

THE HILDA DISASTER

The bodies of 21 of the crew and four passengers of the steamship "Hilda" were on Monday brought to Southampton in the "Ada," which left St. Malo on Sunday afternoon. The little steamer, on leaving St. Malo, ran straight into a gale, which pitched and rolled her considerably. However, she weathered the storm splendidly, and, considering the conditions, made a smart passage. Arriving off the Isle of Wight, Captain HOWE deemed it inadvisable to risk the Needles passage, and bore up to Spithead, entering the Solent from the Eastward.

At seven o'clock on Monday the "Ada" was sighted off Ryde. At eight o'clock she went slowly up Southampton water with ensigns half-mast. Simultaneously the ensigns of all the shipping in the harbour were hoisted at the same level, and a crowd of working men hurried to the berth at the outer dock, where the steamer was due.

Among those on board was GRINTER, the only British survivor. The bodies were in plain oak coffins, on which were small zinc plates giving the names and date of death. They were carefully laid on the platform in slings, and hoisted by crane ashore. The first to be landed was that of Captain GREGORY, upon whose coffin was a wreath from the English colony at Dinard, who had, in fact, placed a floral tribute upon each coffin. Reverently the coffins were carried into the shed which had been prepared for its reception. There were in the commodious building a number of improvised tables, at each end of which the Union Jack and Tricolour were entwined, and draped with crape. Altogether there were 25 bodies placed in the shed, including those of four passengers--Major PRICE, Miss VAUX, Miss DENHAM and Mr. SYKES. Relatives of Miss VAUX and Mr. SYKES were on the quay, and were visibly moved as the sad procession proceeded.

There were a number of floral tributes from English residents at St. Malo, Dinard, and St. Servan, and many excellent wreaths of immortelles from French sympathisers, amongst them being tributes from "Les Commerçants de St. Malo aux Marins Anglais," "From St. Malo Potato Merchants," and from "La Marine de St. Malo et St. Servan."

THE INQUEST

The inquest on the bodies of the victims was held at Southampton on Monday and Tuesday, when the jury found a verdict of "Accidental death," and added that the captain and crew did everything in their power. They also expressed sympathy with the bereaved. The chief witness was James GRINTER, who gave a graphic account of his adventures on the night the "Hilda" was lost.

The boat was to have sailed on November 17th, at 8.15 p.m., but did not leave until ten o'clock, in consequence of the fog. It went as far as Yarmouth, I.W., but the fog became so intense that the captain gave orders to stop and prepare to anchor. One anchor was dropped. The fog continued all night, the vessel lying still at anchor. The mist lifted, however, sufficiently at six o'clock on the morning of the 18th for them to see their way, and the anchor was weighed. When off Jersey, a gale sprang up, and the Hilda began to knock about. Later the weather cleared, and became beautifully fine, and they saw the Jardin lighthouse. The light was just open on the port bow. When the Hilda was about half a mile from the light, a heavy snowstorm sprang up, blocking out all lights. Captain GREGORY instantly gave orders by telegraph to slow. GRINTER added he was on the bridge at this point, with the captain, chief officer, and pilot for the French coast. The sea was too heavy for them to look out beyond the fore-castle. The captain then gave orders to the helmsman to hard-a-starboard, which would bring the head of the vessel right round away from the French coast to deep sea and clear water. The orders were at once obeyed, the engines running down to dead slow. In a quarter of an hour the captain altered his course, and went to the westward.

They kept manœuvring about until after ten at night, when the vessel ran on the rocks as described last week. GRINTER said there was wonderful discipline, and that everything was done

to save life.

WESTMINSTER GAZETTE
(by Dr. Dabbs)

"We only wait, but do not fear,"
Be this their epitaph, who here
In sombre silence shrouded deep,
Are one in death and bond of sleep--
When the dread moment all must find
Came swift for them, through storm and wind
And torment of the ravening wave,
Death could but own he found them brave;
He found them as we leave them here,
Who only wait, but do not fear.

Researched by
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