

A Narrow Escape from Drowning at Lake Macquarie.

On Monday, June 14th, I went up to Wallasey with the intention of walking out to Lake Macquarie to spend some pleasant days boating at that much talked of and beautiful place. I had walked some distance, until I came to a number of roads branching in different directions; whilst contemplating which of these I would take, I was overtaken by a gentleman who appeared to be travelling in the same direction. I asked him if he could kindly inform me which of these roads would take me to Lake Macquarie. To what part of the Lake do you wish to go? To Belmont, I replied. Do you know how far you have to walk? I told him that I did not, and that I was a stranger in New South Wales. He seemed rather amused as he told me that it was about 16 miles, and further informed me that I should have gone straight from Newcastle. I asked if he was acquainted with anyone at the Lake, to which he replied that he was residing there, and was then on his way home, and kindly offered to land me on a part of the Lake from whence I could more easily find my way. I thanked him, and we walked on together. In the course of conversation, I asked him if he was acquainted with a Mr. Fennell, that some friends of mine in Melbourne were acquainted with a Mr. Walter Fennell, whose parents I understood resided at Lake Macquarie. He replied that he was the Mr. Fennell himself, and was very well acquainted with the residents above mentioned. We had now arrived at a small river or creek, in which Mr. Fennell had his boat secured. A few moments put everything in order, and we glided smoothly down the creek. Mr. F.'s conversation was highly interesting, having that easy candid manner which we find in the true type of well-bred gentlemen. We were now in sight of the Lake, with its beautiful and sloping shores. At a distance it appeared quite calm, but as we cleared from the creek I was surprised to find it blowing a heavy westerly gale; considering myself a pretty good boatman, and seeing Mr. Fennell was perfectly master of boat sailing, I felt no fear. It continued to blow strong until we got some distance up the Lake and then died away a little. On seeing Mr. Fennell wishing to fill his pipe, I offered to steer for him; he thanked me, and went forward to burn some rope. Scarcely had he commenced to do so when a gust struck us; Mr. Fennell called out to let go the sheet, but before I knew what to do, the boat was turned upside down. I shall never forget the horror of that moment. I was thrown clear away from the boat, and not being able to swim I soon found myself sinking, and cried out, "Oh, my—;

myself sinking, and cried out, "Oh, my—; I am drowning!" Mr. Fennell, who had got clear from under the sail, now came to my relief, and grasped me by the arm as I was sinking. My first impulse was to cling on hard and fast; but Mr. F. decidedly objected, by stating that if I attempted to grapple on he would knock me off; then, placing my arm on his left shoulder, he swam with me to the boat. Oh, how thankful I felt as I clung to that manly form! Never had I seen in any man such perfect self-control. I watched him in dreadful fear as he first threw off his coat, and then his boots, and commenced diving under the boat to get the sail clear. He succeeded in doing so after much trouble; then, lowering the jib-sheet, he swam after the paddles, which had drifted some fifty yards away, and, lashing them together, put the rope over his head and towed them back to the boat. After securing them he attempted to get on the boat to rest himself, but as soon as he pressed his weight upon her, I found with horror that she was sinking down. Weak with cold and fear I lost my hold and fell back into the water again. The dreadful sensation of drowning came over me as I sank down. I felt that all was lost, when I was again grasped by that friendly hand and raised once more to the surface, and swam with me to the boat. Fastening me with a rope, so that I could not fall, he commenced swimming and drawing the boat after him. Few, I trust, may have such cause to praise as I, and I think I may safely say that very few have had the opportunity of judging, unless under such circumstances, the brave, unselfish, and noble feelings of this man, who, through my neglect, was exposed to danger and death. But, seeing I could not help myself, he did not leave me, as many would have done, to perish, but came bravely to my rescue, and twice saved me from a watery grave; and for two long hours he was swimming. What must have been his sufferings with the land a good half-mile away? What, indeed, must have been his sufferings—exposed to cramps from the bitter coldness of the water—when he thought of a fond mother, a tender sister, and, perchance, a dearer one still? Yet he showed no sign of fear. His perfect calmness and quiet boldness was something grand; indeed, he seemed willing to sacrifice himself rather than see a fellow-creature perish unaided. What have I got to thank him for? When I think of a loving wife and three little children, who have been spared the pangs of bitter grief and long hours of weary watching; when I think of that young and powerful arm that raised me in that moment of sinking agony; and when he got footing at last he staggered, weak and benumbed, from the long and desperate struggle? Still, he smiled as he pulled me from the boat and lifted me to

and desperate struggle? Still, he smiled as he untied me from the boat and lifted me to where I could walk. I shall never forget the few earnest words, "You're safe now, forget not to thank your God." That quiet gaze that met mine was so perfectly undisturbed and calm that I had not power to thank him. I felt like a dog as I trembled with cold before him. He gave me instructions which way to go, and turned to right his boat. After leaving Mr. Fennell, I wandered about for some hours over hills and through scrubs, and just as night set in I heard the whistle of a train, and struck out in the direction from whence it came. After climbing another steep hill I found myself at Lambton Coal-field. A good glass of brandy did me much good, and I thanked God; and all I have further to say is, that I trust we may not be exposed to such danger again; and may all who share in the affection of friendship of the man who saved my life know the noble worth of a brave and manly heart. I am quite satisfied with New South Wales, and hope to-morrow to be on my way to Victoria.

L. P., A Victorian.