

GAIRLOCH A TOTAL LOSS.

Ran Ashore in Darkness

THE CREW ALL SAFE.

Early this Tuesday morning, Dr. Walker's house, which is connected by telephone with Oakura, received word that a steamer had ran ashore near that place. Signals of distress were observed for some time, but no assistance could be rendered on the spot. As soon as they heard the news, the Misses Walker went round in inky darkness to the Police Station, to give information of the disaster, and Constables Linn and Oliphant left for the scene of the wreck about 3 a.m.

No information as to the identity of the lost vessel, or her movements, were obtainable until this morning, when the officers and crew, 21 in number, of the Northern Steamship Company's s.s. Gairloch, 400 tons gross burden, commanded by Captain Austen, arrived at the breakwater at about half past six in the vessel's two boats.

AN UNEFORTUNATE TRIP.

The Gairloch left Onehunga on Saturday for Wanganui, intending to call at intermediate ports on the way down. She put in at Naglanui and Kawhia, leaving the latter port at about 2 o'clock yesterday (Monday) afternoon. If the weather was fine, it was the captain's intention to work Opunake on the way down to Wanganui, but if this was impossible, he would have visited Opunake on his return from the southern port.

Coming out from Kawhia, the vessel found herself in the North Taranaki Bight, and shaped a course to clear the Taranaki coast. The night came down very black and stormy, rain falling in torrents. So pitch black was the night that it is said that the Gairloch nearly collided with her sister ship, the Ngapuhi, which left the breakwater for Onehunga on Monday night. The two vessels were in close proximity to each other before their lights became visible, the whistles were at once set going and by smart and careful seamanship a collision was avoided, and the Gairloch proceeded south, to meet disaster a few hours later.

The sea was comparatively smooth but the weather was very dirty, and the gloom so thick that it was impossible to see anything ahead.

At about twenty minutes before midnight, those on board the Gairloch felt the vessel strike something, over which she appeared to glide as if on a smooth bottom. Then she stuck fast.

The captain at once sent up gun

rockets, in response to which the crew heard a great noise on the beach. This they took as the demonstrations of a Maori fishing party, but it was really settlers in the locality and inhabitants of Oakura who were alarmed by the rockets and sound of the guns. These hurried down to the beach but were powerless to render any assistance.

The crew remained on the doomed steamer until daylight, using the time to provision their boats. At daylight they launched the two boats and pulled some distance out to sea, where they caught sight of the Sugar Loaves. They then pulled towards the breakwater, having a distance of some seven miles to cover, and effected a landing at 6.30 a.m.

Despite their trying experience the crew were all in good spirits. They had plenty of clothes and the boats were well provisioned. The stewardess, Miss Stanley, who was in the last boat with the captain, walked up the steps at the wharf without assistance, showing that nobody was exhausted.

At the breakwater they met a kind friend in Mr F. Knowles, of the Breakwater Hotel, who gave the crew food and accommodation. Mr Neal, of New Plymouth, also kindly sent out a large bundle of socks in case they were needed.

SCENE OF THE WRECK.

The spot at which the ill-fated Gairloch went ashore is the Timaru reef some ten miles to the southward of New Plymouth. The vessel has

gone right up on the rocks, and the stern on to the beach. She went on at high water and was then perhaps a quarter of a mile from dry land, but Mrs Corkill, of the Oakura Bureau, telephoned this morning that at low water she saw a man walk right out on to the steamer.

CONDITION OF THE WRECK.

The Gairloch lies on the reef a total wreck. The rocks, as she passed over them at the first impact, tore the bottom clean out of the vessel, and she is reported to be fast breaking up. She is, of course, plainly visible from Oakura, and can also be seen from the top of Paritutu.

The Gairloch is lying in the centre of a large reef on the far side of Oakura. She is swaying with the tide, and there is no possible chance of getting her off.

An observer who visited the scene of the wreck this morning states that the plight of the steamer resembles that of a cable which has curved a corner too quickly and run into an obstruction.

THE CARGO AND SALVAGE.

The cargo of the wrecked steamer consists chiefly of sugar from the Northcote Sugar Works in Auckland. This was consigned to Wanganui. On her deck were also a landau and another carriage, which were also intended for Wanganui.

The New Plymouth Harbour Board's dredge, the Thomas King, left the breakwater at about 9

10 O'CLOCK THIS MORNING, ... THE SCENE OF
the wreck, to see if it is possible to
save anything from the ruins. Cap-
tain Austen and his officers returned
to their ship by the dredge and the
harbourmaster, Captain Hood, also
went down in the Thomas King. Mr.
Redford (the Collector of Customs),
and Sergeant Haddrell also visited
the scene of the wreck to-day, leav-
ing town at 12.30 p.m.

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Wreck Near Oakura.

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