

shadows of the lifeboats, all the ship was asleep. But in the wind the lookout was waiting for the colour of the "Wahine's" foremast light, the second officer was glancing at his watch. This nightly meeting is usually to the minute. Cutting their bulk roundly through the shadow, the lifeboats seemed to keep a watch of their own; there are twelve of them, with gravity lowering davits and hand-worked propellers (like railway jiggers) swung ready for action over the railings. Nearly seven hundred of the passengers and crew can be carried in the boats; and, if necessary, there is plenty more room on the floating rafts.

Since 1795, when the sailing ship "Endeavour" (not Captain Cook's vessel, but a whaler) piled up in Dusky Sound, there have been more than one thousand three hundred wrecks on New Zealand coasts and outlying islands—a toll of the sea that is amazingly high considering the comparatively few years of European navigation in these waters. These wrecks, which have been fairly evenly distributed round the coast, include ships burnt, foundered, and pilaged in addition to the commoner disasters caused by rocks and river bars. And more than forty vessels have left New Zealand harbours never to be heard of again. One of the most interesting of these mysteries was the clipper "Glenmark," one of the fastest sailing ships ever to come to New Zealand; in 1872 she left Lyttelton with a full cargo of wool, £80,000 of gold from the West Coast diggings, and fifty people. She vanished forever.

The year 1890 was disastrous: in ten months five vessels left New Zealand never to call at another port. Polar ice, with its translucent bulk just awash and almost impossible to see, was probably the main cause. It was certainly the explanation of what for many years was known as the "Marlborough" mystery. The stately clipper, on what was her last voyage, left New Zealand with twenty-nine people and a valuable cargo. She never arrived at her next port of call. Many years later she was found still afloat in a deep indentation in the precipitous coast of Terra del Fuego. Her timbers were rotted and green, her ghostly yards were

creaking, and on the decks were the bleached human skeletons of the passengers and crew, who had died from starvation and cold. Her end gives an indication of what was the fate of many of those ships never heard of again after leaving harbour in New Zealand.

The inter-Island steamer expresses have never got up to things like that. But they have had their mishaps. Compared with the "Wahine" and the "Maori," the "Rangatira" has not been a lucky ship. After she was launched and shortly before she was to sail for New Zealand she caught fire and damage was caused that delayed her departure by several weeks. In 1933 at Lyttelton she gashed several plates in a collision with the floating crane, "Rapaki." In February, 1936, there was nearly a disaster. Off Sinclair Head, Wellington, in a sixty-mile-an-hour gale she struck a submerged rock, holing herself badly in the bow. With her screws out of the water, deep down in the bows, and with a slight list to port, the crippled ship crept stern first down the harbour through wild weather. There was 30 ft. of water in her forward hold.

For three months the "Rangatira" was in dock for repairs. For ships the Wellington heads always have been a death-trap; many sailing ships and steamers have been wrecked there, the



Good-bye from the boatdeck.