

[From the New York World.]

BURNING OF THE BERKSHIRE ON THE HUDSON RIVER—FEARFUL LOSS OF LIFE ON BOARD.

Another terrible disaster has occurred on the Hudson River, more harrowing in its details than almost any thing that has taken place in the record of steamboat accidents for years. The disaster of the Isaac Newton cannot form any parallel to it, for in that only the loss of a fine and beautiful steamer was involved, while the burning of the Berkshire proved fatal to many human lives. So fearful a thing almost passes comprehension, that on the beautiful Hudson, one of the favorite boats, relied on by the traveling community, should be destroyed in such a manner as to involve the lives of many passengers, even while the boat almost touched the bank of the stream.

The Berkshire was a steamboat belonging to the Hudson Steamboat Company, quite new, only having been launched a few weeks ago. She took fire on Wednesday evening, while coming down the river, and burned to the water's edge. It is estimated that forty lives were lost in this sad catastrophe.

BEFORE THE ALARM.

It appears, from the statement made by passengers and others, that the steamer started as usual, from Hudson on Wednesday evening, on her way to the city. One hundred and thirty, or more, passengers were on board, many of whom were ladies, and there were also quite a number of children. The departure from Hudson took place about six o'clock, or a little later. The passengers, many of them, had retired to their berths, while others remained in the saloon chatting cheerily together on politics, business, and domestic affairs, passing the time away as well as might be, in happy unconsciousness of the terrible scene that was soon to burst upon them. On the outer deck, too, a few gentlemen were still sitting, quietly smoking their cigars, watching the sprinkling waves, and admiring the bold hills that, covered with green forests, rose on either side, shadowed, as night gathered round, in solemn darkness. None imagined that any of those cliffs were to be lighted up before midnight with the fires that should light their own funeral pyres.

THE CRY OF FIRE—FEARFUL SCENE ON BOARD.

Thus the time passed quietly on. The evening was beautiful, a mild breeze was blowing from the South, and all seemed serene. Seven, eight, nine o'clock passed, when suddenly the dread cry of "Fire, Fire," was echoed through the boat in such fearful tones that none could mistake its genuine meaning. Nearly every one seemed to hear it at the first alarm, but others, all unconscious, slept quietly on in their state-rooms.

There was a rush in all directions. People threw open the doors of their rooms, and ladies, gentlemen and children rushed out—a few seemingly calm and self-possessed, and others with almost frantic fright depicted in their faces. "Where?" "Where?" "What is the matter?" "Is the boat on fire?" "Have the boilers burst?" were among the hurried questions that were asked of almost every person of almost every other; but for a moment, that to them seemed an age, none knew definitely what had occurred. But as the cry continued in a fearful chorus, swelled by other voices, it became evident, and as they rushed on deck the spreading flames, fanned and driven by the increasing wind, met every one's sight. The boat was indeed in flames, and those flames were spreading wider and mounting higher every second. They caught upon some bales of hay, and as the hoops and cards burned away the bales burst open and into hot blazing masses that quickly covered almost the whole deck.

It was a scene that no even a painter, who has not experienced the terrible reality of such a moment, could accurately depict. Up into the beautiful summer night the fires mounted and hissed, lighting up the waters and shores on either side with their angry glare. How it started no one hardly knew. It is stated that it was first discovered by a Captain Sherman, a passenger on board, who thought it must have commenced in the lamp room, or have started among the hay from a spark dropped from a gentleman's cigar. The flames spread aft, forced by the wind, and those who had not been fortunate enough to happen to be near the forward part of the boat, soon seemed to be cut off from escape. A number were only half dressed, and others wore only the night dresses in which they had laid down to sleep.

Not only did the flames spread along the main deck, but the smoke rolled in huge volumes above and below, stupefying many of the frightened passengers. They gathered together in groups in all the tenable places, some on the extreme prow, and others at the stern, while still others, forced by the advancing flames, endeavored to let themselves down over the sides and hung by one or both hands from the railings. Some were still heard groping about below, endeavoring to get out of the cabin. Some jumped into the water and tried to swim ashore. One man was hanging over the side with a young lady clinging to him. The volumes of smoke soon obscured them, and it is believed that the young lady was drowned.

APPROACHING THE SHORE.

The boat was headed to the shore, for it was impossible to put out the fire, and the only hope that remained was to save as many as possible of the passengers. The shrieks and cries of the frightened passengers, as well

as those actually suffering from the increasing heat, were most painful. The boat struck on shore in some four feet of water. She ran head on and thus afforded a way of escape for numbers who were on the bows, but at her stern, where more than a score of passengers were gathered, there was still ten or twelve feet of water, owing to the rapid slope in the bottom of the river and the heavy load of freight on the steamboat. Those on the forward part jumped off into the water and succeeded in wading to the shore. Many of those at the stern jumped off too, but some are believed to have floated down the river and finally sunk beneath the surface.

Some were saved by boats that came off from a schooner near by, and from the steamer James Baldwin. The greater number that perished were supposed to have been burned alive in their state rooms, only waking in time to find that there was no escape, or rushing into the fire only to fall suffocated and helpless in its hot embrace. There was a marked difference in the deportment of the ladies. All were pale and anxious, but some appeared comparatively calm and self-possessed; while others were completely in hysterics, sobbing and shrieking in agonizing tones. The children were fearfully panic-stricken, and gathered about their parents, where they could find them, beseeching them to get ashore in some way, and crying loudly.

THE SURVIVORS ON SHORE.

As the survivors gathered on shore they formed a most piteous picture, like that of a shipwrecked party on some unknown land. Half-dressed as many of them were, they exchanged congratulations for each other's safety; and, expressing fears for others, watched the burning vessel and the waves around, for any that might be still attempting to escape. In the confusion, and from the fact that most of the passengers were strangers to each other, it was impossible to tell who or how many had been lost; but it was believed that about forty, and many ladies in that number, had perished in the most painful and heart-rending manner. The survivors collected sticks and fragments of boards and made fires near the shore, around which they gathered—a dismal congregation—drying their clothes and warming their chilled bodies.

Messengers were dispatched to the neighboring farm-houses, whose occupants immediately betook themselves to the scene, and did all they could for the sufferers. A number of ladies and some gentlemen were kindly taken to the neighboring houses and cared for as well as possible. Wagons were procured for the passengers, and transportation was thus provided to Hyde Park, where they were placed on board a boat and conveyed to Rhinebeck, from whence many took passage for Hudson or New York. Some arrived late in this city on Wednesday night, wearing only their shirts and drawers, and others came on yesterday by boat and railroad, after providing themselves with the necessary clothing.

THE LOST STEAMBOAT.

The Berkshire is almost a complete wreck. The captain of the Daniel Drew reports her as being burned completely away to the water. She was heavily loaded with freight, which was valued at one hundred and fifty thousand dollars, and which was mostly consumed. The steamer itself was new, and had made but few trips. She was furnished in splendid style, her cabin furniture alone being worth several thousand dollars. She belonged to the Hudson Steamboat Company, was commanded by Captain F. M. Powers, and worth about one hundred and thirty thousand dollars. The Oregon, belonging to the same company, was lost by collision last season, while leaving her dock at this city.

OUR WOUNDED BRAVES.

"M. C. A.," the lady correspondent of the Springfield Republican, who is now devoting her time to the wounded in Washington, writes:

Passing out Fourteenth street, the trees by the roadside drop beneath the heavy garniture of May—many-leaved as the foliage of a Northern June. Sunshine and shadow gleam and flicker over the deep emerald of the softly swelling hills, which environ the suburbs. The orchards are raining down fragrance in myriads of snowy blossoms. Cottage and villa, and yonder on that cowering knoll, the pale stone tower of the Soldiers' Home, peering above the embowering trees, and here on the green slope of Mount Pleasant, the cattle grazing—how peaceful all look!

Yet through all this beauty, far along the road, creeps the long line of ambulances, packed full of wounded men. Here protrudes the stumps of an arm; here a bare and bandaged foot; here against these bars, where the May air may kiss it, rests a pale, patient face; and the crimson blot and the white patch upon the cheek tell where the bullet smote. The yard of Columbia College Hospital is filled with ambulances emptying their precious freight.

Passing further on, we come to the long, low buildings of Carver Hospital, into which is being poured another installment of sufferers. Many are carried immediately into beds; many more are able to help themselves and each other. They crowd into the wards and on the steps outside, washing their faces, combing their hair, and shaking from their torn garments the grime of the march and of the battle field. One is pouring cooling water upon the swollen arm of a comrade, and another sitting upon the ground, is trying to dress the wound of a companion.

"The doctors have so much to do," he

says. Haggard, worn, suffering, and yet these boys are not only cheerful, but positively gay. "I'd rather be wounded than not," says one, "as long as the boys are pushing on; but it's mighty hard to be hit, and know that we are running back." "The army has had a hard week. I am glad that you can rest," I say to one pale and suffering man lying on his bed. "Yes, but the Army of the Potomac is used to hard times. I would rather be with the boys than here. I'll be with my regiment again in two weeks, driving the Johnnies."

Passing from one of the wards, I met a strange face above a well-known jacket, the zouave jacket of the Ellsworth Avengers, the 44th of New York. The man is wounded in the face, has lost some of his fingers, and one hand is swollen to twice its natural size. His face lights with recognition as he says: "You are —'s sister?" "Yes." "— is all right. I left him in the line of battle. After I was wounded the second time, I crawled back to try and find my knapsack. All I wanted from it was the picture of my wife and child. I couldn't bear to lose it, but I couldn't find it. Then I looked for —. There he was in the front line with his rifle ready. I love —. All the boys love him; he will give us his last morsel and do without himself. He's a lucky boy always; fighting in the front and never had a scratch." Sacred praise! treasured already, as if spoken of one passed within the Eternal gate.

"You boys seem devoted to each other." "Yes," is the answer, "we are like brothers. — was killed last Friday, and —. It was hard to leave them behind," and tears roll down the furrowed face. "I did not think that any of us would ever reach Washington," he continues. "The guerrillas fired on us, and wounded some of us over again. Then they took three hundred of us. Poor fellows! how hungry and weak they were, I had only three crackers to eat for three days. When I tried to swim the river I was so weak I thought I'd drown; but I did not, and I'm all right now."

Still they come; through all the day and night I hear the mournful roll of ambulances under my window. They are now bringing in the extreme cases of the wounded. Through all the heavy thunder storm of last night they were passing. As I look down at midnight, a flash of lightning revealed a ghastly sight, as an ambulance vanished in the darkness.

Dear old "Campbell!" its lawns have grown green, its flowers are blossoming, its gardens ripening for summer harvest. It looks smiling without and with in, with every ward and couch full of sufferers, it presents a more cheerful aspect than any other hospital. The long airy wards, the gay paper hangings, the white curtains, the plants, the moss rimmed aquariums, the stands covered with books, all tend to give to each ward the looks of a pleasant sick room.

The reading room and the long hall where the invalids used to assemble last winter to witness theatrical entertainments, are now filled with the severely wounded. I never stand in the door ward, looking down on the long row of white beds and pale faces which line it on either side, without a sense of shrinking. Can I give to each one, though ever so little, something of that which he needs? Shall I give the meet word to the one who wants it; the fit silence to the one cannot speak? Shall I lay by any pillow the thing longed for most?—are my doubting questions.

Yet it seems not difficult to tell the agonized face past all speech, and the eager asking eyes which say: "Speak to me." The eyes of the New England boys say more; they say, "Ask me about myself; ask me where I was wounded; where I came from; ask me about my folks." "Were you ever in Huntington?" "That's my home," said a Massachusetts boy to-day from his bed. "I have been through Huntington many times," was the answer. The fact was sufficient to make us friends immediately.

"How are you to-day?" asked another Massachusetts boy, belonging to the 29th regiment. "Gay," was the reply. This was displaying a talent for being "jolly" under unfavorable circumstances, which threw the genius of Mark Tapley into the shade. This man was terribly wounded, utterly helpless. Yet the face which showed above the coverlet, was as radiant as if never convulsed with a pang. I could only say, has the world ever seen anything so morally grand as the manhood which this war has developed in American men?

BEBEL PLANS TO DESTROY OUR MONITORS IN JAMES RIVER.

A letter from our fleet before Fort Darling, James river, gives the following interesting statement of a rebel sailor, a runaway from the rebel iron-clad ram Richmond, now generally known as Merrimac No 2:—

The man states that he is a native of Manchester, England; that he was a resident of the South for some years, and that since the breaking out of the war he has been employed on various vessels in the rebel navy. Himself and some other shipmates went to Richmond on liberty last week; but having become thoroughly sickened of the so-called Southern Confederacy, he resolved upon escaping from its limits if possible. Starting from Richmond on Monday last, he has been the whole week cautiously working his way down to this point, through the swamps and thickets on the north bank of the river. The accounts given by this deserter relative to the rebel iron-clads and river defences are highly interesting, and, if reliance can be placed in

them, they contain some important information.

The substance of his statements is to the effect that Fort Darling, which now mounts fifty guns of heavy caliber, is considered by the rebels impregnable to the attacks of gunboats; that three iron-clad rams—the Richmond, the Virginia and the Fredericksburg—are now lying in the river below the fort, making preparations for an attack upon our fleet, in which they are to be aided by several fireships and a number of floating infernal machines. The programme laid down for this raid is as follows:—

The fireships, consisting of nine schooners, laden with pitch and turpentine, are to be towed down within a short distance of our fleet, and then sent, enveloped in flames, drifting down upon the current towards us. Closely following these burning vessels are to be a host of floating torpedoes, so constructed as to explode upon coming in contact with any of our gunboats, and then, during the excitement and confusion which they hope these missiles and the fireships will create, the rebel iron-clads are to make their grand attack upon the Union fleet.

The rams are said to be plated with eight inches thickness of iron over three feet of solid oak timber, and projecting from the bow of each boat is a heavy beak several feet in length, to which is attached a powerful submarine battery. This battery is intended to explode at the moment of concussion with either of our monitors, by which means they hope to so cripple us as to make more easy work for what follows.

I have thus given you in brief the sum and substance of the rebel plans as related by this runaway. We only hope this programme will be adhered to, but fear the news is too good to be true. Nothing would give greater satisfaction throughout our Monitor fleet than being afforded an opportunity to test their prowess against the Richmond rams, of whose power the rebel press has so long been boastful.

Rely upon it, if the enemy has the temerity to come forth from his lair and offer battle, every Monitor in this fleet will strive nobly to emulate the brave deeds of the gallant Weehawken in her celebrated battle with the Atlanta. It is to be feared, however, that the very recollection of that conflict will suffice to keep the rebel fleet behind the protection of the river obstructions and under cover of the guns of its batteries.

[From the Richmond Dispatch, June 9.]

GRANT'S TACTICS.

We think it may be safely asserted that, since war first became known to mankind, no General ever sacrificed his men so recklessly, so remorselessly, and to so little purpose as Gen. Grant. He started from his camp on the north side of the Rappahannock, little more than a month ago, with 130,000 men. He has been reinforced, according to the statements of his friends, by more than 80,000 since that time, viz. Stanton says he sent him 25,000 veterans after the battle of the 12th of May; Butler has sent him 20,000, and prisoners say he has received 40,000 from Ohio and other sources, making a total of 85,000. Yet his army, at this day, in the opinion of those best qualified to judge, does not greatly exceed 100,000 men, and is certainly greatly inferior in numbers to what it was when he started on his crusade. He lost 75,000 in Spottsylvania, and his losses in Hanover can not have fallen very far short of 25,000.

Thus he has sacrificed 100,000 men, the flower not only of his own troops, but of the whole United States army. In return, he has effected nothing, absolutely nothing. Lee's entire loss since the campaign opened does not amount to 17,000, all told, killed, wounded and missing. He has never once been forced from a position, and has only fallen back when his enemy, despairing of victory, has attempted to slide off to his left, and get in rear, without further fighting. Grant in the meantime has been brought up before McClellan's old lines beyond the Chickahominy, and is not able to take a single step in advance. He has thrown away 100,000 men to obtain what he could have had for nothing.

The Confederacy has great cause to congratulate itself upon the choice Lincoln has made of a Lieutenant-General. They desire to see this war brought to an end, and Grant is the very man to do it. Had the distance between Richmond and Spottsylvania been 100 miles greater, we are disposed to think he would have reached the end of his journey with not more than 100 men.

If Grant is whipped on land, however, he is always victorious on paper. We have sometimes wondered why he takes the trouble to fight at all. He can demolish armies with a stroke of his pen, and capture cities by a flash of the telegraph. Why not confine his exertions entirely to the composition of telegraphic dispatches. He succeeds far better at that than he does at fighting. Lee whipped him in at least ten battles, in Spottsylvania and Hanover; yet he continually flogs Lee on the wires. He "inflicts very little loss" on Lee with his army, but he slaughters his men by the thousand with telegraphs. Where, then, is the use of fighting with any other weapon than the wires? If he can gain so many victories with that instrument why can not he take Richmond with it? If a telegraphic victory satisfy Lincoln and the rest of Yankeeedom, we do not see why it should not satisfy Grant, since the applause of those interesting people is all that he aspires to. Let Grant sit down and telegraph a big victory