My dear Mummy,

This town goes forward with considerable éclat. But I think I’d better abandon the calculations necessary to catch the Frisco mail & let you have a short letter now, to go when & how the prevailing mails may take it. I think I wrote last from Brussels, but how far I’d gone then I’m dashed if I know, except that I’d arrived at Brussels. Anyhow Brussels is a fine town, with trees up the boulevards & a Hôtel de Ville of some fame & parks with fountains playing in them & statues & an enormous & enormously horrible Palais de Justice & a massive old city gate & some punk pictures & very cheap taxis, argumentative drivers of which however can be cut short with a reference to the legal fare & courteous but firm "c’est tout" & a church which is not bad, being dedicated to the bracketed saints Gudule & Michael. But I forgot to buy any postcards in Brussels & never seemed to have my camera at the psychological moment, so I am afraid I can not give you any pictorial impressions of this famous city. We did not go to see the field of Waterloo, nor was it visible from the top of the Hôtel de Ville, the requisite clear day being absent. Did I mention in my last the wonderful cake shops of Brussels? Now these patisseries are really what I take off my hat too; these are really what one should visit Brussels for. I had a large cherry tart & a small chocolate tart at one of these & nearly went under, but by dint of working off the last of the chocolate tart on one of my young companions, drinking lots of black coffee & going for a good hard walk afterwards in the park I came through triumphant. Wonderful what an early training in dietetics will do. However I think our best day at Belgium was spent at Bruges. New Bruges is really a wonderful place & I should like to put in a week or so there. It is unspoiled, even by tourists like us & charabanc tours to the battlefields. (I trust I haven’t mentioned all this before. But the square is the real thing in squares, even though we did not see a flower-market there, as we did in the square at Brussels, & most of the buildings round it are the good old sixteenth & seventeenth century ones. The belfry is wonderful & chimes away vigorously & melodiously all day telling the time. Of course we arrived in the one month of all the year when the carillon is not playing. Then there is the Hôtel de Ville, not far away, where we struck an interesting exhibition of illuminated & old stamped bindings, & a ghastly chapel & a very lugubrious crypt. (These Micks will vulgarise anything, from Jesus Christ downwards). The churches are not uninteresting, but no great shakes on the whole. One of the best places is the old Hospital of John, which has been going for centuries, & where they have turned the chapel into a little museum of Memling’s paintings, & glorious things they are. There’s something very satisfying about these Primitive birds, in spite of their sameness of subject; but my word, brilliance of painting! The old red brick & the courtyards & gardens of this Hospital would delight your soul too. Then there is another little art- gallery, the municipal one, packed full of gorgeous things two stunner Van Eycks & a Memling best of all. These the things a bloke thanks his stars for being able to see. I spent 30 francs on a photograph of the Memling. Christopher & the usual accompaniments of saints & donors So you’ll see some of it some day. And then there are the beautiful little old streets & the bits of canals & the bridges & doorways & windows & carvings, & vistas here & perspectives there & trees a & flowerpots elsewhere, which make up the real essential joy of the place. Give a man a year there, & the he might absorb some of it. I went sniffing about the lace shops here, thinking I might get a lace hanky or so for you; but the only ones that really appealed to me as being up to your standards were from about 10/- a upwards, so I regretfully came out again, having been complimented on my taste in lace by one of my lady friends, but getting no further. So you will have to take the will for the deed. The cheap stuff you could get in just as easily, so what I reasoned with my usual infallible logic, was the use of paying customs on an inferior article? Anyhow, in course of time we left Brussels & went to Cologne, where we picked up. again, who had had to be buzzing round Holland on family affairs while we were in Belgium. We were only in Cologne for the fag end of an afternoon & a night and an early breakfast, & practically all that time we put in in & around the Cathedral. Well, it’s something to have lived to see This Cathedral. But it’s simply no use trying to describe it. It’s the sort of thing you dream about, & if most of the glass had not been put in in the century it would be about as glorious thing I suppose as men have ever made. There’s no doubt about it, those medieval birds could build, & they could make stained glass; & once you look at their glass you want to stare yourself blind, & once you walk into their naves you wonder why you have never seen a building before in your life. Well, I’ll merely remark that to visit Cologne Cathedral is an emotional experience of the first magnitude & leave it at that. We went to a joint to order our
dinner & then [unclear: tre] back to look at the outside of the Cathead Cathedral again. But our dinner was also marvellous, consisting of a Chartreuse steak for form (which they say is so called because it is horse) & an extraordinary multiplicity of vegetables, which would have delighted your soul; following which, & to celebrate our re-union with we felt impelled to indulge in a € liqueur, & then pranced off through the streets & parks of Cologne to the banks of the Rhine, where we sat & watched the lights & the trains thundering over the bridge. Thence to a good bed. I’m beginning to believe in travellers complaints about pubs; & after the ridiculously cheap & first rate places we had in Holland & Germany a bloke would feel inclined to growl at anything short of clean wallpaper, running water & patent taps. The other places we have been at have not been so good, not having running water, except at Rotterdam; but the room I am writing in now is as bigger than your room at home equipped with three lots of windows, two beds, a settee & all other suitable furniture, & all for 8 shillings a night for & & — the Austrian shilling being about equal to 7 ½d. However God forbid that I should reproach in any way my native country, the mother of all my virtues, & the kindly nurse of so many great men & such transcendent ideals. We left Cologne with many regrets the morning after our advent & proceeded by train to Coblez. We traversed Coblez by train, on the way to the ferry wharf, so I cannot give you any very trustworthy details of this city, except that the post-boxes are blue & are hung on the sides of buildings like birdcages & are not set on the ground; & after patiently waiting in the sun for ½ an hour or so, the paddle steamer came up the Rhine & we hopped on board, yours truly being nearly killed in the rush, being knocked off the luggage he was endeavouring to cope with & nearly trampled to death by fat Germans. Let me say however that I bear these same Germans no malice, that some of them were probably American tourists from some university in California, with accents as broad as their plus fours; & that all the Germans that I have met, though not distinguished for beauty, have been very amiable. There was a mob of school kids on the boat going for an educational trip up the Rhine, & you never saw a brighter brighter hand of small ugly mugs in your life. Most of the boys wore those long stockings & trousers below the knee which I imagine Daddy wore in his boyhood, & the girls with dresses corresponding in date; but they yapped & tore away at their bread & wurst & got messed up with all parts of the ship in the most delightful way. Also it was very good fun, inducing shrieks of laughter, to pull the little girls’ pigtais unbeknownst like & then look innocent; while the girls had the whole mob at their feet by making jumping rabbits out of handkerchiefs & teaching them what wonderful games you can play with the human hands. One little girl on being told we were English shrank away as if from the devil, but the game was too much for her, & she was soon back. Nice kids. And they finished up with some first-rate singing of old songs. And when I hear a mob of kids sing as many, & as musically & as readily & as charmingly, I’ll be ready to believe a bit more in the saving grace of Messrs [unclear: Parn] & Wright & Co, & the transcendent virtues of [for the young of citizenship of of a country 98% British. As for the Rhine itself, up which our steamer paddled most of this day, it is beautiful, as long as you put more faith in Romance & legend than in your own eyes; but as we remarked to one another, coves that have seen the St Lawrence & the Rockies & the Orongorongo & the Southern Alps are apt to be a bit sceptical of the wild magnificence of these European natural wonders. However God forbid that I should say anything against the Rhine, which is a very pretty river, with many romantic castles, in repair or in ruin, & nice little villages scattered along it’s banks, & I am quite prepared to admit that if I had been on those banks I should have raved over it. I may instance that notorious rock the Loreley, so fatal to mariners, & said (I believe) to reach the terrific height of 300 — a desperate peak in all conscience; but then we have many such round Island Bay way. Still, I’ve nothing against the Rhine in any way — the Rhine’s all right. At the end of the day we came to Mainz, where we disembarked & had a meal, looked at the array of occupation sauntering around, had a ride in a tram, & a walk in the park, watched a practice game of soccer, & caught the train for Heidelberg, which we reached at midnight. However tongue working very freely at German, he went out & by great stroke of luck got rooms for us in 5 minutes (the town being full of students come for a re-union & summer course pretty well every place was full of them, but we got two rooms reserved for people who did not turn up.) Heidelberg is another joy. & I left the girls in bed in the morning to recuperate & wandered out to see what we could see. Now there are in Heidelberg some excellent bookshops (most of the stock unfortunately being in German) where they also sell a great series of facsimile reproductions of etchings & woodcuts & so forth — [unclear: Reichsdencke] the series is called, & there are nearly 1000 of them, Rembrandt & Durer & all the rest of them; absolutely stunner reproductions, & dirt cheap, from about 1 — 5 marks each. We got a good many between us, but when we get to Munich we are going to have a regular orgy. I got some good Durer prints, George & Melanchthon, & Rembrandts’ Faust the chief of them; but wait till I get to Munich, aha! They are the best things I have ever seen in this line. Some of the German book production is very good too — their gothic type type makes a fine black page, & when their books are good they are very good. Where they fall down is on the covers, which are quite often very crude, nothing like as good as the ordinary English cloth cover — too much ornament, & bad ornament at that. Still some of them are jolly good both within & without — nothing to lose in comparison with Jonathan Cape, & far better than most English books. I saw a lot of the Tauchnitz books — I must see if I can’t smuggle a few
of these into England; they are only 1/6 & some of them are good stuff. Besides these amenities Heidelberg has a University & many students in caps of all colours, & pleasant side-sheets & a river & a famous bridge & hills & a celebrated Schloss, which means castle. We had a perfect day wandering over the place — the castle is set in immense grounds, with the proper romantic views all round, & I suppose the proper romantic associations, if one only knew them, & a little shop for selling postcards & bad etchings. I brought some of the postcards, which I hope to send out to you in due course. Also a large & up-to-date beer-garden, complete with blue box for posting afore-paid. I mentioned the bridge, I think; we stood on it in the twilight, & H. evolved a scheme for getting up at 4 o’clock next morning to see the sunrise; which however being did not come off. I was nearly forgetting to mention the black tragedy which overcame me at the Schloss in process of being photographed by who is very painful, with & painfully conscientious with a large & complicated 1/4 plate camera; scratching my head violently, precipitated my goggles on to the gravel & fractured one of the panes. The only consolation was that the great Goethe may possibly have walked on this self-same gravel 100 years ago; a large notice states that he was accustomed to stroll around hereabouts & meditate on life circa that time. It was a very sad affair, but the great & noble by the use of his excellent German was able to get them fixed for me next morning at Freiburg. For from Heidelberg we went to Freiburg & from Freiburg (seeing nothing of it save the station) we went to Titisee, leaving to do odd jobs & visit (a/ friends (b/ bookshops. (Friends got left out, as it happened) Titisee is a bright little place in the Black Forest, with a lake & bathing sheds & other celebrated resorts & a good many pubs which looked a good deal too flash for us. Anyhow we had lunch there (at 4 pm) & got caught in a thunderstorm; & then the invaluable turned up & we learned that as it was the week-end there wasn’t a single room left in the place; so we caught another train to the next station, Neustadt; which was one of the luckiest chances of the whole trip. It is absolutely ridiculous my trying to give you an account of this journey — I could give you a whole letter on Neustadt alone. But you won’t get it out of me. All the pubs here were full too; but we managed to get two rooms in two different private houses among the most charming people imaginable. & I who had two old ladies who seemed as charmed with us as we were with them; & the girls has danced sedately to an accordion & the landlady beamed comprehensively & guessed our ages & was more interested in the details of these than you will. We came on to Innsbruck today, which is Wednesday & we have reduced lunch in a train to a fine art we get on magnificently. You see everybody worth seeing. We were slaughtering their sons & grandsons a little while ago. You can see how pleasant, & cheap, & the streets are full of shorts & hob-nailed boots, & the shops of boots & shoes & swags & rope & ice-axes & other desirable things. Ice-axes cost £2.10 in — you can get them for 10/- – 15/- here. I am thinking seriously of getting one to bring out with me. It would come in very handy at times & it seems a sin to leave
them all here at that price. A pair of leather shorts would be the latest thing on the Tararuas too I daresay, especially if decorated in the flash way some of them are here; but I dare say the pair I pinched form the will do me as well for conditions, as well as being a more tamer truer expression of the national genius. Other things that are cheap here are beer & liqueurs - Chartreuse 10d a bottle. But as you are not the experts in these things that I am I shall draw a judicious & tactful veil. I wish I could do a bit of climbing round here, but alas! & alas! We are leaving tomorrow night for Vienna, which I am told is the finest city in the world. Well, it is now ½ past midnight & is sleeping sweetly behind me. I hope you got your last letter all right — this will probably go via Suez. I hope to get something from you at Vienna.

Give my love to all,

reserving what is necessary, a lot I hope,

*for

yourself.

Jack/