

THE NOR'-WEST HURRICANE.

FIFTY LIVES LOST.

**CAPT. GREGORY'S GRAPHIC
ACCOUNT.**

PERTH, December 17.

There still remains a lot to be told regarding the recent storm on the nor'-west coast. Several luggers are missing. The *Searull* has turned up at Gourdon Bay, dismantled. The *Vivian* is still unaccounted for, and grave fears are entertained for her safety. Two luggers belonging to Mr. D. Sutherland are still missing. They left Condon for Broome the day before the blow, and no tidings of them have yet been received. At first it was thought that they would make for Barangarra Creek, but the police report that there are no signs of them.

The crew of the *Kalander Bux* reached Broome on Wednesday, considerably battered about, and are now being cared for.

The storm-disturbed area extended from King Sound to Port Hedland. The centre of the disturbance passed about 75 miles west of Roebuck Bay, and struck the coast between Wallal and Barangarra Creek. The schooner *Kalander Bux* went ashore 45 miles south of Lagrange Bay, and became a total wreck. Enormous seas broke right over the masts. Only Capt. Gregory and four of the coloured crew were saved, and three white men—Miller, Tillen, and Young—were drowned. Mr. Goldstein's

Young—were drowned. Mr. Goldstein's schooner *Alto* went ashore 10 miles further north. The luggers *Tasmania*, *Ray*, *Strugler*, *Louisa*, *Gracie Langdon*, and *Pet* are total losses. The luggers missing are *Leon*, *Lillie*, *Argon*, and *Welcome*.

The shipping master at Broome estimates that 50 lives have been lost as the result of the hurricane. Donald Sutherland, H. Watt, and Brown are still missing. The schooner *Ena* has drifted into Cape Villarette Creek without being damaged. The steamer *Sultan* searched south as far as Point Blaze, and assistance has also been dispatched from Broome to Lefrange Bay. Over 40 luggers have arrived at Roebuck Bay in a seriously damaged condition, many dismantled.

The consensus of opinion is that the blow was much more severe than the April storm. The damage to boats and property is estimated at fully £20,000.

Capt. Gregory, who was in charge of the schooner *Kalander Bux*, in the course of an interview with a representative of *The Register*, gave a graphic account of the disaster. He said:—"On Monday, December 7, we were working off Cape Joubert. The weather looked unsettled, and the glass, instead of rising the usual point, remained stationary. From that, coupled with other indications, I knew that we were in for something. But for night coming on I would have gone out to sea, but was unable to signal the boats in the darkness. At daybreak on Tuesday morning we stood for sea, and signalled the boats to clear for shelter. The wind was easterly, with freshening squalls, and the barometer was stationary. The wind and the sea rapidly grew worse. At 8 a.m. on Tuesday the schooner was reaching northward, close reefed fore and aft. An hour later we were struck by the first heavy squall, after which it became rapidly worse. The glass fell with a rapidly rising sea. At 11 o'clock

with a rapidly rising sea. At 11 o'clock we sighted a lugger to the leeward flying distress signals. We wore the ship to the southward and closed up with the lugger, but on getting down we found nothing the matter with her, and shouted instructions to the man in charge. We wore the ship again northward, the wind being north-east and blowing a whole hurricane. It continued throughout the day, and got worse at the day passed. At nightfall the wind, if possible, seemed to redouble its vigour with squalls of fearful fury. Every half-hour the wind veered between north-north-east and north-north-west. The schooner was hove-to under a close-reefed foresail. Oil bags were carried to windward through the whole night. The water became gradually shallower. The schooner's estimated drift was south-south-west. By 2.30 oon Wednesday morning we had shoaled to eight fathoms, and I decided to beach the schooner at the next high water. The difficulty was how to keep her off until then. Both anchors were let go and the cable was played out to its fullest extent with springs on both chains. The topmast was cut away, as were also the motor launches, to ease the vessel; but at 4 o'clock the anchors parted with the fury of the squall.

"The vessel's head was paid off to eastward. Sails were immediately set on her, and the ship wore around with her head to the north-west. The broken chains were hove in, and the spare anchors were bent on, but just after letting go anchors the vessel took the ground, and the seas made a clean breach over her. Both of the lower masts were cut away. The schooner lay over on her starboard bilge, and the whole of the timbers on the starboard side collapsed. The deck was at an angle of 80 degrees. The boat was breaking up rapidly, so the coloured crew were passed into the whaleboats and dinghys, which were more or less submerged, and floated clear of the ship. Seas smashed the

clear of the ship. Seas smashed the after deckhouse away, and the mate, engineer, purser, and myself were thrown into the water where we grasped pieces of wreckage. I was washed off, but again managed to get on the wreck, of which there was little left, and found every member of the crew was either in the submerged boats or on pieces of wreckage. About 20 minutes afterwards I left the wreck and saw the chief mate, Young, hanging on part of the deckhouse, about 10 ft. square. I shouted to him that it was still ebb tide, and he waved back, but I do not think that he heard what I said.

"I swam with the aid of a half door, got ashore at about 9 p.m., and laid down exhausted. I could not sleep as it was raining in torrents and blowing a hurricane. I walked to the northward, intending to make for Mr. Zumfeldt's station, which was about 30 miles away. Some time during the night I came across three men in the dark, and they proved to be coloured members of the crew. Two were blind from the severe effects of the salt water. We proceeded to walk all through the night, lying down for an hour when it ceased raining. At about 10 o'clock on Thursday morning we saw a lugger, high and dry, in the distance, and finally got aboard. We all had a long drink of water and went to sleep. At about 2 o'clock in the afternoon we again started to walk to the station, the crew of the lugger having left previously. At about 4 o'clock we saw four men in the distance. Two of them turned out to be members of the crew. They had been severely cut in getting ashore. They informed us that the Alto was ashore about eight miles further up. When we were about two miles off the Alto we met Mr. Zumfeldt, who was then having a preliminary look while waiting for horses from his station to patrol the beach. We were told that they had buried the

We were told that they had buried the mate just previously, and they showed me his grave. On arrival at the Alto wreck we were treated by the staff with every possible kindness. Miller and Tiben, poor chaps, left the vessel on pieces of the deck-house. I afterwards saw no one in the water except Young. The crew consisted of South Sea Islanders and Malays, and their behaviour from first to last was splendid; no one could wish for a better or more active crew. No vessel could withstand the fierceness of such a gale, with seas 40 ft. high, after she struck. She was a fine, able schooner, and given room would weather anything. Being so well in front of the advancing semicircle of the storm, our only possible course was to heave-to, as it was impossible to run across the front of the cyclone, owing to the closeness of the lee shore. I have had 14 years' experience at sea, 12 as officer and master, and this storm was by far the heaviest cyclone I have been in. It was far more severe than the April blow."