



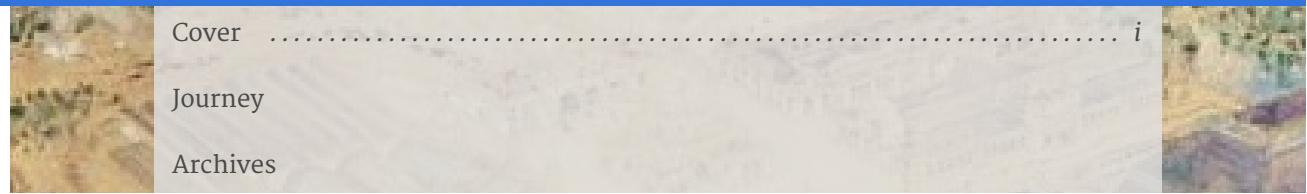
MOZOOMDAR AT SEA



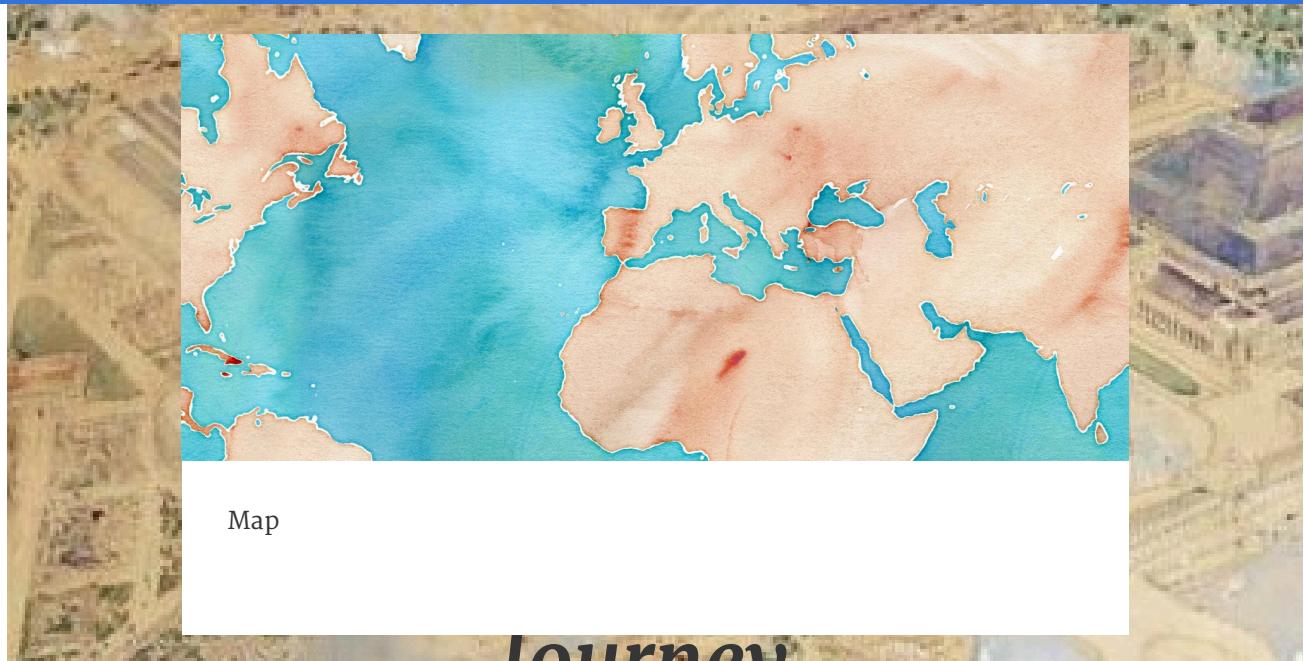
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Los Angeles



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# *Contents*



*Journey*



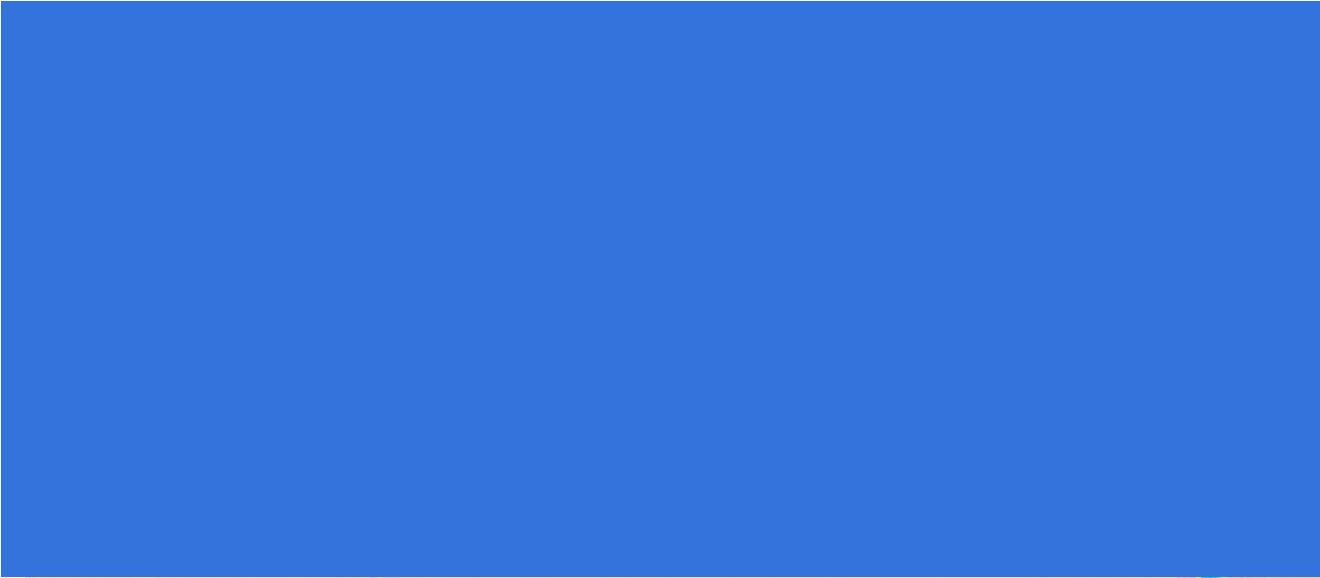


Figure 2. P&O Steamship Khedive in Port Said, 1871.

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## A Prolonged Departure

At 11:30am on Tuesday July 11, 1893, Mozoomdar boarded the P&O steamship Khedive headed to London, the first leg of his journey to Chicago. According to a Brahmo Samaj newsletter, “enthusiastic shouts, the waving of handkerchiefs and the sincere prayers of his friends and sympathizers” animated the gathering of over 100 people at a Kolkata pier that morning.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately for Mozoomdar, the energy of this farewell was not enough to propel the ship very far. In a letter to Saudamini, he complains that the SS Khedive had traveled only a few miles from the jetty before halting for 20 hours in the Garden Reach shipyard, affording no sleep due to the heat.<sup>5</sup> This was followed by a full day’s delay at Diamond Harbor, the port at the mouth of the Hooghly River. It was not until noon on July 13 that Mozoomdar tasted the salty air of the Bay of Bengal.



Mozoomdar spent three days traversing the bay. The letters he wrote to Saudamini during this time reveal a man enraptured by the beauty of the sea, which he took to be proof of God's immanent presence. Consider his first impressions of the waters before him:

*The endless expanse of rippling blue is like the open arms of a mother. The dancing, churning waves crowned with surf are like excited children, and I their brother whose sight has filled them with joy, encouraging me to dance, chanting the name of Goddess Anandamayi.<sup>6</sup>*

Yet Mozoomdar's prose never strays too far from matters of health, and the account of his first days at sea is ridden with descriptions of medications and reflections on his constitution. Although expressed as assurances to Saudamini of his healthiness, Mozoomdar's preoccupation with details such as whether he slept through the night, the pain in his hand, his regular consumption of cod liver oil, and his upset stomach suggests that he continued to worry over his physical condition.<sup>7</sup>

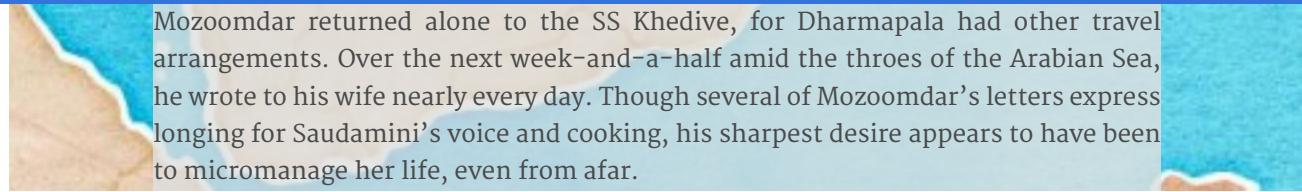
## The Bay of Bengal

6. Ibid, 3.

7. Hunyadi János was a Hungarian aperient spring water that gained popularity in the 1860s. See Hunyadi János: *Natural Purgative Water Drawn from Saxlehner's Bitter-Water Springs near Budapest* (Budapest: Firm of A. Saxlehner, 1898).

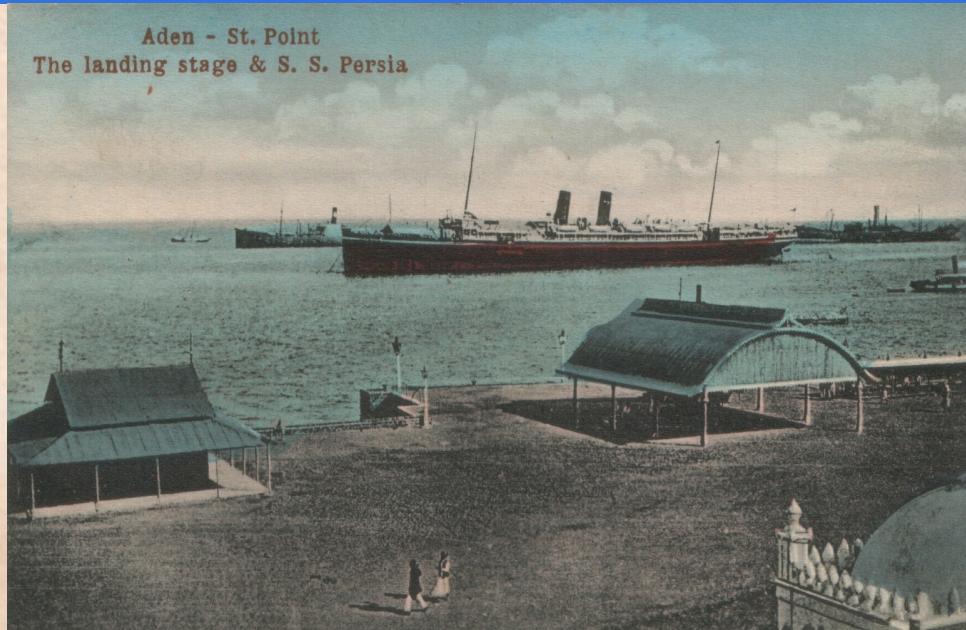


# *Colombo*



Mozoomdar returned alone to the SS Khedive, for Dharmapala had other travel arrangements. Over the next week-and-a-half amid the throes of the Arabian Sea, he wrote to his wife nearly every day. Though several of Mozoomdar's letters express longing for Saudamini's voice and cooking, his sharpest desire appears to have been to micromanage her life, even from afar.

## *The Arabian Sea*

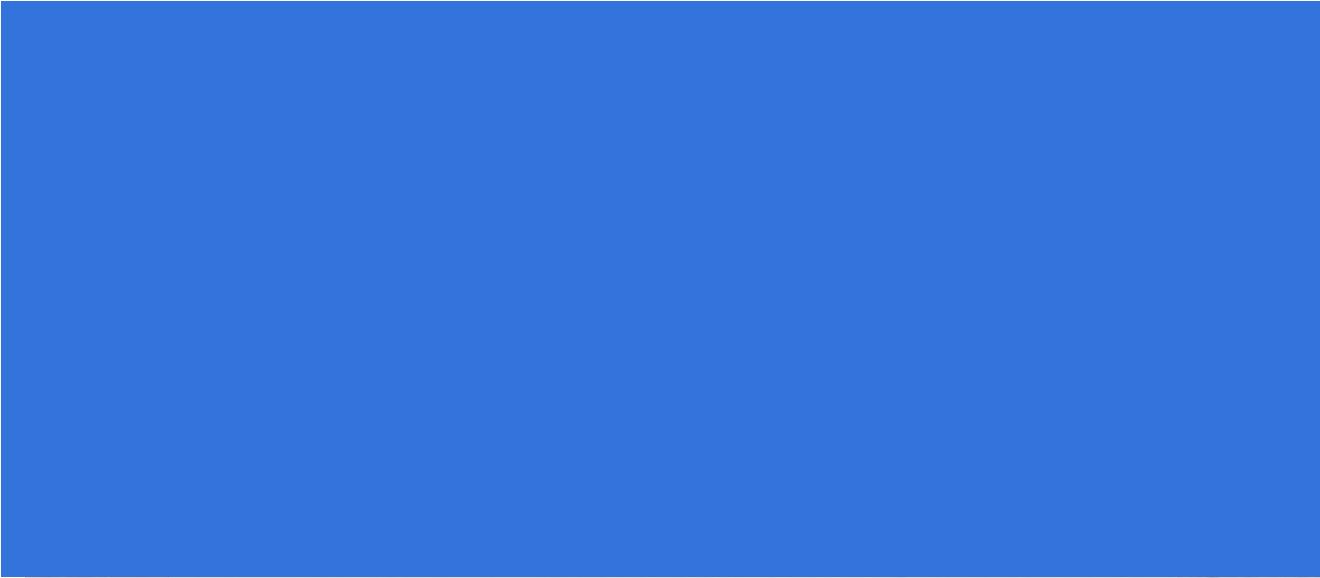


**Aden**  
Figure 6. Aden - St. Point landing stage Postcard, c.1910.  
Public domain image

After a stretch of ten days at sea, PCM arrived in Aden on 28 July. Instead of the excitement one might expect from someone finally able to stretch his legs, his letters give evidence of a man pained at the distance from his loved ones. After receiving and reading his first batch of reply mail from the port city, Mozoomdar gushes over the chance to read his wife's writing:

*Only you can write this way. I feel blessed to read it. I read it again and again. I plan to read it more during my journey.... No matter how low a husband is, the dutiful care of his wife will lead to her own greatness. I hope I can someday become worthy of your love and respect.<sup>18</sup>*

Compare that excitement with his distaste for the crowds of Aden: "I have never been one for company. I don't like the babble of people. I am lonely in the truest



Mozoomdar had cause to feel lonely. For the past decade, he had been struggling to reconcile the warring Brahmo Samaj factions in the wake of Keshub Chunder Sen's controversies and death, with little success. Bereft of his friend and alienated from other Brahmos because of that friendship, PCM became the object of scorn by many Brahmos who felt threatened by the idea that he might try to succeed Keshub as leader of the group.<sup>20</sup> For Mozoomdar, whose global aspirations for the Brahmo Samaj and its New Dispensation were more pronounced than most, the opportunity to leave such squabbles behind in order to bring Keshub's vision to life in the West was surely a welcome one.

Yet Mozoomdar expressed disappointment in the behavior of his shipmates. In a piece he wrote for *The Interpreter*, titled "Red Sea, Why Red," PCM suggests that the Red Sea is so-named because of the excruciating heat experienced when traveling its waters. With tongue in cheek, he writes that even "the freezing attitude of his fellow passengers" cannot cool him down.<sup>21</sup> Though there is no evidence that anyone treated him poorly at sea (to the contrary, he describes being pampered by a British servant named Harris, who massaged him with medicinal oils),<sup>22</sup> PCM expressed to Saudamini that religious life aboard the ship did not meet his expectations. After several Sundays without the promised religious services, Mozoomdar resigned himself to dissatisfaction, writing "It turns out that neither Kolkata nor this ship can afford me those luxuries."<sup>23</sup> Without friends or occasions for religious fulfillment, and sweltering in the sun besides, Mozoodmdar was not at his best upon the Red Sea.

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20. Suresh Chunder Bose, *The Life of Protap Chunder Mozoomdar* (Calcutta: Nababhdian Trust, 1927), 114–5.
21. Mozoomdar, "Red Sea, Why Red," *The Interpreter* 2, no.1, (1893): 27.
22. Mozoomdar, *Letters*, 21.
23. Ibid, 16.

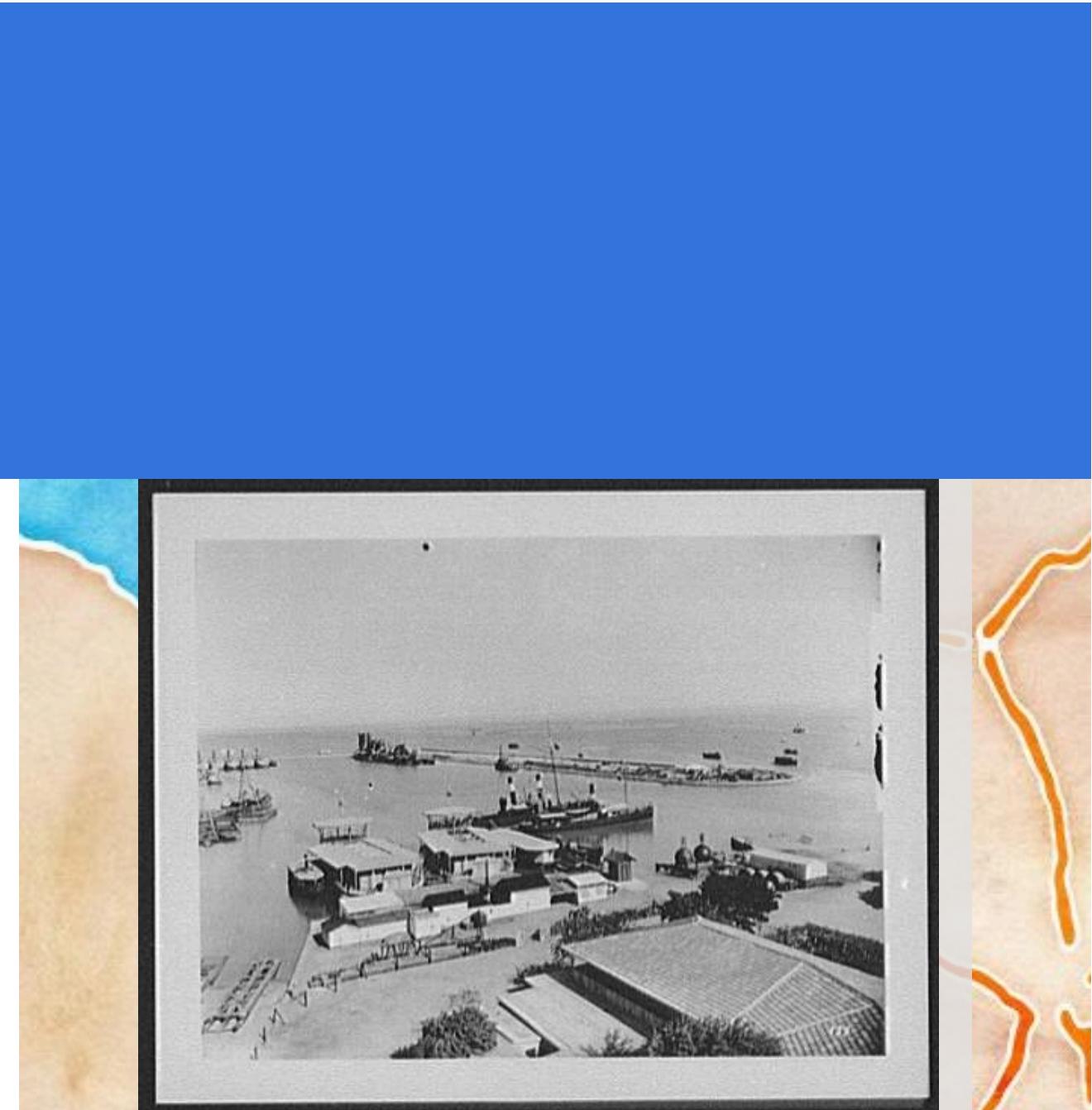
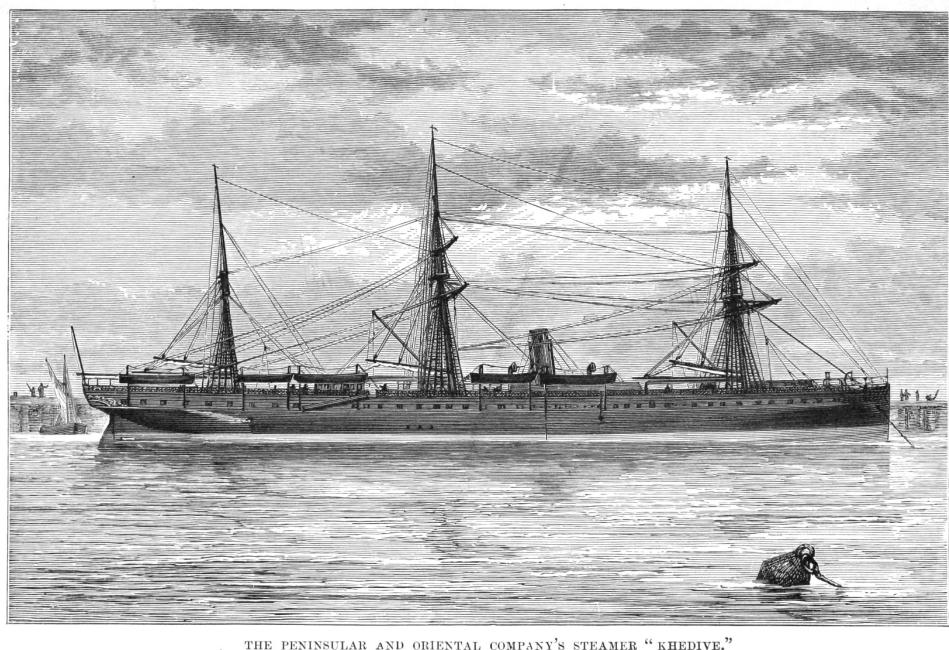


Figure 7. On the Suez Canal, 1894.

Public domain image, by William Henry Jackson

At the height of his suffering Mozoomdar scribbled, “it’s too hot to write any more. I will just close my eyes for some time.”<sup>24</sup> By the end of his five days on the Red Sea, PCM was covered in heat rashes and found it difficult to breathe.<sup>25</sup> In the delirium of his condition, Mozoomdar mistook Port Suez for Port Said and posted letters to Saudamini that he later apologized would likely arrive a full week later than planned. Fortunately, the worst of his journey was over. Immediately upon entering the Mediterranean, PCM wrote to his wife of relief: “All storms have subsided. All the heat is gone, too. All fears have been erased from my mind. The peaceful waters of Europe are making the wind cool and pleasant.”<sup>26</sup>



THE PENINSULAR AND ORIENTAL COMPANY'S STEAMER "KEDIVE."

Figure 8. P&O Steamship Khedive, 1917.

Public domain image

More than a change of weather, these “European waters” marked a turning point in Mozoomdar’s living conditions and resolve. Having moved to a cabin further below deck that afforded him additional space and refuge from the summer sun, he resumed preparations for his lectures.<sup>27</sup> PCM’s writing during this time indicates that he was preoccupied by issues of character. In a letter written to Saudamini, he laments the difficulty of maintaining upright behavior amid the “luxury and sport and decadence” of those aboard the ship.<sup>28</sup> Yet wariness of the passengers did not detract from Mozoomdar’s respect for the crew. In an article penned for *The Interpreter*, titled “The Organisation of a British Ship,” he lauds the captain and staff for so efficiently distributing and pursuing their responsibilities:

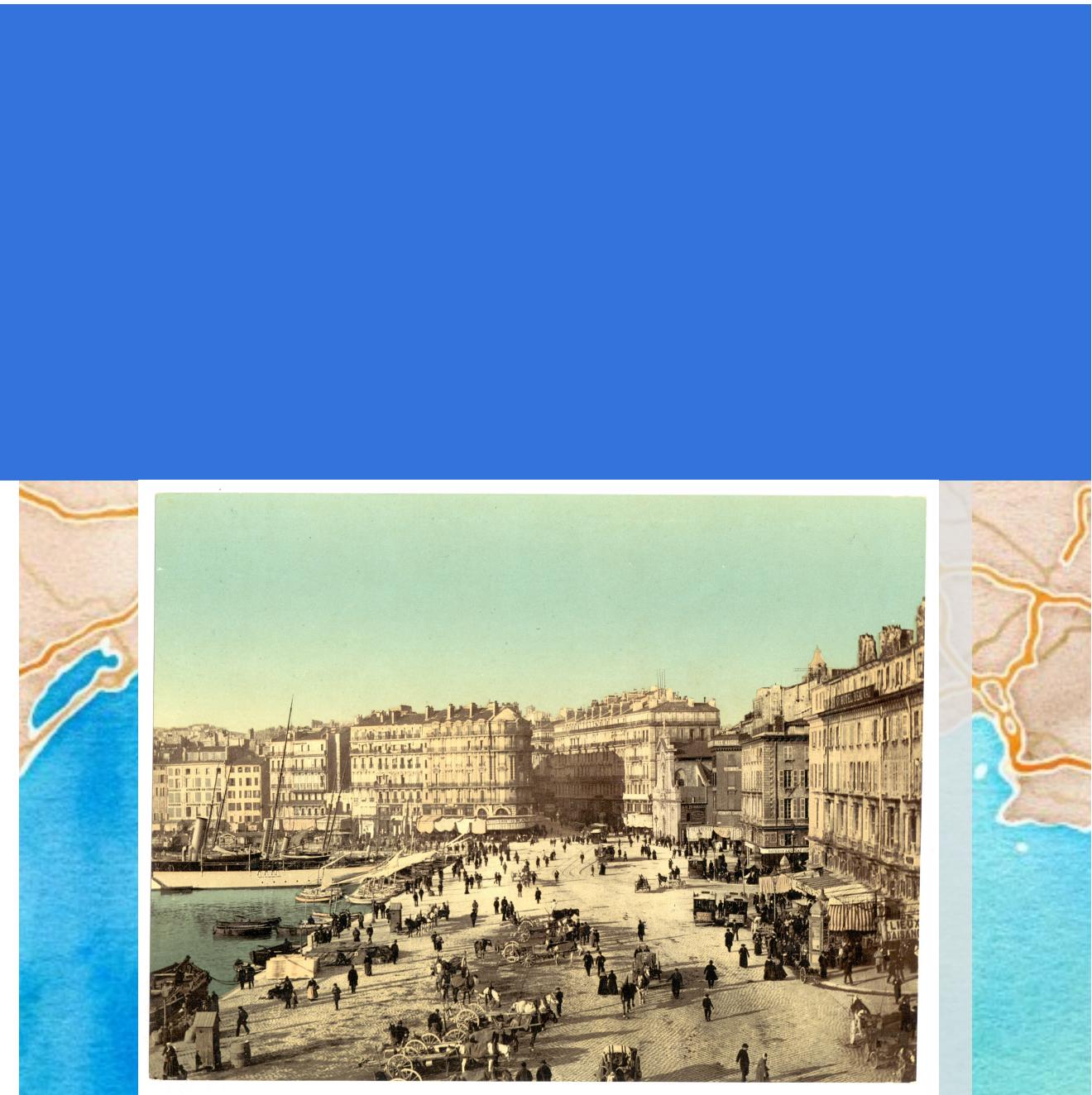
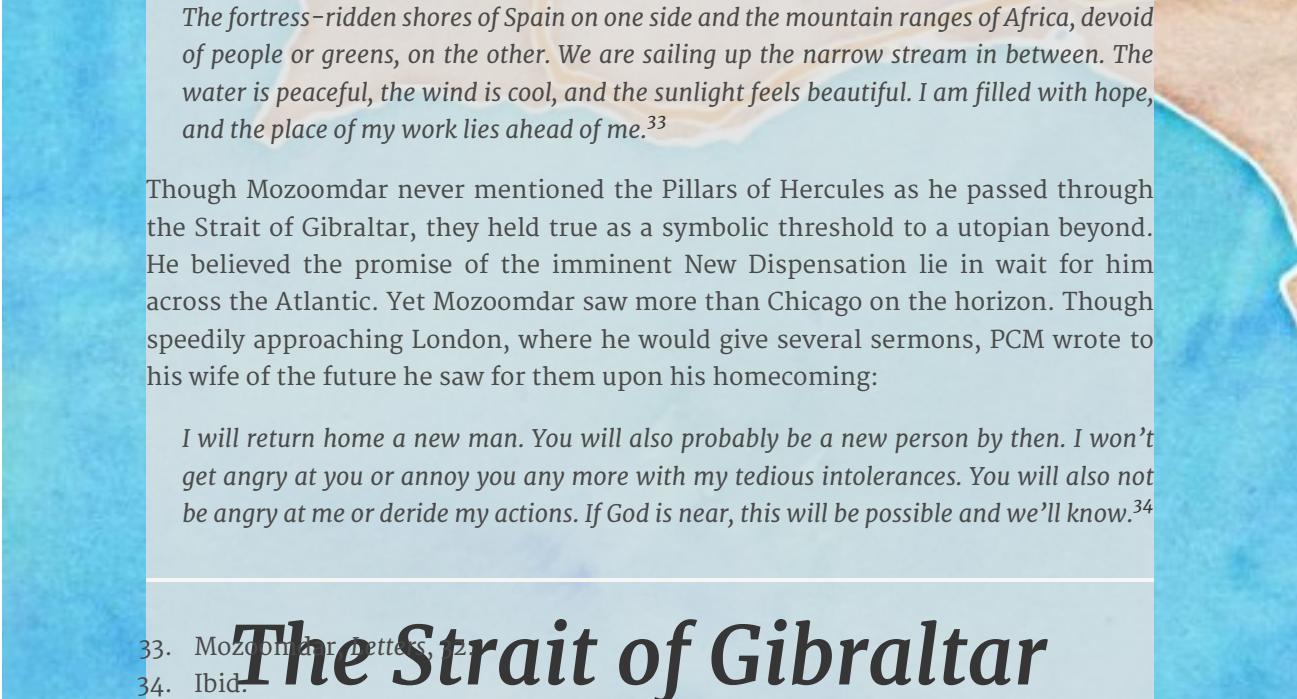
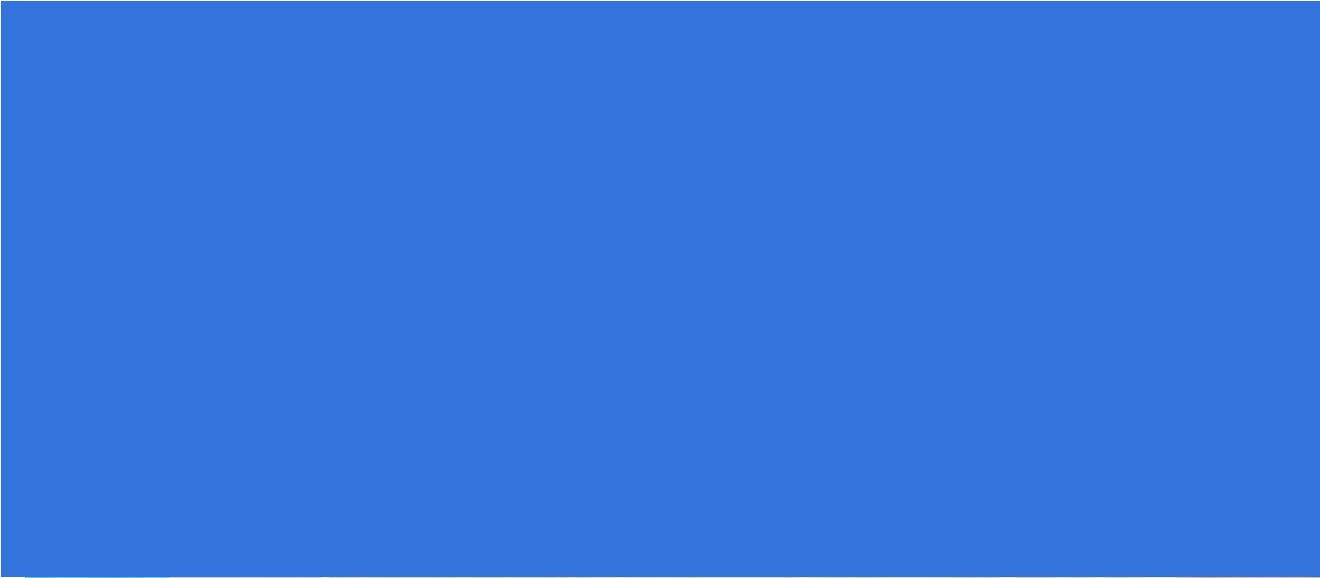


Figure 9. Old Harbor, Marseille, c.1890–1900.

Public domain image

Arriving on the evening of 8 August, Mozoomdar spent two days sightseeing in the French town of Marseille. He described to Saudamini the mountain ranges, backwaters, and the “very pretty, clean, and cheerful” residents, who lack “the chalky whiteness that we find in the Englishmen.”<sup>30</sup> In contrast to the pallor of his shipmates, PCM had long since written to his wife of the healthful “red tinge” that the sea journey had left on his body.<sup>31</sup> Although his letters indicate that he felt strengthened by the time spent in Marseille, Mozoomdar decided against inland travel through Europe to London for health reasons.<sup>32</sup> Instead, he boarded the SS Khedive once again and set out toward the Strait of Gibraltar.



*The fortress-ridden shores of Spain on one side and the mountain ranges of Africa, devoid of people or greens, on the other. We are sailing up the narrow stream in between. The water is peaceful, the wind is cool, and the sunlight feels beautiful. I am filled with hope, and the place of my work lies ahead of me.<sup>33</sup>*

Though Mozoomdar never mentioned the Pillars of Hercules as he passed through the Strait of Gibraltar, they held true as a symbolic threshold to a utopian beyond. He believed the promise of the imminent New Dispensation lie in wait for him across the Atlantic. Yet Mozoomdar saw more than Chicago on the horizon. Though speedily approaching London, where he would give several sermons, PCM wrote to his wife of the future he saw for them upon his homecoming:

*I will return home a new man. You will also probably be a new person by then. I won't get angry at you or annoy you any more with my tedious intolerances. You will also not be angry at me or deride my actions. If God is near, this will be possible and we'll know.<sup>34</sup>*

33. Mozoomdar letters, 22.

34. Ibid.

## The Strait of Gibraltar



Mozoomdar indeed felt that God was near. As he traveled the Bay of Biscay, which he thought would be ridden with storms, he attributed his calm passage to “the grace of the Almighty.”<sup>35</sup> Yet God’s proximity stood in contrast to the ever-increasing distance separating Mozoomdar from his friends and family. Over a month had elapsed since his departure, and a letter to Saudamini shows that these loved ones often came to mind. A chair given to PCM by his friend Dr. Dutta in Kolkata is the object of much attention by the sailors, who fitted a small pillow to its headrest. Mozoomdar expresses gratitude for the chair, which helped him to sleep on nights when the stuffiness of his former cabin kept him awake. His recently improved health serves as an occasion to hope for the wellbeing of his distant compatriots, whom he asks Saudamini to send his love. Even the luxurious lifestyle of the passengers reminds him of home, for it so starkly differs from the poverty he and his wife suffered in their early marriage.<sup>36</sup> In sum, Mozoomdar’s anticipation of London was outpaced by nostalgia for home.

35. Ibid, 33.

36. Mozoomdar's lack of means stemmed from his decision to work, without compensation, for a Brahmo Samaj newspaper and his estrangement from family, which resulted in the partial loss of his inheritance. See Bose, *The Life of Protap*, 22–30.



**Figure 10.** The Pier, with Drake's Island. Plymouth, England.

Public domain image

Mozoomdar arrived in Plymouth on the morning of 16 August. His spirits were high. With “a strange smell in the air that reminds one of antiquity,” PCM expressed to his wife how close he felt to God and his mission: “It is almost as if He is standing in front of me, the great Sage.”<sup>37</sup> The following day, he would sail across the Southern coast and dock in Tilbury, London.

37. Mozoomdar, *Letters*, 35.



Having docked in Tilbury early in the day, Mozoomdar took a train to Freechurch Street (now Fenchurch Street Station) and then spent the next hour or so ambling by carriage to Highgate Hill, home of his longtime friend Reverend Robert Spears.

## *London*



Figure 12. Landing Stage, Liverpool, 1901.

Public domain image

Amid his public engagements, Mozoomdar only managed to compose three letters to Saudamini in London. His writing reflects how he spent his moments of respite. Whether catching up with the Spears' at Arundel house, sitting amid the fruit trees of their garden, or chatting with B.B. Nagarkar, a Brahmo friend who would travel with him to Chicago, PCM had occasions to relax in good company. Yet his letters suggest that he was plagued with uncertainties during his brief moments of rest. Shaken by the discovery of a friend's death in India, he writes, "How can I be assured of anything after this?"<sup>44</sup> Likely in an effort to shore up uncertainties regarding his own health, Mozoomdar redoubled his authoritative tone to Saudamini, demanding that she pray for him every day, finish her work, and prepare herself for heaven.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, in a letter written the evening before his departure for the Liverpool Harbor, PCM assures Saudamini – and himself – that: "I am well. People in England



The Cunard RMS Umbria mesmerized Mozoomdar, who appears to have forgotten much of his anxiety during his week on the Atlantic. He wrote for \*The Interpreter\* that the ship was not so much a floating palace as a floating city, accommodating over 1000 passengers and personnel.

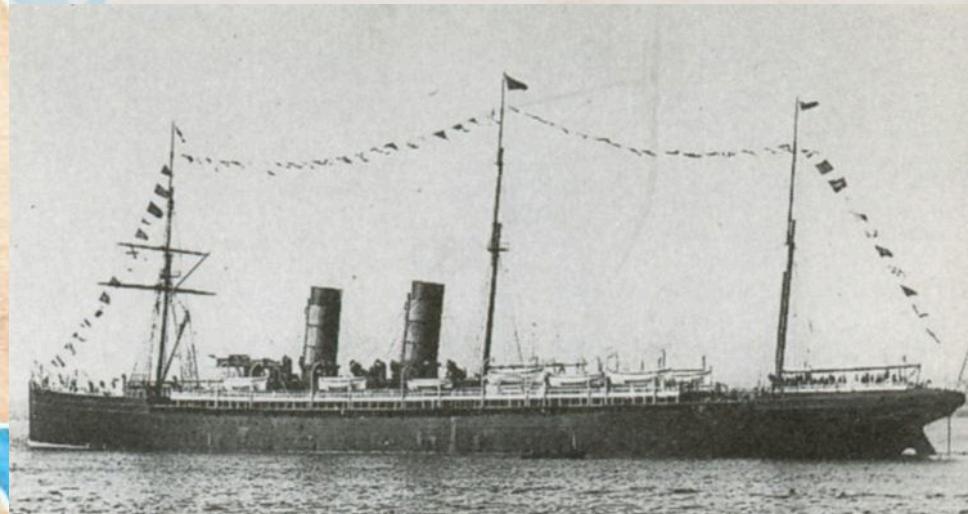
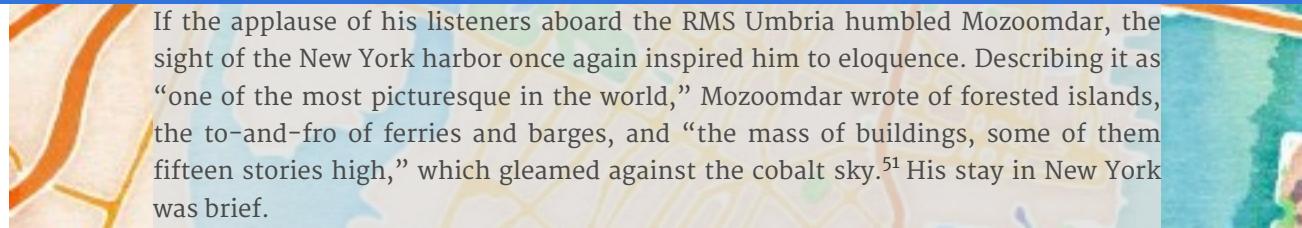


Figure 13. Cunard Line Royal Majesty Ship Umbria, 1896.

Public domain image

He spent his time amid sumptuous food, lavish salons, and galleries, complaining only that his quarters were “dark, stuffy, and overcrowded.”<sup>47</sup> Yet PCM had cause enough to occupy himself elsewhere. In the same article, he marvels at a close encounter with an iceberg seen off the starboard side, describing in detail how its proximity both figuratively and literally chilled those on deck.<sup>48</sup> Perhaps the clearest evidence of his merriment is that Mozoomdar wrote only one brief note to Saudamini while on the ship. He reported good health, feeling refreshed by the sea air and free from seasickness, and mentioned a much warmer reception by these shipmates than he felt aboard the SS Khedive.<sup>49</sup> Mozoomdar gave two lectures in the RMS Umbria’s galleries, each attracting hundreds of listeners who applauded him to the point of



If the applause of his listeners aboard the RMS Umbria humbled Mozoomdar, the sight of the New York harbor once again inspired him to eloquence. Describing it as “one of the most picturesque in the world,” Mozoomdar wrote of forested islands, the to-and-fro of ferries and barges, and “the mass of buildings, some of them fifteen stories high,” which gleamed against the cobalt sky.<sup>51</sup> His stay in New York was brief.

## *New York City*

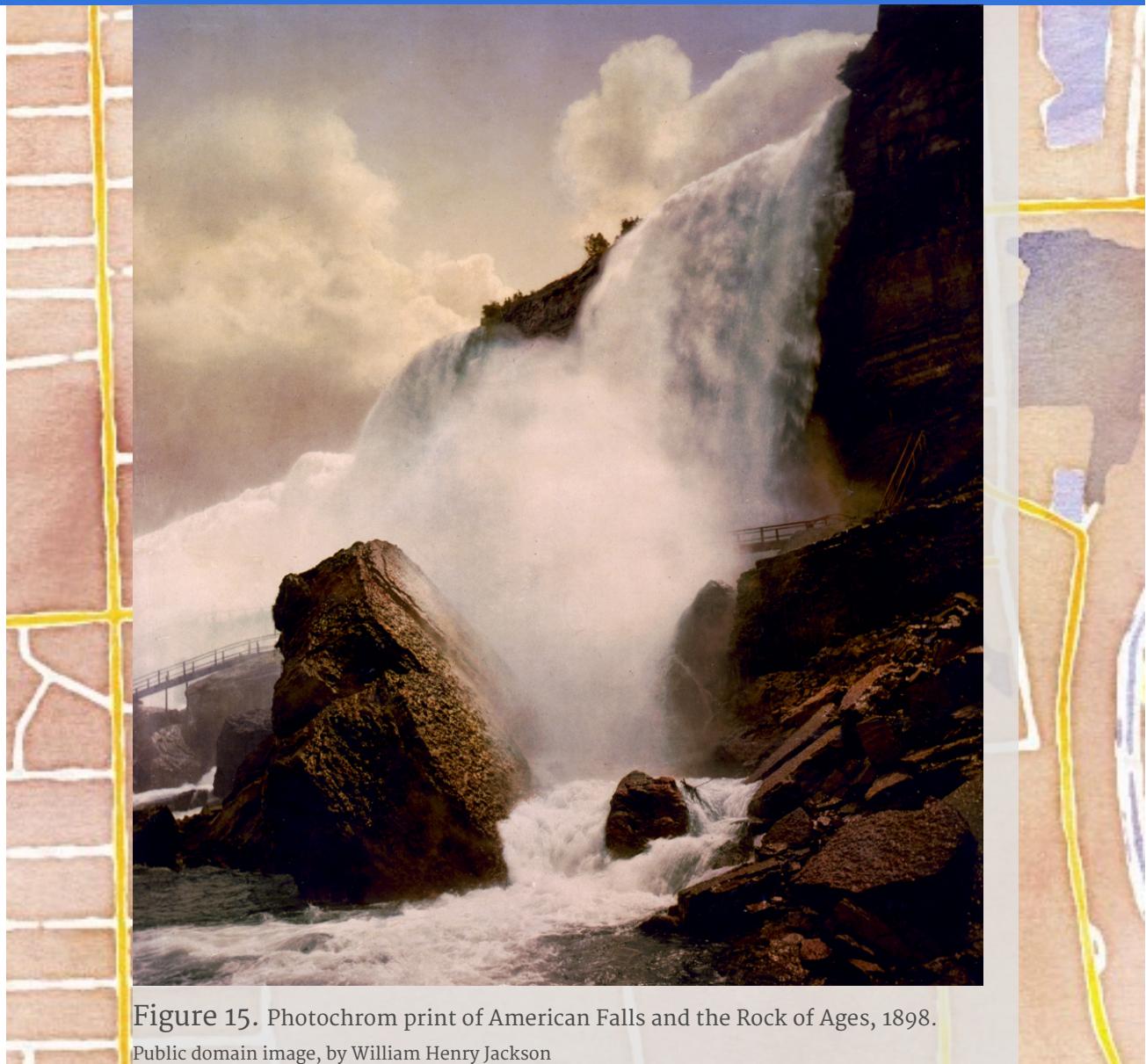


Figure 15. Photochrom print of American Falls and the Rock of Ages, 1898.

Public domain image, by William Henry Jackson



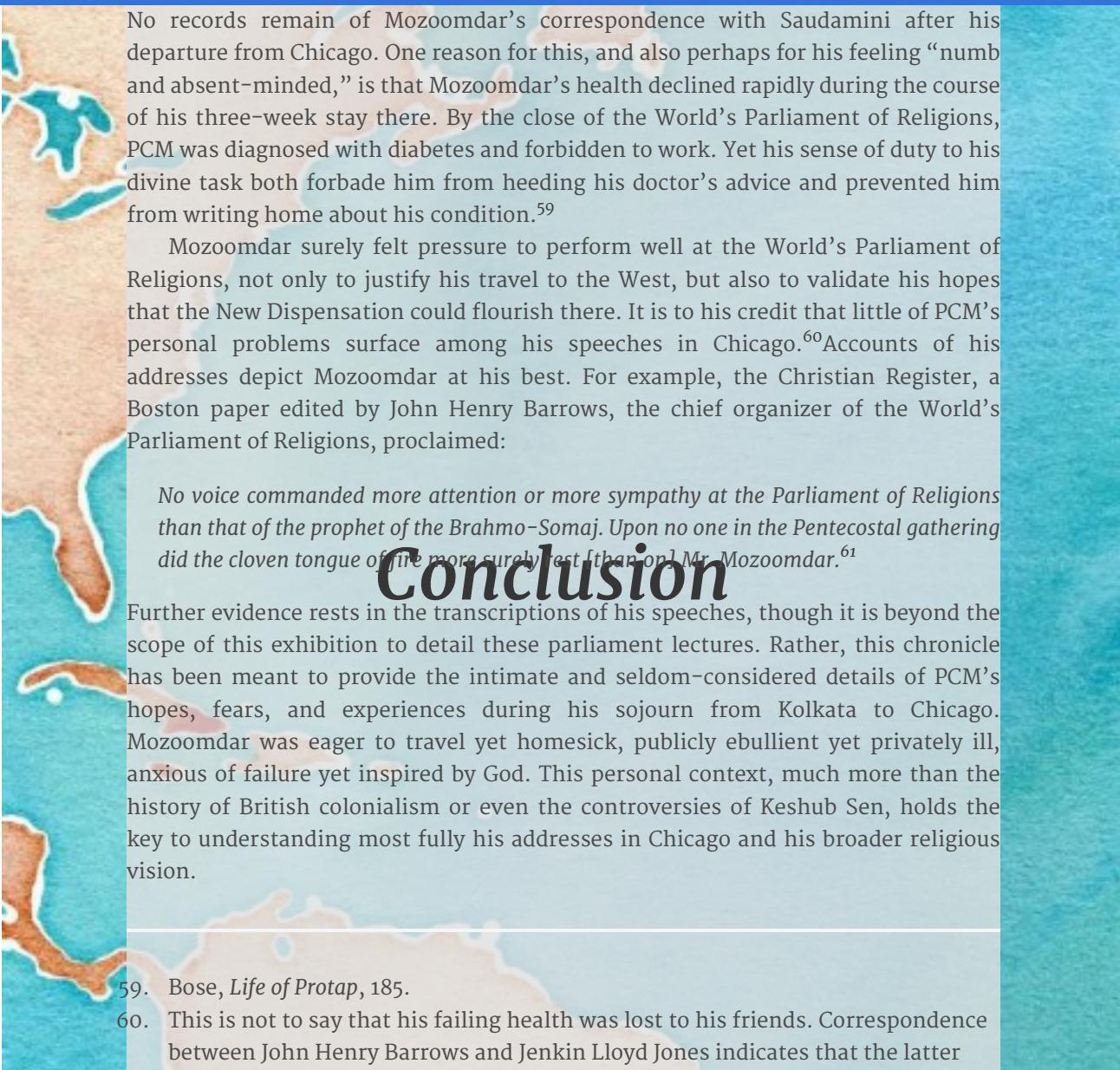
Figure 16. Photograph of the Art Institute of Chicago taken in accordance with the World's Parliament of Religions, 1893.

## Public domain image *The World's Parliament*

At long last, nearly two months since his departure from Kolkata, Mozoomdar reached Chicago. Although he rejoiced upon his arrival, convinced that everything he saw at the World's Fair was graced with God's presence, PCM soon became disheartened by lack of news from Saudamini. In the first of several letters written to her in Chicago, he attempts to console himself by insisting that despite his longing to see his wife, she "wouldn't have been able to tolerate the journey" and therefore rightly remained in Kolkata.<sup>55</sup> Yet his despondence worsened as the beginning of the parliament approached. On the evening of September 10, hours before the conference would begin, he wrote:

*I feel lonely and tired. I wondered why I haven't received your letters yet. Then I saw your handwriting. I feel numb and absent-minded. Write to me. Write anything. Whatever you write will be good for me. It will calm my mind, and also be good for you. Can't you write a few lines to the one for whom you have done so much? I want to scold you, but my eyes tear up instead.... I think about you a lot. I don't know whether you think of me. Heaven will mean nothing to me if I'm there and you aren't. I will pray for hell, then.... I await your hopeful voice in this foreign land. Don't hesitate to make yourself known.<sup>56</sup>*

It was not until over a week later that the longed-for letter arrived, postmarked 9 August. Preoccupied with the proceedings of the World's Parliament of Religions, PCM's response indicates that he was impatient with his wife's brevity, feeling too



No records remain of Mozoomdar's correspondence with Saudamini after his departure from Chicago. One reason for this, and also perhaps for his feeling "numb and absent-minded," is that Mozoomdar's health declined rapidly during the course of his three-week stay there. By the close of the World's Parliament of Religions, PCM was diagnosed with diabetes and forbidden to work. Yet his sense of duty to his divine task both forbade him from heeding his doctor's advice and prevented him from writing home about his condition.<sup>59</sup>

Mozoomdar surely felt pressure to perform well at the World's Parliament of Religions, not only to justify his travel to the West, but also to validate his hopes that the New Dispensation could flourish there. It is to his credit that little of PCM's personal problems surface among his speeches in Chicago.<sup>60</sup> Accounts of his addresses depict Mozoomdar at his best. For example, the *Christian Register*, a Boston paper edited by John Henry Barrows, the chief organizer of the World's Parliament of Religions, proclaimed:

*No voice commanded more attention or more sympathy at the Parliament of Religions than that of the prophet of the Brahmo-Somaj. Upon no one in the Pentecostal gathering did the cloven tongue of fire more surely rest [than on] Mr. Mozoomdar.<sup>61</sup>*

## Conclusion

Further evidence rests in the transcriptions of his speeches, though it is beyond the scope of this exhibition to detail these parliament lectures. Rather, this chronicle has been meant to provide the intimate and seldom-considered details of PCM's hopes, fears, and experiences during his sojourn from Kolkata to Chicago. Mozoomdar was eager to travel yet homesick, publicly ebullient yet privately ill, anxious of failure yet inspired by God. This personal context, much more than the history of British colonialism or even the controversies of Keshub Sen, holds the key to understanding most fully his addresses in Chicago and his broader religious vision.

59. Bose, *Life of Protap*, 185.
60. This is not to say that his failing health was lost to his friends. Correspondence between John Henry Barrows and Jenkin Lloyd Jones indicates that the latter



Despite failing health, Mozoomdar continued to lecture in the US until early December, spending most of his time in Boston. In total, he was said to have delivered almost 200 lectures during his three months in the country in 1893.<sup>62</sup> His efforts bore fruit. Immediately after the World's Parliament, John Henry Barrows began an effort to provide PCM financial support. In December 1893, this resulted in the Mozoomdar Mission Fund, which allowed PCM to visit the US once more in 1900.<sup>63</sup> In October 1894, Caroline E. Haskell gave \$20,000 to the University of Chicago in order to establish an annual lectureship in Kolkata. She did so as a direct response to a wish that Mozoomdar had penned to Barrows earlier that year.<sup>64</sup>

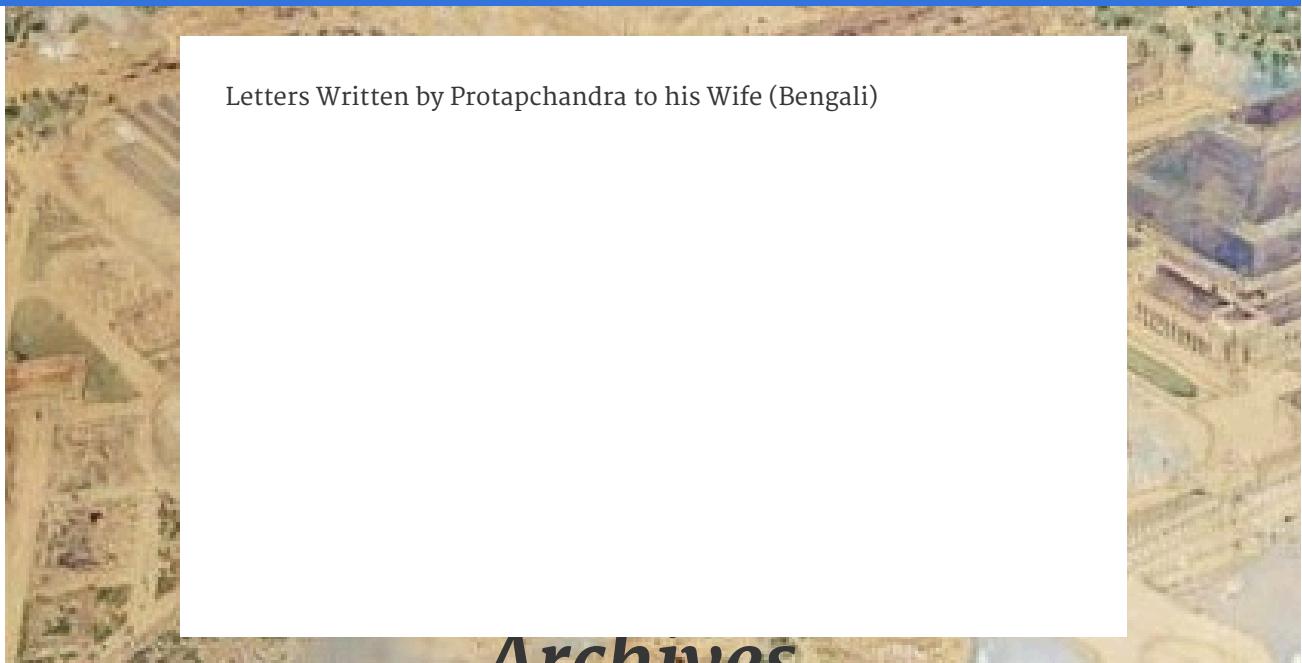
These and other developments kept PCM active until the summer of 1904, when his health began to decline sharply. Though his diabetes was under control, he had contracted tuberculosis, and his deteriorating condition confined him to his bed by December.<sup>65</sup> Despite this, PCM spent the final six months of his life in earnest devotion: his friend and biographer Suresh Chunder Bose described it as “the conquest of the love of God over sickness and death.”<sup>66</sup> Mozoomdar died in his Kolkata home on May 21, 1905, in the company of Saudamini and under the watchful gaze of Debendranath Tagore and Keshub Sen, whose portraits hung on the wall nearby.<sup>67</sup> Though he cannot be said to have fully realized his ambitions for the Brahmo Samaj, Mozoomdar died at peace, in the company of loved ones, ready for union with the divine. Perhaps the two epitaphs inscribed on his monument, written in his own words, express this best:

*I have done the work that was given to me, I have kept the vow I took. I have struggled to unfold my message to many men and women. Peace fills my soul. For all opportunities and facilities, yea for discouragements and depressions, I have the heart to be grateful to God. His ways are not our ways, nor His purposes our purposes. But He has amply proved to me this His great dispensation of the Spirit is sure some day to be the faith of mankind. Blessed forever be His name.*

*I have gained thee with very little spiritual culture, while living this lowly life on earth. Now I start on my way to gain Thee in a degree beyond all measure.<sup>68</sup>*

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*Archives*







Portrait of Protap Chunder Mozoomdar taken in accordance  
with the World's Parliament of Religions. Chicago, 1893.  
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P&O Steamship Khedive in Port Said, 1871. (c) P&O Heritage  
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Portrait of Anagarika Dharmapala taken in accordance with  
the World's Parliament of Religions. Chicago, 1893. Public  
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Saudamini Mozoomdar, c.1890. Public domain image

मशीविदा

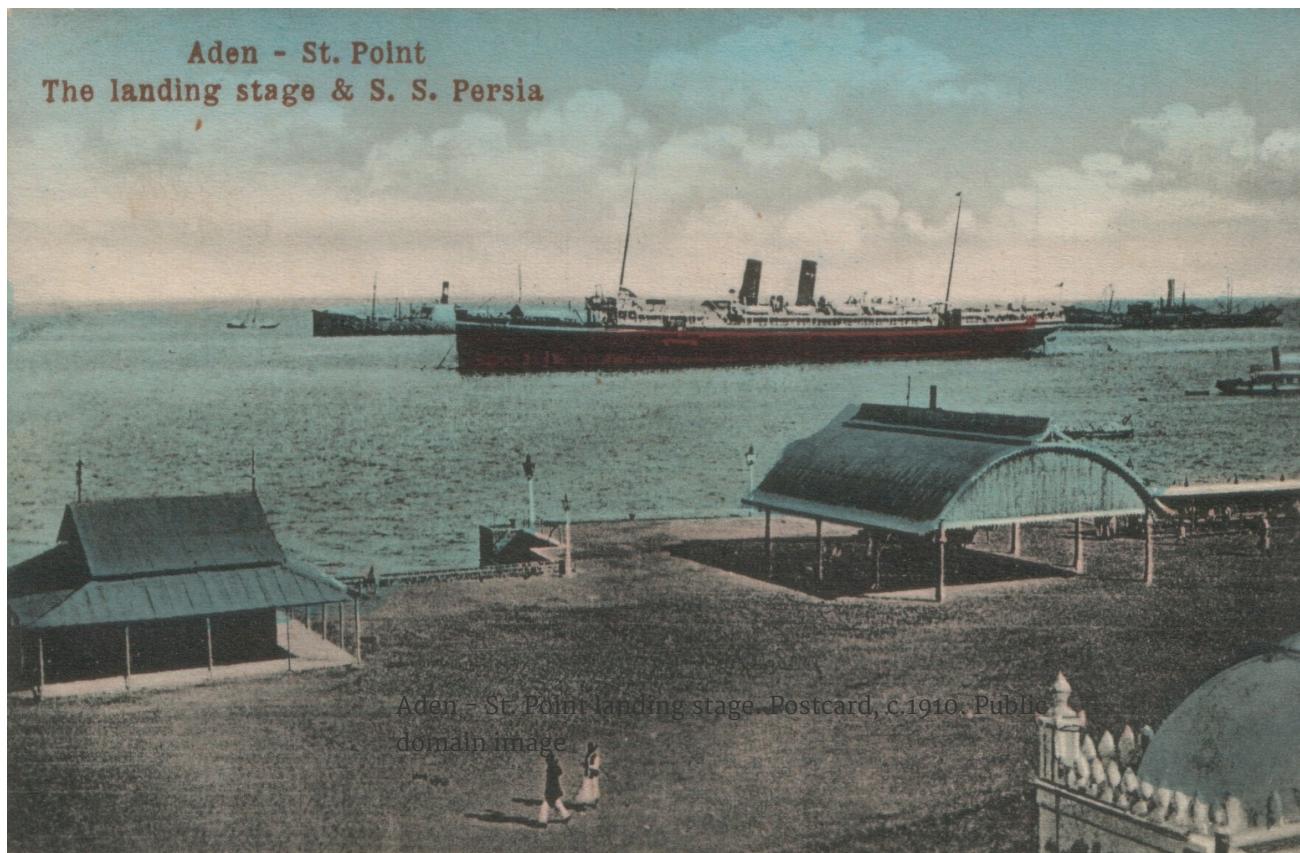


The goddess Bhairavi, c.1880s. Despite her calm demeanour and \*abhaya mudra\*, or 'gesture to ward off fear,' Bhairavi is often a fear-inspiring goddess, as befits her name. Note her garland of skulls. Public domain image, by P.C. Biswas

BY P. C. BISWAS



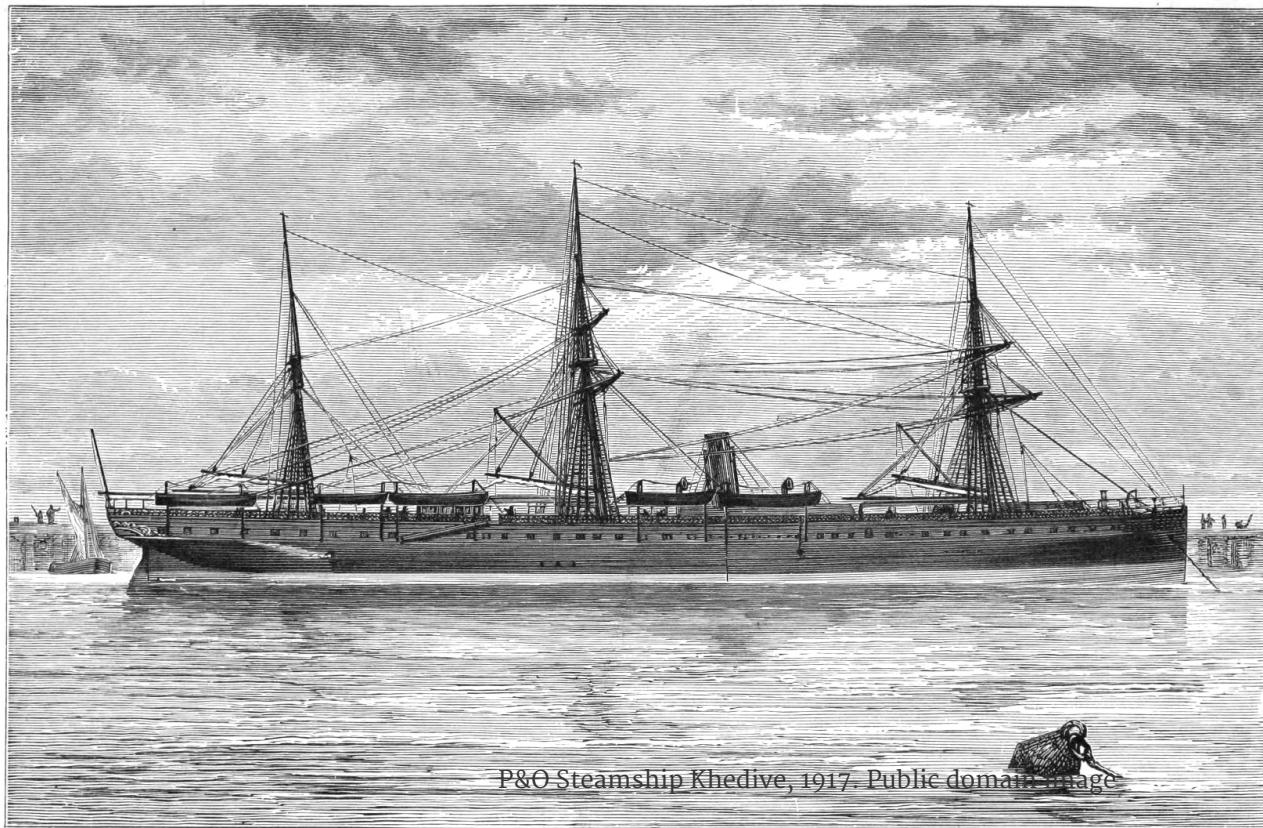
**Aden - St. Point**  
**The landing stage & S. S. Persia**



Aden - St Point landing stage. Postcard, c.1910. Public domain image.



On the Suez Canal, 1892. Public domain image, by William Henry Jackson



P&O Steamship Khedive, 1917. Public domain image

THE PENINSULAR AND ORIENTAL COMPANY'S STEAMER "KEDIVE."

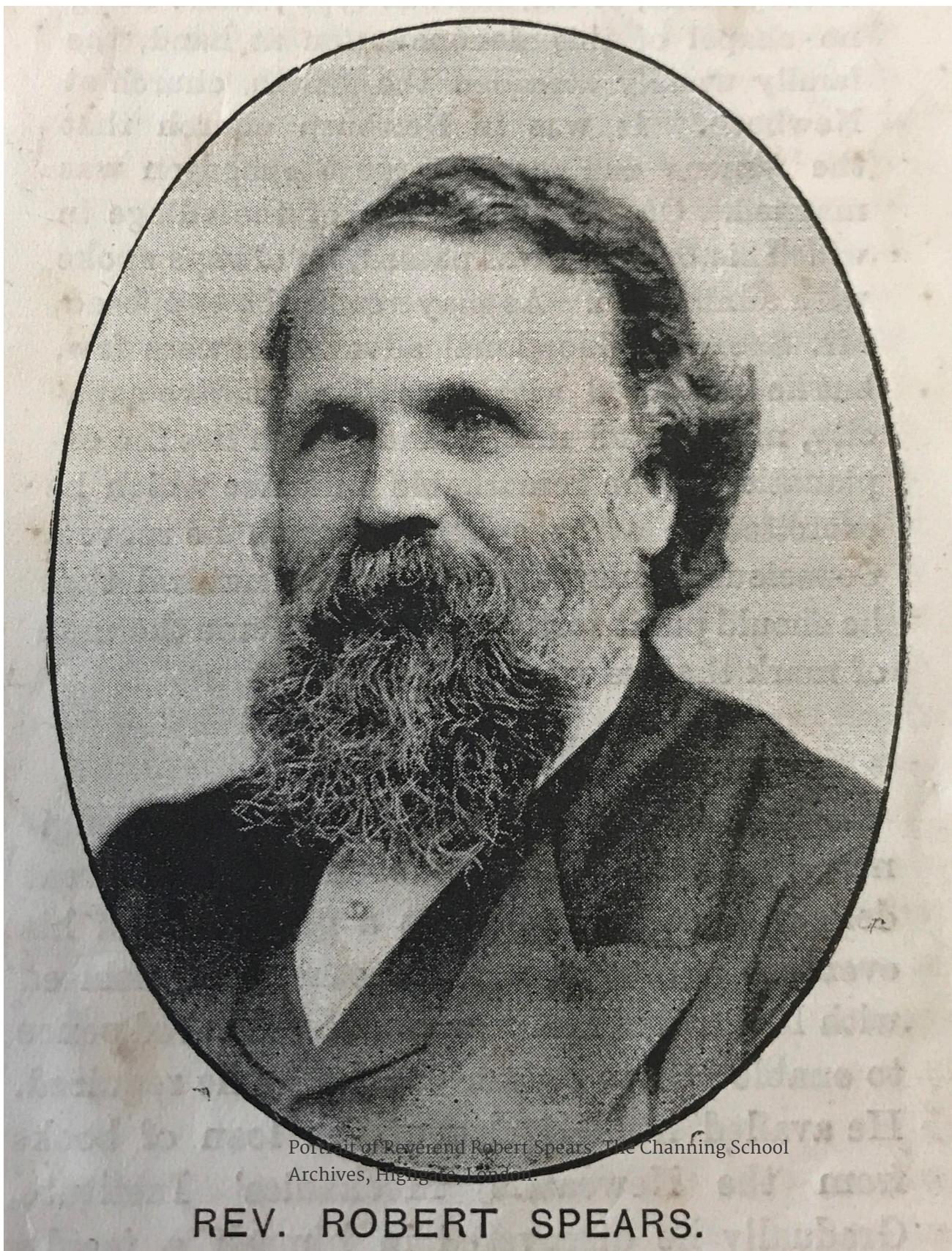


Old Port, Marseille, c.1890-1900. Public domain image



The Pier, Drake's Island, Plymouth, England. Public domain image.

10056. - PLYMOUTH. PIER WITH DRAKES ISLAND.



Portrait of Reverend Robert Spears. The Channing School  
Archives, Hingham, London.

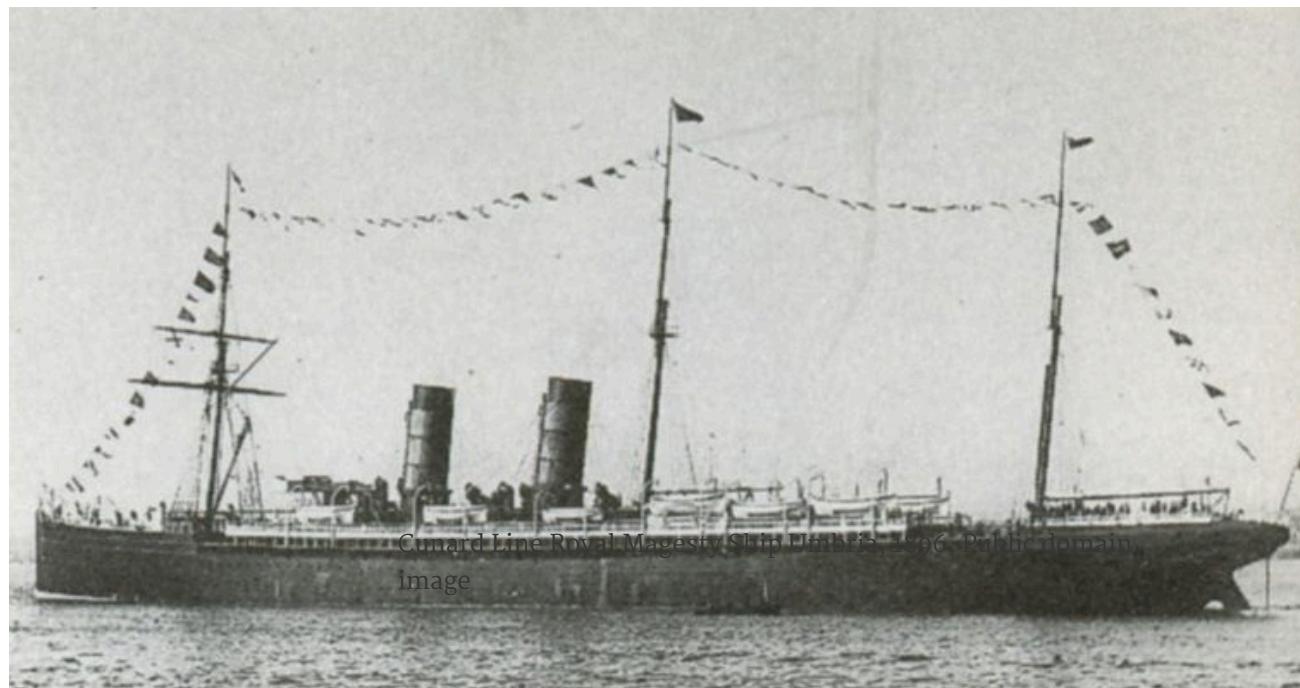
**REV. ROBERT SPEARS.**



Landing Stage. Liverpool, 1903. Public domain image

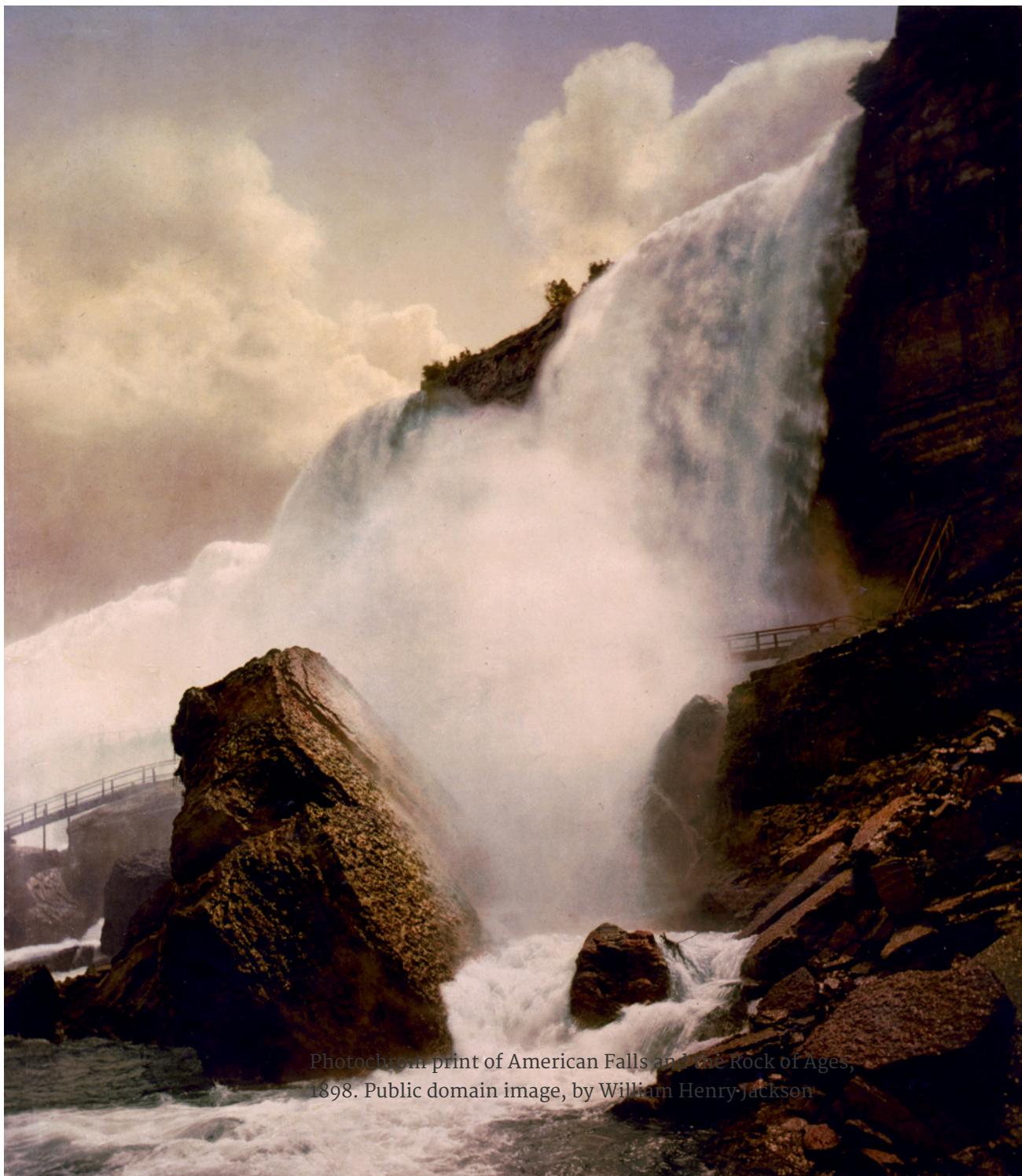
LANDING STAGE, LIVERPOOL.

"Gilette"

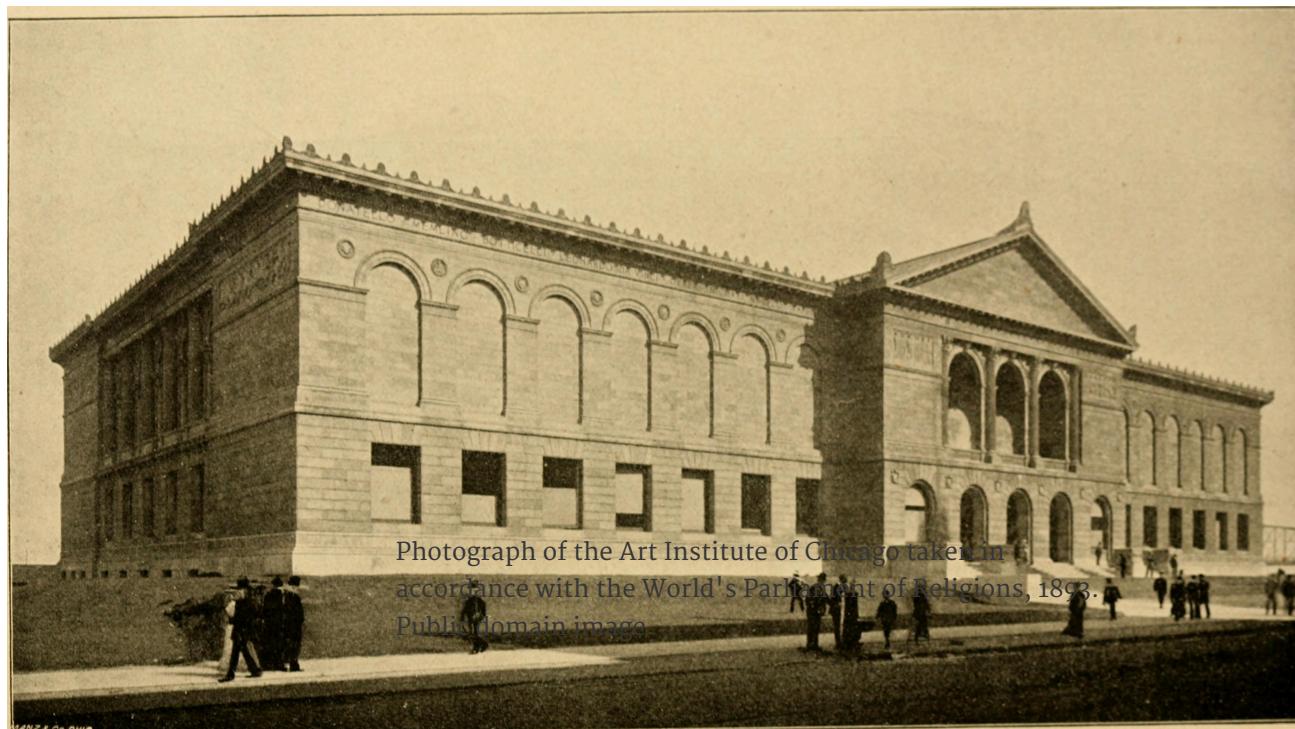


Cunard Line Royal Mail Ship Umbria, 1896. Public domain.  
image





Photochrom print of American Falls and the Rock of Ages, 1898. Public domain image, by William Henry Jackson



Photograph of the Art Institute of Chicago taken in accordance with the World's Parliament of Religions, 1893.  
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# *Full Text*

Journey  
Map