

COLIMA SURVIVORS TELL A TALE OF HORROR.



CARPENTER.

ROSS.

G. ROWAN.

J. M. MORILL.

BOYD.

ORIEL.

SOME OF THE SURVIVORS AS THEY APPEARED ON THE DECK OF THE SAN JUAN.

[Sketched by a "Call" artist.]

The steamer San Juan sailed into port yesterday morning. She had on board sixteen members of the shipwrecked Colima. Very quietly and unostentatiously she steamed in, her flag at half-mast out of respect for the death of the Secretary of State, her white decks gleaming in the sunshine, all spick and span and clean and neat to the eye, giving no sign of the awful tale of disaster that she brought. But those on shore knew full well the news she carried, and as soon as the Merchants' Exchange had been notified of her incoming the intelligence spread over the City, and hundreds were gathered at the Pacific Mail dock before the San Juan rounded the bend in the bay and made fast to the pier.

Then there was a rush made for the gangplank, eager hands grasping it before it was firmly on the dock—eager, anxious souls waiting to go on board to learn the worst or the best. All the faces in the crowd were hopeful, though mingled was a look of dread and fear lest the telegraphic reports from Mazatlan were correct, or lest there had been a mistake in the names of some of those reported to have been saved. There was a deal of apprehension in the throng. It was not the happy, smiling crowd that usually welcomes the incoming steamer from foreign ports. But what marked it most was the eagerness to board the San Juan, and this eagerness must needs wait on officialism.

The wait was not long. Captain Rudell was soon on hand, and after the Government representatives reached the top of the gangplank the eager throng was permitted to press after him. It pressed so hotly, though fearfully, that those on board the steamer must wait a few moments before they could disembark. Soon the decks of the steamer were alive with a throng of landsmen and newspaper men, all bent on hearing the awful tidings from the stormy sea off Mazatlan, where the Colima went down on the morning of Monday, May 27.

And many of those on board were as eager to tell of their sufferings as were the landsmen to listen. For not only had they the tale of their disaster at sea to relate, which in itself is an experience of a lifetime, but they were indignant besides and had a complaint to make against the owners of the San Juan for ill-treatment received both on board the Colima and the rescuing vessel.

The story of the wreck they told has already been told in brief over the telegraph wires; but how different, how much more vivid, more awful it was when coming from the lips of those who lived through the terrors of that fearful scene. The ship was overloaded, badly loaded, top-heavy loaded—all agree upon that. When the gale struck her she weathered it, but badly. Then she careened. There was a list to starboard, and she did not right again. Men called out to the captain to cut away the deckloading of heavy spars. The captain was obdurate. He knew his business, or fancied that he did, and would brook no suggestions from what he called the terrified and panic-stricken passengers. And they probably were all that he called them, for they could see death staring them in the face, while the captain remained blind. The pity of that blindness; it cost more than 100 lives, that blindness, that obduracy.

this time. Perhaps some further investigation will shed some light on the point. At all events, the effects of those orders were to turn the crew and subaltern officers into a band of tyrants who acted as though they sought to prevent anyone from escaping the doom that yawned before them. Steerage and cabin passengers say they sought to obtain life-preservers and were forcibly restrained from doing so. Down in the steerage a guard was posted at the companionway door and those who escaped to the deck in time to cast themselves into the sea before the vessel went down did so only by main force, by kicking and fighting their way past the guard.

Those who were saved are some of those who were wiser than the captain, who could see their peril more clearly, and had wit enough to throw themselves into the foaming sea before the Colima gave her last list to the starboard. As she did this the captain's whistle sounded to cut loose the deckload of spars. It was too late then.

One of the rescued ones tells the scene which followed very graphically. "I stayed upon the ship until the last moment," he says, "and when I came to the surface after my plunge in the seething waves I looked back and the Colima was not in sight. As quickly as that she went down, and scores were drowned in the steerage and cabin. I caught a floating piece of timber and held fast. All around me the sea was covered with wreckage, and every now and then a human body floated by. Sometimes it was a woman, sometimes a man, but their faces were all turned upward. All that day those of us who found a foothold on the hurricane-deck raft saw bodies floating past. They were all dead."

And so the story goes. It is told in this morning's papers from almost a score of different eye-witnesses. All of them suffered greatly, and there is no wild story of the sea wherein the sufferings were greater nor the escapes from a watery grave more miraculous. Here is at hand all the material that one needs for the most thrilling narrative of ocean dangers that was ever woven into the story-books. And no one is responsible for it all. Under the laws of the land it appears to have been a catastrophe against which no damages may lie in law, although from the stories of the survivors—and they are all of the same tenor—it is plain that human skill and foresight might have prevented it.

But this is not all. One of the rescued passengers charges that Captain Pitts of the San Juan was too hasty in leaving the scene of the disaster on the morning of the 28th ult., after he had rescued a number of the shipwrecked men; and this statement is corroborated by Captain Long of the steamer Willamette, who was a passenger on board the San Juan. The captain was not satisfied with the efforts that were being made to search for the shipwrecked people. He raised a voluntary crew on board and asked Captain Pitts to let him take one of the San Juan's boats and go out to search. Captain Pitts refused.

Captain Long went to the purser of the San Juan. After much pleading the purser told him to go ahead. Captain Long then took it upon himself to have one of the boats lowered. He and his crew came back with six more of the shipwrecked men. These six in all probability, from the statements made by Mr. Oriel and Captain Long, would not have been saved but for this disobedience to the orders of Captain Pitts. It was 8 o'clock Tuesday morning when the first shipwrecked man was picked up. At 10:45 o'clock, two hours and three-quarters later, Captain Pitts in his unseemly haste steamed away from the scene. Perhaps there were others to save; perhaps there were not.

The air was misty yesterday morning, so that the San Juan's approach could not be seen by the Point Lobos watchers until she had crossed the bar and was headed for the gate. Immediately the Pacific Mail Company sent out the tug Millen Griffith, which reached the steamship's side before the Government steamer from

Meigs wharf got abreast of her. On the Government tug were several newspaper men, and they interviewed Charles R. Cushing Jr. before the San Juan reached the Mail dock. Mr. Cushing's father also went out on the Government tug and did what he could to prevent his son from speaking to the newspaper men.

Indeed, the company itself did all that was in its power to prevent their employees from being interviewed by the newspapers. Early in the morning there was a roll called in the mess-room. Captain Pitts then warned all the men and officers not to say a word of what had occurred to anybody. This order was more or less effective, and made it difficult for the newspapermen to collect reliable data from official sources.

It was nearly 1 o'clock when the San Juan reached the Mail dock, and by that time the confusion on board was so great that for a time it was impossible to get a straight and connected story from anybody. The steerage passengers had the fewest friends on shore to greet them. Some of them had no friends at all, and these, of course, had the most time to devote to the newsgatherer.

To a man the steerage passengers are

United States navy—Louis Zangare, seaman of the cruiser Olympia; George D. Ross, seaman of the cruiser Philadelphia. Crew of the Portland—Bruno Cerda and Jose M. Morill, firemen; A. Ramos and Jose Antonio Saliz, seamen, en route for Panama.

WHITING WENT CRAZY.

The Graphic and Thrilling Story of A. J. Sutherland, One of the Survivors.

A. J. Sutherland of Seattle, who was one of the heroes of the Colima disaster, tells a very thrilling and graphic story of his experiences during the hurricane that swept the steamer from the seas. Throughout the hours of anxiety and dread he preserved his mental faculties and observed all that passed around him with an extraordinary calmness. So much was inferred from his interesting narrative which he gave last night after attending to correspondence and various details of business. He was going to Guatemala on a business trip on the Colima, but returned yesterday with the other fortunate survivors on the San Juan.

When he stepped ashore he looked like a Southern merchant who had forgotten to change his clothes to suit the climate. He wore a suit of striped flannel belonging to the San Juan's purser, a soft hat loaned by

"In lashing one of the stern boats three or four sailors were very badly bruised and battered, but they kept at their work until it was done.

"Just at the time of the collapse it got very dark, but the real darkness came on when we were on the wreckage floating about. That was the most awful hurricane I ever saw, and I've been through Kansas cyclones. I never saw anything like it before. Some things tore loose from the stern and they were lashed fast by sailors at imminent risk of their lives. Third Mate Hansen cut the deckload of lumber adrift as we were going over, but that made no difference anyhow. Nothing could have saved us.

"The whole thing went to pieces at once—say from three to five minutes from the time the steamer listed until she sunk. As she rolled, all the while listing deeper, the lower tier of staterooms were filled with water by every successive sea that swept over us. The women and children were in the rooms holding on to something to save themselves from being battered to death by the pitching and rolling. It was utterly impossible to keep your feet even while holding fast with your hands to the railing or whatever you could grasp. I was in one of the upper row of staterooms. The woodwork creaked and cracked, and the light came through ceiling and partitions, so

the hull was filling up with water, but she kept afloat though very far down. Suddenly there was an explosion. The masts raised back out of the water and the hull lifted up, and then she tilted and went down in an instant, stern first. I don't think there can be any question but that the boilers exploded. I learned that there were explosives stored far aft, but the explosion was amidships. It tore the hull to pieces and the Colima sank like a flash.

"There were a number of women and Chinese down in the steerage who would not be let up on deck, and they never got out alive. Every one of them went down in the explosion with the hull.

"The first one I saw near me was Mrs. Irving, and then a stout lady, who came up near the lifeboat which I was lucky enough to be thrown against. I pulled her the other lady. They had been taken from their stateroom a little while previously by officers, as the partitions had been smashed by the waves, leaving an opening into the dining-room. It was only by that mere accident that they were not ground to death in the wreckage of cabins. Twice these ladies were thrown out of the boat and twice I got them back. Then Professor Whiting came alongside and I pulled him into the boat. He acted as if he was out of his head. He tipped over repeatedly, Mr. Whiting and I turned the boat over once in attempting to drag the stout woman in; but we got in again, and when we came right Mr. Peters was hanging on to the stern. I went to save Peters, when again the boat turned over in the awful sea. It was then I lost sight of Whiting. The large lady was struck by wreckage and disappeared. I never saw either of them again. Mrs. Irving held on to the boat for half an hour later with marvelous tenacity. It kept turning over, but every time I came up I found her hanging on to some portion of the boat and helped her all I could. Once I got astride the keel and held her up by leaning over to one side and holding her firmly by the hand. But this could not be sustained long, and as the boat tipped I went over. As I came up I tried to tip the boat on its keel, and then I lost Mrs. Irving. She sank from sheer exhaustion after a noble battle for life. Peters sank, too, and I never saw him again, though he was saved.

"When we were in the water the worst trouble began, for it was only then that the hurricane struck us with its full force. The day was blackened and the rain fell in solid masses. It was not a cyclone, but a circular whirlwind that caught us in its very center and would draw the wreckage together in a circle for a great distance. Yes, bodies, struggling men and women, life-rafts and battered boats, all went into the dreadful vortex. Then a tremendous wave would rise from underneath, like a mountain bursting forth, and scatter the wreckage everywhere around. It was in this vortex that those who escaped from the ship were stunned or killed outright from being literally ground to death by driftwood that shot about like monstrous shells.

"How did I escape? If I saw a log or a mass of wreckage coming down upon my head ten feet above me I jumped from my boat and dived. The only thing to do to avoid being cut or killed was to dive and then come up again and swim for your raft. "The water was extremely buoyant and I would come up anyhow, though at one time I thought it would be better dead. All night long I sat in the submerged boat, and when I'd get cold I would crawl down into the water between the seats. Fortunately the water was very warm and comfortable. I was about twenty-three hours in the water when picked up by the San Juan. About an hour or two before sundown the ocean was calm as an inland lake, all strewn with bits of the lost Colima. At one time I was close to the shore and could see the rocks distinctly, but at daylight next morning I found myself drifting far out to sea with only a dim outline of mountains where the coast was.

"I saw the San Juan at 8 or 9 o'clock A. M. but was not picked up until 11 o'clock. My boat was very low in the water—almost under the surface—and so it was long after I sighted the San Juan that her lookouts found me.

"The captain of the San Juan made a circuit of thirty miles, and started north about noon. He might have picked up more if he had stayed cruising around all the afternoon. I don't think I was two miles away from the rest of the rafts that he picked up."

"Was anybody to blame for the wreck of the Colima?"

"They have not got a ship that would have lasted five minutes in that hurricane. It was beyond human skill to maneuver a ship through it successfully. The hurricane, or whatever class of storm it was that caught the Colima, could crush the stoutest ship afloat as if it were a tiny toy. Look at the terrible force of the waves. They tore every stitch of clothing off us before we were ten minutes in the water. Men and women alike were shorn of covering by the wind and the sea. When I saw Professor Whiting for the last time all he had upon him was the shoulders of his coat; the rest was torn to atoms and blown away. Poor fellow, he had lost his mind. The terrible fate that fell upon his wife and children—for he must have known full well they were swept down to a frightful death in that churning wreckage—it took his senses from him. I believe he could not realize his position shortly before he went under the waves.

"The captain stayed by his post to the last. Just before the explosion I saw him clinging to the railing of the bridge and as I was whirled away in the water he gave two faint blows of the whistle. But he never left the bridge. He sank with his ship."

ON THE DECK RAFT.

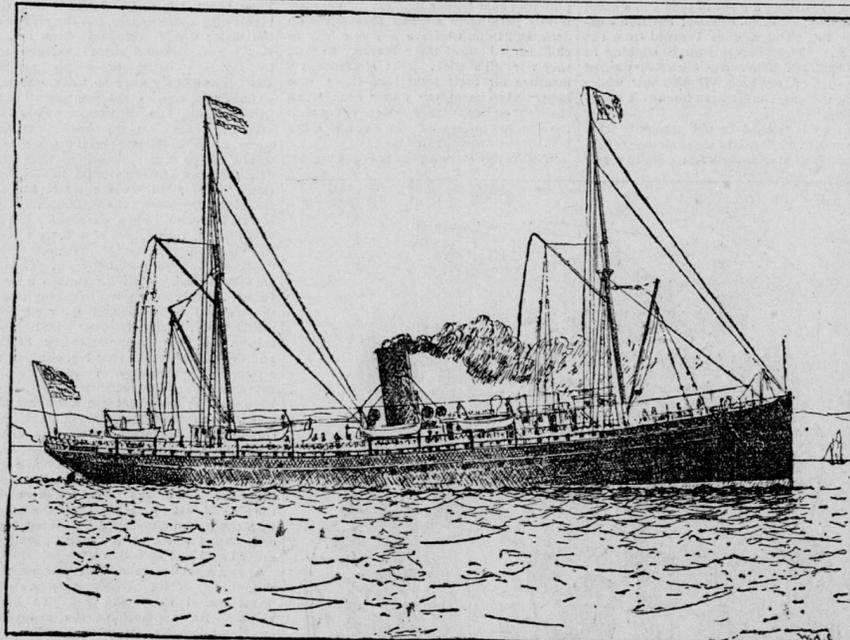
Jose Monica Merel Wound His Arms Around a Floating Timber.

One of the most distressing chapters of the wreck of the Colima is that related by three Spanish sailors through an interpreter in the smoking-room of the San Juan yesterday afternoon. The sailors are Juan Antonio Ramos, Bruno Cedio and Jose Monica Merel. They are three of a quartet of Spanish sailors who came up on the steamer Portland under contract with the Pacific Mail Company. The contract bound the company to return the sailors to their home at Panama from San Francisco. They were passengers on board the Colima and bound for Panama. Jose Antonio Loliz is the last of the four. He was saved from the wreck, but in such a pitiable physical condition that he was too ill yesterday to tell his story.

Attorney J. B. de Las Casas performed the good offices of interpreter, and through him these three tales of the sea were related. Merel spoke first.

"When she began to roll there was a panic in the steerage, and everybody there seemed to realize that something fearful was going to happen. When she listed way over on the port side and did not right again we all rushed for the starboard or high side of the vessel, which was also the landward side. I can hardly remember what the others did. Every man was for himself at that time. All was great confusion. The women were screaming and some of the men were frantic. I was on the steerage deck or I should have gone down with the rest. Many others were on the deck with me, but the guards would not allow any more to come up the gangway, though they fought and pleaded to be allowed to come up. How terrible it must have been to have died down in that hold—to have the waters rush in upon them and no chance for escape in any way. Some men on the steerage deck I saw with life-preservers, but the guards came after them and cursed them and made them take off the life-preservers. I could not get one. What a shame it was. Everybody on board could see that the ship was going down, everybody except the officers and the crew. On the port side tons of water was washing into the hold with every sea. It was a terrible storm, and the waves were big and high and angry. Some waves washed clean over the ship as she lay there in the trough on her beam's end. I heard men cry out to the captain to cut away the deck-load. She might have righted then. But the captain was too sure. Somehow he could not see the danger as we saw it.

"Well, when I felt her rolling still deeper—you could feel her getting deeper and deeper in the water—I tore off my coat and shoes and jumped into the water from the starboard side. I sank, and when I came up and looked around I could only see what looked like the width of a man's hand of her hull above the water. Then the eddies from the sinking vessel caught me and I was forced down again. I think it must have been the half of a minute before I could struggle up to the surface again. I looked for the ship. She was gone. The sea was covered with floating wreckage. I caught a piece of



THE PACIFIC MAIL STEAMER SAN JUAN ENTERING THE HARBOR.

dissatisfied with their treatment on board the San Juan after their rescue, and later in the day it was learned that the cabin passengers had not a favorable story to tell of their treatment. Most of the rescued ones showed visible signs of their physical sufferings, either by scars or wounds received during the wreck or by bandaged limbs. All of them were worn-looking, and one could almost read the tale of their sufferings in their pinched faces.

LIST OF THE RESCUED.

Who the Men Brought to This City by the San Juan Were.

The list of rescued brought to this City by the San Juan yesterday was: Cabin passengers—C. H. Cushing Jr. of Oakland, A. J. Sutherland, New Western Hotel.

Steerage—Harry William Boyd, jeweler, Birmingham, Eng.; Gustav Rowan, musician, Ghent, Belgium; T. J. Oriel, electrician, Stockton.

Officers and crew of the Colima—O. Hansen, third officer, 18½ West Mission street; A. F. Richardson, storekeeper; Raymond Aviles, engineer's storekeeper, La Paz, Mexico; Thomas Friese and Albert Carpenter, seamen.

an officer of the steamer, Dr. Robertson's underclothing and a borrowed gray overcoat to keep himself warm.

"Everything was quiet when we were in Manzanillo harbor," said he. "But immediately we went out to sea it began to blow and became rough. Two hours out the wind began to increase steadily in fury and kept on getting worse until the steamer collapsed.

"During the night the sea was growing more and more terrible, but yet it caused no great excitement aboard except among some nervous passengers. It was only an hour or two before we went down that any real signs of alarm could be seen among the passengers and crew.

"Professor Whiting was the worst worked up man in the cabin, and we young fellows kept 'joshing' him about his fears. Why, really, five minutes before the wreck I did not realize the danger. Something like two minutes before the ship listed the captain told me it was all up.

that water was dripping, or rather pouring in upon us; and this was some time before she went to pieces. I had on my trousers and shirt after getting up and to keep myself dry in my stateroom had to put on my overcoat.

"After we took the last fatal list the cabins started, and I climbed up to the top of the hurricane deck. I realized then we were gone. Both rows of cabins and everything above the hull crumbled away like a bit of soft brick instantaneously. I was then outside amidships hanging on to a rail behind the stays, or ropes that stay the masts, and scrambled into a lifeboat. From that point I saw the deckhouses and two rows of staterooms go overboard. A mast fell upon the boat and shoved it into the water. Then I was off the ship. The cabins were coming toward me, crushing and crunching into splinters and the people who were washed away with them. Above the roar of the gale I could hear the screams and yells. The wreckage and men and women were mixed up in a frightful mass as the timbers were crushing out lives before my eyes. No one could have escaped from that awful mass of broken timbers that kept on churning and smashing in the waves.

"Only the bare hull was left with masts sticking up, for everything above the iron was swept away. During the listing even