

H Thoreau's Notes.

The only ones of the survivors who remained on board till the vessel broke up were the carpenter & the cook. I conversed with the former & the mate, but the cook was not to be found when I called. He was the only American among the crew, & the only one who was unsteady— He was intoxicated most of the time on shore.

The following is the account of Charles W. Davis 1st Mate—A Hanoverian, who went out from N. Orleans.

They had pleasant weather up to latitude 58° so that they painted the vessel. Margaret conversed with him one day about the late wars in Germany & Italy. The child did not talk. He understood that Bangs had been captain of one or two vessels before. At 2 ½ o'clock A. M. on Friday they had soundings at 21 fathoms, & thinking that they were off the Jersey shore, headed NE by E half E. the wind being S. SE, working round to S. (Oakes said that the wind never held long at the SE.) Both he & the Captain expected to know only their latitude, not their longitude! That was too difficult a calculation. The storm was now raging. "Did the Captain turn in?" "He was in his room & would come out & ask what the weather was." The ship struck at 10 minutes before 4. About 2 hours afterward the cabin became untenable and the sailors helped the passengers forward to the forecastle, which was stronger; the latter being in their nightclothes. The ship lay along parallel with the shore, headed east, tipped up on the S. or windward side, the deck sloping to leeward—one end about as high as the other— When he helped Margaret forward, the rigging & sail had fallen across midships so that it was difficult to get under or over it, while the sea was breaking over their heads. Margaret then asked him to get her money out of her desk? or portfolio? and then she said, she would have enough to pay her passage to New-York—also two large seal rings, with a kind of family seal on them. He got the money which was in doubloons, about 70 dollars, this he knew was all she had, except some drafts—also the seal rings, & besides two other smaller lady's rings, one of them with white stones in it, her breast pin, & her eyeglass with a gold handle, & a heavy gold chain—which she did not wear that morning. These things which were more than she asked for, he brought to her, & she told him if she & her husband were lost, to send the child to the Marquis Ossoli, New York. He supposed that she meant her husband. The Ossoli's sat still & silent. The child did not cry. Margaret sat in her white night dress, flat on the deck, with her back to the bulwarks on the upper or windward side, & her feet toward the foremast; the sea breaking over all, though the bulwarks afforded some protection. A smooth place under the lee of the vessel was favorable for the passengers getting off. Having put Mrs Hasty on a plank he started swimming behind, & pushing her before, & they landed about 11 O'clock without assistance— He complained of a sore chest produced by the sea throwing the plank against him— This was an heroic exploit—& proves great strength courage & skill— They completed about the first eight that got ashore. He stayed on shore till the vessel went to pieces, & was the last of the crew that left the spot.

The men on shore had not courage enough to launch the life-boat— They might have

launched it without risk to their lives; he had seen a whale boat launched in as rough a sea. If it had been the coast of England they could all have been saved. The men sat for an hour or two on the side of the boat doing nothing but now & then picking up a hat, (part of the cargo) that came ashore. They did not begin to load the mortar till it was too late—till the fore mast fell—though it had been there an hour or two—& then they had brought but one ball, though they had plenty of them at the Light House(. 4 or 5 miles distant) One man said, that 'he had done enough, he was not going back for another. "Did the Captain do his duty?" "I should think he did what he could. I dont know— He said that nobody would come ashore with him." (The Captain did not come ashore till after the Mate.)

(Davis & the Captain evidently were not on good terms with one another— The former did not know that B. was gone to Phil^a till I told him, but apparently he did not wish to say any-thing against him.)

He said that the Ossolis had four trunks, perhaps five—2 pretty large ones, two smaller—one pretty large case full of books—a tin box marked M. F. which he painted over, letters & all, lead colour, on the voyage. & some more small baggage. A small black iron bound trunk which I saw at Oakes' was Margaret's He saw her put her watch into it. This came ashore empty before his eyes. (The contents of the other were saved, it being late in the day & many people present. It landed itself, & was rolled over & over up the beach.) He saw ladies' clothing bonnets &c. taken out of the larger trunk when it was opened at Oakes'— He knew that Mrs Hasty never had a tasselled dress such as I found & described to him, but he saw such an one on the voyage in Margaret's trunks two of which were often open before him.

Account of John Helstrom a Swede—Carpenter—last 2^d mate—Davis interpreting.

The Ossolis, Paulina, cook steward Sandford, & himself & Westervelt were in the forecastle till it commenced breaking up, which was a few minutes before the foremast fell. They all left the forecastle immediately— He & Sandford went up the foremast—then the cook & Ossoli, he & Sandford helping the latter. The steward got up with the child in his arms, its legs & arms sticking out— 'Did he take the child by force?" He did not see, but supposed he did not.

At the same time Sandford had Padena in the forerigging. When he & Sandford helped Padena up she being first Madame Ossoli was standing behind her next to the mast, but when they turned for her, the sea had taken her. She was drowned before her husband or child— He was very sure of this. A few seas after washed off the "top" by which Ossoli held & left him nothing but the bare mast to cling to; then another sea washed him off. Either directly before or after this, or at the same time, he could not tell which, he looked up & saw that the child was no longer in the arms of the steward— Then came a sea & washed them all off together. It was only about fifteen minutes after the breaking up of the forecastle.

Selah Wood & Daniel Jones of Patchogue, were the earliest on the spot of those who

admit that they were there at all. They happened to be in the Bay in their oyster boat directly opposite. There were many other boats a little farther north seeking the shelter of the beach. Wood who behaved like one suspected & to be suspected said (I omit what has been related) that about 2 hours after sunrise, the storm a little abating, he saw the ship a mile & a half distant over bay & beach, & both went across. The foremast was standing, the midmast was off at the top, the mainmast cut off short. Every sea broke over all. The tide was falling when he got there. It had been over the beach as far as the sand-hills, & came over again afterward. The sailors kept shouting to him & he to them in vain through the wind & surf—he motioning toward Oakes that he would go there. Most of the sailors & passengers effects had already come ashore. There were many chests all stove open, & some with their locks pried off.” They looked & his companion found a fresh wagon track & a man’s track, leading at last towards Oakes’. Oakes was ‘mad’ with him for what he had said. When he got to the house Mr & Mrs Oakes were not to be found at once. Oakes had two men one of whom told Wood after he had pointed out the vessel to him that he had seen her two or three hours before & thought that ‘she was sailing under bare poles’ at which Wood laughed at him, & Oakes said, You damn fool you shut your jaws, you know nothing about it” The first man came ashore when he was at Oakes’ & had a life preserver on— One or two more life preservers float[e]d ashore afterward. The sailor exclaimed “My trunks, chests, all a poor sailor’s things robbed, broken open, & gone!” He had a rope tied round his body and stood in the water to catch those who were washed up. The captain’s head was driven into the sand & it was with difficulty that they got him out. No dead body came ashore till the vessel broke up. The sailors did not send their clothing ashore on planks. Their clothes probably were not washed off much except Paulina.— He delivered to Dominy & a large man (Prime said it was Le Roy) separate bundles of letters & papers”—which the latter opened on the spot & separated, & then threw down on the beach what he thought of no value He could have gone to the wreck in a skiff on Thursday. Bangs said he would rather have gone ashore among pirates.

Mr & Mrs Oakes’ account.

Oakes’ is a perfect pirate’s house, & his men good specimens of that nearly extinct class. There were the stern ornaments of wrecked vessels over the door, & the fragments of wrecks cluttered the yard. He himself was a carman in New York & the worst stories are told of him. Officers have formerly searched his house—his wife has been arrested—he has concealed himself on the beach & been troubled in many ways on account of his dealings with wrecks. —There had been no such storm since they lived there, or for 11 years.—few could remember such a storm at this season of the year— They compared it to the September gale. The fruit trees on the mainland were much injured by the spray. Their fire was put out by the rain. Their house was isolated— The sea breaking quite over the beach (half a mile wide) in a hundred places. Several oyster boats were sunk in the bay, & their own boat still lay bottom up in the water.

Oakes said that he had been out early attending to his boat garden &c., came in, threw himself wet on the side of his bed, & fell into a sound sleep. Was waked up about 9

o'clock out of a very deep sleep, & told that there was a vessel ashore. He jumped up, (he jumped up again to show us,) rubbed his eyes, did not know where he was for a long time. Sent a man for the life boat at the Light House 3½ miles distant. He met one sailor 20 rods from the shore, there being nobody else there He was in good heart,—Oakes directed him toward the house. In a few moments another came ashore, & he sent him after the former, directing him to go on to the Light house & hasten the Life-boat— (It would take 2 or 3 hours to go to the Light-house & back) They began to come ashore pretty fast. He had 3 naked men to take care of at once. One was quite naked, & Mr Adams put his frock coat over him— The sea washed all their clothes off them. The captain was one of the three. He was a dead man & Oakes standing in the water up to his middle pulled him out with difficulty. He rolled him in a barrel on the shore & in a few minutes he cried “Oh, don't, you hurt me!” speaking up pretty strong. Then they desisted, wrapped him up in a buffalo skin, & took them all to the house in the wagon—the captain talking by the way. He was the farthest gone of any that were saved, & did not get over the drowning & the rolling which last hurt his breast, while he stayed on the beach.

Mrs Oakes said that she could see the vessel & passengers plainly from the windows The first two sailors rested 15 minutes in her house, then went on to the Light House. One came back with the boat, the other not till the next day.

After the first 13 got ashore at low tide, there was an interval of an hour or two during which none left the vessel. By this time there were 30 or 40 men on the beach, principally from the boats in the bay. Meanwhile Mrs Oakes got clothing ready for the Ossolis in her bed-room & kept a fire going. The vessel went to pieces about 3½ P. M.— though they did not observe the time. She thought that Mrs Hasty would have fainted when she heard that the ship was all gone to pieces— Mrs Hasty told her that Margaret had wanted her to get ashore & hasten the life-boat. One man, Sandford, who had life in him when he came ashore, was not restored—was perhaps wounded by a spike. Paulina washed ashore entirely naked about 4 P. M. (One man told me that he saw her washing about before this with clothes on.) The crew & Mrs Hasty 15 in all came directly to Oakes' & stayed there a day or two. The storm was at its height in the morning, but it was equally bad & worse for the vessel considering its condition at flood tide in the afternoon—at which time she broke up. (It requires 8 or 10 men to get the life boat to the water—more in fact than are on the whole beach in the winter—it being placed on an elevation at a considerable distance from it. It should be nearer & something like a railway provided. Then they must row it down on the inside of the beach in the Bay—7 men are the complement—& finally transport it across the beach half a mile wherever the wreck is.) At present it is made nobody's business to use, & nobody is paid for service in, the life boat. It did not reach the wreck till almost noon. If it had been there at 10½ says Oakes, or at low tide—all would have been saved.

According to all accounts the sailors behaved well & were remarkably ready to assist the passengers. At Oakes' they used such expressions as “fine lady” “kind lady” with reference to Margaret. ** The child had nothing but its nightgown on at first, when found it was entirely naked. It came ashore soon after the vessel broke up. Mr Oakes

brought it up in a buffalo in his wagon. & Mrs Oakes who laid it out in a little blue dress found in the truck, says, 'It was a quite long stout & fleshy child, with a large head which it would have outgrown" Mrs Hasty told her it had just begun to talk, Italian & English It had "very short thin hair, a little lightish" so short that she could not cut any off. Its hand bled next day. It was buried Saturday afternoon 50 rods west of the house about 3 feet deep, as deep as the water would permit.

Mrs Hasty (twenty-eight or nine years old) had her husband's likeness on her wrist, & his gold watch still going on her person when she got to the house. She told Mrs Oakes that she thought they might all have been saved if they had followed the captain's advice. She & Margaret split a cotton handkerchief & tied their money about their persons. 60 or 70 dollars each. When they struck the passengers were all abed. There was great confusion, the water coming into the cabin, every wave pouring over them. They got what they could to put on. Then or afterward Padena screamed as loud as she could scream for 20 minutes— The Ossolis said it was of no use & pacified her. Then she got on her knees & prayed an hour as hard as she could pray, & then kept quiet. Ossoli made a long prayer all kneeling & the waves washing over them in the fore-castle, referring to Mrs Hasty as one of another faith. Mrs Hasty could not endure the thought of being crushed by the deck which was lifted by each wave. The crew in the mean while were above them fixing to get off at low tide. _____

The great South Beach is the principal one on the South Shore of Long Island. It is separated from the mainland by a very long & shallow bay four or five miles wide, seen o[ver] which its low sand hills loom up in the horizon lik[e] small islands The Bay is famous for oysters clams &c. It took me 5 hours to cross it in two instances on account of head winds. This beach alone is 40 miles long, without an inlet, & half a mile wide rarely rising 25 feet above the ocean at any point. It is pure sand without rocks, thinly covered with beach & other grass, & shrubbery. The western [or] W end near Fire Is. inlet is called Fire Is. Beach from some half sunken islands of that name in the Bay opposite. There are but 4 houses worth naming on the whole beach. Selah Strong's at the Lighthouse one mile from the Western extremity—Felix Dominy's public house a mile further east. Smith Oakes' another low public house 3 miles farther, & Homans 10 miles farther E. still. There are 2 or 3 temporary fishermen's bunks beside. People come off from the neighbouring shore & from N. Y. to various parts of the beach to frolic in the surf. A sail to the beach is a common recreation of the inhabitants of the neighbouring towns. One mile further west across the inlet is West Beach. Almost every family in the neighbourhood has a large oyster boat, & all who were not already on the spot, & to whom the wind was fair, repaired immediately to the wreck—even some women, taking their provisions with them The inhabitants of Babylon were mostly delayed [by] a [head] wind. But those of Sayville, Patchogue, Quorum—&c were early there. They were for the most part idle & reckless persons, with a large proportion of low thieves & a few genuine pirates among them. There were thieves of high & low degree whose deeds were described to me by themselves. Some had heard that there were 3000 dollars in [jewels] on the finger of the Marchioness. They stole from one another extensively—&

property which [had] a guard placed over it, they rolled off across the beach to their boats in the night— Almost every chest & box was broken open with thievish & dare devil curiosity by night & by day in spite of the guard &c &c

I found the engravings (some small engravings of Italian pines & firs in Villa Gardens & one or two others) at Oakes They said they were left out of the trunk. The clothing at Daniel Jones' & John Skinner's Patchogue

The hats of the young men, who were playing at dominoes, were ornamented with the buttons & tassels of the dress which their mother had already fitted to herself. They said that they picked them up a mile & a half or two miles east of the wreck.

H Thoreau says "I am at the house where all the survivors came or were brought—they tell me the ship struck at 10 min. past 4 AM. & all hands, being mostly in their night clothes made haste to the fore-castle the water coming in at once. There they remained, the passengers in the fore-castle, the crew above it, doing what they could. Every wave lifted the fore-castle roof & washed over those within The first man got ashore at 9, many from 9 till noon. At flood tide about three ½ P. M. when the ship broke up entirely, they came out of the fore-castle & Margaret sat with her back to the fore-castle with her hands on her knees—her husband & child already drowned—a great wave came & washed her aft— The steward had just before taken her child & started for shore—both were drow[n]ed.

I have visited th[e] child's grave—The body will probably be taken [aw]ay to day. Mrs Hasty the Capt's wife told Mr Oakes that she & Margaret divided their money—& tied up the halves in handkerchiefs around their persons that Margaret took 60 or 70 doll.s Mrs Hasty can tell all abo[u]t M up too 11 oclock on Friday is said to be [go]ing to Portland Me., the cook, the last to leave, & the steward will know the rest. I shall try to see them. Meanwhile I shall do what I can here to learn particulars & recover property W^m H. Channing came with me. Arthur Fuller has this moment reached the house. He reached the beach last night A good part of the vessel still holds together & something may come ashore with her fragments.

Mrs Oakes dried the papers which were in the trunk & says they appeared to be of various kinds "Would they cover that small round table? "They would spread out—some w[e]re tied up." "She Mrs Hasty speaks of Celesta as if she might have been a sort of nurse to the child— I expect to go to Patchogue whence the pilferers must have chiefly come, & advertise &c. Half a dozen men are ranging the beach for 5 or 6 miles saving the cargo & looking for the bodies so that large articles [which] may come ashore hereafter [are] likely to be saved

Dated Fire Island.

Ellery was helping Mrs Fuller dry the letters—wh. related chiefly to her Italian life in Rome—none to the Florentine— He says In this []d of chaos, now well salted with old ocean's [br]ine we see how admirable a social person th[] was— A great fund of new life was blossoming here—letters from Mazzini & Mickiewicz lay along with many others of a different stamp.

"I felt on looking down from the cold Alps of the shipwreck, into this blooming blossomy Italian life where all the buds & little spring flowers of her domestic affections were just beginning to grow, as if I had twice lived, & was now employed by Minos as a sort of assorting clerk beyond the grave— So many letters which begin 'mia cara' from pens now dry forever."