DIARY OF TRIP TO AUSTRALIA - R.M.S. "ORONTES" - JAN./FEB. 1935.

Saturday, 19th January.

Left St. Pancras 9.5.a.m. Son, Arthur, Jim and Louis Austin were there to see me off, Jim coming to Tilbury with me. The "Orontes" sailed at 11.30 a.m. Jim obtained a pass to come aboard for a short time, and we "snapped" each other on the Games Deck. He afterwards took a photo of the boat leaving, and I one of him and the crowd on the quayside. The weather was dull and drizzling with rain - a typical January day. My cabin-mate was an old Scottie named Lumsden - a cheery old soul, but pretty deaf and very reserved. He was going to Brisbane. In the evening I lost three games of draughts to him in the cabin - he was quite a hot player! However, the weather wasn't, and we felt very cold sitting still. Lunch and tea went down very well, the sea being calm!.... I wrote the first letter home, the boat calling at Plymouth late at night.

Sunday, 20th January.

I slept only about half the night, the boat rolling a fair bit as it met the "Atlantic swell". I managed to win five games to nil at table-tennis in the morning - that was certainly the best way to keep warm! Sad to relate, I was slightly seasick at 4 p.m., and lay down on the bunk the rest of the day, bemoaning my luck. We were then in the Bay of Biscay. Weather cold and miserable.

Monday, 21st January.

Slept much better, but did not go into breakfast for fear of any unpleasant scenes! Later I was again a bit sick, but after a rest felt much better. I tackled the table-tennis once more, winning 3 games to two. Just managed lunch without any ill effect. In the afternoon I won another five games of table-tennis, though the opposition

was not quite up to the standard of 20 Goldsmith Avenue!. I also tried my hand at deck quoits (losing 0-2), bull-board (winning 2-0), and carpet-golf (winning 1-0). Cape Finisterre passed. Weather beautiful, and I began to feel as if I were really enjoying the trip! However, it was still chilly. In the evening I won 7-2 at table-tennis, a little mercurial Egyptian beating me 2-1. That saved any danger of swollen head! He was a bonny player. A lovely moonlit night.

Tuesday, 22nd January.

Beautiful weather, but a cold wind. Had a deck-chair out on the poop deck for a while, then beat Miss Chilcott (a table companion) twice at golf. To my mortification, lost 4-1 to the Egyptian at table-tennis! Lost three games of deck-quoits, a new game to me, and one with which I could not cope too well, I fear. Afterwards restored my pride with a win at golf over Miss Chilcott and another fellow, also beating "Mr. Morecambe", from Lancashire 2-0. In the evening I beat Musgrave 2-1 at table-tennis, and later Miss Chilcott and him at LEXICON! The new game was much liked, and later some onlookers asked for a game, which I again managed to win (being the instructor!). I learned that their names were "The Girl" (otherwise Miss E. Fairbridge), Mrs. Collins, and Mr. "Sinbad". They were very good company. We had some rain in the evening, but the elements were behaving pretty well.

Wednesday, 23rd January.

Arrived Gibraltar! Slight rain, but mild. Ashore 8.30 a.m. Walked through the town with Miss Chilcott and two others. Obtained 100 cigs. for 2/-! We found the little garrison town quite picturesque, and much admired the Alameda Gardens and the views over the harbour. We also witnessed a stirring military band parade through the street. The weather improved gradually, and we returned to the boat at 10.30 a.m.

We sailed again at 11 a.m., and Musgrave and I took several snaps of the famous Rock as we rounded it. Won 2-1 at deck quoits with "Mr. Morecambe" against Musgrave and Miss Chilcott, and 2-0 at golf against Musgrave, making my best score so far - 22. Enjoyed the nicest lunch to date. In the afternoon back to the games - they were a real boon! - beating Miss Chilcott at golf, then her and Musgrave. Lost with Miss Chilcott at deck tennis 6-2, 6-2. Tried the peg quoits, winning with Musgrave against Miss Chilcott and "The Boy". Lost at shuffleboard against the last-named. In the evening back to the old favourite - table-tennis, winning against various opponents 5-0. I then drew with the Egyptian 1-1. Later seven of us played Lexicon - "The Boy" winning and I being second. Besides myself, he was the only one who had played it extensively before!

Thursday, 24th January.

Weather cold and sea choppy. Another attack of mal-de-mer - I was proving a rotten sailor! Missed breakfast - couldn't possibly have faced it. Bucked up later, and won five games to nil at table-tennis, which always seemed to make me feel better! Beat "Sinbad" and "The Boy" twice at golf. Managed a good lunch and felt O.K. again. In the afternoon Miss Chilcott beat me at Bucket Quoits and Peg Quoits, and I retaliated by triumphing 3-0 at table-tennis, and beating another 2 games to nil. The "Orontes" reached Palma at 2p.m., and left at 3 p.m., quite a few getting off. Somebody's suitcase was knocked into the waves from one of the launches, and some excitement was occasioned by its rescue with a boathook by one of the native sailors. We had great sympathy with the luckless owner - salt water could hardly have improved the contents! We were much impressed by the beauty of the

coastline - hilly and well-wooded, with a beautiful cathedral in sight, looking quite new and fresh in the bright sunshine.
As a precautionary measure, I rested in the evening until the cinema show staged in the dining-room at 8.15 p.m. The films were entitled "Sea Change" - a record of one of the summer cruises of the "Orontes", and "Radio Parade" - a series of vaudeville sketches. Not bad entertainment.

Friday, 25th January.

Arrived Toulon 7.30 a.m. A fine harbour. Weather fine, but cold. Three letters were awaiting me, from Mum, Ivy and Mr. Burgess, the Pru' Asst. Supt. These were eagerly devoured, and cheered me tremendously. The tender to the shore left at 10.30 a.m., and I accompanied Musgrave and Miss Chilcott. We went first to the post-office, where we sent off some cards, according to the old-time custom, and I despatched "The Story of San Michele" to Gus as promised. A very absorbing book. We three then took a bus out to Hyères, 18 kms. distant, a quaint and picturesque little town, reached after a pleasant drive through the countryside. We had lunch at the "Hôtel de Paris", after a look round the place, and very much enjoyed the French repast, complete with "vin rouge". Then to buy one or two souvenirs, including a Basque beret. I took the biggest one they had in stock, though it was a little tight! Our next exploit was to climb the hills to the old castle, from which there were some good views over the peaceful landscape. Back again by bus to Toulon, where we indulged in another meal in a waterfront restaurant, and then strolled round the town, being greatly interested in the narrow, crowded streets and the gay shops. The 7 p.m. launch took us back to the "Orontes". Son at Lexicon against Miss Chilcott,

Miss

Miss Fairbridge and Musgrave.

Saturday, 26th January.

An uneventful day, apart from a few games. Sea choppy, but mild weather. The boat did not sail from Toulon until 7 a.m. Passed the islands of Corsica and Elba, of famous Napoleonic memory. Clocks were advanced 1 hour.

Sunday, 27th January.

Reached Naples at 8 a.m. Rainy and cool, so the famous Bay did not show to the best advantage. Left the boat, which was right alongside the quay, at 9 a.m. Quite a crowd from the "Orontes", including myself, went on the Cook's tour to the famed ruins of Pompeii, along the new "Autostrada". Twice the coach was stopped in the precincts of Naples by picturesquely uniformed guards, who enquired with a grin whether we had on board any chickens, oil, etc., etc. We supposed these were dutiable articles. Much hilarity was caused among the passengers at the odd questions, and we felt we were going to enjoy the day! We stopped at the coral factory alongside the road, where we watched with interest the Italian workers busily hand-carving the coral into beautiful ornaments. I purchased a necklace for Margaret. The ruins of Pompeii and the vistas of Vesuvius and the Appennines were really wonderful. The first snow for 24 years had lately fallen in Naples, and the famous volcano was snow-covered, an odd sight considering smoke and occasional flame were issuing from the crater. The old cobbles of the streets were gleaming wet, and I obtained some effective snaps, though I would have preferred sunshine. It showered several times during our tour round. The guide shot us along at express speed, and gabbled in half English and half Italian, being almost incomprehensible. There were several parties being shown round, and

occasionally I and others who were taking photographs found ourselves tacked on to the wrong party, and being lectured to in American or German, our own guide having dashed on a long way ahead! Further excitement and merriment were caused by the driver of our coach waiting about 15 minutes before he would start back, because on counting us he found there was one person missing. He raved up and down gesticulating and shouting, but at length calmed down on being informed insistently by one of the party that he had espied the missing traveller seated in another coach. Even then he wouldn't start without releasing a further volley of complaint! We got under way at last, and found ourselves back in Naples at midday. I went with Mrs. Fairbridge and her daughter to a side-street restaurant, where we fed on typical Italian dishes, including of course, spaghetti. It was amusing to watch the fat Neapolitans around wolfing up great platefuls at tremendous speed! Our efforts by comparison were puny, and we were quickly replete. Later a "guide" tacked himself on to us and showed us some of the sights of the city, and looked quite disgusted when handed the equivalent of a "bob" for his pains! We sailed from Naples at 2 p.m. Much to my joy, a letter from Margaret was awaiting my return to the boat. The water was very choppy, it was cold, and I straight away began to feel seasick (was it the spaghetti?). I retired to my bunk and missed dinner. The clock was put on another 20 minutes.

Monday, 28th January.

Proved a highly unfortunate day. Was seasick in the morning, and missed all meals. However, it was to prove the last bout of indisposition on the trip. Tried a few minutes on the deck in the morning, after the mal-de-mer, but it was no go, and I crept back to the cabin, cursing the sea. The boat was rolling all day - didn't give a fellow like me

a dog's chance to keep fit. I felt a thoroughly miserable wreck the long and practically foodless day through. But why dwell at length on such a painful experience? Clocks were advanced 20 minutes.

Tuesday, 29th January.

Thank goodness, a beautiful day of sunshine and above all - CALM SEA! I could have shrieked with joy, had I felt strong enough. However, I was highly content to spend the morning lying reading on the games deck, in a deck-chair, and rapidly recuperated from the horrors of the heaving journey from Naples. I always noticed that though I easily became a victim of seasickness, complete recovery was speedy as soon as the waves relented. It probably does one good to be sick occasionally! Anyhow, that is the brightest way to look at it. I indulged in quite a few games during the day, and by the time evening arrived was feeling myself again. Mr. Musgrave had also been "hors-de-combat" during the previous day, I found, and was looking pretty green and disinclined for our usual bouts of golf, etc. It was rather a relief to find that someone was as susceptible as I to the influence of the sad sea waves! A whist-drive was arranged for the evening, and I promised my loyal support, though enthusiasm was somewhat conspicuous by its absence amongst the majority of the folk. 16 people eventually turned up, and we played a dozen hands. The winner was one Diezi, a burly Swiss fellow who had joined the boat at the last port, and who had quickly made his presence known by his booming voice and tremendous vitality. His score was 84, and I tied with three others for second place with 83. We cut for the prize (four shillings, I believe!), and I did not win it. All the same, the whist proved quite a pleasant change. Later on, I yarned with the little Egyptian and a young Dutch fellow, who were both getting off at Port Said on the morrow, in the smoke-room, over two or three glasses of beer. They had both

knocked about the world a good deal, and their talk was amusing and sometimes most illuminating! It was quite late when we turned in, especially after putting on the time a further 20 minutes.

Wednesday, 30th January.

Awoke to very misty conditions. We had been told to expect arrival at Port Said at 8 a.m., but owing to the fog the "Orontes", after floundering about for a while, waited for clear weather, which didn't arrive until noon. A number of us whiled away the time by playing "three-a-side" chess, "non-stop" table-tennis, etc. The day eventually revealed itself as fine and cloudless, and we looked forward to our first Eastern port of call. The crowd of natives on the quayside was multi-coloured and picturesque of costume, and extraordinarily insistent on our sampling their various wares. We found that the only thing to do to choke them off was to take no notice whatever - even if you said "no thanks" they would continue to pester, and the slightest sign of a grin was enough for them to redouble their efforts. Mrs. Fairbridge and her daughter, Musgrave and I kept together, and had a most amusing tour round the town by taxi for half an hour, for sixpence a head! In the Arab quarter goats, cats dogs and chickens all scratched about happily together, with here and there loaded camels being led along by sometimes rather villainous-looking ruffians! There were, needless to say, many different odours abounding! We were all done for small silver coins by a very clever native boy conjuror, who promised to return them when he had demonstrated his tricks, but suddenly scudded off like the wind when he had finished. The little scoundrel - but he had such a flashing, happy smile that we forgave him his duplicity! After all, his sleight-of-hand was marvellous, and worth paying to see. We found the main streets broad and cleaner than we had expected, but the native streets off them were narrow and dirty.

A tour round the big stores "Simon Arzt" followed, and here we secured a few articles at low cost. Amongst other oddments, I purchased two silk shirts for 10/- apiece. We again strolled around, taking some photographs, and walked along the quayside out to the statue of the constructor of the Suez Canal. The hawking natives seemed to have picked up a lot of Scotch names with which to address us - doubtless a sign of the Scots' being a much travelled race! During the day, I was hailed as "Mr. McTavish, Mr. MacIntosh, Mr. McGregor and Harry Lauder", to say nothing of one who dogged me with his packets of Egyptian cigarettes, panting hoarsely "Hi, GEORGE ROBEY!" They were all very amusing, though pestiferous. The four of us had tea on the terrace of a restaurant overlooking the sea, and again saw some good conjuring, though without this time falling victims to native wiles. The trade in baby chicks , which were utilised in lieu of the more familiar rabbits for most of the tricks, must have been pretty brisk in the town! Poor little blighters - they could hardly have lived long under such tyrannous employers. I had my shoes cleaned for a piastre by a good-looking youth clad in what appeared to be a long white nightshirt.

"And so to the "Orontes"", after Mrs. Fairbridge and I had bought a dozen oranges from a venerable old hawker with large and supplicating eyes. The persistent salesmen of Port Said were yelling and gesticulating from their little boats clustered round the liner, offering carpets, tapestries, shirts, fruit, etc. at prices which they swore were "vairy chip!". Most of the passengers seemed to think otherwise, however, and preferred to regard the imploring "darkies" as providing a free and entertaining music-hall act! Fruit was the only commodity patronised to any extent, and this the natives "handed over" by slinging up ropes and fastening to the lower ends laden straw baskets, which were then hauled up

the side of the boat, the cash being lowered in the same receptacles. It formed a never-to-be-forgotten scene, though to be repeated almost identically at Aden and Colombo, with slight changes of colour and costume. A rather unexpected letter from Margaret was received at Port Said, to my delight. The boat sailed at 5 p.m. Later in the evening I won a dozen hands of Lexicon from my three companions of the shore trip. Unfortunately, owing to the delay in the morning, the journey through the Suez was commenced in twilight, so we saw practically nil of the surrounding scenery, much to our disgust. The night was quite cool.

Thursday, January 31st.

At 4.45 a.m. I awoke to see through the porthole two pilot boats alongside, and to hear the hoarse shouts of their skippers. A little later the boats sheered off, their jobs fulfilled. The day turned out gloriously warm and sunny, and the Red Sea was blue and sparkling.

A sports meeting was held in the dining-room, and a committee elected to arrange a series of competitions in the various deck games. Musgrave and I managed to steer clear of any committee entanglements, being too fond of a quiet life! However we proposed that Miss Fairbridge be a member, she being such an energetic young person. She was eventually selected as Treasurer. It was decided to ask for 2/- subscription from competitors, plus a penny for each event entered.

To my great satisfaction, I later obtained a 19 at golf, which was a record so far for the trip. The game lost a lot of its hazards when the boat was decently calm! Other games and reading filled in the morning. Ditto in the afternoon. In the evening chatted in the lounge with Musgrave and Mrs. Fairbridge. Clocks were advanced another 20 minutes.

Friday, February 1st.

Again very warm and sunny. A glorious sunrise was viewed through the porthole - and I'd hardly ever seen a sunrise before, to my shame! There only being about 90 third-class passengers, I had obtained permission from the Purser the previous day to change to an empty four-berth cabin nearby, on the port side as before, and now I was able to spread myself and belongings luxuriously. In the other cabin elbow-room had become rather limited with the arrival at Naples of a young New Zealander named Lochore, complete with a vast amount of luggage and a liking for frequent openings of his large trunk on the small floor-space available. However, he proved a decent chap. Later he earned the nickname of "The Monster", on account of his burly proportions and his display of hirsute chest! The competitions commenced soon after breakfast, and provided an interesting change from the ordinary casual daily round. I opened without distinction, losing first round games of Quoits (Singles & Mixed Doubles), Deck Tennis (Singles & Mixed Doubles) Bucket Quoits, and oh! what a humiliation - Miss Fairbridge beat me at my own game of Carpet Golf! I played appallingly (quite obviously I hadn't the big match temperament!), and took 29 strokes to her 26. Later it was ordained that Golf should be decided on the best out of three games, but I considered it more gallant to let the result remain. To compensate a little for my defeats, I survived two rounds of PegQuoits, one of Bull-Board and one of Table-Tennis. In the afternoon, following much clamour, the swimming-bath was installed, and tremendous splashings and shriekings soon signalled appreciation. In the evening, I read for a bit in the lounge, and then received my first lesson in contract bridge, from Mrs. Fairbridge and daughter, not being intrigued to any extent. Clocks were put on another 20 minutes (at least, by all the passengers

except myself, for Iquito forgot the order, and found the next morning that instead of being 8.10 a.m. when I was ready for breakfast, it was actually 8.30 a.m., so I contented myself with some chocolate and an apple!

Saturday, February 2nd.

Still warm and sunny - like summer at its best, as I knew it, though it was still winter in the Red Sea. The tournament was continued, again not too successfully for myself, for I lost the Deck Quoits Doubles and the Table-Tennis Mixed Doubles (partnered by a lady who had never before played the game!); however, we put up a good game between us, and were only narrowly beaten. I won the second round of Bull-Board (a miserable little game, but I entered for everything just for the fun of competition). What pleased me most during the morning was doing another 19 at golf! A lazy afternoon reading, and at 5.30 p.m. the "Orontes" passed the island of Jebel Tier - very rocky and barren-looking, as indeed was most of the Red Sea coastline. In the evening a Gracie Fields film - "Love, Life and Laughter" - was shown on the games deck. I thought I had seldom seen such a feeble film before, and had to leave before it petered out. However, judging by the various opinions expressed afterwards, it proved good fodder for some. Portholes were shut by the cabin stewards, as there was a bit of a swell on. A very stuffy night was spent in consequence.

Sunday, February 3rd.

Breezy, but still warm and sunny. Passed several rocky and desert islands and reached Aden at noon. The chief event of the forenoon was that Mr. Hunt (a Sydney Yorkshireman) equalled my golf record of 19! Aden looked a very arid spot, abounding with fierce-looking rocks. We went ashore in a native steamboat, the sun beating down pretty ferociously.

"The Gang", that is, the Fairbridges, Musgrave and I, hired a car for a trip to the famous Rain Tanks, for a charge of 19/-. We were amazed at the number of brand-new cars whizzing about, used chiefly as tourist taxies, and manned by native chauffeurs. It was afterwards explained by one of the "Orontes" passengers that they were American cars intended for the Indian market, where the duty on new cars was very high, so they were let out on hire to the Aden people cheaply, eventually reaching their destination as second hand cars. Cunning! Soon after we had started, we reached the Shaikh Othman gardens, where to our wonderment we encountered quite a beautiful little oasis of trees and flowers. This was made possible by the presence of a warm spring, and an ornamental pond had been built, which we alighted to inspect. The ubiquitous native hawker of cigarettes was in evidence even here! We carried on, passing the R.A.F. station. The driver would persist in "stepping on it" to the extent of over 40 miles an hour, although we were supposed to be on a sight-seeing tour, and in spite of our entreaties to him to go slower! He wore the determined look of one anxious to reach his objective and get back for some more trippers in the shortest time possible, and gave us a look of astonishment that we should want to dawdle along a road so familiar (to him). Some salt works were pointed out, and then came the tourist spot - the Rain Tanks. Here we strolled around for half-an-hour (during which time the driver probably sweated in dire impatience), and found the Tanks interesting and immense, being hewn out of solid rock. They were practically bone dry, no rain having fallen at that time for three years! An "Orontes" leaflet had it that they were thought to have been constructed in the Queen of Sheba's time, or even before that. It must have been a tremendous task. Their value was very doubtful, as Aden obtained its water from underground springs, and rain was unwelcome, as

it brought in its train the mosquitoes. We took some photographs, ar. then watched some chanting natives round a well; these fellows would drop stones down into the water, invite you to listen for the long-delayed "plop", and then beg for "backsheesh" or whatever they styled money. I wondered whether they ever got tired of their eternal singing and prancing round the well, but they seemed very content with their lot. The return was made via the Tunnels, where only one-way traffic was the rule,- narrow, dark, and smelling strongly of camels! We encountered quite a few of the latter supercilious-looking animals. Again the chauffeur swept furiously along, and Musgrave and Miss Fairbridge both lost their hats on occasions, and had to yell to him to stop. He appeared quite annoyed - probably wondering why we didn't wear sensible headgear, such as a turban or a fez. Aden was reached in safety, luckily, and we paid him off with a certain relief! Mrs. Fairbridge and I then walked out to Steamer Point, where the European community lived, the others being too lazy to join us. The sun was undoubtedly extremely hot, but was tempered by a strong breeze. On our return, we imbibed with great joy a fruit drink at a native store, meantime observing the passing stream of picturesquely-clad natives. Back to the liner at 4.45 p.m. by rowboat - a perilous trip, for we only narrowly escaped an upset two or three times. Oh those excitable dervishes! The hawking boatmen were hard at it round the "Orontes", and the passengers aboard were getting plenty of fun out of them. Another surprise letter from Margaret was awaiting me - cheers! In the evening there was community singing in the lounge, with not a frightfully good attendance. The boat had sailed again at 5.30 p.m.

Monday, February 4th.

Weather as usual - warm, sunny and breezy, and the good ship ploughed on through the Gulf of Aden, passing Cape Gardafui in the afternoon.

The games competitions started up once more, and in the morning bouts I won a round of Table-Tennis and lost one of Bull-Board and also the final of the Peg Quoits to Herr Diezi, the roaring Swiss. After lunch won a round of Shuffle-Board in partnership with Bolzan, a cheery young Italian. Dancing to the band was the "popular" event of the evening, there always seeming to be more spectators than steppers. The ship's band worked hard, but their repertoire was sadly meagre; the poor support they received hardly sufficed to bring out all they knew, perhaps. Musgrave and I chose to do some reading in the lounge, which was kept pleasantly cool by the big electric fans. The daily wireless bulletins on view always interested us, and kept us informed of all the world news of note. One gets a curious sense of remoteness and isolation travelling on the sea, and time seems to stand still. The boat rolled a bit for a while, but subsided. On the advice of one of my table-companions, a fat, "sporty" lady named Mrs. Coulter, I accepted from her a dose of Chlorotone (not chloroform!), for caution's sake. Clocks on half-an-hour.

Tuesday, February 5th.

A perfect day as regards weather - it seemed a long time since we had left the regions of cold and wet. On atmospheric scores I had no regrets at being a few thousand miles from home! The series of games were concluded during the day. In the morning Bolzan and I lost the Shuffle-Board final, and in the afternoon I was beaten by an Army chap named Ayton in the Table-Tennis final, 21-19 and 22-20. A great blow to my vanity, this, for I had previously won the only two games I had played him. Three finals and three defeats - alas! A "race-game" was held in the evening and I won 11d net, winning two out of three bets on my lucky numbers, one and five, (seven not being included). Went and had a drink in the smoke-room on the strength of it! Afterwards chatted on the

poop deck with the Fairbridges and "The Badger", a young Australian schoolmaster with a wonderful flow of droning conversation, which sent me to sleep before bedtime. The clock was put forward another ½-hour.

Wednesday, February 6th.

Still sunny, and very warm. Played shuffle-board and golf in the forenoon. Fresh record at golf - 18 - hooray! After lunch read and slept alternately on the poop deck - it was difficult to keep the optics open in the drowsy air. The sea was like molten glass. A spot of deck-tennis with Musgrave & Co. after tea made us very hot, but pleasantly tired. A race-meeting again in the evening, this time with "winders"; on the previous occasion dice had been used. Having lost the valuable amount of sixpence, I retired to the games deck, where, after a battle lasting an hour and a half, I beat Mrs. Fairbridge at chess. Clocks were further advanced half-an-hour. Procrastination was not the only thief of time, after all.

Thursday, February 7th.

Still sunny and still very warm - a great life! Golf, deck quoits and reading in the morning. I beat a gentleman named Flake in the first round of a men's quoits handicap. More reading (and snoozing) on the poop deck after lunch, then Signor Signori from Italia beat me in a close second round game; it was a pleasure to be beaten by such an expert. After tea some deck-tennis with Musgrave, Mrs. F., and Lochore. Following dinner, the sports prizes were presented by the Captain and the Purser. Musgrave had bagged the Golf prize, and Mrs. Fairbridge one for Deck Quoits (Women's Doubles). Clocks on half-an-hour again.

Friday, February 8th.

Perfect weather persisting, with a kindly smooth sea. Golf and some reading in the morning; also did some washing - clothes! IN the afternoon

did some more reading (the afternoons were becoming too hot for any very strenuous occupation), and wrote a letter home to be posted at the next port. Had an ironing lesson from Miss Drummond, a Scotch lassie who was on a round trip, in the evening, and was told that I had acquitted myself with fair distinction. Jove! it was hot in the ironing room - I perspired with great profusion. Later I won a Lexicon round against Musgrave, Miss Drummond and Miss Newdick, a Surrey-ite on her second trip to the land of sunshine. The Misses Drummond and Newdick were invariably together, and were both of a very amiable disposition. Clocks on half-an-hour.

Saturday, February 9th.

Very warm and sunny. ArrivedCOLOMBO - the port en route I had been most anxious to see - at 6 a.m. Breakfast 6.30 a.m.! However, the unearthly hour was worth-while so as to get the limit of time available ashore. Quite a large number of people were getting off at Colombo, but fortunately none of the friends I had made. The shores of Ceylon's pleasant isle showed up greenly luxuriant, and one could almost smell the spice in the breeze! Ashore at 8 a.m. by native rowboat, after Musgrave had conferred with a friend of his, the owner of a tourist agency, who had come aboard, looking very cool and smart in his tussore suit and topee. We had been recommended to take a trip out to a place called Negombo, the trip to Kandy being judged a bit too far in the time we had to spare. Accordingly, six of us ("the gang" being augmented by The Badger and The Monster) hired a car and chauffeur for the day and set off. The city seemed teeming with life and absorbingly interesting. The point which struck me most about the natives was their upright, dignified carriage and their graceful walk. Quite a number of the men wore their black hair long, like a woman, and from the rear it was extremely hard to

tell male from female, particularly as both affected flowing skirts!
We stopped on the way to inspect a coconut-oil factory, where quite small children were busily employed, also an oil and cinnamon factory. Musgrave here got very interested in the cinnamon plants, and even more so in a species of grub he found crawling on the leaves. His professional zeal was instantly aroused (he was a Sydney Museum entomologist on a world tour), and he took two or three photographs. The native workers probably thought him slightly mad, but decided it were best to humour him!
Not far from our destination we came upon an excited crowd in the roadway gazing at a tree behind a high brick wall enclosing some sort of compound. The driver halted to find out what all the fuss was about, and was informed with great volubility and gesticulation that up the tree was a political prisoner on hunger strike. A Cingalese newspaper reporter there, noticing that we were well armed with cameras, requested us to photograph the delinquent for him. This our friend The Monster complied with, and arranged for the spool of film to be forwarded to him in New Zealand. He was exhibiting great trust in the local code of morality, and I sincerely hoped that his confidence would eventually prove well founded. The reporter seemed a courteous, well educated sort of fellow, or I should have had very grave doubts! We proceeded on, followed by a flow of Oriental gratitude. Negombo was reached at 11 a.m., and we had cool drinks in the pleasant, airy Rest House. A dusky, solemn-faced boy begged us to allow him to climb a tall coconut palm nearby, for "backsheesh" We collected a few small coins, and he eagerly gave us an amazing display of agility, throwing down a coconut from the summit. The Badger poohpoohed the performance, and was bet a shilling that he couldn't emulate it. So thereupon he doffed shoes and socks (he was wearing shorts), and made the attempt! After a great struggle, he managed to get about a third

of the way up, and then couldn't budge another inch. However, he was awarded the shilling for a praiseworthy attempt. Lunch followed in due course, and we did full justice to a well-served meal. Back by the car to Colombo, where the driver took us round the city, which contained some really fine and well-laid-out Government buildings. We had to take off our shoes to view the interior of a Buddhist temple, where a soft-voiced guide explained in very precise English the meaning of the great carvings and wall and ceiling paintings. We did our best to look as intelligent as possible during the tour round, but the stories attaching to the objects depicted seemed bewilderingly involved. After making the usual donation to the funds of the temple, also to the dusky gent who had kept watch on our footgear outside, we departed, shortly reaching the tourist office once more, where we settled for the car and were ushered away , followed by dazzling and expansive smiles. Some shopping was negotiated, I acquiring two suits of silk pyjamas for 9/6 each, also a "tropical" suit made of a mixture of linen and artificial silk, for the large sum of 18/6! The jacket of this outfit came in very useful on the journey from Colombo to Perth, but I was not greatly enamoured of the "bags", they being rather on the narrow side! Eventually came the return to the boat by launch at 5.30 p.m., after some tea. Sailed at 6 p.m. To finish off another very good day, I won a hand of Lexicon from Musgrave, Lochore the Monster, and Mrs. Fairbridge. About seven people from Colombo were added to the third-class complement.

Sunday, February 10th.

Breezy, but warm and sunny. Sea not quite so calm, but couldn't grumble. Whiled away the morning playing golf, shuffleboard, and peg and bucket quoits. Read in the afternoon. In the evening played a game of chess with Hunt, losing after a close game in which we both made many mistakes.

There followed some bridge with Mrs. Fairbridge, Musgrave and Lochore.

Monday, February 11th.

Very warm day - the hottest so far. Another sports meeting at 10 a.m., when I was elected to serve on the committee, rather to my disgust! A series of games, though not quite so lengthy as the last lot, was arranged, also a daily "tote" on the ship's run (that day it proved to be 326 miles). Golf and some reading in the afternoon. We "crossed the line" at 5 p.m., there being no ceremony! After dinner, the draw for the games was made, and later a cinema show was given - Stanley Lupino and Laddie Cliff figuring in a rather silly, though at times amusing, production. Clocks were advanced 16 minutes.

Tuesday, February 12th.

Still very warm, but cloudy later on, with some heavy rain which cooled the air decidedly. The games competitions commenced. I won the first round of Shuffleboard, also Peg Quoits, and lost Deck Quoits Doubles and Bull-Board. Lost 2nd round of Peg Quoits to Diezi, as before. In the afternoon a scavenging game was played by all those with sufficient energy to scavenge, I being one of the non-starters, very much preferring the comparative solitude and peace of the poop deck, with a book and "The Gang". Deck tennis after tea - Musgrave and I versus Mrs. Fairbridge and The Monster. Result: one set each. Jolly good exercise and tremendously good sport. After dinner won a Lexicon bout from Musgrave and Miss Drummond. Clocks advanced another 16 minutes.

Wednesday, February 13th.

Close and cloudy. Had a haircut (my first on the trip!) in the morning. Aquatic Sports held. Some riotous fun at the greasy pole, etc. The occasion was slightly marred by very heavy rain, and the roll of the boat kept sending the water in the bath flying out over the decks. Played

against Mrs. Fairbridge in the first round of the Table-Tennis, and won. In the afternoon negotiated the second round by beating English, a young fellow who was going to Western Australia, and a good, steady player. Two extremely close games. I felt that as I had removed this challenge, I should win the final round against pal Musgrave. Some reading followed, together with some golf with Hunt and Musgrave. The post-tea deck tennis, which was fast becoming an institution, resulted in a two-set win with Musgrave over Mrs. Fairbridge and The Monster, who always played with tremendous energy, eyes flashing and lips grimly pursed. Finished the day by beating Miss Fairbridge, The Badger and Nourse, a young tea-planter from Ceylon bound for Adelaide, at Lexicon. The game looked at times like developing into a riot of mirth, but we just managed to accomplish the dozen hands. An over-abundance of youthful high spirits. Lexicon seems to need the steadying presence of a veteran to keep it in order! Clocks on 10 minutes.

Thursday, February 14th.

A fine day, but breezy; consequently much rolling. Passed Cocos Keeling Islands at 10.30 a.m. - quite an event, it being the only sight of land on the 10 day journey from Colombo to Fremantle. Two sailing boats put out, manned by obvious Britishers, judging by the hailing and shouting and cheering, and picked up a barrel of provisions, mail, etc., which was slung overboard from the "Orontes". The latter slowed down meanwhile, enabling the passengers to get some photographs of the boats as they approached the precious barrel and then departed, making a beautiful sight with their white sails bowing and racing over the sparkling blue water. The string of islands, covered thickly with coconut palms, looked quite delectable, with their shores reflected in the mirror-like lagoons, and the white surf dashing high over the

surrounding reefs. An ideal place for a holiday, I should imagine! As the liner picked up speed again, I felt a feeling of regret that it wasn't possible to land for a few hours. However, this was counter-balanced by the realisation that we were now past the half-way point on the last lap of the voyage to Australia Fair! The afternoon provided a win in each of the following competition games: Golf (2nd round and semi-final; Shuffleboard (2nd round and semi-final); and Bucket Quoits (1st round). Also a defeat in the 2nd round of the latter. After tea lost a very close and enjoyable 1st round of Deck-Tennis Doubles (6-5, 6-5), partnering Shatwell, one of the Ceylon-ites, against Miss Fairbridge and Mr. Broomfield, the pair who won the first competition. Quite by chance they had been drawn together again, unfortunately for the other competitors! In the evening played bridge with Mrs. Fairbridge, Musgrave and Hourse. The boat was rolling quite a deal, but thank goodness there were no unpleasant internal effects! I felt I was slowly becoming a hardened sailor. Clocks on 16minutes.

Friday, February 15th.

Fine weather, but not so hot, which was just as well - it had been a bit trying of late, especially at night in the close confinement of the cabin. A sort of sports Gymkhana was held in the forenoon. Some good fun with the various handicap races, at which some of the young Italians showed great dexterity and fleetness of foot. A diminutive humorist from Lancashire created roars of applause by his agile antics in the sack-race. In the afternoon won the Golf final against my ancient foe Herr Diezi. Deck Quoits after tea, for a change. Partnered The Badger at bridge against Mrs. Fairbridge and The Monster in the evening. Cheers! - we won, though I received a bit of help from my partner, being only a novice. Clocks on 10 minutes.

Saturday, February 16th.

Fine, then changeable, with showers and a strong breeze. Boat pitching and rolling! This didn't prevent my winning the Table-Tennis final against Musgrave, however. I didn't think he looked too good; like me, he was not one of the world's best sailors. Later did some clothes-washing - horrid job! Alternate reading and sleeping in the afternoon. Committee meeting regarding the sports prizes in the evening; it was decided to give them in money, or rather, in permits to buy at the shop anything up to 4/- in value per prize. To spend the cash in riotous living at the Bar was taboo! Finished the day with some reading in the Lounge, retiring to bed early. Clocks on 10 minutes.

Sunday, February 17th.

A quiet day. Very breezy and plenty of rolling. Didn't feel too robust under the strain of continual heaving, (of the decks, of course!) Played deck-tennis in the morning. A concert, of a most impromptu sort, was held in the Lounge in the evening. It could have been worse, though unprepared. A notorious sportsman(?) named Kross, otherwise known as "King Kong", from his rather gorilla-like countenance, gave us some painful moments with the violin. I was a "suspect" in a "Murder" game. Shatwell made a good coroner, and The Monster and Miss Sakir, a Cingalese lady, amusing suspects. A little Scotch lady provided some fairly good songs, though she rather ladled on the sentiment! Musgrave down with mal-de-mer - I visited his cabin to help console him, realising that it might easily have been me stretched out! Clocks on 20 minutes.

Monday, February 18th.

Cloudy at first, but fine and warm later. Only one more day to W.A.!... Ship rolling in the morning, and I felt below par, though upright. Started packing. Got in some deck-tennis and deck-quoits. Had a

lazy afternoon in the sun. Carnival hats were dished out at dinner, followed by a dance. Played cards for a time with Hunt and the two Yugoslavian girls - Marie and Yolanda Tkalcec. Had some amusing moments, as neither of the last two could speak more than a dozen words of English. A beautiful sunset and a most lovely moonlit night. Didn't get to bed until 1.30 a.m., after concentrating on the packing since midnight. Clocks on 28 minutes.

Tuesday, February. 19th.

The Great Day of Arrival dawned with cloudless skies, most fittingly, and it was very warm. The "Orontes" stopped at 6 a.m. outside Fremantle, finally tying up on the quayside at 8.30 a.m. Margaret Elizabeth was awaiting me, of course, and the reunion was swift and joyful. The end of a great trip and the beginning of a new life.

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Yours sincerely,
Reggie.
Aug. 1935.