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David Scott Mitchell.



JAMES JOHNSON, THE SOLE SURVIVOR OF THE DUNBAR.
(From a Photograph by FREEMAN BROTHERS.)

J. Mitchell

SPECIAL EDITION.

FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION ONLY.

A NARRATIVE

OF THE MELANCHOLY

WRECK

OF THE

“DUNBAR,”

MERCHANT SHIP, ON THE SOUTH HEAD OF PORT JACKSON,
AUGUST 20TH, 1857, WITH

ILLUSTRATIONS

OF THE PRINCIPAL LOCALITIES.

Warning not heard or seen—no help at hand—
The wide dark bosom of the angry deep
With irresistible and cruel force
Received them all. *One* only cast alive,
Fainting and breathless on the fatal rocks—
To weeping friends and strangers afterwards.
Thus told his melancholy tale—

SYDNEY:

PUBLISHED FOR THE PROPRIETORS BY JAMES FRYER.

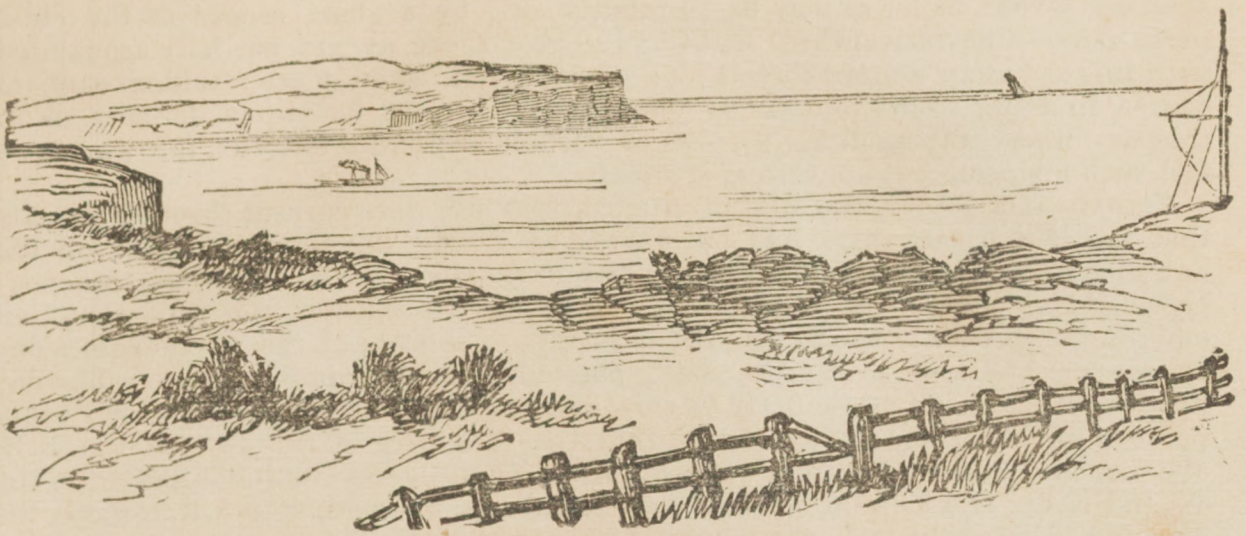
1857.



THE ILLUSTRATIONS.

In the preparation of our illustrations it will be at once seen that no expense or trouble has been spared. The drawings are by distinguished Artists, and most truthfully do they represent the principal localities of this shipwreck, being exquisitely engraved by our respected fellow-citizen, W. G. Mason, formerly connected with the *Illustrated London News*. The following are the places thus graphically set before our readers—*The Gap*, (on Saturday, the 22nd instant) near which the awful calamity occurred taken from a spirited drawing upon the spot by Mr. Angas, and showing some of the painful incidents. *The Wreck* (or principal fragment of the Wreck) *in Middle Harbour* after an excellent drawing by Mr. Thomas. *The Rescue of the survivor, Johnson*, after a masterly sketch also by Mr. Angas. *An Outline Sketch of the Coast on which the Dunbar was lost*, by Thomas. And lastly, a small *Outline Map*, by means of which strangers, and such colonists as are not well acquainted with the coast and outer part of Port Jackson, may best be given to understand how and where this most deplorable affair took place.





THE GAP.

JACOB'S LADDER.

WRECK.

FLAG STAFF.

THE above outline sketch of the brink of the cliffs, under which the DUNBAR was lost, is useful as serving to point out the exact spot where the vessel struck—about 35 feet distant in a direct line from the main road leading to Watson's Bay.

NARRATIVE OF THE WRECK OF THE "DUNBAR."

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DURING the last few days a dark, mysterious gloom has fallen upon our beautiful city, caused by one of the most awful and heartrending calamities which has ever appealed to the feelings of our common humanity, or carried desolation and agony into the sacred precincts of domestic life. A magnificent, first-class passenger ship, under a most able and experienced commander—her cargo alone invoiced at £72,000—has been so utterly cast away within a mile or two of our very doors, that but *one* has been saved alive out of a crew of upwards of 120 souls—one only, as it were, to throw some faint light upon the causes of this frightful disaster. Death in its mildest form is terrible; but, accompanied with such strange and horrible circumstances as those with which so many of us are now familiar, it becomes a thing which the boldest cannot contemplate without dismay. Nothing is perhaps a more faithful reflex of the anxiety and consternation of the public mind than the vague, hurried, and contradictory manner in which our journals have given the details of this melancholy shipwreck; so different from that clear, calm tone in which they usually furnish the news of the day—facts and fictions, conjectures and repetitions, being successively laid before the reader, as if the writers themselves involuntarily participated in the universal excitement; or were

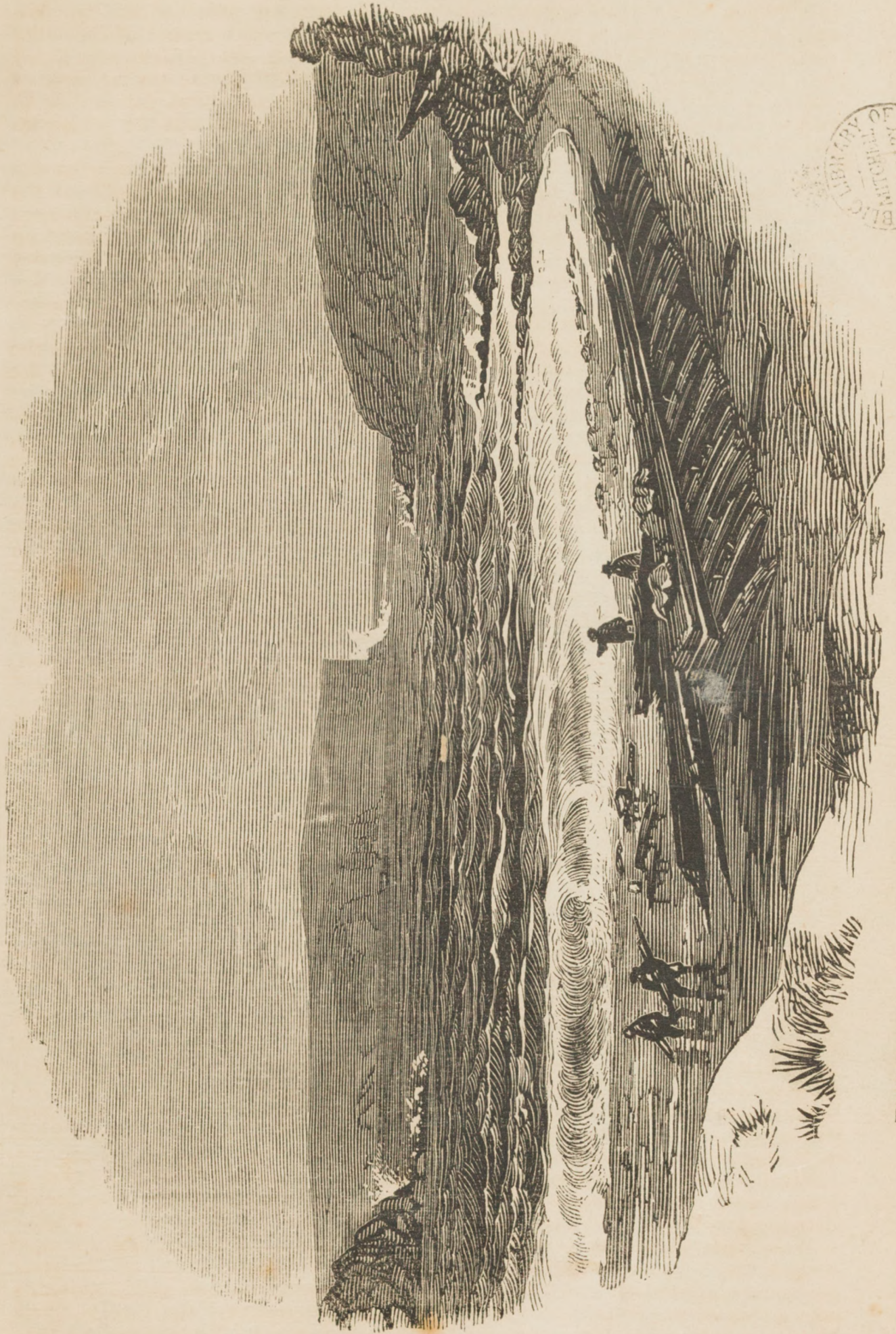
wholly unequal to the task of satisfying that eager, restless craving for further information herein which appears to have seized upon all classes of society. We shall endeavour, as far as may be, to remedy this by a short *resumé* of the chief particulars—a narrative which will serve to give those as yet partially acquainted with this sad affair a more correct idea of what has taken place; taking care, of course, in doing so to avoid giving offence to the most fastidious delicacy, or to trespass in any way upon the sorrows of our afflicted fellow citizens, for whom we feel such a sincere but unavailing sympathy.

FRIDAY.—On Friday, the 21st of August, rumours were current through the city that one, if not two ships had been wrecked during the previous night off the entrance to the harbour, and the greatest excitement prevailed in consequence; especially as the reports stated that one of the vessels was the “Vocalist,” an emigrant ship with over 500 persons on board. The state of the weather for a day or two past had been such as to justify the most serious apprehensions. The day previous it had been particularly stormy, and the wind had shifted to nearly every point of the compass, having been during the fore part of the day, in the N.E. quarter, with a heavy sea from the eastward. Towards the evening it shifted to the W. and N.W., and by midnight it blew a gale at S., veering to S.E. towards the morning, with a tremendous sea setting in dead upon the land.

The ship “Europa,” from Bremen, which arrived in Sydney on Thursday morning, reported having been in company with a large ship for five days off this coast, and a steamer that came in the same day, also gave information of having seen a “large ship” near the land, bearing East; but neither of them could report her name. The steamer “Grafton,” Captain Wiseman, from the Clarence River, while entering Port Jackson this morning (Friday), was the first who gave the alarm. Captain W. reported that he had passed, floating between the Heads, numerous pieces of ship timbers, bedding, bales of goods, and other articles, denoting a recent wreck. At about half-past seven a.m., however, Mr. Hydes, one of the pilots stationed at Watson’s Bay, perceived indications of a shipwreck in the vicinity, and, in company with another pilot, Mr. Robson, whom he immediately informed of the circumstance, he at once proceeded to examine carefully the rocky coast, and at length discovered the portion of a large vessel ashore between the “Gap” and the Lighthouse; they supposed her to have been of at least 1000 tons burthen, and of American build, the fittings that could be seen being of unpainted white deal, similar to that ordinarily used in emigrant ships, the fastenings of copper, figure head a gilt scroll, masts and bowsprit hooped.

There had been washed ashore a quantity of sundry articles, such as carpeting, hats, candles, silk, children’s toys, shirts, prints, clothing, bagging, and linen drapery; but on none of them at this time could any brand be seen by which the name of the vessel could be traced. This could not long continue to be the case. In the course of the day part of the wooden lid of a pickle case, branded — and Co., in half a diamond S over 228; a parchment label, used for luggage on the English Railways, with the address, “Mylne, passenger, Edinburgh;” a handkerchief with the name “Howell;” a lady’s night-dress, marked “Dobelle;” and a cabin door numbered 68, were found near the Heads. The rumours as to the fact of a dreadful shipwreck having just occurred soon assumed distinct shape and certainty. At length it became generally known in Sydney that numerous dead, and mutilated bodies of men, women, and children, were to be seen floating in the heavy surf at the “Gap,” thrown by immense waves to a great height, and dashed pitilessly against the rugged cliffs, the returning water sweeping them from the agonised sight of the horrified spectators. The scene is described by parties present to have exercised a sort of hideous fascination, that seemed to bind them to the spot; while at the fearful spectacle of the remains of fellow beings in so awful a position—immediately before their eyes and yet out of their reach—each determination to leave the fatal locality became overpowered by a desire for farther knowledge, many dreading lest they should have to recognise the familiar face of friend or relative.

While uncertainty continued as to the name of the unfortunate vessel, the most contradictory opinions were promulgated; some averring that she was an Emigrant ship, others, a Merchant vessel, some that she was of North American build, and again others, that she was British; the intense excitement increased, and the road to South Head, notwithstanding the inclemency of the weather, was hastily traversed by hundreds of anxious persons.



THE KEEL OF THE DUNBAR AT HUNTER'S BAY, MIDDLE HARBOUR.



Meanwhile, important facts became known at Middle Harbour, appearing to remove all doubts as to the name of the lost vessel; a mail bag marked "No. 2, per DUNBAR, Plymouth, May 29"; a cask of tripe marked "DUNBAR"; the top of a case, marked J.C.; a quantity of pork; boxes of candles; several boys' cricket bats; and a great quantity of general cargo, were either found floating there, or washed ashore. Captain Pockley, the newly appointed Harbour Master, reported that twelve bodies had been found, one of them evidently an officer, the gilt buttons of his coat marked W.B.W., with a crest; there had also been picked up the body of a boy, about four years of age, quite naked, his hair black. Near the Sand Spit, Middle Harbour, the bodies of two well dressed men, and of a woman, with a ring on one of her fingers, had been taken up by Mr. Isaac Moore; also two or three beer cask heads, with Tooth's brand. A cow, surrounded by sharks was seen floating near this place, and two cows and a horse were here cast ashore. A large portion of the wreck floated into Middle Harbour, (*see Engraving*) and went ashore at Hunter's Bay, near the residence of Mr. Edwards, where it still lies. It consists of about 40 or 50 feet of the keel, and flooring timber of massive construction, copper fastened, two or three sheets of the copper still adhering to the woodwork. The enormous force with which the ship had been driven ashore is evinced by this relic of her former stately proportions; the powerful teak timbers are rent and shivered at their sides and ends, as though they were of the most fragile material, and the copper bolts, nearly two inches in diameter, twisted like pieces of thin wire; a gangway board, with a lion carved on it, was also picked up.

The energetic and efficient officer, Captain M'Lerie, Inspector General of Police, remained at Middle Harbour until half-past 12 o'clock on Friday night, having arranged for the removal of the bodies that had been found to Sydney on Saturday morning.—A party of mounted police, by his directions, remained to guard the recovered property, and it was rumoured that parties detected in wrecking had been arrested. No reasonable doubt remained but that the ill-fated vessel was indeed the DUNBAR, reported in the *Home News* of the 16th of June, as having sailed for Sydney from Plymouth on the 2nd of that month, with a large list of passengers, comprising many well-known and much respected colonists; and several families in our city were at once plunged into the deepest affliction. It was remarked as a singular circumstance that the blue light of the unfortunate vessel had actually been seen off the coast from Sydney, although not observed by the Pilots; and it was also said that the dog of the lighthouse keeper was noticed to be very uneasy during the night, and had run to the edge of the cliffs and barked loudly. Possibly this may have occurred at the time of the awful catastrophe.

SATURDAY.—On the morning of Saturday, the 22nd instant, the lingering hopes of those who trusted that the wreck might not be that of the DUNBAR were utterly annihilated. It became but too evident even to all, that it was indeed that splendid vessel, and it seemed from many circumstances also sure that she must have struck on the rocks, either at the Gap, or between that spot and the Lighthouse—have been almost instantly dashed to pieces, not a single person being saved to tell the melancholy story.

The following is an amended list of the passengers, so far as it can be ascertained, being compiled from the newspapers of the day:—Mr. and Mrs. Kilner Waller, six children and servant; Mr. and Mrs. A. Meyers, six children and servant; Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Peek; Mrs. Egan, son, and daughter; Mr. Hyacinth Macquoid; Mr. Severn; the two Misses Hunt; Captain Steine, R.N.; Mr. Adrian De Young James; Mr. Downey, architect; Mr. Isaac Simmons; Mr. C. Troughton; Miss Logan and two Masters Logan; Mr. and Mrs. Mylne, and Misses A. and E. Mylne; Mr. C. Davidson; Mr. F. Tyndal. Twenty-four second and third cabin passengers; the crew being about sixty. Of the foregoing, Mr. Kilner Waller was the brother of Mr. J. G. Waller, of Wynyard Square, in this city, and the author of several valuable letters on emigration recently published in the columns of the *Sydney Morning Herald*. Mr. A. Meyers was the brother of a gentleman of that name at Bathurst. Mr. and Mrs. S. Peek were well known colonists; Mr. Peek having been for many years a large importer, and formerly in business with Mr. Robert Porter in this city. Mrs. Egan was the wife of Daniel Egan Esquire, M.P. of this city, and accompanied by her relatives, Mr. and Miss Cahuac. Mr. Macquoid was the son of the late Sheriff, who so honourably liquidated his father's debts—he was accompanied by his friend Mr. Severn. Mr. James was the much lamented and only son of H. K. James, Esq., of this city. This young

gentleman had been studying in England, previous to taking holy orders. Mr. Isaac Simmons was the second son of the late Mr. James Simmons, and was returning to the colony to take possession of a large fortune. Miss Logan, and the two masters Logan, were the children of Mrs Logan, a resident in this city. Mr. Mylnes is believed to have been a squatter of the Northern district. In the second cabin was Mrs. W. K. Brown and child, a Mr. and Mrs. Healing and three children, and also, it is thought, a Mr. Bynon. Mrs. Green, the Captain's wife, was at first supposed to have been lost in this vessel, but there is reason to hope that she did not accompany her husband in this, his last and fatal voyage.

The excitement in the city continued very great all day, and thousands of persons went down to the Heads. The description of what had been so appalling to the gazing multitude on Friday, still remained but too strictly applicable to the same scene in the vicinity of the Gap at the foot of the rocks (*see Engraving*). To quote the vivid language of the *Era* Newspaper.—“It was manifest that the ill-fated vessel must have struck when all on board had retired to rest, as the majority of the bodies were in a state of complete nudity or only covered with night dresses.

Corpses of men, women, and children, some of them fearfully mutilated, were dashed against the beetling crags, and as rapidly borne back again by the relentless surge, while here and there, heads or limbs which had been torn off by repeated concussions against the rocks, were thrown up as if in jeering mockery by the very element that had caused their destruction.

The sea was strewn with portions of the wreck, bedding, and wearing apparel; in fact, it was impossible for a vessel to move a yard without encountering fresh evidence of the extent of the heart-rending calamity.”

At about noon, it was reported that a solitary survivor from the wreck had been seen alive, far below, under the cliffs, and that exertions were being promptly made in the hope of rescuing him from his dreadful situation. Coffins were sent off down the harbour by the *Washington*, for the dead, and such mangled remains as could be recovered, and tackle &c., to draw up the living man, if such there were, to the top of the precipice. This report as to one poor fellow having escaped, proved true, but it gave rise to many others, as to three or four similar cases having occurred, which were unhappily without foundation. More than four or five brave hearts signalized themselves in this affair, and in their hazardous and often successful efforts at rescuing the lifeless bodies from the action of the waves. The man thus found alive and comparatively uninjured (although of course in a very exhausted state) gave his name as James Johnson, one of the crew of the *Dunbar* as soon as he came a little to himself. An interesting account of this will be found subjoined in the form of a letter, from the Mayor of Sydney, published in the “*Herald*” Newspaper of Monday. He seemed to think that the Captain must have mistaken the Gap for the true entrance to the harbour, as he went on all sails set. He remembered little or nothing after, until he found himself on the ledge of the rocks, stunned and stupid. Further particulars were now constantly received of portions of the wreck, which, from want of space, we cannot here state in detail. The following particulars appeared in the second supplement of the “*Herald*” of this day (Saturday.)

[FROM A VISITOR TO THE HEADS.]

Having arrived at the scene of this melancholy disaster—the South Head—about quarter to eleven, this morning, I, like most of the spectators, mingled in the general excitement then prevalent, which may be far more easily imagined than described; and, after walking about for some time, listening to the fears here and hopes there—hopes that some one or more might yet be found living to clear up the awful mystery that must ever hang over such a disaster uncleared by such testimony—when behold, the joy of everybody was expressed by a shout of “A man on the rocks! A live man on the rocks! There he is! there he is!” And sure enough there he was. This was about eleven o'clock. It was soon reported that four others, among them a woman, were seen; but up till about two o'clock it was not definitely known whether any others were there or not, although it was very prevalently believed there were.

Of course the authorities were soon upon the spot, with ropes and a boy to lower to him; and, after much anxiety and various attempts to bring it within his



SCENE IN THE GAP ON SATURDAY, AUGUST 22ND. AT SUNRISE.

reach, they at last succeeded, and soon brought him on *terra firma*. He was then brought to the Marine Hotel, where he was immediately attended to by Dr. West.

The following were some of the particulars elicited from him, in reference to the sad disaster. They were coming in under close reef topsail about midway between the two Heads, at a few minutes before twelve o'clock, on Thursday night, when the Captain ordered the foresail to be hauled up, which being done, she lost head way so fast that they drove over, and struck the rock, and almost immediately broke up.

In answer to inquiries he said, "There were no cannons fired, but blue lights were burnt. I (James Johnson) believe all the others are lost. I have seen no others alive—only their dead bodies. I had a little sleep on the rocks."

Dr. West now thought it best for us to retire, and let him have sleep, which we did. I may state that the Doctor pronounced him to be perfectly sane, and he looked better far than might naturally have been expected. He is about thirty years of age, and a strong, tall, powerfully-built Irishman.

5 o'clock p.m.

Seventeen bodies were found on the North Shore. One has been recognised as Mr. Downey, the architect. On his linen his name was written "J. Downey." The body of Mrs. Kilner Waller was recognised by her brother-in-law, Mr. J. G. Waller. The body of Captain Steine, R.N., was also known by marks on his linen and braces. There were two Jewish children identified as belonging to Mr. Meyers. The body of a midshipman, named Ward, was also known. The Supplement which gave these particulars also contained a copy of the manifest of the ship, but this, so important in a commercial point of view, was almost overlooked in the contemplation of the sudden and frightful loss of life consequent upon this sorrowful shipwreck.

Captain Green, the commander of this ill-fated vessel, was well known and much esteemed by a large number of the inhabitants of the colony. For several voyages in the Agincourt and Waterloo, he was mate with Captain Neatby. For two voyages he commanded the Waterloo; subsequently he has been in the Vimiera; and this was his second trip as master of the Dunbar.—*Herald*.

SUNDAY 23rd.—At ten o'clock this morning an inquest was commenced on the bodies which had been recovered and placed in shell coffins in the dead house on the Circular Quay. The gentlemen of the Jury were in attendance according to summons, at the King's Arms Hotel, Lower George Street, and after the ceremony of swearing them in, the following bodies were identified:—Mrs. Waller, Mr. Meyers, 32 years of age, and a lad about 12 years, by Mr. Jacobs; Mr. I. Simmons, aged 21 years, by one of the family, and Mr. Downey by his Father. The bodies lay in the dead house. The scene was most distressing,—one of the jurors fainted and was carried away, whilst others were so deeply moved that they were compelled to leave the place. The bodies of two of the females and of one of the men were in such a state as to make them easily recognizable by their friends, but they were not identified. The Steamer Black Swan chartered by the Government left Sydney about the same hour as the inquest commenced, and proceeded down the harbour in search of the remains of the ill-fated passengers and crew of the Dunbar, Captain McLerie, Captain Pockley and other officials, persons more or less concerned also being on board. The Steamer first made for the North Shore, and began to explore the various bays, successively visiting Taylor's Bay, Chowder Bay, and finally Watson's Bay, on the opposite side. At the latter place two shells were left, and the survivor James Johnson received on board. Middle Harbour was the next spot, and there the steamer waited a considerable time. A numerous party landed near the spit, where we may remind our readers Mrs. Waller, a Midshipman, and Mr. Downey had been picked up. Here the principal part of the wreck and cargo seem to have been washed. The shore is literally white with candles, and the rocks covered a foot or more deep with articles of every kind—boots, panama hats, and bonnets are here in abundance. Drums of figs, hams, pork, raisins, drapery, boots, and pieces of timber, piled in heaps, and lining the shore for a considerable distance, give a vivid idea of the havoc created. Among other things there were a barrel of brandy and another of red wine perfectly uninjured.

Here also was picked up an interesting relic—a child's straw hat with a feather in it which when shown to Johnson (the survivor) was by him identified as worn by one of the children in the Tropics. We have heard that a piece of crochet-work with the needle stuck in it, and a reel of cotton attached, was picked up at North Harbour. This.

relic of the calamity seems as if it were only just laid aside by the fair fingers that but a few moments after must have been lifeless. The steamer after calling at Manly Beach and sending a boat up North Harbour (which however discovered nothing) stretched straight across for Watson's Bay and received on board the bodies of three men, evidently seamen by the marks on the arms—one, with the exception of the top of the skull, and the loss of part of the left arm, was entirely whole, and seemed to have been a fine man. The other two were only trunks, the mutilated remains of unfortunate sailors.

Mr. P. Cohen of the Manly Beach Hotel reported that he saw two bodies floating and tried to recover them, but in consequence of the number of sharks, and the ferocity with which they fought for their prey, he was unable to do so. The steamer having thus closely searched every nook and corner, returned to Campbell's Wharf in the evening; leaving the bodies brought up to Sydney at the Dead-house for identification. Thousands of people in vehicles and on horseback, and an immense number on foot visited the heads during the day.

The appearance of the Gap is described as having undergone a considerable change. Fragments of the wreck were fast disappearing, and the sea having greatly abated, several boats had approached close to the base of the fatal spot. An intrepid fellow named Mulhall, in his skiff ran down the coast to a considerable distance past the Semaphore, but without seeing indications of any survivors from the wreck. Nearly abreast of the Signal Staff several spars are to be seen, and as the sea recedes portions of sail became visible shewing that some part of the hull remains here. Part of a woman's apparel, marked J. Logan, was picked up near the body of some poor unfortunate in a sadly disfigured state.

MONDAY, 24th. The principal item of news this morning connected herewith was a communication addressed by the Right Worshipful the Mayor, to the Editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, comprising the statement of Johnson, the sole survivor. This letter was to the following effect.

[LETTER FROM THE MAYOR OF SYDNEY TO THE "SYDNEY MORNING HERALD."]

SIR—I have been all day down at the scene of the wreck of the DUNBAR, and had a long interview with Johnson, the man who was saved. If the statement he made to me, and which I carefully noted, be of any service to you as information of a correct character for the public, who all feel a deep interest in this melancholy event, I shall be glad that I have taken this course to forward it. He stated that they were off Botany at half-past eight o'clock p.m., Thursday; the captain then stood off shore, on the starboard tack, ship with double-reefed fore and main topsails; a very dirty dark, and rainy night, two men were placed at the wheel; Captain Green instructed them to keep their luff; he (Captain Green) had not been off the deck for two hours since they first made land, some days previously; at half-past eleven p.m., the captain gave orders to square away, which was done; the ship then ran under close-reefed fore and main topsails and foresail. As they neared the "light" the captain ordered the foresail to be clewed up, sent the second mate to the foresail to keep a look-out, then very dark; told him to "keep a good look-out for the North Head," The captain asked if he could see the Head. The mate replied no, it was solid darkness. The second mate suddenly called out "Breakers a-head." The captain ordered the helm to be put hard to starboard to bring the ship round, then blowing strong; ship on a dead lee shore, having such small sail upon her, the ship would not come round, (this was about 12 o'clock), and the sea lifting her in, she almost immediately struck; the passengers, who had been in bed, rushed up on deck in their night dresses; their shrieks were dreadful (Johnson describes the scene at this time the most terrible part of the whole; the ladies asked the captain, and entreated the seamen to know if there was any hope; the ship was still holding together, and the men thought and said there was hope.) Almost immediately after, as if in angry denial of that expression, the decks burst up from the pressure of the water, the ship was rent into a thousand pieces, and all on board (except him) were hurried into the foaming terrific sea.

Johnson, with the old boatswain, and two Dutch seamen, were about the last who were washed from the wreck, they four holding on a piece of plank, from which the two Dutchmen were soon after washed; a huge sea then threw Johnson and the boatswain on shore amongst some pieces of timber, from which Johnson scrambled to a



THE SAILOR RESCUED.



higher shelving rock to avoid the next sea, which he did, but the poor old boatswain, less active, was carried way, and perished. Johnson then climbed to a still higher position, and, being much exhausted, laid down and slept. The next day he saw a steamer (the Grafton) go into the Heads; he made signals to her, but was not seen. During the day he saw another steamer (the Washington) pass, and tried to attract her attention; as, also, that of a schooner running in. Friday night was passed in this state. On Saturday morning he endeavoured to get along the rocks; he could see people on the cliffs above, but could not make himself seen, until a brave lad, (Antonio Wollier, an Icelander,) who had gone down "Jacob's Ladder," and along the rocks, noticed Johnson waving a handkerchief; relief came, and he was soon after hauled up to the top of the cliffs, which are there about 200 feet high.

The noble fellow, Wollier, was then hauled up, and received the hearty manifestations of the thousands there assembled. I opened a subscription, which was suggested by Captain Loring, of H.M. ship Iris, and in a few minutes, about £10 was collected, and handed over to the courageous boy, who, in answer to my compliment when handing him the money, said, in broken English, "He did not go down for the money, but for the feelings of his heart."

Johnson says that a blue light was burned when the ship struck, but it was very dim, and could scarcely be seen; Captain Green must have taken the bluff north end of the Gap for the North Head, for, in ordering the helm to starboard, he must have supposed that to have been his position, and North Head a lee shore; for had the helm been put to port, the ship would have cleared, and run for the entrance to the Heads.

Afterwards, at the "Gap," another brave fellow, whose name I have not yet learned, volunteered to go down to send up some of the mangled corpses, now and then lodging on the rocks beneath us—now a trunk of a female, from the waist upwards—then the legs of a male, the body of an infant, the right arm, shoulder, and head of a female, the bleached arm, and extended hand, with the wash of the receding waters almost as 'twere in life, beckoning for help! then a leg, a thigh, a human head would be hurled along, the sea dashing most furiously, as if in angry derision of our efforts to rescue its prey; one figure, a female, tightly clasping an infant to the breast, both locked in the firm embrace of death, was for a moment seen, then the legs of some trunkless body would leap from the foaming cataract, caused by the receding sea, leaping wildly, with feet seen plainly upward in the air, to the abyss below, to be again and again tossed up to the gaze of the sorrowing throng above.

We procured a rope, lowered the man, with some brave stout hearts holding on to the rope above, and in this manner several portions of the mutilated remains were hauled up to the top of the cliff, until a huge sea suddenly came, and nearly smothered those on the cliff, wetting them all to the skin. I caused the man to be hauled up, thinking it too dangerous to continue. It was a heartrending scene and I was glad to leave it, which I did soon after, and returned to Sydney about dark.

Wonderful to say, Johnson has not as much as a scratch about him, and is otherwise quite well. He states that there were a great many bodies near to one place where he was rescued, and his great fear was that he would be starved. The ship was eighty-one days out.

Saturday evening.

THE INQUEST.

At nine o'clock a.m. (on the 24th), Captain M'Lerie attended by a body of Inspectors and several other persons repaired to the Dead House, and began the harrowing task of attempting to identify the bodies.

A large crowd surrounded the place, who unfeignedly, so far as deportment and general appearance went, sympathised with the mourners who sought among the mutilated remains inside for relatives and friends. This continued up to eleven o'clock, when all that it was possible to identify were marked off, and in some cases given to their friends, the remainder with the unknown and unrecognisable being placed in shells and viewed by the jury already sworn on the inquest. These gentlemen, attended by

the coroner, assembled in the large room of the King's Arms (Mrs. Stone's), a little after eleven, for the purpose of resuming the inquiry adjourned from yesterday morning.

Thirteen gentlemen had been sworn on the jury, and these all attended, Mr. J. V. Gorman being foreman. The first witness called was—

James Johnson, seaman, late of the DUNBAR, being sworn, stated, Belonged to the DUNBAR, commanded by Captain Green. We sailed for Plymouth first; the DUNBAR, is a first-class Ship; we sailed from Plymouth on the 31st May, with general cargo; would not say how many passengers—there were cabin passengers, male and female; there were also second-class passengers, male and female, on board; I cannot state the exact number on board; am positive of the day of sailing; we sailed on Sunday morning; there were fifty-nine seamen on the ship's articles, including captain, officers, able-bodied seamen, boys, and all; the chief officer's name was Mr. Struthers; we had a prosperous voyage till we reached the coast of New Holland; we first made King's Island a week last Sunday, the 16th August, the wind fresh and blowing from west, under double-reefed topsails; we had been looking out for land, and we made it out according to the captain's calculation; there was a watch kept on deck, and time called every half-hour; King's Island was the land we first expected to make; we saw the island very plain; when first seen the wind was from the westward; we then shaped our course for the Straits; from where we made the land the weather was thick, wet, and hazy; the sails were shortened from stress of weather; two reefs of the topsail were taken; we did not shorten sail to meet the land; I cannot exactly say what was the course we shaped; we made the Straits that night, the 16th; King's Island was the land we were looking out for before; we made it according to the captain's calculation, and saw the island very plain; the wind, at this time, was from the westward; we then shaped our course through the Straits; from the time we made the land the weather was thick and squally the whole time, and sail was shortened from stress of weather; our course was somewhere to the east, but I cannot say the point we steered exactly; we made the Straits that same night; we saw a light about two o'clock the next morning that was said to be upon some land in the middle of the Straits; we also saw the land; we did not alter our course; the light was rather on our port bow; no change took place till next day, when the wind headed us, and we made two boards which carried us clear of the islands, I have never been here before, but I have been in Melbourne; I am an able seaman, and have been eleven years at sea; I served my time on the coast of England, out of Lancashire, principally trading between England and Ireland; after we passed Kent's Group the next land we saw was the light at Cape Howe; I was told that was the Cape Howe light; we made this light in the evening; I do not know that there was any change of course; we were under double reefed topsails, with all the yards braced sharp up; there was no great stress of weather at the time; it was thick, hazy weather; we saw the land at times, but not always; there was no heavy sea on; a correct look-out was kept from the time we made the land; a person was stationed forward, but there was no look-out from aloft; I have never seen looks-out from aloft in ships that I have been in; we carried the same sail throughout until we made the land at Botany; this was on the Thursday evening: all hands saw the land distinctly; after that the Captain ordered us to close reef the topsails, and we were close hauled to the wind; the wind was then about E. and by S.; we were close to the wind and lying about N.E. and by N., and lying along the coast; at the time we made this land to the best of my opinion we were about ten or twelve miles off, and the ship had her starboard tacks aboard; we were under easy sail, sail having been shortened after we saw the land; we had on no topgallant-sails, and we had three reefs in the main, and four reefs in the fore-topsail; the mizen-topsail was stowed, and the spanker was brailed up; the inner jib, and the maintopmast-staysail, were taken in; the weather was squally with thick rain; when we made the land at Botany, we kept on our course; this was between six and seven o'clock, and when night came on, we still kept our course, and shortly afterwards we saw the Sydney light; I saw it about seven o'clock, shortly after getting supper; it was known to be the Sydney Head light; the vessel was then lying a course about N.E. and by N.; she was lying her course in that sort of manner that we had no difficulty—we had plenty of room; she was not at all labouring with the sail she had on; I know that she was making heavy lee-way; it is my impression that she had not got enough sail on her, to prevent her making this lee-way; this was not said on board

ship, but I think so; Captain Green was on the deck; they were not shaking the ship up into the wind, but keeping her clear full; the Captain was not conning the ship; the chief officer was on the poop likewise; the watch on deck went below according to orders, and were relieved at eight o'clock; it was raining hard; the light was only seen at intervals, but distinctly; it is a revolving light; I was on deck at eight o'clock, as I belonged to the chief officer's watch; the captain remained on deck when the watch was relieved, and gave orders the same as usual; everything was attended to, and his orders were punctually obeyed; everything went straightforward, and there was no annoyance of any kind; all the men were quite correct and obeyed orders; we stood along the coast till we fetched the light up to the lee mizen rigging; the vessel was not labouring: she came to her helm willingly; one man only was at the wheel until we began to square yards, when two men were sent there; the lee mizen rigging was on the port side of the ship; the Captain was on the weather side of the deck; he had no night glass, but the second mate had a case of what we call opera-glasses; when the light was brought to bear upon the lee mizen rigging, all hands were piped up by the boatswain; the hands turned up; the boatswain sung out for "All hands to wear ship;" these were the words that were passed along; the usual orders were given; when we came on deck, orders were given to square away the yards; we got the orders to square away; after a short time, the Captain gave orders to haul up the foresail; it was then reefed; the ship then kept before the wind; the light was clearly visible at times; when the words were given to square the yards, the light had previously been seen; the vessel was running in on a heavy sea; it was blowing very fresh in squalls, with thick small rain; it was about eleven o'clock when the hands were called up; there were two men on the fore-castle with the third mate, on the look-out for the land; the third mate was on the fore-castle with the two men, and the second mate was afterwards sent there also; the captain sang out "Do you see anything of the North Head?" and the mate said "No, I see nothing of it;" I was on the poop at this time, standing by the braces; she had the light a bit on her port bow when I saw it at this time; then the captain sang out to the man at the wheel to keep his luff; the yards were about a point or so to port; I heard these words; it was done; the course of the ship was changed a small bit by this; shortly after this the second mate sang out "Breakers ahead;" this was a few minutes afterwards; the captain sang out to the man at the wheel to port his helm; we were all at the braces: he told us to haul in the port braces, and brace the yards sharp up; it was done quickly, without delay; there were thirteen able seaman in each watch; there was no want of hands; we were well manned, and we could see the light; it appeared to be right over us; I heard no further orders given; a few minutes after we hauled the yards round—about two minutes after—she went side on to the rocks; she was trying to stretch out to the eastward, her head lying along the land to the north; then we struck, and then the screaming began, the passengers running about the deck screaming for mercy; the captain was on the poop; he was cool and collected; there was great confusion and uproar on the deck with the shrieks of the passengers; with the first bump the three topmasts fell; the first sea that came over us stove in the quarter-boats; none were lowered; the mizen-mast went first, then the main-mast. The fore-mast stood a long time; it was not more than five minutes after she struck that she began to break up; I was on the poop at the time; I caught hold of the mizen chains; when these gave way, I made for the cabin, but the sea was coming down there enough to smother one; I went below and got out of the cabin skylight to leeward, and got up the side of the chain-plates of the fore-rigging; this broke up at last, and I was thrown over still holding by the chain plates, which held some four planks together, and I was thrown upon the rocks in a heap of timber and rubbish; we made one signal before we struck; we burnt a blue-light; the steward held it in a bit of paper and burnt it all; he held it over the port side; this light was visible for three or four minutes; he got orders from the captain to do this before the vessel struck; no one was near me when I was washed away; she kept breaking up from aft, and I kept getting forward until at last I reached the chain plates of the fore-rigging; I was washed away with planks and broken timber upon a shelf of rock, but immediately on the sea receding I got up a bit higher out of reach of the back current; we saw no vessel; we could not stand off the land more than we were doing; I heard nothing said about the captain not wishing to get further off the land for fear of being driven to the northward; the captain could not stand off the land more than he did; he did all that he

could to keep off the land so far as I can judge; I expected, when we squared away, that we were going into the entrance of the harbour; I did not hear anybody say this, but I thought from the squaring away that we were so; nobody said that they saw the North Head; there was no opening that I could see that would lead any one to believe that they were going into port; I only saw the light; I was not frightened of anything; I thought it was all right, and that we were going into harbour; this was my idea until the second mate gave the alarm; the part that struck first was the port bow; she struck the rocks below first, and then bumped heavily over them; the vessel herself could not have formed a breakwater for lowering boats to the leeward; besides, the boats went with the first sea; the sea did not break right over her, and even when the weather side broke up the lee side offered some shelter; there is no truth in the report that the long boat was launched, and that some of the passengers were put into it; I am sure there had been no drinking aboard; we had a glass of grog at 12 o'clock; the men were all very steady; they were good men, and many of them were working their passages out at a shilling a month, intending to stop in the country; when I got ashore I could see nothing, for the rain and darkness, and I could hear nothing but the roaring of the surf; I saw nobody besides myself anywhere; the first thing I saw in the morning was the dead bodies brought in by the sea, and carried out by the under tow; the ship was completely broken up, nothing remained but her fore yard; I could see no persons; I was about ten yards above the sea, and the spray came over me as the seas broke below; there was no hollow or anything; underneath me, on the lower ledge, you could go a long way in under the rock, but I liked to get higher up rather than to go in under there; I had on a blue shirt, a singlet, and drawers; I hove everything off—boots, trousers, and pea coat, when the first alarm was given; we saw the light only a few minutes before the vessel struck. The witness, who was further interrogated at some length by the Coroner and the Foreman, gave his testimony in a very frank and straightforward manner, and was followed by Captain Wiseman, of the *Grafton*, steamer, at the conclusion of whose evidence the Court adjourned for the purpose of allowing the jury to attend the funeral procession.

When the inquest was subsequently resumed, Mr. A. Fletcher (master of the *Nora Creina* Steamer, trading to Shoalhaven) gave his evidence, followed by Messrs. Gorman and Raphael. In the course of the melancholy enquiry, the Coroner took occasion to speak in high terms of the zeal exhibited by Captain M'Lerie, Mr. North, Inspectors Brown, Weale, and Cowell, and the police and citizens generally, in the painful task of recovering the bodies of the sufferers, and in preserving the property belonging to the wreck. The evidence having been finished the Coroner addressed the Jury on the duty they owed to the public, themselves, and the lamented captain of the wrecked vessel, and urged upon them the necessity of acting justly and conscientiously in the discharge of their important functions.

THE VERDICT.—After some deliberation, the following verdict was returned:—“The jury find that the bodies viewed are those of some of the passengers and crew of the ship *Dunbar*, out of London, commanded by Captain Green, and bound to this port, and that the ship *Dunbar* was wrecked outside the Sydney Heads, close to the Gap, on the night of Thursday, the 20th August last, causing the death of the said parties; there may have been an error of judgment in the vessel being so close to the shore at night in such bad weather, but the jury do not attach any blame to Captain Green or his officers for the loss of the *Dunbar*. The jury consider it their duty to put on record their opinion that the present Pilot arrangements for this port are most inadequate, and desire to draw the attention of the Government to the matter.”

This concluded the proceedings, and the jury were discharged.

THE FUNERAL.

THE procession moved from the dead-house at a little before five o'clock. There were seven hearses, preceded by two officers of the Mounted Police force. Each hearse was attended on its side by mounted policemen, under the command of Captain M'Lerie. The last hearse contained the remains of Captain Steine, a retired naval officer, and the coffin was wrapped in the Union Jack, and was followed by a company of sailors and two officers of her Majesty's ship *Herald* and *Iris*.

There were four mourning coaches and a long string of carriages, of which that of the Hon. Stuart A. Donaldson took the lead. One of the mourners attending the funeral was Captain Macbeth, uncle to the late Captain Green.

The band of the Artillery Companies formed a part of the procession, and played the "Dead March from Saul" with fine effect. A company of Artillery with two officers, between whom rode his Excellency the Governor's Aide-de-Camp followed. The footpaths throughout the streets of this city were literally walled with people. In proportion to the number of inhabitants, never can we recollect a scene in which the feeling of the people was so keenly and manifestly exhibited.

The shops were, with one or two exceptions, closed along the whole line of road, and the streets thronged with silent and awe-struck spectators, many of whom seemed much moved, while the knell, sounding from some of the church bells, and flags hoisted half mast high, added materially to the general gloom.

It was night before the funeral reached the Cemetery at O'Connell Town, where the last sad obsequies were performed. The Rev. C. C. Kemp read the service for the dead, in portions of which the large concourse joined reverently : and, having taken a last look at the grave, began slowly to disperse. It has been remarked that, although the *time* had not been specially chosen for the ceremony, the calmness of a dim moonlight seemed not unsuited to the close of one of the most painful tragedies which has yet taken its place in the annals of our Colony.

Opinions are of course somewhat divided as to the manner in which (judging from Johnson's evidence and other circumstances) the ill-fated Dunbar was commanded and manoeuvred on that dark and memorable night ; as to the amount of censure (if any) to be attached to Captain Green, and as to numerous material facts, a large number of persons exonerate the captain altogether ; others, although delivering themselves with moderation and delicacy, feel compelled to consider that much lamented gentleman to have been in some degree to blame for his orders and arrangements previous to the catastrophe. This latter view of the matter has found a forcible but temperate expression in the columns of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, on the 25th instant, in striking and eloquent language. The justice however of such a view has not been generally recognised, either by the public, or the friends of Captain Green. It is easy for landsmen and other self-constituted critics to pass sentence now on that brave man, whose cause must be judged in his absence—the inexorable King of Terrors having forbidden him to enter upon his defence, or even to hear his accusers. Nevertheless, it should be borne in mind that the land at Botany, seen at about 7 p.m. on Thursday night, was made by mere dead reckoning, the commander not having (as it would appear) seen the sun for several days ; the time when it was so made being already night, the weather dark, tempestuous, and rainy. What if the land thus seen through the murky atmosphere were but so imperfectly observed that Captain Green might well be deceived as to its real distance, and reasonably suppose himself to be a mile or two nearer to, or farther off from it than he actually was ? Would not that very probable circumstance interfere with the course to be pursued, and justify (nay even demand) measures, which have under adverse circumstances, been attended with such unhappy results ? Dead upon a lee shore at an uncertain distance, and with a most uncertain light, the wind and sea both setting in fearfully towards the land, it may have been an awful fact, known only to one brave heart who fought it out to the last, that under all these conjunctures the sailing qualities of the Dunbar would *not* permit her to keep out to sea that night. Hour after hour, minute after minute, notwithstanding all careful steering she made a lee-way, which, no change of wind occurring, must at last have thrown her bodily somewhere upon the coast. This lee-way could not be securely calculated upon, even by him who knew the Dunbar so well, because his first idea of distance when he sighted Botany was, to say the least, uncertain, if not untrue. Captain Green shaped his course for the North Head (it was of that he spoke at the last), but he only fetched the fatal rocks at the Gap. It seems doubtful to many if he could have done anything more than what he did do, and thus his duty to the utmost performed, Green met his death with calmness, as a brave man should. The only particular pang that might then have shot through him would be this—that he would be more or less condemned unheard, carrying with him his own strong, unanswerable defence. God alone knows all he had to struggle against, and to weigh in his mind that night.

One good result of this will probably be that we shall at length have proper arrangements for lighting the rocky portal of our harbour, and for something less feeble and

inefficient than our present Pilot system; crying defects for which it is ungenerous and unjust to blame a Government recently formed, and still struggling against a powerful Opposition. These two discreditable items are legacies for which, others are virtually, although no longer legally, responsible. The following practical remarks from a well known Colonial author on these matters appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of the 26th instant, and seem to merit particular attention. "I begin," says the writer, "by denying the assertion often made, that Sydney Heads are safe to enter in any weather; still, let it be understood that I speak of night-work only. With the wind off the land, smooth water, moon, stars, and all other assistances of that kind, it may be well enough, but even then it is fit to shake the nerves of a man coming off a long voyage, when he gets fairly in the entrance—for the light is then lost—and sees nothing but the towers of black rock in one unbroken line frowning defiance at him. If such be the coast when a weather-shore, what must it be when a lee one. The harbour is well enough to *make*, no one can contradict that, but with a strong wind blowing on the land—the ship scudding, and thick sudden showers of rain, the characteristic of our east winds, making the darkness impenetrable; there perhaps is not another port in the world more terribly confusing to a seaman to *enter* than the loudly-lauded one of Sydney. In most other ports, or estuaries, many mistakes may be made, and yet with little or no loss of life; here there only can be one made, but that is the final and fatal one. An error of a little half-mile, as in the case of the poor Dunbar, and all is lost; a single look from the most inexperienced eye reads on that rampart of cliffs nothing but rude and mangled death. If I have said anything to shake the general belief that Sydney is such a safe port to enter, let us now see what may be done to make it safer, and to prevent, if possible, by human means, the recurrence of two such shipwrecks as have slain their hundreds before our eyes. [Alluding to the wreck of the *Edward Lombe* in 1834.] Although with only an interval of some twenty-three years between them, methinks we have had time to think over the matter, and now to move ourselves.

Prevention the first.—*More lights.* Had I—or any other, a twelvemonth ago, written as much, we should have been "pooh poohed" for our pains; had we been able to advance the matter in the House of Parliament, we should have been told by the Opposition, or the Government, whichever had the economical perplexity at the time, that "the country could not afford nay more lights." But "the country" can't, and the people won't afford any more losses like the last one, and therefore now it can be both boldly said and written, that something must and shall be done in the matter.

As to the situation of any more lights for the entrance to Port Jackson, no doubt there will be many opinions. The North Head has been mentioned as a site for this leading light, but my own convictions, borne out by the judgment of others of great experience, goes against the North Head *only* being lighted; and if only one light should be added, that there is another situation preferable. Because every seaman knows that a light on a high cliff in thick rain squalls, which is the weather we have here to dread, is not so easily seen as a light placed a moderate distance above the water's edge. Therefore, if one light only should be added, that light should be placed where the turning point of the entrance takes place—in this case the *low* point of the South Reef—a red light visible eight miles. And perhaps it would not be at all amiss to say, in the Sailing Directions for the Port of Sydney (a copy of which, by the way, I have not seen for a long time in places of resort for seamen, being very likely out of print), that unless such leading light is seen, no sailing vessel with an east wind at night (coasters excluded) should attempt the entrance without a pilot, as long as she can keep to sea.—Having stumbled upon the word pilot, we may write—

Prevention second.—A more effective system of pilotage at Port Jackson Heads. Let me be understood when I say effective system of pilotage, because I do not for a moment throw blame or slur upon the pilots now at the Heads, but I think it disgraceful to the Government of New South Wales that such a paltry *system* should be kept alive when I see the way they manage things in Melbourne— It strikes me very forcibly that a pilot-cutter—one of those crafts that can keep the sea in any weather, would be very beneficial in preventing any more wrecks like that of the Dunbar. And I venture it as my opinion, that had such a vessel, with six, or any other number of good men and true in her, been cruising off the Sydney Heads, we should not now have to lament the loss of the ship Dunbar, and all hands, save one, on the night of August 20th, 1857. That cutter would have been cruising on such a night with Sydney lights bearing from

N.N.W. to W.N.W., or thereabouts, distant from 10 to 15 miles, she would in all probability have put a pilot on board the Dunbar (if Johnson's account is correct) with daylight, and before the gale came on. Had the cutter not been able to board the ship, the latter would have been ordered to answer the flash-light which all pilot vessels burn every half-hour, and there is little doubt that men intimately acquainted with coasting work, which long-voyage ship-masters cannot possibly be, would have seconded the first order by an urgent request to make more sail and keep to sea, if possible; or, had the pilots deemed the entrance at all practicable, yet without being able to board the ship, the latter would have been directed to follow in the wake of the cutter, as is continually done on the coast of England.

D. P.

More bodies have been discovered in the North Harbour, since the compilation of the foregoing narrative, but they have not, it is believed, been yet identified. The matter of wreck was mentioned in the House of Assembly, on Tuesday evening last. A debate thereon seemed at one time likely to supervene, but the discussion was very properly stopped by the Speaker as irregular.

Our readers may be interested to learn that poor Johnson has a trade (that of a rough carpenter) and does not purpose for the present, at all events, to return to the dangers of a seafaring life. We beg to suggest that a *shilling subscription* be set on foot in his behalf, so as to buy him tools and clothing, and thus set him up in business. We feel confident that if the subscription be made, thus low, hundreds will willingly contribute. The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Captain McLerie, and the Police Magistrates, who have already taken so warm an interest in the sad event would doubtless not refuse their aid and sanction to what is now proposed.

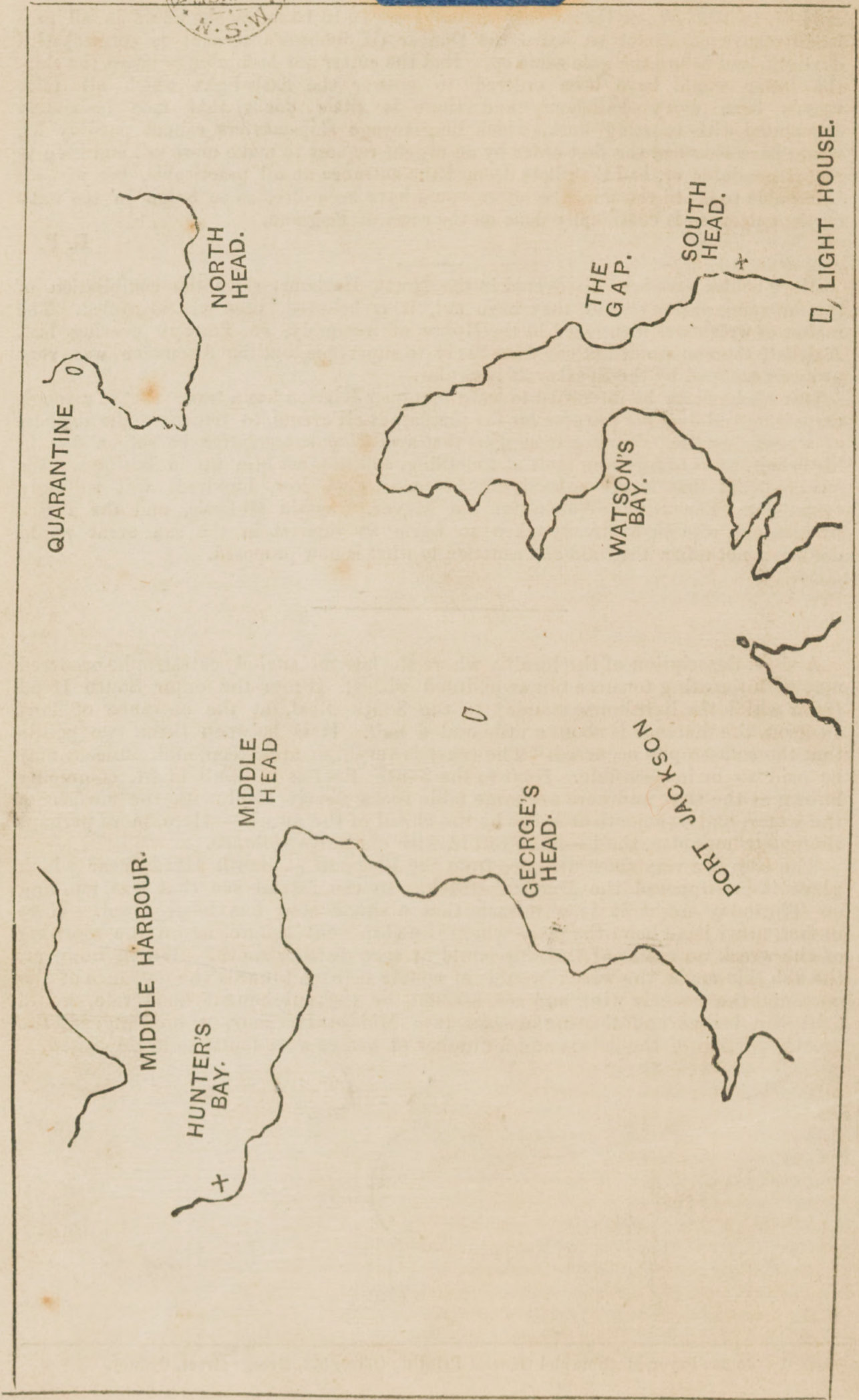
A short description of the locality where the late melancholy catastrophe occurred may be interesting to those not acquainted with it. From the outer South Head (near which the lighthouse stands) to the South Reef, at the entrance of Port Jackson, the distance is about a mile and a half. It is between these two points that the catastrophe occurred. The coast is very high and steep, and, indeed, may be said to be inaccessible. Next to the South Reef is a small bight, commonly known as the Gap, and here are large table rocks nearly level with the surface of the water, and as smooth as if cut by the chisel of the mason. Here, more perhaps than anywhere else, the breakers roll in with excessive violence.

The Gap is a very short distance from the Flagstaff at South Head, near which place it is supposed the DUNBAR struck. In the fearful sea that was running on Thursday night it is a miracle that a single soul has been saved. Here in fact, must have been the place where the ship went ashore, as on the morning of the wreck no traces of the ship could be seen further south. When, however, the ebb tide made, the wreck would of course be sent towards the entrance of the port, and the easterly wind and sea, assisted by the subsequent flood tide, would drift the bodies and floating masses into Middle Harbour, where, indeed, the greater portion of the debris and a number of bodies were found to be deposited.





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A Narrative of the
melancholy wreck of the
"Dunbar", merchant ship, on
the south head of Port
Jackson, August 20th, 1857 :

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