

Travel I 8.

Ethel Lovel.

Description of a voyage
to India, Jan. 1916.

Chapter I Queens Park to Tillymore Dochs

Chapter II Board Ship life generally.

Chapter III Hints as to kit for travelling

Chapter IV (32- Malta, Submarine, Port Said

This is not a diary, nor is it a book of
 travels. It is merely a few jottings from
 memory of my experiences & impressions
 during my four years in India. It may,
 in a measure, serve as a slight guide
 to the traveler going East for the first time,
 and, if this much is achieved it will more
 than have served its purpose.

I remember it was a cold, bleak day

in January 1916 when I set forth from
Queens Park Station on my way to the
Tilbury Docks - the first stage of my
journey East. My husband had left
Devonport with his Regiment two months
previously, and as far as I was able
to gather, & he was able to tell me, his
destination was Bombay. Whether he
was going to remain there or was
destined for the fighting area, I was

unable to discover. But I had determined to go out to him, so immediately he had left, I began to make my plans.

I first of all had to approach the war office for permission and - incidentally - for an indulgent passage.

This was no easy attainment, as no doubt many will remember. My request came just at the time when the ill-fated "Persia" came to grief off Crête. The war

is not so far distant that we can
yet think without a shudder of the
horrors of those days, the dreadful
suspense while one looked down the
columns of the morning papers with
their ~~long~~ big headlines of yet
another submarine disaster. Fortunate
indeed are our little ones who will never
remember those days! I was lucky in
having a friend at court in the shape

Of an old college friend of my
husbands, who pushed my application
forward. I remember when I filled out
my application I remarked to the
particular ~~office~~ brother office's wife
who had come along with me on the
same errand, that I would give ~~the~~
the Authorities two weeks to think
about it and at the end of that time
I had heard nothing, I would jog them.

memories. Accordingly I ~~pat~~
waited with what patience I could,
for fourteen days, when I once again
wrote to my friend at Court enquiring
how matters stood as regards my
application. By return of post he
wrote saying that it had been granted
immediately on receipt, that is to say a
fortnight ago previous, but that owing
to the fact that I had omitted to fill

in my address, they had been unable
to inform me. As a matter of
fact, though I called myself all
manner of names for my stupidity, it
proved to be a blessing in disguise, as
I afterwards discovered that in all
probability I should have been hooked
to ~~on the ill-fated "Persia"~~ one of the
ill-fated vessels.

Now that I had the definite assurance

From the W. O. that I was going to get
a passage all right, I pushed forward
my ~~arrangements~~ plans, hoping to have
all in readiness. But I had not
got very far when a few days later
I received an official document saying
that I had been granted a passage
on the "Malta," which was sailing from
Tilbury Docks on the 14th Jan. — in four
days' time — destination Bombay &

that the Embarkation Officer at ~~Bombay~~
that Port would make any arrangements
for my further journey to rejoin my husband.
This letter arrived by the last post on
Monday evening and I was to sail on
the following Friday! ~~My~~ Furthermore,
my luggage had to be on board by
Wednesday morning at latest. "Great
Bodies move slow" but in this case
they were in a hurrying mood there.

was nothing for it but to hurry up & get things done. As a matter of fact I was grateful for the short notice, because it gave me less time in which to listen to the presumes stories of our friends, which invariably held the moral that it was most unwise to go out, that the dangers ~~was~~ were countless & the chances were 100 to 1 that I should never reach there safely. However, I am an optimist

by nature & nothing on earth was going to stop me going. There was no one to consider, when my husband left me arranged that I should just follow on as quickly as I could manage a passage out of the W.O. so I was merely carrying out his instructions & my own wishes.

I spent Tuesday morning rushing to the nearest shops, hurriedly buying all the

things one always forgets until the last moment. I had taken the precaution to have all the locks & straps to my trunks put in order against "the day" & my photograph for my passport in readiness. I had no time to think out what I wanted to take with me, & hurriedly collected as many of my possessions as I could in so short a time, my mother-in-law meantime packing for

all she was worth. You can imagine
the result! I left behind me shoals of
things I soon discovered I had wanted,
& packed those better left behind. However,
thanks to the untiring efforts of the parents,
my luggage was all ready strapped &
labelled by the time Carter Patterson called
at six o'clock. My regrets came when,
on my arrival in Calcutta, I thought of
all the essential things we needed to set

up only a primitive & temporary
house, & which things were lying
comfortably packed in a London warehouse.

And here my first word of ^{counsel} ~~advice~~ to
those going out. Don't take the advice of
any old person who hasn't been East.
If you can't get first hand help from
someone who has been out before, use
your own judgement & rather err by
taking too much. But of this more anon.

The "Malta" was due to leave at midday on Friday the 14th Jan. I dislike rushes when they can be avoided, so I accordingly set out at an early hour from Queen's Park Station to Liverpool Street, & from there to Tilbury. My parents-in-law came with me, altho' we knew beforehand that they would not be allowed on the boat. A host of friends saw me off from Liverpool Street, leaving with me enough chocolates to

lost the whole young. At Tilbury the formalities were soon gone through and I passed over the gangway wondering how long it would be before I should step on English soil again. In the back of my mind I thought ~~that~~ we should be home again in six months; never for a single moment did I imagine that we should be away for four years.

~~New Chap~~
 Looking back, I cannot help smiling

Chapter II

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Looking back, I cannot help smiling when I think of that journey. In reality I suppose it was a very ordinary one - up to a point - but to me who had never been on a large ship in my life, everything was a revelation. The "Malta" is a small boat & we were not overloaded. Every lady was a "grass widow" on the way to some part of India to meet her husband. We were all for the most part newly married, & all but one or two,

"war brides". Every man was either a
naval ~~to~~ or military officer, on the way to
join his unit. I think there were about
half a dozen civilians, ~~old~~ old
habitués of India. It was a slow
voyage & we touched everywhere possible.
I shared a cabin with Mrs. Roskilly,
wife of a junior Subaltern in our (1st P. B.
Lincolnshire) Regt. But as soon as we got
past Gibraltar the temperature began to

rise appreciably, I worried the Purser
to give me a cabin to myself on deck, which
I had discovered I was going to be getting.

He was a hard nut to crack & lined by
red tape. It was strictly against
rules, he said, to allow a lady alone
in a deck cabin, but in the end I had
my way. Now a deck cabin all to
oneself, sounds very nice & so it is, but
it has its disadvantages too. Please, Mrs.

Puzzled, if this should happen to catch your eye, don't think ~~I am~~ that my gratitude has abated one jot for your kindness in going against regulations.

But if one will insist on having a deck cabin one must be prepared to be kept awake long & after sleeping hours by the strolling couples who didn't want to sleep. Also one must be prepared for the Shower bath, which is usually the

First sign of day, from the deck washers. But the worst part of all is the visiting rats which you can't get away from; you leave your door open at night - as I did - in order ^{to} get every breath of air. However, one soon gets accustomed to everything & by the time I reached India I had lost my first horrors of ~~rats~~ creeping things & such like. Boardship life is certainly an education

in itself. One lives in such close
proximity with ones fellow passengers that
one learns ~~more~~ to know them more
intimately than would ^{on dry land} ~~otherwise~~ take a
considerable time. By the time we reached
Pih. I had learned the exact status &
precedence of most of the Ladies on board,
how long they had been married, where
they had been quartered and the rank of
their individual husbands. I came across

a few afterwards in India, but I regret to say that the description did not always tally. Maybe its the pride of the regiment that makes me hoast, I can't say; but even if it is, its a good thing to be proud of what one is trying to achieve even to the extent of hoastfulness. I personally had few military illusions or aspirations. My husband's ~~name~~ Commission had arrived on the

very day that we were writing out
invitations to our wedding. We had
waited for over a year, putting off our
marriage until the Commission should
come ~~we could know~~ but at last we
got weary of waiting - & then the two
coincided. But now we were in the
swing ^{of the war} had to go through with it, hoping
all the time that it would end sooner than
was expected & that we should be able to
return home to resume a normal life.

Chapter III

I have said that this was an ordinary voyage up to a point, but to those who have never taken a sea journey, a few words here regarding the necessaries for such a trip may not be out of place. We had to reckon on four weeks by sea (in normal days it takes three) & to allow for the changing climates ^{en route} You, dear reader, who are going out to the married, will in all probability have all your ~~best~~ smartest clothes packed in your

boxes marked "Hold - not wanted on voyage"

Naturally one has to economize as much as possible in packing, as even with a cabin to oneself - which is not very usual - the room space is very limited indeed. One's cabin trunk must be able to fit under the bunk to begin with.

A uniform case is by far the best sort of trunk. If you get one long enough, it will take your frocks almost full length. You may not have a wardrobe in your cabin and it is better to

spread over clothes not full length rather than have them hanging on a hook behind the door. I have often been asked "what is the best sort of garment to take for boardship" & my reply is invariably "dark skirt, sports coat & ~~innumerable~~ blouses as many blouses as you can muster. a couple of evening frocks a warm coat & rug - summer or winter - a light ^{weight} coat & shirt for travelling at the other end & last, but by no means least, a solar

topee." This last is imperative & you should not wait, like I did, until you are actually in the tropics. ^{before purchasing one,} You will need it for going ashore at Port Said & particularly at Aden where there is no shade whatever. Take your own deck chair, you may find them on board, but it is best to be independent; one can. There is usually what is called a "barbers shop" on board where almost any small article for the toilet can be obtained.

You may even be fortunate enough to have
your laundry work done, but if not, the boat
usually stops long enough at one port to
enable it to be done in time before leaving again.
As a matter of fact, provided one has a
sufficiency of things to go on with it is
not wise to have ones things done at the
Ports. Remember that laundry work in
India is very cheap, very quick, done,
& usually very well done. One usually stays

a night in Bombay & this is plenty of time
 for the whole of ones ~~wardrobe~~ ^{bit} to be
 revolutionized at the cost of a few rupees.

To my mind the "dhobi waller" (washer man)
 is one of the blessings in the East. ~~Forget~~
 They work by contract, usually five rupees
 a hundred pieces; be these pieces frocks or
 handkerchiefs it is all the same.

But I am anticipating matters, the dhobi
 should come under the chapter dealing with

servants. But as the dholi is one of the first essentials on arrival in India it is comforting to know something about him & his ways.

Bombay, the usual Port of arrival is a large place with European shops & is a very good shopping centre

Chapter IV

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~~return home to a normal life.~~

At Malta we took on more passengers
from there until Port Said we began
to go more cautiously zigzagging through
the Mediterranean taking devious routes.
The passage was a smooth one & in
spite of two bad days in the Bay of
Biscay. I can't say I rebelled in
the voyage, but then I am a
frightfully bad sailor, I was feverish &

anxious to get to Port Said so that I could
write to my husband that all was well.
I had left England without telling him,
as I wanted to spare him the anxiety
which I knew would be his, he knew
I was going through the Mediterranean.
We had life belt practice twice a
week & people were beginning to wear
a strained look.

We were two days from Port Said, just off

Crête on a day of absolute perfect
beauty & calm. We had had life belt
drill in the morning & were sitting
about writing letters to be posted at
Port. when ~~quite suddenly~~ ~~ever~~ I
had finished writing & was standing at
the deck rail, wondering for the hundredth
time, how long it would be before we
actually reached our destination. The
boat seemed to move so slowly - 13 knots -

& every one seemed so settled down to the present life, one felt it might go on like this for ever. Suddenly what looked like a silver dart, flashed by on the horizon. Submarines were far from my thoughts just then & I turned to a man standing near me & asked him what boat it could be. Before he could reply I called his attention to an explosion in

the water not fifty yards off the
ship which I ~~remembered~~ I supposed
were porpoises. Still he made no
answer & I watched two more
explosions, a little farther off &
then a little nearer. I then noticed
that everyone on deck seemed hurrying
& running but still I thought no harm.
Then the man, who until that moment,
had been petrified I think, turned

to me saying: "You have seen the
Submarine & three explosions, now
fly for your belt. Before I could
say knife someone had clipped
me on me & then we made for
our ~~boats~~ particular boats ^{on} ~~to~~ which
we were hooked in case of danger.

There was no panic, we had all been
very well drilled in the event of
such a happening. The men were

splendid. Their only concern was for
the ladies & not until they had looked
at least twice at all our belts &
fetched our wraps, would they see to their
own. I had an attache' case of papers
which I wanted to get at in case I
ever arrived anywhere. I flew down to
my ^{friend's} cabin to get it & then it struck
me that the lady next door might be
putting her baby to sleep, unconscious of

what was happening on deck. I
opened her door & sure enough there
she was crooning the child to sleep.
I called to her to get Jimmy &
come up on deck. She thought it was
a joke & said ^{she} ~~we~~ had already had
one false alarm that morning &
she wasn't going to disturb the
baby again. It was only when I
started stepping her belt on her that

She realised I was in dead earnest.
By the time we got up again the boats
were all lowered & the lascars were
busy throwing in necessary stores.
Luckily we had a gun on board, but
to our unpractised ears we couldn't
tell which was our gun & which
the enemy's. My boat was on the
wrong side of the ship so I couldn't
see the fight going on. We heard the

Guns booming & knew that an S. B. S.
call had gone out & we stood straining
our eyes for a sight of some rescue ship.
after what seemed an eternity, the firing
ceased & we were told that we had
damaged the submarine & in a little
while we saw a French Destroyer
coming along, who afterwards completed
the damage we had begun & sent the
Submarine to everlasting rest.

The reaction, when we were out of danger, made us all feel rather cheery. I was surprised to find how little fear we felt while we were in the midst of it. Personally my chief feeling was one of bitter disappointment that we should not be able to do the things we had planned. Curiously enough I never once thought that we should get away on the boats;

the ship had been blown up. The sea was so calm, it was such a perfect day, it seemed sacrilegious to disturb the water & here were we rushing madly through it as fast as our propellers would allow. One felt inclined to apologise to ~~the~~ the Almighty for daring to disturb ~~to disturb~~ such a holy peace.

But we were nearing Port Said
then we were past the danger zone.

As a matter of fact we had another very narrow escape on the same night. We were zigzagging along & so was a large hospital ship coming in the opposite direction. As she was white we could see how to avoid her but she was blind to us, & the next morning ~~and~~ the First Officer told us she all but barged into us. But we were blissfully unconscious, as in spite of a

Few very nervous ~~peop~~ ladies, ~~most of~~
who would sit up all night in the
music room, refusing to close their eyes, most
of us went to bed, & I for one slept
soundly.

The next day we made Port Said
& I sent my wire to my husband telling
him I was past the danger zone.
We had a few hours ashore, going the
usual tourist drive & being cheated in

usual native Jashia. I often wonder how the shopkeepers in Port Said would manage to live; suddenly ~~it~~ it ceased to be a Port for incoming & out going vessels. But I suppose they consider us legitimate prey.

By this time we were all frankly weary of one another. There were the usual flirtations going on all the time & the usual deck games & now that we

were out of the submarine track we could have lights at night. The Canal was interesting with knots of Tommies dotted here there, but oh the heat! And it got worse as we neared Aden. There again we ~~could~~ coaled & stayed a whole day. We were allowed ashore in spite of there having been fighting there a few days previous. When I saw what a barren, dry

Shodden place it was, I thanked
 my stars that we were not here.
 I should say its almost the hottest
 place on earth & not a blade of
 grass or shade anywhere. We drove
 out to the ~~Alexandra~~ Tanks & were
 duly impressed, but we could not take
 a vital interest in anything when
 one knew that the only way the ^{native} printer
 could be made to ^{drive} ~~work~~ the car in the

right direction was by one of our party
 sitting next to him with a loaded
 revolver, ready to use at a moment's
 notice. I was glad to get back to the
 ship ~~with all its short comings~~ to start
~~again~~ on our last stage to Bombay.

I think I must have got a touch of the
 sun at Aden; I had not time yet.

Sun at Aden; at any rate I
 remember my head started aching,
 then it never stopped until I

got off the ship.

All things, good & bad alike, come to an end, and at last we sighted Bombay. ~~It makes a wonderful picture from the sea.~~ From there most of us separated, but Mrs. Roskill & one man called Cowan & I all went the same way. I had heard from my husband at Aden, telling me of all the arrangements he had made.

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The Colonel wouldn't grant ~~permis~~
leave to our husbands to meet us at
Bombay, so we had to continue on our
own. But every detail was arranged for
our comfort, he had arranged for a friend
to meet us on board & to take care of us
until the train left. We actually
dropped anchor at 4 o'clock on Saturday
afternoon the 14th Feb. exactly one month
from the date of sailing. Thanks to my

Friend we had no bother at all at
the Customs, we merely handed over our
keys to his servant & the next time I
saw my luggage was in the hotel, ^{absolutely untouched.}
I have since learnt the magic power of
bakshish, but at the time I couldn't
help marvelling that we got through the
formalities so quickly. ^{of the ladies} Most - in fact I
think all except me two - were met
by their husbands. As the tender neared the

shore, we could see a row of husbands,
waiting for a row of wives. Candidly, I
was very jealous that mine wasn't
there too and it was a long time before
I forgave that Colonel for keeping
my K man back.

Well, here we were at last on Indian soil,
surrounded by a crowd of half naked coolies,
all talking at once & offering to all but
carry me. How thankful I was to my friend

for taking every ~~the~~ responsibility off
my shoulders and arranging & ordering
everything as it should be. He was a
widower with two daughters, ~~they were~~
~~all three the personification of that~~
~~newellows quality known as hospitality~~
and here I must pay my tribute to
their untiring hospitality. Neither my
husband nor I had ever seen any of
them & had only heard of them a few

weeks previous. But nothing I have
since experienced - and all Anglo-
Indians are renowned for their hospitality
- could compare to the kindness &
consideration & help which not only I,
but Mrs. Posthill & Mr. Cowen also -
by virtue of ^{their} having been on board with
me & going on to Calcutta - received at
their hands. They lived in a flat, as
nearly everyone does in Bombay, where

spare rooms are never allowed for. But
Mr. F. had secured us rooms at the Taj
Mahal Hotel, exactly opposite them,
which was a most convenient arrangement,
as we spent the whole of our time with
them. My bedroom was the largest I had
ever slept in, and I thought that if all rooms
in India were built on the same scale one
could ~~would~~ ^{could} ~~surely~~ keep tolerably cool, in
spite of the high temperature. I was soon

to learn wisdom however.

~~I liked the~~

~~crazy china floor which, altho' it does~~

~~accol~~

~~has dust, always give the appearance~~

~~of~~ But it was a joy to sleep on

terra firma once again and in spite of

the mosquito curtains which engaged

me, I had a perfect night's rest