















# HISTORY OF THE General Slocum Disaster

BY WHICH NEARLY

## 1200 LIVES WERE LOST

BY THE BURNING OF THE STEAMER GENERAL  
SLOCUM IN HELL GATE, NEW YORK  
HARBOR, JUNE 15, 1904.

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*ILLUSTRATED.*

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COMPILED AND EDITED BY J. S. OGILVIE.

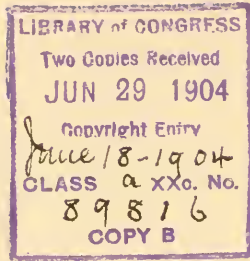
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## PREFACE

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IN presenting a brief history of one of the greatest calamities of modern times, by which nearly twelve hundred persons were burned to death and drowned in New York Harbor, we have necessarily had to depend upon different writers and upon many sources of information for the facts contained in this book, but we have taken the greatest possible care that all statements made are as nearly the actual truth as possible, and we give them to the public, believing, as we do, that many persons will be glad to have, as a matter of reference, the facts condensed together in one volume.

THE COMPILER.





# HISTORY

## OF THE

# GENERAL SLOCUM DISASTER

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### CHAPTER I.

NOTHING approaching the recent General Slocum disaster has happened in New York waters before. The exact number of the women and children who were burned to death and drowned by the burning of the pleasure steamer General Slocum will not be far from twelve hundred.

Nearly all of those who were burned and drowned were women and little children, members of the Sunday School of St. Mark's Lutheran Church, in Sixth street, who were on their annual excursion.

Between 1,400 and 1,500 people, so far as can be learned, started out on the Slocum. Nearly a third of them were babies. Try as best they could, the police and hospital authorities and the officers of the church could not find more than 300 or 400 survivors. But everybody believed that, when matters were straightened out, and all the hospitals began to give an accounting of the wounded they had taken in spontaneously, the list of those members of the excursion still living would be most happily lengthened. Many of the excursionists were children not attached to the church.

## HOW COULD IT HAPPEN?

"How did such a thing happen?" That was the question which was reiterated up and down the length and breadth of the city. People read of the captain who found at 110th street that his boat, with its precious cargo, was on fire and yet did not drive it to the shore until he was beyond 138th street, a mile and a half from the place where the cry of "Fire!" first reached his ears.

Captain William H. Van Schaick of the Slocum explained, as best he could, how such horrible disaster had come to a company under his care and direction. He is a man 61 years old, and has had long experience in commanding pleasure craft in the waters around New York. Captain Van Schaick said that though he heard the alarm of fire early, he made up his mind at once that there was no certain place where she could be beached in shallow water south of North Brother Island. The tide was running up to the Sound with terrific velocity, and he was sure that he would lose time trying to turn his boat into a proper beaching place south of North Brother Island. He stuck to his post, although the flames scorched his clothing, until the boat was hard and fast ashore. Pilot Van Wart stayed with him.

Rivermen generally were divided as to the good judgment shown by Capt. Van Schaick in trying to go so far. The captain himself admitted that it was not until after the fire had been going some time that he realized its fierceness and its rapidity. Captain Van Schaick and pilots Van Wart and Weaver were arrested and were sent to the prison cells of Bellevue Hospital, for all of them were badly burned.

## LAMP ROOM FED THE FIRE.

There was a compartment in the hold of the General

Slocum known as the second cabin. It was forward, just aft the forecastle. In this room were kept the lamps and the oil for them, the gasoline and the brass-polishing liquids, and all the other inflammable supplies. It cannot be determined whether or not the fire started in this cabin. But it was known that the flames were fed there to reach their greatest and most murderous intensity. From that cabin the fire swept back through the boat with a fierceness that no fire-fighting apparatus could hold in check.

#### THE PITY OF IT.

There were scenes of horror on the General Slocum and on shore such as it would not be decent to set down on paper, even though any chronicler had the ability. It was a boatload of women and little children. For the last mile, when the steamer, spouting flames high into the air, was shooting swiftly out to the Sound with the tide, people on the shore and on other steamers could see the women and children fluttering over the sides into the water in scores. The river is swift there at flood tide. The waves grab forward at one another with hungry white fingers. A strong man would have but little chance. The women and the children had no chance.

There have been heard such stories as often come out after a disaster—stories of cruel selfishness by members of the crew, of cold disregard of the Slocum's distress signals and most evident need by pleasure and business craft in the harbor. In the end came the story that there had been looting of the bodies of the dead. Some of these things were more or less true.

#### HEROIC WORK OF RESCUERS.

But there was a glorious record of self-sacrifice and of bravery to be set over against all that was evil or unmanly.

Of such were the bravery with which the old captain and his pilots stayed at their posts; the noble efforts of Policemen Kelk and Van Tassel, who were on the burning boat, to save the lives of those entrusted to their care; the beautiful recklessness of the women nurses and the convalescent patients from the hospitals on North Brother Island, risking their lives to dash into the water around the burning boat to pull out drowning children and women; the brave deeds of the men on the city's boats, the Franklin Edson and the Massasoit, and on the tugs Theo and Wade. Some day someone will fittingly dress out the deeds of that little man, Capt. Jack Wade, and his daredevil crew. For every one whose deeds were seen and mentally registered in the flying moments of horror and peril, there were hundreds of others in which the rescued were too much scared to appreciate what was being done for them, and the rescuers were too busy to take note for themselves.

Ambulances and patrol wagons from nearly every corner of the city were sent to points along The Bronx shore nearest the wreck. Physicians and nurses came by hundreds, not only from hospitals, public and private, in all the boroughs of the city, but singly, from their private offices, from as far away as Newark and Paterson.

#### NORTH BROTHER ISLAND A MORGUE.

Bodies were sent down to the Bellevue Morgue from North Brother Island as fast as they were recovered, until there was no more room there. Most of them were unidentified. At about 5 o'clock at night, when the tide was low, there was a sudden increase in the rapidity with which bodies were recovered. They were brought out of the water near where the Slocum had been grounded at the rate of about one a minute. A temporary morgue was established

on the island. The systematizing of the work of identification was completed, and it is hoped that nearly all the recovered bodies may be recognized. Some of them were so badly burned that they will never be recognized. At night great silent crowds, thousands and thousands of people, stood in front of the church in Sixth street, in front of the morgue and the Alexander Avenue Police Station, and along the East River shore opposite North Brother Island—wherever the bodies of the victims were laid or where news of them could be learned.

#### THE SLOCUM SAILS OUT GAILY.

The General Slocum, which was built of wood, started around the Battery at about 7 o'clock on the morning of the fatal day. Her crew of twenty-seven was aboard. She reached the foot of Third street, in the East River, where there is a recreation pier, at about twenty minutes past 8 o'clock.

There were several hundred excursionists already on the pier when the Slocum arrived. There were mothers full of pride in their lusty German-American babies, and full of anxiety for fear some of them would fall overboard in their haste to get on board the Slocum before anybody else did. A band came and went to the after deck and began booming out melodies dear to the German and the East Side heart.

The mothers and children kept pouring across the gang plank and scurrying for "good places" about the decks. The Rev. G. C. F. Haas, and his assistant, the Rev. J. S. Schultz, stood on opposite sides of the gang plank and welcomed the mothers and the scholars. Policeman Kelk and Van Tassel, full of experience in the handling of Sunday School excursions, took posts on the off-shore side of the



steamer, ready to dive after any towhead who by mischance should fall overboard. It was as fine a day for a picnic as ever was. The sunlight made the blue water seem as bright as though it lay anywhere but between the piers of the biggest city of this nation. The ugly factory walls were set off by masts and flags, and big boats and little boats seemed rather to be skittering over the river for their own amusement than for any purpose of sordid profit.

#### IT WAS AN IDEAL DAY.

The excursion was late in starting. Lutherans are great folk for going to family picnics in big family parties. Greta and Wilhelmina and August's wife gather from the corners of Manhattan and Brooklyn and bring all their children, and combine their luncheons so that it shall be served to ten or fifteen hungry mouths in proper proportions. And if any one of the whole family circle was late, then all the rest went to Pastor Haas and besought him, by all that was dear and sweet, not to let the boat go until sister and her little ones came. Pastor Haas was good-natured, and it was well along toward 10 o'clock when the Slocum started, the band on the upper deck playing "Ein Feste Burg Ist Unser Gott."

The children tugged at their skirts, held down by their smiling mothers and big sisters and grandmothers, and cheered at the departing pier. There was not a chill in the air. There was not a cloud on the blue sky. Pastor Haas went up and down the decks, and the matrons loudly communicated their congratulations to him.

Hell Gate, where the tide was rushing out to the Sound with the utmost violence, was passed safely. There isn't a steamer captain in this harbor, no matter though he be as old as Capt. Van Schaick, who is not glad when he has



passed through Hell Gate without a collision and without being slewed out of his course against its rocky sides.

#### STEAMBOAT BURSTS INTO FLAMES.

Though Capt. Van Schaick did not know it, the steamer must even then have been on fire. Just back of the crew's quarters, up in the bow of the steamer under the main deck, is what is called the second cabin. On the Slocum this cabin has been used as a sort of storeroom. Spare hawsers and paint and oils were kept there. Gasolene was kept there, and it was there that Albert Payne, a negro steward, kept the ship's lamps when they were not in place, and cleaned and filled them. Payne, his face ashy with the horrors he had been through, swore that he had finished cleaning all the lamps before the boat left her dock early that morning, and that he had not been in the room, except to see that everything was all right. He swore that just before the boat left East Third street the second cabin was all right.

Along the Astoria shore, where there are many yards for the building of small boats, the trouble was known sooner than it was on the steamer itself. As the Slocum passed Broadway, Astoria, John E. Ronan, a Dock Department employee, was struck with the gayety of the steamer, with her flags, her music and her load of hilarious children, and called to a companion:

"Look at the Slocum! Don't it make you hate to work when you see a crowd having as good a time as that?"

But a quarter of a mile further on, William Alloway, the captain of a dredge, saw a burst of smoke puff out from the lower deck of the Slocum just forward of the smoke-stacks. He let off four blasts of his dredge whistle. At the same moment other boats on each side of the river be-

gan to toot shrill warnings. Alloway and his men could see a scurrying on the decks of the Slocum. They wondered why Capt. Van Schaick didn't back his boat right into the Astoria shore.

#### ALARM AT LAST GIVEN ON BOARD.

From the best understanding of the situation which could be gained from those who were left alive when everything was over, it was quite a while after the Slocum was first found to be on fire that the seriousness of the situation was understood by all of her officers and crew. Very few of the passengers knew anything of the real danger they were in until the burning and drowning had begun.

Eddie Flanagan was the Slocum's mate. On excursion steamers the safety and comfort of the passengers are delegated to the mate, while the captain is in the pilot house, as he always is, very properly, while the boat is in motion. To Flanagan there came a deckhand and Steward McGann. He caught Flanagan by the shoulder and said:

"Mate, there's a fire forward, and it's got a pretty good headway."

Flanagan jumped down through the dark space in the middle of the boat and turned the lever of the fire drill alarm. He sent McGann to warn Capt. Van Schaick. The crew was not enough to handle so many passengers. The fire crackled up through one deck after another, licking out far on the port side. There was a rush for the stern. Some of the children thought that the whole alarm was a joke, and laughed and pummeled one another as they ran. The mothers didn't. They lumbered after, trying vainly to keep hold of some one garment on the bodies of each one of their youngsters.

Captain Van Schaick ran back from the pilot-house and

saw that Flanagan had two lines of hose run from the steamer's fire-pumps toward the second cabin, and that the water was already spurting through them. The fire drill on the Slocum was always well done. It was held, without any requirement of law, once every week. But this fire was beyond any mere fire drill. It took Captain Van Schaick only a minute to see that he ought to get his passengers ashore as soon as he could. He determined on the north shore of North Brother Island.

#### THE FULL HORROR COMES IN HASTE.

It takes time to read of all these things. It took almost no time at all for them to happen. The yells and screams of the few people who were caught on the decks below the hurricane deck forward were ringing horribly across the water. The roar and crackle of the oil-fed flames shut these screams off from the frightened mass of Sunday School people aft.

Kelk and Van Tassel had leaped into the crowds when the fire-gongs rang. It was due to them that more women and children were not caught forward of the fire. They herded the people back like sheep until nearly the whole company were huddled together on the broad afterdecks. The fire was eating its way back steadily. The people were getting more and more frightened. Mothers whose children had been separated from them in the rush were getting frantic, and dashing madly through the crowd. Confusion grew almost as fast as the fire at the other end of the boat was growing. Van Tassel took to the rail.

"Now, everybody keep quiet!" he shouted again and again, waving his big arms reassuringly at women who were grasping the rail and already leaning over and trying to make up their minds to jump.

Pastor Haas had found his wife and his twelve-year-old daughter Gertrude and had put them near the back of a companionway, where he was sure he could find them. He, too, tried to calm his people. He might as well have tried to calm the whirling tide that was bearing the burning steamer along to its end. They were fighting now. Mothers who had started side by side with an endless fund of sympathy for domestic difficulties were fighting like wild beasts.

#### OVERBOARD BY HUNDREDS.

Screams came from the water. A woman looked over and saw three children floating by on the starboard side. The head of one of them was covered with blood where a blade of the paddlewheel had wounded it. The woman screamed just once, so loud that for a moment all the other horrible sounds of the boat seemed hushed. She pointed a finger at the little bodies that were floating back from the forward decks.

"Frieda!" she screamed. "Meine Frieda!"

Before a hand could be raised to stop her, if indeed there was anyone there cool enough in that moment to raise a hand, the mother jumped on the seat and threw herself over the rail. She sank, whirling over and over in the swift current. So did the children. But other bodies came. As the flames worked upward and backward more and more people were driven to jump to escape being burned. Mercifully, the pilot-house, away forward and up in the air, was in a position which the flames found it hard to reach. The captain and his pilots were able to keep steering.

It seemed to be the captain's purpose as he came up past 130th street to try to find a berth on The Bronx side of the stream. There are a number of coal and wood yards along there and some factories. Rivermen said that he

might well have carried out his plan. The land forces of the Fire Department could have reached him there. But he said that a tug warned him off, telling him that he would only be setting fire to the shore buildings, and would not be helping his people in the least, if he ran in there.

#### BOATS TO THE RESCUE.

At any rate, the General Slocum, observed now by hundreds of horror-dazed people on both sides of the stream and on the islands, turned again toward North Brother. Steamers and tugs from far down stream were making after her. The Department of Correction boat Massasoit was on the far side of the Brother islands. Her captain lay in wait for the Slocum, not knowing through what channel she would come. From down stream came the slim, white Franklin Edson, the Health Department boat. Thence, too, came the sturdy little Wade, with her tough-talking, daredevil, great-hearted little captain, Jack Wade. There came also the tugs Theo and Easy Time, tooting their whistles, headed for the burning steamer.

#### LOOKED TO THE MAINLAND FOR HELP.

On board the Slocum horror was being piled on horror too fast for any one to keep track of them. The fire, leaping now high above the framework of the steamer's hog-back and roaring with a smoky glare of red tongues up thirty feet over the tall brown smokestacks, had begun to scorch the edges of the compact mass of women and children who were crowding back out of its way at the rear end of the boat.

The greater number of these people by far were on The Bronx side of the decks. They seemed to feel, poor crea-



tures, that small as their chance for rescue was, when it came it would come from the thickly populated shore rather than from the bleak, rocky, bare spaces on the islands on the starboard side. The Slocum was now opposite 138th street, heading partly across the river toward North Brother Island.

#### OVERBOARD WITH BROKEN RAIL.

With a crack and echoing volley of screams that set on edge the teeth of men hardened to almost any form of death or evidence of pain, the port rail of the Slocum's after-deck gave way and all the people near it slipped and slid, one over another, into the water. She had hardly gone 200 yards further on—indeed, by ones and threes and twos and sevens gaily dressed women and little tots all in white were seen whirling down from the deck into the racing tide—when worse came. The steamers and tugs in pursuit were catching up one woman here or a child there, but it was not much they could do. The tide was too swift, and there was too much work to be done ahead to warrant any delay over individuals.

#### EXPLOSION BURIES HUNDREDS.

There was a puff like a great cough down in the Slocum's inwards. A red starry cloud of sparks and smoke and flames shot up and the greater part of the superstructure aft plunged forward into the flames. How many hundreds of lives were snuffed out in that one instant nobody will ever know. Outsiders could see writhing, crawling figures in the burning wreckage, slipping down further and further into the flames until they were gone. As bees cling along a branch when they are swarming, there was a thick cluster



ing of women, all screaming, and boys and girls around the edges of so much of the superstructure as was still standing.

At the very back Kelk, the policeman, was standing, catching up some of the smallest children and hurling them out at the decks of the nearest following steamers. Mothers threw their children overboard and leaped after them. When the stanchions burned out and the superstructure fell families were separated.

Thus it happened to Dominie Haas. He had given up as hopeless any effort to get the people quiet, and had just found his wife and daughter. The crash came and he lost them.

#### BEACHED AT LAST.

Now the big steamer, ablaze for more than two-thirds of her 250 feet of length, was rounding the point of North Brother Island. The flames were reaching out for the pilot-house. The door toward the fire was blackened here and there and the paint blisters were bursting with little puffs of fire. But the hundred nurses gathered eagerly on shore waiting a chance to help, saw old man Van Schaick and his pilots at their wheel, straining forward as though by their own physical force they could make the boat go faster.

The captain and Van Wart are both of scrawny, hollow-cheeked build. Both have sandy side-whiskers, cropped close. Van Wart is taller than the captain. Weaver, the other pilot, is of heavier build. They made a wonderful picture, the three of them. Afterward, when the horrors were all over except the most ghastly horror of all—the piling up and labeling of the dead—men spoke of the picture. It was at no moment certain that the pilot-house

would not shrivel up and vanish in a puff of smoke. If it did the Slocum would never get close enough to the shore to make it possible for help to be given to the passengers who were still living. And the two old men and the younger, with never a look backward, whirled their wheel and braced it, and with their teeth set close together and never a word kept their eyes fixed on the one little stretch of rocky beach where it was possible for a steamer as big as the Slocum to be beached accurately and safely.

They succeeded in the fight that they had been making all the way from the Sunken Meadows, where the Seawanhaka was beached years ago. Capt. Van Schaick was past the Sunken Meadows, he said yesterday, before he knew that he had a fire on his boat, and the tide was too strong to let him turn back to beach her there, even had there been any way of rescue out there in the middle of the river.

#### WORK OF RESCUE.

The only heartening incidents of the whole horrible half hour began happening as soon as the Slocum's bottom scraped on the North Brother Island shore, about twenty-five feet from the sea wall.

The Massasoit, which was the closest boat behind the Slocum when she struck, drew so much water that it was impossible to get her bow within fifty feet of the Slocum. It didn't make any difference to Carl Rappaport, her coxswain. He took a running jump forward over the bow and swam toward the burning steamer. Like a big red-headed St. Bernard he grabbed two babies and swam back to his own boat. Meantime the captain of the Massasoit was putting boats overboard as fast as he knew how. When these were out picking up people from the water wherever

they could, Rappaport was floundering around helping from the water side.

The Franklin Edson, with her new clean coat of white and gilt paint, drew less water than the Massasoit and went right up to the Slocum's side so that people jumped from the burning decks and were dragged back to safety. For safety was not on the forward deck of the Edson. She needs a new coat of paint. Her forward windows were cracked by the heat and there are the marks of flame for the forward thirty feet of her superstructure.

#### JACK WADE AND RUDDY M'CARROL.

Jack Wade, master and owner of his little tug, was pitching his life preservers over, turning loose his boats and pushing up so close to the burning decks that the hair on his brawny arms frizzled and his men, John McDonnell, Ruddy McCarrol and Bob Brannigan, had their shirts burned off their backs. It wasn't worth while afterward to attempt to get this crew to tell how many lives it saved. They had been too busy to count.

Ruddy McCarrol was plain beaten out for the first time in his life. The effort which finished him had been getting a very heavy German woman over the side, single-handed. When she was aboard she began to scream. Ruddy laid himself out flat, face down along the rail, and was sure he was going to die, he was so exhausted.

#### FIREBOAT COMES FLYING UP.

All along the shore, as the burning steamboat had come along the stream on the breast of the tide, fire alarms had been rung. One alarm at the foot of 138th street was rung three times. There was nothing the firemen could do when they came except just one thing, which was done at once. The captain of the first company to arrive at the

river's edge telephoned for the fireboat Zophar Mills. She came up the river, screaming, with a voice that outscramed all the other whistles which were being blown in every factory and yard from which the blazing steamship could be seen.

The captain of the Mills saw that the Slocum was beached and that rescuers were more needed than pumpers of water. He ran into 138th street and took aboard Capt. Geoghegan and all the reserves of the Alexander Avenue Station and took them over the river to help in the work of picking people out of the water from rowboats and tugs. There is a big marble works opposite North Brother Island. The boss, when he saw the Slocum, knocked off all work and sent his 150 men across in any and every sort of craft that they could lay their hands on.

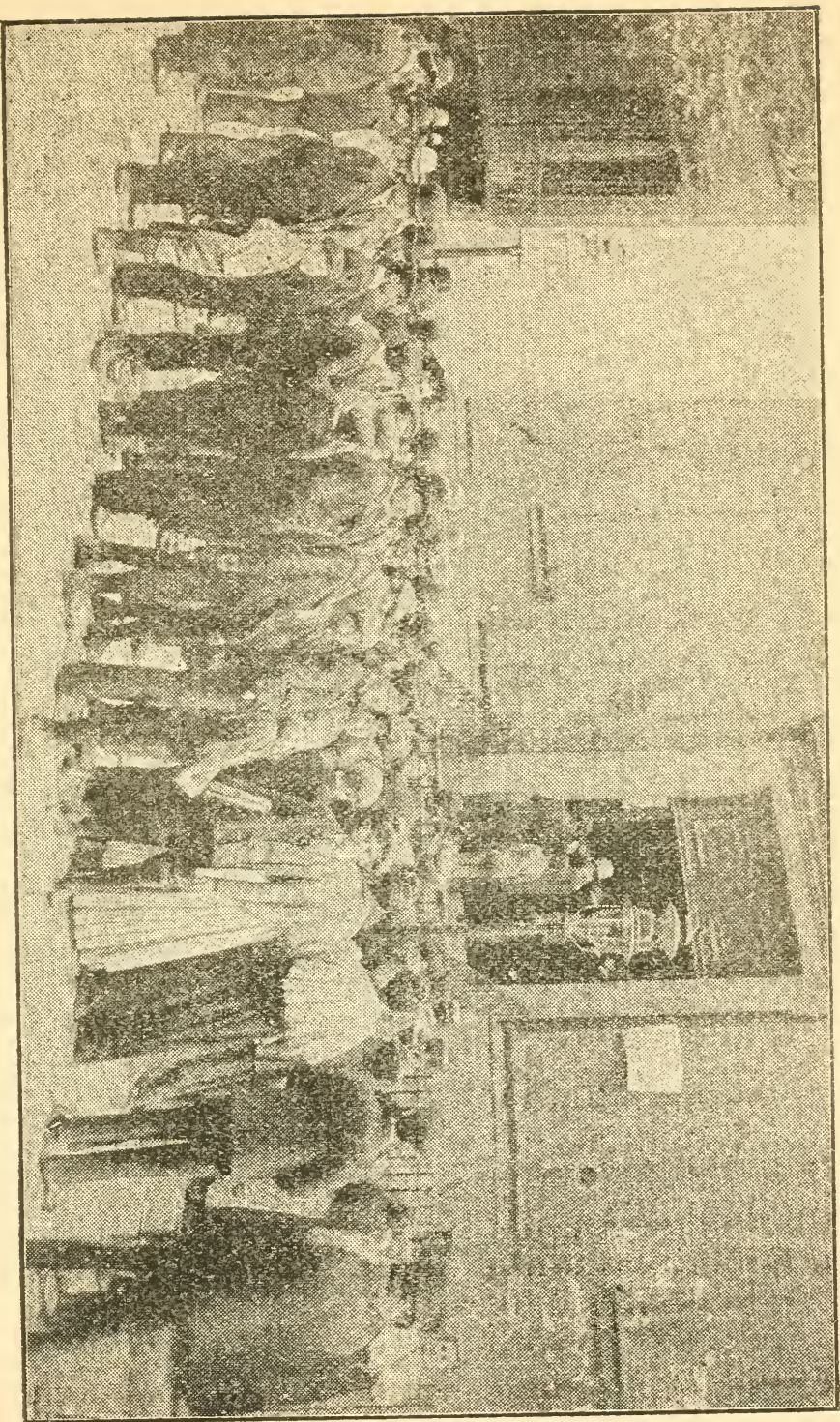
#### NURSES WADE OUT UP TO THEIR NECKS.

Meantime the hundred nurses and the tuberculosis patients were doing wonderful things. Delicate-looking young women, in the dainty white uniforms which nurses wear, ran down to the water's brink and waded in up to their necks and formed human chains, along which struggling, half-drowned refugees were passed. Miss O'Donnell, the assistant nurse in charge, went out and brought in seven dead people and eight living. Every other nurse in the place was doing nearly as well. Dr. Watson, the head of the hospital, was out in the water with them, cheering them on. Mary McCann, a 16-year-old ward helper, just over from Ireland, swam out four times and each time brought a living child to the shore.

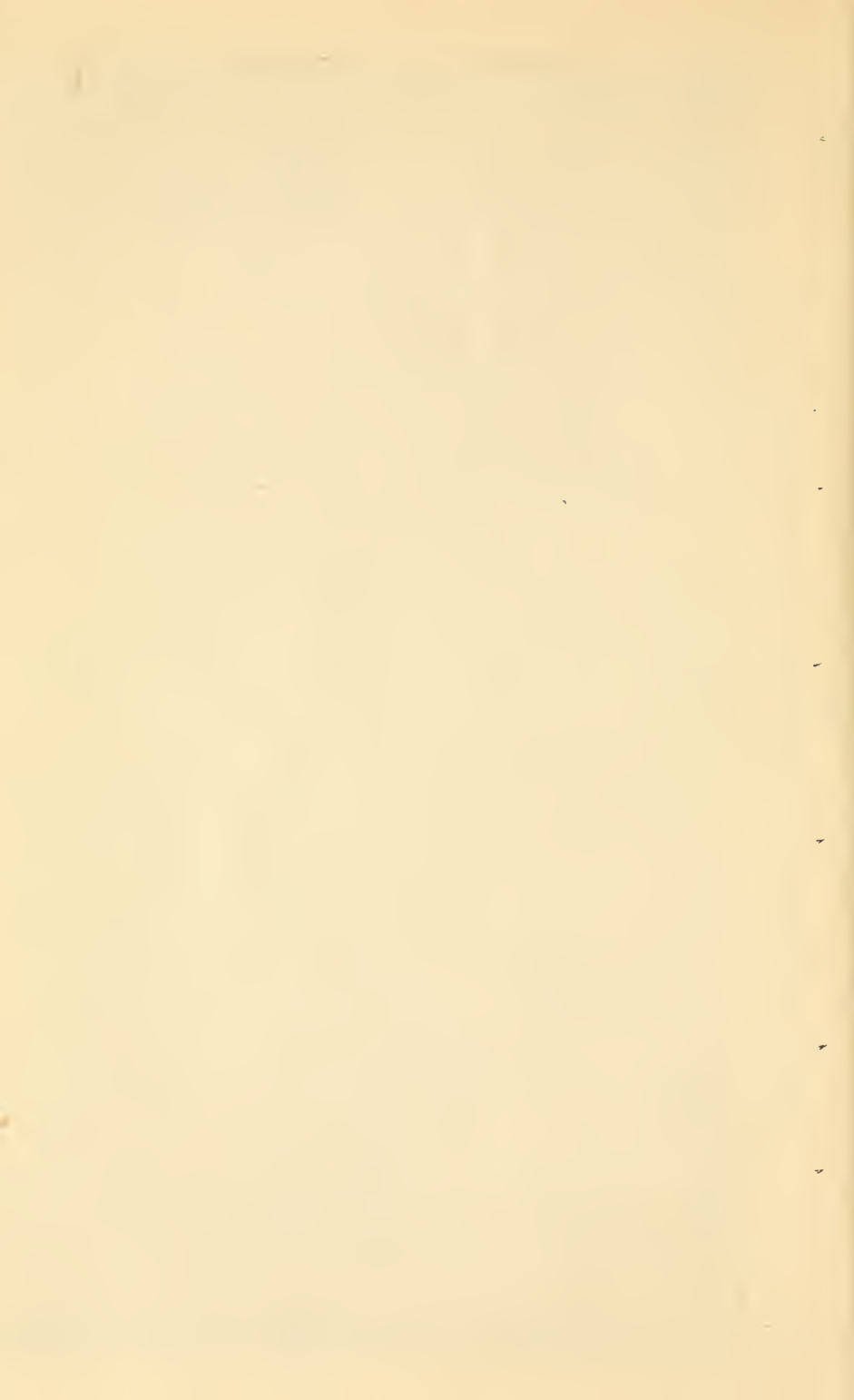
#### HULK A FURNACE—MANY STILL ALIVE ABOARD.

Even though relieved by these evidences—but one or two out of hundreds that were happening unrecorded—of the





THE CHURCH IN EAST SIXTH STREET FROM WHICH THE PIC-NIC STARTED.





working of good and brave human hearts, the misery and the horror were going on almost undiminished. The great hulk was still burning like a furnace on top of the water. Living men and women were still rolling out from her decks. Hundreds sought shelter from the heat under the paddle-boxes, which seemed slow to burn. In there, among the wet paddle-blades, the rescue boats were filled again and again.

#### SIX-YEAR-OLD'S VAIN CLIMB FOR LIFE.

Long after every one had given up any idea that there was a human life in the forward part of the boat, except those of Capt. Van Schaick and his two pilots, there was a shout of surprise and agony on shore. A small boy—he seemed about six years old—climbed up to the flagstaff and began to make his way up as though to get away from the deck, which was burning under him. He climbed a little higher and a little higher with each jump of the tongues of flame from below until he was almost at the top. He was a sturdy-looking little chap, and each time he found he had not gone enough he would shake his yellow curls determinedly and work his way a few inches more. It was a brave fight, but he lost it. The flagstaff began to tremble, just as a boat was getting around in position to get at the child. The staff fell back into the floating furnace, and the boy with it.

#### LIVING BORNE PAST THE DEAD.

As fast as dead and living were brought ashore the weaker of the convalescent patients took them and carried them up on the lawn. There was a constantly increasing number of physicians coming over from the mainland, some of them in rowboats. Every burnt woman or child who showed any signs of life was carried into the buildings. The nurses' quarters and the doctors' quarters and the

stables and every place that had a roof where cots could be erected was filled—except those in which there were contagious diseases.

The dead were laid out in long rows on the grass. The living walked or were carried by them. Heartrending recognitions were there: women throwing themselves on the bodies of their children; children catching at their mothers' hands and begging them to "wake up," and screaming inconsolably when they realized that there would be no waking up.

There was too much to be done at once for any list to be kept of those who were rescued. The Rev. Mr. Haas was pulled out of the water, into which he had fallen soon after the Slocum beached, and found to be not very badly injured. But it was more than an hour before he could be found and identified.

One reason for the heavy loss of life ascribed by those who assisted in the work of rescue was the apparent inability of all the passengers of the Slocum to swim. Scores were drowned within a few steps of firm footing. Not a few were drowned who might have saved themselves by standing up. Capt. Van Schaick and his pilots and all the rest of his crew except Steward McGann and Chief Engineer Conklin swam ashore without much difficulty after they once got safely into the water away from the flames. It is not known what happened to McGann. Other members of the crew were sure that when the divers got down into the wreck of the Slocum they would find that Chief Engineer Conklin would be found dead at his post, from which he might have escaped any time, had he wanted to abandon the passengers to their fate.

#### BURNED TO THE WATER'S EDGE.

When the Zophar Mills' commander was satisfied that

there was no more chance of saving any lives he ordered that the burning hulk be got out of the way. With the help of several of the other tugs she was yanked out into the stream and floated, ablaze from stem to stern, over to Hunt's Point, a mile away, where she grounded again and burned to the water's edge and sank. She lies now about half a mile from Hunt's Point on the Bronx side of the stream and about a mile north of North Brother Island. She lies with her yellow smokestacks tilted over to the south and one of her big yellow paddle-boxes visible. For the rest there is an outline of charred timbers and nothing more.

#### WORTHLESS LIFE PRESERVERS ON THE DEAD.

On many of the bodies which were recovered were life preservers which seemed to have been perfectly worthless. Assistant District Attorney Garvan's attention was called to a collection of the Slocum's life preservers which had been made by Capt. Jack Wade. These life preservers were covered with such flimsy, rotten stuff that they could be ripped open by a scratch with one's thumbnail. They were filled with ground-up cork instead of with solid chunks which would retain their buoyancy.

The work of recovering bodies went on steadily from the time when all hope of saving more lives ended. Nearly a hundred policemen, assisted by men from all the hospitals and morgues, went out in small boats and waded out and worked from the shore and from the decks of the tugs with grappling-hooks, dragging up all that was left of victims of the disaster. The bodies of some of those who were burned were in an indescribably horrible condition.

In the rush and confusion there were many things which in the face of a disaster less appalling would have shocked

the sensibilities of the most hardened man who witnessed them, such, for instance, as the sight witnessed on a trip on a tug across to North Brother Island—a rowboat, with two men at the oars, and a small boy, who was holding a line by which were towed the bodies of three women, dressed all three in flimsy white dresses. Nobody was to blame. The boat would have been swamped with the three bodies inside.

#### NIGHT INCREASES THE HORROR.

At 10:30 at night 415 corpses had been recovered and tagged at North Brother's Island. Fifty had been recovered at other points. They included a dozen that had first been landed at Oak Point. More were coming in at the rate of twenty an hour.

The police of the harbor squad, assisted by volunteers, were wading and rowing about the shore picking them up with grappling-hooks. So numerous were the corpses that early in the evening the bodies were recovered at the rate of one a minute.

#### FISHING UP THE DEAD UNDER SEARCHLIGHT.

All the boats used by the police and other workers were equipped with lanterns. In addition lights were hung on poles that had been stuck in the mud along the shore of the island. The police boat Patrol stood by constantly with a big searchlight playing on the waters. The employees of the hospital rigged up temporary lines of incandescent lights along the lawn to aid those at work in tabulating and searching the bodies.

#### CORPSES KNOWN ONLY BY NUMBER.

As soon as the bodies were taken from the water they were laid in groups of four each. They were first tagged

and then searched. All jewelry, papers and valuables taken from the bodies were thrown into huge bags. Each batch of valuables taken from a body was tagged with the number corresponding to that on the body.

After the searching and tagging of the bodies had been completed photographs were taken of the groups of four. This was done by the use of flashlights.

#### FIRST PHOTOGRAPH A WOMAN AND THREE CHILDREN.

The first photograph taken was a group of four, consisting of a woman and three children. The bodies were stretched out along the lawn, with the heads propped against the wall of the scarlet fever hospital.

It was decided to send all the valuables taken from the dead to the office of Coroner O'Gorman, at 177th street and Third avenue.

It was at first proposed to send all bodies to the Morgue, at Twenty-sixth street, where arrangements had been made to turn the big Charities Department dock into a temporary morgue, so that the bodies would then be brought nearer to their homes and could thus be more easily identified.

#### DIVER RICE VOLUNTEERS.

At 7 o'clock at night a Merritt-Chapman wrecking tug, with full crew and three divers, reached North Brother Island. One of these divers was John Rice, who went to Boonton, N. J., and brought the body of Bill Hoar to the surface, when others had failed to do so. Rice was gladly welcomed, and joining the others in the wrecking crew, hurried to the charred and sunken steamer to recover the bodies fastened in and about the wreck. Word was sent back by



them some time later that the work would be very difficult owing to a lack of light. It was also stated that the single wrecking tug was hardly able to cope with the situation, and Commissioner McAdoo decided to summon more help.

#### NAVY YARD SENDS A TUG.

He then telephoned to the authorities at the Brooklyn Navy Yard asking if they would help out, and received word back that a powerful navy tug, fitted up with search-lights, would be despatched to the scene immediately.

#### NAVAL RESERVE SENDS BOATS AND CREWS.

Commissioner McAdoo had already called on the First Battalion, N. Y. Naval Reserves, to come to his assistance. Commander Franklin, who received the message, sent two launches, the Oneida and Seneca, in command of Lieutenant Barnard and full crews made up of picked men from the New Hampshire, lying at the foot of East Twenty-fourth street. Commander Franklin ordered these men to report to Commissioner McAdoo, and they did so as soon as they reached North Brother Island.

"We are at your service," said Lieutenant Barnard to the Commissioner, who met them at the landing, "and more men will be sent if needed."

One of the launches was sent to aid the harbor police in the recovery of bodies from along the shore, and the other was used as a ferry between the island and the foot of East 136th street.

#### VOLUNTEERS FROM THE MAINLAND.

When Coroner O'Gorman reached North Brother Island he was accompanied by Alderman John H. Dougherty, of

The Bronx, and Fireman Thomas J. Cahill, of Engine 38. Alderman Dougherty begged to be allowed to help, and Coroner O'Gorman put him to work along with the police from the Harbor Squad.

It was Fireman Cahill's day off, and he volunteered his services to Coroner O'Gorman, and was put to work with Alderman Dougherty. As late as midnight the two men were bringing bodies ashore.

Dr. Darlington, President of the Health Board, arrived early in the afternoon, and was still seen superintending his men and hustling with his coat off at midnight. Coroner O'Gorman was also still there at that hour.

#### RAILROAD FURNISHES LIGHTS.

Just as he was leaving the island, someone called Mr. McAdoo's attention to the fact that the work in caring for the dead was made doubly difficult owing to the lack of proper light. As soon as he was told of this the Commissioner hurried to a telephone and called up the office of the superintendent of the Metropolitan Street Railway. "Will you help the City of New York out?" asked Mr. McAdoo. "In a minute!" was the reply. "Well, then, send up six of those gasolene flare lights you folks use when repairing the tracks at night," said the Commissioner.

"We will send twenty-six, if you want them," said the representative of the street railway company. Mr. McAdoo said that six would be enough. It was just fifty minutes later that a boat containing the requested lights reached the island. Two were placed on the lawn, where the bodies were being tagged. The other four were stationed along the shore, and greatly aided the men at work in the water. The powerful lights illuminated the faces of the dead on the lawn most plainly.



Everybody praised the doctors, nurses and employees of the hospital on North Brother Island. All hands there worked unceasingly from the time the burning boat was first seen until late at night. Then many of them, especially the women, actually fell from exhaustion. Dr. Darlington ordered them to retire, but some insisted on working.

#### DIVERS COULD GET BUT FOUR BODIES OUT.

At 11 o'clock at night Diver John Rice returned from the wrecked steamer with four bodies of children. They had been found in the afterhold of the vessel. Rice said that the divers had decided to make no more descents into the wreck, as it was plain to them that their labor would be useless.

"We searched the forward part of the boat," said Diver Rice, "and could find no bodies. She has settled down with a crash into the middle and we couldn't explore that part. I suppose there are a lot of bodies there, but the wreckers will have to get to work before anyone can get in the center of the vessel.

"The working crew are going to work all night on that part, and they say that if necessary to clear it they will split the boat in two parts. We divers will go out in the morning again."

#### WATCHES STOPPED AT 10.20 AND 10.25.

The watches on all the dead recovered early in the afternoon had stopped at 10.20 o'clock. The watches taken out last night had stopped at 10.25 o'clock.

Roundsmen Klute and Giloon, of the Harbor Squad, with a crew of men, were the first policemen to reach the burn-

ing boat. All of them were more or less burned in effecting rescues. Between 3 o'clock in the afternoon and 11 o'clock at night they had recovered 219 bodies. Roundsman Daniel Ryan with Policemen Corbett, Franklin, Powers and McKeown recovered 107 bodies in the same time.

Dr. Darlington was reinforced by a large number of inspectors from the Health Department, and they devoted their time entirely to tagging the bodies and arranging for their transfer to East Twenty-sixth street.

The last six were recovered from the wreck. They were horribly burned, and came up with the wreckage torn up by the Merritt-Chapman crew. At 12.30 o'clock there were a-total of 95 bodies left on North Brother Island. Of this number 39 were in the hospital morgue. Of those on the lawn 25 had been placed in coffins, and 31 were still lying on the grass covered with blankets. All the others had been sent to the East Twenty-sixth street morgue, or had been loaded on the boat that was leaving at this time.

## CHAPTER II.

HORROR AT NORTH BROTHER—WOMEN SNATCH MANY LIVES FROM THE RIVER—DOCTORS, NURSES, CONSUMPTION PATIENTS AND POLICE IN THE WATER SAVING LIFE—THE HUNDREDS OF UNRECOGNIZED DEAD PHOTOGRAPHED AND THEIR VALUABLES, LARGE IN GROSS AMOUNT, CARED FOR.

A HOSPITAL for the treatment of contagious diseases would not ordinarily be the place to look for heroism of the spectacular type, but there was enough of it shown at North Brother to give the place a name in history. Everybody took a hand in the rescue work—doctors, nurses, ward helpers, engineers, health inspectors and laborers. Even the tuberculosis patients rendered splendid service when so many of the excursionists were struggling in the water after the burning steamer had been beached. None of the other patients was allowed to assist, but many of them who were on the road to recovery volunteered, and there was much excitement among them. It is estimated that the island people rescued 150 persons from drowning.

Commissioner McAdoo, accompanied by his secretary, reached the island in the middle of the afternoon on board the policeboat Patrol. At that time the lawn at the side of the main hospital was literally covered with corpses, and the police and others were fishing them out at the rate of one a minute. Three dead children, all roped together with toy horse-lines, were brought to the surface at one time.

The Commissioner shuddered and raised his hat. Next came a woman with a baby clasped in her arms. The Commissioner raised his hat again.

"It is the saddest sight I ever saw," he said. Then he gave orders to the Merritt-Chapman Wrecking Company to send two divers to explore the hulk of the Slocum. He also engaged an expert photographer to make pictures of the bodies on the island. These pictures will be passed around among the members of St. Mark's congregation to facilitate identification. The Commissioner ordered the pictures made, fearing that decomposition would set in so quickly as to prevent identification in many cases.

Among other officials who were on the island were Commissioner Darlington, of the Health Department; Police Inspectors Albertson and Brooks, Coroners, O'Gorman, of The Bronx, and Scholer, of Manhattan; Captains, Geoghegan, of the Alexander Avenue Station, and Dean, of the steamboat squad. An army of other officials were there, together with doctors and nurses from nearly every hospital, public and private, in Greater New York.

#### ALL HANDS TO THE RESCUE.

The first man to see the burning boat from the island was James J. Owens, a mason who was working on the laundry building. He shouted "Steamer afire!" and made for the landing. As he ran he notified Chief Engineer Gaffney, of the pumphouse, who sounded the fire alarm. This aroused every soul on the island. When Owens reached the landing he launched a skiff with the assistance of Mate Johnson, of the Health Department boat, Franklin Edson, who was off duty. Both men got in and put out for the burning vessel, which was rounding the point close to shore. Owens plunged overboard and got a child.

At the next plunge he got a man and two children. By this time the skiff was in the midst of a struggling crowd. So many tried to get aboard that the craft was upset about fifty feet from shore. Owens says he managed to drag six people with him when he swam in.

In the meantime the Slocum had turned the point and was beached. The sea wall was lined with doctors, nurses and other hospital employees. As soon as the vessel struck they waded out into the water and began to drag people out.

#### WOMEN WORK THE FIRE LADDERS.

Along the side of the scarlet fever hospital were six 35-foot fire ladders, placed there for an emergency. Doorley, the superintendent of outdoor labor, called for volunteers to push these ladders into the water and operate them as life lines. There was no response for the simple reason that practically every able-bodied man on the island was already in the water pulling out excursionists, dead and alive.

Matron White, who was on the seawall with her assistants, sized up the situation in an instant. With her own hands she dragged one of the heavy ladders to the water and drew it back with three persons clinging to it. The other women then fell to, and soon all the ladders were working as life lines with splendid effect. Some of the women waded out to their waists and helped to pass the excursionists in.

#### MARY M'CANN SAVED FOUR CHILDREN.

Among them was Mary McCann, a buxom Irish girl, who had graduated from a measles patient into a ward helper. She has the reputation of being the most expert swim-



mer on the island. Four times did she swim out near the Slocum, and on each trip brought back a live child. Engineer Gaffney also did splendid service. At first he ordered two lines of hose stretched to the seawall and extra pressure put on the pumps. He soon saw that these streams were futile, and he ordered the hose abandoned.

"All overboard!" he yelled, and every man jumped. Gaffney worked away in the water until he collapsed from exhaustion. He was hanging on the seawall by his fingers when discovered, and it was some time before he recovered.

Many of those brought in by the island people were unconscious, and some of the doctors turned their attention to resuscitating them. Prominent in this work was Dr. Weisman, an interne. He worked until his tongue hung out like a dog's from fatigue.

#### CHASE OF A THIEF.

While Superintendent Doorley was helping to carry the victims up to the lawn where they were laid out he spied a tall, muscular man, who looked like a Swede, reaching for the gold watch on a woman's breast. Doorley gave the alarm, whereupon the big man started on a run across the island, pursued by nurses and patients. He finally plunged into the water and swam to a skiff, which he boarded. That was the last seen of him.

#### GREWSOME SIGHTS AT THE LANDING.

There were corpses everywhere near the landing, many of them mutilated and burned beyond recognition. On the stringpiece were a bunch of bright brown hair and part of a woman's belt.

As fast as the bodies were brought up they were searched

by the Coroners and their assistants, and tagged. At 5 o'clock Coroner O'Gorman had, in a huge basket, watches, jewelry, cash and bank books representing an estimated value of \$180,000. One of the corpses was that of a comfortably dressed, middle-aged woman, who wore an old-fashioned bustle. In it were found about twenty books on savings banks, showing deposits of nearly \$40,000. The books were made out in the name of Eva Krenger.

When the steamboats Massasoit and Fidelity had been loaded to their capacity with corpses for the Bellevue Morgue, temporary morgues were established in the old brick coal shed, in the disinfecting plant and in the old drug store. These were also soon filled, and at 6 o'clock there were at least 100 corpses still on the lawn. All afternoon and far into the night policemen toiled in the water and in boats, hauling up bodies with hooks and dragging and carrying them ashore.

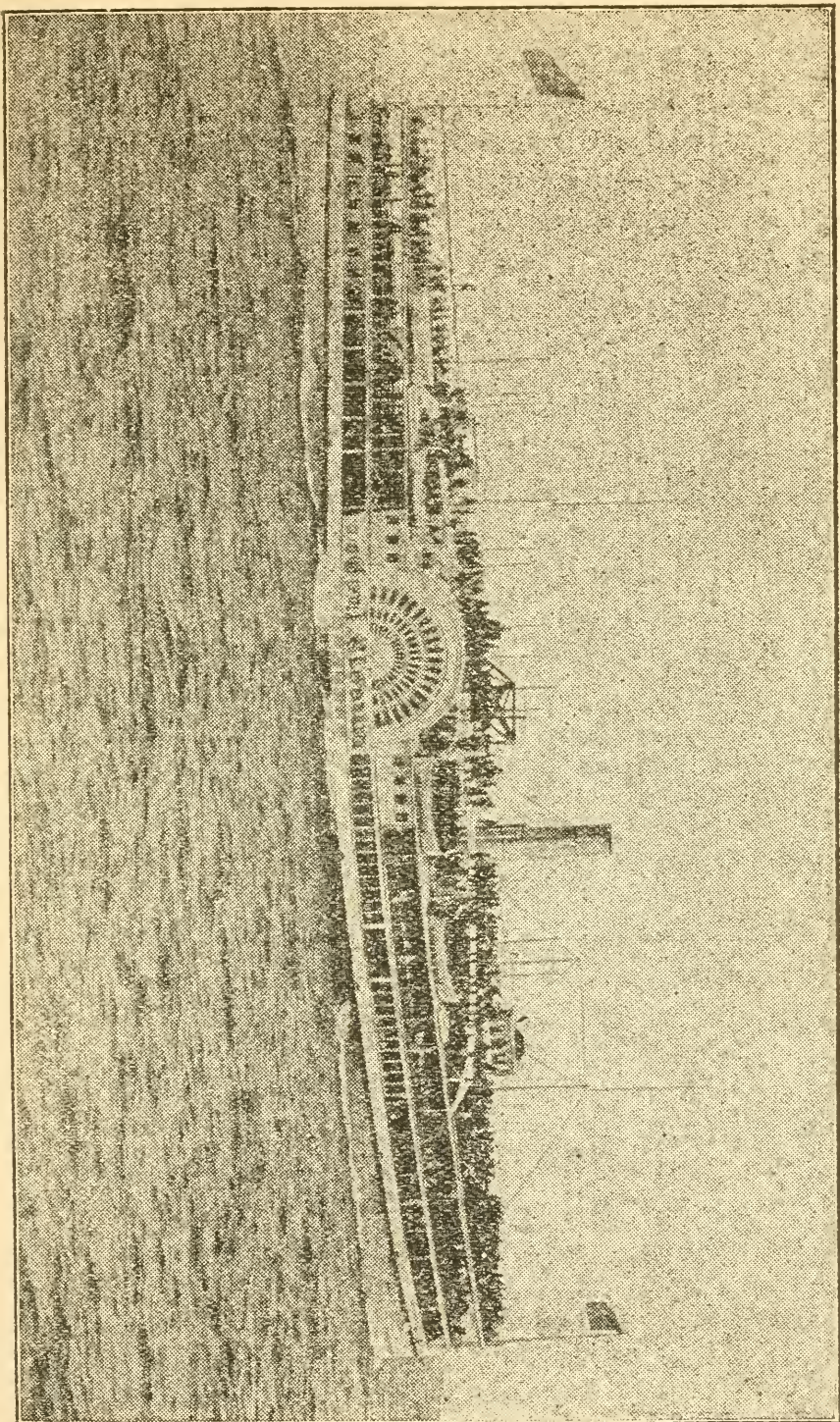
#### POLICE RESCUES.

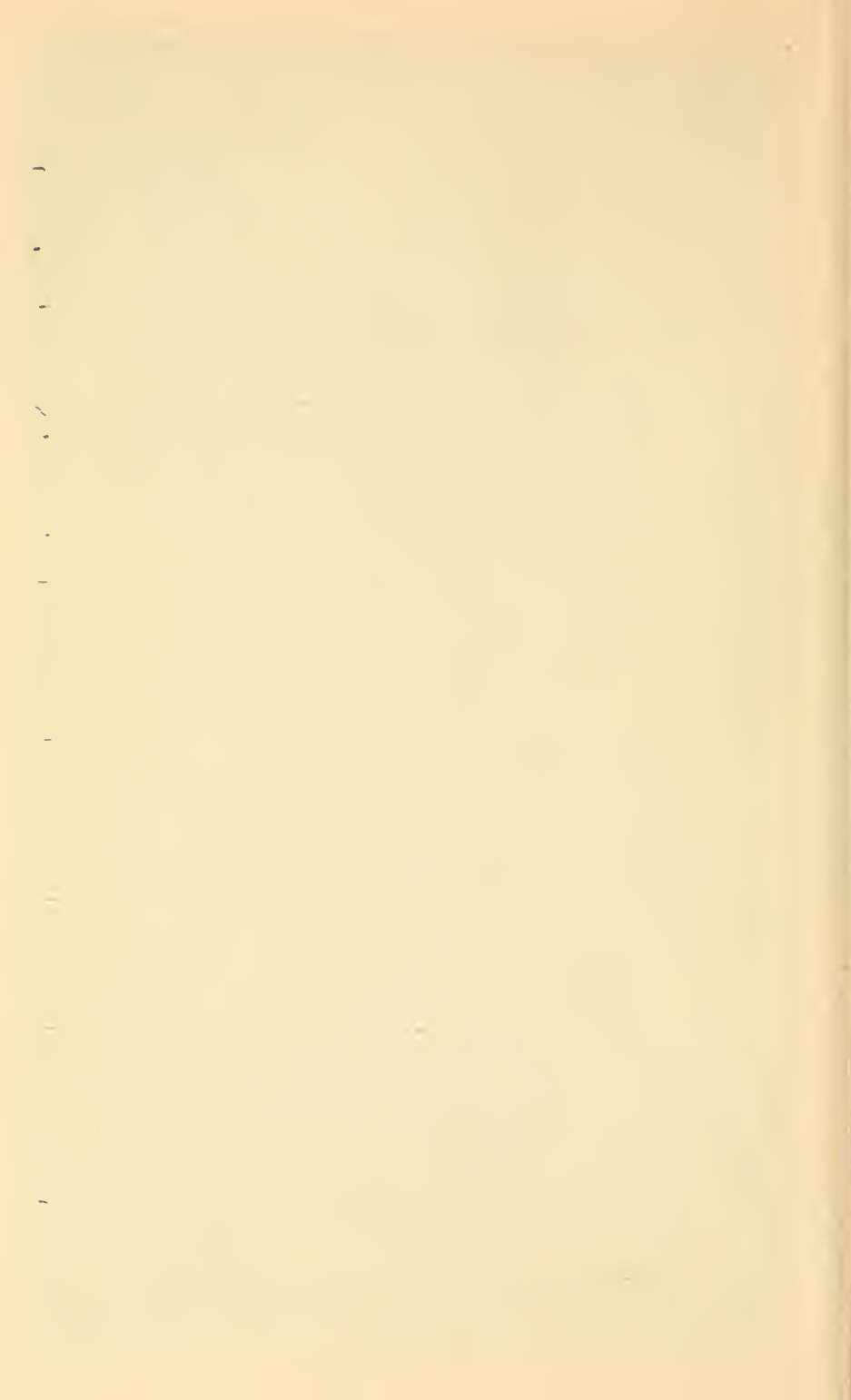
Policeman Giek, of the Alexander Avenue Station, was at the foot of 138th street with Louis Riegel, an old lifesaver, when the burning boat hove in sight. Riegel pulled in two women and a child who had jumped overboard.

Policeman Herbert C. Farrell, a model man, and Policeman James Collins, of the Alexander Avenue Station, are also listed among the heroes of the day. With Olaf Jensen, master of the sloop Baylis, they put out in a yawl for the Slocum. The heat was so intense that they were forced to go under the paddle-box. The burning boat was drifting then, and many were clinging to the blades of the wheel. The policemen took 24 persons aboard, of whom 16 were dead. Among those saved was J. Elliot, of 219 East Thirteenth street, who was clinging to the paddles with two small children hanging to his neck.



THE STEAMBOAT GENERAL SLOCUM.







The first launch to reach the Slocum was the Kills, of the Dock Department. Captain Halloran got a medal from Congress when he was in the life-saving service. The launch was off 138th street when the burning boat was sighted. She put out and took on board 18 alive and 21 dead.

#### TWO OF A PARTY OF FIFTEEN FROM HOBOKEN SAFE.

One of the largest family parties aboard the Slocum came from Hoboken. Most of the people in it were related closely to each other, and had been formerly members of St. Mark's Church. The party was accompanied to the boat in the morning by Mr. Fulling, a paper manufacturer, of 53 Crosby street, this city. In the afternoon he went to North Brother Island in search of the excursionists. He was accompanied by Otto R. Erklin, a coal merchant, of 1 Broadway, and Henry Klenan, a son of Mrs. Meta Klenan. They were nearly frantic with grief, and besought the reporters for news of the lost ones. They were told before they left that Louise Garling, the nurse, was safe, and that she had rescued Mrs. Erklin's two-months-old baby.

Among the people who had miraculous escapes were Florence Weiss of 507 East Eighty-seventh street and Mrs. Nicholas Schumacher of 529 East Eighty-second street. Some one threw them from the Slocum upon a tug, and dozens of others came tumbling down on top of them. They were not hurt. They said the boat burned like a paper box.

Minnie Weiss, 13 years old, of 1235 Third avenue, was on the bow of the excursion steamer. She saw smoke and then a tongue of flame eating its way along the top deck toward where she stood. The crowd made a rush forward. She climbed down the side and got to the first deck, where

there was no fire. She jumped into the water and caught hold of a woman who had a little boy in her arms. A rope was thrown to them from the Massasoit and they were dragged on board. Minnie was with her mother, Mrs. Otto Weiss, and her brother, George, who was 15 years old. She thinks that both were lost.

George Kirschner, 13 years old, of 18 Russell street, jumped from the Slocum and swam ashore. His mother, brother, sister, grandfather and two cousins were with him. He said he thought they were all lost.

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## STORIES THE SURVIVORS TELL.

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### FAMILIES PARTED IN THE RUSH BEFORE THE FLAMES.

Herman Lembeck, 14 years old, of 14 East Ninth street, was picked up by the launch Kills and brought to Riker's Island.

"I was with my mother, two brothers and two sisters on the hurricane deck," the boy said. "We saw a lot of smoke and flames coming from below and mother got scared. Just then Dr. Haas, the minister, came running up to us. He said it was nothing but some coffee burning and begged us to be calm.

"He then went off looking for his own family. We all stood holding on to mother and then the deck broke underneath us. I lost hold of mother and fell into the water. When I came up I saw my sister Dora hanging on to the paddle-wheel. I looked for her after I was picked up, but she had gone."

Freda Gardiner was one of a number of children rescued by a rowboat off East 138th street. She had been with her aunt on the main deck.

"We were all laughing," said the child, "because my aunt had said she was afraid on such a big boat. When the first cry of fire came, Aunt Louise told me to hold onto her hand, but the crowd came rushing at us and swept her away from me. A big man picked me up in his arms and held me in front of him, but he couldn't keep his feet.

"I fell over the rail, and when I came up I grabbed a big piece of timber. A man in the water tried to grab hold of me and when he missed me I saw him go down. The rowboat came up just as I was about to let go the log, I was so weak."

#### SWAM ASHORE; ALL HIS FAMILY LOST.

George Kircher swam ashore to Riker's Island. He told those on the island that his mother, brother, sister, aunt and grandfather had been with him on the boat, and they had been drowned, he thought.

"We had seats along the rail on the top deck," the boy said, "and we stayed together for a long time, hoping that some boat would come and take us off. The flames started in the front of the boat, and that made the crowd come toward us. It was awful to see them. I saw little children trampled on.

"Everybody was making for the back of the boat, and behind them seemed to be a big wave of flame. As the crowd from the front got to where we were the railing burst into flame, and then I had to jump. Just as I jumped part of the deck gave way and I saw the people tumbling down into the water through a big hole in the deck."



The boy went around the island for hours searching for his relatives and sobbing.

#### ONLY ONE OF NINE CAME BACK.

Nine persons from the tenement 54 Seventh street, in the rear of St. Mark's Church, none of them members of the congregation, went with the excursion. Only one came back.

Mrs. Lena De Luccia, who lives on the top floor front, took her four children, ranging in age from two and a half years to twelve, for the sake of the sail. She persuaded her neighbor across the hall, a young married woman named Sophie Siegel, to join the party. Yesterday morning Mrs. Galefsky, on the floor below, decided to go, too, and took her two young children.

Mrs. De Luccia was the only one who returned. Her hands and arms were horribly burned. She and her children, she said, were all together on the main deck, near the wheel-box, when she saw the smoke and flames forward. She picked up her baby and, with her other children, crowded to the rail. Men went around, she says, shouting that there was no danger.

Next she remembers a wave of frenzied women and children forced her overboard. She lost her baby and saw no more of her other children. Mrs. Siegel struck the water alongside of her, but she did not see her come to the surface.

The Slocum's engines had stopped and Mrs. De Luccia clung to a paddle-blade. As the superstructure burned, the iron got so hot that it blistered her hands. Then a rowboat picked her up.

#### FIVE LITTLE GIRLS WHO WERE SAVED.

Five little girls from the Slocum who boarded a Third

avenue train at Eighty-fourth street, attracted attention by their attire. They all wore dresses too little or too big, and the faces of some were tear-stained.

A customs inspector, who sat beside one of the girls, who had a big black and blue lump on the left side of her forehead, and two fingers done up in splints, learned from her that she was Katie Kaffenberger of 436 Sixth street. She is an only child and she was going home to her mother.

"I jumped from the top of the steamboat into a tug," she said. "I was hurt by lots of people who jumped on me and on other little girls who jumped when I did. I am glad I have only a few little hurts. I saw a great many jump and fall overboard, and I know there must be a lot drowned."

Another little girl in the party was Louise Motzer, nine years old. As they were going home after getting off the elevated train at Ninth street a big man came up to them, and, peering into the face of Louise, said: "Are you Motzer?"

Louisa, who was somewhat startled by the big man's earnestness, said she was, and he grabbed her up and ran off with her, not stopping until he reached the saloon of her father and deposited Louisa in his arms.

Louisa said she had become separated from her mother and her little sister, Lena, four years old, and that she had failed to find them at the hospital after she got ashore. They were not home when Louisa got there, and Mr. Motzer decided that they were among the lost.

#### WOMAN'S JUMP FROM SECOND DECK.

One of the injured in the Harlem Hospital is Mrs. Nellie Kessebaum of 196 Guernsey street, Brooklyn. She was

saved because she had nerve enough to jump from the second deck of the Slocum to the deck of a tugboat.

She was standing at the forward end of the boat, with the flames working toward her. She had almost given up hope, when a tugboat came along.

As the tug neared the steamer's side she leaned over the rail, poised herself a moment, and then jumped. She landed on the deck of the tugboat, where some of the crew were waiting for the jump. Later she was landed on North Brother Island, where she was cared for until she was taken away in the ambulance.

John Halphusen, the sexton of the church, who is 70 years old, and was rescued by a tug, says that in his opinion the crew of the General Slocum was undisciplined and did not know how to use a hose. He was standing with Dr. Haas and his family, aft on the main deck, when the fire was discovered.

#### PRAISE FOR DR. HAAS' BRAVERY.

Dr. Haas, according to the sexton, conducted himself most bravely and worked in an unsuccessful effort to close the hatch doors until he was blinded with the smoke and heat. Then he returned to his wife and daughter, but lost them in the excitement.

Halphusen had his two daughters on board also. All these clung to the paddle-wheel until they were picked up by the tug Sumner.

The twin sons of John C. Heins, George and Theodore, 15 years old, of 344 East Fourth street, were among the rescued. They were on the boat with their mother and their younger brother, Frank, whose leg had been broken and was in a plaster cast.

First George jumped from the upper deck. As he struck

the water a woman landed on him and partly stunned him. Theodore also jumped. Both boys are crack swimmers. George was picked up by a tug and Theodore swam to Randall's Island. They met at home six hours later. Their mother also was there. She jumped overboard and clung to the paddle-wheel, at the same time supporting another woman, who was finally taken from her by a negro, a member of the crew.

Frank, the brother with a broken leg, is still missing.

## CHAPTER III.

THE following are facts and incidents as collected by another writer:

The swift and terrible destruction of human life in the burning of the General Slocum created intense excitement in the city and led to widespread expressions of horror and sympathy. Many found in the fact that nearly all of the victims of the disaster were women and children additional cause for sorrow.

One reason for the extent of the disaster was the panic which prevented the use of the steamer's lifeboats or any considerable use of the life preservers on the boat. Hundreds of women and children, panic-stricken by the rapid spread of the flames while the steamboat was running two miles for a landing place, crowded other hundreds overboard before life preservers could be adjusted.

## MORE THAN 1,500 ABOARD.

When the steamboat General Slocum left her pier at Third street to carry an excursion crowd of the Sunday School of St. Mark's Lutheran Church of No. 323 Sixth street, near First avenue, to Locust Grove, Long Island, 982 tickets to the excursion were taken up. As more than one child had been admitted on a single ticket, however, in many cases, there were known to be more than fifteen hundred members of the excursion aboard. There were in addition twenty-three members of the crew, about a dozen



waiters and some musicians. Capt. William H. Van Schaick, an experienced and old-time excursion boat commander, was in command of the General Slocum.

The steamboat stopped at Twenty-third street at 9 A. M. long enough to take aboard a few more passengers. Most of the women and children on the boat were on the main deck and hurricane deck, enjoying themselves under the kindly eye of their pastor, the Rev. George C. F. Haas, when the disaster overtook them. From the stories of survivors the first sign of fire seems to have been noticed as the vessel was passing the Sunken Meadows, off 122d street.

#### THEORIES AS TO ORIGIN.

Accounts differ as to just where the fire started, some declaring it had its origin in the forecastle, on the main deck, while others, the latter being in the majority, say it started in the boiler room almost amidships. The origin of the fire is also a matter of uncertainty. It was said by several men who were passengers on the boat that a careless bootblack left some oily rags near a vessel filled with benzine or oil, whether in the forecastle or boiler room they could not say, and that spontaneous combustion started the blaze that had such disastrous results. Still another version was that a pan of grease boiled over in the kitchen of a lunchroom on the forward part of the freight deck and started the blaze.

The flames spread with great rapidity. Some of the crew said after the disaster that they tried to get water on the flames, and found that the pumps would not work. Some of the survivors say that the crew became demoralized from the start, and did little except save themselves. The panic spread as fast as the flames.

Capt. Van Schaick was in the pilot-house with Edward

L. Van Wart, the pilot. He says that as soon as he was apprised of the fact that the boat was on fire he gave the signal to the crew to report to quarters and fight the flames. The captain at first thought he might beach his vessel on the Sunken Meadows, where the ill-fated Sewanhaka was destroyed by fire in 1880. He found, however, he says, that the wind was blowing in a direction that would cause the fire to spread more quickly if he attempted to reach the Meadows. He therefore signaled the engineer to put on all steam, while he headed the burning boat for North Brother Island, the nearest available place for running her ashore.

The speed of the boat fanned the flames, sending them roaring along the lower deck. Clouds of smoke almost shut the upper decks from view. Hundreds of women and children on those decks began to rush toward the stern of the boat. They became insane with terror as the panic increased. The crush forced many helpless people against the railings of the decks with such force that the stanchions were broken and the railings were swept away.

#### SWEPT INTO THE WATER.

Then from the decks hundreds of women and children were swept into the water, some falling on one another and sinking together to drown before any help could reach them. Capt. Van Schaick was keeping the whistle of the General Slocum going to attract the attention of other boats, and several boats within sight started toward her at full speed. In the race some of the boats picked up people in the water.

In the race for the burning steamer people on the tug-boat Easy Times saw two other boats decline assistance. Capt. Churchill says he saw the ferryboat Bronx stop on her

run to North Beach long enough to allow the General Slocum to pass her bow, and then continue on her trip without attempting to save any of the people who were falling overboard from the steamboat. The ferryboat people, however, deny this. A private yacht, the name of which was not discerned, drew out of the way of the burning steamboat and lowered a launch. Two men got into the launch from the yacht. Instead of making for the General Slocum, however, the launch carried the men to The Bronx shore, while the yacht continued on her way to the Sound.

Most of the boats which joined in the work of rescue could not get near the General Slocum until she ran aground off the north shore of North Brother Island. Among the boats that hurried to the succor of the stricken passengers were several tugs of the New York Central Railroad Company, the Health Department tug Franklin Edson, and the Charities Department boat Massasoit. These and several rowboats manned by willing hands approached as near the blazing steamboat as was possible and rescued scores of people. Most of these were picked out of the water after they had dropped over the side of the General Slocum. The Franklin Edson went up so close to the burning steamer that her own paint was scorched. The crew of the tug, however, stuck bravely to their task and snatched many women and children from a terrible death.

#### DECKS CAVE IN.

A strong flood-tide was running when the General Slocum went aground on some rocks nearly 100 feet from the shore of North Brother Island. As she struck the rocks her hurricane deck, on which many of the panic-stricken women and children were clinging, suddenly caved in, precipitating its human freight either into the blazing hold

or into the water. The water around the flaming vessel was thick with drowning people, and, notwithstanding the almost superhuman efforts made by the rescuers, a large number of the perishing people had to be left to their fate. Many of those who jumped into the water or were precipitated over the side of the vessel when the hurricane deck collapsed were on fire from head to foot and they escaped one form of death only to meet another more merciful.

A man who is serving a two months' term on Blackwell's Island for some petty offence, and who was detailed as a "trusty" on the Charities Department boat Massasoit, proved that he had good stuff in him when the emergency arose. He was George Dennis, and when he saw people struggling in the water around the burning boat he jumped overboard and saved a woman's life. Then, with his clothing soaking wet, he returned to his work on the Massasoit. His bravery will be called to the attention of the proper authorities, and it is probable that he will be restored to liberty as a reward.

#### A WOMAN'S RESCUE WORK.

Mary McCann, a buxom young Irish girl, 17 years old, who has not been long in this country, and who is working as a ward-helper on North Brother Island, also distinguished herself in the work of rescue. With more than a score of nurses she ran to the water's edge, near the stranded vessel, and plunging in, swam to the stern of the boat and brought ashore a woman whom she found clinging to the rudder. She returned three or four times, each time rescuing some person.

Remarkable was the heroism of Mrs. Allen, a workwoman employed on North Brother Island, who leaped from the pier and rescued two women, who were struggling

in the water. Another woman rescuer was Pauline Puetz, a waitress employed on North Brother Island. At the risk of her life she saved five children from drowning. Miss Puetz made an enviable record at Asbury Park as a life-saver.

Miss Lulu McGibbon, a telephone operator on the island, after telephoning the Police Department for assistance, ran to the beach and helped in the work of rescue and resuscitation. Among those she dragged from the water alive were two infants, 3 and 6 months old respectively.

Twenty-four nurses on duty in the hospital on the island did creditable work, under the leadership of Mrs. K. L. White, the matron. These women waded into the river up to their necks, and each one of them saved from four to six lives. Then, with their clothing dripping wet, and in spite of a chilly wind that was sweeping across the island, they went to work to resuscitate the half-drowned passengers or to assist the doctors in attending to the wounded.

The fireboat Zophar Mills, responding to a call, stopped long enough at the 138th street dock to take aboard a squad of police and an engine company, and she reached the burning steamboat soon after the General Slocum was aground. Most of the policemen and firemen promptly jumped overboard and began rescuing people from the water. Several bodies they took out were lifeless.

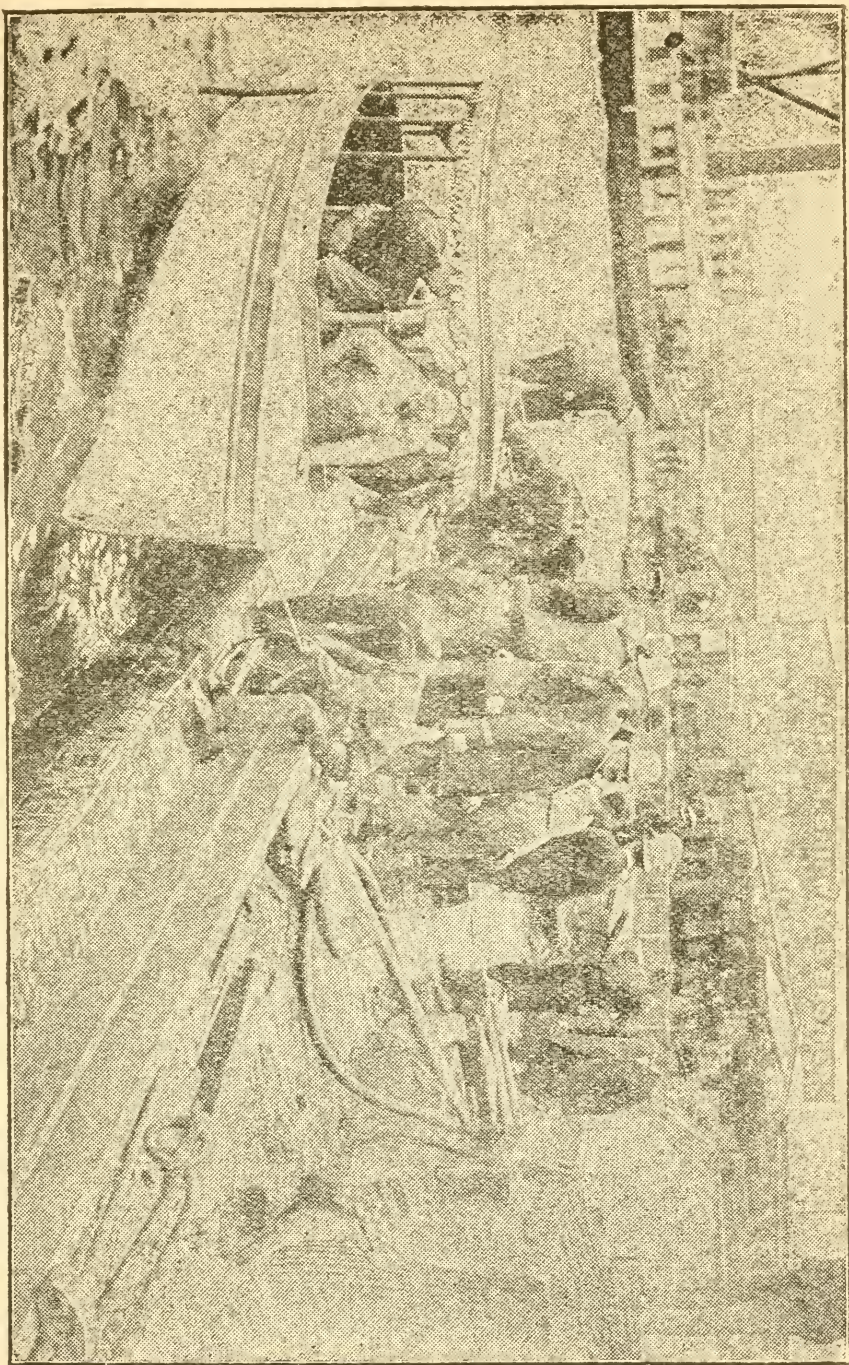
#### LEAVE PATIENTS FOR THE RESCUE.

Physicians, nurses and helpers had run from the pavilions on the island, deserting for the time the patients suffering from contagious diseases to join in the work of rescue. Several of the women nurses helped save lives by running ladders down into the water from a stone pier.

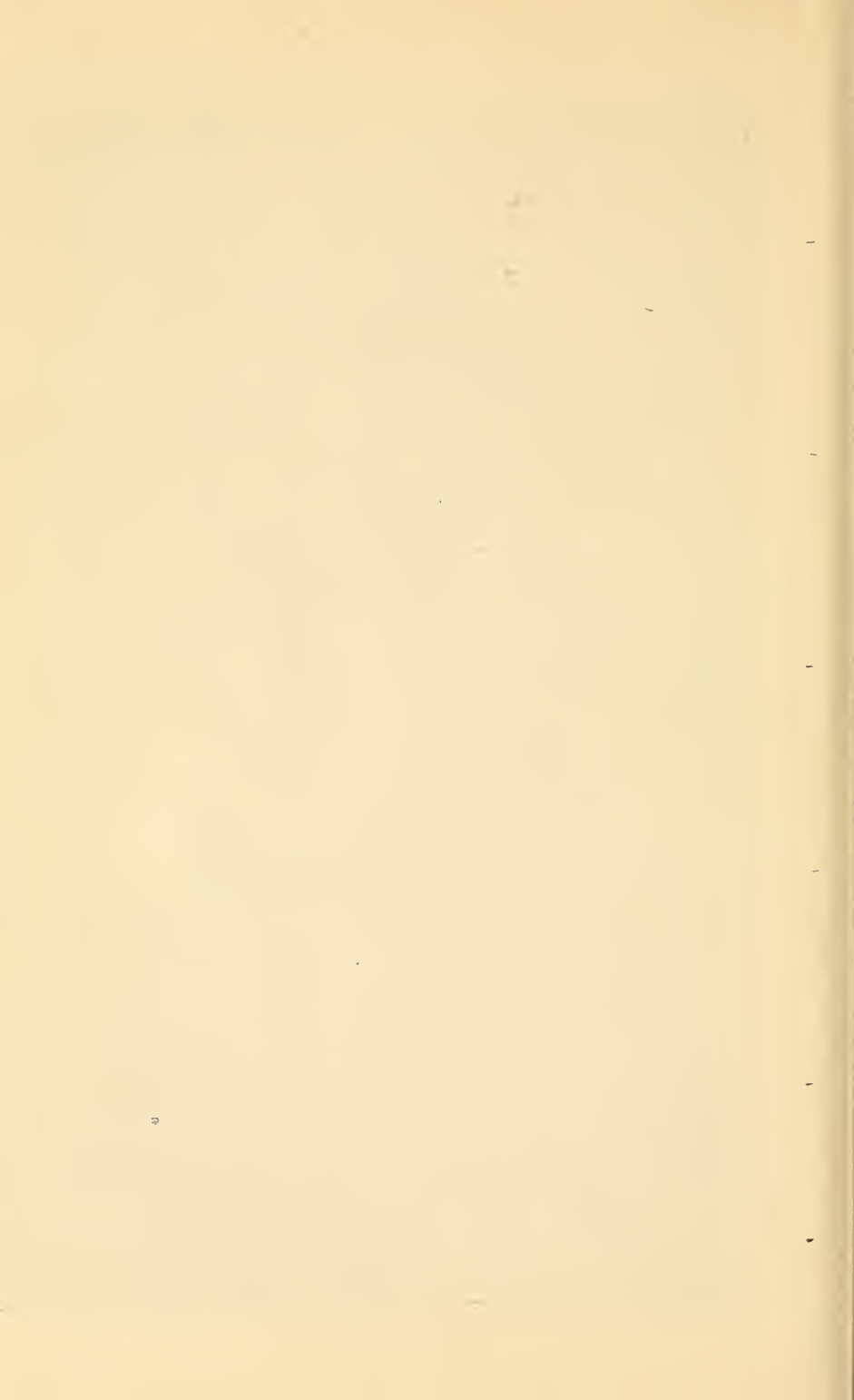


Many acts of bravery and self-sacrifice were recorded. One girl, scarcely more than a child, rescued a baby. The heroine was Louise Gailing, 12 years old, of Nutley, N. J. She had gone on the excursion with Mrs. Gertrude Erkling, and in the excitement following the discovery of fire had become separated from Mrs. Erkling and left with the latter's 2-year-old baby in her arms on the hurricane deck. The little girl did not lose her presence of mind, notwithstanding the fearful scenes that were being enacted before her. She managed to get possession of a life preserver, which, unaided, she adjusted about her body; then, with the baby in her arms, she went to the extreme end of the boat and waited as long as she could before plunging into the river. Finally the flames and smoke were swirling about her and she leaped over the rail into the water twenty feet below. As she disappeared beneath the surface she clung tightly to her infant charge, and still had the baby in her arms when she arose again. Beside her, struggling in the water, was a man in uniform, one of the officers of the steamer. He told her to place one arm about him, that he would hold her up until help came. She obeyed, but still clung to her helpless little friend. In about five minutes they were picked up by somebody in a rowboat and taken ashore. The brave little girl and the baby whose life she had saved were treated in one of the hospital wards on North Brother Island.

Another instance of childish heroism was that of Lucy Hencken, a fifteen-year-old girl, of No. 162 South Second street, Brooklyn. She was with her mother, Mrs. Lucy Hencken, and her brother Charles, 19 years old. When the fire started she took her mother to the hurricane deck, believing that to be the safest place, and, leaving her there, went in search of her brother. On her way downstairs she found three babies lying on the floor at the foot of the



STARTING TO THE RESCUE.





companionway and in danger of being trampled on by the people who were running around on the main deck. She carried the babies one by one to her mother, in whose charge she placed them, while she again went in search of her brother, whom she saw in the midst of an excited crowd of people on the main deck. Before she could reach him a cloud of smoke, pierced by flame, intervened, and she was forced to retreat to the upper deck. When she got there she could not find her mother or the three babies, and, being unable to stay any longer on the burning boat, she jumped overboard. She was rescued by William Major, of the tugboat Theo.

#### LAWNS LIKE A BATTLEFIELD.

The lawns on the north shore of North Brother Island soon looked like a battlefield after a battle. They were nearly covered with bodies which were taken from the water, and with persons who had been rescued and were being prepared for removal to the hospitals.

Health Commissioner Darlington called all the physicians of the Health Department available to the island, and kept them at work there the rest of the day. More than three hundred police were sent to the island to work under the direction of Inspector Albertson. Coroners O'Gorman and Scholer soon began the task of examining the bodies removed from the water. As rapidly as possible the persons who were to be sent to hospitals were removed in boats.

While the work of rescue was still in progress, the burning General Slocum was raised by the tide until she floated from the rocks and began to drift in the direction of Riker's Island. Several of the boats which were engaged in rescue work followed her until she sank, off Hunt's Point. Be-

fore she went down the rescuers could see many charred bodies of women and children who had been burned to death.

Captain Van Schaick and his pilot jumped overboard as soon as the General Slocum grounded. Both were burned severely before they jumped, but they were able to get ashore. Most of the members of the crew had jumped overboard sooner. There was a report that the engineer had been burned at his post of duty, but it was learned later that he had jumped overboard and had been rescued.

Peter Jensen, who owns a naphtha launch, was coming out of Little Hell Gate to the East River when the blazing Slocum passed that point on her way east. Jensen followed with his launch, and the moment he was able he ran her up to the starboard paddle-box and snatched from certain death a little girl and two little boys. Although burned himself while making this rescue, he ran his boat to the beach, landed the children, and then, dropping flat on his face on top of the seawall, pulled forty persons out of the water.

#### AN UNKNOWN HERO.

A man, whose identity could not be learned, showed himself to be a hero. He was seen on the starboard paddle-box of the General Slocum, surrounded by a group of women and children. Tug No. 7, of the New York Central Railroad, braving the smoke and flames, ran up alongside the burning steamer, and the man on the paddle-box passed the women and children down to the crew of the tug. The clothing of some of the passengers was burning, and the hero's own garments were on fire by the time he had handed the last person to safety. He was then forced to jump into the river and swim ashore.



## SWIFT RECOVERY OF BODIES.

Many small boats were manned by the police after the General Slocum drifted away from the shore, and the task of dragging for bodies was begun. In the afternoon the recovery of bodies was rapid. For two hours at one time in the afternoon the bodies were being recovered at the rate of one a minute.

Of the bodies recovered before noon 37 were taken to the police station at Alexander avenue and 138th street, about which large crowds gathered. Later, the Charities boat carried two loads to the morgue at Twenty-sixth street.

When 130 bodies had been carried to the morgue and Coroner O'Gorman was told that no more could be accommodated there, he turned an old coalshed on North Brother Island into an impromptu morgue, being aided by Dr. Darlington.

On a platform over blocks of ice were placed as many of the bodies as could be accommodated. It was first decided that relatives desiring to identify their friends would be allowed to come on the island for this purpose, but when the impromptu morgue became crowded, and more than two hundred bodies were still on the lawns, it was arranged that the bodies should be taken to the East Twenty-sixth street pier, where another large morgue had been improvised. To facilitate the work of removing bodies at night, Police Commissioner McAdoo, who went to the island, borrowed some cluster lights from the Metropolitan Street Railway Company. These were to be placed on the lawns where the bodies lay. Mr. McAdoo also made arrangements to have the bodies of the dead photographed.

At a late hour in the afternoon it was found that over three hundred bodies had been taken ashore at North Broth-

er Island, and were still being recovered at the rate of one a minute. The lawns on the north side of the island seemed covered with bodies, most of which were those of women and children, and some of them charred beyond recognition. One girl, about 16 years old, clasped tightly in her clenched hands the body of a child apparently six months old. Presumably they were sisters.

#### OFFICERS OF THE SLOCUM ARRESTED.

Seven men, including all the officers saved from the General Slocum, were placed under arrest as soon as the police found them, and as they were all more or less injured, either by burns or shock, they were sent to the Lebanon Hospital as prisoners. They were Capt. William H. Van Schaick, 60 years old, who said he lived on the steamer; First Pilot Edward Van Wart, 64 years old, of No. 331 West Twenty-first street; Second Pilot Edwin N. Weaver, 26 years old, who lived on the steamer; William W. Trembly, 33 years old, of California, who lived on the boat; Henry Canfield, 46 years old, of No. 421 Tenth avenue, a cook on the boat; Edwin Robinson, 19, also a cook, of No. 414 West 39th street, and James Woods, 45 years old, a cook, of No. 337 Ninth avenue.

The officers missing are Michael McGrann, Steward; Edward Flanagan, Mate, and B. F. Conklin, Engineer.

## CHAPTER IV.

SCENES AND INCIDENTS BY ANOTHER WRITER—SCENES OF  
HORROR WHEN STEAMER BURNED.

It was a spectacle of horror beyond words to express—a great vessel all in flames, sweeping forward in the sunlight, within sight of the crowded city, while her helpless, screaming hundreds were roasted alive or swallowed up in the waves—women and children with their hair and clothing on fire; crazed mothers casting their babies overboard or leaping with them to certain death; wailing children and old men trampled under foot or crowded over into the water—and the burning steamboat, her whistle roaring for assistance, speeding on for the shore of North Brother Island with a trail of ghastly faces and clutching hands in the tide behind her—grayhaired mothers and tender infants going down to death together.

The captain of the steamer has been arrested; there are stories of rotten life preservers and of life preservers placed out of reach; of the failure of the crew to fight the fire; and of the captain's mistake in not heading for the nearest land. But few know exactly what happened in that terrible scene of suffering and death, for many of the survivors are practically insane, and hundreds of others are in the hospitals.

## EXCURSIONISTS THROG TO STEAMER.

It was a few minutes before 10 A. M. when the General Slocum left the recreation pier at the foot of East Third

street, with the Sunday School scholars and members of the congregation of St. Mark's German Lutheran Church, on Sixth street, between First and Second avenues. The excursionists belonged to the respectable German-American families of the East Side.

Hundreds of them had met near the church earlier in the morning, and with the Rev. George C. F. Haas, the pastor of St. Mark's, at their head, had marched to the pier, the children waving flags and the mothers carrying lunch baskets full of good things. The band was on the after-deck of the boat playing merry tunes, and from every flagstaff on the General Slocum streamed gay-colored bunting. The sun shone brightly, and the crisp, cool air gave a splendid promise of a happy day for the church people.

#### NINE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-TWO TICKETS WERE SOLD.

When the lines were at last cast off and the go-ahead bell rang in the engine-room, one of the deck hands went up to the pilot-house and reported to the captain, William Van Schaick, that 982 tickets had been taken in at the gang plank. This represented the adult passengers and the children over nine and ten years of age. In addition to these, it was estimated that there were about 300 babies and young children who did not require tickets. There were also on board the ship's regular crew of 23 men, the employees of the caterer, numbering about 15 men, and the members of the band, numbering 10. In all, it was estimated that there were almost 1,500 people on the boat.

When the boat reached a point opposite Ninety-seventh street several of the crew who were on the lower deck saw puffs of smoke coming through the seams in the flooring immediately above what is called the second cabin. The

forward part of the hold of the General Slocum was divided in this way: In the extreme bow was the forecabin. Immediately aft the forecabin is what is called a second cabin. In the second cabin was a dynamo, the electric appliances and a number of stores, including the ship's lamps and the oil used to fill them. Nobody was in the second cabin, so far as could be learned, when the fire started. The negro porter, Walter Payne, who had charge of the lamps, said that he had attended to the lamps early in the morning, and that he was confident nobody was in the second cabin.

#### PASSENGERS ON UPPER DECKS.

Nearly all of the excursionists were on the two upper decks at the time the first puffs of smoke were seen. The band had taken up a position on the middle deck, and most of the excursionists were sitting around it. A large number of the children were on the top, or hurricane deck. There were two policemen on the boat who had been detailed to take care of the crowd—Charles Kelk and Abel R. Van Tassel, both of the Forty-second, or Harbor Police Precinct.

A few minutes after the boat had left the dock a number of the children began to romp on the hurricane deck, and one of the boat's crew asked Patrolman Kelk to go up there and keep them in order. Van Tassel remained on the lower deck. It was just 10.10 A. M. when the first puffs of smoke were seen.

For some reason the fact was not communicated immediately to Captain Van Schaick. Some of the deck hands went below and ran into the second cabin, believing they could easily extinguish the fire. They found the place a furnace.

Some of the deadlights had been left open and through



these the wind had fanned an insignificant fire into a blaze that could not be conquered. When the deck hands rushed up and told Mate Edward Flanagan of the blaze below, he directed that the fire apparatus of the General Slocum be put into working order. Word was also sent to Captain Van Schaick.

#### FLAMES EAT THROUGH DECK.

In the pilot-house with the captain at the time was the chief pilot, Edward Van Wart; the second pilot, Edwin Weaver, was walking about the deck, and the chief engineer, Conklin, was below. Before anything effective could be done with the fire apparatus the flames had eaten their way through the flooring of the main deck and the smoke began to ascend in great clouds. By this time the boat was well above Ward's Island.

Why Captain Van Schaick did not at once head the General Slocum toward some of the docks on either the New York or the Long Island shores has not yet been explained. He signaled to Conklin to go ahead at full speed and pointed her bow toward North Brother Island, which was a good mile ahead of him. The wind was blowing from the north, and the swift progress of the steamboat caused a strong current of air, which drove the flames aft into the faces of the passengers.

At the first cry of fire the excursionists became panic-stricken. All of those on the lower deck fled to the middle deck and then to the hurricane deck. Mothers ran about the boat to find their little children and get them to a place of supposed safety. The crew for a time did nothing but fight the fire, which engaged all of their attention. Within a few minutes nearly every one of the excursionists was crowded on the aft part of the second deck and the aft part of the hurricane deck. The band made a feeble effort

to allay the panic by playing popular airs, but the musicians soon became choked with the smoke and were forced to give up the attempt.

#### MANY LIFE PRESERVERS USELESS.

There the scene was one of terrible confusion. Shrieking women, with little children clustering about them, were trying to get life preservers and fasten them upon their little ones. The men on the boat did their best to help with the life preservers. These, however, proved in a majority of instances to be death traps. Most of the life preservers were so old that their canvas covering was rotten and their fastenings worthless.

Jacob Miller, an officer of the Sunday School, tried seven different life preservers before he found one whose fastening did not crumble and break when he put it about a mother of several small children. Other passengers had the same experience.

When the boat had reached a point opposite 132d street the flames were shooting up eight and ten feet at the bow of the vessel, and the heat was so great that everybody was pushing and fighting to get as far aft as possible.

Little children were thrown down and trampled upon in the terrific crush. Mothers, with three and four small children to care for, were helpless. Policeman Kelk, coming on the deck, did everything possible to restrain the panic, but his efforts were in vain. Van Tassel went up on the second deck and tried to calm the people there, but his work was useless.

Men working along the docks on both the New York and Long Island shores saw the flame-swept boat with its crowd of shrieking passengers steaming up the river. Alarms were sent in to Police Headquarters and Fire Headquarters

from many sources. Tugs, launches and other boats put after the steamer, but she left them far astern.

There were some few passengers who had taken seats in the extreme bow of the boat when she left her pier, and these were shut off from the stern by a barrier of flame. The fire was burning aft all the time. The heat became terrific, and those in the bow, hemmed in, were in a hopeless condition.

#### LEAPED FROM THE STEAMER'S BOW.

Just as the boat was opposite 133d street a man whose face was fearfully scorched and whose clothing was smoking jumped over the portside, and a minute later shrieked as the big paddle-wheel caught and mangled him.

The fate of this man did not deter others from following his example. By two and threes the unfortunates penned in at the bow climbed over the side and leaped into the river.

Not one of these unfortunates, so far as could be learned, escaped death. All, it is believed, were caught in the paddle-wheels and killed. Later in the afternoon the bodies of a number of the excursionists were washed ashore opposite the point at which they had jumped overboard.

One boy about twelve years old, who had been in the crowd penned up in the bow, climbed the long flagstaff at the bow of the boat. He hung there notwithstanding the intense heat until the Slocum was finally beached, only to drop into the furnace below him when rescuers were near at hand.

When the boat was opposite 140th street, the flames had reached amidships, and the hundreds massed together were literally being baked to death, so fearful was the heat. Men, women and children had climbed over the guard rails

and were hanging on, their feet resting on the inch or two of deck that protruded beyond the rails.

#### STEAMER'S RAIL GIVES WAY.

Suddenly there was a terrific crash and the rail of the middle deck gave way under the pressure of the panic-stricken throng. Those on the outside were thrown into the water, and many close to the rail were forced overboard. Nearly all of these unfortunates were never seen again after they struck the water.

The fleet of tugboats and launches chasing the Slocum stopped to pick up those who were still afloat, but not one in ten was saved.

The ferryboat, Bronx, which runs to North Beach from 133d street, passed within 200 yards of the burning boat. The unfortunates on the Slocum screamed and shouted, but the Bronx never changed her course. Even had she done so, the slow-moving ferryboat could not have caught up with the steamer.

From that point on women and children dropped from the Slocum in pitiful little clusters of three, four and five at a time. Rowboats put out from the New York shore, but long before they reached the course of the Slocum these unfortunates had disappeared under the surface.

From North Brother Island the burning Slocum was sighted when she was down opposite 132d street, and the people on the island thought her captain would beach her on the westerly shore. Dr. Samuel Watson, who is in charge on the island, and his assistant, Dr. Cannon, were notified of the coming of the steamer by the engineer, Joseph Gaffney. George Doorley, superintendent of the island, was ordered to get the fire apparatus in working order.

There are 164 persons employed on the island, of whom

35 are nurses and six are doctors. Dr. Watson placed monitors at the doors of buildings where victims of contagious diseases are confined to keep the patients quiet. Practically every other person but these monitors was sent over to the westerly shore.

#### EVERY WHISTLE TOOTS AN ALARM.

Lines of hose were run out and the engines started to pump water through them. The fire whistle on the island was blown to notify those on shore to summon help. Every factory along the water front on both shores and every steamboat in the river tooted its whistle continuously as an alarm.

At the stern of the Slocum were the Department of Correction boat Massasoit, the tugs Wade, Theo, William H. Gautier, Wheeler, Tracy and Sumner, the steam launch Mosquito, and the New York, New Haven and Hartford tug No. 14. The Wade had been lying at the pier at North Brother Island, and her captain, John L. Wade, had headed into the stream the minute he saw the flame-swept boat approaching. The Franklin Edson, the Health Department boat, also followed the Slocum.

It was just 10.20 A. M. when the Slocum was beached at North Brother Island. She struck just a few yards north of the scarlet fever ward and close to the little chapel which is jointly used by the Roman Catholic and Protestant Episcopal churches. When she struck, the bow was in about four feet of water, but her stern, where all the unfortunates were, was in thirty feet of water.

Captain Van Schaick and Pilot Van Wart were in the pilot-house when she was beached. They had remained at their posts at the wheel, though the pilot-house was just above the hottest part of the ship, and the flames were shooting up all around them.



The instant the boat struck half of the passengers, thinking they were in shallow water, jumped overboard. Scores of them never came to the surface again.

#### HURRICANE DECK FALLS.

When the boat was beached the most terrible catastrophe of all happened. The stanchion supporting the hurricane deck gave way under the great weight of the people above and the whole top deck collapsed, hurling hundreds downward. Scores of these fell into the midst of the roaring furnace and were never heard of again. Some were thrown outward by the collapse and fell into the water.

How many met death by being thrown into the fire by the collapse of the deck will perhaps never be known. Many of them must have burned in an instant, and as the boat later sank it is doubtful if what was left of them by the flames will ever be recovered.

Brave men on the shore and on the boats which speedily came to the rescue jumped into the water, and then began the battle to save the drowning. Dozens of those who jumped from the Slocum and who could swim or were helped by other swimmers reached the big paddle-wheels. There they fought for a few inches of space on the blades where they might cling until rescuers could reach them. Others clung to camp-stools and to debris thrown out by the nurses, doctors and the attendants on the shore. Those on the surrounding tugboats or launches threw over life preservers, long ropes and lifeboats. Long ladders were pushed out from the shore and many who caught the rungs of these were saved.

#### FEARFUL STRUGGLE IN WATER.

The men who jumped overboard from the rescuing boats had fearful experiences. Each one was seized by several women and children, and but for the help of their com-

rades would have been drowned. The heat was so terrific that none of the boats could run up alongside the Slocum.

Those on shore were also handicapped by the heat. The tugboat William H. Gautier turned its fire hose on the Slocum, but this and the lines of hose from the island made no impression whatever on the flames. Within two minutes after the Slocum had been beached she was a mass of flames from stem to stern. The columns of water thrown from the hose lines had no effect.

The boats Franklin Edson and the Wade pushed up closer to the Slocum than any of the others and maintained their positions until all of the paint on their deck-houses had been scorched and the boats themselves began to burn. Edward McCarroll, fireman of the Wade, was one of the first to go overboard. He grabbed a girl about 19 years old, passed her along to a man with a boat-hook, who pulled her up on deck. Then he seized two little children and passed them to the same man.

While he was trying to save an old woman five or six others of the unfortunates grabbed him. One of the women had him by the throat and McCarroll was carried down. He managed to free himself and came to the surface. He shoved the nearest woman toward the man with the boat-hook and then managed to get on deck himself. He was completely exhausted by the exertion. The woman he had rescued saw her 12-year-old son struggling in the water a few yards away, and running up to McCarroll she gave him a shove, crying out:

"You must save my boy!"

#### HERO WAS ALMOST EXHAUSTED.

The shove sent McCarroll reeling backward into the water. He grabbed the boy, managed to get him alongside

of the Wade and was sinking from exhaustion when Capt. Wade jabbed the boat-hook into his clothing and held him up until he could be hauled on board. The heroism of McCarroll was duplicated by fully twenty of the hardy tug-boatmen.

Mate James Duane of the Massasoit launched a lifeboat and in the first trip saved seven women and dragged out eight more who could not be resuscitated and died on the beach. Policemen who had put over from the New York shore to North Brother Island in small boats rowed around the burning steamer and pulled in people—alive and dead—by the dozen.

The tugboats would dart in and shave the side of the Slocum for a minute or two to give those who were still clinging to the side a chance to jump on board. Some of those who jumped landed on the boat and others landed in the water.

Scores of people who might otherwise have been saved were dragged down by frantic friends or strangers. A powerful swimmer in that fearful, fighting crush of women and children was almost as helpless as those who could not swim.

The nurses from the different wards on the islands did valiant work. Several of them who could swim plunged into the water and pulled out little children. Fully half of those who were rescued were unconscious when dragged up on the beach. Heroic measures were at once taken by the doctors, nurses and attendants to resuscitate the unconscious ones. Many were suffering from cuts, wounds and burns. These were rushed up to the big green lawn in front of the hospital and their hurts hurriedly dressed. Blankets were spread all over the lawn and in ten minutes the scene it presented was appalling.

## LAST OF THE LIVING RESCUED.

Some of the tugboats took so many people on board that they were in danger of being swamped. To make a landing it was necessary for these boats to steam around to the dock, about a quarter of a mile away. There a corps of attendants met each boat-load with a stack of stretchers and carried the people, dead and alive, up to the lawn. Within ten minutes after the boat had struck the last of the living had been rescued.

Then came the task of recovering the dead. Within an hour 150 of the victims, nine-tenths of them women, were stretched out on the beach. Some of them were carried up on top of the bank and laid in the long grass near the little chapel, but most of them had to be left in the sand just at the water's edge.

One woman who was taken out of the water held a baby tightly clutched in her arms. There was a satchel or small handbag attached to her waist, and in it were some papers bearing the name, "Miss Rohme." The baby was tenderly taken out of her arms and laid on the grass beside her.

## MANY WOMEN WORE JEWELRY.

Many of the dead women wore costly jewelry. Scores of small boats had come over from the New York shore, and to prevent thieving Dr. Watson stationed a number of attendants to guard the dead. A big man was seen to stoop down and try to unchain a gold watch from the waist of a dead woman. A couple of the attendants started for him and he ran away without the booty. In the excitement he managed to escape.

In a very short time the fireboat Zophar Mills, the police





JUMPING FROM THE BOAT.





boat Patrol and later on other fireboats arrived and proceeded to pump tons of water into the burning wreck. It was found impossible to quench the flames and the fireboats pushed her into deep water, where the strong ebb tide carried the Slocum slowly up to a point about two miles away, where she stranded between Riker's Island and Hunt's point. An hour later she keeled over so that only her upper works, smokestack and skeleton of the pilot-house remained above the water.

Policemen from every precinct in the Bronx, nurses and doctors from every hospital in the city north of Twenty-third street were rushed to North Brother Island. By the time that many of the nurses arrived there was nothing for them to do. Inspector Elbertson took charge of the police arrangements. Health Commissioner Darlington arrived on the scene very early and directed the work of nurses and physicians. Coroner O'Gorman, with a staff of assistants, took charge of the investigation as to the cause of the catastrophe, being aided by Coroners Scholer and Goldenkranz.

#### WHOLE BOAT-LOADS OF INJURED.

Under the direction of Mrs. Kate White, matron at North Brother Island, and Miss O'Donnell, the assistant matron, the injured and survivors were quickly cared for. As soon as the survivors were able to be moved they were put on board the Massasoit or the Franklin Edson and taken over to the pier at the foot of 138th street. These boat-loads of people presented a pathetic spectacle.

Nearly all of them were more or less scorched or burned. They were all dripping wet. Little children of 3, 4 and 5 years bereft of mothers, fathers and all other relatives were landed at the pier dazed and alone. These little ones

were tenderly cared for by the police. They were put in patrol wagons, grocery wagons, ambulances and other vehicles and hurried over to the hospitals or station houses. On some of these first trips the boats brought over a number of dead. These were taken to the Alexander Avenue Police Station.

As soon as the immensity of the disaster was appreciated by the officials it was decided not to send any more of the dead over to the 138th street pier, but to remove them to the Morgue.

It was several hours before the last of the survivors were able to leave the island. As many of these as could be accommodated with changes of clothing were given pajamas or night dresses, and in these they lay on the lawn covered up in blankets until their own clothing had been dried.

Some of those who were in a serious condition were placed on one of the Health Department boats and carried down to Bellevue Hospital. All of the buildings on North Brother Island are used for contagious diseases, and it was not deemed advisable to keep any of the injured ones there longer than was necessary.

#### MORE CORPSES TOWED IN.

After the steamer had been towed away and the search for more bodies had continued for a couple of hours without results, it was the hope of the officials that the list of dead would not exceed 200 or 250 at the outside. Later it was learned, however, that there was a number of dead still in the wreck, and these fears were verified when small boats began to arrive at the North Brother Island pier, each towing five or six blackened corpses astern.

The full scope of the disaster, however, was not known

until the tide began to fall late in the afternoon. Then the receding water uncovered the dead at the place where the Slocum had been beached.

In a single hour between 4:30 and 5:30 P. M. fifty bodies were recovered, nearly all those of women and children. In the succeeding hour the work of recovering the dead proceeded at even a faster rate.

Scores of small boats were pressed into service, and policemen and others brought bodies to the shore with terrifying rapidity. Police Commissioner McAdoo directed that the work be continued all night without cessation, and sent for the Patrol and other boats fitted with electric search-lights, to illuminate the scene.

Photographers were also sent for to photograph the dead so that their relatives might identify them. The elaborate precautions taken during the day to make identification possible were continued during the night under the direction of Coroner O'Gorman and a staff of 100 volunteers.

#### DROWNED WOMAN HAD FORTUNE.

At 10 P. M. Coroner O'Gorman said that upward of \$200,000 in money and jewelry had been taken from the bodies. On the body of Mrs. Eva Ringler there was found \$30,000 in bank notes, securities and bank books.

All of the property was taken to the coroner's office, at 177th street and Third avenue, and exhibited for identification. It was hoped that the greater number of bodies would be identified through those envelopes. The property was turned over to those who proved to the satisfaction of Coroner O'Gorman that they had a rightful claim to it.

At 3 P. M. two boat-loads of the dead were sent to the Morgue. On the Fidelity there were fifty bodies and on the Massasoit eighty. These bodies exhausted the capacity of

the Morgue. The Morgue superintendent telephoned Mr. Darlington that he would be unable to care for any more bodies, and it was planned to establish a temporary morgue on North Brother Island. This was abandoned as not feasible, because it would require relatives of the dead to make trips to both North Brother Island and the city, morgue, at the foot of East Twenty-sixth street. It was finally decided to establish a temporary morgue adjoining the City Morgue and all the bodies were taken there.

#### GIRL COMES TO LIFE IN MORGUE.

One of the marvels of the disaster was the coming to life of 15-year-old Clara Hartman, of 309 East Ninth street, after she had been picked up burned and apparently drowned, and towed in the rear of a launch from the side of the wreck of the Slocum to the shore of Manhattan.

Wrapped in a tarpaulin sheet the seemingly lifeless body of the young girl was placed with a row of twenty-nine dead in the Alexander Avenue Station.

Fully three hours had elapsed from the time of the fire to the hour when the seemingly lifeless body was conveyed to the station house, and another hour passed before the startling discovery was made that the young girl still lived.

The revelation caused consternation among the witnesses, who included police officials and reporters, surgeons and matrons, who were engaged in their various duties in the station house.

It was a strange woman, who had volunteered her services in aiding the police to obtain identifying marks of the women dead, who made the startling discovery, and her presence, every one said after the remarkable development, was regarded by those present as an inspiration.

Had this particular woman not happened on the scene at



the particular moment, Clara Hartman would have been placed in the dead wagon and carried to the Morgue, with an attendant coterie of a score of corpses.

Selecting the women dead for her inspection, the unknown woman had examined several, when she came to the form of the young woman wrapped in the tarpaulin with which some tender-hearted person had enveloped her body. Unwrapping the folds of the death-sheet the unknown woman began to take an inventory of the seemingly dead woman's effects, clothing and physical description.

There was something in the appearance of the body which caused the examiner to pause, she afterward said. Although she entertained not the slightest idea that life still existed, she hesitated over the body. Undoing the corset at the front, and making a minute examination of the underclothing, the woman started up with the exclamation, "This girl is alive!"

"HURRY! SHE'S ALIVE!"

"Be quick!" she almost commanded, indicating a surgeon, who stood with the rest, paralyzed. "Hurry! This girl is alive!"

In an instant not one, but three surgeons were at work over the apparently dead form, and with their efforts unmistakable evidence of life was observed. Presently the girl gave a deep breath; then came the regular breathing—long and heavy; and when Miss Hartman had been carried to a comfortable couch fashioned by blankets, she opened her eyes, restored to consciousness. No hysteria accompanied her return to her senses. She gazed into the faces of those surrounding her, and then faintly raised her voice. She said something not quite audible to those nearest her and then she closed her eyes.

Another examination by the doctors convinced them

that there was every chance of saving the young girl's life, and she was hurriedly but tenderly taken to Lincoln Hospital. When she was being carried to the ambulance one of the doctors supervising her removal said: "I don't think this tag need remain any longer on this remarkable young child's person," and stripping the tag off with his knife, handed it to the sergeant. It was the tag indicating young Clara Hartman's number in the line of dead resting there in the improvised station house morgue.

## CHAPTER V.

## DIVERS BEGIN SEARCH FOR BODIES IN THE SUNKEN STEAM-BOAT.

As the General Slocum slid off the beach at North Brother Island, there was not a vestige of life aboard her. But around her, in her paddle-wheels and upon her upper deck were a number of bodies, how many will not be known until the charred and twisted hulk, which now lies upon the bottom of the river off Hunt's Point, is pulled to pieces by wreckers. At least seventy people are believed to have been caught when the hurricane deck fell like a great lid upon the frantic people crowding the deck below.

As the vessel's stern swung clear of the rocks and mud of the beach a dozen tugs fastened their lines to her and began towing her into the channel. There was no attempt to take her to a berth, but she was dragged along crab-fashion, sometimes stern-on and sometimes bow-on, as she was hurried up the river toward Riker's Island, off which it was determined to beach her. Her port paddle-box was ablaze, her upper decks supports were a line of fire, while smoke and flames belched from every window and opening along her sides.

With her ghastly freight, the Slocum was pulled slowly and carefully to a place where she would sink and where she could be thoroughly searched. The almost numberless streams of water that had been poured into her hold made her stagger like a waterlogged hulk, and she reeled along in the wake of her towing tugs, settling all the time.

It was seen that she would not stay afloat much longer, and the plan to beach her off Riker's Island was abandoned. The course of the tugs was changed, and the Slocum was headed for Hunt's Point, where there are few buildings and where a good bottom could be found. Within about 250 feet of the shore the vessel, which was then little more than a shell above the water, lurched heavily forward, then careened on her port side, settling slowly under water. The brace-rod which runs from stem to stern, her smoke-stacks, her starboard paddle-box and a few bits of her hurricane deck protrude from the water at high tide.

She had hardly touched the bottom, her two stacks at an angle of 45 degrees pointing down the channel, when the work of searching for the dead on board of her began. The Merritt & Chapman wrecking tug, William E. Chapman, had assisted in towing the Slocum to the place where she sank, and they had a crew aboard of the wreck almost as soon as the eddies had finished circling about it.

Captain Burfeind had a force of men on the scene, and the auxiliary yacht, owned by the department, was anchored close by to render any assistance possible. One of the assistants of Mr. Haas, in a steam launch, with a dozen nurses were also at the side of the wreck. The reverend gentleman stood at the bow of the boat with a boathook in his hand to take a practical part in the work of rescue, if any should be alive.

#### SEVEN BODIES SOON FOUND.

The Slocum sank at 12.20 and by 1 o'clock seven bodies had been taken from her. These were found in the starboard paddle-box, the only place where the rescuers could work until the divers could go below to tear off the hurricane deck. The bodies that were recovered from the paddle-box were wedged into the paddles of the great wheel.

Some of them were burned beyond recognition and some of them were crushed. As far as could be determined the bodies were those of women. One poor remnant of humanity, twisted beyond all semblance of recognition, had a wedding-ring on her finger, and, strange to say, this was the only finger on that hand that had not been burned to a small, blackened stump.

At nightfall enough of the side supports of the paddle-box had been torn away to disclose five other bodies wedged in close to its curving top.

Diver John Rice, who figured in the Boonton catastrophe, in which Diver Oleson lost his life, and three other divers employed by the city arrived at the scene on the Naval Reserve launch Oneida at 6 o'clock.

They went at once to the wreck and began the work of disengaging the bodies entangled in the wreckage. As the bodies were brought to the surface they were taken by men waiting in boats and carried to tugs, from which they were put on shore at North Brother Island.

Roundsmen Klute and Giloon and Policemen George Mott, Murphy, Skelly, Grey and Healey, of the Harbor Squad, went to the scene in a police launch, and worked steadily all afternoon. At 7 P. M., when these men had taken 217 bodies from the water, they fell from sheer exhaustion and were forced to go ashore and leave the work to others.

Diver Rice and his assistants were forced to stop work because of exhaustion at 11 o'clock, but resumed again in the morning. In the forward cabin of the sunken ship they found ten bodies, those of four boys and six adults. All of the bodies were burned beyond recognition. The wrecking tug continued after the divers had left. The work was in the center and stern of the boat. It was in the stern that the greatest number of bodies were found.



“MADE BEST LANDING I COULD,” SAYS CAPTAIN, UNDER ARREST.

Captain William H. Van Schaick, who has been in command of the General Slocum almost continuously since she went into commission, escaped by jumping into the river and swimming ashore. He was taken to the Alexander Avenue Station from North Brother Island and placed under arrest, with five members of his crew. Captain Van Schaick made a statement to Coroner Berry, in which he said:

“We left the foot of East Twenty-third street about 9.30 o'clock. It was reported to me that 982 tickets for adults had been taken in at the gangways. This does not include children who came aboard, or passengers who paid their fare at the gangways. I should say there were about 1,400 souls aboard when we started on the trip up the river.

“I took the boat slowly up the river, and we were bearing over toward the Sunken Meadows after passing through Hell Gate, when I heard shouts of ‘fire.’ I was in the pilot-house at the time. I sounded the alarm for fire drill. Fire apparatus was stationed on the boat and the crew had been schooled in its use. I saw smoke issuing from the companionways forward, and my first thought was that it was coming from the boiler-rooms.

“I swung the boat over toward North Brother Island, knowing it was the safest and quickest place to land. Response to the bell in the engine-room showed me that the engineer, B. F. Conklin, or some of his assistants, were still at their post. A few moments before the boat grounded in the channel off North Brother Island the flames were licking the pilot-house.

“Followed by my pilots, I ran over the deck and jumped

into the river. My hat and clothing were burning when I jumped. I reckon the time between the first alarm and when we grounded at about five minutes.

DID HIS BEST, SAID THE CAPTAIN.

"I floundered in the water and do not know who pulled me out as I neared the shore. Someone dragged me up under a tree, and it was some time before I was revived. I made the quickest and best landing under the circumstances."

Captain Van Schaick gave his address as the General Slocum. He was extremely weak, and Coroner Berry ordered his removal to Lebanon Hospital.

#### THE GENERAL SLOCUM AN UNLUCKY CRAFT.

The General Slocum was one of the best known vessels about New York Harbor. Since the time of her launching, in 1891, she has been employed in so many different capacities, and on so many different runs, that possibly five out of every ten people in New York City have, at some time, been aboard of her, or have seen her at close range.

Built for the Rockaway service as sister ship to the Grand Republic, she was kept on that run during most of the days of the summer months, and during the thirteen years she has been in the service she has carried to that resort almost enough people to equal the population of this city.

As an excursion boat she was easily one of the most popular of all the vessels that ply the surrounding waters. Her build did not permit of much room for dancing, but the younger folks usually found room in a rather small space on the main deck for this amusement, while the general arrangement of the vessel, with corners and spaces to

suit every kind and class, gave her great popularity. During the excursion season, which comes before and after the Rockaway season, she was employed almost every day by excursion parties.

#### WAS A YACHT RACE BOAT.

The General Slocum, too, has followed every international yacht race held off Sandy Hook since the day she was built. When she was in her prime and was the finest of the harbor craft, great sums were paid for her on the yacht courses. Since 1891, however, other vessels have appeared which are faster and more suitable to open sea sailing than the Slocum, and she has gradually become the poor man's transport at the races. Besides serving in these capacities she has, every Decoration Day, made a trip to Bridgeport, Conn., since 1895, under the auspices of her owners. These runs had become quite a fixture, and many of the people who went on them boasted that they had been on the first one.

At her launching, everybody was full of praise for Divine Burtis, Jr., the boat builder, of Conover street and Atlantic Basin, Brooklyn, who built her. The contract for her construction was given out on February 15, 1891, and on April 18th of the same year, three days more than three months later, she was launched.

As she was the finest vessel in the harbor, and having been built in Brooklyn, that city took a pride in her, and turned out in a crowd at her launching. Miss May Lewis, the niece of the then president of the Knickerbocker Steamboat Company, her owners, broke the bottle of wine over her bows as she left the ways.

#### THE BOATBUILDER'S DREAM.

When the vessel a short time later made her trial trip she was described as the realization of the boatbuilder's

dream. She was provided with three watertight compartments, which was something entirely new then in such craft, and she was said to be unsinkable. Her dimensions were: length of keel, 235 feet; breadth of hull, 37 feet 6 inches; depth of hull, 12 feet 3 inches; length of deck, 250 feet; breadth of deck, 70 feet.

Her body was of white oak and yellow pine, and she was of about 1,200 tons. Her engines, which were three of the most advanced pattern, were built by the W. & A. Fletcher Company, of Hoboken. She was a sidewheel boat, each wheel 31 feet in diameter, bearing 26 paddles. She had a steam steering gear of the latest pattern, and was lighted by 250 electric lights. She had a speed of about 18 miles an hour.

The General Slocum had three decks, the main deck provided aft with a comfortable and roomy cabin for women, and with a restaurant forward. The next above, the promenade, held the main cabin, richly lined with highly polished sycamore and upholstered in red velvet. Forward and aft of this cabin were roomy deck spaces. The band usually played on the after-part of this deck. The hurricane deck was provided with a running bench all along the outside. Her two funnels were almost amidships and were placed one on each side. Her body was painted white, and her funnels a medium yellow, while her name in large gold letters stood out on either side. She carried a crew of 22 men, a captain and two pilots.

#### HER MISFORTUNES.

The General Slocum has been in almost constant misfortune since a time shortly after her launching. No other vessel in the harbor has nearly as long a record of accidents as she, and she has cost her owners thousands of dollars at

various times for repairs and for hauling her off some bar on which she had lodged.

She had not been running four months when she ran onto a mud bank off Rockaway, and remained there until a fleet of tugs hauled her off. Two days later she ran into the old Monmouth, in the North River, and had to be taken to the dry-dock for the first time with a hole in her side. She has broken her walking-beam or a bucket in her paddle so many times that during recent years nobody has taken any account of such an accident.

The first serious mishap to the Slocum happened on July 29, 1894, when, on a run home from Rockaway, on which it was said she had 4,700 persons aboard, late at night she ran on to a sandbar and struck with such force that she carried away several stanchions and injured her electrical apparatus so that every light aboard was extinguished. A panic followed in which women who fainted were trampled upon, and men fought with each other in their efforts to get at the boats. Pandemonium reigned for half an hour, until order was restored by the crew. Then it was found that hundreds had been injured in the wild scrimmage.

In August of the same year she met her next mishap. During a heavy squall she ran on a bar off the end of Coney Island. It was night, and again a panic raged. The captain and crew fought down the scrambling passengers, and finally when the storm abated, transferred them to another vessel. The Slocum remained on the bar for twenty-four hours.

In the following September she was again laid up through a collision in the East River with the tug R. T. Sayre. She sustained damages which cost \$1,000 to repair, and drifted helplessly about the river for a time, at last to be saved from going on the rocks off Governor's Isl-



and. Minor accidents happened to her until July, 1898, when she again was put out of commission by the steam lighter *Amelia*, with which she collided off the Battery. The two vessels locked, and were being carried on the Battery rocks when tugs separated them.

In June, two years ago, while returning from Rockaway with 400 people aboard, in order to avoid a small sloop she again ran on a bar, where she remained all night, her passengers camping out on deck and in the cabin.

#### HAD A MOB ABOARD ONCE.

The most serious affair that ever happened aboard the *Slocum* before the recent disaster, however, occurred on August 17, 1901. She then had aboard 900 persons, mostly men who were described at the time as Paterson Anarchists. When they boarded the vessel at Jersey City most of them were intoxicated. The *Slocum's* owners had contracted to take the party to Rockaway, and when the vessel passed outside the Narrows she encountered a rather heavy sea.

Some of the passengers ordered the captain to turn back. He refused, and then a mob organized to compel him to obey their wishes. The mob first started a panic among the women aboard, and then began a march to the pilot-house to lay hands on the captain. The deck hands and spare men from the engine force were quickly called upon, and, with the captain, they attacked the mob, and a pitched battle was started. Little by little the mob and all other passengers were driven into the cabins, the doors of which were locked. An hour later the *Slocum* stopped at the police pier at the Battery, where seventeen of the men were turned over to the police. Most of them were later sent to jail.

The officers of the Knickerbocker Steamboat Company have frequently been up before the authorities for over-

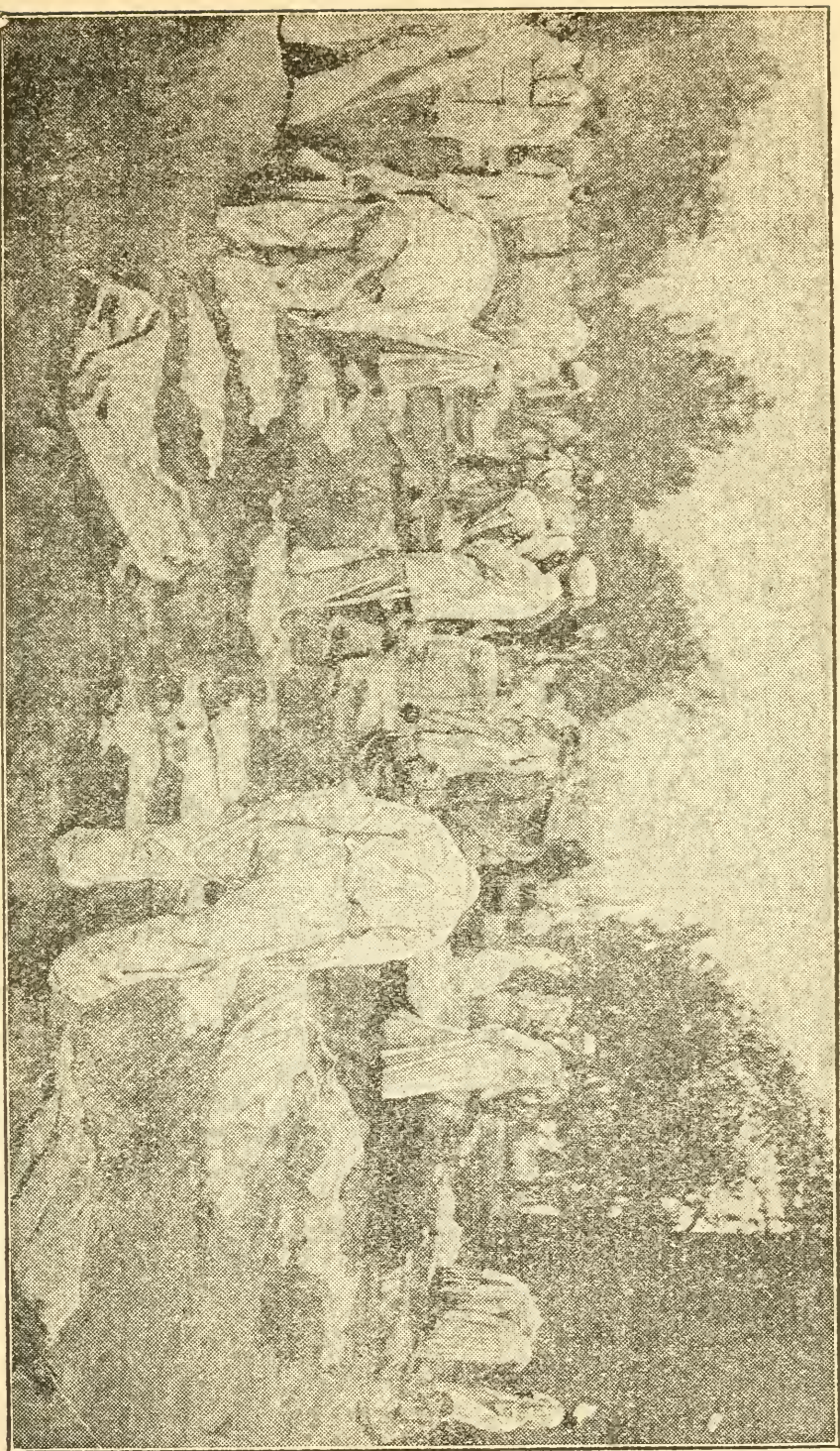
crowding the Slocum. Almost every year special men were detailed to watch her, and charges against her were often made. In 1895 the company was fined \$1,670 for a violation.

#### CAPTAIN VAN SCHAIK'S RECORD.

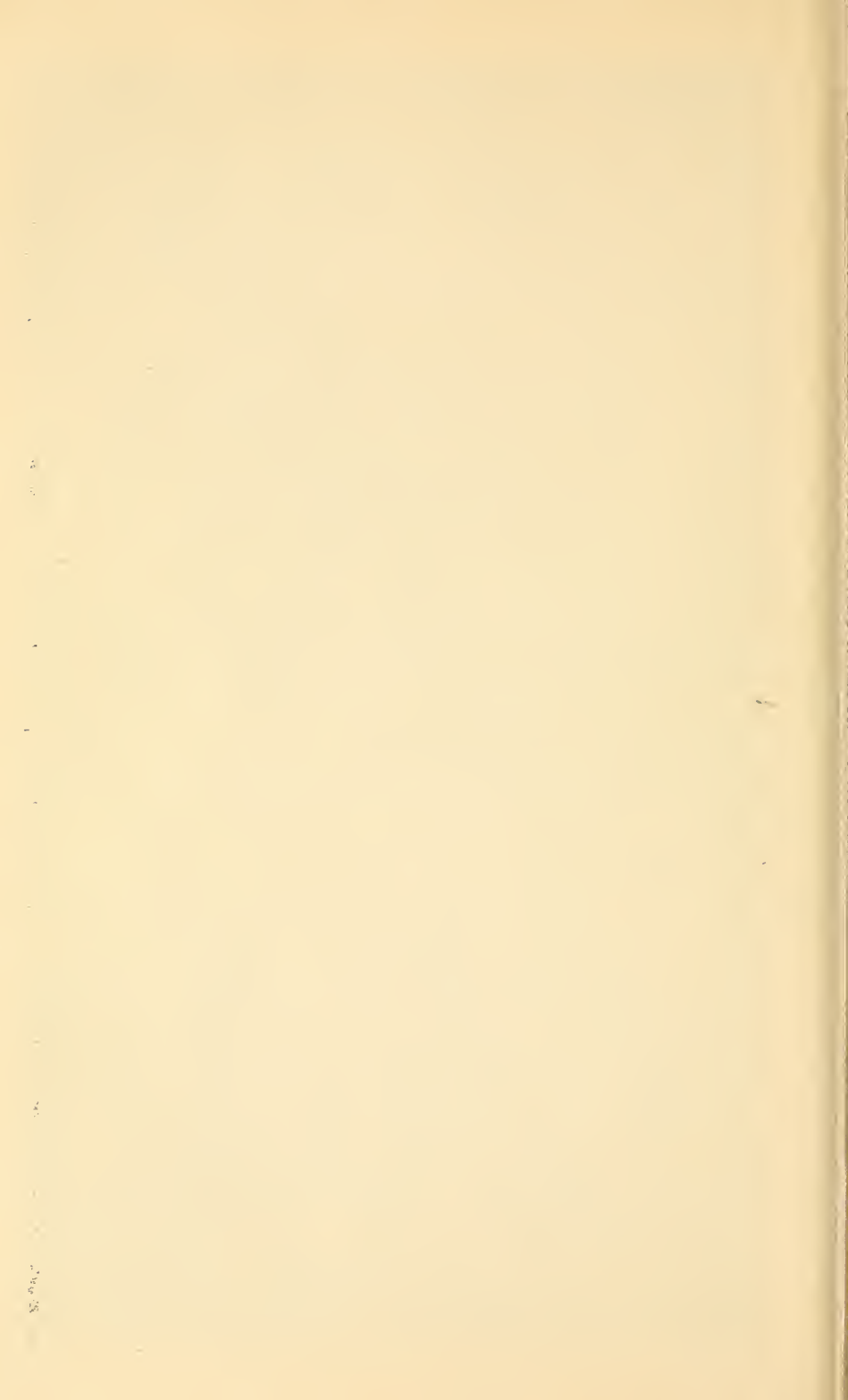
Since the day of her launching the General Slocum has been in command of Capt. William H. Van Schaick, who is credited with being one of the best of the local pilots. He is said to know every foot of the ground about this harbor, and though he has been in innumerable accidents, he is said to have suffered more from bad luck than from ignorance. He is 61 years of age. His home has always, during the sailing seasons since 1891, been just aft of the pilot-house on the hurricane deck of the Slocum. His employers credit him with being a most capable, careful, and reliable man, always ready to protect their interests and the interests of his passengers at any cost.

Captain Van Schaick's first pilot was Edward Van Wart, aged 62, of 331 West Twenty-first street; his second pilot was Edwin M. Weaver, aged 28, who lives in Troy; B. F. Conklin was the engineer; Edward Flanagan, mate, and Michael McGrann, steward.





LAYING OUT THE BODIES ON THE SHORE.





## CHAPTER VI.

SCENES AND INCIDENTS GATHERED BY VARIOUS WRITERS—  
GIRL FOUGHT WAY THROUGH PANIC-STRICKEN CROWD.

STRUGGLING for safety, Miss Frances Hilbert, of 419 East Fifth street, had all of her clothing except her petticoat torn from her before she could leap to a tug that was near the General Slocum. The girl, who is 17 years of age, fought her way through the frantic women and made the daring jump to the tug. As she made the leap in safety another woman jumped squarely on top of her, hurting her shoulders.

The young girl borrowed a man's jacket and thus scantily clad went to her home. She was exhausted from her experience and was badly shaken up in the rush.

TWO BOY HEROES PERISH WHILE FIGHTING FIRE.

Half a dozen young boys, schoolmates at Public School No. 19, at 334 East Fourteenth street, are known to have been passengers on the Slocum, and all but one are missing. These boys, 14 to 16 years old, were chums at the school. The parents of one of the boys and a younger brother are also believed to have been on the boat.

Two of the boys, Fred and Charles Schuler, brothers, of 15 Stuyvesant street, were last seen just before the upper deck gave way. The two boys were working in a bucket brigade, throwing water upon the flames, and disappeared



when the deck crashed down into the flames below. Their father searched the hospitals and Morgue for news of his heroic sons, but did not find them.

Henry Alt, of 14 Lafayette place, was one of the boys who went on the excursion. His mother, father and brother, it is believed, accompanied him. All were missing from their home that night. The rooms were dark. No one about the building had heard anything of them since they left the house, a happy family party, early in the morning.

H. McCahon, of 504 East Fourteenth street, another of the schoolboy chums, is also missing, and his parents vainly searched for news of him.

Otto Sanders is also believed to have been on the boat. He is missing.

William S. Masterson, the only one of the six boys known to have been rescued, was picked up by a tug.

"I saw Fred and Charles Schuler working with buckets trying to put out the flames on the boat. They were on the upper deck. Then that deck caved in," said young Masterson, "and I was thrown off into the water. I swam around for awhile, trying to keep myself afloat, and was picked up by a tugboat. I did not see any of the boys after I was thrown into the water."

#### GIRL SLID DOWN POLE FROM UPPER DECK TO THE WATER.

Miss Marie Kreuger, of 451 West End avenue, who was rescued and taken to the Harlem Hospital, said:

"I was sitting on the upper deck when there was a cry of fire. Men came among us and told us to be quiet. The women and children were panic-stricken. I slid down a pole to the water and held on by a rope on the side of the boat.

"The flames began to shoot out of the portholes and I had to let go. A little boy was near me, holding to a life preserver. A coal barge was near and a deckhand threw us a rope, which we got and were pulled aboard the coal barge.

"I saw my cousin and sister, but they disappeared. An ambulance, with Dr. Krauskopf of Harlem Hospital, came along and brought us here."

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## BOY'S HEAD BURNED OFF AS HE KNEELS IN PRAYER.

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AS DEATH COMES CHARRED BODY TOPPLES FROM PADDLEBOX INTO THE RIVER.

Patrolman John Hines, of the Mulberry Street Station, was one of the scores of policemen sent to the scene of the disaster. When he learned the name of the vessel that had burned it struck horror to his heart, as he knew that his mother-in-law, Mrs. Margaret Wolf, her daughter, Mrs. Lena Ullman, and her 8-year-old son had gone on the excursion. They could not be found by Hines, who felt certain that they had perished.

Inspector H. J. Steele, of the Building Department, who chanced to be on North Brother Island, was among the number there who went to the rescue of passengers. He waded into the water and drew out three persons alive.

H. L. Malabar, chief clerk at North Brother Island, has witnessed many horrifying sights, including those of war, but he said those of yesterday were the most terrible he ever saw. When he first saw the Slocum the boat was a mass of flames.

## HUNDREDS IN FIRE PIT.

"I saw hundreds of persons jumping into the water," said Mr. Malabar, "and finally the decks collapsed, throwing the crowds on it either into the water or into the pit of fire on the boat. A boy knelt on the top of the paddle-box, with his hands clasped in prayer.

"No one on board paid any attention to him. They were too much occupied in looking after their own safety. The flames crept up around the boy's feet, then they licked upward to his face until he was enveloped in fire. Finally, I was horror-stricken to see his head burn off and fall into the river, followed soon by his charred body."

On the body of a woman lay in the long row on the island was found \$150 in greenbacks and \$25 in gold. The body was marked No. 141 of the unidentified. The next body also was that of a woman, on whom was found but six cents.

Michael McGrath, steward of the General Slocum, was among the drowned. He went overboard with between \$200 and \$300 on his person, and when his body was found the money was gone.

Mrs. Albertina Lembeck, of 427 East Ninth street, was on the upper deck. With her were her five children, ranging in age from 4 to 10 years, also Mrs. Haas, wife of the pastor of the church, and her two children. They all remained where they were until the deck fell in.

Three of Mrs. Lembeck's children were thrown into the water and she jumped in with the other two, aged 6 and 4 years, respectively.

Mrs. Haas and her children disappeared. When Mrs. Lembeck struck the water she became unconscious and sank, and when she finally recovered her senses and found

herself rescued all her five children were gone. She was taken to Lincoln Hospital, suffering from shock.

Among the physicians who worked unremittingly at North Brother Island were Dr. Weisman and five from the Riverside Hospital. Dr. Weisman finally was compelled to desist in his work toward night. He had worked so constantly in moving arms and limbs and in other efforts to resuscitate apparently drowned persons that he was benumbed and was unable to move hand or foot himself. He sat and directed the work thereafter in the hospital proper.

#### BOY SURVIVOR HELPED SAVE LITTLE GIRLS.

George Gray, 13 years old, of 309 East Fourteenth street, one of the survivors, tells the following story:

"I was sitting on the rear of the upper deck with my two friends, Otto Hans, of 310 East Fourteenth street, and Albert Greenwall, of 326 East Fourteenth street. The boat was just passing out of Hell Gate and going toward an island when I smelled fire.

"I said, 'Hey, boys, there's a fire!' and we jumped upon a seat and tried to pull down some life preservers.

"A lot of them were rotten and all the cork came out of them. Women and children around us were yelling something awful. While we were pulling at the life preservers a big cloud of smoke and flame came right up out of the center of the boat. Then the boat seemed to stop, and the women began jumping overboard, and I saw some of them throw their babies in the water and jump after them.

"After the fire came all up around the deck the boat got started again, but the people kept jumping over. There weren't any tugboats near us then, but soon I saw a lot coming for us. I was afraid to jump over and got Otto and Albert to stay with me.

"We all had got life preservers for ourselves and for three little girls who we held on to when they tried to jump.

"The first tug that came to us was the Director. It was a big boat and came right up near us as we were going toward the island.

"Pretty soon there were so many on her that her rear end was way down in the water and her bow way up in the air. I got hold of a little girl's leg who was falling over, pulled her up and sat on her so as to keep her from being pushed over.

"As I was on the boat I saw a man on the upper deck take a baby and throw it into the water. The baby's hair was all on fire and she fell in the water near the tug and a man jumped over and got her and brought her to the Director."

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## MOTHERS HURL BABIES INTO RIVER AND FOLLOW.

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WOMEN ABLAZE TAKE FLYING LEAPS TO DEATH IN WATER  
—SEXTON OF CHURCH DESCRIBES AWFUL SCENES.

John Halphusen, sexton of St. Mark's Church, who was among the rescued, tells a thrilling story of the burning of the boat.

More than half of those on board, I should say, were children—naturally, because excursions of this kind are primarily for the amusement of the young folk. The weather was perfect, and the start was delightful.

"We had been gone about an hour, I suppose, and I have no idea how far we had gone, when I suddenly saw a rush toward the center of the boat, followed by a cry of alarm.



"I pressed forward to see what was the matter, at the same time calling to the people not to crowd. I took it first to mean that they were rushing forward to see something along the shore, and I remembered that immediately afterward the thought flashed across my mind that somebody had fallen overboard.

"With that idea in my head I had started to ask the captain what the trouble was when I saw a cloud of smoke go up from the interior of the boat amidships. Immediately afterward that fearful cry of 'fire' was raised.

"I don't think any one will ever be able to describe the scene that followed. There was a rush away from the spot from which the smoke came. Screams of women and cries of the children rent the air. Men began to shout, and there were cries of 'keep cool,' 'where are the lifeboats?' 'don't crowd,' etc., but I doubt if many heard them.

"Panic ensued. Sheets of flame followed the rolling clouds of smoke, and the fearful rush began to the sides of the boat. Women and children were thrown down and trampled upon. Many were pushed overboard, and more jumped into the river.

"I saw mothers hurl their little ones far into the water and then jump after them. Men and women enwrapped in flames rushed past me and leaped overboard. The water was soon dotted with floating bodies, which soon disappeared, only to be replaced by others.

#### - CREW LOST THEIR HEADS.

"It seemed to me that the crew of the boat lost their heads—they were undisciplined, and did not do what sane men would have done to stay the panic and restore order.

"Never again, I hope, shall I witness such scenes. In an instant almost the entire boat was ablaze, and the water was the only refuge for them.

"Pastor Haas seemed to be everywhere—calm and collected, striving to stay the panic and assisting in every way to help as many as possible to safety, regardless of his own welfare. I had a glimpse of him once when he seemed to be surrounded by flames, and that was the last I saw of him.

"I felt that he must surely perish, but I have since learned that he escaped.

"There was little time to secure life preservers, and I doubt if many thought of them. Such pictures of agony I have never witnessed.

"I assisted as much as I could, but I also had my two daughters, Mina, twelve, and Clare, ten, to look after. I took them to the top deck, and led them onto the paddle-box. The flames were all about us now, and I was merely waiting for the moment to order my children to jump.

"Tugs were coming to the rescue from all directions. In the water I could see on every side the despairing struggles of the dying. Finally, the flames crept so close to us that they almost set our clothing afire. I signaled to a tug and called to my daughters to jump.

"The tug Sumner picked us up.

"I dread to think of the number who were lost. To me it is a miracle that any escaped uninjured. It is a terrible blow to our church, and to think that it was the ending of a happy picnic party!"

#### BOY WOULD NOT JUMP BECAUSE OF FLOATING BODIES.

John Eil, fourteen years old, one of the survivors of the disaster, gave the following account of his terrible experience, his mother and two brothers being drowned before his eyes:

"I, my mother and my little brother Paul made one of a large party from our district.

"When we left the pier the deck was packed to the limit of its capacity. The band was playing, the children were frolicking, and we were all having a fine time.

"As we neared Hell Gate children were called down to the lower deck, where ice cream and soda water were served.

"The children were falling all over each other in an effort to get to the tables which held the refreshments. With my mother and my little brother Paul, I went to the engine-room to watch the machinery. I was standing there with John Gray, Albert Greenwall, Otto Hans, and a number of children.

"Suddenly, and without the least note of warning, there was a burst of flame from the furnace room that rushed up through the engine-room and flashed out about us. The flames spread with rapidity of an explosion, setting fire to the clothing of the women and children who were grouped about the engine room watching the machinery.

"My mother's dress and my little brother's clothing caught fire, and I grabbed them and started to rush for the side of the boat. There was the most terrible panic as the burning women and children rushed out among those surrounding the ice cream and soda water tables screaming and yelling with pain.

"In the terrible scramble my mother and little brother were swept from me and carried toward the side where the children and women with their clothes burning had begun to jump into the water. The flames spread in bursts that soon had the entire deck enveloped.

"The crew was helpless to render any assistance or make efforts to check the advance of the fire. We were just passing out through Hell Gate when the fire started. The captain headed the boat toward North Brother Island, and the pilots who were with him yelled frantically to us to stay aboard until they beached the boat.

"But in a moment after the flames had burst from the engine room great numbers began to jump overboard. The women were wild with fright, and snatching their children to them leaped into the whirlpools that carried them toward the rocks on both shores.

"When she was grounded the flames had spread over the entire upper and lower decks. There were only a few spots on the boat untouched by the flames and in these were piled up women who had fainted and falling pinned others to the deck.

"The men from the tugs who could get near the steamboat shouted for those on board to jump, and then the small boats picked them up by the score.

"Many charred and burned bodies were floating in the wake of the General Slocum as she made for North Brother Island.

"I remained on board, as I could not get to the side to leap over because of the mass of wreckage and burned bodies of children piled in front of me. My face and hands, as you see, are badly burned.

"As soon as I reached shore I rushed for the elevated road to hurry and notify my father of the disaster."

BOY KICKS GIRL ON SHINS TO KEEP HER FROM FAINTING.

John Tishner, thirteen years old, of 404 Fifth street, another survivor, describes his experiences and his rescue as follows:

"I was down on the lower deck with Ida Wousky, fourteen years old, who lives in the same house with me. We were eating ice cream when the flames burst out right near us. Everybody seemed to be yelling fire, and I saw a lot of women with their hair and dresses burning jump into the water long before any boats came near us.

"My friend, Ida Wousky, was going to faint, but I

kicked her in the shins and waked her up. Then I got a lot of life preservers, most of them rotten, and after a long time I got one on Ida.

"The tugs were coming near us then, and I told her to jump. She wouldn't jump, and I pushed her over. Then I jumped in the water myself and I got hold of her hair and held her up until the tug came and we were pulled out.

"I guess I saw more than two hundred people jump over on my side of the boat ten minutes before the tugs, row-boats and launches came anywhere near us. I couldn't see on the other side of the boat, but I could hear them screaming, and I could hear the splashes in the water as they jumped overboard.

"After I first saw the smoke and flames there was a terrible rush of people to the rear of the boat. They were pushing and pulling each other until those near the railing were crowded over into the water, falling on top of each other as they landed in the river. I saw a lot of women throw their babies overboard and then fall after them. Most of these women were drowned.

"There were a lot of my friends on the boat. Some of them were rescued, and some of them I didn't see after we got ashore.

"Harry Gambichner, of No. 404 Fifth street; Mrs. Gross, George Gross, and two little girls of No. 90 First avenue, were eating ice cream together when the fire started. I saw George Gross get some life preservers for them, and then, when the smoke came up, that was the last I saw of them.

"Another friend of mine, Paul Kasner, fourteen years old, who lives on First avenue, between Fifth and Sixth streets, was near me when the fire started. I saw him get a life preserver and jump off. He was picked up by a tugboat.



"I saw a lot of girls that lived near me get life preservers and jump into the water long before the tugs came. They were all swimmers and got ashore. One of the girls I saw swim all the way in with a baby.

"I guess I saw fifty babies in the water before the tugboats came, and the men and women were jumping in on top of them. When they got the tug to the New York shore a man took me in a buggy to the elevated station, and I went home and told my mother that I wasn't drowned."

#### SAW MANY FORCED OVERBOARD.

Probably the first persons to see the outburst of flames from a nearby vantage point were Thomas Miley, of No. 629 East 137th street, and John Kain, of No. 617 East 138th street, young men, who were in a rowboat within one hundred feet of the big excursion steamer. Their impressions are well set forth in young Miley's statement, after he and Kain had assisted in the work of rescue.

"Both Kain and I were rowing, with our backs toward the Slocum," he said, "when we heard a loud report as if an explosion had occurred. When I looked around a cloud of smoke was hovering above the forward part of the steamboat. It seemed only a few moments until flames leaped up, but it may have been longer, because my companion and I were awe-stricken by the scenes that followed the explosion.

#### TRAIL OF DYING IN WATER.

"We could see women and children struggling with those in the rear, and in their terror they clung to those closest to them and dragged them into the water.

"While this was happening the Slocum was being run

in toward North Brother Island. She had been only 100 feet or so distant from the island shore when we heard the report, but in making the short trip, a long trail of struggling persons was left in the water. Many of them, I think, had been crushed to death in the panic before they touched the water, and they sank at once from view.

#### FLAMES SWEEP OVER DECKS.

"In a short time flames burst from other parts of the vessel, and the passengers' panic became more terrific. Over the sides they were swept from the decks in masses. By this time the shore had been reached and the Slocum had been run in between two small piers.

"Almost before the end of the footbridge reached the shore the shrieking passengers rushed out on the plank and we saw several persons drop into the water as though pushed from the sides. In a short time those who were uninjured were ashore, but there were some who had been hurt by the struggle for life aboard the burning boat who could not reach the gangplank.

"Some of the less frightened men rushed back and carried these to safety, but there were many, a tugboat captain told us, who had been hemmed in by the flames on the lower deck. This captain had run his boat alongside and picked up ten bodies and saved two little boys. The tug belonged to the Daley Company.

"The tug Wade was the first to go to the rescue. My companion and I followed and succeeded in recovering two bodies. One was that of an aged woman, and the other body was that of a boy, about 10 years old. The boy's head was burned and his face was bruised, as though he had been injured before he was forced into the water.

"About a hundred feet from the Bronx shore was a pri-

vate yacht, with several persons aboard, but they made no move to help the struggling people."

#### HIS GRANDMOTHER TORN FROM BOY AS HE WAS SAVING HER.

Charles Schwartz, 17 years old, of 141 East Third street, was saved, but he lost his mother, Mrs. Louise Schwartz, and his grandmother, who was 68 years old. He says of his experience:

"When the fire started I was sitting with my mother and grandmother on the upper deck. My mother ran from me, saying she would look after herself, and bidding me care for my grandmother.

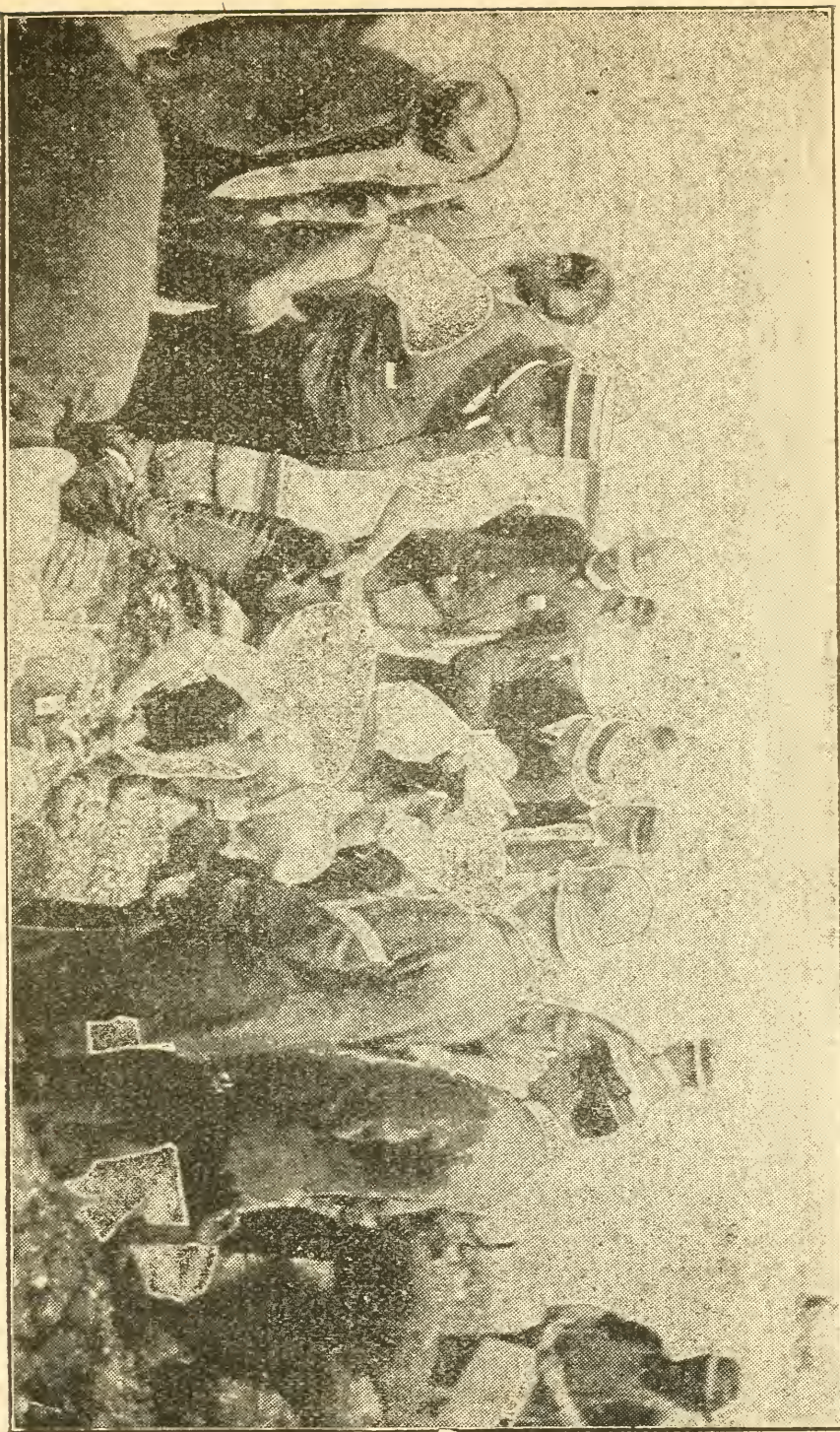
"I carried my grandmother to the rail to await the approach of some boat, but suddenly the rail gave way, and with scores of others we were dumped into the water. In the struggle of the mass who were fighting to keep up, my grandmother was torn from me and drowned before I could reach her. I swam around, looking for her body, until I was picked up by a tug.

"I was taken ashore to North Brother Island. As I was standing on the shore I saw a number of bodies floating toward me. Thereupon I undressed and swam out. Among the bodies I found that of my grandmother and brought it ashore. I fear my mother was drowned with those who were swept into the water when the rail gave way."

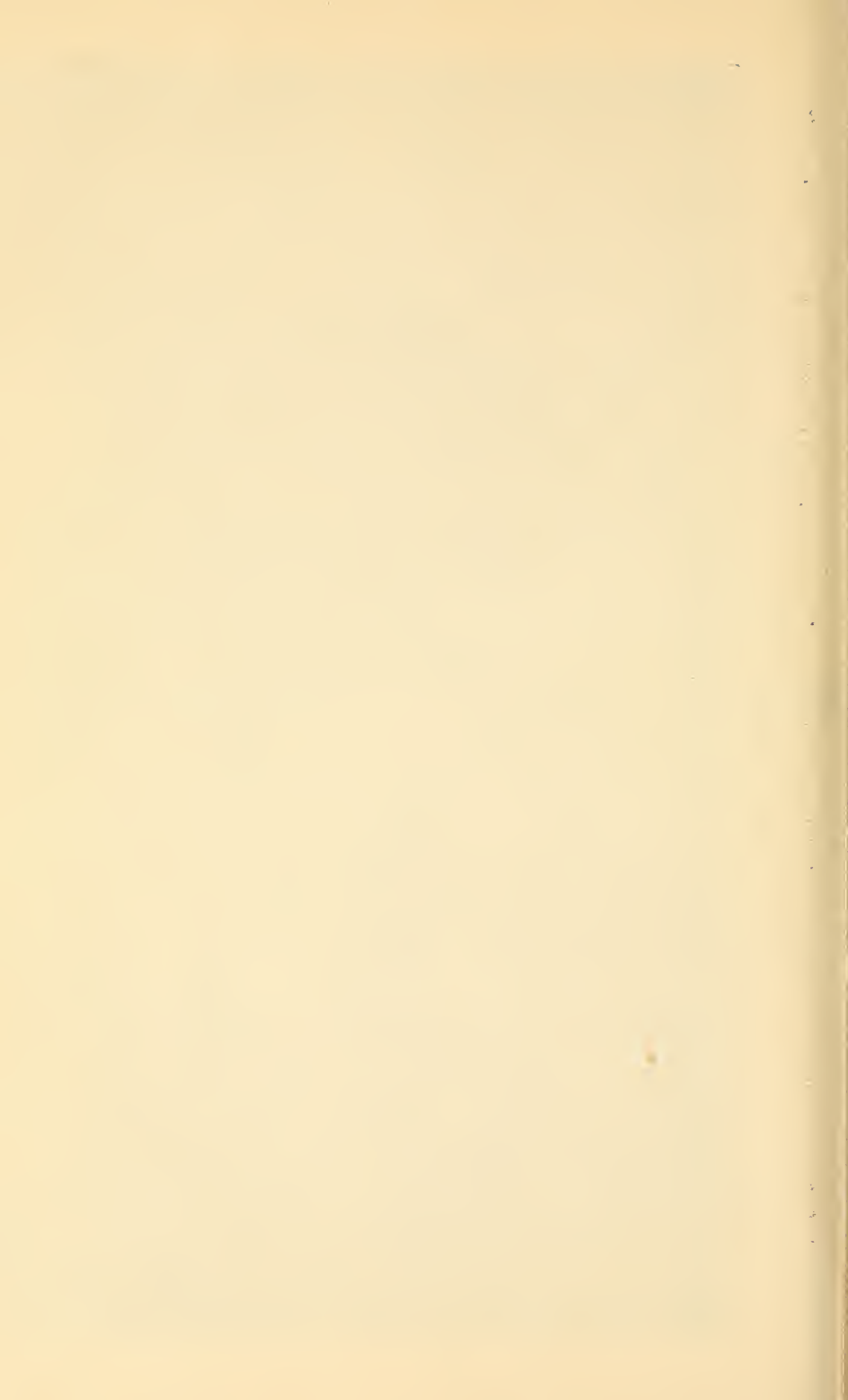
#### HEROINE RISKS LIFE FIVE TIMES TO SAVE CHILDREN.

Pauline Fuetz, a comely 18-year-old nurse employed in the North Brother Island Hospital, flung herself into the water, swam into the midst of the struggling women and children, brought five little tots safely to shore, and then battled until overmastered by a powerful woman who





REMOVING THE VALUABLES FROM THE BODIES.





dragged her to the bottom and from whose death clutch she escaped exhausted and helpless. She was pulled ashore by nurses and carried to the hospital.

When Dr. Stewart, the superintendent of the hospital, sounded the alarm, Miss Fuetz was among the first to reach the beach. With the other nurses and men she waded into the water and helped ashore all those who were within reach.

Fifty feet away the surface of the water was dotted with the heads of struggling women and children. Some were making feeble efforts to keep afloat, others drifted helplessly, kept up by their clothing.

#### SWIMS OUT TO THEM.

"I am going out to them," cried Miss Fuetz, hysterically, as she pulled off her shoes and skirts.

Several nurses caught hold of the girl and tried to restrain her.

"Let me go," she cried. "I can swim; I must go to their rescue."

She flung the nurses off and jumped into the water. With quick, strong strokes she soon reached a little girl. Taking the child's golden hair in her teeth she turned and swam to shore, delivering her charge to the nurses, who waded out to meet her.

Then she turned back. She grasped another child and took the little one to shore. Notwithstanding the pleading of the nurses, she returned again and rescued another child.

Five times she reached the shore with her human burdens.

The sixth trip almost proved her last. As she passed close by a woman, who gave no sign of life, the latter's arms suddenly clasped around the girl's neck. Those on

the shore saw a short struggle and then both disappeared. They arose again, but Miss Fuetz could not break the woman's hold. Finally she placed her hand under the woman's chin and pushed her off. Before the woman could recover her hold Miss Fuetz had passed around and caught her hair and started to push her toward shore.

#### DRAGGED ASHORE EXHAUSTED.

When they were within a few feet of solid footing the woman suddenly turned and grasped the girl again, both sinking. Soon the girl's body appeared on the surface. Her strength had been exhausted. She was dragged ashore more dead than alive and sent to the hospital.

"It wasn't anything to do," said Miss Fuetz, later. "What could I do? I saw the women and children struggling in the water, and what could I do but go to their rescue?"

"I was after the children. I wanted to save the women, too, but my first resolve was to bring the children ashore. The woman who got me nearly took me down with her. If she hadn't been so excited I would have saved her.

"It wasn't much to do. I learned to swim at Asbury Park. Yes, I saved four lives there last summer."

The children Miss Fuetz brought ashore were all unconscious, but they were quickly revived and will recover.

#### SEES BROTHER SINK TO DEATH AT HIS SIDE.

Fred Liederman, of 4 Smith street, White Plains, N. Y., was on board with three other boys. They were George Heinz, 16 years old, of 97 Avenue A; John Liederman, his brother, and John Schoeneman.

"My poor mother, brother and sister were on that boat, too," said Liederman. "I don't know what became of them. I was standing with the other three boys at the right side of the boat leaning against the rail.

"I saw some smoke about the middle of the boat. Then I heard the shout of 'fire' and the people started to run. I shouted, 'Don't crowd,' and pushed my brother Johnnie toward the side of the boat.

"We were almost to North Brother Island when the rail gave way and many people tumbled into the water. My brother and I were two of these.

"I caught hold of Johnnie's hand and tried to save him. He lost his hold on my hand, and the last I saw of him he was looking at me with a look of appeal that was terrible. I was picked up by a boat."

Suffering so greatly from the shock caused by the loss of his wife and child that he could not give his name and address, James Eller, a musician, employed at the Metropolitan Opera House, was taken to Lincoln Hospital.

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## PASTOR HAAS TELLS HOW HE WAS PARTED FROM HIS FAMILY.

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LOST HIS LITTLE GIRL IN THE PANIC, JUMPED OVERBOARD  
WITH HIS WIFE AND SISTER; MRS. HAAS IS DEAD, THE  
CHILD IS MISSING.

The Rev. George C. F. Haas, of 64 Seventh street, pastor of St. Mark's German Lutheran Church, which gave the ill-fated excursion, was on board the General Slocum. With him were his wife, his little daughter and his sister, Miss Emma Haas. He had with him also as his personal guest, the Rev. Julius G. Schulz, pastor of a Lutheran church in Erie, Pa.

The Rev. Mr. Haas leaped into the water with his wife after he had been badly burned about the head. He was

rescued by one of the relief boats and landed on North Brother Island, whence he was taken to Lincoln Hospital. Thither his sister was also taken, suffering with burns. Both were able to return home in a few days. Up to that time they had received no tidings of Mrs. Haas, but the clergyman had received word that his little daughter was saved.

"It had been my practice every year," said Mr. Haas, "to make a tour of the boat as soon as we started on our annual excursion, to see that everything was all right. Shortly after the steamer left the Third street pier that morning I started from the promenade deck to make such a trip. I had just completed the round of the steamer on the several decks forward and aft, and was on my way back to the promenade deck when I saw smoke coming up a narrow gangway leading from the lower to the main deck.

#### PASTOR'S EFFORTS TO SAVE.

"I thought at first that the smoke might be blowing that way from the galley, where I knew they were preparing to cook the clam chowder, but the smoke speedily increased in volume, and I soon realized that it was something more serious. I ran to where my wife was sitting on the promenade deck and returned with her to the main deck, at the same time giving the warning to everybody I met to go to the stern of the boat.

"On reaching the main deck I drove the people before me toward the stern, but that was not difficult, for many of them had noticed the smoke almost as soon as I had, and were hastening away from the point of danger. When I reached the end of the cabin I tried to close the sliding doors so as to prevent the smoke and flames from being blown through them to the open part of the deck, where a

big crowd had gathered. I closed one of the doors, but the other I could not move.

"I cannot tell how many minutes elapsed between the time when I first saw the smoke and when the steamer was all in flames. It seemed only a few seconds to me, but from what I can remember having done in that interval it must have been considerably longer. My wife and I stood together near the rail until we saw that the upper deck was about to fall upon us. We saw nothing of our little girl, who had been playing with other children. My sister stood near us. None of us could swim, but when we realized that it meant certain death to remain longer on the steamer we all jumped overboard together.

#### SEPARATED FROM HIS FAMILY.

"We had on life preservers, but I don't think we had them properly adjusted. At all events, after I got into the water I did not float, and I immediately became separated from my wife and sister. I have no recollection as to how I was rescued. The first thing I knew I found myself on North Brother Island, and was brought from there to the hospital. I did not know that my sister had been saved until I found she was a patient in the same hospital, and I have received no tidings from my wife."

The Rev. Mr. Schulz, Mr. Haas' guest, and Mr. Mueller, a St. Mark's Sunday School teacher, played an important part in the rescue of fifty or more children. They gathered the children on the lower deck at the stern of the steamer at the first symptoms of panic, and although many of the frightened little ones tried to jump overboard, restrained them from doing so. Just as the General Slocum ran aground on the shore of North Brother Island the tug Wade came up and made fast to her stern. Mr. Schulz and Mr. Mueller passed all the children to the tug.



## CHAPTER VII.

## TRAGIC STORIES OF SURVIVORS OF DISASTER.

PITIFUL, tragic, yet quaint because of the youth of some of the narrators, were stories told by some who had been lucky enough to come alive out of the floating furnace or the equally dangerous waters of the Sound.

## MOTHER AND BROTHER GONE.

John Eil, 14 years old, was on the Slocum with his mother and little brother. Eil was saved, but it is thought his mother and brother perished.

"My mother and my little brother Paul and I were with a big party from our neighborhood," said John. "John Fishman, of No. 401 Fifth street; John Gray, of No. 309 East Fourteenth street; Albert Greenwall, of No. 326 East Fourteenth street, and Otto Hans, of No. 310 East Fourteenth street, were with us. When we left the pier the deck was packed so with people you could hardly move. The band was playing, and we were all having a fine time.

"I was standing with some of the boys watching the engines, when all of a sudden a big sheet of flame burst up through the furnace-room, right in our faces. My mother's dress and Paul's dress caught fire, and I grabbed them and started to run for the side of the boat. There was an awful panic; I was knocked down in the rush. When I got on my feet I couldn't see my mother and brother anywhere.

The whole deck was on fire. I was swept into a corner and held there by the crowd.

"It seemed to me the people were going over the sides like a waterfall. The captain kept blowing his whistle, and I could see lots of boats coming toward us. I found myself in the water when the Slocum got near the shore, and I was picked up by a man in a gasoline launch. I saw lots of burned bodies floating behind the Slocum. Fishman and Gray jumped overboard and swam ashore. I haven't seen anyone else that was with us."

Eil was burned badly on the face and hands. At the 138th street station of the elevated road he said he was going home "to tell his father."

#### LIFE PRESERVERS ROTTEN.

George Gray, 13 years old, of No. 309 East Fourteenth street, related his experience.

"I was sitting on the rear of the upper deck with Otto Hans, of No. 310 East Fourteenth street, and Albert Greenwall, of No. 326 East Fourteenth street," said he. "We were just passing out of Hell Gate when I smelled fire. I looked toward the front of the boat and saw a big cloud of smoke. Otto, Al and I jumped upon a seat and grabbed life preservers. They were rotten and all the cork came out of them. Women and kids were yelling around us something awful. Just then a big blaze of fire came right up through the center of the boat and the people began to jump overboard. Some of the women threw their babies overboard and then jumped after them.

"The first tug that reached us was the Director. It was a big boat, and came right up close as we were going toward the island. I jumped on the boat and a lot of people jumped on top of me. Half of them fell back into the

water between the tug and the boat. In a minute there were so many on the tug the stern was way down in the water and the bow up in the air. They kept on jumping and slipping off the tug and going down. I got hold of the leg of a little girl who was sliding off, and pulled her back, and then I sat on her to keep her from being pushed overboard.

"I saw a man on the upper deck of the Slocum throw a baby way out into the river and then jump after her. The baby's hair was all afire. The man went right down. Another man jumped over and grabbed the baby and swam with her to the Director, and was pulled up on to the tug by the captain. The baby was alive, all right. When the other tugs came up everybody that was left tried to jump on them, and they jumped on top of one another. Lots of them fell off and were drowned. I saw some girls in the river swimming toward the island. They were picked up by rowboats.

"I saw two little girls who could swim sink when a big wave made by a tug went over them. The women and kids were crying and yelling so we couldn't hear the men on the tugs, who were waving their arms at us for us not to jump. I saw ten men jump into the river long before the tugs came, and not one of them could swim. They all went down. I thought the Director would sink or turn over when she started for the shore, there was so many on her. When we got off we were taken in wagons to the elevated road."

#### SOUGHT NEWS OF FAMILY.

In great mental anguish, Bernard Miller, of No. 95 Second avenue, called at Police Headquarters in the afternoon seeking information of his wife and four children. He said they had been passengers on the General Slocum, and

all had jumped overboard when it was no longer possible for them to remain on board.

"Myself, my wife and four sons, whose ages were three, six, nine and twelve, were sitting on the first deck," he said, "when I saw smoke coming up through the deck in great clouds. The people lost their heads. I grabbed life preservers and put them on my wife and children, and helped them over the side of the boat into the water. Then I put one on and went after them, telling them to make for the shore. The youngest child was in my wife's arms. All started for Randall's Island. I started after them, but had not taken more than a half dozen strokes when I was surrounded by a half dozen women, who clung to me and dragged me under. I had all I could do to save myself from being drowned by their frantic efforts to hold on to me. A rowboat came up and took us all on board. When we got to shore I searched for my family, but they were not to be found."

Miller's hands were swathed in bandages and his clothes were scorched and burned, showing he had stayed on the Slocum until he could do so no longer.

#### COULDN'T LOOSEN LIFEBOAT.

Nicholas Belzer, of No. 422 East Eighth street, was frantic with grief when he went to the pier at East Third street, looking for his wife and child, who had become separated from him in the mad rush on the boat.

"I lost track of my wife some time before the fire broke out," he said, "and was sitting on the upper deck when I discovered the ship was on fire. I drew my penknife and tried to cut away one of the lifeboats. I succeeded in severing the ropes, but when I got that far I discovered they were held with wire and were immovable.

Seeing I could do nothing, I climbed over the edge and down to the lowest deck. I jumped into the river and swam ashore. The water was filled with floating bodies of those who had been drowned, and I had a hard time from being drowned myself by persons who would cling to me."

Lucy Hencken, fifteen years old, of No. 162 South Second street, Brooklyn, was with her mother and her brother Charles, nineteen years old. When the excitement started the girl took her mother to the upper deck and then started downstairs to find her brother. At the bottom of the stairway she saw three lone babies who had been deserted, and were in danger of being trampled on by the crowd. The girl picked the children up, one by one, and carried them to her mother. Then she returned to find her brother. When she got back her mother and the babies had disappeared. Lucy then jumped into the water and was picked up by William Major, who was on a boat.

Louis Weiss, ten years old, who lives somewhere in Sixth street, was another excursionist who apparently was the sole survivor of a large family. He was with his mother, his brothers, Henry, Jacob and Fred, and his sisters, Amelia and Salome. He saw nothing of them after the first rush.

#### BRAVERY OF A WOMAN.

Mrs. John C. Hynes, with her twin sons, George and Theodore, fifteen years old, arrived at her home in No. 397 East Fourth street, about 4.30 o'clock. She was wet through, as also was Theodore, for both had had narrow escapes from death by fire and water.

"I was sitting on the main deck at the stern," she said, "with my son Frank, these two boys and a friend. When the smoke poured up I tied a life preserver on myself and ran upstairs, the boys having preceded me, to the hurricane



deck. There we became separated, and I did not see them again until we met on the shore. I stayed on the ship as long as I could; then I jumped into the water. There another woman struck me on the shoulder when she jumped. I held her up by the waist until my strength failed, and then let her go. She went down, and when she again came to the surface I grasped her by the hair and swam as well as I could with one hand to the paddle-wheel, where I held her head above water until a colored man swam up and took her from me.

"I don't know who she was, but I recognized her as a member of the church. I don't know whether she was finally saved. When I was relieved of my burden I saw a rowboat approaching, and swam to it, and was taken ashore. I had been there but a few moments when Theodore swam to the shore near where I was, and a few moments later George was brought to shore on a tug.

"I do not know what became of Frank. About three weeks ago he broke his leg, and was hardly able to walk. He was taken out for the first time to-day. I fear the worst."

Theodore jumped from the hurricane deck to escape the flames, and swam to shore, and George jumped to the tug which brought him to shore.

#### SAW CHILDREN CATCH FIRE.

Frances Richter, eleven years old, of No. 310 East Sixth street, was with her mother and six other children on the main deck, near the band.

"The first thing I knew," said she, "was a lot of people yelling 'fire!' and almost in a minute the whole middle of the boat seemed burning. The wind blew the flames toward us, and I saw the dresses of several children catch fire all

at once. The screaming was something awful. My mother called out to me, 'Don't be afraid! Hang over the side.' Then she pushed me over the rail and I fell down to the lower deck, outside, and I hung to the railing with my feet and legs in the water. In falling nearly all my clothes were torn off. I don't know where mamma and the rest of the children are."

Mrs. Kate Metteer, of No. 338 East Fifth street, had her six children on the steamer. She and her baby were saved by jumping upon the deck of a tug. Her children were Elsie, 15 years old; Albert, 11; Robert, 10; Frederick, 8; William, 4, and George, 3.

"I was sitting on the upper deck with the two smaller children," said she, "and the others were playing around the boat. When I heard the cry of 'fire!' I yelled for my children. They ran to me, and I told them to stay near me and they would be saved. I climbed over the railing, holding the baby tight in my arm. Somebody loosened my hold on the stanchion. At that time a tug came alongside and I fell right on its deck with the baby in my arms. The other children called after me, but when I looked up they had disappeared. I was taken to North Brother Island and from there came home. I got word William was in the Lebanon Hospital. I can only hope my other children are saved."

#### NEWS OF ANOTHER SAVED.

At that point of her story a little girl came to the door and told Mrs. Metteer that Elsie had been saved and was in the Lebanon Hospital.

"I was sitting in the stern of the boat with Nicholas in my arms," said she. "I jumped to the railing and was going to get into a tugboat, when somebody from the deck above jumped and landed on my head and shoulders, knock-

ing the little one out of my arms. I know my baby must be drowned. I was rescued by a tug."

"The crew appeared to be undisciplined and unfamiliar with the workings of the life rafts and lifeboats," said John Halphusen, sexton of the church. "I was standing beside the pastor nearly all the time. He did everything in his power to save the people. I placed my daughters—Mina, 12 years old, and Clara, 10—on the top of the paddle-box, and kept them there until the tugboat Sumner took us off."

Mrs. Eleanor Richenback, of No. 175 East Houston street, was on the middle deck with her little son, Herman, in her arms. She said she picked up a life preserver and placed it around her waist.

"The life preserver caught fire," said she. "There was a rope hanging over the side of the boat, and I grabbed that. The rope also caught fire. The flames of the life preserver were licking my face. I dropped the baby into the water to prevent her clothing catching fire. She sank at once. That is the last I remember. When I became conscious I was in the arms of a negro who had saved me."

John Muth, of No. 785 East 146th street, and his son, John, 3 years old, were in a party of ten. Father and son are the only ones of the party known to have been saved. Muth told his story in the Lincoln Hospital.

#### PASTOR TELLS STORY OF STRUGGLE FOR LIFE.

Having lost his entire family, except his sister, on the Slocum, the Rev. George F. H. Haas, the pastor of the church whose outing was attended by such a frightful calamity, was completely prostrated. Mr. Haas lost his wife and his daughter Gertrude, as well as his mother-in-law, Mrs. Carl Hansen, and his sister-in-law, Mrs. William Teti-

more. Mrs. Tetimore's daughter Edith was also on the appalling list of the missing. Mr. Haas was under the constant care of a physician. With his sister, Miss Emma Haas, he returned to his home about 5 o'clock. He told this story of the disaster:

"When the fire shot up to the top deck and drove the crowd back the panic was terrible. The crush from the forward part of the boat swept those in the rear along. The women and children clung to the railing and stanchions, but could not keep their hold. I, with my wife and daughter, were swept along with the rest.

"In the great crush many women fainted and fell to the deck, to be trampled upon. Little children were knocked down. Mothers with their little boys and girls in their arms would give wild screams and then leap into the water. We could see boats pulling out from the shore by this time, and a faint ray of hope came to us.

"With my wife and daughter I had been swept over to the rail. I got my wife and daughter out on the rail, and then we went overboard. I was so excited that I don't remember whether we pushed over or jumped. When I struck the water I sank, and when I rose there were scores about me fighting to keep afloat. One by one I saw them sink around me. But I was powerless to do anything.

"I was holding my wife and daughter up in the water as best I could, almost under the side of the boat, when someone, jumping from the rail directly above me, landed on top of us. My hold was broken and we all went under together. When I came up my wife and child were gone.

"With a great effort I managed to keep afloat, but my strength was about gone when a man on one of the tugs picked me up."





THE SHORE WAS COVERED WITH BODIES.





## FIREMEN, POWERLESS, SAW HUNDREDS DROWN.

On the sounding of an alarm for fire from the box at 138th street and Locust avenue, three engines were sent to 138th street, but these were powerless to aid those on the burning steamer. Fire headquarters was immediately informed of the fire, and orders were issued to the fireboat Zophar Mills to proceed to the place at once from Ninety-ninth street, where it was tied up.

When the Mills got to the General Slocum, the sight, as described by the firemen, was one never to be forgotten. Fire headquarters was informed of the extent of the disaster, and the fireboat William L. Strong was started for the burning Slocum. The Abram S. Hewitt, the Brooklyn fireboat, was ordered to proceed to Seventieth street, where she was met by Deputy Fire Commissioner Thomas W. Churchill, Chief Croker and Secretary Volgenau, who boarded her and were hurried to the place of the disaster.

When the Mills got four powerful streams on the Slocum the remnant of the passengers, a hundred or more, were making a last struggle against the flames. They were together on the forward part of the boat, moving back from the onward course of the flames.

Men, women and children were huddled on the bow, while those nearest to the flames pushed toward those on the bow. Each instant a human being was pushed from the railing of the boat into the water by the backward sweep of the maddened crowd.

The crew of the Mills reported to Chief Croker on the tragic sight, when the General Slocum careened and went down. Men and women who had been crowded together on the bow of the burning steamer were precipitated into the water, struggling to catch hold of one another, and children could be seen floating away from the burned boat.

The Mills steamed as close to the Slocum as she could and picked up those who could be picked up. Boathooks were used, and ropes swung to those in the water by the eager firemen on the Mills. Fire fighters dived to rescue women and children, and not a few of the rescued were landed by the Mills at North Brother Island.

Chief Croker and the officials on the Hewitt arrived after the work of the fire had been done. Strewn about the face of the water for thousands of yards in all directions were articles of apparel—hats, capes, boxes which had contained luncheon for the picnickers, larger wooden boxes, burning wood, and here and there a dead body.

#### FRIGHTFUL PANIC WHEN FLAMES BURST THROUGH FORWARD DECK.

Stories of the survivors of the Slocum disaster abound in thrilling incidents. Miss Clara Stuer, who reached the home of friends in Seventh street, after her escape, said:

“I was sitting on the upper deck with Miss Millie Mannheimer, 40 years old; Miss Lillie Mannheimer, her niece, 9 years old, and Walter, the latter’s brother, aged 11. We had just passed the entrance to the Harlem River, and were going slowly when Lillie called to her aunt, saying: ‘I think the boat is on fire, auntie; see all the smoke.’ ‘Hush!’ replied her aunt, ‘you must not talk so. You may create a panic.’ Lillie would not be silenced, however, and it seemed but a few moments later when there was a roar as though a cannon had been shot off, and the entire bow of the boat was one sheet of flames. The people rushed pell-mell over one another, and in the rush I lost track of my friends. Hundreds of people jumped overboard.

“I jumped over the rail and dropped down to the lower deck, when I began to dispense with my clothing so that

I would have a better chance in the water. Then I started to climb down the side of the boat when I heard a voice calling to me to hold on a minute. I turned and saw a man standing on the bow of a tug which was approaching. I held on, and was soon taken off with a number of other persons who had been rescued from the boat and from the water.

"The tug then put into the landing on Randall's Island and after putting the people ashore went out for another trip of rescue. As I left the pier I saw what looked to me 200 bodies, mostly of women and children, along the shore lying on the ground. Physicians were working over many of them. In the center of one group I saw the Rev. George Haas. Several doctors were doing their best to revive him, and as I stood there he opened his eyes and looked about. His first words were, 'Where are they? Where is my family? Are they saved? Are they dead or alive?'

"I then searched about for my friends, and after a time I found little Lillie. Beyond being bruised she was all right. How she escaped she does not seem to know.

"All this time the boat was burning, being surrounded by tugs which were trying to extinguish the flames. Lillie and I then made our way to a boat, which took us over to New York, and we came down to Miss Mannheimer's house, at 86 East Seventh avenue, but she had not yet reached home."

Bernard Miller of 95 Second avenue called at police headquarters and went to the Bureau of Information looking for his wife and four children. He and his family were all passengers on the General Slocum, and all jumped overboard.

"Myself, my wife and four sons, whose ages are 3, 6, 9 and 12 respectively, were sitting on the first deck," he said, "when I saw smoke coming up through the deck in great clouds. The people on the boat acted as though they had

lost their minds. I grabbed life preservers and after putting them on my wife and children assisted them over the side of the boat into the water. Then I put one on and went after them, telling them to make for the shore. The youngest child was in my wife's arms, and she and the three elder ones started for Randall's Island.

"I started after them, but had not taken more than half a dozen strokes when I was surrounded by half a dozen women, who clung to me and dragged me under. I had all I could do to save myself from being drowned by their frantic efforts to hold on to me when a rowboat came up and took us all on board. I searched for my family in vain. They were not to be found."

Miller's story was told in disjointed sentences, he being distracted and almost wild with grief.

"We did not go over the side," he said, "until we could stand the heat no longer, and I was so long on the boat that I was badly burned about the hands and neck."

Miller's hands were swathed in bandages and his clothes were scorched and burned.

Among the husbands and fathers who called at the Alexander Avenue Station in search of missing ones was August Schneider, of 322 Stanhope street, Brooklyn. He was a cornet player in the band that was providing music for the excursion and had taken his wife, Dora, and three children with him.

"We were playing on the upper deck," said Schneider. "The band, of which George Maurer was leader, was composed of seven musicians. We were seated in the stern when a whole crowd of people suddenly rushed toward us, shouting and screaming.

"At least half of them jumped right overboard. It wasn't until a few seconds afterward that we saw the smoke and fire. The wind, luckily, was blowing the flames away from us.



"I got my family together and told them to stick close to me. I took my little Augusta, 3 years old, on my arm and was just considering the best place for safety when the deck broke and fell with the ruins.

"I still held my child, but my wife and the other two children were torn away from me, and I didn't see them again, and do not know where they are. I was taken off by rescuers on a tugboat."

Carrying his 3-year-old on his arm, the cornet player haunted the station house, examining the bodies. Time and time again he uttered exclamations of grief when he thought he recognized the face of his wife, but invariably he found he had made a mistake.

What had become of the other musicians Schneider said he didn't know. A violin player, George Dillemath, who lives at Fifteenth avenue and 68th street, Brooklyn, was picked up in the water by two boatmen 300 feet from shore.

Dillemath had thrown a life preserver about his neck and jumped from the steamer before she was beached. He was rescued just as he was sinking. Even in his half-drowned condition the man mourned the loss of his violin.

One brave mother faced fire and death in attempts to find and save two of her youngest children, who had been dancing on the hurricane deck. Even after the deck fell she insisted on keeping up her search. Her clothes caught fire, her hair burned off and her hands and body were licked by flames. She would have resigned herself to her fate had not rescuers pulled her off the vessel.

Mrs. Mary Behrendt, of 88 East Third street, was the name of this brave young mother. Her hands done up in gauze bandages and her hair nearly all burned off, she entered the Alexander Avenue Police Station still on her quest for her little ones.

"Annie, my eldest daughter," said Mrs. Behrendt, "was sitting with me on the upper deck, when somebody shouted 'Fire!' We all began to shout 'Fire!' too, although I couldn't see any at that moment.

"Lizzie and Clara, 10 and 8 years old, were dancing on the deck above. I ran up there, but couldn't find them. I pushed my way down again. People were trampling down each other and screaming and fighting. It was impossible to recognize anybody.

"The smoke came over us then, too. The deck gave way and I saw my daughter Annie fall into the water. She was picked up by a boat, and for a minute I saw the other people falling into the water. Some were picked up, but others went down under the pieces of burning wood."

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## PATHOS AT POLICE STATION.

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THIRTY-SEVEN BODIES AT ALEXANDER AVENUE—ALL WOMEN  
OR CHILDREN.

As early as 12:30 o'clock men bearing on stretchers victims of the disaster began to arrive at the Alexander Avenue Station. The station is nearest on the New York side to where the accident occurred, and it was hoped at first that that place would be large enough to contain the dead.

In the anticipation that that would be the place where the victims would be taken to, a crowd of monstrous size soon began to collect, hampering the movements of the men on the dead-wagons.

The arrival of bodies continued to about 3 o'clock. At

that time thirty-seven victims of the accident—thirty-one women and six children—had been laid in rows on the floor of the roll-room. The little tots were laid together against the wall of the room, their little bodies taking up so little room that they looked from a distance like a lot of clothes which had been thrown there. There was not the body of a single man among them—all being women and children.

The scenes there, as at the Morgue and at North Brother Island, were pathetic in the extreme. Coroner Berry took charge of the identification there, and it was with the greatest difficulty that men could be induced to give the names and other data required after they had made an identification.

One man who arrived at the station to identify some of his relatives had lost his reason entirely, and had to be taken to a hospital, and another who had been cured of stammering found when he tried to talk to Coroner Berry that his old trouble had returned to him again because of the fright he had been subjected to. He was forced to write what he had to say.

By 6 o'clock fifteen of the thirty-seven bodies at this station had been identified. Most of the identifications had been made by men who had learned of the accident while at work, and had come directly from their work, in many cases to learn the worst. Quite early Agnes Dipert, an elderly woman of 328 East Sixth street, was identified by her son Charles.

In another instance a man who had identified his wife, somehow could not remember her first name—the excitement had banished it from his head.

Before the afternoon's identifications had progressed very far it was learned that several runners for undertakers were in the room trying to take advantage in a monetary way

of the accident. The police lost no time in getting these persons out of the place.

About 4 o'clock in the afternoon the crowd in the street by that time numbered several thousands. In many cases men with their heads swathed in bandages were flocking in to try to identify those who had been with them on the boat. Among those who came in who had been injured on the boat were Frederick Weber of 404 Fifth street and Paul Liebersohn of 133 East 125th street. Coroner Berry tried to get something like a coherent account from them of what they had passed through, but had to give it up, they being in such a state of mental perturbation that they could not talk. These scenes continued until far into the night.

Frank Weiss, 1235 Third avenue, came to the Alexander Avenue Station looking for his wife and two children. They were not among the dead there, and he was sent to the Bellevue Morgue, and was again unsuccessful. Later he came back to the station and told the desk sergeant that he had found his wife and boy at the Lebanon Hospital.

William A. Conklin, Jr., son of the General Slocum's chief engineer, visited the station during the afternoon trying to ascertain the fate of his father. His father, he said, had been on the Slocum for eight years. When he was asked if he had ever heard his father say that the fire apparatus and life-saving apparatus on the Slocum were antiquated, he replied:

"I often went on trips with my father, and I always thought the boat was in tip-top shape in every way. No, I never heard him say that the fire and life-saving apparatus were anything but of the very best."

C. Schoepffling of 189 Third avenue, whose wife and two children were on the Slocum, was almost insane with grief. When he entered the room in the rear of the station house.

and saw the bodies stretched out in line on the floor he completely lost control of himself and had to be restrained by a policeman.

The poor fellow picked out the bodies of three women, each one of which he said was that of his wife. It was absolutely impossible for him to express himself intelligently, and nothing the police or bystanders could say could convince him that after all his wife and two little children might have been among the rescued. He finally was able to prove that none of the three bodies he had identified as his wife was really she. He was unable to find any trace of his children, Edward and Elsie, the former 10 and the latter 3 years of age.

Almost as soon as the first body arrived at the Alexander Avenue Station, some one brought in a little girl dressed in red. Who had rescued her nobody knew. She had been taken to the police station in the arms of a policeman who was on an ambulance taking several bodies to the station. She was placed in a chair, where she remained as though she had been glued to it. The child's little red dress showed signs of having been wet and her face was smoke-begrimed.

The chair on which she sat was right before the spot where they began to lay the bodies of the dead. Nobody seemed to think of the scenes the child was witnessing. More and more bodies were being brought in, among them those of six children of her own age. Once she whimpered a little, and a single tear crept out from one of her eyelashes and stuck there. She must have sat there for four hours. Finally she began to go to sleep.

About 5 o'clock a man bolted in. His first glance rested on the rows of dead women and children on the floor, and then, looking up, he saw his little daughter just dozing off safe and sound on the chair. With a dash that was more like



a swoop than a run, he made for his little girl. Seizing her he began to shower kisses on the smoke-begrimed little face, the tears rolling down his cheeks, as he began to repeat, over and over again:

"My dear Lizzie, my dear Lizzie, how glad I am to find you."

It was with difficulty that Coroner Berry could get the man, who was a German, to tell that he was Charles Kriegler, living at 257 Avenue B. He left the Alexander Station with his child in his arms to continue with her his search for her mother and four other children, of whom he had not yet got a trace.

The police of the Alexander Avenue Station placed all the members of the Slocum's crew, when they could find them, under arrest. They were all too ill to lock up and were sent to Lebanon Hospital under police surveillance. They were William Van Schaick, captain; Edwin Van Wart, first pilot; Edward Weaver, second pilot; Henry Canfield, negro, cook; Edward Robinson, negro, cook; James Woods, white, cook; William R. Trimbley, deck-hand.

## CHAPTER VIII.

HARROWING SCENES AT MORGUE DRIVE MANY TO MADNESS  
—RELATIVES OF VICTIMS, RECOGNIZING THE FEATURES OF THEIR DEAD LOVED ONES, SHRIEK, MOAN AND SWOON AND BECOME TEMPORARILY INSANE FROM GRIEF.

IN all the crowd of hardened men, inured by long experience in the handling of the dead, calloused by frequent intimacy with scenes of acute distress, there was not one among those whose duty called them to service at the morgue who could witness the horrible panorama of suffering and desolation that passed every minute before his eyes without an aching heart and a filled-up throat.

The New York Morgue, with its heartrending record of sorrowful scenes, has never before in its history been the theater of such performances as were to be seen there. With its limited space it could not begin to accommodate the silent forms which came knocking at its doors, and long before midnight of the day of the disaster it had extended its jurisdiction to the long pier of the Charities Department, at the foot of East Twenty-sixth street, along which stretched two long lines of plank coffins, with an aisle between, down and up which the sobbing fathers, mothers and children walked in their ghastly search for their dead.

## BODIES OF MOTHERS WITH DEAD BABIES.

In those roughly made coffins were forms, the very sight of which would move a heart of stone. Mothers with their

infants so tightly clasped to their breasts that they could hardly be taken away if anyone willed such a sacrifice; little girls, their holiday finery bedraggled by the cruel waters of the river and scorched by the flames, some still holding to their breasts their poor little dolls, and one especially, a curly-headed little boy, whose dead hands still firmly held a little tin horse, the leash string of which dangled pathetically over the edge of the box which held him until a heartbroken mother or father should come to take him away.

There were strong men, too, whose torn hands and bruised faces showed only too well that they did their whole duty in the great crisis and at last gave up their lives; and there were white-haired men and women, most of these with peace written on their faces, for death must have come quick and mercifully to those who could resist but feebly.

#### POLICEMEN WEEP AT SAD SCENES.

To these pitiful dead came scores of living with distress on their faces that it was not good to see. They peered into the coffins with almost insane eyes; a shriek, a moan, the sound of a falling woman, or the hoarse shout of a man who could not stand it longer, would announce that someone had found his dead.

And so it had gone all day, and the duty of some men had called them to hours of these sights. Policemen with wet eyes but firmly set teeth had stood guard over these dead and miserable living all night long.

Time and again they had saved women who, crazed with grief, had made a plunge for the river, for attempts at suicide had been so frequent on the long death pier that they had ceased to be a novelty.

Out on the street beyond the pier the police had kept the anxious searchers in some kind of order, but it had only

been with the greatest difficulty, for such grief as theirs was not amenable to discipline. But Captain Shire, who did a giant's work, got the lines formed west of First avenue, establishing a flanking cordon of his men on either side of East Twenty-sixth street, and let the searchers approach by the south sidewalk and go away by the north.

#### SHAMELESS UNDERTAKERS' SQUABBLE.

Amid such scenes it was hard to believe that a mercenary spirit could develop, and yet among the black-garbed undertakers who had haunted the pier and the contiguous streets there had been a shameless rivalry for business, which even the police were unable to curb. Like "shyster" lawyers, the undertakers had their runners and ambulance chasers out, and there were actual squabbles at times over the dead.

The horror that a night of vigil unfolded for some was best illustrated by the case of Charles Ottinger, of No. 91 East Seventh street, and his two grown daughters, Lillian and Kate.

For hours and hours they stood in the line waiting their turn at the coffins, for the wife of the man and the mother of these girls, with Charles and Emma Ottinger, twins, aged sixteen years, and Andrew and Arthur Ottinger, also twins, aged seven years, went away on the General Slocum and didn't come back.

They found them in the boxes on the piers, all five of them, and all the solace they got out of the find was that their dear ones were not disfigured.

#### FLUNG HIMSELF ACROSS SISTER'S BODY.

Henry Hardincamp found his little sister Mary among the dead. A score of this child's friends were to have gathered at her home to celebrate her eleventh birthday,

and the child had talked all the week of the unusual happiness of two days of pleasure: a picnic one day, a birthday party the next.

Henry Hardincamp found the child in her little pine box, and he just threw himself across her body and refused to leave it. He didn't cry—few men at the pier had tears at their control to help them out—but he fiercely fought the men who tried to tear him away. He was removed at last, however, and his sister was sent after him.

It gave many of those who were searching for their own a double misery to look in some of those boxes. Take that box plainly marked No. 209. In it there was a woman of great beauty with a curly-headed child on her breast, and they looked so peaceful that it was hard to believe that theirs was a violent death.

A little farther on, in No. 332, was another woman with a baby in her arms, not so beautiful but fearfully pathetic in the way the head of the little one was tucked under its mother's chin. It was such things that made many women faint and throw a gloom over some that many years will not eradicate.

Some of these things threw strong men into temporary insanity. Albert Troell, of No. 405 Fifth street, went through the line with his wife Anna, looking for Bert, their thirteen-year-old boy.

#### FRENZIED FATHER GOES INSANE.

They found him at last, and while the mother fell fainting on the floor, the father's eyes took on a queer look, and he knelt beside the box, chafed the boy's ears, and in a stern tone ordered him to get up. He evidently thought the boy was in bed, and he was exasperated with him because he lay there so silent and still.



His peremptory commands to the lad, uttered in no gentle tones, rang discordantly on ears trained all night and day to sobs and shrieks of misery, but it was soon understood. One look at Troell showed him to be a madman. There could be no mistake, and he was gently taken away by policemen.

In a box near the head of the pier was a woman of middle age. To this box came a younger woman. She looked for a second on the dead woman, then leaped to the open door at the head of the pier and made a dash for the river.

A policeman clutched her skirts and others came to his assistance. She was hauled back to safety, and restored to a better frame of mind. She was Mrs. Kate Diamond, of No. 79 Mangin street, and the woman in the coffin was her mother, Mrs. Kate Birmingham. An undertaker took the body away and the unfortunate woman followed it.

Such scenes were by no means uncommon. Many in a moment of uncontrollable grief saw a speedy relief in the river which had cost them so much.

#### HORRIFIED DIVERS WEEP WHILE WORKING.

All through the night and into the gray dawn men in diving suits, others with grappling-hooks in their hands, stood on the decks of tugs which hovered about the sunken wreck of the General Slocum off Hunt's Point. Now and then a man in one of the weird-looking suits would slip over the side of a tug and sink to the bottom.

Then another diver would appear on the surface. Probably he had come to the surface for rest and air. Probably he held the body of a woman or the body of a child in his rubber-coated arms. The chances were that he had come up with the dead, for those divers felt no exhaustion as they groped about the bottom of the river among the dead.

As a diver would bring a body to the surface a grappling-hook was placed under it and it was raised to the deck of a tug. Some of these bodies were twisted and burnt almost beyond recognition. When several bodies were recovered another tug from which divers were not working would pull alongside and the dead be transferred.

How many dead lie in that charred and sunken hull cannot even be estimated until every nook and corner of the shell has been gone over by the divers.

Chief among the divers is John Rice, who figured in the Boonton catastrophe, in which Diver Oleson lost his life. He directed the efforts of the other divers, and now and again he would plunge into the cold waters and go down among the dead.

The Naval Reserve launch Oneida came alongside. The crew of the tugboats were fast becoming fatigued. Every man of them was ready to faint. It took strong nerve and manly determination for them to continue their work among the dead.

Roundsmen Klute and Giloon, with Policemen George Mott, Murphy, Skelly, Grey and Healey, of the Harbor Squad, worked steadily with the Chapman crew and the Naval Reserve crew. During the earlier part of the night these men got out 217 bodies. This number included those taken out after the Chapman tug arrived at the side of the Slocum.

Then human endurance failed every man. Divers staggered about the decks like drunken men. Men on the decks fell over each other as they lifted the weight of a child. More divers and more men were sent. There were many who were willing to come. There were fathers, brothers and husbands lining the shore on Hunt's Point, and every one of them paced like a madman up and down the sands, some sobbing, some dry-eyed and quiet, others crying

out to the searchers among the dead. These men were ready to volunteer for the work of diving, or for the work of grappling the dead with the great iron hooks.

Albert Blenberg and Harry Hier, of the Chapman Company, came aboard. These men are divers of experience. John Rice greeted them.

"Go down below, men," he said.

Quickly Blenberg and Hier donned the great rubber diving-suits. These men were fresh, and they were as willing as they were fresh. They slipped over the side of the tug and sank from sight without a word.

#### SISTERS FOUND EMBRACED IN DEATH.

When the sun rose these two men came to the surface. In Blenberg's arms were two little girls, each with her arms clasped about the other. It was easy to see how these children had died. They had died together and death could not part them. Their hair was the same color and their dresses were alike. These girls were sisters.

Hier had the form of a young woman in his arms. She might have been the mother of these children. Her body was found near them, and in her dead hands she clasped the dresses of the two little girls. The divers found them far down in the hold. It appeared that the woman had tried to save the little ones and had gone to her death with them.

"There are six others under there," said Hier. "They are buried under the hurricane deck."

Without another word the two divers stepped over the side and went down to the bottom of the hulk. Again they appeared. Again they went down, and each time they appeared they brought the body of some child or some woman. Some of them were clasped in each other's arms,

just as the two sisters were. Others were burned and twisted.

#### FIGHT FOR SIGHT OF THE DEAD.

Boats alongside took the bodies to the shore. As they appeared men and women ran forward with loud cries and pleadings. All were sure that the nine would include members of their families who had gone down to death.

As they fought for a sight of the dead they hoped against hope that their suspicions would not be correct, and yet they fought, and it was not curiosity that prompted them. It was the desire to claim the bodies of those they loved.

Stretched on the sands like winrows in a field of harvest were the bodies. They were covered, and those who were not identified were left for a time, while those who were recognized were removed by the police.

Never did day break on such a scene of grief as marked the finding of the dead by the divers on Hunt's Point.

Working among the living, with cheering words for them and prayer for the dead, was Pastor Haas. Never once did he leave the rows of dead, except when he steamed in a launch out to the side of the wreck and with grappling-hook in hand waited to assist in bringing some other body to the surface.

Throngs of old and young hovered about St. Mark's Lutheran Church on Sixth street hoping against hope that in this last harbor of information they might find some thread of hope to raise them in their grief.

Fourteen policemen were posted before the church to handle the crowd, but they were not forced to any physical effort. Men and women bent with age, tottering weakly on the weary feet that had borne them all night long in constant search at hospital and Morgue, their wrinkled faces blank with misery, their eyes run dry of tears; moth-

ers whose faces were tortured with anguish and little children with wondering fear and terror written on their tear-stained faces, gently jostled one another as they pushed their way to the church door and made their heart-rending inquiries.

All night long this quiet throng had pressed about the church, their hopeless silence occasionally broken by some hysterical exclamation of woe, some tired child's bleating cry, or the pitiful, broken sob of some aged man or woman whose children and grandchildren had been swept away in the horrible disaster.

#### CRUSHED WITH HOPELESS GRIEF.

At the morgues, at the hospitals, at the police stations, where the dead had been gathered together and numbered like chattels, there had been wild demonstrations of grief, but those who gathered about the church were crushed and hopeless. Their grief was the grief of terrible uncertainty, breathing unending elegies of misery in their very stillness and worn-out emotions, and among the ranks of policemen stationed there to check them from crowding and struggling there was none who had not been moved to tears of sympathy and who could answer the incessant appeals in other than husky voice.

To recite each separate story of anguish would fill whole pages, but there were many singularly impressive expressions of grief that could be singled out from the rapidly succeeding tragic scenes.

Those who passed the "L" station at First street and First avenue on their way to the church noticed the figure of an old man standing near the stairway on which the passengers from downtown trains descend. He was George Heinrich Hausen, of 167 East Fourth street, white-haired and stoop-shouldered with age.



## JOY MAKES OLD MAN SWOON.

As train after train thundered above his head his feeble old eyes would peer up the stairway in pitiful expectation, seeking the forms of his daughter and little grandchild, who had joined the joyous host of excursionists at the Third street pier.

As the hours passed the old man grew weaker and weaker, until finally he was forced to cling to the iron post for support. Never for a moment, however, did he cease in his pitiful vigil, and after eight hours of waiting he was rewarded when a shrill cry of "grandfather!" greeted his ears and a little form flung itself into his arms. The shock of his joy completely overwhelmed the old man and he fell fainting to the street.

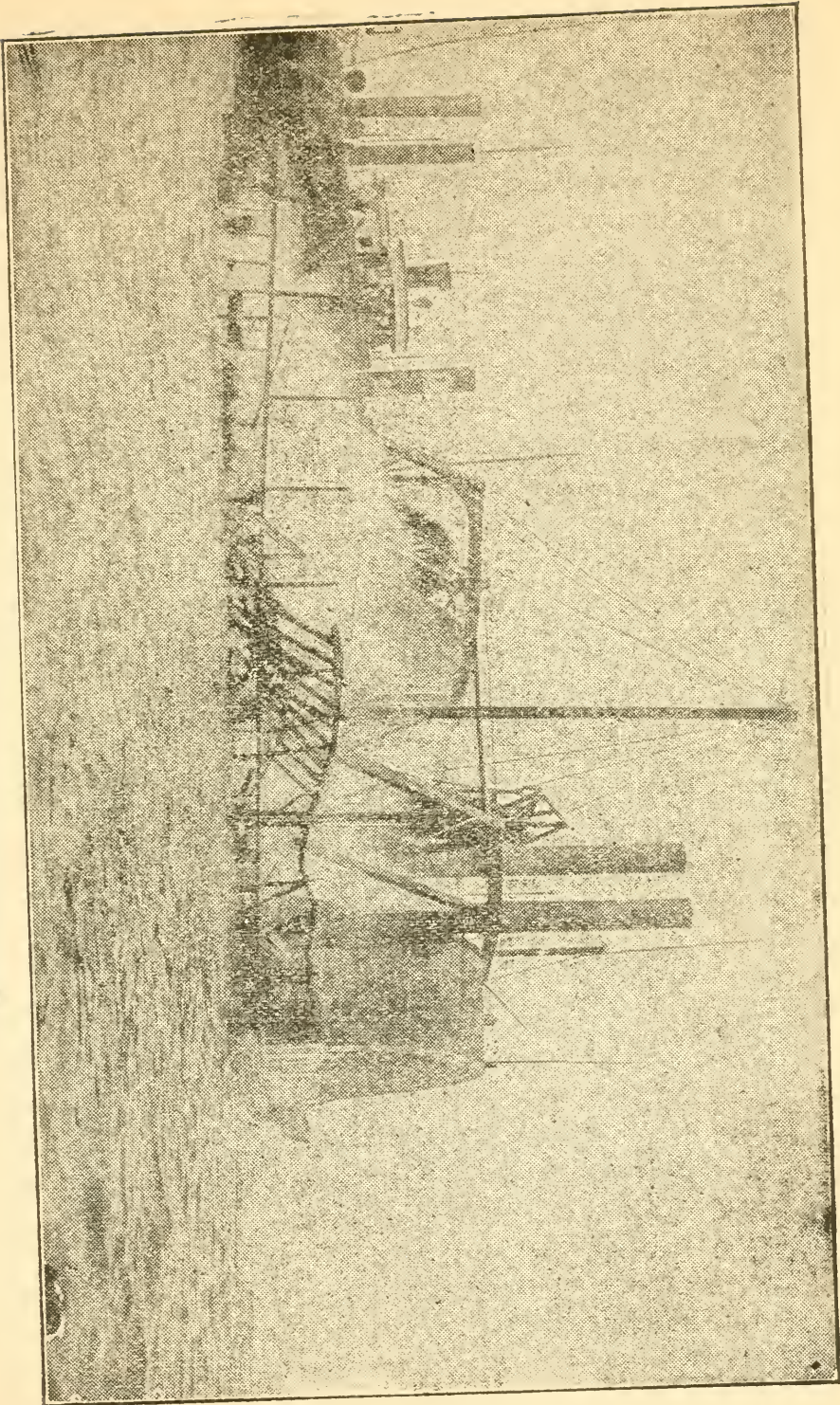
When the old man was revived the little girl told him that she and her mother, his daughter and only child, had been saved through the heroic efforts of gallant Policeman Van Tassel.

As soon as they had been landed on the Manhattan shore they had hurried to their home to tell of their safety, but meanwhile the grandfather had gone in search of them and they had hunted vainly for him at hospital and morgue, thinking he might have gone there seeking them.

## WIDE SYMPATHY FOR PASTOR.

That the few of the Rev. George C. F. Haas' flock who were saved from the terrible death so many met, feel the deepest sympathy for him in his bereavement, was shown when many, as sadly stricken themselves, called at the rectory, 64 Seventh street, and inquired if he was making any progress.

The pastor was injured in the back and suffered so from shock that his life is almost despaired of. He has been in



THE GENERAL SLOCUM AFTER IT WAS RUN ASHORE.





such a critical condition that Dr. Simpkin, who is attending him, would not allow him to learn of the death of his wife and his 12-year-old daughter, Gertrude.

Some kept telling off the names of brothers and sisters on their fingers, winding up with a broken sob and a wail of infantile anguish. Their inherent fear of the bluecoat was lost in their wild, unknowing grief, and they clung to the skirts of the policemen's coats, tugging and tugging to make their questions felt, until many a big fellow had to wipe his sleeve across his eyes and choke back the lump that struggled to his throat.

#### FOURTEEN DEAD IN ONE FLAT-HOUSE.

There is one big five-story flat-house near Dr. Haas' rectory, 54 Seventh street, where fourteen bodies have been taken in the undertakers' wagons that have ominously rumbled throughout the district.

Every tenant in this big house who survived the disaster or who failed to go on the excursion, has been compelled to put on mourning, and the doorbells in the vestibule are completely draped with the black insignias of death.

Among the dead who have been brought into this house of mourning are: Mrs. N. De Luccia and her three little children; Mrs. Tobias Nagal, a young woman who was about to bless her home with a little one; Mary Clow, Mrs. Galwiski and her two children, Frederick and Henry rumbled throughout the district.

In the house next door, 56, two dead bodies were brought in, and fathers, mothers and children are seeking many missing ones.

#### DIVERS SAW MORE BODIES.

Diver Dave Tullock came up from the wreck, where he had been groping around on the port side for half an hour,

and reported that he had come across a number of bodies forward of the wheelhouse. These bodies were charred beyond recognition and so entangled in a network of iron and wood that it will be impossible to raise them until that side of the sunken steamboat is lifted with chains or dynamited. He could not make any count of the bodies, as they were wound together in a crushed mass. Approximately he thought there were more than twenty.

#### BRINGING UP MORE BODIES.

Divers Peter Gilligan and David Tullock, of the tug Hustler, brought up fifteen bodies from the wreck of the Slocum on their first trip to the bottom. The bodies were found well forward and all in a bunch. The crew of the tug Quigley, casually casting overboard grappling-irons while passing up the East River, opposite Randall's Island, dragged up the bodies of a man, a woman and a child.

Six bodies were recovered off North Brother Island by men dragging the shore with grappling-irons. Two of the bodies were of young girls, two of boys and two of men. One man was stout, wore a gray suit and tan shoes and had a handsome gold watch in his vest. The other man was slender and dressed in black.

Thomas McQuade has been grappling for bodies off North Brother Island. In all he has recovered thirty-six bodies.

#### A CONCENTRATED TRAGEDY.

This is a concentrated tragedy. Ninety per cent. of the dead and injured live in a territory embracing less than a square mile on the East Side. It is a quiet, clean neighborhood, in which the predominating language is German.

For many years St. Mark's Church has been the center



of the settlement. The old people have seen their children marry and take up homes near-by and relationships were frequent. That is why in the list of dead it is not uncommon to find three generations represented—the thrifty old grandmother, the buxom wife and the tow-headed little babies.

On every hand in their neighborhood the sombre dead-wagon rattled through the crowded streets, bearing bodies of the identified dead from the Morgue. And even while these bodies were being delivered at the homes that witnessed their departure in life and strength, other bodies were rolling ashore up along the Sound and the East River or were being released by divers from the wreck of the Slocum.

The tragedy of the excursion steamer has taken out of many homes in St. Mark's parish the hope of future support of aged parents. It has robbed hundreds of homes of the wife and mother, and in many instances has taken away the sole breadwinner.

In this connection arises the question of the liability of the Knickerbocker Steamboat Company.

With all the details of the frightful disaster staring at them from the pages of every newspaper, from every bulletin board, and shouted into their ears by every newsboy, great crowds have thronged to the various excursion boats plying the waters of the harbor. Observation of the various piers from which these boats depart failed to show that the General Slocum tragedy had frightened the pleasure seekers.

#### WATERS STILL CASTING UP DEAD.

Taken all in all the horror is so vast as to be beyond the comprehension of the majority. Only those who have

seen the fathomless misery of it can appreciate how awful it is. It is enough to appal the stoutest nerve to stand on the shore of North Brother Island and see body after body rising out of the swirling waters in an apparently endless procession. These are the bodies of the drowned—bodies of women and children. Many of them come to shore almost entirely denuded of clothing, showing that they had been engaged in a desperate struggle on the boat before jumping or being pushed overboard.

How so many bodies came to be found in the paddle-boxes is explained by the story of Outdoor Superintendent Doorley, of North Brother Island. He saw the General Slocum approaching the shore and saw scores driven by the fire to the tops of the paddle boxes, and from there into the water.

The big wheels were spinning around with all the force of the engines behind them. The broad paddles picked up those who were drawn into their reach, swung them up into the boxes, and there they lodged until the wheels were literally choked with corpses. As the flames spread these corpses were burned. Many of them were completely destroyed.

Captain Van Schaick, and Pilots Van Wart and Weaver are prisoners in Bellevue, all of them having been badly burned.

Former Fire Marshal Freel has been detailed by District-Attorney Jerome to make an investigation into the circumstances of the starting of the fire.

It has been proved that the life preservers with which the Slocum was equipped were in such condition that in many instances a man's thumb nail would rip them open, and they were filled with granulated cork, which quickly becomes soaked and loses its buoyancy. These things will be investigated.

## THE SCENE AT BELLEVUE.

At Bellevue Morgue fifty policemen remained on duty under Inspector Brooks, helping the visitors who went there to identify the dead.

One woman, Lena Rowski, who found the body of her ten-year-old daughter, Donda, among the dead at the morgue, went insane and was taken to Bellevue, where it is said her condition is considered hopeless. Mrs. Rowski knew nothing of the accident until she visited the morgue, and did not know that her daughter had been on board the boat. She became so violent it was necessary to place her in a straitjacket.

In the morgue, at North Brother Island, at Riker's Island, and other points where the bodies were being collected, the work of photographing the dead went on incessantly as a means to aid in the identification.

Of the heroism displayed, the insane panic of the frightened women and children, and the cowardly cruelty of selfish ones who trampled upon others in the fight to save their own lives when the Slocum was rushing her human freight to death, but little will ever be known.

The big excursion steamers *Cygnus* and *Sirius*, with 1,500 and 2,000 Sunday School excursionists aboard, sailed close up to the wreck on their way to the beaches along the Sound and hovered about the neighborhood of the disaster for some time.

The band of the *Sirius* played "Nearer My God to Thee," and the *Cygnus*' band played "Safe in the Arms of Jesus." Women and children crowded close to the rails of the big steamers, exhibiting the deepest emotion. The same scene was repeated when the Starin barge *Summer*, in tow of the tugboat *E. Levy*, was drawn near the wreck and lay-to for several minutes.

## THE CAPTAIN'S STORY.

Captain W. H. Van Schaick, who has been in command of the General Slocum ever since she was launched, in 1891, and six other members of the crew were taken to the Lebanon Hospital. Captain Van Schaick and the first and second pilots, Edward Van Wart and E. M. Weaver, were under arrest. Among the others taken to the Lebanon Hospital were several deck hands, and the cook, Henry Canfield, a strapping Southern negro, who said he had been on the boat for several seasons.

Captain Van Schaick was suffering from a fractured leg, contusions of the head and a slight burn. The fracture was the result of his jumping from the pilot-house after the boat was beached. He was pulled from the water by the heroic women on North Brother Island, he said. Before being taken to the hospital he made the following statement regarding the disaster, at the Alexander Avenue Station, where he had been detained for the coroner:

"The Slocum left the foot of East Twenty-third street at 9.30 o'clock. There had been collected on board 982 tickets. The boat passed slowly up the river, through Hell Gate and over toward Sunken Meadows, where the Seawan-haka was burned in 1880. When close to the Meadows an alarm of fire was given. At that time I was in the pilot-house. I jumped down to the deck and gave immediate orders for fighting the fire. The fire drill was sounded, and the crew of the boat, numbering twenty-three men, worked like nailers to get water on that part of the boat which was burning.

## UNDER FORWARD BOILERS.

"The fire was under the forward boilers on the port side, as I made it out in the excitement. My men were exerting

their efforts toward keeping the passengers from jumping. The fire was gaining every instant, and the cries of people suffering from burning to death could be heard above every other discordant sound. I got the boat under way direct for North Brother Island, which was the safest place to attempt to land. The boat was driven on under full speed, and pulled up sideways to the shore of the island. Many had jumped prior to this. Many were jumping every instant. My pilots, Edward Van Wart and Edwin M. Weaver, were doing everything to get safely toward shore, and Engineer B. F. Conklin stuck in the hold. Mate Edward Flanagan had charge of the fire brigade, but when the fire spread over all we had to get off the boat. My hat was burning when I jumped, and I was pulled out of the water and hauled up on shore under a tree before I remembered what had happened."

Canfield, the cook, had a theory as to the origin of the fire. He said to a "Tribune" reporter:

"The first I knew about the fire was when the boat was opposite North Brother Island. I heard two bells and a jingle, and I knew that meant there was 'somethin' doin',' for that means back water pow'ful hard. I ran up and saw there was a fire, and shouted, 'Boys, come up!' I put on a life preserver and jumped overboard. I can swim, so when a lot of people got hold o' my preserver, I unfastened it and helped them into a boat that came along. One woman—a handsome one she was—said: 'If you save my life you won't have to wuk the remaindah of yo' life.' I'd like to have helped her, but I couldn't. I don't know where she is. Where did the fire start? I think it started in the porter's closet, where they keeps the waste and oil. That's a little room down below. I have been in it, and I don't think it was lined with zinc, as it ought to have been."



The fire, it is said by William Trembly, a deck hand on the Slocum, undoubtedly was caused by the spontaneous combustion of oil and rags in the forward part of the hold, where oil was stored. The first thing known of the fire was when it burst out in great fury, aided by a quantity of oil that was carried and by the stiff breeze that was blowing.

Henry Iden, who saved his sweetheart, Miss Swartz, by holding her to the side of the burning boat after they had jumped overboard, declared that the fire was due to a stove on which clams were being cooked, on the deck.

"I was on the lower deck with Miss Swartz," he said, "when suddenly there was a burst of flames from a kitchen on the deck, where they were frying clams. Without any warning whatever the flames broke out, and in a minute were all over the forward part of the deck. I think that the flames spread so fast because of some overturned oil that had been spilled on the deck."

The most readily accepted explanation is that an oil stove exploded in the kitchen while someone was trying to light it. This is borne out by the statement of Albert Kolb, of Marion avenue and 201st street, who went down below decks to get a plate of chowder. Just as Kolb entered the pantry, or kitchen, the explosion of the stove took place, and there was a hurried exit from the room by Kolb, and the others who were there followed. All of the crew, from the captain down, escaped. Of these, Captain Van Schaick, Pilot Edwin Weaver, James Wood and Edward Robertson, deck hands; Henry Canfield, the cook, and Edward Waut, dishwasher, are in the Lebanon Hospital. They will recover.

The crew is said by some to have paid little or no heed to the cries for help of the Slocum's passengers, but busied themselves about saving their own lives. It was pointed out by some of the survivors that if they had provided the

women and children with life preservers the disaster would never have occurred in its present immensity.

#### A MYSTERY TO A WATERMAN.

Why the Slocum was not beached on the Bronx side of the river is a mystery to watermen. Thousands of persons were at hand to go to the rescue if the burning boat had been kept to the New York shore. This was explained by the fact that the steering apparatus had given way and the pilot was unable to control the boat. One man, however, who saw the Slocum come up the river, said that the steering gear could not have been out of order, as the Slocum was run past North Brother Island, and then turned toward it. Many factories line the Bronx shore near where the Slocum beached, and the North Beach ferry and the Health Department pier are there, so that there would have been any number of men to go out to the help of the steamer and its load of passengers. There was a rumor that the ferryboat Bronx, which runs from 134th street to College Point, L. I., had passed the Slocum without pausing to give aid. This was denied at the office of the ferry company.

Joseph Gillan, who runs a bathing-house at 134th street and the East River, near where the Bronx docks, saw her while the Slocum was coming up the stream. He says that there were two barges and a schooner between the Bronx and Slocum, and that when the way was clear the Slocum was going so fast that the Bronx could never have reached her. Gillan says that the ferryboat was fully seven hundred feet away from the Slocum.

Chief Pilot Edward Van Wart, who was at the wheel when the fire broke out, said:

"I was in the pilot-house with the captain and second

pilot, Edwin Weaver. The first mate called through the tube that there was a fire in the stern. The captain immediately told him to lower the boats and get the fire apparatus out. It seemed as though the words were barely out of his mouth when the entire boat was wrapped in flames.

"I turned her head with the idea of making the nearest dock, but saw at once that our cables were burned and that it would be fatal to attempt a landing without them in the deep water near the docks.

By this time the heat was so intense that we had to close the windows of the pilot-house. After we beached her we managed in some way to get to the deck, and jumped into three feet of water. In doing this the captain hurt his spine and split one of the bones in his ankle."

#### THE CREW OF THE SLOCUM.

Captain Van Schaick was born in Troy, this State, sixty-one years ago, and is one of the oldest excursion boat captains plying in New York waters. He has always had the reputation of being capable and careful, and was considered an expert handler of side-wheelers. Captain Van Schaick's first pilot was Edward Van Wart, aged 62, of No. 331 West Twenty-first street, Manhattan; his second pilot was Edwin M. Weaver, aged 28, who lives in Troy; B. F. Conklin was the engineer, Edward Flanagan the mate and Michael McGrann the steward. Captain Van Schaick lived on board the boat.

## CHAPTER IX.

BURYING THE DEAD—FIRST FUNERALS OF THE VICTIMS—  
THE PARISH MOURNS—MANY BLOCKS ARE DRAPED WITH  
CRAPE.

THE first of the funerals of the dead of the Slocum disaster were held June 17, and the bereaved parish of St. Mark's, from which by far the greater part of the victims were drawn, was in the deepest mourning from end to end. The first funeral was that of Mary Becker. There was a short service in the church, and the interment was in the Lutheran Cemetery, Queens Borough.

There was no large gathering at the church to attend this, the first of the funerals of the Slocum victims. Few seemed to realize that the time for burying had come before many had succeeded in finding their dead. Of all the persons gathered in the church—and there were nearly a hundred when the funeral took place—there were very few who were not seeking news at the bureau of information which was established, of their missing relatives or friends.

The search for the missing was kept up all day long, and even while other funeral services were being held in the darkened church and the hearses were carrying the dead to the cemeteries grief-stricken men and women were begging for some word at the church door, and in the majority of instances, learning nothing, would make the journey to the Morgue and seek again among the dead, then back to the church again to see if something had not been heard there at last.

## CENTER OF CITY'S GRIEF.

Throughout the city there is mourning, but the seat of grief is in that section of the lower East Side, centering about St. Mark's Lutheran Church, in East Sixth street. As quickly as the bodies were identified at the Morgue by families or friends they were removed to their homes, and in this section there was scarcely a house without its sombre sign of mourning at the door. There were few persons in the streets, which presented the appearance they might have on a quiet Sunday. Life there seemed at a standstill. When the survivors left their houses it was to go to the Morgue or to the church itself, where a bureau of information has been established, to ask for tidings of the missing; for in many families more than one went to death on the General Slocum—in many instances four or five, in some as many as nine from a single household. In a block of sixteen houses, eight were counted with flags draped with crape at half-mast.

## SCHOOLS IN MOURNING.

Superintendent Maxwell, of the Board of Education, after receiving a report of the pupils of the school who went on the ill-fated excursion, has ordered that the graduation exercises in the lower East Side schools be abandoned and that memorial exercises be held in their stead.

Mayor McClellan, Commissioner McAdoo and Dr. Darlington, who have all been in the places where they were most needed since the holocaust, were busy seeing that the best arrangements under the circumstances were being made to handle this unlooked-for situation.

The Mayor has appointed a committee of citizens to receive contributions to be used to care for the needy, to help



them bury their dead, to see in those cases where the weaker have been left that they shall not want.

And he is making a careful inquiry as to the causes of the disaster. The District Attorney has set on foot an investigation, and Secretary Cortelyou, of the Department of Commerce and Labor, has reached this city from Washington to take a hand in fixing the blame.

#### FINDING MORE BODIES.

With dawn there was no diminution in the activity of the workers on North Brother Island. Divers of the Dock Department were making descents into the wrecked hold of the Slocum. They report that there are still many bodies burned beyond recognition in the waist of the boat, where the victims were buried when the superstructure and the upper decks, their supports burned away, collapsed and carried all of the excursionists in that part of the boat into the seething hull. All night long Diver John Rice and Diver Bob Russell, who have worked in the hull with only short intervals for rest, say that they cannot tell what number the dead amidships will reach.

#### DIVERS BRING BODIES TO SURFACE.

Diver Rice recovered eighteen bodies in a very short time, and most of them were so burned and mutilated as to make identification a fortunate chance.

Divers Blumberg and Hier went to the assistance of Rice and Russell, and in the light of flaring gasoline torches and searchlights on the police boats and tugs the odd-looking black figures dipped beneath the surface of the water time after time, rising to the surface more often than not with a body.

All that is to be seen of the wrecked boat as she lies on her side off Hunt's Point are the upper part of the star-board paddle-wheel box, a section of smokestack and a portion of the walking-beam.

#### MANY BOATS ABOUT THE WRECK.

There were many boats about the wreck all night, police boats, tugboats, rowboats and private boats bearing curious persons, and these latter were moving about everywhere, getting in the way continually of those who were present only to help, to do what little they could to have this grewsome task at an end and all the outward and visible evidences of the holocaust done away with.

The Merritt & Chapman's wrecking tug Hustler has anchored near the wreck, and it was from her decks that the divers descended into the water and went about their work of recovering the bodies.

No one is able to estimate how many dead there must still be at the bottom of the river along the shores of the island, but always at ebb tide bodies are recovered by the score. During half an hour at ebb tide one night seventeen bodies were recovered. Coroner O'Gorman said that he believed the river still contained 200 bodies.

#### BODIES CARRIED OUT TO SEA.

The divers say that beyond doubt some bodies must have been carried out to sea. The appearance along the water front of charred bodies as far south as Jefferson street would add weight to this statement. Those bodies may never be recovered, and the men who have worked about North Brother Island said that it would be a week before all of the bodies could be taken from the hold of the steamship and from the bottom of the river in its vicinity.

Coroner O'Gorman was on the island until he dropped from exhaustion at midnight. He had been working in his shirtsleeves, with only two hours' sleep, numbering the bodies and docketing the valuables found on them, since the disaster happened.

#### WORKERS COLLAPSE.

Others, men who had known no rest and sought none, dropped of exhaustion and slept on the shores of the island, wherever they happened to fall, near the bodies of the dead.

Police boats guarded the wreck, and at the orders of the District Attorney's office, it was said, allowed no one to come near the wreck who was not engaged in the work of raising from it the bodies of the women and children in its hold.

#### SIGHTSEERS HAUNT SCENE.

In contrast to the bitter work going on at the wreck and on the island was the attitude of the sensation seekers, morbid persons of all classes who put in an appearance unblushingly at such times as these.

Yachts, launches and rowboats visited the wreck, and for the most part the occupants merely stared and said nothing, but some of them were laughing and talking animatedly as they passed over the grave of 600 fellow human beings, perhaps more.

The police became more strict in the questioning of those trying to land on the island, and the consequence was that the crowd of morbid women who had sat on the rocks during the day was much diminished.

Many of the survivors whose families and friends were still among the missing visited the island, but in the restlessness of grief soon turned away again and returned to the

section where almost everybody had his dead to brood over.

Here there was little sympathizing one with another. Almost every one had his or her sorrow, and bore it silently in a dazed fashion that in most instances grew more pronounced as the day went on.

The dawn made the streets the dreariest spectacle the city has ever seen. Sorrow seemed concentrated within a few blocks. During the early morning a drizzling rain fell, but this made little difference to the sorrowing families. The crowd before St. Mark's Church appeared to be as large as ever, and stood silently, the women with shawls drawn over their heads, the men with coat collars turned up and hands thrust into their pockets. Now and then the entire gathering would sway forward as if by a common impulse, then would resume its stoical attitude without sound or motion. At times a woman would scream, and the rest would look up inquiringly for a moment, then drop their eyes again to the sidewalk.

#### ASKING FOR NEWS AT THE CHURCH.

Two or three dim lights burned in the vestibule of the church, where the Rev. Mr. Feldman, of the German Lutheran Church in Seventy-ninth street, had established his bureau of information.

#### THE REV. MR. FELDMAN COLLAPSES.

For over thirty-six hours the Rev. Mr. Feldman kept to his self-imposed task of giving the information and comfort he could to the survivors who had lost members of their families in the wreck, but he became so worn out that human nature could no longer stand the strain, and he col-

lapsed. He was attended by a physician and put to bed in a nearby house, other volunteers taking up his task.

One by one the persons waiting outside would file into the vestibule and past the small deal table on which lay the list of the dead, the injured and the missing; messages given to some survivor, perhaps by a dying comrade, for his family; and trinkets, a few, which had been picked up by those who were saved and which it was thought might be claimed here.

But as those who had asked their questions and received, as was the rule, the shake of the head and the few kindly words of the clergyman, which told that nothing had been heard of the missing one, or the confirmation that the one who was sought was dead, filed out of the church to let others take their place, there was no appreciable diminution in the waiting crowd.

#### SEARCHERS DAZED.

The grief of the neighborhood showed no signs of lessening. At first the calmness of the survivors was astonishing; afterward there was no mistaking this apparent calmness—it was infinity of despair which does not express itself externally.

It was hard for the clergyman to understand many of those who asked for the missing. Many were so dazed by grief and loss of sleep that they could not remember the names of their children, their fathers or mothers, brothers or sisters, as the case might be.

#### POLICE AT THE CHURCH.

A squad of five policemen in charge of a sergeant was stationed at the church, but they were needed only



to say a kindly word now and then and to lend a helping hand when a woman would stumble blindly up the church steps. There was no disorder in the stricken.

A white-haired old woman, Mrs. Ella Wormstick, told a policeman that she herself had gone to the Morgue and had found the body of her grandson, Albert Wormstick, and that of her daughter-in-law, Louise Wormstick.

#### HER GRANDSON IS HOME AGAIN.

"My grandson is home again," she said, "and my daughter-in-law is home again, too. We three are alone in the house, because I can't find my son or my granddaughter."

"If they have not been heard from, perhaps they are still alive," the policeman suggested.

#### LIGHTS BURNED FOR THE DEAD.

Through the drawn blinds of the majority of the houses faint lights glimmered at night, and the few persons going through the streets knew that in the room with each of those lights was a dead body.

Crape hung on the doors of most of the houses. On the door of one tenement house hung thirty-five streamers. But this did not seem so appalling as to see on the door of a small house, in which only one family lived, seven streamers of crape.

To see one streamer was uncommon; on most of the houses appeared four or five.

#### DEATH-WAGONS EVERYWHERE.

Undertakers' wagons filled the streets, drawn up before the doors of most of the houses. Three undertakers of

the section had charge of the arrangements for most of the funerals, and they said that it would take a week before all the dead now accounted for could be buried. They were at this work night and day, but it was impossible for them to go ahead more rapidly.

#### OTHER CHURCHES THROW OPEN THEIR DOORS.

Dr. Morris, pastor of the Seventh Street Methodist Church, offered the stricken people the use of his church for funerals. St. Augustine's Protestant Episcopal Church, in Houston street, made the same offer, and it was expected that every church in the neighborhood, of whatever denomination, would make a similar offer.

Most of the dead were buried in the Lutheran Cemetery on Long Island.

#### POLICE PREPARE FOR FUNERALS.

Inspector Max Schmittberger, accompanied by Captain McDermott, of the Fifth Street Police Station, in which precinct the desolated section lies, went to Police Headquarters and talked with Chief Inspector Cortright about what arrangements should be made for police protection at the funerals.

It was finally decided that ten policemen should be detailed to each funeral to handle the large crowds which were sure to be present. This necessitated the detailing of squads from all over the city.

Inspector Schmittberger brought with him to Headquarters a fairly complete list of the missing, the best which it had been possible to draw up.

Captain McDermott, of the Fifth Street Station, who has

the reputation of being one of the most cheerful Irishmen on the force, was deeply moved.

"They're taking my best citizens away from me," he said, and he would not trust himself to speak further.

#### ANXIOUS TO GIVE AID.

The Rev. Mr. Holter, of the Jersey City Lutheran Church, who began a collection for the needy among the survivors who have relatives to bury, received over \$700 before he left the church, worn out.

Before daylight went many who were anxious to give, but there seemed to be no one who was willing to take the responsibility of receiving the gifts offered.

It was very pitiful to see poor men and women, dressed in rags, go to the church and tender their mite, often no more than a five-cent piece, saying:

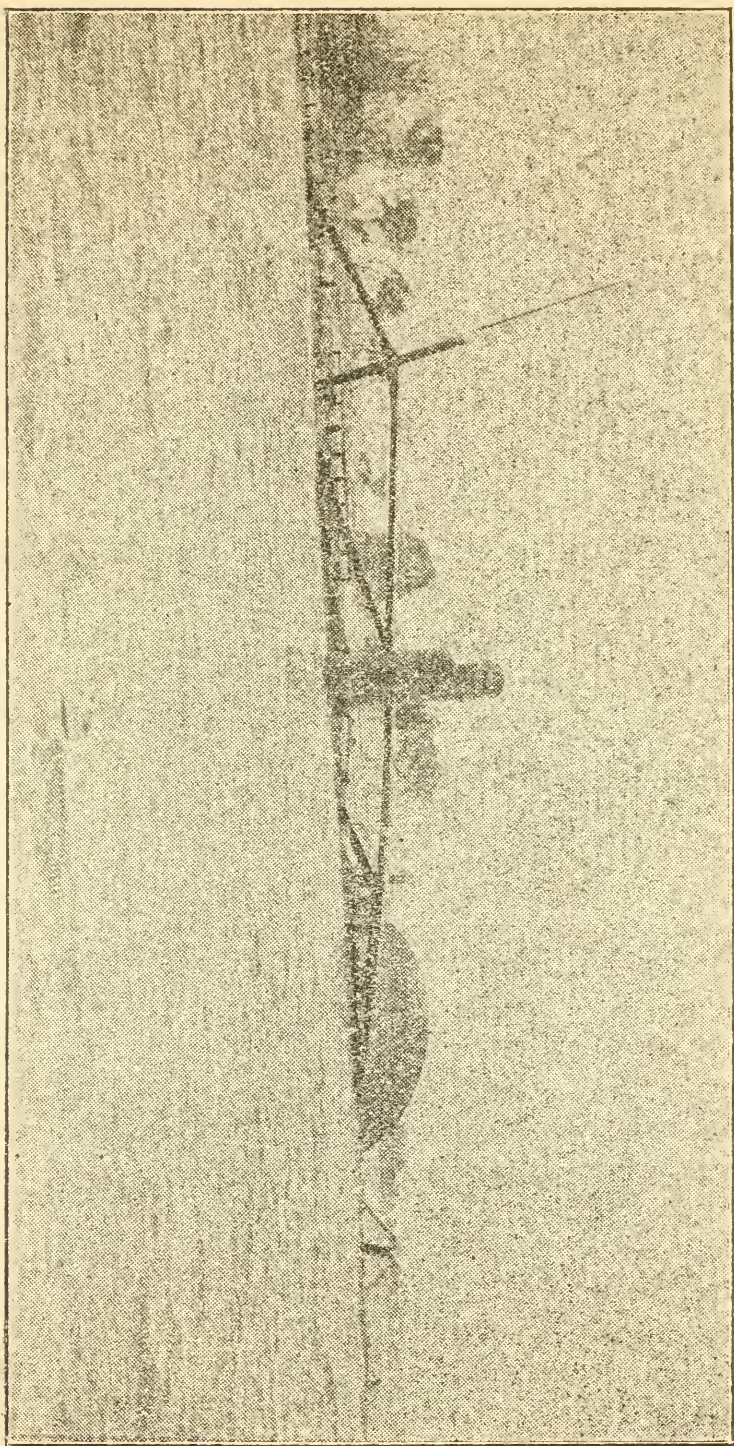
"I want to help a little."

The police sergeant, to whom they were always finally referred, told them to come again a little later, when the Rev. Mr. Holter would have returned and would accept their help thankfully.

#### LOOKING FOR HIS WIFE.

Joseph Schmittberger came to the church looking for his wife. He was so dazed that he found difficulty in recalling her first name, and could describe her only vaguely. He had his twelve-year-old son with him, who was rescued from the burning Slocum. The boy said that he was one of the first to jump, and that he was picked up by a boat before he had been in the water many minutes. He described seeing his mother, for the last time, reach up and wrench a life preserver from the racks. He said that the life preserver





THE BOAT AS IT NOW LIES ON THE SHORE.





tore in two pieces and that something looking like sawdust poured out of it.

After that, the boy said, he was separated from his mother and saw her no more.

#### PASTOR HAAS OUT OF DANGER.

The pastor of St. Mark's Lutheran Church, who was saved, but whose wife and daughter went down with the boat, and who was in a critical condition, is now said to be out of danger.

A trained nurse from Bellevue Hospital has been with him constantly ever since he was led home half crazed. His wife's body has been identified and brought to the house; his daughter is still among the missing, and her body is not in the morgue.

He is still seriously ill in bed. The elders of his church, some of them dead, and the others taken up with their own grief, can do nothing to attend to the church and to the throng of survivors which is always asking for news.

#### ORPHANED CHILDREN GRIEVE.

The sounds of lamentation from the houses where the dead lay were audible in the street. A little child sat in the corner of a courtyard, a tot no more than four years old, who cried softly all the morning through, until a woman, hearing her, took her up and carried her to her own house. Her mother was among those missing, and she had had no care and been without food since the day of the disaster.

It is in these little inside courts that the pitiful scenes are to be found. Here sit the women, their stoical German faces expressionless, some of them with babies on their

arms to whom they attend out of habit, thinking of other children who are among the dead.

They say little, these women. At times the sound of sobbing will bring one to her feet, and she will enter the tenement and go to whomever is grieving.

#### RECEIVING TIDINGS OF THE MISSING.

Into these gatherings of silent women a man would go now and then and say something to one of them, whereupon she would arise and go to the church seeking confirmation of the report she had heard. It might be that she had heard of the finding of the body of her own child or of her sister.

It was at these times that grief would find outward expression, when a woman would sink into a pew in the suggestive darkness, and fill the echoing church with her sobbing.

#### PASTOR HAAS' MESSAGE.

One of the clergymen might go to her and tell her to be of good cheer.

To all a copy of a message from the pastor was given. It read:

"In a common loss we have a common hope. I wish I could be with you all, but I am stricken just as you are."

#### ARRANGEMENTS AT THE LUTHERAN CEMETERY.

Many additional grave diggers have been employed at the Lutheran Cemetery, at Newtown, Queens Borough, L. I., to prepare for the burial of the dead. The superintendent said that already 100 applications had been made

for the burial there of the Slocum's victims, and that other applications were coming in constantly.

He also stated that for each succeeding day for a week applications for burials have been made. Everything is being done at the cemetery to facilitate this sad work.

#### THE CROWD AT THE MORGUE.

The crowd at the improvised morgue on the Charities Department pier, at the foot of East Twenty-sixth street, was very large. The force of police stationed there, however, was maintained. The most noticeable feature about the morgue pit was the unrestrained grief of those looking for the bodies of family or friends.

There was little open demonstration on the pier yesterday, but there was scarcely an identification unaccompanied by a heartbreaking scene.

For one thing, there were fewer bodies, and on this account the affair of death did not seem so common. In addition the searchers had been under the strain one day longer, and they were just that much nearer the breaking point.

#### EIGHTY-FIVE BODIES LEFT.

There were eighty-five bodies remaining on the pier, and during the greater part of the day a crowd of between 300 and 400 men and women were passing and repassing in front of these, going about the work of identification. All but sixty of the bodies then in the morgue had been identified before the pier was closed at midnight, but the Charities Department boat *Fidelity* came down the river during the early morning with twenty-five bodies from North Brother Island.

The work of embalming the remaining bodies was begun

early, and by the time the pier had been reopened, seventy-five bodies had been attended to.

#### EMBALMING THE UNIDENTIFIED DEAD.

This work was given to one undertaker, who, with his assistant, worked at the task for more than five hours during the early morning. It was done at the command of Commissioner Tully, who, after examining the condition of the pier the night previous, deemed it necessary.

#### FINDS ONE CHILD, TWO MISSING.

Paul Liebernow, of 133 East 125th street, went to the pier and identified the body of his little daughter, Hannah Christina. When he reached the coffin and saw the child he collapsed and had to be carried to one side and attended by one of the Bellevue Hospital assistants, who are constantly on the pier for just such emergencies as these.

When he had somewhat recovered, he said that he had gone to the picnic with his wife and three children. His wife and he had been saved.

#### COULDN'T PULL LIFE PRESERVERS DOWN.

"We couldn't pull the life preservers down. They wouldn't come out of the racks, and after struggling with them for a time we had to give up the attempt. The manner in which the majority of the men conducted themselves was brutal and disgusting. They knocked women down and trampled upon them in their efforts to reach the rail."

#### MISTAKES IN IDENTIFICATION.

Terrible mistakes, which add to the horror of the situation, were made in identifying the bodies.

William A. Richter, an employee of the Department of Finance, went to the pier accompanied by A. P. Hill, his brother-in-law, of 123 Meserole street, Williamsburg.

Hill went to the morgue the day before and saw the bodies of two little girls who, he was certain, were the daughters of Richter. Richter was too prostrated to visit the pier that night, and when he arrived the next morning and was confidently led by Hill to a certain pine coffin he was scarcely able to walk unsupported.

Those in the place noticed that something was wrong, for Hill, a surprised look on his face, was leading his brother-in-law from coffin to coffin until at last he went to an attendant and said that he was unable to find the bodies.

The attendants tried to tell him that he was mistaken, and that it was not Richter's children after all whom he had seen, but Hill was certain that he had been right.

#### BEREFT FATHER WANTED TO DIE.

Edward Screcher, of 144 Essex street, found the body of his nine-year-old daughter, Elsie, among those on the pier. The police, noticing his actions on entering the pier, watched him closely.

When he saw the charred body of his daughter he drew a lot of papers from his pocket—deeds, bonds and a life insurance policy, his entire fortune, and threw them into the coffin on his daughter's body.

"Here's all I have," he said, musingly; "it's no use any more," and walked toward one of the sliding doors in the side of the pier, where one of the policemen caught him and led him to the coroner's temporary office, and afterward took him home to get a permit for the removal of the body.



## CHAPTER X.

IN COMMON GRAVE—PLANS TO BURY THE UNIDENTIFIED  
DEAD OF THE SLOCUM—100 MINISTERS GATHER.

AT a meeting of clergymen held at the St. Mark's Lutheran Church on East Sixth street resolutions were taken regarding the burial of the dead of the General Slocum and memorial services, and expressions of sympathy were received from ministers representing churches of all denominations. The Rev. Dr. Joseph J. Herschman, president of the New York State Ministerium, conducted the meeting, which was opened by a prayer by the Rev. Dr. Hoffman, of Brooklyn.

In his opening speech the Rev. Dr. Hoffman said that they were gathered together to give an outlet to their feelings of sorrow, and that he would call on the Rev. Dr. Dawald to read a resolution on that subject. The first topic then brought up was upon burying the dead, of whom, at the very least, said Dr. Herschman, there would be over five hundred. On this subject Dr. Joseph Lawton expressed the feeling of the meeting that the funerals, whenever possible, should be held at the homes of the bereaved families. He hoped that the funerals from the church would be of as private a character as possible, in order to avoid the gathering of large assemblies, who might give vent to an undue expression of grief. He concluded by making an appeal to all ministers of his own or any denomination

to send their cards offering their services to Dr. Herschman.

Dr. Herschman said that among others the Lutheran Cemetery had offered a plot in which might be buried all who were unidentified or whose relatives were too poor to defray funeral expenses. The meeting voted that the offer be accepted and that a service be held within a few days for the burial of the unidentified.

Among the first of those who rose to express their feelings of sympathy and sorrow was Dr. Huntington, of Grace Church. He said:

"I am here to convey to you the Episcopal Church's and my personal expression of sorrow, and to extend to you whatever aid is in my power and in that of the staff of Grace Church."

Dr. Herschman said: "The brightest ray in this our dark hour is the fraternal sympathy not only of Protestant churches, but of the Church of Rome."

At this point Rabbi Silverman, of the Temple Emanu-El, arose and said:

"I come to you as a minister of God to express the sympathy of my people. We feel and share your loss. It is our misfortune, not yours alone. Where we can help we must help, and we will help."

Dr. Herschman thanked Rabbi Silverman heartily. Following came similar speeches by representatives of the Norwegian Church, the Howard Methodist Episcopal Church, the Confederation of Churches, who offered the services of their offices to facilitate the communications between the various ministers engaged in the work; the pastor of the Presbyterian Church on the southeast corner of Second avenue and Second street, who said that the members of his congregation felt that they were more deeply affected by the disaster than any of the outside churches, and a repre-

sentative of the Rev. Dr. Hipple, of the West One Hundred and Fourth Street Methodist Episcopal Church.

Letters tendering sympathy and assistance from Archbishop Farley and the Presbytery of New York were then read.

One of the most impressive features of the meeting was the custom of the Lutheran Church body of casting their assenting votes by rising and singing the first verse of the German hymn, which, translated, begins:

“Who knows how near our end may be?”

The chorus of men’s voices without organ or other accompaniment was singularly deep, mellow and impressive.

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## THE ENGINEER’S STORY.

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CONKLIN, OF THE SLOCUM, TELLS OF THE DISASTER—HIS ASSISTANT’S BRAVERY.

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*Chief Says That Bradow Stood at the Throttle in the Midst of the Flames—Says That He Ran the Pumps and That He Did Not See Any Hose Burst—Impossible to Get at the Lifeboats, He Declares, Because of Crush Near Them.*

Chief Engineer B. F. Conklin, of the General Slocum, who is wanted by Coroner Berry, of the Bronx, to tell his story of the disaster, is ill from the effects of the terrible experience through which he passed. Speaking about it he said:

"I would like to forget that fearful thing if I could, and thus far have made no statement about it. I have no theories to advance and cannot tell you exactly where the fire started. The boat was comfortably filled, though not packed, as we were licensed to carry 2,500 passengers and there were about 1,600 aboard. We proceeded up the bay, and about 10:30 o'clock, when we were opposite 138th street, the first mate approached me as I was standing in the engine room talking to my assistant, Everett Brandow.

"His face was deathly pale, but though he was excited he was not afraid. He said that a fire had been discovered forward, and I at once ordered him to lay the hose while I went to the pumps, first notifying the captain, who was in the pilot-house, by calling to him through the speaking tube. I told Brandow to stand near the engine and not to leave it, and he obeyed me.

"In less than a minute water was being poured on the flames, but it did not seem to check them in the least. Two minutes or so later the fire alarm sounded and some one on deck cried 'Fire!'

"Instantly there was a roar as the terrified passengers arose like one person and made a rush for the stern. Never shall I forget the horror of that scene and the terrible confusion that followed. There was no checking that frenzied crowd. Most of the crew were busy fighting the fire, and those who were on deck were unable to calm the fears of the women and children. The captain rang the bell for a full head of steam and the boat shot forward like a racehorse.

"A thick volume of smoke rolled from forward and filled the lower part of the boat. I was compelled to cover my mouth and nose with my arm in order to breathe. Mingled with the smell of the burning paint and wood was the sickening odor of burning flesh. The women and children rushed about as though bereft of their senses. Mothers

grasped their children and rushed to the side of the steamer and jumped into the water only to drown. I saw several children with their clothing on fire and their mothers vainly trying to put out the flames with their hands. I never saw fire spread with such rapidity, and in less time than it has taken for me to tell you this, the whole forward part of the vessel was in flames.

“The boat had been newly painted, and this, of course, made it burn more rapidly. Those who were on the lower deck rushed aft and many children were knocked down and trampled to death. Try as I can, it is impossible to erase that scene from my memory. When I close my eyes at night I can see the struggling crowd, the dead, upturned faces and floating bodies. I can yet hear those agonizing and piercing screams and feel the scorching flames.

“I realized that our only safety was to beach the boat, and I knew that North Brother Island was the only place to do it. We could not turn back and beach on the Meadows, for we were above them, and I was fearful that we might strike a rock in Hell Gate. Had this happened the loss of life would have been greater, for no one, not excepting a good swimmer, could have kept afloat in that swift water.

“We had eight lifeboats and two rafts aboard, but it was an utter impossibility to get near them, for the crowd was so dense about them that it would have taken a hundred men to push the frenzied persons aside and launch the boats. It all happened so suddenly and the fire spread with such rapidity that in less than fifteen minutes after it was discovered the boat was in flames from stem to stern.

“At intervals the captain called through the speaking tube asking how the fire was progressing, and Brandow kept him informed. I stayed at the pumps, for I did not dare to leave them, fearing that they might break down or



stop. When the boat was beached and I left the engine-room they were still working. If the hose was rotten and burst, as has been stated, I knew nothing of it, for the pumps worked regularly.

"It has also been said that the life preservers were old and rotten. We carried a full complement of preservers. They were such as are required by law, and if they were not sound and in the condition they should have been, then it is up to the inspectors, for the boat had been inspected only a short time before the fire, and everything was pronounced all right.

"Just before the Slocum was beached the engine-room was in flames, and the large mirrors in it fell with a crash. I looked for Brandow, and he was still standing near the throttle, with the flames all about him. The heat was intense, but I did not seem to feel it much.

"When the boat grounded there was a terrible crash as the upper decks gave way, and for a moment I felt sick, for I knew that many people were caught beneath it. Brandow stopped his engines and we made our way with difficulty aft. Here there were a number of women and children who beseeched us piteously to save them. I did my best to calm them and told them they must jump overboard. Just then a tug came up alongside, and a rush was made for it.

"I was carried over with the rest and fell underneath the struggling mass. I arose, and when I reached the shore I saw Captain Van Schaick and Pilot Van Wart standing in the water taking out bodies which were floating all around us. I assisted in the work as long as I could. Brandow was badly burned about the head and neck, but he escaped. He and I were the last of the crew to leave the boat."

## CHAPTER XI.

## THE GREAT BURIAL DAY.

SATURDAY, June 18th, was Black Saturday in the Parish of St. Mark's Church, on the East Side, as it was the day selected by a large number for the burial of their dead.

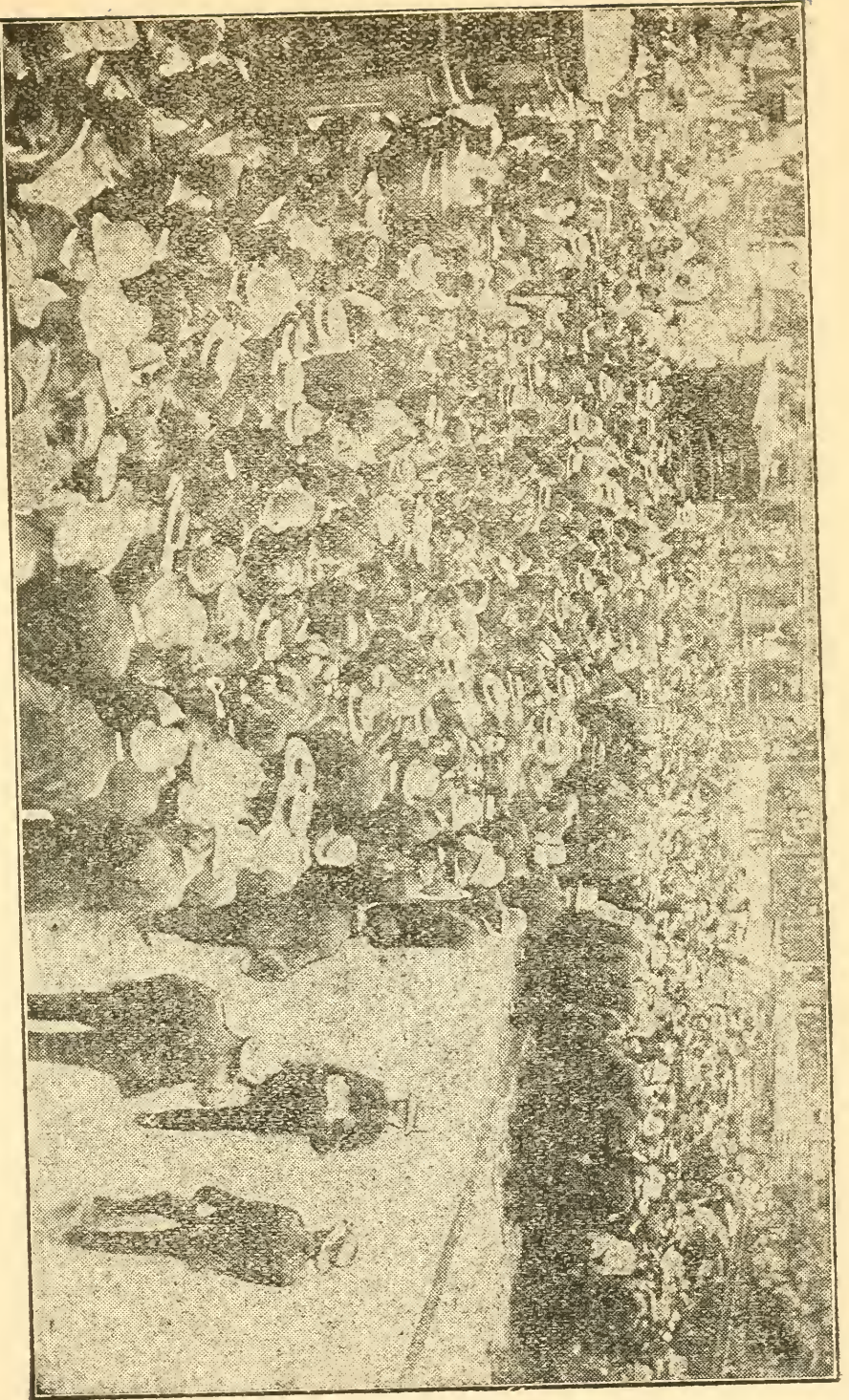
Streets were given over wholly to the funerals of the dead of the Slocum disaster, and barred to all other traffic. A hundred houses were filled with mourning men, women and children; every hearse and funeral coach that could be gathered from all the boroughs of Greater New York and from far-away New Jersey packed the streets of the tiny parish, or moved in slow procession across the new East River Bridge toward the Lutheran Cemetery.

The day and the scenes that made it memorable will never be forgotten by the people of New York; the scar it has left is ineffaceable.

To one who passed through the streets of the stricken village hidden away on the East Side and comprising within its area less than ten squares, the impression was strangely weird and unreal. New York has been sadly stricken before, but never has a blow of this sort fallen with such fearful force upon an area so narrow and restricted.

This very fact had the effect of adding to the deep, keen intensity of the grief of the sorrowing people of the Parish of St. Mark's. Their griefs and sorrows were interlaced





ENTRANCE TO THE MORGUE.



in one complete web of woe, and the entire section lay beneath a single pall.

#### STREETS HEARSE-FILLED.

More than a hundred funerals were held in the Parish of St. Mark's, and the streets were filled from early morning until late at night with passing hearses. Such was the strange and unusual condition brought about by the great number of dead and the scarcity of hearses that no definite hour could be determined upon for the funeral services, and the mourning relatives and friends were forced to wait by the side of the dead until a hearse or train of carriages returning from the Lutheran Cemetery made it possible for the body to be removed.

Little white hearses, bearing, in many cases, two and three white caskets, marked the saddest phase of St. Mark's Black Saturday, for the children who died in the holocaust far outnumbered the women, while only twenty-three men met death.

The Parish of St. Mark's was given up wholly to the burial of its dead. There was but little business transacted. The streets were made gloomy by masses of black across the fronts of the buildings, while the hundreds of half-masted flags were almost covered with crepe. Every street was thronged with people who stood about the houses from which the bodies were being brought.

#### SOME VICTIMS NEVER FOUND.

Frequently they noted a single carriage following two or more hearses, the carriage containing a father and husband whose entire family had been wiped out by the catastrophe. In scores of cases the grief of the survivors following their dead was made bitter by the fact that the dead



they followed to the cemetery were but a part of their loss, and that others as dearly loved had never been found.

There were rows of dwellings in the Parish of St. Mark's with a hearse at every door. In some houses a burial service was being read on every floor, and the hearses stood before the door three and four deep.

The day was dominated by grief and the sincere, tender pity of those in touch with the sorrows of the bereaved. Bearded men standing at their closed shop doors bowed their heads and wiped away the tears that started to their eyes. Women of another race and religion from those afflicted clasped their children to their arms and wept loudly as the long line of little white hearses passed them.

Into the very heart of the grief-stricken parish passed the funeral procession of the unidentified dead early in the afternoon, and hundreds who had been unable to find trace of the dear dead followed the two tiny white hearses and fourteen black hearses as they moved slowly toward the church, throwing the flowers they bore under the feet of the horses and beneath the wheels.

A great throng of sobbing women crowded around these hearses containing the bodies of those they fondly believed to be their own children or relatives, and the scenes here were the saddest of the day.

The funerals began at 8 o'clock in the morning throughout the parish. Within an hour services had been read over twenty-eight bodies, and the stream of hearses and carriages began to move toward the new Williamsburg Bridge. In a short time the outgoing funerals met those returning to the city, where the hearses would be filled again with the bodies of other victims and hurried away to the cemetery.

Over the entire parish there resounded throughout the day the sad, mournful strains of the Lutheran funeral

hymn, "What God Does is Well Done." There were many bands scattered throughout the parish, "playing the soul of the dead away," as the German expression is, and many women who had restrained their emotion bravely, broke down and burst into loud sobs as the music brought home to them with renewed force the affliction that had fallen upon them.

Clergymen from all over Greater New York and from towns and villages in New Jersey were present, going about from house to house to conduct the services for the dead.

Services, as a rule, were most simple. Only a prayer, the reading of the Scriptures and the benediction were used in most cases, even where the minister faced three and even four caskets containing members of one family. It was the general wish that this should be so. The grief of the German district does not find outlet in ceremonial of an elaborate character.

Throughout the day streets in the vicinity of St. Mark's Church were crowded. Many of the crowd were of the morbidly curious kind, but as many more were mourners; weeping women and children, and silent, heavy-eyed men were there to behold the last of life-long friends and acquaintances. Evidences of mourning were everywhere. From almost every house, not alone the crape on the door told of grief, but black-draped American and German flags and long streamers of black and purple and white swung from windows. In the windows of shops were black-bordered cards bearing in German and English the legend: "We mourn the loss of our beloved," or "We mourn our loss."

#### KEEPING BACK THE CROWDS.

The police arrangements were perfect. Early in the day Inspector Schmittberger, having under him twenty-three sergeants, ten roundsmen and 400 policemen, divided his

force into squads of eleven—ten men and an officer—and there was a squad for each funeral during the day to keep back the crowds and to force passageways for the processions as they wound in and out of the streets.

But there was no hard work for them to do. The crowds were most easily handled. It seemed as if all who came within the borders of the territory were transformed into solemn, awestruck men, women and children. Silently the spectators lined curbs and sidewalks by the hour to see the hearses pass and repass. Only occasionally would a policeman have anything to do, and that would be perhaps when some man or woman would step out from the crowd, muttering incoherent words which told of overtaxed nerves.

Chief of the funerals perhaps was that of Mrs. Haas, wife of the pastor of the little church which has suffered so much. The old-fashioned parsonage in Seventh street, just back of the church, was crowded by friends and representatives among the clergy. The floral decorations were profuse; tokens from ministers of every denomination of the city, as well as friends.

Mr. Haas, whose nervous condition has been such that fears were entertained for his recovery, was led into the parlor, and a moment later Miss Emma Haas, sister of the minister, herself still suffering from the effects of her experience, was carried downstairs on a stretcher and placed beside the chair on which her brother sat.

#### SAD NEWS AT FUNERAL.

The Rev. Dr. Alexander Richter, of St. Matthew's Church, Hoboken, was in charge of the services and preached a sermon that dealt with resignation. The Rev. Dr. Joseph Loch, of Brooklyn, read the Scriptures, and the Rev. Dr. Herschman, president of the Ministerium, and the Rev. Dr. Hugo Hoffman, offered prayers.

Only once were the services interrupted, and that was when a messenger called one of the ministers present aside, and after a whispered consultation it was announced to the brother and sister already stricken, that but a moment before a body at the Morgue had been identified as that of Mrs. Tetamore, Mrs. Haas' sister. With the authorities assisting in every way the body was at once brought to the house, and an hour later, when the funeral procession started there were two hearses, and the sisters were buried together.

Outside in the other streets, before the Haas funeral and afterward, funeral services were being conducted on every hand. At 85 East Third street, for instance, there was the funeral of three children—Gertrude, Annie and Henrietta Prawdsicki. Later in the day one hearse was used for as many as three small caskets, but in the case of the Prawdsicki children there were three hearses, preceded by an open barouche filled with flowers and followed by ten coaches, with the grief-stricken father.

The body of the mother of the children had not yet been found. At 171 Avenue A there were the funerals of the three Michaels children. From 532 Fifth street came four of the Weiss children. There had been sixteen members of the family on the fateful excursion. Three members of the Kopf family were taken from 377 East Ninth street. From 506 Sixth street came a casket bearing the body of an infant member of the Keisler family, and on the stairs of the house was met another procession bearing the bodies of two members of the Rosenhardt family.

#### FIVE DEAD IN ONE HOUSE.

Thus it was throughout the district, and if anything was needed to show the intensity of feeling it was when five dead

were being taken at the same moment from 88 and 90 Avenue A and from across the street.

Not a half hour later came another shock to the crowds, and this perhaps was the greatest of the day. Down Second avenue, moving slowly, came a procession of fourteen hearses, followed by one carriage containing two men. At the head a black hearse bore a black casket of an adult and at its side a tiny white one. At the Morgue the ticket had read: "Unidentified woman found with child clasped in her arms."

Behind this came several black hearses and then one of white in which side by side were three white caskets. Another interval of black and another white hearse bearing two, a black hearse bearing two, another mother and child, and so on through the fourteen.

#### IN AWE BEFORE PROCESSION.

Straight down the avenue from the Morgue the procession had come slowly, and just as slowly it turned through Sixth street. If the crowd had been silent before it was now almost immovable. Only here and there as the procession passed could be heard a half-stifled "Ah!" as some woman or man sank on the pavement in prayer or in a fit of weeping. Through Sixth street to First avenue went the procession, down First avenue to Fifth street, and so on east and south to Delancey street, where was the entrance to the Williamsburg Bridge. It was almost the climax of the day's strain, but the police anticipated even more distressing scenes, for many more remained to be buried throughout the district.

In one instance, that of the Richter family, there were six bodies awaiting the coming of the hearses. There were three in some other families, four in one instance.



The bodies were buried in the Lutheran Cemetery at Middle Village, L. I., and the way for all of the processions was across the Williamsburg Bridge. From nine o'clock to five the processions were almost continuous across the structure, and the sight was witnessed by thousands of the East Side who filled Delancey street and other thoroughfares.

For the unidentified dead and the poorest, the cemetery trustees had provided a plot 250 feet square, and in this the twenty-nine bodies were buried. The others were scattered all over the cemetery. There was a profusion of flowers everywhere, for societies, churches and individuals had been most generous. The order at the cemetery was perfect. There was no confusion. There were no services there.

#### A TRIPLE FUNERAL FROM GRACE CHURCH, ON BROADWAY.

A black hearse, a white hearse and a black hearse trimmed with white, standing in front of Grace Church, on Broadway, made the hurrying business man and the shopper pause and think again of the awful disaster. It was a triple funeral of Mrs. Minnie Stoss, her daughter Edna, and her nephew, Teopil Kawezynski. The usual Episcopal service for the dead was read by Dr. Huntington, a vested choir sang the anthem, "Lord, Thou Hast Been Our Refuge" and "I Heard a Voice from Heaven," and the benediction was followed by Stainer's Grand Amen. The tops of the three caskets were completely hidden by flowers, and another open carriage carried the floral offerings of friends.

Treble afflicted in the loss of his mother and his only child, and in the precarious condition of his wife, Frederick Klenen, of 1391 Washington avenue, The Bronx, was the principal mourner at funeral services for Mrs. Neta Klenen,

56 years old, and Ethel Klenen, 1 year, at the Merritt undertaking parlors, Nineteenth street and Eighth avenue, Manhattan. Mrs. Frederick Klenen, who was saved from the river, badly burned, is a patient at Lebanon Hospital, her condition being so serious that she has not been informed of the death of her baby daughter and its grandmother. The funeral was attended by a large number of friends and relatives of the family, and among the mourners were a number of survivors of the disaster. The Rev. Henry Stoup, pastor of St. John's Lutheran Church, of East 119th street, Manhattan, conducted the simple services at the chapel, and the burial service at the Lutheran Cemetery. There were many flowers, in clusters and in set pieces. Four small boys acted as pall-bearers for the child, and the bodies were borne away in a white and a black hearse.

One of the largest funerals was that of John L. Bruning and his wife, Anna E., from their late home at 216 East Twelfth street, Manhattan. About the house there was none of that maudlin curiosity which pervaded the streets farther down town. The services were conducted by the Rev. Jacob Schlegel.

#### SCENES AT THE CEMETERY.

A scene unrivaled in the history of the German Lutheran burying ground at Little Village, L. I., or perhaps any burial ground of the country, was witnessed by a concourse of fully 15,000 people, when 178 victims of the General Slocum disaster were buried.

There were 138 bodies interred outside of the 29 unclaimed bodies, and 11 were placed in vaults, making a total of 178 bodies that passed through the gates of the cemetery from early morning until sunset.

## PRAYERS BY A GRAVE DIGGER.

At some of the graves there was no officiating clergyman. After the bodies were lowered an old grave digger picked up a handful of dirt, tossed it upon the coffin-box, and repeated a simple burial prayer. Outside of the Rev. Mr. Haas, who came to the cemetery for the burial of his wife, the Rev. Dr. E. W. Peterson was the only minister present.

Next day in the little chapel in the cemetery the Rev. Dr. Peterson held a memorial service for all of the bodies buried the day before in the cemetery, and the cemetery was overwhelmed with many thousands of relatives, friends and sightseers.

The first funeral to enter the gates of the cemetery was that of George, Emily and Frederick Stahl, the three children of Andrew Stahl. Lillie was never found, and the father gazed mournfully at the procession of unclaimed dead that followed, wondering if the body of his little one was among them. At the grave Mary, another child, fell unconscious, and the mother and father were helped away in a prostrated condition by friends. Tears came to the eyes of those assembled about the grave as the mother shrieked aloud in her grief.

## HEARSES WERE DELAYED.

In accordance with the German custom, many of the funeral parties adjourned to nearby hotels and partook of food and refreshments. The throng inside the hotels, the hearses and carriages standing in rows and groups outside, the assemblages of sympathizing women about the child mourners all combined to make a scene not soon forgotten. At nightfall many of the hearses and carriages had not returned to the city.

To meet the unexpected number of dead Superintendent David Avenus, of the Lutheran Burying Ground, was obliged to enlist stone cutters, florists, teamsters and men of other occupations to fill the role of grave diggers. Fully 160 grave diggers worked from 8 o'clock in the morning until 6 o'clock at night, when they were relieved.

Thomas Leitch, the clerk in charge of the burying-ground during the past twenty-three years, has seen over 30,000 funerals pass the gates, but yesterday he was so overcome by the General Slocum disaster that he would not look out of the window at the continuous procession of white and black hearses and carriages.

Heartrending and pathetic in the extreme was the burial of the unrecognized bodies—twenty-nine in all. There were nine babies, and all went in fourteen hearses. There were not enough white hearses for the little white coffins of the babies, so some of the white coffins had to go in the black hearses.

There were no mourners to follow the fourteen hearses with unrecognized bodies. The bodies of the babies came to the cemetery without anyone following to mourn for them. There was a single carriage following the last hearse of this sad procession. In it were the officers of the morgue.

An old woman sat weeping at the curb near Second avenue and Sixth street. "Perhaps my baby is in one of them coffins!" she wailed.

There were other sorrowing mothers and fathers who watched with weeping eyes the progress of the fourteen hearses. The street on each side was lined with thousands of persons, from the morgue down Second avenue to Sixth street, and along First avenue to Rivington street and the new bridge. At the cemetery the Rev. E. W. Peterson read the burial service.

IN SILENT WOE THE PEOPLE OF ST. MARK'S  
MEET.

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GRIEF BREAKS FORTH AT SIGHT OF MR. HAAS.

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*Hand of Death on Homes of Pastor, Organist and Singers—Congregation Gathers to Mourn Its Lost.*

Infinitely sad and impressive were the memorial services in St. Mark's Church on Sunday morning. Outside the doors the funeral trains rumbled, and the curious crowds passed and repassed with pitiful glances at the fluttering emblems of death.

Long before the church doors opened, squads of police formed along the block to keep the crowds in check. But their presence was unnecessary. The people were quiet and orderly, as all sorrow-stricken throngs are.

Here and there among the crowds men passed bearing flowers for the dead. Beautiful wreaths, pillows of white roses, open gates of fragrant lilies, broken columns and angels with outspread wings were everywhere. There was at least a tender touch of comfort in this.

Two or three hearses stood in front of the old church, and through the closed shutters above came the sound of wailing voices and of prayers for the dead.

The old church itself was almost devoid of mourning emblems within. The pews were gaunt and crypt-like in their empty desolation, the walls were undraped and the altar, behind which was uplifted the crucified Christ, was naked and bare. On the lectern only were a few black bows.

It was fitting that it should be so, for the grief which has fallen upon the church is too deep for ostentation. On the stone steps of the narrow areaway outside, wretched



figures sat weeping, while about them stood crowds of wondering children with bands of black crepe around their arms. Nowhere could be found the semblance or suggestion of a smile or a light heart.

#### CONGREGATION GATHERS SADLY.

With almost the quietness of death itself the crowd drifted into the church. They came like ghosts, sad and hollow-eyed with sorrow. It was an impressive thing to watch this slow cumulation of a common grief.

One by one they would enter the darkened pews and at once bend forward on the railings in deep and silent prayer. Everywhere there was the reverent solemnity of a voiceless grief.

There came a German laboring man through the doors. He was in his working clothes, soiled and shabby, ragged and awry—just as he had probably worn them night and day since the burning of the Slocum. But the dignity of a great sorrow ennobled him. The well-dressed made way for him, and he sank into a pew, and buried his face in an old red handkerchief.

Seldom during the services did he open his eyes. Those who were near-by would have thought him asleep had they not noted the convulsive heaving of his breast and his tensely clenched hands.

"He lost his entire family—his wife and four little children," said somebody who knew him.

A group of little girls dressed in white, with bands of mourning on their sleeves, entered a pew and knelt in supplication, which ended in an outburst of weeping. They were survivors of the disaster. They choked and stammered beneath their breath, and it was some time before they could compose themselves.

The church filled slowly, as most of the regular mem-

bers were attending funerals. In fact, many of the pews were empty and there were not half a dozen persons in the gallery. Here were the bare branches of a church tree, from which death had stripped away the leaves.

Suddenly from the far distance there came the sound of church bells. Somebody in one of the shadowy pews sobbed. At that moment it would have taken only the weight of a few words to have sent the entire congregation—men, women and children—into a wild storm of grief.

#### PALL OF DEATH ON ALL.

For these things were in their thoughts:

Here there would be no sound of bells, for the sexton had perished.

Here there would be no sermon, for the pastor was stricken.

Here there would be no music, for the player was gone.

Here there would be no songs, for the singers were dead.

While the bells were pealing, Pastor Deering, of the State Street Lutheran Church, entered. He paused at the door, with streaming eyes, and it was many minutes before he could master his emotion. He was supported by one of the ushers as he walked down the aisle.

The services were conducted by Pastor Holstein, a former Lutheran minister of Brooklyn. They were extremely simple, consisting only of reading and prayer. There was no effort to efface sorrow by oblivion, but to soothe it by hope. But it is hard to solace a grief which stares into an open grave.

When the minister entered through the little door near the altar he faced a congregation as quiet as the tomb. For a few moments he looked fixedly at the mute crowd before him, and in his gaze there was a tremendous struggle. He was facing men who had lost their wives, mothers,

who had lost their darlings, and children who had lost their playmates. To him they were looking for comfort. Dr. Holstein began by reading a poem entitled "Who Knows How Near Is My End?"

He had scarcely finished when the vestry door slowly opened and there appeared the figure of a man swathed in bandages and walking with weak and uncertain steps.

#### PENT-UP GRIEF BREAKS FORTH.

It was the Rev. Dr. Haas, the pastor of the church. The congregation slowly rose to a standing position as the pastor, supported by his brother and his son, made his way to a front pew.

Then the long pent-up storm of emotion broke. From all directions came the sound of weeping, of sobs low and heartbreaking, sobs childish and tearful, sobs dry and hard and terrible.

It was an outburst of sympathy and sorrow such as is seldom seen. The pastor sat silent and motionless as one in a dream while Dr. Holstein read the entire fourteenth chapter of St. John, the Thirty-ninth Psalm, the First Epistle of Peter, chapter v, verses 6 to 11, and the 11th chapter of Revelations from verse 19th to the end.

Then, with the congregation standing, prayers for the afflicted were recited, after which Dr. Holstein solemnly pronounced the benediction.

The congregation made no move for the doors until the black-clad form of the minister had disappeared through the vestry door.

Then as the doors were opened and the people began to file out they were again confronted by the rumbling funeral trains and the sound of the solemn chanting from the houses where lay the dead.

The transition came upon them as a shock.

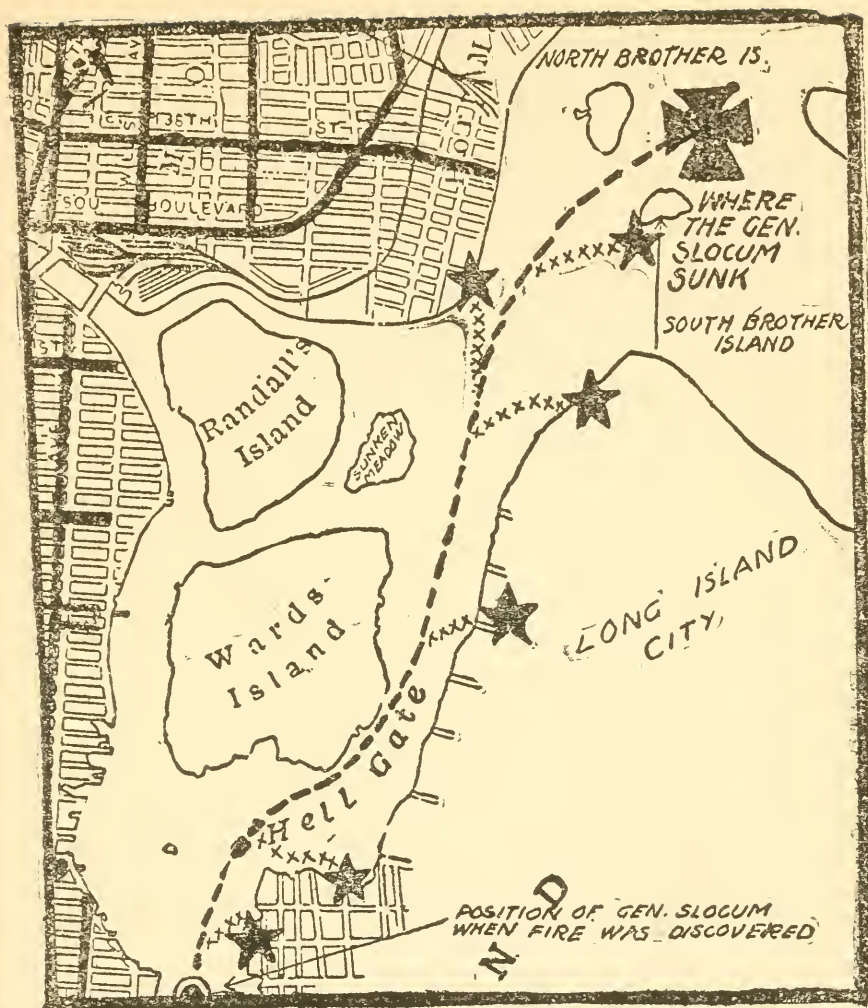


Diagram of the course taken by Captain Van Schaick from the moment he discovered the fire until he beached his boat south of Rikers Island. The solid line shows the course sailed. The dotted lines and stars show the spots where, according to river men, the captain could have beached his boat and saved much time.





## CHAPTER XII.

## DARING DEEDS OF HEROES.

THE complete story of this great disaster would not be told unless some of the daring deeds performed on that day were recorded. The following are only a few instances where great deeds of heroism were performed, and where men and women have shown that they are willing to die if need be in the effort to save life:

Of the few hundred who were saved most owe their preservation to the courage of unselfish men and women. Boys and girls scarcely more than children themselves bore their parts nobly, as witness the youthful apprentice who saved twenty-two lives and the nurse-girl intrusted with two babes who swam for the first time in her life and brought her charges safely to the shore.

Hell Gate had a Jim Bludso of its own, who risked his life and all that he had, a smoky little tug.

There were experienced pilots and captains who went about the work of rescue like trained life-savers; firemen leaped into the waters in their heavy clothing and policemen from stations far and near rowed in whatever boats they could find to help in the work of rescue.

Heroes in every walk of life may be found on the roll, and the record of the darkest day in the history of New York Harbor is brightened by golden letters which tell of high courage and supreme devotion. Those who may have the task of finding those who are entitled to rewards from

a hero fund will have many candidates from whom to choose.

EIGHTEEN-YEAR-OLD BOY SAVES THE LIVES OF TWENTY-TWO PERSONS.

Twenty-two lives saved is written opposite the name of Charles Schwartz, Jr., machinist's apprentice, eighteen years old. His rescues were performed, too, with a breaking heart, for he knew that while he was aiding others his mother and grandmother were lying dead on the beach of North Brother Island.

Schwartz is light of frame, yet his skill in swimming has made him well known throughout the East Side.

"There was not much time to think," said he, "and as soon as I saw what was up I did what I could. I was on the hurricane deck of the General Slocum, and when I knew that there was a fire the first thing I did was to put a life preserver around my little brother Louis, who is ten years old, and I got him to stand by me. Then I saw that there was going to be a panic, and I thought that in the water was the best chance for him, so I threw him overboard. Louis is all right.

"I made a trip down below to see if I could be of any help, but I saw that the fire was beyond control, and that nobody would work in any kind of system. I noticed that two or three boats were coming, and I backed up against the rail, calling out that there was a good chance, and pleading with the passengers to keep cool and not shove. The rail went, though, and I tumbled over backward into the water.

"The first person that I saw was Mrs. Addicks, who keeps a candy store at No. 53 Avenue A, and she called me by name, and I went over and helped her by keeping her chin

above water and towing her a little. She got to shore all right and was not much hurt. She threw her arms around my neck and kissed me. I got into the water again and helped Miss Emma Haas, the sister of the pastor, until a boat came to take her, and then I saw my mother and grandmother. They were floating face downward. I got them both ashore and helped the doctors with them on the lawn. 'It's no use,' said the doctors, 'we can't do anything for your people, my boy.'

"I felt as though my heart would break, and then I looked out upon the water and saw that there were yet men, women and children who might be saved. A man came along in a little boat, and I swam out to him and worked with him. I went overboard whenever I could and swam up to people and helped them into the boat. Many of them grabbed at me, but I was able to keep off enough to prevent being dragged down. I felt hands way down in the water holding at my feet. Hands caught me everywhere, and above me was the fire raging and roaring. I wish that I had been stronger and could have done more.

"The stranger in the boat and I brought four or five ashore at a time and took them upon the beach. I had my clothes off and was able to swim easily, for I kept as cool as I could and saved my strength. I learned to swim in the public baths, and if it had not been for the practice that I got there I would not have been able to do anything.

"We brought ashore many bodies, too, and not until there was no chance of saving anybody did I quit. Counting those I either got into the boat or swam out for I saved twenty-two. If I had been a stronger fellow I might have done a great deal more, but I'm light. I weigh only 123 stripped. Rather too light, don't you think?

"Hero? Oh, I'm nothing like that. I happened to have the knack of swimming a little better than some other per-

sons, and so I thought it was my duty to do the best I could. Besides, I'm not thinking much of that kind of thing with my mother and grandmother lying there in the room. I did all I could for them, but the smoke must have suffocated them before they were in the water."

#### FIREMEN ON THE ZOPHAR MILLS RISKED LIVES TO SAVE OTHERS.

Another medal which will serve as a companion piece to the one received last year will perhaps be awarded to Fireman Joseph J. Mooney, who nearly lost his life in saving a woman.

Mooney attracted the attention of the public on June 6, 1903, when he received the William L. Strong gold medal for saving the life of a little girl, Gertrude Schwenneger, at a fire at Madison avenue and Sixtieth street. Mayor Low presented the medal while the child stood by the side of the gallant fireman.

Only recently Mooney was transferred to the fireboat Zophar Mills, and when, on the day of the disaster, she steamed up into the East River, dotted with the drowning, Mooney could not devote his energy to using lines and boat-hooks. He went into the water and brought two women to the side of the Zophar Mills.

In effecting the rescue of the third woman, who weighed two hundred pounds, and was all the more unmanageable on account of her heavy, water-soaked clothing, Mooney made a valiant effort to reach the side of the fireboat. His plight was noticed by the other firemen, who threw a rope to him. Mooney had strength enough to hold it and was drawn over the side of the vessel.

Restoratives were administered both to the woman and her rescuer. Mooney was able, in the course of a few min-

utes, to resume his duties, but he did not again venture into the water.

George Lawlor, another fireman, saved a woman by swimming after her. Only four living persons were taken on board the Zophar Mills. There were seventeen dead bodies on her deck.

Firemen attached to Bronx fire companies took an active part in saving the drowning, and many cases are reported of their leaping into the water without removing any clothing, so eager were they to be of assistance.

Policemen from all stations aided in the rescue when the opportunity offered, and many of them rowed out to the vessel in whatever boats they could obtain.

#### PLAYED HOSE ON HIM WHILE HE SAVED DROWNING.

Efficient service was rendered by the Charities boat, the Massasoit, of which Captain Frederick W. Parkinson is the commander. The captain was trained under his uncle, Captain Henry Rick, a veteran Hell Gate pilot. Not only did he direct the work of rescue from his post, where it was so hot from the flames of the burning wreck that it was almost impossible to remain there, but he helped bring the helpless aboard when opportunity offered. Whenever he could leave the wheel he sat in the loop of rope swung over the side of the Massasoit, aiding in drawing up those who were struggling in the water.

The captain speaks in terms of highest praise of the conduct of his crew, mentioning especially his mate, James J. Duane, and Albert Rappaport. Duane went out in the lifeboat to within a few feet of the burning Slocum and was able to work because the captain ordered hose to be constantly played on him. He brought in ten persons in all. He was in constant danger, owing to the possibility of portions of the burning superstructure falling upon him.



Rappaport went over the side of the Massasoit, and at great personal risk saved seven persons. He brought them to the side of the steamboat, and they were lifted aboard by the engineer and deck hands.

"The first one I got," said Rappaport, "was a boy who clung to me after I got back on board, begging that I would not leave him. He said he did not know where to go, as his mother was drowned.

"I was clad only in underclothes, and in a struggle to save another boy about thirteen years of age my clothing fell about my feet, and it was with great difficulty that I was able to get within reach of a heaving line."

Everywhere on the Massasoit are the evidences of her fight with fire. The paint on the upper works of the vessel is badly blistered, and the windows of the pilot-house are cracked. The Massasoit saved in all forty persons.

Those who are mentioned in his report for efficient work are William M. Hatch, the chief engineer; Nicholas Ryan, assistant; James Farrelly, James Caffrey and John Cochran, firemen, and John Lynch and John Cunningham, deck hands.

#### MODEST CAPTAIN RICK SAVED MANY FROM DROWNING.

No account of the work of rescue can be complete without the story of the deeds done by the modest captain of the Franklin Edson. Not content with directing the efforts of his crew while he stood in a scorching pilot-house, he went overboard after a woman and nearly lost his life in doing so. Henry Rick is his name, and for thirty years he has held a pilot's license. All of that time has been spent in the service of the city, either in the Health Department or the Department of Charities. The captain is now 58 years old, but he looks like a man of forty-five.

"It is difficult to tell what to do in such an emergency as that which confronted us in the Slocum disaster," said he. "I had just left the Edson, which had come in at the Board of Health pier, at 132d street, when I heard five whistles from my boat. I was down there in a moment, and as I was going across to the Slocum the engineer yelled up the tube that he had water in three lines of hose. We soon saw that water wasn't needed, but quick work to save lives. Everything in the way of life preservers we had went overboard, and then the heaving lines.

"Fifty feet was as near as I thought it safe to go, for although the windows of the pilot-house were down in their frames I could hear them crackling, and the paint was blistering on the woodwork. Samuel K. Mills, the engineer, and William Balmer, fireman, did fine work.

"It was hard work in many cases, for there were several large and heavy women, whose weight was increased by their water-soaked garments. We got all those who came our way. Some may think that we ought to have taken the rescued ashore right away for medical attention, but I considered it best to save as many as we could. I think that we got about twenty-five in all. As to how many lived I don't know yet; ten, I am certain of, anyway. Six died after we got them aboard, although we did what we could to revive them. My crew did a splendid work. Don't forget to mention Andrew Andrews and Frank Lagarda, deck hands. They are good boys."

"How about the woman for whom you went overboard?"

"She was dead when I got her aboard, as near as I can make out. Too bad! I was rather tired out by the time she was landed, but I think that she had been suffocated before she got into the water. What I was able to do was no more than any city employee should gladly do. I don't want any rewards or any medals. I am too old for that

kind of thing. Once, when I was young, maybe, I thought of fame, but with the city's boats the picking up of persons in distress is part of the business."

#### TOOK CHILDREN AND MAN FROM PADDLE-WHEEL.

Many were the expedients which quick-witted rescuers had to bring into play in order to save the panic-stricken passengers on the Slocum. Policeman Hubert C. Farrell, who saved eight persons, is the subject of a report to Police Headquarters. He is attached to the Alexander Avenue Station.

Farrell and James Collins, a special policeman, obtained the yawl of the schooner Bayliss, which was at the foot of East 137th street. Olaf Jansen and Samuel Patchen, the negro steward, went in the boat with them to the burning wreck. They found several persons hanging to the paddle-wheel.

"I will never forget that sight," said Farrell, "for above us was a furnace of flame. There were passengers who had been leaning against the paddle-box on the upper port who began to fall off as the fire ate through at their backs. Above us was the fire, and the heat was so intense that we could scarcely remain there.

"Clinging to one of the paddles I saw an old man whose head was just above water. I could see that his life was almost gone. On either shoulder was a little child. They were clinging to his neck. I got out into the paddle-wheel, finding a footing in the paddles, and standing in that way up to my waist in water I leaned forward and first took one child and then the other into the boat. The old man could not be drawn up as I had done with the children. I braced myself with my feet and grabbed him by the collar. Then with a quick movement I dislodged his hands. He

fought and struggled with all his feeble strength. I believe that he thought I was trying to drown him. Down he went under the water. Then I got him up through the wheel, and he was placed in the boat.

"It was hotter about that wreck than I ever believed it possible to be."

#### ISLAND WOMEN SWAM AGAIN AND AGAIN TO SHIP.

Women on North Brother Island, matron, nurses, a telephone operator, patients, helpers, performed many acts of heroism and daring. The sight of helpless babies in the stream nerved them with almost superhuman strength. Several who could not swim at all learned how that day for the first time, so intent were they on errands of mercy.

None took a more active part in the work of rescue than did Pauline Pelz, who is in the employ of Dr. Watson, one of the physicians on the island. She divested herself of her outer skirt and shoes and swam out to the vessel. It seemed as if she had the strength of ten. She made five trips into the water, returning each time with a woman or a child. She started to go a sixth time, but was so weak from her exertions that she found it impossible to leave the beach.

Miss Lulu McGibbon, a telephone operator, after she had been relieved from her duties in the administration building on the island, hurried down to the beach. She swam out twice to the vessel and brought back on each trip a child. One of the babies was about a year and a half old, and the other about three years of age.

"I often go bathing in the summer time off the island," said she, "and the nurses are also accustomed to swimming. That gave us some practice for such an emergency as that of Wednesday."

Several of the nurses, clad in their white uniforms, waded out into the water or assisted in placing ladders and poles within reach of the passengers of the Slocum.

One of the most remarkable instances of the power of devotion to duty over bodily fear is the act of Louise Galling, a nurse girl from Nutley, N. J., who was on the excursion with two babies, one two years old, and the other three, the daughters of Mrs. Erkling, of Hoboken.

"I had no thought," said she, "of what might happen to me. I had never swum a stroke in my life, and I didn't know the slightest thing about how I should begin. I only knew one thing, and that was that I must save the babies. So I took one in each arm and jumped overboard and kicked out with my feet and held them up as best I could. I did not care whether I could swim or not. I only knew that if I didn't I would not save the children. I struggled on through the water and got to the shore. I didn't know how, and I guess I never will, but I saved the babies."

#### MANY DEEDS OF HEROISM PERFORMED BY MEN AND WOMEN UNKNOWN.

No story of the Slocum disaster is complete without that of the Unknown Hero who was everywhere. The roll of those who did the best they could under circumstances which made it impossible to do what they would, is a long one.

Tugboat men speak of a man who was seen struggling near the shore of North Brother Island, with three women clinging to him. He had a life preserver, and he was doing all that he could to keep those who clung to him afloat. As he was nearing the shore a fourth woman grabbed him, and he slowly began to sink with his three charges.



"Don't!" he cried. "Don't. There isn't a chance for us if you do that. I can't swim."

The woman increased her hold.

"All right," he replied, "we'll do the best we can. We will all die together." They were picked up and brought to the shore.

His act was on a par with the deeds of scores of others performed about the shores of North Brother Island on that day. There were men who released their hold on floating wreckage to give women a chance, and young girls who calmed themselves in the frenzy of fright to tear life preservers from their own bodies to bind them about babies whose cries touched their hearts in that awful hour. Many a wharf rat, whose name will never be known, did heroic work, and fishermen who came and went in light skiffs, leaving no records of valorous deeds, will not figure in the books of those who reward heroism with medals and with praise.

"WHAT'S A TUG TO A HUMAN LIFE?" SAID THE OWNER OF  
THE WADE.

"He weren't no saint—they engineers  
Is all pretty much alike."

Sanctity is not the strong card of James L. Wade, owner and engineer of the Wade, the blackest and dirtiest little tug in all the river, yet nearly a hundred persons, and more, would hail this man of grime, in overalls once blue, as an angel of light.

He ran the savings of ten years, represented in his tug, ashore and used her as a bridge for the Slocum's passengers.

"Damn the tug!" said he. "Let her burn!" For, like

Jim Bludso, Wade does not stop to pick his language. "Let her stay where she is. What's a tugboat to a human life?"

Wade goes up and down the East River something after the manner of a cruising cabman on land, doing odd maritime jobs here and there. He was at North Brother Island when he saw the General Slocum draw into view with a mass of fire shooting from her forward deck.

He dived into the engine-room and told the pilot of the little tug, Captain Fitzgerald, to make for the burning steamboat.

On deck were Edward Carroll, better known as "Reddy," and Antonio Marcetti, otherwise "Tony." The Wade went to the starboard side of the Slocum, getting in between the shore and the steamer. Her propeller was fouled by a rope, and maneuvering was out of the question. Wade ordered that she be run aground, and over this bridge seventy-eight persons found their way to safety. The heat blistered the sides of the deckhouse of the tug and only by throwing water over the woodwork occasionally with buckets was the pilot-house saved from burning.

Carroll and Marcetti spent little time aboard, for they were in the water most of the time. Carroll saved three old women and Marcetti a girl. The Irishman was almost exhausted in bringing the third woman to the side of the tug, but he was finally pulled on board by the captain and the engineer.

Not being able to use his lifeboat Wade presented it to the first volunteer life-saver he saw, and he has not seen anything of the craft since.

Many people declare that the owner remained at his post until the tug was nearly on fire and that his own arms were severely scorched.

Captain Fitzgerald, who was in the pilot-house of the



CAPTAIN VAN SCHAICK OF THE GENERAL SLOCUM.





Wade, also did effective work at the Hoboken fire. The Wade was pulled off by the tug Golden Rod while the streams of water played by the fireboat Zophar Mills kept her from being destroyed.

#### SCHEUNING FACED DEATH TO RESCUE FIVE.

Brief is the official record of John A. Scheuning, a policeman attached to the Alexander Avenue Station, who saved the lives of five.

There is time, though, to go beyond the plain tale of the blotter, and to relate how he risked his life and courted death under the lee of the burning Slocum.

Scheuning saw the burning steamboat while on duty near the water front at 138th street. He commandeered a soda-water wagon, in which he was driven to the foot of East 141st street, where he cut out a boat and pushed into the stream. The Slocum was swinging off North Brother Island, a floating Tophet, and fanned by the off-shore wind the flames swept far out from the port side.

Scheuning rowed direct to the side of the steamer, although the tugboatmen called to him that he was going to his death. The heat was so intense when he came within a hundred feet of the vessel that he felt the skin blister on his face and hands. Burning brands fell about him, and dead ahead towered the paddle-box, from which the flames were bursting as out of the top of a blast-furnace.

Scheuning stopped for a moment, and removing his blouse soaked it in the water. He threw the garment about his neck and shoulders, thus gaining protection from the heat. At the same time Scheuning kept his arms closely to his side as he rowed, so as to protect his body as much as possible from the glow of the fire. Above him the flames were swept out in a sheet which at any time might have



been turned downward by a change of the wind, while the falling of blazing timbers were reminders that at any moment the structure above might crash down upon him.

"There were five faces under that paddle-box," says Scheuning in telling his story, "that told me that it was my duty to go in there. I heard voices calling out, 'Mr. Policeman, save us!' and I rowed right up to it, although I felt my back blistering and had to stop to throw water over myself to keep from scorching. Once I got right up there, though, the heat wasn't so bad, although the way things were falling showed there was no time to be lost."

Scheuning ran the small boat alongside the paddle-box which was well out of the water, and he was able by placing one foot in the boat and the other on a paddle to lift into the skiff five persons. They grasped the sides of the small boat at first and nearly swamped it, but Scheuning, by skillful balancing, was able to save three women and two men, whom he rowed in safety to a barge.

Those whom he took from the paddle-box were Barbara Darhoffer, of 121 Avenue A; Barbara Becker, of 1157 Third avenue; Annie Kipp, of 1894 Lexington avenue; Andrew Zimmer, of 17 East Third street, and an unknown man.

Scheuning, "in the line of police duty," then brought ashore thirteen bodies and devoted the rest of the day to assisting the Coroner in tagging 171 of the dead. His exploit of going so close to the Slocum was the cause of others venturing to the aid of the distressed, despite the intense heat.

DECKHAND SAVED OTHERS UNTIL HE FELL FROM EXHAUSTION.

Those who have seen many brave deeds performed in the waters of New York Harbor say that the courage and de-

votion of at least one member of the crew of the General Slocum exceeded anything which they ever beheld. William R. Trembly was his name, and for a few weeks he had been a deckhand on the vessel. He was not accustomed to the water and he had back of him no experience in the harbor, such as had the veterans of the Hell Gate fleet, who did such efficient service. "I've seen many courageous and devoted acts done in my time," said Captain Parkinson, of the Massasoit, in speaking of the conduct of the deckhand of the Slocum, "but the way that man acted should entitle him to all the medals which may be coming his way. The first thing that I saw was his leap from the side of the Slocum right out of a nest of flames. He swam ashore again and again with women, and the way he saved his strength and the cool manner in which he acted were such as to win the admiration of every man who saw him.

"There wasn't much time, either, to watch others on a day like last Wednesday. His last exploit was to bring in three children at a time. How he did it I'm sure I don't know. He had two in his arms and a woman lowered a third to him.

"He swam with one child in his teeth, steadying himself and going slowly to save his strength. I could see that he was pretty nearly gone, and when I got another glimpse of him he was coming in to the shore.

"A woman clutched at him as he went past and he seemed to be saying something to her. He got the three children to safety and then I saw him staggering on the shore. The woman was still pleading. He was unsteady on his pins by that time and he barely had the strength to stand; but he was still game. He started toward her; then his hands went up and he fell over backward on the beach like a dead man. He had worked to the very limit. I saw him afterward stretched out on the lawn on North

Brother Island, and he was about as near a corpse as a man can well be and be alive."

Trembly was taken later to the Alexander Avenue Police Station, where he told his story and then went to sleep on the station house floor.

He said that he heard the first outcry of fire and did all that he could to allay the panic. Finally, seeing that nothing more could be done, he placed life preservers about two children and started with them to the shore. A woman on the upper deck tore her skirt into strips and with the rope which she hastily improvised lowered her child to him, begging that he take it ashore.

THREE CHILDREN, SEPARATED FROM THEIR ELDERS, SAVED  
MANY LIVES.

Children unable to reach life preservers above their heads and in many cases left without any older person near them were active in helping not only those younger than themselves but even went to the aid of their elders.

There was, for instance, Peter Wingerter, a boy of 13, who lives at 516 Fifth street. He found on the upper deck four babies which had been deserted by their parents. He remained on board the boat, although scores were dropping into the water all about him, and with his own hands passed the two babies to the deck of a tugboat.

Then, with two infants under his left arm, the boy slid down a stanchion to the main deck, where he passed his charges to men in a rowboat. A woman threw her baby into the stream and the boy dived overboard after it. As he was going under the water a man who supposed that the boy was drowning pulled him out. Wingerter fought with his rescuer, who restrained him from again risking his life.

Then there was William McGaffrey, 14 years old, who tossed a dazed girl aboard a tug and swam to the shore himself. On reaching North Brother Island he went out again into the water and rescued three exhausted men who were about to drown, in the shallows.

Among children who are mentioned on the roll of honor which illumines a dark day of tragedy is Arthur Link, of 71 Avenue A. On the upper deck a frightened woman was about to leap into the water with her baby.

"If you can't swim," said he, "give me that baby." She passed the child over to him and jumped.

The boy placed the child on a camp-chair, which he braced against a stanchion to keep the infant from being crushed. When he felt that the deck beneath his feet was giving way he tucked the baby under his arm and struck out for the shore, keeping himself afloat with one hand.

His burden was too much for his strength and he was about to go under when a man in a skiff relieved him of the child.

"Don't mind me," called the boy. "I can keep up all right. Take care of the baby."

#### VALOROUS DEEDS DONE BY HARBOR POLICEMEN KELK AND VAN TASSELL.

Two policemen of the Harbor Squad, Van Tassell and Kelk, who were trained under Elbert O. Smith, the present inspector, who was formerly in command of the marine department of the police force, did valorous work on the day of the Slocum disaster. They had been detailed to look after the safety of passengers, and although the conditions were beyond all control, they acted as though they were in command.

Van Tassell was disabled and Kelk was among the last to leave the doomed vessel. The two men stood on the second deck. They are strong, and their muscles are well trained by rowing in the harbor. From their position they threw women and children into the tugs which braved the danger and the blistering heat. Van Tassell was knocked unconscious when the hurricane deck fell, for the body of a woman struck him on the head.

He was picked up unconscious from the stream by a mason employed on North Brother Island. As soon as he had recovered the use of his senses Van Tassell, who was in great pain owing to the bruising of the muscles of his neck and head, returned to the work of rescue and later helped in bringing in the dead. Kelk remained on board the Slocum, although his hair was singed and his mustache was nearly burned from his lip.

He lost no opportunity to give aid. He placed life preservers upon children and threw them into the flood; he directed the work of tugboatmen who approached the vessel and kept back the panic-stricken who tried to jump into the water when boats which were approaching to their aid were only a few feet away. Though the flames burned his clothing and blistered his skin Kelk was as calm as though he were on parade.

"As I was standing there," said Kelk, in speaking of the experience of the day, "a woman came rushing toward me with her skirts in a blaze. There was a baby carriage standing near, in which there was a heavy blanket. I seized the blanket, threw it around the woman and rolled her on the deck until the flames were extinguished. She jumped overboard then, and whether she was saved or not, I do not know."

That was only one incident which shows how quickly things were done on that day.



## HOSE THAT FAILED.

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DIVERS BRING UP CANVAS TUBE FROM SLOCUM WRECK.

Much evidence touching the origin of the fire on the General Slocum and the conditions which prevailed on board her has been collected. Part of this was secured by the wreckers working about the hulk; part was in the form of statements made by men who were on board. These tend to show that the vessel was on fire much earlier than had previously been supposed, and that the officers and crew were acquainted with the fact.

Five feet of the fire hose of the General Slocum was recovered from the wreck by Diver Tulloch, and turned over to Coroner O'Gorman to serve as evidence at the inquest. The hose was burned at both ends and on a fold in the middle, as though it had never been unreeled. The hose is a two and a half inch canvas tube without any rubber lining whatever.

Former Fire Marshal Freel, who examined the section of hose, said that while it might serve its purpose if an attempt had been made to use it in the case of the Slocum, it would be seriously defective if the hose had to be used at any considerable range. He said:

"The rough weave of the canvas on the inside causes a considerable loss of force at the nozzle on account of the friction with the water. Roughly, in such hose as that the loss due to friction would be about forty pounds to a hundred feet of hose. The hose is porous also, and leaks somewhat. That is, it 'sweats,' causing a further loss of power, until the fiber of the hose swells and makes the coating thoroughly impervious to water. That would take about ten minutes."

## STEEL WIRES ON THE BOATS.

From the sunken vessel one of the starboard steel life-boats was also brought up. The boat was still attached to the davits, to which it was lashed by steel wires instead of ropes. The boat was crumpled up in the middle, as if it had been paper, and great gaps had been sprung in its bow, but boatmen say it would have been serviceable if it had ever been got into the water.

## NEW STORY OF FIRE'S START.

Charles H. Lang, of 1843 First avenue, who used to be a lifeguard at Coney Island, says the General Slocum was on fire between Fiftieth and Fifty-fifth streets. As a result of his statement, made to the police at the Information Bureau, he was summoned to appear before the coroner.

Lang says he was on the upper deck with his wife, his brother-in-law and sister-in-law and his 5-year-old son, when two of the crew came on that deck and told another deckhand, in his hearing, that there was a fire on board. Lang says he looked at the Manhattan shore and knew the boat was between Fiftieth and Fifty-fifth streets by a brewery he recognized.

He got his family together, he says, told them something was wrong, and got them to a place on the boat where the crowd was small.

Just above Eighty-eighth street, he says, he saw an officer of the boat, who, he is positive, was the captain, come on deck and tell two deckhands there was a fire on board.

Lang and his family knew how to swim and all escaped, save his cousin, Amelia, whom he is trying to find.

## JOHN ENGELMAN'S STORY.

John Engelman, of 425 East Twelfth street, stated that he jumped from the Slocum at Ninety-second street, and that the boat was burning briskly at that time. His story was at first received doubtfully, but later was believed. He says he worked for a number of years on a New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad tug, and knows the shore thoroughly. He said:

"I saw smoke coming up out of the hold when we were at Ninety-second street. We were right in the opening of Hell Gate and even at that time my knowledge of boat fires taught me the Slocum was no place to stay. The fire must have been going some time then. The smoke was dense. I took hold of my wife and six-year old son and we jumped. I managed to swim, with my wife resting on my shoulders, to the Long Island shore, but I have not seen my son since and I am looking for him."

Engelman lost two sisters also in the disaster.

## TO REASSURE THE PUBLIC.

It is possible that every steamboat carrying passengers in New York Harbor and neighboring waters may come in for a rigid reinspection by the Federal officials, in spite of the opposition of Robert S. Rodie, supervising inspector of this district. Mr. Rodie's devotion to the rules and regulations of the department has not been weakened apparently by the disclosures concerning rotten life preservers and inadequate fire-fighting facilities since the Slocum disaster happened. He has declared repeatedly that he saw no necessity for another inspection of the excursion vessels and that none would be made unless upon the written application of the owners or masters of the boats.

His attitude has aroused the city officials, who feel that,

the people will never be satisfied until assured in the most positive manner that every excursion steamer, barge and ferryboat plying in these waters is properly equipped for the protection of life in case of an accident.

The following letter was sent to Secretary Cortelyou by Mayor McClellan:

"The awful calamity which has befallen the city in the loss of the lives of so many hundreds of its inhabitants while on board the steamer General Slocum in the Sound on the 15th instant, impels me to invite your attention to the propriety of an immediate inspection by the United States Government of all passenger-carrying boats in the waters adjacent to New York City.

"The lack of jurisdiction in the city authorities makes it impossible for us to protect our citizens from such dangers.

"I would, therefore, urge that when making your investigation into the causes which operated to produce this recent calamity, you extend its scope as I have suggested.

"The season for this kind of traffic is now opening, and the tranquillity of the public mind, the security of life and even the interests of the traffic itself, call for immediate action.

"Anticipating your compliance with this suggestion, if a modification of existing regulations should be undertaken the experts of the Fire, Health and Building Departments of the city will, if desired, be placed at your service to facilitate and expedite the work."

#### EXCURSION BUSINESS HARD HIT.

The steamboat owners themselves, it is said, will be driven to ask for another inspection of their vessels if Sec-

retary Cortelyou does not act upon the Mayor's request. The Slocum accident has had a disastrous effect upon their business, many excursions having been declared off and thousands of people refusing to patronize the boats until assured that they are properly equipped. Nothing will restore the confidence of the public except thorough tests of all apparatus.

Many Brooklyn church excursions which were to be held were abandoned, while those which took place were very slimly attended. The Good Shepherd, Nativity and St. Mark's Episcopal churches had a joint excursion on the Richmond of the Starin Line, but there were only 350 passengers, not a third of the usual number.

Less than 300 attended the excursion of the New York Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church on the steamer Cygnus. The Grand Republic carried only 264 members of the Union League, successor to the Brooklyn Chautauqua, on the annual excursion up the Hudson, although in the past the attendance has generally reached 1,000.

St. Peter's Sunday School excursion has been abandoned.

#### ALL THE INQUIRIES.

It was said officially that the Federal investigation into the Slocum disaster would begin in the quarters of the Steamboat Inspection Department, on the seventeenth floor of the Whitehall Building, in Battery place. Secretary Cortelyou did not return to the city. When he was here he said he would take personal charge of the investigation. Dispatches from Washington afterward said that General James A. Dumont, chief inspector of the New York office, would conduct the proceedings. General Dumont is a pretty old man. He has been head of the bureau here for twenty-seven years. He refused to say whether he would have charge of the investigation.



By request of District Attorney Garvan the Fire Marshal's investigation was postponed to give the coroner's inquest the right of way. After the adjournment Chief Engineer Conklin, who had with him as counsel Theodore B. Chancellor, went to police headquarters to have a talk with Commissioner McAdoo.

Frank A. Barnaby, president of the Knickerbocker Steamboat Company, and ex-Judge Dittenhoefer, called on Assistant District Attorney Garvan and talked for an hour. When the conference was over Judge Dittenhoefer said that he represented Mr. Barnaby personally, and that ex-Judge Olcott would represent the company.

Judge Dittenhoefer said that Mr. Garvan asked Mr. Barnaby if the steamboat company would consent to the city blowing up the wreck. Judge Dittenhoefer replied that the company had nothing to do with the wreck. It was in the possession of the insurance companies, and if the steamboat company gave any directions as to its disposal, they might release the right to the insurance. This might indirectly hurt the sufferers in the disaster, Judge Dittenhoefer said, as the insurance money might be used as a fund for them.

Judge Dittenhoefer said that Mr. Barnaby promised to give Mr. Garvan the name of the builder of the General Slocum, the architect, the parties from whom everything on the boat was bought, and the brokers who arranged for the insurance.

#### NEW VERSION OF CAPTAIN'S STORY.

Captain Van Schaick, of the General Slocum, who is a prisoner in Lebanon Hospital, talked to a friend of the burning of his ship.

The captain's story is radically different from the tale he told in the Alexander Avenue Police Station immediately after the disaster. Here is the statement:

"I was in the pilot-house opposite Sixty-fourth street and saluted the Grand Republic, which passed me at that point. I then walked aft to my cabin and stood at the door for a few moments, then went in and sat down. While I was sitting down the mate sent up an alarm of fire.

"We were then midway between the Sunken Meadows and North Brother Island.

"I gave orders to go ahead, and in three minutes the boat was beached on the shore of North Brother Island. If I had turned back to the Sunken Meadows the time I would have lost would have cost the lives of all on board.

"If I had turned and run to the Bronx shore or any other shore the boat would have struck head on and would have bumped off again into deep water."

He said he judged the fire had been burning two minutes before he heard of it.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## COMMENTS OF THE PRESS ON THE DISASTER.

## THE BURNING OF THE SLOCUM.

THE worst marine disaster of its kind which has ever occurred in the vicinity of the metropolis was recorded yesterday. The steamer General Slocum, carrying at least a thousand Sunday School excursionists, was burned soon after passing through Hell Gate for a resort on the Sound. Scarcely more than an hour had elapsed since the pleasure-seekers embarked, and probably less than ten minutes intervened between the first alarm and the full consummation of the horror. It is not unlikely that the number of women and children who were drowned, in consequence of jumping or falling overboard, will reach or exceed 400. How many others were entrapped in the hull by the collapse of the hurricane deck and were burned to death can at present be only conjectured. The exact truth may never be known, but these victims may swell the total loss to fully six or seven hundred.

The greatest mortality from a similar cause in local waters was that which resulted from the explosion of a boiler on the Staten Island ferryboat Westfield in 1871. Fully 100 persons were killed at that time, and 200 more were injured. Between 100 and 200 deaths have resulted

from the burning of steamers on the Mississippi River and Long Island Sound, and even worse records have been made on the St. Lawrence and the Great Lakes, though not recently. The loss of life from a fire on the Montreal in 1857 was about 250, and that from one in 1850 on the Griffith, running between Erie and Cleveland, was estimated at nearly 300. It is with these last two disasters that comparison will now naturally be made. Obviously, an entirely new precedent has been established. Perhaps even the effects of the destruction of the Iroquois Theatre in Chicago last December have been surpassed.

Widespread as will be the sorrow created by yesterday's tragic event, and universal as will be the sympathy excited, it is now too soon to censure anybody. The boat had been inspected by Federal officials within a few weeks and pronounced to be in first-class condition. On this occasion she carried a much smaller number of passengers than her permit specifies. The captain, the two pilots and the engineer showed the utmost heroism, the last-mentioned officer dying at his post. Moreover, Captain Van Schaick's discretion seems to have equaled his courage. Some of the excursionists believe that he should have beached the steamer sooner. It is safe to say, however, that he understood his business better than any of his critics. No one else on board could have been so well acquainted with the difficulties and dangers of pursuing any other policy than the one which he chose.

A number of lessons will be found by wide-awake steamboatmen in this disaster when the facts are better known than they are to-day. The chief one will relate to the prevention of any such outbreak of fire as that which occurred on the General Slocum. Another will deal with improvements in construction. In the meantime the public will do well to recognize the probability that travel on excur-

sion boats during the remainder of the season will be safer than it was before. If no new precautions are adopted, at least a greater vigilance will be exercised. Again, the majority of the patrons of these boats also have something to learn about the safeguards provided for them by law. One person in ten, perhaps, can swim, but it is doubtful if one in a hundred can put on a life preserver. To make use of the latter in a crowd, and when a panic develops, may not be possible, but these hindrances do not always exist when the need arises. Many lives might have been saved yesterday if, before going on board the General Slocum, all of her passengers had familiarized themselves with the arrangement of a life preserver and the art of donning one in the right manner.—*Tribune*.

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#### THE GENERAL SLOCUM DISASTER.

NOT in many years has the country been called upon to mourn a disaster that so profoundly moves the general sympathy as does the burning in the East River yesterday of the excursion steamer General Slocum.

Even in the numbers done to death the catastrophe threatens to surpass the Iroquois Theatre fire in Chicago, which seemed at the time to reach the limit of the mischief that man's careless cupidity can do. And again, as in that memorable instance, the chief sufferers are those of the weaker sex and of tender age. To think of all those helpless women, of the little children in their gay holiday garb donned for a day of pleasure, now lying dead, needlessly sacrificed, compels even pity not more than honest indignation.

For needlessly sacrificed they were. That so many per-



sons should die in broad daylight upon a crowded harbor arm without fault of unpreparedness for such emergencies is inconceivable.

There was heroism enough: the engineer died at his post, like another Bludso. Tugs, rowboats, barges promptly gathered for the work of rescue. The crew did as much as its numbers and its obvious lack of drill would permit. The usual stories of vessels that passed by, knowingly refusing aid, may be dismissed as improbable. The captain may be criticised for driving his boat a mile into the teeth of a strong wind; but his was at least a trained judgment, liable to error but doing its best at a critical moment. For the chief burden of fault we must go further.

It was in the boat herself; in her rotten and useless "life preservers;" in her scanty equipment for fighting fire; but above and beyond all else in her construction, which fitted her and others like her for a fire-trap and for nothing else.

This is no new discovery. The *World* has already, has emphatically, has repeatedly shown the criminal absurdity of "inspection" laws that permit the officials to examine boilers and count passengers' noses, but do not permit them to question the safety of the hull except as to seaworthiness. Perhaps, with the lesson of this frightful disaster before it, Congress may now frame the legislation that has been so long urged upon it. For it is not one excursion boat alone that is a mere tinder-heap of painted wood. It is not in New York Harbor alone but in every waterway in the country that passengers daily trust their lives to craft that are known to be grossly unfit for their purpose, yet which no present law will touch.

It is a disgrace to our civilization that these things should be. No excursion boat should be permitted to take aboard a single passenger that is not equipped, manned, pre-

pared by constant drill and rigid discipline, and first and most important of all, built to carry that passenger in safety.—*World*.

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#### THE GENERAL SLOCUM.

No tale could more fully combine the elements of pity and horror than that we have to tell to-day. The ghastly contradiction involved in the fact that those who found a fiery fate in the destruction of the Iroquois Theater in Chicago had betaken themselves there not on business but for pleasure is carried a step further in the later tragedy. For most of the victims of this were children, for whom amusement is allowed to be properly the chief interest and aim in life by adults who would reject as frivolous and unworthy the designation of pleasure seekers for themselves. That a Sunday School picnic should all at once become a hideous massacre is revolting to the imagination which is not deeply stirred by the announcement that an equal number of grown men have been done to an equally horrible death at the other end of the world. For those are soldiers, "whose business 'tis to die," but these were helpless and harmless children, whose business is to be happy.

And yet the fatalities of this disaster would make an impression by their number, even in dispatches from the seat of war in the Far East. A conflict involving an equal loss of life would be more than an "affair." Although the exact number of victims in this case cannot yet be known, and may not be known for days, it is already certain that the burning of the General Slocum holds the melancholy "record" of like disasters in these waters. We must go back to the wreck of the *Seawanhaka*, more than twenty years ago; to the wreck of the *Westfield*, more than thirty,

to find matter for comparison. And neither of those memorable wrecks was comparable to this in the number of the fatalities. One is entitled to use of such a disaster in sad literalness the term so often loosely abused, and to describe it as a "holocaust."

It is a holocaust, a "burnt offering" to the spirit of cupidity which keeps a floating fire-trap in service as an excursion boat, to be crammed with all the people that can be inveigled on board of her, in spite of the fact that by her construction she is a mere tinder-box, and that, if the fire which she invites once breaks out on board of her, the great majority of her passengers have no chance for their lives. Doubtless there will be a rigid investigation into the specific responsibility of her owners and managers for this disaster, and if they are found to have offended against the law we may expect their punishment. But it is not the fault of her owners and managers that they have been allowed to offer a floating fire-trap for "pleasure excursions" for as many persons as she would hold. There are others left which constitute quite as much a menace to life as she. Whenever there is a pageant upon the water, in the form of a civic celebration or of an international yacht race, there are to be seen in it half a dozen of these antiquated craft, loaded to the guards with humanity, of which every one excites, in the passengers of safer steamers and even in her own, the reflection how helpless she would be and how hopeless those on board, if the long-expected should happen. This awful disaster should not be suffered to pass without providing matter for edification as well as for reproof. Why should not the excursionists on a steamboat in New York Harbor be as safe from the risk of being burned to death as the passengers of an ocean liner, in which, by her construction and by the precautions forced upon her managers either by law or by an enlightened self-

interest, that risk is so reduced as to be practically negligible? Why should not the harbor boat be as incombustible as to her structural parts as the liner, and why should not all the precautions known against fire be equally enforced for the protection of her passengers? The chief lesson of this disaster is that the standard of construction upon excursion steamers must by law be raised to that of the best modern practice and that the antiquated assemblages of floating junk which now threaten their passengers with a horrible death must no longer be allowed to take passengers at all.—*N. Y. Times*.

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#### THE STEAMBOAT CALAMITY—HORRORS AND HEROIC DEEDS.

“I’ll hold her nozzle ag’in the bank  
Till the last galoot’s ashore.”

IN the immediate shadow of the calamity that throws a pall over the community this morning, attempts to place responsibility for the horror would be premature.

The actual author of the fire may never be discovered, but the official investigations may elicit and collate facts now misunderstood or unknown and which would subvert any judgment reached amid the present excitement and confusion.

On such occasions the popular first impulse is to condemn the owners of the vessel and those in command. In this instance, however, it is apparent that all requirements of the government inspectors who examined the General Slocum only a few weeks ago were fully complied with, while the captain emulated “Jim Bludso” and with the engineer bravely clung to his post on the burning boat until she was fast ashore.

One ray of light amid the awful gloom of the story told

this morning is found in the numberless heroic actions performed by women and men amid the sickening scenes of the disaster. Whether the captain erred in judgment in not making an earlier landing, or whether many of the life preservers on board were defective, as charged, are matters to be determined later. The startling fact which overshadows all others is that a boat said to be one of the best of her class and only recently approved by the inspectors as in perfect condition should in the waters of the city and in plain sight of its wharves burn up so fast that the lives of about one-half of her passengers were lost.

The chief blame seems to be not with individuals, but with the system under which such a catastrophe is possible. As is well known, the Federal Government has charge of all steam vessels plying our navigable waters. Inspections of the hull, machinery, life-saving appliances and other devices are made at least once a year by government officials and licenses are granted. Knowledge that there is such official supervision inspires the public with confidence. But it is mournfully evident that this system looks only to the soundness of the vessel and her appliances, whatever these may be, and does not make such radical requirements touching the material of the hull or superstructure as would guard against such a calamity as that of yesterday.

Craft with frail and highly inflammable superstructures should not be licensed to carry thousands of helpless women and children. When the slight wooden stanchions—presumably covered with oil paint—that supported the upper deck of the General Slocum burned the deck collapsed. Iron stanchions and iron deck beams and generally non-combustible upper works should be demanded in every excursion craft. The Federal authorities should either abandon their system of supervision of such vessels or make it effectual.—*New York Herald*.



## THE STEAMBOAT CALAMITY AND ITS LESSON.

SITTING in the midst of our dead, as we are to-day, it is fitting as thinking beings we should put aside the horror of it all and calmly and dispassionately see what lessons the burning of the steamboat General Slocum conveys.

With about seven hundred lives wiped out, nearly all the victims being women and children, the investigation of the disaster must be thorough.

In the first place it may be stated that no blame is apparently attachable to the officers and crew of the boat, all of whom behaved with heroism, the engineer dying at his post.

So far it is not clear just how or where the fire started. There was an explosion, eye witnesses say, and the lamp room is mentioned as a possible source. The life preservers, it is said, were rotten. There has rarely been a disaster afloat when the same charge has not been made, oft-times substantiated, but if punishment has ever been inflicted it is not of record and certainly has not been deterrent.

The main trouble seems to rest with the Federal inspection. The boat, which was passed on a few weeks ago and pronounced perfect, is now described as a fire-trap, unfit to carry passengers. And yet she was one of the largest and best of the excursion boats plying here.

Everybody to-day agrees that the investigation must be thorough. It will, perhaps, be well in sixty or ninety days from now to look back to the fateful day, Wednesday, June 15, and see whether the 700 souls, and the brave engineer who died like Jim Bludso, were sacrificed in vain.

We might also recall the Windsor Hotel fire of six years ago and the Chicago theater horror of last December, and see what lessons we learned from them.—*Evening Telegram*.

## THE GENERAL SLOCUM HORROR.

Who is responsible for the awful loss of life by the burning of the excursion steamboat General Slocum? What measures must be taken to prevent the recurrence of such a disaster? These are questions that press for an answer. All that can possibly be done for the injured and afflicted will be done by a community that is never wanting in sympathy and generosity.

The investigation should begin at once and be conducted with deliberation and fairness. But let it not be swerved from the true course of justice by heroics and cheap sentiment. The fire that destroyed the General Slocum and caused a loss of many hundreds of lives was not, to use the legal term, an act of God. Some one was responsible for the first burst of flame, although that may never be determined; some one was responsible, it may be presumed, for a failure to extinguish the fire before most of the passengers were doomed to a horrible death and it should be possible to fix the responsibility. Furthermore, it should be determined whether the captain and his officers sacrificed lives by incompetence and failure of judgment. That they behaved with physical courage is not in dispute. Thank God for that! Captain William Van Schaick and his pilots Van Wart and Weaver remained at their posts until the General Slocum struck bottom on North Brother Island, and it required undaunted courage to do this, for the peril of death in the flames encompassed them. They are now in prison cells in Bellevue Hospital, suffering from their burns.

These are some of the things that must be inquired into, and there must be no qualifying and no flinching. Did

Captain Van Schaick know that there was a fire on his boat when she was off 110th street? If he did, was the danger realized and promptly dealt with by the crew under the direction of the officers? This, of course, involves questions whether the General Slocum was thoroughly equipped with appliances for fighting fire, and whether the crew was regularly drilled in the use of them. If the captain was fully alive to the peril of his passengers, most of whom were women and children, did he at once blow his whistles for assistance and set a distress signal? It is said that even when the General Slocum was past 138th street and nearing North Brother Island the Franklin Edson and other boats coming alongside rescued a considerable number of passengers. Did Captain Van Schaick exercise good judgment in not putting in to shore, though there might be the risk of setting fire to some inanimate lumber yard; or in not running his boat on the Sunken Meadows? Expert testimony must decide these questions. The stage and force of the tide and the difficulty of navigating in the rocky bed and swirling waters of the channel must be considered. Judgment should be suspended until all the facts are brought out.

It is charged that many of the life preservers were old or worthless. It is known that the rail of the hurricane deck gave way, precipitating about 200 people into the water and to almost certain death. A defect in construction is indicated, and this concerns, we believe, the Board of Steamboat Inspectors, as the condition of the life preservers does. The disaster should compel an official overhauling of all the pleasure boats in the harbor, to ascertain whether they are made as fireproof as possible, and whether they are supplied with life preservers that will sustain a body in the water and with up-to-date apparatus for fighting fire.—*Evening Sun*.

## THE EXCURSION BOAT SLAUGHTER.

THERE is something unspeakably horrible about the slaughter of women and little children, yet as it was the sacrifice of the young, the tender and the helpless in the Chicago theater fire last autumn which aroused official authority everywhere in this country to a danger long disregarded, so again in the sickening waste of life among women and children in the frightful disaster to an excursion boat have we another revolting warning of a peril of which all men have been long aware, few heedful.

It must seem incomprehensible that in the East River, almost within a stone's throw of shore, a vessel could be burned, with a sudden rush to death of hundreds, before she had time to reach land. But the fact looming large, grim and ghastly, what are we to say of those who lure the public into floating pyres of tinder that may blot out the lives of the human cargo in a flash? What are we to say of the official authority which encourages or permits such invention and practice of slaughter?

As Chicago officials were indicted for their participation in the hideous crime of the Iroquois Theater fire, shall not indictments lie against officials here who have shared in the fatal work of yesterday? In this way only, it seems, may others be spared—for there are other pyres of floating tinder waiting for other victims, women and little children—from the fiery fate of those who in the General Slocum voyaged to their awful end.—*N. Y. Press.*

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## THE FLOATING TINDER BOX.

A RIGID governmental inspection keeps the boilers of the harbor excursion boats safe and reduces to a minimum the

risk of accident from weakness of hull or other defect of sea-going qualities. The law provides for life boats and fire appliances.

But such an inspection takes no account of the tinder-box nature of the superstructure of such craft. It fixes no penalties for insecure upper decks or the layer upon layer of paint on old woodwork. It ignores the presence of inflammable material which a coal from the fire-boxes or a spark from a pipe may ignite.

Nor does it secure under penalty the presence on the spot of trained men ready to put to instant use the fire bucket and hose provided. The law cannot satisfactorily prescribe that human vigilance which is the best preventive of disaster.

But at least it should be able to abolish the conditions of inflammability which invite it. It should be able to order a more efficient patrol on excursion craft and to that extent reduce the gravity of fire peril.

There have been two instances within a year of ferry-boats afire in midstream, on one of which it was impossible to subdue the flames except by proceeding full speed ashore. Attention was called at the time to the grave risk run through the absence of adequate fire-fighting apparatus.

The General Slocum horror, which realizes what the ferry-boats escaped by sheer good fortune, will have served one good end if it prompts an investigation to devise a greater measure of security to the innumerable thousands whose lives may be in peril of a similar fate on tinder-box craft.

What the Iroquois disaster accomplished in diminishing the risks undergone by theater-goers the burning of the General Slocum should do for all who go on harbor or river excursions hereafter.—*Evening World*.



## INFLAMMABLE BOATS.

AFTER such a horror as that of yesterday, there is a search for reasons. They are not always to be found, yet they exist, or the accident would not have happened. We do not believe that such a disaster could have occurred on a ship of the American Navy, nor on one of the Atlantic liners. There the discipline would have been better, the safeguards more numerous, the construction of the ships themselves more sound. Larger ships are exposed to dangers of their own, it is true. In the navy there is the possibility of an explosion of the magazine, or such an outbreak of flame from the breech of the rifled cannon as caused death on one of our warships recently. In the trans-Atlantic service there is also the possibility of collision with an iceberg, and more than one ship which has never reached her port was hurried to her end in that fashion. The danger of fire on vessels of every class is constant, but less than the danger among fixed constructions that accommodate equal numbers of people on shore, for the laws regarding the care of cooking ranges, lighting matches and so on are carefully observed, as a rule, so long as the vessel is at her dock, whereas in the crowded tenement there are no such laws, and if there were, it would be impossible to enforce them.

It was confidence that sent hundreds to their death yesterday—confidence that the General Slocum was in trim, well manned, equipped with all the fitments for safety of life and rescue. The merest suspicion of such an awful tragedy as occurred a few yards from our shore would have led to a complete overhauling of the boat, to a test of her steering gear, which is alleged by some to have been at fault; of her fire hose and grenades; to an inspection of her

galleys, or lamp room, where the fire is supposed to have started, and certainly to a substitution of real life preservers for the flimsy shams that were removed from the bodies. These life preservers are made of rotten canvas, that can be broken by the finger nail, and filled with powdered cork instead of lumps and sheets of the bark that would have had some floating value. The cords by which they are adjusted are as rotten as the canvas, and came apart in the effort to tie them. Then there were the boats. Little seems to have been accomplished by them. The crowds pressed about them so that only two could be put off, it is said. Yet every craft is supposed to be provided with enough of life rafts and life boats to carry off the complement of passengers and crew in an emergency.

The most damaging fact concerning the Slocum is that she was made of wood. She was of an obsolete type, although she was only a dozen or fifteen years old. At the time of her launching she was called the best excursion steamer in American waters, and from that day till the end of her she was in constant use in summer. She was made for the carrying of 2,500 people, but it is alleged that in service between Manhattan and Rockaway she sometimes carried 4,000. What a mercy that this accident did not happen at such a time, and when she was in deep water! She was in collision or aground on several occasions, but was never before seriously on fire. In one of her mishaps, when she ran aground in Rockaway Inlet, there was a panic, but no lives were lost. It was then learned that she had only six boats and four rafts, capable in all of carrying 250 persons, or one-tenth of the number she was licensed to carry. An amazing circumstance!

Iron ships are vulnerable, and by reason of their weight they may sink more quickly than a wooden one; but as they contain less that is inflammable the chances of life in

disaster or panic are much greater. This wholesale drowning and this holocaust, for death came in flood and flame, will probably have the effect of retiring the wooden boats about our waters, or at least consigning them to freight service. It will certainly have the effect of inducing a more honest and competent inspection of all steamers, so that no more shall be permitted to go out with tanks of gasoline in the rooms, leaky and disjointed hose on the decks, insufficient life boats on davits that will not turn, and life preservers that are fastened to inaccessible places and are useless after being unfastened. The officers and crew of the Slocum played their part like men. They did all they could to save their boat and keep the crowd in order. But they could do little on a wooden vessel, with paint, oil and old camp chairs on her decks, and boats for only a few.

In buildings on shore we require frequent inspection—whether it is given or not—and conformity to certain rules, such as moderate use of wood and a sufficient number of stairways and fire escapes. The schools, hospitals, factories, halls, theaters into which great numbers are gathered are made more enduringly and soundly to-day than ever before. Fireproof materials such as stone, brick, steel and cement are increasingly in use, and within a few days we have seen how adequate drill and consciousness of safe provisions have prevented disorder in our schools when fires have broken out. Why not the same sincerity of workmanship in buildings made to float, and destined to be twice as densely peopled?

The ocean liner, made to carry a thousand, is supplied with abundance of boats and rafts, fire hose and grenades, her crew is well drilled, her hull is divided into water-tight compartments, so that unless she strikes a rock with a tremendous shock it is possible to close these compartments and preserve a large measure of her buoyancy. The iron par-

titions that will keep out water will also keep out flame and smoke, and the passengers can readily be gathered into the uninjured divisions of the ship. Yet we permit companies of people twice and three times as large as these liners would carry to put to sea in wooden cockle shells that a careless smoker may set on fire. It must be a salutary revolution in marine architecture that will be induced by this burning of the Slocum. We must have boats that, if they will burn at all, will burn so slowly that the passengers can be removed in safety. The tragedy of yesterday must never be repeated.—*Brooklyn Eagle*.

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#### THE AWFUL TRAGEDY OF THE SLOCUM.

IF it were legal to indict a man for lack of judgment when it resulted in many deaths and much indescribable mental and bodily suffering, the captain of the excursion boat Gen. Slocum might be held responsible in the criminal courts for a great part of the terrible loss of life which marked the awful tragedy of yesterday. The fire was first discovered when the excursion boat was opposite the Sunken Meadows, in the East River, about 135th street. There was no appreciable interval between the discovery of the flames and the knowledge that the fire would spread all over the boat and cause a frightful loss of life unless help in some efficient shape should be offered at once. Instead of turning the boat and beaching her without delay on the Sunken Meadows the captain and pilot decided to run to North Brother Island, nearly a mile away, and beach the boat on a shelving shore without rocks. That decision caused the loss of many precious lives. With the Slocum, one of the fastest boats in the harbor, dashing ahead at more than

twenty miles an hour through a strong June breeze, the flames and smoke that would have made the pilot-house uninhabitable were carried back to shrivel and blind the frightened hundreds in the after parts of the boat. It was the surest way possible to increase the loss of life. The increased velocity of the boat fanned the flames until soon the space between decks was a fiery furnace which claimed many a victim there and then, but drove many more over the sides of the vessel to a less terrible if not less certain death. The speed of the big excursion steamer prevented all of the smaller craft which would have saved many lives from keeping up with her. And, as far as known, the only official persons aboard who sought to prevent a panic and save the poor, terrified people from trampling one another to death, even before the hungry flames reached them or they jumped blindly into the river, were the two policemen detailed to look after the excursionists on their trip. The deckhands, probably in great part the usual summer crew picked up here and there, were nowhere in evidence as trying to put out the fire, which some have said might easily have been done at the start, or in helping to quiet the people so as to increase the chance of rescue. There does not seem to be any redeeming feature to the dreadful picture from the side of the owners, managers or crew of the *Slocum*. She was a death trap so far as fire is concerned. When the fire, that was almost invited, came, the worst possible judgment was displayed by the captain and pilots in handling the vessel, while there is no record of any member of the crew saving, or even attempting to save, a life other than his own, although instances of self-sacrificing heroism among the excursionists themselves, and the gallant men and women, aye, and children (for some of the rescuers were lads under 15 years of age) who saved the lives of those who were saved, were many and splendid. Of the families af-



fect by the dreadful disaster those are best off which were wiped out altogether. The survivors, many maimed and tortured in their bodies, and none of them free from a sort of desolation men can think about but scarcely realize while themselves untouched in a personal way, by the awful tragedy, are the objects of sympathy for a city, indeed for a nation. They are in all our hearts to-day, surrounded by a people who would do anything in their power to alleviate the deep-set misery of these stricken ones, and for that reason perhaps we may hope for some assuagement of the terrible pain of irrevocable loss which has befallen our countrymen and countrywomen, our brothers and sisters surviving, of St. Mark's Lutheran Church.—*Brooklyn Standard Union*.

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#### THE SLOCUM DISASTER.

WORDS are too feeble to express the pity and horror of this disaster. The character of the victims—women, mostly, and children of tender years—the swiftness of the destruction that has overtaken half a modest parish, the terror of sweeping flames, and of loaded decks collapsing into the furnace below—all of these heart-rending features of yesterday's tragedy strain the compassion of the mere reader to the point of numbness. But out of the great pity of it an indignant voice must find strength to cry: Was this sickening calamity preventable, or must we expect to see it repeated from time to time?

Preventable, in the fullest sense, it probably was not. Nobody can wholly provide against the momentary carelessness of a cook or deckhand; probably nobody can stay the first mad movement of panic that comes when the cry of fire is raised on a crowded excursion boat. Nor can one guard against errors of judgment in a captain; it appears

that the brave captain of the General Slocum made a frightful blunder that fateful day in not beaching his boat at the nearest point. But he judged by his best lights under conditions calculated to shake the soundest judgment. The deckhands, also, who never lowered a boat, perhaps represent the inevitably inferior labor employed. In a large degree, however, the accident was preventable. The death list should not have run beyond those crushed or pushed overboard in the first panic. The responsibility for hundreds of the lives sacrificed lies at the door of the Government steamboat inspectors, who declared that the General Slocum was properly provided with fire and life-saving apparatus.

In the face of this false declaration, look at the facts: Pumps and fire hose failed to work, not a boat was lowered, not a life-raft floated, the life preservers dragged down those who wore them. What help came to the fated vessel was from outside, and accidental. The General Slocum, bearing the inspectors' certificate of full equipment, had no effective means of saving her own hull from fire or the life of a single passenger from drowning. We are not writing at random in this matter; we have talked with those who drew ashore bodies actually weighted down by the life preservers that Inspector Lundberg declares in an interview were "in good condition." We know that these life belts, when thrown into the water, sank like stones; when ripped open displayed a mixture of soggy cork and glue, no more buoyant than so much dirt. Now, recall that the fire hose which did not work, the life-rafts which could not be released from their wire lashings, the life preservers which came to pieces when they could be reached, and dragged down the unfortunate swimmers who wore them, had all been inspected and declared not only serviceable, but of the first quality. These life-belts, which pos-

sibly had never been buoyant, bore an inspector's mark of buoyancy from the factory, and the certificate of successive inspectors that no deterioration had taken place. Inspector Lundberg, on May 5 last, certified under oath that the life preservers were 500 in excess of the legal requirement, and all in good condition. He said yesterday that he tested all "that appeared in any way old," and did not reject one.

So the farce of Government steamboat inspection in this port has ended in tragedy! There is too much reason to fear that scores of boats in this harbor are in no better condition than the General Slocum. A year ago last February this paper pointed out the fact that the local steamboat inspection was intentionally perfunctory. It has needed the holocaust of June 17 to make that warning of any avail. Making inquiry of the owner of certain harbor boats as to the condition of his flotilla we receive the answer: "My boats ought to be well equipped, for I do not bribe the inspectors." It is only too clear that we have to do not only with laxness in the inspection, but with corruption as well. Possibly the laws are inadequate. Evidently fire-proofing should be applied to the flimsy wooden superstructure of boats of the harbor type. But surely it is futile to pass new laws when those we have are winked at or sold for a price. The dreadful lesson of yesterday will have been incompletely learned unless compassion for the poor women and children who perished so miserably be converted into effective indignation against those whose indifference or venality has multiplied this horror sevenfold.

In contrast with this sickening record of cowardice and incompetency shines the brighter the heroism of many on board the Slocum and of a whole army of volunteer rescuers. Such of the story as we can gather we tell elsewhere. Much of it can never be told, for many of those who between two deaths played the hero are gone beyond recog-

dition. All the more reason, then, to do honor to those devoted men and women whose individual valor saved many lives that otherwise must have been sacrificed to the negligence of the State and the parsimony of a corporation—*Evening Post.*

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#### THE EAST RIVER TRAGEDY.

To parallel the horror of the burning of the General Slocum in the East River, we must look abroad. Nothing like it is recorded in our history. Only twice, in foreign waters, it has been duplicated—not by fire, indeed, but by collision and simple fate. In September, 1878, the steamer Princess Alice, with over 900 souls on board, was sunk in the River Thames, within the bounds of London, and 640 persons were lost. On May 24, 1881, the steamer Victoria, loaded with a holiday crowd, capsized in the Thames near London, Ontario, and nearly 600 persons were drowned. These, like the Slocum, were excursion boats, crowded by amusement seekers, and women and children made up the greater part of those who perished.

Nearly five hundred persons are known to have been lost in the burning of the Slocum, and estimates enlarge the number to 1,000, and even to 1,200. The latter number is sufficiently ghastly, and there is little hope that it will not be reached. It is seldom that a disaster involving the death of so many persons is so localized in its effects as is this. Almost all of the victims came from a German Protestant colony in the midst of a huge population of Roman Catholics and Jews, and it is not unlikely that in many cases the families of the lost will bear their grief silently, and not permit the public to know of it. St. Mark's Church, apparently, is wiped out.



It is too early yet to place the responsibility for the fire, or to say whether all was done at first that should have been done. Conflicting stories are told of the actions of the boat's crew, and the captain of the Slocum is criticised for not having run his vessel inshore before he did. Captain Van Schaick is an old harbor captain, and must be assumed to have done his best to protect his passengers and himself. The conditions confronting him—the fire, the strong tide, the possibility that his steering gear or machinery might give way—cannot be passed upon by a landsman. But when the fire had got beyond control, and the vessel was seen to be doomed, almost no criticism can be made of the efforts put forth to save life. Excepting, as alleged, the captains of a ferryboat and a yacht, everyone who could aid did so. Volunteers of all sorts and conditions lent assistance in saving life and recovering the dead. In the rescue work of individuals is found the only lightening of the horror of the fire.

When the first shock of the disaster is over, it will be needful to investigate its causes, and to place the blame for the great loss of life. It may be asserted now that the ultimate responsibility cannot rest on the shoulders of the captain and crew of the vessel, but must at least be shared by the Slocum's owners, and possibly by others. It is said, seemingly with truth, that the life preservers were useless, being old and made of bad material, and that the fire-extinguishing apparatus was poor, if not actually bad. The whole question of steamboat inspection under the Federal laws is involved in this disaster, and the further question of the safety of the excursion boat business of the city. It seems terribly clear that the spirit of the laws is not observed, however closely the letter may be followed.

The investigation must be searching, the finding must be definite, the action based on it must be decisive. The plea



that the fire and the consequent loss of life was the act of God cannot be accepted. God helps those who help themselves, and unless all proper precautions were observed, the death of 600 persons is a crime legally and morally chargeable on those who neglected them and took the risk when hundreds of innocent lives were at stake.—*Evening Mail*.

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#### SOME OBVIOUS LESSONS.

It is as useless as it would be futile to search for words to express adequately the full horror of the calamity of June 17. The awful results, stated in the headlines of the newspapers, leave nothing to be said. The first question that arises in every horrified mind is: "How was such a thing possible?" Following instantly and involuntarily upon this comes a second question: "Is a like thing possible upon any and every excursion steamer that plies about the harbor?"

General Dumont, of the Steamboat Inspection Department of the Government, who should be an authority upon the subject, says that the same conditions which ended in the awful disaster on the General Slocum exist upon every steamboat of this city engaged in the excursion business. Like the General Slocum, all of them have their upper works built of wood, all of them have these works painted and varnished and made thoroughly inflammable in every way, additional food for fire being supplied with hangings and furnishings. The flimsy joiner work, upon which all the inflammable material is laid, is arranged in the way most surely calculated to give fury to the flames, being piled up like kindling wood for a fire. Upon it with its coats of paint and varnish the sun beats till it is almost ready to ignite of itself. As General Dumont says:

"People off for a holiday, men especially, smoke cigars and cigarettes. Women and men read papers and throw them away. There is a puff of wind while the boat is going fast through the water, thus creating a breeze.

"A newspaper is blown under a seat. A lighted end of a cigar or cigarette touches the paper and in a second there is a blaze. Unless a fire on any excursion boat in our harbor to-day can be quelled immediately, there is little hope for the people aboard."

The conflagration broke out in as favorable a place for safety as could be found in our waters. Land was near and could be reached without long delay. It is not known yet what the exact period of time was between the discovery of the fire and the beaching of the boat, but it was as brief as could be expected to occur under any other conditions. Yet so rapid was the progress of the flames that 500 lives were destroyed. If the fire had broken out in the open Sound or in the lower bay, as it might have done, and might do in an excursion boat at any time, what chances would there have been for the escape of anybody?

This is not alarmist talk, but the first duty of the moment. General Dumont says the fault is not in the inspection methods, but in the laws; that the fault lies in the building of the boats and that there is no law to compel the building of a different sort; that even those which have steel hulls have the same inflammable and flimsy wood superstructure, and would be no safer in case of fire than the General Slocum was. He declares that, with a single exception, the steamboats of the present day are no safer than those built thirty years ago, because the same methods of upper construction are used. What he says on this point should be made the basis for immediate action:

"A good many years ago I pointed out that another danger on the excursion boat was about the boiler. A boiler

with a fire in it is always a danger spot. The only boat absolutely safe under these conditions is the C. W. Morse of the new People's Line to Albany. That boat has a steel sheeting all about her boiler and extending from hull to upper deck. She can't get afire from her boiler. The laws ought to be changed so that no flimsy joiner work is used in any boat designed for excursion traffic, and all boilers should be fully sheathed in steel. Then the public can be carried in safety."

There is no escape from this criticism, if the facts upon which it rests cannot be disputed. The laws in regard to steamboat construction should be amended by the next Congress in the direction General Dumont suggests. Steel sheathing for the boilers would not have prevented the disaster if the fire started in some other part of the vessel, but steel sheathing is possible for any portion of the boat in which there is possibility of a fire originating. But surely the time has come to stop building firetraps upon the hulls of our steamboats. The same law of safety which requires fireproof construction in our theatres should require the same construction in the deck work of all steamboats. It will not answer, after this awful warning, to say that present methods of construction have been safe and can be trusted to be so in future. They contain the largest element of peril, instead of the least. All the ingredients for a conflagration are supplied, instead of being vigorously excluded. We must go to the other extreme, reverse the process of construction, strip the hulls of their flimsy woodwork, their paint and varnish and oiled canvas coverings, their hangings and gaudy ornamentation, and construct them of steel and asbestos and other fireproof material, sacrificing show to safety, as we have done in our theatres.

—*New York Globe.*

## MESSAGES OF SYMPATHY.

## KAISER WILLIAM SENDS MESSAGE OF SYMPATHY.

The following telegram from the German Ambassador at Washington, Baron Speck von Sternberg, enclosing a cablegram from the German Emperor, was received by the Rev. Mr. Haas:

“WASHINGTON, D. C., June 18, 1904.

“REV. GEORGE HAAS, Sixth street, New York:

“The following cablegram has just been communicated to me by His Majesty the Kaiser:

“‘Being most profoundly affected by the news of the indescribably horrible catastrophe which has overtaken the Lutheran congregation, I command you to express to it my innermost feelings of sorrow.’

“In carrying out the command of my most gracious sovereign, allow me at the same time to offer you my own personal sympathy.

STERNBERG.”

## PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT WIRES HIS SYMPATHY.

The Rev. George C. F. Haas, the pastor of the church, received the following message of sympathy from President Roosevelt:

“To the REV. GEORGE C. F. HAAS, St. Mark’s German Lutheran Church:

“Accept my profound sympathy for yourself, your church and your people.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT.”

## RELIEF COMMITTEE IS APPOINTED BY MAYOR.

## TO THE CITIZENS OF NEW YORK:

The appalling disaster by which more than five hundred men, women and children lost their lives by fire and drowning, has shocked and horrified our city. Knowing the keen sympathy of the people of the City of New York with their stricken fellows, I have appointed a committee of citizens to receive contributions to a fund to provide for the fit and proper burial of the dead and for such other relief as may be necessary.

The following gentlemen have been asked to serve on the committee:

MORRIS K. JESUP,  
JACOB H. SCHIFF,  
HERMAN RIDDER,  
CHARLES D. DICKEY,  
R. A. VAN COURTLANDT,  
ERSKINE HEWITT,

JOSEPH C. HENDRIX,  
THOMAS MULRY,  
GEORGE EHRET,  
JOHN FOX,  
JOHN WEINACHT,  
H. B. SCHARMANN.

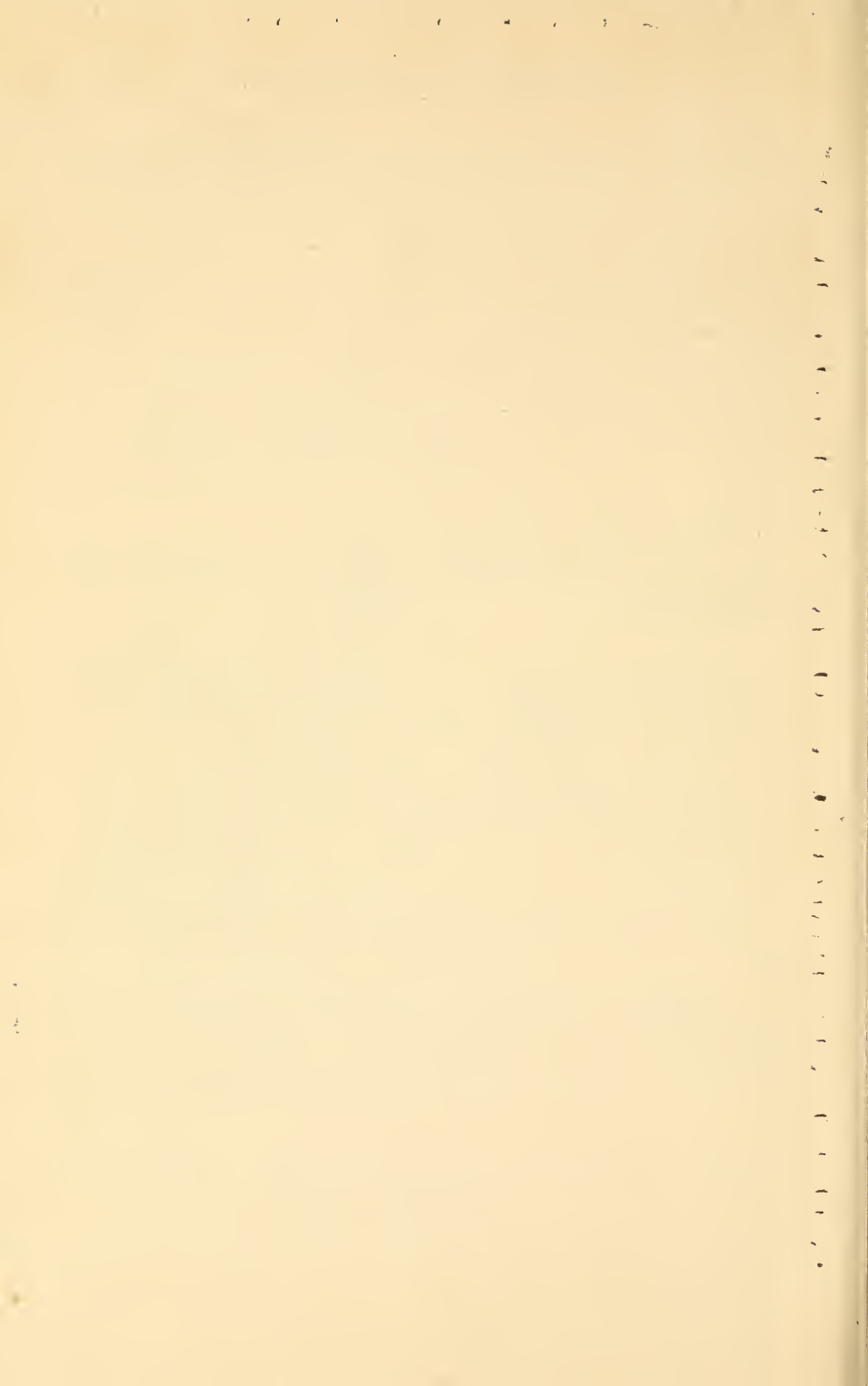
Until the committee has had an opportunity to organize I shall be glad to receive contributions at the Mayor's office.

As a sign of mourning I have ordered the flags on the City Hall to be put at half-mast.

GEORGE B. MCCLELLAN, Mayor.

THE END.





# A STORY OF FIRE AND DEATH!

We desire to announce that we have just issued the full and complete story of the

## GEN. SLOCUM DISASTER

by which nearly 1200 lives were lost in Hell Gate, New York Harbor, and which has created an intense interest throughout the country and which will have a large sale. We want an AGENT in every town to sell this book.

Everyone has heard of this great disaster, and will want this book which gives the complete particulars.

It contains 250 pages, and is bound in paper cover, price, 25 cents; bound in cloth, 50 cents. It also contains

### 12 FULL-PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS,

showing scenes and incidents in connection with the calamity. A bright boy *can sell 100 copies in your town*, and if you cannot act as our Agent please hand this circular to some one who might be glad of the chance to make money in selling it. The following are our *liberal terms to Agents*:

**Sample copy, paper cover, sent by mail, postpaid, 20 cents.**

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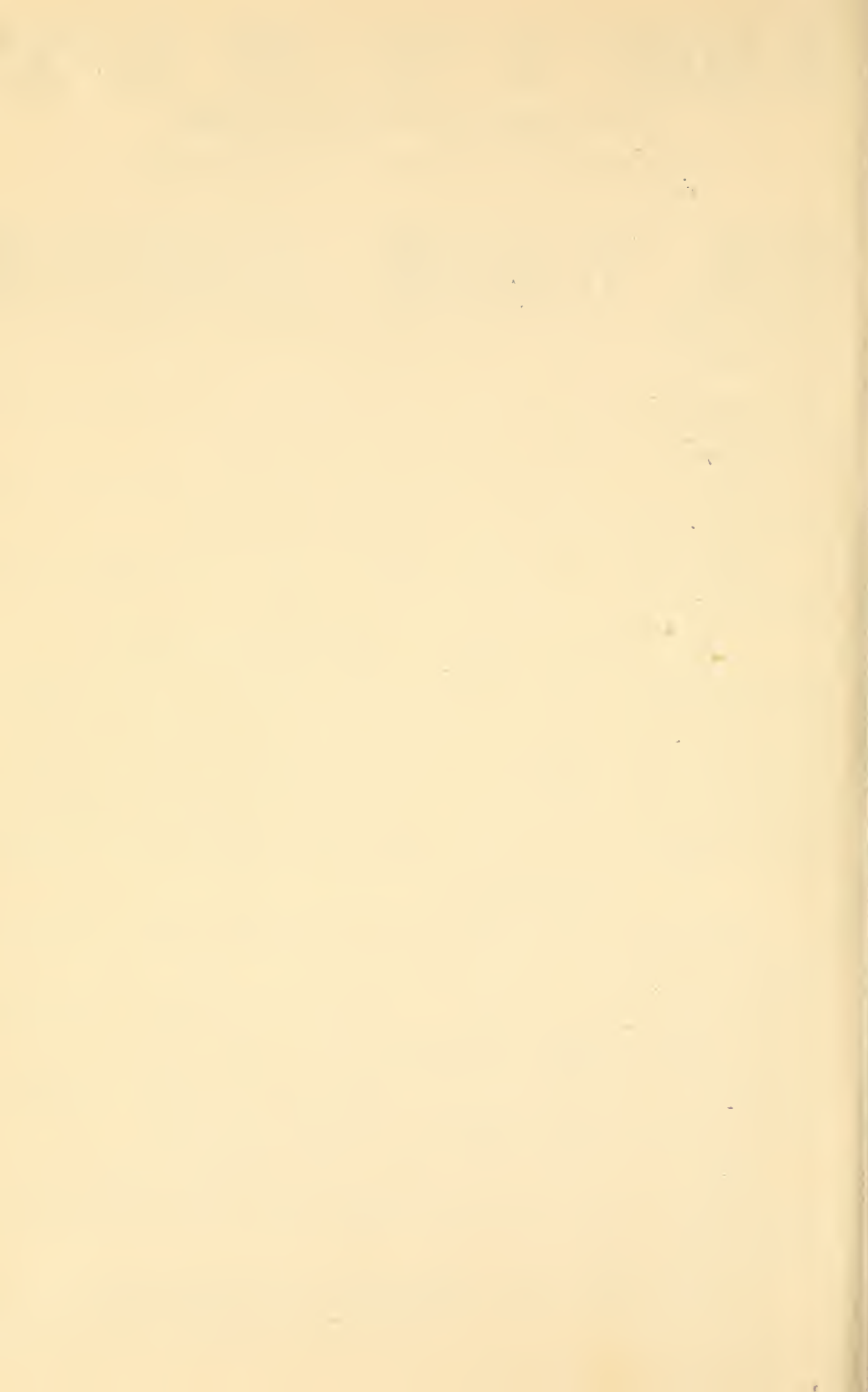
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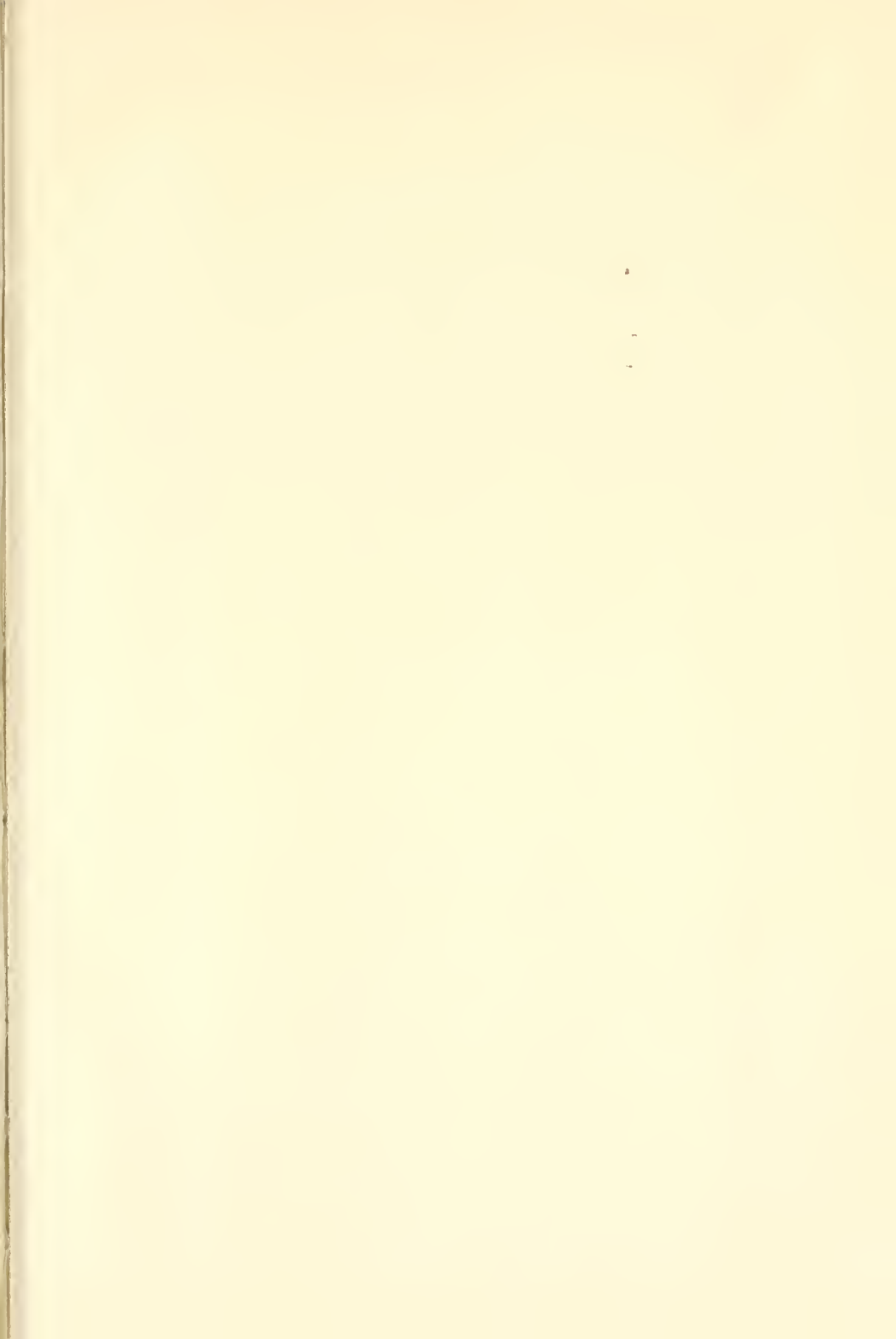
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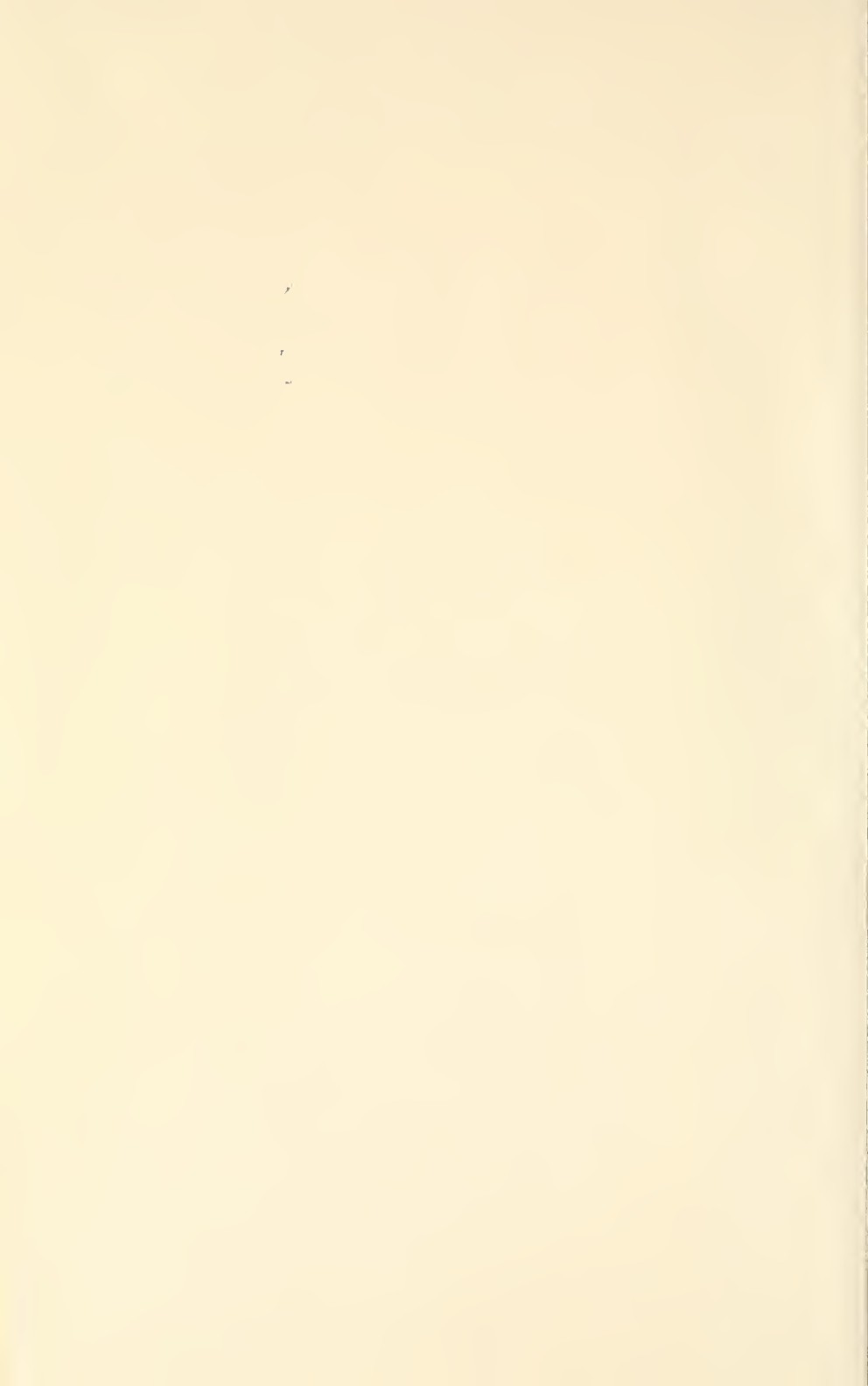
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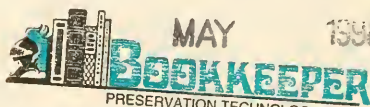








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