

Hotel Madrid 147 Cromwell Rd  
South Kensington London SW.  
3/10/26

Dear Mummy

Well, I'm very sorry I missed the first mail from Sydney, but I was relying on a bloke who ought to have known more about mails than I did, being in the Bank of NZ & behind the Inquiry counter at that — I refer to Mr Henry Knowles Smith. If I remember accurately, I missed the first mail to Auckland through lack of acquaintance with the postal habits of the great City, & was going to post by the Frisco boat to Auckland when H.K.S. said, Don't do that, there's another mail direct tomorrow, which will get to W'gton a day sooner; & ex-plained at some length the complicated intercolonial mail system which gave three mails one week & one the next; but he must have got the weeks mixed up or something. Well, I'm very sorry — I thought I was being pretty shrewd. I hope you have got letters pretty regularly since — I ~~th~~ tried to work things out so as to give you one long letter every week from the Australian ports, though the fact that I was getting farther & farther away all the time brought an element of uncertainty even into the calculations of so keen a mathematician as me. I think I explained about not writing from Naples or Toulon; but I think you will get the letters by this post direct as soon if not sooner than letters posted late on the voyage via Australia. So much for that. Thanks for the key of the trunk, although it is not much use to me now. I persist that it was Keithles who was the [*unclear*: chump]; he took the key on the Friday morning to jam some more stuff into the trunk (on your suggestion so it is partly your fault) & locked it up himself & didn't give me the key. It's turning out a darned expensive trunk that — I had it in the baggage room, & they wouldn't land the baggage-room luggage till the special train had gone; so I had to [*unclear*: sto] get it sent through the agents, which cost me 6/-.

You will have gathered from all this that I am in London & have got your letter, likewise Ern's & a bunch more from various people. The ship was fogbound down the river all Friday morning, & by the time we finally got off & through the customs & into the train it was nearly four. The customs people were very variable; one or two of them were real [*unclear*: snags], & as the list of dutiable articles included every thing from cameras to a pair of braces I hovered around somewhat anxiously on the outskirts looking for a decent man. And while I was thus doing towards the end McGrath got hold of the head [*unclear*: champ] of the lot, who roared in jovial tones "Now do you want to go by this train or not how many packages one! two! (affecting his moniker as thus he spoke) you haven't any cigars cigarettes or whisky right- oh; go for your life!" without taking breath. Which made me wish I had packed a good many more risky articles & got away with them so cleanly. But then I suppose I should have struck one of the snags.

The journey from Tilbury to St. Pancras was pretty dirty on the whole, though at first there were a few fields & haystacks & churches that looked like the England of romance. But then we came to interminable lines of houses all built in the same way in big blocks or seperately, which were uglier still. So a ~~t~~ station or so farther on I nearly got out & came back home; but I decided I would see what St. Pancras was like anyhow. It was all smoke & uproar but having got so far I decided I would give London a go. And then having seen one of WH. Smith's bookstalls with all the new books on, a booking office covered with theatre bills & a paper with the front page entirely covered with adverts of concerts mainly orchestral I decided that England would do me. The more so that the coal strike has done London a lot of good & they are having the clearest weather any of the inhabitants can remember.

So far I have spent the time mainly in dodging taxis and buses. But I had better get things down chronologically. We got the name of this joint (ie. Hotel Madrid) from Whinfield & it is a very decent place & pretty cheap as things go in London — 7/6 for bed & breakfast, even though Henning & I have to go half-shares in a bed, as it is the busy season. But the people are cheerful friendly sorts, the waitresses smile & take us into their trade secrets (one of them asked us <sup>this morning</sup> if we would do her a favour; all my native chivalry coming to the fore I said Delighted; if one of the other waitresses asked us if one of us let in the first last night would we say yes; followed by a somewhat involved explanation of a latchkey only once a week, a duplicate, ~~to~~ ~~make into later~~ of the existence of which waitress no 2 didn't know & a homecoming 20 minutes late); they have two diminutive page- boys clad in buttons & a grin who say sir at the end of every clause in a sentence & grin industriously every time you pass them — one is a regular Torchy ; I don't suppose I shall be here long though, only till I can get a room somewhere. I wouldn't mind being out this way; it is a rather decent place, especially in the twilight; — a vista down long streets of big houses; but I think a bit too expensive. Henning is going over to Paris in a couple of days, & MacG down to Oxford although he is starting to [*unclear*: bemoan]

his fate at having to leave London. From the point of view of getting diggings we were unlucky to arrive in the weekend; we<sup>1</sup> couldn't start to look around till yesterday (Saturday morning) & by the time I had gone to the High Commis & read my letters ther & called all the Banks, got £10 & a cheque book & interviewed the manager & Wyatt, the other bloke to which Major gave me a letter, the business part of the week was over. They are pretty cheery souls at Jimmy Parr's though I didn't see him & don't want to; I ran into that girl what's her name who bugged along when we had the Yanks to tea, with her husband who looked so darned conceited with long hair brushed back that I pretty nearly kicked them. They invited me to trot along & see them at the first opportunity, so I said I should & shan't. Then coming down the street to the Bank on the top of a bus I saw the dome of St. Paul's looming up, which gave me a great thrill; & this Wyatt in the Bank proved to be a cobbler of [unclear: Mrs Han]- [unclear: nah's], & apparently had seen me before at her old flat on the Terrace. I thought his face seemed a bit familiar when I first had a look at it. So I had jovial conversation both with him & the manager; who seemed to think that being the son of the Sec. to [unclear: Shanland's] was a hall-mark of great respectability; so what about Daddy applying for a rise. Then the assist manager turned out to be one Grant, a lean but genial Scotchman & the brother of Grant the prof who examined me & is going out to NZ next year to swap with Hight; so I am going to meet him some time at the beginning of next year. Thus the morning passed both pleasantly & profitable. Everything looks extraordinarily familiar; St Paul's, the Royal Exchange, Admiralty Arch <sup>Trafalgar Square</sup>, etc. But my oath! the bookshops! & I've only seen a very few of the very small ones yet. And the outside of Hatchard's which has a stunner f shopfront. The trouble with the place is, it is so darn big; but if the weather was always like this I shouldn't growl. Not much sun, but not very cold, & clear. The landowners think they are in clover for this time of the year.

Yesterday afternoon I had lunch with Henning & then bowled along & inspected what of St Paul's you can inspect now, which isn't much. But the outside is imposing enough, though hemmed round with other buildings so that you can't stand off & get a good look. Some of the memorials inside are fearful duds, & some of the others are so crammed up that you can hardly see them eg. the [unclear: Gron Dook's]. They had a service at 4 & as we were roaming round about then we stayed for it. But not very exciting. The only good things were an SS Wesley anthem very short & the organ which is a stunner. Nasal parson of some sort gabbling away in an awful monotone, in which it was impossible to distinguish a word; the choir gave recited the Lord's prayer twice & I didn't know what it was till  $\frac{3}{4}$  through, & knew no more the second time than the first. Similarly with the creed which perhaps deserves such treatment however. Choir-boys have good voices though. I may bowl along to a full-dress service some day when old [unclear: Inge] is yapping. On to the Abbey which I haven't seen yet. Last night the three of us tried to get into a theatre but started too late & found it hopeless, though we saw a good deal of the theatre quarter of the city. Everything crammed full, — G. & S., Ibsen, Noel Coward etc etc etc down to the very pictures. So we came home on a bus & looked at the lights; being carried past our own stop not for the first time (or the last I suppose). Duncan was met by his brother who had got digs for him.

I had notes of welcome from Lorrie Richardson & Jack Yeats largely condemnatory of the country, & am meeting them today; & if I survive the subsequent carouse, will post this letter to catch Tuesday's mail out. Thank Ern for his letter & the tramping news contained therein which I shall retail to Y. & R. this afternoon. I [unclear: adjourn] for the present.

Tuesday 5/10/26 I saw the lads & had a good long yarn with much reminiscing. Likewise we walked round London a good deal & inspected various monuments including the Epstein one. It is certainly not boringly conventional in the way of 9/10 of the [unclear: sen] lumps of iron & stone that disfigure London. I didn't actively like it, but neither did I dislike it; L.R. said he didn't like it at first, but is coming to like it now. The general design of the setting — the drinking pools for the birds, lawn in the middle, trees & the other surroundings are most beautiful, though. How any people can run down a thing like this & tolerate such a hideous abortion like the Albert Memorial beats me. I'd heard that this was pretty bad, but nothing, no picture, no description, can come up to the horror of the original. Never in all my wildest imaginings did anything so nerve-shattering bump up against me. Among the war-memorials, apart from the Cenotaph, about the best I have seen is the Royal Artillery memorial. This is a stunner, with tremendously vigorous panelling all around it, & four big statues in bronze, one on each side — inscriptions jolly well [unclear: chosen] too — not like the ghastly complacency of the Machine Gun corps thing in front. There was something about these two things in one of Daddy's Adelphis. But the Cenotaph is the supreme thing of the lot.

We wandered into St. James Park, the water wherein looked very beautiful into the mist, then into Hyde Park <sup>Still write c/o [unclear: Pam] for present</sup> to see Epstein & hear the Orators; and there was nothing there to come up to the straight from the shoulder stuff at the Domain. By the way that Domain article of mine may not be published, it wasn't up to much. We then had a hilarious tea at a joint of Lyons where they are running a café on the lines of that society (who sponsors the place) whose pamphlets Keithles brought home with him. I shall try to snaffle you a menu one of these days. I think as soon as I get settled I shall be able to feed pretty cheaply at the joints like this & on my own.

I saw [*unclear*: Joynt] yesterday & got a cheque for £100 from him. He seems a nice old gent. I am to interview Sir Gregory Foster, the provost of Univ. College this morning & have inspected the Institute of Hist. Research, which I found much to my liking.

Also went to my first Prom. last night — this is the last week of the regular season — mainly Wagner at this concert. Well, this country will do me for a while, climate or no climate. I shall be sending out a bunch of programmes etc later on some time. All W'gton will be having their mouths watered.

As for what you say about publishing my letters — well you can publish them now if you can get anything for them — which please remit. Otherwise nothing doing.

What do you want to go putting my photo in the Free Lunch for? I am extremely annoyed.  
With love from Jack