

Some notes of a trip to South  
Africa in 1884-5.

On a drowsing wet night  
the 27<sup>th</sup> of October I left my quiet home  
in Shotts, Lanarkshire for a few months  
sojourn in Cape Colony South Africa.  
The thought of the great distance between  
us made our parting a little sad. I  
shook hands with Father & Mother at  
the door and scarcely a word was  
spoken. Our hearts were too full to  
risk speaking. John, Elizabeth &  
William Smith, jun, accompanied me  
to Glasgow. The two latter returned  
home the same evening but John  
came on as far as London.

The journey to the great metropolis  
was accomplished in fully 10 hours when  
the morning broke about 7 o'clock  
we were nearing the city. Flat  
well cultivated land in good sized  
farms was the impression one had  
in passing. About 7.30 a.m. we  
arrived at Ruston Station and took  
the luggage by cab to Fenchurch St.

2

Station. After getting some breakfast and a refreshing wash I went to secure my ticket at Donald Currie & Co's Office.

3

For a few hours we walked through some of the principal streets. I had often thought Glasgow streets were crowded with all kinds of conveyances: but it is as quiet as a village in comparison with London. How accidents don't happen every five minutes was a marvel to me. About 8 p.m. we went to the ship where I was to sleep for the night. John somewhat sadly parted from me saying, "that he was sorry to see me going away so far alone". In it all I could commit my way to the Lord & was comforted.

When I went to my cabin I found as my fellow-passenger a Mr. King from near Peterhead. He was glad & so was I to find that two Scotchmen were to be together. Our cabin would measure about 6' 6" x 4'. Two berths are on each side, <sup>with</sup> a basin stand & looking glass at the upper end.

Chair there ~~was~~ none, the edge of the berth is all the seat that could be had.

After joining in prayer together I went to bed. Not having slept much the night before in the train I felt tired all night through the lading of the ship went on which was somewhat disturbing. Next morning <sup>29<sup>th</sup> Oct<sup>r</sup></sup> I got up just in time to see our ship the "Harwarden Castle" sail from the East India Docks. A good many were on the dock bidding farewell to their friends. Some were sobbing bitterly. The morning was foggy when we got into the river, but by the time we reached Gravesend the sun shone out. Woolwich was hidden from view by the fog. I was disappointed in not seeing the great arsenal of England.

The Company's servant & friends who were not going the voyage left us here; in parting the crew <sup>of the tug</sup> raised a hearty cheer for our success. A little further down the river I observed three of the old stone walls of England floating, fitted up as barracks for soldiers.

6

Dunghines & other places were passed as we sailed briskly down to the Channel. Dover was eagerly looked for and created much interest as we passed the strongly fortified old town. Its long line of chalk cliffs stretching far on either side of the town gave it a picturesque appearance. The castle is situated far up the hill side to the right. The houses are plain & strongly built about three stories in height. ~~About 8 1/2~~ The opposite coast of France could be plainly seen but not the town of Calais.

About 8 o'clock we were passing Brighton. The many lights thickly studded on the shore was an imposing sight.

7

When I rose from bed on the 30<sup>th</sup> Oct<sup>r</sup>. we were sailing into Dartmouth harbor. The bend of the bay at the mouth makes it a very safe haven for ships. The hills rise in amphitheatre fashion with the principal part of the town at the north east.

Chaste villas are studded all round, nestling among trees. The autumn tints gave the place a grace & beauty I shall never forget. Six of us took a little boat & went ashore to spend a few hours.

We took a walk up the hillside where a splendid view of the town & bay was had. We visited St Saviour's Church built 512 years ago. It is much after the fashion of other old English Churches & possesses some relics I had no knowledge of. A fine painting of Christ raising the Widow's Son of Naim hangs at the end of the chancel. One of the doors has some very ancient & curious iron-work representing two leopards.

After making some purchases we were rowed over to the ship by a man with one leg. He had endless yarns to tell & evidently had seen some service. I said to him I hoped he would be conducted as safely across the last river as he had carried us. Civility is the mark generally of English servants. When I had been helped with my luggage

in London by a porter, he wished me a pleasant voyage. It would never have entered a Scotchman's brain to do such a thing. When I came to the ship I found a letter from Elizabeth & Mr. Macindoe. After writing a letter to Mr. Cunningham & Mr. Macindoe I went to bed.

31<sup>st</sup> Oct. When I rose next morning many passengers were coming on board, having travelled by train from London. Mr. Schaap a Dutchman from Delft joined Mr. King & me in our cabin. The ship's bell was rung for passengers' friends to leave. Many I observed found it hard to take the last look. At 12 o'clock punctually the ship started again on her voyage. A number of small craft & a tug accompanied us to the mouth of the Dart then a ringing cheer was given & we parted.

About three o'clock the shores of England could be but dimly seen in a few minutes more we had lost sight of Britania. A stiff breeze was blowing which made our vessel roll

considerably. By 6 p.m. many were sick & I had to retire to my cabin. The dreaded Bay of Biscay dealt kindly with us comparatively. No wind was blowing but a heavy swell from the west made the ship roll ~~considerably~~ <sup>very badly</sup>. In deference to the many too sick to attend no service was held in the morning of Sabbath 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov. Rev. Johnston a Missionary of the Church of England returning to Nyassa held a service in the evening. I was too sick in bed to attend.

Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov. As the morning broke we were sailing up the Tagus to Lisbon and by 7 a.m. were anchored to the west of the city. The day was sunny and clear like July in Scotland. Barges loaded with cargo & coal lay along-side. Soon the work began and what clamouring yelling shouting the boatmen made. Careful was the rule; boots I saw few; a tapered cowl of sugar-loaf shape was generally the headpiece.

Opposite from where we were anchored on the left bank of the river ~~was~~ <sup>we saw</sup> the Royal Palace. It is a large oblong structure of

three storeys. At the eastern end which forms the entrance two towers form the corners. Round it villas of chaste architecture are built. Their domes & minarets glancing in the sun made a fine effect. A church somewhat after the fashion of St John's Edinburgh, but ~~and~~ more elaborate gave a classic beauty to the place. A little further down the river commanding a good position is the tower of St Vincent, a guard for the city. One of the Woolich 80 tonners I fancy could make short work of it. The greater part of the city & especially where the earthquake occurred lay to the east. Owing to cholera prevailing in France & Italy our ship was put in quarantine. It was a great disappointment because here we expected to get fruit for the voyage. Letters having to be posted by 1 p.m. I wrote one to home. Mr. Cunningham & Miss Sprot. About 5 p.m. we set sail from Lisbon. The passengers who had come to Lisbon being compelled to lie three days in the quarantine station



waved us a farewell as we passed their isolated quarters on the right bank of the river. An amusing scene occurred just as we were a little way down the river. A pilot's skiff was tacked on to conduct us past the quicksands prevailing at the mouth of the Sagus. A stiff breeze was blowing bringing waves of good size from the sea. Our ship began to go too fast for the skiff to ride them. In a most fantastic way it jostled and threw <sup>it</sup> upon the waves. The old pilot yelled & shouted for us to go slower, and seeing there was no hope he let the hauling rope go & returned with no slight ducking of spray. A great bank of sand lies at the mouth of the river with a lighthouse on it. Far away from it we saw the light gleaming on the wave.

Sickness passed away in the calm but returned again late in the evening, and until Wednesday I was unfit for anything but resting on my chair.

Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> Nov. Read after breakfast the 10<sup>th</sup> Psalm: some of its verses I

understood better than ever I did previously. About 12 o'clock we sighted one of the Canary Islands, but were too far off to get a view of Teneriffe. Being Sunday a number of games were had on deck by moonlight. ~~About~~ Before retiring for the night I joined in a short service held by Mr. Johnston. Although not at home in the English liturgy I felt we were worshipping the same Divine Jehovah I had been wont to worship in simpler style.

Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> Nov. had not much that was eventful except a sight of two passing ships. A French screw came very near, but enough to be able to tell her name.

A walk on the deck and a friendly chat made the hours between meals pass pleasantly. The reserve at first noticed began gradually to wear away & soon we knew each other as if we had lived years together. In Dickenson we had a garrulous Englishman very fond of wagging the Scotch. In Bowman a Jew that could strike a bargain and report had it that he did it, by selling a small piece of elastic for sixpence.

On Friday 7<sup>th</sup> Nov. I had in the morning a refreshing bath: the water here was almost tepid. About 10 a.m. I got my box from the hold and had a change of clothing. Read some of Duncan Mathieson's life and chatted long with a Mr. Bellingham on native life, ect round Lake Nyassa. He had in his charge four young natives of the Tauribar district who had been in England learning something of sailor life for nearly a year. Their names as I get them are Johana Hamisi, Harry Sumani, Edwin Manwere & Liani. I was impressed with their good behaviour & solid character. Their intelligence was not great but very creditable for their scanty privileges.

On Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> we sighted Cape Verde on a hill of considerable height a lighthouse stands & on each ~~side~~ side gigantic trees could be seen. Several flocks of birds like starlings flew near us for a time. In this region called "the white man's grave" sharks are common but none was seen. The town of Dakar on the peninsula we were too far off to see.

In the evening rain fell in torrents chasing every one down to the saloon. After it faded a beautiful display of stars of phosphorus was seen for about 10 ft on each side of the ship. The great darkness that prevailed made the phenomenon very grand.

Sabbath 9<sup>th</sup> Nov At 10.30 the ship bell rang for service in the saloon. The captain read the prayers & portions for the day. No sermon was preached. To one accustomed to a Scotch service it was cold & formal.

In the evening a grand display of sheet lightning was seen to the west. Balls of fire burst and flashed with great length north & south. Immediately after rain fell in torrents. For two days I continued to be slightly sick & no appetite. Near midnight on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> we crossed the equator line.

Here I expected boiling heat but the head-wind that began to blow near Cape Verde made the air cool & bracing.

On Monday & Wednesday a ship was seen but little else to break the monotony.

In the evening of Wednesday the stewards

gave a concert of vocal & instrumental music in negro characters. I did not go owing to the heated state of the room but sat in the company of Mr. Newham ill with consumption. It was saddening to see him poring over novels continually. The Bible Inebri saw in his hand. Without the Holy Spirit's influence I saw how near a man may come to the grave unalarmed.

Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> Nov. Two children attacked with scarletina & two with measles. Much uneasiness lest we should be put in quarantine at Cape Town.

Friday 14<sup>th</sup> Bore day on board. Read some of the life of General Gordon & Nehemiah. Much struck with points of resemblance in their character. Joking begins to be very common since the passengers know each other well. Today two sharks seen swimming near the ship. Only two fins & a little bit of the back visible. In the afternoon sports lasting for two days began. Races & games were - Flat race. leap

hog, high-leap, tortoiseraace, potato race  
egg & spoon. About 8 o'clock one of  
the engineers showed me over the  
engine room. The engines are coupled  
one high-pressure; the other low pressure.  
The cylinders are 50" & 90" in diameter.  
Piston shaft 8½". Length of stroke 5'.  
Main shaft 18" in dia. & blades of screw  
150' in length. Blades of screw 20' in dia.  
Revolutions 57 average per minute.  
Nominal horse power 600. Pressure  
80 lbs on square inch.

An electric engine of Siemens patent  
is used for producing electricity for  
lighting the ship. Refrigerator going  
at a pressure of 50 lbs on the square  
inch makes ice & snow for cooking  
purposes. Coal used per day on an  
average of 66 tons. It was a feather  
for my cap to hear that all the  
engineers were Scotch.

Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> Had a conversation with  
a Mr. Riberie an Austrian on religious  
topics. He said he never had a Bible in his  
possession. The people don't read such

holy books. Only ladies have a little prayer book." How wretched the condition of Roman Catholics under the tyranny of priests!

Today games resumed and were - tug of war, slipper race, bobbing for shillings, cock fighting, crews tug of war, obstacle race. The ducking in the water & being showered on by the hose were most enjoyable for the spectators.

Sabbath 16<sup>th</sup> Did not go to the service owing to the closeness & heat of the saloon. Was meditating on the quarantine regulations at Lisbon.

We were considered unclean by the Portuguese and could not be allowed to defile their land. We saw the beauties of the city & could almost taste the fruits! but it was a far off. The day was hot & we longed for fruit to quench our thirst. I thought of an unsaved sinner's condition at last. Near the "city that hath foundations" & almost tasting the fruit but for ever

50

shut out. Read some Missionary intelligence & an article on hymns by Dr Bullock in Our own Fireside for May 1876. Today we were in the latitude of St Helena.

Nov 17<sup>th</sup> Was much disturbed during the night by a pump. A great many of the passengers rose & walked about the saloon in their night dresses. Much joking & laughter went on as it lessened or increased in loudness.

Birds begin to meet us either from St Helena or the the shores of Africa. They must have travelled some hundred of miles from the nearest land.

Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> Little to record but longings expressed by many to be at the journey's end. Finished the reading of Gordon's life. A noble Christian man; but apparently spoiled a little by being petted. Watched for several nights to see a good sunset at sea. Clouds have generally covered his face as he touched the horizon. The first sunset that I saw in the English Channel



Use an illustration here about the  
of acquittal on the judgment day.

was by far the finest.

Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> Nov. Many large birds flying round the ships & a small one came on board & journeyed with us till we were near Cape Town. Today the vessel began to roll badly & many sick. Upset about 8 p.m. & forced to go to bed.

Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> Owing to the rolling that continued all night I was quite sleepless. There was no possibility of lying at rest in bed unless the knees & back were wedged against the wall of the ship & berth. By 8 a.m. land was seen after an interval of nearly 12 days. By 10 o'clock Table Mountain could be dimly seen. In the afternoon the ship was anchored in Table Bay overlooking Cape Town. Much suspense prevailed lest quarantine should be imposed until the Medical Officers report came back that all was right. A ringing cheer burst from the passengers when they heard that they were to get ashore immediately. A letter was sent to the ship from Mr. Russell Scotch Church

When I went to my room I found the text Matt XI 28. Took as a word for my journeys. "I will give you rest"

inviting me to stay with him for a few days until I had made arrangements about lodgings. After parting with many friends I had made on board I got my luggage by cab to the Custom House. A rough search was made of my bags and then allowed to pass. I observed several Jews being searched thoroughly. Poor Jew: the curse is upon you yet.

Mr. & Mrs. Russell gave me a very hearty ~~invitation~~ welcome and made me feel at home during the two days I spent under their roof. On Friday & Saturday after I arrived much of the time was spent seeing the town. The object that strikes every stranger is Table Mountain. a majestic mass rising almost precipitously behind the town to the height of 3582 ft. It is a fitting introduction to a land of gigantic mountains & barren plains. Like a mighty sentinel it seems to keep guard defying storm & winds. As our ship lay in the bay the sun shone with splendour on its frowning brow. Soon after a cloud