

Ballarat Courier

19<sup>th</sup> April 1890

### THE OCEAN

There need be no scarcity of subjects to write about on land such as vessel as the Ormuz crossing such an ocean as the Pacific in that part of it known as the Australian Bight. Ever since we left Adelaide on Monday afternoon we have not seen any sight of land, or a sail, or if anything but the Ormuz and the ocean and sea surrounding it; and looking over that immense expanse one could not help feeling one's loneliness and helplessness. In gazing over the bulwarks alone at night, with a ground swell on, which rocked us very emphatically, many were forced to recall Byron's (or rather Madam De Stael's) splendid apostrophe to the ocean –

Roll on, thou deep and dark blue ocean – roll!  
Ten thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain;  
Man marks the earth with ruin – his control  
Stops with the shore; upon the watery plain  
The wrecks are all they deed, nor doth remain  
A shadow of man's ravage, save his own,  
When for a moment, like a drop of rain,  
He sinks into thy depths with bubbling groan,  
Without a grave, unknelt, uncoffin'd, and unknown.  
His steps are not upon thy paths – thy fields  
Are not a spoil for him; thou doth arise  
And shake him from thee.

Yes, from the point of human history, the ocean is unchangeable-

Thy shores are empires, changed in all save thee,  
Assyria, Greece, Rome, Carthage, what are they?

The geologist can tell us of changes in the ocean, and the poets can picture Atalantas, but as far as human record extends the ocean is unchangeable. But though the ocean conquers man so often, and shallows up his greatest work as were it a rain drop, still man has reason to be proud of his achievements on the ocean, which is about three-fourths of our world. On the comparatively small deserts of Australia, or of Arabia, men frequently get lost; and even in habitable parts, were

milestones and signposts may be met, it is not uncommon for people to be lost; but man has so triumphed over the ocean that he can traverse it safely and surely on the darkest night, with nothing whatever to guide him and put his trust on, except a trembling needle in a little round box. But with that great triumph of science man can trave day after day, and week after week, over the boundless main without ever seeing a glimpse of land or a passing ship to compare notes. On e feels all that when crossing the Australian Bight, so resolutely yet in such utter solitude. This, we no doubt, will feel more intensely when in the middle of the Indian Ocean, on our way to Ceylon, where we are due in eleven days, 15<sup>th</sup> April, and from whence the P. and O. boat will, I think, carry the return mail on the 16<sup>th</sup> April, being due in Melbourne about the 5<sup>th</sup> May, so that my kind readers will not be able to hear form me until about that date. I will have a good spell on our way to Colombo, and I hope to be able to send a good lot of a more interesting character, picked up during that long stretch. As is it, I feel myself in the middle of a bustling crowd of strangers; but every day tends to make us know each other better, and I am glad to say to like each other better too. I have made friends and acquaintances I the saloon, the second class, the third, and the steerage. For instance, Mr Thomas Kinsella, of Stawell, and myself are great chums, and he is a prominent saloon man, and one, I am glad to see, who is very solicitous in hunting up and looking after some old Stawell acquaintances in the third class. As to the second class, it is largely composed of Ballarat people, who seem to me at their very best aboard ship, especially the ladies, as, for instance, Mrs Rowsell, Mrs Bean, and Mrs Adams.

### **DAVIE THE FOOL**

We have all sorts of characters on board, and men and women of the most diverse occupations and histories. Amongst others we have a fool, a thorough genuine qualified idiot named Davie, and he affords the greatest diversion to the thousand and one persons who are not fools. I am not aware that Davie eats or drinks or smokes what is not good for him, or that he ever invested his little all in silver booms, land swindles, or horse races; but nevertheless Davie is a fool, and as such the passengers and crew derive a lot of fun out of him. For instance, he spent half and hour yesterday, telling us, not of the realisation of the prophecies in connection with Anglo-Israelitism, or some similar deep topic, but on the merits of his wonderful portmanteau, which he opens with a key that turns round twice, and into he is able to pack tow shirts and other things. Davie, like a number of people, who are not fool, is rather vain, and hives himself credit for talents which he hardly possesses. For instance, he holds himself to be a great step-dancer, and so his shipmates delight in setting him to dance without music, as gracefully s that genteel animal called a bear. Davie the fool is perhaps the happiest man on board the Ormuz, and I sometimes wish, as I see him sporting himself, that I was a fool like unto him; but I'm not, for, unhappily, I am a fool after a style of my own, God help me! But, hang it all, we are all more or less tarred with same brush, and while the wisest of us are having a laugh at Davie, he can have a good laugh at us in his sleeve.

## **ARGUMENTATION**

Some of the capitalists in the first and second class, aye, and in the third class too, are somewhat exercised at the fact that so many able-bodied workers are leaving Australia for Great Britain and other countries. These gentlemen are of opinion that it is all the work of trades' unionism, because were these men unrestricted by such unionism they would be willing to work longer hours for less money, and so could have remained in Australia. It does not appear to strike these gentlemen that if these engineers, for instance, took work on such slavish terms they would be turning out of work men who have largely helped to make the country what it is, and whose children, native Australians, would be brought up in want, and consequently in crime. I had a ring around me on Tuesday discussing these questions, and I fancy I held my own on the whole. There is an awful lot of talking done, and it is good for one to thus get away from a place like Ballarat, where I seem to know what everyone has to say on every subject, from frequent conversation and discussion. Here I get into talk with a man, and though, perhaps, I hear nothing very new, yet I at once see that his conglomerate of ideas are mixed somewhat differently to the same sort of man long settled in Ballarat. It seems to me, also, that people are inclined to reason together on the boundless ocean with less acrimony and narrowness than on the land in a little village, town or city. We seem to feel that there is plenty of room for any number of diverse ideas on the open sea, and without a doubt we all seem to be better men and women, more humane, tolerant, obliging and loving. The children are the pets of all, and it is wonderful to see the little ones running about, up and down stairs, without even a tumble, no matter how the vessel happens to toss. The children seem to be born sailors, and they thoroughly enjoy the situation, with perhaps the exception of one infant, whom the mother keeps below out of the sunshine and fresh air, and who cries accordingly.

## **KANAKA LABOR**

Amongst several returning laboring men on the Ormuz I was much struck with a conversation I had with a man named Tynan. He was returning to Queen's County after a stay of five years on a sugar plantation at Macleay, North Queensland. He gave the country a fine name, and he told me he had been getting from 25s to 30s a week all the time for looking after the horses. He was not sure that he would not return to Queensland, but he thought he would not, because he said sugar growing could not be carried on with profit at the price the planters had to give the Kanaka laborers now, from £15 to £22 per year with good food and accommodation, and kind, humane treatment, ever since the Government had stepped in to protect the Kanakas who were being flogged much worse than any slaves in the United States of America before Abe Lincoln .....gave them liberty to work for themselves, though without giving them....labor on. Tynan says that sugar-...will not afford such wages, but I cannot see why such an essential as sugar should not pay as good wages as wheat. In any case, it is only a question of charging a halfpenny a pound more for it.

## **“ALL KINDS OF CONDITIONS”**

The sports and amusements on board are almost as varied as the people, though we are not in full sea-going swing yet. My mate, Mr Hall, has taken with his camera

several interesting and characteristic groups which we mean to use hereafter. There we have men and women playing poker for, as yet, small stakes. Here are whist players, cribbage, euchre, dominoes, draughts, rope quoits. Then during the day we have the Ormuz band discoursing sweet and excellent music. We have very fine concerts in the saloon, and on deck the third-class and steerage show their ability at songs, dancing, and recitation. I don't think I ever laughed heartier than I did at some of them last night, the humor seemed so excellent and unforced. In the second class saloon concert last night a delicate young girl of about seventeen was called on to sing, according to the programme, and she accomplished her part very well. But what struck me as remarkable about this young lady was the fact that she, a young American, is travelling the world over all alone in the glory, with no one to look after her, but her own independent little self. And she appears to get along fine. She always gets good apartments and berths, and at table she does not fare the worse. I would much like to have a talk with this little lady, who in personal appearance reminds me very much of a dear young lady I know well in Ballarat. If I manage to get her story I will tell it, with her permission. And now we are nearing Albany, and I must get ready for the post; so good-bye everyone on the land, which we will be out sight of in the morning.