



THE STORY OF THE BASKET.

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Herbert Keeling Smith
from his affectionate
grandfather the Editor



ADRIFT ON A RAFT,

OR,

THE WRECK OF THE ARCTIC.

The Personal Narrative of

MR. JAMES SMITH.



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1876.



STORY OF THE BASKET.

ADRIFT ON A RAFT.

PERSONAL NARRATIVE BY MR. JAMES SMITH.

INTRODUCTION.

THIS narrative of the wreck of the "Arctic," written on board the sailing ship "Cambria," was, on Mr. Smith's landing at Quebec, published on 14th of October, 1854, in a special edition of the *Chronicle*, a newspaper of that city, and reprinted at the time by many newspapers and journals of America and Britain, and in different languages on the Continent; but, after a lapse of now 22 years, and only one or two fugitive copies being to be found, Mr. Smith's relatives and friends have requested its being printed again, and put within boards for preservation. There is also appended, as interesting reminiscences, a few cuttings from newspapers of the time, still in Mr. Smith's possession.

The steam-ship "Arctic" was one of the largest and finest of the celebrated Collins' Line, and Mr. Smith was on her, on his way home to Jackson in Mississippi (where were two of his children), after having brought and left his wife with three children at Edinburgh.

There was intense interest on both sides of the Atlantic in all relating to the disaster, on account not only of the high character of the ship and of the line, but on account of the numerous people of note who were on board and lost. Out of 383 persons known to have been on the voyage, there were ultimately saved, one way and another, 21 passengers and 54 of the officers and crew, without one woman or child.

ON THE LOSS OF THE ARCTIC.

(From the "New York Express," October 31st, 1854.)

Above, around, no object meets the view,
 But the dense murky mist that seems to fall
 O'er the doomed ship, and her devoted crew,
 Like the dark fold of a gigantic pall ;
 But home is near, and fancy only turns
 With keener zest, her magic to employ,
 With warmer love each weary wanderer yearns,
 O'er her bright picture of his coming joy.

The stalwart youth with rapture high beholds
 The promised partner of his future life,
 That grey haired man, with deeper joy enfolds,
 To his full heart, the long tried faithful wife.
 Children, again, some rev'rend form embrace,
 Mothers are counting their rich treasures o'er.
 All in the future some fair promise trace,
 Nor dream for them the future is no more.

But through the gloom their fate draws swiftly near,
 Another crowded ship drives blindly on,
 A crash ! and every heart stands still with fear,
 And through that shivering crowd no breath is drawn.
 One gleam of hope ; but now the waves rush in,
 And hope dies out with those extinguished fires,
 And in the struggle of the baser sort to win
 Their worthless lives, each human trait expires.

The end comes on, and some in mute despair
 Fall crushed and nerveless without thought or power,
 While others lift their trembling hearts in prayer,
 And trust their God still in that fearful hour ;
 A moment more, one deep unearthly groan,
 And one appalling shriek rings through the gloom ;
 Then the deep surges of the Atlantic moan,
 A solemn dirge above their ocean tomb.

October 14th, 1854.

A. C.

From the "True Witness," a Weekly Journal of Jackson, Mississippi, October, 1854.

When the news of the loss of the Arctic was announced, a large and esteemed circle of friends of this place was suddenly thrown into the deepest gloom and anxiety. It was known that Mr. James Smith, formerly of Scotland, but for some years past a resident here, a prominent and useful citizen, and a member of the Presbyterian Church, had signified his intention to take passage upon her—having spent the greater portion of the summer in Edinburgh, the place of his nativity. It was hoped, however, that he had been defeated in his intention and had waited for the next steamer. In a few days, however, a list of the passengers came, among which his name was found. The gloom was darkened still more that hung over many countenances. Sad hearts were pierced with deeper sorrows—friends wept in bitterness and silence. But soon their mournings were turned to joy. "Saved!" "saved!" tingled along the lightning wires, which brought a thrill of emotion never to be described. They were words that came to troubled hearts with sweeter music than could be swept from an instrument of a thousand strings. It is with great thankfulness, and sympathy with rejoicing friends, that we record the fact.

A depatch from Boston, dated the 13th, says the Cunard steamer Europa arrived there and brought fourteen of the survivors of the Arctic's disaster. The number known to have been saved, so far, is 65.

Another despatch from New York, dated the 14th, says :—"Despatches from Quebec state that the ship Cambria arrived at that port with a number of the Arctic's survivors, picked up at sea. Among these are Captain Luce, commander of the Arctic ; George F. Allen, of New York ; and James Smith, of Edinburgh." It seems from this that our fellow-townsmen, Mr. Smith, together with the others mentioned, on the sinking of the ill-fated vessel, must have secured themselves to floating pieces of the wreck, and remained for a considerable length of time at the mercy of the waves. Their sufferings must have been terrible, and they can only be imagined.

Captain Luce has written a letter to Captain E. K. Collins, giving the particulars of the loss of the Arctic. He states that he sunk twice with his (Capt. Luce's) son, when a piece of the wheel-house struck his son and killed him instantly. He describes the scene as truly awful. The sea was strewn with men, women, and children, who were uttering most pitiable cries, but in vain, as help was impossible for many. Capt. Luce and eleven others managed to get upon a fragment of the paddle-box. All of these died, says the despatch, except two, who with himself were rescued and taken to Quebec.

From the "Flag of Union," of October 25th, 1854, a newspaper of Jackson, Mississippi.

We have the unspeakable pleasure of laying before our readers a letter from our friend, James Smith, of this city, whose miraculous preservation is portrayed in the few lines addressed to his sister, Mrs. Charles Dudley :

ON BOARD THE SHIP CAMBRIA,
RIVER ST. LAWRENCE, *Oct. 14th, 1854.*

MY DEAR SISTER HARRIET :—Through the kindness of our Almighty Father my life has been renewed ; I hope and pray to be a more useful one and more to His glory than heretofore. I write you this before landing. You will no doubt have heard of the loss of our ship before this reaches you. I suffered much on a fragment of the wreck for two nights and nearly three days—all the time looking for the next moment to be my last, and preparing myself as well as I could to meet my Maker. I felt perfectly resigned, if not anxious for the moment to come. I witnessed an awful scene of wholesale death on the 27th, the day of the collision. The French steamer, the *Vesta*, had about 200 on board of her and went down immediately ; we had some 380, few, I think, of whom could have been saved, except some of the officers and men who got clear of the ship in boats and might reach the land. I saw the *Arctic* go down, with, I should think, 200 still on board of her. I was alone on a small raft of three thin planks, lashed together, for 50 hours, and was picked up by this ship, Captain John Russell, of Greenock, bound from Glasgow to Montreal. Capt. R. and all on board pay us great attention : he picked up also Captain Luce of the *Arctic* and eight others who had also been tossing about on different pieces of the wreck. I hope soon to be with you.

Your affectionate brother,

JAMES SMITH.

P.S.—QUEBEC, Oct. 14.—I have been delayed in getting up the river—thankful to hear that the Vesta did not go down as we supposed from her appearance. My feet trouble me much—I can scarcely walk—quite well otherwise. J.S.

From the "Mercury" of October 31st, a newspaper of Jackson, Mississippi.

We give this morning the interesting narrative of our townsman and friend, Mr. James Smith of this city, detailing his wonderful escape after the wreck of the Arctic. It will be found the most minute and interesting account yet published. Mr. Smith showed great courage and presence of mind. We will put him against any Old Salt afloat for the navigation of a small raft at sea! Our friend seems to have been as provident of his biscuit, as if he had intended to work his raft to the Balize, and up the Mississippi. We learn that he left New York on Monday, 23rd, and may be expected home in a day or two.

From the "Quebec Chronicle" of 14th Oct. 1854.

Captain JOHN RUSSELL, with the Ship Cambria, of Greenock, arrived last night, and reports:—

"About 50 miles east of Cape Race, on the 29th of September, about 8 a.m., the weather for some days previous having been very thick, the chief mate observed some floating object right ahead, he immediately informed me of the circumstance, and I went aloft and saw a human being standing on a piece of wreck; he being so near, had no time to put out our boat, but ran the ship up to him, and throwing lines

over the bow, sent some men down, who with some difficulty caught hold of him, and got him on board, much exhausted. He turned out to be a Frenchman; but not knowing his language, found it difficult to understand him; however, I was made to understand, by signs, and by a lady passenger on board, who could talk a little French, that there were some others floating about in the distance. I immediately went aloft with my glass, and distinctly saw five separate pieces of wreck, and on four of them there were human beings. I immediately hove the ship in stays and stood to the north, so that we might reach them on the opposite tack, they being about two miles to windward; got my boat put out and all ready for lowering, with some water and provisions on board. At about 1 P.M., came toward one raft, with three persons on it; hove the ship to and sent my boat to their assistance; got them off the wreck and took them on board, much exhausted. They proved to be Captain Luce, of the Colins' line of steamers Arctic, a cabin passenger named G. F. Allen, of the Novelty Works, N.Y.; the other a young German lad, named Ferdinand Keyn. Proceeded on toward the other raft; sent my boat again to a raft with two persons on it, who proved to be two of the firemen, the other two rafts being at a short distance, the boat proceeded on toward them, being anxious to get them all on board previous to the weather becoming thick, as there was every appearance of it at the time. The last raft, with one single person on it, who proved to

be a Mr. Smith, belonging to the United States, was reached. I then made inquiries if there were any other rafts floating about; but they having stated that they were under the impression that there was no other, the boat returned to the ship with the parties picked up. They were all much exhausted. In the meantime I sent a man to each mast-head to look out if anything else could be seen, but night coming on we saw nothing further, and the wind increasing to a gale from E. S. E., I concluded that if there were any rafts or boats floating about they could not have resisted the storm. I then proceeded on my voyage. Capt. Luce suffered severely from contusions on several parts of his body, but principally on the head; also, Mr. Allen and Mr. Smith, two of the passengers saved.

THE NARRATIVE.

From the "Quebec Chronicle," Oct. 14th, 8 p.m., 1854.

Account of the collision and loss of the American mail steam-ship Arctic, and the screw steamer Vesta, by James Smith of Mississippi.

I was passenger on the Arctic. We had been out from Liverpool seven days, and were in about longitude 52° , and somewhere about 60 or 80 miles off Cape Race, on the coast of Newfoundland, when the dreadful occurrence took place, on Wednesday the 27th September.

During the day, up to the time of the accident, the weather had been quite foggy, and I was somewhat astonished and alarmed several times when on deck seeing the weather so thick, that I fancied not more than three or four of the ship's lengths ahead could be seen, and she going on at full speed, without any alarm bell, steam whistle, or other signal being sounded at intervals, in some such manner as I had been accustomed to in a fog on other vessels. At about 15 minutes after the meridian eight bells had been struck, and while sitting in my state-room in the forward cabin, the earnest cry of a voice on deck (who I at the moment took to be the man on the look-out) "stop her," "stop her;" "a steamer ahead," was heard with alarm by myself and all others in the cabin, at the same time the man giving the alarm

could be heard running aft towards the engine-room. I stepped out of my state-room, and while endeavouring, with Mr. Cook, my room-mate, to calm the excitement among the ladies in the cabin, and before the man giving the alarm on deck had reached the engine-room, we were made aware of concussion by a somewhat slight jar to our ship, accompanied by a crashing noise against the starboard bow. It was a moment of awe and suspense, but I think we all seemed to satisfy ourselves that the shock was slight, and that as we were on so large and strong a vessel, no serious damage had happened, or could well happen to such a ship, in an occurrence of such a nature. With this reliance on my own mind, at any rate, I was very quickly on deck, and in detached accounts from other passengers, learned that a screw steamer, with all sail set, had struck us on the starboard bow, and glancing aft our starboard wheel and wheel-house struck her again, and she passed off a-stern of us out of sight immediately in the thick fog. I saw on the first look at our bulwarks that all seemed right *with us*, but soon began to get alarmed from our careening over on the side we had been struck, as well as from the call for the passengers to keep on the port-side. I understood, also, at this time that one of our boats had been cleared away and lowered with our first officer (Gourlie) and six of the men, to render assistance to the other vessel, and that our ship was making round in search of her also. I saw Capt. Luce on the paddle-box, giving orders in one way and another,

and soon most of the officers and men running here and there on the deck, getting into an evident state of alarm, without seeming to know what was to be done, or applying their energies to any one thing in particular, except in getting the anchors and other heavy articles over on to the port-side of the ship. I looked over the starboard bow and saw several large breaks in the side of our ship, from 8 to 12 or 14 feet abaft the cutwater, and I was convinced that in the 10 or 15 minutes' time, our wheels were further submerged in the water than usual. Our ship seemed to right herself somewhat after getting the dead weight upon the larboard, but it was too evident that Captain Luce himself, as well as all hands, were becoming aware of extreme danger, and from the tremendous volume of water being thrown out from our steam pumps, I was convinced we were making water at a fearful rate. Then came in full view before us again the other vessel, presenting a most heart-rending spectacle; the whole of her bow for at least ten feet abaft her cutwater was literally crushed away, leaving to all appearance an open entrance for the sea; and how she had remained above water for so many minutes seemed a mystery. Her decks were covered with people, and all of her sails on all three of her masts were set. We merely passed her again, and she was in less than a minute hid in the fog, but scarcely out of sight when we heard arise from her deck a loud and general wail of mourning and lamentation that told us of their

burial *en masse*. I should think there were at least 200 souls on the deck of that ship. It was just previous to, or at the same time that we thus came in sight of and passed her, that our wheels went over two or three separate individuals in the water, as well as a boat and crew who had evidently left the other ship for safety on ours. One man only we picked up, an old weather-beaten French fisherman, who having leaped from the small boat before she went under our wheel, caught a rope hanging to our ship, and was finally pulled on board of us, and from whom we learned something of the other vessel. Capt. Luce had, by the time of our again coming in sight of the *Vesta*, become convinced of our own critical situation, and that our only or best chance was to keep on under headway as fast as possible toward the land. A deep-seated, thoughtful look of despair began to settle upon every countenance—no excitement, but ladies and children began to collect on deck with anxious and inquiring looks, receiving no hope or consolation, wife and husband, father and daughter, brother and sister, would weep in each other's embrace, or kneel together imploring Almighty God for help. Men would go about the decks in a sort of bewilderment as to what was best to be done; now laying hold of the hand-pumps with redoubled energy, or with sickening effort applying their power to the hauling up of freight out of the forward hold, already floating in water before the lower hatches were opened. System of management or concentra-

tion of effort was never commenced or applied to any one object. Two separate ineffectual attempts to stop the leaking by dropping a sail down over the bow were made, and the engines were kept working the ship ahead toward the land, but in the course of an hour, I should think, from the time of the collision the lower furnaces were drowned out and the steam pumps stopped. Then it seemed to become only a question of how many hours or minutes we would be above water. The first officer with his boat's crew we had left behind from the first. The second officer with a lot of the sailors had lowered another boat and left the ship, and a general scrambling seemed to be going on as to who should have places in the only two remaining boats that I saw on deck. The stern tackling of another had given way from the weight of persons in it while it was swinging over the side, and I think several must have been lost with that. I saw one lady hanging to the bow tackle of it after the stern had broken loose. One of the two boats still remaining was a large one, on the quarter-deck, occupied by ladies and children and some few gentlemen. The other was on the upper deck forward and in the possession of a lot of firemen. Things were in this condition at about two hours after the accident. Capt. Luce was superintending the lowering of spars and yards, aided mostly by passengers, for the purpose of making a raft, and complaining that all his officers and men had left him. Most of the women and children were collected round the boat on the quarter-

deck, seemingly resigned to their fate. Some few gentlemen exerting all their powers to prevail on others to work on at the pumps, but all to no purpose, the water kept gaining in quantity as steadily as time progressed. The engines had stopped working, and I, seeing that the chief engineer, with some of his assistants and firemen, had got the forward boat in the water over by the bow, under the pretence I saw of working at the canvas which was hanging over the bow, so as to sink it down over the leaking places; but seeing, as I thought, symptoms of their real intention to get off from the ship without too many in the boat, I dropped myself down near by them on a small raft of three planks about a foot wide each, and 10 or 12 feet long and an inch in thickness, lashed together with some rope and four handspikes, and which I had just previously helped to lower into the water for the purpose of working from about the bow of the ship; finding it bore me up I shoved off, intending to get alongside of the engineers' boat, but as I did so several firemen and one or two passengers dropped down into the boat, the engineer protesting against their doing so, and at the same time he pushed off and pulled well away from the ship, with about twelve or fifteen persons in his boat, declaring to those on board, at the same time, that he was not going off, but would stay by the ship to the last. At the same time he or those in the boat with him, continued to pull away in what I considered was the direction of the land, and were in a few minutes lost in the fog. I now saw

there was no probable chance for me but to remain where I was, on my frail little raft, until I could see some better chance after or before the ship went down. She had now settled down to the wheel-houses. The upper furnaces had for some time been drowned out. People on board were doing nothing but firing signal guns of distress, trying to get spars overboard, and tearing doors off the hinges to be ready as floats. Nothing else seemed to present itself, as a means of saving the lives of some three hundred souls still on board.

I have crossed the Atlantic nine times now, and nearly every previous time have had in charge one or more of my family or near relatives, but now I thanked my God that I had not even an acquaintance with me in this my adversity. I tightened up my little raft as well as I could so as to make it withstand the buffetings and strainings of the heavy rolling sea, and with the aid of a long narrow piece of plank, which I split off the edge of one of the others, using it as a paddle, I kept hovering within about 200 or 300 yards of the sinking ship, watching operations there, and keeping myself from being drifted out of sight, so as to have what company there might be left on rafts like my own after our doomed vessel had sunk beneath the surface. In this position I saw three different small rafts like my own leave the ship, one of them with three and another with two of the firemen standing erect on them, the third with the old Frenchman we had picked up, and one

of the mess boys of the ship sitting on it. Those three rafts all drifted close by me, so near that I was hailed by one and another of them with the request for us all to keep near together, to which I assented; but told them that we had all better try and keep by the ship till she went down. At this time I noticed that the large boat which I had seen on the quarter-deck was in the water and was being freighted pretty fully to all appearance, with several females and a good number of males, and that the raft of spars was at the same time being lashed together and several getting on it. I noticed also a couple of large empty water casks lashed together, with five men on them, apparently passengers, leave the ship, and drifting toward me, while within about 50 yards they capsized with the force of a heavy swell, giving their living freight an almost immediate watery grave. Three of them, I noticed, regained the top side of the casks, only to be immediately turned over again, and the casks separating, I saw no more of their human freight. My heart sickened at so much of immediate death, and still I almost longed to have been one of them, for at the same instant, and as near as I can judge about half-past four, the ship began to disappear; stern foremost she entered under the surface, her bow rising a little as she slowly went under, and I distinctly heard the gurgling and rushing sound of the water filling her cabins from stern to stem, as she went under, taking, I should think, from 30 secs. to a minute in disappearing with crowds of people still

upon her deck. Thus went down the noble Arctic, leaving nothing behind but a mixture of fragments of the wreck and struggling human beings. I saw one large half-round fragment burst above the surface and several of the struggling fellow mortals get on it; this and the raft of spars with several on it, and the boat full of people, were all that I could distinctly make out as being left in the neighbourhood of where the ship went down to windward, and the three small rafts to leeward along with my own, were left to pass the night, now beginning to close in upon, and to hide away from my sight, I wish I could say from my memory, this dreadful day; but such a night of extreme melancholy despair and utter loneliness, I hope I shall never again experience. I had, certainly, become so familiarized with death, that awe of it was gone, and as certainly felt it would be great relief to go immediately like the rest; and for this end I, with somewhat of satisfaction, thought of the phial of laudanum in my pocket, previously intended for a better use, but oh how unprepared was I to see my God, and for my family's sake how necessary I felt it was for me to live a while longer, else could I have emptied that vial or rolled over the side of my plank most willingly. The night was cold and chilly, the dense fog was saturating my already wet clothing; I was standing to the ankles in the water, with the waves every now and then washing me above the knees, no hope in my mind of being drifted to the land, and in a part of the ocean

where it is expected a thick fog continually hangs over the surface, precluding the hope of any chance vessel in passing near us being aware of our situation ; all circumstances seemed to say it is but a question of how long the physical frame can endure this perishing state, or how long before a more boisterous sea turns over or separates the slightly fastened planks. Thus reflecting, I offered up to Him who ruleth the winds and waves—to Him unto whom we flee unworthily, perhaps sincerely only in our deepest distress?—an anxious petition for mercy, that, as I had now been called to account, I might, notwithstanding my worthlessness, find an acceptance through the merits of Him who suffered, and is ready to aid—who says, Knock and it shall be opened unto you—unto whom can we look, Oh ! our God and Saviour, but unto thee?—the whole life is after all but as this hour, at most but a few short days ! and what are all the mere vanities transpiring during an ambitious and short existence, compared to an assurance which maketh the end a fearless one ? Relieved and consoled by this my last petition, I was somewhat calmly resigning myself to await my time while strength and power of endurance could hold out, when I discovered close by me a large square basket lined with tin, floating lightly by me—one of the steward's dish baskets it proved to be—and paddling up to it I got it on board, and with the help of a piece of small rope I had round my shoulders, I lashed it pretty firmly on top of the plank, thus not only

tending to make my raft more secure, but affording me a comparatively dry place to sit on the edge of it, and with my feet inside, it formed a shelter for my legs up as high as my knees. After getting this all arranged and while sitting watching the water every now and then dashing over the top of it, and becoming convinced that it would soon be partly filled and add to my discomfort as well as to the weight of the raft, I was again attracted by a distinct rattle against the side of the raft, which proving to be a small air-tight tin can, a part of a set of such used as a life preserver, I seized hold of it as an additional token of the presence of a protecting Providence. I cut out one end of it with my pocket knife, and found it answer the purpose of what above any thing else I then needed—a baling-pot—and by which I was enabled to keep my little basket-shelter clear of water; and so acceptable as a protection from the cold damp blast did I find this little willow house that I soon found myself cramped down into the inside, thus keeping not only my feet and legs but the lower part of my body warm.* In this sort of situation I wore away the tedious night.

The breaking dawn revealed to my sight nothing but thick mist, the unceasing rolling waves, and my own little bark, not a single vestige of all that the night closed upon was now to be seen. About midday the sun cleared away the mist, and the heat of its rays was truly grateful, but O how desolate in its very

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cheerfulness, seemed the prospect it thus unfolded. Over the whole broad expanse of waters, not a sail could be seen, not a thing save the figures of the two firemen about half a mile distant, still standing erect on their bit of the wreck, and showing themselves at intervals as every heavy swell raised them on its crest. I had not yet felt either hunger or thirst, for this I was truly thankful, for I had but a handful of broken crackers or biscuits, kept dry in my hat, which I felt determined to save to the last, and of course no water. I dreaded the craving of either.

The day wore on still clear until about an hour before nightfall, when the two firemen (within hailing distance of whom I had worked my way again,) discovered a ship under full sail, broadside toward us, but it was with faint hopes of success that I hoisted my handkerchief tied to the end of the strip of wood I was using as a paddle, the firemen doing the same with a shorter piece of wood in their possession. The ship at one time we noticed laid to, or altered her course for a moment, giving us a hope that she had discovered something, but the night closed in again, and with it all hopes of a rescue.

I passed through this night in a dozing dreamy, shivering, half sensible sort of state, with all sorts of fancies before my drowsy and somewhat disordered mind, and all sorts of pictures in my wakeful moments, both of a pleasing and of a revolting character, floating before me on the dark surface of the water. Now and then during the night I fancied myself

hailed by various surrounding parties, convinced as I was at the same time that none others were within hailing distance but the two firemen. My disordered fancy, however, kept me for more than half the night in an agreeable state of excitement, under the firm belief that companies of boats' crews were on the search for us, and most lustily did I answer every fancied or real signal. The morning dawned again, and with it a horrid scene of despair at the gloomy prospect of the same dense, foggy atmosphere now and then fully developing to view the same two erect figures dancing about on the rolling surf, and in my selfish liberality I bargained with myself that I would endure still during this day, seeing that my two companions, obliged to be on their feet, supporting each other in a very precarious looking back to back attitude, were still able to exist. I felt a little hungry this morning, and eat half a biscuit. While warming myself by about two hours paddling up toward this companionship, and during which the fog partially cleared away, and while close to them, we all became excited at the sight of a sail far to the south, as I thought, but broadside toward us. Like the one on the previous day, I had little hope of her coming much nearer, but being determined to leave no effort untried which might possibly attract their notice, I stripped off coat and vest, and taking off my shirt, tied it by the sleeves to the end of my paddle, and with my handkerchief on a small strip of wood tied on above this, I thought I had a tolerably conspicuous signal, and

waved it to and fro for more than an hour, till the ship was nearly out of sight—and just as I had lowered it, in utter hopelessness, we all descried at the same instant, in the opposite direction, another sail—end on to us—just entering as it were into our grand amphitheatre through a cloud of mist that seemed to rise and clear away above the vessel, forming a grand triumphal archway over and around, our “eureka,” like a little tower of promise, in the centre. Feeling sure, at first sight, that the course of this one was toward us, I did not long remain undeceived, for she began to increase in size as time slowly wore on, and although she was falling to leeward considerably as she advanced, still I felt sure if she kept on the same tack she would undoubtedly see our signals before passing beyond. My large signal, too, continued to drift me nearer to her track, and took me almost out of sight of my two companions. When within about two or three miles of us, and about an hour and a half after she first hove in sight, we were relieved by her backing her sails, altering her course, and lying-to for a while, then hoisting a signal on her spanker gaff she put about and bore away, on and on far in the distance on the opposite tack, until my heart began to fail again, doubting whether she was beating to windward for us, or had gone on her way, rejoicing in the discovery and rescue of only a portion of the unfortunate wretches within range of her. But again how light and buoyant was the joy as she at last put about, and stood directly for us; and on and on she advanced

like a saving angel, until we could see her glorious hull distinctly rise and fall within little over a mile distant from us, when she backed her sails again and waited for some time in the prosecution of her mission of mercy, no doubt relieving some scattering companions from a like precarious state. Soon she filled away again, and at last lying-to, close by the two firemen, I saw her boat lowered with five men in it, who, picking up the two firemen in their course, came dashing along direct for my raft, and were soon bouncing alongside. I allowed myself to tumble aboard of them, unable physically to adopt anything of a graceful action, and morally overpowered with gratitude to God and to those his instruments. I remained almost speechless until I got on board the ship. Before getting on board, however, the boat went away off some distance to windward, and picked up the three other firemen whom I had seen leave the Arctic, but who had been ever since out of view. We all got huddled upon the deck somehow, although rather awkwardly, and making my way down to her neat little cabin as well as my stiff feet and legs would allow, I had the pleasure of paying my respects to Captain John Russell, and found myself on board the ship *Cambria*, of Greenock, bound from Glasgow to Quebec.

Capt. Russell, the Rev. Mr. Walker of the Free Church of Scotland, and his very kind and attentive lady, Mr. Sutherland of Caithness-shire in Scotland, Mr. John McNaught, and several of the steerage

passengers paid us every attention that I could have desired; Captain Russell giving me up the berth which he had been using himself, and putting everything on board in requisition that might tend in the least to relieve and make us comfortable. I was surprised to learn that the old Frenchman whom we had picked up from the *Vesta* was our good genius on this occasion. Being directly in the track of the approaching *Cambria*, he was picked up by the second mate (Mr. Ross) jumping overboard with a line, and seizing hold of the old man, they were both pulled on board, and the rescued Frenchman, in the best English he could muster, made Capt. Russell aware that others were near, who then went to the mast-head and, with his glass, made out the other four pieces of wreck which we were all on, and making his long tack to windward, came back in the midst of us, picking up first, from that half round piece of wreck that I saw burst above the surface at the time of the ship going under, Capt. Luce, Mr. George F. Allen of the Novelty Works, and a young German, a passenger on the *Arctic*, by the name of Ferdinand Keyn. They, along with eight others of those who went down with the ship, had gained this piece of wreck, which turned out to be a segment of one of the paddle-boxes; and singular, it seems that Capt. Luce, who had stuck by his sinking ship to the last minute, was thus saved at last on the very boards which, as commander, were his post of duty. The same thing, however, had caused the death of an in-

teresting son, by striking or falling on him as it burst above water. The eight others who had gained it with them had from time to time willingly perished from it, and Mr. Keyn was on the point of making the ninth when the Cambria hove in sight. He had become almost a lunatic from extreme thirst, from eating biscuit soaked in sea-water and attempting to quench it by blood sucked from veins of his arm opened with his pen-knife, and wishing to drown himself several times, he had been prevented by Captain Luce and Mr. Allen, until longer endurance seemed impossible with him, when the Cambria appeared.† Mr. Allen, too, although saved himself, had too much reason to fear the loss of his wife and several other relatives who were on board with him, and whom he saw placed on the raft of spars before the ship went under. I found those three my companions in the cabin of the Cambria, and being attended to like myself. The old Frenchman and the five firemen were comfortably quartered away in the forecastle, all suffering much; and the old man having lost his "compagnon de voyage" on his bit of wreck, the mess boy, who held out as long as he could, but finally rolled overboard.

In the course of a few days we all began to get round and feel pretty well, with the exception of the severe pains in our feet, which continue with very little intermission, and at the same time it is most congenial to our feelings that through the leadership of Mr. Walker, we have had the daily opportunity of

† See Appendix, Page 34.

rendering praises and thanksgiving to a gracious God for his mercy and goodness toward us.

Capt. Russell feels the circumstance of his instrumentality in the matter with great gratification, on account of Capt. Nye, of the Collins' steamer Pacific, having some years ago run great risk in saving him and his crew from off the sinking "Jessie Stevens" in a severe gale on the Atlantic.

APPENDIX.

*From the "New-York Commercial Advertiser" of 19th
Oct. 1854.*

While the dreadful news of the wreck of the Arctic, and the loss of nearly three hundred lives, was fresh upon us, the deep feelings of sorrow for the dead and sympathy for the living overwhelmed all other considerations, and few could stop to criticise the conduct of officers or men with the calmness essential to a just opinion. The time is coming, however, when the public mind will review the circumstances of the wreck dispassionately, and perhaps severely. It is unfortunate for the purposes of justice that there is no method by which the disaster can be made the subject of investigation by a legal tribunal having power to enforce the attendance of witnesses and examine them strictly upon oath. Had the lost steamer belonged to the navy, or been chartered by the Government as a troop-ship, as the *San-Francisco* was, a competent court of inquiry might have been instituted, and justice might have been meted out to all the parties concerned. But as it is, the task seems to devolve upon the press to endeavour to elicit the truth from the mass of the confused, contradictory, and incoherent statements which have been made by the survivors of the passengers and crew. With this view we have, from day to day, published in the *Commercial* every piece of information, and every incident that seemed to throw any light upon the circumstances of the disaster.

It is probable that every important fact which ever will be made known in regard to the management of the Arctic has already been published. The expediency of driving such a

vessel through the water, on a much frequented route, and amid a dense fog, at the rapid rate of over twelve knots an hour has been already discussed in this column, and we shall not now revert to that branch of the subject; but we propose to say a few words in reference to the conduct of the officers and crew, and to consider what was their duty, and what will be the duty of every officer and hand on board a ship under similar circumstances.

It is evident that there was a total lack of discipline. Mr. James Smith, who seems to have been one of the coolest and most observant of the passengers saved, says in his personal narrative, originally published in a Quebec paper: "I saw Captain Luce on the paddle-box, giving orders in one way and another, and most of the officers and men running here and there on the deck, getting into an evident state of alarm, *without seeming to know what was to be done*, or applying their energies to any one thing in particular, except in getting the anchors and other heavy articles over on to the port side of the ship." And again, he says:—"Men would go about the decks in a sort of bewilderment as to what was best to be done, now laying hold of the hand-pumps with redoubled energy, or, with sickening effort, applying their power to the hauling up of freight out of the forward hold, already floating in water before the lower hatches were opened. *System of management or concentration of effort was never commenced or applied to any one object.*" This statement is corroborated in various ways, and the result of the calamity shows decisively that it is true.

We sympathise most sincerely and profoundly with Captain Luce in his great affliction; we admire the unselfish heroism with which he stuck to his ship till she went down; but this must not prevent our candidly saying what we honestly think the evidence shows, that the courage he displayed was passive rather than active—the courage of the man who bows his head and firmly awaits the stroke, rather than the courage of him who sagaciously and actively combats impending danger.

It will be learned from the paragraph which we extract to-day from the *Troy Whig*, that Captain Luce acknowledges he committed a fatal error in sending away his first officer, Mr. Gourlie, to the aid of the *Vesta*, before ascertaining the extent of the damage to his own ship; but that was an error committed from motives of humanity and the impulse of the moment, and may perhaps be excused. More than four hours appear to have elapsed between the collision and the submer-sion of the *Arctic*, and ample time was afforded for reflection. The crew abandoned their duty and seized the boats—the attempt to construct a substantial raft by lashing spars, &c., together, was thus frustrated—but there were a hundred or more men passengers on board, who are represented to have behaved with scarcely less fortitude than the captain displayed in the face of imminent danger, and who might surely, under his directions, have cut away a portion of the deck and wheelhouses upon which some, perhaps all, of the passengers could have been saved. There is no evidence that Captain Luce set the passengers systematically to work for this purpose. After the boats were taken from them, and the crew hastily sought their own safety without striving to complete the raft, the remaining passengers appear to have resigned themselves to fate. In the language of Mr. Smith, from whose personal narrative we have above quoted, “A deep-seated, thoughtful look of despair began to settle upon every countenance—no excitement, but ladies and children began to collect on deck with anxious and inquiring looks, receiving no hope or consolation; wife and husband, father and daughter, brother and sister, would weep in each other’s embrace, or kneel together imploring Almighty God for help.”

We think then that Captain Luce erred in sending Mr. Gourlie away, and that he erred in not properly directing the passengers when abandoned by the crew; but the greatest error of all was that the employes of the ship were not disciplined as they should have been. This was an error not of

the moment, but of long standing; and an error which we fear is too general in the management of other passenger ships. It is the duty of a captain to provide for such a disaster as this, and to have his crew properly drilled and trained to meet the emergency. The whole process of getting out boats, transferring the passengers in due order, shipping instruments, provisions, &c., should have been rehearsed again and again, until every man knew the precise duty which he would have to perform in case of wreck. Every man would then have had assurance of the capacity of the boats, and of the means of safety, and when the time of peril came would have done his part with alacrity and confidence. This is the practice, we are informed, on the steamships in the British Peninsular and Indian mail service, and it is worthy of adoption in every line of steam-ships in the world.

* This Dish Basket has now (1876) a history of its own. Mr. Smith, on being transferred from it to the boat of the "Cambria," pled with the officer in charge to get the basket on board as well; "Pull away, men, for the ship," was the quick reply; "the fog's coming again. I don't like the weather, and we have a long pull yet." Mr. Smith appealed again, as best he could, this time with the sailor-like response, "Pull back, men, for his old basket; he ought to be glad he's aboard himself, let alone his kit; the weather will be down on us before we get the ship; pull lively, men." And sure enough the second mate of the "Cambria" was not far off his reckoning, for but little after the ship was gained the wind rose, and that night it strengthened to a wild gale that undoubtedly swallowed up all other unrecovered living remains of the "Arctic."

During the two weeks ere reaching port, the cook of the "Cambria" found the saved basket as serviceable as it had been on the "Arctic," and at the wharf at Montreal, during the whole time the ship was discharging and re-loading, the

applications for a sight of "Smith's Basket" were so continuous that it was at last labelled and fixed up conspicuously on the roof of the cook's galley, so the curious could be gratified without crowding on board; and on the "Cambria's" arrival home in the river Clyde, some friends of Mr. Smith (Messrs. John and William M'Adam) obtained possession of it, and presented it to Mrs. Smith, then staying in the city of Edinburgh, and thereafter, when Mr. S. took up his permanent abode in Glasgow, it was encased in a handsome carved walnut frame-work, and now by Mrs. Smith the old basket is made to do duty as her drawing-room ottoman.

The following lines on the willow of the basket, and accompanying a beautifully embroidered cover for its ottoman case, worked by her own hands, are by a very early and dear lady friend of Hamburg:—

LINES TO MY FRIEND MRS. SMITH.

~~~~~  
 THE OLD WILLOW BASKET.  
 ~~~~~

We know not the land where the willows
 First lifted their heads to the sun,
 Nor if then the warm summer breezes
 Soft whispered a tale to each one :
 How they should gain strength for the future,
 To battle with waves of the main,
 And bear on its wild heaving bosom,
 One from death to world-life again.

We know not whose hand cut the willows
 Away from their birth-day soil,
 Still hearts bless the thought and the moment
 Which urged him on to his toil ;
 For his work was the bud, the beginning,
 To form a household god,
 In the shape of an *Old Willow Basket*
 That bore you a precious load.

We all know that God in His wisdom,
 Breathes to men good deeds from above,
 Watched too in that dark night's struggle
 The willows with heavenly love,
 As they lay a tiny *ark* floating,
 'Midst the dead and doomed to die,
 But to fulfil some plan we know not,
 Found best in our Maker's eye.

Then accept for your prized old Basket,
 My loved friend amongst a few,
 A Christmas gift to deck the willows,
 Which gladly I have wrought for you ;
 Whose warm heart prompts many an action,
 Nobly held from the world's greedy ear ;
 And believe I am schooled to cherish
 Kindly deeds so rare and sincere.

A.W.J.

25th December, 1866.

† This young man Keyn, a passenger, was in company with two others, all Germans, captain, mate, and second mate of a new ship, the charge of which in America they had been appointed to by their home owners, Keyn being the youngest.

Mr. Smith had noticed their nautical expertness in different efforts during the mixed turmoil of the awful calamity, and it was to them that he felt largely indebted for his own ultimate safety. The little raft of three planks which floated him for the best part of three days and the whole of two nights, was lashed together by them on the deck of the "Arctic" and lowered over to starboard, where the breaks in the side of the ship were, one of them getting down on it, in search for, and to endeavour to stop up the leaks under water. These three planks—deal boards—inch thick, and about a foot wide and 12 feet long, had served as a temporary addition to the dining

table in the forward cabin, and had the lashing not been intelligently done, the light structure, under the incessant straining of the continuous and often severe motion, would have parted and been useless ere the lapse of many hours.

Some time after this thing had been lowered overboard, Mr. Smith saw it still alongside, and with a line dropped himself down on it to get to the "Engineers'" boat.

After landing in America, Smith parted company with Keyn at New-York, never since having met with or known of him till, strange to say, in this present year 1876, while in London for a day or two, he noticed in the newspapers the trial and verdict for manslaughter, passed upon one Ferdinand Keyn, captain of the German steam-ship "Franconia," on account of alleged want of humanity in the circumstances attendant upon the then late most disastrous collision between the "Franconia" and the British steam-ship "Strathclyde" in the English Channel, and resulting in the "Franconia," in a damaged state, getting to land, while the "Strathclyde" went down with many people on her; and struck with the name, Mr. S. unsuccessfully strove to find this Captain Keyn, and then wrote the following letter, which appeared in *The Times*, was responded to by the letter from Keyn, and afterwards by a meeting in recognition.

THE FRANCONIA AND STRATHCLYDE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE TIMES."

SIR,—In the end of October, 1854, there appeared in *The Times* two or three columns of my narrative of my deliverance from death and the wreck of the American steam-ship Arctic, of the Collins' Line, in Mid Atlantic. That narrative speaks of one Ferdinand Keyn, a young German passenger on the Arctic, who was saved along with myself two days after the disaster by a passing sailing ship. Yesterday and to-day, while in London, I have noticed the name of Ferdinand Keyn, captain of the steam-ship Franconia, conspicuously in your columns again, and I have spent some time (unsuccessfully)

in trying to meet him. If he is that same Ferdinand Keyn that was picked up along with myself, the sad circumstances of the Arctic affair must have been vividly present with him on the moment of his late disaster, and have impelled the course of action which has brought sore trouble. The big steamship Arctic came in collision with a small French steamer, the Vesta. The Vesta looked as if she was going down instantly, many of her people taking to the water to gain our ship, which spent some time trying to get to and to aid the supposed sinking vessel, while our first officer (Gourlie), with a number of the best seamen of the Arctic, was sent off in a boat by Captain Luce to aid the Vesta, and who, poor fellows, were never more heard of. All this and more went on to the neglect of the Arctic's own condition, which, when too late, was found to be sinking herself, and her best men gone. The Arctic went down with all her people (some 300), while the Vesta got into the port of St. John's, Newfoundland, with all her people, except those of them who were drowned in trying to get away from her to the Arctic.

I finally got afloat upon a little raft of three small planks, put together by young Keyn and two others of his German companions, who were all active on board in doing their best to save life, and this Ferdinand Keyn was picked up two days after by the same passing sailing vessel that sighted me. He and two others, one being Captain Luce himself, were afloat upon a fragment of the Arctic's paddle-box, all much exhausted. Out of over 250 passengers, there were only 21 of us saved, and a noble ship was gone—a calamity which, had instant attention and energetic action been concentrated towards her safety, which all afterwards saw, would have been averted.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
 JAMES SMITH, of Benvue, Dowanhill, Glasgow.

London, April 8, 1876.

LONDON, 10TH APRIL, 1876.

DEAR SIR—Reading the *Times* to-day I saw your letter to the Editor of that paper. I can inform you that I am the same man you mention.

Many times I have been thinking of that sad affair of the "Arctic," and of those who were saved with me, especially you, Sir, and certainly never more than now, when another misfortune of that kind has taken place.

I hope to get well out of this affair, for my conscience does not reproach me. I have done my duty as man and as master of my ship, but it seems that a foreigner is not allowed to defend himself. I am found guilty, but without having had the opportunity of saying a single word for myself, but I am sure I shall bear the case well.

I was so glad, Sir, to see that you remembered me, and hope you do not believe all the papers say, and will have kept the good opinion you seem to have had of me.

I still have the newspapers of the "Arctic" affair, and I assure you it was a consolation to me in those days to read them over again.

It would have been a great pleasure to have seen you.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

FERDINAND KEYN, Captain of "Franconia."

To JAMES SMITH, Esq., Benvue, Dowanhill, Glasgow.

From the London Papers of November 11th, 1876.

The Judges in the Court of Criminal Appeal delivered the Judgment to-day, in the "Franconia" case, as to whether Ferdinand Keyn, a German, who was convicted of Manslaughter for running down the "Strathclyde," off Dover, was amenable to the Laws of this Country.

Sir R. Phillimore was of opinion that the Court had no jurisdiction over a Foreigner, for an offence committed on the high seas, although within three miles of the English shore.

Mr. Justice Lindley said that he had come to the conclusion that all offences committed within three miles of the English shore was punishable by English law.

Judges Phillimore, Bramwell, Kelly, Pollock, Lush, and Field, were in favour of not convicting the Captain of the "Franconia." The Lord Chief Justice will deliver judgment on the same side on Monday next.

Judges Lindley, Denman, Brett, Grove, Amphlett, and Coleridge, were in favour of the conviction.

The conviction will thus be quashed by one vote.

