

Themes: *Travel, Surfing, Domestic Life, Writing*

Summary

Agatha embarked on a ten month round-the-world tour, accompanying her husband Archie who was financial advisor for the British Empire Exhibition Mission. Recovering from incapacitating seasickness, she threw herself into visits and formal social occasions, as well as enjoying downtime. Their journey through southern Africa included stops in Cape Town, where Agatha learnt to surf. Later, when the Mission had completed its tour of Australia and New Zealand, Agatha and Archie took a personal detour to Hawaii, where they surfed once again - albeit in very different conditions: at one point the force of the waves ripped Agatha's bathing dress! They rejoined the Mission in Canada, then after a brief visit to an aunt in New York, Agatha sailed home with Archie and the group.

The trials of domestic life resumed once reunited with their daughter, not least managing Rosalind's nannie. Archie had lost his job as a result of the trip and struggled to find another and Agatha, keen to contribute financially, started work on a new book. She was encouraged in this by their friend and Mission leader Major Belcher, who asked to be cast as the murderer, and her other experiences on the world tour contributed heavily to the result: *The Man in the Brown Suit* (1924). After correspondence with the Inland Revenue, who now considered her to be an established author, Agatha engaged Edmund Cork as her (long-standing) literary agent. Archie was then offered his ideal job, and they began to look for a house outside of London, while Agatha delightedly purchased her first car.

Quotes

"Going round the world was one of the most exciting things that ever happened to me. It was so exciting that I could not believe it was true. I kept repeating to myself, 'I am going round the world.'"

"Life is really like a ship - the interior of a ship, that is. It has watertight compartments. You emerge from one, seal and bolt the doors, and find yourself in another."

"I will confess here and now that of the two things that have excited me most in my life the first was my car: my grey bottle-nosed Morris Cowley. The second was dining with the Queen at Buckingham Palace about forty years later."

Questions

- What were the challenges that Agatha faced on the tour? And what lasting impressions did she write about that have stayed with you?
- How did the tour influence her writing?
- How did you feel about Rosalind's nannie and her relationship with Agatha?
- What did you learn about Agatha's changing attitude towards her writing?
- What further insights did you gain into Agatha's marriage with Archie?