

14/3/57

1392 Orillia St., Ottawa, Ont.

March 10, 1957

Dear Wesley,

I have just re-read your letter approaching Greenmantle, Feb. 13. Of course I meant to have something waiting to greet you in England after the long voyage ended. But I put it off too long, and then got sick. The old complaint - but I am feeling considerably better to-day. Hope it lasts. When I mentioned to Eric that I was about to write you he said at once, "For Heaven's sake, tell him to enjoy himself in England, and not feel he has to rush home in a couple of weeks." All this after reading of the urgency Father has been putting in his letters to you for some time, I believe. To me he says "Mother is not really sick, just forgetful and full of hallucinations". To you he says she is dangerously ill and resents your plan to stay in Eng. a month. I think I know what his ideas are. Mother sleeps a great deal, and is abnormal in several ways. Also she is subject to "weak spells". I expect he thinks any one of these may carry her off, and he may be right. If he didn't urge you to return with speed, and Mother died, he would feel he should have urged you. Now I haven't actually seen her since last August when she had rallied substantially from her June illness. But I suspect she may go on as she is for months or years. The doctor tells Father never to leave her alone, which is reasonable because she wanders, and does many irresponsible things. However Alice or I ~~is~~ ^{is, am} available in any emergency, although Alice has recently started working in the office of an

insurance company. When she wrote me she had been there only 4 days, so the novelty was still on, but I think she will like it in the long run. Likely the expenses attendant on feeding, clothing and educating (to say nothing of housing) four large-size youngsters, make the pay envelope very acceptable at the Cowan ménage. However Alice's primary motive in going is work was probably to get out of the house. Can't say I blame her, especially with the non-cooperation she gets from husband and children.

Our children - Alastair especially - have heard of your latest travels with great interest, especially since Jay has a small globe received on his last birthday. Of course they have little or no conception of distance. Going from Ottawa to Delhi is just about as far as Hildegard's mind can stretch, in fact it's the ultimate in a long journey. It is difficult to remember that Jay was smaller than Mark when you quit these parts, so that "Uncle Wesley" is a sort of fable to them all.

You will be astonished of course, that we look much older. Alice surprised me after 2 years in Winnipeg even. But she has had more than her share of the worrying to do, thanks to a selfish husband. And me - I always say that it's my almost-chronic state of ill health that has aged me, and what better explanation? However we shall all be looking about for a fatted calf to kill in your honour, even if you don't rate as a prodigal.

We are planning to go to Delhi for Easter, as we have done for several years past. Being late in the spring we should have fairly balmy weather, so that the children can be herded out of doors without too much fanfare, & thus spare the quiet Delhi halls too much reverberation. You will have been through such an astonishing variety of climates in a short time, that talk of the weather must leave you fairly unimpressed. Right now we're at the "shaw in the daytime, freeze at night" stage - maple syrup weather.

I had a very short, and scarcely stimulating letter from Wilford about a month ago. I think it was three sentences long: (1) how were my parents because he had heard they were poorly, (2) did they have a cemetery plot & if so where, and (3) they were all doing fine. The whole thing was so irritating that I was hard put to to write any reply let alone a civil one. He wouldn't go to the trouble of spending an extra 2 minutes to explain his requests for information, but he sure enough expected a nice detailed answer. I remember in my reply I said that my parents had always kept their business very much to themselves.

Perhaps Father has told you that Mrs. Baker died suddenly - of a burst blood vessel when she was in hospital for an operation on her tongue. She has been so very kind in coming to our place to clean floors &c, and iron Father's shirts. For which I had planned to thank her - and now will have no chance.

Mother isn't capable of doing housework, and Father never sees what must be done beyond dishes & laundry. So I only wish they lived in the next block where I could run in & do things. Going to Delhi last summer proved a mixed blessing to them, because my children are so boisterous that Father couldn't stand them.

I guess they aren't any worse than most kids, but plunked down there in that arena of quietness they sounded worse than usual. And my extra efforts to keep them down to an acceptable number of decibels made me a nervous wreck. In fact we cut our stay short by a week. Father forgets all this and invites us again for the summer!

He will be able to decide better after our Easter visit. If I don't get better, I may not be in any shape to go, unfortunately. My diet is not controlling the ulcer, and other than a more severe diet upon which nobody can work, there is no alternative but to operate. However that also remains to be seen. Little Mark is

scheduled for a hernia repair in April, as it is.

So, to come back to the original stipulation, do have a good time in England, even if you come home flat broke. And incidentally, happy birthday! Love, Evelyn