

2) Mr. Clemens' account:

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The Erie.—A correspondent of the *N. Y. Commercial Advertiser*, in a letter from Buffalo, gives the following account of Mr. Clemens' [sic: Clemens'] description of the conflagration as it appeared to him while he was floating on the water. Mr. C. was the first engineer of the Erie: —

“The whole of the vessel, with the exception of a small part of the forward lower deck, was one mass of fire, lighting up the whole heavens; as the flames would wave to and fro he could see the bodies of some of the passengers writhing as it were in their agony, and endeavoring to throw themselves overboard, but apparently not possessing strength to get over the rail—while on the fore part of the deck were seen some dozen or more wildly throwing about their arms and filling the air with cries and shrieks which seemed to pierce his very heart. In fact, said Mr. C., “so horrible and dreadful was the sight that I at one time almost felt ready to suffer myself to sink, beneath the water, without an effort to save myself, that the scene might be hidden from my view.” He again turned from the boat and saw a plank floating about, on which were two of the crew. They called to him to get on. He did so, but it barely supported them all; fortunately he perceived [sic] the drawer of a bureau near by, which he reached, and placing it bottom upward under the plank, it floated with more ease. He had not been on the plank before he perceived an elderly man swimming by, nearly exhausted; he called to him, and relinquished his place on the plank to the old man, while he again trusted to his swimming. It was not long, however, before he met one of the “fenders,” and as he was securing it he saw two or more of the passengers; this he also gave up to them. After swimming about alone for some minutes he was hailed by the captain, and turning round saw him and four of the crew on the yawl, which was bottom upward. He also got on it, when the captain informed him that there was a lady floating by. This was Mrs. Lynde; a life preserver was about her neck, but not one quarter filled with air; her hand grasped an oar, and she was to all appearance dead. Mr. C. thought that by filling the life preserver she must continue to float, and if picked up be recognized by her friends. With this intention he applied his mouth to the tube and commenced filling it. While so doing, Mrs. L. faintly spoke and said, “you are very kind, sir.” Finding she was alive he continued to fill the life preserver, but so exhausted was he that he could do it but imperfectly. He then drew her toward the yawl, when she revived a little and said, “save me if you can, but rather use all your efforts for yourself, and let me die if I cannot be

saved without sacrificing others.” Such language from a female,” said Mr. C., “made me resolve, that if I were saved she should be also;” and his efforts were constantly directed to her, and successfully. They continued on the yawl for about two hours, when the De Witt Clinton rescued them.”

The pilot of the Erie, the captain in his examination says, he believes remained at the wheel *till he was burned to death.*”