

15
TRUE AND CORRECT NARRATIVE

OF THE

DREADFUL BURNING

OF THE STEAM-SHIP,

AMAZON,

WITH 115 PERSONS BURNED AND DROWED,

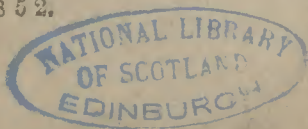
AND ONLY 46 SAVED.



DUNDEE:

Printed for R. Crombie and G. Gordon, by James Redger,
March 5,

1852.



THE AND CORRECT NARRATIVE

OF

THE BATTLE OF BUNEN

IN 1804

BY
JAMES W. B. ...

THE ...

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PLEASE TO PURCHASE THIS BOOK FROM TWO
POOR SAILORS.

BURNING OF THE AMAZON.

PLYMOUTH, January 6.—It is our painful duty to report the particulars of a most appalling accident. The new Mail steamship Amazon, Captain Symons, which left Southampton on Friday for the West Indies and the Gulf of Mexico, has been totally consumed by fire; and of 161 persons who were on board of her when she left, it is feared only 46 have been saved.

The Amazon left Southampton on Friday afternoon, and in the Channel experienced strong head winds and rain. At a quarter before one on Sunday morning, when the ship was about 110 miles west south-west of Scilly, a fire broke out suddenly, forward on the starboard side, between the steam-chest and the under part of the galley, and shortly after the flames rushed up the gangway which is in front of the foremast funnel. The alarm bell was rung, and Captain Symons rushed on deck in his shirt and trousers. Wet swabs and other things were placed on the gratings of the spar deck hatch, and a hose was brought to play on the main deck, but quickly abandoned in consequence of the excessive heat. The deck pumps were also kept at work until the men were forced to retire. The wind was blowing half a gale from south-west, and the vessel was going $8\frac{1}{2}$ knots, which was her average rate from the time of departure. Captain Symons ordered some hay, between the engine-room crank gratings, to be thrown overboard; two trusses were hoven over the ship's side; but the fire igniting the main body, the henhoops on each side, and the paddle-boxes, the men were obliged to abandon the deck, and those who could leave were all finally driven from the ship. Many were burned in their berths, others suffocated, and

a great number were drowned on the lowering of the boats. This account was brought into port on Monday by the brig Marsden, of London, from Cardiff, with iron, for South Carolina, which picked up from the life-boat twenty-one of the persons above referred to. Mr Vincent (son of Captain Vincent of the Severin), the midshipman in the Amazon, who was saved, has furnished the following narrative:—

We left Southampton with the West Indian and Mexican mails on board on Friday, the 2d instant. On the 3d at noon, we were in lat. 49. 12 N., long. 4 56 W., steering west by south half south, with an increasing fresh breeze. At 9. 30 *p.m.* we stopped with half bearings. At 11. 20 we proceeded, wind still increasing. About 20 minutes to 1 on Sunday morning fire was observed bursting through the hatchway foreside of the fore funnel. Every exertion was made to put out the fire; all was ineffectual. The mail boat was lowered, with twenty or twenty-five persons in it, but was immediately swamped and went astern, the people clinging to one another. They were all lost. The pinnace was next lowered, but she hung by the fore tackle, and being swamped the people were all washed out of her. In lowering the second cutter the sea raised her and unhooked the fore tackle, so that she fell down perpendicularly, and all but two of the persons in her were washed out. Captain Symons was all this time using his utmost exertions to save his passengers and crew. Sixteen men, including two passengers, succeeded in lowering the life boat, and about the same time, I (Mr Vincent), with two men, the steward and a passenger, got into and lowered the dingy. In about half-an-hour the lifeboat took the dingy's people into her, and bore down for the ship, with the dingy in tow; but the sea increasing, and being nearly swamped, they were obliged to cast the dingy off and bring the boat head to sea. The masts went—first the foremast, and then the mizenmast. About this time a barque passed astern of the lifeboat; we hailed to her with our united twenty-one voices and thought she answered us, but she wore and stood under the stern of the burning vessel, and immediately hauled her wind and stood away again. The gig with five hands was at this time some little way from us, but the sea was running so high we could render her no assistance, and shortly afterwards lost sight of her. About 4 *a.m.* (Sunday) it was raining heavily, and the wind shifted to

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the northward; sea confused, but decreasing; put the boat before the sea. At five o'clock the ship's magazine exploded, and about half-an-hour afterwards the funnels went over the sides and she sunk. At noon we were picked up by the *Marsden*, of London, Captain Evans, by whom we were treated in the kindest manner possible. We were picked up in lat. 48. 5 N., long 5 30 W.; wind north to north east. The captain stood into the coast of France, but the wind shifting to the southward he bore up for Plymouth, where we arrived at 10. 15 *p.m.* on the 5th, and were most hospitably and kindly received by the landlord of the *Globe Hotel*.

Mr R. Neilson, one of the only two passengers saved, reports as follows:—

“At 12. 40, fire broke out. In less than ten minutes it was bursting up the fore and main hatchways. Out of 155 people on board, only twenty-one are, I believe, saved for I was in the last boat that left the ship, and one of the two last men who got in after lowering her, by springing from the ship's side and sliding down the tackle fall. The fire caught the other man and burned the hair of his face before he sprang off.”

The following descriptive and more detailed accounts have been collected from day to day:—

“The boats of the *Amazon* were fitted with iron cranes (or crutches) on which their keels rested; these fittings obstructed their clearance from the ship, and but for this fatal arrangement the serious loss of life would have been lessened. Captain Symons ordered that no one should get into the boats. This order was obeyed (until the people saw the flames overpowering the ship). He was last seen with the man at the wheel, ordering the helm to be put up, so as to keep the ship before the wind. His last words were—‘It is all over with her.’ The officer of the watch, Mr Treweeke (second officer), was walking the bridge when the accident was discovered. Mr Henry Roberts, chief officer, (in his shirt only,) was actively assisting the captain; he was last seen going through the companion down to the main deck, and is supposed to have perished there. Mr Lewis (third officer), Mr Goodridge (fourth officer), and two midshipmen, some of whose berths were forward on the port side of the m

boats, were probably suffocated, as were also the chief engineer Mr George Angus, and Mr Allen, the superintending engineer (on behalf of Mr Seward the constructor of the engines,) as they were seen in the engine-room ten minutes before the fire broke out, going forward, there being no possibility of their return through the flames. (The second engineer, Mr William Angus, was on the spar deck, between the funnel and the crank gratings, pulling oars, and throwing them out of the way of the fire on the deck, near the boats.) The two best boats were stowed on the top of the sponsons where the flames prevented approach. After the *Amazon* was put about, she went at the rate of 12 or 13 knots, dead before the wind. One boat on the starboard side, the second cutter, was full of people, when the wash of the sea unhooked the foremast tackle; she held on by the stern tackle, and her stern falling into sea, all except two were drowned, in consequence of the ship's speed. The pinnace was observed on the port side, towing by the fore tackle, behind the burning ship; and as no one cut the tow rope, the miserable passengers, who were all huddled together, were one after the other washed into the sea. The mail boat, which was also full of people, having shipped a quantity of water, went down alongside.

“When the flames had approached the after-companion, two male passengers came up from the saloon, all in flames, and running aft), fell on the deck. A tall lady, supposed to be Mrs Maclaren, entreated some one to take care of her child; but she would not enter either of the boats. Dineford, the quarter-master, placed one lady passenger in a boat; but she being extremely agitated, got out again, and although Henry Williams and another used some force and begged her to go in, she persisted in remaining on board. The stewardess, Mrs Scott, with her bonnet and shawl on, and something in her hand, first asked Steer to put her in the dingy, and then left for a larger boat. At the time of leaving, some of those who yet lived were kneeling on the deck praying to God for mercy; while others, almost in a state of nudity, were running about screaming with horror.

“The survivors escaped in the after-starboard second life-boat, in which was Mr Neilson. One of her occupants (Maylin) in leaving, pressed his foot through the burning deck and injured it; two others (Williams and Passmore) had to climb the starboard paddle-box through the flames and smoke. They suc-

ceeded after three attempts, and then slid down hands and face over the paddle-box into the boat; several slid down by the tackles. Two of the watch board (Williams and Foster,) had their hair burnt while burning on deck. When the life-boat left there were sixteen on board; they heard some one shouting in the water, and threw over a keg and some oars. They endeavoured to approach, but a sea carried the boat off. They then took Mr Vincent, Mr Williamson, Mr Sisley, and two sailors from the dingy, and making her fast to the stern, towed after the burning wreck, thinking to save more lives; but the dingy having filled, they were obliged to cut her adrift, and fearing that they themselves should be swamped, their boat's head was put to face the sea. Twelve oars were at work, the wind was increasing, and heavy squalls coming on. They saw the ship's gig full of people, shouting as if for assistance, and at the same time descried a sail standing apparently to the southward. The vessel appeared to pass between the two boats, and after this the gig was not seen; whether she swamped or was taken up by the stranger is unknown. The strange vessel came pretty close under the life-boat's stern, when all shouted together, and thought they were answered on board. She was a barque, under close-reefed topsails, foresail, and fore-topmast staysail; her spanker was hanging in the brails as if she was in the act of wearing. Soon after her helm was put up, and she bore right down towards the wreck, behind which she disappeared. The masts of the steamer went over before four o'clock in the morning, the foremast on the port, and the mainmast on the starboard side. One poor fellow appeared at the jib-boom end; the jib was cut loose, and was blown away. Her mizenmast was standing while she was in flames from stem to stern. About five o'clock, when the life-boat was passing the ship in a leewardly direction, the gunpowder in her two magazines aft exploded; and in about twenty minutes, the mizen having gone by the board, she made a heavy lurch and went down, her funnels being red hot, and still standing.

“Those in the boat now pulled before the sea and wind, thinking to make the French coast, which was, as they thought, the nearest. Mr Vincent's monkey jacket, being mounted on an oar, was their only sail, and the boat kept dry by bailing her with his boots. At half-past ten o'clock on Sunday morning they saw a brig, and, taking down the jacket, they hoisted handkerchiefs,

fore and aft, for signals of distress; and at 12 o'clock they were taken on board the Marsden, as Mr Vincent has described.'

The passengers rescued in the life-boat are Mr Hawkes, Vera Cruz, Mr Neilson of Liverpool, bound for Demerara, Mr T. Sisley, bound for Chagres.

The officers of the crew saved are Mr Vincent, junior, midshipman, and Mr James Williamson, the chief steward.

The rest of the people saved are Mr Dunsford, quartermaster, and 15 seamen and firemen.

The crew were the picked men of the whole Company's service, and Captain Symons was distinguished for his skill and bravery:

The lost passengers are Messieurs De Pass and Delgado, Lieutenant Geylls, Mr Fellows, and Reverend Mr and Mrs Winton, Jamaica; Mr Best and servant, Mr Kilkelly, Messieurs Oslander and Stirling, and Mr Alleyne, Barbadoes; Mr Johnston, Mr Burnett, and Mr and Mrs Scotland, Trinidad; Mr Hick, and Mr and Mrs McClimow, Demerara; Mr Elliot Warburton; Mr Geraud, M. and Madame Lacombe and child, M. Kersabee, Mr Cinna, Mr Barincose, and Mr Dellenare, Chagres; Mr M. Del Rio, Margaret Fitzgerald, Mr Fevler, and Mr Glennie, Vera Cruz; Miss Smith, Porto Rico; Mr Joel, Jamaica; Mr Cumming and Mr Evans, St Thomas; Mr Cardenas, Santa Martha; Mr Blood, Mr Anthony, and Mr Hamilton, Jamaica; Mr Ferrer, Grace Hoare, Mr Stryboo, and Mr Granter, Vera Cruz; Mr Crevecowst, St Rhemas; Mr Le Eaye, Guadalupe.

The superior officers of the ship who perished are

William Symons, Commander.

Henry Roberts, 34 chief officer, Gosport.

Charles H. Treweeke, 29, second officer, Illogan.

J. Lewis, 28, third officer, Kingston, Jamaica.

J. W. Fullerton, 37, surgeon, county of Donegal.

Mr H. Strutt, 33, purser, Middlesex.

F. Stainworth, 16, midshipman, East Indies.

W. K. Stuart, 15, midshipman, Tallyhog.

T. W. Shapcott, 28, purser's-assist. Southampton.

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The petty officers are

George Angus, 34, chief engineer, Dunbar.

William Angus, 32, second do., Dunbar.

Four other engineers succeeding in rank.

Debray Theophite, 30, cook, France:

Three other cooks.

Joseph Kirby, 36, the baker, Southampton.

The rest were seamen and fireman.

The cause of the destruction of the Amazon is unknown; she was under steam from the time of her departure to the period of the accident. As is usual with new machinery, water was kept almost continually playing on the bearings of the engines. On account of the heat of these bearings, the ship was stopped off the Bill of Portland on Friday night between the hours of eight and twelve, and about the same period on Saturday night she was stopped for two hours and a half; however, the necessity for the operation of wetting these parts was decreasing, as the main centre bearings were getting more sweet, and the engine altogether in better order. The position of the fire rendered it impossible to get at the engines in order to stop them. When the ship's head was to windward the flames swept the after-decks, where the passengers chiefly were. Before the wind, she was going at a tremendous speed; and it is marvellous how any of the boats were launched under such circumstances and in such a sea. The escape of the little dingy is no doubt due to the calmness and intrepidity of young Mr Vincent; who, though a mere boy in years, proved himself a thorough man and sailor on this occasion. He not only guided his small boat in safety till he joined the life-boat, but there he took immediate command as superior officer, and did everything in his power to sustain the courage of the crew throughout that dreadful night.

The value of the Amazon when ready for sea was about £100,000. The loss of that sum falls entirely upon the insurance fund of that company,—a fund exclusively devote from annual grants derived from the profits of the Company towards such casualties. The value of the specie, quicksilver, cargo, &c., when added to the value of the ship, will give a total loss of property by this melancholy occurrence of little less than £200,000 sterling.

The West India Mail Company has been the most unfortunate of all the great steam-packet associations in the loss of their steam-ships. Since the establishment of the company in 1841 no less than eight of their fleet of steamers have been destroyed by casualties on the sea.

FURTHER SURVIVORS.

BREST, Jan. 6.

The Dutch vessel *Gertruida*, Tunteler, entered the roads here to-day with 25 shipwrecked persons, picked up in two boats from the Amazon.

She picked up the first boat yesterday (Sunday, the 4th of January), at half-past six o'clock in the evening, and the second this morning at seven o'clock.

In the presence of such a catastrophe, the British vice consul, in the absence of Sir Anthony Perrier, the consul, who is detained in Paris by his duties as a member of the International Sanatory Commission, lost no time in endeavouring to save the lives of those who, according to the accounts given by the passengers who have arrived here, were saved in the four or five other boats which escaped from the wreck, and which, from appearance, must still be struggling against the waves. The maritime prefect was immediately applied to, and he at once agreed to give every assistance, and the *Souffleur* steamer, which was in the harbour, was immediately ordered out. Captain Caharet, the captain of the *Souffleur*, prepared for sea with a promptitude which did him great credit; but owing to confused information given him by the crew and passengers rescued by the *Gertruida*, he returned without having fallen in with any of the boats which was amissing.

The whole of the shipwrecked passengers and crew who arrived by the *Gertruida* have been brought ashore in boats, and a more melancholy spectacle than they presented could not be pictured. Among them are two ladies and a child; and their sufferings may be conceived from the fact that besides all the other

horrors they had gone through, they were exposed to all the inclemency of the weather, during nearly forty-eight hours, almost in a state of nudity. Immediately on their arrival, several ladies hastened to send them the clothing which they so much wanted. The family of Sir Anthony Perrier also hurried to the assistance of their distressed countrywoman, and with their ordinary humanity had the two ladies and their child removed to their house. One of the ladies—Mrs Eleanor Roper M'Clinnon—is severely burnt. During the whole of the period between the alarm of fire and the time she left the ship she clung with maternal devotion to her child (a boy eighteen months old), and, when so many others perished, contrived to save the lives of both. Her husband, who was in the employment of the Government at Demerara, was also in the vessel; but her companions in misfortune declared that they thought he was blown up in the steamer when the magazine blew up. The other lady passenger, Miss Anna Maria Smith, from Dublin, on her way to Porto Rico, to join a family in which she was to be the governess. The male passengers are all lodged at an hotel here, by directions of the Vice Consul. They are also completely destitute, both of money and clothing, but have been amply provided with shoes, hats, and wearing apparel, by the Vice Consul, who has also secured means to convey them with the least possible delay to Morlaix, where they will be shipped for England.

I have only to add that Captain Tunteler, of the *Gertruida*, has acted with most praiseworthy humanity. He not only placed everything that was on board his vessel at the disposal of our shipwrecked countrymen, but had gone out of his track to carry them to the nearest harbour.

The following is a list of the persons saved in the two boats rescued by the *Gertruida*, and landed at Brest:—

FIRST BOAT.

- Eleanor Roper M'Clinnon and child, passengers
- Frederick Glennie, passenger.
- Bernardo Barrincose, ditto.
- Jacob Allan, foreman at Mr Seaward's
- John Lamont, fireman.
- William Stene, ditto.
- William Goodman, ditto.

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Henry Carter, fireman.
Charles Samy, ditto.
George Harding, ditto.
George Lucah, ditto.
Jamest Rodgers, seaman.
James Berryman, ditto.
Frederick Wall, sailor boy.
Michael Gould, second stewart.

SECOND BOAT.

Anna Maria Smyth, passenger.
William Evans, ditto.
Jean Strybos, ditto.
George Deal, quartermaster.
Alex. Laing, quartermaster.
Daniel Brown, seaman.
Joseph Welsman, ditto.
Thomas Attwood, firemon.

Ye landsmaen all draw near a while, and listen unto me,
While I relate the mournful wreck that happened on the sea;
The loss of the steam-ship Amazon, whose fate we now deplore,
When sailing on the ocean, bound for Columbia shore.

On the second day of January eighteen hundred and fifty-two,
They left Southampton harbour with passengers and crew,
They numbered 156, whose hearts beat light and free,
No fear or dread their minds o'erspread, in crossing o'er the sea.

No incident occurred as they ploughed the raging tide,
Till one o'clock on Sunday morn, when fire it was espied,
It came rushing o'er the hatch-way from the funnels foreside,
And every exertion to quell the flames was tried.

But oh, alas, exertions they proved all in vain,
Consider now their sad distress upon the open main,
The Captain cries, our ship is gone, although a man so brave,
Come lower the boats, my brave boys, the people's lives to save.

To lower the boats immediately began his men so brave,
The mail boat it was soon let down, some of their lives to save;
Alas! it was soon swamped, and many there did weep.
It sank beneath the briny tide, and was buried in the deep.

The flames were still increasing,—distressing was the scene,—
And to fly from the destruction, all efforts proved in vain;
Their cries were like to rend the air, but nothing could them save,
One hundred and thirty-five of them met with a watery grave.

But now unto these mourful lines, I now must bid adieu,
We understand no blame is given to the Captain or his crew;
May kind Heaven be the comforter of those that now do weep,
For all their dear relations that now lie in the deep.