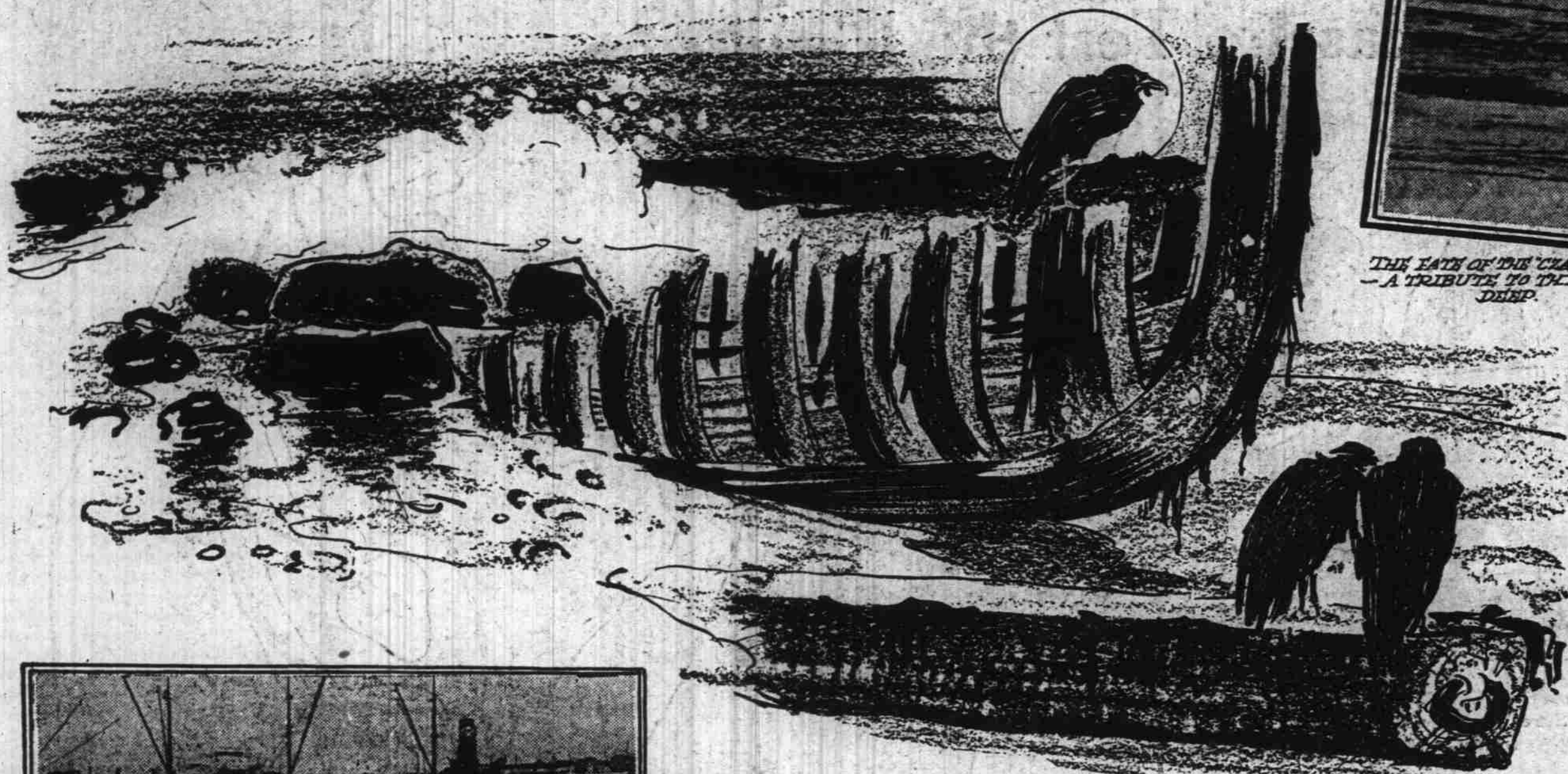


IN THE OCEAN'S GRASP

Grim Tribute Exacted on the Oregon Coast While the Breakers Boom



THE FATE OF THE 'CHARINA'—A TRIBUTE TO THE DEEP

NEPTUNE HAS WRITTEN THE LAST CHAPTER IN THE HISTORY OF THE 'SANTA CLARA'



FRANCIS H. LIGGETT, VICTIM OF A 90-MILE GALE—581087

By Earl C. Brownlee

"Out to the sea, the open sea,
The pouring, roaring, soaring sea,
The wind-whipped, tearing, flaring sea,
The sea that never rests."—Sea Song.

This fictioned, romantic business of sailing the seven seas is a grim game, with the odds always changing and the strength of solid steel demanded in ships and the souls of men.

Is more ruggedly picturesque and romantic than the rock-bound, sun-drenched coast of Oregon. It is the last frontier, beyond which only able seamen may venture, but to which the voyagers of the wide world have come—some of them to perish.

There is record in the pioneer and recent history of that sweeping shore line that would give the poet fuel for his most fiery verse and the fictionist pathos for his most harrowing tale.

Between the mouth of the Columbia river, great western waterway, and the southern boundary of the state the ocean has reached out her white crested breakers time and again to grasp lives by the score, cargoes worth millions of dollars, and ships—stately big sailers, doughty little steamers—innumerable.

There is an Indian legend somewhere that has given the hopeful researcher food for the belief that the redoubtable Captain Kidd, or others who pirated on the Pacific, once visited our shores—in the very shadow of hoary old Neah-Kah-Nie, a barrier against which many of the venturesome and the careless have battered.

It is estimated that 1879 was the year of the wreck of Oregon's famous beeswax ship at Neah-Kah-Nie mountain. The remnant of that valued cargo has been found in substantiation of the story of the wreck. In the offing stood a pirate craft, perhaps Captain Kidd's, bearing a chest of priceless treasures.

Somewhere about the old mountain that treasure chest is buried, many believe. And they believe it so sincerely that for years they have sought it. They expect to find the bleached bones of a giant negro upon its cover—for the story says the pirates buried their largest slave with the chest.

Neah-Kah-Nie is not the only barrier to those foolish or incompetent mariners who get off their courses along the Oregon coast. Peacock spit, off the mouth of the Columbia, is the tombstone for many an ill-fated craft and the hearty lads who sail the seas.

It was there the good ship Peacock, sent on a worldwide harbor investigating voyage by the government, piled up in 1841. From that wreck the spit got its name. In 1877 the bark W. H. Besse ran aground at Peacock spit and it was near the same fateful spot on November 12, 1911, that the steam

schooner Washington went off her course and presented one of the most spectacularly solved marine problems in history before she was successfully rescued.

Peacock spit, on January 9, 1913, claimed its greatest toll when the oil tanker Rosecrans went on the rocks that defy the strongest of man's work. The Rosecrans sacrificed 30 lives to the turbulent seas and a loss of \$250,000 was suffered by her owners. An incompetent officer at the bridge—a victim of his own failures—caused the wreck of the Rosecrans, where the most heroic work ever recorded to the credit of lifesavers was in vain.

The S. O. S. of the Rosecrans had sounded over the sea for many minutes before her wireless operator—despair clashed into every letter—sent his farewell message: "I guess it is all off. The ship's back is broken," the spark screeched. The last message reached friendly ears somewhere on the broad, blue sea, but the Rosecrans was gone.

No greater marine disaster has ever been recorded off the Oregon coast than the wreck of the Francis H. Liggett, which carried 58 victims into the depths of the sea on September 19, 1914.

A 90-mile gale swept the sea lanes on that afternoon. The furious waves made tinder of the hatch and the water flooded in to claim its tribute. There was no escape for the many—only two men lived to tell of the fate of the Liggett. One of them floated 10 hours on a railroad tie before he was rescued. Many of his mates had sought escape in lifeboats, but the little skiffs swamped pitifully in the heavy seas.

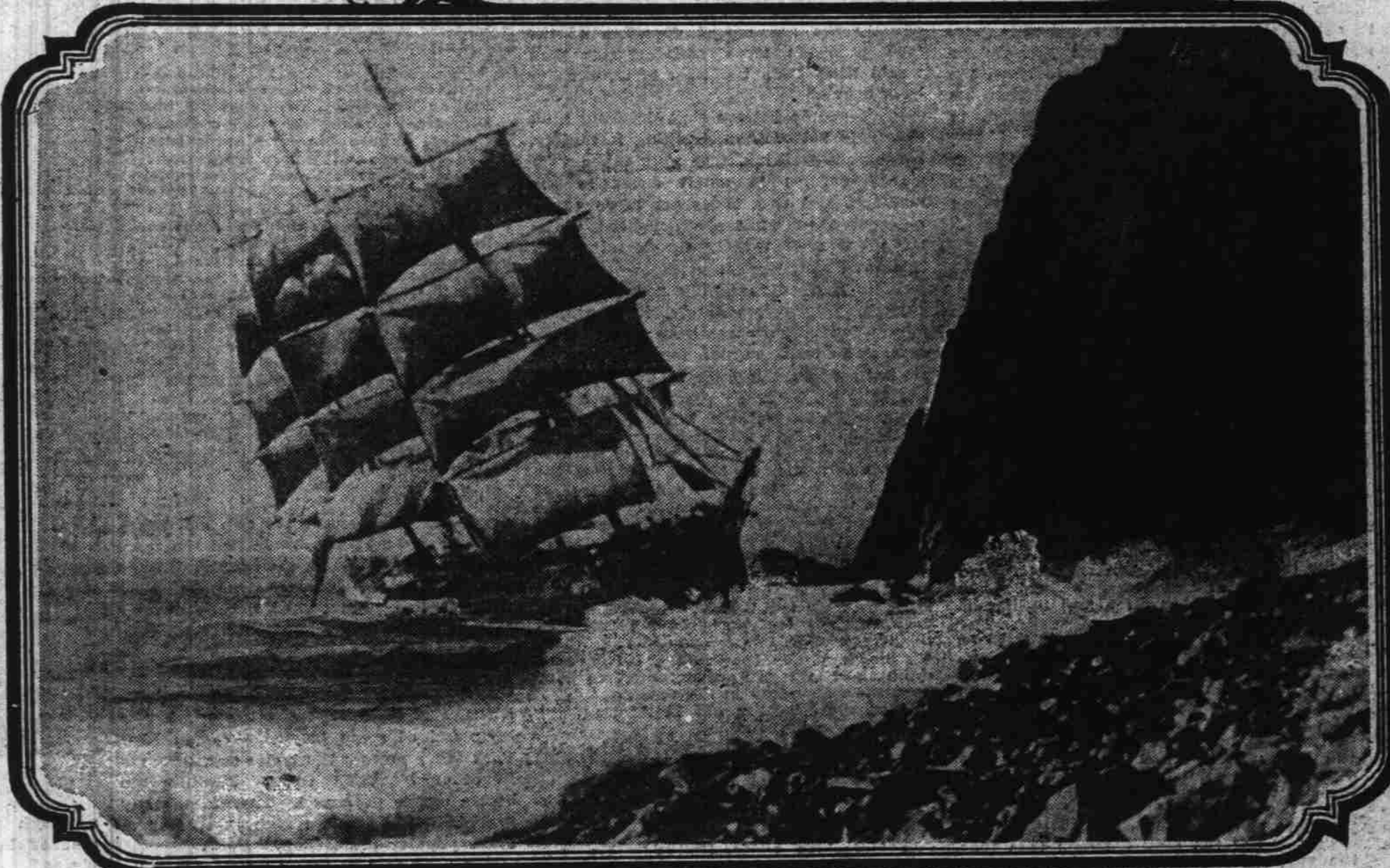
Thirty-one persons were claimed by Neptune's playthings on January 12, 1910, when the Czarina, tossed like a feather on a mad sea, hit the Coos Bay bar. Six men clung to her ice-crusted rigging throughout that bitterly cold night and when the morning broke over the scene of the disaster hope fled and the sufferers met their fate. They are visible in the picture here reproduced.

There, outlined against the never-ended background of ocean, within sight of relatives and friends on the shore, but beyond the possibility of rescue by human hands, those six men carefully unburdened themselves of their icy clothing and leaped into the foaming waves. Here was a stage where was enacted a tragedy in human life with a fearful, helpless audience separated by a raging ocean stretch.

Out of her channel, in the hands of a navigator unfamiliar with his course, the German bark Mimi went ashore off Nehalem spit on February 13, 1913. Engineering science was called upon to salvage the



GERMAN BARK 'MIMI' ASHORE, OFF NEHALEM SPIT.



PICTURESQUE THREE-MASTED 'GLENESLIN', CLAIMED BY NEAH-KAH-NIE'S ROCKS.

beached craft and on April 7, when success was in sight, the ship capsized and 18 of the 22 persons on board were lost.

Within 10 minutes the staunch Mimi was battered to shreds. She was bound in ballast from Valparaiso to Portland to load lumber.

Bound to San Francisco with passengers for that destination and for Coos Bay, the steamer Santa Clara, once known as the John S. Dollar, grounded on the south spit near the entrance to Coos Bay with 90 persons aboard November 2, 1915.

The rocks cut ruthlessly into her bottom and the breakers tossed her at will, pounding not only the ship, but the frenzied passengers, many of whom, in high hope, were

bound for the Coos Bay country and the riches that would come with the railroads.

The miracle of the Santa Clara crash was that only eight lives were lost. But the eight supplied sorrow enough for all who saw their battle against the sea. A tiny lifeboat with several persons from the Santa Clara was pulling close to the shore—its occupants were already tasting rescue. The skiff touched a sand bar in shallow water and overturned. All its passengers were lost.

Another little craft carried a young married couple and two children. A breaker foundered the skiff and the family was not found. In a little cabin on Bastendorff beach was set the theatre of sor-

row—a drenching rain to baptize it and a little kerosene lamp to light its small interior. That was the hospital where a score of the seriously injured and the dying were cared for.

Three days later the Santa Clara broke asunder, and the beach combers hauled in a rich harvest from her miscellaneous cargo.

The coast line between Bandon and Cape Blanco has in past years ranked as one of the Pacific's most grim playgrounds. Yet the course is well charted and perfectly safe for competent mariners who will stick to the business of sending their ships into the proper channels.

It was on Cape Blanco reef on the foggy night of October 13, 1903, that the steamer South Portland struck. Thirty-one lives were the

ocean's claim. Ten minutes after the rocks had cut their way into her vitals, the South Portland was a completely shattered, awful wreck.

A navigator had blundered. The South Portland, bound from Portland to San Francisco, plying an honest trade the first time in her career, had been a Cuban blockade runner and only a few years before being wrecked, an opium smuggler between Portland and Alaska—a vessel with a stormy history.

At midday on February 12, 1911, the gas schooner Oshkosh turned turtle within sight of the shore two miles south of the Columbia river jetty. Six members of her little crew were lost. George May, the Oshkosh's engineer, locked in his undersea prison, the engine room, battled for hours to free himself from his seemingly certain doom and tomb. Despair had engulfed

the engineer when the craft beached and he was rescued, but his mates were gone forever.

The wreckage of the barkentine Oregon, victim of a pioneer wreck, remained a sight for the curious near the mouth of the Coquille river for many years. The Oregon went ashore at an uncertain date, without loss of life.

The Lizzie Frien drifted ashore on November 13, 1891, but was hauled off without serious damage and without loss of life. On August 28, 1895, the British steamer Bownmore, 1428 tons, beached near the same spot and was a total loss, as was the Eureka, wrecked November 20, 1899. On August 28, 1901, the British bark Baroda, from Callao to Portland in ballast, hit the shore. A year later she was hauled off, very little damaged, and sold.

There have been innumerable marine losses along the Oregon coast in which, providentially, human life was spared. The Hugh Hogan, a three-masted schooner, crossing out from Florence, Or., ran ashore near the entrance of the harbor when she was lost from her tow. The nine members of the crew were saved, although the craft was a total loss.

The steam schooner Claremont struck the end of the sunken jetty at Marshfield, and foundered. Twenty-three persons aboard were saved, but the ship was a total loss. A jagged hole in her bottom spelled her doom indelibly.

At the mouth of the Siuslaw river on April 12, 1913, the little gas schooner Asvil was wrecked. There were no deaths.

Bound from Liverpool to Portland via Brazil, the picturesque British three-masted schooner Glenesslin struck the farthestmost cape off Neah-Kah-Nie mountain, impregnable sentinel of the great Pacific, October 1, 1913.

The wreck was one of the most picturesque, if that word can describe a view of a great winged boat riding to its doom on the crest of roaring, gnashing breakers, ever reported in Oregon marine annals. All hands aboard the Glenesslin were saved, but the stately old sailor was crushed and pounded to splinters upon the wicked rocks of Neah-Kah-Nie.

Oregon and the United States government have done much to protect the coast line of the state against the ministrations of the ocean's fate and the mistakes of those who brave the perils of the tossing seas.

The Pacific channels are charted carefully and extensively. The lights and buoys are plentiful and carefully located. Withal, among the many thousands of ships that sail our seas each year, some few of them must come to grief. It is an inevitable rule of the deep. That a few of them—a very few—should have found the door to Davey Jones' locker open off the Oregon coast is natural.

"But those who ever sailed the sea
And felt its rugged grip
Will always turn back wistfully
To seek another ship."—Sea Song.