

# **Festivals, Carnivals and Celebrations and Saucy Sophia's Snippets plus trailer for next month.**

**August, 2023.**

The early morning sun shone brightly through the curtains on the east and rear side of the house and Edward was awoken by a gentle tap on the bedroom door. Calling out "Enter", the maid Hodges wishing him a "Good morning, sir," carried in a large jug of hot water which she placed on the washstand beside a bowl, both items being of porcelain decorated with bluebells and lily of the valley on the outside and a single spray of the latter on the inside of the bowl which was for washing. The room itself was decorated with green wallpaper above a cream wainscoting, cream door and windows which overlooked a neatly maintained garden of gravel paths, lawns, flowering shrubs and flower beds, with a view beyond to the river, and although somewhat obscured, the fine red brick buildings of Woolwich Arsenal, whilst a little nearer by Maze Hill Railway Station the occasional glimpse of a green locomotive with black smoke box and funnel drawing a rake of dark red carriages of the South Eastern Railway. There were two sash windows, with green damask curtains of Remini pattern. Below a white ceiling were two armchairs covered in green velvet, and a large double bed (See note 2). From the picture rail hung two steel engraved prints, of a painting by Augustus Leopold Egg "Misfortune" from his "Past and Present" triptych of 1858 and by Edwin Landseer the ever popular, "The Monarch of the Glen" of 1851. On the wall either side of the bed there were two bracketed gas lights.



**No.1, Misfortune by Augustus Egg, 1858.**



**The Monarch of the Glen by Edwin Landseer, 1851.**

Having delivered her assignment the girl made to leave Edward to his dressing, and she was at the door when Edward noticed as though for the first time that she was actually quite petite and although one would not describe her as beautiful she did have a certain poise and whilst her features could not be described as “chiselled” there was a degree of charm about her presence. Hesitating slightly Edward spoke up saying “I know you are known as “Hodges” but tell me please, what is your Christian name, I cannot just call you Hodges.”

The girl blushed a little at the personal question from one of the family, but answered promptly enough, “Rosemary” sir, “Rosemary Hodges.” After a pause while Edward wondered if he had already said too much, the maid said to Edward “The water will get cold if you lay there talking to me, and breakfast will be served in the morning room, also Cook will want know what I have been doing”, adding as she left the room, “A very good morning to you sir.”

Shaving, washing, and dressing carefully, Edward made his way to the ground floor and located the Breakfast or Morning room. On entering he found that, as in his parents’ house, though with more elegance, an assortment of hot food had been set out on a rather grand sideboard consisting of grilled kippers, scrambled eggs, fried tomatoes, mushrooms complete with toast in a silver toast rack, butter pats in a shallow dish and marmalade also in a dish but with enough depth. There was a choice of plates, and cutlery. Edward seated himself at the breakfast table which was covered with a white damask tablecloth after helping himself to a selection of the breakfast fare and proceeded to observe the room whilst eating. There were a number of paintings decorating the walls which our young friend judged correctly to have been acquired in the Orient, some oil paintings whilst others were watercolours, smaller with less ornate plaster gilt frames.

Hardly had Edward commenced eating than his morning mental revelry was interrupted by his Host entering the room, announcing “Glad you found breakfast, she does a good spread, Cook that is, best meal of the day I always say, sets a man up for whatever the day may bring, don’t you think?” and continuing almost without a break to allow Edward to answer, “What are your plans for the day, my lad?”

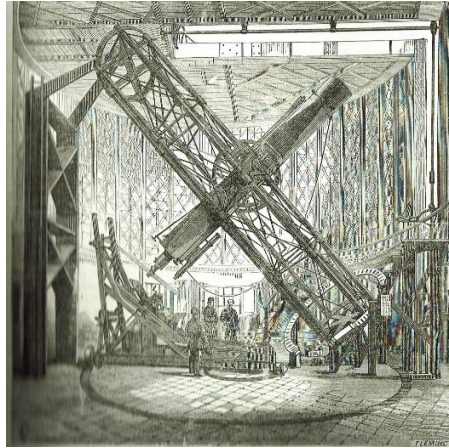
Edward began by saying that he should be getting back to the “Black Swan” as he had informed the Captain that he would be away only until this morning, and the speed the stevedores were working he feared the ship would sail without him if he did not return soon.

“Nonsense, my boy,” boomed the Lieutenant Commander, “ship will be in dock at least a week, plenty of time to show you around, or as Sir Francis said (see note 3) plenty of time to finish our game of bowls and still defeat the Spaniards”. Brushing aside Edward’s reservations Uncle Gerald asked him if he had ever visited the Royal Observatory, and on hearing that his nephew had not the Commander simply stated “That’s it then, we go there after we’ve finished breakfast,” and turning aside as the maid entered he enquired of her “Have my letters been posted?”

Receiving an answer in the affirmative he thanked her.

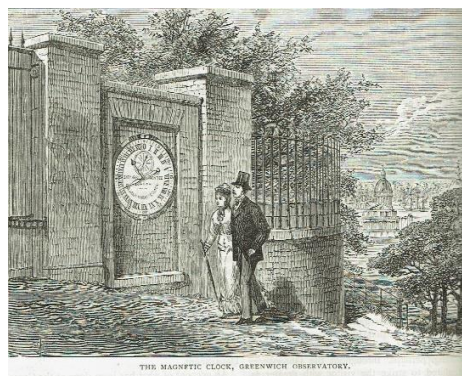
Thus, much to Edwards trepidation by half past the hour of nine the pair were making their way across Greenwich Park to King Charles II’s Observatory high on the hill overlooking the park, the Royal Naval Hospital, the river with London beyond, though the

great metropolis now stretched as far as Woolwich to the east, Sydenham to the south and Hampstead to the north. Once they entered the Observatory Edward was completely fascinated and overawed by the sheer scale and size of the mighty telescope and the machinery which manoeuvred the telescope the better to observe the stars and planets. Whilst approaching the Observatory from the higher ground adjacent to Black Heath they saw a young lady and gentleman gamely making their way up the hill from Greenwich, and Uncle Gerald and Edward now met them again inside the Restoration Period building. Making their acquaintance Edward was surprised to discover that the young couple hailed from Ledbury and were spending a week visiting the Metropolis.



### **Edward is surprised by the sheer scale of the telescope.**

The time was now approaching midday, and after pointing out Shooters Hill, a road leading downhill towards the Capital, so named as less than a hundred years earlier it had been a favourite location for “gentlemen of the road” to hold up royal mail and/or stage coaches conveying mail and passengers from the channel port of Dover. Uncle Gerald now stated it is time to return home for luncheon, and again would not listen to Edward’s protestations regarding his returning to the “Black Swan.” Edward did not like to admit it, but in addition to the risk of not keeping his word to the Captain, as the “Black Swan” would be likely to return to Memel he would miss the chance of seeing Alexandra again. Edward could not see a way out without giving offence to his aunt and uncle, so he allowed himself to be conducted to the garden of Navigators House where a most enjoyable repass was served on a table set on the lawn under the shade of several ornamental trees. Over luncheon the maid, Hodges, brought an envelope that the postman had just delivered addressed to the Commander.



### **The Young Couple from Ledbury at Greenwich.**

“Good” exclaimed Uncle Gerald, “Just what I expected” and he waved three tickets for that evening’s performance of Messrs Gilbert and Sullivan’s comic opera “The Mikado” at the Savoy Theatre in the Strand (see note 4). Edward made desperate efforts to hide his concern as it seemed increasingly likely that the “Black Swan” would sail without him. To hide his anxiety Edward carefully studied a painting on the opposite wall of a Dutch interior.

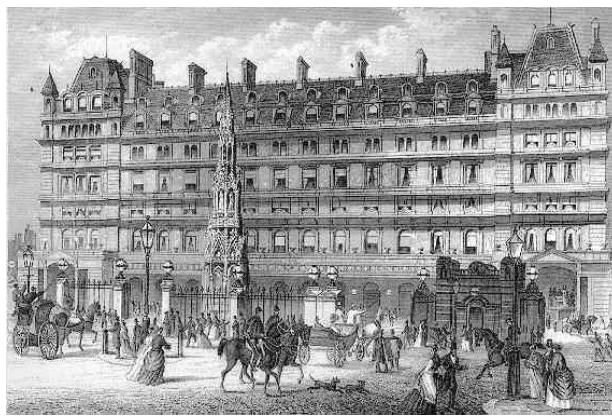


### **The Painted Hall, Greenwich Naval Hospital**

Luncheon completed the Commander declared that as Edward had not visited the Royal Naval Hospital, they should both go there that afternoon and thus the afternoon saw Uncle Gerald and his nephew wending their way across the park towards the river. Aunt Charlotte having excused herself on the grounds that she would be too tired by the evening if she did not rest in the afternoon.

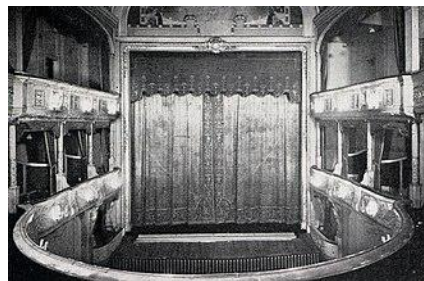
“I will show you the chapel and the refectory” said Uncle Gerald, as they entered the Hospital “They are the most interesting parts of the building.”

“This, the Royal Hospital for seamen at Greenwich, and its construction was ordered by Queen Mary, wife of King William III, William of Orange after seeing the plight of sailors injured at the Battle of la Hogue in 1692” announced the Commander, and as they entered the refectory he pointed out to Edward the ceilings painted by Sir James Thornhill with celebratory works in honour of King William and Queen Mary, and separately of Queen Anne and Prince George of Denmark, and another celebrating King George I. The Commander also explained to Edward that the Painted Hall with the ceiling painted in honour of King William and Queen Mary was never used as a refectory, and became popular with visitors after it was opened to visitors on the 5<sup>th</sup> January, 1806, and was where Vice Admiral Lord Horatio Nelson’s body lay in state for three days before conveyance to the Admiralty on the 8<sup>th</sup> January, and thence to St. Paul’s Cathedral the following day. They also visited the Chapel and other parts open to the public before returning to Navigators House via Maze Hill Railway Station. Uncle Gerald had already consulted “Bradshaw’s” to check the times of trains to Charring Cross Railway Station and decided on the 6.12 pm from Maze Hill. The Ticket Office clerk confirmed the service is scheduled to run, so Uncle Gerald and Edward stepped inside the first of a line of cabs waiting at the station entrance for the short journey to home. On arrival the Commander requested the cabby wait and that there would be three returning to Maze Hill Station. Aunt Charlotte was already dressed for the evening when the pair entered the house and thus within a quarter of an hour all three of them were seated in the Clarence returning to Maze Hill Station, where Uncle Gerald paid the cabby exchanging a few words. Smartly on time they watched the green and black locomotive of the South Eastern Railway with a rake of dark red carriages draw into the station and after Uncle Gerald had selected a first class carriage they entered and were off through the tunnel under the Royal Naval Asylum (see note 5) emerging just before Greenwich Station. The train rattled along lurching over numerous junctions enroute and even the deeply padded cushions of the first-class carriage did not entirely protect Aunt Charlotte from the jolting railway carriage. After Greenwich they stopped at Deptford, London Bridge shared with the London, Chatham and Dover Railway, and Waterloo for the London and South Western Railway before clattering across Hungerford Railway Bridge and entering the “South Eastern” terminus of Charring Cross. Walking along the platform amidst all the hustle and bustle associated with major railway stations there was a sudden shriek of violently escaping steam under pressure as the engine driver released boiler pressure and the steam rose to the roof and there dispersed amongst the iron and glass structure.



**The Charing Cross Hotel incorporating the entrance to the South Eastern Railway Station and the reproduction of the original Elenore Cross, West Strand, London.**

It was a warm and dry early evening, and the four and a half miles from Maze Hill had taken no more than fifteen minutes to traverse, so the Commander suggested that they walk along West Strand, now the Strand, to turn right for the Savoy Hotel, which they entered (see note 6). There was time to enjoy the delicious ice creams served in the hotel restaurant overlooking the river, together with tea and a few cakes. Before reserving a table for later, they made their way to the adjoining Savoy Theatre to enjoy that evening's performance of "The Mikado" (see note 7), the comic opera by Arthur Sullivan and W. S. Gilbert. The Commander had secured a box from which they had a splendid view of the stage. During the first act they listened to the "A Wand'ring Minstrel I", gasped at "Behold the Lord High Executioner", at the same time as agreeing that some on his list deserved to be there, and laughed with the three young ladies as they sang "Three little maids from school are we." In act two they enjoyed "A more humane Mikado" with the chorus of "the punishment fit the crime", smiled through "The flowers that bloom in the spring", and sighed through "On a tree by a river", more usually remembered as "Tit-willow, tit-willow".



**The Savoy Theatre, 1881.**

Returning to the Savoy Hotel Restaurant the three enjoyed a splendid dinner served with the immaculate good taste associated with the best London had to offer. It was obvious to Edward that his Aunt and Uncle were perfectly familiar with the great city and its most prestigious establishments, and over dinner, by saying as little as possible he discovered a great deal from their conversation. Uncle Gerald had only to nod to the waiter for him to appear and execute their request with speedy politeness. Visits to the theatre were not unusual and with the enthusiasm for all things Japanese then in vogue they had visited the Japanese Village at Knightsbridge many times.



On leaving the restaurant they retraced their earlier footsteps along the Strand past the various shops and street vendors selling a variety of merchandise commemorating Her

Majesty's Golden Jubilee below flags and bunting which adorned the streets. In the train to Maze Hill Railway Station Edward resolved to make good both his appreciation of their most kind hospitality and his departure, hopefully to return to the "Black Swan".

The following morning Edward duly departed although it was obvious that the whole household were loath to see him go. Uncle Gerald suggested an omnibus to Woolwich and to cross the river by the Woolwich Ferry, then a "Great Eastern Railway" train from North Woolwich Railway Station, which is located adjacent to the ferry landing stage, to Victoria Docks Customs House or Tidal Basin.

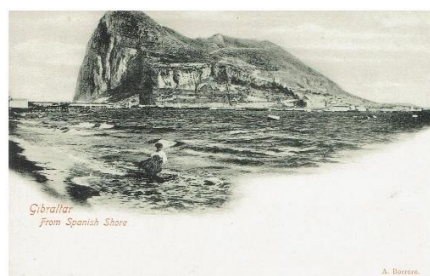


**Woolwich Ferry in the 1880's.**

When Edward arrived at the Victoria Dock there was no sign of the "Black Swan", and enquiry at the Harbour Master's Office revealed that she had sailed with the morning tide. A helpful clerk suggested "You might, sir, be able to catch the ship by taking a cab to Fenchurch Street for the "L.T.&S.", get out at Tilbury and hire a boat to take you out to her, as she passes, if she slows down enough, that is" (see note 8). Edward thanked the clerk, but muttering that the matter was not that urgent, enquired if there were any other ships sailing soon in need of extra crew, and after consulting his ledger, the clerk directed Edward to a berth on the north side, stating that the "P & O" ship, the "Sunda" is in need of extras and would be sailing for Shanghai tomorrow.

Edward duly made his way along the dock side stepping over ropes, avoiding stevedores racing to load or unload cargo, and dockers manhandling merchandise from railway wagons or into warehouses. It was a noisy, bustling and potentially dangerous place if you did not keep your wits about you. The "Sunda" was the largest ship in the dock, and as Edward soon discovered, named after the straits, the Sunda Straits, between Batavia and Sumatra. (See note 9). Edward remembered the brilliant sunsets in 1883 when he was 16 years of age, caused by the volcanic ash thrown miles into the sky when the volcano on the island of Krakatoa at the south of the straits erupted.

True to the word of the clerk to the Harbour Master the "Sunda" sailed with the tide the following morning, the 4<sup>th</sup> of July and by evening they were passing Dover on the starboard beam, and making good passage through the English Channel westwards towards the Atlantic Ocean. It had been Edward's intension to find a ship bound for Memel, but enquires the day before revealed that the only ships sailing for the Baltic ports were for Christiania, (see note 10) Stockholm and Reval, (see note 11) but none for Memel. In an unusual moment bordering on panic, and not desiring to be left alone in the vast metropolis Edward signed on for a voyage to China on the only ship sailing that day.



**The Rock of Gibraltar from the Bay of Algeciras.**

The voyage was generally fairly uneventful, a gentle swell of the sea to be expected in the Atlantic as they crossed the Bay of Biscay and sailed just within sight of the Portuguese coast. Then it became the Spanish coast past Cape St. Vincent and further south Cape Trafalgar before turning east to enter the Straits of Gibraltar. From out to sea the straits

were hardly visible, the coast seemed to consist of a solid wall of mountainous rock, but as the “Sunda” entered the narrow gap a mere eight miles wide Edward was struck by the sheer scale and magnitude of the Atlas Mountains towering above them on their starboard beam and on the port side the less mighty but still impressive Sierra de la Luna. At Gibraltar the “Sunda” anchored in the Bay of Algeciras in order for a consignment of cargo addressed to the Governor of the Rock to be taken ashore by lighter. The crew saw the rock only from the ship, and within a few hours they weighed anchor and were on their way to Port Said for the Suez Canal. In the north African hinterland in mid July the heat would have been intolerable but at sea with a balmy breeze it was quite pleasant. Even at Port Said, where there was a two-day delay, with a pleasant sea breeze and the cooling effect of water the African sun, which in Anglo Egyptian Sudan would with unrelenting ferocity have born down on them, was not unpleasant. Edward joined a small group who were put ashore by an Arab boatman with orders to return by the end of the second dog watch (2000 hours or 8 pm).



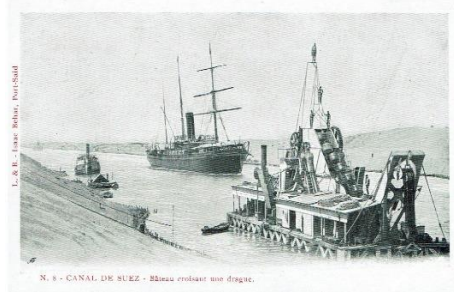
**The Arab boatman at Port Said**

As had occurred in Memel when the “Black Swan” called there for a few days the old hands and those who seemed to be disinterested either remained aboard or frequented the gambling dens or houses of ill repute. Edward together with five other shipmates explored the quay and the Arab town of which there was not that much to see. They were briefly entertained by an Arab street juggler, and as warned by one of the crew who had been there before, they avoided giving money to any of the swarms of ragged street urchins who continually pestered all foreigners. As a parting gift Uncle Gerald had given his nephew a collodion dry plate camera and a stock of glass plates in cardboard boxes, adding that as he was so determined to visit foreign parts he may as well record what he saw. It was this camera that Edward took with him much to the amusement of his fellow shipmates who all wanted him to take a photograph of them which would have exhausted his supply of glass plates. A chap of less physical ability than Edward would have been the butt of their humour, much of which would have been decidedly uncomplimentary if not downright provocative.



**Arab street juggler at Port Said.**

The “Sunda” now joined a convoy of ships sailing south in the canal towards Port Suez and the Red Sea. The passage was uneventful, except that once away from the coast the temperature rose, a foretaste of what was to come, and on board below decks it was like an oven, whilst on deck there was little escape from the relentless and scorching sun during the hours of daylight. Midway between Port Said and the Great Bitter Lake they passed a dredger which provided some relief from the monotony of endless sandy desert on either side and precious little else to observe.



### **A ship of the transition period rigged as a barquentine passing a dredger in the Suez Canal.**

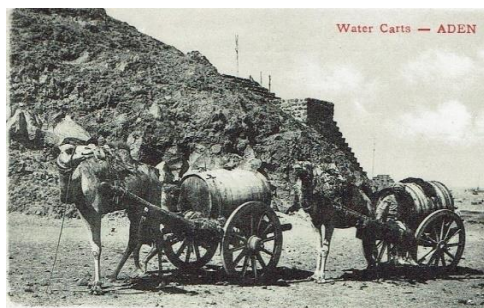
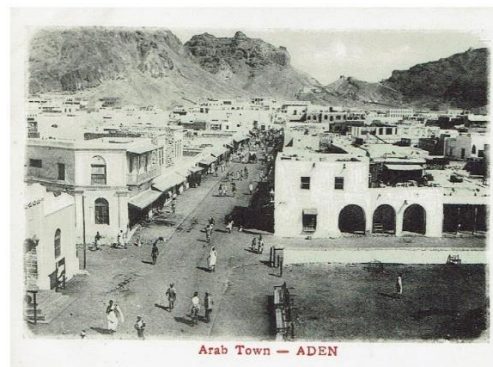
Once past Port Suez and into the open waters of the Red Sea the heat became a little less oppressive and after three days sailing, they reached the Protectorate of Aden on the 21<sup>st</sup> July, 1887 where they put in for re-coaling. Edward was able to photograph the Arab gang labourers engaged in carrying bags of coal which were duly hoisted aboard and discharged into the fuel hold, an activity which Edward assisted in supervising.



### **Native labour re-coaling at Aden.**

Edward was again fortunate as there was a delay with re-provisioning the ship and he managed to obtain a half day leave to visit the town on the strict understanding that he must avoid trouble of any type, and that if he did not return by the end of the first dog watch they would sail without him.

With little time to spare, Edward briefly visited the Arab town, the tanks, he saw a native caravan and water carts before returning to the “Sunda”.



Aden possesses a sheltered harbour where ships can anchor in calm waters, and it was on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of July that the “Sunda” weighed anchor and turned her bows in the direction of the open waters of the Arabian Sea. The Captain was assisted in his command by first, second and third officers, a navigation officer, a chief engineer, and a purser, and it was the third officer who now presented a problem. Having gone off on his own at Port Said, and declined to say where he had been, after a couple of days, and while the “Sunda” was

still traversing the canal he complained of feeling unwell. This state did not improve and Mr. Jenkins, for that was the third officer's name, now suffered from very severe headaches and sickness, which by the time of their departure from Aden had developed into diarrhoea. The ship's steward who doubled as sickbay attendant declared the third mate to be suffering from a case dysentery and that unless he improved, he would be unable to complete the voyage and would need to be put ashore. From a previously fairly uneventful passage the officers and crew of the "Sunda" were now treated to a few hours of exciting activity. Leaving the sheltered semi landlocked bay of Aden and sailing south the ship was soon born along by the Indian Ocean current which swept through the Arabian Sea from the Cape of Good Hope in the south west towards the west coast of India; aided by the south west trade wind which blew diagonally across the ocean to the north east from April to September (see note 11). Captain Richardson standing in the shelter of the deckhouse in the centre of the otherwise open bridge which served as the wheelhouse and chartroom contemplated the situation. Not only was he now short of his third officer, but Jenkins had become a problem. There was no point in turning back to Aden as the Protectorate did not boast a competent hospital, whilst the nearest would be in Bombay, well to the north of their route. However, with the current and trade wind in their favour, by setting as much canvas as possible they should be able to make Colombo in five to six days. Would Jenkins last that long, and how would they manage without him on the bridge. Captain Richardson did not waste much time on the problem, he could not seek permission from the Company to alter course, so Jenkins would just have to sink or swim, meanwhile he would try out Edward Ashbourne who seemed a bright lad with an education which most did not have. No sooner had he given orders for Ashbourne to be summons to the bridge, and now with the sails set and the favourable conditions they were making about seventeen knots than great excitement ensued. A gunboat flying the white ensign of the Royal Navy came into view from the southwest making great haste overhauling an Arab dhow. This proved to provide much entertainment for the crew who watched as the gunboat closed on the dhow, which was making the best speed it could with a maximum spread of sail but was no match for steam power. With a powerful glass it was possible to make out a mass of dark-skinned bodies clustered together midships onboard the dhow, and as the gap closed it was seen that the negros, both male and female and all near naked were chained together. Word immediately went around the "Sunda", an Arab slaver was being intercepted. The Arab captain, too late, tried to save his ship and crew by casting the slaves, still in chains, overboard. As the drama fell away astern the officers and men of the "P and O" ship were just able to see the Royal Navy vessel seizing the dhow and arresting the Arabs. The dhow had sailed from the Sultanate of Zanzibar on the east coast of Africa with a shipment of negro slaves purchased in the slave market. Arab slavers raiding native villages was not at all unusual in the long period before the civilising influence of European colonisation eventually put a stop to their practice.

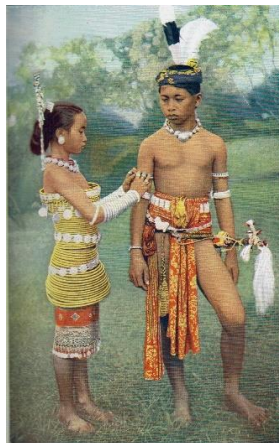
Meanwhile Edward had reported to the bridge, and been informed by the Captain that he had been promoted to acting third officer, so long as he proved able to cope with the responsibilities and until Mr. Jenkins recovered sufficiently to resume his duties. The second officer was summoned from his bunk to supervise Edward, which did not greatly please Mr. Wainwright, the second officer, who was not slow to show his displeasure. Despite these events they made good speed on the passage to Colombo arriving there on the 29<sup>th</sup> July. Unfortunately, Mr. Jenkins had not recovered and was buried at sea two days before their arrival at the capital of Ceylon, (see note 12) wrapped in a shroud which the sailmaker sewed from an old and worn-out sail, weighted with old pipe produced by one of the stokers. The service for burial at sea was read by the Captain, and the body slid off the raised plank into its watery grave. On arrival Edward was despatched to purchase provisions under the supervision of Mr. Wainwright whilst Captain Richardson made his way to the port office.

Edward and Mr. Wainwright whose Christian name was Philip, and who had been in Colombo before knew his way around made for the fruit and vegetable market where a quantity of fresh produce was purchased and the native stall holders were only too pleased to deliver the goods to the "Sunda", knowing that the purser would only pay once the produce had been safely stored aboard.



**The Fruit Market, Colombo, Ceylon.**

When the Captain of the “Sunda” returned he brought with him a replacement third officer who had been at the Port Office waiting for just such an opportunity to join a ship’s company after the vessel he had been serving on had been lost at sea off the Andaman Islands in the Bay of Bengal. He seemed an aimable enough fellow and asked to keep Ashbourne with him for a few days while he became familiar with operations. A strange request they all thought but Edward who rather enjoyed his new roll as part of the command was more than happy to go along with. The replacement third officer who enjoyed the name of Benjamin Bullock, constantly referred to Edward as either number four or occasionally number three and a half, which Ben as he preferred to be called always found rather amusing. Soon after Ben’s arrival on board his trunk was delivered, an extremely heavy large cabin trunk the loading and stowage of which the third officer supervised with great care. All would be revealed in due course, but meanwhile the “Sunda” was carefully manoeuvred out of the harbour crowded with shipping of all types, steam ships, fully rigged clippers, brigs, barques plus an assortment of native craft. Once clear of the port a course was set south-south-east to steer across the North Equatorial Current which flowed in an east to west direction to reach the Equatorial Current flowing in the opposite direction, its strength assisting the voyage eastwards. From here on the voyage was relatively uneventful, calling at Penang in the Straits Settlements and Sarawak on the north west coast of the island of Borneo.



Brother and younger sister, the Sea Dayaks or Ibans people of Sarawak.

From Sarawak the “Sunda” sailed northward into the South China Sea where after three days steaming the weather deteriorated atrociously until the “Sunda” was tossed about by a full scale typhon. When the weather worsened at the beginning of the second dog watch (late afternoon) Edward was on the bridge assisting Mr, Bullock. The only other person on the bridge being the helmsman, the navigation officer having gone below. The reason for the third officer’s seeming good spirits now became obvious, his face drained of all colour, he desperately clung to the ships rail of the starboard wing with both hands; he then tried to extract a bottle from an inner pocket. Mountainous waves crashed into the ship hitting her broadside and causing her to roll alarmingly. Edward, who had learnt enough of seamanship knew instinctively that to avoid disaster the “Sunda” must alter course to steer into the forthcoming tempest and dashing to the wheelhouse across the open bridge with the sea threatening to drag him overboard he wrenched open the door and shouted to the helmsman above the roar of the storm to alter course pointing to the mountains of water rising on the starboard beam. Together they hauled the wheel to turn

the ship to starboard and slowly the bows crept to the right and she rose to meet the oncoming fury. Moments later the Captain, first and navigation officer arrived on the bridge and Captain Richardson immediately assumed control and congratulated Mr. Ashbourne and the helmsman, Jo, for their prompt action. The ship now rose as each wave rolled to meet her, lifting her bows, as the wave passed beneath her keel, following which the stern rose and bows dipped into the sea which surged across the foredeck creating a thick mist of spray.

He, the Captain, then enquired what Mr. Bullock had been doing and where he is. The third officer was soon located, wedged against the bridge stanchions and the canvas screen pouring a yellowish liquid down his throat. Being hauled to his feet amid the violently lurching deck, where he clung to the rail shaking hysterically. He was brought into the wheelhouse and quickly checked for any signs of injury, none were found.

Disaster had been averted, and by late morning of the following day the worst of the typhoon had passed and the "Sunda" could resume her course northwards by the next day. Mr. Bullock had been summons to the Captain's cabin, together with the first officer to be questioned on his, Mr. Bullock's, dereliction of duty. His usual jovial attitude had completely vanished and there now stood before the ship's master a broken man, a jibbering wreck with no coherent explanation for his irresponsible behaviour. A furious captain ordered Mr. Bullock to be removed and locked in the chain locker temporarily while his cabin was searched, which as suspected revealed an unhealthy stock of alcohol together with both cocaine and opium all of which would account for the third officer's irrational and irresponsible behaviour, it explained why he had kept Edward with him, his happy outlook and the weight of his trunk when brought on board. The Captain stood just over six feet tall, a broad shouldered barrel chested presence whose easy grace belied his physical strength and speed of thought. The addict stood before the man who held his very life in his hands quaking in his shoes. Captain Richardson could put Bullock ashore with a report concerning the addiction where such a hobby is a capital offense to await execution, or he could be held until they reached Hong Kong to be released, either way the man was summarily informed that he had been relieved of his post. In the meantime, Bullock was taken to one of the small cabins in the centre of the ship, without any portholes, and locked in.

Way out to the west over the horizon lay the French colony of Annam, (see note 13) part of French Indochina, where massed clouds had accumulated, and the imperial city of Hue on the Perfume River was receiving a soaking from the heavy pouring rain.

With the delay due to the typhoon and the two ports the "Sunda" called at plus a brief visit to Hong Kong to put Mr. Bullock ashore minus his alcohol and narcotics, although the north ward current of the west Pacific Ocean helped to speed their passage, they did not make Shanghai itself until the 26<sup>th</sup> of August. Edward had been reinstated as acting third officer immediately on Bullock's arrest for his presence of mind in a very difficult situation.

By the 20<sup>th</sup> of August they entered the delta of the Yangtze and at greatly reduced speed gradually made their way upstream to moor near the Bund on the Huangpu or Chunshen (Chunshen is the original and more poetic name) in central Shanghai. With a gang of willing, enthusiastic, and able coolies (see note 14) hired to unload the ship's cargo. There was considerable cargo to be disembarked, and a vast quantity to be loaded aboard, which would take several days. However, to mitigate pilfering not all the hatches were opened at the same time, and a guard stationed to keep watch consisting of one of the ship's officers and six deckhands armed with an assortment of weapons from staves and belaying irons to rifles and revolvers. The navigation officer, whom Edward was on friendly terms with, mentioned to young Ashbourne that they had arrived in time for the Chinese festival or practice of Yu Lan Jio. James Napper, the navigation officer, explained that during August the Chinese devoutly honour their ancestors in a variety of ways, some selective and others all embracing: tombs and other resting places of their dead are scrupulously cleaned, and food is brought for their enjoyment. Also, paper money (not real) servants, carts or carriages depending on the deceased status in life etc are offered at the grave or tomb and burnt as it is considered that the ancestor will need these items in the afterlife. There is also a practice, explained James Napper, though he admitted to being a little hazy, of treating, praying and/or providing gifts which reflected the ancestors way of life: he or

she may have been devoutly religious; kind, generous and charitable; hard working; extremely sexually active; a thief, robber or murderer, and the paper gifts provided would reflect this, or so he had been given to understand. The next day, with a few hours leave the pair set out to see what they could find, and with great good fortune, on the eastern outskirts of Shanghai they spotted a group of Chinese carrying a variety of paper objects together with brushes and brooms. Following at a discrete distance after about two miles the pair observed the Chinese party turn off the track, for this is what the road had become, and make for what appeared to be no more than an elongated slight elevation of open pastureland, into which they all seemed to vanish, all ten of them. The pair decided to circle round the mound at a safe distance, and on gaining a vantage point on the opposite side, with the aid of powerful binoculars Mr. Napper had brought with him the pair were able to observe the activity of the Chinese party sweeping the inside of a simple tomb and offering prayers to the deceased. Fearing either the wrath of the Chinese party, or their own embarrassment the pair made their way back to the quay and the “Sunda”.

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Meanwhile on the small country estate near Memel Alexandra’s Father had received a reply from the owners of the “Black Swan” in London, but it was not very helpful. They merely expressed thanks for the enquiry but regretted that they did not keep such personal records of casual labour, and therefore would be unable to be of assistance, adding that Mr. E. Ashbourne was no longer a servant of the Company.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of July the national newspapers reported the death of the Graf Karl von Czernowitz, who had died without leaving any surviving children, his wife having predeceased him in 1881, adding only that he was ninety-six at the time of death two days earlier. When Alexandra’s father read this news at luncheon that day he sat silent for some time, then went to his study to search through old family records. The Graf, the Germanic version of Count or Earl had disapproved of his brother’s choice of wife, and there had been a family estrangement. Now it seemed that Alexandra’s family may be in line to inherit the title and the extensive estates in what had been the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth. She could be Lady Alexandra.

### **Acknowledgements:**

Engraved prints of London from “Old and New London” published by Cassell & Co. Ltd., early 1880’s.

Sea Dayaks of Sarawak from Peoples of All Nations, volume II, published by Educational Book Co., Ltd, early 1920’s.

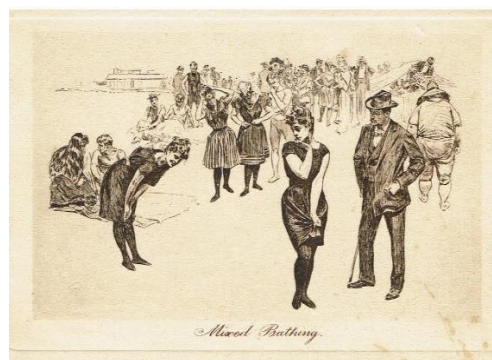
### **Notes:**

1. Reference to Edward Ashbourne, the Ashbourne family including Lieutenant Commander Gerald Turnbull, and Navigators House are entirely fictional although all other matters are historically accurate.
2. Green is the colour of sleep; it is a restful colour and is also the colour associated with Aphrodite or Venus.
3. Sir Francis Drake at Plymouth Hoe in 1588.
4. At that time in most cities and towns it was possible to post a letter by mid-morning and receive a reply by luncheon time. There is a famous legal case where the London Solicitors exchanged four letters by post before midday.

5. To avoid driving the railway through or close to the Hospital a tunnel was provided using the “cut and cover” method of construction, whilst the Royal Naval Asylum is now known as the Queen’s House.
6. The sector of the Strand from Trafalgar Square to Adam Street was then West Strand and the Savoy Hotel is named after the Savoy Palace which stood on the same site. In 1246 King Henry III granted land to Count Peter of Savoy on which was built the Savoy Palace. It was destroyed in 1381 by the revolting peasants led by Wat Tyler.
7. The Mikado or The Town of Titipu” by Arthur Sullivan and W. S. Gilbert was written after W. S. Gilbert’s visit to Japan in 1884. First performed on the 14<sup>th</sup> March, 1885, it ran for 672 performances.
8. The “L.T.&S”, the London, Tilbury, and Southend Railway.
9. Batavia, the Dutch name for the island now called Java, then part of the Dutch East Indies.
10. Christiania or Kristiania, at the time the capital of Norway which was a vassal state of Sweden.
11. It is the southwest trade wind of April to September which brings the monsoon rains to India and south east Asia.
12. Ceylon, the original name for the country now known as Sira Lanka.
13. Annam, now part of Vietnam.
14. Coolies, native Chinese labourers.

## **Saucy Sophia’s Snippets**

**Another post card from  
the Author’s private collection.**



Regarded as the original seaside postcards by the artist Charles Dana Gibson, originator of the Gibson girl.

## **Trailer for next month.**

The Ashbourne family saga continues with George travelling to Scarborough on business, Edward in Shanghai and Alexandra rejecting suitors in Memel.

## **Historical Talks.**

In addition to writing these articles or “blogs” for the Chimes, I am available to give illustrated power point talks on a variety of historical subjects. To see the complete list please email to me at [brockswoodfs@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:brockswoodfs@yahoo.co.uk), or telephone 01989 780634.

***Dorian Osborne***

1<sup>st</sup> August, 2023.