

# THE RANGITIKI.

## Some Sensational Runs—Vessel's Varied Career—Death of Captain Pottinger.

One of the N.Z. Shipping Company's fast sailers, the Rangitiki, 1225 tons, in command of Captain Scotland, made a remarkable run to Lyttelton in 1876. The passage from Plymouth occupied 73 days, or from land to land 67 days. The Rangitiki, which was formerly known as the Scimitar, left London on November 29th, 1875, for Plymouth, where she embarked her immigrants, 301 souls, and sailed on December 4th. The Equator was crossed on Christmas Day, 21 days from Plymouth, Gough Island passed on January 15th, 1876, and the meridian of the Cape on January 21st. She ran down her Easting between parallels 52deg. and 53deg. She had remarkably fine weather until reaching the Leeuwin on February 5th, as one may gather from the fact that the main skysail was not taken off the ship from the time she left Plymouth till she reached the coast of Tasmania. Here the ship passed large quantities of ice, and had strong westerly gales and thick weather to the Snares, which were passed on the 12th February at 10 p.m., arriving and dropping anchor off Ripa Island, Lyttelton, at 2.30 p.m. on February 16th, 1876.

### FAST SAILING.

Some splendid day's runs were made during the passage. From Gough Island to Cape Saunders the average was 268 miles per day, or, in other words, from January 29th to February 10th, 3738 miles were covered in thirteen days, the vessel being south of 50deg. when the run was commenced. One day no less than 345 miles were covered. Another good run was from the Snares, which was left at 10 p.m. on February 12th, and Nugget Point was abreast at 10 a.m. on the 13th—182 miles in 12 hours.

The Rangitiki on this occasion brought 300 immigrants, and it was Captain Scotland's first visit to Lyttelton. He was warmly congratulated upon having made such a speedy passage.

On January 22nd the ship sighted an immense iceberg, standing about 500 feet above water, and it was about 1500 yards long. It was seen at 4 a.m. and it passed abreast of the ship within a quarter of a mile at 8 a.m. On this occasion the Rangitiki made the voy-

age from Lyttelton to London and back in six months 27 days.

On the first voyage to Auckland in 1864, which was the maiden trip of the Scimitar, she encountered very severe gales until crossing the Line, and was there becalmed for three weeks. Mr. Edward Wilson, still living in Auckland, who was a passenger by the ship on this occasion, states: "The Scimitar was a very fast sailer when given a chance. I remember, when in the Atlantic, we caught sight of smoke ahead of us. We had a good breeze, and all sails, including the stunsails, were set. We rapidly caught up with what proved to be the Brazilian mail steamer, sailing and steaming. Before evening we left her well astern. Among the passengers to arrive in Auckland on this occasion were the Rev. Rabbi Elkin and Mr. Farquhar McRae, who was for many years headmaster of the Auckland Grammar School."

### AN UNLUCKY VOYAGE.

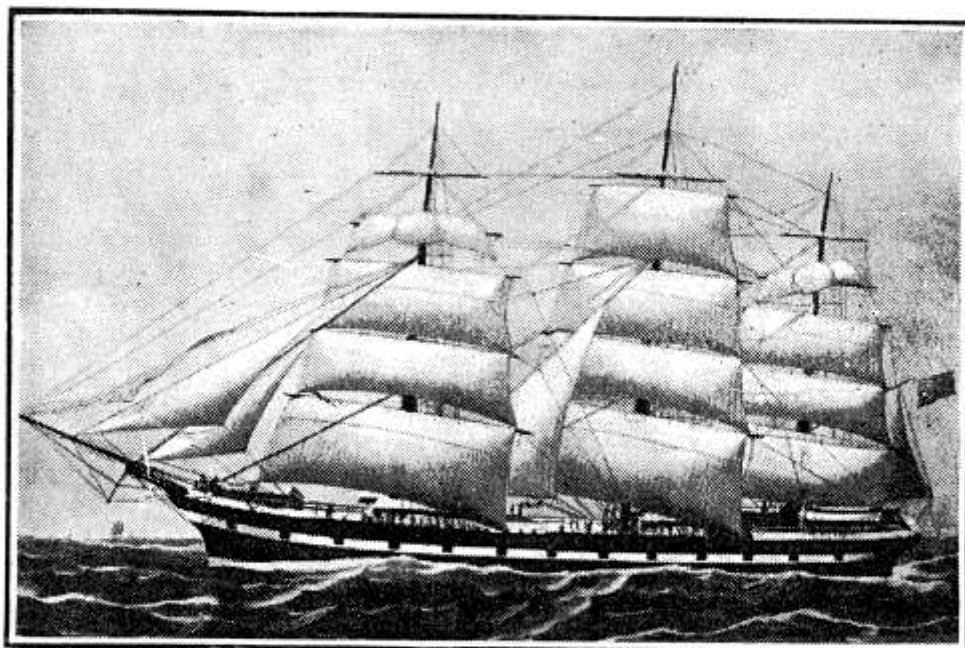
Before the Rangitiki was purchased by the N.Z. Shipping Company in 1875 the ship, under her old name the Scimitar, made a sensational run to Port Chalmers. The ship left Plymouth on December 24, 1873, with 430 souls aboard. Four days after sailing scarlet fever broke out. Two days before starting two families from Jersey were removed from the ship as the children were suffering from this complaint. The fever was followed by other sickness, including bronchitis, measles, diarrhoea and variola, which were confined to the children under seven years, with one exception. One or other of the diseases attacked all the children on board. Altogether there were 26 deaths before reaching Port Chalmers. Dr. Hoskings was in charge and upon arrival he eulogised Captain Fox, the ship's commander, and narrated how, in spite of death and suffering, the passage was not without its pleasant side. The said Captain Fox married one couple and performed the ceremony of baptism on four occasions. "What with reading divine service every Sunday, celebrating marriage, baptising the new babies, and burying so many, there had been enough work on the passage to keep a parson fully employed," said Dr. Hoskings.

The Scimitar on this passage departed finally from Eddystone on December 25th. She then threshed about for a week before getting favourable winds, and afterwards made a splendid passage to Tristan d'Acunha, where she called and took on board a supply of fresh meat and poultry. She crossed the Line twenty days from Plymouth, meeting with splendid trades each side of it, and she got fine strong westerlies from the meridian of the Cape. The vessel made an average of 1800 miles per week, her Easting being run down in 41deg, S. Fine weather with strong winds favoured her until making the Snares on 3rd March, where high seas were met with. She anchored at Port Chalmers on March 5th. The time occupied

certainly beat her a day in the land to land run.

#### RUN OF RESCUE WORK.

The 1883 passage of the Rangitiki to Auckland was an eventful one. Mr. W. Bines, now residing in Auckland, who was one of the ship's company on this occasion, has supplied me with interesting details taken from his log. "The Rangitiki, Captain Millman," writes Mr. Bines, "left Plymouth on January 30, after taking on board immigrants. On February 3rd, we sighted what we took to be a raft with live human beings on it, all awash. The lifeboat was lowered, and we rescued two men who had been on a deck house (not a raft) for two days and nights. Eight men scrambled on this house when they left



THE N.Z. SHIPPING COMPANY'S RANGITIKI.

from land to land was 67 days, or 71 days from Plymouth.

It used to be an open question whether the palm should be given to the Rangitiki (ex-Scimitar) or the Westland for having made the record run from England to Port Chalmers during the 40 years, from 1860 to 1900. While the Scimitar's time was 71 days from Plymouth to port, or 67 land to land, the Westland made the run in 72 days from London, or 66 land to land. Under the circumstances I am satisfied all nautical men will agree that the honours should undoubtedly be given to the Westland. It must be remembered that she had a two to three days' longer run down the English Channel than the Scimitar, and

the wreck of the Kenmore Castle, bound from Liverpool to Singapore, but six were washed off. Dr. Leger Erson (who was a passenger in our ship, and afterwards settled in Auckland) soon pulled the men round.

"On the 8th February, we sighted a dismantled barquentine. At the time, a heavy gale was raging, and we were running under fore and main topsails. At 2 p.m. we came up to the wreck, the Maria Agatha, Captain Owens, from South Wales.

"Under considerable difficulties the lifeboat was lowered, and the master, mate, and five men were rescued. It was very risky work owing to the heavy seas, and we did not get back to the ship

until just at dark. Picking up men from a ship in a heavy seaway under such conditions is a far different job from a warship, filled with life rockets and breeches buoy, doing similar work. We had to get close enough to the wreck's lee quarter to allow one man at a time to jump in and then back away, as the life boat at one time would be almost level with the ship's rail, and three seconds later twenty feet below.

#### DOCTOR WANTED.

"On the 2nd March, we were again requisitioned. A ship signalled for a doctor, and Dr. Erson again went to the rescue. He found a young fellow who had been suffering with a broken arm for 28 days. The arm was amputated, and the man greatly relieved. The ship was the James Grimsby from Bak to San Francisco. After this, all went well, and we had a fair run to the coast, sighting the North Cape on May 13, and anchoring in the harbour on the 17th.

"Mr. Basley, who was third officer on this passage is now Port Missioner at Auckland. Captain Owens of the Maria Agatha remained in New Zealand and commanded the brigantine Pendle Hill, Ada C. Owen, the barque Casa Blanca, and the brigantine Wanganui. He has now retired, and is settled in Auckland. Myself and Mr. W. Walker, two of the men who rescued Captain Owens are also living in Auckland."

#### TRIP TO PORT CHALMERS IN '75.

It has been stated in print on more than one occasion that the Rangitiki reached Port Chalmers from London during 1875 in 73 days. The facts are, the ship left London on December 18, 1874, and arrived at Port Chalmers in command of Captain Fox on the 25th March. She was in the vicinity of the Otago Heads on the 22nd, but was blown off again. Captain Fox stated that the ship was very deep, drawing over 20 feet, and this and light winds experienced accounted for a longer passage than usual, the time being 88 days land to land, or 96 from port. On the 23rd February the vessel was becalmed abreast of Prince Edward and Marion Island for 24 hours. The sea being beautifully calm a boat was lowered, and manned with several of the passengers, including two ladies who pulled towards the land. Several pieces of drift-ice were seen this day, and one large berg three days previously.

#### CHANGE OF RIG AND NAME.

The Rangitiki made three or four smart passages to England. After the year 1889 she was rigged as a barque.

Sold to the Norwegians when she left the New Zealand Shipping Company's fleet, the Rangitiki had her name changed to Dalston, and under that name she paid a visit to Lyttelton. Later she was sold to a French owner, named the Paul Bouket, and taken to Noumea, New Caledonia, where she is used as a hulk. During the late war when everything that could float was sought after, she was once more sold and taken to Sydney by the steamer St. Josefa, in charge of Captain Scott. During a heavy gale off the Australian coast the hulk broke adrift, and was at the mercy of the wind and sea for forty hours. Those on board had a very trying experience. I believe the original intention of again placing her in commission was abandoned, and the hulk was towed back again to Noumea. The Rangitiki was built by Mr. Samuelson, of Hull, in 1863.

In the year 1884 the Rangitiki brought out to New Zealand eight cock and twelve hen pheasants, and one raven for Sir George Grey.

#### CAPTAIN POTTINGER'S DEATH.

Sailors are, or were, very superstitious, and a very interesting story has been told me by Captain F. A. Macindoe, of Wellington, concerning the death of Captain Pottinger on board the Rangitiki at Napier in the year 1897. Captain Macindoe, who made several voyages with Captain Pottinger as second mate, is at present secretary of the Wellington Merchant Service Guild. The Rangitiki left London in ballast a day after the well-known New Zealand trader Halcione, and the ships did not sight one another until off Cape Aguilhas, South Africa, where they were so close that the two crews could exchange small talk over the side. That was the last the ships saw of one another. The Rangitiki was bound for Otago Heads for orders, and got instructions to go to Napier to load. When passing Cook Straits she met a heavy gale, and it was afterwards learned that the same night their old friend the Halcione was wrecked at Wellington Heads.

Bad luck seemed to dog the visit of the Rangitiki to Napier. First of all the mate (Mr. Porteous) was injured while the anchor was being lowered. Now we come to the part of the story that touches an old sailor-superstition. On a Thursday evening a cat that belonged to no one knew whom, jumped aboard the ship from a wool-lighter, and started to make itself at home; but as it was not of cleanly habits it was not popular. Next morning the steward

found the cat in his room, and called out to the second mate, but before the latter could come along pussy had jumped through a porthole. The second mate went on deck and saw the cat floating away astern.

Quite pleased at having got rid of the animal he told the story to the Captain at breakfast; but the Captain was very angry, and after giving the second mate a verbal keelhauling, told him that if he had done his duty he would have lowered a boat and picked the cat up. That night (Friday, as superstitious folk will note) it came on to blow from the eastward, and at two o'clock next morning the second anchor was let go; but in spite of the fact that all the cable was out the ship was dragging towards the shore. At about nine o'clock in the morning the Captain and the second mate were standing on the main hatch just abaft the fore-house, discussing means of easing the heavy strain on the windlass.

"My God, look out!" suddenly cried the Captain, and hurrying down on the labouring ship came a tremendous sea. The second mate, rushing to the bulwarks, grabbed hold of a stanchion just as the huge sea crashed on board, carrying away the after end of the house and filling the decks.

A yell from the steward, who put his head out of the pantry port, told the second mate and the Captain's son that somebody was floating in the water that filled the deck aft and was waist-high on the starboard side, the ship having taken a list. Rushing aft the second mate and young Pottinger got hold of an arm that was seen above water. They pulled out Captain Pottinger, and carried him down into the saloon, where it was found that his neck was broken—death having apparently been instantaneous.

It is remarkable that although the gale continued to blow hard the ship did not drag any longer.

The body was carried ashore and buried at Napier, and the ship was taken Home by Captain Baker, formerly mate of the Turakina.

The mate of the Rangitiki was ill during the ship's stay in Napier, but he recovered, and the first time he came up to relieve the second mate—it was midnight—his greeting was, "I hope that is the last time I'll see a cat drowned!"

Captain Pottinger was only 54 years of age, and of the thirty-five years spent at sea he had been with the N.Z. Shipping Co., first as mate of the Waitangi and for the last six years in the Rangitiki. Captain

Pottinger was a capable seaman and a man of high sterling qualities, which had won for him the esteem and admiration of all with whom he had business or social relations.

#### PASSAGES TO NEW ZEALAND PORTS

Following is a list of the various visits the Rangitiki paid to New Zealand ports:—

##### TO AUCKLAND.

Sailed.	Arrived.	Captain.	Days.
†Nov. 25	Mar. 11, '64	Potts	106
*Jan. 30	May 17, '83	Millman	106
Dec. 16, '83	Apr. 15, '84	Millman	119
May 3	Aug. 4, '87	Taylor	93
June 23	Sep. 28, '90	Middleton	97
Oct. 30, '92	Feb. 11, '93	Pottinger	103

##### TO WELLINGTON.

Feb. 10	May 28, '85	Cottier	107
Aug. 24'	Dec. 22, '91	Pottinger	120

##### TO LYTTELTON.

*Dec. 4, '75	Feb. 16, '76	Scotland	73
		Land to land	67
Sep. 4	Dec. 11, '76	Scotland	98
Aug. 12	Nov. 9, '77	Millman	89
Aug. 4	Nov. 17, '78	Millman	105
July 19	Oct. 24, '79	Millman	97
Aug. 28	Dec. 7, '80	Millman	101
June 25	Sep. 21, '81	Millman	88
Mar. 31	July 5, '82	Millman	96

##### AT DUNEDIN.

*†Dec. 24, '73	Mar. 5, '74'	Fox	71
		Land to land	67
Dec. 18, '74	Mar. 25, '75	Fox	96
		Land to land	88
Aug. 15	Nov. 23, '89	Middleton	95
Nov. 24, '94	Feb. 22, '95	Pottinger	89
Aug. 27	Dec. 8, '96	Pottinger	103
Oct. 4, '97	Jan. 30, '98	Forsdick	118

##### TO NAPIER.

‡ —	Jan. 13, '96	Pottinger	97
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##### TO BLUFF.

Feb. 19	June 2, '86	Budd	103
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\*Sailed finally from Plymouth.

†Under her old name the Scimitar.

‡Via Otago Heads.

The owners of the ship it is believed made a mistake in the spelling of the Maori name when the ship was registered, and when they endeavoured to make the correction Lloyds had entered it up in the list, so the spelling of the name stood as Rangatiki.