

## WRECKED ON THE ROCKS

The Steamer City of New York in a Tight Place.

JUST INSIDE OF POINT BONITA.

Leaving Port for China She Misses Her Way in the Fog.

CREW AND PASSENGERS RESCUED BY TUGS.

The Vessel Will Probably Be a Total and the Cargo a Half Loss.

PILOT JOHNSON CHARGED WITH GROSS CARELESSNESS.

A Large Amount of Treasure Taken From the Steamer, Which Has Nine Feet of Water in Her Hold.

At 3:15 o'clock yesterday afternoon the 300-ton steamer City of New York, bound for China, cast off her lines from the Pacific Mail Steamship Company's wharf and dropped into the stream. Captain Frank Johnston was in command and Pilot George Johnson was on the bridge to steer the big steamer through the channel of the Golden Gate.

A heavy fog was rolling in through the harbor entrance, blotting all view of the ocean from sight, but in the south arm of the bay there was not the least sign of mist or thick weather.

The City of New York was headed down the bay under a good pressure of steam, her hull low in the water, for on board of the vessel was one of the largest and most valuable cargoes that has been shipped to the Orient for some time. Those who saw the stately craft little thought that in less than an hour word would be flashed over the wires from the Merchant Exchange Signal Station, conveying the appalling intelligence that the steamer with her quarter of a million dollars in freight was groaning on the rocks just this side of Point Bonita.

No one has ever questioned for a moment the ability of Pilot Johnson to safely guide a vessel to a good offing. His record in his peculiar capacity has never been questioned. Years of careful and honorable service earned for him the reputation of being unapproachable as a judge of San Francisco Bay currents and Pacific Ocean tides.

But like all men who have too great a confidence in their ability, Pilot Johnson apparently allowed himself to become careless. Some persons even accuse him of more serious negligence, but owing to the excitement of the moment the presence of innumerable rumors and contradictions, it is only fair to say that Johnson has yet, perhaps, a chance to explain himself.

It was about 4:10 o'clock when the City of New York passed Meiggs wharf, and in a short time she disappeared in the banks of for which by this time had completely hidden Point Bonita, the Sausalito hills and all vestige of the bar. It was an unusual fog for this time of year—low and thick and only lightly stirred by an eight-knot westerly breeze.

The telephone-bell in the exchange rang at 4:45, and Keeper John Hyslop at the association's station sent a message that an unknown vessel was on the rocks near Point Bonita. Rockets had been sent up and signal-guns were booming.

In a few minutes all of the tugboat companies had been notified, and so had the several morning newspaper offices.

Redstack tugs and the boats of the Spreckels line were soon booming down the bay in a race to the rescue. Seven of these little craft were in the fleet that first put off to the assistance of the stranded liner. They were the Fearless, the Alert, the Reliance, the Sea King, the Joseph Redmond, the Vigilant and the Alba. When they reached the point where the City of New York had struck it was found that the steamer lay just this side of the point, heeled over on her port side, with her stern pointed toward the west. The fog was so thick that it was at first difficult to judge of her exact position, but later it was ascertained that the reef of rocks on which the vessel is impaled is a few hundred yards south of the little sand beach, which is southwest of the lighthouse.

The sea was smooth, and only a slight swell created an indistinct line of surf close to the shore, which was visible, but vaguely at intervals when the moon found its way partly through the shroud of mist that enveloped the whole scene. The tugs Monarch and Alert remained close by for a while, and a consultation was held between the officers of the several towboats and the New York's commander as to the advisability of making an attempt to get the steamer off. The Sea King dropped alongside, as did the Fearless and the Vigilant. The first-mentioned boat proceeded immediately to take off the passengers, of whom there were two in the cabin and 130 in the Chinese steerage. There was also one passenger in the European steerage.

All of the passengers were brought to this city and landed at the Mail dock, the baggage of the cabin passengers also being taken to dry land. The City of New York had nine feet of water in her hold, and appeared to be pretty high up on the rocks. Her cargo can only be partly saved, and the vessel, it is feared, will be a total loss. There is just one possibility of saving her, and at a late hour last night it was determined to jettison part of the cargo, which consisted mostly of flour, thus lightening the steamer sufficiently to make it possible to drag her on to the sand beach mentioned heretofore.

Even should this be accomplished, the City of New York will probably never be saved. It might permit of the wreckers getting at her more handily, and might result in saving some of the shipments of canned goods and other articles from the Eastern manufacturers, which are stored in the vessel's hold.

"As nearly as I can remember," said one of the City of New York's crew, "we were not going more than four knots just after entering the fogbank. When we struck I thought we were about to go to the bottom, and I made a rush for one of the boats; but after bumping once or twice we finally came to a standstill, so I concluded that we were hard aground. We keeled over to port, and had there been a heavy sea on I think the vessel would have gone to pieces in a few hours."

"The shock was very unexpected. It was, of course, very foggy, in fact so much so that one could hardly see a hundred feet ahead, but knowing Johnson's reputation as a pilot I had no idea that any accident would occur. I could not say whether we drifted in or not. When it is thick as it has been to-night it is very hard to tell whether a boat is drifting or going ahead on her regular course."

Between decks on the City of New York some damage was done to crockery and other breakable goods. The water in her hold was up to a level with her fireroom, and it was well nigh impossible to say just how much of the vessel's bottom is pierced or stove in.

From other sources it was learned that the steamer passed pretty close in shore, and the pilot undoubtedly thought to clear Point Bonita about a half mile off.

Everybody appeared to feel deeply for Pilot Johnson's misfortunes, but from the way circumstantial evidence tended last

rider over to Lime Point and to the life-saving station at Bakers Beach that a vessel was on the rocks and that many human lives and much valuable merchandise were at the mercy of the waves.

It was just at 4 o'clock in the afternoon when the steamer signaled for help, but so dense was the fog that it was almost an hour later before the lighthouse-keeper and his assistant could locate the vessel; but the mist finally lifted a little and the long black lines of the vessel could be plainly seen, while the smoke which floated away from the funnel showed that one of the ocean fliers was high and dry upon the rocks.

So close was she that from the cliff on which the lighthouse stands it was possible to look down on the steamer's decks, while the members of the crew could be seen hurrying hither and thither, and the lights of the vessel were brightly reflected in the small stretch of water between the vessel and the point of land.

It did not look to be more than 500 feet out to the place where she was lying, and it could hardly be more than that distance from the rocks, as those which fringe the north heads do not reach out more than 300 yards, and beyond that is deep water. Indeed the lighthouse-keeper said that if the steamer had passed fifty feet farther out from shore, she would have cleared the rocks entirely.

As soon as the vessel was located two of the assistants in the lighthouse put off

toward the fog and cloud the light shown through them like some strange phosphorescence, and bombs which were exploded around echoed against the granite cliffs and reverberated against the surrounding hills. There was great activity on board the steamer, and the officers could be heard giving orders, though the words could not be understood while the crew were hurrying about carrying out the commands of their superiors. The sound of an engine working the pumps could be detected, but later in the evening the sound of hammers was heard, while now and then came the clanking of chains.

About 10 o'clock a noise of some sort came up from the bow of the steamer which sounded like the breaking of a hawser, but whether the tugs had been taking pull at her could not be distinguished in the darkness.

The vessel went on the rocks when the tide was well out, and the keeper of the lighthouse thought that it would be possible to get her off at high tide, which would be about midnight.

But the rising tide would hardly be sufficient of itself to float the steamer clear of the rocks. As long, however, as the water keeps so smooth but little harm can be done to the vessel, as she was not grinding a particle and seemed perfectly fast.

But the ebb tide generally carries a swell with it. That might cause some

all of them to once more set foot on terra firma, and when the officials who had charge of them refused to allow them to land there was a small-sized riot apparently impending for a time.

About the wharf a large crowd had assembled and a number of Chinese endeavored to gain an entrance to the sacred precincts at various times to learn something of their friends who had been aboard the unfortunate ship, but their efforts were in vain. Some of the employees of the steamship company seem to be imbued with the idea that it is their especial mission to suppress all information when an accident of this kind occurs, and render the work of newspaper men as disagreeable as possible at the same time. A man named Spencer, who was said to be captain of the night watch, was a shining example in this respect last night. A reporter attempted to state his mission to this officious individual while the latter was ordering everybody off the dock, but was informed that "no reporters were wanted around there anyway," words that effect.

#### A DIPLOMAT'S EXPERIENCE.

Among the cabin passengers on the City of New York was Yang Bo Gong, secretary of the Chinese Consul-General at Havana, Cuba. He arrived here about a week ago and was the guest of Li Yung, the Consul-General at San Francisco. Yang Bo Gong at first intended to sail on the Gaelic, but as he would gain a week by so doing he engaged passage on the City of New York. He has been fourteen years in the Chinese diplomatic service, two years having been spent in Cuba. His present trip was undertaken in consequence of the granting of six months' furlough, which he resolved to spend in a visit to China.

Accompanied by Consul-General Li Yung Yan, Vice-Consul King Owyang and a number of Chinese merchants, he left the Consulate about 1 o'clock yesterday afternoon. His countrymen wished him bon voyage and he embarked, retiring immediately to his cabin. His subsequent experiences were related by him to a CALL reporter at the Consulate about midnight, through the medium of Vice-Consul King's interpretation.

"Although I have spent fourteen years in the diplomatic service of China," began the secretary of the Cuban Consul-General, "and have traversed many leagues both by land and sea, I am a very poor traveler. My sailing experiences represent simply so many days of deplorable wretchedness, which I customarily spend in prayer and repentance. I have a precise and accurate knowledge of all the symptoms from the first premonition to the big moments when I set foot on the gangplank in the act of disembarking."

Captain Grey and Whitelaw will take a wrecking party and divers out in the morning.

"It will be necessary to raise the ship considerably," said Captain Whitelaw, "as the jagged rocks on the bottom would have torn her all to pieces if the tugs had succeeded in moving her. She lies in a very easy position and in no immediate danger, except a storm comes up."

"During the evening five tugs made an attempt to pull her off, but did not budge her an inch. I don't think she is in any danger, except a storm comes up."

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Both Captains Grey and Whitelaw thought it was a useless task to attempt to save any of the cargo. The gang of men worked upon it about two hours and threw overboard about sixty tons of flour. The specie and baggage, both of the cabin and steerage passengers, was successfully secured and landed at the Pacific Mail dock at an early hour this morning.

**THE WRECKED VESSEL.**

The City of New York was built in Chester, Pa., in 1875, by John Roach. She was brought to this coast a short while afterward, and has done duty up to about four months ago on the Panama and Central American route of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company.

At the end of the recent coffee season in the south the City of New York was taken off the Panama route and sent to China. She was what was known as the "extra" boat, not being scheduled for any regular time, but carrying cargoes and passengers on dates between the sailing of the regular Chinese steamers.

Two round trips to the Orient had already been made by the City of New York, and she was outbound on her third voyage yesterday.

The Rio Janeiro sailed on the 19th inst. and the Gaelic is billed for November 2. The Rio Janeiro carried forty cabin passengers, which accounts for the City of New York's small list.

Captain Frank H. Johnston commanded the vessel for a number of years while she was on the Panama route. He always made good time with his ship, and well he might, for she has a record for steady speed.

Like the Newbern of the Pacific Coast Steamship Company, the City of New York has made a great deal of money for her owners.

During good times in the coffee business she used to come into port regularly loaded down with valuable freight, for which the corporation received the highest of rates.

Central Americans always showed a preference for Captain Johnston's steamer when they traveled. This was partially because the skipper himself was popular with them and partly for the reason that his vessel was a very comfortable, and even luxurious passenger craft.

About three years ago the steamer was sent to the Union Iron Works, and her machinery was altered and repaired to such an extent that it has remained in perfect order ever since, and has seldom given the least trouble.

Other extensive improvements were made, including the placing of an electric light plant aboard and the enlargement of her steerage accommodations.

The Pacific Mail Steamship Company never insures its steamers in regular insurance companies.

It contributes the amount which would be paid for insurance to what is known as "the insurance fund," and from this fund is drawn money to build new vessels to take the place of those lost.

**THE STEAMER'S CARGO.**

The total value of the City of New York's cargo, as manifested at the Custom-house, when she sailed out of the port yesterday was \$9,535. Her cargo for China was valued at \$86,000 and included 16,000 barrels of flour, valued at \$50,700, shipped principally by Chinese merchants, 9000 pounds of ginseng, valued at \$23,900, shipped by Huie Kai & Co. and the South-



POSITION OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK NEAR POINT BONITA.

night all were inclined to charge him with rank misjudgment for trying to keep so near the rocks in such a fog.

When THE CALL reporter left the wreck three tugs were alongside of it and preparations were being made to dispose of some of the cargo of flour.

Great excitement was caused on 'change by the announcement of the presence of a big ocean steamer on the rocks off Point Bonita. The Australian steamer Monowai was due, and many thought that it was she that had met with disaster.

The office of the Oceanic Steamship Company was besieged with anxious friends of passengers on the Monowai, and the clerks of the Exchange were kept busy answering the telephone. When news came that the unfortunate vessel was neared the fog grew thicker and the light of the lighthouse scarcely made a ray of brightness in the midst of the profound darkness of sky and water.

A position within a few hundred yards of the stranded steamer was reached almost imperceptibly, but little could be told of how she lay until the reporter's boat was almost alongside. Nebulous-looking lights danced about in the fog and marked the spot where the fleet of tugboats were standing by ready to lend a helping hawser. Voices came out of the darkness on every hand, and muffled orders emanated from the big black bulk of the City of New York.

But there was no confusion; just a businesslike state of affairs, in which every man waited his turn to do what he was told with a show of true maritime discipline.

The red stack tugboat company kept its veil of uncertainty one could easily imagine how a hand at the helm of a big ocean traveler might err in its manipulation of the tiller ropes. As Point Bonita was neared the fog grew thicker and the light of the lighthouse scarcely made a ray of brightness in the midst of the profound darkness of sky and water.

There were many expressions of regret for Pilot Johnson, but no one seemed to understand how he could fall into the error that he did.

Numerous Chinese merchants, owners of a large portion of the City of New York's cargo, were deeply interested in the possibilities of getting their goods ashore. Not much insurance was placed on the consignments, judging from the remarks of shippers.

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About 200 tons of cargo had been thrown overboard, but General Agent Alexander Center of the Pacific Mail Company gave orders to cease work in that direction.

Early this morning another effort will be made to extricate the steamer, and if should fail then Captain T. P. H. Whitelaw will try to pump her clear of water with wrecking pumps.

Mr. Center and Captain Whitelaw decided that it would be foolish to destroy any more of the ship's cargo.

#### AT POINT BONITA.

The Pacific Mail steamer City of New York sailed away from the Mail dock at 3 o'clock yesterday afternoon, and an hour later her whistle was sounding signals of distress, and the gallant boat was high on the rocks of Point Bonita. The fog, which hung over the Golden Gate, came in about 4 o'clock yesterday morning, and it kept everything enshrouded in its gloom during the entire day. As regularly as the clock ticked off its thirty-nine seconds, the big foghorn on the point shouted out its warning to the mariners, while it was answered by the sharp signals of the steamer to "give them a line."

Each one was anxious to get a pull at so rich a prize, and as the little vessels puffed and fumed as they steamed back and forth their commanders lost no opportunity to try to strike a bargain with Captain Johnston.

But that officer waited, evidently watching for the assistance which he had telegraphed for from the city.

It was a strange sight that presented itself to the beholder as he stood out on the farthest point of the rocky peninsula while the blasts of the foghorn behind him rent the air, and the rays of the big lamp were thrown directly out on the spot where the stranded steamer lay.

The lights of the numerous tugs fluttered about in the darkness, and when the fog would lift for a few seconds the outline of the steamer would be plainly seen while the lights from the portholes and in the cabins shone out brilliantly.

Hardly a breath of air was stirring and the sea had not been so calm for many a day. It was as smooth as a mill pond, and the light swell which rolled in from the ocean was not sufficient to rock the tugs and small boats which surrounded the steamer.

There is no method of communication between the Point Bonita lighthouse and the steamer, but the big foghorn was at once set to work and the signal was soon car-

ried over to the steamer to ask if any assistance was needed. Captain Johnson asked them to lay by for a moment or two, and soon threw over the following message, which was at once taken to Sausalito and telegraphed to San Francisco:

To Alex. Centre, Esq., Gen. P. M. S. Co.: Ship ashore on north leads. Send all assistance quickly. Dry forward and aft; five feet amidships. JOHNSON.