

DECLARATION BY CAPTAIN WILLIS OF THE "ALLEN GARDINER"

The following is the statement of Captain Willis, of the Mission yawl Allen Gardiner, taken at the Falkland Islands, relative to the discovery of nine bodies belonging to the San Raphael [sic], of Liverpool, burnt at sea, off Cape Horn, on the 4th of January last:—

That on the 23rd of April last [1876], I was at the mission station, Ushuwia [Ushuaia, Ed.], Terra del Fuego, when a number of Indians, in 18 canoes, arrived from New Year's Sound, Hoste Island, and reported as follows:—

Some time last summer, a canoe was passing from Rous Island to Black Head, for seal. The Indians saw something white lying on the ground, and a flag flying (two miles inside the Black Head), but no sign of life or smoke. They did not land, as they thought it a trap laid by the natives of Waterman Island, with whom they had quarrelled. Twenty-one days after other canoes came, and, these things being still visible, three men and women went in a canoe to the place; the men landed whilst the women kept the canoe off the rocks. They found six corpses lying exposed, and under the white object, which turned out to be a boat sail, spread on some bushes, was a dead body and two men alive, one dying, the other just able to crawl about. The Indians removed the dead, and brought water and fire from their canoes for the living. They gave them water to drink and cooked them a shag to eat. They would have taken the strongest with them, but were unable to do so owing to the rugged nature of the coast. The Indians left, and did not return for some days, by the reason of bad weather. When they next visited the place the two survivors had died.

One of the natives offered a sovereign for food, a piece of Albert chain we bought from a child, and saw the face of a watch hanging from a woman's neck. After discharging our cargo of provisions, I, and the Rev. Mr. Bridges, determined to go to the place ourselves if the report was true. We left Ushuwia on the 26th, and took with us one of the natives from New Year's Sound, and two from the station. Tried to get by way of False Cape, but did not succeed, owing to the heavy weather. Returned to Ushuwia on the 6th of May, and sailed again on the 9th, going through the south-west arm of Beagle Channel and Talbot Passage. We arrived at Indian Cove on the 17th, and obtained assistance of two natives who

directed us to Rous Sound.

We landed on a headland two miles north of Black Head, Hoste Island, and then saw the bodies of eight men and one woman lying exposed on the open ground; the six found by the Indians appeared to have been placed two and two by the survivors, and the last three by the Indians. They were fully clothed; there was no mark of violence on the bodies; they were so much decomposed that it was impossible to remove them, so we covered them as they lay with turf. Many clothes and books were lying about. An epitome, Sailing Directions, bibles (mostly destroyed by wet), an Holosteric barometer, a portion of a chest, a bucket, some empty beef tins, a chart, and a note in pencil. In a bay about half a mile to the N. W., there was the remains of a boat, two lifebelts, and the name board of a ship, "San Raphael"; and some distance from this to the north of Hind Island we found a sextant, destroyed. On the inside of the box was written in pencil, "M'Adam, Balfour, Williamson, and Co."

On an islet in New Year's Sound, the Indians had hidden the chronometer, the binoculars on another a mile distant. The headland where the bodies of the poor creatures were found is about 250 feet high, and separated from the main island by a deep chasm some 50 feet wide. It was quite impossible for any one to pass on to the mainland, except by canoe or boat. If the unfortunate people had reached the main they might have lived for months on mussels, berries, and fungi. On the clothes lying about near the bodies were the names of seven — M'Adam, M. Proctor (Captain's wife), Reid, Stewart, Swift, Daly, and Umblant; the last name was on a bag. I did not search the clothes on the bodies — they were too much decomposed. I returned to Ushuwia, landed Mr. Bridges and the natives, and then sailed for the Falklands.

J. C. T. Willis, Master of the Allen Gardiner.

[COPY OF NOTE.]

Lat. 54 30 S., long. 71 W., Feb. 15, 1876.

Dear John, —When you receive this your mother and me will be no more. We have been 41 days on this desolate island on very low diet. Your mother and me are very weak. I am about blind; I can scarcely see the paper I am writing on. My watch and your mother's chain I give to Willie, my Albert to yourself, and you must wear your mother's ring; the earrings

for Jessy. My instruments, clothes, and gold watch, and £3 12s to assist in maintaining Willie, and I hope you will be as a father to him, kind, and giving him good advice; the furniture to yourself. There are the chronometers, one telescope, one night. The chronometer marked Webster, and telescope, you must take to the office, and you can see if there is any money due for me, if there is it will have to go for the maintenance of William, and his mother joins with me in hoping he will be a good boy and not forget his God, and we hope that you and Jessy may live long together in happiness and peace in fear of the Lord, and now we send you our last, kind, loving blessing, and may God bless you all is the sincerest wish of your parents.

James M'Adam.

To John Fleming, 84, Canterbury-street, Everton, Liverpool.