

PREVENTED SECOND HALIFAX EXPLOSION

Harrison Boarded Blazing Munition Ship Picton, Attached Hose, and Put Out Fire.

MEANTIME SET HER ADRIFT

Mont Blanc Blast Had Killed the Crew—Brave Men of the Rescue Steamer Stella Maris Perished.

HALIFAX, Dec. 9.—How the City of Halifax was saved from greater damage by the bravery of a former British skipper was revealed today.

The British steamer Picton, heavily laden with munitions, like the Mont Blanc, was lying close enough to be ripped and torn by the explosion. Nearly every member of the crew, including their commander, was killed. Later, as fire started on the decks, those of the crew who had survived the wreckage abandoned the ship. There was no living man left aboard to stay the spread of the flames, which soon would reach the cargo of high explosives in the holds.

And then came an act of heroism worthy of the best traditions of the sea. Captain J. W. Harrison, Marine Superintendent of the Furness-Withy Line at Halifax, knew that the Picton had put in here several days before with a broken rudder. She was proceeding from an American port when she laid over for repairs. Harrison knew of the cargo. From ashore he could see little streaks of flame and clouds of smoke rising from the deck of the helpless ship. The vessel, moored at the Acadian sugar refinery plant, was nearer the heart of the city, and if she blew up the shock would raze another part of Halifax.

As his mind grasped the situation, the Captain got into action. It took but a moment to send a messenger to direct hundreds of others about the streets warning the people to flee to the open. They took heed and fled as if from an invading foe, not knowing or stopping to ask why.

It took but a few seconds more for Captain Harrison to reach the blazing ship. He cut the hawsers and set her adrift. He went with her. The fire was easily accessible. Attaching a reel of hose, he played a stream on the blaze and soon had it under control.

The present position of the Picton, lying helpless on the Dartmouth shore, would indicate that Captain Harrison opened the sea cocks and let in a flood of water to prevent an explosion below. Regarding this, however, he declined to make any statement and would not, in fact, discuss the incident at all. The Picton may be saved.

The explosion on the Mont Blanc took place some time after the fire started on her decks. The crew of the Picton lined up on the deck were watching the blaze. Fragments of shell shot across the harbor, killing and mangling all but a few of those aboard.

The story of the salvage steamer Stella Maris, wrecked while proceeding to the assistance of the Mont Blanc, was told today by one of the survivors. On the way out to Bedford Basin the vessel was ordered by naval officers to anchor her tow and speed over to the Mont Blanc to assist in fighting the flames. The Maris was close up to the Frenchman and was preparing to make fast when the explosion took place.

The Maris was driven ashore and torn to shreds. Captain Brannen and most of the members of the crew

were crushed to death under piles of junk in the hull.

At the graving dock, from which the Maris started out, 250 men were at work at the time of the explosion. So far as can be figured at present, 126 of them are missing. The dock proper and the caisson apparently are intact. But the salvage outfit, the most extensive of its kind in Nova Scotia, is a crumbling mass.