My dear Mummy,

Well, well, Christmas is coming & the goose is getting fat Please put a penny in the old man's hat If you haven't got a penny a ha'penny will do If you haven't got a ha'penny God bless you! And so say all of us. Here's luck & happy days & such like greetings & a merry Christmas ball. I put in a laborious morning task Saturday at Bumpus's getting getting you all fixed up, except Auntie; now Auntie really is a problem; I think I'll just have to send her out a postal order for a bob & ask her to buy something expensive for herself. Go the limit, Auntie! I'll say. I doubt whether you will get these books by Christmas by the way, although they were posted last Monday — I hear they go by parcel mail & I may have missed that — in which case you will have all the joys of anticipation for a week or two, & a sort of extra Christmas at the end of it. I shall also be sending out sometime in the future for Daddy a couple of pictures of his cobbler Erasamus, which I picked up in Germany last time I was there, & for yourself a picture by J.B. Yeats, published by the Cuala Press, which gives an authentic prophecy of my future. I made up a bit of poetry to go with this it goes thus:

Some coves grow up for to be Prime Ministers
And some, among whom I may cite Geoffrey & Keith as conspicuous examples, take up the load

Of marriage; but I will be a bloke that writes poetry
And walk along the road.

After all, there are few lives as happy, & after my time here it will do me to retire for a while close to the breast of Mother Nature (Jas Shaw Brown) or into the great stillness (J.E. Hale) & loaf & invite my soul for a bit. And a bloke who can read his own poetry to himself need never be at a loss for a source of innocent interest, amusement, & instruction. While I am on that subject I hope you will like my Christmas card of which I am also sending you a specimen. The idea struck me all of a sudden like one night & I said to next time I saw him, what about doing me a little pickcher for this here poem? And he said Yes, captain. The printing was done by the Cambridge University Press, now being at Clare College & having them well under his influence; the paper is a sort of Austrian semi hand made, to find which we had to comb out London; got it at Selfridge's finally. White paper doesn't look any good & we wanted one that would give a good impression of the bloke. He did a stunner one for himself too, a reminiscence of his Spanish tour; I'm sorry I haven't one to send out. There's no doubt that he shines at these little woodblocks. I am sending out some of Berrie's cards to Aunts, to. The people who published them for the last year did not do any this time; so she only had three designs printed as line-blocks, & has hand-coloured them. I am sending one to Auntie which you will see. The other two were the usual child with cradle & Flight into Egypt, which apparently command a greater sale than charming little things like this, but then, as Sir John Reith said in the words so much applauded by Daddy, I am convinced that England is a profoundly religious country. Anyhow the old ladies in the Trinley-Felixstowe district appear to be. So much for the Yule tide season. I hope I have not omitted to notice anybody in tangible form but then I at this distance of time & space I am getting a bit mixed as to how many relatives I have & how they are distinguished. As for nephews & nieces, I had to miss them all out, for fear of noticing one & omitting another, & causing thereby fierce pangs in the hearts of fond parents; but if you send me a list of them, names, ages, sex, & all other general information before I come home, I shall try to find something for each & every lad & lass, in due order & propriety: I suppose some of them are going to school by now.

I got a letter from Fay yesterday, saying he would publish my thesis with some excisions. This is what the cow says “I think we should be glad to publish it, provided you are willing that I should cut out a few sentences here & there which are perhaps of a facetious nature & seem not quite appropriate to me”. I'll say these blooming have a fine sense of the dignity of history — here's a cove spends his days & nights in labouriously thinking and humour & they want to cut it all out & say it'll be an improvement. I've half a mind to tell him to go to blazes & say no! I will not stoop to this! I'll go to the who have been bombarding me for months with
imploring inquiries. In any case, as he is going to send it to the printer as soon as I let him know definitely, you can expect a presentation copy in three or four months. I forgot to say there is to be a special edition of 50 copies on Japanese vellum number & signed by the author with a picture of him in the act of composition; it has not yet been decided what the price will be but it will be something pretty big & orders will now be received by the under — signed. By jingo : I must get them to send out a few copies to & try to work off same on patriotic students of their country's history. Or perhaps it would be better to send them to McGregor who caters for the high-brow population. We shall see, & I had better have a yap to my publishers about it. This Imperial studies series seems to be a bit of a washout, Newton wants to fork out £150 to have his thesis published in it — or perhaps he is only seeing how much he can take him down for. If he gets 150 out of me he will do a darn sight more than he's got any chance of doing. I think I'll keep on sending my historical writings to Fay in bundles of 100 foolscap pages & get them all published buckshee. Well, anyhow that & the Xmas card comprises all our adventures in that line for the last few weeks. Here's something else though. I borrowed a Hansard (N.Z.) from Campbell & read the report of the reading of the War Disabilities Removal Bill which made me so fed up that I sat down and wrote a long letter to the Post, about two columns of it. I don't suppose they'll publish it, but there's just a chance they will, as it will arrive somewhere about Xmas & the Editor may feel sentimental. I want it to get into the Post as their printing is the best; but I am asking the Editor if it is no good to him to send it to Daddy; will you therefore there is nothing doing there send it to the Dominion; if they also turn it down & you think it try the Auckland Herald; if no good try any one else you like: but a Wellington paper would be best. If no one will take it give it to the Spike, who will be glad to get it; I should like it to get into the Spike anyhow, & they wouldn't mind reprinting it. If Ern is sub-editor he ought to be able to fix this. Nobody gives a damn what a legislative Councillor says anyhow; but I dare say these aged half-wits are representative of a few thousand ; so do your best for me. I send out another copy of the letter to you direct in case anything goes wrong with the one I send to the Post. I might have made it shorter, but couldn't have done so & got the effect I wanted. No bread would have been better than half a loaf in this case.

I have been offered the chance of a job in a tentative sort of war in . A bloke is getting two years leave from Rhodes University College, Grahamstown, so there is a two years job going, which might become permanent. Newton has something to do with it & offered to mention my name in answer to an enquiry from the . So I said all right. I don't know anything about it yet, screw, what I should be teaching etc. But I hear that Grahamstown is a decent place, small, but capital of the Eastern Province of the Cape, & centre of education there; the College is the best in after Capetown. I shouldn't mind going there at all for two years to see & get first-rate experience; I might be able to hop into F.P.'s job after it. The catch is that the job starts next July; if I went out then I should lose a whole summer & half a winter here & in Europe; & I'm not so sure that I wouldn't do better to knock round France in that time. I should have to get my [unclear] thesis finished for certain by June, too. I want to do this anyhow if possible; but I'm not shook on rushing off immediately into a whirl of lectures, with no time to prepare anything. If I could go out at the end of the year it would just do me — that is, if I can't pick up another or one of those Yank grants here. I ought to stand a much better chance with something published. What I should like to do would be to get a job or a in the States for a couple of years. I'm sick of these cheap English sneers at Americans; when it comes to a choice between interesting people give me travelled colonists or Americans every time eg. McGrath, Duncan, Helen. The average English male or female gives a man the dingbats in comparison. I'm coming to the conclusion that the States is one of the most important things to study in this here world, [unclear: Babbilt & Elmarfanky] ridden as it may be. It might be pretty batty in some ways, but I doubt if on the whole it's worse than England or I understand the Foreign Relations Committee of the legislature is about on the same level as the . Well, I should like to know what you think of all this business. Can you stand my absence for a while longer? Or not? Put in the boot if you think I ought to come back.

The foregoing seem to have been the most important things that have happened recently. I haven't been for a single concert this week owing to Xmas mails & such-like. There was a first-rate Leuen concert last week, Schubert, including an octet — string quartet, double-bass, horn, clarinet, & bassoon. Well, you couldn't ask anything better than this. One of the good choirs here the , was having a four days orgy at the beginning of the last week & finished up with Bach's B minor Mass, so I went to that & dragged in a couple more. Then the Armistice night concert was good — choral works by Stanford & Parry, & Elger's Spirit of England, which he conducted himself; & it went well. Then Sir H. Wood conducted Chopin's Funeral March — it sounds better on the piano & the last movement, the choral part, of the Symphony. Balfour read Rericle's Funeral Oration poetry well, except for falling over himself in the middle & getting into a frightful mess, from which he extricated himself ungracefully. An old codger he's getting now. Sir Ian Hamilton is a funny bird, with a high pitched parade-ground tenor bark; quite the opposite of anything I ever expected from him. He might with advantage put in a bit of time polishing his voice as well as his sentences. I think I said in my last letter that he was to read let us now praise etc. He snapped it. Funny coves you meet over here. On Saturday afternoon I went to & heard some good Bach stuff — they have started their Saturday afternoon concerts again.
On Tuesday night we had this much heralded Seminar dinner, a flash affair, 4/- each. I you will be pleased to hear, did all the secretariat & financial work, sent out notices, collected the dubs & handed some over to Madame with many flattering remarks. Besides manhandling the piano for a while & the tune of swing low sweet chariot & Johnny came down to Hilo, & telling my famous joke. We had it in a little place off Soho Square & went right through from Hors d'oeuvres via roast chicken & coffee. You will see if you want to do a thing well you can't do better than place it in the hands of me & my young American cobber — she arranged the sequence of food. Curse these things though — 4/- would cover 4 days' lunches at the Food Reform joint. I generally get a meal there for 4d these days & spend what I save at Bertorelli's on the evening meal. The soup there is the best I've tasted since I left home.

I haven't read anything lately beyond a couple of things in Garnett's “Twilight of the Gods” which is now out in another of these 3/6 editions. Did you ever strike it? Some of it is jolly good stuff. The Brook Kerith is out in a new edition, extensively revised, according to the cover flap, or re-orchestrated, according to George Moore, which I suppose means that about 2 words have been changed. Only 10/6 this time. I have at present a copy on approval but haven't looked at it yet. except to see if the type is straight on the page, which it isn't. W.H. Davies has a new book of verse out, which is tripe. By a natural transition of course I come to — I came to the last one of my lot the other day bar one or two I haven't been able to find, but I am still fishing for stuff I want & which ought to be somewhere, though I don't know where, so far without success. This is the sort of thing that annoys a cove. — I got an invitation to the private view of Alfred G Hopkins' pottery this year & went today at lunchtime. I haven't bought any thing yet so cheer up; I may back on Saturday & blow in a quid or two. He has evolved a red glaze, the first in the history of salt-glazing & wanted me to fork out £100 for his star specimen. No Alfie, I said, not today; but I shall write home tonight & perhaps me Father will buy it for me Mother. Well he seemed quite grateful for that, so if you want it you had better send a cable. Tragic to be hard up in Bond Street, ain't it? I think I might anticipate my Xmas mail a bit. It's a thing I know I am safe with, with you anyhow, as you don't mind a cove spending his money on anything as long as he doesn't spend it on books.

I'm glad to note a pretty cheerful letter from you both, I must say you displayed excellent taste in your birthday present to Daddy; couldn't have given him a better thing. May it inspire him & lead him ever on to greater heights! Footprints or face-prints) great men leave behind them etc. Your half of the letter starts very characteristically “After Daddy's screed, there doesn't seem much more to say.” Whichever of you starts second invariably says that. You say also that you are astonished at the amount of intoxicating liquor “all sorts of rubbish” I have been absorbing. Wotcher getting at? Nothing that wasn't of the best quality went down my throat; & my dearest wish is to get back to Paris & Munich & get some more of it. Never been drunk in my life. Always a moderate drinker & know when to stop (NB. let this get into the hands of the Dentons) Nothing doing with Mrs Bennet's cobber unless she forks out a good bit, me being a busy man & a historian, not a mere (blast the word!) . Anyhow she hasn't written to me yet. I am glad you are getting out into the sun & that there is some sun to get out into — you seem to be having a pretty good spring from all I hear. The weather here varies from bad to worse with occasional incursions into worst. Not much rain so far, but the water in the morning pretty well gives you the rigor mortis in your bath. It snowed in some parts of London twice last week & this morning we had an excellent fog. Still as long as it doesn't rain its all right. I shouldn't mind hopping down the garden & looking round for a bit, or having a sun bath of a Sunday morning. Not for the dweller in Bloomsbury. Which reminds me — you say that if I read a book on by Pember Reeves I should want to go back straight away. Funny thing he doesn't go back himself, isn't it? He must have some objection to the country he doesn't let escape into the book.

I tender special congratulations to Daddy (1) for taking to shoes (2) for being elected a vice-patron (a of the (this is a new subdivision of honour to me — I suppose it means a bloke you can cadge books from when you're too mean to buy them yourself) (3) on being asked to join the Historical Society. He might like to read my thesis to it, in sections, à la his old Sunday morning sermons. Miss Newton would admire, anyhow. You might give her my kind regards by the way. — I gather that the kid who gets more like me the fatter she gets is Anne Mary. It will get a bit embarrassing if any more of these bear such a strong resemblance to their uncle.

I think I shall now stop, tendering the usual Yule tide greetings to one & all, as I started off by doing. And especially I send my love to you. Well, so long

Jack
P.S. Smashed the frame of my horn-rims last week. Four days after smashed pince-nez. 12/6 for new frames, but a flasher pair than the old ones. Happy days!

Space left here for the Reader to add her own notes. No, I'll add a bit of verse for you, not much good, except as a filler

Leaf-Burning
In all the squares the leaf-fires burn & burn;
Among the trees the smoke drifts & is thinned
While these brown multitudes are raked & turn
To nothing but sweet smell, & haunt the wind.

Spring, summer come, the town is bravely dressed
In her new green, & shakes her lovely head;
But now in autumn's mists that clothe her best
She floats, & soon will be bereft & dead.

London, October 1927.

Two blue identical German postage stamps. Handwritten text appears underneath "Illustrations given for mix."

Illustrations given for mix.