

# Ashore and Afloat



A circumnavigational adventure under sail beginning in 1890  
Presented as a talk to the St. Georges YMCA in Montreal, March 20, 1902  
by James Thomson Aikman (1874-1957)



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Note: Minor edits in italics have been made to the surviving manuscript, and place name spellings have been modernized for ease of recognition. Some of the appellations used would be considered offensive or politically incorrect today, but they should be considered in the context of the times in which they were written. Hyperlinks have been inserted for clarification of some terms. Notes on the manuscript imply oral explanations were offered on certain points, but those comments are not recorded for us. Otherwise, the words that follow are as written by my grandfather, Captain James Thomson Aikman (1874-1957).

A note about the name of the ship. Sailing records uncovered by Michael Wadsley of Tasmania unambiguously identify that the ship that made these voyages on these dates and to these ports was the 'Peter Iredale'. This ship name does not appear on the copy of this story in my possession, although perhaps the name was given during the oral presentation in 1902. My family's oral tradition was that JTA sailed on the Peter Iredale. It now seems certain that these adventures of 1890-1895 were on the Iredale.

Of interest is that this account records the maiden voyage of the [Peter Iredale](#), a vessel newly constructed at Maryport, U.K. in 1890. The episode about the ship becoming stranded at the mouth of the Columbia River becomes acutely prescient, [given that vessel's ultimate fate](#).



It is my intention this evening to tell you not only about sea life, but also of scenes and places in other lands, which I will do my best to describe to you. I will confine myself to what were actually my own experiences.

I was particularly fortunate as a boy in being able to take a sea-voyage regularly every summer, generally to the Mediterranean, the Black sea, and India, which gave me such a longing for travel that after two years of ship brokering I decided to make the sea my career. I was at once apprenticed to the Clipper Ship "J.J." of Liverpool, a fine, four-masted barque, for the term of four years (*beginning at age 16*).

The Captain, officers, seven other apprentices and myself had our quarters aft, while the remainder of the crew were housed forward, making a crew, all told, of thirty-two. Never will I forget my first parting from

the homeland. Cheering crowds on the quay (for all sailing vessels leaving England on a long voyage are always heartily cheered), sailors partially intoxicated, and the decks all covered with coal dust--bound to Yokohama, Japan.

Before describing the voyage. a word about my fellow apprentices. They were all good fellows, but had misguided ideas regarding the sea. Some had paid as much as 100 guineas to be apprenticed, and were equipped with almost everything useful, and otherwise. The first fortnight our diet consisted of cakes, jam, and other fancy confections, provided by our sorrowful and indulgent mothers before leaving, which naturally made us very sea-sick, but when all these home delicacies were finished we came down to the rock bottom of ship's fare--very much rock with regards to the biscuits. Fresh beef and potatoes soon gave out, and then our fare consisted of salt beef, salt pork, and pea-soup, vile coffee in the morning. The biscuits and pork we generally dished up as crakerhash, dandyfunk, and other concoctions, which we sometimes varied by catching eatable fish like bonito, albacore (*tuna*), flying fish, etc., which sailors become very adept at catching. We made a smart run out to the [Cape](#), the southeast trade winds driving us somewhat southward of the usual track to run the eastern down. It was here that we encountered exceptionally large icebergs, and passing within a few miles of a regular island of ice fully five to six miles long about two hundred and fifty feet high, a grand sight. When we take into consideration that only one eighth of this huge mass is seen above water, one can imagine the size of the whole mass of ice.

It becomes very monotonous running before the wind day after day, going ten to twelve miles an hour with the decks awash most of the time, especially when the ship is taken all aback with a strong southerly wind, which is rightly called a 'buster'.

We sighted Tasmania to verify our position and commenced the journey through the Pacific Islands, which lie very close together; coral reefs are very common. All islands were given as wide a berth as possible and no lights were allowed while passing through, so as not to attract the natives, as they are mostly hostile. An extra good lookout had to be kept. Often the ship would pass over magnificent sea plants and fungi of all colours and shapes, which were quite perceptible in the clear blue water. We had to pass between two islands, one of which the admiralty sailing directions said was inhabited by aboriginal savages. We approached slowly as the wind was not very strong. The lookout reported canoes pulling towards us from the island. We at once kept away, the canoes came out in swarms after us. As the wind was not on the bow, the ship went probably two or three miles an hour with the breeze freshening. The smaller craft fell out of the chase, but three long war canoes kept it up for a long distance. Meanwhile on the ship there was great excitement. We mustered three rifles of the Captain's, five revolvers, and sundry implements of our own. The leading canoe actually came within a hundred yards of the ship when I had a splendid view of the occupants from the mizzen tops, five fellows of the lanky type, quite nude except strings of shells around the neck and dry rushes around their loins; thirty men with paddles two deep and their chief on the high stern urging them on, while they sang a quaint chant with each stroke, but our sailing qualities proved too strong for their paddling. With a shout they sprang to their feet and waved defiance at us with their spears.

On the 128th day we sighted [Fujiyama](#) (the sacred white-capped mountain of Japan), but were driven off with a heavy north-west gale for three days, eventually making Yokohama harbour. We had no sooner cast anchor into the harbour before swarms of the Japanese natives were aboard with goods and curios to sell, making the ship into a veritable bazaar, arranging their curios all along the deck. The gentlemen very well knew that poor Jack has very little money, but they are only too glad to secure European clothing, especially woollen shirts - besides there are the tattoo men and conjurors as well.

Next morning hoards of women and boys commenced discharging the cargo of coal. Their method was most peculiar. Boys would fill miniature baskets, which would be passed from hand to hand, whilst fair-sized lumps were just passed up. Stages were made to stand on, as they dug lower into the hold. They took out over 2000 tons in six days by this method.

Yokohama is a clean city in the European quarter and the native part is most interesting and quaint, but after ten days we received orders to proceed to Nagasaki.

Five days out we sighted a Japanese junk bottom up, and next day picked up the twelve survivors in a small punt. These men had been nine days on the water, six being without food. When they were rescued, they commenced to worship their idol, which was in a box. On arrival at Nagasaki the Captain of the junk was imprisoned for losing his ship, according to Japanese law.

Nagasaki harbour is undoubtedly the finest sheltered harbour in the world, about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  to 3 miles in length, with a narrow entrance. Nagasaki was one of the most interesting towns I ever visited, so clean and orderly; every street had its bazaars. A European never thinks of walking. Japs are there to take you all over the town for a few pence in their fine rickshaws. I saw a great deal of this town as we were there seven weeks and I am afraid we apprentice lads enjoyed ourselves at the expense of the poor Japs.

I will just mention one of our escapades: While the 8 of us were jaunting round the town, we came across one of the rickshaw stands, and promptly pulled out 4 of them and commenced a little journey of our own. All went well until we saw several little Japanese policemen running after us. When we put on the pace, one of ours fell into the street and was promptly captured; another was tripped up by the police and caught with small lines which they always carry, while I, trying to stop my wild pace at the bottom of the hill to turn to the right, ran up the slope of a roof and promptly fell through, and landed in the back of a cake shop in the oven room. The old man and his wife got such a fright they never tried to stop me as I ran out of the front door.

Japanese theatres are always crowded, the men in the pit and the ladies look through wooden bars at the side--but the wrestling matches are great fun. Men of equal weight endeavour to throw each other out of the round circle, on a kind of bandstand. They are generally always held in the cemetery (of all places), but they are attended by swarms of people of both sexes. The Mikado's wrestlers are enormous men of large girth and seem almost impossible to throw owing to their weight. These men would give Steadman of Cumberland a rough time.

Tightrope walking is another feature of the gathering, where they do wonderful feats of balancing with the aid of their paper parasols. They grasp the wire with their great toe and always use their feet to climb.

A visitor is struck with the extreme simplicity of the people; for instance, they never dream of locking up their house or shops, for the Japanese would never dream of stealing and the needy poor are always supplied with plenty of food.

A Japanese Customs Officer asked me to dine with him one night, and I was surprised to find the dinner spread on the floor on a rush mat. He seemed quite at home sitting cross-legged, tailor fashion, while his two wives waited on us with their fancy dishes, holding them up before us-- but I soon gave up the chopsticks in despair.

The Japanese ladies are very proud of their toilet and get their hair dressed once a week and sleep resting their necks on a hard piece of wood.

Walking along the street you will hear a man blowing a shrill whistle. On enquiry you will find that this man is blind, whose business it is to give massage by rubbing their hands over the body to relieve pain by their personal magnetism.

The Japs are great bathers, public and private baths being erected all over the city. They would never dream of not having a bath at least once a day.



They are very proud of their navy, for they possess modern, up-to-date men-of-war. They are very smart in gunboat drill practice, etc., and easily beat a Russian man-of-war's crew in a competition they had, but perhaps it was owing to the superiority of numbers.

After discharging our Welsh coal, we loaded Japanese coal, which is very clean, and set sail for Saigon, Cochin-China, passing between the island of Formosa and the mainland of China. This narrow sea is nearly always crowded with queer looking fishing craft with latticed sails, every boat having two great eyes painted on the bow, which according to their religion is necessary for them to keep clear of rocks and sand-banks, which abound in these seas. They come out in hundreds and form quite an imposing sight.

Then we ran along the coast of (Vietnam?), which looks so black and formidable. At last we make the low land of Cochin-China at the mouth of the Mekong(?) and sailed up the river for forty miles, until we stuck fast on the soft mud of the river-bank. There the wild tropical scenery was unsurpassed, the parrots screeched and flew around, mostly of the green and yellow variety. We had a visit by apes, who made quite a jabbering noise and took flight after taking a good stock of us. Then the marmoset monkeys, which are very small, came that night also. Their cry is not unlike that of a baby. The undergrowth is alive with snakes and bullfrogs, toads, etc., who make up an incessant croaking all night.

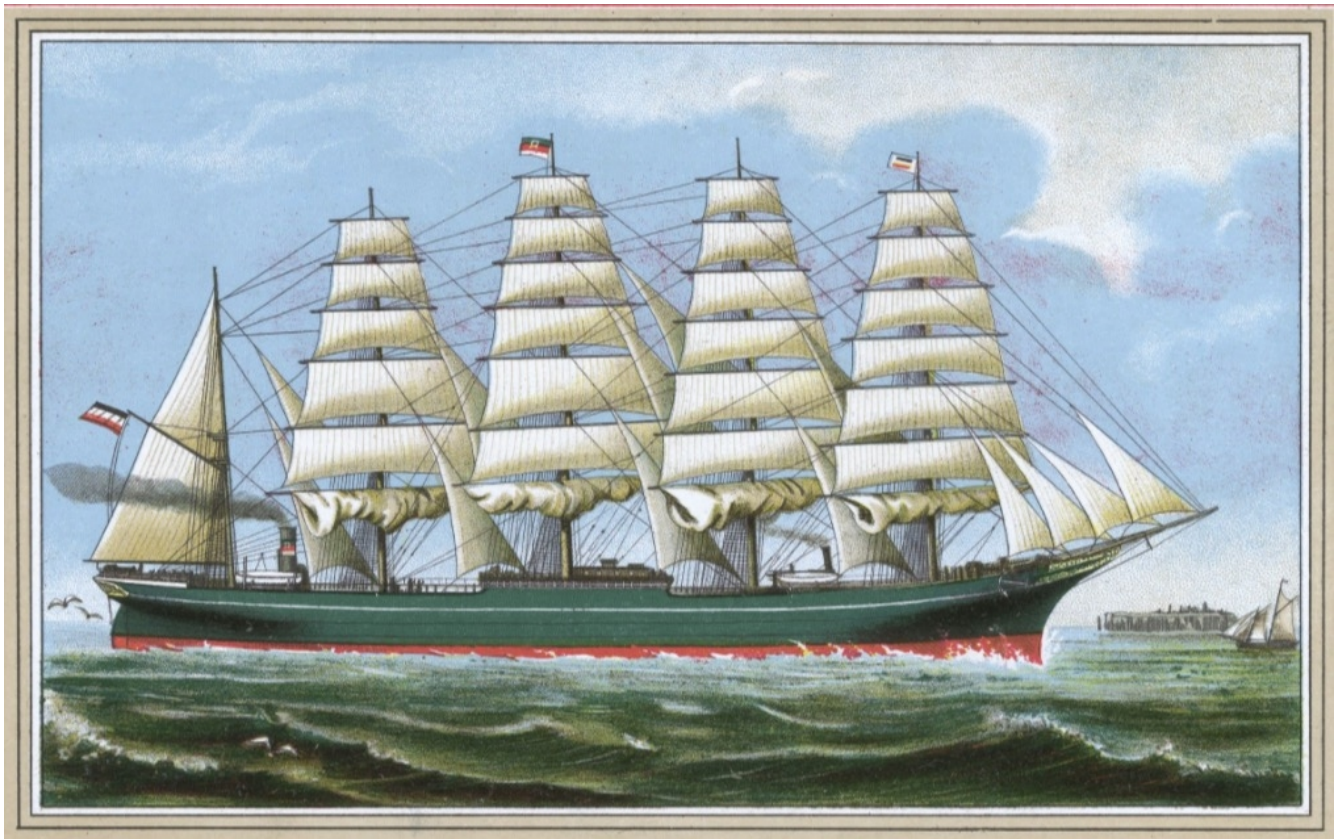
After three days we were towed up to the city, and anchored in mid-stream. I only ventured ashore once, as there was an epidemic of fever at the time and all the ship's crew were down with it, through having to drink the milky water. The intense heat during the day and the mosquitos' raids at night made life anything but pleasant, but it would invariably rain after sundown, which always brought the thunder and lightning; and over on some hills in the distance, for perhaps two hours, there was the unusual phenomenon of continuous lightning.

There only seemed to be two kinds of riverboats used by the natives. one for the men being a sail canoe with an outrigger float, which was good for the light winds. If the wind was fresh, a coolie would go out on the outrigger: This was called a 1-man breeze, and so on until in a squall you would see 3 or 4 men out there all huddled together, the canoe spinning along in fine style, until the wind fell suddenly, when down would go the men into the water, but they are all capital swimmers. Then there are the women's boats, long narrow canoes, by which they carry their market produce, which they always place in the centre in large earthenware jars, while the women would be rowing right aft, which was quite a feat of balancing.

As we were nearly all reduced to skeletons, we were heartily glad to receive our complement of rice and heave up the anchor to the song or shanty "We're homeward bound, I hear them say."

From Saigon to the [Straits of Sunda](#) (between Java and Sumatra), it took us 6 weeks, delayed by head winds. These straits are very narrow. Here we secured lots of fruit and birds. I had over 40 myself, Java Sparrows, Java Canaries, etc., which I was able to sell at a big profit in Germany. We were favoured with fine tropical weather and light breeze through, passing where the town of Angier (Anyer) used to be before it disappeared in the waters during the great volcanic eruption of 1883 ([Krakatoa](#)). Just astern of us about a mile was the ship '[Maria Rickmers](#)', the then largest sailing ship. She was a 5-master, and looked very fine with all-her sail set.

We had just sailed through the straits when up rolled a tremendous typhoon, which, although we were all stowed in except topsails, flung us on our beam ends for several minutes. We just saw the other ship heel over, when all was darkness. Some of her wreckage was found afterwards near the same spot.



*(Note: This happened on July 24th 1892. The Maria Rickmers and her crew were never seen again. The crew of the Peter Iredale were the last to see her, but were unable to come to its aid. Ironically, both vessels were on their maiden voyages. The Maria Rickmers had been built in Glasgow & sailed from Bremerhaven in December 1891. Whether the death of Captain Gennerich and the subsequent resume of command by the First Mate Wiethoff has something to do with the tragedy is unknown. Being the biggest ship of her time, her disappearance created mystery and speculations. Some sources claimed that her 5 masts were bad for her stability. In any case, a tale of too much sail and not enough crew for storm conditions.)*

You can't describe the fury of those typhoons. There are generally two waves, which give you a little warning of something coming, then a furious blast of wind, then you are in the midst of a boiling cauldron of white water, the wind increases until the centre is reached, then a lull for a bit, then the wind just comes as bad from the other quarter - but by careful handling of the ship you can avoid this.

Just think of the 162 days from Saigon to Bremerhaven with the eating bad, and living on salt provision, but somehow we managed to pick up on a rice and currie diet.

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Our next trip, from London to San Diego, California was perhaps uneventful, for we were favoured with fair wind round the sailors dread corner, Cape Horn, where it is always so cold and dreary, you only having about 5 hours of daylight. This is the home of the Mother Carey's Chickens (storm petrels), and the white-bellied porpoise.

Between Valparaíso and Callico(?), I witnessed a magnificent spectacle. We had just come out of a heavy gale and were busy making sail when an immense white column of water was seen to approach the ship with a

zig-zag motion. We all watched spell-bound, thinking it would overwhelm the ship; but when right abeam, it veered astern of us. We just had one gust of wind, which took the sail off the mainmast, mizzen, and jiggermast, leaving the rail on the foremast intact. .

San Diego can boast of having fine weather all the year, where almost all tropical fruits are cultivated. Vast acres of orange, lemon and olive groves, etc., greet the eye everywhere.

I took a fellow apprentice 12 miles out one Sunday to an olive ranch in Old Mission Valley, to meet a namesake of mine, who kept the oldest ranch in California. He was quite happy until he was told the place was infested with rattlesnakes. Then I never saw anybody so scared in my life, as we had to go home in the dark.

[Coronado Island](#) in San Diego Bay possesses one of the largest hotels in the world, which mostly contained the wives and daughters of rich 'Frisco people. These young girls were simply crazy after sailing in cat-yachts (little boats with the mast in the bow). A dozen or so would come aboard and fairly take charge of the ship, bringing beautiful wreaths of flowers and fruits and giving the Captain no peace until he allowed us apprentices to join their sailing-picnics; they would have the male sex somehow. They were the means of five of our apprentices leaving the ship, and strange to say they are all doing well.

A gold rumour got up, and when every one of our sailors cleared out, we had to ship the vilest lot of men I ever saw; what a time we had until we reached Portland, Oregon.

From Astoria the ship is hitched onto a stern wheeler alongside. There are very few rivers to beat the wild picturesque scenery of the [Willamette](#) and Oregon. Astoria has an extensive salmon plant at the mouth of the river. They are mostly dog-salmon, and are fine fellows who jump high out of the water.

The Columbia river has a dangerous bar, which we were unfortunate enough to stick on, lying over at a dangerous angle waiting for a higher tide for 4 days. Three ships being detained, all being bound for Liverpool, the captains had a wager who would get there first: £50 apiece, the winner gaining £150. Of course we did nothing but crack on all the way home. Curiously enough, one of the ships kept company with us several days, all turning up in the vicinity of the equator, when we all disbanded. We actually arrived 8 hours behind the winner, the "City of York", an old tea Clipper. The "Clackmannorshire" arrived the next day, and the "Wanderer", which was really the fastest ship (she having the record from Frisco home in 89 days) arrived 3 days after. We did it in 128 days from the Bar to the Liverpool Bar.

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Loading salt at Liverpool for Calcutta, we had a fine ran out to the Cape. Instead of the usual westerly wind off [Cape Agulhas](#) (*the southernmost point of Africa*). we experienced one of those very severe gales, which are prevalent at certain seasons of the year. We lost nearly all our hard weather sails and main topsailmast. Being driven toward the low-lying shore, for 3 days we lay hove too, with all the grandeur of a South African veldt before us. We could easily discern the natives and their mushroom-like huts, as the atmosphere is so clear. Probably 6 miles inland was a sheer cliff with beautiful falls tumbling over. The wind hauling to the westward kept us from grinding on the rocks. The westerly wind carrying us to the South of Madagascar, the winds are light and variable until Ceylon, with its spicy breezes, are reached, when you have the monsoons, which are merely trade winds.

In the Bay of Bengal we experienced a cyclone, which commenced one sultry morning. All the previous night, electric balls of fire were playing hide and seek on the backstays and yard-arms. Even birds seem to know what is coming, for they take shelter in the tops and yards, screeching until they go asleep, when it is easy to catch them. The captain lightened the top hamper by taking down the upper topgallant and royal yards. You first feel a disturbance in the air, in a cyclone, then the clouds seem to drop. Luckily the cyclone was

mostly to the eastward of us, but to give you an idea of their force, one ship, the 'Clydebank', on her first voyage was towed into Calcutta with her steel masts turned round like a corkscrew and her decks all wreckage from falling spars. There were five other vessels injured, and one of the trim little Pilot barques was lost with all hands.

At last we reach the mouth of the sacred River Ganges, where you have to anchor until you obtain a very powerful tugboat. The scenery on this river is unsurpassed for tropical scenery, distinctly Oriental. Halfway up the river is the James and Mary quicksand, which is more treacherous than the Goodwins. Here the pilot stands with his axe on the forecastle head, all ready to cut the towing rope; the boats are swung out all ready to take the crew off. Here, if the vessel once touches, the cable is cut. The crew hurry into the boats, as the vessel sinks very quickly.

A very sad case happened a month previous to our arrivals. A steamer passing through struck the quicksand and immediately heeled over. The water, engulfing the engine room and stoke hole, caught two poor coal-trimmers down in the bunkers. They worked their way to two portholes on the top side and shoved their heads through shrieking for help, but their shipmates could only look on without giving help, as nothing could save them.

Presently we see fine mansion houses with luxurious gardens, which is called Garden Reach, with long rows of shipping in the distance.

Undoubtedly Calcutta has the finest collection of sailing ships and steamers in the world. They are moored 4 abreast, with their own cables fore and aft. Being 5½ months in Calcutta, I had a good opportunity of seeing the City of Palaces, as it is called. Facing the shipping is a boulevard full 2 miles long, which commences at the Grand Courthouse and runs to the Hamna Ghat, built in commemoration of the Mutiny. Here is to be seen the greatest extremes of wealth and poverty, grand nabobs in their gaudy coloured carriages with two runners ahead proclaiming the owners' titles, two on horseback, two on the box seat in front, and two at the back, driving in the cool of the evening.

The Eden Gardens is unsurpassed for its different varieties of trees and flowers. Fort William is quite a town in itself, so well fortified in one of the relics of the mutiny, where the tall and stately 6 foot Bengal Lancers and the tough little Gourkhas, the fiercest fighters of India, have their headquarters with our own English troops.

The infamous Black Hole of Calcutta is still preserved at the back of the post office.

I was very fortunate in seeing the great coolie festival called the Hobsen Jobsen, which lasted about 6 days. Immense hordes of people met on the Miadan, an immense green field. Here the people would all prostrate themselves before the priests and effigies of the God and Goddesses. I had a near view of these gaudy idols. They are carried by the coolies on large platforms. One striking figure had several arms, each holding some symbol of their belief, all covered with golden trinkets. These are of immense value, being wrapped up in valuable cloth, interlaced with gold thread, but, at the end of their prayer and fasting, the priests and devotees wind their way to the river banks in thousands, the idols are taken to the middle of the river where there is quicksand, and, with great ceremony, dumped into the stream, the priests daubing the foreheads of the worshippers with the sacred mud of the Hooghly (*a tributary of the Ganges River*).

Caste is the great drawback to India life, but it acts the same as our trade unions. The Mohammedans are very powerful here and perfectly trustworthy and honest, unlike the ordinary coolie who is always trying to do something underhand.

Dead coolies, instead of being buried, are burned on piles, about a mile above the town, but it was a common sight to see the dead body of a coolie floating past, and they would often get foul of the chain-cable; if



was no pleasant job to clear these away in the morning, which the port regulations compels you to do. Asiatic cholera was prevalent at the time.

The docks are large and roomy, where you load the jute cargo. They seem to be in the centre of the poor native quarter, which gave me the impression that it is a good thing to be an Englishman, for the huts are very squalid, with a strong smell of cooking and charcoal fires, with hordes of humanity passing to and fro, who seem to be astir from 3 A.M. till 11 P.M.

I had a drive with an Eurasian to a Palace outside the City, owned by a native prince. The interior was gorgeous in the extreme. The attendant, showing us around the house after taking us all round, showed us into a long room with a table all covered with silver, all black for want of cleaning, and the remains of food, all covered over with the dust of time. Here a tragedy had been committed: a jealous wife had poisoned the food to kill her husband and 7 other guests, herself included. The prince would have nothing touched, and you had to stand on a siyah mat at the door.

Just opposite to where the ship was moored was a favourite bathing spot, although the river runs very strong and the average drowning there was 1 a day. To give you an idea how little life is valued in India, one of our apprentices fell into the water. Although surrounded by coolies in the sampans and boats, they all stolidly watched him struggle in the water and sink without even attempting to rescue him, as it is against their religion to rescue anyone from the sacred Ganges.

At last we received our complement of jute in the [Kidderpore Docks](#) (*Kolkata*) and sailed homeward bound for Boulogne, making a rapid passage until we reached the latitude of the Channel, when we experienced a stubborn head wind, which kept us tacking and weaving every 2 or 3 days for 7 long weeks, during which time we only beat 15 miles to windward, which made most of us very impatient, but the sailors consoled themselves with the maxim "more days more dollars". But when the wind did veer to the windward we got more than we bargained for, for we had to run up channel with close reefed topsails.

Boulogne is a pretty little seaport town of fisher folk, who look very picturesque, as they walk along with their wooden sabots or clogs. These people hold a great carnival every year, which is quite interesting to see.

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The ship being towed to Barry, in Wales near Cardiff, we sailed with steam coal for Cape Town, which our friend Jack Barry has so aptly described. I was there at the time of the Massacre of the Armenians, by the Turks at Constantinople (*the Hamidian massacres*). Probably four to five thousand of them had taken shelter in Cape Town. Their great high priest arrived among them. They gave him a great ceremonial welcome and, being all dressed up in their native costumes, looked very well indeed. Shortly after, General Booth arrived in the 'Taritallore Castle'(?), making the fastest run out to the Cape; he also received a great reception.

Cape Town gave me the impression of being a very sleepy place. It is to be hoped it will be more enterprising after this [war](#) is over.

From Cape Town to Sydney, N.S.W., the ship is driven by those fierce, never ceasing, westerly winds, which are called the '[Roaring Forties](#)', being in latitude 46 south. In making Sydney, you first see Manly Beach, a seaside place not unlike Coney Island. Passing the entrance, you sail up the bay until you make Neutral Bay, where you pass quarantine, and then get towed to Circular Quay in the heart of the city. I think there are 12 small bays in Sydney Bay. It is undoubtedly the most picturesque harbour one could ever see, but what makes it more attractive to Englishmen is that everything you see is stamped British, as if you were actually in England, and the Australians are most patriotic. The City is well laid out. It has its Hyde Park and large Botanical Gardens, and for the small sum of 3d 6 cents you can hear music from the largest organ in the world, in the City Hall, which was subscribed for by the people. Everybody seems to have a row or sail-boat

to sail about in the bay. During the 4½ months I was there, I think I was at more picnics and concerts than I have been to before or since. I passed the Board of Trade for 2nd mate there, and, although I had many offers to sail in other ships, I thought I would stick to the ship that had carried me safely for 4 long years, and it is as well I did, for the ship '[Romanoff](#)', of the Aberdeen White Star, the Captain of which wanted me to sail 2nd Mate with him, was lost with all hands, off the Falkland Islands.

Loading wool, we sailed south of New Zealand and rounded the Horn, and in due time arrived at dear old London.

That was the end of my sailing ship days. I was rather sorry to leave the old ship, but mighty glad to receive my first pay.

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I was only home 2 weeks when I joined as 2nd mate of a large steamer at Hull and came out to Quebec. As I have been in 9 different steamers since then, I will only speak about the more important places I have visited since.

I was fortunate in seeing Athens twice, that lovely old city of ruins. We hailed a hack and were driven up a hill to a large crumbling gate of marble, enter and commence to mount easy marble steps worn almost down with the feet of countless people. That cage to the right cut into the solid rock is where they used to put men to starve to death. All strewn over the ground is huge pillars of marble. Guides show you the places of interest and take you to all the old temples, but perhaps the most interesting to a Christian is to see where the Apostle Paul preached. When I asked for the supposed exact spot I quietly slipped two pieces of marble into my pocket as a memento, of which I was very proud. When I arrived home I placed them on the mantle-piece to show friends. I was very much surprised on returning home the next trip to find they were gone, and on enquiry found the maid had thrown them into the ash barrel, not knowing their value.

Constantinople is very picturesque, with its white mosques and buildings everything looks so clean, until you are rowed ashore; then you find out you have never struck a dirtier place. The streets are full of dogs, who act as scavengers. A dog leaving his own street is instantly worried to death. The great majority of the streets are that narrow that most of the carrying is done by men, who carry everything on long poles, which is quite a load in itself. These men have wonderful strength and simply live on vegetables. The [San Sophia](#) church there is practically the Westminster Abbey of the Mohammedans. After taking off your shoes at the entrance, you are shown around the building. You are at once struck with the beautiful designs on the walls, which are made up of very fine mosaic work. Europeans have free access to all parts except the Holy of Holies, which is barred off with golden gates. Priests there keep up a continuous worship, chanting all the while; there is a complete silence amongst the worshippers, although there may be swarms of men praying and prostrating themselves on the prayer mats. The Sultan himself is their great high priest. I have been assured by many Mohammedans that if he once raised the Green flag of Mohamed all Mohammedans would be bound to follow him. The Sultans own Palace faces the Bosphorus and takes up about 1½ mile of frontage. The landing steps to the Palace are barred off by massive gates of beaten gold, which glitter bright in the sun. All round the palace grounds is heavily guarded with soldiers, as the Sultan is awfully afraid for his life. These are about the only soldiers that he pays regularly. The others live mostly by pillaging; that is why they are so eager to cut up the poor Armenians, who are a thrifty people and are generally money-lenders and exchangers, for they have the same custom now as they had in the time of Christ. For a copper or two they will show you their odd collection of coins, which is very interesting.

Odessa, in Russia on the Black Sea, is an up-to-date city. All the principal streets are boulevards. Promenading is common in the cool of the evening, where it is the custom for ladies and gentlemen to drink tea and lemon and smoke cigarettes (the ladies smoke after each meal). There you hear all kinds of scandal, the opera, etc.--for they are very proud of their Opera House--and its [basso profundo](#) singers, who are

really worth hearing.

Every other man you meet is a soldier. Their drill is exceedingly severe and trying, and, although they are well trained, they seem to lack the spirit that makes the Britisher what he is.

While at [Sevastopol](#) I went over nearly all the ground of the Battle of the Crimea. What a barren, bleak looking ground, which not even the summer's sun could brighten. I saw the ground where the gallant 600 made their furious charge, which will always be remembered as long as England is a nation. After you climb the heights of [Inkerman](#), you can see [Alma](#) in the distance, and all over the battlefield. It overlooks the deep bay where the English fleet were at anchor. Going back we call at the English, French, and Russian Cemetery. The French Cemetery is well preserved and has numerous graves well kept, but in the English Cemetery you would see a monument "Sacred to the memory of Major So & So, Captains 3 or 4, and 870 men of the 3rd Lancashires, and", as an afterthought, "42 Middlesex." There was one grave by itself, a little drummer boy, aged 13, who had sounded the bugle at Inkerman. The Russian burial ground was 5 big round heaps with a cross on the top of each. I saw a bone sticking up under some thistles and dug it up and found it to be the thighbone of a man; I took it home with me as a relic. The Russians will not till the ground or build on it, for they are very superstitious and simple minded; they claim that the place is haunted at night-time. There is one house where you put up the horses and get refreshment. Their idea of refreshment is rather queer. It is either vodka (or native rye whiskey) or tea with lemon and sugar in it, with black bread and caviar, goats milk, and white cheese. The caviar is vile stuff, which is made out of the roe of sturgeon, which abound at the mouth of the Danube. It is a singular thing that during the bombardment of Nikoloff, along the coast a bit, every building was destroyed, except a little old Protestant Church, the very fact of which made many converts in that town. Their own fine Greek Church was burned to the ground.

[Port Said](#) is very interesting to see, (with) all the big Indian and Australian liners, and boats of all nations. It is a great coaling station. Before the steamer is at anchor the coal barges are along side, a stout plank aboard, and the Arabs are running with sacks of coal aboard, and bunkers the steamer in no time.

Alexandria, in Egypt, is both modern and ancient, modern after it was bombarded (the buildings being nearly all after the French style), but ancient in the native quarter and the outskirts. You can't help laughing when you see Tommy Atkins, riding round the town on a donkey, with, perhaps, a British man-o-war's man. These donkeys are by no means like the wretched specimens you see on our seashore, but fine hardy beasts, not unlike a pony. I have had many a donkey ride, and nothing can surpass a ride on the banks of the Nile at the cool of the evening with a good English party.

The [Khedive](#) has his palace on the left of the harbour. You can often see him riding about with his bodyguard of picked Arab soldiers, mounted on white horses. I had the care of a white Donkey presented by the Khedive to [Lord Charles Beresford](#). It was a fine beast. Besides being well paid, I received thanks and a photograph of Lord Charles, with his signature at the bottom.

I think you all know about Malta, Gibraltar, and Algiers, but Naples is worth hearing about. It seems to be an ideal place for tourists. Here one sees Italian life at its best. Although enjoying life to the full, the people of Naples seem to live on the memory of the dead, as it were, who they pay more tribute too than the living. Their cemetery is a sight never to be forgotten. The beautiful monuments and exquisite marble carving, which are so perfect in every detail, impress one greatly by their beauty. Each group seems better than the other, while the graves are always kept fresh with wreaths of flowers. Vesuvius is worth a visit, which occasionally vomits forth its stones and lava. The people of the town at the foot carve figures out of the lava and sell them to the hordes of tourists that visit Vesuvius. It is very tiresome work climbing it, as the stones are loose at the side.

I was once at Rio-de-Janeiro, and never wish to go again, as, out of 12 vessels, we were the only one who did not fly the yellow flag, which denotes the presence of [Yellow Jack](#). It is the largest and finest bay in

the world, all studded with small islands. A very significant omen is pointed out to you as you make Sugar Loaf Rock (which is like a Sugar Cone at the entrance of the harbour). The hills shape themselves into a huge dead man, as it were, with the sugar-loaf as the feet, which sailors take as a significant omen.

Buenos Aires, at the mouth of the River Plate, is a magnificent city, which can boast of the finest boulevard street in the world, which at night time is a blaze of light. It is called the [Plaza de Mayo](#). The Argentine people called it that after the massacre of an English regiment in the large square, which used to be called the 14th of Mayo, but is now called Plaza Victoria, with a splendid statue of our late Queen. The Argentine Republic built it to pour oil on our offended English dignity, for they sent a letter to Gladstone to say that they had an English Standard which they could have if they liked, and our government wrote back and said "they might probably come and take it without asking," but, to give them their due, they used to give the Queen a royal salute on the anniversary of her birthday. The state government carry on an extensive lottery, the profits of which keep up the Argentine Navy. You have no idea how strong the gambling spirit is. It has a firm hold on the people. I have seen mothers buy tickets for the children, in the hopes that they would obtain the lucky number. I have sailed up the River Plate as far as Parana, the capital of Uruguay. This is one of the old Spanish settlements. The buildings, people, their manners and Customs, all speak of the old time Spaniard. These men seem to live in the saddle, and always smoking cigarettes, and are most polite. The country is most fertile, but now and again the crops are destroyed by the locusts. When these come, the law of the land compels every man over 15 to gather 10 sacks of locusts, for which they are paid, in whichever part of the country they settle down on. The soldiers are turned out and follow their flight by train or wagons. When they do land, they clear every vestige of grass or corn clean away, going in a straight line. This is their undoing, for the soldiers dig a large hole on the line of advance, with earthworms at right angles, to corral them in. On comes the locusts and pour into the large hole like living water, as it were. Very soon the hole fills up, when chemicals are poured over them. Sometimes all are destroyed in this way, when there is a great rejoicing among the people, for they are not over fond of tilling the ground--cattle raising is their chief industry.

Coming nearer home, I would advise anyone who could afford it to take a run to the West Indies, which I found very interesting; and those of you who intend to visit London, England, can for a few dollars more run over to Antwerp and Brussels which I think are the cleanest and most interesting towns on the continent, with their beautiful art galleries and museums. Living is very cheap there compared with Paris, Hamburg, Rotterdam, etc. Stockholm is worth seeing. They all have their distinctive points of beauty and interest, the separate features being too long to describe singly.

It was my good fortune last summer to sail chief officer of a steamer on the *Great Lakes*. Canadians ought to be justly proud of their Dominion, as it has beauties peculiarly its own, and, out of all the lands I have visited, I prefer Canada to any of them, and with God's help I intend to make it my home for good, and always and heartily join in the chorus of the 'Maple Leaf Forever'.

J. Thomson Aikman.

\* \* \* \*

*Here ends the manuscript of his talk delivered on March 20, 1902. From my perspective, the most interesting aspect of this remarkable view of the world was not just all the wonders he observed in circumnavigating the globe under sail at least three times. Rather, it is hidden between the lines of the above manuscript which reads:*

*"I was only home 2 weeks when I joined as 2nd mate of a large steamer at Hull and came out to Quebec."*



*JTA's voyage to Quebec City turned out to be providential. We do know that in 1899 he sailed to Quebec with his father, also James Aikman, as Captain. There are at least two family accounts of what happened at Quebec, but they largely agree on the principal matter: it was the occasion when he first met my grandmother, Jennie Elizabeth Howard. On returning to the ship, he told his father, the Captain, "I'm going to marry that Miss Howard." Which, after further voyages, he did in St. Georges Church, Montreal on October 13<sup>th</sup>, 1900. My father, Howard Aikman, became the firstborn of that union, in 1903.*

*It was good fortune that he no longer sailed on the ship 'Peter Iredale'. That vessel was stranded on a sandbar at the mouth of the Columbia River in 1906, near where my grandfather had almost shipwrecked some 14 years earlier. The wreck of the Peter Iredale remains on the beach there to this day, one of the most famous and enduring shipwrecks of the Pacific Northwest.*

See more about the shipwreck of the Peter Iredale on youtube:

[https://www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=peter+iredale](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=peter+iredale)

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