My dear Mummy,

I hope that by the time you get this your eye will have been fixed for a long time. If you don’t look out you will have to be employing a young lady companion, high speed reader preferred, to get through your banked up piles of books. I do hope you have given it a good long rest, though — no use starting off too soon & having it bunged up again. Take a lesson from your general status & don’t take any risks. I am glad to learn that the quacks give so favourable a report of you generally, & I wish I could have any faith that you would continue to earn their commendation. But I suppose one of these fine afternoons you’ll be taking it into your head to go out & play golf, & off you’ll go with Auntie for a caddie & Auntie Win to look for the lost lost balls. Still you might try & remember in the intervals that your real job is to look after yourself. — You seem to be having a regular housefull [sic] most of the time, & it is perhaps just as well that Ern & I got out — what with Auntie & Auntie Win & Frannie & 1 female child it must be a merry party. I pity Daddy; though I suppose you were more or less in the same position when you were alone among five males. Still we were all relatively well-behaved; now I don’t see how in the least you could call a household as above-listed well-behaved. And I suppose half the time the place is full of other aunts, together with attendant ghosts, table-rappers, jokes, daughters, tales & yarns of every description. It seems a great pity to me, as a matter of fact, that the pair of you can’t get right away from everybody in a smaller house, with a good hefty housekeeper to look after you, room for Daddy’s books, & a garden for you to sit in. I think you’ve always had far too much of a crowd around you & all depending on you. I trust no relative who may chance to read this will take offence — if you think they will & can’t bear to hurt anybody’s feelings you know what to do. I used to think that once we four got out & got either jobs or scholarships of our own it would lessen the burden on Daddy a bit; but so far as I can see, & learn from Ern, that hasn’t happened yet. I hope at least that Auntie Laura doesn’t still write short notes of 10 pages to you, & that you won’t break your neck over Joan’s wedding, or any other silly tripe like that. I wish to God I was getting £1000 a year & could pension you both off — you could easily get enough for the house & section to get another place out at the Hutt or somewhere. What you need is quiet; & you can’t get quiet with trams tearing down past your window & a ceaseless stream of sisters & daughters-in-law inside. What a damned nuisance this money is! — Here’s Daddy too goes & eats pie at the Savage Club & what could he expect but a rebellious stomach — the truth is he ought to have had a swig of beer as well, & the two evil influences would probably have counteracted each other. Personally I think he would get more fun out of his book & (if he must smoke) a fag in front of the fire than out of the festive side of the Rotary Club. I have already suggested his that he should entertain Walter Nash or Peter Fraser by the fire-side. I don’t think much of these Orphans & Savages myself — but I may be judging on over-slight acquaintance. I see Daddy says that the fatal evening was a very good one except for the pie; & God forbid that I should lecture my elders on how to spend their nights. They never did me on how to spend mine. Of course I was always a model boy & home bright & early with full information on where I had been & what I had been doing, not like Keith & others I could name.

I agree with Daddy that the Holland Nelson combination is a funny one. Ern doesn’t seem to be a whole hearted backer of Richardson, though, in spite of the Mandates Commission. Nice little subject for an thesis some day. — well, well, so poor old Horace Ward has slipped his cables! — none too soon for the old man, I suppose; he couldn’t have been leading a very cheerful life. I always meant to drop him a note when he retired, but it’s too late now. He had his peculiarities, & very strong they were, but he was a nice old feller underneath his scales. — Father Marchant too — well, it’s no use regretting him. — Many thanks to Daddy for care & attention to my books. Don’t let him break his back over them, though. I hear Auntie Win has my room, & has it crammed full of furniture of no particular use; I hope she remembers that she is surrounded by so much precious life-blood of so many master-spirits & baths in the bath-room. I shudder at the idea of flying soap & water. You might give her a hint that the sleeping-porch would be a much healthier & airier place for her to doss in, as well as affording a lot more space for her belongings. But perhaps that is exclusively reserved for Frannie & child while Keith is off gallivanting with tunnels & stewardesses. What a thing it is to be an abandoned wife! There’s an experience I can’t remember that you ever had. I hear from Ern that Frannie is dead nuts on making Keith push the pram all the way up Northland — good exercise, but if I were Keithles I would
push her into a bus & take two for self & family. Nothing like democracy for the young. — News about Mrs. Mansfield very interesting, I must say; I should like to know what brought her to that. Of course you didn’t know her as well as I did. I wonder if she is still interested in the same place: I might write to her some time. This finishes comment on Daddy’s letter.

Well, I got those Clarendon folios. It seemed too much of a sin to leave them for somebody else, huge as they are, & expensive as their transport may hereafter prove. Little 3/6 editions are all right in their way, but after all, give me a book, even if you have to borrow a brass eagle from a church to read it on. I have been much tempted to buy a fine Bacon (Henry VII) £11 & an equally fine Raleigh’s History of the World £9; both very good folios, but I haven’t. In fact the only thing I have bought besides the Clarendon has been Alice in Wonderland, which I saw today in a new cheap edition for 2/-, & accordingly fell. Still a cove has to buy a book sometimes, or he would get out of practice, & the autumn publishing season being now in full blast, it is perfect torture to me to go into a bookshop. It is a real relief to have a birthday present to buy. I thought I might wait a long time to get the Erasmus I foreshadowed in my last for Daddy, so I relieved my feelings to-day on Greville’s Life of Sir Philip Sidney for him, which I hope will arrive in good order & fairly soon. There was an article on Greville in the a week or so ago, which I suppose you read; & this may therefore come topically, besides being a nice little book. I am sending in the same parcel this month’s Life & Letters, which has some good articles in it, & a swag of Low’s cartoons. Alan might like to see these; they may possibly give him a point or two. He doesn’t seem to have broken out into political cartoons yet. Does take any interest in Low? He has an enormous reputation over here. Campbell swears by him — need I say more?

There hasn’t been a great deal happening over here in the last fortnight — Ern’s end you will have heard of from him, so I needn’t enlarge on that. We have been lucky in having Elsie & Kathleen to do the housekeeping, such as it is; but Kathleen being due to leave for next Friday, that happy state of things will be coming to an end, & Elsie will be following Ern into a cheaper lodging. These landladies are wolves. — £2.2 those girls have been paying for one room since they came back from Cornwall; & this is not what is reckoned an extravagant price round here. They & Ern have gone up to Cambridge today for a couple of days; I, being able to afford neither the time nor the fare, remain behind to write my letter & thesis. I have been mucking around at the lately, but not finding much for my pains. I did read Henry Taylor’s Autobiography all through instead of just the Colonial Office parts — you know he was a clerk there for about 50 years, & only pursued the Life Poetic in his spare time. Of which he seemed on the whole to have a good deal, in spite of all he says. If you haven’t read it, it is very interesting — all I skipped were the large chunks from his own poems & a few descriptions of his obscure cobbers. It has a lot of good yarns too. E.g. Lord Melbourne said on Gabbe’s death “I am so glad when one of these fellows dies, because then one has his works complete on one’s shelf & there’s an end of him!” Southey spoke French “without shame or remorse.” A certain Bishop Philpotts on Lord Normandy (see Captain Hobson &c) “My lords, I despise no man, & therefore not the noble marquis.” Gent to fat lady in crowded concert: “I am afraid, madam, you have nothing to sit upon.” “No, it is not that, but I have nowhere to put it.” I suppose you know Sir George Cornwall Lewis’ remark, that life would be tolerable enough except for its amusements. Taylor describes himself in society in words that I take for my own easier work? Lighter work, perhaps I should say.

Pugnacity. &c. &c. I must rush down to the Post Office now & send off Daddy’s parcel.

Which being done I resume. These yarns are the worms you turn up in digging over the stony ground of a thesis. Of the thesis itself I am heartily sick, — or rather I preserve quite a lively interest in that part of it that I’ve done, I don’t mind revising it, but the part I haven’t done gives me the pip. That is, I wish the West Indies were at the bottom of the sea from which they should never have been allowed to emerge. I’ve got a pile of notes for them big enough to write a small thesis from by themselves, even without the stuff I can’t find, & all that the sight of them inspires in me is an intense distaste. However, you needn’t start to think of remedies for this state of mind, because by the time you read this, either the chapter will be finished or I shall have succumbed, & in either case condolences will be wasted. Also by the time I get an answer to this the whole thing will be done, barring fires & earthquakes, thank God. I am easy about getting it published too — I told you that the Oxford was a good chance in my last, I think; now Newton comes forward & says he’s just had a letter from the Yale University Press who are looking out for stuff to publish. So if the fails me, America will have to come to the rescue again. I sincerely trust, for Daddy’s sake, that the will oblige; but if not, the Yale people are about as good as any in the world, & bring out their stuff well. Of course, it would suit me better to be published in England; but again the handles all the Yale stuff here. So whatever happens the outlook in that direction is fairly bright, & it should even cost me the $25 I am on the point of sending over to Sidney B. Fay. Grasping hounds these banks are too — for a postal order for that much the American Express [unclear: Co] here charged me £5.4..1. Nothing for nothing you get out of them, & damn little for 6d.

A thought strikes me — has Daddy ever thought of setting up for himself as an auditor? Wouldn’t that be easier work? Lighter work, perhaps I should say.
The session is starting again next week — my year here! — for I was the anniversary of our landing. We shall be without the guiding hand of Newton till or after: — he is going out to India to advise the Punjab something or other on something or other — I asked him whether he wanted a private, but he said he was taking his wife with him. Not a very good cove to send out there to advise, I should think, for tactlessness is his strong point. Still some deity may watch over him, & I hope for the credit of the white race it will. In the meantime his absence suits us, or anyhow me, all right. We shall have Williamson, a decent bird, to preside at the seminars, & possibly may have some fun. Meanwhile the proms are coming to an end; tonight’s is the second the last, & after this week therefore I may get a bit more work done. There are “a tremendous number of other concerts coming off though; it looks as if it will be as bad as the first winter I was here. You would be surprised at the way Bach is rushed; I went along last week at my usual time & couldn’t get near the place. This was partly because Myra Hess was playing the piano concertos, & she is very popular; but they turned away as many as got in. Every other Wednesday when Bach has been done the hall has been packed. Brahms is a good draw too; & Wagner & Beethoven always fill up the place. So you might say that the only nights when the hall isn’t pretty well crammed are those when the more “popular” stuff is done.

The weather is getting very autumal. Mists in the morning & at night; an evening chill, & the bath-water in the morning a prophecy of the worst things experienced already. But the rain has held off so far, & long may it do so. We went out to Virginia Water last Sunday & walked to Windsor, about 5-6 miles; watched goats stand on their hindlegs & eat acorns off an oak-tree; brought a bag of acorns back for the squirrel in Russell Square (whom accordingly we have not yet seen since we did so); picked a lot of blackberries & were ordered politely but firmly back to the road by a ranger of sorts (or he may have been Geo V out for a walk inco). It seems you can’t even pick blackberries in a park in this country without infringing the proprieties. I see that Victoria put up an enormous Statue of Albert there too, presented to her by some body of dotty women or other. The old lady’s motto must have been Every open space to have its Albert, & if possible, two. She pretty nearly succeeded in England too. The Albert Hall of has one on each side. — The Sunday before that we went down to the again, but I forget what we looked at this time — it wasn’t carpets, or furniture, or books — oh, I know what it was — it was all of those in moderate quantities, Morris’s stuff & some of his tapestries; but mainly watercolours, of which they have some very good specimens. Also took Ern to see Rima & Peter Pan & the orators in Hyde Park & so on & brought him back in the Tube; so he saw a good deal in his first two days — Thanks for sending over the books by him; will you also thank kind donors of cake, shortbread, cocoanut ice &c for same, pending individual treatment. As a matter of fact I have not yet succeeded in disentangling who all these people were, & whether the cake &c were Ern’s or mine. Except for the cocoanut ice, which must infallibly have come from Auntie Sis, & for which I render her all my gratitude. That about finishes off this instalment.

Take care of both of yourselves, & be assured of my continued very much love

Jack/

Wot pris this?
A library-trunk with room for typewriter travelling bag in supple leather & toilet case