

AN ACCOUNT Of the Capture and Burning of the British Schooner "GASPEE."

In the year 1772, the British government had stationed at Newport, Rhode-Island, a sloop of war, with her tender, the schooner called the Gaspee, of eight guns, commanded by William Duddingston, a Lieutenant in the British Navy, for the purpose of preventing the clandestine landing of articles subject to the payment of duty. The Captain of this schooner made it his practice to stop and board all vessels entering or leaving the ports of Rhode-Island, or leaving Newport for Providence.

On the 10th day of June, 1772, Captain Thomas Lindsey left Newport in his packet for Providence, about noon, with the wind at north; and soon after the Gaspee was under sail, in pursuit of Lindsey, and continued the chase as far as Namcut Point, which runs off from the farm in Warwick, about seven miles below Providence, and is now owned by Mr. John B. Francis, our late Governor. Lindsey was standing easterly, with the tide on ebb about two hours, when he hove about at the end of Namcut Point, and stood to the westward, and Duddingston in close chase, changed his course and ran on the Point near its end, and grounded. Lindsey continued in his course up the river, and arrived at Providence about sunset, when he immediately informed Mr. John Brown, one of our first and most respectable merchants, of the situation of the Gaspee. He immediately concluded that she would remain immovable until after midnight, and that now an opportunity offered of putting an end to the trouble and vexation she daily caused. Mr. Brown immediately resolved on her destruction; and he forthwith directed one of his trusty ship-masters to collect eight of the largest long-boats in the harbor, with five oars to each, to have the oars and rowlocks well muffled, to prevent noise, and to place them at Fenner's wharf, directly opposite the dwelling of Mr. James Sabin, who kept a house of board and entertainment for gentlemen, being the same house purchased a few years after by the late Welcome Arnold; is now owned by, and is the residence of Colonel Richard J. Arnold, his son.

About the time of the shutting of the shops, soon after sunset, a man passed along the Main-street, beating a drum and informing the inhabitants of the fact that the Gaspee was aground on Namcut Point, and would not float off until 3 o'clock the next morning, and inviting those persons who felt a disposition to go and destroy that troublesome vessel, to repair in the evening to Mr. James Sabin's house. About 9 o'clock, I took my father's gun, and my powder-horn and bullets, and went to Mr. Sabin's, and found the southeast room full of people, where I loaded my gun; and all remained there till about 10 o'clock, some casting bullets in the kitchen, and others making arrangements for departure; when orders were given to cross the street to Fenner's wharf, and embark, which soon took place, and a sea Captain acted as steersman of each boat, of whom I recollect Captain Abraham Whipple, Captain John B. Hopkins, (with

whom I embarked,) and Captain Benjamin Dunn. A line from right to left was soon formed, with Captain Whipple on the right, and Captain Hopkins on the right of the left wing.

The party thus proceeded till within about sixty yards of the Gaspee, when a sentinel hailed, "Who comes there?" No answer. He hailed again, and no answer. In about a minute, Duddingston mounted the starboard gunwale in his shirt, and hailed—"Who comes there?" No answer. He hailed again, when Captain Whipple answered as follows:—"I am the sheriff of the county of Kent, G—d d—n you; I have got a warrant to apprehend you, G—d d—n you; so surrender, G—d d—n you."

I took my seat on the main thwart near the larboard rowlock, with my gun by my right side, and facing forwards. As soon as Duddingston began to hail, Joseph Bucklin, who was standing on the main thwart by my side, said to me, "Ephe, reach me your gun, and I can kill that fellow." I reached it to him accordingly, when, during Captain Whipple's replying, Bucklin fired and Duddingston fell; and Bucklin exclaimed, "I have killed the rascal." In less time than a minute after Captain Whipple's answer, the boats were alongside of the Gaspee, and boarded without opposition. The men on deck retreated below as Duddingston entered the cabin.

As it was discovered that he was wounded, John Mawney, who had for two or three years been studying physic and surgery, was ordered to go into the cabin and dress Duddingston's wound, and I was directed to assist him. On examination, it was found the ball took effect about five inches directly below the navel. Duddingston called for Mr. Dickinson to produce bandages and other necessaries for the dressing of the wound, and when finished, orders were given to the schooner's company to collect their clothing and every thing belonging to them, and put them into their boats, as all of them were to be sent on shore. All were soon collected and put on board of the boats, including one of our boats.

They departed and landed Duddingston at the old still-house wharf, at Pawtuxet, and put the chief into the house of Joseph Rhodes. Soon after, all the party were ordered to depart, leaving one boat for the leaders of the expedition, who soon set the vessel on fire, which consumed her to the water's edge.

The names of the most conspicuous actors are as follows, viz.:—Mr. John Brown, Captain, Abraham Whipple, John B. Hopkins, Benjamin Dunn, and five others, whose names I have forgotten, and John Mawney, Benjamin Page, Joseph Bucklin, and Turpin Smith, my youthful companions; all of whom are dead—I believe every man of the party, excepting myself; and my age is eighty-six years this twenty-ninth day of August, eighteen hundred and thirty-nine.—1839.

EPHRAIM BOWEN.

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