



Death of Captain Thomas Hart

The steamer *Beautiful Star* arrived in Port Chalmers at half-past 3 o'clock on Friday morning, with the sad intelligence of Captain Hart's decease. Her coming had been anxiously looked for by friends of her popular commander, and in the anticipation that he would survive the passage from Lyttelton, every precaution had been made to at once convey him to his residence on the Peninsula. He is leaving behind a wife and family of four young children, not too well provided for.

Beautiful Star left Port Chalmers with nearly a full cargo and several passengers on Sunday last, and, as usual, called at Timaru. Was detained there for two days by the heavy sea that rolled in, and after all only succeeded in landing 18 tons of cargo, and then, as the sea was increasing, she pushed on for Lyttelton, where he had agreed to promote his owner's interest and engaged in the risky undertaking, for a passenger and cargo steamer, of towing a 1200 ton ship down Lyttelton Harbour - a harbour through which the sea always sends home in a greater or less degree. She reached Lyttelton at 9 a.m. on Wednesday, and finding the ship *Sallochmyle* [her tow] ready to leave the wharf, immediately preparations were made to tow her into the stream.

At about noon the *Star* made fast to the ship with her own 7 inch hawser and steamed ahead, but the strain of so heavy a vessel on the tow was more than the warp would bear, and it accordingly snapped. This involved some delay, as the ship had to let go an anchor, and also run out a large 13 inch hawser – the biggest on board. The end of this hawser was passed on board the *Star* through the quarter chock, and carried forward past the galley and down the main hatch, and was then made fast round the main-mast, close up to the deck.

As soon as the hawser was fast, the *Star* went ahead, and moved slowly on. Naturally solicitous about the hawser, holding good, Captain Hart went aft with the mate, Mr McKenzie, to inspect it. It was surging considerably with the send of the sea, and the mate remarked "That he was afraid that the frapping would not hold". The Captain was in the act of stepping down the break, right leg first, when the steamer gave rather a heavy pitch, then a send aft, and in an instant the hawser lifted clear of the bit heads, and flew with immense force against the galley and skylight.

As it struck the galley, it produced a report like that of a spar snapping, and the mate at first thought that the mainmast had gone. His first glance was towards it. His next, however, fell upon Captain Hart lying prostrate on the deck. He had been struck on both legs by the hawser and jammed against the skylight, the right leg receiving the first shock, and was dreadfully injured, as was evident by the blood which poured in streams from the mangled limb. To rush to the poor fellow and lift him in his arms was the work of a moment on the part of the mate. Assistance being at hand, the Captain - who merely exclaimed, "Take care of my leg" - was removed to the cabin, and there and then bandages were applied to check the flow of blood.

Then the mate rushed on deck and cast off the tow-ship. The accident, however, had been observed from the latter, and she was at once anchored, whilst a boat was lowered, and with Dr Smythe, her medical man, hastened to the *Star*. Meantime the mate headed the *Star* for the wharf, and hailed one of the small steamers that was running in, and asked her master to report the accident on shore, and send off a medical man. Presently Dr Smythe came on board, and was followed shortly after by Dr Rouse from the shore. The examination that ensued revealed the fact that the sufferer's right leg being absolutely in splinters, whilst the left was compound fractured in two places. By this time - about 2 o'clock - Captain Hart had sunk very low, and could not speak; so, beyond assuaging the flow of blood and administering stimulants, nothing could be done to him.

Between two and five he rallied considerably, and then the amputation of his right leg was performed. The patient bore the operation better than would have been expected, and by eight o'clock had wonderfully rallied, and the heart's action being comparatively strong and increasing, it was decided after a serious consultation to send him off to Dunedin in the *Star*.

Actuated by these considerations, Dr Smythe volunteered to attend him, and at the outset felt confident of pulling him through. The *Star* left Lyttelton at midnight, but at 8 o'clock he lost consciousness, and at the turn of the night, just as Taiaroa Head light hove in

sight, he rendered up his spirit to the God who gave it. Such was the end of Thomas Hart, true man and good seaman.

The mortal remains of Captain Hart were consigned to their kindred earth on Sunday, and the occasion evoked a wide-spread expression of respect to the worth of the departed gentleman. His body had been confined at his residence, Port Chalmers, and the funeral obsequies commenced with its removal to the steamer *Golden Age*, which was to convey it to Dunedin, in accordance with the earnest wish of his widow, it was to receive the rites of sepulture.

Shortly after noon, the coffin, carried by members of the crew of the *Beautiful Star*, was brought forth, and the funeral cortege began its melancholy march. It comprised 100 persons, including the members and masters of nearly every vessel in port. The Harbour Department was also fully represented, not one official being absent.

The *Golden Age* reached the Dunedin Jetty Street Wharf at about two o'clock where the coffin was placed on a hearse. A procession was then formed, and marched to the Southern cemetery, where the burial service was read by the Rev Dr Stuart, and the Rev Mr Johnstone, of Port Chalmers. There were fully a thousand persons in the procession, which reached from the wharf to Princess Street. Following the hearse some of the Harbour Company's employees, Customs officers, shipping agents, merchants, and others; afterwards members of Masonic Lodges - Marine Lodge (Port Chalmers), Lodge Celtic, Otago Kilwinning Lodge, and Lodge of Otago, and in the rear citizens and friends of the deceased. The route was along Princess street south, and on reaching the Presbyterian cemetery the pall-bearers - Captain Clark, Captain Paterson, Hector Baxter, David McKenzie, Captain Sinclair and Julius Hyman - slowly wended their way to the grave, where Dr Stuart and the Rev Mr Johnstone each offered up an impressive prayer.

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