

Colonel CHARLES HENRY DUDLEY RYDER

Letters 1912 - 1913.

With Margaret (18) and Enid (16) as well as Ida joining him they started a good social life, though without the need to correspond there aren't the letters to recount this. But he does write home to Violet (13) who must have felt very left out and he anticipates her coming out later. To make it easier to spot place and family names these are in bold type.

2nd January 1912, **Srinagar**, Kashmir: My darling Violet, I am wring this in a great rush to catch the mail. Mother has just send (*sent*) up to my office where I am writing the letters from you all, with your pictures of birds. Darling, how well you have done them, thank you ever so much. I am glad to say my toothache has at last gone, and I am happy again. I tried all sorts of things & then at last some stuff I got from the chemist did the needful, Bunter's nervine. (*Bunter's nervine, 'Cures Toothache instantly. Relieves neuralgia instantly. Prevents decay, saves extraction.'* *A magazine advert published in 1896.*) I shall always have some with me in future. I hope we shall hear next mail where you are in your class. We are now having most beautiful weather, clear & sunny, but it is cold at night. **Margaret & Enid** went up the hill above **Srinagar** this morning to see the sunrise. I read in a book the other day on the French Revolution a story of an uncle of Louis XVI who was such a dandy four men used to lift him up and lower him into his trousers every morning so that they should not be creased. I thought it would amuse you. Mr Mason has been stopping with us, as he was alone for Christmas. We have been quite gay with dinner parties, but presently we shall relapse into quiet again. I haven't been able to go out shooting lately on account of my toothache, but now I hope to again. Much love & heaps of kisses to you all, from your loving Father.

18th April, **Mussoorie**: My darling Violet, I am writing from my office where I am very busy. I feel rather like a bird perched up in a tree, as I look out & look right down into a deep valley thousands of feet below me. We all thought of dear little **Ernie** on his birthday. (*He was 6 on the 18th.*) I hope he enjoyed himself.

Black man is so clever, he not only catches fist (?fresh) insects on the walls when they are pointed out to him but wanders about the rooms looking for sport himself. We had quite a good thunderstorm two days ago which has cooled the air & cleared it too, because today walking to (my) office I had a grand view of the snows. It takes me just an hour to walk to my office. Be quick & grow up Violet. Heaps of love & kisses, from your loving Father.

23rd May, **Mussoorie**: My darling Violet, Mother & I are full of the tennis tournament. I hope next year **Margaret & Enid** will be good enough to go in too. We have got through a round each in Ladies' Doubles, Men's Doubles, and mixed. We are not playing together, as we never play our best together. Poor Mummie is playing under great difficulties, as she has constant lumbago.

Mother & the girls are going to a dance at the Club tomorrow and one at the Savoy Hotel on Saturday. I am dining with the volunteers tomorrow. We have a thunderstorm nearly every evening, quite the wrong thing at this time of year. We can't see anything of the snows now, owing to clouds. You do seem to have had a jolly time at **Bedford**. We are expecting to see Captain & Mrs Cowie in a few days. In about a week I have to go to **Simla**, for week or so. Heaps of love & kisses, from your loving Father.

19th June, Hollow oak, **Mussoorie**: My darling Violet, We were so delighted with your long letter, four pages to Mother & one to **Margaret**, that must be your record. I have stayed at home from (the) office today. In the morning I had work to do, but now mother & the girls are all lying down, as we have two heavy nights ahead., Fancy Dress Dance tomorrow & the Army Ball. Everyone in uniform on Friday. I shall go to the latter not the former. We are living on apricots, about a dozen each at every meal, except Mother who scorns them. **Margaret & Enid** now realise **Ernie's** feelings when he wanted to help himself to fruit whenever he saw any, much to all your indignation. We are having people to tennis this afternoon & this morning M & E went to the ?nik, also to get mother a wig for her fancy dress, as it was such a bother powdering her hair last time & getting the powder out of it afterwards. Capt. & Mrs Cowie came to dinner with us on Monday & we didn't get to bed till ½ past 12. It is trying to thunder & looks cloudy. I'm afraid it will be wet for our tennis; but it is about time for the monsoon to begin.

Darling Violet I was so glad to hear of your good resolution to try hard & talk French. You will find it so useful. We all think **Bobby** will draw well, his aeroplanes & engines are so good for his age (*he is only 4*). Our house is perched on the hill side, rather like the old Murhill & all round is thick wood. We are sending you some of the pictures drawn at the game of one person drawing the head, the next the body without seeing the head & the last the legs with out seeing the body or head. They are rather funny. Mother has got rid of her lumbago. Much love & kisses to you all, from your loving Father.

8th August, Mussoorie: My darling Violet, I was awfully pleased to hear of your splendid swim. Well done! Now next year you must learn to dive with your eyes open and pick up things off the ground. I got home on 6th after 3 nights in the train, and jolly tired (*sic*) it was. However it was not hot till I got to **Delhi**, where I had to change and got into a carriage with an electric fan that wouldn't work. So I perspired that night very freely. Now I am back in the clouds again we have rain most days. It is so nice to be home again with mother & the girls. I should have loved to see **Bobbie** & the alligator. This morning I found a huge toad in he corner of mother's bathroom, the biggest I have ever seen, as big as a good sized sponge. I called the bearer to turn it out, as I am not like you, fond of touching slimy things. It was so big he didn't pick it up but pushed it behind. I'm afraid my darling, my letters are so short, but then I have a lot of work to do, and if I didn't work hard, you would have only dry bread to eat. Heaps of love & kisses, from your loving Father.

10th October, Mussoorie: My darling Violet, We are now having a quieter time, although we did have a dinner party last night and are dining out tonight. That however is the end. I had a lovely day out shooting on Monday. We got 20 pheasants. On Saturday there was an American Tennis Tournament. You know American means you play every other couple 6 games and score up for yourself whatever number of games you win. Mother and I won with 45 very easily. We had to play 60 games altogether. I am off on Saturday to **Quetta**, and get back on 21st after only staying there 2 days. So I shall have plenty of railway travelling. Violet, ask Miss Fenn to read you any interesting news out of the paper. I find **Enid** only does when she is made to, the result is she knows nothing of what is going on in the world. Much love & heaps of kisses, from your loving Father.

30th October, Mussoorie: My darling Violet, Very many happy returns of your birthday (*to reach her by 23rd November when she would be 14*). How I wish we could all be with you. I do so hope you will have a happy day. Mother and I are sending you a small elephant which Miss Fenn will have a pin put on to make a brooch, also 10 shillings to buy yourself something; and **Margaret** and **Enid** are also sending you 10/- that is going by M. O. with ours. **Mussoorie** is quite empty and nothing to do but go for a walk. I go off tomorrow to **Kashmir**. Mother & M & E go to **Lucknow** on 9th for a fortnight. They will have lots to tell you of their adventures there. It is getting decidedly cold, however our verandah which is closed in with glass is still quite warm as the sun shines on it. Heaps of love & kisses, my darling, from your loving Father.

5th November, Srinagar: My darling Violet, Here I am once more in my dear Kashmir in a house boat. I left Mussoorie on the 31st. Mother & the girls came & had tea with (me) in my office & then I walked down the hill to **Rajpur** went in a tonga down to **Dehra Dun**, where I had dinner with Mr Mason at the Club, & left by train at 9.15 pm. nothing exciting on the journey to **Rawalpindi** where I arrived the following evening, slept the night in the station & started off early next morning by tonga. The ponies were excellent all along, behaved well & went well, so I did 76 miles the first (*sic*) to **Dulai**. At dinner that night I met Capt. & Mrs Leeds whom we knew in **Peshawar**. The next day I came 86 miles to **Baramula**; that was from 7 am. to 7 pm. and yesterday the easy 36 miles in here by 11 o'clock. The de Lotbinieres were out shooting, however I found a note telling me to make myself at home, so I did. They have some other people staying with them, so to my great joy I sleep in the houseboat. After lunch I went round to the office for a bit & then had tea with Major & Mrs Pirie. Jean Cowie will remember them & then to the Club where I saw many old friends, played bridge for a bit and then back to dinner and an early bed. I hope to get several days shooting and enjoy myself generally. The autumn colouring of the trees is not nearly so lovely as it was last year owing to the want of rain. Darling, heaps of love & kisses to the old 14 year old, from your loving Father.

26th December, Mussoorie: My darling Violet, Thank you so much for making those Doyleys for us. I think they are very well made. We had a sober Xmas yesterday, just ourselves and **Uncle Harry**. Our only excitement at dinner that the peafowl had been kept too long & had to be hastily removed! Mother gave me a safety razor and **Margaret & Enid** a water heater for my shaving water. Mother sang very sweetly in the choir too. **Uncle Harry & I** are going out pheasant shooting tomorrow. I hope we shall fill the larder a bit. Darlings, I hope you all had a very happy Xmas.

Please tell Miss Fenn, **Lisle** may have 2^d a week pocket money. Much love & heaps of kisses, from your loving Father.

2nd January 1913, Muhammereh, Persia (*where he is preparing for the Turko-Persian Boundary Commission. He is to be the senior surveyor for the British working with the Commissioner and his Deputy alongside Russian colleagues and with representatives of the Turkish and Persian governments.*)

My darling Violet, I am sending another envelope of stamps, Persian & also some Indian ones, some of which have H.M.S. on them which I think makes them different from the plain ones. Since I last wrote Major Cowie (*whose daughter Jean is also in the care of Miss Fenn*) went off on the 28th down to the mouth of the river to begin surveying in a launch; but I had a wire from him yesterday to say his launch had broken down. So I sent off another one to his rescue. He will probably miss the mail, so tell Jean we had two evening festivities dinners. The latest we didn't get back from till 2 o'clock, at the Consulate all the English were there, 21 men, 4 ladies. We have had several meetings between us & the Russians to discuss things & yesterday I had to act as interpreter in French between our doctor & the Russian for about an hour. We tried one day shooting, but it was a failure. We only got 2 partridges. My darling I have quite forgotten to congratulate you on getting the prize at the School of Art. I am so pleased. You don't know what a pleasure & resource it is to Margaret & Enid their painting. We have had one rainy day & night, and the whole place was mud, but we have loose brick floors to our tents & little paths of bricks leading from one tent to another. One of my men who was with me in Tibet has died of pneumonia. Much love to you all & heaps of kisses, from your loving ~~brother~~ (Violet your getting old) Father.

30th January, Lucknow: My darling Violet, I always feel that the one of you who has a letter from me, comes off 4th best. (*This implies there were other letters to the boys, but not retained at least in this archive.*) You get such long ones from **M & E**. We left **Mussoorie** on the 24th & walked down to **Rajpur**, by which time I was accompanied by 3 rather hobbly people with burst chilblains, sore feet &c. However we did it all right, and then drove down to the Cowie's at **Dehra**. We dined out one night with Lennox-Conynghams & one day Capt. Cowie & I went shooting. We got 3 hare, 5 partridge & 1 snipe. He got most of it. Our rail journey down here was quite a success. I insisted on everyone being comfortable, but mother likes to make herself as uncomfortable as she can. We just had the one night in the train, getting here at 9.15 am. Our luggage went straight to the camp, and we went to Col. Ronaldson's bungalow, where we spent the day; breakfast, lunch & then down to the camp in the evening, by which time everything was ready. We have a drawing room, a dining room & two bedrooms; tents all big, with a small tent for my dressing room. On the 28th we didn't do much. Mother & I went calling & after dinner, the girls went to a concert with Mrs Lovett in her motor. Yesterday we all went to see a parade of the Highland Light Infantry, then back to a late breakfast, after which Mother and Margaret went shopping to arrange for fancy dresses. Afternoon we went to polo, then they dined at the Club & danced till 3 am. I like a wise man stayed in camp & went early to bed. Today we have races. Much love & heaps of kisses, from your loving Father.

27th February, Mussoorie: My darling Violet, I have been a wanderer the last fortnight, so I have been missing mails right & left, and I don't know who I ought to write to. I got up here on the 24th & that night it thundered & rained & next day, hailed & sleeted gradually turning to snow. & only yesterday morning the whole place was covered with snow & a lovely sight. I wished mother & the girls had been up but perhaps they wouldn't have enjoyed it so much as I did. Today is a lovely day not a cloud in the sky and the snow melting fast. I have been staying with Mr Ragg the clergyman here, but yesterday I tramped through the snow to our house. It was much deeper there, as it is on the shady side of the hill. I found 'Judyl' was well & very squeaky at seeing me. I go down to **Delhi** tonight, just stay the day there

& take the girls on to **Ferozepore**, while mother goes to ?**Roorkee** today 2 days with **Aunt Kitty** (*Ida's sister*), & then on to **Dehra** where I pick her up on the 8th. Those sisters of yours are having a good time, Violet, so will you I hope when you are grown up, so hurry up. Heaps of love & kisses to all, from your loving Father.

20th May 1913, Shillong, Assam: My darling Violet, I had to open the envelope which mother sent down to my office to see whom I was to write to. It is pouring with rain, such a pity as there was going to be a Gymkhana on the race course, to which we were going, now it will be off. I hope mother & the girls haven't started yet. I must get into the habit of writing my English mail on Sundays. We here get yours on Tuesday & have to answer the same day, rather a rush. You are a dear writing such long letters, we do love getting them. You would love **Shillong**. We are all so interested in the garden. Are you getting fonder of gardening than you used to be? We have been looking at a pony & are going to try it on Friday. It is a nice one, but rather fat. Yesterday there was a sort of "at home" at the Club by Colonel & Mrs **Campbell** (*Was this Enid's future in-laws?*). Mother & **Enid** danced. I played bridge & Margaret stayed at home because she was a bit seedy. I am off to Burma on the 10th June. Hope to get back for mother's & my birthday. It will be awfully rough, "The fishes alone will know the fullness of my woes." Heaps of love & kisses, my darling, from your loving Father.

24th June 1913, S.S.Arona: My darling children four, I have just come on board 7 am. & while my servant is arranging my cabin I have started writing English mail because this boat takes the mail from **Burma** to **Calcutta**, and I want to write it early, because by this evening we shall be out into the **Bay of Bengal** & fighting the monsoon. I got down to **Rangoon** and stayed the night at a dirty hotel with a fine name, The Royal. I didn't have a good night because the electric fan in my room stopped some time in the middle of the night, and then the mosquitoes seized the chance & bit me for all they knew, woke me up, then I let down the mosquito curtains; but it was along time before I got to sleep again. One horrid thing about **Burma**, is that one hardly ever gets fresh milk, always tinned. Darlings, it is hot, but it will be better when we get moving. It has been rather nice seeing Burma. My first visit here was 19½ years ago, and I left mother & **Margaret** aged 2 months with Grand papa at **Sitapur**. Ten my last visit was 10 years ago. I am just going to have some tea & a mango. Heaps of love & kisses to you all, from your loving Father.

15th July 1913, Shillong, Assam: My darling Violet, Pouring with rain and Enid wandering about grumbling because she can't go for a ride. However there's no help for it. I'm just getting started with my letter before breakfast. I hurt my leg at tennis the other day, however it is nearly all right again for walking now, but I shan't risk it at tennis for some time. I believe I am Lieut. Colonel from yesterday, but I shan't see it in the Gazette for some time. Has anyone told you about our hens? A Mrs Campbell gave us a cock & two hens. The cock is a very fine fellow. They are half Orpingtons, half Chittagong & give us two eggs a day now. Even mother is getting to like them, they are so tame, one of the hens is shy., but the others eat out of one's hands.

After breakfast: The mail has just come in with little photos of **Ernie** and **Bobby** which we are all delighted with. I am waiting for it to stop raining before I start for office. Do Violet darling, talk as much French as you can with M^{lle}. Never mind mistakes. We are giving you every chance of learning & you will be very sorry afterwards if you don't learn. Heaps of love & kisses to you all, from your loving Father.

5th August, Shillong, Assam: My darling Violet, I am so interested in your diving & swimming, very delighted that you are getting on so well. Do you remember the time when a small Violet used to shiver on the edge of the sea & didn't like coming out. It is very sweet of you wanting to teach **Ernie**. I do hope he will learn before ?Faith, it will be a great feather in both your caps. We are all so delighted too to hear how well you are getting on with your music with Mr Mead. It is pouring with rain, so Colonel Renny-Tailyour and I are waiting to give it a chance of clearing before we go to (the) office. We expect our new pony to come up today & are greatly excited to see it. Thank you darling for your congratulations on my being made a Lieut. Colonel.. Now Violet you are a Colonel's daughter & must behave as such. We have divided our 7 eggs between the two hens Rachel & Leah; poor Jacob the cock feels very lonely. Heaps of love & kisses to you all, from your loving Father.

Violet be nice to Jean (*Cowie*). Don't forget she is alone with you all, her Father & Mother out here & her brother in Scotland.

9th September, Shillong, Assam: My darling Violet, It is practically certain that I shall go on this Turko-Persian Boundary Commission. I leave here on 23rd Sept, spend a few days at **Calcutta, Simla & Mussoorie** & leave **Karachi** on 18th Oct, arrive at Muhammarek (**Mohammarah**) at the end of the Persian Gulf on 23rd October. That is where we are all going to meet. Major Cowie is going with me. Muhammarek is just about 30 miles up the **River Tigris & Euphrates** joined and we have to survey & fix the boundary between Turkey & Persia for 700 miles, ending up on **Mount Ararat**. It is supposed to take a year. A Mr Wratishlaw from Crete is the Head of the Commission and a Capt. Wilson is his Assistant. We are to have an officer & 30 men from some active cavalry regiment as escort & I suppose there will be a doctor as well. Now Violet, will you take it in turns with Miss Fenn to write to me each week, so that I can be certain of having the latest news of you all. My address will be: Lt Col. C.H.D. Ryder, D.S.O. R.E., Turko-Persian Boundary Commission, Muhammarek, Persian Gulf. Heaps of love & kisses to you all, from your loving Father.

7th October, Shillong, Assam: My darling Violet, I expect letters generally will be short this mail, there is so much on. Mother was playing tennis this morning & won her first round in the mixed doubles with Mr ?Monies by 2 setts (*sic*) to 1 after losing the first sett 6 – 1. **Margaret** has being (*sic*) sending things down to the racecourse & **Enid** is down there arranging flowers & tables as the Survey are at home for tea this afternoon. Fortunately Capt. Wodehouse, one of the Calcutta Cricket XI who is staying with us, brought his motor up & takes us about in it, has come back. Just in time to change into swagger clothes, have lunch & go down. We got the mail this morning. It is now settled that I am to be at **Mohammarah** before 15th Dec. so I shall leave here on 10th November and Karachi on 6th Dec. It is 5 days steamer journey from Karachi. All the offices are closed for the whole of this week for the hot days, so I'm having a nice idle time. Heaps of love & kisses to you all, from your loving Father.

4th November, Shillong, Assam: My darling Violet, Very many happy returns of your birthday, my darling (*now 15*). How I wish we could all spend it together, but I think your 17th we will. I think the cheque I send you will be the first you ever received. It is half from mother & me & half from **Margaret & Enid**. Miss Fenn will tell you how to endorse it & get the money. Look at all the tiny Messrs Cox & Co. on it. Count. I make it 968. I shall write my next letter from Calcutta. As I leave her on Monday 10th we have sold our trap & harness, so now there is only Black Swan left. We are having such perfectly lovely weather. When we get up in the morning we have such a lovely view of the snows very far away, I think they must be 150 miles away. I am very sorry to leave Shillong, but Mother is very glad. I hope you will have a very happy birthday, my darling & with heaps of love & kisses, ever your loving Father.

I believe you are nearly as tall as Mother.

8th December, SS Cola: My darling Violet, we left **Karachi** on 6th Dec. during the night. The mail boat from Bombay came up & put passengers on board during the night which was disturbing to sleep. Our party is gradually collecting, as Capt. Pierrepont, our doctor was already on board and Mr Wratishlaw, the Commisioner, Mr Hubbard, his Secretary came up by the mail from Bombay. They are all very pleasant and I think we shall get on excellently together, which is a good thing as we shall be 18 months together. There will be Russians, Turks & Persians so we shall be a large party. The present idea is to do as much of the low country as possible this winter, and then march up to the north & do the high ground from **Mount Ararat** southwards during the summer, & then finish up next winter. We are now nearing **Muscat** on the Arabian coast & can see the high mountains behind it. There is a Sultan of Muscat but his people have revolted & he only holds the town. So we have a regiment of native infantry there to help him, the 102nd Grenadiers. We have had it beautifully calm. We land our only lady passenger, a missionary, who came down the Gulf from **Basrah**, but couldn't land as it was so rough; so she was taken on to **Karachi** & now is coming back again. Tell Jean (*Cowie*) her Father is sitting alongside of me on deck, also writing. Much love & heaps of kisses my darling to you all, from your loving Father. (*All the above copied to Julian March 2012*)

15th May, Camp: (Address always now: Turco-Persian Frontier Commission, C/o Foreign Office, Whitehall, London. & post on Wednesdays.)

My darling **Violet**, I am off by myself for 6 days & as I have very little work to do & only a short march each day, I have time for letter writing. I am sitting in my little ?khaklin tent camped amongst the hills, in a valley amongst corn fields & some nice long grass, in which by the bye a snake was killed just now. I have come out here to get this bit of the frontier surveyed & also to explore for a road, however this one will do very well. I got 60 miles along it all right with only one upset, my kitchen box, & the boot polish or rather dubbing has got mixed up with my flour. So I have to take to the country flour & brown chipatties. We have now got amongst Kurds, rather fine looking men, fair & independent, heavily armed with rifles, revolvers & cartridges all over them, & awful thieves. Yesterday I got 4 men from the nearest village to do night guard. I heard them fire off 3 shots last night, they said against thieves, but I think it was just to show they were awake. There are such lovely wild flowers about here, including masses of hollyhocks, white & mauve, and it isn't too hot, as I am more in the hills here, 2,300 ft up, only my enemies the stabbing flies are very much to the fore. They stab one right through thick socks. Darling **Violet** I was so glad to hear about your Confirmation. It makes me feel as if you are growing up. I have just written to India to find out about my leave, when I may take it. Darling, heaps of love & kisses, from your loving Father.

Please thank Miss Fenn for her letters.