blew a north-west hurricane, and the thermometer fell to sixteen degrees below zero towards daylight on Thursday morning. Then, in the darkness of the Gulf, with a few sparks of fire to warm them and a few drops of water to slake their thirst, their suffering commenced. The third boat had been consumed for fuel, and the newspapers in the mail with their bags were added, but the fire was too feeble to warm bodies famished with hunger and thirst, chilled with exposure, and freezing. At dawn on Thursday Cape Traverse, they thought, could be seen, but a wide stream of lolly, through which it was impossible to pass, lay between them and the Cape. The ice with the boats and men at noon, had drifted towards Crapand. Occasionally a glimpse of the shore could be obtained, and hopes brightened. Then the snow commenced drifting, the cold bit fiercely, the shore was lost to sight, and strong men lay down in the boats to die. About three o'clock, however, the drift cleared away, and the DeSable Presbyterian Kirk was sighted. With renewed hope, the men again made a last effort to reach the shore, and succeeded in striking in near the farm-house of Angus McPhail. A thicket stood between the farm-house and the shore. Some men took refuge here, while Captain Muncey Irving went to the farm-house for assistance. Going to the shore they found the men scattered in all directions, some in the thicket stood silent and motionless against trees while others held them firm in their grasp. Others stood alone with arms extended in a comfortable and happy mood, while others lay prostrate in the snow. It was late in the evening before they were conveyed to the house of Mr. McPhail, where all human kindness and attention was bestowed on them, and every effort was made to relieve them from their terrible sufferings.

At noon to-day, Mr. James Fraser, druggist, Summerside, arrived in this city. He was immediately driven to the Charlottetown Hospital, and was soon surrounded by a host of friends. Among the first callers were Dr. Dodd, Postmaster Brecken, and R. K. Fitzgerald, Esq. Mr. Fraser did not appear to suffer by any means, as he chatted pleasantly to all around him, and answered the volumes of interrogations which came from every mouth. He suffers from frozen toes and a frozen finger, and on the side of his face is a frost patch. Though he expects he will have to suffer the amputation of a few toes, he is thankful to Providence he escaped with so few injuries compared with the rest of his fellow-passengers and the crew. To a representative of THE EXAMINER he made the following statement:—

We left Cape Traverse board ice at 10.15 on Wednesday morning. The crews were composed as follows:—

Boat No. 1—Capt. Newton Muttart, Hector Campbell, Mont Campbell, Eph Bell, James A. Howatt.

Boat No. 2—Captain Muncey Irving, Alex. Muttart, Bluch Robertson, Wm. Howatt, Wm. Campbell.

Boat No. 3—Capt. Hanford Allan, George Allan, John Allan, — Treuholm, Daniel McGlashey.

The passengers were: Dr. McIntyre, M. P. Souris; James A. Morrison, representative of J. S. McLean & Co., Halifax; Aaron Wilson, International Hotel, Summerside; Philip Farrell, Messenger of the House of Commons, Sturgeon, P. E. I.; Mr. Glyndon, clerk in store of J. H. Myrick, Tignish, and Mr. Millet, belonging to the States, who has some friends in Belstar.

A snowstorm was setting in from the east, and the weather generally looked threatening. The ice was running west at, I should say, from three to four miles an hour. The boats were all good and well built for the service; but their equipment was totally inadequate. They were without axes, without compasses, and without any provisions. A small keg of water was all that was

taken for twenty-two men, and only two lucifer matches could be found after searching the boats and pockets of the whole number. Not a lantern was even attached to the boats. In fact there was no preparation whatever for the terrible passage we have undergone. I forgot to mention that there was a small pocket compass in possession of Capt. Muncey Irving, which might or might not be accurate. Immediately on leaving the board ice, Mr. James A. Morrison, one of the passengers, fell through and got wet to the knees, and again when we were two hours on the passage, fell through and got wet to the shoulders. His clothes immediately froze stiff, and he therefore suffered from the start. During the first hour, the ice was fearfully rough, and we experienced great difficulty pulling the boats over it; but after that, we got into large fields of smooth ice and managed to proceed comfortably. Our course was given by Capt. Irving, by the small compass, and we kept this course for four hours. Whether intentionally or not, I feel confident the course was changed, and we, hour after hour, continued our tiresome journey without getting a sight of land. Finally at 5.30 o'clock, p. m., as darkness was approaching, we halted on a tongue-shaped pan of ice, which was surrounded on three sides by water. Capt. Irving then told us he did not know where we were. A consultation was then held between passengers and crews regarding the best means of making ourselves comfortable for the night, and it was unanimously decided to retrace our steps a short distance from the open water. We did so, and made ourselves as comfortable as possible under the circumstances. It was now blowing a half-hurricane. The pelting sleet and hail was hard to face, and we had to move back slowly to a place considered safe for the night. Here we upset two of the boats, placed their gunwales together, and placed the third boat with baggage, etc., to windward, and thus completed a temporary cabin. Then taking some tin off the bottom of the boats they constructed a fireplace and prepared a fuel of oars. When it was prepared, the fact became known that among the whole number of twenty-two men no more than two matches could be found. The most was made of these and the fire was lit. The oars were soon consumed, and it was found necessary to break up one of the boats, but when we came to do this, we found there was no axe. We therefore broke an oar in two, used the handle end and a boat hook, and with these broke up the boat for fuel. The work of breaking up the boat, considering it was strongly kneeed and tinned over, was a difficult job. It was now about eight o'clock. The hail and sleet were blinding and the cold was intense. In company with Jas. Morrison, I spent the night outside the cabin. I "marked time" from eight o'clock on Wednesday evening, till five o'clock on Thursday morning. At times I would get down on a trunk with Morrison, and rest; but the biting frost would never fail to keep me on the move. At five o'clock, in the morning, I went for a first time inside the cabin to warm myself; and I most earnestly pray to God I shall never witness the scene which was then presented to me. Strong men lay around the fire, famished, shivering, and exhausted, while from the smoky cabin, came prayers for relief, and blasphemies intermingled. Occasionally a man, almost overcome by suffocation, would dash through the smoke out of the cabin, and fall exhausted on the ice. Revived by the piercing cold air, he would again return to the smoky cabin to obtain whatever warmth it afforded. Altogether, I thought the night passed quickly. At midnight the wind shifted to the northwest and blew a hurricane, and the weather became colder than ever and thus added to our sufferings. During the night only one of the crew—James Howatt—had his feet frozen, and he was given preference at the fire until they were thawed out. As day dawned on Thursday I fancied I saw land to the southeast, but it was drifting too thick and blowing too hard to make a move. After this I saw land to the westward but they thought it was lolly, and decided it was better not to work towards it. At 8 o'clock we changed the camp because the fire had melted the ice so thin that it was dangerous. After this was done one of the passengers had a pound of small sweet crackers on which the whole number broke their fast—being served with one cracker each;—each cracker might possibly weigh a quarter of an ounce. After this light breakfast we heard a tremendous crash outside. All rushed outside and were amazed to find the ice had parted about fifteen feet from the side of the cabin. In less time, said Mr. Fraser, than it takes to tell it, there was a space of one-eighth of a mile between the pans which separated. The waves then dashed on the pan where we had our cabin and broke it up so rapidly that we had barely time to get up the boats and baggage and move towards the middle of the pan before the site of the cabin was destroyed. In the centre of the pan we pitched our tent again. At noon on Thursday the cold was beyond endurance, the fuel was nearly consumed, and we then looked ahead for fuel to last Thursday night. We reckoned on the balance of the boat, three trunks, a quantity of mail newspaper matter, etc., to last us till Friday morning. By this time most of the men had given up all hope of reaching land, and for my part I think if we had to spend Thursday night in the Gulf there

would be few remaining on Friday morning to tell the terrible tale. At this time few, if any, had hope of ever seeing land. One of the men became quite delirious and thus added to the horrors of the scene. We were all then inside the camp, looking out at intervals. The crew thought it useless to move until they saw something to move for. The passengers wished to move at all events, thinking it best to die on the move than like rats in a hole. About four o'clock we were all lying about inside the boats half asleep, when Muncey Irving went out, and immediately said, "Land ho! not three miles away." Everyone at once scrambled out of the camp, and we all saw the land. Strange to say, the news appeared to be taken very quietly. The men were really half-dazed from weakness, want of food, and a sense of suffocation from being so long confined in the smoky camp. But all went to work willingly, and we packed up everything in the two remaining boats and started for the shore, which turned out to be nearer six or seven miles away than three. Some were only able to follow the boat, holding on, utterly without any strength. But all kept along until we struck the board ice. It was a struggle for life over a hard road. The two crews would often have to combine to move one boat. We had to row through some 300 yards of lolly. We had only four oars between the two boats, and our way was mostly made by rocking the boats in the lolly, and one boat making way for the other. When we got to the board ice, we left the boats, after we got them twenty feet on it—the crews positively refusing to pull another inch. Almost simultaneously every man started for the shore without bag or baggage. There was no order of our going; the strongest man went to the front, and the weaker followed. Morrison and I brought up the rear, as I wanted to take my valises. Morrison was pretty weak, but he shortly got ahead of me, as I was weighted by the valises. When I got about 200 yards from the shore, I was met by two young men who took my valises, and helped me along. These men had been sent down by the first of our crew who had arrived at the shore. It was about 8 o'clock when I reached the house. It was a regular hospital, everyone being more or less frozen. It was then seen that three of our number was missing, and a party was sent out to search for them. They found Capt. Newton Muttart at a neighbor's house, and Mr. Glyndon was found in a barn, hands and feet badly frozen. He had followed Capt. Muttart, but had not been able to keep up with him. The other man, Sandy Muttart, was found in the marsh perfectly speechless, with his face badly frozen. The people at the house (Angus McPhail's) vied with one another in helping us. They spared themselves no trouble, and many of the passengers owe their lives to their prompt and kind attention. A motley-looking spectacle was twenty men sitting with their feet in dishes of cold water, trying to draw out the frost from their frozen limbs. The walk from the board ice to the shore (about two miles) was a severe task for many of the crew. It was the last struggle for life, and many of the men arrived at the shore with just power to move one limb in front of the other, and barely conscious. Until the morning the men could not tell to what degree they were frozen. Some of them had kept their limbs in water five or six hours. It was then found that all the crew and passengers, with the exception of Dr. McIntyre, the three Campbell brothers, Muncey Irving, Hanford Allan and Blucher Robertson were more or less frozen. Those who were most severely frozen were Mr. Glyndon, Mr. Millet, James Muttart and James Morrison. My own injuries are but trifling compared with many others. I am firmly of opinion that there was unnecessary delay in starting. That had they got away at 8 o'clock there would have been no difficulty in making the crossing. This delay should not have occurred, and the day was such when the start was made, that it was almost madness to make it. It was then beginning a regular north-easter, and I hesitated about leaving. That boats should start so inefficiently equipped, is in my opinion nothing but a criminal. The conduct of the men will probably be investigated before the proper authorities. Mr. Fraser declined for the present to give any expression of opinion. But we are informed sufficiently from other sources to say that no delay should be made in making a thorough examination. The travelling public have now an opportunity of learning for themselves under what protection they cross the straits.

Messrs. Irving and Muttart, on behalf of themselves and boats' crews, return their warmest thanks to Mr. James Coleman, Superintendent of the P. E. Island Railway, Mr. Brecken, Postmaster, Mr. Lord, Agent Marine and Fisheries Department, Mr. John Hughes, of Charlottetown, Mr. T. C. James, Supt. Anglo-American Telegraph Co., and his operators at Capes Traverse, and Tormentine and Charlottetown and others for the interest manifested, and desire to do everything within their power that might have led to the rescuing of the missing boats, crews, passengers and mails during their perilous attempt to cross the straits, and for the promptness in despatching medical aid to the suffering on landing; also to the people of Black Point, who assisted them on shore, and kindly did everything within their power to alleviate their sufferings.

The terrible experience of the men who landed at Argyle Shore, is only rivalled by the sad incident which occurred in the year 1855. They are, indeed, two sad incidents in the history of our winter mail communication. In the year 1855, on a fine Friday in March, the iceboat carrying the mails, and accompanied by Messrs. Johnson, (now Dr. Richard Johnson of this city) and Henry Hazard, (son of the late James D. Hazard) two medical students on their return from college, and a Mr. Wier, of Bangor, Me., as passengers, left Cape Tormentine for Cape Traverse. The boat proceeded on her way without encountering any unusual obstacle to her progress until she got within half a mile of the Cape Traverse shore, when a violent squall of whirlwind, charged with a blinding snowfall, suddenly burst upon her with so much force that the crew found themselves utterly unable to keep their course or make the least headway through the darkness and violence of the storm which had so unexpectedly surrounded them. They could now do nothing but try and shelter themselves as best they might from the fury of the storm. For this purpose they turned up their boat on a large cake of ice, and gave the passengers the fullest benefit of the shelter that could then be afforded them. In this condition they drifted before the storm all night, and in the morning found themselves driven far out of their course into the middle of the wide part of the Gulf, and several miles from the nearest point of either shore. Here they were driven backwards and forwards by the tides and currents of the Gulf during the whole of Saturday and Sunday night, without being able to make the least headway towards landing. On Sunday morning Mr. Hazard became unable to walk, and had to be hauled in the boat by his fellow sufferers, who gave him all the aid and attendance they could bestow upon him, and made efforts—which, under the circumstances, might well be called heroic—to save his life, but in vain. The exposure of the three nights and days proved too great a strain on his somewhat delicate constitution, and on Monday evening, in the iceboat out in the middle of the Gulf, he breathed his last. The survivors, after suffering the hardships of exposure in the Gulf one night longer, at last succeeded, on Tuesday morning, in landing with the boat, containing Mr. Hazard's body and all the mails, at a point near Wallace, Nova Scotia. Here they were most hospitably received, and had all their wants most kindly attended to until they had recovered sufficient strength to stand the exposure of removal to their own homes with perfect safety.

Notes.  
The relief party returned to the city at midnight.  
Dr's. Taylor, Conroy, and Jenkins were in attendance on the sufferers today. Dr. McLeod returned home at noon.  
The boatmen who are suffering from frozen feet and hands will arrive in the city this evening, and will be placed in the Charlottetown Hospital.  
Dr. McIntyre arrived in the city this forenoon, and proceeded to his home in Souris this evening. He was much exhausted, but was not otherwise injured.  
Mr. Jas. Morrison, feet and one wrist frozen, and nose slightly frozen.  
Mr. Glyndon, Tignish, hands and feet badly frozen.  
Philip Farrell, one foot slightly frozen.  
Mr. Millet, both feet and ears badly frozen. Will probably lose feet and ears.  
Aaron Wilson, not frozen. Very much fatigued.  
James Howatt, feet badly frozen.  
Newton Muttart, feet badly frozen.  
George Allan, one foot slightly frozen.  
Bluch Robertson, eyes badly inflamed from smoke.  
Mr. Treuholm, dangerously ill from pneumonia.  
Hanford Allan, ill from pneumonia.  
Others with the exception of Irving and the Campbells suffering from fatigues.  
ONE of the poets has said that the saddest words are, "It might have been." The saying is true; but true only in just; for after an escape from a great peril or a terrible death, when we reflect upon the danger past, the words "It might have been," are very apt to rise to our lips to express feelings the reverse of sad—feelings of deep relief and heartfelt thankfulness.  
We shall not now stop to think of what might have been had the fears of yesterday been realized. It is enough to know that the intrepid men of the Cape, and the passengers in their care, are safe. The joy bells have been rung, and our thanks ascend to the merciful Preserver.  
The extreme suffering which they endured, and the narrowness of their escape, notwithstanding their great pluck and power of endurance, will, however, we trust, be long remembered, and long exercise a restraining influence on those who may hereafter be tempted to cross the Straits in iceboats during stormy weather. Increasing demands of the travelling and business public during winter, increasing competition and jealousy among the ice couriers, and long exemption from accident, had no doubt combined to produce carelessness in undertaking the hazardous crossing.  
There are two important points which will, no doubt, be borne in mind as a result of the trials, sufferings and escape here recorded. (1.) That crossings

shall not be undertaken in stormy weather—particularly when the wind is blowing from the east and north-west, and (2) That the boats shall not be put out unless there is a store of provisions, however coarse and hard, on board. I these points are attended to the event may not be without its benefits; and we must, at any rate, be thankful that the result is not worse than it is.

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Further particulars later.  
Ch'town, Jan. 26, 1885—3

TENDERS

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The Trustees of the Hospital do not bind themselves to accept the lowest or any tender. For further particulars apply to  
D. R. MACLENNAN,  
Secretary.  
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