

THE DOOMED SHIP.

BY ROBERT L. WADD.

THERE was much of bustle and activity, and hurrying to and fro, in the streets of the usually quiet little town of Salem, on a fine October morning, 1740. The sun had not yet risen, but the eastern horizon, in token of its approach, was stained with a faint crimson hue, and a few of the most brilliant gems that deck the firmament were yet burning brightly in the broad expanse above. The morning had long been looked forward to with anxiety. The colonies were yet in their infancy, and every unusual circumstance had a tendency to create excitement; but to us of later times it may seem strange, and perchance cause many a one to smile, when he reads, that all this busy stirring was occasioned by the expected departure of a packet-ship.

This vessel, which was called the 'Countess of Pembroke,' after the sister of the sweet bard of Arcadia, was one of two owned by a company of London merchants, who regularly twice a year sent out one to the colonies, freighted with such matters as were in demand at the time, receiving in payment principally the produce of the country; always by shrewd calculation and management succeeding in getting the latter at very low rates, while their own goods seldom failed of bringing high prices. No particular ports were selected on this side of the Atlantic for the regular destination of the packets of this company, for the proprietors preferred sending them to whatever place promised the best market at the time; and therefore it was a matter of uncertainty altogether with the colonists where to look for the next arrival. The 'Countess of Pembroke' and her sister packet, however, had now put into Salem harbor six consecutive times; and as this was a period when the most perfect harmony existed between those of the mother country and her bantlings, the New-Englanders took as much pride in the shipping and naval matters of Britain as did their brethren under the more immediate protection of the crown. The consequence was, in this case, that the good people of Salem and its vicinity had a strong liking for these two vessels, and had begun to consider them as belonging particularly to their own community; and when reports several times spread through the town, that Newport, New-York, and Boston, and several other places, had held communications with the company, with a view to having the voyages of the sister crafts terminate at each of their respective ports, and that the owners had suffered serious thoughts to creep into their minds to the same effect, they were not slow or scrupulous in venting their indignation at what they termed acts of meanness in the other towns, and resolved, with jealous eyes, to guard against what they deemed an

invasion of their rights and privileges. These feelings, however, were forgotten in the all-absorbing interest created by the rapid approach of the time set for the departure of the ship. For two or three weeks it had been bruited throughout the adjacent country, that on such a morning the 'Countess of Pembroke' would sail for England, wind and weather permitting; and now when that day had dawned, beautiful and bright, and with every prospect of a happy commencement of the long voyage, (such voyages were *long* then,) the streets of the town were filled with active people, and all the wharves and house-tops, and in fact nearly every point from which a good view of the harbor could be obtained, was covered with interested spectators.

With the early morning tide the ship had hauled out some little distance into the stream; and now, as the sun was just lifting itself above the verge of the horizon, and pouring down its floods of golden light, her yards were covered with seamen, busily employed in loosing her sails and preparing for departure. At her peak the old ensign of England was fluttering in the clear morning breeze, while from her main top-gallant mast a long dandy red-and-white-streamer was dancing gaily upon the air. Alongside, attached by the painter to the rope-ladder which hung down from the bulwarks, a small boat was rising and falling upon the slight swell of the waters; and at the foot of the steps of the principal wharf floated another, containing four oars-men, who were waiting with all possible patience to take the captain off, who as yet had not made his appearance.

An hour, two hours, rolled away; the ship still swung at single anchor; the captain's gig still remained at the wharf; but those in it had now become quite uneasy at his protracted absence, and manifested many signs of impatience, in addition to giving vent to their feelings in their own peculiar way:

'The cap'un's on a lee-shore and going to pieces,' said one; 'I heard as how there was a false beacon up to decoy him on.' This joke, which had reference to the 'ladye-love' of their commander, was immediately understood by all, and received with a shout of boisterous laughter, which had the effect to restore good humor for the time being.

Upon the land the crowd had greatly augmented. As day advanced, the numbers had increased upon the scene; and now in every direction the eye encountered countless human faces, some turned toward the water and the gallant craft that sat upon it like a duck, and others partly back upon the town, to catch the first glimpse of the tardy officer. It was a matter of wonder and much speculation with the multitude, as to the cause of his non-appearance, an hour after sunrise having been the time appointed for the departure of the ship; and two full hours having passed beyond the time, many began to fall into the belief, in spite of themselves, that it boded no good for the anticipated voyage.

'I don't like this,' muttered one to his neighbor, with an ominous shake of his head; 'I fear some ill may befall our pretty vessel,

which Heaven avert! before she casts anchor in the Thames. They should have been prompt, and started at the time set — at the very minute. No good comes of tardiness. Why, friend Gibson, I heard of a vessel once, that her owners intended to despatch from Cork to Leghorn, and gave notice that she would sail on just such a morning, at just such an hour. Well, the morning came, and something was the matter; either the ship was not ready, or her cargo not all aboard, or her passengers out of the way; at any rate, she could n't go, and so they postponed the start for three days; and when the time came, she did n't sail for six hours after.'

'Well, and what then?' rejoined his hearer, with a careless and unconcerned expression on his countenance, seeing that the croaker had come to a stop in his story, and was looking at him out of one corner of his eye, with a sort of mysteriousness that he could not account for; 'well, and what then?'

'What then!' repeated the other, in a loud tone, as though astonished at this response; and then sinking his voice to a husky whisper, added, 'Why, she was never heard of after she left port. What do you think of *that*? — eh?'

'Why, that she was either wrecked, or burned, or captured by pirates, or something of the kind,' coolly replied the other.

'Umph!' rejoined the first speaker, not very well satisfied with his success in the benevolent endeavor to excite the apprehensions of his neighbor; 'there was a ring round the moon last night; and hark'ee, they say there was something seen off the harbor, too, about midnight.'

'Do they though?' answered the other, with apparent interest; 'and pray what was it?'

'I do n't know exactly,' was the reply; 'I have n't heard the particulars; but my son Tom heard from the Boston wagoner, who got it from the uncle of one of the fishermen who came up, that a light, a bright light, was seen for more than an hour, away off upon the water.'

'Poh! nonsense, Jenkins! you're a fool!' impatiently exclaimed the other; 'you've got a silly, superstitious, old woman's notion into your head, that something or other is going to happen to the ship, because the captain's detained ashore, and she did n't start at just the moment she was expected to. As to the captain, I can tell you where he is, and what the matter is with him. I heard the messenger, who was sent down to the boat a little while ago, tell one of the men, that he was at the counting-room of the agent, fixing his papers. He sent word that he would be down by the waterside at ten o'clock. And as to yonder brave craft, I have n't the least doubt that she will have a quick and safe run home, and that we shall see her again in this harbor a great many times, unless indeed some of those mean scamps down in Boston or off at New-York, manage to get her bringing-up place altered. She is a good, strong, staunch vessel; sails fast and don't labor much; has got an excellent crew, a first-rate captain, who will make her walk through the water like a shark, and a jewel of a mate. I tell you what it is,

friend Jenkins, away with all your gloomy fears and your ugly prognostications! I wish with all my heart a safe and speedy run to the 'Countess of Pembroke.'

'That is all very well, neighbor Gibson,' replied the other, not at all disposed to look upon the brighter side of the picture; 'I wish as heartily as you, that the Countess may get home safe, and if wishes would carry her there safe, she'd have no lack. But that does not alter matters in the least. Good wishes, all the good wishes in the world, won't carry her home; and I'll tell you what it is, signs and things are against her. Look you there; see how it is clouding up.'

The man who had been addressed as Gibson turned his gaze upward as the other ceased speaking, and saw that it was indeed as he said. A few straggling clouds had hung upon the distant edge of the horizon nearly all the morning; and now, taking a start from their stationary position, were moving along up the surface of the sky, with huge dark banks of the same following close in their wake. A few had already reached the bright luminary of day, and spread a thin mantle of mist over its burning face; but these were not sufficient to dim materially its glory, and the rays of light and heat pierced through like sharp and glittering daggers. Yet it was not so clearly evident that those huge dark masses, which were now slowly and gradually rolling to the zenith, would become as transparent when stretching before the dazzling orb as their pioneers; and many were the eyes that were fixed anxiously upon the sharp circle of the horizon, watching as they fondly hoped for the last ominous platoon of mist.

At that moment a whisper run through the crowd, and the whole of that vast forest of human forms was swayed to and fro like the tall trees of the woods, when the strong wind bears down upon their wide-spread ranks. A shout then rung upon the air; all stood upon tip-toe, swinging themselves backward and forward to catch the first glimpse of the commander of the ship, who was said to be coming down to the wharf, in company with the agent.

He was soon in the midst of the crowd; and as it fell back on either side as he advanced, to give him a clear passage through, many hearty huzzas rung out upon the bracing air; many in kindly tones bid him 'God speed' upon his voyage; all which awakened the most grateful feelings of his heart, and in some instances, where his eyes fell upon a familiar countenance, elicited a return of hearty and sincere thanks; while all, from the very chambers of their hearts, wished him a speedy and safe return. Arrived at the steps, at the foot of which his boat still lay in waiting, he turned and looked back upon the little town he was on the point of leaving, perhaps forever, and upon the dense and almost countless multitude, which had assembled for a last farewell; then raising his hat from his head, he waved it once and replaced it, which action was immediately followed by a startling cheer of hundreds of voices. The agent of the London Company, who had accompanied him thus far, now prepared to take leave of him, and giving him his

hand, whispered, while shaking it for the last time, a few parting instructions. This done, they separated; the agent falling back a little and gaining a position where he could watch conveniently the departure of the vessel, and the captain hastily descending the few steps which led down to the water. As he set one foot upon the gunwale, he halted a moment and raised his eyes toward the sky; and as he watched the gathering clouds, and noted the position of the wind, there was a slight knitting of the brows, a compression of the lips closely together, and a sparkling of his dark eyes to be discerned, which gave evidence that the appearance of matters were not exactly as he could have desired. This, however, was but momentary; for his face immediately resumed its usual calm expression; and stepping down into the boat which rocked beneath his heavy tread, he seated himself at the stern, giving command by a nod to the men to shove off; and then the little craft made its first leap forward, and the glassy surface of the water was broken by the regular dip of oars.

A few long and steady pulls sufficed to carry the boat alongside the ship, when she was suffered to float along under the counter, until opposite the rope-ladder hanging down the side. Rising then from his seat, he made two strides to the bows, and without awaiting till the boat was as close in as the men intended to have had it, he sprang off and caught the steadying rope in his hand. Unfortunately his feet missed both of the rounds upon which he had expected to alight; and such a heavy weight as his body falling suddenly upon so small a rope as that which he held in his hand, proved too much for it; one strand cracked and untwisted; another and another; then, to the horror of all within sight—and every eye upon the shore and aboard the ship and boat, was upon him—it parted, and he fell heavily into the chilly element, breaking the surface with a fearful sound, and the waters closed over him as he sunk.

Such a cry now rang forth from the lips of every man, woman, and child of that vast collection, that one would have thought it sufficient to have roused the very monsters of the deep. Ashore, everything was in confusion, and nearly all dismayed. There was shouting from one to another, to do this and to do that; there was running to and fro, from one point to another; some were calling out to put off in boats, and others to throw off planks and casks, and logs of wood, and every thing that would float; but all to no purpose; all were giving orders and none obeying them. Some two or three indeed there were, who with more presence of mind had abstained from joining in the uproar, and had upon the first alarm jumped into a little skiff that lay alongside the wharf, and were now half way to the ship. Those aboard and in the boat, however, being used to accidents and dangers incidental to a seaman's life, participated not in the least in the fears of their friends ashore. They knew that their captain was an excellent swimmer, and that he would rise in a moment or two, when they had no doubts or apprehensions of his rescue from a watery grave. Those, there-

fore in the boat poised their oars, ready to strike off at the second toward the spot, wherever it might be, in which he should appear. The others aboard busied themselves in throwing out spars, casks, and barrels, hen-coops, and every thing that they could lay their hands upon, that would sustain his weight in the water, to assist him in getting aboard.

In less time than I have occupied in its description, all this occurred; yet short as it was, short as was the interval between his sinking and reëpppearance, it was a period of the most fearfully anxious interest. Eyes were strained to catch the first glimpse of his head; and there were conflicting feelings at work within each bosom; feelings of doubt, and hope, and fear, and worse than all, a suspense that was torture. At length, to their great joy, the waters were parted a few yards from the spot where he sunk, and once more they caught sight of the object of their interest.

Was that not a shout of heart-felt gladness that then startled the echoes for miles around? Rising confidently upon the treacherous waves, as though this was his own peculiar element, he brushed the water from his face, and then struck out boldly for the ship. At the same instant the men in the boat, with a hearty cheer, simultaneously dipped their oars, and one strong pull sent the little skiff nearly a third of the distance that intervened. On board, too, more spars were thrown over, and no means were neglected to ensure his safety. Just then one of the sailors of the ship, who had thrown over every thing that he could get hold of that would float, and who had gone down into the cabin in search of something else, appeared at the bulwarks with a large heavy chair in his arms. Disregarding the expostulations of his mates, and the cries of those in the boat that enough had been thrown out, and without taking the slightest notice of its probable course, he hurled it with all his strength into the air.

‘God save him now!’ ejaculated many, while a half-suppressed cry of terror escaped the lips of others, as they watched its rise, and saw that the direction it was taking was such that it must inevitably strike the struggling man, or the water very near him. Shouts of warning, and cries of, ‘push away, quick!’ and the various sounds that would naturally occur at such a moment, filled the air, and drew his attention to the impending danger. He saw and comprehended all in a second, and with desperate effort struggled to move, though it were but a yard from the spot in which he then was. Alas! his efforts were in vain. Steadily up into the air it held its course, until it was directly over the swimmer, and the force that hurled it was expended, when it seemed to hang for a second or two, as though to give warning, and then fell with fearful rapidity. Down, down it came! None could help him now! With its full force it struck him on the head, and with a groan that went to the hearts of all who heard it, he again disappeared.

It is impossible to find words adequately to describe the consternation that prevailed at this melancholy accident. In contrast with the previous manner of expression, it displayed itself not in noise

and confusion, but all seemed suddenly petrified with horror, gazing motionless and in silence at the point where the unfortunate man was last seen. For ten long and dreary minutes, this fearful stillness was unbroken by any sounds, save those of the waves leaping gently over one another, and the rushing of the breeze. Weary were the watchings for the rise of the commander of the gallant ship. When they again saw his form, a few hours after, (rude grappling-irons, constructed on the spur of the moment, having been successfully used,) the seal of death was upon his brow.

Of the whole of that vast company, so interested were they all, scarcely one had left the scene; and now, when the dripping corpse of the unfortunate captain was carried on shore, and borne up to the house of the agent of the ship, as they opened to the right and left to give passage to those who carried him, many eyes were filled, and cheeks were wet with genuine tears. One and another now began to whisper among themselves, and wonder what would be done with the vessel, now that she had lost her captain; whether she would be detained long, or until another commander could be obtained, or the first mate promoted to the office; what the agent's intentions were, and whether or not it was probable that he would order her round to Boston, and try to make a more successful start from that place. These, together with speculations upon the weather, and the probability of a storm, for now the aspect overhead was threatening, formed the staple of conversation of the assembled townfolk for another hour, when it was whispered through the crowd, and afterward spoken loudly, that the agent had altered the day of sailing to that day week, when she would sail for England, under the charge of the first mate. Nobody, however, appeared to possess authentic information relative to this matter; each one who was questioned confessed that he was told so by a friend, who had got it from another, who in his turn had received it from somebody else.

But these rumors were speedily verified by a party who had constituted themselves a committee to ascertain the truth or falsehood of the reports, and had marched up in a body to the counting-room of the agent. These now returned and announced that the counting-room was locked up, the agent being probably up at his house superintending the necessary arrangements for the reception of the body of the captain; but upon the door was affixed a paper, on which was written in his own hand-writing the sum and substance of what they had heard. There being now no occasion for remaining together, the crowd began to disperse, at first slowly; but at the expiration of fifteen or twenty minutes a few stragglers, who had stayed behind to take a long, last look, for the time being, of the ship, were alone left of all the hundreds that had so lately filled the place.

That night one of the most terrific storms that ever visited New-England broke over Salem, and the surrounding country and towns, for miles and miles around. Although it was late in the year, it was accompanied by the most fearfully vivid lightning and appalling thunder. Rain and hail poured down in torrents; and the winds, as

though the effort to break their chains had but increased their anger, united in sustaining such a conflict, that the effects of it were visible for weeks after. The waters of the harbor were lashed into perfect fury. Several small fishing craft were sunk at their moorings, or parted their cables and drove ashore. Boats lying at the wharves, or in the dock, were dashed in pieces against each other, or carried up high and dry into the streets of the town. A small brig which was anchored above the 'Countess of Pembroke,' loaded and ready to sail for New-York, was struck by lightning and consumed by fire in the sight of many whose fears would not suffer them to attempt to sleep, and who spent a portion of the long and dreary hours of the night in straining their eyes to catch glimpses of the ship, when the lightning for a few seconds at a time rendered it visible, without an effort being made to stay the progress of the flames. The good ship herself suffered severely. Though her anchors held her firmly, yet her spars and rigging were injured. Her foretopmast was snapped early in the storm, as though it had been a pipe-stem, and several of her upper spars were cracked. A fishing schooner, which had arrived only an hour before dark, and had not hauled up to the wharf, parted her cable, and in driving toward the shore came in contact with the ship, running her bowsprit up into her fore-rigging, and staving in the bulwarks of the 'Countess of Pembroke,' with the force of the concussion. The town also suffered much. Several houses were blown down; chimneys without number were shattered, to the imminent danger of house-tops and whatever might be in the streets; roofs were lifted up and carried away; and the spire of one of the churches was struck by lightning. But fortunately the fire was extinguished by the rain before it had acquired much headway. Nor did the country escape the general devastation. Old trees, which had braved the storms of a century or more, were torn up by their roots, as though they had been but the saplings of a summer's growth; some were struck by lightning, and others whose prongs and roots had struck too deeply into the earth to be severed from that relationship, had their massy limbs and branches broken off, and otherwise suffered severely. It was in fact a storm of fearful power. None remembered ever to have witnessed such a night; and many and many months, ay, and years too, elapsed ere its equal visited the place.

Not to draw out this narrative to a tedious length, the time intervening between the morning after the storm and that appointed for a second attempt to carry the ship out may be passed over, with merely the remark that the unfortunate captain was during that period followed to his grave by a large concourse of friends; for his many virtues had won esteem, and all who knew him felt that in his untimely end a tie of tender relationship had been severed. The morning came; not like the other, bright and beautiful, with a clear, fresh breeze careering over the water, filling the sails, toying with the numberless flags and streamers upon the little craft in the harbor, and the different flag-staffs in the town, and gladdening the hearts of the voyagers and their well-wishers with the prospect of

getting well off the coast; but dark, gloomy, and ominous. The whole of the broad blue canopy of heaven was shut in by one wide-spreading cloud, immovable and impenetrable, indicating the close proximity of snow. The ship had been put in complete order; but her new commander, though naturally elated at his unexpected promotion, yet felt a heavy responsibility weighing down his spirits, and a presentiment that some evil was about to befall the idolized 'Countess of Pembroke' and her crew.

Upon the shore the crowd assembled to witness her departure was if possible more dense than before; but not now, as then, rose shoutings and cheerings and well-wishings. All, alas! felt that silence was the most appropriate for the occasion; and every individual preserved it.

At the appointed hour the signal of sailing was given. The anchor was weighed, the sails filled with the chill north wind, and slowly the gallant ship stood down the harbor. Soon cries from many mouths announced that a new object of interest had been discovered; a large crow was seen hovering over the ship, now rising and now sinking, and flapping its black funeral wings over it. In those days of superstition an incident like this was, in the absence of every other sign, sufficient of itself to create consternation and dismay. In this instance, when so many omens of evil had occurred, it may well be supposed that the appearance of the dark messenger did not tend to allay the fears and misgivings of the town's-people. The motions of the bird were watched by all with intense interest. After hanging over the ship, or sweeping round for ten or fifteen minutes, now flapping so far away as to create hopes of its disappearance altogether, and then returning again to crush those hopes in the very bud, it finally settled down slowly, and alighted upon the main truck, where it remained until the ship herself was lost to the sight of all, save those who had trusted themselves to her strength, and that 'Eye that never sleeps.'

Slowly the multitude dispersed, with many shakings of the head and doubtful looks, with many whisperings among themselves, and many misgivings of the heart, that they had taken their last look of the gallant bark.

A MONTH had rolled away since the departure of the ship, when one night the inhabitants of Salem were aroused from their beds, to behold a strange sight in the heavens. It was that of a large ship, apparently under full sail, with every yard braced up, and every square inch of canvass spread to its full extent; but from every point, from deck to trucks and from stem to stern, wide lurid flames of fire were streaming up, with fearful and appalling brilliancy. For two more nights the same scene was witnessed, with this difference on the third, that the ship was seen to go down very suddenly below the horizon in the height of the conflagration, instead of fading away gradually, as on the two previous nights. It 'was an honest ghost' of THE DOOMED SHIP. The 'Countess of Pembroke' was never heard of more.

T H E D E I T Y .

BY MISS MARY GARDINER, OF SHELTER-ISLAND, SUFFOLK COUNTY.

BENEATH the quenchless light
 Of the broad day-god's life-imparting ray,
 Wrapt in the gloomy clouds of mental night
 That round him thickly lay,
 The ancient Persian bowed, and at that shrine
 Worshipped the glorious effluence as divine.

THOU! whose creative voice
 Called from the depths of chaos form and might,
 Bade at a word unnumbered worlds rejoice
 In that effulgent light;
 Sun of the Universe! to THEE I bow,
 Almighty God! list to my humble offering now!

Before the stars of night
 In circling systems moved through yonder sky,
 THOU! from Eternity's unmeasured height,
 Wrapt in immensity,
 Beheld the earth chaotic solitude,
 And ages roll away in their infinitude.

Can human thought explore
 The boundaries of THY kingdom, or define
 Mid all the orbs that sweep the blue vault o'er
 Those that remotest shine?
 E'en Science pauses in her proud career,
 Furls her tired wing and sinks o'erwhelmed to Earth's low sphere.

Before her glancing eye
 The clouds of ignorance have rolled away;
 She calls the lightning from its throne on high,
 And marks the planet's way;
 Bids the frail bark o'er Ocean's bosom glide,
 And from her mystic cells rolls back the heaving tide.

And in her search sublime,
 Measures the sunbeam in its trackless flight;
 Earth yields her secrets, and both space and time
 Are subject to her might:
 E'en from the unseen air the mysteries flee,
 But THOU! Eternal ONE! no searching can find THEE!

THY voice of majesty
 Throughout creation's wide expanse is heard;
 In the low South-wind's fitful melody,
 The music of the bird;
 When by the tempest-breath the clouds are riven,
 And the loud thunder peals through the deep vault of Heaven.

And in the measured chime
 Of low waves dashing on the sunny shore,
 The streamlet's flow in the bright southern clime,
 The cataract's loud roar,
 And the hollow moan of the restless sea,
 When the storm-spirit sweeps on pinion swift and free.