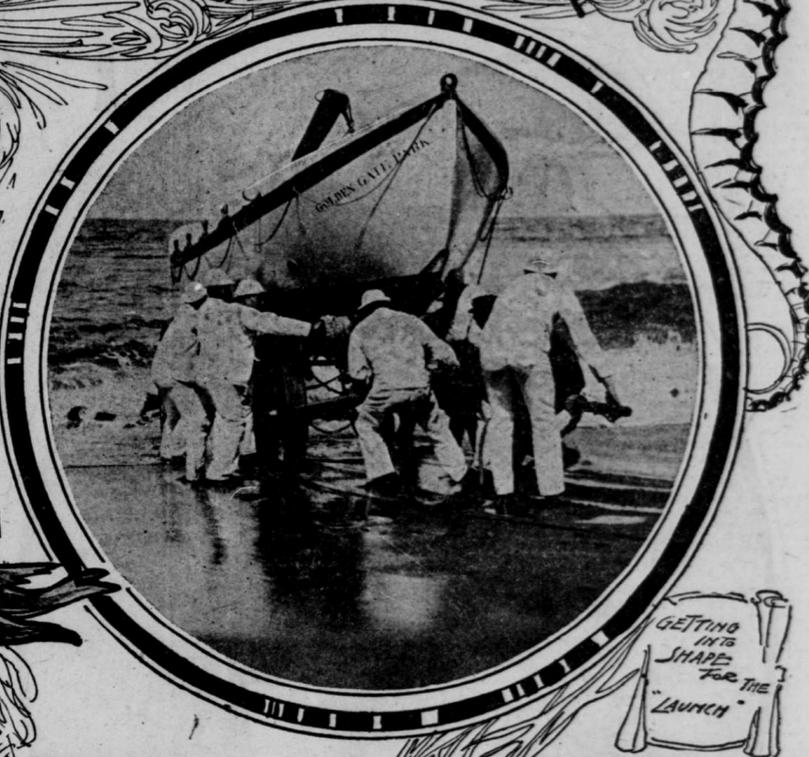


# Through the Surf With The Life Savers

## By Man Buxbee



GETTING INTO SHAPE FOR THE "LAUNCH"



THE CAPTAIN WADED INTO THE SURF WITH ME



STEERING FOR AN OPENING IN THE BREAKER



OVER THE FIRST BREAKER



MAN SAYS GOODBYE

The waves were rolling mountain high, lashing themselves into a foam against the sands below the Cliff House. It was 10 o'clock in the morning, on the day of the life savers' weekly drill.

"They won't go out this morning," said a bystander; "it's too rough."

But they did. Rough water was what the men of the Government service were looking for, and the rougher the better practice for them, whether or not there should be a loss of life among them.

Down the hill from the station came the boat wagon, drawn by two heavy horses. In the teeth of a biting wind the crew in their white canvas uniforms leaped to their places and as the horses backed up to the edge of the lashing water they worked together with a swing and a cry.

"Yo-oh, heave, ho-oh heave, yo-oh! Now with her, lads! Yo-oh, yo-oh, heave!"

With the final swing the "Golden Gate" rose high into the air, pitched out from the boat wagon and splashed into the angry waves. Captain Varney and seven men leaped into the water, staggering against the incoming mountains of sea, and clambered over the sides of the tossing boat, taking their places beside the oarlocks.

Out of the sound of the rushing waves the voices of the men came back indistinctly. The captain was giving the commands.

"All together, lads! Ship oars! Give way! Harder on the starboard! Give way all!"

Four pairs of oars struggled against the beat of the ocean. The trim white boat rose over the wave only to be dashed back again. Three times were the commands given and the boat forced out into the roaring foam before the Golden Gate was launched; then like a white swan she rose and fell, taking the rolling waves as they came falling upon her, and the eight oars lifting and dropping, sending the boat forward between the waves in long, swift leaps. Further out the swells came regular and the Golden Gate circled widely, rising perpendicularly to mount the rushing masses of water, and dipping down gracefully beyond it out of sight until the swell had passed.

A hard row of ten minutes or so completed the warming-up practice, and the boat made her way again to shore. As her white tip came over the last wave the crew dropped their oars and bounded out, waist deep, bracing themselves against the impouring torrents, and struggling to control the boat. But the Golden Gate was swept from their grasp and dashed upon the sand.

The captain in his big rubber boots waded ashore.

"How are you going to get to the boat?" he asked. "You will get wet; if you want to go aboard—here, I will carry you!"

I was hoisted through the air as though my one hundred and thirty-eight pounds of avoidipolis were no more than a feather's weight, and found myself being carried through the rushing water. Another hoist and I was pitched into the boat and given a seat at the front. The seven sailors laughed.

"Are yez neither sugar ner salt?" queried one. "Cause if yez be, yez'll sure get melted afore we come ashore."

"An' here's y'er life preserver—put hit on. We'en we get amongst them swells yez lable to go overboard, with the boat an' the whole of us!"

They buckled on the awkward bundle of cork and the captain gave orders to pull

away. There was a rough ten minutes getting over the first breakers. We were beaten back twice, but the eight strong oarsmen buffeted steadily until the half-dozen shore rollers were climbed. Then we went cutting through the water, rising on the small swells and dipping down on the other side like the flight of the swallow. Further out we met the big swells—madly rolling mountains of water. When each one was upon us there came the clear, firm order of the captain, "Altogether lads; give way, port side; look out! Over she goes!" The bow of the Golden Gate, shooting upward perpendicularly, leaped over the curling wave and came down gliding from the top and out into the level of the sea, the eight pairs of oars dropping simultaneously at the command of the captain, and onward again to the next wave.

Presently a large swell came unexpected-

ly, and before the captain's order could be executed the curling mass of water came pouring over us with the sweep and the force of a torrent. I had been standing up in the bow of the boat and caught the full benefit of the intruding wave. I sat suddenly down. The action was unpremeditated and entirely involuntary. My clothing was drenched, but by the time I had caught my breath the water had disappeared through the safety valve arrangement of the lifeboat and the boat was dry. Just as I started to my feet again a monstrous bank of water came pouring over us and emptied the larger portion of itself upon my back. We had gone through the wave instead of over it.

"Sure, an' they put a job up on yez," whispered the good-natured Irish sailor next to me. "They wanted to hear yez holler." I had no doubt of it, and was glad to know that I had not disappointed them.

Farther out the sea was smoother, the sun shinning brightly, and the rise and fall of the oars kept time with the motion of the boat. A mile from the shore we circled about, and at the captain's command the Golden Gate began a series of maneuvers—the cutting of pigeon wings, execution of military figures, etc. The oars cut into the water like broadswords, and the steady pulls sent the white boat shooting through the water at any number of knots per hour. At the order to turn the boat switched about and darted ahead with incredible swiftness. The end of three-quarters of an hour found us heading shoreward, one of us with a whirling head and dizzy eyes.

"Do yez want to go in this thrip, or be yez goin' out with us to capsize the boat?" queried the Irishman. I preferred to watch the latter proceeding from the shore, and was carried out by the captain. A few moments' rest, and the Golden Gate was again manned and sent climbing over the waves. After a few

pigeon-wing maneuvers there was a moment of uplifted oars, a sudden dropping of them and the sailors all slid over into one side of the boat. A moment later there was a whirl, and the bottom of the white craft appeared on the surface, the sailors buried in the water beneath her. Then eight rubber hats popped out of the water, eight pairs of hands laid hold of the Golden Gate and rolled her over, right side upward. Clambering into the boat, the drill was resumed. This was the part of the practice known as "rolling" the boat. In good and bad weather, in smooth seas and rough ones, the drill goes on, the life-saving crew always in readiness for the call of humanity and in perfect training to cope with the anger and treachery of the sea. The life-saving crew are expert swimmers, and "rolling" the boat serves to keep them in regular practice. At each weekly drill the boat is "rolled" two or three times, and to the eight sailors of the crew it is but the sport of a moment to throw over the craft, take their ducking, lay hold of and right the boat again and climb aboard.

At the end of the drill the boat came leaping in, the oars were shipped close to shore and the sailors, jumping out, waded through the waves. With their musical chorus of "Heave, yo-oh; heave, yo-oh," the trim craft was hoisted from the rolling surf and on the boat wagon, and the good, stout horses of the service struggled into a brave trot over the sand and up the hill to the life-saving station.

On dark, stormy nights, when the waves roll high, it is good to know that whatever troubles come to vessels struggling with the wild sea there are eight good men and true willing and trained to the duty of rescue. It is on such nights that Captain Varney and his crew listen well for the signal of distress, and when it comes the Golden Gate is always at hand, ready at a moment's notice to launch into the roughest sea, climb the highest waves and brave the wildest storm. A cheer for her crew!