

**Bourne**  
**toWrite...**  
creative writing  
workshops

Journal of JB Shaw Protector of Immigrants  
The Umzinto 1906

by Shevlyn Byroo

July 11<sup>th</sup>

This short run is hardly worth my while, aye *it's a sair fecht for half a loaf*.

The northern horizon is black and you can be sure a squall is coming. You would think after running this route so many times I would be accustomed to it all but that is not the case.

The coolies have been fighting continuously, they fight over the tobacco, the blankets and even the soap. The women fight each other and the lascars and sepoys have joined in. I am at a point where I am meting out punishments day and night. It is not having much effect on them. We are only day into our 6-week journey and I find myself dreaming of home. I am more suited to the *dreich days* of Scotland than this misery. My cabin is hot and stuffy and in the day, there is no shade. The Umzinto is cramped with the coolies, who have stretched out everywhere on the deck saying it's too hot below deck. They supposed to be let out for 2 hours for fresh air but this Captain seems to have other ideas. He will soon learn.

July 17<sup>th</sup>

A *wee bairn* died, I had to throw the little brown body overboard. These coolies made such a fuss and wanted some sort of cremation with rituals and other nonsense. I threatened to throw its body into the furnace but they were not happy with that either. It bobbed on the surface for some time, in the ship's wake, the mother made enough noise, I'm surprised that she did not wake the dead. The fighting seems to have calmed down but the Doctor has been kept busy. An outbreak of mumps he says and in his daily checks he tells me that a few of the woman had some sort of venereal disease. He is not happy and is set on seeing me tomorrow. That *dunderheid* is young and has yet to learn how this all works.

July 20<sup>th</sup>

We lost a woman last night. *Aye right*, Now I don't wish to go *clyping* but screams were heard coming from the *lassie's lavvy* after midnight. Plenty of Sepoys are positioned there but not one of them saw a thing. Strange. She is certainly missing and it is safe to assume that she has jumped overboard. Now why, that's a question I cannot answer. That Doctor, he's a *wee scunner* too. Has come to see me for 2 days now, in a flap about the same things. The railways around the bulwarks need to be higher, someone could fall over, the quarantine area is too small and he does not have the equipment he needs. The company has to follow the rules and have a Doctor on board but this man is a nuisance if I ever saw one.

August 1<sup>st</sup>

The weather is fair. Captain says we have just passed Reunion island. Only a few days to go. The supplies are low with only dhol and rice left. I don't mind the *scran* because I've been feeling a bit *hingy aw week*, sores on *me tadger and me baws ache so much* it's hard to *pish*. Should have left the coolie *hoore* alone. Clatty, the lot of them!