

Near Cape Town
Dec. 5th. 1940.
Dear Everyone,

The steward brings me fruit and tea in the morning to assist me to rise. When it is bananas or oranges the going is good, but if I see an apple on the tray, with my hand on my heart and a warm feeling within, "Now," say I, "shall I render a lasting benefit to the ship by consuming this apology for fruit." And so to breakfast, a light one this morning, some iced orange juice, two Shredded Wheat, two eggs and plenty of bacon, sultana fritters and treacle, and toast, marmalade, butter and coffee without count. I didn't have the lamb chop or the veal, thinking to be abstemious, but I must not think this thought too often.

The Lady Superintendent of the Y.W.C.A. in Durban is a Full Gospeller. A few days ago at their morning prayers she prayed thus for Missions, "O God, we know that Thou art white, but that Thou lovest Thy black children etc.etc Amen."

O yes, we were in Durban for a Sunday, so I went to St. Paul's Church, and before the 11 o'clock service the Vicar came down the aisle to me and said, "Surely you must be one of the Wansey Clan?" Believe me or believe me not, you could have knocked me over with a feather. His name is T.G.Vernon Inman, and after a very vicarial lunch I saw a copy of the Selwyn Calander on his study table. He told me that he had been Captain of the Boat Club, but only for one day, and no-one was more surprised than he, for he was elected in the same way that in my time Billings was elected President of the Foxing and Bencing Club, namely, for the reason that he could neither fox nor bence.

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Today on rising, we were treated to a sight for kings. Northward, above the morning mist, towered the majesty of Table Mountain, the first and noblest landmark of the Seven Seas. Beyond it lies the Cape of Good Hope, whose rugged peak still kindles mariners' hearts to high endeavour, as in the days when, tempest-tossed and sick with foreboding, intrepid Da Gama first set eager eyes upon it.

In Mossel Bay is a black island-rock, on which seals sport themselves. The water is fine and clear, and in its blue depths are hammer-headed sharks; not one, but four or five, taking no fright at the ship, but rather girdling with lazy scorn the uncouth hulk of her. I gave John Holliday one of my lines, and forthwith he hooked two of these many-toothed monsters of the deep. But what did it boot? it booted nought at all; for one brief moment they chafed and champed at the slender thread that had them ensnared, then angrily they ground their teeth, and hook and fair line parted company, whilst dived the monster to its encoralled lair.

At Freetown, it is bruited, there is a fair green golf-course, but whether the Sport of Kings is also the sport of sea-tossed and wandering Clerks, I dare not tell. All that I do dare to tell is that I have purchased, with alien gold, six fair Clubs, in a fair leathern Pouch fitly Encas'd, and of prepared rubber spheres not a few. The whole costing somewhat less than six silver Crowns.

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I have had a week in Cape Town. Arriving on Saturday night, I was able to be in Church on Sunday; and the Vicar, a certain Father Shapter, took me a grand drive down to Cape Point, some 50 miles each way, on Monday. On Tuesday, he took me to a Clerical Society meeting, where I met Father Bull of the Cowley Fathers, and also a young priest who was passing through on his way home from Masasi, and who was introduced as Father Lamprell. He came up to me, and said he had been at Westcott House with John, and of course I remembered the name.

And now I am on my last lap to Freetown, in a very desirable passenger-cargo ship. There are three Hindoo gentlemen and myself occupying space for a hundred passengers, so we are hardly crowded. At meals, the three Hindoo wallahs sit at a corner table, across a vista of empty tables and chairs, and I am with the Chief Officer, the Chief Engineer, and the ship's Surgeon. And, of course, the Captain when he joins us. The Surgeon is over 70 years of age, and looks it: the grinders are ceasing, because they are few, and the keepers of the door are trembling, especially when 'there is porridge for breakfast. He was talking to me the other night about his schooldays. "Very scholarly masters we had," he said, nodding his head with conviction, "very scholarly indeed. And the strange thing was, they all committed suicide... all of them ... There was one I remember... rheumatoid arthritis he had... he used to teach with his elbows out, and jerking himself forward... like this ... just like this... he committed suicide... Then there was the Arithmetic Master... algebra, mathematics, you know, its all one... he went, too... remarkable... remarkable.....

Another time, "Wonderful... wonderful... to live [Page 4] in the odour... the odour, of sanctity... wonderful, wonderful...

Yesterday at lunch-time, the talk turned to vivisection and dogs. "But they are very, very careful; they use Chloroform you know... you know, Chloroform..... I used Chloroform on a dog, once; it was a Dane, a Great Dane, O, a fine animal. It belonged to a Titled Lady. And do you know what I got for three-quarters of an hour? A guinea, a paltry guinea!" Here the Chief Engineer turned round: "I shouldn't mind getting a paltry guinea for some of the hours I spend with all the worry of this ship on my shoulders. And when we get to port I don't even get thanked... just, H'm, you're back, are you?" "Still" I said feeling propitiatory, "being a titled lady, she probably had an enormous number of paltry guineas, and might have spared some more".... "Paltry guineas', my hat!" exclaimed the Chief Officer afterwards to me, as we were going up on deck, "A guinea an hour for me would do all right. Twenty-four paltry guineas a day is about what I want."

I play solo whist with the Hindoo gentlemen, I drink small beer with the wireless operator, I read Detective Stories and beat out halting melodies on the piano from the Daily Express Community Song Book. A very fine piano it is... very fine Indeed... the tone, you know, the tone... O wonderful, wonderful....

We are due in on Christmas Eve, but I do not think they are expecting me till the festival of Holy Innocents. Who "They" are, or how many of "Them" there are I do not know. The Chief Officer says about four hundred, but the Chief Engineer says last time he was in Freetown there were only twenty, and ten of them were just about to leave. You will notice from the map that my parish is adjoining that of

Timbuctoo, but as I am no longer [Page 5] officially a Missionary, I trust I shall escape the clutches and predatory habits of the guileful denizen of those parts, the Cassowary of evil fame.

A remarkable bird is the Bummock;
He sits all day on his hummock,
And picks out the eyes
Of the web-footed flies
That settle in swarms on his Stummock.

Really, the flora and fauna - especially the fauna, you know - of these Tropical Regions, is quite remarkable... O quite..... quite..... yes, wonderful..... wonderful.....

One more piece of news has just come in: at this very moment, unless I am mistaken, we are Crossing the Line, so, as the Chief Officer said at lunch-time, from now we start going downhill..... Did I hear someone say the style of my narrative was doing the same? Then I must lay aside my garrulous Quill for the nonce.

From
Joseph