

GROPING IN THICK FOG A STEAMER GROUNDS.

The Indian Runs Into Boulders at Vineyard Sound Entrance—Vessel Bound for Boston from Philadelphia May Become a Total Wreck.

WOOD'S HOLE, Mass., March 30.—The iron steamer Indian, Philadelphia for Boston, went ashore on the famous Sow and Pigs Ledge, off Cuttyhunk Island, at the western entrance of Vineyard Sound at 6 o'clock last night during a heavy fog, and is likely to become a total wreck.

She was not discovered until daylight this morning, but owing to a heavy sea the life savers were unable to reach her until this afternoon, when they took off her four passengers, one of them a woman, and landed them at Cuttyhunk. They will be brought here to-morrow morning, probably by a tug.

The scene of the wreck is not far from that of the steamer Fairfax, in November, 1898, and about three-quarters of a mile to the westward of where the Admiral Dewey went ashore the following Spring. The Fairfax was a total loss, but the Dewey was saved.

From what can be learned from Cuttyhunk, the Indian went on the rocks about ten minutes before 6 o'clock last night. The fog had been heavy nearly all day, and a gale had been blowing from the southeast and south, so that a heavy sea was running at the time. The Indian had passed Vineyard Sound Lightship, anchored at the entrance of the sound, and supposed to warn vessels off this very ledge. The lightship is equipped with a twelve-inch steam whistle.

Ordinarily steamers, after passing the lightship, head up Vineyard Sound for Nobska, but the Indian seems to have swerved from this course and stood straight in for Cuttyhunk Island, on which there is a light, but no fog whistle. The reef off Cuttyhunk makes out nearly a mile, and the greater portion is under water. The Indian plowed right onto the jagged boulders, and, with a big sea behind, she had no chance whatever of backing off.

She at once began whistling for assistance, and while her signals of distress were heard by the Cuttyhunk life savers, none of them could make out just where they came from. Neither could they see the rockets which were sent up, owing to the heavy fog.

Toward daylight, however, the weather began to clear, and at dawn the steamer was discovered hard and fast on the ledge, with the big waves breaking over her stern. The lifeboat was immediately launched, and the crew pulled out to the steamer. But the sea was very rough, and the waves were breaking over the reef in all directions, so that the life savers did not dare to go close up for fear of having their boat dashed to pieces.

While they were rowing round the Indian, trying to find a smooth spot, the Gay Head life savers, about six miles away at the other entrance of Vineyard Sound, also sighted the wreck and pulled bravely over to assist the Cuttyhunk crew, but they had no better success, so both crews rowed back to the island, and the big cannon, with the life line, was hauled down to the water's edge nearest the wreck.

Eight attempts were made to fire a line over the steamer, and each time the line fell short. About noon, however, the sea commenced to subside and once more the two crews put off for the wreck. This time the life savers were able to get much nearer the steamer, and, watching their chance, dashed in under the lee. One by one the four passengers were lowered into the tossing lifeboat, the woman first and then the three men. One of the ship's officers also came ashore, but Capt. Crowell and the rest of his crew remained on the vessel, although at that time her hold was full of water and every sea was making her quiver and shake from stern to stem.

The life savers then rowed round into the little harbor of Cuttyhunk, where the entire population, about thirty souls, was waiting on the beach to receive them. All were made quite comfortable in the hospitable homes of the islanders, and as soon as possible word was sent to their friends.

The Indian is a well-known steamer of the Boston and Philadelphia Steamship Company. She was built at Wilmington, Del., in 1890. She is 1,133 tons net burden, 227 feet in length, 38 feet in breadth, and 26 feet deep. Capt. Crowell, her commander, has been in charge of the Indian for some years and is considered an experienced seaman and navigator.