

PAPERS RELATING TO THE

Enclosure to No. 6.

MR. WING TO THE SUPERINTENDENT, AUCKLAND.

Pilot Station, Manukau,
8th February, 1863.

SIR,—

I have the painful duty to report to your Honor that H.M.S.S. "Orpheus," Commodore Burnett, has been totally wrecked on the South Spit at the entrance of the harbour. The Commodore and most of his officers and crew have perished, saving only about sixty-two men out of a crew of two hundred and sixty.

The circumstances, as they came under the notice of myself and the person in charge of the Signal Station (my son), are as follows:—

On Saturday, 7th instant, at about 9 a.m., the ship "Orpheus" was seen steering for the harbour from the westward, distance about 25 miles, and at 10 a.m. the signal at the Pilot Station was put up (Take the Bar), there being more than half-flood and the Bar clear of break, but a heavy rolling sea on the South Spit. At about 1 p.m. the ship was seen steering south of the Entrance, when the Telegraph Arm was put up pointing Northward, to keep the ship in that direction, but no notice appeared to be taken of it. At 1:30 the ship was drawing near danger, and the signals were hauled down and the Telegraph notice put up "Keep the vessel more off shore." This, however, they did not obey, but continued on under all sail and steam; and about 2 o'clock the ship was observed to hang and roll heavily on the South Bank, and shortly afterwards started, and again took the ground on the South Spit, broaching-to with her head northward near deep water, and then all the sails were clewed up.

At this time I was in charge of the "Wonga Wonga," steamer, on the way for sea, and about 3 p.m. rounded Puponga, and when near the South Head observed the ship making sail, but was not aware that the ship was aground, and as I have not been able to obtain signals and other necessities for the Pilot Station, the person in charge could not make me acquainted with the circumstances until I arrived at the Pilot Station, when shortly afterwards we observed the ship fast settling down with her hull under water, rolling heavily. I then manned the Pilot-boat and started for the wreck, and when abreast of the Orwell Shoal saw two boats with crews in them in the breakers on the Shoal. I then waved the Pilot Flag to conduct them out of danger, and when they came alongside the Paymaster, Mr. Amphlett, desired that I would lend him the Pilot-boat to proceed to the "Harrier" for assistance; this I did and took charge of the ship's boats to proceed to the wreck to save life. We then observed the "Wonga Wonga" returning, when I proceeded with the boats to meet her to obtain assistance in getting the boats to the wreck quickly. This Captain Renner did immediately, and at about 5 o'clock the boats, with the Pilot-crew in them to assist, were placed within half a cable's length of the ship's jib-boom under command of a Lieutenant, to pick up the men as they dropped and floated from the wreck. At this time the rollers were breaking over the ship as high as the lower yards, making it extremely dangerous to get near the wreck with common boats; however, a number of lives were saved. At 8 o'clock becoming dark, the "Wonga Wonga" was anchored within about three cables' length of the wreck, and the boats kept plying about the wreck picking up the crew until after midnight, when it became ebb tide and no further chance was left of saving life. I have further to remark that towards 9 o'clock the Mainmast was observed to go over the side, and in about half an hour afterwards no part of the wreck was to be seen excepting that drifting near and about the breakers. The boat under charge of the Pilot-crew continued to follow the drifting wreck and picked up five men much exhausted, and when midway between the wreck and the Pilot Station, they picked up Midshipmen Hunt and Barclay floating on wreck nearly exhausted; and when they landed at the Pilot Station, Nehana, one of the Pilot-crew, carried young Barclay nearly a mile to his house, and then made a fire and supplied their wants by providing food and dry clothes for all. And I also add that every assistance and kindness that could be shown was rendered by Captain Renner and the crew of the "Wonga Wonga." On the following morning at daylight only two stumps of lower-mast with a portion of the ship's frame was to be seen. Weighed anchor and proceeded up the harbour, and when near the Pilot Station saw H.M.S.S. "Avon" coming round Puponga; anchored the "Wonga Wonga" near South Head, when shortly afterwards the "Avon" came alongside with Captain Jenkins, of H.M.S.S. "Miranda," on board, taking all the shipwrecked crew to Onehunga. At 1 p.m. the "Wonga Wonga" weighed anchor for sea, and at 2 o'clock she was clear out through South Channel. In conclusion I must add that I feel it my duty to say that, had the late Provincial Government supplied the necessary requirements of the Pilot Station, many valuable lives would in all probability have been saved on this occasion.

I have, &c.,

THOMAS WING,
Pilot and Harbour Master.

His Honor the Superintendent, Auckland.

No. 7.

MR. WING TO THE SUPERINTENDENT, AUCKLAND.

Pilot Station, Manukau,
26th February, 1863.

SIR,—

In compliance with your Honor's request, as stated in letter from your office, dated 12th instant, referring to the wreck of H.M.S. "Orpheus," I have to reply as follows, and would