

LETTER FROM A PASSENGER.

To the Editor of the New York Herald :

NEW YORK, Aug. 22.

I have this moment the first opportunity since the fatal disaster on Lake Erie to give a description of the awful scene, as it then occurred, which is still vivid before me, in all its horrors, as far as I had an opportunity to view it.

I have refrained from reading any account published as yet, with the exception of the first telegraph despatch which appeared in a Buffalo paper, for the reason that I wished to retain the scenes fresh upon my mind as they actually occurred to me, believing some truths in relation to the heart-rending and fatal catastrophe should be made public; and it is to be hoped that some others who witnessed the calamity may aid the public in coming to as correct a conclusion upon the subject as the nature of the case demands. I feel that this is due, especially when the sacrifice of human life is so great, and similar catastrophes of such frequent occurrence, that measures may be taken to remedy the evil.

You are aware that the calamity happened about two o'clock on Friday morning August 20th at which time I was sleeping in my berth in state room No. 1, (with two other gentlemen whom I have not seen since, and fear they are lost,) which room was on the larboard side, and within from four to six feet from where the propeller struck the Atlantic, and, as near as I can judge, about midway between the paddle wheel and the stern of the vessel.

At the moment she struck us, and while the timbers were still moving and crushing me down in my berth I struggled and extricated myself, and in a moment was upon the forward part of the hurricane deck, alongside of the pilot's wheel, feeling assured that from that position I could gain more information in regard to our danger, than from any other point, as the orders would be given from that quarter. At this time the propeller was slowly falling astern of us.

I had occupied that position but a few moment before the appalling cry was heard that she was sinking.

All was confusion, and the next moment the command was given, in a very stifled and agitated voice, to head her in for shore, and ring the bell, both of which commands were soon obeyed, and some exertions were made to careen her over on her starboard side, to keep the water from rushing in but without much effect.

All this time her engine was in motion, as it had been all the while, and we were fast leaving the propeller.

I then thought it time to make an effort to save my life—I made for the door of the saloon in order to reach the main deck. I found it dark there, and not a light to be seen, and I do not believe there was one on that part of the boat; however, I succeeded in getting down, and tried to find something to float upon.

At this moment I thought of the life preserver stools, and climbed over the railing on the hurricane deck to secure one, but I did not like their appearance, and I made my way down again and secured the after gangway door. I placed it over the rails on the guards outside, intending it for future use, concluding to remain upon the wreck as long as I could, giving myself sufficient time to clear the vessel when she should go down.

But very soon the cry of fire was heard, at which time the emigrants were jumping off the forward deck, as they had been doing previously, by dozens; some sinking under the wheels and some passing astern, uttering such fearful cries for help, in their own language, as to render the scene, which it is impossible to describe, double appalling.

Some fifteen or twenty minutes after the collision, the main deck sunk; and then I launched my frail support, and struck out to clear the vortex which I supposed would soon be made by the sinking vessel.

When I was sufficiently clear from her and her wake, and also without the reach of those who were drowning around me, of whose cries I will not attempt to speak, I lay still and watched the motion of both steamers, calculating my chance of escape, which I did not, at any one time, lose sight of.

It has been said we went some three miles after the collision took place. If so, then for me to be able to see that distance, one of two things must be false—either it was not very foggy, or we did not run that distance. It is true I did, at one time, almost lose sight of the propeller—I supposed she was leaving us to perish. It was then, for the first time, I lost my fortitude—I gave up for lost; but I yet hoped for help from that quarter, and I did not look in vain, for soon I saw her bearing down towards us, and then God only knows my feelings of gratitude. I made for her as fast as my strength would permit, and was soon taken on board.

From my observations of the drowning persons around, I fear the loss of life will prove greater than can be known.

That it was to the still, calm, and almost clear night, and the interposition of Divine Providence, we are indebted for the preservation of so many lives, there can be no doubt. Had it been dark or rough, God only knows what would have been the result.

And now, that such an accident should happen, must remain a matter of speculation to those not present; but as for me, I believe it to be one deserving the strongest censure. That there was a reckless spirit manifested, I fairly believe—otherwise, how, on an almost clear night, could it have taken place?

JOHN B. BLAKE, Meriden, Ct.