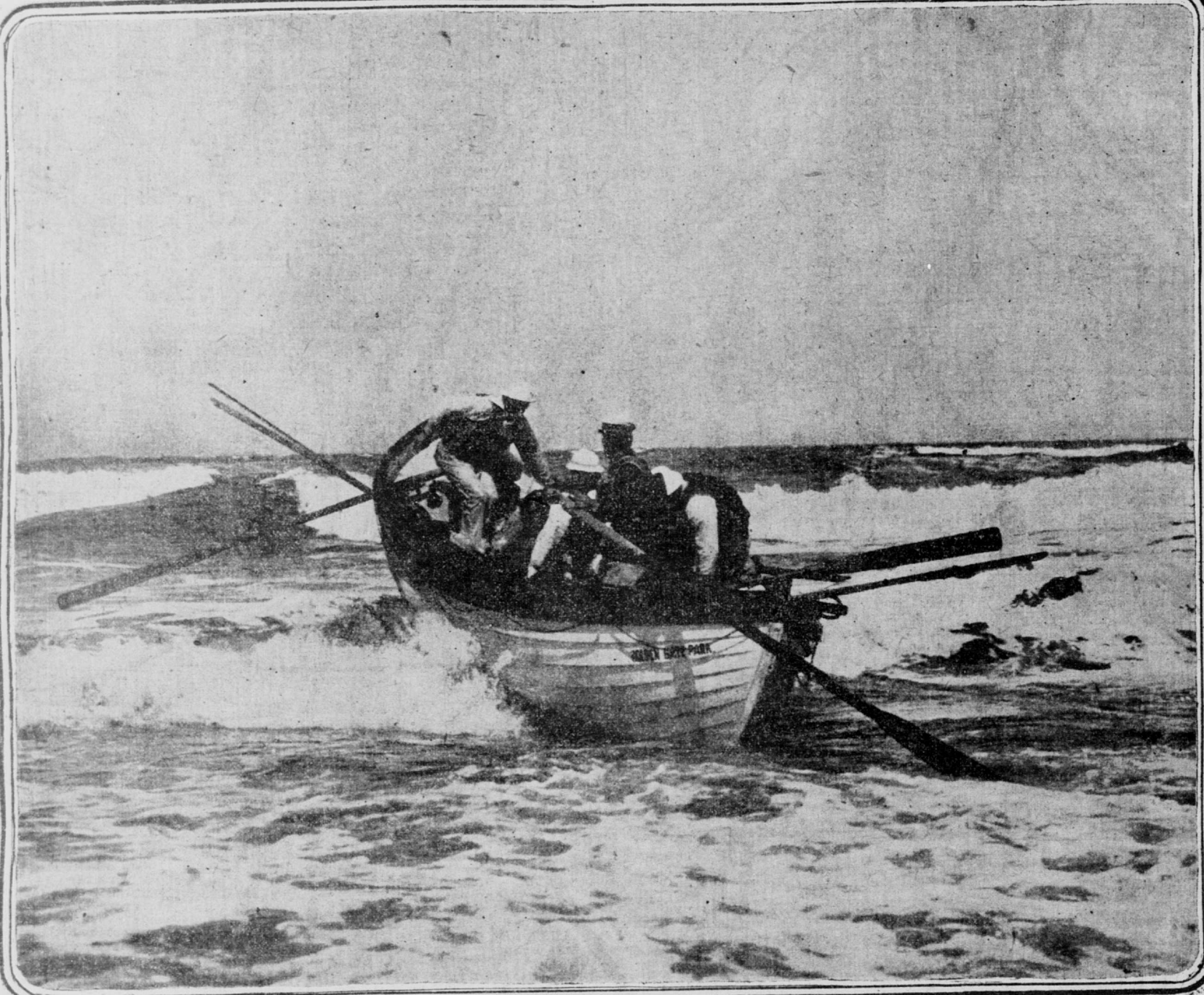
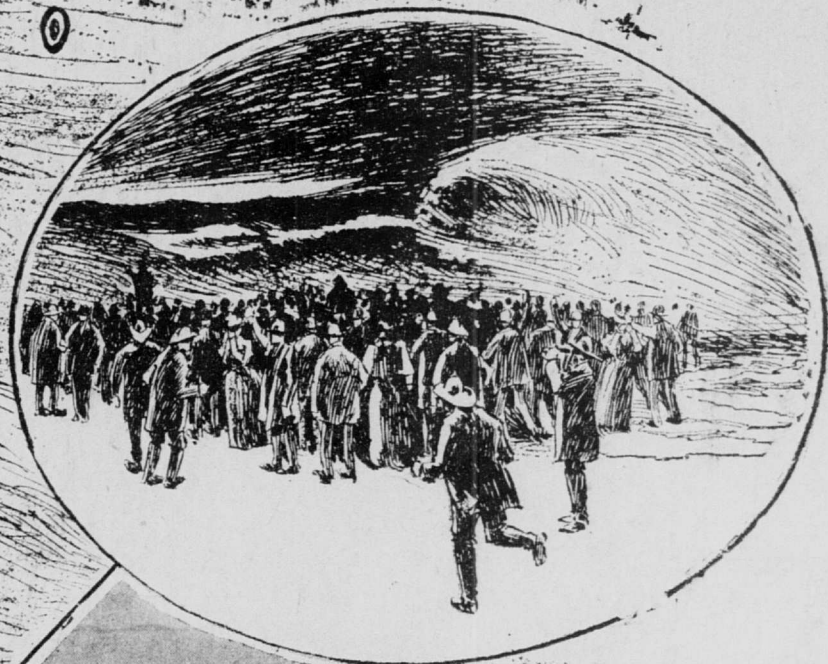
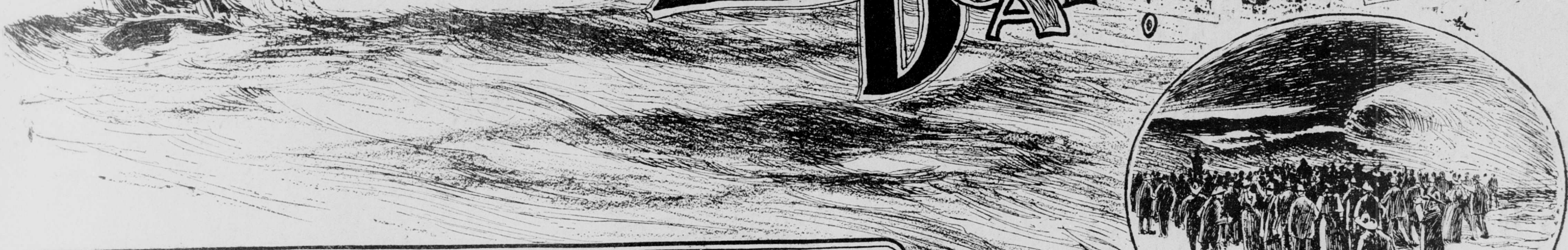
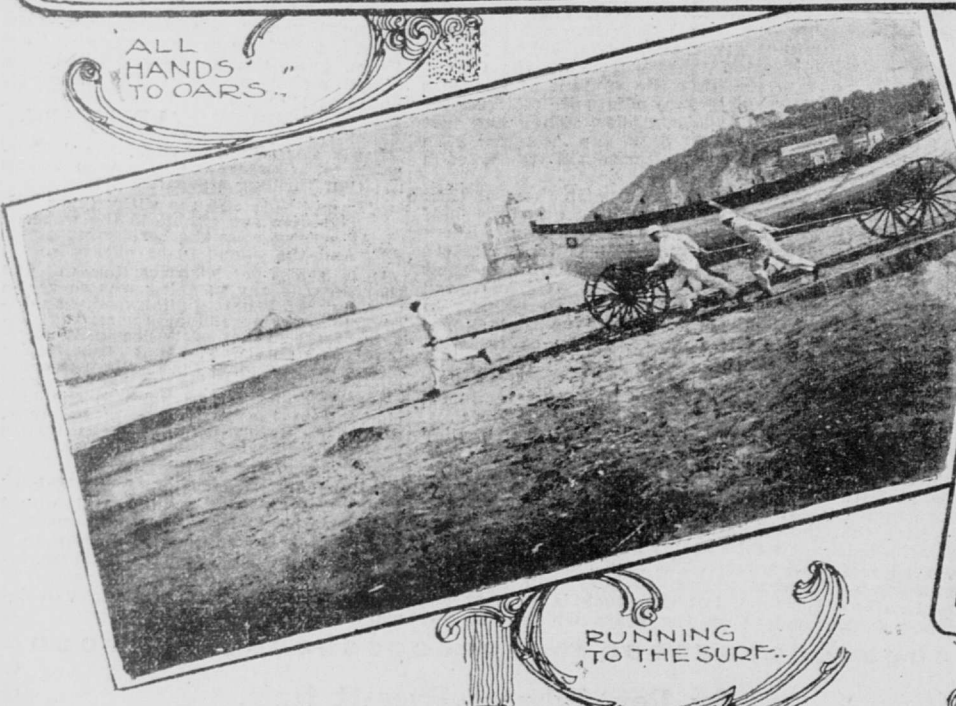


MAN THE LIFE BOAT!

OF THE CLIFF HOUSE BEACH.



BACK TO THE BEACH AGAIN.



ALL HANDS TO OARS.



INTO THE BREAKERS.



NOW, ALL ABOARD.

COME, boys, let's go out and get wet." That's what Captain Varney of the Golden Gate life-saving station said to his crew last Wednesday when he wanted them to go out and drill in the surf. And he could have described the expression no better, for the men were as wet as drowned rats before they got through maneuvering the lifeboat in the breakers.

There is a lifeboat drill once a week out on the Cliff House beach, the day depending on the weather. If a fine day comes early in the week the drill takes place then. Should the weather prove unfavorable early in the week the drill is put off until a fine day comes along.

It might appear at first thought that it would be best to drill in bad weather

so that the men could get accustomed to rough water. But this is not so, for the lifeboat drill is not a mere amusement; it is an exercise calling for both courage and nerve and at all times accompanied by considerable danger. In rough weather, no matter how much care is exercised, there is likely to be an accident to some of the gear, even though the men should be so lucky as to escape. An hour afterward there might be a call for help and with a broken boat on hand the life-savers would be unable to respond. That is the reason that no drill takes place in rough weather. Besides, the water is always rough enough for all purposes. Just watch the lifeboat and see.

After the order is given to drill there is a hurrying of men from distant parts of the station. They rush into

a small room at the back of the boat-house and hurriedly cast off their ordinary garments and get into suits of thin white duck. For shoes they put on cloth slippers with rubber soles.

"When we go through our drill here," said Captain Varney, "we go at it just the same as if there was a boat in distress out in the breakers. Not a second of time is lost and every move is as exact as possible, so that each man becomes thoroughly familiar with his work and never makes a mistake."

"Man the lifeboat," calls out the coxswain, and the drill has commenced.

In less than ten seconds from the time the order is given the canvas covering is stripped from the boat and it is rolled out in front of the house. Then at the word of command every man jumps to his place, seizes a rope

and all start for the beach on the run. It is an almost grotesque sight to see the big boat mounted on wheels flying over the sand. The men drag it as if it were a toy, although it weighs over two tons. Down the sandy beach they fly and plunge right into the breakers. The idea is to get the boat into as deep water as possible, so that it may be more quickly sent out into the breakers.

By this time the men are all wringing wet, but each quickly seizes a life-preserver from the boat and buckles it on.

Then the boat is pushed from the wagon, or truck, and each man takes his place at the sides, except the coxswain, who stands in the stern with a long oar ready to steer the instant deep water is reached.

One or two small swells come in and the boat is pushed out a little further each time. Then a big roller comes along. It buries the boat in foam, but lifts it high from the beach.

Just at this instant the men jump in and take their places at the oars. Before the rushing tide has had a chance to recede half a dozen mighty strokes have taken the boat far from land and out into the big, rolling breakers.

While the lifeboat was on land it looked like a big, cumbersome hulk. But out in the surf it becomes a thing of life and rides each roller with the grace of a swan.

There are usually four lines of breakers on the beach and to get past each of these is a mighty task. The men haul at the oars with all their strength,

but even then progress is very slow. After rising over the first incoming breaker the lifeboat plunges into the depths beyond so deep as to disappear from sight. Then she rises high into the air, hanging on to the crest of a wave for a moment, slides around and goes down the next roller at an angle.

Steersmen and rowers now pull as if for dear life. The boat almost swings around to take the next wave on her bow, but does not make it. The crest of the wave breaks on her quarter, half filling the boat with brine and concealing it from view in a mountain of foam.

But nothing daunted the sturdy life-savers pull for the last breaker. A dozen small seas all come in at once. The lifeboat is pitched around like a cork. Up and down and round and

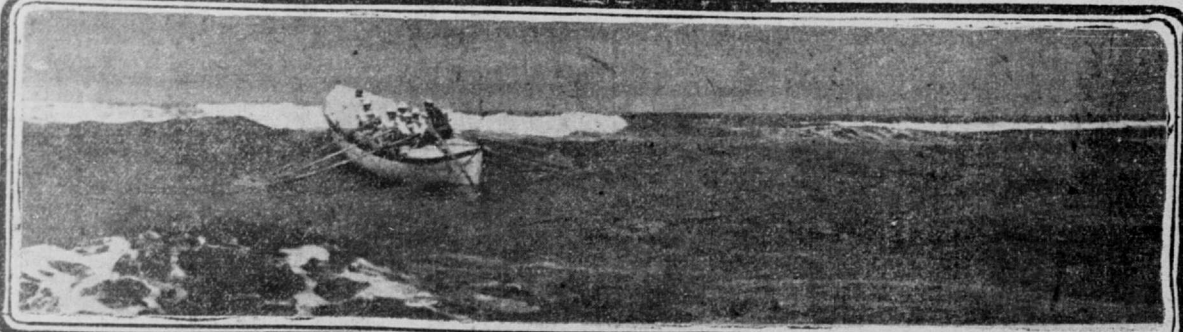
round, rolling first on one side and then on the other. Waves break on all sides and foam rises to the gunwale.

But here comes the last breaker. Steady now. The steersman hangs tightly to his oar and turns the boat to just the right angle. Then the wave comes and she takes it just right. Raising her bows high in the air she poises an instant. Then her stern rises and she plunges down into the trough of the sea. The lifeboat is now out in the ocean, and if there was a ship in distress out there it would be an easy matter to get aboard of it and rescue the imperiled crew.

Out in deep water the drill is confined to the art of handling the boat. Big rollers have no terrors for the lifeboat. She rides them in all directions and even lies in the trough of the sea, where an ordinary craft would perish.

This exercise also consists of pulling men out of the water and righting and hauling the boat after upsetting it. The lifeboat's crew seem like a flock of seagulls so much as they at home in the water. Their boat will toss about bottom side up for several moments when they will all get around and turn it over and climb in.

To get back to land is not difficult, but it is more dangerous than going out. In this instance the aim is to check the speed of the boat, for otherwise she would be hurled on the beach as if fired from a cannon. This danger is overcome by throwing out a drag that holds the boat back. Then it is only necessary to steer properly and in a few minutes there is a bump on the beach. Instantly the men jump out and like a flash drag the boat back to shallow water. The drill is now over.



ON THE EDGE OF THE BREAKERS.



STRIKING THE FIRST ROLLER.