

AN

EMIGRANT'S NARRATIVE;

OR

A VOICE FROM THE STEERAGE.

BEING A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE

SUFFERINGS OF THE EMIGRANTS IN THE SHIP INDIA

OF HER

VOYAGE FROM LIVERPOOL TO NEW YORK.

IN THE WINTER OF 1847-8;

TOGETHER WITH AN ACCOUNT OF THE CRUELTYES PRACTISED UPON  
THEM IN THE STATEN ISLAND HOSPITAL.

---

BY WILLIAM SMITH.

---

NEW-YORK:

PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHOR.

Printed by E. Winchester, 44 Ann-street.

1850.

AN

(13)

EMIGRANT'S NARRATIVE;

OR

A VOICE FROM THE STEERAGE.

BEING A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE

SUFFERINGS OF THE EMIGRANTS IN THE SHIP INDIA,

ON HER

VOYAGE FROM LIVERPOOL TO NEW YORK.

IN THE WINTER OF 1847-8;

TOGETHER WITH AN ACCOUNT OF THE CRUELITIES PRACTICED UPON  
THEM IN THE STATEN ISLAND HOSPITAL.

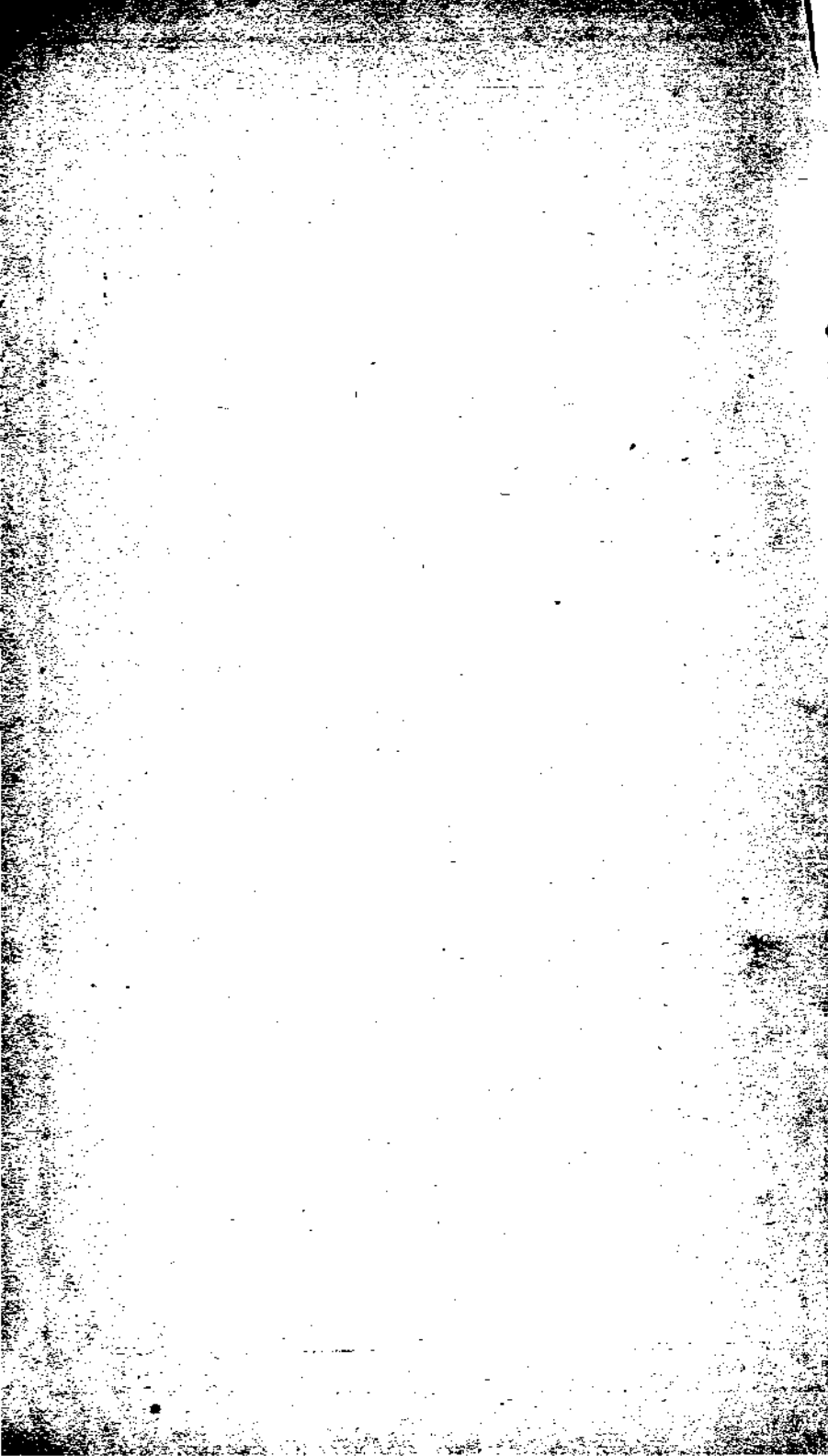
BY WILLIAM SMITH.

NEW-YORK:  
PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHOR.

Printed by E. Winchester, 44 Ann-street.

1850.

13M  
#807-4



AN  
EMIGRANT'S NARRATIVE;

OR

A VOICE FROM THE STEERAGE.

BEING A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE SUFFERINGS OF THE EMIGRANTS IN THE  
SHIP "INDIA," ON HER VOYAGE FROM LIVERPOOL TO NEW-YORK,  
IN THE WINTER OF 1847-8; TOGETHER WITH A STATEMENT  
OF THE CRUELITIES PRACTICED UPON THE EMI-  
GRANTS IN THE STATEN ISLAND HOSPITAL.

---

BY WILLIAM SMITH.

---

" THERE are, gloomy oceans, a numerous class,  
Who traverse thy banishing waves;  
The poor disinherited outcasts of man,  
Whom avarice coils into slaves.  
From the homes of their kindred, their forefathers' graves,  
Love, friendship, and conjugal bliss,  
They are dragg'd on the hoary abyss,  
The shark hears their shrieks, and ascending to-day,  
Demands of the spoils his share of the prey."  
MONTGOMERY.

---

NEW-YORK:  
PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHOR.  
Printed by E. Winchester, 44 ANN-STREET.

1850.

15365.22

US 10598.50

1852 June 13  
Life of  
A M Thayer of New York City

TO JOHN WILSON,

THIS HUMBLE NARRATIVE IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED, BY  
ONE WHO HAS FELT HIS KINDNESS  
IN THE HOUR OF SICKNESS, INDIGENCE, OBSCURITY,  
AND EXILE.

---

"The friends that speed, in time of need,  
When hope's last reed is shaken  
To show us still, that, come what will,  
We are not yet forsaken:  
Though all were night, if but the light,  
From friendship's altar crowned us,  
I would prove the bliss of earth was this—  
Our home and friends around us."

C. SWAIN.

## P R E F A C E.

---

As I have been often requested by my relatives in England, and a few friends in New-York, to give them a comprehensive account of my sufferings, and my relatives and friends frequently asking me many questions concerning the voyage and subsequent events, has induced me to give them the gratification they desire.

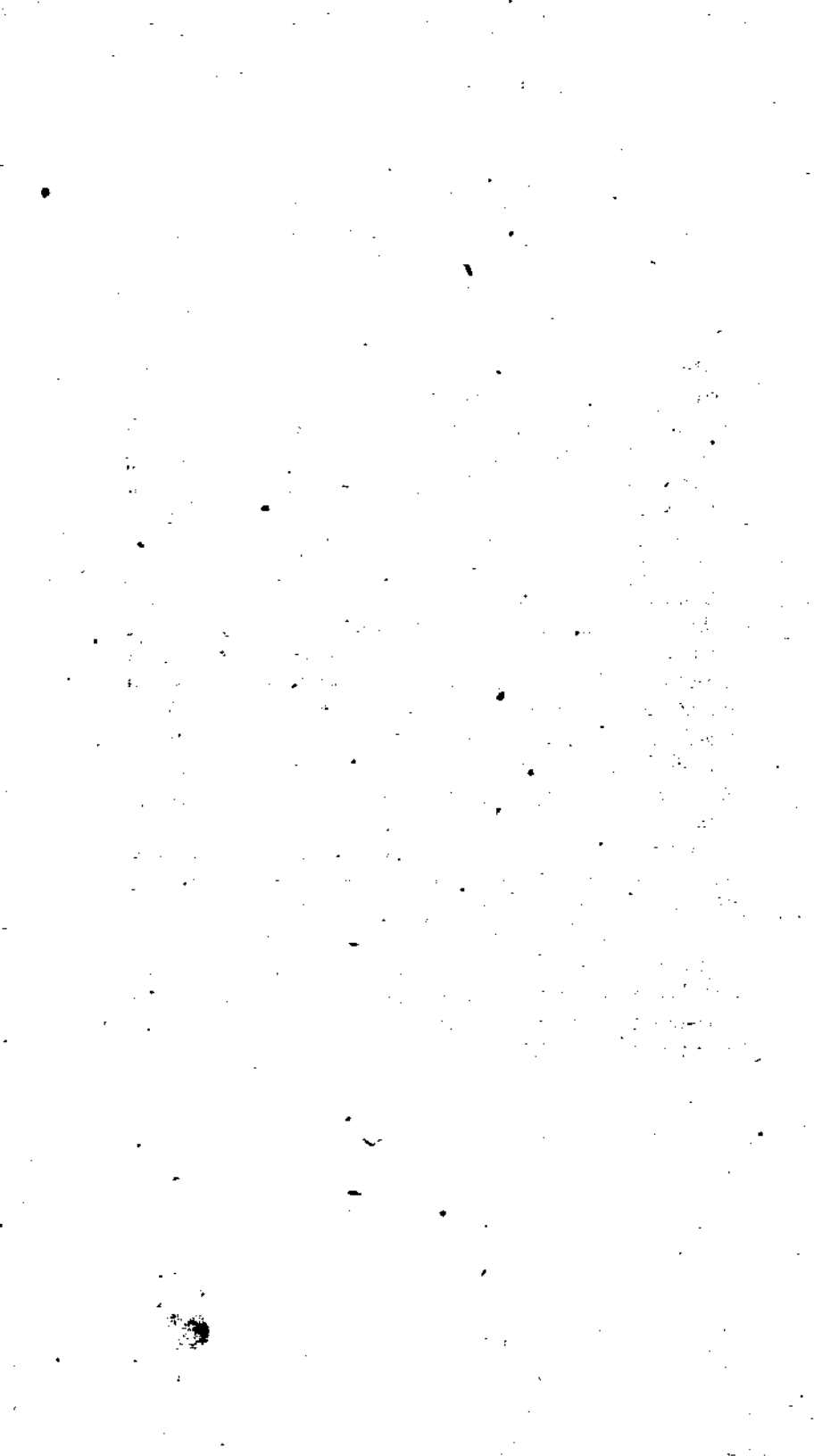
In doing so, however, I can promise them nothing more than a plain narrative of the prominent events of the voyage, interspersed with such remarks as suggested themselves to my mind.

In consequence of my limited education, I have not that talent in recording facts, that I otherwise might have possessed; I must therefore beg the kind indulgence of my well informed friends for the incorrect manner in which I have put together a few facts selected from so many. Whatever may be its defects, it shall have one merit, at least, namely: a truthful statement of a few out of many events that came under my own observation.

I am well aware that my hair-breadth escapes and severe sufferings have affected those whom I love and esteem, and I know that the following narrative will be read with interest by them.

Let me hope that though separated from them\* by a world of waters, they still cherish an affectionate remembrance of me, and though we may never meet again in this vale of tears, I hope to meet them in a better world. "May we all lay up our treasures there."—Matt. vi. 20.

\* My relatives.



## NARRATIVE.

---

I left Manchester, and arrived in Liverpool, on Tuesday, the ninth of November. On the following day, I engaged passage in the steerage of the ship *India*, belonging to H—n & Co. The day advertised for sailing was the 12th of that month, but in consequence of not having got in the cargo, which consisted of pig iron and earthen-ware, we were detained ten days for that purpose, and one day to stop a leak, which sprung as the ship was leaving the dock; the immigrants being thus detained eleven days, and as they were of the very poorest class, and most of them having families, with only a small stock of provisions, and that too of the coarsest description, most of them having left Ireland a week, some a fortnight, before the day fixed for sailing, this detention of eleven days was severely felt by those poor creatures, many of them having consumed half of their provisions, without the means of obtaining more. Under these circumstances, the immigrants applied at the office of H—n for the sum of eleven shillings, which was due to each adult immigrant, as the law allowed one shilling per day to each adult passenger from the day advertised to sail to the day of sailing; but as they refused to comply with the request, the immigrants selected six persons to go and state their case to the Government agent. We went to him and stated our grievances; he came with us to the office of H—n, and ordered them to obey the law by paying the amount due to each person. They promised him that they would do so. He then left us, telling us to call upon him again if we did not receive the sum already stated. The ship owners ordered us to go immediately on board, where we would be paid the amount due us. Believing that they would do so, we all went on board the *India*, when we were paid two shillings, and two pounds of sea-biscuit. No sooner had we received this trifle, than a steam-boat towed us down the river, in order to prevent us from again complaining to the agent of their base conduct. There we remained two days, anchored, during which time there was great confusion and uproar on board, from the above cause. On the next morning, Friday, November 26, 1847, we set sail. The



crew numbered twenty-four good seamen, exclusive of the captain and first mate. I had wished many times during my stay in Liverpool that the ship would set sail, but when the hour came, and a fine breeze wafted me from the shores of my native land, when I saw it gradually receding from my view, the tears, unreprieved, chased each other down my cheeks, as I began to reflect that I had left my wife and child behind me. I had also left an aged father, and three affectionate sisters; and a few friends to whom I was bound in the strongest ties of friendship. I had left my native land, which I loved, though I detested her tyrants. I had voluntarily exiled myself from all that was near and dear to me in my native country, to seek for that remuneration for my labor in a foreign land, which I could not obtain in my own. The bitter thought too, that if I should arrive safe in America, in a few days I should be penniless, perhaps without employment and without food, among strangers, without a friend to do me a single act of kindness, or to take any interest in my welfare. For several years I had vainly endeavored to raise myself from the state of poverty and the consequent degradation which the small remuneration I received for my labors,\* forced me into. If, in the *free and happy land* to which I was going, my last and only hope should be destroyed, my wife and child would then suffer by my absence.

As these thoughts were preying upon my mind, I began to grow sea-sick. I cannot describe the sensations I felt, but I shall not easily forget them. It reduced me so much that I could not walk without assistance, for I felt as weak as an infant. On the third day, feeling much better, I went on deck, and, for the first time, beheld a boundless expanse of ocean. In the distance appeared ships under full sail; above was a clear blue sky; the water seemed to be of a blue tint and the ship was running like a race-horse, coursing over the waters with a speed that promised to bring us quickly to our journey's end. All was new to me; the scene was one of sublimity, magnificence and grandeur. Who, possessing a reflective mind, can look above, and not exclaim, with the inspired psalmist, "The Heavens declare the glory of God, and the Earth showeth his handy-work?"—Ps. xix. 1. Who can look upon the mighty ocean, and behold the wonders thereof, and not acknowledge the hand of God? "O, Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches."—Ps. civ. 24.

\* I was a Power-Loom Weaver.

When we had been at sea three weeks, during which time we had made slow progress, having to contend with head and contrary winds most of that time, a storm arose, which continued four days and five nights. The day on which this storm commenced it rained so heavily the whole day we could not make a fire on deck to cook our victuals with. About three o'clock in the afternoon, the rain began to fall in torrents, the clouds were black, and moved rapidly, and the wind gradually increased in force till eight o'clock, when the roaring of the tempest was truly appalling. I heard the mate order the hatchways to be fastened down, (an order indispensably necessary to the safety of the ship.) The order was quickly obeyed, and from that time commenced our sufferings. The increasing violence of the storm, the moaning and creaking of the ship, the howling of the wind, and the roaring of the waves, was horrible to those not accustomed to such scenes; and every few minutes a wave would strike the ship with such force as to make it tremble beneath us, causing a shock so great that at every blow we expected to see the bow stove in and the ship sink.

About midnight, a number of boxes and barrels broke loose and rolled from side to side, according to the motion of the ship, breaking the water cans and destroying every thing capable of being destroyed by them; to fasten them was almost impossible, for we could not keep ourselves from sliding down without grasping something. In a few minutes the boxes and barrels broke to atoms, scattering the contents in all directions—tea, coffee, sugar, potatoes, pork, shirts, trowsers, vests, coats, handkerchiefs, &c., &c., were mingled in one confused mass. The cries of the women and children was heart-rending; some praying, others weeping bitterly, as they saw their provisions and clothes (the only property they possessed) destroyed. The passengers being sea-sick, were vomiting in all parts of the vessel; the heat became intense in consequence of the hatchways being closed down, and the passengers, 300 in number, being thus kept below, we were unable to breathe the pure air or see the light of heaven but a few hours at a time. The scent arising from the matter vomited up, and from other causes, became intolerable. Things continued in this way until the fourth day, when the storm abated, and the hatchways were opened. Most of the passengers were so eager to get on deck that they pushed each other off the ladder; several were severely hurt, and I expected that loss of life would be the consequence of this confusion; however, I am happy to say, my expectations were not realized. As an apology for such con-

duct on the part of the passengers, let me remind you of the horrors of our situation. We had been five nights and nearly four days with only one hatchway (the after hatchway) open for a few hours at a time, and 300 souls confined below, breathing the close, polluted, and unhealthy atmosphere constantly in all ships, especially immigrant ships, where large numbers of human beings are crowded together in a small space; in this case rendered doubly sickening and intolerable from the causes before alluded to. So oppressive was the atmosphere we were compelled to inhale, that it was proposed to break open the hatchways when both were closed upon us, and were only dissuaded from it by being told that the captain would again open it as soon as he could do so with safety to the vessel. Had they broke open the hatchways during the storm, the ship would inevitably have sunk, as it was constantly shipping a sea. Ever and anon, we heard the waves rushing over the fore-castle upon the deck with terrible impetuosity. On the other hand, to remain much longer below would be certain death. We all felt a sense of suffocation, and a difficulty of breathing which plainly indicated that the air so necessary to our existence was wanting, and unless speedily renewed, death would soon ensue. You will not wonder then at their eagerness to get upon deck. It is impossible to keep men in a state of discipline under such circumstances. For my part I was as eager as any one, but by waiting a few moments till the rush and confusion had subsided, I was enabled to get upon deck without risk of life or limb. I forgot to state that we had nothing but cold water to our biscuit, for, having no means of cooking our food, such provisions as could not be eaten without cooking, could not be eaten at all. However, I did not feel the loss of a fire much, as I soon lost my appetite when confined below—cold water and biscuit being all I could eat during the two last days of the storm.

We were startled about three o'clock in the morning by a loud crash, caused by the breaking of the fore-mast, which a sudden gust of wind had shivered to atoms. The women and children were screaming in despair, believing we had struck a rock. Nearly one half of the crew had a providential escape from a watery grave, as they had been aloft reefing and just got down upon deck the moment it broke. A portion of the bulwarks were also destroyed. The scene which met my eye upon reaching the deck was awful. Broken fragments of the fore-mast, rigging, chains, &c., were strewn from one end to the other. We assisted the sailors at the pumps, but soon got wet through with spray caused by the waves dashing against

the bows of the ship. Cold, hungry and exhausted, I went below to change my wet clothes for dry ones, and recruit myself with sea-biscuit and cold water, which was all I could get without fire. I have said that the scene on deck was awful. The following description of "A Storm at Sea," written, I believe, by a missionary, is such a faithful statement of facts, that when you have read it, you will be able to form some idea of a storm. The writer says:

"On deck the scene is truly grand. The sky is black, rugged, and shifting; the wind is terrible, with alternate gust, 'seugh,' and lull; the sea heaped up into a ridge of low hills on either side. The ship lies wriggling in the gale like a winter tree; the masts stripped of all their clothing, the storm staysail being the only stitch of canvass left. A billow is rushing forward with its white cress shaking like a lion's mane, nearing the bow—it looks so lofty that she must be overwhelmed—but, with mingled delight and apprehension, you see her rear herself on its base; then, as if rejoicing in her escape, at that moment a cross sea strikes on the weather bow with a dull sound, like the shake of a battering-ram. The noble bark shudders like a child in a thunder clap; and while you are quivering with sympathy, a fierce surge sweeps along the deck, making your firmest grasp needful to prevent being borne away. When you emerge, the ship is resting on the top of another wave, as if to shake off the moisture of the last immersion; and just as this passes from under her, it strikes fiercely on the counter, in seeming anger at its being foiled in its assault. While staggering from the effects of this after-blow, a broken sea, like an enemy in ambush attacking the flank, dashes suddenly on the weather-beam. Instantly the top-masts seem nearly touching the water, and the strongest hold of a rope or bulwark can scarcely save you from sliding down the almost vertical deck; it seems impossible the ship can right. Volumes of water rushing over you, confirm the impression that the moment of danger is come; but a counter swing restores you to your footing, and shows the bow plunging into another billow.

"The whole scene is sufficiently awful, and if one but give way to fear or fancy, it is easy enough to make the waves mountains, the gusts artillery, and to crowd the whole with gigantic forms of horror. The lesson of a storm is humility. Each cloud may be the engine of destruction, each sea may capsize or overwhelm your ark; you cannot lighten its stroke by a single drop. Surrounded by objects, all potent to destroy, there is nought on which your skill can work the least amelioration. The sky, the wind, the waves, are eloquent with the