OFFICIAL REPORT

of

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Commander of the

CANADIAN PACIFIC
S.S. EMPRESS OF AUSTRALIA

ON THE JAPANESE EARTHQUAKE
THE FIRE
AND SUBSEQUENT RELIEF OPERATIONS

1923

Commander
Canadian Pacific S.S. Empress of Australia

This Report was written by the Commander of the S.S. Empress of Australia on the memorable voyage between the Orient and Canada.

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AT one minute before noon on Saturday, September 1st, this vessel was about to leave the wharf for Vancouver, the main gangway just on shore and ship's moorings singled up. Wind blowing strong from S.S.E. broad on the port bow, vessel lying starboard side to the wharf with tow boats with lines made fast at bow and stern all ready to tow out so that we could back astern into the harbour, the S.S. "Steel Navigator," being made fast to the wharf astern of us, bow to our stern. A violent earthquake took place, first a number of very severe shocks, then the land rolling in waves apparently 6 to 8 feet high like a succession of fast moving ocean swells—three or four large ones and several smaller ones—running from S.S.W. to N.N.E., plainly visible from the height of our bridge along the wharf and the street leading to it.

The vessel shook all over in a most terrifying fashion and also rocked very quickly and violently until it seemed as though the masts and funnels must carry away. I do not think the very severe shocks and land waves lasted more than a couple of minutes, probably much less, but violent tremors continued for some time, and in about half an hour we had several more quite severe shocks. Tremors and small shocks continued at intervals until noon the next day (Sunday), when we had several more shocks, and occasional slight tremors were felt on board each day right up to our departure.

During the first shocks the vessel was lying close up to the wharf, held there by the strong wind—afterwards we found several dents in the plating amidships, probably caused by striking or being struck by broken pieces of the wharf; fortunately none of the dents were serious—but after the violent earthquake was over the ship had gone bodily off about fifteen to twenty feet from the wharf. The wells were at once sounded round and the vessel found to be making no water.

Of the wharf itself the shore end from immediately ahead of the ship to the shore and a considerable portion of the foreshore itself had sunk below the water, leaving a gap of about 400 yards with only the iron side railing and portions of the west side of the wharf showing about water level, over which numbers of people were half scrambling, half wading to the shore. Of the more solid cement part where we were laid, and to the outer end of the wharf, large portions had sunk or collapsed and large fissures opened up in the cement, but the greater portion still stood when the shocks had

finished. The two-story wooden freight shed on the wharf running along nearly the full length of the ship was badly distorted but practically intact, as was also the one-story ferro-concrete shed under construction on the outer end of the wharf.

Three or four hundred people were on the wharf alongside the ship, saying good-bye to their friends, with paper streamers in their hands, when the earthquake happened. A number fell, or were thrown by the motion, down the fissures as they opened and closed as the land waves passed—some of the openings being three or four feet wide—either disappearing into the water below or being crushed to death. In one case a motor car and its occupants, ready to drive off the wharf, disappeared entirely. Captain Kent, our Shanghai Pilot, who had come up with us to meet the "Empress of Canada" and who was on the wharf, had a most miraculous escape, falling down through a fissure in the cement into some hollow beneath the wharf and then managing to scramble out, naturally very much shaken and bruised, and with a bad cut on one leg, but otherwise unhurt. The greater part of the people on the wharf were thrown down and badly shaken and bruised but escaped serious injury, and when the worst shocks had finished we hove back alongside, put out ladders, and took a considerable number on board. Many also went on the French Messagerie steamer "André Lebon," which was lying on the other side of the outer end of the wharf, and some managed to get on the "Steel Navigator," astern of us.

The wind, which had lulled almost to a calm for a few minutes during the worst of the earthquake, increased shortly afterwards to a fresh to strong 60 to 70 miles an hour gale, still from S.S.E., occasionally hauling for short periods to S. by E. and S., the gale being the effect of a typhoon in the vicinity.

A dense pall of dust rose up hundreds of feet above the town and a terrible roar came from it, which was probably caused by the simultaneous falling of hundreds of brick and stone buildings in the Settlement, also possibly by the earthquake itself. For a moment or two it could be seen that the buildings on the Bund nearest to us had fallen, and then everything was blotted out by the dust which swept over us in a cloud so dense that for a time we were unable to see the foc'sle-head from the bridge. This was rapidly succeeded by dense clouds of smoke through which, at intervals, flames could be seen. Every fire-hose possible was connected, special water pressure put on, and the decks and upper

works were kept flooded with water. A considerable part of this was done by the Stewards' Department, several of the passengers volunteering to help, and assisting the boys where necessary. At first it seemed as though, owing to the distance from the shore, we were comparatively safe, but soon large sparks and masses of burning matter came along, driven by the gale, together with gusts of intensely hot air, and we saw that the freight shed alongside was likely to catch fire. We were then in an extremely dangerous position. The tow boats had let go their lines and left at full speed at the first of the earthquake; we could not get the vessel off the wharf owing to the gale; we could not go ahead more than a few feet owing to shoal water, and we could not back along the wharf for the S.S. "Steel Navigator" astern. At the first shock of the earthquake her moorings parted and she swung out and let go an anchor, and shortly afterwards, when the gale increased, she fell back alongside the wharf and let go her other anchor.

About this time a large Japanese steamer, the "Lyons Maru," came in through the smoke, on our port quarter. She struck us heavily right aft and on our quarter with her stem and bow, badly denting the plating at "D" Deck level right aft, and doing considerable damage to the bulwarks and rails. She then bumped off some distance, then ranged up alongside and came in heavily again near amidships. I think she would have done us considerable damage, but, fortunately for us, a large lighter laden with lumber had drifted in alongside us and acted as a fender; this she smashed to matchwood. She laid there for a little time and then backed or drifted off and disappeared in the smoke. I learned afterwards that the waters of the harbour outside the wharves were whirling round furiously in all directions for some time after the earthquake. The "Lyons Maru" was moored to a buoy some distance to the eastward of us, and in some way had her cable parted by the "Korea Maru" (T.K.K.), who was trying to get out of the harbour. The "Lyons Maru" then tried to swing to get out of the harbour herself and in doing so came into us. Her anchor was down but did not seem to have much effect, she was dragging it about all the time she was near us. She had steam up on her main engines and was using them. I have asked Mr. Rankin to notify her owners of the damage done to us.

We managed with the Japanese Pilot's motor sampan to run a line out to a buoy ahead and on the port bow, and tried to heave our bow out to this with the idea of getting more head to wind

and so being able to swing our stern out, but found this impossible on account of the shoal water, our bow taking on the mud before we could get far enough out, so we had to drop back alongside again. I had previous to this asked the S.S "Steel Navigator" several times, both through our officer stationed aft and Captain Holland, our Staff Captain, to heave up his anchors and drop astern, so that we could drop astern too, at least clear of the freight shed on the wharf, but no notice had been taken, the officer in charge either not understanding or deciding that his vessel was safe where it was and that our safety was a very secondary matter. In this I cannot entirely blame him. I am fairly certain that he had steam up on his main engines, but even in that case, with the gale that was blowing and unable in the dense smoke to see what was going on in the harbour astern, his position alongside the part of the wharf where he was, with both anchors out ahead, must have seemed to him the safest place, and naturally the safety of his own ship was his first consideration. It is possible that he could not see, or seeing could not realize as I did, the danger to his own ship if the freight shed abreast of us caught fire, which seemed inevitable, as in that case, if we could not have got astern or away, we should unquestionably have caught fire and then gone down on him, and probably set him on fire too before he could either slip his cables or heave up his anchors. I went aft myself with a megaphone, but could not get anyone on the "Steel Navigator" to take any notice.

When, at about 1.30 p.m., the roof of the freight shed caught fire on its shore end, I made up my mind that the only way to save the vessel and the lives of those on board was to back down on the "Steel Navigator," taking the risk of damage to our propellers and to her upper works and our own, and force her far enough astern for our bow to clear the main part of the shed. This we commenced to do, but as we went astern some lumber-laden lighters that had drifted in on the wharf between the two ships got jammed between our counter and the wharf, and gradually forced our stern out until it was outside the "Steel Navigator's" stem, and we slid along with our starboard counter on her port bow until our stern was well past her main hatch, doing no apparent damage as far as the hulls and upper works of both ships were concerned. The "Steel Navigator" paid out both her cables as we went astern and we pushed her along with us about 200 feet and then brought up there.

Shortly after we commenced to move astern along the wharf our starboard propeller had brought up on some obstruction, possibly some of the broken cement piles, but it went away again immediately. As our stern neared and passed the bow of the "Steel Navigator" I stopped the engines and then used them as little as possible. After our stern was well past her bow and approaching her bridge, and our propellers, especially the port or outside one, seemingly well clear of where her cables should have been, I went ahead on our port engine to check our way a little and at the same time throw our stern out if possible, when our port propeller fouled something, and, after a few turns, brought up—the power being, of course, shut off at once. On trying it again easily, it could not be turned either way. The obstruction was presumably the port cable of the "Steel Navigator," for, when afterwards she was made fast to the wharf and they tried to heave in the port cable, it was found to be fouled and leading in the direction of our port propeller, her starboard cable and anchor coming in all clear. I think it extremely probable that the "Steel Navigator's" port anchor was dragged entirely out of position by the anchor of the "Lyons Maru" ranging fore and aft alongside us both.

Our stem was now abreast of the outer end of the freight shed, which was a roaring mass of flames from end to end. As well as going astern, we had also been forced out bodily from the wharf about 20 feet by the lighters wedged between us and the wharf, so that our bow was fully 60 feet away from the nearest of the flames, also the wind was blowing the flames and sparks obliquely away from us, and also, fortunately, the two-storied part of the shed did not run its full length and the part nearest us was only one story. The heat was intense. It does not seem to have scorched the paint on the hull much, but we found a number of the glass scuttles on the lower decks broken by it. We got every hose we could connect forward and on the starboard side, and nothing caught fire, although the ship's motor boat in the starboard forward davits, from which we had previously removed the gasoline and kerosene, seemed near to it several times. This was averted by Captain Holland and two Chinese seamen, who had to stand out in the heat in order to play on the outside of the boat, which was badly scorched and blistered.

All this time dense clouds of smoke and sparks had continued to come down before the gale from the burning town, completely obscuring the view in that direction. The freight shed on the wharf

burned fiercely, and after about an hour of extreme anxiety and fighting, it collapsed between 2.30 and 3 p.m. It still gave out an intense heat, but though it continued to flare up intermittently for some time after that, and piles of lumber and other articles on the wharf and parts of the freight shed under construction caught fire and burned, our hoses kept the fire from spreading near us and we were comparatively, for the time, in no serious danger. A number of blazing lighters containing lumber and merchandise drifted alongside both then and all through the night, but our hoses put them out without great difficulty.

About 3 p.m. the wind began to ease off, and by 4 p.m. it had dropped to a light breeze and we got out lines to the posts on the wharf, which still appeared in good order, and hove ahead and made fast alongside, the "Steel Navigator" coming in with us and making fast to the wharf close astern, both vessels being held some distance off the wharf by partially wrecked and burned lighters.

It was then realized that the whole of the town, including the Foreign Settlement and the Residential District on the Bluff, had been destroyed. Fires could be seen burning fiercely all along the foreshore and in all directions for miles inland. Later, glares in the sky in the direction of Tokyo and Yokosuka showed that they were burning too. We put out lifeboats with all the men available and sent them to the shore of the Bund to pick up survivors, all the Europeans among the ship's company who could be spared, and several passengers who volunteered, forming search and stretcher parties for the injured. This work was continued all through the night and was at times a task of considerable danger. One thousand prisoners had been let out of jail during the earthquake, and a number of these commenced killing and looting. Bands of Japanese, armed mostly with long knives lashed to bamboos, were formed to hunt these down. With this exception everything appeared orderly, and all very grateful for anything we were able to do for them. Large numbers of survivors of all nationalities, many of them badly wounded, were brought on board. We also, towards midnight, at the suggestion of Mr. Boulter, Acting British Consul General, sent several boatloads of fresh water, in breakers, for the refugees, mostly Japanese, in Yokohama Park, who had been without water since noon. Mr. Boulter had arrived on board early in the night, the Consulate having been destroyed and three of the Staff killed or

missing. He himself was badly cut and bruised, but he worked hard through the night directing and helping in the relief work.

The next morning, Sunday, September 2nd, about 7 o'clock, a very large and furiously burning mass was noticed in the water on the foreshore near the old French Hatoba about half a mile from the ship. We thought for some time that it was drums of paint composition that the harbour authorities had stored there for painting buoys, etc., and, as the wind was light toward the shore and the fire remained stationary for some time, that it would burn itself out there, but soon it started to move, and then we realized that it was fuel oil, large quantities of which were floating about all over the harbour, many thousands of tons both of fuel oil and kerosene having run out of various storage tanks which burst during the earthquake.

The flames were terrible, sometimes rolling up in thick greasy-looking masses and then suddenly shooting up into a whirling column of fire 100 feet wide and several hundred feet high. I decided to get away from the vicinity as quickly as possible, and I went aft and had a talk with the Mate of the S.S. "Steel Navigator," who was in charge of her, the Captain having been killed on shore by the earthquake. I told him that I thought it advisable for both of us to move as soon and as fast as we could, and asked him, when he went astern, to allow us to lash our quarter to his bow as we were then laid, and to tow us out, as it looked as though we had his port cable and anchor on our port propeller, and I did not want to move our starboard propeller as we were placed, for fear of fouling it as well. He agreed, and after some considerable delay while he slipped his port cable at the 75 fathom shackle and took in his moorings, which were let go from the wharf by our Chinese seamen, he went astern, Captain Kent, our Shanghai Pilot, going on his bridge with him to advise and help. He drew us out from the wharf without any difficulty. In passing we lightly fouled the stern of the "André Lebon," who had let go from the wharf and was anchored off the end of it, slightly denting our bulwarks aft but apparently doing no damage to her. When we were out about 300 yards our anchor was let go to bring us up, and the "Steel Navigator" let go our wire, turned, and went out of the harbour to an anchorage. I hailed the Captain as he passed us, asking him to tow our bow round toward the entrance to the harbour, but he kept on. In any case he had done good work in towing us out from the wharf.

As our stern was now more clear we tried the engines again carefully and found that the starboard engine and propeller worked all right but the port one would not move. I wirelessed the "Korea Maru," anchored a little distance outside the breakwater, who had a harbour tug alongside her most of the morning, to send the tug to help us, seeing how we were disabled, but with no results. The wind, which had been blowing lightly in the direction of the Bund where the oil was burning, now dropped, and after a little time we realized that the flames were creeping out along the line of the ruined wharf in our direction, at first very slowly, and then, as a light breeze sprung up towards us, very fast, coming along in several large masses from 50 to 150 feet in diameter, roaring violently and presenting a most terrifying sight. We had then over 2,000 people on board and I was very anxious. All the fire service was turned on deck again and we hove up anchor and drove the ship full speed with the starboard engine obliquely towards and across the path of the flames up to windward of them until we could get no farther for the shoal water near the breakwater. The nearest burning patch, a comparatively small one—about 100 feet in diameter—passed about 300 yards from our stern, and twenty minutes after we had left the place where we had been anchored, the flames passed over it 200 feet high.

By this time I was fairly certain that if we still had the "Steel Navigator's" anchor with us it must be hanging close up under our stern, as we could not possibly have dragged it across the harbour and all the buoy moorings, etc., with all that length of cable attached. From what we found afterwards I am almost certain that we must have parted the cable from the anchor either moving out from the wharf or at the first jerk going ahead across the harbour. The vessel would not steer at all, but, helped by the wind, and by going ahead and astern on the starboard engine, in about an hour we finally managed to manœuvre the ship out through the entrance to an anchorage just outside the breakwater. As we were laid almost in the entrance, trying to turn, the harbour tug which had been alongside the "Korea Maru" came past going into the harbour. We hailed the Japanese in charge to give us a tow round. He stopped and took our wire from forward, but just as he got a strain on it, by bad handling he swung into our bow and he at once slipped our wire and went away.

We could not get far outside the breakwater, as the outer anchorage was much too crowded with vessels that had come out

of the harbour and anchored near the entrance for us to attempt to manœuvre through by going ahead and astern, and the only way we could turn, moving solely ahead, brought us into shoal water, but we had sufficient room and depth of water to swing in as long as the wind did not increase to any extent. During the afternoon a vessel—the S.S. "Iris"—to which we had been forced to anchor rather close, very considerately, knowing our condition, weighed and moved out a little to give us a clearer berth and we also weighed and moved out a cable or so farther from the breakwater.

The ship now appeared safe. Just before dark, however, large quantities of floating oil drifted out through the harbour entrance and surrounded us, and flaming masses again appeared on the water just inside the remains of the breakwater, about half a mile off. The wind was light and taking them away from us, but as, in case of a shift of wind and the flames jumping the wrecked breakwater, I considered our position again dangerous in our circumstances, I sent over Captain Holland to the Captain of the S.S. "Iris," which is a tank steamer belonging to the Anglo-Saxon Petroleum Company, stating our circumstances and the anxiety I felt with the large number of people on board, and asking him if he would tow our bow round to seaward so that I could try to steam out to a safer anchorage. He agreed at once most willingly, and after making three attempts, finally got our bow round in such a position that we were able to steam clear of all the other vessels to a safe anchorage outside everything, where, even disabled as we were, we could get right out into the bay in case of necessity. These operations took from 7 p.m. until nearly midnight. It was pitch dark and the "Iris" had to be handled very carefully—the job of keeping the towing wire clear of her propeller was a very ticklish one. I thought she had fuel oil on board and was a handy twin-screw vessel, but I found afterward that she was a single screw and had 2,000 tons of benzine and 2,000 tons of kerosene on board. Under these circumstances I find it difficult to express fully my thanks and appreciation of the ready and thoroughly efficient assistance of the "Iris," her Captain, Officers and Crew, particularly in regard to Captain A. J. Konings, on whom the responsibility rested, and I shall be very pleased if you or the Chairman will express this to the Anglo-Saxon Petroleum Company. I understand the Anglo-Saxon Petroleum Company is the same as the Rising Sun Petroleum Company, who supply us with fuel oil in Yokohama.

Mr. Homeward, the senior surviving representative of the Rising Sun Petroleum Company, had taken refuge on board here on the Saturday night, and he went with me to the "Iris" to arrange the third and successful attempt to tow us round, and I should like to express here my appreciation of the manner in which he and Mr. Youill, also of the R.S.P. Co., worked with us in arranging re-bunkering and in every way we were in contact during the relief work.

I should like here also to express my appreciation of the conduct of our Japanese harbour pilot, Captain Takeuchi, and the crew of his motor sampan, who stayed with us until we were fast alongside and out of serious danger on the first day, doing very good work under most difficult and dangerous circumstances, all the time not knowing how their families were faring on shore. This was in great contrast to the behaviour of the harbour tug mentioned before, who, when he left us, went to the safest berth he could find near the breakwater and laid there all through the earthquake and fire on the Saturday afternoon, taking no notice of our repeated signals for his assistance, and on the Sunday morning laid for three hours alongside the "Korea Maru," apparently doing nothing, when his help was badly needed by several vessels in the harbour. Our pilot, Captain Takeuchi, came on board afterwards and told me his family was safe but, of course, homeless, and asked for a little food for them. I told him to bring them on board here until he could make arrangements for them. He thanked me and said that he would, but he never turned up, so I think he must have left for Kobe.

All our European Office Staff, with their families, were safe on board here, with the exception of Mr. Wevill and Mr. Read, who were presumably killed when our office collapsed during the first earthquake shocks.

We gave Mr. Boulter, the Acting British Consul General, a room for an office for relief work, and on the Sunday he formed a Committee from the leading business men among the refugees and passengers, and afterwards, on the Wednesday morning, an American Relief Committee was formed with headquarters also on board here, all working in perfect conjunction with our General Agent, Mr. Rankin, Mr. Fitzgerald and myself from then on until our departure from the port.

On Sunday the Purser's Staff took a register of all refugees on board. At 7 p.m. it was: Europeans 592, Chinese 705 and

Japanese 604. We had many more Japanese on board on the Saturday night and Sunday, probably well over 1,000, but almost all who were able left, entirely of their own accord, in various launches and sampans which came alongside, and by Wednesday only about 70 with wounds and 20 stretcher cases were left on board. These were gradually taken off by vessels bound for Kobe, leaving only 14 seriously injured stretcher cases, which were taken off at our request by the "Yamashiro Kan," the Japanese Flag Ship, on the morning of Saturday the 8th, to be sent as quickly as possible to Kobe by Japanese vessels. We had no foreign vessels leaving at that time and had no idea then that we should be leaving that night. I asked Mr. Rankin afterwards to write and explain this to the Captain of the "Yamashiro Kan," to whom I had sent the request for the removal of the wounded.

The Chinese refugees, both well and injured, we sent off gradually to Kobe by various foreign vessels, the last of ours going by the "West O'Rowa," a steamer sent up by the Kobe Relief Committee. This steamer took from us 115 Europeans and 362 Chinese. There were still numbers of Chinese on shore, but they appeared to want to stay for a time to try to save some of their effects.

The Europeans and Americans we also sent off gradually by foreign vessels, numbers from outlying districts coming, or being brought, on board each day until we left.

As we had no idea at first how long we might have to stay there, we at once cut down on the fresh water, leaving only a plentiful supply for drinking and cooking and necessary washing and cleansing. We also went as easy as possible on the food. The Agent of the Admiral Line offered us supplies from the "President Jefferson" when she arrived on Monday the 3rd, and supplies were also offered from the "West O'Rowa," but we advised them to send them to the "André Lebon" and other vessels where they were urgently needed, and with the stores and provisions which we received from the "Empress of Canada" we were able to make out very well until we got to Kobe.

The French steamer "André Lebon" had a most marvellous escape. During the first day, by heaving astern as far as possible on the other side of the wharf from us, she being the only vessel on that side of the wharf, she was well clear from the sparks and flames from the burning freight shed and was in no serious danger as long as her decks and upper works were kept well flooded with

water. The next day, Sunday, when the burning oil began to appear dangerous, she let go from the wharf, while we were waiting for the "Steel Navigator" to unshackle her cable, and drifted off the wharf about 400 feet, where she let go her anchor and laid at right angles to the line of the wharf. She was in as bad, or even in a worse, plight than ourselves, as essential parts of her main engine were ashore for repairs at the Yokohama Dock. Luckily for the ship and all on board her the masses of burning oil did not come along in line, the patch on the east side of the wharf, the one that passed nearest to our stern, being well ahead of the others. The "André Lebon" hove in on her cable as much as possible and this patch passed about a ship's length from her stern. After it had passed, a line was quickly run out, by the help of a stevedore's motor boat which happened to be passing, from the "André Lebon" to a buoy some distance astern of her. Her anchor was then weighed and the vessel hove astern, the other burning masses of oil passing a few minutes after a short distance ahead of her. She then made fast to the buoy. Her Captain certainly deserves great credit for his presence of mind and quick grasp of the situation, but I was told that the experience had aged him terribly. She had a number of refugees on board, mostly, I think, French and Russian. A number of Americans and English, who had gone on board her at first, came on the Saturday night and early Sunday morning on board this vessel on finding that the "André Lebon" was short of provisions.

The masses of blazing oil, after passing the "André Lebon," burned themselves out about 2 p.m. in the centre of the North-Eastern part of the harbour, the fire not spreading at all to the Western part, the oil near the North breakwater, which, as I mentioned before, started blazing late in the afternoon of Sunday, September 2nd, being set on fire by a burning lighter or sampan which drifted down into it.

Up to the morning of Monday the 3rd we were entirely without news of the outside world, all telegraphic communication either by wireless or land being cut off. Choshi, the wireless station nearest Yokohama, accepted one message from us for Kobe on the Saturday afternoon—September 1st—the message briefly stating the disaster and that the ship and all on board were safe. This apparently did not get through, but it was picked up by a Blue Funnel boat and taken to Kobe. We managed to work the "Canada" as she was coming in with our continuous wave system, but everything else was jammed by the Japanese ships and shore stations and at 9.40 a.m. it was interfering with urgent Japanese Government relief work. We got no wire or news of any kind from September 1st until we left except by vessels arriving, the "President Jefferson" on Monday morning bringing us the first news that Kobe had escaped the disaster.

A Japanese battleship, the "Yamashiro Kan," from Kure, flying an Admiral's flag, arrived on Tuesday morning the 4th, and remained the rest of the time we were in port. With the help of Mr. Boulter, our Consul, who personally went over with me to the battleship, we tried several times to get wires through to the Kobe office. We also tried through the H.M.S. "Despatch" and the U.S. war vessels when they arrived. We thought they were getting through all right, but we found on arriving at Kobe that they had not been delivered there and that all the news they had had was the letters we had sent by various steamers.

The "Empress of Canada" arrived about 9 on Monday morning the 3rd, and, as previously arranged by wireless, we commenced to transfer refugees to her, using both her lifeboats and ours. It was blowing quite strong from the South with a nasty sea running alongside, and we had considerable difficulty in getting the injured and women and children into the lifeboats, but we managed it without accident. It was raining heavily most of the time, which added greatly to the discomfort and difficulty. The "Canada's" motor lifeboat worked very well, towing lifeboats between the ships. Our lifeboats have stood the hard usage they have had during our stay very well and the hoisting gear has proved very handy and efficient. The "Empress of Canada" took from us 304 Europeans and 205 Chinese, including a number of injured. There is some question about the number of Europeans, as some of them apparently changed from the "Canada" to the "Jefferson" and vice versa. The "Canada" supplied us with two boatloads of provisions, and left for Kobe at daylight the next morning, Tuesday the 4th.

The "President Jefferson," on her way to Seattle from Hongkong, also came in on Monday the 3rd, from Kobe. She took from us 175 (approx.) European refugees for Kobe and America and a few of our passengers who wished to transfer for passage to Seattle. She also took refugees from the "André Lebon" and other vessels in the harbour and left for Kobe again that night.

I was, of course, extremely anxious to get divers to examine our

propellers and to get the port one cleared, if possible, from the obstructions. Everything in the nature of diving gear had been destroyed in Yokohama, but I hoped at first to get divers from Yokosuka or Uraga. We got news on Monday that this was out of the question as these places had suffered as badly as Yokohama, so I wrote down to Kobe by the "Empress of Canada" for divers to be sent to Yokohama as soon as possible. On Tuesday morning when the "Yamashiro Kan" came in and Mr. Boulter went to see the Japanese Admiral, at my request he asked the Captain of the "Yamashiro Kan" if he would send a diver to examine our propellers. He at once said "Yes," and at 1 p.m. their boat with diver and gear complete, with a young Japanese officer in charge who spoke English, came under our stern. The diver found three riding round-turns of about 2¼ inch chain cable round the port stern tube close inside the propeller. On tracing the cable he found a broken end about four fathoms long hanging down from the turns; the other part led down into the mud and he traced it some distance without finding an end. By working on the broken end, after about two hours' work, with a 2½ inch wire and by using the shackles under the counter as leads, Captain Holland being down in the diver's boat and I myself on deck with the Boatswain and his gang, we got the turns off and slipped the cable to the bottom. We had some difficulty with the riding turns, but the diver worked very well and cleverly, going down when we were heaving or slacking away, to push the turns clear. The diver reported both propellers to be in good order except that the edges of the blades were chipped in places. After he was up we tried both engines ahead and astern and found them working all right. Mr. Boulter and I went on board the "Yamashiro Kan" to thank the Captain for his kindness and courtesy in lending the diver and incidentally to try to get some messages sent to Kobe, including one saying we were all clear and that the divers were not needed. This was promised to be sent through the Naval Station at Kure, but it was never received at Kobe. We also sent a letter by a steamer to the Kobe office to the same effect. As it happened, there had been some delay in getting divers and the letter was received in time to stop them.

When we came back to the ship Mr. Rankin, Mr. Fitzgerald, Mr. Boulter and myself talked over the situation. Mr. Boulter said he wished us to stay in the port as there was no other vessel in the harbour suitable for taking care of the refugees who were

coming in all the time from the districts near Yokohama. I told him, Mr. Rankin and Mr. Fitzgerald agreeing, that I considered, and I was sure my Company would consider it my duty to stay as long as it was necessary, in order to save life and rescue and relieve the distressed, and that I agreed such was the situation, and if he, or some one else in authority, were not here I should stay on my own responsibility the same as I would in a disaster at sea, but that as he, the representative of the British Government, was here, and as we had numerous passengers on board, mails, and a full valuable cargo, and we were now able and ready to sail, I should like him to give me a letter stating that he considered it necessary for us to remain. He at once, without any hesitation, wrote me a letter—which in its showing of a quick grasp of the situation, tact, courtesy and decision, I consider is symbolic of Mr. Boulter's whole work during the relief operations. The American Consul had been killed in the earthquake, so Mr. Boulter was acting for both British and American Communities, and in fact at times for the whole foreign community, and earned the respect, admiration and friendship of all who had the privilege of working with him. He is the Vice-Consul, but the Consul General being away, he is acting in that capacity. Our release on the Saturday we left he notified to me verbally, but I kept a copy of the signal sent to the H.M.S. "Despatch."

From Sunday, September 2nd, until we left, numerous rescue parties of half a dozen men each, composed of residents, passengers and ship's officers, left the ship each morning, searching the outlying parts of Yokohama and bringing in injured, and women and children. One party of fourteen men were landed at Nagahama about six miles down the bay, taking provisions, mostly tinned milk, and walked in about eight miles by road to Kamakura and district, where there were about 270 Europeans, mostly women and children, camped out, their houses and the hotel having been badly damaged by the earthquake, and they were reported to be short of food. The shortage of food was found to be more comparative than real, but the milk was very necessary for the younger children and much appreciated. About forty of the people were brought back by road to Nagahama, where they embarked in a steam launch provided by the R.S.P. Co., and came to the ship, the remainder preferring to wait until they could be brought round by sea.

On Wednesday morning the first U.S. destroyer arrived, followed in the afternoon by three others. From then on these made trips to Tokyo and various places on the coast, bringing in refugees to us, one, the "Smith-Thompson," bringing in the rest of the Kamakura refugees to the number of 230. She came alongside and we embarked them direct, at midnight on Thursday, September 6th, there being numerous children and several injured amongst them.

About noon on Wednesday the 5th, H.M.S. "Despatch" arrived and anchored some distance inside us, the anchorage being by now much clearer, many vessels having left. As I wished to be nearer him for convenience in communicating, etc., we weighed and took the opportunity of trying out our engines and propellers by half an hour's run at full speed in the bay. Everything worked well and we came back and took up a safe anchorage near him.

To make further sure about our propellers, I arranged with the Captain of the "Despatch" to send over his divers for a thorough examination of them. They reported practically the same as the Japanese diver except that they found a couple of turns of wire rope under the rope guard on the starboard propeller. This they removed. I do not know where the wire rope was picked up. It was smaller than any of our mooring wires, and looked very old and rusty.

The Captain of the "Despatch" gave me a properly signed diver's report on the condition of the propellers, which I hold.

On Friday, about noon, the U.S. Flag Ship "Huron," Admiral Anderson, came into port. Soon after his arrival he called his principal officers, several American citizens and others to the Flag Ship for a conference on relief work, and invited Mr. Boulter, Captain Hamilton of the "Despatch" and myself to be present. On going on board the Flag Ship he thanked me very heartily, before all present, for what the "Empress of Australia" had done for the American Community.* At the Conference the Admiral read a cable from President Coolidge empowering him to go to any expense he deemed advisable and to use all the resources at his disposal for relief work. He also read cables from the U.S. Shipping Board and the U.S. Steel Corporation, placing all their vessels in the Pacific at his disposal for relief work, they to bear all

**Editor's Note.—Subsequent to the writing of Captain Robinson's report, and prior to his arrival in Vancouver, a letter was received to be forwarded to him from the American citizens referred to.* *(See page 23.)*

operating expenses. The relief and rescue of the Foreign Community being now well in hand, the Conference dealt mostly with Japanese relief.

On Saturday morning, September 8th, I went on shore for the first time since the earthquake, with Mr. Rankin, Mr. Fitzgerald and a Major Brown, of Toronto, who, I understand, had letters from the Company, to see the ruins of the office and to get some idea of the condition of the harbour, wharves, etc. The destruction of the town is absolute and indescribable. It is just one tumbled mass of debris, and only one with a thorough knowledge of the town and buildings could distinguish even where the various streets had been in the Foreign Settlement. We picked our way along the Bund through a tangle of fallen wires, and over and past piles of brick and stone-work—many of which gave out very plain evidence of the unburied dead beneath them—to where our office had stood. When we were looking about near the overturned safe, which evidently had been open, as everything inside had been burned, we suddenly came upon what were unquestionably the charred remains of poor Wevill and Read, lying close together, partially covered by fallen bricks and stone. We covered them up and left them, but as we were going farther along we overtook a burial party from the "Despatch" under an officer of Marines and accompanied by the Reverend Eustace Strong, the Vicar of what had been Christ Church, and asked them if they would send over some men to help us to get out the remains of Wevill and Read and bury them properly. The funeral they were conducting was the body of a poor woman whose husband I knew well, the family having been regular travellers by our line. She had come down into the town with her little son to take the husband home from his office and had left the boy with him and gone in her car to do some shopping. When the earthquake came the husband and boy managed to get out of the office uninjured. The husband then searched madly round the locality where he knew his wife had gone, and found the car standing empty, but could not find her, until the fire came and drove him away. Her body had just been found that morning, crushed under the burned ruins of a Japanese store and only recognizable by parts of her jewellery. I simply quote this as an example of the many similar cases which were constantly coming under my notice.

To return to our own affairs. The officer at once sent back a party with us and we got out the bodies—Major Brown helping

as though he was one of our own people. I was extremely glad we had him with us. We covered them with a flag and took them up to what had been the British Naval Hospital, with all the dignity and respect we could, and a grave was dug in the Hospital Grounds overlooking the harbour and sea and they were buried there together. The service was very impressively conducted by the Reverend Eustace Strong. Arrangements were made to have the grave marked with their names.

By this time it was noon and I had been away from the ship longer than I had intended, so we came straight back without going round the ruined wharves or harbour. Shortly after we got back Mr. Boulter came to tell me that he had just had news that the large European Community in Hakone, Miyanoshita and district, whom we were expecting down, had managed to get out on the other side of the mountains and had gone by train to Kobe, and that, as the remainder of the Foreign Community in Tokyo seemed to be in no want of immediate relief other than what could be given by the war vessels in port, and as Yokohama and district was cleared up and we could take all the remaining refugees who wished to leave, we could leave port that evening, Saturday, September 8th.

It was, of course, necessary to return to Kobe to land the large number of refugees on board and to take in fresh water and provisions. We had on board then 633 Europeans, 65 Japanese—mostly nurses and servants of the Europeans—and 15 Chinese. Of this total, 29 Europeans were left in Yokohama, for business reasons, or still searching for lost relatives, 32 were transferred to the "President Pierce" for passage to San Francisco, and the remainder of the refugees taken to Kobe.

Fortunately we had arranged to fill up with oil fuel that day, and this was being done and was finished at 4 p.m. I expected to get away about 6.30 p.m., but we were delayed waiting for the "President Pierce" to arrive, to transfer her passengers to her. She wirelessed her arrival first 7 p.m., then 8 p.m., then 9 p.m., and finally arrived at 10.30 p.m. I never heard why she was delayed, for as soon as she anchored and I was sure of her identity, I put the passengers in launches from the U.S. "Huron," which had been provided for their transfer, and left at once. Most of the lighthouses in the entrance and vicinity were damaged and the lights not burning, but it was fine and clear, and we went out at half speed until well clear of the bay, and had no difficulty.

We got into wireless communication the next day with H.M.S. "Hawkins," Admiral Leveson, then on her way to Yokohama, where she expected to arrive in about 20 hours time, and exchanged messages, mostly relative to our movements and the number of refugees we expected to take from Kobe, copies of which I attach. After we made fast alongside the wharf at Kobe on the morning of Monday, September 10th, I found from our office that, as I had expected, there was no rush of passengers or refugees to go out with us, even many of those refugees who had previously given in their names on the passage from Yokohama as wishing to go with us to Canada cancelling as soon as they got in touch with their friends at Kobe. As soon as I found this out, Mr. Rankin, Mr. Hayward and myself went to the British Consulate, as I heard that Captain Washington of H.M.S. "Durban," whom Admiral Leveson in his messages had said he wished me to meet and presumably consult, was there. But he had just left before we arrived. I asked the Consul General (H.B.M.), Mr. Forster, his views about our departure, and showed him a message I had written out to send to Admiral Leveson proposing to sail at noon the next day (Tuesday). We could not in any case have left that night on account of the large amount of fresh water we had to take on board. Mr. Forster seemed to think that we ought to stay for a few days to allow people to get to know about our sailing and to make up their minds, but with this we did not agree at all, and we left the Consulate and went on board the H.M.S. "Durban." Captain Washington, a very decisive and business-like man, quite agreed with my proposals for sailing and at once sent the message to Admiral Leveson. We received a reply the next morning saying that the Admiral concurred.

The Relief and Red Cross Organizations at Kobe worked very efficiently and we were cleared of all our refugees and injured in a very short time after arrival.

A representative of the Governor of Kobe—I think it was the Vice-Governor—with an interpreter and other officials came on board immediately on our arrival alongside and thanked me for all we had done for the Japanese.

Previous to our departure from Yokohama, realizing the difficulty of getting oil fuel at Kobe, we had made arrangements with the R.S.P. Co. at Yokohama for 600 tons to be reserved for us there until cancelled. We now found that it was practically impossible to get it at Kobe, which necessitated a return to Yokohama.

At Kobe we had the various damages sustained during the earthquake and fire surveyed by Mr. Watt, Surveyor to Lloyd's Register. The survey report was not ready when we left but was to be sent to Vancouver on the "Empress of Asia."

We left Kobe at noon on Tuesday, September 11th, having only embarked 34 passengers and refugees, and after a rather bad passage round, arrived at Yokohama at 2 p.m. on the 12th, Mr. Rankin, our General Agent, coming around with us. As soon as we were anchored, Admiral Leveson sent over his barge for Mr. Harley of Messrs. Butterfield & Swire—Mr. Harley being the head of a delegation of Yokohama firms who had come back with us from Kobe to try to save property—and me to go to the Flag Ship. When we arrived there, the Admiral expressed his hearty appreciation of all the "Australia" had done, and then we, with Mr. Boulter and the Admiral's Secretary, had a long talk over the general relief question. The Admiral seemed rather surprised and annoyed that the Yokohama refugees did not want to leave Kobe at once, and in large numbers. This was both in regard to our vessel and also the P. & O. "Mantua," which he had arranged to make several trips between Kobe and Shanghai and for which he said he had not been able to get a single refugee. I told him my idea of their reason for this, which is that the majority of the Foreign Yokohama Community, being either representatives of big outside firms, or firms having branches in the other coast ports of Japan and China, ceased to be refugees as soon as they got to Kobe and into communication with the outside world, and I thought that most of them would not leave Japan, or even send their families away, until they had had time to look over the situation and they or their firms decided what they were going to do, which would take weeks, in which time they could easily be looked after by the ordinary lines of steamers. The smaller European merchants and shopkeepers who had lost heavily would not wish to leave, as their sole interest was in Japan, and they could probably, knowing the country well, live cheaper there than anywhere else. There were very few poor among the Europeans in Yokohama, except the Russian refugees, and the places they want to leave Japan for, will not accept them.

Our oil fuel came alongside immediately we anchored, and when it was all on board we left Yokohama at 8 p.m. on Wednesday, September 12th.

All of the refugees from Yokohama were entirely without

spare clothing, and what they had on was in rags. Most of the passengers and ship's company gave away everything they could spare, and a quantity of serge, flannel, etc., was also received from H.M.S. "Despatch" when she arrived, which was made up into dresses, etc., by sewing parties organized by the passengers and refugees. Some of our old passengers among the refugees knowing that we had kimonos and other clothing in the curio store, asked if they might sign cards for them, and I told Mr. Chisholm to allow this and also to give out anything in that line he considered necessary.

I do not like to close this report without expressing my strong admiration and appreciation of the work and conduct of all the Officers and Crew of this vessel. During the whole of our stay at Yokohama, but especially on September 1st, 2nd and 3rd, everyone, without exception, carried out all orders and worked energetically, but steadily and without excitement, on very arduous tasks and in very dangerous situations. I have received letters of appreciation from the various Foreign Communities, most of them, to my mind, far too eulogistic of my share in the affair.

I should also like to express my admiration of the conduct and calmness of the passengers, many of whom, both men and women, worked untiringly day and night among the sick and injured refugees of all nationalities in most uncomfortable and distressing circumstances, our lower decks and alleyways all over the ship Saturday night, September 1st, and the next day presenting a most gruesome and heartrending sight, crowded with hundreds of badly wounded among the rescued, half or partially naked and covered with dirt and blood, groaning and crying pitifully.

A Mr. Doty, President of the Foundation Company of New York, and one of his staff, Mr. Johnston, came to me early on the Saturday afternoon and asked to be allowed to help in anything. They both worked hard with the hoses, along with several other passengers, on the upper deck, and afterwards took a very active part in the relief work.

I was very glad to have Mr. James Rankin, General Agent, and Mr. Fitzgerald on board—their tact and sound good sense were a great help at all times. I should also like to mention the help given to our Purser's Staff by Mr. Hospes of the Passenger Office Staff of Yokohama, who stayed on the ship until we arrived at Kobe, and worked very hard.

In conclusion, I would say that, to me, one of the most gratifying things, and the dominant factor in the whole proceedings, is

the way that everyone with whom we have had to deal on board here has worked together without friction, disagreement or complaint during this terrible catastrophe, the nerve-racking events immediately following, and the whole of the relief work, some of the hardest workers having lost families or homes or business possessions, and in some cases all of these.

This is a very long report, and I have gone at times into perhaps somewhat irrelevant detail, but the circumstances and various situations were so exceptional that I found it difficult to give any description of them without doing so. I hope, at least, it will not prove uninteresting.

S Robinson

Commander,
R.M.S. "Empress of Australia."

The following letter was addressed to Captain S. Robinson, of the S.S. "Empress of Australia," by the American Relief Committee, on board the ship, on September 9th. It reached Vancouver on September 22nd on board the Canadian Pacific S.S. "Empress of Asia." It reads:—

Commander, Empress of Australia.

SIR,—

The American refugees and passengers of the "Empress of Australia" wish to congratulate the Canadian Pacific Steamships, Ltd., in having you in its service.

We have gone through what will probably be recorded as the world's greatest catastrophe, and we know that the lives of all on board the ship during the first two days were constantly in the hands of you, your officers and crew. It was your able, skilful and courageous handling of the many critical situations that saved us all.

You, Sir, must be proud of every member of your staff and crew, who served you as one man and who never failed in any emergency, and the kindly, courteous and efficient manner in which you all cared for the refugees, regardless of condition, nationality or colour, was marvellous.

Words are inadequate to express our appreciation and gratitude to you, your officers and men.

Sincerely yours,

AMERICAN RELIEF COMMITTEE.

J. R. GEARY, *Chairman.*
H. E. ROOT,
JOHN W. DOTY,
E. G. BABBITT.

AN APPRECIATION

On September 12th, the following letter and a further appreciation was communicated to the Commander of the "Australia" from the British refugees and passengers of the ship:—

Commander S. Robinson, R.N.R.,
R.M.S. Empress of Australia.

SIR,—

The British Refugees and Passengers desire to express their intense admiration and pride in your handling of the many difficult and dangerous situations that arose during the whole period of the recent terrible catastrophe in Yokohama, in which the traditions of the British Mercantile Marine Service have been maintained.

The conduct of the officers and men under your command was admirable.

We owe to you our lives, and words are entirely inadequate to express our thanks and gratitude.

For and on behalf of the Refugees:

(Signed) G. W. BROCKHURST.

For and on behalf of the Passengers:

(Signed) A. C. LOFTS.
A. B. DAHL.

It is suggested, that in order to put on record the magnificent part taken by the S.S. "Empress of Australia" in the work of rescue and relief, that a Tablet be presented to the Commander, to be affixed to the ship, in which reference may be made respecting the gallant work accomplished by the officers and crew.

At a meeting of the passengers, it was unanimously decided that a fitting tablet should be placed on the "Australia," and the following committee was formed for the purpose of selecting and erecting a bronze tablet:—

JOHN W. DOTY, *Chairman.*
J. R. FLINT, *Treasurer.*
A. B. DAHL,
F. C. NOBLE,
G. C. CARVELL,
A. C. LOFTS, *Secretary.*

R.M.S. EMPRESS OF AUSTRALIA