

Approaching Calcutta.

1921 7

May 9. 1921.

My dearest Ruth, I saw no point in posting a letter to you at Madras as I hope to catch the same mail from Bombay & posting in Calcutta; and I reckon this should reach you only about 5 days later than my letter from Colombo. Will it, I wonder, reach you for your birthday? At all events it must bear my loving wishes for your happiness & the assurance that I shall think of you most particularly on June 10. The parcel from Colombo also of course contains thoughts for your birthday. My p.c. was perhaps confusing on that head. I meant merely that I want you to keep one of the three objects anyway - all of course if you like. But I'm not at all sure whether you will like the beads. I shall be much interested to hear - but I suppose I shall be somewhere or other at that time. I also bought three lace collars which may serve the children & a seed necklace for Bessie. I was stupid not to get two, but a coolie dashed up & pressed it upon me just as we were starting off in a car & I was not sufficiently collected. However I dare say Clare will not be disappointed if she has my letter & I fancy the colour would be too bright for her. The other object in the parcel I am sending off to-morrow is a garland, one of many which was presented by some of the natives to Mrs. Vernon on her return home, & I thought Frank might have it; if at least I picture him with it - liking it, but I leave it to you to give it to

whom you will.

We had 48 hours in Madras & the Vernons very kindly put me up. It was a great comfort to get ashore, or rather to sleep ashore, lying quietly in a wide verandah with green trees & bird song to cheer the early morning. I enclose 2 photos of the house to give you an idea of it. It is typical of the better houses. The rooms are very large - high & there are so many doors in them leading into each other & out into the verandahs in all sides that one feels more to be in a great rambling park under a building than actually to be in a house. I was delighted by my first sight of Indian life, which I shall try to describe in my journal. The country round Madras is flat but I obtained a view of it from a small eminence & again the impression is of a garden-fronted town with houses all among it. It was frightfully hot - nearly as hot as it can be so they said & I was very limp. I hadn't altogether recovered from whatever it was that laid me low before Colombo: but the two days did me good & I am feeling quite fit again now.

The most interesting thing that happened to me in Madras was on the evening of our arrival when I walked by myself through the native quarters of the City. It was thrilling beyond description - the mere presence of so much humanity in so small a space & at every turn some inconceivable sight revealing a manner of life & a manner of people as unlike the West as a Pyramid from Westminster Abbey. I shall try & get the picture clear in my mind & describe it in words one

day, but at present I feel it is impossible to convey anything about it.

We are within 80 miles of Calcutta (or incidentally within half an hour of lunch) - so we shall be well up the river to-night - a very warm night, I'm told, it will be, anchored in the Hoopli - & at our place of disembarkation in the morning. The mail for Darjeeling leaves at 4.30 p.m. & I ought to have a good chance of catching it.

I can't honestly say that the voyage has seemed to go slowly, but none the less it has been a detestable business though relieved by occasional moments which I wouldn't for anything have missed. The great thing is that I am not run down - I did my Muller exercises quite happily this morning for the first time since I was unwell.

What shall I find from you at Darjeeling? too much I hope. I want to hear from you more than I can say. I shall know nothing as to how your great scheme with the Horses is progressing for ever so long. You have had them for a week now I suppose. I do hope you are liking her & see the prospect happily. I can't tell you dearest how much I want to communicate with you in some more satisfactory way than this. You are very often in my thoughts & do seem at times very near - but so very much too far. I never can forget how brave & unselfish & loving you have been ~~being~~^{over} all this project & how near we often have been

to me another especially since John was born.

How is John? Give him my love & make them all feel that I often think of them.

Please pass on as much as possible both to your family & mine. Would it be worth while having the leaves from my journal typed? They are difficult to read I fear.

I shall leave this open for a postscript to-morrow. For the present Goodbye; best wishes, & as much love as you can imagine.

Your very loving,
George.

Calcutta. I was miserably dis-ordered getting in last night - we were tied up at the wharf until after 8.0, & contrary to expectation no one met me; I had received a letter onboard from Howard Bury, so that I was in the position of knowing arrangements had been made & of having to act independently at the same time. However I had so difficulty this morning in getting into touch with the Survey officer & the transport of the baggage has been accomplished - it took a 2 mile walk through the docks in the heat of the day to square the Customs. I start for Darjeeling this evening at 5.0 - get there midday. I am to stay with the Governor of Bengal - very splendid & comfortable but I don't look forward to official circles & would rather have been humbly at the Hotel Mount Everest where I imagine Bulluck is. There are none at Darjeeling I believe except Kellas, who was last heard of as having climbed a mountain on April 5. Raeburn was evidently a shade anxious about him (I had a letter from him too). It's dripping hot here now, but I greatly enjoyed a good walk before breakfast. I have despatched the parcel.

Farewell
George