

Readers will recall frequent mention in these pages of casualty investigations conducted by Capt. L. A. Demers, who served for many years as Dominion Wreck Commissioner. Recently, Gordon Turner located the following item in the Montreal press of Monday, August 28, 1933, and we thought that some of our members might find it to be of interest.

"Dominion Wreck Commissioner for more than twenty years, with the exception of two as Harbour Master of Montreal, and for over forty years associated with the Department of Marine, Captain L. A. Demers will sever his connections with the Canadian Civil Service next Friday, September 1st. Information to this effect was obtained yesterday in a communication from this well-known veteran of the seven seas, and the news will be received with considerable regret by the shipping fraternity in Eastern Canada, for the courage of his convictions has been admired and the justice of his decisions recognized.

"It was known for some time that the retirement of Capt. Demers was imminent, for he celebrated on August 18 his 71st birthday. However, as his friends have often explained, he seemed to appear younger with the advance of years, and was always ready for a yarn with his friends here and in other seaports where his judicial services were required. During his term as Dominion Wreck Commissioner, over four hundred investigations have received his attention, and only three of his decisions were altered. Two, it was maintained, were too severe, and the other was changed on account of some difference in the nature of its presentation.

"Capt. Demers first became associated with the Department of Marine in 1890, when appointed second officer of the schooner ANGUS MacDONALD, employed on fishery protection service off the coast of Nova Scotia. In 1892, he was transferred to the steamer CONSTANCE as first officer, and five years later to LA CANADIENNE as sailing master. Then, in 1898, he was appointed captain of the schooner VICTORIA, engaged in preventing smuggling along the Cape Breton coast. The following year found Capt. Demers chief officer of the steamer KINGFISHER and later extra-officer aboard the steamer ACADIA, which carried the Earl of Minto, Governor-General, on a trip down the St. Lawrence and up the Saguenay to Chicoutimi. He then left the service for several years to become master of the steamer RESTIGOUCHE, operating in the coastal trade between Dalhousie, N.B., and the Gaspé Peninsula.

"The Minister of Marine and Fisheries, the Hon. Joseph R.F. Prefontaine, K.C., called him back to the department in 1906 to become its agent in Montreal. Instead, however, he was appointed assistant chief examiner of masters and mates. Later he went to England in order to study the system of examination in the Old Country, and brought back a number of suggestions for the improvement of the system in Canada. Before his departure, he was appointed chief examiner of masters and mates, superintendent of pilots, and superintendent of marine schools.

"It was in 1906 that he was also appointed assistant Dominion Wreck Commissioner and held his first inquiry instead of G. V. Spain, the Commissioner, the vessel involved being a Norwegian steamer. Captain Spain resigned from the service two years later, and Captain Demers continued to hold inquiries. In 1910, he was appointed Dominion Wreck Commissioner, at the same time as Col. St. George Lindsay was made chief examiner of masters and mates.

"There was a demand for his services here in 1912, and Capt. Demers was appointed Harbour Master. The port was divided into two sections at that time, however, and Captain Bourassa was responsible for the section west from Victoria Bridge, Capt. Demers being responsible for that part now constituting the harbour proper. In 1914, he was again back in Ottawa as Dominion Wreck Commissioner, and he sat on the bench with the Rt. Hon. Lord Mersey when an investigation was being held into the circumstances surrounding the loss of the EMPRESS OF IRELAND.

"Born in Montreal on August 18, 1862, the year in which Conrad was born, he