Soon, however, the captain obtained control, and we went to work clearing the life-boats. In launching the second boat, Captain Crowell was thrown against some iron work, and severely injured — three ribs broken, it was afterward reported — but he kept at his post. Two frightened men climbed into a boat before it had been lowered, and the women safely placed. The tackle stuck in the block. "Cut the rope!" ordered the Captain. A sailor whipped out his knife, and one end of the boat dropped from the davits. The two men were pitched into the sea, but hauled out considerably cooled. Many of the passengers clung to their boxes and bags, while yet they despaired of their lives. Many tied life-preservers about their hips, or arranged as though their greatest danger might be in getting their feet wet. One man, his feet bare, tightly held a blacking-brush.

In half an hour the six life-boats were launched, manned, and the fifty or more women and children lowered into them. Then they put off in charge of the first officer, and disappeared in the fog and darkness. One returned for blankets, as the women were unprotected, and the night was cold. We tore the blankets from the beds in the state-rooms, still above water, and flung them into the life-boat. After that we huddled together on the leeward side of the ship, and waited for daylight.

We had struck on Little Hope Island, — how cheerless the name sounded, — alongside an old wreck, four miles off the rocky Nova Scotia coast. The tide was going down, — "Thank God for that," the captain said, — and the ship was full length on the rocks. Through the low fog we could see the island light, and we sent up rockets at intervals. One of the men managed to get some cake and pie, and we ate our Sunday morning meal.

Daylight at last! A heavy sea was running, but the island was near, and there were two life-rafts on board. Second Officer Cutting, Asst. Purser Basford, and Asst. Engineer Rogers took a line, and on one of the life-rafts started for the shore. The breakers caught the raft and dashed it on the rocks, but the men scrambled up and made the line fast to a bowlder. Then, by means of the rope and the remaining life-raft, the men were taken, five or six at a time, from the steamer to the island, and were safe. Food, the ship's instruments, and as much of the baggage as possible, were taken from the ship, and then the Captain left her. Two days afterward the Merrimack broke, and was a total wreck.

A small lighthouse occupies the greater part of the surface of Little Hope. The keeper was away, but the assistant, Michael Cunningham, did all in his power to make us comfortable. There was drunkenness and brawling, little food and shelter, however, and we wanted to send word to the dear ones at home. One of the life-boats came to help us off, but was stove in on the rocks. From her men we learned that the women had been safely landed at Catherine's River. A fishing schooner lay to and sent her dory to our assistance. The fishermen took two passengers, and by skillful pulling managed to get them to another of the life-boats lying outside the breakers. They returned and took two more. We stood on the slippery rocks around the boat; the men seated in her waited until a wave broke and the water surged around us, and then gave her a mighty shove. She slid down the retreating current. The next big wave met her. She balanced, trembling, on its curling crest. The men plied the oars. A moment more and she was safe; but it was dangerous business, and the fishermen did not come back again.

Another schooner sent a dory, and three more of us were put into the life-boats. We were the last to get off that day. One man was a prisoner on the Island over the day that was to have been his wedding day. The brave waterman put back to try again, but a breaker over-turned his light boat, and he was swept into the sea before us all. He caught on a point of rocks; those near rushed out and pulled him dripping from the waves.

There was now nothing to be done but to pull for the shore. We landed at Catherine's River. The women had been cutting skirts from the