

LOSS OF THE

STEAM-SHIP

ORION,

ON HER PASSAGE FROM

LIVERPOOL TO GLASGOW,

ON TUESDAY, JUNE 18, 1850.

The Orion left Liverpool on Monday afternoon at three o'clock, with 115 cabin, and 45 steerage passengers. Everything seems to have gone on right till between one and two o'clock, when the hapless vessel struck upon a sunken rock off Portpatrick, and almost instantly went down. The rock on which she struck passed through the vessel principally in her midship compartment, breaking the engines to pieces. The scene at that moment was of the most appalling description. It is said that the night had been beautifully clear. The following narrative of the melancholy catastrophe was supplied by one of the survivors:—

“It was about half-past one that I was awoke by hearing and feeling a strange tearing sort of noise, as if some strong paper was torn. It was gentle, that I thought little of it, and re-

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remained in bed, although all the other passengers in the cabin started at once to their feet, and rushed on deck. After a very brief interval, one of my neighbours returned, and began to dress. I then apprehended danger, and jumped out of bed, and drawing on my trousers went on deck, calling at the ladies' cabin in passing, to tell my wife that she had better get up and dress, although there might not be any immediate danger.

“On getting to the quarter-deck, I found a large number of the passengers assembled. The vessel by this time had settled somewhat by the head, and was lurching over a little to starboard—that is, towards the land.

“My wife and I now went on deck, and as the vessel was dipping deeper and deeper into the water, I calmly told her that I feared there was little hope, but that we would use every effort to save ourselves.

“By this time the water was over the bulwarks at the bow, and the heel of the deck was becoming greater and greater. I then feared that all was over, and clasping my wife to my breast, we both felt resigned to our fate.

“We then proceeded, at my wife's suggestion, to the stern of the vessel at the larboard side, and as the inclination of the deck became so great as to prevent our standing, I laid hold of one of the belaying pins, and placing my wife between my breast and the bulwark, I held on.

“A lady at this moment got hold of my wife's  
ened at the throat,

it soon dropped off, and the unfortunate creature slid down the deck into the sea, which was gradually creeping up over the deck as the ship sunk. On turning round, I found the whole space within the bulwarks filled with a struggling multitude in the gurgling and seething waters, and most of these I fear were drowned.

“As soon as the water reached the companion, the pent air in the cabin forced off the skylights with a most horrid crash, and in an instant after we were under water. When below the surface I lost hold of my wife, but striking out found myself above water, and in contact with one of the stays of the mizen-mast, which I at once laid hold of. I had hardly done so when my wife rose also to the surface, and I at once took her hand and caused her to hold on by the same rope. I placed my legs round the rope the better to secure my hold, and told her to rest herself on my knee, which she did.

“As soon as we had so far secured ourselves the ship gave a heavy lurch to starboard, which immersed us under water; but swinging back, she lurched heavily to port, and again were we under water.

“I had only my head above water as I was supporting my wife, and I was afraid to elevate myself farther, as I knew that in that case the weight would be increased. Above me, on the mast, a sailor was perched, who called out in the most imploring accents to some persons in a boat to come and take the people off.

“On the shrouds of the mizen mast, near

where we were, there were several persons clustered, three females hanging on by one rope. At this time the companion cover floated off, and three persons contrived to keep by it until they were rescued.

“After being about half an hour in the water, a shore boat came up and was about to pick me up, when I told the men to get a lady, who appeared much exhausted, in first; this was done, my wife was taken in next, and, as quickly as possible, all supported by the mast were rescued.

“The boat then went to the mainmast and took off the captain and another man or two, and then proceeded to the shore, where we were met by a little girl, who said we must come to her mammy's house, as they had a nice fire to warm us, and would make us comfortable.

“Into one of the boats some four or five men got, and rowed away in spite of the cries and entreaties of those on board the sinking ship.

A number of gentlemen had crowded into one of the boats, when a cry got up that the ladies should be allowed in first, and accordingly a number of the gentlemen did get out and admit ladies; but the boat had not left the vessel's side when she swamped; but after being emptied of her first live freight she righted, and although half full of water, a number of others got into her, and I believe reached land.

“Mr McNeill of Collonsay, his wife, two daughters, and two sons, were on board. The sons alone escaped. The eldest daughter, although alive when brought ashore, soon died.

Mr Merrilces of Liverpool had a little child about 9 months old in her arms. When she was overpowered with the waters, she sunk, and on rising to the surface her baby was dead, and floated away out of her arms. The mother was saved, and when she recovered herself so far as to recollect her loss, she was bewailing her sad bereavement, when the body of the little innocent was brought into the house. Mr Tait, baker of this city, swam on shore with his little boy on his back most of the way, and both were saved. The Rev. Mr Peughe, the Episcopal clergyman of Paisley, had a little child on board, about twelve years of age, which was given in charge to the stewardess. After the alarm was given, she proceeded to dress her little charge, and took her on deck, the poor little child exclaiming, "I know you will not leave me." "No, no, I never will," exclaimed the noble woman; but, alas, heroism availed them not. The remorseless surge claimed them as its own."

One of the most providential of the numerous miraculous escapes which occurred was made by a lady, who, for about three-quarters of an hour, hung on by a rope attached to the rigging till she was ultimately received on board one of the boats in a state of great exhaustion. The following is the statement she makes:—

Shortly before the vessel struck, she was on the main deck, and she perfectly satisfied that, at the time, there was no appearance of any fog. Immediately after the rock was struck, she ran down to the cabin and found the ladies leaping from their beds in a state of the greatest consternation. She had, at a previous period of the evening, advised those with whom she had occasion to be brought into contact, not to dress on retiring, but, in the great majority of instances, her advice

had been disregarded. However, there was evidently no time to be lost, and the ladies prepared just as they were to go on deck. The captain now appeared, and entreated them to compose themselves, as there was no occasion for alarm; but our informant at once gave positive assurance to the contrary, by declaring that she had seen the vessel settling down at the bows; and ample proof of the melancholy truth was soon afforded by the water rapidly making its way over the cabin floor. The panic which ensued it is impossible to describe; and much more so was the scene which took place afterwards on deck. Some persons were praying, others uttering imprecations, others screaming. The lady in question succeeded in getting into the first boat that was launched, but it almost immediately swamped. By some means or other she got hold of the helix of the steamer; but she had the greatest difficulty in maintaining her position. The vessel was swayed from one side to the other by the people rushing in a body to secure a place in the boats. The boiler she thinks now burst, but perhaps she was mistaken this for the noise occasioned by the escape of the pent up air through the skylights. Ultimately an end was put to the painful scene by the vessel gradually sinking beneath the surface, first forward, and then in the after part. However, when she again came to herself, she found that she had secured hold of a rope attached to the upper portion of the rigging, and fortunately also she observed a cushion floating past her, which she seized hold of. With this she experienced no great difficulty in supporting herself, and her usual composure returned. For some time she imagined that she would never reach the shore; but as time wore on she got rid of her fears, and latterly looked forward to rescue with some confidence. She remained hanging by the rope for about three quarters of an hour, at the end of which time she was picked up by one of the boats. She was landed in a state of great exhaustion, but ultimately so far recovered from the effects as to be able to proceed with the Princess Royal, which arrived here on Wednesday afternoon.

The following is a list of the passengers saved as far as could be ascertained:—

Mrs Spence of Liverpool, Lieut. Maurice Jones, R.N., John M. Jones Mr E. A. Marshall, Wallingford, Berks, Major John Mac E.L.C.S., Richard Price, Master D. Darroch of Gourock, Thom Kidston, Mr, Mrs, and Miss Anderson, S. H. Napier, Liverpool, Napier, do, W. J. Walker, J. Nichol, M.D., Mrs and Miss Nichol Peter McLellan, Liverpool, Mr Valegia, John Roberts, do, Dug Cameron, Glasgow, Lawrence Barmer, Montreal, Mrs Thomson child of Prescott, Robert Buchanan, Glasgow, Mrs Buchanan, Miss J. Sucker, Invernes, from America, Mr Sucker, Mrs Sucker, Mrs Miss Robby, Malvern, Wm. Anderson, Glasgow, Wm Priest, Liverpool, James Holt, R.N., Mrs Williams, Liverpool, Mrs Peace, John Archibald, Alloa, Geo. Lamb, do, John Brennan, J. Dochter Liverpool, Mr and Mrs Host, Mr and Mrs Whitehead, Miss Han

Whitehead, Miss Janet Colquhoun Jameson, Glasgow, Isabella Duncan, Liverpool, James Gibbons, Glasgow, Thos. Devlin, Glasgow; J. T. Rennie, Aberdeen, Miss Omer, do, John McCall, Glasgow, James Lyall, do, Alexander Lyall, do, Wm. McKenzie, Liverpool, Wm. M. Moss, do, Richard Spencer, do, Mrs John Pearce, Capt. McKechnie, Greenock, Mrs McKechnie, Miss Farquharson; Pailey, J. Connah, New York, L. Gladstone, Liverpool, Mrs Gladstone and family, do, T. Williams, do, J. C. McNeill of Judia, A. McNeill, do, Miss White, C. Sorley, Wm. Bond, Glasgow, C. Martin, Mrs Hunter, Port-Glasgow, E. Colquhoun, J. A. Pritchard, Liverpool, P. Alston, Glasgow, P. Marra, Staffordshire, J. Biggan, W. Gardner, Glasgow, Mrs W. Gardner, Rev. Mr Clark, Manchester, Jas. Walker, Glasgow, J. Oldman, Somersetshire, Miss Woolfield, Glasgow, John Tait and son, do, John Walker, John Mills, Liverpool, Henry Thomson, do, A. Forbes, Stirling, R. Bell, Tiuro, W. Kelly, Dartmouth, James Payne, do, J. Merrilees, Paisley, Duncan Campbell, Glasgow, P. Ramsay, Liverpool, Wm. Merrilees, do, Mrs Wm Merrilees, do, Mr Thomson, Glasgow, Mrs Thomson, do, Margaret O'Brien, M. E. Nich II, Liverpool, John Stewart, Glasgow, Mr Fleming and two nephews, do, Mr John Cameron, do.

### The following are the names of those lost:—

Dr Burns of Glasgow, Mr Hume, do, Mr and Mrs M Neill of Colonsay, Miss Peughe, daughter of the Rev. Mr Penghe, Paisley, the stewardess, infant child of Mrs Merrilees, Liverpool, Mr W. Marchbank, Glasgow, Mrs and Miss Splatt, Miss Mary Ann Splatt, and two sisters, Mr Bennett, Chester, Mr Jago, Liverpool, Mr Robby, two children named Fraser, Mr Ross, Glasgow, A. Graham, steward, John Pearce, Liverpool, Miss Morris, niece of Dr Burns of Liverpool, Jas. Martin, Andrew Walker, ship's carpenter, — Dunn, cabin boy, Mrs Hurst, child and servant of Mrs Whitehead, Miss Nicol, Liverpool.

During the brief but fearful and eventful period between the ship going down and the deliverance of the survivors, many acts of heroism and gallantry were performed. One of these was the case of a child who came up to Glasgow in its mother's arms by the Tartar, who was found by a passing swimmer floating on the water, just as a boat loaded to the gunwale with the saved was crossing his track, he seized the infant and jerked it among the people on board. The child was consequently saved,

as we trust the gallant swimmer. Another astonishing feat of heroic gallantry was that of a gentleman observed swimming with a lady under each arm, and his own child held in his mouth, supporting himself on a board, which he held under his chin. Some less scrupulous swimmer came across him and drew away the plank which enabled him to support his head, and he was forced to let go hold of his unfortunate child, which, in consequence, met a watery grave; the ladies, however, he safely brought to land. We have not learned this noble person's name, but it should be recorded. Another instance was that of a gentleman, who, having got possession of a small piece of floating wood, when a young lady was passing, he extended his hand to her, and saying "this may save us both," was enabled to keep himself and her up till they were picked off by a passing boat.

We understand that a large amount of money belonging to passengers lies within the iron sides of the Orion.

#### Description of some of the bodies unclaimed:

An old man with grey whiskers and light grey hair; 17s 8d in silver and one sovereign, were found on his person.

An old man, with ticket 286; wore a pair of silver spectacles; had on a black vest, black coat, black trousers bound with green silk tape round the waistband, and brown over-all coat. Had a letter on him addressed "Mr Robert Donaldson, care of Mr Wm. Dickie, 135 Grafton Street, London." Said to belong to Dundee. White handkerchief and 16s 10d found upon him.

A stout gentleman, with a letter on him, addressed "Dr J. Williamson, St George's Hospital, London. Steerage passenger; had in his pocket a fusee-box, a hair comb, 13 sovereigns and 10s 6d; sandy eye-brow, dark whiskers, mixed with a little grey; had on brown trousers, with light blue stockings.