

ships, but the two former are running for the Belgian Relief Commission. The latter one is a French vessel, also running for Belgian Relief. We examine two in the forenoon and two in the afternoon, but all are found to comply with the regulations and allowed to proceed.

Thursday December 6th

We turn out of our hammocks at 6.30am and lash up and stow in the usual way, we fall in on the upper deck at 7am and disperse to cleaning stations, busying ourselves scrubbing decks etc until 8am when we "cease fire" for breakfast. The "Acadia" being run on strictly naval lines, we clean ourselves and fall in again at 9am. There are no ships in for examination today, so we again proceed to cleaning stations and had just drawn soap and powder and the necessary utensils for cleaning paint work when the most awful explosion I ever heard or want to hear again occurred. The first thud shook the ship from stem to stern and the second one seemed to spin us all around, landing some under the gun carriage and others flying in all directions all over the deck. Our first impression was that we were being attacked by submarines, and we all rushed for the upper deck, where we saw a veritable mountain of smoke of a yellowish hue and huge pieces of iron were flying all around us. A shower of shrapnel passed over the Forecastle, shattering the glass in the engine room and chart room to smithereens, which came crashing down into the alleyways. It was the greatest miracle in the world that we were not all killed. God only knows how we escaped. The fires all burst out on to the floor of the stokehold and it was a marvel that the stokers were not burned to death, but all of them escaped injury as did all the other of the ships company. A tug was alongside us at the time and part of her side was torn completely out and three of the crew were injured, one of them getting a piece of flesh weighing nearly 2 pounds torn off his leg. A hail of shrapnel descended about 20 yards from the ship, this came with such force that had it struck us we should certainly have all been lost, it was so terrific. This was the last of the explosion, the whole of which had taken place inside of five minutes. We were fully impressed by the time that we were being attacked by submarines and we were expecting our turn to come at any moment. Then came a lull of a few minutes and when the smoke had cleared sufficiently, we saw clearly what had happened. Two ships were in collision, one a merchant vessel and the other an ammunition transport loaded with high explosive. It had blown completely up, wrecking 5 large vessels at the same time. One ship had been hurled wholesale for a distance of about 400 yards, dashing it close to the shore a total wreck with dead bodies battered and smashed lying all around in disorder. Fires broke out on ships all around and hundreds of small crafts had been blown to hell and the sea presented an awful scene of debris and wreckage. Our doctor attended to the wounded men on the tug as quickly as possible and we laid them on stretches in a motor board and took

them to hospital. The scene ashore was even worse. The N.W. part of Halifax was in total ruins and fires were springing up all over the city. Part of the railway was completely demolished and everywhere were dead and dying among the ruins. When we arrived at the hospital, the windows were all blown out and the wards were two feet deep in water owing to all the pipes having burst. We had to return to our ship as quickly as possible, as we are Guard Ship and responsible for the safety of the other vessels in harbour. From the ship the scene was one of utter desolation, what a few hours before had been beautiful vessels, were now terrible wrecks, their crews all dead and bodies, arms, etc were floating around in the water. During the afternoon we received a call for help from the "Eole" the crew having mutinied, we went aboard and after considerable difficulty succeeded in restoring order. Returning again to the "Acadia" we quickly got hurried tea and proceeded ashore. Here the scene was absolutely indescribable, the town was literally ablaze, the dry dock and dockyard buildings completely demolished and everywhere wounded and dead. The theatres and suitable buildings were all turned into hospitals or shelters for the accommodation of the homeless. Naval and Military pickets were patrolling the streets endeavouring to keep order. Poor little kiddies homeless, their parents having perished were crying piteously and anxious relatives were inquiring for their dear ones. We visited the part where the fires were at there worst, and it is beyond me to describe the absolute terror of the situation. For miles around nothing but a flaming inferno, charred bodies being dragged from the debris and those poor devils who were left still lingering were piled into motor wagons and conveyed to one of the improvised hospitals. We returned to our ship at 11pm sick at heart with the appalling misery with which the city abounded. The glare from the fires lighting the harbour up like day, on the other side of the bay, the little town of Dartmouth was also in flames on sea and land nothing but misery, death and destruction. Looking out on the flaming city from our ship, I cannot help but marvel that we escaped sharing the fate of thousands of souls in this terrible catastrophe.

Friday December 7th

We have got settled down to the routine of the "Acadia" by this time and we proceed to the usual cleaning stations before breakfast. Our Commander goes to Harbour Authorities in the forenoon and tries to get the harbour closed for a short time so as to enable us to go ashore and give a little assistance, but it is considered impossible to close the harbour, consequently we have to remain on board. A strong blizzard blows all day, driving the snow full force up against the ship. The thermometer registers zero and the upper deck is dangerous it being an inch thick in ice. The fog lifts occasionally and for short intervals we can see the smouldering ruins of Halifax. We learn the details of the disaster during the day which briefly seems to be that the "Mont Blanc" a French transport was proceeding through the narrows towards