Fire & Flame

The Longest Johns

Let me sing you a song, boys, of fire and flame
Of a French ammo ship, the Mont-Blanc was her name
How the brave Nova Scotia was never the same
On the morning when Halifax burned

'Twas in early December 1917
She was packed to the gills with Grade-A TNT
They were bound for the fighting in High Germany
When towards them the other ship turned

The Norwegian ship Imo, some fault in her gears
She struck Mont-Blanc's side like the mightiest of spears
And the benzol ignited, the captain's worst fears
As the fire consumed bow to stern

The people gazed on from their safe distant rooms
Watched the soot and the smoke fill the sky with their plumes
Though within, the ship's cargo would spell all their dooms
How were they to know to be concerned?

The crew rowed for shore lest they burn or they drown
They cried "Save your souls!" as they ran through the town
But their warnings were nothing but strange foreign sounds
For the townsfolk, no French had they learned

One man, Patrick Coleman, in the railway's employ
Sent word "Stop the trains, or they'll all be destroyed!
This will be my last message, farewell to you boys"
For a true hero's death he had earned

An explosion colossal when the munitions blew
Devastation and debris for miles, fire through
The Mont-Blanc was gone and the town with it, too
And the waters raged up in return

There were heroes and angels all fated to die
Over 2000 souls laid to rest by-and-by
We will always remember and lift a glass high
To the morning when Halifax burned

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