My dear Daddy,

The usual thanks for your last letter, of 5 May, or rather, more than the usual thanks, it being my birthday letter. I feel rather humble when you yourself thank me so much for my letters; you don’t seem to consider that yours have been just as regular over just as long a period, & that you have had a good deal less time to write them in than I have had. Looking back, I seem to myself really to have put up a very poor performance seeing what I owe you. It seems little to repay you & Mummy for what you have given me. — I was thinking by the way, but forgot to say in my last letter that my book will still have the same dedication when it is published, for it must get published some day if I have to shanghai a publisher to do it — “To & ” I could never alter it now.

Thanks for the Carlyle bit about Stephen; it is very interesting to have such an ex-cathedra judgement, & I may find an opportunity of using it. There has been an article about Stephen in a new American Journal of History recently by a cove who has picked up some very good material, but does not put it together too well. Someone told me he was writing a book on the subject; so after the lapse of twenty years or so I may be able to step in & rewrite it for him with the addition of whatever exclusive information, if any, I may have myself. I think it’s a pity Leslie or James Fitzjames never left a decent long account of the old man; apparently they took the view that it wasn’t everybody’s business. If you ever come across Leslie’s Life of though, there is a rather interesting account in the first chapter or so of the whole family, with a good deal of attention to the James. Carlyle didn’t seem to think much of his Essays in Ecclesiastical Biography, but they are rather interesting still, as the expression of a the mind of a very thoughtful & broad-minded evangelical. When he went to Cambridge as Regius of Modern History he was assailed by one blithering fool over the hell-fire question; but the attack didn’t seem to cut much ice; the vice-Chancellor of Cambridge being a good deal more tolerant than King’s College, London apparently. I think I told you of the movement to get a F. D. Maurice Chair of Theology there - it makes me laugh whenever I think of it. God knows how many more theologians they want there; I should think a better thing for the Parsons would be a practical worker in intelligence-tests. — Thank you too for the cuttings. Everybody seems to be very keen on the study of N. Z. history — at least, [unclear: H. G.] Miller, Nellie Good, Scholefield, & perhaps F. P. W. do. Miller of course may be acting merely as devil’s advocate, but he does seem to be a bit of a holy Joe in his public life. I notice it never seemed to occur to anybody to propose an E. G. Wakefield lectureship in History at a good fat screw — perhaps as a member of the Committee, or Council, or High Priesthood of the Historical. You might be instrumental in engineering this praiseworthy object. I do not doubt that if P. J. Smith got his giant brain on to the subject something could be made of it. Perhaps however he is entirely wedded to the drama these days — I understand he has at last had an extravaganza produced. It is interesting to learn also that there is a symphony orchestra in . It looks as if the difficulty soon may be not to get me back to but to keep me out of the country. I don’t think there is much more to say about the contents of your letter; I gathered from it & from Keith’s, for which you might thank him — I will do so myself next mail — that you had been having a pretty rotten time. However I did not need much telling to know that , & I won’t enlarge on it. Will you thank Auntie also for her note & birthday present; I wrote to Auntie Win this mail, just to keep things all square between them, but she shall get a letter herself very soon.

The 2 + 30/- turned up all right. I won’t reiterate thanks; but it may steady your bank balance if I say I don’t intend to take any more degrees for a few years. I have been considering what to get, & I have pretty well decided to add both lots together & get the Shakespeare Head Plutarch, if I can find a decent copy. It is a very good set; but those Blackwell books have very often one bad fault which most books seem to have in this machine-ridden age — the pages are folded so badly that the print frequently rides up or down hill on the page, & I am getting so pernickety [sic] that these things annoy me damnably. At the same time as I said in my last, the thin-paper Pepys is very attractive, & so is the new Sir Browne, though that has the same fault f as the Plutarch. It is annoying when they ask £4 or £5 for a set, to have two or three volumes like this. Did I ever say anything about that Shakespeare they were trying to work off on you at Whitcombe’s? They talk about the marvellously low prices of those things, but there’s a good deal of eye-wash about the it all. They may be
marvellously low prices, but not for the average book-collector. At the same time, it is a bit comic that they should be obtainable in Some of them, at prices far below what collectors who can’t get on to the original subscribers’ lists have to pay for them here. Do you know I hardly ever see a book? I did see a show of them in Bumpus’ window just after I got here; & the Milton a few weeks afterwards, & I know were you can get a Milton now if you own the Midland Bank; & I saw the Dante at Oxford. But with the exception of their Restoration dramatists, I haven’t seen any other of their big books — not the ghost of a shadow of the Shakespeare. I think publisher & subscribers must form a pretty close corporation. — Well, this is a long repetition of what I believe I have already said before often enough. Of course I should except from this diatribe the small Blake & Donne. Ern walked in yesterday morning with the Donne as a birthday present, which was very decent of him — I had been wanting it for a long time. He is a generous cove. I also received on this occasion the new Gibbon’s Journal from Elsie, with permission to change. I have not yet decided what to do; it is a good book, but rather expensive at the price. Finally Mary Casey of the School bookshop, & Duncan joined in presenting me with A Soldier’s Diary of the Great War, a little book which has a good reputation. Translations of German war-books by the way continue to flock into the market. Ernest & Elsie combined to turn on fruit-salad & cream & a bottle of booze for tea, to which Duncan also came, so I did pretty well for one away from home. — the first birthday party of that size I have had since 1926. Mrs Hannah, unwitting of the occasion, had already had me out to lunch again, so all in all I did pretty well yesterday.

I don’t know that there is a great deal to report apart from this. There hasn’t been a job turn up yet. The thing at Portsmouth has gone to someone else. I have been asked to attend at the University next Friday for an interview in connection with the travelling studentship I entered for; which may mean something or nothing. I’m not getting excited about it anyhow; as whatever happens in that particular business it can only mean further puzzlement. A year in Paris would be all right, but at the end of it I mightn’t know exactly where I stood, any more than I do now. I haven’t heard anything at all of the Geneva project, as the head serang in that department is working on the minorities report for the league. I hope he will bethink himself of this infinitesimal minority some time. I had a note from Willie tonight about that Pacific exploration book; the publishers are now sending out contracts to be signed; there is no time-limit, but they would like my volume by the beginning of 1931. If I come back to & can’t get a job immediately, I could work on this in the meantime at the Turnbull. If by any chance I am out of England & not in There may be difficulties. However I think I should do it if humanly possible. I have done nothing about publication of the yet. I may as well revise it before trying it on anyone else, & that is a fair sized job, & I don’t feel like starting off on it at present in this uncertain position; though superficially that might seem the best way of filling in the time. But I want to come to it with an absolutely fresh & merciless mind; & meanwhile there is a lot to see & do in England still. So much for work or prospects thereof.

I don’t seem to have read much. I finished the Forsyte Saga last week; & I am very eager to read the next cartload. Thinking back to the Man of Property itself, it seems to me to be a most remarkably good novel, in balance, & construction, & style & effect. Taken in conjunction with the rest of the book, it seems unfinished; but I am wondering what I would have thought of it if I had read it as it first appeared by itself in 1906 (was it?). We were strolling around Kensington a bit this afternoon & struck Montpelier Square, where Soames lived — a jolly nice square it is too. All those Forsytes did for themselves pretty well in the way of housing. — I think for sheer beauty of writing the Indian Summer of a Forsyte takes the palm. I never read any Galsworthy before this spasm. I think it is a good thing to keep some books till you are fairly mature, & then to get your teeth into them properly. I have also read a little book of essays by Galsworthy, Castles in Spain, in Heinemann’s Windmill Library 3/6 — it has some interesting reminiscences of Conrad in it; & another interesting essay on his own faith as a novelist, among other things. I never knew there was so much humour in him. — I have also read Gentlemen Prefer Blondes, which is funny in spots; & Virginia Woolf’s Orlando, which is hard to criticise; nor is it much good doing so — you just accept it, as Walt Whitman & Ella Wheeler Wilcox did Life. Mrs Hannah presented me with a Tauchnitz edition. I believe you were enquiring about the book from Ern — I don’t know whether you would like me to send this out. Or would it be too much like driving a motor-lorry through the translations? That seems about all I have read. I got Eddington’s Swarthmore Lecture, Science & the Unseen World, but that day, but haven’t taken it in yet. And the other day I was peevish to notice a new cheap 6/- edition of Tawney’s Religion & the Rise of Capitalism. What with the books you don’t buy & never get a chance at again, & the ones you do buy & that afterwards come out in cheap editions, a man leads a pretty mournful life.

I had Mrs Hannah here to tea on Saturday afternoon last, after which we went together to see Sybil Thorndike in Jane Clegg & the Medea. The acting in Jane Clegg, most of it, was superb, especially Clegg, Mr Morrison, & Mrs Clegg senior. Have you read the play? It is good though not great stuff. The Medea was staged very well on the whole, good posing & lighting Sybil at times looked magnificent. But the thing, though impressive at times, was also at times very funny & pretty boring, at least to me; also considerably
long-winded. It might go down better in Greek; for the translation, though beautiful in parts, is undeniably if inevitably wordy. However it was interesting to see Greek drama for the first time. About the only show I have been to besides this has been a Philharmonic Choir concert of modern English stuff, very good indeed.

Well, I don’t suppose I need point out the importance of the election to you. Lloyd George seems very peeved. The fool isn’t losing any time in getting going, & is generally regarded as being a very good one. Most people have expressed some doubts of Henderson as Foreign, but at Laski’s on Sunday I heard that he was about the best man in the country for the job — a tremendous worker, a wonderful organiser, & thoroughly familiar with Europe & the coves who run it. Geneva will be very pleased, as he is greatly admired there. He is the sort of cove who doesn’t mind who gets the credit, as long as the work gets done, so Macdonald will probably do most of the speechifying. It is owing to this that Henderson is not so well-known or appreciated, but he is the man behind the Labour Party. All of which is very cheering, if it doesn’t quite tally with John Burns’s estimate of him. [unclear: J. H.] Thomas wanted the Foreign Office, but agreed to work on the unemployment question instead — about equally important. Most of the other important jobs are in pretty good hands. Macdonald is a very good Jowitt’s going across & taking the Attorney Generalship has annoyed the die-hard Tories & Liberals immensely. [unclear: U. G.] said he wouldn’t comment upon it — there was no need to in view of the universal nausea it has created — I haven’t noticed this personally.

Just before I close down! have you considered whether it may be possible to chuck Shanlands’ now or get six months off & come to England for a trip? I think it would do you a world of good. But I won’t say more about it now till I see what is going to become of us all on this side. Think it over though, even if it is only a bare possibility. — Well, I had better knock off or have another walk to the Post Office. I think about you a good deal these days — the memory of all our lives together is very dear to me. My birthday seems to throw it all up in ever higher relief. God bless you my Father.

with much love

Jack/