

A brief and remarkable
narrative of the life and
extreme sufferings of
Barnabas Downs, Jun.

Barnabas Downs

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[Illustration: Woodcut of a shipwreck]

A brief and remarkable NARRATIVE OF THE LIFE And extreme
=Sufferings= of *BARNABAS DOWNS*, Jun.

Who was among the Number of those who escaped Death on board the
Privateer Brig =Arnold=, =James Magee=, Commander, which was cast
away near =Plymouth-Harbour=, in a most terrible Snow-Storm,
December 26, 1778, when more than Sixty Persons were frozen to
Death.—Containing also

A particular =Account= of said Shipwreck.

=Printing-Office Liberty-square=, Sept. 22, 1786.

In the Press, and in a few Days will be published and ready for Sale, by
=E. Russell=, at his Office, near Liberty Pole, by the Thousand, Hundred,
Groat or lesser Quantity, at the most reasonable Rate:—Also may be had
of Mr. =Benjamin Guild=, at the Boston Book-Store, near the
State-House in Cornhill; Col. =Ebenezer Battelle=, Bookfeller, at the
London Book-Store, in Marlboro'-Street; Mr. =William Green=,
Bookfeller, at Shakefpear's-Head, in Newbury-Street; Capt. =William
Green=, at his Grocery and West-India Store near the Bridge, in *Boston*;
Mr. =Lemuel Cox=, and Mr. =Trumbull=, Innholder, near the Bridge,
and Mr. =Edward Hayes=, in *Charleston*; Mr. =Edward Killins=, at his
Store, near the Market, in *Salem*; Mr. =Bulkly Emerson=, at the
Post-Office, in *Newbury-Port*; Mr. =Alford Butler=, Bookfeller, in
Portsmouth, New-Hampshire, and by many other Printers, Bookfellers,
Shopkeepers and Travelling-Traders in Town and Country.

BICKERSTAFF's GENUINE AND CORRECT BOSTON
ALMANACK, For the Year of our =Redemption=, 1787.

Which will contain a great Variety of useful and entertaining =Matter=,
in =Prose= and =Verse=.

This =Work= will be likewise ornamented with a large Number of
engraved Plates, some of which represent the twelve Signs of the Zodiack
in Miniature, and the several Employments and Diversions of the
=Gentlemen Farmers=, throughout the different Seasons of the
Year:—Also a curious Representation of a =County Convention=,
debating on State-Affairs; at the Head of the Table is a Figure of
HONESTUS, that renowned Champion and bold Attestor of the
=Liberty= of the Subject, and sworn Enemy to =Lawyers=, who is
conversing with one of the Order; over his Head is a Label with these
Words “*No =Courts=, no LAWYERS:*” Another Plate represents a very
curious and droll Scene of a large Group of the =Black Order=, or the
=Sons= of =Littleton= and =Coke=, mounted on Jack-Asses, Peacocks,
&c. returning from a rich Feast at =Concord Court=, &c.

PREFACE.

*To the READER, into whose Hands this =Narrative= may fall; especially
my Seafaring =Brethren=.*

FRIENDS,

When any remarkable circumstances take place in a man's life, he feels
commonly a disposition to communicate them to the world: If they have
been deliverances from great and signal dangers, he will make this
communication from a principle of gratitude to the =Being= who hath
protected and preserved him: He will wish to engage others to be thankful
on his behalf; and a knowledge of the kindness of Heaven to him may
lead others to trust in GOD, when they are brought into like distress and
danger. By these motives the Subject of the following pages hopes he is

influenced in publishing them to the world; which is all the apology that may be expected from the =Publick='s distressed Friend,

BARN. DOWNES, Jun. =Barnstable=, September 10, 1786.

==> *The Author gratefully acknowledges himself indebted to a Reverend =Gentleman= in Boston for his kindness in correcting the following sheets.*

A NARRATIVE, &c.

I was born in *Barnstable*, in *New-England*, October 2, 1757, of credible Parents, whom I served as an obedient Son, I hope, until the commencement of the late war called me from my home, and led me to exchange the occupation of a Husbandman, to which I was bred for the more dangerous employment of a Soldier. In this capacity I served my Country 3 campaigns, and know not that my behaviour was censured by my officers.

After having returned for a time to the Farming-Business, I concluded to try my fortune at sea: I entered accordingly on board the Schooner *Bunker-Hill*, Captain *Ifaac Cobb*, Commander, on a privateering voyage: But we had not been out more than 6 days before we were taken by the brig *Hope*, one *Brown*, Commander, and carried into *Halifax*. We were committed to jail and kept very short: Then I was taken with the small-pox, thro' which GOD safely carried me when destitute of the necessaries of life, and under great pressure of mind. But after my being recovered so far as to be returned to the jail from the hospital, in consequence of my having nothing but a small allowance of salt provisions, which were next to poison for a sick person, I was taken with a violent fever, which returned me again to the hospital, and brought me to the gates of the grave. No person who hath not experienced it can imagine how gloomy and distressing it is to be under such circumstances: To be far distant from our dearest Friends; to be among persons who are not only

without any concern for us, or interest in our fate, but who are our professed enemies, and not governed even by the common principles of humanity, is a case truly melancholy. In this situation I was attacked with a bleeding of the nose, (to which I had before been subject) which brought me to the very borders of eternity!

After this I was, by the smiles of heaven recovered and restored, by a cartel, with 400 of my Countrymen to our own homes. How welcome they were to us, and how pleasant it was to me to see the faces of my Friends again, any one may imagine more easily than I can describe!

But tho' I had been so unsuccessful in my first attempt at sea, I could not resist the inclination I had to try once more what Providence would do for me: I left my native place, went to *Boston*, and entered on board the brig *Arnold*, *James Magee*, Commander. I well remember I felt an unusual dejection when I entered on this undertaking; and tho' I pretend not to say that this foreboded the misfortunes I was to meet with in this fatal vessel, yet I have often reflected upon it since with a degree of admiration.

While the brig lay in the harbour, I attempted with some other hands to go on board another vessel in a small boat, but the wind suddenly rising we were in danger of being drowned; the boat run on *Governor's-Island*, and we were obliged to stay there 24 hours before we could get off. Providence preserved my life in this danger, in order that I might live thro' greater, and testify to his loving kindness and mercy.

On December 24, 1778, Capt. *Magee* sailed from *Boston*: We had been at sea but a few hours, when a most terrible gale of wind arose, so that the water was almost knee deep on the leeward side of the quarter-deck. We continued in the Bay that day and the night following, but on the next day we got into *Plymouth*. The wind was abated, but the cold was severe and intense beyond description. We came to anchor a little below *Beach-Point*, in the Harbour of *Plymouth*.

On Saturday, December 26, about 6 o'clock in the morning, from the violent motion of the sea, the brig struck the bottom as tho' it would drive her keel in. As there was not depth of water enough to work the vessel in the place where we lay, and we saw a heavy storm coming on, our Commander thought it best to cut our cables and let her drive, which was immediately done. The storm increased very fast, so that we were obliged to cut away the main-mast, and we drifted upon an hard flat a little to the westward of *Beach-Point*.

This was early on Saturday morning, and we now laboured hard in throwing over our wood and getting our guns off the decks into the hold, but the vessel began to leak very fast, and with every motion of the sea she struck the bottom as tho' she would split in pieces. We kept 2 pumps going, but could not gain upon the water. The storm now increased to a most prodigious degree: It snowed so thick that we could see but a very little way from the brig, and the cold was extreme; we continued hard at work all day without eating or drinking any thing scarcely, having but little appetite with the prospect of death continually before our eyes.

Until now we had hopes of escape, but just before night we looked into the hold and saw the casks floating about; this drove us to despair, and we forsook the pumps without a ray of hope but from the immediate interposition of divine Providence. Many of the people now began to pray, and I went into the cabin and sat upon one of the gun-carriages. I had not been there long before I saw chests floating about, and perceived that the tide was flowing on us very fast; by direction of the Capt. all left the cabin and came upon the quarter-deck.

It is not possible to describe my sensations at this period; death appeared inevitable, and we waited every moment for its approach! Even now, when I recollect my feelings it is difficult to steady my pen! And indeed I had ground enough for my apprehensions, for we had not been long upon the quarter-deck before the water upon the main-deck was even with it.

Our fore-mast was still standing, which caused the vessel to roll very much, but when we had cut that away she lay stiller. The brig now lay funk; the tide was flowing fast and the sea broke very heavily over us. We were all upon the quarter-deck, and the water came in upon us ankle deep.

There was a fail in the netting upon the windward-quarter, which we contrived to lash over us, but there were so many under it that we should have been stifled for want of breath, if we had not cut places to let in the air. The tide was then about at its height but the storm did not abate. There was nothing to be heard around but screeches, groans and deep lamentations for themselves and their families, and earnest cries to GOD for mercy and relief!

There was such a croud upon the quarter deck we could not stand up without treading upon one another. Being in a struggle I was thrown down and trampled upon as if the breath would be crowded out of my body: However I soon recovered my feet and trampled upon others in my turn; for the immediate regard which every man had to his own life prevented him from attending to the distresses of his neighbours!

Struggling in this manner and trying to clear ourselves from those who fell down had pulled off most of our shoes, and the wet and cold soon froze our feet. Nature could sustain it no longer and the people began to die all around me. Capt. *John Ruffell* of *Barnstable* was the first of those with whom I was acquainted that died, but many others soon followed him. Fatigue and distress, added to the extreme cold and despair of relief, put a period to the lives of great numbers. Those who were able to stand were obliged to huddle up close together, and breathe in each other's faces to preserve them from freezing to death, while their comrades were dying around them all night. In the morning a most awful sight presented itself to us; 60 of our Comrades lay dead across each other, and but 2 of my Townsmen were among the living!

On Lord's-Day, Dec. 27, the storm abated and the sun appeared clear, but the severe cold still continued. We saw *Plymouth* and a number of people coming along the shore for our relief: We could discern them pull off two boats and make an hard trial to come to us, but the harbour was so full of ice they could not reach us: We saw them return and it gave us an inexpressible shock. The elevation which their appearance gave us tended to sink us the lower. Our situation was very gloomy; we had little to support nature except rum; no shoes on our feet, and very much frozen; the Heavens was our only covering!

I retained my senses until about 2 o'clock on Lord's-Day, but was then deprived of them and lay on the quarter-deck until the next day, when a boat got to us in order to carry the living ashore, which amounted only to 32. When they were looking around to collect the survivors, they at first supposed me to be dead, but seeing one of my eye-lids move they took me up and laying me in the boat carried me ashore.

I was carried to Mr. *Bartlet's* tavern, whose kindness to me I would thus publicly acknowledge, and hope I shall always remember with gratitude. My cloaths were first cut from off me and I was put into cold water in order to take out the frost: I was then placed in bed and having my teeth forced open had some cordials poured down my throat, but I have no remembrance of any of these transactions, for I lay perfectly senseless until 2 o'clock on Monday, when my senses came to me at once. My eyes were not open, but I heard the voices of persons talking around me, and the first idea which struck me was, that I was still on board the brig, but that a boat come to our relief. I soon however opened my eyes and was informed of what had happened and where I then was.

I recovered gradually, but was obliged to pass thro' the painful operation of having some of my limbs separated from my body: But after all these distresses I am still among the living to praise GOD! Let my spared life be devoted to his service, and may I ever be mindful of his benefits!

Names of the Deceas'd belonging to Barnstable.

Capt. John Ruffell, Barn. Lothrop, Daniel Hall, Tho. Casley, Eben. Bacon, Jasey Garritt, John Berry, Barnabas Howes, Stephen Bacon, Jon. Lothrop, Boston, a Negro Man.

The SHIPWRECK: A =Hymn= of Praise.

Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy water-spouts: All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.—Yet the LORD hath shewn his loving kindness in the day-time: In the night my song shall be with him, and my prayer unto the GOD of my life.—When I remember these things I pour out my soul in me, with the voice of joy and praise. David.

When mountain billows o'er me roll I poured out my troubled soul
When waves of adverse fortune meet, Thou prov'd a guide unto my feet.

2. My song shall always be on GOD, I'm fav'd by his uplifted rod; My
utmost search shall be to know The LORD who fav'd from frost and snow.

3. LORD may I fear thee all my days, Thy mercies claim my highest
praise; For in the time of deep despair, Preserv'd I was by heav'nly care.

4. The LORD is good to those who call On Him, and do depend for all; In
adverse fate if we depend On GOD, he will deliverance send.

5. In deep distress and trouble fore, When surging billows round me roar,
Altho' he slay me, yet I'll trust On =God=, my Saviour, who is just.

6. Not only trust but I will call On =Him=, who is the LORD of all; My
day-long shall in thee accord, And in the night I'll praise the LORD.

7. Thy goodness and thy tender care Reliev'd me when in deep despair;
Thy gracious and thy friendly Crook I will record in this my Book.

8. Had it not been for thy controul, The deep would swallow up my soul;
Tho' frost me of my feet deprive, Yet I will praise thee I'm alive.

9. Alive to praise thee, O my GOD, Tho' chaf't'ned with afflicting rod;
But should my sins been marked well, My soul would have been sent to Hell.

10. But blessed be his holy Hand, I am return'd to native land; Tho'
sickness did my spirits waste, Thy flowing mercy I do taste.

11. My Kindred and my Friends so dear; Trust in the LORD and always
fear =Him= who can save, if you rely On =One= who rules above the sky.

12. Lo, =Seamen=, one and all attend, Look well to what I here have
pen'd; Let me intreat you not to swear, But live in GOD's most holy fear.

13. He will vouchsafe when danger's nigh, To help, if on =Him= you
rely; Tho' storms arise on raging main, He'll bring thee safe to Friends
again.

14. I say to all trust in the LORD, He will your grottoes always guard,
From tempests dire and sickness fore; Your basket fill, and bless your
store.

A HYMN. By another =Author=.

My soul, my powers bless ye the =Lord=, With Hymns of praise his
wonders sound, When threat'ning danger round me stood I fought his
help and succour found.

2. Hopeless I saw my gloomy cave, When bursting waves broke o'er my
head, Then did my soul address his throne, And all its wants before him
spread.

3. Then in the mount did GOD appear, And made his light in darkness
shine, At his rebuke the Tempest fled, To magnify his arm divine.

4. He said I have a ransom found, Therefore ye sons of men return, I will
no more with you contend, Nor let my wrath forever burn.

5. I am the LORD who rules the seas, My voice can hush the roaring waves, The keys of death are in my Hand To shut or open oozy graves.

6. Come trust the LORD in all your straits, His great salvation call to mind, My own experience can attest, The LORD is good, his dealings kind.

7. Within the book of his accounts, Each of my members written are, Without commission from his Hand, There shall not fall a limb or hair.

8. With joyful heart I'll tread his Courts, And pay my vows among his Saints, To Him my life, my all devote, Who bow'd his Ear to my complaints.