



JK588

5
3958
Wonderful Escape from Shipwreck.

AN ACCOUNT OF THE LOSS
OF

His Majesty's Ship **CENTAUR.**



Sold by S. HAZARD,

(PRINTER to the CHEAP REPOSITORY for RELIGIOUS
and MORAL TRACTS) at BATH:

By J. MARSHALL,

At the CHEAP REPOSITORIES, No. 17, Queen-street, Cheap-
side, and No. 4, Aldermay Church-Yard; and R. WHITE,
Piccadilly, LONDON; and by all Bookfellers, Stationers,
Newsmen, and Hawkers, in Town and Country.

Great Allowance to Shopkeepers and Hawkers.

PRICE ONE HALFPENNY,

or 2s. 3d. per 100, 1s. 3d. for 50, and 9d. for 25.

[Entered at Stationers Hall.]

WONDERFUL ESCAPE

FROM

SHIPWRECK.

THE Centaur left Jamaica in rather a leaky condition, and in the evening of the 16th of September 1782, when a fatal gale came on, the ship was prepared for the worst weather usually met with in those latitudes. The main sail was reefed and set; the top-gallant-masts struck, and the mizen-yard lowered down, though at that time it did not blow very strong. Towards midnight it blew a gale of wind, and the ship made so much water, that the Captain was obliged to turn all hands up to spell the pump. About two in the morning, a gust of wind, exceeding in violence every thing of the kind he had ever seen, or had any conception of, laid the ship upon her beam ends. The water forsook the hold, and appeared between decks, so as to fill the men's hammocks to leeward: the ship lay motionless, and to all appearance irrecoverably overfet. The water increasing fast, forced through the cells of the ports. After many other disasters, dreadful to relate, the Officers, who had left their beds (when the ship overfet) naked in the morning, had not an article of cloaths to put on, nor could their friends supply them. At one, the Centaur had a view of the Ville de Paris, but in the evening lost sight of her, and lived in full expectation of seeing her again in the morning. The night was passed in constant
labou

labour at the pumps, and a variety of other difficulties they had to encounter. All the rum, 26 puncheons; all the provisions, of which there were two months store in casks, were stove, having floated with violence from side to side until there was not a whole cask remaining; even the staves that were found, upon clearing the hold, were most of them broke to pieces. In the forehold they had a prospect of perishing: should the ship swim, they had no water but what remained in the ground-tier, and over this all the wet provisions, and butts filled with salt water, were floating, and with so much motion, that no man could with safety go into the hold. Every thing that activity could do, was done. On opening the fish-room, they were so fortunate as to discover that two puncheons of rum had escaped. This, in very small quantities, served by the blessing of God just to keep them alive; without this relief, the Captain thinks they would have dropped.

The next morning they just saw the other ship at a great distance, and found it was in equal distress. They were driven to great labour and shifts to get a cask of fresh water, in which they at length succeeded, which was a great relief, and refreshed them very much.

Very great and dreadful difficulties now succeeded; but a Divine Providence, never forgetful of those who look to him, sent them now a fine calm day. And the night following, dreadful as was the situation of the ship, the poor men got some rest, by relieving each other. But on the following morning, they had the mortification to find the weather again threatened, and by noon
blew

blew a storm; every thing being so worn out and exhausted in the ship, that they had no hope of being able to stand it much longer, though every art and labour was used both by the Captain and men of every description.

Night came on again, with every dreary prospect as before; and was passed in continued labour. The Captain gave orders for the two remaining cables they had left to be thrown over board. Every time the captain visited the hatchway, he observed the water increase, and the danger of course increased. The carpenter now assured him the ship could not swim long, and proposed making rafts to float the ship's company, as now it was not in his power to encourage them any longer. Some appeared perfectly resigned, for still they could not but know that an Almighty and merciful God, who had protected them hitherto, could carry them still thro' greater dangers if they looked to him. Some went to their hammocks, and desired their mess-mates to lash them in, others were lashing themselves to gratings and small rafts.

They were now in a situation to catch at a straw, the captain therefore called his ship's company together, and told them his intention, recommending them to remain regular and obedient. Now was the time for them to look to Him who has promised by his servant David "to save the people that are in adversity"—and further that "he is the defender of all them that trust in him;" for "who is God but the LORD, or who hath any strength except our God?" Preparations were now made for the purpose of quitting the
the

the ship. The booms were cleared, the boats, of which they had three, were got over the side, a bag of bread was ordered to be put in each, and any liquors that could be got at, for the purpose of supplying the rafts. The Captain intended himself to go into the five-oared yawl. Two men, captains of the tops of the fore-castle, were placed in each of them, to prevent any man from forcing the boats, or getting into them 'till all was settled. While these preparations were making, the ship was gradually sinking. The men had for some time quitted their employment of bailing, and the ship was left to her fate.

So far a dependance upon Providence had conducted them through these dreadful escapes. In the afternoon the weather again threatened, and in squalls blew strong, the sea ran high, and one of the boats sunk. As the evening approached, the ship appeared just suspended on the water, there was no certainty that she would swim from one minute to another, and the love of life, which never shewed itself later in the approach to death, began now to level all distinctions. It was impossible for any man to deceive himself with a hope of being saved upon a raft in such a sea; besides that the ship in sinking, it was probable, would carry every thing down with her to a certain distance.

It was near five o'clock, when the Captain, coming from the cabin, observed numbers of people looking with great anxiety over the side; where he saw that several men had forced the pinnace, and that more were attempting to get in. The Captain had immediate thoughts of securing this
boat,

boat, before she might be sunk by numbers. There appeared not more than a moment for consideration; to remain and perish with the ship's company, to whom he could not be any longer of use, or seize the opportunity which seemed the only way of escaping, and leave the people whom he had been so well satisfied with on every occasion, that he felt he could give his life to preserve them. This indeed, was a painful struggle, and which must be felt to be known.—But the love of life prevailed; he called to the master, the only officer upon deck, desiring he would follow him, and immediately descended into the boat. With great difficulty they got it clear from the ship, twice the number that the boat could carry pushing to get in, and many jumping into the water. A young gentleman, fifteen years of age, leaped from the chains after the boat was got off, and was taken in. The sea ran high, and the only probability of living, was keeping the boat before the wind.

They might now well “cry unto the Lord in their trouble, for (thus far) he had saved them out of their distresses.” The Captain now became sensible the situation of those in the boat was very little better than those who remained in the ship; it appeared now so dreadful, as only to be a lengthening out a miserable existence.

They were all-together twelve in number, in a leaky boat, nearly in the middle of the Western Ocean, without compass, without quadrant, without sail, without great coat or cloak—but not without GOD.—Man's extremity is GOD's opportunity, and when human help fails, then is Divine help most seen and felt.

They

They were very thinly cloathed in other respects: there was now a high gale of wind, with a great sea running! It was five o'clock in the evening; and in half an hour they lost sight of the ship. Before it was dark, a blanket was discovered in the boat. This was immediately bent to one of the stretchers, and under it as a sail they scudded all night, in expectation of being swallowed by every wave, it being with great difficulty they could sometimes clear the boat of the water, before the return of the next great sea; all of them half drowned and sitting, except those who bailed at the bottom of the boat; and without having really perished, perhaps no people ever endured more.—Well might the Captain and his men cry out, “ They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters, these see the works of the LORD, and his wonders in the deep.”

In the morning the weather grew moderate, the wind having shifted to the southward, as they observed by the sun. Having survived the night, they began to think of their future preservation. Upon examining what they had to subsist on, they found a bag of bread, a small ham, a single piece of pork, two quart bottles of water, and a few cordials. The wind for several days providentially never blew so strong, but they could keep the side of the boat to the sea; but they were always miserably wet and cold.

They kept a sort of reckoning; but the sun and stars being sometimes hid for twenty-four hours, they had no very good opinion of their navigation. Various were their trials, and various their disappointments, for several days.

Their

Their hopes and prayers were now for a northerly wind; their condition began to be truly miserable both from hunger and cold, for on the fifth day they had discovered their bread was nearly all spoiled by salt water, and it was necessary to go to an allowance; one biscuit divided into twelve morsels for breakfast, and the same for dinner; the neck of a bottle broke off, with the cork in, served for a glass, and this filled with water was the allowance for twenty-four hours for each man; this was done without any favour or distinction; but they must have perished ere this, had they not caught six quarts of rain water, and this they could not have been blessed with, had they not found in the boat a pair of sheets, which by accident had been put there: these were spread when it rained, and when thoroughly wet, wrung into the kidd with which they bailed the boat. With this short allowance, which scarcely sustained life in that comfortless condition, they began to grow very feeble, and their cloaths being continually wet, their bodies were in many places chafed into sores: but the rain coming at such an important moment, when their existence hung upon it, well might they cry out with the Psalmist, "Thou hast been our succour, leave us not, neither forsake us, O God of our salvation."

A calm now took place, and soon after a breeze of wind sprang up from the north, and blew to a gale, so that they ran before the sea at the rate of five or six miles an hour under their blanket, till they judged they were to the southward of Fayall. This was the fifteenth day that they had been in the boat; and they had only one day's bread, and

one

one bottle of water remaining of a second merciful supply of rain. Their sufferings were now as great as human strength could bear; but trust in God was the only support they had to keep up their spirits, of far greater consequence now than bodily labour: for on this day Thomas Matthews, the stoutest man in the boat, perished from hunger and cold. How plainly does this prove the "race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong;" for their hardiest man fell first; on the day before he died, he complained of want of strength in his throat to swallow his morsel; in the same night he went off without a groan.

As it now appeared next to a certainty they should probably perish in the same manner in a day or two, they began to take comfort, that dying of hunger was not so dreadful as they had first imagined: what a mercy was this, that their sufferings should gradually have lessened their horrors: thus is the Almighty tender in his chastisements. Some complained of the same symptoms in their throats, some had drunk their own urine, and all but the captain had drunk salt water.

As yet despair and gloom had been successfully prevented, and as the evenings closed in, they endeavoured to amuse themselves. Here was a glorious opportunity to sing a hymn or psalm, and to pray with uncommon fervor!

But now an evening arrived, when the captain found them unable to do any thing. As the night came on it fell a calm, and about midnight a breeze of wind sprang up; but a star was to be seen, they were afraid of running out of their way, and waited impatiently for the rising sun to be
their

their compass. As soon as the dawn appeared, they found the wind exactly as they had wished; and immediately spread their sail, running before the sea at a great rate. Their last breakfast had been served with the bread and water remaining, when John Gregory, quarter-master, declared with much confidence that he saw the land; but they had seen fog-banks so often, which had the appearance of land, that they did not trust themselves to believe it.

Our faith in trying moments is too often shaken; but if we persevere, GOD is always at hand. However the captain might have his fears, the poor sailors were all joy and rapture, and one of them cried out, if he ever saw land in his life he beheld it now. They immediately shaped their course to it, the wind freshened, and in two hours time the land was fairly to be seen by every man in the boat, but at a great distance; so that they did not reach it till ten at night, and acknowledged the goodness of GOD in it.

In every part of the horizon, except where the land was discovered, there was so thick a haze, they could not see any thing for several leagues. As they approached the land, their belief had strengthened that it was Fayall. They traversed about a great way; the shore being too rocky to land. This circumstance agitated and affected them very much, as they were so weak. Their impatience was very great to get a little fresh water, at the first part of the land they could approach, as the thirst of some of them was so great, it was almost insupportable; at length they discovered a fishing canoe, which conducted them into
the

the road of Fayall about midnight; but alas! where the regulation of the port did not permit them to land, till examined by the health officers; however, they did not think much of sleeping this night in the boat, as the pilot brought them refreshments of bread, wine, and water. In the morning they were visited by Mr. Graham, the English Consul, whose humane attention made very ample amends for the formality of the Portuguese. They declared they could never sufficiently express the sense they had of his kindness and humanity, it being the whole of his employment for several days, to contrive the best means of restoring them to health and strength; perhaps more pitiable objects have seldom been seen. Some of the stoutest men belonging to the Centaur were obliged to be supported through the streets of Fayall; even the captain, whose health was rather better than the rest, could not walk without being supported; and so weak were they, that for several days, even with the most comfortable provision, and good beds, they remained very poorly.

In this miraculous and wonderful manner was Providence pleased to preserve Captain Inglefield and his few worthy sailors, that they might at the end of all their extraordinary perils be enabled to say, "O that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and declare his wonderful works to the children of men: for he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness:" — "And who so is wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the LORD."

FINIS.

B (dr.)
INGLEFIELD, J.N.
WONDERFUL...
[1975]



37131126 288 240

