

**THE CONVICT SHIP: A NARRATIVE OF
THE RESULTS OF SCRIPTURAL
INSTRUCTION AND MORAL DISCIPLINE
ON BOARD THE "EARL GREY". FROM
THE FOURTH ENGLISH EDITION**

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THE
CONVICT SHIP,

A NARRATIVE OF THE RESULTS OF SCRIPTURAL
INSTRUCTION AND MORAL DISCIPLINE ON
BOARD THE "EARL GREY."³

BY
COLIN ARROTT BROWNING, M. D.,
SURGEON, ROYAL NAVY.

From the Fourth English Edition.

WITH A PREFACE
BY THE REV. JAMES H. FOWLES,
RECTOR OF THE CHURCH OF THE EPIPHANY,
PHILADELPHIA.

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge."—Hosea iv. 6.
"The gospel of Christ . . . is the power of God unto salvation to every one
that believeth"—Rom. i. 16.
"It is the Spirit that quickeneth."—John vi. 63.

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1850.

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of the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

W. S. YOUNG, PRINTER.

PREFACE TO THE AMERICAN EDITION.

THIS little volume will fill the heart of every benevolent reader with wonder and gratitude. Its author is an intelligent, pious and zealous Surgeon of the Royal Navy—who was placed in charge of some two or three hundred English convicts, during their transportation, on board the *Earl Grey*, to the penal colony of Van Diemen's Land. His work consists of a narrative, told in a perspicuous and interesting style, of a successful attempt to elevate these unpromising subjects out of that state of ignorance and sin in which they were found. The means employed were simple, yet enlightened, self-denying and kind; and their results are of a character so encouraging, that they will scarcely be anticipated by the believer, and cannot be understood by the infidel. At their debarkation, nearly all the prisoners could read the Word of God, and upwards of one hundred gave hopeful evidence of a change of heart. Nor were these hopes unfounded. In the Appendix, which

consists of extracts from another production* of the same pen, in relation to this and similar voyages, will be found satisfactory proofs of the permanent and saving nature of that work of grace, which was begun on ship-board. The Comforter would indeed seem to have hovered over this vessel, as she pursued her long and trackless way upon the bosom of the deep, and to have imparted to a large portion of her refuse freight His richest blessings.

Dr. Browning's account of such unprecedented success among these outcasts has been very popular and effective in his own country; and it was thought that the republication of its Fourth English Edition here might serve many useful purposes.

Among other good ends, it may obviously contribute to such as these:—

The revival of a general confidence in the power of the simple Gospel, when accompanied by the Spirit of God, to renew and save the most abandoned and profane.

Is not our author's example, likewise, worthy of being held up for imitation before a Laodicean Church? His direct and zealous efforts for the glory of Christ, in the salvation of souls—his unmixed reliance upon the only appointed and effectual means,

* *England's Exiles.*

as they are recorded here with all singleness of mind, portray an instance of faith and love, which is but too rare in these days.

What valuable aid, also, may this volume afford to the pious visitors of our Penitentiaries, and Houses of Refuge! Such self-denying labourers will not only be encouraged by this narrative, but derive from it important suggestions in the prosecution of their work.

Place this book, moreover, in every convict's cell—and it will show that it is admirably fitted to inspire the wretched inmate with the best desires and hopes, and to point out to him a feasible, and tried, way of escape from the miseries in which he is involved.

On board of our immigrant ships, too, with such a modification as the circumstances would suggest to any pious officer, or influential Christian passenger, the system of doing good, which is here described, might in its main features be wisely introduced.

In short, there is scarcely any department of evangelical effort, that might not receive an impulse from what is recorded in these pages. There is no son or daughter of Adam, who may not be personally instructed, and profited by that work of God which is here disclosed. For the same change which these convicts experienced, must be wrought upon every

fallen man, or he can never see the kingdom of heaven.* Except all repent, they shall likewise perish.† Unless all be washed in the blood of that Lamb, which was slain before the foundation of the world,‡ their sin cannot be taken away.§ It was in accordance with these Scriptural allusions, that a poet,|| whose character was as unexceptionable as that of any reader of these lines, sung—

“The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day;
And there may I, tho’ vile as he,
Wash all my guilt away.”

And the London Christian Observer, in a favourable review of our work,¶ has well remarked: “Human nature, whether in towns or villages, in courts or cottages, in hospitals or prisons, in ships or camps, afloat or on shore, is essentially the same; corrupted by the same fall; needing the same remedy; and open by divine grace to the same blessed influences.”

Philadelphia, February 1st., 1850.

* John iii. 3. † Luke xiii. 1—5. ‡ 1 Peter i. 18—20.
§ John i. 29. || Cowper. ¶ April, 1847.

P R E F A C E.

WHEN, in the year 1831, on being appointed to the *Surry*, the duties and responsibilities involved in the surgeon-superintendency of a convict ship, were, for the first time, imposed upon me, my inexperience of the nature of the service, and of the details of its duties, caused me no small degree of anxiety. I had, it is true, a copy of the printed official instructions; which gave a general view of my duties, but which supplied me with nothing like a scheme of education and discipline, and necessarily left the *minutiae* of duty to my discretion.

Much of the time occupied by my first voyage, was expended in observation and experiment, and was therefore in some measure lost as to the moral improvement and instruction of the prisoners.

I entered on my second charge, in 1834, in the ship *Arab*, prepared with a system of instruction and government, the result of my experience, and to which some additions suggested themselves, during our progress to the Colonies. As my third voyage, in the *Elphinstone*, advanced, my plan received still farther improvements; and in this matured state it is now exhibited. Its fitness for the management of