

THE PROVINCE

WEDNESDAY, JULY 22, 1914

A WEARISOME BUSINESS.

The "boarding" of the Komagata Maru was for the expectant onlookers a most wearisome business. The situation was fraught with dramatic possibilities owing to the announced intentions of the authorities to run the Rainbow alongside and board the vessel as in the good old days. Thus, nearly the whole of the population of Vancouver spent most of the day in some coign(?) of advantage overlooking the water. If there was going to be a scene of that kind they did not wish to miss it. A naval action of sorts in Burrard Inlet was an unexpected attraction. Ten o'clock was the hour first set for the demonstration of Canada's authority. Thousands of people had lined the waterfront since about six in the morning expecting immediate action when the Rainbow arrived. Then o'clock passed and it was announced that a positive ultimatum had been sent on board the Komagata Maru demanding its unconditional surrender at twelve. That hour fell into the past and it was stated that the Hindus had secured the service of a well-known lawyer who desired the authorities to allow the Hindus on shore to parley with their brethren on the ship. Action was delayed until two o'clock. The Hindus on shore had, however, to form a committee and the committee had to go off to the Sea Lion and then be transferred to the Komagata Maru. Positively 3:15 was the hour set for surrender. That hour came and went and nothing was done.

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Five o'clock struck with due formality and its tones thrilled the waiting thousands. Now at least something must happen. Alas, the actors desired the patience of the audience until seven. At seven they refused to give any

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performance at all, but said they would like the ship's lawful captain and crew back on board to get up steam as they desired to go home.

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The Asiatic is a diplomat of the first order. He loves a parley and a bargain. He will play that game with the greatest good nature until his opponent shows he has come to his limit and then he will tamely surrender.

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This really seems to have been the inside history of yesterday. The Hindus know very well that the authorities would not use force unless they were obliged to and they parleyed and threatened to the last moment. Then they allowed the captain and his men on board. All day long they were surrounded with pleasure craft(?) of every kind and certainly showed me bloodthirstiness. They never even heaved a piece of coal at those who took their pleasure out of the situation on the water. They laughed and chatted and the barricades of which a good deal had been heard were evidently those erected along the rails for the express purpose of protecting their feet should there be another attempt(Sic) to board from a lower deck. The engine room was reported wrecked, but apparently the wreckage was not so bad as imagined for steam was got up without much trouble. The leaders of the passengers on the Komagata Maru seem to have been playing an elaborate game of bluff in the hope of saving some money from the general wreckage of their financial schemes and make the government pay the passage back to Calcutta of the men they were deporting. It was nothing but an attempt to extort blackmail and every man who knew India said so all day long.

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The Hindus saved their face. They have been deported but only after their resistance has had its full moral effect on the Asiatic mind. It is true there has been no bloodshed and from the happening of last Saturday it was deduced there would be strenuous resistance to any attempt to board the vessel and take her out to sea. But circumstances have to be taken into

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account. The Hindus caught the police at a disadvantage and made the best use of it. Directly they saw the Rainbow come into the harbor they knew resistance would be useless but were prepared to drive a bargain.

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They had sworn to die rather than be deported but to die is difficult(?) when the sun shines and everything(?) is peaceful. Moreover, why should they die when they could live and tell the tale of their great adventure in India? It will be a great tale when it gets to the bazaars(?). The midnight attack will lose nothing in the telling at the hands of the greatest story-tellers in the world. Then they will tell of the two days' peace, when they held command of the harbor and no one dared say them nay(?). After that will come a long description of the attack by the Rainbow with guns and soldiers; probably cavalry will be brought in to add color to the scene. Thus will they tell the story of the great adventure of the Komagata Maru and the game they played and the lies they told. Much indignation will be wrought up and possibly a good many broken heads will result. There will be indignation meetings and petitions to the viceroy and undoubtedly there will be a good deal of trouble when India welcomes her sons again. But there are 300,000,000 of them in India and the story will be but a pebble in an ocean of lies.

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It is undoubtedly regrettable that the situation developed as it did. The Hindus know how anxious the authorities were not to use force and played on that fact for all they were worth and only when the Rainbow sailed into the harbor did they realize that as far as force was concerned the authorities had plenty of it to spare if there were any further trouble. The immigration officials found a very difficult problem on their hands owing to the helplessness of the Japanese captain and crew. The captain practically allowed his ship to become a fortress and for a long time never kept order on board. He should have appealed to the police long ago when he first suspected that he was no longer in command. If the police could have taken

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charge then there would have been no more trouble. But neither the immigration authorities nor the police could touch the ship as long as the captain did not ask for help. When he did ask his passengers were already out of hand and thought themselves masters of the situation. A gunboat would have soon shown them their mistake by taking charge of them but as there was no gunboat handy the police had to do the best they could under a very heavy handicap.

It was a delicate and difficult business and under the circumstances Mr. Malcolm Reid and his men must be congratulated on their patience and good humor. For nearly three months Mr. Reid has had a very trying time. How he has managed to invariably see the bright side of things when the shadow of the Komagata Maru and her passengers continuously lay abreast of his office it is impossible to say. He must be a happy man, and if there is anything of a sea off Cape Flattery when the ship gets that far, the dupes of Gurdit Singh will be correspondingly miserable. It is only to be hoped that they will not once more take possession of the vessel and return to Burrard Inlet for another performance.