

The life of Captain William Adams was to end on Wednesday the 6th August 1889. The Dundee year book for that year carries his obituary. He died after another successful adventure in the Arctic regions. –

A week or two before he left this country in March last he was complaining of illness, but it did not assume so acute a form as to prevent him returning with his ship to the seal and whale fishing. It seems that while at the fishing ground he became very ill, and was unable to give that supervision which he no doubt considered so necessary. So soon as the ship was full, orders were given to bear up for home, and early on Monday morning she reached Scrabster Roads. The captain's condition was then so critical that the mate of the ship (his eldest son) and the crew thought it advisable to make an effort to get him ashore at Thurso, where he could get medical advice and be well attended to. This was accomplished with some difficulty, and the captain was taken to a hotel in Thurso under the charge of his son and his officers. After arriving there he seemed to get a little better, and spoke of leaving Thurso with the morning train on Monday, but, not being so well as he expected in the morning, he had put off till the mid-day train. Meantime Mrs Adams was telegraphed for, and he was persuaded to wait till she arrived at Thurso. Mrs Adams arrived on Tuesday night, and it was then agreed that they should proceed home by the train leaving Thurso on Wednesday morning at 12.30. With assistance Capt. Adams walked from his bedroom to the hotel 'bus outside, and was driven to the station, where a special saloon was in waiting for him. He was comfortably provided for in the saloon, and though weak was in pretty good spirits. After the train started the jolting seemed to affect him very much. His breathing became laboured, and he appeared to suffer great pain, which he bore with great fortitude. He partook of some stimulants, and the difficulty with breathing was relieved, but the pain otherwise did not subside, and he gradually became weaker. In the saloon where Mrs Adams, a nurse, and Mr Deuchars (one of the crew, who has sailed with Captain Adam for upwards of 20 years). At one of the stations on the line a doctor was called. After examining the patient, and doing everything in his power to alleviate his sufferings, the doctor remarked – "Keep up, captain; you will get proper medical attention at Inverness." "Ah," was the reply, "I will be dead before I get there." The words were prophetic, as the unfortunate gentleman died just as the train was entering Dingwall station. Mrs Adams, the nurse, and Dr Deuchars were the only parties present when he quietly passed away...

HIS CAREER

Captain Adams was one of the best known and probably the most successful of Scotch whaling captains. He was born in Dundee in 1832, and when a very young man he went to sea...

HIS LOVE FOR THE ESQUIMAUX

Captain Adams was a man of large sympathies, and his heart went out to the poor Esquimaux whom he met with in the far North. Every one knows that at considerable expense he brought at different times representatives of the race to Dundee, and by lecturing and otherwise he excited an interest in them. The captain, while admitting their barbarous condition, was of opinion that they could be raised in the scale of humanity. He was loud in his praise of what had been done for them by the Danish Government, and in a tone of bitterness somewhat akin to reproach contrasted the efforts of that Government with those of the British Government. In his own way the captain did a great deal for the Esquimaux, and he never failed when opportunity offered to arouse interest in them and sympathy for them.. Writing in 1887 on this subject, he said :- When I returned from Davis Strait in the fall of last year I brought with me an Esquimaux, a fine young fellow, who during his short stay in this country has acquired a considerable knowledge of our language, and has adapted himself in a remarkable manner to the usages of civilised society. I have spent the greater portion of the last thirty years in the Arctic regions, and the question has occurred to me – Can nothing be done for the Esquimaux? On the coast of Greenland, between lat. 60 deg. and 73 deg. N., there are about 13,000 natives, all civilised, and under the influence of Christianity. This gratifying state of matters is due to the action of

Denmark

. Many years ago the Danes sent missionaries to those out-of-the-world people, and they have had their reward. Denmark and the Royal Danish Company carry on important and valuable trade there. Numerous small villages are to be found along the sea coast, the inhabitants of which enjoy many privileges. The Danes send out ships every year with clothing, tea, coffee, and other provisions. Each village has a church school, and the Governor is generally a Dane. The Governor collects the oil, skins, ivory, &., and gives money in exchange – there is no truck system. The natives can read and write, are attentive to their religious duties, and considering their surroundings, may be described as a contented and happy people...

CAPTAIN ADAMS AS AN ADVISOR

□□ For long time Captain Adams had been recognised as an authority on all that pertained to the Arctic regions, and he was frequently consulted by the Admiralty, the Royal Geographical and other Societies on questions of Arctic exploration. His advice had also been sought by the American Government, particularly in connection with the relief of the Greely Expedition.