

STEAMER DESPATCH.

PASSENGER LOST OVERBOARD.

A tragic incident was associated with the rough and protracted trip of the small steamer Despatch from Gippsland Lakes to Melbourne.

At about 1 o'clock on Sunday morning, whilst the vessel was lying at anchor in Waratah Bay, sheltering from the gales, a passenger named George Wallace, aged 27 years, a resident of Camberwell, disappeared overboard, and was drowned. He was observed by the watchman to strike the water, and an alarm was immediately raised. With all possible haste a boat was lowered, and a luminous life-buoy thrown towards the spot where the unfortunate man was struggling in the water. Although the buoy fell within a few yards of him, he failed to grasp it, and almost immediately afterwards disappeared.

For half an hour subsequently the boat cruised about the locality, towing with it a luminous buoy in the hope of attracting the attention of the drowning man, whose name was also lustily called by the members of the rescue party. All these efforts, however, proved unavailing, not a trace of the missing passenger being afterwards found. The deceased, who is reported to have been married, had on previous occasions made the round trip from Melbourne to Gippsland Lakes and back by the Despatch, being well known to most of the officers and crew.

At the time of the tragic occurrence the weather was dark and squally, whilst a moderate sea was running. The lost man joined the Despatch when she left Melbourne on her present trip a fortnight ago. As already published, the vessel met with the recent furious gales on her return passage from the Lakes, and was in consequence compelled to shelter in various havens on the way. The Despatch reached the wharf yesterday afternoon.