

c/o D.Gurner  
London  
Jan 21<sup>st</sup>, 1946

Dearest Howard,

Many Happy Returns of Feb 9<sup>th</sup>. I hope you have a nice day and don't have to spend it shovelling coal for strikers or anything like that!

Please thanks Babs for her (air) letter of Jan 5<sup>th</sup>. What bad luck all being laid low at Xmas time! I hope you all recovered quickly, and completely.

I am spending a week in London to see how things are getting on and they aren't getting on at all! It is very difficult to get past the men in the outer office at Australia House, as their job is to fob people off and tell them to come back and enquire again in 2 to 3 months' time.

I had to argue for a long time before I could even get them to look up my reference number and see what correspondence had gone before. But I did finally get into an inner sanctum and see a man of some authority. From him I learnt that I was not for the January boat that I had hoped for. There is now a Selection Board who chooses the one to go from the priority list. Mr Smith (the man I saw) said he would try to put my name before them at their next meeting, but could promise nothing, and didn't know when the next boat would be. They had hoped the Govt. would allot them the 'Aquitania' for their people, but it had gone to someone else. Anyway, I shall enquire again in about a fortnight's time. Meanwhile, will you keep some money quickly available, and when I cable either send it by the quickest possible route, or pay the fare out there, whichever I say. I hope it will be possible to do the latter and so save exchange and income tax.

I lately heard of someone who couldn't get out on a British line booking on a Danish cargo ship leaving next month from Denmark (she has to get there first but believes it will be possible). I have been trying to make a few enquiries on similar lines today (just as a second string) but find obstacles everywhere. No-one can tell me the names of any Swedish, Norwegian or Danish shipping lines and Cooks say they don't know of any of them with agencies in London. Also there seems to be trouble about paying. I doubt if any of them would allow the fare to be paid out there, and even here I understand there are difficulties as one has to get permission from the Director of the Bank of England to pay any money to a foreign country, and then only certain limited amounts. I must say I would prefer to sail under our own flag at the present moment, but it is a possible idea. If you happened to pass any Scandinavian shipping offices in Sydney, you might make a few enquiries of that sort for me.

I spent about 3 weeks with the Gawne's. They sent their love to you. Helen is a great deal better than she was but can only walk a few steps with assistance still. Mary is a sweet girl and rather unusual. I am doing a round of short farewell visits at present – mostly a few days here and there – next week in Oxford, and then back to London to see how things are progressing. Then I may go up to Newcastle and finalise things, or, if my ship still looks very distant, may go back to Bristol for a fortnight before going to N'cle. If it drags on too long, I must get to work again.

The cold has been fierce for about a week, and does not look like breaking yet, and supplies of gas and electricity are very poor. Still, we are surviving it, and Jan. is nearly over, thank goodness. There is practically no snow, just hard frost and ice everywhere. The young people are skating all over the country.

Tons of love, Rachel.

c/o Miss Welton

37 Eslington Tce., Jessmond, Newcastle-on-Tyne

Feb 16<sup>th</sup>, 1946

My dearest Howard,

The money (£90) arrived alright, and I have today sent you another cable for more (£10) – this time a delayed cable as there is no urgent hurry.

As the cable will have told you, the sailing of the 'Port Jackson' has been postponed until early March – whatever that may mean! Two days ago, I heard it was put off till 23<sup>rd</sup>, yesterday till 27<sup>th</sup> and today till March. I am sending for the extra £10, as I find everything has gone up considerably – (Insurance, cartage etc) and I don't want to be short. I have been living in hotels for the last little time, poised for flight, and one can't do that economically. I should have asked for more, just in case of emergencies, but the £10 brings me to the limit of my February quota. However, I think you had better send me a further £20 on March 1<sup>st</sup>, as I might be here for another month or so yet and it is awkward to be short. Send it unless you hear from me not to.

I had a pretty good rush around to get ready in time both in London and here, but, working at high pressure I got everything done, so from now on will be able to enjoy some leisure. I had a bit of a job to get into a hotel in Newcastle at such short notice, but finally found one, but they can only keep me a few days longer. I didn't want to go to friends with all my luggage, but this hotel seems willing to store it for me, and I shall go and stay with friends for a while on Monday. This was not unexpected, it being a cargo ship, they are always more uncertain. I am delighted, though, that it is one, as there will only be 20 or 30 passengers, and they are practically all 2 berth cabins and she was a new ship at the beginning of the war, and I believe very comfortable.

Please thank Babs for her letter of Jan 29<sup>th</sup>. I am sorry to hear Janet has to wear glasses; it is a shame for the child, but worth it if it may correct the error.

Sir Ben Smith has got himself into hot water over here over taking away our dried eggs! It is really the last straw as they were the one light and nourishing thing we could always get, and there is nothing to take their place. However, such a fuss is being made that I think he will have to get them back, if at the expense of cigarettes and film.

I am getting very excited about seeing you all. I hope Thea won't bother to rush down to Sydney to meet me. I have suggested to her that I'd much rather meet her in her own home, but perhaps she hasn't thought of anything else, anyway.

Love to all,  
Rachel

Great Australian Bight

April 8<sup>th</sup>, 1946

For any of my Newcastle friends whom it may interest, here follows an unexciting record of my voyage out.

After 5 postponements, we finally sailed from Liverpool on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, and, after moving a few hundred yards from the wharf, broke a rudder and had to put back into dock. Deep depression settled over everyone, especially when we heard, among other rumours, that it would take at least a fortnight to repair, as Liverpool, covered with slushy snow, was not attractive. However, they fixed it up in about four days and we started off again. In about an hour we sailed right out of the murk enveloping Liverpool into brilliant sunshine which has been with us ever since. The sea heaved gently and a little disturbingly for two days and then settled down to a flat calm till we reached the Australian Bight where it is blowing rather hard, but by now we are able to regard rollers topped with spray with haughty disdain. The sun has been glorious! Most people have sun-baked right through the tropics with a complete disregard of possible sunstroke and with impunity, and skins range from honey to chocolate-colour. We haven't had a swimming pool unfortunately, as the well-deck where it is usually erected is occupied by 8 pedigree bulls in stalls.

Across the Indian Ocean it was very hot and muggy. Clothes and hair were sticky, and appetites wilted, and thirsts increased. Two days before reaching Freemantle we sailed out of the mugginess into bright fresh air. The sun was warm, and the breeze was crisp, and the sea sparkled. "This is **IT**", we said, drawing deep breaths and smiling at the newcomers to Australia with a proprietary air!

These ships are designed to carry 12 passengers, and, under the present circumstances, the bunks have been doubled but we are still extraordinarily comfortable as the cabins are large and deck space ample. It is constantly being borne in on me how lucky I have been to be allotted to a freighter, as the stories one hears of converted troopships are each more grim than the last. I share my cabin with 2 Frenchwomen, the wife and daughter of the French Minister, going out to join him in Canberra. We have got on well in a mixture of French and English. Madame is inaccurate but game to try anything, and she is quick at interpreting my stumbling efforts. We both start off in each other's language and lapse into our own on encountering difficulties.

I came on board feeling apologetic and self-conscious about the amount of my luggage, and found it was a mere molehill to other people's mountains. My cabin-mates have large trunks which will not fit under the bunks, and, feeling guilty about them, they insisted on my having the lion's share of cupboard and shelf space, so I am well content.

We have a nice lot of passengers – several returning servicemen, several businessmen, 5 brides (one with an adorable baby), a family who were in Jersey during the German occupation and still show signs of malnutrition, an ex-P.O.W. from a Japanese camp, and a very nice woman as ship's surgeon.

The time has passed very easily with a few sports, some Poker in the evenings, and much sleeping and reading. The library contains 7 books, so I have been glad I brought a good supply with me. Plenty of beer has been consumed, but not in excess as in the Swedish ship in which I came over, where getting drunk was a solemn duty for most of the crew and many of the passengers.

I picked up a nasty germ in Liverpool and started off with a heavy cold which the Dr. seemed to expect its turn to pneumonia any minute and kept me in M & B for a week. Consequently, my impression of the first 10 days is of utter misery. However, it passed.

The food is good! If we so desired, we could order at one sitting soup, fish, entrée, joint, sweet and cheese! And in spite of a feeling of guilt towards you people at home and do manage quite a few courses.

At Freemantle I stood spell-bound outside a fruit shop with a window full of grapes at 6d per lb and other luscious things in proportion. I bought ½lb and ate them then and there while waiting for the bus.

We came almost direct from England to Aust., only stopping twice for a few hours for oil. We anchored outside Port Said but were not allowed to land as some religious festival was in progress and trouble was feared. A few vendors came out to the ship in their boats and we bargained for leather cushions etc. You will not, perhaps, be surprised to hear that my chief purchase was an outsize zipper bag!

Aden, where we had several hours ashore, was fascinating. Set at the foot of high, jagged and absolutely bare brown hills, its rainfall is practically nil, and, in the past, they have had to distil all their water from the sea. Lately, however, they have discovered and put into use an old water-system of wells and lakes used by the inhabitants B.C. The sun must beat down on it cruelly but when we went ashore at 4pm it was delightful. We were rowed there in small boats by immensely tall, thin, black Somalis who have come across from Africa and who seem to have a monopoly on the boat business, but most of the population are Arabs with a sprinkling of Indians. When we wanted to return to our ship at night two rival boat-owners waiting at the wharf had a bitter quarrel as to whose turn it was. The fight raged with fists and tongues, diminishing and rising to a crescendo again. We thought we'd never get home! The native police were called in, but only added to the noise. Tired of waiting, our escort, a tall commanding-looking Englishman, said firmly "Hi, you" and got into one of the boats. All was peace and smiles instantly, and even the defeated man seemed satisfied.

On passing the police station, we noticed the rather sickening sight of dozens of small boys in an iron-barred cell facing the road. Some were laughing and shouting rude remarks, and some were crying. On enquiry we were told "Oh, they're a nuisance. We put them there to be out of the way when a ship comes in."

The shops and bazaars were fun, though poorly stocked compared to peacetime. In addition to the Eastern goods of ivory, ebony, sandalwood and jade we found combs, cosmetics and unrationed shoes, mostly of the sandal or wedge variety. Every woman passenger returned on board with a white pair and some with half a dozen of different colours.

In the evening we drove inland through the native town with streets and streets of little stalls with flaring lights selling all sorts of messes to eat and bright coloured goods, all teaming with people so that the car had literally to push its way through at a walking pace – all very picturesque, if a bit dirty – and on up into the hills where it was cool and peaceful, and very pretty looking down on the lighted harbour and town.

We sailed at midnight and then struck straight across the Indian Ocean to Freemantle, touching nowhere else.

We had 4 days there, and I went up to Perth where I had friends to stay with. My hostess made a point of feeding me on all the things I hadn't had lately such as corn-on-the-cob dripping with butter, rock-melon filled with sherry and ice cream, peaches and cream etc, and it wasn't hard to take, though I do notice a decreased capacity for fats and meat.

Perth is a charming little town on the Swan River; very hot, but apparently healthy. It is built on sand, and now, at the end of the dry season, everything is panting for rain, but glorious roses riot

everywhere. The houses are cream washed with coloured blinds, and a few palm trees about give it a semi-tropical air.

My first impression of Australia is of sunshine, an ugly accent, frivolously dressed women wearing little white cocktail hats at 9am to go shopping; lashings of food; and shops bulging with goods which, on closer inspection prove to be rather shoddy. The quality of clothes is poor, but the prices are not high, and shoes and stockings are off the ration, also knitting wool and garments knitted or woven. This means all rayon underclothes, cardigans etc.

If any of you want anything sent over, let me know. You would probably have to pay duty, but you would get the benefit of the exchange. The finance can easily be arranged by your paying the money into my London account.

April 19<sup>th</sup>. At sea again.

Heading for Sydney after several days' stay in both Adelaide and Melbourne.

The former is an attractive little town with fine parks and a reputation for culture (Adelaide for culture, Melbourne for business and Sydney for a good time, is the saying).

Melbourne, on seeing it afresh, impressed me as a fine city. It is a huge place, with a cold bleak climate. It started with no natural advantages, being built on a mud-flat, and its inhabitants in building it have developed an inordinately strong sense of civic pride. It is well planned, well-kept, dull and very law abiding. The notice on an outside compartment of a tram amused me "Smoking is permitted here except on Sundays". They also have no Sunday papers.

Most of the passengers have left us now and hastened to their various destinations by plane or train. Ecstatic meetings of the brides with their husbands took place, in spite of the fact that they all had a jolly good time on the trip out!

April 26<sup>th</sup>. In Canberra, the national capital city, visiting my sister, Thea, after a few days in Sydney. We reached there on Easter Saturday and sailed up the famous harbour (which seems to have shrunk since I saw it last) in the dawn of a grey chilly day. The wharf was deserted except for a tall, lean figure with several very small attachments, which proved to be Howard and his young. Much talk ensued in the next few days until I, mercifully for my family, was stricken with laryngitis for a day or so. I found them all well and very little changed, and it is fun making friends with the younger generation. Aunt Rachel has a high novelty value at present and is rather popular, doubtless on account of the gifts that came with her. Janet and Margaret were overheard making a list of their favourite people and Aunt Rachel topped it at first, but after some discussion she was deposed in favour of God.

Sydney has been over-run with American soldiers for years and looked shop-worn and tawdry. It is just stiff with people, and choked with traffic, and immense blocks of flats have sprung up on every square inch of spare land. Its narrow, twisty and rather dirty streets wander haphazardly up and down the steep hills around 'our 'arbour', which mercifully man cannot spoil. Every second shop seems to be a restaurant or an art-jewellery shop. It is an inconsequent sort of town, full of squalor and unexpected peeps of beauty. It has a charm which is gradually exerting itself over me again after my first recoil.

Canberra, the Capital City, where I am now is a strange and interesting place – a city in embryo, planned with vision of 100 years hence, and ¾ of it still in the blue-print stage. It lies inside a ring of hills, surrounded by wide open spaces. At present it consists of magnificent avenues and gardens, large white public buildings and groups of charming little houses, all interspersed with acres of rough fields and red earth. It is to be the centre of everything pertaining to the Commonwealth as distinct

from the States. Parliament House is there, and the Governor's residence. There are Public schools and a University, museums and scientific research institutes etc, but none of the business and industry that usually makes a city. Thea loves living there as she lives a quiet country life enlivened now and then by public events of the greatest interest, after which she retires with pleasure to her cabbages and roses, to say nothing of the kitchen stove, as no domestic help is available there.

May 26<sup>th</sup>. Inverell N.S.W.

After a short return to Sydney, I am now 500 miles inland with my country brother. A drought is in progress and we have to be very careful with water in the house. The fields (paddocks, we call them here) are bare and brown and the sheep are starting to die, and nothing can be done about them because the miners are on strike and trains cut to a minimum, so food can't be brought to them from less stricken parts of the country. The countryman has a hard struggle trying to drag a living out of an unwilling bit of land. He has few points of contact with the city-dweller and it is like entering another world to go from one to the other. It is a wonderful place for a holiday. Time doesn't matter, and the sun seems extra warm and bright. I still haven't got used to having the sun always with us and am laughed at for saying "Hadn't we better do such and such a thing today? Its sure to be raining tomorrow, this can't last". "Can't it" they scoff, "it can last all too long." And it does. The country houses are less compact and convenient than the town ones. They are usually rambly one-storey places with plenty of verandahs for the hot weather and they are very pleasant. If you are lucky enough to have an artesian bore or river handy from which you can pump water you probably have a beautiful garden, but if you haven't you struggle to keep a few plants alive in a dust-heap of a yard by carrying the bath water to them. It is a good life though.

June

Back in Sydney again and have just landed a flat after months of seemingly hopeless searching. Quite a nice little flat, too, if a bit unusual – three tiny little rooms in a row opening onto a verandah – once the servants' quarters of a big house. My own house is still let.

I get my furniture out of store next week and move in. It will be nice to be settled after wandering for so long. I have felt very restless and out of touch with things here since I returned.

I have, of course, been exploring the possibilities of work. There have been quite a number of hospital appointments going, but I felt disinclined to accept a junior one. My idea of starting a clinic was squashed, at any rate for the present, by the impossibility of hiring any sort of room. The only way to get one seems to be to buy a practice, so I am now negotiating for one which I think will be good if the deal goes through.

Physiotherapy here seems to be in a fairly healthy state, though recent students show signs of a lack of good teaching. A good many methods of treatment in vogue in England do not seem to be used here – for instance I have not seen wax therapy anywhere. Such classwork as I have seen is poor. On the other hand, excellent work seems to be being done with Spastics, ante- and post-natal, and re-education of polios.

Talking of spastics, a few years ago a very high incidence of either blindness, spasticity or mental deficiency was noticed among a certain age group of children by a wide-wake eye-surgeon in Sydney, and he established the fact that all the mothers had had German measles during pregnancy, and it is now proved to be a definite cause. To deal with the results a very good Spastic Centre has recently been started here.

A group of members of the A.P.A. hold an informal discussion evening once a month, when they show a film, or have a speaker on some subject 'to start them talking'. I was picked to speak one evening on "Impressions of Physiotherapy in England in Wartime". I spent anxious weeks beforehand working it up and trying to prepare an answer for any question I might be asked. The

notes that you used to laugh at me for taking at lectures came in very useful. R.V.I. methods were much to the fore – in fact the R.V.I. was described in detail as a sample (and, of course a model!) Voluntary Hospital. About 50 people turned up, to my horror, but once started, I got on better than I had expected and found they were quite interested particularly in the chest work and rehabilitation. Mercifully, there was no time at the end for questions, and I felt 10 years younger when it was over!

August, Sydney

Have just made a flying visit (in both senses) to Hobart to see an aged aunt before settling down to work. Air-travel is certainly the thing as far as speed and convenience are concerned! Five hours for what used to be a nasty 2 days crossing by sea.

Hobart is a most beautiful little town, built at the foot of a snow-capped (at present) mountain, with miles and miles of glorious harbour spread out in front, and all-round steep green hills very reminiscent of Devon.

I have now ceased my travels, for which you may be thankful, as you will be spared any more descriptions. I expect you skipped them anyway, I usually do.

Everyone says, "You must be glad to be back from England", but except for seeing my family, I am not a bit. I yearn, how I yearn for England and things English! As yet I am only half here, and I miss my friends dreadfully and feel thoroughly out of touch with people here (again excepting my family). I expect what I need to settle me is a spot of work, which I shall be starting next month.

Of course, this place has its good points! The sunshine is just incredible – week after week of it without a break. The food is marvellous, but one feels a bit ashamed of it. With the manners of the man in the street I am agreeably surprised; a rough and ready courtesy prevails, and I rarely had to stand in a train (possibly I remind them strongly of their dear old mothers). Shop-assistants are quite obliging, and signs of war-strain are, naturally, not in evidence much.

Politically and industrially things are in a shocking mess. A handful of Red extremists are in complete control of the Unions, and strikes are called on the most frivolous excuses. Then all the other Unions are called out in sympathy, and chaos reigns. At present we have all transport services cut to one quarter normal, and rationed gas and electricity. The wharf labourers seem always to be on strike, and ships are held up in every port. It doesn't worry them that half the world is starving. A weak Labour government just evades the issue and is afraid to do anything. However, there is an election shortly so things may improve.

There has been much indignant writing to the papers lately about the non-delivery of parcels being sent to England from here. I have sent several so I hope they arrive; I should be furious to have them diverted to the hospitals as they say they are doing.

The women here don't dress as well as English women (or perhaps my eye is Anglicised); they favour a fussier type of dress with too many bits and pieces – the influence of the climate perhaps, and our American buddies.

I was prepared for the accent and determined not to be critical, but it jarred me nevertheless, particularly among my own nephews and nieces. But, of course, there are always two points of view! Young Peter said to me the other day, "You have brought back a lot of English talk with you, Aunt Rachel, but never mind, you'll soon get back to good old Australian."

I hear you are having a very poor summer; I wish I could send you some sunshine plus a few pineapples, peaches etc.

I am at present indulging in a passion for caramel milk shakes which seem to touch some spot that hasn't been touched for years. They are very easily procured at the milk-bars every few hundred yards along the city streets.

### September

Have been very busy with preparations for starting work and have been at it for two days and think I shall like it, though my activities will be rather limited for lack of space. I have two rooms, but neither is very big, and one is filled up by the diathermy cage. The restrictions have not been removed here, unfortunately.

My predecessor used to start work at 6:30am, which I have no intention of doing, but in order to get through comfortably I am straining a point and starting at 8. I get through about a dozen compensation cases by 10 or 11 when the private patients come and, so far, I have finished soon after 4 and have not had to go to any outside cases. Most of them, apparently, come in. I have an assistant on Saturday mornings which leaves me free if I wish and is very pleasant. If the work justifies it I'll get a full time assistant later on. I want to get wall-baths, baths etc fitted up, but at present you can't get plumbers, taps, wood, carpenters or anything else.

Well, if this is ever to be sent, I had better finish it.

I read the list of R.V.I. exam result with interest and send my congratulations to the successful students.

Oh, I nearly forgot to mention my greatest thrill since I returned – a letter from Winston Churchill! Just before leaving England, in an impulsive moment I wrote him a short note saying, 'Thank you'. He replied in his own writing "I thank you very much for your letter, which gave me great pleasure. Winston Churchill".

I never imagined mine would get further than the waste-paper basket in the outer office!

With kind remembrances to everyone I know in Newcastle.

Yours sincerely,

Rachel M. Lloyd

I am in no danger of forgetting Newcastle as I have the painting framed and looking very nice on my treatment room wall.

