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"P A L M A L I A"

The Story of the Palmer's Journey to Australia.

March 1947.

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CHAPTER 1. DECISION AND DEPARTURE.

On the 18th October 1946 an advertisement appeared in the "Post Magazine" asking for an Actuary with Industrial Branch experience to go to Australia.

At that time the outlook in England was dark; the economic situation was doubtful, my position as Assistant Actuary with the Liverpool Victoria was not what it should have been and altogether I was feeling overworked, underpaid and generally disgusted. I had been making efforts over the previous year or so to find some more agreeable and remunerative employment and decided to apply for the position. Immediately after making my application I received a letter from Clough, Chairman of the Students' Society Appointments Board, drawing my attention to the advertisement and suggesting that I should reply to it.

On the 4th November a letter was addressed to me by Mr. G.A.Beatton, Manager for the U.K. of the Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society Ltd., asking me to call upon him to talk over the matter. We met the following Thursday, the 7th November, and discussed the proposition together with Neares, Manager for Africa. The position offered was that of Industrial Sub-Manager.

Several more interviews followed to elaborate the basis offer but, whilst the main post and emoluments were satisfactory

enough, I raised several important points in a letter dated the 22nd November and turned the proposition down on the following grounds:-

(a) The housing question appeared insoluble - information in my possession pointed to rents being so high that the increase of salary I should receive would be largely absorbed in such payments.

(b) There was a clear loss of £100 per annum widow's pension.

The reply from Mr. Beatton cleared up the minor points in my letter, but the major ones were referred back to Melbourne. On the 10th December I was again asked to see Mr. Beatton and following that interview I gave a formal acceptance of the post. The Society had offered to build a house and rent it to us, rates and internal repairs being defrayed by us. It also guaranteed a widow's pension at least equal to that obtained under the Victoria basis.

A contract was drawn up between us and the completed copy was sent to me on the 4th January 1947.

It was not without a great deal of thought that we finally reached our decision to accept the opportunity. For three whole long evenings in mid-December Gertie and I discussed the matter from every conceivable angle. Was the game worth the candle? How did £A1 compare with £1 sterling in purchasing power? Should I like the work? Should we made good immigrants? How would the children fare both now and in an

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unforeseeable future? What would be the reactions of our two remaining parents? What did our relatives and friends think of the idea and the prospects?

For days we sought information on life, costs and prospects in Australia; we talked to our neighbours, our relatives and our friends. But the answer was always the same: go - there is nothing to stop you and precious little to stay for in England. We were envied our opportunity by all and sundry.

And so it came about.

Then followed the complex job of making one's exit. First of all I resigned from the Victoria. That happened on the 31st December, the day when the New Year's Eve dance was held. My office associates were dumbfounded. For nigh on 20 years Palmer had been at Head Office, staying on whilst others had left; in fact he had become part of the furniture. The effect was immediate and considerable.

Then followed the usual paraphernalia, passports and photographs, a licence to export jewellery and pictures, a permit to take one's life policies away, an application for extra clothing coupons, forms to fill, more forms to fill and yet more forms. Arranging transport for furniture, a timber licence to make the crates, a special job of the piano, another special job to get the dog, Rob, taken; and then all the bits and pieces, notifying the landlord of our going, selling up the things we did not want, arranging to sell our few Savings Certificates, concentrating all the money in our joint banking account, arranging money for the voyage and the balance being

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transferred to Melbourne - all this took days and days tramping around in the severest weather we had ever known, snow, ice and biting winds. Finally we had electricity cuts from 9 to 12 and from 2 to 4 each day - we ate in London by candlelight - when we ate.

At home Gertie was in an equally unending rush, mending and patching our rags to give us a change of clothing on board ship - shopping, cooking, tidying up and throwing away - hours and hours of it.

Bit by bit we produced order out of chaos. Our passage was fixed for Tuesday, the 25th February by R.M.S. Orion. How lucky we were! This vessel, the largest of the Orient line boats (24,500 tons) had been on war service and was just out from a nine months refit. It was her first voyage and we were travelling first class. In due course our passage ticket came through. Then followed the business of packing for the voyage - what to put in the hold, what in the baggage room to which access was only obtainable once a week and what in the cabins. The more we did the more there seemed to do; every single article of clothing had to be packed to supply the needs of spring, summer, autumn and winter for we knew we should meet all four seasons during our four weeks voyage taking us half way round the world.

Our friends and relations rallied round magnificently and our going away will be long remembered. Presents and good wishes were bestowed on all of us from the slender resources

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of those we were to leave behind; never at any time was life so difficult in England - the unprecedented cold had brought shortages more severe than we had ever known even in the darkest months of war. And yet witness the following:-

From the Victoria Staff	-	A silver cigarette case
From our neighbours	-	A magnificent leather handbag A Bina pen
From the School	-	A puzzle, souvenir card A picture cutout, a book
From relatives	-	Cash, clothing coupons, etc.

And so we came to the last few days prior to departure. On Tuesday, the 18th February, we gave a small "At Home" to our neighbours - thirty-two in all. A most enjoyable affair which we think made many realise how much social contact had been lost from the enforced shortages of the war and the peace.

On Thursday, the 20th, the children left Heathfield High School. They were given a most exceptional send-off. There is no doubt whatever that they both were well-liked members of a most excellent school. Miss Norris, the head-mistress, gave to Gertie at a parting interview most eloquent testimony to them and their mistresses were most loth to lose them.

On Saturday, the 22nd, we spent most of the day with Ded and the Aunties at Acton. The children had gone there the previous day to stay until the time to depart arrived. We ourselves had accepted the very kind offer made by Mr. & Mrs. Hobbs to stay with them at No. 18 after our

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furniture was removed from No. 27 on the Friday.

On Sunday, the 23rd, we all (including Dad), went to Iver to spend the day - we think that there could have been no fatted calves left in Britain by the Tuesday - they had all been killed for our especial benefit.

Monday, the 24th February, the eve of our departure we spent in last minute preparations and final calls on our special friends.

As the time to go drew near, our feelings grew more and more mixed. The first thrill of the adventure passed. The breaking of old ties formed during over ten years residence in Hatch End became an accomplished fact; it was only then perhaps that we began to realise finally that when once the train moved out of St. Pancras, the four of us would be virtually alone. In England we always had parents, relatives and friends to whom we could turn in time of trouble, with whom we could share our pleasures and experiences. Soon, very soon, they would be far away, not lost, but physically not present. And so for some time to come we must rely completely on our own resources, we must make new friends and must build perhaps a different and certainly a new life to replace the one we are leaving.

On Tuesday we pottered around until 11.15 a.m. We caught the 11.25 to Euston and then had a taxi to take our four cases to St. Pancras. There we picked up the children, our respective fathers, Will, Bernard Evans, Herbert and

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Mrs. Gill, Eileen and David, Mr. Beatton, the Aunties and Mr. Faragher. The first half of the first class passengers left at 12.48 and we were in the second half due to leave at 1.18. The minutes seemed interminable. So much to say, so much left unsaid. Then we took our seats and on the minute were away. During those last few awkwardly painful moments Will was magnificent. He cracked jokes in quick succession, got a laugh and so sent us off in a happy atmosphere. A great chap Will - I wish he too would take the plunge.

The journey to Tilbury was uneventful. We ate a few sandwiches as we did not know when our first meal might be and so whiled away the hour or so to the dockside. At about 2.30 the train pulled in. our passports were examined, then we queued up for the formalities. Our sailing tickets were checked also the passports again and we were given embarkation cards. Then the ration books were cancelled, the identity cards cancelled and the passports examined again. On to another section where I was questioned by a Customs Official who appeared satisfied with our luggage, duly scribbled on it and we were ready to embark. Proceeding to the gangway, we handed over the embarkation cards and were permitted to board.

Our cabins, two in number, were each two-berthed on "E" Deck, port side rather forward. They were not very large but were well equipped and comfortable. Our advance

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luggage was already there and no packages missing.

The cabin was decorated in blue and silver with new gleaming white paint. It had a dressing table, wardrobe (with adequate fittings and hangers), washbasin and three mirrors. There was an infra-red ray electric stove, porthole and punkah - louvre ventilation and four lights, three being operated from the bunk side. The children's accommodation was similar.

Soon after embarkation a hand round tea was served on "B" Deck and this was our first impression of no rationing. What a sight for eyes which had seen nothing but austerity for so long. Cakes by the hundred, cream buns, iced cakes, delicious pastries and tea with unlimited sugar. They did not last long! But unlike home there were more to follow - as soon as the first batch had disappeared more were produced. And so we left at 4.45 p.m. to the blare of martial music over loudspeakers, eating cream buns and drinking tea.

After tea, we made a tour of the ship, trying to discover our way about and where the various points of importance were on each Deck.

At 5.30 p.m. we had boat-drill on "B" Deck. Our life-belts were donned and each group of passengers proceeded to its station, just as would be done in an emergency. Lesley insisted that as it was "drill" she must of course wear her plimsolls.

Dinner was at 7 p.m. - and what a dinner! Of this more anon.

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Soon after dinner we put the children to bed. They had had a tiring day and an exhausting week. Shirley in particular had felt the strain of parting and if they could have a good night's rest we hoped they might then be ready to cope with the Channel and the Bay of Biscay the following day.

Our feelings that evening were very little. The final rush to get everything done, to write all the letters which wanted writing, to settle the odd bills, to pack the last few bits and pieces and to see all those who had been our friends left us tired and exhausted. The night was calm, the river dark and the boat travelling slowly and with scarcely a tremor, so at about 9.30 we went to our cabins, there to seek sleep and repose. The children were fast asleep and apparently comfortable. Nature had had her way, and the Bay held no terrors for them.

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CHAPTER 2. THE BOAT.

R.M.S. Orion is the first boat in the Orient line, a vessel of 24,500 tons, with oil-burning engines developing horse power to drive her through the oceans at 21 knots.

A brief tour of the first class accommodation will perhaps be of interest and serve to identify the events and happenings of the voyage.

On "F" Deck is the dining saloon amidships. This is a large room extending the full width of the vessel, about 85 feet. It is air-conditioned and always strikes fresh and cool on entry. The first visit was most impressive after the dirt and squalidness of London. Snow white new linen was on every table, virgin silver at every place. Pink or yellow tulips graced the tables, the colours showing to perfection in soft fluorescent lighting radiated from ceiling and wall panels. On the walls also were quaint glass sea-horses cannily fashioned as to reflect green light from every angle.

The furniture is wood, probably ash, covered with blue hide. The panels in the walls are of maple and the curtains are blue and silver.

A lovely setting in which to eat good food, perfectly cooked and served by a well-trained steward.

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The baggage room is also on "F" Deck and was open daily from 11 a.m. for an hour.

On "E" Deck the ironing and drying room is for'ard close to our two cabins. This being the first voyage after the refit, we found some things not fully in working order, amongst which were the laundry arrangements. Gertie therefore washed our clothes as far as possible in the cabin basin, rigged a wee clothes line to dry them and then ironed in the special room. There she found a new type of electric iron which fitted into a slot containing the electric contacts. The irons were in pairs so that whilst one was in use the other was heating. The absence of cable proved a decided advantage over the usual type of electric iron.

Adjoining each group of cabins were baths and lavatories. Baths were of hot salt water with a small basin above the foot containing hot fresh water; thus normal soap could be used and afterwards rinsed off either by lying in the water or by using the spray or shower over the bath.

For'ard on this Deck were the surgeon, assistant surgeon and nurse in case of emergency.

Amidships was more sleeping accommodation, some more luxurious with bathroom attached.

On "D" Deck for'ard was the ship's shop, behind which were ladies' and gents.' hairdressing saloons. The shop is of course quite small - but to the passengers coming from a

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beauty-starved country, a source of unending wonder and interest. Silk stockings, silk blouses, silk scarves, cameras, films, sweets, handbags, compacts, scent - a thousand wonderous things for male and female alike - not dear, no coupons, no restrictions at all. Not unnaturally the passengers take full advantage of their heaven-sent opportunity and spend to their heart's content. We bought a couple of films, a silk blouse and a brooch quite early just to show willing.

On "D" Deck is the Purser's office and letter bureau.

"C" Deck is the first promenade deck; we spend most of the mornings and afternoons sitting about enjoying the weather or the scenery as the case may be. It is quieter than "B" Deck which is more spacious. Forward is the children's play-room where there is very good accommodation for all ages up to about ten. Blackboards, puzzles, shapes, stencils and so forth occupy the hands of the mites whilst a small ship's bridge with wheel and binnacle, a helter-skelter, seesaw and Wendy house keep the bigger children (including a few aged 40-50) amused. Aft is the swimming pool which is in good demand. The children have exclusive use of the pool from 2 to 4 p.m. when the water is steadily lowered from 6 to 3 ft. A children's hostess is detailed for the greater part of each day to keep a watch-ful eye over the seventy odd nippers aboard and to organise games for them.

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The state cabins and suites occupy the rest of the deck space. "B" Deck is the main source of attraction, containing as it does the show pieces and main public rooms.

Forward is a spacious lounge with polished wood floor and blue, silver and fawn rugs. The furniture is covered in blue and silver fabric with patterned blue and silver hangings to match. The for'ard end of the lounge is notable for a dummy "fire-place". It consists of a large radiator (infra-red ray tubes), over which is a recessed mantle-piece containing a huge bowl of artificial flowers, tulips, lilies, roses and so on ; surrounding the whole is an enormous mirror some 12 ft. high and 15 or 16 ft. in breadth. Etched into the mirror are vaious symbolical designs, sea-horses, mermaids and the like.

A small semi-circular grand piano is on the right of the fire-place.

Next to the lounge is the ship's library and reading room. This is decorated in fawn material and is very comfortable.

Beyond the library is a sort of foyer, similarly furnished which leads to covered deck space used each evening for dancing or a film show.

Lighting is adequate everywhere and is of different types. The main lighting is fluorescent with subsidiary vertical strip lights on the walls. To retain the nautical flavour, ship's lamps, miniature lighthouses and shells also assist the picture.

After luncheon and dinner coffee is served in the public rooms.

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A promenade deck extends right round this deck and ample deck chairs of an unusually comfortable type supply the needs of the less athletic passengers.

"A" Deck is the sports deck and also the one where maximum visibility can be obtained. Cables can be sent from this deck as well.

Above everything of course is the "bridge".

CHAPTER 3. THE VOYAGE - TO GIBRALTAR AND PORT SAID.

26th February. We woke soon after 7.30 a.m. to a moderate sea with the boat pitching somewhat and rolling slightly. The children were excited with the movement of the vessel and accompanied it to wails not unlike the siren of less happy times. Had they taken things easily they would probably have been all right, but skylarking about, up and down into the top bunk, made them both a bit sea-sick.

Gertie, after a slight retching, and I were all right and we had our first breakfast at 8 a.m.

The children ate no breakfast and we wrapped them in warm coats and a blanket brought for the purpose and put them in deck chairs on "B" Deck out of the wind. The day was fine and with a walk now and again they soon recover d.

Perhaps our most obvious reaction on this first day was to the food. Breakfast off five courses, luncheon off five courses and dinner off six courses was such a violent break with the

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unrelieved monotony and grimness of our previous diet that we had to pinch ourselves to make sure we were not dreaming.

Fruit and rice, cereal, bacon and fresh eggs, hot rolls of half a dozen different kinds, toast and marmalade with unlimited butter became our daily breakfast with suitable variations. Lunch follows at 12.30 ushered in by a cornet-player blaring forth the "Officers Call". This consists of soup, fish, joint, two vegetables, sweet, cheese, rolls and butter to finish. At 7 p.m. comes dinner to the call of "Roast Beef of Old England" - this resembles the lunch menu but starts with hors d'oeuvre before soup and replaces cheese with dessert and adds a savoury if you wish.

The bread is perhaps the most remarkable sight - snowy white and light as a feather.

Cooking is perfect and service just as it should be. All the stewards a re British on this line and we were particularly lucky in having an old pre-war man who had travelled on the boat before.

Our dining companions were four in number: opposite were Mr. & Mrs. Burton - he a retired naval man of nice taste and a great raconteur. They were stationed in Gibraltar for several years and had intimate knowledge of South Spain and France. To our right was an Aberdeen lady, Mrs. Teale, on a trip to see her children in Australia, and on our left a Lancastrian lady of rather more lowly station - lived all her life in the country and very obviously out of her depth in the

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company aboard.

Our next important discovery was that drinks and tobacco were absurdly cheap after the prices we had been paying in London. Cigarettes were plentiful at 2/- for 50 instead of 5/10d. Whisky and Schweppes 1/3d., gin and lime 9d., sherry 1/-, cider 10d. and so on. We agreed that one could be happily soused for the price of a 10/- note. Noticeably passengers drank very little.

So the first day passed peacefully with us all gaining confidence in our ability to become fair sailors.

27th February. We had a better night having all got used to the noise of the sea. Our cabins are just above the place where the bow wave breaks and so we have a continual noise of swirling, foaming sea: now that we are used to it, it will seem strange to be without it.

Appetites were by now all in good working order. The children's feeding arrangements are not good and the three-sitting scheme is not working at all well. Other passengers are complaining of delay and one or two children have lost a meal altogether. Being virtually a maiden voyage we are not surprised that some things are not fully working but if the children's feeding is not altered we shall have to have a moan.

Had early morning tea at 7.15 a.m. - our steward was rather shaken yesterday to find that when he brought tea in after 8 a.m. the birds had flown. Quite a few passengers keeping to their bunks.

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Sea choppy passing through the Bay of Biscay but not half as bad as we had expected. Passed Cap Finisterre during the afternoon.

Tipped the dining steward and our cabin steward 10/- each. A bit to go on with seems to be the thing to do.

Started unpacking our cases. We seem to have an awful lot of stuff in the cabins but suppose we shall want it all.

Tomorrow we shall be out of the Bay and heading for Gibraltar.

28th February. Visibility still not good although sun has now appeared and weather is distinctly warmer. Shed my pullover. Children have donned shorts and are playing deck quoits.

Our first real thrill at 4 p.m. when we passed through the Straits and saw Gibraltar. Rather misty but had broken views of the Rock and the land behind it. Approaching the Orion were four destroyers in line abreast. As they neared us they changed to line ahead and passed quite close on our port side. A magnificent sight. Signalled "Glad to see you in your peace-time colours" - could not see our reply. Fog horn sounding for an hour.

This is our last view of Europe and our first sight of Africa on the starboard beam. Weather still getting better and as soon as we had passed through a bit of swell just prior to reaching the Straits, the sea became very calm. Hardly any trace of movement in the boat and it is difficult to realise one is doing a steady 20 miles per hour. Even a Rolls is poor comfort beside this.

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The children have met two sisters Shirley (nearly 12) and Jennifer (nearly 9) who are the daughters of a Mr. & Mrs. Godfrey. He is a dentist going to Queensland under the Government health arrangements. Very nice people of about our own age. Tipped children's stewards 10/- each.

We notice that the "glad rags" are beginning to appear at dinner time. We are shedding clothes a bit and do not have to wear overcoats when outside on deck.

1st March. We are having most lovely weather - sunshine all day just like an English April with a fresh breeze to give one an appetite. How we keeping on turning up to three sumptuous meals a day is amazing. We still cannot believe it is true.

We are keeping a very southerly course only a few miles off the coast of Algiers as we hear that this is still the only path which is kept free of floating mines. We are glad to know that we carry radar equipment.

Had a bit of a shock this a.m. when we found that we have no stamps aboard to allow us to air mail the letters we have written so bought some 6d. air letters. Now we shall have to sit down and write the whole blooming lot again.

Cabled home to G.N.P. and A.H.B. 20 words each for 6/8d. to let them know we are alive and well. Expect they will be wondering how we are getting on. We do not reach Port Said

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until eight days after sailing so even an air mail letter will not reach home for about a fortnight.

The coast is very reminiscent of Devonshire with long lines of hills running up to what looks like about 1000 ft. Very bare and rocky. Few signs of habitation.

The nights are lovely and we notice that the Pole Star is definitely lower in the sky now that we are well south of London. We have a dance, not much but just enough to whet the appetite.

After four days away we begin to realise how quickly austerity will become only a horrible memory. We are quickly accepting our good luck - we begin to take our luxurious food for granted. But the rest and relaxation is beginning to work - we both wake up about 6.30 a.m. and retire by 10 p.m. We look and feel different - refreshed but not yet ready to do much. If this went on for ever it would seem quite right.

We notice that at home the weather is improving but snow and ice are still about. There is no general resumption of full scale production. The food position does not look at all good - misfortune seems to dog its footsteps interminably.

At 5 p.m. we pass Algiers.

<u>2nd March.</u> Another glorious day and still cruising steadily along the North African coast. This is the part where much of the African campaign took place - it looks difficult country from the sea - the hills and mountains are now much higher and more rugged than when we passed Gibraltar. Have taken a few snaps along the coast but although visibility is

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not bad it is still not really clear.

We are still spending most of the day doing nothing. It is lovely just to sit and dream or watch the coast line slowly change; we do not sleep in the day time but just do nothing. Gertie already looks ten years younger and is going to have her hair done this afternoon at 2.30. The shop still pulls an awful lot - so many things to see that we have not set eyes on for years and not expensive considering everything.

The children's meals have improved with some adjustment of seating times. They are developing better appetites and seem to be quite satisfied. Lesley still cannot eat creamy things and is refusing ice cream of all things because they are too rich for her. We notice also that we have hardly eaten any sweets at all - the food is so much sweeter than we have been used to that we suppose we do not need any more.

Now having hot s ea water baths every evening at 5.30 p.m. What a treat - very invigorating too.

Passed Cape Bon during the early afternoon and the island of Pantelleria at 5 p.m. We were well inshore at the latter point and were surprised to know it had a population of 9,500. The houses, vineyards and gardens were clearly visible and the terraced formation was to us quite unusual. The people are quite thick and this was really the most densely populated place we had seen since leaving London.

By dusk we knew that our last glimpse of land had been seen till we reached Port Said.

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3rd, 4th and 5th March. Passed much as the previous days, quietly with Gertie and I whiling away the morning and afternoon out on deck, reading or writing, chatting to odd passengers, having a quiet drink or just sitting doing nothing.

The weather remains absolutely wonderful, sun all day with now excellent visibility; a light breeze and scarcely any movement on the boat; many times we look over the handrail to make sure we are still moving. The evenings are beautiful with the moon getting fuller each night and casting a wonderful silver belt across the gently moving water. We do not bother now even to put on a coat for our evening stroll before going to bed.

On the 3rd and 5th we danced, the 5th being particularly good because the four piece band had a night off and our music was "canned" being all dance records by Victor Sylvester. A lovely evening when we danced almost solidly for two hours - went to bed at 10.30 very tired.

On the 4th they showed a film and broadcast some classical music - mostly Chopin and Beethoven. We chose the latter and enjoyed an hour's listening with about three dozen other passengers.

The sports committee is now functioning and deck games of all sorts have been in progress for a day or two. The competitions are starting but we do not think we shall bother with them - too energetic!

The children had a first dip in the pool and seemed to enjoy it very much. Shirley Godfrey however developed a chill

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the day after - suppose the acclimatisation is not yet complete - although the sun is warm the water is still only about 63° which is not exactly hot.

Afternoon tea has been causing a bit of pother - we a ll ache for a spot of tea by 4 p.m. (8 a.m. is our last previous acquaintance with the tea pot) and there is a proper undignified rush to the dance floor where tea is served. The Purser has made several shots at getting things more ordered but it still does not work properly. So tomorrow we are to revert to the pre-war system of having tea in the dining room.

The piano too has been causing a bit of trouble. One lady. a Mrs. Mitchell, is quite a good pianist and has to give a recital when she gets to Australia. She has been practising at 7 a.m. but some passengers have objected so she has been "warned off" till 8 a.m. Then too many have been using the joanna after lunch and disturbing the forty winks brigade so there is now no music from 2-4 p.m. On the whole our fellow passengers are quite a nice lot but a few are very touchy.

The thing which is really astounding is their age. We reckon the average age of the adults must be sixty or more! We are quite some of the young bloods on board. How they have all managed to get passages is something of a mystery - some have admittedly waited eighteen months or so but others (and they are not a few) are coming out purely on pleasure. When there is such a shortage of boats and so many people who are desperately in need of passages, it seems strange that so many can even now travel purely for selfish reasons.

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Mr. Godfrey has spent a long time in India - he is a dentist and has been telling us how the termites got into a zinc lined trunk and ate up all the family pas ports, birth certificates and their marriage lines. The "woolly bears" (a sort of caterpillar) also got into another trunk and they ate up his clothes including his dress pants! So now, poor fellow, he has had to borrow his father-in-law's dress pants but they are about three inches too short and he says his ankles get cold! I am going to lend him a pair of mine tomorrow but although we are much the same height and build I think his legs may be a bit shorter; anyhow it will keep his ankles warm though he may have to hitch them a bit high for comfort.

We go to bed full of expectation tonight - we are due at Port Said at 7 a.m.

We must hand over passports to an Egyptian Customs official and receive a card in lieu - probably because the inhabitants are such thieves that most of us would come back less our passports!

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CHAPTER 4. PORT SAID.

6th March. We awoke at 5 a.m. this morning. Actually we thought it was 5.30 a.m. because we put our watches on half an hour last night as we have done each evening since we left Gibraltar but learnt later that we should have stopped this nonsense yesterday.

We had been getting through the Nile delta all night and as the water got more shallow the screws vibrated more and this woke us at so ungodly an hour. Anyhow we wanted to see the fun so up we got and dressed; we saw the sun rise - a golden ball lifting rapidly from a muddy sea to the clear sky above. We were a bit early however because there was no land in sight so down below we went and straightened up a few things.

At 6.30 the children got up and about and alas! Lesley had a pain in the tummy and did not feel at all good. We decided it was swimming the previous day, gave her three milk of magnesia tablets and put her on her bunk again to rest.

By this time the coast was visible and we were passing alongside the enormously long harbour wall, slowly threading our way through the many small craft hanging about. We passed two wrecks, the remains of many sunk in the area during the war. The peculiar dhows were making for the sea in pairs, their single triangular sails, the base uppermost, making a lovely picture in the early morning haze.

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The land is very flat and sandy here and the town from the sea looks like a slight hump with no special features. As we drew near the "bum-boats" came to meet us loaded with leather goods of all sorts, dates, Turkish delight, tangerines, fez, sandals and the like. The row was awful. Two or three men, dark skinned and ruffianly looking Arabs, manned each boat, one to row and the rest to shout. And shout they did, hawking their wares for a solid five hours without a second's relief.

By 7 a.m. we were moored fore and aft. Then two pontoon bridges were pushed out from the quayside and our own gangway was fixed on "F" Deck (having been prepared and checked over a day or so previously) and lowered to connect with the pontoons. All the time the Arabs were screaming to us to buy their stuff - there must have been at least fifty boats around the Orion.

On the other side of our boat there was feverish activity too. A large oiler drew alongside and put aboard two 9 or 12 inch pipes and then proceeded to pump oil into our belly for a solid four hours. Four fresh water boats also drew alongside and each pumped water, 500 tons apiece, to keep us going for a few days. We understand the use of fresh water has been very heavy and we were getting pretty low on arrival at Port Said. Finally several food ships drew up and started loading us with food; Australian jams, milk, honey, butter, could be read from the case markings, ten cases at a time. Another ship loaded greenstuff, tomatoes, marrows, cucumbers and pumpkins. Finally a dhow loaded cases of oranges, tangerines and grapefruit. So it looks as though we shall be O.K. for a few days. Much regretted to

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notice that at 12.30 when we made off for the Suez Canal the dhow still had twenty or so cases of fruit aboard which we had to leave behind.

We were amazed how large a town Port Said is. We had expected cobbled streets and mud huts more or less but we found (at least along the water front) modern houses in the Eastern style with ornate facades and straight wide roads (with a right hand drive) properly pavemented and macadamed. Splendid modern limousine cars - probably American - rubbed shoulders with the native single horse traps. The latter race round the streets ringing a bell furiously and make quite an attractive feature (viewed from the distance).

At the gangway from the boat were uniformed Egyptian police, swarthy, well set up men with deep mauve jackets, bottle green trousers and deep red fez. Each was the proud possessor of a carefully waxed moustachio and the general effect was quite à la Gilbert and Sullivan.

Most passengers went ashore but it was not until 10.30 that Lesley recovered sufficiently to go out. By that time however the customs official had retired to the shore so we had perforce to remain on the ship - much to our regret.

It is pretty hopeless for the tourist to do "business" with the "private entrepreneur" in this place. He only understands bargaining and thinks you a fool if you accept his first offer. Not knowing their language leaves you on the wrong side of the fence and so the European must almost inevitably find his way

next page but one

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During this time a large boat drew alongside the far water boat with armed soldiers aboard. They had the mail - about forty or fifty bags of it, and we wondered whether there would be any mail for us - it was beginning to seem strange not seeing the postman for over a week. That afternoon we had three letters, two from Iver and one from Acton which gave us a thrill. We hoped our first letters home would be safely away by then. They do not take any chances with the mail - it is all taken from one boat to the next and finally up the hoist under armed guard.

The town itself is not particularly exciting to look at from the boat. The water front is long, two or three miles probably and looks much like our own coastal towns except that the buildings are either a light sandy colour, deep red or brilliant white. The architectural features are somewhat different, the houses having flat roofs and the larger houses having windows of the usual oriental type, viz: with carvings in the stonework. English is spoken in the larger shops and hotels and English currency can be used, the rate of exchange being £E1 = £1.0.6 English. Goods were very expensive passengers being asked between £2.10.0 and £4 or £5 for a pair of shoes. Several people bought large cart-wheel straw hats for our impending journey through the tropics and had to pay £1 each for them. Even Turkish delight costs 5/- or 7/6d. per pound plus about 2/6d. for postage. We could not send any home because the stuff sold from the boats is reckoned uneatable and probably full of maggots.

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to the house of Simon Arzt - the best of the shops in the town. Most passengers visited this shop and in spite of the customs regulations, which permit the export only of match-wooden, glass or china or leather articles, managed to buy a few shirts, hats and other small fabric articles. The famous African smells were not very noticeable from on board but some passengers reported a variety inshore - some pleasant and some otherwise.

The "gully-gully" man caught our eye on the pontoon bridge. He is the slight-of-hand man from Palestine and is very popular with the children in particular. He dresses in the traditionsl habit of these parts - deep red fez, dark jacket affair and white skirt down to the ankles. The idea is that you take a silver coin in one hand and hold it very tightly. Then he produces a tiny day-old chick to hold in the other. He then proceeds to produce further chicks from behind your ears, inside your frock and so on - finally says have you still got the coin in your hand - you unclose your hand and find that all you then have is a Palestinian halfpenny. He tried this on a lady as she was coming back across the pontoon bridge and by the speed with which he made off afterwards we imagine she lost a good deal more than 1/- or 2/6d. or whatever she put in her hand.

These Arab types have their amusing side. Below us loading food and water were a number of Arabs shouting at us to drop them pennies. We threw coppers down and then they scrapped and had mock fights for them. Their shouts and gesticulations kept us in fits. Sometimes one would be mock serious as a judge.

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The harbour is enormous with enough quays and paraphernalia to hold the whole British Navy I should think. There must have been a dozen or so ships berthed when we arrived. Amongst them was a troupship crammed full of humanity - after our comfort on the Orion it looked awful. The other boat we were particularly interested in was one containing all sorts of animals and we thought of our young Rob due to sail in a few days. The animals seemed to be very well housed on the deck with plenty of light and air and tons of hay; we saw mostly horses, pigs and sheep but probably other livestock was aboard.

Whilst watching the shipping young Lesley spotted a turtle - it was floating near a bum boat and one of the men pulled it aboard thinking he had a valuable prize. However, he took one look at it and judging by the expression on his face and the actions of his hands we concluded the delicacy had passed its freshest - he hurriedly chucked it overboard again.

By 12.30 everything was ready for us to resume our trip - the pontoons were ashore again, gangways up, moorings cast off - the dhow alone was still sending up cases of fruit. Then one of the Arab divers whom we had been watching diving down thirty feet for silver coins (not pennies nowsdays - the cost of living even for Arab people has gone up enormously) came aboard and collected sixpences so that we could have the privilege of watching him dive eighty feet down from the top deck and turn three somersaults en route. He went along the decks, the old rascal, making a most odd noise, something like "olly-olly-olly"

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said or rather piped about ten times a second in a high pitched voice. When we had been moving a few minutes he got outside the handrail and dived - but the old liar did not attempt any somersaults and he made a poor job of his dive. One passenger said he saw the same chap diving forty years ago so he is probably pretty old by now.

So now we turn due south through the Suez Canal, down the Red Sea to Aden where we are due to refuel before crossing the Indian Ocean to Ceylon.

CHAPTER 5. SUEZ CANAL & RED SEA TO ADEN.

6th March, p.m. After leaving Port Said we left the deck and had a quick lunch so as not to miss the scenery.

On deck again soon after 1 o'clock, we were in the Canal with flat sandy desert on both sides. On the port side is Palestine and on the starboard side Egypt. Our speed is only about 8 miles an hour because the wash would destroy the sandy banks on either side were we to go more quickly. On the Palestine side there runs a fresh water canal, the railway and a military road. Both the rail and road are busy, the latter with much military traffic. A motor road runs alongside the canal and passing cars wave handkerchiefs to us as we go.

The desert is grim. Just mile on mile of sandy waste with yellowy-green scrubby growth as the only vegetation. For a few miles after leaving Port Said a scruffy type of fir tree lines

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the canal but these too soon disappear. The first few miles also are broken up by shallow lakes some of which yield salt and form a small industry. The only obvious living things are Arabs and Bedouins here and there, some on the roads, some inland and a few in small encampments of two or three tents. There are no animals and what these nomads eat, how they live and where they come from or go to is a mystery.

Every few miles is a station, a sort of oasis on the desert occupied by troops for the main part. Here a few trees grow, some brilliant flowers also grace the "gardens". The houses have obviously been recently built and are made of a sort of sandy red brick. Black headed children wave and shriek at us as we pass.

The main military camp is at Cantara where the single line railway boasts two or three sidings. We saw an Arab riding a bicycle with his child in a basket on the handlebars. He was quite acrobatic on his bike, riding barefooted, waving at us with one hand and giving the bike an extra shove now and again by pushing with his foot on the ground; judging by his progress both the right and left hand sides of the road are equally suitable for traffic in each direction. We are becoming quite used to seeing date palms growing by now - many to a height of 20 or 30 feet at each little station.

In the far distance through the heat haze and dust of the desert can be seen ranges of hills and mountains in the interior.

During the afternoon Lesley spotted something on the bank;

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it was a sand spider. But what a spider - 12 inches across the feet at least with a body 5 or 6 inches broad and just the colour of the sand. It had a most curious way of moving too, bouncing 6 to 12 inches at a time along the water's edge. A not too pleasant reminder that we are no longer in England but nearing places which have fauna very different and with less desirable habits than those we have been used to at home.

By night we were nearing Ismalia and the Bitter Lakes. The latter by the way are of no use to brewers in the production of mild and bitter but derive their name from the acrid taste of the water. The lakes are shallow and navigation is difficult.

Ismalia looking lovely by night, with the large War Memorial on the starboard side silhouetted against the moonlight and the town bordering the small Crocodile Lake which comes before the Bitter Lakes: the houses were lighted and looked like fairy lamps in the distance. Lighted buoys marked our course, red lamps on the port buoys and green on the starboard ones.

While sitting over coffee in the lounge after dinner things got a bit odd. We ceased to move ahead, stopped and then moved astern; after a bit we resumed our forward motion, then we stopped altogether. At first we thought it was the twisting channels through the lakes which gave these odd impressions, but as by 11 p.m. we were still much in the same place as we were at 7 p.m. we concluded that that was not the

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answer. It turned out later that we had run aground on the mud and were trying to get off by "shaking" it from the hull. So there we stayed. Somewhere after midnight, lying in our bunks, we felt a shuddering and shoving and then the normal swish of water under the porthole - we were moving again down the Canal to Suez.

By 7 a.m. on the 7th we were clear of Suez and in the Gulf of Suez with the weather very much warmer. Lovely blazing sunshine and perfect visibility greeted us on deck with the Sinai peninsula on the port side and Arabia on the starboard side. Sea was a bit choppy today with a bit of swell but we were scarcely conscious of it now and in fact it was quite a treat to feel the boat moving once again after the slow monotonous twelve hours through the Canal.

Which reminds me that during the passage of the Canal we saw many camels, mostly lying down, at the stations; also, to us, a very funny incident. An Arab was doing his daily obeisances towards Mecca on his prayer mat - he bowed several times then flopped down on his knees with head on the ground and his arms thrown forward. After half a minute or so up he jumped to bow a few more times to Mecca - then down he flopped. Up and down he went many times for several minutes. His antics were funny enough to watch but what made the whole thing ludicrous was that his prayer mat was smack in the middle of the railway lines - we trust he had a time table in his pocket!

The Golf of Suez provided quite the most magnificent panorama yet. On the port side the Sinai peninsula with high

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mountain ranges - one behind the other, and on the starboard side the Arabian mountains, less high and with desert sand in front. The Sinai mountains were rugged, rocky and glittering in the powerful sun. The sea was extraordinarily blue and made a magnificent base to the scenery further off. Long white-capped waves made the boat rock gently. On the Arabian side a large oil field hove into sight, with the wells and storage tanks clearly visible. One well was alight giving off a long black column of smoke from a great roaring fire on the desert ground.

The temperature rose steadily and by mid morning it was too hot to stay long in the sun. But how lovely it was, the hot sun and magnificent scenery - sheer delight to the eye and body.

By early evening we were past the lights marking the end of the Gulf and well into the Red Sea.

The rest of the day we were out of sight of land and life resumed its normal quiet course.

I had a game of pad ball in the afternoon with Godfrey. This is a form of tennis, played to the usual rules on a court about the size of a badminton court. The racquet is of 1" thick solid wood and is only about 15" long. If hit properly, one can get a very good drive and produce most of the normal strokes; volleys and half-volleys are difficult because one is not allowed to volley beyond the service line, i.e. between net and end of service court, and thus all volleys and half-

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volleys must be driven - not so easy on board ship when there is always some movement of the deck.

Evening was magnificent. As we near the equator, the days and nights steadily get more equal in length. The sun rises about 5.30 and sets soon after 6 p.m. Tonight was near full moon and at 6.30 the brilliant creamy white moon on the port side threw a carpet of silver on the water: on each side the water looked almost black. At the same time the sun below the horizon was throwing most gorgeous colours through the sand-laden air over the desert we could not see - deep mauve at sea level, through blue, green and all colours of the rainbow - a wide semi-circular belt of colours extending over half the horizon. The sky above was deep blue with the stars brilliant points of light within it. This was our first real experience of evening in the lower latitudes but we are told it was quite an ordinary evening: the really good ones come later in the year when the dust storms start. So far again we have been very lucky with the weather conditions. The only bit of sand we had was for half an hour or so through the Suez Canal, but very often severe dust storms are experienced in the Red Sea; they are apparently most unpleasant - luckily we have had none and the weather is perfect though a bit humid.

8th March. Still proceeding down the Red Sea and the shade temperature has risen to 93° - it is very humid and we have reduced our clothing to the bare (or nearly bare) minimum. We still do not find it at all bad though of course we are still

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some distance from the equator. We shall be at Aden tomorrow and hope the humidity will drop a bit, then we shall be better able to cope with the heat.

Had a Marconigram from Hearn this a.m. saying they are looking forward to seeing us and that Jeanes will be meeting us at Freemantle.

Saw about two dozen flying fish - rather look like salmon hopping out of the water.

Looking back over these odd notes of our voyage it looks almost as though our two children were dropped overboard soon after leaving London and have not been heard of since. In some respects that has more than a grain of truth in it - they spend all day with their pals, the Godfreys, and we scarcely see them from one end of the day to the other. We get fairly regular requests for a 1/- to buy a "fizzy drink" or permission to bathe or a request for a hair ribbon to be tied, but beyond that they mostly desert us. Their lives are quite different now ; they have hardly put pen or pencil to paper since we left, nor have they painted or drawn - all the time they prowl round the boat, have a go on the see-saw, talk to the sailors or stewards (they know most of their nick and pet names!), bathe, play quoits or tennis and so on just happily playing.

9th March. We learn from higher authority, viz. the quartermaster, that our "flying fish" are small porpoise - we shall not see the proper flying fish until we get into the Indian Ocean.

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Arrived at Aden at 6 a.m. and made fast to two buoys in the harbour. Again we are surprised at the size of the town: the population must be a good many thousands.

Had breakfast at 7.30 a.m. and there are no formalities for getting ashore other than to pay 10d. per head for the short motor boat trip to shore - a distance of 500 or 600 yards. Arriving ashore we pay our fares to a couple of Indians stationed in the large War Memorial but cannot change our money as the office is not open on Sunday. The 1914-1918 War Memorial is quite a large building of offices over a sort of colonnade and it houses harbour police and other officials.

The water-front is alive with all sorts of cars being hired out by natives for trips round the port and also to the main town which is actually two or three miles round the point of the bay. As we want to do some shopping we decide to stick where we are and join up with the Godfreys - a useful idea since the population is about half Arab and half Hindu and Mr. & Mrs. G. have spent a long time in India and know the customs and habits well. There are a good number of shops situated close to the water-front and lying in a broad semi-circle with flowering trees and bushes in front. The shops by western standards are a bit odd. There is very little attempt at display of stock - articles of each type are more or less kept together in piles on rough wooden shelves with sliding glass doors in front - probably a protection against the light-fingered members of the public generally. One can buy almost anything here -

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shoes, hats, silk fabrics, kimonos most beautifully embroidered, cigarettes, films, cameras, silk stockings, underwear, frocks, cut glass and so forth - but prices are high. The legend of cheap silks from the east seems today to be more of a myth than anything. They asked us £2.5.0 for a cotton frock and £10.15.0 for a silk one for Gertie - so we did not buy. And most other articles were about the same. One can haggle - but you do not get very far with it because of the language and currency difficulties. T he native assistants are most charming in manner and will cheerfully sell you the shop if you like - so different from England of recent years. And when they add up the cost of your purchases in rupees and then change it to sterling they usually manage to put on an extra 6d. or 9d. in such a charming manner that you feel you have been paid a gracious compliment - and pay up. I was particularly wanting a toupee as I had no head covering at all and we were due for a full day's tour at Colombo in goodness knows what heat. So we popped in and out of the various shops in search of my hat - ultimately we got just the thing for 10/- - but not before the families had had a good laugh at my somewhat altered appearance. Anyhow it must have been reasonably successful since Mr. G. remarked that my lanky figure in tennis shirt, grey flannels and toupee gave a very distinct impression that I had lived there for years!

A strange thing about the shops is that whatever the proprietor may use as a description of his trade, tobacconist,

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jeweller, chemist, silk stockist or what not, they are all in fact general stores – my toupee came from a chemist! Much of the stuff on sale is rubbish – rather after the flimsy Japanese style – but we did buy a rather pretty and beautifully fashioned bracelet for 15/- which was about half the price asked on the boat and about one twelth of the London value. It seems a pity we cannot send a few trinkets home but probably duty and tax at the other end would make the gift an expensive one for the recipient.

Proceeding from shop to shop we were continually urged to have a taxi, to hire a guide, buy postcards, give money to beggars and so on, but one gets used to it by the time an hour has passed and anyhow it is apparently a feature of the Eastern bazaar. One notices very keenly that there is scarcely a woman to be seen, nothing but men; the odd female or so to be seen was so heavily veiled that not a vestige of flesh was visible. These Arabs and Hindu people still guard their womenfolk very closely and they completely misunderstand the half-naked and blasé way (to them) in which the white woman wanders around. The men of whatever social level are awfully friendly and to those who went ashore at Port Said far more agreeable than in the latter port.

Strange how oddly some things strike one – the goats wandering in the side streets (which are mostly sand) without anybody looking after them – they apparently are used much as dogs are in England – the camels carrying wood, rushes and so

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forth and serving as transport in this dry, arid spot. The street sweepers too were odd - they used small bundles of twigs - 18 inches long or so - and just scratched to and fro on the rough pavement leaving a square yard or two free from sand every 20 or 30 yards - but having had this "spring clean" nobody did anything about it and in two minutes everything was "as you were".

Mr. G. and I are much the same height and build and we were like giants among these much shorter peoples. The children are most attractive little nippers - deep brown skins with very short, crisp curly black hair, eyes like gimlets, they chatter, fight and play games (in bare feet) just as our own do. They are all beggars by birth - running alongside one to pour out in pidgin English a doleful tale in a sing-song chant of "no father, no mother, no brothers, no sisters" and appeal for "baksheesh" - but if you are foolish enough to give one of them even a halfpenny, it brings forth about 10,000 other apparently equally deserving cases - yet I did not see a single gooseberry bush anywhere.

In the gardens in front of the shops were many trees and shrubs - date palms, acacias - I do not know what else - they were all strange to us. But many had richly coloured blooms on them, red, orange, mauve and yellow flowers making quite an attractive feature in this outpost of the Empire.

Many passengers had said there was nothing at Aden; they can have no imagination - to us whose first visit it was to an

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Eastern town, it was full of interest the novel way of doing business, the coloured people, the almost complete absence of women, the incongruity of the ancient camel and the modern motor car, the different trees and shrubs, all held attention and interested us all for the two hours or so we were ashore.

Returning to the boat, we saw the aircraft carrier Theseus in harbour looking very smart with ratings lining the deck and waving to us in the motor boat. The navy always looks as clean and fresh as new paint whenever we meet it. Their white kit in these tropical latitudes contrasts so greatly with the dark skinned natives with their usually drab coloured clothes. Which reminds me that all the Orion staff have now donned white drill uniforms, dining stewards, cabin stewards, lounge stewards and crew. The officers look extra smart at dinner time too and quite a few male passengers have managed to get hold of white dinner jackets. Dress generally on board is very much of the "go as you please" order though most people smarten up for dinner in the evening.

At 12 noon we left Aden; a bit late because one unlucky passenger was taken ill and had to be rushed off to hospital. As we slowly steamed off to head away to Colombo, we had a perfect view of the port and rugged, hilly country around. The houses are of the bungalow type, low with sloping roofs and look quite oriental in the brilliant sunshine with green-blue sea below and brown, red and yellow rock and sand above.

Nothing to report.

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That afternoon our youngest passenger, a little fellow of nine weeks, was christened. The ceremony was held in the children's dining room by the ship's Captain; the font was the ship's bell upturned. Quite an interesting and unusual event.

Turning E.S.E. we entered the Indian Ocean and met a stiff head wind but the boat still has little or no movement. This wind we are told is the dried out remains of the monsoons from Chins. So now for some four days at sea during which time we shall hope to see the Cocos Islands, not far from the East Indies. Temperature is much more bearable today; it is probably just as hot but we have got rid of the humidity and that is a good thing.

10th March. Well in the Indian Ocean today and resuming our quiet life. The children have a fancy dress parade and tea fight tomorrow so we are busy trying to work up something for each of them. Shirley is going as a pirate and Lesley as a poppy. We have been cutting out crepe paper and trying to stitch it together amid difficulties. The wind is blowing like blazes through our scuttle and we seem to spend most of the day chasing bits of paper. Our efforts at designing flower petals, skull and cross-bones look a bit amateurish but the brats are getting a big thrill out of it. Mrs. Geddes, wife of the managing director, Lady Palmer and another lady will be the judges.

Nothing to report.

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CHAPTER 6. ADEN ACROSS ARABIAN SEA TO CEYLON.

11th March. The glorious weather and smooth passage continue. We certainly seem to have chosen the best time of year to make our crossing. We shall be just too early for the monsoon in Ceylon and hope to see something of the island.

The event of the day is the children's fancy dress parade and tea party. All day we have continued our efforts to get the children ready and many more parents are doing the same. For an outlay of about 6/- we have made a fairly presentable pirate of Shirley dressed in a white sailor's "top" and our cabin steward's long tousers. She has a black skull and cross-bones on her chest made from black paper, designed and stitched by hand by yours very truly, the whole surmounted by a brilliant turban. Her lady ship is adorned with two large brass earrings each of 2 inches diameter and carries a silver bladed cutlass with black handle. This fiendish implement was procured at enormous cost in money and life from the ship's shop: the weapon took many hours to feshion and temper in paper and card-board.

A certain amount of black paint was employed to give local colour to her ladyship's appearance - heavy black eyebrows, two day's growth and some "sideboards". Her parents could not recognise her.

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As to the younger progeny Lesley, she appeared as "oriental poppy". A six-petal skirt of flame coloured crepe paper was sewn to her ladyship's bathing drawers and underneath s silver petticoat billowed out the petals. From bust to waist moss green calyx adorned the body; from shoulder to bust leaves completed her dress. The general effect of an inverted poppy we decided was not too bad. On her head she wore another large flower similarly designed and modelled by "the boss" - Mrs. P.

The parade was timed for 2.45 - actually it took place at 3.30 after considerable ungentlemanly remarks from certain passengers. Almost every child was entered and some very clever results were produced. Our youngest passenger aged nine weeks entered (in arms) as "Father Christmas"; others were pirates (three), cowboy, paper seller (very clever), columbine, Miss Orion 1947, Dolly Vardon, huntsman, nigger, Arab, geisha girl, and so on.

To our amazement Lesley got first prize for the prettiest and most original costume. Gertie had an extra pint that night to honour the occasion.

After the parade there were games with tea at 5 p.m. What a tea - even the Savoy Hotel could not we think have done better. Plaice, turkey, sandwiches, jelly, Neapolitan creams, fresh fruit salad, ices pastries, pears, apples and oranges with any drink they liked to wash it down. The table was specially laid in the foyer leading to the dining saloon and in the centre was a terrific three-tier iced cake. The noise

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was terrific as the seventy children "laid to" - what they ate we feared to ask - they seem to have had a go at everything - sometimes more than once. They stuffed for over an hour and came away just about stretched to breaking point - fortunately there were no bad after effects!

In the evening we had our second race meeting. These meetings are held in full style. A day or so before the meeting "nominations" are made to the sports committee. A male passenger enters his "horse", names it and gives the pedigree, at the same time naming the jockey. The course is on the sports deck and consists of five horses. Each has its own little track of about 20 yards and is pulled along by string wound round a cylinder by a handle operated by the jockey. The cylinder tapers and is widest in the centre and the game is to make the string keep as nearly central as possible. A proper tote is run and betting is in 1/- units. 10% of takings goes to seamen's charities.

The nominations are very clever and often humorous. As examples we have:-

Mr. Stuttles "Replete" by Escape out of Austerity.

Mr. Wilson's "Nectar" by Hops out of Vat.

S/L Everingham's "Gasping" by Running out of Breath.

The best effort to date is L/Cdr. Walch's "Hurried Exit" by Careless Gentleman out of Green Light. It may be added in parenthesis that the gentlemen's lavatories are indicated by a red lamp burning outside and the ladies' by a green one!

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At 9.15 p.m. we went to the sports deck and took up our positions, we made our bets, 1/- win on two horses and collected or not as the case may be. We had a similar meeting the week previously when we finished up 6d. on the debit side. To night we were 2/6d. in pocket - quite a good evening's fun.

12th March. Gertie not too well today - there is quite a bit of minor illness aboard, mostly tummy colds in which G. has also been caught.

A fancy dress dance was held in the evening at which many quite clever stunts were worked. Gertie was lying in her bunk so there was not much to interest me - but I liked the gentleman who wore full evening dress without any collar or shirt but with his tie carefully tied round his neck - on his back was a placard "By kind permission of the Orion laundry".

13th March. Quiet day with nothing to report much. We cabled daytime to wish G.N.P. good luck for the dinner on the 15th and many happy returns of the 16th.

Somewhere my legs have got sunburned and are now fiery red and very swollen round the ankles. I visited the vet. after Gertie's visit of yesterday and now have canary-like legs as the result of a heavy dose of picric acid.

14th March. Arrived at Colombo just after 7 a.m.

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CHAPTER 7. AT COLOMBO.

14th March. Today is probably the high spot of the whole voyage. We had earlier booked a day trip to Kandy, the former capital, and were keeping our fingers crossed in case any of us were ill - fortunately Gertie's tummy had quite recovered and although my legs were painful and swollen, they were not bad enough to keep me aboard.

So we breakfasted sharp at 8 a.m. and cut our meal because from the arrangements notified it was pretty clear that we should have to move fast if we were not to be left behind. By 8.20 we had finished; Gertie I sent to the Purser's office to get launch tickets and I proceeded to "B" Deck to get the passports stamped. These completed we collected the children and were in the second launch to leave for the quayside. As it turned out later, we were lucky - they only had three launches in service and there were awful delays getting ashore.

Arriving at the quayside, we were greeted by the sight of streets covered with flags and bunting with a ceiling of white paper frills from one side of the road to the other. So close together were they that they cast a shadow over the roads and pavements and the breeze made them rustle like leaves of trees in a wood. It was only then that we learned that the Orion had been entrusted with certain sacred bones of the disciples of Bhudda which had been in England nearly 100 years. They were very sacred things to the Ceylon people and tremendous

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festivals were being arranged that evening to receive back the treasure.

We boarded our coach and at 10 a.m. started for Kandy, nearly 75 miles away.

Colombo is a sizeable city and has many very modern buildings. It seems to be typical of the East, or what we have seen of it, that the very modern and the very ancient live side by side. In the roads were brand new English and American cars and alongside them rickshaws drawn by natives. Again we noticed a beautiful modern building occupied by the Ceylon "Times" and nearby the old market with women selling fruit from panniers made of cane.

The town is clean, modern with properly paved footways and properly made modern concrete or bitumastic roads. The harbour area is well provided with good shops - as we passed along towards the rear of the town we came across the purely native trading area and the "black market". Apparently some things are very short in the island and black markets flourish there quite as successfully as in Europe.

Having seen only Port Said, desert and Aden since we left England we just gaped at the scenery as we left the main built-up area behind - all around was an obviously luxuriant vegetation - palms and other trees, green verdure and colourful flowers everywhere.

The first 50 miles of the run were fairly flat: the road runs more or less along the riverside and the scenery is much the same all the time. It consists of paddy fields, i.e. rice

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growing fields, more or less under water; coconut plantations; rubber plantations and tea plantations. The rice had recently been cut and harvested and the natives were busy preparing for the next crop; they use a sort of mattock to turn over the mud or else a bullock-drawn plough - the animals sink a foot or more in the ooze whilst they are working and it is a wonder they can ever till the "soil" in this way - incidentally this was the dry season - the monsoon was not expected for a month to come. There are only two real seasons in these equatorial areas - summer and autumn. Each "field" is quite small; it might be about as large as a football pitch at the most - each one is flanked by a low wall of earth (a brick red colour) beaten hard so as to prevent the water running away. The rice areas each consist of perhaps a dozen or up to fifty or so "fields".

Where the ground is less flat the main crop is coconuts, all growing in regular lines just like an English fruit orchard. The tall palms, bare of leaves up to 25 or 30 feet from the ground with a large tuft of sword-like leaves growing from the top, make a striking picture and one we had never seen before. The nuts grow in clusters at the base of the leaves.

Banana trees grow everywhere, often wild. They reach a height of 12 to 15 feet and have long slab-like leaves 5 or 6 ft. long with a fringed edge. A brilliant greeny-yellow in colour, they are a distinct contrast in both form and colour to the coconut palms. The fruit of course grows in a sort of walking stick fashion, hanging down from the base of the leaves, the actual bananas being upright - each tree seems to bear only one

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truss of fruit at a time.

Rubber trees have tall branchless trunks with spreading foliage at the top, the leaves being rather like small laurel leaves. The tappings are made in deep wide cuts from the base upwards and evidently each tapping is made above the previous one so that the old ones heal over and do not stop the growth of the tree. The number of such plantations was small in this part of the island.

Tea, curiously enough, is grown on quite small bushes no more than two or three feet high and three or four feet in diameter. The bushes are well spaced and grow on the rockier parts only, probably because the plant does not need too much moisture. It was noticeable also that a few coconut palms were interspersed, probably again to provide some shelter from the blistering sun.

So much for the main industries of the island. A surprising thing is that every square yard of ground along the whole length of our ride was cultivated and populated. Whether the belt extends far away from the road, one could not see, but at least it appeared to. No hedges or ditches divide one man's ground from his neighbour's. It would seem that the owner of the ground lives in a bungalow built 50 or 100 yards from the main road. There were many such places, pleasing to look out and scrupulously clean. Each had a loggia in front, a central sort of lounge hall with a table covered with a clean white cloth.

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On either side was a room and that about completed the establishment. The native workpeople attached to the estate live in groups of similar but less pretentious bungalows by the side of the road. The bungalows are built of brick so far as the best ones are concerned and roofed with a sort of dutch tile; the workers' houses are mainly built of sun-baked earth and roofed with dried palm leaves and rushes - a bit thin in the way of protection when the monsoons come one would think but we gather that when that times arrives the rain and wet penetrates anything and everything and it does not much matter. We noticed the bricks and tiles being made along the road from time to time - the ordinary soil was scraped into piles about 2 ft. high and 20 or 30 ft. in diameter; here it was thoroughly wetted, the edges of the pile being banged and interlaced with dry palm leaves to retain the wet sloppy mess. Here it seems to stay for some days, drying out and when in the right state it is cut into shapes and fired in kilns. They also make ewers for carrying water, jugs and various household utensils in the same way.

All water is drawn from wells and carried in ewers on the head or shoulders. There are no electricity or gas services and cooking is done over a fire.

Through this type of country and houses we steadily rattled along from 10 o'clock for an hour. It was very hot and humid and our party of twenty-two was thirsty. At 11 o'clock we pulled up in the main pineapple growing area and bought and ate pine-apples and coconuts. The former cost us

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one Rupee each, about 1/6d. and the four of us ate a whole one in a matter of minutes. These natives are most friendly, grinning and jabbering all the time - they know the value of money however and it is a waste of time to think they are dumb in this respect. They prepared the pineapples for us, cutting the top off with a vicious looking sort of Swedish knife with a 6" blade as sharp as a razor. Then the outside husk was shaved off and finally it was sectioned into nine pieces like orange figs. Juice simply pours out of this fruit when it is ripe and we more or less bathed in it - in passing we discovered it stains handkerchiefs with a lovely grey stain which nothing seems to shift!

On again we went till midday when we stopped and our conductor bought a "handle" of bananas. These he sold us at twelve for one Rupee, about 1½d. each. We ate about twenty of these lovely things - the Ceylon banana is like a Canary banana, small with a very thin skin and a rich, creamy flavour.

Then on again through rising land towards Kandy. We crossed the main river, then rather low, but a beautiful sight, rushing water with swirling pools between great rocks: the land on either side thickly covered with all sorts of trees. Many natives were bathing there or doing their washing. They have a peculiar way of washing their clothes; they swish them in the water and then bang them on the rocks, swish them again in the water and then bang them again - it seems efficient enough judging from the whiteness of the drying clothes on the lines which we saw from time to time.

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The scenery towards Kandy is glorious. The town is 1600 ft. up and lies amidst rugged hills. It is very reminiscent to me of Switzerland, craggy heights, precipitous drops from the road full of S-bends - the trees are different and the heat is very different but the effect on one is much the same. Half way up we had to stop to cool off our engine and to take on water for the radiator.

It is the little things which strike one perhaps more forcibly than the big ones. The radiator of the coach probably held eight gallons of water or so, say 60 or 70 pints. The source of water was a small stream running down the hillside. Every bus or coach has to fill up here and the natives have established quite a half-way house. Bottles of lemonade are on sale with nuts and a little fruit; there is the usual quota of beggars, less one hand, half blind or merely old. When it comes to filling the tank, a small tin holding about a quart is used and each time a journey of 30 yards or so to the stream is required for a refill. To perform what to us is an elementary opera tion this requires the services of a couple of natives, each with his little tin can and the operation occupies something like twenty minutes. But this is all quite normal; everybody is quite happy and they all laugh and chatter meanwhile. To us it gave an opportunity to look around, to gather a flower or two and to listen to the birds - the latter have many strange notes and calls. Butterflies of various colours (including one very much like the popular "cabbage white" in England) also catch the eye.

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On again we went through similar rugged scenery to Kandy where we pulled up at the Queen's Hotel for lunch about 2.15. A splendid lunch was served by natives in the native fashion: things are not cheap in the island and our soft drinks cost 9d. per bottle. We were by now quite at home with the people and thoroughly enjoyed ourselves; the Hotel was spotlessly clean, food good and sufficient although there was some rationing, the usual "two main courses" system. Again there were no windows and one has the meal in the dining room looking through pillared arches across the main street on to the very large and famous Lake. The Hotel is European in its amenities, complete with lift, post office, money bureau, shops and so on. In style it is mainly Indian.

At 3.30 we left after having bought and sent off some souvenir post cards: our first call was at the Bhuddist temple for which the city is mostly famous. This is a fairish sized building of rectangular shape, made mostly of granite and is situated in about the middle of the city. A guide took us around and showed us the various tessellated floors, walls and ceilings and explained the significance of the pictures represented. They dealt with various aspects of Bhuddist beliefs, of death and resurrection, of the "fatal" sins of dishonouring one's parents, of disbelieving one's friends, of lying and the like - the workmanship was very fine, the execution good but the gen ral design is a bit crude - the ethics seem O.K. and are not very different from the Christian religion. The main idea seems to be that if you make a sufficiently big effigy of

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Bhudda you yourself feel such a miserable little slug that you will feel duly humble and abashed! Our bad luck for the day was here, for there was a service in progress and we were not permitted to enter the temple itself.

Here I must retrace a bit - we visited a tea and rubber factory on the way up in the morning which I overlooked. This was very interesting and showed how the raw materials are dealt with. Tea for instance is picked from the fresh new shoots of the plants and then laid out on a sort of sacking; this is arranged in large sheds, row upon row of shelves 70 or 80 feet long: each rack is only a few inches apart from its neighbour and here the tea is partially dried in a hot atmosphere until it gets about half dried. Native boys then clear the shelves of the tea with short whippy sticks on to the floor where it is gathered into panniers and taken to another shed for treatment. First, it is put into a machine which rotates it and rolls it - quite what for is not obvious and we did not find out but the main purpose appears to be to separate the fine leaf from the stem and stalk and also to dry it further. Next the half wet mass is transferred to a long shaking apparatus where the tea is placed on a long wire tray and agitated, a boy again rolling the tea by hand - the effect is still more to separate leaf from stalk, the tea proper falling on to the ground below. This is again gathered up, dried off and finally put into boxes for shipment. If there is a taste of "feet" in the Ceylon tea it will arise from the fact that as the boxes are filled a native stands on the tea and presses it down with his feet.

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The rubber is drawn from the trees and comes out in a white liquid of almost the exact colour and consistency of cows' milk. It is then put in a tough made of glazed tiles and treated with formic acid. The acid turns the white liquid into a dirty solid in long strips. At this stage it looks more like very dirty roller towelling than anything. It is rolled and scrubbed and treated in a number of machines and finally emerges in sheets of crepe rubber, all cut to a number of different specific sizes. In that state it is exported for final treatment and marketing.

Resuming from the temple, our next visit was to the river bank where elephants were being taken to water. There were several animals there, one a very young chap of about two years and no bigger than a decent sized pony, and others of about thirty years old about the size of the Indian elephants. I do not know what variety of elephant these were, but they were not in the Regents Park Zoo - they had pink edges to their ears and their trunks had pink spots right down to the tip: in colour they are brown and instead of a smooth hide they have a sort of stiff fur - the children had a bare-backed ride on one of the beggars and decided that their backs were very prickly for riding on. The mahouts made the elephants do quite a lot of tricks for us, one limped along on three legs, another got hold of the mahout by the head in his mouth and lifted him up (I did not try the experiment myself), another lifted the mahout in his trunk - the kids were very thrilled.

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Nearby we saw another little thing which intrigued us. Five bullocks were leashed side by side and were wheeling round in circles encouraged by the stick of a young native. Underfoot was a circular pile of rice which was added to from time to time by another native. This is the "threshing machine" - these animals tread on and turn the stalks with their hooves and so separate the grain from the stem; rice is of course very hard and suffers no harm in the process but it is not exactly a speedy nor an economical process. We saw later the grain lying in the sun on mats drying.

From here our next trip was to the botanical gardens lying on the outside edge of the town. These are large - about as big as Kew Gardens, and are probably of rather recent introduction. They are beautifully laid out in formal fashion and contain I imagine a more or less complete collection of all tropical trees, shrubs, plants and flowers. Unfortunately we had only half an hour to make a very cursory inspection but even that was well worth while.

Peculiar blooms growing in odd ways greets us everywhere - blooms on the end of a yard of thin stalk like twine; blooms like lilies on a sort of rosebush, all colours of the rainbow and all growing in the open. An avenue of palms was very attractive with tiny squirrel-like creatures darting up and down the trunks. A week would be wanted to make a decent tour of the place. As we turned back to the gates we passed through the spice and nut groves: cinnamon, nutmeg, pepper and cloves - such lovely smells which cannot be described.

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And so it had got round to well after 5 p.m. before we started back home. We were desperately thirsty by now and, much against our better judgment, bought soft drinks from a native by the roadside: we knew there was some risk in doing so - there are many illnesses in these parts which have no effect on the native but which can be very uncomfortable for the white - luckily we had no after-effects.

It was now a hard drive back - 70 odd miles to go and a rough road - the children were tired and darkness would come in under an hour and in these parts it comes very quickly. Once the sun is down, there is only a few minutes twilight and then it is dark.

The sunset was lovely - the sun itself a huge red ball sinking behind the hills with palms and banana trees silhouetted sharply against the clear blue sky. And as night drew on, the lights appeared in the huts and bungalows. A candle here, an oil lamp there and in the poorest homes just a dry palm leaf lighted and held till it burned out to be replaced by a second and so on. A pretty scene with an odd fire here and there in the coconut groves round which would be gathered a few natives sitting on their haunches.

As we passed along we smelt all sorts of smells, mostly of herbs and spices, sometimes of lemon and as we passed through the modest villages the shops were still open, black figures being silhouetted against the light of an oil lamp or a kerosene burner. In the cool we passed buses bringing the workers home and many small convoys of bullock carts bringing

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down rice, coconuts or straw, and so we rattled and bumped our way back to Colombo, enjoying every moment of our thrilling and strange journey, tired and grubby but full of thoughts of the day. At 8.30 we were back to the jetty and by 9.0 we were aboard again.

Dinner was finished: after raking out our two cabin stewards we got a light meal and a cup of tea in the cabin, after a wash and a rest, the children went to bed and at midnight we sailed.

One more event was to happen before we resumed our journey. We had brought up the anchor, unmoored and were just moving slowly away when a boat containing six whites and rowed violently by two natives appeared in our floodlights. Two of the whites were members of the crew, slightly oiled, who had left too late. After some short arguments below, the boat pulled round our bows to the port side and the two laggards had to board us by climbing a rope ladder on to "F" Deck - we watched the fun from "C" Deck and quite how they scrambled up we do not know. Finally they both got aboard and we proceeded on our journey. At 12.30 we turned in.

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CHAPTER 8. FROM COLOMBO ACROSS THE INDIAN OCEAN TO FREEMANTLE.

15th to 22nd March. There is little to report. After leaving Colombo the weather was less good, clouds gathered in the sky and on the 17th we had half a day's rain. They call it rain in these parts but it is more like a warm shower bath to us. The sea remained calm except for a short patch here and there when there was a bit of roll.

We crossed the line on the 16th March and Lesley, being under twelve years of age, was presented with a certificate to this effect. The Orient Line do not approve of the Line ceremonies and so we had no fun.

However we did have some aquatic sports and they were quite well worth watching. Children's sports also were held and Lesley got one prize and Shirley two.

Otherwise life was its usual pleasant self and we relaxed and enjoyed the sun and air; the heat was a bit trying at times, particularly at night when we found sleeping difficult, but on the whole we feel that it was not half as bad as we expected and we all got along perfectly well.

On the 22nd March we landed at Freemantle at 6 a.m.

All passengers were required to see the Medical Officer the previous day and for this purpose we all assembled on "B" Deck at 11 a.m. Here we were given a quarantine and passport ticket and then passed in front of the M.O. with bared arms and

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foreheads. These formalities are required by the Australian authorities who are very anxious to keep tropical diseases out of the country; they are apparently very successful.

On arrival at Freemantle we all assembled again at 7.15 a.m. when the Australian Medical Officers again inspected our arms and foreheads after which our passports were stamped. After that breakfast and by 8.45 a.m. we were ready for the shore.

We had been wondering for some days how Jeanes the local sub-manager would contact us but decided to wait and see. At 9 a.m. I went to the Purser's office and collected the mail, four letters and a cable; three letters were from home, (the one from A.H.B. had a 2/6d. English stamp on it, much to Lesley's delight) one from Jeanes saying "Welcome to Australia" and saying he had a permit to visit us aboard and the cable was from Beatton also welcoming us to Australia.

So that was that and here was our first taste of the New Homeland.

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CHAPTER 9. FREEMANTLE AND PERTH.

22nd March. Freemantle is the port for Perth, the latter city lying some ten miles to the north. The port is a great size and well provided with warehouse space and mechanical facilities for loading and unloading vessels. There is obviously a large export of wool from this place and special storage sheds abound.

Mr. & Mrs. Jeanes came aboard at 9.15 a.m. and looked very smart - they are about our own age and have three children. Their welcome and the warmth of their entertainment was quite exceptional and we all enjoyed a magnificent day.

First we boarded his new Hillman car and made a short trip round the wharf and harbour, calling on a friend of theirs who is in charge of the oil dumps. The friends have a very nice bungalow with half an acre of ground, beautifully kept. The "soil" is virtually sand but somehow or another they manage to produce a marvellous lot of flowers. The beds were magnificently set off by trim short grass - rather like a coarse twitch in character. Roses, dahlias, hibiscus, zinnias, phlox drummondii and many sub-tropical plants were there in profusion. The area is very dry and sprinklers are kept going more or less continuously to provide the necessary moisture: there is a basic allowance of water to each house,

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registered by water meter, and beyond that they pay 1/- per 1000 gallons - average usage seems to be 200,000 gallons a year or so which costs some £20 - apparently they spend their money differently from what we are accustomed in England.

Next we crossed the railway - a funny little affair with 3' 6" gauge, more like a miniature railway than the type one would anticipate in Western Australia which, by the way, is by far the largest State and covers one-third of the whole continent. Thence we went around on to a vantage point giving a view over the Swan River with the sea in the distance. The view, considered one of the finest in this part, was truly magnificent. We were 400-500 feet up and below lay the river like an enormous U-shaped lake, the extremities considerably thickened. Dozens and dozens of yachts (it was Saturday) were racing in various parts and made a lovely picture - hills in the background completed a real postcard picture. The air here is perfectly clear and buildings stand out brilliantly against trees or the sky - there is no smoke and no dust and the wind comes over thousands of miles of ocean straight from the South Pole.

The residences at the vantage point we had chosen were those of the well-to-do - mostly bookmakers apparently and again were really magnificent. Space is cheap and the Aussies take full advantage of the fact. Added to this is the fact that, in spite of the poor sandy soil, a profusion of tropical and sub-tropical plants and trees flourish, the whole effect must be seen and cannot be described. Mr. Jeanes told us that

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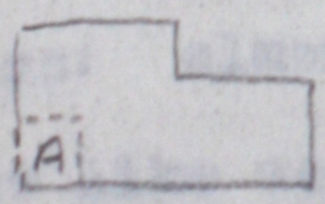
in spring time every twig bears a flower and there are over 4000 varieties of flowering shrubs, etc. which grow in the district.

By now the heat was pretty considerable and we were glad to get going. Our next call was at the Jeanes' house in Perth where we had a "cup of tea". We had been looking forward to some decent tea for a long time - the ship's tea is definitely poor, weak and washy. We were not disappointed - cup after cup we had of lovely hot, sweet "char" served out of really nice china cups. The children had iced water - they still do not seem to like the national beverage very much. To go with our tea Mrs.Jeanes had prepared Scotch pancakes smothered in butter (four each we had) and two perfectly amazing "sponges" - an Australian sponge is apparently about twelve inches across and three and a half to four inches deep. It is covered on top with something tasty - in our case one was decorated with dates, cream and sugar, and the other with passion fruit, cream and sugar. How many eggs were used we do not know, but a decent draught would have blown it all away.

What struck us more though was the house - we were assured very solemnly that it was quite a normal suburban bungalow used by those of moderate income. Be that as it may it took our breath away: we entered into a nice hall on the left of which was a sort of lounge-dining room: the room was designed thus:



and was some 25 feet long at the widest part and 20 feet broad. At "A" was a stone floored loggia with 4 ft. walls around covered with flowering plants; in the evening they sit here in the cool and read or play bridge

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screened from any prying people. Behind this main room lay a kitchen about 15 feet square, fully equipped with gas cooker, refrigerator, etc. and beyond the kitchen is the laundry. To the right and rear of the main room are the bedrooms, four in number and the best room was some 15' x 20' - the smallest room was about 12' x 12'. Finally right at the rear of the house was a proper playroom for the children, one side open to the air so that on wet days they get the benefit of fresh air but keep dry - windows open into the kitchen and so the parents can keep a watchful eye on the brats. The house was some fifteen years old but both inside and outside so fresh and clean it looked no more than a year or two old - this amazing freshness is most striking everywhere - paint does not discolour, tiles remain brilliantly red and do not get mossy, you have to tell the age of a house by the nature of the design and not by the colour of the paint or tiles.

Inside all is beautifully cool - no stuffy, humid atmosphere as we get in England but a pleasant dewy coolness such as one experiences in the middle of a deep forest on a hot day. The fittings were good and well kept.

In the garden again, one's mouth waters, oranges and lemons grow as easily as loganberries and fruit in a couple of years: almonds and walnuts provide them with nuts, and grapes grow like weeds.

In a word, it seems, as a first impression at least, to be a veritable paradise. Had we been asked to live there I think we should have jumped at the chance - the design of the

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house and its spaciousness made an instant appeal and we felt very much that in England we could learn an awful lot in the art of living in something like comfort on a moderate income.

We spent thus about an hour, eating and chatting, surveying the house and garden and making friends with Mr. & Mrs. Jeanes and their three children Leonie, Bruce and Helen.

Then back again in the car for a run into Perth proper. We were again immediately struck by the bright, clean shops and streets; the shops had everything apparently, fruit by the ton, meat, cheese, eggs and eatables of every possible sort; frocks, suits, silk stockings, shoes and all the things both man and woman have longed for at home for years past. We just stood and gaped - it seemed so impossible - it seemed that we were in some fabulous place. And the people themselves were something to marvel at as well; bright, cheerful and happily grinning as they walked about, smartly dressed and well fed. It was all so different from home, so obviously different; so obviously a land which knew not what need is or what hunger is, which knew no cares and no sacrifices of the kind we had been used to.

So we celebrated the new found liberty and bought the children some Easter eggs and the Godfrey children a memento each.

Then on to lunch at the best hotel in Perth where an excellent meal was served to which I fear we could hardly do full justice. Our appetites had improved on board but we had had little bits of many courses and were now subjected to

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massive portions of fewer courses. Having skipped the soup, we had a "taste" of fish and followed with chicken, salad, ham, rolls and butter, ices, wine and coffee. This "austerity" meal served according to regulations cost 4/- each plus wine at about 5/- per bottle - all I can say is "welcome austerity" !

After a short rest in the lounge where coffee was served we went to the office building and inspected the building. Very nice too - a very tall modern place with plenty of light and air and all modern mechanical appliances to aid efficiency. Up to the top we went where we repeated the view previously enjoyed in the early morning from another angle. And the more we saw, the more desirable did this City seem.

Then a minor tragedy - Mr. Jeanes discovered that his petrol was very low and it was after closing time. We scoured the town and went back to the house finally where he located a couple of gallons in a tin - we lost a good deal of time which had been intended for sight seeing but it could not be helped - actually he had intended getting the tank filled in the morning but in the rush of trying to get to Freemantle to meet us by 9 a.m., had overlooked the refuelling.

So we had a run around the locality instead of going out further: first to the tennis courts of the best club. My hat! In a small town of about 150,000 inhabitants, this club has a "centre court" equal to Wimbledon and brick built grand stands with cover, lovely turf and beautiful surroundings. The ordinary courts too are marvellous; they use "buffalo" grass very largely - it is a type of very course twitch which creeps

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and makes a solid carpet. Even in late March, which is early autumn, not a trace of wear could be seen and the bound of the ball was as fast and true as on a hard court.

From here we made a quick run to the coast to see the "bathing beaches". This was our first acquaintance with surf and the rollers and we were very keen to know if it all lived up to its reputation. The answer is it most certainly does: the sand is rather soft but stretches for miles and miles, as far as the eye can see in both directions. It is almost white and on a hot day at noon must be almost blinding. It was latish afternoon when we arrived, with a calm sea: the bathers too were few because the "season" was practically ended - too cold - and that at 90° in the shade! The kiddies decided they had better test the water, so paddled for a short time, declaring that the water was warm. We found out later that Aussies only bathe when the water is luke-warm and then reckon to stay in most of the day with a break for meals. They seem to think us a bit mad only going in for fifteen minutes and do not think it worth the bother.

On again we went along the coast to other beaches. The scenery along the shore is not very exciting because the "land" is mostly sand dunes. But the colouring is lovely. The brilliant white sand grows two sorts of plant in great profusion, the first a grey-leaved shrub about eighteen inches high, and the second a bright emerald green sort of cactus plant also some eighteen inches high. The white "earth" with great blobs of grey and green bushes leaves a vivid impression in one's mind, it is so unlike anything we had seen before.

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By now it was getting towards evening so we left the coast and turned inland again towards Perth. A few miles inland we met our first real "bush" land. This is apparently half desert - it consists of gum-trees of varying heights and girth, at varying distances apart, the undergrowth consisting of all sorts of bushes, thick in some places and thin in others. Some places had been ravaged by fires but it is a peculiar thing about these gums (a) that the leaves, being full of eucalyptus oil will burn whether they be dry or wet so rain does not stop a fire, and (b) the burning does not kill the trees; a year or so after the fire has passed they spring into growth again and so the "bush" starts off on a new lease of life.

To the uniniated, the poor sandy soil and the apparent barrenness of the earth suggest that nothing much will grow. But with proper cultivation and more particularly by irrigation, this land grows anything and that to perfection. Some day Western Australia will I imagine be fully developed and it ought to be a bottomless well of food.

This scenery is not unattractive. There are only small hills to vary the relative flatness of the landscape, but the gum tree has a peculiar attractiveness all its own. Its leaves are a grey-green, long and narrow rather like a willow leaf. The trunks are varied in colour, some dark, some almost white. The variation i colour is caused by the trees shedding their bark from time to time, leaving a silvery new trunk exposed to the sun and air.

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And so we came back again to the outer suburbs when Mr. Jeanes thought we had better have some tea. Well, for the sake of appearances we just had to say "thanks very much" and to appear grateful for the unstinted hospitality, but it was a real and conscious effort - we seemed to be eating all the time and very rich food at that. We struggled through a couple of courses but had to call a halt then, we just could not manage another crumb!

Finally we left in time to join the boat again by 8 p.m. We got the Jeanes' aboard for a drink and then bade them a tired and honest "au revoir and thanks a lot". They had provided from many points of view the real high spot of the voyage and we shall always remember their city and the grand gestures of friendliness with which we were greeted on our first acquaintance with the New Homeland.

Punctually at 8 o'clock we moved off to the accompaniment of cheers and shouts and with streamers being thrown to and from the boat. The harbour is very shallow here and a very neat piece of seamanship was performed to get us on our way again. We could not go ahead directly from the quay side; so a tug pulled our nose out through an angle of 45° and then gently eased us away from our stern moorings. It all looks very simple but a boat of over 20,000 tons looks very much like a floating Selfridges when in port and would crush the wooden quay-sides to matchwood if she swung awkwardly.

That night we perhaps realised fully that our long journey was nearly at an end. On the 27th March we were due in

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Melbourne - we had yet to cross the Bight which, by all accounts is much like the Bay of Biscay but often worse - and at the other side was the ultimate goal. These were sobering thoughts.

CHAPTER 10. THE LAST LAP - FREEMANTLE TO MELBOURNE.

23rd March. There is not much of any consequence to tell about this "last lap". Our good fortune with the weather held all the way and the Bight was even more kind than the Bay had been although it was very obvious that it could well have been otherwise. The sea here comes straight from the South Pole with ne'er a bit of land to break the waves. In consequence, the sea comes at you in "large lumps", great long waves hundreds of yards long which make black streaks in the blue sea. One sails along steadily with the rollers relentlessly coming, passing under the boat and thence to the distant shore where they break in great foaming cascades of water. And as each roller reaches the boat, down goes the port side and up comes the starboard side, hanging a moment in the trough of the wave, which passes under the keel and as relentlessly pushes up the port side and pushes down the starboard side. This motion is almost as regular as clockwork in a smooth sea, but could be mighty uncomfortable in a rough one; how many degrees from the vertical we went each two or three minutes I do not know, probably no more than seven or so, but even that means that when one sits

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in the lounge and looks out through the windows, its all sea one minute and no sky, and all sky the next and no sea. Not that any of us felt the least uncomfortable by that time, but a wind could cause a lot of trouble and one might, probably would, feel very different.

Each of these last four days saw less and less activity as each and all packed a bit more, wrote last letters, cabled last cables and generally got ready to land. For nearly half our total passenger list was due to disappear into Melbourne, and only the other half was going on to Sydney.

And we too got our bits and pieces together, trying somehow or another to get some order into our two cabins, to get our clothes into the suit cases in the very limited space at our disposal. It was a bit of a caper, one way and another, and we seemed to get ourselves in a pretty good muddle one way and another. Gradually too we had to get back to normal dress, to abandon shorts as they were packed away, to abandon dressing for dinner as our clothes were packed for the time being.

On the 26th March we had our last breakfast aboard, our last lunch, our last tea and our last dinner; we had a last drink too and we thought of the marvellous time we had had the previous four weeks, the marvellous experiences we had enjoyed both on board and ashore; the lovely memories which would always remain with us to look back upon in the years to come and whether or not the future turned out as we hoped it would. We thought too of those we had left at home, wishing that they might share in our good luck, wondering what the future had in store for them.

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And so we had our last sleep in our bunks, and good sleeps they were too - how could they be otherwise. We were happy and contented, well fed and rested and in spite of the imminence of the real new adventure. the real contact with our new fellow men and women, we slept long and deeply.

At dawn on the 27th (Thursday) we were in the Bay at the head of which Melbourne lies and in dock in the very early hours.

And there there were hundreds to greet us all. They burst in through the gangways on "C" Deck like a dam-buret, citizens, pigwigs and littlewigs, paper reporters, radio interviewers, news reel merchants, old folk and young folk, all the lot decked up for the occasion.

Amongst this seething elbowing mob were Mr. Greig and Mr. Fletcher, showing their way through to our cabin: here we awaited them and charming chaps they were; again we noted their cheerfulness, their look of good health and of good living.

Thus we made our first contacts at this our final goal. Not much to look at in print perhaps, but to us in our small way, a big moment - for on the first impressions on both sides much must hang, perhaps the success or failure of the whole adventure.

Then it was all bustle and formality. Our bags were taken ashore and I was lucky enough to be the first in the P-R letter group to have his luggage examined. And what an examination they did - every case had to be unroped - every one was subjected to a minute scrutiny. Every bit of paper was opened, my shaving tackle carefully examined, toothbrushes

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looked at as though made of gold and generally speaking one's belongings were treated to the most rigid inspection. And all for nothing! Served them darn well right too! What they expected to find, I know not, but they did not find it search as they did. Every passenger was similarly treated and I think there must have been some sorely ruffled tempers by the time evening came - and even then they had only dealt with half the landing passengers and the other half had to wait until Friday before they could get their clearance.

And worst luck of all, our trunk in the hold was missing. It matters little how I eventually found it, battered and torn, with every one of the four labels originally tied to it with so much loving care, missing, with both back hinges broken and one of the two padlocks wrenched off. Had it not been securely roped as well I doubt whether we should ever have seen its contents again. However we duly rescued our property and collected it all at our first temporary home - a guest house "Picton Court" in South Melbourne.

Here we were greeted by flowers from the Board of Management and an enormous box of chocolates from Mrs. Hearn, wife of the General Manager. A very pleasant and charming welcome to the land of our choice which pleased us well.

So I write "Finis" to this first chapter of a new life - a chapter full of incident and import to the four of us who have made the decision and the journey. Not well written nor well described I know but perhaps to those who read it, it will

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convey something of our reactions and our experiences; perhaps it will help them too to enjoy in some small way the great good fortune which has come our way. We are on the threshold now of a new life in a different country; all that has gone before is experience; on that and our own abilities we have to build a new and a different life. We shall need all our courage and all our abilities but I have no doubt we shall succeed.

Perhaps in time to come I may write a second chapter to this adventure - who knows?

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