

prisoners, inspect the ship daily, and administer punishment, even unto death if necessary. The surgeon also has control over the master of the vessel, and his regulations. The master and mates, on receiving a certificate from the surgeon, are allowed a small sum for every convict landed, in addition to their pay.

The criminals have prison fare, and are supplied with wooden-ware for their eating utensils, which are kept in very nice order. The quarter-deck is barricadoed near the main-mast, abaft of which all the arms and accoutrements of the guard and vessel are kept. The master and officers are usually lodged in the poop-cabin. The prisoners are habituated to the discipline of the ship, on board the hulks, before leaving England. The usual, and most effectual, punishment for misbehaviour is to place the culprit in a narrow box on deck, in which he is compelled to stand erect. This punishment is said to be effectual in reducing the most refractory male convicts to order, but it was not found so efficacious in the female convict-ship; for, when put in the box, they would bawl so loudly, and use their tongues so freely, that it was found necessary to increase the punishment by placing a cistern of water on the top of the box. This was turned over upon those who persist in using their tongues, and acted on the occupant as a shower-bath, the cooling effect of which was always and quickly efficacious in quieting them. I was informed that more than two such showers were never required to subdue the most turbulent.

I was struck with the ruddy, healthy, and athletic looks of the young convicts that were arriving, and from their deportment and countenances I should hardly have been inclined to believe that they had been the perpetrators of heinous crimes.

I am not at all surprised that many of the settlers of the colony should be opposed to the change in the assignment system; for when such a fine body of men is seen, the reason is easily understood, as the possession of such strong and hale persons to all intents and purposes as slaves, and at the expense of their maintenance alone, must be very lucrative to those requiring labourers. I am, on the other hand, at a loss to conceive how the assignment system can be looked upon in any other light than as a great evil, which must be abolished if it be designed to make the inhabitants of New South Wales a moral community, and to reform the convicts. It acts most unequally on the parties, and is a barrier to the reformation that the punishment of transportation is intended to effect.

The convicts on arriving are sent to the barracks at Sydney. The government selects from them such mechanics as are required for the public service, and then the numerous applicants for labourers are