

THE QUEBEC TRANSCRIPT,

AND GENERAL ADVERTISER.

Vol. II.—No. 23.]

WEDNESDAY, 3rd APRIL, 1839.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]

THE BURNING SHIP.

BY A NAVAL OFFICER.

With many of the officers I was on shore at dawn, intending to accompany a large party to the opera, when a rumor reached me that the ship was ordered to sea, under Captain Todd. With a few, hastily collected, we were on board, leaving many young midshipmen, that had strayed away. God knows where, ashore, found the ship a stay peak, and the "Pipe all hands—make sail a-hoy—fall—sheet home, hoist away," and our dutiful cut canvas stretched upon our yards, decorated our taper masts, with the celerity of a well organized ship, thick and dry for weighing. "Brace the yards for sailing to starboard," said Capt. Todd; "and we and a-weigh. The drums and fife pick up 'Coil away the Hawser,' and the assured tramp of the men gave life and jollity to the scene, and was an excellent accompaniment to the heart-inspiring tune. "She is high, sir," said the officer of the fore-castle to first lieutenant, as the noble ship fell gracefully off to starboard, who, returning the salute, reported the same to the captain; and the deck, looked a noble sea-officer of no proportions. And now, to reflect that the godlike form is reduced to ashes, the muscled that gave Herculean strength to the good-fabric shivered to nothing by intense heat, every bone calcined, and the whole shapeless mass of ashes buried in the ocean's depth that I am anticipating. At four that morning having kept the middle watch, I left the ship under her courses and topgallant "ploughing the waters like a thing of breeze having just sprung up, as she had been decimated most of the night. At six I awoke from a deep sleep by the firing of a gun that from the cockpit struck my cot, and the hurried feet of men running to and fro, and the wail-door, upon opening, a dense volume of thick black smoke rose to my back, half-suffocated, and heaved out, to the weather quarter gallery; and O God! what a sight burst to my view! flames that rose from the quarter-deck, gave the appearance of a crater of a volcano, had just reached the main-sail; their fire was reflected strongly on the agitated faces of hundreds of men assembled on the main-deck. "These is Dundas," said Lieutenant Erskine to me, for he had joined me in the quarter gallery. "There is Dundas on the fore-castle, endeavouring to let go the anchors; I will join him or perish." "After join the launch," said I, which, full of men, was making her best efforts, with only a spar, to increase her distance from the burning ship. Amidst the roar of artillery and the din of despair, I heard the manly tones of the "To!" voice over my head; what he could not make out; but poor Erskine, who was immediately fat for a lieutenant, as his ascent to the quarter-deck butwarks, which he was climbing. The ship heeded to leeward, the hullwarks gave way with a horrid crash, and disclosed what might be passed for the mouth of hell, into which our friend was hurried in an instant. I saw his agonized cry, as the flame, like the tongue of a serpent, lapped him in its folds; and his last despairing glance thrown upon the bright liquid glare as it enveloped him.

God! it was a sickening sight! The ship was covered with struggling sailors, the boats that ventured near under a heavy which the guns, that were shotted sent were full, to sinking. Some of our midshipmen were in those boats, and the cowardly Italians into the fire at the side of their dirks. Both anchors were now away, and the noble ship swung head to wind in consequence. I found my post unimpaired by the smoke and flames that now blew aft, and with short ejaculations used by the publican and sinner, which from my heart, I plunged into the water struck out for the launch. "There is poor, and we cannot take you in," said man's voices from the boat. "Keep off, on your" said a discordant one, as I grasped the

gunnel of the well filled boat, and a heavy blow broke two of the fingers of my right hand, and made me relinquish my hold. I then swam alongside the boat, and entreated them to save me. Though a few, with the generous quality that characterises British seamen, would have risked the safety of the boat in my favor, still the majority were against me; and the ruffian who had disabled my hand set watching me, ready to repeat the blow. To depict my feelings in this tremendous scene!—they can be imagined, but not described. Under the stern of the burning ship, that was discharging her hundred and thirty guns, were seen hundreds of men swimming and floating on spars; in the distance, vessels afraid of venturing near the shot and expected explosion of the magazines; here and there a few Italian boats, with a young midshipman, at the point of his dirk, urging them to save the drowning; one or two from English merchantmen, regardless of all danger, loading with the swimmers, and dashing into the south of danger, to receive those who, unable to swim, had hung on the blazing ship to the last. The flames now shot high above the main mast, and reminded me of an eruption I had once viewed at Etna. It was very terrible, joined to the cries of the young, the groans of the wounded, and the shouts and yelling of the burning. Finding myself much exhausted, I struck out for a man I saw on a grating. "Hillo, shipmate," said he, "keep away, its too small for both of us; boat a-hoy!" "Hail, one the English ones, boat a-hoy! if you have room for a spare hand, pick up this poor devil; as for me I am doing well and shall make the Island of Gorgons in three hours." Upon which he spread his neckerchief with his teeth and hands as a sail, and squatted on the grating apparently at his ease. As I was giving up hope, which in general is slow to desert me, the boat with the captain of the cutter, and the steward of the cutter—for it was the veteran John Naylor, that had pointed me out for succor—hailed me in just in time to prevent me from sinking, for I had struggled with many a drowning wretch, who clutched me, as men in that state will, and in consequence I had imbibed a quantity of water.

I was roused from my torpid state by the blow up of the after magazine, which detached the whole of her stern frame from the body of the now splendid luminary, that gave an idea of a world in conflagration. She now majestically raised her bow high in the air, with her tapering lofty masts and submerged stern, going down gracefully in the "deep, deep sea." "Very ery was hushed, and people held their breath as this beautiful fabric of human creation buried itself in the waves, and created an immense commotion, in the agitated waters. A tremendous concussion followed, and "Stand clear," was shouted from the over-loaded boats, as the mainmast descended from the immense height to which it was blown by the grand magazine exploding under water; had it taken place above, nothing could have survived the concussion. Down it came, with a horrible crash, tearing all before it, and putting an end to the miseries of a hundred half-drowned wretches.

That dreadful scene of conflagration is ever before my eyes, and my nervous system (if sailors are allowed to have nerves) will take some time to recover the shock. I still see the falling of our poor friend Lieutenant—into the blazing furnace, reflecting a strong light on his agitated countenance as he turned it full upon me, filled with indescribable horror—the piercing and agonized shriek to which I involuntarily responded, is for ever ringing in my ears—the darting of the forked flames, from yard to yard and mast, till they soared above the clouds and illuminated the most minute object, making all as distinct as the meridian sun—the numberless sinking and struggling sailors—their despairing imprecations when beaten off from the already over-loaded boats. One of them I am told, in a violent paroxysm of madness, before he was turned overboard, deliberately broke the thigh bones of a boy, and threw him into the boiling waters. You will recollect our old messmate, young Smithers, the doctor's son; nearly exhausted, he caught at, and grasped, an oar

pulled by a person we both know, without esteeming. The person, I am informed, cruelly shook him off to certain destruction, and flew to save a much greater man,—whom he had seen lower himself from the bowsprit. He was successful, and I have no doubt from this will be his reward. The last sight of poor Captain Todd was on the poop. He then, half clad, had pistols in his hands, preventing the quarter culverts from being fired, and endeavouring to drive the men, intent on escape, to their duty. Poor gentlemen! he was a gallant and good man, and fell a victim to the all deceiving flames.

ON DRUNKENNESS.

Hobbes makes voluntary drunkenness a breach of the law of nature, which directs us to preserve the use of our reason. The ancient Lacedaemonians used to make their slaves frequently drunk, to give their children an aversion and horror for this vice. The Indians regard drunkenness as a species of madness; and in their languages, the same term, ramjam that signifies drunkard, also implies a phrenetic. Addison says, "the person you converse with, after the third bottle, is not the same man who first sat down at table with you. Wine often turns the good-natured man into an idiot, and the choleric into an assassin; it gives bitterness to resentment, and makes vanity insupportable." In a word, drunkenness exhibits the individual in a new and foreign character, and infuses qualities into the mind, to which it is a stranger in its sober moments. Hence the justice, as well as neatness of the saying of Publius Syrus, "He who jests upon a man that is drunk, injures the absent." "My whole experience assures me" says Dr. Trotter, "that wine is no friend to vigour or activity of mind; it whirls the fancy beyond the judgment, and leaves body and soul in a state of listless indolence and sloth. The man that on arduous occasions, is to trust to his own judgment, must preserve an equilibrium of mind, alike proof against contingencies as internal passions. He must be prompt in his decisions, bold in enterprise, fruitful in resources, patient under expectation, not elated with success, or depressed with disappointment. But if his spirits are of that standard as to need a fillip from wine, he will never conceive or execute any thing magnanimous or grand. In a survey of my whole acquaintance and friends I find that water-drinkers possess the most equal temper and cheerful dispositions." "Mark," says Dr. Darwin, "what happens to a man who drinks a quart of wine, if he has not been habituated to it. He loses the use of his limbs, and of his understanding. He becomes a temporary idiot, and has a temporary stroke of the palsy; and though he slowly recovers after some hours, is it not reasonable to suppose, that a perpetual repetition of so powerful a poison must at length permanently affect him?" To confirm this, Dr. Williams says, "I am convinced that considerably more than one eighth of all the deaths which take place in persons above twenty years old happen prematurely through excess in drinking spirits." Sir Walter Raleigh says, "Except thou desirest to hasten thine end, take this for a general rule, that thou never addest any artificial heat to thy body by wine or spice, until thou findest that time hath decayed thy natural heat; and the sooner thou beginnest to help nature, the sooner she will forsake thee."—In all the examples of Europeans wintering within the arctic circle, those who drank spirits died from scurvy, while those who possessed no such liquors, and drank water only, survived.

Immersion in the cold bath has often brought a drunkard to his senses; and it is often observed among seamen who fall overboard in a state of stupid intoxication, that they are generally sober when picked up. There was a custom at one time prevalent, of ducking a drunken husband; and it is to be lamented that our fair countrywomen should not exercise so wholesome a privilege more generally. In the "Philosophical Transactions," many dreadful instances are recorded of the combustion of individuals, arising from the effects of habitual intoxication.

MISCELLANEOUS EXTRACTS.

FROM ENGLISH AND AMERICAN PAPERS.

The number of persons who emigrated from Liverpool during the year 1838, under the supervision of the government emigration agent, was 13,411. Of these, 10,683 sailed for the United States; 863 for British North American colonies; 1,059 for Australia; 345 for West Indies; 186 for South America; and 59 for Cape of Good Hope and Mauritius.

The English ships of the line are 90; of France 49; of Russia 50; United States 15. The English frigates number 93; French 60; Russian 25; American 35. The English steam ships of war, 12; French 7; Russian 8; American 1, building 9.

In the neighbourhood of Grosvenor Square, London, there reside four Surgeons, all enjoying excellent practice, whose names are Blood, Slaughter, Death, and Churchyard.

A foreigner perambulating the streets of London, would have strong reason to believe that Mr. Peel was one of the most odious and unpopular ministers that ever existed. In almost every book-shop window is to be seen a placard or paper, thus ominously inscribed: *Peel's Criminal Acts.*

Cleivie's Eccentricity.—The Rev. Mr. Hagarore, of Catshego, Leicestershire, died on 1st of January, 1776, possessed of the following effects, viz. £700 per annum, and £1000 in money, which (he dying intestate,) fell to a ticket-porter in London. He kept one servant of each sex whom he locked up every evening. His last employment of an evening was to go round his premises, let loose his dogs, and fire his gun. He lost his life in the following manner:—Going one morning to let out his servants, the dogs fawned upon him suddenly, and threw him into a pool, from which he was unable to extricate himself. His servants heard him call for assistance, but being locked up, could not afford him any. He had 30 gowns and cassocks, 100 pair of small-clothes, 100 pair of boots, 400 pair of shoes, 80 wigs, yet always wore his own hair, 88 dogs, 30 carts and waggons, 80 ploughs, and used none, 50 saddles, furniture for the menage, 30 wheelbarrows, so many walking-sticks that a toyan in Leicester-field offered £8 for them, 60 horses and mares, 200 pick-axes, 200 spades and shovels, 74 ladders, and 240 razors.

A Frank Confession.—Dr. Barthiez, a French physician, who effected many wonderful cures, had no faith in his profession. He said that physicians were like blind men with sticks, with which they struck at the patient and his disease, and so much the better if they hit the malady instead of himself.

A sensible people.—Valerius Maximus tells us of a people in Thrace who wept at the birth of a man, but who manifested great joy at his death, as they deemed the end of life better than the beginning. They were right.

Reason.—Many by their situations in life have not the opportunities of cultivating their rational powers. Many from the habit they have acquired of submitting their opinions to the authority of others, or from some other principle which operates more powerfully than the love of truth, suffer their judgment to be carried along to the end of their days, either by the authority of a leader, or of a party, or of the multitude, or by their own passions. Such persons, however learned, however acute, may be said to be all their days children in understanding. They reason, they dispute, and, perhaps, write; but it is not that they may find the truth, but that they may defend opinions which have descended to them by inheritance; or into which they have fallen by accident, or been led by affection.

Poison and Poetry.—A forlorn damsel in a country village sought relief from life's troubles by swallowing poison; but fortunately, the stomach pump prevented serious consequence, and the bellman celebrated her recovery in the following quatrains:

"Gals whose mind have somewhat odd 'em,
Oft seek relief by taking lodanum;
And after all, 'tis not surpris'd
Forsaken gals should swallow pain."