

From the Boston Athenaeum.

### NARRATIVE

Of the shipwreck, and particulars of the loss of the English ship *Jane*, in the River la Plata, (South-America.) By George Feacker, of Boston, (Mass.)

In the month of May, 1817, I embarked at Buenos Ayres as second officer on board the English ship *Jane*, Captain William Spoth, bound on a voyage from that place to the Brazils. The departure was some time retarded (an ill-omened event), owing to the carelessness of the pilot, by striking on the bar in going out, which materially damaged our rudders and caused our detention nearly six weeks. Towards the middle of June, however, we again set sail, and after a moderate passage of twenty days, anchored in the harbour of Rio Janeiro. Working here two months for freight, we at last succeeded in getting it, and on the third of September, in company with a large fleet, for different ports, sailed on our return, bound to the ports of Monte Video and Buenos Ayres, with a cargo consisting of rum, sugar, tobacco, flour, butter, rice, and dry goods, having on board five passengers, 2 of them Spaniards, inhabitants of Buenos Ayres, a German, an Englishman, and an American; the three last freighters of the vessel, and owners of the principal part of the cargo; four blacks, their slaves, and fourteen of the ship's company, comprising in all twenty three persons. Our passage was agreeable, and very favourable, and in fifteen days we discovered Cape St. Mary, the Northern entrance of the River la Plata, continuing our course along the banks of the river, with a fine wind, till towards sunset, on that day, when the weather becoming foggy, the wind increasing, and the night approaching, we deemed it expedient to haul off to sea, and gain an anchorage for the night. We accordingly came to anchor about fifteen miles from Monte Video, our first destined port, near the Island of Flores, that being to windward, and the wind about SE. The gale increasing very fast, at eight o'clock, more cable was paid out, and at nine, it blowing very hard, another anchor was let go; at half past 9, we took supper, elated with the idea of being so near the end of our passage, and happy in the fair prospect of breakfasting next morning on shore. Little did they imagine this supper to be their last, and of being so near the end of the voyage of life. From this time the gale still continued to increase, the ship pitching very heavily, and wetting from fore to aft by the sprays of the sea. At twelve, midnight, after passing an anxious watch below, owing to the strange rolling and pitching of the ship, caused by a strong weather current, I came upon deck to relieve the watch. I went forward to examine the state of the cables in the hawse holes, and then returned to the quarter deck, to the lead line, which we had kept over the side, & by its feeling, was fearful that the ship had been, and was still drifting. The motion of the ship, and strong current, prevented my knowing this to a certainty; both our anchors, which were of over-proportioned sizes, being down, and our cables nearly new, out, with their whole scope of a hundred fathoms. While at the lead I observed something at a distance, to leeward, like a white foam; and remarked it to the boat-swain, who was standing near. He replied, he thought it no more than the curl of the waves. Not satisfied with this, I went aft into the yawl astern, and was soon satisfied they were breakers, and not far off. I quickly went below to the cabin, awoke the Captain, and aroused the passengers. He soon ran upon deck, and had just gained it when, at fifteen minutes past twelve, the ship struck. Those below were directly alarmed by this shock, for the previous motion, with the noise of the wind, and the roar of the sea, must have prevented their sleeping, and hurried affrighted, to the deck. The sea began instantly to break over every part of the ship, and all were struck with horror on looking around at the awful prospect, and the inevitable destruction that awaited them. Some were in their shirts, others half dressed, and many with their clothes in their hands. For

This Narrative was principally written during the lameness occasioned by the disasters of the Author, who is a young man of probity and respectability.

the first time, I saw seamen completely terror-struck and dismayed. The captain ordered the steward to go down and secure some articles in the cabin; he descended, but soon came up with the dismal tidings that the cabin was full of water. Many, from the violence of her striking, were obliged to hold on by the railing, and the captain among them gave orders to cut away the mast. The Carpenter was sick in his hammock below. I asked several for the place where the axe lay. "We don't know of any axe, Sir," was the answer, "Lord have mercy on us." The seas now made complete breaches over every part of the ship, and perceiving I should have to commit myself to the waves, I threw off my pea-jacket and hat. Most of the crew and passengers were holding on to the different parts of the quarter deck, at the highest part of the ship; three or four I was pained to see, although nearly naked in freezing weather, had got up into the main shrouds. From the time she first struck, the seas had broken so completely over us, that it rendered every effort abortive towards the first, and most laudable intention of cutting the cables, making some sail, and driving as far as possible on shore, or at worst, to cut away the masts. But such was its sudden violence, that nothing was soon thought of but the attempt to hold on as long as possible, and efforts of any thing else were impracticable and abandoned. While holding on to the quarter rail, we were at every sea overwhelmed and washed out at arm's length off our legs, and many were forced from their holds, and drowned, or broken and bruised to death by pieces of the wreck. Finding it impossible to stand long, this freezing and suffocating drenching, I watched my chance, & sprang over the heads of some that were in the mizen top, advising the rest to follow, as I was certain no one could stand such horrid seas five minutes longer. Here, in the mizen top, in the intervals of the ship's striking, I fell to thrashing myself, preparing for the waves. I took off my shoes, and beat the soles of my feet. My limbs had been for some time much numbened, and my feet without feeling; I succeeded, however, at last by great exertions in circulating the blood, and rendered myself once more warm. While aloft, the work of chaotic destruction was busily carried on by the dread ministers of death. It appeared as if orders had been given from above on this night for total and indiscriminate destruction, in the shortest time possible. There I could almost perceive those spirits of vengeance who "ride in the whirlwind, and direct the storm." From thence was a view of a shipwreck in all its terror, and in all its sublimity. While here, most of those below were now washed from their grasps, and soon met death. The mainmast likewise fell over the side, unfortunately the wrong side, to windward, off shore, the ship lying broadside to the sea, and having a weather heel.

The ship continued to beat very hard upon a ledge of rocks till she was in pieces. The long boat, by repeated seas was forced from her grips and fastenings, and the small boat astern instantly struck, and was carried away upon the top of a sea, with all its appendage of sails, tackles, and lashings. I soon found myself going over with the mizen mast, which fell, and carried me along with it. I was plunged into the sea, and received a few scratches and bruises, but happily extricated myself, and by my making my way down the rigging, with difficulty regained the ship. I was now beset on all sides with conflicting timber, but was well aware of the danger, which threatened me. It was indeed passing the watery ordeal to cross the ship at this time to gain the shore, and springing at the interval of a sea to gain the other side, I found every plank of the main deck washed off and in pieces; the foremast had now likewise fallen, and numerous pipes of wine floating around, added to the general wreck. I had fallen in springing among this ruin, and had so far received but one or two serious bruises; but a tremendous wave now swept before it some large spars, and carrying me along with it, my right leg was struck by one of them, just at the joint of the knee, which was instantly crushed, and jambed in between that and a deck beam, a few of which still remained fast (as near as I could distinguish) for it was now as dark as Erebus. Now for a few moments jambed, as it

were in a vice, my situation was most critical and frightfully alarming. The blow I felt had almost severed my leg, and kept it still conjoined; another sea was roaring towards me which would infallibly have washed some large surrounding timber higher up against my head and body, and of which I was in instant expectation; but, by a fortunate rise of the water, I caught hold of the lee-rail & threw myself over the ship's side into the sea, not with a hope of reaching the shore, which I did not know how to steer for, as I had not seen it, but resolving to hasten my end, preferring to die with sea room, and to avoid a death which seemed equal to being broken upon the wheel. I had heard the voices of two or three others, and among them the captain, their bones probably mostly broken, and but just alive. These, I believed, were all that still survived.

After I had plunged into the sea, and rose, I held on for a moment to the upper works, which was all that was now left of the ship. I then quit and began to strip, no easy manoeuvre for a person in my then situation, as I had on a thick jacket, waistcoat, two pair of trousers, and neckhandkerchief. While doing this, some one, and the only one whom I discovered clinging to the ship's timbers, was suddenly washed from his hold, and extending his arms grasped my neckhandkerchief behind, and we sunk together; pushed for breath myself, it was no time for ceremony, the next hold, I perhaps could not disengage, and I was not so beside myself as by attempting to assist another to ensure certain death to both. I therefore quickly untied my neckhandkerchief, he sunk with it in his hand, and I saw him no more. I presumed he was a passenger, from his white shirt; and from his great size, Senior Monasteria, a Spanish engineer. While under water, I in a moment stripped myself, and again rose to the surface, divested of all covering but my shirt; my leg hung down useless in the water; besides which, I had several cuts in my feet, several bruises on my ribs, and a large cut over my left eye, through which the chilling water struck to the heart. A though always an expert swimmer, I found I could barely keep above water. Fearless before of wind and water, I was now puzzled; for swimming even with health and whole bones, was unavailing in sea like this. Hitherto I had seen no land, but was swept and carried along by every sea which came over me, and I resolved to get hold of the first thing I fell in with, & gain breath of which I was very short. I soon seized hold of a bale of goods, but it being wet and heavy was of no use, for every sea rolled over me, & I quitted it nearly exhausted. I saw numberless pieces of the wreck, and was in constant danger of being struck by some, which I often avoided by diving and scrambling from, but which the prodigious seas would wholly overwhelm.

I stood this hard buffeting for about a dozen seas, and nature was fast retreating from the conflict; being desperately pushed for breath, as I could draw but little in the short interval of the seas. I had now been nearly half an hour in the water, and half the time underneath it; disabled as I was, I had withstood beyond my hopes this war of elements, but my breath now deserted me like the flash of a taper, and another sea struck out every particle of the remainder. Suffocated and strangled, I grasped twice with a convulsive leap. It was in vain, another sea swept over me, I saw death inevitable, terrible, and face to face. I had but time with a last breath to say involuntarily, the ejaculation, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," and quickly sunk many feet under water, without the least or most distant hope of again seeing the light, but with the fullest assurance I had taken a last view of transient objects, and till the last trump summoned all hands I should rise no more. My senses with my breath also forsook me, and for a moment my mind was filled with the most singular and delightful sensations, seemingly in an enraptured dream. This, however, was momentary as it was wonderful. Whether from the violence of the wave which then broke over me, or by the pain of the wounds and chill of the water, I am not certain by what means, I was soon brought to my senses, and rose again to the surface, seemingly refreshed; on looking around, I distinctly discovered a few fathoms from me, as if supernaturally thrown in my way, something large and light, for it kept

constantly above the waves; I exerted my remaining power & reached it. It was a large crate containing nothing but straw, clinging to this I soon recovered breath, as its buoyancy kept it high above the sea.

After holding to this some length of time, and constantly turning it round as my weight pulled it over towards me, I still kept courage, & dropped myself frequently down without quitting my hold, with the earnest hope of touching the bottom, but without success. I was much fatigued and could scarcely keep hold of the crate, for every sea would sweep us at least ten feet before it. I had almost despaired of the land being near, and was fearful that at least it might prove only a shoal. Still, however, holding on with hopeless indifference, I soon after observed a sudden lull, & that the waves were not a third so violent. I shook myself, and roused my drowsy spirits, looked around & found myself inside the breakers! I quickly again dropped myself down and with my foot touched the ground. I found it was of sand, and in a few moments I got up to about breast high in the water, and then by shoving myself forward by legs & arms, soon crawled out upon the beach.

Thus, after being more than half an hour in the water, and making my way for nearly three quarters of a mile through a tremendous sea at midnight, I at last found myself upon a desert beach, certain that no one could have reached ten fathoms from the ship, which in an hour and a half after she first struck was scattered in pieces on the strand. Some idea may be had of the violence of the elements, when not a single mast came on shore entire, and out of twenty-three persons, among whom were four stout African slaves, whose constant practice of swimming renders them almost amphibious, but one body came on shore that night. The remainder buried by the first waves, came not on shore till nine days afterwards.

Amazed and nearly stunned, I attempted to stand, but my leg refused its office, and I fell backward to the ground, hurt by the fall, and the blood streaming from several wounds. Half frantic with pain, and the severe wintry weather, a groan for the first time escaped me. Here as I lay extended on the earth, I repeatedly wished for death, for his stroke would have been welcome. Then I could have met his face, not as the grim visage of the dread King of terrors, but as the hope-inspiring countenance of meek-eyed mercy. I considered the fate of my companions far more happy than my own, for their sufferings though severe, were but momentary, while mine were perhaps to be protracted till struggling nature, slowly giving way, sunk under misery at its utmost stretch. Sufferings so acute I determined not to endure. The dread alternative, therefore, was soon chosen, and I resolved to put an end to my existence by the first means chance should throw in my power.

I had a firm opinion that the shore was a barren and desolate country without inhabitants for a great distance, with no chance of being discovered, impenetrable from swamps and shrubbery; and not being able to move without torture, I should certainly not survive till the morning. Groping my way at the edge of the water, I felt something large, and found to my surprise a pipe of wine; here was the lowest part of the cargo on shore before me. I was upon the point of knocking my head against it, and dashing out my brains, but doubted my strength to give a blow sufficient. A second thought most happily struck me; the case was big enough to contain me, and by knocking in the head, if possible, would if placed in a favourable position, be a complete shelter from the horrible cold. Hope once more brightened, and gave me triple vigour. Groping farther round, I found several sticks of wood, dung to the pipes, and taking up one, I got round to the upper head, and by repeated strokes, made a breach; the wine spirted out through the crevices; I drank some, and then continued my strokes with renewed force. The head at last was entirely stove in, the wine washed over me, the touch of which to my frozen carcass was electric, and most agreeable. I then placed two pieces of the head staves into the bilge of bottom of the cask, to make it square and level, and crowded in. It seemed and felt like an oven. I had all this time been partly in the water, at the edge of the surf, which now came into the cask at every wave, which kept me constantly throwing

it out with my left hand, upon my back as the level position. This labour I continued during the night till towards morning when the wind somewhat abated, the tide ebbed, and the suffering, no longer kept me in the water, was, however, too fatigued to move. At day break, I looked out of the cask, and beheld a large sandy beach, covered to a great distance on each side of me with the wreck, but not a vestige of the ship, except the pump, or any thing, except the galleys, &c. I was sore on first reaching the shore, that no mortal alone could have way through such seas, at night to land. My own situation I considered as falling but the short of a miracle. A thought so sudden, an escape so unexpected, I had witnessed, & now before me, my situation could scarcely contain some time actually doubted I was awake, for it seemed like a dream.

I then again composed myself, the cask, and willing to give fumes of the wine, and great care, I remained during the night, nearly insensible, and in a stupor. Towards sunrise, I was fearful of being carried away by the return of the water, during the approaching night, with the pipe, this dangerous situation, I constantly crawled out of the cask, holding up my useless leg from the ground, and hitching myself backward with my right hand. I gained in this manner the foot of the sand hill further up the beach. I crawled up this as high as my strength would permit, to be from the reach of the sea, & the night was fast approaching, it was vain to look farther for a shelter. Finding no refuge above the ground, I resolved to seek one below it, dug a large hole in the sand on top of the hill, got into it, and my disabled leg, and most, I was fast falling the same over me, down. The sand and a shirt were my only covering. The weather was extremely cold, the sand was and during the night it rained and blew tremendously; the wet sand, drifting around in smothering showers covered every part of me, it repeatedly filling my hair, ears, eyes and mouth, kept me constantly spitting it out to prevent suffocation while the weather compelled me to sit up and thrash myself every minute to prevent freezing. I resolved to shift my position, get under the lee, or into some low upon the sheltering side, and accordingly crawled to some distance. I knew not in what direction, only to extreme darkness, and made my way, then thrashing myself for some time, again laid down, to resist the cold. Such was the manner in which I passed this night, alone on a desert beach, in a foreign land, with the wild beasts of the forest, & their consoling music added, and chanting sirenade!

In the morning I looked around and observed I had got to the side of the sand hill, in sight of low and marshy country, but a sign of habitation or cattle, I shifted to get out of the sand. I took a survey of myself; I looked like nothing human, nothing in the likeness of any thing upon earth, in the waters beneath; covered with sores which were filled with worms as were also my hair, eyebrows, beard and whiskers; my leg was almost to the size of a woodcock, my left wrist out of joint, and my arms and legs useless; my feet were like tripe, from remaining so long in the water, and both painful and numerous wounds; my body was coloured, as if a rainbow was washed round me, and withal nearly dead. I was indeed, a figure shocking to excite pity, too dim to excite fear, and too monstrous any sensation but astonishment.

(To be concluded.)

Notice is hereby given That the subscriber, both of the county, in Maryland, letters of administration on the personal estate of Benjamin Leitch, of Ben. Co. of that county, deceased. All persons having claims against the said estate, are hereby warned to exhibit the same, with the vouchers therefor, to the subscriber, at or before the 15th day of August next, they may otherwise be excluded from the benefit of said estate. Given under my hand and seal the 15th day of February, 1818. JNO. IREDALE, Rob. 25c.

# MARYLAND GAZETTE

VOL. LXXVII.

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY JONAS GREEN,

at the Office of the *Frederick*, in the City of Annapolis.

Three Dollars per Annum.

From the Boston Athenaeum.

NARRATIVE of the shipwreck, and particulars of the loss of the English ship *Jane*, in the River la Plata, (South-America.) By George Feacker, of Boston, (Mass.)

(Concluded.) descended the slope of the hill, slowly moved along for some distance among the bushes that grew up to a low plain among the grass and shrubbery, which I thought might be water. In half an hour, I reached it at intervals, reaching it, next, as my only object, to rig a kind of signal, a small spar, of which I had many, and a piece of cloth for a flag; that, if I approached near enough to observe it. My first endeavouring to get to the top of the hill, which I saw at a distance, to rig a kind of signal, was a mad idea. I had been impracticable at the bottom, I afterwards stooped in. I knew I should be unable to search there for my visions, as the morning was slow and I before observed myself backward with frequently myself from the nothing was more than that the first sea discover me would be, as an impediment to my preparations for my apprehensions, less, the sequel shows. But a cet of relief still upon which were more than on the occasion that the great not forsaken, ever present, ever waste as in the clothing therefore cloth with fortitude that was my ultimate was now more than at any previous began to amuse me few songs. I had a keg of wine, and a keg of water, and a keg of powder, with great feeling known, and classed a blest life a sailor's, &c. I was now that since I had tasted per of life began to socket. How scenes of accumulation, when but gaining the shore, tell; the retrospect wishes me. But exist no more. utterly failed. approaching night of my cares; covering over the cask as my with fortitude that. But the deliverance. At the afternoon of the 20th, I aroused from a sound of a horn and careless whether a friend of his approach of absolutely indifferent to sleep or moment, a horn ped before the Spanish family. He instantly exhibited, he backward. His condition, he was to learn by his hab outlived th