

S.S. Surrey Royal Albert Docks Friday Dec 7th 1900

We got here between one and two o'clock this afternoon, and came on board at once. When we got down below, we found all our bunks and places had just been furnished. The carpenters had been putting in new bunks, forms and tables, even the floor is new. This is very nice for some reasons, but there is plenty of dirt and shavings about. The floor is dreadfully dirty, I think the sailors ought to clean it first, but it seems as if we have got to do it ^{between} ourselves somehow.

We have all got one matress, one big blanket, one pillow, three unbleached calico sheets, as stiff as boards, and a counterpane in the same state. I am very glad I have got a good big rug. I shall sleep in it, as I don't fancy these sheets. I daresay the place will look better when it is clean, and more shipshape. We do not leave here until tomorrow. I hope we go off early, but they are still bringing cargo on board, and it is now nearly 9 pm.

We have electric light in all our places, so we can see well to read or write. We had five omnibuses to bring us here from Westminster. It was a long ride and we crossed the river on the steam ferry, buses and all. We have not been able to get any proper dinner today. We shall get on better when we are fairly off.

No more tonight.

Tuesday Dec 11th

On Sunday I got up feeling well enough, but by the time breakfast appeared, I was beginning to be queer, and soon was laid low in my berth, where I stayed all day and all Monday as well. We were in the English Channel Saturday night, and I heard on Sunday that during the night the ship had had to put back from Deal to Dover because it was so rough. I suppose it was that that started the sea sickness, as we have all, or nearly all been bad. We got into 'The Bay of Biscay O' yesterday about 4 o'clock and expect to get out of it tonight. It has not been very bad, though there has been a rather heavy swell all the time and the ship has rolled a good deal. I have been much better today, went on deck both morning and afternoon. It seems very stuffy in the cabin when we come down, and no wonder with fifty of us all sleeping in the same place

Wednesday 12th Dec.

We got out of the bay today. This afternoon when we were on deck we saw a whale, but not very close. It has been fine all day and the sea seems calmer. Nothing particular has happened except that most of the seasick ones are getting about again.

Friday
~~Saturday~~ Dec 14th.

I didn't write anything yesterday, so must put it in with today's news, such as it is. Some of the girls got up a sort of concert last night, but there is not very much striking talent on board. I shall be glad when it is light enough to go on deck after tea, the evenings won't seem so long then. It is already much warmer, we shall soon be in the tropics now. We expect to reach Las Palmas soon, either tomorrow night or Sunday, and shall get our letters posted there. I Haven't done any needlework yet but am going to start some now I feel myself again.

Sat Dec 15th.

We passed the peak of Teneriffe today just after five, but were too far away to see it very plainly. We shall reach Las Palmas tonight, I think, Tomorrow Sunday we shall be taking in coal all day so we shall get pretty grubby I daresay, up on deck.

Dec 16th.

We were slowing down all night and anchored at Las Palmas this morning between seven and eight. Soon after breakfast a tug came off from the shore, towing the coal barges, and the coaling has been going on all day, and has not finished now, at half past nine at night. We are in a very pretty bay. The houses all seem close to the sea, and the mountains rise behind them., they remind me very much of the Cumberland fells, though I can't see any stone walls on them. Las Palmas seems a fair sized place but it is scattered right round the bay. All the houses appear to have flat roofs, except some buildings which look like warehouses. The people are a mixture of Spanish and Portuguese. Several boats came off during the morning with oranges, bananas and apples, cigars, cigarettes, scent, and picture postcards, one of which I sent home today. All the girls were buying fruit, scent and so on, and some of them even went in for cigarettes, which they smoked down below when the matron wasn't there. A little boy caused a lot of fun by diving from one of the boats for coppers which we threw into the sea wrapped up in pieces of paper. He didn't miss many of them. He seemed as much at home in the water as a duck and came up each time puffing and blowing and ~~asking~~^{shouting} for more pennies. Las Palmas is in the group called the Canary Islands.

Dec 17th.

We finished coaling this morning and left Las Palmas about 12 o'clock. I hope we shall stop again once at least, but the matron seems to think we shan't. This evening a flying fish jumped right on deck, it was after dusk and I suppose it was attracted by the light on the bridge. It struck its head on something and was killed. One of the Officers let the Matron bring it down for us to see, it was about eighteen inches long.

Dec 19th.

It is getting very hot now. It seems so strange to think it is most likely foggy and wet in England. We have had no rain since we started, and it is light now till six o'clock. We are thinking of leaving off our thick winter things. We get plenty of reading. There are plenty of magazines and papers for us, a box of library books and such games as Draughts, Ludo Halma and so on, and packs of cards. The matron has plenty of materials for needlework if we want it, so we needn't be idle. I have finished nearly all mine already, as we only have to keep our own places clean, and wash up after meals, so we get plenty of time. One of the girls on board is partly Spanish. She was telling me yesterday about the bull fighting in Spain. There was one at Las Palmas the Sunday we were there. There is a girl here from Whitehaven, she knows all about the Luncans.

Dec 21st.

We were allowed to go on deck this evening after tea. We shall soon be going up every evening now, I hope. The doctor has a gramophone, which he set going for our benefit. It played some dance tunes, though there is not much room for dancing on our part of the deck.

Dec 23rd.

Today is the first Sunday we have had a proper service on board conducted by the Captain. The tables in our quarters were covered with rugs, and at the end of one a pillow was put, with the Union Jack over it, to serve as a reading desk. I don't know why the service was not held on deck, it would have been much cooler up there. There was a sudden shower of rain this evening while we were on deck, and some of us got rather wet before we could get down below. It is the first rain we have had since we left England. It is very hot and sultry just now, as we are close to the Equator. The matron says we shall have four more Sundays at sea. Yesterday we saw a curious kind of bird, with large webbed wings like those of a bat. I was told it was a sea fox which had probably been blown out to sea from the coast of Africa, Sierra Leone or thereabouts. The wind has been very strong these last few days, although it has been very hot.

Dec 24th.

Christmas Eve and pouring with rain. It has been beautifully fine all day, but started raining soon after eight this evening. I daresay it will clear up by tomorrow. We had a concert on deck this evening. Several of the girls sang, and the Captain and two of the officers gave an exhibition of their vocal powers. We had to do without music as there is no piano on board. They said today that we shall cross the line about seven tomorrow morning. It has been much cooler today. I hope it will keep so. The only land we have seen since we started was Teneriffe and Las Palmas. I hope we shall see more, even if we don't stop. I have been told this captain keeps farther out to sea than most of them do. The Surrey is a steel ship, and was built at Newcastle last year.

Dec 25th, Christmas Day.

Today has not seemed at all like Christmas. We had beef and mutton for dinner and a very ordinary roly-poly plum pudding. There was a shower of rain after dinner, but the wind soon dried the deck up again. The usual concert was held on deck this evening. One of the girls sang a duet "What are the wild waves saying", with the purser. We crossed the line this morning.

Dec 27th.

It is much cooler now. The matron seems to think we shall be getting bad weather soon. I hope she will prove to be mistaken. She was telling us today that on one of her voyages with a party like ~~this~~, the engines went wrong, and the engineers were only able to patch them up enough to get into the port of Lisbon, where they had to stay eleven days, while they were repaired, the engines I mean, not the girls. It must have been rather riling to have been delayed all that time. Once the ship she was on was wrecked and though everyone was safely landed, some of them only had nightgowns and shawls on, and I believe they lost all their belongings. On another occasion the ship caught fire, so she has had some varied experiences in her time. She has taken thirty-eight voyages with parties of girls.

Dec 30th.

Yesterday evening we were off St Helena. We had been hoping to see the coast but were not near enough for that, I suppose, till after ~~dark~~, so we missed it. It is getting a good deal colder now, and will continue to do so till we are off the coast of Australia. We seem to pass very few other ships. I don't think we have seen half a dozen since started, exclusive of those in the bay at Las Palmas.

Jan 3rd 1901

I was seasick again yesterday, and also part of today. I thought I was safe from that for the rest of the voyage, after being so at the start, but yesterday and last night the ship rolled so again, that several of us have been bad, more or less. I think we are nearing the Cape now. On New Year's Eve the Captain had ~~some~~ of the hatches cleared out, and the electric light put on so, that we could have it at night for a concert. He lent us a lot of flags to decorate with, and when it was done the place really looked quite nice. Four of the girls had got up two short dramatic pieces, which they acted very well, considering the lack of stage properties. The rest of the programme consisted of songs and recitations, and the doctor's gramophone was to the fore again. Sweets and biscuits were passed round, and when twelve o'clock arrived, we had, of course Auld Lang Syne, and then, by the Captain's request "All people that on earth do dwell". That was how we bid farewell to the old year and century and welcomed in the new, out on the Ocean, on board the Surrey. The Captain is a Scotchman, McGibbon by name, so no doubt that is the reason we had more festivity at the New Year than at Christmas. One feature of the entertainment was the whistling of various well-known tunes in chorus by five or six of the girls. It looked so comical to see them standing in a row trying to screw their mouths into whistling shape.

Jan 5th

It is a good ^{deal} colder now, and we are glad of our jackets on deck in the evening. We have not seen many wonders of the deep yet, and the voyage is half over, but we saw some very large albatrosses today. We were only able to go on deck in the morning; after dinner it was raining, and though it cleared up in the evening, we couldn't go up as the deck was so wet.

Jan 7th

We passed the Cape yesterday morning, but of course did not see it. If I live to come back, I guess I'll manage to come the other route, so as to stop at a few more places. As this is a cargo boat, it is coming this way, no doubt, to save the expense of going through the Suez. We have such a lot of albatrosses round us now. They rest on the water like the seagulls do, and look like great ducks.

Jan 9th.

The weather is very uncertain now, and we have had to be downstairs more than we care for, but they let us have the hatch in which we kept "Hogmanay", as the Scotch call it, as a kind of recreation room. It is a nice big place, but rather stuffy, as the port generally has to be shut on account of the waves. The girls have all sorts of games on deck when it is fine. They skip and dance, and play at Oranges and Lemons, Jolly Miller, and so forth: it seemed funny at first to see them at such childrens' games, but of course it is a good form of exercise.

Jan 10th.

It has been fine today and much warmer. This evening we saw some whales spouting at a distance from the ship, at least they were either whales or grampuses or something of that ilk. I was under the impression until today that we were going straight to Perth but I hear we shall stay at the depot at Fremantle until we get places. I expect most of us will go on to Perth then. I am going to enclose a paper showing the number of miles we have travelled each day, some of the dates are missed.

The following are the names and nationalities of the girls, those not otherwise specified are English, as far as I know.

Mess I Clarence Visick, Jessie Scott, Kathleen O'Daly, Emily Feeney (Irish),
Hannah Gardiner (Whitehaven), Beatrice Stone, Janet Telfer (Scotch)
Maud Matthews.

Mess II Ethel Harper, Edith Everett, Jane Thompson, Sarah Roe,
Caroline Denham, Maggie Russell (Scotch), Bertha Roberts, Annie Pearson.

Mess III Ada Crick, Alice Crook, Edith Butter, Jessie Chapman,
Edith Taylor, Frances Edward, Florence Giles, Nellie Harris.

Mess IV Florence Campbell (Irish), Amy Tucker, Mary Duggan (Irish), Margaret Long (Irish)
Florence Searle, Annie Smith, Margaret Jackman (Irish), Phyllis Post.

Mess V Lizzie Davidson (Scotch), Georgina Bristow (Scotch), Catherine Miller,
Lily Sanderson, Florence Sanderson, Elizabeth Birch, Rose Vilches (half Spanish)
Emily Harris.

Mess VI Kate Page, Hannah Field, Beatrice Field, Nellie Allanach (New Zealand)
Laura Bartrop, Rossina Dessanges (Swiss, Lausanne), Florence Daniel,
Boline Winther (Danish).

Miss K. E. Page.