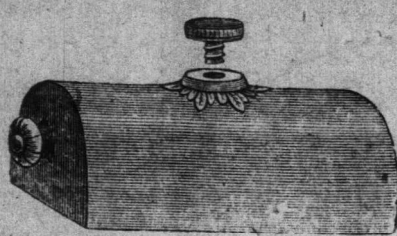


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The Loss of the Florence STORY OF THE SURVIVORS.

Five seamen—John Hedley, second mate; Thomas Smeding, A.B.; William Wight, A.B.; O. F. Malmgoish, A.B., and Edwin Taylor, A.B.—survivors of the wreck of the ill-fated steamer Florence, arrived by the s.s. Portia from Trepassay, on Tuesday afternoon, accompanied by Mr. T. Kennedy, representing the Furness Withy Company and who was at the scene of the wreck, acting in the interests of all concerned, as to the recovery of dead bodies and salvage of cargo. Immediately on arrival the shipwreckers were met by Shipping Master Carter and Manager Montgomerie, of the Furness Withy Line, and escorted to the new Seamen's Home on Water St., where elaborate and well ventilated rooms were ready for them to occupy. Here the seamen were waited on by a Telegram reporter to whom they gave a story to the best of their knowledge of the wreck. Apparently they did not resemble stranded seamen despite the fact that they had undergone such a terrible ordeal. They looked like a party of tourists, laughing and joking all the while, as they stated that they had been treated as such coming along on the Portia. Before beginning to relate their story the seamen asked if they were transient boarders. They were astonished at the surroundings of the palatial Home, and it took them some time to realize that they were the most heartily welcomed people to enjoy the comforts and conveniences of the building, which was erected chiefly for the protection of distressed seamen. The wrecked seamen then began to give a graphic story of hardship and suffering. Their experience on that barren and rugged portion of the South Coast, depicts pathos and adventure and can be better imagined by those whose avocation it is to brave the elements of the sea.

The Florence, as already told in the Evening Telegram, belonged to the Furness Withy Line, being in command of Captain Barr, brother of G. M. Barr, Esq., merchant of this city, and met with disaster off Marine's Cove, near St. John's on December 20th, carrying with her twenty-two souls, including the captain.

STORY OF THE TRAGEDY, AND HOW THE SHIP WAS LOST.

The s.s. Florence left Halifax at 12.30 on Wednesday morning, Dec. 18th. At the outset the weather was fine and calm, but overcast. The following day a rough sea prevailed but notwithstanding the steamer made fairly good headway. On Thursday night, the Florence was off Cape St. Mary's "laying to." The wind veered from the south west with sleet and rain showers. Later it moderated for a few hours, but again changed and became very thick and hazy. The Red Cross Liner Florizel, which was bound to St. John's from the same port as the Florence left, passed the latter about two miles west. It was the second mate's watch on deck and he made signals with lamps to the Florizel, but got no reply. This was about two o'clock on the morning of Friday, Dec. 20th. No communication as alleged, took place between the masters of both liners. A few minutes elapsed and the Florizel was out of sight. Capt. Barr, believing he was inside of Cape Pine, altered the course of the Florence and headed her for the eastward. Weather conditions suddenly changed. The wind veered from various points of the compass, and there were heavy showers of rain.

The sky was pitch black and gloomy, it being difficult to make out the land from on board the steamer. The color of the sky and that of the land resembled each other. The crew soon realized the seriousness of their position. The ship was going under full speed and they knew that if Captain Barr lost his bearings that the chances of avoiding the land were remote, yet little did they think their doom was awaiting them. The Captain, who brought ships to St. John's invariably along the same route, was not misguided in his reckoning and navigation of the vessel as best he knew how under the circumstances. At three o'clock on Friday morning, December 20th, the Florence was close by Marine's Cove near St. John's. The tide there is very deceptive, the water not shallow and it is designated by fishermen as a dreadful and treacherous spot. It is also termed the "Graveyard" of the Atlantic Ocean. The ship was steaming along at the rate of 9 knots an hour and was gradually but surely being brought in on the land by the "breakers." Every conceivable method was used to check the ship, but without avail, and at 3.10 a.m. she went upon the rocks, known as "Sawdieback" Shoals. She struck with great force, and, in consequence, her outboard, which was like that of the s.s. Tabasco, was carried away.

WHEN THE SHIP STRUCK.

There was not the slightest commotion raised on board when the Florence struck the land. Every member of the crew, with the spirit of discipline and courage of a British sailor, stood to duty's post. Where the Florence lay there were tremendous seas running and there was every possibility of her being dashed to pieces at once. Immediately boats were swung from the davits ready to be launched in case of emergency. Unfortunately, however, they were not needed and every person on board climbed over the bowsprit and abandoned the ship. That was at four o'clock. After reaching the shore and holding on grim death to the rocks for fear of being blown into the sea, a frightful experience between life and death was then encountered by that hardy crew of seamen, twenty-two of which have since gone to eternity.

APPALLING INCIDENT.

To realize the predicament the poor fellows were placed in on the ice-clad rocks at the bottom of a huge perpendicular cliff, rising two hundred and fifty feet from the level of the sea, exposed to torrential rain showers and heavy falls of sleet for four hours, cold, hungry and fatigued, with death staring them in the face and to think of their dear ones in a far-off land, is indeed difficult, extreme.

TRIED TO CLIMB CLIFF.

The seamen tried every means to scale the cliff and get to the land for assistance but their efforts proved fruitless. One of the number in endeavoring to climb the rocks would have fallen over and be dashed to pieces but for the promptitude of a shipmate in saving him.

RETURN TO SHIP.

At eight o'clock, or four hours after going ashore, the captain and crew returned to the ship, which was then breaking up rapidly against the rocks. There was a terrific sea running with strong wind increasing to

hurricane force. This was an anxious time for all hands there being little possibility of the crew escaping with their lives, except to launch the lifeboats, but this latter course was deemed impracticable by the captain, who believed that no boat could live in the rough sea. Capt. Barr was expecting the wind to shift to the eastward so that his vessel would float off in deep water. In the meantime he was keeping a keen look out for a fishing craft of any kind to get news of wreck ashore for assistance.

LIFE-BOAT LAUNCHED.

At nine o'clock the same day, John Hedley, the second mate, who is responsible for saving the lives of four other survivors as well as his own, intimated to the captain that he would make an effort to get to the shore in a life-boat for assistance provided he got volunteers to accompany him. The boat was launched and four seamen, those who survived the disaster, went with him. They rowed along the coast for about a mile and a half when they found a place to land on the beach.

BOAT CAPSIZED.

While landing, a huge sea struck the boat, capsizing it and threw it in on the rocks. Seamen Thomas Smeding and Edwin Taylor were thrown in the water and for a minute were buried beneath the foam. On rising to the surface they were rescued by Mate Hedley and seamen Wight and Malmgoish, after much difficulty. The five men, although having performed a hard task were still in a bad predicament. They were hungry and fatigued while their clothing was saturated with icy-cold water and they were chilled to the marrow.

REACHED THE SHORE.

After reaching the shore they walked along the beach for about two hundred yards when they came to a fisherman's hut. They went in to try and get something to eat and found provisions there, including flour, molasses, tea, pork and matches. A fire was started and the five seamen had a small meal, which barely saved their lives.

HUMANE ACT.

The hut in which the provisions were found, is owned by a kindhearted fisherman named James Bonia, who fishes at Broad Cove but who always made it a custom of leaving something to eat in the hut at the coast line of St. John's, for seamen when distressed. The act, no doubt, is a most humane one.

SHIP BREAKS UP.

At noon on Friday, mate Hedley and seamen Wight and Malmgoish, being anxious about their shipmates, left the hut and proceeded to the top of the steep cliff which they were unable to ascend a few hours previously, leaving seamen Smeding and Taylor, who were too weak to walk, behind. They brought a piece of rope with them and tied a stone around one end of it, then throwing it on board the vessel to attract the attention of those on board to the top of the cliff, but, without success, as the high wind would not permit the string to carry far. The mate then spoke to those on board the Florence by semaphoric signals telling them to take to the boats as he (the mate) was unable to get any assistance. He received an answer that they understood the signals. At three o'clock the mate shouted out but got no reply. There was a strong wind blowing then with a terrific sea. The ship was breaking in two amidships and the after end of her was submerged.

THE LAST THEY SAW OF HER.

At 3.30 p.m. Friday, Dec. 20th, mate Hedley and seamen saw those on board the ill-fated ship removing the cable that was on deck and which held the two anchors. That was the last they saw of the Florence.

ON RETURNING TO THE HUT

At 5 o'clock that evening, after returning to the hut, the survivors had some pancakes to eat and then lay down to try and get some sleep. But they could not get any as all had uneasy minds. During the night each man kept a two-hour watch. The next morning the five seamen went to hear further news of their shipmates but could see no sign of the ship or anyone that had been on board. They observed some cargo, such as timber and barrels that were on the ship's deck, floating about. After meditating for some time over the death of their shipmates, three of the survivors left to go to St. John's. Seamen Smeding and Taylor remained in the hut being unable to walk. They left on Saturday forenoon, travelled towards the eastward and after covering fourteen miles of a bleak, desolate forest, with every step of it three feet deep of bog and snowwater. Seamen Wight and Malmgoish became exhausted before reaching St. John's. The soles of their feet were practically raw from the heavy travel and they gave out, they were so hungry, but were reassured by the mate. At 4 p.m. Saturday, a fisherman hove in sight. On being approached by the wanderers the fisherman took them to his house, gave them plenty to eat and drink with accommodation for resting. He then sent the news of the

(Continued on 8th Page.)

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20 cases VALENCIA ORANGES.

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SWIMMING POOL—

Single admission with shower, and use of towel and soap 15c.
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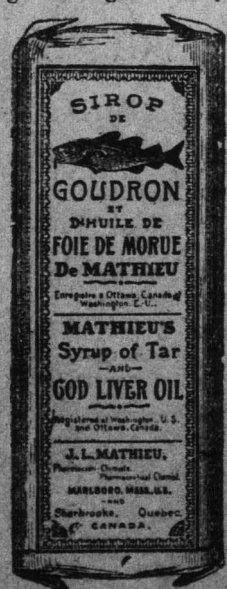
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Yours truly,
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Yours truly,
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