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Titanic I: An Opportunity Lost

Lead: It was about 11:15. The cold night seemed to close in on the Leyland Steamship Line Californian. She was dead in the water, stopped by Arctic ice unusually far south for April that year.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts

In the radio room, operator Cyril Evans began to pick up a large amount of traffic between a passenger liner quite close by and the telegraph relay station on the coast of Newfoundland at Cape Race. Evans interrupted and

telegraphed, “We're stopped and surrounded by ice. The Liner replied, "Shut up! Shut up! I'm busy, I'm working Cape Race." Twenty minutes later he could still hear the liner sending its passenger telegrams when he shut down his set and went to bed.

Earlier in the evening on deck Captain Stanley Lord had seen another ship approaching. It looked about the size of his own, but attempts to contact the vessel failed. It lay dark and mysterious about 10 miles away. At 12:40 there appeared a sudden flash just over or beyond the mystery ship. The Captain ordered the officer on deck to try signaling the ship by lamp. No reply. Three more rockets exploded, none appeared to go higher

than halfway up the mast of the mystery ship. About 2:00 A.M. it turned and slipped into the darkness.

In the light of the dawn there was no mystery ship but 20 miles in the same direction there was the scene of a great tragedy. Somehow this ghost vessel had imposed itself directly across the line of sight from the deck of the Californian. Had this ship not been there, Captain Lord would recognized the rockets as distress rockets. Had Cyril Evans kept his radio on for just 30 minutes more he would have heard distress signals. The source of both was the stricken liner RMS Titanic headed for a watery grave with 1500 victims in her wake. It was April 14, 1912.

"A Moment in Time" is produced at the University of Richmond. This is Dan Roberts.

Resources

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