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Journal of Matthew Gilmour's & two Sons

Voyage to Australia

in the

Great Britain Screw Steamer

which sailed from Liverpool

on the 21<sup>st</sup> August

1852

By

Allan Gilmour

Beautiful day, still very little wind & sea very calm, but considerable swell from the S.W. Saw three whales this afternoon, but as they were a great way off, we could only see them very imperfectly, however they appeared to be rather a small species. Had a trial this afternoon of Henry Bell, a passenger, who was convicted on the suspicion of having stolen a piece of mutton, but after examining a sailor boy who said he saw him cut it, he was acquitted. Very dark & unpleasant on deck tonight.

Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> Oct. Lat. at Noon 30°42. Long. 1°1. Distance run since yesterday 175 miles. Total from St. H 1091m.

Beautiful day but rather cold with a strong wind blowing nearly straight ahead of us. Considerable swell on the sea, but the vessel considering is very steady. We are now beginning to be annoyed by rats, which are now pretty numerous & are to be heard during the night running about the Mess Room & making a great noise. Saw another whale this afternoon, which appeared to be of considerable size but as it was at a great distance, we could not see it properly. No amusement whatever on deck tonight, & as it is very cold, most of the passengers are below. Sails still well filled & going at a very good speed.

Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> Oct. Lat. at Noon 33°25. Long. 2°0. Distance run since yesterday 190 miles. Total from St. H 1281m.

Very cold day, with still a good stiff breeze blowing

in the same direction. Sailors are now all busily engaged in washing & painting the life Boats &C & also the outside of the vessel to make her appear to some advantage at the Cape. A number of Albatrosses, Cape Pigeons & other birds are now flying about us which indicates that we are now coming near land. Ruffling seems to be again begun as two or three Guns & a pistol were put up today. Saw a number of fish floating past tonight, but which in the darkness appeared like sparks of fire. I however asked one of the sailors what they were & was told they were Portuguese Men of War. Very dark & cold on deck tonight consequently most of the passengers are below.

Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> Oct. Lat. at Noon  $34^{\circ}27'$ . Long.  $5^{\circ}13'$ . Distance run since yesterday 214m. Total from St. H 1495m.

Still very cold and wind blowing freshly, but rather more easterly. Mr. Cox has informed us that we are now 620 miles from the Cape so we will not likely reach it before Sabbath. Large numbers of Cape Pigeons and Albatrosses flying about today, to which some baited hooks were thrown out, but did not succeed in catching any of them. Great preparations still being made for the Cape, washing & scrubbing up the decks &C with sand which has made them nice & clean & is a treat to walk upon & still painting the outside of the vessel. Towards

evening the wind freshened up considerably so that we got a few more sails set. Still very cold & dark on deck tonight.

Friday 8<sup>th</sup> Oct. Lat. at Noon 33°26. Long. 9°58. Distance run since yesterday 208m. Total from St. H 1703m.

Wind this morning still very much ahead of us, but towards mid-day it changed & is now in our favor. Passengers seem to be now much better spirited as they have the near prospect of again seeing land. Beautiful afternoon, sun shining brightly & as we are running before the wind it is not at all felt. Another letter sent to the Captain today by the passengers of the Second Cabin Aft as an answer to the one sent to them by him & which is to be published in the Great Britain Times. Sailors still engaged making preparations for the Cape. For this some nights past several of the passengers in our Cabin have been annoyed by rats which even at times have come into their beds, & tonight we were awoke by a lady screaming, who being awake saw a rat walking on the partition above her head.

Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> Oct. Lat. at Noon 34°3. Long. 13°56. Distance run since yesterday 202m. Total from St. H 1905m.

Beautiful day with strong fair wind which is sending us along at a rapid rate. Getting all things in readiness for the Cape, the anchor is now put over the side & the guns ready for action. Had a concert in

The Second Cabin Aft this evening which was exceedingly well-attended & was patronized by the presence of the Captain, who at the conclusion gave a short speech & wished them all comfort & happiness through the remainder of the Voyage. He also desired that such Concerts as these should be continued once or twice a week as he was sure they would be a source of much pleasure & enjoyment to the passengers, & a very nice way to pass the time.

Sabbath 10<sup>th</sup> Oct. Lat. at Noon  $34^{\circ}22'$ . Long.  $18^{\circ}24'$ . Distance run since yesterday 268m. Total from St. H 2173m.

Most beautiful day. At 7 O'clock this morning we sighted the Cape, at  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 8 O'clock we were along side of land & steering in a N.E. direction for Table Bay. The scenery here was magnificent & universally attracted the attention of the passengers.\*

The sea is exceedingly calm in the Bay today, so calm that the smallest boats are sailing about us in all directions with perfect safety a circumstance which has not happened for the past three months. The country here presents a very beautiful appearance, especially about Cape Town, but the general aspect is mountainous & rather barren. Large numbers of passengers have gone on shore today. As there is no service on board, we have to employ ourselves reading. I must say today has little or no appear