

RMS California

March 3, 1924

My dearest Ruth, The first breath of warm air has come this morning, delicious, fragrant, spring-like air; one can sit about happily without wearing a coat. I won't say bask in the sun, for it's not yet like that - but perhaps it will be hot in the sun when it comes to high noon - & at all events it's nice to sit in now. I have a feeling of pleasant prospects about the voyage altogether. The ship is overbooked with passengers at present; but  $\frac{2}{3}$  of them get off at Port Said - they belong to some scheme of an organised tour in Egypt. The remaining  $\frac{1}{3}$  so far as I can see will contain a large proportion of soldiers & their wives, evidently some nice people among them. I find myself almost training my ears to catch the various accents & phrases in the fragments of speech a folk pass - so little will serve for an indication; but chiefly of course the looks of people; & one of the most important reasons you should be here with me is for discussing their looks in the stage before acquaintance. At table Irvine & I sit side by side (Harvard - Beetham at another table), next to me at the head of the table is a gentleman looking Colonel with whom I don't expect to converse in any very interesting and opposite are a youngish army doctor & his wife, good, enterprising, hard sort of people - hard I mean in the good sense - ; she is Canadian by birth & doesn't greatly love Canadians which is a mercy. Mrs. Selby & friends, the

Lennox (you'll remember he's in the Indian Survey) seem pleasant people too. Anyway here we all are learning each others languages, a process which may have gone some useful distance by the time we reach Bombay; & then we shall go our separate ways, and I shall never see any of this group again.

We're going down the coast of Spain at this moment, out of sight of land, though I dare say one could see it from the mast, passed Finisterre after dinner last night & presumably will turn in past Cape St Vincent this evening. Do you realise how much the western edge of Europe slopes away - we have had our clocks put back 49 mins each of them last two nights, a proceeding I greatly prefer to the other one which will begin tomorrow, after we leave Gib. We're not to land at Gib I hear - rather sad; but we stop to receive a despatch mail & should be near enough to see the best of it.

How are you feeling, you poor left-behind one? I was glad you decided to abandon waving this Friday - we weren't off till 8-30 or thereabouts as the two ships provided were hopelessly beaten by the wind & could get us off. It was a wild night that first one; & yesterday in the Bay was wild too, with wind & rain in plenty sending across the waste of steel-grey white capped waters - a day for staying indoors mostly - with some study of Hindustani, some reading, some writing of letters.

~~and~~ a long, long game of Dab it Down with Hazard, and a modicum of exercise in the gymnasium -

Curiously I had the impression at first of Hazard that he was going to be tiresome - was bursting with information about the tittle tittle of travel, how many knots the ship will travel per hour - whether one should wear a topie in the Mediterranean or so on; however since then he seems to have become a nice & reasonable being, perhaps he was a little over-excited at beginning the journey.

Beetham I'm inclined to think is a gem; good-humoured & unselfish & a sort of natural batt, one doesn't quite know why. I expect he'll be very useful altogether. And so no doubt will Irvine - sensible & not highly strung he'll be one to depend on, for everything perhaps except conversation.

Since I began writing all the larvae lurking below in bunk or in corners of lounges & smoking rooms have come forth into a new butterfly life on board, & most have seem to be seeking the sun in or near my particular & chosen spot; & now are gathering in a cloud to spy out the visible land, a rocky island - a headland beyond which turns out to be

My books so far have been chiefly André Maurois' life of Shelley or Ariel as he title it, & Aleksarkoff's Years of Childhood. Though much of it is psychologically interesting I'm a bit disappointed with Aleksarkoff - those

under for instance don't quite come alive. However I shall proceed. Ariel is a remarkable book, more serious than his others - bringing out very much all the love affairs & the strange mix up with Harriet - Olyja & the rest I'm not scholar enough to know how much of it is new, but I feel that it presents a story in a fresh way without adding anything about the man, Shelley. I've not yet begun to read any history books nor to write the little article I have to do for Blackie - son - 3000 words will not take me long & I shan't worry about it. I'm more concerned at present to write letters - there seem to be a large number of people I want to write to - which suggests that no one doesn't so want in the ordinary way of life because time is short. But here's the chance to repair so much that's let go in the ordinary way. I'm immensely enjoying the thought of this clear space of time ahead.

It is horrid, dearest one to think that I am to get no letter from you until Darjeeling, & perhaps not even there. We shall lose no time - arrive Bombay the 19<sup>th</sup>, Darjeeling the 22<sup>nd</sup> & leave D. somewhere about 27<sup>th</sup> presumably.

Dear love I shall be thinking of you often & often. We have been very close together lately I think & I feel very close to you now. You are going to be outwardly cheerful I know & I hope you will also be inwardly happy while I am away. I love you always dear one.

Ever your loving,  
George.