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## “The first mate is a Polish count, a very quiet fellow”: Some New *Torrens* Documents

Helen Chambers

*The Open University*

THE TWO letters dated 8 and 23 April 1893, respectively, that John Galsworthy wrote to his sister Mabel while on board the *Torrens* between Adelaide and Cape Town were, until now, the only detailed and authentic contemporary accounts of Conrad’s second *Torrens* voyage, in 1892–93. These letters include comments on fellow first-class passengers, including the Veys, a Liverpool family whom Galsworthy describes as “rather nice,” but not before commenting on the children:

Master Frankie V–, a bovine – oh! such a bovine – child of four, very like the fat boy in *Pickwick* on a smaller scale, and the younger, a boy of two, about whom I need say nothing except that everyone on the ship longs to spank him.

(Marrot 1935: 84-85)

When Owen Knowles and John Stape published a critical version of Galsworthy’s early story “The Doldrums,” they identified Galsworthy’s fictional “Wray” family as these Liverpool Veys, who were listed as passengers on both the outbound and homebound runs of the London–Adelaide voyage (2009: 40).

A recent search for “clipper ships” by the author at the State Library of South Australia in Adelaide uncovered from the archives the only known copy of a forty-four-page-long privately printed pamphlet entitled “Round the World in a Famous Clipper in the Early Nineties,” by Leslie Vey. Only about a hundred copies were produced in 1975, initially intended for distribution to friends and relatives.<sup>1</sup> The misleading title belies the fact that it is a record of the 1892–93 *Torrens* voyage.<sup>2</sup> In the

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<sup>1</sup> Correspondence and notes about printing and distribution held by Vey family. The pamphlet in the State Library of South Australia was donated by a neighbour, Mrs G. C. (Barbara) Cross.

<sup>2</sup> The title was the result of an uncorrected transcription error whereby Cape Leeuwin in Western Australia, spelled phonetically as “Lewin” in the holograph

early 1970s, Leslie Vey, Galsworthy's disruptive two-year-old, by then a retired ophthalmic surgeon aged over eighty, compiled the pamphlet from extracts taken from his father's voyage diaries and his parents' long letters home, and added some photos from the family collection.<sup>3</sup>

While the pamphlet is obviously of interest, it is the primary source documents and images that provide the most comprehensive account to date of the nine-month round trip. There are observations about Conrad, Captain Cope, various officers, Galsworthy, Ted Sanderson, W. H. Jacques, Nita Wall (*née* Redmayne), and other passengers. The documents provide details about weather conditions, significant events during the voyage (including several deaths and a birth), periods of time spent in Adelaide and Cape Town and on Saint Helena, and sightings of, and meetings with, other vessels. The rhythms of daily life on board the *Torrens* are also recorded, including meals, musical performances, games, reading and writing, and the antics of various animals on board. Some of these events are echoed in Conrad's late essays in which he mentions the vessel and its passengers: for instance, "The *Torrens*: A Personal Tribute" (1923), "Ocean Travel" (1923), and "Memorandum" (1920).

The diaries are written in ink in two identical lined, small-format black notebooks. The first notebook covers the outbound voyage from London to Adelaide and the family's travels within southeastern Australia; the second covers the return voyage and includes details of the stopovers at Cape Town and Saint Helena. Both diaries feature Mr Vey's carefully recorded logs of the ship's position and direction, as well as the weather for every day of both the outbound and inbound voyages. Thus, events described in the diaries can be precisely located and correlated with accounts by others, in both contemporary records (Galsworthy's and Conrad's letters) and later recollections (Conrad's essays, and Ted Sanderson's account of the doctor's death passed on to Galsworthy). Mrs Vey wrote five letters home, of which three (or parts of three) survive in the family collection. These long letters, some of them running up to as many as sixteen pages of thin paper, were obviously written over several days, even weeks. Mr Vey wrote one letter home from Adelaide to his mother-in-law, whom he addressed as "Dear Mrs Albert." The

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letter, and in Leslie Vey's own manuscript, was converted into "Cape Horn" in the typescript and then passed unnoticed into print.

<sup>3</sup> Leslie Vey was prompted to compile the pamphlet after reading an article in the *Observer* magazine by Norman Sherry. Sherry wrote several newspaper articles at that time about Conrad and South-East Asia, but I have been unable to locate the one mentioning the *Torrens*.

family also hold a collection of photographs; some of these were taken and developed on board ship, others in Australia, and all were later printed and placed in family albums.

In the account that follows, the focus will be primarily on the evidence provided by the diaries and letters; together with the photographic evidence, it sheds further light on the *Torrens*, her passengers and crew, thus extending the work of John Stape and Hans van Marle (1995), Martin Ray (2008), and Owen Knowles and John Stape (2009). Rather than attempting to reproduce the two diaries in full (too long), or the letters (shorter but containing private and family information not relevant to Conrad scholars), this essay focuses essentially on those records that can be aligned with, and validate, Conrad's and Galsworthy's later writings. The diaries and letters also include considerable material about collective reading, writing, and musical performances on board; this is being incorporated into a separate project on maritime cultures of reading and writing, and although at times mentioned in passing, will not be discussed in detail here. Neither will the records of Mr and Mrs Vey's travels further afield within Australia, between early February and late March 1893, undertaken independently of other *Torrens* passengers.

On 24 October 1892, Samuel Hamilton Vey, then a forty-four-year-old Liverpool tea and coffee merchant, known generally as "Hamilton," travelled from Liverpool to London by train with his twenty-five-year-old wife Emily Agnes Maria Vey (*née* Elliott), always known as "Dot" or "Dottie"; their two boys, Francis "Frankie", aged four, and (David Christopher) Leslie, then nicknamed "Baby" or "Bobbles," aged two-and-a-half; and their nanny, Miss Clara Maerbeck, aged about 28. On the following day, they boarded the *Torrens* at West India Dock. As Conrad noted much later:

Part of our passengers, those from the Midlands generally, used to come on board in London Dock, while others, those from the South and from London itself, preferred to join the ship in Plymouth where we used to call in order to embark the live stock for the voyage. (*Last Essays*, 28)

The ship departed on 31 October, stopping over in Plymouth to take on more passengers before sailing nonstop to Adelaide. Hamilton Vey, like several other outbound passengers, including W. H. Jacques, had been advised to take the nine-month-long return voyage because of suspected pulmonary tuberculosis. During the rough early stages of this

outbound voyage, his wife and children suffered badly from sea sickness, and only he was healthy enough to make diary entries every day. Hamilton Vey's two diaries and his wife's home letters} complement each other rather than duplicating information, and reveal different concerns and interests.

Hamilton Vey, like John Galsworthy, learnt navigation from Captain Cope. Galsworthy provides the details in a letter to his sister:

Every day directly after breakfast we set the chronometer and take sights, if we can, of the sun. Then we sit down together and work out the longitude. At twelve o'clock more sights, then down again to work out the latitude, correct the longitude, and prick out places on the Chart. (Marrot 1935: 85-86)

Leslie Vey simply wrote in his pamphlet that “my Father kept a list of the ship’s daily positions most assiduously, and, maybe, became quite proficient with the sextant” (1975: 12). This meticulous and well-preserved daily log of the ship’s position, direction, distances covered, and weather, during both the outbound and the return voyages (Figure) is invaluable in aligning Conrad’s later reminiscences with the Vey family’s contemporary records of events at sea.<sup>4</sup>

Mrs Vey’s letters contain not only personal news and amusing anecdotes but also vignettes of the ship’s officers and various passengers, including, on the outbound voyage, the Redmayne family; on the homebound voyage, Galsworthy and Ted Sanderson; and, on both outbound and homebound runs, W. H. Jacques. After recovering from early severe sea sickness, Mrs Vey began to enjoy life on board, particularly musical activities. In Conrad’s phrase, she “found in the ship a new kind of home.” (LE 27) Passengers on board the *Torrens* did not feel as though they were in a “luxurious prison,” as did those on board the S.S. *Tuscania* or *Majestic*; a passenger of the *Torrens* was “a citizen of a small community in special conditions and with special interests that gradually ceased to be secret to him, and in the end secured his

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<sup>4</sup> The existing maps of Conrad’s *Torrens* voyages (*Last Essays*, 485, and CL1 x-xi) are thus revealed as slightly inaccurate, notably for the return voyage, when the vessel in fact crossed the Indian Ocean at latitudes 25-26 degrees south, passing close to Mauritius, and then the South African coast, not further south into the Roaring Forties.

sympathies” (*Last Essays*, 27-28). The Vey letters and diaries bear witness to Conrad’s nostalgic reflections.

So what do we hear of Conrad himself on these voyages, and how was he perceived? Early on the outbound voyage, on 4 November 1892, Hamilton Vey noted the officers’ reactions, after a violent storm in the Bay of Biscay:

According to the Captain “we had a moderate gale that night.”  
According to the Second Mate “we should not see another like it.” According to the First Mate “We were to be thankful the danger was over when the wind toned down a little after 4 o’clock.”

Captain Cope’s matter-of-fact reporting and First Mate Conrad’s sober response are those of experienced officers, and contrast with the youthful second mate’s unwarranted confidence.

In one of Mrs Vey’s long home letters, written over several weeks and posted in Adelaide after the ship’s arrival in February, she writes that the “First Mate is a Polish Count, a very quiet fellow. He does not enter into any amusements whatever.” This is in contrast to Leonard Cotter, the second mate, who “is very young, a proper sailor, always up to tricks and a great favourite with the children.” We hear nothing else about Conrad on the outbound voyage and it is likely that his low profile was, at least over the last two weeks of the voyage, a result of illness, those “souvenirs d’Afrique” to which he referred in his 3 February 1893 letter to Marguerite Poradowska from Adelaide (*CL1* 123). Very soon afterwards with the temperature still over 38 °C in the shade, Conrad went up to the surrounding hills, as did the Veys and other passengers. An attempt to identify where in the Adelaide Hills Conrad stayed has yielded no positive results. It seems that he did not stay at the same hotel as the Veys: the Halfway Hotel, now the popular Stirling Hotel and then as now on the main street in the small hills community of Stirling, then loosely referred to as “Mount Lofty.” In a letter to his mother-in-law, Mr Vey mentions two other *Torrens* passengers staying at this hotel; he names a Mr Harman but says nothing about an officer. Conrad could well have been at the nearby Aldgate Pump Hotel, a few kilometres along the railway line (Martin 1996: 97). These Adelaide hills settlements were easily accessible by train; the Veys travelled up and down to the city. This railway was almost certainly also used by Conrad, because it

was a far more comfortable and much faster journey than the only alternative: horse-drawn transport over long sinuous rough roads.<sup>5</sup>

Conrad receives more mentions during the homebound voyage. Mrs Vey wrote to her mother, “I sit next to the first mate, who is quite an original character, and also close to the doctor, is a most interesting young fellow.” The latter was the narcotic-addicted Dr Jackson, whose death was later fictionalized by Galsworthy almost certainly on the basis of Ted Sanderson’s retelling of the incident. On the homebound voyage Conrad seems to have been more relaxed, in better health and mixing more with the passengers, of whom there were only fifteen first-class saloon adults and four in steerage. (On the outbound voyage, there were twenty-six saloon passengers, including two children’s nurses and the doctor’s and the captain’s wives, and seven second-class steerage (Knowles and Stape, 2009: 52-54). Conrad taught navigation to Mrs Vey, who wrote:

I know now how to find the latitude of a place but have not yet learned how to find the longitude and Mr Conrad the Chief Officer has given me lessons in steering, and one Sunday I steered for quite a long time and kept her within half a point which was I considered very good.

While “Dot” Vey was not among the “old maiden ladies” whom Conrad also saw developing “during a passage a nice discrimination in the matter of steering,” she seems to have become, as did her husband, one of the “men and women [who] become reconciled to the vast solitude of the sea untroubled by the sound of the world’s mechanical contrivances and the noise of its endless controversies” (*Last Essays*, 29).

What do we hear of the captain and other officers? In comparison with Conrad’s near-invisibility on the outbound voyage, Captain Cope’s presence is much more conspicuous in the Vey documents. Mrs Vey describes him as being rather gallant:

Our Captain is a jolly man . . . if you allowed him to take an inch he would proceed to take an ell. This morning I was standing near him and I showed him my fingers which are blistered on the tops, and I said “This is what fiddling does to one’s fingers,” so

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<sup>5</sup> The archives of the Stirling District Council (searched 7 April 2017) reveal the names of the hotel licensees but no extant guest lists.

he took hold of my hand and raised it to his lips and pretended to kiss it. Rather cheeky, was it not?

On the outbound voyage, the captain and his wife actively participated in the Christmas celebrations. Hamilton Vey notes that there was a collective Christmas dinner, rescheduled for later in the evening so as to allow the apprentices also to be present. Despite heavy seas in the South Atlantic (latitude 37° 54' S, longitude 18° 10' W), the atmosphere on board was "home like. All the children had their stockings filled and hung up at breakfast it was quite cheerful to see all the little presents and Christmas Cards, the latter for everyone from the Captain and his Wife, all along the table." That Cope was a considerate man became apparent in the Roaring Forties a week later, on 31 December 1892 (latitude 43° 15' S). Hamilton Vey describes the noisy midnight celebrations, when the crew collected metal instruments and utensils and marched around the poop and the saloon until "the din at last became so great that the Captain had to protest on behalf of the invalids." One assumes that during this time Conrad was in charge of navigating the ship, as he receives no mention at all. When a second passenger, twenty-one-year-old George Edmonds, died from advanced pulmonary tuberculosis and was buried at sea on 18 January, Mr Vey wrote: "Mrs Cope had all the children to afternoon tea, and they seemed to have had a good time." (Leslie Vey later judged that this was Mrs Cope's kindly way of distracting the children.) A passenger, William Rylands, aged twenty, had already died on 6 December after a rapid and painful decline in the tropical heat. His death prompted Captain Cope to postpone the "Crossing the Line" ceremony from 4 to 12 December. Hamilton Vey also notes that on 25 January, (day 86 and 42° 05' S, 120° 44' E), during a stiff gale in the Great Australian Bight, the captain had been "on deck all night, the sea now calming down and a favourable wind blowing. About 600 miles from Adelaide." Conrad was then ill and confined to bed; his indisposition explains the captain's high level of hands-on involvement. Three months later, early in the homebound voyage, during a strong gale off Cape Leeuwin, Captain Cope would "be always about day and night, and though not alarmed was very anxious to see the wind drop." In *The Mirror of the Sea* Conrad rated Cape Leeuwin "The third stormy cape of the world" (73).

Elements of both Mr and Mrs Vey's narratives are echoed in Galsworthy's story "The Doldrums." At the tale's opening, the captain, his wife and two gentlemen, one of whom is called "Jacques," the other



being the narrator, are playing whist (2009: 58). Mrs Vey in a homebound letter remarked:

How superstitious one becomes at sea. Our Skipper, his wife and two gentlemen play whist every night and we are always most anxious to hear who has won, for surely as ever the Skipper wins we will be becalmed or else get a head wind. Sometime I say at breakfast to Mr Conrad “a head wind Mr Conrad,” then he shrugs his shoulders and says “Oh yes for the Captain won at whist last night.”

We know from her husband’s diary entry for 12 May that one of these gentlemanly card players was Dr Jackson, who was “ill all day but came out for his evening whist engagement.” This statement is echoed by Galsworthy when Armand/Conrad relates how the doctor “came on board, you know, and shut himself in his cabin for two days” (2009: 64), after which Armand/Conrad begins to suspect his drug habit and investigates.

Other passengers feature more frequently than Conrad in both the diaries and the letters. On 25 March, as the vessel left Adelaide, Hamilton Vey mentioned that there were four new passengers on the homebound voyage. He singled out the “two new gentlemen who may leave us at the Cape and who have been travelling about Australasia together – one studying navigation, a knowledge of which he expects to find useful in his profession – the law, the other going about on pleasure.” He also noted that they “are educated, have travelled a good deal and are decidedly agreeable so an acquisition to our ~~number~~ company.” According to the passenger list, there were two women, a Miss Hale and a Miss Winwood, whom Mrs Vey labelled as “old maids, very inoffensive and most uninteresting.” Galsworthy’s comment was equally unflattering: “a miss H– and a Miss W–; the latter sits next to Ted at dinner and has no ideas at all, of which he complains bitterly. She certainly does make the silliest remarks” (Marrot 1935: 85).

The young Mrs Vey was quite star-struck by some passengers. On 12 May she wrote: “We have got two (exceedingly nice) new passengers both young rich, handsome and musical. I am sorry to say the one I like best leaves us at the Cape. Oh he sings beautifully, it is a treat to listen to him.” Two days later, in the same letter, Mrs Vey records that she “watched from the poop various passengers dancing to music from the crew on the main deck,” and adds: “The other night I danced the ‘Pas de Quatre’ with Mr Galsworthy on the poop and I did enjoy it.” A photo in

the Vey family's possession, taken on board the vessel and looking down the length of the empty and tidy poop deck, makes it easy to imagine the pair dancing, perhaps alone, on a calm evening off the South African coast near Port Elizabeth. Mrs Vey remarked in the same letter:

I am sorry that I left all my music at home, I have missed it. Fortunately though Mr Galsworthy and Mr Sanderson both happened to have a little on board. I have not been quite without. I have had to learn all their accompaniments.

Referring to a concert held on 19 April, Galsworthy wrote that "Mrs V— is kind enough to play all the accompaniments for us whenever we like so we sing a great deal." Ted Sanderson is described as playing chess and reading Sunday prayers near the end of the voyage home, in the absence of a clergyman on board. Mr Vey mentioned Sanderson's oboe-playing on 7 July:

Everyone getting impatient to see old England and this is now the only excitement except Mr S's daily practice on the Hautboy and this may not be very charming to listen to unless the listener is a Scotsman who might imagine he heard the bagpipes in the distance.<sup>6</sup>

While W. H. Jacques is mentioned in "The Doldrums" merely as one of the whist players, Galsworthy in his letter described him as "the most interesting" of the three bachelors on board: "He was a First Class Classical man at Cambridge and plays chess a great deal with Ted" (Marrot 1935: 85). The Vey documents further flesh out this portrait. Hamilton Vey's voyage log allows us to visualize more precisely when, on the outbound voyage, Jacques read the manuscript of *Almayer's Folly*.

In a pause I went on meeting instinctively the heavy roll of the ship, and Jacques put his feet on the couch. The curtain of my bed-place swung to and fro as it were a punkah, the bulkhead lamp circled in its gimbals and now and then the cabin door rattled slightly in the gusts of wind. It was in latitude 40 south, and nearly in the longitude of Greenwich, as far as I can remember, that these quiet rites of Almayer's and Nina's resurrection were taking place. (*A Personal Record*, 29)

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<sup>6</sup> See CL2 186-87, Plate 9, for a photograph of Ted Sanderson playing the oboe c.1896.

Mr Vey's log gives allows this reading (if Conrad's memory was accurate) to be dated around 28 December 1892. The *Torrens* was then sailing fast, covering between 200 and 250 nautical miles a day on a south-easterly course into the Roaring Forties. Mr Vey's log reports variable weather from dull to sunny over the few days after Christmas when the ship entered the latitudes of 40°. His diary entries clearly record how the seas began to rise on 24 December, the rolling of the vessel causing water to enter the portholes and affecting various passenger activities, including the Christmas dinner, the morning's Holy Communion service, and a concert.

Jacques not only generously read Conrad's work; Mrs Vey reports that he also corrected her exercises on German grammar during the homebound voyage: "I am learning German and have got halfway through Otto]'s German Grammar bought in Adelaide I am getting on very well indeed and do an exercise every day. Mr Jacques corrects it for me." Adelaide and its surrounding rural districts and small towns were by the 1890s the home of a large colony of German free settlers who had arrived in the 1830s from Prussia, fleeing religious persecution; by the 1890s there were second and third generations of settler families. Some settlers became wine-growers, others German teachers, not only at the German School in central Adelaide, established in the early 1860s, but also, by the 1890s, at the major Adelaide public schools. *Otto's Grammar* was the standard German grammar of the time.

The photographs in the Vey collection supplement existing knowledge of the passengers and officers. One shows eight women of varying ages, well dressed and, one assumes, first-class passengers, seated on the deck with a middle-aged man in an officer's cap standing behind them, and who fits Galsworthy's description of Captain Cope as "a man about 50, with grizzled hair, whiskers and moustache" (Marrot 1935: 85). To Cope's right is a much younger man who may well be the second mate, Leonard Cotter. There is no sign of Conrad in this or any other photograph taken with passengers.<sup>7</sup> That Mrs Vey is in the group is obvious, not only from comparisons of other photos taken during the journey, but also from the clear handwritten label "Ma" (i.e., Mrs "Dot" Vey) underneath the print of the photo in the family album. In the front row is a young woman who, from comparison with a photo in the

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<sup>7</sup> Leslie Vey included in his pamphlet the well-known image of Conrad, with second and third *Torrens* mates and three apprentices; its provenance is not clear.

account of the Redmayne family (Stape and van Marle 1995: 25), strongly resembles one Mrs Nita Wall, of whom Mrs Vey wrote that she “plays the piano beautifully” and is “a very pretty lady . . . a regular Mary Anderson<sup>8</sup> and as nice she is pretty.” Conrad later sent Mrs Wall a copy of *An Outcast of the Islands* together with an intriguing letter suggesting that he may have had some personal contact with her during the voyage (CL9 25). The number of women present and the presence of Mrs Wall establish that this photo was taken during the outbound voyage. Martin Ray investigated a Miss Madden, identified on the passenger list, but whether she is in the photo is not known. There are several plain-looking older women, but none of them fits Ray’s description of Miss Madden as being “six feet tall gaunt ‘mannish,’ dressing in stiff collars and black clothes and given to smoking cigars and drinking whiskey,” though she may have picked up these habits later (2008: 160). If Miss Madden was indeed a nurse, as suggested by Ray in view of Conrad’s further correspondence about her, it seems then that she had (perhaps understandably, given the number of frail and sick passengers on board) not declared this in 1892, since on the passenger list she is merely “a lady.” Furthermore, in relation to the dying passenger, Mr Rylands, Mrs Vey noted that in the extreme heat and humidity when the ship was becalmed off the Brazilian coast, “as there were no nursing staff on the ship the passengers had rallied around and taken on nursing ‘watches’ on a rota system during the later stages of his illness.”<sup>9</sup>

On the outbound voyage Mrs Vey had noted that “the Doctor and his wife have only been married six months, and she is a lively piece of goods, and he is very nice too.” This doctor was not the ill-fated Dr Jackson but Dr Stephens, whose wife, according to the Veys, was also a compulsive knitter of woollen berets (“tam-o’-shanters”) for passengers. Conspicuous in several photographs, this headgear allows these particular images to be identified as being from the outbound (winter) voyage. Mr Vey noted on 26 January: “Photo’ed the Tam o’ Shanter gang, so called from the caps made for each member by Mrs Stevens.” This description may refer to a photo of four young children, two of whom are labelled as Veys, in such headgear; Mr Vey’s words suggest that he himself took this particular image.

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<sup>8</sup> An American actress (1859-1940) who had recently toured in Britain.

<sup>9</sup> The single women who travelled with two of the families (the Veys and the Parkers) and who are referred to as “nurses” on the passenger list were clearly children’s nannies.

There were other photographers. On 9 December Mr Vey wrote: “The photographers took a group of nearly all the passengers this afternoon, and curiosity is rife as to how the negatives will turn out.” Some of these turned out well: the Vey collection features several images of warmly dressed adult passengers in various headgear, including tam-o’-shanters. Mrs Vey reported to her mother that a little later in January “we have had lots of photos taken which will be very interesting to you when you see them, we have got several of the ship taken from one of the small boats one day by a passenger when we were becalmed in the tropics;” i.e. on the outbound voyage and so around the time of Rylands’s death. The Vey family album contains a reprint of this photograph, entitled “*Torrens* becalmed,” clearly taken from a small boat on mirror-like seas. The album also includes what appears to be an original negative of this image, of printed on glossy paper showing what appear to be the silver bromide-coated glass plate, as the slightly rough edge of the plate is clearly visible on this print. While the passenger who took this photograph is not named in the diary, a reproduction of the same photograph appears elsewhere (Paszkowski 1987: 278), credited to a “W. G. Edwards” and apparently here derived from a Polish text.<sup>10</sup> Basil Lubbock’s *Colonial Clippers* also shows a reproduction of this image, though uncredited (1921: 157). Photographs were also taken on the return run. On Tuesday 25 April, in the Indian Ocean, nearing Mauritius, Mr Vey wrote: “Toned 20 odd photographs and spoilt them all. Cause unknown, unless the water for the first washing was impure. Very disappointing.”

Four days after the *Torrens* arrived at Jamestown, Saint Helena, on 7 June 1893, Mr Vey noted: “After breakfast went ashore and took some photos.” The passengers then spent several nights on board, anchored off Jamestown, and Vey’s diary offers a vivid impression of the days were spent. There was a visit to the clipper *Macquarie* anchored there at the same time and also homebound.<sup>11</sup> A photograph in Leslie Vey’s pamphlet is labelled “*Torrens* and *McQuarrie* [*sic*] almost certainly at anchorage off Jamestown, Saint Helena.” This legend was possibly added

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<sup>10</sup> Roza Jablkowska, *Joseph Conrad: 1857–1924* (Wrocław, Warsaw, Cracow, Zakład Narodowy imienia Osolinskich, Wydawnictwo Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 1961).

<sup>11</sup> In “Memorandum” Conrad mentions the *Macquarie* as the only vessel comparable with the *Torrens* (*Last Essays*, 5). In Hamilton Vey’s diary, a late entry, dated 19 July, records the passengers’ anxiety as to whether the *Torrens* would beat the *Macquarie* into port at London, having left Saint Helena later.

by Leslie Vey for publication; the original untitled photo may have derived from the family collection. The island is described in muted but evocative tones as

barren and desolate with hardly a bit of green to be seen. The town of Jamestown is built close to the sea on a bit of level ground between two black, desolate looking hills, with another way at the back. Between these, glimpses of verdure-clad hills in the distance are seen and one feels that the first forbidding aspect may belie the beauties of the interior.

When the Veys returned to the ship (by implication the *Macquarie*), they met the exiled Zulu prince DiniZulu, son of Cetawayo, “who with his relatives, wives and servants, is a state prisoner here.” On 9 June, some of the passengers visited Longwood, Napoleon’s residence while in captivity there. There is no mention of Conrad among the visitors. On the following day, Mr Vey explored the island. He commented on the poor selection of produce for sale in the market – only “a few plantains, oranges, guavas and pumpkins, no meat, no fish no other vegetables” – and noted the luxuriant vegetation of the island’s interior: “enormous arum lilies, hollihocks [*sic*] and geraniums growing wild and exotic fruit trees in the gardens.” He added that during the day the main deck of the *Torrens* was “occupied by natives selling fruit, eggs, shells, bead mats and bags, beans, whales’ teeth, birds such as Java sparrows, canaries and waxbills, but the collection was poor and uninteresting.”

This brings us now to arguably the most significant event of the homebound voyage, the illness and death of Dr Jackson, lightly fictionalized by Galsworthy, who must have heard the story from Ted Sanderson, as Galsworthy himself had left the ship at Cape Town.

Although the Doctor had been noted to spend all day in his cabin, only emerging for whist each evening, it was not until 24 May that we hear of his illness: “The doctor very ill and nothing decent on board for him to take. Dot making Barley Water, beaten eggs etc for him.” Even if Jackson was ill, Hamilton Vey noted retrospectively, on 14 June, just after leaving Saint Helena, that he had performed some clinical duties:

While at St. Helena [7-12 June] another vessel came along and let down her anchor. It seems her Captain was suffering for some weeks from violent head pains and an attack of brain fever, or what was thought to be brain fever, coming on. They put in for medical advice. It was a case of tumour or abscess, and as a last

resort the Jamestown Doctor, with our Doctor, performed an operation on the man's head which proved fatal.

The captain's death (by implication during or just after the surgery), almost certainly resulted from severely raised pressure inside the skull or brain itself, from infection or a tumour; it was not necessarily a result of medical incompetence.<sup>12</sup> But only two weeks later, on 28 June (day 96), Hamilton Vey wrote: "This evening everyone stunned by death of the Doctor. He had complained of toothache but was doubtless suffering from a variety of causes and moreover had become a victim to opium and laudanum [*sic*] etc., and his constitution was no doubt thus shattered." Mr Vey's log reveals that the doctor's death did not take place in the Doldrums, a low-pressure area that extending five degrees on either side of the equator (the Intertropical Convergence Zone), but further north, at 12° 30' N, 26° 47' W, the latitude of the Cape Verde Islands.

Shortly before the ship's arrival at Saint Helena, Conrad produced the light-hearted and lightly eroticized sketch, dated 29 May, that Owen Knowles discusses in this issue of *The Conradian* {add ref}. Hamilton Vey had recorded the ship's position on that day (day 66) as 23° 31' S, 7° 7' E), with "beautifully fine" weather and a north-westerly course. Conrad's own record, latitude 25°10'S, 6°20'E therefore does not quite correlate with Vey's, as it demonstrates a slightly more south westerly position and there is no convincing explanation for this discrepancy. However, it is what the diary reveals about the events of this day that is of interest. Mr Vey wrote: "Signalled a barque bound from Rangoon to Rio, which had lost her Captain who had fallen overboard. Name *Chelina*. Promised to report her at St. Helena." The direction of the *Torrens* at that time (sailing north west )would have intersected the usual sailing ship across the Atlantic toward Rio . There is no clear trace of this vessel, although there is a record of an ironclad barque *Chilena* built in Sunderland in 1876, sold to Finnish owners in 1897, and renamed *Hilja*.<sup>13</sup> The seas were very calm in those latitudes, and this incident inevitably recalls Mr Jones's account in *Lord Jim* of Captain Brierly's suicide, jumping from the S.S. *Ossa* (52-53), a fictional event inspired by Captain Wallace's suicide on board the *Cutty Sark* (532). It is not inconceivable that Conrad, while writing *Lord*

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<sup>12</sup> Herniation or so-called "coning" of the brainstem, as a result of raised pressure, may be very rapidly fatal, with or without decompressive surgery.

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.bruzelius.info/Nautica/Ships/Merchant/Sail/C/Chilena> (1876).html

*Jim*, had for some reason recalled that day, 29 May 1893, on the *Torrens*, and the recollection informed his description of Brierly's suicide.

Other *Torrens* officers appear in the letters and diaries. We also hear in Mrs Vey's home letter dated 12 May 1893 that "Bobbles" (i.e., Leslie Vey) "is very well indeed and is the life of the dinner table. He sits next to the Second Mate Mr Cotter, who himself is an imp of mischief, and between the two of them our end of the table is kept pretty lively." In "The Doldrums" Armand/Conrad says to the Doctor:

Come, my dear fellow . . . what is the matter with you to-night, you were not even amused by the Wray baby – oh!" He laughed with a sudden unrestrained merriment curious to listen to in that sultry, joyless air, "that is an interesting little animal. Did you see Cotter fill it up with plum-duff at dinner, and Mrs Wray opposite laughing all the time, you know, and little Wray [presumably Mr Vey who was small and slight] looking 'orrified – ah-ha! and the little animal liked it you know. (2009: 60)

That the passenger lists were not always accurate has already been noted (Knowles and Stape 2009: 40), and these diaries and letters further confirm this. For example, Mrs and Mr Vey refer repeatedly to "Mr Harman and Mr Bush," two young men who spent time in and around Adelaide before returning to London together. Mr Harman is listed only for the homebound run, but Mr Vey mentions playing chess with him on the outbound run (diary, 19 and 22 November). There is a Mr [Percy] Aste listed on both voyages but no "Mr Bush" in either direction. The "three unattached men, two with beards grow[ing] in the voyage out – nomine J–, H– and A–" that Galsworthy mentions in his first letter (85) presumably correspond to Jacques, Harman and Aste. Mrs Vey's clearly inscribed "Mr Bush" is therefore a mystery.

Although several of the passengers, including Harman, Bush, Jacques, and Vey himself, were taking the round-trip health reasons, the food was scarcely designed for invalids, for whom special arrangements had to be made, such as those that Mr Vey noted in relation to Dr Jackson's illness. Otherwise, the range of dishes is astounding; Mrs Vey describes it in breathless lists for the benefit of her mother. Breakfasts included porridge followed by "chips, curry and rice, steak and onions, liver and bacon, sausage and bacon, mince, kippers, herrings, mushrooms and chip potatoes, bread and butter and marmalade." After various mid-morning snacks, lunch at one might include, after soup, "roast goose, and apple sauce, jugged hare and jelly, boiled mutton, roast pork, steak and



mushroom puddings, boiled beef and carrots, potatoes, beans, onions, peas, etc” and then “plum pudding, mince pie, marmalade tart, plain suet pudding and syrup, tapioca pudding, pancakes, boiled jam roll, apple tart, damson tart, and then for dessert, pears, pineapple, almonds and raisins, apples and prunes, figs, nuts, ginger, chow-chow, apricots, peaches etc., then biscuits and cheese and on Sunday Champagne.”

In order to help provide for this varied diet there were all sorts of livestock on board, on both runs. Despite what Conrad wrote in “Ocean Travel” about a “milch cow” being loaded in Plymouth (*Last Essays*, 28), there was, at least on the 1892 outbound run, no cow on board. Both Mr and Mrs Vey complained several times about the lack of a cow and thus of fresh milk for the children and themselves. There were certainly geese, as well as chickens; a Vey family photograph labelled “Torrens” – whether taken on the outbound or homebound voyage is unknown – shows a flock of white geese being herded by a crew member along the main deck of the vessel, as well as a number of small animal cages stacked one on top of the other with a rabbit’s face poking through the bars of one cage. Mrs Vey, feeling miserable and tired in the tropical heat near the Brazilian coast after Rylands’s death, complained in her mid-December 1892 letter about the various pests:

We have got a number of sheep, pigs, fowl, geese, bugs, fleas, cockroaches and spiders on board. The geese were allowed out during the showers and now look so clean we hardly know them. Three hundred eggs went bad the other day and had to be thrown overboard, so no more eggs and bacon for breakfast; most of the flour too has gone sour.

We know more about animals on the homebound voyage. In Mr Vey’s diary entry for 16 April 1893, day 23 out from Adelaide and in the calm Indian Ocean, he noted that “on board there are two laughing jackasses, several parrots and cockatoos, two canaries, a kangaroo and a wallaby or rat kangaroo.” Galsworthy meanwhile wrote to his sister Mabel: “We have got a cow and calf, and a good many sheep, geese, turkeys, ducks, hens, pigs, and cabbages; whilst amongst the other live stock on board are a kangaroo, two wallabys [*sic*], five parrots, a dog, two cats, several canaries, and two laughing jackasses.” Crossing the Indian Ocean, the “poor old cow,” according to Mrs Vey, has “run dry . . . so the Captain is going to put her ashore at the Cape and get another one, for which we are all truly thankful.” Galsworthy also mentioned that the

cow ceased to give milk at some point (64); this cow does not appear to have been replaced.

Both Galsworthy and Hamilton Vey commented on the ship's kangaroo. Galsworthy reported how, while he and Ted Sanderson were chasing a cockroach over the floor of their shared cabin, there appeared "a hairy monster on all fours which resolving itself as it came into a kangaroo" (Marrot 1936: 86). Vey too noted that

Every day the animal gets into the saloon and there is a chase to get him out again . . . and occasionally he looks into the cabins and makes his courtesy to those inside. . . . The larger kangaroo is quite tame and every morning baby [Leslie Vey] is not content unless he goes onto the main deck and gives it some bread and butter.

This last comment is echoed by Conrad in "Ocean Travel" – "the ship's children, some controlled by nurse-maids, others running loose, trooped forward to pay a visit to *their* cow which looked with mild big eyes at the small citizens of our sea community" (*Last Essays*, 29) – although Conrad is probably recalling the first *Torrens* outbound voyage, not this later one.

On 14 July 1893 Hamilton Vey was

alarmed this morning before breakfast by hearing the Captain order the boat down with all speed and the consequent noise and commotion. . . . It appeared the Captain's little paraquet had flown out of the cabin porthole and was seen astern further and further off on the water as we moved along. Half an hour was spent in the search, but the bird was lost sight of a minute or two after the boat left the ship and was not seen again.

Conrad (mis)remembered this episode when composing "Memorandum" in 1920:

The only real test of quickness we had, happened in the daytime and in light weather, when the ship was luffed up till the sails lifted and one of the quarter-boats was lowered to (was) when one of the quarter-boats was lowered to pick up a parrot which had flown overboard. Not being on deck at the time I don't know how long all this took, but the parrot survived the experience; so we must have been quick enough to have saved a child, for instance, of which we always had several on board.

(*Last Essays*, 58)

The above diaries and letters provide a vivid and unmediated record of passengers' lives during Conrad's second *Torrens* voyage, authenticating most of Conrad's later memories and providing further evidence of the autobiographical nature of Galsworthy's early story "The Doldrums."

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**FIG (Legend) Page of Hamilton Vey's diary on homebound voyage, showing daily positions of *Torrens* in Indian Ocean**