

21 Brunswick Square
London W.C.1

29/6/27

My dear Mummy,

About the most salient thing to record this trip, anyhow the one most immediately present to my mind, is that I am in a bad temper, having spent the last three days in trying to bring up the notes to my Captain Hobson thesis to the requirements of modern historical research, & being still some way off fixing them. 195 of the cursed things, the place of origin of which I had to find all over again & put on record. If that silly ass F.P. knew 1/10 of what he ought to know I should have been saved all this mucking about & probably got a good many more marks from old Grant for the thing. Cripes! if I had a student who gave such rotten references I'd put in the boot good & hard. And after doing all this messing round I'd don't suppose the blooming thing will get printed. There are some good jokes in it, though, which puzzle De Kievriel sorely, as he doesn't go too much on humour. Blast F.P., I say. I had a note from one of the girls who got honours in the last exam. — she said he put it all down to his own efforts; ^{said he} was very pleased when he saw the results, but rather surprised, as he didn't think they took their work seriously enough; which coming from him was pretty blatant. She got her highest marks in Political Theory, too (which I used to teach); if they all did the same it would be considerable satisfaction. Gosh, he makes me sick. Your letter of May 22 to hand, describing the virtues of Mary, how Daddy took Mary out for a ride in her pram, Auntie's admiration for Mary, Mary's drinking of bath water, Mary's teeth (2) etc etc etc., all of which is duly noted & card-indexed for future reference. While we are on the subject of relatives, I got 5/- from Geoffrey & a letter from Keith, which I was sorry to note contained no cash, or if it did I have since spent same & forgotten all about it; you might thank all concerned. You say you think it would be a most wonderful thing to have the faith that the S.A. Booth tribe have & had — Why? Any damn fool who cares to dope himself can have it. Anyone would think you were a whited sepulchre of scepticism to hear you talk. Gosh! The faith you've displayed in all sorts of things even in my experience I bet transcends any thing merely religious & Booth-like. Ordinary good Christian religion's not good enough for you & Auntie & Auntie Nancy — you've got to nail your beliefs to whole-meal bread or a new Bible or a patent way of saying your prayers. The trouble with you is that the river of your faith is always at flood-tide & keeps overflowing its banks, like a Mississippi perpetually in the rainy season, so that you're always breaking out in a fresh place. You're the last person who should lament your lack of faith. So why get so mournful just because you can't get washed in the blood of the lamb.

What's all this about a red birth-mark? More faith on your part I suppose, for I never knew I had one & I can't see it yet, though I did have my haircut on Saturday. Thank you for the hints on visiting Southampton, correct party conversation on ailing uncles etc; I hope to get down there sometime, but I don't know when. We get our washing done by taking it to the Laundry, or letting the laundry come for it. It only costs 2/- – 2/6 a week, but they are death to socks & shirts. After about two immersions the best & longest sock hardly reaches up to your calf, while shirt-collars are always starched to knife-board stiffness. You generally cut your throat every Monday morning. Collars break up pretty rapidly, too. God knows what they do to them. Suggestion re Xian Science Monitor duly noted; but I never have time to write anything at all these days except history notes & letters, so you needn't expect a source of revenue or fame to open up there. One of the few advantages of living in N.Z. is that ~~you've~~ ^{you're} comparatively free from watching the mails. Thanks to Daddy for worrying about Times cash; let it slide if too much trouble. Very gratifying to hear that A.M. ^{has} now changed her appearance so completely. Stupid extravaganza fiasco also noted. Thanks for cuttings, tragic & otherwise. Seem to have been a lot of coves counted out round about Easter; ah, well, there's worse ways of pegging out.

Heaven knows what I've done the last fortnight, so I'd better tell you what I'm going to do. The summer term is over & I'm taking about six weeks off. These two girls Ross & de K & I have been buzzing round with lately were going to Europe for a month, starting with Holland, & as de K knows Holland pretty well & has people there he said he would take them round for a week. I was going over to Paris for a while to see my cobbers there, so de K. said why not come to Holland too & go to France via Belgium? So we settled on that. Then we were fixing up the Holland itinerary one night & I mentioned that Pope had recommended me very enthusiastically to go to Vienna, at which Helen (Allen) said, well, why not come? So de K gazed at each other & our bank balances & scratched our heads & said Well, anyhow, why not? So we straightaway got a Continental time-table & worked things out till 1.30am. We are going over to Rotterdam on Saturday night

(July 2) & picking up de K there; making the Hague or Amsterdam our headquarters & bugging over the country day by day for about a week, then going to Brussels, then to Cologne, thence up the Rhine to Coblenz, & by devious ways across Germany to Vienna, where we are staying for a while, then to Budapest for a few days & to have a squiz at the blue Danube, then back to Salzburg to get to the musical festival if possible, then to Munich to hear Tristan & Isolde without fail, then to Paris where the party breaks up & as at present ~~planner~~ planned I put in about a fortnight with Espiner & Henning. I may go over to Paris again at Christmas. One thing I'm certain of I won't spend it listening to Father Johnson, or wasting good argument on Manchester either. Old Espiner is getting a bit homesick, I gather. He has got a job as lecteur d'Anglais at the Sorbonne. Of course you will know what that means. I may pick up a collection of up to date French literature for you while I am there. Time you had a change from Jane Austen, I think. You might think this trip would bankrupt anyone, but the beauty of it is, that the whole ~~af~~ fare from here to Budapest & back amounts to no more than £13..6..8. Of course that is third most of the way, second for one or two long spells by night only. Also it doesn't include side-shows. But we reckon we can do the whole month (scheduled to reach Paris on July 31) for £35 at the outside. Then back to London to gaze hungrily at books for a year, I suppose. I don't see myself going up to the Lakes with old P. Phillips in September, though. I think I'll go & sponge on Auntie Jeanne for a week too, & take some books down. Well, so much for holiday plans. It's a bit stiff for a bloke to have to become a tourist in his old age, but beggars cannot be choosers, & if I'm only to be here for two years I'll cram in every darn thing I can digest. One long English Christmas. One thing certain — plenty of time to recuperate. By the way I shall probably refer to these people in the future, for brevity as H, A. (Adelaide MacDonald) & de K or Dicky, (though his name is Cornelius William). Ross being merely an Englishman who lives here isn't able to come, much to our sorrow. Still he's got a lifetime to wander round in. If you don't hear from me for a while you will know what's happened, though I shall do my best to catch some sort of a mail sometimes. It may go via Suez though, in which case there will be some irregularity. You can resume addressing letters to Brunswick Square, as we are not leaving the room. Negotiations with our landlady ended in her knocking it down to 25/- a week for 6 weeks, which is about 5/- too much anyhow at any time. We save a bit in time & trouble if not in cash, & perhaps in cash as we would have to store a good deal of stuff, & she makes a jolly good thing out of us (as she is doing all the while) for her rooms are emptying now for the summer & if we left 50 6 1 she wouldn't get in anybody else. She thinks we're nice ~~boys &~~ boys; which maybe (a) diplomacy or (b) evidence of good taste. A hard old cow.

I have been to no concerts & no plays; the only show I have been to was a marionette show which was good stuff; run by Dagos who have had the business in the family for about 300 years — anyhow they're pretty clever at it. Opera, vaudeville, highbrow concert ~~going~~ ballet dancing, you get it all in the same ~~g~~ programme I think our most exciting day was that of our river- party — one of my brainy suggestions (the party, not the day) We had it a couple of Fridays ago, picking a Friday so as to get the river to ourselves. Thursday of course was a perfect day & Saturday very passable. Saturday broke very gloomy, ~~but~~ & the only one of us who took the trouble to dress up in whites was de K, who wore a beautiful cool Johannesburg summer suit. However on his way down to the station a small yelled "Optimist!" to him & he turned into a shop & bought a mackintosh. It poured all through the morning, but we took shelter in tubes & trains & by the time we got to Hampton we thought we might as well be mad so we sniffed round a boat shed for a boat. They didn't have a boat with a cover, & as Ross said he had been in a punt once before we tried a punt. Well, a more stupid thing I never struck ~~before~~ in my life. ~~The~~ impossible to steer, impossible to paddle. I didn't try the pole myself, after seeing a strong man like de K struggling like a child or a lunatic, but after trying to keep the blasted thing in a straight line with a paddle from the rear (I am having a pretty hard time writing this letter as Duncan has just got intoxicated on Georgian Poetry & is roaring like a bull & banging the table at intervals, blast him } — what with punts & drunken sociologists life can be very difficult) Anyhow we got the punt round the corner from the boathouse, narrowly escaping death at the hands of ferry-boats about 4 times & then pulled down the roof & put in the rest of the afternoon feeding. By jingo! The Canadians & Americans know a thing or two about sandwiches. What they provided were pretty exciting, but to hear them swopping favourite combinations you would think the elaboration of sandwiches was the ultimate end of man. Then I took a large quantity of the very best cherries, & Dicky bananas & Ross a pile of apple turnovers his mother contributed, so on the whole we did pretty well. Then after swopping lies for a while we came back & had tea at a 14th century shop, missed a train, & got back to London to find it raining again. The night after we went out to Ross's for a festive evening & it rained again. And yesterday & today it has been raining again with unabated vigour. Such is the heart of an English summer. It will be a pity when this crowd of ours breaks up; but de K has got a job in Johannesburg, & G. at [*unclear*: Torants] & Ross is going to a Training College next term; so existence will be darkened for a bit. Still you never know — a man can always do a bit of work if the worst comes to the worst.

Did you ever read any of Henry Lawson's stuff? I have been reading While the Billy Boils lately & it's good stuff. There are two series just come out in the Traveller's Library. Only colonial writing I ever read that

got there; no waste words, no padding. not much description; but it couldn't have been written anywhere but in N.Z. ~~or~~ & Australia. A far cry from that to K. Mansfield. I have bought Ludwig's Napoleon too — or rather I have got it from [*unclear*: Bumpus's] on appro, so I suppose I shall keep it. I reckon I deserve a birthday present from myself anyhow. He is turning out good stuff, that bloke. £1000 a year is the minimum they ought to allow travelling ~~sho~~ scholars, though.

I have been to the Tate Gallery again. G. F. Watts ought to have been drowned in his bath at birth. Monstrous that a man should have been allowed to go on painting such drivel into such extereme old age. And to get the O.M. into the bargain. Well, I'm dashed if I'll accept the thing after that. He ought to have been a house-painter. Turner is another cove who ought to have died the death. They have some good sculpture here, though; & I am getting a liking for Blake.

Barker is leaving King's College & going to Cambridge as Professor of Political Science. Good man, I should have liked to ^{have} known him better. Generally the way, — you get bored with the duds from everlasting association, & the good men get shifted on.

The Government is doing batty things again. They're about as silly as the silliest crowd you could meet in the N.Z. parliament. They're bringing in a House of Lords reform Bill now as a bulwark against the Reds which is so farcical as ~~at~~ to get below laughing point. Also pretty dangerous if it gets through. I may send out an Observer article by Garvin for Daddy's benefit. They seem to be like Coates (as I am told Coates is) — fiercely determined to get pushed out of office as soon as it is humanly possible to do so. Another little stunt was to refuse passports to a party of little Communists to go overland to Russia to inspect the wonders of Bolshevism; so that they merely went by boat. Of course it may have been some satisfaction to Birkenhead & Co to make ~~the kids~~ Communist kids sea-sick; & no doubt that is a considerable triumph of the forces of law & order in Western civilization. But I believe I mentioned this in my last letter. Pity they can't do something that really matters. Other events we have had recently have been the return of the Dook & Duchess of York & the eclipse of the sun, neither of which I saw. The D & D came back in pouring rain, & as soon as they hove in sight every umbrella in a crowd of heaven knows how many thousands outside Buckingham Palace & their town house came down amid cheering & torrents of water. What a mentality! N.Z. has nothing for loyalty on the millions of mutts who live in this blooming place. If God the Father drove up Whitehall in a thunderstorm they couldn't display more reverence. I hope a lot of them got pneumonia, that's all. They cleared the road outside the House of Parl. & some rough Labour member couldn't get past the police into the House. He said (in asking the speaker to look after the privileges of M.P.s) he wouldn't have minded walking around the block if it had been for anything important & the roof nearly fell in on him — amid loud cries of Order! Order! Well, well, blasphemy will get its reward some day. England will go red ~~on~~ about the year 7,551. Tell old Geddes that Old England is Sound at the core & will Pull Through. I now go to bed. July 1. Went to a couple of Strindberg plays last night — The Stranger & The Spook Sonata. I rarely if ever have seen anything battier than this last in my life. Very interesting though. I suppose you will read about it in some of the reviews, so I need say no more. You never felt that it was merely silly though. Tell Mrs Hannah to get the Repertory mob to turn it on next & make a name for themselves. No good being a Repertory theatre if you don't do batty things occasionally as well as milk & water Shaw & Co. And I have spent most of today tearing round getting visas & having my passport endorsed & so forth, at a cost of 4 hours solid hard work & 33/-. Haven't had any lunch yet & it is 7pm. Wrote a new introduction yesterday to my Hobson thesis which contains several jokes destined to become immortal & is not on the whole unworthy I flatter myself of the pen of the greatest English prosateur of the century. I now copy out to ~~full~~ fill up space, my great poem on Salad, which ought to please you for its sentiments, even if not as a work of art.

Fragment on Salad

Of all the foods the earth produces
Each has its own peculiar uses
Spuds are excellent for starch
Beer is good for throats that parch
Eggs are specially rich in protein
Cherries good when taken boatin',
Apples, so the wise men say,
Keep avaricious quacks away
Bread if whole-meal has its graces
And should be eaten in all cases

Cheese & jam in various fashions
Minister to human passions
Carrots & the Brussels sprout
Are comforting without a doubt
But when we come to think of what
Is really good & what is not
There is no food for man's inside
To beat a salad in its pride.
Consider how the salad grows
Into dark earth it digs its toes
And in due time the urgent spring
Brings the young lettuce glorying
With red tomatoes in their prime
To greet the joyful salad time
And all the other things which may
Be thrown into a salad, they
By kindly action of the sun
Appear in beauty every one,
Into the salad bowl they fall
And golden dressing crowns them all.
And what the beneficial task
Of salad? we may justly ask
It clears the blood & gives the prize
Of merry sparkle to the eyes
Presents the happy glow & bloom
Of health to cheeks long lost in gloom
Inspires the step & tilts the chin
And makes the works go well within.
The virtues of the salad I
Could duly instance & apply
Till all the vault of heaven rang
Loud with the epic song I sang.
Enough! What [*unclear*: boots] it? 'tis enough!
And * *'s salad is the stuff.

* * fill in to taste with the name of maker of salad.

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The rain is pouring down again. This is the middle of the Summer. What a Country ! —
Well, so long. Dashed if I know when I shall be able
to write to Auntie to wish her many happy returns. You might
do so for me in the meantime.
Love to all &
especially to yourself
from Jack