

Imagine, then, the Northgate, with her voyage suspended, drifting before the wind at the rate the vanished derelict had been seen to drift, waiting for the leisurely clearing of the weather. Imagine the captain, solitary and grim, on the bridge with his useless telescope, the first and second officers conversing in low tones now and again, and the men attending to their appointed tasks with sly glances at one another that spoke louder than words. And under these strained conditions glances were certainly safer.

The point of it was that they were all dead against their shipmaster. Those who had seen the derelict were unanimous in their decision that there could have been no one on board; and Collinson, an experienced seaman, who had had the best view, was prepared to wager his last half ounce of tobacco that she had been a sea-washed wreck for at least a year. As for the bell—

The man who thought most and said least was the second officer. He had something to think of, and his paucity of speech was due as much to his good feeling as to his good sense. He realised that the captain's story was really something confidential, and that he must not impart it to anyone else. In this he was undoubtedly right, and his conduct gained its acknowledgment.

That was late in the afternoon, when the sensation was over. Meantime the new south wind gradually thinned the curtain of fog until the telescope could resume its ordinary functions with a good face. Then expectation became keen, every glass was brought into use, and every acre of the tumultuous northern sea was eagerly scanned. And more than a mile to leeward a black spot appeared and disappeared, looking like anything but a ship in the utterness of its ruin. But the engine-room bell tinkled again, and the Northgate steamed triumphantly on her mission of rescue.

During the next half hour a curious silence held almost every one. They were in the grip of a mystery, but the circumstances were not of a character to encourage free comment or audible speculation. It lay between the captain on the bridge and the derelict on the water; and while no one expected the captain to win, it would not be politic to say so aloud. Indeed the silence became even more general when they drew nearer, and were able to examine at leisure the helpless hulk which had so nearly proved their ruin.

Once she had been a ship of some two thousand tons, but it was generally agreed that Collinson's estimate had been over-modest. Of course it was impossible to say when her ruin had come, but she had certainly been the sport and butt of the storms for a long cycle of months. There was no life in her ghastly hull, but she lay like a log, with the seas breaking over her and their waters streaming through the gaps in her shattered bulwarks. Long ago the last fragment of her deckhouse had been swept away, but the stumps of three lost masts and a bowsprit still reared themselves in tragic mockery out of the ruck of disaster.

There was no sign of a name on her paintless timbers, no hint of life from stem to stern. For many minutes the glasses searched her in vain, and then, at a signal from the bridge, three shrill screams from the Northgate echoed over the water. After that a strained silence fell once more.

In response to another command from the captain, the Northgate moved round to leeward of the wreck, whose hulk was listed over to starboard. Then at two hundred yards they got a square view of her sloping deck, and there was no further question. No human being could by any possibility have lived there. As she lay, her whole deck was naked to the seas, and in scores of gales the thundering billows of the wild North Atlantic had hurled themselves upon it and climbed in triumph over it. Every fragment of furnishing had long been swept away, and she lay so deep that water could be seen welling from her gaping hatches as she rolled. There was no shelter on the hull for anything larger than a bird, no resting place for any creature without wings wherewith to fly.

The men glanced at one another cautiously. Only one or two could see the tragic side of the situation, while its absurdity was apparent to all.

Suddenly the captain spoke. 'Mr. Gibbs, come up here.'

'Yes, sir,' said the second officer; and when he reached the bridge he found Captain Pritchard ready to speak.

'Mr. Gibbs,' he said curtly, 'I was convinced that this morning I heard a signal from that hulk yonder—a bell. As a matter of fact, it is to that warning that we owe our escape. You follow me?'

'Certainly, sir.'

'Well, Mr. Gibbs, I have eyes, and can see what is before me. But you know as much as I do, and I want your confirmation. After looking at that wreck, do you agree with my conclusion that the thing is impossible?'

For an instant they stood eye to eye. Then the second officer touched his cap.

'Nothing but a bird could live there, sir,' he said emphatically. 'It's out of the question.'

'Thank you,' answered the captain in the same curt manner. 'That will do.'

The mate turned and retired. The bell rang again in the engine-room, and instantly the propeller began to lash the grey water. But no man smiled as the Northgate resumed her voyage. That dismal spectre of loss and ruin, drifting upon a still and barren sea had crept upon their spirits, and they turned their backs upon it with a great relief.—*Catholic Columbian.*

OBITUARY

MRS. DANIEL MCGOWAN, MATAURA.

The death occurred on November 27 at 'Gowan Brae,' Mataura, of Mrs. Jane A. McGowan, wife of Mr. Daniel McGowan, at the age of 70 years. The late Mrs. McGowan was a native of Carnwath, Lanarkshire, Scotland, and was married in 1861, arriving in the Dominion with her husband at the Bluff in 1863. Mr. and Mrs. McGowan resided at Morton Mains for six years, and for eight years at Longbush. Mr. McGowan having taken up 'Gowan Brae' (near Mataura) in 1875, the family removed there two years later, where they have resided ever since. There were six sons and six daughters of the marriage, 11 of whom are married, and 40 grandchildren and one great-grandchild. The sons are Messrs. T. W. and R. A. McGowan (Auckland) and T. McGowan (Canterbury). The daughters are Mesdames W. Cameron, W. P. Thorn, G. Wheeler, and P. Curtin (Mataura), C. F. Taylor (Morton Mains), and Miss McGowan (Mataura). Mrs. McGowan was a sister of Mr. Robert Anderson (Gore). Mr. and Mrs. McGowan celebrated their golden wedding on July 5, 1911, when all the members of the family were present. The deceased, who was an earnest and practical Catholic, was attended in her last illness by the Very Rev. Father O'Donnell. The funeral took place on November 30, when Rev. Father Tobin officiated at the graveside. The late Mrs. McGowan was well known and highly esteemed by a large circle of friends.—R.I.P.

Reefton

December 9.

On Monday night, December 1, at the Sacred Heart Church, Rev. Father O'Sullivan, C.S.S.R., commenced a week's mission. The six and seven o'clock Masses every morning were very largely attended, and large numbers approached the Holy Table daily. On Sunday morning almost the whole congregation received Holy Communion, which was an edifying sight, and most pleasing to the zealous missionary. In the afternoon Father O'Sullivan addressed a special meeting of the Children of Mary, and in the evening preached to a very large congregation. On Monday, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, large numbers again approached the Holy Table, and after the Mass and in the evening the Rev. Father preached on the life of the Blessed Virgin. At the conclusion of the ceremonies Rev. Father Galerne thanked Rev. Father O'Sullivan for the good work he had accomplished during the week, and hoped that Father O'Sullivan would again visit Reefton in the near future.

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