

----- 1846 -----  
----- Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> March -----  
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----- Monday 16<sup>th</sup> March -----  
----- Island of Nantucket -----  
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*Five eventful days have elapsed since last I put pen to paper - days which I trust may ever be deeply impressed on my memory for during them I have experienced the truth that the Lord is a very present help in every time of trouble & that they who put their trust in Him & Him alone shall never be ashamed or confounded.*

*On Thursday we were favoured with a most beautiful day & a light though favourable breeze given a boa....ie & being then on the Southern edge of the Gulf Stream we were congratulating ourselves on our having at length some prospect of seeing a favourable termination to our long and severe passage.*

*Our course was NNW or from that to N & by W  $\frac{1}{2}$  W & being progressing at a rate of from 5 to 6 knots we expected to be North of the stream on -*

*Friday - Today the wind held about SSE, light breezes & pleasant weather though cloudy - had an observation about 2pm when we were well through the Stream & at 8pm our Capt was working up his reckoning & that time he informed me that Cape Cod was distant 159 miles. Ship going on an average about six knots & her course about N & by W.*

*Saturday - I know not what it was but this morning I could not sleep so rose about 5am & went on deck where I found it raining heavy & Capt. Niven gradually reducing canvas in expectation I suppose of a N<sup>W</sup>er gale, the glass having gone down & heavy rain being the usual symptoms of such a visitor. I shortly after went below again as there was no pleasure to be found outside & remained down till after breakfast. About  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 10am we had soundings in 20 fathoms which I saw exactly agreed with those laid down in our supposed position to the E or NE of the Nantucket banks, after which the ship's head was pointed to the Eastward & we were reduced to very low canvas. The soundings decreased rapidly and as near as I can recollect about  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 11 in about 5 fathoms the ship struck heavily & continued for near a quarter of an hour by that time she wore off & we tried to clear the breakers that we saw in almost every direction - however we could not in consequence of the thick fog see any passage & being in 14 fathoms Capt. N ordered the anchor to be let go & though we gave it a good scope of cable it did not bring us up at all*

*but almost immediately parted & we had to fill our sails once more from this time till about 11 or 12 at night, we continued to thread our way which we were enabled to do for a greater length of time than we should otherwise have done in consequence of the moon having cleared away the fog about 8pm. About 11 o'clock one of the men reported land in sight but it was so like a fog bank that we were uncertain whether it would really prove land or not however in hopes that it might we sent up rockets, burned blue lights, showed our channel turpentine light & did all we could in hopes that assistance might be sent us. We were still standing off & on as the wind & breakers would allow but about ½ past 11 or 12 no alternative was left us so we let go our topsail sheets & let her go into the breakers as easily as might be & we struck with a tremendous shock. The sea running very high and threatening to sweep everything before it. Lifting us up and again dashing us down with dreadful force, the masts quivering like reeds and our oaken frame tearing & groaning like a strong man in his agony.*

*For a moment each one held his breath & the hand clutched convulsively to some support but life is dear to the dying man and the orders given to get out the boats gives each of us a gleam of hope; the tackles are already out to the yard arm, soon the long-boat's cover is off. The top-gallant bulwarks disappear before axe and saw of the carpenter - everyone works with a will it is for life - the steward & another hand prepare bags of biscuit & other provisions; the hurried order - the half suppressed exclamation, the calm composure of some, the anxious look of others & the fearful despair of the coward few all tell that it is no light matter, which engages their attentions but that life or death hang in the scale.*

*The tackles are made fast & nerved by despair full strength is given to the purchase - see she rises, the chocks are knocked away. There is some confusion, the sea threatens to dash her to pieces, but no, she is over the bulwarks & soon she floats - provisions are got into her along with a chart, some nautical instruments & a few other things that in the hurry of the moment can be thought upon. Having got out the long-boat we prepare to get out the pinnace also. This boat had during the voyage been lashed bottom up across the front of the poop, we had the railing cut away and righted her after which the carpenter & joiner set to work to clear away the poop rail & netting on the port side which having been accomplished two of the men John Luckham & Thos Johnston<sup>1</sup> volunteered to be launched off the poop in her which was accordingly done & after shipping a considerable quantity of water in the descent she rose to the surface buoyant as a duck & like her predecessor the long-boat was veered astern.*

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<sup>1</sup> AWM gives varying spellings - from the newspaper cuttings this appears to be Thompson Johnson

We continued to strike heavily all the while the boats were being got out until about 2am when she struck heavily & leant over - during this time the pinnace had been hauled up alongside to receive some things on the starboard side near the main chains when a sea struck her and filled her, washing the two men in her Luckham & Johnstone overboard when the second mate Mr Magee sprung down into the main chains and thence into the boat & saved them both - it was found the pinnace was too light in such a heavy sea and a boy John Lambert was sent in her to assist in bailing her out and James Hepburn one of the seamen also got into her at this time thus making five hands in her in all when she was veered astern of the long-boat.

We had now drifted over into 12 & 14 fathoms water but our wheel chains had been broken the braces snapped & everything was in such disorder that it was vain to attempt to steer any course even had we known where to steer to, however the wind had somewhat taken off & the sea gone down while we had only about four feet water in the pumps & they were accordingly once more manned, the ship being allowed to drift with the current.

Shortly before daylight say about ½ past 4am the hands in the boats sung out a light right ahead to which all eyes were instantly directed it seemed to be a fixed red light & from its height we took it to be a light house though when we looked at the charts no light was noted in any position near where we supposed we were. This idea of a light-house was however soon dissipated as the light rose & we were soon convinced that it was the morning star - at daylight we saw land about five miles off bearing due north which we took to be Nantucket & the shoal on which we had last struck to be the Old Man.

The wind was about this time comparatively light from SSE & the current setting strong ENE when being in 10 fathoms & seeing a few people collecting on the beach Capt. Niven deemed it prudent to anchor, our remaining bower was accordingly let go and having veered out a long scope of cable the ship brought up in seven fathoms about two miles from the shore.

This was about ½ past six or seven AM. The pumps were still manned, the topsails furled & the Ensign hoisted Union down at the mizzen as a signal of distress to the people on shore and having now brought this narrative so far I will turn back for a little to what more personally concerns myself from the time the ship first struck to the time we came to anchor.

The water was comparatively smooth and we had what we during the voyage had seldom had, the stern windows open - my head was leaning out of one of them when we first struck - she struck again and I made my way immediately into the main Cabin when the first salutation I met with was from the steward who exclaimed "What shall we do Mr Morris we're struck. Oh God, we're struck" almost similar were the

exclamations of the mate who having been confined to his Cabin for some weeks made his way to the Saloon at this time. I answered them that we must look to a greater than man - I tried to point them to a merciful Redeemer but alas I found it was no time to begin the work of Repentance.

Having gone on deck & finding that I could be of little or no use there I returned below, went into my own cabin shut the door and having taken up my Bible I read a few verses & then engaged in a short but fervent prayer to Him who holds the winds & the waters in the hollow of His hand - there was no lukewarmness in that prayer, ah! that I was always as fervent at a throne of Grace.

Having thus commended myself to God's keeping I then opened my desk, took therefrom my papers, silver medal & a few other trifles; my papers together with my letter book & this Log Book I tied up in a bundle all ready to take with me lest we should be suddenly called to desert the ship in the boats - the other little things together with my Bible I took upon my person and in a short time I was all ready. From this time till we struck again about midnight I was alternately on deck & below - after the boats had been got out during a lull when we were momentarily disengaged I embraced the opportunity of speaking to Capt. Niven and as the breaking up of the wreck might be no time I gave him a message to my friends, lest he might be saved and I lost - after that, the steward came to me & asked me if I would not make up a bag of my clothes to go in the boats - I went below & stuffed one of my clothes bags with my best suit of black & any of my other clothes that I could lay my hands on.

Hunger of course was little felt in the midst of such exciting scenes but strong coffee was now & again handed round by the steward to those who would take it - this formed our only food for about thirty-six hours. I have now I think briefly run over the more personal events I referred to and shall here resume the course of my narrative after the Ship was brought to an Anchor.

About seven AM the pumps were sounded & six feet water found in them - the crew were fairly worn out & no appearance of assistance coming from the shore - Capt. Niven reflecting on the nature of our cargo (salt etc) determined as the only means to save life and property to beach the ship - he accordingly hailed the boats to haul up under the lee quarter which the long-boat did and a number of the crew attempted to get in but were ordered forward the steward being the only one who got into her - I then threw in this Log Book & some other papers - the boat was veered a little astern and the pinnace hung on to her though at a considerable distance.

The foresail, fore topsail & fore topmast staysail were now set, the chain cable slipped and we steered right for the Beach where a good number of people were assembled. It was a time of fearful suspense - we all mustered aft on the quarter deck, fearing the masts would be overboard at the first shock. I threw off my topcoat and secured a Curtis life buoy & each made what arrangements he thought best - every moment we expected to strike, the lead was kept going and at last gave six fathoms. We were just about to enter the breakers when crash she struck & rolled over till I thought she would have capsized - I darted to the weather side

but had scarcely got there when she took a lurch the other way & in my anxiety to recover my former stand at the mizzen rigging a line took my foot & down I rolled on deck as did several others, a sea broke on board of us but I caught hold of the poop netting & then regained the rigging - when down I heard an exclamation of horror that the boats had swamped but when I got up it was all over, we saw that some had been saved who or how many we could not tell & our own danger engrossed all our thoughts. I then jammed myself along with Capt. Niven and another amidst behind the wheel standard and there the sea swept over us every minute or two - breaking on the side of our devoted bark & flying in clouds of spray over our main-mast head, forming amidst a brilliant sunshine most beautiful rainbows - they cheered me in my dangerous situation when I remembered them as the symbol of our ever-present God.

All this time we were drifting further up on the beach - nearer the hundreds of anxious spectators now assembled and further from the full strength of the surf as it rolled over us - I left my stance aft & got into the mizzen chains on the starboard side with Curtis Life Buoy on, to see if any chance offered for a safe passage - I feared the falling of the masts to entangle me - once I thought I saw my way when the main brace came in my way & prevented me and to this apparently trivial circumstance under providence I attribute my safety - had I trusted myself to the waters I would probably never have reached the shore - as it was I held on & before another opportunity offered I heard Capt. Niven who with others had gone forward, hail the folk on shore whether we should stick to the wreck or try to get on shore on parts of the wreck - the answer we could scarcely distinguish but took it to be to remain - I accordingly got on board again.

All had now left the poop save myself & were congregated on the forecandle head. I prepared to follow their example - a work of some difficulty from the loose casks rolling about in the waste - I managed it however. An oar had by this time been thrown overboard with the deep sea logline attached, it floated near enough for the shore folk to throw a grapple over it and so secure a communication with them - a coil of running rigging cordage was hauled ashore & finally a coir hawser. A running bowline having been got on this it was determined to send the youngest boy Richard McHale on shore first - he got in, was hauled through the surf & a cheer burst from shore & ship as he touched the land.

The question was now put who should be sent next & as I was a passenger it was proposed that I should go - I offered to let any one who might be anxious to take my place but no one would do so & it being no time or place to stand on ceremony I got into the bowline so soon as it was ready & a few minutes after I was safe on 'terra firma' again.

Many were the offers of coats & hats I got from the kind Yankees & I at last accepted the loan of a coat from a gentleman whom I have since learned is a Mr Matthew Crosby Jr. I stood gazing at the wreck for some time & saw Capt. Niven next hauled on shore much exhausted & I think I will never forget the look of anguish he gave as soon as he got on shore when he gazed at the ship & exclaimed "Oh my poor men - save my poor men". Seeing no use to remain longer I at last accepted an offer to be driven up to town (many were made) - we called at a farmhouse where I saw Capt. Niven & the steward & learned for the first time from

*the latter the fearful loss of life that had taken place in the boats - whole six out of the eight having perished - the second mate, four hands & a boy - poor Johnson, he was a noble young fellow - thus early to perish - having got to town I was taken to a Capt Bunkers to lodge & they kindly gave me a change of raiment & a nice warm drink of which I stood much in need. After an hour or two's rest I went again to the wreck and found all the crew had been taken off - so returned again to town. Turned in early & on the whole enjoyed a good night's rest though not undisturbed by "nightmare". Today four of the six bodies have been washed on shore but more of this tomorrow. I need scarcely say that my very first act on reaching my lodgings from the wreck was to bend the knee to Him who had so wonderfully and graciously preserved me during these trying scenes - Oh! may he grant me grace to love him more & devote my future life to his service and glory.*

----- **Wednesday 18 March 1846** -----

*No other bodies having been washed on shore we had yesterday a most affecting service at the funeral but the following extract tells it so much better than I can that I will simply paste it in without any note of mine.*

SHIP WRECK AND LOSS OF LIFE - Ship Earl of Eglinton, Capt John Niven of Greenock, Scotland, from Liverpool for Boston, struck, supposed on South Shoal; on Saturday last at 11AM, let go her anchors and drifted in shore until Sunday morning at 2 o'clock, when she struck again on the Old Man. After thumping heavily there for some time, causing her to leak badly, the Captain thought best to beach her, which he did at about 8 o'clock Sunday morning, on the south side of the island, she then having about 6 feet water in her hold, and all hands supposing she would soon sink. Eight of the crew then took to two boats, and but two of them succeeded in reaching the shore. An oar was thrown overboard with a small line attached to it, which drifted to the shore, by which means a hawser was run from the ship to the shore. The hawser was then drawn taut, a pair of slings attached to a ring, and the balance of the crew were hauled ashore upon it in this way in safety. There were 26 souls on board the ship, six of whom have been lost, and twenty saved, some of them barely so.

She left Liverpool on the 29<sup>th</sup> Dec., and has been out 11 weeks, during the most of which time she has experienced very bad weather. Her cargo consists of 300 tons Salt, 100 tons Coal, 50 cases Copper, and about 50 cases Dry Goods. The weather on Saturday was thick, with strong wind from the South, and heavy rain. The ship is about 500 tons burden.

LATER - TUESDAY 17th

She now lies nearly broadside on, heeling off shore. The storm to which she has been exposed since she struck has very much shattered her; she will be a total wreck. Her mizenmast is gone and the water flows freely through her stern. The cabin furniture, light things from her deck, a few bales of dry goods and a small quantity of

coal have come ashore; but the surf has been so heavy as to render it impossible to work, or even to go, on board her. She was a fine ship, only eighteen months old, owned we believe in Greenock. She was to have carried a cargo of ice to Canton before returning to Great Britain. She was consigned to Messrs J Winslow & Son, in Boston, and was probably, with her cargo, insured in Great Britain.

The mournful loss of life which accompanied the wreck of this ship has cast a gloom over the whole community. Although there is considerable destruction of property by shipwreck upon the shores of our island, the seamen almost always escape. Sixteen years ago this month, in a violent snow storm, a vessel came ashore, the crew of which nearly all perished - but since that time nothing of the kind has occurred until now. We heard one of the survivors say that on Friday last, the crew were all in excellent spirits. The weather was fine, and after having been tossed about by adverse winds for seventy-five days, they calculated that one or two more would carry them into Boston. Sadly delusive were their expectations. We think it worth recording, as a sort of evidence of the unselfishness of the genuine sailor, that as one after another of those who were saved touched the beach, they almost instantly inquired with great earnestness, how many and who had been rescued alive from the boats. Their first thought was concerning their shipmates.

The names of those drowned were Cupples Magee, second mate, from Lisburn, North of Ireland; Thompson Johnson, seaman, from Glenary do. do; John Luckham, seaman, from Kent, South of England; John Lambert, apprentice to the Captain, from Liverpool, do.; James Hepburn, seaman,

from Orkney Is., Scotland; Henry Darwkins, seaman, from Dorset, South of England.

The bodies of the first four were found on Monday morning and buried yesterday afternoon from the Baptist church. The house was crowded to overflowing, and many went away, having found it impossible to get in. After a most appropriate prayer from Rev. Mr. Rich, an eloquent and impressive sermon was delivered by the Rev. Mr. Barnaby, from Phillipians, 1. 21 - "To die is gain". After having unfolded with great clearness the course of life by which death is rendered a gain, the Rev. gentleman addressed himself particularly to the survivors of the ship's crew, who sat in front of him, and earnestly besought them to live pure and holy lives, so that when they should be, like their drowned shipmates, called from the earth, their spirits might take their places among the hosts of the redeemed in the presence of the Lord. Death might be nigh to them, it might be far off; - it might rudely hurry them out of life amid the uproar of the tempest, or it might visit them gently in their homes; - but let it assume whatever form it might, it could have for them no terror, if they were true followers of the Saviour - for they would then know that "to die is gain". The services were closed with prayer by Rev. Mr. Wise.

The bodies were interred in the Unitarian yard and were followed to their last resting place by an exceedingly numerous procession. Ours is a community of seamen, and all were anxious, though the deceased were strangers, to treat their remains they would those of brothers, not knowing how soon some of our own people might need, at the hands of strangers, the same kindly offices.

During the afternoon the flags of the vessels in the harbour were set at half-mast.

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*From the 19<sup>th</sup> to 29 March I have been partly in Boston & partly in Nantucket but in no mood to summarize - perhaps my general remarks at the end may embrace part of this time.*