

S.S. SARDINIA

1921 2

in the Mediterranean towards Malta

April. 15-1921.

My dearest & loveliest Ruth, To-morrow we shall reach our first port of call. I suppose that to be the correct expression, - Malta. The mails from there are uncertain I understand, but you ought to get this 3 or 4 days earlier than my next letter which will be despatched from Port Said. I only wish there were any hope of getting a letter from you in Malta - but I know you won't have written there though as it turns out that would have been the best thing to do, more particularly as it is more than doubtful whether the mail will catch us in Port Said.

I am not going to write you at this moment an elaborate account of my life on board ship. I am keeping a sort of diary - in a disjointed fashion of my own - that is to say I keep a little book in my pocket and write in it occasionally, just as the fancy takes me, about daily life & things about me in general - & I shall send this to you at intervals. Probably the first instalment will go off not from Malta to-morrow but from Port Said on Tuesday, three days later. Now I want to talk to you as nearly as I can.

I know you must have been depressed after we parted that morning a week ago, though I admired you for being so cheerful & brave all the time. Now you are fully occupied & I know you won't be feeling depressed because there is too much to be done & thought of - only I am afraid you will be feeling lonely at nights. I want you to think of me especially

at 10.30 p.m. & 6.30 a.m. when you will usually be giving  
John his bottle; I shall know the difference between my time  
& yours & will think of you especially at those times.

I can't tell you how utterly hateful I found the first days on  
board. I longed to have you with me as I still do - but I'm  
no longer depressed - & hated the thought of our separation.

I try to picture you at present doing this & that in the Adlt  
- N.B. that the sun shines as brightly there as it is doing  
here & is streaming into the loggia this afternoon - is that  
like the reality? You have now the Morgan children with  
you I suppose. Stupid! I am rather hazy about their  
dates but I imagine you will be having them a few days  
longer, until the middle of next week or thereabouts.  
I dare say they are all playing in the garden this afternoon  
& you keeping them happy.

And how about the garden - you mustn't forget your  
bulletins. Is the white lilac out - I should think it must be.  
And the crab is in full bloom & the beech coming into leaf?  
And peonies must be coming on - the tree peony first.

I must try & remember a few things for your attention which  
will want doing & some of which Cheeseman could do.

- (1) When the weather becomes hot & dry the lime round the  
rose trees should be dug in & also any dung there may be  
on the surface. [ask Father Hugh - perhaps now is late enough]
- (2) Most of the roses want some tying, particularly those  
on the pergola. And so do the various clematis - not

forgetting the montana against the fence behind the cedar & that on the s. wall of the rain garden - we ought to get those well spread out this year.

- ③. You will find the acacia will give much more shade this year than last & it might at least to have the top off, but I don't know whether it is worth while getting Beagley for the job.
- ④. Trolius should be watered as they come into flower if the weather is dry.
- ⑤. You can tell Cheeseman from me that whatever else he does he must prevent goose grass, rattle cbsamble, from seeding this year - particularly goose grass.
- ⑥. I noticed weed was beginning to grow again in the ponds - if it survives, as I expect it won't. In know the remedy - dissolve copper sulphate in a can of water & pour into the pond; about as much as would lie in the palm of your hand heaped up is enough for a first dose. And I forgot to remove the frogspawn - but I suppose it is too late now.

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This is turning out a dull letter. You won't have much time for the garden I know - but you'll make some use of Cheeseman I hope.

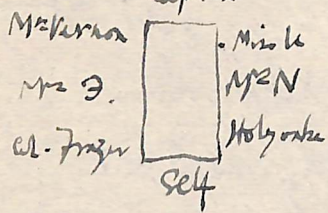
I have finished Queen Victoria, most of which I greatly enjoyed & shall probably send it back from Port Surt because I want you to have it to read. Otherwise I've not read so very much - a large bundle of Martin Chuzzlewit which I take slowly & a little Santayana.

I've been working away at Geoffrey but have made little progress & feel depressed about it.

You will learn a good deal about my habits from my diary. The most alarming crisis was when I chose my place for dinner, almost at random, by putting my name down on a plan sheet. I found myself between one Colonel Jager & a very undistinguished man called Holyoke, who has at originated a single remark to either of his neighbours at table since the voyage began - but his table manners are not in any way disgusting. The Colonel is a tall gaunt Anglo Indian of rather forbidding appearance - but the mildest of human beings & do I should say the slowest. I feel he has a really nice character but absolutely not the faintest glimmer of an idea as to how to get any interest from conversation - he smashes a leading remark with dreadful thunder-blow or stamps them in the dust. I gasp.

Luckily Mr Drager talks & is gay & so do the other ladies -

here is the plan - particularly Mr N who is very jolly, a sailor's



wife a kerbles on & makes some fun. I talk to her a good deal across Holyoke. But the two

ladies on my right are both getting off at Malta -

So what will happen then? I shall the Dragers to go next the captain or so. Mrs Drager's seat. I shall then be next to Mr Vernon, who is quite a pleasant Anglo Indian, & within the circle of the Captain's radiance - he talks a good deal, about what I don't know as the table is spaced out & one hears nothing of what goes on at the other end.

I see how large this question looms - every meal except tea is involved!

But I'm getting past the need for talking about what interests me - thrown back in despair on myself & quite contentedly, except sometimes at meals. It would be I should have thought have been possible to collect 93 people with less intellectual life among them. The best person to talk to is the man I described before as probably an Auxiliary. He has travelled a good deal in the East. The trouble with him is not that he is repulsively ugly or a cannibal, as one might suppose - but simply that he is a bore.

Well, dear Ruth it's a depressing business looked at this way - worse than I expected & different in a way because it is such a very small ship - there is no organizing athletic crowd

• the most we've risen to in that way is a dance for about 4  
couples to the accompaniment of a gramophone. I could wish  
there was more activity. But I have left out  
the other side - the beauty of the sunlit Mediterranean  
• the slow peace which comes as we steam gently & I sit  
up in the bows alone watching the wide sea or the passing land.  
We have had fine weather, & since turning Eastward good things to  
sea. Gibraltar at dawn on Tuesday morning was a really wonderful  
sight - "ground & grey" - ; of the eastern end of the rock is precipi-  
tous; the rest could very easily be climbed except for occasional  
walls of steep rock. A little later in the day we saw the Sierra  
Nevada deep snow clad appearing from a bank of clouds. On  
Wednesday we had the African coast in view all day. It looks  
quite good country - better the further you go west - &  
we had a fine view of the Algerian Atlas range which contains  
~~after~~ several fine peaks & rock faces. There carries plenty of  
snow & must go up to 10000 or even 11000 I should think  
I have found a splendid spot of isolation where I retire  
the bows, & often take my chair there.

I have been finishing this in bed Saturday morning the 16<sup>th</sup>.  
The weather broke last night, but I have some hopes of it  
clearing. We shall have six hours in Malta & I must go  
see some flowers.

Farewell sweet angel. Ever so much love to you, &  
many kisses to the children. Your loving George.  
I'm dying to hear about your domestic arrangements & how

In like your companions.