

action shots, assist the mind's eye in creating scenes while the maps place the combat in geographic context. I recommend *Disputed Victory* for those seeking a deeper understanding of the US Navy's role during the Spanish-American War.

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**Vyvyen Brendon. *Children at Sea: Lives Shaped by the Waves*. Barnsley, S. Yorks: Pen & Sword History, [www.pen-and-sword.co.uk](http://www.pen-and-sword.co.uk), 2020. 256 pp., illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. UK £15.99, US \$29.95, paper, ISBN 978-1-52677-242-8.**

“What cheer, mate?” Who can forget the “half-grown boy in sea clothes” of Robert Louis Stevenson’s classic novel *Kidnapped* (1886)? Alas, there was little cheer for him or his real-life counterparts in the age of sail. More often than not, as movingly demonstrated by Vyvyen Brendon in this well-researched study, the story of children afloat is generally one of backbreaking work, peril, abuse, suffering, and neglect.

In her introduction, Brendon explains that she “was drawn to this subject by a strong affinity for the sea” (1). Her forbears grew up in Britain’s remote Isles of Scilly, and several, as teenagers, took to the waves, where they lived, worked, and died hard. During the Second World War, when Brendon herself was yet a child, her father served on the dangerous Murmansk Run. While too young to fathom what he was facing, she easily recalls her mother’s “anxiety” (1). Brendon studied history at St. Anne’s College, Oxford, and went on to a teaching career. After retirement, she devoted her energies to research and writing, producing two previous works, *Children of the Raj* (2005) and *Prep School Children* (2009).

Brendon is clearly qualified to explore her latest topic. As with her previous books, her scope is limited to the experience of children who were born “in Victorian and Georgian times, when the sea was still the key element of Britain’s national existence” (5). This presents certain challenges to reconstructing their stories. To begin with, these children lived in an age when they were “supposed to be seen and not heard” (4). Many of them were “waifs and strays” (5) for whom the only records are from hostile or indifferent institutions like the police or law courts. Evidence for what these children themselves thought or felt is limited. If a child was lost or buried at sea, there was often no documentation, and those who survived frequently disappeared and are difficult or impossible to trace in their destination countries.

Undaunted, Brendon persevered and, thanks to creative sleuthing, manages to highlight some remarkable stories. She focuses on eight children, including

Mary Branham, a convict bound for Australia; Joseph Emidy, an African boy enslaved by the Portuguese, freed, and impressed into the Royal Navy, who became a successful concert violinist in Cornwall; Sydney Dickens, one of Charles Dickens' sons, who became an officer in the Royal Navy; and Ada Southwell, whose father's suicide led to the dissolution of her family and her forced emigration to Canada.

Brendon effectively interjects life and colour into the hard experiences of these children. For example, Mary Branham was accused in December of 1784 of "stealing clothes and taking them to the pawnbroker" (9). Her mother described Mary as not yet 14 and "seduced" away by bad people (9). Unloved at home and a thief in the eyes of the law, the child was sent to the new penal colony in distant Botany Bay. As she and everyone else knew, her prospects of returning after her seven-year sentence were poor. And so she found herself on board the transport *Lady Penrhyn*, chained below decks for months before the ship even sailed, one vessel among a fleet loaded with such unfortunates. *Lady Penrhyn* carried only women and girls. Despite a compassionate fleet commander, they suffered all the vicissitudes of a dangerous open-ocean passage. The stormy south Atlantic tumbled Mary and her fellow convicts about their cramped quarters and left them badly bruised. As if foul weather was not bad enough, the girls were constantly exposed to the revolting smells emanating from the bilge, made up of "sea water mixed with urine, puke, dung, rotting food and dead rats" (15). Shamefully but predictably, the sailors preyed on the girls, and some of the latter prostituted themselves, trading sexual favours for treats. By voyage's end, many of these "sea-wives" (17), Mary among them, were pregnant. Brendon, unable to discover Mary's fate, loses track of her in 1791. She sadly concludes that in the British government's zeal to get rid of children like Mary, it "also cut them off from history" (27).

Joseph Emidy's astonishing odyssey is recoverable through a variety of sources. When he was a music teacher in Cornwall, one of his students was the young James Silk Buckingham, to whom Emidy told much, but not all, of his story. Buckingham later included the tale in his own autobiography. Perhaps understandably, Emidy chose not to share his slavery years with his young student. In order to better understand that painful experience, Brendon relies on the "ample documentation about the infamous system" (5) penned by many contemporary witnesses. Fortunately for Brendon, Emidy's later years were well chronicled in Cornish newspapers and memoirs. That Emidy was able to marry an Englishwoman and successfully raise a large and happy family is tribute to his fortitude and his ability to parlay his musical gift into broad community acceptance in spite of racial prejudice.

Even better documented is the life of Dickens' fifth son, Sydney. Born in 1847, during which time his father was writing the briniest of his novels,

*Dombey and Son*, Sydney emerges as a distinctive personality. When a toddler he accompanied his family on a seaside holiday and was observed “casting a faraway look over the ocean” (164). He was promptly nicknamed “Ocean Spectre.” Dickens thought the boy “an odd child” but one with “a great deal of originality and character” (167). Despite his beloved public persona, Dickens was a “quixotic” father, prone to depression, distraction, and strange practical jokes (165). Among the latter was the suggestion that three-year-old Sydney walk down to the train station to see if an expected guest had arrived. The boy went some distance before the family retrieved him.

The woefully undersized Sydney went to naval school to become a midshipman at the tender age of 12. He genuinely wanted to join the navy, so his father helped arrange it. Two years later Sydney departed on the steam frigate HMS *Orlando*. Dickens senior quipped that the lad boarded with a sea chest “in which he could easily have stowed himself and a wife and family of his own proportions” (174). The boy appears to have been well-liked by his shipmates who, inspired by the 1861 publication of *Great Expectations*, good-naturedly nicknamed him “Little Expectations” (176). Unfortunately, the moniker proved apt. Sydney drank and ran up gambling debts to such an extent that his father despaired and actually wished him dead. At only 25, Sydney obliged, the cause “general debility” according to an official report. His body was “committed to the Indian Ocean” (184). Brendon makes it clear that a sailor’s life made harsh emotional as well as physical demands, and Sydney, alas, was poorly prepared to meet them.

*Children at Sea* is a heartbreaking read. One is thankful to live in a modern society that no longer condones enslavement of children or routinely sends them to sea as convicts or naval officers. At the same time, one marvels at the determination of the human spirit, nowhere as manifest as in the life of Joseph Emidy, to endure and achieve some measure not simply of survival but triumph.

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**Kâtip Çelebi. Svatopluk Soucek (ed.). *The History of the Maritime Wars of the Turks*. Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, [www.markuswiener.com](http://www.markuswiener.com), 2012. 184 pp., illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography. US \$97.49, paper; ISBN 978-1-55876-548-1.**

The objective of Svatopluk Soucek, the modern editor, and the publishers of this work is to introduce a classic text of Turkish maritime history and its author to a general English-speaking audience. At the time of its writing in the seventeenth century, it was intended to exhort the leaders of the Empire how to