

Packet Ship "Boston"

F. H. Lane

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## THE PACKET SHIP "BOSTON" OF GLOUCESTER.

BY ALFRED MANSFIELD BROOKS.

Harvey Coffin Mackay of Gloucester, Captain of the Packet Ship, *Boston* sailed from Boston to Charleston where he took on a cargo of cotton for Liverpool. The tragedy which befell the *Boston* is herewith described as taken from the ship's journal.

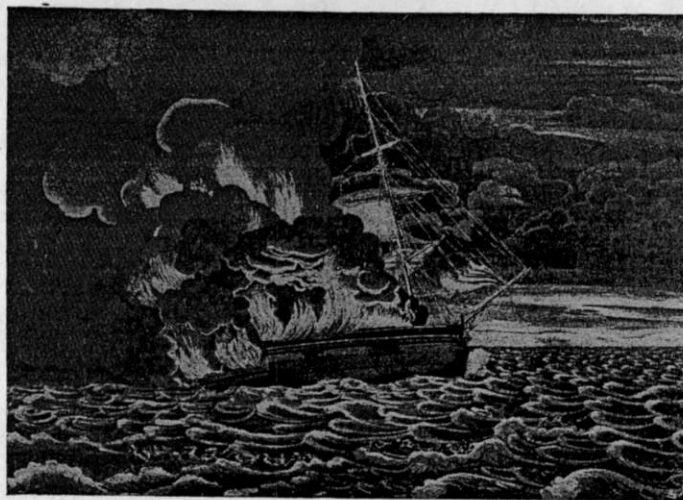
The picture of the burning is accounted for by the following extract taken from a letter dated Boston, August 15, 1869, written by the First-Officer of the *Boston*, at the time of the disaster, Elias Davis Knight. "The picture (a water-color 20" x 28") was drawn the same year by Mr. Lane (Fitz Hugh Lane, 1804-1865, well-known Gloucester artist) from a sketch I (Captain Knight) made soon after the disaster, aided by one of the passengers, Charles Osgood Esq., afterward a distinguished portrait painter (of Salem.) Mr. Lane had made no pretension of course at this time as an artist and probably had received no instruction."

Extracts from the Journal follow:

"Charleston towards Liverpool  
"26th day of May, 1830.

"Commences with fresh breezes and squally weather at 1 P. M. Squally at 2 P. M. Heavy rain which continued until sunset. At 8 P. M. forked lightening in S. West, and dark & heavy clouds rising from the Westward. At nine the wind hauled to the westward. At ten a heavy cloud began to rise in the S. W. At half past ten sharp lightening. Clued up the top galt. sails and hauled up the mainsail. At 11 P. M. very thundering and sharp lightening. The second flash struck the ship, burnt the main hatch and knocked down the steward, Isaac Hopkins, a sailor. Filled the ship full of electric fluid. We examined the ship immediately & searched to ascertain if the masts were injured, or if the lightening had passed through the deck, but the main mast appeared uninjured. A

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THE PACKET "BOSTON," OF GLOUCESTER

bright corposant setting on each royal mast head. We single reefed the main topsail and were about to land the mainsail when we found the ship to be on fire. We immediately cleared the main hatch and after hatch to get at the fire and commenced heaving the cotton overboard out holes in the deck, and plied water in every direction but all in vain. The ship's main hold was on fire fore and aft on both sides burning like tinder. Our only alternative was to clear away the boats and get the most part of the crew and passengers at work keeping the fire down as much as possible by drawing and heaving water, the scuppers being stopped up we hove the water casks over holes in the deck and main hatchway and starting the water but all to no good purpose for before we could get the long boat over the side the fire had burst through the ships deck and out the larboard side. The flames raged with such violence and consumed the vessel so quick that nothing could be saved from the wreck. We got about 40 gallons of water, and provisions sufficient on a short allowance to keep the passengers and crew alive for three weeks. Almost everything else was burnt up in the ship, even the money, watches and cloathes all destroyed."

"At 3 A. M. the main and mizzen mast went over the side, At half past three the passengers and crew were all in the boats. The flames had then reached the forecastle and the ship was one complete flame of fire fore and aft. The passengers had exerted themselves to the utmost to assist us. The officers had with unwearied exertion, coolness and persevering activity done all that men could do, and the ships crew worked like horses and behaved like men, but all would not do. About three hours time had changed one of the best ships that ever swam the ocean to a complete volcano. And twenty persons cast adrift on the ocean. The cabin passengers were Admiral Sir Isaac Coffin and servant, Dr. William Boag and his sister, Miss Ansella Boag, Mr. Neil Mackneil and Mr. Samuel Osgood. The sea was running high, and raining. Every person drenched through with water. In this situation the constitution of Miss Ansella Boag, the only lady passenger soon gave way. This aimable young lady's firmness of conduct is worthy of the highest praise. At

the first alarm of fire and during the whole dreadful scene to the divine will of her God she submitted without a murmur and, at eleven o'clock in the boat, she died in the arms of her brother thanking him in the most affectionate manner for his kindness, and giving her blessing to all. On the following day she was burried with the church service, our situation not admitting of the corpse being kept longer in the boat."

"We remained in the boat near the fire of the wreck two days and at 4 P. M. May 28th were taken aboard the brig Ida of Liverpool, Capt. Barnaby who with his officers and crew treated us with every kindness and attention. We remained on board the brig Ida two days, then Sunday morning, May 30th, falling in with the brig Camillus of Boston Captan Edes was good enough to offer us a passage and receive us aboard, and Tuesday, June 1st, at 4 P. M. we all landed safe on India Wharf in Boston."