

any closer intimacy; and if a snake presumes to intrude upon their quarters, he is instantly expelled with noises of tomtoms. Not so, however, the snakes in Egypt and Syria—at least, one peculiar species, termed the household snake, from their invariably taking up their abode with men. These, though hateful to the sight and loathsome to the touch of the natives, are revered and countenanced as a necessary evil by Moslems, Christians, and idolaters, and also by not a few of the old European inhabitants who have dwelt half a century in those countries, and imbibed most of the prejudices and superstitions of the natives. Every house has its male and female household snake; they inhabit some nook or corner in the wall or in the store-houses, and though they venture out of a day, and are frequently seen by the inmates, no one ever thinks of noticing or interfering with their movements, unless, indeed, it be to get out of their way as speedily as possible. Marvelous stories are bandied about and handed down as traditional lore from father to son respecting these snakes. They are said to peculiarly patronize infants and young mothers, being attracted by the smell of their much-loved, dainty milk, though how or when a snake should have acquired this taste it is hard to imagine. Still they doubtless do like milk, for I have had ocular demonstration of this fact, saucers full of milk being placed under the beds where mothers and infants sleep, to satisfy the

yearnings of the serpent family. These snakes are reputed among the natives to be of a most unforgiving disposition, so that if you harm one the whole colony will be up in arms and seeking for vengeance. Another superstition, too, credited among them is, that when a daughter marries out of a family and removes to the house of her husband, the old snake, provided he has been kindly used by the parties, sends his eldest son and his wife to go and settle in some wall in the same house; and it is considered a very propitious omen to the newly-married couple if the black snake cross their pathway during the first week of their marriage.

Such, and a hundred other absurdities, are recounted of these household snakes, which here live in perfect harmony with man, who is elsewhere usually their greatest enemy. Most probably the origin of this unseemly familiarity traces itself back to the black days of Paganism in the East, and is one of the many relics which has yet to be uprooted. The serpents are innocuous of their kind, nor, indeed, all over Syria, have any, so far as we know, of a deadly nature been discovered. These snakes, however, are particularly harmless, and if they sometimes annoy and alarm you with their presence, they make ample amends for this by the service rendered in the quantities of mice and rats they destroy or intimidate; indeed, were it not for them and the cats, living would scarcely be possible in any house in any part of Syria.

Monthly Record of Current Events.

THE UNITED STATES.

THE wreck of the steam-ship *San Francisco*, attended by a loss of nearly two hundred lives, of officers and soldiers of the U. S. army, and involving extreme suffering from exposure and starvation of those who were so fortunate as to escape, has enlisted and nearly engrossed public attention during the month just closed. The *San Francisco* was a new ship, and was on her first voyage at the time of her disaster. She sailed from New York, under command of Captain Watkins, on the 22d of December, with U. S. troops, forming Companies A, B, D, G, H, J, K, and L of the Third Regiment of United States Artillery, amounting, with the non-commissioned staff and band of the regiment, to nearly 550 men. She was ordered to touch for coal at Rio Janeiro, Valparaiso, and Acapulco. Including her passengers, ship's officers and crew, and the cabin and steerage waiters, she carried over 700 persons. Nothing of interest occurred on the first and second days of their passage; but, on the evening of the 24th, when they were off Charleston, the wind began to blow strong from the northwest. It soon increased to a gale, and at 10 P. M. the steamer broached to. The fore-staysail and fore-spencer were set, when she recovered. In another hour she again broached to. Her fore-staysail, fore-spencer, and foresail, from the lee yard-arm, were next blown away. The troops were ordered forward. Soon after midnight the engine stopped, from the breaking of the piston-rod of the air-pump, and the spanker blew away, thus leaving

the ship entirely at the mercy of the winds and waves. She labored heavily from this time, lying helpless in the trough of the sea, every wave striking a tremendous blow under her guards, tearing up the planking fore and aft on both sides. Presently she began to make water, and the pumps were manned. Still the water continued to gain, and the troops were organized into bailing gangs. At seven o'clock in the morning of the 25th (Christmas Day), the foremast went over the side, splintering the ship to the berth deck. The terror of the passengers up to this period may be well conceived. Still no lives were lost, and no extreme danger was apprehended by the most experienced on board. A successful attempt was made to mend the piston-rod of the air-pump, but it could only be used to drive the pumps to free the ship from water, which, notwithstanding every exertion, was rapidly gaining on her. After losing her foremast, she lay like the corpse of a ship on the water, lifted and let fall by the heaving waves, and totally at the mercy of the tempest. About nine o'clock she shipped a heavy sea amidships, which stripped the starboard paddle-box, carried away both smoke stacks, all the upper saloon, staving her quarter-deck through, and washing overboard about one hundred and fifty troops and officers, including Colonel Washington, Major Taylor and his wife, Captain Field, and Lieutenant Smith. Three men were killed by the splintered timbers. The terror that now seized the survivors was proportioned to the terrible catastrophe, and the imminent danger in which they were all placed.

The ladies, who were yet in their berths, hurried into the cabin in their night-dresses, and clung to each other in affright, with the water—which now deeply covered the floor of the cabin—dashing about them with every motion of the tempest-tossed ship. The cries of the camp women, whose husbands had been washed overboard, were terrible to hear. The laboring of the steamer made it impossible for the occupants of the cabin to stand, and they crouched upon the floor, lying or kneeling literally in the water. The ladies prayed, the children shrieked. A universal panic prevailed; they feared that every moment would be their last. The ship was now opened in the seams, over the wales; a large portion of her quarter-deck was stove in, and it was only by the greatest exertions that she was kept afloat. The troops were set to hold blankets and sails around the shafts, to prevent the water from flowing in. An attempt was also made to cut away the mizzen-mast, but owing to the plunging of the ship it could not be accomplished.

This was the morning of Christmas Day, which at the commencement of the voyage, three days previous, had been anticipated with pleasure. The cold was intense, but though the sea continued to heave, and seethed like a caldron, the sky overhead was unclouded by any cloud, was "darkly, deeply, beautifully blue," seeming to smile as in mockery upon the helpless wreck beneath. In the afternoon of that day, while the passengers were engaged in prayer with the Rev. Mr. Cooper, an Episcopalian minister who was on board, a ship hove in sight, which proved to be the brig *Napoleon*, of Portland. She was also in distress, being short of provisions. Captain Watkins, of the *San Francisco* spoke her, and asked her captain if he would not take off some of his passengers. Captain Strout, of the *Napoleon* replied that he was out of provisions; to which Captain Watkins returned that the steamer had plenty of provisions, and would supply him. The captain of the *Napoleon* then promised to take off as many passengers as he could, as soon as the storm abated, adding that the attempt could not probably be made before morning. A portion of the troops were clinging to the mizzen riggings of the steamer, and upon hearing Captain Strout's promise they gave him three hearty cheers. According to the statement of three of the crew of the *Napoleon*, made subsequently, the brig played about until eight o'clock the same evening, when the weather moderated sufficient to enable the captain to fulfill his pledge; but instead of doing so, the *Napoleon* disappeared during the night, and the hope of rescue, cherished by the unfortunates on board the steamer, was doomed at daybreak to a cruel disappointment.

That day, the fifth of the voyage, and the third since the commencement of the storm, was truly a wretched one on board the steamer. The disappearance of the *Napoleon* weighed heavily upon all hearts. Captain Watkins sent word to the passengers that the hull of the vessel was still sound, and that she would not go to pieces. Disabled, and free from all guidance and management, she had for two days been drifting rapidly to the northward, and was now nearly opposite Boston, in longitude 61 degrees. About noon of this day, another brig appeared in sight, which proved to be the *Maria Freeman*, of Liverpool, Nova Scotia. On being hailed, her captain promised to lay by and render assistance, but the sea still running too high to admit of disembarkation, the attempt was postponed till the morning. That night was passed anxiously by the

sufferers, and in the morning the *Maria Freeman* had also disappeared. Despair seized the passengers, and even the officers of the ship carried dismay in their countenances, notwithstanding their efforts to sustain the fast-flagging courage of the females. We must pause here to speak of the admirable conduct of the ladies. Scarcely a murmur was heard in the cabin, where they were grouped together with the children, who, poor little ones, were terrified to distraction, and never ceased to wail. There were some men on board who had their own courage revived by contemplating the patience and self-possession of their wives. One woman, belonging to the steerage, filled the vessel with her cries, and, in supplicating tones, inquired of every one if they had seen her husband. Heedless of others' grief, she wearied all with her own tale of distress, till at last one of the officers said to her, "Good Heavens! woman, you make more noise than all the rest on board; one would think that you was the only lady who had a husband in the ship." The day that the *Maria Freeman* disappeared, the gale was strong from the northwest, with a heavy sea. The troops were employed in lightening the ship, pumping, bailing, and clearing away the fragments of timber, spars, and other portions of the wreck which still cumbered the deck. The officers' rooms and upper deck were cut away, and the steering-wheel was shifted aft on the quarter-deck. An attempt was made to start the engine, but it was unsuccessful. A sailor named Alexander was swept overboard.

The next morning the hearts of the sufferers were again filled with hope, as the welcome cry of "A sail! a sail!" once more rang through the ship. It was the bark *Kilby*, Captain Low, from New Orleans, bound to Boston. She reported herself short of provisions and water, but promised to remain alongside of the *San Francisco*. As the steamer's boats were lost, the crew could not put off for the bark, and the sufferers were obliged to content themselves with the promise of the captain that he would stay by them during the night. Judging from their previous disappointments, they feared that the *Kilby* too would abandon them. But when their eager eyes swept the waves in the morning, the vessel was still in sight, and bearing down toward them. It was a season of great excitement. The sufferers exchanged congratulations. The tones of their voices were almost hysterical, so intense had been the agitation of their mingled hopes and fears. But now they believed that rescue was indeed at hand, and many dropped upon their knees and returned thanks to God, while all hearts, it must be believed, were filled with devout feelings of gratitude. A boat from the *Kilby* coming alongside, Captain Watkins left the steamer and boarded the *Kilby*, for the purpose of arranging with her captain for the rescue of as many passengers as he could carry. At 3 o'clock P.M., the hawser of the steamer was run to the bow of the *Kilby*, and soon afterward the disembarkation commenced. The ladies were lowered down the steamer's sides by ropes let under their armpits and fastened around their waists. There was at first a great rush made to the boats, but the officers stationed themselves with weapons to keep back the crowd, and expostulated with the soldiers, telling them that any undue haste would assuredly swamp the boats and insure their destruction. The life-boat was stove on the second trip, but no one was lost. The other boats continued to ply backward and forward between the steamer and the bark, until night came

on and compelled the rescuers to cease their labor, the last boat being swamped alongside the vessel. In one of the boats Lieutenant Loeser had deposited a barrel and a half of sea-biscuit and three hams, together with some casks of water and some boxes of sardines. In the subsequent famine on board the *Kilby*, even this little stock was of much assistance. During the night, the hawser was broken by the force of the waves, and the next morning the *Kilby* was not in sight. As she had been very short of water and provisions before she had taken any of the *San Francisco's* passengers on board, there was sufficient cause for apprehension lest one form of suffering had only been exchanged for another.

The condition of those remaining on board the *San Francisco*, was now rendered doubly terrible by the outbreak of a disease resembling Asiatic cholera. During the confusion that had prevailed, the provision-room had been left open, and some of the troops and waiters had repaired thither to feast themselves at will. Pots of preserves, sardines, pickles, potted meats, and similar luxuries of a sea voyage, were eagerly seized and devoured by these gourmands. They paid the penalty, for in a few hours most of them were dead men. Perhaps this indulgence of the appetite was less the predisposing cause of the disease, than the spark which started the outbreak. Be this as it may, the disease became contagious, and was communicated to others who had not so dissipated. For some time, this new terror was hidden from the ladies, but the rapidity with which the deaths followed each other, prevented any farther concealment. Their pangs were considered heightened by this new danger, since death seemed now to threaten them in another direction. The ill-conduct of others of the steerage passengers and waiters also aided to increase their troubles. The trunks of the ladies were broken open and pillaged. The raw recruits, either from insubordination or fear, became unmanageable. They rushed into the ladies' cabin, and threw themselves down wherever there was a vacant space, adding much to the terror and confusion that already prevailed there. The deaths from cholera were now averaging ten a day, while the cries of the sufferers filled the vessel. "It was a scene," remarks a survivor, "over which I wish to draw a veil, and the like of which I trust a merciful God will spare me ever witnessing again."

Once more the *San Francisco* lay upon the waters like a log, and for two days the eyes of those on board were not gladdened by a single sail. It was a time of intense prostration and despair. The sufferers forbore to cheer each other. To look for deliverance was almost to hope against hope. The steamer rolled and tumbled about at a fearful rate. She had been considerably lightened by throwing out her coal, but the sea broke heavily upon her decks, flooding her cabins at almost every wave.—No sail still. With abundance of provisions on board, it was almost impossible to get them cooked. They were thrown from the galley by the pitching of the ship. No hot water could be procured for the making of tea or coffee, and cold water and hard biscuit was all the fare that was accessible. Once the Purser was invited by some of the crew to partake of a sumptuous repast. It consisted of roasted potatoes and a slice of bacon.

On the morning of the 31st December, a light was discovered on the bow of the steamer, and the cheering tidings were communicated to those in the cabin that a ship was at hand. Signal guns were immediately fired, which were answered with blue

lights from the strange vessel. At daybreak she was plainly visible, bearing English colors. She tried to speak the steamer, but the violence of the wind rendered it impracticable. A kind of telegraphic communication was then resorted to, by writing large letters with chalk on some pine boards. The English captain promised to lie by them, but the weather, for the next two days, was too rough to allow a boat to be lowered. Moreover, the English ship had but one reliable boat—the long-boat—and the steamer had lost all hers. Out of nine boats which she brought from New York, not one remained. It was not till the evening of January 2d, that the sea moderated sufficiently to allow of any communication between the vessels. Then the strange ship lowered her yawl boat, and Mr. Grattan, the second mate of the *San Francisco*, went on board of her. She proved to be the *Three Bells*, Captain Creighton, of Glasgow, bound to New York, and was leaking fast, after experiencing very rough weather. She promised to stay by the steamer till she sank; "But I am almost sinking," added the captain, "and what can I do?" On the next day, another ship hove in sight, under American colors. She had five good boats. When she came within speaking distance of the steamer, she announced herself as the *Antarctic*, three days out from New York, bound for Liverpool. She undertook to assist in the deliverance of the shipwrecked sufferers. By the aid of her boats, a file of soldiers, with their sergeant, were placed on board the *Three Bells*, to work the pumps. The leak was not serious, and soon after daylight, on the morning of the 4th instant, the work of disembarking commenced in earnest. Captain Watkins first ordered the transportation of the sick, about thirty in number. They were well wrapped in blankets, and carefully lowered into the boats. This noble work of humanity proceeded during the day, and, by nightfall, the *Three Bells* had received as many as she could carry. Some provisions and water were sent on board by the last boat. Through the night she kept near the steamer, and not till the bright, cold daylight streamed across the waves, did she take her departure. Freighted with those rescued souls, she continued on her voyage, after laying by nearly six days in the holy work which has given her a fame which will go down into history. Her dimensions being too small for the accommodation of all who were left on the *San Francisco*, one hundred and forty soldiers, with some officers, including Lieutenants Chandler and Winder, embarked on board the *Antarctic*, bound for Liverpool. On board the same vessel went also the commander of the *San Francisco*, Captain Watkins. His farewell bore evidence of the estimation in which he was held. "Every man, woman, and child," says a rescued passenger, "had left the ship. Our captain was the last on board. He saw every officer, every sailor, every fireman, and every negro waiter, of whom there were forty or fifty, safely in the boats, then lowered himself down, and the boats pulled away. He was rowed alongside the *Three Bells*, where he was greeted with nine hearty cheers, and then pulled away for the *Antarctic*. The *San Francisco* had, by his orders, been scuttled, and we could see her settling gradually deeper into the water."

The *Three Bells* left the *San Francisco* about 600 miles from New York, in lat. 39 deg. lon. 59 deg. 60 min. The progress of the vessel was slow for some days. At length on Friday, 13th Jan., she came up the bay, and as soon as her arrival was made known, the greatest commotion prevailed throughout the

city; for reports had reached New York nearly a fortnight before of the perilous condition of the *San Francisco*. As early as January 5th, a telegraphic dispatch was received from Halifax, announcing the arrival there of the *Maria Freeman*, who brought tidings of the wreck, and stated that she could not render assistance, as the steamer drifted out of sight during the gale. The public mind throughout the country was plunged into a state of intense excitement, and vessels were at once dispatched to the aid of the disabled steamer from several ports of the United States. The brig *Napoleon* next reached Boston, and reported falling in with the disabled steamer. The arrival, therefore, of the *Three Bells* at New York, with a portion of her passengers on board, though it plunged our citizens into the deepest gloom, served to relieve the anxiety, which was more and more keenly felt as the time wore onward.

When the *Kilby* parted from the steamer, on the night of December 29, the passengers rescued by her, together with her own officers and crew, were perhaps, in a worse strait than the sufferers who were left on board the *San Francisco*. She was very short of provisions and water before she spoke the steamer, and now with an increase of more than a hundred persons, the prospect was wretched indeed. Two days were passed in searching for the *San Francisco*; and when all hope of meeting with her was abandoned, a rigid system of economy was adopted, and an officer was appointed to distribute the rations. At first, a ship biscuit and a small slice of bacon were allotted to each person, but on the second day, the biscuit was denied to the male passengers and the officers. On board the vessel, was a small quantity of corn, which was dealt out by the handful. This, partially roasted, formed the chief sustenance of those on board for fourteen days. Water, also, being very scarce, only a wine glass full was given to each passenger as a daily allowance. Fortunately, several rain storms occurred, and once a fall of snow covered the deck. Garments were spread to catch the precious drops, and the poor famishing creatures devoured the snow as fast as it descended. But for this benefaction of the elements, many would have inevitably perished of thirst. Several times they approached the land, but were driven back by adverse winds, into the Gulf Stream. On one occasion, they were in sight of Nantucket shoals, and had to stand out to sea, to avoid running on shore. Their sufferings, at length, became so great, that the crew threatened to mutiny. Early in the morning of January 13, a cry was raised, that a ship was lying close by. The captain hailed her, and received an answer. It was not yet daylight, and the passengers tumbled on deck in every style of garment, eager to hear what chance of deliverance was afforded them. A boat was sent from the ship, which proved to be the *Lucy Thompson*, Captain Pendleton, of New York, and Lieutenant Fremont, the quarter-master of the regiment, went on board, to effect a contract on behalf of the government. Another disembarkation of the passengers soon took place, and with the exception of four passengers and twelve of the United States troops, who volunteered to remain on board the *Kilby* to assist the captain in working the vessel, the whole were transferred to the *Lucy Thompson*, where abundance of food and generous treatment awaited them. The bark *Kilby* sailed on her way to Boston, where she arrived in due time, and on the afternoon of the 14th, the *Lucy Thompson* reached New York, where the proprietors of the Astor House, in the most liberal manner, immedi-

ately extended to the rescued sufferers, the hospitalities of that establishment. In a day or two afterward, when they had, in some degree, recovered from the effects of their privation and exhaustion, the officers with their wives and children, and the troops who were rescued by the *Lucy Thompson*, attended divine service, at Grace Church, to offer thanksgiving to God for his mercy shown in their preservation. An impressive address was delivered by the pastor of the church, Rev. Dr. Vinton, and the Sacrament of the Holy Communion was administered to all who desired to partake of it.

In Congress, the proceedings of the month have been of considerable interest. In the Senate, on the 4th of January, Mr. Douglas, from the Committee on Territories, reported a bill for the territorial government of Nebraska. One of its sections provides that whenever the said Territory shall be admitted into the Union as a State or States, it shall be with or without slavery, as its Constitution at the time of admission may prescribe; and another extends over the Territory the provisions of the existing laws for the surrender of fugitive slaves. The bill has not yet been discussed in either branch of Congress. On the same day, the resolution previously offered in regard to the Pacific Railroad was referred to a Select Committee. On the 11th, Mr. Cass addressed the Senate on the subject of the treaty concluded between Great Britain and the United States, during the administration of President Taylor, concerning British settlements in Central America. He stated that when he voted in favor of confirming that treaty, he supposed it excluded the British from all parts of Central America, being at the time ignorant of the fact that a declaration had been made by the British Government, and explicitly assented to by our own, to the effect that the treaty was not to apply to the British settlement at Honduras, and its dependencies. This declaration, thus exchanged, of course had the effect to limit the operation of the treaty—to give to it a force and meaning not conveyed by its language—and ought, therefore, to have been submitted to the Senate. Earl Clarendon, the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, has officially declared that the treaty does not in the least affect the British settlement in Honduras, or the protectorate of the Mosquito Indians. Mr. Cass thought it extremely unfortunate that such a concession should have been made by our government, as he deemed it very desirable that the British should be entirely excluded from Central America. On the 12th, Mr. Clayton replied to Mr. Cass, maintaining that the declaration referred to did not change the effect of the treaty in the least degree, and that the British were effectually excluded from Central America by the terms of that convention. He expressed great surprise at the declaration of Lord Clarendon on the subject. He vindicated his share in the negotiation of the treaty at length, insisting that its provisions were distinctly understood by the Senate when it was ratified. He believed that Great Britain had systematically violated all her treaties concerning Central America, and the Earl of Clarendon's declaration showed that she would continue to do so. The Earl had said that the Mosquito Indians were still under British protection; and that if either Honduras or Nicaragua should interfere with them, it would be at their peril. Mr. Clayton said that in such an event we should introduce a bill, placing the military and naval force of the country at the command of the President, to resist the aggression of the British