

Thrilling Story of the Wrecking of the "Shark" Told to "Truth"

THE FISHERMEN'S PERIL.

ASHORE NEAR LANCELIN ISLAND : HOW HELP CAME.

EARLY ON SUNDAY MORNING THE 8th MAY A FISHING boat named the "Shark" was wrecked on the beach near Lancelin Island, about 70 miles North of Fremantle.

The "Shark" was manned by Messrs. Frank Payton, Otto Olsen and Arvo Grannath, well known fishermen of the Port. At the time of the wreck another fishing boat named the "Silvery Wave" was standing off the beach, but owing to the heavy surf she was unable to render immediate assistance.

When the "Shark" crew got ashore Olsen and Grannath decided to go for help and leave Payton, who is a war cripple, on the beach. They estimated that they would be back in a few hours, but the distance was greater than they had anticipated, and it took them over two days to get to Mogumber—the nearest station. There they got into touch with the police and the launch was sent from Fremantle to rescue Payton.

The account of the adventure and the surrounding incidents are here narrated by Frank Payton, exclusively for "Truth." Perhaps lacking the thrill of an epic, anyone with a seafaring knowledge will appreciate the real danger which faced the three men. Here is the tale from the pen of Frank Payton.

For several days and nights during the fatal week the weather had been fine; too fine in fact, for fishing, light east to north winds in the mornings, and calm nearly all the rest of the 24 hours. On Tuesday (the 5th) morning the glass began to drop and a freshening breeze sprang up from the north. Being in the vicinity of Lancelin Island, which is usually considered a good anchorage for fishing boats and, expecting bad weather, we decided to put in for shelter. We anchored early in the afternoon about half way between the island and the mainland, with the northern end of the island bearing about N.W. The Silvery Wave, which anchored sometime earlier in the day was lying about 500 yards away.

KEPT ON FALLING.

The glass kept on falling steadily

The glass kept on falling steadily and the wind gradually increased in velocity. By 10 p.m. the squalls were coming that often and heavy that the skipper went on deck and put a spring on the chain in order to ease the strain and the sudden jerks to which the chain was being subjected.

All that night it was blowing and raining pretty hard, but the next day the glass began to rise, the wind veered from the S.W. still blowing hard and the squalls became less frequent. It seemed as if the weather was going to settle down in a day or two and we expected it to be fine enough by Sunday morning to enable us to go out fishing again.

However, the preliminary blow and the rapid rising of the glass on Friday turned out to be what Fish Inspector Brown terms as "kidstake" weather, for on Saturday afternoon the glass began to fall as rapidly. The wind veered back from the N.W. and it began to blow in real earnest,

and it began to blow in real earnest, with a strong tide and heavy sea running. But it was not before about 8 p.m. that it developed into a full gale, accompanied by thunder and lightning and continual rain. I fell asleep about 11 p.m., while reading. Shortly after midnight I felt a bump somewhere under the stern.

In about a second we were up on deck and made to unloosen the sails and heave up the anchor, but, alas, it was too late, the boat was already close to the beach and touching bottom every time a wave was receding.

PITCH DARK.

It being pitch dark the wind howling like a lost soul, the seas breaking all round and clean across the decks and the boat reeling heavily now to one, now to the other side. I was under the impression that we were on the reefs.

Remembering all the sins I have committed in the past I decided to lead a better life in the future—if I got a chance. However, my anxiety as to our safety was relieved after a while by my mates explaining to me, that we were not on ~~the reefs~~, but only in the heavy surf, although still a good way off the beach.

After a while, seeing that nothing could be done for the time being, we went down the cabin to think out the position, and while waiting for a lull we closed the scuttles and blocked the openings with rags to prevent the water from coming into the cabin.

But in spite of all precautions, she was making water very fast, so we took turn and turn about at the centrifugal pump, which could be worked inside the cabin—but to no avail. The water was coming in faster than it could be pumped out, and after a while the floor was awash, as well as the whole port wall, the boat having a list of about 40 degrees to port by then. In the meantime the storm was raging as fiercely as ever, and the boat was getting a se-

as ever, and the boat was getting a severe buffeting from the breaking seas.

At last she must have opened up somewhere in the hull, as the cabin filled in about 10 minutes, while she swung her stem towards the beach, the stern having settled more or less firmly on the bottom.

IN THAT CHAOS.

Well, we decided to try and get ashore, and forthwith proceeded to pack up, which was no easy matter in that chaos, as everything was wet and moving about. However, we managed to pack some of our clothes, and out

of the galley we secured a chunk of bacon, half a loaf of bread, a couple of packets of sweet biscuits, some coffee, tea, milk, jam, two tins of meat, and half a bucket of fresh water. Also some kerosene and a hurricane lamp.

Our matches and tobacco we wrapped in oilcloth and canvas. The skipper watched his chance, and when a sea was running out jumped over and ran towards the beach. My other mate stopped on deck while I was waist-deep in the water in the cabin handing things to him, which he, in turn, handed to the skipper over the stem whenever the surf was running out. When at last we got ashore ourselves we were glad to feel good firm sand under our feet. With the aid of much kero-

Left Inset (Payton.)

sene and some dry twigs we made a big fire in the shelter of a sand dune, and boiled some coffee. It was then about 4 a.m.

We held a council, and decided that, not having overmuch food, and not knowing how long the blow was going to last, that my two mates walk inland in search of assistance, while I, on account of my leg, stop behind to look after our goods and chattels and keep the

leg, stop behind to look after our goods and chattels and keep the fire going.

So, after having had a feast of sweet biscuits and tinned dog, my mates set out on their journey.

I was anxious lest they should get lost, but they assured me that they would return ere long, possibly with help.

LOST TO VIEW.

In the meantime, I was to keep up a good fire and smoke, which would serve them as a landmark on their return trip. The last I saw of them was when they were lost to view behind the crest of a sandhill.

Left to myself, I reviewed the situ-

ation, and decided that first of all I must get a plentiful supply of firewood. I collected a good deal along the beach. The fine scrub growing on the dunes was too green, and wouldn't burn. Later in the day I was overjoyed to discover some timbers off the fishing boat Olai, which was wrecked in that vicinity a few years ago. But it was a long way from our "camp," and I was just about played out. So I rolled some of the heavier planks along on an oil drum and also floated some through the surf.

All our belongings were covered with an old jib, which was scant protection from the rain. But towards evening it began to clear up somewhat. I must have fallen into a long and heavy sleep

Right Inset (Olsen.)

alongside the fire, for when I woke up the moon had set and the fire was nearly out. I was still soaking wet and cold, and all the joints in my body were stiff and numb. I piled some more wood on the fire, made a hearty meal of coffee, grilled bacon and a bit of mouldy bread, and felt a lot better.

A SORRY SIGHT INDEED.

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In the new dawn of Monday morning the Shark looked a sorry sight indeed, lying completely over on her side, her jibboom pointing inland, part of her bulwark gone, the sails torn to shreds, great masses of seaweed entangled in the rigging and halyards. The scuttles knocked open by the swirling waters, the decks being swept by the heavy surf. Her fate was sealed.

Later in the day I unpacked some of our clothes and hung them out to dry. I also got a move on and collected more firewood. By then I was beginning to get anxious about my mates. But reflecting that they were good bushmen, I assured myself that

they would be back now anytime.

After a while, during a lull, the crew of the Silvery Wave deemed it safe enough to launch their dinghy and come ashore. The skipper explained to me, and I well knew myself, that it was impossible for them to come ashore the day before, because of the weather. He was relieved to hear that no one got lost or injured, and offered to take me back to Fremantle in his boat. I thanked him and refused his offer for the following reasons:—

THE REASONS.

1. My mates may be back any time, possibly with some means to convey ourselves and our belongings to some railway station. 2. Not finding me, where they left me, they may come to the conclusion that I made for the bush myself, or something had happened to me. 3. There was no telling how long it would take the Silvery Wave to reach Fremantle, as the weather was still unsettled.

The skipper, however, gave me a lot of tucker and as I found plenty of

of tucker and as I found plenty of water by digging about three feet 200 yards from the beach, I had sufficient victuals to last me for at least a week.

I made myself a little shelter out of washed up gear and planks and settled down to await my mates. The Silvery Wave sailed next morning and I prepared myself for a long vigil.

Imagine my surprise when about dinner time I saw a motor launch approaching. I waved my arms and legs, yelled out, piled up the fire—did everything in fact to make sure that I would be seen.

I need not, however, have worried for the launch dropped anchor and a dinghy was rowed ashore by two policemen.

I was taken aboard where Inspector Brown, who was in charge of the launch did everything possible to make me comfortable.

SOPPING WET AGAIN.

After I had revived somewhat we decided to bring the salvaged gear aboard. After three trips with the dinghy—once swamped—we got it on board, but everything had got sopping wet again.

Thursday morning we left, and I was not sorry to see the grey streak of Lancelin being left astern—but as we were still 35 miles from Fremantle at nightfall, it was considered politic to sling the anchor. At daylight we were off again and you can guess with what joy the sight of the old Fremantle moles filled me, when we saw them about 2 p.m.

In closing this narrative I would like to thank Inspector Brown and his merry men for the special—the almost tender care they showed me. I shall never forget them, nor shall I forget my last glimpse of the remnants of the poor Shark—writhing in the surf like a tormented serpent.

HOW THE OTHERS FARED.

When daylight came on Sunday morning, and it was seen that there

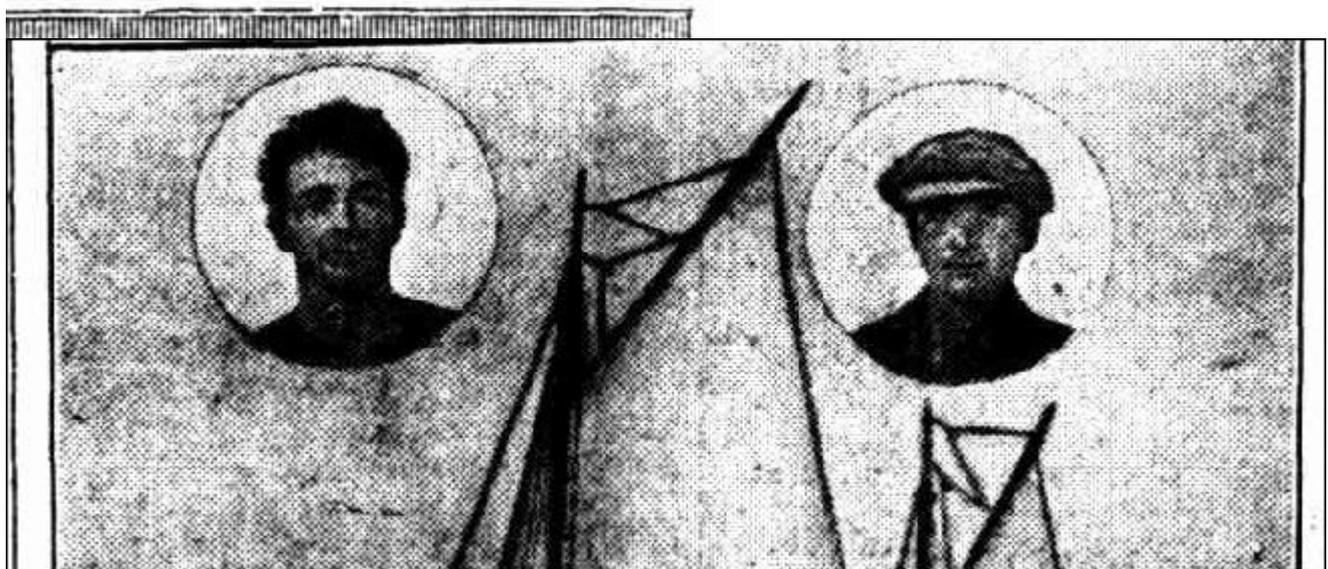
When daylight came on Sunday morning, and it was seen that there was no chance of getting out to the Silvery Wave through the big seas, the other two members of the party decided to make a break for assistance, as stated above.

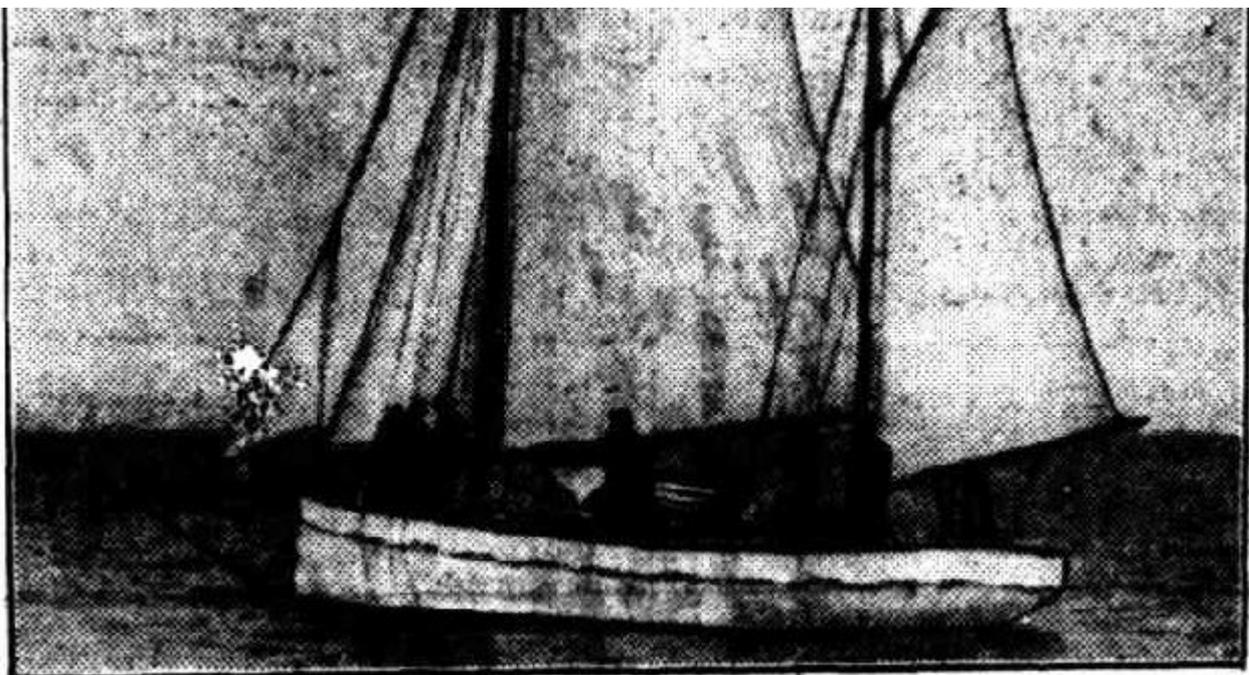
On studying their chart they planned to make for Moora, and struck easterly towards what they took to be a road on the chart.

To their dismay, however, the road proved to be the old stock route, and at night they struck camp, and at daylight next morning were on the trek again. At noon they reached and waded the Moora River. Foot-weary, and without water, their plight was far from happy. They found a spring, however, which yielded water that was drinkable only after boiling.

Just when the shadows of the late afternoon were deepening into night they struck habitation, a farm called "Kilmoray," about 14 miles out of Murgumber.

The settlers—Needham their name—made them comfortable for the night, and next morning drove them to the New Norcia Mission station, where they got into telephonic communication with the police. That was the message that sent Inspector Brown to the rescue of Payton, the man who had been left on the beach. A few hours later they had entrained for Perth, and were at Fremantle to welcome their friend on his return on Friday.





The "Shark" As She Was.