

# ADRIATIC SAFE HERE; THINK SHORT CIRCUIT MADE GAS EXPLODE

## Electrician Ablett, Dying and Delirious, Said Fault Was His.

### WAS ADJUSTING HOLD LIGHT

## Went Below With Extra Length of Cable and Explosion Followed.

### TEN LINERS OFFERED AID

## Reliance and Lafayette, Nearest, Stand By in Response to Precautionary S O S.

When the White Star liner Adriatic arrived in Quarantine at 5:30 o'clock yesterday afternoon in the waning sunlight there was nothing to indicate to those who were on the deck of the U. S. Coast Guard cutter alongside that an explosion had occurred and that five of her crew had been killed and three others were lying in the hospital seriously injured. The buff-colored foretopmast was blackened for a space of ten feet toward the truck and there was a canvas covering rigged over No. 3 hatch forward of the bridge, but otherwise there was nothing unusual in the appearance of the liner.

So far as could be ascertained from Captain H. F. David and officers and engineers of the ship, the explosion was believed to have been caused by a short circuit in the lower No. 3 hold when Electrician Leslie Ablett was fixing a cable to turn on a three cluster light for the men to work the coal out. The hold had been opened for half an hour and the junior second engineer, Warren, was in with Ablett. As the first cable was not long enough, he told the electrician to go on the deck and see if he could let one down from the top. Ablett returned and told Warren that the hatch was not open and then he was told to get a longer cable and run it from the bunker where the trimmers were working.

#### Went Down With Spare Cable.

The electrician carried out the instructions and was seen to go into the hold with the spare length of cable to link up and turn on the lights. In the meantime the junior second engineer had climbed over the tunnel to the starboard side of the hold when the explosion took place that blew off the hatches and twisted iron beams and girders about and hurled them, looking like paper spalls, into odd corners of the hold. Exactly what did occur will never be known as Ablett rushed up on deck dying in agony from burns and with his flesh peeling off. He was delirious until he died shortly afterward and was said to have stated that it was all his fault but no coherent statement could be obtained from him.

Warren, who was on the starboard side, was shaken by the forces of the explosion, but not hurt. The explosion blew Fireman McGuinness overboard and killed Firemen A. J. Dilley and J. Redmond, who had been sleeping on No. 3 hatch on account of the heat. Leading Fireman Holwey was with them and sustained severe injuries. Dilley's body was found on the starboard side of the promenade deck under the bridge, wrapped up in a blue blanket on a straw mattress.

#### Officer on Watch Missed Death.

The flame which burst from the hatch shot across the deck slanting from port to starboard. The officer on watch had just walked over to the port side, otherwise he would have been killed instantly by the fiery gas. The paint was scorched from the upper part of the foremast but the forepart of the bridge was untouched. It also caught the upper part of the starboard rigging, but did not do much damage. One of the iron girders struck a solid oak beam with such force that although it was six inches thick it was flattened like a pancake.

That the fire did not spread further and do more damage to the ship was due to the prompt action of Chief Engineer F. W. Ruddle and his staff. Directly following the explosion the chief and his men went into the burning bunker and carried buckets of water with which they doused the flames until the hydrants were turned on. After twenty minutes the fire was subdued and the pumps were stopped.

One of the incidents which stood out down below where the engineers were fighting the fire was the heroism of

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# BLAMESHORTCIRCUIT FOR SHIP EXPLOSION

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James C. Corrigan, the second engineer. While the others were fighting the blaze in the bunker he went up on deck to see what had happened to his men and asked the officer who was with some sailors if there were any men down in the smoking hold, which was still belching forth coal gas.

## Bravery of Engineer Corrigan.

The officer replied that no one was there, but Corrigan replied, "Well, I am going down to make sure myself." He reached the bottom of the hold and with his hand to his mouth to stifle the fumes he saw the head of a man sticking out from under the debris. It proved to be the coal trimmer, Redmond, whose skull and chest had been broken by the weight of an iron girder which had struck him. He had been blown into the air by the explosion and had fallen back to the lower hold. The man was dead and the engineer had to call for help to release his body.

Then Corrigan discovered Trimmers Donnelly and McCarthy in other portions of the hold seriously injured and rescued them with the aid of volunteers. The body of Dedmond and injured trimmers were placed upon a hatch and hoisted to the deck where they were carried to the ship's hospital, where Northan had already been taken suffering from burns which caused his death on Friday afternoon.

The passengers, of whom less than fifty were roused by the explosion and the stopping of the ship, were of one opinion—that there was no approach to anything like a panic after the explosion. Seamen got the covers off the lifeboats and stood to the stations and the stewards were standing by to aid the passengers if necessary.

## Captain David's Statement.

When the liner arrived at her pier last night, foot of West Twentieth Street, Captain David issued the following statement to the reporters:

"At 1:30 A. M., on the 10th, an explosion took place in the No. 3 hold,

used as a reserve bunker. This had just been opened from the adjoining bunker hold with the object of working out the coal. The explosion was severe and some flame ascended the No. 3 hatchway, which was stripped of hatch beams and hatches by the force of the explosion. Fire hose was rigged and what small flames there were were at once extinguished. The ship proceeded on her way at full speed at 3:55 A. M., after a detailed examination of her hull and structure had been made."

Chief Engineer F. W. Ruddle said: "Seven men were at work about the entrance of No. 3 hold at the time of the explosion. Other men were asleep on the upper hatch over No. 3 hold. One of these, Stephen McGuinness, 49, a fireman, of Liverpool, was not found afterward, and it is supposed that he was blown overboard. His home was at 32 Bostock Street, Liverpool. Of the men in the hold, two were killed outright. They were A. J. Dilley, fireman, 40, of 24 Hill Street, Liverpool. Leslie Ablett, 21, of 77 Hornby Road, Liverpool, electrician, who was arranging lights in the hold at the time of the explosion, was severely burned about the body, and died in the ship's hospital. John A. Northan, 34, of 3 Drayton Road, Walton, Liverpool, was so severely injured that he died in the hospital. Edward Donnelly, 19, of 75 Hornby Street, Liverpool, and Robert McCarty, 23, of 28B Reading Street, Liverpool, and Simon Howley, 27, of 122 Balfour Street, Liverpool, fireman, were also severely injured. Donnelly's hurts were the gravest, but all three survived until the ship reached her pier here."

The injured men were cared for by Ship's Surgeon Dr. Fleming and his assistant, Dr. F. W. Mann. They saw their patients off in an ambulance to St. Vincent's Hospital last night after the ship had been made fast.

## Resolution of Thanks to Captain.

All the passengers confirmed the statement made by ex-Governor of New York Martin H. Glynn, that the discipline on the ship was perfect. The following resolution was presented to Captain David with a short address by Mr. Glynn.

"Steamship Adriatic, at Sea, Aug. 12, 1922.  
"In grateful recognition of his heroic and effective service on the night of Aug. 10, the passengers of the Adriatic tender this testimonial to Captain Hugh F. David, R. D. R. N. R.

"We feel we owe him a debt of gratitude beyond the power of words to express.

"In a trying hour, when a cool head and

steady nerves meant everything, Captain David proved himself the ideal sailor.

"When minutes stood for more than gold he had his officers and crew instantly acting with precision and efficiency.

"We congratulate the officers and crew for the wonderful discipline, coolness and kindness they displayed toward us all.

"We will never forget the tense hours of that night, will never forget Captain David and his masterly leadership. And we will always remember the prophecy that came true, the prophecy made by some lady with a silvery voice, when the thumping pumps had almost silenced speech: 'Captain David will pull us through.' That became the slogan, the inspiration, the faith of the passengers. He did pull us through.

"And he did it so handsomely that we respectfully offer him this testimonial of our gratitude and lifelong appreciation."

The captain in his letter of thanks to the passengers which was placed upon the bulletin board called the deliverance of the ship and her passengers from harm as the "act of beneficent providence."

After the explosion the Adriatic proceeded at half speed from 1:30 A. M. to 2:20 A. M., and then increased to twelve knots. In answer to an S. O. S. call the Adriatic received replies from ten steamships offering to come if required. The nearest was the *Reliance* of the United States Lines, bound east and sixty miles away. The French liner *Lafayette* was astern one hundred miles and bound for New York. Both vessels steamed to the position given by the Adriatic until 3:55 A. M., when the chief engineer, Ruddle, reported that there was no further danger. The engines were put at full speed and a message was sent broadcast with thanks to the ships which had offered aid.

Although the explosion made a loud report forward of the bridge it did not shake the ship sufficiently to wake up those who were not at that end of the vessel. *Lady Rhondda*, who recently failed in her attempt to enter the House of Lords, and her friend, Miss Galk, said that they were unaware of the accident until they went to breakfast next morning. Sir Robert M. Liddell, the woolen manufacturer, had the same experience and so did James Mollison, who asked S. C. J. Freeman-Matthews, the purser, why he looked so thoughtful at breakfast Saturday morning. When the passengers realized the tragedy they formed a committee and collected the sum of \$3,257.49 and £652.14s for the families of the dead and injured men after giving £100 to the Seamen and Firemen's Orphans' Fund on Thursday night at the concert. The burial of the first victims, Redman and Dilley, took place at 6 P. M., Friday. The bodies were sewn up in canvas with firebars and covered with the union jack, placed on gratings on

the "D" deck aft and lowered into the sea through the port. The other two victims, Ablett and Northan, were buried in the same manner at 6 A. M., Saturday.

The final list of the dead and injured, as given out at the surgeon's office, read:

ABLETT, LESLIE, electrician; burns and collapse; lived ten hours afterward.

NORTHAM, JOHN A., trimmer; burns; survived but a short time.

DILLEY, A. J., trimmer; face and chest crushed and burns.

McGUINNESS, S., fireman; supposed to have been blown overboard.

REDMOND, J., fireman; killed instantly.

Stephen McGuinness Jr., formerly employed on the *Adriatic*, waited several hours at the pier last night waiting for news of his father, who was missing after the explosion.

Apart from new hatch covers and beams with iron girders to replace those blown to pieces by the explosion, the *Adriatic* was undamaged when she reached her pier, and will be ready to sail for Liverpool at noon on Saturday. After the gangway was put out R. C. Farley, general passenger manager, and his assistant, Thomas Thorne, with Captain Williams, F. W. Ridgway, Captain Thompson, the marine superintendent, and other officials went on board to hold an inquiry into the cause of the explosion.

## STOOD BY ADRIATIC.

### Kroonland Halted Two Hours, Ready to Aid Explosion Victim.

The Red Star liner *Kroonland* arrived yesterday from Antwerp. Officers of the steamer said the ship was held up two hours last Friday morning when a wireless message told of an explosion aboard the *Adriatic*. The *Kroonland* was seventy miles nearer New York than the *Adriatic*. Captain Charles Newman did not allow the Red Star liner to proceed until assured that the *Adriatic* was in no danger.

Passengers on the *Kroonland* were not notified of the accident on the *Adriatic* and all mention of it was deleted from the radio news posted on the ship. Despite this precaution, most of the passengers learned of it.

Lawrence Langner, lawyer and Director of The Theatre Guild, and family; Robert Treat of Chicago, who is in the Consular Service, and E. M. Patterson, Professor of Economics at the University of Pennsylvania, were passengers on the *Kroonland*.