The Manuscript of Philip Freneau's

The British Prison-Ship

By Lewis Leary

Once more Dr. Leary has made available for students of American literature one of the hidden treasures of the Library. This first version of "The British Prison-Ship" is written in Philip Freneau's handwriting in an old notebook, which also contains "The Log of the Brig Rebecca," published in the Journal last spring.

For six weeks, from June 1 to July 12, 1780, Philip Freneau was a prisoner in the hands of British forces in New York, first on board the prison ship Scorpion, then on the hospital ship Hunter. Exposed to hot summer suns, stifled with three hundred other captives between decks, witnessing brutalities such as his sensitive poet's mind had not before contemplated, he brought from this experience impressions which he never could, if, indeed, he ever wanted to forget. He had embarked late in May on the ship Aurora, for the Caribbean, "to enjoy," he said, "the fruits and flowers of that happy clime." Instead, he and the vessel on which he sailed had been captured by the British warship Iris off the capes of Delaware. Freneau suffered intensely, perhaps more than the situation warranted. He was almost "suffocated with heat and stench." The "melancholy sights" and the "dismal countenances" of his fellow captives made the prison ships seem to him "a pretty just representation of the infernal region." His guards were "the most brutal of mankind,"
This picture of the Jersey, reproduced from a contemporary drawing, shows the most notorious of the British prison ships. Freneau spent several weeks on a similar ship, the Scorpion.
“the most vile and detestable of mortals.” When finally released at Elizabeth-town Point on July 13, he made his way, by wagon from Elizabeth-town, on foot from Crow’s Ferry, toward his home in Monmouth County. “I was afflicted,” he said, “with such pains in my joints, I could scarcely walk, and besides, was weakened with a raging fever.”

Convalescent, apparently, through all the rest of the summer, Freneau began at once to record his experiences. In verse and in prose he told in detail of his capture, of his sufferings, and of the bitter hatred for all British domination which they had bred within him. In March, 1781, the poem was published by Francis Bailey in Philadelphia as The British Prison-Ship,\(^1\) as fervid a hymn of hatred as has ever been produced in America. Soon it was reprinted in part as a broadside Description of the Sufferings of Those Who Were on Board the Jersey and Other Prison Ships in the Harbour of New-York, During the Struggle for Our Glorious Independence. By an American Who Was a Prisoner on Board of One of Them.\(^2\) Later Freneau revised and expanded the poem for the first collected edition of his works,\(^3\) improving phraseology and versification, tempering invective, even adding lines from a shorter poem which he had published before his capture.\(^4\) Lines from the manuscript which had been rejected for the 1781 version were inserted again, but reworked and strength-
For later editions of his writings he edited the poem even further, dividing it in 1795, in the volume which he issued from his own press at Mount Pleasant, to eighteen "Canto's from a Prison Ship."

But as he wrote the poem during the summer of 1780 Freneau had little time for revision. He composed at white-heat, scratching his pen across the pages of his notebook with resolution. "Weak as I am," he wrote, "I'll try my strength to day/And my best arrows at these hell-hounds play." But other literary projects soon demanded his attention. The prose account of the capture and imprisonment was written in almost exhaustive detail. Then, when late in September American countrymen learned of Benedict Arnold's apostasy, Freneau found a new subject for his belligerent muse, as he composed a drama in five acts, which he called "The Spy." By the middle of December the poet was in Philadelphia. A few months later he was associated with Francis Bailey in that city as editor of The Freeman's Journal. From this time to the end of the war Freneau's pen was actively engaged in journalism and patriotic politics. There was no time now for such literary niceties as the revision of poems already completed.

We are the more surprised, then, when we turn to Freneau's manuscript of The British Prison-Ship, to find in it so many details different from any published version. It is of course, most like the edition of 1781, of which it is the prototype but Freneau revised this first draft carefully before he committed it to print. More than fifty lines

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\[\text{Especially MS lines 1-38, omitted in 1781, but rewritten for the 1786 version as lines 1-32.}\]

\[\text{Poems Written Between the Years 1768 & 1794 (Mount Pleasant, 1795), pp. 162-75, and Poems Written and Published During the American Revolutionary War (Philadelphia, 1809), 11, 36-52.}\]

\[\text{The MS of Act I—Act III, Sc. 2 and the first lines of Sc. 3, is in the Rutgers University Library; one sheet of the MS, containing parts of Sc. 3 and Sc. 4 of Act III, is in the Princeton University Library. Victor Hugo Paltsits, A Bibliography of the Works of Philip Freneau (New York, 1903), p. 39, mentions a fragment containing lines from Act IV and Sc. 1 of Act V, a fragment which is now apparently lost (see Leary, op. cit., p. 378). Pattee, op. cit., 11, 39-72, reproduces the MS through the extant portion of Sc. 4, Act III.}\]

\[\text{The MS, "The Prison Ship—A Poem," is in the same notebook with the "Log of the brig Rebecca," "The Spy" fragment, and "Some Account of the Capture of the Ship Aurora" in the Rutgers University Library. Portraying Freneau as a sailor, a dramatist, a writer of prose, and a poet, this notebook is quite the most important single Freneau MS in existence.}\]
were discarded, and many lines more were added. He made the early portions, those which had to do with him alone and with the ship on which he sailed from Philadelphia, less personal and particularized. He expanded and developed in more detail those parts which exposed the brutality and the ineptitude of his captors. He polished carefully, tinkering with versification, strengthening adjectives—vile, for example, becomes damn'd; an ironic glorious becomes a straightforward loathsome.

In many respects this manuscript version of 1780 is crude and unpolished. Often after a page of couplets composed with apparent ease as Freneau adapted conventional eighteenth-century poetic diction to objective description or the exposition of tyranny, we come upon a verse or a series of verses which have given the young writer trouble because they demand fresh phraseology for the description of some experience or emotion which is distinctly personal and drawn from the particular hardships through which he had so recently lived. Then his pen sputters, is drawn with apparent impatience through a word, a line. Again, the notebook is turned so that another line may be added in the margin, sometimes several lines which cut at right angles over what he had written before. In his attempts at exactness in description or in metrics Freneau often rejected a word, tried another, rejected that, and more than once determined finally on the word first used. As we study the manuscript, we find ourselves in the position of looking, more than a century and a half later, over a young poet’s shoulder as he works. He confirms what we have already known of him through his revisions of many other poems as they appear in successive printed editions—that he was a painstaking workman, fond of puttering over individual words and lines. But never before have we had the opportunity of seeing just what he did do, the steps he followed, the phrases he rejected, in writing one of his major poems.

*The British Prison-Ship* was written in 1780, as it was printed in 1781, in four cantos. But Freneau began composition with what we now know as Canto II. Only after the three final cantos had been finished did he go back, change the numbering, and begin on Canto I. His first purpose was “The Various horrors of those Hullks to tell/Those Prison Ships where Pain and sorrow dwell.” Thus he began “The Prison Ship—a Poem,” and he prefixed to it lines from Vergil:
A page from the original manuscript of Freneau's poem, *The British Prison-Ship*. 
Later, when perhaps some of the fire of hatred had burned out of him, he wrote the first canto, telling of the capture of the *Aurora*; and he supplied his poem then with a conventional invocation to the Muse of history, he added supplications to the God of war and to the God of commerce, and he reinforced the opening with patriotic allusions. But this, only after he had first written at white-heat of his sufferings as a prisoner.

Printed below is the version of *The British Prison-Ship* as far as Philip Freneau perfected it in this first manuscript. Rejected words, phrases, and lines are indicated in footnotes, as are the revisions and additions which he subsequently made for the 1781 version. Lines which are written in the margins of the manuscript are enclosed in brackets [ ]. Lines which do not appear in 1781 are printed in italics. When portions of the manuscript have been illegible or when it is not clear which of two readings Freneau meant as final, I have supplied the omission, within square brackets, from the 1781 version. In numbering and naming the cantos I have followed the 1781 printing. The spelling, capitalization, and punctuation (or lack of it) are throughout Freneau's. I wish to express my gratitude to Professor Paull F. Baum of Duke University, who has made several helpful suggestions concerning the text.

[CANTO I. THE CAPTURE]

*Assist me Clio while in Verse I tell*  
*The dire Misfortunes that a Ship befell*

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10 Portions of Dido's curse upon the departing Æneas: "Then do ye, O Tyrians, pursue his whole people and his descendants with hatred. . . . Let there be no love nor confed-eration between the nations. . . . Now or hereafter, whenever strength shall be given, may shore clash with shore, water with waters, I pray, arms with arms; may they have war, they and their children's children."

11 The MS—except in the case of the heading for Canto I, which is identical with 1781—gives confused readings: for Canto II, "The Prison Ship—a Poem—Canto I
Which outward bound to St Eustatia's Shore
Freight of Tobacco thro the Billows bore

From Philadelphia's crowded Port she came
Where first the Builder plannd her lofty frame
With wondrous skill and excellence of art
He form'd, disposd and orderd every part,
With joy beheld the stately fabric rise

And thus address their Godships in the Skies
Ye Powers that reign beyond the twinkling Stars
But chiefly those O Mercury and Mars
Grant that this Pile so stately and so Grand
That rose beneath my long experienced hand
That soon must meet the distant ocean's roar
May travel safely still from Shore to Shore
[May still Beneath thy flag Columbia sail]
[Till every bolt and every timber fail]
To British Ruffians never fall a prey

But seize these Pirates on the watry way
Their richest ships of Commerce take by force
And alter from our Port their destind course
Grant that brave Lads may man her on the Sea
And still no Coward let her Captain be
But one whose breast with Sense of Honour Glows
Who dares to meet the battle of his foes
And crush their Ships as I this Bottle now"—
He said and dash'd the Bottle on the Prow.

Who scattered to the wind the fruitless Prayer,
She must be lost, the God was heard to say,
But richer Prizes shall her loss repay
Fierce Britain claims her captur'd on the Sea
I Jove declare it and the fates decree

6. Where altered from New to lofty alt. from giant.
11. Powers alt. from Gods; reign alt. from rule.
20. seize alt. from capture.
22. destind alt. from former.
26. Who alt. from And.
27. And alt. from But.
33. Prizes alt. from captures.

[alt. to II]; for Canto III, "Canto II [cancelled]" Canto 3rd The Capture [cancelled]
Canto 2nd; for Canto IV, "Canto 3rd [cancelled]" Canto 4th The Hospital Ship."
But for her loss Columbia shall defeat
Full Nineteen Transports of the Quebec fleet
With richest Cargo floating o'er the main
Doomd not Quebec but Boston's Port to Gain.''

Aurora now in all her Pomp and Pride
With sails expanded flew along the Tide
Twas thy deep Stream O Delaware that bore
This Pile intended for a Southern Shore
Bound to those isles where endless Summer reigns
Fair fruits gay Blossoms and enameled Plains,
Where sloping Lawns the roving swain delight
And the cool Morn succeeds the balmy Night—
Where each glad Day a Heaven unclouded brings
And fragrant Mountains teem with Golden Springs
From Cape Henlopen with a Southern Gale

When morn emergd we spread each snow white sail
Then East South East she ploughd the watry way
Close to the Wind, departing from the Bay,
Hermes and Mars stood pensive on the Strand
And Jove with Pity saw her leave the Land,
To think what ills we wretched Mortals bear
How vain our Labours and how vain our care.
The Gale increases as we plough the Deep
Now scarce we see the distant Mountains peep
At last they sink beneath the rolling wave

That seems their Summits, as they sink to lave—
Gay Phoebus now the sacred source of Light
Had passd the Line of his Meridian height

39. 1781 begins: OUR vessel now in all her pomp and pride,
42. In 1781 for a Southern Shore becomes for Eustatia's shore.
45. sloping Lawns alt. from fragrant woods. Transposition of lines 45-46 and 47-48
   (as in 1781, 7-10) indicated by notation Where fragrant Woods &c below line 44.
47. glad alt. from bright.
48. fragrant alt. from sloping; teem with Golden alt. from issue forth their.
50. spread each alt. from east each [each alt. to the progress cancelled]; snow white
   alt. from milk white; in 1781 snow white becomes flowing.
51. she alt. from we: in 1781 watry becomes briny.
54. In 1781 her becomes us.
59. At last they sink alt. from Demergd at last.
61. Gay alt. from When Gay.
After 62. When from the tops a lookout Sailor cries cancelled.
And Westward hung—impervious to the View
The Shores were fled and every hill withdrew
When ever cautious of some neighbouring foe
Aloft the Captain bade a Sailor go
To mark if from the Masts aspiring height
Through all the round a Vessel came in Sight—
Soon did the Seaman's quick discerning Eye

70 Far distant to the East a sail espy
Her lofty masts stood bending to the Gale
Close to the wind was brac'd each shivering Sail
Next from the Deck we saw th' approaching foe
Her spangled Bottom seem'd in flames to glow—
[When to the Winds she bow'd in dreadful haste]
[And her Lee guns were delug'd in the waste]
From her top-Gallant stream'd an English Jack
With all her might she strove to gain our track
Nor strove in vain—The Captain gave command

80 We tacked about and tried to reach the Land
As from the South the rapid breezes rise
Swift from her foe alarm'd Aurora flies
With every Sail expanded to the wind
She fled the unequal force that lurk'd behind,
Along her Decks dispos'd in close array
Each at its Port the grim Artillery lay

63. Westward hung—impervious to the alt. from all was sea, and vanish'd from the: in 1781 impervious to the becomes absconded from our.
64. every hill alt. from hill uncancelled and.
69. quick alt. from far.
73. Next alt. from Seen.
77. From alt. from On; main cancelled before top-Gallant; lines 77-78 are expanded in 1781 (39-46) to

At her top gallant that proud flag we saw,
Which once aspir'd to give the nations law;
But humbled now—with grief, regret and pain,—
No longer holds the empire of the main.
The frigate now had every sail unfurl'd,
And rush'd tremendous o'er the wat'ry world;
Fixt and resolv'd our ship to overtake,
With toil immense she strove to gain our wake;

80. tried alt. from strove.
81. In 1781 rapid becomes fresh'ning.
82. Aurora alt. from Pomona.
84. force alt. from match; lurk'd alt. from charg'd in 1781 lurk'd becomes chac'd.
Soon on the foe with brazen throat to roar
But small their size and narrow was their bore
Yet faithful they, their destind stations keep

90 To guard the Barque that bears them o'er the Deep
Who now must bend to steer a wary course
And trust her swiftness rather than her force
Still o'er the wave with foaming Prow she flies
And steady Breezes from the Southern Skies
High in the Air the Starry streamer plays
And every sail its various tribute pays
To gain the Land she bore the mighty blast
And now the wishd for Cape appeard at last—
But the vexd foe pursued us on our way

100 Like a starvd [Lion] eager for his prey
A Frigate she and not unknown to fame
For soon we learnt her errand and her name
Iris it was, (but Hancock once she bore)
Framd and completed on New Albions shore
(By Manly lost)—the swiftest of the train
That fly with wings of Canvas o'er the Main,—
Toward the Land by favouring breezes led
As Iris followd still Aurora fled
[So fierce Pelides eager to destroy]
[110 [Pursued proud Hector to the Walls of Troy]
Swift o'er the waves indignant they pursue
As Swiftly from her fangs Aurora flew
At length the Cape Aurora gained once more
And here we strove to run the Ship on Shore
[Stern fate denyd the barren shore to gain]
[Denial sad, and source of future pain]

87. on the foe alt. from from the Decks.
94. And steady alt. from The [increasing cancelled after Breezes]: in 1781 Breezes.
from the Southern becomes winds from equinoctial.
99. still cancelled after But; vexd inserted after the.
100. starvd [Lion] eager for alt. from starvd wolf to sieze his humbling, alt. from
grim Lion to devour.
102. In 1781 errand becomes nation.
103. once cancelled before Hancock.
110. In 1781 Pursued proud Hector to becomes Chac'd the proud trojan round.
113. In 1781 At length the Cape Aurora becomes At last the cape with joy.
114. And here alt. from in vain; alt. from And then; on S cancelled after run.
115. shore alt. from beach uncancelled.
For then the inspiring breezes ceased to blow
Calm were the heavens above the Seas below
(The Cape expelld the breezes from our Sails
Tho' farther off a lively breeze prevails)
The Ship unable to pursue her way
Tumbling about at her own Guidance lay
But Iris kept still farther off to Sea
And lay with dreadful aspect on our Lee
Then up she luff'd and fired the deadly shot
Bearing destruction, terror and what not—
Vexd at our fate, we prim'd a Piece and then
Return'd the Shot to show her we were Men
At length dull Night her dusky Pinions spread
And every hope to shun the foe was fled
All dead becalmed and helpless as we lay
The Ebbing current forc'd us off to Sea
While vengeful Iris thirsting for our blood
Flashd her red lightnings o'er the trembling flood
At every flash a storm of ruin came

117. For alt. from Twas.
118. In 1781 becomes Lost were they all and calm the seas below.
119. expelld alt. from had shov'd, alt. from had reft: in 1781 expelld becomes dispell'd.
120. a lively [alt. from former] alt. from the self same.
121. In 1781 The becomes Our.
122. In 1781 and what not becomes terror, death, and fire.
123. prim'd alt. from charg'd: in 1781 fate becomes doom.
124. her alt. from them.
125. At length dull alt. from Now sable: in 1781 At length dull Night becomes Dull night had now.
126. In 1781 shun becomes 'scape.

After 130. 1781 (99-106) adds

Close to thy cape, Henlopen, though we press'd,
We could not gain thy desart dreary breast;
Tho' ruin'd pines beshroud thy barren shore,
With mounds of sand half hid or cover'd o'er;
Tho' howling winds disturb thy summit bare,
Yet every hope and e'ry wish was there.—
In vain we sought to gain the joyless strand,
Fate stood between and barr'd us from the land.

131. Written and cancelled as line 132; the notation All dead &c below line 130 indicates transposition, as in 1781 (107-08).
133. While alt. from But; thirsting alt. from eager.
135. a storm of alt. from the crashing.
And shook our Ship thro’ all her labouring frame—
Mad for Revenge our breasts with fury glow
To wreak return of Vengeance on the foe
Full at his hull our lifted Tubes we bore—

140 His Hull resounding to the dreadful roar

[Alternate fires] dispell’d the Shades of Night
But ah, not equal was the daring fight
Our largest Guns but wings a four pound Ball
Twelve Pounders from the foe our sides did maul,
And while no Power to save him intervenes
A Bullet struck our Captain of Marines
Fierce as He was to dare the british foe
He felt his Death and ruin in the blow
Headlong he fell, insensate with the wound

150 With Gore distain’d and heart blood streaming round
Now frequent cries throughout our decks resound
And every Bullet brought some different wound—
[His louder thunders forced our Pride to bend]
[In such a case could we with hell contend?]

Twixt Wind and Water one assailed the side
Thro’ this aperture rush’d the briny tide
What could we do—to fight the foe was vain
’Twas better sure to yield than all be slain

160 [Twas then Aurora trembled for her crew]
[And must she yield to yon destructive ball]
[And must thy colours dear Columbia fall]

136. In 1781 becomes ’Till now Aurora shook thro’ all her frame.
138. return alt. from a storm.
139. our alt. from the: in 1781 lifted Tubes we bore becomes pointed guns we raise.
140. In 1781 resounding to the dreadful roar becomes resounded as the cannon blazed.

After 140. 1781 (117-18) adds

Through his fortopsail one a passage tore,
His sides re-echo’d to the dreadful roar;

141. Alternate [alt. to One lasting; followed by eager hungry uncancelled] flames
[alt. to Blazes]; alternate fires written beneath and cancelled.

142. In 1781 ah, not equal becomes how unequal.
143. In 1781 becomes Our stoutest guns threw but a six-pound ball.
147. In 1781 as He was to dare the british becomes though he bid defiance to the.
149. In 1781 insensate becomes distracted.
150. In 1781 With Gore distain’d and becomes The deck bestain’d with.
151. In 1781 our decks becomes the ship.
152. In 1781 some becomes a.
162. In 1781 becomes And must our colours to these ruffians fall?
Conquerd, not waiting for another blow
We struck at once and yielded to the foe
Convoy'd to York, Dame Iris lodgd us there
Safe in the Dens of Hunger and despair
There Ships are Prisons void of Masts or Sails
In which describing even description fails
But what on Captives British rage can do
Another canto, friends, shall let you know

[CANTO II. THE PRISON-SHIP]

The Various horrors of these Hullks to tell
Those Prison Ships where Pain and sorrow dwell
[Where Death in tenfold horror holds his reign]
[And injurd Ghosts in Reasons Ear complain]
This be my task—Ungenerous Britons you
Conspire to murder those you cant subdue—
Why else no art of cruelty untryd
Such heavy Vengeance with such hellish Pride?—
Death has no charms (His kingdoms barren ly,
A desart Country with a cloudy Sky)—
Death has no charms—except in british Eyes—
See how they court the bleeding Sacrifice,
See how they pant to stain the world with Gore
And Millions Murdered still would murder more—
This selfish race, for fame and Empire strive
To ruin, waste and slaughter all alive
As if the Power that formd us did condemn

163. Conquerd, not waiting alt. from So not delaying.
167. void of alt. from without.
172. Prison Ships alt. from dark retreats.
173. In 1781 horror becomes vengeance.
179. Empires alt. from kingdoms, alt. from Empires.
180. with alt. from and: in 1781 with becomes and.
182. bleeding alt. from dismal.
185. selfish race alt. from race accurst: in 1781 for fame and Empire strive becomes from all the world disjoined.
186. In 1781 becomes Eternal discord sow among mankind.
After 186. 1781 (161-62) adds

Aim to extend their empire o'er the ball,
Subject, destroy, absorb and conquer all;

187. us alt. from them.
All other Nations to be slaves to them
A generous Nation is their hourly cry
But truth revolts against the daring lie
Compassion flees them, an unwelcome guest
And Pity never warmed a British breast
No Pity can a Britons Bosom Share
For he that made them never placed it there
A brutish Courage is there only Pride
For one small hour of fame have thousands dyd—
All Nations they abhor, detest, decry
But their [dear race] they blazon to the Sky
As if the Sun for Britons [only] shown

Or all Mankind was made for them alone—
Weak as I am I'll try my strength to day
And my best arrows at these hell-hounds play
[To laugh at Death is glorious in their Eyes]
[And life that wise men value they despise]
[To future years their murdrous deeds prolong]
[And hang them up to infamy in Song.]
Clio assist my keenest arms I yield
Clio assist to stretch them on the field
So much I've suffer'd from the race I hate
210 So near they shov’d me to the brink of Fate
When six long weeks in their vile hulks I lay
Barr’d down at night—and fainting all the day
With the fierce fervours of the Solar beam
Cool’d by no breeze on Hudson’s mountain stream
That not unsung these horrid Deeds shall fall
To dark Oblivion that would cover all
Not unrevenged shall all the woes that pass’d
Be swallow’d up inglorious as the last—
The dreadful secrets of these Prison Caves

220 Half sunk half floating on fair Hudsons waves
The Muse shall tell: nor shall her Voice be vain
Mankind must shrink with Horror at the strain
Astonish’d Nature yield a pensive sigh
And blame the tardy Vengeance of the Sky—
[See with what Pain your murder’d Victim dies]
[With not a friend to close his dying eyes]
[He once perhaps with aspect bold & gay]
[Drove the Vile Briton o’er the watry way]
[Or close arran’d unconscious of a fear]

230 [Hurl’d the loud thunder from his Privateer]
[Thus do our Warriors, thus our heroes fall]
[Imprisond here, quick ruin meets them all]

210. shov’d me to the brink of Fate alt. from plung’d me to Deaths brazen Gate.
211. their alt. from there: in 1781 six becomes seven, vile becomes damn’d.
212. In 1781 all becomes through.
213. In 1781 With becomes In.
215. Deeds alt. from Scenes; fall alt. from pass.
216. dark alt. from black: in 1781 dark becomes black.
217. In 1781 that pass’d becomes we bore.
218. In 1781 the last becomes before.
219. In 1781 fair becomes my.
223. In 1781 becomes To such a race the rights of men deny.
225. In 1781 Pain your murder’d becomes pangs yon’ wasted.
226. In 1781 dying becomes languid.
227. In 1781 becomes He late, perhaps too eager for the fray.
228. In 1781 Drove becomes Chas’d.
229. Or alt. from And; unconscious of a alt. from with heart devoid of: in 1781 uncon-scious of a fear becomes a stranger to all fear.
230. Hurl’d alt. from fird.

After 232. 1781 (205-17) adds

Or sent afar to Britain’s barbarous shore,
There die neglected and return no more.—
Ah, when shall quiet to my soul return,
In slumbers deep I hear the farewell Sigh
Their Plaintive Ghosts with feeble accents cry,
At distance far with sickly aspect move
And beg for Vengeance at the throne of Jove

[CANTO III. THE PRISON SHIP

Continued]

No Masts nor Sails these sickly hulks adorn
Dismal [to view], neglected and forlorn—
[Here nightly ills oppress the crowded throng]

No friendly awning cast a welcome shade
Oft was it promised but [was never made]
[[No] favour could these Sons of Death bestow]
[But endless curses and unceasing woe]

And anguish in this bosom cease to burn;
What frequent deaths in midnight vision rise!
(Once real) now all ghastly to my eyes,
Youths there expiring for their country lay,
And burnt by fevers breath'd their souls away;
Where, now so cruel to deny a grave,
They plung'd them downward in the parting wave;
The parting wave received them to its breast;
And Hudson's sandy bed is now their place of rest:

233. farewell alt. from parting.
234. In 1781: Their becomes Pale.
235. before cancelled before At.
236. beg alt. from call.
237. sickly alt. from ragged.
238. their view underscored, alt. to to see; neglected alt. from dejected.
239. In 1781 crowded becomes imprison'd.
241. In 1781 along becomes throughout.
After 241. 1781 (227-30) adds

Wretched and poor, insulted and distrest,
The eye dejected, and the heart depress'd;
Stript of our all—affronted and derided,
For cruel Iris had our cloaths divided—.

244. was never made underscored, alt. to it ne'er was made unc cancelled: in 1781 Oft becomes Once.
246. In 1781 curses and unceasing becomes cursing—ever-during.
THE JOURNAL OF THE

[Immortal hatred doth their breasts engage]
[And their Lost Empire fires their Souls with rage!]
Two Hullks on Hudsons placid Bosom lay
Two farther South [affright the gazing eye]
There the black Scorpion at her Mooring rides
There Strombolo swings yielding to the tides
Here hullking Jersey fills a larger Space
And Hunter to all Hospitals disgrace
Thou Scorpion fatal to the imprison'd throng
Dire theme of Horror and Plutonian Song
Requirest my lay—thy sultry decks I know
And all the Evils that are found below—
Must Nature shudder at this Scene of fears
And must I tell what must provoke thy tears.
American! inactive rest no more
But drive these murdering Britons from your Shore
And you that o'er the troubled Ocean go
Strike not your colours to this hellish foe
Better the greedy wave should swallow all
Better to meet the Death conducting Ball,
Better to sleep on Oceans ouzy bed

247. doth alt. from must.
248. fires alt. from fills: in 1781 fires becomes arms.

After 248. Four lines cancelled:

High on the stern Britannia's colours flew
A tattered [alt. from ragged] Ensign and [alt. from for] a tatterd [alt. from ragged]crew
Two hullks in Hudson terrify the stream
Two farther eastward more than equal'd them

249. ly alt. from lay: in 1781 placid becomes rugged.
250. down cancelled after farther; South alt. from Southward; toward the oozy Bay
alt. to the blue waves terrify uncancelled; affright the gazing Eye uncancelled and
written beneath.

252. swings yielding alt. from subservient: in 1781 Strombolo swings becomes swings Strombolo.
255. In 1781 imprison'd becomes crouded.
257. —there pining cancelled after lay.
258. In 1781 that are found becomes of thy holds.
260. thy alt. from your.
262. murdering Britons alt. from worse than monsters: in 1781 these murdering becomes
those murderous.
264. In 1781 colours becomes standards.
266. Death conducting alt. from dire destructive.
267. ouzy alt. from oozy.
At once destroyed and numbered with the dead
Than thus to perish in this dismal Den

270 Starved and insulted by the worst of Men—
Some cruel Ruffian o'er these Hulks presides
Tryon to such the imprison'd host confides
Some wretch who banish'd from the navy crew
In blood grown old, would here his trade renew
Some vile ill-nature'd, growling, snarling Dog
Renowned for swearing and for Drinking Grog
Whose forked tongue when on his charge let loose
Utters Reproaches scandal and abuse
Gives all to Hell who dare his King disown

280 And swears the world was made for George alone—
Such are the men who rule the captives there
A menial Tribe their brutal feelings share
Stewards and Mates whom fam'd Britannia bore
Cut from the Gallows on their native shore
O may I never feel the poignant pain
To live subjected to such Brutes again
Their Ghastly Looks, and Vengeance-beaming eyes
Still to my View [in] all their fury rise
O may I ne'er review their dire abodes

290 These [piles for Slaughter] floating on the floods
Nature recoils and Trembles (all in pain[])
To live subjected to such Brutes again—
[American on thy own fields expire]
[Or fall a victim to the hostile fire]

272. Tryon alt. from Brita[?]; such alt. from them: in 1781 Tryon becomes Clinton.
274. blood alt. from Death; would alt. from doth: in 1781 In blood grown old becomes Grown old in blood.
275. frown[ning?] cancelled before growling.
277. In 1781 forked becomes venom'd.
285. In 1781 O becomes Heavens!
286. Brutes alt. from imps.
287. Their Ghastly alt. from Their Horrid: in 1781 beaming becomes bearing.
288. Fierce to my View in dreadful colours r[ise?] cancelled; Fierce cancelled after still; in alt. to with cancelled; in 1781 fury becomes horrors.
290. piles for Slaughter written above Murdrous Prisons uncancelled.
291. In 1781 and Trembles (all in pain) becomes in agonies of woe.
292. In 1781 becomes To live subjected to such Brutes again.
293. expire alt. from slain.
294. Alt. from Or chace these monsters from the embattled Plain uncancelled: in 1781
Or fall a becomes A glorious.
[From thy black ship the winged Vengeance throw]
[But be no captive to this tyrant foe]
[Yield not alive to stain their greedy Jaws]
[First faint first perish in thy country's cause]
First may I meet the winged wasteful Ball

And split to atoms for fair freedom fall
Such scenes are acted in these gloomy cells
Such horror in the doleful mansions dwells
[So many ills these loathsome hullks defame]
[That to be here and suffer is the same]
Death has its woes and sickness claims its share
But both are trifles if you die not there
When to the Ocean dives the Evening Sun
And the Tories fire their Evening gun
A Scene of Terror rises to the View

Such as the boldest painter never drew
Three hundred Captives banishd from the Light
Below the Decks in Torment spend the Night
[Some for a bed their humble cloathing Join]
[And some on chests & some on floors recline]
Shut from the blessings of the cooling air
Pensive they ly, all anguish and Despair
Meagre and sad and scorched with heat below
They look like Ghosts ere Death has made them so

295. In 1781 becomes In thy own ship expect the deadly blow.
297. alive alt. from thy corpse.
298. faint alt. from fail.
299. Would I prefer alt. from First may I; whole line cancelled: in 1781 First may I becomes Prefer to.
300. Whole line cancelled: in 1781 split becomes cut, fair becomes lov'd. Freneau apparently experienced difficulty with lines 297-300; he cancelled the following attempts:
And [alt. to but] now deliver'd [alt. to Exchang'd, alt. to free, alt. to freed] from their bloody Jaws [alt. to from their fangs]
I'd freely perish in my country's cause
I meet with joy the winged wasteful Ball
Ere I [alt. to If I] again [alt. to once more] would feel their bloody Jaws.

301. Scenes are acted in these gloomy alt. from Horror in these dismal dreary.
302. Alt. from In the dark Mansion of this Scorpion dwells cancelled.
306. trifles alt. from nothing.
308. Then from the port cancelled after And.
309. In 1781 Terror becomes horror.
311. In 1781 Captives becomes prisoners.
313. humble alt. from tatter'd: in 1781 humble becomes tatter'd.
How should they thrive where Heat and hunger join

Thus to debase the human form Divine?
[Where cruel thirst the parching throat invades]
[Dies up the man & fits him for the shades]
No Waters laded from the bubbling Spring
To these dire Ships these generous Britons bring
Of thro the Night in vain their captives ask
One drop of water from the stinking cask
[No drop is grantd to the earnest prayer]
[To Dives in these regions of despair]
The loathsome cask a fatal Dose contains

Its Poison bearing thro the altered Veins
[Hence Fevers rage where health was seen before]
[And the lank veins abound with blood no more]
O how they long to taste the woodland Stream
For there they Pine in frantic feverish Dream
[To springs and brooks with dreary steps they go]
[And seem to hear the gushing waters flow]
[Along the] purling wave they think they ly
Quaff the sweet stream and then contented die
Then start from Dreams that fright the restless Mind

And still new Horrors in their Prison find—
Dull flow the hours till from the sky display’d
Sweet Morn dispells the horrors of the shade—
But what to them is mornings chearful Ray,
Dull and distressful as the close of Day?
At distance far appears the Dewy Green
And leafy Trees on distant hills are seen

319. *in 1781* thrive becomes bloom.

After 322. A Gloomy Guard [alt. to where] at every Portal waits *uncancelled*.


328. *in 1781* these becomes the.

329. *cask a fatal Dose contains alt. from draught that now corrupt & dead grown*.

331. *Hence alt. from pale*.

333. *in 1781* Stream becomes streams.

334. *in 1781* Dream becomes dreams.

335. *springs alt. from founts: in 1781 dreary becomes weary*.

337. *Among the cancelled: retained in 1781 (303)*.

338. *in 1781* then becomes all.


341. *from the sky display’d alt. from morning gilds the sky*.

343. *in 1781* mornings chearful becomes morn’s delightful.

344. *in 1781* Dull becomes Sad.

346. *leafy alt. from Green: in 1781* distant hills becomes mountain tops.
But they no Groves nor grassy Grottoes tread
Marked for a longer Journey to the dead
At Every Hatch a Group of Sentries stands
Cull'd from the Scottish or the Hessian bands
As Tigers fierce for human blood they thirst
Rejoice in slaughter as in slaughter nurst
[Of restless, cruel, angry, Iron soul]
[Take these my friends as Samples of the whole]
Black as the Clouds that shade St. Kilda's shore
Wild as the winds that round her mountains roar
Their hearts with malice to our country swell
Because in former days we used them well—
Ingratitude! No curse like thee is found

Throughout this jarring world's expanded round
Some other Vice may bid your feelings bleed
But this will burst and break the heart indeed.
But such a host of various ills are found
So many evils in these hullks abound
That on them all a Poem to prolong
Would endless make the horrors of my Song
To what shall I their ruin'd bread compare
Baked for old Cesars Armies you would swear
So great its age that hard & flinty grown
You ask for Bread and they present a Stone,
Why should I tell what putrid oil they deal
Why the dread horrors of a scanty meal
The Rotten pork, the lumpy damagd flour
Soaked in Salt Water and with age grown sour

347. In 1781 Grottoes becomes mountains.
348. longer alt. from tedious.
349. Group of Sentries alt. from sullen Sentry.
350. In 1781 Hessian becomes English.
351. Alt. from Blood is their joy & Murder but their play.
352. cruel, angry alt. from fierce, destructive.
353. Clouds alt. from Storms.
354. Wild alt. from Fier[ce]; round alt. from on.
355. abound alt. from are found.
356. After 366. If the black regions of the ruin'd Dead [alt. to fiends] below cancelled.
357. ruin'd alt. from rotten.
358. old Cesars alt. from some Roman.
359. Why alt. from With all; dread added before horrors.
360. The Rotten pork alt. from In one sad meal.
Say must I tell how the famish'd Messes join
And on these fat delicious Dainties dine
For once a day we taste the Royal Meat
Once and but once at the Kings charges eat
[Such hosts he feeds upon Columbia's shore]

[How can the stingy heartless wretch do more?]
If from your Purse the Gold has run to waste
No breakfast nor no supper would you taste—
[Then ere you sail your Purse wt Gold supply]
[For on the royal Bounty you would die]
The vigorous Spirit that the Islands yield
Was by these petty Tyrants here witheld
While yet they deignd the healthy Juice to lade
The putrid water felt its powerful aid
But when denyd (for Tryon's private Gain)

Then Fevers rag'd and revel'd thro' our Vein
Throughout my frame I felt its deadly heat
I felt my pulse with quicker motion beat
A Ghastly paleness oer my face was spread
Unusual Pain attackd my fainting head
No Physic here, no Doctor to assist
My name was enterd on the Sickman's list
12 wretches more the self same symptoms took

375. Say must [alt. from shall] alt. from Why should; how the famish'd [alt. from hungry] Messes alt. from that some the day they.
376. And alt. from Once a day; dine alt. from join: in 1781 fat delicious Dainties becomes offals of creation.
377. For alt. from But: in 1781 taste becomes touch'd.
378. but once alt. from no more.
379. Columbia's alt. from our injurd: in 1781 Columbia becomes our ravag'd.
380. In 1781 stingy heartless becomes heartless, mean-soul'd.
382. In 1781 becomes At morn nor evening look for no repast.
385. vigorous added before Spirit; sugar [alt. to juicy] cane affords cancelled before Islands.
386. To here with[held? Cancelled after Was.
387. healthy alt. from powerful.
389. the cause of cancelled after denyd: in 1781 for Tryon's private gain becomes to aggravate our pains.
390. In 1781 Vein becomes veins.
391. all cancelled before may; frame alt. from blo [od?].
393. My gr head grew cancelled before A; Ghastly alt. from Deadly.
394. attackd alt. from assaild.
397. 12 alt. from Ten.
And soon were enterd on the Doctors book
The glorious Hunter was our destind place

400
The Hunter to all hospitals disgrace
With Soldiers sent to guard us on our road
Joyful we left the Scorpions dire abode
Some Tears we shed for the remaining crew
Then cursed the Hullk and from her sides we drew

[CANTO IV. THE HOSPITAL SHIP]

[And toward the Hunters black abode we came]
[A slaughter house, yet Hospital in Name]
[But when too near with labouring oars we plied]
[The mate with curses drove us from the side]
Ten thousand times he gave us to old Nick

410
And swore as often that we were not sick
But calm'd at length (for who can always rage
Or always war like Bloody Britain wage)
He pointed to the stairs that led below

398. Doctors alt. from sickmans: in 1781 soon becomes these.

399. In 1781 glorious becomes loathsome.

401. road alt. from way.

402. Joyful alt. from With Joy.

403. we added before shed.

404. In 1781 we drew becomes withdrew.

405. toward alt. from to; written and cancelled as Now to the Hunters dark abode [alt. to scorching decks] we came: in 1781 And becomes now.

406. yet alt. from but; written and cancelled as The Mate with Curses took us to the same.

After 406. 1781 (391-92) adds

For none came there (to pass thro' all degrees)
Till half consum'd and dying with disease;—

407. too near alt. from to the ship.

409. give alt. from wishd; in 1781 he gave us to old Nick becomes to irritate our woe.

After 409. 1781 (396-97) adds

He wish'd us founder'd in the gulph below;
Ten thousand times he brandish'd high his stick,

After 410. 1781 (399-400) adds

—And yet so pale—that we were thought by some,
A freight of ghosts from death's dominions come;—

412. In 1781 becomes Or the fierce war of endless passion wage.

413. to alt. from out; written and cancelled as He deignd the Passage to our births to show: in 1781 dire becomes damps.
To dire disease and varied shapes of woe.
Down to the Gloom we took our pensive way
Along the Deck the dying Captives lay
Some struck with madness, some with scurvy pain’d
But still of putrid Fevers most complain’d
On the hard planks these dying objects laid

Here tossed and tumbled in the dismal shade
[Of leaky decks I heard them now complain]
[Drownd as they were in Deluges of pain]
Denyd the comforts of a dying Bed
And not a pillow to support the head
How could they else but pine and grieve & sigh
Detest a wretched Life and wish to die—
A Hessian Doctor, from Long Island came

Soon as I came to this detested place
A wasted phantom star’d me in the face;
“And art thou come (death heavy in his eyes)
And art thou come to these abodes, he cries;
Why didst thou leave the Scorpion’s dark retreat,
And hither come, a surer death to meet;
Why didst thou leave thy damp infected cell,
If that was purgatory, this is hell;
Here wastes away Autolycus the brave,
Here young Orestes finds an early grave;
Here gay Alcander, gay, alas, no more,
Dies, far sequester’d from his native shore;
Ah, rest in peace, poor injur’d parted shade,
By cruel hands too soon in death array’d;
But happier climes where orbs unclouded shine,
Light undisturb’d and endless peace are thine;
—
He said and struggling in the pangs of death,
Gave his last groan and yielded his last breath.

Fair science &c, referring to lines for which no original is found
in the manuscript, but which appear in 1781 (437-46) as
Fair science never call’d the wretch her son,
And art disdain’d the stupid man to own;—
Can you admire why science was so coy,
Or art refus’d his genius to employ?—
On rocky hills can Eden’s blossoms grow,
Not great his skill, nor greater much his fame
He on his charge the curing work begun
With Antimonial Mixtures by the Tun
Ten Minutes was the time he deign'd to stay
The time of grace allotted once a day
He drench'd us well with bitter draughts I know
Peruvian Barks and Tartar Cremor, too
On those refusing he bestowed a Kick
Or laid them sprawling with his walking stick
Hence came our Deaths, by his untoward skill
And by Vending one another's purge or Pill
By frequent Blows we from his staff endur'd
He kill'd at least as many as he cur'd—

Do Trees of God in barren deserts grow,
Are loaded vines to Ætna's summit known;
Or swells the peach beneath the frozen Zone?—
Yet still he puts his genius to the rack,
And as you may suppose, became a quack.

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429. curing alt. from healing.
430. The time of grace alt. from This was the time, alt. from Ten Minutes.
431. In 1781 Tartar Cremor becomes Cremor-Tartar.
432. On those refusing alt. from To those that could.
433. In 1781 laid them sprawling becomes meanac'd vengeance.
434. In 1781 untoward becomes defective.
435. In 1781 Vending becomes sending.
436. By alt. from The: in 1781 staff becomes cane.
437. At least cancelled before and added after he kill'd.
438. In 1781 (459-80) adds

Some did not seem obedient to his will,
And swore he mingled poison with his pill;—
But I acquit him by a fair confession,
He was no Englishman, he was a Hessian;—
Although a dunce he had some sense of sin,
Or else the Lord knows here we now had been;
Doubtless in that far country went to range,
Where never prisoner meets with an exchange;—
Then had we all been banish'd out of time,
Nor I return'd to plague the world with rhime!

Our doctor had a master, chief physician,
To all the hospitals in their possession;
Once and but once by some strange fortune led,
He came to see the dying and the dead;
He came—but anger so deform'd his eye,
And such a fauchion glitter'd on his thigh;
And such a gloom his visage darkened o'er,
O'er this poor Vessel and her sickly band
A dismal Ruffian held the chief command
Tho unprovoked an angry face he wore
We stood astonishd at the Oaths he swore
He wishd us banishd from the public Light
Stark dead and buryd in eternal Night
That were he King no mercy would he show
But drive all Rebels to the world below,
That if we scoundrels did not scrub the Decks

His staff would break our damned rebel Necks
He swore besides, (not waiting for his turn)
That if the ship was burnt we too would burn
[For then by chance the chimney Pipe took fire]
[And that she was not burnt I much admire]
If, where he stood a loathsome carcase lay
Not alter'd was the language of the Day,
He thought us Dogs and would have us'd us so

And two such pistols in his hands he bore,—
That by the Gods—with such a load of steel,
He came, we thought to murder, not to heal;
Had he so dar'd—but fate with-held his hand,—
He came—blasphem'd—and turn'd again to land.

We stood astonishd alt. from And Devils trembled.

He swore—till every mortal stood aghast,
And thought him Satan in a brimstone blast;

Stark dead and alt. from He wishd us: in 1781 Stark dead and becomes he wished us.

And meant it so—this monster I engage.

Alternate line, written below and unc cancellation, And if she was not burnt, it was not our Desire: in 1781 becomes Had lost his post to gratify his rage.

That not a scoundrel would remain alive
No, not one Rebel of us all survive

In 1781 thought becomes call'd.
But Vengeance check’d the meditated blow
The vengeance from our injur’d country due

To him and all the base ungenerous crew
[Each day at least three Carcasses we bore]
[And scratchd some Graves along the sandy shore]
By feeble hands the shallow Graves were made
No stone memorial oer the Corpses laid,
In barren Sands, and far from home they ly
No friend to shed a Tear when passing by
Oer the slight Graves insulting Britons tread
Spurn at the sand and curse the Rebel dead—
When to your Arms these fatal Islands fall

For soon or late they must be conquerd all
Americans!—To Rites sepulchral just
Tread lightly on your hapless offsprings dust
And oer their Graves, if Graves can there be found
Place the Green Turf and plant the myrtle round
Americans, a just Resentment show
How long shall Britain dare to use us so
[While the warm blood shall swell the glowing vein]
[Resentment still must in my bosom reign]
[Can I forget [the] Vengeful Britons ire]

[Our fields in Ruin and our Domes on fire]
[No Age no Sex from Lust and Murder free]

458. future cancelled before Vengeance; check’d alt. from bade him; blow cancelled before meditated.
460. In 1781 ungenerous becomes unmanly.
461. Each day at least three Carcasses we bore alt. to Here corpses from the Hullk uncanceled.
462. some alt. from a: in 1781 some becomes them.
463. In 1781 Graves becomes tombs.
466. when passing by alt. from when walking by uncanceled, alt. from that travels by.
469. When alt. from If; Arms alt. from Power.
470. For soon or late alt. from As first as last; they must be conquerd alt. from Fate has decreed them: in 1781 soon or late becomes first or last.
472. hapless alt. from deceasd: in 1781 becomes With gentle footstep press this kindred dust.
473. In 1781 Graves twice becomes tombs.
474. Place alt. from Lay; plant the myrtle round alt. from sacred hold the ground.
476. In 1781 becomes And let your mind with indignation glow.
477. warm alt. from red; warm cancelled after glowing.
478. In 1781 becomes Let fierce resentment in your bosons reign.
479. the cancelled before Vengeful: in 1781 I becomes you.
480. In 1781 our twice becomes your.
[And black as Night the Hell born Refugee]
[[Must York] forever see your Lives expire]
[In Ships, in Prisons and in dungeons dire]
How long shall foes that trading city keep
Placed like old Tyre for Commerce on the deep
Rouse from your Sleep and crush the thievish Band
Defeat destroy and sweep them from the Land
Allyd like you, what madness to despair

490 Destroy the Traitors while they linger there—
*Weak and Divided, to your arms they yield*
*They dare not venture to the open field,—*
See to your Ports the British navy flee
*And France remains the Mistress of the Sea*
See all the Nations of the world combine
*And full resolvd to humble britain join*
See Washington bright Freedoms flag display
*Your Guardian God conducts you on your way*
*Immortal Honor to past deeds is due*

500 Recall those actions and aspire to new—
See Britain falls—the fates to ruin Bring
Her Lords, her chiefs, her monster of a King.

482. And black as Night alt. from The Britons [rage?].
483. First two words illegible.
485. foes alt. from they.
486. on alt. from near.
490. In 1781 Traitors becomes ruffians.
After 490. 1781 (545-54) adds

There Tryon sits, a monster all complete,
See Clinton there with vile Knyphausen meet;
And every wretch whom virtue should detest,
There finds a home—and Arnold with the rest;—
Ah! monsters, lost to every sense of shame,
Unjust supports of a tyrant's claim;
Foes to the rights of freedom and of men,
Stain'd with the blood of thousands you have slain;
To the just doom the righteous skies decree,
We leave you toiling still in cruelty;

494. remain alt. from remains.
497. No more cancelled before See.
499. past alt. from your; is alt. from are.
500. those alt. from brave.
501. In 1781 becomes The years approach that shall to ruin bring.
502. In 1781 her three times becomes your.