

A SEAMAN DIARIST

Of a Century Ago.

VOYAGE IN CONVICT SHIP.

(BY MRS. R. PICKNELL.)

I.

A hundred years ago next June there sailed from the Thames a ship, the *Kains*, which carried 120 women convicts to the penal settlement at Sydney. The *Kains*, 353 tons register, was privately owned, but had been chartered by the Government for this long and arduous voyage of 1830. In the writer's possession is a leather-bound note-book in which a member of the *Kains'* crew kept a daily record of the voyage, or at least for the first half of it. For at Capetown the entries cease. Whether the diarist shirked, like so many diarists do, the continuance of his efforts as a recorder, or whether he came to the end of his stationery, the present writer cannot say. It is to be regretted that the diarist's impression of the Sydney of a century ago are not available, but, in the entries of the six months covered, we can obtain a graphic picture of the conditions in which convicts of the early 19th century were brought from British gaols and taken to overseas penal settlements; of incidents of the voyage; and of the relations between master and crew.

The diarist was a young seaman named Charles Picknell. He was illiterate; his spelling atrocious in the light of present-day standards. But that he had had some education is shown by his writing—a bold, free-flowing style, which makes the reading of his pencilled entries, 100 years later, an easy task. He was, moreover, of an observant nature. Nothing seemed to miss his sharp eyes. His pencil never fails to record an interesting incident, however small and personal. He was, judging by his comments on people and events, a keen, shrewd student of character, simple, honest, unvindictive.

Picknell was born on June 15, 1810, one of ten children of William and Mary Picknell, a Hastings (Sussex) family. Five of the children died young. Of his boyhood there is no record, but that he was a fond and dutiful son there is evidence throughout the diary. On the first page, he had copied the inscription from a gravestone in the Fairlight (Has-

tion from a gravestone in the Fairlight (Hastings) cemetery, as follows:—

Sacred to the Memory of Marye the wife of
William Picknell,
Who departed this life 16 October, 1823,
Aged 45 years.

Also the mother of ten children, five of whom
are likewise departed, viz.: George, Marye, Thomas,
Jobe, Sarah.

The inscription ended with a four-lined
verse, all carefully transcribed into the diary.
I daresay that the 20-years-old sailor often
turned to that page during the stress and
strain of the long voyage, seeking comfort in
it from the dangers of his life and from the
harsh bullying of his officers.

It has been further established that Pick-
nell was apprenticed on May 1, 1826, to Boy-
kett Breeds, merchant and shipowner, "to
learn the art of mariner." In his diary he
carried the following certificate to his
ability:—

Hastings, April 5, 1830.

The bearer Charles Picknell was bound an appren-
tice to me to learn the art of a mariner.

I can only say that to the best of my knowledge
he is an Honest Steady Lad.

Boykett Breeds.

Picknell's apprenticeship was served in the
coasting trade, but that he made more than
the 1830 voyage in foreign waters is clear.
Transgressing from the diary for the moment,
there is evidence that Charles Picknell be-
came a master mariner, for among the papers
he left was a Master's Certificate of Service,
signed and issued at Hastings in 1851, to the
effect that he had been employed in the
capacities of apprentice, mate, and master
in the British Merchant Service in the coast-
ing and foreign trades for 26 years. After
retiring from the sea, Picknell became pier
master at Hastings. The municipal records
of this Sussex town show that he resigned
from that post on July 3, 1885, after 30 years'
service, being presented with a silver watch,
suitably inscribed, which is now in possession
of a descendant. He is well remembered by
old residents of Hastings, particularly in the
picturesque fishing quarter of the Old Town,
where the harbour and the old pier were situ-
ated. He died at Hastings in 1886, and was
buried, not far from his mother's grave, and
amid the graves of other of his family, many
of them also mariners. It is a wonderful
resting-place for a sailor, for Fairlight Church
stands on a cliff-top overlooking the English
Channel, and is a well-known landmark for
sailors at sea.

The diary which Picknell kept during the
Kains' voyage of 1830 is an interesting docu-
ment, and should be a valuable addition to
any collection of early Australian relics. It
is a sturdy, leather-bound volume, measur-
ing four and a half inches by three inches, and
about an inch and a half thick. Its paper
is in a good state of preservation. The writing
itself is in pencil, and is as clear as if it
had been recently done.

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Apart from the certificate of character from his master and his own master's certificate, previously mentioned, there is a copy of his indenture of apprenticeship with Boykett Breeds. A long and circuitously-worded document, this bound Picknell, among other things, "to keep his Master's lawful commands everywhere gladly, to do no damage to his said Master nor see to be done of others but to his power shall tell or forthwith give warning to his said Master of the same. He shall not waste the goods of his said Master nor lend them unlawfully. He shall not contract matrimony within the said term. He shall not play at cards or dice or any other unlawful games. . . . He shall not haunt taverns or playhouses." Boykett Breeds, on his side, promised to teach and instruct young Picknell, "finding unto the said apprentice sufficient meat, drink, lodging, and all other necessaries (except wearing apparel of all sorts)" and also contracted to pay the apprentice £7 during the first year, £8 during the second, £10 during the third, and £12 during the fourth, by monthly payments.

On May 1, 1830, Picknell became a fully-qualified sailor, or as he quaintly recorded this important event in his life: "C.P. came out of 'is time May the first in Castle-street at twelve a'clock in the parish of saint marey in the castle hastings sussex." Apparently he spent a few days in ease and then set off to London to find a ship. He arrived in London on June 1, having walked most of the way after vainly hailing coaches, which passed him, for a lift. He proceeded to call on a number of his family's acquaintances. The first was a Mr. George, but he found that "Misters" (Mrs.) George was dead and buried. He noted in his diary: "10 a'clock he wanted me to sleep on the bed she died upon. I sleep in the citchen upon some chairs that night." The next week he spent in visiting friends, and fell in with a man who had just left a ship. On June 12 the two of them went to London Docks to look for a ship, and on the following day to the Surrey Canal to look for a "yot" (yacht). On the 14th they met a Captain Goodwin, and the diarist recorded: "He gave us boath a horder to go on board the ship Kains the next day."

So on June 15 Picknell became a member of the crew of the Kains. His first job was "britching (breeching) the guns on boath sides." Until the 26th, he performed routine tasks such as fall to the lot of the crew when their ship is being prepared to put to sea for a long voyage. He stowed cargo in the holds, worked in the ship's magazine, helped to pump in fresh water. On June 27, he committed himself to the unknown terrors and dangers of a voyage to Australia. In his diary he made this amusing entry: "Signed articles for the 25 for sidney, new holland, vandemons land, to hell or elsewhere. I had 1 month's advance 2 pound. walked to london. 1 day on liberty." Leave ended at 8 o'clock the following evening, and then the Kains began to be loaded with its wretched human freight. The Kains was lying at Woolwich (Woolwich).

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The Kains was lying at Woolwich (Woolwich) and Picknell noted:—

"June 29. took in all prisoners from horse monger prison.

"30. took in prisoners from newgate prison all ironed and a crying.

"July the 1. took in prisoners from liverpool and manchester. heavy irons.

"2. took in prisoners from bermigan (Birmingham) and city of york."

Scottish and Irish prisoners were taken aboard on the 4th and 5th, but meanwhile, on the 3rd. "a sunderland brig drove athout (athwart) us, careyed away our maintopsail in to peases" (two pieces). On the 6th three free women named White, Arthur, and Harris came aboard. Next day Picknell recorded: "All prisoners and free women on board. The quakers came on board praying with them and giving the priseners all kinds of useful things. orders came from the government to sail next tide."

Picknell was on the eve of his great adventure.
