

## Colonel CHARLES HENRY DUDLEY RYDER

**Letters 1917 – 1918**      *Letters resume after an interval of 4 months.*

1<sup>st</sup> February 1917, U S Club, **Calcutta**, to **Ida**: Your watch continues its brilliant career, and we are great friends in the middle of the night. I couldn't read a book by it though. We were all very interested in the last honours list. The Survey here got a lot. Pye & Morshead (?) DSO, Macleod, MC, Chase & Nosworthy Brevet Majors. Did you see that Mrs Browne (Bella) had died at home? The Lennox Conynghams arrive today. I think they stay for about a week.

It is very little use my writing as the next term is half way through before my letters get home. Perhaps your letter to Mr Williams about **Lisle** may have some result. I'm so glad **Chucky** has got an M C, it will console him a bit for being away from his regiment, & I'm glad Ned has got one too. One of my few remaining back teeth, upper jaw is breaking away, so I'm afraid it's no go; I must go in for plates. I haven't been doing much this week, except having 2 or 3 men to dinner who have asked me. I dined one night with Mr Cotton in his flat in Middleton Street. He has a lots of nice English China picked up in the Madras Bazaar, & altogether does himself well.

You will be glad to get **Enid** back, as yo must have been lonely. I had a long letter from Col. Bythell, the usual rant against Burrard & a very conceited letter. It was very naughty of you, absent without leave for the week end, were you punished., but quite excusable to see the children. **Ida** I wish you would think out this point. When we are out here it is necessary for the boys to be at boarding schools, but when you are in England it would have been much cheaper for them to be day boys. If the war goes on, do consider whether when you give up the Eastbourne house you couldn't migrate to Cheltenham & the boys all there as day boys. It would give us such a lot more money. Heaven knows I don't want it for myself, but for the children themselves. I must of course leave it to you, but I know that is what I should do.

Feb 2. Darling, I love your letters & mine are so dull (*I wonder where hers are?*). Cowie is going to join the Russians, pretty sickening to be left behind. S.G. Says he can't spare me. God bless you, my pet, I love you more & more. Ever your adoring lover & husband, Charlie.”

17<sup>th</sup> February, **United Services Club, Calcutta**, to **Ida**: No mails for a fortnight & no signs of one, and now an order has come out stopping all women & children from travelling from India to England unless they can give some very good reason. ...also the export of a lot of luxuries, tinned foods &c from England has been stopped. So India is at last beginning to realise that a war is on. One small thing shows how even out here things are on a bigger scale than before the war. We used to print 500 copies of a map, now we print 4,500 of the Mesopotamia lot. Today is Saturday, I am playing tennis with the Kirkpatrick's at the Saturday Club, tomorrow I snipe shoot in the morning, tennis in the afternoon & dine out. I hate dining out now. The second cold snap has come to an end, but it is quite pleasant still. I'm having a bad month at bridge! My old specs that I used shooting have got broken up, they were anyhow very rusty. Now I've got a rolled gold pair Rs.26, but much more comfortable. I'm afraid if the income tax is increased I shall have to hunt about for further economies, but as I don't have chota hazri<sup>1</sup> or lunch or drink anything, there only remains smoking & that I should find it difficult to reduce. Dear pet, heaps of love & Enid, ever your adoring lover & husband, Charlie.

*Another three month gap.*

22<sup>nd</sup> May, **Shillong**, Assam, to **Ida**: I got up here on Sunday the 20<sup>th</sup> with no adventures, in fact quite a pleasant journey. It was beastly hot in the train, but whizzing along in the motor was quite cool. There were only 3 others besides myself in the motor so that was all right. They have made a very nice little bungalow for tea alongside the road at the half way place **Nongpoh**, and we were also pointed out that place where “Archy” ran over a bridge & fell into a nullah<sup>2</sup>; he was rather

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1 A light meal taken very early.

2 A riverbed or ravine.

badly damaged & had to be taken into **Nongpoh** & kept there a fortnight. I'm stopping my first week with the Crichton's, they are rather a sad household, as their boy died of his wounds in Mesopotamia only about two months ago. Then Col Crichton has been very seedy & is more deaf than ever. He says he is going next march anyhow, he couldn't stand another hot weather. He ought really to clear out now, he is not fit for work. The girl, Marjorie is a nice girl only (?) got engaged to a waster of a planter. We went down & had a game of golf, yesterday afternoon. They have made a good many changes & they certainly are delightful links, only the greens seem bad of course after the perfect ones at **Tollygunge** (?).

My new bearer, since my old one on a month's leave, is a great success, quiet & hard working. I wish I could keep him on. Ida, you don't know how delightful it is getting up here from Calcutta, the quiet & the coolness \*\*\* after all, although there weren't 16 dances a week & there were no British Cavalry. I was very happy here, the last home we had together. The Crichton's house is on that spur running behind the Gurkha mess; there is no regiment here at all now, only a depot, no officers, only old Mr Copeland who is now a Captain in command. So far I've had most beautiful weather which of course means very hot down below. There is the May week on next week, but I don't know much what is coming off. I can't find out what because of our dear fowls, no one knows. I am going round one of the officers today.

23<sup>rd</sup> May. Still enjoying the cool, & it has been very fine weather. Feel rather a beast up here idling when I think of you working. Heaps of love from your adoring lover & husband, Charlie.

27<sup>th</sup> May, Shillong, to **Ida**: My darling sweetheart, I'm afraid this will be a week late for your birthday, many many happy returns of the day darling. I long for us to be together once more. I moved over to Mr Dentith's yesterday and we sat up till 12 o'clock talking. I gave him a copy of your photo at the lathe, he was very pleased. I don't see much of him, as he still has his curious hours, so I have breakfast by myself. I have been busy all the morning writing a report about Surveys required for the **Hughly**<sup>3</sup> & then stuck for a book I couldn't get from the office today being Sunday. There are very few people here now who were here with you. I've met old Mr Copeland, now a Captain, Indian Army Reserve, and seen Enid's double in the distance, "Fairy". I've played a good deal of golf. Today is very rainy & quite cold, just put on a thick coat. I expect I have the room you had facing the side lawn. Mr Dentith makes one very comfortable. Just been reading the paper, about the Italian advance. If they don't get any telegrams up here now, except to Govt House, so I don't see any at the Club, and the paper & post which arrives here in the evening doesn't reach here till next morning, so one is very behind hand with the news. The change up here does one a lot of good. I feel quite invigorated. The Gurdons are living at our old house. I hope for a mail tomorrow.

1<sup>st</sup> June. I had a good mail. School reports, **Lisle & Ernle** not good. **Bobby** at last has made a start. I have been enjoying myself up here a lot, playing golf most days & I feel as fit as possible. I leave a gain on 3<sup>rd</sup> morning early. I hear Cowie is back in **Bombay** & is being posted to **Mussoorie**. He ought to go home on sick leave, as after pneumonia one is very weak for some months. It is just on two years since you left & I wonder when I shall see any of you again. There is a **Waziristan** show on. Govt. have at last got tired of their raids. Mr Dentith is as cheery as ever, Ha! Ha! Ha! by Jove. Colonel &c, we dined at the Holders last night & the night before we had some people to dinner. I've won enough at bridge to pay all my golf and club bills. I don't know when mails leave, hope I haven't missed one. Heaps of love, my darling, from your adoring lover & husband, Charlie.

3<sup>rd</sup> June, Shillong, to **Ida**: (*This letter now seems to be missing*)

I am indeed very proud & pleased that you have gone into munition work<sup>4</sup>. It is some consolation to me, when I am stuck out here and cannot myself help in the war, that my family do. I think it splendid of you & **Enid**. ... and what **Enid** earns shall be her own. I especially want this, as I felt it a little hard that my scholarship money was put into the common fund and not kept for me as I earned it. I want to know what sort of machines you work & what you actually make. I had a long

3 Hooghly.

4 Ida and Enid had gone to work at Gwynne's munitions factory in Chiswick.

letter from **Margaret** too, full of her housekeeping. I'm so glad she can manage now with only one servant. I hope you wear gloves & don't spoil your pretty hands. This is my last day in Shillong... A remark of **Lisle's** in his letter to **Enid** that he is working hard at his lessons has made me very happy too. ... by working munitions or hospital work you are releasing men for the front & yet enabling the necessary work of the nation go on, and you especially darling, having had 6 children. You have already done 6 times more than most women now-a-days. Besides which the example you set will probably induce a dozen others to start in and work. Both you & **Enid** are so good with your hands I expect you will do splendidly. Tell me all about the other women working in your room. ... don't get too independent, I'm still a better man than you are."

8<sup>th</sup> June, U S Club, **Calcutta**, to **Ida**: My darling sweetheart, pouring with rain & so dark in office that I have had my electric table lamp switched on. I think the rains have really broken, which is a good thing. I have had no prickly heat this year, I had it so badly in my arm pits last year. I can if I like exchange with Col. Robertson & take the Northern Circle next spring if I like, but really while the war is on & if I can't go on service I'd sooner be here, as I feel that here, though indirectly one is doing war work in supplying the North West Frontier & Mesopotamia with maps and although this climate doesn't make one feel energetic I keep well enough. I'm so glad **Violet's** thumb is better, most painful doing anything like that, dear little girl. I'm so glad she is doing her bit, and I should like both her & **Enid** to feel that besides the good they are doing for the war they are taking a bit of the money difficulties off my shoulders & I can now see daylight ahead and shall be able to come home all right with a bit of money in hand for us all to have a good time & darling, what you are doing is splendid & I'm very very grateful to you & feel very proud of you.

Since I got back from **Shillong** I got one mail from you of May 2, as you see it now takes a bit over a month for letters to come through. I had two long letters from Bythell, one all about his recruiting work & one all about the children & his visit to Eastbourne, what a really good fellow he is. Major Cowie is back in **Mussoorie** on sick leave to 15<sup>th</sup> July, looking pinched & one lung not quite right yet; he was very dangerously ill at one time. Renny Tailyour wants me badly to come down & inspect him at **Bangalore**. I should like to, but it is a long journey. I got my pass book from Cox, looking in a healthy condition. I think now you needn't worry about sending list of cheques... I shall continue to send you home £80 a month although that now is more than you want. Heaps of love darling: it will be rather awful when we only get fortnightly mails. Ever your adoring lover & husband, Charlie.

14<sup>th</sup> June, **Calcutta**, to **Ida**: My darling sweetheart, I hope when the fortnightly mails start they will be punctual. We are still I think supposed to be having weekly mails, but your last was dated May 3 & that came 12 days ago; however when I was in China, Tibet & Persia I should have thought myself lucky to get them as often as that. The rains have broken gently & quietly & it is quite cool under a fan, too cool sometimes but of course one sweats very easily just walking. I have been put on as waiting member of the Selection Committee. Pugh of the Light Horse is the military member and I take his place when necessary, but I don't think I shall have much to do. Their duties are to select their contingents of the Indian Defence Force to go off for 3 months at a time for regular military duty. We have a meeting of the Exemption Tribunal on 2<sup>nd</sup> July to hear the few odd cases. I am hoping to get away for a fortnight to Bangalore. Renny very keen, so I asked the S. G. & Asked him to wire if he approved. I hope he does, if so I go off on the 16<sup>th</sup> & get back on the 2<sup>nd</sup> morning. It will be jolly seeing Renny again & having a good "bak". We still have heaps of work here, maps beyond Baghdad & for this Waziristan show. I heard from Cowie back in Mussoorie; he is on sick leave till 16<sup>th</sup> July. While I have been here I have revised & brought up to date every handbook, orders &c, so now I have rather a slack time. A despatch has gone home from India mentioning a list of people who have done good work in connection with the War. The S. G. Asked me if I wished anyone mentioned so I said yes, the 3 men in charge of my three offices, Crosthwait, Cowie & Farmer, as they all have had a lot of war work; of course they are all under me so I ought to be mentioned; we will see. Of course too it's potty work compared to fellows actually at the front.

June 15. There is a rumour of a mail expected tomorrow. Nothing from capital S. G. about my going

to **Bangalore** so I wired again. Heaps of love darling, from your adoring lover & husband, Charlie.

26<sup>th</sup> June, United Service Club, **Calcutta**, to **Ida**: My darling sweetheart, Two mails came in together yesterday, the last of Many 16, so you see even the quickest takes 5 weeks to reach. This gives one a horrible feeling of isolation out here. I have an office holiday today so this afternoon I am going to play golf. It is delightfully cool owing to rain & I am in fact sitting without a fan. I am off the day after tomorrow to **Bangalore**. I shall get 10 days there; en route I inspect a Survey Office at **Madras**. I'll go up to **Simla** later on about September. We've had a lot to do getting out maps for the **Waziristan** show & of beyond **Baghdad** including part of the Turco-Persian work. Rich has come back from Persia & is in **Simla** ill with fever of some kind. There has been a lot of War Loan sweeps going, one man Daly in the Police having (?) in the Club won £3000 and a girl in Shillong won the same. They all together have got 25 millions in the Indian loan out here, Not much compared to England, but about 6 times as much as they have ever got before.

If the Russia news doesn't improve. I heard from **Arthur Money**<sup>5</sup> in answer to mine congratulating him on his K. C. B. He was in **Simla** on a month's leave, he said Griffith had got off at last & was going to Mesopotamia. Lady Burrard told me her boy had had double pneumonia, but was better again. I get back here on 9<sup>th</sup> July. We have done more work in 8 months this year than has ever been done in a whole year before the war, in the way of publishing maps. I do hope you will manage to see a good deal of the boys, I want your influence at work on them. It is most important that **Ernie** shouldn't be allowed to get slack over his work. Tell him how disappointed I shall be. He can do so much better than he has done the last two terms. Heaps of love and kisses, darling, from your adoring lover & husband.

I have been reading the daily "Times" most interested in the Engineers strike. I hope it is over, long ago.

15<sup>th</sup> July, USC **Calcutta**, to **Ida**: My darling sweetheart, The worst of these damp hot places like **Calcutta** is that one feels so slack. It's just 10 o'clock Sunday morning, I have had breakfast & I feel more like going up to my room & lying down than anything else. I got back here on Monday the 9<sup>th</sup>; rather a tiring journey, as we were four in a carriage. You know a lot of trains have been knocked off owing partly to cost difficulties that mainly owing to the impossibility of getting new engines out. As usual after a trip I have a lot of work to do & S. G. arrives tomorrow & leaves again on the 21<sup>st</sup> for **Bangalore**. These are flying visits and his are an awful nuisance, one has to try & get through in a week what otherwise should take a fortnight. He doesn't care two pence about the real work of the Department. I get very fed up sometimes. The last couple of days I've had very tender soles to my feet, quite painful to walk. I had got very interested in our work here, there is much more variety than in any Circle, as we get such a lot of outside jobs, much more than from the Department. Since I came back a mail came in of 7<sup>th</sup> June & with it to my great delight my silk scarf, it is a beauty. I've already worn it out to dinner the other day, quite the most magnificent I've had, a great bit of luck its just missing the "Mongolia". My most loving thanks to all of you. Everyone seems to have given up any idea of the war coming to an end this year. The Waziristan show seems to have pretty well ended, the Malisands (?) having given in, which is a good thing, as it will enable India to send reinforcements to Mesopotamia. We are I think just starting the fortnightly mails.

18<sup>th</sup> July: A splendid mail came in yesterday the first of the fortnightly ones & so it was a 11 & your last was of June 21 & so came very quick, & then all the news was good, boys well up in their classes & so it made me very happy. Darling, so sorry my letters are so short that it's rather like this. I have to be writing constantly in office from 10 to 4 & come back pretty tired of it. It would be rather as if when you had finished your day's work in the factory you had in the evening to make a couple more cylinders to send out to me. Tonight I'm having some fellows to dinner, I have to work off hospitality occasionally, the table of 6 I have been gingering the S G up about getting leave next spring. He says he'll take it up. He also said he'd sent my name in to be mentioned in despatches for good service in connection with the war. What splendid work you are doing darling. I love you

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5 A second cousin.

for it, more & more. No signs of this dreadful war coming to an end. I'm longing to see your photos in working kit. I had a long letter from **Margaret**, all about her fishing trip; what darlings all our children are. So pleased I am about **Lisle** being 7<sup>th</sup> it mayn't last but it bucks me up like anything. How you must have enjoyed going to the small boys' half term show. I think you are doing splendidly about money, congratters to all of you.

21<sup>st</sup>. Saturday & holiday owing to the Eid Mahomadan festival. I am doing nothing this afternoon. On Saturdays they have races at **Tollygunge** which spoils the golf so I don't go. It is cloudy & raining today. Old Burrard doesn't take the slightest real interest in the work of the Department now & oh! it is so funny he now says "we must only think of the War & nothing else." He shows no signs of wanting to retire. Much love, darling I adore you. Never your most loving husband & lover, Charlie.

4<sup>th</sup> August, U.S. Club **Calcutta**, to **Ida**: My own sweet darling, Yes I am a blackguard about writing & the unlucky part is that I took the opportunity of being in **Bangalore** in a decent climate to write a lot of letters & longer ones & that mail has been sunk. However, yesterday I got a good double mail up to July 4, from you all & better still the photos of you, **Enid** & **Violet** & since then I've been looking & looking at them. The only criticisms I have to make are **Enid**, I can see her bricket (?) bones or whatever they are, collar bone, which shows she is still thin & doesn't eat enough. You munitions workers shouldn't wear necklaces. Violet, is she really as good looking as that, because if so she's better looking 'even than father'. I can't tell you how happy I am with these photos. You were all not working overtime, owing to shortage of materials owing to the strike. I hope the effects of this will work off soon. I had another tooth out yesterday & the dentist said I must have plates, up & lower jaw, but another tooth has got to come out, but he would prefer if I can manage to bite my food, to wait till it had loosened a bit. I told him I thought I could probably manage as I never did bite my food, just got a grip with my front teeth & then swallowed it like a dog. My other bit of news is that I was sick with old Burrard that I wrote him an official letter saying I wanted to revert to military duty. However before sending it I showed my leg to Col. Deare the doctor here & he said that owing to varicose veins no doctor would pass me fit for active service. This was rather a blow, so I didn't send in my letter. I then asked Surgn. General Edwards to give me his opinion & he said certainly I was fit. Of course the only result of my reverting to military employ would be that I should be sent as C R E to Ahmedmager (?) or some place like that & not go on active service and my present job is more important & more to do with the war than that sort of work. So there it rests for a bit. ... I ought to be playing golf, but so frightened at your remarks about my short letters I've given it up & staying in writing letters instead. Yes, the boys letters are sweet. I do enjoy them. Thanks for the half term reports of **Bobby** & **Ernle**, both good, former has made a fine start. **Ernle** was 2<sup>nd</sup> in his class, but bottom in mathematics, in which he seemed to have struck a snag.

You know Ida what sickens me about old Burrard (and his staying on costs me Rs250 a month) is the little interest he takes in the work of the Department. Now here in the **Calcutta** offices (R Survey here ends on 30<sup>th</sup> Sept.), last here (*year?*) 1915-16 we had a record year in maps printed & distributed. It was something like this best year before we had 2,200,000 printings. Last year we had 2,900,000 & this year we shall have about 3,700,000; so you see in the two years we have nearly doubled, allowing to war requirements. He never says thank you, and takes no interest in it, and after make the dog sick. Honestly I am doing half his work for him, I mean I write & answer letters in his name on all sorts of subjects as it is no use sending things to him, he only delays them & doesn't understand them.

I didn't send you the £80 home this month, nor shall I do so next month i.e. Sept & perhaps not in October; my reason being that the Indian War Loan closes on 15<sup>th</sup> Oct, so I want to put in as much as I can, & then I'll begin again sending you home money. You have enough to go on with, that you might tell me how much you will want each month. Your plan of having the boys in town for Xmas I strongly approve of. Give them a good time at shows &c then Easter & summer holidays art some bracing j\*\*\*gly (?) seaside place. I'm glad you haven't had overtime lately especially in the heat of

summer. I am often anxious lest one of you overdoes it.

Aug 5 Sunday: I must post this today & as I must also write to **Lisle** for his birthday I must stop. Heaps of love & kisses, Darling & even when my letters are short my love for you is underlying & undiminished. Ever hear your adoring lover & husband, Charlie.

5<sup>th</sup> August, U. S. Club Calcutta: My darling **Margaret**, Two delightful letters from you by last mail, both from Ireland. Today is Sunday & I'm writing in the long writing room in the Club, which is cooler than my room. I shall be most interested to hear all you do about closing up the house, settling with Joseph Martin & packing up. You will have a job. I hope will get rid of all the rubbish. Nobody ever told me whether there was anyone I ought to call on who were good to you. Occasionally people ask me if I'm the father of the pretty Miss Ryder's. Yesterday Capt Green-Armitage asked after you all; being in the I. M. S (?) Being in France & Mesopotamia, a nice fellow I play bridge with him sometimes. I wonder if you'll be allowed to take up some work. I hope so. It has been raining heavily this morning, but I am going to have a try to play golf at **Tollygunge** this afternoon. I've been rather gay this week. Dined with Smith the American Consul General & bridge after & also with the Ducats, quiet (?) people, she adores me Margaret, like Mrs Vincent Mackinnon for my bridge, a funny old thing, but a good sort, very proud of her only son, flying in Egypt. Very sick of existence out here, old Burrard is such a driveller now. We only get fortnightly mails now and I hear one home, one with mails of July 7 from **Bombay** sunk, and lucky it would contain rather a big bunch of letters I wrote in the cooler climate of **Bangalore**. I may get up to **Mussoorie** for a fortnight at the end of September. Heaps of love, darling, from your loving Father, Charles Ryder.

” *This this about closing up Murhill, Eastbourne*

9<sup>th</sup> August, Calcutta, to **Ida**: My own sweet darling, I don't know when this will go off, but as today Thursday is a holiday & pouring with rain it is a good opportunity to get started with my letter, especially as I have been thinking a good deal, due to looking at pictures of houses in Country Life, of what we shall do when I retire. I want to especially think of this, because I knew you would like to settle in what I call one of the expensive counties, like Surrey or Kent, so would I but unless I get something to do when I retire, I knew we couldn't afford to and we should have had to retire to one of the more out of the way counties like Wiltshire. Now I think you might have a chance of laying (?) the idea. You know Renny Tailyour's mother when he retired became one of the two managing directors of Guinness, £1,200 a year, but of course he knew nothing of making stout, but what they wanted was a gentleman who would be straight and a good manager, all technical work was left to the experts.

Now your engineering works have become very big & there might be some opening of that sort for me. Just think it out and see if Neville Gwynne is at all inclined to rise to it. If got something with say £500 a year at least, then & then only could we settle down in say Kent which has always been to my mind the most beautiful part of England. It is quite easy to figure out what we shall have. My pension of £700 will be reduced by £85 (if the income tax remains what it is) for income tax and about £35 for the fund subscriptions, that gives £580. You will have about £300 a year from mother<sup>6</sup> though it may be many a long year before you get it. My insurance money will be £1,500. Anything I can save between now & when I retire won't be much, it will mostly go in giving the boys a start in life.

I shall be 55 in 6 years; I might if I become S. G. be given a two years extension. Renny says Govt. certainly would offer me that and of course if I was S G for several years I could save something substantial; but of course taxes and the general cost of living would be greater than before the war. I could probably put in another 10 years work at home. So now you know all about it. It might even pay if I got a decent billet to retire before I was 55. In some ways I should be sorry to do that, as I should like to end up as S G & a possible K C I E.

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6 Ida's mother, Josephine Grigg, neé Roberts.

Subject No. 2 is: I've just been adding up my account with Cox & as far as I can see after paying the boys school bills in September we have £380 in hand less any cheques other than schooling you have paid & less house rent & summer holiday expenses & expenses of closing up Murhill. Joseph Martin is bound to rook you something. Then I suppose you will sell some of the furniture & rubbish, but you won't get much. Anyhow you have enough to carry you up to Xmas, so I won't send you home any money in September or October, but will begin again in November. That reaches Cox at end of November or early December, but there is quite time for you to tell me what amount to send you home each month. The boys schooling can do about £30 a month. How much more do you want, but don't have a big balance lying idle at Cox; each quarter you should see what you have spare & invest it in War Loan of sorts. Your little watch has been in hospital, but is going strong again. Every night as I look at its shining face I think of you. By Jove it is raining steadily. I had arranged to play golf this afternoon, but that will have to be off. I am able now to ask any few men to dinner occasionally, thanks to the money you gave darling; you don't know how beastly I have felt sometimes saving every penny. On Saturday I am having Stevenson, Moore, Sir R. Gamble (used to be the tennis player) & Hayden & to play bridge after. & the following week the Ducats & Mr Smith the American Consul in the ladies room.

10<sup>th</sup> Aug. Just seen a notice that a mail leaves today. It will probably catch up last week's which is waiting at **Bombay**. Heaps & heaps of love, my darling & I long to give you a good hug. Ever your adoring lover & husband, Charlie.

So grateful to **Enid & Violet** for their long letters.

*A six month gap in letters.*

17<sup>th</sup> February 1918<sup>7</sup>, United Service Club, **Calcutta**, to **Ida**: My own sweet darling, A sudden notice it out that the mail goes on Tuesday the 19<sup>th</sup> instead of Friday, so I have to write without any letters to answer. I've been busy gradually getting my things together but no orders yet. I was also very extravagant and conceited in going to Browne & Shepard to get photographed in service kit with my two rows of ribbons. I also saw the big enlargement they have in their window of **Enid**, it's beautifully done, but they wanted 100/- so I said I'd write & ask you. **Enid** always photographs well, & that is a great score, you don't & **Margaret** doesn't. I have also been in the dentists hands & finish on Tuesday, a small plate in the lower jaw & a larger in the upper. I don't think I shall ever feel comfortable with them. Next mail will be at the beginning of March, & I'll send you all the money I can spare. I want to keep some in hand as I am having to spend a good deal in getting things. Of course everything is double price to what it used to be. I have one more meeting of the Exemption Tribunal & then I resign that, & one more meeting of the Club Committees & resign them too. I find I can wire home just an address & have to trust you'll understand & not think this time that Baghdad is the name of a ship. This has been the best of my 3 cold weathers here for cold weather staying on, still glad of a blanket at night. I'm having my tennis bat restrung, it's got very slack. How I'd love to have some good singles again with you. I could only beat you by hammering away at your back hand.

Feb. 19. A mail in of Dec.31 & Jan. 9. You were all taking it in turns to be in Eastbourne for the holidays & I do hope the change did you all good. How perfectly sweet of the the dear children to give us the George III silver teapot<sup>8</sup>. That is a real prize & I hope we drink many cups of tea out of it with our dear ones round. Last mail there was a letter to you from Mrs Ashfield speaking of **Ernle's** stuttering. It might be a bar to his going into the Navy. This is a blow, what do you think about it yourself? Anyhow his name should go down for a public school, not Marlborough please, that is not a good Army School, it is more classical. I should prefer my Cheltenham.

I'm so pleased **Ernle** is the 1<sup>st</sup> XI for football & **Bobbie** the 2<sup>nd</sup> XI, that is good as they are so small.

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<sup>7</sup> The day after Bobby's 10<sup>th</sup> birthday.

<sup>8</sup> This is possibly the silver teapot with Harrowby crest that his grandson Lisle has inherited.

I expect they are quick. Anyhow they are sure to be keen. I'm afraid we must make up our minds **Lisle** will not set the Thames on fire but he's a dear good boy & we'll do our best for him. Heaps of love & kisses, my pet, from your adoring mother & husband, Charlie.

Love to the girls, no more news about my going to Mesopotamia.

15<sup>th</sup> April, from a steamer up the Tigris from **Basra**, to **Ida**: My own sweet darling, I am on my way upriver, just nearing **Shaikh Saad** where the fighting began to try to relieve **Kut** (?). I got to **Basra** on the 9<sup>th</sup> M. O'C Tandy met me & took me off to the Field Park which he is in charge of and I lived in them S, a nice house on the river bank. I have found there was a steamer leaving on the 12<sup>th</sup> & got a passage in that, & spent the time going & seeing different people with whom I might have to do in survey questions. We have a Survey office across the river. Mr West & 2 surveyors doing a large-scale survey for extensions of the Port which is now immense. There's more shipping there than there has been lately in **Calcutta**. I saw the Railway people, Col Oates in charge & Haslam another Sapper, also the Base Commandant, G. O. C. Line of Communications, Port officials & so on. I left on the 12<sup>th</sup> & have been slowly coming up river ever since. It is really cold, I am wearing serge uniform & have put on a warm waistcoat (yours) as well.

Today we can see the **Pushti Kuk** hills at the foot of which we put the boundary & I can recognise a lot of the hills. There is snow on the further ranges. There are about 20 officers on board going up to join units. There are big flat bottomed boats, very large & broad & most comfortable. They feed you on board quite good food that nothing. I have a cabin with a Col Godman of the Scots Guards, a very nice fellow, on the staff. We only go about 4 miles an hour up stream with a barge on either side full of stores. The country is very bare but quite green.

17<sup>th</sup> April. We are just in site of the old arch at **Ctesiphon** (??) going along very slowly against a very strong current, grounded twice, each time for about two hours and the awning over one of our barges caught fire, which was a great excitement for a bit. We got to **Kut** on the evening of the 15<sup>th</sup> & could have gone on that night by train & got to **Baghdad** next morning. However I thought I'd stick to the steamer to see more of the country & I'm glad I did so. The day we were coming near **Kut** was most interesting seeing the different places where all the fighting took place.

21<sup>st</sup> April. I got to **Baghdad** on the 19<sup>th</sup>. There was a pretty big flood in the river which made us go slow. I came up the last 3 miles by launch. Perry came down to meet me. Pirie was out down south inspecting & came in yesterday. I take over from him on 1<sup>st</sup> May. We are having most delightful weather & I sleep under two blankets. Most of the officers are in houses along the river. We haven't got a bad one, but not nearly one of the best, the usual Persian style round an inner courtyard; it was a school I believe. I went & reported yesterday & saw Gen. Gillman the Chief of the Staff & Gen. Marshall the G O C & also went over Gunter's office. He reproduces the maps, but he's not under the Survey as he should be. He has Lewis, Gwynn & the younger Crosthwait all under him. Pirie has made a great mistake in allowing all that show to be separate. Perry is going on a month's leave to India. I shan't be sorry he is such a grumbling, dismal youth. However he is all right at his work. I have a motor & a motor launch at my disposal, good things for getting about the country. Of course I can't tell you anything about what is going on, but everything seems very satisfactory. I kind with Gunter yesterday in his mess, very comfortable. We went on to an open air concert, jolly good. The new army has great variety of talent. I don't know what has happened to **Arthur Money** he left ill soon after **Baghdad** was taken & went home I suppose. Brooking is quite one of the most successful generals out here, he has a Division. Theodore Fraser was Chief of the Staff for a short time, officiating. Roe is up here as Director of Works. I can't find out if there is any special day of posting for English mail, I doubt it so I shall try & post each Sunday. We get excellent rations but I shall try & live in one of the messes as soon as Pirie leaves. There is a very good canteen, I believe, from which one can buy all sorts of things, so I really don't think there is anything much I shall want sent out.

23<sup>rd</sup>. I haven't been very brilliant the last day or two, a splitting head & a tongue of the yellowest, however I'm all right today, eat something that disagreed. I'm longing for Pirie to be off, so that I



can get to work. I shall join one of the messes. One is fed much better than when living by oneself & one sees newspapers &c.

25<sup>th</sup> April. I dined out last night with Mr Garbett who knew you all in **Simla & Karachi**; he is here as one of the Civil Officials, rather clever, very fond of hearing his own voice. Tonight I'm dining with Col Godman & going to hear a lecture on old Baghdad after. I'm longing for letters, as you can imagine. I haven't had any from India even yet. I ought to have got some "Pioneers". The flood in the river has gone down a good deal but it has done a good deal of damage. I've taken to smoking a pipe a good deal since I've been out here, but it's a nasty, dirty habit.

It's warming up today, sitting in my shirtsleeves. These houses are not suited to get through breezes, my room is a long narrow one upstairs, but the whole of one long side is a blank wall & the other is all windows looking across as a verandah into the courtyard, where grow 3 mulberry's. It will be rather dull till I take over charge, then I'll have plenty to do. Hunter is just going off to **Kut** to start some survey work south of there.

26<sup>th</sup> April. I'm going out tomorrow with Col Godman by motor to **Hilla**, stop the night (it is 60 miles south of here), and come back next day, seeing the ruins of **Babylon** en route. It's rather a bit of luck seeing the place like that, and it will be useful seeing the country as well. I dined with Godman last night & went to a most interesting lecture by an American on old **Babylon**. I also met Gen Stuart Courtley (?), he is A. O. M.G. a distant cousin, another of Lord Whemcliffe (?). This is rather a respectable long letter. Heaps of love, darling. I'm very fit only longing the letters. Ever your adoring lover & husband, Charlie.

28<sup>th</sup> April, as Deputy Director of Surveys, **Mesopotamia**, to **Ida**: My own sweet darling, My trip to **Hilla & Babylon** didn't come off, owing to the heavy floods motor traffic has been stopped over the bridge here, so it was out of the question. I hope to do it later. There is an open air Theatre here. I went to a very good variety concert last night, really good, there are a lot of men in the new army who are regular music Hall performers before they joined up. It cheers one up to go, admittance -/8/- so it's not a ruinous. The night before I'd dined at the officers club with Major Peart whom I knew in **Calcutta**. The river is right up to our house when it's high, 2 or 3 feet deep against the wall; it's rather better like that, as when it is low there is a stretch of mud. I got letters from India yesterday & Pioneers up to 6<sup>th</sup> April, but that must have just missed the English mail, 30<sup>th</sup> April. I dined last night with Col Ewbank RE. Do you remember him at **Bangalore**, he is acting as Chief Engineer. The Quartermaster General here is one of the Stuart-Wortleys, a brother of Lord Wharncliffe's, I've met him. I take over from Col Pirrie tomorrow & then I shall get to work. Our fans are being fitted in today, but one hardly wants them yet. I've got my car now, it is a Ford, a good driver, English; it will be very convenient. Hardly anything but Fords are used here, they are very good for rough wear. Perry goes off tomorrow. The floods have gone down a bit, but it is still a turbulent river that rushes past. It is no use buying carpets &c. here, prices are ridiculous. Pirrie has got some nice ones, but at enormous prices, including a fine silk one.

Darling, you see I began this on 28<sup>th</sup> April & today is 8<sup>th</sup> May & except a letter to **Margaret** I haven't had a moment to myself, even got a pile of Pioneers and opened. I found dreadful confusion in the office & have been tidying up & getting things in order ever since Pirie left on the 2<sup>nd</sup>. Then poor old Beazeley got taken prisoner. He was sketching country in Turkish occupation from an aeroplane which either had to come down or was brought down. He was not hurt, but the pilot wounded. This just as an advance was taking place gave me a lot of bother.

I get up at 6.30 & go to bed at 11 & except for meals & from 5 to 7 when I take exercise I've been hard at it; that will get all right soon. The first thing I did was to get myself attached properly to G. H. Q. & then joined one of the messes, where I have breakfast, lunch & dinner, just 6 minutes walk from here. We need very well, only a good deal of bully beef & broad beans (tough ones). Gunter, Younger Crosthwait & Lewis are all in the same mess. It has been extraordinarily cool. I have a fan

in my office & also in my bedroom, but hardly used them yet. There are tennis courts near here where we've played 2 or 3 times, mud courts but quite fair, and I have also had a game of golf of sorts outside. The rupee has gone up to 1s/6d you know it was 1s/4d, then last year went up to 1s/5d, so I have given orders to the Alliance Bank to send home to Cox £140 a month beginning from 1<sup>st</sup> June. I think it better to do that than invest savings out in India. That is about Rs.1870, as might pay is 1940/- a month now. That leaves me 70/- a month to live on, then I have 150/- a month T.A. so that will do me all right, but this will soon give you a very big balance at Cox, so mind you in this date in my name 5½% please & then there is no income tax to pay, but see that Cox does it right. My motor, a very rattly Ford is most useful. I have a good driver Hannyngton by name.

Funny you should have asked to be photoed, as I have already sent some to you. I'm too far away to have any control over things at home. I still think that it a mistake to keep on the house at Eastbourne & then you could spend holidays at real jingly (?) places. I'm so glad **Bobby** got the drawing prize, that is capital. I got 4 mails the other day & unluckily just as I am at my busiest, I'm only slightly interested in the tin mining idea in Cornwall, as it has never been a paying proposition, only bucked up a bit just now going to the high prices from the War. I have two fellows in just, both Provincials, Booth, really quite a gentleman & a very fine young fellow, done a lot of good work; he is going up to **Kifri**; and Rennick (?) who was with me in Kashmir, he is going up to **Kermanshah**. I'm feeling as fit as possible, simple food & plenty of work.

May 9. There is one rather important thing I want you to (*do*). On 13<sup>th</sup> July I complete 5 years service as Lt Col & should be promoted Colonel, & they date it back a year. It would come out shortly after that date not under R. E. Heading but under Memoranda in the ordinary Gazette, so watch it with you and wire out simply the word "Colonel". You can find out what address you should telegraph to me under, put Colonel Ryder and either **Baghdad** or **Mesopotamia**, weekend telegrams go cheap & also there are special rules about cheap rates for telegraphing to anyone on service. You see as I really shall be a full Colonel from 13<sup>th</sup> July 1917 I want to know it as soon as possible. Yes, I sent you the tea, I'm so glad you liked it. I sent some to **Una & Mary**<sup>9</sup>, if they knew it came from me, so I suppose some mails were delayed. Heaps & heaps of love from your adoring lover & husband, Charlie

Congratulations to Enid on her record days earnings of £1-19-1.

13<sup>th</sup> May, Deputy Director of Surveys, **Mesopotamia**, to **Ida**: Today is the 15<sup>th</sup> so I didn't get very far with my letter, & I've got a horrid pen. Yesterday I got an English mail or part of one, a letter from you & **Violet** of 7<sup>th</sup> March, one from **Margaret** a week later & one from **Una & Mary** of 20<sup>th</sup> March. The last said Lisle had German Measles, but a mild attack, good thing to get it over. I hope in another fortnight to have a quieter time, at present I am occupied in sending men out to work & others on leave, & writing long letters to Burrard trying to get him to help; he is not so bad, Lennox-Conyngham is the sticker. I'm dining out tonight with a Col Frost, Director of Labour, met him in Kashmir with **Frank Money**<sup>10</sup>. There are lovely sunset views across the river from my office room, where I am sitting now. I'm beginning to fidget for the grandfather telegram. You were evidently in the dumps when you wrote. Cheer up, old girl. Although we are not together, I love you more than ever & think of the good times we've had together & shall have.

Nothing to grumble about in the heat line, sleeping under a fan I don't get worried by sandflies or mosquitoes, as I was before the fans started. I work most of the day in shirt sleeves. I'll try & get off a letter each week & hope they'll get along to you; and as one never knows where that letters fetch up or not I'll repeat what I said last week about the money I am sending home, beginning from 1<sup>st</sup> June from Calcutta £140 each month, this is because the rupee has gone up to 1/6. That is practically the whole of my pay, or at least Rs.80 short of it. I can live on that & my T.A. Of Rs.150/- quite easily, as I spend hardly anything here. My mess bill comes to about Rs.3 a day, my bearer Rs.35 a month & a few odds & ends besides. But as I'm sending everything home instead of

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9 His older sisters.

10 A second cousin.

saving anything in India; it will be up to you to invest money in my name so as to avoid income tax. The highest temperature so far has been 96° in my room, but it will go and other 20° higher yet, but so far this year has been ever so much better than last. Hunter went up in an aeroplane yesterday to see how he liked it with a view to doing sketching & photos from one.

Darling, letters take so long that this will reach you after our birthday, very many happy returns dear pet. When you come to think of it, in many ways you and I have been lucky. Look at our 6 dear children; if the boys had been the elder 3 they'd have probably all been killed by now. All my doors & windows are made of wooden frames with netting (?), all glass was stolen or smashed by the Turks. The floors have matting, very common sort with waterproof sheeting on top. I've got the sanitary people interested in the office & getting it very clean & superior, much more healthy for everyone. Heaps of love darling from your adoring lover & husband, Charlie.

31<sup>st</sup> May, Baghdad, to **Ida**: My darling sweetheart, I got as far as the address four hours ago & have been at work ever since. Lennox-Conyngham is here for a week, leaves on the 3<sup>rd</sup>. He came here to advise about some levelling work, which was urgently required by the Irrigation Dept & which old Burrard wouldn't help in. However I have proved to L. C. the necessity & now he agrees, so all's well. I took him out on one trip to see the country. We motored down to **Hilla** on a branch of the **Euphrates** 60 miles from here, stopped the night & came back, stopping en route at **Babylon** to see the ruins thereof, but very disappointing. The road was covered when you got off it & buzzed along over the desert (1<sup>st</sup> June); it was pretty hot, and I should be very sorry to be out surveying now. I hope to a range to shut down a good deal of the work except on the actual fighting fronts for the next 3 months. It is all most interesting to me. As soon as capital L. C. goes on 3<sup>rd</sup> I shall have my room to myself & the able to write more.

We went out yesterday to **Kazhimain** where there is a fine tomb, or two rather, golden domes, it is about 6 miles out. I had Mason dining with me last night, very full of life; he has an MC & is Intelligence Officer with the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps with a temporarily rank of Major, married last year & has a daughter. Tonight I'm going to a concert. One posts letters here on Saturdays but no one knows when they go off, certainly there isn't more than a fortnightly mail from **Bombay**. My last letter from you was of March 7, but a day or two ago I got one from **Una** of of March 27 that was addressed to Grindlay, Bombay. I'm hoping soon to get letters direct. I sleep well under the fan but a crowd of sparrows generally wake me at 4.30 & I only doze after that till I get up at 6.30. I go over to breakfast at the mess at 8. My room is quite decently cool in the morning, but in the afternoon it gets hot. I wrote **Enid** a few days ago a letter about accounts. I gather she like me is the stern economist. You all have saved the situation from the money point of view by setting to work. I'm eternally grateful, really without that I don't know what we should have done.

From today I'm sending home £140 a month & so I hope the account at Cox will soon be in a flourishing condition. We are all feeling rather disheartened just hearing of the 3<sup>rd</sup> big German push between Rheims & Soissons and no cheerful prospects to counterbalance it, unless the Americans can do something. Dear, dear I mustn't get doleful, but I often feel homesick & a great longing to be with you again. Heaps of love & kisses from your adoring lover & husband, Charlie.

3<sup>rd</sup> June, Baghdad, to **Ida**: My darling sweetheart, Lennox-Conyngham left this morning so I have had a great day of polishing off arrears of work and got my table clear, but I have lots of jobs to do yet. Dinner is at 7 tonight as we are going to hear Miss Bell lecture on Northern Arabia. She is a wonderful woman travelled all over the place before the war and is now employed in the Political and amongst other things gives the correct spelling of names for our maps. L.C.'s visit was useful as he now understands the situation and so won't be obstructive if he becomes S. G. While I am here. I had two rather interesting letters from the S. G. about my promotion to full Colonel, some new War Office rules had come out, which looked like barring R. E.'s in civil departments. Robertson's & my names were up & C. in C. in India had written to say that Robertson couldn't be recommended, so it is supposed mine has been, so you will keep an eye on Gazettes and wire out if you see my name shortly after 14<sup>th</sup> July, don't forget to telegraph just a word "Colonel". You will find it not amongst

R.E.'s but under Memoranda.

The other item of news I got from L.C. was that if he was S.G. he would certainly recommend that if I wanted it I should be made S.G. after him & be given a 2 years extension, so as to hold it for four years.

5<sup>th</sup> June. In the cool just at sunset I'm writing. Darling, I do believe in writing a lot of letters. I quite forgot to write to you about our grand-daughter<sup>11</sup>. You don't know what a relief it was to get your wire, thanks ever so much. It was a happy day for me and a very proud grandfather I am. I don't fancy there are many in this force, but I don't feel old, darling do you. You have the gift of perpetual youth & charm.

Conyngnam left on the 3<sup>rd</sup> & I have had a busy time getting up to time with my work & still it comes in. In the last birthday honours Rich got a C.I.E. for his work in Persia. He is on his way out to join me in place of Beazeley, and I am sending him up to Persia, can't tell you where, but all that work is now under me.

Mrs Lennox-Conyngnam got a British Empire Order, M.B.E. or C.B.E. I think she deserves it, she has done a lot of work for Red Cross &c. all unpaid. Col Coldstream has been wounded & Trenchard's wife has died. I've just had a long visit from Miss Bell over a map of Northern Arabia I'm getting out for her. I dined with Mason last time, he is with 1<sup>st</sup> Corps Head Quarters across the river, that is the cool side as they get more breeze and don't get the afternoon sun as we do. I feel more cheerful today, good Reuters. My mess bill came to 86/- for May. English mail today. Yours of April 3 all about your arrangements for the boys' holidays, excellent; from **Una** I had letters of April 3 & 10, but your letters between April 7 & early March had evidently gone to Calcutta & will come on, but it is so nice now getting them direct. I'm bucked too by the two personal things (1) that I've been recommended for full Colonel & Robertson wasn't, pip pip. (2) Both Burrard & Conyngnam are agreed I'm to be S G after C and be given a two years extension; this holding the job for 4 years will make it worth having, and will I hope enable me to see my boys out into professions, and possibly get a K.C.I.E. especially if I get something out of this show.

6<sup>th</sup> June. I write in scraps as I have time. I'm lucky to be in a house; if I were up country in a tent I'm afraid my letters would be very short. I've started sleeping like a top, in fact very reluctant to get up at 6. I shall be most interested to hear about your new machine & the new work you do<sup>12</sup>. I thought from the amounts you were paid that you were all paid at men's rates. Of course I suppose everything is frightfully expensive at home now, but you don't tell me about that I sent you a few months (*ago*) a frightful scolding about not eating enough, but as it was never answered I imagine you never got it, did you? I'm so glad mother will at last see **Bobby**. I hope he'll make a good impression. I expect **Lisle** will, and on **Una & Mary**<sup>13</sup> too. Bless my darlings, I love them all, there's no one to equal them and as far as you, you are the best of the lot.

7<sup>th</sup> June. Aren't I getting rather good at writing. I'm dining with long (?) Theodore Fraser tonight, he is Chief of Staff of one of the Corps, grown very white in the hair. Rich ought to be up in a few days. I shall send him up to Persia as soon as I can. I played badminton yesterday on the roof of the mess, quite good, Gunter, Lewis & Major Blackshaw, the gas expert. Two aside was quite good exercise. Lewis was much better than any of us. I've told Cox to write to you about recovery of income tax all part of it on your War Loan, but I don't know what you are paying on your earnings. A south wind blowing the last few days which warms the place up. Now here are two jobs for you.

1). Send me out a pipe, a good big bowl, Peterson's patent (which has the whole at end of mouthpiece on top not at the end, that is essential as it is the only sort that doesn't burn my tongue<sup>14</sup>) straight please, not curved.

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11 **Rosemary** was born 12<sup>th</sup> May.

12 At Gwynne's munitions factory.

13 Charles' older sisters.

14 Diagram to show.

2). A thing to scrape out the bowl of a pipe, I prefer the sort just the shape of the bowl with jagged points sticking out all over.

3). This is urgent, because I reckon this letter will take 2 months to reach you and two months for the parcel to come out again. A good "coat warm British". Please ask Mrs Cowie for the address in Conduit Street of the tailor, her husband & the Tandys go to. I can't remember his name, he has my measure, but tell him I am stouter since he took my measure, a stone heavier, and as one wears the coat in cold weather I wear it over a thick coat and I like it loose. Failing that tailor, see the G & N stores, ready made, chest measurement for an ordinary coach a full 42" & 6ft. high I am.

4). One pair warm gloves, not letter of any sort please, just woolly ones.

Then I shall be well provided for. I can get everything else either hear from the officer's shop or from India. Heaps of love, darling, from your adoring lover & husband, Charlie.

I sent **Margaret** a cheque for £10 for herself & **Una & Mary** £5.

6<sup>th</sup> June, Baghdad, to **Violet**: My darling Violet, I shall be especially interested to hear all about your new work when you get onto it. In the mean time Violet here's something to think of, and when you've got it patSay it to mother, because it is better said than written. "Mary's age is 18. Mary is twice the age that Ann was when Mary was the age that Ann is now. What is the age of Ann?"

The only objection I have to my billet is that it is fairly noisy. I have 8 Red Cross launches moored in front & it is also a sort of bathing quat (?) & place where boats ply for hire. I must send for some films and try and take some photos to give you an idea of where I live. I'm afraid not all my letters reach you. I must start numbering those to Mother. We get quite good food, anyhow plenty of it, though our mess cook is not first class. My breakfast consists of a plate of porridge & some (2) eggs & bacon; luncheon, a meat dish, bully beef once a week, other days frozen meat<sup>15</sup>, plain pudding. Dinner, soup (in theory), a fish out of the river, Tastes all right but has many bones, roast meat, vegetables, we generally have two vegetables marrow & brinjals (egg plant) just now, potatoes only on occasion & then a fruit tart or other pudding. To drink, plenty of soda, & whisky or lime juice. That doesn't sound bad does it? I wish you all had as much. Today & on the 8<sup>th</sup> there are races on but I shall go instead & play golf. Heaps of love, darling, from your loving Father, Charles Ryder.

10<sup>th</sup> June, Baghdad, to **Ida**: My darling sweetheart, I'm enjoying a cold. You know what a beastly thing a cold is in a hot climate, one feels a worm, and as one's joy here ordinary (*sic*) is chasing every draft or breeze one can find & sitting in it, it's rather difficult to get rid of. A young & vigorous Caxara<sup>16</sup> is also adding to my amusements. We had a couple of days up to 160° with a south wind, today it cooler again with a north wind. This evening I'm going to hear Capt Wilson lecture on Persia & its inhabitants. I'm taking up Rs.5000 of the new India War Loan, 7 years, by deductions of Rs.500 a month from my pay bill, so after the £140 which will go home on 1<sup>st</sup> July, I shall reduce the amount to £100 from 1<sup>st</sup> August onwards. We first hear of a mail coming by seeing in orders that it has arrived in **Bombay**, for instance yesterday I saw the mail of May 6 arrived in Bombay on June 7, that was quick. I am doing my best to send you a letter each week, they will probably arrive in bunches. I'm getting accustomed to chlorinated water, & soda water but it isn't nice really. A mail of March 20 just in, the last via **Calcutta**. Have you all noticed **Bobby's** new handwriting, I think it is rather good. You were sick with Neville Gwynne for not introducing you to the Queen; never mind my dear, think how lucky you are to have such a good looking husband. I'm afraid I rather let you down in the money line by sending nothing home for two months. I wanted to collar something to invest in India & then I wanted to keep something in hand for getting kit for here, however you should be all right now. Do you notice I write both sides of the paper & you only one? I wonder how you liked my photo, funny and I should have thought of being photoed just as

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15 How did they manage to have frozen meat?

16 A fish.

you were asking me to be done. I'm glad to hear from **Enid** that you are eating better. I'm afraid I rather treated your Cornish tin mine with scorn. I certainly wouldn't invest any money in one even if I had money. If I get my 2 years extension as S.G. it would be 7 years before I write (*sic. He must mean retire*) & certainly 2 years extra as S.G. Would be worth more than a doubtful tin mine. I don't believe Markham without seeing me would think of giving me a job unless I put money in. How splendid, **Enid** says you each had £68-19-6 in savings certificates, that's £200 between you. How nice meeting Capt Oldham again. Did you say Ūlŭ (?) to him. I met a Col Harvey I.N.S. with 2<sup>nd</sup> Gurkhas who was at that dance & remembered the episode of my going incog.

11<sup>th</sup> June. It is so cool, a good north wind blowing that I've stopped my fan, and last night I really didn't want it; the only thing is that at night it keeps away sandflies. My code is much the same, I suppose it has got to run its course. I saw Gen Gillman the Chief of the Staff again about the survey work in Persia and settled everything with him satisfactorily. You will soon be getting spoilt by the length of my letters, quite like old times, when I wrote you 12 pages & you answered in 2. Yes, the boy's letters are very sweet, I enjoy them.

15<sup>th</sup> June. Letters go off today. A dry place like this makes one very thirsty. I average 6 soda waters a day. Tomorrow I'm playing tennis at one of the hospitals. I came up with Miss Walker, the Matron, on the river steamer from Bombay. I don't play tennis well here, the light is dreadful, on the Club courts there are no screens & the light is very spotty, sun shining through palm trees. We see in the telegrams mention of the French thinking of the defence of Paris, which doesn't look well. Sweetheart this place is not in Persia, but in Turkey, or was. Living here as I do one often hardly realises there is a war on. I'm working much as I did in India, and the heat so far is certainly no worse than India. As regards food, well I fancy I have better or at any rate more food than you do. If we can stick out this year we shall win the war all right. I'm very proud of all you've done. I expect after the war prices will be still high & servants difficult, we shall have to alter our style of living & do more for ourselves, well that won't hurt, and till we get very old, then some of our children grow have to look after us. Renny-Tailyour has a year's extension. I really ought to get an extra 250/- if he had retired from 8<sup>th</sup> June, so I have already pointed this out. Heaps & heaps of love, darling, from your adoring lover & husband, Charlie.

19<sup>th</sup> June, Baghdad, to **Ida**: My darling sweetheart, a mail in today with two letters from you, April 17 & 25, so it you see it takes just under two months to get a letter & my dear! how I do revel in them. I promptly chucked all work and retired into my cool bed room and was happy for an hour in thoughts of you. **Ernie** has a faculty for making friends which I'm very glad of. He always was unselfish & ready to help and I suppose it's that that makes the other boys like him. I gather, although you don't say why you thinks so, that **Bobby** wasn't appreciated at Bedford, well it can't be helped. I suppose mother has grown old now and doesn't like being disturbed. I hope I shan't get like that.

I've had Major Rich here the last week. I'm so glad he has gone, he grates on me the whole time, he is always on the make, hunting about to find out some extra allowance he can draw, or where he can save money. He has gone up to Persia, but still remains under me. It is warming up now steadily, and it won't be for another 3 months before we see the maximum under 100° again, but I keep very fit, only I have a very fine thirst always on.

I have your letters before me and so start to answer questions. I haven't succeeded Major Tandy, but Colonel Pirrie, No the billet is not new it is that of the Deputy director of Surveys, that is head of the surveys out here. I have Major Rich, Thillier, Hunter & Perry under me as well as 8 Provincial officers & about 30 surveyors. Have a Ford car, a Government one, but I have the sole use of it with an English driver & a motor boat, But the latter has only just come back from the Euphrates & has had to go into dock for a fortnight, so I haven't used it yet. I have no ponies & would have no use for them if I had. I have been rather stupid about my teeth; I've got quite accustomed to the one tooth in the lower jaw & always have that in; the 3 on a plate in the upper jaw (including my old missing front one) I've chucked & put away. I'm quite happy without it; probably if I'd stuck to it I

should have been accustomed to it by now. I'm afraid your old big earnings are a thing of the past, but I congratulate you on being on superior work. Why don't you (*use*) superior writing blocks & write both sides? I'm using the Westminster Bank from the A & N Stores. I had two jolly letters from **Margaret, Enid & Violet**, so I am in luck's way. There must be another mail on its way up river.

20<sup>th</sup> June. I went over it yesterday to the officer's hospital on the other side of the river to see Strong, one of my Provincial Officers invalided down with dysentery. He has done first rate work. They are well looked after. I noticed the nurses were particularly plain, and at mess last night I said that I hoped I should be sent to their, as when I was ill I like having someone pretty to look at, and old Gunter sitting opposite said "Of course you've been spoiled by having such a beautiful wife." I suppose I have and as I have beautiful children too I shall continue to be spoilt. The best is good enough for me.

I got in the electrical people today and am having 3 more fans put in different rooms, and the electric light more sensibly placed. India is bucking up really now over the war, many more recruits and the War Loan is being well supported. You know, darling, here in **Baghdad** I am doing much the same sort of work I do in India, no hardships, no danger, I'm as fit as possible. The only luxuries I miss are the long hot baths, and potatoes. I'm really having a much easier time than you are. I'm most interested in the new machine you are working on. How are all your hands, are they horny handed? I shall always love yours whatever they are like, very pretty hands yours.

21<sup>st</sup> June. Longest day in day yeah, that is always one thing gained in hot weather places, though our hottest time here is 15<sup>th</sup> July to 15<sup>th</sup> August. I had a game of golf yesterday played beautifully & beat Gunter, result got an awful thirst on, no quenching it, and one doesn't enjoy a smoke. You know when it's hot I find existing by itself enough exercise & always feel better when I haven't taken hard exercise; it's a different thing in a cold climate. Some fellows get leave home from here, one month at home & it takes them about 6 months to do it, hardly seems worth it. My present excitement is getting out a machine printing press for printing maps from **Calcutta**. Gunter has run, so we shall have two & be able to get out maps much quicker, they ought to have two long ago, especially when operations on one it is most risky having only one which may break down. I have laid out in the work in my office now so that I don't have too much to do.

Dear sweetheart, I love you & long before the time when I can just sit & look at you. I suppose you'll be always bustling about till your 90. We are now watching the accounts of the Austrian offensive against the Italians, the beginning two days seem fairly good for us, but one never knows with the Italians after their last break down.

Temperature just 100° in my office room, so I didn't stay there long. Why do we come to nasty hot climates when there are nice cold ones? Day before yesterday I went to a comic opera, quite abusing, one man Bill awfully good; but it is a hot place as no breeze gets in. If this show was properly organised, Gunter and I one show, one of us would go for a month each year to organise things, the surveyors, khalassis &c; as it is I couldn't get away if I'd been here two years and I can't get out inspecting surveyors. Pirrie used to do the latter & leave office work & organisation to look after itself.

We had a dust storm last night. I slept through most of it, it has not cooled the air as they do in India. It's nice having time to scribble away to you & the faculty for writing is coming back; the truth is one can only do a certain amount of writing in a day & if one has to do a lot in (*the*) office as I had in **Calcutta**, well one simply couldn't do more in the evenings & so I played bridge. **Baghdad** would be much cooler if the houses were made of stone; please sun dried bricks seem to retain the heat, if the sun shines on them.

**Enid** is becoming quite good at accounts & lists of cheques &c. What is **Violet's** line? **Margaret** said V was looking very fit & no bust. I think all our boys are going to be small.

22<sup>nd</sup> June, and hottish, temperature up to 111° yesterday, but it isn't even then nearly so hot in a

house as Calcutta with its damp heat of 100° or so. Outside one often meets a burning hot wind straight off the desert. Heaps of love darling and am I not a dear writing long letters again, ever your adoring lover & husband, Charlie.

23<sup>rd</sup> June, Baghdad, to **Ida**: My darling sweetheart, Sunday morning is not a good morning because they stop the fans from 5 to 7 am for repairs & that means I wake up, scratch & have to get up & smear myself with mosquito. So I finally got up & sat in my little verandah having my tea or looking across the river. The view in the early morning is rather like **Suez** or **Port Said** from a little distance. No signs of any English mails coming up the river. I go off tomorrow evening to inspect some work; get into the train at 8:30 pm, arrive at Railhead about 3 am & then I have 4 hours in a Ford Van. It will be a hot tiring journey, but interesting to see the country and I have several important things to settle. I have just begun to write a long note showing the advantages of amalgamating Gunter's office & mine; he is a difficult chap to work with, inclined to dash off with an opinion without thinking things out. I went to a variety show yesterday, but it has now become too hot as the open air theatre is surrounded by a 20 foot matting wall which effectively keeps out any breeze there may be. I wish you would seriously reconsider the question of keeping on the house at **Eastbourne**; I feel certain it is an extravagance. You pay £80 a year rent plus taxes and other £20 or £30. I don't know what you do about servants but I presume you don't get one in for each holidays. I know it's a nuisance packing, but I feel certain we should save a lot; then each holidays you could take a farm house or lodgings by the sea. If the boys were day boys & lived in the house there might be some point in it, but as they are boarders & at most the house is only used 3 months in the year, and **Eastbourne** you know is a very expensive place. Do just think it out. You could sell any of the furniture you don't want to keep & warehouse the rest & our nice things & I feel certain that wouldn't cost more than £20 to £30 a year. If you took a farmhouse for the holidays you'd see much more of the boys if it was near town. This is a time when we ought to be saving money well, but we seem to save awfully little. I don't want money to be saved by stinting anyone, but I do think we are throwing money away. This will reach you during the summer holidays, **Lisle** will be away harvesting for 3 weeks. You know I don't want the money for myself (I'm spending next door to nothing) but I do want it for you & the children. Let us take so long a time to arrive & to receive an answer so you must act as you think best, I'm quite certain I'm right & that Dr Colgate & Jim Reid who advised you to keep on the house are wrong. The house is expensive & **Eastbourne** itself is expensive; it is one of the most expensive towns in England. What would have happened to us if you hadn't buckled to and worked I don't know. I want you to see that **Enid** & **Violet** have a good time & go to dances whenever they can & so on; that's all right but I believe by giving up the house at Eastbourne you'd have £200 a year and have a better time. If it was only for a short time it wouldn't so much matter, but the war shows no signs of coming to an end, and even when it does come to an end, it will be a long time before prices come down, and taxes will never decrease in our time.

24<sup>th</sup> June. The above is not intended as a grumble, darling, I wish you & all our darlings to have all the good time & everything we can give them, only I don't want money wasted. I've packed up my kit & sent it down to the railway station 4 miles away. I go down myself in my Ford after I've had an early dinner. There was a bit of north in the wind today, made it much cooler. Burrard tells me I have been "mentioned" for services rendered during the war, but I haven't seen the list. It's something to have that as I was stuck in India so long. Ferrier who was in charge of the Mathematical Instrument Office was mentioned too, which I'm glad of as I sent his name in.

June 28. & Many happy returns of the day to us both. When you're happy I'm happy. I only got back yesterday, after quite an interesting trip, but I have found such a lot to do that I've had no time for any letters this week except to you. I left here on the evening of the 24<sup>th</sup> by train, the train started 2 hours late and lost 2 hours en route, so I got to my railway destination at about 7 am & left in two Ford vans. The journey was particularly interesting because I went quite close to where we were on the Boundary Commission & I could see the Persian hills. The road was good & we buzzed along & got to **Kifri** (?) by 11.30. I stayed at the Brigade Headquarters for two nights much disturbed by



sandflies, but it was quite cool sleeping on the roof. There was a family of storks quite happy about 4 yards away from me on a corner of the roof. I left yesterday at 4:30 am & caught the 8.30 train & had a very slow, hot & old journey in here. I had a wire from Major Thillier that his 2<sup>nd</sup> boy Ronald had died of dysentery at **Mussoorie**, such a dear little fellow he was, isn't it hard. Fancy if we had lost any of ours like that. The enclosed cheque I received from Major Rawling, the doctor brother, it is a legacy for General Rawling's Godson, **Bobby**. Send it to Cox to credit of my account and invest it in 5 years Savings Bank certificates for Bobby through his Savings Bank book. I am writing to Major L.B.Rawling R.A.M.C, 16 Montagu Street, Portman Square to thank him. I am so glad he remembered **Bobby**. I don't know whether **Bobby** can concoct a suitable letter of thanks, that is as you like, but if not I think you might. Heaps of love darling, from your adoring lover & husband, Charlie.

1<sup>st</sup> July, Baghdad, to **Ida**: My darling sweetheart, Now we are having it hot, maximum at 116° or so. So I retire more & more to my cool room. Major Thillier has come in & is sharing my room. I've brought him to give him a rest and try & cheer him up a bit; I think being in here & seeing other fellows will. We hope for a mail on the 4<sup>th</sup>; in the meantime we think of nothing but the heat, not so much for oneself in a house with all the comforts but for those who are out. I keep very fit, a little liverish so I took some Eno this morning. Last night I dined with Miss Bell, a most interesting woman. She said, "I hear you have the most beautiful & charming wife & daughters." I said, "Yes I have," & found out it was Mr Garbett who told her. I hope my motorboat will be ready in a couple of days, & then I shall go out for short runs in the evening. Oranges are pretty well over now, but melons have come in, very good ones some are too.

6<sup>th</sup> July. A fine big mail came in yesterday, but it is unlucky (*as*) letters have to be posted today, as there is quite a lot to write about. **Enid's** account of sending everyone round to collect doctors & nurses was A1, reminded me of the similar sprints about I've had for you, she was splendid. **Margaret** must have had a much easier time than you had, as she called **Enid** at 2 am and the baby<sup>17</sup> (**Rosemary**) arrived at 4 am, pretty quick work for a first. I'm so disappointed at your not liking my photos. I'll have to give it up. I was rather pleased with my own appearance. Of course it's 3 years since you saw me and I've had rather a trying time and I am older & fatter. You always used to say I looked stern with my eyeglass in my eye. I am writing under difficulties as Mason & Hunter & a mechanic are working at an instrument in my room. **Lisle** seems to have been quite a success with **Una** and **Mary**, they've written very warmly about him. So sorry darling, I have been at work ever since & this must go. I'll write you a longer letter next week. Heaps of love from your adoring lover & husband, Charlie.

6<sup>th</sup> July, Baghdad, to **Enid**: My darling **Enid**, I think you must have been a great comfort to Margaret, an absolute Godsend but that you are to all of us. Your account of everyone trying to break into houses & get onto telephones reminded me of my performances in that line. I remember biking down to Dr Colgate in my pyjamas when **Ernie** or **Lisle** was born. You managed splendidly & all is well. We are having a bout of cooler weather, due to a northerly breeze, after temperatures of 118°, we are down to 111°. The reception you have all given to my photos is an absolute shock. I really thought & so did everyone I showed them to they were very good & I was quite pleased with them. Stern perhaps, but then I'm often told I do look stern, although you may know I'm not; then about being fat, well darling I am. I don't weigh 15½ stone, but 15 stone & after all I am fairly big all round & so I don't imagine I look very fat. Any how you've all got to make the best of me as I am, you can't change 1 fat father for two thin ones. Thanks so much for sending me out the list of (*cheques*). I would much sooner have them & know when I'm overdrawn than be in blissful ignorance. I'm afraid you'll all have to draw in your horns a bit now you are earning less. I wish you could all together go onto farm life for a bit, it may be a hard life, but jolly healthy. I should be very glad to hear you had given up the house at Eastbourne & for the holidays take either a farm house for one by the sea. I gather the little Margaret<sup>18</sup> was born on May 12 so the telegram took

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17 **Rosemary**.

18 He must have not heard she would be named Rosemary.

some time to reach me. Heaps of love, darling. You are as useful as you are pretty & altogether a dear. Ever your loving Father, Charles Ryder.

8<sup>th</sup> July, Baghdad, to **Ida**: My darling sweetheart, Ever so much cooler the last two days, what a difference it makes, all due to the north wind blowing & the maximum fell from 118° to 98° & everyone feels more cheerful. Then there is the Austrian defeat in Italy, and several small victories for us in France, and the Americans are at last really making their presence felt. I think the Germans will make one more big attack and if it isn't a real success they will be done.

I went out for my first trip in the launch, a complete failure, we went about 2 miles down river & then broke down and had to be towed up. My bid is rather crowded just now, as Thillier & Hunter are in, the latter only for a few days & 3 Provincials, Fielding, Strong & Booth, old good chaps. I haven't gone out this evening, at least only down to G. H. Q. to see the Reuters. We have got a good ice box going now & get nice cold soda whenever one wants them. I spend a good deal of money on fruit, I have it going for everyone, melons & grapes just now, but I am living well within my allowance of my T. A. + 100/- a month from my pay. This is how my pay is now divided up:

£100 home = Rs.1330.

Rs.500 War Loan = 500 & my pay is 1944/14/- so that is all right.  
1830

I'm interested to see whether they will make Renny supernumerary from 8<sup>th</sup> June, when he was 55 (he has been given a year's extension) as that would give me 250/- a month extra.

The only drawback to the cool wind is the amount of dust flying about. I have taken to coffee again for breakfast, splendid to say it regulates me. Ink dries up very quickly on one's pen & for tobacco & cheroots I have to keep a damp cloth around them. In any few days I shall be hoping for a telegram from you saying I am a full Colonel.

10<sup>th</sup> July. We are still having first class weather, a fine breeze from the north, which makes an extraordinary difference. I've been having an awful bother trying to get a machine printing press out of the Survey. They have 12 & I know they can spare one, finally I've got Burrard I think to agree, now a telegram comes saying Lennox-Conyngham deprecates sending it during monsoon, presumably because the man in charge might be seasick! I really thought L. C. Coming here would make him realise this was a war on. Today is the Mahomedan festival after Ramadan month's fast so they are all happy & old Syed Razi (you remember my Head Clerk in Kashmir) has just been into Salaam before going off to his prayers. He was very excited when I told him I was a grandfather and sent many messages of congratulations including love to the baby.

I wrote last week about giving up the house at **Eastbourne**. The more I think of it are white and it seems to me. I want during the war to save every penny I can and invest in War Loan, that is anyhow one's plain duty and also gives us money for after the war when for some time everything will be expensive and there will be huge taxes. I can see too many expenses ahead, outfits & passages to India (steamer fares already up 30 per cent more), my trip home, starting the boys in life & so on. I want you all to have as good food as can be got, and as good a time as possible, but I cannot see that the house at **Eastbourne** contributes to that a bit. I feel sure you would all enjoy much more a variety, a jungly seaside place our holidays, a farm house another & so on. All the boys being at boarding schools is the most expensive way of running their education, not only in school fees, but in extras & rail fares. **Wilfred** & I were quite happy as day boys, so were your brothers. The war seems to go on & year after year slips by. When the war does come to an end & you & the girls come out to India again, the house has got to be given up, why not give it up now and have done with it. Jim Reid & Dr Colgate are too well-to-do men with few expenses and don't understand the situation one bit. £200 a year more or less to them is nothing, to us it's a lot. It always comes as a shock to me when I get a pass book or list of cheques & suddenly find we are badly overdrawn, instead of well on the right side as I expected. Use the expecting you to be well on the right side and I didn't send home any money in January & February and invested the money in War Loan in India & plop we are £200 overdrawn. If I had known the situation I would have said

6 months ago given up **Murhill**<sup>19</sup>. As a seaside place I always think Eastbourne is a very poor one, my idea of a seaside place is where one can spend almost the whole day in & out of the sea bathing, boating, fishing, catching shrimps, as we used to do when I was a boy in France<sup>20</sup>. I believe you could sell a lot of the furniture you didn't want to keep and warehouse the rest of the things for £20 a year, certainly not more than £30. My launch is said to be all right again, I shall try it tomorrow. I'm feeling as fit as possible. I saw in the Pioneer that Major Turner (Algy) of the 9<sup>th</sup> Gurkhas has died of heat stroke, I don't know whether it was out here or in India. He was brother of Blanche's friend Mrs Dugdale

12<sup>th</sup> July. I sent you a weekend wire today to consider the advisability of giving up **Murhill** on account of the expense. I don't know how long they take, but one you sent about **Margaret's** baby took about a week. I feel very if it, my leg doesn't worry me a bit; I shall be hoping in a few days to have a telegram saying I am a full Colonel. We get a fair number of papers in the Club. I (*ought to*) take in the Pioneer myself, and the local paper the Baghdad Times to see Reuters if I don't happen to go down to G. H. Q. You poor dear, fancy having four teeth out & with that beastly gas. I haven't had it since I was a boy. I suppose you will have a plate; when you are accustomed to it you can encourage me to wear mine; at present I am very happy without.

13<sup>th</sup> July. No more news, darling. I love you, and that your adoring lover & husband, Charlie.

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<sup>19</sup> The name of their house in Eastbourne.

<sup>20</sup> His maternal grandfather was Chaplain to the English community at St Servan.